

Regionalisation and Rural Development in England

**By
Sally Hewitt
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**School of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
Faculty of Science, Agriculture and Engineering
University of Newcastle upon Tyne**

Abstract

This is a study of the discourses of regionalisation and rural development in England. The thesis examines the impact of New Labour's period of regionalisation from 1997 to 2008 on the policy and practice of rural development. A Foucauldian inspired discourse analysis reveals the patterns of power relations between national, regional and local actors, networks and governance structures, contributing to our understanding of political change. Regionalisation has resulted in changes both to rural policy and the practices of governing.

Previous studies have emphasised the contrast between the rhetoric of devolution and the extent to which the state retains control by extending its power to the devolved scale. A framework of four discourses combines these contrasting notions to form four discourses of the region – “participatory development”, “administrative regionalism”, “participatory regionalism” and “regional autonomy”. Non-government actors express their choices, captured in three discourses of response – “buying into regionalism”, “reluctant regionalism” and “local autonomy” – highlighting the complexity of regional/local power relations. The discourses illustrate regional difference and shed light on how and why divergence has taken place.

The research was conducted through documentary analysis, and interviews in two case study regions of the North West and East of England. The discourses are drawn from the language of rural actors in each region. Employment as a rural development practitioner gave the researcher ‘insider’ knowledge and understanding, whilst the discipline of an academic and reflexive approach aided an ‘outsider’ view, with both identities contributing to the research.

The research found some differences between English regions and between regional government agencies, as a consequence of devolution. Nevertheless, the discursive practices centre on realising state plans. Furthermore, regionalisation restricts the choices available to the local level, compromising capacity building and participation in rural development, long recognised by researchers as critical aspects of successful rural development. Local plans were formulated on the basis of a generic, homogenous territory, marking a fundamental change from previous territorial rural programmes.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

BSE	Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy
CO	Cabinet Office
CoSira	Council for Small Industries in rural areas
Defra	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DETR	Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions
DoE	Department of the Environment
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry
DTLGR	Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions
EEDA	East of England Development Agency
EU	European Union
FC	Forestry Commission
FMD	Foot and Mouth Disease
GO	Government Office
GO-East	Government Office for the East of England
GO-North West	Government Office for the North West
LAA	Local Area Agreement
LGRN	Local Government Rural Network
MAFF	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
NE	Natural England
NWDA	North West Development Agency
RAF	Rural Affairs Forum
RCC	Rural Community Council
RDA	Regional Development Agency
RDC	Rural Development Commission
RDPE	Rural Development Programme for England
RIP	Regional Implementation Plan (for the RDPE)
RRDF	Regional Rural Development Framework

Chapter 1. Introduction

Background

For rural development practitioners and researchers in England, regionalisation loomed large following the election of a Labour government in 1997. Reforms by a new coalition government to dismantle the infrastructure of regions from 2010 serve to emphasise the extent to which regionalisation was a political project. Nevertheless regions became a 'way of thinking' during New Labour's three terms. The creation of new institutions and functions at a regional scale altered the landscape of rural development with consequences for policy and practice. As a rural policy practitioner in local government I was acutely aware of the changes and have sought in this research to uncover the impact of regionalisation, focusing on the regional and local scale. This chapter outlines the context of the research, the research question, and structure of the thesis.

Public policy is not solely the preserve of government. Whilst governments generate the mechanisms and institutions of policy intervention, policies evolve and change within the context of the society that produces them. Rural policy is diverse and historically has been segmented according to sectors – agriculture, trade, natural and historic environment, economic and social issues – and by delivery at differing tiers of government. Policies may be rural in nature, dealing with rural resources, spatial and land-use policies, or they may be 'subject policies' which apply equally to urban and rural areas, such as housing and transport, but which are affected by the conditions of rurality. Multiple tiers and multiple actors have been involved for many decades in all aspects of rural policy in England. Attempts to coordinate or integrate rural development policy have raised the profile of territorial policy and community participation, particularly at the European level with consequences for EU and national programmes. Complex governance structures spanning all sectors have become a way of life, together with partnerships and plans for every programme of policy intervention.

Studies of regionalisation in England have tended to examine economic imperatives and impacts, or the political project of regionalism (Tomaney and Mawson 2002; Morgan 2002; Ayres and Pearce, 2005; Harrison 2006; Macleod and Jones 2007; Pike, Rodriguez-Pose and Tomaney, 2007; Pike and Tomaney

2009). Other work has explored the implications for rural policy (Pearce, Ayres and Tricker, 2005; Winter, 2006; Woods, 2008). However, such accounts have not tended to study the local politics of those delivering institutional and policy change and the wider rural policy community including the implications of regional change for other scales. The knowledge gap addressed by this thesis centres on the question of how regionalisation has impacted on the practice of rural development policy. Specifically the research examines how regionalism was delivered and how policy actors involved in rural development created and responded to a new tier. An appreciation of the inter-relationships between policy scales and between actors operating at differing scales has the potential to improve understanding of rural development practice.

Research to understand interactions, struggles and inter-relationships, necessitates an approach sensitive to the activities of public policy making involving different scales. First, the study needs to be able to analyse the role of actors independently from institutions in order not to make assumptions about roles and relationships. Second, it is important to recognise that although policy making and the issues addressed may be understood as 'objective' and 'real', they are nevertheless socially constructed. Third, although government leads the construction of public policy, a wide range of actors, organisations, institutions and political ideals can be involved in policy interventions. The research draws on Foucault's concepts of discourse, knowledge and power, which – as I will demonstrate – open up the possibility to analyse the discursive practices of regionalisation.

Research context

Historically, England has had little tradition of regional government, being governed at the national tier and by local government. Nevertheless, there is a long history of regional economic policy. Post-war regional policy was understood as a need to redistribute economic activity, to redress the balance between the prosperous south of England and the ailing north. For Labour governments there was an electoral imperative to respond to their voters, concentrated as they were in the north, and a similar imperative to devolve powers to Scotland and Wales. Key individuals in the Labour Party believed that devolution should also apply to English regions. The twin narratives of

economic and democratic regions were drivers of party policy for several decades, though a lack of public interest in regional government in England, meant that democratic regionalism was always a minority agenda.

When 'New Labour' came to power in 1997 they implemented an incremental programme of regionalisation. Voters rejected regional government in 2004. Instead between 1997 and 2010 England had a series of unelected regional institutions with powers derived from the UK state. The principal new institution at the English region level was the Regional Development Agency (RDAs), though a pre-existing network of Government Offices (GOs) also played a much enhanced role. The effect was a continuing accretion of regionally based Government and non-departmental bodies, with staff, funds, plans and targets.

In the 1990s, European funding programmes necessitated the creation of regional management and administration. These tasks were taken on by Government Offices, set up in each region in 1994. They established governance networks of public, private and voluntary sector actors as required by each European programme. As a result, regional rural development capacities grew. However, although institutionalisation of the regional scale was underway prior to 1997, New Labour's regionalisation marked a new era. Rural policy and delivery formed a part of the regionalisation project, through restructuring and devolution of responsibilities.

The early years of New Labour were a period of expansion for rural development. However, the lasting effect of regionalisation has been functional and institutional change, abolishing national agencies formerly responsible for rural development, whilst retaining one for the natural environment. Instead, Government Offices and Regional Development Agencies have had rural teams, responsible for the tasks devolved to them by the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). Government Offices have facilitated various plans and partnerships focused on understanding what was happening 'on the ground' in order to deliver regional intelligence back to Defra. Regional Development Agencies took on the core function of the Rural Development Commission, as part of their mission of economic growth. The socio-economic elements of the Rural Development Programme for England –

the EU's Rural Development Programme – were devolved to the RDAs. From 2005, the Agencies began to put together plans in each region and took responsibility for managing and implementing them from 2007 onwards.

The research question

Devolution is not solely a UK phenomenon. Decentralising power from the nation state to 'lower' tiers of government is widely regarded as enabling decisions to be made 'closer to the people' and as enhancing co-ordination (Brenner, 2004). Nevertheless, researchers have questioned the extent to which power has been devolved to subordinate tiers of government (Ayres and Pearce, 2005). Similarly governance mechanisms have grown in recent decades in all policy fields, causing the sites of decision making to become blurred (Derkzen, Franklin and Bock, 2008; Convery et al, 2010). The rhetoric of devolution and centralisation, and the extent to which participatory approaches were adopted in regional policy making, form dimensions of the research. My study focuses on what happened in practice at the regional tier. Through understanding how regionalisation was enacted, the consequences can be revealed. The research question is as follows:

What did the development of a regional tier of governance in England from 1997 to 2010 mean for the policy and practice of rural development?

The question is based on a series of assumptions. First, regionalisation fundamentally changed the former administrative regional tier, creating new institutions, functions and a governing identity at the regional scale. Furthermore, such rescaling would have consequences for actors operating at national and local scales. Second, regionalisation is a form of devolution. Devolution involves the transfer of responsibilities from the state to the regional tier, and potentially to subordinate bodies. Devolved decision making leads to different choices in each territory, as for example with recent decisions in Wales and Scotland on prescription charges and student fees, diverging – at present at least – from England.

Nevertheless as noted above, a policy of devolution does not always result in the transfer of power. Thus, an objective of the research is to examine regional

policies and plans for evidence of distinctive choices, to indicate whether regionalisation did lead to divergence. An analysis of regional plans (presented in Chapter 6) forms the framework for the analysis, and informed the choice of two contrasting regions to use as case studies – the North West and East of England. Finally, it seemed likely at the start of my project that my dual role as a researcher and a practitioner would have an impact on the research and that the learning experience would differ. My practitioner-identity has played a part in framing the research and in shaping ‘discourses’, as explained in Chapter 4. My research objectives are as follows:

- 1. To examine the forces of change which rescaled the regional and local tiers*
- 2. To examine the extent to which distinctive regional rural policy frameworks were created, the drivers of distinctiveness and the reasons for any divergence*
- 3. To analyse the response of rural actors in two case study regions in order to draw conclusions about the impacts of regionalisation on regional/local relationships*
- 4. To draw lessons on the implications of studying local/regional governance systems from within, as a practitioner inside the system being studied.*

The objectives are realised through an exploration of Foucault’s concepts, and of methods of discourse analysis, followed by an examination of the history and key events in the fields of regionalisation and rural development, and the construction and discussion of discourse narratives. My thesis seeks to build on and add to existing research through a focus on the micro-politics of regionalisation in practice through the application of discourse analysis inspired by Foucault.

There was an enthusiasm for regionalism in early political and academic debates, examining the rationale and potential for regional government, whilst noting the incremental and tentative steps in the first term (Jones and Macleod, 1999; Tomaney 2002; Ward 2002). The creation of new English institutions was a rich seam for research into the dynamics of Labour’s regional policies, including Regional Development Agencies (Webb and Collis, 2000; Payne and Bennett, 2003) and Government Offices (Musson, Tickell and John, 2005). Researchers examined the strategic operations of the institutions in comparison with government’s intentions and ideals of positive growth (Hudson, 2007; Macleod and Jones, 2007). A common feature is that researchers have sought

to illuminate the changes of New Labour in the context of an international discourse of economic regions and a political discourse of regionalism.

Some have highlighted the existence of struggles between scales (Deas and Ward, 2000; Payne and Bennett, 2003; Counsell et al 2007; Pemberton and Goodwin, 2010). Ayres, Pearce and colleagues have published a series of studies, examining the operation of regional institutions, the impact on rural policy through a case study of the West Midlands, and regionalisation as viewed by state administrators in Whitehall (Pearce, Ayres and Tricker, 2005; Pearce, Ayres and Mawson, 2006; Ayres and Pearce, 2005; Pearce and Ayres, 2007). The studies focus on national-regional-local institutional relations, and observe the primacy of central government, taking a strategic view of political and institutional activity.

Other studies have examined the operation of governance, through examining the micro politics of specific projects or partnership structures (Edwards et al, 2000; Derkzen, Franklin and Bock 2008). The position of individuals, groups of actors including elites (Woods, 1997) and the networks of power illustrate the critical factors in decision making. My study focuses on the public policy activities that took place at the regional scale, focusing on a range of critical tasks throughout the period of regionalisation, rather than one project or partnership. It avoids an institutional viewpoint, emphasising instead the agency of individuals and groups of actors, and their ability or otherwise to shape events.

Foucault's concepts of discourse, knowledge and power provide a framework which is sensitive to the research objectives. Discourse analysis puts the spotlight on how policy and governance are constructed over a period of change. An adherence to Foucault, rather than drawing on a variety of concepts, should lend a theoretical purity and avoid problems of incompatible, or uncomplimentary concepts, though also putting their potential contribution out of reach. There are a limited number of examples of discourse analysis that are true to Foucault. In addition, few discourse analyses are explicit about questions of method – a necessary element of a thesis.

The analysis is confined to England. Nevertheless, devolution and regionalisation are common trends, and thus may have resonance for other territories. The discourses of how public policy changes were received and responded to have parallels in other fields, such that the framework in Chapter 8 also may be relevant to other situations.

Structure of the thesis

The thesis is organised as follows. Chapter 2 introduces the theoretical concepts that are the foundation for my study. The chapter explores the implications of Foucault's writing on discourse, knowledge and power for research on public policy making, especially in the context of multi-scalar governance. Foucault did not set out a methodology for applying his ideas to research questions. Chapter 3 reviews the options for conducting a Foucauldian-inspired discourse analysis in practice, and the advantages and challenges for a time-limited research project.

Discourse analysis utilises a range of familiar research techniques. Chapter 4 explores the research methodology, and explains the choices I have made in carrying out the research in two case study regions. My dual role as an "academic researcher" and "local rural policy practitioner" has implications for constructing and doing the research. A reflexive approach has contributed to the research, as described in Chapter 4.

Chapter 5 sets the context for the empirical research through an exploration of two themes: first, regionalism, and second, the historical practices of governing rural development in England. The chapter concludes with a description of the regionalisation and rural policy events of the New Labour era.

The starting point for a discourse analysis is a theoretical framework. Chapter 6 presents an analysis of two sets of regional plans from which a framework for an analysis of the discourses of the region is derived. Chapter 7 constructs a critical narrative of the four discourses of the region, drawing on the case study materials. The discursive practices of regionalisation have prompted reactions which shape discourses of response. In Chapter 8 I outline a framework of three discourses of response and portray the narrative of each discourse.

The final Chapter discusses what the discourse analysis reveals about the practices of regionalisation and the impacts on rural development. The conclusions reflect on the role of central government, the differences between the two case study regions, the patterns of power relations between different elite groups, and the consequences for delivery of the significant rural development programme – the Rural Development Programme for England.

Chapter 2. Conceptual foundations: Foucault and public policy

Introduction

Research questions are often formulated in response to other authors' work, or to political or moral imperatives, or to events or new ideas in the research field. The topics seemingly have solidity and certainty, forming fixed points of departure for new research. Foucault argued that research fields, questions and topics are social constructs, laden with implicit meanings (Foucault, 2002). Making use of his concepts means rethinking the accepted descriptions and categorisations which can obscure our understanding. It also means considering the influences that form, control and shape the descriptors and categories. Traditional research approaches often take institutions, predefined interest groups, or other structures as their unit of analysis, whereas Foucault reminds us that their very form and shape, and the mechanisms of change should be questioned too.

This chapter explores some of the fundamental concepts in Foucault's work, to understand their implications for formulating and undertaking research on public policy. The first section introduces Foucault's ideas on discourse and power, as they are the conceptual foundations of my study. Second, I discuss the nature and characteristics of public policy practices in the light of Foucault's notions, through interrogating a long-standing definition of public policy (Jenkins, 1978). Finally I consider how Foucault's ideas can be related to issues of scale and policy making.

Discourse and power

Foucault's early work considered questions of madness, and of medicine, amongst other things. His interest was in the practical, not in philosophising (Sheridan, 1980). However, in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (Foucault, 2002 [1969]) and in other works around the same time (Foucault, 1968; 1970) he set down some of his ways of thinking which had enabled him to explore these topics in new ways. He describes his early method as 'archaeology' through which he discerned the 'unities of discourse' and the 'rules of formation' (Foucault, 2002), or the functioning and transformation of a discourse.

Foucault's starting point was to question the familiar groupings and categorisations that we adopt to describe 'problems' and research questions without acknowledging that such problems and questions are themselves the product of discourse. Social or political issues articulate a set of ideas and values, and are the outcome of social and political deliberation. Yet we give them the status of truth or fact, ignoring their contingency on principles, morals and ethics. Instead, Foucault proposes that 'all these syntheses that are accepted without question, must remain in suspense' (Foucault, 2002, p28). It is only through putting accepted categories aside that we can discover the nature and extent of discursive fields, and be able to see the practices that lead to discourse production and transformation (Foucault, 2002). He requires us to think about how the field of research is shaped and what systems of thought regulate it. Through understanding these 'forms of regularity' (2002, p32), the limits of discursive fields emerge.

Foucault explained that 'discourse is constituted by the difference between what one could say correctly at one period (under the rules of grammar and logic) and what is actually said' (Foucault, 1968, p63). What we say and do not say is governed by the rules of the discourse. This is not to say that there is no freedom to think and act, but rather that there are 'taken for granted' meanings in what is said. Discourses comprise the shared meanings, rules and expected behaviours found in any given field of study. Concepts and events have particular meaning in the discourse, and must be constituted so that they are recognisable within the discourse (Danaher, Schirato and Webb, 2000).

Social conventions are often unspoken and implicit, and thus discursive meanings are not entirely prescribed by language. For Foucault, discursive practices may utilise language, but to understand those practices it is necessary to understand 'how it is that one particular statement appeared rather than another' (Foucault, 2002, p30). Foucault uses the term 'statement' to mean something more than a sentence or group of sentences. Language is used as a tool to construct sentences but statements also embody wider meanings, such as concepts, ideals and values. Concepts of social problems are accepted as accurate representations of 'reality', whereas they conceal or suppress other ways of thinking and other representations by their very expression. Statements

signify what is acceptable, and what can be said and thought (McHoul and Grace, 1993, p36).

Statements both construct and are limited by the discursive practices of the discourse. Statements actively create and represent what the discourse stands for, and they can only be constructed in ways which conform to what can be said. The articulation of discourse is pluralistic, a 'group of regulated practices' (Foucault, 1968, p63) subject to formation and transformation, rather than how individuals or groups act on each other. Within a policy field there will be some who have greater authority than others to act or formulate, but for all, their agency is derived from the policy discourse. For Foucault, the focus is on practices or techniques, and how they are constructed in and by the discursive field.

Actors can only gain access to the discourse if they follow the rules, and are seen to be qualified to take part. Discursive productions are excluded if they break taboos, or challenge accepted rituals or rights (Sheridan, 1980, p122). An example of discursive practices is the role of professions and disciplines in defining and constraining actions.

A discipline is defined by a domain of objects, a set of methods, a corpus of propositions considered to be true, a play of rules and definitions of techniques and instruments. (Foucault, 1970, p59)

Within the confines of the discipline, actors can go on and on formulating, for example new policies and proposals. Some of these 'commentaries' (Foucault, 1970, p56) are short lived, whilst others will gain dominance and change the course of the discourse.

The identification of change is an essential step of Foucault's archaeology, to depict and understand discourses. Traditional analyses tend to represent change as a series of steps that build one on another over time, which according to Foucault are 'strained continuities' (1968, p56) that hide discontinuities. Analyses seek 'to gain mastery' (Foucault, 1970, p49) through establishing chronologies and causalities, whereas archaeology seeks to detect 'discontinuities, ruptures, gaps, entirely new forms of positivity, and of sudden redistributions' (Foucault, 2002, p187). Foucault paid particular attention to detecting changes, first within a discursive formation (of concepts, theories

etc.), second detecting changes which are transformative, and third detecting changes which affect several discursive formations simultaneously (Foucault, 1968, p56-57). However, he warns against excessive categorisation which would obscure the transformations, but to concentrate on 'the play of dependencies' (1968, p58), or the inter-relations between changes which reveal continuities and discontinuities.

In summary, Foucault's foundational writings on discourse from 1968 to 1970 emphasise discursive formations and changes to discursive fields, in contrast to traditional analyses which emphasise the cumulative history of events, classes, structure and laws. Analysis of statements and discontinuities define the limits of discourse, and reveal 'a regularity (an order, correlations, positions and functionings, transformations)' (Foucault, 2002, p41). Revealing discourse is not about tracing causality, determining the influences and events that lead to certain outcomes, but about revealing the practices or the 'rules of formation' which determine meaning and form (Sheridan, 1980, p107).

Power is the second of Foucault's concepts relevant to my research and essential to analysing discourse. In the same way as his ideas on discourse were something of an offshoot from his early work, Foucault's concept of power emerged over a period of years. Sheridan notes that 'a theory of power is introduced for the first time in his 1970 lecture *The Order of Discourse* (Sheridan, 1980, p130). In an interview in 1976 published as *truth and power* Foucault acknowledged that 'I'm struck by the difficulty I had in formulating the question of power' (Foucault, 1976, p117) as power was an underlying theme of his early work. By 1982 he contributed a chapter entitled *The Subject and Power* (Foucault, 1982) in which he acknowledges the need for a concept of power to assist analytical work.

Foucault's concept of power differentiates him from many other modern thinkers. For him, power is not owned for example by states, institutions or individuals, to be exercised on other individuals or citizens, as in the historical depiction of feudal rule. Power is not a finite resource which can be held by some and taken away from others, but 'power is everywhere, not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere' (Foucault, 1998

[1978], p93). In modern society no-one body or individual has absolute control or authority. As different groups, institutions or bureaucracies respond to statements, for example from government or in the press, opinions can change and new alliances form, showing that 'power is mobile and contingent' (Danaher, Schirato and Webb, 2000, p71).

Power is only made visible by its effects, or the 'relations of power' that permeate society, and limit the scope of responses and behaviours.

In effect, what defines a relationship of power is that it is a mode of action which does not act directly and immediately on others. Instead it acts upon their actions: an action upon an action, on existing actions or on those which arise in the present or the future. (Foucault, 1982, p220)

Relations of power are inherent in the ways that society functions, such as the categorising of groups as 'disadvantaged' or 'the unemployed', and in the ways such groups are portrayed and understood. Power does not stand outside of the descriptors (Foucault, 1998, p94). Such categories or descriptors are not imposed 'top down', created by a governing class or authority. For Foucault, 'power comes from below' shaped by 'relationships of force' (p94) throughout society. The circulation of ideas promotes redistribution and realignment, propagating dominant notions for which 'the logic is perfectly clear' (p95) to all and for which there is no one author or originator. Individuals, groups and institutions may be instrumental in forming ideas, but for them to become hegemonic they must permeate society, and be shaped through relations of power.

Foucault recommended that power relations could be analysed by identifying points of conflict, resistance and struggle, rather than the dominant arguments or position which are themselves rationalisations (Foucault, 1982, p225). Analysing struggle reveals the mechanisms or 'techniques of power' that work through social networks and modify actions. Power relations may regulate behaviour through domination or persuasion, though behaviour will also be self-regulated through adopting cultural or social norms for example.

For Foucault, discourse and power are inter-linked as power relations take place within discursive fields. Knowledge is socially, politically or historically conditioned, and cast in ways which support the positions being claimed

(McHoul and Grace, 1993, p29). Knowledge supports the relations of power through for example, communicating evidence, whilst power conditions the knowledge produced, and thus, power and knowledge are mutually constitutive (Foucault, 1970). In his later writing Foucault used the terms subject and truth. When asked to explain how these pairs of concepts – of power-knowledge and subject-truth – were complementary, Foucault said that knowledge and power are ‘an instrument that makes it possible to analyse the problem of the relationship between subject and truth’ (Rabinow, 2000, p290). Through not taking for granted theories of a given subject, he was able to understand how a subject was formed and constituted through ‘games of truth, practices of power, and so on’ (Rabinow, 2000, p290). Consequently, seeking one absolute or essential truth is beside the point, as ‘truth’ or ‘rationality’ is contingent on the rules of the discourse.

There is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations. (Foucault, 1979 trans. Sheridan, 1980, p138)

Knowledge does not have a source in one individual or group but is derived from the circulation of power within the networks of discursive formations.

There is always the potential to refuse or reject the forces of power which seek to regulate. Foucault said that ‘points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network’ (Foucault, 1998, p95) However this also means questioning ‘the form of rationality at stake’ (Foucault, 1978), or in other words questioning the ‘truth’ or norms of the discourse. As Foucault explained, ‘every power relationship implies, at least *in potentia*, a strategy of struggle’

It would not be possible for power relations to exist without points of insubordination which, by definition, are means of escape. Accordingly, every intensification, every extension of power relations to make the insubordinate submit can only result in the limits of power. (Foucault, 1982, p224)

Furthermore, there is not one mode of insubordination but many, because as already noted, there are many ‘truths’ or many readings of a given situation. The existence of so many truths is a consequence of multiple points of resistance resulting in opposition, and as Foucault noted, ‘perpetual gaps between intentions in relation to one another’ (Foucault, 1978c, p356).

Through analysing how power functions, Foucault was able to characterise subjects in new ways and understand how they were constituted. Discourses

function through the operation of power relations, both within and between a multiplicity of discourses. Discourses mutate and transform through the mechanisms of knowledge and power. The next section elaborates Foucault's ideas of discourse and power in relation to a common concept of the government activity of policy making, and reflects on Foucault's concept of 'governmentality'.

Policy Making

In traditional political science, government entails both the production of policy issues and the actions taken to address them. One long standing definition of public policy making is from Jenkins.

A set of interrelated decisions taken by a political actor or group of actors concerning the selection of goals and the means of achieving them within a specified situation where these decisions should, in principle, be within the power of these actors to achieve. (Jenkins, 1978)

Jenkins's definition implies that policy decisions are linked to the availability of resources to carry the decisions through, and that policy specifies the actors involved in the policy intervention. Policy practitioners (including myself) take for granted the familiar well-worn path of 'making policy' through a series of stages – collecting and analysing data, considering solutions, drafting strategies, consulting, making decisions and implementing them (Hill, 1997). As Hill and Hupe note, 'very few insights from public administration or political science have been so generally adopted by practitioners as the stages model of the policy process' (Hill and Hupe, 2006, p558).

The components of Jenkins's definition and the stages of policy making can be traced in the day-to-day activities of government actors, as will be seen in the empirical research in later chapters. In this section I use Jenkins's definition to show how Foucault's ideas focus attention on the mechanisms and practices of the subject of governing. This contrasts with a research approach that takes for granted the ideology of policy making encapsulated in Jenkins's definition and utilises political institutions as units of analysis. In other words, I am using Jenkins's definition as a description of the subject of governing that is constituted through the common practices of policy making, or in Foucault's terms, a description of the practices of power.

The governmental process of policy making rests on the creation of knowledge, for example to define the 'specified situation', to devise goals and the modes of implementation (Jenkins, 1978). My own experience confirms that policy actors amass evidence and information. They form – in current parlance – an 'evidence base' first, through undertaking various forms of data-collection, including measurement, conducting surveys to gather facts and opinion, holding conferences and discussions. Second, they may undertake analyses of previous policy interventions to assess their impact, and search for new ideas, theories and solutions that have been applied in other sectors or geographic areas. Third, they will make choices in order to define the new policy intervention based on current theories and ideas, and the desired change. All of this information is used to form and to make explicit the public policy issues, and to justify policy formulation.

Through applying Foucault's ideas, it can be seen that the operating rules of how, when and from whom, data is collected, the methods of processing and presenting it are all regulated by the norms of the governmental institutions. The policy agenda that emerges is conditioned by the ideas and practices of those involved. Policies reflect the way that the policy problems and desired goals are portrayed and understood by those who are involved in the political processes of policy formation. The construction of issues that are circulating within and dominate the discourse will guide the data interrogation. As Gottweis observes 'we must conceptualise policy phenomena ... as articulations rather than facts' (2003, p249). Other potential ways of looking at the same or other data will be absent from discussion and analyses. Alternative constructions will not be considered and dismissed but rather will not be present at all because they are not consistent with the discourse.

Public policies are owned by 'the state or state organisations' (Hill, 1997, p10) as underlined by the reference in Jenkins's definition to 'political actors', – or those whose authority to act is derived from the state. The principal agents formulating policy instruments are those in government and public agencies, and increasingly are part of international coalitions of policy makers such as through the European Union. Jenkins's definition suggests that policy formation is carried out solely by state actors, though there will be formal and informal

opportunities for non-state actors to influence policy making. Certain professions, disciplines or institutions have special interests, remits or roles in policy topics of concern to them. These agents and interest groups contribute to the state-led activities. Constraint and containment are exercised through jargon, structures such as 'partnerships', or formal processes such as planning enquiries.

Policy actors have increasingly sought the involvement of those who will be impacted on by the policy activity. Practices of participation are embedded in the public policy process, such as mandatory consultation exercises (Hajer, 2003). The rhetoric of policy making is that politicians take the lead through their representational role and citizens respond. A discourse analytical view suggests much more complex patterns. Hajer notes that 'people do not always have clear cut identities or preferences' (Hajer, 2003, p88), and that policy announcements can ignite opposition and create opposing 'political communities' (p89). Individuals may be involved in lobbying political actors directly or through their membership of campaigning bodies that support or oppose policy changes. As voters, members or representatives for example, the conduct of individuals will be governed not by the norms of government, but the diverse norms at play in the discourse and accepted by individuals at any one time or space.

The rhetoric of 'participation' and 'consultation' exercises masks the power dynamics. Citizens are invited to comment for example at public exhibitions and conferences, by sending written responses or increasingly through web-based electronic means, such as web-blogs. Some state actors, including professionals and elected representatives, have a role to encourage those affected but who are outside of the technocratic policy process, to make their views known. However, conventions, such as the use of official language and modes of replying to consultations, are essential elements which restrict and curb the involvement of 'outsiders' as well as 'insiders'. Consultees have to adopt the conventions of the policy makers in order to be included in the policy process, or they will be excluded by systems of restriction that Foucault terms 'ritual'.

Ritual defines the qualification which must be possessed by individuals who speak (and who must occupy such-and-such a position and formulate such-and-such a type of statement, in the play of a dialogue)' (Foucault, 1970, p62)

The aim of policy analysis has been defined as 'to bring the unstable, ideology-driven and conflict-ridden world of politics under the rule of rational, scientifically derived knowledge' (Wagenaar and Noam Cook, 2003, p139). Policy makers will tend to view the knowledge gathering process as rational, and see the information or knowledge base that they compile as objective evidence which justifies policy formation (Richardson, 1996). Jenkins's definition is underwritten by the rational tradition of policy analysis though in practice he acknowledged, as many other policy analysts have done, that policy making involves the selective marshalling of evidence and a complex web of decisions involving many policy actors over a period of time (Jenkins, 1978). For example, Lindblom (1959 and 1979) has argued convincingly that it is not possible to conduct a complete analysis of complex policy problems.

Too many interacting values are at stake, too many possible alternatives, too many consequences to be traced through an uncertain future - the best we can do is achieve partial analysis. (Lindblom, 1979, p518)

Lindblom's position is that the scale and convoluted nature of the task constrains the extent to which policy making can be rational, and he fashioned the notion of "muddling through".

More recently, in a long term study of urban development policy and practice in Aalborg, Denmark, Flyvbjerg has built on Foucault's ideas. As Flyvbjerg notes, for those involved in the techniques of government, rationalising 'is a principal strategy in the exercise of power' (Flyvbjerg, 1998, p228). For Foucault, achieving rationality is not the issue, as it is unattainable. There is no one universal truth or rationality to seek. Rationality is contingent on the discourse. Seeking rationality, however, is a norm of the dominant discourse of policy making, such as the production of 'supporting evidence'. In Foucault's terms, the 'knowledge' employed by policy makers is shaped and constrained by the discourse or discourses in which they are operating and is only rational *within* the confines of the governmental practices.

Foucault suggested that if a conflict leads to a victory, then stability returns, but the freedom and the ability of others to act does not disappear (Foucault, 1982, p225). The Aalborg study confirmed Foucault's conclusions of the dynamic nature of power relations and of multiple points of resistance. Flyvbjerg found

that in a field of public policy, characterised by a complexity of politics, technical disciplines and institutions, power relations are likely to tend towards stability. 'Antagonistic confrontations are actively avoided. When such confrontations take place, they are quickly transformed into stable power relations' (Flyvbjerg, 1998, p231).

Flyvbjerg has asserted that 'the freedom to rationalise is neither universal, inevitable, nor unlimited' (Flyvbjerg, 1998, p228). In his study, some individuals occupying privileged positions within the institutional structures could dominate the production of knowledge, or rational truths. Those in senior positions of authority, had less need for presenting evidence as the basis of knowledge claims, than for example, those with technical roles who may be primarily concerned with the production and presentation of data. He summarised the situation thus, 'the greater the power, the less the rationality' (Flyvbjerg, 1998, p229). Senior figures who could command the support of other bodies or interest groups, as a result of historical or cultural connections, had less need of rationality.

In summary, Jenkins's definition enunciates the day-to-day taken for granted activities of public policy making and hence, it has utility in discussing questions of governing. The example of Lindblom underlines that the ambiguity and complexity of policymaking has long been understood (Lindblom, 1959), and policy analysts continue to seek to improve their models (Hill and Hupe, 2006). Foucault's contribution is to point out that public policy making activity is itself a technique of governing. Flyvbjerg's study serves as a detailed example of how such techniques can operate.

Foucault explored the 'problematic of government' in his lectures on 'Governmentality' (Foucault, 1978b). In reflecting on the changing nature of rule over many centuries, Foucault defined the modern period of government as 'the ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics, that allow the exercise of this very specific, albeit complex, form of power' (Foucault, 1978b, p219). Governmentality refers to the apparatus of government, its exercise of power, and the domains of knowledge which support it. Government is concerned with guiding the conduct of

individuals, or the inter-relations between the state and its population, summarised as the 'conduct of conduct' (Gordon, 1991, p2). In the modern era, government is concerned with the welfare of individuals or 'problems of life' (McHoul and Grace, 1993, p61) rather than the exercise of sovereign power as in earlier centuries. It is the construction of the population as both the subject and the object of government that Foucault exposed as the 'birth of a new art' (Foucault, 1978b, p217) – the tactics and techniques of government.

Foucault's ideas suggest a recasting of the conventional political science view of public policy making as rational and yet complex. Instead policy making is a practice of governing constrained and informed by the production and reproduction of discourse. The practices are led by 'political actors' but their actions are informed by knowledge circulating within society. Knowledge is produced in diverse sites across society, not just in government institutions. Knowledge claims, or the 'evidence base', justify policy stances. Interest groups or the media for example, construct knowledge which impacts on policy knowledge through employing accepted norms and rituals.

Jenkins (1978) places emphasis on decision making as the preserve of political actors. His definition exposes a technique of government – that of endowing political actors with authority to make decisions on the 'specified situations' that are the subject of policy, as well as the 'goals and means of achieving them', as noted in Jenkins's definition. Decisions of political actors are subject to the processes of knowledge production and power relations. They do have the potential to direct the flows of power (Flyvbjerg, 1998), though the potential is not absolute, as Foucault observes.

It is a question not of imposing law on men but of disposing things: that is, of employing tactics rather than laws, and even of using laws themselves as tactics—to arrange things in such a way that, through a certain number of means, such-and-such ends may be achieved. (Foucault, 1978b, p211)

Foucault began to explore the history of governing following his work on penal systems. In 'Discipline and Punish' (Foucault, 1975) he revealed the social construction of 'criminals' and 'criminality', and the forms of discipline devised by society to 'control' criminality. As Gordon notes, Foucault was suggesting that 'a whole aspect of modern societies ...could be understood only by

reconstructing certain “techniques of power” or of “power/knowledge” designed to observe, monitor, shape and control the behaviour of individuals’ (Gordon, 1991, p3). The same mode of analysis – of not taking for granted any ‘accepted’ notions, ideologies and institutions, and focussing instead on techniques and practices – could be applied to all questions of government.

Theorists examining how society is governed in recent decades have employed the concept of governance, defined by Rhodes as ‘self-organising, interorganisational networks’ (Rhodes, 1997). Governance theories suggest a more complex world than the one portrayed by Jenkins. Actors involved in policy making comprise state and non-state actors. The networks of non-governmental organisations, boards and partnerships operating outside of the formal structures of government represent a ‘*new* method by which society is governed’ (Rhodes, 1997). A Foucauldian view would suggest that governance and related practices for example of ‘consultation’ and ‘partnerships’ are themselves tactics of governing. As Gottweis notes:

The analytics of government in the tradition of Foucault ... goes even beyond the relatively broadly focused governance concept.... Regimes of practices are objects of the analytics of government insofar as they concern the direction of conduct. (Gottweis, 2003, p255)

Perhaps the significance of the current emphasis on governance for questions of governing, is the potential for complex alliances and power struggles related to alternative territories. Governance structures are assembled for defined territories and reinforce the boundary of the territory through their existence. Jenkins’s definition makes no mention of territory or spatial scale, though the power relations of scale are of significance in analysing the policy process. The next section examines questions of scale.

Policy making and scale

In tracing the history of what Foucault described as the modern era of governmentality, he concludes that ‘to govern, then, means to govern things’ (Foucault, 1978b, p210). He uses the term ‘things’ to describe a complex array of which ‘property and territory are merely one of its variables’ . For Foucault, governing relates to the population of the territory and all the events and eventualities which characterise that population. In practice in our system of government there are multiple tiers of the state, governing differing aspects of populations that inhabit overlapping territories. The shape of policy at any one

time or of any one governing tier will be shaped by power relations with other tiers. State policies often seek to sustain or introduce a new dominant discourse. Alternative discourses, for example, from the international or local levels, or from one discipline will seek to mediate the dominant discourse through knowledge production and tactics of policy formation.

The impact of power relations on different scales of governance has been graphically illustrated by Feitelson and Fischhendler (2009) in the highly contested case of water management in Israel through a Foucauldian analysis of discourses. As they note 'spatial scale determines the areas to which a governance regime pertains' (p728) though scale is far more complex than simply a territory or tier of government. 'Struggles over the construction of scale in the water governance case ... are actually multifaceted struggles, involving multiple actors advocating different story lines' or discourses (Feitelson and Fischhendler, 2009, p741). The administrative boundaries of government geographies can suggest that tiers of government – international, national, regional and local, nest inside each other. However, as Jessop confirms, multiple scales are not nested in neat, generally agreed hierarchies but are more usefully comprehended as 'tangled and mutually disconnected' (Jessop 2005). Each tier is not subservient to another – though there are tactics of constraint and control such as legal and fiscal measures. In Foucault's terms, each tier has its own 'things' to govern, and these 'things' – including their territories – overlap.

The 'tangled' relationships are evidence of power struggles which emerge often as opposing claims to legitimacy. Legitimacy is a necessity for any system of democratic government, forming part of the social practices of policy formation. In Schmitter's words the 'actions of those who rule are accepted voluntarily by those who are ruled... legitimacy converts power into authority' (Schmitter, 2001, p1). Government at all levels has historically gained legitimacy through representative democracy (Welch, 2002). However, as has already been noted, with the growth of governance, legitimacy is increasingly derived from consultation with citizens and more participative styles of democracy, rather than or as well as through elections (Rhodes, 1997; Hajer, 2003).

National government seeking to curb the autonomy of local government and local government resisting central restrictions, is a typical example of where tensions arise (Jones and Stewart, 2002). The powers of local government are circumscribed by national statute, but within that broad envelope there are separate democratic processes which those involved in local government argue bestow a legitimacy to act on behalf of local citizens. They are seen to have legitimacy to solve local problems independently of state involvement, always providing of course that the solutions and practices are deemed legal. But the national state has legitimacy too, and national governments have sought successively to curb the activity of local government using a variety of controls (Jones and Stewart, 2002). The tiers of government and governance structures organise and make use of participative democracy to legitimate their decisions.

Swynegedouw (1997), examining how the global and local economy are intertwined, concluded that spatial scales 'define the arena of struggle'. Scale can be a factor in conflict, collaboration, resistance or consensus between those involved with different scales. Rescaling to create a new territory, for example through political devolution, may itself be the result of socio-political power struggles. The establishment of structures and institutions at new scales provides the framework around which policies are defined, and creates new sites of policy deliberation and flows of power. The 'political actors' of Jenkins's definition, such as elected representatives, and agents of government at national, regional and local levels are organised around institutions and governance structures which have geographically defined territories. Non-governmental actors will only be able to influence political actors by organising and tailoring their response to the scale or scales of governance.

Governance mechanisms of partnerships, forums and networks have grown in recent decades in all policy fields (Marsden and Murdoch, 1998). Some partnership territories are defined according to administrative boundaries, whereas others formed to tackle 'specified situations' have geographies which are not defined according to pre-existing administrative boundaries. The process of rescaling when new governance structures are created can be understood in itself as a power struggle between those with allegiances to

different administrative, natural or historic boundaries, or to a desire to minimise the significance of such boundaries through creating new ones.

The knowledge processes of policy formation reinforce the identity associated with a territory, through for example presenting information as distinctive characteristics, such as the social and economic statistics of an area. Data is collected and analysed for the spatial area for which the 'set of interrelated [policy] decisions' (Jenkins, 1978) are made. Comparisons with neighbouring territories are made, to emphasise the strengths and weaknesses and therefore the identity of the home territory. Differences within the territory, and similarities of parts of the territory to other external territories tend to be given no or minimal coverage in policy documents.

Another feature of government which is significant when considering policy and scale is that government bodies at national, regional and local levels are not homogenous entities. As Wilson remarked, commenting on national government, 'searching for homogeneity within Whitehall is an exercise in chasing shadows' (Wilson, 2004). There are different histories, disciplines and cultures manifest through different discourses from one department to another, and from one political leadership to another. Political actors will be constrained by the 'rituals' of their discourse and power struggles will take place across the differing discourses.

The blurring effect of governance on decision making, the tangled nature of scale, and the complexity of legitimacy claims at different scales, means that there are multiple constructions of 'truth' and 'rationality' operating within and between scales. Foucault describes fractures, resistances and cleavages graphically.

[Resistances] are distributed in irregular fashion: the points, knots or focuses of resistance are spread over time and space at varying densities, at times mobilizing groups or individuals in a definitive way. (Foucault, 1998, p96)

It is through these struggles that shifts in policy arise and the 'set of interrelated decisions' of Jenkins's definition are mediated, and occasionally that fundamental or revolutionary changes occur.

Conclusion

Whilst Foucault's work ranged widely through the history of ideas, medicine and madness, criminality and discipline, government practice, and the history of sexuality, concepts of discourse and power are portable, fundamental ones, which underlie his work – including governmentality. He undertook historical studies, and this has led to some criticism because it fails to reflect changes in modern society (Simons, 1995, p40). Others have elaborated his ideas to deepen our understanding of modern liberal democracy (Rose and Miller, 1992; Barry, Osborne and Rose, 1996; Dean, 2010). Nevertheless, as Simons says 'it may be more fruitful to follow Foucault's general approach to the analysis of power rather than cleaving to its details' (Simons, 1995, p40).

The definition of policy making examined in this chapter (Jenkins, 1978) from the rational tradition of policy analysis, describes a seemingly reasoned process within an ordered world of defining issues, considering options, taking decisions that are within the power of the policy actors, and implementing them to tackle the issue. It is a definition that has stood the test of time as it continues to express the rhetoric of policy making and the steps habitually used by government policy analysts (Hill, 1997). It is tempered by an understanding of complexity (Lindblom, 1979), and the systems of participative democracy and governance which have evolved in recent decades (Rhodes, 1997).

Researchers interested in the mechanics of governing have drawn on the concept of governance to examine how actors and organisations interact, and the apparent lack of transparency in decision making. Rural researchers were slow to employ the concept according to Goodwin (1998), who set out a new agenda for rural research complemented by other articles in the same volume (Woods, 1998; Marsden and Murdoch, 1998; Murdoch and Abram, 1998). He detailed how the concept has utility to understand the capacity to act of actors and groups. Subsequently, the concept has appealed to rural researchers because it emphasises, as Woods and Goodwin (2003) note, 'the messiness and complexity of the new structures of governance' and prompts questions of 'legitimacy, accountability and power' (p249). Studies from a governance perspective have improved our understanding of how relationships work in practice and have sought to trace the power relations of decision-making

through unpicking the complexity of governance structures (Edwards et al, 2001; Derkzen, Franklin and Bock, 2008).

A Foucauldian approach has the potential to look beyond governance structures and organisations as his ideas posit that the accepted organisations and structures of governance are in themselves techniques of governing. Policy formation, knowledge production, consultation and decision-making by political actors are not founded on an absolute rationality, but are constrained and controlled by the norms of the discourse and rituals of the disciplines. An understanding of the discursive formations shows how policy knowledges are shaped *within* the rationality of the discourse. Policy discourses are framed by the examination and re-examination of knowledge in the context of the values and practices of the actors involved.

Other conceptual approaches that could be appropriate to my research objectives include Jessop's strategic relational approach (Jessop, 2001), and network approaches drawing on the work of Callon and Latour. Jessop, in accord with Foucault's notion of government as socially constructed, emphasises political strategy and 'the differential ability of social forces' to privilege some strategies over others (Macleod and Goodwin, 1999, p516). Jones et al (2004) have shown how Jessop's concept has utility in understanding political processes and the dynamics of political change in relation to regionalisation. Similarly, Pemberton and Goodwin (2010) have applied the approach to the changing nature of rural local government. The research is a powerful example of the strengths of the approach, calling attention to the interplay between political strategies and political projects. However, my research objectives point to a methodological approach more suited to understanding the implementation of policy changes at a micro-political level.

The concept of policy networks as Macleod and Goodwin (1999) recognise, has the potential to illuminate the dynamics of political activity. Rhodes (1990, 1997) has proposed a range of networks from highly integrated policy communities, to more loosely integrated issue networks. Policy networks can be traced as influencers of the policy process and, at the same time, they are shaped by the

policy process. One of the challenges is to codify the networks at play in an empirical case. Macleod and Goodwin conclude that, in a policy network approach 'there is little conceptual space to consider the political struggles inherent in the *production* of networks, their scalar manifestation, and associated relations of empowerment and disempowerment (p512). Similarly, actor-network theory, based on concepts developed particularly by Callon and Latour, has been applied in rural research to situations of conflict (Murdoch and Marsden, 1995; Woods, 1997a). Here, actors conform with the requirements of the network and research is focused on the associations and interactions between networks. Murdoch and Marsden (1995) note that Callon and Latour follow Foucault's notion of power. Actor-network analyses identify the power relationships between networks, and how networks of power are consolidated, constrained or resisted.

A way of thinking about policy research which is not centred on institutions, structures and procedures, government publications and policy officials, but which encompasses the inter-relations and connections involved in governing opens up the possibility of fresh insights into public policy. Network approaches could be employed, though Foucault's ideas on the production of discourse enables a focus on questions of the practices of government and how public policy is formed, shaped and reshaped. Analysis of discourses has the potential to show the link between political rhetoric, and how discourses are created and maintained.

My research seeks to examine the forces of change which rescaled the regional and local tiers. Power struggles are inherent in the processes of rescaling and in relations between scales. Foucault's concept of power acknowledges the diverse influences of social and political relations on policy, beyond the immediate political arena.

There are manifold relations of power which permeate, characterise and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse. (Foucault, trans. Sheridan, 1980, p93)

Governance theories and studies of partnerships in practice illustrate the dynamics that mediate power struggles, though Foucault, as confirmed by Flyvbjerg's findings, implies a tendency towards stable relations. A concept of

power that is everywhere and not owned, and power relations that are contingent, suggests a way of understanding the values and practices which are evident in power struggles. Concepts of power and knowledge, the subject and truth reveal the potential to understand the mechanics which underlie the day-to-day activities of governing and the forces at play within a multi-scalar policy field. It is possible to become aware of how changes to public policy play out in practice, independently of apparently fixed boundaries. Foucault's ideas can promote a rich understanding of public policy practices in contrast to methods of social scientific analysis with their tendency to examine subjects, institutions, or policy mechanisms pre-constructed according to the accepted ideologies of policy making. An analysis of discursive practices opens up the prospect of illuminating questions of governing. The next chapter considers how this discourse analysis can be achieved.

Chapter 3. Discourse analysis and public policy research

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to examine how Foucauldian discourse analysis can be conducted in fields of public policy, the extent to which it has utility for researchers, and how it can be applied in practice. The term 'discourse' is used in day-to-day language interchangeably with discussion or dialogue. The story of a discussion or dialogue is the object of discourse analysis, in order to expose patterns and hidden rules of how language is used and narratives are created. Thus, discourse analysis is about how the world is understood through examining all modes of communication.

There are different traditions of discourse analysis which are derived from differing interpretations of the meaning of discourse (Mills, 1997; Torfing, 2005). Linguistic traditions define discourse solely as the units of written and spoken communication under study and focuses on the content of texts and conversations. Psychologists and other researchers working in linguistic traditions use linguistic methods such as discursive psychology and conversation analysis to derive meaning from spoken and written communications. Modes of 'narrative study' have developed within several disciplines such as literary studies and sociolinguistics (Slembrouck, 2006). Other social science traditions define discourse as being derived from and dependant on social practices which govern the discursive formations (Hajer, 1995). Planning researchers have employed the idea of 'policy discourses' through a 'sociological institutionalist approach' (Healey, 1999; Vigar et al 2000; Vigar, 2002). Policy discourses evolve and transform through the social practices of policy networks and policy arenas – or the networks of actors and places where policy issues are discussed (Vigar, 2002; Coaffee and Healey, 2003).

Discourse analyses have evolved which are grounded in a variety of social theories, such as those of Laclau, Mouffe, Bourdieu and Foucault (Slembrouck, 2006). Foucault's ideas on discourse are appropriated by analysts from many different disciplines. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) developed by Fairclough and others (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1997) within the linguistic tradition of

discourse analysis, understand discourse to be represented by text and spoken communication, whilst also recognising that discourse is shaped by social practices. A definition of discourse which encompasses social practices draws attention to how discourses are formed and shaped, and to the possibility of contrasting sets of influences, producing divergent discourses. In Critical Discourse Analysis, these practices are detectable in language and thus methods are based on linguistic analyses, giving rise to the 'linguistic turn' for example in geography (Hastings, 1999) and political science (Carver, 2002). Discursive traditions which explore the connections between narrative, positions and identity, through an understanding of social practices which goes beyond units of text, are adopted by other researchers. Discourse analysis in the discursive tradition which is also inspired by Foucault, places emphasis on his concept of power which is 'prior to language' (Hastings, 1999, p10), so that power relations are reflected in language but are not a consequence of language. This thesis is concerned with the discursive tradition of discourse analysis inspired by Foucault's concepts of knowledge and power, and this chapter draws on examples from researchers working in the fields of rural, environment and planning policy.

Social scientists inspired by Foucault typically present the discourses in their field of study and analyse them according to the power relations they have uncovered, giving valuable insights (Hajer, 1995; Richardson, 2000). However, the method of how to conduct a discourse analysis inspired by Foucault has received limited systematic attention (Howarth, 2005, p316). As Hoggart, Lees and Davies (2002) have noted, discourse analysis is 'something like bike riding...which is not easy to render or describe in an explicit manner' (p165). Yet if researchers are to make use of discourse analysis it is necessary to gain some appreciation of how to do it. However, to prescribe a methodology would be un-Foucauldian, as 'to do so would afford a particular position the status of truth in a perspective where truth is always conditional' (Gilbert, Cochrane and Greenwell, 2003, p792). This paradox means that there are many methodologies employed and at the same time no methodologies of discourse analysis. Truth is constructed within a discourse and therefore is relational to the knowledge and practices of that discourse. The relational nature of truth

means that methodological choices made in any one research project are driven by the problem at the centre of the research.

The absence of extensive discussion of methodological issues raises questions about how researchers can engage with the Foucauldian tradition of discourse analysis and the extent to which it is useful to researchers carrying out time-limited academic research. In the first part of this chapter, I summarise how Foucault's ideas can be of value to understanding the dynamics of public policy. Then in part two I examine some contrasting studies of discourse analyses of public policy which take their inspiration from Foucault, to illustrate the approaches that others have adopted.

Foucault and public policy research

Four strengths of Foucauldian discourse analyses of public policy can be discerned. First, it illuminates the mechanisms of government, institutions and governance without making any assumptions about institutional boundaries and the roles of actors located within these institutions which could limit the research. Foucault's ideas prompt questions about how the actors engage and interact, rather than what they are doing or are seeking to achieve (Dean, 2010, p33). Questions of who does what in which institution and what is the legitimacy of their action are replaced by a focus on engagement and interaction, through examining questions of how actors form and implement policy (Foucault, 1982). Rose and Miller, in their analysis of political power which is based on Foucault's ideas of power, assert that:

Through an analysis of the intricate inter-dependencies between political rationalities and governmental technologies, we can begin to understand the multiple and delicate networks that connect the lives of individuals, groups and organisation to the aspirations of authorities. (Rose and Miller, 1992 p175-176)

Discourse is independent of individuals or institutions, but is shaped by systems or regulatory processes described as discursive formations. 'One is "in the true" only by obeying the rules of a discursive "policing"' (Foucault, 1970, p61). For Foucault, the rules of government are not sovereignty, the rule of law and political domination, which are themselves elements of a pervasive discourse of the state, but the rules of knowledge and power operating within the practice of government.

Second, Foucauldian discourse analysis uncovers the diverse influences that define a policy problem. In Foucault's early work on discourse, *The Order of Discourse* (Foucault, 1970), he explores the social practices of disciplines and shows how discourses are embedded in any given field of interest through customs and rituals, values and practices. Foucault shows that individuals, institutions and other social phenomena are regulated by these social processes. The discourses of policy are continually shaped and reshaped through social interaction. That interaction is not confined to the world of policy makers or to one spatial scale such as national policy, but encompasses many disciplines, citizens, the media, and political activity at differing spatial scales.

The third strength is that Foucault's concept of power suggests ways of studying the detailed dialogue of policymaking and its implementation in order to understand the everyday practices of resistance, collaboration or co-operation that are evident in policy studies. For Foucault 'discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it' (Foucault, 1998, p101). Power relations mediated by the social practices at play in power struggles within and between discourses, are a fundamental part of discourse analysis inspired by Foucault. Flyvbjerg (2001a, p98) notes that Foucault's 'work reflects a sophisticated understanding of Realpolitik' and that his 'emphasis on marginality and domination makes his thinking sensitive to difference, diversity, and the politics of identity, something which today is crucial for understanding power' (Flyvbjerg, 2001a, p104).

The fourth strength of discourse analysis is that, through debunking the rationality of policymaking, researchers become aware of the contingent nature of the policy process. Evidence or information used in policymaking is created within the confines of the discursive formations, so that the 'truth' conforms to the rules and norms of the discourse. Foucault terms these processes 'the will to truth', the effect of which is to mask the discursive formation.

Thus all that appears to our eyes is a truth conceived as a richness, a fecundity, a gentle and insidiously universal force, and in contrast we are unaware of the will to truth, that prodigious machinery designed to exclude. (Foucault, 1970, p56)

Discourse analysis exposes the 'will to truth' or the accustomed ways of governing, and opens up questions about how the diverse components of policy processes 'produce effects that have meaning and consequences for us' (Rose, 1996, p38).

As explained in Chapter 2, Foucault propounded a set of ideas that evolved throughout his lifetime, and from which the four strengths of discourse analysis for policy studies flow. His writings and interviews point to a way of understanding the discourses and power relations of public policy. Foucault described his own early work as examples of 'archaeology' or the description which resulted from analysing the strategies being used and the principles governing the strategies within his fields of interest. In his later work Foucault developed the related tool of 'genealogy' to analyse the power relations within a specific struggle, paying 'attention to the processual aspects of the web of discourse – its ongoing character' (Kendall and Wickham, 1999, p31). The insights produced as a result of his ways of thinking are evident throughout his work. Nevertheless, he did not formulate a definitive methodology of discourse analysis which can be applied by those new to it. In order to examine the utility of discourse analysis for researchers in rural policy studies, the next section examines analyses inspired by Foucault.

Discourse analysis and method

Foucault's legacy of ideas on discourse and power, and emphasis on the social practices of discourse formation, has inspired a new tradition of discourse analysis in politics and public policy research (Howarth, 2005). A corpus of work utilising discourse analysis has grown up within various disciplines. These have tended to favour distinct modes of discourse analysis. Rural studies does not have a well defined oeuvre but researchers have drawn on work undertaken in a number of connected disciplines. Geographers, town planners, political scientists and others researching in the rural studies field have utilised discourse analysis grounded in Foucault's ideas. Discourse analysts whose work is influenced by Foucault's concepts have devised their own methods of carrying out discourse analysis (e.g. Hajer, 1995; Flyvbjerg, 1998; Richardson, 2000; Dryzek, 2005). A review of the literature suggests that three broad approaches can be discerned.

The first approach taken by researchers is to make reference to concepts of discourse and power because they have utility in illuminating the research topic and material under study, rather than applying any specific methodology to analyse material for discourses. The classic debates in the rural studies literature of the early 1990s on the usage of the term rurality, and meanings attached to the rural (Philo, 1992,1993; Halfacree, 1993; Murdoch and Pratt, 1993, 1994; Jones, 1995; and Pratt, 1996) were grounded in ideas of discourse as socially constructed realities. The contested nature of multiple discourses raised questions of power within the debates, including fleeting references to Foucault as well as to other social theorists. Frouws' analysis of rural discourses in the Netherlands draws on this debate in rural studies. Quoting Jones (1995), Frouws describes the significance of relations of power in Foucauldian terms – 'Unravelling this process of discourse formation provides an understanding of the flows of meaning and *power* that combine to create the social constructions of the rural' (Frouws, 1998, p56, italics in original).

Other researchers in the same tradition of rural studies do implicitly or explicitly acknowledge Foucault's influence on analysing discourses. Woodward (1996) uses the Foucauldian notion of discourse to investigate contradictory discourses of rural deprivation espoused by different groups. She notes the significance of power relations in excluding or obscuring discourses of the rural. Her later work on military discourses draws on Dryzek's environmental discourses, which are also inspired by Foucault's concepts. She questions 'the political and social accomplishments of different discursive strategies, and an assessment of how such strategies can legitimate or challenge power relations' (Woodward, 2001, p203). Woods (1997) in a study of local politics in Somerset, outlines discourses of rurality grounded in Foucault's concept of power. Ideas of discourse and power relations are utilised in his writing on rural politics (Woods, 2003, Woods, 2008), though, in common with other academics in rural studies, he makes use of a variety of complementary concepts from theorists such as Latour, Jessop and others to illuminate his research methods and findings.

Thus, in the first broad approach to discourse analysis, in most cases the research papers give little indication of research methodologies used. They can

be expected to be grounded in commonly employed methods such as desk research, interviews, action research and so on. The significance for potential discourse analysts is that Foucault's ideas are sufficient to provide a 'way of thinking' when conducting research using traditional methods and when reviewing research materials

Flyvbjerg's detailed and long term study of urban transport planning in Aalborg would seem to be an example of the second methodological approach, to emulate Foucault's own tool of genealogy. The project to improve traffic and public transport management, improve the quality of public space and encourage transport by means other than the car, is the subject of Flyvbjerg's narrative spanning nearly fifteen years set out in eighteen chapters (Flyvbjerg, 1998). Flyvbjerg pointed out that there can be many interpretations of the project.

[It is] not the only reality... and a reality to be interpreted differently by different readers. But for the reader willing to enter this reality and explore the life and death of the Aalborg project from beginning to end, the payback is meant to be a sensitivity to issues of planning, democracy, rationality, and power. (Flyvbjerg, 2002, p356)

Flyvbjerg sets out the story of the Aalborg project in the context of a belief in democracy and of the theoretical benefits to the populous at large of planning exercises. Through laying bare the power relations, he reveals the reality of a project which has failed in these contexts. As Peattie notes 'The book does not praise the plan, but neither does it blame it; the story is one of ineffectiveness' (Peattie, 2001, p257). Flyvbjerg's narrative focuses on how the actors interact, and the social practices or the 'rules of formation', such as the historical relations between the planning authority and the chamber of commerce.

As with the first methodological approach, Flyvbjerg's study is cross-referenced to the notions of a range of thinkers including Machiavelli, and Nietzsche as well as Foucault. Foucault's notion of the 'will to truth' is evident in Flyvbjerg's emphasis on the construction of rationality as relational within the policy production and implementation processes. Although Flyvbjerg does not say explicitly that his work is a discourse analysis, he is inspired by Foucault and his study illustrates the four strengths of Foucauldian discourse analysis – of illuminating the mechanisms of government, exposing social practices,

uncovering the power relations in everyday activities, and highlighting the gap between policy rhetoric and practice.

Hajer and Dryzek have been leading proponents of Foucauldian inspired discourse analysis of environmental policy issues. Their work provides contrasting examples of extensive narratives reminiscent of Foucault's tool of genealogy (Hajer, 1995; and Dryzek, 2005). Alongside Flyvbjerg's study, these examples are the result of a prolonged period of immersion in their respective policy fields and a long association with it. The common emphasis in their analyses is the uncovering of power relations within the policy arena. Dryzek's work is based on four decades of material and a lifetime's involvement with it. Although Flyvbjerg wrote up the Aalborg study in a shorter period, it is based on almost fifteen years of the life of the Aalborg project (Flyvbjerg, 2002). These examples suggest that, in order to understand the discursive formations of a policy field, the data and analysis requirements are extensive. The consequent question for researchers is whether discourse analysis can be applied to time-limited projects.

The third approach to Foucauldian discourse analysis provides some means of surmounting the obstacles of time and scale. Some analysts have proposed analytical tools, an initial framework of discourses, and devices to structure the results, which all assist with managing the analysis and containing the research exercise. In both the Hajer and Dryzek cases the writers use a framework to structure their work, and thus they can be seen as examples of the third category of structured approaches, as well as examples of the second 'narrative' category.

Hajer has proposed three tools to identify discourses within research materials. These are 'metaphor', 'story line' and 'discourse coalitions'. Metaphors are generally two or three word phrases which symbolise the key ideas of the discourse such as 'climate change' and 'access to services'. Story lines encapsulate the discourse in a short-hand form using the metaphors. Hajer says that when carrying out discourse analysis 'one quickly realises that in any field there are a couple of such stories, which fulfil an especially important role' (Hajer, 2005, p301). They define the essence of the discourse. Actors operating

within the discourse use the story lines in communication. However, Hajer points out that this does not necessarily mean that each use of the story line is based on the same understanding or depth of knowledge. 'It can be shown that people *who can be proven not to understand one another fully*, nevertheless together produce meaningful political interventions'. Hajer defines his third concept of 'discourse coalitions' as 'a group of actors that, *in the context of an identifiable set of practices*, shares the usage of a particular set of story lines over a particular period of time' (Hajer, 2005, p302, italics in original). For example, story lines of public policy are not confined to any one organisation or government department, but are shared by the national and local players, and by the academic community, professions, the media and others impacted on by the policy activity. These actions combine to form the discourse coalitions.

Dryzek's method of structuring his material is similar, and utilises story lines and metaphor (2005, p19). He asks four questions to define each discourse:

- the basic entities whose existence is recognised or constructed
- assumptions about natural relationships between different entities
- agents and their motives, and
- the key metaphors or other rhetorical devices that figure in the discourse

Through analysing and presenting his material within the four questions, he is able to construct the elements of the discourses within each dimension.

In the discipline of town planning, Sharp and Richardson (2001) agree with Hajer and Flyvbjerg that the intention of a Foucauldian discourse analysis is to construct a critical narrative of the story or stories. They propose 'a set of key elements' that form the methodological questions to be answered by the researcher. They argue that different discourses should be identified before the research process, as discourses are manifest in 'policy rhetoric, documents, plans or programmes, but also in institutional structures, practices and events' (Sharp and Richardson, 2001, p201). Through this initial question, researchers make significant decisions which largely define the scale and scope of the research. Richardson (2000) was able to contain his analysis of discourses of rurality in EU spatial policy through concentrating on the stories associated with a key policy document – The European Spatial Development Perspective 1999. Within the research process, Sharp and Richardson (2001) suggest that

researchers pinpoint struggles and their outcomes as a further way of making a discourse analysis of public policy manageable. The researcher makes decisions to focus on new practices, changes in communication, and the linkages between these changes and institutional structures. This, they suggest, can be done through collecting descriptions, particularly of opposing views, from people, documents, and studying practices, for example. New insights, they argue, are gained by asking questions about the difference between policy rhetoric and what happens in practice (Sharp and Richardson, 2001).

In his later work Hajer (2006) has proposed ten steps which could be universally applied, in addition to his devices of metaphor, story lines and discourse coalitions (Table 1). The steps imply an iterative approach, to build up the narrative through taking an overview using different sources, and then homing in on key players, incidents and events. He suggests focussing data collection and analysis on sites of conflict, and how interaction between actors are regulated, linked to Foucault's concepts of power and resistance.

Table 1: Hajer's ten steps of discourse analysis

1. <i>Desk Research</i> – a first chronology and first reading of events
2. <i>'Helicopter Interviews'</i> – to gain an overview from different perspectives
3. <i>Document Analysis</i> – to identify story lines and metaphors, and the sites of discursive struggle
4. <i>Interviews with key players</i> – to enable the researcher to construct the interviewee discourses and the shifts in recognition of alternative perspectives
5. <i>Sites of argumentation</i> – search the data to account for the argumentative exchange
6. <i>Analyse for positioning effects</i> – to show how people, institutions or nation-states get caught up in an interplay
7. <i>Identify key incidents</i> – to understand the discursive dynamics and the outcomes
8. <i>Analysis of practices in particular cases of argumentation</i> – by going back to the data to see if the meaning of what is said can be related to the practices in which it was said.
9. <i>Interpretation</i> – come up with an account of the discursive structures, practices, and sites of production
10. <i>Second visit to key actors</i> – respondents should recognise some of the hidden structures of language.

Summarised from Hajer, 2006, p73-74

Hajer has utilised the three tools of storyline, metaphor and discourse coalition in his own work on environmental politics, through the 'emblematic issue' of acid rain (Hajer, 1995). The issue functioned as a metaphor, encapsulating the wider issue of environmental conflict, as did BSE (Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy) in later analyses (Hajer, 2005). A strength of his work has been to show how a relatively easily understood issue can help to construct an understanding of a wider problem, and how different actors responded in contrasting ways according to their historical and political positions. The resultant analysis is sensitive to historical norms in the field of study – in his case of science and government. His conclusions shed light on how interactions shape policy making, and how positions and government practices evolve and change.

Other researchers have made selective use of Hajer's concepts in Foucauldian analyses. Feitelson and Fischhendler (2009) identify the story lines associated with differing ideological stances in the highly contested field of water management in Israel. The story lines enabled them to bring out the contrasting political, technological, and scale issues which form elements of the conflicts. Through discourse analysis they identified five generic scales of governance 'each legitimised by a different story line and thus likely to be advanced from a different ideological stance' highlighting the nature of power relations, and why some water regimes were rejected or sidelined (Feitelson and Fischhendler, 2009, p741). In an example from town planning, Hidding, Needham and Wisserhof also underline the political nature of scale, noting that problems and spatial scales 'are selected by people, and hence determined by people's knowledge, interests, power positions etc. (Hidding, Needham and Wisserhof, 2000, p122). They identify five discourses of town and country, and construct three layers of the theoretical perspective, plan concept and management strategy of the discourse. Each layer is portrayed by a statement or story line. Similarly, Connelly, Richardson and Miles analyse the nature of legitimacy in rural governance structures through the story lines circulating in stakeholder forums (2006).

The structuring of discourses through applying Hajer's tools can be used in discourse analyses that are not conceptually tied to Foucault. Vigar utilises

story lines in his analysis of transport policy 'as a way disentangling policy discourses', creating new frames of reference and insights into policy making (Vigar, 2002, p25). The utilisation of metaphor or rhetoric to symbolise aspects of a discourse is a common feature of discourse analyses. The concept of discourse coalitions seems to be less widely adopted. Vigar provides one explanation noting that the construct 'fails to capture the fluidity and uncertainty that characterises institutional relations in any policy setting' (p18). If members of the discourse coalition by definition identify with the story lines, then there is an implication of consistency and lack of variation within the coalition. Hajer says that discourse coalitions are made up of the actors who utter a common set of story lines, and actors from many different positions and interests may be attracted to a set of story lines (Hajer, 1995, p65). Thus, in Hajer's view, a discourse coalition is diverse.

Lundqvist (2000, p30) considers that Hajer's strategic and historical approach hides the micro-analysis of actors' motives. Researchers have adopted alternative constructs, seeking to stratify and group actors who adopt different positions or roles in the discourse. Miller (1994, p157) distinguishes the role of 'setting organisers' to determine social interactions, producing 'discursive dominance by making some interactional resources available to themselves and others, and acting to make others less available'. MacMillan (2003, p191) proposes to drop 'discourse' from discourse coalitions and focus instead on 'coalitions', to show 'why some people are better placed to join [coalitions] than others'. Vigar and associates (Vigar, 2002; Vigar et al, 2000) utilise 'cultural communities' or 'communities of practice' as the building blocks of policy networks to understand the dynamics of policy change. Feitelson and Fischhendler draw on 'epistemic communities', or networks of knowledge-based experts, as proposed by Haas (Haas, 1992). Hajer himself compared his concept with Sabatier's 'advocacy-coalitions', 'made up of people from various organisations "who share a set of normative and causal beliefs and who act in concert"' (Sabatier 1987 cited Hajer, 1995, p68). Whilst he agreed with much of Sabatier's approach, Hajer considered that whereas Sabatier assumed that consensus could be achieved through debate, Hajer focused on the meaning of the constructs used in debates – following Foucault.

Conclusion

A Foucauldian discourse analysis of public policy, the nature of the research questions and the construction of discourse narratives will be guided by the underlying conceptual foundations provided by Foucault. The key strength of such a discourse analysis is to open up ways of understanding policy activity which emphasise the contingent nature of rationality and seek to uncover the power relations of policy making. Examples of the three approaches to Foucauldian discourse analysis show that they all seek to construct a critical narrative, through an examination of the power relations at play. However the 'pure' narrative approach exemplified by Flyvbjerg is less structured and more open ended than the other two approaches, and is applicable to a research endeavour which is not as time bound as most studies. The examples of structured approaches offer ways of making the research project manageable.

Hajer's work provides additional guidance through his tools, and ten steps of analysis to construct the narratives of argumentation or conflict. Researchers agree that discourse analysis makes explicit why groups of actors take different approaches, and by doing so there is the possibility to challenge and change power relations. The first step is for policy makers to 'free themselves from their present ways of thinking' (Hidding, Needham and Wisserhof, 2000, p129). However, some researchers have found it necessary to disregard or modify Hajer's tool of discourse coalitions, in particular to enable a closer examination of the micro-politics within those coalitions.

All three approaches to discourse analysis require the use of research methods, such as desk research, interviews, and participant observation as appropriate to the research material, with the contingent questions of applicability, ethical considerations, operationalisation, and robustness. The next chapter considers the methodological questions of how to conduct the research in practice.

Chapter 4. Research questions and methods

Introduction

Hajer's steps and tools provide a structure and a way of 'doing' discourse analysis. This chapter discusses the methodological steps in practice. However, in setting out discourse analysis as a process of sequential steps, there is a danger of failing to explain the essential element of 'un-hiding' the hidden. Discourse analysis requires a deeply reflexive approach to recognise the 'rules of formation', and to understand the patterns of power relations. This chapter also examines reflexivity and my position as a researcher and practitioner. The first section reflects on the methodological issues, in particular the use of case studies. The second section outlines the conduct of the research to illustrate the strengths and weaknesses. The third section explores the concept of reflexivity and my reflexive practice.

Methodological issues

Brewer says that research design is 'a necessary requirement for all research of whatever style' (Brewer, 2000, p57-58) and the choice of research methods is determined by the nature of the research question. Chapter 3 has shown that a Foucauldian discourse analysis can illuminate the practices of government and hence is applicable to my research question concerning regional governance and the policy and practice of rural development. This section considers issues of design and methods in a Foucauldian discourse analysis.

Hajer's structured approach recommends desk research as the first step. This enables the researcher to appreciate the scope of research that has already been carried out and identify new questions. The critical element of Hajer's second and third steps of 'helicopter interviews' and document analysis is to focus on finding the key events of change, conflict and struggle within the chosen field. The preliminary analysis seeks to identify different positions and sites of discourse production through examining how events and circumstances are described.

In public policy research, the starting point will be government publications, strategies, minutes and web pages. Such 'official' publications are easy to access and can be used to give an account of the chronology of events.

However, they can also reveal patterns of thought and action (Brewer, 2000, p113) or the accepted norms, culture and conventions. Inferences can be drawn from documents such as the political construction of issues by lead politicians in the foreword or covering letter, or relationships with others listed or missing from governance, consultations, and circulation lists. The implications of the context and audience for a document also need to be considered. For example, Howarth notes 'the actual words and meaning of a political address may be much less significant than where and how they are delivered' (Howarth, 2005, p344). Non-official sources, such as consultation responses and news articles, may indicate supporting or opposing viewpoints.

Questions will always arise as to the extent of documents to seek and to examine (Hajer, 2005; Howarth, 2005). Some documents will be publicly available, whilst others may require negotiation to access. The researcher makes judgements based on their significance to the research enquiry and to show that consideration has been given to selecting appropriate documents. Hajer's recommendation of 'helicopter interviews' to seek an overview of different positions is a more direct method (Hajer, 2006, p73) as interviews lend themselves to drawing out opinions and identities. The choice of interviewees may be informed by the desk research and limited by time, access, availability and cost. Questions of interviewing as a method are discussed later in this section.

Hajer's fourth step is to conduct interviews with key players. Howarth's discussion of applying discourse theory suggests that there is an intermediary step of choosing between 'two central research strategies in discourse theory... case studies and comparative method' (Howarth, 2005, p329). Comparative research can be useful to draw inferences from similar or different cases. Much empirical work in discourse studies is case based, either of single or multiple cases. The need for case studies, as Yin notes, 'arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena' (Yin, 2009, p4). Case studies are ideally suited to research questions that require in-depth descriptions and pose "how" or "why" questions about social phenomena. Case studies enable pictures to be built up of events over a period of time, and to explain the role of actors and the critical incidents. Experiments, surveys and other formal, less

explanatory methods are less likely to elicit descriptions of how actors responded or why they responded to a series of social events.

Another feature of case studies is that they set the events within their social context (Brewer, 2000, p77). Whereas in an experiment, researchers may seek to control variables to test different outcomes, such an approach is entirely inappropriate when the situation and circumstances are themselves a critical element of understanding behaviour (Yin, 2009, p11). Case studies tend to deal with contemporary events where ‘the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident’ (Yin, 2009, p18) or in other words a complex, real-life situation where events, explanations and patterns of behaviour are confused and intertwined.

There is a common perception that it is not possible to generalise and draw conclusions from a small number of cases, regardless of their depth, and cases are criticised for not being ‘objective’. Authors such as Miller and Brewer (2003) and Yin (2009) refute the criticisms by noting that the choice of cases, the sampling of data collected in the cases, and the use of comparative materials can all overcome issues of generalisation. Howarth, drawing on Flyvbjerg’s defence of social science enquiry (Flyvbjerg, 2001a), observes that cases may be ‘critical’ cases that can be used to ‘falsify or confirm, or “extreme” or “deviant” cases which may confirm or question our assumptions about “normal cases”’ (Howarth, 2005, p330). Foucault used cases such as Pierre Rivière in *Madness and Civilisation* (Foucault, 2001) to demonstrate ‘the genesis ... of a system of thought as the matter of possible experiences’ (Foucault, 1984, p336). He considered that individual cases could have ‘the status of significant experiences’ (p336) if they illustrated the formation of knowledge and the systems and practices at play in the broader field.

The choice of case studies does not in itself determine the methods of generating data. Data collection for discourse analysis, in common with ethnography, seeks ‘to understand the social meanings and activities of people in a given “field” or setting’ (Brewer, 2000, p59). Common research methods, which give access to such settings and which enable the examination of language and social practices, are interviews and participant observation. Hajer

would seem to favour interviews (Hajer, 2006, p73). The timetable for the research is determined by the researcher, and interviews are arranged to suit the programme. The researcher can examine specific lines of enquiry thrown up by the preliminary analysis. In contrast, participant observation can only be used if suitable activities are taking place to observe in the time available and the researcher is able to access the field.

Interviews are used in many types of research (Miller and Brewer, 2003, p166). Brewer notes that semi-structured and unstructured interviews give 'access to people's meaning-endowing capacities and produces rich, deep data that come in the form of extracts of natural language' (Brewer, 2000, p66). However, there are pitfalls which the researcher must avoid if they are to collect meaningful responses, including selecting interviewees, gaining access and conducting the interviews.

The selection of interviewees for discourse analysis will be guided by the initial discourse framework, with a view to seeking contrasting and opposing viewpoints. Such choices are described as 'judgement sampling' by Burgess who says that the researcher 'requires a detailed knowledge of the universe from which to draw individuals who have distinct qualifications as informants' (Burgess, 1984, p55). 'Snowball sampling' involves the researcher asking their initial contacts to put them in touch with other key informants. Judgement and snowball sampling are not specifically concerned with obtaining a representative sample as in quantitative research, but rather to reach different aspects of the social phenomena under study (Burgess, 1984, p75).

Snowball sampling can be one way of overcoming issues of gaining access to key interviewees. Access is the start of building trust, and to ensuring that interviewees speak openly and freely, and so the researcher needs to give careful consideration to the most appropriate ways of making the first contact. Adopting the norms and styles of communication of the situation, and describing the scope of questions openly and honestly so that the interviewee knows what to expect, are methods of smoothing access. Self presentation of the interviewer, their demeanour and ability to empathise with the interviewee such

as through indicating prior understanding of their position, are essential steps in negotiating access (Brewer, 2000, p85).

When conducting interviews, the interviewer needs to adopt a position which minimises bias as well as encouraging the interviewee with non-threatening questions. Chisnall notes that the success of an interview depends on 'personal factors' of rapport and empathy, 'unhampered by personal predispositions' (Chisnall, 1997, p169). The first key concern is that interviewers do not manipulate the responses of the interviewee or seek to impose their own views. Thus, interviewing is not an easy option and requires practice. Semi-structured interviews use a list of topics or key questions derived from the research objectives. The list provides some structure to ensure that all relevant areas are covered and to keep the session on track, whilst the researcher remains free to probe and follow-up leads. The flexibility means that the researcher can adapt the flow and style of the interview, to connect with the interviewee. Unstructured interviews have the same benefits but are more challenging, taking the form of 'a non-directive almost conversational style' (Miller and Brewer, 2003, p167). Their advantage is that the interviewer does not make any false assumptions in framing the topics prior to meeting, though they need to be able to react and develop relevant lines of enquiry during the discussion.

The second key concern is for the validity of responses. Respondents may exaggerate or present a false picture, because they are concerned about how the information they provide may be used, or in order to conform to official positions of their employer, or to preconceptions of what the researcher is seeking. Strategies that can minimise these problems include explaining how confidentiality will be assured and sharing transcripts for review and correction. Interviewees may overplay their own role to inflate their point of view, or withhold information if they perceive it to be embarrassing or sensitive (Miller and Brewer, 2003, p169). Validity can be checked by returning to key questions using different language later in the interview. Howarth notes that divergent responses should be given special attention.

Material that is shown to be false, distorted, or partial can and ought to be analysed precisely *because* of their inaccuracies and concealments. Rather than being discarded or discounted they may themselves constitute important windows into actors understandings and interpretations of events. (Howarth, 2005, p339)

It is also important to compare responses with other interviews and documentary sources to highlight variations and understand differences.

A question for researchers is whether to take notes during an interview or whether to record them. A verbatim recording is particularly useful for discourse analysis as the language can be examined closely. However, the researcher needs to be aware of the potential impact of recording devices. Yin notes that it is essential to gain the agreement of the interviewee to record the interview, and not to operate devices clumsily so that they detract from the conversation (Yin, 2009, p109). Interviewees may be wary of how a transcript may be used and be less open. Transcribing tapes consumes time and possibly money, and analysis can be more lengthy than for notes taken at the time or immediately after the interview. Transcripts do lend themselves to computer-aided analysis. Yin says that 'the investigator [may] think that the recording device is a substitute for "listening" closely in the interview' (2009, p109), whereas my own experience is that using a tape machine aids listening. Taking notes makes it more difficult to spot when to probe in more depth and can interrupt the flow of dialogue.

Participant observation is the second common research method used for collecting data to understand social meanings for a case study. Brewer defines participant observation as:

Data gathering by means of participation in the daily life of informants in their natural setting: watching, observing and talking to them in order to discover their interpretations, social meanings and activities. (Brewer, 2000, p59)

Participant observers take on a role in order to research an unfamiliar setting or use an existing role to research a familiar setting (Brewer, 2000, p61). Where the role is new and the setting is unfamiliar, time is needed to be accepted by other participants and to understand the social meanings. Researching familiar settings will be much quicker though the role has to enable the researcher to observe and to be sufficiently detached to draw meaningful inferences. Many of the considerations for successful interviews, of access and trust for example, apply to participant observation. A key difference will be whether the researcher acts overtly or covertly – and the consequent issues of ethical access and behaviour. Brewer notes the significance of the researcher to successful participant observation as they have to 'maintain the balance between "insider"

and “outsider” status’ (Brewer, 2000, p59). The concept of reflexivity addresses this notion of insider-outsider and is the subject of the final section of this chapter. First I examine how the research was conducted in practice, to establish its robustness, taking each research objective in turn.

Research practice

Objective 1. To examine the forces of change which rescaled the regional and local tiers in England, impacting on rural development

The common starting point for a social science thesis is to undertake a review of the academic literature. There is a sense in which a traditional literature review is at odds with a Foucauldian approach. There is a danger of taking for granted constructions and meanings in the literature, and assuming causality and historical continuity of ideas. Nevertheless, as chapter 3 concludes, meaningful discourse analysis can be undertaken in time limited research. The first step is to make choices about the focus of the research (Sharp and Richardson, 2001, p198) and make ‘an initial chronology and a first reading of events’ (Hajer, 2006, p73). In Hajer’s work on environmental discourse and BSE he analyses the broad socio-political context, focussing on the different positions in the policy field (Hajer, 1995; Hajer, 2005). He concentrates on understanding the political context, and the norms of institutions and disciplines, whilst not assuming coherence, but rather expecting ‘discursive complexity’ (Hajer, 1995, p44-45). My first research objective sets the focus of the literature review in Chapter 5 – the cultural and political drivers of regionalism and rural development practice. Although the research question refers to changes since 1997, in order to uncover ‘the forces of change’, the chapter traces key positions in the literature in past decades.

Hajer’s second step is to conduct ‘helicopter interviews’ with a small number of actors who have an overview of the field of research. As part of viewing the field of rural development from different perspectives, I interviewed two academics and three practitioners with relatively long career histories. They were part of my very early work to fix the scope and objectives. The interviews followed the career paths of each individual, and their role in key events in rural development. They presented contrasting outlooks, and in one case in particular, provided confirmation of historical events.

Objective 2. To examine the extent to which distinctive regional rural policy frameworks were created as a consequence of regionalisation, the drivers of distinctiveness and the reasons for any divergence

The assumption underlying the second research objective is that devolution can be expected to lead to differences between regions. Hajer's third step is a document analysis. Two sets of rural policy documents one prepared by the Government Office and one by the Regional Development Agency (RDAs) in each region were tangible evidence of the impact of regionalisation on rural policy. All of the plans were publicly available on websites. A partial exception was the GO plan for the North East region. A document had been developed in the region ahead of the national guidance, and this was the equivalent plan for the region at the time of the analysis. The RDA plans were draft plans due to outstanding decisions awaited from the EU on total funds. However, this was not a material consideration as all the plans had been put together under the same conditions. My purpose was to examine both sets of plans for differences between regions. The Government Office plans were 'delivery frameworks' for the Rural Strategy (Defra, 2004) and comprised themes, objectives and priorities. My analysis, set out in Chapter 6, examines the similarities and differences between the regions and with the national strategy. The second set of plans by the Regional Development Agencies were concerned with implementing the EU funding programme, the Rural Development Programme for England. I analysed the allocation of funds in each region, to show the extent to which the regional choices were distinctive. A second tangible impact of regionalisation was the creation of new governance structures in each region with rural development remits. Evidence of governance in each plan is compared to draw out the extent of difference and divergence.

Hajer proposes that the document analysis 'should result in a first attempt at defining structuring discourses' (Hajer, 2006, p73) or a preliminary framework to use in subsequent stages of the research. The extremes of difference between policy and governance systems shown by the analysis of the regional plans and governance structures were used to create a four fold discourse framework, as set out in Chapter 6.

Objective 3. To analyse the response of rural actors in two case study regions to the processes of regionalisation in order to draw conclusions about the impacts of regionalisation on regional/local relationships

The framework of four discourses of the region is drawn from regional government documents and therefore represents the 'regional' view. In order to draw conclusions about regional/local relationships, I needed a framework of discourses of response to the regional view for which there was no consistent documentary evidence in each region. A preliminary framework was drawn from my own experience, as outlined in Chapter 8. The primary research aimed to collect material from those involved in the regionalised activities of rural policy in two regions, and provided material to depict the four discourses of the region (Chapter 7) and three discourses of response (Chapter 8).

The third research objective raises a number of questions about the research methods which require some explanation. First, I explain the rationale for choosing two case study regions and the regions chosen, and second, I give an account of the research.

Discourse analysis requires in-depth descriptions of the social phenomena, behaviour and interactions. The time and resources available to me did not permit in-depth study of all eight English regions but two was realistic. The documentary analysis did cover all the regions and provided a broader context for the two cases. Whilst the wider analysis did reveal some variation between regions, there were also a great many similarities. The same pattern of events, groups of actors and types of documents existed in each region, suggesting that there would be diminishing returns for each additional region studied. Researching a small number of cases allows for greater effort to be put into each. While one alone would maximise the scope for in-depth treatment, a choice of two cases enables comparisons to be made.

The documentary analysis informed the choice of the two regions – the North West and East of England – from the potential eight. They displayed extremes of difference within the narrow range of cases. Flyvbjerg defines 'critical' cases as 'having strategic importance in relation to the general problem' (2005, p78). The similarities between all of the regions shows that any of the regions could

be studied to make deductions about the topic of the research – the impact of regionalisation in England. Choosing two regions with the least similar patterns of governance and plan making gave maximum scope to clarify the drivers of distinctiveness between regions.

Two other factors influenced the choice of the two cases. First a pragmatic choice of those that I could reach most easily, and second a choice not to research the region wherein I was a practitioner. The similarities of the regional stories show that my practitioner experience was portable and provided an intuitive understanding of the other regions. It would have been more difficult to be reflexive in my practitioner region where I had pre-existing relationships with many of the key actors. Reflexivity is discussed later in the chapter. By the time I undertook the research it was too late to use participant observation, as much of the relevant activities were in the past.

Thus, I collected the case study material largely through semi-structured interviews, supplemented by published documents, website material and participant observation of one forum meeting that took place conveniently at the time of the interviews. The aims and objectives, a framework for identifying the interviewees and a list of question topics are in Appendix 1. The remainder of this section discusses the methodological issues of the data collection.

The third objective focuses the choice of interview subjects on rural actors involved in regional-local interactions resulting from the political phenomena of regionalism. Roughly an equal number of participants were drawn from the national government institutions and from across the rural governance structures involved in the relevant interactions. I employed ‘judgement sampling’ (Burgess, 1984) based on my own knowledge of the range of actors and the regional documents. Web information and phone calls supplemented by personal contacts enabled me to make an initial approach by email, followed up by phone to arrange a face-to-face meeting. The method proved successful as all but one of the initial targets agreed to meet, and the remaining one agreed to a telephone interview on the eve of retiring.

An email confirming our appointment said that I intended to use a tape machine to record the interview and sought to allay any fears about how the recording would be used. If they had any misgivings, the assurance of confidentiality was sufficient as all the interviewees agreed to being recorded. I chose to have the interviews transcribed so that I had as accurate a record as possible of the language used, which was vital for the analysis. At no point did any of the participants ask me to switch the tape off or terminate our discussion prematurely, suggesting that their responses were not significantly affected by being recorded.

Hajer uses interviews to generate information on the history of events.

Participants will always assume this is the central purpose of the meeting but the interviews might also be used to get a better understanding of the meaning of particular events for the interviewees. (Hajer, 2005, p306)

My opening questions sought to establish their role and history of involvement in the relevant events. This acted as an 'icebreaker' as people generally like to talk about themselves, and it enabled me to tailor the interview to include just the events that they had direct experience of. The list of topics in Appendix 1 were designed to elicit a description of 'what led to what', their interpretation of events, and how they viewed other actors involved. A semi-structured format lent itself to following their story and maintaining a non-threatening stance whilst enabling me to probe for their opinions.

A limitation of the interview method was that each participant was interviewed once in a short period between November 2008 and January 2009. This meant that the accounts were collected at the same point in the story enabling partial or anomalous accounts to be compared. Interviewees described their role in relevant processes mostly from 2004 though some could recall detail back to 1999, and those with long work histories in the field made comparisons with earlier times. A longitudinal programme of research over the length of New Labour's regionalisation reforms and return visits to the key actors would have provided greater depth of analysis.

Similarly, participant observation could have been an appropriate method if the time and access had been available. I did attend one Rural Affairs Forum meeting in the East of England in December 2008, at the suggestion of the

Government Office and with the prior agreement of the Chairman. The event felt entirely familiar because of frequent attendance at very similar events as a practitioner, even though most of the attendees were unknown to me. Delegates sat in small groups at round tables, and I introduced myself to my table of colleagues as an academic and a practitioner in another region. Each agenda item took the form of a presentation which was discussed by each table and by delegates as a whole. My attendance at the Forum as an academic researcher was accepted by all those I spoke to, and I took part in the table discussions drawing on my practitioner identity. Brewer describes this as a variation of pure participant observation involving the acquisition of a new role in a familiar setting (Brewer, 2000, p61). The day confirmed the extent of similarities between regions.

Objective 4. To draw lessons on the implications of studying local/regional governance systems from within, as a practitioner inside the system being studied.

My fourth research objective was predicated on a belief that making an academic study of the field that I worked in would be affected by my dual practitioner/academic role, and that it would be possible to say something about the difference that the dual role made to the resulting study. Social scientists draw on concepts of reflexivity to reflect critically on the relationship between the research field, researcher and research participants (England, 1994; Brewer, 2003). Hence, a discussion of reflexivity and how I have applied the concept warrants a section of its own.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity requires the researcher to consider explicitly the ways of thinking and acting (England, 1994; Pini, 2004, McAreavey, 2008), and is commonly associated with ethnography and feminist research (Brewer, 2003, p260-1). In a discussion of reflexivity as a research strategy of feminist geographers, Rose concludes that 'the particular form of reflexivity advocated needs careful consideration' (Rose, 1997, p305). She argues that a wholly 'transparent form' of reflexivity centred on the 'all seeing' researcher is not only extraordinarily difficult but ultimately fails due to 'its particular understanding of agency and power' (p318). Reflexivity in a Foucauldian tradition does not mean, as McDowell (1992, p409) has described, taking account of the position of

ourselves as the researcher as well as the position of the research participants and writing it into the research practice, as ‘there is no prior reality or unified identity to gain access to or be created by research’ (Gibson-Graham, 1994, p214).

Foucault’s concept of discourse implies that the researcher cannot be separated from the discursive formations in their field as an independent entity. The relationships between researcher and researched are contingent and relational, and the research process is subject to the power relations. Research may have an impact on the ways that professional knowledge is framed, and on how discourses are produced and reproduced. Nevertheless, as Rose concludes and Pini demonstrates, ‘this does not mean that we should abandon reflexivity... but seek to incorporate into our reflexive process some of the ambiguities of identity’ (Pini, 2004, p170), recognising the constantly changing and multiplicity of identities.

Sharp and Richardson note that ‘the position of the researcher needs to be acknowledged, to help the research audience understand the choices made’ (Sharp and Richardson, 2001, p203). In addition, discourse analysis requires researchers to query the research material in ways that they may not otherwise consider, as Richardson has commented.

Discourse theory puts the spotlight on the boundaries of thought and action. Using these tools reflexively is an attempt to first notice how these boundaries are established and maintained, and then to notice the effects of this closing down process. (Richardson, 2001, p354)

Reflexivity involves conscious reflection on the context, content and production of research ‘knowledge’ and of the research choices made.

Objective 4 implies two identities of “rural policy practitioner” and “academic researcher”. An acquaintance with Foucault suggests that it is important to acknowledge the concepts of practitioner and academic as socially constructed. The two identities are idealised forms, though they can be used to reflect on how the positions have influenced the research (Pini, 2004; McAreavey, 2008). My practitioner identity was present long before the research whilst the academic role has come more to the fore in the later stages of shaping the discourse narratives. The remainder of this section explores the two identities.

Employment as a rural policy officer with Lincolnshire County Council throughout the preparation of the PhD and for several years prior, meant that I had been party to the story as it unfolded, through events, documents and relations with other actors. I was familiar with the social practices, albeit implicitly, which are manifest in government activities, and the conventions of communication and relations between actors. Practitioners develop an awareness of differing political interests, complexity and ambiguity in policy processes. Years of practice hone skills of negotiation, and of managing the micro-politics of everyday situations. The practitioner has a partial view of the discursive space and views it from a particular viewpoint, though with a deep intrinsic understanding of events, relations and practices.

My employment in local government in rural England means that I was particularly aware of regionalisation as a site of conflict and argument. I was also aware that regionalism was responsible for changes to government programmes for rural development, and I helped to formulate the response of my local authority to those changes. The Conservative Party has had a large majority in Lincolnshire throughout the period of the New Labour government. The party and local councillors exhibited strong opposition to regionalism. Thus, prior to and throughout the research I have been embedded in an institutional discourse of rural local government opposed to regionalism.

A town planning background also has a bearing on the scope of the research. Conventional planning theory of the 1970s and 1980s saw planners as ‘a family of roles that involve deliberation about *proper* courses of action’ (Forester, 1989, italics added). Planners trained at this time have tended to adopt the conventional theory of policy analysts, to define the problem, consider the options, conduct consultations, take decisions, implement the solutions, and evaluate the results (Hill, 1993). My starting point is the same in presenting the conventions of public policy making in Chapter 2. Rationalism plays a significant part in many professions involved in fields of public policy, through the production and reproduction of the technical or scientific knowledge of the discipline (Schön, 1983). A basic text at the time I was training – ‘Planning Theory’ by Faludi (1973) – is still influential today, alongside richer and more

diverse analyses of policy making, space, territory, and power relations. Faludi and van der Valk (2001, p274) in a critique of Flyvbjerg's Aalborg study, describe Flyvbjerg as a member of a 'select group' of planning theorists. By implication he is not part of the rational mainstream – even though they want to dub him a 'neo-rationalist'. In doing so, they underline the significance of rationalism to the 'ways of thinking' within the town planning profession as well as to governing. As they declare, 'rational decision making is the foundation on which Western democracy rests' (Faludi and van der Valk 2001, p272).

The identity of "rural policy practitioner" represents the 'inside' understanding of rural development and regionalisation. An appreciation of the embedded norms of social practices, gained through being 'inside' the discursive field played a particular role in three areas – scoping the field to research, empathising with interviewees, and shaping the discourse framework. Taking the first of these, the field of investigation was influenced by a pragmatic requirement to study a topic relevant to my employer who has part-sponsored my study, though they did not seek to set any specific parameters. The topic was also determined by a desire to explore and express something of the change wrought by regionalism on rural development at the local level. I described the research topic in an early piece of work as to examine 'tensions at the interface between the regional and local tiers of governance in England, especially around the treatment of rural areas', and formulated an objective 'to determine the factors that lead to conflict, resistance, collaboration or consensus at the interface between the local and regional institutions involved in rural development'. My experience was of conflict between opposing political ideologies, as well as a perception that the role of local practitioners and politicians to determine how rural development resources were allocated was being eroded. I was within an 'elite network' affected by shifts of power (Woods, 1997) and the research is framed according to my position inside the discourse coalition, thus focusing on the local politics of policy and governance (Woods and Goodwin, 2003).

The second consequence of an inside view was an ability to empathise with interviewees. The paramount impression was that I was treated primarily as I presented myself – as an 'academic researcher' who was 'practice-aware'. I conclude this because interviewees made comparisons between their own

situation and what they understood of the situation in Lincolnshire and the East Midlands, they asked questions about my experience of events in another region, they took acronyms for granted, and in some cases they referred to our common professional background even if we hadn't met before. None of the interviewees seemed reticent and were very willing to describe their experiences. However, the significance of my two identities varied. Shared experiences with one county council officer unknown to me prior to the research, contributed significantly to building rapport quickly. The interview seemed to give him the opportunity to give voice to opposition to dominant discourses which my practitioner identity recognised. It is possible that, faced with another interviewer, the interviewee would have been less open and generous with his views.

Third, shaping the discourse frameworks drew on my practitioner experience of 'regional partnership working' as well as observing the response of colleagues from Lincolnshire County Council, and other bodies. I was aware from participation in national practitioner networks of differences in governance arrangements between regions and different experiences of regionalisation. These impressions fed into the construction of the framework of discourses of the region. Being embedded in the networks of responders was critical in order to articulate the regional/local story, and to formulating the framework of the discourses of response.

At the interview stage, both of my identities were present. I had met four of the interviewees in work settings, at consultation events and conferences, on one or two occasions. The link was sufficient to ease access in only one instance. When contacting them I portrayed myself as an academic researcher, but also mentioned to them, either when booking the appointment or at the start of the meeting, my dual academic-practitioner status. This was a helpful strategy to achieve rapport, but more importantly it was an ethical choice to be open with the interviewee. Their contract with me was not purely one with an academic researcher, but also with a fellow insider. My academic researcher identity was new to me, though undertaking semi-structured interviews for commercial and government research was not. The significance of being from an academic institution was that interviewees were very willing to be helpful in contrast to

commercial research. They seemed entirely unconcerned about how their interview might be used, displaying trust in academia and interest in the results. Both identities gave me legitimacy with the interviewees.

Whilst my practitioner view is inevitably partial, limited by my position in relation to the events, it does not mean that it is not possible to be detached and view that and other positions from the outside. Discourse analysis necessitates the researcher gaining a view of the problem from the 'outside' in order to recognise the hidden assumptions and practices that form the rules of discourse. Hidding, Needham and Wisserhof (2000) sum it up succinctly.

Each of us – academics, policy makers, politicians – tends to think within a discourse. But we do not need to be imprisoned within it. Moreover, being made aware of what we have been taking for granted... can be liberating, academically and politically. (Hidding, Needham and Wisserhof, 2000, p129)

There are three principal meanings in my research project of 'being outside'. First, through gaining an awareness of the academic literature on regionalisation, and on rural policy and development, I was able to contrast it with the prevailing stories in my practitioner field. I found a mismatch in both cases – between the dominant academic writing and my practitioner experience – which at first was difficult to reconcile. A deeper historical inspection of the literature, focussing on England, revealed strands of academic literature relevant to 'the local politics of rural change' (Woods and Goodwin, 2003, p257), as opposed to the dominant stories relevant to national and international research studies on rural development and economic regions.

Second, early discussions with my supervisors on differing stories of rural policy led them to suggest that I investigate the idea of discourse and in particular, Foucault's writing on discourse. Foucault's work is the conceptual foundation through which it has been possible to tackle the research question, whilst Hajer, Richardson and others have pointed up ways to 'be outside' in practice. The third meaning of 'being outside' is the fundamental challenge of discourse analysis which requires the researcher to reflect on the meanings behind language, events and activities, and to consider how dialogue takes place. At the analysis stage, my supervisors helped me to 'be outside' through for example recognising metaphors in language. Constructing the discourse stories was only possible by learning to review language critically with their help.

The question arises – has the process liberated me from imprisonment – as Hidding, Needham and Wisserhof suggest (2000). To some extent the answer is yes though liberating is perhaps too strong an expression. I see this thesis as providing an analysis of the period of regionalisation and its impact on rural development in terms that may provide some illumination for interested academics. The discourses will be recognised by practitioners and express explicitly what they understand implicitly. The discourses of the region shed some light on the practice of regionalisation, and the discourses of response may provide a framework which is relevant to understanding the power relations of similar contested situations. The journey has revealed to me the complexity, rigour and precision of academic knowledge production.

Conclusion

The chapter has discussed the issues that must be considered in designing and carrying out research for discourse analysis, and how I have conducted it in practice. An explanation of reflexivity and the two identities of practitioner and academic researcher are illustrated as distinct, though the practice is more ambiguous. As Miller states 'social realities are produced (or accomplished) by seeing and communicating from standpoints (or gazes) that are simultaneously ways of understanding and being in social worlds' (Miller, 1994, p156).

The research method cast me as an academic researcher 'going out' to collect data in regions other than my practitioner-region, as opposed to participative ethnographic methods. The method aided reflexivity through assuming an academic researcher identity but with the ability to draw on 'insider' knowledge and understanding. My subjectivity will have influenced the choices made, and in this chapter I have sought to reflect on these and the implications for knowledge production. Perhaps Schön is right when he notes that 'the planner is an individual who likes to reflect on his [or her] practice' (1983, p228). The combination of knowing the context from the inside and recognising the story lines and metaphors from the outside frames the thesis, whilst acknowledging that, as Rose says 'we cannot know everything, nor can we survey power as if we can fully understand, control or redistribute it' (Rose, 1997, p319).

Chapter 5. The research context

Introduction

Across the globe decentralising power from the nation state to 'lower' tiers of government is widely regarded as positive, enabling decisions to be made 'closer to the people' and to enhance coordination (Brenner, 2004). In England regionalism was conceived as a form of devolution or decentralisation (Pearce, Ayres and Tricker, 2005). As Bogdanor notes, devolution involves the transfer of powers to a 'subordinate elected body' (2001, p2). The Labour Party had an intention in 1997 to allow people 'region by region to decide in a referendum whether they want[ed] directly elected regional government' (Labour Party, 1997, p377). Voters rejected regional government in a referendum held in the North East in 2004, which effectively put an end to elected assemblies. Instead, between 1997 and 2010 England had a series of unelected regional institutions with powers derived directly from the UK state. The lack of elected bodies was cited by the Conservative Party as justification for their policies to dismantle the regional institutions – 'We believe that Ministers should be responsible for government policy, not unelected bureaucrats' (Conservative Party, 2010, p70). Within weeks of being elected in 2010, a new coalition government of Conservatives and Liberal Democrats began to sweep away the regional structures.

This account illustrates that the development of a regional tier of governance in England from 1997 was essentially a project of the Labour Party, and that the democratic element was never realised. Nevertheless, the policy and institutional changes that took place 'utterly transformed the structures and institutions of rural policy' (Goodwin, 2008, p45). The purpose of this chapter is to give perspective and context to the New Labour era through examining the literature. An exploration of recurring topics and political ideas, that seeks to identify the key discursive events, sets the background for the research and frames the discourse analysis. The first part of this chapter reviews the political history of regionalism and the second part, regionalisation in the academic literature. Part three traces the practices of governing rural policy in past decades. Part four describes key changes underway in the 1990s which set the context for New Labour – European policy, administrative regions and governance. Finally, the chapter sets out a chronology of the events between

1997 and 2008 that are the subject of the primary analysis in the following chapters.

Regionalism and Labour

Mawson (1997) traces the origins of the English regional debate back to the 1880's when decentralisation of government was a theme underlying the creation of elected county councils. Devolution was discussed at the Labour Party conference in 1918 including 'autonomous administration in matters of local concern' in England. Tomaney cites a Conservative politician, Lord Percy, as one of the first to make the case for regional government in 1939. The inter-war economic crisis warranted intervention 'that small and fragmented forms of local government were ill-equipped for' (Tomaney, 2009, p63). The post-war economic circumstances prompted intervention in the form of regional aid and grants, helping to create a discourse of economic regions. However primarily, at this time debate on the role of regions was limited to a small band of the political elite and the emergent planning profession (Mawson, 1997, p181).

The debate gained strength in the 1960s and 1970s. Labour proposed regional planning and employment measures in response to a worsening economic situation 'to check the present drift to the south and to build up the declining economies in other parts of the country' (Labour Party, 1964, p112). Economic Planning Councils and Planning Boards were set up for English regions, Scotland and Wales in 1965. The rationale for economic intervention was a national one based on redistribution from south to north, or to Labour's power base in northern cities. The 1970 Labour Party manifesto hailed the success of the Boards – 'these have proved to be effective instruments to strengthen the Government's regional policies, (Labour Party, 1970, p172) though Labour lost the election that year to the Conservative Party. The new government continued to implement a regional development policy for example through financial assistance to designated development areas (Conservative Party, 1970, p186). Though economic policy was a central concern for the Conservative government, regional policy was of far less electoral significance, with Conservative voters concentrated in the more affluent south.

The Labour manifesto of 1970 asserted that the Economic Planning Councils and Planning Boards had 'given new impetus to proposals for devolution' (Labour Party, 1970, p172). In the Party narrative, democratic accountability was harnessed together with economic planning in support of regionalism and devolution. In contrast, whilst the Conservative position was also to examine devolution to Scotland and Wales, for England their manifestos stressed the role of existing structures of local government (Conservative Party, 1970, p193) and the regional offices of government (Conservative Party, 1974, p220). This could be interpreted as a desire to retain the existing patterns of government. Meanwhile, in the Labour Party, regionalism gained momentum. A discussion paper in 1975 set out the case for democratic control in English regions, as well as devolution of economic and industrial development functions (Labour Party, 1975). The Party was already committed to assemblies in Scotland and Wales by 1975, though in a tacit acknowledgement of the lack of public demand in England for regional democracy, the paper noted that 'it does not follow... that each of the constituent parts of the United Kingdom must necessarily be treated in the same way' (1975, p6).

Two further story lines come to the fore in the Labour Party narrative from the 1970s onwards – the implications of joining the European Economic Community, and the relationship between a regional tier and local government. Constructing regions was consistent with being seen to be part of Europe and to function as part of Europe, and specifically to be able to take part in European funding programmes. Europeanisation reinforced the policy arguments for regions in the Labour Party. The second narrative on regional and local government is more equivocal. Similar story lines are used to support both the discourse of democratic regions and of effective local government – of 'transferring power from Westminster', 'better planning' and 'vigorous local democracy' (1955 and 1970 manifestos). The implications of a regional tier for local government was the subject of much debate in the late 1960's and 1970s during a period of examination of the financing and structure of local government (Redcliffe-Maud, 1970; Kilbrandon, 1973; and Layfield, 1976 reports). Labour advocates of regionalism favoured a simplification of local government to a single tier though there were clearly many conflicting views of the relative merits of local and regional government. 'Any scheme for regional

authorities would carry an inherent risk of *political* conflict between central, regional and local government' (Labour Party, 1975, p18). The party discussion paper points to another key consideration for a political party – 'it is clear that certain regions would fall under semi-permanent one party rule' (1975, p18). The party would not want to create regions which were electorally out of reach.

The narratives of democratic and economic regions continued inside the Labour Party despite referenda defeats on devolution to Wales and Scotland in 1979. The period of Conservative government from 1979 to 1997 ensured that devolution was off the government agenda (Bogdanor, 2001, p193). However, discontent with Conservative governments amongst voters, particularly where Labour held a majority, strengthened devolution debates. Conservative economic policy emphasised free market enterprise rather than interventionist regional policy. Actions such as the abolition of the Scottish Development Agency in 1994 which had continued to pursue 'a largely corporatist approach to economic development' (Musson, Tickell and John, 2005, p1395) ensured that policies of devolution to Scotland and Wales regained momentum in the 1990s in the Labour Party. In turn, the discussions refuelled debates on regionalism in England, especially outside of the Conservative heartland of southern England, linking democratic and economic policy rationales. There was a 'renewed belief... that a transformation of governance would be necessary if uneven economic development was to be tackled' (Musson, Tickell and John, 2005, p1396).

The 1983 Labour manifesto proposed the creation of regional development agencies and regional plans in English regions 'in need of them' to tackle economic problems (Labour Party, 1983, p252). A policy paper in 1991, 'Devolution and Democracy', and a Policy Commission in 1996 set the framework for the reforms implemented when they returned to government in 1997. 'Devolution and Democracy' proposed a phased approach, first to build up the 'regional administrative framework' of institutions, second to establish elected regional assemblies, and third 'a continuing process of devolving functions and powers from Westminster' (Labour Party, 1991). The party committed to Regional Development Agencies for all English regions in the 1992 manifesto (Labour Party, 1992, p322), whilst also seeking to strengthen

the democracy of local government. The 1996 Policy Commission led by former European Commissioner, Bruce Milan, drew on his strong conviction from experience at the European Commission and cemented Party commitment to Regional Development Agencies.

Whilst the Conservative Party was opposed to the form of regional government proposed by Labour, Mawson and Spencer attribute the formation of Government Offices in 1994 under a Conservative administration to two factors. First, the imperative to be part of a Europe of the regions. European Structural Funds operated on a 'regional' basis throughout Europe, requiring regional operational plans administered for each region. Second, there was a 'need to co-ordinate the overlapping programmes and roles of a myriad' of central government regeneration agencies such as Training and Enterprise Councils (Mawson and Spencer, 1997, p161). Regional offices of Whitehall departments, regional strategies and plans were not new. The 'integrated offices' brought together 'regional officials from the then Departments of Employment, Environment, and Trade and Industry ...under single Regional Directors, reporting to four Secretaries of State' (Pearce, Mawson and Ayres, 2008, p446). Responsibility for Education was added in 1995 when the department merged with employment, and other departments such as the Home Office had a presence in the Government Offices. Pearce, Mawson and Ayres ascribe the desire to 'integrate' at this time to 'unease that regional administration was too fragmented' (p445). Integration was a difficult task for the Regional Directors, since they had to report to four Secretaries of State, and show that they were operating within each of the separate departmental policy frameworks. A second task to 'make Whitehall more responsive to sub-national stakeholders' was equally difficult for civil servants unused to acting in an 'advocacy manner for their region' (Mawson and Spencer, 1997, p175; Pearce, Mawson and Ayres, 2008, p446). Nevertheless, by the time Labour came to power in 1997, the administrative structures of Government Offices were already in existence.

From 1997, New Labour began to implement regionalisation much as set out in 'Devolution and Democracy', first with the Regional Development Agencies Act 1998, and 'voluntary Regional Chambers' comprised of representatives of local government and other social and economic interest groups in each region. The

Chambers were intended to be transition bodies, to be replaced later by elected assemblies. A White Paper, 'Your Region, Your Choice' in May 2002 proposed that Regional Assemblies would be set up following referenda in regions where there was evidence of public support (CO/DTLGR). The step by step approach first outlined in 1991 did not enjoy strong support across the Party, as Tomaney observed – 'the Labour government has remained deeply ambivalent about the prospect of devolving more power to the regions' (Tomaney, 2002, p731). Whilst the economic imperative for regional policy of redistribution had been a strong theme of Labour policy, the lack of public concern in England for democratic reform ensured that it remained a minority agenda. Voters in the North East rejected the opportunity decisively in November 2004, forcing the government to abandon its plans for regional government.

In contrast the Regional Development Agencies continued to acquire new functions and funds in each New Labour term. Multiple national government departments contributed to Regional Development Agency budgets, pooled together from 2002 to make up a 'single pot'. This was a significant devolutionary change as it allowed the agencies to allocate their own budgets, though they also had to be cognisant of national requirements to contribute to relevant Government targets. In 2006/7 the Agencies took over responsibility from the Government Offices for European Regional Development Fund, and for the socio-economic aspects of the Rural Development Programme for England. Regional Development Agencies had considerable financial resources at their disposal to achieve their mission 'to transform England's regions through sustainable economic development'. In the financial year 2009/10 total Regional Development Agency funding was £2,260 million. Prominent Labour politicians representing northern constituencies such as John Prescott and Stephen Byers, continued to support investment in northern regions, and due to the economic and political circumstances, they received a larger share of funds. Allocations to each Agency differed markedly with the North West Development Agency receiving £398 million while the East of England Development Agency budget was less than half this at £136 million (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2010).

Whilst Government Offices were already established to meet the administrative and European imperatives, they grew rapidly in terms of personnel and areas of responsibility in the 2000s. Government Offices carried out administrative and monitoring roles on behalf of Whitehall departments, administering national policy and acting as a conduit through which the central state gathered information on the social, economic and environmental condition of the regions. Government Offices took on responsibility for the functions of progressively more government departments – 10 in 2006 – as well as managing European regeneration funds until 2006.

For Labour, there was an electoral imperative to respond to their voters in the north of England, and a similar imperative to devolve powers to Scotland and Wales. Similarly the belief in regional economic development, requiring government intervention, is a recurring principle in the party's thinking. Morgan says that, for the Conservatives, Mrs Thatcher had dismissed the north-south divide in the 1980s as 'a media invention ... because the Tories had little to lose in the north' (Morgan, 2002, p799). Economic intervention was founded in enterprise, efficiency and innovation. Subsequent Conservative administrations in the 1990s integrated various departmental offices into the Government Offices, creating administrative regions. The election of New Labour heralded a new era, regionalising many activities of the state. The discourse shifted with the creation of Regional Development Agencies, from economic redistribution to emphasising each region as the unit of growth and competitiveness (Tomaney, 2009, p66)

Regionalism beyond Labour

The historical review illustrates the repetitive story lines in Labour Party policy of support for regional government and regional economic policy, as well as an awareness of the potential for conflict between tiers of government and an ambivalence to elected regional assemblies. Foucault's ideas of discourse tell us that political discourse is not divorced from other worlds. In a review of the literature on English regions, Russell Barter (2002) notes the role of advocacy papers from 'think-tanks', which both inform and are informed by academic and political debates. Tomaney reports a link between Labour's regional economic policy and 'powerful international evidence that suggests that strong regional

institutions and well prepared regional strategies are critical for regional development' (Tomaney, 2009, p66). Morgan also suggests a cross fertilisation of ideas from the academic to the Labour Party discourse, asserting that the assumption of an economic dividend played 'a pivotal role in the case for democratic devolution in the English regions' (Morgan, 2002, p800). Russell Barter identifies four 'rationales for regional government, similar to the four themes that recur in Labour Party manifestos: economic development pressures, democratic arguments, European imperatives, and administrative requirements' (Russell Barter, 2002, p13).

The theme of regions as a necessary precursor for economic success is contained in the vast and international literature of economic geography. For researchers in the genre, the region is the scale of economic growth formed in response to global economic pressures (Brenner, 2004; Harvey, 1985; Storper, 1997). Research into globalisation has led to questioning of the nation-state 'as a preconstituted geographical unit of analysis of social research' (Brenner, 2004, p28) and instead that global capitalism is producing new 'socio-spatial' configurations, or economic regions. The term 'new regionalism' has been used to describe 'the "re-emergence" of the region as a unit of economic analysis' (Tomaney and Ward, 2000). Harrison goes further linking 'new regionalism' to decentralised policy making.

New regionalism broadly claims that contemporary capitalism and its territorial configuration are best regulated and governed in and through the decentralisation of socio-economic decision making and associated policy implementation to subnational institutional frameworks and supports. (Harrison, 2006, p2)

Regions that are successful economically, are held up as models for others to emulate (Knapp and Schmitt, 2008) and studies examine the role of political intervention (Hospers, 2006). There is an expectation in the economic geography literature that political, economic, social and cultural 'institutions act to stabilise a range of collective economic practices in a particular territory' (Amin and Thrift, 1994, p16). 'Institutional thickness' (Amin and Thrift, 1994) describes the 'local agglomerations' of formal and informal institutions in a particular territory. Institutions here includes firms, marketing boards and trade bodies such as Chambers of Commerce as well as the publicly funded agencies more commonly described as 'institutions'. Whilst Amin and Thrift do not assert

that a causal link necessarily exists between regional institutional capacity and economic fortunes, much research has examined state rescaling, the role of institutional capacity, governance and networks in the evolution of economic regions (Jones and Macleod, 1999; Gibbs and Jonas, 2001; Brenner et al, 2003; Jones et al 2004; Jones, Jones and Goodwin, 2005). The region has become a site of governance and institutions.

Governance and institutions, though, are politically and administratively constructed. In England there has been a gradual alignment of various regional boundaries by government, and thus a research study of New Labour's regionalism is a study of regional scale that is fixed by the political processes. This contrasts with notions of regions as self contained economies linked to identity. Whereas Keating writes of 'the centre of a series of functional interdependencies' (1998, p127), and Amin and Thrift use the term localities in contrast to the global, Jones and Macleod put the focus back on to the role of the state.

The new regionalist discourses are often guilty of downplaying the extent to which the state continues to act as an influential, multi-scaled set of institutional forms, and, thereby, a key facilitator of such (regional) governance. (Jones and Macleod, 1999, p299)

They contend that rescaling can be a product of governmental intervention and demonstrate this through a case study of the North West Regional Development Agency (RDA). The powers of the RDA are those 'inherited from central government', and the government practices of devolution to RDAs are 'in substantive terms, minimalist' (p307).

Regionalism implies devolution of powers and functions from central government, and in contrast to the economic literature, political analyses point to an inherent inertia to such change. In 1977 Smith, in a critique of devolution, described an 'executive' model of regionalism akin to English regionalism, involving the devolution of executive powers to institutions within a constitutional framework, with no devolved powers to recast or abolish those institutions (Smith, 1977, p17). He predicted that such regional institutions staffed by civil servants would not 'make their own decisions about regional needs and interests' but rather that the reluctance of Whitehall to devolve power would result in the extension of central control (Smith, 1977, p20).

Researchers examining the institutions and governance of New Labour's regionalisation, have mostly concurred with Smith's predictions, that the power relations employed by national government tend to dominate the activity and thinking of regional bodies (Jones and Macleod, 1999; Gibbs and Jonas, 2001; Ayres and Pearce 2004; Pearce and Ayres, 2007). Pearce, Ayres and colleagues have undertaken a number of studies of regionalisation which consider the national, regional and local tiers. Their study of Whitehall actors shows that whilst many practices of government had changed, there was little evidence of devolution of decision-making.

Rather than ceding power, Whitehall is in fact mobilizing its resources to extend its powers and influence at the regional level. GOs, RDAs and other government-sponsored agencies may seek to exert influence in Whitehall, but evidence that this has resulted in any significant change in policy is limited. (Ayres and Pearce 2004, p274)

Through a study of Regional Assemblies, Pearce and Ayres found that whilst regional institutions were 'being encouraged to generate regional solutions and apply greater discretion over policy implementation... nationally determined targets and departmental funding streams remain persuasive' (Pearce and Ayres, 2007, p8).

Stewart, an authority on local government, found many contradictions in Labour's 1991 policy paper, 'Devolution and Democracy'. These were variously that regions would 'draw powers upward', reducing the functions and authority of local government. He questioned whether politicians were prepared for divergence and diversity taking place between regions and predicted that problems of central-regional relations and regional-local relations would be added to the already complex central-local relations – 'Regional authorities will inevitably exercise control over local authorities' (Stewart, 1995, p276). Administrative imperatives of regionalism arose from a perception that local government does not possess the necessary skills and ability to co-ordinate policy and implementation, whereas regional government was presented as "good" government in terms of efficiency and effectiveness' (Russell Barter, 2002, p15).

Some studies have uncovered the tension predicted by Stewart between 'top down' regionalisation and local solutions. A review of rural delivery practice in

the West Midlands found that some stakeholders questioned the rationale for policy action at the regional level on the basis of geographical complexity and diversity. Sub-regional partnership structures were favoured. The research revealed 'a complex set of fragmented structures and blurred accountabilities' (Pearce, Ayres and Tricker, 2005, p197). Struggles between major cities and 'new' regions were eminently predictable. In a study of Manchester and the North West region, Deas and Ward show that regeneration powers were displaced 'upwards' from local authorities to the Regional Development Agency. 'The creation of a national template for regional governance only exacerbates the pre-existing tensions ... within regions' (Deas and Ward, 2000, p287).

Similarly, Sandford foresaw Labour's failure to implement elected assemblies when he wrote in 2002 that 'there is no grassroots awakening of interest in the governance of England' (Sandford, 2002, p789). He quotes the 2001 British Social Attitudes Survey which 'indicates that the English more or less accept the present constitutional position' (2002, p791). Hazell, writing after the North East referendum, shows that the dilemma remains a concern of devolutionists and constitutional experts, and not a matter of public concern (2006). Yet Tomaney's 'quiet revolution of regionalisation' continued through the New Labour years, through the growth of institutions, strategies, networks and governance (Tomaney, 2002).

The literature confirms that, whilst regional studies have leant credence to regional development policy, regionalism did not fuel popular demand for regional government, such that the political project of elected assemblies failed, and the practice of regionalism from 1997 to 2010 was technocratic and administrative. Research has highlighted first, the limits of devolution from the national state, and second, struggles between regional and sub-regional tiers. Lovering affirms that the link between the economic and democratic political rationales for regionalism was present in New Labour's thinking, though nevertheless he considers that the 'New Regionalism' was motivated by a belief in the 'rightness' of regions, rather than a desire to devolve.

The ideas in the New Regionalist package are there because they seem to resonate when viewed from the point of view of a wish to focus on the scope for policy initiatives at the regional level. This, rather than logical or historico-empirical considerations, determines which ideas are allowed for inclusion in the bundle and which are not. (Lovering 1999, p390).

Regionalism strengthened the position of the national state, monitoring and controlling devolved institutions and local government, whilst at the same time addressing a political necessity to show voters that it was doing something about their regional economy – often in the form of urban physical regeneration projects funded by the Regional Development Agencies.

A wide body of literature has drawn out the ambiguity of New Labour's project and the tensions between regional institutions and central control, and it forms the context for the regionalism theme of my research. Prior to the political changes of 1997, Mawson and Spencer (1997) noted the limits to the powers of Government Offices, despite a national policy rhetoric of regional accountability, and an ability for regions to influence national policy. In the early period of New Labour, some researchers were critical of the 'new regionalism' because it failed to examine closely enough the role of the state in rescaling (Jones and Macleod, 1999; Macleod and Goodwin, 1999). Later, Harrison (2006a) describes the concept as 'chaotic' and 'constructed on inadequate foundations', and proposing that a view that encompasses 'multi-faceted scalar politics' and 'tangled policy hierarchies' is more illuminating. Benneworth, Conroy and Roberts (2002) uncovered such a pattern of tangled hierarchies in their study of sustainable development policies. They noted that whilst some Regional Chambers had developed ideas and plans for sustainable development, RDAs, who also derived their authority from the national state, continued to be driven by an economic imperative. Pearce, Mawson and Ayres (2008) noted a similar ambiguity in government practices as regional institutions had not replaced established central-local policy or aspects of central-local relations. GOs had been added to existing structures, resulting in overlapping structures and relationships.

Despite policy remaining centrally driven, Winter (2006) shows through a case study of the South West region, how the state rescaling of regionalisation constructed not just a new institutional landscape, but built new scalar identities and capacities at the regional and local scales. The political construction of scale engenders a sense of identity (Keating, 1998), a uniqueness and individuality, at least amongst those 'insiders' who are involved in a territory's continuing construction. In a study of the East Midlands, Jones et al (2004)

illustrated the role played by state personnel in institutionalising the regional scale, forming a new elite. Regionalisation also impacted on pre-existing networks of rural development policy and practice. Researchers have used concepts of elites to explore rural power struggles (Newby et al, 1978; Cloke and Little, 1990; Woods, 1997 and 2005), which forms the second theme of my research. The next section explores the typical practices and elite networks involved in governing rural development in England in the decades prior to 1997, to understand the impact of the new regional tier.

Rural policy and practice

The dominant networks governing rural policy prior to regionalisation were formed from the interactions between members of government institutions with a rural remit and local government, interest groups and voluntary organisations. The two principal national government bodies were the Countryside Commission, and the Development Commission (Rural Development Commission from 1988 (Rogers, 1999, p111)). A typical mode of operating in the decades prior to 1997 was for the government agencies to grant-aid projects or programmes which would be delivered by local government or the voluntary sector. In discharging their functions the agencies built relationships with local representatives who took part in committees and consultation exercises, managed projects on behalf of the agencies and sometime jointly funded activities. This section describes examples of the operation of the Development Commission and the Countryside Commission.

The Development Commission established in 1909, had a long history as the national agency for rural development, and as Minay notes, always attempted to work with local communities and local authorities 'adopting a partnership style of operation' (Minay, 1990, p217). Local government relationships were strengthened following reorganisation of local government in 1974 when authorities could bid for funds on the basis of 'action plans' which they prepared and the Commission approved. The Council for Small Industries in Rural Areas (CoSira), described as 'the economic development arm of the Commission' (Rogers, 1999, p79) also prepared county strategies from this time (Minay, 1990, p220). This approach was cemented from 1982 with the designation by the Development Commission of Rural Development Areas. Whilst the decision on the areas designated for support was made by the Commission, I recall

discussions with the local authority and sharing of information about the potential areas prior to the announcement. The designated areas were administered according to the local authority boundary in which they fell. As Minay notes, 'the Commission ask[ed] the local authorities concerned to prepare in association with other key agencies, a Rural Development Programme' for the Rural Development Area in their territory. The Development Commission described its relations with local authorities in 1982 as 'a close partnership' and 'we can play an important part in helping them to deal with the particular needs of rural areas' (Development Commission, 1982, p6). It was a cooperative relationship, through the production of mutually supportive plans.

The practice of promoting and facilitating community development evolved significantly through experiments by local authorities and Rural Community Councils in England, often funded partly by the Development Commission, in the 1970s and early 1980s. Examples include the Rural Community and Development project in Hereford and Worcester established in 1975, followed by the Leominster Marches Project from 1981 to 1986 (Moon, 1986). Typically, community project officers sought to stimulate action at the parish level based on self help, such as parish appraisals, community transport schemes, co-operatives, information services, sport and cultural activities. Government agencies and county organisations provided a catalyst for local groups to form, though they would be constrained by the norms of the funders. Whilst the scope and resources of the Commission waxed and waned until its abolition in 1998 (Rogers, 1999), the mode of operating through experiments and locally devised county plans agreed between the Commission and county councils was common from the 1970s to the 1990s.

Advisory committees were a second common feature of the mode of governing. Built on a tradition of county council agriculture committees set up in 1939 and Rural Community Councils, the Development Commission set up various county and Rural Development Area committees through the 1970s and 1980s. A former 'county organiser' of the Development Commission – one of my 'helicopter' interviewees – recalled in 2007 his county committee of the early 1970s.

They were a mix of the great and the good. A prominent Chair, either from landowning stock or a principal county council Member, that sort of character. The members were people who could do one of two things - represent the interests of a sector of rural industry, like the local member of the national master farriers, or they could facilitate the work, like a medium ranking planner from the county. (20:N)

The committee's remit was to approve local plans, and recommend loans and investments for final approval by the Development Commission centrally. He depicts a group of the landed, political and professional elites selected to be part of his network due to their status, knowledge and position. He went on to describe his working relationship with the county planner, meeting at least every two weeks, and 'easing [the interviewee] into the business community and planning mechanisms'. As Cloke and Little note, 'the clear outcome' of this type of elite 'is that the state becomes instrumental in upholding the particular interests of the elites who exercise power within it' (Cloke and Little, 1990, p45). The committee members providing advice were at the same time representatives of the beneficiaries of the Development Commission's investment. Whilst Minay records some expressions of frustration with the Rural Development Programme in the 1980s (1990, p219), the Commission's work was generally welcomed. In other words, the professional and bureaucratic network of a select few individuals was held together by mutual support.

Similar narratives of working with local authorities and land managers can be traced in the history of the Countryside Commission from its formation in 1968. The first decade of the Countryside Commission was marked by a series of innovative experiments in 'countryside management', such as New Agricultural Landscapes (Westmacott and Worthington, 1974), urban fringe and upland management experiments. The Commission was the source of 'broad and brave thinking', developing ideas which were subsequently 'taken up by government or others' (Mercer, 2006, p8). The willingness of local authorities to be part of experiments was a crucial factor in the choice of areas (Countryside Commission, 1974, p5; 1981, p10). An approach to countryside management was developed based on close cooperation between many different interest groups, brokered by a project officer with the skills, responsibility and support to get practical work done, and respond to problems. The projects sought to resolve conflicts between farmers, residents and visitors, establishing a method which was regarded as successful when it was taken on by the public

authorities at the end of the experiment – as with the establishment of an Upland Management Service by the Lake District Special Planning Board following the Lake District Upland Management Experiment (Countryside Commission, 1976).

The Commission were particularly mindful of the dominant farming interests and national policies to maximise production in conducting their experiments. For example, the Commission used the auspices of the Ministry of Agriculture, the National Farmers Union, Country Landowners' Association and Local Authorities to seek nominations for its Demonstration Farms Project (Countryside Commission, 1979). A Commission leaflet described the process of selecting the farms as a measured, objective one based on size, wildlife diversity, conservation and access potential, and other factors, whilst hinting at other considerations.

The personal circumstances of the farmer are also important: it was agreed from the outset not to include anyone who was either too conservationist or too sceptical for the project's aims. (Countryside Commission, 1979, p2)

The farmer would need to be recognised as a member of the farming and landowning elite by other elite members in order to play his role in persuading them to take notice of the results of the project. Each farm and the project as a whole had a steering group comprised of farming and conservation interests, encouraging them and others to endorse the project's first objective to 'reconcile problems of landscape and nature conservation with modern agricultural methods' (Countryside Commission, 1979, p2).

Phillips (1993) notes that the Countryside Commission's 'success has to be judged not so much by what it did as by what it could get others to do' (Phillips, 1993, p64). A lack of executive powers to direct or prohibit meant that the Countryside Commission conducted its work to enable people to enjoy the countryside largely through 'advice, persuasion and promotion' (Phillips, 1993, p64). Early experiments tended to use Commission staff or secondments from government agencies, though partnering with local authorities grew through the decades. The change to a Conservative government in 1979 led to fluctuating fortunes for the Countryside Commission, as with the Development Commission. However, as Phillips concludes, the non-combative partnership mode of operating remained constant.

Some two-thirds of the funds which it received from government went to such organisations [public and voluntary sector, land owners and managers] in the form of grant-aided projects and programmes. It thus built relationships with influential organisations which saw the Commission as a supporter, not a rival. (Phillips, 1993, p80)

The examples from the Development Commission and Countryside Commission show how the agencies carried out their government roles by working with and through complex alliances. Networks were formed at a local level, often on the basis of local authority boundaries or smaller areas within an authority area, between small groups of actors. If designations, such as Heritage Coasts or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty crossed local authority boundaries, then cross boundary networks were set up, with all members focused on the designated territory. Politicians and officials comprising relatively few individuals from rural County Councils were significant players, drafting plans, agreeing to jointly fund activities, organising advisory groups and hosting project staff.

The Nature Conservancy Council, the third government agency with an interest in rural land, had some similar patterns of working, forming tight knit elite networks with the relatively rarefied worlds of science and voluntary nature conservation, especially in its early years prior to the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act (Marren, 2002, p35-36). The Nature Conservancy was initially a 'strongly science-based organisation' (Dixon, 1998, p215) and retained links with the science community in spite of restructuring and loss of powers. The Conservancy supported the formation of many county Wildlife Trusts in the 1950s. The Trusts and local authorities continued to work in alliances with the Conservancy on land management and 'professionalising' nature conservation (Marren, 2002, p61). Management agreements with landowners in the 1980s were an attempt at finding ways to reconcile the competing demands of agriculture and forestry with nature conservation, and to work with a broader range of land managers. However, in contrast to the Development Commission and the Countryside Commission, the Nature Conservancy Council owned and managed land, and had regulatory powers which at times put it on a collision course with dominant farming interests, including the Ministry of Agriculture (MAFF) (Sheail, 1997).

The examples of alliances between officers of the government institutions and local elites, often at a county scale, typify the patterns of rural development. They show that there is a long history of coalitions between central government and local personnel from statutory and voluntary groups, to sustain their common interests. Local authorities often took a lead role in local policy making and project management. The bureaucracy of committees and advisory groups gave legitimacy to their interventions.

However, there is a danger of painting a picture of stability and homogeneity in rural institutions which is far from the case. The three government rural agencies were variously affected by devolution debates. The status of the Development Commission changed in 1984 to a 'grant-in-aid' body, similar to the Countryside Commission and the Nature Conservancy. The Development Commission gained powers to intervene in a much wider range of rural issues and at the same time, officially became an English body (Rogers, 1999, p90). Development Boards had been established for the Highlands and Islands in 1965 and for rural Wales in 1977 in response to economic conditions, whilst also reflecting a political desire of the Labour governments to devolve activity to national bodies in Scotland and Wales (Rogers, 1999, p103). Conservative administrations were also subject to devolution pressures. In 1989 a Conservative government announced that the Nature Conservancy Council would be replaced by separate agencies for England, Scotland and Wales – subsequently English Nature, Scottish Natural Heritage, and the Countryside Council for Wales. The Scottish MP, Tam Dalyell, has been quoted as saying that this 'had nothing whatsoever to do with the best interests of the environment... It was... about devolving power to the Scots as a sop to keep us happy' (cited Marren, 2002, p39). The roles of the Nature Conservancy and Countryside Commission were combined in Wales, so that the Countryside Commission which formerly covered England and Wales, became an English agency. By the early 1990s devolutionary pressures had anglicised the Rural Development Commission, Countryside Commission and English Nature.

In addition to devolution, major changes took place in the interface between agriculture and environmental policy in the 1980s (Lowe et al, 1986). Secondly, the nature of government changed dramatically during the Thatcher era from

1979, impacting on priorities and funds. Strategies of deregulation, privatisation and free market economics (Jessop, 2003) led to a sustained decline in local authority powers and their ability to initiate rural development interventions. The next section charts the evolution of further changes which set the context for rural development under New Labour.

Europeanisation and governance

A key driver of change impacting on rural development policy and practice in the decade prior to New Labour was Europeanisation. European funding programmes brought with them requirements for regional plans and management which necessitated the creation of a range of administrative bodies. Conservative governments in the 1990s created integrated Government Offices partly in response to these European requirements. There was a growing emphasis on local territorial development fostering participation rather than sectoral rural development, as well as new priorities for agriculture policy. In addition to the European influences, a general trend can be identified of the changing nature of governing structures embodied in the concept of governance.

Flexible delivery of rural development policy and sensitivity to local conditions were set out at EU level in 'The Future of Rural Society' (CEC, 1988). The principles were applied to the Objective 5b programme, the Structural Fund objective concerned with improving under-performing rural economies. Each 5b area developed an implementation plan showing how the funds would be used to contribute to the EU objectives of economic convergence and cohesion, taking account of local circumstances. The local endogenous approach was honed further in the three LEADER programmes from 1991.

Dwyer et al (2007) note a further shift at the EU level when the Rural Development Regulation was linked with principles of local delivery through the Cork Conference in 1996 – Rural Europe: Future Perspectives. The Cork Declaration signalled a fundamental change away from support to farmers, to a broader concept of rural development through decentralised, local delivery (CEC, 1996). Whilst LEADER I had been a modest experimental programme, from 1996 an integrated approach to the economy, environment and society of

rural areas was put forward by the European Commission. However, powerful farming interests mobilised support to protect farm incomes, maintaining support for agriculture and severely limiting the funds for, and integration of, rural development policies.

In England, a similar discourse of local action through self-help was manifest in the Rural White Paper 1995 (DoE, 1995). Rose (1996, p41) terms such governing practices as seeking to 'degovernmentalise the State'. Murdoch notes that the narrative of the White Paper was of a diverse countryside, requiring local decision-making, rather than central government management, which 'might be portrayed as the government creeping away from its responsibilities under the cloak of local empowerment' (Murdoch, 1997, p116). In contrast, the European stance can be seen as seeking to achieve European ideals through local action, as Ray concludes: 'Behind the participatory principles... the greater EU project continued to hold sway' (Ray, 1996, p11). LEADER programmes have included an element of trans-national cooperation pursuant to cohesion policy, and targeting the poorest economies, pursuant to economic convergence.

During the Conservative years in government up to 1997, the Europeanisation of funds for rural development expanded local and regional capacities to administer programmes. In the first programming period of Objective 5b from 1989 Whittaker et al (2004) reported that in the South West, the Single Programming Document required by the European Commission as a framework for allocating funds, was drafted by officers from Cornwall County Council (Whittaker et al, 2004, p185). More areas were designated as 5b areas in 1994, the same year as the Integrated Government Offices were created in the English regions.

The strategic programme for each Objective 5b area is drawn up in the form of a Single Programming Document by central government through its Government Regional Offices... A group of local 'partners', including local authorities and local rural development organisations, are invited to comment on the draft document. (Ward and McNicholas, 1998, p32)

Responsibility for drawing up policy documents for Objective 5b had moved to the regional scale, and away from the former pattern of local government and local interest groups negotiating a strategy with national bodies. The Rural Development Commission became a valuable source of funds to match the

European funds in Objective 5b areas (McNicholas and Woodward, 1999, p13), allocated according to a regionally-crafted plan.

Two further changes are illustrated by the Objective 5b example. First, a larger number of organisations were involved in advisory groups, and second, the members came from across the spectrum of rural organisations. The size of the groups was in some cases a reflection of the size of the area – the Northern Uplands 5b area covered parts of five counties, though in practice, over time, county committees were formed to monitor the programme (Ward and McNicholas, 1998). In addition the size of the advisory groups was due to the increases in the number of agencies such as Training and Enterprise Councils and of active environmental bodies. A fundamental change was the bringing together of a broad governance network of public, private and voluntary players and representing all sectors of rural policy.

The LEADER programmes have been influential, building on experience with community development programmes, and creating a new tradition of rural development linked to European, rather than local or national funds. The programme areas in LEADER I, LEADER II and LEADER+ from 1991 to 2006, were a smaller spatial scale than Objective 5b in keeping with the European Commission's aims for community-based and community-led rural development (Ray, 1996). European policy for cohesion and participation has driven community involvement in rural development practice since the end of the 1980s. The incorporation of local knowledge was seen as preferable to decision making by distant government structures, and local capacity to solve problems would be built through new forms of local governance (CEC, 1988). Shortall and Shucksmith (2001) recognise that "'bottom-up" rural development owes much to earlier traditions of community development' (Shortall and Shucksmith 2001, p122) such as English experiments mentioned in the last section. Curry cites 'the very British idea of "getting involved" in voluntary work' (Curry, 2001, p 563) as an explanation of the long history of local community involvement in rural areas. In their European incarnation, Local Action Groups required by LEADER programmes have responsibilities to bring forward projects in their area, and recommend projects for approval. Rural Community Councils, local authorities and other local bodies have roles to motivate and facilitate community

development, and to manage funds on behalf of the Local Action Groups through the 'accountable body' role.

Ray, describing the European ideal, says that 'effective policy action required the active partnership of the locality' in order to 'facilitate a feeling of ownership and commitment, and to harness local expertise' (Ray, 1996, p10). In Objective 5b areas, the partnerships could recommend projects for funding to the Government Office and the final decision was made by Government in London (Ward and McNicholas, 1998). In the LEADER programmes, despite some freedom to experiment and innovate (Ray, 1996; Scott, 2004), each territory was regulated by record keeping, decision making and accountability rules (Whittaker et al, 2004).

The examples of European rural development programmes in England show that governance was evolving, and changing the traditions of the elite networks and community development partnerships prior to the 1990s. The academic literature draws on the concept of governance, introduced in Chapter 2, to examine the complex structures of governing. Governance of rural policy received attention from academic researchers from the mid 1990s onwards, in parallel with changes taking place more generally in political organisation (Rhodes, 1997; Goodwin, 1998). Membership of elite networks was often a product of the paternalistic nature of rural society, whereas the complex cross-sectoral governance structures required for European programmes were a product of administrative practices.

In recent decades, studies have questioned the extent to which the site of decision making has moved from government to governance structures (Murdoch and Abram 1998, Jones and Little 2000, Edwards et al, 2001, Gibbs and Jonas, 2001, Convery et al, 2010). Where governance mechanisms are set up by state institutions, it is principally members of those state institutions who manage the processes by which representatives of other bodies and individual citizens take part in such governance arrangements (Taylor, 2007). The social practices which determine the constitution and membership of a partnership, the rules and conventions of decision making and the extent of opportunity to engage in the work of the partnership will largely be set by the 'insiders'.

Murdoch and Abram (1998) in their study of rural housing policy concluded that, although community involvement opens up the potential to influence decision making, the national state constructs the dominant strategic discourse. Edwards et al examined examples of rural partnerships and concluded that the ability to make policy decisions was not devolved to them but rather that 'state institutions remain the dominant actors' (Edwards et al, 2001). Taylor asserts that 'a substantial body of research across the globe' points to the same conclusions and that 'some argue that this apparent opening up masks new forms of state control' (Taylor, 2007). Key issues of decision making, accountability for decisions and legitimacy are made invisible, concealed by the screen of partnership working.

Edwards et al found that 'for all those participating, the experience of partnership working is far from straightforward and involves considerable negotiation' (Edwards et al, 2000, pvii). A more recent study of local partnership relationships (Derkzen, Franklin and Bock, 2008) has demonstrated that whilst the national or local government authorities were dominant in their research example, no agency could exercise absolute control. They found that the use of coercion by government players was not productive and increased the resistance from other partnership members. Complex webs of dependencies and relationships had grown up, as can be seen in any sphere of policy making and implementation. By joining forces in 'partnerships', members attempt to gain a greater ability to achieve their goals and a capacity to act through negotiating with other members (Derkzen, Franklin and Bock, 2008).

The Europeanisation of rural development and the creation of Government Offices meant that, by the time New Labour was elected in 1997, institutionalisation of the regional scale was well underway as Mawson and Spencer observe.

[The Government Offices] were engaged in the preparation and/or approval of a range of economic, regeneration, environmental and European strategic documents, so that regional priorities were already established in most of the key policy areas. (Mawson and Spencer, 1997, p172)

The former elite networks had diminished, national and local roles and responsibilities had changed, and broader more complex partnerships

developed. Local authorities and other local bodies gained administrative tasks to support local groups, heavily regulated through the EU and national government, and lost their executive role in drafting plans. Designations of rural development territories, their policy and governance was managed through regional and national plans. Nevertheless, the framework of English bodies involved in rural policy and delivery of the Rural Development Commission, the Countryside Commission, and a restructured regime for nature conservation in the form of English Nature, remained in place. A 'helicopter' interviewee, a long term employee of the Development Commission from 1971, confirmed how the rural bodies had been very separate, acting independently from each other, though they too experienced changes in governing practices from the mid 1990s.

I'd never met anybody from the Countryside Commission ever I don't think, until about 1994. We tried to get a bit closer to English Nature and the Countryside Commission in the mid 90s. (20:N)

This change may have been influenced by a proposed merger between English Nature and the Countryside Commission at that time (Marren, 2002, p314), which though it did not take place, resulted in joint working. However, it could also be explained by the formation of complex governance arrangements for rural development programmes, which brought local representatives of the English agencies together.

Key events 1997-2010

This section gives an account of the redistribution of rural functions and institutional changes of New Labour. Such changes reveal the 'tactics and techniques' employed by government. The two most prominent rural policy documents of the period construct contrasting solutions to rural policy problems in relation to regionalisation, and thus mark two phases of regionalisation's impact on rural policy. The first up to 2004, is exemplified by the Rural White Paper 2000, and the second phase from 2004, by the Rural Strategy 2004.

Commentators have noted the significance of rural concerns in the early years of the Labour government, despite their manifesto having little to say about rural areas (Woods, 2008; Ward, 2008; Ward and Lowe, 2007). The first years up to 2001 was a remarkably active period for rural policy, partly due to electoral pressures caused by the commitment to ban hunting and the Countryside

Alliance lobby, and partly due to external events such as Foot and Mouth disease and the EU's Agenda 2000 (Woods, 2008). The Agenda 2000 proposals published in 1997 incorporated both continuing incremental reform of price support and the role of farmers in maintaining the fabric of the countryside, as well as structural support for the poorest rural areas (Lowe, Buller and Ward, 2002, p3). Protracted negotiations on the overall budget and the policy priorities resulted eventually in 'crucial elements of national discretion' being incorporated into the final agreement in 1999 (Lowe, Buller and Ward, 2002, p4). The EU could monitor and control each state through requiring an operational plan, such as those used for the Structural Funds including Objective 5b. The UK's Labour government sought to maximise the funds available to the broader rural economy, rather than to farmers, though this was heavily constrained by the history and complex rules of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

Nevertheless, there was a critical change in UK policy, bringing together economic, social and environmental concerns. The Rural White Paper 2000 emphasised a discourse of fairness, community responsibility, citizenship and social inclusion (DETR/MAFF, 2000). Whereas, agricultural policy had formerly dominated government rural policy, in the new narrative it became but one strand (Ward, 2008). Much academic literature on rural policy emphasises the productivist/post productivist transition, marking a change in rural policy. The declining importance of agriculture to the rural economy, a shift towards non-production based land-uses, the influence of the environmental lobby, and influences from the EU are all seen as having extended the field of rural policy, creating a new tradition (Keating and Stevenson, 2006; Lowe 2006; Slee, 2005). Events and electoral concerns created the discursive environment in which rural policy was redefined.

The first impact of regionalism was the abolition of the Rural Development Commission and establishment of Regional Development Agencies (RDAs). Staff involved with the day-to-day delivery work of the Commission transferred to form rural teams in the RDAs. The 'national policy, research and advocacy functions' were merged with much of the Countryside Commission to form the Countryside Agency, described by Ward and Lowe (2007, p4) as 'a side effect of setting up the RDAs' rather than any 'urge to improve the institutional

machinery' of rural policy. The Countryside Agency inherited the regional offices of the Countryside Commission, and became a 'relatively powerful quango' (Ward and Lowe, 2007, p4) with a national policy and research team, a network of regional staff, and government funds for rural programmes. The Government Offices also acquired rural teams from 2000, formed by integrating regional strategy staff from the Ministry of Agriculture (MAFF), further strengthening the regional tier.

The Rural White Paper of 2000 marked a return to a narrative of state intervention alongside European programmes, and an inclusive 'countryside for everyone' including urban dwellers arguably to counter the sectoral interests represented by the Countryside Alliance. It drew on a policy report, 'Rural Economies', based on the work of an expert team at the heart of the Labour government within the Performance and Innovation Unit (PIU) (Cabinet Office, 1999). Even though the report has been described as a 'sanitised version for public consumption' (Ward, 2008, p32) of the team's internal report, it encompassed economic, environmental and social policy objectives for rural England in one document. Whilst economic and social problems of rural areas had received attention from policy makers in earlier decades (DOE, 1976; Labour Party, 1981; Rural Voice, 1981), agriculture had dominated rural policy making for over 'forty years, a situation wholly endorsed and promoted by successive government' (Buller and Wright, 1990, p15). Ward notes that when the White Paper 'was eventually published... it contained a wide variety of measures, many of them taken from the PIU work' (Ward, 2008, p33). The White Paper set out a spending spree of measures on rural services, market towns, the economy including farming, as well as conservation and enjoyment of the countryside. Implementation of the measures was to be the responsibility of all national, regional, local bodies and the private sector.

The institutional landscape was taken for granted in the White Paper, which focused on issues, measures and initiatives. Commenting at the time, Lowe and Ward said 'it is at the regional level where the thinking in the Rural White Paper is perhaps least well developed, and where there is room for improvement' (Lowe and Ward, 2001, p389). The two government departments responsible for the White Paper of DETR and MAFF, at arms length from the policy drive of

the Performance and Innovation Unit, assumed that their agents such as the Countryside Agency, Housing Corporation, MAFF regional staff as well as Regional Development Agencies, local authorities, parish councils and the voluntary sector all had roles to play. Whilst the White Paper did specify roles for some organisations, particularly to manage funds, government as hierarchy was not part of its narrative.

Nevertheless, a tendency for regionally-organised and local bodies to take responsibility for the socio economic measures, and for national ones to lead the agricultural and environmental measures can be identified. Lowe suggests a spatial dimension to rural policy generally, noting that whilst the locus of international concern is on agriculture and trade policy, the national and local focus is on socio-economic development and territorial rural development (Lowe, 2006, p31). Farm diversification, diversity and wildlife measures were in the remit of the Ministry of Agriculture and English Nature. The Countryside Agency, local authorities and others were the institutions more concerned with the wider economy, services, homes and transport for people in rural areas.

The Countryside Agency could be seen as an exception. It was an England body continuing the tradition of the Countryside Commission, carrying out experiments such as the Land Management Initiatives (DETR/MAFF, 2000, p99) and promoting new initiatives such as 'Eat the View' (Countryside Agency, 2002). It had regional offices staffed largely by former Countryside Commission officers, with a broadened remit and funds to intervene in socio-economic issues. Their practices when delivering initiatives such as Market Town Health Checks and Rural Transport Partnerships continued the earlier traditions of co-operation and working with local authorities and the voluntary sector. Advisory groups and monitoring requirements were more prevalent than in earlier decades, and the scope of funding programmes was nationally determined. Nevertheless, there were echoes in some of the day-to-day relationships, between Countryside Agency and local authority staff that were reminiscent of former elite networks.

Government Offices are described in the Rural White Paper as having 'a crucial role to play in taking forward our rural agenda'. The formation of rural teams

from MAFF staff in each region except London, created a new mechanism for the department to manage programmes regionally. A step towards regionalising policy had already been taken with the preparation of regional chapters in the England plan of the European rural development programme, the England Rural Development Programme 2000-6. Government Offices advised national government on the choice of new LEADER areas and took on the management of LEADER+, alongside their responsibilities for other European funding programmes. They were also given a specific responsibility to lead the formation of a 'Rural Sounding Board' in each region, later known as Rural Affairs Forums. The narrative of government at that time was that there was a need to 'listen to the rural voice' and to demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of interests in the countryside to counter the Countryside Alliance lobby. A solution was to create a governance mechanism for rural affairs at the regional scale. Rural Affairs Forums comprised members with an interest in rural affairs, performing the 'rural region' through events, meetings and consultations. Their role of communication channel to government has been performed, first in the early years through a Rural Affairs Forum for England and annual conferences, and from April 2005 through quarterly meetings between Ministers and Chairs of the regional Forums (Defra, 2004b). For over a decade the Rural Affairs Forums continued to take part in the activities of regional institutions and in governing rural regions.

Regional Development Agencies were expected to support the growth of rural businesses and regenerate the rural economy, especially in Rural Priority Areas designated in 1994, replacing Rural Development Areas (DETF/MAFF, 2000, p80). The White Paper praised the activities of Regional Development Agencies and asked them 'to take forward the implementation of the policies' in the White Paper. Regional Development Agencies had active rural teams who worked in partnerships with the Government Offices, Countryside Agency and others. However, in contrast to the Government Offices, there were no specific new tasks for the Regional Development Agencies in the Rural White Paper. The next government document which set out changes to the government of rural affairs, the Rural Strategy 2004, was very different.

Within a few months of the Rural White Paper, Ward notes that 'all hell was let loose with the outbreak of foot and mouth disease (FMD)' (Ward, 2008, p34). The fallout from the crisis, and the continuing unfolding of regionalisation set the agenda for the next period. MAFF was severely criticised for its handling of FMD. Following the general election in 2001, the new department of the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) was formed, intended to mark a new era of governing the 'whole rural affairs agenda' (HM Government, 2002, p13) in contrast to MAFF's focus on agriculture. The Department was entrusted to Margaret Beckett, an experienced and loyal member of the Labour Party, and former President of the Board of Trade and Leader of the House of Commons. In her first few months, she announced two independent inquiries on the scientific issues and the government's handling of FMD, and a third inquiry on the sustainability of food and farming. The report of the latter, known as the Curry report (Cabinet Office, 2002), was very industry specific, focussing on food supply chains. Recommendations for a large expansion of agri-environmental schemes, and measures to strengthen the market orientation of farm businesses 'allowed farming and environmental interests to (re)capture the funds being released by the painfully achieved CAP reform' following Agenda 2000, effectively eroding rural development budgets (Lowe and Ward, 2007, p310).

The Rural Strategy 2004 (Defra, 2004) built on another report commissioned by Defra – the Rural Delivery Review led by Lord Haskins (Haskins, 2003). The scope of his review was wide ranging, though his background in the food and farming sector meant that he viewed rural policy from 'an agricultural or land management perspective' (Woods, 2008, p22), serving to marginalise the wider rural development agenda. The Rural Strategy places an emphasis in its first few pages on wider policy developments including the White Paper, Decentralisation – Your region, Your choice (CO/DTLGR, 2002) and the Prime Minister's principles of public service reform set out in 2002 for 'national standards and clear framework of accountability, devolution and delegation to the front line, more flexible arrangements for service delivery, and expanding choice for the consumer' (Defra, 2004, p7). The Strategy seeks to emphasise the government narrative as the context for Haskins' review – of the necessity to reform and modernise the public sector, a business-like focus on the

customer, and targeting and accountability. The Haskins Review proposed the separation of policy and delivery, recommending that Defra should make policy, and a myriad of other recommendations were concerned with the role and functions of other agencies to do 'effective delivery'.

The narratives that course their way through the Rural Strategy 2004 are first, a 'devolved approach to rural policy and delivery', and second 'to give a better deal for customers' (Defra, 2004, p4). The strategy re-emphasised the economic, social and environmental compass of rural policy from the Rural White Paper, though the measures announced were in the shape of 'delivery reforms' (p48). Lord Haskins's report, as Woods notes 'referred not to rural residents or citizens, but to "customers"' (Woods, 2008, p21). Customers were to the new Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), the recipients of their three funding programmes of rural regeneration, agriculture and food industry regeneration, and natural resource protection (Defra, 2004, p48). This narrow definition combined with a new enthusiasm taken up by Defra for devolution and regionalisation, and a handy list of recommendations from Lord Haskins around which to structure the reforms, set in train a second restructuring of rural institutions.

The chief recipient of new roles and funds were the Regional Development Agencies. The Countryside Agency was wound up to be replaced by a national advocacy and research body – the Commission for Rural Communities, focused on rural disadvantage. A new national 'integrated agency' of Natural England was created, bringing together 'English Nature, the landscape, access and recreation parts of the Countryside Agency, and the environmental functions of [Defra's] Rural Development Service' (Defra, 2004, p50). Regional Development Agencies took on key funding streams from the Countryside Agency, and from 2007 the EU's Rural Development Regulation 2007-2013, enacted in England as the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE). Regional Development Agencies were given responsibility for the economic and social measures in the programme including the LEADER approach. The national RDPE budget for the Regional Development Agencies was set at £536m. Individual Regional Development Agencies were then allocated total

RDPE budgets ranging from £48m in the North East to £102m in the South West region (Defra, 2008).

Government Offices were also central to the devolution and 'customer focussed' agenda of the Rural Strategy 2004. Government Offices were cast as brokers and leaders (p21), acting as a conduit to inform national government of the views of customers, monitor the performance of Regional Development Agencies, and co-ordinate and integrate rural priorities in each region. Lord Haskins had proposed that regional governance should be strengthened, through 'Regional Rural Priority Boards, chaired by Government Offices and including key regional and local bodies' (Defra, 2004, p83). Defra responded by asking each Government Office to lead the preparation of a 'regional framework for delivering rural policies' (p84) and to determine what governance structures would 'best meet their needs' rather than imposing Lord Haskins solution.

In Labour's third term from May 2005, the focus was to carry through the 2004 reforms in the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, setting up Natural England and the Commission for Rural Communities, and abolishing the Countryside Agency. The Regional Development Agencies took on delivery of the socio-economic elements of the Rural Development Programme for England, and the rural development policy capacity in Defra was cut severely (Ward and Lowe, 2007). For the RDAs, rural development was one element of their work, to be fitted into their economic remit. Thus, the social element of rural development was, at best downgraded, left to the advisory, non-executive agency of the Commission for Rural Communities, whilst English agencies operationalised agriculture, environment and conservation strands of rural policy.

Conclusion

The primary purpose of this chapter has been to explore the key discursive events of regionalism and New Labour, and the policy and practice of rural development. In practice, devolution policy was only partially realised, though in the process, critical changes were made to the governance and institutions of rural policy. Devolution and regionalisation of England has been a long standing policy for the Labour Party, founded on a tangle of beliefs in the economic and

democratic efficacy of regions. A large body of research on economic regions and the role of governance fuelled the political beliefs. At the same time researchers have examined the operation of institutions and the impact of changes on specific policy themes (Gibbs and Jonas, 2001; Pearce, Mawson and Ayres, 2008). Some have questioned the tenets of the 'new regionalism', asserting instead the tangled hierarchies of scale (Jones and Macleod 1999; Lovering, 1999; Macleod and Goodwin, 1999; Benneworth, Conroy and Roberts, 2002 Harrison, 2006, 2006a).

In the decades prior to regionalisation, rural policy and practice had been exercised typically through elite networks of national and local bodies, organised around sectoral interests and territories designated for policy action. From 1990 onwards shifts began to take place in the established networks in response to European policy, promoting a more integrated approach, initially adopted by New Labour. Trends for more extensive, cross sectoral and administrative governance at the regional tier began to embed regions as a scale to administer rural development programmes.

Researchers have studied these changes through focussing on the operation of individual institutions such as the GOs or RDAs, and on national-regional-local institutional relations. The final section has shown that the regionalisation of the rural activities of government took place in two phases following the Rural White Paper in 2000 and the Rural Strategy in 2004. The chronology is summarised in Table 2 at the end of this chapter. My research focus is on the micro-politics of regional-local relations during these two periods of change. The next chapter looks at the tasks devolved to the two principle regional institutions, the Government Offices and Regional Development Agencies, in the two key documents, as the focus of the discourse analysis.

Table 2: Key events

1 st May 1997	General Election: Labour government elected
1998	<i>Regional Development Agencies Act</i>
May 1998	<i>Government Office NW and MAFF established a Rural Forum for the North West</i>
<i>Prior to April 1999</i>	<i>Countryside Commission and Rural Development Commission wound down, functions transferred to Regional Development Agencies, Government Offices and Countryside Agency</i>
1 April 1999	Countryside Agency established <i>including a network of regional offices</i>
December 1999	PIU report 'Rural Economies' published by Government
November 2000	Rural White Paper – Our Countryside: the future published <i>including i) commitment to better regional co-ordination of Government activities, with MAFF regional strategy staff joining Government Offices in rural teams, and ii) establishment of national and regional 'Rural Sounding Boards' in all regions (Rural Affairs Forums)</i>
19 February 2001	Foot and Mouth Disease confirmed in Essex
7 June 2001	Labour re-elected in general election
June 2001	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) created
29 January 2002	Policy Commission on Farming and Food reports
November 2002	Haskins' Rural Delivery Review commissioned
9 th November 2002	<i>Rural Affairs Forum first annual national conference: Town & Country – Great Divide or Deep Connection?</i>
<i>December 2002</i>	<i>Government response to Policy Commission on Future of Farming and Food, including tasks for Government Offices and Regional Development Agencies to draw up local food strategies, coordinate and monitor their implementation</i>
11 November 2003	Haskins' Rural Delivery Review reports
July 2004	Rural Strategy report published <i>including Government Offices to lead the production of Regional Rural Development Frameworks (RRDFs) Rural Affairs Forums reviewed and strengthened</i>
1 April 2005	Social and economic rural development functions transferred from Countryside Agency to Regional Development Agencies
5 May 2005	Labour re-elected in general election
30 March 2006	Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act gets royal assent
1 October 2006	Functions of the Countryside Agency transferred to Natural England and the Commission for Rural Communities
2006-7	<i>Regional Development Agencies draft Regional Implementation Plans for the Rural Development Programme for England, and take on delivery of the socio-economic elements</i>

Source: Adapted from Woods, 2008, p4-5 – Non italicised items from Woods

Chapter 6. Framework for the discourse analysis

Introduction

The significant rural policy making activities of New Labour which framed the regionalisation of rural affairs in England, were the activities instigated by the Rural White Paper 2000 and the Rural Strategy 2004. The Government Offices and Regional Development Agencies were charged with new devolved policy making and governance tasks. An analysis of the documentary evidence is the starting point for constructing a theoretical framework of the discourses of regionalised rural policy making. The devolved tasks are manifested in the production of two sets of plans and their governance. Government Offices led the preparation of Regional Rural Delivery Frameworks (RRDFs) in 2005/06, and Regional Development Agencies were responsible for preparing Regional Implementation Plans (RIPs) in 2006/07, setting out how they would deliver the socio-economic aspects of the Rural Development Programme for England 2007-2013.

My second research objective is 'to examine the extent to which distinctive regional rural policy frameworks have been created as a consequence of regionalisation, the drivers of distinctiveness and the reasons for any divergence'. The rhetoric of regionalisation is the devolution of power from the national state to the regions, such that variations could be expected between regions. Policy making and governance are the key sites of change devolved to regional actors. The focus of my analysis of the two sets of regional plans is to question whether distinct policy differences have emerged and to look for evidence of divergence in governance practices.

This chapter reviews the rural plans from the English regions, and presents a discourse framework of four 'discourses of the region'. The first section explores the extent to which the policies of the two sets of regional plans are distinctive from national policy and from each other. Regional Rural Delivery Frameworks and Regional Implementation Plans were produced for the eight rural regions, excluding London, shown in Figure 1. The second section reviews the evidence in each set of plans of regional governance arrangements. The third section takes the two themes of policy distinctiveness or consistency, and the extent to

which governance practices are devolved to construct a discourse framework applied to the case studies in Chapter 7.

Figure 1: The English regions



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Analysis of policy distinctiveness

The Rural Strategy 2004 set three strategic priorities – of economic and social regeneration, social justice, and enhancing the value of the countryside. The inclusive scope of rural policy in the Rural White Paper 2000, of a ‘living,

working, protected and vibrant' countryside continued in the 2004 Strategy. The first national priority of economic and social regeneration emphasised the contribution that all businesses in rural areas could contribute to economic prosperity as a whole, with agriculture, fishing and forestry being but one component of the economy. Supporting enterprise, improving demand and access to learning opportunities, and tackling disadvantage are the dominant themes. The second national priority continues the theme of inclusivity, promising 'social justice for all' through tackling social exclusion, fair access to services including 'affordable housing and transport, and opportunities for everyone. The third priority of 'enhancing the value of *our* countryside' stressed the significance of rural areas for people, including future generations. Protecting and enhancing the environment was both a rural and an urban issue, as well as a component of 'the climate change challenge'. Enhancing 'the value and natural beauty of the countryside' is both for 'rural communities' and 'for the benefit of society in general' (Defra, 2004, p35).

Table 3 shows the themes of the regional plans mapped against the national priorities. The regional plans use very similar language to the national plan, and the objectives can be easily mapped onto the three national priorities. Some regions have a separate objective for land based business, or food, farming and forestry, though all the plans include an overarching theme to support all rural enterprise. Learning and skills are also common themes. The topics linked to the social justice priority in the national strategy of housing, transport, access to services and inclusive rural communities come through clearly in the regional plans, as shown in Table 3. Protecting, enhancing and conserving the countryside are key words in the regional plans, with some emphasising the need to respond to climate change. The details linked to the third national priority tends to focus on the funding streams such as stewardship schemes, and functions of the relevant agencies, such Natural England and the Forestry Commission.

There are differences in how the three national themes are subdivided in the regional plans and differences of emphasis which reflect the distinctive rural context of each region. For example in the East of England plan, plans for housing growth and the development pressures in the accessible parts of the

region, and the relative disadvantage experienced in the more peripheral areas set the context for the objectives (Government Office East of England, 2005). The plan for the South East concentrates strongly on environmental aspects whereas the North West has a stronger focus on economic and social issues. Nevertheless, all the priorities and themes from the Rural Strategy 2004 are reflected in the regional plans, and there are no objectives which fall outside the national scope.

The lack of divergence in the Regional Rural Delivery Frameworks is not surprising given that the plans were instigated by Defra. When the Rural Strategy was published in July 2004, Defra wrote to the Government Offices explaining that they had a role to take ‘the lead in each region to **develop the arrangements** to prioritise and co-ordinate activity, funding and delivery, **leading to a plan**’ (Defra, 2004a, bold in original). The title of ‘Regional Rural Delivery Framework’ given to the rural plans emphasises that the role of the national tier is to set policy, and it is the arrangements for delivery and ‘strengthening customer engagement’ that are being devolved to Government Offices. National officials maintained a close interest in the production of the plans. Defra (2004a) set the timescale for producing the frameworks and listed the ‘key decision makers and delivery agents’ that should be involved in each region. As work progressed, Defra staff visited the Government Offices to check on progress. An internal Defra report commented that ‘we have looked for evidence that the three main objectives of Rural Strategy 2004 are adequately covered’. Monitoring also included assessing the governance and consultation mechanisms, and the availability of an evidence base, and giving feedback to the regions on their approach (Defra, 2005).

Table 3 : Regional Rural Delivery Frameworks - Analysis of themes compared to the Rural Strategy 2004

Rural Strategy 2004 objectives	1. Economic and Social Regeneration Support enterprise across rural England, but target greater resources at areas of greatest need	2. Social justice for all Tackle rural social exclusion wherever it occurs and provide fair access to services and opportunities for all rural people	3. Enhancing the value of our countryside Protect the natural environment for this and future generations
North West	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximising the economic potential of the region's rural areas • Supporting sustainable farming and food 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving access to affordable rural housing • Ensuring fair access to services for rural communities • Empowering rural communities and addressing rural social exclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing the value of our rural environmental inheritance
East of England	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To encourage and support enterprise and innovation in rural businesses • to encourage people of all ages to participate in quality learning opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote social inclusion through improved access to services, community cohesion and participation in rural areas • To address housing needs in rural areas and respond to the anticipated impact of growth within the region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To encourage economic, social, and environmental activity which sustains and enhances the distinctive natural, cultural and built heritage of the region's rural areas • To improve the efficiency and sustainability of resource use across rural areas • To anticipate and respond to the impacts of climate change across rural areas
Yorks and Humber	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural business development • Employment, education and skills training • Support market towns • Sustainable tourism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to services • Rural transport • Rural housing • Rural communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserve and enhance the natural environment • Promote a functional landscape

Rural Strategy 2004 objectives	1. Economic and Social Regeneration Support enterprise across rural England, but target greater resources at areas of greatest need	2. Social justice for all Tackle rural social exclusion wherever it occurs and provide fair access to services and opportunities for all rural people	3. Enhancing the value of our countryside Protect the natural environment for this and future generations
West Midlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing a diverse and dynamic business base • Learning and skills improved • Creating the conditions for growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieving fair access to services for all • Securing vibrant, active inclusive and sustainable communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing the value of the countryside
East Midlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving enterprise, innovation and employment • Supporting land based rural businesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving access to affordable housing • Improving accessibility to jobs and services • Developing active communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green infrastructure • Addressing climate change
South East	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic development and enterprise • Food and farming • Forestry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusion • Housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biodiversity • Heritage • Landscape • Green space • Water and waste
South West	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural economy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community • Services • Housing • Accessibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environment
Priorities in the North East Rural Action Plan, June 2002			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The future for land-based businesses 2. Influencing National and European Rural Policy 3. The development of tourism and culture 4. Building a diversified rural economy 5. An enabling planning system 		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Investing in market towns and local service centres 7. Making the most of Information and Communication Technology 8. The empowerment of rural communities 9. Integrated rural transport 10. New ways of working 	

Sources: Defra (2004), RRDFs for each region¹ and North East Rural Action Plan 2002

An exception, which serves to underline the uniformity of the plans produced following the national strategy, is a plan (OneNorthEast, 2002) produced by the North East Rural Affairs Forum and the regional government partners in 2002 (OneNorthEast, the Countryside Agency, Government Office NE, and North East Assembly). The themes of this earlier plan, initiated in the wake of Foot and Mouth Disease, are focused on social and economic regeneration actions, and not on protecting the natural environment. Some of the language of the regeneration themes reflects national initiatives at the times, such as diversifying the rural economy, 'investing in market towns' and 'making the most of information and communication technology'. Two themes – to influence national and European rural policy, and to drive changes to the operation of the planning system – are story lines that have no counterpart in the regional plans that followed the Rural Strategy 2004, as shown in Table 3. Whilst the North East GO undertook some work to draft an RRDF, the earlier plan was retained, and was the only plan available on the web at the time of the research.

The timescale for producing the Regional Implementation Plans – delivery plans for the Rural Development Programme for England – and their scope were set by Defra and the EU requirements, such that the potential for divergence was very constrained. However, an analysis of the Regional Implementation Plans does show more significant variations from region to region than the Regional Rural Delivery Frameworks. Table 4 shows an analysis of the percentage of funds allocated to each 'measure' in Axis 1 defined by the EU programme, by region. In the national plan 18% of Axis 1 funds were allocated to the measure on vocational training and information actions. The breakdown shows that the regional choices range from 7% in the East Midlands to 39% and 40% in the West Midlands and South West plans respectively. Table 4 shows that there were a similar range of variations in many of the other priorities, indicating that distinctive choices were made in each region.

Table 4: Axis 1 measure allocations by English region

RDR measure	% share of regional funds	North West	East of England	North East	Yorks & Humber	East Midlands	West Midlands	South East	South West
111	Vocational training and information actions	35	17	20	23	6.5	39	14	43
114	Use of advisory services	5	5	2	0	0	1.3	0	1
115	Setting up of management, relief & advisory services	5	2		3	0.1	2.6	1	1
121	Modernisation of agricultural holdings	5		10	16	18.5	17	19	22
122	Improving the economic value of forests	5	10	4	9	3.9	1.3	18	2
123	Adding value to agricultural and forestry products	20	42	54	37	44.7	20.8	28	20
124	Co-operation for the development of new products	20	7	3	10	5.5	18	6	21
125	Infrastructure related to the development & adaptation of agriculture & forestry	5	17	2	2	20.8	0	13	0

Sources: Regional Implementation Plans for the English Regions²

One of the choices open to the regions was how to use the LEADER-approach of local delivery, including discretion to select the programme measures available to LEADER local groups. Table 5 shows that there are significant differences between regions in the measures chosen. The North West, North East and South West regions opted to include most measures in axes 1 and 3, whereas most regions chose to focus on Axis 3. Yorkshire and the Humber elected to concentrate the LEADER-approach into three measures only, compared to 14 measures (out of a possible 16) available for groups to bid for in the North West.

In addition, there was some flexibility on the scale of funds allocated to LEADER provided that an EU minimum requirement of 5% of the total programme was met. Table 5 would suggest a similar commitment to delivery of Axis 1 through the LEADER-approach in the two northern regions. However, the North East plans to spend only about 6% of Axis 1 funds through LEADER, whereas the North West plans to spend 20%. There is less variations in Axis 3 plans, which range in all eight regions from around 31% to 50% of the Axis total. The financial allocations approved in the initial Local Action Group plans (Thompson, 2009) reveal further regional differences. Local Action Groups (LAGs) submitted local development strategies to bid for funds in 2008. Figures available in 2009 showed that the North West region had approved LEADER bids up to the full allocation of funds for 2007-2013 (£22.2m), whereas the North East groups had only allocated around one quarter of the LEADER funds in their plan (£3.6m). The spending plans of the North East groups were only approved up to 2011, rather than for the full span of the programme.

The analysis of the policy content of the two sets of regional plans shows that the Regional Rural Delivery Frameworks have a high degree of consistency with the national strategy (Table 3), whereas despite the common national framework of the RDPE, the Regional Implementation Plans demonstrate greater distinctiveness from each other (Tables 4 and 5). The Regional Rural Delivery Frameworks were the responsibility of the GO rural teams, and the Regional Implementation Plan drafting was led by staff in the RDAs.

Table 5: Axis 1 and 3 measures available for delivery by the LEADER-approach

		North West	East of England ¹	North East ²	Yorks & Humber	East Midlands	West Midlands	South East	South West
111	Vocational training and information actions	X	X	X				X	
114	Use of advisory services	X		X					
115	Setting up of management, relief & advisory services	X		X					
121	Modernisation of agricultural holdings							X	
122	Improving the economic value of forests	X		X				X	
123	Adding value to agricultural and forestry products	X	X	X				X	
124	Co-operation for the development of new products	X		X				X	
125	infrastructure related to the development & adaptation of agriculture & forestry	X		X					
311	Diversification into non-agricultural activities	X	X	X		X		X	X
312	Support for the creation and development of micro-enterprises	X	X	X		X		X	X
313	Encouragement of Tourism activities	X	X	X		X		X	X
321	Basic services for the economy and rural population	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
322	Village renewal				X		X	X	X
323	Conservation and upgrading of rural heritage	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
331	Training and information	X	X	X		X	X	X	X

¹ Other Axis 1 measures can be included in LEADER bids but the RIP states that they are 'better delivered regionally by EEDA' ² Measures not listed. Data derived retrospectively from LEADER Local Development Strategies.

Sources: Regional Implementation Plans for the English Regions²

Analysis of governance

The second aspect of policy making where evidence of divergence could be expected is the governance arrangements in each region. Governance structures have become a common feature of public policy making, as discussed in Chapter 2. Listening ‘to what people in the countryside have to say’ (DoE/MAFF, 1995, p10) was also a theme in the English White Paper of the earlier Conservative government, though Labour made it an element of regionalisation through formalising regional Rural Affairs Forums. They have become an established element of governance in each region. In addition, from 2004 the government invited ‘each region to determine what structures will best meet their needs rather than impose a uniform solution’ (Defra, 2004b, p84). Not all of the regional plans indicate how they were drawn up, or the governance structures in operation, which in itself may indicate a divergence.

Table 6 summarises the evidence of governance arrangements in the published plans, and shows divergence in the approaches. For example, the governance structure is given prominence in a diagram at the start of the North West’s Regional Rural Delivery Framework (see Figure 3, page 109), whereas for other regions it is in an appendix or not mentioned at all. The composition of the North West’s governance is complex, comprising a board, ‘practitioners steering group’, RAF, and various regional and sub-regional ‘partnerships.’ Similarly, Yorkshire and the Humber and the South East regions have multiple groups of Boards, practitioners and partnerships. Regions with complex structures suggests a devolved approach, incorporating representatives from governmental and non governmental bodies operating at regional and local scales. Members have formal roles and responsibilities to contribute to and participate in regional policy making.

Where multiple structures have been created in the regions for the Regional Rural Delivery Frameworks (North West, Yorkshire & Humber, South East), the same groups are mentioned in the governance of the Regional Implementation Plan. In other regions, governance of the Regional Implementation Plans is largely confined to groups drawn from the regional government institutions. Simple structures or little or no emphasis on governance beyond consultation

exercises, is consistent with a view that regional government actors have all the authority required to implement the programme.

Table 6: Evidence of governance structures in regional rural plans

Region	RRDF evidence on governance	RIP evidence on governance
North West	Governance is a very significant part of the plan. A Rural Board including non-regional government stakeholders is supported by Rural Practitioners Group in place. RAF full forum and executive group	Rural Practitioners Steering Group are responsible for the overseeing the programme. Complex arrangements linked to the structures in the RRDF.
East of England	Regional government bodies form a regional partnership group. RAF role is to influence.	Steering Group of the three delivery partners
North East	No structures described in the plan	Programme Delivery Group of delivery partners, Environment Agency, English Heritage and representatives from key intermediaries
Yorkshire and the Humber	Rural Board and Rural Practitioners group. RAF has 4 sub-regional partnerships reporting to it	Rural Board, RAF and Rural Practitioners groups steer, monitor and review the RIP as part of their work
East Midlands	The RAF 'owns' the RRDF. No other governance structures.	No structures described in the plan
West Midlands	A rural board called 'Rural Accord' and the RAF share governance and accountability.	Few details of governance but strategic direction and approval are the responsibility of regional government bodies
South East	The SE Rural Partnership includes non-regional government stakeholders (Regional Assembly, 5 Local Authorities and RCCs represented). Progress reports presented to the RAF	National government delivery partners will report to SE Rural Partnership. Feedback on performance will be through Regional Advisory groups.
South West	No structures described in the plan	Some mentions of local sub-regional partnerships but no details of governance structures.

Source: RRDFs¹ and RIPS²

The Rural Affairs Forums are more prominent in the Regional Rural Delivery Frameworks than in the Regional Implementation Plans. This could be expected as both the Rural Affairs Forums and the Regional Rural Delivery Frameworks were the responsibility of the Government Offices. Analysis of the evidence available on governance suggests, that whilst all regions have a Rural Affairs

Forum as required by Defra, there are distinct differences between regions ranging from devolved governance with complex structures and broad participation, to tight knit structures of regional government officials.

The discourse framework

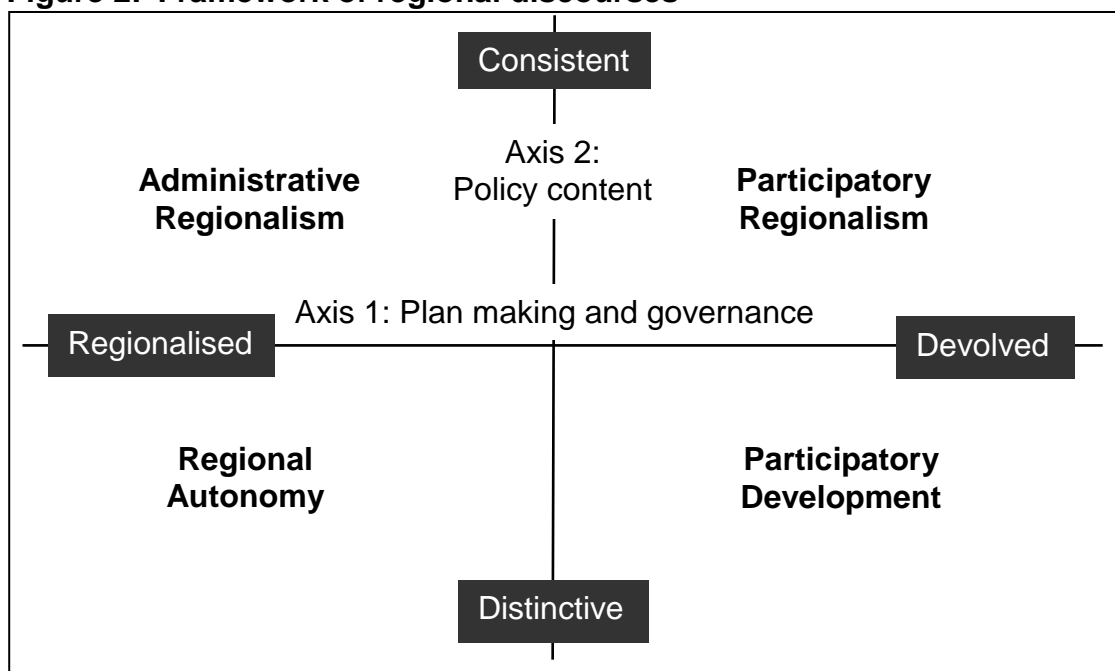
Chapter 5 referred to studies which have questioned the extent to which the state retains control, despite devolution, by extending its power and influence to the regional scale, or alternatively the extent to which the state devolves control away from the national state. My analysis of the two sets of regional plans shows that there were examples of difference and divergence as well as examples of consistency with national plans. In this section, I construct a discourse framework based on the contrasting perspectives of devolution and the tendency to centralise.

The tasks of drafting plans and arranging governance form the two elements of the discourse framework. First, the analysis of the plans shows that the Regional Rural Delivery Frameworks tended to have a high degree of policy consistency with national plans, driven by Defra's involvement, whereas the Regional Implementation Plans tended to be more distinctive. Plans that diverge from national plans and vary from region to region, suggest that devolution has taken place. Differing decisions have been taken in each region as a consequence of devolution, whereas consistent plans can be seen as evidence of continuing centralisation. Second, in the analysis of governance, as Table 6 shows, some regions constructed complex governance with sub-regional structures, whereas others had minimal structures for governance of the region as a whole. Complex structures which draw in a wide range of actors from the region and sub-regional scales implies a participative approach to governance, consistent with greater devolution of power. Simple structures made up of representatives from the regional tier implies a regionalised approach, centralising governance such that power was not devolved beyond the regional institutions.

The documentary analysis suggests that the discourses of the region are more complex than a twofold division of 'devolved' or 'centralised'. This can be illustrated by the results for the case study regions of the East of England and

the North West. Table 6 shows that governance in the East of England lay at the centralised end of the spectrum, whereas the North West had highly devolved governance with many groups each with their own constitution, roles and responsibilities. The measures chosen for the LEADER-approach shown in Table 5 provide a further hint of a devolved discourse in the North West, through leaving the choice open to the local groups to make. In the East of England the menu of measures was narrower, though not as restrictive as in some regions. The analysis of Regional Rural Delivery Frameworks (Table 3) concluded that most regions were largely consistent with national plans. In contrast the Regional Implementation Plans were highly distinctive (Tables 4 & 5), so that the North West and East of England had examples of both consistent and distinctive plans in the same region. Thus, the documentary analysis suggests four possible pairings of the two axes of policy and governance, shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Framework of regional discourses



The four quadrants make up the discourse analysis framework. The two devolved discourses suggest broad participation in governance and hence the epithet of participatory, whereas governance in the two regionalised discourses is limited to government actors from the regional tier. Consistent policy content describes discourses where national policy is paramount, whereas distinctiveness implies a greater degree of regional choice.

The discourses of 'Administrative Regionalism' and 'Participatory Development' combine themes which are consistent in terms of the centralised versus devolved debate. That is 'Administrative Regionalism' comprises consistent policy and regionalised governance, whereas 'Participatory Development' combines distinctive policy with devolved governance. 'Participatory Regionalism' and 'Regional Autonomy' are an amalgam of both centralised and devolved elements. 'Administrative Regionalism' describes a discourse where regional government actors execute government policy in the region, whereas 'Participatory Regionalism' promotes participation by a wide range of stakeholders in delivering the government programme. The third and fourth discourses – of 'Regional Autonomy' and 'Participatory Development' – have plans which are distinctive and divergent from national plans. Whereas 'Regional Autonomy' is governed by a regionalised elite, 'Participatory Development' shares a governance style with 'Participatory Regionalism' in which a broad membership takes part in regional policy making. The next step of the analysis is to paint a picture of each discourse through a critical examination of the interview transcripts and other materials.

In Chapter 3 I outlined Hajer's three tools for structuring discourse narratives, of metaphor, story line and discourse coalitions. It was also noted that some researchers have chosen to replace or supplement the third tool of discourse coalitions with alternative concepts that identify groups of actors involved with policy change. In the next two chapters, I utilise Hajer's three tools, and in addition, two subsets of the discourse coalition – first, Miller's concept of 'setting organisers' (1997) and second, a grouping of the regional government actors that I term the 'regional coterie'.

Miller says that "'setting organisers" arrange for and sometimes direct the flow of activities within settings' (Miller, 1997, p157). From 1997 functional and institutional changes created groups of actors at the regional tier with responsibility for the devolved tasks. The Government Office and Regional Development Agency rural teams played a pivotal role, organising the domains of knowledge, and the systems of control and constraint of governmentality. Through leading the devolved tasks, the rural teams 'operationalised' the

regionalisation programme of the national state, or in Miller's terms acted as the 'setting organisers'.

The 'setting organisers' joined forces with employees of government organisations that had regional structures and rural responsibilities to form the wider subset of the discourse coalition that I term the 'regional coterie'. Regionalisation promoted close alliances between MAFF/Defra-led rural agencies, Regional Development Agencies and Government Offices due to common institutional cultures. Typically, members were from the Countryside Agency and latterly Natural England, the Environment Agency and the Forestry Commission. Together with staff from the Government Offices and Regional Development Agencies, they had a common purpose first, in being able to show to their respective 'parents' at the national government tier that they were delivering regionalisation, and second, carrying out their rural functions. The rural teams and MAFF/Defra agencies shared similar work histories and organisational backgrounds, reinforced by their ties to the national department. MAFF staff formed the core of the Government Office rural teams. Rural Development Commission and Countryside Commission staff in the regions transferred to the rural teams and to the Countryside Agency, and latterly to the rural teams and Natural England when the Countryside Agency was abolished. Through shaping shared narratives they reinforced their role as rural policy makers. The result was a strong extended elite group or 'regional coterie' that contributed to the construction of 'their region' through the regional activities.

We started that group ... to ensure we were taking a more joined up, strategic view to issues of common interest to us in the region. (NW:11C)

The regional coterie formed a distinct segment of the discourse coalition by virtue of its relations to national government from which members derived their roles and responsibilities, and often historically, their working culture.

Conclusion

The chapter has analysed the two sets of rural plans produced in each region following the two periods of regionalisation marked by the Rural White Paper 2000 and the Rural Strategy 2004, according to two dimensions. The first is policy making and the content of plans, or in Foucault's terms, knowledge construction, which is evident in the plans. The second dimension is governance, or the state-led activities to produce, legitimise and implement the

policy agenda. The analysis has focused on the extent of distinctiveness and divergence, finding differences between the plans and governance led by the Government Offices and by the Regional Development Agencies. The analysis and a comparison of the regions forms a four-fold framework of regional rural discourses, combining consistent or distinctive policy content with regionalised or devolved governance.

The next chapter constructs a critical narrative of the 'discourses of the region' (Figure 2) using regional documents and interviews with members of the 'regional coterie' in the two case study regions. Those in the wider policy community with a 'stake' in the regionalisation of rural affairs, outside of the government-constituted core, generated discourses of response. Chapter 8 constructs a three-fold framework of responses to regionalisation and portrays the three 'discourses of response' to illuminate the 'sites of argumentation' (Hajer, 2006).

Naming conventions are used to distinguish between the interviewees in the next three chapters. NW and EE denotes the region (North-West and East of England); C, L, T is a sectoral attribution of central government, local and third sector; and each interviewee has a unique number (1 to 21).

¹ Regional Rural Delivery Frameworks –
North East – Rural Action Plan June 2002
North West – Regional Rural Delivery Framework, April 2006
Yorkshire and the Humber – Rural Framework 2006
West Midlands – Rural Delivery Framework, first iteration, April 2006
East Midlands – Rural Action Plan 2007-2013
East of England – Rural Delivery Framework, November 2005
South East – Rural Delivery Framework 2006-2009
South West – Rural Delivery Framework 2006

² Regional Implementation Plans -
North East - Draft December 2006 (Revised June 2007)
North West – Draft July 2007
Yorkshire and the Humber – Draft June 2007
West Midlands – Draft 6.1 August 2007
East Midlands - Draft July 2007
East of England – Draft March 2007
South East England and London – Draft May 2007 (Revised April 2008)
South West – Draft December 2006

Chapter 7. Discourses of the region

Introduction

This chapter constructs the four discourses of the region introduced in the last chapter, using Hajer's concepts of story lines, metaphors, and discourse coalitions incorporating 'setting organisers' and the 'regional coterie'. The analysis has shown that participatory governance was most in evidence in the North West, compared to centralised structures in the East of England, and hence examples from the North West best exemplify the two participatory discourses. Practices in the East of England, where governance and plan making tended to be centralised, provide examples for 'Administrative Regionalism'. Chapter 6 notes that policy divergence was most in evidence in the Regional Implementation Plans, linked to the construction of Regional Development Agencies. RDA-led activity therefore provides the examples for Regional Autonomy.

Discourse	Governance	Policy content	Primary exemplar
Participatory Development	Devolved	Distinctive	NW – RIP and governance
Administrative Regionalism	Regionalised	Consistent	EE – plans and governance
Participatory Regionalism	Devolved	Consistent	NW – RRDF and governance
Regional Autonomy	Regionalised	Distinctive	EE and NW – RIPs led by the RDAs

The stories are set out in turn using the primary exemplars shown in the table, and a summary is given at the end of each discourse.

Participatory development

In the participatory development discourse the 'setting organisers' build partnerships which promote participation and collaboration as illustrated by the North West case study. The North West Rural Affairs Forum was initially established by Government Office-North West in cooperation with NWDA and others ahead of the national requirement for a Rural Affairs Forum. The North West RAF was already well established by 2000, when it had 230 members (DETR/MAFF, 2000, p162). At the time of the research membership stood at over 300, due to a policy of welcoming 'all bona fide and rural organisations'

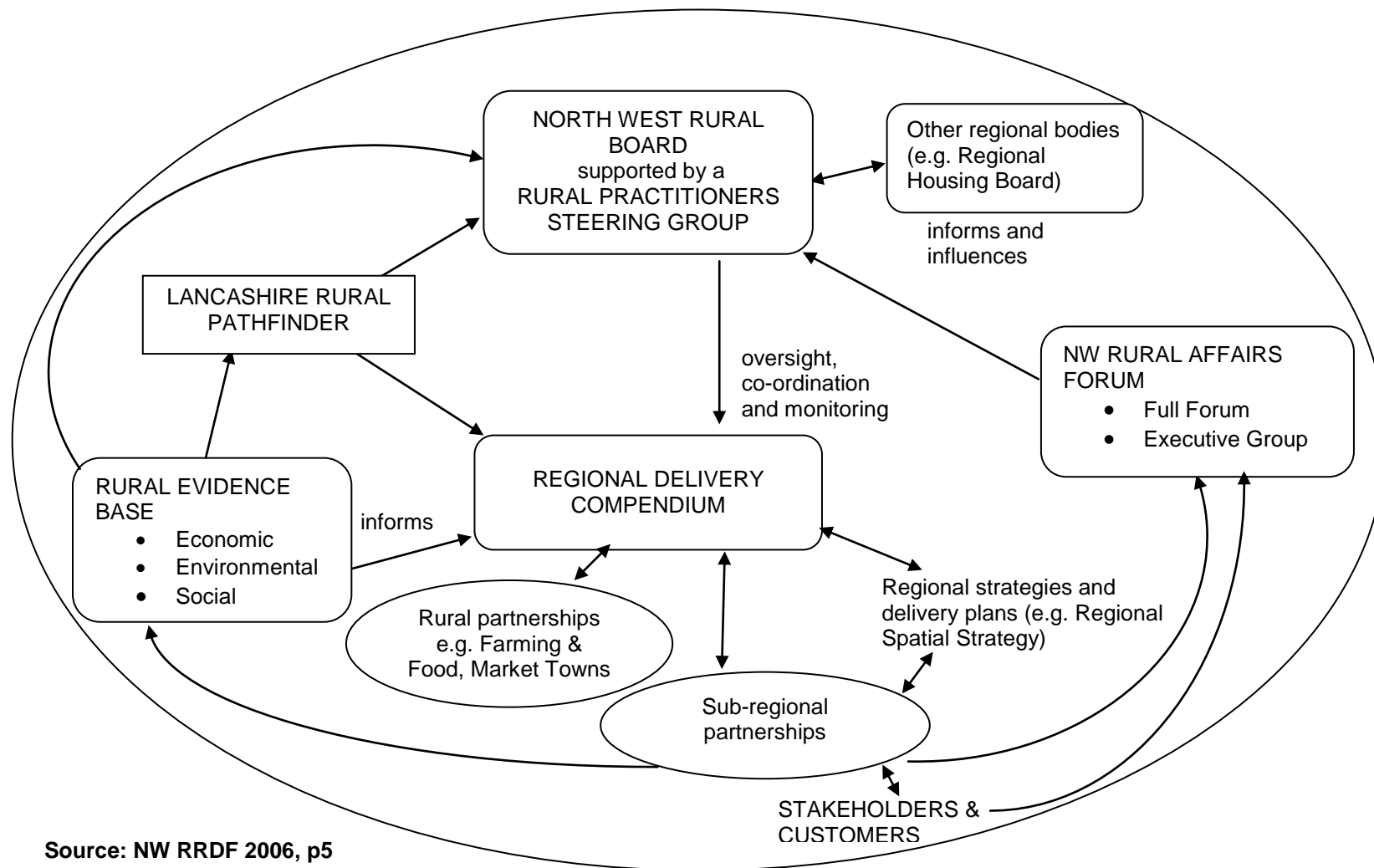
(NW:18RAF). The early establishment and an enthusiasm to encourage a broad membership indicates that the RAF was created in line with a devolved approach. In addition, it was a deliberate policy of GO-North West to enable the RAF to become independent of GO management. GO-North West's secretariat role has gradually been withdrawn, and new arrangements put in place for the Country Landowners and Business Association to carry out the administrative roles of communicating with members, arranging meetings and events.

For the Rural Affairs Forum, we [GO-North West] were the driving force. We provided the Secretariat, we organised the meetings, we set the agenda. It was a little bit command and control to start with, not because we wanted to be but because things wouldn't have happened without that. But over the last three or four years ... we've moved to ... a service level agreement with them. But they set their own agendas now, they organise their own meetings. They are just about an independent body now. (NW:13C)

The RAF may have become autonomous to an extent, managing its own affairs, but it was very much a part of the regionalisation project, integral to regional consultations and governance. It was nurtured by the setting organisers to be a participative network that encouraged an unrestricted membership to engage in its activities. The RAF contributed to the construction of the region and reinforced the regional scale.

The NW RAF was valued by the setting organisers as 'a general network for communication and information sharing' (NW:13C). The metaphor of a network suggests decentralised governance made up of multiple, connected and interacting participants. A diagram illustrating the 'rural delivery framework for the North West' (NW RRDF, 2006, p5) showed the RAF as itself a node in an extensive network of regional and sub-regional partnerships, all contained within a circle (Figure 3). The groups are linked by arrows constituting governance as a network of networks. The outer boundary encompasses 'stakeholders' and 'customers', or everyone who had a stake in or was affected by the rural delivery framework. The region was inclusive, made up of a network of sub-regions inter-linked by multiple connections, combining to construct an entity of the North West.

Figure 3: Governance Diagram for the North West



Source: NW RRDF 2006, p5

In addition to the RAF, the North West partners, led by GO-North West as part of their RRDF role, set up a Rural Board and a Practitioners' Group.

There was a Rural Practitioners' Steering Group which was like a technical officers' group of fairly senior but not chief executives in various organisations. They were the main drivers that pulled the RRDF together (NW:18RAF)

Although the membership of the Board and Steering Group was described as being 'small' by a GO interviewee, the structures involved additional participants from outside of the regional institutions of the national state. The governance structure was simplified once the Regional Rural Delivery Framework had been completed, collapsing the Board and Steering Group into one body – the Rural Strategic Group, but the breadth of membership with sub-regional representatives from local government and the third sector continued.

When we set up the Rural Strategic Group we deliberately created five seats for the sub-regions... we've got the Rural Strategic Group doing the strategy, we've got the task and finish sub-groups doing the operational delivery, and we've got the Forum doing the stakeholder engagement. (NW:13C)

Diversity and inclusive engagement was part of the regional story.

In 'participatory development', policy content is distinctive. The analysis in Chapter 6 noted that the Regional Implementation Plans showed a significant degree of divergence, despite national and EU constraints. A major reason in the case of the North West RIP was the devolved policy making practices adopted.

We've adopted the subsidiarity approach with RDPE... What my predecessor did in the development process, is go out there and say to the partners 'what do you want to do with us?' which is quite laudable in many ways. (NW:10C)

Sub-groups worked on county-level Regional Implementation Plans as noted in the RIP foreword.

Uniquely, in the Northwest we are using our sub regional partners to target Axis I, III & IV. Each of our five sub-regions has produced a Sub-Regional Implementation Plan that tailors the agreed regional approach to fit sub regional priorities. (NWDA, July 2007)

A significant divergence of the North West RIP was the greater use of the LEADER-approach than other regions, especially in Axis 1 (see Table 4, Chapter 6). The RIP allocated over 7% of the Axis budget to the LEADER-approach compared to nil or 1% in most other regions, except for the South East (4.6%). A commitment to community-led rural development of LEADER was consistent with the devolved, participatory values of the discourse.

The discourse coalition associated with the 'participatory development' discourse was large and complex, encompassing actors involved in the network of governance structures and consultation mechanisms. The metaphors of collaboration and networks form the participative story line circulated by the 'setting organisers', drawing in those with an interest in and affected by, the activities. The metaphors of collaboration and a 'region of sub-regions' meant that regional plans were produced by members of the discourse coalition working 'in partnership' to reflect the priorities of the sub-regions. The formal structures, broad membership, and the independent nature of the RAF built a narrative of participation in the North West through networked governance. The lead players could claim to have made Defra's policy of "devolving power, resources and responsibility" a reality.

Participation through the governance network and through participatory methods of plan making was understood by those involved to give legitimacy to the rural policy making activities, as stated by the NW RAF chairman.

If we email our 300 odd members and they email their members ... it's a really powerful avenue... people think, oh gosh, this is a resource we need to tap into and in order for us to legitimise our decision making processes we ought to be talking to them. (NW:18RAF)

Through consultation and participation, the setting organisers could claim that groups of actors were involved in decision making and, as Margaret Beckett said in the Rural Strategy 2004, they were 'empowered to deliver'. The extensive reach of the network of networks draws in power from the 'grassroots' to legitimise decisions. The regional players constructed the domain of rural policy making in response to tasks devolved by the national state, and constructed networks to enable those in the discourse coalition to collaborate.

Researchers have questioned, as noted in Chapter 5, the extent to which decisions are made within governance structures or whether they continue to be made within government, for example by the regional rural teams or by the national state. The commitment to collaboration in the participatory development discourse suggests that, theoretically the potential existed for decisions to be made within governance structures. The power relations of governance bodies with broad memberships, as in the North West region, opened up the possibility for members to influence and potentially introduce

new story lines. A collaborative culture of partnerships enabled all members to have some role in the shaping and reshaping of the story lines, pushing at the boundaries set by the regional coterie.

Discourse Analysis of Participatory Development	
Story lines of plan making and governance	Regional partners plan and deliver rural development, making decisions in collaboration with local partners. Together we understand and agree the needs of our region.
Story lines of policy	Our regional plans reflect the priorities of our sub-regions.
Metaphors (underlined)	<u>Collaboration</u> Network of <u>networks</u> <u>Practitioners, stakeholders, partnerships</u> Regions comprise <u>sub-regions</u>
Discourse coalitions	Complex governance structures involve regional and sub-regional stakeholders.

Administrative regionalism

The administrative regionalism discourse lies in the quadrant where regional policy content tends to be highly consistent with national policy, and governance is not devolved. In the field of environmental policy, Dryzek (2005) defined the discourse of administrative rationalism, or 'leave it to the experts' as a discourse of solving problems through professional, bureaucratic structures. The same general characteristics define administrative regionalism albeit in a different policy sphere. The dominant story line of administrative regionalism, as in administrative rationalism, is of a hierarchical state where the regional tier is subservient to the national state, and governing is an administrative task. The role of regions was to administer national policy, as Dryzek says through 'rational management in the service of a clearly defined public interest, informed by the best available expertise' (Dryzek, 2005, p87).

In the administrative regionalism discourse, the regional coterie showed deference to the national state, and constructed their role in relation to the requirements of government.

We're charged by Defra with being their eyes and ears in the region and making sure that the Development Agency are doing what needs to be done to deliver RDPE effectively. (NW:13C)

The GO interviewee portrayed himself as a watchdog for Defra, reporting back up the line on whether the RDA was conforming to national regulations. The role of the RDA was depicted as an agent delivering Defra policy. Policy was for the national scale and the regional role was to join up and make sure that national policies were delivered locally, rather than setting a regional policy agenda. The viewpoint was consistent with the Rural Strategy 2004 which focused on 'reformed delivery' and requiring partners to 'deliver the overall aim of Rural Strategy 2004' (p4). The regional actors were the managers and experts carrying out the diktats of the national state.

Preparation of the East of England plans and governance arrangements typify administrative regionalism. The tasks to prepare the regional plans required by Defra were technical ones, to lead and oversee their progress, consistent with a metaphor of hierarchical government. GOs were depicted as part of the institutional structure of Whitehall and staff accepted the hierarchy and expert manager metaphors of administrative regionalism.

We were managing that process essentially. So we had the remit from Defra to do it [the RRDF]... yes, we were managing and driving that process in a situation where we were also proactively managing and driving as a secretariat our Regional Rural Forum. (EE:1C)

The policy making practices to prepare the Regional Implementation Plans and Regional Rural Delivery Frameworks described by regional interviewees in the East of England showed that the regional bodies adopted the rational policy making norms discussed in Chapter 2 – of assembling the knowledge or 'evidence base', preparing draft plans, carrying out consultations and publishing a final document. The regional managers led the drafting of consultation documents, and planned and organised the consultation, as described by interviewees in both regions.

Government Office, Natural England, Forestry Commission got round a table to write our regional implementation plan based on the themes and measures [of the national plan] (NW:10C)

There was a review done of all the key regional strategies... It looks like we've got ... these range of issues and priorities which look like the ones for rural delivery in this region. Then there were a series of events focusing on different stakeholders groups and so on. (EE:1C)

The interviewees described their actions in rational and logical terms. The 'selection of goals' (Jenkins, 1978) or the scope of the plans, was generated by the regional rural teams carrying out their 'delivery' role. As such they were not concerned with examining and making complex policy choices within the region, but only with how to make government policy a reality in their region.

Governance has become such an accepted part of the democratic programme of government, that the administrative regionalism discourse, despite its technical character, had to accommodate governance. As I have shown in 'participatory development', the Rural Strategy 2004 could be said to encourage a participatory approach to devolution, through consistent reference to involving regional and local partners. In the East of England example of administrative regionalism, expert managers tackled the requirement for governance through constructing structures that informed their technical tasks. In this case 'governance' meant inviting comments from 'stakeholders' who were endowed with their own expertise by virtue of their membership or position, for example as an officer or representative of a 'rural body'. The stakeholders were chosen by the 'setting organisers' in contrast to the open, inclusive approach in the North West where members of networks of networks were considered to be stakeholders. The regional 'experts' gave information and promoted their programme of government to the stakeholders. The role of stakeholder was to give feedback to the regional experts, so that they could understand the impact of their policy actions, and potentially, make adjustments. The regional experts could use the evidence of stakeholder engagement to 'prove', for example to Defra, that they were taking account of – in the words of the Rural Strategy – "grass roots customers", as the North West was shown to do in participatory development though the methods differ substantially.

Governance arrangements in the East of England can be used to illustrate that in administrative regionalism, devolution is solely to the regional tier. The constitution of the East of England RAF (given to me by EE:1C) was drafted by GO-East staff and set the membership at 35 representatives nominated by a range of bodies. The membership was composed of the experts that the regional managers perceived had the knowledge required to give feedback on their programme. The members were chosen to give territorial coverage of the

region, drawn from 14 sectoral 'constituencies'. Three of the constituencies, of local authorities, sub-regional rural forums and the Rural Community Councils, had six members each, one for each county in the region. The remaining eleven constituencies were nominees from regional bodies such as the East of England Business Group, or East of England Tourist Board, or from bodies required to nominate representatives to operate at the regional scale. For example the National Farmer's Union, Country Landowners and Business Association, and the Forestry and Timber Association could together nominate two representatives to the regional forum.

The composition of the RAF with people from different interest groups ensured that alternative views were expressed and lively discussions could ensue, as observed at one of the quarterly meetings of the East of England RAF (12th December 2008). Opposing views could be expressed by different members of the forum, including views contrary to the regional plans and thus there was the potential for RAF members to introduce new story lines into the debate. However, they could only influence decision making by engaging as experts themselves, as the GO-East interviewee said concerning tensions in East of England RAF meetings.

Where people are so infrequently engaged and don't fully understand what things it can do and can't do, they will be looking to fetch up quite parochial things. (EE:1C)

RAF members are expected to appreciate the context set by the managers and to present issues that qualify as regional ones through the quarterly meetings.

Rural Affairs Forums operated in a typical bureaucratic style, with a chairperson and agendas, organised through varying levels of professional assistance, for example from the GO, RDA or stakeholder body. In order to overcome the apparent tensions in the East of England RAF, and as a result of a reduction in the GO budget, the GO had initiated more bureaucracy within the RAF, so that a sub-group of RAF members took on the bureaucratic functions formerly carried out by the GO team – of organising meetings and events, and preparing the agendas, for example.

We've set up a Rural Forum Steering Group to become a Rural Forum Executive or management board. It sets a programme of priorities and meetings, and gets involved in the agenda and so on. That's all been part of us trying to stop spoon feeding them and trying to get them to take ownership. (EE:1C)

The metaphor is of children needing to 'grow up' and conform to the power dynamics of the 'adults' or regional experts. RAF membership was constrained by the constitution drafted by the GO, and discussions were set up and managed by the regional government leaders. The techniques of bureaucracy limited and controlled the scope of the RAF to challenge and question the setting organiser-experts.

Nevertheless, the RAF was very significant to the regional bodies in the East of England, as regional forums were an integral part of Defra's programme of devolution. The RAF was very closely allied to the regional managers, operating as a feedback mechanism for the 'setting organisers'.

Its role is to be a critical friend to and get some engagement with the regional delivery partners. (EE:1C)

The RAF was an essential part of the regional policy making activities, satisfying the democratic requirements of governance.

The voice of the stakeholder, the raising of issues and so on. We made sure that the Rural Forum was fit for purpose for doing that. (EE:1C)

The RAF could respond, though only comments that were 'acceptable' to the expert managers were given consideration by them, such that the RAF supported and reinforced the processes of administrative regionalism.

In addition to the RAF, GO-East and the East of England Development Agency established groups of regional partners as required to manage Defra's devolved tasks.

For our governance arrangements we have this Rural Delivery Framework Steering Group which is made up of the regional bodies. Then we have, in order to continue delivering the RDPE against a RIP, the three delivery organisations who meet fairly regularly.... that is the team of rural development managers and representation of Natural England and Forestry Commission. (EE:2C)

The 'regional bodies' referred to here were the regional coterie – agencies set up and funded by the national state with a regional presence. Various boards and steering groups of regional partners were mentioned in the East of England Regional Rural Delivery Framework, though they were not given prominence as in the North West document. The groupings seem to have changed over time according to internal agreements between the government agencies and prompted by each new responsibility devolved by Defra. As interviewee EE:1C explained, the regional partners continued to meet on a 'task and finish' basis,

to agree how to take forward their regional rural responsibilities. The narrative of the regional government tier in the East of England was one of regular discussion through meetings between regional governmental colleagues with expert roles and common ties to national government, and who shared a managerial responsibility to deliver government policy.

The only groupings that existed where decisions could be taken were the groupings of the national government experts in the region, or within one of the rural teams. Decisions were depicted as technical and managerial ones internal to regional government, made by individuals or groups of officers, following consultation with stakeholders. The regional actors had responsibility to make decisions on behalf of 'the region' as a result of the managerial responsibilities devolved to them by Defra. The legitimacy of decisions was derived from their accountability to Defra. An instance cited by GO-East and East of England Development Agency interviewees was decision making on bids made by sub-regional groups for LEADER-approach areas in the RDPE. The GO was asked by EEDA to chair the selection meeting to give 'independence'.

We've sat in on that because it was just necessary to have someone who wasn't from one of the three delivery partners [EEDA, NE and FC] to get the balance there. (EE:1C)

The implication seemed to be that, as EEDA, Natural England and the Forestry Commission had a financial interest because they defrayed funds from the RDPE, the regional delivery partners needed to show to external actors that a 'due process' of selection had been undertaken. There was an assumption that, with GO-East as mediator or referee, the regional partners were demonstrating impartiality for decisions on the LEADER-approach bids to external applicants. The example underlines the story line that regional managers have the expertise and responsibility to make decisions on behalf of 'their region'.

The discourse coalition associated with administrative regionalism was confined to those actors given a role in the programme of government by the regional setting organisers. The regional actors employed techniques of government to supervise the membership of the RAF and thus sought to manage the power relations that impacted on their rural programme of government. Some actors who were not members of the RAF could access the programme, for example as consultees responding to plans posted on a regional website or invitees to

consultation events. The regional partners could choose to take account of comments or to ignore them, and were likely to do so according to whether comments could be accommodated without making fundamental changes to the expert assumptions. In the administrative regionalism discourse, Defra’s rural programme of government was devolved to the regional tier of government to deliver, and the policy making power was retained at the national tier.

Discourse Analysis of Administrative Regionalism	
Story lines of plan making and governance	Regional government managers make decisions on behalf of the region, and are accountable to the national state. Stakeholders provide feedback.
Story lines of policy	Regional plans are required to deliver national policy in the regions.
Metaphors (underlined)	Government as <u>hierarchy with national and regional tiers</u> The region as <u>one entity</u>
Discourse coalitions	Regional government bodies and invited stakeholders.

Participatory regionalism

The rhetoric of New Labour’s devolution policy as expressed in the foreword to the Rural Strategy by the Secretary of State, Margaret Beckett MP, reflects the participatory regionalism discourse.

Reformed delivery can only be achieved ... by genuinely devolving power, resources and responsibility away from central Government. Rural Strategy 2004 sets out our new devolved approach to rural policy and delivery, and represents a significant contribution to the Government’s wider devolution agenda. By bringing together resources and decision-making at a more local level, our regional and local partners will be empowered to deliver... (Defra, 2004, p4)

The dominant story line of the Rural Strategy was of devolution to “a more local level”. Success for rural areas according to the Strategy, lay in working together on a “customer-focused” agenda and enabling customers to “have a voice”. Devolution was presented as a pluralist project, where “delivery partners” engaged in a single enterprise of meeting customer need through exercising devolved powers. ‘Delivery’ is highly interactive in participatory regionalism, involving “regional and local partners” in the programme of government.

Production of the Regional Rural Delivery Framework in the North West serves to illustrate 'participatory regionalism'. The devolved nature of rural governance in the North West has been described under the 'participatory development' discourse. Chapter 6 concluded that all of the Regional Rural Delivery Frameworks including that of the North West region were generally consistent with national policy. Thus, production of the North West Regional Rural Delivery Framework serves to illustrate devolved governance combined with consistent policy content.

The regional interviewees portrayed the story of preparing the North West Regional Rural Delivery Framework as a collaborative one, with GO-North West playing a leadership role. This involved framing the task by presupposing that policy content was the preserve of national government.

We kicked it [the RRDF] off by having a workshop basically around it. I think, no, there wasn't a lot of disagreement around what we needed to do, and there was good commitment to actually getting on and doing it. (NW:13C)

The focus of discussion was on the practical matters of how to 'join-up' the activity of the delivery bodies to achieve the aims of the Rural Strategy, rather than on policy discussions.

Very early on we came to the conclusion that it wasn't another strategy we were producing it was a framework under which a lot of things sat. So it was about a framework which would bring some more co-ordinated action. (NW:13C)

The production of the Regional Rural Delivery Framework was seen as a practical, problem solving exercise, tackled by organising rational debate and down to earth collaboration.

A wide range of actors took part in the collaborative discussions which emphasised 'action' rather than idealistic policy debates. Sub-groups for each of the six themes of the RRDF were set up, charged with preparing an action plan for their theme.

Leads [of sub-groups] were charged with bringing together their group and to come back with the critical issues. (NW:12C)

The task of creating the plans was depicted as one where problems were solved by involving many partners with expertise. The approach was participative, based on a maxim that 'many heads are better than one'. The sub-groups had flexibility to set their own agendas, and to draw in other members.

The leads, or sub-group chairpersons, were identified by the setting organisers who also set out the tasks for the sub-groups. However, their leadership role is not unconditional but is tempered by discussion and negotiation with those participating in the activities. The regional government players were 'in the middle', balancing national and local requirements as a North West GO manager said of the RRDF.

The way we did that was trying to strike this balance between us providing a bit of leadership but not doing everything. Maybe getting the delivery bodies to own the tasks and do things. (NW:13C)

For him, 'delivery bodies' included non government partners, unlike in the 'administrative regionalism' example from the East of England. The setting organisers operationalised devolution by constructing an extensive community to participate in regional rural activities. At the same time, by portraying the role of participants as to 'do things', debate was focused on action rather than alternative policy directions. The GO staff maintained a policy stance consistent with national plans and, at the same time led a participatory approach.

The 'balancing act' of the setting organisers in participatory regionalism meant that the metaphor of government as hierarchy features in this discourse as well as in 'administrative regionalism'. However, the hierarchy has more depth in participatory regionalism as it continued from the national and regional tiers to those 'delivering' at sub-regional scales. The hierarchy also incorporated many actors beyond government and 'invited stakeholders', so that the discourse coalition was far more extensive than that of administrative regionalism.

GO-North West's execution of the RRDF reflected the metaphors of the Rural Strategy. The metaphor of 'delivery' applied to both the action-oriented stance of the discourse and to the composition of the discourse coalition, made up of "delivery bodies" and customers. GO-North West had taken on a leadership role derived from devolution and operationalised the Rural Strategy by drawing 'delivery bodies' into action planning. Broad, inclusive engagement which acknowledged sub-regions and the local, was designed to build a partnership which took charge of delivery.

The importance of establishing the right devolved governance structures to take forward the regional rural work was consistently stressed by regional

interviewees in the North West, and features in both participatory regionalism and participatory development discourses. The focus on governance reveals the significant role it had to play. Participation conferred responsibilities on the governance members to deliver plans, as well as getting involved in their production and providing expertise.

We had what was called a Rural Practitioners' Steering Group which was rural delivery bodies who had come together to support the Rural Board... The Practitioners' Group was really the group of people that delivered the Regional Delivery Framework (NW:13C)

The broad membership of the Practitioners' Group and the Rural Board incorporating sub-regional partners, as described under the participatory development discourse, was seen as being responsible for delivering the Regional Rural Development Framework.

The role and membership of each governance body was described in the Regional Rural Development Framework, formalising and making known the complex network of governance. The governance structure institutionalised the involvement of a wide range of rural interests who were cast as having a stake in the region. Governance drew in the 'stakeholders' who, through taking part in sub-groups, events and consultations, helped to construct the rural region. In participatory regionalism a region was diverse, with many 'delivery partners'. The governance structures had members from the sub-regions who came together to collaborate in action-planning and delivery.

The nature and scale of the discourse coalition associated with the participatory regionalism discourse was much the same as in the participatory development discourse. GO staff were empowered by Defra's stance, as expressed in the Rural Strategy, to take on the leadership role. The interviews suggest that the task to prepare the Regional Rural Development Framework were set in a way which took for granted that the scope of the framework would be consistent with the Rural Strategy. The participative way of working together involved the broad membership in a collaborative, cooperative process set up by the regional leaders. Legitimacy for decisions was derived both from their accountability to Defra and from the participatory approach to governance.

Discourse Analysis of Participatory Regionalism	
Story lines of plan making and governance	Partners across the region collaborate to deliver rural development on behalf of the national state. Together we understand and agree the needs of our region.
Story lines of policy	Regional plans are required to deliver national policy in the regions.
Metaphors (underlined)	Government as <u>hierarchy</u> with <u>national, regional and sub-regional tiers</u> . <u>Practical collaboration</u> on delivery Regions comprise <u>sub-regions</u>
Discourse coalitions	Complex governance structures involve delivery bodies who serve customers

Regional autonomy

'Regional autonomy' evokes a picture of a self-governing region in charge of its own rural affairs. Clearly, that extent of independence did not exist in the English regions. However, a regional autonomy discourse was evident in many of the characteristics of the East of England and North West case studies. The regional autonomy discourse shares a regionalised governance structure with 'administrative regionalism' and distinctive policy content with 'participatory development'.

In Chapter 6 I suggest that policy divergence is most in evidence in the Regional Implementation Plans prepared by the Regional Development Agencies. The analysis showed that there was significant divergence between the social and economic measures of the Regional Implementation Plans despite the national and EU constraints on the plans, much of which may have been due to independent choices. Thus characteristics of the Regional Development Agencies, policy content of the Regional Implementation Plans, and governance arrangements, using examples from both case study regions, can be used to illustrate the regional autonomy discourse.

The case study materials confirm that interviewees perceived Regional Development Agencies differently to the GOs and national bodies.

There is a fundamental point actually that the Forestry Commission and Natural England, for example, are structured very differently. They are national bodies with a regional presence (NW:14L)

As Regional Development Agencies grew into substantial organisations, an identity was constructed of a regional institution of, and for, the region.

The majority of partners who we work with, the Government Office who are basically Whitehall in the regions, Forestry Commission, Natural England, are actually all national bodies and don't attempt to touch down very much even now at regional level. (NW:10C)

The interviewee considers that his Regional Development Agency was 'more of a regional body' than the other regional government partners. He implied that the Regional Development Agency had a true understanding of the region by being 'on the ground' in the region, so that it could respond to its needs. On the other hand, the other government partners managed from Whitehall were distant, and policy decisions were not made with reference to the specificities of the region. The belief in the regional autonomy of the Regional Development Agency meant that it was in a 'better position' to exercise regional leadership than the Government Office, as expressed by the GO-North West interviewee.

I feel that because of the way that Government Office had facilitated the Rural Affairs Forum... they are de facto looked upon as the kind of the pinnacles that lead in the region which I think is wrong. I think that lead should actually come from within the region, - the RAF chairman or from an organisation like ourselves, all regional. (NW:10C)

In the North West, the Government Office played a strong role in establishing participative governance. However, the regionalism project enabled Regional Development Agencies, as shown by NWDA, to develop their image as independent bodies 'leading' their region.

A story line of the regional autonomy discourse is that Regional Development Agencies made decisions on policy choices and hence investment decisions.

There is a great opportunity for us to identify the kind of priorities that we need to commission in the region. (NW:10C)

In the North West, the RDA interviewee expressed frustration at the participative approach which in his view hindered delivery.

Where I think the rural delivery framework didn't actually match expectations was that it became a kind of framework process and that there had to be a lot of complex associations associated with the development of it. If you look at this region's delivery framework, there's a diagram that actually highlights complex relationships, it's a network of how this works. It's probably less straightforward and is actually less dynamic than just a simple approach to delivering priorities. (NW:10C)

The role of partners was depicted as 'deliverers' of RDA priorities. The network (shown in Figure 3, page 109) was seen as unnecessarily complex because it 'prevented' deliverers doing the RDA's bidding.

The story line that regional government leaders were responsible for decisions on behalf of the region and getting things done, was exemplified by the use of the term 'single pot' to describe the Regional Development Agencies' investment resources. The term emphasised the independence of the Regional Development Agencies to make their own decisions as they saw fit. RDA funds comprised a number of allocations from different government departments including Defra. In the North West example, the Regional Development Agencies portrayed decisions as their own, and the role of other bodies was to deliver what they were commissioned to do according to the regional priorities that the RDA determined. The national picture of the Regional Development Agencies funded from several sources and contributing to a range of national objectives, vanished behind the image of funds being thrown into a piggy bank, or single pot, which the RDA dipped into as it chose.

The mission of the Regional Development Agencies was to transform the economy of their region. The North West's RDA website declared –'The Northwest Regional Development Agency stimulates economic growth and regeneration in England's Northwest'. Regional Development Agencies were tasked with preparing a 'Regional Economic Strategy' as their guiding policy document. Given the significance of the economic mission it is not surprising that the EEDA interviewee stressed the overriding importance of the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) in defining the priorities in their Regional Implementation Plan.

The RES was important because otherwise it's a bit pointless the RDAs delivering the RDPE.... The RES, that was really key to when we were looking at how we developed it [the RIP] and what were the priorities that came from it. (EE:2C)

A focus on the economic would inevitably lead to choices which favoured the economic measures over the social and community measures available in the national plan for RDPE.

However, a common focus on the economic did not lead to each region coming up with a similar formulae for their Regional Implementation Plans. There are several explanations that could account for the divergence. Some of the Regional Implementation Plans included a strong narrative of their 'evidence base' suggesting that a technical approach had been adopted to show how the priorities were derived from an analysis of the needs and characteristics of the region. The absence of national control meant that the prevailing culture within each RDA differed. My own experience with the East Midlands RDA was that rural staff were keen to maximise funds available to private businesses, which they considered to be the most effective means to boost the rural economy. This stance led to decisions to exclude some RDPE measures and to favour others.

The characteristic of Regional Development Agencies as independent bodies meant that their choices were limited by, but not determined by national rural policy. They had the autonomy to make decisions which resulted in divergence. The Regional Development Agencies saw the RDPE as an opportunity to develop their rural activity according to their priorities, rather than a task to be undertaken in order to contribute to Defra's, or the EU's, policy objectives. Objectives that did not accord with each RDA's priorities were marginalised or excluded. For example, in the East of England plan, RDPE measures on 'village renewal' and 'investing in basic services' were allocated minimal funds. Regional Development Agencies took for granted that the decisions were theirs to make within the overall EU and national framework, as regionalism devolved to them the responsibility to 'know what is best' for the region.

As with all the discourses, evidence of consultation was required to 'prove' that democratic practices existed to give legitimacy to regional plans. The example of the East of England RIP illustrates the centralised consultation and governance of the regional autonomy discourse.

We used the Rural Forum as the basis to invite people to a range of consultation meetings across the region, where we'd go along and present what the RIP was about. ...I think it was four or five meetings across the region under the guise of the Rural Forum, so somebody from the Rural Forum chaired each of the meetings. (EE:2C)

The practice in the East of England of a forum member leading the RIP consultation events drew them into the discursive constructions formed by the

governmental players who set up the consultation. The consultation process, managed through the forum and led by a forum member, had the effect of giving legitimacy to the plans drafted by the regional lead players.

The East of England Rural Affairs Forum meetings frequently featured updates on the RDPE from EEDA.

I find it useful to have a group of stakeholders that we can take things to, that we can get some buy in from or some feedback from (EE:2C)

The RAF received support initially – in common with all Rural Affairs Forums – from the Government Office. Each of the GOs encouraged their Rural Affairs Forums to be more self supporting, requiring less assistance as GO resources for rural affairs diminished, and in order to strengthen their representational role through greater independence. EEDA had no direct responsibility for the RAF, but EEDA increasingly filled the gap left by the withdrawal of GO funds, providing organisational and financial assistance. As long as the RAF continued to function, EEDA could show that it was involving stakeholders, giving legitimacy to EEDA’s decisions. In the regional autonomy discourse, invited stakeholders provide feedback on the information provided to them by EEDA. Decisions are made within the RDA structures according to their priorities and budget decisions

Discourse Analysis of Regional Autonomy	
Story lines of plan making and governance	Regional government leaders are responsible for decisions on behalf of the region. Stakeholders provide feedback.
Story lines of policy	Our regional plans are grounded in our knowledge of the region and set out our priorities for the region
Metaphors (underlined)	<u>Autonomous</u> <u>Independent</u> <u>Regionalised</u> The Region is <u>an entity</u>
Discourse coalitions	Regional government bodies, invited stakeholders and deliverers

Conclusion

The case study material illustrates the story lines, metaphors and discourse coalitions of the four regional discourses as summarised in Table 7. The analysis draws out the rhetorical devices that influenced the patterns of distinctiveness and divergence. The 'setting organisers' in each region and in each Government Office and Regional Development Agency interpreted the tasks delegated to them in differing ways, though remaining within the discursive framework of national government. Government Office discourses tended to espouse the story line that regional plans were required to deliver national policy in the region, whereas RDA-led plans tended to be divergent. Governance was more inclined to be devolved and participatory in the North West region. In the East of England governance was the preserve of the 'regional coterie' with minimal stakeholder involvement. It is important to recognise that the discourses presented here are ideal types and interviewees draw on and represent more than one discourse. All the discourses are present to differing degrees at different times, and the case study regions exhibit characteristics of all of them. The next chapter sets out the discourses of the rural policy actors who were not part of the regional coterie, in order to gain insights into the impacts on rural development practice.

Table 7: Regional rural policy discourses – story lines, metaphors and discourse coalitions

Discourse	Axis 1 – Plan making and governance story lines	Axis 2- Policy story lines	Metaphors (underlined)	Discourse coalitions
Participatory development	Regional partners plan and deliver rural development, making decisions in collaboration with local partners. Together we understand and agree the needs of our region.	Our regional plans reflect the priorities of our sub-regions.	<u>Collaboration</u> Network of <u>networks</u> <u>Practitioners, stakeholders, partnerships</u> Regions comprise <u>sub-regions</u>	Complex governance structures involve regional and sub-regional stakeholders.
Administrative Regionalism	Regional government managers make decisions on behalf of the region, and are accountable to the national state. Stakeholders provide feedback.	Regional plans are required to deliver national policy in the regions.	Government as <u>hierarchy</u> with <u>national</u> and <u>regional tiers</u> The region as <u>one entity</u>	Regional government bodies and invited stakeholders
Participatory Regionalism	Partners across the region collaborate to deliver rural development on behalf of the national state. Together we understand and agree the needs of our region.	Regional plans are required to deliver national policy in the regions.	Government as <u>hierarchy</u> with <u>national, regional</u> and <u>sub-regional tiers</u> . <u>Practical collaboration</u> on delivery Regions comprise <u>sub-regions</u>	Complex governance structures involve delivery bodies who serve customers.
Regional Autonomy	Regional government leaders are responsible for decisions on behalf of the region. Stakeholders provide feedback.	Our regional plans are grounded in our knowledge of the region and set out our priorities for the region	<u>Autonomous</u> <u>Independent</u> <u>Regionalised</u> The Region is <u>an entity</u>	Regional government bodies, invited stakeholders and deliverers

Chapter 8. Discourses of response

Introduction

The construction of the rural programme of government within each region – of governance, plans and funding programmes – changed the flows of power and opened up new discursive spaces. The regionalisation of rural policy transformed the scalar landscape, and changed the patterns of former elite networks, as shown in Chapter 5. Discourse coalitions – in Hajer’s tradition of discourse analysis – form around and help to shape the discourses of the rural region. The programme of government became a focus for actors to share and reinforce the story lines and metaphors of the regional discourse, even though they could be from a wide variety of rural alliances. They had an affinity, for different unstated reasons, with the discourse. Discourse coalitions evolve and are strengthened by the discursive practices of the discourse.

The discursive practices, which take in some actors and exclude participation by others, prompt responses from them. Their reactions and interplay with the discourses of the region shaped discourses of response. This chapter sets out a framework for discourses of response and depicts the discourse narratives. The theoretical framework for discourses of the region was derived from regional documents (Chapters 6 and 7). These provide little evidence on which to base a framework of discourses of response. I draw on examples of my own involvement in regional and rural affairs over the last decade to construct three discourses of responses.

The discourse framework

During the first two terms of New Labour, I worked on a local initiative – the South Holland Rural Action Zone, a district in Lincolnshire in the East Midlands region. The activity was heavily focused on influencing national and regional policy on rural issues, and thus, I engaged with the national and regional agendas. Two key advocates of the East Midlands rural region transferred from the Rural Development Commission in 1999 to lead the newly created rural team in the region’s RDA, the East Midlands Development Agency (emda), and the Countryside Agency regional team. Through their work, together with the GO-East Midlands rural affairs director, formerly with MAFF, they were influential in constructing an entity of the rural region of the East Midlands. The

East Midlands Development Agency rural team manager expressed a strong commitment to regionalism when I interviewed him in 2007.

For seven years in CoSIRA and seven in the RDC, I'd been the governor in the eastern region.... But I've got to say I think the East Midlands Development Agency has turned out to be absolutely brilliant in what it's done for the rural areas. We've done more in the last eight years in rural East Midlands than we'd ever had done had the RDC still been here. (20:N)

He considered that the Regional Development Agency had far greater “flexibility” than the Rural Development Commission. His depiction of himself as the “governor” of the Commission’s eastern region, which was a much larger geographical area than Government Office regions, shows that he was in a lead role in the Rural Development Commission. Once in the Regional Development Agency, the autonomy to make decisions and allocate funds confirmed his conviction in regionalism, of which he became a powerful promoter. He emphasises the ability of the Regional Development Agency to ‘get things done’ and to make decisions without reference to complex governance structures.

Such conviction is not confined to those with regional roles. A colleague in Lincolnshire County Council was surprised to be rebuked by a senior manager for suggesting in a written report that the county should join a regional research observatory initiative without describing any other options. The colleague had worked in local government for more than five years but had a much longer history of working in government bodies and the civil service. The offer to join the regional project was a straightforward one as far as he was concerned, as he knew and had worked with the regional proponents. He accepted that the regional body had the authority to act and accepted without question that the local authority should ‘buy into’ the project.

Another example from Lincolnshire explains the reason for the rebuke. The same senior manager prepared a note for a councillor who was required by his position to attend some regional events. The councillor from the ruling Conservative party was ideologically opposed to New Labour’s regionalism. The note began by outlining the issue and then proposed a pragmatic response.

The problem you posed to me is essentially one of integrity. How can you respond to emda when you have fundamental disagreements with the concept of regionalism?

If you feel strongly enough about any matter of principle it is, of course, a perfectly proper response to withdraw! You do not have to play the game!

However, you represent rather more than yourself in the position you hold. So, this paper offers a way by which you do not compromise your integrity on this matter and still participate in the consultation.

An example of the advice offered was:

You may wish to sign up to a Vision that supports the people in the East Midlands but not one that supports an entity of the East Midlands.

The senior manager understood that interactions between the regional tier and local government had consequences for his organisation, for example, on the distribution of resources by regional government bodies, and thus he proposed to engage for pragmatic reasons. The manager refers to “playing the game” the rules of which were set, in this case by the East Midlands Development Agency. The best result for the people that the councillor represented was to respond to the consultation, and not raise “matters of principle” concerning the legitimacy of emda to set the agenda. Such a response would not only have been ignored but could damage the interests of the area because it was outside of the ‘rules’.

The councillor did not recognise or accept the region as a legitimate scale of policy making. He was opposed to all things regional and considered that, through engaging in a regional consultation, he was compromising his own principles. Left to himself, he would not have engaged with the region as it would be dishonest to do so – which for a retired lieutenant colonel with a strong sense of integrity was particularly uncomfortable. His political conviction and that of his party locally was for decisions to be made by elected representatives in national and local government.

These examples illustrate three discourses of response – ‘buying into’ regionalism, ‘reluctant’ responses to regionalism, and a counter assertion of ‘local autonomy’. ‘Buying into regionalism’ accepted the national government stance that the region should lead a programme of government through agreeing that regions are the ‘right’ scale with legitimacy to act. In the second discourse of ‘reluctant regionalism’, actors were motivated to take part in order to influence regional activities according to their own priorities. There was a sense of ‘making the best’ of things and a lack of enthusiasm for engagement because actors did not buy into the regional discourse. They retained their freedom to act, but could only take part by engaging within the rules of the discourse. The councillor, through his opposition to New Labour’s regionalism, exhibited the third discourse of ‘local autonomy’. In this discourse, there was a

political imperative to devolve decisions to local elected bodies. Actors chose not to engage with the region or did so reluctantly whilst voicing their opposition and seeking change to the systems of regional governance. The discourse was confrontational through not playing the game.

This chapter constructs the three discourses of response. There is no one activity, interviewee or institution that acts as an exemplar for each of the discourses. Aspects of all three discourses can be found throughout the interviews. The discourses, summarised in the table, represent ideal types.

Discourses of response	Engagement	Governance
Buying into regionalism	Regionalist	Regional authority
Reluctant regionalism	Pragmatic	Influencing
Local autonomy	Disengaged	Democratic deficit

Buying into regionalism

The essence of 'buying into regionalism' was an acceptance of the basic structures and premises of regionalisation. Devolution gave authority to the regional coterie, and those who shaped the discourse willingly took part in alliances which supported regionalism. The interviews show that there were different groups who 'bought into regionalism' though the common characteristic was a readiness to collaborate positively in the regional programmes of government.

'Buying into regionalism' reinforced the power relations of the region. The rural teams and the regional institutions in general accepted the government region as their territory of concern and reinforced its construction in doing so. Regional publications underpinned the construction of the region as an entity, as in the East of England Regional Economic Strategy which stated, 'The strategy is owned by the region' (EEDA, 2006, p6). Interviewees spoke of 'Here in the North West..' or 'in our region...'. Regional documents stated and interviewees explained that the region embraced many different policy issues with differing characteristics in different localities.

Our approach has to be that we tell the story of rural areas. By that I mean where do rural areas fit in this region, what is their role, in much the same way that there's a role for urban areas ... Rural areas actually provide a very strong type of balance in different ways and they also benefit from the markets that are at that core. (NW:10C)

Naming the region and “telling its story” constructed regional identities. In this case the region was formed through emphasising the interdependence of urban and rural. The story teller depicted his rural areas as having a function through acting as a “balance” to urban areas. Rural was one part of the self-contained, distinctive region, in which urban and rural had a part to play.

The second example of ‘buying into regionalism’ came from third sector actors who perceived a benefit of operating at the regional scale. Two examples were the Wildlife Trusts in the East of England and the Rural Community Councils (RCC) in the North West region. Both types of organisations had traditionally operated at a county scale but have formed new bodies in order to collaborate at the regional scale.

The trusts in this region have always worked together quite well anyway and the regional scale was quite a convenient scale to come together at, and the trusts in the East of England are quite similar in a way. So they came together for those reasons really but also it's to do with the whole regionalisation agenda. (EE:7T)

The Wildlife Trust interviewee was clear that state rescaling had been a factor in their own rescaling, though there had also been some historical links. The Trusts, through creating a regional structure, had created a ‘regional stakeholder’ who could take part in governance. The interviewee was active in regional networks such as the Rural Affairs Forum, Regional Assembly and Regional Biodiversity Forum. The Trust had made it easy for the ‘setting organisers’ to engage with them. The common aims, historical links and similarities between the Wildlife Trusts meant that the interviewee was able to represent their collective interests. He described the arrangement as “convenient”, viewing it as a positive experience for the Trusts through opening up the possibility of influencing regional policy and decisions.

In the North West, the Rural Community Councils were encouraged to ‘buy into regionalism’ because they perceived that joint working with the regional government bodies was offered in a spirit of co-operation and collaboration.

We jointly established a company ... called North West Rural Community Councils, to wave that regional structure flag. That enabled us to get the seat

on the North West Rural Strategy Board. We also use the flag in the North West Rural Affairs Forum and we've used it in our negotiations with the Development Agency. (NW:19T)

The metaphor of flag-waving sent a signal that the Rural Community Councils in the North West were signed up to regional collaboration. They were accepted as 'stakeholders' by the 'setting organisers' and incorporated into governance. The governance community – of setting organisers and stakeholders – collaborated in regional rural policy making, constructing the region as an entity.

We had a discussion with the Government Office and the three RCCs around how the contract would be, the activities it would cover, how it would be managed, outcomes reporting, a whole series of things which I think gave us very strong shared ownership of that contract... That laid the foundation for three or four years of very good, close working. (NW:19T)

The "close working" which had positive consequences for all parties, was more likely to exist in a dominant regional discourse of 'participatory development' as found in aspects of the North West case study led by the Government Office. The Rural Community Councils played their part by contributing to the work programme.

I think it's fair to say that none of it was imposed by Government Office. The thematic leads worked as a team through a series of meetings where we said - each individual leads would say 'this is where I'm thinking of going with this' and we would debate whether that seemed right. So there was a lot of mutual support. (NW:19L)

Cheshire County Council adopted a similar approach to the Rural Community Councils, of presenting a united front with the other counties in the North West region in the wake of foot and mouth disease, in order to maximise their own benefit.

We managed to co-operate with Cumbria and Lancashire and backed their arguments and ... it increased, heavily, the percentage of the millions that came our way... We helped ourselves by vigorous support of Cumbria and Lancashire. So we got in on their coat tails. (NW:15L)

Co-operation and regional collaboration, marked by an absence of reluctance and opposition, led to positive consequences.

X [from GO-North West] always saw Cheshire as being the easiest sub region to deal with and we all got along with everybody else, ...we don't have a history of various programmes that we've developed over the years... therefore we've not really had the opportunity to start to develop enemies. (NW:15L)

They were the 'easiest sub-region' because they were supportive of the region. Cheshire's stance reinforced the NW-Development Agency's approach that foot and mouth disease was a regional issue. They joined together the arguments of Cumbria, Lancashire and Cheshire at the regional scale, building a picture of

the rural region. In this case, the region is defined by a common rurality, in contrast to narratives that emphasised the interdependence of urban and rural.

In the 'buying into regionalism' discourse the story line of governance was of the regional government bodies having the authority to make decisions on behalf of the region, and that authority being accepted by those in the discourse, as noted by Cheshire County Council.

Given outlines of the regional plan it is no use us pushing in a different direction, is there? ... If the funding is coming... through the Development Agency, so long as they are allocating those funds they hold a responsibility for their proper use. (NW:15L)

Partners were willing to "align" themselves to regional plans so that they were in step with and supportive of the region.

Consultants... produced for us information on what the key issues were for the sub-region, and that mirrored quite closely the work of the region. So we could align ourselves to the regional plan. (NW:16L)

The practices in the North West of the 'setting organisers' and others such as Cheshire County Council to portray the region as a 'region of sub-regions' reinforced the identity of the rural region. Diversity was cited as a virtue which defined the region. Actors who were not part of regional government structures were encouraged to take part in regionalisation of the rural, because it purported to accept their sub-region as a special component part. The discourse coalition 'bought into' the leadership and authority of regional governance.

Discourse Analysis of Buying into Regionalism	
Story lines of engagement	Co-operating with the setting organisers has positive consequences for our region
Story lines of governance	Regional bodies have the authority to make decisions for our region
Metaphors (underlined)	<u>Alignment</u> The region as <u>an entity</u> A <u>diverse</u> rural region Regional <u>flag-waving</u>
Discourse coalitions	Contributing to the work programme and collaboration through regional governance

Reluctant regionalism

Both of the discourses of 'buying into regionalism' and 'reluctant regionalism' involved the members of the discourse coalition working together and members were motivated by what they could achieve together. However, the distinguishing feature of reluctant regionalism was a lack of enthusiasm, unwillingness and frustration.

The reluctance of Essex Rural Community Council was apparent in the following statement which implied an unwillingness to conform with regional plans.

To put it bluntly and simply, when I wanted my £1,000 from the regional forum I had to draw up priorities for funding that linked with the delivery framework. (EE:9L)

The speaker was clearly annoyed at having to 'jump through regional hoops' in order to access funds which had been allocated to the Rural Community Council and therefore she sees as hers to draw down.

Similarly, Cambridgeshire Rural Community Council's work has been refocused in recent years on collaboration with county-based and local partners, rather than regional ones. However, the RCC has a history of delivering funding programmes administered by government bodies in each region such as LEADER Plus, and maintained positive relations with the regional bodies on the successor programme – of the Rural Development Programme for England containing 'mainstreamed' LEADER funds.

Our relationship is quite good with EEDA on this but we had a head start because we understood European legislation and we'd been running the programmes before... Our staff were working with EEDA to help advise them, so we do work quite well with them. (EE:8T)

Nevertheless there was evidence of frustration in the relationship.

I have to say I always tell the staff here do not fall out with them, whatever you do don't fall out with them. You need to work with them and understand it but they have a culture of their own. (EE:8T)

The quote suggests that there had been occasions when maintaining good relations had been tricky. Relations were governed by the 'regionalised' approach of the East of England Development Agency (EEDA) and 'government as hierarchy'. Cambridgeshire Rural Community Council had 'played the game' with EEDA, conforming reluctantly and co-operating out of necessity.

We needed to make a very clear transition between LEADER Plus and this new programme because we didn't want EEDA thinking we just thought we were adding onto the old programme. (EE:8T)

In order to receive new funds the RCC had accepted EEDA's position that the new programme had different priorities from LEADER Plus and negotiated new funds, despite difficult relations.

The discourse of response of third sector organisations was tempered by their reliance on grant income. The decision of the North West Rural Community Councils to form a company jointly was pragmatic and achieved successful collaboration as noted in 'buying into regionalism', though their response in other instances was more akin to 'reluctant regionalism', particularly if the regional discourse did not sponsor collaboration.

NWDA will talk to us from time to time as informants on rural issues but without actually enabling us to participate actively in their programme, development or debate, which is really frustrating. (NW:19T)

The Rural Community Council considered that they should be much more than passive contributors. They sought to influence the priorities of the Regional Development Agency but the regional discourse of autonomy excluded them as participants, and cast them as rural informants – a role to which they acceded reluctantly.

Local authorities may arguably have had the autonomy to express reluctance more freely than the third sector as they were less directly dependant on grant income, though in practice there were significant financial and political constraints on doing so. 'Government as hierarchy' was expressed by a county council interviewee in the North West.

NWDA - it's clearly a top down model and we're supplicants. If we're stroppy they'll turn the funding tap off. (NW:17L)

Keeping up an appearance of cooperation was a necessity if the area was not to lose funds, though there was a clear unwillingness to accept a notion of hierarchy which was perceived to be akin to a master and servant relationship. The interviewee's experience of NW-Development Agency was that there is no room for discussion or negotiation, and grant recipients had to carry out NW-Development Agency's bidding or lose funds.

The discourse of 'reluctant regionalism' questioned the authority of the setting organisers, and asserted a right to be involved. If the practices of the regional discourse did not promote participation then reluctance was fostered.

The programme monitoring committee (PMC)... has been very, very slow to get its hands on the Rural Development Programme for England. The PMC had been in existence for probably 15 months before RDPE started to appear as a regular agenda item, and that was at the request of our members. They [EEDA] have resisted that. It's always the last item on the agenda and it always gets about two minutes and that's the extent of its exposure to the public meeting. That's the closest we get. (EE:5L)

The interviewee painted a picture of two sides at odds with each other. The committee members were kept at a distance by the East of England Development Agency who were reluctant to share information, and in doing so showed no acceptance that the committee members had a legitimate right to that information. On the other hand the interviewee believed that the committee should have had a practical, "hands on" role, and was frustrated that he only succeeded in getting East of England Development Agency to provide limited information.

A second reason for reluctance and frustration arose when there were opposing constructions of local rural or regional rural policy issues. The third sector and local government interviewees described rural issues in relation to their territory of concern. Essex County Council referred to reconciling the differences of fourteen districts, and the variety of issues affecting rural areas adjacent to the Thames Gateway in contrast to the more remote east and rural coasts. Essex Rural Community Council championed the cause of rural shops as their surveys showed that the decline in numbers was escalating. Cumbria Rural Community Council were focussing on fuel poverty at the time of the interviews. Where the local issues were not incorporated into a regional rural discourse then actors contested the regional coterie's understanding of rural.

I think it's fair to say that Government Office have a better recognition of rural areas than the Development Agency. (EE:9T)

The Rural Community Council interviewee did not accept that the East of England Development Agency understood rural issues and questioned their legitimacy to take decisions which affected rural areas. Nevertheless, the region could provide a space for rural affairs, even if there were different views on priorities and constructions of rural.

If the region didn't exist you would to some extent have an even worse situation where the direction was very much set by the urban centres. (EE:3L)

For this reluctant regionalist, the region provided a context in which to contest rural affairs without them being subsumed into urban ones.

In Lancashire, an example of frustration created by the lack of a shared view with regional leaders, came from an interviewee engaged in delivering NWDA support programmes.

It was the Agency that convened that group ... they very much set the agenda and the policy arena for rural business support but I would argue they're not talking to the right people. (NW:14L)

The interviewee considered that the choice of 'stakeholders' was influenced by pre-existing notions held by the North West Regional Development Agency that he did not share, and thus that the business support provided was not as appropriate as it could be for the local economy in his view. Decisions were made independently by NWDA and the practices excluded some local participants.

'Reluctant regionalists' had expertise and knowledge which they wished to contribute to policy debates and funding decisions, but became frustrated when they were not able to do so. They represented and were accountable to their organisation, electorate, membership or specialist field of concern. The frustration was borne out of a belief that their knowledge or position gave them a legitimate right to be involved in the rural programme of government which they were not able to fully realise. Frustration led to struggles to define the rural at the regional scale, and dissent from regional constructions.

Nevertheless, the discourse of reluctant regionalism accepts that 'it is better to engage, than not to engage'. Reluctant regionalists engaged with the rural programme of government in order to influence regional policy decisions, and out of necessity to access funds for their territory or topic of concern. For many, regionalisation had created a necessity to engage in order to maintain the flow of funding. However, engagement was reluctant, due to a lack of acceptance of regional legitimacy, the regional management of governance, and opposing views of what constituted a rural policy issue.

Discourse Analysis of Reluctant Regionalism	
Story lines of engagement	Co-operating with the setting organisers is a necessity if our territory, sector or topic of concern is not to lose out.
Story lines of governance	Seeking to influence regional priorities so that they reflect our concerns.
Metaphors (underlined)	Government as <u>hierarchy</u> <u>Unwillingness</u> and <u>frustration</u> Rural issues are <u>contested</u> Stakeholders as <u>supplicants</u>
Discourse coalitions	Membership and involvement in regional partnerships is a necessity of regionalisation

Local autonomy

The local autonomy discourse was fundamentally opposed to regionalism. It disputed the legitimacy of regional leadership and regional identity. The metaphors of opposition and dispute suggest conflict, though in practice local autonomy was expressed through a quiet lack of engagement as well as vocal opposition. Most of the expressions of the local autonomy discourse in the case studies came from local authority interviewees, and the East of England Regional Assembly. Cumbria and Cambridgeshire respondents provided examples of disengagement whereas Essex had been at the forefront of campaigning against regionalism (Hanningfield, 2009).

The example of Cambridgeshire County Council illustrates a discourse of response which was largely disengaged from the regional programme of rural government. The interviewees expressed significant discontent with the stance and actions of regional decision makers.

You get these regional bodies getting together and they say that's it. No, it's not and actually there are sub-regional flavours going on. (EE:3L)

The quote suggests that there were things "going on" in sub-regions that the regional bodies were not attuned to. The Cambridgeshire interviewee considered that it was up to the regional actors to be proactive about

engagement and understand those “flavours”, and suggested that the regional staff were disconnected from what was really happening.

I do think they miss a trick and unless and until they engage with individual authorities they don't necessarily get meaningful engagement on or delivery on the ground. (EE:3/1L)

There was involvement by individual officers in funding programmes, and by an elected member nominated as a representative on the Rural Affairs Forum. This amounted to occasional attendance at meetings, not active participation. The story line of the interviewees was to ‘carry on with the day job’ and ad hoc involvement with the region.

Relationships with region - they're fairly ad hoc because I'm conscious that there are various EEDA and whatever threads coming back into the county council, and we're probably reasonably uncoordinated about how we're dealing with them. Again, I think there's a series of dimensions in there we're not even really taking part in. (EE:3/1L)

The regional rural programme was not sufficiently significant to them, and by not “taking part” they maintained a position of quiet disengagement. One explanation given for not being engaged was that the region was not an entity.

I don't think we have an East of England view on much anyway because the East of England doesn't have an identity. (EE:3/2L)

If the region was not conceived of as an entity, and did not impinge greatly on the work of the authority, then there was no imperative to engage. Furthermore, keeping their distance meant they did not help to construct a regional identity or give it legitimacy.

The ‘regional autonomy’ discourse prevalent in the East of England offered little or no encouragement to the Local Authorities to engage. In the example of the Local Area Agreement (LAA), where there was a national government requirement on the local authority to agree a set of targets with the Government Office, an East of England Regional Assembly interviewee noted that individual counties in the East of England had asserted their autonomy.

GO-East, their take on LAAs was there's something of the means by which they could get national targets delivered locally. What they persistently forgot to understand is it does need to be agreed with the county council, and if it ain't an issue for the county council then why would the county agree to it? (EE:5L)

Whilst Cambridgeshire had agreed an LAA they described it as a necessary activity which they had “integrated” into their existing activities, overseen by county governance structures, and not as a regionally-led agreement. A Cambridgeshire interviewee was very wary of suggestions by East of England

Development Agency that it would delegate funds to the county through the mechanism of the LAA.

They were saying we want to get more involved in your LAA, we want to delegate funding to you and what have you. It's very clear through the SNR [Sub-National Review of economic development] that delegation isn't going to happen. They're keeping the reins very tight and it's going to be a year on year cash limit settlement with them as the accountable body. (EE:3L)

Cambridgeshire reluctantly accepted the funds, and the interviewee was clear that the arrangement was a pecuniary one. She resented being bound by 'tight regional reins' and their retention of the decision making and monitoring role, leaving no possibility of collaboration or local decision making. The Local Authority 'made the best of it', through avoiding outright conflict and seeking to integrate regional requirements. Internalising the requirements enabled the authority to take control, and once they had become part of the county plans and governance, they became more acceptable.

In Cumbria, the County Council interviewee was more strident in his criticism of regional governance, though maintained a similar stance of quiet disengagement as Cambridgeshire, in order to ensure that the "funding tap" was not turned off. He considered that his conception of Cumbria's rural issues and policy responses was not shared by regional actors, and could see no way of changing regional notions in a way which would accord with his view.

The focus of regeneration on Barrow or Carlisle is very fine. But the impact on rural communities is far more difficult to express. I suppose the assumption is that you should be comfortable in going to these bigger centres to get sustenance, then you can go back to your hovel in the sticks. There are certain unstated, intellectual models that are underpinning their approach. (NW:17L)

The interviewee was aware of the regional rural story line – of the inter-relationship between urban and rural expressed by the North West Development Agency interviewee in 'buying into regionalism'. The regional model assumed that rural dwellers are reliant on towns and that towns are at the centre. The view of the Cumbrian interviewee is that regional actors applied their models without reflecting on what it meant or the circumstances in which it was applied. He describes rural Cumbria as fundamentally different from other rural parts of the North West.

Our bigger settlements are around the fringe of the county, and the thing that distinguishes Cumbria from almost every other county in England is that virtually none of the county is within a 40 or 30 mile drive of a town of 100,000 or more. So we're far away from places where you can get high level

services... I'd see Cumbria and definitely Cornwall and a small number of areas in England as outliers. They're so far away from the normal distribution of rural areas... that's a concern I've got about a north west approach, where we are seen as one of five counties that all have some rural (NW:17L).

His construction of rural was opposed to any regional discourse. The North West region view of rural was homogenised and there was no place for different policy decisions matched to local conditions. The interviewee did not 'buy into' the idea of the region as an entity. He depicted rural Cumbria, not as part of a diverse North West region, but as a peripheral rural area, distant from large towns and cities, and with more in common with Cornwall than Cheshire.

Regional leadership had no legitimacy in the 'local autonomy' discourse, and quiet disengagement minimised conflict and gave no authority to 'the region', as shown by the Cambridgeshire and Cumbria cases. The Local Authorities in the North West were far more involved in regional rural governance than the East of England due to participatory discourses and a history of rural development (Chapter 7), but fundamentally the Cumbrian interviewee expressed opposition.

If we didn't have a Rural Forum I think it's unlikely we would invent one in this day and age, and if we didn't have a delivery framework we wouldn't be setting one up now. (NW:17L)

At the time of the interviews Cumbria County Council was under the political control of the Labour Party and the county's rural areas had received substantial funds for rural development both before and after Foot and Mouth Disease. Minimal engagement and quiet opposition were relevant strategies consistent with the common political leadership of national and local government, and in order not to jeopardise funding.

Essex County Council pursued a more vocal version of local autonomy, openly refuting the leadership of the regional institutions, based in Cambridge.

Who are these people in Cambridge to be telling us to put 143,000 homes in Essex. We'll build where we want, thank you very much. (EE:4L)

The stance of the authority was driven by the ideology of the lead Conservative politicians that regional governance should be abolished because it was 'unaccountable to local people' (Hanningfield, 2009, p39). Their position was that regional bodies were tasked with determining regional policies in accordance with national frameworks, but they had no authority to insist that local government put these policies into practice. Local government claims its own legitimacy through comprising elected representatives. Essex leaders

concluded that locally determined policies and solutions should not be subservient to national ones, and they should not be required to implement national ones, particularly when they were determined by ‘a tier of unelected agencies’ (Hanningfield, 2009, p39). As in Cambridgeshire, the Essex interviewee cited the lack of regional identity in support of local autonomy.

Essex is big enough and ugly enough to look after itself, and they [local political leaders] would rather go it alone on an awful lot of things... When you think of the population, GDP, etc. it could be a region in its own way. (EE:4L)

If the region is not an entity, problems and policy responses could not be conceived for it.

In practice there was engagement between officers of Essex County Council and the regional structures, as there would have been occasions when it was critical for the authority to do so. The Local Area Agreement (LAA) would be one instance, as noted in the Cambridgeshire example, and to draw down EU funds managed regionally. Nevertheless, the dominant discourse on regionalism was that it emasculates the local agenda and was unnecessary.

I don't think it would really affect us that much if the region wasn't there. Now the only caveat I'd put on that is the European level. The region was there because that's how we attract European funding. (EE:4L)

The interviewee was not accepting in this admission that the regional institutions and structures were required in order to draw down European funding, as this could be undertaken by authorities cooperating instead.

Essex County Council had intervened in proposed closures of rural Post Offices in 2008 and provided funding to reverse closure decisions. The interviewee described their work to highlight the issue locally and nationally, aimed at demonstrating the ‘necessity to devolve power’ using their actions in this case as an example.

There was a conversation between the leader of Essex County Council and two executives of Post Office Limited... where he was able to browbeat the two executives involved so much he said, look, we'll take them over, we'll take them on and do it ourselves because our public demand that we try and keep these post offices open. (EE:4L)

The local politicians had the legitimacy to “browbeat” national decision makers when those decisions were at odds with those of local people in Essex. Through decisions to commit their own funds, Essex County Council apparently reversed decisions to close a number of Post Offices. The discourse coalition comprised

national and local actors engaged in debate and decision making. Regional actors did not feature. Local politicians were portrayed as leaders, representing the public to national decision makers, ‘intervening’ on their behalf, and being seen and heard to have intervened. The rural policy issue of Post Office closures was a county and national one, not a regional one.

The discourse highlights the contradiction that regional leaders did not have an electoral mandate and yet devolution from the national state gave legitimacy to regional decisions. In the three county council examples, opposition to regionalism was rooted in beliefs about the role of local democracy, and the lack of democracy and identity of the regional tier. Cumbria and Cambridgeshire focused inward on their own activities, whereas Essex, as a result of local political decisions, shouted their opposition through campaigning.

Discourse Analysis of Local Autonomy	
Story lines of engagement	Regionalism emasculates the local agenda. Opposition, ad hoc involvement, and disengagement
Story lines of governance	The region is a tier of the national state of unelected agencies, with no democratic mandate
Metaphors (underlined)	<u>Democratic deficit</u> Rural issues are <u>local issues</u> The region is <u>not an entity</u> , has no identity
Discourse coalitions	Local government getting on with the ‘job’ Political alliances promoting an end to regionalism

Conclusion

The depiction of the ‘discourses of response’ shows that actors outside of the ‘regional coterie’ may choose to collaborate, make the best of, or resist the transformations set in train by regionalisation, according to their own perceptions. Engaging with the regional rural activities has reinforced the region as an entity, and given support to the dominant regional drivers of autonomy and regional economic growth. The counter discourse of ‘local autonomy’ serves to highlight the complex and politicised power relations that have been at work throughout the period of regionalisation.

Table 8: Discourses of response – story lines, metaphors and discourse coalitions

Discourse	Story lines – of engagement	Story lines – of governance	Metaphors (underlined)	Discourse coalitions
Buying into regionalism	Co-operating with the regional setting organisers has positive consequences for our region.	Regional bodies take a balanced view of the strategic priorities, and have the authority to make decisions for our region	<u>Alignment</u> The region as <u>an entity</u> A <u>diverse</u> rural region Regional <u>flag-waving</u>	Contributing to the work programme and collaboration through regional governance
Reluctant regionalism	Co-operating with the regional setting organisers is a necessity if our territory, sector or topic of concern is not to lose out.	A legitimate right to influence regional priority setting so that they reflect our concerns.	Government as <u>hierarchy</u> <u>Unwillingness</u> and <u>frustration</u> Rural issues are <u>contested</u> Stakeholders as <u>supplicants</u>	Membership and involvement in regional partnerships is a necessity of regionalisation
Local autonomy	Regionalism emasculates the local agenda. Opposition, ad hoc involvement, and disengagement	The region is a tier of the national state of unelected agencies, with no democratic mandate.	<u>Democratic deficit</u> Rural issues are <u>local issues</u> The region is <u>not an entity</u> , has no identity	Local Government getting on with the ‘job’ Political alliances promoting an end to regionalism

Chapter 9. Discussion and Conclusions

Introduction

The research has examined how regionalisation has been enacted through gathering details of the tasks, activities and views of those involved in the two regions. The discourse analysis extracts the story lines and metaphors, formulating four discourses of the region and three discourses of response. In this chapter I discuss what the analysis reveals about regionalisation and rural development, and to seek to answer the research question – ‘What did the development of a regional tier of governance in England from 1997 mean for the policy and practice of rural development?’

It is worth repeating that the discourses are ideal cases. There is a danger of creating the impression that they represented actual situations, which in fact were much more complex, involving a tangle of discourses. The discourses, though, do make explicit the discursive frameworks that were embedded in the regionalisation programme. A second danger is that the analysis suggests a stable system, where discourses were fixed and absolute. In reality, the discourses will have evolved and changed through internal power relations and through interactions with complementary or opposing discourses, throughout the period of regionalisation.

Discourses are useful for what they can tell us about why actors and groups take different approaches. The focus of this final chapter is to explore the hidden influences which shaped those approaches, and to understand how discourse analysis helps us become aware of those influences. Devolution can be expected to produce divergence and the analysis of the written plans showed some differences of policy and governance. The first part of this chapter reflects on what the discourses tell us about the role of the state in this process of regional divergence. The second part considers the differences between the two case study regions and reasons for divergence. The third part discusses what the different patterns of response reveal about power relations during the period of the research. Part four depicts the rural policy story in each region, focussing on the LEADER element of the Rural Development Programme for England as the significant example at the end of the period of

regionalisation. Finally, I draw some conclusions first on the methodological approach and second, on the impact of regionalisation on rural affairs,

The government story

In this section I reflect on central government's role in framing the regionalisation programme. The state conferred leadership roles on the regional institutions, requiring them to 'broker' new activities such as the production of plans, new governance structures, and the allocation of resources. The scope of activities was set by national government. The regional tier executed the decisions of the national state, circulating the story lines of regionalisation and building the discourse coalitions, such that a discourse of regions as 'the right scale' to conduct government activities emerged.

The discourse analysis emphasised the 'setting organiser' role of the government agents in each region, and the broader subset of the discourse coalition that I term the 'regional coterie, comprising all the state actors. Rural tasks were devolved to the rural teams in the Government Offices and Regional Development Agencies, for example production of Regional Rural Delivery Frameworks and Regional Implementation Plans. The setting organisers managed the domains of knowledge and flows of power which underpinned the construct of 'the region', through the activities required by the national programme. The plans and governance, nurtured by the setting organisers were supported by the 'regional coterie', constructing and reinforcing regional identity.

An explanation for the cohesiveness of the 'regional coterie' is the shared 'rituals' (Foucault, 1970, p62) that existed due to their common career histories in national government bodies. The rural teams came into being largely as a result of the reorganisation of national bodies with a rural remit. When the Regional Development Agencies were set up in 1999, their rural teams were created through the transfer of regeneration functions from the Rural Development Commission. An interviewee (N:20), formerly employed by the Rural Development Commission and a member of the 'transfer unit' in 1998, said that the eight rural team leaders, one in each Regional Development Agency except London, were assigned by the Commission.

The upshot of the exercise was that about 110 posts went to RDAs and about 90 people within those posts, so there were some vacancies [for RDAs to fill].
(N:20)

Further transfers of national staff took place in two waves. Following the Rural White Paper 2000 (DETR and MAFF, 2000), MAFF regional staff were integrated into the Government Offices to form rural teams, though informal cooperation between MAFF and Government Offices staff was already established (DETR and MAFF, 2000, p159-160). Following the 'Haskins Review' of rural delivery in 2003, the Rural Strategy 2004 set in train further movements of staff from the Countryside Agency, Rural Development Service and English Nature – all English agencies. Examples of these connections are provided by the career histories of case study interviewees from the Regional Development Agency and Government Office rural teams. In the East of England, one interviewee had formerly been employed by the Countryside Agency before transferring to EEDA in 2004, and prior to that had worked for the Rural Development Commission. A senior manager in Natural England in the North West had headed the Countryside Agency's regional office in the region until 2006, following a career with the Countryside Commission. Staff interviewed from both Government Office rural teams had backgrounds connected with MAFF prior to the creation of the regional rural teams.

The discourses of the region revealed different relations between the regional bodies and government. The early phases of devolution up to 2004 set new tasks for the Government Offices to establish a Rural Affairs Forum and prepare a Regional Rural Delivery Framework, and they continued to manage European funds such as LEADER+ from 2000 to 2006. The discourse analysis identified Government Office-led activities with the metaphor of government as hierarchy – in 'administrative regionalism' in the East of England and 'participatory regionalism' in the North West. The essence of administrative regionalism was technical, process tasks to enact the policy decisions made in London. The story lines emphasised the accountability of regional managers to the national state, and the role of stakeholders as experts providing feedback within the confines of the administrative bureaucracy. The participative element in 'participative regionalism' drew in a more extensive range of actors. The setting organisers seemingly undertook a balancing act of meeting national requirements whilst enabling regional and sub-regional actors to play a part.

Nevertheless in both discourses, government as hierarchy was used as a tactic to control involvement in, and substantiate, the national programme. In 'administrative regionalism' the practices maintain a small discourse coalition, involving those who authenticate the programme. In 'participative regionalism', participants are drawn in for what they can do to help realise the programme, but not to engage in making policy.

Chapter 6 described how Defra (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) set out tasks for the Government Office rural teams, reviewed their progress, and monitored the content of emerging Regional Rural Delivery Frameworks against the Rural Strategy 2004. Divergence of plan making and governance was possible, but the policy function was retained by Defra. Defra, known for its centralising tendency, retained strong direct links with the rural teams, whilst they were also part of a single integrated Government Office structure. The hierarchical practice was not confined to the rural teams. I have described the management of LEADER+ funds by European programme staff – in my practitioner capacity – as benign. In other words they carried out a technical, administrative role, checking decisions by the Local Action Group were in line with policy and reporting to Defra, but never questioning the legitimacy of the Local Action Group to make those decisions. The Government Offices portrayed themselves as part of the infrastructure of Whitehall, as the website for the East of England Government Office stated:

Here you will find information about the Government Office as we join up the work of eleven Central Government Departments across the East of England to strengthen national policies, integrate regional strategies and drive local delivery (GO-East, 2009)

The relationship between government and Regional Development Agencies has tended to be far less directive than with Government Offices. The Department for Trade and Industry and successor departments, with lead responsibility in Whitehall for the Regional Development Agencies, developed an ethos of devolution. An example that confirms this ethos is from a meeting between officers from the Local Government Rural Network and the DTI in 2006 on the allocation of EU structural funds (LGRN, 2006). The local government officials were seeking to engage support from central government to ensure that all

Regional Development Agencies took account of rural issues. DTI officials were reported as responding as follows:

[DTI:1] emphasised the importance of regional decision-making in the process of programme development and stated that the DTI would not look at a detailed analysis of the spend in the regions.

[DTI:2] emphasised that central government would not tell the regions how to spend the money – they were after all regional programmes (LGRN, 2006).

Regionalism framed the image and identity of each Regional Development Agency as a body that determines and implements the region's regeneration policy, and latterly also rural development, tourism, and business support. The Local Government Rural Network representatives were seeking a reassurance that does not fit with the national-regional discourse. The Regional Development Agencies operationalised regionalisation as devolution, which in turn added force to the New Labour story that power had been devolved.

The Regional Development Agencies symbolised devolution through showing that they had their own significance and independence, and were not subservient to DTI or Defra. The Rural Strategy 2004 confirmed this in a commitment for Defra 'to work closely with Regional Development Agencies when negotiating the successor to the EU Rural Development Regulation' (Defra, 2004, p79). The commitment underlined the position of the Regional Development Agencies in New Labour's regionalism, according them the right to be involved in policy discussions, in this case at the EU level along side Defra. Regional Development Agencies operationalised devolution, in contrast with the Government Office role of realising national policy on behalf of government departments in each region.

The 'regional autonomy' discourse expresses the apparent independence of the Regional Development Agencies. Nevertheless, autonomy was far from being unbounded. There were significant controls and constraints on devolution. Chapter 5 showed how regionalism has been favoured by a political elite in the Labour Party. Once elected, Regional Development Agencies became a mainstay of economic development policy, with strong supporters in the Treasury as well as the DTI. Formal controls such as 'tasking frameworks', budgets, and institutional arrangements set the boundaries for the activities in each region. The regions in turn created governance structures, partnerships, networks and policy documents, as well as distributing funds to 'regional'

projects and initiatives. Informal controls, such as shared staff histories and meetings of regional staff with similar roles with their government department – for example the rural team leaders with Defra – comprised some of the informal tactics of national control. The practice of each Regional Development Agency taking on lead roles to liaise with government departments on behalf of all other Regional Development Agencies was another example. EEDA was the ‘lead RDA’ with Defra. The EEDA interviewee described her Chief Executive’s role as to “keep abreast of rural affairs” and to keep the other Regional Development Agency Chief Executives informed when they met together. The Regional Development Agencies came together, forming a federal community with common rituals that constrained the extent to which they diverged. Inter-regional networking took place in the context of requirements to inform and be informed by the national state, for example on policy issues and activities. The history and continuing staff relations with the state reinforced the national agenda. Thus, the Regional Development Agencies represented devolution at the same time as being of government. Devolution legitimised regional autonomy, which in turn mutually reinforced regionalism.

Foucault’s concept of governmentality casts the national state as the organisers of knowledge, leading the problematisation of policy domains (Rose and Miller, 1992). This section has shown that the Labour Party were able to drive regionalisation, once elected to power. Regionalism was implemented through creating a machinery of government at the regional scale and mandating ‘setting organisers’ to operationalise regionalisation on behalf of government. In practice the state is not one entity. In the early period, Defra promoted a rhetoric of delivery through regionalisation, whereas in the later period the stance of DTI and successor departments emphasised devolution to the Regional Development Agencies, constituting a discourse of autonomy, which was nevertheless shaped by the national state.

The regional stories

The previous section argues that New Labour’s regionalism was top-down. The discourses of the region make clear that the government decisions to regionalise rural programmes gave birth to restructured and new institutions, and set in train the policy making activities outlined in Chapter 2. The ‘setting

organisers' drafted plans, arranged consultations, set up governance structures, invited 'stakeholders' to take part, and allocated and distributed funds. Yet the discourses of the region showed that the activities played out differently in the two regions, indicating some latitude. The key differences were the scale and composition of the discourse coalitions and governance arrangements, and divergence of the Regional Implementation Plans. The latter occurred as a consequence of regionalism, as explained in Chapter 6 and in the depiction of the regional autonomy discourse (Chapter 7). 'Regional autonomy' is exemplified by Regional Development Agency-led activity especially in the later period (2005-2010) when Regional Development Agencies took on responsibility for the Rural Development Programme (RDPE). This section discusses how far divergence of governance took place and the reasons why.

In the North West there was an enthusiastic response by the 'regional coterie' to set up regional rural governance. Government Office staff put considerable effort and resources into events to establish the Rural Affairs Forum, drawing in anyone with a formal interest in rural affairs. One explanation for this may be that it was particularly necessary to engage in region building in the North West, to counter tensions between the large cities and the region (Deas and Ward, 2000) and to reinforce a North West identity. Different government bodies had operated on a variety of regional boundaries, which were gradually changed to be coterminous with Government Office boundaries. In the past for some former purposes, such as the voluntary alliances of local authorities in Regional Associations, Cumbria had been part of a northern region. The Cumbrian County Council interviewee recalled these days fondly.

I've been here long enough to remember having been and worked in the northern region, Cumbria was part of the northern region. We had people to be pals with because there was a lot we had in common with Northumberland and indeed with Durham. (NW:17L)

As discussed in 'participatory development', a GO-North West interviewee described their vision of setting up a Rural Affairs Forum which was 'independent' and 'self-managed'. The Government Office staff sought to grow the membership and identify leaders to take on the organising and managing role. The Forum was only one element of rural governance. Similar effort was put into a Board and Practitioners Group, drafting papers for discussion on

constitutions and membership, and forming sub-groups to 'take charge of' action plans. The roles and memberships of the groups were reviewed and amended at intervals, keeping debate alive and the groups active. All of this activity was associated with the participative discourses, and metaphor of collaboration. An inclusive, collaborative model of partnership gave legitimacy to the policy and governance activities, as well as encouraging acceptance of the regional scale. A second metaphor common to 'participatory development' and 'participatory regionalism' was a region of sub-regions. Members of the networks were encouraged to see their geographical area of interest as part of a greater whole. They could retain their local identity and at the same time took part in constructing the regional discourse.

The East of England Government Office also established a Rural Affairs Forum as required by Defra. Staff prepared a written constitution listing 35 members nominated by a range of bodies. Eighteen were nominated by sub-regional bodies – from local government, rural community councils and the rural forums in each of the six East of England counties. The remaining 17 members were nominated by bodies representing different sectors, acting at a regional scale. As noted in Chapter 6, there was a notable absence of formal governance structures other than the Rural Affairs Forum in the East of England. Interviewees described various groups of the regional coterie who came together to carry out each new task set by Defra. The meetings were of 'experts' who shared a managerial responsibility to carry out government tasks.

The number of actors involved in governance in the East of England was small in comparison with the North West, and was made up of regional government bodies and a constituency of invited stakeholders. 'Administrative regionalism' and 'regional autonomy' tended to be the dominant discourses found in the East of England sharing the metaphor of 'the region as one entity'. The discourse coalition mobilised by the regional coterie was encouraged to understand policy issues as regional ones to be tackled at the regional scale.

Three reasons can be discerned from the interviews to explain why the two regions favoured different approaches to governance. First, the Foot and Mouth crisis (FMD) in 2001 had a profound effect on the rural affairs of the North West.

The Government Office and NW-Development Agency teams were central to the government's response. An investment package of £72m was announced by Government for the North West once the consequences of the handling of the epidemic on the rural economy, beyond the farm sector, had become apparent. The NW-Development Agency were given the lead role in administering the programme, named 'Rural Renaissance'. Though there were examples of disagreement and conflict during the life of Rural Renaissance, the scale of the investment and the profile of the FMD crisis was such that a wide range of rural organisations got involved with the plan. The challenge was such that the dominant value promoted by the setting organisers was of 'achieving solutions together'.

There was some impetus and catalyst in the experience around foot and mouth which was actually of people coming together very effectively in the region to deal with that issue. (NW:11C)

Each phase of investment has been preceded by strategy discussions around the priorities at a partnership level, and those were delivered as a subsidiarity approach to it. So we actually have local partnerships delivering it as much as possible. (NW:10C)

The effects of FMD were greatest in northern England, and there was no programme of an equivalent scale in the East of England. Interviewees in the North West noted the effect of FMD on their regional governance from 2004 onwards.

I think the reason we wanted somebody from the counties on the Rural Board was because the Rural Renaissance model was delivered on the ground by sub-regional partnerships (NW:13C)

The second significant difference between the two case study regions was that they had different histories of rural policy making and programmes of government before the FMD crisis.

The reason why I think the region came together so well around foot and mouth was partly because there was a longer history of organisations in the north west working quite well together (NW:11C)

Whilst parts of the East of England had been eligible for rural development programmes, the North West had had more extensive coverage of large programmes delivered by territorial partnerships.

The areas that had had Objective 5b and they were able to access the first round of LEADER funding, had developed capacity at local level to deliver rural things. ... So the places that had Objective 5b funding we found had a bit of a head start in the sub-regional set-up because they'd had capacity there, they knew how it worked. (NW:13C)

Thus, there were pre-existing networks of public, private and third sector bodies with experience of delivering rural development practice within national and European frameworks of accountability and subsidiarity prior to New Labour's regionalisation. In the East of England the regionalised discourse did not embrace 'sub-regional' entities, whereas in the North West they were co-opted as sub-regional units to help constitute the emergent regional agenda. An East of England interviewee was aware of the contrast.

We get along reasonably well, RDA, GO and Assembly, but this RDPE is really the fly in the ointment. It's not possible to penetrate their thinking and do the work in the spirit which you'll see in other areas. When the regional programme was developed it was a pretty much behind closed doors job. (EE:5L)

In the East of England, rural actors considered they had been 'shut out', whereas in the North West the story was of a region of sub-regions.

Rural Renaissance was to a very large extent delivered through the sub-regions. That's very much been NWDA's approach, to work through the sub-regions. (NW:11C)

A third, less tangible reason for the participatory rural development discourse in the North West seems to be attributable to the personal stance of key figures in the Government Office and Regional Development Agency. Interviewees stressed the personal commitment to local delivery of the GO-North West rural team leader, supported by the NW-Development Agency .

X who works at government office ... all the way through the last six or seven years he was the rural leader. (NW16:L)

We've been fortunate in this region to have a Director of rural environment in Government Office who's been very committed to joint working. (NW:11C)

The Government Office team leader confirmed this himself in connection with encouraging the Rural Affairs Forum to become independent of the Government Office rural team.

I'm quite pleased about it because it was a deliberate strategy and it took five or six years to achieve (NW:13C)

GO-East did engage with sub-regions and an interviewee espoused similar aspirations for the Rural Affairs Forum as the North West, but interviewees who were not part of the regional government coterie portrayed the approach to consultation of GO-East and EEDA as tokenistic.

It was mainly government officials coming to talk to us and then ticking a box to say that they'd consulted us but we'd never actually contributed. (EE:6T)

A Rural Affairs Forum member expressed a typical view of detachment and lack of involvement in it.

The RAF - it's not independent, is it, really. I think it's good that they've got those people round the table meeting but communication has been bad. They've kept it amongst themselves whereas they are writing papers that could be used at a local level. We could distribute them to parishes, and through the LAA and all of that if we had them (EE:8T)

A bureaucracy focused on serving the national state, and governance tactics which portrayed non-regional statements as “parochial”, reveal the dominant East of England story.

The regional comparison shows that some divergence took place as a result of circumstances and the characteristics of each region. The degree of difference was limited to the extent to which participation and subsidiarity was promoted by the ‘setting organisers’. Nevertheless, all of the discursive practices were concerned with realising government’s plans. The programme of government, governance, and practices of the setting organisers supported by the regional coterie, combine to construct the discourse coalition and perform the region. The rural programme contributed to regionalisation, forming new discourse coalitions, and shifts in networks and alliances.

The stories of response

The discourse analysis reveals the pivotal role played by the regional officials in enacting the national plans. It also shows that there were requirements on them to interact with those who are governed. Governance and consultation have arisen as the mechanisms of interaction with those cast as ‘partners’, ‘stakeholders’, ‘consultees’, or ‘deliverers’. Foucault’s concept of power as ‘everywhere’ is a reminder of the potential for dissent and opposition (Foucault, 1982, p224-5). The impact of regional rescaling was to create new meanings of regions, regionalisation and devolution. Regionalisation opened up new discursive spaces whilst marginalising others, changing the flows of power and prompting responses to the new governmental discourse. This section examines the drivers of the three discourses of response.

Examples of all three discourses of response were found in both regions, and interviewees from similar institutions appear to have contrasting responses. One of the most striking contrasts was the stance of the County Council

interviewees, both within and between the two regions – Cumbria and Cheshire in the North West, and Cambridgeshire and Essex in the East of England.

In the North West, Cheshire appeared to favour a conciliatory and accepting approach consistent with 'buying into regionalism'. A long serving councillor described his stance of engaging positively with everyone as the most effective choice to gain influence for their rural area.

30 years ago Cheshire County Council was master of a lot. It ran schools. Head teachers had a fair amount of discretion ... but when push came to shove, if the county council said do it they did it. Now they don't have that power at all and that is the case across a whole range of local government activities. I argue very strongly that as councillors, we have lost a lot of power. But if we have the nous to use it we have gained far more in influence than we've lost in power. (NW:15L)

Cheshire's approach was not about 'giving in to' the region, but a pragmatic leadership decision of how to achieve the best deal for his area in the face of declining local authority power and competition for resources.

As a united rural forum it can produce a strong rural voice. In the north west region where about a third of the population is classified as rural, the other two-thirds is mainly urban and the bulk of those are in the sphere of Manchester. We're in the minority and if we're not an effective minority, a united minority, we've had it, we're divided and ruled. (NW:15L)

Cheshire's location in the region, next to and overshadowed by the mass of the urban area, seems to affect the councillor's stance. For him, it was more important to combine forces to shout louder for rural areas in order to counter arguments for investment in his near neighbour of Manchester than to fight the loss of local government power. Rural is defined by the contrast with urban. Cheshire's approach would seem to have been influenced by the events that followed the outbreak of FMD. Both Cheshire County Council interviewees considered that they had done well to gain resources for their area from Rural Renaissance, by being supportive of and working with the regional government players. The memory of that success continued to shape their response to 'the region' and particularly to the NW-Development Agency, as a source of resources.

In Cumbria, the scale, profile and impact of FMD and the devolution of resources to the NW-Development Agency, meant it was inevitable that the County Council would work as far as possible with the regional players at the time of the Rural Renaissance plan. The Council would want to respond and be

seen to respond to the crisis, and the government funds were vested with the regional institution. However, an 'independent' rural regeneration company was formed, owned by NW-Development Agency, to realise the Rural Renaissance plan in the county. The dominant discourse of response expressed by the Cumbria County Council interviewee was 'local autonomy', with some reluctant involvement specifically in order to draw down resources. Local autonomy was the dominant local government response in the East of England too, and reflects my own experience in Lincolnshire, all of which underlines the contrasting response of Cheshire. There seemed to be a personal element at play. The councillor, perhaps influenced by his officers, had made a pragmatic choice that to oppose those in privileged positions was unproductive, especially when cooperation had brought dividends in the past.

Viewed in this way, the difference between the authorities seems to be less stark. Drivers of response that they shared include avoiding outright conflict, and a motivation to achieve the best outcome for their county as they saw it. Essex may at first sight seem to have been engaged in conflict through their campaigning stance. However, in practice the object of the campaigning was the Conservative Party nationally, as well as the voters of Essex. The aim was to influence Party policy, through the position of the council leader as a member of the House of Lords, as well as opposing the ruling Labour Party. The county portrayed itself as the heroic saviour of rural post offices in the face of the national might of the Post Office supported by the Labour Government. Cumbria and Cambridgeshire, too, pursued their own interests, though through quiet disengagement. All counties conversed with the regional players if it seemed likely to give them access to resources.

Flyvbjerg, in his Aalborg study (Flyvbjerg, 1998, p231) confirmed Foucault's belief that power relations are likely to tend towards stability (Foucault, 1982, p225). Drawing on Flyvbjerg, the rationality of regionalism was constructed and maintained by the regional and national government actors. Alternative rationalities, such as those expressed by the Cumbria interviewee in 'local autonomy' were not considered to be rational in terms of the discourse of regionalism. Cumbria and Cambridgeshire did not spend resources on lobbying for changes to national policy, as there was little chance of success. Outright

conflict was constrained by the privileged position of national government and conventions of democracy which require change to be sought through 'rational' argument and democratic change. In addition, it was necessary for non-state actors to keep up an appearance of cooperation if the local area was not to lose out on funds. For these reasons, the norm of stable power relations noted by Foucault (1982) can be seen in the discourses of response.

Regionalism was particularly challenging for local government. The construction of a new scale could weaken the identity of local government territories, and undermine its powers and functions. Local government exists by virtue of national government statute, but local authorities are not of the national state. The history of regionalism and the Essex example show that regionalism was highly politicised. Local authorities too are political structures, led by politicians elected through separate democratic processes to national government. Reluctance and opposition to regionalism were exacerbated where there was a difference between the parties in power at the national and local level, and as Foucault pointed out, despite the tendency towards stable power relations the ability to oppose remains (1982, p225).

The third sector organisations also sought to maximise the benefits for their organisation, members and sectoral interests. The NW Rural Community Council described a strong relationship with Government Office in the early period of regionalisation which was mutually supportive. In a prevailing discourse of 'participatory regionalism', the parties worked together, agreeing a programme of activity in return for funds. Policy issues and regional decision making were not foregrounded in 'participatory regionalism' in the same way as for example in 'regional autonomy'. Collaboration took place against a background of generalised, understated national policy, and a role for Government Offices to lead the "devolved approach to rural policy and delivery" (Rural Strategy, 2004, p4). The NW Rural Community Council was able to 'buy into regionalism' in this instance, and in turn helped to construct the region of sub-regions and contribute to the regional programme of government.

In the majority of examples, interviewees sought to change the regional agenda through reluctant engagement, and made choices to take part in selected

activities according to the benefits. Cambridgeshire Rural Community Council described their decision to refocus on the county scale and on self-sustaining activities. They continued to work with EEDA through a bid for RDPE LEADER funds, accepting EEDA's authority whilst not wholly agreeing with their policy and management decisions. Another response in order to maximise their benefit was the creation of regional coordinating bodies by the Community Councils and East of England region Wildlife Trusts (Chapter 8, reluctant regionalism).

Thus, dialogue and communication did take place between the 'regional coterie' and non-state actors, but with what consequences? Did those responding have any influence on decision making? And what was the impact on rural affairs? An example which provides some illumination is the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE).

The RDPE story

Devolution of the Rural Development Programme for England funds to the Regional Development Agencies resulted in a significant shift in rural development practice. The 'regional autonomy' discourse was prevalent in the Regional Development Agencies. The discursive practices enabled the EU and national plans to be interpreted differently in each region, resulting in divergence. A national stance of not interfering in devolved decision making enhanced the importance of regional interpretations. Flexibility to suit local conditions was also a principle of EU rural policy. The wealth of academic literature on the former LEADER programmes from 1991 to 2006 show how they harnessed local expertise to design, manage and implement them (Ray, 1996, p10). Therefore, the Rural Development Programme for England incorporating the LEADER-approach serves to highlight the impact of regionalisation on rural development.

During 2005/06 the Regional Development Agencies began to prepare regional plans showing how they would implement the socio-economic measures of the EU Rural Development Programme, choosing from the menu of 'measures' incorporated in the national plan, setting out how they would select LEADER areas, and creating the necessary administrative bureaucracy. Analysis of the

regional plans in Chapter 6 showed significant differences. Variations could indicate that choices had been made which reflect the distinctive rural context and development needs of the region. The differences could be argued to be devolution in action. Indeed there is evidence supporting this argument. The regional plans included an analysis of regional challenges and some plans showed how the spending priorities were linked to development needs. However, the differences in the percentages allocated to each RDPE measure cannot be accounted for solely in terms of the variability of rural economic and social conditions from region to region. It seems implausible that the differences between adjacent regions were so great that differences in the allocation of funds could be traced back solely to an examination of the state of each region.

One explanation for divergence suggested by the non-government interviewees was the limited prior experience of EU rural development policy in the Regional Development Agencies. A particular cause of frustration for reluctant regionalists was that decisions on how to go about delivering the RDPE relied on the interpretation of a complex European Regulation by a small number of individuals.

Recently it's become really, really clear that some of the staff that they've employed to run the programme haven't even read the Rural Development Regulation, so they have no idea what is and isn't eligible. So they are making recommendations and decisions based on their knowledge of previous NWDA programmes with no reference to the guidance available. (NW:19T)

A multitude of decisions in the internal bureaucracies of each Regional Development Agency led to variations between regions. Any questioning of the Regional Development Agency's decisions was seen as questioning their autonomy. Regional Development Agencies considered that they had the authority to apply the same procedures that they applied to their other funds, because the decisions were theirs to make. Devolution gave them the authority and legitimacy to do so, and non-government actors regardless of their prior knowledge were subordinates in the hierarchy of government.

The emphasis on local people participating in planning and objective setting inherent in LEADER philosophy (Ray, 1996; Shucksmith, 2000), and the diversity of LEADER areas, could have been expected to lead to variations between LEADER group plans in the same region. However, the analysis of LEADER strategies in the three northern English regions referred to in Chapter

6 (Thompson, 2009) revealed very limited intra-regional differentiation. Similarities within regions were explained by the need to work to a common regional process that ensured local strategies cohered with regional ones. LEADER groups made bids to the Regional Development Agencies on the basis of a plan that addressed the priorities of the regional strategies. The result was intra-regional consistency. The lack of variation suggests that decentralisation did not extend below the regional level. Rather the reverse is the case with local variation tending to succumb to regional choices.

Yet, the depiction of 'participatory development' suggests that the North West region exhibited devolved policy making and participative practices. The existence of formal governance and participative approaches seems to have had some impact when the Regional Development Agency first became involved in the EU programme. The NW-Development Agency interviewee noted in the 'participatory development' discourse (Chapter 7) that they 'adopted the subsidiarity approach' to RDPE, with sub-regional groups working on sub-regional plans. The analysis of the Regional Implementation Plans in Chapter 6 found that the LEADER-approach assumed far greater significance in the North West Regional Implementation Plan than in most other regions. Thirteen out of a possible 15 measures were available for LEADER groups to bid for, the proportion of Axis 1 funds allocated to LEADER was 20% compared to nil in some regions, and in 2009 local plans in the North West had been approved up to the full commitment of the regional plan. In contrast, the North East, LEADER group plans were only approved up to 2011, rather than for the full span of the programme. The implication is that it was much easier for LEADER groups in the North West to invest in longer term projects for a broader range of purposes, as well as having substantially more funds at their disposal. Variations in the discursive frameworks and thus of the Regional Implementation Plans, had implications for rural development.

Programme delivery was only just getting underway at the time of the interviews, though respondents in both regions expressed frustration, despite the initial intentions of a devolved approach in the North West.

I have a real concern that the Development Agency [NWDA] don't really understand what LEADER's about, they don't understand some of the basic principles. They are obsessed with statements such as 'this is not the

continuation of LEADER Plus, this is a new programme' and we're going to stick our muddy boots all over it to make sure that you understand that.
(NW:19T)

There were a number of reasons why those actors who had been involved in previous rural development programmes were frustrated. First, as 'regional autonomy' showed, non-Regional Development Agency actors were outside of and unable to influence decision making. Second their prior knowledge and experience was discounted as irrelevant by the Agencies. There was a conflict between the local actors' portrayal of the EU principles of LEADER, and the Regional Development Agency's discourse of autonomy. Regional Development Agencies did not see themselves as mere administrators of an EU programme of rural development, as the Government offices had been of the 2000-2006 LEADER+ programme, but RDPE was a means to pursue their regional objectives.

The interlinking of regionalisation and rural policy has had implications for capacity building and participation in rural development, long recognised by researchers as critical aspects of successful rural initiatives (McNicholas and Woodward, 1999; Ray, 1996). Policy was formulated on the basis of a generic, regional territory. Rural was part of each region's story, such that it emphasised the region as a self-contained, distinct unit. Planning at a regional scale restricted the choices available to the local level. The political imperative of Regional Development Agencies to transform the economic fortunes of their region, did not motivate them to be interested in rural capacity building as noted by a North West interviewee.

NWDA is concerned with the capacity of the organisation involved to deliver. LEADER's about capacity development, it's not about expecting something to be operating from day one. LEADER's about helping development capacity.
(NW:17L)

The interviewee is pointing out a distinction between Regional Development Agency requirements for 'their delivery bodies' to meet spend and output targets, and the ethos of LEADER to build local delivery capacity. The measure of success was to achieve the economic outputs required. Success in community capacity building did not feature in the Regional Development Agency targets.

Conclusions: the methodological approach

Chapter three outlined some of the challenges of undertaking a discourse analysis. First, whilst there are a number of examples of Foucauldian discourse analysis, very few are explicit about how the discourses have been formulated. A second challenge relates to how to manage an in-depth archaeological exercise in a time-limited project. This section reflects on some of the challenges and limitations that I encountered in conducting my discourse analysis in practice, and the strengths and weaknesses of the approach.

An early step of discourse analysis is to construct a discourse framework, as noted by Sharp and Richardson (2001) and Hajer (2006), through examining documents and interviews. The examination is a reflective one, seeking opposing points of view, underpinning values, and constraining and controlling factors. Typically, contrasting positions will be found in situations of conflict or arising from alternative viewpoints, moralities or philosophies. I compiled an initial framework of four discourses, which comprised many of the elements of the final discourses. Two discourses expressed the extremes of regional relations with the local, denoted on the one hand as 'regionalism', and on the other as 'participatory rural development'. The other two discourses were based on opposing perspectives of local players' relations with regional institutions, denoted as 'local autonomy' and 'local delivery'.

Analysis of the documents presented in Chapter 6 undoubtedly helped to define the initial framework of four discourses, but a more significant factor was my prior immersion in the field as a practitioner. As Sharp and Richardson note concerning Liz Sharp's research, articulating discourses requires an 'intuitive understanding' (2001, p203). For me, the drive of the research was to make explicit what I implicitly understood as a situation of struggle, though a covert one that was for the most part not articulated in official documents. The documentary evidence quoted at the start of Chapter 8 was an internal memorandum which I had sight of as a practitioner but which would have been very unlikely to have been made available to an 'outside' researcher. Similarly, I recall conversations with other practitioners, using our shared language and experiences, of struggle within the discourse. However, at the start of the research I could not express that understanding in ways meaningful to

academia. An acquaintance with Foucault's ideas of discourse, 'systems of exclusion' and 'the will to truth' (Foucault, 1970) provided a way to mine the research materials and my own experiences from the outside, but very much drawing on my intuitive understanding. Thus, the production of an initial discourse framework is a process of induction, reliant on immersion in the topic.

Ethnographic methods, as noted in Chapter 4, could have been used to achieve immersion in the field. An analysis of the relations between actors, or the networks of actors could give the researcher similar insights. However, the strength of a Foucauldian discourse analysis is the focus on understanding the forces of constraint and control. An examination of the structures and operations of policy making institutions, using documents and materials produced by those involved can take for granted the rhetoric of governing and policy making. Discourse analysis enables the hidden influences to be revealed and presented through the construction and presentation of the discourses.

In Chapter 3 I posed the question as to whether discourse analysis could be applied to time-limited projects. Dryzek, Flyvbjerg and Hajer's work has drawn on material spanning many years in their fields of research. Other examples focus on a much narrower period and on apparent changes in policy or rhetoric. My project is narrow too, focussing on the changes that ensued from two policy documents and the players directly involved in those changes. The tried and tested research crafts of articulating the research brief, clear objectives and a work plan can be applied as much to a discourse analysis, as to other forms of social research. Adhering to the plan and the focus defined in the framework ensure that the project is manageable.

Hajer's tools and ten steps are further devices to guide and manage the research. Hajer's steps suggest a sequential process of refining and refining, and applying the analytical tools to reveal and present the discursive formations. In my research, beyond the first few steps of desk research, helicopter interviews, document analysis and interviews with key players, I have not found it possible to follow his analytical steps sequentially. Whilst the analysis has included searching for argumentative exchanges, positioning effects, key incidents and practices in cases of argumentation, as in steps 5 to

8, the practice I found was an iterative one of sifting, refining and reviewing. My initial framework of four discourses was developed and expanded to seven in the final framework. The tools of story lines and metaphors assist both in examining the research materials and in presenting the results. Whilst the concept of a discourse coalition is helpful, in common with other researchers I found it necessary to subdivide the coalition in order to account for the micro politics.

Hajer's final step is a second visit to key actors, who can be expected to recognise some of the hidden structures of language. My conclusion that the discourses I have presented would be recognised by practitioners is based on describing my conclusions to colleagues, and not on fully realising the tenth step. By the time I had worked through the analysis and distilled the final seven discourses, the field of the research had altered drastically. Following the election in June 2010 key actors in the 'regional coterie' began to leave their posts and the environment for those that remained at the time was entirely changed as there was no place for regions under the new coalition government. The power and authority of the 'regional coterie', derived formerly from national government, was swept away. The change of government also had consequences for those in the discourse coalition outside of the regional coterie. First, there were immediate consequences for regional and local governance, and a downgrading of the importance of partnership working, shifting the patterns of relationships. Second, the economic crisis and budgetary constraints on local government and third sector bodies has meant a number of my non-regional interviewees are also no longer in their previous positions.

Ward and Jones (1999), reflecting on the positionality of research and the researcher through examples of research on Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) and the Single Regeneration Budget in the 1990s, conclude that temporal aspects of research into political projects and their associated elites influences access to research subjects.

The TEC project, researched five years after its political inception, was easier to infiltrate than the SRB Challenge Fund, which had only been in existence two years ... At this time, the policy process was still highly sensitive, as inter-organisation and inter-elite relations fluctuated around a state of continual (dis)equilibrium. (Ward and Jones, 1999, p309)

The timing of my interview research has parallels with their TEC project. It was undertaken midway through the 2005-2010 parliament and at a time when the changes instigated by the Rural Strategy were in place or well-underway. The political controversies of FMD and conflicts exemplified by the Countryside Alliance in the first two terms of New Labour up to 2005 were no longer conditioning the responses of regional actors. They had a secure mandate from their respective government departments to enact regionalism. In contrast, by the time I was in a position to carry out Hajer's tenth step of revisiting actors, whilst some may have been able to reflect on their historical position, the changed circumstances would have loomed large. I made a judgement that those remaining would be far less willing to give me access at this point and the changed environment would impact on their responses.

The specific nature of my research, spanning a relatively narrow range of policy interventions, actors and a limited time period might suggest that the analysis is only relevant in that field. However, there are aspects of the results that could be relevant to other policy situations. The four regional discourses distil the policy making practices of devolution or centralisation, and the extent of participation in governance. Whilst the research topic is very focused, the themes of devolution, or central/local control, and the operation of governance are common ones. The discourses of response seek to crystallise the span of responses by those outside of the governing elite to a dominant position. Actors can either support, go along with, or seek change to policy making interventions. The discourses of response of 'buying into', 'reluctance' and 'autonomy' may be equally relevant and could be tested in other public policy fields where there are competing elites, or governance is conceived as hierarchy.

In summary, discourse analysis has the potential to make explicit the power relations of policy interventions. A well defined and narrow focus is a necessity for a time-limited research project, and my experience suggests that researchers benefit from a period of immersion in the research field. Discourse analysis enables the presentation of the researcher's understanding of the field so that it is accessible to interested academics as well as being recognised by practitioners. The journey for me has been akin to turning a complex garment

inside out to show its construction, or of dismantling a complex mechanism and reassembling it in a see-through case, to reveal in an academic study what I implicitly understood. Discourse analysis provides explanations and insights, adding to our understanding of policy making. It does not however, produce recommendations that could be applied by practitioners to improve the outcomes of policy making. Though as Sharp and Richardson conclude, 'we hope, however, that critical analysis of one context will stimulate critical thought about another' (2001, p207).

Conclusions: regionalisation and rural affairs

The governance of territory can be addressed at different scales. Prior to the 1990s, rural development policy had been – in Rose and Miller's term (1992) – problematised principally at a national and local, or county scale. In the decade prior to New Labour, regional, cross sectoral groupings began to construct a regional tier of governance. By 1997 the activities of governing were embedding a regional scale, so that rural policy was problematised for the English regions as well as for England and local scales. Regional governance has evolved and deepened throughout New Labour's term, with consequences for rural development policy at national and local scales.

Two distinct periods of regionalising rural policy can be discerned. In the first period, government policy was principally for England, with regions acting as a conduit for communications and carrying out policy. Until the Rural Strategy 2004, there continued to be bodies for rural England – the Countryside Agency and English Nature. Ward has chronicled the national rethinking of rural policy, identifying December 2000 as the 'high point' of a 'more reformist, territorial approach to agriculture and rural development' (Ward, 2008, p40). For a brief time, rural policy for England embraced the multiplicity of socio-economic and environmental concerns, even drawing in agriculture, historically a separate strand. In the second period from 2004 onwards socio-economic rural policy became part of the regionalism project, and institutional change separated the strands of rural policy, promoting some and downgrading others.

The former agencies of the Rural Development Commission, Countryside Commission and the Nature Conservancy, and latterly English Nature, had

been constructed as innovators, experimenters and leaders of excellence through many political terms of government, bringing their expertise to bear both on the formulation of 'rural issues' and their solutions. Knowledge was formed for each specialist sector and success was achieved through complementing, rather than opposing, the dominant discourse of agriculture policy. Similar story lines continued into the early New Labour years. The Countryside Agency – in the words of Jenkins' definition (1978) (Chapter 2) – took decisions 'concerning the selection of goals and the means of achieving them' for England. Programmes were delivered through regional and local networks including their own regional offices. Tasks devolved to the Government Offices were technical managerial ones, to 'deliver' government policy, and set up 'rural sounding boards' so that government could demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of rural concerns. Regional Development Agencies were expected to support the rural economy, though in the Rural White Paper 2000 were merely one part of the rich mix of organisations with a role in the future of the countryside, sharing in the relatively generous amounts of funding available at the time for rural development.

The Rural Strategy 2004 and the institutional changes that followed, demoted the story lines of inclusive rural development at the England tier (Ward, 2008, p39). The Countryside Agency was replaced by a weakened advisory body with a narrow 'watchdog' role, the Commission for Rural Communities. Socio-economic and territorial rural development policy were subsumed into regionalism. Regions comprised both urban and rural, and rescaling made explicit that policy could counter pose urban and rural, or be framed for the territory of the region. For those interested in rural issues, rescaling was often perceived as undermining rural policy.

When the Regional Economic Strategy was consulted on, there was a particular issue about whether there should be a separate goal for rural issues, or whether it should be dealt with horizontally which is in fact what's happened That decision was arrived at through 18 months of torturous discussion and debate but ultimately the EEDA Board, and the Assembly signed off the documents so we take that as a proxy for everybody being content with it. (EE:5L)

The East of England Development Agency example shows that rural was no longer a separate and special policy issue for the region, whilst the Commission

for Rural Communities could merely advise and make recommendations to government.

This was a fundamental change from previous territorial rural programmes such as the Rural Development Commission and EU programmes. An East of England interviewee remembered the localised rural policy role.

The Rural Development Area Strategy Committee in Suffolk was entirely peopled by people who understood rural stuff and understood their patches and knew what was going on, and knew what needed to be done. I mean there was an intimacy to that process which certainly doesn't exist now. (EE:5L)

Decision-making frameworks were constructed for rural territories, and rural had its own resources. Urban issues and resources were not in the frame. The area committees were not subject to 'regional' policies when determining their priorities, and whilst their actions would have been constrained by Rural Development Commission policy, the recollection is of autonomy and self determination.

A second change brought about by rescaling was to revise the patterns of governance. Prior to regionalisation, cooperative elite networks managed experiments and distributed funds according to mutually supportive plans.

The old process, you would have to say it was thoroughly inclusive. The committee that was overseeing the fairly modest budget was heavy, not heavyweight but inclusive, with members from every district that was affected. A couple of members from the county, senior officers etc. and our budget was £1 million or something, so it was quite a big structure. (EE:5L)

Formal governance was seen as important to legitimise the allocation of resources to "rural stuff", as was the knowledge and credentials of the actors to act for their local area. Shifts to regional governance began to take place with European programmes and the administrative regionalisation of integrated Government Offices from the mid 1990s, though rural remained separate.

The Rural Strategy marked the final shift, devolving policy making and resource allocation decisions to the regional institutions, legitimised by story lines of devolution, though with no vision of decentralising power as Ward notes.

The Strategy failed to provide any greater clarity and coherence over how decentralisation might work. There was nothing on the role of local authorities, very little in the way of specific decentralising reforms, and many platitudes. (Ward, 2008, p39)

The region became the scale of knowledge production, performed by the 'setting organisers' and reinforced by the 'regional coterie'. Tasks were devolved such that Regional Development Agencies became deliverers and Government Offices were given monitoring and coordinating roles. The regionalisation of the Rural Development Programme for England meant that applications and bids for LEADER funds were made to the Regional Development Agencies and their staff were responsible for negotiating with applicants and making the decisions. There was a step change to Regional Development Agencies carrying out direct delivery, independent from and not requiring collaboration with others. By the time elements of the Rural Development Programme for England were devolved, regionalisation had been underway for nearly a decade and the Agencies were relatively mature institutions with their own identity, experience of regeneration activity, and the autonomy to govern their resources.

The regional scale had a long period of gestation in the sphere of economic policy. Post-war regional policy up to the mid 1970s was understood as a need to redistribute economic activity, to redress the balance between the prosperous south and the ailing north. However, the creation of Regional Development Agencies marked a change, emphasising the region as the engine of economic growth. Each had its economic strategy, institutions and governance structures focused on economy. The concatenation of rural and economic policy, by devolving the socio-economic elements of the Rural Development Programme for England, conceived at the EU scale as an integrated rural development programme, undermined rural development as well as the local capacity building element of LEADER.

Regionalisation changed the patterns of policy making and governance, opening up the potential for contestation between scales, whilst confining agriculture and much environmental policy to the national scale. The discourses of regional and local autonomy represent the extremes of difference. The story lines derive from opposing ideologies of nationally led regionalism, and locally-determined decision-making, as well as emphasising divergent priorities for rural development.

The discourse analysis confirms other research (Murdoch and Abram, 1998; Jones and Little, 2000; Edwards et al, 2001; Gibbs and Jonas, 2001; Whittaker et al, 2004; Derkzen, Franklin and Bock, 2008), that government sets the scope of the devolved programmes and that rituals of control tend to reinforce the state's position. However, the discourse analysis suggests that conduct which is within the norms of government and of the lead players can influence the power relations of the discourse. The North West Regional Implementation Plan appears to provide an example of non-state players having some impact on decisions concerning LEADER, facilitated by a participative discourse. The regional stories (this chapter) confirmed that the stance of the lead 'setting organiser' from the Government Office set a pattern of participative practices. This, combined with the experience of local actors in former programmes, and a vision of how the LEADER-approach could be applied in the 2007-2013 programme appears to explain the prominence of LEADER in the Regional Implementation Plan. Cumbria Rural Community Council, and my own discussions at the time with LEADER colleagues, suggest that one or two key individuals influenced the scope of LEADER in the Regional Implementation Plan.

N, my colleague here who manages the programme, did a fantastic job in persuading the Development Agency that LEADER would be a great tool for delivering both Axis 1 and Axis 3. So we have two LEADER programmes now in Cumbria which cover the whole of the rural parts of the county and are delivering the whole of Axis 1 and Axis 3. (NW:19)

Recent research confirms that the lead was taken at the County tier.

In Cumbria a core group of stakeholders took the decision at an early stage to develop a proposal to deliver the whole of Axes 1 and 3 funding via a mainstreamed LEADER approach. The work to develop a strong case for mainstreamed LEADER (and capacity building to support this process) preceded formal NWDA invitations to develop LEADER groups with a focus on presenting a highly organised and united plan to the NWDA. (Convery et al, 2010)

Success of the local plan is likely to have been aided by the regional norms of encouraging 'sub-regional' participation and collaboration.

The production of the Regional Implementation Plan in the Eastern region was portrayed very differently by the non-government actors.

The Rural Affairs Forum was used as a sounding board for RDPE. I don't recall any workshops. All the usual devices that you would use to roll people together and get them sticking post-its on walls, I don't remember any of that going on. EEDA were quite resistant to exposure and completely out of kilter with partnership working. (EE:5L)

The Regional Implementation Plan was an administrative, technical task to be undertaken on behalf of the region. Seeking views on the needs and priorities from the Rural Affairs Forum was seen as useful and fulfilled the requirements to show that consultation had taken place to legitimise the plan. However, decision making was the preserve of regional government agents, reflecting discourses of 'administrative regionalism' and 'regional autonomy'. Regional norms portrayed non-state players as 'deliverers' irrelevant to decision making.

In the latter period of regionalisation, institutions and governance were transformed, based on a rhetoric of devolution. The English rural institutions were dismantled or downgraded, and policy focused on economic regions for which rural was only one subordinate element. The consequence was to overshadow rural policy, demoting the socio-economic and community development aspects of rural policy, leaving the government tier to concentrate on agriculture and the environment. The period of regionalisation left rural policy and governance weakened and fragile. Although Conservative governments, prior to New Labour in 1997, had fostered integration of regional offices of Whitehall departments and government agencies, New Labour's regionalisation was driven by a much deeper political conviction. With their demise in 2010, a Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition government showed an opposing conviction, wiping out the structures of the political project of regionalism, and reviving instead story lines of localism. The consequences for rural governance and policy will only become apparent with time.

Appendix 1: Interview research

1. Aims and objectives of the case studies

In order to construct the critical narratives of the policy and practice of rural development and draw conclusions on the power dynamics of rescaling at the regional and local levels two aims will be pursued:

1. In two regions, examine the perspectives of a cross section of individuals on their involvement with the policy and practice of rural development during the period of regionalisation of 1997-2008
2. analyse the texts, written material and governance practices from those regions.

Objectives

To reach a broad range of opinions through semi-structured face-to-face interviews and to analyse rural development policy and practices in order to

- reveal the discursive struggles which are manifest in the dimensions of scale and rural policy
- assess the extent to which policy formation and decision making are devolved below the regional level, and the factors and values determining the degree of devolution and centralisation
- probe interviewees' perceptions of the impact of regionalisation to expose the changes in power flows as a result of regionalisation
- analyse interviewees' perceptions of English regions as economic or administrative constructs and their perspectives on 'institutional thickening' at the regional level

2. Framework for identifying interviewees

Interview targets – those with at least 3-5 years in a relevant role, and drawn from those involved in the regional rural governance

North West Regional partner bodies	Members of regional bodies drawn from regional and local (non-central government) organisations
GO –NW Rural Board Chairperson or another rural team rep with knowledge of the RRDF (1) NWRDA – Rural Board Member or rural team leader /RDPE team leader RAF – Chair or vice chairperson? (1) Rural Practitioners Steering Group Chairperson (Natural England?) (1)	A county council member of the rural practitioners group (1 or 2) Voluntary and community sector reps on practitioner steering group Local government, voluntary and community sector reps on the RAF (3 or 4 with mix of region-wide and county based groups)
Total 4-5	4-5

East of England Regional partners with a rural brief	Regional (non-central government) and local organisations
GO – rural team and/or LAA team. (LAA is a prominent feature in the RRDF) RDA – RDPE team NE/EA/EH/FC RAF - Chair or vice chairperson?	County Council (Cambridgeshire because of their lead of the LA rural pathfinder, and/or LAA drafter) RCC/Cambridgeshire Acre Local government (Cllr?), Voluntary and community sector reps on the RAF (2 or 3 with mix of region-wide and county based groups)
4-5	4-5

3. Interviewees Naming Conventions

C: Central Government Agent T: third sector L: Local government, (includes local enterprise agency) RAF: Rural Affairs Forum member N: National remit

Interview	Region/sector	Organisation affiliation
East of England - EE		
	EE:RAF meeting	Observation of RAF meeting
1	EE:C	GOEast
2	EE:C	EEDA
3	EE:L	Cambridgeshire CC x 2
4	EE:L	Essex CC
5	EE:L	EERA x 3
6	EE:RAF	RAF chair
7	EE:T	Partnership of EE Wildlife Trusts
8	EE:T	Cambridgeshire ACRE (RCC)
9	EE:T	Essex RCC
North West – NW		
10	NW:C	NW-Development Agency
11	NW:C	Natural England NW
12	NW:C	GONW rural team
13	NW:C	GONW rural board
14	NW:L	Lancashire Economic Partnership
15	NW:L/RAF	Cheshire County Council Councillor
16	NW:L	Cheshire County Council Officer
17	NW:L	Cumbria County Council
18	NW:RAF/T	RAF chair
19	NW:T	Voluntary Action Cumbria (Cumbria's RCC)
Helicopter interview		
20	N	CoSira, RDC and emda

4. Framework for semi-structured interviews

Face to face interviews that concentrate on the interviewee describing their role in relevant processes E.g. RRDF/RIP drafting, LAA negotiations, as a member of rural governance, responding to consultation, events, collecting rural proofing evidence, rural aspects of other region-led activities.

Questions -

About the interviewee

- Brief description of interviewee's role in regional rural activities in last 3-5 years, or up 10 years (depending on length of time involved)
- Professional history of working in rural governance

Roles of individual and organisation

- What is the role of your organisation in the policy and practice of rural development? What was the individual's role and responsibility (in relevant regional rural plan-making activities? what were the parameters of their role, and the process

Taking one policy formation, governance or plan delivery process or activity

- Describe how they/their organisation went about it or was involved in it
- Who would you identify as your main partners? What contribution did each make? Was everyone equal?
- What methods of consultation or engagement were used? How were these methods arrived at? What were they designed to achieve. Give examples of changes made as a result
- How were decisions made on differences of view between contributors? Who decided and on what basis?
- What governance mechanisms have been established? How was the constitution and membership arrived at? What were the considerations?
- Have there been differences of view between different members of the partnership/governance structures? Give examples. How were they resolved or how do you think difference would be resolved in future?
- What would you see as the main achievements of governance structures?

So what?

- What things would you like to have done differently, what were the barriers, and keys to success
- are the structures and practices 'fit for purpose' as they are? If yes, Why? If not what changes would you like to see made
- What is happening in the region now and plans for the future? What are the reasons for change.

In NW: What is happening on governance structures for rural? Have sub-regional structures continued? How are agendas sets? How is it working? Barriers and keys to success are...?

In E of E: what is the role for RRDF and RAF now? Rural and LAAs – what role did the RRDF priorities play in the LAA negotiations? How do they see the future?

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