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SOCIAL ISSUES IN REGIONAL PLANNING

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

List of abbreviations and acronyms used in this paper:

'The Act'	Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
CCC	Cambridgeshire County Council
CCHPR	Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research
COVER	Community and Voluntary Forum: East of England
CPRE	Campaign to Protect Rural England
CSD	Committee for Spatial Development
CURS	Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, University of Birmingham
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DETR	Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions
DoE	Department of the Environment
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry
DTLR	Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions
EEDA	East of England Development Agency
EELGC	East of England Local Government Conference
EERA	East of England Regional Assembly
EiP	Examination-in-Public
ESDP	European Spatial Development Perspective
EU	European Union
GO	Government Office
GO-East	Government Office for the East of England
GOYH	Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber
GP	General Practitioner
GVA	Gross Value Added
HE	Higher Education
HMRP	Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder
IRS	Integrated Regional Strategy
LA	Local Authority

LDF	Local Development Framework
LPA	Local Planning Authority
LSCP	London-Stansted-Cambridge-Peterborough
MHLG	Ministry of Housing and Local Government
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NIMBY	Acronym for 'not in my back yard'; a person who objects to the siting of a development in their locality
NWGS	Northern Way Growth Strategy
ONS	Office for National Statistics
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
PCC	Peterborough City Council
PPG	Planning Policy Guidance note
PPS	Planning Policy Statement
PTA	Passenger Transport Authority
PTE	Passenger Transport Executive
RDA	Regional Development Agency
RES	Regional Economic Strategy
RHB	Regional Housing Board
RHS	Regional Housing Strategy
RPB	Regional Planning Body
RPG	Regional Planning Guidance
RPIC	Regional Planning and Infrastructure Commission (of the Yorkshire and Humber Assembly)
RPP	Regional Planning Panel (of the East of England Regional Assembly)
RSDF	Regional Sustainable Development Framework
RSS	Regional Spatial Strategy
RTAG	Regional Technical Advisers Group (of the East of England Regional Assembly)
RTPI	Royal Town Planning Institute
RTS	Regional Transport Strategy
SA	Sustainability Appraisal
SCP	Sustainable Communities Plan
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SEU	Social Exclusion Unit
TCPA	Town and Country Planning Association

TSY

Transform South Yorkshire

YHA

Yorkshire and Humber Assembly

Chapter One: EXPLORING SOCIAL ISSUES IN REGIONAL PLANNING

This research project took place during a period when the English planning system was undergoing a period of significant structural change, most notably with the introduction of new planning legislation in 2004. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 introduced changes which altered the governance arrangements for planning, not least by increasing the range of people and organisations expected to be consulted on planning decisions and strategies. The Act also introduced a major re-scaling of the strategic processes of planning, removing one of the tiers of planning strategies, the county structure plans, and strengthening the regional scale of planning as Regional Spatial Strategies became statutory documents for the first time. This represents a renaissance of regional planning, reflecting a broader shift towards greater policy devolution to the regional scale in UK policy-making over the last decade or so. Central to the themes of this thesis, the changed planning system has also seen a widening of the scope of the planning arena, bringing policy areas such as housing, transport, social cohesion, flood control and biodiversity closer to the heart of planning.

The thesis is broadly concerned with critically analysing how social issues have been dealt with in the emerging systems for regional planning in England using two case study regions to provide alternative perspectives, Yorkshire and Humber and the East of England. A central theme of the research involved examining the changes to the governance arrangements in the two study regions, specifically those involving Regional Planning Bodies (RPBs). Central government has introduced new structures and processes for regional planning, involving a degree of central prescription but also the potential for regional distinctiveness in developing new forms of regional accountability for planning policy. The research also examines the progress made by the two RPBs as they endeavoured to widen the scope of regional planning strategies beyond their traditional land use focus. In particular it explores how one of the themes of the modernised planning regime, social cohesion, is being drawn into the new Regional Spatial Strategies (RSSs).

In setting about this task, the project provides some detailed empirical evidence and critical analysis of the regional planning governance process, adding to the growing academic interest in this policy area (see for instance: Albrechts *et al.* 2003; Haughton and Counsell 2004a, 2004b; Marshall 2003; Murdoch and Norton 2001). Using Q methodology (see Chapter 3), the research highlights a range of different narratives which operate within regional planning, providing evidence of underlying positions which are potentially more far-reaching than the typical pro- and anti-development or pro- and anti-environment discourses identified in earlier research. Qualitative data analysis of interviews with a range of planning stakeholders then allows further interrogation of how these discourses work and also how they interact and intersect. The analysis explores the perceptions of a broad range of people involved in developing the RSSs to discover their motivations, their conceptions of the arenas for developing the strategies and the relative power of the participants.

The importance of this research lies in its emphasis on how social issues are being dealt with in the new regional planning systems, after several years in which planning practice and indeed much planning literature has tended to shy from the social (see Chapter 2). As such there is little or no recent research evidence which deals explicitly and in detail with the full range of social issues in planning, and particularly with the impacts of the reforms of 2004. The findings of this research project should be of great interest to policy-makers and academics as one of the first analyses of the progress achieved to date. The work will also provide critical analysis of the processes introduced by the two RPBs as they have sought to address the expanded scope of planning, an important contemporary challenge for planners and stakeholders as they endeavour to rethink the role of 'social' issues in planning.

Defining the 'social' in planning

It is important to begin by exploring what is meant by 'social' in the planning context. Put simply it might be said to involve putting people closer to the heart of planning, although this is a rather simplistic way of putting it since even when planning was primarily cast as a 'land use' function, it was still always in some ways about people. Planning for people in the contemporary era is a process which requires:

- being aware of and addressing people's spatial needs;
- recognising the diversity of the communities;
- addressing issues to do with social cohesion; and
- ensuring that the decisions of other policy areas that address people's needs or concerns and have a spatial dimension are also dealt with in planning, such as education, healthcare and crime.

Earlier attempts at social planning in this country had a tendency to focus on the provision of housing, concentrated on the design of the built environment, or were largely scientific approaches to calculate the standards of provision of facilities and services required to sustain a community. What makes the vision of planning for the 'social' at the beginning of the 21st Century different from previous incarnations is the greater role in the decision-making process being given to the people and organisations that will be affected by the planning strategies.

National guidance on planning policy matters is generally provided in Planning Policy Statements (PPSs) prepared by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), now the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). The PPSs and their predecessors, Planning Policy Guidance notes (PPGs), explain the relationship between planning and other policy areas, such as transport, the historic environment and renewable energy. They are an important component of the planning system as local and regional planning authorities are expected to take the PPSs and PPGs into account when preparing formal plans, whilst the guidance may also be relevant to decisions on individual planning applications. The government provides no specific guidance to the RPBs or Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) on how to address social issues in their planning strategies. This said, social issues are referred to in several of the PPSs and PPGs, for example affordable housing is addressed in *PPG3 Housing*, and community safety issues and road safety are referred to in *PPG13 Transport* (DETR 2000a; DTLR 2001a).

Early in the course of this research project, as part of the CASE studentship supervisory meetings, the regional planning team at the ODPM asked for assistance in mapping out the ways in which social issues could be addressed by planning policy. It was agreed that as part of this project a report would be written in which

social considerations would be scoped out in the style of a Planning Policy Statement (PPS). In the mock statement that was drafted, it was suggested that social considerations could be conceptualised in three categories: social well-being, social infrastructure and social equality (see Table 1.1 for examples). The feedback from the regional planning team at the ODPM suggested that the mock PPS 'had proved to be a useful means of focusing on the social element' (ODPM 2004a). The mock statement was circulated within the Department to stimulate discussion on the subject matter. What was interesting from the perspective of this research was quite how much the ODPM was keen to go back to basics to establish what was meant by 'social' issues in regional planning, and also the importance that was attached to community participation processes in the ODPM's conception of 'social' issues. The framework suggested in the mock PPS will be returned to in Chapter 8 to discuss how social considerations have been addressed in the draft Regional Spatial Strategies of the two study regions.

Table 1.1: Framework for defining social considerations in the planning context

Category	Description	Examples
Social well-being	A broad view of people's health or wellness, personal safety (including fear of crime, crime and anti-social behaviour) and social capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible opportunities for sport and leisure • Reduce fear of crime through improved sightlines in pedestrian areas • Create opportunities for social interaction in public spaces
Social infrastructure	Facilities and services that contribute towards people's health, educational, social and recreational requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate provision of primary health care facilities • Protect retail and commercial services in rural areas
Social equality	Equality of opportunity for different groups in society to enhance their social well-being and to access social infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate supply of affordable housing • Provision of mixed housing supply to meet people's diverse needs • Accessible public transport services for people without cars

Main research questions

The changes to the English planning system seek, amongst other things, to achieve social progress via spatial planning. The 2004 Act created a statutory regional tier of spatial planning that has become the first scale at which national planning policies

are given a spatial dimension. This research project examines and compares the different types of institutional constraints on the development of spatial strategies at the regional scale, and the techniques used to develop better co-ordinated policies and strategies and collaborative practices. There are four main aims for this research, outlined below.

The first is to identify and critically analyse the main discourses evident within regional planning. This aim draws on the academic literature which argues that the planning process is a policy arena in which different meanings and values are contested in order to influence policy outcomes. Healey (1998) for instance describes the planning process as a social process in which 'social meanings are constructed through discourse and language, and in which social practices are shaped and given legitimacy' (Healey 1998, p.1543). Using Q methodology (Brown 1993), the research attempts to establish whether there are common meanings shared by the stakeholders involved in developing RSSs. The location, spatial scale and the profession or interests of people are explored to see if and how they influence people's viewpoints.

The second aim is to examine critically the development of new systems for engaging communities in the development of Regional Spatial Strategies. The research explores the reasons why people participate, the perception of difficulties that might affect engagement and the dynamics of power between the different participants. The value of the wider participation of the general public is also examined through the opinions of people closely involved in the development of the strategies.

A third aim of this research is to analyse the emerging processes for improving 'horizontal' collaboration between Regional Planning Bodies and their various stakeholders, and the 'vertical' co-ordination with strategies at different scales of governance such as Local Development Documents and the sub-regional programmes of the Sustainable Communities Plan. 'Joined-up' government has been looked at in specific policy areas, for example Mawson and Hall (2000) on regeneration, Hayden and Benington (2000) on services for older people, and Cowell and Martin (2003) on local government. This project will add to this growing body of work by analysing the systems for joined-up working in the production of spatial

planning strategies at the regional scale, in the process picking out the tensions which exist between the different governance scales and also the role in sub-national planning maintained by central government.

The final aim is to analyse the ways in which the social aspects of sustainable development are drawn into spatial planning strategies at the regional scale. In pursuing this aim, particular attention is paid to exploring how social issues are defined for the purposes of regional planning – that is to explore how different people interpret the broad government advice on bringing social considerations more explicitly into planning strategies and systems. The potential offered by the current round of Regional Spatial Strategies to address these issues is discussed and an assessment is made of the relative success of Regional Planning Bodies in dealing with various aspects of the social agenda.

Structure of the thesis

Chapter 2 introduces the academic and policy material that forms the background to this project. The recent reforms to the English planning system are introduced to set the policy context for the research. This chapter outlines how planning has had an interest in addressing social issues that has taken various manifestations since planning's origins in the 19th Century. Regional planning in this country, like social planning, has a policy history characterised by a to-ing and fro-ing of national government support. The renaissance of the regional scale of planning is put in the context of a wider trend towards 'new regionalism' that is evident in many countries. Explanations for the new forms of urban governance, which encourage greater collaboration between different actors, policy areas and scales of governance, are discussed. With the growing emphasis on developing new collaborative and participatory approaches, the professional planner sometimes has to make choices between a wide range of alternative policy options, acting as mediators in systems which are increasingly less akin to semi-private professional domains of practice, instead serving as highly politicised public arenas of conflict. The chapter concludes with a discussion of why contemporary planning research must examine the new institutional landscape of planning in parallel to any meaningful analysis of the

viewpoints and objectives of participants if we are to begin to understand the ways in which the contents of planning strategies come to be shaped.

The next chapter explains the methodology used to gather the empirical evidence for this research project. A combination of in-depth semi-structured interviews, a Q methodology study, document review and observation were used to collect empirical data, offering opportunities to triangulate the data. Chapter 3 also provides details of the socio-economic backgrounds of the two case study regions, Yorkshire and Humber and the East of England.

Chapter 4 describes the governance structures and consultation opportunities put in place by the Regional Planning Bodies in the two case study regions as they prepared their RSSs. This chapter explains the processes of developing the strategies that were followed in the two regions, from the initial scoping exercises through to the submission of the draft documents to the ODPM. These descriptions reveal the diverse challenges faced by the RPBs, not least as they sought to respond to central government advice which was being produced simultaneously with the drafting of the RSSs.

The main underlying narratives of regional planning identified by the Q methodology study are introduced in Chapter 5, with a discussion of the similarities and distinctive features of each narrative. People's backgrounds in terms of profession or policy area, their location and the spatial scale in which they are operating are examined to see if these help to determine which perspective stakeholders are most closely associated with.

Chapter 6 examines in some detail the involvement of different actors in the development of the two RSSs. Firstly there is an analysis of reasons provided by those involved in the process for wanting to get involved in the development of the strategies. In addition there is a section which analyses the ways in which social interests are represented in the planning policy arenas. The chapter shows that many of the people involved in the development of the RSSs believe that the process is one that is filled with tension and difficulty, with participants in the strategy development process perceived to hold different levels of power and influence over the emerging

strategy. The chapter concludes with a review of the different opinions held by participants on the value of engaging the public in the development of the strategy.

Chapter 7 shows the different relationships that the RSSs have with other scales of governance and different regional strategies. The introduction of the Sustainable Communities Plan at the beginning of the research project provided three interesting and timely examples of sub-regional strategies, and the relationships between these and the RSSs are explored in this chapter. Although the regional scale of planning has been reinforced by the legislation, central government continues to hold considerable influence over this scale of planning and this is evident throughout this chapter. The chapter also looks at why it is important for different strategies and scales of governance to be aligned with the RSSs.

Chapter 8 starts by outlining what participants believed were the main social issues that faced their region. There is a discussion of the strategic potential offered by the spatial planning approach, which is now one of the cornerstones of the planning system, to address different policy areas. The perceived effectiveness of the regional scale of planning in addressing social issues is considered, necessarily focusing on how this plays out in the strategy-making process rather than at the implementation stage, which had yet to be reached. This chapter then explores what people thought the objectives of the regional planning strategies should be and what they believed was actually proving to be the case. Using the conceptual framework for the social considerations of planning described earlier in this introduction, the draft RSSs are analysed to reveal the extent that social issues are being addressed.

Returning to the four aims for this research, the various findings of the research are drawn together in the final chapter. In summary, whilst the Regional Assemblies have worked hard to widen engagement and improve participation in the deliberation of the new spatial strategies, resulting in a broader range of policy areas being included in the strategies, other scales of governance remain particularly influential, with the traditional land use concerns of planning continuing to dominate the debate and the content of the strategies.

Chapter Two. BREATHING LIFE INTO REGIONAL PLANNING?

Revitalising the social and the community in the reformed planning system

This chapter examines the theoretical and policy background to the recent revitalization of regional planning, linking it to broader changes in governance and in particular the growing importance attached to improved forms of engagement between planners and a wider range of stakeholders and indeed the general public. The chapter begins by examining the nature and the purpose of the recent changes to the English planning system introduced by the New Labour government, built around three main themes of sustainable development, spatial planning and community engagement. It is worth emphasising here that addressing social problems more effectively and political devolution were both high on New Labour's agenda when the party came into power in 1997. New Labour's commitment to these two policy areas is very much in evidence in the ways in which the planning system has been modified, with attention to social cohesion and the regional scale of planning both strengthened. The planning system's attention to social issues and regional planning have been subject over the years to a fluctuation in central government interest, and the changing policy context of these two themes is discussed. The recent literature on governance is examined to seek to understand better the policy turns which have seen an increased emphasis on collaboration and public engagement in planning and a re-scaling of planning towards the region.

Modernising planning

According to the New Labour government when they came into power in 1997, the previous government's policies aimed at tackling social problems had been largely ineffective. As Prime Minister Tony Blair said: 'for too long governments have simply ignored the needs of many communities. When they have acted the policies haven't worked' (Blair 1998, p.1). The explanation for this failure provided by the

Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) was that previous policies were poor at preventing social exclusion¹ and reintegrating those who had become excluded, whilst many basic services were worse in the places where they were most needed (SEU 2001). In addition these problems were underpinned by structural weaknesses in the way that the state worked, for example, the difficulties in achieving joined-up policies across government departments and poor working with external partners such as local government, the voluntary sector and businesses (SEU 2001).

Tackling social exclusion was one of the first priorities of the New Labour government (Mulgan 1998), and if 'social exclusion is the problem, the aim in tackling it is the achievement of social inclusion' (Kearns 2003, p.38). The ODPM's policy statement on the purposes of planning states that planning is part of the government's programme to tackle social exclusion with planning authorities being urged to 'promote communities which are inclusive, healthy, safe and crime free, whilst respecting the diverse needs of communities and the special needs of particular sectors of the community' (ODPM 2005a, p.11). Alongside setting cross-cutting objectives to tackle social problems, the government also sought to improve the delivery of public services and joint policy-making and working (Bullock *et al.* 2001; Lee and Woodward 2002; Office of Public Services Reform 2002).

The New Labour government's early emphasis on socially inclusive policy, community development, neighbourhood renewal and joined-up policies (HM Government 1999; ODPM 2003a; SEU 2001) led some people to imagine that the new government would adopt a more socially and environmentally aware approach to planning (Greed 2000). Along with the political changes, planning theories and methodologies had developed in the 1990s which were characterised by more collaborative and participatory approaches (see Forester 1999; Healey 1997a, 1998). The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) also recognised the need for change. In 2001 it adopted a *New Vision for Planning*, which suggested that effective planning should look beyond statutory processes and required working with a variety of organisations (RTPI 2001a). These shifts in thinking represented a reorientation away from the high level structural plans and policies of the past towards approaches

¹ Social exclusion is defined by the SEU as 'a shorthand term for what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime and family breakdown' (SEU 2001, p.10).

which were expected to address more directly the needs of the individual and the community.

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 introduced major changes to the English planning system, and was built around three main themes:

- sustainable development;
- spatial planning approach; and
- community involvement in planning (ODPM 2004b).

The Act very clearly set out the central government's commitment to promoting sustainable development through its planning policies, arguing that sustainable development is 'the core principle underpinning planning' (ODPM 2005a, p.2). The old planning system was perceived by the New Labour government as slow, complex, unpredictable and inflexible which was said to result in economic growth being held back and people feeling disengaged from the whole process (DTLR 2001b). The latter is particularly important, reflecting long-standing criticisms that the planning system has tended to benefit land and property owners, the educated and the middle class at the expense of other members of society (Evans and Rydin 1997). From a government perspective, the changes introduced since 1997 are intended to make the planning system faster, fairer and more predictable, whilst contributing to the delivery of the government's wider macroeconomic, social and environmental objectives (ODPM 2002a, 2005a).

The inclusion of sustainable development for the first time as a statutory purpose in the 2004 Act resulted in the remit of the entire planning system being extended beyond its traditionally local concerns with land use. As a result of this new statutory purpose, planning authorities were expected to integrate into their planning policies the government's four aims for sustainable development as presented in its 1999 strategy *A Better Quality of Life* (DETR 1999): these were high and stable levels of economic growth and employment, social progress, protection of the environment, and the prudent use of natural resources (ODPM 2005a). According to the ODPM: 'The government believes that planning can be a strategic, proactive force for long term economic prosperity, social cohesion and environmental protection'

(ODPM 2003b, p.1). The term 'social cohesion' is important, requiring planners to become more active in addressing social issues than most had thought they were mandated to under previous government guidance. To assist this process the government has emphasised the role of Sustainability Appraisal in ensuring greater attention to social issues in both local and regional planning strategies, the Local Development Documents (LDDs) and the Regional Spatial Strategies (RSSs).

The new system of development plans introduced by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 is underpinned by the concept of spatial planning and therefore represents a move away from narrower traditional land use planning. The adoption of the spatial planning approach means bringing together and integrating other strategies and programmes that 'influence the nature of places and how they can function' (ODPM 2005a, p.12). Spatial planning can operate at any spatial scale, and in the UK it is increasingly applied to planning at the regional and local scales. The 2004 Act replaced the old Regional Planning Guidance with statutory Regional Spatial Strategies, providing a spatial framework for each English region. The RSSs are expected to provide an integrated approach for the delivery of policies relating to a wide range of policy areas including housing, economic development, biodiversity and nature conservation, transport, air quality, culture, health, and waste treatment and disposal at the regional and sub-regional level (ODPM 2004f). As a result of the widening of the remit of regional planning and the extension of the number and type of stakeholders expected to participate in the process, there was always a risk of generating further scope for conflict rather than a simple reconciliation of different interests.

The third theme of the planning reforms was community involvement in planning. The devolution of power to new layers of community governance has been one of the key themes of the New Labour government (Imrie and Raco 2003). According to Rose:

community is promoted as an antidote to the combined depredation of market forces, remote central governments, [and] insensitive local authorities in new programmes for the regeneration of delimited locales (Rose 1996, p.335).

Greater community involvement in the planning process is justified by the government as part of its efforts to ensure that decisions are taken democratically and that inclusive, transparent and relevant strategies are developed (ODPM 2004c). Local planning authorities are required to produce a *Statement of Community Involvement* which indicates how the community was consulted in the production of Local Development Documents. At the regional scale, the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders in the process of developing RSSs is regarded as crucial to securing regional ownership of the strategy. The reforms also require that Regional Planning Bodies (RPBs) use innovative techniques that draw in the views and opinions of the wider community, providing a continuous process of participation on the content of RSSs rather than a one-off fixed period of consultation. When the RPBs submit the draft RSS to government, they are required to publish a 'pre-submission consultation statement' which sets out how consultation was carried out, the key issues raised and how these shaped the draft RSS (ODPM 2004f).

These changes in planning consultations are part of a general opening up of planning which has gathered pace in recent years, perhaps reflecting that improved collaborative and participatory practices have been a perennial quest for policy-makers in this country and overseas (Powell and Glendinning 2002). It is notable that New Labour emphasised a 'collaborative discourse' (Clarence and Painter 1998) since before its election in 1997 and has continued with it ever since. This collaborative discourse employs terms such as joined-up working, partnership, collaboration and co-ordination in policy documents. It extends beyond improving horizontal linkages between government departments to include partnerships between government, other public sector organisations, and the private and voluntary sectors at national, regional and sub-regional levels.

Perhaps unsurprisingly in this context, recent research commissioned by the ODPM strongly advocated that the English planning system should adopt mediation and participatory planning (Heriot-Watt University *et al.* 2003), in order that 'All parts of the community - individuals, organisations and businesses - must be able to make their voice heard' (DTLR 2001b, p.2). This was said to represent a move from 'public participation' to 'participatory planning' in line with the central precepts of communicative planning theory (Healey 1997a, 1998; Hillier 2000; Innes 1995),

which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. Planners need to cooperate with those who hold the resources essential to their achievement in order that they can accomplish the wide range of goals expected of them. However this might result in partnerships favouring those resource-rich actors who possess strategic knowledge. The insistence by central government on wide consultation when preparing RSSs has been one of the greatest challenges facing the Regional Planning Bodies (RPBs), not least given that some difficult regional choices needed to be addressed. For example, the involvement of pro-development interests, rural protection and environmental NGOs and local authorities has increased the potential for debate and controversy over the nature of new development and infrastructure expansion that is planned for a region.

It is worth noting here that the modernised planning system, along with reforms directed at local government and housing, is intended to support the government's Sustainable Communities Plan launched in February 2003 and the Northern Way Growth Strategy launched a year later (ODPM 2003c, 2004d). The focus of the Sustainable Communities Plan is housing supply, which is regarded as a national priority (ODPM 2003d). The Plan set out a new framework with which to address housing market imbalances in different parts of England. Underpinning the Plan is a long-term vision to build 'successful, thriving and inclusive communities ... that will stand the test of time' (ODPM 2003c, p.3) with the government recognising that previous experience has shown that investing in housing alone risks money being wasted.

Returning the 'social' to planning

The traditional story told of the foundation of the planning profession sets it in the context of several different movements from the middle of the 19th Century: public health reforms, the Garden City and the City Beautiful (Campbell and Fainstein 1996; Cherry 1996). Three broad phases to planning can be identified:

- the formative years (from the end of the nineteenth century to around 1910);
- the period of institutionalisation and professionalisation (1910-1945); and

- the post-war period of standardization, crisis and diversification (Campbell and Fainstein 1996; Pacione 2001).

The recent reforms of the English planning system can be seen as being part of the third phase, which Allmendinger *et al.* (2003) describe as involving a series of shifting scales, processes and objectives. Each approach in this last phase has been characterised by different 'settlements' between tensions that include, on the one hand, competing scales of governance and, on the other hand, the balance between prescription and discretion (Allmendinger *et al.* 2003). The different combinations of these tensions have resulted in various settlements, with each new approach responding to a perceived weakness in the previous settlement, resulting in a 'see-saw' approach. So under the settlement wrought by the 2004 Act, there has been a strengthening of the regional scale at the expense of the county scale which has been removed completely. In terms of the amount of discretion held by planners, central government continue to issue guidance to planners about the form planning should take, how they expect planners to consult more widely using more proactive participatory techniques, and how planning should become a process which co-ordinates the strategies and policies of different policy areas via the spatial planning approach. In other words, despite the rhetoric of devolution and allowing regional distinctiveness, at the beginning of the 21st Century there is still extensive central government prescription of the role, activities and responsibilities of planning professionals and bodies.

With the integration of different policy activities advocated by the spatial planning approach and planning expected to deliver sustainable development, social issues have now been drawn more explicitly into the regional planning debates alongside environmental and economic considerations (Haughton and Counsell 2004a; Owens and Cowell 2002). But this is not the first time that planning has been mandated to address social issues. For over a century, planning has had an interest in social issues in some form or other. Indeed, the origin of planning as a form of intervention at the end of the 19th Century can be traced to the emergence of a set of 'social issues', for example public health and overcrowded housing, arising from the changes to society and the built environment caused by industrialisation and the growth of the urban metropolis.

Initially there was the drive for sanitary reform which provided the basis for early town planning, although at this stage it was town and city corporations rather than central government which instigated many reforms. Also during this period came the interest in social issues on the part of paternalistic industrialists such as Titus Salt, Joseph Rowntree and George Cadbury, who experimented with the design of model housing and urban areas for their employees. These new urban areas were designed to meet the 'social' needs of the working classes, including for example the provision of opportunities for learning and green open space, although this provision was heavily conditioned by the demands of production. With temperance sometimes an issue for religious reasons, public houses were deliberately excluded in some of these developments, with alternatives for social activity provided instead. In terms of size these model settlements did not contribute a great deal to the large-scale problems of slums in the large cities, but they did stimulate reformers to question the morality and necessity of poor living conditions (Pacione 2001). With workers themselves beginning to demand housing, increasing pressure was placed on the state to intervene in the social conditions of production. By the end of the 19th Century, these pressures began to coalesce with some of the ideas introduced by the Garden City movement with its designs for model new towns (Burton and Cherry 1970). Around the same time, legislative reforms were implemented to deal with the effects of disease, overcrowding and slum development, with an emphasis on sanitary reform and building standards, and thus a social role for planning was more clearly signposted.

The Second World War saw a resurgence in the desire to plan with people in mind, with the government offering promises of a new social life in return for loyalty during wartime (Chapman 1948). There was an expectation that the state would undertake most of this development (Vigar *et al.* 2000). Planning became an instrument of the welfare state as government agencies and departments 'planned' for the nation's health, education, employment and welfare (Colenutt 1997; Glass 1959; Greed 2000). The paternalistic control of land use and the built environment was the focus of planning, especially regarding the provision of housing with its legacy from the 19th Century and its links with delivering social satisfaction (Burton and Cherry 1970). Master-planning was seen as the way forward, with its emphasis on surveys, analysis and plans. This highlighted the importance of a scientific approach to planning (Lock 1947), with standards of provision for elements such as

shops and open space designed to meet basic needs, provide satisfaction and form the basis of a happy and fulfilled community (Burton and Cherry 1970). By the 1960s a more prescriptive approach to planning was advocated which recommended that systematic social analysis should become an integral part of the planning process (Brooke Taylor 1963; McConnell 1969). This dependency on 'social surveys, demographic analyses, and master plans, persuasive legislation and state intervention 'for the greater good'' (Blair 1973, p.19), or 'social planning', implied the integration of economic, physical and social welfare planning and was exemplified by the new towns of the post-war era.

By the early 1970s though, uncertainties began to be expressed about efficacy of social planning and welfare-statism. In particular, the role of the government in social planning was questioned (Webb 1971). This was partly a result of a growing critique of the state provision of housing and the realisation that improvements to housing alone did not necessarily remove social problems especially if the additions to housing stock did not fit the community's needs such as some high-rise developments (Burton and Cherry 1970). More generally, the idea of the welfare state was under attack from neo-conservative forces and with it the instruments of collective provision, which included social planning. The changes to the spatial form of the city had not resulted in the intended redistribution of income, instead it seemed to some that the options for the affluent suburbanite had improved and the possibilities for low income residents had been reduced (Evans 1997; Harvey 1970). There was also the recognition of the social and environmental limits of physical planning and design: that there was more to building a place which worked than architecture and design and that planners should be more sensitive to the social consequences of planning (Blair 1973; Broady 1968). The result was widespread disillusionment with 'social' planning. Some said that it had failed to deliver the modernisation of the built environment promised since the 1940s, whilst others attacked it for its failure to prevent undesirable development (Brindley *et al.* 1996).

After the 1970s, central government emphasised that guidance to planners should concentrate on land use planning matters, rather than have a redistributive role combining economic, environmental, social and infrastructure policy (Vigar *et al.* 2000). The 1980s saw reforms, or deregulation, of the planning system and a growing emphasis on letting the market rather than the state decide on the spatial

allocation of land use. This resulted in a reduction in development control and the removal of forward planning duties in some areas as the market was allowed more of a role, especially if employment opportunities were created (Tewdwr-Jones 2002). Alongside this, competition and market forces were introduced into the provision of welfare services that had previously been the preserve of local government, which quite rapidly saw its role change from provider towards that of enabler (Meller 1997). By the 1990s, local planning authorities were working in a tightly constrained regulatory environment in terms of the purposes of planning, with an increased emphasis on national policy documents and planning guidance (Vigar *et al.* 2000).

Sustainable development emerged as the watchword of the 1990s, and with this came a rising concern for the environment (Brindley *et al.* 1996), which saw by the end of the decade the emergence of the policy imperative to identify 'win-win' solutions, that is those which try to achieve environmental protection and economic development simultaneously as a first order priority, rather than identifying 'trade-offs' (Haughton and Counsell 2004a). Environmental issues and sustainable development gave a whole new momentum to planning (Owens and Cowell 2002), leading some to argue that planning could regain a more powerful role in constructing sustainable social futures (Evans 1997). During the early 1990s the social dimensions of sustainable development had been less prominent despite intra-generational equity being a central element of the Brundtland definition of sustainable development (WCED 1997). With its greater attention to the social inclusion agenda, this changed once the New Labour government was elected in 1997 (Mulgan 1998). By the early 2000s, the government had introduced a revised sustainable development strategy, *A Better Quality of Life* (DETR 1999), and this added a more explicit emphasis on social inclusion to the environmental and economic focus of the previous interpretations of sustainable development (Owens and Cowell 2002). As a result the imperative for planning became to achieve 'win-win-win' situations in an attempt to include social cohesion alongside environmental protection and economic development (Counsell *et al.* 2003).

In addition to contributing towards social cohesion, planning in the UK is also expected to address people's diverse needs and values and ensure that opportunities for equality are provided (ODPM 2003e, 2004f, 2005b). The RTPI *Code of Professional Conduct* compels professional planners not to discriminate on the basis

of race, disability, gender, sexual orientation, age or religion and creed (RTPI 2001b). Academic literature has looked at the ways in which equality and diversity issues are drawn into planning practice, for example: Douglass and Friedmann (1998), Greed (1994), Reeves (2005) and Thomas (2000). Reeves (2005) suggests that plans should acknowledge and value the differences within society and ensure that every member of a community has equal opportunity of access and participate in the environment. However when it comes to the practicalities, Greed (2000) observes that planning inspectors have sometimes removed policies from development plans that relate to women, ethnic minority groups and disability. Their removal was justified on the basis that the policies were *ultra vires*, or outside the scope of planning law, as they imposed requirements that were regarded as unreasonable and not land use matters. Greed also argues that the ad hoc approach of plans towards issues of equality and diversity suggests that sensitivity towards these issues is dependent to some degree on the willingness and perspectives of planners. Recent research suggests this still holds true, finding that issues around diversity and planning are not well understood and rarely figure as a strong priority in planning practice and procedure (Sheffield Hallam University and ODPM 2004).

Invigorating the regional scale in planning

Since its election in 1997 the New Labour government has sought to strengthen the regional scale of planning (Tewdwr-Jones 2002). In 1998 a policy statement, *Modernising Planning*, set out what the new government intended to do to modernise the land use system, including plans to strengthen the regional scale and to widen the policy areas covered by them (DETR 1998b). A consultation paper entitled *The Future of Regional Planning Guidance* was produced in 1998 (DETR 1998a) and was followed by a new PPG11, *Regional Planning*, in 2000 (DETR 2000b). The consultation paper suggested greater responsibility be placed on planning at the regional scale with regional planning bodies working in collaboration with regional Government Offices, other regional interests and local authorities. These changes to regional planning and other reforms to the planning system were eventually consolidated into legislation through the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

The modernisation of planning has seen a shift in state territoriality, i.e. scale, that is said to have privileged the region (Allmendinger 2003a; Allmendinger *et al.* 2005). The removal of county structure plans, the newly endowed statutory status of regional plans, and increased central direction of local planning, for example on major infrastructure projects and Business Planning Zones, all represent new arrangements for planning that mark a shift of power away from the local authorities towards the regional and national scales of governance (Allmendinger *et al.* 2005). The modernisation process has therefore involved a 're-scaling' of some important regulatory and planning functions to the level of regions (Allmendinger 2003b). This re-scaling has widened the gap between strategic direction, which now occurs at the regional scale, and the implementation of policy at the local scale (Cowell and Owens 2002). Alongside of these changes was the introduction of the government's Sustainable Communities Plan and Northern Way Growth Strategy, which in different ways also reinforced the importance of the regional scale (ODPM 2003c, 2004d).

This re-scaling of the planning system can be seen as part of a wider trend described in the academic literature as 'new regionalism' (Lovering 1999), which in turn captures an important dimension of some profound changes occurring in the geographical locus of the power of the state. MacLeod (2001) contains a summary of different perspectives on new regionalism. In the last twenty years there has been a trend towards a strengthened regional institutional tier across many countries including the UK, suggesting that the policy-making community has been quick to 'accept new academic writing arguing that the economics of the so-called knowledge economy favour regions that can link locally for competitive advantage' (Amin *et al.* 2003, p.23). Various reasons for this trend are cited in Tewdwr-Jones 2002, p.126-127. This English brand of new regionalism has its critics (for example Amin *et al.* 2003; Jones 2001), who point to its flaws and draw attention to the problem seemingly ignored by policy-makers that 'there is a capital logic of regional inequality, resulting from differential economic performance and interregional competition' (Jones 2001, p.1196). Thus critics such as Jones and MacLeod (1999, 2004), Jonas and Ward (2002) and Jonas and Pincetl (2006) have argued that there is a need for more evidence of the economic and political determinants of regionalism in diverse national contexts, as new regionalism may be better explained as a product of new strategic state priorities than a result of a drive for greater economic

efficiency. Walker (2002) suggests that there are benefits of returning to 'centralism', as he argues that economic and social policies are best managed from the centre, thus preventing the potentially damaging consequences of rivalry between sub-national areas. If this is the case then perhaps there is little hope that the new regional structures and strategies will deliver greater regional equality, which is one of the central government's principle objectives (ODPM 2005f).

Since 1997 New Labour's devolution project has opened up new forms of governance and new ways of delivering public policy in the territories of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as well as in the English regions and London (Keating 2002). As these new institutional forms become established in the UK, there are ongoing debates on the scale and the nature of state intervention (e.g Amin *et al.* 2003; Brenner and Theodore 2002; Goodwin *et al.* 2002, 2005; Jones 2001; Marquand and Tomaney 2001; Walker 2002). Goodwin *et al.* (2005) suggests that it is no longer sufficient to refer to the changing forms of governance in the UK as a manifestation of the 'hollowing out' of the state (Jessop 1990), as although some elements of the state at particular scales are indeed being 'hollowed out', they claim there are others at different scales which are being 'filled in'. They further observe that the re-scaling of economic governance is characterised 'both vertically between scales and horizontally between institutions operating over the same territory' (Goodwin *et al.* 2005, p. 432). The new institutional forms are likely to be uneven, thus creating potentially uneven capacities to act and uneven patterns of success or failure. For example, Benneworth and Roberts (2002) observe that devolution offers institutions the potential to adopt experimental approaches as actors are freed from central control. They argue that the newly devolved institutions in Scotland and Wales have already exercised their powers to integrate sustainable development into their activities, whilst the English regions lag behind; a situation which Marquand and Tomaney (2001) blame on the regions' lack of political leadership, exemplifying the uneven capacity of the regions to act.

Parallel to the substantial changes that have occurred to the scales of strategic planning since 1997, Allmendinger and Haughton (forthcoming) argue that devolution has encouraged a redefinition of the scope of plan-making activities to include a wide range of issues such as social cohesion, bio-diversity and integrated transport systems. With greater policy integration and collaboration being sought by

central government, different policy interests are actively involved in what was noted earlier as the 'filling in' of the restructured state. This is not a uniquely UK phenomenon, as Friedmann (2005) observes examples in the rest of the world where the boundaries of planning are being expanded to address a wider range of concerns than land use, especially in relation to sustainable development. As a result the boundaries and priorities of policy areas are being re-worked as different policy domains, interests and groupings strive for influence, and 'policy actors interact across scales and across sectors in complex, non-hierarchical, non-linear, cross-sectoral ways' (Allmendinger and Haughton forthcoming, p.24). Therefore planning has become a complex mosaic of inter-layered scalar geographies rather than a simple nested hierarchy of scales (Brenner 2001). Not least amongst this planning 'mosaic' is the national government, which continues to exert its influence over sub-national scales of planning through, amongst other things, the proliferation of guidance and policies that planning authorities should follow, its recommendations of which policy areas and groupings should be involved in the development of planning strategies, and its requirement that planning should seek to deliver the government's interpretation of sustainable development.

The history of regional planning in England can be characterised by the ways in which this strategic scale has gone in and out of fashion with central government. One of the earliest examples of regional planning was Abercrombie's *Greater London Plan* (Abercrombie 1945) which sought a redistribution of existing employment and population, and was followed by the first new towns (Simmons 1999). The next wave of regional planning began in the early 1960s when White Papers on Central Scotland and the North East, and the favoured treatment given to these areas, led other regions to pressure for similar studies (Lindley 1982). In 1963 a division was set up in the Board of Trade to supervise further studies in other regions. Whilst the focus of the studies in the north had been the problems caused by economic decline, high levels of projected population growth in the South East had triggered the government's *South East Study* (MHLG 1964). This was followed by the creation of a second wave of new towns (Simmons 1999). Regional Economic Planning Councils were set up in 1966, each producing a regional strategy by the early 1970s (Lindley 1982). The election in 1979 of the Thatcher government ended this era of regional planning, and later that year the Planning Councils were abolished.

The abolition of the metropolitan county councils and the Greater London Council in 1986 brought about the beginning of a revival in regional planning. It became clear that there was a requirement for strategic planning guidance for the unitary development plans to be prepared by the unitary councils, but the government sought to keep this type of planning activity to a minimum (Simmons 1999). The early 1990s saw the emergence of a number of issues including an overheated housing market in the South East and a rise in concern over environmental degradation, which led to calls for more strategic planning (Haughton and Counsell 2004a). This resulted in a national system for regional planning being introduced in 1990 and a flurry of Planning Policy Guidance notes (PPGs) were issued by the Department of the Environment, responsible at the time for national planning policy. When the RPGs were introduced in 1990, their core function was to allocate the required housing completions to the regions and counties, with other purposes such as transport infrastructure, economic development and natural resources added gradually (Marshall 2003). PPG12 *Development Plans and Regional Planning Guidance* (DoE 1992) issued in 1992 indicated that the primary function of regional planning guidance was to provide strategic policy for land use and development on regional issues that would guide the preparation of local structure plans (Simmons 1999).

The new generation of regional planning documents developed in the wake of the 2004 Act are intended by the government to be more regionally specific, to be produced on a more inclusive basis and to contain a stronger spatial element than the old style of documents (ODPM 2004f). The government's guidance on how to prepare the new RSSs is contained in PPS11 (ODPM 2004f). The main stages of developing the new RSS are set out below:

Stage one: Drawing up a project plan

In association with the Government Office (GO), the RPB should draw up, consult on and publish a project plan which should cover a number of aspects including, amongst other things, the objectives of the revised RSS and why they were chosen, a timetable for preparing the draft RSS, the policy areas to be considered and a statement of public participation which sets out the proposed involvement of the community and partnership working.

Stage two: Developing strategic options and policies

Involving the community and working with partners, the RPB should identify different strategic options for delivering its vision for the region. There are several matters that need to be addressed including the objectives outlined in the project plan, the plans of infrastructure and service providers, technical work, such as housing needs assessments, and the Sustainability Appraisal (SA).

Stage three: Submission of the draft RSS to the Secretary of State

The draft RSS is sent to the Secretary of State together with the SA report, the 'pre-submission consultation statement' and supporting technical documents. The 'pre-submission consultation statement' sets out how the RPB consulted people in the process of revising the RSS and can be compared to what the RPB said it intended to do in its statement of public participation. There will be a period of consultation during which any representations on the draft document must be made.

Stages four and five: Examination-in-Public (EiP) and the Panel Report

Unless the revisions to the RSS are minor there is an assumption that there will be an EiP. The main purpose of the EiP is to provide an opportunity to discuss and test the soundness of the draft RSS before a Panel appointed by the Secretary of State. The soundness of the Plan will be tested against criteria which include, amongst other things, whether:

- the draft is founded on a robust evidence base;
- it is consistent with other relevant regional strategies, including the economic, housing and cultural strategies; and
- engagement of the community and partnership working have been satisfactory.

After the EiP the Panel completes a report into the EiP.

Stages six and seven: Publication of proposed changes and issue of the RSS

The Secretary of State publishes proposed changes to the draft revision and allows time for comment. After consideration of any representations made on the proposed changes, the finalised RSS will be published. At the end of the process, the RPB should publish a consolidated SA report of the entire SA process covering all the stages of revising the RSS (Source: ODPM 2004f).

Under the 2004 reforms, regional planning has been given a strong statutory role to play in addressing social issues for the first time. Earlier incarnations of regional planning in the 1960s and 1970s had not been totally without social objectives, with Glasson (1974) describing the main aim of regional planning as ‘to achieve a satisfactory relationship between people, jobs and the environment in the region’ (p.12). Regional plans included social objectives such as the provision of housing, social, cultural and recreational facilities. But these regional strategies were put together by professional planners with little public participation, being based on surveys, analyses and forecasts for the region that reflected the scientific approach to planning of that time (Blair 1973; Glasson 1974). As a result the objectives of these plans were very generalised, whilst the advisory role of the regional bodies that produced them left them open to being ignored by local authorities (Glasson 1974; Houghton and Counsell 2004a). In the present day, Regional Planning Bodies are expected to work in partnership not only with local authorities, Government Offices and government departments and agencies, but also with a wide variety of interest groups, other regional institutions and the general public in a collaborative approach that should see more consensual planning strategies for the regions being produced.

New forms of urban governance: the emergence of collaboration

The reforms made to the planning system in recent years have been developed in ways which the government intended would be consistent with its changes to local government (Tewdwr-Jones *et al.* 2006). These broad changes in governance arrangements can be viewed as being recognisable characteristics of what Jessop refers to as the Schumpeterian workfare postnational regime whereby the importance of the national scale of policy-making is challenged and re-worked as new powers are gained by other scales of government and governances, alongside a growing

reliance on networking, partnership, consultation and negotiation (Jessop 2002). New forms of local governance are said to be required because in the contemporary era the:

problems are too complex; the solutions are highly contingent upon the actions of others. Political systems must adapt to form horizontal, cooperative and trusting relationships with the many actors who need to be involved in the policy process. Command and control does not work; networking, bargaining and cooperation are part of the answer (John and Cole 2000, p.82).

Central government's long-standing inability to pursue effective sensitive and differentiated programmes to tackle the problems of particular localities has led to experiments with new sub-national partnership arrangements to guide and promote the development of local resources and programme delivery (Jessop 1994; Newman 2001; Peck and Tickell 2002). Networks and other forms of joint working had emerged strongly under the previous Conservative governments, partly as a by-product of the fragmentation of services at local government level. Since the election of New Labour in 1997, a more 'collaborative discourse' has emerged in which networking and partnership are intentional outcomes of many policy initiatives (Clarence and Painter 1998; Newman 2001).

In his model of intergovernmental relations Rhodes (1988) emphasises the role of policy networks in shaping the policy process and policy outcomes. This was recognised to be no simple task. In order for networks to operate successfully, certain attributes are required: firstly there has to be a high degree of trust, reciprocity and altruism between network members, and secondly it is widely held that networks need to be managed in a way that is not hierarchical but involves co-ordinating network members around a problem or policy measure (Clarence and Painter 1998). In addition it is important to examine in detail the ways in which the policy sectors themselves are constructed and maintained by 'particular forms of knowledge and expertise, well-defined policy territories, and patterns of resource allocation' (Cowell and Martin 2003, p.163). This is important for this study, with its concern to examine how the boundaries of planning are being re-worked as part of its expanded remit, not least as planners are directed to pay more attention to social

issues, but also issues to do with climate change, competitiveness policy, sustainable development and so forth. To address these issues, planners need not simply more knowledge themselves, but to be able to access more effectively the expertise and resources of others.

New Labour's approach to joint or 'joined-up' working has both a horizontal and vertical dimension (Stoker 2003). Stoker directly addresses the vertical dimension of the new governance arrangements by suggesting that New Labour has developed two models to manage multi-level governance. One model, which focuses on horizontal joining-up, sees

local and regional government as a strategic or community leader, with a wide role in determining priorities and expresses the concerns of communities in partnership with other stakeholders (Stoker 2003, p.4).

In the other model, central government is the strategic leader managing all the institutions of multi-level governance with discretion being given to them to deliver the centrally determined agenda. Arguably the spatial planning approach developed by this current Labour government looks very similar to Stoker's 'strategic centre' model. This though is too simplistic. For instance regional planning with its strong emphasis on community engagement and stakeholder involvement also contains features of his 'community leadership' model. What can begin to be seen then is a system for re-working vertical governance arrangements which is simultaneously re-working power across all scales in complex ways, rather than simply transferring the balance of power in one direction only.

To try to investigate these ideas further, it is worth looking at Stoker's community leadership model in the light of Cox and Mair's (1991) conception of locality as agent, whereby the state's role and actions have tended to increase the responsibilities of local governments and stakeholders. Cox and Mair (1991) also use the concepts of spatial and scalar divisions of labour to explain how local actors are linked, directly or indirectly, to actors outside their locality. If these concepts are applied to planning, then the planning reforms can be viewed as developing a hierarchy of spatial scales. At the lowest spatial scale, Community Strategies are to be developed and translated into spatial form as Local Development Documents.

The LDDs will in turn be nested within the Regional Spatial Strategies, which will also need to address national planning guidance. At each of these scales of governance, issues relating to spatial divisions of labour are addressed by actors operating within that scale. However these issues, for example economic development or transport, are rarely purely local. As a result, the stakeholders involved in planning have to interact with wider modes of governance operating at different scales, for example at the national or European level, as well as governance structures operating within other geographies, for example neighbouring regions or cities. According to Cox and Mair (1991), the central state can also be observed assuming a major role in local affairs, intervening in conflicts in provision that local branches of the state seem unable to resolve, similar to Stoker's strategic centre model of governance. An example of this is the Sustainable Communities Plan through which central government is attempting to resolve the problem of housing market imbalances which neither the market nor local government have been able to rectify by themselves.

Planning for cross-cutting issues

At the same time as planners' methods of working are tending towards more collaborative behaviour within and across scales of governance, the objectives of planning are being extended to include cross-cutting issues such as sustainable development and social inclusion (ODPM 2005a). As observed earlier in this chapter, sustainable development, whereby connections need to be made between the economic, environmental and social, is now firmly on the planning policy agenda (Alden 2001; Cowell and Owens 1997; Owens and Cowell 2002; Rydin 2003). Specifically the regional planning tier has been privileged by the New Labour government 'as a forum in which delivering planning aspirations are to be reconciled under the heading of 'sustainable development'' (Murdoch and Norton 2001, p.122). Formal assessment techniques, deliberative participation and integration of economic, social and environmental policy objectives, are all approaches that have been viewed as 'operationalising' sustainable development (Owens and Cowell 2002). However all of these approaches are bound into power struggles in which conceptions of what is sustainable are actively constructed and negotiated (Murdoch 2000).

Owens and Cowell (2002) suggest two conflicting views of the outcomes of these struggles. Firstly these approaches can provide forums for learning new ideas and therefore have the potential to mobilise radical conceptions of sustainable development. Or alternatively, as the outcomes are always going to be constrained by existing structures of power, only safe conceptions of sustainable development will be deployed. With LDDs and RSSs subject to Sustainability Appraisal, central government is pushing planners to accept its definition of sustainable development and to develop integrated solutions through which economic, social and environmental objectives are expected to be addressed together. As a result planners are expected to resolve the tensions between objectives to deliver a win-win-win scenario that in practice has proved difficult to achieve (Counsell and Haughton 2002; Rydin 2003).

The rise of social inclusion as a cross-cutting issue marks a shift in the state's focus away from the economy and jobs towards 'softer' issues (Kearns 2003). The Thatcher government had developed planning and land use policies premised on the notion that 'improvements in the macro-economy would provide benefits that would inevitably trickle down' to the less well off (Tiesdell and Allmendinger 2001, p.907). However it has become increasingly argued that social issues do matter in various ways:

'social' factors such as family structure and individual self-esteem, and personal characteristics such as punctuality, reliability and attitude are of equal or greater importance than 'economic' factors such as the levels of inward investment, new floorspace provided, or even formal training qualifications. In other words, 'social capital' is as important to economic development as economic capital (Kleinman 1998, p.13).

The result of this greater recognition of the concept of social capital is evident in the 'strategies, policies and initiatives that integrate the 'people and communities' with a 'bricks and mortar' dimension' (Tiesdell and Allmendinger 2001, p.921). The days when social policy was just about the delivery of public welfare are over. The purpose of the welfare state is moving towards getting people back into employment rather than providing social protection against problems such as unemployment and

illness as previously (Peters 2003). New arrangements for the delivery of social policy are also being introduced, which include private sector providers, client participation and the use of regulation as a means of addressing social problems (Peters 2003). However the change in priorities and the new institutional arrangements of social policy have not been accompanied by a withdrawal of the state. Peck and Tickell (2002) observe that these shifts are characteristics of a new mode of the neoliberalist project they describe as 'roll-out' neoliberalism, in which 'a deeply interventionist agenda is emerging around 'social' issues like crime, immigration, policing, welfare reform, urban order and surveillance, and community regeneration' (Peck and Tickell 2002, p.389). This means that rather than pursuing deregulative approaches, state regulation continues through new forms of direct and indirect regulatory frameworks for influencing individual and collective behaviours.

Spatial planning: Expanding the institutional landscape of regional planning

Alongside extending the aims of planning to the achievement of the government's cross-cutting objectives, the 2004 Planning Act made the spatial planning approach the core delivery mechanism of the planning system (ODPM 2005a). The term 'spatial planning' has had widespread use since the early-mid 1990s, and

calls for the strategic management of spaces and territories in ways which organize land uses with a wider regard for the balance between developmental and environmental objectives. It implies a more cross-sectoral and longer-term approach than 'town-planning' (Thompson 2000, pp.127-128).

Spatial planning is concerned with the location of both physical structures and activities within an area and can operate at any spatial scale. Working across functional, sectoral and institutional boundaries, it aims to provide coherence and co-ordination of policy-making and action for the various agencies and authorities in other sectors, such as health, industry, education and crime, that need to make decisions with a strategic spatial impact (ODPM 2005a; Tewdwr-Jones 2001, 2003).

It is therefore through the process of spatial planning that much of the joining-up of governance is expected to occur (Albrechts *et al.* 2003; Vigar *et al.* 2005).

Spatial planning has been advocated by professionals and academics alike (Healey *et al.* 1997; RTPPI 2001; Tewdwr-Jones 2003), and is founded on the principle that better quality and informed planning strategies will emerge from a process which coordinates strategies and policies and actively involves partners (Tewdwr-Jones 2003). Spatial planning strategies promise a more effective way of integrating different policy agendas as they affect a locality. In recent years there has been a growing trend towards developing spatial strategies for cities, sub-regions and regions in many parts of Europe, with spatial planning also actively promoted in European Union initiatives (Albrechts *et al.* 2001; Healey 2004). Albrechts *et al.* 2003 provides a summary of the driving forces behind this trend. The European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) (CSD 1999) promotes strategic spatial planning in the context of improving European integration and cohesion (Healey 2004), and is the framework for developing regional spatial policy across member states of the EU. Although non-binding, the ESDP informs the preparation of the Regional Spatial Strategies, and focuses on polycentric spatial development, the sustainable management of natural and cultural heritage, equal access to infrastructure and technology and addressing spatial development disparities (EERA 2004a; YHA 2005f).

The new focus on spatial planning promises a more effective way of integrating different policy agendas as they affect a spatial area, and of encouraging different levels of government to work together and in partnership with a wide range of actors (Albrechts *et al.* 2003). Whilst the shift towards more integrative government is not a new phenomenon and can be traced back to the 1970s (Allmendinger 2003a), it has emerged as a higher political priority since 1997 (Cowell and Martin 2003; Newman 2001). In part this shift reflects what Jessop (1990, 2000) refers to as the 'strategic selectivity of the state' in which the state retains its influence over sub-national scales of governance, deciding which scales and which bodies should be empowered and favoured. It is also a recognition of the reality that it is important to bring more people into the policy-making process to achieve, amongst other things, greater legitimacy, whilst not ceding so much power so as to undermine wider state objectives such as economic growth.

Spatial strategies do not do the co-ordination on their own, as the process of developing the strategy is as important, as it is 'through the social relations of plan-making processes, issues are identified, strategic ideas articulated and policy agendas structured' (Healey 1997b, p.11). Spatial planning strategies are not only informed by different policy sectors through their inclusion in the process, but also provide, in theory at least, the strategic spatial framework which links the current and future investment plans for various other policy agendas. Spatial planning is also critical to the delivery of sustainable development (Tewdwr-Jones 2001), requiring the assessment of economic, environmental and social issues within an area, and is 'multi-dimensional, linking development to place, time and the agents of change' (Tewdwr-Jones 2003, p.3).

However, integrating decision-making is not an easy task as the inter-related nature of environmental, economic and social objectives causes problems for policy-makers as they cut across policy sectors and organisational boundaries. Vigar and Healey (1999) suggest that the arenas, policy communities and discourses surrounding the English planning system are systematically constrained in their capacity to move towards place-focused, integrated and participative sub-national governance forms and processes. They suggest a number of reasons for the constraints within the planning system and in resolving these tensions: the increasing number of territorially focussed initiatives in different policy areas means there are potentially competing arenas; 'silo' sectoral thinking is lodged in the minds of the planning community and other key stakeholders; and some stakeholders find it difficult to access and engage in the strategy development process. With regional planning now including a wider range of policy sectors and stakeholders than in the past, there is considerable opportunity for pressure to be placed on the spatial strategies that might prevent them from achieving their intended potential. Furthermore in an increasingly complex and uncertain world, it is suggested that spatial plans are tending to focus on short-term activities rather than on long-term strategic planning (Dijst *et al.* 2005; Regional Futures 2004).

An examination of the institutional landscape of regional spatial strategy-making should be more than just the identification of who is involved in developing the strategy. Vigar *et al.* (2000) suggest using the concepts of policy communities and

policy arenas to analyse the institutional dynamics of spatial strategy-making. The term policy community focuses on the 'who' is involved in policy development, referring to groups of people who think or act in similar ways, whilst the term policy arena emphasises the 'where' of policy, the sites where members of the policy communities come together (Vigar *et al.* 2000). Consideration of these two dimensions can begin to reveal how far new governance arrangements affect the policy agendas of strategies. The first focuses on the actors involved in the development of the RSSs and the policy communities to which they relate. The second dimension identifies the points at which these relationships meet and intertwine, in other words the policy arenas where strategies are developed. This type of approach is very relevant to this research with its emphasis on exploring the new governance arrangements for regional planning, and more especially the engagement of the wider community in the development of the RSSs.

In their original formulation of policy communities, Richardson and Jordan suggested that it was the relationship of committees – the policy community of different groups and its practices – that accounted for policy outcomes rather than examinations of political stances and manifestos (Richardson and Jordan 1979 cited in Dudley 2003). The related literature on policy networks (see Marsh 1998 for a summary of European and American literature) uses the idea of networks as a way of conceptualising the relationship between the state and society. Marsh and Smith (2000) emphasise the agenda-setting role of networks as 'they are characterized by a large degree of consensus, not necessarily on specific policy but rather on the policy agenda, the boundaries of acceptable policy. In addition, these shared values and ideology will privilege certain policy outcomes' (Marsh and Smith 2000, p.6). Different approaches to the study of policy networks exist, some of which emphasise the structure of the networks (e.g. Knoke 1990; Marsh and Rhodes 1992), and others which stress the role of agents (e.g. Dowding 1995; McPherson and Raab 1988) to explain policy outcomes. Policy networks have tended to be identified with conditions of policy stability (Dudley 2003; Rhodes 1986), but when there have been shifts in the dominant ideas within them they can become more flexible and trigger policy changes (Dudley and Richardson 1998; Richardson 2000).

Within the network approach there have been attempts to classify networks along a continuum of openness with issue networks being the most 'open' and policy

communities being more 'closed' (Marsh 1998; Peters 1998). Issue networks are characterised by wide membership, limited inter-dependence between organisations and have a tendency to disperse once the issues are addressed. Policy communities have a restricted membership, high inter-dependence between organisations and are more stable over time (Bache 2000; Rhodes 1986). Richardson (2000) observes how greater interest group activity in policy community politics has created more uncertainty and instability, as 'policy communities and networks may become linked in a rather messy and unpredictable chain of actors, who do not know each other well and who do not speak the same 'language'' (Richardson 2000, p.1008). As new stakeholders join the network they bring with them the different policy ideas or 'frames' through which they view the world (Rein and Schön 1993). Richardson notes that this collection of different actors may only be a network in the loosest sense and although they inhabit the same policy area, little interaction occurs. The motivation for interest group participation in networks includes their wish to reduce their uncertainty and their need to acquire information (Richardson 2000).

The extension of the institutional landscape of planning that has occurred as a result of the planning reforms has the potential to alter the policy outcomes of the strategy development process. Widening the types of groups involved can increase the tensions surrounding the development of the strategy through, for example, the 'silo' thinking of participants, the inability of new stakeholders to engage, and the greater level of debate and uncertainty introduced into the policy mix by the widening of interests that hope to have their objectives addressed through the strategies. In researching the changes to the planning system it therefore becomes important to examine the people and groups involved in decision-making and the arenas in which the strategies are developed. It is also important to understand how planners reconcile the viewpoints and objectives of different participants and this is discussed in the next section.

Collaboration in plan-making: making difficult choices?

According to Raco (2003) the empowerment and mobilisation of communities and individuals has been an integral part of New Labour's vision of a modern Britain, with active area-based communities believed to be crucial to the effectiveness of policies and programmes. The engagement of the community in the development of spatial plans has been a key theme of the Labour government's modernisation agenda for planning as it has for other policy areas (DETR 1997; ODPM 2004c, 2005a). The widening of stakeholder engagement in the development of RSSs to include citizens and interest groups as well as local authorities represents an example of the rolled-out neoliberal relations suggested by Peck and Tickell to explain why the state encourages partnership-based modes of policy development (Peck and Tickell 2002).

As part of the modernisation process of the English planning system, there has been a shift towards a more collaborative form of working in the preparation of planning strategies (Doak and Parker 2005). The ODPM has set out minimum requirements for the involvement of the community in planning, defining the community as 'all those who have an interest in and a contribution to make to the content of the revised RSS; individuals as well as local authorities and bodies representing various interest groups' (ODPM 2004f, p.90). The arguments for the community's involvement include that:

- it will lead to outcomes that reflect the views and aspirations and meet the needs of the community;
- it is a key element of an open and participatory democracy;
- it will improve the quality of decision-making and minimise potential conflict;
- it offers the community a stake in decision-making; and
- it improves the knowledge of all participants (ODPM 2004c).

The notion of public participation in planning emerged in the 1960s. Arnstein (1969) introduced the notion of a 'ladder of participation' in which she characterized a series of levels of 'devolution' of power to citizens, which she represented as rungs on a ladder. These levels ranged from manipulation at the bottom of the ladder to citizen

control at the top. Measures to allow a degree of public participation in planning were recommended in the Skeffington Report in 1969 (MHLG 1969), and were followed by legislation which made it a statutory requirement to include minimum publicity and consultation periods in both plan-making and development control processes. However rather than creating wide opportunities for public participation, in practice participation in the UK has tended to focus on two types of activity: neighbour's objections to planning applications, and objections from lobby groups to proposals in draft development plans or for major developments (Smith 2005). Smith (2005) suggests that typically the lobby groups which make extensive use of the channels for participation are either environmental/amenity groups wishing to protect the natural environment and built heritage, or are developers and house-builders seeking the designation of land for development. Cowell and Owens (2006) suggest that coalitions of actors have exploited the institutional spaces of plan-making and public inquiries in order to resist developments and also to articulate a critique of the strategies and policies from which individual proposals derive, resulting particularly in the higher profile of environmental arguments. Gibbs and Jonas (2001) note that new institutional forms have 'implications for the access of different interests, political representation, and policy determination' (p. 281). The effect of the changes to regional planning and the move towards more collaborative approaches to decision-making introduced by the 2004 Planning Act will therefore depend on how effectively different policy actors respond to the modified opportunities for engagement, with difficulties anticipated in achieving participation from the wider public at this scale (Cowell and Owens 2006; Sykes 2003).

This transition away from what previously had been a process dominated by local authorities and professional planners towards one of wider stakeholder engagement is a manifestation of what has been described as the 'communicative turn in planning' (Haughton and Counsell 2004a, p.41). The communicative or collaborative approach to planning is a pervasive theme in contemporary planning theory, building on Habermas's ideas of communicative rationality (Habermas 1984). Healey, one of the main exponents of communicative planning, argues that in a communicative approach, politicians, lobby groups and all of the other actors who have a stake in a place should be involved in the decision-making process (Healey 1997a, 1998). By bringing together social partners with different points of view, the communicative planning approach is intended to increase the knowledge of the

issues and their impacts, and help to connect the different dimensions of the planning process. As an inclusive process, it is also expected to develop ownership of the final policy or strategy, to legitimate the decisions reached and to assist in the resolution of conflicts.

The different stakeholders are expected to bring to the planning process their different knowledges and values, their different access to empirical data and their different styles of argumentation and communication (Healey 1998). The planning professional will need to make sense of these differences and to act as 'a knowledge mediator and broker' (Healey 1997a, p.309). The right type of forum will need to be established for the stakeholders' voices to be heard and for this information to flow (Healey 1998). Through this active social process, new policy discourses are built which are shaped by the values and discourses of those involved: 'It is through all these processes that spatial strategies are 'socially constructed' and filled with power, while being shaped by the driving forces of the powerful structuring dynamics of their local context' (Healey 1997a, p.23). During this process, 'discourse coalitions' can form between the disparate actors involved in the shaping of strategies as they settle on shared sets of story-lines (Hajer 1995).

Plan-making involves making choices about a whole range of interest claims and is potentially an arena for struggle over strategy, policy and decision rules. The construction and use of development plans therefore presents a key challenge to the capacity of modern governance processes to mediate among the range of interests in local economic, social and environmental conditions (Healey 1995). The planning community will have to adapt to manage these partnerships or networks and move away from the traditional areas of planning competence, namely the knowledge of the administrative systems of planning and a concern with urban design (Evans and Rydin 1997). One way forward is to adopt a collaborative stance along the lines advocated by Healey (1997a, 1998), whereby planners take the role of facilitators and become experts in argumentation, the use of language and persuasion, and be sensitive to the needs of a range of groups in society (Evans and Rydin 1997). However as McGuirk (2001) argues adopting a communicative stance is not unproblematic as communicative planning theory operates as if the relative power and resources of various stakeholders have no influence on consensual planning

practice and, as this is not possible, truly transparent, democratic and rational decisions cannot be achieved.

Whilst there is considerable merit in the communicative planning approach in terms of adding legitimacy, improving conflict resolution and enhancing local governance, a body of work exists that indicates the weaknesses of the approach (e.g. Allmendinger 2001; McGuirk 2001; Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger 1998). Critics point to the possibility that actors may act teleologically rather than honestly, and that there is no guarantee of an open and fair collaborative process as actors may act collectively (Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger 1998). For a collaborative approach to be fully effective, there is an inherent assumption that all actors, whilst being different, will have equal status. This ignores the individual's capacity to act, their levels of understanding of the process and their comprehension of the technical data presented to them and what it might mean to them (Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger 1998). Actors who have had prior involvement in spatial planning strategies may therefore be at an advantage, as might be those people whose organisations have the resources to support them. In practice people who are new to the regional planning process usually have fewer resources available to them or have no prior experience or knowledge of the planning system, putting them in a relatively weaker position compared to long-standing participants.

As spatial strategies are increasingly expected to take account of and co-ordinate with other strategies, a vital part of the analysis of spatial strategies should be to look beyond their face value and to develop an understanding of their underlying discourses. A policy discourse is more than the policy agenda as it

involves sets of concepts, many of them often hidden from view, as well as an array of arguments, metaphors and phrases. Policy discourses are produced, borrowed and adapted by policy communities in policy networks for specific audiences (Vigar *et al.* 2000, p.223).

The adoption and dissemination of policy discourses in a locality can be typically traced to the existing institutional landscape in terms of the active organisations and the relationships between stakeholders (Vigar *et al.* 2000). Stakeholders involved in developing spatial strategies will have different interests in any policy, and in the

case of sustainable development will have different interpretations of it and how it might be achieved (Mazza and Rydin 1997). Although the processes of localisation and partnership described above appear to be intrinsic features of the new governance, the power to establish particular discourses and ideologies continues to be highly centralised, and therefore the role of the state in constraining the agenda and actions of what happens at the local level should not be overlooked (Newman 2001).

It is now widely accepted that the perfect world required by collaborative planning cannot exist; that it is not possible for every interested party to participate fairly and on an equal footing, or for all points of view to be listened to, debated on and then for a consensus decision to be reached. In the real world of planning debate much therefore comes down to which sets of values dominate, who understands the process and who holds the power, in terms of mediating debates and setting the rules of engagement. When seeking to interpret the outcomes of the strategy development process, it then becomes important to understand the underlying values and norms of the actors participating in the process. Examples of the discourses in planning policy have been identified in other research (e.g. Haughton and Counsell 2004a, 2004b; Owens and Cowell 2002; Vigar *et al.* 2000). The discourses identified in this body of work concentrate on the argumentation of values to justify the possible outcomes of planning strategies, such as the management of demand in order to protect environmental qualities (Vigar *et al.* 2000). There is an emphasis on how different groups selectively articulate arguments of sustainability to substantiate their objectives. Haughton and Counsell (2004b), for example, cite the example of both employment and housing lobbyists who use the argument that the provision of employment sites without housing would be unsustainable: pro-development groups use this argument to support additional housing allocation, whilst the environmental and conservation groups use it to justify less housing development. In his work on discourses, Hajer (1995) suggests that the ways in which discourses are constructed is contingent on place. The findings of Haughton and Counsell (2004b) support Hajer's supposition by identifying evidence of a different geography to debates of sustainable development, with regions in the north and south of England invoking arguments of sustainability to justify higher and lower housing and employment land allocations respectively. Hajer (1995) also suggested that the nature of discourses can change over time. This viewpoint was substantiated by the work of Vigar *et al.*

(2000) who found that the planning discourses of the 1980s and 1990s were transformed by policy evolution in the 1990s, especially under the New Labour government. A major emphasis of this research study is therefore to build on this body of work, exploring the ways in which the narratives surrounding regional planning are distinctive and may differ according to place and time.

Conclusions for this research

This chapter has examined the policy and theoretical dimensions of the strengthened scale of regional planning which has emerged from the modernisation of planning put in place by the New Labour government since its election in 1997. As part of the reforms the Regional Planning Bodies (RPBs) are expected to consult more widely and more often than in previous eras of regional planning. Participation and partnership working are the new buzzwords of the regional planning process. The intention of this wider and yet more intensive level of involvement of different people is to create strategies that are more regionally specific, cover a broader range of issues and have regional ownership. Yet in spite of this emphasis on participation, we have seen that there is still a significant level of central government involvement in developing the RSSs, which can be linked to wider theoretical debates about the strategic selectivity of the state, not least in how it manages processes of re-scaling and restructures sub-national governance arrangements. In the recent planning reforms, it is central government which dominates the process, setting out quite clearly what types of people should be involved and with which strategies the RSS should be aligned. It monitors the process of developing the RSSs via the regional Government Offices, and at the end of the process the government, and not the regions, issues the RSSs. One crucial theme for this research, therefore, will be to seek to uncover how much influence central government has had over the emerging strategies and how much of a say the people in the regions really have in the process of strategy-making.

The adoption of a spatial planning approach, whereby there has to be greater collaboration and integration of different strategies working across different scales of governance, has altered the institutional landscape of regional planning to include more than the local authority representation of the past. This institutional landscape

now includes people and organisations which represent a more diverse set of interests and who are trying to influence the process in order to satisfy their interests. These groups are commonly referred to as 'stakeholders'. In addition, the landscape also contains the strategies that need, or wish, to be linked to the RSSs. These strategies operate at different spatial scales: there are the Local Development Documents (LDDs) at the local authority level, the sub-regional plans of strategies such as the Sustainable Communities Plan, and the other regional strategies that include, amongst others, the Regional Transport Strategies (RTSs) and the Regional Economic Strategies (RESs). With its new statutory status, it is imperative for many of these different strategies that their aims and objectives are aligned with the RSSs. Therefore there are three overlapping elements to the landscape of planning: there are the local authorities, there are the stakeholders who represent different interests, e.g. rural protection, business and health, and there are the different strategies, e.g. LDDs, RESs and the Sustainable Communities Plan. They overlap with one another as often the interests of the first two groups are closely served by particular strategies, e.g. the local authorities and their LDDs, or the environmental NGOs and regional environmental strategies. It is the RPB's responsibility to address all these potentially conflicting interests and to find a way to deliver a consensual strategy to the Secretary of State. This research will be seeking to identify who is involved in developing the strategies, the form their involvement takes and to articulate how their involvement has influenced the draft strategies.

In researching planning it is important to consider the processes of collaboration and co-ordination when analysing strategies. This means seeking to understand the knowledge and expertise of stakeholders, the frames and terms of reference used in argumentation, the struggles for power, and the formation of alliances and relationships of trust. Developing from this, the current research sets out to examine the perceptions of stakeholders and to consider how these views interact in the debates surrounding the development of spatial strategies. In focussing on the narratives, it is intended to develop an understanding of the constraints on and opportunities for spatial policy-making at the regional scale. In addition, the research will examine the extent that collaboration and joined-up policy-making have been achieved within and across different scales of governance.

Outside of an understanding of the selective use of arguments over the sustainability, or not, of different options for planning strategies, academic and policy knowledge about the exact nature of the values and norms of participants in the regional spatial planning process is weak. What are their objectives? Do they share these views with other actors, i.e. form discourse coalitions, and if so, with whom? Do they act alone? What are the common factors? What are the tensions? Unravelling the answers to these questions, together with an understanding of the ways in which different groups and individuals think, will help to explain why certain policy discourses dominate planning strategies. This research was particularly interested in whether the ODPM's insistence on wider stakeholder engagement in the development of spatial planning strategies resulted in the formation of new discourses that reflect the views of the new social partners. It also explores whether the involvement of experienced and well-resourced participants, such as the house-building lobby and rural protectionists meant that the previously identified discourses have been further strengthened, consolidated or re-thought.

Introduction

This chapter sets out the research process followed in this project. The first part of this chapter describes the different research techniques used in this project and explains the sampling methods used to identify the participants in this research. Two English regions were chosen for in-depth study in this research project: the Yorkshire and the Humber and the East of England regions. This chapter concludes with an overview of the socio-economic characteristics of both regions, and indicates the particular social problems that are faced by these two regions. This overview illustrates the context in which the new Regional Spatial Strategies (RSSs) were being drafted in these regions.

Research methods

The research questions outlined in Chapter 1 are concerned with developing an in-depth understanding of the nature of the regional planning process. The information that needed to be collected was qualitative, as it related to the planning process and events within it, and to the activities, motives and relations of the different participants, rather than to statistics on particular characteristics or patterns. With the process's emphasis on collaboration and participation, it was important that whichever research technique was used it could reveal social interaction and offer interviewees the opportunity to express themselves freely, and these objectives would be difficult to achieve in a controlled 'tick box' questionnaire. The methods adopted therefore fit within what Sayer (1992) describes as an 'intensive' research design, as they seek to identify the 'causal powers' of relations or ways of acting (Sayer 1992, p. 104). Sayer suggests that there are two types of research design: extensive and intensive, which ask different types of question, use different techniques and have different definitions of their boundaries and objectives (see Table 3.1). Extensive approaches uncover general patterns and common properties

from a representative sample of the population (England 2002). An example of an 'extensive' approach to researching the subject of social issues in regional planning would be to survey the public on how the Regional Planning Bodies had addressed social issues in their draft RSSs or on the relative effectiveness of techniques to encourage public participation in the strategy development process. However this type of approach would have provided little in the way of relevant findings to help answer the research questions, and it was believed that with low public awareness of the regional planning process, surveys would have been problematic in terms of the amount of useful data produced.

Table 3.1: Intensive and extensive research methods: a summary

	Intensive	Extensive
Research question	How does a process work in a particular case or small number of cases? What produces a certain change? What did the agents actually do?	What are the regularities, common patterns, distinguishing features of a population? How widely are certain characteristics or processes distributed or represented?
Relations	Substantial relations of connection	Formal relations of similarity
Type of groups studied	Causal groups	Taxonomic groups
Types of accounts produced	Causal explanations of the production of certain objects or events, though not necessarily representative ones	Descriptive 'representative' generalisations, lacking in explanatory penetration

	Intensive	Extensive
Limitations	Actual concrete patterns and contingent relations are unlikely to be 'representative', 'average' or generalizable. Necessary relations discovered will exist wherever their relata ² are present eg causal powers of objects are generalizable to other contexts as they are necessary features of these objects	Although representative of a whole population, they are unlikely to be generalizable to other populations at different times and places. Problem of ecological fallacy in making inferences about individuals. Limited explanatory power
Appropriate tests	Corroboration	Replication

Source: Sayer 1992, p.243

An intensive approach would, on the other hand, focus on a relatively small group of people who possessed personal knowledge or experience of the strategy development process, and would be able to reveal causal connections. Their interpretations of the regional planning process could be studied so that the significance of their different circumstances could be learnt and analysed. However a weakness of intensive approaches is that the results may not be representative of the whole population, which in this case would be the entire English planning system. In this research it was decided to focus on two English regions which were experiencing different socio-economic conditions. Whilst this would not make it possible to say that the results of the research were representative of all English regions, looking at regions in different situations would test whether similar experiences and perceptions existed in different regions.

² Objects or events in a relationship

As noted earlier, it is important to understand the frames and terms of reference of the people involved in planning when studying the planning process (e.g. Haughton and Counsell 2004a; Healey 1993, 1997; Rein and Schön 1993). Whilst discourses around the planning process have been identified (e.g. Haughton and Counsell 2004a, 2004b; Vigar *et al.* 2000), these tend to focus on the objectives of the different groups involved in planning debate, for example whether they are pro- or anti-development, and on the arguments people used to try to manipulate the development of strategies in order that their interests are met, but say little about issues such as participation and joined-up working which are important features of modern regional planning. Q methodology is a quantitative technique which examines subjectivity, or how people frame a particular subject matter, and therefore is well-suited for revealing the ways in which people view the nature of planning in a more detailed and subtle way (Brown 1980). In-depth semi-structured interviews with participants would complement the Q methodology study, as the interviews would provide the opportunity to both elaborate on themes and personal viewpoints which the Q methodology is unable to do, and to check the validity of the different narratives revealed by Q methodology. This section starts by describing the interview process, including a description of the sampling strategy used to select participants and provides details of the timing of the data collection in the context of the each region's RSS development process. The next part of this section explains Q methodology, and it concludes by outlining the two other methods used to collect information for this research project: the study of policy and strategy documents and the observation of meetings.

Semi-structured interviews

As a process for collecting details of people's views and experiences, conducting interviews is a relatively common research method in contemporary academic research into planning as in other social science disciplines (e.g. Allmendinger and Tewdwr-Jones 2000; Kitchen and Whitney 2004; While *et al.* 2004). Observers (e.g. Hamnett 2003; Sheppard 2001) have identified a methodological shift in human geography research away from quantitative techniques 'towards an unquestioning use of qualitative techniques' (Hamnett 2003, p.2). There have been recommendations that researchers should use more rigorous research methods that will improve empirical evidence and strengthen research findings (Markusen 2003;

Peck 2003). As an alternative to the 'standard' methodologies, this research study therefore combines a qualitative and a quantitative technique in a form of triangulation in order to add an element of robustness and uniqueness to the methodology approach (Bryman 2004).

As noted earlier, questionnaires with their use of closed questions, providing no opportunity to probe respondents to elaborate on answers (Bryman 2004), were not considered a suitable technique for collecting the qualitative data on people's views and experiences that was required in this study. Similarly a structured interviewing approach, with an emphasis on standardization, was also regarded as unsuitable as this approach would not allow the interviewer the opportunity to be flexible and develop themes and ideas as the interview was in progress or produce the rich detailed answers that were sought (Bryman 2004; Robson 2002). Unstructured interviewing, on the other hand, would be far more flexible, allowing discussion to freely develop around a general subject area and tending to be similar in character to a conversation (Bryman 2004; Marshall and Rossman 1999). This method tends to be more time-intensive than structured interviewing and is more suited to smaller samples (Robson 2002). As interviews would be taking place during participants' working day and given the size of the intended sample, this technique was not considered suitable for this research project.

Semi-structured interviewing offers the potential to follow lines of discussion which the interviewee sees as meaningful and gives the interviewee more flexibility in how to reply to the questions without being pigeon-holed into standard categories (Patton 1987). After consideration of the different options it was decided that semi-structured interviews was the most appropriate technique to gather the detailed qualitative information on people's impressions and experiences that would complement the quantitative data derived from using Q methodology. The interviews were arranged in three sets: the national, regional and sub-regional. Table 3.2 indicates the numbers of interviews conducted at each level. Interview guides containing a list of pre-determined questions were used in all interviews in this study. An advantage of semi-structured interviewing is that the sequence and wording of questions in the guide can be modified based on what is appropriate for the interviewee (Robson 2002; Simmons 2001), and this proved to be useful in this study when interviewing people with differing levels of technical knowledge of the

planning system. This type of approach also enables questions that are not included in the guide to be asked as the interviewer picks up on comments made by the interviewee (Bryman 2004).

Table 3.2: Interviews conducted at the national, regional and sub-regional scales

	Number of interviews conducted	Refusals
National scale:		
• Policy-makers	9	1
• Lobby groups	5	4
Regional scale:		
• East of England	13	2
• Yorkshire and Humber	14	3
Sub-regional scale:		
• Cambridgeshire Horizons	3	0
• Transform South Yorkshire	4	0

Conducting the interviews

Before consenting to be interviewed all interviewees were informed of the nature of the research and that the research was co-sponsored by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM). There can be little doubt that the ODPM's involvement opened doors that would otherwise have been closed. For example, one interviewee explained that he receives lots of requests to participate in student's research and would normally decline. However as this project was sponsored by the ODPM and would be read by them, he had agreed to participate as he hoped that this would mean his views could reach the ODPM in a non-attributable fashion.

Nearly all the interviews took place in the interviewee's workplace. Three interviews were undertaken in people's homes as they did not have an office base. Four other interviews took place in public places as these were the most mutually convenient location; in three cases these were cafés with another interview taking place on a train journey to London. Apart from the four interviews that took place in public places and three others that occurred in the ODPM staff restaurant, all of the interviews were in rooms occupied by only the interviewer and interviewee(s) ensuring privacy and an undistracting environment.

It is recommended that interviewers achieve rapport with their interviewees, which means quickly building a relationship that encourages the interviewee to participate in the interview (Bryman 2004). Patton (1987) suggests this means conveying the impression that what the interviewee is saying is important, and yet at the same time maintaining some neutrality by listening without judgement. Being alert to the fact that interviews were taking place with people in their working roles, during their working day and in most cases in their workplace, it was also important to minimise disruption and inconvenience. With all these issues in mind and in the interest of building rapport, it was therefore important to arrive punctually for the interview, to be courteous, dress appropriately and appear friendly and interested, by offering visual clues such as smiling and maintaining eye contact.

Four interview guides were prepared: one for national lobby groups, one for national policy-makers, and one for each for the regional and sub-regional scale interviewees. Generally speaking in this study all questions on the interview guides were asked, although in a small number of instances when the interviewee was pressed for time, some questions were omitted. The guides contained what are referred to as open questions, which allowed interviewees to respond in any way they wished (Bryman 2004; Simmons 2001). In some instances, prompts were used to elicit a response (Fielding and Thomas 2001). Examples of the prompts used include a comment that referred to the views expressed by others, or an observation made on something that was said at a meeting that both the interviewer and interviewee had attended, and then asking what the interviewee thought of that comment or observation. In situations when interviewees gave brief answers and they had to be probed to provide more information, conversational probes were used to elicit a fuller response (Fielding and Thomas 2001; Patton 1987). Follow-up questions were often used to

gather more detailed information or to clarify something that was unclear (Patton 1987).

The majority of the interviews lasted 60-90 minutes with about a quarter of all interviews taking less than an hour. Timing was a problem in only a few interviews, for example three interviews were cut short as interviewees had to leave to attend another meeting convened at short notice. In the small number of cases where it was known at the start of the interview that the length of time for the interview was unlikely to be sufficient to cover all the material in the interview guide, a decision had to be taken on whether some questions would have to be omitted and to keep to the questions which were the most appropriate to that interviewee. In these instances the interviewees obligingly kept their answers brief, and it was found that all the essential material was covered.

Confidentiality

The requirement for confidentiality was a recurrent theme amongst interviewees. Whilst interviewees were pleased to assist with this research, a good number insisted at the onset of the interview that they did not want to be identified and requested that quotations were not attributable. Compliance with this request means that where quotes are used in the text of this paper, their source is given as 'East of England regional stakeholder' or similar to maintain confidentiality. A small minority requested that quotes were checked with them before being used in the thesis, and in the interests of equality it was decided to check quotations with all interviewees. This verification took place in the closing stages of writing up the thesis. Five requests to change quotations were received. Only four of these quotations were used in the end, and the alterations are noted in the text. Despite the quotations not being attributable, the requests were generally to improve the syntax or grammatical form of their original statement and not to alter the tenor of the quote. Although the process of seeking approval for using the quotations was time-consuming, the benefits of having a rich, varied and verified source of quotes for the thesis are huge.

Interviewing 'elites'

The participants in the interviews were all highly placed professionals, which meant that there needed to be an awareness of the potential difficulties of 'researching up' that can be encountered when interviewing 'elites' (Desmond 2004; Pile 1991; Sabot 1999; Smith 2006). One of the challenges to be faced is the relative power of the researcher in the interviewer/interviewee relationship. Scott (1984) found that respondents in positions of power sometimes used their position to control the interview. Perhaps the only examples of interviewees asserting their control over the interview process in this research was the cutting short of the length of time of the interview and, in three cases, interviewees allowing the interviews to be interrupted by telephone calls. Some problems were encountered when trying to gain access, a challenge encountered by other researchers (e.g. Cochrane 1998; Sabot 1999), and these are described in the later section on sampling. However once an interview was scheduled and underway, issues to do with power and elites were not considered a major problem. Another problem for researchers is that gaining access to elites can be time consuming and requires 'continual negotiation, bargaining and compromise' (England 2002, p.207). It took as long as two months to gain access to some of the people interviewed in this study.

A slightly different twist to the notion of power between researcher and interviewee was suggested by several interviewees either before or after their interviews. These participants made the observation that when they had helped researchers in the past, often the interview was the last time that they had heard from the researcher, and that they hoped that on this occasion they would be privy to the research findings when they were published. Their prior experience suggests therefore that the relationship of power between researcher and an elite interviewee is not always control by the latter over the former, as the researcher can retain control over the information the interviewees divulge to them.

'Member checking', whereby interviewees check and comment on a researcher's interpretation of their interviews (Bradshaw 2001), was not offered or requested during the course of this research project. However one of the regional planners interviewed suggested that her Assembly should be given the opportunity to read the thesis before submission in order to check its accuracy, as she had done this to the

organisation(s) she had researched in her PhD. However, several researchers argue that it is not appropriate for elites to member-check research as they may use their power by request changes (Smith 2006). In this research study, whilst the suggestion was noted, agreement was not given, and ultimately restrictions on time at the end of writing up the thesis meant it was not feasible to accommodate this suggestion.

Sampling and access

The original project plan for this research set out the intention to collect empirical data through the use of interviews and Q methodology at three spatial scales: the national, regional and sub-regional scales. The strategy for selecting participants was to purposefully select 'information-rich cases' (Patton 1987), whose professional role meant that they possessed in-depth knowledge of the planning system and regional planning processes and from whom a great deal could be learnt. Q methodology studies also require participants should represent different points of view on the subject area being researched (Robbins 2006; Webler *et al.* 2003), and therefore at the national and regional scales participants were selected who represented a wide range of policy areas and professional backgrounds.

In addition to the research aims set out in Chapter 1, in the early stages of the project it had been intended to examine how national policy-makers in planning and other policy areas worked together to produce planning policies that were sensitive to social issues. The role of lobby groups in influencing national planning policy was also to be investigated. However as the project proceeded and the aims of the project were re-evaluated, this element of the research was later withdrawn in order to concentrate more fully on the regional scale. This decision was taken in part because the overall amount of data collected was overwhelming, and partly because it was felt the national data had the potential to distract attention away from regional planning which was the original focus of the research project. On reflection, the inclusion of the national scale in the early stages of the research had been possibly too ambitious, and although the interview material gathered at the national scale was analysed, very little was used in the end. However the Q sorts undertaken by participants at the national scale were included, and therefore it remains appropriate to outline the sampling of interviewees at the national scale.

The first stage of sampling at the national scale was to select the different policy areas which might seek to influence planning policy, and using the academic and policy literature these were likely to be: health, education, transport, crime, social exclusion, and housing. The more difficult stage was then to identify suitable candidates for interview from the relevant Whitehall departments. The Whitehall departments employ large numbers of people, and it is very difficult to identify named individuals if one is outside the civil service. Several methods were employed to do this:

- the analysis of relevant policy guidance and consultation documents to identify a named individual;
- accessing the ODPM internal telephone directory on their intranet site; and
- using suggestions provided by the ODPM contact for this research project, a process known as 'snowballing' (Bryman 2004; Patton 1987).

Once named individuals were identified, they were then contacted. If the initial contact were found to be unsuitable, for example because they held too junior a position or had moved to a different policy area, or if they were not in a position to help, suggestions of alternative participants were requested. Only in the Department of Health did it prove especially difficult to identify somebody suitable, and when someone was identified, he was too busy to assist. In the end, a policy officer in the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, who had special responsibility for health policy, was interviewed to represent this policy area.

When it came to identifying people to interview in national lobby groups, this too proved to be a difficult task. As with the Whitehall departments, the first stage was to identify policy areas which might seek to influence national planning policy in order to further their objectives. The areas chosen were disability, ethnic communities, older people and homelessness. Once suitable organisations to represent these interests were identified and having no named contact to address, the chief executives or similar for each organisation were contacted, using them to establish contacts with other people in their organisation, in other words snowballing. In every case, a considerable amount of persistence was required before the names of suitable interviewees were elicited.

The process of identifying interviewees was considerably easier at the regional scale. With the widening of the types of stakeholders involved in developing the RSSs, the first place to identify suitable interviewees was the planning steering groups of the Regional Assemblies. To narrow the search down, it was decided to involve people representing similar issues on both steering groups, for example, housing, business, healthcare, voluntary and community groups, environment, rural and education interests. Where a particular interest was not represented on the steering group, the membership of the full Regional Assembly was scoured to identify a suitable candidate. In one instance, an environmental representative who had been a member of a planning task group in the East of England was invited to participate. In addition to the stakeholders, two or three local authority councillor members on each of the steering groups were contacted and invited to participate in the research. The net was widened to include senior local authority planning officers involved in the technical aspects of developing the strategies. In both regions, regional planning officers were also included in the interview process. The links between crime and planning policy had been examined in an earlier interview in Whitehall, and it had been the intention to look at this relationship at the regional scale of policy-making. However the interests of the Home Office were not represented directly on either of the Assemblies' steering groups, and apparently were addressed via the everyday working relationship between the Government Offices and the Assemblies. The key individuals representing the Home Office in both Government Offices were invited to participate in the research project, but only one agreed to take part.

The final stage of the interviews was to look at the sub-regional scale. The introduction of the Sustainable Communities Plan in 2003, at an early stage in the scoping of this research project, had led the ODPM to suggest that some aspect of the Plan be included in the project if possible. To this end, it was decided to use one of each of the Plan's Growth Areas and Housing Market Renewal Pathfinders as examples of sub-regional programmes, and the relationship between these programmes and the RSSs would be teased out as part of this research. The Growth Area selected for study was the London-Stansted-Cambridge-Peterborough corridor and the chosen Pathfinder area was Transform South Yorkshire. The London-Stansted-Cambridge-Peterborough contained several geographical areas which were at various stages of strategy development. One of these areas, the Cambridge sub-region already had an agreed strategy and was up and running under the auspices of

the Cambridgeshire Horizons partnership. A senior executive of the partnership was interviewed as part of this research project. For Transform South Yorkshire, two senior executives were interviewed. In each region the member of the Government Office with responsibility for the relevant sub-regional programme participated in the project. Finally the two people in the ODPM who had the lead responsibility for the two programmes were interviewed.

The issues to do with power and elites when setting up interviews alluded to earlier in this chapter relate to three factors. Firstly there are the ways in which it is difficult to identify key individuals in some large organisations like the civil service and in NGOs such as the national lobby groups. One way to get around this is through the use of what are known as 'gatekeepers' (Fielding 2001; Marshall and Rossman 1999), who can literally 'open doors' for the researcher. For this reason the chief executives were used as the initial point of contact in the lobby groups, although persistence was required, usually via their secretaries, to elicit the names of useful contacts. Another aspect of the power relationship is the power of the potentially useful participant not to respond to correspondence or phone messages (England 2002). This means time is wasted waiting for a response, and when eventually the decision is taken that it is unlikely that a response will be forthcoming, further time has to be spent seeking another contact. A third aspect of the relationship between researcher and interviewee is that as a holder of information the interviewee can pick and choose which researchers they chose to help, such as the example given earlier of the participant who agreed to be interviewed because the research was sponsored by the ODPM.

A list of interviewees' is provided in Appendix 1, although to preserve anonymity only details of their policy areas or roles are provided.

Data analysis

All interviews were audio-taped and then transcribed. It was decided not to use computer software, such as HyperRESEARCH and Nud.ist, to interpret the material. This decision was taken in part because of time reasons, and in part because it was felt that the parallel use of Q methodology was adding a degree of rigour to the analysis of qualitative data. In addition it was felt that it would take time to become

familiar with the software which might be better spent doing the analysis itself. The analysis was therefore done manually, which was a time-consuming task, involving several iterations as the substantive statements were coded and sorted.

The first stage of the analysis was to read through the transcripts of the interviews, noting down substantive statements under general headings of subjects which initially related to the interview questions, for example, the interviewee's role on the planning forum or the RSS and social issues. This formed the first stage of coding the data. The next stage was to go over the notes again, adding more subjects where appropriate and to start to structure each subject into different topic areas (Gillham 2000). The intention was to create an exhaustive list of topic areas for every subject in order that every comment could be assigned to a topic area, which might contain many or only a few statements. In this way, it was simple to identify where points of view were shared, disagreed with or were unique.

Having started the process of analysis with a paper-based system, the different statements were transferred to word processed documents with a note of the comment's origins in each transcript. The transfer to computer meant that it was easy to retrieve the information and also to rearrange the statements as necessary if new topic areas were required or if topic areas had to be merged. The note of the comments' origins meant that it was possible to quickly identify the interviewees whose comments fitted into a particular topic area and to return to the original statement in the transcript if necessary. Being able to associate particular viewpoints with the interviewees was also useful when it came to analysing the Q methodology as links between the individual's Q sorts and their interviews could be easily identified. Although coding the data manually was a rigorous process, it was a time-consuming exercise, and whether in retrospect it would have been quicker and more efficient to have used computer software to do this task is not known.

The approach for selecting quotes in this research was usually to choose statements which exemplified a typical point of view of a group of participants. In some instances however quotes were selected which represented an interesting or unique perspective, these examples are clearly identified as such in the text.

Timing

The research project commenced in September 2002, with the empirical work taking place during the period May 2004 to February 2005. The draft RSS for the East of England region was published in December 2004, towards the end of the empirical work in that region. In the Yorkshire and Humber region, the draft RSS was published a year later in December 2005. This means that the context for the empirical work in the regions is slightly different. Firstly, as many of the interviews in the East of England region were undertaken in the closing weeks of the drafting process, interviewees were in a position to be slightly reflective on the whole process. In Yorkshire and Humber the interviews took place only a few weeks after the announcement of details of the Northern Way Growth Strategy. Although it had not been originally intended to include this strategy in the research project, it was very fresh in the minds of the regional interviewees. Whilst few interviewees had any views on the Transform South Yorkshire strategy, the Northern Way and its potential impact on the development of the RSS was influencing planning debates in the region at the time, and was a subject on which nearly all of the interviewees had a view. It was therefore decided that the Northern Way should also be addressed in the research project, but as it was at a very early stage of development, it would be considered as just one relatively minor element.

Both of the draft RSSs were developed at the same time as the national planning reforms started to bite and as new guidelines for regional planning were drafted and finally issued (ODPM 2003g; 2004f). Developing the RSSs under a new set of rules was an experience common to both regions. However for the East of England region, which had commenced the development of a new regional planning strategy for the unified region in 2002 under the old system of Regional Planning Guidance, the stresses of switching to the new system of Regional Spatial Strategies were much more evident. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

In May 2006 a reorganisation of Whitehall departmental responsibilities meant that the functions of the ODPM were assumed by a new government department with expanded interests in community cohesion and equality, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). As this research project was undertaken prior to the reorganisation, for the purposes of this dissertation the

ODPM will be referred to as the government department with responsibility for planning.

Appendix 1 provides details of which month and year the interviews took place in.

Q methodology study

Q methodology was used to explore subjective viewpoints around the role of the regional planning process. All interviewees were asked to perform the Q sorts after their interview, although some interviewees declined due to time pressures. The schedule of interviewees in Appendix 1 indicates who did not perform the Q sorts. The interpretation of the analysed data produced by this study determined the different conceptions or narratives that exist around regional spatial planning. It also provided comparative data on how the participants in the study fitted into these narratives by looking at participants' professional backgrounds and location. The data also revealed the patterns of agreement and disagreement that existed between the different narratives.

Q methodology, which has been in existence since the 1930s, is a quantitative technique for the analysis of human subjectivity, where subjectivity is regarded as a person's point of view on a subject matter (Brown 1980, 1993; Dryzek and Berejikian 1993; McKeown and Thomas 1988). The method has been used in a wide range of studies, including psychiatric, political and social sciences. Its use in environmental and geographical studies is increasing (e.g. Barry and Proops 1999; Robbins 2000, 2006; Robbins and Krueger 2000; Webler *et al.* 2001), with Eden *et al.* (2005) suggesting that Q methodology maybe a useful supplementary methodology to consider in human geography research. Two examples were found in American academic literature of Q methodology being used in the research of planning, in both cases relating to participation in planning processes (Webler *et al.* 2001, 2003), but no examples could be found of it being used in planning research in the UK literature.

Q methodology was employed in this research project to identify how different people characterise the role of the regional planning process, and to reveal patterns in the ways in which the different characterisations are related. Other research had

indicated that different participants in the planning process have different points of view, but the perspectives found to exist had a tendency to focus on the objectives of participants (e.g. Haughton and Counsell 2004a, 2004b; Owens and Cowell 2002; Vigar *et al.* 2000). It was hoped that Q methodology would provide a more detailed picture of people's perspectives. It was also intended to ascertain whether the widening of the types of individuals who had become involved in developing the spatial strategies since the planning reforms had altered the narratives identified in the earlier body of work on planning narratives which had been undertaken prior to the reforms. As the interests of participants in the process had become more diverse, it was anticipated that the narratives around regional planning would be found to have started to reflect planning's new 'boundaries', which are much wider than its traditional land use concerns and the reconciliation of environmental/rural and business interests.

Q methodology investigates participants' subjectivity and models their reactions to a set of statements about a given subject matter. In ranking the statements according to how strongly they agree/disagree with them, participants react to each statement in relation to all the others in the study. This provides the researcher with a view of the individual participant's subjectivity regarding the chosen subject matter.

Participants' responses can be compared using factor analysis seeking patterns amongst individuals rather than variables. Participants who load heavily on one factor reveal a high level of commonality with one another and are simultaneously dissimilar from the group of individuals who load heavily on opposite factors or negatively on the same factor. Inverted factor analysis of all the participants' responses will then group statements related to each other. These groupings are taken to represent underlying perspectives or narratives within the subject matter.

Selecting the statements

There are four main stages to developing a Q methodology study. The first is to identify a 'concourse' of statements on the subject matter, which in this study is the regional planning process. Statements needed to reflect all key aspects of regional planning. Statements on related issues, such as the integration of strategy-making and the conduct of planning authorities, were also included as these were believed to be relevant to the ways in which people conceptualise regional planning. The

statements to be used with interviewees in the sorting stage of the exercise were selected from this concourse. Concourse statements can be drawn from a wide range of sources including academic or popular literature, such as magazines or newspapers, policy documents and interview material. In this research project statements were collected from the first two of these sources supplemented by responses to a short questionnaire sent to individuals involved in the development of the RSS in the East Midlands region. Of the 53 questionnaires e-mailed to individuals representing a wide range of NGOs, regional agencies and local authorities in the region, seven were returned.

More than 120 statements were collected, and these were subsequently reduced to a more manageable number of 38. A full list of these 38 statements is provided in Table 3.3. The creation of this subset of statements forms the second stage in the methodology. It is essential that this subset is representative of the main concourse, and to facilitate this, Q methodologists often use a cell structure as a device for selecting statements, each statement being assigned to a cell in the matrix. Repeats or poorly phrased statements are removed with the intention of preserving balance, clarity and diversity of statements types. The conceptual typology used to sort and select the statements in this study is shown in Table 3.4, with the numbers of the statements relating to those shown in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3: Statements used in Q methodology study

<i>No.</i>	<i>Statement</i>
1	Where people live is the biggest influence on life chances
2	All points of view should have an equal opportunity to be expressed
3	There are many barriers to effective involvement including a lack of willingness on the part of some to share the power
4	Balanced strategies will be achieved if there are environmental, economic and social representatives involved in the process
5	A person who has get up and go will succeed wherever they start from
6	It's a much more open process than previously... everyone has a finger in the pie
7	Some organisations (like the House Builders' Federation) shouldn't be allowed a seat amongst public bodies

<i>No.</i>	<i>Statement</i>
8	Too often it is highly motivated and eloquent groups and individuals who influence outcomes
9	The primary line of accountability in the regions is upwards to Whitehall and not downwards to the people who live there
10	Individual disciplines (eg health, planning, housing or whatever) tend to focus on their own agenda, as they have their own output measures etc and these tend to take priority
11	It is difficult to find anyone who adequately represents the social side of things to get involved in planning
12	It is easy to exclude large numbers of individuals and organisations by holding meetings on particular times, on particular days, in particular locations etc. e.g. during school holidays, in remote locations etc.
13	With regional planning the government is trying to take the power over local decisions away from local people
14	We need to involve people in planning at the lowest level
15	The planning process should not be used for social engineering in any form
16	The overarching requirement of planning should be low carbon development
17	Priority should be given to meeting economic, social and environmental objectives together (win-win-win) rather than balancing different interests
18	The primary task for the RPG is to provide the right land use and communications infrastructure to maximise the creation of jobs and assist economic regeneration
19	You shouldn't put newts and bugs first
20	The planner's function is to advise a political process on the real needs of a local and wider community
21	'Win-win-win' is just about impossible..... most of the time priority has to be given to one aspect over the others
22	Social factors are the poor relation in sustainability policy
23	Spatial strategies overstate the role of environmental and social elements of sustainability at the expense of economic considerations
24	Planning guidelines can be followed too literally by some local authorities when they should be exercising discretion
25	Planning should try to influence personal behaviour and preferences
26	The inefficiency of local planning authorities results in delays and poor decision making
27	I doubt if the general public are even aware that regional planning happens
28	The planning process is too remote, too technical and too jargon-led

<i>No.</i>	<i>Statement</i>
29	Planning authorities are often under-resourced and bogged down with minor planning applications such as house extensions, leaving little capacity to take on a more proactive role that leads to schemes coming forward that maximise social, economic and environmental benefits
30	We're working towards an integrated regional agenda ... decisions are no longer made in isolation from each other
31	With the government stimulating house building on the one hand and economic development on the other, social objectives are at the bottom of the priority list for funding, materials and staff
32	The government hasn't made clear how the conflicting aims and objectives of stakeholders can be reconciled
33	Regional planners won't take notice of local pressure groups - local councillors have to or otherwise they would find themselves off the council at the next election
34	It is the role of planners to reconcile competing priorities
35	Basically small local authorities aren't equipped for the large strategic decisions called for today
36	RPG is all about improving the desirability of places to live - tackling wider issues such as crime, education, health, etc
37	Regional strategies tend to have only marginal effect on the actual projects that end up being delivered
38	Some kind of natural synergy between agencies will emerge through the process of 'iteration' and 'joint working'

Table 3.4: Conceptual typology used to sort and select statements in this Q methodology study

Subject of statement	Number of statement
Objectives of RSS	16 17 18 19 21 22 23 31 36 37
Stakeholder engagement in RSS	2 3 4 6 7 8 11 12 32
Public participation in RSS	14 27
Integration of policy areas	10 30 38
Regional governance	9 13 33
Planning and personal behaviour	15 25
Conduct of planning authorities	24 26 28 29 35
Role of planning professionals	20 34
Importance of place/personal ambition	1 5

Selecting the participants

The next stage of the methodology is to select the participants. Other Q methodology studies use criteria to select participants (e.g. Robbins 2006; Webler *et al.* 2003), the main thrust of which is that participants should represent different points of view on the subject area. Robbins (2006) suggests that this is unlike the sampling strategies of other methodologies which are designed to elicit expert knowledge. In Q methodology, as the emphasis is on revealing divergences in knowledge, the fundamental strategy for selecting participants is that they are a reasonable representation of different perspectives of the subject area. As the interviewees in this research project represent diverse points of view and have an understanding of the regional planning process, all interviewees were asked to perform the Q methodology study. Out of the 48 people interviewed for this project, all except for six people agreed to perform the Q sorts who declined due to time commitments. One other person, who was not interviewed, but who possessed considerable knowledge of the regional planning process, performed the Q sorts, bringing the total number of participants in the Q methodology study to 43. This person was not interviewed, as she was a member of the ODPM committee advising

on this research project, and it would have been difficult to conduct an interview in a 'neutral' way.

As Q methodology is an intensive form of analysis it works well with small numbers of people. Past studies using Q methodology suggest that the perspectives identified within a small sample of participants can generally be used to describe the various perspectives that exist in the wider population (Tuler *et al.* 2005). Adding individuals to the study therefore will not yield any new information unless the additional individuals are very different from the original sample; this is why it is important to have a diverse sample of individuals in the original sample. As a good Q methodology study can be performed with as few as 12 participants, statistically meaningful results can be produced from a relatively small sample of individuals as long as a diverse sample of people perform the sorts (Barry and Proops 1999).

Sorting the statements

Each person was asked to systematically rank each statement according to how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the statement on the card using the grid shown in Figure 3.1, and this ranking of the cards is known as a Q sort. Each card contained one of the 38 statements presented in Table 3.3. The two statements they most disagreed with were to be placed in the column headed -5 on the grid and the two statements they most agreed with were to be placed in the column headed +5. All other statements were placed in the columns in between according to how they ranked them. The grid does not represent absolute values, i.e. the statements placed in the column headed 0 do not represent the statements that participants feel ambivalent about with statements placed to the left being those they disagree with and the statements on the right being those they agree with. Participants could in theory agree with all 38 statements, but it would still be possible to rank them according to how much they agreed with them. The inverted pyramid structure is used to encourage participants to consider carefully the statements about which they feel most strongly.

After each participant had arranged the statements there was a brief follow-up discussion in which they were asked how they had interpreted the statements on the cards and why they had sorted them in the way they did. This discussion focussed on

3.5. The eigenvalue represents the amount of total variance accounted for by a factor.

Table 3.5: Eigenvalues of unrotated factors

Factor	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Eigenvalue	12.32	4.46	2.67	2.45	2.27	2.05	1.79	1.62
% expl. var	29	10	6	6	5	5	4	4

The original set of eight factors produced by the factor analysis is usually of little immediate interest and simply provides the raw materials for probing subjective relationships (Brown 1993). Factor rotation aims to highlight individual relationships between the different factors, and rotating by hand, as opposed to using the varimax option available in the PQ Method software, allows the researcher to use ‘abductive principles’ (Stephenson 1961, cited in Brown 1993). As Brown (1993) explains with an infinite number of ways of rotating the factors, these possibilities can be tested by the researcher by using ‘preconceived ideas, vague notions, and prior knowledge about the subject matter, but with due regard also for any obvious contours in the data themselves’ (Brown 1993, p.116). Judgemental hand rotation of the factors was used in this study as participants could be separated more clearly with respect to their individual factor loading scores. Hand rotation also allows the researcher to reduce the number of participants who do not ‘load on’, or correlate significantly with, any one factor (Tuler *et al.* 2005). The criteria used for selecting the number of factors to be rotated in this study were:

- (1) the factor must have an eigenvalue greater than 2.0;
- (2) there were at least two participants who loaded significantly on each factor; and
- (3) the factors had distinguishing differences.

On the basis of these criteria, three factors were retained for rotation in this study.

The starting point for the hand rotation of the three factors in this Q methodology study was to look at the background of participants. In the interviews, the views,

objectives and resources of environmental representatives were often used as a reference point, with interviewees either aligning themselves or not to them. The Q sorts of the environmental representatives therefore provided a starting point to commence the rotation. The factors A and B were rotated such that the loadings for the environmental representatives were maximised and therefore optimising their position relative to factor B. Factors A and C were similarly rotated to achieve the maximum loadings for significant sorts for both factors. The final rotation allowed for all but six of the 43 participants to be assigned as a 'defining' sort to one of the three factors. Q sorts which correlate highly with a factor are designated as defining sorts of that factor (see Tables 5.5, 5.6 and 5.7 for details of the defining sorts of each of the three factors). Weblar *et al.* (2001) suggest several possible explanations why people participating in a Q methodology study do not load on a factor: that they do not have well-formed opinions, that the way in which the Q methodology study is constructed has failed to capture their views, that they may have not sorted the statements properly due to tiredness or boredom, or their viewpoints were not included because of the criteria used to select the number of factors retained for rotation.

Each of the final three factors represented an idealised social perspective or narrative around the regional planning process. The final part of the analysis process is to identify what each factor or narrative means, or in other words what point of view is being expressed by the participants who loaded significantly on each factor. Descriptions of each narrative were created based on the arrangements of the statements in each of the three factors, and these descriptions are presented in Chapter 5.

Interpretation of the statistical data and the ideal type narratives revealed by them provide two sets of information which can be analysed further. Firstly interpretation of the ideal types helps to identify the different narratives that exist around the regional planning process, and secondly by comparing the actual Q sorts of participants to the ideal types it will be possible to draw conclusions on how different individuals fit into these narratives. In gaining a greater understanding of the narratives people use in relation to the regional planning process, areas of mutual understanding and shared interests between groups can be identified. Conversely, potential problems, conflicts and areas of weakness can be identified.

The analysis of how the different participants fit into these narratives provided information which was used for comparative study. For example, it was possible to compare data based on the location of participants, e.g. intra-regional comparison of viewpoints. A comparison was also made between the viewpoints of participants operating at different spatial scales, e.g. regional vs. sub-regional level. The viewpoints based upon the professional role of participants were also compared, e.g. the representatives of business groups vs. the local authority planning professional. The results of the Q methodology study are presented in Chapter 5.

Reflections on the use of Q methodology

With planning being a highly contested and politicised arena, it is important to have an understanding of the frames and terms of reference used in argumentation, and to this end Q methodology was used in this research to identify the narratives around regional planning. As noted earlier, no examples could be found of Q methodology being used in planning research in the UK academic literature, and therefore the decision to adopt Q methodology as part of the research methodology for this study, sets this research project slightly apart from other work that use more conventional approaches to gathering material such as surveys and/or interviews. In this section the utilization of Q methodology in this project will be critiqued and evaluated in order to assist other researchers into planning who may consider using this technique.

There is little doubt that the narratives revealed by the Q methodology study provided a useful starting point for the framing of the main themes of this research, as will be discussed in Chapters 6, 7 and 8. For example, the study disclosed that some people were more concerned than others about barriers to participation, that there was consensus that the economic objectives of the spatial strategies were emphasised at the expense of other considerations, and that there were mixed views on whether or not a 'silo' mentality persisted. The Q methodology study also revealed valuable information about the types of people aligned to the different perspectives, and the themes on which all narratives agreed or which made narratives distinctive. This information helped to create a well-developed picture of how different people perceived regional planning at the time of the study. The study indicated the temporality of planning narratives, suggesting in particular that current

central government policies are significant determining factors of the content of the narratives. As policies shift over time, so too will the narratives, with narratives shaped around outdated policies making way for those that reflect newer policy ideas. The study also revealed unexpected results, including the lack of a regional distinctiveness to the narratives. Furthermore it found that although environmentalists, and housing/developers and local government interests tend to disagree with one another, they do not hold directly opposing perspectives.

Notwithstanding the valuable insights offered by using Q methodology into how different people perceive regional planning, there were drawbacks to using this research method. Most of these relate in some way or other to time. Q methodology is recognised as being a time-consuming exercise for the researcher (Barry and Proops 1999; Eden *et al.* 2005). For example in this study it took approximately four weeks to collect the original set of more than 120 statements which formed the concourse of statements. The analysis of the results of the factor analysis of the Q sorts took a long period of time, as numerous different computations and rotations were performed using different numbers of factors until the final three factors were decided upon. Additional computations were also performed that looked in different ways at the data collected, so that idealised Q sorts were extracted for participants according to the spatial scale they were engaged in. This meant that idealised Q sorts were produced for participants at the national scale and for all participants at the regional and sub-regional scales, allowing comparisons to be made between the narratives that exist at different spatial scales. These scalar computations were not used in the end as they did not reveal any significantly different narratives to the narratives identified by the analysis of all of the Q sorts performed, but this proved to be a lengthy and time-consuming exercise.

When it came to asking the participants to perform the Q sorts after their interviews, in many cases the time available for participants to sort the statements was limited, resulting in the Q sorts being somewhat rushed. Occasionally there was little time after performing the Q sort for the participant to fully explain the reasons for arranging the statements in the way he/she did. The follow-up discussions are an important part of the data collection process, and inadequate time available for this resulted in less data being collected than would have been preferable. As noted earlier, for some interviewees limited availability of time had prevented them from

participating in the Q methodology study. This is unlikely to have affected the overall results of the study, as those participants who did participate in the study represented a wide range of policy areas and interests. However, as will be discussed in Chapter 5, in hindsight it would have been interesting to have included more local authority councillors in the study in order to ascertain whether or not they have a unique perspective on regional planning.

On balance though, using Q methodology in this research project was believed to have been beneficial. Whilst there is concern that Q methodology can emphasise the subjectivity of the participants at the expense of the researcher (Eden *et al.* 2005; Robbins and Krueger 2000), in the experience of this researcher there was plenty of opportunity afforded for the creative interpretation of the results of the Q methodology study. Analysis of the idealised sorts alongside the material gathered in the interviews enabled triangulation of the data sources, leading to a wider understanding of the narratives that currently exist around regional planning and revealing some unanticipated findings.

Document review and observation

Although the main sources of the empirical evidence for this project were the interviews and Q methodology study, two other sources of material were utilised. The first of these was the compilation and analysis of secondary source material, and the second was the observation of meetings of the Regional Assemblies' steering groups which had responsibility for developing the RSSs.

Documents published by both Regional Assemblies during the course of strategy development were collected and analysed. In addition, the websites of both Assemblies also provided access to their reports and research. The website of the East of England Regional Assembly proved to be a valuable source of information as it contained full copies of the meeting papers of the Assembly's planning steering group, the Regional Planning Panel. This enabled the detailed account given in Chapter 4 of what was a particularly complicated process for developing the region's RSS. The documents of other regional strategies were used to inform the discussion in Chapter 7 of the alignment of the RSSs to these other strategies. The content of the draft RSSs submitted to the Secretary of State by both regions was analysed to

ascertain the relative inclusion of social considerations in the strategies, and the results of this analysis are provided in Chapter 8. Other sources of secondary material were used to inform the research project. These include websites, newspaper reports, press releases, reports by academics and other professional bodies, and policy and guidance documents published by central government. This wide variety of the material provided a rich resource of data for this project.

Two meetings of each of the Assemblies' planning steering groups were attended in the course of this research. The purpose of attending these meetings was to observe the structure of the meetings, for example the layout of the meeting rooms, and who was able to address the meeting. As the meetings were open to the public, it was also intended to ascertain the level of public interest in the planning debate. During the breaks of the meetings, observers attending the meeting were asked what types of organisation or interest they represented. The results of the observations are discussed in Chapters 4 and 6.

The study regions: Yorkshire and the Humber and the East of England

Two regions, Yorkshire and the Humber and the East of England, were selected to illustrate how different planning problems and different regional economic and social conditions might influence the regional planning process. As explained earlier in this chapter, this was in part to address the potential problem of representativeness of an intensive study. It was also because each region had different parts of the current regional and sub-regional planning agenda represented within them. Reflecting the interests of the CASE studentship sponsor, the ODPM, in learning more about how the Sustainable Communities Plan's Growth Areas and Housing Market Renewal Pathfinders were being linked to the regional planning process, it was agreed to look at regions where these initiatives were in place. The East of England was chosen as it had all or parts of three of the four Growth Areas within it, whilst Yorkshire and the Humber had two Pathfinders, one of which was underway at the time of the research. Both regions were well ahead with their RSS process, with both draft strategies expected to be submitted to the Secretary of State during 2004. The

Yorkshire and Humber also had the attraction of being accessible and therefore more convenient to research.

In addition choosing two regions for in-depth study, rather than selecting one example, would provide opportunities for comparison. The regions chosen were experiencing different socio-economic conditions, and it was anticipated that this would mean that different social issues would be to the fore in their regional planning debates. The study of two regions would therefore seek to identify the ways in which regionally distinctive processes and strategies were adopted to address different issues. This links to an interest in the flexibility of government guidance on regional planning as it works in practice in different regions experiencing different conditions. This section therefore highlights some of the key regional differences which might impact on how social issues are dealt with in the two regions, and provides the regional context for the discussion in later chapters.

Yorkshire and Humber provides an example of a region experiencing low economic growth rates, with parts of the region requiring substantial economic and social regeneration and suffering from housing abandonment. By contrast the East of England provides an example of a region experiencing high rates of growth and relative prosperity, but with problems of housing scarcity, homelessness and affordability. In this section the socio-economic characteristics of each region are outlined, identifying the main social issues they face and the key distinctions between the two regions.

The Yorkshire and Humber region is one of the three regions in the north of England. It contains 22 local authorities and two national parks: the Yorkshire Dales and the North York Moors. Three of the eight city regions identified by the Northern Way Growth Strategy are located in the region: the Leeds, Sheffield and Hull and Humber Ports city-regions (ODPM 2004d). These three city regions contain 94 per cent of the region's population being approximately Leeds: 2.6 million, Sheffield: 1.7 million, Hull and Humber Ports: 0.9 million (Northern Way 2004, 2005a; SCC 2005) and an equivalent level of the region's economic activity measured by Gross Value Added (GVA) (Yorkshire Forward 2005). These city regions have been identified by the Regional Development Agency, Yorkshire Forward, as significant contributors to the region's economy (Yorkshire Forward 2005). The main centres

of population are to the south and west of the region, in the Sheffield and Leeds city regions, whilst in the north and east of the region there are few large settlements apart from the two main population centres of the Hull city region and York.

The East of England region is a relatively new creation as a 'region' being created in 2001. It includes the old East Anglia region and three counties, Bedfordshire, Essex and Hertfordshire, which were formerly part of the South East region. As a result until the revised strategy was prepared, the new region was covered by four regional planning strategies:

- RPG6: East Anglia – Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk;
- RPG9: South East – Bedfordshire, Essex and Hertfordshire;
and
- RPG9a and RPG9b: Thames Gateway and River Thames respectively (EELGC 2002a).

The East of England region is larger in terms of land area than the Yorkshire and Humber region (see Table 3.6). The region contains ten upper tier authorities: the six counties of Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk, and the four unitary authorities of Luton, Peterborough, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock. There are also 44 lower tier authorities (GO-East 2006a). Three of the four 'growth area' identified by the government's Sustainable Communities Plan (ODPM 2003c) lie partially within the region: Thames Gateway, the London-Stansted-Cambridge-Peterborough corridor and Milton Keynes South Midlands. Unlike the Yorkshire and Humber region, the East of England has no major conurbations. The largest urban areas are Southend and Castle Point (population 250,000) and the Luton/Dunstable/Houghton Regis conurbation (population 230,000) (EERA 2004). Whilst the southernmost counties of Essex, Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire are more urban and have population densities above the English average, the rural and coastal areas are more sparsely populated, especially in the north of the region (DEFRA 2002a). The proportion of people living in rural parts of the East of England is greater than the English average (see Table 3.6).

Whilst the population in Yorkshire and Humber has stayed relatively stable growing by only 0.9 per cent in the period 1981 and 2001 (ONS 2002a), the number of people

living in the East of England has grown quite substantially over the same period at 11 per cent, compared with a growth rate of 5 per cent for the whole of England (ONS 2002b). One of the main reasons for this rapid growth is in-migration from other parts of the UK, principally London (EERA 2004a). Cambridgeshire is the fastest growing county in the region with annual growth averaging 1 per cent since 1991, with much of the growth centred around the city of Cambridge (DEFRA 2002a). Over the next twenty years the population in both regions is expected to grow (ONS 2005), with the East of England also facing the problem of accommodating an expected high increase in the number of households, anticipated to grow by more than 28 per cent (see Table 3.6). A large number of residents in the East of England commute to London (Faber Maunsell 2002), and both road and rail networks in the region are heavily congested following a legacy of under-investment in both types of infrastructure (EERA 2004a).

The working age employment rate in the Yorkshire and Humber is a little below the English average, whilst for the East of England the rate is higher than the average (see Table 3.6). The East of England contributes a third more to the national economy than Yorkshire and Humber in terms of GVA, whilst GVA per head in the East of England is higher than the national average (see Table 3.6). In both regions the service sector is the most important sector in terms of employment. Whereas at one time Yorkshire and the Humber relied heavily on heavy industry, manufacturing, textiles and agriculture, its economy is now more diverse. However manufacturing and other traditional industries are still important to the region, contributing more to its economy than the same sector in any other English region (Yorkshire Forward 2005). Employment in manufacturing in both regions is suffering from long-term decline.

Table 3.6: Socio-economic data on Yorkshire and Humber and East of England regions

	Yorkshire and Humber	East of England	English average
Land area	15,413 km ²	19,110 km ²	-
Population in 2006	5.05m	5.57m	50.5m (total)
No. of households in 2001	2.14m	2.28m	21.0m (total)
Estimated no. of households in 2026 (% growth 2001-26)	2.51m (17.6)	2.93m (28.1)	25.7m (total) (22.5)
% living in rural areas	20.9%	43.4%	28.5%
Employment rate	74.5%	77.6%	74.7%
GVA for the region	£75.2bn	£100.3bn	-
GVA per head	£14,928	£18,267	£17,188
Recorded crime per 1000 people	118	88	106

Source: DCLG 2006; ONS 2005, 2006a, 2006b; Home Office 2005; DEFRA 2002b

The most recent Regional Housing Strategy in Yorkshire and Humber indicated that there is evidence of a growing gap between the most popular, high value areas and the unpopular, low value areas (GOYH 2005). The Strategy suggested that this disparity is leading to increased social and economic division between the low value areas, located primarily in disadvantaged inner city neighbourhoods, and the more mainstream markets that operate in the popular suburbs, rural and commuter areas. The extent of low demand for housing within the region was identified in a study by CURS (2002). Responding to this problem, the government designated two parts of the region as Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder areas within the 2003 Sustainable Communities Plan. These areas, South Yorkshire and Hull/East Riding, represent two of the nine pathfinder areas established by the ODPM to tackle problems of low

housing demand and abandonment resulting from housing market failure (ODPM 2004d).

Another of the problems facing the region is the non-decency of existing housing stock, with 37 per cent of homes in the region failing to meet the government's 'Decent Homes' standard, making Yorkshire and Humber the second highest of the English regions (ODPM 2003f). Estimates suggest that it would cost approximately £4.4 billion to get these homes up to standard (GOYH 2005). Fuel poverty is another aspect in which the region performs poorly, having the second highest level of fuel poverty in the country (DTI 2005).

In the East of England, the most important housing issue is the affordability of housing, an issue which has been the subject of two research studies undertaken to inform the new Regional Housing Strategy (EERA 2005a). The studies found that there was pressure on local housing markets with demand for housing outstripping supply. Income levels have not kept pace with the rise in house prices and rent levels, with the result that house purchasing and private rental has become increasingly unaffordable to many. The result of this is that the demand for affordable housing is large and increasing, with the additional problem of a significant backlog of unmet need (CCHPR 2003). Coupled with this is the anticipated growth in both population and household numbers in the region over the next two decades which will put further pressure on the housing market. The affordability problem is particularly acute for the many 'key workers', such as nurses, police and teachers, in southern parts of the region who are not eligible for scarce social rented housing (CCHPR 2004). Affordability of housing for key workers affects both existing local people and potential new employees; it can lead to staffing difficulties in those sectors employing them, e.g. health, education and the police, and can contribute towards out-commuting, leading to further road and public transport congestion and stress for individuals.

Data from the Home Office indicates that crime levels represent a major problem in Yorkshire and Humber. The region is second only to London in terms of the rate of recorded crime per 1000 population, with the Humberside police force recording the highest rate across all police forces in the country (Home Office 2005). In the East of England, on the other hand, reported crime is significantly lower than the national

average (see Table 3.6). Yorkshire and Humber also has a poor record when it comes to health. It is one of the worst performing regions in the country in terms of premature death rates, levels of long-term limiting illness and claimant rate for disability living allowance (GOYH 2004a). The region also unsurprisingly ranks poorly compared to the rest of England with regard to deprivation. The Indices of Deprivation 2004 revealed that 29.6 per cent of Super Output Areas in Yorkshire and Humber fall into the 20 per cent most deprived in England (ODPM 2004e).

Estimates of the gross weekly household income at ward level indicate that in the East of England region income is amongst some of the highest in England and Wales (EEDA 2006). A large majority (86 per cent) of the wards in the region are in the top half of the country for household income, with only one ward (in Great Yarmouth) appearing in the bottom 10 per cent lowest paid (EEDA 2006). However in spite of the region's economic growth and relative prosperity, it is estimated that there are hundreds of thousands of people in the region living in poverty or experiencing economic difficulty, with 25 per cent of pensioners, 22 per cent of children and 14 per cent of working age adults living in households where income is below the poverty threshold (EERA 2004b). Parts of rural Norfolk and Suffolk, in particular, suffer from the problems associated with remote peripheral areas such as limited employment opportunities, poor access to services and low wages (EERA 2004b). Within urban areas there are significant pockets of deprivation illustrated by the fact that in January 2006 Great Yarmouth had the second highest claimant count rate in the UK after Kingston upon Hull (GO-East 2006b).

The two regions studied in this research are troubled by some quite different socio-economic issues. In Yorkshire and Humber there are problems to do with poor health, crime levels, inferior quality and abandonment of housing, and deprivation. The gap between the region and the more prosperous south of England is widening (ONS 2006b). Despite its relative prosperity, the East of England region is also suffering from problems. A high rate of population growth due to in-migration is putting pressure on the region's infrastructure and housing especially in certain hotspots such as the Cambridge sub-region and the areas close to London, with unmet demand for affordable housing a key issue. A significant number of people in the East of England are living in low income households and pockets of deprivation exist. Now that central government intends that regional planning should be more

sensitive to social considerations, this research sought to identify how the existence of different socio-economic issues affected the RSSs of both regions, and this will be explored in more detail in Chapter 8.

Conclusions

This chapter has set out the research process followed in this research project. The different research techniques that were used have been described and the problems encountered in the course of collecting the empirical data have been outlined. It is important to know and understand the frames and terms of reference held by the participants in collaborative processes (e.g. Healey 1993, 1997; Rein and Schön 1993), and the Q methodology revealed three different perspectives around the regional planning process, which are more detailed and subtle than those identified in earlier research. These narratives are introduced and outlined in some detail in Chapter 5. Chapters 6, 7 and 8 use the results of the Q methodology study to structure the main points that relate to that particular chapter and then explore these further using the material collected during the interviews with participants. Combining the results of the Q methodology study and the more descriptive qualitative material gathered during the interviews, it is intended to draw together some conclusions about why individuals share the same narratives, what this might mean in terms of how people understand issues, and the possible impacts this may have had on the outcomes of the strategy-making processes of the RSSs.

Chapter 4. DEVELOPING THE NEW REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGIES

Introduction

In this chapter details are given of the processes followed in each of the study regions as the new draft Regional Spatial Strategies were developed. The processes of strategy development are outlined to the time when the draft strategies were submitted to the Secretary of State, with a description of the key events and milestones in each region. The ways in which the strategies were developed is an important element of the context of this research for a number of reasons. Firstly, as noted earlier, the policy and theoretical literature pointed to the importance of consultation and participation processes in planning, and this proved to be a critical aspect of how 'social' issues in planning were perceived and constructed. Another reason for looking closely at the participation processes was that, as part of their collaboration in this research study, the ODPM had expressed an interest in learning more about how their newly introduced systems for greater public engagement were working in. Thirdly it is important to understand the respondents' views in the context of the stages of the strategic development process. Finally as the research progressed, it became clear that events and decisions outside the regions, principally around the changes to the planning system and the launch of the Sustainable Communities Plan, had a significant impact on the way in which the strategies were developed, how social issues were addressed in the strategies and on respondents' viewpoints.

Although both regions followed the same guidance from Whitehall on how to develop the strategies, the processes adopted by the Regional Planning Bodies (RPBs) were not identical. In particular the consultation processes adopted by the RPB in each region were slightly different as were the institutional structures which they established for developing and delivering their strategies. Another important distinction between the two regions derived from the impact of the new planning legislation and the introduction of the government's Sustainable Communities Plan,

which resulted in significant delays and additional work for the East of England region. By comparison the strategy-making process for the Yorkshire and Humber RSS was relatively trouble free, although finalising the draft RSS was delayed partly because of the introduction of the Northern Way Growth Strategy.

Yorkshire and Humber

The government last approved a regional planning document for the region, Regional Planning Guidance for Yorkshire and Humber (RPG12), in October 2001. Work started the following year on a selective review of the RPG to take account of major studies completed after the RPG was prepared and to fill in some of the gaps in the strategy. Whilst the selective review was being undertaken the government announced proposals to reform the planning system which included the replacement of Regional Planning Guidance by statutory Regional Spatial Strategies in each of the English regions (ODPM 2002a). In Yorkshire and Humber the Regional Assembly, the Yorkshire and Humber Assembly (YHA), acts as the Regional Planning Body with responsibility for proposing regional land use and transport policies to the government. The YHA decided that rather than start work on the new Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) as a completely new document, it should emerge as an evolution of the RPG, building on the already agreed objectives and policies (YHA 2003). As a result work on the new RSS commenced at the same time as the selective review of the RPG in the Yorkshire and Humber region. In December 2004 the government issued the revised version of RPG12 for the region (GOYH 2004b).

Within the Assembly the Regional Planning and Infrastructure Commission (RPIC) is the principal body responsible for developing the RSS, with more than 50 institutional members, representing a wide range of interests (see Appendix 2 for details of membership). During the development of the strategy, meetings of the Commission were held on a regular basis in locations throughout the region for accessibility purposes. Each of the 22 local authorities in the region, as well as the two National Park Authorities, was represented on the Commission. Both an elected member and a senior planning officer from each authority were entitled to attend meetings of the Commission. The elected members represented on RPIC usually held the planning portfolio within their authority. The meetings, chaired by the

Leader of the City of York Council, are open to the public, but on the two occasions that meetings were attended as part of this research study only members of RPIC and YHA officers were present. The RPIC has a small Executive Group that acts as a steering group for the development of the strategy and which reports to RPIC (YHA 2004a). The Executive Group shares the same Chair as RPIC; other members of the Group include another local authority member to represent all local authorities in the region, and a representative from each of the Regional Environment Forum, Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber, the Highways Agency, Yorkshire Forward, the Regional Transport Forum and the housing sector.

Two advisory forums or groups support the RPIC. The Regional Transport Forum is responsible for advising the RPIC on the Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) element of the RSS. It has responsibility for steering the technical work and policy development of the RTS (YHA 2004a). Like the RPIC, the Regional Transport Forum includes representatives from all the region's local authorities and a wide range of regional stakeholders including those with an interest in transport matters, for example Network Rail and the Road Haulage Association. The second advisory group is the Technical Advisory Group, chaired by the Assembly's Director of Planning. The chief remit of the Technical Advisory Group is to advise the Commission on the drafting, development and implementation of the new strategy, including, for example, the methodology for the development of the RSS and RSS-related research (YHA 2004a). Membership of the Technical Advisory Group is detailed in Appendix 3. Members of the Group are expected to be senior planning officers or related experts and, if possible, should be the same officer or expert who attends meetings of RPIC. The Technical Advisory Group meets before each meeting of the RPIC in order that feedback and recommendations can be made on relevant matters. Meetings of the Technical Advisory Group are not open to the public and take place in Wakefield either at the offices of the YHA or some other venue in the city.

Initially the government set a target date of the end of 2004 to produce the new RSS (YHA 2004a). As required by guidance issued by the ODPM, a project plan was developed for transforming the old RPG into a new RSS (DETR 2000b). The plan was developed following consultation with regional stakeholders during September and October 2003, and a final project plan, *Shaping the Future*, was issued in

January 2004 (YHA 2004a). The plan explained that it would take *Advancing Together* (YHA 2004b), the overarching vision and strategic framework for the region, as the starting point for developing the vision and objectives for the new Regional Spatial Strategy. It was proposed that the RSS should provide ‘the spatial, land-use, expression of that vision, setting out ‘where’ and ‘in what form and scale’ development and infrastructure can be located to help deliver the regional vision’ (YHA 2004a, p.10). The project plan set out a work plan for the most significant policy and topic areas, and it was acknowledged that some topics would be explored in more detail than others and that priority would be given to housing, employment and transport.

When the government agreed the timescales for the preparation of the draft RSS in June 2004, the target date of April 2005 was set for its submission to government (YHA 2005a). This was to allow sufficient time for the RSS to take account of the Northern Way Growth Strategy (ODPM 2004d) announced in February 2004, and to enable alignment in the timing of submission dates for the draft RSSs for all three of the northern regions. Nine months later, in March 2005, it proved necessary for a number of reasons for the Regional Assembly to seek permission for an extension of the timetable, which moved the submission date to September 2005 (YHA 2005a). By July 2005 it became apparent that meeting the new September deadline was not going to be achievable as work remained to be completed on two critical areas: housing provision requirements and the approach to economic growth/employment land (YHA 2005b). The Assembly was granted a further extension of the timetable pushing the submission date of the draft RSS back to December 2005, and this revised deadline was met (YHA 2005b). Taking account of the amendments to the timetable, the final work programme for the preparation of the draft RSS is summarised in Table 4.1.

The Assembly consulted the public and a wider group of stakeholders on the development of the new RSS on several occasions. The first opportunity was the publication of an ‘issues consultation paper’ in September 2003 which sought views on the issues and topics that should be considered in the preparation of the draft RSS and also set out the terms of reference for the work (YHA 2004a). In addition to seeking responses to the paper, the YHA organised a series of roadshow events at various locations in the region. After considering the outcomes of the roadshows and

the public consultation, the YHA agreed the principles of the *Shaping the Future* project plan published early in 2004 (YHA 2004a).

Table 4.1: Work programme for the preparation of draft RSS for Yorkshire and Humber, indicating key milestones and events

YHA approval for work to commence on RSS	July 2003
Consultation on issues and topics that should be considered in preparation of Draft RSS	Sept-Oct 2003
Undertaking technical work on a wide range of topics, involving liaison and partnership working with local authorities, regional agencies and stakeholders	Throughout 2004 and onwards
Publication of RSS project plan, <i>Shaping the Future</i>	Jan 2004
ODPM announcement of Northern Way Growth Strategy	Feb 2004
Publication of <i>PLANet Yorkshire and Humber</i> (an 'easy read' guide to the RSS process)	April 2004
Publication of <i>Draft Spatial Vision and Strategic Approach</i> consultation document	July 2004
Consultation on draft RSS spatial vision and strategic approach	Aug–Sept 2004
Publication of Pre-Draft RSS Topic Papers looking at main issues of the different policy areas and the spatial options for the region.	Jan 2005
Consultation of Pre-Draft RSS	Jan-Mar 2005
Shaping up the scope and direction of RSS in the light of consultation responses	Feb-Mar 2005
Responding to consultation	Mar-Apr 2005
Finalising the policies and proposals for the draft RSS	July-Dec 2005
Draft RSS, SA/SEA document and Pre-submission Statement of Consultation submitted to GOYH	Dec 2005
Public consultation on Draft RSS	Jan-April 2006
Examination-in-Public	Sept-Oct 2006
Panel publishes a report of its findings	Feb 2007
Publication of Secretary of State's proposed changes	Spring 2007
Government publishes revised RSS	Autumn 2007

Source: YHA 2004a, 2005a, 2005b, 2006; GOYH undated

Under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Assembly was obliged to include a consultation and participation plan within the project plan (ODPM 2004f). The plan set out how the Assembly intended to achieve wide consultation with as many stakeholders as possible. One element of this would be that the Assembly would be advised on the preparation of the draft strategy by the Assembly's Regional Planning and Infrastructure Commission (RPIC), which had a broad representation of stakeholders (see Appendix 2). It was intended that the Commission would have very active involvement in the preparation of the strategy: 'It will act as the key 'sounding board' for developing RSS, recommending policies and proposals to the Assembly for inclusion in the RSS and providing a valuable source of expertise and members for the groups that will undertake the technical work to prepare the document' (YHA 2004a, p.23). The project plan explained that participation and consultation should take place with a wider range of stakeholders within the region, and neighbouring regions as appropriate, than those identified in government guidance. As it was unrealistic for the Assembly to liaise directly with all locally-based groups and individuals, consultation would concentrate on the regional and sub-regional level of stakeholder involvement. Regional and sub-regional groups would be encouraged to ensure that the flow of information and views took place within or across their own networks.

The second formal phase of consultation took place after the publication of the *Draft Spatial Vision and Strategic Approach* consultation document in July 2004 (YHA 2004c). The document received more than a hundred written responses (YHA 2005e). Each of the YHA's other commissions also considered the document, namely the Economy Commission, Education and Skills Commission, Quality of Life Commission and the Sustainability Commission. The document did not include detailed policy options; instead the main intention of the consultation was to develop a spatial vision for the region, looking in particular at the role of sub-regions and the key issues facing different parts of the region (YHA 2005b). The consultation responses were intended to help inform the development of detailed draft policies and proposals that would help to meet the objectives of the *Advancing Together* vision. Different options would then be evaluated through a sustainability appraisal/strategic environmental assessment (SA/SEA).

This document was important because it introduced the notion of dividing the region into different sub-areas, an approach that had been discussed with stakeholder groups over several months. The old RPG had identified areas based on a regeneration theme, but in the new spatial strategy the sub-areas would be based on a number of economic, social and environmental characteristics (YHA 2004c). Whilst the document suggested that the sub-area approach was the most useful way to develop the RSS, it emphasised that it was not the intention to develop individual sub-regional strategies for every part of the region. Detailed sub-regional strategies would be developed for only two parts of the region: the Leeds City Region and South Yorkshire. The document identified six sub-areas, namely Leeds City Region, Humber Estuary, Coast, South Yorkshire, Vales and Tees Links, and Remoter Rural, for what it termed ‘analytical’ and ‘aspirational’ reasons. The document also identified a number of recurring themes that had emerged from the sub-area work including, for example, the need to tackle the issues of low demand in the housing market, to provide affordable housing, and to improve multi-modal connectivity between centres. The feedback from the consultation showed widespread support for the sub-area concept, although some concern was expressed about the basis of the sub-areas and that an emphasis on economic analysis meant less significance was seen to be placed on environmental and social issues. Most of the respondents to the consultation agreed with the emergent themes and that these should form the basis of a set of core principles for the new strategy (YHA 2005e).

The final stage of formal consultation during the preparation of the draft strategy took place in winter 2004-05 (YHA 2005c). This pre-draft stage allowed stakeholders the opportunity to comment on the different policy options for development patterns in the region, or what it called ‘spatial options’, that could be supported by the RSS. The spatial options were supported by the use of three distinct scenarios to show how a different policy emphasis could affect patterns of development in the region. The three scenarios were:

- Scenario A: ‘Responding to market forces’;
- Scenario B: ‘Matching need with opportunity’; and
- Scenario C: ‘Managing the environment as a key resource’ (YHA 2005d).

The document emphasised that the different scenarios should not be seen as extreme approaches, so for example scenario A did not suggest that economic progress should be at the expense of the environment (YHA 2005d). It also made clear that the scenarios should not be seen as distinct options with a choice having to be made between scenario A, B or C. Instead the scenarios were to be used as a tool to help illustrate and test the impact of different policy options. The three scenarios were reflected in a series of 25 topic papers included in the consultation. Each of the topic papers set out the key issues for each topic area and the policy options for the draft strategy drawing together the range of work that had been undertaken on each of the topics. More than 170 organisations and individuals responded to the consultation and generated approximately 4000 comments (YHA undated).

East of England

The East of England region is a new planning region formed in April 2001. Prior to then it was covered by four regional planning strategies which had been published between 1995 and 2001 (EELGC 2002a). With the formation of the new region it was quickly recognised that an early review of these RPGs was required for a number of reasons. These included the need to set out a spatial strategy for the new region in one document, fill policy gaps identified in RPG6 and RPG9, and to take account of more recent multi-modal and sub-regional studies (EELGC 2002a). When the process of developing the regional planning strategy for the unified region was initiated it was led by the East of England Local Government Conference (EELGC) as the regional planning body for the East of England. The EELGC was a regional association of all 54 county, unitary and district councils in the region (EELGCb). In April 2003, a year after the government launch of the White Paper *Your Region, Your Choice* (DTLR 2002), the EELGC was rebranded the East of England Regional Assembly (EELGC 2003a).

The role of producing and reviewing the new RPG on behalf of the EELGC/Assembly belonged to the Regional Planning Panel (RPP). When the RPP was set up in 2000 it broke new ground by having representatives of community stakeholders and the regional development agency, EEDA, as full voting members (EELGC 2003a). In 2003 the Panel had 30 members, two of whom are appointed

Board members of EEDA with the remaining 28 being drawn from the Regional Assembly or its nominees of which 19 were local government representatives and nine were community stakeholders (EERA 2005b). With 54 councils in the region this meant that not every local authority had a representative on the Panel. Representation was organised so that each of the ten county and unitary councils had one representative with the remaining representatives drawn from political groups to ensure that the political balance on the Panel reflected the Regional Political Balance Template, which represents the proportions of a constructed regional electorate based on the local election results of all principal councils in the region (EERA 2005b). Meetings of RPP, chaired by the Cambridgeshire County Council Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Services, were usually held in Cambridge and were open to the public. At the meetings of the Panel attended in the course of this research, the number of observers attending outnumbered Panel members by some measure. Observers came from a variety of backgrounds including local authority officers, planning consultants, representatives of developers and land owners, and members of the general public.

The RPP has a Management Committee of which the Chair of the RPP and the three Vice-Chairs of the RPP are members, so that each political group and the community stakeholder group are represented. The Committee is supported by the Secretary of the RPP, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Regional Technical Advisors Group and the Head of Regional Planning at EERA. The Committee meets in advance of each RPP meeting to plan the agenda, deals with urgent business arising between Panel meetings and represents the RPP in any discussions with other organisations.

Assisting the Panel in the preparation of the draft strategy was the Regional Technical Advisors Group (RTAG). This is the key technical panel advising the RPP. Its membership comprises of senior EERA officers, one officer from each of the ten county and unitary councils, one officer from each of the county groupings of district councils, representatives of business and environment stakeholders, EEDA, GO-East and the Highways Agency. Membership of RTAG is open to a representative of the social sector, but at the time of the interviews no suitable candidate for the position had been identified. Meetings of RTAG are not open to the public, although the agendas and meeting papers were made available on the EERA website.

The formation of the new East of England region meant that the regional planning body was faced with a number of challenges from outset. A lead-in time to engage stakeholders was required, regional ownership of the strategy had to be built, and arrangements for partnership working needed to be established (EELGC 2002a). A number of significant studies were already underway or recently completed, for example, four multi-modal transport studies were carried out in the East of England (EERA undated a) following the publication in July 1998 of *A New Deal for Trunk Roads in England* (DETR 1998c); these studies would require consideration before their implications could be addressed by the new planning strategy. All of these issues meant that at an early stage in the process concern was expressed by GO-East that the proposed timetable for producing the new strategy was ambitious (EELGC 2002a).

Conforming to government guidance (DETR 2000b), the EELGC produced a specification for the new RPG in early 2002 (EELGC 2002a). The specification set out the process and timetable for delivering the new strategy as well as the guidelines that the EELGC would be following to prepare the new strategy. The specification explained that the new strategy would be informed by the Regional Sustainable Development Framework (RSDF) which set out a vision of sustainable development in the region (EERA 2001). Rather than being a plan of action, the RSDF aims to influence the development of regional and local policies to ensure that they were consistent with the principles of sustainable development (EERA 2001). The RSDF was to be the foundation on which the region's Integrated Regional Strategy (IRS) was built (EERA 2005c). The IRS, published in October 2005, was produced in parallel with the draft Regional Spatial Strategy and the new Regional Economic Strategy, so that these new strategies would provide an up-to-date and overarching vision for the East of England (EERA 2005c).

In the specification document the EELGC stated its intention to submit the draft RPG to the Secretary of State in June 2003. Public Examination of the RPG would follow at the end of that year and the final RPG was expected to be published in July 2004 (EELGC 2002a). The deadline of publishing the RPG Options Document (EELGC 2002b) in time for the public consultation during September to December 2002 was achieved, but by this time events outside the region were beginning to impact on the

achievability of submitting the draft RPG on time. In July 2002 John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister, made a speech to the House of Commons outlining his approach to meeting housing needs in the East of England and South East regions (Prescott 2002). The statement outlined the need for a 'step change' or acceleration of housing development in the two regions, concentrating on four identified 'growth areas', an increase in the supply of affordable housing and reforms to the planning system. The planning reforms included the replacement of Regional Planning Guidance with statutory Regional Spatial Strategies and the introduction of Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) to replace local/structure plans and unitary development plans (ODPM 2002a).

Later in the same year Lord Rooker, Minister of State for Housing, Planning and Regeneration, wrote to the EELGC with comments on the options consultation document (EELGC 2003b). In this letter he expressed his concern about the RPG's approach towards housing targets. As work on RPG14 had started before the Planning Green Paper (DTLR 2001) the approach adopted by the RPG rested upon the then established planning system whereby the non-statutory RPG would set county-level housing targets, leaving the structure plans to set district-level targets. At the time of Lord Rooker's letter, the region's approach had been to include housing figures at the county, unitary and growth area levels, but not at the district level, with the intention being that an early review of RPG14 would be required to convert it into an RSS when the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill came into law (EELGC 2003c). Lord Rooker suggested that this would lead to a potential delay of up to two years before there would be clear housing targets to guide the LDFs and this would be an unsatisfactory situation. After much debate the RPP decided that the best approach would be to include district-level housing figures for the whole region, a process that would require additional work and local engagement. On this basis the ODPM agreed that the submission of the draft RPG could be delayed from June 2003 to February 2004 (EELGC 2003d). The adoption of a revised timetable allowed EERA to move away from producing an old-style RPG to produce an RSS in line with the emerging legislation and guidance, which would make it the first region in the country to do so.

The revised timetable was adhered to, and in February 2004 the Draft RPG14 was approved by a meeting of the full Regional Assembly. Once again though, the

process had suffered a setback arising from discussions with the ODPM. Work on the draft had identified housing provision for the region as 23,900 houses per year between 2001 and 2021 making the total regional provision 478,000 houses (EERA 2004c). Although this figure was about 15 per cent higher than the average for RPG6/9 (EERA 2004e), Lord Rooker, now Minister for Regeneration and Regional Development, made clear that this level of housing growth was 'not sufficient to meet the Government's aspirations for the Sustainable Communities Plan and, in particular, for the London-Stansted-Cambridge Growth Area' (EERA 2004c, p.6). The shortfall was believed to be in the region of 900 houses per year, equivalent to an additional 18,000 houses over the twenty year period (EERA 2004c). Lord Rooker also suggested that RPG14 should also provide for growth, i.e. a second runway, at Stansted Airport rather than wait for an early review, as the current draft had been prepared on the basis of making full use of the existing runway only (EERA 2004f). Coupled with all of this the ODPM announced an extension of the London-Stansted-Cambridge Growth Area to include the whole of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough (ODPM 2004g). EERA consequently agreed to 'bank' the draft strategy as it stood with the ODPM in early March, placing it on record pending further work, and to investigate the potential of the newly extended London-Stansted-Cambridge-Peterborough (LSCP) corridor to accommodate the additional housing growth (EERA 2004c). The revised draft RPG14 would then be formally submitted to government in September 2004. Lord Rooker also gave his assurance that the government accepted that the higher levels of growth could not be achieved without additional infrastructure particularly transport but also health, education and other services and green infrastructure (EERA 2004f). The region was therefore invited to submit a proposal for essential infrastructure as part of the 2004 Spending Review for investment in the period 2005-08. The bid for an additional £1.5 billion for a range of infrastructure investments was submitted by EERA in May 2004 (EERA 2004g).

To ensure that the revised RPG was robust and could be defended at Public Examination, EERA commissioned technical studies that might identify the potential for further housing growth and examine the impacts of the various Stansted runway scenarios. Other studies were commissioned to test the 'banked' strategy and to resolve any outstanding issues. As it became clear that EERA would have to comply with the now statutory requirement to seek advice from County and Unitary Councils

on the final form of RPG/RSS14, taking into account the outcomes of the technical studies commissioned during summer 2004 (EERA 2004h), the date for submission of the RSS was pushed back once again. It was agreed that the RPP would meet in October to discuss their advice and a revised RPG/RSS14 would then be submitted to the full Assembly in November for approval.

The extension to the timetable for producing the strategy meant that the RPP also had to commission additional assessment work on the RSS in order to secure compliance with the Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) Directive³ (EERA undated b). Although RPG/RSS14 had been subject to Sustainability Appraisal (SA) throughout its preparation, prior to April 2004 it had been assumed that on the basis of the old timetable for the RPG/RSS it would not be subject to the SEA Directive. The commissioning of the additional technical studies and the resultant delay in finalising the RSS meant that it was likely that the RSS would not be formally approved before 21 July 2006, one of the trigger dates for the formal application of the Directive.

With no response from the government on EERA's submission to the Spending Review, the RPP met in October to recommend final amendments to the 'banked' RSS14. The meeting also received the draft report of the Sustainability Appraisal (incorporating the Strategic Environmental Assessment) of the RSS. The report prepared by the consultants Levett-Therivel and Land Use Consultants stated that 'the great majority of the impacts of policies [in the RSS] are positive' but that the SA/SEA had also found that it will be extremely difficult to implement the RSS in a way that meets all its policy objectives because of the 'step-change' in delivery of housing, employment and infrastructure called for in the RSS' (Levett-Therivel and Land Use Consultants 2004a, p.29). The RPP resolved that the RSS should not provide for the additional 18,000 housing in the LSCP corridor and that the housing provision as contained in the 'banked' strategy would remain (EERA 2004i). The reason given for so doing was that the independent environment and economic studies commissioned by the Assembly had suggested that the case had not been adequately made for the additional housing (EERA 2004j). It was agreed that there should be an early focussed review of the housing numbers in about three years that would take into account changes in the region's needs and economic development.

³ Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and the Council on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment

The Panel also resolved that the RSS would not support a second runway at Stansted Airport on environmental grounds. In November 2004 the Assembly approved the East of England Plan (EERA 2004a), endorsing the recommendations made by the RPP (EERA 2004k).

The RSS was submitted to the ODPM in November, but the drama was not completely over. At the next meeting of the full Assembly in December 2004 the issue of the government's response to the infrastructure bid was debated. It was estimated that only 25 per cent of the bid had been recognised by that date (EERA 2004l). The Assembly voted to suspend its endorsement of the draft RSS that had been launched only a few days earlier, citing the government's lack of funding for essential infrastructure in the region. A statement issued by the Assembly after the meeting said 'The East of England Regional Assembly deplores the Government's grossly inadequate funding of the transport infrastructure costs associated with the additional 478,000 houses planned for this region between 2001-2021. Bearing in mind that the Assembly's acceptance of this massive growth was conditional upon adequate government provision of the necessary infrastructure; and mindful of Lord Rooker's repeated written assurances that growth will not be imposed without the associated infrastructure' (EERA 2004m). Notwithstanding the Assembly's withdrawal of support for the RSS, the public consultation on the draft strategy proceeded as planned from December 2004 to March 2005 (EERA undated c). Table 4.2 summarises the timetable for the preparation of the RPG/RSS14 with key milestones, decisions and events.

In recognition of the importance of involving stakeholders in the production of the strategy at an early a stage as possible, the starting point for the new strategy was a small number of stakeholder seminars held in different locations in the region during November 2001 (EELGC 2002c). Participants from local government and different regional and local stakeholders were invited to identify and prioritise the key issues that the RPG should address (EELGC 2002d). The seminars also gave participants the opportunity to discuss how stakeholders should be involved in the process of developing the new strategy (EELGC 2002d). As part of this debate, those attending the seminars noted the narrow cross section of participants of the seminars and concern was expressed that there was poor representation from business groups,

service providers, community-level voluntary sector organisations and the general public (EELGC 2002d).

Table 4.2: Timetable for the preparation of the RPG/RSS for the East of England, indicating key milestones, decisions and events

Stakeholder workshops to discuss key issues, vision & objectives	November 2001
Publication of RPG specification document	January 2002
ODPM announcement that Government is looking for a 'step change' in rate of housing development in South East and East of England regions, and provides details of planning reforms	July 2002
Consultation on the RPG Options Document <i>East of England: Your region, your choice, your future</i>	Sept-Dec 2002
Letter from Lord Rooker requesting RPG should include district level housing figures	December 2002
Letter from Lord Rooker on 18,000 shortfall in housing, second runway at Stansted and his invitation to submit proposal for 2004 Spending Review	January 2004
Announcement of extension to LSCP growth area	February 2004
Draft RPG14 submitted to ODPM as a 'banked' strategy	March 2004
RPP commissions additional technical and environmental studies	Feb-April 2004
EERA submits proposal to 2004 Spending Review for additional £1.5 billion for infrastructure	May 2004
RPP seeks advice from County and Unitary Councils on RPG/RSS14	July-Sept 2004
RPP finalises draft RSS14 but does not recommend provision of additional 18,000 housing	October 2004
EERA approves draft RSS14, <i>East of England Plan</i>	November 2004
EERA sends draft Plan to ODPM	November 2004
EERA suspends its endorsement of the Plan	December 2004

Public consultation of draft Plan	Dec 2004– March 2005
Examination-in-Public	Dec 2005– March 2006
Panel to publish a report of its findings and recommend how the draft RSS could be improved. Government to consider the Panel's recommendations and publish 'proposed changes' to the draft RSS.	Mid 2006
Government to consult on the proposed changes	Late 2006
Government to publish final RSS	Early 2007

Source: EELGC 2002a, c, 2003b; EERA 2004f, g, h, i, k; ODPM 2002a; Prescott 2002

After the specification for the RPG was issued in January 2002, work quickly progressed on setting up twelve topic-based task groups which would be responsible for the policy drafting of the draft RPG leading to the publication of the options consultation document. The task groups were made up of representatives from key stakeholder organisations and partnerships and were tasked to focus on particular issues to be addressed by the strategy including: spatial strategy, economy, housing, transport, town centres and retail, rural issues, environment, culture and tourism, aggregates, and waste (EERA 2004d). This resulted in more than 150 people being directly involved in the development of the document and the draft policies (EERA 2004d).

The options consultation document, *East of England: Your region, your choice, your future* (EELGC 2002b), was published in September 2002. Over 3000 copies of the document were distributed as well as a further 1200 copies of a summary document (EERA 2004d). In response to the concerns raised during the initial stakeholder events in 2001, workshops were also held with a number of hard-to-reach groups and the business community in order to increase their participation. At the end of the consultation period nearly 500 organisations and individuals had responded to the document. The number and breadth of responses were seen by the Assembly as an indicator of the success of the consultation process which had been resource intensive (EERA 2004d).

The consultation document outlined the urban areas already defined in the existing RPGs as the focus of sub-regions and sub-areas: Ipswich, Peterborough, Norwich, Bury St Edmunds, Kings Lynn, Great Yarmouth/Lowestoft, Cambridge and Thames Gateway. Also pre-defined in RPG were the Growth Areas of Milton Keynes South Midlands and London-Stansted-Cambridge (EELGC 2002b). Comments were sought on whether there should be any additions to these sub-regions which could benefit from having more specific sub-area policies. Ultimately only three new sub-areas were added to the list: Thetford, Stevenage and the London Arc, which broadly coincided with the metropolitan green belt (EERA 2004a).

Four different spatial scenarios for the future development of the region were presented in the options document: to continue with existing regional policies, to build on key regional centres, to build on regional strengths, and to create a new settlement (or settlements) as a prime location of growth (EELGC 2002b). This issue attracted the greatest number of comments, confirming the importance of this as the basis for the draft strategy. The balance of responses favoured a mix of the scenarios: that the spatial strategy should continue with existing policies at first, then move towards focusing on regional centres and strengths, weaker economies, and on market towns in rural areas (EERA 2004d). The task groups were required to consider the responses and to address them when drawing up the policies for the draft strategy. During the drafting process there was continued engagement with a wide range of stakeholders and experts as well as meetings with the wider community, e.g. the Association of Parish Councils, to ensure that a wide range of views on the developing strategy were captured (EERA 2004d).

Conclusions

In spite of following the same government guidance on regional planning (DETR 2000b; ODPM 2004f), the two regions developed somewhat different approaches to putting together their regional planning strategies. One example is the additional stage of public consultation utilised by the Yorkshire and Humber Assembly. In the East of England region, by way of contrast, a significant body of technical research was developed to ensure robust decision-making of the RPP. In other ways, though, there were similarities between the approaches adopted by the two regions: for

example both adopted sub-regional approaches in areas of the region that would benefit from more specific policies.

Many of the problems faced by the East of England Assembly as it developed its RSS can be attributed to the timing of the strategy development process which had commenced in 2001. New planning guidelines were introduced as the strategy was being developed, so that a process that was initially set in place to produce Regional Planning Guidance for the newly formed East of England region eventually had to deliver a new statutory Regional Spatial Strategy. This was subject to a greater level of appraisal, involved more interests in its development and designed to achieve a wider range of objectives than the old RPG. In the end, the new strategy was submitted to the ODPM about 18 months later than had originally been anticipated. Government strategies also had an impact on the content of both sets of strategies. In Yorkshire and Humber, the Northern Way Growth Strategy was announced during the development of the draft planning strategy, and in the East of England the Sustainable Communities Plan was a major influence not only on the content of the strategy but also on the process of developing the strategy, contributing to the considerable delay in the strategy being finalised. The effect of both of these government strategies on the regional planning strategies will be explored in more detail in later chapters.

In terms of the institutions of governance developed to produce the strategy, the two regions again used slightly different approaches. In the Yorkshire and Humber region, with only 22 local authorities, it was relatively easy to allow every local authority a voice on the Regional Planning Panel. For the East of England region, however, with 54 local authorities, following this approach would have made the Regional Planning and Infrastructure Commission a large and unwieldy forum. Membership of the Commission was restricted to the elected members of the region's larger, and seemingly more powerful, councils with the balance of elected representatives being selected to reflect the voting characteristics of the regional electorate. Unlike the Yorkshire and Humber's RPP, where senior planning officers were allowed equal debating privileges to their elected representatives, at the East of England's RPIC only elected members and community stakeholders were allowed to address the meeting. Whilst the East of England had initially been at the forefront of allowing community stakeholders equal voting rights to local authority members on

the Commission, in the meetings attended in the course of this research it was noted that debate was dominated by elected representatives. By way of contrast at the Yorkshire and Humber's RPP, the elected representatives were relatively less vocal when compared to the stakeholder representatives and the planning officers. The roles and influence of members of these two regional planning forums will be examined further in the Chapter 6.

In both regions the reforms introduced by the 2004 Planning Act resulted in wider participation in the governance processes that produce regional planning strategies. The institutional structures established by the RPBs to develop the strategies were designed so that representatives of key stakeholder groups representing business, environment and social/community interests would be equal partners to planning specialists and elected members. The effect of this wider participation on the debate and on the objectives of the strategies will be explored in later chapters, with the engagement of groups representing social issues in particular being examined in Chapter 6.

Chapter 5: Q METHODOLOGY STUDY: Revealing the narratives of regional planning

Introduction

Q methodology is used in this research study to identify the different and shared perspectives held on the regional planning process. Each person participating in the Q methodology study has their own individual viewpoint on regional planning, but common experiences and personal attributes make it likely that there are shared perceptions. What makes Q methodology interesting as a research approach is that it extracts idealised shared perspectives on the planning process using the data provided by all of the participants in the Q methodology study. Q methodology also identifies which participants share the different perceptions, and by linking this information to the professional backgrounds and experience of the participants it is possible for the researcher to make assumptions as to how the wider community might fit into the different discourses.

As described in the Chapter 3, three different perspectives on the regional planning process were identified in this study using PQ Method software. In this chapter narratives are presented for each of these perspectives which represent the different ways in which people think about the regional planning process. The perspectives are compared to reveal areas of consensus and distinguishing themes. Details of participants' backgrounds in terms of profession or policy area, the spatial scale in which they are operating and the region in which they are located are examined to ascertain whether these are determinants of which perspective participants are most closely associated.

The Narratives of Regional Planning

Three statistical factors – or perspectives – emerged from the factor analysis of the data from the Q methodology study as discussed in the Chapter 3. Each factor

represents a distinct perspective on the regional planning process. The factor analysis computed an idealised Q sort for each of the factors, which represents how a hypothetical subject would have arranged the 38 statements if they had loaded 100 per cent on that factor. Table 5.1 presents the factor array scores, or statement ranking, for each of the idealised Q sorts. As in the actual Q sorts performed by the participants, the idealised Q sorts are characterised by a rank ordering of all the statements across the eleven columns in the sorting grid (see Figure 3.1). A statement ranking +5 strongly is strongly agreed with, whilst a statement ranking -5 is strongly disagreed with. Therefore each of the three factors is defined by the particular rank order each of the statements received in the idealised sort.

In this section each of the factors identified by the Q methodology study are presented in terms of a narrative that describes what the participants who participated in the study think about regional planning. The narratives are described in the language used by the Q statements, with the numbers in parentheses referring to the numbers of the Q statements listed in Table 5.1. The narratives are built by linking together the statements which received the highest scores, both positive and negative, for the idealised sorts. These key statements are rephrased where appropriate, for example reversing the sense of negative statements to avoid double negatives, and also to make the phrasing more coherent, producing a 'pithy paragraph' (Eden *et al.* 2005, p.419), which summarises the main features of the narrative. The distinguishing statement sets as generated by the factor analysis for each of the factors are shown in Tables 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4. Labels have been given to each factor, namely Factor A: Troubled Regionalists, Factor B: Democratic Environmentalists, and Factor C: Community Planners.

Participants can have differing levels of agreement with each narrative, so that people can agree with one narrative and disagree with another, indicated by their having positive factor loadings with the former and negative loadings on the latter. Where a participant has high loadings on a factor, this indicates strong levels of agreement with that particular narrative. The factor loadings for each narrative are shown in Tables 5.5, 5.6 and 5.7. As explained in Chapter 3, in this study six participants did not load significantly on any factor, and the factor loadings of these participants are provided in Table 5.8.

Table 5.1 Q statements and their ranking for each factor or narrative

No.	Statement	FACTOR		
		A	B	C
1	Where people live is the biggest influence on life chances	-1	0	1
2	All points of view should have an equal opportunity to be expressed	4	4	2
3	There are many barriers to effective involvement including a lack of willingness on the part of some to share the power	1	2	1
4	Balanced strategies will be achieved if there are environmental, economic and social representatives involved in the process	3	3	5
5	A person who has get up and go will succeed wherever they start from	-2	-3	0
6	It's a much more open process than previously... everyone has a finger in the pie	-2	-2	1
7	Some organisations (like the House Builders' Federation) shouldn't be allowed a seat amongst public bodies	-5	-2	-5
8	Too often it is highly motivated and eloquent groups and individuals who influence outcomes	4	2	5
9	The primary line of accountability in the regions is upwards to Whitehall and not downwards to the people who live there	-3	1	-2
10	Individual disciplines (eg health, planning, housing or whatever) tend to focus on their own agenda, as they have their own output measures etc and these tend to take priority	3	0	1
11	It is difficult to find anyone who adequately represents the social side of things to get involved in planning	1	-1	-2
12	It is easy to exclude large numbers of individuals and organisations by holding meetings on particular times, on particular days, in particular locations etc. e.g. during school holidays, in remote locations etc.	5	1	0

No.	Statement	FACTOR		
		A	B	C
13	With regional planning the government is trying to take the power over local decisions away from local people	-5	-3	-3
14	We need to involve people in planning at the lowest level	-1	5	2
15	The planning process should not be used for social engineering in any form	-1	-4	-4
16	The overarching requirement of planning should be low carbon development	-4	3	-5
17	Priority should be given to meeting economic, social and environmental objectives together (win-win-win) rather than balancing different interests	3	5	3
18	The primary task for the RPG is to provide the right land use and communications infrastructure to maximise the creation of jobs and assist economic regeneration	-2	-5	-1
19	You shouldn't put newts and bugs first	0	-4	-1
20	The planner's function is to advise a political process on the real needs of a local and wider community	0	1	4
21	'Win-win-win' is just about impossible..... most of the time priority has to be given to one aspect over the others	0	-3	-2
22	Social factors are the poor relation in sustainability policy	1	4	-1
23	Spatial strategies overstate the role of environmental and social elements of sustainability at the expense of economic considerations	-3	-5	-3
24	Planning guidelines can be followed too literally by some local authorities when they should be exercising discretion	0	0	0
25	Planning should try to influence personal behaviour and preferences	-3	2	1
26	The inefficiency of local planning authorities results in delays and poor decision making	0	-2	-1
27	I doubt if the general public are even aware that regional planning happens	5	2	3

No.	Statement	FACTOR		
		A	B	C
28	The planning process is too remote, too technical and too jargon-led	2	0	-1
29	Planning authorities are often under-resourced and bogged down with minor planning applications such as house extensions, leaving little capacity to take on a more proactive role that leads to schemes coming forward that maximise social, economic and environmental benefits	2	-1	2
30	We're working towards an integrated regional agenda ... decisions are no longer made in isolation from each other	1	1	3
31	With the government stimulating house building on the one hand and economic development on the other, social objectives are at the bottom of the priority list for funding, materials and staff	0	3	-3
32	The government hasn't made clear how the conflicting aims and objectives of stakeholders can be reconciled	2	1	0
33	Regional planners won't take notice of local pressure groups - local councillors have to or otherwise they would find themselves off the council at the next election	2	-2	-2
34	It is the role of planners to reconcile competing priorities	-2	0	2
35	Basically small local authorities aren't equipped for the large strategic decisions called for today	1	-1	0
36	RPG is all about improving the desirability of places to live - tackling wider issues such as crime, education, health, etc	-1	0	4
37	Regional strategies tend to have only marginal effect on the actual projects that end up being delivered	-4	-1	-4
38	Some kind of natural synergy between agencies will emerge through the process of 'iteration' and 'joint working'	-1	-1	0

Factor A: Troubled Regionalists

This perspective describes a viewpoint that within the planning process it is important that all points of view should have the opportunity to be expressed, including private sector organisations (2, 7). This will make it more likely that a balanced strategy will be achieved (4). However there is a very strong emphasis in this perspective on the possible barriers to participation (8, 12, 28), and these might explain why the process has not opened up a great deal (6). There is also a concern that the individual policy areas tend to concentrate on their own agenda (10), with central government offering little guidance on how these competing aims and objectives should be reconciled (32). In this perspective, the statements that relate to the regional scale were identified as important. Regional strategies are believed to have a big influence on the projects that eventually get delivered (37). The regional scale of governance is seen as being less accountable to Whitehall than to the people in the region (9), with responsibility for local decisions still resting within the region (13). Having said this, those who subscribe to this perspective were doubtful that the general public had any awareness of regional planning (27), and there was uncertainty as to whether it was essential for the people to be involved (14). According to this perspective, meeting economic, social and environmental objectives together should be made the overall priority of planning (17), and it is regarded as important that planning should not have low carbon development as the overarching requirement (16). However, it was believed that in reality spatial strategies tend to overstate economic considerations at the expense of environmental and social elements (23). This perspective agreed that planning should not influence the ways in which people behave or their preferences (25).

The factor analysis generated a set of distinguishing statements which are particularly significant for this perspective, and these are presented in Table 5.2. Two of these statements, 7 and 23, are also important to one or both of the other narratives.

Table 5.2: Distinguishing statements for Factor A

<i>No.</i>	<i>Statement</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>z-score</i>
12	It is easy to exclude large numbers of individuals and organisations by holding meetings on particular times, on particular days, in particular locations etc. e.g. during school holidays, in remote locations etc.	5	1.62
27	I doubt if the general public are even aware that regional planning happens	5	1.45
10	Individual disciplines (eg health, planning, housing or whatever) tend to focus on their own agenda, as they have their own output measures etc and these tend to take priority	3	0.98
23	Spatial strategies overstate the role of environmental and social elements of sustainability at the expense of economic considerations	-3	-1.34
25	Planning should try to influence personal behaviour and preferences	-3	-1.41
13	With regional planning the government is trying to take the power over local decisions away from local people	-5	-2.08
7	Some organisations (like the House Builders' Federation) shouldn't be allowed a seat amongst public bodies	-5	-2.24

Factor B: Democratic Environmentalists

The people aligned to this perspective feel particularly strongly about what the priorities for planning strategies should be and what is believed to happen in reality. They believe that it is very important that planning should meet economic, social and environmental objectives simultaneously (17). They hold strong views on environmental aspects, believing that planning should make low carbon development an overarching requirement and that environmental protection is also an important objective (16, 19). In line with this viewpoint, this perspective is also averse to the RSSs prioritising economic development (18). This perspective is very clear that social factors are the weakest aspect of sustainability policy, and that both social and

environmental elements are the weaker elements of spatial strategies as economic considerations tend to be overstated (22, 23). Central government's stimulation of house-building and economic development has contributed towards social issues being made a lower priority (31). Despite being aware of these issues, the people aligned with this perspective are optimistic that it is possible to achieve a win-win situation (21), and one of the ways in which this can be done is by allowing all interests the opportunity to get involved in the development of the spatial strategies (4). Those holding this perspective believe that it is very important that people are involved in planning (14), but they are doubtful that there is much awareness of regional planning (27).

Distinguishing statements for this perspective, as generated by the factor analysis, are shown in Table 5.3. Statement 31 is important to both Factors B and C, but whilst this perspective strongly agrees with this statement, the next perspective disagrees with it.

Table 5.3: Distinguishing statements for Factor B

<i>No.</i>	<i>Statement</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>z-score</i>
17	Priority should be given to meeting economic, social and environmental objectives together (win-win-win) rather than balancing different interests	5	2.10
14	We need to involve people in planning at the lowest level	5	1.73
22	Social factors are the poor relation in sustainability policy	4	1.48
16	The overarching requirement of planning should be low carbon development	3	1.09
31	With the government stimulating house building on the one hand and economic development on the other, social objectives are at the bottom of the priority list for funding, materials and staff	3	1.02
19	You shouldn't put newts and bugs first	-4	-1.33
18	The primary task for the RPG is to provide the right land use and communications infrastructure to maximise the creation of jobs and assist economic regeneration	-5	-2.10
23	Spatial strategies overstate the role of environmental and social elements of sustainability at the expense of economic considerations	-5	-2.39

Factor C: Community Planners

The third perspective focuses on the importance of integrating different policy areas. According to the participants aligned to this viewpoint, the overall focus of regional planning should be about improving the desirability of places to live, which means addressing a wide range of policy issues (36). It is believed that balanced strategies will be achieved if everyone is given equal opportunity to be involved and express their views (2, 4, 7). Decisions are no longer made in isolation from one another (30). They consider that it is the planner's role to advise the elected members of the community's needs and also to reconcile competing priorities (20, 34). The people aligned to this perspective believe that planning should try to meet economic, social

and environmental objectives together (17). They do not support planning having low carbon development as the overarching requirement (16). Although they consider that economic considerations are overstated in spatial strategies, the government's stimulation of economic development and house-building has not caused social issues to be a low priority (23, 31). This perspective is supportive of the regional scale, and believes that regional bodies are more accountable to the regions than to central government (9). Regional strategies have an instrumental effect on the shaping of projects that are eventually delivered (37).

Table 5.4 presents the statements which the factor analysis specified as being significant for this perspective.

Table 5.4: Distinguishing statements for Factor C

<i>No.</i>	<i>Statement</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>z-score</i>
4	Balanced strategies will be achieved if there are environmental, economic and social representatives involved in the process	5	1.83
36	RPG is all about improving the desirability of places to live - tackling wider issues such as crime, education, health, etc	4	1.37
20	The planner's function is to advise a political process on the real needs of a local and wider community	4	1.35
30	We're working towards an integrated regional agenda ... decisions are no longer made in isolation from each other	3	1.26
23	Spatial strategies overstate the role of environmental and social elements of sustainability at the expense of economic considerations	-3	-0.92
31	With the government stimulating house building on the one hand and economic development on the other, social objectives are at the bottom of the priority list for funding, materials and staff	-3	-1.50
7	Some organisations (like the House Builders' Federation) shouldn't be allowed a seat amongst public bodies	-5	-1.85

Comparison of Perspectives

Perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of the Q methodology is that it enables the researcher to compare and contrast the different perspectives revealed by the factor analysis. Statements that attain similar strong or weak scores across the factors can be considered consensus statements, whilst distinguishing statements have a wide range of scores, with more than a 5 point difference in rankings. Using these statements it is possible to highlight potential tensions between those who subscribe to different perspectives. These areas of consensus and distinguishing themes will be explored in more detail in later chapters alongside the material collected in the interviews

Areas of consensus

According to the idealised Q sorts there are a number of points on which the three narratives hold very similar views, either strongly agreeing or disagreeing with the same statements. The figures in brackets indicate the numbers of the statements in Table 5.1. All three perspectives agreed that priority should be given to achieving a win-win-win situation with economic, social and environmental objectives being met simultaneously (17), supporting central government's interpretation of sustainable development which emphasises that these objectives should be addressed at the same time (DETR 1999). A fundamental requirement for the achievement of balanced strategies is to ensure that environmental, economic and social representatives are involved in the process (4). The narratives all agreed that it is important that the organisations which will actually be delivering the final objectives are involved in the strategy development process (7). It was also considered important that all points of view should have equal opportunity to be expressed (2), but it was recognised that too often it is the highly motivated and eloquent groups and individuals that influence the outcomes (8).

The three perspectives were in agreement that the general public were probably unaware of the regional planning process (27), indicating that there has been little change since an earlier study which established that there was low public interest in regional planning (Tewdwr-Jones 2002). None of the perspectives believed that in regional planning the government is trying to take power over local decisions away

from local people (13), which suggests that participants were largely untroubled by the re-scaling of planning which had strengthened the regional scale and removed county structure plans. They agreed with one another that spatial strategies usually understate the role of the environmental and social elements of sustainability at the expense of economic considerations (23), suggesting that the situation had not altered from the old system of Regional Planning Guidance (Haughton and Counsell 2004a). These statements were ranked highly by all narratives. That these statements were linked closely is suggestive of the significance placed on effective and wide engagement in the strategy-making process by all participants, from which it can be surmised that there is extensive support for a collaborative approach to planning (Healey 1997a, 1998) and for central government's encouragement of wider participation in planning (ODPM 2004b, 2004c).

Distinguishing themes

Although the three narratives were all agreed that it should be a priority to meet economic, social and environmental objectives together, two of the narratives emphasised the importance of particular objectives. The Democratic Environmentalists narrative was alone in its conviction that regional planning strategies should aspire to achieve environmental objectives (16), ranking this statement at +3. This is not an unexpected finding given that nearly all participants with environmental backgrounds were associated with this perspective. The other narratives both strongly disagreed with this point of view, with this statement being ranked -4 and -5. Also favouring a single objective were the people aligned to the Community Planners narrative, who believed that the main purpose of the RSSs should be to improve the quality of places (36), ranking this statement at +4. The Troubled Regionalists and Democratic Environmentalists both expressed relative ambivalence towards this statement, placing this statement at -1 and 0 in the centre of the sorting grid.

Another interesting feature is that although the narratives agreed that it was important for all points of views to be represented in the process, there was disagreement amongst the different viewpoints as to whether or not the general public should be involved in planning. The public's involvement in planning is something that Democratic Environmentalists considered to be very important,

giving statement 14 a ranking of +5. This is an issue that the Troubled Regionalists and Community Planners narratives expressed a degree of ambivalence, placing this statement towards the centre of the sorting grid at -1 and +2.

There are different views on how much planning should influence the lives of citizens. The Troubled Regionalists believed that planning should not influence people's choices or behaviour (25), ranking this statement at +3. Whereas the Democratic Environmentalists and Community Planners considered it was very much in the public interest for planning to intervene in the way communities work (15), both giving this statement a ranking of -4. Finally whilst the Community Planners believed that regional strategies were becoming more integrated (30), ranking this statement at +3, this was something that the other narratives were less sure about, as they both gave this statement a ranking of +1. In fact the Troubled Regionalists believed that there was a tendency for the different policy areas to focus on their own agendas and targets (10), with this statement ranked at +3, suggesting that people aligned to this perspective suspect that a silo mentality exists.

Characteristics of Participants

There is an important question of whether it is possible to use the results of this Q methodology study to make generalisations about the characteristics of the wider population in relation to the identified perspectives on regional planning. Cultural theory suggests that people exposed to different forms of organisational culture will have differing outlooks on policy-making (Rayner 1992). It was therefore anticipated that this Q methodology study might throw some light on whether people from different backgrounds have differing perspectives on regional planning. As noted earlier, the participants in the study were drawn from a diverse range of policy areas, operating at different spatial scales: some were Whitehall civil servants, some were stakeholders on the regional planning forums, some were senior planning officers in local authorities, and others were working on the sub-regional strategies of the Sustainable Communities Plan. It was anticipated that by selecting people from a wide range of backgrounds, if a narrative existed, however marginal, it would be possible to identify it.

When looking to see if there is any common ground amongst the participants based on which perspectives they load heavily, or in other words are most closely associated with, it is possible to draw some conclusions (see Tables 5.5, 5.6, 5.7 and 5.8). The Democratic Environmentalist perspective is probably the most obvious of these with three of the four environmental representatives working at the regional scale, the representative of a national environmental lobby group, and both of the representatives of voluntary and community groups all loading significantly on this factor. The close association of environmental interests with this perspective is understandable given the strong environmental bias used in this perspective. What is interesting to note is that the sorts of the two representatives of voluntary and community sector groups were defining sorts of this factor, suggesting a close consensual viewpoint on regional planning between the voluntary and community sector and the environmental lobby. But an examination of the factor loadings of each of the participants aligned with this perspective (see Table 5.6) reveals that the four non-environmentalists have the lowest factor loadings ranging from 38 to 51. A further study of the sorts performed by the non-environmentalists shows that, whilst there are strong similarities between their sorts and those of the environmentalists on other aspects of the narrative, for example the importance of public participation, they do not share the same strong ecological perspective, and this probably accounts for their lower loading on this factor.

Table 5.5: Factor loadings for Troubled Regionalists narrative

<i>Participant's background</i>	<i>Factor</i>		
	<i>A</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>C</i>
Higher education NGO	75 X	5	-9
Regional planner	73 X	38	6
Housing representative	71 X	-33	30
Sub-regional strategy liaison, ODPM	65 X	28	31
Local authority planner	60 X	22	25
Civil servant, Social Exclusion Unit, ODPM	51 X	43	0
Policy Officer, Shelter	51 X	32	13
Business interests representative	50 X	-47	4
RDA officer	49 X	-7	43
Sub-regional strategy liaison, GO	47 X	16	30
Civil servant, Neighbourhood Renewal, ODPM	47 X	-10	35
RDA officer	46 X	-1	46
Civil servant, Liveability, ODPM	45 X	26	34
Rural NGO	34 X	23	7

Note: X indicates that the participant's sort is a defining sort for that factor

Table 5.6: Factor loadings for Democratic Environmentalists narrative

<i>Participant's background</i>	<i>Factor</i>		
	<i>A</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>C</i>
Environmental NGO	-10	80 X	28
Environmental NGO	4	76 X	6
Rural NGO	39	59 X	34
Policy Officer, Black Environment Network	49	54 X	10
Local authority planner	22	51 X	25
Vol. & community NGO	39	51 X	31
Vol. & community NGO	37	49 X	16
NHS representative	10	38 X	-11
Local authority councillor	-3	-53 X	0

Note: X indicates that the participant's sort is a defining sort for that factor

Table 5.7: Factor loadings for Community Planners narrative

<i>Participant's background</i>	<i>Factor</i>		
	<i>A</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>C</i>
Local authority planner	-6	41	66 X
Sub-regional strategy liaison, GO	33	22	65 X
Civil servant, Housing Directorate, ODPM	27	-13	65 X
Developers' interests NGO	-6	-32	64 X
Civil servant, Planning Directorate, ODPM	39	37	60 X
Civil servant, Dept. for Education & Skills	12	-22	59 X
Sub-regional strategy employee	14	36	58 X
Sub-regional strategy liaison, ODPM	15	29	58 X
Higher education representative	18	13	53 X
Civil servant, Planning Directorate, ODPM	29	30	53 X
Sub-regional strategy employee	36	11	49 X
Business interests representative	19	-29	49 X
Sub-regional strategy employee	41	-8	48 X
NHS representative	7	3	47 X

Note: X indicates that the participant's sort is a defining sort for that factor

Table 5.8: Factor loadings for participants who did not load significantly on a factor

<i>Participant's background</i>	<i>Factor</i>		
	<i>A</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>C</i>
Local authority planner	48	48	41
Local authority councillor	9	-22	5
Regional planner	45	32	34
Business interests representative	29	-20	-19
Civil servant, Dept. for Transport	37	46	49
Civil servant, Home Office	49	-54	25

It should be noted that there was one participant who significantly loaded negatively on the Democratic Environmentalists narrative and this was one of the local authority councillors interviewed in this study. When a person loads negatively on a narrative, this suggests that typically the views held by this person are the mirror image of the narrative. This means that where the Democratic Environmentalists narrative agrees strongly with a statement, the participant loading negatively on this narrative would tend to disagree strongly with this statement. An interesting point to note here is that when the regional and sub-regional sorts were factor analysed without the national data, two participants loaded heavily on a perspective very similar in characteristics to the negative form of the Democratic Environmentalists narrative. Both of these participants were local authority councillors. This would seem to indicate that this mirror image perspective is possibly closely associated with participants operating in that role. Originally five councillors had been invited to participate in this research, but only two agreed to take part, both of whom were members of the Conservative party. With hindsight it would have been interesting to have widened the study to include elected members from other political parties to identify whether this viewpoint was aligned to their political persuasion or to their role as a local authority member.

With the Troubled Regionalists and Community Planners perspectives, it is more difficult to draw firm conclusions on the policy areas of the participants who identify most closely with these viewpoints as they reflect a wide range of activities. However if one looks at the scale at which the participants are operating, the Community Planners perspective appears important to the participants working on the sub-regional strategies that come under the umbrella of the Sustainable Communities Plan, with five of the seven participants involved in these strategies loading heavily on this factor. This is not surprising as one of the most significant Q statements in this factor was 36 which refers to the RSS improving the desirability of places to live in, an objective close to the heart of the Sustainable Communities Plan (ODPM 2003c). This statement was in the centre of the other narratives' idealised sorts, suggesting their relative ambivalence towards this statement.

Fourteen of the 43 participants in the Q methodology study had received professional training as a planner. The different narratives were examined to discover whether having a similar professional background had any bearing on the factors to which

these participants were most closely aligned. The analysis reveals that having a professional planning background seems to have no influence on the narratives with which these participants were aligned with approximately a third of participants aligned to each of the narratives having received training as a planner (see Table 5.9). Two of the fourteen planners did not load significantly on any factor. Even amongst the four local authority planning officers there was no single narrative on which they all loaded, with a planner associated with each of the three narratives and the fourth person not loading significantly on any narrative.

Table 5.9: Participants with planning training by factor

	Factor		
	A	B	C
No. of participants with planning training	5	2	5
Total number of participants	14	9	14

The theorist Hajer (1995) suggested in his study of environmental politics that location can make a difference to discourses, and therefore the final analysis undertaken of the participants in this study examined whether there was a relationship between the location of participants and the narratives. An examination of the factors on which the regional participants significantly loaded suggests that the perspectives identified in this study are not contingent on place as the regional backgrounds of the participants are fairly evenly distributed between the factors (see Table 5.10).

Table 5.10: Distribution of regional participants by factor

	Factor		
	A	B	C
East of England	3	3	2
Yorkshire & Humber	5	4	3

Taking the analysis of the characteristics of the participants in this study together with the narratives and the areas of consensus and difference, it is possible to draw some conclusions on the discourse coalitions and possible sources of tension that exist between the participants involved in the development of the new RSSs and these are explored in the next section.

Discussion

The analysis of the three narratives which emerged from the Q methodology study of people's perceptions of the regional planning process identified several themes that were considered particularly important by participants and which cut across the different narratives:

- the fulfilment of sustainable development objectives simultaneously;
- stakeholder engagement, including public participation, in the development of planning strategies;
- the role of planning on people's lives;
- the influence of central government on regional strategies; and
- the integration of policy activities within spatial planning strategies.

These themes build a wider picture of the values people place on planning than the discourses identified in other research, which tended to concentrate on the objectives of the different actors and how they argued their position to try to influence decision-

making (e.g. Haughton and Counsell 2004a, 2004b; Owens and Cowell 2002; Vigar *et al.* 2000).

If the characteristics of the participants are taken as the starting point for examining these perspectives, it is possible to draw some intriguing conclusions at this stage about the policy areas that are closely aligned to the three narratives. Individuals that represent environmental interests and the voluntary and community sector are closely associated with the Democratic Environmentalists perspective. The persons working on the sub-regional strategies of the Sustainable Communities Plan are most closely aligned to Community Planners perspective. For the remaining policy areas, there was no discernable pattern to the narratives to which they were aligned.

It was anticipated that the Q methodology study might reveal that the environmentalists and one or both of developers/housing representatives and local government hold opposite points of view, that is agree and disagree strongly with the same narrative, as other research had indicated that these groups hold different perspectives (Haughton and Counsell 2004b). As noted above, nearly all environmental lobbyists loaded strongly on the Democratic Environmentalists narrative, with only one of the local authority councillors loading heavily on the negative point of view (see Table 5.6). However to a lesser degree all of the developers, housing and business representatives, and the second councillor participating in this study loaded negatively on this narrative (see Tables 5.5, 5.7 and 5.8), indicating that they did indeed disagree with the Democratic Environmentalists narrative, although they were more closely aligned to the viewpoints of the other two narratives or were not aligned to any narrative in particular. This suggests that environmental issues are continuing to divide participants to some extent, although for many of the people who disagree with this narrative, there are other aspects of regional planning that they consider to be more important.

With many of the participants having received planning training, it was pertinent to ascertain whether this had a bearing on the narratives, and analysis revealed that this was not a relevant factor. In fact there was no pattern even for the participants who are employed currently as local authority planners, who all loaded on different narratives or not at all. This would suggest that the organisational culture of planning does not affect the orientation of planner's viewpoints, as other

psychological and sociological factors, such as other work experience or personal views on environmentalism, help to determine how people formulate opinions on a subject (Webler *et al.* 2001). The analysis also showed that in this study, the narratives were not influenced by the region in which the participants were based. This was an unexpected result as the findings of other research into the discourses used in planning had suggested that they differed according to place (Haughton and Counsell 2004b).

By looking at the areas of agreement across the different narratives, a picture can be built of the values that people across a wide range of policy areas and scales of governance place on regional planning. These are that:

- the fulfilment of economic, social and environmental objectives together should be a priority;
- the involvement of stakeholders that represent all aspects of sustainable development is fundamental to the achievement of sustainable development;
- all points of view should have equal opportunity to be expressed;
- Whitehall is not using regional planning to take decisions on local matters away from the people in the regions;
- spatial strategies emphasise economic objectives at the expense of social and environmental aspects; and
- the general public has little awareness of regional planning.

With the narratives agreed on the above, it would seem that there is widespread support for the central government's sustainable development strategy with its search for integrated solutions. Whether this is achievable in reality is another matter, as in their study of RPGs, Counsell *et al.* (2003) had found that many people doubted that win-win-win solutions could be achieved, and this will be explored in more detail in Chapter 8. Certainly, as far as the narratives revealed by the Q methodology study were concerned, the emphasis of spatial strategies continues to be on economic considerations as under the old RPG system (Haughton and Counsell 2004a). The narratives also clearly show that there is extensive support for the government's encouragement of widespread engagement in regional planning, although there is no doubt that participants thought that the wider community had little awareness of the

opportunities, suggesting that, as in the past, efforts to engage the public's interest had had little success (Owens and Cowell 2002; TCPA 1999).

All narratives are agreed on the above, and yet as one participant disagreed significantly with one of the narratives it suggests that an alternative point of view may exist. Performing the factor analysis on only the sub-regional and regional sorts had shown that the participants most closely associated with the mirror image of the Democratic Environmentalists narrative are the elected members of local authorities. In both the study regions, the regional institutions that debate and take decisions on the RSSs are dominated by local authority councillors. The existence of a point of view that appears unique to members of this group and contrasts with all other participants suggests there may be a degree of tension between councillors and other participants, which would be an important challenge for the regional planners to overcome if they wish to achieve consensual decisions on the RSS. Indications of the tensions between the two types of participant were identified in the interviews. For example there was a sense of distrust of the elected participants on the steering groups amongst some of the unelected participants:

There is this grave suspicion that if left to their own devices the local politicians would shove anything unpleasant under the carpet and not deal with it (Interview: East of England regional stakeholder).

I don't think RPIC as a group has quite got to the participative stakeholder workshop-y, let's break down all the barriers, let's put the chairs in a big circle and we're all equal, type of group. I think it's still flavoured by political interests, I suppose jockeying for position on particular issues. If there are groups there with a particular interest in certain areas, say CPRE or Friends of the Earth, for example, they're seen as sort of, 'well, they would say that, wouldn't they, because they're CPRE or Friends of the Earth'. And I'm not saying that is the case, but it's almost a stereotypical view, rather than saying 'well, how can those groups add some value?' (Interview: Yorkshire and Humber local authority planner).

Another stakeholder suggested that party politics played a significant role in decision-making on the East of England Assembly, resulting in the unelected

stakeholders having little influence when compared to the collective might of the politicians who seemed to vote en bloc:

When you have a hundred plus seats around a table and you are one person, then the seat round the table is relatively insignificant, particularly when three quarters of the other seats are entirely politically motivated with political group meetings and political voting. 'We agree with these other thirty people here simply because we are all Labour' or 'we are all Liberal Democrat' or 'we are all Conservative'. So I think that really does inhibit quality decision-making (Interview: East of England regional stakeholder).

Yet, according to one elected member, stakeholders tend to concentrate on their own objectives, indicative of a silo mentality, whilst the politicians thought and acted from a wider perspective:

When you've got what I would term lobby groups on something, they're usually very specific and very passionate about the things that they're lobbying about, single issues or whatever. I actually believe that elected people should be much more representative of a wider view, but consider them in a wider way (Interview: Local authority councillor).

Jenkins and Hague (2005) also found evidence of underlying tensions between participatory and representative forms of governance in their study of public engagement in the planning process in four European countries. The tensions between participants in regional planning will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6, which examines the roles and influence of the unelected stakeholders vis-à-vis the elected members on the planning steering groups.

The narratives had different views on the objectives of the RSSs and if these are examined, another interesting perspective emerges. One area of contention across the different narratives is whether or not the RSSs should address environmental issues as a principal objective. Whilst in the Democratic Environmentalists narrative it was believed as a matter of principle that the RSS should achieve environmental objectives as a priority, the other two narratives all strongly opposed this suggestion. This disagreement on the prioritisation of environmental issues was a source of

tension between the environmental lobbyists and a very small number of stakeholders during the development of the RSSs. The environmentalists suspected that their views were ignored, whilst others suggested that environmental issues held too much sway with environmental concerns being cherry-picked by politicians wishing to argue against further growth, as exemplified in this interview with a stakeholder member of EERA's RPIC:

I think environmental politics are clearly in the ascendancy in a broad sense, in that environmental issues are both serious concerns, if you like, for the environmental bodies themselves, like CPRE and the others, but they are also a very, very nice fig leaf for the politicians who want to use them (Interview: East of England regional stakeholder).

Analysis of the different narratives also revealed an interesting divergence of views on the involvement of the general public in regional planning. Although improving public participation has been a core issue in English planning (MHLG 1969; ODPM 2002a, 2004c, 2004f), there was some contention as to whether or not this was actually necessary or beneficial at the regional scale. Whilst the Democratic Environmentalists narrative believed that the involvement of the public was absolutely essential, the Troubled Regionalists and Community Planners narratives held relatively ambivalent views on this statement. The interviews with individuals who loaded heavily on the Troubled Regionalists and Community Planners narratives indicated a mix of views on public participation, with some believing it was important that the public participated in the development of the RSSs, and others revealing that they believed that the community already had its interests represented by the local authorities on the strategy and that citizen participation would add little value to the strategy. Examples of the alternative perspectives are:

I believe that everyone should have an opportunity to participate, because it's ultimately about shaping where they live, and although it's one step removed from the immediate impact it's going to shape where they live, and therefore they should have the right to making a meaningful input into that strategy (Interview: Yorkshire and Humber regional stakeholder).

I've never seen evidence of Joe Public's ability to engage properly in the plan-making process (Interview: East of England regional stakeholder).

The different views on public participation in regional planning will be explored further in Chapter 6.

The Q methodology study also revealed that different perspectives exist on the ways in which planning can influence how people lead their lives and the choices available to them. This was a topic that was not addressed in the full interviews with participants although it was mentioned in the follow-up discussions after the Q sorts were performed. The two opposing points of view are firstly that planning should not interfere with people's behaviour, but it should give people choices and then leave it to them to make the decisions. The people who aligned themselves to the Troubled Regionalists narrative held this perspective. The alternative viewpoint, shared by the people who loaded heavily on the Democratic Environmentalists and Community Planners perspectives, was that it was in the public interest that planning intervened in the choices available to people, and that this effectively happened already in terms of the decisions on policy areas such as housing, employment and accessibility.

Reflecting on the temporality of planning narratives, the Q methodology study indicated that planning narratives are being influenced by the government's current strategies towards (re-) building thriving communities and greater policy integration (HM Government 1999; ODPM 2005a; Prescott 2003). The Community Planners perspective indicated the influence of government policy over the values placed on the planning system. With a large proportion of the participants involved with the SCP sub-regional strategies being aligned to this narrative, the government's emphasis on the creation of sustainable communities and the integration of policy areas were themes that came through strongly in this narrative. The other narratives held relatively neutral views on these themes. The Community Planners narrative also believed that the current emphasis on house-building and economic development in central government policy was not resulting in social objectives being made a lower priority. In the follow-up discussions, individuals who loaded heavily on this narrative claimed that if anything social objectives were now a higher priority for the government than they had been in the past.

The Community Planners narrative closely resembles a discourse identified by Vigar *et al.* (2000) in their work on discourses used in planning policy debate and development in the 1990s. In their study Vigar *et al.* identified traces of a discourse they described as ‘shaping the quality of places’, representing a strand of thinking from mid-20th Century planning. They suggested that this discourse recognised the importance of strategic spatial planning, and that it continued to be in use at the end of the century, although it was somewhat weakened from its earlier manifestations. It was noted by Vigar *et al.* that at the end of the 1990s, concern with the quality of places was rising in central government’s policies which sought to improve the quality and liveability of urban areas. The identification in the Q methodology study of the Community Planners narrative, with its strong emphasis on improving the quality of places, suggests therefore that this earlier discourse has become more powerful since the turn of the century as central government strategies towards the quality and liveability of places have become embedded (e.g. Cabinet Office 2001; DTLR 2001c; ODPM 2002c).

Furthermore in their examination of planning policy discourses, Vigar *et al.* (2000) found evidence to suggest that central government was partly responsible for the ways in which discourses were framed, suggesting that as government policies towards planning evolved, outdated discourses reflecting earlier policy evolutions were crowded out. The influence of central governments over the nature of discourses is also evidenced in a study of environmental discourses in Australia which found that the Australian government had successfully influenced the concepts of sustainable development in circulation (McGregor 2004). It is clearly evident from this Q methodology study that central government in the UK holds a significant amount of influence over the narratives of regional planning which include, as in the Australian study, the widespread support for the central government’s interpretation of sustainable development.

Conclusions

Wider stakeholder engagement in regional planning has not brought with it a wider range of narratives which reflect the views of all of the ‘new’ stakeholders.

Generally there is no discernable pattern to how the representatives of business groups, developers' interests, higher education and healthcare have aligned themselves to the narratives. The only exception to this is that environmentalists and the voluntary and community sector are aligned on the same narrative, which would suggest that there is a greater synchronisation of their norms and values than exists between the other stakeholder groups. However it should be emphasised that whilst these two groups hold similar viewpoints on some of the narrative's themes, they did not share the same feelings on the environmental aspects of the narrative. Whilst the new stakeholders have not had the anticipated significant impact on the nature of the narratives, perhaps their involvement in the strategies has raised awareness of the institutional problems faced by people as they become involved in strategy development, which was a strong theme in one of the narratives.

The Q methodology study of the narratives around regional planning held by a diverse range of people revealed in more detail than in most planning literature how different groups of people draw upon different understandings of regional planning. There is consensus on many themes, but there are also differences of opinion on what should be the objectives of regional planning strategies, public participation, and the influence that planning should have over people's lives. The study is also suggestive of the types of people who align themselves to the different perspectives. This analysis will be used to inform the next three chapters, which examine the nature of stakeholder engagement in the development of the Regional Spatial Strategies, how the RSSs are aligned with other strategies and initiatives, and how social issues are being drawn into the spatial strategies.

Introduction

Over recent years policy-makers and planning theorists have advocated a more collaborative approach to plan-making as wider engagement is believed to improve decision-making (Healey 1997a, 1998; ODPM 2004c). The greater role being given to the community in the plan-making process is one of the key features of the modernised planning system, helping to distinguish it from earlier planning phases. This shift away from simply consulting the community to actively engaging people in the deliberation of strategy-making was of particular interest to the ODPM in their role as co-sponsor of this research. This chapter examines in detail the emerging social relations which surround the development of the Regional Spatial Strategies in the two study regions. The accounts of the people involved in developing the strategies in the two study regions are examined to gain a picture of the relationships between them, the sites of interaction and the capacity of the wider regional community to engage in the strategy development process.

The chapter begins by examining the reasons why stakeholder groups want to engage in the development of the RSS and outlines which interest groups are actively engaged in the debating process of RSS development. Of particular interest, given this project's emphasis on the social aspects of regional planning, is to identify in what way the groups that represent social interests are involved in the process. As noted earlier, increasing the numbers and types of interests involved in agreeing the strategies may potentially result in greater tensions and constraints on the process, and evidence of this will be sought. The chapter will also seek to identify whether all participants are seen as equal or whether some have more influence than others. With current planning guidance placing a greater emphasis on participation than in the past, the chapter outlines the measures taken by the RPBs to engage the public in shaping the strategies, and on the potential benefits of public participation in regional planning. The chapter concludes with an assessment of the outcome of the government's encouragement of greater participation from a diverse range of

interests and reflects on the nature of the networks that have emerged in the regional planning arena as the engagement of a wider set of actors begins to take effect.

This chapter will use the results of the Q methodology study discussed in the previous chapter to structure the main viewpoints, and then explore these further through material gathered during interviews. This will allow, firstly, the identification of key trends, secondly, the exploration of similarities between and contradictions within viewpoints and, thirdly, the comparison of the two methods of Q methodology and in-depth interviewing in their ability to reveal planning narratives. The numbers given in parentheses relate to the Q statement number as shown in Table 5.1. As a recap, the different perspectives identified by the Q methodology, as discussed in the last chapter, are summarised in Table 6.1. This indicates the different groupings associated with each perspective, the main areas of consensus and the differentiating themes.

Table 6.1: Summary of narratives revealed by the Q methodology study

Narrative	Groups associated with narrative	Areas of consensus	Differentiating themes
<i>Troubled Regionalists</i> (Factor A)	No pattern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sustainable development objectives should be achieved simultaneously. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Concerned about barriers to participation.
<i>Democratic Environmentalists</i> (Factor B)	Environmentalists and voluntary/ community sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To achieve sustainable development, all interests should be represented. ● Whitehall is not taking local decisions away from regions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Emphasis on public engagement. ● Planning should seek to address environmental objectives.
<i>Community Planners</i> (Factor C)	Sub-regional strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Spatial strategies understate social & environmental objectives. ● Low public awareness of regional planning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Strategies are becoming more joined up. ● Planning's role in building quality places is stressed.

‘You have to be a participant’: why stakeholders become involved

According to government guidance sustainable development is the core principle which underpins planning, with national policies and regional and local development plans providing the framework to deliver sustainable development (ODPM 2005a). Planning for sustainable development is expected to promote social cohesion and

inclusion, to protect and enhance the environment, to ensure the prudent use of natural resources and promote sustainable economic development (ODPM 2005a). The emphasis in this piece of research is to examine the progress being made within the two study regions towards the first of these objectives: the social strand of sustainable development.

In PPS1, the ODPM's guidance document which sets out the overarching principles on the delivery of sustainable development through the planning system, it is emphasised that community involvement is an essential element in delivering sustainable development (ODPM 2005a). According to the guidance communities should be involved in the preparation of the vision for their area and how this might be achieved. Communities are defined in ODPM guidance on regional planning, PPS11, as 'all those who have an interest in and a contribution to make to the content of the revised RSS. This includes individuals as well as local authorities and bodies representing various interest groups' (ODPM 2004c, p.90). Planning authorities at the local and regional scale are expected to encourage community involvement and to take an inclusive approach which should give different groups the opportunity to participate and not be disadvantaged by the planning process. In the guidance paper which sets out the central government's policy on community involvement in planning, participation is described as being more than the provision of information and consultation on proposals that have already been developed (ODPM 2004c). Participation should be about being involved in the development of the options and proposals, and therefore being included in the debate of these options. Under the pre-modernised system of planning land use, planning debates had been found to be dominated by public sector interests although there had been some widening to include typically pro-development lobby groups and the environmental lobbies (Haughton and Counsell 2002; Vigar *et al.* 2000). Previous research into the development of the last round of Regional Planning Guidance revealed that groups wishing to participate in the process faced a number of problems including lack of resources and unequal power (Baker *et al.* 2003; Haughton and Counsell 2004a).

In this section, the reasons why people want to get involved in developing the spatial strategies are explored. To set the scene, how different people perceive the concept of wider stakeholder engagement will be discussed using the results of the Q methodology study. The Q methodology study indicated there was a strong

consensus that in order to achieve balanced strategies it was important that representatives of the different strands of sustainable development should be involved in the development of the strategy (4). Enabling all points of view to have an equal say (2) was also considered important. More than half the interviewees at the regional scale, representing each of these three narratives, thought that theoretically wider stakeholder engagement should improve decision-making. The wider range of issues involved should create a broader knowledge base which meant that more complex and strategic decisions could be made. It was suggested by one RDA officer that the draft spatial strategy would be more robust with issues being raised at a much earlier stage in the plan-making process than under the old arrangements, and this meant that:

the issues to be debated are much narrower. I think broadly people accept it and they will narrow down their areas of objection to much smaller areas. They feel that they've been included. Policies reflect their aspirations. So when it comes to say the public examination where they've got to object, they're actually commenting or making representations on relatively modest parts of the proposal (Interview: RDA officer).

According to this stakeholder, the result of this wider engagement would be that by the time the draft strategy reached the public examination stage, it should be a 'better' plan than would have been possible to develop under the previous system of plan preparation with its narrower approach to participation.

Closer analysis of the narratives showed that the Community Planners narrative placed a much stronger emphasis on statement 4, ranking it at +5, whilst statement 2, giving everybody equal opportunity of expression, though still important was considered less significant at +2. The participants who were aligned to this perspective did not throw any light on this in their interviews, but one of the other participants, who gave statement 2 a low ranking, explained the reason she had done so: 'If a point of view is represented by only a minority it can take a disproportionate amount of time to address. You can get hung up on the needs of an individual, so sometimes a wider perspective should be taken' (Personal comment: Sub-regional interviewee). Perhaps the conclusion to be drawn then is that for the individuals associated with the Community Planners narrative it is more important that each of

the three strands of sustainable development is involved in the development of the strategies, than it is to ensure that every minority interest group is represented in the process.

A third statement on the types of groups which should be involved in strategy development was also considered important by all narratives. This statement looked at the role of private sector interests that would eventually be involved in the delivery of the strategy objectives (7). Both the Troubled Regionalists and the Community Planners narratives agreed that it was very important that this type of organisation should be involved in strategy development, both ranking this statement -5, for example: 'you get a different perspective from private bodies. It's right to include the delivery agents' (Personal comment: Sub-regional interviewee). However, whilst the Democratic Environmentalist narrative agreed that the delivery agents should be involved in developing the RSSs, the people aligned to this narrative placed less significance on this viewpoint than the other narratives, ranking this statement as -2. Although no light was shed in the interviews for this slight difference in opinion, a possible explanation might be that the people associated with the Democratic Environmentalists narrative recognised that it was difficult to involve groups in decision-making who might have a financial interest in the outcome.

While the Troubled Regionalists, Community Planners and Democratic Environmentalists narratives all agreed to varying degrees that these viewpoints were important, some individuals disagreed with these perspectives. For example, one of the local authority councillors indicated in his interview that he was slightly troubled by the fact that the stakeholders on the planning steering group were not elected, may not possess any relevant experience or knowledge, and may not have the expertise available to them like he had access to through his authority's planning department. He was satisfied that the councillors on the steering group represented a cross section of the community and 'you would have the back-up that actually they have been elected' (Interview: Local authority councillor).

Concern with the difficulty of balancing the different viewpoints was expressed by nearly half of the participants at the regional scale. The reasons suggested for these difficulties included that the widened engagement had made it more difficult for decisions to be reached as more views had to be taken into account than in the past.

The inclusion of representatives of interest groups, who were passionate about the issues they represented, had increased the level of debate according to one stakeholder. But a few others suggested that as the stakeholders were independent of one another it was difficult for them to have much influence over the strategy. These concerns were expressed across the whole range of narratives. So whilst there was comprehensive support from a broad range of people for widening the range of stakeholders involved, as this was seen to be an important factor in improving decision-making, there were reservations about whether this could be achieved in practice.

These reservations did not deter people from wishing to participate. In the interviews with participants in the steering groups the main reason provided for engagement in the development of the draft strategies was that it would give them the opportunity to influence the outcome in order to achieve what their sector/organisation wanted. This could be to ensure that their policies were taken forward and/or to safeguard against the things that they did not want. Achieving balance between the different interests was therefore perhaps more about ensuring that their interests were not overlooked rather than ensuring that all the different interests were being met. For the stakeholders representing business interests, in particular, this was a very strongly held view: 'I just feel that [my organisation's] job is to bring the economic thread to the top. I think it's [my organisation's] duty to go in waving the economic flag' (Interview: Regional stakeholder). Another stakeholder representing business interests believed that his role was more than simply trying to influence on behalf of economic interests and that it was to prevent economic interests being subjugated by what he believed to be the more dominant environmental agenda: 'in terms of the whole sustainability agenda and the three legs of environmental, economic and social, I suppose we see ourselves as trying to ensure that the economic leg of the stool isn't overwhelmed particularly by the environmental leg' (Interview: Regional stakeholder).

Whilst involvement in the strategy development was considered important across the different interest groups, this was especially the case for those organisations for whom the decisions taken within the process would have a significant impact on their future work, for example, for house-builders via housing numbers, and for local authorities through the relationship between the RSS and the LDFs. For one

environmental NGO the opportunity to be involved as the strategy was being developed, rather than having to wait to fight it after it had been drafted at the Examination-in-Public (EiP), was hoped to be a more effective method of achieving their objectives.

Simply having a presence on the steering groups was also considered a worthwhile objective as it meant that their sector and/or interests were noticed. As one environmental NGO explained, 'just by being present you have an impact because people recognise they have to take that issue into account' (Interview: Regional stakeholder), in which case your presence had become part of a 'learning process'. Whilst a few participants were doubtful of the amount of influence they might have on the strategy, it was still considered important to be involved as it gave their organisation the opportunity to voice issues of concern and raise awareness in front of a wide and influential audience. Being a member of the steering group was also identified by a small number of interviewees as a way of developing an organisation's knowledge of what was happening at the regional scale and the evolving RSS.

Beyond influencing the strategy and raising the profile of their sector/organisation, the wider benefits of engagement to their organisation or interests fell into two main categories: information sharing and relationship building. Environmental and business interests were very direct in their declaration that participating in the development of the planning strategies gave them access to information and research undertaken in the course of the strategy development. This would be more difficult to obtain if they were not participating: 'when you're on the inside of a body, like the planning panel, you get all the papers, you get to know the dates of things coming up. It's very difficult for an outsider to find information if you're out of the loop.' (Interview: East of England Regional stakeholder). The information in the public domain could be used in the EiPs, which was expected to be beneficial to organisations wishing to make their cases at that level.

For the stakeholder groups, attendance of the meetings themselves was also an important part of the information gathering process: 'You have to be a participant, to have the papers and be there. ... And if you just miss one meeting you will lose out.' (Interview: Yorkshire and Humber Regional stakeholder). Other forms of

information that were said to usefully flow from participation included being able to identify who to lobby and where sympathies lay. With access to information being an important benefit of participation, a handful of stakeholders saw their role as being a conduit of that information. Their role was therefore to collect information, translate it into a useable format for the recipients, and pass on the information to the relevant interests. In short their role was to 'make the connections' between what was happening on the RSS and how it might relate to what their organisation or sector was doing or planning to do. The flow of information worked in both directions; actively engaging in the process gave organisations the opportunity to pass on information they held and to feed in the thoughts of their organisations or the interests they represent. Stakeholder organisations on the steering groups now had 'a voice', whereas before the reforms they would have been excluded from the debating process.

Relationship building was another important potential benefit of engagement. Four participants claimed that working relationships had improved with the other participants and officers of the Regional Assembly. It was suggested that improved information flows between organisations also helped to prevent them from going off in different directions. Along a similar line, membership meant that as information flowed more freely between participants ideas could be shared, and where common agendas or issues arose there was strength to be found in working and lobbying together. Another aspect of relationship building between participants of the meetings was that they identified the meetings as an opportunity to network with other participants: 'it is an opportunity to perhaps re-energize certain networks or develop new ones' (Interview: Local authority planner).

With steering group members seeing their role as representing the interests of their organisations/sector, local authority planning officers believed that their role was to act as adviser, to advise on the merits and flag up the practical implications of what is being proposed using their technical skills and previous experience. Two stakeholders, who had received training as planners, believed that they too could use this knowledge to extend their role on the steering group to being one of adviser.

In summary there was consensus from the Democratic Environmentalists, Community Planners and Troubled Regionalists narratives that wider stakeholder

engagement should help to improve the spatial strategies, and that it was important for all interests to have the opportunity to be involved, especially if they were going to be involved in the delivery of the strategy. However a minority viewpoint voiced by a local authority councillor did exist which questioned whether it was right for non-elected people, who may be ignorant of some of the issues, to have a role in the decision-making. Doubt was expressed across all narratives whether engaging a more diverse range of interests made a difference in reality. This concern did not seem to deter people from engaging. Everyone had reasons for wanting to engage in the strategy development process, and the varied reasons could not be linked to any specific perspective. However it was possible to identify some commonalities according to interest group, such as business interests, environmentalists or planning officers, and these tended to cut across the different narratives. The next section will outline the ways in which social considerations are being drawn into the process of developing the RSSs in the two study regions and identify the reasons why this has proved problematic.

Where are social interests represented?

The reforms to regional planning introduced in 1998 had brought NGOs closer to the decision-making. These changes required that regional stakeholders representing a wide range of interests, for example business organisations, utility companies, house-builders, voluntary organisations, transport providers, and education and health authorities, should be consulted on the draft Regional Planning Guidance (DETR 2000b). The subsequent changes introduced under the most recent guidance on the RSSs, PPS11, recognised that Regional Planning Bodies had established focus groups of regional stakeholders, reporting to a central steering group responsible for drafting the old style of regional planning documents. Now, the new guidance insisted, at least 30 per cent of the membership of these steering groups should be from non-local authority representatives (ODPM 2004f).

In the early stages of this research project it was anticipated that it would be found that a broad cross section of interest groups or public sector bodies representing environmental groups, economic/business interests and the social issues would be involved on the Assemblies' planning steering groups. It was quickly evident that

the first two of these were indeed well-represented on the steering groups through interest groups such as the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), Friends of the Earth and the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) either by direct representation or indirectly, via umbrella groups such as the East of England Business Group or the East of England Environment Forum. However it was less obvious as to which organisations represented social issues. The stakeholders on the planning steering groups of the two Assemblies at the time of the interviews are presented in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2: Stakeholders groups on the Yorkshire and Humber RPIC and the East of England RPP at the end of 2004

Yorkshire and Humber RPIC	East of England RPP
Regional Environment Forum (3)	East of England Environment Forum (2)
Regional Housing Forum (2)	East of England Business Group (3)
Regional Rural Affairs Forum	Living East ⁴
Confederation of British Industry	BENSCH ⁵
Federation of Small Businesses	NHS Confederation
Yorkshire & Humber Chamber of Commerce	Association of Universities in the East of England
Utilities representative	
Faiths community	
Yorkshire Culture	
Regional Health Executive Forum	
Yorkshire Universities	
Yorkshire and the Humber Regional Forum ⁶	

Note: The numbers in brackets denote the number of seats held by that organisation.

⁴ The cultural consortium for the East of England

⁵ The Association of Parish and Town Councils in Bedfordshire Essex Norfolk Suffolk Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire

One of the statements used in the Q methodology study referred to the difficulty in finding someone suitable to represent social issues (11). None of the narratives felt strongly about this statement, although the Community Planners were slightly more inclined than the other narratives to disagree with it, which would suggest that this group did not think that it was particularly difficult to find a suitable representative. With most participants not having strong feelings on this statement having placed it towards the middle of the Q sorting grid, the statement only featured slightly in the follow-up discussion. One person who had disagreed with the statement observed that 'it's lazy to take this attitude' of it being difficult to find a suitable representative (Personal comment: Whitehall civil servant). The remainder of this section examines who the participants in the RSS development process believed represented social issues on the steering groups and why it might be difficult to engage groups that represent social issues in the process.

Intuitively, an analysis of the stakeholder groups might suggest that it was the umbrella groups for the voluntary and community sector which would represent social interests on the planning steering groups given the broad cross section of groups in their membership. In the Yorkshire and Humber, the voluntary and community sector was represented on RPIC by the Regional Forum, but the representative for this organisation did not identify herself as representing the social strand on the steering group. Neither, for that matter, did anyone else on RPIC suggest that the Regional Forum stood for social issues. At the time of the interviews COVER⁷, the organisation invited to represent the voluntary and community sector on the East of England RPP, had been unable to identify anyone suitable to take its place on the steering group and their place had been handed to the Regional Environment Forum in lieu, taking the number of seats held by the Forum from one to two.

⁵ The Regional Forum is the strategic organisation for the voluntary and community sector in the Yorkshire and Humber region

⁷ COVER is the acronym for the Community and Voluntary Forum: East of England.

As noted in Chapter 4, issues to do with housing are seen as significant problems in both study regions, and yet the RPBs have taken slightly different approaches to including representatives of the housing sectors on the steering groups. In Yorkshire and Humber, RPIC included two representatives of the housing sector, both of whom were nominated by the Regional Housing Forum which was developing the Regional Housing Strategy. Representing the private sector was a regional planner for the House Builders Federation, with an officer from the Forum representing the interests of the social-rented provider/funding sector. Housing interests were not represented on the region's full Assembly. In a different approach, the RPP in the East of England did not include a representative of the housing sector, instead housing interests were served on the full Regional Assembly by a representative of the National Housing Federation, representing the region's housing associations.

All interviewees at the regional scale were asked who they thought represented social issues on their planning steering group. The most frequently given response was that there was no one on the steering group that appeared to represent social issues. There were a few exceptions to this: three individuals suggested the regional Government Office had the responsibility as the regional representative of the ODPM, although the Government Office was only a member of the steering group in the Yorkshire and Humber region. Four people believed that it was the responsibility of every member of the Assembly to speak up for social issues in the region, with two people (one representing the healthcare sector and the other representing an environmental NGO) saying that they might occasionally say something.

Five people responded that they thought it was the responsibility of the local authority members of the steering groups to speak up for the social needs of their constituents. In fact, it was the view of about half the regional interviewees that it was the local authorities' role to represent their community's entire interests and not just to articulate their social needs. As one stakeholder suggested:

obviously the various elected representatives from the local authorities see themselves as representing community interests too, so I think to a certain extent they would be insulted if any inference was made that social concerns weren't represented. They would see themselves I think almost primarily

representing the concerns of the people (Interview: East of England regional stakeholder).

But about half of the people who thought that local authorities represented the views of their communities, expressed a degree of uncertainty about whether this representation was meaningful or effective.

Many reasons were suggested by interviewees why it might be difficult for social issues groups to engage in regional planning. The reasons fall into two main categories. Firstly there are the institutional reasons why engagement has not occurred, which include a lack of resources and time on the part of both the groups and the Assemblies to successfully draw out engagement. It was also suggested that unlike some other policy areas, social groups have not yet built their institutional capacity at the regional scale. Some of the better resourced national lobby groups, such as the CPRE, had already restructured their organisations in order to strengthen their capacity to engage at the regional scale (Murdoch and Norton 2001). This study found that some interest groups or organisations operating within both regions had developed a regional structure. For example, universities in both regions had formed regional bodies, and in the East of England business NGOs, such as the CBI and the Chambers of Commerce, had formed a regional grouping, the East of England Business Group, as they had recognised that there was a need for their interests to be represented at the regional scale. Finally, a few people thought that one of the reasons why groups representing social interests may not be engaged was because these groups did not appreciate the significance of the RSSs or were not aware of any relevance these may have to their objectives.

The second type of reasons given could be described as functional. It was suggested that the regional scale may not be the most appropriate scale to address the objectives of social issue groups. It was thought by some that perhaps Local Development Documents and Community Strategies were a more appropriate level for these groups to direct their energies. Alternatively, one person suggested that national legislation, such as the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, may be more influential in addressing people's needs than the RSSs. Lobby groups therefore may consider that in order to achieve their objectives it is more important for them to lobby policy-makers at the national scale than to be actively involved in the regions. In short it

seems that the reason why many social issues groups appear not to be actively engaged with regional planning was as one stakeholder suggested: 'unless you can see some very clear outcomes that you could get from that process I can see why if it came to prioritising your work you might think that you could spend your time better elsewhere' (Interview: Yorkshire and Humber regional stakeholder).

With the Regional Assemblies required to provide all relevant interest groups with the opportunity to participate in the development of the RSSs and this proving difficult to achieve via the format of the planning steering groups, Assembly officers used other more direct approaches to engage these groups. In Yorkshire and Humber a regional planning officer acknowledged that there had been a need to go beyond the RPIC to seek the views of a wider range of people, as not all interests were represented on the Commission. Exercises aimed at wider engagement in Yorkshire and Humber, for example, included a meeting in April 2004 of various region-wide interest groups and agencies under the auspices of the Yorkshire and Humber Ageing Panel to focus on the spatial dimensions of the needs of the region's older people. Another example of the YHA trying to connect with established networks was a meeting held in May 2005 with the Multi-Faith Steering Group. The YHA also used the Regional Forum to run two sets of consultation events with voluntary and community sector representatives.

In the East of England a similar set of events were held with groups in order to increase their participation. Workshops were held for local businesses and private sector organisations hosted by the East of England Business Group in each of the region's counties. Representatives of ethnic minority groups, people with disabilities and young people were invited to attend focus group discussions. The Head of the Assembly's Planning and Transport team also made a presentation to the regional arm of the Youth Parliament.

In both of the regions there was no easily identifiable group on the steering groups which took responsibility for social considerations. The most common suggestion was that if anyone had this role on the steering groups, it was probably the local authorities, although the regional Government Offices were also mooted as possibly having responsibility for the social agenda. The Q methodology study indicated that participants did not believe it was particularly difficult to identify someone to take on

this role. However analysis of the interview material indicated that participants thought there were institutional and functional reasons why there was a lack of engagement of this type of group at the regional scale of planning. As a result of these difficulties both Assemblies had to use more direct approaches to seek the views of these groups. Although interest groups are engaged in the steering groups, this participation is not trouble-free, and the difficulties faced by the stakeholders as they seek to play a role in the regional planning process are discussed in more detail in the next section

Emerging tensions and difficulties

The analysis of the Q methodology study revealed that the narratives were agreed that there were barriers that make it difficult for people to engage in the planning process, although the degree of concern over these obstacles varied. This concern was most acutely expressed within the Troubled Regionalists narrative, which believed very strongly with the statement that referred to the arrangements for meetings that might make it difficult for people to attend (12), ranking it +5. The Troubled Regionalists also agreed with other statements in the study that related to possible barriers (3, 28). In the follow-up discussions with people who were aligned with the Troubled Regionalists narrative, the issue of meetings being held at inconvenient times and in inaccessible places causing difficulties for some people was raised by four of the Troubled Regionalists, with one of them noting that 'people aren't as involved as they should be' (Personal comment: Sub-regional interviewee). Another Troubled Regionalist observed that 'you have to take a 'big leap' before getting involved in planning. Maybe there's a fear factor to do with it being a technical discipline' (Personal comment: Sub-regional interviewee).

Although according to the Q methodology study the Democratic Environmentalists and Community Planners narratives were only slightly concerned about the potential difficulties faced by people wanting to get involved in the planning debate, having ranked statement 12 at +1 and 0, some of the individuals aligned with these narratives indicated in the follow-up discussion that they felt strongly on some of these issues. One of the Democratic Environmentalists complained that the jargon and technical terms used in planning was a major stumbling block which deterred

people from getting involved, and felt similarly about the times and places of meetings as 'organisations talk about inclusion but often it's the practical issues that are the stumbling block or barrier to participation' (Personal comment: National lobby group policy officer). However another Democratic Environmentalist disagreed and thought that it was difficult to argue that arrangements for meetings would really deter people from attending, with one of the Community Planners sharing the same opinion. A different Democratic Environmentalist disagreed with the statement which suggested that people were unwilling to share power as in her experience 'people are willing to engage people' in the process (Personal comment: Yorkshire and Humber regional stakeholder).

The Q methodology study therefore indicated that the participants aligned to the Troubled Regionalist narrative held firm views about the difficulties faced by people wanting to engage in the planning debate. The people aligned to the other two narratives were however less concerned with these issues according to the Q methodology. The follow-up discussions with members of these narratives/groups would seem to support the contention that as far as these narratives were concerned there was, relatively speaking, less uneasiness about the difficulties faced by people wishing to become involved. However in the full interviews nearly every one of the regional participants indicated that they were aware of potential difficulties that made engagement in regional planning problematic. The issues raised in interviews cut across the different narratives, with no one narrative more or less aware of problems than the others. There was no evidence that the people aligned to one narrative were more aware of certain types of problems than the others, with some issues such as the amount of material that had to be digested before meetings being referred to by people aligned to every narrative. The remainder of this section will summarise the participation issues raised during the interviews.

For the new members of the steering groups, membership was not an easy task. Membership was identified as a big commitment in terms of time and resources, and for some stakeholders came at a personal financial cost as attendance of meetings meant time away from their paid employment. For some participants though, membership of the steering group was very much a part of their role in their organisation. It was not unusual for membership of the planning steering group to be one of a number of similar roles held by participants. Whatever the circumstances,

considerable commitment was required to travel to and attend meetings, reading papers and participating in seminars, workshops etc. As one unpaid volunteer reflected: 'you need to have resources in order to take part in the regional agenda. You need an income in order to travel to meetings and give up time, because going to these regional meetings, you have to give up a whole day' (Interview: East of England regional stakeholder).

There was concern amongst a small number of stakeholders that they were going to make little impact on the strategy. Holding only one seat around the table was seen as insignificant, especially when compared to the collective might of the local authority members: 'I'm just one little voice' (Interview: East of England regional stakeholder). Even if the stakeholders did make representations there was always the danger that it would be belittled or seen as an isolated point of view. As one environmental NGO explained: 'it's a slightly isolated or marginal role because they can say 'oh it's just those ones over there who are raising that' so if they don't like what you're saying they can say 'oh it's an isolated view point' or even 'it's slightly extreme'' (Interview: Regional stakeholder).

Now that they had a legitimate role to play in the development of planning strategies, environmental and rural protection groups perceived that they had become 'insiders'. Being an insider and associated with decisions which she may not have agreed with personally was a source of concern for one environmental NGO:

There has been a very tricky balancing process because, for example, in the '90s, in the early and mid 1990s, when we were protesting about the roads building programme and we were shouting from the sidelines and so on, we were completely excluded from any debates taking place, and now we actually get invited to attend forums where...these issues are being discussed. It is very tricky when forums, as a whole, endorse projects that you are not comfortable with (Interview: Regional stakeholder).

Another issue relating to the membership of the steering groups was that it was noted that it was not possible for every regional interest to have a place on the steering group. The result of this was that umbrella groups representing a wide range of interests were given a seat on the steering group. With one person representing

potentially a very wide range of interests, this could lead to difficulties for the person concerned. As a representative of the voluntary sector explained about her role:

Technically though it's the whole of the voluntary sector, so that could be animal charities for instance, it could be a lot of people charities, children and so on, but it essentially could be any kind of charity, voluntary sector of charity. But I don't do that because I don't have those skills or networks, so it tends to be the people charities (Interview: Regional stakeholder).

For some stakeholders the actual process of developing a spatial strategy was an area of difficulty. For those participants who had no prior experience with the planning system, there was a new language and a new process to be learnt: 'it's like any technical body of work, it has its own jargon, own acronyms and just to get a handle on the process is actually quite difficult unless you've been working through it.' (Interview: East of England regional stakeholder). It was a truly demanding task to interpret the papers produced during the process for the stakeholders without any planning expertise.

Local authority members were able to rely on their planning departments to brief them on the 'telephone directory of reports' (Interview: Local authority planner), but even planning officers found the volume and the complexity of the information needing to be analysed a challenge. The constraints of a tight timetable to produce the draft strategy could also be felt here; one planning officer raised his concern that there was a danger that reports could be rubber stamped by the steering group as people did not want to be seen as holding up the process because they did not understand the content of the reports. Environmental groups were also identified by two interviewees as being particularly well-resourced and organised, with one interviewee employed by CPRE explaining that it was her main priority to be involved in the RSS so she was able to devote a lot of time and resources to her involvement.

There were a lot of issues raised about the meetings of the steering groups themselves. Newcomers to the regional planning process found the meetings large and overwhelming. In the East of England meeting rooms used for the RPP meetings were set out in a conference style arrangement, with tables placed in a rectangle in

order that all members of the RPP were facing in to the middle of the room. Each member had an allocated place around the conference table demarked with their name and the organisation or local authority council or council grouping they represented. The community stakeholder group were seated together. All other attendees (i.e. non-members of the RPP) sat around the rest of the room. Only members of the RPP were entitled to address the meeting. One stakeholder who had recently joined the RPP was quite perturbed that she had had difficulty being able to address the meetings and networking with the other members, problems she did not normally encounter in her professional capacity outside the RPP.

By contrast the meeting rooms for the RPIC meetings in Yorkshire and Humber were laid out 'bistro-style', with round tables seating approximately eight people being placed around the room. The Chair of the RPIC and the Head of Planning for YHA sat together with any presenters at a table facing the rest of the room. All attendees of the meeting were free to choose where they sat in the room. Anyone was able to speak at these meetings. Although less formal than the East of England's RPP meetings, the meetings of RPIC, with as many as 76 participants, appeared large. There was a sense at the meetings attended in the course of this research that the meetings were more a means of informing participants and receiving feedback than a forum for debate. This observation was confirmed by several interviewees: the RPIC 'is so big, in effect it can do little other than make comments' (Interview: Yorkshire and Humber regional stakeholder). Even then the comments might not be made in the meeting itself, as he continued 'but a lot of those comments do actually take place behind the scenes' (Interview: Yorkshire and Humber regional stakeholder).

With relationship-building having been identified as one of the main benefits in engaging in the development of the RSS, it appears that two stakeholders interviewed found this to be a struggle: 'I have tried, I go up and talk to anybody ... I try and network over coffee or lunch when I'm there and they don't want to know, really, and they look at me and thinking ... you know ... and I say 'well I'm actually representing [sector]' and I found it difficult, I don't know why' (Interview: East of England regional stakeholder). Another stakeholder, representing the voluntary sector on the steering group, explained that she had experienced a lack of connection with other stakeholders, not as a consequence of the individuals being disagreeable but because her sector was not relevant to them: 'I think they wouldn't think of me as

being a valid person to network with, because they don't think the voluntary sector is interesting enough' (Interview: Regional stakeholder).

Three participants noted that quite often it was the same people who attended a range of forums at the regional scale. Sometimes described as the 'usual suspects', this group of people were perceived as being a group bound together by common experience: 'there seems to be a group of regional people who network with each other and find themselves at meetings with each other even if they didn't intend to be there' noted one stakeholder (Interview: Yorkshire and Humber regional stakeholder). Another stakeholder also had concerns about the regional scale of working: 'It is very exclusive. It worries me how narrow, how small a number of people, narrow a range of people, are involved in the regional agenda. You go to meetings and you see the same faces' (Interview: East of England regional stakeholder). For one senior planning officer, though, more perhaps could have been done to move away from involving the 'usual suspects' who hijack the planning process and 'can marshal their interests accordingly and position things in a particular way' (Interview: Local authority planner).

The Regional Assemblies in both regions had tried to engage many people and organisations in the process of drafting their new RSSs beyond the stakeholder members of the steering groups. As noted earlier, in Yorkshire and Humber, for example, there was a recognition that the Assembly planning officers had to reach out to a wider range of interests than those represented on the Assembly, and as a result they liaised with groups such as the Regional Ageing Panel and the Children and Young People's Steering Group to seek their input and views. Both regions used a variety of different methods to obtain a wider perspective, the more formal examples being consultation on documents, and the inclusion of different interests in working/task groups, workshops and steering groups. However, for some of these organisations and groups the engagement in the RSS development process had been their first experience of the planning system; with one regional planning officer explaining that 'for a lot of those groups you're starting from an absolute blank in terms of, well, regional government, let alone Regional Spatial Strategy. 'What's planning?' I mean we are going into groups like that' (Interview: Regional Assembly planning officer). The result, though, of engaging with groups with little knowledge of planning was that the feedback received from their engagement was totally

different from the type of technical material generated for example from the detailed discussions with local authority planning officers.

In addition to widening engagement, the Assemblies had the task of reconciling the different and, sometimes, opposing interests. In terms of the steering groups, this meant being careful not to react to the most vocal interests: 'I can imagine that people think that if you talk more at meetings and make more points and are more vociferous and bang on about things and get more annoyed that that will mean that you get a reaction or you get a response in a way that if you don't do that at meetings you won't' observed one regional planning officer (Interview: Regional Assembly planning officer). She continued by explaining that decisions needed to take account of the bigger picture that took everything into consideration, rather than simply being a 'knee-jerk' reaction to lobbying.

However the perception of participants was perhaps slightly different from the picture that the Assembly painted. It was believed to some extent that interest groups were still being treated as stereotypes at meetings: 'they're seen as 'well they would say that, wouldn't they, because they're CPRE or Friends of the Earth'' observed one stakeholder (Interview: Local authority planner). In Yorkshire and Humber, there was also a viewpoint that the Assembly responded to what they believed to be the dominant political force in that region: the city of Leeds. By their own admission, the YHA believed it was important to develop close working relationships with local authorities because of the statutory relationship between the RSS and the Local Development Frameworks. Whilst Assembly officers in that region were commended by some participants for being open to other people's input, one stakeholder expressed his disappointment in the reaction from the Assembly to his sector's interests: 'it's increasingly obvious that when we advocate issues, there isn't a response or there isn't a response in the direction that we would like' (Interview: Yorkshire and Humber regional stakeholder).

This section has focused on the practicalities of engaging in the process of developing the RSSs. In the interviews, participants reflected on the potential difficulties to be faced when engaging; the large and overwhelming meetings which some people found difficult to break into, the amount of paperwork that had to be assimilated and the concern that they would not be able to influence the strategy are a

few examples of the issues raised by participants. The Q methodology study had suggested that one group, the Troubled Regionalists, were more aware than the other narratives of the difficulties that needed to be overcome, but it was clear from the interviews that the consciousness of the potential problems was far wider than the Q methodology study indicated.

There was a sense that the participants with access to more resources and expertise, and longer established participation in planning were more able to participate and contribute to the debates. There was also a perception that people were treated differently by the regional planning officers. Whilst in theory, all participants in the process were equal, it appeared that the local planning authorities were more privileged than the other participants. The reasons for this include their greater understanding of the planning process, the statutory links between the RSS and the LDFs, and because they would be delivering the strategy when it was eventually implemented. It would seem therefore that those organisations which had more to benefit or lose from the RSS had a higher status in its development than the other participants who were involved as their input was required. Who was perceived to have the most influence over the process is discussed in more detail in the next section.

Articulate performers and lone voices: who has the most influence over the process?

As regional planning is a process in which competing priorities and future plans for the region are actively debated, it is useful to have an understanding of who has the most influence over these debates. A statement was included in the Q methodology study which suggested that it is the most highly motivated and eloquent groups which influence outcomes (8). Both of the Troubled Regionalists and Community Planners narratives firmly agreed with this statement, ranking this statement at +4 and +5. In the follow-up discussions, people who strongly agreed with this statement claimed that the process favours the better resourced and more articulate groups, and that these groups determine the direction and tenor of debate: 'those groups that are organised and have the power will determine the debate' (Personal comment: RDA officer). Two people also suggested that it tends to be a certain type of person, that is

someone who is middle class and well-educated, who gets involved and tries to influence policy, for example: 'it's the well-educated who've had good opportunities that tend to influence policy, but this means that less well-educated people don't have a voice or opportunity to participate' (Personal comment: Whitehall civil servant). In the full interviews the discussion about who has the most influence went far wider than the well-resourced and articulate groups, as interviewees indicated that it was the political members of the steering groups, the elected local authority councillors, who wielded the most influence. The rest of this section examines more closely the different impressions held by interviewees of the groups which had the most influence over strategy development.

The introduction into the regional planning process of specialist groups, some of whom felt passionately for their sector, was said by one interviewee to have led to more debate at the meetings. Two participants suggested that having the ability to form a well-constructed argument was an important skill. Whereas a few stakeholders were identified as being articulate and passionate when delivering comments, an elected local authority member remarked that this may not necessarily help their cause as it 'can probably turn people off' (Interview: Local authority councillor). A small number of participants felt that there was a tendency for people, especially the councillors representing smaller local authorities and the stakeholder representatives, to focus on their own areas or interests when they spoke. As one stakeholder said: 'I don't think people think regionally, as you say, they think about their own particular place, and pushing their own, which they've got to do, that's what they're there for' (Interview: Yorkshire and Humber regional stakeholder, original quote amended). However whilst this was a fairly common view, a few steering group members were identified as being able to make constructive regional comments.

Representatives of environmental and rural protection groups were identified by a few of the interviewees as being particularly vocal and passionate, although sometimes they could be a 'lone voice' (Interview: Yorkshire and Humber regional stakeholder). Representatives of these groups were not only articulate, but according to one regional planning officer they were 'incredibly geared up to the detail of what we're dealing' (Interview: Regional Assembly planning officer), indicating that the resources available to them and their history of engagement in the planning system

gave these groups certain advantages. Of the other interest groups on the steering groups, only the representatives of business organisations were identified as being articulate and vocal. Although these may be personal qualities, as one business representative explained he believed he was taken notice of because the 'economy is reasonably well up on the agenda, so therefore I feel that I personally am being reasonably well listened to' (Interview: Regional stakeholder).

The representatives of local authorities were also identified by a few interviewees as being vocal at meetings. This did depend on the topic being discussed, with the new housing number allocations issue dominating debate in the East of England region and the sub-regional areas being a cause of concern for some local authorities in the Yorkshire and Humber region. Certainly in the East of England, the local authorities were sometimes described as being parochial, with the most parochial tending to be the most vocal at meetings. In the Yorkshire and Humber region, it was noted by one stakeholder that it tended to be the planning officers who spoke up at RPIC meetings and not the elected members of the local authorities. One environmental NGO suggested, though, that there was a certain level of restraint exercised by planning officers in terms of what they said which he referred to as 'their code of 'I won't say anything against you and you don't say anything against me'' (Interview: Yorkshire and Humber regional stakeholder) which meant that arguments sometimes went unchallenged and that people would not go out on a limb.

Four participants in the Yorkshire and Humber region said that they were not aware of or found it difficult to identify power relationships in the RPIC. One stakeholder went so far as to suggest that: 'If there was real power in that room you can bet that people would be fighting over it. The fact that they aren't means that there isn't.' (Interview: Yorkshire and Humber regional stakeholder). Generally though, most participants in both regions could identify different levels of power amongst the participants, and it was relatively easy to identify power in numbers on the steering groups. With stakeholders being in a minority on the steering groups and most holding a single seat, it was suggested by several interviewees that as individuals the stakeholders held little power. The story was different for the local authorities on the planning steering groups, whose large numbers (19 seats out of 30 on the RPP in

East of England, and 44 seats out of 76 on the RPIC in Yorkshire and Humber⁸) meant that they appeared to dominate proceedings. Apart from their strength in terms of numbers, the local authorities were also perceived as being better resourced and organised than the stakeholders. With departments staffed by planning professionals, local authorities were able to assimilate the large amount of technical paperwork produced during the course of strategy development and advise their steering group representative(s) on the lines to be taken.

Apart from being fewer in number, the stakeholders were thought to be at an immediate disadvantage because they represented different interests and held different objectives. Introducing diversity was of course part of the reason why they had been invited on to the steering groups in the first place. Their different aspirations were thought to make it difficult for the stakeholders to work as a cohesive group:

So the stakeholder group you have to see it very much as probably individuals rather than as a group, and as individuals when you're in a voting process, it's very difficult to see how you can, how you can make that work. So although they're there and they can speak, and make representations, it's very difficult to see what authority or power they have within that panel (Interview: RDA officer).

In spite of the concern expressed about the lack of influence held by stakeholders, their presence on the steering groups was considered to have had a valuable function as, according to a handful of stakeholders, their engagement had forced a degree of openness and transparency onto the process. This perspective was most strongly vocalised by stakeholders from the East of England. As one stakeholder in that region rather vehemently put it:

if we weren't there, to put it crudely, there would be a much, much more smoke-filled room political carve up, and I honestly believe that the existence and the involvement of stakeholders, as I said earlier to you, actually forces a degree of transparency and forces the full arguments and data supporting the

⁸ In Yorkshire and Humber each of the 22 local authorities may be represented by an elected member and a senior planning officer making 44 representatives. See Appendix 2 for membership details.

arguments to be put into the public domain and rehearsed (Interview: East of England regional stakeholder).

There appeared to be two different types of power relationships amongst the local authority representatives on the steering groups. Firstly in both regions there was the difference due to the size of the authority with the larger counties and cities believed to hold the most influence. Two interviewees suggested that this was due to the larger planning departments, and therefore greater technical and senior office resources, at the disposal of these councils. This meant that these authorities had a greater ability to challenge views that might not support their policies as they could provide well-developed responses supported by detailed analysis. In addition there was the suggestion from one interviewee that these larger authorities were perceived as drivers for economic growth in their region, another reason for their appearing to hold more power over the direction of the strategy. For example it was ventured by a small number of interviewees in Yorkshire and Humber, that the cities of Leeds and, to a lesser extent, Sheffield, were the most powerful authorities. In the East of England region, on the other hand, two interviewees suggested that Essex and Hertfordshire held the most power on the RPP, with the district councils and the counties of Norfolk and Suffolk perceived to be weaker.

Secondly in the East of England, where the political balance on the Panel was subject to the Regional Political Balance Template, party politics also seemed to be a factor. With members voting along party political lines, party politics was clearly an important element of the power relationships on the RPP. Stakeholders were aware that politicians had a way of acting together either according to county or according to political party: 'the local authorities are tribal, in the sense that you know, there are people from Essex, there are people from Hertfordshire, there are people from Suffolk, there are people from Norfolk, there will be a common element of the Conservative grouping or the Liberal Democrat grouping or the Labour grouping' (Interview: East of England regional stakeholder). Before each meeting of the RPP, group meetings were held by each political group and by the stakeholders. At the political group meetings, it was agreed how each group would vote at the RPP meeting, with the political dynamic being that if a member did not agree with the majority decision then he/she abstained from the vote at the Panel meeting. One

senior planning officer recalled a frustrating example of how party politics dominated decision-making:

we'd worked really hard to brief our member on a telephone directory of reports and lines that we recommended him to take on behalf of [our local authority], and when we asked him 'look is that brief adequate? Do you know what to say?', the response we got was 'well I'll have to wait and see how the other Conservative councillors vote'. All the work we'd put in basically boiled down to waiting to see who lifts their hand (Interview: Local authority planner).

With a General Election expected to take place in the summer of 2005, one reason suggested for the high level of influence that party politics was playing in the drafting of the East of England RSS was the large increase in new housing that the Labour government was expecting the region to accommodate as: 'by and large, in this part of the world, there aren't any votes in supporting significant new development' (Interview: EE8). As the Conservative party held the most political seats on the RPP, the upcoming General Election added another dimension to the debate as local political mileage could be made out of resisting the central government's request for higher housing numbers. Subsequently the Labour party lost a number of marginal seats in the SCP Growth Areas in the 2005 Election (*Planning magazine* 2005).

When it came to resources, like some of the larger local authorities, a few of the stakeholder groups were seen to have a greater advantage over the others. The representatives of groups such as CPRE and the environmental groups, which have a history of engagement in the planning process, were thought to have the advantage over groups that had only recently become involved in the process. Some of these well-established groups also benefited from having paid employees whose role it was to represent their interests on planning and any other forums where it was anticipated that they might be able to secure a more favourable position for their interests. Other stakeholders recognised that by the nature of the interests they represented, for example higher education or voluntary groups, there would be few instances during the course of steering group meetings when they would have the opportunity to offer anything relevant to the discussion. Three stakeholders felt that contacting the

planning officers at the Assemblies direct was a more satisfactory way of feeding in their thoughts and concerns than addressing the meetings of the steering groups.

The Q methodology study and the interviews indicated that many participants thought that the more articulate and well-resourced groups were at an advantage when it came to influencing strategy development. But being able to put together a well-constructed and robust argument is not enough on its own, as the in-depth interviews indicated that it was the local authority participants who appeared to hold the most influence over the strategy. Stakeholders, on the other hand, were thought to be a rather disparate group, who held little influence. It was suggested that they were wanted for their views, but that they held little power over the direction of the strategy. Within the local authority members, different power relationships were observed. The larger authorities with more economic influence and greater resources available to them were thought to be the most influential. In the East of England, party politics was also a factor with councillors representing different authorities voting together along party lines. With the Conservative party holding the most seats on the RPP, they were considered to be the most influential group on the steering group. In the Yorkshire and Humber region, no evidence could be found of party politics being a factor in the debate over the direction of the strategy. Whilst a clearer picture of the more influential figures on the steering groups has been gained, engagement on these groups forms only part of the process of gathering the region's views on the emerging RSS. The next section will turn to the role that the general public plays in developing the spatial strategies in the two study regions.

Engaging Joe Public: citizen participation in the RSS process

In this final section of this chapter the role taken by the wider public in the development of the RSSs will be explored. As noted earlier, ODPM guidance sets out the central government's intention that the RPBs should provide all of those with an interest in the revised RSS, which includes individuals as well as organisations, with the opportunity to express their views on the RSSs as these are developed (ODPM 2004f). It is also a statutory duty of the RPBs to publish a statement of public participation which should indicate how and when the RPBs intend to involve the public. The Q methodology study indicated that most people thought that the

general public were probably unaware of the RSS process (27). This view was most strongly felt by the people aligned to the Troubled Regionalist narrative, ranking this statement at +5, and especially by participants based in Yorkshire and Humber, for example: 'I know for certain that that the general public don't know about regional planning' (Personal comment: Yorkshire and Humber regional stakeholder). Participants from the East of England region across all of the narratives were perhaps less convinced that the public did not know about the process, as nearly all of the participants from this region placed the statement in the middle of the Q sort arrangement indicating that they did not feel strongly on this issue. One East of England interviewee explained that she believed that 'people have become more aware since the news stories' (Personal comment: East of England interviewee), as press coverage of the proposals to increase the region's housing supply had raised the public's awareness of regional planning with headlines such as 'Plan to 'blitz' east of England with 500,000 homes backed' (*Independent* 2004).

On the principle of whether the public should be involved in regional planning, the Q methodology study indicated that there was a wide discrepancy of views (14). For the Democratic Environmentalists involving the public in planning was very important, ranking this statement at +5, but those associated with other narrative strands tended to be less sure, placing this statement at -1 and +2. In the follow-up discussions, participants from all narratives acknowledged that although they thought that public engagement should happen, there were difficulties in relation to the constructiveness of the feedback received and the problems that people had thinking strategically, for example: 'I think people should be involved, but it's difficult to get the people who can help constructively' (Personal comment: Yorkshire and Humber regional stakeholder). Three people suggested that it was more appropriate to seek engagement of the public on local scale issues and not at the regional scale, for example: 'we need to involve local people in what's happening in their local area. It's not beneficial to involve people right across the region' (Personal comment: East of England regional stakeholder). The remainder of this section will further elaborate on these issues with a discussion of the interview material and will initially outline the ways in which the views of the public had been sought in both regions.

As discussed in Chapter 4, the two Assemblies had sought to encourage public participation in the strategy development process in a number of ways. There had

been one consultation stage during the development of the East of England strategy, the Options Consultation Document (end 2002), whilst in the Yorkshire and Humber there had been two consultation opportunities, the Draft Spatial Vision (July 2004) and the Topic Papers (early 2005). In the East of England region, copies of the Options Consultation Document were available throughout the region in public libraries. Copies were sent to local authorities, who were encouraged to promote the consultation exercise in their areas, and to parish councils. The document was also available in electronic format on the Assembly's website and an electronic response form was available. There had been media coverage of the launch event in the local press, television and radio. The document was available in a large print format and translations were available in eight languages. Of the 498 responses submitted to the Assembly, 88 came from private individuals (EERA 2004d). Summaries of all responses were placed on EERA's website. In addition to the formal consultation opportunities, information on the process was readily available as minutes and meeting papers of all RPP meetings were accessible on the Assembly's website. Copies of all research projects undertaken during the course of the strategy's development were also available on the website. Meetings of the RPP were open to members of the public.

In Yorkshire and Humber, the papers for both consultation opportunities were available to the public on the Assembly's website. Responses to the consultation could be made by e-mail or in writing. Printed copies of the papers were available on request from the Assembly, but unlike in the East of England, the documents were not available from the region's libraries or local authority offices. Two formats of the Draft Spatial Vision document were published, one of which was an easy-to-read summary. Posters advertising this consultation opportunity were printed for display in local authority offices to raise public awareness of the RSS. However the YHA did not print the papers for either consultation opportunity in large print or in different languages. Of the 139 responses to the Topic Issues consultation, less than ten came from private individuals (Jacobs Babbie 2005). In addition to the two opportunities for formal consultation, the planning team at the YHA published a newsletter, *RPG Matters* and later renamed *PLANet*, to publicise the strategy and inform on the progress of its development. At the beginning of the strategy development process in 2003, an advertisement publicising the commencement of the process was played on local radio. Copies of all research documents were made

available on the Assembly's website, as were minutes of a few of the RPIC meetings. As in the East of England, it was possible for members of the public to attend meetings of the Commission. When it came to the consultation period after the draft strategy was submitted to the ODPM in December 2005, the Assembly undertook a widespread campaign to publicise and facilitate the public consultation which included radio advertising, publicity events, establishing a telephone hotline, and using the region's library network to provide access to hard copies of the documents.

About half of the interviewees at the regional scale believed that it was important for the public to be given the opportunity to participate in the development of the new RSS, for example:

I believe that everyone should have an opportunity to participate, because it's ultimately about shaping where they live, and although it's one step removed from the immediate impact, it's going to shape where they live and therefore they should have the right to making a meaningful input into that strategy
(Interview: Yorkshire and Humber regional stakeholder).

Interviewees across the range of narratives believed in the value of participation at the regional scale of planning. A few of these referred to the importance of giving people the opportunity to participate because of the strategic impact that the new statutory RSS would have on the local scale of planning. It was observed by one interviewee following the removal of the county structure plans, the planning reforms had resulted in less opportunity for the public to have a say in the future for their areas, especially as the regional scale of planning was also seen as difficult to understand and influence. Several interviewees believed that public participation was a right, and it was essential that the public were given the opportunity to have their say. It was suggested by one person that the principle of public participation was more important than the outcome, as the public's feedback may add little of value to the process, as she explained: 'even if at the end of the day all you get back from people is a rant about their dustbins not being emptied, at least they'd had the opportunity' (Interview: Regional Assembly planning officer).

As with the involvement of the stakeholder groups in the steering groups, the participation of the public in the development of the strategy was seen by

interviewees to bring a degree of realism to the strategy. The final strategy would be better as a result of effective involvement of the public: 'if [public participation] was done well, [the strategy] would be more appropriate, it would meet people's needs, it would reduce social problems, it would increase the prosperity of the region' (Interview: Yorkshire and Humber regional stakeholder). It was also believed that engagement would result in a greater sense of ownership of the final strategy, and that if people felt that they had been part of the process rather than having the strategy imposed on them, then hopefully the strategy would be more successful. Although enabling participation might not be an easy task, a few interviewees were optimistic that the public had the capacity to think strategically and regionally. Even if they could only provide a local perspective, the public would still be able to provide a viewpoint on how the regional strategy was going to affect a part of the region: 'people, I think, have been able to latch on to something that's particular to their area, it's enabled them to get a campaign that people can understand and that has generated a lot of public interest in the plan' (Interview: Regional Assembly planning officer).

Although many of the interviewees at the regional scale viewed engagement of the public at the regional scale as a positive feature of the reformed planning system, not everyone shared this view. One local authority councillor explained her reason for questioning the value of public participation: 'I believe that the majority of the public are absolute NIMBYs⁹' (Interview: Local authority councillor). This point of view was shared by a stakeholder representative: 'you can guarantee 99 per cent of those public voices say 'not in my back yard'. To put a value on that is quite difficult' (Interview: Yorkshire and Humber regional stakeholder). The suggestion that the views of the public would not alter the direction of the strategy was shared by about a third of the regional interviewees, as one stakeholder explained: 'my experience of consultation is that it very seldom changes the outcome, and without consultation you tend to be able to get to the outcome far quicker than with all the consultation that we go into.' (Interview: East of England regional stakeholder). The suggestion that the public would bring insightful information to the process was derided by another stakeholder:

⁹ Acronym for 'not in my back yard'; a person who objects to the siting of a development in their locality.

they're not actually saying 'have you thought about putting them there? Have you thought about building this, that and the other?' The voice will generally be 'we're not having that' and therefore ... public consultation can bring many things, but it tends to be, if you've got a controversial proposal, it tends to be very negative (Interview: Yorkshire and Humber regional stakeholder).

The view that the public only became engaged in the development of strategies when it was perceived that there was a threat was a perspective shared by a small number of people, as one regional planning officer reflected: 'I have always thought that it's quite difficult to engage people on strategic plans, but it's clearly not difficult if you're suggesting things that people don't agree with' (Interview: Regional Assembly planning officer). This might account for the higher levels of attendance at the Essex and Hertfordshire venues of the East of England regional consultation events compared to venues in Norfolk and Suffolk, where the projected increase in house-building was going to be less than in the southern counties of the region.

In addition to this sense of caution about the benefits of public participation at the regional scale, there was also the opinion shared by several participants drawn from the steering groups, that the interests of the public were already represented via the local authorities. As previously discussed, about half of the regional interviewees believed that the wider interests of the community were being represented through the local authorities on the steering groups, although there was a measure of doubt as to how meaningful this representation was.

Interviewees also reflected on the difficulties faced by the Regional Assemblies seeking participation from the public. Consulting the public was perceived as a time-consuming and resource intensive process, the results of which did not necessarily merit the effort it took. The large scale of the regions, with both having approximately five million residents, was another reason given for the difficulty facing the Assemblies should they want to seek the views of every individual in the region. Similarly it would also be difficult for the Assemblies to estimate the impact on every person in the region. This was why, a few interviewees suggested, there was a role for interest groups to engage in the process as they were able to feed into the process more effectively and more constructively than the public, as one stakeholder explained:

You're going to get much more effective feedback than what you would do by spending too much time trying to engage the public, because the public are not going to tell you how many people in their area are homeless; they're not going to tell you how unaffordable certain properties are. They're just going to want to have a whinge (Interview: Yorkshire and Humber regional stakeholder).

There was also the view shared by three people that it was often the same individuals or groups that engaged in the consultation opportunities. This rather limited engagement may result in only a partial, and possibly unreliable, picture of the public's views being gained explained one stakeholder:

Joe Public is not interested, at an individual level, in reading about policy at a regional level for the next twenty years, is my rather cynical view. The people who become interested are usually interest groups of a particular kind, inspired not by general interest in the region but by a narrow interest in their own issue, and they tend to react on that basis. So although public consultation on regional spatial strategy is obviously desirable, I think the benefits for the public and for the people making the decisions, are not very great (Interview: East of England regional stakeholder).

As was indicated by the results of the Q methodology study, it was generally believed by interviewees that the public had little awareness of the regional planning process, as one stakeholder explained:

I suspect that despite all the efforts for participation and involvement, if you canvassed the people of Lowestoft where I live, I'd be very, very surprised if more than 1% had heard of the Regional Spatial Strategy. They might have heard of all the hoo-ha about all the houses that have to be built, but that was not because of participation and involvement, that was because of press coverage and media coverage (Interview: East of England regional stakeholder).

A number of reasons were suggested for the public's low level of engagement in the strategy development process. One reason given was that it was to be expected that not everyone would wish to be involved, but they nonetheless should be given the opportunity to do so. Another reason suggested was that the public would only engage in the process if there was a perceived threat to their interests, and given the perception that the public had a low level of awareness of the strategy, it was not surprising that there was little public engagement. Allied to this was the suggestion made by nearly half of the regional interviewees that the general public find it easier to participate at the local scale than at the regional scale, as a local authority planning officer observed: 'The public will get engaged in 'planning for real' exercises on their doorstep; they find it very difficult to engage with any kind of exercise which is at a more strategic level because it's not, it's difficult to make it real for them' (Interview: Local authority planner).

A further reason provided for the low level of public participation at the regional scale was that the public felt disempowered by the process, that whatever they said nothing would change as the government would be issuing the finalised RSS and would impose its policies on the region come what may. Whether ultimately the government could overrule the will of the region after wide consultation would be interesting to observe, as one regional planning officer mused: 'it seems to me that it would be quite difficult, once you've got a plan that's had so much input from so many different people and it's been through a public consultation process and the public have spoken, to then turn round and say 'well actually we're going to do something else' (Interview: Regional Assembly planning officer).

To summarise, public participation in the development of the RSSs was a topic that divided participants. The people aligned to the Democratic Environmentalists narrative believed that this was fundamental, whilst those closer to the other narratives were not so certain it was essential. The benefits of public participation included bringing an element of realism to the strategy and giving people a say in the future of their region. However not everyone shared these views. It was suggested that the public found it easier to engage on local issues than at the regional scale, and that their interests were possibly best served through stakeholder or local authority representation at the regional scale. When the public did get involved, the quality of their input was questionable and, as it was believed that only certain types of people

got involved in participation exercises, their views should not be considered representative of the community as a whole. Most interviewees believed that the general public had little consciousness of the regional planning process, with this impression being strongest amongst the interviewees from Yorkshire and Humber. In the East of England media coverage of the housing numbers debate had probably raised the public's awareness of regional planning.

Conclusions

Since the New Labour government came into power in 1997 there has been an increased emphasis on partnership working and community participation. More inclusive public engagement is supposedly 'essential for a truly sustainable community' (DETR 1999, para. 7.87). According to the Q methodology study participants were agreed that it was important that everyone had the opportunity to get involved and that widening engagement to include representatives of economic, environmental and social interests would help to achieve balanced strategies. However the interviews revealed that about half of the participants had reservations that widening engagement would succeed in reconciling the different interests; Counsell *et al.* 2003 had similarly identified that there tended to be winners and losers under the old system of RPG.

One reason given by participants for this difficulty was the lack of influence, described as the 'lone voice', that individual interest groups had on the strategy. Baker *et al.* (2003) had similarly found that stakeholders in RPGs perceived that they had little influence on the process. Another possible factor was the difficulties faced by Assembly officers trying to reconcile the tensions arising out of a planning process that was involving more people, more often and subject to a tight timetable, a point of view echoed by others (e.g. Cowell and Owens 2006; Kitchen and Whitney 2004; Tewdwr-Jones *et al.* 2006). A third reason for a lack of synergy, provided by a stakeholder involved in the East of England strategy, was that the political parties in that region were driving the process making it difficult for the other members of the steering group to play a significant role. These tensions between elected representatives and the unelected stakeholders were possibly inevitable (Jenkins and Hague 2005; Marshall 2003). Yet in spite of the envisaged difficulties, participants

had not been deterred from participating. Most people wanted to get involved in order to acquire information and to influence the strategy so it could be in line with their objectives, therefore reducing uncertainty (Campbell and Marshall 2000; Richardson 2000). It was also found that participants used the steering groups to build relationships and networks with other participants, which would help them to achieve the other two objectives (Pattison 2001).

At the beginning of this research project, it was anticipated that environmental, business and social interests would be actively involved in the debate of the emerging RSS. It soon became evident that this was not the case. The steering groups established by the Regional Assemblies in both study regions to develop the new RSSs included a diverse range of interest groups and local authority members, and in the Yorkshire and Humber region local authority officers, but there appeared to be a lack of engagement with organisations that could be said to stand for social issues. It was suggested by many people that this role belonged to the local authorities. But there was little evidence despite rhetoric to support the view that this representation was substantive.

There are both institutional and functional reasons why groups that represent the social considerations are not better engaged with the steering groups. Whilst some groups, especially economic and environmental interests, seem to have adapted successfully to the new opportunities for engagement in regional planning (Murdoch and Norton 2001; Pattison 2001), it was suggested that social interests may not yet have done so. Engaging private sector organisations no longer appeared to be a problem for RPBs as previously identified by Baker *et al.* (2003), with business interests represented on the planning steering groups in both study regions. In order to capture the views of groups that represent social issues, Assembly officers have had to reach out to them by means such as workshop events and focus groups. However, only a few of these events were held in either region during the development of the draft strategies. The steering groups, apart from allowing stakeholders the opportunity to influence the emerging strategies, are seen as arenas for sharing information, building relationships, and keeping their sector in the eye of decision-makers and other stakeholders. With so much potentially to gain, if one group of interests is not represented then it is questionable whether the regional planning arena is a level playing field. When compared to the interest groups that

were participating in the steering groups, the groups representing social interests were therefore at a possible disadvantage.

In spite of the potential benefits of being a member of the steering groups, both the RPP and the RPIC were viewed by their members as arenas of struggle and tension. A few people found it difficult to address the meetings and felt more comfortable approaching the Regional Assembly planning officers outside of the meeting situation. Several people believed that their impact on the strategy was never going to be more than minimal. Baker *et al.* (2003) identified the lack of resources of the RPBs and the stakeholders as the principal barrier to involvement in regional planning under the old system, but this was thought to be a problem by only a very few participants in the present study. Dealing with the vast amounts of technical information was another difficulty that had to be overcome by all but the most well-resourced of the interest groups and the local authorities, and this had similarly been identified as a significant issue in earlier studies (Baker *et al.* 2003; Pattison 2001). It also appeared that old modes of behaviour had not altered with the new system of governance, as there was a sense that some groups, particularly the environmental ones, were still being treated as stereotypes. In addition there seemed to be a tendency for the local authorities to be treated as more privileged members of the steering groups, as observed by Campbell and Marshall (2000) in their research into participation in planning: 'while participation has a role to play in planning, it is important to remember that it is impossible to trump the legitimacy of an elected representative' (p. 341).

In short there was a perception that the steering groups were not an equal partnership with participants having equal prerogatives. The local authorities were believed to have the most influence over the strategy whilst it was being drafted, as Haughton and Counsell (2002) had similarly found, with the well-resourced environmental groups and the business groups also recognised as influential figures to some extent. From the sidelines, struggles could be observed between the local authorities. Some of these struggles were based along political lines, others were to do with geographic situation such as county or sub-regional allegiances, and others were situated around the relative strength of different authorities' planning departments. The regional planning officers had to navigate their way through all these power struggles, to

ensure that everyone involved in the strategy had the same opportunity to be heard and not to respond to the more argumentative and vocal participants.

As with their attempts to engage groups that represent social interests, the Regional Assemblies appeared to have had limited success in getting citizens of the region to engage in the development of the strategies beyond information provision and the public consultation exercises. Little has therefore changed since attempts to engage the public in planning under previous regimes (Owens and Cowell 2002; TCPA 1999), with an earlier study suggesting that public involvement in regional planning was little more than tokenism (Tewdwr-Jones 2002). A survey in 2002 of local planning authorities had indicated that nearly all respondents thought that the RPBs would experience difficulties securing meaningful community involvement in planning (Sykes 2003).

The participants in the strategy development process were themselves divided on the value of engaging the wider public in the process. Whilst half of the interviewees at the regional scale believed that it was important to give everybody the opportunity to participate, there were others who said that it was not worth the effort it would take to get meaningful engagement, with the possibility that more parochial or NIMBY views would be introduced. Other research had found that giving non-experts the opportunity to voice their views and concerns rarely challenges the capacity of the more dominant economic interests and bureaucracies to frame what is politically acceptable (Campbell and Marshall 2000; Cowell and Owens 2006). Despite the government's encouragement of wider community engagement in the earlier stages of plan preparation, this had proved difficult to achieve in both regions with many interviewees agreeing that the general public were probably unaware of and/or not interested in either regional planning or the Regional Spatial Strategies.

Returning to the theme of policy networks in regional planning, it would seem that whilst the steering groups now included representatives of a diverse range of interests or policy communities, there was an empty space insofar as social interests were only poorly represented. Interestingly, although the voluntary and community sector, covering a variety of interests such as children's charities and faith groups, had a representative on the planning steering group in Yorkshire and Humber, this person did not believe that it was her role to act for social issues. Perhaps it is the

very nature of the social sector, which is expansive and diverse, that makes it difficult for representation to be identified for the purposes of steering group membership.

The social policy community therefore has been approached by the RPBs in a different way to the other policy communities which have more identifiable representation. So whilst other policy communities operate within one policy arena, the planning steering groups, social interests are being addressed elsewhere. Without being present at the steering group meetings, the social policy community is not in a position to introduce their policy 'frame' into the debate on the spatial future of their region. Although the views of different groups, for example older people and people with disabilities were being sought by regional planners outside of the arena of the planning steering group, it is questionable whether participation in this form is sufficient. Surely if the new idea of bringing the 'social' into planning is ever going to be effective, the groups that represent social interests need to be encountered by the other policy communities in order that these groups can gain greater information and understanding about social issues, and therefore improve policy-making (Healey 1997a; Vigar and Healey 2002).

Haughton and Counsell (2004a) used the terms 'noisy' and 'quiet' spaces to describe the different policy arenas in which regional planning strategies are debated and worked out, with social interests occupying the quiet spaces. Little appears to have changed since their research into the last round of planning guidance in spite of the government's encouragement set out in their modernisation reforms. The noisy spaces are characterised by struggle and tension especially in relation to issues such as housing numbers, with some policy communities, namely the local authorities, suspected of having more influence than the others. Without a physical presence in this particular arena for debate and potential influence, it remains to be seen whether social issues are disadvantaged when it comes to the objectives of the strategy, and this will be explored in Chapter 8.

Introduction

Under the new regime of spatial planning in which the RSSs were developed, there were a number of competing and intertwined tensions which the RSSs had to seek to resolve and then deal with. Firstly there was the relationship between the RSSs and the LDDs, the development strategy documents of the region's constituent local authorities. Next there were the other regional strategies for which the RSSs provided the strategic spatial framework. Then there were the government's new sub-regional initiatives, the Sustainable Communities Plan (SCP) and the Northern Way Growth Strategy (NWGS), which the regions were expected 'to test' via their spatial strategies. In addition the RSSs were expected to take account of national planning policies and guidance. This complex set of relationships work in different directions, between spatial scales, and within and across local and regional boundaries. Alongside these complex institutional relationships sits the wider sectoral scope of regional planning, which may add to the likelihood of conflict and tension rather than the amelioration and alignment hoped for in spatial planning (Tewdwr-Jones 2002).

This chapter seeks to unravel this complex web of relationships and to discover what the impact of adopting an integrated approach to planning has been at the regional scale looking beyond only the social aspects. The chapter starts by discussing the results of the Q methodology study in relation to the themes of regional governance and strategy co-ordination. The next section explores the relationship between the regional and local scales of planning. The connections between the Regional Spatial Strategies and the other regional strategies will then be examined. In both of these sets of relationships the central government maintains a role. Through the Sustainable Communities Plan, central government has actively intervened at the sub-regional scale in situations where the market has failed to keep up with structural economic changes with the expectation that the RSSs will conform to the central

government's requirements. The final section of this chapter will, therefore, discuss the relationships between the emerging RSSs and one each of the SCP's Growth Areas and Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder Areas, and the Northern Way Growth Strategy.

Exploring regional governance and policy co-ordination

Jonas and Ward (2002) suggest that although the trend of new regionalism has seen the development of regional economic and political institution building whilst other scales of governance have receded, one should not ignore that the national level continues to play a central role in the direction of regional institutions and their functions. In the Q methodology study, two statements (9, 13) referred to the central government's influence over regional/local matters. The first statement suggested that the regions were more accountable to the central government than to the people in the region (9). The Troubled Regionalists and Community Planners narratives tended to disagree with this suggestion, ranking this statement as -3 and -2. In the follow-up discussions, four people said that they had disagreed with the statement because regional institutions were accountable to both Whitehall and their regional constituents. This balance was not easy to achieve, as one person suggested that: 'regional bodies should be balancing national priorities with regional priorities and are therefore accountable to both' (Personal comment: Whitehall civil servant). She explained that the regional institutions themselves had different relationships with the central government: 'Government Offices are the 'voice' of Whitehall, whilst the other bodies like the RDAs and the Regional Housing Bodies, should be advising us of regional requirements' (Personal comment: Whitehall civil servant). The Democratic Environmentalists narrative was relatively ambivalent on this statement, ranking it as +1, although one individual who loaded significantly on this narrative, suggested that the Northern Way Growth Strategy was a good example of how central government imposed itself on the regions and expected regional institutions to deliver the strategy.

In fact an examination of the regions in which individuals were situated revealed that half of the participants located in Yorkshire and Humber had agreed with statement 9, whereas all but one participant in the East of England had disagreed with it. An

explanation for this is that the interviews took place shortly after the launch of the Northern Way Growth Strategy and this was very fresh in people's minds during the interviews. The Northern Way is discussed later in this chapter. The Northern Way 'factor' may have been an influence on people's judgements of this statement, but was only mentioned in one person's follow-up discussion. Another person who had agreed with statement 9 explained that he thought that the national-regional relationship depended upon the policy area involved: 'it's different for different policy areas, but the Government Offices have a lot of conflicting policies within them and some are more prey to central government pressures than others and this is a tension' (Personal comment: Sub-regional interviewee).

The second statement suggested that the government was using regional planning to take decisions away from the region's constituents (13). All of the narratives disagreed with this statement, and for the Troubled Regionalists this was one of the statements they felt most strongly about, ranking this statement -5. Participants aligned with the Troubled Regionalists narrative explained in their follow-up discussions that they did not believe that regional planning was taking decisions away from people, and that it is an increasingly more effective tool for looking strategically at issues, for example: 'It's not taking decisions away from people. It allows synergies and provides an umbrella strategy and cohesiveness maybe between two different neighbouring authorities' (Personal comment: Whitehall civil servant). One Troubled Regionalist had a slightly different perspective and suggested that the government was not using the regional planning agenda to actively take strategic decisions away from local people as these decisions had not been the responsibility of local people in the first place: 'key local decisions, such as strategic issues, shouldn't really be with the local people and never really have been' (Personal comment: East of England regional stakeholder). Another Troubled Regionalist observed that the re-scaling of planning towards the region was part of a wider trend: 'There is a move towards subsidiarity in central government. Power is being taken away from central government departments, and now regional structures are more accountable to the local people' (Personal comment: Local authority planner).

The Democratic Environmentalists and Community Planners narratives also disagreed with this statement, with both ranking statement 13 as +3. Two participants suggested that regional planning in their view represented more of a

devolving of power from the centre than the withdrawal of power away from the local authorities. However, whilst nearly all participants had disagreed with this statement, there were four participants who strongly agreed that regional planning represented a withdrawal of power away from the people: these people were the two local authority councillors, a representative of business interests and a senior planning officer. One of the councillors said in her interview that she was concerned about whether spatial planning at the regional scale was necessary, that she believed that the RSS was being imposed on the community and that decisions on issues such as housing numbers were best made by local authorities. The senior planning officer, who incidentally had been involved in a campaign for a continued strategic planning role for the counties, suggested that: 'the regional scale has brought in another level of planning that means that local people have less of a say about what happens in local levels' (Personal comment: Local authority planner).

Pulling together the views on these two statements, it would appear that with the exception of the participants aligned to the Democratic Environmentalists narrative, people were generally satisfied that the regional institutions were not more accountable to Whitehall than to the people who lived in the regions. A practical example of this independence was the East of England Regional Assembly's decision to turn down the ODPM's request for 18,000 additional houses in their draft RSS as noted in Chapter 4. However half of the participants in Yorkshire and Humber thought that central government was exerting a significant influence on regional policy, and this opinion may have been triggered by the relatively recent launch of the Northern Way Growth Strategy a few weeks prior to the interviews, which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. There was a recognition amongst participants that the regions are probably accountable to some degree to both the central government and the region's constituents. When it came to regional planning, the vast majority of people believed that the regional scale of planning was not taking decisions on local issues away from people. The regional scale of planning satisfied a requirement for strategic planning which could not be delivered at the local authority level. However a small minority of people were not happy with the introduction of the regional scale of planning, which they believed had taken power over local issues away from the local authorities.

Two statements in the Q methodology study referred to the co-ordination of different strategies and policy areas (10, 30). Statement 10 suggested that individual policy areas tended to work in policy ‘silos’, concentrating on the achievement of their own objectives, whilst statement 30 implied that integration of decision-making at the regional level was improving. As a group, the Troubled Regionalists agreed that the so-called silo mentality persisted (+3) and were less certain about improved regional co-ordination (+1). The Community Planners took the opposite point of view, believing that regional co-ordination had improved (+3), but were ambivalent about people concentrating on their own objectives (+1). The Community Planners narrative therefore suggests that decision-making has become more integrated at the regional scale, whilst the Troubled Regionalist narrative implies that policy areas still tend to give a high priority to the achievement of their own objectives. In the follow-up discussion, two participants who had loaded significantly on the Troubled Regionalists narrative, confirmed that they believed that people still tended to promote their own agenda and objectives, for example: ‘people will promote their own agenda which is natural’ (Personal comment: Sub-regional interviewee). A third Troubled Regionalist suggested that ‘the reality is that many decisions are made in isolation, without consideration for other agendas and strategies, although synergy might happen occasionally’ (Personal comment: Whitehall civil servant). Participants who loaded significantly on the Community Planners narrative, affirmed in the follow-up discussions that they thought that decision-making was becoming more integrated, for example: ‘individual policy areas do focus on their own agendas, but the decisions are taken in an integrated fashion as people realise there are linkages between policies’ (Personal comment: East of England regional stakeholder). With the integration of different strategies and policy areas being a fundamental theme of spatial planning, the remainder of this chapter will discuss the different ways in which the Regional Assemblies have sought to integrate the views of local authorities and other policy areas into the RSS, and how the sub-regional initiatives have been addressed in the RSSs.

Local Development Documents

The Regional Spatial Strategies act as a bridge between the local scale of planning and national policies and strategies. At the local level, the RSS forms part of the

statutory development plan, guiding decision-making on individual applications for planning permission alongside the documents contained in the Local Development Framework. The RSSs provides the spatial framework for the preparation of LDDs which must be in general conformity with the RSSs. In turn, the local authorities provide the RSSs with a local perspective on issues and advice on what does and does not work at the local level, so that ideally the relationship between the two scales should be one of mutual informing and shaping. However whilst strategically steering what happens at the local level, the RSSs cannot be too specific or detailed as each locality is different. Recognising the strategic importance of the RSSs in relation to the local scale, one regional stakeholder explained that it was vital to ensure that their interests were addressed at the regional scale:

I've been saying to people 'Look, you really do need to help us here, because if there's anything happening in your local area that's got regional significance, if we don't get it sorted in the Regional Spatial Strategy, you've got problems when it comes to the local stuff and because it's now a statutory framework that everything else has to accord with further down in the planning system' (Interview: Yorkshire and Humber regional stakeholder).

This view was reinforced by several other interviewees including a local authority member who admitted that engagement at the regional scale was necessary to safeguard against things that her local authority did not want.

In acting as the link between the local and the national scales, the RSS has to take account of a large number of relevant national strategies, guidance and programmes which include for example air quality, climate change, culture, economic development, health, housing, retail and leisure, rural development and the countryside, transport and waste, and which will in turn have to be addressed at the local scale (ODPM 2004f). During the strategy development process the regional Government Offices play an active role in ensuring that the RSSs suitably reflect national policies and expectations and identifying possible conflicts (Tewdwr-Jones 2002).

The local authorities' membership of the technical working groups, task/topic groups and the steering groups of the Regional Assemblies were the main ways in which

authorities in the two regions could shape the emerging RSSs. The importance placed on the relationship between local authorities and the Regional Assemblies was discussed in earlier chapters. Whilst in Yorkshire and Humber, every authority was entitled to a place on the technical groups and planning steering groups, this was not the case in the East of England region where there were considerably more authorities. Even in Yorkshire and Humber where the authorities had full and direct representation, the relationship was not always an easy one with authorities not trusting the Assembly not to impose housing figures on them; the Assembly, in turn, were trying to achieve a consensus agreement on the numbers to avoid possible battles with the authorities.

Several interviewees noted that the removal of the structure plan tier under the planning reforms meant that there was now quite a large gap between the local and regional planning scales. One of the impacts of the void left by the removal of the structure plans relates to the resourcing of planning teams at all spatial scales. It was suggested that the regional planning teams would need to build their technical skills as they would have to cover some of the ground previously covered in structure plans. Similarly it was thought that district council planning teams would also be inadequately resourced to deal with the strategic issues that they were now expected to address. Although some role had been retained for county planning teams in terms of sub-regional plans and consultation on strategic plans, two interviewees observed that it had to be expected that planners would start to leave county planning teams after the reforms as it would be difficult for chief executives to justify the expense of maintaining planning teams at the same level as in the past.

Another concern arising from the removal of the structure plans related to the amount of detail that RSSs would now be required to include in order to close the gap between the local and regional scales. The RSSs are expected to be concise and confine themselves to regionally specific issues, but at the same time provide sufficient detail for Local Development Documents and other local and sub-regional strategies (ODPM 2004f). The difficulty that this causes is heightened by the fact that some government initiatives that seek to address social issues are directed at the local or community scale (e.g. ODPM 2002c; ODPM and Home Office 2004). This tension of needing to be strategic and yet at the same time provide sufficient detail for the sub-regional and local strategies was difficult to resolve and was evident in

the lengthy draft RSSs that were eventually developed. Prior to the Examinations-in-Public, the Government Offices in both regions were critical of the draft RSSs for being too long (GO East 2005; GOYH 2006); for example, the East of England's draft RSS, excluding the appendices, was three times longer than the original 75 pages estimated in the RSS specification nearly three years earlier (EELGC 2002a; EERA 2004d).

Regional strategies

One of the key requirements of the RSSs is that they are shaped by and shape other regional strategies, resulting in a two-way process of influence:

It is essential that the RSS both shapes, and is shaped by, other regional strategies. If the RSS and other strategies are not aligned in their key objectives and vision, and support one another, the region's ability to deliver will be compromised. The RSS provides the long-term spatial planning framework for these other strategies (ODPM 2004f, p.9).

The intention therefore is that the RSS will form the long-term spatial planning framework for a whole host of regional strategies. In accordance with Section 39 of the Act, which puts sustainable development as the purpose of the RSS, both of the RSSs were guided by their Regional Sustainable Development Framework (RSDF), which set out their region's vision for achieving sustainable development. In Yorkshire and Humber, the integrated regional strategy (IRS) for the region, *Advancing Together*, was the starting point for developing the vision and objectives for the RSS (YHA 2004a). As noted earlier, the integrated regional strategy for the East of England region, *Sustainable Futures*, was in the process of being developed at the same time as the new RSS was being drafted. One member of the regional planning team in that region explained that in an ideal world the *Sustainable Futures* strategy would have been in place first, providing the overarching framework for the other regional strategies.

Government guidance requires that the RSS contains the region's transport and waste strategies (ODPM 2004f). In order that the RSS is an integrated planning and

transport spatial strategy, Regional Transport Strategies are an integral part of the RSS (ODPM 2004f). In Yorkshire and Humber a specialist Regional Transport Forum was established with more than 50 members, including all 22 local authorities, to advise RPIC on the transport element of the RSS (YHA 2004a), whilst in the East of England one of the task groups was given the responsibility of developing the transport strategy (EERA 2004d). ODPM guidance also requires that the region's strategy for waste management is included in the RSS (ODPM 2005c). In the Yorkshire and Humber region, a pre-existing technical working group, the Regional Technical Advisory Body on Waste, developed the technical work on waste to support the RSS (YHA 2004a). In the East of England a topic group for waste was tasked similarly to focus on the waste issues to be addressed in the RSS (EERA 2004d).

The identification of the provision and location for new housing is another important element of the RSS. Regional Housing Strategies (RHSs), prepared by Regional Housing Boards (RHBs), are closely aligned to the RSSs and Regional Economic Strategies (RESs). In order to improve the integration of the RSSs and RHSs, Kate Barker's report *Delivering Stability: Securing our Future Housing Needs* recommended that the Regional Planning Bodies merged with the RHBs to create a single entity responsible for managing regional housing markets (Barker 2004). Accepting the case for the merger the ODPM undertook a consultation exercise on the proposals at the end of 2004 (ODPM 2004h), although at the time of writing this thesis no decision had been announced.

Like the RSSs, the Regional Economic Strategies have statutory status, and have a complementary, non-hierarchical relationship with the RSSs (ODPM 2005d). The RSSs should complement and assist the implementation of the RESs, which are prepared by the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs). In both study regions, representatives of the RDAs sat on the Regional Assemblies' planning steering groups and technical officer groups. In the East of England, the East of England Development Agency chaired the economic development task group which drafted the economy chapter of the draft RSS, and also had representatives on other task groups such as housing. The RDA representatives interviewed in this study emphasised the importance of the planning system to their work, and their belief that through their close working relationships with the Assembly that the RESs and RSSs

were becoming better aligned. Since the interviews took place, the ODPM has issued advice to RDAs and RPBs on how to strengthen the economic evidence base and the ways in which this is applied to regional strategies (ODPM 2005d).

Whilst alignment between the RSSs and the aforementioned regional strategies is regarded as critical (ODPM 2004f), there are other regional strategies that are also relevant (see Table 7.1). As mentioned earlier, the integrated regional strategies for the two regions, *Advancing Together* and *Sustainable Futures*, provide a high-level policy framework for each region, presenting a common vision and key objectives and themes which should inform other regional and local strategies. In Yorkshire and Humber this is illustrated by the Regional Development Agency and Regional Housing Board using *Advancing Together* as the framework for preparing the RES and RHS, just as the Assembly had used the IRS as the starting point for the RSS. Alignment of the RSS, RES and RHS in the region was further facilitated by their all being reviewed in 2005, enabling a shared evidence base to be created. As noted above, the IRS for the East of England could not be a major influence on the revised RSS as it was not finalised until shortly before the RSS was submitted to the Secretary of State. However the development of the RSS in the East of England had been guided by the Regional Sustainable Development Framework which provided a high-level statement for achieving sustainable development in the region, and was at the heart of the region's IRS as that was being developed.

To improve the integration of the objectives within RSSs, the government requires that a sustainability appraisal (SA) should be an integral part of the RSS development process (ODPM 2005e). During the RSS revision process the RPBs have to take into account the relationship between the emerging RSS and other plans and programmes, and thus the SA encourages alignment between the RSSs and other regional strategies. In both regions, the SA processes analysed the relationships between the revised RSS and relevant plans, programmes and strategies, including other regional strategies (Levett-Therivel and EDAW 2005; Levett-Therivel and Land Use Consultants 2004b).

In the East of England region, close alignment between strategies was also sought through the engagement of different regional stakeholders in the process of developing the RSS, bringing with them their knowledge of other regional strategies.

Examples include the aforementioned chairing of the economic development task group by an RDA representative, and the inclusion on the environment task group of stakeholders who had been involved with the drafting of the Regional Environmental Strategy. The EERA Health and Social Inclusion Panel, which published the region's Social Strategy in early 2004, were involved early on in the process of developing the RSS and informed the different task teams of the relevant issues that should be considered by each team. After the task teams had drafted their sections, the Panel then checked these and advised the teams of any changes that were required.

In the Yorkshire and Humber region, a representative of each of the Assembly's commissions is entitled to membership of RPIC, and at the time of the interviews, with the exception of the Economy Commission, this link was provided by Assembly officers. The officer teams that supported each of the Assembly commissions had also been involved in some way or other in the development of the RSS. At each of the key stages of the development of the RSS in Yorkshire and Humber, the RSS was on the agendas of the Assembly's other commissions, and a regional planning officer would have been available to address these meetings. RPIC, in turn would have had other commissions, for example the Sustainability Commission, present their work to the RPIC meetings. Towards the end of the development period, meetings were held on a monthly basis between the Assembly, RDA, Government Office and Yorkshire Culture as the region's spatial, economic and housing strategies and cultural action plan were all being drafted at the same time. Headline issues were discussed at these meetings to ensure that the strategies were delivering a consistent message and that they all had the same priorities. Another way in which alignment would be facilitated was through the YHA's Technical Advisory Group, with members of this group bringing their knowledge of what was happening in their part of region to the meetings.

Table 7.1: Principal regional strategies which have cross-cutting importance to the RSSs, indicating date of issue

East of England	Yorkshire and Humber
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Sustainable Development Framework (<i>Oct. 2001</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Sustainable Development Framework (<i>Feb. 2004</i>)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Sustainable Futures</i>, Integrated Regional Strategy (<i>Oct. 2005</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Advancing Together</i>, Integrated Regional Strategy (<i>Feb. 2004</i>)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Economic Strategy (<i>Nov. 2004</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Economic Strategy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Framework for Regional Employment and Skills Action (<i>Nov. 2002</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (including the region's Framework for Regional Employment and Skills Action) (<i>March 2003 and under review in 2005-6</i>)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Housing Strategy (<i>May 2005</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Housing Strategy (<i>May 2005</i>)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Environment Strategy (<i>July 2003</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Environmental Enhancement Strategy (<i>Sept. 2003</i>)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Cultural Strategy (<i>Under development at the time of writing</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Cultural Strategy (<i>Nov. 2001</i>)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Health Strategy (<i>Dec. 2005</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Framework for Public Health (<i>Dec. 2004</i>)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Social Strategy (<i>May 2004</i>) 	

Note: The issue date of the draft RSS for the East of England was December 2004 and for Yorkshire and Humber was December 2005.

Various problems to do with timescales were perceived by some interviewees as possible sources of difficulty in the development of the RSSs. Firstly there was the potential for problems to do with the timing of the development of the different regional strategies. This problem had not occurred in relation to the two most

influential strategies, the RESs and RHSs, in either of the study regions as these had been reviewed at the same time as the RSSs were being developed. In terms of the other regional strategies, one interviewee suggested that the timing of development of the spatial and social strategies in the East of England region had meant that alignment between the two strategies had not occurred to an ideal level. Whilst the Health and Social Inclusion Panel had proofed the RSS, they had not challenged the content of the strategy. It was suggested by a regional planning officer that in order for them to have done so, the Panel would have needed more explicit guidance from regional planning officers on the possible linkages between the social and spatial issues, a better understanding of spatial planning, and a wider brief that encouraged them to question rather than simply proof the RSS. With the new planning system in the process of evolving whilst the draft RSS was being developed the regional planners were on a learning curve on the first two of these, and it was anticipated that when it came to the first review of the RSS these matters would be addressed.

There was also the question of the synchronisation between the RSS and sub-regional strategies. This was raised by a number of the interviewees operating at the sub-regional scale. The principal concern was that the RSS sets the strategic spatial framework for the region for the next 15-20 years, and although it would be reviewed before then, the length of time it took to undertake a review meant that the RSS was considered to be fairly inflexible especially when it came to accounting for unexpected changes. This was noted as a particular difficulty when it came to housing-related issues, as housing markets were perceived as being particularly fast-moving and subject to change. In order to address this concern, a 'plan, monitor and manage' approach to housing delivery had been adopted in both regions, through which it was anticipated that the need for housing provision and the ways in which this could be met would be kept under review. The statutory status of the RSSs could benefit the sub-regional strategies, giving them strength and credibility if their objectives were included in the RSSs. However there was concern that a lack of synchronisation time-wise between the sub-regional strategies and the RSSs might undermine the strategies, and again, the lengthy process of reviewing the RSSs could possibly threaten the success of sub-regional strategies.

Another problem referred to in connection with timescales was the tight timetables to complete the revision of the RSSs that the Assemblies were working to at the time of

the interviews. Time pressures appeared to have forced attention on land use and housing numbers as a priority, partly due to the continued focus on agreeing numbers as under the old planning regime, and partly to the political interest in these policy areas, with the result that other issues received far less attention.

Central government's sub-regional initiatives

In addition to aligning with regionally generated strategies, it is also expected that the RSSs will address the implications of the government's Sustainable Communities Plan (SCP) and Northern Way Growth Strategy (NWGS) which cut across regional and local authority boundaries. The Sustainable Communities Plan, announced in 2003, was intended to put people first and 'to tackle the challenges of a rapidly changing population, the needs of the economy, serious housing shortages in London and the South East and the impact of housing abandonment in places in the North and Midlands' (Prescott 2003, p.3). Produced under the banner *Making it happen*, the Sustainable Communities Plan underlined the imperative of a so-called 'step change' in approach, necessitating an increase in resources 'to tackle low demand and abandonment, to address the shortage of affordable housing, and to promote more private house building' (ODPM 2003c, p.7) along with reforms to the planning system, of which the strengthened regional system was part. The tensions arising from the introduction of the SCP on the RSS revision process in the East of England were described in Chapter 4.

The SCP is expected to address the dual issues of housing shortages and affordable housing in the South East of England and low demand and abandonment of housing in parts of the North and Midlands. The main instrument intended to tackle the first issue was the acceleration of growth in the supply of housing in four 'growth areas' in the South East. Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder (HMRP) areas established in nine areas of the North and Midlands were expected to address the second issue. It was anticipated that the RPBs and local authorities would translate the government's proposals for the growth and low demand areas into the revised statutory RSSs, thus ensuring that the SCP's objectives were binding.

Although restructuring the housing market was the main focus of the SCP, social, environmental and economic issues were also expected to be addressed as part of the approach. It was anticipated that the large scale of the proposed changes to the housing markets would have implications for other policy areas relating to infrastructure, such as roads and public transport, schools and hospitals for example, as well as changing the demand for services, such as utilities, waste disposal and healthcare. In the Growth Areas, demand for services and infrastructure were expected to rise, but the patterns of change would be more difficult to determine in the Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder areas. For example, a study of public services found that people living in deprived areas were significantly more likely to use a range of health and welfare services, such as GPs, hospitals, social services and home helps, than people living in other areas (Duffy 2001). Therefore in areas suffering from low demand for housing where population numbers are falling, reducing the levels of services and facilities may not be desirable as this may overlook the specific needs and problems of the communities in these areas.

As noted earlier, one of the reasons for including the SCP Growth Areas and HMRPs in this research arose from the interest of the CASE studentship sponsor, the ODPM, in learning more about how the SCP was linked to the regional planning process, and indeed this had affected the choice of study regions to some extent. In addition the examination of the emerging relationship between the regions and the sub-regional strategies of the SCP was considered to be a worthwhile exercise as the 'sub-region' in planning terms is being redefined by central government (Bianconi *et al.* 2006). At the same time as the old system of county structure plans was abolished, the RPBs were being encouraged to address sub-regional issues where appropriate in their new regional strategies (ODPM 2004f). These changes to the sub-regional scale have effectively re-worked the physical boundaries of planning at this tier, as the 'new' sub-regions are no longer confined to the historic administrative boundaries of the counties (ODPM 2004f). Whilst under the old system there was a hierarchy between counties and the regions, the reforms leave no clear link between local and strategic planning and there is concern that the regional scale will be unable to deliver an effective sub-regional strategy from the top-down (Bianconi *et al.* 2006).

Two aspects of the SCP were examined as the links between them and the regional planning strategies were sought:

- Growth Area strategies, and as an example the London-Stansted-Cambridge-Peterborough corridor (LSCP); and
- Housing Market Renewal Pathfinders (HMRPs), and as an example the Transform South Yorkshire pathfinder.

The Northern Way Growth Strategy will also be considered in this section.

Announced after the commencement of this research, it was not originally intended to include the NWGS in this study. However in the interviews with participants from Yorkshire and Humber, it was clear that only a few people had any understanding of the HMRPs, and yet as the NWGS had been recently launched, many of them had opinions on this strategy. As the NWGS will be tested through the RSSs of the three northern regions and its economic objectives will impact on the RSSs, it was decided to include the strategy in this research, although given it was at an early stage of development it would not be covered to the same extent as the SCP strategies.

Growth Areas: London-Stansted-Cambridge-Peterborough corridor

As part of the SCP, the government identified four Growth Areas in the South East of England. The imperative behind the Growth Areas, according to the ODPM, was that the economic success of London and South East had put pressure on housing and services that could not be addressed under the prevailing market conditions, and if these problems were not dealt with then they would impede the international competitiveness of the region and the country as a whole (ODPM 2003c). The social consequences of not responding ‘to these pressure means that communities break up and children cannot live near their parents’ (ODPM 2003d, p.4). Increasing the supply of housing had become a national priority. Alongside the delivery of additional housing, the government wanted to create communities, which included ‘the delivery of schools and healthcare provision, for public transport and good quality public spaces, for quality and high design principles. We want employment growth to accompany housing growth’ (ODPM 2003d, p.5). According to the SCP, the four Growth Areas had the potential to provide an additional 200,000 new homes to those allowed for in existing plans, and during the first three years would be supported by more than £600m in directly targeted government funding, a further £2.2bn in transport investment and an anticipated £3bn leveraged funding from private and public sector partners (ODPM 2003d).

Parts of three of the four Growth Areas fell within the East of England region, with one of these being the London-Stansted-Cambridge-Peterborough corridor (LSCP). The corridor had experienced substantial economic growth, and aside from Harlow and Peterborough where there was a need for regeneration, the main issue was believed to be how to accommodate future growth rather than whether growth would continue (ODPM 2003c). The LSCP Growth Area was at an earlier stage in its planning than the other Growth Areas, but at the time of the interviews, in one part of the corridor, the Cambridge sub-region, a sub-regional partnership had already been established, and it is this partnership that is examined in detail.

The problems faced by the Cambridge sub-region related to past economic success and the prospect of future economic success which had resulted in a 'growth crisis' in the sub-region (Healey 2006; While *et al.* 2004). The pressure on housing and infrastructure in the sub-region arising from economic growth had seen house prices rise, local need for affordable and key worker housing outstrip supply, employers facing recruitment difficulties and strategic infrastructure stretched. The 2003 Structure Plan planned for 46,500 new homes in the sub-region, 50,000 new jobs and more than £2.2bn of infrastructure and improvements (PCC and CCC 2003). Local authorities in Cambridgeshire had set up a public/private partnership, Cambridgeshire Horizons, to implement the development of new communities and infrastructure as agreed in their Structure Plan. The partnership was established 'in recognition of the fact that no agency or authority acting on its own can expect to achieve the outcomes identified in the Structure Plan' (Cambridgeshire Horizons undated, p.1). The role of Cambridgeshire Horizons is thus to provide 'the high-level help to co-ordinate the delivery of the major development sites, to link in with central government policies, and to co-ordinate all the major infrastructure providers and key agencies such as the Housing Corporation and Highways Agency' (Interview: Sub-regional interviewee, original quote amended).

A study by Roger Tym & Partners in 2001 put together an infrastructure plan for the sub-region, giving estimates of the costs of providing the infrastructure such as utilities, transport, health and education that would be required to support the strategy (Roger Tym & Partners 2001). Powerless on its own, Cambridgeshire Horizons relies on private and public sector partners to deliver the strategy. The

partnership has to work closely with local authorities as it will be the councils which will ultimately be taking the decisions. Education and healthcare providers are closely involved, not only as the providers of services and infrastructure, but as employers they have a vested interest as they suffer from recruitment problems arising from the inaffordability of housing in the sub-region. One interviewee observed that there was not the same amount of leverage with the transport and utility sectors, which did not have a similar vested interest in the provision of more affordable housing. The partnership also has to work closely with the private sector, especially developers or landowners, to ensure that the infrastructure aspects were built into any planning proposal. In the absence of a public sector interest such as English Partnerships, then the only mechanism for ensuring that the private sector delivered public benefits would have to be attached to the granting of planning permission through 'planning gain' via Section 106 agreements. Where a gap exists between what is required and what the private sector is prepared to fund, then it is up to Cambridgeshire Horizons to talk to the government to identify alternative sources of funding, which might be from the ODPM's Growth Area Fund or the Highways Agency for example.

In terms of connections between the partnership and the RSS, Cambridgeshire Horizons was not represented on the RSS planning steering group, nor did it have a representative on the Regional Housing Board. Each of the local or district councils in the sub-region was represented on the Board of the partnership by either the leader or deputy leader of the council, one of whom at the time of the interviews was the Chair of the Assembly's Regional Planning Panel. It is assumed therefore that if there had been any major issues in relation to the RSS for the partnership, that these would have been addressed via the relevant local authorities' representation on the Regional Planning Panel. In fact, a member of the senior management team at the partnership interviewed believed it was possibly inappropriate for the partnership to comment directly on the draft RSS as it was not a policy-making organisation.

With the Structure Plan only recently agreed, interviewees working closely with Cambridgeshire Horizons revealed no evidence that tensions existed between the partnership and the evolving RSS. This might in some part have been due to the fact that the Structure Plan, approved by local authority representatives and subject to an independent EiP, did not pose a challenge to the region's housing figures or the

aspirations of the SCP. Alongside this, district-level housing targets had been calculated as part of the process of developing the Structure Plan and therefore ahead of the Act's requirements to provide district-level figures. As discussed in Chapter 4, the RPB had originally been working under the premise that it would not need to produce district-level figures, but had had to amend its approach when the ODPM insisted that district-level housing figures were included in the RSS. This requirement placed the timetable for producing the RSS under greater stress, and increased the workload of authorities which had not already prepared these figures. With district-level figures agreed in the Structure Plan, local councils in the Cambridge sub-region had therefore not experienced these pressures.

Housing Market Renewal Pathfinders: Transform South Yorkshire

Alongside the Growth Areas of the SCP sat strategies to tackle low demand and abandonment in nine parts of the North and the Midlands, covering about half a million homes (ODPM 2003c). The nine Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder (HMRP) areas covered some of the most deprived areas of the country, cutting across local authority boundaries. In each of the areas, a partnership of local authorities and other stakeholders was expected to develop a tailor-made strategic plan for the whole housing market, tapping into a £500m Market Renewal Fund for investment over a three year period. These plans would entail the replacement of obsolete housing with more sustainable modern housing through demolition, refurbishment or new building. As with the Growth Areas, by addressing imbalances in the housing market the government intended to resolve economic problems, but whereas in the LSCP these were due to economic expansion, the problems in the pathfinder areas were related to economic decline and urban deprivation. According to the ODPM, the pathfinder programme 'is at the heart of efforts to make cities more competitive, because we cannot reverse decline and attract skilled workers back to cities unless they offer the quality and choice of housing that people are looking for' (ODPM 2006a).

Transform South Yorkshire is one of two pathfinder programmes in the Yorkshire and Humber region, and covers parts of Sheffield, Barnsley, Rotherham and Doncaster. These four local authorities together form the South Yorkshire sub-region. Transform is the largest of the nine pathfinders, covering about 140,000

households with about a quarter of all homes in South Yorkshire falling into the pathfinder area (Audit Commission 2006). Work on the housing supply problems in South Yorkshire had commenced some time before the announcement of the SCP, with a number of regional studies into the housing market being commissioned by the National Housing Federation in partnership with the local authorities (CURS 2003). In its prospectus, Transform suggested that growth in the sub-region was inhibited by the quality of the housing stock, with a surplus of social housing and an absence of choice failing to attract incomers and to retain skilled and younger people (TSY 2003). This lack of popularity is evidenced by the population in the pathfinder area falling by 4.4 per cent between 1991 and 2001 compared to growth of 2.4 per cent in the rest of South Yorkshire (CURS 2003).

The strategy adopted by Transform for its first two years (2004-2006) was to support the modernisation of existing stock, create new housing and clear some of the outdated social housing in order to provide more choice and to reduce the pressure on nearby overheated housing markets (TSY 2003a). The government awarded £71m to Transform to fund its strategy for this first two years (ODPM 2004i). This funding was only to be used for housing interventions, so in order to address the wider factors that influence the housing market, e.g. the quality of the physical environment, community safety, education and transport, Transform had to align and influence the policies and priorities of a wide range of organisations with responsibility for these policy areas (TSY 2003b). A member of the senior management team at Transform noted that despite there being a large amount of goodwill and commitment from the various parties, difficulties were experienced due to the different timescales and funding constraints that these various organisations were working under. Partners included, amongst others, Yorkshire Forward, English Partnerships, the Local Strategic Partnerships, and the House Builders Federation. As the four local authorities would be delivering the pathfinder strategy, the importance of linking the pathfinder's strategy to the plans of the local authorities was stressed. For this to successfully happen, the support of those who provide the frameworks within which they are operating, i.e. Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber (GOYH), the Regional Assembly, the ODPM and to a lesser extent the EU, was also required. As one member of the Transform team explained: 'we need to build up the partnerships which provide that support framework, in order that

we could influence those organisations which bring the investment; they're not necessarily the same' (Interview: Sub-regional interviewee).

Influencing the draft RSS was regarded as vital to the success of the Transform pathfinder. The interviewees from the pathfinder referred to the difficulties in negotiating separately with the four local authorities, with one giving as an explanation that as it was only until recently that the local authorities had been in fierce competition with one another for regeneration funding, this was a legacy that was difficult to put behind them. The other interviewee from Transform affirmed the importance of the RSS in relation to their negotiations with the local authorities: 'We need to have the statutory weight from the region to make it clear that there is an issue, and how it's going to be addressed' (Interview: Sub-regional interviewee). To remove the risk of local authorities opting out of the strategy, he added that the RSS 'gives us hooks, and that means that we can have consistent hooks and frameworks for all four local authorities to work to'. With no statutory basis at the sub-regional scale for the strategy, and with the local authorities only mandated to operate within their individual authority area, there was a recognised need to ensure that the statutory RSS reinforced what Transform was seeking to achieve at the sub-regional scale and not simply 'signpost' the pathfinder strategy. It was also important to ensure that housing targets for other parts of the region did not undermine what the pathfinder was trying to achieve, for example, by ensuring that the proposed amount of new housing could be supported without resulting in over supply and therefore perpetuating the problems of low demand.

A number of mechanisms were in place to try to achieve this influence over the RSS. For their part, the ODPM sought to ensure that the Regional Assemblies were aware of the causes of low demand and that the Assemblies worked with the pathfinders to include some of the emerging work that had RSS implications. In Yorkshire and Humber, the Assembly was persuaded to accept the need to treat the region's two pathfinder areas as spatial planning units within the RSS so that they had their own designation and housing targets (YHA 2005e). An interviewee from GOYH disclosed that the Government Office had also tried to ensure that the Regional Housing Strategy (RHS) was supportive of the pathfinder given the national importance of the HMRP strategy. The RHS for 2005-21, which was being drafted during the interview phase of this research, placed the two pathfinders in the region

as the top priority for rebalancing their local housing markets (GOYH 2005). A further source of influence was via the four South Yorkshire local authorities, which provided Board members for the Transform pathfinder and were members of the Regional Assembly, and therefore providing them with the opportunity to input into the RSS on behalf of the pathfinder. Finally Transform employed a planning specialist on their team whose role it was to engage with the Regional Assembly and Government Office and to facilitate discussions between the four local authorities.

Northern Way Growth Strategy

A year after the Sustainable Communities Plan was launched, the ODPM announced the launch of the Northern Way Growth Strategy (NWGS), once again using the headline of *Making it happen*. With reducing the relative gap between the English regions one of the government's main targets (House of Commons 2003), a steering group led by the three northern RDAs put together an economic-based strategy that was designed to address the problems of the under-performing northern regions. Fundamental to the success of the strategy was the performance of eight identified city regions, home to 90 per cent of the population of the three regions and the base for more than 90 per cent of its economic activity (Northern Way 2005b). The key objectives of the strategy were to bring more people into employment, build a more entrepreneurial economy, improve skills and transport, and create more sustainable communities (Northern Way Steering Group 2004).

The NWGS set out the principles which the steering group considered should be featured in the RSSs of the three regions (Northern Way Steering Group 2004). The government expected that the spatial implications of Northern Way would be further developed, tested and delivered through the statutory RSS process (Lords Hansard 2005). In addition to incorporating the principles of the Northern Way into their RSSs, the Regional Assemblies were also expected to closely align the RSSs, RESs and the NWGS's City Region Development Programmes, which would be the main focus of the Northern Way's investment programme (Northern Way Steering Group 2005).

Nearly all of the interviews in the Yorkshire and Humber region took place at the end of 2004, only a few weeks after the launch of the NWGS. Interviewees were asked

for their initial reaction to the strategy and how they believed it would align with the emerging RSS. The launch of the strategy was greeted with a mix of approval, scepticism and mistrust by the interviewees. The majority of interviewees expressed concern that the NWGS had been produced with seemingly little consultation; as one stakeholder explained: 'it just suddenly came from nowhere and there it was and no one really knew where it had come from or why they hadn't been involved in any development process' (Interview: Yorkshire and Humber regional stakeholder). A few people felt that at that time the strategy was still quite vague, and that the links between it and the RSS were rather unclear. A small number of people wondered which of the NWGS and the RSS was now more important, and feared that the Northern Way would dictate the content and direction of the RSS, especially in relation to the city region elements of the strategy. In respect of the latter point, concern was expressed elsewhere that the NWGS and its City Region Development Programmes may result in an alternative spatial framework for the three northern regions being developed, and that the NWGS emphasised the main conurbations and therefore may not benefit rural areas (RTPI 2005; RTPI North West Region 2006).

The Sustainable Communities Plan initiatives and the Northern Way Growth Strategy announced during the drafting of the new RSSs created additional levels of complexity to the processes of developing the spatial strategies. Within the East of England, in the example of Cambridgeshire Horizons there did not appear to be any noticeable tension between the RSS and the initiative in itself. However as described earlier in Chapter 4, the requirements of the SCP that the region should approve an additional 18,000 new homes to that agreed by the Assembly in the banked strategy was a considerable source of tension between the region and central government. In the Yorkshire and Humber, Transform South Yorkshire sought in a number of ways to directly influence the emerging RSS as the initiative believed that it was critical to the success of the pathfinder that the RSS supported its objectives. In these two examples the influence of the central government policy on the objectives of the RSSs can be observed although this influence is directed via the sub-regional scale. Although the Northern Way was at an early stage of development, this too seemed to have added an element of tension to the process of drafting the RSS in Yorkshire and Humber and to have raised a degree of concern amongst regional stakeholders. The NWGS would be tested via the three northern RSSs, which were expected to be aligned with the NWGS, with the result that once again, the statutory status of the

RSSs was being exploited by central government to help it meet its objectives at the sub-regional scale.

Conclusions

With Regional Spatial Strategies expected to provide the strategic spatial frameworks for the English regions, they are situated in the middle of a complex web of strategies, guidelines, plans and initiatives which work across different spatial scales. At every angle, institutional actors and stakeholders are seeking to influence the RSSs to ensure that their objectives are addressed within the strategy. The statutory status of the RSSs further serves to make the inclusion of other's strategic objectives in the emerging spatial strategy an imperative. The adoption of the spatial planning approach that seeks to 'join-up' strategies and deliver sustainable development has created a rich and rather tangled web or mosaic of scalar relationships as the RSSs have evolved (Brenner 2001).

In this chapter the progress of the two study regions as they developed a regional planning strategy via a spatial planning approach has been discussed. The Q methodology study indicated that there were mixed views amongst participants on whether a silo mentality persisted amongst the different policy areas and if regional co-ordination had improved. These results are similar to those in a 2004 study into RSSs, which found that many organisations continue to have a sectoral approach to policy, although in some areas this was changing via integration and cooperation (Regional Futures 2004). In the main, however, it would seem that the emphasis on housing, employment and transport policies consumed much of the debate and resources during strategy development. Whilst spatial planning endeavours to integrate strategies and policies across the piece, perhaps understandably the emphasis appeared to have been on integration and co-ordination with the strategies where there was a requirement to do so rather than with other policy areas where the links with land use are slightly more tenuous. Pressures to do with time and resources were often cited as reasons for this, as well as perhaps that as housing, the economy and transport had strong existing links with the planning framework, concentrating efforts on these was very much business as usual for the parties concerned.

The removal of the county structure plans resulted in a new working relationship between the Regional Assemblies and the lower tier authorities which had in the past relied on the structure plans to explain the land use relationship between the regions and the districts. The local authorities in both study regions played an active role in the governance processes set up to develop the RSSs, although in the East of England this was not entirely straightforward due to the relatively large number of local authorities in the region. As the new working relationships became embedded, issues arose to do with resources and the balance between strategy and detail.

Another factor to take account of is the amount of influence that central government continues to hold over the framing of issues at the regional scale. According to the Q methodology study, most people were satisfied that the regions were less accountable to central government than to the people in the regions, although in Yorkshire and Humber there was less certainty on this point. Yet despite participants' apparent satisfaction that a top-down approach to regional planning was not in place, there is evidence that suggests the national scale continues to hold considerable influence over sub-national institutions and their functions (Jonas and Ward 2002; Jones 2001). With the RSSs prepared by the Regional Assemblies, but issued by the ODPM, and the RESs drawn up by the RDAs, but subject to Whitehall approval, it seems that strong ties exist between the regional strategies and central government in spite of the discourse that the strategies are regionally specific and regionally produced. Additional influence is also exercised by the Government Offices in the regions, who work closely with the Regional Assemblies and RDAs as they revise the strategies, ensuring that national policy imperatives are met. The links between the performance of the regional economy and the accommodation of regional spatial planning strategies to enable economic growth is a recurring and prominent theme in central government guidance (ODPM 2004f, 2005d). It is therefore hardly surprising that the RSSs are seen to address those objectives which offer the potential to influence economic growth, rather than those where the connections are weaker, such as health and crime.

Further examples of the influence of central government over the policy issues that need to be framed by the RSSs are the Sustainable Communities Plan and the Northern Way Growth Strategy. In both approaches, the accent was on addressing

problems to do with economic growth or the lack of it, and on how direct intervention in the supply of housing could resolve some of these problems. The SCP and NWGS emphasise the way in which the state is able to intervene in sub-national sites, producing new institutions of economic governance that represent what is described as a 'filling in' of the sub-national scale (Goodwin *et al.* 2002, 2005).

The announcement of both of these initiatives occurred during the preparation of the draft RSSs in the two study regions. Within the course of this research, it is too early to examine the impact of the Northern Way, but there can be little doubt that as the RSSs of the three northern regions will be integral to the delivery of the Northern Way, its emphasis on enabling economic growth in the three northern regions will make an impression on the Yorkshire and Humber RSS. The two examples of the SCP initiatives, Cambridgeshire Horizons and Transform South Yorkshire, which are more established than the NWGS, throw some interesting light on the importance of the RSSs to sub-regional strategies. In the case of Cambridgeshire Horizons, the relationships between the stakeholders of the partnership and between the partnership and the RSS appeared to be relatively untroubled. In this example the partnership was working within the boundaries of one local planning authority and to an agreed Structure Plan, although the process of agreeing the Structure Plan had not been entirely trouble free (While *et al.* 2004), and so there were reduced causes of tension between the various parties. For Transform South Yorkshire, the situation was different. Although there was plenty of goodwill to make the pathfinder work, the pathfinder area crossed the boundaries of four local authorities, bringing a degree of tension to negotiations. In this example, the absence of a sub-regional planning strategy meant that the RSS, in binding the different local authorities to the pathfinder strategy, was regarded as an essential part of the governance process. Research by Regional Futures (2004) also suggests that the government's intervention via the sustainable communities agenda is creating tensions between regional and national policy.

In short, central government intends that the RSS should be the spatial expression of a region's vision for its future, reflecting and co-ordinating other important regional, sub-regional and local strategies. Furthermore the RPBs have to be mindful of central government's intentions for widening the scope of planning strategies, central

policy prescription and timetabling, and pay attention to the government's interventions at the sub-regional scale which they are expected to reflect in the RSSs. As a result the RSSs are being shaped by a complex web of multi-scalar processes which are in addition to the social processes of deliberation and participation described in Chapter 6. With its capacity to act independently somewhat constrained by these complex pressures, the RSSs appeared to be concentrating on traditional land use matters, and whether this impeded their ability to address social considerations will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 8. ADDRESSING SOCIAL CONSIDERATIONS IN REGIONAL SPATIAL PLANNING

Introduction

Alongside its modernisation agenda, a key theme of the New Labour government has been to develop approaches that seek to tackle complex cross-cutting agendas (Allmendinger 2003a). The spatial planning approach is one of the ways in which the joining-up effort is expected to be delivered (Albrechts *et al.* 2003; Vigar *et al.* 2005). In this chapter, the prospect of greater strategic integration of policy activities offered by spatial planning at the regional scale is discussed with particular reference to social considerations. The first section of this chapter will examine how social issues are conceptualised in planning and the potential offered by spatial planning to address these issues. The ability of the regional scale of planning to deal effectively with social concerns is critiqued. The second section looks at what participants in this study believed should be the objectives of regional planning and their perceptions of how the different aims of sustainable development are being reconciled in the emerging RSSs. In the final section of this chapter, the relative progress towards addressing a range of social issues in the RSSs in the two study regions is examined. As in the two preceding chapters, the results of the Q methodology study will be discussed to structure the main viewpoints where applicable, and then the material gathered during interviews will explore these viewpoints further. Numbers given in parentheses relate to the Q statement numbers as shown in Table 5.1. Again this will enable the identification of key trends and the exploration of similarities between and contradictions within viewpoints.

Structuring the social in regional planning

In order to get a flavour of how people conceptualise the parameters of social issues in contemporary planning, interviewees at the regional and sub-regional scales were asked to identify the main social problems facing their region (see Table 8.1 for a

summary overview). Whilst a number of the problems identified by interviewees were shared by both regions, for example rural issues, a lack of skills and education, and the outward migration of young people, they also identified issues that were more regionally specific. Some of these regionally specific problems were evidenced in Chapter 3.

Table 8.1: Social problems facing the study regions as identified by interviewees

Issues common to both regions	Issues specific to the East of England	Issues specific to Yorkshire and Humber
Poverty and disadvantage	Affordable housing	Quality and mix of housing
Areas of multiple deprivation	Cost of living and housing	Housing market failure
Social inequalities	Key workers	Unemployment
Outward migration of young people	Migrant workers from overseas	Crime and anti-social behaviour
Lack of skills, training and education	Pressures of inward migration	Employment related issues e.g. childcare, accessibility of jobs, low aspirations
Issues to do with rurality and remoteness	Pressures on infrastructure (such as roads and hospitals) due to economic growth	Gap between the richest and poorest communities, often living side-by-side
Regeneration in some parts of the region	Congestion and commuting due to proximity to London	Communities in which there were relatively large number of claimants of incapacity benefit
Health-related issues	Asylum issues	

In the East of England, affordable housing was considered a cause for concern by the majority of interviewees from that region, for example:

the ratio of income to the amount of money you need to buy a house is increasing and that means that will lead to difficulties for the region in terms of both its capacity to grow economically and who's going to provide the essential services if people can't afford to live here... and then that leads onto other issues for the region like, well if you can't live in Cambridge and be a bus driver, you're going to live somewhere miles away and commute
(Interview: East of England interviewee, original quote amended).

Issues to do with rurality and remoteness were also believed to be a problem by about half of the East of England interviewees, with concerns over the accessibility of services and facilities, public transport provision and demographic change being expressed.

Housing-related problems were also considered an issue by about a third of interviewees in Yorkshire and Humber, but in this region the problems were perceived in terms of the quality and mix of the housing supply, for example: 'if we had a better mix of housing, better quality of housing, then, along with more vibrant towns and cities, then Yorkshire would be a more attractive place to live and that would be better for the economy' (Interview: RDA officer). Two interviewees from Yorkshire and Humber did express concern over housing affordability which they claimed to be a problem in some parts of the region, particularly York and North Yorkshire. One of these interviewees also pointed to Leeds, where he suggested there were parts of the city in which affordability was a problem, and yet simultaneously other parts of the city were suffering from urban deprivation. Two other interviewees made a similar observation, suggesting that Leeds had a 'twin-track' economy, and that it was possible to have abject poverty and considerable wealth living almost side by side in the city. Many of the region-specific issues suggested by interviewees can be viewed in the most generalized of terms as resulting from the pressures of economic growth in the East of England and from the economic restructuring in the Yorkshire and Humber region.

It was suggested by a handful of interviewees in both study regions that the diversity of their region meant that the same problems did not exist throughout the region. The local variability of social problems was held by such people to mean that a generalised solution for the whole region would not be practical, so instead solutions should be sought which respect the localised nature of specific problems. The appropriateness of the region as a scale to address social issues effectively will be returned to later in this chapter.

Whilst a small group of people had their doubts about whether the RSS could meaningfully influence the social problems faced by their region, the majority of interviewees were more positive about the contribution that RSSs could make. There were several ways in which it was believed that RSSs could help to address each region's social problems. Firstly it was suggested that the RSSs could help by making some of the bigger strategic decisions for the region, like integrating transport nodes and deciding on the future employment and housing growth points, which affect the ways in which people live their lives. In making these strategic decisions via a lengthy and rigorous process, the RSSs would have a role in making the difficult high-level trade-offs between the policy areas, such as specifying the desirable amount of affordable housing. It was hoped that the processes of consultation and partnership working would ensure that the RSSs do not set up unanticipated problems for other agencies. Another suggested advantage of regional spatial planning was that it could overcome the potential difficulties of planning at too small a scale or in isolation, which might make it more likely for problems to arise or reduce the possibility of benefiting from economies of scale. For example the location of the site for a new hospital would need to be worked through with neighbouring regions to avoid duplication and to ensure adequate coverage of services and facilities. Alongside making these strategic decisions, the RSSs could also have a role to play in terms of mainstreaming policies, such as diversity, and could advocate policies that address particular social problems, for example, by having more inclusive policies for transport or meeting the demand for affordable housing.

As in itself the RSS does not deliver anything, two interviewees considered that it was important that the RPBs achieved buy-in from delivery agents to ensure that its decisions were addressed. Several interviewees observed that the RSSs acted as the

starting point, giving direction to delivery agents, such as local authorities or developers, and passing the responsibility to them to address problems through their policies, strategies or investment plans. Of particular importance is the relationship between the RSSs and the sub-regional and local scales, with the statutory status of the RSSs meaning that these other scales have to take account of the policies set out in the RSS. In addition on some strategic issues, such as patterns of demographic change, for example the trend for young people to leave rural areas, the RSSs can draw attention to regional trends that might be less obvious at the local level, and then usefully give the policy steer to local authorities. Along the same theme of influencing agents at other spatial scales to address social issues, a few people noted that the RSSs should also work alongside other regional strategies to ensure that these addressed social problems, as the RSSs alone could not address them. This reflected the transition from land use planning to spatial planning which created greater potential for addressing social problems as the RSSs had to be developed in line with policies in other strategies. The processes followed by the RPBs in the two study regions to achieve alignment of the RSSs with other strategies were discussed in Chapter 7.

The interviewees were able to point to the ways in which regional spatial planning would impact on their policy areas. For example a representative of higher education institutions observed that although the RSSs do not deal with the spatial distribution of training or higher education, its strategies would affect transport links and the provision of housing close to educational facilities both of which would have an impact upon students. Through the relationship with the RESs, it was also perceived that the RSSs would also have a possible impact on the availability of employment opportunities in the region, which would have implications for education and training providers.

There was recognition from the representatives of the CPRE interviewed that the planning system is one of the main ways in which the organisation has campaigned for the countryside and the environment, and therefore spatial planning has a role to play in 'protecting the rural environment from unnecessary development, but also the idea of having viable communities, having active communities, in rural areas as well' (Interview: Regional stakeholder). One of the CPRE representatives explained that with the adoption of the spatial planning approach and the new statutory status of

regional planning, it was now important for the organisation to look beyond influencing the preparation of local plans and individual planning applications as it had done in the past, and to actively engage at the regional scale of planning as ‘obviously if you don’t engage at the regional level than you haven’t for the strong policy framework that feeds down’ (Interview: Regional stakeholder).

Health representatives envisaged a number of ways in which spatial planning would impact on their sector. Firstly it could help with the provision of land for primary and secondary healthcare facilities. This was identified as a particular problem in new developments, where according to one NHS representative there never appeared to be a problem allocating land for schools, but that it seemed to be more difficult to find suitable sites for healthcare facilities, citing an example of a new development in which a GP practice was offered rooms above a shop as a surgery, which would have been inadequate and also unsuitable for access reasons. The RSSs would also benefit the health sector, particularly in the East of England, through the specification of a requirement to supply affordable housing consistent with local need. According to the interviewee representing the health sector in the East of England, the cost of housing was a contributory factor in making the recruitment of nursing staff difficult in that region. Another way in which spatial planning would benefit the health sector was suggested by the NHS representative in Yorkshire and Humber, who observed that through the RSS’s relationship with the RES it could help to increase suitable job opportunities in areas in which there are high numbers of people on incapacity benefit, helping to get people back into employment and thus increasing their incomes and improving their quality of life.

Interviewees involved in local government and the transport, housing and business sectors pointed to the ways in which regional spatial planning would affect the relationship between housing supply, employment opportunities and transport links. These links worked across local authority boundaries and therefore it was valuable to have a strategy-making process that could look at the issues at a higher spatial scale. One local authority planner also observed that in working together on the RSS, working relationships between his authority and neighbouring authorities had strengthened, and that his local authority was now taking greater account of neighbouring authorities’ strategies.

In terms of crime reduction, spatial planning was seen as an opportunity to create mixed communities rather than mono-cultural communities, which were identified as a potential source of problems relating to crime. Another link identified between crime and spatial planning at the regional scale was through what are termed as 'crime highways', that is the links provided by roads between ports and airports used by criminals for drugs and people trafficking. As there is no single overall police authority for a region, it is important to ensure that planning strategies make it possible for the crime initiatives focussed on crime highways to maintain connections and communications between the various police authorities.

The two representatives of the voluntary and community sectors interviewed had different views on the ways in which their sectors could link in with spatial planning strategies. The first looked at the opportunities for the voluntary and community sector to get involved if spatial strategies included requirements relating to community development. This was seen as being particularly relevant to areas where there were new housing developments. The other representative observed that the voluntary and community sector had a role to play in ensuring the views and experiences of different groups in society, for example older people, were taken into account as strategies were drafted. In this way, it was hoped, it would be possible for spatial planning to minimise the recurrence of the problems experienced by these groups caused by 'bad' planning in the past.

Generally speaking most of the effects of spatial planning strategies on interviewee's sectors were perceived as being long-term or strategic, with several people believing that spatial planning could help with the inter-relationship between different policy activities, notably housing, transport and employment. This would seem to chime in with view shared by several interviewees that spatial planning strategies can be effective in addressing issues at a high level looking beyond strictly land use matters. The move away from the traditional land use focus of previous strategies was seen as a positive step, with one interviewee referring to the perception in the past that planning was a restrictive process, but now with the adoption of the spatial planning approach planning would become more proactive than before. However a small number of interviewees observed that the move from land use planning towards spatial planning represented a leap in thinking for all parties, and that it may not be

properly addressed in the current round of RSSs, but with time the situation would improve as people progressed up the learning curve.

Notwithstanding the positive statements about the effects of the regional scale of spatial planning, a few interviewees were doubtful that the regional scale would be as effective as the local scale in addressing certain issues and delivering policy objectives. When it came to issues around social exclusion and regeneration, and primary and secondary education for example, it was felt that regional spatial planning had little applicability to these areas and that it was more appropriate to address these policy areas at a more local scale. Several people noted that on some social issues, such as the needs of older people or the closure of post offices in rural areas, the regional scale was not the most appropriate scale to deal with them. Even on some of the more difficult cross-cutting issues, such as social exclusion, it was suggested that it would be better to address them at the level of the community rather than at the regional scale; as one stakeholder explained: 'regional planning isn't going to change social exclusion. The only thing that's going to change something like social exclusion is something that takes place in that village there' (Interview: Yorkshire and Humber regional stakeholder). One local authority planner went a step further by suggesting that the regional scale would not be able to effectively address social issues because the nature of these problems was area specific: 'I would challenge the sort of premise that you can look at social issues on a regional basis anyway. I think different areas have different social issues that have to be dealt with in different ways' (Interview: Local authority planner).

It would seem therefore that although the regional scale has been empowered to address social issues and with the expectation that spatial planning through its emphasis on the co-ordination and collaboration of different policy areas will be able to address social problems, there exists an element of doubt as to whether regional planning is the appropriate scale to deliver the anticipated improvements. A significant factor will be the extent to which the RPBs make addressing social considerations an explicit objective of the spatial strategies, and the next section of this chapter contains an assessment of this.

Delivering win-win-win or the same ‘old planning bread and butter’?

This section uses the results of the Q methodology study and the interview material to examine what different people believe should be the overall objective of regional planning, and their perceptions of the relative progress made towards addressing social issues in the emerging RSS in their region.

The Q methodology results revealed that although most narratives were agreed that achieving a win-win-win scenario should be an important priority for the RSS, quite significant differences between the narratives were identified about whether the regional planning strategies should have an overall objective. Firstly, the narratives agreed that the strategies should aim for a win-win-win situation whereby environmental, economic and social objectives should be met simultaneously rather than one or two interests potentially losing out in order that the third's interests could be achieved (17). In the follow-up discussions with participants, one person who had strongly agreed with this perspective elaborated: ‘win-win-win is not the same as compromise. You don't need to give priority to one over the others, as there is a point where everyone's interests and needs can be addressed. You have to find the common ground’ (Personal comment: East of England regional stakeholder). Another participant also explained that in a situation where trade-offs are made the most powerful or influential interests may win. It was recognised that achieving a win-win-win result was not going to be easy, with another participant suggesting that ‘it's the role of planners to reconcile these different objectives’ (Personal comment: Local authority planner).

On the subject of whether it should be the planner's role to decide how the different objectives should be reconciled, there was disagreement (34). Whilst more than half of the participants in the Q methodology study had not shown strong feelings either way, placing this statement in the centre of the sorting grid, about a quarter of participants had felt very strongly. In general, the individuals associated with the Troubled Regionalist narrative tended to believe that planners should not take on this role, ranking this statement at -2. One Troubled Regionalist said in the follow-up discussion that ‘this is not the exclusive decision of planners alone. They have to be involved, but it's not necessarily their decision alone’ (Personal comment: Whitehall

civil servant). Another Troubled Regionalist opined: 'Planners shouldn't balance priorities. They should ensure that everyone's satisfied' (Personal comment: RDA officer). A different Troubled Regionalist thought that the planner's role should be to advise and support the elected members in making these decisions, as planners should not be making decisions. However this perspective was disagreed with by another participant, who thought that the planner's role is to deal with the technical issues, and that they should not advise the political process as 'there is a danger that if planners advise they may end up saying what they believe the politicians wish to hear' (Personal comment: East of England regional stakeholder). The Community Planners as a group, on the other hand, tended to believe that it was the role of planners to be reconcilers, as they ranked statement 34 at +2. One person who strongly agreed with the statement explained that 'reconciling' in her view meant achieving a win-win-win situation, and that this should be the goal of planners. She also expressed the view that 'this role should not be exclusive to planners, as there are other people who are able to do it' (Personal comment: Regional Assembly planning officer), which was a point of view shared by two other participants.

When it came to whether or not planning should have any particular overriding objective only the Troubled Regionalists disagreed with this suggestion, tending to believe that all issues were important and that it should not be the case that one is more important than the others (16, 18). In the full interviews, six interviewees indicated that they believed that economic, environmental and social objectives were all equally important. Four of these interviewees were aligned with the Troubled Regionalist narrative. According to the interviewees, there is a close inter-relationship between the three objectives, and in order to achieve sustainable communities, the three components should therefore be addressed together. A very small number of people, all from the East of England, believed that their RSS had successfully integrated all three objectives, whilst two interviewees, also from the East of England, suggested that equal weighting would always be difficult to achieve as there would always be concentration on particular issues such as housing and employment.

Unlike the Troubled Regionalists, those associated with the other narratives believed that planning should have a single overriding priority. The Democratic Environmentalists thought that planning should seek to achieve low carbon

development (16), ranking this statement at +3, and the Community Planners believed that enhancing the quality of places should be a priority (36), ranking this statement at +4. In the interviews, though, it was interesting to note that a handful of interviewees, all but one of whom came from the Yorkshire and Humber region, believed that it was important that economic issues were addressed in the RSSs (18), suggesting that social benefits would then follow. The links between the social and economic aspects were believed to work in both directions, as two people suggested that addressing social issues would be to the advantage of businesses already located in the regions and would make the regions more attractive to potential investors:

If this region is going to perform and punch its weight at a national, international level, and they're going to attract the Microsofts of this world, and the big players, people aren't going to come here if the quality of life isn't any good, and the health facilities aren't any good, and if the green spaces aren't there. It won't be on the map, they'll go somewhere else, they'll go to Seattle or they'll go wherever (Interview: Local authority planner).

According to the ideal type narratives, the Troubled Regionalists, Democratic Environmentalists and Community Planners all disagreed with the statement which suggested spatial strategies tended to overstate environmental and social elements of sustainability at the expense of economic considerations (23). Two people explained in the follow-up discussion that the emphasis in the RSSs was very much on economic development, and suggested that this was caused by the powerful influence of the RDAs, for example: 'If anything, spatial strategies are too dominated by economic considerations, because of the linkages to the Economic Strategies and the powerful influence of the RDAs' (Personal comment: Sub-regional interviewee). Another individual thought that it was right that the economy was overstated as this is the driver of the region: 'It focuses more on the economic and this is right. We need to work towards something and the economy is the driver' (Personal comment: Sub-regional interviewee). Another person, one of only two people who had actually agreed with the statement, explained that the reason she had done so was that up until this round of the RSSs, it was not a requirement for these issues to be recognised in planning strategies: 'It's just been a land use plan and hasn't been visionary' (Personal comment: RDA officer). In the interviews, six people explained that they believed that the emphasis in their RSS had turned out to be on economic

development. Four of these interviewees came from the Yorkshire and Humber region. The draft RSS was examined to identify whether it contained an explicit reference to the synergy between the economy and social aspects, to which some of the interviewees had referred, and no reference was found (YHA 2005f). In fact the document specifically stated that the region could not rely on the 'trickle down' of economic benefits to disadvantaged communities to address social inclusion (YHA 2005f, p.61).

It was found in the full interviews that the majority of interviewees in both regions thought that the social element was the weakest aspect of the RSSs. Many reasons were given for this conclusion. The most frequently cited reason was that there continued to be a concentration on housing, transport and the economy, described by one planning officer as being 'the old planning bread and butter' (Interview: Local authority planner). The RSSs have to include district housing allocations, transport investment priorities and employment land allocation, and as numbers and targets need to be agreed for these, these policy areas therefore receive the most political attention at both the regional and local scales. As a result it was suggested there was less time to spend on social issues, which did not have same focus on targets or objectives. Another reason cited was that the government's initiatives, e.g. the Growth Areas and the Northern Way, are economically driven, and as it was expected by the government that these initiatives would be addressed in the RSSs, economic issues were privileged. It should be noted that although housing, employment and infrastructure were thought to dominate the debate in the East of England, two interviewees observed that these sectors had accessibility issues, which if dealt with in the RSSs could mean that there would be an opportunity for social issues to be addressed.

A number of other possible reasons were given for the lack of emphasis on social issues. One interviewee suggested that possibly people believed that social issues were being addressed elsewhere other than in the RSSs, for example through policies for education and health, so that there was no need for these issues to be considered in the RSSs. Another suggestion was that the delivery agents for social aspects, for example the health sector, may not be aware that the RSSs may be able to help them deliver their objectives, as one interviewee observed: 'the very fact that they haven't done so could in fact imply that they don't think there is an agenda and that they can

achieve their objectives better through other strategies' (Interview: East of England regional stakeholder). It was also observed by an interviewee that in her view 'the links between social issues and land use are not always obvious or straightforward, and are therefore not necessarily issues that are put at the top of agendas, unlike an issue such as the distribution of housing and the impact that this will have on social considerations' (Interview: Regional Assembly planning officer, original quote amended). A further possible reason indicated by an interviewee for the lack of attention paid to social issues was that they seemed to lack a 'champion' on the RSS unlike environment and business interests. This interviewee suggested that the lack of engagement may be a resource issue for groups representing social issues who may have:

millions of other priorities which are actually more important than engaging in the regional things. And I can see how that would get into an almost vicious circle, that if people haven't got the capacity to engage they're less likely to be called upon to engage, and because they're not banging at the door, people aren't necessarily thinking 'oh gosh, yes, we must talk to so and so' (Interview: Yorkshire and Humber regional stakeholder).

A final reason given for the emphasis on traditional land use issues was that planners lacked the knowledge or understanding of the links between planning and social issues, for example:

factoring in the social element which is coming out of the new planning system, it takes time, doesn't it? It takes time to do that. It's also such a wind change, isn't it? So it's going to be incremental, it is not going to be great leaps through where suddenly social issues come alongside housing and employment (Interview: Local authority planner).

One further perspective on the priorities of RSSs focussed on the environmental aspects of sustainable development. Two people representing business interests in the East of England believed that environmental issues had been prioritised in the emerging RSS, whilst two other people, representing environmental interests and also from the East of England, considered that environmental issues were the weakest aspect.

To summarise this section, both the interviews and the Q methodology study indicate that many of the people involved in developing the RSSs believed that the social aspects were the weakest elements. For all the government's concern to broaden the scope of planning, for most interviewees the traditional land use concerns of housing, economy and transport were believed to receive the most attention still. The next section explores the extent to which social issues are addressed in the draft strategies and starts by examining the techniques used by the Regional Planning Bodies to identify the social issues that need to be addressed by the strategies.

A new scale of strategic social planning?

The two study regions used a number of different methods to identify the social issues that should be addressed by their RSSs. In the East of England region the Options Consultation at the end of 2002 had informed the Assembly of some of the issues that should be addressed by the strategy. The Assembly's Health and Social Inclusion Panel, which was responsible for developing the region's Social Strategy (EERA 2004b), were also involved and they highlighted the social issues that the different task teams should be aware of. Another way in which groups representing health and social interests informed the strategy was through their representations to the Examination-in-Public of the strategy in 2006. A member of the regional planning team at the Assembly noted that they thought that the social side of the RSS had possibly been insufficiently addressed this time around, and that when this RSS was revised in a few years time the Assembly would be able to be more proactive about social issues and include better scoping of this aspect. A reason for this weakness was that the RSS had initially been developed under the pre-modernised planning system, and that the Assembly had had to adjust to new sets of rules all the way through development including the widening of the scope of the strategy beyond its traditional emphasis on land use. In these circumstances, it was suggested, it was not always possible to backfill the strategy to take account of changes.

Not least amongst the effects of the switch from one system to another was the fact that the RSS was not subject to the SEA/SA process all the way through its development as is now recommended by the ODPM (ODPM 2005e). Early work on

the strategy was prepared in compliance with the region's Sustainable Development Framework, and some work had been subject to SA, but there was no standardisation or co-ordination of methods (Levett-Therivel and Land Use Consultants 2004b). The late switch meant that the scoping of the issues to be covered by the SEA/SA was rushed and completed in the last stages of the RSS's development (Levett-Therivel and Land Use Consultants 2004b). As a result, there was not the opportunity at an early stage in the development of the East of England's RSS to use the scoping process and the creation of baseline data for the SEA/SA to highlight the social issues that should be addressed by the strategy.

In the Yorkshire and Humber region, the scoping exercise that formed part of the SEA/SA process had drawn attention early in the development of the draft RSS to key underlying issues faced by the region, which the RSS should try to address, including social inequalities such as health inequalities and social exclusion (Levett-Therivel and EDAW 2005). At various stages in the process of developing the RSS the environmental, social and economic impacts of the RSS were tested and suggestions made for how the RSS could be more sustainable, thus ensuring amongst other things adverse impacts on the social issues identified by the SEA/SA process were minimised. The regional planners also invited the other Assembly commissions to comment on the emerging RSS. One of these commissions, the Quality of Life Commission, focuses on trying to deliver a better quality of life for all in the region, seeking to encourage participation and promoting equality of opportunity, and has undertaken work on health issues, offenders, refugees, cultural policies and social inclusion. Like EERA, the YHA used the consultation periods as opportunities to pick up on social issues raised by consultees. At each consultation stage, the Assembly funded sub-regional workshops organised by the Yorkshire and Humber Regional Forum, the strategic organisation for the voluntary and community sector in the Yorkshire and Humber region, in order to obtain direct feedback from voluntary and community groups in the region. Working with consultants, the Assembly also drew upon the views of external groups like the region's Forum on Ageing to learn more about social issues that affected people who lived in the region.

The framework for social considerations in planning introduced in Chapter 1 suggested that social considerations can be conceptualised in three categories: social well-being, social infrastructure and social equality (see Table 1.1). Using this

framework the draft RSSs developed by the study regions were analysed to identify the extent to which they have addressed social issues (see summary in Table 8.2). It appears that the concerns raised by a minority of interviewees during the strategy development process were not fully justified, as the draft strategies that were eventually produced in both regions addressed a range of social issues. Both strategies tended to focus on the provision of social infrastructure, i.e. health, education, cultural, retail and recreation facilities and services, accessibility and access issues, housing and transport issues probably because these policy areas have a clear land use element. It is especially noticeable that the East of England strategy recognised the anticipated growth in housing supply under the Sustainable Communities Plan, as it included requirements that relate to new build developments, such as paying attention to community safety issues and the provision of open space.

Table 8.2: Policies to address social considerations in draft RSSs of Yorkshire and the Humber and East of England regions

Category of social consideration		Policy stated in draft RSS	Yorkshire and the Humber	East of England
Social well-being	Health	Walking & cycling initiatives encouraged	✓	✓
		Safeguard playing fields, recreation & sports facilities	✓	✓
		Local sourcing of food to be addressed in LDDs		✓
		New build developments should address public health		✓
	Social capital	Exploit potential of cultural assets and the arts to build social capital		✓
		Improve access to opportunities, facilities & services to help improve people's quality of life	✓	
		Mixed-use development in towns & cities to strengthen social integration & civic life		✓

Category of social consideration		Policy stated in draft RSS	Yorkshire and the Humber	East of England
Social well-being (contd.)	Personal safety	Improve road safety	✓	✓
		Design of new built environments should address community safety & crime prevention		✓
		Transform urban areas to become attractive, safe & cohesive places	✓	
Social infrastructure	Health facilities & services	Local healthcare facilities should be accessible by means other than car	✓	
		Timing for necessary health infrastructure provision should be concurrent with new developments		✓
		Provision of outreach health facilities in rural areas	✓	
		Improve accessibility of health facilities & services	✓	✓

Category of social consideration		Policy stated in draft RSS	Yorkshire and the Humber	East of England
Social infrastructure (contd.)	Education facilities & services	Address needs for accommodation close to HE & university facilities	✓	✓
		Improve accessibility of education facilities & services	✓	✓
		Support for enhanced further & higher education provision in SCP growth areas and in priority areas for regeneration		✓
	Cultural & arts facilities	Maximise opportunities to improve provision of venues & facilities for arts & cultural use		✓
		Improve accessibility of cultural facilities & services	✓	✓
		Needs & provision of cultural services to be assessed periodically		✓

Category of social consideration		Policy stated in draft RSS	Yorkshire and the Humber	East of England
Social infrastructure (contd.)	Retail opportunities	Retail needs to be addressed in LDDs		✓
		Existing city & town centres to be strengthened through no further expansion of out-of-town shopping centres in region	✓	
		Improve accessibility of retail facilities	✓	✓
		Extend provision of shopping facilities in market towns in rural areas		✓
	Sports & recreation facilities	Areas of open space to be provided in new housing developments to meet recreational needs		✓
		Provision and needs for open space & sports facilities should be assessed		✓
		Regional & nationally significant facilities to be supported		✓
		Improve accessibility of leisure facilities	✓	✓

Category of social consideration		Policy stated in draft RSS	Yorkshire and the Humber	East of England
Social equality	Equality of access	Provide affordable housing to meet assessed need	✓	✓
		Housing mix to meet assessed need	✓	✓
		Widen travel choice		✓
		Promote improved public transport services	✓	✓
		Minimum targets for accessibility	✓	✓
		Encourage development of transport strategies for rural areas	✓	✓
	Needs of various groups	Housing needs to be assessed	✓	✓
		Needs of travellers and gypsies for sites & housing to be assessed	✓	
		Improve accessibility to key facilities for people without cars	✓	

Fewer policies were aimed at what in the framework was described as social well-being, that is people's health, personal safety and social capital. Perhaps for these issues it is more difficult for the regional scale of planning to get involved as government strategies for these policy areas are directed at the more local level. For example:

- The *Safer Places* guide encourages attention to the principles of crime prevention and the creation of safer places that might be applied to villages, towns and cities (ODPM and Home Office 2004);
- *Living Places* sets out the government's main policies for improving the quality of local environments. It is believed that having safe and attractive public spaces has a role to play in building community cohesion (ODPM 2002c); and
- Walking strategies are expected to be included in Local Transport Plans (DETR 2000c).

This would seem to exemplify the problem identified earlier of whether the spatial strategies at the regional scale could effectively address some social issues, or whether it should simply signpost issues for other organisation or strategies to address. The Assemblies were also caught between national and local scales of policy-making, in that whilst the RSS 'should have regard to national policies it should not simply repeat them' (ODPM 2004f, p.3), and although it provides a strategic framework for the LDDs, it should also avoid unnecessary or inappropriate detail (ODPM 2004f). What seemed to happen in practice was that the RSSs drew attention to an issue or policy area which it believed to be regionally significant, leaving it to the local authorities to address the issue. For example it was noted in the East of England Plan that walking and cycling strategies are matters for local authorities to address, but that the cumulative effect on the environment, health and public safety make walking and cycling a regional issue (EERA 2004a, p.150). However on the other side of the coin, even though crime is considered to be a significant problem in Yorkshire and Humber and despite there being government guidance which explains the spatial relationship between crime and the built environment (ODPM and Home Office 2004), there is no reference in this region's RSS to crime prevention or reduction apart from in the context of some rather general statements about improving social inclusion and urban renewal.

As noted earlier, the East of England strategy focuses on the importance of ensuring that social infrastructure is developed concurrently with new build development

particularly in the Sustainable Communities Plan Growth Areas and in the priority areas for regeneration such as Harlow and the Thames Gateway. According to the draft RSS, not only have the organisations which provide the services and facilities got a role to play in ensuring that their regional and local strategies give priority to health, education and social inclusion needs, but the LDDs will have to make provision for the land use needs for facilities in co-ordination with developments (EERA 2004a). The draft RSS states that it is critical to the success of the SCP for there to be a substantial increase in investment in physical and social infrastructure and close co-ordination between development and the provision of social, health, education and transport infrastructure. EERA is looking for ways to overcome the present problem of investment lagging behind the emergence of need, as well as at innovative approaches to get the up-front funding of infrastructure schemes through development contributions arising from planning agreements such as Section 106 agreements (EERA 2004a).

Both regions have policies in their RSSs to deliver affordable housing. In Yorkshire and Humber affordable housing is seen in the context of unmet local need, especially in rural and coastal areas which have seen increases in house prices that make it difficult for people who live and work in those areas to have their own home. The lack of affordable housing in rural areas is also a problem in the East of England; however in this region there is the additional difficulty faced by key workers who cannot afford housing on the open market in reasonable proximity to their workplace. The provision of sufficient affordable and key worker housing is considered essential to ease the problems of recruitment and retention of employees in the health (in particular), the education, social and public service sectors. So it would seem that in this region affordable housing is not simply a social problem, but an economic problem as 'accessible housing for key workers is of strategic economic importance for the region' (EERA 2004a, p.128).

In terms of social equality, both regions' strategies set out the requirement for equality of access to the housing market, ensuring that the housing mix meets people's needs and addressing issues of accessibility. Very little is said about the needs of specific groups of people apart from the Yorkshire and Humber strategy which refers to travellers and gypsies and their needs for accommodation. It would seem therefore

that it is assumed that the needs of specific groups of people, such as women, older people, people with disabilities, young people and people from different ethnic backgrounds, will be picked up in and addressed through housing assessments and the policies that are aimed at improving accessibility. This concentration on housing and accessibility issues would seem to indicate that these are thought to be the main policy areas that have a spatial context through which the two regions can try to address any difference in needs. Neither of the RSSs contains any mainstream policy statements that planning in the region should recognise diversity and equality issues.

Conclusions

As the planning system is expected by central government to acknowledge a wider range of policy areas, the Regional Assemblies have sought to develop RSSs that are regionally distinctive and that can address the issues which are relevant to their regions. In both study regions interviewees identified what they believed to be the key social problems within their region. In the East of England affordable housing was considered to be a significant problem by many of the interviewees, and with more than 40 per cent of the region's population living in rural areas (DEFRA 2002b), issues to do with rurality and remoteness were also a cause for concern. In Yorkshire and Humber housing issues were also thought to be a problem, especially in terms of the quality and mix of housing available. The majority of interviewees were generally hopeful that the RSS could help to address the social problems they had identified in their region. There was recognition of the advantages offered by planning strategically at the regional scale, which included giving direction to and ensuring alignment with other strategies and programmes at the regional, sub-regional and local scales. Interviewees were also able to identify potential benefits that a spatial planning approach would have on their policy area, suggesting that this type of approach would be more effective than the traditional land use approach.

In developing the RSSs, the Regional Assemblies used slightly different techniques to identify the social issues that needed to be addressed in the strategies. Both regions had used the feedback from consultation opportunities. Each region also had the

benefit of an Assembly steering group which had a specific brief to deal with social issues; in the East of England this was the Health and Social Inclusion Panel, and in Yorkshire and Humber this was the Quality of Life Commission. However the East of England had not been able to draw on the work of the SEA/SA process to help it scope the issues it needed to address and then to test the adequacy of the RSS to minimise the adverse impacts on these. The YHA had been able to draw upon the SEA/SA process in this way, and, unlike the EERA, the YHA had also benefited from the RSS having always been produced under the modernised system and thus had been able to build in wider consultation of groups throughout the strategy development process.

The Q methodology study had pointed to strong consensus amongst participants that planning should seek to achieve economic, social and environmental objectives simultaneously, which is the interpretation of sustainable development advocated by central government (DETR 1999). The study also indicated that participants had differing perspectives of whether planning should have an overriding objective. Whilst one group of people, those associated with the Troubled Regionalists narrative, thought that regional planning should not have an objective that was more important than the others, the participants associated with the Democratic Environmentalists and Community Planners narratives believed respectively that this should be the achievement of environmental objectives and improving the quality of places. This suggests that there are divergent views on what RSSs should be seeking to achieve which might make it difficult to achieve the win-win-win outcome that the central government seeks (Counsell *et al.* 2003).

According to the Q methodology study there was also consensus amongst participants that the economic aspects of regional planning were overstated at the expense of other objectives, whilst the majority of interviewees in the study regions revealed that they thought that it was the social considerations which were the weakest aspects of the RSSs. Interviewees provided many possible explanations for this apparent weakness, but the most frequently cited reason was that the strategies were continuing to focus on the traditional land use issues of housing, employment and transport (Vigar and Healey 1999). This meant there was little time or resources for attention to be paid to other issues which did not have targets or objectives, or have the same level of

political interest in them. The government's sub-regional initiatives, the Sustainable Communities Plan and the Northern Way Growth Strategy, may also have influenced the amount of attention being paid in the study regions to these traditional land uses, as the government expected the RSSs to have due regard to these initiatives which are largely economy driven. The introduction of these sub-regional initiatives, the continued silo thinking of some participants in terms of overall objectives as mentioned above and the difficulties faced by some stakeholders to access and engage in the strategy development process discussed in Chapter 6 are all factors suggested by Vigar and Healey (1999) that can make it difficult to move towards distinctive, integrated and participative planning strategies.

An examination of the draft RSSs indicated that the concerns of participants about the level of attention being paid to social aspects were ultimately not completely justified as the scope of regional planning strategies have been redefined to include a wider set of issues (Allmendinger and Haughton, forthcoming; Friedmann 2005). Whilst very little was said explicitly in either RSS about addressing issues of diversity and equality (Sheffield Hallam University and ODPM 2004), both of the RSSs required that policies towards housing and accessibility should meet people's diverse needs. The RSSs also addressed issues to do with housing, transport, access and accessibility, and the provision of social infrastructure. Other areas of concern that relate to social well-being, such as health, crime and safety, are also referred to in the RSSs, but these issues did not receive as much attention when compared to policy areas which have a very clear spatial context such as affordable housing.

The dilemma for the Assemblies is perhaps that they are caught in the middle of neither wanting to simply repeat national policy nor going into too much detail, resulting in a lengthy and cumbersome document. Added to this is the fact that some policy initiatives which seek to address social issues, such as crime and liveability, are directed at the local or community scale, leaving little to be said at the regional scale apart from some signposting. A final reason why participants may not have thought that social issues were getting sufficient treatment was that compared to the traditional concerns of planning strategies, that is the economy, housing and transport, social issues simply do not receive the same level of attention. In both of the draft RSSs a whole chapter was devoted to each of economy, housing and transport, whereas social

considerations were woven into the strategies where appropriate. Strategies towards social issues were perhaps implicit in the RSSs through their use of stated goals such as social inclusion, but compared to the other more traditional land use policy areas little was explicitly stated, especially about how the strategies would help to improve social cohesion and reduce inequalities.

The ability of spatial planning at the regional scale to address some problems was questioned by a minority of interviewees, in particular cross-cutting issues and the supply of services and facilities at the community level. Where regional spatial planning was believed to have a greater role to play was in the making of long-term strategic decisions on behalf of the region, looking across local authority boundaries and integrating different policy activities, although Dijkstra *et al.* (2005) suggest that there is a tendency for spatial plans to focus more on relatively short-term approaches than on longer term, future-oriented strategies. It was anticipated that the move towards spatial planning was a step forward from the allocative and redistributive approaches to social planning of the past, leading to improved integration and co-ordination of activities and decision-making. Interviewees recognised that the RSSs could not work alone and that there had to be close alignment with the objectives of other strategies and delivery agents. However much rested on the ability of the Assemblies to ensure that objectives were agreed to and that the regional and local partners bought into the strategy to deliver what the RSSs set out.

It is not possible to conclude that either region approached social issues more effectively than the other. Rather what can be seen is that within the government's guidelines there is sufficient discretion for the Assemblies to develop regionally distinctive approaches, such as seeking to ensure the provision of infrastructure and other requirements alongside new build developments in the East of England. However the Assemblies seem to have failed to capture fully the opportunity to address the social problems of the regions. This should not be seen as a deliberate omission, but rather a result of the complexity of the strategy development process which saw policy issues being framed from within and outside the regional scale, resulting in an emphasis on traditional land use matters, and also of a constrained timetable which meant that the broader remit of spatial planning was difficult to achieve, especially with the complications of the Sustainable Communities Plan and

the Northern Way Growth Strategy thrown in during the strategy development process.

Chapter Nine: CONCLUSIONS ON THE SOCIAL AND SCALAR PROCESSES SHAPING REGIONAL PLANNING

English regional planning is undergoing a period of transformation that has seen amongst other things new institutional forms emerge, a greater number of policy actors engaging in the deliberation of the strategies, opportunities for public participation developed, new procedures and policies for plan-making installed along with a wider range of policy imperatives to be met by the emerging strategies. This research sought to explore many of these changes during the first round of new Regional Spatial Strategies drafted after the introduction of planning reforms that culminated in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The research project had four main aims, which were introduced in Chapter 1:

- To identify and critically analyse the main discourses evident within regional planning;
- To examine critically the development of new systems for engaging communities in the development of Regional Spatial Strategies;
- To analyse the emerging processes for improving ‘horizontal’ collaboration between Regional Planning Bodies and their various stakeholders, and the ‘vertical’ co-ordination with strategies at different scales of governance such as Local Development Documents and the sub-regional programmes of the Sustainable Communities Plan; and
- To analyse the ways in which the social aspects of sustainable development are drawn into spatial planning strategies at the regional scale.

These different themes were explored using a combination of semi-structured interviews, Q methodology, document review and observation, creating a rich source

of empirical material for this project. In this chapter the various findings identified in earlier chapters are drawn together, illustrating where findings add fresh insights into regional planning.

Before commencing with the conclusions of this thesis, it is worth asking the question whether, if the work was undertaken again, would it be altered? Certainly there would be less emphasis placed on data collection at the national scale. As noted in Chapter 3, one of the original intentions of this study had been to examine critically how national policy-makers work together to produce planning policies sensitive to social issues and to investigate the role of lobby groups in influencing planning policy-making. This element of the research was later withdrawn as it became apparent that this would distract attention away from regional planning which was the main focus of the study. If the study was to be repeated, it would not be necessary to change the research methodology. Using Q methodology made it possible to develop a greater understanding of the narratives that exist around regional planning. Its use in a future study would therefore allow the researcher to ascertain whether these narratives have developed in new directions since the current study was undertaken. Q methodology also provided a useful framework for presenting the empirical results of the results in this thesis, drawing together the material collected using the other research methods, such as the interviews and the review of documents, and enabling triangulation. On reflection, in spite of the time taken to understand and utilise this research technique, the benefits of using Q methodology were far greater than had originally been anticipated at the onset of the study.

There are a number of possible future research directions which arise from the findings in this study. Firstly, as discussed in Chapter 5, the results of the Q methodology exercise indicated that local authority councillors may have a unique perspective on regional planning that is associated with the mirror image of the Democratic Environmentalists narrative identified in this study. With only two councillors agreeing to participate in this research, it would be interesting to widen the study to include more councillors from a range of political backgrounds. This would hopefully affirm whether a unique perspective did exist, and if so, whether it was aligned to their role as a local authority councillor or to their political allegiances.

Another possible future research direction would be to undertake a more in-depth examination of the nature of public participation in regional planning. This research study identified that there were divergent viewpoints on the benefits of engaging the wider public in the development of the RSSs. Research undertaken in the future would benefit from the RSSs having completed the full cycle of public participation, as the current study only covered the strategy development process before the EiPs commenced in the study regions. A future study could therefore be more reflective on the nature of public participation at all stages in the strategy development process.

A further possible direction for research, again benefiting from more time having passed, would be to undertake a retrospective examination of the effects of the sub-regional strategies, the Sustainable Communities Plan and the Northern Way Growth Strategy, on regional planning. With the sub-regional strategies at relatively early stages of development at the time of this study, future research will be able to undertake a more critical examination of the central government's influence on the direction of the region's spatial strategies as the effects of the sub-regional strategies will have unfolded more clearly as time passes.

It would seem therefore that whilst this study, undertaken as the new legislation was being introduced, benefits from being one of the earliest studies of the new planning regime, future studies will have the advantage of being able to more reflectively on the whole process of developing the RSSs and on the finalised strategies approved by Whitehall. In time it will be possible to look retrospectively at how the strategies aimed at addressing social issues laid out in the RSSs were eventually rolled out as policies and initiatives by local authorities and other delivery agents which was outside of the timeframe of this particular piece of research. Then it will be truly possible to ascertain whether indeed regional planning has the potential to address social issues.

Learning from the narratives within regional planning

The reforms to the English planning system introduced since 1997 have resulted in the widening of the scope of planning along with an expectation that a more diverse range of interests would be involved in developing regional planning strategies in order that regionally distinctive and appropriate strategies might be agreed. At the beginning of this research project it was anticipated that the narratives within regional planning would be showing signs that they were beginning to reflect the interests of the new stakeholders in regional planning (Healey 1997a; Rein and Schön 1993), such as housing/developer interests, business groups, voluntary organisations and environmentalists, now that these interest groups were playing a more active role in the deliberative processes of strategy-making than their previous role as consultees. The Q methodology study indicated that there were three different perspectives on regional planning, and these were given the descriptive titles of Troubled Regionalists, Democratic Environmentalists and Community Planners.

The Q methodology study revealed that there were areas of consensus across the three different narratives which suggest that people across a wide range of policy areas and scales of governance share common views on some aspects of regional planning. There was extensive support for the government's encouragement of widespread engagement in regional planning, which is perhaps not surprising as being part of this engagement process provides participants with the opportunity to influence the content of the RSSs. There was also general agreement with the government's interpretation of sustainable development (McGregor 2004), which seeks the achievement of economic, social and environmental objectives simultaneously, but participants also indicated that they believe that the emphasis continues to be on economic objectives with social aspects being the weakest aspects of the RSSs (Haughton and Counsell 2004a).

There were also issues on which the different perspectives were not agreed, and analysis of these can begin to indicate where there may be underlying tensions between the participants. One of the major areas of contention was whether regional planning should have a single objective. Whilst the Troubled Regionalists thought

that this should not happen, the other narratives disagreed, with the Democratic Environmentalists believing that environmental objectives should be a priority and the Community Planners suggesting that regional planning should seek to improve the quality of places. This difference of opinion on the fundamental objectives of regional planning suggests that there is some way to go before the government's aspiration for sustainable development may be achieved (Counsell *et al.* 2003; Rydin 2003).

As one of the features of Q methodology is the ability to identify which participants agree or disagree with each perspective, according to this study it is quite clear that the environment is an issue that continues to divide participants (Haughton and Counsell 2004a, 2004b; Owens and Cowell 2002; Vigar *et al.* 2000). If one examines the people who agreed or disagreed with the Democratic Environmentalists narrative it is evident that the people who strongly agreed with this perspective are the environmentalists and the representatives of the voluntary and community sector, whilst those people who disagreed with this perspective are the elected members of local authorities and the participants representing developers, housing and business groups. With nearly all of the participants who disagreed with the Democratic Environmentalists narrative loading significantly on other narratives or on no narrative at all, the study suggests that although the environment divides opinion these participants feel more strongly about other aspects of regional planning.

Another issue that according to the narratives divided participants was public participation. Only the Democratic Environmentalists believed that this was very important, with the other narratives indicating that they felt relatively ambivalent towards it. This outcome seems slightly at odds with the widespread support for wide engagement in the strategy-making process, but can be explained by some people's evident cynicism towards public participation and by others who suggested that the interests of the wider community were already being represented by the local authorities, which made public participation in regional planning less essential.

The analysis of the narratives seems to disprove the initial assumption that the new stakeholders would be creating new or revising the old narratives within regional planning (Healey 1997a, 1998; Rein and Schön 1993). No new 'social' or 'economic'

narratives were evident. Other research into the old RPG system had identified an environmental narrative in regional planning (Haughton and Counsell 2004b; Owens and Cowell 2002) and this continues to be an issue that divides participants. Possibly where the new stakeholders have influenced the narratives is in the identification of institutional barriers which make it difficult for some groups to engage and through the recognition that there are groups who appear to have more influence than others over the direction of the debate (Baker *et al.* 2003; Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger 1998). Central government also plays an important role in creating the narratives (Newman 2001; Vigar *et al.* 2000), as policies towards sustainable communities, stakeholder engagement and sustainable development are seen as significant influences on the ways in which people characterise regional planning. In this way, a previously weak discourse, which emphasised the importance of enhancing the quality of places (Vigar *et al.* 2000), has become more powerful, reflecting current central government policies. The narratives revealed in this study therefore seem to support Hajer's conjecture that the nature of discourses can change over time (Hajer 1995), and thus perhaps in the case of this study, undertaken as the new measures were being introduced, it is simply too early to say how the engagement of new policy areas in the deliberation of planning strategies are beginning to shape the narratives within regional planning.

Improving community engagement

With wider stakeholder engagement in the deliberation of regional planning strategies expected by central government, the Regional Assemblies in the two study regions have worked hard to improve the level of community engagement, representing a shift towards a more collaborative approach to plan-making (Doak and Parker 2005; Haughton and Counsell 2004a; Healey 1997a, 1998). This research project focussed on engagement in the Assemblies' planning steering groups, the Regional Planning Panel in the East of England Regional Assembly and the Regional Planning and Infrastructure Commission in Yorkshire and Humber. These steering groups were the forums in the Regional Assemblies with the delegated responsibility to develop the new RSSs. In both regions a wide range of interests were represented on the planning

steering groups, their technical working groups and themed topic groups, all of which helped to shape the new RSSs. Opportunities were available for other interest groups, hard-to-reach groups and the public to participate in the strategy-making processes, through public consultation opportunities and participation in focus groups and workshop events. Widening engagement was widely supported by the participants interviewed, as this was identified as being an important factor in improving the quality of decision-making. However there were some reservations about whether having more interests involved might make it more difficult to reach consensus decisions. It was also noted by participants that there was low public interest in regional planning (Tewdwr-Jones 2002), and that there had been limited success in getting citizens to engage in the development of the RSSs (Owens and Cowell 2002; TCPA 1999).

Whilst it had been anticipated in the early stages of this research that economic, social and environmental interests would be represented on the planning steering groups, there was little evidence that groups representing the social aspects were involved. Although environmental and economic interests in both regions appear to have developed their capacity to engage at the regional scale (Murdoch and Norton 2001; Pattison 2001), social interest groups seem not to have done so in the two study regions. There are institutional and functional reasons why this may not have happened, including a possible lack of awareness on the part of these groups of the potential significance that the RSSs would have on future decisions with a strategic spatial impact. It is also suggested that the local/community scale or national policy-makers may be more appropriate routes for these groups to direct their attentions. The people involved in the planning steering groups were not clear themselves as to who represented social aspects. The most frequently given response was that no one represented social interests, although a few people thought that it might be the Government Offices, or the local authority members on the steering groups, or that possibly everyone on the Assembly had a responsibility to speak up for social issues. Intuitively it might be thought that the regional groupings of voluntary and community sector groups on the planning steering groups represented social interests, but only interviewee suggested that this indeed was part of their role. Similarly with housing market imbalances believed to be significant social problems in both regions, it was interesting to note that it was not proposed in either region that the

representatives of the housing sector on the Assembly were responsible for representing the social needs of the region.

Aware that other ways had to be found to seek the views of groups representing social interests and hard-to-reach groups, the Assemblies had had to use more direct approaches to gain access to these groups, resulting in the groups that represent social interests and the other policy actors occupying different policy arenas (Haughton and Counsell 2004a). The lack of presence on the planning steering groups implies that groups representing social interests were not encountered by other policy communities (Healey 1997a; Vigar and Healey 2002), reducing the opportunities for information sharing, relationship building and influencing decisions, which were seen as the advantages of membership of the steering groups (Campbell and Marshall 2000; Pattison 2001; Richardson 2000).

Although the Assemblies had successfully drawn in a wider set of interests into the planning steering groups, participants were aware that there were practical difficulties to be faced when trying to engage in strategy development. There was also a feeling that some participants had more influence than others and that participants were not always treated the same by the regional planning officers, which is contrary to the central tenets of communicative planning (Healey 1997a, 1998; Hillier 2000; Innes 1995). The more articulate and well-resourced groups, typically representing environmental and business interests, were thought to be at an advantage, but it was generally believed that the interest groups on the steering groups were not as influential as the elected members representing the local authorities in the region (Baker *et al.* 2003; Pattison 2001). There appeared to be an undercurrent of tension and distrust between these two groups in both regions (Jenkins and Hague 2005; Marshall 2003), and especially in the East of England. Regional planning officers faced a difficult task of trying to reconcile the different viewpoints and aspirations of these disparate groups, but it appeared as though the local authorities, who would eventually be implementing the RSSs at the local level and who had the added legitimacy of being democratically elected, were more influential than the interest groups on the direction of the strategies (Campbell and Marshall 2000; Haughton and Counsell 2002).

The scalar complexities of shaping the RSSs

As central government expects the Regional Spatial Strategies to be the spatial expression of a region's vision for its future, it is important that the RSSs reflect and are co-ordinated with other important strategies. In addition to the social processes of deliberation and consultation which help the RPBs to decide what should be the priorities and policies for the RSSs, the adoption of a spatial planning approach requires RPBs ensure that the objectives of the RSSs are in line with those of other strategies and programmes operating at different spatial scales. Furthermore the statutory status of the RSSs makes it all the more important that different strategies and policy areas have their aspirations included in the RSSs. This means that the RSSs are shaped by both social and multi-scalar processes. This complex relationship may partly explain why much of the debate surrounding the draft RSSs focused on housing, the economy and transport. Government guidance requires that there is a close relationship between a region's spatial, economic and housing strategies, with transport being an integral part of the spatial strategies (ODPM 2004f, 2004h, 2005d). With a policy imperative to address these areas, pressures due to time and resources meant that these policy areas received relatively more attention than policy areas with less strong links to spatial planning.

In spite of the different social and multi-scalar processes in place in the regions to help shape the objectives and scope of the RSSs, central government continues to hold considerable influence over the strategy-making process, much as the theoretical literature might have predicted (see Jessop 1990, 2000; Jonas and Ward 2002; Jones 2001). Some of this influence is direct, via the Planning Policy Statements and other planning guidance issued by Whitehall, but influence is also exerted indirectly through the work of the regional Government Offices and via sub-regional strategies like the Sustainable Communities Plan. In one way or another, there continues to be a considerable amount of direct and indirect top-down management of the priorities and form of the RSSs (Peck and Tickell 2002). This influence has the potential to interfere with or even reduce the effectiveness of the innovative bottom-up approaches to collaboration and participation that the RPBs are endeavouring to

establish, as they seek to develop regionally distinctive spatial strategies (Benneworth and Roberts 2002; Goodwin *et al.* 2002, 2005).

Guidance on planning issued by the ODPM emphasises the importance of partnership working and being inclusive (ODPM 2004f), and this is characteristic of a 'rolling-out' of new forms of neoliberal state relations (Peck and Tickell 2002). Yet it was observed that the interest groups involved in active deliberation of the new RSSs were sometimes termed as the 'usual suspects', implying that as institutions of governance struggle to gain access to and influence over state power through the regional planning process, governance remains 'in the hands of elite coalitions' (Amin 1999, p.373). The evidence from this study suggests that the institutions that represent social issues may have neither the capacity to engage, nor identified the opportunities available from becoming involved at the regional scale (Cowell and Owens 2006). Although it may not have been the intention of the two RPBs in this study, different interests were selectively included in and excluded from the arenas of strategy-making.

It would appear therefore that whilst the central government requires that RPBs take notice of a wide range of policy areas in order that they may address sustainable development objectives simultaneously, in practice the Assemblies are prevailed upon by various scalar processes, not least Whitehall, to focus their attention on a narrower set of policy issues. At the same time, central government also actively encourages the RPBs to initiate processes that will widen the engagement of different groups and interests in the deliberation of the spatial strategies, and yet regional planning remains inaccessible to some groups or is perceived by groups that are engaged as an arena in which they have little or no real influence (Baker *et al.* 2003). In conclusion it seems that although considerable weight is placed by central government on the importance of addressing a wider range of issues alongside greater community engagement, in reality through its actions and influence the government limits the ability of the Assemblies to achieve these policy objectives. Whilst the agenda for spatial planning is not simply a top-down process, in that it is being shaped by a complex mix of social and multi-scalar processes (Cox and Mair 1991; Stoker 2003), there is limited scope for a radical departure from central government guidelines. This is partly due to centralized policy prescription and timetabling, and partly a result of central

government intervention in the sub-regional scale with the expectation that the RSSs will conform to Whitehall's expectations. It is also about how power relations map out unevenly in the regions (Goodwin *et al.* 2002), even at a time when central government appears to be seeking a more equitable engagement of different interests in the planning process (ODPM 2004c).

Social issues in regional planning strategies

After several years in which planning practice has seemed to shy away from addressing social issues, the recent planning reforms have turned attention to them once again. An examination of the draft RSSs submitted to the ODPM indicated that the scope of the strategies has indeed been widened to include an array of social aspects, addressing issues that are regionally specific. These issues, covering a diverse range of policy areas and objectives, can be categorised as follows:

- Social well-being: Health, social capital and personal safety;
- Social infrastructure: Health and education facilities and services, cultural, arts, sports and recreation facilities, and retail opportunities; and
- Social equality: Equality of access and the needs of various groups.

Within this wide set of issues, there is a concentration on the policy areas which have a clear land use dimension, such as the provision of infrastructure and housing and accessibility, with the areas that relate to social well-being receiving rather less attention. This may be due partly to the fact that these policy areas have a less clear spatial dimension and partly because government strategies for these are directed at the local or community level.

The RPBs also appear to be caught in the dilemma of needing to be strategic, and yet not simply repeating national policy or including unnecessary details. This dilemma may be compounded by the fact that addressing social issues in planning is a relatively new requirement of planning policy. The light touch towards social issues

evident in the draft RSSs may therefore be symptomatic of the RPBs testing the water in the first round of draft strategies, whilst they wait to see what issues are raised in representations to the EiPs or what changes the ODPM/DCLM propose to the finalised RSSs. An illustration of the retrofitting of the RSSs to account for new policy requirements introduced outside the timescales of the RSS development process is the preparation of a single issue review by the East of England Assembly to address the lack of provision of traveller and gypsy sites in the region (EERA undated d). The EiP of the draft RSS accepted the urgent need for regional policy to assist local authorities with the identification and provision of sites through their LDDs, thus enabling them to conform to new legislative requirements (ODPM 2006b). By way of contrast, the draft Yorkshire and Humber RSS benefited from its slightly later timetabling and therefore already included provisions to meet the housing needs of gypsies and travellers (YHA 2005f).

Rather than making the most of the opportunities arising from the transition to a spatial planning approach, the RPBs appear to have adhered to policies which have a clear land use dimension, enabling them to avoid accusations of acting *ultra vires*, that is outside the scope of planning law. For example in their draft documents the RSSs could have included more about meeting the diverse needs of specific groups of people, such as women, older people, and people from different ethnic backgrounds, rather than simply requiring that all housing needs are met and some rather general statements about accessibility. More could also have been said about strategies towards public health, community safety and crime prevention, all of which have spatial aspects. In short then it would seem that the RPBs have tended to fall back on relatively 'safe' definitions of what might be construed as being the social aspects of planning.

The majority of interviewees had been optimistic that the RSSs had the capacity to address the social problems facing their region, but as noted earlier were concerned that the social aspects would be the weakest element of the strategies. The analysis of the draft RSSs indicated that the RPBs had successfully drawn in a wide array of social issues into the strategies, but the concerns of the interviewees were possibly still justified. Compared to the traditional land use content of planning strategies, the economy, housing and transport, the social aspects of the strategies were indeed thinly

represented. There are many possible reasons for this which include the continued silo mentality in terms of objectives, the lack of political interest in social issues, limited time and resources resulting in attention being focussed on policy areas in which specific targets have to be agreed and on policy areas which have a clear spatial expression, insufficient engagement of groups that represent social issues, sub-regional initiatives which have a strong economic dimension, and initiatives aimed at addressing social problems being directed at the local rather than the regional scale, leaving little to be usefully said in regional strategies. Taking all of these potential difficulties together, it is perhaps not surprising that the RPBs in the two study regions were not able to achieve more progress in challenging the traditional land use concerns of planning strategies.

Conclusions

The reforms to the English planning system introduced by the New Labour government since their election in 1997 have resulted in a re-scaling of planning that has been shaped in particular by two powerful policy imperatives: devolution and modernisation (Allmendinger 2003a). In England the devolutionary changes have included new arrangements for planning which have strengthened the regional scale in a number of ways, including endowing statutory status to regional strategies and removing the tier of county structure plans. The modernisation agenda is marked by a shift towards more integrative policy-making, and in planning this is represented by a shift towards the process of strategic spatial planning. These new strategic arrangements for planning are intended to result in more appropriate policy solutions being articulated which emphasise the qualities of the regions (Healey 2004, 2006).

To enable this to happen, central government has encouraged RPBs to adopt a more collaborative approach to plan-making, which has resulted in a wider array of organisations and interests becoming actively involved in the deliberation of strategies. Alongside this move towards greater collaboration, the RPBs are also required to take into account other strategies and programmes operating at different scales of governance. Furthermore, the statutory status of the RSSs has made it

important for interest groups, policy areas and programmes to try to ensure that their aspirations and objectives are accounted for in the strategy, resulting in the scope and direction of the new RSSs being shaped by both social and scalar processes.

Put into the context of the wider theoretical debates about governance and scale, the experiences of the two study regions indicate that new institutional forms of governance are being rolled out at the regional scale. In part this is due to the re-working of power in planning across all scales of governance, exemplified for instance by the increased influence of EU Directives or the removal of county structure plans, and thus power is being re-worked in complex ways and not in one direction only. The evidence from the two study regions would therefore seem to support the claim of Goodwin *et al.* (2005) that it is no longer sufficient to refer to the state as being simply 'hollowed out' at particular scales (Jessop 1990), as indeed other scales of economic governance are being 'filled in'. As new partners are becoming actively engaged in the 'filling in' of the restructured state at the regional scale, regional planning is characterised by both vertical and horizontal re-scaling, providing interesting examples of the kinds of complex mosaics of inter-layered scalar geographies suggested by Brenner (2001).

The research study also illustrates some of the features Jessop (1994) suggests might characterise a post-Fordist regime, including the development of 'local regulatory capacity' towards more collaborative and participative forms of governance, the subordination of social policy to supply-side requirements mainly through the intervention in the local supply of housing as central government seeks to ensure that the right quality/mix of housing is available to attract/retain a flexible workforce, and the promotion of economic competitiveness (Painter and Goodwin 2000). But whilst some aspects of regional planning seemingly point to the emergence of a hollowed-out Schumpeterian workfare state (Jessop 2002), there are other factors that appear to undermine it, principally to do with the constraints placed on sub-national modes of governance by the nation state (Jessop 2000), sometimes referred to as the 'strategic selectivity of the state' (Jones 1997). Put simply then, it is not sufficient to say that in planning there is evidence of shifts in power towards or from the national/regional/local scales. Instead what can be seen is a complex, multi-layered policy area, which continues to have an essentially hierarchical structure and which is

subject to a wide and diverse range of influences from within and across different scales of governance.

From the evidence in this research study, it appears that the Regional Assemblies in the two study regions have successfully widened regional planning so that it is becoming more inclusive and they have also actively sought to reconcile the different interests. In addition the Assemblies have responded to the government's insistence that planning should address a wider range of policy areas than in the past, and as a result the overall scope of regional planning has been extended (Allmendinger and Haughton, forthcoming; Friedmann 2005), and now includes, amongst other things, policies directed towards social well-being, social infrastructure and social equality. This study also indicates that different stakeholders are voicing their opinions in different ways and in different forums, making it difficult for this information to flow freely as is necessary for a successful collaborative approach to planning (Healey 1998). Furthermore there are a number of institutional constraints which make engagement a demanding task for some stakeholders, which when taken alongside the differences in the relative power and resources of participants, make it difficult to achieve truly transparent, democratic and rational decisions (McGuirk 2001). It can be concluded that although there is evidence that positive steps have been taken by the Regional Assemblies, the local and national scales remain significant influences on the regional scale of governance, and that the traditional land use concerns of the economy, housing and transport continue to dominate the debate and content of the draft Regional Spatial Strategies as they did in the past.

APPENDIX 1

List of interviewees/participants in Q methodology study indicating date of interview

East of England:	
Vol & community NGO	Sept 2004
Local authority planner	Oct 2004
Higher education representative	Oct 2004
NHS representative	Oct 2004
Rural NGO	Oct 2004
Local authority councillor	Oct 2004
Local authority planner	Oct 2004
Business interests representative	Oct 2004
RDA officer	Oct 2004
Housing representative	Nov 2004
Business interests representative	Nov 2004
Environmental NGO	Nov 2004
Regional planner	Feb 2005
Yorkshire and Humber:	
Vol & community NGO	Nov 2004
RDA officer	Nov 2004
Higher education NGO	Nov 2004
Local authority planner	Nov 2004
Business interests representative	Nov 2004
NHS representative	Nov 2004
Developers' interests NGO	Nov 2004
Local authority planner	Nov 2004
Environmental NGO	Nov 2004
RDA officer	Nov 2004§
Rural NGO	Dec 2004

Yorkshire and Humber (contd.):	
Local authority councillor	Dec 2004
Government Office	Dec 2004§
Regional planner	Jan 2005
Sustainable Community Plan:	
Sub-regional strategy employee	Dec 2004
Sub-regional strategy liaison, GO	Dec 2004
Sub-regional strategy liaison, ODPM	Dec 2004
Sub-regional strategy liaison, GO	Dec 2004
Sub-regional strategy employee	Dec 2004
Sub-regional strategy employee	Dec 2004
Sub-regional strategy liaison, ODPM	Jan 2005
National level:	
Policy Officer, Black Environment Network	May 2004
Policy Officer, Shelter	May 2004
Policy Officer, Shelter	May 2004§
Policy Officer, Disability Rights Commission	May 2004§
Policy Officer, Age Concern	June 2004§
Civil servant, Dept. for Education & Skills	June 2004
Civil servant, Housing Directorate, ODPM	June 2004
Civil servant, Liveability, ODPM	June 2004
Civil servant, Home Office	June 2004
Civil servant, Social Exclusion Unit, ODPM	June 2004
Civil servant, Neighbourhood Renewal, ODPM	June 2004
Civil servant, Dept. for Transport	June 2004
Civil servant, Planning Directorate, ODPM	June 2004
Civil servant, Housing Directorate, ODPM	June 2004§
Civil servant, Planning Directorate, ODPM	†

Notes:

All listed were interviewed and participated in Q methodology study with the exception of:

§ indicates person was interviewed but did not participate in Q methodology study

† indicates person participated in Q methodology study but was not interviewed

APPENDIX 2

YORKSHIRE AND HUMBER ASSEMBLY

Membership of Regional Planning and Infrastructure Commission

Type/name of organisation:	No. of Members:
Elected Authorities:	26
Local Authorities	22
National Park Authorities	2
PTAs/PTEs	2
Government and its Agencies, National/Regional Public Bodies:	9
Countryside Agency	1
English Heritage	1
English Nature	1
Environment Agency	1
Government Office for Yorkshire and Humber(*)	1
Highways Agency	1
Strategic Rail Authority	1
Yorkshire Forward	1
Yorkshire Tourist Board	1
Other Regional Bodies and Forums:	9
Yorkshire Universities	1
Yorkshire Culture	1
Regional Environment Forum (**)	3
Regional Forum for Vol. & Comm. Organisations	1
Regional Housing Forum (***)	2
Regional Rural Affairs Forum	1

Assembly Commissions	4
Economy Commission (****)	1
Quality of Life Commission	1
Education & Skills	1
Sustainability Commission	1
Other Bodies/Interests	6
Confederation of British Industry	1
Federation of Small Businesses	1
Health representative	1
Yorkshire & Humber Chambers of Commerce	1
Utilities representative	1
Faiths Community	1
TOTAL MEMBERSHIP	54

Notes:

(*) Observer status

(**) Representation to be drawn from non-governmental, voluntary sector and to be as diverse as possible

(***) One representative from the house-builder/developer sector; one from the social rented provider/funding sector

(****) Representation to be drawn from private sector business

Source: Yorkshire and Humber Assembly 2004a

APPENDIX 3

YORKSHIRE AND HUMBER ASSEMBLY

Membership of Technical Advisory Group

Type/name of organisation:

Elected Authorities:

Local Authorities

National Park Authorities

Government and its Agencies, National/Regional Public Bodies:

Government Office for Yorkshire and Humber

Yorkshire Forward

YHA Regional Planning and Transport team members

Other Regional Bodies and Forums:

Yorkshire Culture

Regional Environment Forum

Regional Housing Forum

Regional Transport Forum

Source: Yorkshire and Humber Assembly 2004a

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