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The production and communication of regional space in the North East of England: a conceptual analysis of a regional assembly and regional development agency

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The Production and Communication of Regional Space in the North East of England: A Conceptual Analysis of a Regional Assembly and Regional Development Agency

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

This thesis examines Lefebvre's theory of the 'production of space' and Habermas's theory of 'communicative action' in relation to the interactions of two regional governmental organisations in the North East of England, the regional development agency One NorthEast and the North East Assembly. In a conceptually-driven approach, these theories are developed and integrated into a framework which is used to analyse the spatial narratives and discourses that are promoted by the organisations in attempting to legitimate their respective claims to regional space.

Informed by a three year work placement at the North East Assembly, the thesis provides insights into the production and communication of regional space via an heuristic application of the theoretical framework to three case studies which investigate the 'storylines' behind the 2005 draft regional economic and spatial strategies and two North East Assembly scrutiny investigations into *Regional Leadership* and *Evidence and Regional Policy*.

There were significant communicative distortions and power imbalances in the interactions of One NorthEast and the North East Assembly, which resulted partly from the nature of their working relationship but also from the effects of wider governance processes and cultures. This is seen to have created particular conditions of 'communicative meta-governmentality' that contributed to the production of a dominant economic and administrative spatial discourse, hindering the Assembly in establishing its claims to regional space. In light of this, it is argued that the Assembly created 'illusionary spaces of participation and representation' that failed to give it genuine integrity or credibility in and beyond the region.

The thesis finishes with a look towards future regional arrangements following significant recent policy developments and suggests that there might be potential for positive change through the development of 'arenas of hope' based upon 'lived' and 'popular' spaces.

Simon Lewis
January 2009

Declaration

I declare that the contents of this thesis have not been previously submitted at this or any other university

Simon Lewis
January 2009

For my dad

1954 – 2005

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List of abbreviations

ANEC	Association of North East Councils
CAS	Complex Adaptive System
CfPS	Centre for Public Scrutiny
CoR	Committee of the Regions
CSR	Comprehensive Spending Review
CSCR	Centre for the Study of Cities and Regions (previously ICRRDS)
CURDS	Centre for Urban and Regional Development Studies (Newcastle University)
DBERR	Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
DETR	Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions
DTI	Department for Trade and Industry
EBPM	Evidence Based Policy Making
EDOG	Economic Development Officers Group
EiP	Examination in Public
ERN	English Regions Network
ESP	Economic and Social Partner (Assembly Member)
GLA	Greater London Authority
GO	Government Office
GO-NE	Government Office for the North East
ICRRDS	International Centre for Regional Regeneration and Development Studies
IPA	Independent Performance Office
IPP	Institute for Policy and Practice (Newcastle University)
IPPR	Institute of Public Policy Research
IRF	Integrated Regional Framework
LA	Local Authority
LAA	Local Area Agreement
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership
MAA	Multi-Area Agreement
NAO	National Audit Office
NEA	North East Assembly
NEO	North East of England Office
NERIP	North East Regional Information Partnership
NGI	Newcastle Gateshead Initiative
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
ONE	One North East (the North East's Regional Development Agency)
RA	Regional Assembly
RDA	Regional Development Agency
RES	Regional Economic Strategy
RPB	Regional Planning Bo7dy
RSS	Regional Spatial Strategy
SAPD	Scrutiny and Policy Development

SHiNE	Shaping Horizons in the North East
SNR	Sub-National Review (itself an abbreviation for the Review of Sub-National Economic Development and Regeneration)
SRP	Sub-Regional Partnership
VONNE	Voluntary Organizations' Network North East

Acknowledgements

Chapter 1

Introductions

1. Salutations

"(Social) space is a (social) product" (Lefebvre, 1991:26). Hence, the North East of England is not a *territory* to be filled, a *place* or collection of associated places, a *scale* of societal functioning, or a node in the 'flowmations' of wider *networks* (Jessop et al., 2008; Castells, 1996; Amin, 2004). Rather, it is all of these and more, as it is continually constructed by a complex tangled web of sometimes complementary and often contradictory interpretations and projections of space. The North East of England, therefore, exists but in many forms. It is real and concrete whilst simultaneously imagined and dream-like, inhabiting the realms of the conscious and unconscious. It is a social space and thus a "space of society, of social life" (Lefebvre, 1991:35).

The North East of England is also history, eternally articulated in the ephemeral 'moment' of the present (Merrifield, 1993). The region is not produced in an historical vacuum but, as Marx states, "under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living"[1] (1963:1). Or alternatively, as Lefebvre observes, "the past leaves its traces;

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[1] Indeed, Lefebvre argues that even death itself is 'located' as part of a society's production of space. As Lefebvre states, "death is relegated to the infinite realm so as to disenthrall (or purify) the finiteness in which social practice occurs, in which the law that that practice has established holds sway" (1991:35).

time has its own script" (1991:37). While the title of this research reveals 'the production of space' to be a key line of enquiry, this recognition of time and history is important. Just as Henri Lefebvre (1991), in developing his theory of 'the production of space', sought to redress the balance between time and space, this research will also attempt to produce a 'spatial history'[2] of the North East of England revealing the ways in which the region is both produced and communicated.

This 'spatial history' will focus upon the governance interactions of two key regional organisations in the North East of England – the regional development agency (RDA) One NorthEast and regional assembly (RA) the North East Assembly – and examine them through the practical application of Lefebvre's (1991) theory of the 'production of space' and Habermas's (1984, 1987) theory of 'communicative action' as ideal-type heuristic devices. Established in 1999 to promote regional interests and indigenous economic growth, the RDAs and RAs represent the cornerstones of the New Labour government's 'rush to the regions' (Pearce and Ayres, 2007:701) and together with the Government Offices for the Regions (GORs), created in 1994, form a 'triad' of regional governmental organisations (DTI, 1998).

In 1991 Harvie referred to the English regions as 'the dog that never barked' (Harvie, 1991) but since 1997 the "Labour government ha[s] consolidated a strong tier of administrative regionalism across the eight regions outside London" (Bradbury and Mitchell, 2005:298) and devolved political powers to Scotland and Wales. This process of decentralisation, however, has not been unproblematic. As While states, "in the absence of an elected tier of regional government, English regional state organisations have long attracted concerns about power, control and accountability to the populations they serve" (2000:329). Furthermore, the failed referendum for directly elected regional government in the North East of England in November 2004 essentially removed the possibility to address such issues through the ballot box.

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[2] Elden (2004) suggests that, for various reasons, Lefebvre's (1991) 'The Production of Space' outlined more of a 'history of space', which continued to reflect a focus on historicism, rather a more balanced 'spatial history'. He further comments that Lefebvre's project to develop a 'spatial history' became better formulated with his later work 'Rhythmanalysis' (2004).

To get to the heart of these concerns in developing a 'spatial history' of regional government in the North East of England this investigation utilised a three-year research placement at the North East Assembly from 2004 to 2007. During this time, an 'insider-researcher' or 'reflective practitioner-researcher' role was adopted that allowed privileged access and insights into the functioning of regional government and the nature of the relationship between One NorthEast and the North East Assembly (Schön, 1996; Robson, 2002). The experience gained and evidence gathered from this research setting was subsequently used to examine the 'storylines' behind key documents, events and processes and reveal the organisation's respective claims to regional space (Hajer, 1995).

In setting out the foundations for this investigation, two basic but valid questions can be asked. Firstly, why study regional governance and, secondly, why do so through the conceptualisation of the production and communication of regional space? The answer to the first has already been touched upon in terms of the concerns surrounding the accountability and legitimacy of regional state organisations – namely the RDAs and RAs. "Regional governance has expanded to an unprecedented degree during the past decade" (Musson et al., 2005:1408), experiencing a setback in the form of the 2004 referendum 'no-vote' and is set to evolve further in the wake of the regional restructuring announced by the 2007 Sub-National Review (HM Treasury et al., 2007). In such light the region can be seen as an intriguing scale of governance 'experimentation' that demands examination in terms of what governance arrangements have worked and what might work in the future (Duit and Galaz, 2008).

The answer to the second question asserts that, in order to understand regional governance, it is vital to envisage the arenas in which it is constituted, as neither neutral nor passive mediums, but as active attempts to legitimate and establish particular kinds of governing based on particular kinds of space and particular relations of power (Paasi, 2001). As Paasi states,

> "the region should not be regarded merely as a passive medium in
> which social action takes place. Neither should it be understood as
> an entity that operates autonomously above human beings.

> Regions are always part of this action and hence they are social constructs that are created in political, economic, cultural and administrative practices and discourses. Further, in these practices and discourses regions may become crucial instruments of power that manifest themselves in shaping the spaces of governance, economy and culture" (2001:16).

Regional government is thus contested and as such can be seen as a specific, yet inherently temporary, 'spatial fix' - as a 'technology of government' attempting to establish a 'state of domination' (Harvey, 2003; Brenner, 1998; Dean, 2007).

In struggling to 'fix' governmental arrangements the production and communication of space are central components. As Rodriguez-Pose and Sandall state,

> "[decentralisation] is not a process, therefore, which can be undertaken lightly, or on a political whim, even in the context of a strong government or with the support of a wide cross-section of society. As with all major political undertakings, it requires a narrative, or discourse, which can be used to justify or explain the process and to make it palatable to those opposed to change. In the case of decentralisation this is especially important because of the creation of new political and specifically territorial institutions which may depend for their survival on the feelings of ownership and legitimacy that they can engender" (2008:54).

The 'survival' of regional governance can thus be seen to depend upon the production, communication and the acceptance of the validity of spatial narratives or discourses. In the North East of England the regional development agency One NorthEast and the North East Assembly represent the 'institutionalisation' of regional space, but crucially their legitimacy is determined by the success or failure of their claims to regional space.

Any attempt to establish 'territoriality' requires 'a form of communication', a form of 'classification by area' and an attempt at 'enforcing control' or 'influencing interactions' (Sack, 1986:21). Hence, the production of space, and communication and interaction are closely intertwined. As Sharp states, "strategies of power always require the use of space and, thus, the use of discourses to create particular spatial images, primarily of territory and boundaries in statecraft, is inseparable from the formation and use of power" (1993:492). Following such rationale, Lefebvre's (1991) theory of the

'production of space', which conceptually bridges physical, mental and social space through the 'triple dialectic' of spatial practice, representations of space and spaces of representation, provides a theoretically mature framework for investigating regional space (Lefebvre, 1991; Elden, 2004). Similarly, Habermas's (1984, 1987) theory of 'communicative action', in which undistorted communication can lead to consensus on the 'better argument', presents a suitable and complementary mechanism for analysing the interactions of regional governmental organisations that have a mandate to embrace an ethos of partnership working. As such both Lefebvre's and Habermas's ideas were combined into a theoretical framework, which focused on the production *and* communication of space, and used as ideal-type heuristic devices to investigate regional governance in the North East of England.

In undertaking such an examination it is also important to understand that the North East of England sits within a wider context of regionalisation and the transformation of the nation-state. The debate surrounding regions is, in itself, substantial and can be seen to be closely associated with the literature on the processes of globalisation, glocalisation, the changing roles of nation-states, the new localism, cities and city-regions, devolution and decentralisation, risk and global society, and government and governance (Storper, 1997; Peck and Tickell, 1994; Swyngedouw, 1992, 1996; Jessop, 1997; Horsman and Marshall, 1994; Brenner and Theodore, 2002; Brenner, 1998; Jones, M, 2001; Beck, 1999, 2006; Park, 2008; Kooiman, 2003). From this Martin Jones has gone as far as to say that "there is evidence that a *new regionalist* orthodoxy is emerging" (emphasis in original) in which "the regional scale is claimed to represent a focal point for knowledge creation, learning, and innovation [that] is deemed essential for establishing economic competitiveness in an era of globalisation" (2001:1186).

Discussion on regions has also been linked to the changing nature of the nation-state particularly within the developed world. As Brenner summarises:

> "In the state-centric configuration of world capitalism that endured
> until the late 1960s, social relations appeared to converge within
> the territorial 'containers' of states... The national scale appeared

to have a pre-given structured coherence as the natural geographical-organizational level for social relations, whether with reference to state institutions, economic organization, civil societies or politico-cultural identities. Today these assumptions have become obsolete. The scales of capital accumulation, state territorial power, urbanization, societal networks and politico-cultural identities are being continually transformed, disarticulated and recombined in ways that severely undermine this pervasive naturalization of the national scale of social relations" (1998:28).

Many authors have commentated on a perceived change in the dominant mode of governing from one of hierarchical government to a more diffuse system of governance, with terms such as network governance, governance networks, interactive governance, governing without government, governance-beyond-the-state and participatory governance being put forward to describe these emergent forms (Edelenbos, 2005; Klijn and Skelcher, 2007; Kooiman, 2003; Rhodes, 1997; Swyngedouw, 2005).

This wider context of nation-state transformations, globalisation processes and emerging forms of governance is crucial in setting the scene for a study of regional governmental organisations but equally it should not be privileged over the significance of the specific regional and local context. "Scale, like space, is not a neutral or static container within which social relations are situated, but one of their constitutive dimensions" (Brenner, 1998:28) and as such regional space is imbued with and produces its own distinctive identities and social relations.

The North East of England is thus a (social) space and a (social) product with its own 'spatial history' (Lefebvre, 1991). Within the region, as Miles and Tilly state,

"context *is* important. The dislocating effects of the history of the North East of England should not be under-estimated. The collapse of the 'old' industrial economy of coal mining, shipbuilding and heavy manufacturing led to the destruction of a way of life, and an ordering principle by which people lived and worked. Fragmented, dislocated and isolated communities characterize[d] too many areas of the North East" (2007:862).

From its industrial heyday as one of the 'powerhouses' of the British Empire, the North East of England has experienced at times harsh economic decline and now rates as statistically the poorest and most deprived of

England's eight regions. The structural weaknesses in its economy have led to a widely held perception of it being a 'peripheral' or 'problem' region and even an economic 'deadland'[3] (Tomaney, 2006; Brenner, 1998). The North East of England's specific economic, social, cultural and environmental history is inescapable. It is one fraught with contradictions and tensions, failures and hard times, but also with loyalty, pride, resilience, success and hope. Importantly, its future, therefore, should be seen as contingent rather than dependent upon the past (Hudson, 2005).

Building upon this brief introductory outline the remainder of this chapter will first provide additional detail on the aims and rationale underpinning the foci of this research. A subsequent section will provide an overview of current regional arrangements and recent developments in England and the North East of England. A final section will then outline the structure of this thesis.

2. Aims and rationale of this research

This research has actively engaged with both the theoretical and the practical - with the ideas of Lefebvre, Habermas and others and the real world space of the North East of England – and in so doing has cast the two into a dialectical relationship in the hope of achieving three main aims.

Firstly, to better understand the nature of governance interactions and the production of regional space in the North East of England at a time when regions are receiving increasing political and policy attention. Set against this was the understanding that the production of space is always context-specific and, as such, the research had to be 'situated' (Johnson, 2006). As Brenner states, "though geographers have frequently invoked the idea that spatial

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[3] Brenner in analysing the rise of global cities, or 'world city-regions', as a re-organisation of world capitalism states that, "the consolidation of a world urban hierarchy dominated by an archipelago of upper-tier global cities has also produced new geographies of exclusion stretching from the economic 'deadlands' of the older industrial core states into the marginalised zones of the global periphery that contain almost seven-eighths of world population" (1998:7).

scale is socially produced, our understanding of how this takes place in distinct historical-geographical contexts remains underdeveloped" (1998:27). This research therefore aimed to further such understanding by focusing on the 'spatio-temporal' setting of the North East of England at the beginning of the 21st century.

Secondly, to engage with academic theories, that not only possess potential as tools in gaining greater understanding of regional governance, but which also may be innovatively combined together to develop a stronger complementary and more revealing theoretical framework. In so doing, Lefebvre's (1991) *The Production of Space* and Habermas's (1987) *The Theory of Communicative Action* were utilised as ideal type heuristic devices – simultaneously used to test their individual and combined applicability, and to act as a theoretical guide and scale for comparison in analysing the real world setting of the North East of England.

Thirdly, the research embraced the belief that academic study has a role to play in attempting to create a better society – a motivation that also underpins much of both Habermas's and Lefebvre's work. Habermas had hoped for 'Lifeworld decolonisation' to occur by making possible an emancipatory form of knowledge and Lefebvre had seen the revolutionary potential of spaces of resistance and the 'moment' (Habermas, 1987; Ashenden and Owen, 1999; Lefebvre, 2004). In similar fashion, it is hoped that this research will contribute to the debate on how more democratic, accountable and legitimate forms of action and space may be produced in the North East of England and potentially beyond.

In addition to achieving these three aims set out above, the research was informed by a wider rationale which intended to address a number of perceived gaps and underdeveloped avenues in academic and professional literature. This rationale can be summarised under the following four subheadings:

1. The identification and promotion of good governance

The transformations in the functioning of nation-states and in particular the observed emergence of new forms of governing has received significant academic attention and within this can be seen "Stoker's (2000) injunction to the academic community in this phase of governance experimentation that scholars contribute to improving the infrastructure of governance by identifying and communicating best practice and by delineating the attributes of good design for governance institutions" (Davidson and Lockwood, 2008:642). This study, situated between sociology and geography, has sought to contribute to answering this call by devising an alternative means of conceptualising and analysing governance interactions and their relation to space.

This research has also aimed to relate this 'search' for well-designed and democratic governance institutions to the regional sphere in England. As Davidson and Lockwood state, "democracy is fundamental to regional development. Regional development strategies that privilege economic imperatives over democracy miss out on the social capital building and innovative learning and feedback mechanisms possible in the open learning environment of a broad democratic space" (2008:646). In addition to studies which have concentrated on national transformations (Mann, 1990; 2003; Horsman and Marshall, 1994; Ohmae, 1995; Strange, 2003; Weiss, 2003) and the local level (Cole and John, 2000; Brenner and Theodore, 2002; Bennett et al., 2004; Jonas and Ward, 2007; Beaumont and Loopmans, 2008; Turok, 2008), this research therefore saw potential in adding to the literature on the regional level (Storper, 1997; Jones and MacLeod, 2004).

Further to this regional focus the research aimed to practically assess the democratic functioning of particular regional governance organisations in the North East of England – namely the regional development agency One NorthEast and the North East Assembly. A number of previous studies (Snape et al., 2003; Snape et al., 2005; Swyngedouw, 2005; McGregor and Swales, 2005; Blackman and Ormston, 2005) had noted issues regarding accountability and the existence of a regional 'democratic deficit', thereby

suggesting that further study was both required and worthwhile. As While states, "New Labour's plans for English regions have left a number of ambiguities over roles and responsibilities that could lead to tensions or conflicts in the future... [and] there are important questions about the balance of power, both between the RDA and the chamber [assembly] and amongst different partners within the chamber" (2000:343). As Fuller and Geddes also support, there has been "a failure to fully comprehend the tensions and contradictions arising from the insertion of New Labour's emergent institutional agendas and agents into the inherited institutional landscape of the local state" (2008:253). This investigation therefore aimed to use an analysis of the production and communication of regional space as a means to deconstruct the current 'spatio-temporal fix' in order to "understand its uneven, contested and contingent nature" (Fuller and Geddes, 2008:256; Harvey, 2003) and explore the "contradictory spatialities, socialities and subjectivities (Larner, 2005:17) that make up the governance framework in the North East of England.

2. Exploring the production of space

Central to the theoretical framework put into practice in this research was the idea of space being something that is socially produced or constructed. Despite extensive academic work on space there was considered to be a justifiable need to return to the ideas promoted by Lefebvre on the social production of space for a number of reasons.

Firstly, various academic approaches have theorised space in a number of different ways ranging from territorially bounded units to spaces as places, scales and spaces of flows and networks and there has been a tendency for each approach to reify its particular view of space. A return to Lefebvre's idea of the social production of space was seen as a means to overcome this epistemological and ontological obstacle as it allowed for the analysis of multiple and varying productions of space. Such an approach echoes the work of others in attempting to develop a multidimensional

understanding of space – notably that of Jessop, Brenner and Jones (2008) who articulate a territory, place, scale, network (TPSN) framework of space.

Secondly, seeing space as a social construct was perceived as academically useful in terms of the construction of political institutions ascribed to particular spaces. With relation to city-regions Jonas and Ward describe the working premise of the *Debate and Developments* forum as there having been "an under-emphasis in the city-region literature on how new territorial forms are constructed politically and reproduced through everyday acts and struggles around consumption and social reproduction" (2007:170). The idea of space being something that is socially produced was therefore seen as being relevant and useful in analyzing how regional institutions and spaces were created, sustained and challenged.

3. Exploring the role of communication and its links with space

The role of communication in the production of space, or what Netto calls building a "more inclusive spatial narrative" (2008:363), and the "place of space in the communicative sociation of practice" (2008:363) was seen to be a key combination of separate though deeply interrelated theories that warranted further examination, particularly in a real world context. Any claim to territory necessitates an element of communication and hence potential was perceived to exist in combining Lefebvre's ideas on space with Habermas's on communication and interaction (Lefebvre, 1991; Habermas, 1984, 1987). This research, therefore, sought to develop a new framework by combining the theories on space and communication as a means by which to examine governance interactions. The theories of Lefebvre and Habermas were additionally considered to share characteristics that supported the development of a complementary perspective. For example, both academics used their theories to provide a critique of modern society in the hope of changing it for the better. These similarities are explored in more depth in chapter three.

4. Furthering methodological approaches

The adoption of an 'insider-researcher' or reflexive-practitioner role with direct access to the functioning of regional government was seen as a particularly innovative research approach. Indeed, it entailed the delicate balancing of professional, academic and personal responsibilities and views, which made for an intriguing research 'experience'. As such the researcher's close engagement with the research setting was seen as adding a unique dynamic to the often undervalued field of case study research.

The researcher's position also facilitated an innovative approach to a number of research methods, most notably discourse analysis. Müller has identified a need to rectify "the somewhat skewed emphasis on texts and images [rather than practice] in critical geopolitics" (2008:324). Further to this Paasi has criticised "what he calls geopolitical remote sensing, an emerging tendency to observe and deconstruct discourses from a distance and out of context" (Müller, 2008:329). The researcher's active engagement with the research setting sought to respond to these criticisms by both taking into account an analysis of language/texts and practice/behaviour, achieving context-rich insights into regional discourses and narratives (Müller, 2008). As such the research is structured around various 'storylines' on key documents and events, which permit an examination of organisational and individual interactions (incorporating practices and texts) in the North East of England (Hajer, 1995).

3. Regional arrangements in England

"Although 1997 – the year that New Labour took power – is sometimes seen as 'year zero' for the English regions, the development of those regions has been a gradual and progressive process" (Musson et al., 2005:1398). Indeed, despite its highly centralised nature, the British nation-state does have its

own distinct regional history even if it is not always widely recognised or understood. In fact Fothergill goes as far as to say that "Britain can lay claim to have invented regional policy when, as far back as the 1930s, the first measures were put in place to help areas of high unemployment" (2005:660). Taken to an extreme, some even claim "English regionalism had its high point with the Anglo-Saxon heptarchy, when the territories of Mercia, Wessex, and Northumbria dominated the 8th century political landscape" (Jones, M., 2001:1190). The 'region' therefore has a rich history in the UK and one that rightfully deserves a more detailed account. For this reason appendix 1 provides an historical overview of regional developments with a particular focus on the North East of England. However, for the purpose of setting the scene for this research, it is worthwhile focusing on more recent arrangements.

Up until the establishment of Government Offices in 1994 and the 1998 Regional Development Agencies Act it would have been correct to assert that, "the most striking feature of the English regions in terms of their role in British government is a complete absence of a coherent definition of their boundaries, their size or even the concept of the region" (Hogwood, 1982:2). 'Civic defence regions' had emerged in the inter-war years and had subsequently become the 'standard regions' in the 1950s forming the basis for an interventionist approach to regional policy, which lasted until the late 1970s (Jones, M., 2001; Tomaney, 2006; Hudson, 1989). However, the failures of referenda on Scottish and Welsh devolution and the election of the Thatcher government in 1979 saw regional policy take a back seat. Indeed "eighteen years of Conservative governments bent not on devolving power, but on centralizing it" (Cullingworth and Nadin, 2002:50) essentially stripped the regional decentralisation mandate of any progressive agenda. Nevertheless, since the Conservative governments of the 1980s and especially more recently with the New Labour 'regional project' it is possible to identify a shift in regional policy. This change is illustrated by Clark in table 1.1. below.

Table 1.1. Evolution of Regional Policies 1950s to 2000s in OECD Countries (taken from Clark, 2008:108)

	Traditional Regional Policies 'Regional Planning' 1950s to 1990s	New Regional Policies 'Territorial Development' 1980s to present
Objectives	Balance national economies by compensating for disparities	Increasing regional development performance in all regions.
Strategies	Sectoral approach	Integrated development programmes and projects at regional level.
Geog focus	Political/Administrative Regions	Economic regions
Target	Lagging regions and local economies	All regions and local economies.
Context	National economy	International economy
Tools	Subsidies, incentives, state aids, and regulations	Assets, drivers of growth, soft and hard infrastructures
Actors	National governments	Multiple levels of governments and private/civic actors

Fuller and Geddes support this observation stating that "in the UK the propagation of multi-scalar governance arrangements has been apparent for at least two decades, but has been given fresh impetus by New Labour governments since 1997" (2008:253). The advent of the New Labour government in 1997 marked a step change in regional policy and within two years successful referenda in Scotland and Wales had seen the establishment of a Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly with devolved political powers and the creation of regional development agencies (RDAs) and regional chambers[4] (RAs) with decentralised administrative powers in each of England's eight regions[5]. However, it is important to note that the regional boundaries that underpinned this 'regional project' were those used by the Government Offices for the Regions, which had been established by the Major government in 1994[6] with the aim of rationalising the "patchwork quilt of complexity" (Jones, M., 2001:1191) that constituted local governance. The administrative regions of the Government Offices, which also form the

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[4] Later renamed assemblies to avoid confusion with regional chambers of commerce.

[5] London was subject to different legislation – the Greater London Authority Act 1999 which created the Mayor of London, the London Assembly and the Greater London Authority (Bradbury and Mitchell, 2005).

[6] Following some boundary alterations after 1994 the current regional arrangement of nine administrative regions (including the 'honorary' region of London) was finalised in 1998.

current framework for RDAs and RAs, are shown below in figure 1.1. along with some basic information on each region.

Figure 1.1. Government Office Regions
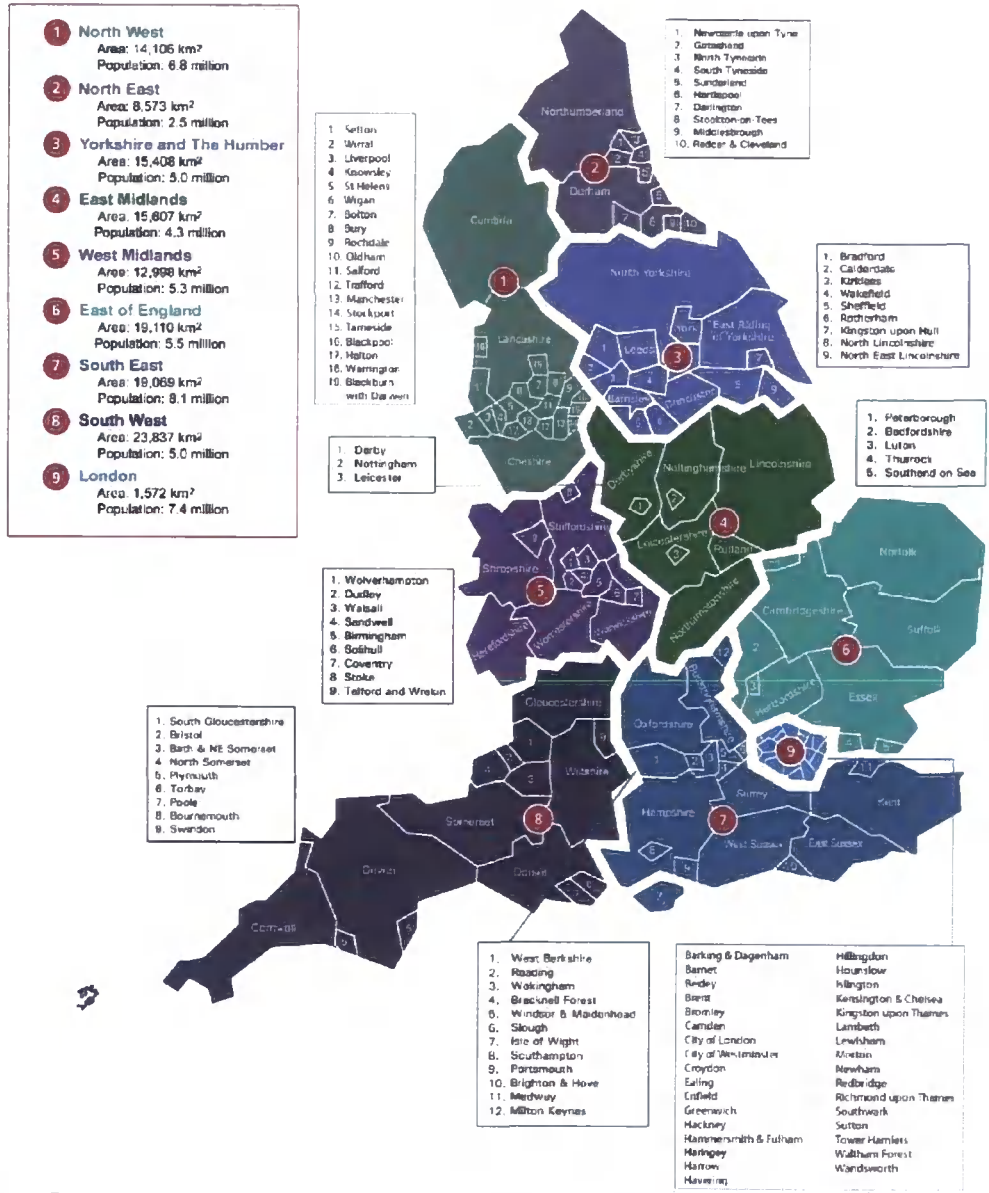
Source: Government Offices for the Regions website (http://www.gos.gov.uk/aboutusnat/)

The establishment of regional development agencies and regional assemblies under the 1998 Regional Development Agencies Act, and the pre-existence of Government Offices essentially created a triad of administrative governmental organisations in each region. However, it is clear that this was not intended to be the last step in English regional decentralisation. As the Labour Party Manifesto from 1997 states:

"In time we will introduce legislation to allow the people, region by region, to decide in a referendum whether they want directly elected regional government. Only where clear popular consent is established will arrangements be made for elected regional assemblies" (Chapter 9)

The then ODPM stated in 2002 that, "most of the academic literature considers Regional Chambers as an intermediate stage before the introduction of elected regional assemblies, rather than important bodies in their own right" (2005:8). This political rhetoric and academic conjecture was actualized in the publication of the *Your Region, Your Choice: Revitalising the English Regions* White Paper in May 2002 (DTLR, 2002) which represented the government's first statement on elected regional government in England since the *Green Paper Devolution: The English Dimension* in 1976 (DCLG, 2008[7]). This led to the Regional Assemblies (Preparations) Act 2003, which provided for referendums to be held in the regions on the establishment of directly elected regional assemblies. The subsequent emphatic rejection[8] of the proposal in the North East of England in the November 2004 referendum essentially "destroyed the Government's plans for elected regional assemblies" (Shaw et al., 2006) and has taken political regional devolution off the agenda for at least a generation (Bradbury and Mitchell, 2005). However, despite this, regional government has continued to function and has even been granted further decentralised administrative duties, albeit in an ad-hoc fashion.

This has left the regional bodies with a range and mix of roles and responsibilities some of which are set out in table 1.2. below.

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[7] http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/citiesandregions/yourregionyour accessed 10/10/2008.
[8] In a high turnout of 48%, on 4 November 2004, 78% rejected the proposals for directly elected regional government in the North East of England. Only 22% supported the plans (Tomaney, 2002; Bradbury and Mitchell, 2005).

Table 1.2. The role of institutions of regional government in England: Government Offices (GOs), Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) and Regional Assemblies (taken from Musson et al., 2005:1399).

GOs	RDAs	Regional Assemblies
Represent the interests of central government in the region	Further the economic development and the regeneration of their areas	Hold the RDAs to account for their economic development targets
Explain government policy to regional partners	Promote business efficiently, investment, and competitiveness	Act as the statutory land-use and transport planning body for the region
Provide feedback to ministers	Promote employment	Act as a sounding board for issues relating to the region
Are a source of expert policy advice in the region	Enhance the development and application of skills relevant to employment	Create a strong and credible voice for the region by engaging member organisations and the public
Lend additional capacity to regional institutions	Contribute to the achievement of sustainable development in the United Kingdom	Coordinate and integrate regional strategies between regional institutions

Within this regional 'triad' Government Offices actively take on the role of being central government's representative in the region and by the end of 2008 eleven Whitehall departments had a 'regional presence' within them. Their mandate is thus "first, to coordinate the regional spending of [these] departments... and, second, to act as the 'eyes and ears' of central government in the regions" (Musson et al., 2001:1398). Regional development agencies have a clear agenda to further economic development in their regions predominantly by focusing on 'drivers of productivity' and upon their creation were regarded by many as representing "the centrepiece of Labour's policies for the English regions in its first term" (Tomaney, 2002:723; HM Treasury, 2001). Under the 1998 RDA Act they are specifically required to "formulate and keep under review a strategy for implementing its statutory responsibilities to further economic development and regeneration, to promote business efficiency, to promote employment, to enhance the development and application of skills, and to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development" (Cullingworth and Nadin, 2002:54). This strategy outlining key regional economic priorities is commonly referred to the Regional Economic Strategy.

The regional assemblies have been charged with, or more appropriately 'collected', a range of roles including the formal scrutiny of the Regional Economic Strategy, which was intended to add a degree of democratic accountability to the functioning of RDAs, and a mandate to foster "a regional civic culture by enabling regional partners to work together more effectively" (Musson et al., 2005:1402). With the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act of May 2004 Assemblies were also designated as the Regional Planning Bodies with statutory responsibility to produce the Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS)[9], and have subsequently become home to the Regional Housing Boards and interim Regional Transport Boards.

Importantly within the regional governmental framework it is intended that the three organisations fulfil complementary roles and that they engage in proactive partnership working on issues of regional significance. This is especially true of the RDAs and RAs as they are perceived as being more representative of regional interests. However, a number of important questions remain with regard to the nature of the inter-organisational relationships. As While states, "RDAs, for example, are required to take account of the views of chambers but are not necessarily required to take those observations on board. RDAs are also not restricted to working with the chambers, but have the right to consult local and regional stakeholders and partners directly" (2000:343).

The North East of England as the region with the most perceived sense of regional identity and also as the only to have had a referendum on directly elected regional government is imbued with a rich regional history (Bond and McCrone, 2004). As a 'state managed region' (Hudson, 1989) supported in the post-war years by nationalised industries; as a 'branch plant economy' and 'global outpost' (Tomaney, 2006) from the 1960s onwards; as a 'problem region' and 'policy laboratory' "where successive regional policies were tested" (Tomaney, 2006:3); and now as a region at the forefront of such experimentation, the North East of England is 'situated' within a complex and diverse context. In order to begin to understand the current dynamic of regional working the following figure (figure 1.2.) illustrates the relationship

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[9] The RSS replaced previous Regional Planning Guidance (RPG) produced by Government Offices.

between the three key regional governmental organisations during the research from 2004 to 2007.

Figure 1.2. The 'regional triad' of the GO, RDA and RA in the North East of England.
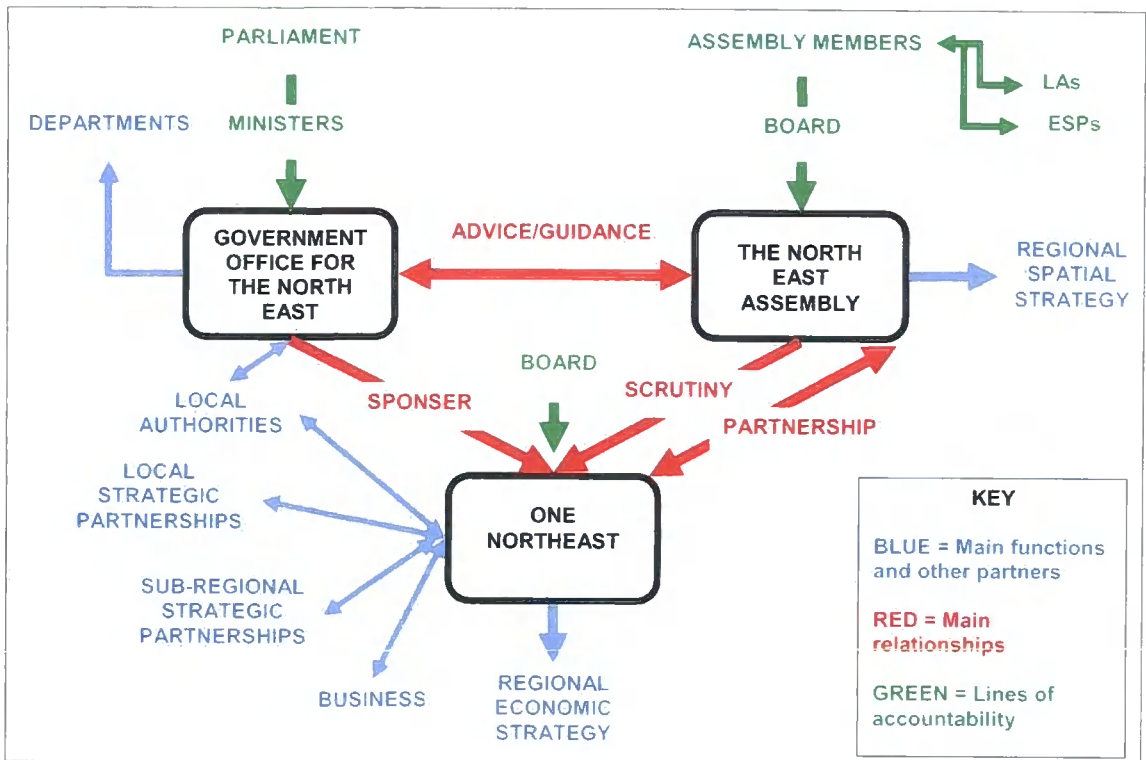
Although an ethos of partnership working was often assumed, all three organizations were signatories of a Regional Concordat[10], which essentially formalized such working arrangements. In addition, particular functions such as scrutiny and policy development (SAPD) between the RDA and RA also had their own additional agreements.

Although the regional framework is presented as a system of coherent relationships it would be naïve to assume that this has developed according to any kind of preconceived plan for regional government. On the contrary regional government has developed in an incremental ad-hoc fashion and has been shaped by a number of contingencies such as the 2004 referendum, and even the 1997 referenda on devolution to Scotland and Wales. Despite the English regions not possessing a "lengthy pedigree of public and private organizations established and operating upon a clear and

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[10] A copy of this concordat is attached as appendix 2.

uncontested regional basis" (Bond and McCrone, 2008:2) the Labour government pursued its 'regional project' upon being elected in 1997 on the argument that, "the fact that these questions [about regional boundaries] are difficult to answer is not a reason for junking the whole regional project" (Murphy and Caborn, 1996:219). Indeed this practical approach was embodied by co-founder of the Regional Policy Commission Richard Caborn who stated that, "a region is defined by a population of five million... If you've got an identity it's helpful, but not a prerequisite" (quoted in Richards, 1998:4).

The continued functioning of indirectly elected regional assemblies in the aftermath of the 2004 referendum result supports this line of thinking, but such an approach also potentially glosses over the impact of the referendum on the legitimacy of regional government in general. As Bond and McCrone state, "while it may be true that identity is not in itself a prerequisite for regional government, if such political change is only to proceed on the basis of popular support, then the absence of identity as a potential source of such support would unquestionably reduce the likelihood of popular assent" (2004:3).

The complex and delicate regional situation, particularly in the North East of England, has led some to question the government's commitment to the regions. As Tomaney states, "New Labour's engagement with the English regions reveals its continuing ambivalence about devolution in general and English regionalism in particular" (2002:722). Indeed even the ODPM admitted in 2005 that, "there is no clear formal set of aims and objectives for Regional Chambers. Their role and function has evolved from a disparate combination of Government papers and announcements and from the initiatives of the Chambers themselves" (2005:8). This ambiguity has meant that Regional Assemblies in particular have developed their own distinctive styles of working[11] resulting in a kind of 'experimental regionalism' (Gualini, 2004) across the regions. Ashworth et al. observe that the emergent "horizontal, multiple, and mutual accountability relationships have resulted in

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[11] The case of regional scrutiny is an excellent example with approaches ranging from select committee style hearings, to task and finish scrutiny panels, to regular informal discussion sessions. For further details please refer to Snape et al., 2003.

tensions and sometimes competition between all three organisations in some regions" (2007:195).

Whilst these relationships characterised the research setting, the government has since taken steps that will fundamentally change the regional governmental landscape. The announcement of the *Review of Sub-National Economic Development and Regeneration* (Treasury/DBERR/DCLG) in July 2007 has ushered in another wave of change as Regional Assemblies will effectively be abolished and the spatial strategies, for which they were responsible for producing, will be integrated with the economic strategies to form single regional strategies. However, these changes are not due to come into practice until 2010 and so, despite the formation of various transition groups, operations are continuing as before.

4. The structure of this thesis

This research's strong theoretical underpinnings mixed with their practical application demands a balanced approach. For this reason the following chapters will further explore the academic and theoretical literature informing this investigation before attention turns to the three mini-case studies that form the basis of the three research chapters.

In more detail, chapter two will assess the literature on transformations in systems of governing focusing specifically on an observed rise of governance. This debate will be linked to issues of governmentality, power, accountability, legitimacy, jurisdictional integrity, democracy, complexity and interactive governance. The aim of this chapter will thus be to lay the foundations for the study of governance interactions in the North East of England.

Chapter three will explore in more detail the theories that are central to this investigation – namely Lefebvre's (1991) 'production of space' and Habermas's (1987) 'communicative action'. After being discussed briefly

individually, the work of Michel Foucault will be used to highlight the key arguments, similarities and differences in the authors' works.

Chapter four will provide a detailed account of the research methodology and methods employed in conducting the study. The research setting at the North East Assembly and the researcher's position as an 'insider' or 'reflexive practitioner' will be examined and, building upon the previous chapter, the theories of the production of space and communicative will be operationalised to the research setting. Some of the specific methods employed including discourse analysis, interviewing, surveys, research diaries and participant observation will also be outlined.

Chapter five represents the first of this study's three research chapters. It focuses upon the spatial narratives and discourses revealed through an analysis of the draft Regional Economic Strategy and draft Regional Spatial Strategy, produced in 2005 by One NorthEast and the North East Assembly respectively.

Chapter six shifts the research's emphasis to the North East Assembly's scrutiny and policy development process that is intended to act as a means by which to hold One NorthEast to account. The chapter concentrates on the scrutiny investigation into *Regional Leadership* and attempts to assess the nature of the interactions, and their spatial implications, of the Assembly and One NorthEast.

Chapter seven, the third and final research chapter, will centre on the Assembly's scrutiny investigation into *Evidence and Regional Policy*. The aim here will be to build upon and further analyse the spatial narratives and discourses and interactions identified in the preceding research chapters relating them more specifically to the conceptual framework.

Chapter eight will relate all of the research findings to the five key research questions that are outlined in the research methodology. Therefore the production of space and the nature of communication in the region will be discussed individually before being brought together to analyse how identified 'communicative pathologies' affect productions of space and vice versa (Greenhalgh et al., 2006). A subsequent section will look at the usefulness of the theoretical framework developed in this study before

finishing with a discussion of the future of regional governance in the post Sub-National Review policy and governance landscape.

Chapter nine will conclude this investigation by summarising the key findings, identifying strengths and limitations, offering directions for further research and expression, and suggesting a number of policy recommendations.

Chapter 2

Governance: power, complexity and interaction

1. Introduction

Forms of governing have been the subject of academic and popular debate for centuries. With the rise of the modern nation-state since the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia the functioning of national governments has received significant attention. More recently societal changes occurring in an age of intensified globalization have led to much conjecture on the evolution of existing 'traditional' modes of government and the emergence of potentially new forms of governing, sometimes referred to under the title of governance. Other lines of thinking, such as Foucault's 'governmentality', have also attempted to deconstruct the concept of government in order to better understand the functioning of power and the 'spatio-historically' contingent nature of forms of governing in modern society.

This research is primarily concerned with potential shifts from government to governance associated with the development of a regional tier of governing in England and its claims to those spaces. However such 'shifts' are dependent upon and inherently intertwined with much wider changes in the governing of society such as the blurring of distinctions between the state, market and civil society and the transformation of the nation-state. On such issues Taylor states that, "most commentators agree that it is no longer possible in the context of globalization, or given the complexity of today's

society, for the state to govern without the co-operation of other actors" (2007:297). As Rhodes (1997) affirms, governance can be seen as "one of three modes steering society towards common goals, the other two being the more familiar hierarchies (bureaucracies) and markets" (Davidson and Lockwood, 2008:642).

Governance is therefore seen as both a facilitator and product of changes in the nature of governing societies but beyond this considerable variation exists in its use. Although it has been observed that governance re-emerged in the 1980s to describe the processes of governing that incorporated more than just the formal mechanisms of state-centric government, Kjaer (2004) has highlighted its distinctive use in academic fields ranging from public administration and policy to international relations and comparative politics. Its use in this research relates to public policy but an understanding of the diverse uses of the term nevertheless illustrates the complexity associated with recent theorisations on the changing nature of society. Indeed, numerous terms such as government, governance, governmentality, power, accountability, legitimacy, complexity and jurisdictional integrity amongst many more are implicated in the study of 'governing' and require a degree of understanding and clarification before being used as the basis of research. Furthermore, such an analysis must also begin by at least offering a basic definition of those entities upon which processes of governing are based – namely the state, government and society.

With these academic necessities in mind this chapter will first outline an elemental understanding and definition of the state as a foundation for the analysis of governance. The following section will then deconstruct the concept of governance with the aid of basic classifications and the concepts of power, governmentality, accountability, legitimacy and jurisdictional integrity. The fourth section will introduce the idea of complexity and complex adaptive systems and outline its usefulness to this research. Following this the work of Jan Kooiman on 'interactive governance' will be highlighted as a useful conceptualisation for understanding Habermas's views on communicative action in terms of governance processes. Section six will then

seek to relate some of these observations and clarifications to the sphere of regional government.

2. The state, government and society

The answer to the question, 'what is the state?' is fraught with problems and contradictions that have frustrated scholars to the point where some consider it indefinable. Indeed, Bohman has even identified what he calls an 'indefinability thesis' put forward by academics such as David Easton which contends "not merely that the state is an arbitrary and elusive institution but that its ambiguities are such that it should not be part of theoretical discourse" (1995:2). However, simply rejecting the state as an adequate concept does not overcome the 'reality' of its inherent contradictions. Indeed, as Bohman concludes, "the state is contradictory and mystifying, but it is not possible to get to grips with its problematic character unless we begin by *defining* it" (1995:3). Furthermore, the state's ambiguous relationship with, and crucially its immersion in, a wider society or social formation necessitates that "there can be no adequate theory of the state without a theory of society" (Jessop, 2007:1).

The relationship between the state and society is therefore key to any understanding of the state. Here Weber's much cited definition of the state as "an institution claiming to exercise a monopoly of legitimate force within a particular territory" (Bohman, 1995:3) is a useful starting point. This definition usefully ties together the diverse qualities of the state - monopoly, territory, legitimacy and force – into an interrelated whole. As Bohman states, "unless its [the states] 'claim' is monopolistic, territorially focused *and* underpinned by a force which is legitimate, the state cannot function in Weberian fashion" (1995:3). This approach also highlights an important distinction – that between the state and government. Despite their close association in modern society (to the point where they are often assumed to be the same), the two can exist without each other. For example, it is common to hear of 'failed states' in which, rather confusingly, basic processes of government are non-

functional. Similarly, situations may exist where a government may exist in exile or not have a monopoly over a state's territory, legitimacy or use of force. Here Taylor (1989) identifies the state as being defined by its possession of sovereignty – itself an ambiguous concept but which can be understood as absolute and "supreme coercive power within a territory" (Taylor, 1989:156) or even more basically as the internally and externally accepted right to exist. Thus for Taylor governments are not sovereign bodies; instead they are "short term mechanisms for administering the long-term purposes of the state. Hence every state is served by a continual succession of governments. But governments only represent the state, they cannot replace it" (1989:156-157).

Analytically therefore the state is most visible through the actions of government conducted on behalf of the state. This however creates somewhat of a paradox as the state appears to become an invisible entity, invoked and appropriated by governments for the purposes of actualising effective systems of governing.

A further problem is encountered in defining the state's (and government's) relationship with wider society. A useful way forward is provided by Jessop (2007, who in proposing a 'strategic-relational approach', posits that the state can be seen as a social relation. The state can thus be seen as essentially interacting with its wider social formation over which it has accepted legitimacy and a monopoly of the use of force. Such a 'wider social formation' may be organised according to the priorities of the state but by geographical categorisation its constituent individuals share a sense of being what Anderson terms an 'imagined community'. This theorisation of the state as a social relation can be seen in Dean's definition of government:

> "Government is any more or less calculated and rational activity, undertaken by a multiplicity of authorities and agencies, employing a variety of techniques and forms of knowledge, that seeks to shape conduct by working through our desires, aspirations, interests and beliefs, for definite but shifting ends and with a diverse set of relatively unpredictable consequences, effects and outcomes" (1999:11).

Here the close association and relationship between the state and society is clearly visible. However, in order to develop a definition of the state it is still

necessary to delimit where the state ends and society begins, even if that distinction is fuzzy, complex and continually evolving.

In developing such a practical understanding of the state, Jessop offers a generic definition:

> "the core of the state apparatus can be defined as a distinct ensemble of institutions and organizations whose socially accepted function is to define and enforce collectively binding decisions on a given population in the name of their 'common interest' or 'general will'"[12] (2007:9).

Such a definition is useful in defining the state as identifiable through its processes of governing via 'collectively binding decisions' in the name of the 'common interest'. However, as Jessop notes, difficulties arise in defining those "institutions and organizations whose relation to the core ensemble is uncertain" (2007:9). For example, Hirst identifies that 'civil society', although frequently thought of as "independent of the state in a democratic country" is in fact "made up of institutions, associations and corporate bodies whose powers are defined and regulated by the state" (1995:348). Furthermore Jayasuriya observes that making a state/society distinction has become harder as the rise of 'negotiated governance' has created "new forms of relational capacity that reconfigure the state within the civil society" (2005:31). Indeed, the emergence of various forms of governance has added extra layers of analytical complexity to defining the state.

For the purposes of this research, in which the regional governmental organisations of regional development agencies (RDAs) and regional assemblies (RAs) may be seen to occupy unsure positions with regard to being amongst the 'core of state apparatus', any definition of the state would be problematic. The idea of core institutions is analytically useful and it will be intriguing to see whether the RDA and RA could be termed as such. In light of their short institutional history and specific regional context it may thus be more revealing to consider them as being is possession of various 'degrees of statehood' – a classification which, in terms of the organisations'

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[12] Jessop (2007) highlights six qualifications for the use of this definition in a research agenda. For more information refer to Jessop, 2007, p 9 – 11.

legitimacy, relationship with the 'core state apparatus' and political power, forms the basis of this research.

3. Governance, power and democracy

Types of governance

The Commission on Global Governance refers to governance as:

> "the sum of the many ways individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their common affairs. It is a continuing process through which conflicting or diverse interests may be accommodated and co-operative action may be taken. It includes formal institutions and regimes empowered to enforce compliance, as well as informal arrangements that people and institutions either have agreed to or perceive to be in their interests" (1995:2).

This definition very much supports the view of governance being a compilation of the processes of governing, and whilst rather all-encompassing does highlight the diverse, dynamic and complex nature of governance activity. In light of the broad spectrum of processes included within such approaches a number of authors have attempted to categorize the types of governance occurring in modern society.

Kooiman (2003) analyses the interactive workings of society and identifies three main kinds of governance. The first, self-governance refers to "the capacity of social entities [ultimately down to the individual level] to govern themselves autonomously" (Kooiman, 2003:79). Whilst the subject of various theorisations, such as Foucault's 'governing the self' and Luhmann's 'self-referentiality', the role of self-governance widely recognised as being intrinsic to the functioning of wider societal governance (Kooiman, 2003). The secondly, hierarchical governance can most adequately be compared to the systems of government found in traditional Western nation-states. Admittedly, modern European nation-states do practice different forms of government, especially in relation to democratic mechanisms and the degree of centralisation or devolution of political power, but all incorporate at least a degree of hierarchical decision making. Thirdly, Kooiman (2003) identifies co-

governance, which is what is often referred to in discussions surrounding new forms of governing. Co-governance can be witnessed in a variety of forms but is perhaps best understood in relation to the associated concepts of network governance, governance networks, interactive governance, governing without government, governance-beyond-the-state and participatory governance, which all share characteristics of partnership working, co-operation, collaboration and to a lesser degree co-ordination (Edelenbos, 2005; Klijn and Skelcher, 2007; Kooiman, 2003; Rhodes, 1997; Swyngedouw, 2005).

A similar attempt to categorize, and hence better understand, governance is promulgated under the concept of orders of governance. Under this approach different 'orders' can be identified ranging from meta-, first- and second-order governance (Jessop, 2002; Kooiman, 2003; Swyngedouw, 2005). Meta-governance essentially refers to governance 'regimes' or 'cultures' where 'rules of the game' and 'grand principles' and arrangements of governing are defined (Kooiman, 2003; Whitehead, 2003). Nation-states are often credited with acting as the 'official adjudicator' and as setting the 'governance frame' within their respective territories. However, the emergence of international governmental organisations such as the European Union, the World Trade Organisation and the United Nations has also received attention for developing a transnational 'order of meta-governance'.

First-order governance is concerned with how these 'grand principles' are formalised and incorporated into wider systems of governing and second-order governance revolves around their actual implementation (Swyngedouw, 2005). Swyngedouw states that "there is a clear hierarchy between these orders of governance, which can and do operate at all spatial levels. However, the choreography of participation, including entitlements, status and accountability, varies significantly depending on the 'order' of the governing network" (2005:2001).

This 'choreography of participation' in orders of governance has led some authors to categorize a distinction between interactions associated with traditional hierarchical government and those of multiple actors in emerging forms of co-governance. The work of Hooghe and Marks (2003) typifies this

approach as they identify Type 1 governance, which consists of "multi-level governance partnerships between different levels of government", and Type 2, which is formed by "partnerships among governments and non-government actors from business/industry and civil society" (2008:647). The inclusion of elements of civil society and the bridging of formal/informal and public/private distinctions is thus a defining feature of Type 2 governance (Jones, 2002).

In developing effective systems of societal governance it is becoming increasingly clear that one form of governance is not enough to deal with the challenges of governing in modern societies. As Kooiman states, "in diverse, dynamic and complex areas of societal activity no single governing agency is able to realise legitimate and effective governing by itself" (Kooiman, 2003:3). In order to capture the variegated nature of governance processes a number of authors have attempted to develop useful definitions and conceptualizations. Hyden, for instance, states that "governance is the stewardship of formal and informal rules of the game" and so "governance refers to those measures that involve setting the rules for the exercise of power and settling conflicts over such rules" (1999:185). Hyden here, perhaps narrowly, focuses on the role of rule-setting whilst a more generic understanding is provided by Rhodes' who defines governance as referring "to self-organizing, inter-organisational networks characterised by interdependence, resource-exchange, rules of the game, and significant autonomy from the state" (1997:15).

Some commentators have observed that the continued role played by established state bureaucracies means that a 're-labelling' of governing as governance is problematic. To overcome this Shaw et al. (2006) prefer to avoid the term 'governance' and instead favour the use of 'new government', as opposed to 'old government', which involves:

> "networks and partnerships; covers a plurality of organizations – the state, private and civil society organizations that pursue common goals/deliver public policy; is about the state 'steering' (by setting the rules of the game) rather than 'rowing' (by direct delivery); and involves joint-working underpinned by characteristics such as resource exchange, interdependence, trust, diplomacy, and reciprocity" (Shaw et al., 2006:46).

The distinction between 'old' and 'new' government is intriguing but ultimately one which does little to acknowledge the diverse, dynamic and complex systems that are emerging as a result of new governance processes (Kooiman, 2003). Critically 'old' forms of government can still be identified but they can be seen as co-inhabiting an institutional and political landscape which is increasingly alien (as opposed to new) as a result of the unpredictable evolution of multiple interacting forms of governance.

The co-existence and interaction of new and old forms of governance is acknowledged by Swyngedouw (2005) in his useful theorisation of 'governance-beyond-the-state'. Under this approach 'governance-beyond-the-state' refers:

> "to the emergence, proliferation and active encouragement (by the state and international bodies like the European Union or the World Bank) of institutional arrangements of 'governing' which give a much greater role in policy-making, administration and implementation to private economic actors on the one hand and to parts of civil society on the other in self-managing what until recently was provided or organized by the national or local state" (2005:1992).

As such 'governance-beyond-the-state' can be defined as "socially innovative institutional or quasi-institutional arrangements of governance that are organized as horizontal associational networks of private (market), civil society (usually NGO) and state actors" (2005:1992).

A plethora of new actors and processes have therefore revolutionized modern forms of governing creating what Swyngedouw calls "horizontally organized and polycentric *ensembles*" (emphasis in original) (2005:1992) where power and decision making is increasingly dispersed at a variety of geographical scales (Swyngedouw, 2005). These new *ensembles* are referred to by Kooiman under the title of 'co-governance' which covers five broad sub-types. These general approaches and some practical examples are set out in the table below.

Table 2.1. Types and characteristics of co-governance

Type of co-governance	Key characteristics	Practical examples
Communicative governance	Actors reach understanding through reasoned debate in which the 'good' or rational argument is preferred. consensus is achieved without the use of coercion or force of violence.	Communicative planning, consultation exercises.
Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)	Involves building trust and collaborating around issues of mutual self-interest. They are often project focused and so can come into creation and then dissolve once objectives have been reached. Their proliferation has been taken by some to signify "an increase of the recognition by government and the private sector of the necessity to channel, or even exploit, mutual interdependencies by means of co-operation" (Kouwenhoven, 1993:123).	Urban regeneration projects, joint Local Authority and private developer initiatives.
Co-management	Entails authorities and users sharing responsibility for the management of a resource. Have been observed as having been in existence for a longer period of time.	Management of natural resources such as forests and waterways.
Systems of networks	Involves predominantly, though not always, horizontal interactions of information exchange and co-operation. It is particularly the growth of these networks, with their emphasis on partnership working that has led some to claim they signal "a blurring of the boundaries between market, state, and civil society as processes of governance partially replace those of government" (Hudson, 2005:592). Most notably put forward by Castells in his book *The Network Society*.	Local associations and partnerships with charities, private developers, state actors etc.
Regimes	Most commonly associated with international relations by which 'rules of the game' are established so that actors can operate in a stable and predictable environment.	European Union, World Trade Organisation, United Nations.

Kooiman suggests that with the proliferation of forms of co-governance, the previously established system of hierarchical government is being challenged as "at its margins – and maybe even at the centre here and there – cracks are appearing and critical voices about its performance are becoming more vocal" (Kooiman, 2003:115). In such an unpredictable, complex and new governance situation Jessop (2002) maintains that it is vital that there be a 'metagovernance' role "to manage the complexity, plurality and tangled hierarchies found in prevailing modes of co-ordination" (Taylor, 2007:313).

Indeed, in an era of new governance processes and actors, some claim that such mechanisms of 'meta-governance' may well be required in order to "establish ground rules, ensure compatibility and coherence, facilitate dialogue, balance power differentials, act as a court of appeal and assume responsibility in the event of governance failure" (Taylor, 2007:313). Governance, through interactions between various types, orders and scales, is transforming the ways in which (post)modern societies are governed. Crucially this raises issues and questions regarding the distribution and operations of power, the struggle to establish and maintain legitimacy alongside clear lines of accountability and the wider functioning of democracy within society.

Power, governmentality and spatio-temporal fixes

Power is not necessarily as simple a concept as might first appear with much conjecture around its meaning at least partially emerging from the diversity of ways in which it has been theorised and contexts to which those theorisations have been applied. A key problematic in conceptualizing power is that it is simultaneously invisible and everywhere.

A useful starting point in looking at power for the purposes of this research is through the lens of governance theory and governmentality, which views power, not in terms of those who do and do not have it, but as a relational concept in which it is continually being produced. As Taylor states, "governance theory analyses power not as 'social control' but as 'social production'. It moves away from fixed ideas about power as a commodity

rooted in particular institutions to more fluid ideas of power developed and negotiated between partners" (2007:299-300).

This approach is based upon Foucault's understanding and development of 'governmentality' which "refers to the rationalities and tactics of governing and how they become expressed in particular technologies of governing, such as – for example, the state (Swyngedouw, 2005:1997). As such the state can be viewed as a "tactics of government, as a dynamic form and historical stabilization of societal power relations" (Lemke, 2002:60) and henceforth represents, what some such as Harvey, have termed a particular 'spatio-temporal fix' or 'spatio-institutional fix' (Harvey, 2003; MacLeod and Jones, 1999). For Foucault, therefore, 'governmentality' incorporates two elements. The first involves a conceptualisation of 'governmentality' as a 'mentalities of government' - as the 'conduct of conduct' which covers all of our collective and taken-for-granted practices and thoughts of governing (Dean, 1999). It is thus concerned with "the bodies of knowledge, belief, and opinion in which we are immersed" (Dean, 1999:16). The second relates 'governmentality' to the specific context of the development of Western European societies since the 'early modern period' in which a "distinctively new form of thinking about and exercising power" has emerged "bound up with the discovery of a new reality, the economy, and concerned with a new object, the population" (Dean, 1999:19).

The theory of governmentality can thus be used to analyse how 'regimes' attempt to consolidate or secure a particular 'conduct of conduct' – a 'spatio-temporal fix'. In this vein Foucault distinguished between "'states of domination' in which power relations have become relatively fixed, stable and hierarchical and 'technologies of government' which are instruments for the stabilization of power relations and the creation of states of domination" (Dean, 2007:9). Henceforth, such a view of power and governmentality asserts that in the continually developing and capitalist dominated world, forms of governing must continue to adapt in order to maintain particular relations of power. As Davidson and Lockwood state,

> "from a post-national and regulationist stance, Jessop (2002, p.456) interprets the shift to governance as part of the search for a 'spatiotemporal fix' for neoliberal capitalism in order to 're-embed

and re-regulate the market' just as Keynesian welfare arrangements were part of the solution to the contradictions and conflicts induced by laissez-faire capitalism in the early twentieth century. Thus, governance is the means to reconcile contradictions and antagonisms like international competitiveness and regional autonomy, economic growth and sustainable development, and market forces and quality of life" (2008:643).

Governmentality theorists therefore see the development of capitalism as being accompanied by a series of 'scalar fixes' which have been interpreted as being historically rooted in 'spatio-temporal fixes' or bound to the production of specific organizations through 'spatio-institutional fixes' (Harvey, 2005; Jessop, 2002; Moore, 2008). Changes in the processes of governing have altered the balance of power relations in modern societies resulting in what MacLeod refers to as the 'recomposition of political space' (1999:232; Keating, 1997) or what Gibbs and Jonas (2001) see as the 'rescaling of state power'. Within new forms of governance, partnerships have been "perceived as an effective way to manage change, reduce complexity, [and] cope with uncertainty" (Davidson and Lockwood, 2008:647), yet it is important to consider that such 'scale jumping' imbues new and potentially more complex power relations on emerging forms of governance (Smith, 1984).

It has been observed that "state power has become decoupled from the state as 'government' and is instead produced through a range of sites and alliances 'at a distance' from or 'beyond' the state" (Taylor, 2007:300). In other terms, the previously established 'spatio-temporal fix' which sustained industrial capitalism for much of the twentieth century has become 'unfixed' as the increasing complexity of modern society has necessitated more diverse and dynamic forms of governance in order to "realize legitimate and effective governing" (Kooiman, 2003:3). On this note governmentality theorists assert "that forms of power beyond the state can often sustain the state more effectively than its own institutions, enlarging and maximizing its effectiveness [not] through coercive control, but through a more complex and subtle diffusion of techniques and forms of knowledge" (Taylor, 2007:300).

Within such situations the production of knowledge or the 'mobilisation of bias' (Coaffee and Healey, 2003:1983) and discourse become key

components in legitimating particular forms and policies of governance-beyond-the-state (Swyngedouw, 2005). As Coaffee and Healey state, "there are struggles over whose discourses and practices come to dominate the recasting of governance forms and whose strategies and interests are promoted by emerging modes of governance" (2003:1980). Many claim that "new governance spaces beyond the state are still inscribed with a state agenda" (Taylor, 2007:304) and whilst some opportunities for alternative agendas have arisen it has been against a backdrop of a disciplining structure which has maintained and perhaps even accentuated the relations of power that characterized more traditional hierarchical forms of governance. As Swyngedouw asserts, "governance-beyond-the-state is embedded within autocratic modes of governing that mobilize technologies of performance and of agency as a means of disciplining forms of operation within an overall programme of responsibilisation, individuation, calculation and pluralist fragmentation" (2005:2003).

Nevertheless, the operations of power are inherently fluid and open to contestation as the production of knowledge and discourse is fragmented and never complete. As Coaffee and Healey state "governance discourses and practices are not fixed. New discourses and practices emerge, in interaction with shifts in governance cultures" (2003:1981). Hence the shift to governance characterized by multiple partnerships and networks presents chances for the reconfiguration of power relations in a potentially infinite number of directions. As Raco highlights, whilst shifts in governance "could be seen as a way of relegitimising the state... new domains and territories of state action provide new platforms and opportunities for the articulation and implementation of alternative agendas" (2003:79).

In developing a better working understanding of how the operations of power might consolidate or reconfigure particular forms of governance Coaffee and Healey (2003) provide a useful deconstruction of how governance and power interactions can be viewed in an institutional setting. Table 2.2 shown below illustrates how power dynamics can be seen at a range of levels in governance interactions in terms of specific episodes, governance processes and governance cultures.

Table 2.2. Levels and dimensions of power relations in governance processes (Coaffee and Healey, 2003:1983).

Level	Dimension
Specific episodes	*Actors:* key players—positions, roles, strategies and interests *Arenas:* institutional sites *Ambiences (interactive practices):* communicative repertoires
Governance processes and 'mobilisation of bias'	*Networks and coalitions* *Stakeholder selection processes* *Discourses:* framing issues, problems, solutions, interests, etc. *Practices:* routines and repertoires for acting
Governance cultures	*Range of accepted modes of governance* *Range of embedded cultural values* *Formal and informal structures for policing discourses and practices*

In this conceptualization, *specific episodes* of interactions, therefore, refer to "power dynamics of interpersonal relations", *governance processes* to "power relations embedded in organized institutional practices and deliberately manipulated by strategic actors", and *governance cultures* to "a deeper level of taken-for-granted assumptions, habits and routines" (Coaffee and Healey, 2003:1982). Crucially all of these levels[13] operate within every interaction as governance entails a diverse mix of practices occurring within complex formal and informal systems of narrative and discourse production and legitimization. Indeed, Kooiman (2003) recognizes the diversity, dynamism and complexity of governance interactions and makes a similar distinction in identifying an action or intentional level and a structural level to every interaction. Power is therefore something that is inherent within every system, form and practice of governance at a number of levels and this understanding and approach will be critical in looking at governance interactions in the North East of England.

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[13] Lemke (2002) also highlights that Foucault distinguishes between three very similar 'levels' of power relations ranging from strategic games (human interaction), government (the systemized regulation of conduct) and domination (a stable and fixed hierarchical power relationship).

Accountability, legitimacy and jurisdictional integrity

The changing nature of power dynamics in emerging forms of governance has raised issues regarding accountability, legitimacy and their relationship with pre-existing systems of representative democracy. As governance increasingly incorporates the use of partnerships and networks, lines of accountability and the ways in which legitimacy is gained and bestowed have undoubtedly become more complex, with an observed effect being the rise in a so-called 'democratic deficit' in decision making at scales ranging from international organizations such as the European Union, to national, regional and local bodies. As Kjaer states, "in representative democracy, the governors are accountable to the people and the civil servants are accountable to the governors" (2004:14) within a generally accepted system of checks and balances that promotes accountability. However the emergence of new forms of governance has reconfigured the political landscape creating new relations between accountability, legitimacy and democracy.

Starting with accountability, Skelcher (2005) maintains that it involves two main processes. The first entails *giving an account* or explanation of judgements or actions and the second is the process by which an entity is *held to account* where its actions and judgements are tested. Importantly, Dingwerth (2004) stresses that accountability can be both democratic and non-democratic. For example, an individual or organisation might be *held to account* through a democratic electoral process but there also exists non-democratic forms such as supervisory arrangements and legal requirements which in turn might be hierarchical (including subordinates and superiors) or pluralistic (involving relations amongst relatively equal entities) in nature (Dingwerth, 2004). Thus as Skelcher sets out, although the electoral process might be the primary means of gaining public accountability in a democratic system, "around this are wrapped a number of other means including critical debate, public hearings, lobbying, and public demonstrations" (2005:93). Accountability is therefore central to testing the degree of consent or

credibility in making judgements or taking action, but both accountability and consent also rely on legitimacy.

In similar fashion to accountability, legitimacy can be approached from two angles. First, 'input legitimacy', which is sometimes referred to as 'democratic legitimacy', is gained through participation in decision making (Dingwerth, 2004). This may be through consultation or deliberation but is most frequently associated in representative democracies with the legitimacy bestowed through the ballot box. In contrast, 'output legitimacy' relates to the results and assessed success or failure of actions. However, on this Papadopoulos is critical stating that "such a form of legitimacy is not democratic in and of itself. Goods and service provision can in principle be judged satisfactory regardless of the democratic character of decision-making, and dictatorships too produce policies that are perceived as adequate by some of their recipients" (2003:483). The distinction between input and output legitimacy is also problematic in that whilst an election victory might be seen as the achievement of 'input legitimacy', as it grants the victor a term of office, it may also be based upon 'outputs' particularly if a candidate is re-elected. In a representative democracy a vote can thus become 'retrospective' and 'future-orientated' blurring the boundary between output and input legitimacy (Papadopoulos, 2003). In a similar fashion, a deliberative form of network governance may achieve input legitimacy through consultation and participation but this engagement may be based on perceptions of previous successes or failures. In this way input and output legitimacy can be seen to be mutually supportive to the point where drawing distinctions, irrespective of the form of governing, may be problematic.

An interesting and analytically useful approach for looking at the accountability and legitimacy of organisations is provided by Skelcher (2005) through his conceptualization of 'jurisdictional integrity'. The concept represents a reworking of the idea of sovereignty – based upon territory and authority – applied to the arena of 'network governance' through the combination of the terms 'jurisdiction' and 'integrity'. The figure below usefully outlines the component parts of this theorisation.

Figure 2.1 Schematic representation of the concept of jurisdictional integrity (taken from Skelcher, 2005:92).
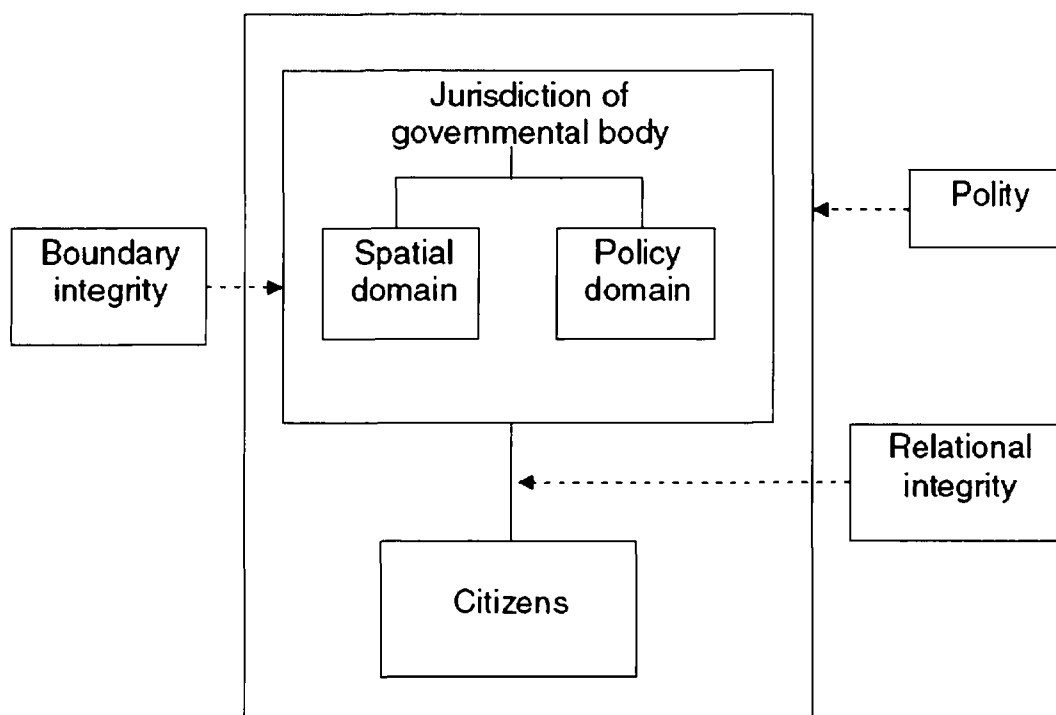
Within this approach 'jurisdiction' represents the 'spatial domain' within which an organisation has the authority or 'competence' to act (Skelcher, 2005). Organisations with a 'degree of statehood' usually acquire such 'competence' from a legal or administrative mandate or constitution (the 1998 RDA Act for example) but more 'grassroots' organisations may achieve it through popular support on specific issues or through membership of a community as in the case of residents' associations. The second component is 'integrity' which is used two ways. Here Skelcher best makes the distinction:

> "Boundary (or external) integrity is a measure of the autonomy of the spatial and policy domain. Complete boundary integrity would mean that the jurisdiction was not subject to intrusion by other agencies of government, whether at higher or equivalent spatial scales, and therefore that its authority could be exercised autonomously. Relational (or internal) integrity is a measure of the democratic relationship between the governmental body and the citizenry it serves. Intrinsic elements of relational integrity are legitimacy, consent and accountability" (2005:93).

Skelcher's (2005) concept of 'jurisdictional integrity' thus usefully combines recognition of an organisation's spatial functioning with the need for legitimacy and accountability. Furthermore, Skelcher invokes a wider understanding of legitimacy as encompassing the "less tangible but still powerful collective civic judgment that such authority [formal legal action] overall is being used in the public interest" (2005:93). Thus legitimacy is also dependent on "underlying regime support from the citizenry" (Skelcher, 2005:93). Such an approach is likely to be very useful in analysing the legitimacy of the claims to regional space of the Regional Development Agency and Regional Assembly.

Governance and democracy

The roles of accountability and legitimacy in emerging forms of governance have received significant attention especially in relation to the changing nature of the representative democracies of many Western nation-states. Papadopoulos offers an insight into some of these theorisations stating that, "in the first place, it might be wrong to assume that the 'democratic deficit' of governance is greater than that of standard political-administrative procedures" (2003:489). Instead, issues of accountability and legitimacy undoubtedly face new challenges in systems of network governance which are characterized by 'fuzzy arrangements' and a lack of 'codified rules' (Swyngedouw, 2005:1999).

Against this backdrop Swyngedouw asserts that "new institutional forms associated with networked modes of governance – which supposedly foster citizen empowerment, enhance democratic participation and support more effective governing – in fact, harbour contradictory tendencies that promote authoritarian institutional arrangements leading to a substantial democratic deficit" (Davidson and Lockwood, 2008:644). In so doing Swyngedouw (2005) highlights six key areas in which new forms of governance are in fact perpetuating and potentially exacerbating political inequalities. They are as follows:-

i. Entitlement and status: new forms of governance are characterized by inequalities in rights to participate and status is often something achieved prior to participation shown well through the example of being identified as a 'stakeholder'.

ii. The structure of representation: diverse memberships of governance networks are accompanied by wide ranging representation and feedback mechanisms creating unclear lines of accountability and consultation.

iii. Accountability: accountability is generally assumed through participation (being designated as a stakeholder) and as systems of representation are ill-defined, accountability is often poorly developed.

iv. Legitimacy: given the issues with entitlement, representation and accountability, legitimacy has to be established elsewhere such as through the construction of discourse alliances.

v. Scales of governance: as governance moves beyond-the-state 'scale jumping' occurs as policy domains shift to different scales. However, this is not a neutral process and is often used as an opportunity to gain power or influence within emerging networks of governance.

vi. Orders of governance: meta-, first-, and second-order governance imply a hierarchy or governance operating across all spatial levels. However, they are accompanied by varying forms of participation, entitlement and accountability.

Swyngedouw's (2005) work on the democratic problematics of governance is particularly useful in developing a framework for analyzing emerging forms of governing. Indeed combined with Kooiman's identification of forms of 'co-governance', a picture can start to be formed which hints at the complexity and diversity of types of governance and their implications for democracy, accountability, legitimacy and the (re)working of power relations. The table

below (table 2.3.), which combines the perspectives of Swyngedouw and Kooiman, offers a preliminary outline of some of these issues.

Table 2.3. Types of governance and democratic implications (categories taken from Swyngedouw, 2005 and Kooiman, 2003).

Type of co-governance 'Democratic' issue	Communicative Governance	Public-Private Partnership	Co-management	Systems of Networks	Regimes
Entitlement and status	Equal rights to and status in participation	Identified stakeholders usually around a project or programme	Usually limited to relevant authorities and users depending on the resource in question	Dependent upon the willingness/ability of parties to participate	Normally limited to institutionally recognized actors or organisations
Structure of representation	Open to all without coercion	Varies depending on the private/public interests. Can be complex/unclear	Varies in openness according to resource. Can be closed in some circumstances, i.e. defence issues	Depends on internal representation structures of participating partners. Can be complex/unclear	Usually set out in accepted international laws of diplomacy
Accountability	Equal participation implies a more direct accountability	Mixed between private (profit motivated) and public (electoral, for the public good) responsibility	Mixed accountability. Usually authority (public or private) with responsibility or ownership of the resource is ultimately accountable	Mixed and potentially 'fuzzy' lines of accountability dependent upon internal mechanisms of partners involved in the networks	Usually lies with higher authority, i.e. national governments or inter-governmental organizations
Legitimacy	Strengthened by equal and non-coercive participation and consensual decision making	Public trust and buy-in is sought whilst financial risk is usually borne by private interests	Can be achieved through delegation by higher authority, i.e. atomic energy. However, different in cases of private interests and public goods	Attempts to build input and output legitimacy. However, sources and balance can be unclear	Usually assumed through representation in a system of higher authorities, i.e. nation-states
Scales of governance	Usually a more direct scale providing a potential voice for the excluded	Financial risk and decision making partly down-scaled from national to private interests	Management and responsibility down-scaled	Multiple rescaling and potential to become territorially unfixed through multiple associations	Trend towards up-scaling to international bodies such as EU, WTO, UN, NATO
Orders of governance	First and second order	Second order governance with input of first and influence of meta-governance	Second and first order	Potential combination of first and second order with meta-governance	Predominantly meta-governance

The multifarious emerging forms of governance can thus be seen to be accompanied by a range of issues regarding the incorporation and role of accountability and legitimacy arrangements. However, in analyzing these new problematics we need to be wary of idealizing the democracy enhancing potential of new forms of governance and of reifying established systems of representative democracy. Indeed Swyngedouw warns that governance-beyond-the-state is often presented as an "idealized normative model" (2005:1994) that promises to fulfil the conditions of good government, whilst Papadopoulos highlights how critiques of a lack of democratic legitimacy tend to "presuppose a somewhat idealized image of the performance of representative (partisan) democracy in terms of the accountability and responsiveness of decision-makers, and they fail to conceptualise adequately how the issues of accountability and responsiveness should be framed in complex societies" (2003:477).

The aim of this overview of the potential democratic implications of new forms of governance has been to emphasize that thinking is split and diverse on the potential for democratic reinvigoration. In order to better understand these varied viewpoints Klijn and Skelcher (2007) have usefully developed four 'conjectures' which encompass theorisations on the relationship between representative democracy and governance networks. These can be summarized as follows:

i. **The incompatibility conjecture**: This view posits that representative democracy and governance networks are based upon different and conflicting institutional rules. Governance networks thereby conflict with representative democracy by challenging the state through the promotion of shared sovereignty, restructuring political representation, giving a more active role to public administrators, and bridging the traditionally perceived separation of state, market and civil society (Sorenson, 2002).

ii. **The complementary conjecture**: "From this perspective, governance networks engage a wider range of actors in the policy process, connecting them in new ways and thus, 'oils the wheels' of

representative democracy as it struggles to govern in a complex environment" (Klijn and Skelcher, 2007:594). In so doing governance networks are complementary as they add 'democratic anchorage' and legitimacy to representative democracy.

iii. **The transitory conjecture**: This view takes understands changes occurring in society as a signifier of larger and longer lasting processes which will lead to representative democracy no longer being the dominant mode of governance. It could be replaced by a more interactive form of governance but at the moment all that is clear is that society is currently attempting to resolve the contradictions between representative forms of democracy and governance networks. "From the transitional perspective, democracy becomes more a societal model than a representational model. Democracy becomes a process of deliberation that has to be organized and guided carefully to enhance its open character. In addition, it becomes a model that has to be supported by multiple forms of accountability and not only by political accountability by means of the primacy of politics" (Klijn and Skelcher, 2007:598).

iv. **The instrumental conjecture**: This standpoint applies a more critical reading and rests upon the view that "powerful governmental actors increase their capacity to shape and deliver public policy in a complex world through the instrumental use of networks" (Klijn and Skelcher, 2007:598). Networks are therefore used to increase the alignment of the policy process with dominant agendas in more subtle ways. This echoes with Taylor's assessment that "the 'rules of the game' continue to be largely framed by government actors, with the parameters of policy established elsewhere and regulatory techniques enshrined in central guidance, cultures of decision-making, procurement protocols and auditing requirements" (2007:302).

The four conjectures of Klijn and Skelcher (2007) provide a useful overview of theorisations on the relationship between forms of representative

democracy and emerging governance networks and additionally act a reference point for analysis in the research setting of the North East of England. For example, the instrumental perspective's incorporation of a sensitive understanding of power will be useful in analysing the relationships within the region and with central government. However, a complementary viewpoint is potentially useful in understanding the Regional Assemblies' mandate to represent and engage with their regions. Similarly, the developments associated with the Sub-National Review would appear to suggest that current arrangements have been a transitory step toward other forms of governance.

4. Introducing complexity

So far emerging forms of governance have been referred to as inherently complex without really engaging with what such complexity might mean. Indeed much academic literature is quick to highlight the complexity of governance as an almost taken-for-granted phenomenon. However, a greater understanding of complexity rooted in the idea of complex adaptive systems can aid in the analysis of what Kooiman (2003) terms diverse, dynamic and complex systems of governance (Stacy, 2000; Duit and Galaz, 2008).

Complexity theory and complex adaptive systems can be used to identify common features of the dynamics of systems and networks, and, despite being pioneered in the field of natural sciences, has more recently been applied in the social sciences "to analyse the nonlinear nature of social, political, and economic behaviour" (Duit and Galaz, 2008). In so doing complexity theory refrains from attempting to establish general laws but instead aims to model agent interaction in line with the principle of self-organisation whereby "agents interact locally according to their own principles, or 'intentions', in the absence of an overall blueprint for the system they form" (Stacey, 2000:276). This results in 'co-evolutionary processes'

which "in turn generate... *shifting system behaviour with limited predictability*" (Duit and Galaz, 2008:313)(emphasis in original).

This 'limited predictability' or irregularity is a vital premise in understanding complexity theory and its potential to account for change. As Duit and Galaz state, "complexity theory starts from the assumption that there are large parts of reality in which changes do not occur in linear fashion" (2008:312). However, as an extension to traditional systems theory, which looks at linear effects and feedback loops, complexity theory "contains no a priori assumptions about key variables, emphasizes nonlinear causal effects between and within systems, and views system equilibrium as multiple, temporary, and moving" (Duit and Galaz, 2008:312). As such "systems may pass through states of instability to reach critical points where they may spontaneously self-organise to produce some new structure or behaviour that cannot be predicted from a knowledge of a previous state" (Stacey, 2000:263).

In theorising change with regard to complex adaptive systems Duit and Galaz (2008) identify three main categories of system effects that can be found within governance systems – threshold effects, surprises and cascading effects. Threshold effects within systems represent 'tipping points' or 'abrupt change' whereby "small events might trigger changes that are difficult or even impossible to reverse" (Duit and Galaz, 2008:313). Such rhetoric can be seen in modern day debates over the future of climate change for example. Secondly, 'surprises' result from the interconnectedness of a system which, because of its complexity, contains poorly understood interactions and cause and effect mechanisms. Hence, surprises can occur beyond those which were previously expected from the system. Thirdly, cascading effects can be spurned by both threshold events and surprises when consequences shift across scale (e.g. local-regional-national-global), time (e.g. delayed or recurring impacts) and/or systems (economic, political, cultural, social) (Duit and Galaz, 2008). Such cascading effects, 'causal chains' or 'reactive sequences' are often tied to the 'degree of coupling' between systems with the argument that more loosely connected systems will be better suited to buffer potential cascades (Pierson, 2004; Mahoney, 2000; Duit and Galaz, 2008). As an example the scale, time and system

cascading effects of the El Nino ocean current and its impact on global weather patterns serves as a good illustration of how a 'surprise' can escalate within a complex adaptive system.

The capacity to deal effectively with these system effects can be used to analyse and better understand the governing potential of systems of governance. From this perspective Duit and Galaz (2008) have used the ideas of system exploitation and exploration to identify four governance types – rigid, flexible, robust and fragile. Starting with exploitation and exploration, exploitation is concerned with the ability of a governance system to manage collective action via activities such as the implementation of institutional rules, ensuring cooperation, enforcing order and the efficient use of resources. In contrast, exploration involves experimentation and the capacity to learn from new forms of governance, and is hence characterized by flexibility, innovation, discovery, variation and risk taking (March, 1991). The dilemma that systems face, therefore, is that a focus on exploration is likely to incur the use of significant resources whilst the means to implement innovative findings may remain underdeveloped. However, favouring exploitation may mean that a system misses out on discovering more effective forms of governing.

The balance between exploitation and exploration in resolving the tension between the needs for institutional stability and change can thus be used to categorise governance systems into four categories along a simple axis as shown below.

Figure 2.2. The adaptive capacity of four governance types (taken from Duit and Galaz, 2008:323)

Exploitation

High

Rigid   **Robust**

Low   *High*   → **Exploration**

Fragile   **Flexible**

Low
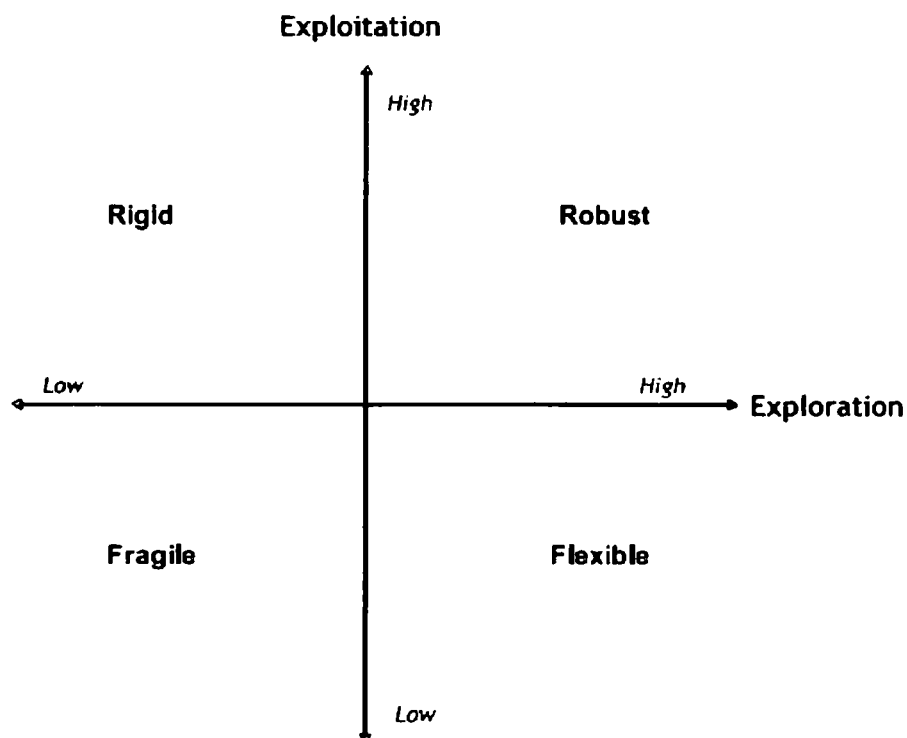
From this diagram 'rigid' governance can be identified as most closely reflecting the characteristics of 'steady state governance' or 'state-centric governance' (Peters and Pierre, 2005). Under stable conditions this is the most efficient form of governance as it focuses on exploitation, whilst, as long as there are no 'surprise' events, exploration is not required. 'Robust' governance reflects an ideal state in which exploitation ensures efficient administration without restricting exploration which enables the system to cope with any kind of system effect. 'Flexible' governance in which exploration is embraced but there exists a lack of capacity to effectively gain from its benefits can be compared to the idea of 'governing without government' or 'multilevel governance' in which actors are engaged in non-hierarchical and independent exploration (Rhodes, 1997; Pierre and Peters, 2005; Duit and Galaz, 2008). Finally, 'fragile' governance systems share similarities with failed states in which negative feedback loops prevent the development of either exploitative capacity or innovative forms of governing.

Through the concepts of exploitation and exploration, and their potential to deal with various system effects, complexity and complex adaptive systems can be seen as an analytically useful tool for looking at governance systems. As Stacey states "mess is the material from which life and creativity are built and it seems that they are built, not according to some overall prior design, but through a process of spontaneous self-organisation that produces emergent outcomes" (2000:294). Life can thus be seen as a series of 'contingent necessities' (Jessop, 1997) and complexity theory provides a lens through which this 'mess' of 'contingent necessities' can be viewed and potentially sorted, if only in a partial sense, in order to hopefully develop better forms of governance. Almost all governance systems attempt to establish order so that unpredictability can be minimized and society governed more effectively, with the result being that they are usually resistant to change. In Foucauldian terms, 'technologies of government' continually seek to establish more stable and fixed 'states of domination' (Dean, 2007). Therefore as Duit and Galaz state, "with stability comes rigidity. Institutions are path dependent, sticky, and products of circumstances and power struggles present at the time of construction. Norms and networks of cooperation are slow changing and have a tendency to grow stronger with increased actor homogeneity" (2008:320). Institutional inheritance, internal and external powers struggles and the steering of discourses can thus increase a system's vulnerability to complex system effects.

This brief summary has outlined how complexity can be theorised beyond its often taken-for-granted use to shed light on the operations and potential future scenarios of governance systems analysed as complex adaptive systems. Complexity theory, through its focus on nonlinear causal effects, and systems as essentially temporary and ephemeral, can therefore act as a useful companion to analysis of interactive governance by adding a deeper level of understanding to the context of the research on the production and communication of regional space.

5. Interactive governance

Governance has been studied under many guises with terms such as 'network governance', 'governance networks', 'multi-scalar governance', 'government-beyond-the-state', 'governing without Government', 'polycentrism' and 'meta-governance' representing just some of the many categorizations (Klijn and Skelcher, 2007; Gibbs et al., 2002; Swyngedouw, 2005; Rhodes, 1997; Bache, 2000; Skelcher, 2005). In theorising the increasing complexity associated with transformations in forms of governing Jan Kooiman (2003) has usefully developed the concept of 'interactive governance'. The advantage of the approach lies in the fact that it focuses on the common features that are present in all kinds of governance – namely interactions.

Based upon a growing awareness that "because of the limited information capacity of central actors, to solve societal problems or to realize promising policies, co-operation of a wider variety of actors is necessary" (Klijn and Koppenjan, 2000:366), Kooiman (2003) incorporates complexity theory in asserting that the key tenant of governance is the interaction between diverse, dynamic and complex areas of societal activity.

For Kooiman (2003), successful and legitimate governance therefore becomes dependent on the recognition of inter-dependencies, and, in similar fashion to the nonlinear system effects promoted by a complexity theory, posits that governance is thus essentially comprised of the "multiple-lateral relations between social and political actors and entities (individuals, organizations, institutions)" (Kooiman, 2003:11). Hence, in general terms:

> "governing can be considered as the totality of interactions, in which public as well as private actors participate, aimed at solving societal problems or creating societal opportunities; attending to the institutions as contexts for these governing interactions; and establishing a normative foundation for all those activities" with governance being the "totality of theoretical conceptions on governing" (2003:4).

Before the theory of 'interactive governance' can be used as an analytical tool it is first necessary to define and deconstruct an interaction. In basic

terms an interaction can be understood as "as a mutually influencing relation between two or more actors or entities" (Kooiman, 2003:13) and, according to Kooiman (2003), can be viewed as consisting of two distinct yet interrelated levels – an 'actor' or 'intentional' level and a 'structural' level. The 'actor' or 'intentional' level is formed by the actors and their intentions and can essentially be analysed as an 'actor-in-situation' (Kooiman, 2003). Closely associated is the 'structural' level, which forms the contextual setting in which the 'intentional' level operates. Their relationship can be compared to that of agency and structure, with their mutually supportive and complementary dynamic sharing similarities with Giddens's structuration theory[14] (Giddens, 1984; Hubbard et al., 2004).

Although some see interactive governance as a form of governance in itself[15], the theory of 'interaction' can be utilised to investigate the nature and operations of various forms of governance. For instance, it has already been noted previously in this chapter that Kooiman (2003) identifies three main forms of governing – self-governance, hierarchical governance and co-governance. These distinctions are at least partly facilitated by Kooiman's (2003) categorization of interactions into three main groups:

i.   **Interferences** – refer to the 'primary' processes of society and indeed human life. They concern how people live their lives in terms of every action they intend to do. In this sense these interactions are unorganised and almost infinite as they permeate every aspect of society.

ii. **Interplays** - involve collective action of a 'horizontal' nature whereby goals are achieved through group understanding and action.

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[14] Other authors have highlighted different levels of interactions within institutional settings. For example, Edelenbos (2005), in similar fashion to Kooiman, identifies a 'procedural' level, consisting of organizational structures, rules and methods, and a 'role' level, which refers to the action and patterns of interactions of actors.

[15] Edelenbos for example describes interactive governance as "a way of conducting policies whereby a government involves its citizens, social organizations, enterprises, and other stakeholders in the early stages of public policy making" (2005:111) rather than viewing it as a means by which to analyse varying forms of governance.

iii. **Interventions** - interferences relate to formal mechanisms of command and control most commonly implemented by official authorities on their populace.

Kooiman avoids reductionism by highlighting that interactions will usually incorporate a diverse and complex mix of interferences, interplays and interventions, but also stresses that a pre-dominance of a certain kind of interaction can indicate a particular form of governance. Here the useful link is drawn between the dominant form of interaction and dominant form of governing (either self-governance, hierarchical governance or co-governance).

According to the theory of 'interactive governance', self-governance can thus be perceived as being most influenced by interferences as it consists of each actor, in terms of an individual or organization, going about their daily routines. Academics such as Foucault (1991) in his work on 'self-regulation' and 'governmentality, Creswell in theorising on transgression and being in/out of place, Luhmann (1995) on 'self-referentiality' and the autopoietic nature of society as a 'living system', and Lefebvre (1991) in emphasizing the ways in which daily 'spatial practices' perpetuate or 'secrete' a society's space, all display an acute awareness to the need for a society to order itself at a micro- level. As Kooiman states, "without a capacity for self-governance, societal governance becomes an impossible task" (Kooiman, 2003:79).

The command-and-control nature of interventions can be seen to predominate in systems of hierarchical governance, which is most closely associated with traditional (nation) state-centric, rationalized and bureaucratic governments. Though other forms of interaction are present this hierarchical form of governance can be seen to rely on interventions such as steering (setting goals and targets) and controls (taxes, laws, etc).

Finally co-governance is characterized by the increased role and importance of interplays, which offer potentially more consensual and deliberative forms of decision making. Co-governance in stressing an ethos of partnership working will therefore often involve the processes of collaboration (a diverse membership working in a dynamic and ever-

changing environment) and co-operation (working together for a mutual interest) (Kooiman, 2003).

The distinction between self-governance, hierarchical and co-governance according to the dominant influence of particular kinds of interactions is useful in further developing an understanding of the relationship between forms of governance and the issues of accountability, legitimacy and styles of decision-making. As the table below illustrates, the influence of the type of dominant interaction, whether it be interferences, interventions or interplays, may have a significant impact on the nature and functioning of the form of governance.

Table 2.4. Characteristics of generalized types of governance (categories and material adapted from Klijn and Skelcher, 2007, and Kooiman, 2003).

Type of governing Characteristic	Self-governance	Hierarchical	Co-governance
Main type of interaction	Interferences	Interventions	Interplays
Relationship with democracy	Internalised norms and behaviours, self-interest and a 'social contract' with the state	Representative predominantly via the ballot box	Mixture of representation, participation and deliberation. Presence of partnerships and networks.
Accountability	Individual is responsibility. However, trends such as 'tragic individualism' (Beck, 2006) seeing this increasingly transferred to other actors/bodies	Lies with elected officials and civil servants	Multiple forms ranging and depending on internal processes of partners
Type of decision making	At the individual level and both consciously and unconsciously	Takes place within systems of authority such as local authorities and national Parliament	Increasing complexity requires consultation and wider input. Can be consensual but leadership may also be required on 'wicked issues'
Legitimacy	Ultimately with the individual through participation in society	Input legitimacy achieved through elections and also output legitimacy if re-elected	Potentially buy-in achieved at input level. More likely to be gained through successful outcomes

However, as Kooiman (2003) recognises, such categorizations offer idealised types and henceforth need to be considered only as reference points and analytical tools in studying the diversity, dynamism and complexity of governance in modern society. As Rhodes states, "our grasp of this world is fragile. All too often we simplify impose an order that is not there" (1997:200). For the purposes of this research it is not necessary, or indeed desirable, to 'impose an order' but the theorisation of governance as comprised of multiple

diverse interactions can be perceived as potentially useful in gaining a better understanding of the processes and tensions ingrained within forms of governing.

6. The politics of regional governance

In taking an instrumental view of recent developments in governance it is important to bear in mind that governing is very much a 'political project' (Klijn and Skelcher. 2007; Le Gales, 2001). From the perspective of maintaining particular relations of power, the type and effect of governance therefore become less important than the actual ways in which power is ingrained within them. As Le Gales observes in his analysis of urban governance in Rennes, France, "networks strongly reflect existing structures of power [and] existing hierarchies" and so "the articulation of networks is likely to be much more important than the effect of the policy network" (2001:182).

The inherent importance of power and politics to systems of governance is particularly pertinent in looking at the changing nature and scales of governing processes in the UK. Indeed the proliferation of bodies and organizations playing some role in governing at a variety of often overlapping scales poses interesting questions as to the political rationale behind them. As Haughton and Naylor highlight with the example of local and regional and economic development: "in the case of England this involves neighbourhoods, local governments, sub-regions, city-regions, regions and meta-regions such as the Northern Way, which have all at various times in the past decade been presented as the preferred scale for public policy interventions" (2008:167). The promotion of regional governance as a form of administrative decentralisation, and potentially in the early 2000s as a form of political devolution, has been one of these many preferred scales to (re)emerge.

Whilst the idea of regions may not necessarily be new, what is distinctive are the ways in which they have been used politically to usher in

and push forward new forms of governance. On this subject the 'new regional policies' embraced by New Labour in the wake of their 1997 election victory have undoubtedly contributed to the increasing complexity of governance arrangements (Clark, 2008). As Shaw et al. observe in the period from 2000 to 2006 "governance has become even more complex and harder to understand, even for individuals who are part of the governing 'class'" (2006:43).

The ambiguity and complexity of the regional institutional set-up has created contrasting opinions on the nature and future of England's regions especially following the announcements of the SNR and makes the North East of England – as the only region to have held a referendum on directly elected regional government – a particularly interesting case. Hudson for example contends that "rather than regional policies designed and administered by the central state, there is now a more complex multi-level system of governance that conjoins EU, national, regional, and sub-regional in a more complex geometry" (2005:591). Whilst acknowledging the increased complexity Pearce takes a more sceptical stance stating that:

> "some observers view these developments as evidence of the emergence of a more flexible, multi-tiered form of governance, built around regional networks and strategies in which regional actors are able to exert greater influence over policy-making and implementation... however, this is difficult to reconcile with the view that, rather than relinquishing power, central government has employed the regional tier to expand and deepen its influence" (2005:15).

In this sense, from an instrumental standpoint, regional governance, like other emerging forms of governance, can be seen as a 'political project' to maintain and further dominant relations of power. In other words "English regions remain administrative conveniences through which central policy can be delivered and tweaked, at the pleasure of central officials, to adapt to local circumstances" (Sandford, 2006:71). The active role of government departments such as DEBBR (previously DTI) in setting targets for Regional Development Agencies and the 'referee' and 'messenger' roles of the Government Offices for the Regions are illustrative of this point and highlight the friction inherent in the New Labour Government's pursuit of a 'third way'

to balance neoliberal and social democratic tendencies and simultaneously empower and control (Fuller and Geddes, 2008; Giddens, 1998). As Jones and MacLeod state, tensions exist between New Labour's "centrally orchestrated regionalisation and demands for a more locally rooted regionalism more receptive to questions of political participation, citizenship and culture" (2004:434).

Against this backdrop of political motivations the respective roles and relationships of RDAs and RAs take on extra significance. Indeed, they can be seen as being at the forefront of such tensions between a 'centrally orchestrated regionalisation' and 'locally rooted regionalism' as RDAs take on responsibility for promoting 'regional sustainable economic development' and RAs attempt to act as a *'voice'* for their regions and foster a sense of 'regional civic culture' (Musson et al., 2005). In this light the Assemblies' scrutiny of RDAs becomes a forum for interaction and communication between the two organisations and their differing respective mandates with the ultimate goal being that active deliberation and an ethos of partnership working will lead to the development of a shared regional consensus on policy issues. Scrutiny thus can be seen as a method by which both organisations could increase their jurisdictional integrity over and within their regions by adapting their agendas to incorporate the legitimacy or relational integrity of the other. Such integrity is therefore potentially enhanced through 'pluralistic accountability' between the organisations (Dingwerth, 2004).

7. Conclusion

This chapter began by providing a basic account of the state, government and society as a basis for understanding the emergence of a multitude of new forms of governance. In analysing their various characteristics the concepts of power, governmentality and spatio-temporal fixes have been presented as being of particular analytical use. Similarly an understanding of legitimacy and accountability, particularly through Skelcher's conceptualisation of 'jurisdictional integrity', is valuable in examining the

democratic implications of changes in the ways in which modern societies are governed. Complexity theory and the idea of complex adaptive systems have also been introduced as a means by which to make sense of the contingent, dynamic and diverse nature of governance interactions. This in turn complements Kooiman's (2003) work on 'interactive governance' which will be used as a basis of understanding for investigating the complex relationship between One NorthEast and the North East Assembly.

This analysis of the observed emergence of new forms of governance is central to understanding the developments in regional government in England. As Haughton and Allmendinger state:

> "it is in this context of multilevel governance and emergent agendas steered through systems of metagovernance that we are seeing a set of regional and city-regional experiments to find a new spatio-institutional fix for the economic problems of areas, characterised by fluidity, rapidity and ruthlessness in how new solutions are arrived at, evaluated, extended, altered or discarded" (2008:141).

Regional government and in particular RDAs and RAs are thus significant actors in what might be termed a 'political experiment' to find a 'new spatio-institutional fix'. As such, developing an understanding of their relationships with each other, and already existing (and emerging) governance arrangements is potentially extremely valuable in terms of revealing possibilities for the betterment of how *specific* societies are governed. As Fuller and Geddes observe, "new state bodies have also been introduced at differing socio-spatial scales, posing questions around their interaction with, and challenge to, inherited institutional arrangements" (2008:170). This investigation will therefore seek to deconstruct the complex regional governance arrangements and relationships within the North East of England through an analysis of the interactions and spatial claims of the North East Assembly and One NorthEast.

Chapter 3

Conceptual and theoretical frameworks

1. Introduction

By focusing on the *production* and *communication* of regional space in the North East of England this research is heavily indebted to the work of Henri Lefebvre and Jürgen Habermas. In particular Lefebvre's (1991) *The Production of Space* and Habermas's (1984, 1987) *The Theory of Communicative Action* can be identified as key, though not exclusive, texts. Despite the influence of both academics little explicit attention has been directed to looking at their ideas together[16]. However, this research considers there to be significant theoretical and practical potential in combining some of their perspectives.

At first glance the theories of the production of space and communicative action may appear unrelated. Lefebvre writes about how society's space is also an inherently social space and investigates how it is constituted or *produced* (and hence how it may be reconstituted) by the relations of spatiality or what he terms his 'triple dialectic'. With regard to interaction, Habermas demonstrates universalistic tendencies in attempting to illuminate certain rational conditions of communication (formal pragmatics) that emphasise 'reasoned' debate and a general human desire to reach

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[16] Miller (2005) does offer a preliminary attempt in drawing some connections between Habermas and Lefebvre, but crucially does not proceed in developing an integrated methodological approach preferring instead to rely on Lefebvre's 'triple dialectic'.

understanding or consensus. However, there are also similarities which deserve, though up until now have not received, attention. Indeed, both thinkers relate their theories to an analysis of society and in particular to the operations of modern capitalism. For Lefebvre it is capitalism's appropriation of the means of producing space (a deliberate rearticulation of Marxist approaches) whilst Habermas sees the System of contemporary capitalism colonising the Lifeworld. The different angle of approach, but same general aim, is identified by Miller who states that, "whereas Habermas's colonization thesis is based on language and context, Henri Lefebvre articulates a colonization thesis founded on the rationalization of space in everyday life in modern capitalism" (2005:63).

Additionally, as this chapter will reveal, Lefebvre's and Habermas's theories have some significant shortcomings particularly when it comes to their practical application. As a result they have both been subject to significant academic criticism, some of which is justified and some less so. However, this investigation proposes that much of the practical critique of their work can be overcome, firstly, by combining the Lefebvrian and Habermasian perspective, and secondly, by utilising their theories not as naïve realist accounts but as ideal type observations against which the 'real' world can be compared and contrasted. For example, Sack (1986) in devising his theory of 'human territoriality' identifies three requirements for establishing territoriality:- (i) a form of communication; (ii) a form of classification by area; and (iii) an attempt at enforcing control. In light of Lefebvre's lack of detail on the relations of his 'triple dialectic' and Habermas's micro-level focus on the procedures of communicative action, it would appear that the work of both could be combined in order to lessen the other's shortcomings.

The remainder of this chapter will be structured around six sections. The first two will act as introductions to the key works, contributions and criticisms of Lefebvre and Habermas. The third, fourth and fifth will then take the form of a series of discussions on central themes and controversies within Lefebvre's and Habermas's work. The sections will thus focus on place, space and time; power, rationality and the subject; and theories of change. A final sixth section will conclude by making some preliminary

attempts at developing a complementary Lefebvrian and Habermasian framework on the production and communication of space. This will in turn set the scene for the operationalisation of the theories in the following methodological chapter.

In advance of these discussions it is important to acknowledge the critical role of a third key protagonist – Michel Foucault. Foucault engaged in active and public debate with Habermas, particularly with relation to issues of the subject and power, and also acknowledged his work to be inherently related to the spatial (Johnson, 2006; Soja, 1999). Foucault's diverse range of work therefore overlaps significantly with both theories on the production of space and communicative action, and has already been used in this research to inform an understanding of governance, as discussed in chapter two.

2. Henri Lefebvre: relevant contributions

Henri Lefebvre is an intriguing character. Throughout his long life he wrote prolifically on a diverse range of subjects, producing a vast body of work[17] which, due to the delays in translation from his native French, has led to him having somewhat of an ad-hoc though not to be underestimated influence on academic thought. For example, a central work to this research, *The Production of Space*, was first published in 1974 and for twenty-seven years was only accessible first-hand to the French speaking world. Indeed, many of his works still await translation[18].

Lefebvre's varied works mirrored the nature of his life. As Merrifield states, during his career,

> "he had lived through two World Wars, drunk wine and coffee with the Surrealists, joined and left and joined again the French

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[17] Shields (2004) as an overview identifies just some of Lefebvre's writings on the concepts of 'everyday life', 'modernity', 'mystification', humanistic Marxism', 'alienation' and 'the social production of space'.

[18] As Brenner and Elden state, "Lefebvre's most explicitly political and philosophical texts have not yet been translated" (2001:766).

Communist Party, fought for the Resistance Movement in the early '40s, driven a cab in Paris, taught sociology and philosophy at numerous French universities, been one of the intellectual godfathers of the 1968 generation... Throughout the twentieth century... Henri Lefebvre has done and seen and heard a lot" (2000:168).

No doubt this rich life experience enriched Lefebvre with the material for his diverse range of works, and complemented his Marxist beliefs in inspiring him to continually direct his writings towards the betterment of society. As Shields states, "Lefebvre personifies the twentieth-century search for freedom, the demand for grassroots democracy, identity, self-fulfilment and happiness" (Shields, 1999:7). However, he was also a self identified 'anti-philosopher' harbouring deep suspicions of 'schools' of thought which attempted to establish particular trains of thought (Soja, 1996). In Lefebvre's typical style he later claimed that all he had really ever written about was love (Shields, 1999; Hess, 1988).

Lefebvre's resistance to established ways of thinking, especially any form of reductionism, coupled with his eclectic sources of inspiration can make his works difficult to pin down. As Soja states, "Lefebvre was a restless, nomadic, unruly thinker, settling down for a while to explore a new terrain, building on his earlier adventures, and then picking up what was worth keeping and moving on. For him there are no "conclusions" that are not also "openings"" (Soja, 1996:9). However, whilst this may make his work challenging it has not denied his work from having a wide ranging appeal and influence (and has most likely made his work more enduring). Indeed, as Brenner and Elden state,

"from the early discussions of his urban theory in the 1970s through the critical engagements with his approach to sociospatial theory during the 1980s to the more recent appropriations of his work in the context of debates on the condition of postmodernity, the body and sexuality, everyday life, the production of scale, urban struggles and the transformation of urban citizenship, Lefebvre's writings have served as central reference points within a broad range of theoretical and political projects"[19] (2001:763-764).

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[19] To complement this claim Brenner and Elden highlight nearly thirty important works which have been influenced by the work of Lefebvre.

Even with this long history of academic influence the years since 1991 have seen "somewhat of a renaissance of interest in the work of Henri Lefebvre" (Elden, 2001:809). The impetus for this has been provided by the eventual translation of some of Lefebvre's works into English, most notably his three volume *Critique of Everyday Life* and *The Production of Space* (*Production de l'espace*).

Even though the prime motivation for this research's engagement with Lefebvre is for his insights on spatiality, the importance of his other works should not be underestimated particularly as they are indelibly more powerful when approached as a body of work. In this regard Lefebvre's writings on everyday life[20] in his *Critique of Everyday Life* (1991b) and *Everyday Life and the Modern World* (1971), his work on capitalism in *The Survival of Capitalism* (1976) and subsequent development of concepts such as 'moments' as part of *Rhythmanalysis* (2004) are invaluable in understanding the basis for and continuation of the ideas laid down in *The Production of Space* (1991). As Merrifield supports, "Lefebvre's explorations in *The Production of Space* (1991a) are the culmination of a life-long intellectual project in which he sought to understand the role of space, the nature of the urban and the importance of everyday life in the perpetuation and expanded reproduction of the capitalist mode of production" (1993b:522). Therefore, although *The Production of Space* (1991a) is often quoted as a key text for this research in acknowledgment of the study's focus on regional space, Lefebvre's work as a whole deserves rightful recognition.

Lefebvre's work was political but he has also been acknowledged as a Marxist philosopher (Elden, 2004a). His work reveals too the influence of Hegel and Nietzsche but also Heidegger, whose philosophy he described as 'pro-fascist', and even Bergson, despite having "hated [his] guts" (Merrifield, 2006:27; Elden, 2004a). With regard to the most acknowledged influences of Marx, Hegel and Nietzsche, when taken together they can be seen to shape Lefebvre's dialectical view of the modern world as:

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[20] As Shields states, "Lefebvre was one of the first social theorists to pay attention to the details of everyday life outside of macro-social structures, such as kinship patterns, employment and status, that can be generalised from person to person and society to society" (1999:65)

"Hegelian – a political theory of the nation state, the state engulfing and subordinating civil society, that is social relations; as Marxist – the relation of the working class to the nation state, industrial change and its consequences more important than ideas; and as Nietzschean – an assertion of life and the lived against political and economic processes; resistance through poetry, music and theatre; the hope of the extraordinary, the surreal and the supernatural" (Elden, 2004a).

However, Elden (2004a) also highlights the important yet lesser acknowledged influence of Heidegger on Lefebvre's work. Heidegger's commitment to the Nazi Party garnered much criticism from Lefebvre and perhaps stunted recognition of his work. Nevertheless Elden identifies how Heidegger's "spatial notion of poetic dwelling, a notion of lived experience of everyday life is enormously important. Lefebvre's use of *habiter*, which we might translate as "to inhabit", or "to dwell", is a direct translation of Heidegger's *wohnen*, which is usually translated as "to dwell", or, in French as *habiter*" (2004a:96). In similar fashion, Fraser (2008) outlines how Lefebvre also misread Bergson as promoting a "homogenous and continuous narrative of history" (2008:340) when in fact "it is space, for Bergson, that is linear, while it is time that is undirected creativity" (2008:340). Therefore, "in spite of his declared refutation of Bergonian philosophy, Lefebvre's actual relationship with it was significant – although uncomfortable, unconscious, and certainly unacknowledged" (Fraser, 2008:355).

Lefebvre's success came in combining these influences with his own views in "arguing forcefully for linking historicality, sociality, and spatiality in a strategically balanced and transdisciplinary[21] "triple dialectic"" (Soja, 1996:6). This approach was given full attention in *The Production of Space* (1991) which Soja describes as "arguably the most important book ever written about the social and historical significance of human spatiality and the particular powers of the spatial imagination" (1996:8). Central to this thesis was the idea of seeing space as both a product and importantly as a process. As Merrifield states, "for Lefebvre, the process of producing space (process)

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[21] In terms of avoiding academic appropriation into specialized disciplines such as history, geography, sociology or politics which would undermine his approach the stress on being 'transdisciplinary' is important (Soja, 1996).

and the product (thing) – that is, the produced social space itself – present themselves as two inseparable aspects, not as two separable ideas. Thus space as a material product is a present space: a moment absorbed in a complex dynamic process" (1993b:523). Through such an approach Lefebvre aimed to move the "analysis of 'space' from the old synchronic order of discourses 'on' space... to the analysis of the process by which meta-level discourses 'of' space are socially produced" (Shields, 1999:146). This thereby represented a development of the historical materialism of Marxism by, firstly, incorporating an analysis of spatiality to reveal how modern capitalism reduces space to a product (the 'thingification' of space as Merrifield (1993b) tentatively suggests) as opposed to a process and, secondly, by enlarging the concept of production "from its narrower, industrial, sense (production of products, commodities) to include the production of works in the built environment (oeuvres) and of spatialised meanings and other codings of the social environment" (Shields, 1999:159).

An approach that Lefebvre frequently deployed as a means of developing his theories in conscious opposition to reductionism and the 'lure of binarism' (Soja, 1996:60) was the use of conceptual triads or triplets. As Fraser identifies, "one of the key problems of cultural geography, and of Marxist praxis", for Lefebvre, "concerns the reconciliation of that perennial philosophical dichotomy that cleaves space from time in its various and sundry avatars – the material and the immaterial, movement and representation, the particular and the universal, the real and the imaginary, and the concrete and the abstract" (Fraser, 2008:342). In response to such binarism "Lefebvre persistently sought to crack them open by introducing an-Other term, a third possibility or "moment" that partakes of the original pairing but is not just a simple combination or an "in between" position along some all-inclusive continuum" (Soja, 1996:60). Importantly, the intention of incorporating a third concept into taken-for-granted binary categorisations is to 'deconstruct', 'disorder' and 'reconstitute' the initial oppositional relationship and thereby create a 'triple dialectic' which produces an "open alternative that is both similar and strikingly different" (Soja, 1996:61).

Lefebvre's theory of the production of space presents such a 'conceptual triad', 'triple dialectic' or what Soja (1996) terms a 'trialectics of

spatiality'. In order to "discover or construct a theoretical unity between 'fields' [comprising the physical, mental and social] which are apprehended separately" (Lefebvre, 1991:11) Lefebvre proposes a "*threefold* dialectic within spatialisation" (Shields, 1999:160) or *dialectique de triplicité* consisting of spatial practice, representations of space and spaces of representation.

Spatial Practice

"The spatial practice of a society secretes [or perpetuates] that society's space" (Lefebvre, 1991:38) encompassing "production and reproduction, and the particular locations [*lieux specifies*] and spatial sets [*ensembles*] characteristic of each social formation" (Lefebvre, 1991:33; Soja, 1996; Shields, 1999). It is thus the 'perceived space' (*espace perçu*) of society. As Merrifield states "spatial practices structure daily life and a broader urban reality and, in so doing, ensure societal cohesion, continuity and a specific spatial competence" (1993:524).

Shields adds that, "through everyday practice, 'space' is dialectically produced as 'human space'" including, for example, "building typology, urban morphology and the creation of zones and regions for specific purposes: a specific range of parks for recreation; test sites for nuclear weapons; places for this and that; sites for death (graveyards) and remembrance (memorials, battlegrounds, museums, historic walks and tours)" (1999:162). In terms of each member of a society's relationship to space, spatial practice thus ensures cohesion by implying a "guaranteed level of *competence* and a specific level of *performance*" (Lefebvre, 1991:33). As Lefebvre illustrates, under 'neocapitalism' spatial practice "embodies a close association, within perceived space, between daily reality (daily routine) and urban reality (the routes and networks which link up places set aside for work, 'private' life and leisure)" (1991:38). Importantly, a 'commonsense' understanding of space as 'neutral' and 'unimportant' characterises such 'taken-for-granted everyday life' (daily routines) and rationalises urban reality creating an *illusion of transparency* which denies members of society from seeing that all parts "are

linked together as part of an overarching arrangement, or spatialisation" (Shields, 1999:162).

For Lefebvre 'neocapitalism' relies on the visual to achieve such an illusion of transparency (Lefebvre, 1991:27) which, as Shields warns, can give the impression that 'spatial practice' relates only to visual 'perception' and hence that 'perceived space' is a only a 'visual space' without practice (Shields, 1999). Shields therefore aptly advises that in English 'perceived space' should be understood as relating to 'practical perception', 'common sense' and especially to the notions of the 'taken-for-granted' and 'unreflective practice' (Shields, 1999).

Representations of Space

Representations of space can be seen as "conceived space, the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers, as of a certain type of artist with a scientific bent – all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived" (Lefebvre, 1991:38). As such these 'mental' spaces are "the logic and forms of knowledge, and the ideological content of codes, theories, and the conceptual depictions of space linked to production relations" (Shields, 1999:163) and hence are "representations of power and ideology, of control and surveillance" (Soja, 1996:67).

"Because it is effectively the space of capital", (Merrifield, 1993:523) conceived space tends to be the dominant space or mode of production in any society (Lefebvre, 1991). Within 'neocapitalism' Lefebvre claims that this dominance has been achieved through a second illusion: *the realistic illusion* revolving around an empiricism in which "objective 'things' have more reality than 'thoughts'" (Soja, 1996:64). "This illusion of 'opacity', the disinclination to see much beyond the surface of things" reduces the 'real' "only to material or natural objects and their directly sensed relations" (Soja, 1996:64). Conceived space achieves this illusion through a focus on the written and spoken word as comprised of language, discourse, texts and logos. Hence "taken alone, this 'level' of the dialectic today involves the abstract

presentation of lived experience in space reduced to quantified movements" (Shields, 1999:163).

Spaces of Representation

Spaces of representation, sometimes confusingly translated as representational spaces, refer to "space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of 'inhabitants' and 'users'" (Lefebvre, 1991:39; Shields, 1999). Overlying physical space "this is the dominated – and hence passively experienced – space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate" (Lefebvre, 1991:39) but also the space that "the conceived, ordered, hegemonic space will intervene in, codify, rationalize and ultimately attempt to usurp" (Merrifield, 1993:523).

Shields identifies spaces of representation (*espaces de la représentation*) as the 'social imaginary' forming the presuppositions that "often structure problem definitions and thus influence the sort of solutions that are thought possible and achievable" (1999:164). Hence spaces of representation can be seen as 'discourses *of* space'. Tending toward "systems of non-verbal symbols and signs" (Lefebvre, 1991:39) and as 'social space' it can thus be seen as central to any fully 'lived space' (l'espace vécu).

The idea of struggle is also closely associated with spaces of representation with Lefebvre describing them as "linked to the clandestine or underground side of social life" (1991:33). Likewise Shields refers to this 'lived space' "as an essential terrain of struggle on the way to realising ourselves as 'total persons' and achieving "out of the three-part dialectic a 'total space' of engagement and presence" (1999:164). Therefore, spaces of representation can be the spaces of resistance and change as they are capable of escaping the dominant gaze of representations of space (conceived space). Indeed, Soja identifies the "partial unknowability, the mystery and secretiveness, the non-verbal subliminality, of spaces of representation" (1996:67) which can make them "the terrain for the generation of 'counterspaces', spaces of resistance to the dominant order

arising precisely from their subordinate, peripheral or marginalised positioning" (1996:68).

In summary, a driving force behind Lefebvre's 'triple dialectic' of spatiality was to reveal how space had been "understood in a narrow, calculative, mathematical sense, which is divorced from our experience of space in our everyday dealings with the world" (Elden, 2004b:188). The figure below shows how the three 'moments' fit into a dialectical arrangement.

Figure 3.1. Lefebvre's 'triple dialectic' or 'trialectic of spatiality' (adapted from Soja, 1996:74)
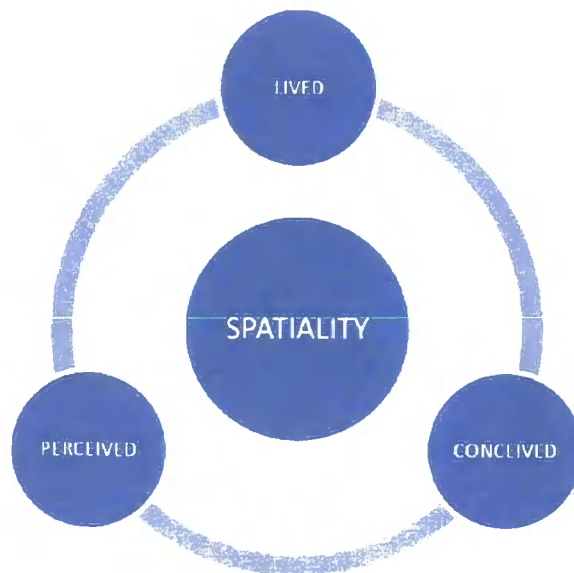
Critically for Lefebvre such a rethinking and incorporation of spatiality can be used to complement thinking on historicality and sociality as part of a critique of modern 'neocapitalism'. Indeed, his 'triple dialectic' can essentially be seen as a deconstruction of what he sees as a 'double illusion' which fuses "physical and mental space into social space" via an "object-subject binarism that has defined and confined the spatial imagination for centurues" (Soja, 1996:62). This 'double illusion', described individually in the sections above, consists of *the illusion of transparency*, which makes space appear as 'taken-for-granted' and neutral, and as easily understood and defined, and *the realistic illusion* which "oversubstantiates the world in a naturalistic or

mechanistic materialism or empiricism, in which objective 'things' have more reality than 'thoughts'" (Soja, 1996:64).

Despite the academic value and influence of Lefebvre's work it has also invited criticism. Unwin (2000), for example, highlights five problematic issues in Lefebvre's arguments on the production of space. These include: (i) issues surrounding language and meaning; (ii) the apparent separation of space and time; (iii) a perceived emphasis on space as a product rather than a process; (iv) difficulties in using his ideas to bring about empowerment; and (v) a confusion between space and place. Other issues have also related to inappropriate translations and Lefebvre's occasionally frustrating style. Indeed, even Soja, who is a firm supporter of Lefebvre's work, describes *The Production of Space* as "a bewildering book, filled with unruly textual practices, bold assertions that seem to get tossed aside as the arguments develop, and perplexing inconsistencies and apparent self-contradictions" (1996:8). However, in providing a brief overview such a fuller critique will not be discussed here. Instead, various tensions, contradictions and flaws will be discussed in the accompanying four sections on place, space and time; power, rationality and the subject; theories of change; and developing an integrated framework.

3. Jürgen Habermas: relevant contributions

Jürgen Habermas, occasionally referred to as the 'last modernist' (Burrell, 1994; Crook, 1991), much like Henri Lefebvre, was and still is a prolific writer. A self-professed philosopher Habermas has actively sought to continue the Enlightenment project by devoting "enormous energy to building bridges between 'analytic' and 'pragmatic' Anglo-American philosophy and German 'continental' thought" (Adams, 2006:24). Born in 1929 and growing up in Nazi Germany Habermas sought the 'pragmatic' and 'democratic' conceptual resources of Anglo-American thought in response to a perceived failure of

the German philosophical tradition to suitably address or criticise the horrors of the holocaust and National Socialism.

During his early years he studied under Horkheimer and Adorno and his work bears the influence of great thinkers such as Kant, Hegel, the lesser known Schellig on whom Habermas wrote his doctoral thesis, and Marx (Adams, 2006). Building upon these thinkers Habermas has written and philosophised on a range of issues, which can generally be split into two separate though complementary components – that relating directly to the political domain and that concerning his interests in rationality, communication, epistemology and knowledge. Above all, however, Habermas is committed to using these elements as part of a programme aimed at improving society. As Adams states, "Habermas' social theory has a therapeutic goal. He aims not merely to understand social phenomena, but to alter them for the better. His work stands firmly in the tradition of philosophy influenced by Marx's challenge to intellectuals: philosophers have understood the world, in various ways; the point is to change it" (2006:23).

Perhaps the best and possibly most influential example of Habermas's concern for improving the political domain through his interpretation of communication and rationality is provided in his book *The Theory of Communicative Action*; a "massive and complex work" (White, 1988:1) first published in German in 1981 and later translated into English in two volumes in 1984 and 1987. Through this theory Habermas provides a micro-level analysis and formulation of how communication can ensure consensus in society complemented by a macro-level theory of modern society as integrated through a series of subsystems most commonly associated with the System and the Lifeworld. The work, however, has created much controversy since its publication in response to its "commitment to a universalistic perspective on rationality and ethics" (White, 1988:1). As White states, "this appears in Habermas's notion of universal [formal] pragmatics, which asserts that competent speakers raise certain invariable, universal validity claims, and in his belief that in argumentation over specific claims we also impute an ideal speech situation, which provides us with a rational basis for testing the truth of legitimacy of these claims" (1988:1).

This approach and Habermas's Enlightenment principles have been subject to extensive criticism especially from emerging postmodernist and poststructuralist viewpoints, most notably Foucault, with some even positing that his "scheme constitutes a mode of philosophical foundationalism" (White, 1988:27). Despite attempts to defend his theories, Adams observes that in response Habermas effectively "abandoned the concept" (2006:47) of the ideal speech situation. Some of the issues and tensions surrounding Habermas's approach will be explored in the subsequent discussion sections but, in the meantime, the basic premise behind *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1984, 1987) will be explored in a little more detail, starting first with his 'micro-level' thoughts on rationality and communicative before moving onto his 'macro-level' analysis of society.

Habermas's theory of communicative action is predicated upon an understanding of rationality. As a starting point White (1988) identifies 'strategic' and 'contextual' rationality. Strategic rationality conceptualizes action as "the intentional, self-interested behaviour of individuals in an objectivated world, that is, one in which objects and other individuals are related to in terms of their possible manipulation [and] the rationality of action is correspondingly conceptualized as the efficient linking of actions-seen-as-means to the attainment of individual goals" (White, 1988:10). This understanding forms the basis for rational choice theorists who "often add the assumption that rational agents are motivated by self-interest" (White, 1988:10) though strictly speaking this does not have to be the case. In contrast, contextual rationality "can be summed up in the claim that the meaning and rationality of an action are derived from understanding its role in relation to the prevailing norms and beliefs of the form of life of which it is a part" (White, 1988:18). Hence, contextual rationality is norm guided as motivations for action are intersubjective or social in nature because values of the individual are shaped by those of the collective community. In addition to strategic and contextual rationality there can also be considered 'instrumental rationality' which concerns non-social action in terms of how the individual actor relates to the objective world (White, 1998).

Habermas utilises such understandings of rationality to propose four distinct models of rationality. First, the teleological model incorporates non-

social 'instrumental' and social 'strategic' rationality as part of an objective view of the world in which actors take action in order to bring about a desired end. Second, the norm guided model relates to contextual intersubjective rationality whereby action is normatively regulated as "members of a social group orient their actions according to a set of predefined common values, and where each individual complies with the group's norms" (Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger, 1998:1976). Third, the dramaturgical model concerns the "presentation of the self to an audience" (Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger, 1998:1976) and how "in the performance of actions, an individual *represents* his [or her] *subjective world* in a specific way to an *audience* of other actors" (White, 1988:38). "Developed by Goffman, the action incorporates the possibility of strategic behaviour, in which the individual actor may present a front to hide particular views, or else (may) employ deceptive means to achieve a desired outcome" (Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger, 1998:1976). With regards to these three models White (1988) highlights how they relate to the objective, social and subjective worlds respectively.

Fourth, Habermas puts forward his original conceptualisation of the communicative model of rationality and action in which the three preceding models and objective, social and subjective worlds can be found. Communicative action is defined by Habermas as "the interaction of at least two subjects capable of speech and action who establish interpersonal relations" (Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger, 1998:1976) in which understanding and consensus are sought on a specific issue. Importantly Habermas develops an intersubjective-contextual norm guided view of rationality by linking those norms to core universal, rational and moral standards, which underpin an actor's participation in communication. What is more, those universal standards presuppose that every actor will have some leaning, though it may not be realised, towards achieving consensus in that communication. As White states, in communicative rationality "ordinary language competence is now envisioned as giving actors the capacity to use the entire system of world relations and validity claims in a distinct fashion for the purpose of coordinating action" (1988:39) and there is the assumption that the 'better argument' will thus be favoured.

Table 3.1. below offers a basic interpretation of the relations of the various forms of action and rationality including Habermas's communicative rationality.

Table 3.1 Types of action and rationality (adapted from MacDonald, 2005:585)

Situation	Action	
	Orientated to success	Orientated to reaching understanding
Non-social	Instrumental action (subject–object relation) (objective world)	-----------------
Social	Strategic action (subject-object relation) (objective world) Contextual action (subject-subject relation) (social world)	Communicative action (subject-subject relation) (objective, social and subjective world)

Habermas's theory of communicative rationality is inherently related to action and importantly interaction. As Habermas states, "the human species maintains itself through the socially co-ordinated activities of its members and this co-ordination is established through communication[22]" (1984:397). Such communication then facilitates social integration as society's members reach understanding through reasoned or rational debate (Sitton, 1998). In this regard it is a logical development and reworking of his earlier work on the bourgeois public sphere (Habermas, 1989). In basic terms the public sphere is identified by Habermas as the arena for communication and hence "the public sphere is constituted wherever and whenever any matter of living together with difference is debated" (Dahlberg, 2005:112). However, importantly the public sphere is not a reductionist unitary public sphere but instead represents "the whole array of complex networks of multiple and

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[22] Kooiman (2003), who observes that Habermas' theory of communicative action is more a theory of communicative interaction identifies three main kinds of communication in society: (i) non-mediated (face-to-face); (ii) mediated (which uses a medium such as a telephone); and (iii) quasi-mediated which is predominantly one way as it uses the mass media (i.e. through the press, television and internet).

overlapping publics constituted through the critical communication of individuals, groups, associations, social movements, journalistic enterprises, and other civic institutions" (Dahlberg, 2005:112). Hence, as Kellner supports, "rather than conceiving of one liberal or democratic public sphere, it is more productive to theorise a multiplicity of public spheres, sometimes overlapping but also conflicting" (2000:267).

Within this public sphere Habermas outlines a number of explicit rules for the functioning of communicative rationality, which through the 'rational reconstruction' of linguistic interaction are identified and referred to as formal (or universal) pragmatics (White, 1988). Essentially Habermas claims "that the speech acts of communicatively competent actors conform to a set of rules, some of which establish the criteria of communicative rationality" (White, 1988:28). Habermas goes into some depth explaining these conditions and draws on a range of sources. Nevertheless, four key principles are apparent:

i.   The principle of universal moral respect in which all beings capable of communication are entitled and have the opportunity to participate and initiate discussion (Benhabib, 1990; Ashenden and Owen, 1999).

ii. The principle of egalitarian reciprocity in which "all participants have equal opportunity to make claims, question them, clarify them, defend them and so forth" (Benhabib, 1990; Adams, 2006:29). As Blackman states, Habermas's test of reciprocity "requires each individual to interpret his or her need in relation to others who may be affected by these needs being met" (1991:126).

iii. The principle of non-coercion whereby "no participants be prevented from exercising these rights to, and of, participation" (Ashenden and Owen, 1999:149). This denies certain forms of communication such as rhetoric, threats, bribes as acceptable to achieving communicative rationality.

iv. The principle of transparency whereby all participants must be open

and honest with each other in terms of their attitudes, feelings and intentions (Adams, 2006).

These conditions demand much from communicative acts. Indeed, as Blackman states with regard to reciprocity, "the major problem with Habermas's ideal is that it expects a lot of individuals to subordinate their interests to an ethic of reciprocity" (1991:127). Habermas has defended his theory as representing an 'ideal' but this has not been enough to escape the criticism that attempting to establish universal conditions for communication is unrealistic and ultimately counter-productive. However, as shall be discussed in the section on power, rationality and the subject Habermas's theory still provides some useful tools through which to examine communication that does not adhere to such 'ideal' conditions.

A most valuable component of Habermas's theory of communicative action is the incorporation of a micro-level study of interaction into a wider macro-level critique of modern society. Habermas's theory thus contends that society can be differentiated into four interdependent subsystems: the *economy*, the *state*, the *public sphere* and the *private sphere* (Scambler, 2002). Moreover the economy and the state collectively form the System and the public and private spheres constitute the Lifeworld. The System, as MacDonald observes, is "the expansive half of his dualistic categorisation of society of society, producing what Habermas calls 'actions oriented to success': that is, it is driven and structured by the nature of set goals related to the workings of the state and the market" (2005:584) such as material (rather than symbolic) reproduction and maximising production. Alternatively, the Lifeworld is "the medium, or 'symbolic space' within which culture, social integration and personality are sustained and reproduced" (Scambler, 2002:45). The Lifeworld can therefore be reproduced and acts as an "indispensable correlate" of Habermas's communicative action (Baynes, 1990:57).

Crucially, the interdependent nature of the four subsystems necessitates their reliance on each other for what they do not individually produce. As Scambler states, "the economy produces *money*, the state *power*, the public sphere *influence* and the private sphere *commitment*" and

the "products or *media* are traded between subsystems" (2002:45). As Crook et al. state, "the economy relies on the state to establish such legal economic institutions as private property and contract, on the public lifeworld to influence consumption patterns, and on the private lifeworld to provide a committed labour force, and itself sends money into each other subsystem" (1992:28). However, Habermas observes that a 'decoupling' between these four subsystems has led to what he calls 'colonization of the Lifeworld' whereby the private and public spheres are increasingly defined by and operate according to the state and economy. This includes such processes as commodification and what Habermas terms 'juridification' whereby everyday life situations are defined by 'administrators and professionals' so that public life is increasingly subsumed under bureaucratic legal categories (Blackman, 1991; Habermas, 1987). Nevertheless, Habermas remains positive in affirming the potential for future rationalisation of the Lifeworld via communicative action, which could lead to Lifeworld 'decolonisation'. 'New' social movements are identified as the most promising instigators of this process though critically he "sees little prospect of headway in the short term" (Scambler, 2002:46).

4. Place, space and time

Michael Dear states that "most social theorists are by now aware that Lefebvre's project is aimed at a reorientation of human inquiry away from its traditional obsession with time and toward a reconstituted focus on space" (1997:49). However, this research agrees with Shields' assertion that Lefebvre's work has been "too narrowly understood by those who championed his ideas" (1999:viii) as privileging an analysis of space over time. As Elden, who has consistently argued for a more balanced re-evaluation of Lefebvre's works, comments, "Lefebvre did not replace temporal with spatial analysis, but thought the relation between space and time, and in the process rethought both concepts" (2004:170). As he also

observes, "Lefebvre sometimes played the role of a historian" (2004b:169). Likewise Foucault is well associated with historical study through his 'situated' genealogies but perhaps lesser known for his work on space.

The following discussion will attempt to draw out some of these similarities and emergent contradictions from their works. A preliminary section will thus focus on the issues of space, spatiality and place before subsequently moving on to a wider discussion of time, space and history. It is also worth noting that Habermas does not write explicitly on space though time does play an implicit role, especially in practical terms, in the functioning of communicative rationality.

Space, spatiality and place

Before engaging in the works of both Lefebvre and Foucault it is worthwhile providing a little background on terminology, as a degree of confusion and difficulties in translation have led to criticism being directed towards Lefebvre's work in particular. A first note of distinction is between 'space' and 'spatiality', which Elden, with reference to Massey, warns "are regularly used as if their meaning was clear, but writers generally fail to realize that they have many different interpretations" (2004b:186). A lengthy discussion would be required to examine the nuances of such interpretations but it is sufficient here to distinguish between 'space' as something which is produced via being practised, conceived and perceived and 'spatiality' as a form societal organisation according to a set of values and norms. Elden asserts that Lefebvre recognised the potential confusion and "is fairly explicit in his understanding of these historical terms" (2004b:186) as illustrated through his identification of the physical, mental and social nature of *space* and the 'historical *spatialisations*' of specific societies.

A more commonly presented terminological criticism is that there is a lack of clarity in Lefebvre's work between 'space' and 'place'[23]. As Smith

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[23] As Unwin states, "Lefebvre has a tendency to use the word 'place' in a variety of different ways, particularly conflating ideas about the place of social space and the notion that place is a particular kind of space" (2000:25).

states, Lefebvre "uses the concept in all ways – as social space separate from physical space, as absolute space, as theoretical space and so forth – and seems to make little distinction between them" (1990:91). It must be said that this confusion partly derives from the 'particular difficulties' associated with translating Lefebvre's and Foucault's work for an Anglo-American audience (Unwin, 2000). As Johnson states, "there are complex and subtle differences in English and French between space [*espace*] and place [*lieu*]" (2006:76). To overcome potential confusion Merrifield offers a distinction suggesting that "space is always set to a particular conceived representation because it is the dominant conception" whereas "place is synonymous with what is lived in the sense that daily life practices are embedded in particular places" (1993:525). In an attempt to integrate such definitions with Lefebvre's diverse use of space as lived-conceived-perceived, Merrifield further qualifies 'place' as "more than just lived everyday life. It is the 'moment' when the conceived, the perceived and the lived attain a certain 'structured coherence" (1993:525). However, Merrifield's substitution of 'place' for 'space' in Lefebvre's 'triple dialectic' only serves to illustrate Lefebvre's view of the two as interchangeable terms. Indeed, in French the "word espace has, of course, a wider range of meanings than the English 'space'. In English these different meanings could be understood as close to our terms of 'area', 'zone' or even 'place[24]' (Elden, 2004b:186).

Some have criticised Lefebvre for not creating a new conception of space and so by relying on the term, all previous meanings associated with space, particularly its scientific, abstract and Cartesian incarnations, are invoked (Unwin, 2000). As Unwin states, "Lefebvre ties himself to old notions of space which prevent him from achieving the radical task that he set himself" (2000:26). In response to these claims it should be noted that Lefebvre's primary aim was to offer a reinterpretation of space rather than to entirely rework and invent a new conception of space. Further, as the issue of translation illustrates, Lefebvre's use of the term 'space' should not be seen as problematic, as its French usage can have much wider connotations than its English translation. Hence Lefebvre's use of the term is appropriate

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[24] For example Lefebvre also uses other terms such as spatial 'ensembles' which are produced in particular social formations (Shields, 1999).

to his attempt at constructing a more encompassing conceptualisation of space and reminds us that we should always aim to understand a work's context.

The details of Lefebvre's formulation of space as a 'triple dialectic' has already been given some attention earlier in this chapter. Those arguments will not be reiterated here but will be referred to in relation to the work of Michel Foucault. In an interview in 1976 Foucault remarked that, "geography acted as the support, the condition of possibility for the passage between a series of factors I tried to relate" adding, "geography must indeed lie at the heart of my concerns" (cited in Soja, 1996:148; Foucault, 1980). Soja thereby contends that, "the power-knowledge link is acknowledged by every Foucauldian scholar, but for Foucault himself the relationship was embedded in a trialectic of power, knowledge, and space. The third term should not be forgotten" (1996:148) (emphasis in original).

Though space and the spatial were identified by Foucault as a central underpinning of his work he only briefly endeavoured to outline his thinking on space through what he called heterotopology. This he did on three occasions: "first, in his preface to Les Mots et les choses (The Order of Things) published in 1966; second, in the same year, within a radio broadcast as part of a series on the theme of utopia and literature; and finally, in a lecture presented to a group of architects in 1967[25]" (Johnson, 2006:77). Within these works Foucault outlined his approach through the ideas of 'sites' or 'emplacements', 'utopias' and his much lightly developed concept of 'heterotopias', after which he "never returned to this spatial framework in any explicit or sustained manner" (Johnson, 2006:81).

Foucault's notion of 'sites' or more accurately 'emplacements' provide a good starting point for understanding his approach to space and place. As Soja states,

> ""The site is defined by relations of proximity between points or elements", formally as series, networks, or grids (as in computers or traffic systems) or "more concrete" in terms of "demography"

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[25] The lecture was published in French as 'Des Espaces autres' shortly before Foucault's death in 1984 and has subsequently been translated in English under the titles of 'Of Other Spaces' and 'Different Spaces' (Johnson, 2006; Soja, 1996).

("the human site or living space"). Today he [Foucault] concludes, "space takes for us the form of relations among sites" (1996:156) (emphasis in original).

Here Johnson (2006) argues Foucault's use of the term *'l'emplacement'* has been unhelpfully and misleadingly translated as 'site' rather than 'emplacement'. He further clarifies the term has containing "a sense of both space and place that is not conveyed by the word 'site'" as it 'encapsulates' "the formal, spatial qualities of certain places, which are both 'mythical and real', and specific historical mutations" (2006:77). This relational view of space, which is also 'situated' in the 'lived' and the 'concrete, 'mythical and the real', is in many ways similar to Lefebvre's re-articulation of space into his physical-mental-social 'trialectic'. As Soja highlights, "although less infused with allusions to the production process, the sites and situations of Foucault take on insights that reflect Lefebvre's critique of everyday life in the modern world and his trialectic of the perceived, the conceived, and the lived" (1996:156).

Foucault uses his conceptualisation of 'emplacements' or 'sites' to ground his ideas on 'utopias' and 'heterotopias'. For Foucault 'utopias' are "sites with no real place" whereby society is presented in a "perfected form, or else turned upside down" (Soja, 1996:157). They are thereby invariably 'unreal places'. In contrast heterotopias are,

> "real places – places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society – which are something like counter-sites [counter-emplacement], a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found in the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality" (Foucault, 1986:24).

To demonstrate Soja (1996) highlights Foucault's example of the mirror, which is simultaneously a 'utopia' as the reflection presents a 'placeless' 'unreal', or 'virtual' place, and a 'heterotopia' as the mirror does exist in reality and appears to constitute the self as 'real'. Johnson offers further clarification on this 'briefly sketched' idea stating that "heterotopias draw us out of ourselves in peculiar ways; they display and inaugurate a difference and

challenge the space in which we may feel at home" (2006:84). As such "these coercive places do not seem to fit into most interpretations and are forgotten or sidelined" as they have the capacity to "unstitch, undermine and transform utopias[26]" (Johnson, 2006:84-85).

Crucially for the purposes of this research Foucault's idea of 'heterotopias' shares similarities with the work of Lefebvre. Indeed, before the publication of *The Production of Space* (1974), Lefebvre in *The Urban Revolution* (1970 translated in 2003) develops, in his typical fashion, a conceptual triad of 'heterotopy', 'isotopy' and 'utopia' whereby 'heterotopy', which refers to the 'place of the other', the peripheral or marginalised, melds with the homogeneity of 'isotopy' to create the 'utopian' urban dimension by way of 'uniting difference' (Johnson, 2006:83). Johnson emphasizes the similarity in the academics' works stating that "Lefebvre's description of utopic spaces may also seem to resemble Foucault's notion of heterotopia. The utopic is a non-place and a real-place, 'half-fictional and half-real', closed and open, concentrated and dispersed, near and far, present and absent. It is paradoxical, contradictory space, opposite the everyday" (2006:83-84).

Lefebvre and Foucault have more in common than might at first appear. However, Foucault's move away from explicitly developing his spatial thinking has left his ideas on space underdeveloped. As Soja states, "Foucault's heterotoplogies are frustratingly incomplete, inconsistent, incoherent [and] seem narrowly focused on peculiar microgeographies" (1996:162). This is an important point which will be addressed in the subsequent discussion on theories of change: Lefebvre developed his theories as a means of critiquing and ultimately resisting domination in society whereby Foucault's heterotopy, at least, through its micro-analysis or micro-critique offers no such directions for resistance. Nevertheless, it is still worthwhile noting that "in so many ways, space was as central to Foucault as it was to Lefebvre, the former inflecting primarily through the nexus of power

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[26] Johnson provides a further wonderful definition of heterotopias stating: "they offer no resolution or consolation, but disrupt and test our customary notions of ourselves. These different spaces, which contest forms of anticipatory utopianism, hold no promise or space of liberation. With different degrees of relational intensity, heterotopias glitter and clash in their incongruous variety, illuminating a passage for our imagination" (2006:87).

what the latter persistently parsed through the meanings of social production"
(Soja, 1996:162).

Space, time and history

As was mentioned in the introduction to this discussion section, it is a
common misconception that Lefebvre favoured an analysis of the spatial over
the historical. As Elden highlights, Lefebvre was acutely aware that space
and time "must be thought together" as they are "the indispensable
coordinates of everyday life" (2004b:170). This, however, has not been
realized by some of Lefebvre's critics who continue to assert that by "giving
dominance to space, Lefebvre has dangerously reduced the significance of
time" (Unwin, 2000:21).

Here Soja, who openly acknowledges the influence of Lefebvre's
'triple dialectic' in developing his own notion of 'thirdspace', provides some
clear clarification. He states,

> "The project begun by Lefebvre in the 1960s, and only now
> beginning to be understood and realized, was nothing less than to
> reassert the equally existential spatiality of life in a balanced
> trialectic that ranges from ontology through to a consciousness
> and praxis that are also simultaneously and presuppositionally
> social, historical and spatial" (Soja, 1996:73).

Indeed, such misinterpretations of Lefebvre are all the harder to explain given
that he explicitly wrote in The Production of Space that "time is
distinguishable but not separable from space" (1991a:175) and that "time is
known and actualized in space, becoming a social reality by virtue of social
practice, similarly, space is known only in and through time" (1991a:219).

This dialectical relationship of the spatial, historical and social at the
heart of Lefebvre's work is summarised in figure 3.2. below.

Figure 3.2. The trialectics of being (adapted from Soja, 1996:71)
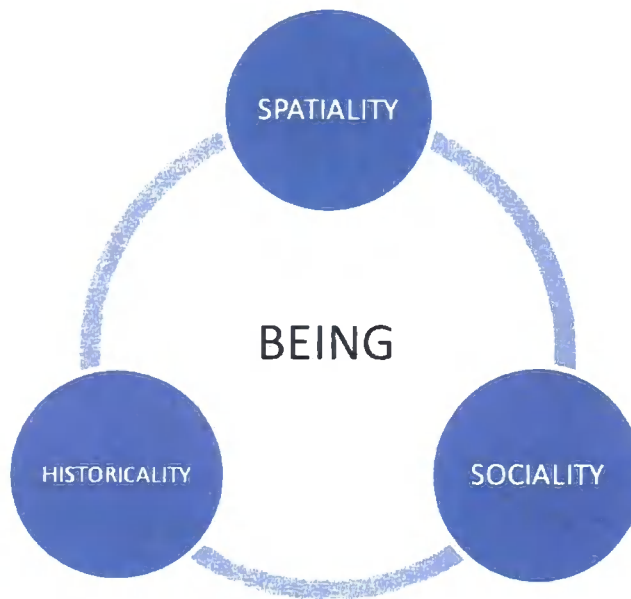
Much of the confusion surrounding Lefebvre's presumed 'focus on space' likely comes from his initial labelling as a 'spatial separatist' by leading Marxists. In particular Harvey and Castells, despite recognizing "Lefebvre's contribution in dealing brilliantly with the organization of space as a material product, with the relationship between social and spatial structures of urbanism, and with the ideological content of socially created space" (Soja, 1989:76), believed he overemphasized the role of space. In positing that "it was not enough to make geography Marxist; Marxism needed to be spatialised" (Elden, 2001:814) Lefebvre appeared to Castells and Harvey "to be substituting spatial/territorial conflict for class conflict as the motivating force behind radical social transformation" (Soja, 1989:77) and was thereby guilty of a 'fetishism of space' (Soja, 1989).

Soja notes that "rather ironically, the primary source of misunderstanding seemed to lie in the failure of Marxist analysts to appreciate the essentially dialectical character of social and spatial relationships as well as that of other structurally linked spheres like production and consumption" (1989:77). Therefore, "in attempting to be good

Marxists, Castells and Harvey established boundaries beyond which spatial analysis should not pass" (2001:814). Still Lefebvre's work has been influential amongst Marxists[27] such as Harvey who in particular has sought to develop new ways of expressing the interconnectedness of our "spatial and temporal worlds" (Harvey, 1990:240) through concepts such as 'time-space compression', 'spatial fixes' and more recently 'spatio-temporal fixes' (Harvey, 1989, 1990, 2003; Unwin, 2000). This work is undoubtedly admirable but somewhat disappointing in its ironic ambivalence towards Lefebvre's overall project of establishing a conceptualisation of the spatial, social *and historical*.

A key issue requirement in understanding Lefebvre's approach to time and space is looking beyond *The Production of Space* (1991) which may explain some of the confusion surrounding his work. Lefebvre's works demonstrate a clear progression, or perhaps better a programme, throughout his career from his *Critique of Everyday Life* (1947, 1961, 1981) to *The Production of Space* (published in French in 1974) and *Rhythmanalysis* (published un French in 1992) and only as a whole is his conceptualisation of the spatial-historical-social at its best. In particular Lefebvre's approach to time and history was only fully realised in his final work *Rhythmanalysis* (2004), which was to prove a fitting end to his career. This is not to claim that time and history was not pivotal to his earlier work on *The Production of Space* (1991) – indeed if anything time was too privileged and certainly not adequately deconstructed until his later work.

Within *The Production of Space* Lefebvre makes reference to his previously theorised concept of 'moments'[28] defined as those instants "that break through the dulling monotony of the 'taken for granted'" (Shields, 1999:61) or "those tiny epiphanies... in which the absolute possibilities and

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[27] On this subject Shields (1999) identifies a disappointing consequence of Lefebvre's use of terminology. Essentially, Lefebvre has, by attempting to broaden the definition of 'production' left "his argument hostage to misinterpretation and reduction back to established Marxist concepts of production" (Shields, 1999:154).

[28] Indeed each aspect of Lefebvre's 'triple dialectic' is referred to as a 'moment' continually articulated in the present. As Merrifield states, "relations between conceived-perceived-lived moments are never stable and exhibit historically defined qualities, attributes and interconnections" (1993:524).

temporal limits of anyone's existence were revealed" (Marcus, 1989:144). This he did in direct opposition to what he saw as Bergson's reductionist linear notion of time, concluding that "a completed theory of moments would correct the overly simple periodisation of modes of production and the fetishism of linear historicity of progress found in Marx" (Shields, 1999:61). The problem is that Lefebvre, though he did propose a balancing of the historical and spatial, did not adequately develop his 'theory of moments' in *The Production of Space*.

In writing *The Production of Space* Lefebvre acknowledges his aim to produce a spatial history (Lefebvre, 1991). However, as Shields observes, "having established the notion that social space is 'produced', Lefebvre historicises it, turning to a stereotypical, linear, Eurocentric modelling of historical progress" (1999:170) whereby particular 'historical spatializations' are correlated to particular 'epochs'. The result, as Shields continues, is that "Lefebvre's project of historical periods, the accuracy of his dating of changes and his ignorance of the conditions and spatialisation of most of the world detracts from his credibility and distracts from his overall message" (Shields, 1999:183) hence inferring that "much of the 485 pages of *Production de l'espace* is thus a failure in Lefebvre's own terms" (Shields, 1999:172). As Elden (2001) notes, Lefebvre therefore did not succeed in writing a spatial history but instead a history of space. The problematic was only resolved fully with the publication of *Rhythamanalysis* in 1992 which essentially completed his 'theory of moments' by challenging the notion of linear time through a theorisation of a multiplicity of rhythms and moments (Lefebvre, 2004). As Fraser states, "underlying Lefebvre's understanding of the rhythms of life is an explicit rejection of the way that the qualitative nature of time has been made linear and homogenous, the way living processes have been reduced to quantities" (2008:349). In essence this brought Lefebvre full circle in his reconceptualisation of both space and time.

Lefebvre's development of a counter-understanding to time as a linear notion adds much depth to his analysis and complements his theory of the social space as a social product. It also brings his work once again into the sphere of Michel Foucault. At the heart of this project "Lefebvre is concerned with moving away from a rationalist understanding of an event, which sees it

as a 'privileged instant, that of crisis'" (Elden, 2004b:173). Indeed, such a rationalist understanding, Lefebvre deems, is also a Marxist one as the event is "conceived of as an end result" (Elden, 2004b:173); as the result of progress towards some historical turning point. Alternatively Lefebvre posits that the 'moment' has its own memory and a specific time that becomes temporal through the repetition of everyday life. The result, as Elden highlights burrowing Lefebvre's words, is that as an event is historical, "it will leave traces [which] we are going to become attached to" and so forth "we shall try to understand the so-called historical event in terms of a series of things revealed by traces[29]" (2004b:173).

For Lefebvre, "as with space, the concept of time has a distance from the actual time that we live" and hence there is a "fundamental difficulty with the concept of time, in that it removes all reference to *praxis* and thereby descends into speculative metaphysics" (Elden, 2004b:173). However, for fear of 'eliminating history' Lefebvre posited that "we need to retain an abstract of time *alongside* examinations of 'lived time'" (Elden, 2004b:173). In proposing such an approach Lefebvre moved into the territory of genealogy, which he saw as concerned with "'filiations, concrete encounters, detours and détournements, influences, etc.'" (Elden, 2004b:180). As such Lefebvre's approach can be compared to Foucault's 'situated genealogies' which are essentially micro 'spatial histories' of specific contexts and issues such as the prison, clinic, madness or sexuality. However, Elden (2004b; 2004a) has skilfully asserted through an analysis of Lefebvre and Foucault in relation to Nietzsche and Heidegger that Lefebvre has managed to develop a more fluid understanding of genealogy which better achieves a move away from the homogenising effects of meta-narratives and Hegel's 'world history'. As Elden neatly summarises,

> "Like Foucault [Lefebvre's genealogy] is concerned with the emergence and descent of concepts, but these tend to be more flexible and less tied to specific systems of thought. Rather than the Heideggerian Nietzscheanism that I have found in Foucault's work on history, in Lefebvre we have a version of Nietzschean

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[29] For this passage Elden uses his own translation of *La fin de l'historie* (p196) and extracts from *Key Writings* (p178) both by Lefebvre.

history, of genealogy, that is something less monolithic" (2004b:180).

To conclude this short discussion on time and space it is worth briefly mentioning Habermas. His work does not explicitly deal with reconceptualisations of space and time but they are nonetheless implicit to his theories and therefore deserve greater attention. *The Theory of Communicative Action* (Habermas, 1984, 1987) implies, in particular, a deliberative process which is located in time. On an associated note the theory has also been criticised for portraying an idealised inherently Western view of rationality which amounts to a spatial criticism, though in practical terms Habermas is essentially ambivalent to the issue of spatial location by asserting 'consensus seeking' behaviour as occurring universally 'everywhere' through 'intersubjective' interaction.

On Habermas's treatment of time it is important to note that he privileges the actual process of deliberation over the end result. In this sense, like Lefebvre, he moves away from any kind of historical determinism – for Habermas the process itself is enough to justify its being practised rather than any desired outcome. However, in attempting to propose such a theory as a means of solving practical decision-making through consensus formation Habermas leaves himself open to criticism. Rawls for example "does not believe that public argumentation and discussion will lead to consensus, to a common basis for social life. Quite the contrary, argumentation and discussion will only lead to more discussion" (Heysse, 2006:269). In such a vein Flyvbjerg (1998) states that 'unlimited time' should be added as another ideal condition to Habermas's procedural requirements of communicative rationality.

Habermas's treatment of time is criticised, and rightly so, for being unrealistic in relation to the needs of decision making in modern society. However, it is interesting to speculate that his stress on the process rather than the end result could be complemented by a Lefebvrian conception of time as non-linear and as a collection of rhythms and 'moments'. Such an approach could, in theory, move beyond Habermas's view of deliberation as ideally leading to decisions based on consensus (and admittedly away from his desired ideal process) towards a conceptualisation in which public

deliberation forms one rhythm (constituted by the repetition of 'moments') amongst many in the functioning of modern society. It would hence be possible to conceive of 'deliberative time' as existing in and amongst abstract, 'lived', biological, social, physical and the infinite multitude of other times (Elden, 2004b).

5. Power, rationality and the subject

White notes that "one thing that is distinctive about the idea of a social science research program is that its core must include some model of the subject; that is, some minimal conceptualization of what it is to be human" (1988:7). Developing such a conceptualization, however, is by no means a straightforward and simple task. Indeed many of the criticisms and debates regarding the ideas of Lefebvre, Habermas and Foucault can be traced back to this initial 'building block'. Habermas, for example, has been criticised for using a rational abstracted view of the subject which assumes an almost 'pre-given, pre-linguistic' state of being (Dahlberg, 2005). These arguments are all the more important because they relate directly to issues of structure and agency and wider relations of power. This discussion will first look at the debate surrounding Habermas's views on the subject and rationality and particularly how it has been criticised, especially by post-structuralists, for negating the importance of power. Subsequent sections will incorporate the thinking of Lefebvre and Foucault in an attempt to find an amicable position between the three key thinkers.

Habermas's theory of communicative action received much criticism in the years after its publication in German in 1981 and then in English in two volumes in 1984 and 1987. After only partially managing to successfully defend his approach Habermas "abandoned the concept" (Adams, 2006:47) stating in his 1983 essay on 'Discourse Ethics' that he had "tried at one time to describe the presuppositions of argumentation as the defining characteristics of an ideal speech situation" (1990:88). In later writings

Habermas states that "communicative language still commits participants to strong idealisations" (2003:17) but the universal assumptions are no longer mentioned.

It was arguably Habermas's attempt at establishing universal conditions for the 'ideal speech situation' which in turn implied (and was based upon) a certain rational subject which created the most controversy. As White observes, by the end of the 1970s "the universalist, rationalist tradition of the Enlightenment came under increasing fire from various quarters" as "contextualist and relativist positions were articulated by analytic philosophers, moral and political theorists, social anthropologists, feminists and post-structuralists" (1988:1). In particular Habermas's theory was most trenchantly criticised by poststructuralists who believed that it failed to adequately take account of the issue of power.

The work of Foucault, undoubtedly one of the most influential thinkers on power[30], and Habermas highlights the tension between consensus and conflict in modern society. As Flyvbjerg states, "with a point of departure in Kant, Habermas is the philosopher of *Moralität* based on consensus. Foucault, following Nietzsche, is the philosopher of *wirkliche Historie* (real history) told in terms of conflict and power" (1998:211). Crucially Habermas's attempts at establishing universal conditions for interaction require, as part of his formal pragmatics, that coercion be removed in order for undistorted 'ideal' communication to occur. However, followers of Foucault's conceptualisation of power claim that removing coercion essentially removes conflict and the operations of power, which is ultimately naïve and potentially counter-productive. As Dahlberg states, "by calling for the removal of power, Habermas's conception of communicative rationality may act ideologically by obscuring the power relations it contains" (2005:121). Habermas's attempt to build a universalistic view of rationality based upon an identification of inherent and 'unavoidable' contextual and norm guided conditions is therefore unable to "comprehend collective beliefs and norms in terms of power and systematic misperception" (White, 1988:20).

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[30] Although "Foucault stated that his work is frequently misread as being about power rather than about the different modes by which human beings are transformed into subjects" (Müller, 2008:327).

Habermas's 'leap of faith' rests upon the assumption that "consensus-seeking and freedom from domination are universally inherent forces in human conversation" (Flyvbjerg, 1998:215). However, this is a 'leap' which firstly overestimates the importance of such universal justifications and secondly masks the operations of power by simultaneously externalising and excluding coercion and ignoring the internalised and included role of power in the formulation of the subject and other contextual norms of communication. On the first point White states that, "an appeal to universal principles instead of traditional norms... has no special, higher power of moral rationalisation" as they "have a justificatory power no different from any other normative framework for judging actions" (1988:21). On the second Flyvbjerg (1998) notes that many important philosophers and social thinkers have outwardly contradicted and argued against Habermas's universal assertions that people have an in-built leaning away from conflict toward reaching understanding and resisting domination. He cites Machiavelli's infamous *The Prince* which states, "one can make this generalisation about men: they are ungrateful, fickle, liars, and deceivers" (1984:96). Henceforth Habermas is criticised for portraying an unrealistic conception of the subject which is overtly rational and abstract (Dahlberg, 2005). In this vein Peters argues that "Habermas' citizens resemble Rousseau's 'de-natured' citizens perceiving the general will or Kant's world citizens purged of all 'particular interests' or John Rawls' citizens temporarily ignorant of their own particularities" (1993:564).

The most damming criticism of Habermas is thus that his attempts to create universal conditions of communication actually prevent the study of underlying power relations and in so doing crucially deny the possibility of achieving Habermas's overall project of empowering civil society and democracy. As Flyvbjerg states,

> "In staying close to the Enlightenment vocabulary Habermas has developed little understanding of power and thus tends to become part of the problem he wishes to solve. Habermas's efforts to achieve more rationality and democracy, however, laudable, draw attention away from critical relations of power. The neglect of power is unfortunate, because it is precisely by paying attention to power relations that we may achieve more democracy" (1998:219).

Critically Habermas's work within the public sphere fails to adequately critique its normative modes of functioning which are inherently related to power. In contrast Foucault reveals the workings of the public sphere "as the operation of modern disciplinary power, which relies not upon hierarchical, asymmetrical domination but upon the subjugation of selves through subjectification" (Dahlberg, 2005:121). Communicative action thus fails to provide an account of, or defence against "the self-surveillance of the civically virtuous citizen (who has internalized the hegemonic conception of the public good) or communicatively rational agent (who has internalised the hegemonic conception of what constitutes 'the better argument')" (Villa, 1992:715).

This represents just a snapshot of the criticisms launched against Habermas's theory of communicative action and predominantly those which relate to Foucault's understanding of power and the subject[31]. The lack of analytical tools and wider failure of Habermas's theory to take account of power relations has very serious implications which this research duly notes. However, in navigating a way forward it is proposed that elements of Habermas's thinking can be mobilised as a means of assessing power relations in modern society. Such an approach it is argued can avoid universalistic attempts to create communicative rationality, and instead use the theory as an 'ideal type' heuristic device through which to investigate society. By doing so Habermas's ideal speech situation is essentially used as a concept within a Foucauldian genealogy of a specific practical situation: in this case the North East of England.

Such an approach between Habermas and Foucault is not necessarily as controversial as might appear. Foucault actually agreed with Habermas in realising the importance of rationality as an object of study but thought that Kant might have been too narrowly interpreted by Habermas (Flyvbjerg, 1998). In contrast Habermas was concerned by Foucault's relativism, criticising it for not being grounded in any normative framework (Flyvbjerg, 1998). Hence, it is proposed that Habermas's theory can provide a

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[31] A useful and more detailed account of the various criticisms of Habermas's ideal speech situation is provided by Adams (2006) in chapter 2 on 'The ideal speech situation' pages 23 – 48.

framework (though not one which assumes a recognisable correlate or universal foundation in the real world) for a Foucauldian style analysis of power in modern society.

Continuing this line of thought, Habermas theory of communicative action can be opened up to an analysis of power relations when employed as such an 'ideal type' heuristic device. As Bohman (1996) points out, in communicative acts, "deliberative inequalities" can often be identified by the lack rather than presence of ideal conditions. Such "deliberative inequalities" can include ""power asymmetrics, which affect access to the public sphere; communicative inequalities, which affect the ability to participate and to make effective use of available opportunities to deliberate in the public sphere; and political poverty, which makes it unlikely that 'politically impoverished' citizens can participate in the public sphere at all" (Scambler, 2002:143).

What Greenhalgh et al. (2006) describe as 'communication pathologies' can thus be analysed against Habermas's theory to assess the degree to which they represent 'true' consensus or strategic action. As Greenhalgh et al. observe, confusion can arise over action orientated to success (strategic action) and action orientated to understanding (communicative action) which can result in concealed strategic action either through conscious or unconscious deception. In cases of conscious deception "at least one party acts with an orientation to success while allowing hearer(s) to assume that all the conditions for communicative action are being met" (Greenhalgh et al., 2006:1171). Alternatively in cases of unconscious deception "at least one party is deceiving themselves that they are acting with an attitude orientated to success and only keeping up the appearance of communicative action" (Greenhalgh et al., 2006:1171). A necessary prerequisite of utilising Habermas's theory is that "almost all actual conversations... are a mix of communicative and strategic action" (Greenhalgh et al., 2006:1171) and so communication is also inherently "systematically distorted communication" (Habermas, 1984, 1987).

This acknowledgement, though also made by Habermas, is important in moving on from any universal conditions of communication. Therefore, it can be said that all communication is distorted, not in comparison to a universal ideal speech situation, but in the sense that interaction is driven by

a range of motivations and is essentially 'power laden' or inseparable from power. As such the theory of communicative action can be used in specific situations to reveal Foucauldian genealogies of power. In this sense even "Habermas distinguishes between 'administratively employed' power – the sanctioning, organizing, and executive power of the state and its servants that is necessary to enforce decisions on the one hand – and 'communicatively generated' power – the kind of power that is created in and through communication of free and fair deliberation on the other[32]" (Heysse, 2006:272). However, in this example Habermas unfortunately falls back into a narrow and reductionist either/or conception of power as either 'administratively employed' or 'communicatively generated'.

Poststructuralists following a Foucauldian line of argument stress that power can never be fully removed from communication. Thus "the exclusion of forms of discourse that involve coercion implies that power can be readily identified and excluded, which some critics argue is both naïve and dangerous" (Dahlberg, 2005:121). Habermas's simplistic view of power is flawed, but whilst it would indeed be naïve to assume that power can be excluded, identifying its functioning and influence is, though problematic, also essential if society is to be changed for the better. On this note Dahlberg is adamant that "a distinction can, and must, be made between forms of discourse that contribute to greater understanding and ones that are coercive... Some sort of 'line' must be 'drawn' between rhetorical *manipulation* and rhetorical *persuasion* in order to maximize difference" (2005:120).

What becomes apparent from this analysis is that the researcher needs to be aware of the issue of power at all levels. Drawing a 'line' between persuasion and manipulation is undoubtedly important in identifying power in an explicit form but power is also implicit everywhere. Any analysis therefore has to be aware of this fact. Habermas's theory, however, provides a starting point for overcoming the assertion that if power is everywhere it is

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[32] Interestingly the recognition that 'administratively employed' power is required to enforce decision is in itself an acknowledgement of the always unachievable nature of 'communicatively generated' power. For, as Heysse states, "if decisions are freely made by consensus, what need is there for a state apparatus with the administrative power to enforce them?" (2006:273).

simultaneously nowhere. As Adams states, "one should be able to diagnose the degree to which such masks and disguises are used. To do this, one presupposes that there is at least an ideal of genuine argumentation, against which actual processes can be measured... [as] without it, one is unable to critique corrupt practices *as corrupt*, or exercises of disguised violence *as disguised violence*" (2006:26). Whilst this research does not necessarily agree with the notion of a 'genuine ideal' underpinning any real world communication, the concept is still analytically useful for comparative purposes.

Habermas's theory of communicative action, as mentioned above has been criticised for portraying the subject as rational, abstract and decontextualised. However, some have argued that this interpretation is based upon a narrow reading of Habermas's theory. Dahlberg, for instance, states:

> "the public sphere conception as based upon communicative rationality does not assume a Cartesian (autonomous, disembodied, decontextualised) subject who can clearly distinguish between persuasion and coercion, good and bad reasons, true and untrue claims, and then wholly remove themselves and their communications from such influence. For Habermas, subjects are always situated within culture. The public sphere is posited upon intersubjective rather than subject-centred rationality" (2005:124).

Therefore, 'rational-critical communication' is identified as the mechanism by which coercion is removed rather than by an appeal to individual universal reflectivity. Such an analysis, though still inferring an underlying universalism, does present itself as potentially useful in looking specifically at modes of communication and interaction. In terms of investigating the relations of regional governmental institutions, which are required to engage in partnership working, such an 'intersubjective' understanding of the subject is a valuable supplement to any individual view of the individual actor or subject.

The need to ground any research programme in a conceptualisation of the subject raises some interesting theoretical dilemmas particularly with regard to structure and agency. Whilst Habermas's concept of

'intersubjectivity' is useful to analysing communication it is not sufficient in itself, particularly as such an approach, by focusing on the interaction of actors in a norm guided public sphere, could be potentially ambivalent towards the issue of power. Here the views of Habermas, Foucault and Lefebvre are all important in developing a practical way forward on the subject.

This research resists Foucault's poststructuralist view of the 'subject' as it denies the role of human agency. As Müller states, "although poststructuralism strives to map out an epistemological position which avoids the determinism of structuralism, in so doing it is also quite clear about denying the possibility of an autonomous subject. It is not the individual that structures and manipulates discourse but vice versa – discourses speak through the individual" (2008:326). Hence, "Foucault uses the term 'subject' in conscious contraposition to the concept of the acting individual" (Müller, 2008:327). Whilst the subject may take up different subject positions, this is not intentional, and so subjects are products rather than producers of discourse (Müller, 2008).

This research will investigate the role of discourse in the North East of England and will also examine the active construction and selection of regional narratives [33]. Such an approach envisages Foucault's 'subject' having a degree of agency but also rejects the hypothesis of a world of interdependent autonomous agents. A promising way forward can be located in the realm of Giddens's 'structuration theory' in which human action is conditioned by rules and resources so that 'action and its constraints' are weaved together (Müller, 2008:325). This investigation therefore considers the concept of the 'semi-autonomous actor' to be a useful and practical approach to incorporating elements of Foucault's 'subject' with the idea of a degree of agency.

The conceptualisation of the 'semi-autonomous actor' as a basis for an understanding of the subject and as a balance between structure and agency is also potentially very complementary to the work of Lefebvre and Habermas. Despite the flaws of Habermas's ideal speech situation, "what

[33] A detailed examination of the difference between discourses and narratives is supplied in the subsequent chapter.

[he] seeks and arguably accomplishes", argues Scambler, "is a theoretical synthesis formed from the insights of the modernist paradigm of interactionism and phenomenology, strong on agency and lifeworld, on the one hand, and conflict theory and structural-functionalism, strong on structure and system, on the other"(2002:44). Hence, Habermas's micro-level analysis of communication and its use to inform a macro-level critique of modern society does succeed in being strong on both structure and agency. This is further illustrated by his attempted incorporation of objective, subjective and social worlds into a form of rationality.

Likewise Lefebvre's approach is commendable for its incorporation of both structure and agency by placing them into a 'dialectical relationship' of spatial practice, representations of space and spaces of presentation. Here Lefebvre's work on the practice of everyday life and its incorporation into his subsequent theorisations is vital. As Smith states, "the accumulation strategies of capitalist logics, structures and actors, to which many urban analysts devote so much attention, are not the sole, or at times even the most important agencies in the constitution of urban life. As important, if not more so, has been the impact of ordinary women and men – the consciousness, intentionality, everyday practices and collective action – on the social construction of urban life" (2001:6). Lefebvre realises the importance of the everyday, the social imaginary and the potential for resistance and this gives his arguments significant theoretical depth. In addition the combination of the physical-mental-social or lived-conceived-perceived is conducive to the idea of the 'semi-autonomous actor' and, in the sense that it helps reveal the nature of spatiality, is better placed than Habermas's universal communicative conditions in highlighting the exercise of power. As such the theory of the production of space can analyse how a 'politics of scale' is embedded within a 'complex set of power relations' and in so doing 'illuminate' what Agnew (1993) terms 'hidden geographies' (Delaney and Leitner, 1997).

Lefebvre therefore offers a valuable counter to Foucault's 'subjectified' subject and Habermas's universal 'intersubjectivity' and a path for navigation between power as 'everywhere' and 'nowhere'. Miller has somewhat naively stated that:

"however insightful Lefebvre (and Habermas) may have been in terms of depicting the colonization of consciousness and practice under capitalism, both rely on an essentially 'modernist' conception of power that divides culture into two parts: the powerful and the powerless, the hegemonic and the counter-hegemonic" (2005:64-65).

Whilst this may be true of Habermas's work it crucially misses the entire point of Lefebvre's project to "provide a deep critique not just of this oppositional dichotomy of power but of all forms of binary logic" (Soja, 1996:7). Admittedly Lefebvre did have, what Shields terms, "a naïve faith in the primacy of authentic experience" (1999:63) through 'moments' as culturally experienced universals, but critically these 'moments' are not defined and are only relied on as a reference point for defining what it is to be human. Critically their nature is left open and so they differ drastically from Habermas's system of 'formal pragmatics'.

As mentioned in the previous section Lefebvre's work is similar to Foucault's on genealogy and the need to create 'spatial histories' of particular contexts. However, for Lefebvre Foucault goes too far in that his analysis appears to overly focus on the periphery or marginal as compared to the centre. As Soja states,

"Lefebvre argued that Foucault's enraptured individualism failed to explore the 'collective subject', that his frequent use of floating spatial metaphors obscured the political concreteness of social spatiality, and that the manysidedness of Foucault's conceptualization of power/knowledge took too little note of 'the antagonism between a knowledge [savoir] which serves power and a form of knowing [connaissance] which refuses to acknowledge power" (1996:146).

Lefebvre considered it essential to relate any 'spatial history' or 'situated genealogy' to a wider critique of society thereby achieving what Soja (1996) terms a 'centred peripheralness'. He fully recognised the importance of Foucault's 'micro-studies' in providing a critique of power but also asserted that without being related to a wider critique "this tactic, which concentrates on the peripheries, simply ends up with a lot of pinprick operations which are separated from each other in time and space" (Lefebvre, 1976:116). As the next section will discuss, Foucault's conception of power as omnipresent and

his studies of the 'peripheral' has made his thinking attractive to marginalised groups. In this regard it would appear that Lefebvre's work has been somewhat misinterpreted as representing power as a binary dichotomy of dominant and dominated. In fact Lefebvre's work has much to offer in terms of empowerment through his understanding of genealogy, spatial histories and the importance of lived experience. What is more, he also relates this thinking to a wider critique of the functioning of 'neocapitalist' modern society through his theory of *The Production of Space* (1991).

6. Theories of change

Habermas, Lefebvre and Foucault all propose contrasting theories on how societal change can be assessed and importantly brought about. However, Habermas and Lefebvre have also been criticised, mainly by poststructuralists and postmodernists, for employing simplistic views of power and not adequately allowing for the empowerment of marginalised groups. This brief discussion will examine some of these critiques and analyse the usefulness and contradictions of the three academics theories on societal change.

Both Habermas's and Lefebvre's work has been criticised for not paying enough attention to the possible empowerment of the marginalised. This has perhaps been most raised by feminist critiques which highlight a lack of appreciation of difference implicit in the modernist principles utilised by both academics. These assertions are in part justified though, as outlined above in the case of Lefebvre's thinking, are also based upon some misinterpretations of the authors' works.

With regards to Habermas, Cohen identifies a "peculiar blindness to gender issues" (1995:57) and Habermas himself acknowledges that his theory does not explicitly include an analysis of gender, ethnicity, class or popular culture (Flyvbjerg, 1998). However, through the proposition that the best hope of 'Lifeworld decolonisation' lies in the development of 'new' social

movements, as opposed to 'old' class-based movements, Habermas does present a possible strong role for previously marginalised groups and in this regard he is somewhat 'postmodern'. However, such a possible role for marginalised groups is not seen by his critics to rest well with the attempt to establish universal conditions of communication and the stress placed on consensus.

A major problem identified particularly by commentators referred to by Dahlberg (2005) as 'difference democrats' is that Habermas puts forward a 'rationalist' form of communication that excludes certain 'aesthetic-affective' modes of everyday communication, such as rhetoric, metaphor, storytelling, and poetry and theatre, which are perceived as non-rational. This results in a "public sphere that is based on rational critical discourse, works to devalue and exclude the modes of expression, and thus the voices and positions, of women[34] and marginalised groups" (Dahlberg, 2005:114) and so Habermas's understanding "fails to take into account the fact that meaning is always in excess of what can be understood discursively, spilling out beyond the symbolic" (2005:115). Dahlberg does offer a partial defence of Habermas against such criticism highlighting how communicative action only requires the exclusion of coercive action rather than non-rational action, thereby suggesting that claims of it being exclusionary are "based on a particularly narrow reading of the conception" (2005:112). However, difficulties in distinguishing between rational and non-rational, coercive rhetoric and persuasive rhetoric, mean that the fact that the theory excludes *any* form of communication is problematic[35].

Habermas's desirable state of reaching consensus is also challenged by postmodern accounts which question how such a situation would deal with difference. As Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger speculate, "if everyone is to agree, or achieve consensus, what would be the purpose of individuals with differing opinions initially participating in the discourse arena, only if there is a slight possibility that their views will find favour with the majority?"

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[34] Dahlhberg (2005) highlights a number of studies that have shown that women are much more likely to use 'aesthetic-affective' modes of communication, such as emotions and gestures, than there male counterparts.

[35] As Dahlberg states, "the unconscious-bodily-affective aspects of communication cannot be removed to reveal purely rational processes and true meaning" (2005:115).

(1998:1982). Indeed many marginalised groups are "vehemently opposed to the idea of consensus being set as the goal of political communication" as "public opinion in the form of consensus in pluralist societies is not possible without domination and exclusion[36]" (Dahlberg, 2005:126). Thus Habermas's ideal consensus by way of the better argument is for some equivalent to a "collective subjectivity that is inherently totalitarian" (Chambers, 1996:157). As Flyvbjerg states, "political consensus can never be brought to bear in a manner that neutralizes particular group obligations, commitments and interests" (1998:229); highlighting that "feminists and environmental initiatives, today central to the structure and functioning of civil society in many societies, got their issues on the public agenda not primarily by rational consensus but through the power struggles and conflicts characteristic of activism and social change" (1998:226).

Lefebvre has received similar criticism especially from feminist accounts which claim that his theories are of little use in developing ideas on gender and sexuality as they are grounded in a certain patriarchal hetero-normative frame. As Shields notes, "Lefebvre's approach to the household, gender blindness and celebration of heterosexuality limit the usefulness of his theories to feminists and theorists of the body" (2004:211). The reality is that Lefebvre's work is contradictory on the issue of gender.

Whilst Lefebvre clearly noted the gendering of space "through a tripartite constellation of geometric-visual-phallic power" (Gregory, 1994:158) he simultaneously fails to " break with the heterosexual gender assumptions built into his own analytical framework" (Shields, 1999:174). Hence Merrifield is correct in stating that, Lefebvre "emphasizes the way in which abstract space is not solely the repressive economic and political space of capital, but is equally a repressive male space which invariably finds its representation in the phallic aspect of towers – symbols of force, male fertility and masculine

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[36] In response to this Ku puts forward the interesting suggestion that "in day-to-day politics, it is public credibility, rather than critical rationality, that lays the basis for moral authority in politics" (Ku, 2000:236). In this scenario communicative action between various actors would be less about the formation of a reasoned consensus and more about claims to public credibility. As Ku states "in the public sphere, the democratic codes of public accountability, public accessibility, and other non-democratic value codes of the community would interact with each other through symbolization and narrativisation in the process of struggles over public credibility" (2000:236).

violence" (1993:524). However, he also assumes natural space to be commensurate with the maternal and passive, and the paternal with activity, agency and force, which has the effect of rendering feminine bodies invisible (Shields, 1999). As Shields states, Lefebvre's "use of notions of male-female heterosexual identity in which the female is a negation of masculine activity presents a parodic and non-dialectical affirmation (male) and negation (female)" (1999:185). Lefebvre's 'heterosexual gender assumptions' are ultimately inexcusable and critically also an unnecessary part of his theory of the production of space. Indeed, despite its failings, Lefebvre's work can be used to reveal how space is also an inherently gendered space. In this regard Merrifield is right to suggest that "Lefebvre's discussions on space and the body leave plenty of room for dialogue with both phenomenological perspectives and feminist geographers" (1993:524).

Foucault's understanding of the omnipresent yet partial nature of power in which a 'power relationship' is essentially any "relationship between any actors who seek to affect each other" (Dean, 2007:9) has been widely hailed by postmodernists. As Flyvbjerg observes, "Foucault's emphasis on marginality makes his thinking sensitive to difference, diversity and the politics of identity, something which today is crucial for understanding civil society and acting in it" (1998:225). Additionally his reluctance for general theories in favour of 'situated genealogies' of "actual power relations in specific contexts" (Flyvbjerg, 1998:223) has made his work applicable to a wide range of interests and issues. In contrast Habermas, through the incorporation of normative conditions which in his case are raised to the status of universal ideals, can but fail to adequately take account of the nuances of power relations. Habermas's universalism is therefore contrasted with Foucault's relativism/contextualism. Against this Lefebvre is seen to offer, an often misinterpreted, dialectical analysis of power which like Foucault rejects binary definitions, but unlike Foucault and more in line with Habermas relates that analysis to a wider critique of modern society.

From this discussion of the importance of power the question thus arises: in what ways are the work of Lefebvre, Foucault and Habermas useful in theorising the potential for societal change? There are undoubtedly many

answers to this question which deserve detailed account. However, what follows is a brief summary and comparison of the authors' key arguments.

It has been noted how Lefebvre utilised his theory of the production of space and subsequent 'theory of moments' to critique 'neocapitalist' society. Indeed, as a Marxist, his underlying aim was add an analysis of spatiality to traditional Marxist account which focused on historicity and sociality. Indeed as Lefebvre states in The Survival of Capitalism, after having witnessed the economic post-war boom:

> What has happened is that capitalism has found itself able to attenuate (if not resolve) its internal contradictions for a century, and consequently, in the hundred years since the writing of Capital, it has succeeded in achieving 'growth'. We cannot calculate at what price, but we know the means: by occupying space, by producing a space (1976:21)[37].

Lefebvre therefore attempted to use his theories to demonstrate that "one of the reasons why capitalism has survived into the twentieth century is because of its flexibility in constructing and reconstructing the relations of space and the global space economy" (Elden, 2004:81). By doing so it was hoped that the groundwork could be laid for the realisation of a new spatialisation which could refigure the balance between conceived, perceived and lived space thereby creating a 'fully lived space' (Shields, 1999).

Lefebvre posited that the best potential for 'counter spaces' and resistance lies in the 'social imaginary' of 'spaces of representation' and that the current 'neocapitalist' society's production of 'contradictory space' is increasingly opening up avenues for change and transformation (Lefebvre, 1991; Shields, 1999). As Lefebvre states, "neither capitalism nor the state can maintain the chaotic, contradictory space they have produced. We witness at all levels, this explosion of space. At the level of the immediate and the lived, space is exploding on all sides" (1978:290 cited in Shields, 1999:182). Importantly, through an emphasis on everyday practice and experience Lefebvre affords a degree of human agency in bringing about such a spatial reconfiguration through radical transformations. As he

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[37] The current economic downturn raises some interesting questions as to whether capitalism has managed to achieve a stabilised spatio-temporal fix.

demonstrates in his description of spaces of representation: it "is alive: it speaks. It has an affective kernel or centre: Ego, bed, bedroom, dwelling, house; or: square, church, graveyard. It embraces the loci of passion, of action and of lived situations" (Lefebvre, 1991:42). Therefore in an era of contradictory space, for Lefebvre, "people can be directed to act along the fractures that deeply score the unstable 'surface' of the present spatialisation" (Shields, 1999:183) and by focusing on such 'ruptures' can "convert a dominated 'leisure spatialisation' into focused resistance and revolt through a sudden respatialisation" (Shields, 1999:185). For Lefebvre, a radical and revolutionary reconfiguration of the balance of conceived, perceived and lived space is a desirable outcome.

Habermas, like Lefebvre, seeks to change and improve society by utilising his micro-level analysis of communication as a basis for a macro-level critique of modern society through the twin concepts of System and Lifeworld. Habermas's view of society through these concepts is described by Sitton, who states:

> On the on hand, society must be reproduced as a meaningful whole, as a 'lifeworld', from the standpoint of its members. On the other hand, in order to grasp the functional imperatives necessary for survival, society must be conceived as a self maintaining system that is integrated through processes that occur 'behind the backs' of society's members" (Sitton, 1998:63).

Habermas's agenda for change thus derives from the claim that, "Western modernization has constituted a 'one-sided' – and thus distorted – development of the rational potential of modern culture" (White, 1988:3) which he refers to as the 'colonization of the Lifeworld' and 'cultural impoverishment'[38]. To resolve this situation and bring about a 'decolonisation of the Lifeworld' Habermas proposes the building of a 'democratic dam', through the writing of constitutions based upon his communicative principles, which will guarantee levels of democracy by crucially preventing System

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[38] This is emphasized by Habermas who states, "As the private sphere is undermined and eroded by the economic system, so too is the public sphere by the administrative system. The bureaucratic disempowering and desiccation of spontaneous processes of opinion- and will-formation expands the scope for engineering mass loyalty and makes it easier to uncouple political decision-making from concrete, identity-forming contexts of life" (1987:54).

encroachment upon the Lifeworld (Scambler, 2002; Ashenden, 1999). As Flyvbjerg states, "Habermas quite simply sees constitutions as the main device for uniting citizens in a pluralist society" (Flyvbjerg, 1998:214) and hence these are his 'main methods of progress'[39]. Therefore, in contrast to Lefebvre's radical spatialisations, Habermas conceives of change as occurring within current systems of law and order (Flyvbjerg, 1998).

Foucault appears as somewhat of the odd one out in this trio of academics in terms of advocating theories of change. Indeed, his poststructuralist analysis of power accordingly makes him extremely wary of prescribing general theories or partaking in any Habermasian project to identify universal norms. As Foucault states, "the search for a form of morality acceptable by everyone in the sense that everyone would have to submit to it, seems catastrophic to me" (1984:37 cited in Flyvbjerg 1998:221). In contrast to Habermas, Foucault instead "focuses on the analysis of evils and shows restraint in matters of commitment to ideas and systems of thought about what is good for man" (Flyvbjerg, 1998:221-222).

Here an important distinction can be made between the approaches of Habermas and Foucault. As Flyvbjerg states, "both thinkers see the regulation of actual relations of dominance as crucial, but whereas Habermas approaches regulation from a universalistic theory of discourse, Foucault seeks out a genealogical understanding of actual power relations in specific contexts" (1998:223). As Ashenden further illustrates,

> "Habermas' project is that of reconstructive criticism within which the idea of civil society is brought into the service of emancipatory social science. Foucault's work takes the form of a number of genealogies within which concepts are to be interrogated as to their use within practical systems for the ways in which they constitute and circumscribe our capacities to act" (Ashenden, 1999:158).

As a set of universal conditions for communication Habermas's theory of communicative action is undoubtedly flawed. However, it still has merit as an ideal type heuristic device through which to analyse societal interactions.

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[39] Habermas sees the greatest potential for bringing about these changes as lying in the 'new social movements' (as opposed to 'old' class based movements) but critically "sees little prospect of headway in the short term" (Scambler, 2002:46).

However, in contrast, although Foucault's genealogical studies may be more adept at identifying relations of power, they are context specific and 'situated'. Foucault makes little attempt to link them to a wider critique of society. Additionally Foucault's conception of the 'subjectified' subject and a rejection of the potential for intentional human agency make conceiving of theories of change problematic.

To bring Lefebvre back into the equation his theory of the production space allows for both structure and agency through a combination of the conceived representations of space with lived spaces of representation acted out in perceived spatial practice. Foucault did briefly sketch his spatial thinking through his heterotopology of utopias and heterotopias, but offered little in terms of a theory of change. As Johnson states, "although Foucault describes heterotopia as 'actually existing utopia', the conception is not tied to a space that promotes any promise, any hope or any primary form of resistance or liberation" (2006:84). Therefore, unlike the disruptive and revolutionary potential inherent within Lefebvre's 'spaces of representation', Foucault's 'heterotopia' has no "inevitable relationship with spaces of hope" (Johnson, 2006:84). Hence, as Soja concludes, "in contrast to Lefebvre, Foucault never developed his conceptualizations of space in great self-conscious detail and rarely translated his spatial politics into clearly defined programs for social action" (1996:147).

In terms of their approaches Elden usefully distinguishes between Lefebvre and Foucault through a reading of Heidegger:

> "What is crucially there in Heidegger, and missing in both Lefebvre and Foucault, is the careful theoretical working through of issues of spatiality and their understanding in the philosophical tradition. What is there in Foucault, and only occasionally in Lefebvre, is the deployment of these issues in historical studies – spatial histories of madness, medicine and discipline. What is there in Lefebvre, and not in Heidegger and Foucault, is the ability to turn these analyses to the contemporary period of capitalism – the spaces of the modern world" (2004a:100).

Foucault's approach to power and focus on identifying 'situated' norms and values, as compared to universals, are undoubtedly invaluable. However, for the purpose of this investigation his refusal to actively engage in positing

theories of change beyond 'situated genealogies' and his restrictive view of the 'subject' are problematic. Therefore the theories of Lefebvre and Habermas, especially in terms of how they incorporate wider critiques of modern society and propose avenues for change, are potentially useful.

7. The production and communication of space: developing a complementary Lefebvrian, Habermasian and Foucauldian framework

This research represents an attempt to investigate the theories of Henri Lefebvre on space and time and Jürgen Habermas on communicative action in the 'real' world setting of the North East of England. This chapter in turn has attempted to answer the challenge of navigating a theoretical route between Lefebvre and Habermas via an examination of Michel Foucault's thinking on power, the subject, history and space. As has been shown, the writers' thinking differs in some key arguments but also overlaps in others. The challenge for the subsequent methodological chapter will be to develop a framework for the operationalisation of the key concepts but in the meantime it is worthwhile briefly summarises the main points of this chapter and highlighting the challenges for the next.

Through *The Theory of Communication Action* (1984, 1987) Habermas attempted to clarify "the presuppositions of the rationality of processes of reaching understanding, which may be presumed to be universal because they are unavoidable" (Habermas, 1985:196). However, in so doing Habermas fell foul of poststructuralist accounts, particularly that of Foucault, who argued against the possibility of such universal conditions. For Foucault, only 'situated' or context specific conditions were identifiable and he realised such ideas through historical genealogies or 'spatial histories' of particular contexts. As Flyvbjerg states, "Habermas's approach is orientated toward universals, context independence and control via constitution writing and institutional development. Foucault focuses his efforts on the local and

context-dependent and toward an analysis of strategies and tactics as basis for power" (1998:227). For Foucault, Habermas's approach is ineffectual and even counter-productive in analysing relations of power.

Bringing in Lefebvre, his theory of *The Production of Space* (1991) and subsequent *Rhythmanalysis* (2004) provide illuminating approaches to the reconceptualisation of space as more than traditional Cartesian, mathematical and abstract space, and time as more than linear historical time (Elden et al., 2003). However, it is his theorisation of 'social space' as a 'social product', which is most relevant to this investigation's aims. On this note Soja has gone as far as to describe Lefebvre as a "'metaphilosopher' who has been more influential than any other scholar in opening up and exploring the limitless dimensions of our social spatiality" (1996:6). A somewhat less academically explored link is that between Lefebvre and Foucault, who briefly delved directly into spatial thinking with his idea of heterotopology. Here Soja provides a rare glimpse of the similarities between their work:

> "the central point that Lefebvre and Foucault were making in their different yet similar conceptualizations of spatiality: that the assertion of an alternative envisioning of spatiality (as illustrated in the heterotopologies of Foucault, the trialectics and thirdings of Lefebvre...) directly challenges (and is intended to challengingly deconstruct) all conventional modes of spatial thinking. They are not just "other spaces" to be added on to the geographical imagination, they are also "other than" the established ways of thinking spatially. They are meant to detonate, to deconstruct, not to be comfortably poured back into the old containers" (Soja, 1996:163).

Lefebvre's work also overlaps with Foucault's on the issues of history and genealogy. Foucault is commonly associated with historical or 'situated' genealogies but Elden (2004b) usefully demonstrates how Lefebvre's approach to history, seen as a series of 'moments' and 'traces', is also a form of genealogy. In fact he goes further stating that Lefebvre's approach to genealogy is less 'monolithic' and less tied to systems of thought than Foucault's.

The theories of change posited by the three authors reveal both contradictions and similarities. Whilst both Lefebvre and Habermas use their

theories to provide a critique of contemporary society Foucault refrains from even attempting to develop any general theories remaining committed to the principle of there only being local knowledge. For Lefebvre, Foucault's analyses amounted to 'pinpricks' isolated in time and space. On the potential for intentional change for the better Foucault is sceptical at best, a view that comes in part from his belief in the 'subject' as opposed to the autonomous agent. Whilst 'subjects' may be capable of taking on multiple subject positions, for Foucault, this is never intentional and so his thinking lacks the potential for change as brought on by the agency of individuals. In contrast, Habermas and Lefebvre allow for both structure and agency, whether it be through 'intersubjectivity' or the 'moments' experienced in everyday life. As such Habermas's Lifeworld and Lefebvre's spaces of representation both present possibilities for the intentional improvement of society.

So where does this leave us in developing an analytical framework? It has been argued that the issue of structure and agency and the subject can be overcome through an understanding of the semi-autonomous actor. This allows for an engagement with Foucault's mature approach on power, without committing to what is seen as his overly stringent view of the 'subject' as product rather than producer of discourse (Müller, 2008). It also allows for the study of the active construction of narratives and passive reproduction of discourses (which will be discussed in more detail in the subsequent chapter), and provides a means by which to recognise the potential for improving society which lies at the heart of both Habermas's and Lefebvre's[40] work.

The universalism of Habermas's theory of communicative action has been rightly criticised as, whilst it represents an admirable attempt at forming a basis for a more just society, its naïve ideal conditions make it unrealistic and ultimately unworkable. This however was not lost on Habermas[41]. As

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[40] Lefebvre's acknowledgement of the potential for human agency can also be seen to liberate his understanding of genealogy from Foucault's which remains linked to systems of thought and the 'subject'.

[41] As White notes "a simple appeal to the intuition of competent speakers in modern societies is not adequate to sustain the strong universalist position Habermas wants to maintain. He is clearly aware of this fact and the search for more adequate support is what provides the philosophical impetus for his ambitious theory of modernity put forward in *The Theory of Communicative Action*" (1988:90).

Heysse notes, Habermas "readily acknowledges that contemporary societies are just too complex to be governed through deliberation among citizens; that is why we cannot but rely on systems specialized in government through administrative power, such as the bureaucratic state" (2006:273). The dilemma, as Flyvbjerg states, is that:

> "Habermas's thinking is well developed as concerns political ideas, but weak in its understanding of actual political processes. Foucault's thinking, conversely, is weak with reference to generalized ideals... but his work reflects a sophisticated understanding of Realpolitik" (1998:220).

Foucault's lack of ideals, or general theories for that matter, makes it virtually impossible to apply and test his thinking. Therefore he is most useful in incorporating a more aware and nuanced understanding of power and the importance of context or 'situatedness'. However, Habermas does present an idealised theory, which can and will be used as an ideal type heuristic device. As Flyvbjerg states, Habermas's "scheme can be used as an abstract ideal for justification and application in relation to legislation, institutional development and procedural planning" (1998:228). Indeed, within the institutional setting of a regional assembly and regional development agency, in which certain conditions such as partnership working are mandatory, such an 'ideal' tool as comparison has significant analytical value.

Lefebvre's 'triple dialectic' on the production of space, like Habermas's work, has been criticised for being vague and abstract rather than universal. Merrifield (2000), for example, describes it as a 'hollow abstract device' and as "tantalizingly vague on the precise fashion in which the conceived-lived-perceived triad interrelate" (Merrifield, 1993b:524). On a similar note Unwin claims that, "the complexity of Lefebvre's arguments, and their elusive character, thus make it very difficult to interpret precisely what he means at any particular juncture" (2000:19). This presents difficulties but does not prevent Lefebvre's theory from being employed as an ideal-type heuristic device in the same manner as Habermas's. Indeed, this is in keeping with Lefebvre's thinking in which he "always saw his own intellectual project as a series of heuristic "approximations", never as permanent dogma to be defended against all non-believers" (Soja, 1996:9).

We may at this point return to the question underlying this thesis: why combine Habermas's ideas on communicative action and Lefebvre's conceptualisation of space? In short because any form of governing in modern society requires both space and communication. As Sack (1986:21) has summarised, any attempt to establish 'territoriality' requires a 'form of communication', a form of 'classification by area' and an attempt at 'enforcing control' or 'influencing interactions'. Lefebvre's and this research's understanding of space moves beyond the need for a mere 'classification by area' as a requirement for establishing effective forms of governing. Instead, space has to be actively produced through communication and the 'validity' and effectiveness of that communication decides the 'legitimacy' of various claims to space. As Thrift states, space is important because "to govern it is necessary to render visible the space over which government is to be experienced. And this is not simply a matter of looking: space has to be represented, marked out" (2002:205). Therefore in the North East of England, the communication and interactions of the North East Assembly and One North East, not only with each other but all their interactions from the individual to the organisational level, represent concomitant claims to regional space. But of course space is not only produced and communication practised and regulated by these two regional organisations. Their exists an infinite multitude of spatial productions and communicative interactions from the national, regional, local, neighbourhood, household and individual to the social, economic, environmental, cultural and so on. Critically, however, space and communication are inherently intertwined in the processes of the social production of these social spaces.

Such considerations lead neatly into the challenge of operationalising Habermas's theory of communicative action and Lefebvre's 'triple dialectic' as ideal type heuristic devices, which can be used as comparisons against observed phenomenon in the 'real' world setting of the North East of England. This however is no easy accomplishment. Indeed, Habermas's theory has been described as "overly abstract and 'shockingly unreal'" (MacDonald, 2005:583) and Scambler recognizes that "it is of course easier to distinguish analytically between System and Lifeworld, together with their respective subsystems and media, than it is to 'recognize' them in the social

world" (2002:53). In a similar vein Brenner and Elden warn that "Lefebvre's writing style – with its dense theoretical argumentation, its many implicit references, its elusive organizational structure and its frequent digressions – can prove extremely challenging, and at times downright frustrating, even to French-language readers of his texts" (2001:767). Overcoming these obstacles and devising a framework which can be practically applied will be the initial challenge of the subsequent methodological chapter.

Chapter 4

Research methodology and research methods

1. Introduction and research questions

This investigation can be problematised as an analysis of the tensions, interactions and relations which surround the production and communication of regional space in the North East of England. Utilising Henri Lefebvre's 'triple dialectic' on space as set out in his work on *The Production of Space* (1991), and Jürgen Habermas's concepts of System and Lifeworld and strategic and communicative action most famously associated with his *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1984, 1987), this study aims to assess the operations and interactions of selected 'governance' organisations – namely a regional development agency, One North East, and a regional assembly, the North East Assembly – as part of the social production and contestation of a regional space.

The preceding chapter discussed in some detail the respective theories of Lefebvre and Habermas via the intermediary of Foucault and developed a theoretical framework which combines their perspectives. In addition to the main theories on the production of space and communicative action previous sections have highlighted a wide range of additional or secondary theories, concepts and observed trends, including complexity theory and complex adaptive systems, governmentality, the emergence of governance, and regional decentralisation, which will aid, support and set the

context for this investigation.

To complement the conceptual and theoretical framework this chapter will focus on the case of the North East of England and the methodological approach adopted to assess the theoretical in the 'real' world. In this regard Palm and Brazel (1999) make a useful distinction between 'pure' and 'applied' research stating that:

> "applied research in any discipline is best understood in contrast with basic, or pure, research. In geography [and the social sciences], basic research aims to develop new theory and methods that help explain the processes through which the spatial organisation of physical or human environments evolves. In contrast, applied research uses existing geographic theory or techniques to understand and solve specific empirical problems" (1992:342).

Importantly a dialectical relationship exists between the 'pure' and 'applied' (Frazier, 1982). As Pacione states, "applied research provides the opportunity to use theories and methods in the ultimate proving ground of the real world, as well as enabling researchers to contribute to the resolution of real-world problems" (1999:5). As Stake states in relation to 'intrinsic' research which focuses on the case and 'instrumental' research which uses the case as a testing ground "the researcher simultaneously has several interests, particular and general, there is no line distinguishing intrinsic and instrumental; rather, a zone of combined purpose separates them" (2003:137). With the 'pure' theoretical framework established, this chapter will demonstrate how it was operationalised and 'applied' to the real world case of the North East of England.

Attention will now turn to the identification of the five research questions that were used to structure this research. Following this, four subsequent sections will discuss the relative parts of the methodological approach and methods employed. The first will highlight how the key working concepts were operationalised, so that they could be analysed in the 'field'. The second will introduce the case as a research strategy, outline the main roles and ethical considerations associated with being both a researcher and practitioner (professional) and provide a discussion of epistemological and ontological issues. The third will present the concepts of discourse, narratives

and storylines as a useful bridging point between the theoretical framework, methodological approach and research methods. And finally the fourth section will briefly summarise the various evidence gathering techniques utilised within the research setting.

2. Research Questions

The prospect of a three-year research placement raised the very real concern that, without structure, the volume of evidence generated and collected could potentially hamper analysis. For this reason it was vital that a number of research questions or 'mini-problematics' be devised to provide specific foci. It was envisaged that this in turn would aid in structuring analysis around the identified aims of the investigation and provide a more manageable framework or agenda for conducting research in the field. The following five research questions were developed, with the first four centring on the concepts and the case and the fifth providing an opportunity for conjecture on the future in light of the continually evolving policy landscape of the region:

1.   **To what extent do the North East Assembly and One NorthEast produce a regional (socio) spatial discourse? What are the tensions in their respective and combined productions of space?**

2.   **To what extent is communicative rationality achieved through the interactions of the North East Assembly and One NorthEast?**

3.   **To what extent do the identified productions of space represent a System or more Lifeworld orientated discourse on regional space? How do the identified communication pathologies affect the production of space?**

4.   **To what extent are the concepts of System and Lifeworld, communicative rationality and the production of space useful tools in examining the governance processes, as investigated in the three case studies, operating in the North East of England?**

5. What future might there be for regional governance and democracy:

a) What potential is provided by the concepts of System and Lifeworld for a reinvigoration of the democratic process (government/governance processes) in the North East of England and beyond?

b) What next for English regional government and the 'space' of North East of England?

3. Operationalisation of key working concepts

The previous chapter went into some depth with regard to the fine details, strengths and criticisms of the concepts being put forward for application and analysis in this study. It is not the aim of this section to repeat those debates but instead highlight and develop feasible and effective ways in which those concepts can be operationalised and used to research and be 'researched' in the North East of England. However, this is not a straightforward task and requires a certain degree of pragmatism as both the production of space and communicative action are relatively abstract theories.

In order to effectively operationalise these concepts, various tests and measurable or observable characteristics have to be identified. For theories such as the production of space this is notoriously problematic as it is well known that Lefebvre was especially vague in terms of how his 'triple dialectic' interacted (Merrifield, 1993b; Shields, 1999). It is however not impossible. In positing his theory of 'human territoriality' Sack (1986) identified communication, alongside classification by area and an attempt at enforcing control as the three requirements of territoriality. With the North East of England as the geographical classification and the Assembly and One NorthEast as the organisations attempting to enforce control, communication presents itself as a key means by which to investigate not only 'communication pathologies' (Greenhalgh et al., 2006) but also the production of regional space.

A focus on communication and interaction is also an approach which can be effectively implemented through an 'insider-researcher' role at the

North East Assembly. Additionally it links well with Kooiman's (2003) work on 'interactive governance' as "Habermas' theory of communicative action, in which subjects capable of speech and action co-ordinate their conduct, is more a theory of interaction than of action" (Kooiman, 2003:12).

The process of interaction through communicative events thus provides the most conceptually suited and potentially most successfully applicable framework for operationalising Lefebvre's the production of space and Habermas's theory of communicative action. To take this a stage further it is worthwhile briefly discussing the nature of communicative events and how they can be related to the relevant theories and concepts. For the purpose of aiding analysis, an interaction or communicative event can theoretically be sub-divided into three constituent parts. The first consists of the pre-conditions for communication, the second to the actual act of communication (which comprises its nature and content), and the third to the resulting or post-communicative situation. How this framework can be used to operationalise Lefebvre's and Habermas' theories within the research setting is shown below in table 4.1.

Table 4.1. Diagrammatic representation of the operationalisation of key working concepts

Section of communicative process under analysis		Concept(s) being tested	Operationalised through	Outputs for analysis
Pre-conditions of communication		The ideal conditions for communicative action	Following principles: - (i) the principle of universal moral respect (ii) the principle of egalitarian reciprocity (iii) the principle of non-coercion	Any 'distortions' such as 'deliberative inequalities' including: (i) power asymmetrics; (ii) communicative inequalities; (iii) political poverty.
Act of communication	Nature	Communicative action System and Lifeworld Production of space	Ideal conditions as above Test of reciprocity How space is involved in interactions (i.e. physical location)	Analysis of 'communication pathologies' Type of interaction: inferences, interplays or interventions. Balance of strategic and communicative action
	Content	Lifeworld 'colonisation' Production of space	Juridification Presence of conceived and lived space	'Expert cultures', bureaucratic language Type of language used
Result(s) of communication		Communicative rationality System and Lifeworld Role of regional space	How decisions are arrived at Time and complexity	Roles of 'administrative' and 'communicatively-generated' power in decision making at the regional level.

Table 4.1. shown above simplifies the process of communication into manageable and operational units for analysis, which should be regarded as a starting reference point rather than an attempt at defining interaction in general. In the social world interaction is complex, diverse and dynamic comprising a multitude of communicative acts even in seemingly straightforward speech situations (Kooiman, 2003). As such the value of the table outlined above lies in its use as a tool in identifying certain phenomena to look for in the research environment rather than as a framework for performing the impossible task of deconstructing every communicative event. The following three sections, which correlate to the theoretical stages of the communicative process, outline in a little more detail some of the operationalising concepts and outputs for analysis.

Preconditions of communication

The ideal preconditions of communication relate to Habermas's formal pragmatics which are required in order for undistorted communicative action to occur. The conditions posit that: (i) every being be entitled to participate in argumentation (the principle of universal moral respect; (ii) every being has equal rights during participation (the principle of egalitarian reciprocity); and (iii) participants not be denied of their rights by any means (the principle of non-coercion) (Benhabib, 1990; Ashenden and Owen, 1999).

Bohman's (1996) concept of 'deliberative inequalities' which identifies three broad types provided a means by which to analyse any communicative distortions identified through the research. In summary the three kinds of inequality include: "*power asymmetrics*, which affect access to the public sphere; *communicative inequalities*, which affect the ability to participate and to make effective use of available opportunities to deliberate in the public sphere; and *political poverty*, which makes it unlikely that 'politically impoverished' citizens can participate in the public sphere at all" (Scambler, 2002:143). These 'deliberative inequalities' thereby provide a more practical and observable correlate to Habermas's ideal (pre)conditions.

Act of communication

Actual acts of communication can be seen as being comprised of their nature and content. With regard to the nature of interaction Habermas's initial preconditions, as highlighted above, still provide a useful framework against which to compare the social world. In addition Habermas's test of reciprocity in which each participant[42] is required to "interpret his or her need in relation to others who may be affected by these needs being met" (Blackman, 1991:126; Habermas, 1987) is an effective operationalising concept for the analysis of the nature of regional partnership working.

Incorporating elements of Kooiman's (2003) work on 'interactive governance' the nature of communication can be assessed in terms of whether it shows a tendency towards certain kinds of interaction – namely interferences, interplays or interventions which relate to self-governance, co-governance and hierarchical governance respectively. In analysing identified 'communication pathologies' (Greenhalgh et al., 2006) Habermas's concepts of strategic and communicative action can also be utilised to reveal whether acts of communication are orientated towards reaching success or understanding (Ashenden, 1999).

The content of communication can be analysed for particular narratives and discourses on space and particularly regional space. In so doing it will be possible to examine the roles and balance of System and Lifeworld and conceived and lived space perspectives in constructing regional space. Habermas recognised that the Lifeworld colonisation thesis was very abstract but there are some additional conceptual tools to aid its operationalisation (Ashenden, 1999). Habermas proposes the idea of 'juridification' as a term to describe the rationalisation of the Lifeworld or what Lefebvre would interpret as the dominance of conceived representations of space. As Blackman states the process of "juridification induces people to define their public life in terms of relationships to bureaucracies so that everyday situations can be subsumed under legal categories" the overall result of which is "dependency and the definition of norms not by people

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[42] For the purpose of this investigation a participant could be an individual or organisation.

themselves in everyday life situations but by administrators and professionals" (Blackman, 1991:126). The presence of legal and bureaucratic language within regional governmental organisations is perhaps to be expected but it will be revealing to analyse the roles of so-called 'expert cultures' within the regional policy landscape (Scambler, 2002).

Result of communication

The result of communication will allow for a reflective assessment of the outcome of interaction through analysis, for example, of whether decisions were reached through 'administrative' and/or 'communicatively generated power' (Heysse, 2006). In operationalising strategic and communicative action, "Habermas distinguishes between 'administratively employed' power - the sanctioning, organizing, and executive power of the state and its servants that is necessary to enforce decisions on the one hand - and 'communicatively generated' power - the kind of power that is created in and through communication or free and fair deliberation on the other" (Heysse, 2006:272). Potential distorting factors such as time limitations and the operations of power relations at various levels ranging from specific episodes, to governance processes and governance cultures will all be important in analysing the balance of strategic and communicative action and the discourses and narratives on regional space present within the observed interactions (Coaffee and Healey, 2003).

4. Methodology

1. The case study as research strategy

This research was informed by a three-year part-time research placement at the North East Assembly during which the researcher took on the duties of a policy officer within the Scrutiny and Policy Development team. Robson states that, "one of the challenges inherent in carrying out investigations in the 'real world' lies in seeking to say something sensible about a complex, relatively poorly controlled and generally 'messy' situation" (2002:4). The adoption of a general case study approach in which the researcher was immersed into the 'messy' environment of regional government facilitated the acquisition of an 'insider' perspective on the 'real world' of the North East of England. Within this general research environment or landscape three 'mini-cases' were selected as opportunities through which to develop detailed knowledge and greater understanding of specific policy and procedural areas. These mini-case studies therefore acted as the arenas in which the theories on the production of space and communicative action were examined and thereby represented the dialectic application of both 'applied' and 'pure' research elements[43] (Pacione, 1999).

The three mini-case studies dealt with events, which occurred chronologically during the research placement from September 2004 to September 2007. The first concerned the publication of the draft Regional Economic Strategy and draft Regional Spatial Strategy, which occurred within a few months of each other in the spring/summer of 2005. The second revolved around the North East Assembly scrutiny investigation into *Regional Leadership* conducted in partnership with One NorthEast throughout the course of 2006. And the third centred upon the scrutiny investigation into *Evidence and Regional Policy*, which itself utilised the region's submission to the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007 (CSR 07) as a case study, and took place between the winter of 2006 and spring of 2007. Table 4.2. shown

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[43] Similarly Stake (2003) makes the distinction between the 'intrinsic' purpose of a case study whereby the researcher strives for a better understanding of the case and the 'instrumental' purpose whereby the case is used to shed light on a general issue of theory.

on the following page identifies these three case studies and provides an overview of the researcher roles and particular sources of information that informed them.

Table 4.2. The three research case studies

Information	Case study		
	Draft RES/draft RSS	**Regional leadership**	**Evidence and regional policy**
Key dates	Draft documents released spring/summer 2005	Spring – autumn 2006	Winter 2006 – spring 2007
Organisational nature of case study	Production of regional strategies	Assembly scrutiny exercise	Assembly scrutiny exercise
Assembly role	General member of staff. Consulted on both strategies but not directly involved in their drafting	Member of scrutiny officer team. Directly involved in all aspects of the exercise	Member of scrutiny officer team. Directly involved in all aspects of the exercise
Documentary sources	Official draft strategies. Approved strategies. NEA/ONE correspondence including responses to the strategies. Evidence from public consultations. Previous versions of the RES and RSS (RPG)	Final and draft versions of the leadership report. Minutes of scrutiny meetings. Associated documents such as Terms of Reference and tender briefs. Other academic and professional literature	Final and draft versions of the leadership report. Minutes of scrutiny meetings. Associated documents such as Terms of Reference. Other academic and professional literature including substantial government guidance
Assembly experiences	Close engagement with the process of producing the draft RSS (including attendance its the Examination in Public). Involved in compiling the NEA's response to the draft RES. Witness to the partnerships interactions in producing both strategies	Direct officer experience. Included access to NEA team, management and member attitudes/opinions and ONE approach. Involved in NEA/ONE interactions	Direct officer experience. Included access to NEA team, management and member attitudes/opinions and ONE/NERIP approaches. Involved in NEA/ONE interactions
Interviews	General discussion with NEA staff	Formal and informal interviews/discussions with ONE/NEA staff and external consultants and representatives	Formal and informal interviews/discussions with ONE/NEA staff and a number of external relevant representatives.

In terms of Yin's (1994) framework for categorising case study research the general research strategy can therefore be defined as consisting of a single case study, in the form of the North East Assembly and regional development agency One NorthEast as regional organisations within the North East of England, with multiple units of analysis in the form of the three mini-case studies[44] (Yin, 1994). Yin (1994) refers to these 'units of analysis' as 'embedded units' which provides a useful perspective on how the three research chapters on the mini-case studies are situated within the broader research strategy and case study of the North East of England. Alternatively, Stake (2003) proposes that cases can be composed of 'subsections', but whilst this offers some potential in helping to compartmentalise areas of focus for the research, it somewhat relegates the importance of gaining holistic insights – something which was a crucial benefit gained by being an 'insider-researcher'. The three mini-cases are therefore better understood as 'embedded units' though in similar fashion it should be stressed that such 'units' were inherently seen as somewhat fluid and dynamic in nature. Hence, they allowed for a comparative evaluation of the interactions and 'storylines' of the NEA and One NorthEast in various 'embedded' contexts (Hajer, 1995).

Whilst the North East of England formed the general case the research was conducted from within the North East Assembly. Here Miles and Huberman's (1994) comments on the 'case' and the 'site' offer a useful distinction. Specifically they argue that the term 'site' may be preferable to 'case' as case implies a particular social and physical setting devoid of context (Robson, 2002). However, for the purpose of this research there is no reason why both terms cannot complement each other, although it is considered that there should be no reason why a 'case' should be devoid of context as long as its geo-historical setting or 'spatial history' is acknowledged and incorporated. Hence the term 'case' appears apt to describe the case study of the North East of England whilst the term 'site'

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[44] Yin (1994) for example also identifies comparative studies and single case studies with a single unit of analysis as other types of case study research. However, the use of the three mini-case studies in addition to the multiple and diverse roles of the Assembly and One NorthEast meant that a single case with multiple units was the most appropriate classification.

seems suited to describe the North East Assembly as the location where the research was conducted. Indeed, the Assembly's 'intermediary' representative role as 'voice for the region' with its diverse membership of local authority councillors and economic and social partners (ESPs)[45] made it a prime 'site' through which to investigate the interactions between and of the Assembly and One NorthEast.

This research through active immersion into a site has utilised a case study as a research strategy rather than, as some naively assume, as a research method. As Robson confirms, the "case study is a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence" (2002:177). Indeed, as Stake states, "as a form of research, case study is defined by interest in individual cases, not by the methods of inquiry used" (2003:134). Nevertheless case studies have been viewed with apprehension by some academic circles, partly in response to questions regarding whether and how findings can be generalised from individual cases. In relation to this a growing seam of literature has argued for the recognition of the value of case studies as the "too little honoured intrinsic study of the particular" (Stake, 2003:140), irrespective of whether findings can be generalised (Schön, 1991). Indeed, as Valsiner aptly states, "the study of individual cases has always been the major (albeit often unrecognized) strategy in the advancement of knowledge about human beings" (1986:11).

The academic worth of case study research in terms of its potential to provide context rich insights, develop understanding (or 'verstehen') and 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) is becoming more widely recognised and is now seen as an acceptable research strategy in its own right rather than as a supplementary or exploratory part of a larger investigation. This does not

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[45] In March 2006 the Assembly consisted of seventy-two members with seventy percent of those representing local authorities and the remaining thirty percent consisting of ESPs coming from the private/business sector, trade unions, culture/media/sport and the voluntary sector. The Assembly's full membership met in plenary sessions twice a year and selected members participated in a range of other groups such as the Chief Executive, the Planning and Transport Advisory Group (PTAG), the Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee and the Economic and Social Partners group. This structure has however subsequently changed to a system of Boards though many of the functions performed remain the same.

necessarily mean that the sometimes perceived 'soft' approach of case studies is exempt from questions of validity and reliability. As with all investigations it is the responsibility of the researcher to devise and implement robust evidence gathering techniques in order to legitimate the research.

Yin has written that, "the case study is the method of choice when the phenomenon under study is not readily distinguishable from its context" (1993:3) and when the investigator has little control over events (Yin, 1994). As part of the investigation into the interactions of a regional assembly and regional development agency a case study approach therefore appears well suited to developing more nuanced 'verstehen' or understanding of social phenomena, as opposed to definite answers or reasons. Stake has claimed that, "the case is a 'bounded system'" (2003:135), but it is important to make clear that such a view is not shared by this research. Indeed, this investigation's explicit use of elements of complexity theory which understands the social world as comprised of complex open systems runs contrary to such assertions of 'bounded systems'. However, this does provide an opportunity to reiterate the value of complexity theory to the methodological approach as a means of viewing case studies (and their 'embedded units') as parts of wider open systems and in stressing the importance of local rather than universal knowledge.

2. The insider-researcher role: participant observer and reflective practitioner

Schön observes that, "researchers are supposed to provide the basic and applied science from which to derive techniques for diagnosing and solving the problems of practice. Practitioners are supposed to furnish researchers with problems for study and with tests of the utility of research results" (1996:26). The role of the researcher in this investigation bridged this distinction by simultaneously embracing both practitioner and researcher roles in what has been termed the 'practitioner-researcher' (Robson, 2002), 'reflective practitioner' (Schön, 1996) or 'insider-researcher'. What follows is a

brief summary of the means by which the researcher balanced those respective roles.

The professional role saw the researcher become an official part-time employee at the North East Assembly. Funding was supplied by the Assembly at a rate equivalent to that provided for ESRC funded studentships. The researcher's official job title on starting employment in September 2004 was Policy Officer as part of the Regional Development Team with particular responsibilities to assist in the Assembly's scrutiny and policy development function. Although job responsibilities remained the same, subsequent Assembly restructuring entailed a change of job title to Policy Officer (Scrutiny and Research) and a change of team into the Europe and Scrutiny Team. To elaborate further some of the tasks for which the researcher was responsible included taking and drafting minutes of Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee meetings, supporting and liaising with Committee members, conducting initial research on scrutiny topics, writing reports for Committee meetings and Assembly plenary sessions, writing final reports on scrutiny topics, conducting interviews to assist scrutiny research, attending other meetings on behalf of the Assembly such as the English Regions Network Accountability Group and the North East Academic Panel, replying to e-mail enquiries from the public and other professional sources and offering general assistance on a variety of other Assembly matters[46].

In terms of participation in the research setting Ely et al. observe that, "the meaning of participant-observer ranges from full participant, that is actually living and working in the field as a member of the group over an extended period of time, to mute observer, who attempts to replicate the fly on the wall" (1991:45). Alternatively, Wolcott (1988) distinguishes between three participant observer styles ranging from the active participant (who has a job to do in the setting) to the privileged observer (someone who is known and trusted and can get easy access to information) and the limited observer (who has no public role other than as a researcher).

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[46] For example, high workloads in other teams or unique developments would necessitate the temporary use of the resources in the researcher's team. Such cases included compiling material for House of Commons Select Committee evidence sessions, logging and examining public responses to the consultation on the Regional Spatial Strategy and compiling material for the Assembly's website and newsletters.

According to these definitions the researcher, in fulfilling the roles and responsibilities as mentioned previously, was a full and active participant in the North East Assembly and clearly abided to Stake's assertion that "perhaps the simplest rule for qualitative casework is this: Place your best intellect into the thick of what is going on" (2003:149). In addition the researcher's status shared many similarities with Robson's 'practitioner-researcher' who "holds down a job in some particular area and is, at the same time, involved in carrying out systematic enquiry which is of relevance to the job" (Robson, 2002:534) although in this investigation it can be argued that the research element was more related to external academic interests than the Assembly job itself. Hence, Robson's identification of the 'true hybrid' to describe someone whose "job is officially part-practitioner, part-researcher (2002:534) is potentially more accurate but suffers from the implication that the roles could always be easily distinguished.

In the research setting practitioner and researcher roles were often blurred as emphasis was placed on actively being reflexive and reflective in order to counter criticism that such immersion into a research setting can lead to unacceptable levels of subjectivity. As Robson notes:

> "At one extreme, some would doubt the feasibility of insiders carrying out any worthwhile, credible or objective enquiry into a situation in which they are centrally involved. At the other extreme, those associated with movements such as 'collaborative research' (Kemmis and Wilkinson, 1998) or 'participatory evaluation' (e.g. Cousins and Earl, 1995) maintain that outsider research is ineffective research, at least as far as change and development are concerned" (2002:7).

Hess and Mullen observe that "organisational considerations provide both opportunities and obstacles to practice-research collaborations" (1995:15). Whilst an 'insider' perspective was invaluable the setting did require the researcher to undertake the research according to certain organisational rules and obligations. Nevertheless the professional responsibilities connected with the practitioner role did essentially guarantee and formalise the researcher's participation in the organisation thereby ensuring access to source material.

Guba and Lincoln state that participant observation demands

"sufficient involvement at the site to overcome the effects of misinformation, ... to uncover constructions, and to facilitate immersing oneself in and understanding the context's culture" (1989:237). Embracing this assertion the research, therefore, covered a three year period from September 2004 to September 2007. This was considered adequate time to 'settle in' and integrate into the research environment in order to develop a more detailed and nuanced understanding of the case.

Maintaining a continuous presence in the research environment provided the practitioner-researcher with day to day experiences of the policy landscape and an unequalled degree of insight into the interactions of the North East Assembly and One NorthEast (Fuller and Petch, 1995). This approach is supported by Schön who highlights the importance of 'knowing-in-action' or what Polanyi terms 'tacit knowing' whereby knowledge is "dependent on tacit recognitions, judgments, and skilful performances" (Schön, 1996:50). Whilst this investigation stressed the need to understand by 'knowing-in-action', the key element was to recognise and use this knowledge as part of the process of 'reflection-in-practice' (Schön, 1996:54), which is the defining characteristic of the 'reflective-practitioner'. As Stake states, "qualitative case study is characterised by researchers spending extended time, on site, personally in contact with activities and operations of the case, reflecting, revising meanings of what is going on" (2003:150).

In order to recognise subjective positions, reflexivity and reflectivity played vital parts in the practitioner-researcher role. The terms are very similar but do vary slightly with reflexivity interpreted here to be more concerned with the continual interpretation and feedback of research findings or insights into the ongoing research process; and reflectivity relating predominantly to the process of thoughtful reflection regarding all aspects associated with the research. Stake has stated that, "in being ever reflective, the researcher is committed to pondering the impressions, deliberating recollections and records – but not necessarily following the conceptualizations of theorists, actors, or audiences" (2003:150). Schön's (1996) concept of the 'reflective practitioner' and the process of 'reflection-in-action' were thereby useful and complementary to Robson's (2002) idea of the 'practitioner-researcher' and central considerations in performing the

'insider-researcher' role.

3. Ethical and practical considerations

During the three years spent as a practitioner-researcher in the North East Assembly a number of moral and ethical considerations and practical obstacles were encountered. The hybrid practitioner-researcher role raised particular issues concerning confidentiality and the subjective position of the researcher especially in relation to potential clashes of interest between academic and professional fields. Maintaining acceptable levels of subjectivity and avoiding the pitfall of going native were thus essential as was finding practical solutions to emerging challenges.

Confidentiality was an ongoing consideration throughout the research period as the researcher was continually presented with situations and information in which a certain degree of 'good judgment' had to be exercised. A number of Assembly working arrangements and guidelines set out specific procedures for dealing with different types of information, which applied to all staff [47]. Additionally, in recognition of the potentially sensitive balance between the researcher and practitioner roles, the researcher agreed to a working arrangement with the Assembly, which covered some of the confidentiality issues on more detail. For instance, it was agreed that it would be inappropriate to name individuals [48] and the Assembly were permitted sight of any papers or chapters prior to submission.

Importantly having such regulations in place not only clarified some confidentiality issues but also helped reduce any suspicion the Assembly might have had of the researcher in taking an insider perspective. The working arrangement also countered a potential issue surrounding the

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[47] For example, documents would often be labelled "confidential draft report: not for distribution"; in certain circumstances it was seen as bad practice to name individuals; and in the periods preceding national and local elections and the regional referendum the Assembly was subject to 'purdah' in which communication outside of the office was restricted.

[48] Anonymising the whole region was considered as a possibility to escape any confidentiality issues but was rejected as this would have denied the study of its vital context.

relationship between the researcher and the Assembly as the funding organisation. As Cheek states, an "issue can arise when the findings of a study do not please the funder. What happens if the findings are, or have the potential to be, beneficial to the participants but may displease the sponsor?" (2003:98). Anonymising individuals and permitting the Assembly to view the research effectively prevented such occurrences and helped in building trust in the working relationship. Crucially, editorial control was retained by the researcher which allowed for a positive response to Cheek's assertion that "it is important for the researcher to consider whether it is possible for him or her to retain integrity and independence as a researcher when paid by someone else or provided with the support to do research" (2003:99).

Despite such guidelines and arrangements there were a number of obscure and problematic 'grey areas' in which the distinction between professional confidentiality, freedom of information and the rights permitted to the researcher were less clear. As Kimmel states,

> "in one's attempt to conduct high-quality research, the pressures to comply with professional and company standards (and the reality of organizational life), place considerable constraints on the organizational researcher (Angell, 1967; London and Bray, 1980). The realities of research in organizations are such that investigators are likely to become entangled in a set of multiple roles that give rise to ambiguous and conflicting expectations" (1988:105).

In such situations the researcher had to "strike a delicate balance between scientific requirements of methodology and the human rights and values potentially threatened by the research" (Kimmel, 1988:9). At all times the researcher aimed to use good and sensible judgement in potentially sensitive areas and, where extra guidance was required, the relevant Assembly management staff were often asked and willing to provide clarification.

The subjective position of the researcher was an important ethical consideration especially with relation to potential professional and academic emotional attachments. Whilst achieving complete objectivity was perceived as an unrealistic aim, an acceptable level of subjectivity was sought by actively acknowledging subjective positions through reflexivity and reflectivity. In so doing the research followed Robson's stance that "objectivity can be

approached through a heightened sensitivity to the problem of subjectivity, and the need for justification of one's claims" (2002:314).

Nevertheless adopting a 'hybrid' role did require a balancing of allegiances. As Ely et al. state, "for many researchers, prolonged engagement with people creates an emotional attachment that is hard to break" (1991:51). Taking on a part-time position helped counter against the pitfall of 'going native' but it would be naïve to deny that a number of personal friendships were made at the Assembly – indeed such friendships aided the researcher in becoming a full and active participant. Other factors such as the fixed-term contract of the work placement, the pressures of producing a thesis, potential career paths and the desire for good professional and academic references all influenced the continually evolving allegiances and subjective positions of the researcher. However, the process of consciously acknowledging such factors through reflexive self-analysis was seen as an effective means of ensuring the validity of the research was not jeopardised.

In the day-to-day job at the Assembly additional efforts were also made to ensure the researcher retained a 'critical eye'. As Fuller and Petch state, "practitioners may through habit-blindness have difficulty in seeing the wood from the trees. To adopt a research perspective one needs to stand back, to see a wider picture than is necessarily visible from the individual practitioner's workload" (1995:9). To achieve this, the researcher developed a series of constant reminders to promote reflexive and reflective thought processes. These micro-level practices included: leaving notes in researcher's diaries and staff workbooks, putting reminders on the computer 'desktop' and the 'Outlook diary'; placing 'post-it' notes on the work desk; and using lunch hours to write up thoughts and findings. Thus, it was ensured that the researcher remained critical and reflexive in the practitioner role.

In addition to the ethical use of confidential material and the ethics of researcher attachment, a number of practical issues presented challenges in the field. Although not hindrances per se, two particular factors did affect the researcher's assimilation into the practitioner-researcher role. The first concerns the part-time nature of the work placement at the Assembly. Working only three-days a week (and often not the same three days for any length of time) prevented the researcher from maintaining a consistent

presence and made it problematic in following exchanges or narratives on particular issues as developments would sometimes occur outside of the researcher's office hours. However, this partial exclusion resulted from being a part-time employee rather than a practitioner-researcher and so did not compromise the researcher's participation whilst in the 'field'.

The second, albeit minor, issue relates to the timing of the funding payments. The researcher received quarterly maintenance grants in contrast to the rest of the Assembly staff who received their pay on a monthly basis. What was not anticipated was the degree to which everyday life amongst staff at the Assembly was influenced by the monthly pay cycle. For example, conversations and the organisation of social events were often related to 'pay day'. The researcher however was not subject to such a monthly dynamic which did on occasion serve to highlight the practitioner-role. Nevertheless for the most part it was overlooked and it cannot be said to have posed a serious problem in preventing the researcher becoming a full and active participant at the Assembly.

4. Ontological and epistemological considerations

Ontological and epistemological considerations are vital in informing the design of a research project as they effectively relate to the ways in which the world are viewed and consequentially to what kinds of evidence are accepted as valid and relevant. It was duly recognised from the outset that "methods of research and analysis are not neutral devices for gaining leverage on the social world, but different approaches to knowing the world" (Bryman, 1998:140) and as such "many empirical and theoretical problems and questions flow from the adoption not just of one or other methodological approach, but from the assumption (usually implicit) of philosophical or methodological positions" (Williams, 2002:6). In developing a methodological way forward Cresswell (2002) contends that one of three standpoints can be adopted:

i. The 'purist' view which posits that paradigms and their associated methods should not be mixed;

ii. The 'situationalist' which proposed that certain methods are appropriate for specific situations; and

iii. The 'pragmatic' which pertains that there is a false dichotomy between the qualitative and the quantitative.

Whilst ontological and epistemological issues were critical, particularly in devising a research design which combined somewhat divergent concepts and theories, the very development of such an approach shifted the investigation away from a 'purist' view towards a more 'situationalist' and 'pragmatic' stance. Indeed, although there was not necessarily considered to be a 'false dichotomy', the research could aptly be described as being 'pragmatic' and 'practical' in negotiating ontological and epistemological issues. This is an approach supported by Layder who states that, "social analysis and research cannot afford to concentrate exclusively on one aspect of social reality or methodological framework. A multidimensional approach which grasps the variegated nature of social reality and the necessity for a plural epistemological basis is the only viable approach for the job at hand" (1998:99).

With relation to the selection of research methods the 'pragmatic' view shares similarities with Bryman's (1998) 'technical' approach which "recognises that research methods and approaches to analysis may have been developed with a particular view of social reality in mind, but that this does not tie them exclusively and ineluctably to particular epistemological viewpoints. (1998:140). Such a standpoint allowed for the utilisation of a variety of research methods which was vital in gaining a greater understanding of the research environment.

Turning directly to the ontological and epistemological stance of this investigation the first requirement is to set out the ontological foundations because as Marsh and Furlong state, "ontological positions are prior because they deal with the very nature of being" as "literally, an ontology is a theory of 'being' (the word derives from the Greek for 'existence')" (2002:18). Indeed, the most pertinent question regarding ontology pertains to whether or not there is a 'real world' independent of our knowledge of it. In utilising Lefebvre's (1991) 'triple dialectic' of the physical, mental and social a strong

emphasis was placed on embracing an ontological position which incorporated both realist and social constructionist elements. However, care was also exercised to avoid naïve realist presumptions of objectivity and essentialist/foundationalist approaches which assert that there are "essential differences of 'being' that provide the foundations upon which social life is built" (Marsh and Furlong, 2002:18).

The meta-theory of realism was perceived to offer an ontological position which allowed for the combination of social constructionism and anti-foundationalism with a recognition of the existence of an external reality or 'real' world. This approach can be seen to share many similarities with Pawson and Tilley's *Realistic Evaluation* (2004) which contends that evaluation first has to be 'real' in that certain things do exist irrespective of the meanings and interpretations we construct of and around them. However, they are also careful not to presuppose that 'real' things have "some elemental, self-explanatory level of social reality which can be grasped, measured and evaluated in some self-evident way. The reality we seek to explore is stratified" (Pawson and Tilley, 2004:xiii). In realising this multi-layered reality they acknowledge that "all social programs involve the interplay of individual and institution, and of structure and agency" and that therefore "all social interaction creates interdependencies and these interdependencies develop into real-world customs and practices, which are quite independent of how people would wish them to be" (Pawson and Tilley, 2004:xiii).

The approach of 'realistic evaluation' proposed by Pawson and Tilley offers a useful combination of social constructionism and realism and acknowledges the complexity of the social world. In light of this, figure 4.1. below offers a simplified interpretation of how such a realist/constructionist ontology can be seen to constitute the act of 'being'.

Figure 4.1. A realist/constructionist ontology of the self
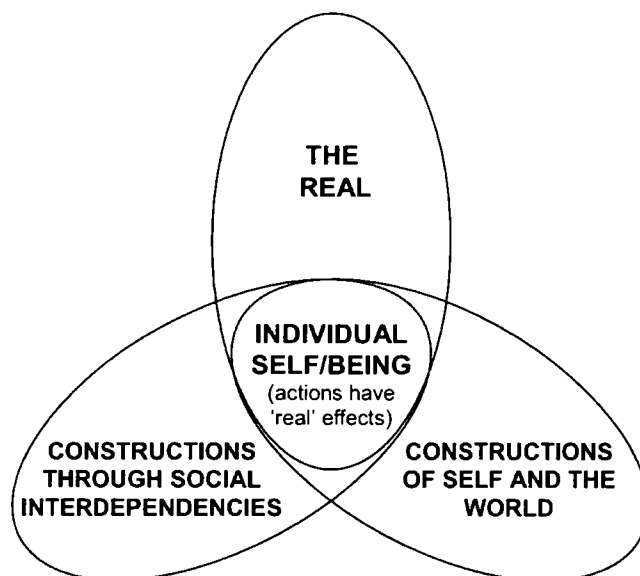
As a final word on ontology Hammersley (1992) puts forward the idea of 'subtle realism' which proposes that knowledge is defined as beliefs about whose validity is trusted and thus research should aim to represent reality whilst acknowledging that such a representation would be from a particular perspective. Developed in opposition to naïve realism's presumed achievement of objectivity, the concept of 'subtle realism', through its conscious recognition of the researcher's subjectivity, presented itself as a particularly useful correlate to the practitioner-researcher role adopted within the Assembly (Hammersley, 1992). Hence ontologically the investigation could best be described as taking a 'subtle realist/constructionist' approach.

In terms of epistemology, in keeping with the case study approach, the investigation can broadly be described as interpretative and more specifically hermeneutic in nature. As Schwandt states, "interpretivist epistemologies can be categorized as hermeneutic because they emphasize that one must grasp the situation in which human actions make or acquire meaning in order to say one has understanding of a particular action" (2000:193). In terms of this research a philosophical hermeneutic viewpoint allowed for the researcher to "engage of one's biases" (Schwandt, 2000:195) and develop what Stake terms an "epistemology of the particular" (Stake, 2003:145) focused upon the

case.

As a requirement of interpretivist approaches, "the inquirer must grasp the meanings that constitute that action" (Schwandt, 2000:191) which entails assigning meaning to human action. In turn, "to say that human action is meaningful is to claim either that it has a certain intentional content that indicates the kind of action it is and/or that what an action means can be grasped only in terms of the system of meanings to which it belongs" (Schwandt, 2000:191). Such an approach therefore permits both structure and agency (structuration), which overcomes Foucault's poststructuralism denial of the autonomous subject discussed in the previous chapter, and fits with an anti-foundationalist ontological stance that aims to interpret actions and interactions by revealing "how they are constructed by prior webs of belief informed by traditions" (Rhodes, 2003:3; Giddens, 1984; Müller, 2008).

However, interpretative approaches do create a certain degree of epistemological friction with regard to their stance on the subjectivity of the researcher. Specifically, a shared feature of interpretative studies, as Schwandt states, is that "the meaning that the interpreter reproduces or reconstructs is considered the original meaning of the action" (2000:193) which necessitates the researcher becoming a 'disinterested observer' in order to achieve objectivity. In other words, "in interpretative traditions, the interpreter objectifies (i.e. stands over and against) that which is to be interpreted. And, in that sense, the interpreter remains unaffected by and external to the interpretative process" (Schwandt, 2000:194). Such an epistemological approach was therefore not well suited to the researcher's immersion into the researcher field as an active and full 'practitioner-researcher'.

Alternatively, the emphasis placed on reflexively engaging with the researcher's own bias and subjective positions, offered by a hermeneutic approach, appeared to more realistically reflect and complement the research design. In particular, the branch of hermeneutics known as philosophical hermeneutics, which was inspired by Heidegger, and is most commonly associated with Gadamer and Taylor, was considered especially relevant. In contrast to interpretative studies philosophical hermeneutics focuses on achieving understanding, not by standing back or being a

'disinterested observer' but by coming to terms and thinking reflexively about one's own opinions, experiences and thoughts. As Garrison neatly explains, prejudices are the very kind of prejudgments "necessary to make our way, however tentatively, in everyday thought, conversation, and action...The point is not to free ourselves of all prejudice, but to examine our historically inherited and unreflectively held prejudices and alter those that disable our efforts to understand others, and ourselves" (1996:434). Actively participating in a research environment therefore lies at the heart of a philosophical hermeneutic approach because, as Schwandt states "understanding is participative, conversational, and dialogic. Moreover, understanding is something that is produced in that dialogue, not something reproduced by an interpreter" (2000:195). Understanding is thus negotiated, reflexively and reflectively, by the researcher in the field rather than objectively revealed.

The philosophical hermeneutic approach gave vital priority to gaining greater understanding or 'verstehen' as opposed to seeking causal mechanisms and, in being applied to the case of the North East of England, sought to facilitate an "epistemology of the particular" (Stake, 2003:145; Marsh and Furlong, 2002). Importantly such an epistemological stance also stressed the value of producing 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) and allowed the research to move "back and forth between aggregate concepts and the beliefs of the individuals" (Stake, 2003:2) thereby complementing the research design's incorporation of both 'pure' and 'applied' research (Pacione, 1999).

The ontological and epistemological foundations of this investigation can be summarised as following a 'subtle realist/constructionist' ontology complemented by a philosophical hermeneutic and broadly interpretative epistemology. However, as with ontology it should be noted that, "any way of classifying epistemological positions can be contested" (Marsh and Furlong, 2002:20). Indeed, the multitude of epistemological and ontological positions, contradictions and debates creates a veritable maze which requires careful navigation in order to successfully anchor a piece of research to its theoretical foundations. In light of this, the decision was taken to use the concept of discourse as a means by which to link such ontological and epistemological considerations directly to the research methods. The

following section therefore provides an overview of the concepts of discourse, narratives and 'storylines' before the individual research methods are discussed (Hajer, 1995).

5. Discourses, Narratives and Storylines

The emergence of the concept of discourse is often associated with the work of Michel Foucault who developed the approach as a reaction to the structuralist tendencies of believing in the autonomous subject and the possibility of universal truths (Bevir and Rhodes, 2002). Discourse is therefore related to the re-articulation of the concepts of reason and the subject. On reason, "in opposing pure experiences", as Bevir and Rhodes state, "[Foucault] suggest[ed] we have experiences only within a prior discourse. Objects and actions acquire meaning, become 'real', only when they have a place in a language, a wider web of meaning" (2002:138). On individuals, "Foucault uses the term "subject" in conscious contraposition to the concept of the acting individual" (Müller, 2008:327) as meaning and identity are only acquired through immersion into discursive practices. "Thus, Foucault sees subjects as products and not as producers of discourses" (Müller, 2008:327) as, essentially, "the subject is a contingent product of a particular discourse, a particular set of techniques of government and technologies of the self" (Bevir and Rhodes, 2002:139). Discourse, therefore, entails the 'subjectification' of the individual[49].

The concept of discourse has been much used and developed since Foucault. Indeed, Foucault, in his later work, replaced the idea of an episteme with that of discursive practice as a term to describe the ever shifting and evolving regulation of acceptable meaning within a discourse (Bevir and Rhodes, 2002). However, its diverse academic application has led

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[49] Although discourse is often, and usefully used in analysing power relations "Foucault stated that his work is frequently misread as being about power rather than about the different modes by which human beings are transformed into subjects" (Müller, 2008:327).

to it becoming somewhat of an umbrella term for a diverse range of approaches, which concomitantly threatens to undermine its usefulness[50]. As Ó Tuathail states, "'discourse analysis' is a misnomer for there is no agreed and paradigmatic 'discourse analysis' but a heterogeneous mix of approaches, perspectives and strategies" (2002:605). Indeed, "there is a tendency", as Müller states, "for discourse to become a catch-all term with only very vague notions of its conceptual underpinnings" (2008:323). In accordance with the pragmatic and flexible epistemological stance of this study, albeit with interpretative anti-foundationalist leanings, discourse provides a potentially useful means by which to focus the research methods in the field and link them with the investigation's epistemological and ontological roots. In order for this to occur, however, it is necessary to provide a little clarification on how the 'catch all term' of discourse and related concepts will be approached and utilised.

A number of varying and related definitions of discourse abound. For Hajer discourse can be defined as the arrangement of "ideas, concepts and categories that are produced, reproduced and transformed to give meaning to physical and social phenomenon and relations" (1995:44). In stressing discourse's post-structuralist rejection of universal truth or objective reason Bevir and Rhodes describe it as consisting of "endlessly multiplying meanings, many statements and events, none of which is stable, none of which makes up an essence" (2002:138). In its most straightforward sense, therefore, discourse can be interpreted as a particular, though always fragmented, way of seeing and reproducing the world (Phillips and Jørgensen, 2002).

In the field of critical geopolitics, Ó Tuathail states that "discourse can be defined as a set of capabilities that allow us to organize and give meaning to the world and our actions and practices within it" (2002:605). However, this focus on 'allowing us to organise' implies a degree of active agency, which contradicts Foucault's theorisation of the 'subject' as a product rather than a producer of discourse. To overcome this, a useful categorisation and

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[50] Müller (2008) observes that in the field of critical geopolitics alone numerous associated terms have arisen such as 'geopolitical storylines', 'geopolitical imaginations', 'geopolitical scripts', 'geopolitical narratives', 'geopolitical visions' and 'geopolitical fantasies'.

theoretical bridge can be provided by making a distinction between discourses and narratives.

The key to delineating between the two lies in relation to the autonomy of the individual. In developing the idea of discourse Foucault posited that, due to the multiplicity of discourses, there was the possibility that the subject could be aligned with a number of different discourses, but crucially this was never an intentional process (Müller, 2008). Alternatively, narratives imply an element of conscious construction or agency whereby texts are produced with selective reference to other texts (i.e. its intertextuality) (Müller, 2008). In the field of critical geopolitics, as Müller states:

> "much... writing starts from the assumption of the autonomous subject who has control over texts, knits them into narratives, and thus turns them into a vehicle through which it exercises power. Narratives are here associated with the agency of subjects as individuals. Individuals produce narratives" (2008:328).

Therefore, "narratives, assembled through texts, are associated with the autonomy of the subject and intentional representations of geopolitical events" (Müller, 2008:334), whereas discourse reflects the 'subjectified' nature of the individual as products rather than producers. This distinction will be potentially useful in analysing the production of space and communicative action as it allows for insights into whether agencies and/or individuals actively produce regional narratives or 'subjectively' reproduce discourses.

A further note of clarification is required with regard to the place of language and practice in discourse. In order to harness the full potential of discourse and further distinguish it from narratives it is necessary to move beyond a focus on texts (language)[51]. Whereas narratives can be seen as being predominantly concerned with the active production of texts, discourse can alternatively be seen as encompassing both language and practice (Müller, 2008). Indeed, Foucault, as Müller states, paved "the ground for abandoning the concept of the sign in favour of the concept of discursive

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[51] Dick, for example, rightly asserts discourse's role in actively *constructing* individuals and relationships rather than reflecting their *nature,* but adopts a language focused view of discourse defining it as being "concerned with how individuals use language in specific social contexts" (Dick, 2004:203).

practices and thus veers away from a purely linguistic conception of discourse" (2008:329). Laclau and Moeffe (1985) have developed and refined Foucault's thesis and in so doing have rejected the distinction between discursive and non-discursive practices as a means by which to include the totality of interactions within society under discourse. As Müller states:

> "For Laclau and Moeffe, the whole social space is engaged in the process of creating meaning and, therefore, is of discursive character. A distinction between the discursive and the non-discursive is consequently rendered obsolete. Discourse refers both to linguistic and to extra-linguistic phenomena, to language and practice" (2008:329).

This re-theorisation of discourse as both language and practice borders closely on Butler's (1993) concept of 'performativity', which incorporates practices, performances, texts and images (Müller, 2008), and Bourdieu's (1977) ideas of 'fields', 'doxa' and 'performing the habitus' whereby the objective structures of the 'field' are imposed upon the subjective structures of the agent. For Butler,

> "'Performance' is not a singular 'act' or event, but a ritualized production, a ritual reiterated under and through constraint, under and through the force of prohibition and taboo, with the threat of ostracism and even death controlling and compelling the shape of the production, but not, I will insist, determining it fully in advance" (1993:95).

What this approach critically provides is an avenue for agency and resistance, which Foucault's rejection of the autonomy of the individual had rendered problematic. As Müller states, "the performance or enactment of identities offers conceptual leeway for subversive potential to challenge the discourses that underlie certain performances" (2008:330).

Bevir and Rhodes (2002) pursue a similar pragmatic approach to discourse in attempting to find some middle ground between the autonomous agent, the subject, objective reason and the eternally shifting meaning derived from language (and practice) (Ó Tuathail, 2002). They counter Foucault's rejection of the intentionality of having subject positions with the view that "there must be a space in social structures where individual

subjects decide what beliefs to hold and what actions to perform for their own reasons" (Bevir and Rhodes, 2002:140). Instead, Bevir and Rhodes temper discourse's hard-line on the subject with the concept of a 'tradition' which can be seen as "a set of theories or narratives, and associated practices that people inherit; and forms the background against which they reach beliefs and perform actions. Traditions are contingent, constantly evolving and necessarily located in a historical context" (Bevir and Rhodes, 2002:140). By implication this degree of agency also allows for what Bevir and Rhodes (2002) term 'local reasoning' as opposed to neutral or universal.

The concepts of 'tradition' and 'local reasoning' are reminiscent of Giddens's theory of 'structuration' in finding a complementary approach between structure and agency (Giddens, 1984). In addition the notion of 'performativity' usefully allows for a degree of agency and resistance as part of a conceptualisation of discourse as language and practice. The broad points of this discussion can be summarised in the following table (table 4.3.)

Table 4.3. The characteristics of narratives, discourses and traditions

	Narrative	Discourse	Tradition
Role of the individual	Autonomous Agent	Subject	Semi-autonomous Individual
Method(s)/means of (re)production	Language	Language and Practice	Performativity

This conceptualisation adds important methodological weight to the investigation and critically, by acknowledging an element of agency in discourse through the possibilities of 'performativity' and what this study will term the 'semi-autonomous actor' or 'individual'[52], it allows for the study of potential forms of resistance in addition to the analysis of interactions and underlying relations of power. This research will therefore adopt the ideas of narratives, as predominantly focused on texts and allowing for the active role

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[52] This term in providing for the possibility of resistance can be seen to share similarities with the concept of 'self-reflexivity' whereby individuals have the ability to acknowledge their own subject positions, and 'subjectification' into those positions, and hence potentially change them.

of the agent, and discourse as comprised of language and practice and performed by semi-autonomous agents[53].

In particular, the concepts of narratives and discourses will be applied to an analysis of the interactions of the North East Assembly and One NorthEast. In looking at such a 'field' Skelcher et al. highlight that, "the task of analysis is to explicate the discourses that are embedded in institutions and that provide a medium of power through their capacity to foreground certain elements and background others" (2005:578). Indeed, in such an organisational setting discourses can be seen as the 'taken for granted' 'informal logic' or 'software' of institutional design and practice (Dryzek, 1996).

In going about the application of narratives and discourses Ó Tuathail (2002) identifies three 'levels' of perspective – the macro, meso, and micro. Macro-level discourse analysis in terms of looking at its epistemological foundations can perhaps best be associated with the work of Foucault "on the functioning of powerful discourses of subjectification and social positioning as regimes of truth and technologies of power" (Ó Tuathail, 2002:606). Meso-level analysis is more concerned with how 'taken for granted' assumptions are produced as part of the everyday workings of discourse, and the micro-level focuses on the detailed study of linguistics and psychology in communicative acts. This investigation has sought to embrace discourse at all three levels.

The clarification of the concept of discourse as composed of a macro, meso and micro-level leads conveniently to the research methods that were utilized. The nature of the 'immersed' three year research placement, however, necessitated an 'organic' evolving process of method selection to best suit particular situations. For this reason it would be misplaced to consider there having been an interviewing phase, followed by surveys and then ethnography for example. Indeed, the structure of the research chapters around particular 'case studies' or topics, rather than findings from specific methods, reflects this. Therefore, as the methods can essentially be viewed

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[53] Despite the academic potential of the term 'tradition' it is considered that an approach to discourse that incorporates an element of agency is most appropriate as it avoids the confusion of using a less widely recognised term and indeed a term which has a number of other connotations.

as the micro-level analysis, it is useful to see them as contributing to a higher level meso-level investigation structured around the three research chapters. For this purpose Hajer's (1995) concept of the 'storyline' is a relevant analytical tool. Although predominantly used in the study of the formation of 'discourse coalitions' a 'storyline' in its basic sense can be defined as "a narrative on social reality through which elements from many different domains are combined and that provides actors with a set of symbolic references that suggest a common understanding" (Hajer, 1995:62; Mander, 2008). Hence, "storylines are sense-making organizational devices tying the different elements of a policy challenge together into a reasonably coherent and convincing narrative" (Ó Tuathail, 2002:617).

The research methods described below, over the course of the research placement, gathered a tremendous amount of primary and secondary data that if presented as collected would be lacking in coherency and not to mention tedious to read. The three research strategies on the draft regional strategies, regional leadership, and evidence and regional policy, therefore provided the 'storylines' via which the information from a wide range of sources could be compiled and at least partially explained[54]. The following sections provide a summary of the particular methods of data collection.

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[54] Skelcher et al. (2005,) in looking at the public governance of collaborative spaces in two UK municipalities employed three primary methods – "semi-structured interviews, a governance assessment and a questionnaire survey of board members" (2005:581) – in addition to a review of official documentation. This research went beyond the above referenced work and also included a detailed content and discourse analysis, a three year ethnography with the researcher adopting the role of an 'insider' participant-observer, in-depth research diaries and an analysis of personal and organisational interactions between a regional assembly and regional development agency.

6. Research methods

1. Content, thematic and discourse analysis

At a micro-level scale content and discourse analyses were used to inform all three research chapters but were of particular importance to the investigation of the draft regional spatial and economic strategies. Whereas the regional leadership and evidence and regional policy chapters utilised an analysis of their accompanying North East Assembly scrutiny reports as a method of constructing a 'storyline' around the topic, the draft regional strategies chapter, although also informed by information gathered from the research placement, involved a much more detailed and systematic dissection of the texts. For this reason this section will predominantly focus on the application of methods in the draft regional strategies case study.

Coffey and Atkinson state that texts are most often analysed to "reveal patterns, themes and regularities as well as contrasts, paradoxes and irregularities" (1996:47). In actively performing such analysis Fairclough (1992) identifies three different levels, which essentially constitute the 'situatedness' of a text. This three dimensional approach posits that every communicative event consists of a text (speech, writing, image), discursive practice (the production and consumption of the text) and wider social practice (including underlying relations of power and 'taken for granted' norms) (Phillips and Jørgensen, 2002; Dick, 2004). Figure 4.2. below highlights how these dimensions interrelate in situating the production of a text.

Figure 4.2. Fairclough's three-dimensional model for critical discourse analysis (adapted from Fairclough, 1995:98)

Text production

TEXT

Text consumption

DISCURSIVE PRACTICE

SOCIAL PRACTICE
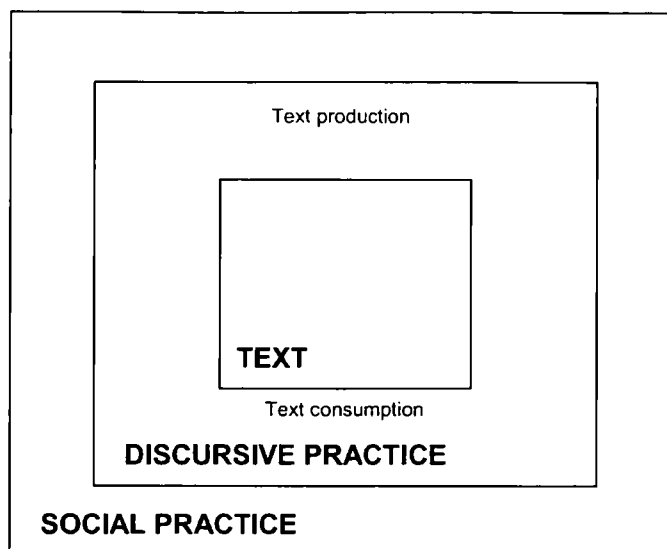
In terms of analysing at the level of the text, various qualitative and quantitative forms of content analysis can be used to establish the recurring concepts, themes and purpose (i.e. whether it is attempting to assert, justify, accuse, defend or explain etc) of a text. An analysis of the level of discursive practice requires an examination of the context of text production and consumption and so goes beyond the study of what is only included in a text. It is likely to entail a combination of thematic or frame analysis and a critical discourse analysis of the micro-level linguistic details of the text.

The level of social practice includes the 'taken for granted' norms and relations of power associated with particular ways of seeing the world. As such it can be seen to resemble Foucault's concepts of unintentional subject positions resulting from specific techniques of government and technologies of self (Bevir and Rhodes, 2002). Crucially Phillips and Jørgensen state that, "discourse analysis is not sufficient in itself for analysis of the wider social practice, since the latter encompasses both discursive and non-discursive elements" (2002:69). However, as has already been discussed, a conceptualization of discourse as encompassing both language and practice can overcome the 'weak' distinction between the discursive and non-discursive thereby rendering the totality of society's interactions under

discourse (Müller, 2008). In other words social practice can be analysed through discourse analysis when it incorporates language and practice.

This was definitely the case in the regional leadership and evidence and regional policy investigations where a text was used as a 'window' into the wider interactions and practices of the North East Assembly and One NorthEast. However, in the draft regional strategies chapter, as the main subjects for analysis were texts, it was consciously recognised that the text and discursive were the main levels of focus, with only preliminary remarks about wider social practice possible at that stage. As all three research chapters formed part of a wider investigation, this format allowed for the first to establish and identify key themes (narratives and discourses) in the key regional texts and for the subsequent two to test and further develop those findings.

Content, thematic and discourse analysis: the draft regional strategies

Applying Fairclough's (1992) three dimensional model of critical discourse analysis the draft regional strategies were subjected to an initial content analysis, followed by more detailed thematic and discourse analyses. As one of the greatest obstacles was the sheer size of the documents, with both being over one hundred pages in length, this approach allowed for an appropriate balance to be achieved between the amount of material being examined and the level of detail it was examined at. In addition, as the first stage content analysis covered the entire documents, the potential problem of missing important data through the use of a sampling strategy was avoided. Figure 4.3. below represents the stages of analysis and the key focus at each respective stage along with an indication of the proportion of the text assessed and level of detail of analysis at each stage.

Figure 4.3. Stages of content, thematic and discourse analysis

STAGE OF ANALYSIS	FOCUS OF ANALYSIS	TYPE OF ANALYSIS
STAGE 1	Key Words	CONTENT ANALYSIS
		Proportion of text under analysis
STAGE 2	Key Themes	THEMATIC ANALYSIS
		Level of detail of analysis
STAGE 3	Key Narratives	DISCOURSE ANALYSIS
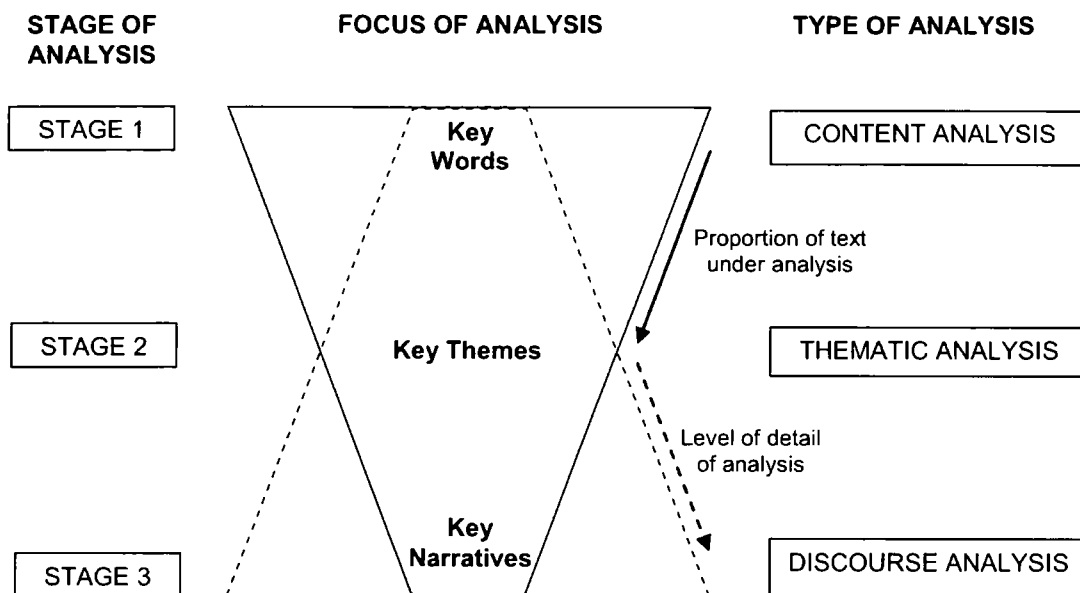
The three stages therefore essentially acted as a series of filters in analysing and selecting particularly revealing sections and themes for further investigation. The following sections provide a little more detail on the methods used at each stage.

Stage 1: Content analysis

The content analysis involved a thorough reading of both draft strategies with an emphasis being placed on the identification of key words and concepts and emerging themes (King, 2004). Each subsection[55] of the draft Regional Spatial Strategy and draft Regional Economic Strategy was assessed individually and in relation to associated sections and the wider document. The results were recorded on a series of A3 matrices, two examples of which are attached as appendix 3.

The draft RSS consisted of a total of 94 sub-sections whilst the draft RES had slightly more at 107. As part of the first stage these sub-sections were filtered on the grounds of whether they were representative of particular

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[55] A subsection typically consisted of a couple of paragraphs but occasionally only formed a couple of lines.

themes and/or warranted further analysis[56]. Hence approximately two-thirds of subsections were carried forward for thematic analysis[57].

In addition, once analysis was complete and certain key words had been established the documents were scanned to ascertain their total frequency. This also involved combining searches for key words with associated terms. For instance, 'development' was searched as a key word and complemented by searches for 'sustainable development' and 'economic development'. In order to facilitate comparison the draft strategies were counter-searched for key words identified from the other strategy.

Stage 2: Thematic analysis

The sections selected from the draft RSS and the draft RES were submitted to a thematic analysis which incorporated a number of different techniques and added an extra level of detail to the preceding content analysis. For example, elements of schema analysis were used to explore how metaphors and the repetition of ideas may be revealing of more complicated opinions, and deconstruction's interest "not just in what is in the text itself but also in what has been left out and the 'secret' meanings that are not obvious" (Hannan, 2002:194) was a valuable viewpoint (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000).

Frame analysis also presented itself as a useful means of conducting the thematic analysis (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994). Frame analysis "underscore[s] the cognitive character of frames, as they not only reveal patterns of labelling through inclusion and exclusion of specific elements in texts or discourse, but also broader 'interpretative schemata' (priorities, values, stereotypes, stances and identities) both borne and acted out by the creators of those texts or discourses" (Stewart et al., 2006:736). Hence, Nelson et al. define 'framing' as "the process by which a source defines the essential problem underlying a particular social or political issue and outlines a set of considerations purportedly relevant to that issue" (1997:222). At the

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[56] Some sections for instance were so short that it would have been excessive to submit them to a further thematic or discourse analysis.
[57] 60 of the 94 subsections in the draft RSS and 75 of the 107 subsections in the draft RES were marked for further analysis.

level of discursive practice, framework analysis therefore provided a useful tool in examining how themes were mobilised as narratives as part of both the production of the texts and concomitantly of space. As Stewart et al. state, "frames are more than mere rhetorical strategies adopted by contending actors to sell a viewpoint and promote their interests. They are complex yet selective ways of naming reality that inform actors' perceiving, valuing and acting" (1997:736).

The subsections of text were hence examined for both included and excluded themes and a smaller number of extracts were selected for a finer detailed discourse analysis. Two example extracts of this thematic analysis are attached as appendix 4. Additionally each of the sections was assessed according to whether it represented a more System or Lifeworld-orientated (or conceived or lived space) discourse. A marking framework was devised with values ranging from zero to ten with one representing the System and ten the Lifeworld. A copy of the marking criteria is attached as appendix 5. The results from this exercise were averaged to explore the respective System/Lifeworld positions of the respective documents.

Stage 3: Critical discourse analysis

The final stage of analysis took a number of previously identified key passages and examined their linguistic construction at a high level of detail. The aim of this stage was to reveal the underlying narratives running through the documents and make preliminary remarks about the discourses in which they were situated.

As part of the analysis the documents were studied in terms of how they used a number of linguistic techniques. Some of these included the use of manipulation, such as through the use of 'discourse labels' in which the author of the text makes an evaluation that is passed on to the reader as if taken for granted, the use of conjuncts such as *and* and *but* to steer the reader in particular directions, and the use of subordinators such as *because* and *although* in assuming a degree of common ground with the reader (Thompson and Hunston, 2000). In addition 'hedging' whereby certain claims

are toned down so as to make them more agreeable (and potentially less offensive) was another technique which was explored (Fairclough, 1995). The results from this analysis were subsequently used to inform the discussion of key narratives in the draft regional strategies chapter.

Content, thematic and discourse analysis: regional leadership and evidence and regional policy

To a lesser extent the regional leadership and evidence and regional policy case studies involved content, thematic and discourse analyses through examinations of their accompanying scrutiny reports. However, in these instances the emphasis was placed more on using the texts (the scrutiny reports) as the basis for 'storylines' in order to examine and reveal the interactions of the North East Assembly and One NorthEast. What was most important was an acknowledgment of the constructed nature of the texts. As Schurmer-Smith states, "whatever sources of information one draws upon, one needs to be conscious that people and things always communicate more than they seem to on the surface" (Schurmer-Smith, 2002:127). The texts were therefore actively 'read against the grain' and incorporated elements of content, thematic and discourse analysis though not on the systematic scale employed in the analysis of the draft regional strategies.

2. Ethnography: participant observation, research diaries and conversation analysis

Ethnography is a wide ranging term perhaps most famously associated with Geertz's (1975) idea of achieving 'thick description' as a means of partially explaining the practices and discourses within society and discovering the 'weaves of meaning' in the 'webs of significance' which humans spin for themselves (Bevir and Rhodes, 2002). As such, to do an ethnography can entail the use of numerous techniques such as "selecting informants, transcribing texts and keeping field notes" (Bevir and Rhodes, 2002:136). In

the researcher's role as a 'practitioner-researcher' within the North East Assembly the most commonly utilised method was that of participant observation which effectively incorporated aspects of selecting informants and transcribing texts. It also included keeping detailed research diaries and analysing conversations as forms of interaction. The following sections will briefly summarise each of these techniques in turn.

Participant observation

Participant observation is a form of ethnography, which has the broad aim of providing a "description and interpretation of the culture and social structure of a social group" (Robson, 2002: 186). Hence it does not seek specific answers but develops contextual understanding or 'verstehen' by 'lifting the veils' and 'digging deeper' into complex and dynamic research environments (Geertz, 1975; Blumer, 1969).

More specifically participant observation "involves not only a physical presence and a sharing of life experiences, but also entry into their social and 'symbolic' world through learning their social conventions and habits, their use of language and non-verbal communication, and so on. The observer also has to establish some role within the group" (Robson, 2002:314). As part of this investigation the researcher's role within the 'social group' was guaranteed and formalized as an employee within the organisation of the North East Assembly. This automatically provided a role within the organisation but the researcher still had to integrate, find and fill a role within the day-to-day workings of the Scrutiny and Policy Development team. This was achieved by actively taking on professional duties such as becoming the official minute-taker at Scrutiny and Policy Development meetings, taking on projects as allocated at team meetings and liaising with Assembly members and other contacts. This allowed the researcher a certain freedom within the organisation to 'follow the actors' (Latour, 1993) and developments, tracing their engagements wherever they seemed relevant to the research (Hitchings, 2003).

In terms of being more than a 'physical presence' the process of learning the organisational policy language of the North East of England and its 'social and symbolic world' was taken on most during the early months of the placement but undoubtedly was an ongoing process. One of the most pressing early challenges for example was developing an understanding of the numerous official and unofficial abbreviations[58] used within the research environment. The list of abbreviations at the beginning of this thesis gives an indication of the vast array of terms and organizations which were officially abbreviated as part of everyday practice at the North East Assembly.

Most of the professional responsibilities and conventions were learnt through the working guidelines set down for the North East Assembly and other public sector organizations. However, a number of social conventions, such as when to speak in team and committee meetings and how to effectively influence and negotiate in group and one-on-one sessions took time and a degree of patience for the researcher to learn. In some circumstances, as part of Assembly employee practice, specific training was undertaken to develop some of these professional social competencies. More challenging was learning the social habits of members of staff and how best to interact with them in certain situations. One important point to note was that it was occasionally considered that the researcher had a duty to avoid confrontational situations in order not to jeopardize research opportunities at a later stage. McCracken posits that in interviewing it is often best to appear "slightly dim and... agreeable" (1988:38) in order to illicit fuller responses. Whilst appearing 'dim' was avoided, as this undoubtedly would have reflected negatively on professional ability, the desire to develop research opportunities no doubt slightly pacified the actions of the researcher.

Throughout the placement efforts were made to integrate into the general office environment by attending after office social events and various staff engagements. As a result the researcher became an active member of

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[58] Abbreviations such as DBERR can be seen as an official abbreviation of the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform. However, in an everyday work setting a number of unofficially recognised abbreviations and alternative terms for organisations, officer roles and individuals are used. At there most colloquial this can be interpreted as a form of 'organisational slang'.

staff and was able to gain considerable insights into the workings of regional government within and beyond the region.

Research diaries

Research diaries were kept throughout the course of the three-year work placement and by the end represented the main output of collected primary data. On a professional descriptive level they were used to keep a log of notes from meetings, lists of tasks and details from e-mail correspondence. On an academic level these 'communicative events' were complemented by various interpretations, subsequent thoughts and analysis often written on the same day. An example of a research diary entry is attached as appendix 6.

Robson states that, "with participant observation, it is difficult to separate out the data collection and analysis of an enquiry. Analysis takes place in the middle of collection and is used to help shape its development" (Robson, 2002:315). Certainly the research diaries recorded significant amounts of data, which at first impression might not appear to be directly relevant to the three research chapters on the draft regional strategies, regional leadership and evidence and regional policy. However, the whole reflexive process of data collection and ongoing analysis as part of being a 'reflective practitioner researcher' was vital in forming a more holistic picture of the interactions of the North East Assembly and One NorthEast (Schön, 1996; Robson, 2002).

Conversation analysis

As part of being an 'insider researcher' and in conducting participant observation the researcher was involved in and witness to a large amount of data in the form of conversations. It would have been impossible to record via dictaphone, transcribe and code such a diverse and vast range of discussions. However, there was still an interest in pursuing conversation

analysis's concern "with uncovering the implicit ideas and understandings people possess and use in their everyday interactions" (Forrester, 2002:3). As such it was seen as a tool by which to reveal the 'secret' narratives and discourses present within communicative events.

A basic conversation analysis was conducted through conscious and active attempts to 'deconstruct' conversations or 'talk-in-interaction' as it happened or as soon as was practically possible afterwards. This was recorded in research diaries (which doubled as professional logbooks) and as it was common practice for officers to make notes during meetings the researcher was able to discretely make observations without appearing out of place. In more casual conversational settings where there was not a logbook to hand, quick notes had to be made soon afterward.

In conducting conversation analysis various elements were considered such as the conversation's content, participants' body language, tone of voice, and the speed, clarity and manner of pronunciation amongst others. In addition a conversation's adherence to a number of normative rules was also observed. These included the turn-taking organisation of the interaction, the sequencing of conversations, and the use of repair and coping strategies when certain rules (i.e. a participant interrupts a speaker) are broken.

3. Interviews

A range of interviews were conducted throughout the course of the three-year work placement with officers and members of the North East Assembly, and members of other regional organisations both within the North East of England and in other regions[59]. Most interviews were semi-structured or unstructured in nature and carried out preliminarily as part of research and evaluative schemes for the North East Assembly's scrutiny function. However, Assembly management were kind enough to permit the researcher to ask a number of other questions related more to the academic research

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[59] Participation in various groups of the English Regions Network allowed for, mainly informal dialogue, with representatives from other regions. Indeed, in 2007 the North East Assembly hosted the ERN Regional Scrutiny Conference which allowed for a number of national contacts to be gained.

being undertaken as long as it did not compromise Assembly business. On this matter the researcher made all participants aware of the situation, both in terms of the questions to be asked and the 'insider-researcher' role, before progressing with interviews and respected any requests for anonymity.

Interviews generally set out to achieve two aims. Firstly, to provide an extra level of understanding and insight into general governance interactions within the region and, secondly, to investigate particular topics in more detail such as the production of the draft regional strategies, regional leadership and evidence and regional policy. Often interviews combined both a general and specific element but varied depending on the interviewee's particular area of expertise and/or experience. A number of 'prompt' sheets, 'interview guides' or 'interview schedules' were used throughout the research period which varied according to the scrutiny topic being investigated and the researcher's 'reflexive' interpretation and development of relevant avenues for enquiry (Kitchen and Tate, 2000; Plummer, 1983).

Only a minority of interviews were taped with the use of a dictaphone with the majority being recorded in note form in officer logbooks. Given the quantity of interviews conducted this was considered to be the most appropriate technique for managing the data. Although the precise number of participants is difficult to ascertain (in part because some interviewees contributed on many occasions) the total number of people consulted is estimated at between one and one-hundred-and-fifty. In addition to this the North East Assembly Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee meetings essentially operated as a form of organisational focus group[60] and provided significant amounts of data.

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[60] Hydén and Bülow define focus groups as "a method for collecting data through group discussions" (2003:306). As the researcher was the primary minute taker for Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee meetings they were ideally placed to document the discussions.

4. Surveys

The researcher had access to a considerable amount of already compiled and usually analysed survey data[61]. However, the North East Assembly's scrutiny team also conducted a number of their own surveys, which primarily tended to focus on gauging the opinions of members of the Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee. The first of these surveys was conducted in the autumn of 2004 as part of an internal evaluation of the effectiveness of the scrutiny process in which members were asked for their opinions. The survey in this instance took the format of a postal questionnaire with a series of multiple choice questions and sections for further elaboration of answers. This assessment was deemed to be successful and so was repeated a year later. After this the scrutiny member feedback process was formalised through an annual Scrutiny Committee 'away day' where members filled in a questionnaire (feedback) form and had an opportunity to express there opinions in person.

Importantly, the researcher was directly involved in the design of those surveys and so had the opportunity to tailor and introduce certain questions that were useful to the academic investigation. This in no way compromised the work of the Assembly as it was often the case that the professional and academic research shared similar interests (for example, establishing members' perceptions of the legitimacy of the Assembly and the effectiveness of regional scrutiny). In designing the surveys many features from Dillman's (2000) 'tailored designed method' were used to maximise response and ensure clarity and usability in completing them.

5. Secondary sources of data

As part of the 'researcher-practitioner' role at the North East Assembly the researcher had access to a wide range of official, semi-official and occasionally highly confidential secondary information. Indeed, the officer

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[61] Please see below for a discussion of secondary sources of evidence.

role required a working knowledge of a number of specific documents, most notably those relating to regional assemblies and the scrutiny function, and a general awareness of a wider selection of publications and ongoing reviews. Throughout the course of the research placement, conscious attempts were made to identify sections in official publications, which were relevant to the field of academic study.

Additionally a significant amount of statistical data was available and accessed through sources such as the North East Regional Information Partnership (NERIP) and State of the Region reports (compiled by NERIP). Various forms of survey data were also collected by the North East Assembly and One NorthEast as part of their consultations on the draft regional strategies. In certain instances the researcher had access to this data in particular forms before it was made publicly available. Finally, the North East Assembly participated in a newspaper cuttings scheme which automatically sent staff articles from local, regional and national newspapers that were relevant to regional issues. This was incredibly useful in developing an understanding of the print media's perception of the issues and agendas that were of significance to the region.

Chapter 5

The draft Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies: An analysis of regional spatial discourses and narratives

1. Introduction

The first of three case studies, this chapter takes as its focus the 2005 draft Regional Spatial Strategy and the 2005 draft Regional Economic Strategy, *Leading the Way*, produced on behalf of the region by the North East Assembly and regional development agency, One NorthEast, respectively. The remits for the two organisations require them to continually review the regional strategies and conduct a full evaluation at least every three years. As such, in the summer of 2005 the situation arose in which both the draft Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies were in the public domain for consultation. As the strategies are arguably the two most identifiable statements of regional policy produced within the regions, this offered a unique opportunity to examine the narratives and discourses being put forward.

As the centrepieces of a region's policy approach the strategies are active components in the production and communication of regional space. Their policies not only affect decisions throughout the region but also effectively act to define the present, future and even historical nature of

regional space. The dissemination of their findings through communication and interaction and the (active and passive) interpretation of their claims are therefore important factors in influencing whether particular narratives and discourses are judged to be legitimate in constructing 'the region'. The regional strategies are thereby inherently spatial documents. More importantly, however, in addition to being *producers of* space they also represent *claims to* regional space and 'jurisdictional integrity' by their author organisations, the North East Assembly and One NorthEast (Skelcher, 2005). Viewed as such the regional strategies become not just statements of regional policy but also sources of possible organisational legitimacy or 'jurisdictional integrity' within regional space (Skelcher, 2005). As Martin Jones supports, RDAs were given responsibility for regional economic strategies "in order to carve out a space for themselves as 'territorial managers' of change" (2001:1199). In similar fashion the RAs can be seen to have been granted responsibility for regional spatial strategies.

The Sub-national Review's announcement in 2008 that the economic and spatial strategies will be combined into a single regional strategy makes this investigation all the more timely (HM Treasury et al., 2007). Though only one strategy will be produced in the future, an analysis of how discourses underpin and narratives are constructed in North East regional policy has the potential to be very revealing of what can be expected and what might be effective in the future.

In producing regional economic and spatial strategies the RDAs and RAs have to fulfil a number of requirements or 'spatial practices'. These are set by central government and cover issues such as economic targets, sustainable development and standards for consultation (DTI, 2005; ODPM, 2004b). For a more detailed overview of these frameworks please refer to appendix 7.

In the North East of England the 2005 draft RES *Leading the Way* represented the region's third RES following on from *Unlocking Our Potential* in 1999 and *Realising Our Potential* in 2002. As well as incorporating government guidance it was also based upon an analysis of the previous RES, economic scenarios, and an extensive consultation process referred to as the Shaping Horizons in the North East (SHiNE) exercise. *Leading the*

Way was subsequently endorsed by the Secretary of State in September 2006 and followed by a RES Action Plan, which was launched on 18th May 2007.

In contrast the 2005 draft RSS represented the region's first spatial strategy. The North East Assembly, upon being recognised as the Regional Planning Body (RPB), consulted on the main principles behind the first RSS through the publication of *View: Shaping the North East* in late 2004. After feedback was incorporated a submission draft of the RSS was produced for consultation in June 2005 and later subjected to an independent Examination in Public (EiP) over a six-week period in the spring of 2006. After the panel report was published Government Office for the North East took the lead in two further rounds (usually it should only be one round) of consultation on proposed changes with the strategy eventually being endorsed on 15th July 2008.

Although the regional strategies are produced by different organisations, a strong emphasis is placed on the active engagement of the other, and indeed wider regional interests, in their production. Indeed the North East Assembly and One NorthEast jointly funded research into future economic scenarios as a means of co-ordinating the evidence base for both strategies. However, to assume that the documents would therefore portray identical visions and advocate indistinguishable policies is naïve at best. This chapter will hence attempt to deconstruct the regional strategies to reveal underlying discourses and the active construction of regional narratives. In so doing it relies heavily on the three-stage content, thematic and critical discourse analysis outlined in the preceding methods chapter, but is also informed by the first-hand experience of being an 'insider-researcher' at the North East Assembly. As such this empirical chapter will play a vital role in establishing the nature of the productions of regional space, which will be further investigated in the subsequent chapters on *Regional Leadership* and *Evidence and Regional Policy*.

The following analysis is arranged in three parts, which broadly mirrors the stages involved in the research process. Henceforth the first will introduce the basic themes in both strategies and supplement and highlight the recurrence of particular 'key words'. The second will analyse the nature

and purpose of the policy language used by the draft RSS and draft RES and whether it is orientated toward a more System or Lifeworld discourse. The third and most substantial section will then identify and examine the underlying discourses and narratives in both strategies.

2. Analysis: Basic Themes and Key Words

Regional economic and spatial strategies are written for specific purposes but in the sense that they both outline regional priorities there is high expectation that they will be complementary. Spatial strategies are intended to provide an overarching planning framework and, as Marshall states, "are the most seriously prepared [regional strategies] of the last four years" whereas "Regional Economic Strategies on the other hand have been much lighter, promotional documents" (2008:100) aimed more at creating a vision of the future economic development of the region. However, such expected alignment raises important questions. For instance, is it possible for the economic development priorities set out in the RESs, which are produced by business-led RDAs, to be compatible with the spatial priorities of the RSSs, which are informed by the regionally representative Assemblies? Whatever the answer, inter-organisational working requirements as set by national government and regional agreements stress the importance of developing complementary approaches.

Basic themes

The ethos of complementary partnership working can clearly be seen in the explicit themes of both draft strategies. Table 5.1. below provides a summary of the key themes and identifies the broad areas of overlap between the two strategies. As it reveals, there are strikingly similar priorities being put forward in both strategies, with differences tending to revolve

around the degree of importance placed on a priority and the ways in which it is incorporated into policy rather than the priority itself. However, such a reading is very much a 'face-value' interpretation and ultimately only reveals the explicit narratives being put forward. Such themes will therefore be investigated more fully in subsequent sections. In the meantime, the stress placed upon these basic themes can be explored via an analysis of the recurrence of particular key words in both draft strategies.

Table 5.1. Basic themes in the draft regional strategies

No.	Draft Regional Spatial Strategy	No.	Draft Regional Economic Strategy
1.	Focus on increasing economic development combined with acknowledgements of the need to improve the quality of life of communities and the environment.	1.	Economic development is the key means by which to improve economic performance. There is therefore a need to create the necessary 'underpinning economic conditions' (p3).
2.	Commitment to the importance of city-regions in developing the region's economy.	2.	There is a need to prioritise and, due to limited resources, 'hard decisions' have to be taken. Investment has to be focused in fewer, bigger projects in order to add the most value. City-regions and urban growth are central components.
3.	Competitiveness identified as essential in order to reduce economic and social disparities. The region has a number of assets which can be better utilised to achieve this.	3.	Aim to create a 'globally competitive economy' (p10) by making the most of the opportunities of a global economy.
		4.	'Regional distinctiveness' is a means by which economic development can be enhanced. Assets such as the North East of England's environment, culture and heritage will be important in improving economic performance.
4.	A 'step change' has occurred and things have improved but there is a need for change to occur at a greater speed. There remain a number of 'challenges' and 'barriers' to be overcome.	5.	The North East of England has made progress but much remains to be done. The future holds a number of 'challenges', 'barriers', 'risks' and 'opportunities'.
5.	Sustainability and quality of life are important areas with regard to economic development. There is potential to make use of these to enhance development.	6.	Commitment to ensuring that growth is both sustainable and inclusive.
6.	Education and skills are vital in creating a responsive workforce which will enable a 'transition to higher productivity' (p68).	7.	The North East of England 'lags behind' other regions and the national average on many criteria. Focusing on the key drivers of growth is the key to closing that gap. Therefore dual stress is placed on 'productivity' and 'participation' and the 'five drivers' of skills, investment, innovation, enterprise and competition.
7.	Good connectivity is essential. Investment is needed in transport to 'facilitate economic growth' (p62).		
8.	Focus on ensuring appropriate housing supply so that the region is not held back.		

Key Words

Based upon an initial reading of both draft strategies a number of 'key words' were identified and subsequently used as the foundation for a number of word searches. This complemented the identification of basic themes by allowing for a comparison of certain words between the two documents and by providing a record of the prevalence of those words within each document. The two sections below focus, firstly, on the strategies' references to general geographic scales and, secondly, to their use of a number of policy terms. A number of additional searches were also conducted and are attached as appendix 8.

1. General geographic scale

Figure 5.1 below illustrates the frequency of references to general geographic scales in both draft strategies[62].

Figure 5.1. References to geographic scales in the draft regional strategies

	Global(ly)/international	National(ly)	City-region	Local(ly)
■ Draft RSS	60	89	136	216
■ Draft RES	164	81	106	64
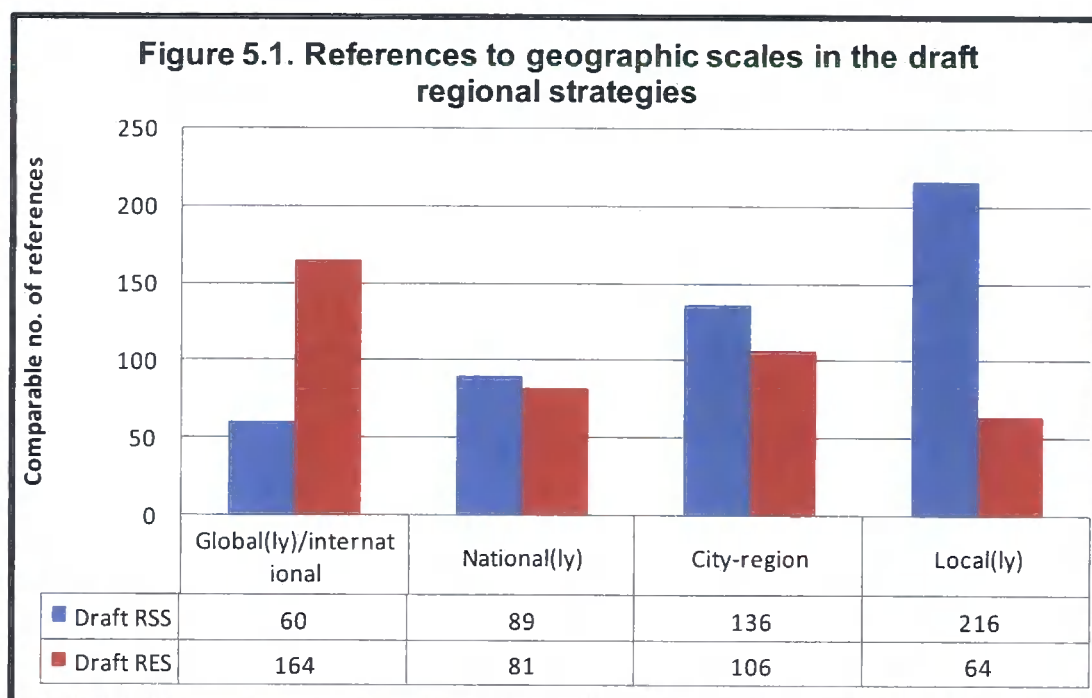
The figure reveals that the draft strategies make a similar number of references to the national and international level. However, the draft RES

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[62] As the documents were of varying word length the totals from the draft RSS were converted so as to be comparable.

pays much greater attention to the global scale supporting one of the main themes of increasing competitiveness in a global economy. Conversely the draft RSS strongly outnumbers the draft RES in its reference to the local and to a lesser degree the city-region. Both documents make over one hundred references to the city-region which supports the identification of the importance of city-regions as a main theme in both documents.

The draft RSS makes over three the times the number of references to the local level than the draft RES. This is, however, probably to a certain degree expected. The RSS's purpose is to act as the region's statutory and legally binding planning strategy, but crucially its author – the North East Assembly – is not responsible for implementing or delivering its policies. This duty, in most cases, falls to the Local Planning Authorities, the functions of which are included within Local Authority Councils. Therefore, the draft RSS not surprisingly makes numerous references to local and city-regional scales primarily because these are the most relevant to the workings of Local Authorities. Whilst the RES also relies upon local delivery, its content is more general and aspirational, in line with its aim of outlining a vision for the region. It therefore lacks the level of detail, in terms of local conformity and delivery, included within the RSS.

2. Use of policy terms

The draft strategies were also searched for a number of other key terms identified in the initial reading. The table below illustrates the recurrence of particular 'key words' relating to development or growth and inclusion/exclusion.

Table 5.2. References to key policy terms in the draft regional strategies

Term referred to in text	Comparative word count totals	
	RSS	RES
Economic growth	25 [44]	35
Regional economic growth	5 [9]	0
Sustainable economic growth	2 [3]	4
Sustainable, inclusive economic growth	0 [0]	9
Sustainable growth	1 [1]	1
Sustainable and inclusive growth	0 [0]	1
Economic development	13 [22]	18
Regional economic development	0 [0]	4
Sustainable economic development	2 [3]	0
Sustainable development	18 [31]	9
Performance	6 [10]	26
Economic performance	2 [3]	16
Prosperity	4 [7]	10
Economic prosperity	10 [17]	5
Inclusion	1 [2]	7
Economic Inclusion	1 [1]	39
Social inclusion	9 [16]	0
Exclusion	0 [0]	2
Economic exclusion	0 [0]	6
Social exclusion	3 [6]	3

The content analysis of the main themes has already ascertained that 'development' or 'growth' is central in both documents. Table 5.2. above supports this finding but, as is shown, there are a number of ways in which 'growth' or 'development' is referred to. For example, it is noticeable that both documents make frequent reference to economic growth. In the RES, of the fifty references to growth, thirty-five are purely in relation to 'economic growth'. In comparative terms, of the thirty-three references in the RSS, twenty-five refer to just 'economic growth'. The RSS has a few references to 'regional economic growth' and both include some mention of 'sustainable economic growth'. Interestingly the RES has a significant number of references to 'sustainable, inclusive economic growth', which challenges the identified theme of the document being focused predominantly on producing economic growth. However, it is still clear that 'economic growth' alone is the

most referenced form of growth in both draft strategies.

The frequency of the use of the term 'development' is similar to that of 'growth' as in many cases it was used interchangeably. However, whilst both the RSS and the RES make frequent use of the term 'economic development', the RSS makes more references to 'sustainable development' than to 'economic development'. The RES alternatively only makes half as many references to 'sustainable development' as it does to 'economic development'. This offers a potential insight into the approaches to 'development' and 'growth' of the respective strategies.

The RSS and the RES do make a number of references to 'performance' and 'prosperity'. The RES in particular makes significant use of the term 'performance' and over a third of the circumstances in which it is used are with regard to 'economic performance'. This supports the RES's identified tendency to use the national performance management framework, and in particular the national average, as tools with which to judge the region's progress. The RSS, on the other hand, makes only eight references to 'performance' compared to the forty-two of the RES. References to 'prosperity' are more balanced between the documents but it is revealing to note that the RSS uses the term more with regard to 'economic prosperity' whilst the RES tended to use the term more generally.

'Inclusion' and 'exclusion' receive relatively few references in both documents, especially in comparison to words associated with growth and development. It is worthwhile noting however that the RES makes a significant number of references to 'economic inclusion' yet does not make a single reference to 'social inclusion'. Concerning exclusion it also favours 'economic exclusion' to 'social exclusion' or the use of 'exclusion' on its own. In comparison the RSS clearly focuses on 'social inclusion' over 'economic inclusion' and only refers to 'exclusion' in terms of 'social exclusion'.

3. Analysis: Nature of Policy Language

Building upon the identification of the basic themes, stage two of the analysis aimed to examine the nature and reasoning behind the policy language used in the draft strategies. Two basic tests were therefore performed. The first categorised the sections of both documents according to four 'ideal types' of policy purpose and the second ascertained the orientation of the strategies in relation to an imaginary System/Lifeworld classification.

1. The type and purpose of the discourses in the draft RSS and RES

Four 'ideal types' of policy purpose were used to categorise sub-sections in the draft RSS and RES. The ideal types, as classified by Bhatia and Coleman (2003), posit that policy discourses aim to do one of four things: (i) reinforce and further institutionalize a dominant policy frame; (ii) justify the dominant policy frame and address small policy failures; (iii) advocate a new approach which attempts to persuade a switch to an alternative policy frame; and (iv) seek consensus around "a new set of broad, normative parameters for policy making" (Bhatia and Coleman, 2003:722). In most cases, the dominant policy frame was considered to be the priorities set out by central government and, importantly, given the diversity of issues often covered in each sub-section of the documents, every section had the potential to be categorised as adhering to more than one 'ideal type'. Table 5.7, shown below, illustrates the results of the types of policy purpose in the draft RSS and draft RES.

Table 5.3. The policy purposes of the draft regional strategies

Policy Purpose	% of sections analysed that included the given type of discourse	
	RSS	RES
Reinforce	28.3	11.8
Justify	91.6	98.7
New Approach	21.6	6.6
New Consensus	0.03	6.6

The table provides an interesting insight into the approaches of the two draft strategies. Most noticeably it reveals that over 90% of sections in both documents seek to justify some course of policy intervention. In the case of the draft RES, almost every section makes some reference to justifying a proposed cause of action. Importantly, this suggests that the primary concern of the strategies is to legitimise policy intervention within a dominant policy frame. Reinforcing this dominant policy frame plays a significant role in both strategies, with 28.3% and 11.8% of sections in the RSS and RES respectively demonstrating a reinforcing element. However the draft RSS does significantly outnumber the RES in terms of sections that reinforce the dominant discourse. Here the draft RSS's status as a legally binding planning document to be used by Local Authorities in developing their Local Development Frameworks may explain the higher incidence of a reinforcing discourse, as government guidance is relied upon to build legitimacy and increase local acceptance and implementation.

The high number of sections in the RSS and RES that either reinforce or justify illustrates the strategies' commitment and stance within the dominant policy frame. However, there are a number of instances in both documents in which references are made to new approaches to policy dilemmas and to the need for consensus on a course of action. For example, the draft RSS mentions the ideas of instigating 'behavioural change' (p133) and implementing 'softer demand management schemes' (p133) and the draft RES proclaims a commitment to sustainable development which should

influence "the basis for individual decisions" (p18). Interestingly the draft RSS has over three times as many sections (just over one in five) that make reference to a new approach to a policy issue, although it has to be considered that with over 90% of sections justifying the dominant policy frame, the instances in which new approaches are suggested are often closely associated with the dominant policy frame. Nonetheless, the attention paid to new approaches in both documents and particularly the draft RSS is significant.

Both strategies make little use of a new consensus policy approach. The reason why more sections in the draft RSS and draft RES were not labelled as seeking new consensus, despite their numerous references to consultation and consensus, was that often no attempt was realistically being made to challenge existing beliefs or norms. In other words consensus was being promoted but purely within the limits set by the dominant policy frame.

2. System/Lifeworld orientation

In order to explore and operationalise Habermas's concepts of System and Lifeworld sections in the draft strategies were classified according to a hypothetical System/Lifeworld scale. Possible values ranged from zero to ten, with zero representing the System, ten the Lifeworld, and five reflecting a balance between the two. It was in no way intended that the two should be judged as being in conflict but merely that the System be interpreted as the values of the economy and public administration and the Lifeworld as the public and private sphere. A classification scheme was devised which can be found as appendix 5. The resultant spread of values is shown below in Figure 5.2.

Figure 5.2. The System/Lifeworld orientation of the draft regional strategies
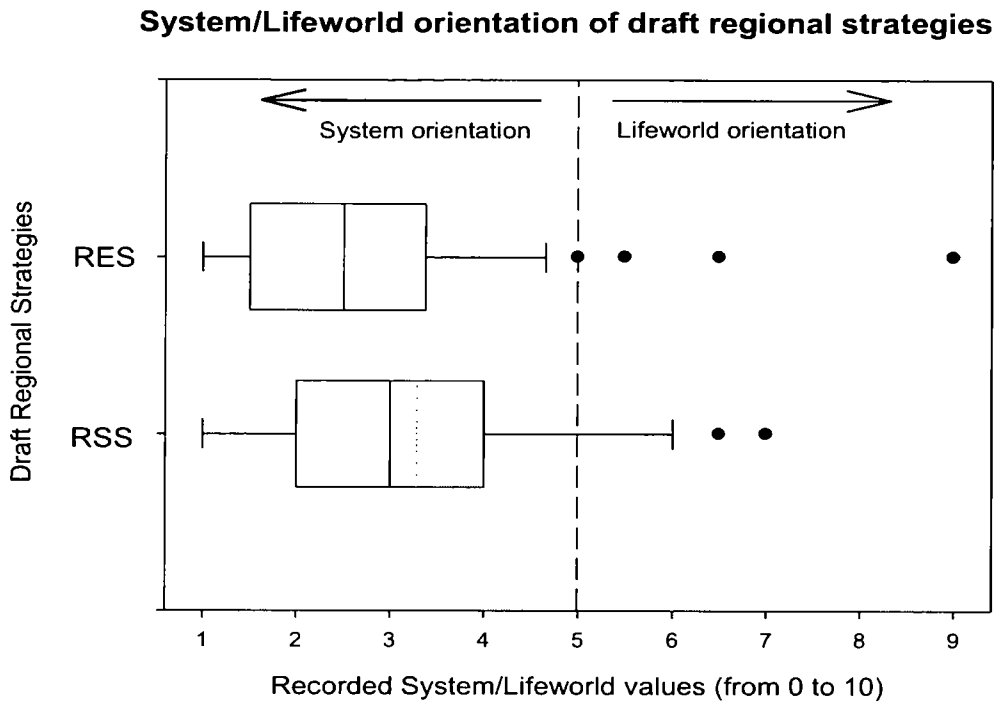
Here the boxes show the 25th percentiles (middle 50% of values) with the full lines within them representing the median and the dotted lines the mean average values. The limits of the bars show the 90th percentiles and the dots delineate outliers.

What this figure immediately reveals is that both documents lean towards a System orientation and the interests of the economy and public administration rather than the Lifeworld. Also, although reasonably similar, the draft RES appears to take a stronger System line whereas the draft RSS contains a greater number of sections that appear to incorporate and balance System and Lifeworld perspectives. However, both documents are still predominantly System-orientated and their respective mean averages differ only slightly – the draft RSS scores 3.23 and the draft RES 2.69.

The results pose some interesting questions regarding the purpose of the strategies and the roles of the organisations responsible for producing them. For instance, the draft RSS is a planning document and is required to

be reasonably technical implying that it should be heavily System-focused. However, it is produced by the North East Assembly, which has the remit of acting as a representative 'voice for the region', and so would be expected to reflect Lifeworld perspectives. On the other hand, the RES is meant to set out the region's economic development principles and is produced by the business-led RDA also implying a System orientation. However, the RES's role is additionally to act as an aspirational document highlighting the region's vision, which should be accessible to all. The balance between organisational roles and strategy purposes is therefore particularly intriguing.

4. Analysis: Key Narratives and Discourses

Following a detailed thematic and critical discourse analysis, nine key issues were identified that revealed particularly useful insights into the narratives and discourses of both texts. The remainder of this chapter will examine these in turn.

1. General approach to growth and development

The draft RSS and draft RES propose policies to increase growth and particularly economic development in the region, and whilst numerous narratives are constructed around the means by which such change will be achieved, it is clear that an underlying economic discourse permeates throughout both strategies. From the outset then, the North East space is identified by the documents as a space in which economic growth and development is a favoured course of action. As such initial observations point toward the dominance of a System economy-focused production of regional space. However, despite the clear economic focus in both strategies, there are some subtle yet significant variations in the nature of the narratives surrounding this dominant policy discourse.

The draft RSS and RES include references to the need for growth and

development to be inclusive and sustainable. Indeed, this reflects the requirement, as set by central government, which adheres to certain social and democratic principles, that the strategies incorporate such policy agendas. The draft RSS sets out its general approach on the very first page by stating that its aim is to develop a 'stronger economy' whilst also improving the 'quality of life of communities as places to live and work' (p1). Thus the economy is highlighted as the primary aim but the inclusion of the reference to quality of life offers a potential indication of a more balanced approach. Indeed the references to 'communities', a geographical scale that can arguably be perceived as one more associated with lived experience, and to 'places to *live* and work', can be interpreted as actively broadening the narrative beyond an economic focus on the workplace.

Two key narratives taken from a section in the draft RSS on 'Connectivity and accessibility' illustrate how the strategy reproduces a discourse on economic development, whilst also attempting to include a wider agenda within its narrative:

> There is a significant need to invest in the transport infrastructure in the region to tackle transport *barriers*... to assist in the delivery of *accelerated growth in the regional economy*. This investment will be needed to overcome these transport *barriers* and also to help *reduce regional disparities*. Several aspects of the strategic network require upgrading to improve *connectivity and accessibility*, to improve *social inclusion*, reduce the *environmental impacts* associated with road traffic and to ensure that these links will attract businesses and workers to the region, to enable the North East to remain and become more *competitive* (p63) (emphasis added).

This first extract illustrates how problems are constructed as 'barriers' to be overcome in order to achieve the primary aims of achieving 'accelerated growth in the regional economy' and the reduction of 'regional disparities'. However, a more balanced narrative is introduced through the stated need to improve 'social inclusion' and reduce 'environmental impacts' although again the underlying discourse is revealed when action on these areas is justified in terms of making the region 'more competitive'. The second extract reads:

> There is *also* an issue for those *people*, who do not have access

to a car; who are increasingly being *excluded* from accessing employment opportunities, essential services and facilities. This is more prevalent in the region's more *disadvantaged communities* and also the more remote rural areas, where *public transport* accessibility is poor (p63) (emphasis added).

This second extract comes just two paragraphs after the first and is significant in its focus, less on promoting economic growth, and more on those people and communities that are 'excluded' from that growth. Additionally, it is interesting how the language shifts from the preceding paragraphs' references to 'social inclusion' and 'barriers' to potentially less abstract terms such as 'people' and 'communities', indicating a possible attempt to communicate with issues at a more experienced level. However, the vital word in the extract is 'also' which is placed at the beginning of the paragraph. This conjunct immediately alerts the reader to the importance of the following statement but simultaneously, as it can be interpreted as implying something additional, rates it as secondary to what came before it. The following narrative incorporating less abstract terms is therefore subordinated to the previous narrative concerned with the conceived world of economic growth.

The fact that the draft RSS does incorporate other non-economic issues, even if they do not set the agenda, does illustrate a commitment to them, which on occasion is explicitly made. For example, the RSS at one point states that, "delivery of the region's economic, regeneration and population aspirations is therefore only sustainable where conservation and enhancement are equal elements of the proposed use of the environment" (p97). Therefore the draft RSS does include a number of sections that appear to demonstrate an approach to policy that is more balanced between System and Lifeworld orientations.

The draft RES, as might be expected from its mandate, produces a narrative that is clearly primarily focused on increasing economic growth. Indeed it is noticeable how other issues such as culture and quality of life are included as a means to the end of improving the economy. The section below on 'leadership in a global economy' demonstrates the economic agenda:

As is clear within other chapters in this document, globalisation

represents both *opportunities and threats* for regional economies across the world. Those regions that are *sufficiently prepared* for the effects of globalisation, e.g. through a clear emphasis on *innovation* of products and processes; flexible and highly *skilled workforce*; effective intelligence/information sharing systems; and strong relationships with other regions and international companies, will be in a stronger position to reap the benefits of a *global economy* (p27) (emphasis added).

Globalisation is approached here in terms of 'opportunities and threats' and it is implied that the North East of England should follow the example of other 'sufficiently prepared' regions. Those regions are then defined as 'prepared' through the use of policy terms such as 'innovative', 'skilled workforce' and 'intelligence/information sharing systems'. Relationships are mentioned but on an organisational rather than personal scale.

The draft RES does make reference to a number of practices and issues which affect people's lived experience. However, this is more often than not in relation to economic or commercial gain. For example, the "quality, image, cultural and environmental assets of an area" (p9) are mentioned but primarily as a "comparative advantage" (p9). Furthermore, the draft RES asserts that people, places and culture are to be "celebrated and enjoyed" (p9) but that they should also act primarily as "key drivers". The association of Lifeworld-orientated concepts such as culture and people with abstract economic language and the interpretation of issues of lived experience as either 'barriers' or 'opportunities' to economic growth are defining characteristics of the draft RES.

2. Focusing investment

The draft RSS and RES identify the North East of England's two city-regions of Tyne and Wear and the Tees Valley as the key sites for further economic growth. With the two city-regions receiving their own section in each strategy a key narrative and discourse of promoting urban growth is identifiable. However, the variation in justification for this urban focus and the issue of redistribution raises some interesting comparisons.

The theme of prioritising investment, particularly in the city-regions, is

explicit throughout the draft RES. Indeed it goes as far as to state that "the leaders of the Region will focus on the fewer, bigger investment opportunities that will reap the greatest return on our investment" (p31). The repeated justification for this approach is that resource limitations necessitate that investment be focused where it will add most value. In other words scarcity is the reason for selectivity. The extract below is typical of the draft RES's approach:

> *Given that we cannot do everything immediately due to resource limitations*, we believe that to achieve the greatest return on investment, we need to take forward *priority actions* in the short term (p8) (emphasis added).

This extract begins with a discourse label, a statement that attempts to summarise for the reader the context of decision making, and thereby encourage agreement with the following course of proposed action. It is an excellent example of the production of a regional narrative that justifies focused action through resource limitations.

The draft RSS also promotes city-regions as the favoured locations for greater investment but struggles to balance the justification of resource limitations with a need for more redistributive investment particularly in regeneration and housing. The draft RSS therefore uneasily incorporates both targeted investment and redistributive discourses into its regional narrative. For example, with regards to the Tees Valley and housing market restructuring, the RSS refers to a programme focusing on "interventions to revitalise priority smaller coalfield settlements" (p47) in order to achieve sustainable communities. This commitment to aiding areas with identified social deprivation contrasts significantly to the RES's strategy of investing where it will gain the greatest return.

The problematic of focusing or distributing investment in the region creates some subtle contradictions particularly within the draft RSS, as the example of housing renewal illustrates. In contrast the draft RES follows a more consistent line of focusing investment in the city-regions and then enabling areas of economic need to access areas of economic opportunity. The draft RSS, despite a number of somewhat contradictory references to the need for regeneration in deprived areas, tends to also follow this

approach although it does so using terminology that is representative of more than just an economic focus. The key narrative below from the draft RSS demonstrates this point:

> 3.6   There is an increasing need to *focus economic growth* in the most *sustainable locations*, which maximise *regional economic growth* and *wider regeneration priorities*, whilst *safeguarding the environment*. Important *considerations in developing the economy* in a more sustainable way include being close to an available workforce; accessibility by *public transport, cycling and walking*; promoting self sufficiency with indigenous businesses locally producing goods and services; and making optimum use of existing infrastructure.

> 3.7   *To achieve this aim the two city regions*, particularly the core areas of the conurbations and main towns should be the focus of economic development and investment as these are *where the greatest economic and social benefits can be achieved at the lowest environmental cost*. The reuse and adaptation of existing sites and older premises will be particularly encouraged, as will *ensuring access to opportunities from the more deprived communities* (p66) (emphasis added).

This extract clearly illustrates a strong commitment to and narrative legitimating the focus on economic growth within the city-regions. However, it also reveals a subordinate redistributive discourse communicated through the promotion of 'ensuring access to opportunities'. There is also evidence of the draft RSS addressing a wider social as well as economic agenda expressed through a commitment to ensuring growth occurs in 'the most sustainable locations' and 'safeguarding the environment'. In addition references are made to a number of more lived space terms such as public transport, cycling and walking, offering an interesting addition to more conceived space policy making.

Despite the draft RSS's and RES's similar commitment to the role of city-regions in promoting economic growth in the region, the justifications for such an approach illustrate important variations in the narratives of the two strategies. Whereas the RES advocates a very economically motivated approach which appears characteristic of a conceived and System view of regional space, the RSS presents an uneasy narrative on city-regions as it attempts to incorporate and balance the contradictory discourses of focusing

limited investment to add the most value and redistributing resources to those people and places most in need.

3. Relationship with central government and divergence between the draft strategies

Relationship with the central government agenda

The guidance and policies of central Government and Whitehall departments are clearly apparent within the RSS and the RES. Indeed the previous examination of the purpose of the policy language revealed that the two documents were predominantly orientated towards justifying intervention in relation to a dominant national policy frame. However, this reliance on central government narratives to justify and legitimate the regional strategies is also problematic. As McVittie and Swales state, responsibility for producing the RES [and RSS in this case] was delegated to the regions on the belief that "RDAs [and RAs] have greater local knowledge and flexibility of operation than central government departments" (2007:428). However, this "asymmetrical information situation sets up potential moral hazard problems, given that the agency's interests will not accord perfectly with the interests of the appropriate government departments or departments" (McVittie and Swales, 2007:428). RDAs and RAs are also faced with the challenge of being relatively new organisations producing strategies that have little institutional history in co-ordinating policy at a regional level. In the face of having to establish themselves within the region, the credibility of central government guidance and policy is often an appealing though potentially counter-productive source of legitimacy. As such the North East Assembly and One NorthEast are tasked with producing their own regional narratives within the 'shadow of hierarchy' of central government (Héritier and Lehmkuhl, 2008). The draft RSS and RES can therefore be analysed to reveal a fascinating picture of the competing narratives and discourses within the regionally constructed space of the North East of England.

Concerning the North East's maritime ports, both the RSS and the

RES make the case for a national redistribution of port traffic away from the South East and to the North East. In doing so, an issue, which is geographically local in terms of ports such as Teesside, is converted and used to define a regionally distinct North East space. The RES, for example, asserts that redistribution is an opportunity to 'relieve pressure on the South East' and capitalise on 'Southern Discomfort' (p98). Despite not disagreeing with central government, this example reveals how both documents actively sought to influence national policy by producing and communicating a distinctive North East spatial narrative.

On planning policy the RSS adds a caveat to central government guidance on developing greenfield sites by maintaining that it is necessary for the North East to retain a small number of reserve greenfield sites in order to accommodate large scale investment. It also introduces the possibility that Local Development Frameworks, to be developed in conformity with the RSS, may wish to introduce threshold levels of affordable housing below that set out in the Government's Planning Policy Guidance 3: Housing. However, even greater disagreement occurs with the Highways Agency over the identification of key roads within the region, with the RSS stating that the A19 is the region's most nationally important road and the Highways Agency that it is the A1. Whilst most instances involve the RSS introducing a level of flexibility to national policy this particular example illustrates a rare case of clear disagreement.

The draft RES in a very few instances criticizes national policy and promotes a distinctly regional narrative. For instance, concerning transport the RES states that the North East's proximity to the rest of the UK and beyond is seen as a "key impediment to economic prosperity" especially with "national policy being London-centric" (p93). Indeed, the draft RES repeatedly communicates a narrative in which the North East of England is perceived as having been unfairly treated as a peripheral location[63]. One of the more significant areas of disagreement concerns new housing, which is technically the statutory responsibility of the RSS, in which the RES states

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[63] For example in setting the 'Economic Context' the draft RES states, "as a small region, the North East has often felt at the mercy of wider national and global trends and less able to influence them" (p15-16).

that "the planning system must recognise that there is a regionally distinct need to depart from the national planning guidance to enable housing to meet the needs of the growing knowledge economy" (p113).

The RSS's initial assertion that it is set out in accordance with government guidance, but also that national resources should be allocated in accordance with the needs it identifies, appears to be a good summary of the approach of both documents. The majority of the content of both documents either implicitly or explicitly agrees with government guidance, which highlights how regional narratives are reliant on national narratives and discourse for their legitimacy. However, on a select number of cases both documents make a regional case to government or suggest an element of regional flexibility to national policy. On rare occasions the documents do explicitly disagree with either a Whitehall department or national guidance. A complex situation therefore exists in balancing the approach to gaining legitimacy and 'jurisdictional integrity' between the demands and resources of central government and those of and within the region (Skelcher, 2005).

Divergence between the draft RSS and draft RES

Technically the two regional strategies are intended to be complementary in advocating a vision and policy interventions for the North East of England. Partnership working between RDAs and RAs is expected and an implicit emphasis is placed on consensual decision making. However, in reality the draft strategies contain a number of clear and subtle areas of divergence. Indeed, to a certain extent, the potential for fractures and contestation lies in the differing purposes and mandates of the two strategies. Although, the strategies deal with their own designated policy areas – for example the RES specifically deals with skills, business and enterprise, whereas the RSS covers planning, transport and housing – confusion can arise when issues cross over into both documents. Indeed, given the complex nature of many economic, social and environmental issues this is a common occurrence and so the draft strategies are faced with the challenge of co-ordinating their approaches to avoid contradictory regional policies. In many cases

agreement is reached but there are also a number of issues in which disagreements reveal the contrasts in the narratives of the Assembly and One NorthEast.

The most apparent case of divergence between the two strategies is the adoption of different growth scenarios. Although, the North East Assembly and One North East co-funded work by the Centre for Economic and Business Research (CEBR) into positive growth scenarios, the two strategies adopt different scenarios with the draft RES working according to a higher proposed growth rate than the RSS. Specifically the draft RES proposes an average annual GVA growth rate of 3.4% compared to 2.8% proposed by the draft RSS. This has subsequently been explained by the draft RES as befitting its more aspirational purpose, but the fact remains that the draft RSS does not embrace the same high targets. Despite certain institutional pressure to devise coherent and complementary regional approaches, such episodes illustrate the inherent frictions, tensions and fractures in the spatial narratives of the North East of England.

4. Consensus and consultation

The previous section highlighted how both strategies seek to legitimise themselves through references to the discourses of central government and by constructing regionally distinctive narratives. However, these regional narratives in order to be accepted need to be judged as credible. Therefore both the North East Assembly and One NorthEast repeatedly rely on a discourse of consensual decision making and public consultation in constructing their narratives.

The stress on consensual foundation is apparent in the draft RSS and RES, although the former makes more explicit reference to it. The extract shown below from the draft RSS is an excellent example of this narrative:

> "1.8. *One of the strengths of the North East* is that there is a *broad consensus* amongst the public and private sector organizations about the main challenges which *the region* faces; the opportunities for improvement; and the general approach that

should be adopted... This approach has been *endorsed by the Government* and forms the basis for '*Moving Forward: The Northern Way A Strategy for Growth*'. It will require accelerated economic activity and a renaissance throughout the region.

1.9 Following discussions between the *North East Assembly, One NorthEast and the Government Office for the North East* it was *agreed* that the three main regional strategies – the RSS, the RES and the IRF should share a *common vision* for a better North East and a set of *common values* to guide decisions" (p6) (emphasis added).

This extract is a fascinating piece of text and is indicative of how the draft RSS utilises certain terms and references to organisations to justify its own legitimacy. For instance, the word 'common' is used twice with regard to 'vision' and 'values'. Combined with the initial identification of a 'broad consensus', and the stated agreement of all of the three main regional governmental organisations, the passage attempts to communicate a clear message that the draft RSS is based on a consensual approach that is also 'endorsed' by central government.

The draft RSS is explicit in its commitment to a consensual approach. However, the draft RES also highlights the importance of a 'vision' for the region, as agreed between the North East Assembly, One NorthEast and Government Office, in order to "promote greater alignment across regional strategies and policies" (p3). Furthermore, in other cases One NorthEast appear to imply that the emphasis should be placed on ensuring other documents are in consensus with the draft RES. For example, in ensuring the draft strategies are complementary, the draft RES states, "the North East Assembly and One NorthEast have worked in close collaboration on the production of the draft RSS" (p21). What pervades is an underlying narrative of credibility in the claims of the draft RES, as having the support of the region which necessitates that other strategies need to be brought into conformity with it, rather than the other way around.

Consultation procedures were carried out prior to the drafting of the draft RSS and RES and both use them to justify various policy interventions and indeed the validity of the strategies themselves. For example, the draft RSS in its 'Foreword' states how the strategy was prepared 'in liaison with' Local Authorities and stakeholders, and later highlights the statutory

statement of community participation (p149). However, it is the draft RES which makes more consistent reference to consultation, in particular to the Shaping Horizons in the North East process. What becomes clear, throughout the document is that it is often this specific consultation exercise that is relied upon to justify policy interventions. The key narrative below on the 'Drivers on increased GVA through productivity and participation' is an excellent example:

> "*As identified within the SHINE process* the opportunities for investing in the economy through activities to improve participation and productivity are greater than the resources available. Therefore strategic decisions have to be made on where our interventions can add most value by considering the likely return on investment of all activity. To this end we have identified prioritised areas for action where we believe real progress can be achieved by 2016. *These actions, as outlined below, build on the key themes identified through the SHINE process, and around which this iteration of the RES is structured*" (p7)

Here the first and last sentences illustrate the discourse 'labels' whereby the SHiNE process, although we are not informed of its findings, is used to justify and legitimate the proposed course of action – namely the need to prioritise investment in this case. However, throughout the document the results and conclusions of the SHiNE exercise are never specifically revealed. Hence it is the discourse of consultation rather than the actual findings which are used to justify and legitimate policy intervention.

The incorporation of discourses of consensus and consultation in both strategies represent attempts to construct an ethos of 'shared responsibility' for the region based upon their particular policy recommendations. The draft RES in particular embodies this approach by using terms such as 'we', in relation to the region as a whole, much more prolifically than the draft RSS. For example it states how "this Regional Economic Strategy (RES) sets out how *we* are going to deliver greater and sustainable, prosperity to all the people of the North East" (p3). But question marks remain in both documents over what consultation actually entails. On taking the strategy forward the draft RES remarks that "the consultation period will enable key partners to identify how they intend to take these priorities forward" (p8) and the draft RSS states how it was prepared 'in liaison with' Local Authorities and

stakeholders. Although the public are entitled to comment there is little mention of any great public engagement or indeed public support for the strategies. Instead, a narrower emphasis placed on 'key partners' and 'stakeholders' and is used in legitimating the draft strategies. Consultation for the draft regional strategies is therefore not necessarily exclusionary but it is fair to say that only selected regional interests can genuinely participate.

5. The people and population of the North East of England

The subject of the population of the North East of England is an interesting area of comparison between the draft regional strategies. In proclaiming its difference from the 2002 RES *Realising Our Potential*, the draft RES states that:

> "there is a greater emphasis on economic development. On reading this document, it becomes apparent that it is much more people focused than the previous iterations of the RES; this is most clearly evidenced in the emphasis on Participation as a guiding economic principle" (p13).

Despite the claim of being more 'people focused' this extract clearly illustrates that people are seen predominantly in economic terms as human capital. On the subject of economic inclusion the draft RES highlights this approach stating that "the Region's low employment rate and low skills levels act as a barrier to participation, as well as a drag on productivity" (p8). As a whole the population is treated as barrier and possible tool by which the economy can be improved. In other words it is an economic asset with unused potential. The key extract below illustrates the RES's general approach to the regional population:

> "Regional competitiveness depends on achieving both high levels of productivity and high rates of economic participation. Economic inclusion describes the process of overcoming the barriers, or market failures that prevent people from participating fully in the economy.
>
> Successful regions are those that can maximise the contribution of their population to the economy..." (p81)

The passage immediately defines the subject for discussion as regional competitiveness and links its successful attainment to increasing productivity and participation. Once this is accepted, the view of the population as a participation and productivity-enhancing tool is portrayed in the narrative as logical and credible. Despite this economic stance it does not mean that population is not dealt with at the individual level or that well-being is not taken into consideration. The importance of individuals, quality of life and sustainable communities are frequently referenced. However, it is often the case that people are mentioned with reference to individual skills and 'employability for life'. Similarly, 'quality of life' and 'sustainable, healthy, safe communities' are viewed as 'key drivers' by which to attract the 'talented individuals' that will help boost economic productivity and 'regional competitiveness' (p106).

The draft RSS adopts a similar approach toward the population of the North East of England though its recurrence is less prevalent throughout the document. A good example is provided in the passage below the Tyne and Wear city-region:

> "As the economy has evolved and diversified over time, the city region's *workforce* has responded through retraining and re-skilling. *However*, there is still a strong need to continue to create a responsive *workforce* to the changing economy or the city region will become *less competitive* internationally and nationally" (p30) (emphasis added)

As with the previous extracts from the draft RES the primary motivation for action is to prevent the region becoming 'less competitive' and the population are clearly considered in economic terms as a 'workforce'.

The draft RSS like the RES does predominantly promote a discourse which views the population of the region in an economic context. However, there are slight glimpses which offer a more balanced view of the population. For instance, reference is made to the 'older population', 'work-life balance' (p69), 'flexible working' (p69) and 'quality of life' potentially indicating the incorporation of a social as well as economic agenda. System and Lifeworld views are not necessarily in opposition to one another, but, with the exception of the examples mentioned above, within both documents there is

a tacit assumption that economic System development will lead to improvements in the public and private Lifeworld spheres. It is thus an important matter of emphasis in which the System or economic is privileged above the Lifeworld or social.

6. Regional progress and the future

The draft RSS and RES are both similar in adopting a somewhat contradictory approach to the state of the North East of England's economy and its future. Specifically whilst they highlight the success of the region during recent years, they also downplay that success and suggest that much still needs to be done. More so, this combination of positive and negative statements occurs in close proximity in the texts, revealing an uneasy combination of narratives built upon the differing discourses of the region's statistically poor relative performance and its high aspirations for improvement.

The draft RSS in its sections on the 'Tyne and Wear' and 'Tees Valley' city-regions illustrates the case of this hybrid narrative on the state of the economy. On the 'Tees Valley' city-region it states:

> **"A Rebuilt Competitive Economy**
> 2.91 Since the economic downturn of the 1980's, the city region's economy has gone from strength to strength. Unemployment, at 3.6%, is the lowest for decades and job vacancies are at record levels. Worklessness, which shows the proportion of the workforce without a job who are seeking work but not necessarily registered as unemployed, is double that at 7.4%. Nevertheless, the structure of the economy has been *transformed* from one reliant on heavy industries to a *more diverse and balanced economy*. Chemicals, steel making and fabrication industries remain important. The growth in the economy has been fuelled by expansion in the business services, knowledge based and information and communications sectors. Call centres have made a major contribution to diversifying the economy and offering new opportunities.
>
> 2.92 Despite these improvements over the last twenty *years, structural problems remain*. In fact, the success of the economy has revealed the *inadequacies* of the *labour force*. Compared to

other regions, the Tees Valley city region displays a weak enterprise culture: the rate of new business start-ups is amongst the lowest in the UK and the failure rates are amongst the highest" (p43) (emphasis added).

Here the extract reveals how the text shifts quickly from defining the Tees Valley as going from 'strength to strength' and being 'transformed' to 'a more diverse and balanced economy' to still having 'structural problems' and being near the bottom of UK tables for business start ups and failure rates. The sharp contrast from positive to negative presents an almost schizophrenic narrative, which hampers its acceptance as valid and credible.

The draft RES is perhaps even more disjointed in its combination of narratives. Whereas the draft RSS appears to alternate between paragraphs, in the RES it can be seen on a sentence-by-sentence basis. As the extract below illustrates:

"Over the past decade, the North East's economy has been *constantly renewing and reinventing itself*, undergoing a lengthy period of *structural change*. Over this time the Region has been successful *at increasing output, number of jobs, income and investment*. However, as outlined in previous sections, despite these successes, the North East economy *still lags behind the UK average* on most standard measures of performance" (p4) (emphasis added).

In this example the North East of England is described as 'constantly renewing and reinventing itself' but also as lagging behind the UK average. The subordinator, 'however', is used to guide the reader through the transition, but the shift is a difficult one to conceal.

In both the draft RSS and RES progress is often measured by comparison to the national average via a number of indicators, which essentially constitutes a national performance management framework. Furthermore, the strategies, and in particular the draft RES, make use of the North East of England's poor record in this performance assessment regime to justify their policy approaches and legitimate their spatial narratives. Therefore, despite the existence of a narrative on the positive aspirations of the region, it is the negative discourses of poor economic performance and deprivation revealed through a national comparative framework that are relied upon to justify policy intervention.

7. The industrial history of the North East of England

The draft RSS and RES present rather interesting narratives on the North East of England's industrial past. The decline of the region's traditional labour-intensive industries, the rise of a branch plant manufacturing economy and more recent attempts to attract more knowledge-based industries leave 'traces' in the strategies which can be seen to produce three distinct narratives on the region's history. The first involves the presentation of a negative regional economic narrative based upon the region's poor economic performance on a range of nationally comparable indicators. The second and third revolve around contradictory viewpoints that warn against aiming to recreate the past but also promote approaches that focus on embracing the characteristics which made the region successful.

The draft RES in its section on 'Leadership in a Global Economy' issues a clear warning against looking back to the past:

> "In some regions, *however*, the focus of strategic discussions may be more about *looking back to relive past glories* in the economic and social spheres. This denial of the inevitable progress of globalisation will leave such regions increasingly vulnerable to economic crises. The ability to *move forward* is crucial for successful regions..." (p27) (emphasis added)

Elsewhere the draft RES states that "the decline of traditional heavy industries has provided the Region with significant *challenges*" and that "these challenges have left a *legacy* of communities with very high rates of worklessness, physical dereliction and wider social and cultural problems in many areas" (p83). Here the 'legacy' is not one of pride in the former strength of the region, but a 'legacy' of communities with social and cultural problems. This narrative, apparent in both strategies, but particularly the draft RES, attempts to uncouple the region from its 'historical baggage' and break free from its 'institutional lock-in' (Hudson, 2005).

Running parallel but contrary to this narrative on moving forward is a sub-narrative, which covertly subverts it. This narrative reveals itself in the use of particular words, rather than whole sentences or paragraphs, and involves evoking connotations of the North East's prosperous industrial

heritage. For example, the draft RES states its aim to "reengage people within economic activity" (p11) and observes that "in recent years, the North East has begun to re-establish innovation as a significant part of its prosperity and identity" (p59). Similarly the draft RSS refers to the need to "re-skill" the workforce (p11) and a programme to "rediscover entrepreneurialism" (p43). Whether it be reengaging, retraining, re-establishing or rediscovering, all of these terms invoke the notion of re-doing something that has been done before, and thereby implies a connection to the region's industrial past. As Bond and McCrone observe, One NorthEast has sought to overcome a 'dependency culture' by "'recapturing' the North East's historic identity as an enterprising region" (2004:16). Indeed, as One NorthEast's first RES *Unlocking Our Potential* stated in 1999, "the Region must rediscover the spirit of enterprise – the attitudes and skills – that provided the foundation for the North East's former prosperity" (1991:44). There, therefore, exists within both strategies an intriguing complex and contradictory assemblage of regional narratives which highlight the region's poor and good economic performance, stress the need to move forward by overcoming negative historical legacies and also appeal to the 'past glories' of the region's industrial past.

8. Defining the region

There is a clear narrative in the draft RSS and RES that defines the region comparatively with either the national average or other regions. This is most obvious with regard to the recurring references to increasing the GVA of the region in order to 'catch up' with the national average. Hence, it is also a narrative used to support a dominant discourse of economic growth and regional competitiveness.

The narrative is most prevalent in the draft RES, which as outlined previously often uses negative perceptions and references to justify policy approaches. The comparatively small population of the North East of England and its status as a peripheral region are two such examples, illustrated in the extract from the draft RES below:

> Also, *as a small region*, the North East has often felt at the *mercy of wider national and global trends* and *less able to influence them*. *Meanwhile*, the Region's location, *somewhat at the periphery of the United Kingdom and the European Union* – whether this be a perception or a reality - has counted against it in an era when proximity and low transport costs have been key drivers of business location and activity (p15-16) (emphasis added)

In contrast the draft RSS refrains from some of the more negative connotations that characterise similar sections in the draft RES and adopts a less subjective and somewhat plainer approach. For example, the start of one section refers to the North East as "a compact, well-defined region" (p21). Attempts to define the region show that, though it may be possible to identify an underlying North East of England regional discourse, the draft strategies interpret and actively produce the region as a space in a variety of different ways through a competing web of narratives.

9. The region and its assets

The draft RES and RSS make frequent reference to assets – seventy-two in the draft RES and a comparable forty-five in the draft RSS (for more details on the word searches please refer to appendix 8). The tendency to refer to some of the region's most valued characteristics, such as its culture, history and heritage, identity and environment as assets is a clear narrative in both strategies and reflects their commitment to an underlying discourse of economic development. However, there are subtle variations in the narratives of each document with regard to the importance and future significance of the region's assets. Noticeably the draft RES views the region's assets as potential areas on which to capitalize in order to enable greater economic growth. Alternatively, the draft RSS, despite also recognising their economic value, considers the aforementioned assets as vital in their own right and in helping to create and sustain a high quality of life for the region's inhabitants. The two extracts shown below present excellent examples of the differing approaches.

Extract 1 from the draft RES:

Image and Cultural Assets: Linked to Infrastructure above, there is increasing evidence that in the post industrial economy, the major new *comparative advantage* is the *quality, image, cultural and environmental assets* of an area. Successful businesses must attract and retain skilled and motivated people. *Image and cultural assets* are *key drivers* in attracting such skilled people as well as visitors and tourists to a region. We *therefore* need to build upon the distinctive image of the North East, based on the people, places and cultural *assets* that can be celebrated and enjoyed within and outside the Region. Through attracting business and skilled people to the Region, Image and Cultural Assets will be a *driver* of both *participation and productivity* (p9) (emphasis added).

Extract 2 from the draft RSS:

3.82   Together, the region's built and natural environment are an *important resource* and *major asset*, both *in their own right* and as a necessary component in contributing to *economic growth, regeneration, health and quality of life* in the region. Creating and retaining high quality and attractive environments is important in encouraging *tourism*; providing *leisure, recreational* and *cultural opportunities*; improving *health* and providing a sense of *well-being*; as well as being an essential element both to *successful regeneration* and to improving the *image* of the region. High quality design ensures attractive, usable, durable and adaptable places and is a key element in achieving *sustainable development. The natural environment is the support system within which all life exists. Its resources, such as air, water, land and soil, have a limit to the amount of activity they can support. Breaching these limits will lead to a reduction in quality of life, particularly for future generations. Economic and social development must take place within the framework of respecting regional and global environmental limits.*

The economic discourse, which underpins the strategies, is present in both of these extracts but the degree to which the draft RSS embraces what might be termed Lifeworld principles is notable. Here the draft RSS widens the policy frame in which regional assets are assessed creating a narrative that appears to successfully incorporate both System and Lifeworld orientations. This approach can also be seen to promote a conservationist sub-narrative with regard to the region's assets. For example, on historical assets, the draft RSS states that:

In areas identified for growth and regeneration it is important that the impacts on the historic environment are properly understood at an early stage in the process. In many areas, opportunities exist for conservation-led regeneration which will benefit both the historic environment and the economy" (p105).

In summary, approaches to the region's assets reveal differences between the narratives of the draft regional strategies. Whereas the draft RES maintains a strong economic focus, the draft RSS attempts to construct a broader narrative incorporating economic, social, cultural and environmental agendas.

5. Conclusions

This chapter has provided a detailed analysis of the narratives and discourses underpinning the draft RSS and draft RES. In so doing nine key areas have been identified which reveal the similarities and differences in regional narratives being communicated by the North East Assembly and One NorthEast. Additional light has also been cast on the nature of those narratives in terms of their orientation toward the System and the Lifeworld. On this note it was demonstrated that the draft RSS achieved a slightly more balanced incorporation of System and Lifeworld perspectives, though it is important to note that both strategies were strongly influenced by an underlying discourse of economic growth and competitiveness.

Analysing the draft regional strategies it is also possible to see them as illustrative in Lefebvre's terms of a kind of regional 'spatial practice'. Certainly the mandatory consultation requirements, national performance management regime, ethos of partnership working and government guidance ensure specific sets of routines are 'performed' in creating the strategies. As such these practices produce and reproduce particular kinds of regional administrative space. As Turok states, "government reports and white papers emphasise repeatedly that differences between places really matter and that decentralised institutions are more sensitive to local needs and

circumstances" (2008:154). However, the detailed consultation and conformity to guidance requirements can also be seen to potentially undermine decentralised decision making by stressing compliance to certain nationally determined spatial practices and System-conceived policy approaches. As Bond and McCrone observe, "the RDAs' agendas exhibit a high degree of commonality" and "in part, these similarities reflect the strong political influence that central government exerts upon the English RDAs" (2004:15).

What is perhaps most noticeable from this analysis is that, apart from a small number of predominantly subtle differences, the narratives presented in the two draft strategies are remarkably similar. Admittedly, the narratives form a complex and occasionally complex tangled web of spatial representations but they are all essentially underpinned by a taken-for-granted commitment to an economic discourse of growth, skills, competitiveness and development. Within this it is possible to identify a fledging regional discourse but critically this is obfuscated by an uneasy relationship with national policy narratives and discourses. The draft strategies therefore attempt to strike a delicate balance in establishing their legitimacy and credibility from national and regional sources. In light of these observations and analysis, it is possible to provide four conjectures that may potentially explain the similarity of the regional narratives in the draft RSS and RES:

i.   The similarity is a reflection of the North East Assembly and One NorthEast working closely together around a shared discourse and producing both documents consensually.

ii.   The regional narratives are not in fact 'regional' in nature but are purely national agendas applied at the regional level. In this scenario central government is the leading actor in establishing regional policy and thereby the regional strategies are conforming to a higher legislative power.

iii. An uneven power relationship exists between One North East and the North East Assembly, which has led to the dominance of one's narratives other the other.

iv.   The similarities have occurred by the chance situation of both the

North East Assembly and One NorthEast adopting the same policy approaches.

The themes identified in this chapter and these conclusions will be used to inform the subsequent investigations into *Regional Leadership*, and *Evidence and Regional Policy* but in the meantime it is worth closing with a few thoughts on these conjectures. This chapter has revealed that the regional strategies seek to both produce regional space and adhere to national agendas in order to legitimate their respective policy interventions. As Bond and McCrone observe, "in reflecting ubiquitous concerns [regional institutions] may still do so through a regional or national lens. Hence themes that are in fact universal are regionalized and distinctiveness is constructed using the raw material of identity that is perceived to be available" (2004:15). However, in contrast Martin Jones states that, "regions are being politically charged through a discourse of competitiveness and learning, as a means of achieving so-called economic success" (2001:1203). Regional space is thus torn between the competing agendas of cultivating regional distinctiveness and promoting a more homogenous 'discourse of competitiveness'. As Fothergill queries, "when does a locally run regional policy become simply a national industrial policy implemented in the regions?" (2005:666). Before these issues are investigated further it is perhaps best to finish with a policy warning that is aptly suited to the concept of the production of space:

> "The 'powerhouses for regional regeneration'... [the RDAs] are driven by an economic imperative, which assumes that a strong regional tier corresponds with an ability to secure a competitive advantage under globalisation. This explanation is misleading if it implies a necessary relationship between economic dynamism and the regional scale without, first, examining the complex connections between economic, political, and cultural factors that come together to produce regions" (Jones, M., 2001:1195).

Chapter 6

Regional leadership in the North East of England

1. Introduction

The previous chapter established a working understanding of the narratives communicated by the 2005 draft RSS and 2005 draft RES produced by the North East Assembly and One NorthEast respectively. Taking these findings forward the following two chapters will examine the North East Assembly's mandatory role of scrutinising the actions of One NorthEast, through the lens of two particular investigations conducted between 2005 and 2007. In this sense the scrutiny function effectively forms a regional 'spatial practice' in delineating a required level of co-operation and ethos of partnership working between the NEA and ONE. Scrutiny is based upon communication and interaction between the two organisations and so can be seen as an ideal lens through which to analyse the interplay of the respective organisations' narratives. As such this and the following chapter are well placed to shed light on the concluding conjectures of the analysis into the draft strategies, which asked: are the similar narratives in the strategies the result of (i) an agreement on policy approaches based on an underlying regional discourse; (ii) a homogenising influence of central government agendas; (iii) a 'power asymmetry' between the NEA and ONE; or (iv) a chance occurrence.

This research chapter will examine the North East Assembly's Scrutiny and Policy Development (SAPD) Committee's investigation into

Regional Leadership, which was conducted in partnership with One NorthEast between December 2005 and November 2006. It is worthwhile noting that following internal restructuring at the NEA, this was the first scrutiny topic for the newly formed SAPD Committee, which in contrast to past practices had become a standing body analysing one topic at a time. Previous scrutiny practice had been based upon 'rounds' – roughly year-long investigations conducted by a panel of Assembly members on a 'task and finish' basis. Under that arrangement one 'round' could consist of a number of panel investigations. In all, three 'rounds' of scrutiny had been conducted in the North East of England prior to 2005 looking at a total of ten topics.

The SAPD Committee's investigation into Regional Leadership marked a change from previous practices. For the first time a greater emphasis was placed from the outset on pro-active policy development rather than retrospective scrutiny. In this vein the Assembly and One NorthEast worked in partnership in developing the Regional Leadership agenda and co-commissioned consultants[64] to aid the SAPD Committee. Regional Assemblies have a statutory duty to scrutinise RDAs with the process to be led by the Assemblies' 'indirectly-elected' members supported by Assembly officers and with the full cooperation of RDAs, as set out in the Government's *Strengthening Regional Accountability* guidance in 2001 (ODPM, 2001). In the case of Regional Leadership, SAPD Committee hearings were used to discuss and debate findings and policy approaches between the Assembly, One NorthEast and the consultants. Work on the topic was therefore comprised of a diverse collection of sources ranging from the aforementioned hearings and Committee meetings, to officer discussions, opportunities for public consultation and a system of research that was delegated between staff at the Assembly, One NorthEast and the consultants.

The scrutiny exercise concluded with the publication of a final report in November 2006 that set out the SAPD Committee's approach and provided four recommendations to One NorthEast, their response to which was also included. As such the final report is structured around seven key sub-

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[64] For issues of professional confidentiality the consultants shall remain un-named.

headings: introduction, methodology, emerging themes, mapping, conclusions, recommendations and ONE's initial response. As part of this research the document was submitted to a full thematic analysis, but importantly experiences and insights gained from being an 'insider-researcher' at the North East Assembly within the SAPD team were used to uncover the 'stories' behind the text. As such the aim was to reveal the numerous and competing 'storylines' of the NEA and ONE that came into interaction throughout the course of the Regional Leadership investigation. The following analysis therefore utilises a number of points made in the final report to examine the interplay of the various productions of space of the two regional organisations.

2. Regional Leadership 'storylines'

With the North East Assembly's final report acting as a reference point for an examination of the Regional Leadership scrutiny exercise seven key areas of interest were identified. In some cases there are clear degrees of overlap with the narratives of the draft regional strategies and this analysis can therefore be seen to build upon that. However, the points selected below are most useful in terms of what they reveal about the nature of the interactions between competing narratives or 'storylines' in regional space.

1. The North East Assembly – One NorthEast relationship

The scrutiny process can effectively be seen as constituting a regional deliberative forum in which certain sets of spatial practices are followed. As such it represents a space where various narratives or 'storylines', which are inherently imbued with claims to space, are communicated and interact. The Regional Leadership report essentially reflects the North East Assembly's interpretation of a particular scrutiny investigation and is therefore intriguing in terms of what it reveals regarding the nature of the relationship between

the two organisations. Based on experience gained as an 'insider-researcher' directly involved in the process, four main issues can be identified concerning the NEA-ONE relations.

i) The previous ineffectiveness of regional scrutiny

The Regional Leadership final report makes much of the policy development approach of the exercise. The Executive Summary, for example, identifies Regional Leadership as a key policy area emerging from the then forthcoming 2006 *Regional Economic Strategy: Leading the Way* and highlights the role the Assembly can play in taking forward that agenda. From the outset, therefore, it is clear the NEA is stating its desire to work with ONE and build working relations. The report continues in this vein with the Methodology highlighting the difference from previous scrutiny rounds because the exercise was "conducted in partnership with One NorthEast through the joint commissioning of consultants" and entailed "a heightened emphasis on policy development" (p8). The report is quick to stress that this was an "innovative and new approach" to scrutiny and policy development within the region. This ethos of partnership working is apparent in the minutes of many of the SAPD Committee meetings such as that of 20 December 2005 in which One NorthEast representatives are recorded as stating that "One NorthEast would like to work with the Assembly on developing their policy, in the first instance, specifically on regional leadership".

The shift of focus from retrospective scrutiny to forward looking policy development is significant and the report, although perhaps rather excessive in its praise for the new approach, is entirely correct in drawing the reader's attention to the difference. However, the reasoning behind the shift is more questionable particularly when analysed in terms of the power relations between the two organisations. An internal review of scrutiny and a previous scrutiny investigation into the effectiveness and influence of scrutiny recommendations had revealed that the process was on the verge of becoming unmanageable and, that to improve, the Assembly had to

restructure its own process. This was frequently referred to amongst Assembly staff as the need to 'get one's own house in order'. Assembly reasoning predicted that once this was achieved it would provide the foundations and legitimacy for building better relations with One NorthEast. However, this rationale essentially masked a very unbalanced power relationship between the two organisations. Although the Assembly possessed statutory powers for scrutiny it frequently struggled to make an impact on the policy and practices of One NorthEast. The investigation into the effectiveness of previous recommendations was an extremely difficult and frequently frustrating exercise for the Assembly and seemingly for One NorthEast as well. Although their were occasions in which scrutiny recommendations appeared to have been adopted by One NorthEast it was often difficult, if not impossible, to prove that policy change had been directly in response to a particular scrutiny recommendations. Internal restructuring at both the NEA and ONE also created confusion in following up recommendations due to a lack of clarity on the respective roles and responsibilities of staff at both organisations, particularly at the operational micro-level of day-to-day activity (SAPD Committee development day 27 January 2006).

So although the explicit narrative claimed that regional scrutiny was embracing a new ethos of partnership working in order to improve the effectiveness of the process the reality was somewhat more complex. A covert sub-narrative, which was never truly acknowledged and only known to those involved in the process, perceived the move to policy development as a desperate attempt by the Assembly to give the scrutiny function some legitimacy even if it meant working to One NorthEast's agenda. The term 'critical friend' which was widely considered to be a guiding term for regional scrutiny is particularly relevant here. The scrutiny relationship between the Assembly and One NorthEast had been damaged during the first 'round' of scrutiny in 2001, during which some members of the scrutiny panels adopted a very confrontational and critical approach. Assembly staff observed that, as a result, One NorthEast in subsequent rounds became increasingly defensive and essentially withdrew from an active role in the process. With little statutory powers to enforce participation or collaboration the Assembly's

scrutiny process became increasingly frustrating in the face of an organisation which overshadowed it in terms of budget, staff and seemingly regional profile.

The shift to policy development was innovative but analysed in terms of relations of power it can be seen an attempt by the Assembly to overcome a 'power asymmetry' which was restricting the influence and stifling the claim to legitimacy of the scrutiny process. Unable to assert its own desired process for scrutiny the Assembly moved from providing a direct challenge to attempting to influence One NorthEast from within, by engaging in collaborative policy development. It is interesting however that one of the key conclusions expressed by Members at the SAPD Committee development day of 27 January 2006 was the need for the formal and previously used scrutiny/monitoring mechanism to remain part of the Committee's remit. Assembly Members were, therefore, clearly uneasy with working too closely with One NorthEast. Striking a balance between cooperation and independence, or alternatively between being 'critical' and being a 'friend', was hence a source of much difficulty for the NEA, especially as the scrutiny function provided little in the way of enforcement tools in the wake of non-compliance or non-cooperation – something ONE had been guilty of in the past.

The 'new' policy development approach can be seen as a means by which to overcome the Assembly's lack of realistic enforcement options. Indeed, if decisions could be arrived at collaboratively so as to achieve consensus then enforcing scrutiny recommendations would be unnecessary. However, the limits of this rationale were clearly revealed by way inability of the two organisations to fully agree on the Regional Leadership recommendations. The final report provides four recommendations to ONE proposing that: (i) funds should be made available to leadership development programmes; (ii) a communications programme for regional leadership should be devised; (iii) a regional leadership conference should be organised; and (iv) a leadership panel should be established to implement the recommendations. To some degree the exercise was a success in that the first three recommendations were agreed consensually with ONE. However, ONE refused to accept the fourth recommendation on creating a

leadership panel, citing a lack of clarity in its purpose, a previous similar body which failed in 2002 and upcoming regional and national policy developments as reasons for its rejection. What this critically illustrates is that ONE's power to accept or reject recommendations fundamentally undermines the NEA's scrutiny function whether it be focused on retrospective scrutiny or forward-looking policy development. This power imbalance therefore casts doubts over the legitimacy of Assembly scrutiny and by association the organisation as a whole.

ii)   Improving the legitimacy of the scrutiny process

Despite the problematic of ensuring the active engagement of One NorthEast in the scrutiny process outlined above, the Regional Leadership exercise still attempted increase the legitimacy of the Assembly by improving, internally at least, the functioning of its scrutiny practices. For instance, the *Executive Summary* stresses the concepts of 'emergence' and 'consistency' as underpinning the evidence gathering and analysis process. In context this relates to an identified problem with previous scrutiny rounds in which recommendations occasionally seemed to appear without any supporting evidence. The Regional Leadership exercise attempted to solve this by better linking together evidence gathering with analysis – emerging themes were thereby identified and explicitly connected to conclusions and recommendations. By doing this it was hoped that the legitimacy of scrutiny and its recommendations would be improved and as a result taken more seriously by One NorthEast. In essence, therefore, the altered process was a means by which the Assembly could better assert and have accepted its narrative on regional space through the mechanism of scrutiny.

The Assembly's statutory scrutiny role is also highlighted as a source of organisational legitimacy and 'jurisdictional integrity' (Skelcher, 2005). The *Introduction* is quick to stress the importance of scrutiny as the "only regional strand of accountability applied to Regional Development Agencies". It also stresses the significance of the Assembly's diverse and regionally representative membership in conducting that scrutiny. Notably the section

does not include reference to the other means by which RDAs are called to account, say for example, through DTI (now DEBRR) targets, reports to Government Office and the National Audit Office's Independent Performance Assessment which was very topical and about to undergo its first round when this report was being written. This omission is revealing in that to the uninformed reader it appears to make scrutiny out to be potentially the only means by which RDAs are held to account. The Assembly is therefore portrayed as having a legitimate, and indeed much required, role in ensuring the accountability of regional space.

iii) Capacity, credibility and the use of consultants

The joint commissioning of consultants was a defining point of the Regional Leadership exercise. It was the first occasion in North East regional scrutiny that consultants had been co-funded and as such did much to boost the idea of the topic being developed in partnership. In addition the two organisations submitted equal sums of money and the combined funds made available were substantial adding to the perception that the investigation was being taken seriously. But such positive overtones masked some underlying issues regarding the capacity and relationship of the two organisations.

The use of the consultants added a new dynamic, essentially creating a tripartite relationship between the consultants, the Assembly and One NorthEast. Consultants had been used by the Assembly in the past often as a means of providing a neutral interpretation of the evidence. The *Methodology* section stresses the 'independent voice' (p9) that using consultants provided but it is interesting that such neutrality was needed as a source of legitimacy. Within both organisations an evident discourse existed that placed value on having the support of an 'independent' voice outside of regional government to support their policy approaches. In terms of balancing national and regional agendas, the support of outside consultants hence provided a relatively easy, though potentially expensive, means of acquiring credibility and capacity. With regard to Regional Leadership the Methodology

of the final report states that both the Assembly and One NorthEast sought an 'independent voice'.

The use of consultants also revealed the capacity imbalance between the NEA and ONE. The NEA's scrutiny team[65] did not possess the capacity to undertake such a substantial investigation into regional leadership. Alternatively, ONE had the budgetary resources but, as it was then still in the process of recruiting for the project, consultants were seen as an intermediary solution. Furthermore, though discussions regarding the recruitment of the consultants were conducted in SAPD Committee meetings, it was ultimately the resources of ONE that were used to facilitate the process[66] and these procedural details were not subject to debate as it was clear the Assembly simply did not possess the capacity to offer such services.

The use of consultants also revealed tensions in the NEA-ONE relationship. If consultants had not been used and the research had been carried out by just one of the two organisations then that organisations would have had ownership over the findings, something which would have jeopardised the concept of developing a shared evidence base (as One NorthEast stressed in the SAPD Committee meeting of 20 December 2005). Therefore, rather ironically, the best way of working in partnership was judged to be to delegate the bulk of the research to a neutral partner. In this sense partnership working was achieved by the use of an external third partner, something which appears to contradict the ethos of partnership working between the NEA and ONE. A key issue regarding this development is that organisational trust appears to have been lacking as the consultants acted as an 'independent' voice not to but between the NEA and ONE.

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[65] A new Scrutiny Manager was appointed in February 2006 and an additional dedicated Scrutiny Officer in April 2006. This meant the scrutiny team changed from having an Assistant Chief Executive with one part-time Scrutiny Officer and another member of staff who took on some scrutiny duties to an Assistant Chief Executive with a Scrutiny Manager, Scrutiny Officer and part-time Scrutiny Officer

[66] For example, ONE's legal department was used in orchestrating the tenure process.

iv) North East Assembly internal regulation

In conducting the Regional Leadership exercise the Assembly in some instances actively and consciously regulated its own actions. An interesting example concerns the *Introduction* of the final report. The section refers to the statutory guidance for the scrutiny process as set out in the 1998 Regional Development Agencies Act and the DTI Guidance to Regional Development Agencies. This information was included in the report of the previous scrutiny investigation but significantly during that preceding round in 2005 had faced substantial opposition from Assembly management, which perceived it to be too confrontational. As a result the section was removed and re-instated a number of times before it was finally approved in the final report, with the overriding persuading factor being that the statutory guidance helped clarify and emphasis the role and importance of the scrutiny function. Still it is revealing of the relationship between the Assembly and One NorthEast to know that some debate occurred inside the Assembly over whether stating what was publicly available knowledge and in fact statutory law and guidance, was potentially too confrontational.

The Regional Leadership report also illustrates the NEA's preference to avoid potentially controversial issues. One particular example is that of the structure of regional government which the Assembly considered to be too closely associated with the work of national government departments (the work on city-regions for instance) and as unnecessarily drawing attention to the NEA's weakened position following the regional referendum result. Therefore the Introduction section clearly sets out that "the report has not set out to evaluate the success of regional organisations and governance structures in the region" (p7). However, a problem arose in that governance arrangements emerged time and again as one of the key themes that needed to be addressed in developing regional leadership. Indeed the headline statement for the Emerging Themes chapter states that "a prominent consideration in developing regional leadership in the North East of England was that such developments were inherently linked to the national, regional and local governance framework" (p11). The Scrutiny and Policy

Development Committee and its supporting officers therefore had to identify governance arrangements as a key theme but simultaneously could do little to investigate it further as it was referred to by Assembly management as a 'can of worms' that the Assembly could not afford to open. This internal regulation at the highest level of Assembly management out of fear of what engaging in highly political and controversial policy areas might do to the profile of the Assembly is indicative of the perceived fragile legitimacy of the NEA in regional and national space.

2. Consultation and consensus

In the Regional Leadership exercise considerable attention was directed toward the need for partnership working and reaching consensus. This thinking was at least partly was based upon the Assembly's mandate as a representative body for the region in which consensus was perceived to be a desirable aim in balancing potentially divergent regional interests. Open consultation sessions were therefore utilised as a means of involving the Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee in the evidence gathering process. Being a Member-led organisation it was considered unsatisfactory by Members, and perhaps more by Assembly management and staff, that investigations should be limited to officers conducting research and presenting it to the Committee. The Regional Leadership report outlines the purpose of these consultation sessions:

> "The open consultation sessions offered an arena for discussion of a variety of different points of view and provided an opportunity for the Members of the Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee to contribute to the primary evidence. Two open consultation sessions were held – one in Darlington and the other in Tynemouth – to maximise the potential for representatives from the region to be involved" (p9).

A key section in the extract above is the final sentence on maximising "the potential for representatives from the region to be involved". The Assembly, throughout the exercise attempted engage with more marginalised and community-based groups and this contrasted sharply with One NorthEast's

focus on the economic and business orientated aspects of regional leadership.

Consultation and consensus were thus important aspects of the NEA's approach to the scrutiny investigation and indeed they did lead to some successes. For example, the NEA successfully negotiated a way forward with ONE in recruiting the consultants and ultimately three of four recommendations were accepted by ONE (SAPD Committee on 28 February 2006). However, despite some elements of consensual decision making the limits of such partnership working were exposed by the rejection of the final recommendation and the distorting effects of the unequal power relationship between the two organisations highlighted in the previous section.

Additionally the NEA also encountered difficulties in following a consensual approach within its own organisation. Numerous capacity, resource and time constraints essentially meant that often decisions had to be taken before consensus could be reached. The pressures of having to meet monthly deadlines for SAPD Committee meetings, combined with the confusion of adapting to differing styles of management, hampered effective communication and dialogue within the Assembly. In Habermasian terms, conditions were thus far less than ideal for reaching any kind of consensus, distorted or undistorted. Therefore, although consensus was an ideal embraced by the NEA's scrutiny process, a number of practical obstacles prevented its ideal functioning.

3. The North East Assembly's regional image

The Regional Leadership report was the first scrutiny report to adopt a new standardised Assembly format in terms of layout and design. The first three rounds of scrutiny had had a consistent style but Regional Leadership was the first report to be produced in line with Assembly-wide 'branding' guidelines. The 're-branding' of the NEA's regional image was the result of a review and reorganisation of the North East Assembly conducted following the 'no vote' of the 2004 regional referendum and the subsequent separation

of the North East Assembly and Association of North East Councils which had previously shared staff and premises.

This internal restructuring of the Assembly occurred in parallel with the review of the scrutiny process and the evaluation of the effectiveness of previous recommendations upon One NorthEast in 2005. There can be little doubt that the often fraught process of internal restructuring, although necessary, created a tense and highly politicised atmosphere which hampered the scrutiny process and the wider functioning of the Assembly during this time. The Regional Leadership report was therefore part of an attempt to step out of the shadow of the rejection of directly-elected regional government, in the wake of which the Assembly's spatial discourse had essentially become confused and almost non-existent. Indeed press articles at the time highlighted how the defeat for the expansion of Regional Assemblies had left a power vacuum in the North East of England. The North East Assembly's re-branding can thereby be seen as an attempt to raise its profile across the region and beyond in order to (re)establish its own production or narrative on regional space.

The moves to expand the NEA's profile included the recruitment of a dedicated communications team[67], the re-branding exercise mentioned above, and the adoption of a plain English guide for all Assembly publication. However, this last development revealed underlying tensions with regard to the Assembly's identity and purpose – in basic terms, was it a regional administrative organisation or a representative body for regional interests? The answer undoubtedly was both but the NEA struggled to balance some potentially contradictory functions that involved representing contrasting regional narratives. For instance, the statutory duty to compile the RSS involved a planning narrative and discourse which was reasonably technical in nature. In this sense the RSS serves as referential guidance to be used by planners in Local Planning Authorities. However, in contrast the NEA also has a duty to act as the voice for the region representing diverse regional interests. This role is public focused, highly visible and involves active engagement with the region's public. Alternatively regional scrutiny falls

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[67] Interestingly when the Association of North East Councils and the Assembly split it was the Association which retained the communications staff.

somewhere between these two purposes. The NEA therefore faced a challenge of performing abstract, administrative and bureaucratic functions and also being accessible, visible and participatory. It was a challenge the NEA continually struggled to overcome.

Concerning scrutiny the Regional Leadership report was published just before the new plain English guidelines came into force but it was still subject to the same problematic. The challenge in previous rounds had been how to raise the profile of scrutiny amongst the people of the region. However, a counter narrative was voiced that making reports more accessible would compromise their ability to act as detailed policy documents. Without subjecting the Regional Leadership report to a full analysis of its readability it is reasonable to say that the report erred on the side of accessibility and readability. This was more the result of Assembly Members, many of whom were Local Authority Councillors, who favoured an easily understandable and brief text. As one member specifically stated, it is "crucial to engage and win over the general public" and that "we [the Assembly] should seek to engage people and thus find the best ways of doing this" (SAPD Committee meeting 25 Sept 2006). A focus on improving accessibility, engagement and participation were therefore perceived by the NEA as the best ways to raise its regional profile and establish the organisation as a credible and legitimate actor in regional space.

4. The relationship between economic and social agendas

This theme was apparent in the draft Regional Economic and Spatial Strategies and it re-emerges clearly in the *Conclusions* section of the *Regional Leadership* final report. The Assembly report is keen to stress a social agenda regarding regional leadership. This is demonstrated in the following extract taken from the opening paragraph:

> "Many of the examples of leadership we encountered were not solely about economic leadership. Whilst this work is directly linked with the emphasis on economic leadership in the Regional Economic Strategy, it also emphasis that the transferability of

skills, experience and aptitude for leadership can be found in communities as well" (p19.)

This stance reflects the view of many SAPD Committee members that better leadership was required at every level from big businesses to communities and neighbourhoods. Significantly this view contrasted starkly with the approach of One NorthEast, which adopted a far more economic business-focused approach from the outset. Indeed the lead One NorthEast officer assigned to the project was mainly experienced in business issues and this carried through into the leadership work.

The differences in terms of economic and social agendas, for want of better terms, can be clearly seen in the delegation of research responsibilities during the scrutiny investigation. Specifically a significant element of the primary research for the exercise revolved around a series of interviews with key regional interests. As consultants had been commissioned to assist in the investigation, the decision was taken by the Assembly and One NorthEast to distribute the one-on-one interviews between them. Hence, due to One NorthEast's relatively small team working on the project and the fact that the exercise was being mainly organised by the Assembly's Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee, the interviews were split between the consultants and the Assembly. However, the nature of that spit is an interesting issue for analysis. As the Regional Leadership report states:

"[The consultants] took responsibility for interviewing, in the main, the more economic and business orientated interests, whilst the North East Assembly interviewed a broader range of interviewees with a particular emphasis placed on those perceived to be under-represented in regional leadership" (p9).

The separation and allocation of interviewees along the lines of groups representing economic and business interests and those that are under-represented is particularly revealing of the perceived roles of the Assembly and the consultants. It was widely acknowledged by all staff involved that the consultants were responsible for carrying out the interviews that were more aligned with the work of One NorthEast - in other words those interviewees that represented economic and business interests. The Assembly on the other hand interviewed a wider audience as befitted its role as a 'Voice for

the Region' reflecting its credentials as an organisation led by members from throughout the region. Significantly the decision, if it could be termed as such, to divide the interviews along these lines was not the subject of much discussion. Indeed there was little or no discussion either internally within the Assembly or externally with the consultants or One NorthEast regarding the initial allocation of the proposed interviewees[68]. Critically the delegation along such lines was a taken-for-granted assumption revealing how the separation of economic and social agendas is embedded within the institutional roles and interactions of the two organisations.

The active promotion of a social agenda, particularly in terms of concern for under-represented interests, was nevertheless seen as a legitimate aim for the NEA to pursue. SAPD Committee members were especially adamant of the importance of a more socially orientated agenda. For example, the minutes of the SAPD Committee meeting of 4 July 2007 record that "all agreed that investing in VCS [Voluntary and Community Sector] capability should be a priority" (p5). Later in the meeting the importance of addressing the economic and social was made apparent when the Chair of the Committee "acknowledged [the consultant's] comment about economy but said that we also need to think about the social aspects" (p6).

The Regional Leadership report is strong in its support for a more socially orientated approach that incorporates an ethical dimension and is sensitive to minority groups. Indeed the report makes a number of references to this issue such as those shown in the examples below:

> "We should be sensitive to the particular problems of Black Minority Ethnic (BME) and other minority communities" (p21).

> "There was strong support for the promotion of ethical dimensions in leadership initiatives" (p23).

This more 'socially aware' approach and the fact that it originates from the views expressed by Committee Members hints at a more 'Lifeworld' orientated perspective. However, the Conclusions section takes an inconsistent approach to incorporating the social which undermines the

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[68] The list of potential interviewees had been prepared jointly by the Assembly and the consultants.

importance assigned to it during the investigation. This is possibly the result of an Assembly recognition that scrutiny is supposed to focus on the Regional Economic Strategy and that recommendations are made to One NorthEast – an organisation primarily concerned with economic development. Whilst social elements are referenced a number of times there are occasions when they are noticeably absent. A good example is the shown in the report's *Conclusions* section on 'confidence and aspirations'. The beginning of the second paragraph reads as follows:

> "The North East has much of which to be proud; economic performance is improving, and has been for the past five years. A recent report suggests that the North East's economy is one of the fastest growing in the UK" (p19).

Significantly the context is immediately set in terms of economic performance. The paragraph could have started with an acknowledgment of the region's distinct identity or thriving culture but instead economic performance takes centre stage. Indeed, the economic future of the region is the focus of the entire section and the terms 'step change' and 'bridging the gap', both widely used in the draft regional strategies, are often referred to. The NEA does make reference to and can be seen to take active steps in incorporating a more socially orientated approach – what might tentatively be described as a Lifeworld perspective. However, the underlying discourse is one of achieving economic growth and hence the NEA's social and empowering aspirations are merely narratives constructed around this discourse rather than competing ones. In addition the dominant position of One NorthEast's business-led approach can be seen to create a potentially unhelpful division of economic and social functions between the two organisations, instead of seeing them integrated into the thinking of both bodies.

5. Reconciling divergent visions of the region

A central theme in the Regional Leadership report is the need for dramatic change in the region. Much like the draft regional strategies analysed in the previous chapter the term 'step change' is used repeatedly. Also, in a vein very similar to that adopted in the draft RES the *Conclusions* section initially adopts an opportunistic view of the region stating that "economic performance is improving, and has been for the last five years" (p19) and then qualifies this with the more negative admission that, "the region's reputation as one with a challenging economic status and where unemployment is indigenous does not help to promote its many assets" (p19). This is a reflection of a trend, apparent in the draft RES and RSS, which presents a double-sided picture of the North East of England as a region which is simultaneously succeeding and failing[69].

This narrative, or more accurately combination of narratives, exposed in the Regional Leadership report, reveals fractures and tensions in the regional discourse promoted by the NEA and ONE. In so doing it shows there to be a certain degree of inconsistency in terms of there being a 'shared vision' for the region. Indeed, the final report under aspirations and vision states that, "there was a strong consensus that the North East of England suffers from either low or unrealistic aspirations" (p12). However, at around the same time a report by the OECD on the Newcastle city-region concluded that the region's growth rates were based upon unrealistically high aspirations. The report was less than well received in the region but it does serve to illustrate the internal contradiction of the spatial narrative of the NEA and ONE. Both organisations can be seen to be attempting to actively construct a narrative of the region as unified and as having high aspirations to improve. However, it would appear that this narrative does not correlate with the situation on the ground. Indeed, the Regional Leadership report even

[69] In fact this was the subject of an ongoing joke amongst Assembly staff in which a fictional policy officer from the North East has to adopt a dual personality when representing the region at national meetings. So when first asked how the North East is performing economically the officer proudly exclaims that the region is performing very strongly. However, when subsequently asked with regards to future regional funding the officer remarks that the region is falling behind the rest of the UK with the lowest average GDP per capita of all the regions and so more funds are desperately needed.

admits this stating, "associated with a perceived lack of regional vision is a perceived deficiency in working together or collectively to a common agenda" (p11). The contradictory narratives representing alternative spatial interpretations of the region therefore rest uneasily in the NEA's and ONE's claims to regional space.

As a means to presenting a more positive image of the North East of England the Regional Leadership report identifies the region's media as potentially playing a vital role, especially in terms of changing public perceptions. The report suggests that current negative stories about the region are stifling the North East's progress and presenting a barrier to regional leadership. As the report states, "bad news stories about the region – particularly the public sector – appear to dominate the regional media" (p22). The report continues that, "if we could incorporate our regional editors into discussions about how to improve the reporting of the region in the media, we might dramatically improve not only communication, but also self-confidence and aspiration" (p22)[70]. Crucially communication and interaction are thereby identified as the critical means by which a more positive North East regional space may be produced. In addition the assertion also implies that communication via the region's media is essentially distorted in that it does not represent a 'true' reflection of regional space.

6. The complexities of the regional geography

The Regional Leadership report takes a comprehensive and spatially aware approach to the need for action at a variety of different scales. In particular the Conclusions section makes reference to the need for action on an individual, collective and institutional basis, as well as the potential to expand prestigious project-based schemes. The section critically illustrates an understanding of some of the varying spatial scales operating within the region and how action might be specifically tailored toward them.

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[70] The final report highlights the example of participation in post-compulsory education in Tees Valley, which is amongst the highest in the country, as just one instance of positive news stories that are rarely covered by the regional media.

Communities are recognised as an arena in which individuals can make a difference and interestingly communities are not treated as narrowly defined bodies as the report stresses they might be "geographic communities, or interest communities, or economic communities" (p20). The recognition by the report of the varying nature of such communities and the wider acknowledgement of overlapping spatial scales can be seen as an indication of the Assembly's acknowledgement of spatial difference. It is not an attempt to assert a regional space over all sub-regional entities, but instead to build a regional space from the complex and diverse collectivity of such spaces. Interestingly this reveals a rarely experienced Assembly sub-narrative which is focused on constructing its regional legitimacy from the bottom up.

Throughout the Regional Leadership scrutiny exercise such appreciation of sub-regional tensions was evident in the spatial practices of the North East Assembly. For instance in organising SAPD Committee hearings officers took the deliberate action of holding one session in Darlington and the other in Tynemouth. Other standard SAPD Committee meetings were also held in Sunderland, Durham, Newcastle and Gateshead[71]. On a basic level this was to make the hearings more accessible to Assembly members and thereby increase participation. However, it was also a more tactical move to avoid any allegations of spatial favouritism within the region. It is often claimed that the North East has one of the strongest senses of regional identity in England but this betrays a far more subtle reality of a region that is really comprised of a myriad of local and sub-regional loyalties, which interact in inherently complex ways. Importantly the spatial practices of the NEA's scrutiny function did display some conceived recognition of these complex sub-regional geographies. Nevertheless, the attempts to build regional consensus based upon equal and fair participation still faced obstacles that were occasionally beyond that which could be solved through the tactics of Assembly officers. For instance, for a short period during the Regional Leadership exercise the Assembly was virtually boycotted by Local Authority members from the Tyne and Wear sub-region on the grounds that they had not been granted a fair number of seats

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[71] Most SAPD Committee meetings were held at the NEA offices in Newcastle and later in Gateshead because of resource implications.

on the Assembly's ruling Executive Board. Once again this particular instance reveals the limitations of the Assembly's attempt to construct a regional space around the principles of consensus, participation and representation.

7. Views and relationship with central government

The Regional Leadership report, like the draft RSS and draft RES, reveals a contradictory narrative which treads uneasily between central government requirements and regional interests. Indeed the *Conclusions* section under the subheading *'Challenging barriers to change and leadership'* specifically identifies central government as simultaneously being both a strong influence and barrier in developing regional leadership. The extract below clearly illustrates, in a relatively short passage, the contrasting approach:

> "Central government clearly has a role to play in the encouragement of leadership initiatives in the region (as in any other in the UK); perhaps that influence is stronger here because of the strength of the... public sector contributions to our economy. Unfortunately, too often the experience within the North-East is of central government discouraging regional innovation and initiatives that don't conform to national agendas which are both transitory and often based on the demands of the over-heated south-east economy" (p21-22).

The passage is evidently highly charged particularly when compared to previous scrutiny reports, which generally tend to avoid references or language that could be interpreted as critical, either of central government or other organisations. The NEA's claim that the government has discouraged regional innovation and any approaches that do not conform to its thinking is therefore unusual in terms of its open criticism.

However, elsewhere in the report the NEA clearly attempts to distance itself from controversial policy areas such as the structure of regional government for example. All the report goes as far to venture on this matter is that future leadership initiatives should be "considered in relation to current and possible future governance arrangements; an example was the current

debate concerning the potential for development of city-regions" (p11). However, despite governance arrangements being raised repeatedly as a vital issue throughout the course of the scrutiny investigation they receive very little specific attention.

The NEA's scrutiny exercise into Regional Leadership illustrates a narrative which attempts to balance the need to work within central government parameters whilst furthering the production of regional space that legitimates the Assembly through its claim to a degree of autonomy from national agendas. An analysis of the Regional Leadership report and draft regional strategies reveals this to be a delicate balancing act between often competing national and regional discourses. What is noticeable about the Regional Leadership report is that it goes further than both draft regional strategies in making the case for a regionally distinct narrative. For example, it explicitly states that, "central government aims are not aligned effectively and there is a noticeable lack of central government understanding of regional issues" (p12). Indeed it makes the regional case further highlighting the "need for stronger political will and presence both within and at the regional level" (p11). These statements indicate what may only be embryonic attempts to cultivate the North East of England as a regionally distinct and unique space. It is therefore actively attempting to produce a particular kind of regional space. Furthermore, the few open criticism of central government approaches even go as far as to suggest a counter-hegemonic narrative to dominant productions of regional space.

3. Conclusions

This chapter has used the North East Assembly 2005-2006 scrutiny investigation into Regional Leadership to analyse the interaction of the regional narratives of One NorthEast and the Assembly. In so doing it has further explored the contrasting narratives and discourses identified in the draft regional strategies and in some instances highlighted new ones.

Importantly, however, this research chapter has succeeded in casting light on the reasoning behind the similarity of the regional narratives.

A key area has been the greater understanding gained of the nature of the relationship between the NEA and ONE. The Regional Leadership exercise was notable for its focus on partnership working and proactive policy development, but this was at least partly motivated by a failure of previous scrutiny mechanisms to effectively influence One NorthEast's policies and practices. The scrutiny investigation did involve some genuine collaboration, but this was complicated by the commissioning of consultants, which then acted as middle link in a tripartite relationship including the NEA and ONE.

The true degree of consensual decision-making was also questioned by ONE's acceptance of only three of the four scrutiny recommendations. As Blackman and Ormston state:

> "while the RDAs are required to consult chambers in preparing their economic strategies and corporate plans, they are not required to accept their views, and a similar situation exists with regard to the new scrutiny arrangements. Given these arrangements were introduced under the banner of 'strengthening regional accountability', they raise important issues about what is actually meant by 'accountability'" (2005:377).

This statement, the concerns of which were realised in the *Regional Leadership* exercise, supports the finding that there exists a 'power asymmetry' between the NEA and ONE. In this light even the Assembly's attempt to gain greater legitimacy by repositioning its approach, scrutiny was unlikely to overcome the distorting effects of the unequal power relationship. As Beaumont and Nicholls state, "well designed participatory institutions serve to enhance fruitful deliberations and satisfactory consensuses *only* when there is a relative balance of power between the stakeholders" (2008:90).

The context behind the Regional Leadership report indicates a desire by the NEA to improve its regional profile. Indeed, the rebranding exercise, of which the report is a part, was a recognition of the poorly understood roles of the NEA within the region. The restructuring of the scrutiny process to focus on policy development and the NEA's wider organisational rebranding can therefore be seen as attempts to establish its legitimacy and validate its claim

to regional space. Indeed, the mature understanding and approach to the complexities of the regional geography, especially in terms of actively seeking to overcome sub-regional tensions, evidenced through the spatial practices of the scrutiny process, illustrate the NEA's efforts to construct a regional profile through broadening participation.

Building upon the contradictory 'storylines' concerning the degree of progress and the interpretation of the region's industrial past identified in the draft strategies, the Regional Leadership investigation demonstrated similar confusion in regional narratives. In particular, narratives were seen to clash with regard to positive and negative accounts of the region's aspirations. As Bond and McCrone observe, "overall, the North East tends to be surrounded by a quite negative discourse, with its identity as much tied up with its status as a 'problem' economic region as it is with any cultural, historical, or political sense of identity" (2004:21). In attempting to raise the aspirations of the region the narratives of the NEA and ONE therefore struggle to establish a legitimate and credible view of the future of regional space.

As before the role of central government is a recurring theme and one that is delicately treated in regional narratives. As with the draft regional strategies the NEA and ONE appear to balance commitments to government with those of the region, but there are instances in which clear fractures are visible. The *Regional Leadership* investigation would appear to indicate that central government does play an important role providing what may be seen as a 'meta-governance' context to regional working. However, the actions of central government alone are not enough to explain the similarities in regional narratives and there are even some examples of tentative attempts to construct a regionally distinct narrative. To investigate these issues further the following chapter will analyse the interactions of the NEA and ONE as part of the scrutiny investigation conducted into Evidence and Regional Policy in 2006-07.

Chapter 7

Evidence and Regional Policy

1. Introduction

The North East Assembly's investigation into *Evidence and Regional Policy* marked the second topic for the Scrutiny and Policy Development (SAPD) Committee, following the internal review of scrutiny conducted in 2004/05. Following directly on from the work on Regional Leadership, the exercise took place between August 2006 and June 2007 when the final report was officially endorsed and published. In this time eleven Committee meetings were held[72], primary and secondary research was conducted 'in-house' by Assembly officers, and numerous discussions were had with Committee members, staff from ONE and within the NEA. However, unlike the previous policy development focused approach towards Regional Leadership, the investigation into *Evidence and Regional Policy* incorporated a stronger emphasis on retrospective scrutiny.

Evidence and Regional Policy was chosen by members of the SAPD Committee, on recommendation from Assembly officers, as a scrutiny topic with the aim of better understanding how the North East of England, as a policy community, utilised evidence bases in formulating regional policy. Barker and Peters state that, "all public policy fields in all political systems require expertise of some kind because they contain much detail and usually complexity" (1993:2). Indeed, as has already been observed, the draft

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[72] One of which was a dedicated introductory session and another doubled as an annual review of the scrutiny process.

regional strategies produced in 2005 both relied on 'expertise' gained either through government or consultancy guidance, consultation exercises or claims at representing a regional consensus. The use of such evidence in justifying strategic regional documents like the RES and RSS was thus a strong motivating factor behind the investigation and as a topical example, the scrutiny exercise used the process of drafting the region's submission to the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review 2007 (CSR '07) as a case study to explore some of the emerging themes.

The scrutiny investigation was also a reaction to the claim that "in order to have an effective decentralised system, both the quantity and quality of regional data need to be substantially increased" (McVittie and Swales, 2007:435). Various sources such as the OECD's territorial review of the Newcastle city-region, which claimed that high growth targets were unjustified, and the National Audit Office's Independent Performance Assessment of ONE, which highlighted a need for better co-ordination of the regional evidence base, had cast some doubt over the North East of England's regional evidence base and its use in supporting policy documents. With a strong emphasis placed on evidence-based policy-making[73] (EBPM) by central government[74], especially since the election of the New Labour government in 1997, the topic of *Evidence and Regional Policy* was perceived as an area in which the North East Assembly could add value.

In addition to viewing the regional scrutiny process as a form of regional spatial practice, the *Evidence and Regional Policy* investigation through its retrospective and reflective approach also essentially viewed the use of evidence as spatial practice in itself. This research was therefore able to use the scrutiny topic as a means by which to examine how evidence is used to create and support various regional narratives or 'storylines' – and crucially how these then interact in terms of their similarities and

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[73] Plewis identifies evidence-based policy-making as requiring "that policy initiatives are to be supported by research evidence and that policies introduced on a trial basis are to be evaluated in as rigorous a way as possible" (2000:96).
[74] DEFRA for example was responsible for a number of leading publications on EBPM as was the National Audit Office (though technically independent of central government).

contradictions. The use of evidence was thus interpreted as a spatial practice that reproduced particular productions of regional space.

In similar fashion to the preceding analysis of regional leadership this chapter will use the *Evidence and Regional Policy* final report published in July 2007 as a starting point for a wider investigation of the scrutiny process and themes that relate to communication or more specifically interaction and the space. Building upon and advancing the findings of the previous two chapters, the following analysis identifies five recurring themes relating to: (i) NEA attempts to connect with a regional Lifeworld; (ii) the relationship between the NEA and ONE; (iii) the dominance of a ONE 'storyline'; (iv) the presence of a North East of England policy discourse; and (v) the region's relationship with central government. Notably these findings overlap but do not necessarily mirror exactly those revealed in earlier chapters. Instead they represent a reinterpretation of those conclusions in relation to the use of evidence in regional policy. The rest of this chapter will hence look at each of these themes in turn.

2. Evidence and Regional Policy 'storylines'

The following themes emerged from the examination of the *Evidence and Regional Policy* scrutiny investigation.

1. North East Assembly attempts to connect with a regional Lifeworld

When initially selected as a scrutiny topic both officers and members of the Committee were aware that the topic was an abstract one that would not necessarily be seen as particularly interesting by the general public. Indeed the opening statement of the foreword of the report highlights the dilemma that was faced:

"This has been a most interesting challenge: taking an abstract topic such as the application of evidence bases in the development of regional strategic documents, and making the discussions and debate around the topic relevant to all the members of the Scrutiny and Policy Board[75]" (NEA, 2007:3)

The references to 'abstract topic' and 'regional strategic documents' are clear indications that ensuring the exercise was accessible to a wide audience was perceived to be a key issue. The challenge for Assembly officers and members therefore laid in how to conduct an investigation into an 'abstract' topic while making its findings useful and accessible to both policy and general communities.

As such the recognition of the topic as 'abstract' and relatively inaccessible outside the policy community can be seen in itself as an attempt to break down the often taken-for-granted elements of an administrative System discourse and its intervention into the regional Lifeworld. Hence, underpinning the Assembly's investigation into the role of evidence in regional policy is a tacit assumption that central government's promotion of evidence-based policy-making (EBPM) and its 'regime' of performance indicators and targets, essentially leads to the System-colonisation of regional space by ensuring a set of particular priorities are embedded into particular spatial practices – in this case the adherence to targets and practice of EBPM (Cabinet Office, 1999). As the investigation's final report supports, "in the drive to satisfy Central Government monitoring, targets were seen as "burdensome", with the suggestion that they sometimes lead to "massaging numbers" and "reporting that can be artificial" (NEA, 2007:17). In such terms regional space thus becomes an 'artificial space' detached from the Lifeworld. However, by revealing the functioning of the formulation of regional policy to a wider 'regional public' the Assembly can tentatively be seen to be (re)claiming a space for the Lifeworld in regional space. And in so

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[75] The Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee was renamed the Scrutiny and Policy Board after the Assembly Plenary on 28 June 2006 had approved revisions to bring the scrutiny function in line with the recommendations of the then Office of the Deputy Prime-Minister (ODPM). This also applied to the Assembly's Housing and Development Boards. The Committee officially became a Board after officers canvassed the Assembly for new members and a new (though essentially very similar to what was already in existence) Terms of Reference were agreed at the first meeting on 25 September 2006. However, for ease of reference the term Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee will continue to be used in this chapter and research.

doing the Assembly is also implicated as an organisation producing a regional space which reveals the System discourse to the Lifeworld, the conceived to the lived and vice versa.

Questions can be asked of the Assembly's motives in attempting to widen the communication of its work. For instance, is the stress on accessibility a politically shrewd manoeuvre to cultivate a legitimate role for itself in regional space or is it a genuine attempt at regional representation? Whatever the answer such actions would certainly appear to fit with the Assembly's mandate of building a 'regional civic culture' and being a representative 'voice for the region' (Musson et al., 2005). However, the actions of the SAPD Committee, and especially the views as expressed by its members, throughout the scrutiny exercise would appear to illustrate a concerted and genuine effort to approach the topic from the standpoint of a layperson. Indeed, in this instance the diverse membership of the Assembly with both Local Authority councillors and a third of members representing economic and social interests (termed Economic and Social Partners) such as trade unions, faiths, education and traditionally under-represented groups, is reflected in the nature of the spatial practice of the scrutiny process via the appeal to widen accessibility.

The SAPD Committee's commitment to ensuring the report was accessible can be seen in the comments made in response to drafted chapters presented at Committee meetings. One of the most pertinent examples was the Committee's meeting of Tuesday 21 November 2006 in which a draft of the methodology section for the final report was presented to members for comment. As research for the exercise had been conducted 'in-house' by Assembly officers there was a desire on behalf of the scrutiny officer team to demonstrate the degree and calibre of work that had gone into informing the report. However, members of the Committee, whilst appreciative of the work of officers, adopted a different line and requested that the section be substantially modified in order to simplify and make it more accessible. As the views of one member are recorded in a Committee meeting:

> "...he was not in favour of the style used in the methodology paper. It was not an approach commonly used in scrutiny investigations. It also had to be more accessible to the 'man in the street' and he stressed that the One NorthEast Board were all people from the wider community" (SAPD minutes, Nov 2006:5).

Another member agreed with these comments and added:

> "that time taken to absorb the content and meaning was also a factor in the need for it to be in ordinary language"(SAPD minutes, Nov 2006:5.

Nevertheless members were still keen that the complexity of the issue not be lost as there was a recognised risk that the report could be simplified to the point where its relevance to the policy community would be lost. For example, one member is recorded as saying that 'it was necessary to keep [in mind] the audience for which the report had been written' (SAPD minutes, Nov 2006:5). Nonetheless the overriding view of the Committee is demonstrated in the final two comments from members on the issue:

> "Councillor XXXX stated that the current exercise was a complex process but that the final document had to be written in plain English. The Chair added that it had to be written for the layperson if it was to go onto the website" (SAPD minutes, Nov 2006:5).

Members also stressed the need for a summary document at the beginning of the report and it was finally agreed that the more detailed methodology could be attached as a 'technical annex' to the final report.

This particular episode reveals a certain dichotomy within the Assembly regarding the basic role of the organisation – that is whether it is primarily policy and administratively focused or representative and public focused? In other words is the Assembly's purpose to influence policy or people? Interestingly the tensions surrounding this are not just between officers and members but between the members of the Committee as well. The variation in perspective between officers and members could perhaps be more easily anticipated given officers' involvement in the technicalities of the whole evidence gathering and analysis process and members' rather more removed role. However although many members were very keen on making the report as accessible as possible, there was also the opinion that the

report should not lose the audience for which it was intended (i.e. the policy community). This challenge was even directly referred to in the Chair of the Committee's opening *Foreword* of the final report, which states:

> "I hope you will agree that we have also managed to produce a readable report which makes a useful contribution to the research, evidence and policy communities in the North East" (NEA, 2007:3).

So the topic of *Evidence and Regional Policy* by being initially orientated towards policy professionals and therefore more associated with the administrative sphere of the System created an interesting dilemma for the scrutiny process in that its Assembly members were eager to introduce a more Lifeworld-orientated perspective. It also raises the wider question as to the 'true' role of the Assembly which appears less than clear. In the case of this scrutiny investigation the Assembly would appear to be walking an awkward line between the System and Lifeworld and facing uncertainty as to which direction it should primarily be aligning itself with.

However, although the Assembly's role may have been somewhat unclear what is noticeable is that active debate did occur on the matter and the final report was, on the whole, the consensus view of Assembly members. As some of the extracts from SAPD Committee meetings in this section demonstrate, numerous varying and supporting statements were put forward and discussed. Indeed the final agreement to include a summary document and place the detailed methodology in the annex of the final report was the consensus view of members which overruled the officers' approach. This would imply that the SAPD Committee did, at least on occasion, function according to the Assembly's remit as a representative forum for discussion for a variety of regional views.

2. The relationship between One NorthEast and the North East Assembly

Relations and communication between the Assembly and One NorthEast receive a number of mixed references throughout the *Evidence and Regional*

Policy topic. Although a number at first appear to be quite positive there is a high degree of formality in many exchanges which contrasts to the more friendly and informal dialogue experienced during the *Regional Leadership* exercise. Furthermore the lack of an official written response to the *Evidence and Regional Policy* investigation from One NorthEast is a potentially significant indicator that working relations were somewhat strained. The following analysis will examine a number of specific examples as illustrative of the NEA/ONE relationship over the course of the scrutiny exercise.

The scrutiny relationship during the *Regional Leadership* exercise, with its increased emphasis on policy development, was widely perceived by Assembly officers and members to be a success and a substantial improvement on previous relations. One of the reasons cited for this was that the stress on policy development allowed the Assembly to engage directly with those officers at One NorthEast that were responsible for the work on regional leadership rather than going through the RDA's usual liaison officers that were previously the scrutiny Committee's chief points of contact.

In addition *Regional Leadership* was deliberately chosen as a scrutiny topic because its selection by One NorthEast as a key work stream provided an opportunity for the Assembly to influence its development. As the work was already on the One NorthEast agenda the Assembly therefore faced much less resistance in working together with the RDA – a point illustrated by the fact that the two organisations jointly funded consultants for the topic. The rhetoric for the scrutiny process stresses the need for partnership working but *Regional Leadership* was distinct with regard to the active engagement of both the Assembly and One NorthEast in the process.

The *Evidence and Regional Policy* scrutiny exercise, with its leanings towards   retrospective scrutiny as opposed to policy development, encountered a different dynamic in terms of the Assembly's relationship with One NorthEast and one which had much more in common with scrutiny exercises prior to *Regional Leadership*. Whereas throughout the *Regional Leadership* exercise there had been a proactive approach from both organisations, One NorthEast was much more defensive from the start in the *Evidence and Regional Policy* topic. Indeed, such organisational defensiveness was first encountered in the preliminary development of the

scrutiny topic between representatives of the NEA and ONE. Regional scrutiny has statutory powers to look at the effectiveness of the Regional Economic Strategy and so the *Evidence and Regional Policy* topic was initially supposed to focus on the incorporation of evidence into key strategic regional documents with the RES being taken as a case study. At the time of conducting the 'horizon scanning' for the topic the RES *Leading the Way* was due for completion and launch in the autumn of 2006[76], after which a RES Action Plan was to be produced. The timing of the start of the scrutiny investigation for August 2006 therefore appeared to link well to the publication of the RES.

What is revealing of the relationship between the NEA and ONE, however, is how the focus on the RES came to be dropped by the Assembly. Even despite the NEA's statutory scrutiny powers representatives of ONE in officer meetings were extremely sceptical of using the RES as a case study and made their opinions well known. Throughout this planning phase, and indeed for the rest of the scrutiny exercise, only two representatives from ONE were used as liaison contacts. Critically the NEA would have liked greater representation from ONE and were willing to do the groundwork in building such contacts, but could not do so as it would have been poor practice to undermine the two chief ONE contacts. On the other hand the two contacts, one of which was the policy lead in the subject area and the other a liaison and partnership manager, effectively acted to prevent the Assembly from forging any wider links by consolidating their 'gatekeeper' status. As reasonably senior ONE staff they essentially did this by implying that the Assembly should not contact any junior staff. Furthermore, the two chief ONE contacts had a reputation at the Assembly of being notoriously difficult to work with. Such reputations were supported in the *Evidence and Regional Policy* investigation as Assembly officers and management were dissuaded from looking at the RES, effectively by the threat of non-engagement if they did.

It is recognised that such a 'storyline' may appear as almost an over-dramatisation of events but it is significant how the micro-level (the specific

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[76] The final version of the 2006 Regional Economic Strategy 'Leading the Way' was launched on 27 September 2007 at One NorthEast's annual review meeting.

episodes of relations amongst individuals) and meso-level (the governance processes of organisational viewpoints and practices) power relations had a real impact on the spatial practice of regional scrutiny (Coaffee and Healey, 2003). Unfortunately many of these developments occurred in closed meetings but there are traces of the tensions in the minutes of the SAPD Committee meetings.

In the Committee meeting of August 2006, when members were still finalising the *Regional Leadership* exercise and only just turning their attention to *Evidence and Regional Policy*, the Scrutiny Manager informed the Committee that:

> "progress on the preparatory work for evidence based applications had been slower than expected due to high staff workloads at One NorthEast and the Assembly. Following consultations with One NorthEast, a viable alternative would be a shorter and sharper exercise using the joint Assembly, One NorthEast and GO-NE submission to the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007 (CSR'07)" (SAPD minutes, August 2006:6).

Although staff workloads were large at the time, experience from being involved in the process reveals that that reference was largely a front to cover for the fact that discussions had virtually broken down over the summer of 2006, predominantly due to One NorthEast's unwillingness to engage with the initial pretence of the scrutiny exercise. Indeed only a very late suggestion to focus on the region's submission to the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007[77] saved the topic from having to be dropped, but even this was dependent on a number of guarantees to One NorthEast that the exercise would not look at certain policy areas such as RES or its then forthcoming action plan.

The *Evidence and Regional Policy* exercise therefore began on very unstable foundations and in a general atmosphere of resistance from One NorthEast. As stated above this was partly due to the fact that certain defensive 'gatekeepers' returned as the primary liaison officers after having been effectively bypassed by the focus on policy development during the

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[77] The region only received the invitation to submit evidence from the Treasury on June 15th 2006.

Regional Leadership exercise. Nevertheless the Assembly were keen to make something off the topic and with the need to keep One NorthEast on board were willing to paper over the cracks so to say. An example is documented in the minutes of the SAPD Committee of September 2006 when a scrutiny policy officer reported to members that "staff had recently held a very productive meeting" with representatives of One NorthEast and the North East Regional Information Partnership (NERIP). The officer however then went on to state that "a project plan was currently being developed for the topic which is expected to be available in early October" (SAPD minutes, Sept 2006:9). What is revealing here is that the 'project plan' had essentially been in preparation since the spring and had been redrafted so many times that it bore little resemblance to the topic that the Committee had initially selected to investigate.

Despite Assembly officer attempts to create a less confrontational atmosphere, SAPD Committee members were very aware of the underlying tensions surrounding the regional scrutiny process and this issue came to the fore at their meeting of 21 November 2006. One member openly asked officers "what they thought of the working relationship with One NorthEast" (SAPD minutes. 2006:3). The response from Assembly management to this was that:

> "Recent developments had made the scrutiny process more realistic and had enabled the Assembly to deliver more effective scrutiny and policy development. Positive relations between the Assembly and One NorthEast had facilitated such progress" (SAPD minutes, Nov 2006:3).

In contrast to Assembly management the member who posed the initial question offered their own interpretation stating that:

> "... there had been some tensions in the past. It had been difficult to avoid becoming adversarial on those occasions where comments had been perceived as negative to the Assembly" (SAPD minutes, Nov 2006:3).

In response to this the Chair of the Committee added that:

> "... the Assembly had made every effort to improve its own scrutiny process and also the working relationships with One

NorthEast. It would therefore be helpful to see how the RDA might seek to improve working arrangements with regard to scrutiny and policy development" (SAPD minutes, Nov 2006:3).

The comments clearly reveal underlying doubts and even resentment with regard to the nature of the relationship with One NorthEast. This is best shown by the references to the Assembly's actions to improve the scrutiny process, which in this context relates to a number of changes implemented as a result of the internal review of scrutiny conducted in 2004. The Chair's comments therefore reflect a general feeling within the Assembly that they had done all within their power to create an effective scrutiny process. Any flaws in the process were hence implicitly levelled at One NorthEast and their failure to actively engage in the process.

Further evidence of the nature of relations between the two organisations can be seen at the conclusion of the exercise. Despite not responding in writing to the final report on *Evidence and Regional Policy*, One NorthEast did provide a verbal comment which is recorded in a meeting of the Committee held in April 2007. The full statement reads as follows:

"Commenting on the report, a representative from One NorthEast (ONE) said:
- The report is a welcome and valuable addition
- It helps to provide a useful picture of activities and relationships in the region
- It helps to reinforce established ideas about the importance of evidence and being clear what we need from external organisations
- There are some interesting questions to be answered about how we organise the 'evidence architecture' sub-regionally and nationally" (SAPD Minutes, May 2007:4).

Initially the response appears positive in terms of welcoming the report. However, to a certain extent this can be seen as a discourse label – as within it is an almost expected practice of courtesy when commenting on the report of a different organisation. After the preliminary customary acknowledgments the statement from One NorthEast is remarkably vague and elusive especially when compared to the subsequent statement from the NERIP representative which addressed each recommendation of the report specifically. The phrase "helps to reinforce established ideas" in the third

bullet point is also a rather negative way of stating that the investigation offered little in the way of new thinking. Crucially however the comments make no recognition of One NorthEast taking any action to implement the recommendations and instead dodges the issue by referring to the report asking "some interesting questions" though these are at no point explained. In stark contrast to the *Regional Leadership* exercise in which lengthy discussions were held on the acceptance and implementation of the scrutiny recommendations (with eventually only three of four being agreed on), with regard to *Evidence and Regional Policy* they are not even acknowledged, let alone debated or acted upon. The verbal response from One NorthEast is therefore revealing of the organisation's lack of engagement in the scrutiny process and suggests an unequal or asymmetrical power relationship between the two organisations.

3. The dominance of One NorthEast 'storylines'

The interactions of the North East Assembly and One NorthEast during the *Evidence and Regional Policy* scrutiny exercise can be seen to reveal tensions between the two organisations and question the degree to which the ethos of partnership working, based on equal and fair 'undistorted' participation and deliberation, was actually embraced. The preceding section has already analysed the nature of the organisational relationship and hinted at the underlying power relations. The following analysis will take the issue of power relations further by identifying instances which indicate that One NorthEast was the dominant partner in establishing the accepted regional 'storylines' or narratives. Three specific areas of interaction and communication will be used to explore this informed assertion: (i) the actions of One NorthEast; (ii) the actions and final report of the Assembly; and (iii) the expressed views of SAPD Committee members.

(i) The actions of One NorthEast

It has already been noted that One NorthEast, through the actions of its 'gatekeepers', essentially refused to proactively engage in the *Evidence and Regional Policy* scrutiny exercise. Most revealing was the lack of a written response to the SAPD Committee's despite it being good and common practice to do so. The only reaction to the conclusions of the Committee came in the form of a fairly vague verbal statement which failed to even acknowledge the Assembly's recommendations. This contrasts sharply to the Regional Leadership exercise in which the recommendations were actively debated, although complete agreement was still not found. In the *Evidence and Regional Policy* case One NorthEast appear to disregard the statutory requirement for the RDA to take account of the views of the RA. Indeed, at best it could be claimed that ONE by issuing a verbal statement did the very minimum to appease its regional scrutiny commitments. Furthermore, the fact that the investigation's case study shifted from the 2006 RES to the CSR'07 as a result of pressure from ONE demonstrates that ONE were the dominant partner in steering the regional scrutiny agenda. Admittedly SAPD Committee members were responsible for choosing the topic but beyond this ONE effectively appeared to exercise control either by applying pressure on the direction of the process or by simply refusing to engage.

The actions of ONE reveal an unequal or dominant and submissive relationship between the two organisations at a number of levels. In distinguishing such levels Coaffee and Healey (2003) refer to the interpersonal power relations of specific episodes, the manipulated organisational practices of *governance processes* and the deeper level taken-for-granted assumptions and routines of *governance cultures*. In the case of *Evidence and Regional Policy* an asymmetrical power relationship can be seen at all three levels. In terms of the *specific episodes* of interpersonal relations ONE representatives or 'gatekeepers' could be seen to adopt a negative, unapproachable and even condescending approach towards the Assembly's scrutiny process. Unlike the Regional Leadership topic in which officer relations were amicable and proactive, the *Evidence*

and Regional Policy exercise was hampered throughout by communicative distortions (i.e. a failure to actively engage and participate, an absence of reciprocity, etc) at the micro-level of individual relations.

In terms of *governance processes* it is clear that the Assembly and One NorthEast firstly did not have a reliable commitment to partnership working in place, and secondly that respect, trust and the governance tools to facilitate and perhaps even enforce effective dialogue if necessary were absent. In the case of regional scrutiny the *Evidence and Regional Policy* example suggests that these processes, and most notably their flaws, were actively utilised by One NorthEast to lessen their involvement in the investigation. In other words ONE used its dominant role to control and thereby remove itself from the process. Critically, however, the Assembly also internalised ONE's hegemonic position by self-regulating its interaction with the RDA and adopting a generally submissive role. This will be explored further in the subsequent section.

On the wider level of *governance cultures* the *Evidence and Regional Policy* investigation also raises questions over the legitimacy and credibility of regional scrutiny and the North East Assembly. Indeed the lack of taken-for-granted routines in engagement and interaction, as exposed by the substantial variation in approaches to *Regional Leadership* and *Evidence and Regional Policy*, between the two organisations over regional scrutiny reveals a potentially confused policy environment. In addition the negative approach of ONE staff towards regional scrutiny may even be seen as illustrative of a wider institutional rejection of the credibility and legitimate claim to space of regional assemblies and in this case regional scrutiny. Such claims can only be tentatively put forward, but the evidence provided of the power asymmetries at the micro- and meso-scales would such suggest wider thinking in *governance cultures* was present. In fact with hindsight the abolition of regional assemblies by the Sub-National Review (SNR) can indeed be seen as evidence of a governance culture in which the legitimacy and credibility of assemblies were negatively perceived.

(ii) Assembly actions and the scrutiny final report

In many ways the *Evidence and Regional Policy* final report is a very diplomatically worded document. However, this diplomacy is very much focused upon not revealing One NorthEast's lack of genuine engagement with the process. In addition, it also downplays the degree to which the report's recommendations should be taken on board, despite scrutiny being a statutory function. The report therefore is illustrative of the Assembly taking a generally submissive approach and means that One NorthEast's dominance of the organisational relationship can be explained as much by the RDA having power as the Assembly accepting its own lack of it. The following examples from the final report demonstrate this point.

In the *Introduction* the following account is provided of how the remit for the scrutiny investigation came to be decided:

> "The purpose of the scrutiny review was to consider the way in which ONE and others draw upon and use existing evidence from research and other information-gathering exercises in the drafting of policy, strategy and associated documents. The expectation was that this would allow the Scrutiny and Policy Board and ONE to work in partnership to develop effective guidelines for the incorporation of evidence into policy formation...
>
> However, in developing a framework for exploring the topic it became apparent that as robust guidelines were already in place, a specific enquiry upon how ONE analysed, used and incorporated evidence into key policy documents would have limited benefit. Therefore, it was decided that the scrutiny topic would add greater value by adopting a holistic view of how evidence bases were compiled and used in the North East" (NEA, 2007:7)

Now the inclusion of this explanation in the change of approach is almost a small act of resistance in itself. However, the details mask over the fact that it was purely One NorthEast that resisted the initial focus of the topic citing the reason that other monitoring criteria circumvented the need for scrutiny to look at how evidence was used. It was undoubtedly true that members and officers agreed that the topic "would add greater value by adopting a holistic view" but this was in light of the fact that One NorthEast would not cooperate

with the preliminary approach. The Assembly in its final report therefore makes it appear as though it were a joint decision in determining the direction of the scrutiny topic. This gives the illusion that the scrutiny relationship is an equal and consensual one and hence that the Assembly is an equal of One NorthEast. To this extent the report can be seen as a small act of resistance and as a coping mechanism to assert some credibility for the Assembly, even if the process was conducted according to ONE's agenda. However, it does also mask the fact that ONE were largely uncooperative and effectively dictated the nature of the process.

The same Assembly approach is evident when the case study of the CSR'07 is identified in the methodology section of the final report. Section 2.8 entitled *Impact* states:

> "The potential of this work is twofold. Firstly, through an illustrative case study, the enquiry has reviewed the processes involved in identifying and using the evidence base underpinning a strategic regional document. The study has not sought to examine the content of the document itself, nor the processes involved in the actual development of the submission. Secondly, the enquiry has identified a series of crucial issues that policy and strategy makers might wish to reflect upon when undertaking future work" (NEA, 2007:9).

Again One NothEast were initially sceptical of the use of the CSR'07 submission as a case study and exerted their dominance by applying certain conditions – namely that the exercise not look at the content or processes involved in its development. Crucially the report makes no mention that this approach was adopted purely as a result of pressure applied by One NorthEast. The key phrase in the second point of the extract is 'might wish' and the fact that it is not aimed at One NorthEast. This is a significant detour from the usual scrutiny recommendations, which statutorily have to be considered by One NorthEast and is an excellent example of how the Assembly toned down or 'hedged' the final report as to be less confrontational. Indeed similar examples occur throughout the report such as in a statement in the recommendations section which reads:

> "There is no desire to be prescriptive about the way in which these recommendations are addressed or implemented" (NEA, 2007:38)

Here a similar situation is clear in that the Assembly are essentially pre-empting a mixed and/or unenthusiastic response from One NorthEast. It is therefore evidence of not only the Assembly taking a submissive stance but also of a coping mechanism by which the NEA saves itself from the organisational embarrassment of having its recommendations ignored. The NEA through its scrutiny process can be seen to be attempting to carve a regional space for itself as an arena for participation and deliberation. To preserve the credibility of such claims it is therefore essential that power of the scrutiny process, in terms of power to make recommendations, is not openly undermined by One NorthEast.

(iii) The expressed views of SAPD Committee members

Whilst the final report takes a very diplomatic approach in covering the investigation – indeed an approach which can be seen as both submissive and a coping mechanism – some of the underlying tensions regarding the scrutiny process can be seen in the comments SAPD Committee members. Members in general expressed a desire to ensure the Assembly's practices were as professional as possible in order to demonstrate to One NorthEast that scrutiny should be taken seriously. This in itself reflects an attempt to come to terms with and overcome what was perceived to be ONE's condescending attitude in the past. As one member stated at a Committee meeting:

> "The Assembly needed to make explicit the 'meaningful consideration' that goes into the scrutiny process so that One NorthEast in return would exercise 'meaningful consideration' when either accepting or rejecting them" (SAPD minutes, Nov 2006:4)

However, despite the final report's attempts to present a constructive and consensual scrutiny exercise, there are signs that members in particular were

not impressed with how the process was operating. As another member stated:

> "... the NEA should, at times, be prepared to make clear statements of position, not simply present lists of options" (SAPD minutes, May 2007:2).

The statement is an indicator of the desire for the Assembly to take a stronger line and indeed many Committee members considered this necessary in order for One NorthEast to take the process seriously. However, the previously established power asymmetries at micro-, meso- and macro-levels, or specific episodes, governance processes and cultures had essentially institutionally locked the Assembly into a subordinate position which it lacked the means, drive and support, or alternatively the legitimacy, to overcome.

4. Organisational narratives and a North East policy discourse

The analysis of the draft Regional Economic and Spatial Strategies first revealed that there were a number of specific terms that recurred – some just in one document and others in both. These terms taken together could be seen as an attempt to construct regional policy narratives and suggested the presence of a basic regional discourse. In other words, although the regional strategies were active attempts at building and justifying regional 'storylines' the use of particular terms and rhetoric were representative of a certain regional policy mentality. It is therefore possible to identify a regional policy discourse that the regional policy narratives of the NEA and ONE subconsciously conform to.

This regional policy discourse is evident in the *Evidence and Regional Policy* final report and the SAPD Committee meetings that formed the main arena for discussion during the investigation. This reveals the Assembly as complicit in adhering to and reproducing a particular form of regional space. The terms that appear in the both the minutes and the final report show firm similarities with the language used in the regional spatial and economic

strategies. For example one member at a Committee meeting requested to know whether the methodology section was concerned with how to "narrow the gap between the North East and other regions in England'" (SAPD Committee minutes, Nov 2006:6). Another member refers to how it was "important that the North East did not become shackled by trends" (SAPD minutes, Aug 2006:7). This idea of the North East being prevented or "shackled" from developing is reflected in the draft Regional Economic and Spatial Strategies in terms of the region facing a number of barriers. The *Evidence and Regional Policy* final report also refers to the 'key ask' of the CSR'07 submission to "reduce major barriers" (2007:23) and to "close the gap" (2007:23).

The opening quote of the *Resource Review* section perhaps best highlights the Assembly promotion of a North East policy discourse:

> "The barriers to achieving a different relationship between research, policy and outcomes are formidable, but the evidence of the Region's own history and the experience of similar regions elsewhere suggest that transforming this relationship will be a vital component in transforming the enduring structural weaknesses in the regional economy" (NEA, 2007:10).

The use of terms such as barriers, transformations, structural weaknesses and the economy are all consistent with the regional discourse underpinning the regional economic and spatial strategies. Importantly, the recurrence of such references in a scrutiny report, which is not aimed at highlighting the NEA's or the region's strategic priorities, suggests that such language represents not just the active construction of an Assembly 'storyline' or narrative, but the underlying foundations of a North East of England policy discourse. The regional organisations of the NEA and ONE, who can be seen to use this regional policy discourse, can thereby be seen to be producing a particular kind of regional administrative space based upon the observed characteristics of that discourse: in brief, the importance of economic development, competitiveness, skills, and overcoming with supplementary though subordinate commitments issues of inclusion, sustainability and the environment.

5. The region's relationship with central government

Just as there is evidence of the *Evidence and Regional Policy* scrutiny investigation presenting a regional policy discourse, which reflects a particular construction of regional space, there are also instances in which the region's approach to and view of central government is revealed. As in the draft regional strategies and the *Regional Leadership* scrutiny exercise the region's stance is revealed as being contradictory in that it simultaneously relies on central government as a source of legitimacy whilst criticising it for not showing due regard to regional issues. However, in similar fashion to the *Regional Leadership* 'storyline', the *Evidence and Regional Policy* investigation does illustrate a NEA leaning towards an approach that promotes the need for regional decision making. Such a 'line' can be seen to ground the Assembly's claim for regional legitimacy on the basis of representing regional interests to central government rather than vice-versa – it is therefore 'bottom-up' rather than 'top-down'.

Two particular references in the minutes of Committee meetings illustrate this approach well. In February 2007 reference is made to a "lack of geographical politics" in government spending departments and in April 2007 one member specifically highlights that national statistics are inappropriate in devising policies for the North East of England. Crucially, this feeling does creep into the *Evidence and Regional Policy* final report via the identification of a 'spatial politics' in which the setting of the national 'context' by central government is judged to limit the potential for change in developing alternative regional policy.

Furthermore, central government sets this 'context' through its emphasis on evidence-based policy-making (EBPM) and framework of performance management according to key indicators and targets. Importantly, influential reports, such as the 1999 *Modernising Government* white paper and 2001 National Audit Office report on *Modern Policy Making*, may stress principles like inclusivity and creativity in policy making, but critically they also contribute to producing a nationally homogenised 'performativity' of certain practices of policy making (Butler, 1993). Through

EBPM central government can thereby be seen to be enforcing particular national 'spatial practices' on the regions. The Assembly's *Evidence and Regional Policy* investigation observes the impact to be a dumbing down of regional distinctiveness as regional organisations such as One NorthEast are required to adhere to such nationalised practices. As the final report states, "streams of their (ONE's) research simply reflect national trends rather than distinctive North East needs. They therefore become a mouthpiece for Central Government rather than a representative of the Region" (NEA, 2007:17).

The report's promotion of a regional discourse that requests greater autonomy from national priorities, agendas and practices is a notable example of the NEA's attempts to construct a regionally distinctive space. In so doing it also implicitly reveals what it perceives to be a 'spatial hierarchy' between national and regional government that is essentially distorting and restricting the development of regions – as cultural entities and spaces for economic development for example – as legitimate spaces.

3. Conclusions

This examination of the *Evidence and Regional Policy* scrutiny investigation has developed understanding of the relationship between the North East Assembly and One NorthEast and revealed the 'storylines' of the respective organisations in greater detail. In particular asymmetrical power relations were shown to exist from the individual (specific episodes) to the organisational (governance processes) level and most probably permeated through the thinking of the wider governance culture, as the policy changes of the SNR would suggest. In this asymmetrical relationship One NorthEast took on a dominant role and steered the scrutiny investigation through a mixture of exerting pressure and threatening non-cooperation. Through this the scrutiny process was effectively undermined as ONE used their dominant

position and the NEA's lack of enforcement options to essentially withdraw from active engagement.

The SNR in 2007 cited ARUP's 2003 literature review of regional assemblies which concluded that:

> "[t]here is no clear formal set of aims and objectives for Regional Chambers. Their role and function has evolved from a disparate combination of Government papers and announcements and from the initiatives of the Chambers themselves'" (HM Treasury, 2007:53).

The inability of the North East Assembly to overcome One NorthEast's disruption of the scrutiny process demonstrates that, in the absence of formalised governance tools to enforce, or at least to threaten to enforce, co-operation and proactive partnership working, the NEA's legitimacy was significantly undermined. Communication and interaction in the *Evidence and Regional Policy* scrutiny investigation can therefore be seen as having been distorted as ONE asserted its dominant position and the NEA attempted to mask its subordinate role in order to avoid greater damage to its claims for legitimacy in regional space. The spatial practice of regional scrutiny can thus be seen as producing a regional space which is communicatively distorted by the unequal power relations of the NEA and ONE.

The chapter has also developed this research's understanding of the nature of the region's and the NEA's respective narratives and discourses. The NEA the through *Evidence and Regional Policy* scrutiny exercise could be seen to be promoting a narrative or 'storyline' based on widening regional accessibility and participation. In this sense the NEA was seen to be seeking to justify its claim to regional space by connecting to, representing and potentially constructing a regional Lifeworld.

Whilst the Assembly actively sought to further its participatory credentials the investigation also revealed the presence of an underlying regional policy discourse that permeated through the interactions of the NEA and ONE. Significantly this discourse, tentatively identified in the draft regional strategies and *Regional Leadership* exercise, can be seen to promote the importance of economic development, 'closing the gap', competitiveness, and increasing skills. Crucially whilst Lifeworld-orientated

issues such as culture, sustainability and social inclusion do feature they are usually in subordinate roles.

Finally this chapter has highlighted that the NEA, despite delicately balancing commitments to central government and regional narratives on many issues, does promote the North East of England as a regionally distinct space. As such it can be seen as legitimating its claim to regional space via an association with and production of the region as in need of greater recognition as geographically distinct. Just as regional scrutiny can be seen as a spatial practice, the NEA's scrutiny process can be seen as considering central government's promotion of evidence-based policy-making (EBPM) in similar fashion. Thus EBPM can be perceived, irrespective of its qualities or faults, as a 'top-down' nationally enforced and homogenising spatial practice that has been responsible for stifling the integration of regional distinctiveness into regional governmental organisations and thereby created an 'artificial' regional policy space. As the final report states, "If the regional perspective is paid only lip service, then it doesn't count" (NEA, 2007:17).

Chapter 8

Discussion and analysis

1. Introduction

With the conceptual tools established, the primary research conducted and preliminary results analysed the moment has come to investigate those findings in light of the identified theoretical framework and wider academic literature. The challenge of practically applying and testing Habermas's theories of 'communicative action' and 'System and Lifeworld', and Lefebvre's 'production of space' has been an intriguing and complex, yet ultimately rewarding, task.

To summarise, the rationale behind using Habermas's and Lefebvre's concepts as heuristic ideal types was based upon three explicit research aims. Firstly, to improve the understanding of governance interactions in the specific context of the North East of England. Secondly, to use the region as a context in which to test the practical application of Habermas's (1987) theory of 'communicative action' and Lefebvre's (1991) theory of 'the production of space'. And thirdly, to pursue the egalitarian aim of exploring the potential for more democratic forms of action and decision making, initially within the region but with potential implications beyond. Indeed this chimes with Habermas's own aim of reinvigorating the democratic process. As Ashenden and Owen state, "the main thrust of his work has been concerned with redeeming the possibility of an emancipatory form of knowledge... by rendering plausible his theory of communicative action and

rationality" (1999:3). By combining theoretical approaches and practically applying them it was very much hoped that this journey could be continued.

Against this backdrop this investigation can be described or *problematised* as an analysis of the tensions, interactions and relations which exist between Lifeworld and System, strategic and communicative action and the varying productions of space in the North East of England (Greenhalgh et al., 2006). Utilising the experience and access to material gained from being an 'insider-researcher' or 'reflective practitioner-researcher' at the North East Assembly this research has used Jürgen Habermas's (1987) *The Theory of Communicative Action* and Henri Lefebvre's (1991) *The Production of Space* to examine the interactions of the North East of England's Regional Development Agency and Regional Assembly within a socially produced and contested regional space (Schön, 1996; Robson, 2002).

In approaching this investigation a number of research questions or mini-problematics were devised to structure the analysis. Following a brief overview of the research findings, these research questions, as set out in the chapter five, will be used as the basis for the rest of this discussion and analysis chapter thereby ensuring consistency with the investigation's initial research agenda.

2. Summary of research findings

The research was structured around the three case studies of the draft Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies, and the *Regional Leadership* and *Evidence and Regional Policy* scrutiny exercises. The first allowed for an in-depth investigation into the policy discourses and narratives being promoted by the North East Assembly and One NorthEast through the analysis of the regional strategies (texts) as quasi-mediated communicative acts (Kooiman, 2003). The second and third topics used the NEA's scrutiny exercises as case studies to investigate the communication and interaction of the discourses and narratives of the North East Assembly and One NorthEast.

Critically these studies built upon the analysis of the findings of the first research chapter, offering chances to contest and compare already identified themes.

In order to summarise the key identified themes and main findings the **following table (table 8.1.) illustrates the development of the research programme through the three case studies. This overview in turn sets the scene for the following discussion of the investigation's five research questions**.

Table 8.1. Summary of key narratives/discourses and main findings of the three research chapters

DRAFT REGIONAL STRATEGES	REGIONAL LEADERSHIP	EVIDENCE AND REGIONAL POLICY
Key Narratives/Discourses: • General approach to growth and development • Focusing investment • Relationship with central government / RSS-RES divergence • Consensus and consultation • People/population of the NE • Regional progress and the future • Industrial history of the NE • Defining the region • The region and its assets	**Key Narratives/Discourses:** • NEA/ONE relationship - previous problems/legitimacy of scrutiny, capacity and credibility NEA internal regulation • Consultation and consensus • NEA's regional image • Relationship between economic and social agendas • Reconciling divergent visions of the region • Complexities of regional geography • Relationship with central gov.	**Key Narratives/Discourses:** • NEA attempts to connect with a regional Lifeworld • NEA/ONE relationship • Dominance of ONE 'storylines' • A North East policy discourse • Region's relationship with central government
Main findings: • Evidence of an economic discourse • Draft RES more System-orientated than draft RSS • Uneasy attempts to establish legitimacy from national and regional sources • Very similar narratives resulting either (i) by chance; (ii) through close partnership working; (iii) conformity to a higher policy frame; (iv) an uneven ONE/NEA power relationship	**Main findings:** • Some proactive partnership working but legacy of communicative distortions • Evidence of 'power asymmetry' in NEA/ONE relationship. NEA internally regulating its behaviour • Attempts by NEA to establish regional legitimacy • Evidence of a 'regional mentality'/discourse • Delicate relations with central gov.	**Main findings:** • Asymmetrical power relations at the individual and organisational levels • Dominant role of ONE undermines legitimacy of NEA scrutiny • NEA attempts to widen participation and accessibility • A dominant economic regional policy discourse • Evidence-based policy-making and regional scrutiny promote particular spatial practices

3. Discussion of findings

In following the investigation's research questions, attention will first be directed towards the production of regional discourses in the North East of England before an analysis is made of communicative interactions in the region. The third section will look at the interplay of interactions and the production of space in terms of System and Lifeworld narratives and discourses. The fourth section will examine the usefulness of the concepts and theories, and the final section will examine possibilities for the future of regional government.

1. To what extent do the North East Assembly and One NorthEast produce a regional (socio)spatial discourse? What are the tensions in their respective and combined productions of space?

An analysis of the draft Regional Spatial Strategy and draft Regional Economic Strategy revealed that, alongside their obvious roles as policy statements, they were also essentially spatial documents in the sense that clear attempts at constructing regional narratives could be identified. Further analysis of the *Regional Leadership* and *Evidence and Regional Policy* scrutiny exercises showed evidence of what might be termed a 'regional mentality' that permeated through communicative interactions (such as speech, texts and images). However this socio-spatial regional policy discourse was not without its contradictions.

A useful approach is to consider a myriad of underlying discourses and actively produced narratives operating within the regional space of the North East of England. Hence, a North East discourse could be seen operating alongside, sometimes confirming and occasionally contradicting, other territorial, place-based and networked discourses (Brenner, Jessop and Jones, 2008). Such multiple discourses were clearly visible in the draft strategies with references to the national policy-setting regime of central government, the need to incorporate the region into international networks so

as to be globally competitive, the importance of local delivery, and the role to be played by particular places, most notably the city-regions (Castells, 2008).

Crucially, such discourses, and particularly the regional socio-spatial discourse of the North East of England, are never complete and their construction is never uncontested. The regional discourse, for example, can be seen to embrace a range of sometimes contradictory discourses and underpins a collection of similarly inconsistent socio-spatial narratives that develop, justify, accept and perpetuate regional space. However, the identification and analysis of confirming, competing and contrasting narratives can at best offer only a partial interpretation of the totality of socio-spatial arguments communicated of, and in, in regional space. An understanding of the partial and potentially ephemeral nature of discourse is, therefore, required. As Müller states, "the field of discursivity represents the impossibility of any discourse to achieve a final suture, since every discourse is constituted in relation to the field of discursivity" (2008:331). This field of discursivity is home to the excluded 'surplus of meaning', which comprises "the totality of other meanings not articulated in a discourse" (Müller, 2008:331; Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). This theoretical viewpoint highlights the key to the contested nature of the discourse as only the dominant definition of meaning amongst a sea of discursive arguments.

In light of the always incomplete nature of discourse it is useful to analyse the tensions within the regional discourse by examining how regional narratives attempt to gain legitimacy or 'jurisdictional integrity' (Skelcher, 2005). Here Schmidt (2002) usefully identifies five key elements that underpin a policy programme's acceptance as legitimate. These are its relevance, applicability, coherence, potential for success and normative appropriateness whereby an appeal is made to 'unique values' in order to demonstrate "the appropriateness of the polity" (Underthun, 2008:755; Schmidt, 2002). Justifications for legitimacy along these lines are present within both the draft regional strategies and the interactions of the North East Assembly and One NorthEast. However, those justifications for the spatial narratives being produced are incomplete and fractured. They are the natural world's equivalent of a pot-holed road or crevassed glacier, and it is these gaps that are intriguing and useful in revealing the tensions in the regional

discourse.

The spatial narratives of the Assembly and One NorthEast reveal the presence of a specific 'spatio-temporal' North East of England discourse that both organisations seek to appropriate through their communications and interactions in order to produce and legitimate their respective claims to regional space. In terms of coherency four key recurring themes can be identified as particularly significant in the production of a regional socio-spatial discourse:

i. **The region as an economic space:** Despite some variation between the draft RES and draft RSS there was an identifiable economic discourse within the strategies and wider interactions of the North East Assembly and One NorthEast. Through an economically focused approach to development, highlighted by references to 'city-regions', 'barriers', 'skills' and 'transforming the region' the North East of England was constructed as an economic space in need of redevelopment.

ii. **The region as an administrative space:** As the analysis of the draft regional strategies demonstrated, most policy interventions were legitimated by seeking to justify them as minor amendments to a dominant national policy frame. In fact the regional strategies and the standpoints of the Assembly and Agency in their interactions were justified in policy terms. Furthermore, the analysis of *Evidence and Regional Policy* revealed that nationally set policy practices, such as EBPM and performance management regimes, clashed with regional distinctiveness and created an 'artificial regional space' detached from Lifeworld perspectives.

iii. **The North East of England as regionally distinct:** The research showed clear evidence of a 'regional mentality' that revolved around a perception of the North East of England being both inter-regionally and nationally distinct. Such a view often manifested itself in expressions of the region not being properly understood by Whitehall departments and the need for the region to have a greater say in its own affairs. On this,

as mentioned above, central government was seen to have a constraining influence on the development of a 'genuine' North East space. Noticeably both the Assembly and One NorthEast attempted to use and appropriate regional solidarity – through references to a 'vision for the region' and 'voice' of the region' for example – to legitimate their own roles and place in regional space. However, both organisations also struggled to balance appeals to regional distinctiveness and national requirements with the result being that the national agenda often dominated over the regional. Frequent references to national averages, particularly GDP per capita and GVA, are good examples of this dominant national and economic policy discourse. Therefore, although supposedly distinct, ONE and the NEA still rely on national criteria to define regional space.

iv. **The region as a space of potential:** Embedded within the interactions of the Assembly and One NorthEast is a tendency to note recent progress in tackling the region's problems – the identification of which is a further attempt to justify a policy discourse – and highlight the significant potential for further improvements. In this sense the region is constructed as a 'potential space' for change and improvement, which acts to legitimate not only policy interventions, but also a regional policy discourse. The titles of the previous iterations of the RES, *Unlocking Our Potential* and *Realising Our Potential,* illustrate this underlying theme.

Around these four key themes a regional discourse exists, which produces a regional space, albeit in a fractured form and spatio-temporally specific context. Whilst it is possible to identify a regional spatial discourse, that discourse and the spatial narratives it underpins also contain a number of contradictions. These can be seen in terms of competing regional narratives, which reveal the incoherencies of the regional discourse, and the interplay of various policy discourses within the regional discourse itself. Importantly these contradictions present challenges to the regional discourse and the legitimacy of regional space. Despite numerous subtle variations five key contradictions can be identified in the regional discourse and narratives.

These are set out in turn below.

1. The relationship between economic and social agendas: the varying approaches of the Assembly and One NorthEast

A definite economic development focused discourse could be identified in the interactions of the regional institutions, particularly in the draft regional strategies. However there were some subtle yet significant variations. For example, the coherence of the regional socio-spatial discourse was challenged by the fact that the draft RES and draft RSS adopted different growth projections for the region's economy. This point was picked up by the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) report on the Newcastle city-region which criticised the lack of consistency in the two regional strategies (OECD, 2006). In this example above, the desire to increase regional growth rates was an accepted and unchallenged task or 'given'. However, there were other cases in which the two organisations came at a subject from significantly varying positions. This was evident in the draft regional strategies but more so in analysing the routine interactions of the organisations as part of the scrutiny investigations into *Regional Leadership* and *Evidence and Regional Policy*.

In a number of such examples it was clear that the Assembly were proposing a more socially orientated agenda in contrast to One NorthEast's more economic focused stance. However, even despite the Assembly's attempts to incorporate Lifeworld perspectives, both organisations could be seen to work within and produce a distinctly administrative and economic regional space. Nevertheless the Assembly's approach to issues such as the people of the North East and the region's assets in the draft RSS contrasted to that of One NorthEast in the draft RES which tended to look at the population in terms of skills and the region's assets, be they cultural, social or environmental, as vehicles for economic improvement. Likewise, in the regional leadership scrutiny exercise it was revealing how in conducting the research, the consultants and One NorthEast took responsibility for interviewing the business community and the Assembly took the charge of

consulting the voluntary and community sector. This variation in approaches is highlighted by Marshall who states:

> "The language of RDAs is that of business and the competitiveness agenda, of managerialism and the rhetoric of markets. The discourses of the assemblies have been significantly different reflecting much more varied sources, environmental, social, public" (2008:102).

This view is one that is supported by experiences in the North East of England, though this research would perhaps challenge the claim that the North East Assembly's spatial narrative is 'significantly different'. Certainly there is evidence of more varied sources, especially environmental and social, but this has not had the influence of altering a dominant discourse which views the region as an economic space.

On this point Jones (in theorising on post-SNR developments) observes how the national performance assessment regime may hamper the development of a broader regional discourse:

> "Although RDAs will have to have regard to 'principles of sustainability' it is easy to see how the national economic growth imperative could come to be prioritized over all other issues. The narrowness of the GVA target could make it harder for RDAs to reconcile and integrate economic and environmental goals. The accounting framework, in other words, could create a conflict between narrowly defined economic goals and environmental sustainability" (2008:2).

What this research reveals is that in the North East of England, the integration of the economic with other agendas such as the environmental and social, is not something that might become a problem – it is already a problem, as the regional economic discourse dominates and potentially excludes other valuable discourses and narratives.

2. The contradictory roles of the North East Assembly

The Assembly's remit as a body to represent the views of the region, or as its own slogan stated to be the 'voice for the region', presented difficulties in that

the majority of its actions outlined in policy documents such as the draft RSS were justified in relation to formal national legislation. The paradox challenged the coherency of the Assembly discourse and concomitantly its legitimacy in producing and shaping regional space.

On the issue of the Assembly's administrative duties Haughton and Allmendinger state that:

> "Formal planning mechanisms with their legal responsibilities are primarily rooted in local and (to a lesser extent) regional government. These are the hard spaces of government activity, involving statutory responsibilities, linked to legal obligations including democratic engagement and consultation, all of which take time, and come with a particular set of public and professional expectations around their choreography" (2008:143).

In the case of this research the draft Regional Spatial Strategy was a statutory and legally binding planning document and hence represented 'officialdom', 'expert culture' or as this extract proposes the 'hard spaces' of government activity. This was a dilemma for the Assembly and undoubtedly created confusion both within the organisation and the beyond as to the exact purpose it was intended to fulfil. The Assembly's initial mandate of being created as a 'soft space' of participation therefore transposed against the duty to draft the Regional Spatial Strategy, which essentially deals with the 'hard' or 'formal' spaces of planning and central government. This created uneasy tensions in the spatial discourse of the Assembly, so much so that it challenged the Assembly's legitimacy in producing regional space and its coherency in contributing to a wider regional discourse.

3. The problematic relationship with the national tier

The regional discourse of the North East of England demonstrates a contradictory dependent yet resistant relationship with the national tier – considered here as nationally prescribed policies and statistics. Interestingly, One NorthEast and the Assembly in producing regional space are faced with the often contrary requirements of creating a distinct space, which is needed

in order to justify the regional policy approach, and moulding that space to national criteria.

Numerous examples have been identified throughout this research of this contradictory tendency such as the internal challenge faced by the Assembly of simultaneously being the 'hard space' of regionally applied central government planning guidance, and 'soft space' of representation and participation, outlined above. Here it is worth recounting two cases that highlight this problematic in the regional discourse. Firstly, especially in prescribing economic development One NorthEast and the Assembly rely on statistics of the region's problems to enhance the relevance of their proposed policy interventions. However, more often than not these statistics compare the region to national averages – the fact that the North East of England has a GDP per capita that is only 80% of the national average was a particularly reused figure. Such an approach thereby attempted to justify a regional approach but in relation to nationally set criteria. So whilst defining the region as distinct from the national, the regional discourse at the same time uses the national to define itself.

Secondly, the Assembly and One NorthEast had an uneasy relationship with central Government with relation to how far they could go in producing an independent regional space. With the advent of the 2004 referendum rejection of directly elected regional government, both organisations were all the more dependent on the guidance and funding of central government. This presented difficulties in terms of creating a regional space that might be at odds with the views of central government. However, the definition and delimitation of the region as a distinct space with its own needs that were not always best recognised in Whitehall demanded such an approach. The Assembly and One NorthEast therefore had to delicately balance their narratives between the regional implementation of national approaches and the promotion of regional interests. So examples such as the cases made for a rail freight terminal at Tursdale in County Durham, a deep sea container port at Teesside, the campaign for the Highways Agency to remove Article 14 notices preventing further development at Team Valley and the request to dual the A1 to the Scottish border, all of which ran counter to central Government thinking, represent small attempts in which local

events were 'regionalised' to legitimate a regional discourse in the face of a sometimes divergent national discourse.

4. The challenge of competing governance arrangements

Early challenges were always likely to be encountered in attempting to establish a legitimate regional discourse following the establishment of regional development agencies and regional assemblies in 1999. Although national legislation gave the organisations and spaces official legitimacy or 'jurisdiction integrity' by establishing a jurisdiction over demarcated and bounded regional space, their embryonic nature made initial regional discourses somewhat fragile and open to contestation, particularly from cultural and/or Lifeworld perspectives, which have the potential to provide relational integrity from the region's citizens (Skelcher, 2005). The complex and ever evolving governance framework into which formalised regional government was introduced further challenged the place of regional institutions in terms of the applicability, coherence and potential for success of the policy discourse they produced.

The North East Assembly and One NorthEast's response to this dilemma was to champion the principle of subsidarity whereby the appropriate sphere of government would operate at the appropriate scale. This trend became more apparent throughout the research period from 2004 to 2007 and culminated in it being a 'key ask' of the regional submission to the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007. Within the region the twenty-five Local Authorities formed the most established pre-existing scale of governance. However, other formalised government networks such as sub-regional partnerships, Local Strategic Partnerships, city-regions and the Northern Way and a whole host of QUANGOS and interest groups further complicated the governance picture. Into this the Assembly and One NorthEast were charged with producing their own legitimate vision of regional space that would only be legitimated if accepted by these other actors operating within the region.

The challenge faced by ONE and the NEA perfectly illustrates Moore's

claim that "scale is not a fixed or given category, rather it is socially constructed, fluid and contingent" (2008:204). The regional organisations in the form of the Assembly and One NorthEast having been created to administer over regional space had to construct and make legitimate their own discourse on and of that space. However, competing governance arrangements – for example, the city-region agenda as proposed by the Northern Way was seen at least initially in some circles as being very much in opposition to regional working – complicated those efforts and necessitated a discourse of appeasement when interacting with other forms of governance.

Adopting the principle of subsidarity was a means by which to establish an unchallenged administrative role for regional organisations such as the Assembly and One NorthEast, whilst simultaneously recognising the role of sub-regional and local actors. Moore states that "scale categories such as 'local', 'urban' or 'global' are often used as naturalized, abstractions that do no analytical 'work' in themselves" (2008:205) and that "scales in this sense are unproblematic, fixed givens" (2008:205). Certainly in producing and justifying a discourse on regional space such abstractions were utilised but at the same time the issue of the local, the urban, the national and the global were all potential obstacles to creating such a legitimate vision of regional space. In this sense the idea of subsidarity was a useful tool in papering over the cracks in the regional discourse by issuing a statement of 'un-intent' that the region would operate as an administrative space and not interfere with the responsibilities and functioning of other tiers of government.

5. Balancing history and aspirations

The regional policy discourse presented by the Assembly and One NorthEast demonstrates an uneasy relationship with the region's industrial past and visions for the future. Narratives can often be seen to justify policy interventions on the basis of the North East of England having severe economic problems that require attention. The frequent references to being below the national average on a number of mainly economic indicators is

testament to this. At the same time the regional discourse also proudly remembers that the region once used to be an economic 'powerhouse', when its industrial base fuelled the workings of the British Empire. Whilst warnings are made to avoid trying and recreate the past, the region's previous economic success is used to create a discourse that highlights the potential for success. This is not to say that it is a bad thing for the regional discourse to be aspirational, but instead that the aforementioned discourse struggles to break free from the historical legacy or 'lock-in' of its development (Hudson, 2005). Therefore, the regional discourse adopts an uneasy stance between pursuing a new path in the future and looking back to embrace past success.

When read 'against the grain' the spatial narratives of the Assembly and One NorthEast simultaneously portray and produce the region as a space of economic deprivation and a space for potential economic growth, creating a regional approach that was described by some Assembly staff as 'schizophrenic'.

The regional space of the North East of England, by analysing it in terms of how a policy discourse is legitimated, is revealed as a predominantly economic and administrative space, that whilst simultaneously being produced is also ridden with contradictions, as the NEA and ONE seek to establish credibility for their own claims to regional space. These anomalies are sometimes confronted and occasionally ignored as taken for granted 'givens' in regional narratives. However, what this analysis has shown is that, although a regional discourse on space is identifiable, the space it produces is a fractured and contested one.

2. To what extent is communicative rationality achieved through the interactions of the North East Assembly and One NorthEast?

It has been established that a regional discourse, responsible for producing a regional space, was evident within the interactions of the North East Assembly and One NorthEast in the North East of England. Importantly, it

was noted that there were also contradictory tendencies or in fact competing and varying narratives within that discourse. The third research question will specifically investigate the extent to this regional discourse was characterized by the dominance of a System perspective over that of the Lifeworld. However, to adequately attempt such an analysis depends first on an examination of the nature of communication and interaction between the Assembly and One NorthEast. Such an analysis, of what Greenhalgh et al. (2006) term 'communication pathologies', is vital in establishing the extent to which communicative rationality was realized in the interactions of the two regional organisations. It may still be asked why is this important? Crucially because in examining and revealing the nature of interaction it is hoped that the nature and rationale behind the production of a regional discourse and regional space can be better explored. In terms of this research, this will help to answer the question as to why the two organisations produce such similar spatial narratives.

The creation of both regional development agencies and regional assemblies in the same Parliamentary Act (the 1999 RDA Act) gives an indication of the close working relationship that was intended for them. Incorporated into their statutory remits was an emphasis on partnership working, with a role for Assemblies to act as 'voices for their regions' and create a 'regional civic culture' and for RDAs to consult and pay regard to the opinions of the Assemblies (Musson et al., 2005). Such a scenario would appear to be conducive to a system of communication and interaction which would at least aim to achieve an undistorted form of communication. Indeed, in addition to the 1999 RDA Act, additional national guidance to RDAs from the then DTI in 2005, and regional working agreements including a 'memorandum of understanding' and 'regional concordat', agreed by the regional 'triad' of the Assembly, One NorthEast and Government Office, and scrutiny agreements, cemented the importance and processes of consultative working arrangements.

It is therefore evident that legislation and operational agreements in the region did appear to set the scene for the potential of at least a relatively undistorted form of communication. As Davidson and Lockwood state, "effective governance will be advanced by the capacity to establish and make

operative processes of dialogue, the arts of bargaining and consensus-seeking, and other-regarding perspectives" (2008:645). It would hence be reasonably fair to affirm that there was the 'capacity to establish' effective processes and channels for communication, interaction and dialogue. However, what this research has revealed is that, firstly, despite the mechanisms for relatively undistorted communication seemingly being in place, this rarely appeared to occur, and secondly, the processes for 'making dialogue operative' varied considerably between the case studies, yet all showed signals of systematically distorted communication.

Critically, in terms of answering how such a similar narratives were produced by the Assembly and One NorthEast, regular contact and dialogue between the two organisations can be taken to indicate that it was not a chance occurrence. As communication was apparent between the two organisations it is perhaps not surprising that numerous policy statements were said to be the consensus view of both organisations, or at least as having incorporated the views and comments of the other. Examples include the draft regional strategies and especially the CSR 2007 submission, which claimed to represent the consensus view of the Assembly and One NorthEast. Interestingly, the *Regional Leadership* exercise involved a final disagreement on the implementation of a particular recommendation, yet it was still stressed that the final conclusions had been debated and One NorthEast had justified its actions. Despite the Assembly not being entirely satisfied the situation was still felt to be generally positive. In contrast a lack of interaction and communication characterised the Evidence and Regional Policy scrutiny exercise with no claims to consensus being made.

The especially interesting theme recurring from the case studies was that such a consensual approach was not as prevalent as would first appear. Indeed, it was more common for a 'false consensus' to be portrayed in order to present a regional space that was unified behind a particular view or vision. Neale et al. refer to this as 'thin consensus' as opposed to 'thick consensus' and believe it to be a failure of the idea of consensus (2008:452). Whether it illustrates the impossibility of true consensual decision making or not, it is clear that in the case of the North East of England there were severe distortions in the communication and interaction between the Assembly and

One NorthEast. In analysing these regional 'communication pathologies' four general themes can be identified.

1. Institutional power imbalances

A number of institutional power imbalances undoubtedly hampered the operation of undistorted communication and led to what can be classified as systematically distorted communication. Beaumont and Nicholls (2008) ascertain that participatory organisations only work when there are no power imbalances. In light of this it would appear that the very functioning of the Assembly as a representative body, and the concept of partnership working between the Assembly and One NorthEast was compromised. Furthermore, the extent to which the interactions of the Assembly and One NorthEast were influenced at macro and micro scales should not be underestimated. In revealing the institutional power asymmetrics of regional governance, three particular points are especially relevant.

Firstly, the legislation that created the new regional infrastructure, and the working agreements and guidance that followed, were based on fundamentally unequal foundations. Indeed, despite the recommendations of the Milan report, regional chambers which became known as regional assemblies, were clearly established as supplementary organisations to regional development agencies. Additionally, the government's approach of 'constrained discretion' (McVittie and Swales, 2007) to regionalization failed to provide clear rules on how regional governance would function, opting instead to allow each region to interpret the legislation in its own way. Regional scrutiny provides an excellent example of this point with RDAs only required to 'show regard to' the views of the Assemblies in compiling the regional economic strategies. The result has been that a wide range of scrutiny approaches has been adopted throughout the English regions.

Davidson and Lockwood state that, "the absence of formal rules may obscure inequalities of power and mask the agendas of dominant interests" (2008:647). The issue in the North East of England was that whilst there may have appeared to be formal rules they operated in practice in a far more

informal way. Government legislation therefore amounted to 'soft governance', which stopped short of setting 'hard' rules for organisational working, preferring instead to allow each region to develop its own procedures and approaches (Brandsen et al., 2006). What this in essence created was an institutional environment in which, partly as the result of confusion over the respective authority of regional organisations and partly in response to the example set by national legislation, the setting of formal 'rules of the game' appeared to run counter to the ethos of regional partnership working. Instead, therefore, a number of memorandums of understanding and working agreements were created to provide some semblance of a procedural system for regional interaction. The unequal footing on which regional assemblies and regional development agencies were established was hence allowed to manifest itself in a system characterised by power imbalances due to the absence of formalized rules, or perhaps what might be termed an effective system of 'meta-governance' to establish the 'rules of the game'.

Secondly, the potential for these imbalances and distortions to be rectified was undeniably hampered, and some would argue extinguished, by some specific events. The result and aftermath of the regional referendum on directly elected regional government in 2004 was catastrophic in terms of its effects on regional assemblies, all the more so in the North East of England which had been widely tipped as the most likely region to desire such a change (Bond and McCrone, 2004). The reasons for the 'no vote' are complex and fascinating in equal measure, but it is fair to say that any unequal power relations between the North East Assembly and One NorthEast that existed beforehand were accentuated by the result. The vote essentially signalled a blow to the legitimacy of the Assembly, and assemblies in general, compromising their representative role as 'voice for the region'. In the wake of developments One NorthEast stepped forward to offer regional leadership thereby effectively stepping into the power vacuum left by the damaged Assembly. The effects of the regional referendum therefore undermined the Assembly's legitimacy, and henceforth its legitimacy in laying claim to regional space, but ultimately labelled the organisation as an unequal partner in participating in regional communication

and interaction. To this extent the principles of moral respect and reciprocity were justified, or at least accepted, as being unequal.

Thirdly, connected with the previous points, the day-to-day factors affecting the workings of the North East Assembly and One NorthEast led to systematically distorted communication. Most obvious amongst these were the huge differences in terms of staff and budgets that both organisations possessed. The Assembly employed approximately thirty staff in comparison to over three hundred at One NorthEast, and had just a fraction of the budget, which came under even greater scrutiny following the referendum result. This mismatch manifested itself in terms of a 'David vs Goliath' mentality amongst Assembly staff and members and perhaps led to some being more confrontational in the face of a perceived condescending and dismissive attitude of One NorthEast. Such a perception was probably not entirely unfounded but the *Regional Leadership* and *Evidence and Regional Policy* scrutiny investigations revealed how engagement between the organisations varied considerably depending upon the issue and members of staff involved.

In the absence of formalized rules for communication, especially for regional scrutiny, much depended, as Davidson and Lockwood state in relation to governance effectiveness "on the capacity of governance arrangements to manage conflict productively" (2008:645). However, such arrangements were not necessarily in place with regional scrutiny despite the aim of the Assembly acting as a 'critical friend'. Local Authority members historically used to engaging in more confrontational local politics frequently either did not grasp or ignored the mantra to work more collaboratively, and One NorthEast for their part often showed little attention to Assembly scrutiny. The working relationship was therefore marred by legislative inequalities accentuated by the lack of formalized rules; political inequalities worsened by the rejection of directly elected regional government; and capacity inequalities such as the mismatch in funding and staff.

2. The effects of governance complexity and uncertainty

The complexity, competition and uncertainty surrounding various scales, territories and places of governance undeniably affected the nature of communication within the region and the interactions of the North East Assembly and One NorthEast. As Davidson and Lockwood state, "because governance involves multiple levels of government and a variety of societal actors, the effectiveness of governance arrangements will depend on their ability to reconcile and coordinate different spatial and temporal perspectives" (2008:645). Thus the complex web of governance arrangements, comprising organisations working at varying scales and in particular territories and places, complicated and challenged the production of a regional discourse.

The role of the regional organisations was clearly to fit into existing arrangements between the national and local scale. However, the negotiation of those scales and the confusion surrounding the governance infrastructure led to distorted communication. The referendum revealed a lack of popular support for regionalism but also showed there to be a lack of political support for regionalization, with John Prescott, the deputy prime-minister, cutting a lonely figure in support of the proposals. The Assembly therefore faced a struggle in establishing legitimacy and credibility for its role coordinating various regional governance scales and interests.

The presence of other governance initiatives also cast into doubt the legitimacy of the regional discourse and led the Assembly and One NorthEast to pursue a line of communication, which would fit with all possibilities. The promotion of the idea of subsidarity illustrates this passive approach. However, bestowed with a substantially larger budget and staffing capacity, and in light of the referendum 'no vote', One NorthEast emerged above the Assembly as the dominant regional governmental organisation and thus could effectively set the rules for regional interaction according to its own agenda.

3. An overzealous and exclusionary focus on regional unity

In assessing the possibilities for communicative rationality in his work in South Africa, Williams (2004) comes to the conclusion that a lack of ownership can prevent effective communication. Interestingly, although it can be and will be argued that the region failed to fulfil its potential as a popular space, it was instead a focus on promoting ownership of the region, which contributed to distorted communication.

The case was strongly made by ONE, the NEA and other regional partners that the region had to present a unified vision that had wide regional 'buy-in'. Indeed, the draft RES made repeated references to its consultation procedures and how it presented the 'view of region' and the *Regional Leadership* scrutiny exercise also stressed the importance of uniting behind a shared vision. However, the regional focus on appearing united can be seen to have had a coercive effect on the nature of communication and interaction. This was illustrated by a lack of variation in the narratives of the Assembly and ONE as regional 'unity' was often implicitly understood as 'unity' on a course of regional economic development.

The effect of this was that alternative or competing narratives and discourses were essentially silenced, ignored of subverted in order to present a united regional discourse. The treatment of the sustainability agenda as a subservient interest to economic development is one such example of how alternative discourses were not permitted to undermine a regional discourse that was centred primarily on promoting the economy. Communicative rationality was hence prevented by the conditioned rejection of certain arguments and the coercive effects of a dominant discourse.

4. The region as an 'invited space' with little 'popular' support

Communicative rationality at the regional tier was essentially made impossible by a failure to meet the principle of universal moral respect or what Bohman (1996) terms the presence of political poverty. To use Cornwall's (2004) terminology the regional space of the Assembly and One

NorthEast represents an 'invited space', characterized by administratively generated power, in contrast to 'popular spaces' which operate through genuine and active citizen participation. The Assembly's disassociation from its representative role therefore meant it failed to provide the citizens of the North East of England with a space to participate in regional government. As Cornwall states, "in some cases, "invited spaces" have been transplanted onto institutional landscapes in which entrenched relations of dependency, fear and disprivilege undermine the possibility for the kind of deliberative decision making they are to foster" (2004:2).

The region as an 'invited space' as opposed to a 'popular space' thereby presents itself as a useful concept in assessing the reasons why the preconditions for communicative rationality were not entirely present at the regional level. The Assembly crucially had little, or at most had only a fragile and indirect connection with the people it was intended to be the voice for, and so, faced a crisis of its legitimacy. This meant not only that political poverty existed in the communicative process, but that the nature of communication and interaction was dominated by administratively generated as opposed to communicatively generated power.

As this analysis has revealed, the interactions of the North East Assembly and One NorthEast were influenced by a number of distortions ranging from political poverty, coercion, and limitations on participation to both conscious and unconscious deception. Ashworth et al. (2007) have conducted research into the factors affecting the effectiveness of regional scrutiny and their analysis found that five factors impacted upon the process: (i) the range of powers; (ii) scrutiny support; (iii) financial scrutiny; (iv) impact of party politics; and (v) the relationship with the RDA. In terms of the potential for communicative rationality between the two regional organisations and within the region as a whole, all of these points have some relevance, though, importantly in investigating how a dominant discourse is legitimated, it would also be stressed that the first four factors all play a contributing role in influencing the nature of the relationship with the RDA.

The range of powers reflects the failure of government legislation and guidance and regional agreements to set effective 'rules of the game'

(Rhodes, 1997; Jessop, 1997a). Similarly, a lack of scrutiny support reflects the budgetary and capacity imbalances between the two organisations. Questions over financial scrutiny illustrate the complex governance infrastructure, as regional scrutiny faced confusion over whether it had powers to look at finances or whether that was the responsibility of central government auditing and performance management frameworks. Perhaps party politics did not quite have the effect on communicative rationality, that Ashworth et al. affirm it did on regional scrutiny, but negative effects on the functioning of the Assembly were observed.

3. To what extent do the identified productions of space represent a System or more Lifeworld orientated discourse on regional space? How do the identified communication pathologies affect the production of space?

Analysis thus far has established that there is a regional discourse which underpins Assembly and One NorthEast attempts to produce a North East regional space. However, that discourse, and hence the production of space, is fragmented and ridden with contradictions. Likewise communication of and in regional space is characterised by significant distortions which hinders the functioning of communicative rationality. Instead, the ideal conditions for communicative rationality are undermined by a range of factors that induce systematic distortions in regional interactions. Tables 8.2 and 8.3. below briefly summarise the discussed findings so far.

Table 8.2. Summary of spatial discourses and contradictions

Spatial Discourse	Contradictions
Region as an economic space	Uneven balance of economic and social agendas
Region as an administrative space	Contradictory role of NEA Uneasy relationship with central Government
North East as regionally distinct space	Uneasy balance between history and aspirations
Region as space of potential	Competing/uncertain governance arrangements

Table 8.3. Summary of communicative distortions

Communicative distortions	Details
Institutionalised power imbalances	Representation, legislation, budgets, referendum
Complexity/uncertainty of governance arrangements	Hinders representation and accountability. Creates uneasy environment for engagement
Exclusionary regional discourse	Forced unity excludes alternative narratives
Region as invited space	Little participation and no Lifeworld support

It has been proposed that the distortions in the communication pathologies in the region have a direct effect on the nature of that space. In other words the power imbalances present within the interactions of the North East Assembly and One NorthEast are reflected in the production of regional space. By analysing these power relations it may thus be possible to reveal the dominant discourses of power/space and thereby concurrently also highlight spaces for resistance and improvement. On the presence of power inequalities in the regional set up, Marshall states, "it is no doubt partly this messy and unsatisfying multiple asymmetry in the regime which meant that weary operators hardly thought it worthy of passionate defence against the

SNR [78] " (2008:100). This interesting quote highlights the effects that asymmetric power relations can and have had on regional working, and so also suggests that it may be a fruitful avenue for analysis in looking at the effects on regional space.

The production of regional space is affected by the communications of regional institutions, both in terms of their interactions with each other but also in their construction and maintenance of a regional discourse. What kind of regional space is produced however depends on a range of factors which will inevitably be context-specific. The following analysis of the North East of England can broadly be summarised under four key points:- (i) the changing discourse of the devolution agenda; (ii) System colonisation of the potential space for a regional Lifeworld; (iii) System recentralization and illusionary space; and (iv) a hegemonic discourse and potential for change.

1. The changing nature of the devolution discourse

Of particular importance in affecting the nature of the North East regional space has been the changing nature of the wider devolution discourse in the UK. In essence, this has contributed to the legislative weaknesses and governance complexity and uncertainty that has allowed asymmetrical power relations to build up between regional organisations, and so favoured the production of particular kinds of space - most notably the region as an economic and administrative space. Rodriguez-Pose and Sandall (2008) in their paper "*From identity to the economy: analyzing the evolution of the decentralization discourse*" highlight three distinct yet interrelated discourses which have been used to justify a course of decentralization both within the UK and abroad. These comprise, firstly, an identity discourse "centred on cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and religious arguments (Rodriguez-Pose and Sandall, 2008:56). Secondly, a good governance discourse based on bringing decision making closer to the people and thereby making democracy

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[78] The Sub-national Review (SNR) proposed the abolition of regional assemblies and the future merger of the Regional Economic and Spatial Strategies into one Regional Strategy.

more responsive. And thirdly, an economic efficiency discourse promoting the need to increase competitiveness, innovation and adaptability in a 'world risk society' (Beck, 1999). Crucially, the mobilisation of such discourses is required:

> "As with all major political undertakings, it requires a narrative, or discourse, which can be used to justify or explain the process and to make it palatable to those opposed to change. In the case of decentralization this is especially important because of the creation of new political and specifically territorial institutions which may depend for their survival on the feelings of ownership and legitimacy that they can engender" (Rodriguez-Pose and Sandall, 2008:54).

The analysis of the North East of England regional discourse is therefore particularly interesting in terms of revealing the kinds of discourse that have been used to justify the process of regionalisation in England.

Rodriguez-Pose and Sandall in their work identify a shift away from the use of an identity discourse, towards a greater reliance on good governance and especially economic efficiency discourses. This observation is revealing of the regional discourse, which focuses on the North East as an economic and administrative space with social, cultural and environmental agendas only playing supplementary roles. The New Labour Government, when introducing regional development agencies and regional assemblies in its first term, relied on a combination of all three discourses identified above, but the belief in regional identity was a strong motivating force particularly given the realisation of political devolution to Scotland and Wales (Marshall, 2008; Jones, M., 2001; Bond and McCrone, 2004). However, the process of regionalisation in England and especially in the North East has gradually shifted from a reliance on regional identity to a discourse dominated by arguments for greater economic efficiency and better governance. This is reflected in the regional discourse portraying the region as an economic and administrative space and in how regional policy interventions are justified in relation to national guidance and legislative authority with public consultation seemingly only conducted as a statutory duty.

The reasons for this shift are multifarious, complex and context-specific. However, four are worthy of a brief analysis with regard to the North

East of England. Firstly, a lack of, or at least erratic, central government support for regionalisation has undoubtedly hindered the promotion of decentralisation beyond more economic and good governance arguments. John Prescott, in his role as head of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, was largely an isolated figure in promoting regional devolution, and particularly in advocating it as a means of recognizing regional identities. Notably, the Treasury was also a supporter of regional policy but crucially this underpinned by a belief in the potential of regions to promote indigenous economic growth rather than 'civic culture' (Balls, 2000; Balls et al., 2006; Musson et al., 2005). The inconsistent and differing basis of support for the regions within government therefore created an unclear regional narrative.

Secondly, a major contributing factor to the change in central government approach was the clear lack of popular support for 'official' government regions, illustrated by the rejection of directly elected regional government by nearly 80% of the North East's electorate. The region had been identified as having a strong sense of identity, and although the economic and good governance discourses were also not enough to persuade the electorate, the 'no vote' essentially removed the identity discourse from the future justification for English regionalisation (Rodriguez-Pose and Sandall, 2008; Tomaney, 2002; Bond and McCrone, 2004).

Thirdly, governance uncertainty and complexity stifled the development of an identity discourse. With a multitude of governance scales being promoted in an uneven and fluctuating fashion, engaging with and producing a regional sense of identity was problematic. For instance, the transference of responsibilities from John Prescott's ODPM to the Department for Communities and Local Government on 5th May 2006 created an environment of uncertainty, as the departure of John Prescott, who had been the government's most ardent supporter of regionalisation, placed the future of regional organisations into doubt. Claims by the Conservative Party in 2004/5 that if elected regional assemblies would be abolished and referendums held on the future of RDAs, along with influential papers by government Ministers, such as Ed Balls et al.'s (2006) *Evolution and Devolution in England Revolution* and David Miliband's 'double devolution', which seemed to promote scales of governance other than that of the region,

all appeared to question the future of the regions.

Fourthly, the regional assemblies and regional development agencies, contributed to the demise of a regional identity discourse by failing to engage with regional feeling and avoid the negative effects of 'jumping scales' (Swyngedouw, 2005). For example, "instead of being resolved, economic and democratic deficits are being rescaled to a new regional scale of state power" (Davidson and Lockwood, 2008:647), inferring that regional organisations have not engaged with their regions than had perhaps been planned.

The shift in justifying discourses for regions from incorporating an appeal to regional identity to focusing on economic and good governance arguments has created a mis-match in the North East of England – a mis-match between System and Lifeworld, between spatial practice (perceived space), representations of space (conceived space) and spaces of representation (lived space) (Habermas, 1984, 1987; Lefebvre, 1991). A useful way of understanding these changing discourses is to use Paasi's (2008) categorization of discourses based upon Raymond Williams' (1977) ideas on layers of culture. Thus Paasi states that, "some ideas are residual (former dominant ideas, that are losing their academic [or policy] power), some are new dominant ideas and some are emerging, perhaps to challenge the dominant ideas in the future" (2008:407). In the case of the North East of England and regionalisation, the devolution discourses based on identity, good governance and economic efficiency emerged against the backdrop of the residual ideas of social democracy and the market economy – the 'Third Way' (Giddens, 2000). However, only good governance and economic efficiency have gone on to establish themselves as dominant or hegemonic discourses.

The ascension of dominant economic and good governance discourses and the rejection of an emerging identity discourse – that played a significant role in the creation of regional organisations especially regional assemblies – has therefore essentially separated the economic from the cultural/social at the regional level. Hence, the regional conceived and System space of the NEA and ONE does not correlate with regional spatial practice, lived or Lifeworld space. Indeed, it is debateable if such Lifeworld

spaces even exist at a regional level.

Additionally, the linking mechanism of the democratic good governance discourse accentuates the mis-match of System and Lifeworld, as it has essentially become incorporated and colonised by the System discourse. This is illustrated in evidence given to the Modernisation Select Committee on the effectiveness of regional scrutiny. It states:

> "Our witnesses gave conflicting views of the effectiveness of regional scrutiny with regard to RDAs. Abby Johnson Brennan, *Deputy Chief Executive of the East Midlands Agency told the Committee that the problem was mainly one of perception, saying "there is scrutiny and accountability.* The challenge for us is the perception that there is not sufficient transparency and scrutiny of the work that the RDAs do" (emphasis in original) (2008, page 8, para 10).

A transition in the justifying discourses for regional devolution can thus be seen to be at least partly responsible for the dominance of an economic and administrative discourse within the communications and interactions of the NEA and ONE. As regional discourses have jettisoned their potential for engagement with the Lifeworld, the flow of producing regional space has come in a top-down manner from regional organisations working within a System-orientated discourse.

2. System colonisation of the potential space for a regional Lifeworld

The inclusion of regional chambers or assemblies in the 1998 Regional Development Agencies Act illustrated a commitment to make regional government accountable to its populations. However, this research into the case of the North East of England reveals that, largely, the representative and participatory functions of regional assemblies have been corrupted by the dominant discourses of the economy and public administration – based on an ethos of fostering economic growth rather than increasing democratic participation. This has been enabled by the presence of significant power imbalances and a communicative pathology of systematically distorted interaction, which have hindered the Assembly's legitimacy in laying claim to

and producing regional space, whilst simultaneously giving credence to the spatial narratives of One NorthEast (Greenhalgh et al., 2006).

The North East of England as a space for a regional Lifeworld, or indeed as a forum for the multitude of Lifeworlds of everyday experience within the region, has to a large extent been excluded. This unclaimed space for participation has been institutionalised and further colonised by the System producing a regional space of economic and administrative planning with only illusionary and tokenistic attention paid to Lifeworld space. As Davidson and Lockwood state, "at issue here is the devolution of real power and the statutory or authoritative legitimacy of such arrangements (Ostrom, 1990)" (Davidson and Lockwood, 2008:645).

The failure to ensure an avenue for democratic engagement with Lifeworld perspectives indicates how little real power has been devolved to formalised regional government in the North East of England. As Taylor argues, "democracy enhancing collaboration is unlikely to be sustained in the absence of an effective countervailing power" (2007:310). Hence, without the intervention of any system of 'metagovernance' (for example national government) which could re-set and enforce the 'rules of the game' a dominant System has been allowed to operate without genuinely engaging with the Lifeworld (Jessop, 2003; Rhodes, 1997). The regional Lifeworld has thereby been 'colonised from a distance' by a hegemonic System discourse. Furthermore, the region as an 'invited', as opposed to 'popular' space, can thereby be seen as inherently a 'state-space' which is produced by agents of the state – namely ONE and the NEA (Cornwall, 2004; Brenner, 2003, 2004).

In looking at 'invited' and 'popular' space Cornwall (2004) also contends that participation can be considered as a spatial practice. Certainly this study has investigated the spatial practices of the Assembly and One NorthEast in terms of the production of space and communicative pathologies, and participation has undeniably been a part of organisational interactions. Cornwall states that, "thinking about participation as a spatial practice highlights the relations of power and constructions of citizenship that permeate any site for public engagement" (2004:1). The communicative distortions identified in the interactions of One NorthEast and the North East Assembly therefore play an integral role in shaping the spatial practice of

participation – its importance and influence – and concurrently the nature of regional space.

The North East Assembly and One NorthEast occupy an 'invited space' and additionally what Cornwall (2004) terms a 'provided space', which are specifically those spaces put in place by dominant forces. The distorted communicative pathologies of the two organisations identified in the previous discussion thus limit the functioning and impact of the spatial practice of participation, and promote the production of a System orientated state-space (Brenner, 2004). The potential for real Lifeworld engagement is therefore undermined as the processes of systematically distorted communication and interaction allow for the production of a System colonised regional space.

3. System recentralization and illusionary space

With the North East of England having lost its 'popular' potential the region has come to reflect the dominant space of the System. This is not to say that systems of participation and representation and claims to democratic accountability do not exist. In fact, the research found that in certain interactions the North East Assembly did attempt to represent a more Lifeworld orientated perspective, which was at least partly prompted by the views of its members. However, the research also unveiled substantial communicative distortions, which have effectively silenced the Lifeworld, leaving what can be referred to as 'illusionary spaces' of participation and representation.

Analysis has already been conducted into the forms of communicative distortions operating within the region. However they have not, as yet, been explicitly linked to the processes by which a dominant System discourse has come to produce an economic and administrative regional space. A useful approach in examining this link is Somerville's (2005) categorization of "three routes through which elite power is reinforced and reproduced: recentralization, responsibilisation and privileged access to decision making" (Taylor, 2007:300).

Recentralisation

Habermas asserts that the System will always have a tendency to colonise the Lifeworld and similarly Lefebvre in theorising space claims that representations of space, or conceived space, is usually the dominant kind of space in any society. In terms of maintaining such a hegemony of space Taylor states that:

> "forms of power beyond the state can often sustain the state more effectively than its own institutions, enlarging and maximizing its effectiveness (Foucault, 1980, p. 73). This is not achieved through coercive control, but through a more complex and subtle diffusion of techniques and forms of knowledge" (2007:300).

The establishment and control of the regional spatial discourse can therefore be seen as a technique of maintaining the state by determining the production of regional space. This is not to claim that regional devolution represents a conscious attempt to further the centralized power of the state. On the contrary it is quite possible and likely that the initial rationale behind regionalisation was not based on such thinking, implying that in Habermasian terms unconscious deception has been the predominant form of distortion. However, whether planned or not, the effects of unequal power relations, realised through conscious and unconscious deception causing communicative distortions, have permitted recentralization to take place.

Here the potential distorting effect of funding arrangements is highlighted by Davidson and Lockwood who state that, "questions of resource allocation are particularly pertinent where central governments are coordinating governance, a position that may enable them to retain control of such processes" (2008:645). The process of 'juridification' can also internalize and colonise the Lifeworld. As Taylor points out, communities "have become zones to be investigated, mapped, classified, documented and interpreted. In this way the state reaches out beyond new governance spaces into communities themselves" (2007:301). Hence the Lifeworld becomes conceptualized in bureaucratic terms as 'calculating individuals' within 'calculable spaces' in 'calculative regimes' and power is recentralized as conceived space extends over spatial practice and lived space (Dean,

1999a, 2007). In such circumstances System procedures such as the audit culture and regulatory frameworks become dominant in society as people assess themselves against state imposed parameters and "the auditor becomes an explicit change agent rather than just a neutral verifier" (Power, 2003:188-189).

Privileged Access

The nature of participation in regional communication has undeniably affected the production of regional space. Communicative distortions have already been identified which have compromised the functioning of communicative rationality and allowed for the creation of a System orientated regional space. This is perhaps not surprising as Swyngedouw states "the internal power choreography of systems of governance-beyond-the-state is customarily led by coalitions of economic, socio-cultural or political elites" (2008:1999). Such elitist participation is therefore more likely to lend itself to the perpetuation of the existing and dominant production of space.

Somewhat ironically it would appear that the referendum rejection of directly elected regional government may well have also been a rejection of a means by which those communicative distortions and elitist 'power choreography' could have been challenged (Swyngedouw, 2008). In the absence of strong legislation or the intervention of metagovernance, already existing power inequalities were permitted to 'jump scales' and manifest themselves at the regional tier (Smith, 1984). This is an important observation in understanding that space in being constructed is also imbued with the power relations present at its creation. As Swyngedouw states "In other words, up-scaling or down-scaling is not socially neutral as new actors emerge and consolidate their position in the process, while others are excluded or become more marginal" (2008:2001). As Taylor states,

> "governing 'beyond the state' does not take place in a vacuum. The existing distribution of power is inscribed in the new sites and spaces... The new governing spaces can thus be characterized as arenas of co-option and colonization, inscribed with rationalities, technologies and rules of engagement that are internalized by non-state actors and create privileged pathways

for more powerful actors" (2007: 301-302).

In the case of this research the region and particularly the North East of England is one of these new 'governing spaces'.

Responsibilisation

The existing power inequalities may have 'jumped scales' to distort regional space, but the construction of regional space in itself, irrespective of its inherent communicative distortions, has undeniably created new ones. On this point power relations can be seen to be maintained "by the way in which the public and community themselves are 'constructed' in these new spaces and the way in which legitimacy is conferred on community representatives by other players" (Taylor, 2007:307). A good example from this research is the indirectly elected nature of Assembly members acting as representatives. Local Authority members have to be directly elected to their councillor positions but Economic and Social Partners (ESPs), which comprise approximately one third of Assembly Members, do not statutorily have to be elected (although many are internally elected within their organisations to sit on the Assembly). Of interest, however, is that the very creation of the Assembly's regional space created a need for such bodies to be represented at the regional level. As an 'invited space' the conceived Assembly space therefore attempted to artificially construct a perceived and lived Lifeworld space of representation and participation. To an extent this space was filled through this process of 'responsibilisation', but this 'false representation' combined with the inherent power inequalities within the interactions of regional government constructed what this study terms 'illusionary spaces' of accountability, participation and representation.

The System-orientated nature of regional space additionally led to the 'professionalisation' of regional space in two notable ways. Firstly, in creating 'invited spaces' for participation, representatives were encouraged to become 'professionalised' and in so doing internalize the values of their peers and working environment (Taylor. 2007). A good example is the Scrutiny and Policy Development Board members. Much was made of the value of having

members with experience in scrutiny and indeed this was behind the rationale for the Assembly's shift to a standing board rather than ad-hoc time-limited committees with changing memberships. Members were also encouraged to attend training events organised by Assembly officers and other national bodies such as the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) and the English Regions Network (ERN). By this process members were conditioned to operate according to particular sets of administrative performances. Whilst this did not necessarily 'Systematize' members it did set the frame for scrutiny process within a System discourse.

Secondly, the construction of 'illusionary spaces' of representation skewed lines of accountability, which permitted less accountable actors to increase their influence in regional space. This can best be seen in the North East of England in the privileged position of certain 'expert cultures' notably those relying heavily on statistics and focused upon entrepreneurialism, innovation and business promotion. As Davidson and Lockwood observe,

> "in their search for effectiveness and efficiency, business and regulation depend increasingly on scientific and technological expertise (Pellizoni, 2004). In regimes employing network forms, the power of experts can often sit outside formal institutional authority, since these actors are not held directly and democratically accountable" (2008:645).

A counter-argument does suggest that if "expert knowledge is in fact a form of delegated democratic authority granted to experts who speak on behalf of democratic publics on 'matters requiring specialized judgment', then expert inputs are liable to democratic norms of transparency and accountability no less than other inputs" (Davidson and Lockwood, 2008:645). The problem with this latter argument is that there are simply not the functional transparent accountability mechanisms in place at the regional tier, as RDAs' biggest responsibility is meeting their targets as set out by central government. Such an environment actively promotes the importance of 'expert cultures' in producing a policy discourse to justify policy intervention. The subsequent effect is that regional space also becomes further 'juridified' as the responsibility of these 'expert cultures' grows. Indeed, the fact that the Assembly saw the recruitment of consultants to aid in scrutiny exercises as a

means by which to add legitimacy to the process is illustrative of this colonisation of regional space.

4. Hegemonic discourse, communicative meta-governmentality and spaces of resistance

The production of 'illusionary spaces' of regional accountability and participation have allowed for regional government to essentially recentralize power. More tellingly it is the centralization of power within the System and dominant conceived space which aims to maintain a hegemonic discourse or achieve a 'state of domination' over and in regional space (Dean, 2007). However, it seems unlikely that such a recentralization is the result of conscious communicative deception. Regional devolution in the late 1990s and early years of the 21st Century was based on the mantra of decentralising power as illustrated in the Government's *Your Region, Your Choice: Revitalising the English Regions* (2002) consultation document[79].

Instead, what is more likely is that the construction of a new form of administrative space, in an already complex governance infrastructure, merely served to further complicate rather than simplify arrangements. A lack of impetus in connecting regional space with a Lifeworld-perspective, and indeed the seemingly embryonic nature of any kind of regional Lifeworld space in the first place, ensured a System-orientated discourse dominated in an institutional environment of heightened complexity. As Swyngedouw states, "therefore, the rescaling of policy transforms existing power geometries, resulting in a new constellation of governance articulated via a proliferating maze of opaque networks, fuzzy institutional arrangements, ill-defined responsibilities and ambiguous political objectives and priorities" (Swyngedouw, 2008:1999).

Within this hegemonic economic and administrative regional space, the complexity of governance arrangements combined with the 'soft

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http://www.communities.gov.uk/citiesandregions/publicationscities/regionalpublications/regionswhitepaper/. Accessed 8th September 2008.

governance'[80] approach of central government, which favoured issuing guidance rather than directly intervening, essentially created a form of 'governmentality' or 'conduct of conduct' that regulated the narratives, behaviour and interaction of regional organisations (Branden et al, 2006; Foucault, 1991; Elden, 2007; Dean, 2007). Importantly, this regulation was in favour of a regional discourse and form of communication that was single-mindedly focused on the region's economic development. Even more crucially, within regional space, this agenda was set by One NorthEast but based upon national 'soft' guidance and 'harder' performance targets.

Branden et al. state that "soft governance can become problematic when, regardless of their unofficial status, guidelines are mixed up with formal mechanisms of accountability [so that] they effectively become an extension of the formal regulatory framework" (2006:546). In the North East this 'unofficial yet official regulation' can be seen to have produced what might be called a system of 'meta-governmentality' where action was regulated not by the direct intervention of 'meta-governance' but by the indirect influencing of the 'conduct of conduct' by a higher authority (Jessop, 2003, 2007; Foucault, 1991; Dean, 2007). It could in effect therefore be referred to as 'steering by stealth'. In terms of the relationship between ONE and the NEA this was seen to exist in a form of 'communicative meta-governmentality' in which the mentalities of interaction and conduct were regulated (often self-regulated in the case of the NEA) in order to comply with the implicit dominant agenda of ONE and central government (Jessop, 2003, 2007; Foucault, 1991; Habermas, 1984, 1987; Greenhalgh et al., 2006). Viewed in such fashion, the communicative distortions that characterised the scrutiny process can be seen as active mechanisms in the maintenance of this 'communicative meta-governmentality'.

There is little doubt that the multifarious conceptualizations of space based upon territories, places, spaces and networks and their realization in complex systems of governance was and is a challenge to the functioning of regional government and governance (Jessop et al., 2008). However, within

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[80] Branden et al. define 'soft governance' as occurring when "central government directs local authorities and agencies, not by hierarchically imposing what should be done but by providing unofficial guidelines" (2006:546).

that 'new constellation of governance' and 'fuzzy institutional arrangements' there is also the potential for resistance and change (Swyngedouw, 2008). For instance Taylor, in using Foucault's approach on resistance states, "self-steering actors outside the state can thus become 'active subjects' in the new governance spaces, not only collaborating in the exercise of government but also shaping and influencing it" (2007:302). Therefore, in this complex arrangement the hegemonic System-dominated regional discourse, characterised by what might be termed 'communicative meta-governmentality' is revealed as fractured and open to challenges from counter-hegemonic discourses and narratives. What will be analysed in the subsequent discussion on the future of regional government is the potential for emerging discourses – based on Lifeworld perspectives and everyday space and practice – to convert regional 'invited spaces' into 'conquered spaces' (Paasi, 2008; Moore, 2008; Dehaene and De Cauter, 2008; Cornwall, 2004).

4. To what extent are the concepts of System and Lifeworld, communicative rationality and the production of space useful tools in examining the governance processes, as investigated in the three case studies, operating in the North East of England?

Davidson and Lockwood observe that, "ensuring legitimacy through democratic means has become problematic. Among the European regions, Newman (2000) has identified creating and maintaining legitimacy for the new institutions of governance as significant political problems for them" (2008:645). This perceived challenge of the regional 'democratic deficit' was a strong motivating factor in shaping the nature of this research and as such led to the development of the theoretical framework combining Lefebvre's ideas on the social production of social space and Habermas's theory of communicative action and System and Lifeworld. The aim was to explore the ways in which communication and interaction were linked to the production of space in the operations of regional governance and whether certain means of

production helped or hindered a regional 'democratic deficit'.

On the benefits of governance co-operation and partnership working, Davidson and Lockwood suggest that:

> "partnership-based governance arrangements constitute a means of addressing complex problems of coordination and integration; they can provide a framework by which actors at multiple scales can communicate with each other; and they can foster good will and trust to address issues and facilitate solutions to entrenched" (2008:653).

However, what the theoretical framework utilised in this study has allowed is an in-depth investigation into the factors that might and do prevent the smooth and successful operation of governance. Such an approach was facilitated by the combination of academic theories on space and communication and can specifically be seen to have benefitted this research in a number of key areas.

Firstly, the combination of theories contributed to a greater understanding of the inherently intertwined relationship between the production of space and communicative interaction. Rather than just analyzing communicative acts or different types of space separately, this research has seen them as mutually supportive allowing for greater insights into how space is constructed through the means of communication. This has increased the theoretical and practical application of the concepts beyond that which they possessed individually. Hence, through this theorisation it can now be asserted that: interaction occurs in space, and space interacts and is produced through interaction.

Secondly, the analysis of communicative acts and particularly communicative distortions allows for an examination of the production of dominant and less dominant forms of space. Importantly by looking at the role of communication in creating spatial narratives and discourses the framework also makes it possible to investigate the processes by which certain spatial discourses and narratives gain greater legitimacy in their claims to space.

Thirdly, whilst the theoretical amalgamation can be used to explore dominant productions of space, it is also extremely useful in revealing the

contradictions in such spatial discourses and the potential for resistant, counter-hegemonic or emergent discourses and narratives (Paasi, 2008).

The most important theoretical contribution of this research has been the observed value and usefulness of combining theories on the production of space and communicative interaction. Of course reality in the North East of England did not match up the idealised concepts but then it was never expected to. The synergy of theories on space and communication added most by allowing for the production and communication of various spatial narratives and discourses to be revealed and in this sense the theoretical framework as a whole was immensely useful. This is not to say that there were not difficulties in practically implementing the theories, as indeed there were, but it is true to say that these were more problems with particular parts of the theories than with the framework in its entirety. What follows, therefore, is an individual analysis of the key theories highlighting their positive contributions and problematic applications.

1. Communicative rationality

The theory of communicative action has proved most useful in analysing distortions within communicative acts. On communicative rationality in practice Beaumont and Loopmans state, that they "sympathize with the theoretical and normative ambitions of an undistorted communication and ideal speech act but feel uncomfortable with the concrete experiences of governance participations and experiments in democracy in cities that tend to belie these principles" (2008:96). Here their assertion would seem entirely appropriate in relation to the North East of England and that has been the value of the theory. Many processes and interactions have been identified as systematically distorted and in so doing this has aided in revealing the underlying power relations in the production of regional space.

The universalistic and ideal-type nature of communicative rationality did present some practical problems. Firstly, Habermas in developing the theory identified a number of different pre-conditions for undistorted communication. The principles of universal moral respect, egalitarian

reciprocity and non-coercion were three of these ideal pre-conditions that were useful in analysing communication acts in the North East of England. However, the idea of conscious and unconscious deception whereby communication is orientated towards success (strategic action) rather than consensus (communicative action) was more problematic to assess. As an insider-researcher some insights were gained into the internal rationale behind the North East Assembly's approach through a process of reflexive consideration. But it was difficult to effectively assess whether One NorthEast was engaged in conscious or unconscious deception particular at the individual level. The differing relationship between the two organisations on the Regional Leadership and Evidence and Regional Policy scrutiny investigations is a case in point.

Secondly, it is all very well identifying the ideal conditions of a communicative act but a very different matter arises when analysing the vast multitude of interactions that occur in an inter-organisational setting. The reality experienced during the research was that there were far too many communicative acts to analyse individually according to the structure of a communicative act – the ideal pre-conditions, the nature and content of the act of communication, and the result of communication. Indeed, in just one meeting or telephone call there could be hundreds of interactions that could be deemed significant. The approach adopted therefore had to be much more practical and realistic than the theory would contend, opting to identify trends and focus on particularly important or revealing communicative events. Communicative trends and interactive processes thereby became the focus of analysis instead of communicative acts per se.

2. The production of space

The theory of the social production of social space added significant value to the conceptualization and analysis of regional space. The 'triple dialectic' of the perceived-conceived-lived allowed the research to not only assess varying productions of space but also examine the interrelations and interactions between those spatial projections. A strength of the Lefebvre's

theory was also its applicability and complementary nature to other conceptualizations of space such as Jessop, Brenner and Jones's (2008) Territory, Place, Scale, Network (TPSN) framework. The theory of the production of space is therefore useful in its versatility to not only understand the complexity of competing and overlapping productions of space but also to incorporate and allow for further conceptualizations.

Practical difficulties included an issue in demarcating the distinctions between different kinds of space – for instance between the conceived and lived. For example, the North East Assembly was supposedly a representative organisation of lived and perceived space but the research reveals that in supporting a predominantly System discourse its links to lived and perceived space were weak. However, the element of regional representation provided by Assembly members meant the NEA did not operate entirely within a regional conceived space. In applying Lefebvre's theory on space the researcher therefore had to be alert to the porous and fragmented nature of space in its many forms.

3. System and Lifeworld: conceived, perceived and lived space

The idea of System and Lifeworld, or the relationship between conceived, perceived and lived space, are useful in explicitly identifying the effects of unequal power relations on the nature of produced space. Habermas's assertion that the System has a tendency to dominate over the Lifeworld, and Lefebvre's claim that conceived space tends to the dominant space in any society have proven to be valuable contributions and tools with which to assess the nature of governance interactions in the North East of England.

As Swyngedouw states in relation to governance, "up-scaling or down-scaling is not socially neutral" (2005:2001) primarily because the operation of governance is tied to the production and claims to particular kinds of space. Both System and Lifeworld and the conceived-perceived-lived spatial 'trialectic' offer a means by which to understand the dominant, less dominant and alternative discourses and narratives operating in the North East of England (Soja, 1996). However, in order to overcome some of their individual

flaws they benefit from being approached as a complex and nuanced combination of System and Lifeworld, conceived, perceived and lived elements. For instance, the System comprising the economy and public administration, and the Lifeworld consisting of people's lived experiences are not necessarily dialogically opposed. However, there are questions as to where democracy and accountability in their various forms fit in relation to the System and Lifeworld. Do they link the System and the Lifeworld or do different forms of democracy and accountability (hierarchical, representative, deliberative, direct, indirect) belong more to one than the other? The conceptualization of System and Lifeworld is useful in approaching such questions but, whilst the argument for a porous and fuzzy boundary between the two may aid practical analysis, the complex governance arrangements present in (post)modern societies, and examined here in the North East of England, may well have outgrown such straightforward categorizations.

The concepts of System and Lifeworld and spatial practice, representations of space and spaces of representation add most by exploring the dominant operations of power and how they are continually imbued in the production of space in specific spatial and temporal settings. On this last point it is also important to acknowledge that time has been a crucially important factor in revealing the ephemeral, fractured and temporary nature of discourse. In so doing this research shares similarities with the work of Deleuze and Guattari on 'smooth' and 'striated space'. As King states "smooth space is the space of order, hierarchical power, and authority, whereas striated space is that of disorder and diversity" (2008:332). Importantly, ongoing processes of smoothing and striating perpetually seek to order and disorder space: "Smooth space is constantly being translated, transversed into a striated space; striated space is constantly being reversed, returned to a smooth space" (1987: 474-475). The concepts of System and Lifeworld and conceived and perceived space thereby at least partially manage to capture the ongoing processes of ordering and disordering space.

5. What future might there be for regional governance and democracy:

a) What potential is provided by the concepts of System and Lifeworld for a reinvigoration of the democratic process (government/governance processes) in the North East of England and beyond?

Developments since this investigation began in September 2004 have simultaneously problematised this research and yet made it all the more intriguing. The first notable event occurred with the referendum rejection of directly elected regional government in November 2004. Since then a number of predominantly minor organisational and legislative developments have taken place, but they have all been overshadowed by the government's *Review of Sub-National Economic Development and Regeneration*, otherwise known as the Sub-National Review, which was published in July 2007. The Paper's announcement that regional assemblies were to be abolished significantly affected the research's search for ways in which to improve the accountability and 'democraticness' of regional government. In light of the SNR, attempting to redress the relationship between One NorthEast and the North East Assembly effectively became inconsequential. Instead, it was realised that the research's findings would be better used to investigate the potential for new directions and arrangements to produce a more democratic regional space. Indeed much can still be learned from the interactions and spatial discourses under the Regional Development Agency/Regional Assembly set-up in attempting to create more democratic, effective and accountable forms of regional governance.

What follows is a brief overview of the Sub-National Review and associated developments followed by an analysis of the usefulness of the findings of this research. In the first instance this analysis will assess the potential for change that would have existed in the hypothetical situation of the Sub-National Review not having occurred, and in the second in the reality of the 'post-SNR landscape'[81]. The final section looks at the future of regional government in the UK with a particular focus on the North East of England

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[81] Accessed at http://www.onenortheast.co.uk/page/news/article.cfm?articleId=3170 on 02/08/2008.

and the lessons that can be learned from the experiences of organisations such as the North East Assembly.

1. The Sub-National Review and associated developments

The long-awaited Sub-National Review, which was the subject of much prior speculation, was published by the Treasury on 17th July 2007 and announced the significant reshaping of the regional governmental infrastructure. This was followed by a number of implementation documents [82] and complemented by the subsequent publication of the Modernisation Committee's final *Third Report of Session 2007-08* on *Regional Accountability* which set out new scrutiny arrangements for the regions,

The SNR introduced a number of changes most notably the abolition of regional assemblies by 2010, the appointment of a minister for each region and the combination of the Regional Economic and Spatial Strategies into one Regional Strategy to be produced by regional development agencies. This upheaval of regional government was justified in various means such as there being a general environment of confusion and complexity in regional government caused partly by weak legislative support for its functioning – factors identified by this research for the presence of communicative distortions between the Assembly and One NorthEast. The following quote from the SNR illustrates this view well:

> **4.32** Complexity is also caused by lack of clarity about roles. For example, in 2003 Arup Consulting, with the Constitution Unit of University College London, reviewed the literature about the regional chambers (as the Regional Assemblies were then called). They concluded that '[t]here is no clear formal set of aims and objectives for Regional Chambers. Their role and function has evolved from a disparate combination of Government papers and announcements and from the initiatives of the Chambers themselves'. Arup's report identified ten different sources that set out the roles of the regional chambers" (2007:53).

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[82] In December 2007 a short paper entitled *Taking Forward the Review of Sub-National Economic Development and Regeneration* and on March 31st 2008 the official consultation document, *Prosperous Places*, on taking forward the review were published.

Indeed, this investigation has already found that "there is little doubt that the multifarious conceptualizations of space based upon territories, places, spaces and networks and their realization in complex systems of governance was and is a challenge to the functioning of regional government and governance (Brenner et al., 2008)" (ibid, p297).

Irrespective of the rationale behind it, the SNR introduced changes which sent shock-waves through regional government, not least the assemblies, and were undoubtedly much more 'revolutionary' than 'evolutionary' (Balls et al., 2006). As Marshall states:

> "My view is that this is a major and very extraordinary reorientation of state policy… it is clear that regional planning and strategizing has been passed on to a very new sort of body. This body, the RDA, is state sponsored, funded and legitimized, and managed on behalf of government by a business led board" (2008:101).

On publication of the SNR, the abolition of regional assemblies cast into some doubt the future of regional accountability arrangements, with only the Local Government White Paper *Strong and Prosperous Communities* published in October 2006 offering some potential by proposing that Local Authorities may scrutinize regional organisations operated within their boundaries and potentially form Multi Area Agreements, which could provide a new sub-regional tier of functioning and accountability. As Jones wrote shortly after the SNR was revealed, "there is as yet a very unclear set of accountability arrangements accompanying this announcement" (2008:2).

This uncertainty has now been somewhat clarified by the publication on June 10th 2008 of the Modernisation Committee's report on *Regional Accountability* and the subsequent endorsement of its recommendations by the government. The report highlighted the SNR's finding that "there needs to be clearer and stronger accountability of the RDAs both to local and central government" (2008:7) and stated:

> *14. The Committee concludes that there is clear evidence of an accountability gap at regional level. Although RDAs and other agencies have a central line of accountability to Ministers, who are in turn accountable to Parliament, many of their activities in the regions are not subject to regular, robust scrutiny. More*

should be done to monitor the delivery of services in the regions, to complement national lines of accountability.
15. The accountability gap is twofold, arising from a lack of accountability within the regions as well as to Parliament" *(2008:9) (emphasis in original).*

This replacement of regional scrutiny with local and national accountability mechanisms is in itself a form of 'scale jumping' as assembly scrutiny moves both upwards and downwards (Swyngedouw, 2005). As such it should not be assumed to be a neutral process in that it undoubtedly encompasses its own power relations, which will influence the future workings of regional governance. Such issues will be returned to in discussing the future of regional governance. Following the Modernisation Committee's report the government subsequently endorsed its conclusions stating that the measures "would represent a significant step forward in providing for a parliamentary tier of accountability for regional institutions and government regional activity in England. They will involve the establishment of a range of new regionally-constituted and regionally-focused committees, often meeting in their own region. The structures outlined should provide Members with real ability to increase democracy and accountability in their region, while at the same time improving engagement with the public"[83] (2008:14).

Within the North East of England the news of the Sub-National Review and subsequent development were met officially with a number of joint submissions from the North East Assembly, One NorthEast and the Association of North East Councils (ANEC) which focused predominantly on the positive nature of the proposals. Indeed, the press release accompanying the aforementioned triad's submission to the March 2008 consultation on taking forward the SNR was entitled *Positive opportunity for North East to shape and determine its economic future*[84]. It is perhaps telling that in the North East of England there was no real opposition, even from the Assembly itself, to the SNR and its proposals.

[83] Regional Accountability: The Government's response to the Modernisation Committee's Third Report of session 2007-08 (Office of the Leader of the House of Commons). Accessed at: http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm73/7376/7376.pdf on 02/08/2008.
[84] Accessed at http://www.onenortheast.co.uk/page/news/article.cfm?articleId=3170 on 02/08/2008.

Paragraph 13 of the joint submission states:

"Executive responsibility for producing the Regional Strategy will lie with the RDA Board, fully recognizing that it will be shaped, influenced and signed off by a local authority Leaders' Forum. The Forum will be convened as part of, and accountable to the wider local government community through, ANEC. This will ensure a 'golden thread' of accountability to the wider Association as local government's representative body and, importantly, ensure that city/sub-regional perspectives are at the heart of the decision making process".

So to support the Modernisation Committee's proposals to add national accountability to regional working, the Leaders' Forum provides the local elements and lends credibility through a 'golden thread' of accountability. Interestingly, however, this is to be coordinated through the Association of North East Councils (ANEC) an organisation not too dissimilar to the North East Assembly, and which shared joint administrative and officer support up until 2005. The similarities bear significance in hypothesizing and pre-empting possible problems in ensuring such a 'golden thread' of accountability is capable of being created and sustained.

2. Potential for change without the SNR

Before turning attention to the realities of regional government in the 'post-SNR landscape' it may be both academically and professionally fruitful to explore the potential for positive change that may, or may not, have been realized without the grander intervention of central government.

To instantly avoid any idealistic and unrealistic wonderings about the democratic potential of regional assemblies, and particularly the North East Assembly, it must be clearly and abruptly stated that their future, as it stood in the time shortly prior to the SNR, was in question. At best the North East Assembly could have continued to exist in some limited form, but it is unlikely at best that the potential regional assemblies possessed when created in 1999 would ever have been achieved – or at least not in the near or medium term future. Such observations would imply that regional assemblies were

essentially doomed, and whilst such apocalyptic statements may seem somewhat over-dramatic, some truth is undeniably present, particularly when seen against the backdrop of the reactions to the SNR. As Marshall states, "the regional assemblies made remarkably little noise at their abolition, a matter which warrants some reflection. Overall the package was met without excitement but without any major opposition from key interests" (2008:100). Indeed, the SNR appeared to be met with a sense of dull resignation at the North East Assembly, illustrating the half-expected nature of the announcement.

At the forefront of the expected decline of regional assemblies was the result of the referendum on directly elected regional government in the North East in November 2004. The 'no vote' severely damaged any potential for increasing the 'democraticness' of regional assemblies, and in the North East of England, made the Assembly the subject of much criticism and a campaign to have it abolished in its indirectly elected form (Marshall, 2008). A lesser acknowledged development that also, in hindsight, did not help secure the North East Assembly's future, was the split from the Association of North East Councils (ANEC) in 2005. The decision to split the organisations, which had shared administrative and officer support and offices in Newcastle, left the North East Assembly even more isolated and vulnerable to criticism than it had been previously. Additionally, the division of staff between the organisations created some capacity issues within the Assembly. Furthermore, power struggles during subsequent internal restructuring led to a somewhat tense and unproductive working relationship between the organisations. Indeed, following the separation it appeared that ANEC deliberately made conscious efforts to distance itself from the Assembly.

Developments within the regional government infrastructure predicated that an announcement of the kind embodied in the SNR was only a matter of time. In this sense the North East Assembly, ever since the 2004 referendum, had lost its potential to act as a democratic and representative body for a regional Lifeworld. However, there were some signs that the Assembly could improve its 'democraticness' and some evidence of success in some areas (Marshall, 2008). These can be summarized under the

headings of pro-active scrutiny, the potential of Economic and Social Partners (ESPs), and the guile of Assembly officers and members.

Firstly, the scrutiny exercises of *Regional Leadership* and *Evidence and Regional Policy* illustrate well both the potential for improved participation and a more consensual process, and the obstacles preventing it. Elements of the *Regional Leadership* scrutiny exercise showed real progress towards a less distorted and more consensual communicative action. In contrast to previous scrutiny exercises Assembly officers and members engaged directly with the officers responsible for taking forward the agenda at One NorthEast. This pro-active scrutiny, which was referred to as policy development at the Assembly, was a refreshing change to previous more commonly practiced retrospective scrutiny exercises and revealed a glimpse of the real potential of a more consensual form of decision-making structured around increased deliberation and partnership working. However, it should be noted that the exercise was still subject to significant communicative distortions. The reversion to a more traditional retrospective scrutiny exercise on *Evidence and Regional Policy* illustrated the hurdles to achieving such potential, as One NorthEast liaison officers took on a restrictive 'gatekeeper' role preventing productive engagement which, given the unequal power relations, effectively meant the scrutiny exercise lacked any real legitimacy. The *Regional Leadership* exercise therefore served as a fragile and fleeting 'moment' of the potential of more communicatively-orientated action.

Secondly, perhaps the North East Assembly's greatest and most distinguishing asset was the inclusion of Economic and Social Partners (ESPs) amongst its membership. Comprising approximately one third of members, ESPs were the key to the Assembly's supposed representation of the views of the regional Lifeworld. This was simultaneously a source of legitimacy or integrity for the Assembly and also a crucial means by which it could increase its 'democraticness' (Marshall, 2008; Skelcher, 2005). However, the critical factor is that the true potential of the ESPs was never harnessed. Outnumbered by Local Authority members and 'professionalised'[85] into the administrative culture of regional government;

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[85] For more detail please refer to the section on 'responsibilisation'.

they were never allowed the influence to direct the agenda. (Taylor, 2007:207). Nevertheless, some ESPs still remained passionately vocal on behalf of their interest groups, providing a glimpse of a more Lifeworld-orientated regional space.

Thirdly, the dominant position of One NorthEast over the North East Assembly and the associated effects in distorting communication between the organisations was not something that was missed by Assembly officers and members. Indeed, as a result officers, and to a lesser degree members, used what might be termed 'institutional guile' or 'cunning' to develop 'coping mechanisms' to deal with communicative distortions and this in itself represents a means by which resistance could and was used to increase the 'democraticness' of regional space. For instance, Assembly officers actively sought to work with One NorthEast staff whom they knew to be more receptive to the Assembly. Also it was acknowledged that reports and dialogue would be much more likely to be accepted by One NorthEast if presented in a certain fashion. Indeed, even the approach adopted in the *Regional Leadership* exercise represented an attempt to circumvent previous communicative barriers. Assembly officers and Members thereby engaged in a conscious series of 'tactics of resistance' (de Certeau, 1984) to achieve more consensual interaction – what one might call a conscious attempt to subvert and undermine conscious and unconscious communicative distortions. The key problem was, however, that such tactics were insufficient on their own to significantly alter the communicative power imbalances between the Assembly and One NorthEast.

The question stands, could the 'democraticness' of the Assembly and regional space have positively changed under the then current regional government set-up? The answer is that the key areas of functioning, such as regional scrutiny, would most probably have developed and improved slightly, but it is extremely unlikely that they would have done so to the extent required. Legislative and power imbalances quite simply had created communicative distortions and a discourse on regional space that was beyond the realm of being changed under the then current arrangements.

In short, some form of meta-governance was required to change the shape and nature of the playing field and to call time on some tiring actors

(Jessop, 2003). In this case this mechanism of meta-governance was the intervention of central government through the SNR and regional assemblies were the organisations in the firing line. However, it is yet to be seen as to whether the SNR's proposals will resolve the challenges posed by regional space. Of concern is that the SNR's abolition of organisations, which possessed some Lifeworld potential, even if not realized, will support the pre-existing unbalanced arrangements. As Davidson and Lockwood state, "a focus on economic success as a quick-fix for regional problems while ignoring citizens' proper access to information, their need for meaningful consultation, and the provision of enhanced opportunities for active participation (Caddy, 2001) will, in the longer term, be counterproductive for the legitimacy of regional governance" (2008:646). And so the question remains: the North East Assembly lacked legitimacy and is now set to fade to the history books, but will the focus on economic efficiency eventually lead to a crisis of legitimacy for regional space in general?

3. Potential for democratic reinvigoration in the 'post-SNR landscape'

The 'post-SNR landscape' is undoubtedly one of change but it will not usher in a new regional framework overnight. In the North East of England the Assembly will not be completely abandoned until 2010 with the RDA and ANEC gradually taking over its functions in the meantime. Regional Ministers were added to the picture reasonably quickly, but regional select and grand committees were only agreed upon in July 2008 and at the time on writing in early 2009 it was still not exactly clear how long it would take for these bodies to come into being. In addition, the shift from a two-tier to a unitary authority in County Durham in 2009 adds to the ethos of administrative change in the region and potentially further complicates, or at least makes more uncertain, how the 'post-SNR landscape' will look and operate.

What is clear, however, is that as the North East Assembly disappears so will the unequal power relationship that existed with One NorthEast. However, the irony is that the power balance is likely be even more one-sided than before, given that the Assembly, which was supposed to add

democratic legitimacy, will cease to exist. As alluded to previously, this poses a significant question of the dominance of an economic System-orientated discourse of regional space in terms of whether such a hegemonic discourse is sustainable.

Power in a Foucauldian sense is not something that is absolute, and as such the elevated position of One NorthEast in the post-SNR North East should not be interpreted as the end of the contestation of and in regional space. As such the concepts of the production of space and communicative action are no less valid in analysing the possibilities for a more balanced discourse on regional space. Resistance can take many forms and, given the contradictions already identified in the current iteration of regional space, there does still exist potential for a more democratic and representative form of regional governance. The three following sections will analyse in turn: the proposed regional set-up and its 'golden thread of accountability'; the potential for organisations and new actors in the new institutional framework; and the possibility of the development of a separate and more independent Lifeworld.

i) The proposed regional infrastructure and a 'golden thread of accountability'

The Sub-National Review was "intended to address a perceived accountability gap at regional level[86]" (Office of the Leader of the House of Commons, 2008:7) particularly in relation to RDAs. However, the Modernisation Committee's report on *Regional Accountability* also states that the SNR "proposes abolishing Regional Assemblies; a move that might be thought to increase the existing perceived "deficit" in oversight and scrutiny of the RDAs" (2008:7). The government's response to this "deficit" has been to both up-scale and down-scale regional scrutiny to government select and

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[86] Modernisation Committee report *Regional Accountability* published July 10th 2008. Accessed at: http://www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/select_committee_on_modernisatio n_of_the_house_of_commons/modcompress10708.cfm on 02/08/2008.

grand committees, and to "local scrutiny bodies [87] " respectively (Swyngedouw, 2005). The joint response to taking forward the SNR from the Assembly, One NorthEast and ANEC suggests that scrutiny structures and processes be agreed by (but ultimately not carried out by) the newly appointed regional Leaders' Forum although the precise details are unclear. Interestingly the joint response does stress the role that economic and social partners can and should play in scrutiny.

The key issue with scrutiny is that the 'scale jumping' of the new arrangements will mean that regional bodies, most notably the RDA, will no longer be responsible to or legitimated by any corresponding representation of a regional Lifeworld. Of course it can be argued, strongly in fact, that unequal power relations and legislative weaknesses meant One NorthEast never considered itself answerable to the Assembly in carrying out its operations. However, the 'scale jumping' of scrutiny arrangements creates a mis-match in that a regional System space does not correspond to any partner form of regional Lifeworld space. Admittedly, new arrangements such as Regional Ministers and whatever form regional select and grand committees may take do represent attempts to ensure regional accountability at the regional level, rather than regional accountability from the local level via a Leaders' Forum, Local Authorities and potentially MAAs for example[88]. But Regional Ministers are not elected to their regional posts and so regional democratic legitimacy and accountability will be supplied through local constituencies and national government. The proposed new scrutiny arrangements therefore pose serious questions as to the possibilities for the production of a more Lifeworld orientated regional space.

The Sub-National Review's combination of the economic and spatial strategies into one Regional Strategy represents a major recalibration in favour of a more System as opposed to Lifeworld orientated regional space primarily because RDAs have been the organisations charged with its production. This essentially means that One NorthEast has been given the responsibility of producing the North East of England's most important and

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[87] Ibid, (2008:7).
[88] The 2006 Local Government White Paper Strong and Prosperous Communities gave Local Authorities (LAs) and potentially groups of LAs working through Multi Area Agreements (MAAs) the power to scrutinize regional bodies.

influential regional document (admittedly some would argue they already did so through the RES). Ironically this does remove the contradiction of the Assembly, a body designed to act as a representative and participatory 'voice for the region', producing the spatial strategy – a statutory and legally binding planning document which relied heavily on the guidance of central government departments for justifying its interventions.

The argument that combining the economic and spatial strategies will remove duplication and simplify regional policy is a persuasive one. Indeed in terms of pure efficiency it is very convincing. However, the SNR in focusing on reducing 'regional clutter' has misunderstood the dynamics of the production of regional space[89]. Previously the production of separate regional strategies necessitated dialogue and interaction between the Assembly and One NorthEast simply because the strategies were required to be in general conformity with one another. This 'enforced communication' ensured that interaction, even if it was distorted, occurred between a range of regional discourses and narratives. The abolition of regional assemblies and the production of a single Regional Strategies by RDAs has removed this diversity and essentially reduced the challenge to the hegemonic economically focused regional discourse.

Furthermore the core regional development process to be used in producing the single Regional Strategy differs only slightly from the procedure already used to for the regional economic strategies. A 'planning advisory group' is included which would have been covered under consultation with the Assembly (being the Regional Planning Body) and the only other noticeable addition is that of the ANEC Leaders' Forum. Whilst the membership of this body is still unclear it is extremely unlikely that it will fulfil the democratic and representative potential that the Assembly aimed to, though never, achieved. Nevertheless, the joint response of Assembly, One NorthEast and ANEC is quick to claim that, "the Forum will be convened as part of, and accountable to the wider local government community through, ANEC. This will ensure a 'golden thread' of accountability to the wider Association as local government's representative body and, importantly,

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[89] The joint ONE, NEA and ANEC proposal for the regional strategy process is attached as appendix 9.

ensure that city/sub-regional perspectives are at the heart of the decision making process[90]" (2008:9).

This 'golden thread of accountability' is an intriguing claim in promoting the role of the Leaders' Forum and ANEC, especially as the stress appears to be placed on representing 'city/sub-regional perspectives' as opposed to the Assembly's diverse though unrecognised range of members and their interest groups. The prospects of this 'golden thread' increasing the 'democraticness' of regional space and producing a more balanced regional discourse therefore appear slim (Marshall, 2008). As Newman states,

> "The regional governance changes reveal strong centralization even though this is being done in the name of greater accountability... There is theoretically greater scrutiny of RDAs but this is meant to be led by leaders of councils on top of their day job running the council and on top of the drivers for greater collaboration through MAA (13 sub-regional areas have been given the go ahead to negotiate MAAs by June 2008) and shared services" (2008:116).

Within the new regional arrangements the potential for a less distorted communication leading to a more representative and participatory form of regional space is seemingly significantly reduced. However, there are avenues for resistance for actors and organisations operating within and outside the new regional infrastructure.

ii) The potential for organisations and new actors in the new institutional framework

The inclusion of ANEC as the body to convene the Regional Leaders' Forum for the North East, which will apparently ensure accountability to the wider local government community, opens up the interesting potential for other regional organisations to fill and possibly succeed in the role once assumed by the Assembly. In theory ANEC has the experience to learn from where the

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[90] Copy available at: http://www.northeastassembly.gov.uk/document.asp?id=14 (accessed 02/08/2008) or http://www.onenortheast.co.uk/lib/liDownload/13186/SNRRegionalResponse.20June08.pdf?CFID=371498&CFTOKEN=16134443 (accessed 02/08/2008)

Assembly failed in that many of its staff were employed when the Assembly and ANEC were administratively joined, and many ANEC members have also been Assembly members in the past. Given the failings of the Assembly to assert its regional discourse and overcome communicative distortions this, however, may not be beneficial experience to have. Additionally, legislative support for any expansion of ANEC appears to be limited to its role in convening the Leaders' Forum. Also Local Authorities have been given greater powers, especially in terms of scrutiny, but it seems unrealistic that they will demand a greater role for ANEC or voluntarily form any other regional grouping.

Nevertheless, indications suggest that a more varied regional discourse is not entirely unachievable. Tarrow observes that even when organisations and social movements disintegrate "they leave behind them incremental expansions in participation, changes in popular culture and residual movement networks" (1994:190). It could just be that the short and troubled history of the North East Assembly may have left enough of an imprint in regional space for it to be filled by a more popular form of space. In terms of residual, dominant and emerging discourses on space, the North East Assembly may therefore represent a residual weak discourse, which may provide an avenue for a more Lifeworld-orientated emerging discourse (Paasi, 2008; Williams, 1977).

An analysis of the press release of 20th June 2008 accompanying the joint submission of the Assembly, One NorthEast and ANEC to the government consultation on taking forward the SNR is particularly revealing of the potential space for a more varied discourse and the role the Assembly has played in constructing it. The release entitled *"Positive opportunity for the North East to shape and determine its economic future*[91]*"* includes three quotes from representatives of the three partner organisations which read as follows:

> 'Margaret Fay, One NorthEast Chairman, "There are real opportunities for this clearer way of working to achieve even greater success but equally, we must ensure we do not lose the

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[91] Accessed at http://www.onenortheast.co.uk/page/news/article.cfm?articleId=3170 on 02/08/2008.

interest and engagement of the business sector - as the key driver of economic growth -and of other partners such as universities in the new 'SNR landscape' at such a critical time for the economy".

Cllr Alex Watson OBE, Chair of the North East Assembly, added: "The new arrangements should build on the successful partnership working already established in the region to include representative from all sectors of the community. By working together we can deliver sustainable and long term improvements to the quality of life for people living in North East England".

Cllr Mick Henry, Chair of the Association of North East Councils, said: "The Government's Sub National Review offers opportunities for new ways of working at all spatial levels, aimed at improving economic, social and environmental well-being, placing local authorities and their leadership role right at the heart of decision-making on issues which matter to citizens and communities'".

Not surprisingly One NorthEast stress the importance of the economy and engaging the business sector which is clearly the dominant discourse as it is echoed in the title's reference to shaping the region's 'economic future'. The Assembly's comments then open the discussion to include the need to work on participation through 'partnership working', and representation 'from all sectors of the community' in improving the 'quality of life for people living' in the region. Crucially the ANEC comments take the middle ground by focusing on 'economic, social and environmental well-being' but the use of terms such as 'well-being' and 'citizens and communities' indicates a potentially more diverse discourse than has previously been observed in regional correspondence.

Unfortunately, even if ANEC were to pursue a more Lifeworld-orientated regional discourse, the 'post-SNR landscape' does not afford the regional institutional space for the major involvement of any organisation other than the RDAs. As such organisations offering more varied regional discourses, potentially such as ANEC, will only have minimal input meaning the discourse of RDAs will be permitted to dominate the production of regional space relatively unchallenged.

iii) An independent Lifeworld?

The new SNR landscape may be consolidating a regional economically focused discourse but this does not necessarily mean that there are not opportunities for a regional Lifeworld to develop and find a voice in creating alternative regional and sub-regional[92] spatial discourses and narratives. The North East Assembly was essentially an administratively created 'invited space' which endured a struggle for legitimacy as it had very little popular support – partly the result of a lack of effective engagement and representation of the Lifeworld and additionally, perhaps, because only a very emergent regional Lifeworld existed (Cornwall, 2004). Similarly any other organisations which may benefit from the SNR, such as ANEC, are likely to suffer from being 'invited' and "artificial' as opposed to a 'popular spaces'.

The greatest potential for alternative regional discourses to be formed therefore may be in the construction of spaces separate and independent from the dominant regional discourse and the organisations that produce it. As Taylor states:

> "Communities do not have to enter new governance spaces... There are choices between having voice within the new invited spaces, or building countervailing power, creating independent 'popular' spaces and exiting the formal democratic system altogether... Indeed, citizens need their own popular spaces to develop their own independent narratives and voices, whether or not they decide to enter invited spaces" (2007:311).

There are no clear rules delineating how citizens might go about creating their own 'popular' spaces, and it is partly this unknown process that not only gives the Lifeworld variety, but also makes it the source of attention for colonisation by the System.

In developing alternative emergent narratives and discourses it would seem necessary that such processes occur independently and 'out of sight' of the colonising influence of the dominant System orientated regional discourse (Paasi, 2008; Cresswell, 1996). As Cornwall states, "citizens also

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[92] Here 'sub-regional' is taken to refer to any scale below that of the region.

need their own spaces in which they can develop alternative discourses and approaches, some of which might best remain at some distance from arenas which bring publics and their representatives together with officials" (2004:6). Although it is unclear as to how such bottom-up 'popular spaces' may come into being and produce alternative spatial narratives and discourses, it would appear that such an independent Lifeworld may well possess the greatest potential to really increase the 'democraticness' of regional space (Cornwall, 2004; Marshall, 2008).

b) What next for English regional government and the 'space' of the North East of England?

It has been theorised that there is still potential for alternative discourses and productions of space to emerge of, and in, the North East of England. However, the previous regional government arrangements were marred by serious communicative inequalities which led to the production of a hegemonic discourse focused chiefly upon economic and to a lesser extent good governance criteria (Rodriguez-Pose and Sandall, 2008). The weaknesses of the previous infrastructure were acknowledged by the SNR, which stated that, the "current regional governance has become somewhat cluttered, with an unduly complex regional strategy framework and a structure lacking in clarity of purpose, with the consequent risk of duplication and inefficiency" (Warburton, 2008:198). This has led some authors to suggest that the post-SNR landscape will ensure greater accountability as "agencies will be working within a much more political context, under more robust scrutiny and governance arrangements" (Warburton, 2008:199). However, such an assertion that the SNR will provide the 'spatio-institutional fix' required to overcome the communicative distortions and power imbalances experienced in regional government would seem somewhat misplaced and, given the findings of this research, even a little naïve (Harvey, 2003).

A contrasting view, and one which this research supports, is that the government's decentralization policy of 'constrained discretion' has in fact led

to the creation of a post-SNR landscape which merely reasserts and further consolidates the dominant economic efficiency discourse whilst making allusions to good governance (McVittie and Swales, 2007). The role of regional development agencies in facilitating this 'recentralisation' is highlighted by Haughton and Naylor, who state:

> "It is certainly a concern that in practice central government has continued to provide more powers and resources to Regional Development Agencies (RDAs), but with clear expectations that they use these to address government priorities, as expressed in Public Service Agreements. The result is that far from being sources of innovative policy ideas, RDAs are little more than agents of government working in the same prescriptive and restrictive style when it comes to funding local economic development" (2008:168).

This research has already stressed the colonising influence of One NorthEast's regional narratives and discourse to the point that it represents the dominant production of regional space. What this extract suggests is that regional development agencies are, even further, becoming the instruments of central government, as possibilities for regional variation in policy making are reduced and devolved decision making becomes less of a priority.

Marshall goes further in his analysis of what the SNR represents:

> "The extraordinariness of this government decision therefore needs emphasis. A body set up to be subservient to 'regional society', in the shape of a regional chamber (in the Milan original schema), is instead to be the dominant figure in the regional landscape, not just for economic issues but across the board. Of course how the new regional architecture is actually set up will be critical, and I come back to this later. But a clearer step towards 'de-democratisation' or 'post-democracy', as increasingly prevalent features of the neoliberal state, would be hard to imagine" (2008:101).

The demise of regional assemblies, which as Marshall outlines above were initially intended to represent the 'regional society' to which RDAs would be subservient, therefore represents a loss of democracy in regional space, in what is termed a step toward 'de-democratisation' or 'post-democracy'. Certainly the disappearance of the North East Assembly, combined with the lack of any replacement or substitute organisation that could potentially

represent a regional Lifeworld, would seem to indicate the further colonisation of regional space by the dominant System discourse of economic efficiency and public administration.

The trend of strengthening the System as the dominant producer of regional space has worrying implications for the future development of any kind of comparable regional Lifeworld. As Haughton and Allmendinger state, "institutional survival increasingly requires attention to building alliances that can successfully compete for new economic opportunities, government funding and the right to run politically in-favour governance structures" (2008:138). The SNR by centralizing regional power within RDAs and by then further making them the agents of central government has essentially 'closed the door' for any kind of regional representative bodies, at least in the short term and in relation to ones which are government funded.

This new 'spatio-institutional fix' of the SNR has therefore created a new governance landscape which, although uncertain, does provide opportunities for its future to be theorised. Combining this study's findings with academic research three possible conjectures will be investigated. The first will speculate on the further consolidation of the hegemonic discourse; the second will look at the possible role of meta-governance; and the third will examine the potential for change in terms of 'arenas of hope' (Coaffee and Healey, 2003).

1. Consolidating the hegemonic discourse?

The abolition of regional assemblies and the creation of a single Regional Strategy to be produced by regional development agencies points towards the consolidation of the economic and administrative discourse, as practised by One NorthEast in the North East of England, and a reduction in the variety of alternatives being voiced at the regional tier. As the following extended quote supports:

> "Two essential differences will very likely arise from the new regional governance system. The main one is of power. Any priorities that do not coincide with those of the new government of

the day will fail to find a place in the new strategizing and decision-making processes. Oppositional interests will have even less hand holds. Certainly the regional assembly system, and local authority-led regime of the 1990s were very imperfect machineries, but access was available to legitimate actors in most pressure groups and in elected local governments. Will such potentially influential access be available under new arrangements?

The second reason is that the changes embed new language. The language of the RDAs is that of business and the competitiveness agenda, of managerialism and the rhetoric of markets. The discourses of the assemblies have been significantly different, reflecting much more varied sources, environmental, social, public. It is certainly the case that central government discourse is strongly influenced by economistic phrasing, spreading through planning documents and practice, as in other spheres of public policy (education, health and so on). But up to the present the regional public policy assemblage has contained diverse formulas. The probability in the new system is that this mixed discourse and the thinking it carries and maintains will be reduced in complexity and richness" (Marshall, 2008:102).

Marshall's view is thus that the SNR, in abolishing regional assemblies, will also eliminate the more diverse discourses that they represented, and had the potential to represent, leading to a more homogenous and simultaneously more 'fixed' hegemonic production of regional space.

In contrast to Marshall, however, this research would suggest that the colonising effects of unequal power relations between One NorthEast and the North East Assembly had already undermined the potential for more participatory and representative forms of governance, and thereby reduced the 'richness' of the regional discourse. Therefore, this research challenges the view that 'access was [truly] available to legitimate actors' and that the discourses of the assemblies had been 'significantly different' even prior to the SNR (Marshall, 2008). Importantly, this imbalance was the result of a combination of unequal power relations and varying discourses borne out in the struggle for legitimacy in the production of regional space. In terms of Marshall's (2008) observations on power and discourse, it is critical to see the two as inherently intertwined in the North East of England, as their relationship is critical to the nature of regionally produced space.

This research would hence suggest that the changes brought about by the SNR, although significant, should more appropriately be seen as an

extension of processes that were already in operation prior to the announcement of regional re-organisation in July 2007. Nevertheless, Marshall's assertions that there will be less 'hand holds' for resistance and a reduction in the 'complexity and richness' of the regional discourse are still well informed predictions. There can be little doubt that the SNR has further consolidated a hegemonic discourse, which is producing the region as a System space of economic planning and public administration, whilst hampering the participation of any emergent forms of a regional Lifeworld. In Foucauldian terms the SNR can thus be seen as a 'technology of government' used as an instrument to achieve a 'state of domination' (Dean, 2007:9).

2. A role for meta-governance?

The consolidation of power at the regional tier within regional development agencies presents real difficulties in developing any form of regional Lifeworld that may increase the 'democraticness' of regional government (Marshall, 2008). Indeed, given this strengthening of the production of an economic top-down controlled regional space, any attempts at introducing greater representation or participation to regional government is likely to be liable to colonisation, as occurred with the North East Assembly. This can similarly be seen with the local level 'community discourse' of recent years, as Fuller and Geddes observe:

> "There are often considerable differences between what "communities" would like for their areas, and what public sector partners see as their priorities. Even where priorities and targets are similar, it is often the case that public sector bodies do not wish to relinquish control to local communities. Public sector bodies have the experience, knowledge and resources to be able to create the "rules of the game" for partnership working, thereby reducing the scope for local communities to act upon their aims. This is often compounded by complex institutional and organisational professional cultures, routines and "enclaves" of professional knowledge that act as "gatekeepers" and barriers preventing "local people" from fully exercising their power in local partnerships" (2008:274).

The presence of unequal power relations, further accentuated by the SNR, creating enclaves of 'expert cultures' and 'gatekeepers' would suggest that there is little potential for a more Lifeworld orientated reinterpretation of regional space (Habermas, 1984, 1987).

This raises the opportunity for the intervention of a form of 'meta-governance' to reset or change the 'rules of the game', so as to redress the balance between System and Lifeworld productions of regional space (Jessop, 2003). Jessop specifically refers to meta-governance as involving the management of "the complexity, plurality, and tangled hierarchies found in the prevailing modes of co-ordination" (2003:6) which includes the practical need "to establish ground rules, ensure compatibility and coherence, facilitate dialogue, balance power differentials, act as a court of appeal and assume responsibility in the event of governance failure" (Taylor, 2007:313).

Within the complex governance arrangements that exist in the English regions, and as observed in the North East of England, the intervention of 'meta-governance' is likely to be required in order to prevent and counter the negative consequences of communicative distortions and power imbalances. However, such a requirement presents a number of dilemmas. The first and most significant of these is that, in England, central government can be seen as the body most closely associated with playing a meta-governance role and it is at the forefront of promoting a System view of regional space. Indeed, the SNR can be seen as an act of meta-governance or specifically 'meta-organisation'[93], which has restructured and 'recentralised' regional governance (Jessop, 2003; Taylor, 2007).

A second dilemma lies in *what* action a system of 'meta-governance' should take. Central government can introduce legislation, such as the 1998 Regional Development Agencies Act, which created the agencies and regional chambers. However, this research has observed how the North East Assembly has been undermined by weaknesses in the primary legislation which have been compounded by a subsequent 'soft governance' approach

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[93] Jessop states that, 'meta-organisation' "involves the reflexive redesign of organizations... and the management of organizational ecologies" (2003:6) which he describes as "the organization of the conditions of organizational evolution where many organizations co-exist, compete, cooperate, and co-evolve" (2003:6).

of providing unofficial and semi-official guidelines (Branden et al., 2006

A third difficulty is encountered in ensuring that the system of meta-governance does not act to further colonise potential Lifeworld influences. As Le Gales (2001) observes in the development of a governance network in Rennes, France, the "authority to structure networks provides it [the city council] with a powerful means of extending and reproducing its policy agenda into a new arena, and enhancing the possibilities of realizing its broader collective project" (Klijn and Skelcher, 2007:599). Le Gales further identifies a 'super network' of 'transversal actors' that cut through and appear in many horizontal networks (2001:171). Such an example is particularly pertinent to the North East of England, which has been described as being governed by a small elite of 'usual suspects' (Shaw et al., 2006). What this reveals is the inherent risk that systems of meta-governance may integrate horizontal Lifeworld networks into vertical structures of regulation and thereby deny them their true Lifeworld potential.

As should be clear the crucial linking problematic of meta-governance is the inescapability from operations of power. With only central government possessing the capacity to act in a meta-governance role it is unlikely that such a System/Lifeworld reconfiguration will be forthcoming in the near future. Indeed, action taken thus far in the form of the SNR, reveals a meta-governance counter-tendency towards recentralization of political power and the consolidation of a hegemonic System-orientated spatial discourse.

3. Arenas of hope?

In light of the unlikely intervention of any system of meta-governance to redress the balance of System and Lifeworld in regional space other avenues necessitate exploration. Greater and clearer participation and representation do not necessarily ensure a better society but, devoid of major communicative distortions, it is the firm belief of this research that they can lay the foundations for a fairer one predicated on a system of governing that effectively balances its economic, social and administrative duties. This leaves open the possibility for 'arenas of hope' (Coaffee and Healey,

2003:1995), enriching heterotopias, 'popular spaces' or 'governing-beyond-the-state' (Hetherington, 1997; Cornwall, 2004; Swyngedouw, 2005; Rhodes, 1997). As Taylor argues, "although the new governance spaces that have emerged over recent years [research done in UK] are suffused with state power, there are still opportunities for communities to become 'active subjects' within them and thus to shape and influence the exercise of government" (2007:311). The idea of governing-beyond-the-state, therefore, "is a fluid and dynamic process in which there is a possibility both of power becoming more transparent (and hence more accountable) and of new circuits of power opening up" (Taylor, 2007:311).

Hence, although the SNR may have consolidated a regional economic and administrative discourse it has not removed the potential for the development for more 'popular spaces' operating at arm's length from the state. Indeed, Osborne and Gaebler (1992) "include the empowerment of communities into their 'ten commandments' for 'reinventing government' (Beaumont and Loopmans, 2008:97). Somewhat ironically, it is perhaps possible that the disappearance of regional assemblies may provide an 'arena of hope' in which local communities may empower themselves. In the North East of England, without the Assembly representing the Lifeworld and acting as intermediary with the System space of One NorthEast and central government, more locally and possibly regionally rooted groups may be afforded the space and distance to develop more 'popular' Lifeworld orientated spatial discourses away from the colonising effects of the hegemonic System discourse. Indeed, there is emerging evidence that such 'popular spaces' are having an effect on System discourses through, for example, various cultural initiatives such as Culture NorthEast, the Angel of the North and the Sage Gateshead whose stated aim is the 'long term enrichment of the musical life of the North of England'[94].

The presence of, at best, an embryonic form of regional Lifeworld and the current System dominance of the production of regional space implies that such 'popular spaces' or 'arenas of hope' are most likely to develop at a more local level at which experiences can be more obviously linked to

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[94] The Sage Gateshead was taken from its website which can be accessed at: http://www.thesagegateshead.org/about/index.aspx [Accessed 1/12/2008].

everyday (lived and social) space. However, crucially such alternative spatial discourses do also have the potential to eventually 'jump scales', challenge, and potentially modify or replace, more dominant discourses and productions of regional space (Swyngedouw, 2005). It is possible that the demise of the North East Assembly may even afford an 'incremental expansion' or democratic shadow in regional space for future 'popular spaces' to appropriate (Tarrow, 1994).

At present much is made of the potential of these 'popular spaces' and they are widely seen as phenomena that cannot be artificially created, which would inevitably create 'invited spaces' (Cornwall, 2004). In terms of capacity building they are therefore perceived to have an almost organic and autopoietic quality to their development, which simultaneously makes it difficult for them to be copied and to be colonised by more dominant discourses on space.

With regard to the production of space and the potential for resisting dominant discourses this research would suggest that the greatest possibilities lie with the actions of the 'semi-autonomous' actor or individual. In light of this research's focus on a predominantly administrative and 'invited' regional space it is difficult to comment further on what this might entail but some basic speculations are possible.

In contrast to Foucault's conceptualisation of the 'subject', in which the individual has no active choice over their subject positions, this research contends that individuals do possess the ability to make active and purposeful choices even if that process is structured or steered according to particular discourses (Giddens, 1984). Thus, individuals can be seen as 'semi-autonomous actors' who are capable of active resistance via the production of discourses, narratives and space. Therefore, the individual may partake in many spatial practices and participate in a lived social space, which is influenced by dominant conceptions or System productions of space, but there always exists possibilities for certain 'moments' of resistance in everyday life that allow those dominant forms of space to be challenged (Lefebvre, 1991; Morgan, 2007). These 'moments' need not be revolutionary 'moments of madness', "when human beings living in society believe that 'all is possible'" (Zolberg, 1972:183; Katznelson, 2003). Instead they can (and

perhaps should) be everyday revelations of how society and life can be made better.

Occasionally these 'moments' may be illusions (i.e. the North East Assembly, commodification practices such as retail therapy) which are real to the extent that they feel real, but offer little true potential for resistance and change. Nevertheless, 'mental moments' of resistance may be realised through participation in 'popular spaces' most likely structured around something which is identifiable in lived social space, such as a specific issue or place. On this point Morgan's (2007) observations concerning the interplay of territorial and relational or *bounded* and *porous* space reveal interesting possibilities for the emergence of such 'popular spaces'. As Morgan states,

> "one needs to recognize that political space is bounded *and* porous: *bounded* because politicians are held to account through the territorially defined ballot box, a prosaic but important reason why one should not be dismissive of territorial politics; *porous* because people have multiple identities and they are becoming ever more mobile, spawning communities of relational connectivity that transcend territorial boundaries" (2007:1248)

Within both new and old governance and community spaces much has been made of the need for 'cosmopolitan democracy' or 'cosmopolitanism' (Held, 1995; Beck, 2006; Beck and Willms, 2004). Such propositions are laudable and there is even some evidence that suggests the emergence of a new type of 'politically participative citizen' (Topf, 1993). As Topf states,

> "it would appear that in post-industrial societies there may be emerging a type of politically participative citizen who holds a world view within which political participation is regarded as a political obligation and a moral good... Doubtless to the chagrin of politicians for whom the authoritativeness of expertise is a convenient veil for the retreat from ultimate values, the indications are that the new active citizens may make a bid to take the fate of our times into their own hands" (1993:115).

However, whilst an increase in 'cosmopolitanism' is undoubtedly a good thing in itself, there is a real risk that such developments are or may become exclusive (in terms of geography, class or access to education for example) (Morgan, 2007). In addition, such theorisations also share an idealism, which

Habermas's 'communicative action' also possesses, that somewhat downplays the occasionally Machiavellian aspects of human nature. In other words, expecting individuals to respect difference may only go so far. An alternative therefore is to base resistance and change upon 'spaces' rather than sets of values, as those spaces may act as the basis for a stronger set of shared community values. Furthermore those spaces might be territorial or relational, bounded or porous (Morgan, 2007). This is also not a proposal for a new 'localism' because such 'communities' or 'arenas of hope' may operate at a range of scales – what is more important in their functioning is instead that such scales (the national, regional and local for example) complement each other in reasserting more democratic forms of space. Within these possibilities the fact remains that the individual mind is the ultimate locus that allows the reception and creation of complex and multiple identities and meanings and, in so doing, also provides the greatest potential for the reinterpretation and production of alternative discourses of, on and in space.

Postscript – the current political and economic climate

Jonas and Ward state that in today's society "the very essence of politics (and participation) may be changing, being redefined and rescaled as people struggle to meet the heady demands of daily urban life" (2007: 174). Whilst this undoubtedly has some truth there are some changes in today's 'risk society' that may affect the nature of regional government (Beck, 1999, 2006). The first is the possibility of political change. There is much current speculation as to whether New Labour will retain its place in government at the next national general election. Interestingly, a change in the ruling political party is unlikely to have the impact it would have done in the early 2000s. The Conservative Party had previously promised to abolish regional assemblies and David Cameron at one point did indicate that a referendum would be held on the future of regional development agencies. However, the Conservative Party has now decided to continue supporting regional

development agencies if elected, and the SNR has already announced the demise of regional assemblies.

The second area of change is economic, which is currently receiving much attention under the label of a 'global economic downturn'. Again this is likely to only consolidate the production of a System orientated regional economic space. Whilst budgets for regional organisations may be reduced, the need for greater economic efficiency in harder economic times will most likely increase meta-governance support for the dominant System discourse and minimize the attention that is given to alternative spatial discourses.

Chapter 9
Conclusions and openings

1. The programme of this research

The pragmatic approach of this research has utilised the theories of Habermas's (1984, 1987) 'communicative action' and Lefebvre's (1991) 'production of space' to explore how a regional space is constituted and constructed by two regional institutions in the North East of England. Whilst the twinning of the above academics' theories delineated the focus of this research, a number of other supportive theories and concepts were employed to assist analysis. Some of these included: Kooiman's (2003) work on 'interactive governance'; Foucault's conceptualization of power and governmentality; and complexity theory and complex adaptive systems (Foucault, 1991; Duit and Galaz, 2008). A wide range of literature has also been touched upon throughout the course of this study such as the changing nature of the nation-state and the emergence of governance; the global and local effects of globalisation; discourse and narratives; regional governance and devolution; leadership; and evidence-based policy-making to name but a few.

The pitch of this research has deliberately been broad. It was certainly considered that any attempts to limit the number of theoretical approaches in looking at regional space may have led to a reductionism that distorted the investigation through a lack of appreciation for the complexity of the research setting. Nonetheless, whilst the breadth of this study is one of its strengths,

structure was supplied through a number of key problematics, or research questions, which sought to address three main aims. First, was a general desire to use the theories of the production of space and communicative action as tools, or heuristic devices, by which to gain a better and more nuanced understanding of the interactions of[95] organisations of regional governance in the North East of England. The North East Assembly and Regional Development Agency One NorthEast were thus selected as the lenses through which these interactions would be explored.

Second, was an interest in engaging with the theories of Lefebvre and Habermas and specifically testing their practical application. All too often concepts and theories can work perfectly on paper but fail dramatically when applied to real world settings. This research therefore aimed to combine Lefebvre's and Habermas's perspectives into an integrated theoretical framework and test its practical usefulness in a gaining greater understanding of the functioning of regional governance.

Third, both Habermas and Lefebvre sought in their own ways to improve society through the development of their theories – for Habermas through Lifeworld decolonisation and for Lefebvre by embracing the revolutionary potential of spaces of representation and the 'moment' (Ashenden and Owen, 1999; Lefebvre, 2004). In similar fashion this research hoped to shed some light on the potential for more democratic, accountable and legitimate forms of action and decision-making, specifically within the North East of England, and possibly beyond.

With the North East Assembly, One NorthEast and their context within the regional space of the North East of England acting as the general 'case', the research focused on three particular case studies. These were: (i) the draft Regional Economic Strategy and draft Regional Spatial Strategy produced by One NorthEast and the North East Assembly respectively; (ii) the Assembly scrutiny investigation into *Regional Leadership*; and (iii) the Assembly scrutiny investigation into *Evidence and Regional Policy*. The first

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[95] A deliberate reference is made to 'interactions of' rather than 'interactions between' in an attempt to illustrate that, although One NorthEast and the North East Assembly had many interactions between each other, they also operated within a much wider regional, national and international sphere, as well a range of other networks, and as such operated within a much more complex 'field of interactions'.

of these case studies on the regional strategies predominantly explored the various (spatial) discourses and narratives presented by the Assembly and the RDA, their internal contradictions, and similarities and differences. The subsequent two case studies utilised the North East Assembly's statutory scrutiny function to build upon the initial findings and examine the interactions of the two organisations.

These case studies were approached from the position of an 'insider-researcher' or 'reflective practitioner' during a three year part-time work placement at the North East Assembly from September 2004 to September 2007 (Schön, 1991; Robson, 2002). A wide range of research methods and information gathering techniques were used, for both professional and academic purposes, such as content and discourse analysis, surveys, staff and scrutiny committee meetings, official and semi-official publications, newspaper cuttings, research diaries, e-mail correspondence and various forms of interviewing. These were used to explore the 'storylines' surrounding the Assembly's and One NorthEast's respective claims to the legitimacy of their productions of regional space.

2. Main findings

The findings of this research have already been explored in some depth in the discussion and analysis chapter, but it is worthwhile here highlighting five recurring themes that are particularly pertinent to the aims of this research.

1. Distorted communication

Against the ideal of communicative rationality the interactions between the North East Assembly and One NorthEast were revealed as systematically distorted. Numerous examples identified distortions in terms of access (universal moral respect), reciprocity and coercion, at both intentional and

structural levels (Marshall, 2008; Bohman, 1996). What this helped to illustrate was the presence of entrenched power imbalances or 'asymmetrics', which could be seen to act as a positive feedback mechanism in sustaining and evening accentuating the degree of distorted communication.

Distorted interactions highlighted the operations of power at a number of scales ranging from specific episodes, governance processes and governance cultures (Coaffee and Healey, 2003). Critically these relations were affected by factors related to the functioning of the organisational relationship between the NEA and ONE and wider political and legislative issues. For example, power imbalances in specific episodes and governance processes were identified in the working relationships between staff and members of the two organisations, and occurred in the context of broader governance processes and cultures which in many cases either implicitly supported or facilitated such imbalances. Communication was thus not only distorted through the relationship between the NEA and ONE but also through the complex interactions of a constellation of governance actors (Habermas, 2001). This research has found that this led to what might be termed a form of 'communicative meta-governmentality' in the region as interaction was consciously and unconsciously regulated according to dominant national and economic agendas.

These wider 'power asymmetrics' in the governance culture were reflected in the spatial narratives and regional discourse put forward by the NEA and ONE, which produced the region as an 'artificial' System orientated economic and administrative space (Bohman, 1996).

2. Legitimating regional space

The research into the draft regional strategies revealed a plethora of spatial discourses and narratives being promoted by the North East Assembly and One NorthEast. Within the strategies it was observed that the Assembly presented a slightly more Lifeworld orientated view through its reference to social, environmental and cultural agendas. However, importantly this was

only identified as a marginally less System orientated approach as it was noted how both regional strategies presented a markedly similar spatial discourse.

The trend was observed throughout the research that, even though the Assembly occasionally pursued a Lifeworld agenda, their spatial narratives were relatively homogenous reflecting ONE's dominance of the regional policy landscape but also the presence of an identifiable regional discourse or 'mentality'. Crucially those discourses and narratives could be seen to construct the North East of England as an administrative or System space of 'officialdom'.

Musson et al. state that, "the rationale behind the formation of assemblies was to exercise some form of democratic accountability over RDAs and to foster the creation of a regional civic culture by enabling regional partners to work together more effectively" (2005:1402). In light of such rationale, the legitimacy or 'jurisdictional integrity' of the Assembly was seen to be undermined by the similarity of its spatial narratives to those of ONE and central government and by the fact that the region's administrative space was being produced as a space of 'officialdom' detached from any form of 'regional civic culture' or Lifeworld (Skelcher, 2005; Musson et al., 2005). Hence, the Assembly failed to create opportunities to gain regional credibility by failing to establish its role as a regional accountability mechanism. Essentially, therefore the role of the North East Assembly was unclear, as it did not fulfil its aim of being the 'voice for the region' and, due to a lack of popular support, it faced a struggle to produce a legitimate claim to regional space.

3. Illusionary spaces of participation and representation

The North East Assembly struggled to establish itself as a legitimate actor in the North East of England regional space. This failure was grounded in the fact that it failed to produce and communicate a legitimate claim to, or in fact a legitimate type of, regional space. This 'crisis of legitimacy' had many causes but two general points are worthwhile noting here. Firstly, the North

East Assembly itself failed to take the necessary action to produce and communicate a valid claim to, and vision of, regional space. Secondly, the role and relationship of the North East Assembly with other governance actors, at a variety of scales, and indeed with regional actors down to the level of the individual, meant that any productions of space by the Assembly would be weak and hence struggle to gain legitimacy over regional space. Of course these two factors are mutually re-enforcing and the research revealed that the Assembly often partook in 'self-regulation' in its interactions with One NorthEast and others. Therefore, from a govermentality perspective, the North East Assembly's failure to produce (social) space also represented a failure to produce power.

The North East Assembly, as a colonised apparatus of System space, became what Cornwall (2004) terms an 'invited space', as opposed to a 'popular space'. The haphazard and at best partially successful attempts to create and/or connect with any space(s) of 'regional civic culture' meant that the Assembly became perceived as a conceived representation of space – as a System invited space of participation and representation detached from popular support or spaces of representation and spatial practice. Thus, the North East Assembly was an 'invited space' creating, what this research terms, 'illusionary spaces of participation and representation' with 'translucent braids of accountability'[96] that led to the undermining presence of 'false legitimacy'. Importantly, however, illusions, such as a mirage for example, may have very real consequences and it is not the aim of this research to argue against the existence of the Assembly. Undoubtedly, the North East Assembly was created with the aim of acting as a chamber for regional participation and representation and to a limited degree this did occur. But the aims of the Assembly were also beyond that which were achieved and hence an 'illusion' surrounded its claims to regional space.

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[96] Here there is a deliberate attempt to avoid the term 'lines of accountability'. Instead, the term 'braids' is invoked particularly in relation to its use in natural geomorphology to describe the braiding of rivers in fluvial environments. The term is deemed appropriate as it implies not only multiple criss-crossing lines/streams of accountability but also the continually changing nature and courses of those lines/streams.

4. The North East Assembly: a failed governance experiment?

Through systematically distorted 'communicative pathologies', which were caused by, and further perpetuated, entrenched power imbalances, the North East Assembly failed to establish a legitimate claim to, and production of, regional space (Greenhalgh et al., 2006). In terms of complexity theory and the ideas of exploitation and exploration, as put forward by Duit and Galaz (2008), the North East Assembly can therefore be seen as an explorative experiment which ultimately (in terms of the SNR announcement) failed – it can be argued as a result of a lack of exploitative capacity fostered by the organisation's failure to gain a legitimate role in regional space. One NorthEast on the other hand, formed part of the apparatus of regional government experimentation, introduced by the New Labour government in 1999, but importantly possessed the administrative tools and resources that allowed it take on an exploitative role in and over regional space. Its claim to regional space was thus secured.

It is perhaps misplaced, however, to prejudge the forthcoming abolition of regional assemblies as a failure. Experiments can leave behind what Tarrow (1994) terms 'incremental expansions' or what this research might optimistically suggest are 'democratic shadows', which are not necessarily filled spaces but leave the impression or outline of what could exist in its place. As Lefebvre states, "the past leaves its traces; time has its own script" (1991:37). What is left behind is, therefore, not necessarily an 'institutional void' but a space which holds potential for more democratic forms of governance.

5. Arenas of hope

The findings of this research, regarding distorted communicative pathologies, negative power asymmetrics and struggles to attain legitimate productions of space, portray a somewhat sceptical view of the positive role of the North East Assembly and of the potential to increase 'democraticness' within the region and regional government in general (Greenhalgh et al., 2006;

Bohman, 1998; Marshall, 2008). However, as noted above, even failed governance 'experiments' can lead to 'incremental expansions' as long as experience is gained and lessons are learnt.

What the struggles of the North East Assembly, in its attempts to establish a legitimate claim to regional space, reveal is that, despite government claims at a bottom-up policy of regional devolution (regionalism), the current regional government set-up of regional development agencies and regional assemblies (and Government Offices) is more in keeping with a top-down policy of regionalisation (Jones and MacLeod, 2004). The North East Assembly represented an 'invited space' that failed to create or connect with a regional Lifeworld and as such its legitimacy and 'relational integrity' – which is gained from public support – were undermined (Skelcher, 2005).

It is thus clear that future attempts at engaging people, widening participation and increasing representation should follow a different path. This may entail more accurately mapping new institutions on to identifiable interest groups (which may be defined in many different senses such as geographical area, specific project, real and virtual networks, historical period, etc) or exerting greater efforts in building capacity and creating a Lifeworld around a specific issue or area. The wide range of literature on collaborative planning or building social capital in deprived areas illustrates that these approaches are being practised. However, this research would hint that such approaches would still be hindered by the dominant and colonising tendencies of the System and the space of 'officialdom', implying that such spaces would still essentially be 'invited' rather than 'popular'. Instead this investigation suggests that 'democraticness' may best be achieved when 'popular spaces' develop outside of the structures of System representations of space (Marshall, 2008). These spaces or 'arenas of hope' offer the greatest potential as spaces of resistance or 'alternate ordering' where genuinely different 'regimes of rationality' may be developed (Coaffee and Healey, 2003; Hetherington, 1997). This is not to suggest that such spaces will lead to any revolutionary overthrow of System productions of space, but their power as being truly 'popular' and 'lived' spaces may be enough to subtly alter the dominant space of society for the better.

3. Strengths and limitations

The complex nature of the research environment necessitated a well-planned methodology that simultaneously provided a focus for the investigation and ensured practical flexibility to deal with any problematic issues that arose. Nevertheless, the research process is an ever-evolving one and, in learning a lesson from complexity theory, although there are degrees of predictability, there is always the possibility for unexpected outcomes. Hence, what follows is a brief overview of the strengths and limitations, and challenges and solutions, that had to be considered in the research design and which were encountered during the process of gathering evidence.

Research strengths

Two of the investigation's greatest strengths were its in-built flexibility and pragmatic combination and use of a range of theories and concepts. Indeed, it was the latter of these strengths, that placed emphasis on achieving understanding rather than discovering explanatory causal mechanisms, which provided the potential for the research to react and adapt to developments in the research setting.

Jessop in approaching complexity, argues that to explain 'contingent necessities' "requires one to combine concepts, assumptions, and principles of analysis from different theoretical domains and to link them to a given, theoretically defined explanendum" (1999:3). This is an ethos which this study, in looking at the nature of the space of regional government in the North East of England, has embraced through its dynamic mix of theories and concepts incorporating elements of complexity theory, interactive governance and governmentality with the ideas of Lefebvre and Habermas. Such thinking was also practically applied through the use of a diverse range of methods during the three years of 'insider' research within the North East Assembly.

Whilst the research's theoretical 'cocktail' is considered to be one of its innovative highlights, it was realised from the outset that the ideas of the thinkers being used did not always necessarily align in a straightforward manner. Twedwr-Jones and Allmendinger (1998) observe, for example, how Habermas's modernist communicative rationality is often subject to poststructural and postmodern critiques particularly in relation to a lack of concern for a Foucauldian conception of power. The differences between theoretical approaches, therefore, presented a challenge but also an opportunity to gain greater theoretical insights, which has ultimately proven fruitful.

In conducting the research, the 'insider-researcher' role of being a policy officer at the North East Assembly was immensely useful. In practical terms the role provided privileged and in-depth access to source material and first-hand experience of the workings of regional government within the North East of England and beyond. Put simply there is little chance that the research would have acquired anywhere near the achieved depth of understanding without the work placement. In addition, being immersed into the research setting necessitated becoming a 'reflective practitioner' in order to identify and acknowledge subjectively held opinions and positions (Schön, 1991). This self-reflexiveness and self-reflection therefore allowed for the exploration of the 'situatedness' of the researcher's understanding (Jessop, 1999). The research position also provided an ideal structure for the research in the form of the three case studies on the draft regional strategies, regional leadership and evidence and regional policy. This chronologically suited the timeframe of the period of study and allowed for specific insights to be gained by focusing on particular aspects and operations of regional policy.

Research concerns

A number of concerns were raised during the planning stage of the research which were largely overcome through improvements to the research design. These included a concern regarding the subjective nature of the policy officer role at the North East Assembly, a tendency to focus on qualitative methods

at the expense of the quantitative, and an 'overcrowded' theoretical framework. These were tackled by adopting a 'reflexive' approach within the research setting and utilising a range of primary research methods supplemented by secondary quantitative data acquired through the policy officer position at the Assembly. Hence, although many primary research methods remained qualitative, the experience and understanding gained from the research placement came from a mix of qualitative and quantitative sources.

Emerging challenges, solutions and limitations

Despite every attempt to proactively manage potential problems it was inevitable that challenges would emerge. On a theoretical level, the framework employed was undoubtedly successful, but became limited instead by the nature of the research environment. For example, the investigation into the production and communication of space by One NorthEast and the North East Assembly essentially denied any direct engagement with, and hence the possibility of better understanding, the presence or nature of a regional Lifeworld – in other words with the people of the region directly. However, this is more a pointer for further research as it would have been beyond the scope and resources of this research to have conducted such an examination on top of its organisational focus. Nevertheless, in terms of looking at Habermas's concept of the Lifeworld and analysing the potential for 'popular spaces' it is a limitation that this research greatly would have liked to have approached.

On a more practical note, the research did turn up a number of ethical issues such as empathy for colleagues and professional allegiance. However, it is considered that, by ensuring individual anonymity and confidentiality of delicate material, these challenges were successfully resolved. What proved more problematic was the part-time role of the work placement, which involved spending three-days-a-week at the North East Assembly and two days studying. Whilst it was difficult to compartmentalize the split roles, what was more problematic was attempting to integrate into

the professional role on only a part-time basis. At times when it was essential to be learning about the interactions between the Assembly and One NorthEast by following through various communicative events and dialogues, the part-time position presented real problems and required the researcher to often play 'catch-up', which was less than ideal. Though not available to the researcher at the time, on reflection, a shorter full-time work placement, as opposed to a longer part-time one, would have been preferable.

The changing nature of the research environment was undoubtedly the greatest challenge. At the outset in September 2004 there was a distinct, and academically exciting, possibility that much of the research would have been based upon England's first directly elected regional government outside of London. However, the referendum 'no vote' necessitated against designing a research programme based on investigating any such new body. Throughout the research period a number of other events provided challenges. Amongst many these included the organisational split of the North East Assembly and the Association of North East Councils, job re-evaluations and internal restructuring, a review of the scrutiny process, high levels of staff turnover, various line management set-ups, an office move and none-but-least the announcement by the Sub-National Review that regional assemblies were to be abolished. This continual environment of change required a flexible research approach but even so it would be fair to say that they were testing times.

4. Directions for further research

For Lefebvre, "there are no 'conclusions' that are not also 'openings'" (Soja, 1996:9). Hence, as a result of applying the theories of the production of space and communicative action to the analysis of regional governance in the North East of England, a number of areas for further research and expression have emerged as being potentially rewarding.

1. Engagement with the Lifeworld

This research, out of a need to define a practical field of study, focused on the production and communication of space at the organisational level of a regional assembly and regional development agency. Of course this entailed analysing individual interactions but these were always as part of an individual's responsibilities as a member of one of the organisations. What the investigation lacked the time and resources to conduct was a systematic engagement with the regional Lifeworld or perhaps, more appropriately, Lifeworlds within the region. Insights were gained during the research through press articles, public consultations and to some extent through the representation and participation of Assembly members. However, these partial snapshots were not sufficient to inform accurate and reliable research that area.

Unfortunately due to the changing nature of the research environment, such as the referendum rejection of directly elected regional government and the Sub-National Review's announcement of the forthcoming abolition of regional assemblies, the revelations of this research have mainly revolved around what governance 'experiments' are unsuccessful in achieving a less distorted communication and increasing accountability, legitimacy, 'jurisdictional integrity' and 'democraticness' (Skelcher, 2005; Marshall, 2008). The findings have thus suggested that the greatest potential to produce a less System-colonised space lies in the emergence of 'popular' spaces in the Lifeworld. However, without a clearer picture of the regional Lifeworld – its coherency, even existence and fragmentations – it is difficult to theorise how such 'popular' spaces might come into being. A fuller engagement with Lifeworlds within the region, people's spatial practices and spaces of representation may thus prove useful in better understanding the potential for other forms of regional governance.

2. Individual interpretations and productions of space

Whilst this research has examined interactions ranging from the interpersonal, to the inter-organizational and inter-systemic, the focus, as highlighted above, has been the production and communication of space by the North East Assembly and One NorthEast (Jessop, 1999). To complement an engagement with the Lifeworld a challenging yet potentially rewarding area for further study would be the development of a better understanding of how the individual mind interprets, produces and reproduces space. This aim lay at the heart of Lefebvre's project to create a conceptual 'triple dialectic' that bridged the physical, mental and social fields and his theory of 'the production of space' has been a vital development in how we understand social space as being something that is socially produced. Nevertheless, how the individual mind balances these fields to (re)produce space is still a potentially fascinating, though possibly impossible, area for further study. Certainly, it would require a cross-disciplinary approach incorporating ideas from at least sociology, geography, linguistics and psychology.

Here complexity theory may provide a useful tool for analysis in considering the production of space as *"necessary* products of *contingent* interactions among different sets of causal mechanisms"* (emphasis in original) (Jessop, 1999:380) as interpreted by the individual mind. It is beyond the scope of this investigation to look into this further here but suffice to say that such further research, if successful, would be invaluable. Indeed, as Lefebvre acknowledged himself, "such little-understood aspects of consciousness would provide sufficient justification in themselves for research in this area" (1991:36).

3. Comparative and other specific case studies

The aim of this research was always to gain greater understanding of the specific case of the North East of England and, whilst some general comments were deemed appropriate especially in relation to the theoretical framework, it was recognised as naïve to attempt to apply the findings to

other cases. For this reason additional comparative studies or specific case studies would undoubtedly be useful to the particular research environments in which they are conducted. This research in the North East of England reveals that every case has its own context and 'story to tell'.

4. The emerging regional landscape

This research began in 2004 when the possibility remained that the North East of England might have had a directly elected regional government in the near future. The referendum result put an end to that speculation but the research still gained important insights into a regional governmental infrastructure in a state of flux. The announcement of the Sub-National Review to restructure regional governance again opens up new opportunities for academic and professional study into the new forms that are emerging in the aftermath of the SNR. New Labour's policy of regional devolution is still barely a decade old and the fact that it is continually evolving (or perhaps devolving or even de-evolving) is likely to provide fruitful opportunities for further study.

5. Expanding horizons through art

Perhaps surprisingly benefits need not only be accrued through the pursuit of further areas of study. Instead a re-interpretation and, importantly, an alternative presentation of findings to a wider, or at least different audience, may widen the impact of research and help overcome the sometimes detached 'ivory tower' representation of academia.

What has emerged from this research is an appreciation and desire to explore the multiple opportunities that exist to present findings in the form of art. Art has long been used as a tool by which to provide a social commentary and as such shares a strong link with academic study. Indeed, in science the Mandelbrot curves associated with chaos theory have been presented in artistic forms. There is nothing to stop an analysis of the

complexity of governance actors and their interactions being presented in similar forms. It may be quite easy to justify such ventures as non-essential but the potential to bring the academic commentary of social life to wider audiences through alternative means is not something that should be dismissed lightly. Lefebvre, for example, saw the greatest possibilities for resistance and change as lying in those representational spaces of images and symbols inhabited by artists and writers.

5. Where now for English regional policy?

It would be naïve to be overly critical of the government's decision to scrap regional assemblies as announced in the Sub-National Review. Indeed, this research finds that, in the North East of England at least, severely distorted communication and power imbalances denied the North East Assembly of any legitimate regional role. So what does this all mean for future policy?

In the medium to long term, regionalists may hope for a return to the political agenda of directly elected regional government. Certainly the change in general opinion towards devolution to Scotland and Wales, as measured by the negative to positive shift from the referenda of the 1979 to those conducted by New Labour in 1997, does offer an indication that such a future is still possible (Bradbury and Mitchell, 2005).

However, making a policy recommendation for directly elected regional government would rest on some key assumptions that this research has offered little evidence to justify. The first is that a regional space, and in this case the North East of England, can act as an appropriate field in which less distorted communication can occur[97]. The second is that the region is

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[97] It is not the aim of this research to necessarily argue for the ideal of communicative rationality, in part because it is acknowledged that it is an unachievable aim. Some have even argued that communicative rationality is not something that should be sought in principle (Twedwr-Jones and Allmendinger, 1998). Whilst this research acknowledges the worth of many forms of decision making, including communicative action, the point is made here that a less distorted communication is desirable because it is likely to represent more equal power relations between participating actors.

produced as a Lifeworld space which balances the administrative regional space of the System. The lack of evidence at this time to support these two assumptions, and indeed the findings of this research which clearly challenges the first, would suggest that at present regional space is not being produced as a 'popular' Lifeworld space. A more rooted regionalization or regionalism would therefore be required before directly elected regional government could be effective (Jones and MacLeod, 2004).

In the short term the Sub-National Review has announced that regional development agencies will take on responsibility for producing a single regional strategy, that will replace the economic and spatial strategies, and the Modernisation Select Committee has signalled that regional accountability will be increased through the establishment of regional select and grand committees. The SNR's proposals for Multi-Area Agreements (MAAs) also hint towards a focus on more sub-regional and potentially city-regional working, with regional organisations taking on a more co-ordinating role. Regional working is therefore likely to become more streamlined around the economic growth agenda with regional accountability being provided through locally (the Leaders' Forum) and nationally elected sources (regional committees and ministers) rather than through a regional equivalent.

In such unclear circumstances, with wide degrees of unpredictability, making policy recommendations becomes problematic. Instead, therefore, it is perhaps best to finish with a warning. New Labour's regional policy has been characterised by an emphasis on indigenous and focused growth as opposed to redistribution (Fothergill, 2005) but at least the regional framework administratively covers all of England. Whilst this regional scale will still remain, any future focus on sub-regions or city-regions runs the real risk of spatial favouritism whereby some areas may be omitted leading to greater inequalities between prosperity and deprivation. The North East of England has been described as a peripheral or problem region and it is important to ensure that such perceptions, true or otherwise, are not perpetuated by whatever new forms of governance come to emerge. In terms of the future, it is inviting to finish with Hazell's assertion that, England is "the gaping hole in the devolution settlement and the space where everything is still to play for" (2004: 263).

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Appendices

Appendix 1. A short history of UK regionalism

What New Labour's formalised policy of administrative regional devolution has revealed is that regional development agencies and regional assemblies (chambers) were not created and transplanted into an 'institutional void' (Musson et al., 2005; Pearce and Ayres, 2007). As Pearce and Ayres state:

> "some regions, including the North East and West Midlands, possessed a legacy of joint local authority working. By contrast, the East Midlands lacked a strong regional identity; while the East of England region was only established in 1994, combining the former East Anglia region with counties neighbouring Greater London. In the North West a tradition of local authority rivalry hampered efforts to secure greater regional cohesion, although agreement was eventually reached in 1992 to establish the North West Regional Association" (2007:701)

Yorkshire and the Humber in the early 1990s was also characterised by a lack of local government cooperation and regional co-ordination whilst "neither the South West nor the South East possessed a strong track record of intra-regional working" (Pearce and Ayres, 2007:701). Therefore up until the establishment of Government Offices in 1994 and the 1998 Regional Development Agencies Act it would have been correct to assert that, "the most striking feature of the English regions in terms of their role in British government is a complete absence of a coherent definition of their boundaries, their size or even the concept of the region" (Hogwood,1982:2).

In order to provide an historical overview leading up to current regional arrangements in England, this summary will be divided into three sections. Firstly, events prior to the establishment of Government Offices in 1994 will be discussed. Secondly, the period between 1994 and the establishment of regional development agencies and regional assemblies will be investigated before finally looking at more recent developments.

Regional Policy Prior to 1994

Regional policy in Britain can be traced back to its nascent origins in the 1920s. Widespread unrest and persistent unemployment in the wake of World War One, culminating in the 'insurrectionary threat' (Tomaney, 2006:5) of the General Strike of 1926, led to the proposal of a system of regional government based upon boundaries recommended by Whitehall's 'Emergency Committee' (Jones, M., 2001). In the North of England the Miners' Lockout of the same year accentuated the tensions and partly formed the motivation behind the establishment of the Northern Industrial Group. With the emergence of regional government predicated on the understanding that "regional uneven development had ceased to be simply an undesirable characteristic of capitalist development and had become a political problem for the state" (Hudson, 2005:584) this group of prominent capitalists in the North East "took an active role in seeking to construct this [regional] policy in

ways that served their own interests, relying on their political power to do so, and became key figures in the new regional institutions established to develop and implement it" (Hudson, 2005:584)[98].

During the inter-war period the North East became defined as a 'problem region' and since then has been a 'policy laboratory' "where successive regional policies were tested" (Tomaney, 2006:3). During the 1930s "the British state eventually responded to the crisis with modest experiments in regional policy involving the provision of new factory space and incentives for firms to locate in the region, while local industrial interests began to form regional organisations to represent their interests" (Tomaney, 2006:6). This policy of offering incentives and providing infrastructure was realised nationally through the Special Areas Acts of 1934 and 1937, which established publicly funded Trading Estates, the first being located at Team Valley in Gateshead (Tomaney, 2006). The regional boundaries of Whitehall's 'Emergency Committee' were then formalised after the 1938 Munich Crisis, with the appointment of Civil Defence Commissioners, who would provide leadership in the event of an enemy invasion (Jones, M., 2001).

The transition to a wartime economy in the 1930s brought much relief to the North East of England and its traditional industries. As Tomaney states, "it was the onset of the Second World War which proved the region's saviour as the demand for coal, ships and armaments increased and was sustained in the 1950s" (2006:6). As a means by which to ensure the survival of industries deemed vital to the national interest (i.e. defence), a wave of nationalisation of industry followed the end of the war – many of which "formed key sectors of the regional [North East] economy (coal mining, iron and steel and the railways)" (Hudson, 2005:584). The North East, therefore, became a "state managed region" (Hudson, 1989). Nationally, in the aftermath of the war "the civil defence regions became the 'standard regions' – deployed between 1958 and 1964 to manage economic planning in the face of recession, and also to coordinate urban overspill" (Jones, M., 2001:1191).

"During the era of state modernisation in the 1960s, attempts were made to regulate the economy through an integrated Department of Economic Affairs (DEA), the National Plan, and Regional Economic Boards and Councils[99]" (Jones, M., 2001:1191) as part of an interventionist approach to regional policy which was "more or less maintained by governments of both parties until the late 1970s" (Tomaney, 2006:16)[100]. Despite the emergence of these new institutions it is notable that decision making power still rested in "the hands of people largely responsible to their headquarters in Whitehall, rather than to the regional populace through democratic machinery" (Smith, 1965:5). In addition, Hudson, has identified the

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[98] Tomaney (2006) argues that the defeat of the General Strike and Miners' Lockout reshaped Labourism in the region away from such revolutionary actions as demonstrated by the orderlyJarrow Crusade in 1936.

[99] Hudson (2005) also adds New Town Development Corporations to this list of new institutional arrangements.

[100] Tomaney (2006) highlights how in1964 the Labour government set up Regional Economic Planning Councils (REPC) in all regions bringing together government, business and trade unions to advise ministers.

occurrence of 'institutional and cognitive lock-in', as the new organisations tended to be,

> "manned (the choice of verb is deliberate) by the same combination of [centrally appointed] representatives of capital and organised labour as had lobbied for and run the new institutions of the interwar and wartime periods. As a result, they became locked into a conception of the 'regional problem' that centred on notions of industrial obsolescence, old industries, and derelict and polluted built and natural environments that required 'modernisation' as a precondition to attracting fresh rounds of manufacturing branch-plant investment, increasingly from outside the UK" (2005:589)

The ethos of the North East's shift to a 'branch plant economy' could be seen in the Hailsham Plan of 1963 which was published as a White Paper. The Plan promoted economic growth as a means by which to alleviate unemployment and advocated focusing new investment on 'growth points' and 'new towns' rather than existing mining communities, by developing infrastructure and issuing grants to firms (Tomaney, 2006).

During the 1970s the large scale 'branch plant economy' approach came under increasing criticism, yet the "market as a resource-allocation mechanism became increasingly seen, normatively, as the right and proper solution to the 'region problem' (Hudson, 2005:589) and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) remained much sought after. In the North East of England as early as 1966 the Northern Economic Planning Council had stated:

> "We are concerned, however, not only with the extent but the quality of industrial growth. It is not enough that we should aim to have sufficient jobs to match the manpower available... We cannot be content that the region should become the home of factories engaged on assembly work. It must have its proper share of research and development units and of administration" (1966:55)

As a result "the policy prescription switched from state to private ownership, from large to small firms, from manufacturing to service sector activities, from inward to indigenous growth" (Hudson, 2005:589). The North East, however, found it hard to break from its links to the 'branch plant economy' and often jobs simply switched to emerging low-skill industries such as call centres.

In 1975 Scotland and Wales were granted development agencies, partly as an appeasement to a perceived rise in Celtic nationalism, which raised the spectre of decentralisation in England (Jones, M., 2001). In the North East of England the Northern Region Strategy Team was established to develop a more regionally rooted understanding of its problems (Northern Regional Strategy Team, 1977) in "anticipation of a move to a more devolved UK" (Tomaney, 2006:19).

Developments changed dramatically however, with the election of a Conservative government in 1979. "The Thatcher government, of course abolished the regional machinery during the 1980s, introducing local level experiments in economic governance" (Jones, M., 2001:1191) such as Urban Development Corporations. Hence in the North East the institutional

framework of the Regional Economic Planning Council and Northern Region Strategy Team was abolished, though the Northern Development Company was supported as a means of marketing the region in order to acquire mobile investment (Tomaney, 2006). The Thatcher government fully embraced a market-led philosophy and privatised a series of industries which had been struggling to remain productive in the face of increasing international competition. For the North East of England, which relied heavily on many of the previously nationalised industries, the changes caused substantial upheaval and brought financial hardship for many, gaining notoriety and a place in the public conscious through the 1984/1985 Miners' Strike.

1994 to 1997 Government Offices to New Labour

In 1994 the Conservative Major government established the Government Offices for the Regions, along similar boundaries to the previously 'standard' regions, in the aim of rationalising the "patchwork quilt of complexity" (Jones, M., 2001:1191) that constituted local governance. In addition, "the deepening of European integration and, particularly, the emergence of discourses around a 'Europe of the regions' as a counterweight to the economically centralising reality of a single European economic space prompted the start of a very real regionalisation of English political and economic life" (Musson et al., 2005:1398). The need to develop a regionally coherent voice in order to win EU Structural Funds and interact with the EU more widely was therefore a strong driving force (Musson et al., 2005) behind the creation of the Government Offices.

Despite being similar to the preceding eight 'standard statistical regions' (SSRs) the new Government Offices made a few key changes. Firstly, the North was renamed the North East as a result of Cumbria being re-designated as part of the North West. Secondly, London was created as a region in its own right after previously being part of the South East SSR. Thirdly, the East of England, which prior to 1994 was formed by the East Anglia SSR and parts of the South East SSR, was created and fourthly, the Yorkshire and Humberside SSR was renamed Yorkshire and the Humber. Therefore, in 1994 ten Government Offices replaced eight 'standard statistical regions' with London and Merseyside representing the new additions. However, in 1998 Merseyside merged with the North West to leave the current nine administrative regions.

The Government Offices were established through the merger of three government departments – the Department of the Environment, the Department of Employment and the Department for Trade and Industry. By 2004 the number of departments with activities overseen by Government Offices had risen to nine and by the end of 2008 this figure stood at eleven. Therefore, as part of their mandate, Government Offices are expected "first, to coordinate the regional spending of the departments... and, second, to act as the 'eyes and ears' of central government in the regions" (Musson et al., 2001:1398). In April 1994 Government Offices also took control of the Single

Regeneration Budget (SRB)[101] which was "created by the merger of twenty separate central government programmes managed by five Whitehall departments into one fund... This move introduced an element of decentralisation, albeit within nationally defined parameters and following ministerial guidance" (Bache, 2000:580). Although wielding significant budgets, the role of Government Offices as co-ordinating organisations has led to them being reasonably low profile actors (Tomaney, 2002).

Post 1997: 'The Regional Project'

"With the birth of the (New) Labour Party in the mid-1990s, an ambitious programme of constitutional and economic reform was promised for the United Kingdom. Through a series of different structures of regulation and governance..., at least in terms of policy rhetoric, it appeared that if New Labour were elected, England at least would witness a radical break with an entrenched tradition of state centralisation and a primacy of political power over both economy and territory" (Jones, M., 2001:1191). Therefore the scene had already been set for a new 'regional project' before New Labour was elected in May 1997. Prior to being elected the future deputy prime-minister John Prescott and close political ally, as well as committed regionalist, Richard Caborn had established the Regional Policy Commission, which, although technically independent under the chairmanship of former European Commissioner for the Regions Bruce Millan, had in 1996 published an extremely influential report entitled *Renewing the Regions: Strategies for Regional Economic Development'* This report, which became commonly referred to as the Millan report, proposed a system of regional government in which "RDAs [regional development agencies] should be set up by regional chambers, and be responsible to them" (Marshall, 2008:99).

Hence, with regionalism and devolution clearly on the agenda it accordingly formed part of New Labour's 1997 election manifesto:

The Conservatives have created a tier of regional government in England through quangos and government regional offices. Meanwhile local authorities have come together to create a more co-ordinated regional voice. Labour will build on these developments through the establishment of regional chambers to co-ordinate transport, planning, economic development, and bids for European funding and land use planning.

Demand for directly-elected regional government so varies across England that it would be wrong to impose a uniform system. In time we will introduce legislation to allow the people, region by region, to decide in a referendum whether they want directly elected regional government. Only where clear popular consent is established will arrangements be made for elected regional

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[101] The co-ordination of SRB has now been relinquished to regional development agency.

assemblies" (Chapter 9)

Regional decentralisation was therefore at the forefront of New Labour policy and quickly received attention upon their election in May 1997. Within six weeks of being in government 'governor of the regions' (Jones, M., 2001:1191) John Prescott issued the Green Paper *Regional Development Agencies: Issues for Discussion* (DETR) and then in December 1997 the White Paper '*Building Partnerships for Prosperity*' (DETR) which set out the government's plans for RDAs and proposed the creation of nominated Regional Chambers (Ayres and Pearce, 2005). In an important divergence from the Millan report of 1996 the government's plans placed greater emphasis on the role of RDAs as opposed to Regional Chambers[102].

The moves toward a more formalised system of English regional government were also critically linked to associated New Labour pledges for greater devolution to Scotland and Wales. Despite the failure of the 1979 referenda to put into effect the provisions of the 1978 Scotland Act and Wales Act[103], which would have seen the establishment of Scottish and Welsh Assemblies, New Labour was keen to renew the debate and made promises to act quickly and hold referenda if elected. Within three months of coming into government the devolution White Papers, *Scotland's Parliament* and *A Voice for Wales,* were published, and on 11 September and 18 September 2007 respectively the Scottish and Welsh electorates went to the poles. A conclusive vote in favour in Scotland and a marginally positive result in Wales led the way for the Scotland Act and Government for Wales Act which were passed in 1998[104]. In Scotland a parliament was established with "legislative powers over all matters not reserved to the UK Parliament" (Cullingworth and Nadin, 2002:50) and in Wales an Assembly was created with responsibility for executive functions and full powers on secondary legislation [105] (Cullingworth and Nadin, 2002). The significance of these developments should not be underestimated as they have been heralded by some as the "biggest change to the UK state since the Acts of Union [1707 Act of Union with Scotland]" (Goodwin, 2005:421). The speed and success

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[102] As While states, "the Regional Policy Commission report (RPC, 1996) envisaged that regional development agencies should be created as the executive arms of democratically elected bodies" (2000:331). Marshall views the change of approach as 'extraordinary' as "a body set up to be subservient to 'regional society', in the shape of a regional chamber (in the Millan original schema), is instead to be the dominant figure in the regional landscape, not just for economic issues but across the board" (2008:101).

[103] On 1 March 1979 the Scottish electorate technically by majority voted for the devolution. In a high turnout of 63.8%, a total of 51.6% voted in favour and 48.4% against. However, a condition set by Parliament required at least 40% of the whole electorate to vote in favour. Therefore, despite an overall majority, only 32.9% of the whole electorate voted in favour. In Wales the results were more conclusive in rejecting the proposals for devolution. In a turnout of 58.8%, a total of 20.3% voted in favour and 79.7% voted against.

[104] In the Scottish referendum on 11 September 2007, 74.3% voted in favour of a Scottish Parliament and 60.2% supported it having tax raising powers in a turnout of 60.4%. In the Welsh referendum on 18 September, a turnout of 50.1% saw a small majority of 50.3% vote in favour of a Welsh Assembly and 49.7% vote against.

[105] The powers of the Welsh Assembly have subsequently been strengthened under the 2006 Government of Wales Act.

by which New Labour achieved national political devolution to Scotland and Wales, therefore, undoubtedly increased the fervour for English decentralisation within certain political circles, none least than in deputy prime-minister John Prescott's office.

Alongside the moves towards devolution to Scotland and Wales the government brought forward its plans for regional decentralisation. In 1998 the Regional Development Agencies Act was passed and in April 1999 RDAs became operational in each of England's eight regions[106]. The Act also paved the way for the creation of non-statutory Regional Chambers, later renamed Assemblies to avoid confusion with regional chambers of commerce, and by the summer of 1999 these bodies had been "formally recognised by central government as the representative organisation... on a range of issues" in their respective regions[107]. However, it is observed by many that "RDAs represented the centrepiece of Labour's policies for the English regions in its first term" (Tomaney, 2002:723; Musson et al., 2005).

Under the Act RDAs were required to "formulate and keep under review a strategy for implementing its statutory responsibilities to further economic development and regeneration, to promote business efficiency, to promote employment, to enhance the development and application of skills, and to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development" (Cullingworth and Nadin, 2002:54). Regional Assemblies were charged with a number of distinct, yet perceived as complementary, roles including the formal scrutiny of the regional economic strategies, which was intended to add a degree of democratic accountability to the functioning of RDAs, and a mandate to foster "a regional civic culture by enabling regional partners to work together more effectively" (Musson et al., 2005:1402). Additionally, in Labour's first term many, most notably the government itself, saw the creation of Regional Assemblies as a preliminary move towards directly elected regional government. Indeed, writing in 2000, While states that, "ostensibly acting as the first step towards elected regional government, it is intended that regional chambers will provide a quasi-democratic forum for local authorities and other key regional interests" (2000:330).

Since 1999 the regional governmental infrastructure has remained anything but static. The roles and responsibilities of the Government Offices, RDAs and Regional Assemblies have all expanded but in a rather ad-hoc fashion (Bond and McCrone, 2004). Concerning Government Offices, as a result of the *Reaching Out* report of the Cabinet Office's Performance and Innovation Unit (PIU), the Regional Co-ordination Unit (RCU) was established in April 2000 to better co-ordinate the work of Whitehall departments across the regions (Tomaney, 2002). The number of government departments with programmes overseen by Government Offices has also increased to 2008's total of eleven. RDAs have experienced a

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[106] London was subsequently subject to different legislation under the Greater London Authority Act 1999 which created the Mayor of London, the London Assembly and the Greater London Authority. Elections in 2000 essentially made this the first directly elected tier of regional administration in England (Bradbury and Mitchell, 2005).

[107] In name there are technically only seven Regional Assemblies as the North West refers to its organisation as the Regional Leaders Forum. However, in terms of roles and purpose each region has an Assembly or equivalent (English Regions Network website: http://ern.smartregion.org.uk/About_Regional_Assemblies.aspx Accessed 12.11.2008).

significant increase in their budgets and importantly more flexibility in how they spend it. On this the Spending Review 2000 initially announced increased resources to RDAs and a 'single cross departmental funding framework' which was confirmed in the Chancellor's Pre-Budget Report in November 2000 (Tomaney, 2002). Subsequently, in 2003 the RDAs "moved to a 'single pot' funding model... which gives individual regions greater financial flexibility and ends the preallocation of RDA funds to specific purposes" (Musson et al., 2005:1406). RDAs have also received a range of responsibilities such as becoming home to the promotion of regional tourism.

Regional Assemblies have also experienced an expansion in their roles, most notably in planning, transport and housing. Perhaps the most significant development has been the designation of Regional Assemblies as the Regional Planning Body for their region with responsibility for producing a Regional Spatial Strategy to replace the previous Regional Planning Guidance (RPG). This occurred through the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act of May 2004, which had taken eighteen months to go through Westminster, but a prior indication had been given in the Planning Policy Guidance Note on Regional Planning published in October 2000, which stated that, "a Chamber [Assembly] supported by a full time regional planning, monitoring and review team would be in an ideal position to provide the necessary leadership to produce and implement an integrated spatial strategy for the region" (DETR, 2000b, para 2.4). Assemblies have also subsequently become home to Regional Housing Boards and interim Regional Transport Boards.

Whilst the roles and responsibilities of the three regional governmental organisations have been incrementally strengthened the biggest event to shape the regional agenda since Labour election in 1997 occurred in the form of the referendum on directly elected regional government in the North East of England in November 2004. Following Labour's re-election in 2001 the White Paper Your Region, Your Choice: Revitalising the English Regions (Cabinet Office/DTLR) was published in 2002, which set out the possibility for a directly elected regional tier of government. This was followed by the Regional Assemblies (Preparations) Act in May 2003 which outlined the potential new assemblies' responsibilities and powers "over the RDAs and regional economic strategy, spatial planning, EU funding policy and housing investment" (Bradbury and Mitchell, 2005:299). In June 2003 the government announced plans to hold referenda in the North East, North West and Yorkshire and the Humber and in July 2004 these orders were passed in the House of Commons (Bradbury and Mitchell, 2005). However, it was subsequently announced that a referendum would only go ahead in the North East of England. As Bradbury and Mitchell state, "it would appear that the government had concluded that defeat was virtually certain in the North West and Yorkshire and the Humber, but if victory could be attained in the North East, this would create a more favourable context to holding referendums at a later date" (2005:300).

Despite much having been made of the North East of England's strong regional identity, on 4 November 2004 the referendum produced a result in which approximately 78%, of the 48% of the electorate that turned out, rejected the proposals (Tomaney, 2002; Bradbury and Mitchell, 2005). Only 22% supported the plans and this essentially "destroyed the Government's

plans for elected regional assemblies" (Shaw et al. 2006). Somewhat ironically the process of going through a referendum in fact led to there being "far more public attention on the existing assembly than had ever happened before" (Sandford, 2006:24) and a BBC commissioned Ipsos MORI survey, conducted on the second anniversary of the referendum in 2006, even suggested that more people would vote for a regional assembly than against one if another referendum was held[108]. However, the results of the survey were far from conclusive and illustrated that the public were still not widely aware of the work of the North East Assembly, or indeed its very existence.

As well as taking directly elected regional government off the political agenda for a generation the referendum also posed some serious questions with regard to the nature of regional identity and how it might be harnessed in forms of governance (Bradbury and Mitchell, 2005). In the British Social Attitudes Survey of 2001 participants were asked how 'how much pride do you have in being someone who lives in [the relevant government office region] or do you not think of yourself in that way at all?' The results to that question are shown below in table A.1.

Table 1.A. Regional Pride and Identification % (Bond and McCrone, 2004:8)

	Proud*	No regional identification**	Sample size
England	45	52	2.780
North East	70	27	183
North West	63	34	354
Yorkshire & Humber	70	27	311
West Midlands	37	58	286
East Midlands	34	63	261
Eastern	25	73	321
South West	43	56	272
South East	25	72	442
London	51	43	355

Notes: *Combines those responding 'very' and 'somewhat' proud.
**i.e. 'Don't think of myself in that way'.

Source: British Social Attitudes Survey 2001.

Despite revealing significant regional variations the North East showed a strong sense of regional pride and it was such research that suggested directly elected regional government might be a viable and popular option. However, the regional referendum revealed a significant disjuncture between regional pride (and affiliation) and commitment to the type of regional government (in terms of roles, responsibilities, boundaries etc) on offer in 2004.

The issue of regional identity was therefore a problematic one and this was acknowledged by the 2008 Modernisation Committee report on *Regional Accountability* which stated that:

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[108] Mori survey accessed at
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/02_11_06_ne_mori_full_9_10.pdf on 8th November, 2006.

"In reality, regional identities cannot be neatly mapped on to these administrative divisions. Evidence submitted jointly by three MPs from the North West, Ann Coffey, Mr George Howarth and Graham Stringer, gives an example:

> We represent three constituencies which are physically quite close together at the end of a compass point: the North West. Yet within the North West, there are two large cities and a whole range of smaller towns and cities as well as large rural areas all with hugely different needs, identities and priorities. Mancunians do not identify as Liverpudlians, nor Lancastrians, etc. However, we do have one thing in common: no one identifies as a North Westerner! (2008:28)"

For some "an important prerequisite of successful economic development is a territorial shape which reflects regional consciousness and provides an economic space with meaning for its inhabitants" (Jones, M., 2001:1197). After having made pledges for referenda in the Labour election manifesto of 1997 and in the 2002 *Your Region, Your Choice* White Paper the referendum in the North East of England in November 2004 represented the culmination of attempts to conjoin a regional scale of economic development and administrative governance with regional identity and popular support.

The referendum result in the North East of England in November 2004 effectively brought to an end the government's plans for directly elected regional government. At a more local level the 'community discourse' figured strongly and received greater emphasis through approaches such as 'double devolution' (Miliband, 2006) which aimed to "improve public services at neighbourhood level and to bridge the gap between citizens and democracy" (Taylor, 2007:298). However, the regional tier has not been ignored since 2004 and has continued to receive additional funds, roles and responsibilities from central government thanks in part to the Treasury's belief in regions as efficient scales at which to effectively co-ordinate economic governance. Indeed, the Treasury was the driving force behind the Sub-National Review in 2007, which did not scrap regional government but restructured it, adding in regional ministers and paving the way for regional 'select' and 'grand' committees to act as new accountability mechanisms (HM Treasury, DBERR, DCLG, 2007). The regional policy and governance landscape is therefore continuing to evolve.

Appendix 2. Regional concordat between ONE, the NEA and GO-NE

CONCORDAT BETWEEN ONE NORTHEAST, THE NORTH EAST REGIONAL ASSEMBLY AND THE GOVERNMENT OFFICE FOR THE NORTH EAST

CONCORDAT BETWEEN ONE NORTHEAST, THE NORTH EAST REGIONAL ASSEMBLY AND THE GOVERNMENT OFFICE FOR THE NORTH EAST

1. One NorthEast, the North East Regional Assembly and GO-NE will work together to help improve the economic performance of the North East Region to enhance the Region's environment and to improve the social well-being of all citizens within the Region.

2. We will aim to achieve:

   - a common vision for improving the economic, environmental and social prospects for the Region's citizens
   - complementary and mutually consistent strategies
   - as far as possible within our respective powers integrated implementation plans
   - a shared understanding of what is being achieved through monitoring
   - a joint intention to keep strategies and plans under review with flexible mechanisms to enable changes in direction

3. We share the following values:

   - commitment to the Region as a whole
   - recognition of separate and different responsibilities
   - openness and honesty
   - flexibility
   - minimisation of bureaucracy and duplication
   - partnership and sharing
   - priority to achievement and forward momentum

4. We will draw on common sources of advice.

5. Each of the organisations has a separate role to play. Attached as an Appendix to this Concordat is a summary of our own respective responsibilities and we will work together to exercise these to deliver our common objectives.

6. We think it is important for One NorthEast and the North East Regional Assembly to state how they will relate to each other.

7. One NorthEast and the North East Regional Assembly will, wherever possible, seek to achieve consistent responses to external policy initiatives whether from National Government or Europe.

8. One NorthEast will:

   - consult the North East Regional Assembly at regular stages throughout the development of its Regional Economic Strategy and its Corporate Plan
   - meet representatives of the full North East Regional Assembly, at a formal level, at least twice a year
   - involve the North East Regional Assembly in the preparation of all major strategies

- hold formal discussions (at Chairman/Vice Chairman level) with the North East Regional Assembly's Chairman and Vice Chairmen quarterly
- unless inappropriate to do so, to give the North East Regional Assembly's Chairman and Vice Chairmen advance notice of major announcements, press statements etc

9. The North East Regional Assembly will:

- consult One NorthEast at regular stages on the preparation of its Strategic Framework/Business Plan
- take account of One NorthEast's Regional Economic Strategy in developing its strategic framework
- invite the Chairman of One NorthEast to address the North East Regional Assembly at least once a year
- invite One NorthEast to contribute to the work of the sector forums
- unless inappropriate to do so, give One NorthEast notice of major announcements, press statements etc
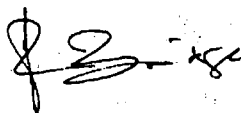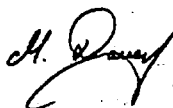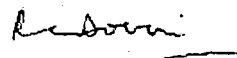
10. The Government Office will:

- support and promote a coherent regional approach to competitiveness, sustainable development, regeneration and social inclusion, both through the Government programmes for which it is directly responsible and by working with regional partners and partnerships, especially One NorthEast and the North East Regional Assembly
- manage the Government's relationship with regional partners by promoting and supporting effective partnership working, and in particular through sponsorship of One NorthEast and support to it in the development of its strategy, and through engagement with the North East Regional Assembly in all activities relevant to the work of the Government Office
- represent and communicate Parent Departments' national policy at regional level and provide a channel to inform national policy with regional views and issues
- meet regularly on a formal and informal basis with One NorthEast and the North East Regional Assembly

11. The three organisations will make every effort to ensure that this Concordat is carried out successfully. We intend to resolve any differences of view at the appropriate levels in our organisations as we are jointly committed to the success of the North East Region.

DR JOHN BRIDGE   CLLR MICHAEL DAVEY   DR BOB DOBBIE

APPENDIX

RESPONSIBILITIES OF ONE NORTHEAST, THE NORTH EAST REGIONAL ASSEMBLY AND THE GOVERNMENT OFFICE FOR THE NORTH EAST

Role of One NorthEast

One NorthEast has five clearly identified overarching aims:

- to further economic development and regeneration
- to promote business efficiency, investment and competitiveness
- to promote employment
- to enhance the development and application of skills relevant in particular to employment
- to enhance the achievement of sustainable development in the UK

Within these overall aims, the Agency has lead responsibility for:

- the preparation of the Regional Economic Strategy (including urban and rural regeneration strategies)
- attracting sustainable new inward investment to improve the Region's economic strength and skill-base, and to provide employment opportunities
- the promotion and marketing of the Region and the role of One NorthEast
- the physical and social regeneration of the Region
- enhancing the development and application of skills relevant to employment including the development of a regional Skills Action Plan
- the future growth and development of business whose continued presence is essential to the growth of the region
- the review and up date of the Regional Innovation Plan designed to encourage innovation, adoption of new technologies and development of business best practice

The Agency has an advisory role in the following areas:

- contributing to the Regional Planning Guidance (including Strategic Sites)
- contributing to the North East Regional Assembly strategies
- undertaking regional research and intelligence, including the labour market
- integrating of programmes sponsored by other bodies, such as European and Structural Funds, Culture, Media & Sport and Tourism
- advising GO-NE on European Structural Funds

Role of the North East Regional Assembly

The Regional Assembly brings together representatives of the following sectors:

- local authorities
- Members of the European Parliament
- TUC
- Training and Enterprise Councils
- further education
- rural
- environment

- Members of Parliament
- private/business
- voluntary sector
- higher education
- culture, sport and tourism
- health

Its areas of interest cover:

- transport
- strategic planning
- economic development
- the environment and sustainable development
- education, skills and training
- crime prevention
- health and social affairs
- culture, tourism and sport
- European Union
- rural issues

Its primary functions are:

- to advise and inform One NorthEast on any issue or area which falls within the latter's competence

- to receive and consider regular reports from One NorthEast

- to scrutinise One NorthEast's Regional Economic Strategy and Corporate Plan

- to encourage the consideration of relevant social, economic and environmental issues at the regional level, where this is appropriate

- to liaise and to work in collaboration with regional institutions and other appropriate organisations

- to offer a regional view to the Government, the European Union institutions etc on any issue or area falling within the Assembly's competence

- to encourage and promote a strong sense of regional identity

- to provide a forum for considering and debating any issue or policy proposals having an impact upon the people of the North East of England

Role of the Government Office for the North East

The Government Office brings together the work of three government departments in the Region - the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department for Education and Employment.

Its main objectives are to:

- meet the operational requirements of their Ministers and Departments
- contribute local views and experience to the formation and communication of parent Departments and government policies
- promote a coherent approach to sustainable economic development
- develop partnerships in the Region with and between all local interests
- sponsor and regulate One NorthEast

Within these overall aims, the Government Office takes lead responsibility for:

- supporting and briefing Ministers
- co-ordinating information and action on relevant policy and programme areas, including housing, land-use planning, overseas trade and exports, education and liaison with Departmental headquarters and regional offices
- strategy and administration arrangements for programmes supported by European structural funds
- regional Selective Assistance for industrial development
- advancing and promoting sustainable development
- regional Planning Guidance and statutory planning casework
- transport, including local highway transport Policies and Programme bids
- economic intelligence and regional monitoring
- housing, including funding for the LAs for the Housing Investment Programme
- contracting with TECs and Business Links, and taking forward the proposals for Learning and Skills Councils
- regeneration and social inclusion

Appendix 3. Example worksheets of 'stage 1' content analysis of the draft regional strategies

Example 1. Draft Regional Economic Strategy: sections on 'Innovation and Creativity' and 'Skills'

Key Issue/ Section	Sub-Issue	Trend (+ or –)	Gvt/Gvt Action/Aim	With or against Gvt: where strongly?	Comment/key phrase/policy's Stance - economic/social	Cross reference to report sections/page no.
Delivering Sust. Communities P83-96	Introduction	Trans Solutions	Strongly with Gvt.		Strongly mirrors/issues of place, health & quality of life. P83 defends/depend on social interest.	Y, P83
	Delivering for Gvt.				from people available/deliver. An delayered input to sustainable/table transport, health, recreation, local communities	Y, P83-4
	Urban & Rural Gvt.	Increase of jobs	Growth/de plans/ (environ stra)	Strongly with Gvt. (some flexibility where indicated so of them & supply)	Additional growth of sustainable within the region "located about settlement target the region" (p. 89 in the "about it's going about it's going - offered economic form of growth)	Y, P84 Y, P85
	Meta-centre/centre/sub-centre devt/devolved/	Ongoing (currently ongoing)	with Gvt. (strongly)	feasibility, key inspired (p8)	Y, P86
	Trad Devt/ Field Dwellings/ Construction	from best control & more deployed pattern	Funds self-invest with Gvt. District interested in sustain-bond	Economic growth & social inclusion needed. Support sustained economic growth (p8?) & public transport through Regional, trans. to economic regeneration (p8?)	Y, P87
	Improving the Housing Stock	Improve housing stock	Improve housing Strongly with - flexibility of options indicated additional	Regeneration should be "maintained to feed communities & quality (p8) - which include new mixed regional quality of life should	Y, P87
	Quality Provision, Improve (p8)		With Gvt in urban areas, most parts location more proposed (planning guidance to Gvt) B on many the flexibility is long about local interest, flexible approach		Y, P88
	Meeting Housing Supply		Customers about their their districts flow with UPA LHA & accredited equip to the land & pollution bond	Employment lands is admitted to economic property (p. 8) should plant schemes of land	Y, P89 Y, P90
	Improving Inclusivity	Lower energy household size?	With redistributing renewal area better access	Housing stock not meeting needs of people on low incomes - to take the alternative target for affordable housing in to take more guidance	P 95

Appendix 4. Example worksheets of 'stage 2' thematic analysis of the draft regional strategies

Example 1. Draft Regional Economic Strategy: Worksheet No. 6.

Section/ subsection	Major Themes	utility Themes	Purpose of Text	Comment	Further comments	Patterns Analysis
			a) Strategy	1-10	Specific	
				2/3	Further comments	No.
			a) Strategy	4	Text is focused in economic growth.	Yes p.105
				4		Yes p.106
			a) Strategy	2		No.
			a) Strategy	1/2		Yes p.107
			a) Strategy	2/3		No.
			a) Strategy	2/3		No.
			a) Strategy	2		No.
			a) Strategy	9		No.
			a) Strategy	3		No.
			a) Strategy	3/4		No.
			a) Strategy	3/4		Yo.
			a) Strategy	1/2		Yo.
			a) Strategy	3/4		No.
			a) Strategy	3/4		No.
			a) Strategy	5		No.
	15	7 4, 0	a) Strategy	3		No.

Example 2. Draft Regional Spatial Strategy: Worksheet No. 4.

Appendix 5. Marking sheet for hypothetical System/Lifeworld classification

Mark (0 - 10)	Criteria	Examples
0	Entirely representative of abstract System interests.	Economy and public administration are the only discourse.
1	Likely to consist of policy language of planning and economics with hardly any reference to lived experiences.	GVA, economic development/growth. Administrative as opposed to lived/community boundaries.
2	Predominantly conceived approach but with some reference to lived experience, though mostly on a more abstract level.	Sustainable economic development/growth, city-regions.
3	Language of planners/economists dominates but attention is shown to issues affecting people at the strategic level and to a lesser degree at a more local level. Consultation is likely to be more to support the dominant policy frame than change it.	Strategic policy with attention to more lived experience. Local Development Frameworks, City-region development plans. Tokenistic consultation.
4	Likely to show much attention to lived experience and issues that affect people everyday but set within the policy discourse of planning and economic growth.	Issues affecting lived experience are taken and incorporated within the dominant policy frame.
5	A balanced approach incorporating System and Lifeworld perspectives, without one dominating over the other.	Inclusive, sustainable economic development. Local communities within the region. Consultation on the way forward.
6	Demonstrates a commitment to addressing the issues that affect lived experience. May also include reference to consultation and suggestions of new ways of working.	Public consultation is valued. New ideas are properly prioritised.
7	Lived experience and people's perceptions are fully incorporated and often set the agenda before the interests of the System. New approaches are incorporated.	Public consultation is put first and widely conducted at an accessible local level.
8	The Lifeworld and lived space set the dominant framework. The spatial scales used are identified with by most people.	Local needs set the agenda. Local people have veto power and dictate development (or not).
9	The Lifeworld is dominant. The discourse is likely to suggest an approach to policy different to that of 'hard' economics and abstract planning.	Local interests decide the future of their particular localities.
10	A rare approach to policy. Decisions are based entirely on local consultation and are purely a reaction to perceived local needs. The spatial scales of action perfectly mirror the 'mental maps' of lived experience.	Direct democracy, local/neighbourhood/street scale. Grass-roots level.

Appendix 6. Research diary extract

Red = me   Black = Assembly   27/01/06

27/01/06 Scrutiny Committee Development Day

➡ Introductions
- GONE are undergoing a Treasury Review but results are not yet known.
 ➡ creeping regionalisation - niche administrative (led by Treasury)
 ➡ something is coming out on City-regions soon which will have a profound impact.
Space for debate

➡ The Referendum - people were in no mood to understand the issues. - Tyneside dominance - there was no plan B.
(Fred Robinson) "no vote left a vacuum with no space for regional debate" - the Assembly was going to be a "space for that regional discussion."
- GO-NE cannot fill the role of the voice of the region as it is seen as the agent of Government.
- Assembly now has to prove its value to the public.
- confusion rather than clarity.

➡ Changes in Governance   (a Manchester conspiracy)
- little enthusiasm for Northern Way but interest in city-regions
- the heavy institutional architecture of the region was set up to manage decline.

➡ Perceptions of Governance
- too cluttered, not co-ordinated

➡ Leadership
- because of multitude of Quangos leaders have to spend too much time stitching together networks than leading.

➡ is still a democratic deficit

Discussion - Session 1

- CFW - lack of support from Tony Blair + gov.
    - Assembly a year late still haven't defined themself.
    - Quango state does not reflect political representation.
- Alan Bowles - public not concerned with governance but with (local) service provision.
    - are not concerned how they get it.
- John O'Shea - we are criticising the Quango state when to a degree the Assembly is unaccountable.
    - (A) have to undertake the tasks set to the Assembly.
- Karuna - depends on who is managing the service provision.
    - depends how culturally sensitive service provision is.
- Ian Mearns - the Labour party did not take the lead on the referendum.
    - if Gov. goes for a Core Cities City-Region approach, will put us in a lot of trouble.
- Joel Von Hayde - democracy is an ends to a means.
    - if its not working do you abandon the means.
- Paul Richardson
    → Assembly needs a press officer.
    - ESPs are often elected from their constituencies that they represent. ∴ PR was elected as faiths representative by a variety of faiths.
- MM - lack of transparency & democratic accountability is problem of Quangos.
    - need to be more inclusive in involving people in service priority.
- Philip Latham - have big policy issues ahead which will need strong leadership.
- Alan Dixon - are people disinterested in democracy or do they take it for granted.
    - the debate on the Assembly did not happen on a mature level.
- Ken Lupton - new to the process and he finds it very complex.
- K Shaw - there is a space to colonise.

Legitimacy - input and output.
- more than democracy.   Public lectures.

- Karuna - do not use language of colonisation.

Session 2 - ODPM   Evaluation & Role of RAs.

Alan Dixon - in early months NEA achieved its role as
    voice of the region by allowing people to come in to
    hearings with ONE.
    - Assembly being the voice & then as giving an opportunity
       to people to air opinions.
CFW - select comm are very public.
Alan Bowles - scrutiny gives the RDA some validity.
    John Herron

John O'Shea - in local gov. operate in a party political
    environment which affects local scrutiny.

Alan Dixon - what NEA does is expose what ONE does
    to the light of scrutiny?
    - scrutiny creates environment for improvement and
      not to provide answers.

Session 3: The last scrutiny exercise
FR - was a relationship problem.
    - Assembly as the 'authorised think tank' my idea!
K/S - Board Members, senior & middle management should be
    more involved.
MM - need to challenge the way ONE are thinking and also
    the details.
A. Dixon - ONE defensive as seen as attacking their brand
J. Mearns have distributed funds to sub-regional partnerships.
    - trying to be all things to all people.
Ken Kaplan - ONE have to perceive that we will add something
                                    to their process.

Send A. Dixon the RES

- RW - scrutiny is about relationship building.
  - a multi-level relationship.
  - depends on the type of personality in ONE.

A. Dixon - we have authority but shouldn't assume that
    others recognise it.
- possibilities for co-opting people onto the committee
    where appropriate.
  - can pull in things from local authority economic development.

FR - to gain credibility needs to promote scrutiny to the
    public.
  - need press support & maybe a journalist attending
    meetings

Session 4: The Link between Scrutiny & Policy Development
The Assembly can act as a catalyst for
new regional level policy work.
- joint

Session 5: Formal Scrutiny - Policy Development
        → Rob Worrall.
- NEA has never really understood the other mechanisms by
which the ROA is held to account.

Ian Mearns - scrutiny can't just be a hindsight
    activity but needs to look forward.
Alan Dixon - do the leaders know who the key followers
        are ?
      - who needs to be brought on board
      - who is our audience & how are we trying to
        move them on (& how does that audience change)

Appendix 7. The frameworks for developing regional economic and spatial strategies

The need for regions to produce and keep under review economic strategies emerged out of the 1998 Regional Development Act which also established development agencies in each of England's eight regions. The Act stipulated in section 7(1) that "a regional development agency shall- (a) formulate, and keep under review, a strategy in relation to its purposes, and (b) have regard to the strategy in exercising its functions".

Further guidance came in 2001 with the Treasury report *Productivity in the UK, No. 3: The Regional Dimension* which stressed that regions could overcome disparities in GDP by focusing on the five 'drivers of productivity': skills, investment, innovation, enterprise and competition (Fothergill, 2005). This thinking was subsequently incorporated into the work of RDAs. Further guidance followed from the Department for Trade and Industry (DTI) in 2005, which emphasised the RESs' "distinctive role among the suite of strategies drawn up in the regions" (DTI, 2001:2). The DTI guidance provided clearer directions on the remit of the RES stating in Section 2 (p1) that,

> "the role of the RES is to provide a shared vision for the development of the region's economy. The RDA is charged with drawing up the RES and keeping it under review. However, the aim should be to formulate a strategy that is owned by the region and commands wide support, and which draws on the support and resources of all major partners in the region" (DTI, 2005:1).

In addition Section 3 also stated "the RES must have a clear focus on economic development and it and action to implement it must be based on the principle of sustainable development" (2005:1). Like the Treasury guidelines before it this guidance was also subsequently incorporated into the thinking of RDAs.

Regional Spatial Strategies (RSSs) emerged from the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, which was officially endorsed in May 2004, after taking more than eighteen months to negotiate its passage through Westminster. Regional Spatial Strategies effectively replaced the previous Regional Planning Guidance, which had been produced by the Government Offices for the regions. The Act also allowed the Secretary of State to recognise a Regional Planning Body in each region. Regional Assemblies were subsequently identified as the Regional Planning Bodies and were charged with developing and keeping under review the RSSs. The purpose of the strategies was set out specifically in Section 1(2) of the Act which stated that "the RSS must set out the Secretary of State's policies (however expressed) in relation to the development and use of land within the region". The Act also stressed the requirement for community involvement in the drafting of the RSS and allowed the Secretary of State the power to arrange for an examination in public (EiP) to be held into any draft RSS. Further guidance was provided through the publication of Planning Policy Statement 11 (PPS 11): Regional Spatial Strategies (ODPM. 2004b). The figure below taken from PPS 11 is a useful aid in understanding the consultation requirements for spatial strategies.

Figure 7. A. The RSS Revision Process (taken from PPS 11, ODPM, 2004b:17)
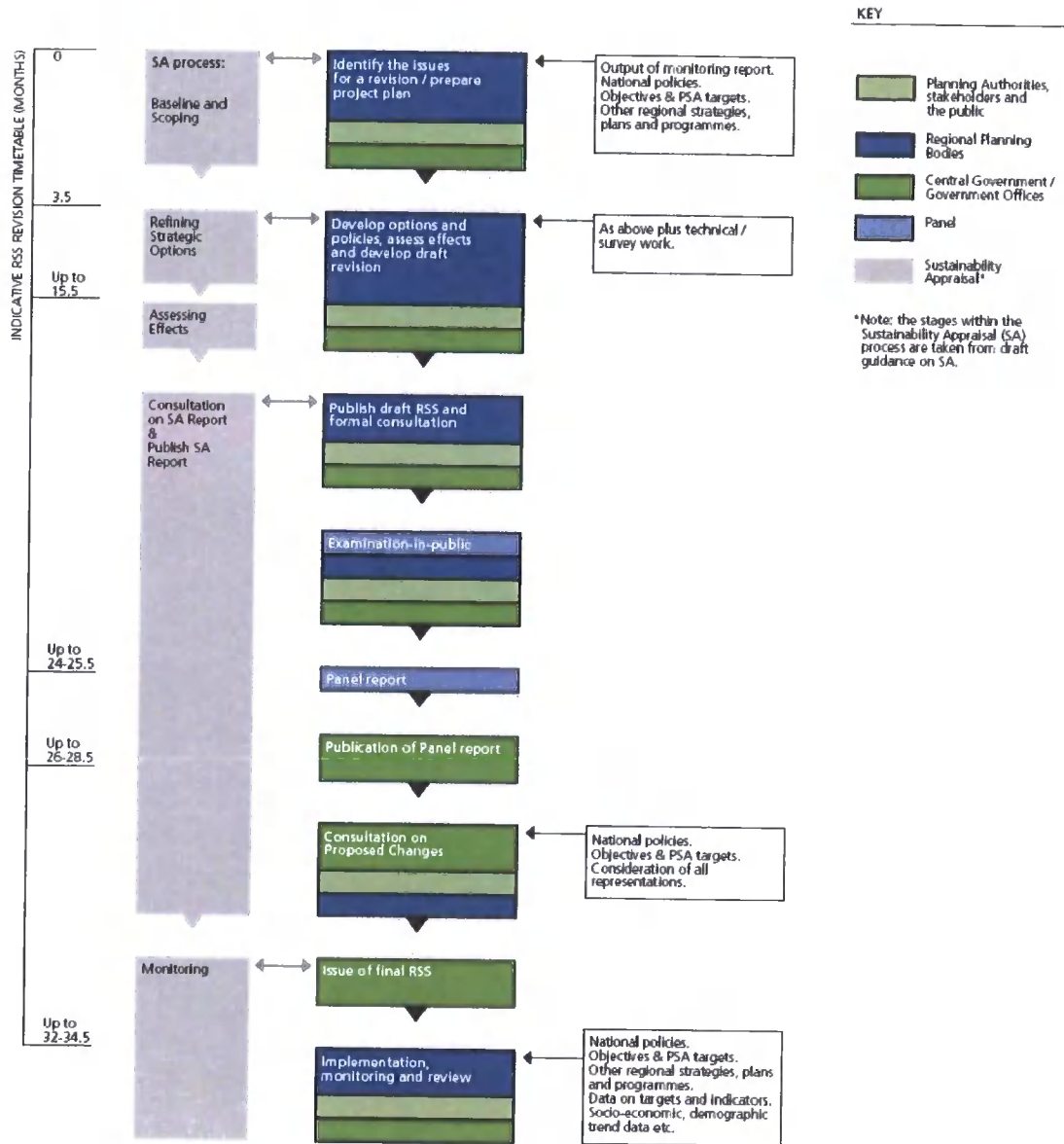
Appendix 8. Draft regional strategies: additional word searches and basic analysis

A number of additional word searches were conducted to supplement the identification of key themes. Shown below are the results and basic analysis from three searches on specific geographic scales and the most frequently used terms in both documents.

1. Specific geographic scale

Table 8.A. References to specific geographic scales

Term of specific geographic scale	Comparative word count totals	
	RSS	RES
Government	37 [64]	32
UK/Britain	22 [38]	106
England (not including NE [of] England)	11[19]	21
National Total	**70 [121]**	**159**
Northern Way	12 [21]	37
The Region	339[592]	526
The North East	142 [249]	356
Regional Total	**481 [841]**	**882**
Tyne and Wear	54 [94]	20
Tees Valley	77 [134]	34
Rural	162 [283]	82
Local Total	**293 [511]**	**136**

With regard to references to specific geographical entities there is a similar trend to that of general geographic scale but with some noticeable differences. One of the most easily identifiable results is the predominance of references to 'the region'. However, in comparative terms, of the specific references to either 'the region' or the North East, the RES's total nearly doubles that of the RSS. The RES also significantly outnumbers the RSS in terms of references to national geographic entities. Within this national category, although both documents appear to make a similar number of references to the government, the RSS makes many more mentions of the UK and Britain.

The RSS dominates in terms of references to the geographic entities below the regional tier. Whilst it was not realistic to search the documents for numerous local place names, the searches for the region's two city regions reveal the RSS's focus on the more local level. Interestingly, although a main theme in both strategies is the focusing of investment in city-regions, the 'rural' is clearly not excluded from the strategies as illustrated by the significant number of references it receives.

2. Most frequent terms in the RSS

In order to gauge the relative importance of key terms within each document the following table illustrates the most frequently used 'key words' within the draft RSS with the exclusion of previously analysed references to general and specific geographical scales.

Table 8.B. Most frequently used terms in the draft RSS

Ranking	Word or variation of word in text	RSS
1	Transport	479
2	Environment(ally)	304
3	Housing	291
4	Sustainable/sustainability	269
5	Public	258
6	Regeneration	202
7	Community/communities	169
8	Opportunity/opportunities	146
9	Potential	125
10	People	114
11	Focus/focusing/focused	108
12	Culture/cultural	100
13	Priority/priorities	84
14	Heritage	81
15	Connections/conectivity	68
16	Health	65
17	Economic growth	52
18	Asset	45
19	Core	42
20	Risk	42
21	Quality of life	36
22	Average	33
23	Workforce	32
24	Sustainable development	31
25	Competitive(ness)	30

'Transport' is the most frequently used term with 'environment' and 'sustainability' also featuring strongly throughout the document. The 'public', 'communities' and 'people' are also all within the top ten most used terms demonstrating the degree to which they are incorporated throughout the draft RSS. Terms with more economic connotations such as 'regeneration', 'opportunity', 'potential', 'focused', 'priorities', 'economic growth' and 'asset' all receive a significant number of references. Indeed, the large number of development-orientated terms does hint at the major role the economic growth discourse and narrative plays in the strategy.

3. Most frequently used key terms in the RES

In order to gauge the relative importance of key terms within each document the following table illustrates the most frequently used 'key words' within the draft RES with the exclusion of previously analysed references to general and specific geographical scales.

Table 8.C. Most frequently used terms in the draft RES

Ranking	Word or variation of word in text	RES
1	People	200
2	Opportunity/opportunities	155
3	Productivity	145
4	Culture/cultural	125
5	Participation	113
6	Priority/priorities	113
7	Community/communities	101
8	Competitive(ness)	93
9	Environment(ally)	92
10	Success	83
11	Sustainable/sustainability	79
12	Potential	78
13	Focus/focusing/focused	77
14	Add value/value added/GVA	72
15	National average/UK average	55
16	Economic growth	48
17	Change	48
18	Inclusion	46
19	Challenge	45
20	SHiNE	43
21	Performance	42
22	Intervention	42
23	Health	42
24	RSS	39
25	Driver	35

Perhaps surprisingly 'people' is the most referenced 'key word' in the draft RES and 'culture 'also features strongly. However, although the 'people' of the North East are often referred to, it tends to be with regard to the workforce and improving skills. Also, 'culture' is mostly referred to as an asset of the region, which can be better utilised to enable greater economic growth. The presence of the RES's two main areas for economic improvement – 'productivity' and 'participation' – and the terms 'opportunity', 'priorities' and 'competitiveness' amongst the eight most frequently referenced terms offers some indication of the importance given to economic development in the document. In contrast to the RSS, words with more social or environmental connotation such as 'community', 'environment' and 'sustainability' are referred to slightly less. The terms 'focused', 'add

value/GVA' and the 'national average' all receive a significant number of references throughout the document.

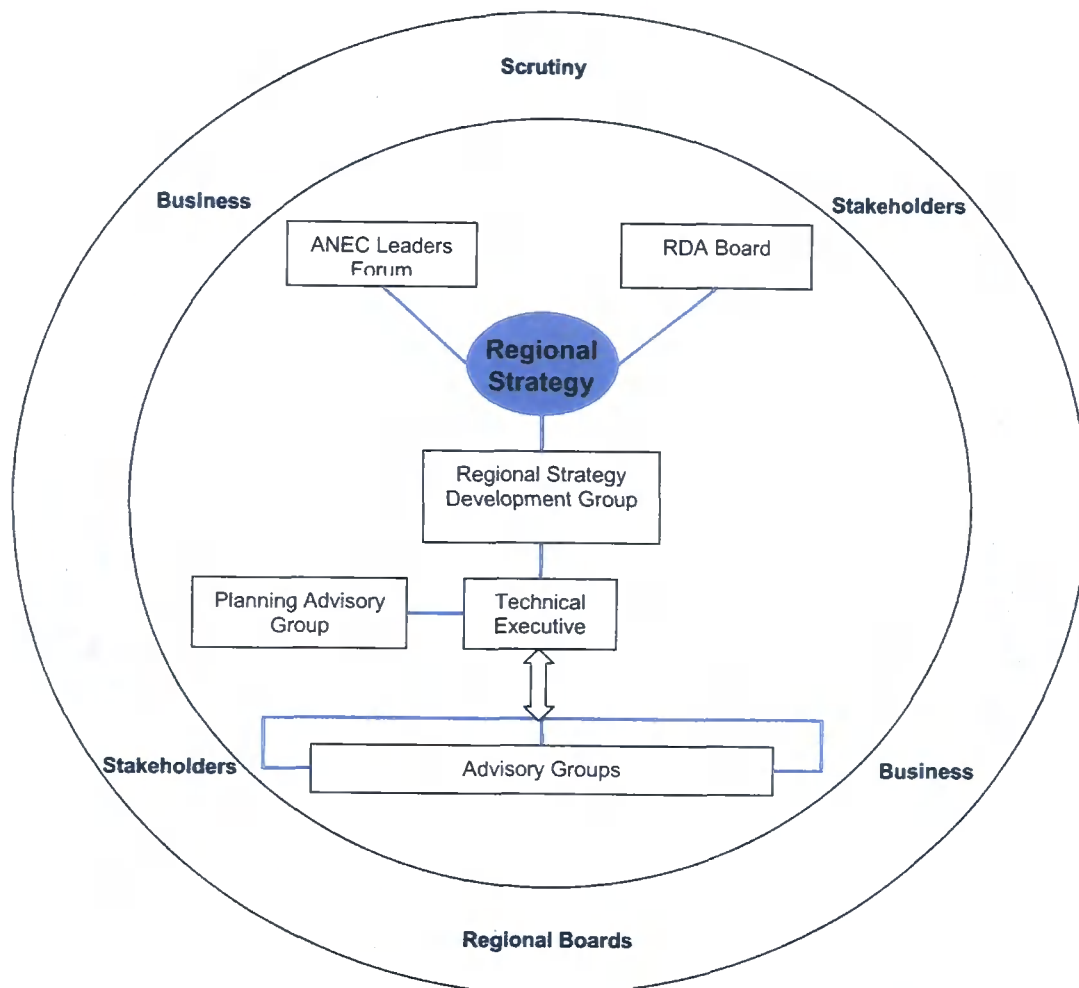## Appendix 9. Core Regional Strategy Development Process – Governance

Figure taken from the joint response of One NorthEast, the North East Assembly and ANEC to the government's consultation on taking forward the SNR published in March 2008 illustrating how the production of the Regional Strategy might operate in the North East of England.

Source: *Prosperous Places: Taking forward the Review of Sub-National Economic Development and Regeneration - Joint response from the Association of North East Councils, One NorthEast and the North East Assembly*. Copy available at:
http://www.northeastassembly.gov.uk/document.asp?id=14 (accessed 02/08/2008) or
http://www.onenortheast.co.uk/lib/liDownload/13186/SNRRegionalResponse.20June08.pdf?CFID=371498&CFTOKEN=16134443 (accessed 02/08/2008).