English Sub-Regional Planning: Governance, Institutions and Outcomes in East Anglia

Alexander John Hollingsworth

ABSTRACT

After successive experiments with top-down and formalised regionalism, the current phase in English local governance is considerably more mixed, and includes flexibly defined and bounded sub-regional institutions. If regional institutions shaped by national actors have proved to be brittle as a consequence of being not arenas for political contestation but objects of it, is it possible that sub-regions shaped by local actors might be more durable and more capable of delivering national and local objectives?

Starting from Bhaskar's realist approach and Jessop's insight that agential actors and the structures within which they operate are mutually constitutive, and making use of tools and terms from Third Wave Institutionalism, this research creates a framework to show how the narrative, practices and rules constraints of institutions used for sub-regional planning both shape, and are simultaneously shaped by, the varied strategic ambitions of local actors.

The research focus is Eastern England, specifically the three major urban areas of Ipswich, Norwich and Cambridge. Eastern England had the lowest level of regional identity during the New Labour period of regional governance, and has a long history of defying efforts to clearly define what the region consists of. By contrast these three urban areas have a clear identity, but are all significantly 'underbounded', with major parts of the built up areas of each sitting outside the formal boundary of their respective local authorities, and insufficient capacity within these boundaries to address pressures for housing supply, infrastructure investment and economic growth. Any attempt by local actors to address planning problems such as these requires a sub-regional approach, and in each case study different approaches have been taken.

A key finding from the research is that when actors perceive an existential threat, whether real or imagined, to the institution through which they access power, they put a greater relative emphasis on strategies that promote or preserve that institution. This increased emphasis is associated with negative narratives, uncooperative behaviours and a decline in institutional stability. This pattern can be seen limiting strategic ambitions in Ipswich, at the heart of negative discourse and behaviours in Norwich, and in growing tensions and challenges in Cambridge.

CONTENTS

"If the aim is to drive economic growth we can do that better outside a devolution structure which would be incredibly resource- and time-consuming..." – Interviewee, Norwich.

Local governance in England is undergoing a period of change and innovation, but one that is not clearly visible or understood. After successive experiments with top-down and formalised regionalism, the current phase in English local governance is less formal, to a greater extent than before bottom-up, and revolves around flexibly defined and bounded sub-regional institutions, institutions that are shaped by local actors as well as by national government, which in turn shape the actors operating within them.

If regional institutions shaped by national actors have proved to be brittle as a consequence of being not arenas for political contestation but objects of it – as confirmed by the importance given in 2010 by the incoming Coalition Government to the abolition of "regional strategies and their centrally imposed building targets" and the promise that "Councils will now have the freedom to prepare their local plans without having to follow top-down targets from regional quangos and bureaucrats" (Pickles, 2010) - is it possible that sub-regions shaped by local actors might be more durable and more capable of delivering national and local objectives?

With thinkers on the left resurrecting the Heptarchy federal model (Alvis, 2017) in almost the same form as the Fabians did a century ago (Sanders, 1905), and with experiments in governance through Mayors, Combined Authorities as well as restructured local government and ad hoc semi-formal arrangements (*The Buckinghamshire (Structural Changes) Order 2019*; HM Government and Arc Leaders Group, 2019) under way, gaining a clearer understanding of the dynamics of the current round of semi-formal and informal sub-regional approaches is a necessary step before national governments embark on yet another wholescale reordering of regional governance (Golding, 2020).

The motivation of this research project is to understand how and why the institutions of sub-regional governance take the forms they do, how and why those forms evolve, and what the implications are for outcomes on the ground. The aim is to increase understanding particularly of how sub-regional actors are shaping and are shaped by their institutions, and the processes by which those dynamics work.

Like much research into the real-life problems of politics, the starting point for this research was a naïve question: when it comes to how local government in England is structured, 'what works?' Or, more precisely: 'what is the best way to structure the governance of sub-regions or city regions so as to get the best possible outcomes in terms of planning and development?'

But while quickly coming to the realisation that there is no helpful research methodology that can link governance structures to measurable economic outcomes while stripping out the 'noise' of all other factors whether internal or external, the underlying question remains a valid one: how do the institutional structures of sub-regional governance and the actors who work within them both shape one another and shape the outcomes for their regions?

The selection of 'sub-regions' as a focus for this research is a deliberate attempt to look past the formal delineations and institutional formations that exist within the governance matrix of England. Sub-regions don't match to hard lines on maps, and nor have they been the subject of the same degree of contestation as the 'regional' forms that have come and gone with predictable regularity over the last 80 years. Defining a sub-region is difficult to pin down with precision, but as was said by a judge of obscenity, "…perhaps I could never succeed in intelligibly [defining it], but I know it when I see it" (*Jacobellis v. Ohio*, 1964).

A sub-region, or a city region, is vague in its definition and hazy in its outline, but is something that clearly exists in some form. Surveys of identification with place have shown that identification with a city is as strong for those that live near as it is for those that live in it (MORI, 2000; Goess, de Jong and Meijers, 2016) . Yet it is in the areas where the urban areas of cities blend gradually into a strongly rural hinterland that some of the greatest challenges exist in terms of planning and governance arrangements. And in England it is in East Anglia that some of clearest examples of this kind of situation can be found.

Cambridge, Ipswich and Norwich are examples of underbounded urban areas, one where the built-up city extends significantly beyond the municipal boundaries within which the urban local authority and those that elect it are able to exercise a degree of control over the policies to be followed.

A working harmonised definition proposed by the European Commission in 2015 to accompany its Urban Audit project suggested that an underbounded city was one where at least 25% of the population of the built-up area lived outside the municipal boundaries (European Commission, 2011); using the 2017 ONS mid-year estimates the figures for Cambridge, Ipswich and Norwich are 55%, 26% and 34% respectively, meaning that they all meet the Commission definition, Cambridge in particular.

The 2015 OECD report "The Metropolitan Century: Understanding Urbanisation and its Consequences" discusses the factors that make a 'successful city', and give particular weight to issues of governance: "…the fragmentation of a city's administration and the quality of its governance structure is directly reflected in its economic strength. Cities with fragmented governance tend to have lower levels of productivity." (OECD, 2015, p. 36). The OECD gives particular weight to the importance of "governance structures (taking) functional realities of metropolitan areas into account" (OECD, 2015, p. 36).

The report concludes its summary of the impact of governance structures: "Prerequisite for well-functioning cities are effective governance arrangements that fit the situation in a city and its surrounding areas. Good governance structures form a foundation that helps policy makers have the necessary information, the required powers and the proper incentives to make decisions that are best for a city. While good governance structures are no guarantee for good policies, it is very difficult to design and implement good policies without them." (OECD, 2015, p. 55) These foundations are particularly important in the linked policy fields of transport and land-use planning, the issues at the heart of debates about 'growth' in urban and peri-urban areas in the UK in the 21st Century (Morphet and Pemberton, 2013).

The OECD makes clear that in many metropolitan areas the institutions that can provide governance vary, but often "cannot be considered fully fledged local governments because they are not a legal tier of government…although they tend to be institutionalised by national laws…they often emerged bottom up through local initiatives." (OECD, 2015, p. 57)

The three East Anglian urban areas all fall into this category. In each instance local actors have developed and shaped – and in turn been shaped by - institutions of governance that have to differing extents been recognised and reified by the actions of national government.

In Ipswich a series of largely informal institutions exist within which different actors interact with one another while pursuing their objectives. These institutions have fairly limited reification by national laws: the Ipswich City Deal was a formal recognition of a partnership approach in that it was a signed agreement with Government, but the bulk of the institutions through which agendas are developed are informal and flexible and established by local actors using elements of institutional infrastructure that have been revived from past initiatives or borrowed from elsewhere.

Cambridge has developed a significantly more formal series of institutions for managing the governance of the sub-region, culminating in the agreement to establish a Combined Authority with an elected mayor for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The mayoralty marked the final stage in the institutionalisation by national government of initiatives and institutions that had gradually developed from the bottom up.

The situation in Norwich sits somewhere between the two, with semi-formal structures created locally by local actors, but which have come to have formal status and structure within the matrix or institutional environment. Local agreements to take forward objectives collectively using these institutions have been confirmed by national government, but without the creation of formal new structures from the top down as in Cambridge.

To an external observer these differences are readily perceived. Equally quickly perceived are the apparent concrete outcomes: in Cambridge a major sub-regional project to plan and deliver growth with much lauded economic and physical achievements to point to (Kirk, Cotton and Gates, 2012; Platt, 2017); in Norwich the semi-formal structures for sub-regional

governance have helped to deliver joint planning documents, and an innovative pooling of the benefits from development that has paid for some major infrastructure, including a new by-pass to the north of the city; in Ipswich, beyond joint statements and draft strategies, delivery on the ground is harder to identify.

So a simplistic approach would be to conclude that the more formal the institutions of sub-regional governance the greater the efficacy of those institutions and the better the outcomes. After all, that is the message of the OECD's report.

However what seems evident to the external observer is not necessarily equally felt by actors within the institutional environments of the three urban areas. The stories, or narratives, of these three places reveal a different perception. In Norwich, which has much to point to in terms of delivery of shared aims via the institutions that have been developed, there is profound pessimism about the present and future, and sometimes a struggle even to recognise past achievements as successes. The contrast with Ipswich is marked: there actors are at pains to emphasise a positive vision of the present and the future, and a move away from a past that was marked by missed opportunities.

And in Cambridge, where both institutions and outcomes seem most advanced, there are serious concerns that the structures developed to improve the delivery of the shared objectives of growth are not fit for purpose, and that positive practices previously embedded in informal and semi-formal institutions have been lost. If practice is 'how things are done around here' (Feldman, 2004) there is evidence that current practice in Cambridge is no longer doing things in the same way as in a more collegiate and successful past.

There is thus a clear dissonance between the external and internal perceptions of the efficacy of the different governance structures of these three under-bounded urban areas. At the same time it is also clear that the institutional arrangements of each area have not been static, but have developed and changed as local actors work within them and national actors influence and shape them from without.

It would be tempting to see the evolution of institutional structures as demonstrated in East Anglia as being something essentially linear, a gradual but inevitable progression towards the 'good governance structures' that the OECD believes to be necessary for good outcomes for urban areas. The path might not be smooth, and there may be occasional mis-steps and wrong turns, but the general direction would be from the A of informality to the Z of a formal layer of local government, perhaps via a B or a C of semi-formal partnerships on the way.

However that would be to fall into several traps. First, it would be to tacitly accept that semi-formal is 'better' than informal, and formal is 'best' of all, when to do so would be to privilege the structure of the institution over the agency of the actors operating within it, and assume an overly deterministic relationship between the two.

It would also fail to take into account that institutional forms can change and evolve in different ways over time, and that a gradual change towards less formal structures within which actors can successfully pursue their strategic objectives might be just as effective if not 'better' than an unchanging formal institution within which strategic objectives are thwarted.

And finally it takes insufficient account of what the strategic objectives of actors are by assuming that they can all be encapsulated by a single aim of 'good policies'. Different actors may well have multiple objectives, and those objectives may well have conflicting priorities: for example in the UK context supporters of Brexit and Scottish independence can clearly be described as both supporting the principle of national self-determination, but their differing preferences for an understanding of 'nation' mean that their strategic objectives can and do come into conflict with one another.

The challenge therefore is to develop a theoretical framework through which both the different strategic preferences of actors, and the ways in which those actors and the institutions within which they sit frame and shape one another. This framework has to be sufficiently robust to allow for conclusions to be reached about the nature of the institutions being examined, while acknowledging that the complexity of the question makes any conclusions inherently tentative.

And those conclusions need to be more sophisticated than simply concluding that formality is 'good': which in turn poses the challenge that if that equivalence is overly simplistic, then what an appropriate alternative approach might be. Is it one that can be based on the success of the outcomes of the policies pursued? As the OECD report suggests, a 'good' governance institution is one that allows policies to be pursued, but doesn't guarantee either that the policies are themselves good, or that they will be successful.

What is clear is that for policies to be devised, implemented and then to take effect, time is necessary, and still more time is required for the efficacy or otherwise of those policies to be judged. So perhaps a better characteristic for a 'good' governance institution to have is not formality, but durability.

It is important to differentiate between durability and stability. The latter implies a rigidity which may or may not be a positive attribute, but comes with an assumption of an inability to change. Durability, by contrast, suggests an ability to respond and adapt gradually to changing circumstances while preserving a recognisable essence, something that seems likely to be a positive attribute in any institution with policy objectives beyond the immediate.

The history of regional and sub-regional governance in England is both one of extreme longevity – the basic geographies of the counties of England can be traced back over one thousand years – and regular recent upheaval. The very particular nature of England's local

governance and how it is evolved and changed, and through what forces, over the last 75 years is important to understanding how different approaches might have developed in difference places.

The question of national and sub-national governance in the UK has been made increasingly urgent by a series of profound political and constitutional upheavals: the Scottish independence referendum in September 2014 and the subsequent transformation of the Scottish political landscape after the 2015 General Election; the 'Leave' vote in the European Referendum in June 2016 and the compromises over the status of Northern Ireland in the Brexit agreement between the UK and the EU finally agreed in late 2020; and the unpredictable and fast-moving impacts of the 2020 Covid pandemic, and attempts by national, regional and local leaders and administrations to react to those impacts.

The divergent outcomes in different constituent parts of the United Kingdom, and the currently still ongoing debates over how to seek differentiated approaches to a post-Brexit settlement, have drawn a focus on the tensions over the country's semi-formalised and uneven devolution (Sargeant *et al.*, 2019; Dudman, 2020).

This debate has been ongoing since the early years of the 20th century, but the current round of institutional remaking revolves largely around the introduction and subsequent removal of regional governance structures in the form of regional chambers – usually taking the name Assembly – and Regional Development Agencies between the mid-1990s and 2010, and the subsequent emergence of sub-regional Local Enterprise Partnerships and the introduction of City-Deals, Combined Authorities, Enterprise Boards from 2010 onwards.

This flux in formal institutions, largely top-down and driven as much by political imperatives as by the success or failure of any given regional structure, is typical of the experience of regional governance in the UK for nearly a century. Successive Governments have made, remade and unmade formal regional structures, none of which have proved to be resilient or durable. For example regional structures put in place by the New Labour government (1997-2010) were abolished as one of the first acts of the incoming Coalition government (2010-2015) as a primarily political project (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2010; Conservative Party, 2010; Pike *et al.*, 2016).

One narrative supporting this abolition emphasised a getting rid of 'bureaucracy', but a more important political priority was the perceived role of these regional institutions as the agents of the imposition of higher house building targets than was deemed acceptable by largely Conservative supporting electorates in the southern half of England. A further strand was added by the perception of regional structures as being imposed by or at least on behalf of the European Union, causing their very existence to be wrapped up in what eventually became the Brexit debate in 2016 (West, 2004; Sykes and Lord, 2011). Thus regional institutions of governance were abolished as a means to signal both the supposed

ending of the increased house building targets (though these were almost immediately revived through other means) and support for the 'Euro-sceptic' project.

At the same time more informal partnerships and collaborations to coordinate strategic planning and economic development have persisted between different institutions – local councils, development agencies, business and other local groupings – at a sub-regional level. The 'duty to cooperate' embedded in the *Localism Act 2011*, and the increasing number of under-bounded urban local authorities unable to meet their housing needs within their own boundaries, has given a further impetus to partnership working *(Localism Act 2011)* . In many instances the geographies and institutions being used to administer these new arrangements, and the actors within them, appeared similar to informal sub-regional bodies that had existed before 2010, often in informal partnership arrangements going back many years.

The stated primary purpose for repeated Government initiatives around sub-national governance institutions has been furthering economic growth. The earliest interventions in the 1930s and 1940s and subsequent more fully-fledged regional policies in the 1960s were intended to redistribute economic development to deprived or economically lagging parts of the country (Commissioner for the Special Areas, 1935; Barlow, Jones and Thomson, 1940; Wannop and Cherry, 1994).

More recent regional innovations from the 1990s, influenced by the New Regionalist (Storper, 1997; Keating, 1998) concept of regions as the primary drivers of economic growth, were intended to give space for innovation and entrepreneurial approaches to growth generation (Jones and Macleod, 2004). Current initiatives, while cloaked in the language of 'localism', remain largely focused on generating additional economic growth (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2012; HM Government, 2015a).

However, despite a more than two-decade long series of experiments and initiatives around sub-national and sub-regional institutional governance, the evidence-base underpinning the development and implementation of these sub-regional governance arrangements remains limited, and the conceptualisation of governance dynamics even less so.

In particular, ironically perhaps given the focus on economic growth and development as the purposes for these initiatives, there are significant conceptual and empirical difficulties in evaluating the precise impacts of sub-national governance forms on economic development outcomes. In other words, if the aim is to develop a model that creates more economic growth, it is extremely difficult to judge whether or not particular models have been successful.

Nonetheless, there is space to explore the emerging implications for the form and efficacy of strategic planning of particular approaches to sub-regional governance. Just as hierarchical approaches to planning based on the nation state were challenged and

overtaken by more complex and nuanced models, recent years have also seen the development of both new, complex and fragmented, spatial structures and the theoretical tools to analyse them (Paasi, 1986; Cox, 1998; Brenner, 2004).

For example, there have been studies of the characteristics and institutions of some sub-regions as part of the development of theoretical models, such as the 'assemblage' of actors that interact to 'construct' the Milton Keynes sub-region (Allen and Cochrane, 2007) or the role of national, regional and local actors in creating a sub-regional growth coalition in Greater Cambridge (While, Jonas and Gibbs, 2004; While, Gibbs and Jonas, 2013).

Looking at the history of English regional and sub-regional planning, formal regional arrangements seem brittle and fragile while less formal sub-regional structures can appear flexible and resilient. As these sub-regional spaces begin to emerge as the basis for new forms of spatial arrangements for planning, development and governance, this poses two important objectives:

A. To describe the nature of sub-regional governance institutions, and where sub-regional institutions 'fit' among an environment of formal and informal institutions at different scales, and the actors that make both up
B. To develop an analytical framework that explains how the institutions of sub-regional planning and governance change, and identifies what distinctive internal and external forces and processes are at work to generate that change

Thus the aim of this research is to develop a conceptual model to understand and characterise the evolving nature and operation of sub-regions in the context of English sub-national planning, and to theorise and empirically examine the dynamics of sub-regional governance.

Rather than 'what works' then, the ultimate object of the study might be better stated as 'what governance form for sub-regions is sufficiently durable to allow for policies to be put into place and given time to work', and for the definition of 'governance form' to be drawn sufficiently broadly to go beyond the formal or informal nature of the institutions themselves, and to explore more deeply the relationship between the institutions and those working within, around and through them.

The study of three urban areas in that often overlooked part of England, East Anglia, has involved talking to, listening to and studying those engaged in political projects at the sub-regional level, and assessing what they say, what they do and how they interact with one another as they try to put those political projects into place. It looks at where they are now, how they have reached that point, and tentatively suggests what lessons might be drawn about where they might go next based on that understanding of their past and present.

The objective is to reach cautious conclusions about what is efficacious in sub-regional governance, based on the experience of Ipswich, Norwich and Cambridge. Any attempt to arrive at a prescriptive view of 'what works' would be beyond the scope of this study, but in showing what 'might work' and 'might not work' in creating a durable structure that allows policies to play out over time, the aim is to begin to answer that original naïve question.

As important as theoretical tools for analysis is an understanding of the history and background of regional and sub-regional institutions and governance in England. This complex and heavily contested element of England's administration has been both the site of and the consequence of political scheming for decades. Whether it is appeals to emotional ties to geographies that appear to have persisted for a millennium, or the creation of sub-national institutions to further political priorities such as the directing of resources to deprived areas or the development of regional networks as alternative sites of power and patronage, these political strategies provide the context within which the present forms of sub-regional institution exist (Peck, 1998; Breathnach, 2010; Mackinnon and Shaw, 2010).

The fortunes of regional planning in England have ebbed and flowed for over a century. Frequently a locus for disputes over issues for which it has become proxy – most recently over housing provision in the south of England in the latter part of the 1997-2010 New Labour administration – "English regions are a fashion that rise and fall like hemlines" (Benneworth *et al.*, 2006, p. 3).

ENGLISH REGIONALISM BEFORE 1945

The earliest published proposals for a regional approach to governance in England came not long after the creation of the first modern set of local authority boundaries in the late 19th century, although Winston Churchill suggested during the growing crisis over Home Rule in Ulster in the years just before the First World War that Gladstone had been considering a broad-based regional approach to governance reform as early as 1866 (Churchill, 1912).

In 1905 the Fabian Society's 'New Heptarchy' series of pamphlets began with a proposal for substantial regions built round the great cities of England (Sanders, 1905), and in 1919 CB Fawcett published detailed proposals for 12 provinces based on six principles that embodied the "systematic application of geographic science" (Fawcett, 1919, p. 80).

Fawcett's six principles include a mixture of the physical – boundaries should be drawn along watersheds and not along streams – and the abstract – the proposed provinces should 'pay regard to local patriotism and tradition' (Fawcett, 1919). His fourth principle – that no one province should be sufficiently large as to dominate the others – was cited as a reason for pursuing a provincial approach to governance in England because of England's dominant

position within the United Kingdom as a whole, a concern that remains very much salient in the present day.

In practice however debates about regionalism in England remained at the level of the theoretical until first the economic crises of the 1930s and then the needs of war-time civil mobilisation in the 1940s brought about change. The impact of the Depression was felt unevenly in different areas of the United Kingdom, affecting worst those parts of the country dependent on large scale heavy industry such as north-eastern England.

As with other Western European countries, this uneven impact led to the development of ostensibly interventionist regional policies that on the surface aimed at the equalisation of development across different regions: economic orthodoxy, particularly stemming from the Treasury, meant that impacts were limited, and it was not until well into the post-war period that interventionist and redistributive regional approaches became a national priority (Ward, 2004).

While no nation-wide scheme of devolution or regional economic development was proposed in the early 1930s, the National Government began to implement policies that aspired to address the needs of economically disadvantaged regions, in particular through the *Special Areas Acts 1934-37* (Swain, Baden and Marshall, 2013).

The 'Special Areas' were those that had been particularly affected by unemployment and economic decline in the immediate aftermath of World War I (although the roots of that decline probably stemmed back to the Great Depression of 1873-96), and had failed to recover before being hit by the global economic crisis of the early 1930s. Three successive pieces of legislation – the *Special Areas (Development and Improvement) Act 1934; Special Areas Reconstruction (Agreement) Act 1936; Special Areas (Amendment) Act 1937* – gave unprecedented powers to commissioners to intervene in the local economies of the areas concerned. It "marked the inception of a …process that remains of considerable economic, political and social significance" (Page, 1976, p. 177)

The significance of the Special Areas Acts was that they marked a clear breach with the prevailing *laissez faire* approach to economic policy and regional imbalances. Previously crises of this sort were seen as ones of 'surplus population', where the preferred solution was the voluntary migration of that surplus to other areas where demand for labour existed, often elsewhere in the Empire; 19th century examples included the Scottish Highlands and the Cornish tin-mining regions.

By the 1920s voluntary migration to other parts of the country, or further afield as part of programmes like the *Empire Settlement Act 1922*, was proving increasingly difficult to achieve without incentives from the Government. Investigators sent by the Government to assess the situation in the Special Areas found significant resistance from families to being forced to leave their homes, often expressed in terms of the strong emotion bonds to their

'hills, valleys and seas' (Ministry of Labour, 1934). The echo of Fawcett's 'local patriotism and tradition' is clear.

Efforts to transfer populations to the South of England were partially successful – around a quarter of million people were moved to new areas under various Government sponsored programmes – but the effects on the already depressed areas were largely negative, as large parts of the economically active population left, leaving behind a worsening economic situation and local government institutions that were increasingly starved of the financial means to do anything about it as their tax bases were further eroded (Page, 1976).

While the Special Areas Acts (the terminology evolved – when first proposed the areas were 'derelict', then 'distressed' and finally became 'special' in an amendment to the first Bill, tabled in late 1934) were limited in their scope and ambition, and were as much about being seen to do something about a problem that was exercising influential newspapers as any comprehensive idea of a regional industrial strategy, they were precedents for later initiatives, when local government bodies and economic regeneration agencies would find themselves working uncomfortably together.

At the same time as the theoretical and top-down approaches to the regionalisation of England's governance arrangements exemplified by Fawcett and the Fabians were being played out on paper, the interwar years saw a development of real plans, based on what are recognisably city regions or sub-regions, by groups of local authorities working together. This largely bottom-up approach – highlighting a divide over how best to manage regional and sub-regional institutions and governance that has persisted to the present day – resulted in several significant planning documents: Wannop and Cherry in their study of the development of the profession of planning noted that that these plans "were surprisingly far-reaching for the planning movement; by 1939 an explicit regional perspective and the wholesale commissioning of regional plans had helped to establish town planning practice on a more secure footing" (Wannop and Cherry, 1994, p. 31).

The first overtly regional planning report was a study of housing distribution in the South Wales coalfield, published in 1921 (Ward, 2004). Among its proposals were the features that were to become markers for regional planning proposals – new settlements, distributed across a broad area, and of particular interest, a proposal for a new structure of local government to manage the process of implementing the plan. While the plan was not ultimately adopted, it ensured that from the very start "the practice of town (and by implication regional) planning was intimately bound up with local authority boundaries and functions" (Wannop and Cherry, 1994, p. 31).

The institutional device most frequently used in commissioning these early regional plans and surveys was the Joint Advisory Committee. Requiring no special government intervention to set up, these bodies could be convened by partnerships of local authorities. In the very early years many were instigated by the personal involvement of advocates for

town planning such as George Pepler, who used his role as Chief Town Planning Inspector for the Ministry of Health and his extensive personal connections across both local government and the nascent planning profession to promote joint working of this sort.

Some of the Committees covered enormous areas and substantial numbers of local authorities. For example the 1926 Manchester and District Regional Scheme covered nearly 100 separate council areas, and the Midlands Joint Town Planning Advisory Council Regional Scheme published 5 years later provided a structure for infrastructure investment for 70 local authorities with a population of over two and half million.

As time progressed the Joint Committees tended to move from advisory to executive functions. In 1926 there were 33 advisory committees set up to draft or commission a regional plan for their area, and only 1 executive: by 1932 there were 60 advisory and 48 executive committees, indicating an increasing confidence in these voluntary combinations to take decisions.

In the end around 60 different regional plans were published between 1918 and 1939, covering a wide variety of areas from London to rural Oxfordshire. Largely they were not blueprints for what must be done, but guides for shaping development that aimed to preserve the countryside and character of the area.

The 1935 East Suffolk Regional Scheme, in making reference to the local artist John Constable, was typical in its aspirations: "…a scheme…which will encourage development both residential and industrial and at the same time preserve the characteristic charm and beauty of a county which has produced one of the greatest of English Landscape painters" (Abercrombie and Kelly, 1935, p. xiii). Similarly, Cambridgeshire's Regional Planning Committee was set up with the "twofold purpose of preserving its native character and providing for its proper development" (Davidge, 1934, p. v).

There was a further push towards wider – in the sense of regional rather than town - and more collaborative approaches to planning with the *Local Government Act 1929* and the *Town and Country Planning Act 1932*. The former was primarily driven by a desire to rationalise the complex patchwork of local authorities across the country, many too small to have the capacity to carry out their increasingly complex obligations. However it was the empowerment of County Councils to take on issues of planning, together with their new responsibility as the Highways Authority for their areas, that led them to increasingly take the lead in promoting Joint Planning arrangements (Wannop and Cherry, 1994). The 1932 Act – the first to mention the word 'Country' in its title – was used as the basis for additional Reports and Regional Schemes (Abercrombie and Kelly, 1935).

The other consistent feature of regional and sub-regional plans of this era was an emphasis on the benefits of co-operation and collaboration between different local authorities. Wannop and Cherry commented that "[regional planning] was taken up by local authorities

because its measures seemed not to hurt anyone, they seemed full of promise, they cost little and offered cooperation rather than conflict." (Wannop and Cherry, 1994, p. 33)

During the short-lived Labour-led Government of 1929-31 a Government Committee, under Lord Chelmsford, was established to examine whether the nascent regional planning process could be used as a mechanism for delivering significant programmes of public works in the depressed areas, an idea strongly supported by the Liberals and in particular Liberal economist John Maynard Keynes (Ward, 2004).

However the election of the National Government in 1931, and a resulting shift in priorities both domestically and in terms of Treasury policy, meant that by the time the Chelmsford Committee reported later that year it was recommending a much more cautious approach that had been originally envisaged. After examining the options for the governance of the new regional approach to planning, the Committee concluded that Regional Planning Committees were the preferred way forward. The Committee noted that there was at present no need for "for the establishment of a new form of organization, national or local" to manage regional planning (Chelmsford Committee, 1931, p. 12).

That is not to say that nothing beyond warm words came out of the co-operation involved in creating the plans. Abercrombie and Kelly recorded that by the time their East Suffolk Regional Survey was published in 1935 the County had managed to establish six Statutory Joint Planning Committees to which local authorities had delegated their powers, and three Joint Committees had already started work on drafting detailed scheme for their areas. However, foreshadowing the kinds of difficulties that entirely voluntary arrangements have repeatedly encountered, they were obliged to note that there were 'three exceptions' among the East Suffolk local authorities which had decided not to take part (Abercrombie and Kelly, 1935).

Ward (2004) cites the case of the Wythenshawe satellite town as an example of the challenges of the voluntary approach to regional planning. The area in question overlapped both the edge of the Manchester urban area and the northern part of Cheshire, and two different regional plans were developed both of which covered Wythenshawe and which had sharply differing proposals. North Cheshire's Regional Planning Committee opposed development, while the Manchester and District Committee supported it.

Most of the land belonged to Manchester's City Council, but it was only when a review of the local government boundaries brought the area under their control in 1930 that the scheme was able to progress fully. This dispute between two neighbouring areas, with differing visions of the desired outcomes of the planning process, is one that has been re-run repeatedly to the present day. The process of disputes over administrative boundaries as a proxy for debates over development and in particular housing provision, and the eventual resolution of the issue by central government intervention to adjust those

boundaries is reflected in similar disputes nearly a century later (Ward, 2004; Phelps and Valler, 2016).

The Special Area Acts of the 1930s culminated in the creation of what became known as the Barlow Commission in 1938, which was given the task of examining the options for the dispersal of both housing and industry more widely across the country (Barlow, Jones and Thomson, 1940). While the Barlow Commission is better known as the basis for the post-War New Towns programme, it also proposed the division of England into regions for technical administrative purposes, something that came to pass during the Second World War with the creation of nine Civil Defence Regions across England (Glasson, 1978).

These regions, which co-ordinated the work of different national government departments such as Education, Transport, Agriculture and so on during the war years, are reasonably recognisable as those that were formalised as Government Offices in 1993 and subsequently used by the New Labour government as the geographic basis for its English regional government proposals first published in opposition in the mid-1990s (Labour Party, 1995).

During the 1940s there was significant controversy about whether the Civil Defence Regions were a suitable basis for regional planning in a post-war world. The transcript of *A Discussion on the Geographic Aspects of Regional Planning* held by the Royal Geographical Society in 1942, with different proposals for suitable regional boundaries being proposed by different speakers while others questioned the suitability of having a single set of regional boundaries for all planning and administrative purposes at all, rehearses the same debates that dogged New Labour's regionalism more than fifty years later (Clerk *et al.*, 1942).

Professor Eva Taylor, invited to introduce the subject at the *Discussion*, outlined the challenges in moving from a theoretical definition of a region to one that could have practical effect on the ground. A memorandum had been drawn up for participants in the conference which posited that a region should reflect two principles: "The region should possess intrinsic 'wholeness'…[and]… should possess some measure of what may provisionally be called social unity".

But as Professor Taylor explained, this social unity was very much dependent on the area with which an individual was familiar- a farmer understood his 'region' differently to the way in which the 'woman doing her shopping' understood hers (Taylor EGR *cited in* (Clerk *et al.*, 1942, pp. 61-63)). Nonetheless there was consensus around the need to see planning on a regional or sub-regional basis, with urban areas intrinsically linked to their rural hinterlands, even while acknowledging the difficulties involved in agreeing what these might be when translated into lines on maps.

It is GDH Cole's short contribution to the *Discussion* that summarises the problem of defining 'regionalism', and the consequences of using the same label – and potentially the same institutions – to achieve two different objectives:

> *"Is what we are talking about a plan for the decentralization of national government services or a plan for the organization of local government in larger units? Again, you may arrive at quite different conclusions according to the angle of approach. Take the Civil Defence Regions. They may be the right units for decentralization of the national government. I am inclined to think that, to a great extent, they are. But I am absolutely sure that they are altogether the wrong regions to serve as units for the linking up of local government administrative agencies, because they are certainly too large to fulfil the absolutely basic conditions for the effective working of local government."* (Cole in (Clerk *et al.*, 1942, p. 65)).

Cole's point, that the word 'region' was being used indiscriminately to mean two different things, was at the heart of the difficulties that faced New Labour's abortive regional policy in the 1990s. Cole argued that 'region' in the sense of the Civil Defence Regions was a very different thing to the 'region' meaning a bringing together of neighbouring local authorities. Cole strongly preferred that the word region should be retained for the latter meaning, what he termed a 'unit of circulation' that would adhere to the principle of 'social unity' in a way that the Civil Defence Regions could not.

Cole constructed his argument by considering these two definitions of 'region' as being top down and bottom up. The Civil Defence Regions, being a means of devolving government from Whitehall to a smaller scale, were a top-down process; Cole argued that the number of such regions should be limited to 10 or 12 because a greater number than that would make them too small for efficient governance (something that was influenced by his belief that there were an insufficient number of properly talented civil servants to run any greater number of devolved regions than that).

By contrast Cole saw local government regions as being built from the bottom up, and that their size would be limited by the extent to which any collaboration between local authorities could retain a "real cohesion amongst the populations who have to be dealt with" (Cole in (Clerk *et al.*, 1942, p. 66)). These debates between differing views of the inherent purposes of a regional approach, between efficiency and accountability, remain essentially unresolvable, involving as they do fundamentally different priorities for the meaning of the term.

Nonetheless the Civil Defence Regions were adopted, more or less exactly, as the basis for nine Standard Treasury Regions by the post-war government in 1946, with other government departments adopting a similar structure to help with regional co-ordination. These post-war regions were still essentially administrative arms of the national government, reflecting the technocratic spirit of the age and the enthusiasm in the 1945

Attlee government for state-led planning across many of the functions of government (the newly founded National Health Service, for example, adopted a similar regional structure). It was in this period that all four of the main characteristics of the Keynesian National Welfare State as described by Brenner can be first seen in English regional governance – centralisation, uniformity of structure, a clear privileging of the single (national) scale and an objective of equalisation (Brenner, 2004).

REGIONAL PLANNING IN ENGLAND 1945-79

The first Ministry of Town and Country Planning was established by the Wartime Coalition Government in 1943, and it was this that was to become "the stimulus to regional planning through the late wartime and early peacetime periods" (Wannop and Cherry, 1994, p. 37). In a flurry of activity from around 1943 to 1948 many of the 'classic' regional plans were produced, from the Greater London Plan through to major plans for Hull, Manchester, Merseyside, the Clyde Valley and beyond, eventually covering areas where more than half of the UK's population lived.

Most of these plans were produced by the same small group of consultant planners – Abercrombie et al – who had been responsible for the 1930s plans. They used the same methods, but emboldened by the experience of the war years the ambition was significantly greater. In most of these plans of the classic era, the 'problem' was urban overpopulation and the solution was a combination of wholescale shifts of that population to new settlements to be created in the broader region, relocation of industries, and the preservation of a very clear divide between town and country through mechanisms like Green Belts.

Abercrombie had been the leading proponent of a more centralised approach to planning in the minority recommendations of the Barlow Report in 1940. At the time, just before the first intensive bombing of British cities during the Blitz period of WWII, the majority view had been that only limited interventions to avoid the over-concentration of industry was appropriate (Barlow, Jones and Thomson, 1940).

The impact of heavy aerial bombing to London and other major cities, together with the realisation during the later war years that the state appeared capable of mobilising and running almost every aspect of economic and social life in the country (albeit in extraordinary circumstances during which time citizens were prepared to give their consent to extraordinary measures), gave confidence to the authors of the minority recommendations in the Barlow Report that their preferred approach was not just necessary but possible (Ward, 2004).

Regional planning therefore was now shorthand for a particular diagnosis and a particular prescription for resolving that problem. Rather than Cole's preferred approach of using the term to mean voluntary, bottom-up collaborative efforts in areas that were recognisably socially cohesive, regional planning came to mean in this period a top-down state-sponsored remaking of whole areas on a gigantic scale. Resistance to the implementation of these grand plans mocked what they saw as Soviet-style state control. Opponents of the first designated New Town, Stevenage in Hertfordshire, marked a visit in December 1946 by Lewis Silkin, the Minister responsible for the scheme, by changing the town's station nameboards to *'Silkingrad'* (Hertfordshire Life, 2016).

Alongside the *New Towns Act 1946* the Labour Government's main piece of planning legislation was the *Town and Country Planning Act 1947*. This was a far reaching and fundamental change in the principles of development control, which although not as radical as some had wanted by effectively nationalising the right to build marked a significant shift away from private and towards state control of development.

The most contentious feature of the Act were the provisions for bringing the profits from development under state control through the mechanism of a 100% betterment tax known as a Development Charge. This was a compromise solution between those who proposed land nationalisation (a recommendation of the 1942 Uthwatt Report) and private property interests. However the decision to set the tax at 100% - and thus effectively removing any incentive from private landowners to develop their land while at the same time not giving the state the powers to easily acquire that land from them – rendered the system near inoperable from the start (Uthwatt and Expert Committee on Compensation and Betterment, 1942; Ward, 2004).

In terms of regional and sub-regional approaches to planning, the most important element of the 1947 Act was the designation of plan making as a responsibility of County Councils and County Boroughs. This in one fell swoop reduced the number of planning authorities by nearly a factor of ten, to just under 150. With the making of what in effect would be a sub-regional plan now a duty rather than an option, as it had been under the 1932 Act, the whole country would now be covered by plans rather than just those areas where local authorities had decided to co-operate voluntarily.

Despite the promise of the grand ideas of the classic plans of the 1940s, delivery on the ground was disappointing. Public support for planning was based on the assumption that state planning would deliver homes and jobs, rather than plans, and that support waned rapidly when it became clear that the homes and jobs were appearing much slower than had been expected. The election of a new Government in 1951 saw two changes, one concrete and one perhaps symbolic but indicative of a changing public mood: the betterment taxation regime which was viewed as inhibiting development was rapidly

dismantled, while at the same time the Ministry for Local Government and Planning was rechristened the Ministry for Housing and Local Government.

Nonetheless the basic plan-making requirements, and development control system, of the 1947 Act remained in place, and influenced the nature and shape of regional and sub-regional planning for the next thirty years. A top-down, process-driven approach largely shaped by central government policy and tied closely to existing local authority boundaries became the norm.

Following the 1947 Act and its shift of focus of planning towards county and district level, and as the urgency of post-war reconstruction work lessened, there was a decline in this 'administrative regionalism' (Glasson, 1978), and the 1950s saw what has been described as the 'fallow years' of English regionalism. At a national government level top-down regional administrative co-ordination was gradually rolled back and eventually abandoned in 1958 (Wannop and Cherry, 1994). However the remaining pillars of the policies of the 1940s remained, and the overriding objectives and nature of those policies were taken as a given.

Within only a few years the twin pressures of economic decline in the north of England and Scotland and population growth in London and the south of England, issues that appeared beyond the capacity of local planning processes to deal with, brought about a revival of regional planning as a potential solution to difficult problems – or perhaps rather a way for a Conservative party still nervous about a historic association with the unemployment of the 1930s to be seen to be addressing these problems (Vincent and Gorbing, 1963).

While economic growth was good when compared to the pre-war years, the UK's economy was clearly performing less well than other developed nations, and projections of population growth suggested that soon the growth in the standard of living would start to stagnate. At the same time concerns grew about the potential problems that might come with those rising living standards, not least the growth in car ownership – something that is a repeated element at the heart of plans drawn up in the 1960s (Shankland/Cox, 1966).

Reflecting these concerns, and a fear of a return of the problem of uneven regional development that had been apparent in the 1930s, major regional studies for the South East, West Midlands, North West and Scotland were commissioned under the Macmillan Government and published in the early 1960s (Scottish Development Department, 1963; Ministry Of Housing And Local Government, 1964; Department of Economic Affairs, 1965b; Department of Economic Affairs, 1965a).

Following the general approach of the Conservative Party in the late 1950s and early 1960s, these documents were not the grand proposals for action of the 1940s, but instead would survey and 'indicate' directions for travel. The Government would lead, but the intention was that other agencies, in particular the private sector, would carry out the main tasks suggested in the plan (Ward, 2004). This approach contained elements of a form of

corporatism, with a major underlying premise being the voluntary collaboration between government, local authorities, business and trade unions.

These studies, which while large in geographical scope necessarily lacked the ambition of their 1940s predecessors, marked the starting point for a revival of planning at a regional level in 1963, a revival that took off under the incoming Labour Government from 1964. A belief in the efficacy of government-led economic planning as well as a desire to address a perception of short-termism caused by an excessive focus on financial rather than economic concerns in the Treasury led to the creation in October 1964 of the Department for Economic Affairs (DEA) with a remit to create a National Plan for the economy. The National Plan was published in 1965 (First Secretary of State and Secretary of State for Economic Affairs, 1965) and was followed by a series of plans published over the next few years at a range of spatial levels – for example the South Hampshire Study and the various further New Town feasibility studies (Buchanan, 1966; Shankland/Cox, 1966).

New regional governmental structures were established or revived, with an 'economic planning council' consisting of representatives from industry, trade unions, local government and academia appointed by the Government on the basis of their perceived interest in the region in question, and a parallel 'economic planning board' made up of government officials.

The word economic was used to avoid conflict with local planning authorities, but George Brown – Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for the DEA – was clear in his memoirs that the intention was that these new bodies would have a major role in both economic and land-use planning (Brown, 1971). The councils and boards had a strategic and advisory role, and were given the responsibility for the creation of regional plans (up to 1966 the boards, and thereafter the councils – as Wannop and Cherry (1994) noted in their review of the period, a decision which allowed the Government to disown any plan that they didn't like).

This period of plan-led economic development was short-lived, but had much in common with the New Labour period from 1997-2010. Both were strongly associated with individual politicians – George Brown in the 1960s and John Prescott in the New Labour period – and were as much about intra-governmental institutional conflict about the relative role of the different Government departments in economic planning as about spatial planning and governance.

In the 1960s the struggle in Whitehall was between Brown's DEA and Richard Crossman's Ministry of Housing and Local Government, supported by the Treasury, with Crossman working hard to water down any suggestion that the DEA would have real powers to achieve anything. In the New Labour government the conflict was between Prescott's Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and the Treasury. In both instances the departure of the prime

sponsor – Brown and then Prescott – led to the rapid restoration of Treasury control over regional policy.

The institutions created at a regional level tended to be appointed and largely, but not always, successfully steered by Whitehall, with profound tensions arising when regional autonomy clashed with central Governmental political or economic priorities. This intra-institutional competition between different departments of the national Government of the UK over many decades has had as significant an influence on the development of regional and sub-regional governance as the differing political strategies followed by Governments of different political complexions; a less personally fraught but still real tension was visible during the 2010 to 2015 Coalition Government, with George Osborne at the Treasury promoting large scale regional approaches and Nick Clegg as Deputy Prime Minister smaller sub-regional City Deals (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2014a; Nurse, 2015).

The major legislative change to the planning system was the *Town and Country Planning Act 1968* which brought into being the recommendations of the Planning Advisory Group (PAG) Report of three years earlier (Planning Advisory Group, 1965). The PAG had recommended the creation of two types or tiers of plan, with an urban or county plan covering strategic issues (these were termed 'Structure Plans' in the language of the Act) and subordinate Local Plans filling in the detailed site allocations.

Together with the eventual reorganisation of local government in England and Wales which came into force in 1974 and which embedded a two-tier system based on county and district level authorities, the locus for developing the Structure Plans meant that spatial and strategic planning was primarily at the formal county rather than regional levels.

Nonetheless several voluntary 'conferences' of local authorities came together to undertake regional planning, either on their own, as in the West Midlands, or as part of 'tri-partite' partnerships with central Government-created agencies (Powell, 1978). Because of the ongoing work on local government reorganisation from the mid-1960s onwards - which would eventually happen through the *Local Government Act 1972* after much controversy and delay – the minister responsible for planning, Tony Greenwood, started to encourage sub-regional collaboration between local authorities. While others in the Government were very much opposed, it was "in effect what happened…[for]…the sub-regional studies, especially the earlier ones begun in 1966" (Ward, 2004, p. 123). One such collaboration was the South Hampshire Study; others covered the South Midlands and so on.

The regional structures created under the 1964-70 Labour Government survived the subsequent Heath administration - whose planning policy priorities were more concerned with land value compensation then they were with changing the administrative structures - with each of the English regions producing a Plan for its area, alongside a range of sub-regional plans and studies produced by various local government collaborations. The regional level plans varied between Abercrombie style spatial plans – the Strategy for the

South East, including London, for example (South East Economic Planning Council, 1967) – and more socially and economically speculative documents such as the Strategic Choice for East Anglia (Department of the Environment, 1974).

The most significant impact that the Heath Government had on the planning system, and in particular how regional and sub-regional planning might work, was its rejection of the Redcliffe-Maud Commission's proposals for local government reorganisation (Redcliffe-Maud, 1969). The Commission had recommended a system of almost entirely unitary local authorities across the whole of England (similar proposals were made separately for Wales and Scotland), and this had been largely accepted by the previous Labour Government, but not yet enacted. Under severe pressure from unfavourable public opinion and substantial grassroots opposition within their own party, the Conservatives instead enacted a two tier system of County and Metropolitan Counties as an upper tier and District and Metropolitan Boroughs as a lower tier.

In so doing therefore the two different sorts of plan created under the 1968 Act were now the responsibilities not of a single local authority but different ones. This separation between the strategic Structure Plans and the detailed Local Plans was to persist until the end of the century, and created tensions that were instanced as much through conflicts over process as they were over the plans themselves. Nevertheless this two tier system, which lasted from the completion of the first Structure Plans towards the end of the 1970s to its eventual replacement twenty years later, provided what is probably the most stable form of sub-regional planning over the hundred year history of planning in England. While tensions inherent in some Structure Plans were never wholly resolved (for example in Oxfordshire), others – notably the final Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan, proved effective tools for long term strategic planning (Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council, 2004).

CHANGING FORTUNES - REGIONAL PLANNING 1979-97

The 1980s saw something of a repetition of the cycle of the 1950s when it came to national institutional influence on regional state spaces. The new Conservative Government under Margaret Thatcher, committed to rolling back the state and ending the mixed economy approach taken by administrations of both parties since the 1940s, abolished existing regional planning structures as part of an agenda with an overt antipathy to planning. In an infamous and often referenced remark, incoming Secretary of State Michael Heseltine accused planners of keeping 'jobs locked in filing cabinets' (Heseltine, 1979).

Instead a plethora of Urban Development Corporations, Enterprise Zones, City Action Teams and the like were created to address increasingly urgent problems of urban decline, particularly in the North of England, with co-ordination a particular weakness: "…the means of intervention proliferated, but the capacity for integrated action was weakly managed" (Wannop and Cherry, 1994, p. 48).

This fragmented approach derived in a large part from the Government's attempts to balance two mutually contradictory aspects of its philosophical approach to planning. On the one hand Heseltine had eloquently articulated the view that the 'dead hand' of planning was a block on enterprise, and that the UK's sluggish economic performance over several decades would only be improved if state interference was reduced to the barest minimum. (Heseltine himself later adopted a much more interventionist state-led approach, especially after the inner city riots of the early 1980s in Liverpool, Bristol and London).

At the same time the growing strength of conservation, environmental and in particular countryside protection feeling among large parts of the Conservatives' natural supporters and grassroots activists meant that the planning system had to be given even greater powers of intervention to achieve the desired outcomes in these areas. Add in the inevitable desire by national governments to interfere increasingly frequently in policy issues if the outcomes they want don't happen quickly enough for the purposes of the electoral cycle, and there was an inevitable recipe for a 'schizophrenic' approach (Brindley, Rydin and Stoker, 1996).

The only remaining element of regional level planning came from the voluntary conferences of local planning authorities (Swain, Baden and Marshall, 2013). Two of these, covering the South-East and the West Midlands, had run more or less continuously since the 1960s, building up informal and personal links between those involved. Others emerged in the 1980s in response to the perceived gap in regional co-ordination; for example, the Standing Conference of East Anglian Local Authorities (SCEALA) was convened in 1987 and produced its first documents a year later (Standing Conference of East Anglian Local Authorities, 1988). Its later strategic regional planning policy work formed the basis for first the East Anglia and then the East of England RPGs issued in the 1990s (Standing Conference of East Anglian Local Authorities, 1992; Department of the Environment Transport and the Regions and Government Office for the East of England, 2000).

In the early part of the 1980s, especially when the energetic Heseltine was the Secretary of State in charge of the planning regime, any attempts at redistributive regional planning policies were blocked by the Government. Structure Plans required national approval, and those of the Metropolitan Counties (to be abolished in 1986) in particular ran into very difficult waters (Ward, 2004). Thus regional and sub-regional planning was squeezed out entirely where the Government found it had the power to do so.

This was taken a step further in the later 1980s by then Secretary of State Nicholas Ridley. A Green Paper and then White Paper called *The Future of Development Plans* proposed the abolition of structure plans, and a single unified system of district level development plans (Department of the Environment, 1989).

However in the same year the rising tide of concerns about local environmental issues - housing pressures in the South East of England was a particular trigger - and the failure of Thatcherite planning policies to address them, was seen as being in a large part responsible for the strong performance by the Green Party in traditionally Conservative areas during the European elections, and Ridley was replaced and his proposals heavily watered down.

Instead of the abolition of structure plans and with them any attempt at nationally directed strategic planning at regional or sub-regional levels, the Government's response was to start to re-create regional structures and policies: first a requirement for Regional Planning Guidance documents (RPGs) and then in 1994 the establishment of Government Offices for the regions to co-ordinate the work of various different government departments.

The first RPGs, issued in the early 1990s, were prepared by the Secretary of State, but with the advice of the surviving regional planning conferences of local authorities. It was this system, of regionally based administration accountable to Whitehall combined with centrally issued but locally steered statutory planning advice, which was inherited by an incoming New Labour government in 1997 with an apparent renewed enthusiasm for a regionally based approach to planning.

NEW LABOUR 1997-2010

Labour's plans for regional governance and planning had been laid out in their 1995 consultation paper *'A Choice for England'*, which combined strong support for a regionalist approach to planning and economic development with a more muted enthusiasm for a democratically accountable elected tier of English regional governance should a referendum support it (Labour Party, 1995). Following the 1997 election the New Labour government set out to implement its policies, beginning with the introduction of a second wave of RPG documents to be produced by new Regional Planning Bodies (RPBs), which in most cases were replacements of the existing voluntary regional planning conferences, initially known as Regional Chambers and then Regional Assemblies.

In turn the RPG system was replaced in the *Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004* by a requirement for Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) to be prepared by each RPB. The RSS also replaced the County Structure Plan layer in the 1968 system, reducing the role of counties

to an advisory one. The Regional Planning Bodies now included not just representatives of local planning authorities, as the planning conferences had done, but also representatives of business, voluntary organisations and parish councils (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2004b); the introduction of these new voices, with new accountabilities, had a "great[er] impact on the dynamics of regional decision making" (Riddell, 2013, p. 11).

At the same time, and demonstrating the same approach of dividing land-use planning at a strategic level from economic development implementation that Labour had followed in the 1960s, a parallel structure of Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) was created in by the *Regional Development Agencies Act 1998.* The RDAs, who were answerable to the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills rather than to the Department for Environment and the Regions (DETR) and its successors who had responsibility for the new regional planning system, were given the responsibility for the creation of Regional Economic Strategies (RES).

The eventual intention was the creation of an elected tier of regional government in England to match, albeit in a different form and with different powers, those created for Scotland, Wales, London and Northern Ireland. However the resounding defeat of the proposal in a 2004 referendum in the North East – the region seen by the Government as most likely to support their policy – led to the abandonment of the elected regional authority idea. Just as in the 1960s when George Brown's move to Foreign Secretary marked the start of a decline in Government support for regional approaches, the cabinet reshuffle of 2006 that ended John Prescott's role in charge of regional and local government policy also marked a significant move away from regional governance.

A review, dominated by the Treasury (HM Government, 2007), led to the abolition of the Regional Assemblies and the consolidation of their powers over spatial planning under the parallel RDA structure in the *Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009*. This was previewed in a July 2006 New Local Government Network (NLGN) pamphlet prepared by leading New Labour figures closely associated with Gordon Brown and the Treasury (Balls, Healey and Leslie, 2006), which outlined a model of devolution to the Development Agencies, and made clear that the authors were "very sceptical" (p12) about proposals to transfer any powers to city regions or coalitions of local government (indeed, apparently without intended irony, the authors proposed that scrutiny of RDAs could best be devolved by removing it from the Regional Assemblies and transferring it instead to Members of Parliament). Local government involvement was maintained by the creation of new Leaders Boards with a scrutiny oversight responsibility, and the two bodies were jointly responsible for producing a single Regional Strategy that would replace both the existing RSS and RES document for each region.

This new structure lasted only one year before the 2010 General Election and the abolition of both the regional planning policy documents and the bodies that were responsible for

creating them by the newly elected Coalition government (Department of Communities and Local Government, 2010). However the provision in the 2009 Act that allowed for the creation of Combined Authorities – voluntary collectives of local authorities coming together to take on devolved powers - was retained, and became a significant part of both the Coalition government's and the subsequent 2015 Conservative government's approach to devolution.

ABOLITION AND RE-MAKING: ENGLISH REGIONALISM FROM 2010

The *Localism Act 2011* confirmed the abolition of the Regional Spatial Strategies, and created a 'Duty to Co-operate' on all local authorities and a range of other bodies that might be involved in the creation of local plans. This attempt to legislate for co-operation is still being digested by local authorities, as neighbouring councils test the extent to which Inspectors assessing Local Plans will accept that the duty to co-operate has been fulfilled and groups of authorities seek different working approaches to the duty (Marlow, 2015; Blackman, 2020).

In parallel, having abolished the Regional Development Agencies, the Coalition government set about the creation of a replacement set of institutions charged with the promotion of economic development at a regional and sub-regional level. In apparent contrast to previous top-down arrangements, the Coalition called for bids from groups of local authorities to form Local Economic Partnerships (LEPs); after some rounds of 'bidding' and approvals, every local authority in England was involved in at least one LEP. The Coalition made clear that LEPs could overlap, and substantial numbers of local authorities became involved in more than one LEP.

Interestingly, these 'overlapping' areas (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2012a) are frequently the same ones identified as problematic because they did not clearly belong to one area or another in the *RGS Discussion* in the 1940s – for example the area between Cambridge and Peterborough in the East of England, or Northamptonshire in the Midlands (Clerk *et al.*, 1942; Department for Communities and Local Government, 2012a).

The LEPs were augmented by the City Deal policy, launched in late 2011, which directed additional investment from national Government, primarily targeted at investment in skills and infrastructure, to successful bids from local authorities and LEPs (HM Government, 2011). The first wave focussed on the 8 so-called Core Cities, the largest English cities outside London. The second wave of bids approved included smaller cities and their surrounding areas – including Greater Cambridge, Greater Ipswich, Greater Norwich: the

nomenclature echoes previous descriptions of urban centred sub-regions – significantly expanding the coverage of the policy (Cabinet Office and Deputy Prime Minister's Office, 2013; Deputy Prime Minister's Office and Cabinet Office, 2013; Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2014b).

Following the return of a majority Conservative government at the 2015 General Election, policies begun under the preceding Coalition government continued, with some features recognisable from previous eras. Treasury-led devolution initiatives such as the Northern Powerhouse and the drive for more combined authorities in the largest cities have accelerated (Wintour, 2015). The high level sponsor in Government – in this case Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne – and the strong preference by Government for an elected mayoral model of governance (HM Government, 2015a) were reminiscent of previous Government-led devolution initiatives in the 1960s and late 1990s.

However the voluntary nature of the combined authority model, and the implications of more recent proposals from non-Core City and/or polycentric regions, such as that from the Greater Cambridge and Greater Peterborough partnership in July 2015 - which became a formal Cambridge and Peterborough Combined Authority with an elected Mayor from 2017 (Herbert *et al.*, 2015; *The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Order*, 2017) – and in particular the Cornwall Devolution Deal which required no Combined Authority, and the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal announced in November 2017 *without* an elected mayor (HM Government, 2015b; HM Government, 2017), suggested the potential for a more flexible, bottom up approach to that followed by the New Labour government between 1997 and 2010.

In keeping with this, and again promoted by the Osborne, looser sub-regional and regional alliances such as the Northern Powerhouse and Midlands Engine were created, and became the focus both for building of alternative growth coalitions to London and the South East, and as a way of foregrounding a stated objective of the post-2015 Cameron Government to promote economic development and regeneration in the Midlands and the North of England (Nurse, Chen and Desjardins, 2017).

Alongside these other informal forms of sub-regional governance institutions were also created as part of the *Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016*, with responsibilities for particular areas of policy; examples include the 'Sub-national transport bodies' (STB) such as 'Transport for the North' and 'England's Economic Heartland'.

These large scale alliances were the culmination of the sub-regional governance reforms that had begun in 2010 with the abolition of the formal regional governance structures by the Coalition. First the city deals, then the combined authorities and finally these carefully branded overarching bodies were presented as a means of cementing the progress of the major urban areas of England outside London towards recovery from post-industrial malaise (Nurse, 2015).

Given that a considerable amount of the impetus for this regeneration came from European Union funding, it was perhaps doubly ironic that the unexpected outcome of the Brexit Referendum in 2016 also appeared to stall the momentum of the post-2010 approach to regional governance. The removal of key political sponsors – Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg after the 2015 election, David Cameron and George Osborne after the Brexit vote in 2016 – combined with the shift of political and administrative focus in Westminster to negotiating some sort of orderly exit from the European Union under intense internal and external pressure, appeared to remove much of the energy from the devolution agenda under Theresa May (Morgan, 2020).

Only after the election as Conservative Party leader and thus Prime Minister of Boris Johnson in 2019 did devolution reappear as an apparent priority for the UK Government, as part of a political strategy of 'levelling up' all parts of the country as part of a post-Brexit settlement. The success of the Conservative Party in the North and Midlands in the 2019 General Election, and the desire to consolidate those gains, appears to have strengthened this revived interest in devolution, with the subsequent Queen's Speech containing a promise of a White Paper on the issue (HM Government, 2019).

The contents of the White Paper remain to be seen, its publication having been overtaken by the 2020 Covid-19 crisis, but appeared likely to contain further encouragement for local government restructuring and further expansion of the model of elected mayors, combined authorities and the 'conditional' funding of devolution deals seen since 2010 (Morgan, 2020). The tension between central Government's stated objective of greater local influence over decision making and an ongoing desire to shape those local decisions in particular ways, evident since the first post-war settlement, seems likely to continue.

The history of English sub-regional planning over a period of around 100 years can therefore be seen as an ongoing search for an 'institutional fix' that is able to both deliver national objectives - whether those are around regeneration, overall economic performance, dispersal of populations or industries, from the 'distressed areas' to 'levelling up' – and to be responsive to local concerns that can quite often pull in a very different direction. The imperatives of national and local election cycles are frequently much shorter than those needed for successful planning, and institutional forms rarely last as long as the plans that they are supposed to deliver.

It is worthy of note that perhaps the most stable form of sub-regional planning came from an institutional fudge under political pressure. The eventual form of the Structure Plan/Local Plan era that ran from the mid-1970s to the end of the 1990s was the result of the Heath Government's decision to not implement the majority of the Redcliffe-Maud recommendations, leaving the two sorts of plans as the responsibilities of different local authorities.

The result was that in some parts of England the question of how sub-regions should be planned and shaped was left unresolved as different local authorities, often acting as the locus of power for different political coalitions, pushed conflicting visions though the statutory documents that they had control over (see for instance Oxfordshire). But elsewhere – in Cambridge and Cambridgeshire for example, and to a lesser extent Norwich - the eventual result after numerous iterations of different plans was a system that provided a space in which differences could be discussed and consensus sought over sub-regional economic, social and environmental objectives.

Problematising the nature of regional and sub-regional institutions involves asking fundamental questions about the nature of space, institutions, social relations and processes of change. The academic discourses that have explored these questions have been impassioned, insightful and by using what are in essence incompatible ontologies, have frequently appeared to create more heat than light.

At the heart of the debate over the institutions of regional and sub-regional planning are two core issues: how does one define a region and its institutions; how do structure and agency interact when it comes to examining how actors and institutions influence one another.

These are substantial problems, and have been the subject of a wide-ranging and dynamic literature that has debated the nature of space, territory and boundedness, and together with the theoretical approaches to institutions that are currently termed 'third phase institutionalism' form the basis for theoretical approach of this study (Lowndes and Roberts, 2013; Verhoeven and Duyvendak, 2017).

While early attempts to define regions risked becoming justifications for geographical and cultural determinism, the galvanising effect of Deleuze and Guattari's ideas of *agencement* and *assemblage* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) in particular had a dramatic impact on how regions and sub-regions could be visualised. Instead of being a territorial space defined by its external boundaries, a region could now be conceived as the constructed result of social relations in an unbounded or networked space.

Sitting between these two different ontologies of space is the conception of fuzzy or soft spaces (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2009; Haughton, 2010). Here there are boundaries, but they are hazy and indistinct, and deliberately lacking in precise definition: the centre of the space is clear, but the edges are not.

These recent theoretical advances around new understandings of the nature of institutions, and in particular the potential for synthesis between spatial and networked concepts of space and territory, offer a potentially productive lens through which to view how the institutions for the governance of planning in the sub-regions of Eastern England have developed.

In the context of English regions and sub-regions, the nature of institutions, their creation, development, evolution and change is contested. From the attempts in the early 20th century to define regions by geographic features such as watersheds (Fawcett, 1919; Allen and Cochrane, 2010) to the rolling out of City Deals and devolution deals to Combined Authorities (Herbert *et al.*, 2015; HM Government, 2015a) with the associated disputes about boundaries and governance structures, what a region or sub-region is has been subject to debate over the degree to which internal and external actors, and structural factors both inside and outside the region and its institutions, are dominant and how those actors and factors interact.

The theoretical analysis of regional planning approaches goes back to the origins of planning as a professional discipline itself. Howard's Garden Cities are in effect city regions, and Geddes described how the processes of technological development of his era, the railway and the telegraph, enabled both "the great centres…to increase and retain their control" while at the same time "rendering decentralisation, with local government of all kinds, increasingly possible" (Geddes, 1904, p. 216).

Geddes's insight into the dynamics and processes of simultaneous centralisation and decentralisation, and the degree to which technological change is implicated in those dynamics, is reflected in the debates over spatial and networked conceptions of governance one hundred years later (Amin, 2002; Bulkeley, 2005; Allmendinger and Haughton, 2009).

As with many normative approaches to theorising and studying issues in the social sciences in the mid-20th century, the holistic regionalism of Geddes, Mumford and Howard was gradually usurped by what became known as Regional Science (Wheeler, 2002). As well as marking a profound shift towards quantitative methods of analysis, the study of 'regionalism' moved away from broader and more sociological notions of community and towards a narrower focus on regional economic development.

Isard, Friedmann *et al* emphasised that "regional planning was concerned mainly with problems of resources and economic development" (Wheeler, 2002, p. 268). This approach to the study of regionalism mirrors the technocratic and economic development-led approach to regional policy in the UK of the 1960s, both in its focus on the economy as a proxy for, and at the expense of, broader social and environmental issues, and also its conception of there being 'a problem' that could by definition therefore 'be solved'.

From the 1970s Marxist regional geographers such as Harvey and Castells (Harvey, 1973; Castells and Sheridan, 1977; Castells, 1983) brought a new emphasis on the critique of

power relations and social dynamics, and at the same time a return - albeit in a different form - to the normative principles of the early 20th century pioneers of academic planning.

While some strands of neo-Marxism ran into a sterile dead-end of structural determinism, the work of Giddens and Bhaskar and then Archer in addressing the interactions between structure and agency created a theoretical framework in which regional governance, with its revolving cast of actors and frequently varying formal and informal institutional structures, can be analysed (Bhaskar, 1979; Giddens, 1984; Bhaskar, 1989; Archer, 1995).

Equally important were the debates that flowed from the understanding of social relations as being critical to the understanding of the process that made and remade institutions, and thus the way in which institutions – particularly those that are part of the process of governance – could be described as networks of relationships rather be simply defined by a physical or administrative space.

The controversy over whether territorial or relational approaches to conceptualising regions was a dominant feature of academic debate over a prolonged period until more recent attempts at achieving a synthesis, or rather a multi-dimensional or polymorphic blending between apparently incompatible ontologies (Harrison, 2013).

Jessop et al (2008) suggested the use of four different dimensions for conceptualising regions, each of which had been the subject of its own 'spatial turn': territory, place, scale and network. While the complex synthesis of the four suggested has proved difficult to establish as a practical tool for enquiry, the definitions of the four dimensions is useful.

Taking each in turn, 'territory' is perhaps best understood as the traditional approach to defining a place through the use of a line on a map. Units of territory are bounded, discrete and non-overlapping. In the context of contemporary debates about regions, this definition was associated with the New Regionalism espoused by Keating and especially by Storper (Storper, 1997; Keating, 1998).

While a bounded and discrete approach to territory has obvious benefits to statisticians and policy makers, and remains the basis for accountable administration in most jurisdictions, the static boundaries and failure to recognise the existence of multiple and overlapping identities are problematic. This weakness was addressed by the concept of 'place'.

Emerging from post-positivist approaches in sociology and geography, Paasi (1986) and others theorised regions through a dynamic understanding of identification. Avoiding deterministic and essentialist theories of place identity, Paasi emphasised instead the concepts of becoming and contingency, with regions as "concrete, dynamic manifestations of development in society" (p. 110).

Massey developed this further, proposing that regions were repeatedly made and remade as a contingent outcome of competition between different economic, social and political

forces (Massey, 1991). That some of these forces were proximate, and others far removed, added a further dimension to the model, that of 'scale'.

In the traditional model of a federal state, territories were arranged not just as bounded and discrete spaces, but within a hierarchy, usually with the nation state at the top beneath which sat regions, then increasingly smaller local units of administration with each accountable to the layer above. However, building on non-static notions of the nature of place, Brenner (2004) and others positioned scale as being both contributor to and outcome of processes and conflicts, just as place is.

In the context of debates about regional policy, and the New Regionalism, this dynamic concept allowed emerging regional scales as being "competitive and strategic territories in a complex system of multilevel governance" (Macleod and Jones, 2007; Harrison, 2013, p. 60).

The final dimension is that of the network, which was initially proposed as alternative to any spatial or territorial understandings of space. Inspired by the work of Castells (1996) and its emphasis on flows and networks, scholars such as Thrift (2004) and Amin (2004) proposed that 'scale dependent' notions of space had been replaced by connectivity, or what Amin described as regions that were 'fluid and unbound'.

This view of territorial or scalar views of place being transcended or replaced by networked views was supported by the observation that 'global cities' – like London or New York - were increasingly forming trans-boundary networks based on function rather than their administrative boundaries.

Thus the region is not a given entity, but a product of social relations stretched out over space and time. There is no 'essential region' waiting to be discovered, but multiple ways of seeing regions that exist only in relation to particular criteria (Allen, Cochrane and Massey, 1998). Similarly, actors and institutions are multi-faced, playing out different roles for different audiences - termed "polyvalent performances" by Tilley (2002, p. 153); the players involved in the constructions recognise their dual role of sorts, even if the duality is not openly acknowledged (Allen and Cochrane, 2010).

Allen and Cochrane develop this further in their critique of multi-scalar and multi-site approaches to conceptualising spatial and institutional arrangements: they argue that these approaches fail to provide a "spatial architecture within which the new institutional arrangements may be grasped" (Allen and Cochrane, 2010, p. 1072). Instead they suggest a topological model, in which state power is "more or less present through mediated and real-time connections, some direct, some more distanciated" (p. 1073). In other words, state power is best viewed not as tangled set of institutions and forces, but a spatio-temporal assemblage of actors.

This debate over whether networked or topological conceptions of space offer greater insight than scalar models or other territorially based approaches is impassioned, and to some extent unresolved and unresolvable (like the ontological choices over structure and agency, it is as much a debate about the choice of the rules of the game as it is about the outcome). As Bulkeley (2005), Bristow (2012), Brenner (2001), Goodwin (2013) and others have argued, it is perhaps more productive to accept the co-existence of relational and territorially bounded spaces, and examine how they interact.

Bulkeley writing on climate change noted that "networks, scales and territories are not alternatives but are intimately connected" (2005, p. 896), while Brenner proposed that "geographical scales and networks of spatial connectivity" can be seen as "mutually constitutive rather than mutually exclusive aspects of social spatiality" (2001, p. 610).

As Goodwin (2013, p. 1189) - "What matters, and what should be explored, is the form this co-constitution takes rather than asserting the primacy of either the territory or the network" - and as Bristow (2012, p. 7) note, the key question is "how regional state spaces are being transformed, why and by whom".

The nature of regional spaces and institutions and their capacity for change varies. The early definitions of a region or territory as being delimited by physical boundaries clearly did not permit a great deal of change – after all a water-shed is close to a permanent physical feature - even if some institutional variation can go on within these fixed borders.

On the other hand, Painter argues persuasively that territory is inherently impermanent, not characterised by stability until transformed by some sort of external crisis or re-fixing but rather something that is perpetually in a state of flux: "…territory is necessarily porous, historical, mutable, uneven and perishable. It is a laborious work in progress, prone to failure and permeated by tension and contradiction. Territory is never complete, but always becoming." (Painter, 2010, p. 1094).

Paasi observes that regions can attain a 'critical mass' at which point they develop a capacity for self-reproduction, as a result of the complex set of practices that emerges during the process of institutionalisation. Building on Latour's (2005) conception of a region as a network that is an actor 'made to act by many others', this set of practices is the composite of the acts of individuals within and without the "perpetually reassembling socio-spatial process" that is a region (Paasi, 2010, p. 2300). Thus the region is defined at two levels, both as an actor itself and as an entity made and shaped by other actors both within and without.

The co-constitution model, of territorial and networked conceptions interacting with one another, allows for a nuanced examination of the impacts of both interactions and historical inheritance. Networked or relational approaches are by definition dynamic, in that each interaction in the network contributes to the construction of the 'region', and at the same time by constructing the network makes further new interactions not just possible but essential. In dynamic terms, regions conceived as networks are made of 'flows'; they are not an area but a 'lattice' of generative interactions (Allen, Cochrane and Massey, 1998).

Allen and Cochrane (2010, p. 1078) describe this lattice of interactions as something that "…represents an unstable power formation in the making. It is unstable not only because different economic, political and legal elements may co-exist in novel arrangements, but also because such elements may operate according to different temporal rhythms and institutional pace which come together in both enabling and contested ways." The inherently unstable and temporary nature of the networked power formation stems from the interactions and the actors that form it; the same interactions and actors that create the assemblage have the seeds of its transformation embedded within them.

At the same time the retention of a territorial conception as part of the co-constitutive model allows for analysis of inherited historical factors. Goodwin notes that "…territorial and relational aspects of regions are mutually constituted in specific ways according to the particular feature of the region that is under investigation." (2013, p. 1182).

In his study of the construction of regional identity in the South-West of England, Goodwin describes the South West Region under New Labour as a construction, performed within its nominated territorial boundaries for the purposes of legitimation: "Indeed the assemblage of overlapping institutional forms – regional offices, agencies, assemblies, boards, roundtables – and strategies which were designed to deliver a sustainability agenda were helping to construct a political space of the 'South West'. In so doing, they were building a particular political project within a particular institutional territory, via a set of political practices which had very little purchase beyond the regional boundary." (2013, p. 1187).

But as Paasi describes, at some point this performed construction becomes self-regenerating, sustaining itself though the new interactions that develop. Therefore, even though many of the structures and institutions of regional governance created by New Labour were abolished by the Coalition Government that came to power in 2010, the performing of and through those structures in the New Labour period created an inheritance on which the next phase of territorial construction is built, just as the New Labour era South West Region was constructed on and shaped in part by the institutional and relational fixes of prior periods.

Similarly, the 'Structure Plan' era from the mid-1970s to the late 1990s can be seen as being made up of repeated performative cycles, which helped to embed the institutions, practices and norms of the plan-making process into the way in which local actors 'did business'. A further and contemporary example is that of the SNP government in Scotland, which has used the performance of governance to build a self-generating momentum towards separatism and independence.

SUB-REGIONS AS 'SOFT SPACES'

One approach to combining territorial and networked approaches to the definition of regional and sub-regional institutions is the 'soft space', first described by Haughton and Allmendinger (2008; 2009) in their studies of the governance of local economic development issues within a regional context, in particular in the UK under New Labour. Haughton and Allmendinger differentiated between 'hard' spaces, where formal territorial boundaries and statutory responsibilities acted as constraints on action, and 'soft' spaces, where greater institutional and policy innovation were permitted or even encouraged.

These "emergent alternative administrative geographies" (Haughton and Allmendinger, 2008, p. 143) were initially described as a deliberate attempt to create new spaces within which to pursue alternative strategies and policies, created or nurtured by either actors within the existing regional planning structures, or though intervention by the state from without. This was further developed in a later article which described five new forms of planning space or practice, of which one was a range of variants of 'soft space' (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2010).

The initial soft space concept, as developed by the original authors and by others, was intended to combine notions of territoriality and of networked relationships. In doing so, it created an implied double meaning – a soft space was both an informal space and a process of informal governance.

In a critical review of how the soft space concept was being used, Walsh et al (2012) suggested that subsequent 'conceptual slippage' had expanded and diluted the original purpose of the term, reducing its usefulness in describing precisely particular forms of regional and sub-regional space and governance. In particular the notion of 'soft planning', meaning a planning process not reliant on legal frameworks or powers, was incorporated into the definition.

In order to return to what they saw as the original intention of the soft space concept, Walsh et al offered a new definition: "Soft spaces are a particular type of space, which are

the result of a deliberate, conscious strategy constructed by governing actors (usually public sector led) to represent a geographical area in a particular way that lies outside of the political-administrative boundaries and internal territorial divisions of the nation-state." (Walsh *et al.*, 2012, p. 5)

This definition of a soft space fits very closely with that of the sub-region, whether it is one defined by a travel to work area, a housing market area, or a general sense of where the influence of an urban area runs to. Walsh et al describe these soft spaces as reflecting a new form of territoriality, although they have much in common with a much older form of territoriality.

These 'fuzzy' areas – spaces without precise boundaries – are analogous to the difference between medieval kingdoms and the modern nation state. The latter are defined by their borders, which are in the most part precisely defined and laid down in treaties, on maps and by physical infrastructure on the ground. By contrast the former were defined by the power of the monarch or government at the centre, a power that gradually waned the further one got from that centre. The result was that rather than a firm boundary between two states, the areas between medieval kingdoms were often 'badlands' (Jessop, Brenner and Jones, 2008) of shifting and hazy loyalties (see for example the history of the English-Scottish border lands up to the early 17th century).

This example, where space is defined by the ability to project power effectively over distance (and time), suggests that Walsh et al's attempt to limit the definition of soft space to just a form of space, albeit one created as part of a deliberate strategy by agential actors, is overly restrictive. It is important to be conscious of the dangers of conceptual slippage, but in this instance the interaction of power relations in the form of political projects – whether it was a Scottish King in the 15th century attempting to bring local warlords in distant territories to heel or an informal group of sub-regional actors promoting a local growth strategy in the 21st – with notions of territoriality seems essential to a full understanding of the processes at work in creating and developing soft spaces. Thus the soft space concept has to retain room for both relational and territorial explanations.

Haughton et al (2013) further emphasised the need to see soft spaces as having both territorial and governance dimensions. For example where the territorial shape of ecological resources such as water catchment areas or river basins are non-congruent with administrative territories (Davoudi and Strange, 2009), a new soft space can provide room for both policy and governance innovation. But equally a soft space can be a 'shadowy space' adopted as a deliberate strategy for reducing accountability, and for permitting a process of elision between non-statutory and statutory planning policies and frameworks.

It is this latter aspect of soft spaces that continues to draw interest, in particular in the context of sub-regional planning spaces. A recent survey across a range of English regions revealed four different approaches to sub-regional planning – from formal partnerships to

informal agreements for evidence gathering - which demonstrated the ongoing overlap between formal statutory spaces and governance and informal soft spaces and governance (Allmendinger, Haughton and Shepherd, 2016).

The authors of this survey regard the ontological dispute over relational and territorial conceptions of space as having been overcome by the notion of the region as being itself a constructed assemblage of both approaches: they regard McCann and Ward's summary as best describing the relationship between space and policy-making: "[a]... 'global-relational, social and spatial process which interconnects and constitutes actors, institutions and territories'." (2012, p. 312, cited in Allmendinger, Haughton and Shepherd, 2016, p. 40)

Allen and Cochrane (2010) in theorising an entirely networked approach to understanding regions describe London and the South East of England as having new configurations that are made up of segments of inherited structure and institution, new economic elements, mixtures of public and private and so forth to form an 'emergent assemblage'. In their dynamic and evolutionary conception, therefore, that which has gone before necessarily shapes that which exists, which in turns shapes that which follows. While rejecting historical determinism the networked model leaves room for a soft or shaping form of path dependency as part of the process of creation and evolution.

Thus, just as in the discipline of economics in which the theory was developed, there is a form of path dependency effect running through the development and change of regional and sub-regional structures, with prior states shaping those that follow. It is important to avoid the trap of historic or geographic determinism – the notion that physical geography inevitably shapes historic outcomes was a common and now discredited approach in early regional studies (see for example Ellsworth Huntington and other early 20th century environmental determinists) - but it is valid to explore the extent to which the imprint of earlier institutional modes and relations limit or direct the nature of those that follow.

STRUCTURE AND AGENCY

Fundamental to avoiding the trap of determinism is identifying a theoretical model that allows for agency as well as structure, a model within which the challenge is to determine the extent to which that agency will be shaped or limited by institutions, and vice versa. This question of structure and agency is critical to the theorising of regional and sub-regional institutions and actors.

Giddens' structuration theory (1984) conceives of structure and agency as being mutually constitutive, and thus allows a focus on the processes of change. Giddens' approach was

intentionally theoretical, and he did not himself consider structural theory to be a suitable basis for practical research, but the 'duality of structure' creates a model that synthesises the positivist and empiricist traditions while not privileging structure over agency or vice versa.

One of the most powerful critiques of structuration theory came from Archer (1995), building on Bhaskar's Critical Realist approach that posits the existence of an independent reality that can be explored and understood by study, but gradually and only ever incompletely. According to Bhaskar (Bhaskar, 1979; Bhaskar, 1989; Smith, 1998) these structures influence and impact upon agency, and in turn the acts of agents impact upon the structures.

The key issue for Archer in her critique of Giddens was that by failing to disentangle structure and agency, Giddens made it impossible to differentiate the two to allow the study of one or the other separately. Archer argued that this study could be made possible by adopting the Critical Realist approach. The pre-existence of structures meant that they and agency were not mutually constitutive, but were instead 'emergent strata of social reality' (Archer, 1995). Thus the structure pre-exists, constrains the actions of actors, whose actions in turn influence and impact upon the structure, and so on in a repeated cycle over time.

However Archer's approach, although addressing the problem of artificial dualism in structuration theory, creates a situation where structure is continuous but agency is intermittent; in Hay's words, an "episodic, disjointed and discontinuous view of agency" (Hay, 2002, p. 126).

An ambitious, and influential, attempt to resolve both the original problem that structuration theory addresses of the interaction between structure and agency while at the same time taking elements of critical realism without privileging underlying structure over intermittent agency is Jessop's 'strategic-relational approach (Jessop, 1990). For Jessop structures and agents are not 'real' in the sense that they do not exist independently of one another, but instead have a relational and dialectic existence.

Jessop's key insight is the dialectic model that he uses to theorise a two stage interaction between structure and agency. Starting from the abstract constructs of structure and agency, Jessop describes interactions between them that lead to a 'structural context' and 'actor in context' stage, which then in turn interact to give a concrete 'strategic action' and 'strategically selective context'.

In other words, action is intentional conduct premised on the context in which it will take place; the context is strategically selective in that it predisposes certain actions to be successful, though it does not pre-determine them. Actors are conscious, reflexive and strategic; their preferences change over time, and aren't determined by context although

context may influence them. They may act out of habit, and can monitor both short and longer term outcomes.

Jessop, taking a lead from Poulantzas (Jessop, 1985) sees the state therefore not as an object but a specific form of social relation, a radically different notion to the concepts of the state as an arena in which politics takes place or as an autonomous actor with its own preferences that have been favoured by classical pluralists and structural Marxist approaches respectively.

This strategic-relational approach, as adopted by Neil Brenner (2004) in his theorising of the emergence of 'new state spaces' in the urban regions of Western Europe, offers a fertile insight into the assessment of the nature of regional and in particular sub-regional institutions and governance in the contemporary UK.

Jessop's conception of the capitalist state is of an institution that takes different and varied forms, but one that is separate from the cycle of capital itself. While an accumulation strategy emerges when a particular model of economic growth – say mercantilism, or import substitution – is linked to a framework of state institutions and policies capable of reproducing it – for example the 17th century Dutch Republic or more recent Asian Tiger states, this essential separation of the state form and the sphere of production means that there can be "a dislocation between the activities of the state and the needs of capital" (Jessop, 2013b, p. 1821).

In other words, the state can become a site for political struggle or bureaucratic inertia which may disrupt the model of capital accumulation. Thus the state form is the product of ongoing strategic interactions; it is never completed, but always contingent, emergent and contested (Jessop, 1990).

This means that the state is at once three things. It is the site of strategies, albeit that a given state form will be more accessible to some forces than others. It is the generator of strategies, serving as the institutional base through which forces mobilise their projects and agendas. And finally it is also the product of these strategies, in that its structures and modes are inherited from previous strategies, and current strategies will go on to influence and form future structures and modes.

This rich and multifaceted notion of what the state is links to an equally fundamental and longstanding notion of what politics itself is. At the heart of competing understandings and theories has been a differing interpretation of what comprises politics and what does not: "…the single most important factor influencing the way theorists conceive of politics is whether they define it primarily in terms of a process, or whether they define it in terms of a site or an arena…" (Leftwich, 2004, p. 13). Those theorists who have drawn a distinction between the political and the non-political have conceived politics as the actions of the political actors within a political arena: there may be considerable dispute over the arena,

the actors and the acts, but there is a clear dividing line between the political and the non-political at some point for both classical pluralists and elite theorists.

On the other hand are those who regard politics as being a process with decidedly fuzzy boundaries outside which the 'non-political' resides. Marxist analysis, with its emphasis on economic analysis and social reproduction sees politics as a process, as does feminist theory which has emphasised the importance of not separating the supposedly private and hence non-political sphere from the public, political, one (Squires, 2004).

The arena conception of politics is best exemplified by the classical pluralist theorists of the 1950s and 1960s, such as Robert Dahl, and the elite theorists who while criticising them made use of the same conceptual paradigm. For the pluralists, politics was best understood through the workings of government in all its forms, and empirical analysis involved the assessment of interactions within the machinery of state, and the ability of outside groups and individuals to steer the engine of state in a direction of their choosing (Dahl, 1961). In this model, the state is a passive entity, separate to and influenced by those actors who interact with each other within its confines. Interaction outside the state is not, in this model, 'politics'.

Critics of pluralism suggested that their model failed to recognise the deeply unequal access to levers of power that different actors had, and that the ability to shape the arena of politics by for example ruling out debate on key issues of interest to elites was entirely omitted from the pluralist approach (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962).

As Schattschneider put it: "all forms of political organisation have a bias in favour of the exploitation of some kinds of conflict and the suppression of others because organization is the mobilisation of bias. Some issues are organized into politics while others are organized out." (Schattschneider, 1960, p. 71). Although this expanded the definition of the arena and issued a challenge to the classical pluralist model, the basic concept of politics as actions within an arena remained.

The countervailing view is that of politics as a process, which sees "activities …occurring pervasively…beyond or below the state or formal institutions of government" (Leftwich, 2004, p. 14). This definition of politics of acts that can and do take place without the need for formal institutions also allows for a much richer notion of change than the arena model with its fixed notions of the political. The arena concept struggles to allow for gradual and evolutionary change, relying instead on external shocks – wars, revolutions, environmental or economic crises and the like – to explain shifts in the nature of the political arena and the institutions of the state (Hay, 2002).

The processual approach to the understanding of politics, much influenced by theorists from outside the traditional discipline of politics such as Soja, Harvey, Castells and in particular Lefebvre, allows not only for changes to political strategies, but also to the sites in which

these strategies take place (Harvey, 1973; Lefebvre, 1976; Castells and Sheridan, 1977; Soja, 1989). Brenner (2004) develops Jessop's approach to theorise the nature of the changes to the spatial aspects of the state, and in doing so offers an opening for analysis of regional and sub-regional spaces in contemporary England.

Brenner's key critique of traditional arena based analyses is that they have tended to start from a series of mistaken assumptions about the nature of state space. First, it is assumed to be static and timeless, when Brenner contends that it is fluid and ongoing. Second, state territories are assumed to be fixed and pre-eminent, when they are instead only one of many dimensions of space. Third, there has been a longstanding tendency to privilege the national state space, ignoring the multiplicity of other scales that intertwine and cut across the national scale.

For Brenner the transformation of institutions and governance at local and regional levels since the breakdown of the Keynesian Welfare National State in the aftermath of the economic and political crises of the early 1970s is an example of the creation of a new and fragmented set of overlapping and interacting state spaces that are neither exclusively the source nor the result of political acts.

These new spaces are not indicators of the withering away of the nation state, as some have argued, but are in Brenner's view the evolution of the nation state into an increasingly complex plethora of institutions and spaces that interact with one another and the political strategies that are followed within them. For Brenner, following Jessop's model, "…state space is best conceptualized as arena, medium AND [my emphasis] outcome of spatially selective political strategies" (Brenner, 2004, p. 72).

During the highpoint of the Keynesian Welfare National State – essentially from the 1940s to the end of the 1960s – the main characteristics of the primary state project when it came to the space of the state itself were fourfold: centralising in approach, uniform in structure, a privileging of a single (usually national) scale, and with an objective of equalisation.

As the international institutions and economic norms on which this system of capitalism had been based - the Bretton Woods system of financial controls and cheap oil in particular - unravelled and collapsed in the early 1970s a new set of characteristics gradually emerged. Instead of a primarily centralising approach, there was increasing emphasis on decentralisation, at least in rhetorical terms.

Rather than uniformity, increasing customisation and individually designed structures were encouraged. These multiplying and overlapping structures began to privilege both local/regional and international networks and spaces in addition to and instead of the national. Most visibly of all, the objective of equalisation was replaced by an objective of concentration of resources - of 'success breeding success' – meaning that regional disparities tend to increase rather than decrease.

While Brenner posits this universal model of the direction of travel of state spaces from a Fordist to a post-Fordist world, and sets out a clear mechanism to explain the steps on this path as state spaces both influence and are influenced by the strategies that are followed, he does so while emphasising the contingent and path-dependent nature of the processual model of understanding the development of politics.

For Brenner the spatial distribution of capitalist development is heavily path-dependent, for example. The initial sites of mass industrialisation were close to abundant sources of power and transport links – primarily coalfields and rivers and ports – even though these may have been distant from major sources of population and key markets. The concentration of heavy industry in these areas made them unattractive to those not required as labour.

In the second wave of industrialisation, based on lighter more consumer-oriented goods at a time of rapidly improving road-based transport infrastructure, was characterised by a simultaneous decentralisation of manufacturing to areas of higher skill and cheaper costs and a centralising of financial and management control functions to major international cities. Thus for many industrialised areas the presence of resource advantages at the initial stages of capitalist industrialisation became a disadvantage in the second wave.

When it comes to state institutions and state strategies, there are similar implications: "A key task that flows from a strategic-relational-spatial approach to statehood is to investigate the path-dependent layering processes through which successive rounds of state spatial regulation emerge within entrenched formations of state spatiality. New territorial and scalar geographies of state power are forged through a contested, open-ended interaction of historically inherited configurations of state spatial organisation with newly emergent state spatial projects and state spatial strategies at various geographical scales" (Brenner, 2004, p. 111).

Paasi, in exploring this balance between structures and actors, notes that a "spatial entity becomes a region in a plethora of practices, discourses, relations, and connections that can have wider origins in space and time but are assembled and connected in historically contingent ways in cultural, economic, and political contexts and struggles" (2010, p. 2298). In other words, the complex interactions of actors, both internal and external to the region, are shaped and influenced by underlying factors and pre-existing – and ongoing – forces.

THE STRATEGIC-RELATIONAL APPROACH

The dispute over the relative influence of structure and agency respectively is important, but as an ontological debate can be seen as essentially unresolvable (Hay, 2002). Classical

pluralism and then elite theory emphasised the importance of agency, while neo-Marxist and institutionalist/neo-institutionalist narratives highlight the importance of underlying structures and processes. Hay argues that to position this debate as a 'problem' is an error: "structure-agency is…a language by which ontological differences between contending accounts might be registered" (2002, p. 91), where the ontological decision over what evidence to look for inevitably conditions what evidence might be found. Thus it is not so much a contest on a level playing field, but rather a potentially fruitless debate over which set of rules the game might be played under in the first place.

The challenge therefore is to identify a means of bringing together these different ontologies, to create a technique that can be used as a means of analysis: to "demonstrate how a common social ontology is applied in each case considered and how this reveals the relative primacy of structural and agential factors in a given situation" (Hay, 2002, p. 113). Hay uses a simple set of questions – is there an agent? Is the agent individual or collective? How has it become a collective? Is that agent contextualised? How relevant is this context? Are there other contexts? (Hay, 1995) – as a means of challenging statements without actors (an example in the context of contemporary political discourse is 'Globalisation is causing austerity', which taken at face value implies an inevitable process rather than a series of deliberate policy decisions taken by actors with the agency to do so).

Jessop's strategic-relational approach offers a potential means to analyse the interactions between agential and structural factors. As previously noted, for Jessop structure and agents do not have an existence independent of one another but instead have a relational and dialectic reality. While analysis might sometimes seek to separate one or the other, this is simply a tactic and should not suggest any sort of ontological dualism (Jessop, 1990; Jessop, 2013b). For Jessop, this implies that that rather than looking for actors and contexts, it is more useful to identify areas of interaction – 'strategic action' and 'strategically selective context'.

Jessop argues that action is intentional conduct premised on the context in which it will take place; the context is strategically selective in that it predisposes certain actions to be successful, though it does not pre-determine them. Actors are conscious, reflexive and strategic; their preferences change over time, and aren't merely determined by context. It is important to emphasise the difference between strategic in this context, and the 'strategic' of rational choice theory, where strategic decision-making assumes both a fixed notion of individual benefit and knowledge of that benefit; here actions can be both habitual or deliberate, but in both instances based on perception and on perceived contextual limitations to action (Downs, 1957).

Paasi explores similar ground in theorising the way in which regions are constructed. While highlighting the role of both conscious and unconscious participation by actors, individual and collective, it is also important to bear in mind the importance of economic and political

structures: "…economic processes and the capabilities and interventions of the state provide crucial material and institutional prerequisites for cultural and political processes and governance that in turn are substantial in the construction and reproduction of regions." (2010, p. 2299).

There are differences in the implied progression here, differences that suggest particular lines for enquiry. For Jessop the actors and the structures are mutually constituted through their strategic interactions, whereas Paasi's description of "institutional prerequisites for cultural and political processes" implies an 'order of events' in the construction of regions and regional identities (2010, p. 2299).

In Paasi's view, the construction of the sub-national 'region' requires the pre-existence of cultural and political norms, norms that are both contributed by the state and existing at the state level. This raises an important theme within the overall debate over who or what constructs a region: what is the role of the national state apparatus in the formation and change of sub-national institutions, and how important is it relative to the role of actors at the sub-national level, and structures and actors operating beyond and through both the sub-national and the state levels.

As Paasi notes, that regions are social constructs is taken as axiomatic, but there is a lack of clarity over who or what 'constructs'. Is what is referred to the process or the product of construction (Hacking, 1999)? Different theoretical concepts of this process of construction have privileged different factors. For example, phenomenological accounts such as the 1970s humanistic geographers and their 'essence of place' arguments saw the key agency as human intentionalism (Relph, 1976), whereas Marxist approaches start from the premise that the accumulation of capital is the primary agential factor. Thus a Marxian analysis of uneven regional development would not start from notions of pre-conceived regions, but from the accumulation process itself.

Both the essence of place and the Marxian approaches can be criticised for an over-privileging of certain factors at the expense of seeing a more complex whole. Approaches that theorise regions as 'meeting places' (Thrift, 1983) or as historically contingent processes (Pred, 1984) emphasise the construction of regions through practice and discourse, and create a more complex understanding of both the process of construction and the interactions between actors, structures and processes.

Extending this conception of the region as socially constructed through discourse, and in part in response to 'New Regionalist' models with their assumptions of regional exceptionalism and bounded autonomy (Scott and Storper, 2003; Bristow, 2012), relational visualisations of regions offer a different means of conceptualising not just the construction of regions, but their nature and reality.

New Regionalism conceptualised regions as autonomous institutions with causal powers. This was clearly an attractive model both for regional elites wanting to pursue their own political projects and for national governments espousing regional growth as a basis for economic and social policy, but one that underplays the role of interdependencies between regions and the networks that run between and through them (Bristow, 2012).

In the New Regionalist model, actors are primarily the existing and emergent institutional and organisation elites of the particular region, able to act with limited constraints to position the regional most effectively for capital accumulation through innovation and specialisation. While even the most ardent New Regionalist would admit the capacity for external factors to impact upon the region itself, the model does not give due credence to the capacity of external actors, in particular the institutions of the nation state, to intervene and influence.

At the other end of the spectrum when it comes to considering the autonomy and agency of actors within the region would be giving the nation state and its institutions an absolute power over them. Thus the actions of the 2010 Coalition Government in the UK in abolishing the New Labour structures of regional governance could be perceived as having abolished the constructed region along with it. But while disruptive acts such as the whole-scale abolition of governance structures – structures created and re-created by the same national state only in the preceding decade of course – have a significant impact on the shape and direction of local and regional actors, there remains an alternate network of actors still with autonomy and agency.

As Goodwin (2013, p. 1188) notes when referring to the effect of abolition of South-West regional structures in 2010: "The demarcation of a particular political space – the South West, for instance – as a locus for the development of specific forms of economic, social and environmental policy is literally denied. What this in turn means is that the agents who have access to power are different, the projects they pursue are different, and the connections and relations they deploy to those outside the region will also be different." Just as when a gardener breaks up an ant nest with a stick, the actions of the national Government have swept away the old institutions but the actors remain and will reform into new networks and structures, many of which were not possible in the previous state of affairs which shaped and constrained the scope of activities of those actors.

Referring to the earlier New Labour Government, and particularly the second half of that government from 2003 and 2010 when changes to the approach to regional governance where occurring increasingly frequently, Allen and Cochrane (2010) describe the flurry of initiatives and institutional flux during that period as being central government 'reaching in' to a South East England regional assemblage to try to get it to deliver the desired policy objectives. While the Government did not achieve the outcomes that it desired, the ability

to disrupt, direct and influence sub-national actors made clear the importance of external actors to the regional space and its institutions.

Building on previous work by Sassen (2006) that described the 'national' as a site where the forces of globalisation are played out, Allen and Cochrane suggest that the same vocabulary and technique can be used elsewhere. For example Sassen's imagery of "the 'national' as something that gets assembled and reassembled over time by different actors who jostle, co-exist and interrupt one another to gain advantage… The different forces at work, however, are not 'national', 'global', or 'regional' for that matter, but are assembled in place, so to speak, out of a mix of spatial and temporal orders" (Sassen, 2006, p. 1078; Allen and Cochrane, 2010) can equally be applied to any other site where forces intersect, at regional or sub-regional levels.

While Allen and Cochrane's aim is to challenge what they see as misguided scalar approaches to conceptualising institutions and institutional development, their networked assemblage emphasises the role and importance of actors and their interactions. One does not have to wholly share their view of whether or not scalar approaches are wrong to draw important lessons from their analysis about the co-constructive nature of the interactions of actors with agency in a complex network of relationships.

ACTORS AND STRATEGIES

In order to gain a greater understanding of the institutions that are being created and shaped therefore, it is necessary to identify both the actors and their aims. As Bristow, citing Prytherch (2010, p. 1537) notes: "To understand how regions are being re-formulated requires learning from the 'complex and multifaceted spatial strategies of political actors on the ground'". These actors are individual and collective, and are embedded in the various different structures of socio-institutional relations and actor-networks that create interdependencies.

An example of the embeddedness of actors in networks can be drawn from Allen and Cochrane's study of the South East of England (2010). A key factor in the shaping and development of the institutional structures and the assemblage of the South East region was the way in which the national government's Regional Office for the South East was 'embedded' within the region itself, quite literally co-located with the secretariat of the regional institutions. Equally actors can influence indirectly; networks are mediated by and for national governmental priorities, political agendas of support for or opposition to those priorities and so on.

Just as the assemblage allows for the prospect of future relationships to be shaped by the context of the present, so past relationships are the context which shapes the present. Thus Allen and Cochrane's South-East assemblage, influenced by the national government from within through its proxies and from without by 'reaching in', was continually changed and remade, and in turn, this changed assemblage impacted on future assemblages which are also shaped and influenced by the 'reaching in' of new national governments of a different persuasion. While the language and imagery are different, this notion of successive assemblages shaped and influenced by that which has gone before is not dissimilar to Brenner's notion of successive layers of institutional architecture (Brenner, 2004).

Bristow (2012) in her critique of the New Regionalism highlights the important of understanding the mutual interdependence of regions, and the governance and power relations of networks by national and international institutions. Bristow's 'critical regionalism' emphasises the need to consider how social construction of regions are shaped by politics of and in space (p. 7), and in particular the role of that national state and its institutions: "regions would not exist without the continuing substantive connections to a national social formation" (see also Ward and Jonas, 2004).

Paasi, in exploring the creation through performance of regional identity and institutions, differentiated between forms of agency: on the one hand the 'soft' agency of institutional advocacy and on the other the 'hard' agency of systematic activism. For Paasi, the former is often more influential for its repetition, and diffusion across many minor actors, while remaining constant across time. This notion of soft advocacy combined with diffusion and informality provides an avenue for exploration of the 'performance' of sub-regional institutions and bodies (Paasi, 2010).

Bristow argues that the process at work depends on the national government level, a national government that is both actor and context. In comparing developments in England – driven by the UK Coalition government – and in Wales, where the devolved National Assembly has followed a different agenda, she suggests that in England the national government has pursued a revolutionary path by dismantling existing structures and encouraging the creation of new ones, while in Wales the spaces are described as 'emergent' or 'soft spaces', implying a process of evolution driven by local actors within a an arena created by the Welsh Government.

Thus in England the abolition of regional institutions and the encouragement of city regions is not merely rescaling for competitiveness: instead it is a reflection of an "array of political forces both in and of space" (Bristow, 2012, p. 15). In the post-2010 period in England multiple narratives intertwine: competiveness narratives favour the city region while decentralisation and austerity agendas favour smaller more localised scales.

In Wales, where there has been much less emphasis on major institutional disruption and change driven by the Welsh Government when compared to England over the same period,

Bristow implies that the forces at work are primarily local actors. Yet the arena in which these actors and their emergent spaces and networks develop is one created by the Welsh Government; its interventions may be less dramatic and less frequent than in England, but while the nature of the influence is different the existence of the influence of the Welsh Government as an external actor is nonetheless real and present.

Similarly in the English instance the making and remaking of structures at the regional level should not disguise the process of 'emergence' of the city regions and sub-regions that had become the preferred focus of national government engagement. These 'new' subnational spaces are not just created from above, but also emerge from below, shaped not just by the new institutional geography created by the national government, one shorn of its regional layer, but also by previous and more long-standing sub-regional spaces, institutions and networks. The intentions and actions of the two national governments may be different, but both shape the context within which local actors exercise their own agency.

CONCLUSION

This chapter started by posing two questions: how does one define a region and its institutions; how do structure and agency interact when it comes to examining how actors and institutions influence one another?

As the discussion above makes clear, these two problems are difficult to resolve, and can be seen as inherently unresolvable. Nonetheless in order to have any meaningful approach to understanding spaces and their institutions of governance, it is necessary to arrive at theoretical compromises that are at the same time both sufficiently robust and sufficiently flexible.

In response to the first question, and the debates between territorial and relational conceptions of space, the notion of the assemblage that is made up of *both* territorial and relational elements overcomes the apparent ontological irreconcilability of the differing positions. Whether the regional or sub-regional assemblage is conceived of as a territorial entity 'pierced' by networks of relationships, or an amorphous and ever-changing web of relationships periodically 'fixed' by the territorial imperatives of administration and accountability, the result is much the same: a blended approach of the two.

The same assemblage also addresses the second question. If the sub-regional assemblage is made up of territorial and relational conceptions of space, it is just as much made up of actors and institutions. As Jessop's strategic-relational model describes, those actors have

agency which is shaped by the institutional situation in which they act, while that institutional situation is in turn shaped by the agency of the actors.

As Bristow highlights, "new and complex state spaces [are] emerging for local and regional economic development" (2012, p. 5) and these are increasingly both territorial and relational in form, "characterised by a developing imperative to manage the contradictions of earlier scalar configurations and policies". In other words, these are not simply a rescaling, but reflect a wide range of political forces stimulating more pluralistic and diverse 'region-building narratives'; these new complex state spaces are emerging from the interaction of a range of dynamic political forces, or narratives.

In some instances the dynamics are driven by the impact of external forces, in particular the 'reaching in' by national government described by Allen and Cochrane. Goodwin argues that the South-West region as a state space or collection of institutions was limited by its inability to reach out in turn beyond its own territorial limits – territorial limits established of course by the prior 'reaching in' of the national government in setting them in the first place – but nonetheless a degree of social construction was achieved that persists and shapes the post-2010 political and institutional landscape of the region.

However the network or lattice is conceived, whether the series of intersects described by Allen or Cochrane or Painter's product of networked flows and relational processes (Painter, 2010), the resulting assemblage is fluid, dynamic and unpredictable. Actors within and without have agency, but the intentions of their actions may vary considerably from the actual consequences of those actions. At the same time the history of previous structures, fixes and relationships shapes and influences the future structures and relationships within the assemblage.

It is these instances and areas of interaction –Jessop's 'strategic action' and 'strategically selective context' – that can give us a greater understanding of the forces at work within and without an institution, and how it changed and may continue to change. Assuming complexity and instability as inherent characteristics make the task of analysis challenging identifying what forces have acted, are acting and will act on the assemblage give a greater chance of understanding not just what it is, but what it was and what range of possibilities exist for its future.

The sub-regional institutions that form the basis for this study have elements of these different notions of space: a city-region based on local government boundaries is bounded and territorial; the web of relationships between social and political actors constructs a networked institution that cuts across and into territorial spaces; partnerships around travel to work areas or housing market areas define the centres of those areas with precision but can be vague about their extent. Therefore to understand the nature of sub-regional institutions means seeing them as combinations of three unstable and overlapping forms -

the network or assemblage (Allen and Cochrane, 2010); the 'fuzzy' or informal space (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2009); and the bounded space (Jones and Woods, 2013).

In a traditional model of territorial space, different spaces form neat and clearly defined borders between one another, and can be made to fit into hierarchical forms of scale. In an entirely networked concept of space, boundaries and scales break down completely and are rendered null and void (Allen, Cochrane and Massey, 1998; Massey, 2004; Oosterlynck, 2010; Bristow, 2012; Goodwin, 2013). Similarly a simplistic conception of the institution sees it as an arena which actors are either within or without, allowing little room for the impact of external forces except as a *deus ex machina*, or for actors to straddle boundaries or to be members of multiple institutions and possess multiple motivations. And at the other extreme, an entirely networked notion of actors linked through social relations breaks down the boundaries between institutions to such an extent it is difficult to differentiate between what is and what isn't included within it. Just as with networked spaces, the removal of institutional boundaries also removes the differentiation between internal and external.

The sub-regional bodies that are tasked with delivering strategic planning and economic development in England are a mixture of overlapping, potentially competing as well as collaborating, sub-regional governance institutions. These institutions are frequently made up of different combinations of the same actors, playing different roles according to the institution in which they sit (Cabinet Office and Deputy Prime Minister's Office, 2013; Deputy Prime Minister's Office and Cabinet Office, 2013; Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2014b; Herbert *et al.*, 2015).

The task therefore in examining these sub-regions is to decide whether these institutions are separate but overlapping and interacting, or part of a single assemblage of actors and resources. From this flows the conceptualising of internal and external, and in combination with the discussion on the relationship and balance between structure and agency, the role and importance of endogenous and exogenous forces for change.

The dynamics of change are fundamental to the understanding of sub-regional governance institutions, but so are the dynamics of stability. As already discussed regional institutions have been frequently disrupted and altered by the actions of national government. Assuming that these regional institutions are conceptualised as being related to but separate from the institutions of national governance, this disruptive change is largely exogenous.

On the other hand sub-regional institutions appear to follow a more evolutionary pattern, with a combination of persistence and gradual change. Partnerships between local authorities and local business and amenity groups in the present day can be seen in similar forms with different labels going back many years. Indeed there are parallels between some current City Deal partnerships and planning area collaborations and those covering roughly the same geographical areas in the 1930s.

The forces at work on sub-regional governance institutions appear therefore more subtle, and perhaps at least as much endogenous as exogenous. In aiming to understand these dynamics, an important line of enquiry is around whether the apparent persistence of particular forms of sub-regional institution is evidence of structural inertia, or whether conflicting forces interact to conserve the present shape of an institution as well as changing it. In other words, is change the only evidence of dynamics at work, or is stability just as much evidence of an ongoing but invisible set of offsetting forces?

Equally it is important to identify whether these forces are driven by the political strategies of the actors within the institution (Groenewegen, Berg and Spithoven, 2010), and whether the forces are the deliberate or accidental outcome of those strategies. Or is the dynamic derived from the strategies of external actors, and if so how is that change transmitted to the institution?

Embedded within these questions is the underlying one of structure and agency: to what extent, and by what means, do institutions constrain and shape the agency of actors, and to what extent in turn does the agency of those actors shape and form the structure of the institution.

The 'spatial turn' in geography and network theory explored in this chapter, and the attempts by Jessop and others to create approaches that retained theoretical concepts of both territorial and relational approaches (Soja, 1989; Allen, Cochrane and Massey, 1998; Jessop, Brenner and Jones, 2008; Harrison, 2013), provides the theoretical underpinning for understanding and theorising sub-regional governance. The challenge is to develop a theoretical framework to translate that underpinning into practice.

Just as an image of an object in mid-air tells the observer a great deal about the current physical form of the object but nothing about its previous and future forms or its direction of travel, a descriptive approach to organisational institutions tells the researcher very little about how that institution came into being, what shaped its form and what its future trajectory and shape might be.

Thus it is essential to understand the dynamics of institutions to get a fuller understanding of the institutions themselves. As well as asking what a particular institution is, it is important to understand how it was created, by what or by whom, what factors influenced, limited or shaped that creation, and how it is currently evolving and changing. Moreover, these dynamics also play out in the other direction, with the institutions in turn influencing and shaping the agency of the actors working within them.

INSTITUTIONAL DYNAMICS: STABILITY AND CHANGE

The notion of structures and institutions as mutable and fluid poses challenges, in particular the need to understand the processes and flows of change as being difficult, unpredictable and complex (Hay, 2002). It is easier to assume stability, with continuity of structures, or progressive stages of inevitable development whether the classical Marxist historical materialism or the Spencerian model of social evolution.

An acceptance of change and a rejection of deterministic models of it is of course essential for those with a normative approach: whether one believes that change for the better is possible and should be pursued, or that change for the worse is possible and should be prevented, both the progressive and conservative normative positions have the same underlying belief. For Hay (2002, p. 143) this implies that "behaviours, practices, processes, institutions and structures…are not trans-historic givens transmitted from the past and bequeathed to the future, but are, instead, fluid, dynamic and ever-changing."

The nature of this change is also subject to debate with revolutionary and evolutionary views contrasted, the former seeing sudden bursts of disruptive energy with stasis in between, the latter a smoother progression towards a specific end point. For example institutionalism, in both its traditional form and the more recent historic variant, emphasised the normalising tendency of the existing institutional fabric in constraining choices and shaping the logics of behaviour within that fabric, an approach that therefore

privileges the constraints of path dependency, and which therefore relies on a crisis – internal or external – to account for change (Peters, 2005).

Much as Kuhn's concept of 'paradigm shift' in the development of scientific ideas (Kuhn, 1962) suggested a synthesis between evolution and revolution, so 'punctuated equilibrium' (Krasner, 1984) – adopted from theories of evolutionary biology developed in the 1970s – formed a more nuanced model for seeing institutional development, with bursts of significant or revolutionary change at times of crisis, interpolated by periods of evolutionary stasis where change was minimal or even non-existent. As developed by institutional theorists, the crisis can be internally or externally driven. An external crisis might be a dramatic or sudden change to the environment within which the institution exists (the parallels with evolutionary biology are clear), while an internal crisis might be a policy response to a gradual loss of institutional coherence or legitimacy (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993; Peters, 2005; Lemprière, 2016).

Allen and Cochrane's study of regions in London and the South East proposed that new networked configurations are made up of fragments of inherited structure and institution, new economic elements, mixtures of public and private, operating in temporary arrangements and at different paces, creating something that is inherently unstable: "In short, a mix of time-spaces embedded in the practices of the different actors involved— from state agencies and jurisdictional authorities to global firms and supranational institutions—may work to disassemble and reassemble 'national regional' or 'global regional' political spaces." (Allen and Cochrane, 2010, p. 1078)

While the assemblage in this conception is open to disruption, for example by the 'reaching in' of national state institutions to alter regional institutional structures and bodies, its inbuilt instability means that change is not just likely but part of its very nature. As Allen and Cochrane suggest, the different rhythms and paces of various actors mean that a network at a given time will inevitably be different from that which has gone before and that which follows.

Moreover, Allen and Cochrane's model suggests a complex relationship between cause and effect. They describe the 'unintended consequences' of government action, where the disruption of the network by external intervention into the network creates, necessarily because new actors are being added to the assemblage, new relationships and linkages that both in themselves alter the existing structure and create the potential for further alteration by exposing the intervening actor to new pressures and forces.

In other words, this intervention from outside "…open[s] up that authority to negotiation and displacement because all of the governing agencies are more or less present through distanciated relationships, direct ties and real-time connections. [It]… provides a context within which negotiations may be brokered directly…" (Allen and Cochrane, 2010, p. 1074). Both existing and successor actors are changed by the social relations between them.

Hay, in summarising his description of change, proposes that it is a combination of structural (access to knowledge, external events, resource limitations), agential (abilities and intentions of actors, the transformational impact of those actors) and ideational (the mediating role of ideas) factors. As Allen and Cochrane observe, the intentions of actors might not be congruent with their abilities, and the transformational impact may be very different from what was intended. But, building on Hacking's (1999) observation that things that are socially constructed tend to be considered as normatively bad and as contingent (in other words they need not have existed and would be better done away with), it is clear that even if the result is not what was intended, the agency of actors is key to social construction.

In the instance of English regional and sub-regional institutions, it is possible to see elements of each of these different notions of dynamics and change. Regional institutions have been subjected to regular revolutionary change through the repeated intervention of national government to make and unmake. By contrast, sub-regional institutions and workings have tended to evolve more gradually through the shaping processes of their own performance, with external forces in the form of national government policy and funding priorities shaping the form and tempo of that evolution intermittently and unpredictably.

Theoretical approaches to institutions have moved in and out of favour within academic discourse, and one reason for the decline in popularity of institutionalism in the second half of the twentieth century in the face of the twin challenges of behaviouralism and rational choice approaches to theorising political processes was the failure of traditional institutionalism to have a robust explanation for change.

However recent developments in both developing new institutionalist models and synthesising those approaches into what has been described as a third phase of institutionalist thought (Lowndes and Roberts, 2013) have brought dynamics firmly into the foreground of institutionalist theory. This new tool for conceptualising change, with a lexicon of terms to describe the processes of that change, offers the components for a framework through which to examine the evolution and development of the institutions and mechanisms of governance in sub-regional planning in East Anglia.

THIRD WAVE INSTITUTIONALISM

In many ways classical or 'old' institutionalism was synonymous with the study of politics and government as the discipline first developed. Early political science, perhaps best exemplified by Woodrow Wilson's *The State* (1890), developed from a legalistic tradition

and tended to be both descriptive and to assume values were embedded in the form of the state.

Because it set out to describe them, it inevitably emphasised the importance of structures to the exclusion of the individual, and concentrated on the formal aspects of the system - parliaments, executives, electoral systems and so forth – while ignoring or underplaying the informal, holistic, historicist (in the sense of looking for reasons for current political practice in the 'historical culture' and development of a particular state), and highly normative (Peters, 2005).

Criticism of all of these features of institutional approaches to political science grew, and by the 1950s and 1960s they had largely been superseded by behaviouralism and by rational choice theory, which took its cue from economics (Downs, 1957). Behaviouralists took issue with that they saw as the structural determinism of traditional institutionalism, while rational choice models aimed – among other things - to remove the normative assumptions inherent in previous approaches.

While some of the accusations laid at the door of classical institutionalism were unfair – "straw men" as one scholar put it (Rhodes, 1995) – studies like Finer's (1932) examination of the informal rules that ran alongside formal written constitutions were exceptions to the norm. Institutionalism in its traditional form gave little room for actors with agency, and over emphasised the role of structures; in doing so there was very little space for institutional change, whether evolutionary or revolutionary, unless brought about by some huge external shock such as natural disaster or war.

These classical approaches to politics, institutions and governance were overtaken by behaviouralist and rational choice models, but there were weaknesses with these new paradigms just as there had been with the old. While classical institutionalism had privileged structure over the individual and had thus all but removed the scope for individual agency, behaviouralist approaches risked doing the opposite. Individuals were theorised as shaping the structures within which they acted, but there was little scope for the opposite effect: causality had in effect become a one-way street where the flow of traffic had been reversed (Peters, 2005).

Rational choice, with its emphasis on 'black box' models of preference for individual utility, offered powerful new ways of examining how actors might express their agency, but it ran the risk of reducing that agency to the simple expression of pre-ordained preferences, which is barely agential at all. Similarly, structures tended to be theorised as being the aggregation of individual preferences rather than a separate entity with agential shaping powers of its own. Taken together, these two problems combined to make another: individual actors are members of many different groups – family, church, work place, social groups and so on – and may both have and express through actions different individual preferences as a member of each (Peters, 2005; Lowndes and Roberts, 2013).

In a seminal article, March and Olsen (1984) argued for a restoration of some aspects of an institutional approach to correct the weaknesses in behaviouralism and rational choice approaches, especially the loss of the normative element of institutionalism that had been cast aside in the search for empiricist models of politics. They were explicit that this was a 'new institutionalism', not a return to the highly structural approaches of the past. Nonetheless their critique was wide-ranging.

Specifically March and Olsen considered that the reduction of collective behaviour to the aggregation of individual behaviours failed to take account of the importance of organisations and their norms, values and rules in shaping individual preferences and behaviour – what they went on to term 'logics of appropriateness' (March and Olsen, 1989). In a similar vein, they also claimed that outcome had been privileged over process, and that in doing so the importance of symbols, values, ritual and ceremony had been excluded.

They argued that the reduction of decisions to individual self-interest ignored broader values; they also noted that 'self-interest' was so conceptually vague as to be virtually meaningless. March and Olsen also challenged the notion of tendency towards equilibrium that was implicit in rational choice assumptions of behaviour (for example political parties in a two party system would tend to move towards an equilibrium point in formulating policies where the individual preferences of the greatest number of voters would be met, implying that eventually both parties would occupy the same place on the spectrum), arguing that instead change was much less smooth and much more unpredictable.

The importance of March and Olsen's contribution was to 'bring back in' the state to the understanding of politics. Their argument was that rather than only the individual being shaped by the state – as classical institutional models had argued – or only vice versa as they argued that behaviouralism implied, actors and institutions influenced and shaped each other in a process of co-constitution.

March and Olsen's approach came from a sociological tradition, drawing on concepts from pioneers of that discipline such as Weber (cultural rules) and Durkheim (symbols), but generated a wide range of responses that attempted to fit structures into theories of politics. The resulting plethora of 'institutionalisms' ranged from historical to rational choice, from empirical and internationalist, formed a second phase of institutionalism (Peters, 2005; Lowndes and Roberts, 2013) marked by intellectual ferment and theoretical innovation.

As with Schumpeter's theory of innovation cycles, periods of innovation are followed by consolidation and maturity, and Lowndes and Roberts (2013) have proposed that the innovative wildcatting of the second phase of institutionalism has now been replaced by a consolidated and synergistic third phase.

Lowndes and Roberts conclude that the many different institutionalisms of the second phase can be summarised as belonging to three groups, each with their own characteristics: sociological, historical and rational choice. The third phase of institutionalism is defined by the gradual coming together – albeit a coming together that is ongoing, incomplete and contested - of these different institutionalisms to form a theoretically coherent approach to analysing and assessing political structures and actors.

The sociological approach to institutionalism emerges from organisation theory, and posits that institutions constrain or offer opportunities to actors (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991a; DiMaggio and Powell, 1991b). Actors follow 'logics of appropriateness', even though those actors don't necessarily know or understand where those logics are derived from: they are driven by "obligations…encapsulated in a …community or group, and the ethos, practices and expectations of its institutions" (March and Olsen, 2004, p. 2). Institutions, which are interconnected through a multiplicity of links and overlaps, are expressions of 'power settlements', and subject to agential resistance and defence (Lowndes and Roberts, 2013).

Thus the process of institutionalism is ongoing, with agency heavily context dependent, and outcomes that are 'recombinant' (Crouch, 2005) rather than revolutionary. In a sociological model of institutionalism research looks for subtle processes and dynamics, including long-time-frame analysis.

Rational choice institutionalism, in avoiding some of the more reductive tendencies of the original rational choice theory itself, offers examples of groups of individual actors co-operating to create complex rule systems that formed an institution. For example studies by Ostrom (2007) showed that in small 'common resource pools' individuals co-operated in complex ways not easily predicted by simplistic models; instead these groups devised more sophisticated rules that preserved scarce resources in ways that simple models emphasising individual utility maximisation did not predict.

The final strand of second phase institutionalism, historic institutionalism, tended to focus on 'grand scale', long-term, analysis. Arising in part from attempts to develop and critique classic Marxism, historical institutionalism incorporated cultural (Gramscian) and 'calculus' (or 'rational') perspectives to explain apparent issues with the smooth progression of historical materialism, such as the persistence and divergence of capitalist models, apparently irrational choices by actors and so on.

The historical institutionalist approach emphasises the constraining power of structure on agency, or path dependency. While this is good at explaining persistence and continuity, it is less adequate at conceptualising change, and so the approach tends to rely on concepts like punctuated equilibrium (Krasner, 1984 and then others) and external shocks, thus reducing the agency of endogenous actors to create and generate change.

These three approaches to institutionalism, Lowndes and Roberts argue, have considerable overlaps and convergence, and through that process of overlap and convergence, form a new 'mature stage' third phase of institutionalism, which draws on principles and themes from all three. Lowndes and Roberts identify a number of defining threads which combine to mark out this third phase approach: a mixture of formal and informal; a theoretical openness to change as well as stability; a normative approach rooted in conceptions of power inequality; a flexibility about levels of granularity; a co-constitutive model of structure and agency.

A criticism of classical institutionalism was that it was wholly focused on formal institutions; this ignores informal institutions, and moreover defines an institution too narrowly as something that is formally defined. Drawing on discourse theory and notions of narrative Lowndes and Roberts identify in third phase institutionalism "…the existence of, and interaction between, three different modes of constraint – rules, practices and narratives" (2013, p. 41); in other words, the formal rules or constitution of the institution, the way in which things are done, and the way in which things are talked about as being done (Feldman, 2004; Jackson, 2006; Jessop, 2010).

This is an area where the apparent ontological incompatibilities between different second phase approaches become less daunting than they at first appear because of the importance of considering the wide range of motivations and behaviour shaping effects on an individual actor, and the resulting complexity of forces at work. As Lowndes and Roberts put it, the task is "…to better understand how these distinctive modes of constraint interrelate in practice, and to establish what this means for ongoing processes of institutional change and prospects for institutional resistance and reform." (2013, p. 50)

Another criticism of earlier work on institutions was that in seeking to define them, 'stability' was used as a characteristic; taken to its logical extreme, this becomes near-tautological and discounts the possibility of change at all. Therefore the third phase approach to institutionalism seeks to understand the processes by which institutions achieve stability, because the same processes should also offer insights into the capacity for and constrains to achieving change.

Streek (2001) suggests that institutions are in a continual state of slow flux in response to 'disorganising forces' and therefore possess only conditional stability. Lowndes and Roberts (2013) suggest that the interconnectedness of institutions within an 'institutional environment' or what March and Olsen (1989, p. 16) termed "islands of imperfect and temporary organization in potentially inchoate political worlds" means that a change somewhere within that network can be transmitted through to other institutions. This echoes the discussion of broader networks of power relations postulated by Paasi (2010, p. 2298): "the agency and power relations involved in the construction of a region extend both inside and outside the regional process".

One of March and Olsen's primary objectives in challenging rational choice and behaviouralist theories of politics was to reintroduce the notion of the engaged political scholar rather than disinterested political scientist, and this normative thread forms a critical part of third phase institutionalism. What has changed is that while traditional institutionalism appeared to have a normative interest in stability and 'good governance', the converged approach here allows for and encourages engagement by scholars in key issues of power imbalance and inequity.

While historical institutionalism could be criticised for losing finer detail by focussing on the grand sweep of history and place, the convergence with sociological and rational choice models brings a greater appreciations of granularity. This allows for example for the study of the gaps between rules and actual behaviour, and between practice and narrative, where institutions are shaped by dissent and deviant (in the terms of adherence to the formal rules of the institution) behaviour (Goodin, 1996; Orren, 2002).

This notion of shaping through non-compliance or resistance highlights the difference between agency and power, between the freedom to try to effect change and the capacity to do it. As Streek and Thelen (2005) note, power mostly resides with 'rule makers', but subordinate 'rule takers' have the power to resist, adapt, deflect and otherwise adjust rules and in particular practices and narratives to their own ends; unlike the analysis of the elite theorists of the 1960s, power is dispersed, albeit unevenly. What is critical is that institutions are means for the distribution of power, and that they are therefore contested.

One of the criticisms of all three strands of second phase institutionalism was that in each agency could be seen to be down-played, whether by cultural norms, the limited agency of self-interest maximisation or by the constraints of path dependency. Taking a lead from Jessop's strategic relational approach, in third phase institutionalism the structures or institutions are both determinant and contingent, while actors are reflexive and strategic; they are, in other words, mutually constitutive of one another.

Further, the conceptualising of the institution sitting within a network or environment of other structures helps to resolve the challenges of exogenous and endogenous forces for change, not least when the structures in the network overlap with one another. Instead of forces of external change being entirely outside the theory and thus not needing explanation change can be traced through the network to external but linked actors or institutions. The similarity with Allen and Cochrane's 'reaching in' concept is clear (Allen and Cochrane, 2010).

Change in institutional approaches could be characterised as either poorly theorised, or overly reliant on external agency. Path dependency and punctuated equilibrium both emphasise internal forces that tended towards stability, and portray change is disruptive and exogenous (the most popular example of path dependency is the QWERTY keyboard, invented for the typewriter to stop keys sticking together but now embedded as the English language keyboard for electronic devices because the cost of change is too great, despite the proven inefficiencies of the layout: the significance of this example is that it is one where change has not happened and seems very unlikely to happen, suggesting that the path dependency model is better at theorising stability rather than change).

Some sociological institutionalist models, taking their lead from Spencerian models of evolution, saw change as gradual and incremental, but with agency heavily constrained by the imperatives of the institutional environment (Pierson, 2004). An example of this from organisation theory is the mimetic process whereby organisations tend to fit new problems into pre-existing solutions that have worked in the past, thus creating institutions and processes that end up very similar to one another (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991b).

Streek and Thelen (Streek and Thelen, 2005; Thelen, 2009) argue that that the 'shock' model is misleading and incomplete, and that transformational change can be a continuous and gradual process. Instead of exogenous environmental forces causing a revolutionary change, or endogenous strains triggering a moment of crisis, change comes from gradual layering and adjustment.

The basis of Thelen and Streek's approach is an understanding that institutions are a means to 'instantiate power' and are thus contested, and this process of constant contestation impacts on the institution itself. The strategic acts of conscious and agential actors bring about gradual, but substantial, change for their own ends. Thelen and Streek proposed a new lexicon of terms to describe the dynamics of this process: displacement, layering, drift, conversion and exhaustion.

The process of displacement is the activation of a new or existing (thus reactivation) institution that displaces the current one. The model of institutions existing within a complex matrix of interlinked bodies allows enterprising actors to 'cultivate' (Streek and Thelen, 2005) alternative institutions within the matrix. The (almost certainly apocryphal) advice given to a new Vice-Chancellor at the University of Oxford makes the point: 'if a committee makes a decision you disagree with, go and find another committee to make the opposite decision.'

Where the abolition of an institution is impossible, new and amended forms of that institution are created by layering, to the point that in time the new form 'crowds out' the old. Just as stability takes conscious effort, so might the process of neglect: drift is the intentional or unintentional neglect of institutions, allowing them to decay. Wholly intentional is conversion, the deliberate reorienting of existing institutions to new goals, while exhaustion describes the breakdown of institutions over time because of diminishing returns, age, or previous acts by the institution that have 'sowed the seeds of its own destruction'. All of these various processes are gradual, derive either intentionally or unintentionally from the strategic actions of agential actors, and have the potential over time to bring about substantial or transformative change to an institution.

As Jessop's strategic relational approach makes clear, institutions and their configurations are embodiments of power relationships and ongoing contestation. Actors, institutions and network or environment within which they sit are interwoven and thus interdependent. As Lowndes and Roberts note, "The form that institutions take depends critically upon the creative work of reflexive actors" (2013, p155), and it also depends on the degree to which they are constrained.

Crouch and Farrell (2004, p. 33) described a similar process to Thelen's layering in the "the entrepreneurial discovery of concealed, unacknowledged, or surprising potentialities of the available institutional repertoire", a process that Lanzara (1998, borrowing the concept from Levi-Strauss) termed 'bricolage', or the construction of something with the materials to hand.

Lanzara's description of bricolage emphasised both the use of existing resources and the gradual, or 'tinkering', nature of the process itself: "Seldom are institutions created from scratch. Most often they are the outcomes of the recombination and reshuffling of pre-existing available components or other institutional materials that happen to be at hand and that, even when depleted, can serve new purposes. Institution building processes and activities display a great deal of tinkering or bricolage" (Lanzara, 1998, p. 27).

This constant making and remaking of the existing institutional structures (Lemprière, 2016), using materials that are already there, might be the only means of designing new institutions in heavily path dependent situations, and where resources, trust and a desire to take risks are lacking or where institutional networks are so entangled and overlapping as to severely constrain options (Lanzara, 1998).

Entrepreneurial bricolage encompasses four key dynamics: remembering, borrowing, sharing and forgetting. Each of these dynamics again emphasises the role of the agential actor, that critical issue for third wave institutionalism, and at the same time the importance of endogenous drivers of change (Lowndes and Roberts, 2013).

Institutional 'remembering' is the reactivation of redundant or latent resources for new purposes (Crouch and Farrell, 2004), or a searching through past repertoires (Lowndes, 2005). A particularly useful approach might be in path dependency models, where remembering can mean the recollection of paths that could have been taken, but weren't. Thelen (2009) describes a similar process of reinterpretation or reuse of existing institutions for new ends; there is a similarity with the process of displacement described by Streek and Thelen (Streek and Thelen, 2005).

In an environment of networked institutions, where actors have a multiplicity of institutional membership and loyalties, a single actor has the potential to transfer resources from one context to another in a process of 'borrowing'. These 'boundary spanners' (Williams, 2002) can thus bring a particular strategy or institutional form from one context and apply it to another.

While the transferring of resources by a single actor in multiple institutions is borrowing, the process of resource transferral between different actors across the network of institutions is one of 'sharing'. This dynamic in particular raises significant challenges to the third phase institutionalist division between actors, institution and environment, since it relies on there being a meaningful divide between the institution and the networked environment within which that institution sits.

Just as territorial boundaries are contested, and that contestation is both a political act and one that creates and shapes those boundaries (Paasi, 2010), so the divide between the institution and its environment is contested and political (Mouffe, 2000). Thus any sharing of resources and strategies across these institutional boundaries is an inherently political act.

These three processes of remembering, borrowing and sharing are collectively equivalent to Thelen's 'institutional layering'. Using a simple spatial-temporal analogy, remembering is reaching backwards in time, borrowing reaches sideways and sharing reaches outwards (Lemprière, 2016).

The process of forgetting is the strategic withdrawal of support for and maintenance of existing institutions. There is an equivalence with Streek and Thelen's (2005) 'drift', but the emphasis here is on intentional neglect. The strength of the 'forgetting' dynamic in analysis is that it highlights two important aspects of institutions: on the one hand they require ongoing active maintenance in the face of both endogenous and exogenous pressures, but on the other hand the deeply embedded nature of practice and narrative as forms of constraint means that to fully get rid of an institution has to be an active rather than a passive process.

These models provide a range of ways to understand the process of gradual institutional change, and the importance of endogenous agential action to that change, whether the

change was an intended outcome or not. This is not to discount the importance of exogenous change – it has been of course a key factor in the context of regional and sub-regional government in England, and history shows that repeated changes of government have brought about repeated and revolutionary changes to the formal institutions of regional governance in particular – but the inclusion of change that is gradual, endogenous or both makes for a more subtle and meaningful theoretical approach that does not limit agency to external actors.

Moreover the linking together of a series of institutions within a networked environment means that it is possible to trace the dynamics of more gradual evolutionary change through both exogenous and endogenous forces. For example Stoker (2002) suggested that the early New Labour approach to sub-national governance was one of deliberate 'non-design', which aimed to destabilize existing institutions without favouring any specific new design, a political strategy derived from a desire not to 'pick winners' among competing members of a disparate support coalition.

The result was a mixture of punctuated and evolutionary change: Government action created or abolished some institutions of governance, but its gradual shift in emphasis away from innovation and towards targets and quantifiable performance metrics also led to gradual changes in institutional behaviours – the practice of those institutions in other words - and thus the institutions themselves. It is therefore possible to trace New Labour's policies as they impact both at different tempos and as direct and indirect influences on the institutions of regional and sub-regional governance.

Similarly, by assessing this period using the three 'modes of constraint' identified by Lowndes and Roberts - rules, practices, narratives – it is clear how a model that allows for both structure and agency, both exogenous and endogenous driven change and both punctuated and gradual change can be developed (2013).

Exogenous change, or the altering of powers and responsibilities by the Government through legislation and regulation, had an immediate punctuated impact on the 'rules' of the institutions of sub-national governance. While a classical institutional analysis would stop there, and assume that changed rules would lead automatically to changed behaviour (the essential premise behind the imposition of particular forms of parliamentary and presidential governance on newly independent colonies), greater nuance comes from examining how – and indeed whether – the practices and narratives of the institution changed as well, and how the three modes of constraint interacted during a period of gradual adjustment and change.

Another significant challenge in bringing together different approaches to institutionalist theory is the range of spatial and temporal scales from which those approaches are drawn (Sassen, 2006). Those built on rational choice theory tend to operate at the individual and immediate scales, those taking a sociological basis run across wide ranges of activities, while

historical institutional theory as the name suggests analyses trends across significant periods of time.

Thus the 'third wave' approach to institutional theory that takes into account each of these traditions or strands must have scope within it to allow for this range of spatial and temporal scales, and in particular for the focus of analysis to fall on particular points on those scales without losing sight of the scales themselves. The particular focus of this research is on the local institutional context in three English sub-regional case studies, but it is important to see that context within the wider institutional environment, and to give appropriate weight to both the immediate context for study and that wider environment.

THEORISING THE INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT OF ENGLISH REGIONS AND SUB-REGIONS

In geo-political terms, the wider institutional environment of the UK, and in particular of England, provides a very specific form of institutional model. The lack of written constitution and a consequent ability to absorb rather than be fundamentally altered by major external pressures, and forms of political culture and behaviours that have been largely consistent over extremely long temporal scales, point to an institutional arrangement at a national level where change occurs at a tectonic rate, and therefore one where temporal scales operate over very prolonged periods.

The impact of this persistence of institutional arrangements can perhaps be best observed at the scale of this study by the continued existence of geographically defined institutions – counties – whose form and boundaries were largely laid down by Anglo-Saxon proto-states at a time closer to the Roman Conquest than the present day. Of greater relevance is a preference for centralised top-down approaches to governance that is almost as old, where the English government has always tended to conceive of the local and regional institutions of governance as being the local branch offices of the national state.

Operating at the same geographic but a different temporal scale are the various shifts of national political-economic strategy, usually indicated by changes not just in Government at elections, but by more fundamental changes in the underlying philosophy of government in the UK. In the post-war period, the elections of 1945, 1979 and 1997 are clear markers of such fundamental shifts, and in due course the election of 2010 – or the impact of the financial crisis of 2008 or the Covid pandemic of 2020 – might be seen as other such events.

These punctuated and periodic shifts, operating at a temporal scale roughly equivalent to 'generations', are much discussed in analyses of governance and institutions at a national level, but also have impacts at sub-regional institutional levels. While the periods between

them were ones of gradual change and institutional stasis rather than innovation, each of the three 'generation-defining' elections of 1945, 1979 and 1997 marked a juncture between one broad approach and another, at which point local institutions and local actors behaving as institutional entrepreneurs had the opportunity to take – or make – new paths.

The extent to which they did so was shaped and constrained by the 'tectonic' institutions of national political culture that operated through and beneath these 'generational' periods, and also by the local institutional context that is the subject of this study. As has been widely discussed (Davies, 2005; Nurse, 2015; Gardner, 2016) the UK has had a highly centralised state structure, something that has barely changed even at points of significant change in the professed approach to regionalism and devolution by national Governments.

Perhaps best typified by the apocryphal line (probably falsely) attributed to Nye Bevan that 'the sound of a dropped bedpan in Tredegar Hospital should reverberate round the Palace of Westminster', the ongoing tension between devolution and accountability of governance has in the British context usually been resolved by a retention of central control, with regional and local structures being seen as the delivery arms of Government rather than autonomous entities with their own legitimacy.

This historical state ideology and political culture is one that has shown very little change over a prolonged period, even when strategic approaches have changed. A good example of this is post-1997 devolved administrations in Northern Ireland, Wales and in particular in Scotland. The Scottish Government, once established following the New Labour government's election and delivery of the manifesto promise to create it, has quite clearly established a significant degree of autonomy from the UK Government, to the point where the long-term political project of Scottish nationalists to separate Scotland entirely from the UK seems closer than ever to being realised. However the underlying and unchanging centripetal tendency of the British state appears to have been transferred to a new arena, with power increasingly concentrated away from local governance structures to Edinburgh instead of to London (Thomson, Mawdsley and Payne, 2014). This tendency to centralisation, which can also been seen to a lesser extent in Northern Ireland and Wales under the devolved administrations, appears to be a fundamental, influential and permanent influence in the shaping of governance institutions in the UK (Quinlivan, 2014; OECD, 2020).

The examples of Scotland and English regionalism after 1997 then shows how two different forces can be at work at the simultaneously, but lead to different outcomes, suggesting other underlying factors that need to be accounted for. The New Labour government was committed to devolution in both Scotland and England, and the scale of their victory in 1997 provided a mandate and sufficient political momentum to attempt to deliver on that commitment. The underlying national political culture of a strong tendency towards centralised governance structures acted as a countervailing force, and the results – a

devolved governance structure in Scotland with a strongly centralising culture of its own, and the failure to establish any English devolved structures outside London, suggests the existence of a third underlying factor, that of a local institutional and historical context that might provide a more or less fertile ground for the establishment – or re-establishment – of governance structures that would prove durable.

While outside the detailed purpose of this research project, it would be in keeping with the ontological and epistemological assumptions of Bhaskar's critical realist approach with its three layers of reality – the Empirical, the Actual, the Real (Bhaskar, 1979) – to posit that the observable or empirical outcomes of the New Labour devolution project in Scotland, London and in the rest of England outside London point therefore to the existence of, and interaction of, three underlying or actual forces: an historic national political culture of power centralisation; a particular strategic moment brought about in part by the election of a new government (although it could be argued that the causality there was equally the other way round); and a locally specific context in London and Scotland of previous devolved or independent governance institutions whose reinstatement was widely supported, and an absence of a similar context in the rest of England.

Such a model might explain, therefore, that the strategic moment and the locally specific context were both individually necessary but only sufficient together to allow for the creation of new devolved institutions in the face of the countervailing direction of the longstanding tendency to centralise power, and that the impact of this third factor can be seen both in the failure of devolution to regions in England outside London and in the highly centralised nature of the devolved Scottish state. Each of these underlying tendencies on their own might provide part of an explanatory mechanism for what can be observed over time, but considered together they provide a more complete model.

However while more complete this explanatory mechanism still lacks a sufficient account of the impact of strategic actors responding to the range of opportunities and constraints that exist and evolve over time. For example, the example of Scotland shows that the original New Labour objective of closing off debate over Scotland's position within the UK through the creation of the Scottish Parliament has proved entirely misplaced, something which could be explained by adding to the model the impact of the strategic choices made and followed by different actors, both the national actors in the New Labour government in Westminster and the nationalists of the SNP in Edinburgh within the new opportunities created by the new governance institutions. This allows for the addition of the consequences of actions, both the unintended consequences of the actions of one group of actors and the intended consequences of the actions of another group.

This then is a fourth force to account for, often but not always operating over a shorter timescale than the more longer-term forces of political culture and local context for example, but still interacting with, shaping and in turn being shaped by them. And finally as

well as these 'strategic' level actions by agential actors there is an additional, 'tactical', level to account for, as actors pursue their strategies at a day to day level, a level that potentially has an increasing importance as a result of the intensity of modern modes of information dissemination around social media.

ACTORS, INSTITUTIONS, STRATEGIES, CONSTRAINTS

The convergence of different strands of institutionalist theory around critical concepts and questions creates both a robust lens through which to assess not just the nature of institutions and their governance, but also how and why they change.

Taken from Jessop is the notion that actors and their institutions are mutually constitutive. This not only provides a theoretical space for both structure and agency, it implies a dynamic rather than a static process: while institutions have the appearance of stability, that stability is not inherent but as the result of contestation where the 'winners' are those whose strategic ends are best served by that stability.

Institutions are a means for the distribution of power, and are therefore inevitably the location of conflict, a conflict which seeks not just to alter that distribution of power within the institution but to change the institution itself. But as the co-constitutive approach makes clear, institutions are not neutral spaces within which political conflict is played out.

Institutions constrain the actors within them, through the modes of constraint identified by Lowndes and Roberts – rules, practice and narrative. Those modes of constraint are applied in a way to privilege some actors or groups as opposed to others, and thus simultaneously empower those privileged groups at the same time as they constrain those groups not privileged. Political action and resistance empowers, so that the act of resistance to constraint itself serves to empower those who are unprivileged.

Because institutions and actors are mutually constitutive, and because change to the different modes of constraint can and does happen at different tempos and to different extents, change is more complex and untidy than models of punctuated equilibrium or social evolution suggest. Change can be sudden, and it can be gradual, and both can be equally transformative as well as occurring simultaneously. Different forces can be operating in different directions, meaning that apparent stasis might be hiding offsetting tendencies which might only become apparent when one is removed or weakens.

Setting institutions within a networked environment of other actors and institutions both better reflects the complexity and untidiness of real life, and draws together the different strands of the disputes over spatial and relational institutions. This interconnectedness

between actors and institutions allow for a wide variety of institutional forms and arrangements.

Granting agency to actors within the institutional structure of this sort gives space for both exogenous and endogenous change. The process of gradual endogenous change in particular is enabled – through layering or bricolage – through the agency of conscious actors. While consequences of strategic or tactical choices can be intended or unintended, for agency to be meaningful those consequences must have the potential to be different depending on the choices made by those actors; agency cannot have a single form or a single consequence, but a range of each.

This poses a significant challenge to developing a theoretical framework, but not an insurmountable one. The requirement is to take the plethora of different strategic and tactical objectives of each individual actor operating within and through a particular institutional structure, and from it to draw out a set of objectives that are predominant. These objectives do not have to be common to every actor – indeed that would be an impossibility in anything but the most simple institution – and each actor can be pursuing multiple and sometimes contradictory objectives in the same or multiple institutions.

As well as the task being to identify objectives that are predominant among actors it is also important to try to differentiate between strategic and tactical objectives. These are not mutually exclusive – a tactical decision taken for short-term reasons can have profound if unintended strategic consequences (an example that has been widely suggested is David Cameron's decision to hold a referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union largely for internal party management reasons) – but in general terms those objectives which are pursued consistently *over* time can be separated from those pursued for a brief moment *in* time.

A theoretical framework that accounts for structure and agency, for the potential for mutually reflective change of both institutions and actors, must therefore include institutions and their modes of constraint and actors and a range of their strategic objectives before attempting to draw conclusions about how they might interact.

DEVELOPING THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Within the institutional environment of sub-regional governance structures it is possible to identify different forms of institution, which could be categorised along an axis between formality and informality. For example, a formally established Combined Authority or

Regional Assembly might sit at one end of this potential spectrum, with an ad hoc 'Chatham House rules' grouping at the other, with regular shared meetings somewhere in between.

While such an approach has inherent challenges – defining what an institution is is already problematic so any categorisation of institutions in this way opens up a further layer of difficulty – it does allow for analysis of particular, punctuated, forms of change.

For example, a simple conception of institutional development over time might start from an informal institution, move from that to a semi-formal stage – perhaps with the establishment of tacitly agreed rules of conduct for actors working within that institution – and then finally moving to a formal model, where the tacitly agreed rules are codified into a written constitution or standing orders.

The points of transition, from one institutional form to another, could then be considered as examples of punctuated change, and be the subjects of analysis. A change from one form to another is a point where there is a risk or potential for failure; an institution that has been successful with an informal structure may have worked well for the actors operating within it precisely because of that informality, and may therefore prove to be unsustainable in its new form.

Figure i – Transition Points Between Institutional Forms (x-axis is time)
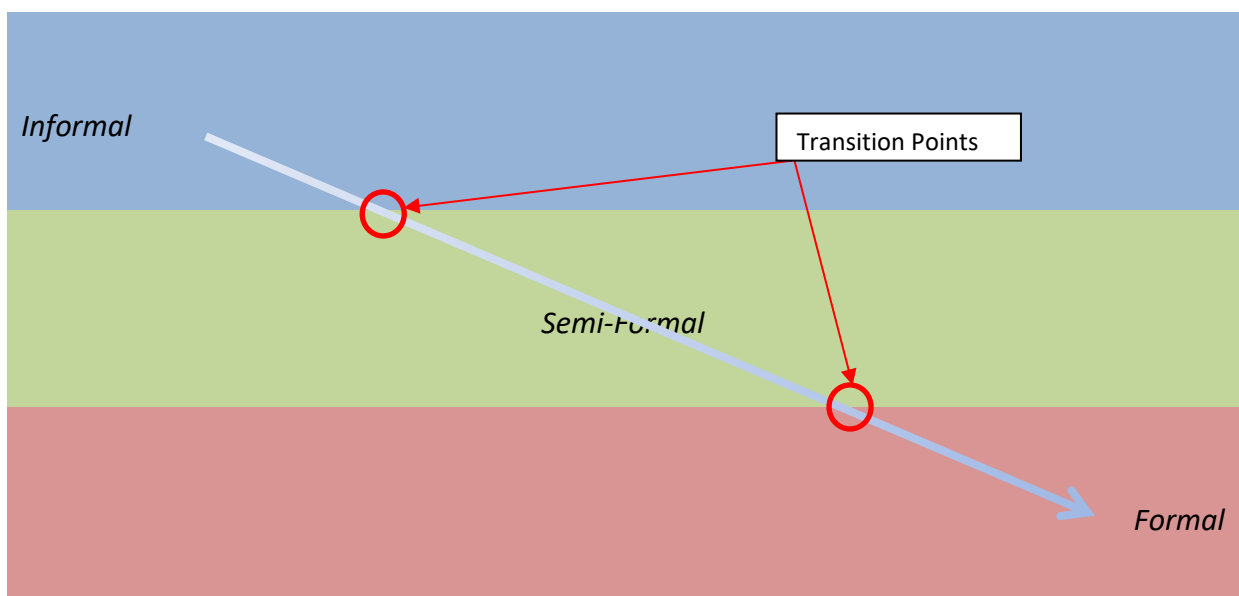
However, a model that assumed this sort of linear progression (*figure i*) in one direction only from informal to formal forms of institution with clear cut points of transition, would be over-simplistic.

First, as noted already, categorising institutions in this way is problematic. While it would be possible to identify with reasonable certainty institutions whose characteristics are

predominantly either formal or informal (and perhaps even ones whose characteristics are largely semi-formal), it would quickly become apparent that the differentiation between forms is not clear cut but liminal; in other words, rather than a point of transition there is a zone during which a process of transition might be taking place.

Moreover, such a model would need to allow for institutions which changed their characteristics in different directions, or retained predominantly the same characteristics over time. A transition from one form to another might be reversed, perhaps because the new form and its modes of constraint might not be suitable for fulfilling the strategic objectives of the actors, or might not be durable and therefore revert to the previous form out of inertia.

Developing the simple model in *figure i* above, a more complex model might look like this.

Figure ii – Zones of transition between different institutional forms providing areas for analysis (red dashed circles) – but NOT allowing for analysis of an institutional form that appeared not to change (black dashed line)
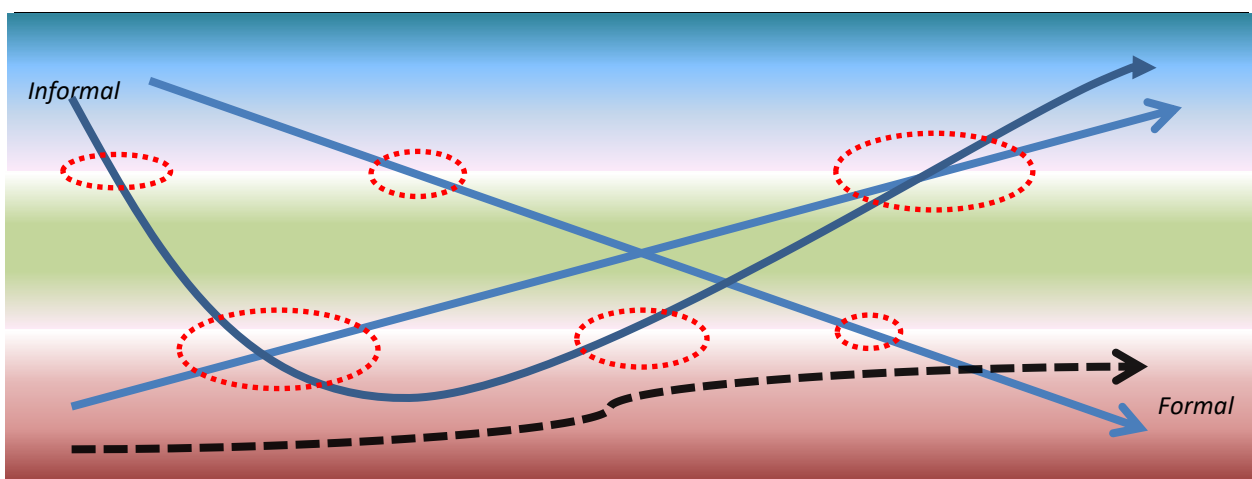
Analysis of institutions that appeared to follow these paths of development could be done by assessing the nature of the change of the institution through the 'zone of transition'. Allowing for the challenges of categorising institutions as previously noted, an analytical model for theorising the causes, natures and consequences of punctuated change – albeit a definition of 'punctuated' that has been stretched from a 'point' to a 'zone' of transition – becomes possible.

Institutions of governance in English sub-regional governance have undergone and continue to undergo these changes of form between informal, semi-formal and formal characteristics, so this conceptual model is a *necessary* tool for analysing those changes.

However, it is not *sufficient*, as the dashed line in *figure ii* above shows, as it would fail to analyse the development of an institution that had appeared not to change its form over time.

If the focus for analysis is changes of institutional form, there is thus a theoretical gap where an institution retains the approximately similar characteristics of formality/informality over a prolonged period. A theoretical model that analyses only transitions from one form to another fails to take into account gradual change as a possible development of an institution, and in doing so would also make the erroneous assumption that any institution retaining its characteristics was essentially stable; in other words, privileging structure over agency, when agential and strategic actors are a critical part of understanding the nature of institutions. Moreover, it would also err in assuming that an empirically observed stability was evidence of the absence of underlying forces, when such forces might exist but be latent, or exist and be in effect, but counter-acting one another.

In order therefore for the model to provide a more complete analytical framework, it must be capable of being applied not just to transitions, but equally to institutions that are not in apparent transition. The analysis needs to be of durability/stability at any given point, irrespective of whether that point is one of transition or not; in other words, the analysis needs to be able to capable of being applied to gradual as well as punctuated change, and needs to look for underlying or actual realities.

In the simple and more complex diagrams above, the x-axis is time, and is common to both punctuated and gradual change. An analytical tool that can be utilised for both punctuated and gradual change might therefore be conceptualised as a mesh or filter like this:

Figure iii – Theoretical analytical tool that can be deployed at any point on the temporal (x) axis, whether at a point/zone of transition or otherwise
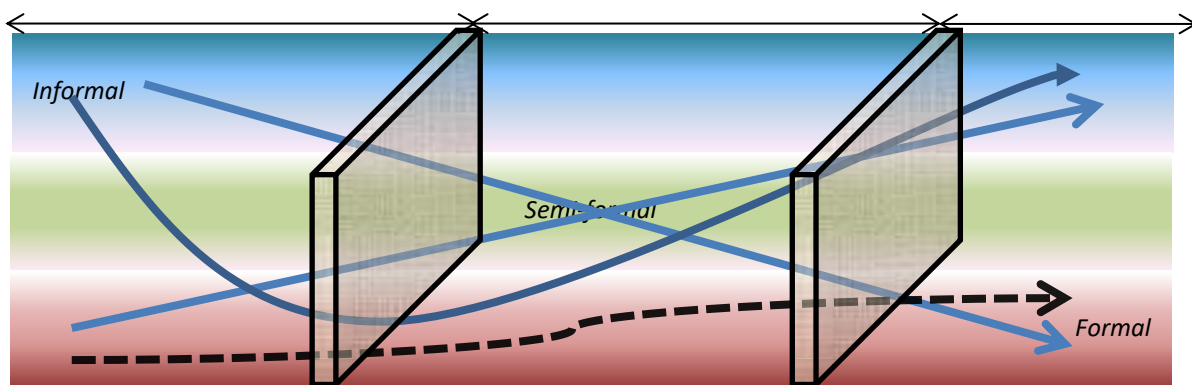
An analytical tool designed to be deployed in this way would not only be able to assess whether or not an institutional transition was durable, but would also be able to allow for the assessment of the impacts and consequences of more gradual processes of

strengthening or decay in an apparently stable institutional form through deployment at multiple points in time.

ANALYSING OBJECTIVES AND CONSTRAINTS

The analytical tool – or mesh/filter – needs to take into account key theoretical components: the *strategic objectives* that actors follow and privilege, the *constraints* that operate both on and through the institutions in which the actors pursue those strategies, and the ways in which those strategies and constraints interact with one another and the consequences of those interactions. Portrayed visually, the warp and weft of the analytical mesh can be set out as in *figure iv* below.

Figure iv – Area of potential interaction

		Constraints		
		Narratives	*Practices*	*Rules*
Strategies	A	*Area of potential interactions*		
	B			
	C			

The way in which agency is allowed for in the framework is through the analysis of the strategic objectives of the actors involved in sub-regional governance structures. In this context, the strategies that actors pursue, and the interactions of those strategies with the different modes of constraint, both imply different *desired* outcomes and also lead to different *actual* outcomes in terms of the eventual forms of institutional governance.

To reiterate the point made earlier, institutions are a means to 'instantiate power' and as such are contested, with this process impacting on the institution itself; the strategic acts of conscious and agential actors bring about change for their own ends (Streek and Thelen, 2005).

It is important therefore to understand the different strategies that actors follow, in order to trace their interactions with the institutional constraints and the impacts of those interactions. These strategies can be derived from the stated and unstated objectives of the actors, and categorised under broad headings for the purposes of analysis and weighting.

While a generalised model for analysing actors and institutions needs to have scope for a wide range of strategic objectives that actors might be pursuing, in the specific context of English sub-regional governance it is possible to isolate particular forms of strategic objective, and to assess the different weights given to them in different scenarios.

England is widely recognised as having a highly centralised distribution of power in its governance systems (Nurse, 2015; OECD, 2020); regional and sub-regional layers have tended to be impermanent and contingent on central Government consent, and funding mechanisms have strongly privileged national over local processes (Gardner, 2016). Even in the era of austerity following the election of the Coalition Government in 2010, with substantial cuts to central Government funding of local government, local authorities in England remain highly dependent on Westminster for resources.

This is particularly the case for projects that go beyond the provision of core day-to-day services; local authorities have had very limited capacity to raise funds independently for investment in capital intensive items such as enabling infrastructure to unlock commercial development, and until recently have not been able to borrow to fund the construction of new housing (Secretary of State for Housing, 2018). Even where local authorities have been allowed to borrow to fund investment the borrowing rate is directly controlled by central Government through the Public Works Loans Board, a control which includes the ability to increase the cost of borrowing at will (*National Loans Act 1968*; HM Treasury, 2019).

One area where English local government has had some degree of autonomy is in the making of plans and the operation of the planning system, but this autonomy is constrained by the degree to which national government has periodically 'reached in' to try to shape or drive the planning system to its own ends.

This tension between local and national control in the system – as exemplified by the regular making and re-making of regional institutions by governments of all stripes, and most recently by the contrast between the rhetorical advocacy of 'localism' in planning by the Coalition and successor Conservative governments since 2010 and the succession of technical changes to the system designed to achieve particular national ends – has been inherent since the 1947 Act, if not before. But for local elected officials, being able to say to those that elect them that they will have influence over the planning system is a powerful and important factor.

This broad context to English local governance influences the strategic objectives of actors working within its institutions, and this research project through an iterative process of coding and recoding identifies four overarching objectives that are pursued by local actors in the three cases studied: a desire for *Recognition* (usually but not always by central Government); the pursuit of inwards *Investment* (again usually but not always by or through central Government); the need to retain *Control* over the operation of the planning system locally; and a concern for *Institutional Self Preservation/Ambition* (ensuring that the institution through which the actor instantiates their power is preserved or enhanced at the expense of other less favoured institutions).

The process by which these objectives were identified, and the methodological principles being followed, is set out in greater detail below (Chapter 5, Operationalising the Research Strategy, p 101), but a brief description is necessary here. The source materials from the first case study on Ipswich, both interview transcripts and primary (for example papers written by actors in the study) and secondary (papers written about the actors/issues in the study) documents, were initially coded under a wide range of headings to help to identify emerging common themes. This wide range of headings was then refined through a series of iterations during the writing up of the Ipswich case study and the concurrent development of a more sophisticated final theoretical model to arrive at the four overarching strategic objectives that are described here.

The difference in emphasis put on these four strategic objectives by actors in a particular sub-regional instance gives an indication of the type of governance institutions that those actors are prepared to operate within and to shape, while the interactions between these objectives and the forms of constraint that operate in those institutions significantly impact on the nature and form of the institutional evolution that takes place.

RECOGNITION

The centralised nature of English local governance means that funding and investment decisions tend to be made centrally; in order for a local governance actor, institution or growth coalition to gain access to these centrally derived resources, it must be recognised. Whether it is a post-industrial or seaside town suffering from multiple deprivations highlighting a need for additional support and resources, or a thriving city wanting to demonstrate a potential for additional growth, local actors are conscious of the need to be seen both as deserving but also as reliable recipients of support from a more central governance body, whether that body is the UK government, a regional funding agency (particularly in the years up to 2010) or an extra-national source such as the European Union.

Strategies that demonstrate characteristics assumed to be seen as desirable by the incumbent national government – 'modernising/modernisation' under New Labour (Inch, 2009), 'competitiveness and innovation' under the Coalition Government (Ward, 2020), 'partnership/collaboration' under both (O'Brien and Pike, 2015) – are often pursued as well as ensuring that regional, national and international actors are cognisant of local priorities.

Thus *Recognition* as a broad strategic objective goes beyond just 'awareness raising'; it is not enough for 'Whitehall' or 'Brussels' to be told that an area has an issue with shortages of skills or that a city-region has a fast-growing agri-tech sector that is being held back by poor transport infrastructure, local actors know that they need to show that they are able and willing to work with these more powerful institutions to do something about it.

INVESTMENT

Because of the centralised nature of financing for regions and localities in England, taking the actions necessary to address issues identified as strategic priorities for actors usually involves obtaining *Investment* of some sort, either directly or indirectly from some sort of funding body. Maximising the opportunity for direct grants from a Regional Development Agency (RDA, to 2010) or Local Economic Partnership (LEP, from 2011) or a European Union structural fund, or grants or permissions for borrowing from central Government, is therefore a major strategic priority for local actors (O'Brien and Pike, 2015; O'Brien and Pike, 2019).

The importance of understanding the network of institutional relationships in play is emphasised here by the fact that the actors working through the regional development bodies (variously RDAs and LEPs) are both the objects of the strategies of local actors – as sources of potential investment – and followers of their own strategy of seeking investment from others.

The success of an *Investment* strategic project both acts as an end in itself – showing that the priorities of local electoral coalitions and broader powerbases can be delivered – but also demonstrates the efficacy of local actors as a reliable partner for other future investors.

Equally, however, because national and international actors also need to show the same efficacy, significant investment projects are usually a compromise between the priorities of local actors and those with a greater degree control over the financing mechanisms, a compromise that can mean that they are not necessarily always an unalloyed good for those local actors – for example the delivery of the Norwich Northern Distributor Road was seen as a significant success by national and regional actors, but was cited as a factor in a rise of electoral support for the Green Party locally.

CONTROL

The strategic objective of retaining *Control* – perhaps better expressed as a desire not to *lose control* – of the local planning system by local political actors can sometimes be seen as a relatively recent phenomenon in English local governance, stemming in very large part from the introduction of the NPPF in 2012. However concerns over control, whether the actual operation of the planning system or the perception of its operation, have sat at the heart of debates over how planning and local government should work since the 1960s and the Skeffington Report and the 'Don't Vote for RE Mote' (a fictional centralising bureaucrat) campaign against the Redcliffe-Maud proposals (Redcliffe-Maud, 1969; Skeffington, 1969).

It is important to note that while Skeffington in particular was concerned with public participation in planning, and the relationship between planning authorities at all levels and the communities that were impacted by their decisions, for local political actors the issue

was over which institutions were deemed to have the greater degree of control over the planning process. Opposition to the New Labour regional governance structures was framed as much as a debate about top-down control by 'unelected bureaucrats' over the planning system as it was about waste and unnecessary costs (Pickles, 2010; Pike *et al.*, 2016).

But even during periods where opponents of particular national political projects could claim that there was too great a shift from local decision making to other loci of power, whether regional structures under New Labour in the 2000s or to central government under the Conservatives in the 1980s, it was rare that a local authority risked a complete loss of control over the planning system and with it the ability to be seen to be meeting the priorities of local electoral coalitions in doing so (the exception was the quangos and development corporations used in some urban areas under Margaret Thatcher) (Cochrane, 1999).

There is a widely held perception that this changed with the first iteration of the NPPF in 2012, and in particular the requirement that all Local Planning Authorities maintain an up to date plan with a five year land supply for housing sites, with consequences if they did not do so that were spelled out in the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' (or 'tilted balance' clause) in paragraph 14 (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2012b). Councils had been required to have a five year land supply previously but the 'tilted balance' of the 2012 NPPF meant that promoters of sites that had been refused by local planning authorities were able to win appeals that previously that they would not have done.

A Suffolk MP summed it up in a 2018 House of Commons debate: "The key word … is 'control'. We call it speculative development because the community loses control. Let us be honest: if an area has a five-year land supply, there will still be controversial planning applications, but those will be determined by the local authority. People will be unhappy about homes being built in—this is a terrible phrase—their backyard, but the point is that the local community will have a say; it will have control" (Hansard, 2018, p. 173WH).

Despite revised Government guidance and a range of appeals and subsequent court cases (*South Northamptonshire Council v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government*, 2014; Solomon, 2019) that have shown that the system is not as clear-cut as had at first appeared, concerns about the ability of planning authorities to prevent 'speculative development' have become extremely important for local political actors. The addition of a new 'Housing Delivery Test' to the revised 2018 NPPF further formalised the process, and while adding greater clarity confirmed national Government intentions (MHCLG, 2019).

Local actors therefore give significant priority to strategies that maintain their *Control* over the planning system. That system gives local actors a powerful lever to deliver their own political objectives, and those of their electoral coalition. To lose control of that lever not

only calls into question the ability of the actor to meet the objectives of their electoral coalition, but also suggests an existential threat to the institutions through which those actors exercise power.

INSTITUTIONAL SELF-PRESERVATION/AMBITION

Working to avoid this perceived existential threat, and conversely, developing ambitions to accumulate greater powers to a favoured institution, is the fourth strategic priority pursued by actors in this study. *Institutional Self-Preservation/Ambition* relates not just to formal elected institutions of local governance, such as Councils, but also to other informal or semi-formal institutions at a range of geographic scales.

As already noted, institutions are means through which actors can instantiate power (Streek and Thelen, 2005; Thelen, 2009) and for many actors in local governance environments their sole means of doing so is through a particular institution. Strategies that aim to preserve not just the sovereignty but the existence of these preferred institutions are commonplace and powerful.

These *Institutional Self Preservation/Ambition* strategies can also be reflected in debates over the nature and geographies of new institutions. For example, when England's health administration geographies were redesigned in 2006 (Secretary of State for Health, 2006) the stated objective was to have new Primary Care Trusts that matched the existing geographies for Social Service providing local authorities (County Councils and Unitary Councils).

Opposition to these changes was frequently explicitly or tacitly supported by actors whose main access to power was through institutions whose geographies were different to those promoted by the White Paper (Pharmafield, 2006) , revealing a concern that new institutions on the same geographies as rival institutions – in this instance County Councils in particular – would strengthen that rival institution and weaken the actor's preferred institution in a zero-sum game.

Similar concerns were expressed in the study area in response to the remaking of the geographies for regional development after the 2010 election, with strong preferences being expressed by local actors for geographies that either matched the geography of their own institutions or if that were not achievable, at least did NOT match the geography of a rival institution.

As most genuinely existential threats to formal governance institutions at the local level – and many informal ones – can only be implemented by national Government, the interaction of local actors with national actors and institutions is often heavily coloured by strategies of institutional self-preservation and ambition, particularly at points when central

Government has either created the potential for institutional re-ordering, or is believed by local actors to be doing so.

Elected officials are of course particularly concerned about local government reorganisation, but employees– especially those in senior roles who might fear not being able to find a place in any successor institution – are equally likely to harbour ambitions for their own organisation or have fears about the privileging of another institution by national government or other influential actors.

These four strategic objectives and the degree of relative importance given to them by actors in different governance institutions therefore form one dimension of the analytical filter (see *figure v* below for how this develops the basic form in *figure iv* above); the other dimension is derived from the Third Wave Institutionalist conceptualisation of constraints that act upon institutions through narratives, practices and rules.

Figure v – Areas of Interaction Between Strategic Objectives and Constraints

Relative importance given to strategic objective		Constraints		
		Narratives	*Practices*	*Rules*
Recognition	+			
	=			
	-			
Investment	+			
	=			
	-			
Control	+			
	=			
	-			
Self-Preservation /Ambition	+			
	=			
	-			

CONSTRAINTS: NARRATIVES, PRACTICES AND RULES

The modes through which institutions constrain are the narratives, practices and rules that characterise the institution. To develop the analytic toolkit for the assessment of institutional forms in this model, it is necessary to expand upon the basic forms of each mode of constraint, and to consider how differences in those constraints between different institutions can be characterised.

These modes of constraint can be briefly summarised: *narratives* are the stories that the actors tell about themselves and their institutions, *practices* are the way in which the actors behave within the institution, and *rules* are the formal constitutions or structures of the

institutions. By considering how each of these constraints appears in the context of the different case studies, it is possible to construct a simple classification process to allow for comparison between institution exemplars.

In a Third Wave Institutionalist model of theorising about institutional change, *narrative* is the process by which 'politics' is done, through persuasion and explanation: it is "several embedded stories [within] an account of a 'grand conception' [where] a story is a specific contextualised exemplar which supports and enriches our appreciation of that conception" (Lowndes and Roberts, 2013).

But a 'grand conception' is not essential to creating a model for assessing institutions; narratives are frequently the stories of the everyday interactions with others, how actors perceive one another and the relationships that exist between different individuals. Perhaps most important of all are the stories used to describe how it is assumed that outsiders perceive an institution and those operating within it, because it is in these descriptions that the differences between narrative and practice can be found.

When a range of actors in a case study use narratives like "they must think we're a complete rabble" [an interviewee from Norwich] it paints a picture that is different to the one that might be drawn from examination of the practices or rules in that institutional environment. Equally a consistent narrative around "it's surprising how well we get on with one another" [an interviewee from Ipswich] which contrasts with an assessment of rules or practice might indicate a deeper and different degree of institutional development (or of course a greater degree of wishful thinking – it is important not to privilege one form of constraint over another in analysis).

Identifying consistent narratives within a case study involves careful analysis of the language used by different actors, and is methodologically challenging, but with care it is possible to draw out a conclusion about where those narratives sit on a positive to negative scale, and from there show how the predominant narrative both constrains of its own accord and as importantly interplays with other factors to constrain.

Thus a narrative that emphasised the negative aspects of interactions with other actors, or the negative aspects of the institution within which those interactions take place, is likely to constrain through a distrust of others. Similarly a narrative that focused on the perceived negative views of third parties might lead to a reluctance to explore innovative strategies, whereas a positive narrative about external perceptions might encourage different approaches and thus shape the development of the institution in a different way.

While narratives are the stories that actors tell, the constraint of *practice* is the way in which actors actually pursue their strategic objectives within a particular institution: in other words 'how things are done around here', or what March and Olsen call the 'logics of appropriateness' (March and Olsen, 2004).

These 'rules in use' (Ostrom, 1999) differ from both the formal rules of the institution and the narratives around it, and the evidence for what they are is based on observation of conduct, rather than analysis of the written rules or of the descriptions offered by actors of how those rules are followed.

While 'observed conduct' could potentially be classified in an almost infinite number of ways, in constructing this theoretical model and toolkit for analysis an appropriate scale along which to assess different institutions and case studies has been identified: the degree to which the observed conduct within the institution is collaborative or collegiate.

Collaborative practices are an increasingly important part of organisational objectives and theory (Watson, 2014), but for the purposes of the toolkit for analysis here the classification is a relatively simple one, and draws out the nature of the interactions between actors within the institution.

Studies of collaborative practice in organisations such as the automotive industry (Gustafsson and Magnusson, 2016) suggest that greater degrees of collaborative behaviour can have positive impacts on resource use and efficiency - in the example of the automotive industry by reducing the need for costly formal contractual and audit procedures to govern relationships for instance.

In the context of institutions for sub-regional governance, similar factors might come into play. Collaborative or collegiate practices are likely to encourage greater trust, more shared risk taking, and greater strategic ambition, all of which will shape the institution in turn. Similarly a context where practices are uncollegiate and lacking in co-operation might encourage more cautious strategic objectives and encourage the development of institutional forms with a greater reliance on rules to define permitted actions.

While the narratives and practices of institutions are primarily driven by the actors operating within them, the *rules* are frequently made and remade by national Government reaching in through the mechanism of the institutional environment.

Whether it is seeking bids for 'Growth Point' status under the New Labour government, the implications of new regulations around five year land supply in the 2011 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) under the Coalition government, or legislation that enables or encourages local government reorganisation under successive governments, changes to the rules of sub-regional institutions have the potential to be profoundly impactful upon those institutions and to the actors within them (HM Government, 2007; Department for Communities and Local Government, 2012b; O'Brien and Pike, 2015).

Even when new institutions and institutional forms are created by local actors, through the process of institutional bricolage, the need to interact with central government in pursuit of for example the strategic objectives of *Investment* or *Recognition* frequently means that

these 'self-assembled' institutions have to be remade to fit with institutional forms (and thus rules) dictated by central government norms.

An instance of this process is when institutional collaborations to bid for central government funds or to be granted particular powers are required to take on specific forms in order to qualify for those funds or powers - such as the provisions in the *Bus Services Act 2017* for developing different models of administering public transport.

While local authorities have an automatic power that allows them to work together to create Advanced Quality Partnerships or Enhanced Partnerships, other options such as franchising are only available automatically to combined authorities with an elected mayor (*Bus Services Act 2017*; Department for Transport, 2017). If, therefore, a group of local actors operating through an institutional form created by themselves decided that a bus franchising strategy was the best option, they would need to adopt new institutional forms dictated by central government to do so, irrespective of whether that institutional form was more efficacious or not.

In examining the nature of the rules constraint in the cases in this study, it is clear that the primary axis for categorisation is one of stability - the degree to which the rules of a particular institution or institutions are stable or unstable. The centralised nature of the English system of sub-national governance (Stoker, 2002; O'Brien and Pike, 2015) means that changes to the rules of institutions are frequently achieved through the intervention of national government either by legislative change or by direct or indirect action by actors such as ministers or other leading political figures at national level. These interventions can have a significant impact on the stability or otherwise of the institution.

Given that there is a degree of local agency over the setting of rules for institutions – albeit an agency limited in significant part to electing not to pursue strategic objectives that require particular new institutional arrangements – the disruptive aspect of changes to the rules can be felt in two ways: either the wholesale remaking of them by Government that impacts equally across the board, or by the selective and 'opt-in' approach of the kind of conditional change of the rules embodied in the Bus Services Act, for example.

In assessing the *narratives*, *practices* and *rules* that make up the institutions in these case studies, each can be measured along an axis by analysis of the responses from the actors involved. In the instance of *narratives*, the analysis is of the positive and negative stories that actors tell about themselves, their fellow actors, their interactions and about the institutions within which those interactions take place. *Practices* ('how things are done around here') (Lowndes, 2005) can be assessed by looking at how actors pursue their strategies, and the degree to which it is done collegiately or co-operatively. *Rules* can be classified according to the degree to which they are stable or unstable.

By drawing out common strategic objectives, and by using consistent categorisations such as these interpretations of narratives, practices and rules, it is possible to compare different case studies in the same matrix. Further, it is important to note that because the analytical tool can be deployed at any point along the temporal axis, the same sub-regional institution can be analysed at different points in time, indicating how changes in strategies and constraints might interact with one another and what the outcomes might be.

Figure vi - Deployment of the analytical tool showing the interrelations between strategies and constraints for two hypothetical case studies, which could be two places at the same point in time, or the same place at two different points in time.

Strategy		Narratives			Practices			Rules		
		+ive	=	-ive	Co-op	=	Un-coop	Stable	=	Unstable
Recognition	+									
	=	X			X			X		
	-			Y		Y				Y
Investment	+	X		Y	X	Y		X		Y
	=									
	-									
Control	+			Y		Y				Y
	=	X			X			X		
	-									
Self-Preservation /Ambition	+			Y		Y				Y
	=									
	-	X			X			X		

In the hypothetical case studies in *figure vi*, case X indicates the highest priority to a strategy of seeking *Investment*, and has positive narratives, collegiate practices and stability of rules. Meanwhile case Y is notable for assigning a high priority to the strategy *of Institutional Self-Preservation/Ambition*, in combination with negative narratives and practices that are neither co-operative nor unco-operative, and instability around the rules of its institutions.

If these were two different places, then it would be possible to draw out conclusions about the differences between them, and make tentative judgements about the potential causes of those differences, and the consequences of those differences for future institutional development.

However if X and Y are analyses of the same case, but at different points in time, then it becomes possible to arrive at tentative conclusions about how different strategies and constraints interact, and in particular the self-reinforcing nature of some of those interactions (Jessop, 2013a). The intersecting matrices, and the fact that actors have strategies whose impact can be traced through the institutional network, allows for analysis of the dynamics of the evolving institutional structure and the interdependencies of different factors.

In particular the co-existence of particular strategies – such as a strong preference for *Institutional Self-Preservation/Ambition* – and certain constellations of institutional constraints – negative narratives, uncollegiate forms of practice and unstable rules – might correlate with a lack of institutional durability and the limiting of the scope of institutional development and for strategic collaboration.

The correlations should not imply linear causality; reinforcing interactions operate in all directions. For example, legislative changes that destabilise institutional rule constraints might increase a strategic emphasis on institutional self-preservation, which might in turn lead to more negative narratives and uncollegiate practices; an alternative interpretation might be that negative narratives and uncollegiate practices at a sub-regional level might lead local actors to seek national Government intervention to alter the rules constraint through ministerial action.

While neither of these linear and unidirectional explanations of causality is sufficient, a model that assumes that particular factors interact with one another and are mutually reinforcing gives a greater deal of theoretical legroom. A visual representation of the interaction of these four factors could appear as in *figure vii*.

Figure vii – Hypothetical model of interacting and mutually reinforcing factors
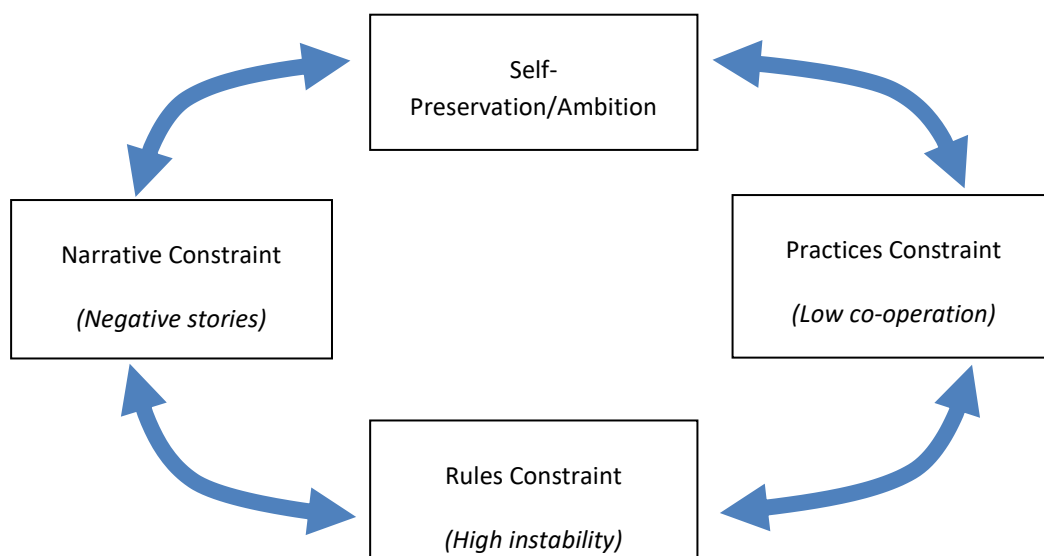
Equally, the corollary of this reinforcing relationship might be one where the predominant narrative constraint was positive and practices collegiate, and where the rules constraint was not unstable and the relative importance of institutional self-preservation was at least neutral (*figure viii*).

Figure viii – Alternate hypothetical model of interacting and mutually reinforcing factors

```
          ┌──────────────────────────┐
          │  Self-Preservation/Ambition │
          │                          │
          │  (Low or medium Strategic │
          │        Priority)         │
          └──────────────────────────┘

┌────────────────────┐          ┌────────────────────┐
│ Narrative Constraint │          │ Practices Constraint │
│                    │          │                    │
│ (Positive stories) │          │ (High co-operation) │
└────────────────────┘          └────────────────────┘

          ┌──────────────────────────┐
          │     Rules Constraint      │
          │                          │
          │      (Not unstable)       │
          └──────────────────────────┘
```
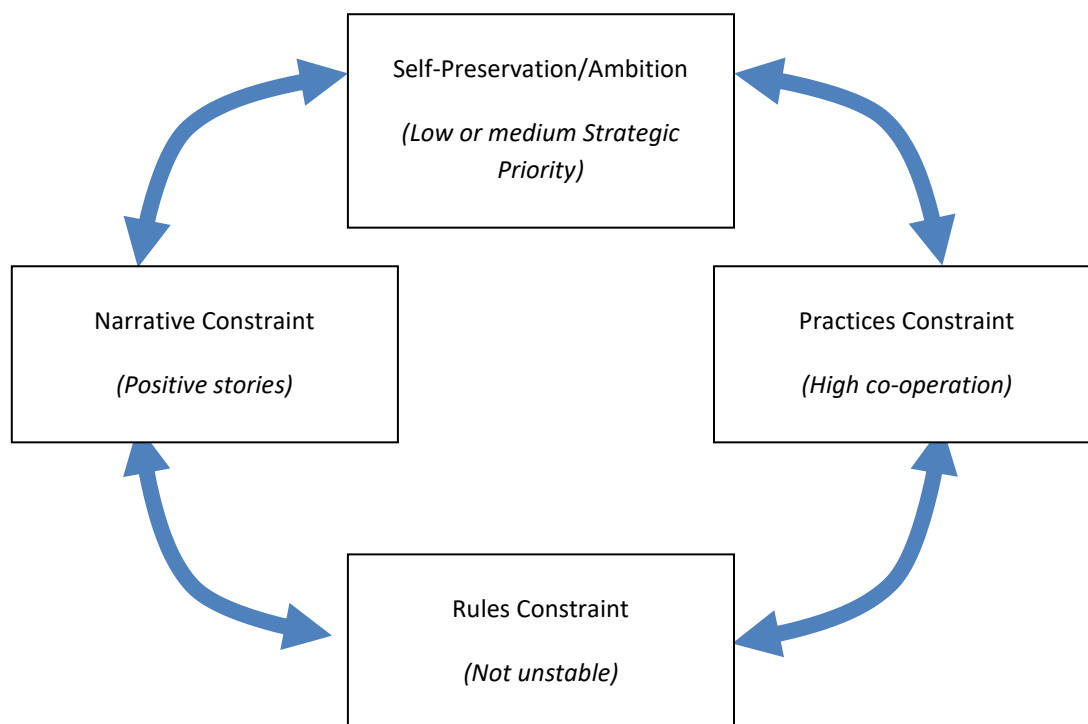
CONCLUSION

The analysis of institutions and the actors within them is challenging. It is critical for any model to make sufficient allowance for both structure and agency within it, so that institutions and actors are mutually constitutive (Giddens, 1984; Brenner, 2004; Jessop, Brenner and Jones, 2008; Mackinnon and Shaw, 2010). To do so the model must have room

within it to take into account the strategic objectives of actors, and the ways in which the structures within which they pursue those strategies might shape or constrain them.

The analytical model must be able to cope not just with moments of punctuated change, but also with the kind of gradual change that reflects Crouch's description of institutionalism as an ongoing process that it is recombinant rather than revolutionary (Crouch, 2005). The mesh or filter toolkit approach allows for analysis over time of the same institution, and does not rely on an instance of punctuated change as a pre-requisite for that analysis.

And in keeping with the underlying theoretical concept, the model must allow for the strategies and constraints at play to interact with one another in mutually constitutive ways. The two figures above (*vii and viii*) demonstrate two potential ways in which the three forms of constraint – narratives, practices and rules – could interact with a particular strategic objective – institutional self-preservation/ambition in these examples – to reinforce the individual effects of each.

The approach in the model is based on particular classifications of narrative, practice and rule constraints. The selection of these classifications (positive/negative; co-operative/unco-operative; stable/unstable) as opposed to other typologies is an epistemological choice, to enable an interpretation of the nature and dynamics of the case under study. This is not to argue that these particular classifications are uniquely able to provide understanding, but that they are able to provide <u>an</u> understanding of what is a highly complex assemblage.

A choice of different typologies, and interpretation of how those typologies interacted with the strategic objectives of the agential actors operating within sub-regional governance institutions, could equally provide a valid starting point for arriving at an analytic approach. But that other valid typologies exist does not invalidate the use of the typologies proposed here.

The stability or instability of formal *rules* of English sub-regional governance institutions, whether set locally or – as they largely are – by national government action, is a fundamentally important characteristic of those rules. While other characteristics clearly exist and can be classified, stability or lack of it has a profound impact on both the institutions and the actors working within them.

Equally, the collegiality of *practices* and the degree to which *narratives* are positive or negative are factors where causality and effect can be plausibly implied, and traced backwards and forwards through interactions with one another and with strategic objectives, and are thus valid theoretical starting points for analysis.

The basic theoretical model allows for the identification and analysis of any number or range of strategic objectives, and their interactions with the various modes of constraint. But for the purposes of examining local governance structures in the English context, the

four broad strategic priorities identified here – *Recognition*, *Investment*, *Control* and institutional *Self Preservation/Ambition* – allow for a sufficiently broad and deep analysis.

That analysis relies on both the absolute and relative priority given to each of these strategic objectives. This is not to claim any process for assigning precise values to the degree which an institution's actors follow a *Recognition* strategy, for example, but it is possible both to say whether such a strategy is clearly important or unimportant, and whether it is relatively more or less important than any other identified strategic objective.

In summary, the theoretical model allows for classification and analysis of complex arrangements of actors, institutions and institutional environments, and comparison both with one another at the same points in time or with themselves at different points over time.

In studying both multiple cases and the same cases as they evolve, it is possible to draw conclusions not just about the correlations between different constellations of strategic priorities and modes of constraint, but how those strategies and constraints might be interacting with one another in ways which profoundly impact upon the durability of sub-regional governance arrangements in England.

The problem that this research project sets out to explore is the nature of governance institutions in sub-regions; in doing so, the research examines what forms and characteristics those institutions have, how and why they have developed and varied over time and space, and what forces are at work to lead to these developments and variations.

There is an assumption that both agential actors and the institutional structures within which they work have a role to play in answering these questions, and that the interactions between the two are critical. Further, the objectives that actors pursue are assumed to have impact or the potential for impact, whether or not those impacts are intentional.

These assumptions are based on important decisions on the nature of reality and knowledge, and how it can be known. From these ontological and epistemological standpoints stem research strategies and paradigms (Blaikie, 2007), which also have to take into account the researcher's own position in relation to the research. These issues are explored below, setting out the sequence of decisions taken in the process of creating the theoretical framework and carrying out the research, using a process of gradual refinement that follows two distinct and successive research strategies.

ONTOLOGY

The ontological starting point for this research is a realist view of the world, that there is a social reality independent of human observation. Bhaskar's critical realist conception of three layers of reality – the Empirical, the Actual and the Real – sets out the basis for the realist approach (Bhaskar, 1979). In his model, the Empirical is that which is observable, the Real is the underlying structures and powers of objects, and the Actual "refers to what happens if and when these powers are activated, to what they do, and what eventuates when they do" (Sayer, 2000, p. 12).

The distinguishing factor of this ontological approach when compared to idealist ontologies is that it assumes the existence of an underlying set of potentially causal mechanisms that might explain an observed event, whereas an idealist approach would limit itself to that which can be observed. In layman's terms, while both realist and idealist approaches allow for the answering of 'what' questions based on observation, the realist approach allows for answers to 'why' questions to be tentatively explored.

Some fundamental critiques of Bhaskar's model are first that it assumes a single inviolable reality which is fixed and immune to change resulting from individual actions (Fay, 1990), and second that in attempting to resolve this issue by developing the concept of 'emergence' to explain that that this underlying reality has both prior existence and is shaped by actors Bhaskar creates a paradox (King, 1999). While Bhaskar's approach has been criticised, by Harré – who takes the view that as social structures are social constructs they cannot be independent of the actors that create those constructs and thus cannot have causal powers (Harré, 2002) - Fay, King and others, there is sufficient room within his ontology to allow for a meaningful assessment of both agential actors and the structures within which they work.

For example, it is possible to posit that the Actual layer in Bhaskar's model can have multiple views or constructions of reality, allowing within the realist ontology space for more idealist approaches, such as Giddens' Structuration Theory and its objective of addressing the structure/agency issue. Taking a realist view of ontology allows this research to apply itself to the underlying powers and potentialities that stem from the interaction of both structure and agential actors.

EPISTEMOLOGY

In keeping with the ontological assumptions in this research, the epistemological approach taken is one which makes three important assumptions of its own: first, that the purpose of research is to go beyond a simple description of a pattern of observed events or regularities, and in doing so seek a structure or mechanism that has produced the observed regularity; second, that as these underlying structures and mechanisms are beyond direct observation and can thus only be speculated upon, such knowledge is tentative rather than absolute; and thirdly that "it is impossible for fallible human beings to observe an external world … unencumbered by concepts, theories…and past experiences" (Blaikie, 2007, p. 23).

The first two of these assumptions stem from a neo-realist epistemology, an approach associated with the realist ontology, while the last is taken from a constructionist epistemology associated with more idealist approaches to ontology. Taken together and applied successively, as this research does, these assumptions address the challenges of post-modernism, in accepting the existence of "context-specific, multiple socially constructed realities and the tentative nature of knowledge" (Blaikie, 2007, p. 54) while at the same time avoiding the trap of rendering all knowledge wholly relative.

This approach also ensures that the temporal dimension is taken into account, and enables a research objective of identifying how past strategies and structures either shape, or have

the potential to shape, the strategies and structures of the present and future. An observational approach at a particular moment in time will not be identify the evolution of these strategies or structures, let alone allow for the development of possible explanations of why such evolution has occurred, and how that evolution stems from the co-constituting interactions of structures and strategic actors.

POSITION OF THE RESEARCHER

In a theoretical framework which is based around the notion of the co-constitution of actor and institution, and where institutions sit within a complex networked environment of interlocking and overlapping actors and entities, it is ontologically illogical to place just one actor – the researcher – entirely outside that institutional environment (Rorty, 1980).

The entire research programme must be viewed through the lens of having been theorised, designed and implemented through the active engagement of the researcher. The design of the research process places the researcher firmly within that process, using interview techniques that encourage the research subjects to 'perform' their interpretation of events and their roles within them (Inch, 2009).

Further, the epistemological assumption here is that the researcher cannot observe social phenomena from a distance, because of the researcher's own past experiences, preconceptions and knowledge. This reflects the personal links of this researcher to the research subject.

The original germ of this research was to ask 'what works' when it comes to the governance structures of sub-regions in England. This initial prompt that led to the desire to carry out a formal research project is not one of mere 'academic interest', but of close personal involvement both currently and in the past.

From 1994 to 2006, and again from 2014 to the present day, I have served as a local councillor in a city with similar geographic and political characteristics to the three urban areas studied as part of this research project. For four of those years (2002 to 2006) I was the Leader of that local authority, and from 2015 to the present day I have been a Cabinet member with responsibility for strategic spatial planning issues. I have therefore dealt with precisely the concerns of this research.

Moreover the world of local governance in England is not a large one; while the three subject areas are in a different geographical region from the one where I am a councillor, and the majority of the interview subjects for this research are officials rather than politicians, it was implausible from the outset to assume that none of those interview subjects would have no prior knowledge of me (particularly in an age where search engines

will locate a political biography within seconds), just as it was implausible to assume that I as a researcher would have no prior knowledge of them, or of the social and political environments within which they operate.

This prior and ongoing personal engagement with the subject of the research project – which was an important factor in the selection of the East of England, an area a considerable distance away but with similar characteristics to the one where I am based – means that any attempt to position myself as a researcher entirely independent of the research would be impossible.

Nonetheless, the approach taken is one that might be best characterised as 'an outside expert' taking particular care to minimise the impact of this prior knowledge of the person on the part of both researcher and research subjects. Rather than taking an immersive approach, the research was carefully carried out using structured engagements, and particular care was taken not to make any reference to any status that I might have beyond that of researcher during the interviews, while at the end of each interview a deliberate reference was made in order to establish whether the research subject had such knowledge of my other statuses (the number who had googled me was actually fairly low, but together with those with certain prior knowledge amounted to about 25% of interviewees).

Equally, having an expertise based on a substantial lived experience of the research subject brought with it advantages, in terms of being able to 'speak the language' of planning, local government and institutional politics in the English sub-regional context. This meant that as a researcher I was able to put the subjects of interviews at ease, and free them from having to use explanatory dialogue to make clear what they wanted to raise.

The experience of the vast majority of interviews was that participants were not just happy to use the full time allotted but to run over time in order to continue conversations that they found 'interesting' or even 'stimulating', something that was made easier by my bringing a knowledge to the table of the types of issues with which they were grappling as actors.

The task then was to balance the need to avoid bringing my specific personal experience as an active participant in similar sub-regional institutions and planning issues into the research process on the one hand, with the advantages of being able to tease out more insights from interviewees using my prior knowledge and experience of the broader issues that they were facing on the other.

This was done by careful planning of the interviews in advance, avoiding any discussion of Oxford and Oxfordshire (where I am an active participant in sub-regional planning and politics) during the interviews themselves, and then a process of checking both at the end of the interview to see what pre-conceptions the interviewee might have had, and then finally

at the review state of the interview tape to pick up any elements that might have been shaped by both their pre-conceptions and my own.

Thus the researcher's stance in relation to this research project is one where a purist approach to objectivity on the part of both researcher and researched is clearly impossible, but critically is one that is consistent with the realist ontological and epistemological assumptions underlying the research: that knowledge is tentative and speculative, and cannot be wholly independent of the researcher's prior experience and assumptions, and that by separating mechanisms for demonstrating reality and reality itself a theoretical tool can be shown to work and therefore indicative of 'truth', but these tools might provide only a partial or flawed version of the underlying reality.

ETHICAL PROTOCOLS

The nature of the research project, with its focus on three specific case studies with a relatively small pool of potential research subjects for interview, poses some particular as well as general ethical issues.

When recruiting interviewees, approaches were made by email rather than by telephone in order to allow subjects to consider in their own time whether to take part, and to allow them the opportunity to read and digest the Information Sheet (see Appendix 2) provided that set out the conditions for the interview and research.

Each participant was asked whether permission from their employer would be required before they could participate; in no case did a participant believe that such permission would be required. All subjects were given and signed a consent form confirming their participation, and were assured that they could withdraw that consent at any time from the moment that the interview started to the point where the final thesis was completed.

Interviews were carried out in pre-arranged locations to ensure the safety of both interviewer and interviewee. Locations were largely set by the interviewee, with some taking place in private spaces – such as offices in their employer's building, or in their own homes – and some taking place in public places such as cafés.

All interviews were recorded, and interviewees were asked to specifically confirm as part of the consent process whether they were happy with this, and were reminded before, during and after the interview that they could withdraw that consent and ask for the interview recording to be deleted at any time. Recordings were stored securely, and were only accessible to the researcher.

Of particular importance to this research project was the issue of anonymity. All participants were assured that when they were cited in the research it would be done in a way that kept both their names and any identifying description of their roles anonymous. However because of the relatively small pool of potential interviewees, each participant was warned in advance – via the Information Sheet and verbally – that 'that the number of interviews for each case study area in this research is likely to be relatively small, and this means that anyone reading the research may try to draw inferences about which organisation or individual is being referred to' (see Appendix 2).

Throughout the later chapters of the study where interviews are directly quoted not only are the interviewees anonymised, but quotations have been edited to ensure that anything that might lead an individual or a specific professional role to be identified have been removed. In some cases, given the limited number of local authorities involved, it is impossible to avoid making clear which organisation a particular individual is connected with, but where that is the case extra effort has been made to remove any further identifying elements.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The process of designing the research strategy uses two separate stages, both of which are iterative, with the outcomes of each stage refined and developed as the research project took shape. This approach, one in line with the ontological and epistemological assumptions of realism, allows for the trialling, testing and then rejection or adjustment of the posited underlying causal structures and mechanisms beneath the observed regularities in the three case studies.

However before those structures and mechanisms can be theorised, it was necessary to start to develop a set of concepts that were common to each case study, and so to allow for comparison and analysis at the testing stage of the theoretical model. This stage of the research project therefore made use of an abductive approach to research strategy, following the process laid out by Schütz and in Giddens (Schutz and Natanson, 1967; Giddens, 1984).

In the abductive approach to research, the starting position is the social world of actors, and engagement in it to understand the way in which those actors conceptualise and give meaning. The task for the researcher is then to re-describe these 'first order constructs' into 'typical' motives and actions through a process of abstraction.

As Schütz (1967) argued, the objects of social research create first order constructs around themselves (Schütz famously pointed out that atoms do not have a self-understanding, while the human objects of social science research clearly do) so that research is already subject to the theorising of 'second degree constructs'.

Therefore in this research project there are number of layers between the research objects and concepts of the theoretical framework. First, individual actors have a self-understanding which forms a first order construct about themselves: in this research the professional and political roles that the interviews play are predicated on particular narratives about those roles – in other words, by choosing to occupy and play these particular roles these actors have internalised sets of beliefs and values that will impact on their responses to both those roles and to research about them.

Second, the theoretical framework conceptualises institutions as entities that shape and in turn are shaped by the strategic actions of actors within and without. Institutions are formed by their modes of constraint - rules, practices and narratives - and the identification of these modes, in particular those of practice and narrative, is an inherently subjective process, for both the object of research and the researcher. Thus the institutions that are the subject of the research are a second-order construct, in Schütz's terms, whose modes of constraint are subject to a two-fold filter of first the research subject's self-understanding and then the interpretation of the researcher.

Similarly the strategic objectives of actors, a critical part of the developing theoretical model, are subject to the same process of self-understanding by the subject of research and then interpretation by the researcher. In both instances the iterative nature of the process is reinforced by the need to be aware of Schütz's 'postulate of adequacy': if a second order construct is not clearly derived from the lay first order construct they fail because they have strayed too far from 'everyday life' or the 'common sense thinking' of the actors being studied (Schutz and Natanson, 1967; Overgaard and Zahavi, 2009).

Giddens sets out a similar approach to research, with four linked and overlapping levels that imply an iterative approach: first, an identification of the 'frames of meaning', equivalent to the Schütz's description of first order constructs and generation of second order constructs; then the making of comparisons across examples and generalisations about common elements; then a taking into account of the limits of actors' knowledge and the potential for actions to have unintended consequences; and finally an identification of components of systems within which actors operate (Giddens, 1984).

The first stage of developing the theoretical framework, therefore, followed the processes suggested by Schütz and Giddens. The interviews carried out, initially in the pilot study carried out in Ipswich, were analysed and the 'lay' meanings that the research subjects gave to their strategies and to the rules, practices and narrative constraints were coded under specific headings. Initially there many of these codes, but as repeated iterations of this first

stage and the second retroductive stage of the research strategy were carried out, a simpler set of variables were developed.

These variables – the four broad strategic objectives followed by actors, and the axes on which the rules, practices and narrative constraints in each case study are assessed – are second order constructs but which can be traced clearly back to the original 'lay' meanings in the primary research, thus passing Schütz's 'postulate of adequacy' test. Equally, the iterative process of generating these variables follows the essence of Giddens' four stages of research.

Reaching this point in the research design process provided a relatively rich descriptive analysis of the three case studies, allowing for comparison between them. Taking a simple idealist ontological position, this would have been sufficient; however the purpose of this research project is to try to identify the causal mechanisms that either have the potential to effect or actually do effect the observable aspects of reality. To do that, a second stage of research strategy is required.

The ontological starting point for this research is that there are underlying structures and mechanisms that have the potential to cause observable regularities. The implication of the word 'potential' here is that the absence of an observed regularity is not necessarily indicative of the absence of the underlying mechanism that might tend to cause such a regularity; for example there may be several such underlying mechanisms at work in ways that offset one another, and the theoretical approach posited may need to take the existence of these multiple mechanisms into account.

By allowing for the potential that an underlying structure, while tending to cause an observable regularity, may not actually do so in all circumstances, the realist approach allows space for context, and for the inclusion of temporal and spatial dimensions in its ontology. Giddens highlighted the importance of "social practices ordered across time and space" and "contextual features of locales through which actors move…" (Giddens, 1984, p. 2), and the way in which "social reality is produced by skilled actors not necessarily under the conditions of their own choosing" (Blaikie, 2007, p. 182).

Pawson outlines the creative process involved in the application of realist logic in this way: first to discern an interesting pattern of regularity, and then proposing a model whereby one or more underlying structures or mechanisms might have created that regularity within the context(s) in which it is observed. As well as the proposed mechanisms the model has to include the relevant contextual factors – local, historic, institutional and so on – and how they might be conducive to the way in which the mechanism(s) work to bring about the observed regularity (Pawson, 2000).

This retroductive approach to research strategy is in line with the logic of Bhaskar's layers of reality, and involves a process of working back from the conclusion or outcome of a process

to try to identify its origins. The purpose of retroduction is to posit their existence and what their potentialities might be from what can be observed, the empirical. By carefully testing the model and refining it, a plausible theory of what lies beneath an observed regularity can be developed.

A critical part of that process of testing and refining is taking into account contextual factors, and how they might result - or equally, might not result – in different outcomes. The use in this research project of three similar case studies, with both contextual factors in common and contextual factors specific to each case, allowed for a greater degree of certainty (noting of course that in the realist approach all knowledge is necessarily tentative) in the development of theoretical models.

The theoretical framework in its second stage of development, therefore, takes the variables or second order constructs identified in the first stage and through an iterative retroductive process starts to posit how the strategic objectives, rules, practices and narratives, and the observable regularities in outcomes might be linked together and point to what underlying mechanisms might be at work (Burnham, 2004).

The model also needs to take into account the potential for multiple off-setting mechanisms, where different contextual factors, or evolution in those contextual factors, might be more or less conducive to particular observable outcomes by encouraging some latent causalities while discouraging others. An example of this might be the way in which external political or economic developments at a national or international level might encourage one mechanism, while local factors around political culture might discourage another, with the two off-setting one another.

Finally, in keeping with the principles of Giddens' duality of structure approach, the model needs to allow for the co-constitution of structure and agential actors, and address the challenge that Bhaskar's 'real' layer of reality is unchanging. The theoretical model therefore addresses the 'actual' layer, where the potentialities of the real may be realised, and where those potentialities interact with one another and with the strategic objectives of agential actors to create a range of realities that are socially constructed, contextually formed, necessarily contingent and potentially variable over time, but which nonetheless provide potential insights into the way in which governance of sub-regions has functioned, is functioning, and might function in the future.

The original purpose of the research was to identify 'what works' when it comes to sub-regional governance. From that starting point, it was necessary to develop questions that could be addressed meaningfully through the research project, a process that involved breaking down the initial research focus into component parts.

The result was two primary objectives posited in the introductory chapter:

A. To describe the nature of sub-regional governance institutions, and where sub-regional institutions 'fit' among an environment of formal and informal institutions at different scales, and the actors that make both up;

B. To develop an analytical framework that explains how the institutions of sub-regional planning and governance change, and identifies what distinctive internal and external forces and processes are at work to generate that change.

These objectives can be seen to fit within different ontological and epistemological assumptions, but collectively they are best suited to the approach highlighted above. The first essentially descriptive objective can be answered using an empiricist epistemological approach, relying on observation and description of the visible characteristics of the institutions under research. But that approach has difficulty with the second objective, in particular the search for both external and internal forces and processes, which might be hidden from view but still shaping the observable patterns of change.

Similarly, the assumption that while sub-regional institutional actors and structures are mutually influencing of one another there are also external factors, forces, processes operating at different spatial and temporal scales that can also act as shapers, requires a theoretical model that includes context, in order to address the second objective.

Early iterations of the theoretical framework explored various descriptive criteria for sub-regional institutions – their degree of 'formality' (informal, semi-formal, formal), or the nature of their 'boundedness' (hard, soft, unbounded) – but these essentially static models struggled to account for dynamics and change over time and space, and failed to establish a satisfactory relationship between the structures and actors.

This short-coming was resolved by shifting away from descriptive models of the forms of sub-regions to a more dynamic model using three scales – narratives, practices, rules – on which both gradual and sudden changes over time could be tracked. This enables the answering of the first 'how' part of the second objective; but asking the implied 'why' part involves understanding the interactions of institutional structures and agential actors over specifically contextual time and space.

Further, in theorising a co-constitutive process between institutions and actors, the research project seeks evidence of a dynamic process of institutions shaping actors and simultaneously being shaped by them. In granting agency to actors to avoid the trap of determinism, it then follows that it is important to assess the ends to which that agency is directed. There is little point in developing a theoretical model based on the co-constitution of structure and agency, and which differentiates between different forms of structure and their impacts, if it does not also differentiate between the different uses and impacts of agency. In other words, 'the pursuit of strategic objectives' cannot be treated as a single determining factor; to be meaningful, it is necessary to explore what the strategic objectives are that agential actors use their agency to pursue.

As described briefly in the Research Design section of this chapter above on page 97, the development of the theoretical framework involved an iterative process of retroduction to assign lay meanings, codify those lay meanings and then differentiate them. This process began with work on the initial Ipswich case study, and ran concurrently with the development of the framework as the research project developed.

The process made use of the NVivo software tool, where transcripts, contemporaneous notes and other source materials were loaded and then coded using a typology that met the criteria for 'lay terms' for what was being described. For example, a regular feature of interviews undertaken for the Ipswich case studies were expressions of regret that the town had been overlooked for funding and investment from central and regional governmental bodies. These statements were initially coded as "regret", "disappointment", "past failure" and the like, as well as "funding".

As more interviews were carried out and more materials coded, these initial codings were re-assessed and developed into first and second order constructs. Using the example above, where terms were similar, such as "regret" and "disappointment", they were brought together under a single heading. Conversely where different sources appeared to assign greater weight to the "overlooking" element of their statement – in other words funding was not forthcoming because the funding agency wasn't even aware of the town's need, rather than having been aware but disregarded the need – or vice versa, the coding was differentiated to emphasise this.

Where initial coding was based around the temporal dimension, as in "past failure", the temporal element was separated out into distinct codes, to allow for an understanding of change over time, as reflected in the time axis of the theoretical framework. This was part of a gradual and iterative process of drawing out and differentiating the strategic objectives, the constraints and changes over time: the coding process was refined as the model was refined, and the evolution of the two was thus – appropriately perhaps – co-constitutive.

At the completion of the initial case study and write up, the constituent elements of the eventual theoretical model were in place, but as yet incorrectly assembled. A key lesson

from the Ipswich case study was that the theoretical model as it stood at that point was underdeveloped and unsatisfactory, with an over-emphasis on description and a lack of a sufficiently robust means of explaining dynamics, causality and underlying structures and processes that might be at work. This led to an extensive remodelling of the approach taken, and the development of the first proper iteration of the framework used in the final model.

In essence, at that stage the model was two dimensional at best, with strategic objectives and narratives, practices and rules sitting on one dimension and time on the other, without the necessary interaction of objectives and constraints to act as an explanatory mechanism of the observed changes over time.

The final stage of developing the essential elements of theoretical model, which took place between the initial case study and the analysis of the subsequent research into the Norwich and Cambridge cases, was therefore to separate out the codings for constraints from those for strategic objectives, and complete a process that was already well developed through earlier iterations of re-coding of drawing together strategic objectives under broad but coherent headings. Each of the four final strategic objectives had already been identified as codes at the earlier stage, and it was increasingly clear that remaining codes fitted under those four, and did not justify a separate typology.

This structure was reviewed through the process of coding the materials from the Norwich and Cambridge case studies, and some minor adjustments were made during work on the former to better reflect the differentiation between Recognition and Investment as strategic objectives, and to ensure that both constraints and objectives were consistently identified and coded as such across all three case studies, something that tended to involve revisiting the initial coding work on the Ipswich case study more than adjustments to the model itself.

Therefore in developing the theoretical framework the strategies of actors operating within sub-regions were sorted into four broad categories of objective, and the impacts of these different strategic objectives were included in the model, alongside the scales for assessing relative positions and changes in narratives, practices and rules.

This then created a set of metrics which were common to all three case studies, and which allowed for regularities to be observed both over time and across space. From these observable regularities where changes in two or more of these metrics appeared to be repeated, it was possible to develop a theoretical model of the underlying systems and processes which might be at work to lead to the regularity, and in doing so allow the second objective to be addressed in a way compatible with the ontological and epistemological assumptions of the research project.

As discussed in the case studies, the observed regularity was that an increasing preference for a strategic objective of *Institutional Ambition/Self-preservation* tended to run alongside increasingly negative narratives, uncollegiate practices and unstable rules. The purpose of

the theoretical model was to speculate about how that combination of factors might arise and develop, and thus develop a theory for the underlying systems at work that might tend, in the necessary contextual circumstances, to produce the observable regularity that was visible across the three case studies.

CASE STUDY SELECTION

Of all the former English Regions created in the 1990s, the East of England had the lowest level of popular identification at 17% (MORI poll for the Economist, 1999, cited in Roberts and Baker, 2006), perhaps in part because it combined East Anglia with areas like Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire which had traditionally formed part of the Home Counties around London rather than anything that might previously have been understood as 'Eastern England'. The same poll however showed a much higher level of identification with other spatial entities within the region, including the major cities and towns.

Ipswich, Norwich and Cambridge are similar sized urban areas, with substantial hinterlands around them, whether defined as housing market areas or travel to work areas. Each has had from 1974 a 'two-tier' local government structure, a district and county council model with split responsibilities for planning and transport in particular. The boundaries of the three 'lower tier' authorities are drawn tightly around them, so that substantial parts of the built-up areas are in different council areas.

Each urban area is growing faster than the national average, and has pressures of housing affordability and excess of demand over supply, although the quantum of pressure varies considerably, with Cambridge being one of the least affordable places outside London in the UK. Similarly the economic development narrative in each area is similar, with an emphasis on the knowledge economy and high value work.

While there are considerable similarities, there are also differences in their history, political culture and institutional development. Economically, for example, Cambridge is one of the world's leading high-tech centres (Silicon Fen) and Norwich a major centre for scientific research, while Ipswich has only recently seen the establishment of a new University campus in the town. Norwich has a long history of interventionist city governance and a strongly urban-centric political culture, where Cambridge has not. These similarities and differences provide space to analyse how the sub-regional governance institutions, the strategic objectives of actors operating through and within them, and the rules, practices and narratives that shape them and are in turn shaped by them, are the same, or differ.

While each urban area is at the centre of distinct areas of influence, these areas both abut and overlap one another. Cambridge's substantial travel to work area encompasses Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire and most of the areas of Norfolk and Suffolk to the west of Norwich and Ipswich respectively. The institutional structures also overlap one another: the same Local Economic Partnership (New Anglia) covers both Ipswich and Norwich, and several rural authorities such as Forest Heath and Kings Lynn and West Norfolk were members of both the New Anglia LEP and before it was subsumed into the Combined Authority, the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough LEP.

Finally, each of these three urban areas has a recent history of developing specific sub-regional institutions. All three were part of the Coalition Government's City Deal programme, and all were part of work to develop new options for Devolution under the subsequent Conservative Government.

Each has a history of inter-authority and cross boundary working to address strategic planning and economic development issues through formal and informal structures going back many years, and this history has created a valuable repository of research material for analysis, including both primary and secondary sources, strategy documents, proposals from and to national government, final and draft reports, publically available meeting agendas and minutes, and coverage in the local, regional, national and specialist press.

Other urban areas in East Anglia would make for interesting case studies – the boundary-spanning areas of Kings Lynn and Yarmouth/Lowestoft for example – but they do not have the same immediately accessible store of research materials and identifiable actors. It is the three major urban areas of Ipswich, Norwich and Cambridge that offer the best opportunities to test robustly the theoretical framework.

INTERVIEW SELECTION AND PROCESS

Following the review of primary and second sources, approximately 20 individuals were initially identified in each case study area to be the subject of personal interviews. These individuals included local councillors, officers working for both local authorities and other public bodies, business leaders, academics who are taking or have taken an active participatory role in the institutions and governance of sub-regions currently and in the past.

After initial contacts, with non-replies, refusals and suggestions for additional research subjects, a final list of around 10 interviewees for each area was arrived at. In each case

study area the list included a cross section of interviewees from different institutions and backgrounds, but with enough overlap to be able to verify – or otherwise – any specific themes or issues that arose.

Overall 74 different individuals were contacted, and of those 28 full interviews were carried out. While this is a relatively small number of interviews, the nature of the research means that the pool of potential interview subjects is itself small, and the total number of those approached makes up the very substantial majority of those with first-hand 'in the room experience'. This was confirmed during the interviews, when interviewees suggested – without prompting – those who might also be worth contacting, and in almost every instance named individuals who had already been approached.

The results of this 'snowballing' approach was helpful in two ways: first, in confirming that the initial identified pool was more or less correct, and second in allowing for follow up approaches to subjects who had previously not replied or had been reluctant to participate citing 'several people that I have already spoken have mentioned that you would be a good person to talk to about my research'. This proved effective in getting agreement from several previously reluctant interviewees to take part (Bryman, 2016).

The ideal sample size for qualitative research is contested, with widely varying minima and maxima being suggested (Harvey, 2011; Bryman, 2016) from as few as 10 to as many as 150. However in this instance, where the pool of potential research subjects is small, a better measure is probably the proportion of potential subjects who took part, which is approaching 40%. When taking a grounded theory approach – which this research has not done – the concept of 'saturation' is used to describe that point at which new data is no longer generating new insights or properties (Bryman, 2016). In this research project an equivalent point was reached relatively early when it came to first order concepts, confirming that the data collected was likely to be sufficient for a robust theoretical model to be established.

The original intention had been to carry out interviews for each case study area over a relatively short period to ensure consistency and allow for cross-referencing, but in the event this proved to be impossible. Challenges around availability of extremely busy professionals and politicians meant that it took at least 12 months to complete each round of interviews, with multiple postponements and repeated study visits to each area.

All interviews bar one were carried out face to face, and in the most cases in a quiet and private environment. The exception was a phone interview carried out with a key figure in the Norwich case study, because they were only able to offer time while on holiday. All interviews, including the phone interview, were recorded securely to allow for later analysis and confirmation of contemporaneous notes.

Interview length varied somewhat, but was on average around an hour. The interviews were semi-structured, with a series of prompts along pre-planned lines to generate responses. The objective of the interviews was to collect first order constructs that could be used to generate second order constructs, from which in turn the theoretical model could be developed and refined. In keeping with Schütz's preference for lay language over technical or academic terminology, the questions and prompts used were designed to generate lay responses to describe phenomena relevant to the research.

A list of questions was developed beforehand (see Appendix 3) but these served as prompts to the researcher to explore avenues of interest, rather than words to use verbatim. For example one set of questions developed in advance asked "Is there a core area and a periphery? For example, in a city region, where is the city and where is the edge of the region round it"; in none of the interviews were these precise words used, but in many there would be conversation about whether a joint planning policy area had a 'definite edge', or whether it covered a 'specific area' or not. Thus the question would be answered, but as part of a series of exchanges in a flowing conversation (Giddens, 1984; Harré, 2002).

The design of the research process involves the active engagement of the researcher, in particular in using interview techniques that encourage the research subjects to 'perform' their interpretation of events and their roles within them (Inch, 2009). The use of semi-structured or researcher-guided interviews and of encouraging 'practice stories' to "let the respondent's voice come through" is an approach designed to generate the widest possible range of lay, or first order, constructs, while at the same time both minimising the impact of the researcher on those practice stories while acknowledging that some impact is inevitable (Burnham, 2004, p. 288).

The nature of the research meant that many of the participants were leading figures in the sub-regions being studied, fitting the definition of elites as 'those who occupy senior management and Board level positions within organisations' used in Harvey's advice on how to carry out interviews with business and political leaders:

> "… researchers should attempt to build a rapport with elite subjects from
> the moment they first contact them to the interview itself and beyond
> the interview. Before an interview, I try to be as transparent as possible
> and provide respondents with the following information: who I am,
> where I am working, what the nature of my research is (in non-academic
> jargon), who is sponsoring me, how long the interview will take, how the
> data will be used, where the results will be disseminated and whether
> the information will be attributed or anonymous. During the interview
> researchers must show that they have done their homework … for
> example, I have found myself being asked questions and assessed by the
> interviewee and it was important to project a positive impression in

*order to gain their respect and therefore improve the quality of their
responses to my questions."*

(Harvey, 2011, pp. 433-434).

The experience of many of the interviews carried out for this research project followed a similar pattern, and as already noted, my personal experience of the issues relating to planning and institutions at a sub-regional level was important in helping to establish that rapport.

In order to confirm the proposed methodology, and to better judge the likely response rates for requests for interviews, a pilot case study was carried out in one of the study areas, Ipswich. Potential interviewees were contacted in January 2017, and face to face interviews carried out on three separate days in February and March 2017, with two telephone interviews carried out in the same time period.

Seventeen different individuals were contacted initially as potential subjects for research interviews; a further two individuals were added to the list subsequently as a result of these initial contacts. Fifteen contacts replied, of which three declined to be interviewed. Twelve interviews were carried out, yielding over ten hours of recordings. The pilot confirmed that the selection of potential interviewees was more or less correct, with a representative cross-section of positive responses received and the 'snowball' approach leading to suggestions for further research subjects who had in fact been already contacted.

The main lessons learned during the pilot study were two-fold. First, as already described above, the theoretical model was underdeveloped and resulted in an over-emphasis on description over explaining the dynamics of sub-regions. The second, in terms of research process, was the challenge of engaging participants who were sometimes protected by 'gatekeeper' systems (PAs who answered emails for example) was emphasised, meaning that relying on standardised emails and covering letters wasn't sufficient, and follow up personalised messages were necessary to catch the would-be participant's attention and convince them that it was worthwhile to participate (it is worth noting that while this was an issue in Ipswich, it turned out to be much more of an issue in Cambridge where a far greater proportion of responses were refusals to participate – something that seems likely to be down to 'research fatigue': Ipswich has had almost no research done on it as a sub-region, while Cambridge has been a frequent subject of academic enquiry).

The interviews were recorded using a handheld recorder and then transcribed: not every word was transcribed, but sections, paragraphs and sentences relevant to the research project were taken down in full. The transcripts were analysed for descriptions of the rules, practices and of strategic objectives followed by different actors. The transcripts were also examined for evidence of instances of change, and the interviewee's perceptions of the forces and processes that lay behind those instances. The NVivo software tool was used to

ensure consistency of coding approaches, and to allow for cross comparisons between case studies.

Where particular governance institutions were discussed, the transcript was analysed for evidence of the form that institution took and any underlying reasons for why that particular form might exist at any given time, and what changes in form might have occurred. As well as institutions, the transcripts were interrogated for references to key events and relationships, in order to build up further a picture of the dynamics of the sub-regional governance arrangements. Patterns of both commonality and contrast were assessed, from which observed regularities could be identified as part of the second stage of developing the theoretical framework. These regularities, together with the second order constructs derived from the initial analysis of the transcripts and the contemporaneous notes taken during the interviews, were used to posit potential mechanisms that might have given rise to them.

In order to preserve the anonymity of the interviewees, but to ensure that the case study and context from which the material is drawn is made clear, where a reference is taken from an interview a fixed shorthand is used as a reference: IP01, IP02 and so on for the each interviewee from Ipswich, NR01 and so on for interviewees from Norwich, and CA01 and so on for interviewees from Cambridge.

Primary sources, such as reports to and minutes of meetings or published reports and documents, and secondary sources such as newspaper reports and journal articles were subject to a similar process of analysis, and used to confirm and further develop the understanding of events, processes, relationships and strategic objectives. As an example of the importance of bringing both the primary sources and the interviews to bear, a brief set of minutes of a meeting held in one of the case study areas seemed to provide possible evidence of a serious breakdown in relationships (indicating a meeting that had been scheduled to discuss several important items ended within a few minutes, after the participants failed to agree the minutes of the previous meeting as a correct record) something that was then explored at greater length and confirmed in a series of face-to-face interviews with participants in and observers of the events in question.

"I am a regionalist; that's quite a hard thing to be in East Anglia where people can't even agree where the region is" [CA01]

Eastern England has often appeared to pose a problem for the drafters of regional governance proposals. While there is consensus that Norfolk and Suffolk are clearly part of the "east", any broader definition becomes harder to arrive at. Northern Essex is often linked to Suffolk, while southern Essex is seen as part of London's immediate hinterland. Cambridgeshire is usually considered part of the "east", but Peterborough – a relatively recent addition to the ceremonial county of Cambridgeshire – is as much part of the East Midlands as it is part of Eastern England.

In the creation of Government Offices of the regions in 1994, the former East Anglian region covering Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire was combined with three counties from the former SERPLAN area surrounding London – Essex, Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire – to create a new entity to be known as the Government Office for the East of England.

Figure ix – East of England Region, shown within England

Unlike most of the other regions created in 1994, the East of England region had no obvious historical precedent for its shape and extent, something that was reflected in the "attachment" survey carried out for EEDA in 1999. Residents of Bedfordshire and in particular Hertfordshire and Essex saw themselves as being part of a greater (as opposed to Greater) London, while residents of the other areas saw themselves as being part of their county and their city/town, and to a lesser extent part of "East Anglia" (MORI, 2000).

Proponents of regional governance approaches for England have frequently sought natural 'capitals' for their proposed regions. The Fabian 'New Heptarchy' pamphlets, for example, proposed a range of regional centres: "The great towns of Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, Newcastle, Nottingham, Leeds etc must be considered as centres…for all local government purposes" (Sanders, 1905, p. 5). But the eastern part of England, with its lack of such a singular 'great town', has been something of a conundrum for regionalists from the Fabians onwards.

When Wilson's Labour Government created Economic Planning Regions in 1965, the lack of an obvious 'capital' for East Anglia was a matter for concern and discussion. Shankland, Cox, in their report on the potential for expansion of Ipswich noted that "second order functions…(eg government regional offices, television and broadcasting, electricity board headquarters) are shared between Cambridge, Norwich and Ipswich" rather than being clustered in a single regional capital (Shankland/Cox, 1966, p. 4).

These consultants considered that it was possible that either one of these three existing centres could 'upgrade' to the role of regional capital, or a wholly new capital could develop in the geographic centre of the region (the report did not specify where this might be – the schematic maps in the report appear to suggest Thetford or Bury St Edmunds, but this is implicit rather than explicit). They went on to say: "If there is not positive direction, each of the major centres will probably acquire more regional functions, and East Anglia will remain polycentric. There might be advantages in deliberately spreading the load of regional functions between Cambridge, Norwich and Ipswich". This was left for the Economic Planning Council and Board to consider.

The polycentricity of East Anglia remains a reality, and continued to be a feature of the subsequent East of England region. As one interviewee in Ipswich pointed out, the essentially flat topography of Eastern England helps make it perhaps the closest place in the UK to the theoretical abstract space in Christaller's Central Place Theory of regularly spaced urban settlements [Interviewee IP05 – further references to interviews will use these abbreviated anonymous references] (Getis and Getis, 1966).

The vexed nature of the definition of East Anglia was further evidenced by the attempt by the Conservative Government elected in 2015 to establish a Devolution Deal for the region. What had begun as efforts by individual counties to put forward bids for additional Government funding in exchange for new governance structures, notably a directly elected

mayor, rapidly turned into a bewildering series of alternative geographies with different combinations of counties and even parts of counties developed under significant pressure from leading Government figures, culminating in the announcement by then Chancellor George Osborne of a Deal for the whole of East Anglia (Osborne *et al.*, 2016). Almost immediately opposition to the directly-elected mayoralty and concerns about local interests being subsumed by regional ones led to the collapse of the project in considerable acrimony.

However, what the regional proponents conceptualised as the polycentricity of a region was as much the persistence of an older pattern of urban areas with surrounding hinterland – in modern terms housing market areas, travel to work areas, areas of economic influence and so forth. The major urban areas of Ipswich, Norwich and Cambridge continue to form the centres of these areas of influence, with their own formal and informal structures of governance, and with their own distinct economic and political cultural inheritance.

Figure x – East of England, showing the three case study urban areas

Geographically Ipswich sits at the edge of Suffolk, but perhaps more important is the way in which it is seen as being not wholly "of" the county of which it is the county town. From its very earliest existence as a Saxon trading post Ipswich was a commercial centre while ecclesiastical and administrative activities were located at Bury St Edmunds, in the western part of Suffolk.

This division, more than one thousand years old, was reflected in the existence until 1974 of separate counties of East Suffolk and West Suffolk, with Ipswich as a County Borough – in modern terms a unitary council - and was still detectable in the present-day interviews carried out for this research. One respondent summed up the difference between Norwich and Ipswich: "... there's a degree of a division between Suffolk and Ipswich. There's a competing...county town in Bury." [IP05].

This "strange relationship" between Ipswich and its county [IP07] perhaps stems from the widespread perception that Ipswich is a "northern town that's found itself in East Anglia" [IP05]. Starting from its origins as a trading place and port, through the growth of an industrial heritage in the 19th and 20th centuries building agricultural machinery for the surrounding rural areas, and the development of a substantial sector in insurance in the post WWII years, Ipswich both has seen itself and has been seen by others as something distinctively different to the notion of 'Suffolk', in a way that Bury St Edmunds has not: "My perception is...that the people of Ipswich don't feel a familial relationship with rural Suffolk, or vice versa…[a large part of Suffolk] still looks to Bury as their County town" [IP08 Ipswich interview].

A microcosm of this sense of 'otherness' can be found in the example of Westerfield, a small village on the northern edge of Ipswich, and included in the Ipswich Policy Area for planning purposes since 2013 (Suffolk Coastal District Council, 2013). Despite being part of Ipswich "... in any logical arrangement, … they're not - and they don't want to be; they see themselves as Woodbridge people" [IP05]; the centre of Ipswich is 8 minutes by train from Westerfield, while Woodbridge is a 10 mile car journey using Ipswich's ring road, yet it is Woodbridge to which the people of Westerfield feel they are attached. Or as the same interviewee put it: "East Suffolk looks towards Ipswich to an extent, but it doesn't feel proud of Ipswich" [IP05].

Politics in Ipswich has tended to reflect and emphasise this difference. Ipswich, like Norwich and a markedly lesser extent Cambridge, has more often than not been 'a red island in a sea of blue' [NR01] and that has literally coloured the actions of key actors in the town. For example in the 1980s a proposed variation of Ipswich Borough Council's boundaries to take in surrounding suburbs – by common consent a move that would have been entirely sensible administratively – was blocked by the Labour leadership of the Council because of fears that these (Conservative-voting) suburbs would threaten the political hegemony of the Labour Party in the town's politics.

Even as early as the first efforts at a sub-regional plan for East Suffolk in the 1930s, Ipswich declined to take part (Abercrombie and Kelly, 1935). This sense of separation and otherness permeates the attitudes of the players both inside and outside Ipswich in this study, reinforced by a keen sense of political difference and by a sense that Ipswich is 'looked down on' by the county that surrounds it. For actors within Ipswich in particular this

manifests itself in a caution about the extent to which any process of collaboration puts at risk the institutions of governance that instantiate the power of those actors.

While narratives about Ipswich frequently place it as being 'outside' Suffolk, the opposite is true of Norwich and Norfolk. During the interviews for the this research respondents from not just Norwich but the other case study areas generally described a situation where Norwich is unarguably the urban centre – the county town – for the bulk of Norfolk (it is perhaps not true to the same extent in the western-most parts of the county which have traditionally looked south and west across the Fens towards Cambridge and Peterborough). One interviewee from Ipswich, contrasting with attitudes to his own town, said: "Norfolk people are proud of their county town, Norwich" [IP05]

Norwich was historically one of the most important urban areas in England – it was third in size only to London and Bristol in the Middle Ages – and its distance and relative isolation from the rest of the country, and proximity via the North Sea to the trading ports of Germany and the Netherlands, meant that it remained a significant centre for the manufacture of and trading in cloth and leather. The wealth of this period is reflected in the number of churches within the historic city walls, reputedly the highest density of any city in northern Europe.

By the 19th century Norwich was the centre of an increasingly wealthy agricultural economy, with its own banking and in particular insurance sector; the latter remains a major part of the city's employment base. While much of the Norwich's manufacturing has disappeared in recent decades, the establishment of the University of East Anglia, and the subsequent development of the Norwich Research Park by the University and its partners have shifted the emphasis of the city's economy towards science and research (New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership, 2014).

From a very early stage Norwich had a reputation of active political and social engagement; one of the earliest forms of Poor Law was created in the city in the 16th century, and in the early 18th century the proportion of adult males (about one third) with the vote was one of the highest in England. Norwich saw the first British regional newspaper – the *Norwich Post*, founded in the early 1700s – and from the 17th to the 19th century a substantial and sophisticated culture of political debate, dispute and dissent grew up in the city.

Like Ipswich, Norwich was granted County Borough status in the *Local Government Act 1888* (it had been a County Corporate since 1404, though that status was largely ceremonial by the end of the 19th century) and was thus able to forge a clear political identity separate to that of the county that surrounded it (*Local Government Act 1888*). From 1933 newly Labour-controlled Norwich City Council undertook an ambitious programme of council house building - by 1939 more than three quarters of newly built homes in the city had been built by the City Council (in 1919 Norwich had around 28,000 homes – by 1939 the City Council had built more than 7,000 new Council Houses) (Boughton, 2015).

This concrete embodiment of municipal socialism at work continued at an accelerated pace in the years after 1945, and by the 1970s Norwich had the largest concentration of Council Houses of any urban area in England (Boughton, 2015). As with Ipswich there was a clear difference in politics between the Labour city and the Conservative rural areas that surrounded it, a difference that grew as the high point of rural socialism in the 1945 General Election - when Labour won half the seats in Norfolk on the back of votes from a rural working class - faded gradually as that rural working class gradually dissipated as agriculture mechanised.

What resulted, and what is reflected heavily in the interviews for this research, is that while there is a shared recognition that Norwich is the dominant urban centre of central and eastern Norfolk, there is a radical divergence in opinion of what that means, and what the implications of that status are. For political and administrative actors in Norwich, the city is the driving force of the local economy and the city council is the apparatus through which substantially interventionist political programmes have been delivered. There is a clear division between the urban and suburban areas of the city and the small towns and countryside beyond: as one leading figure put it, Norwich is "… this larger urban area, with an urban demographic", viewing those outside the city as having a different "… more suburban, rural perspective" [NR01].

Those from these more rural areas accept the notion of Norwich's centrality to a larger sub-region, but understand 'greater Norwich' as going further beyond the immediate urban and suburban area to include the smaller towns and villages, and also deeply resent the notion of being dictated to by the city: "… we accept that Norwich has got to grow, but we're not having Norwich telling us where that growth has got to go" [NR10 interview].

The situation in Norwich appears to be one where a city with a centuries-long history political and social culture of independent activist interventions within its boundaries and a clearly accepted position of 'place leadership' (GVA Grimley Limited (on behalf of Norwich City Council), 2017) within its wider area is struggling with a blurring of both these aspects of its character. The definition of 'Norwich' is contested and uncertain, and actors from rural areas previously assumed to be subservient to the city are asserting a right to have a say in what Norwich is, what it represents, and what sorts of interventions are delivered through its institutions of power.

This uncertainty manifests itself in a strongly defensive mind-set when it comes to the structures of governance in Norwich and its hinterland. Mistrusting of the motives of others, and very conscious of perceived existential threats to the institutions through which they actuate power, actors in the wider Norwich case study place a great priority on preserving those institutions of governance within which they operate.

If Ipswich is seen as an 'alien/other' in the context of Suffolk, and the definition of 'Norwich' within Norfolk is contested and in flux, Cambridge within Cambridgeshire – and just as

importantly, Cambridge the city alongside Cambridge the university – offers an understanding of the past that is more consensual, albeit with a future where the global status of the 'Cambridge brand' interacting with locally based institutions and strategies is beginning to cause that consensus to fray.

Unlike Norwich and Ipswich, Cambridge was never a County Borough; the town (it did not become a city until 1951) was not large enough to meet the minimum threshold of a population of 50,000 set down in the 1888 Act. A subsequent attempt in 1913 to change the status of local government in Cambridge, after it had become apparent that some other smaller towns and cities – including Oxford - were being granted County Borough status after all, was rejected after Cambridgeshire County Council objected that more than half the rates raised in the county would be lost and services across the rest of Cambridgeshire would be rendered unviable (Hansard, 1914).

Thus in terms of its formal governance institutions, Cambridge did not have the substantial period of separation or independence from its surrounding hinterland that Norwich and Ipswich had. What Cambridge did have, and indeed has done for over 800 years, was in the University of Cambridge an institution that acted as an alternative locus of power and influence in the affairs of the city. The question "who speaks for Cambridge" is one that has never had a wholly clear answer because of this duality [CA01].

This importance of the University of Cambridge was emphasised by the shift in the approach to planning that took place in Cambridge in the 50 years between 1950 and the end of the century, both in the establishment of a conservative anti-growth approach immediately after the Second World War, and for the full-blown reversal of that policy half a century later.

For much of the post-war period the main strategic objective of planning for Cambridge and the surrounding area was to prevent the growth of the city. This was spelt out by the Holford and Wright's 1950 report to Cambridgeshire County Council's planning committee: "The Cambridge tradition is cherished by the present inhabitants, not merely as something to be preserved but to be continued. … There is bound to be objection to changes that disturb historic associations or threaten the particular amenities which many different societies in Cambridge enjoy, and there will be serious opposition if it is proposed to change without strong reason conditions of life and work and movement that do very well as they are" (Holford and Wright, 1950, p. vii).

Concerned about the city's rapid pre-war growth, and driven by a desire to preserve the special character of the city as a place of learning, Holford and Wright's recommendations - that the population of Cambridge should not be allowed to rise above 100,000, building within the city should be strictly controlled, and that a tightly constrained green belt should be put in place to prevent new building on the edges of the city - were adopted and formed the basis for planning policy until the last decade of the century (Sharp, 1963).

By the 1990s it was apparent that much of the Holford and Wright approach had failed. A primary objective had been to reduce traffic as well as to constrain population, but with the exponential growth of car ownership –not fully understood in 1950 – Cambridge's expansion had not been halted, but had rather 'jumped the Green Belt' to towns and villages across the wider region and was commuting back to jobs in the city by car, putting huge pressure on the transport network (Baker, 2010).

Moreover, the constraints on growth were beginning to run counter to the global objectives of the University of Cambridge and the growing network of science and technology businesses around it. The Mott Report, presented in 1969, had led the University to develop the Cambridge Science Park for both its increasing number of spin-off companies and for outside businesses wanting to co-locate with Cambridge's research work (Mott, 1969; Ablett and Cambridge Network, 1998; Hinoul, 2008). By the mid-1990s these two strategic approaches – the planning system's 'limit growth' and the University's 'Silicon Fen' model – were increasingly and obviously at odds with one another (Platt, 2000; Platt, 2017).

The refusal by South Cambridgeshire District Council of planning permission for a new business park promoted by the Wellcome Institute for work on the human genome project, and serious concerns that Cambridge's status as a global centre of excellence in science was being put at risk as a result, led to the launch by leading figures in the University and the cluster of high-tech businesses around it of the Cambridge Futures project, which engaged with a wide range of actors from different institutions including local government to develop alternative visions for how Cambridge might evolve in the 21st century (Platt, 2000; Kirk, Cotton and Gates, 2012; Platt, 2017).

The ground-breaking work by Cambridge Futures, using innovative and engaged forms of consultation that appeared to demonstrate that the planning approach that had been followed for nearly 50 years was in fact the *least* popular option for the future, led to a significant shift in the spatial and planning policies in the Cambridge sub-region. Subsequent work on the final Cambridgeshire Structure Plan, the East of England Plan and the Local Plans of Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire emphasised sustainable growth, the development of new transit spines and support for the high-tech economy around the city (Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City, 2004; Government Office for the East of England and Department of Communities and Local Government, 2008; Cambridge City Council, 2018; South Cambridgeshire District Council, 2018).

These two bookends to the second half of the twentieth century in Cambridge help to emphasise the specific culture of institutional collaboration over planning in the city. In 1950 a report commissioned by the County Council recommended a very conservative approach to growth and development in Cambridge, influenced to a very considerable degree by what were perceived as 'university' interests at the time; and in 1997 it was the University that took a leading role in creating a new institution in Cambridge Futures that helped to more or

less reverse the strategy set down in 1950, a change that was made concrete by Structure and Local Plans adopted by the County and District Councils.

While interviewees in Cambridge emphasise the dual centres of power that have developed in the city, this is not described in terms of the mutually antagonistic 'town and gown' split that is often said to characterise Oxford (Lazzeroni and Piccaluga, 2015). Rather, Cambridge's particular institutional history in not having had County Borough status, and thus lacking the kind of institutional prestige and memory that comes from that status in Norwich and Ipswich, led Cambridge's actors to a place where collaboration across institutional lines was seen as the norm, with different local authorities, the University and business interests working together flexibly through a matrix of institutional structures to shape strategic policy objectives.

Politically too Cambridge's history is somewhat different to that of Ipswich and Norwich. While the two latter areas had long-running Labour Council administrations, and generally elected Labour MPs from the 1930s onwards, Cambridge was much more politically diverse. Between 1973 and 2000 the longest period of majority party control was just four years, with more than half of this period seeing the Council in No Overall Control. Since 2000 Cambridge has seen a 12 year period of Liberal Democrat control (2000-2012) and a seven year period of Labour control (2014 to the present day), but these are exceptions to what had previously been the rule. Cambridge, unlike Ipswich and Norwich, was less obviously politically at odds with the areas that surrounded it.

The different political and institutional histories of these three urban areas help to shape and inform the different attitudes and narratives of their actors. In Ipswich there is a long-standing sense of otherness or disconnection from the surrounding area of Suffolk, a feeling that works both ways as rural Suffolk looks to other urban areas as the centre of their 'place'. For actors in Ipswich, therefore, there is a defensiveness about the institutions through which those actors are empowered, but also an acknowledgement that the historic disconnection between Ipswich and East Suffolk needs active effort to be overcome. This dual underlying strategy is evidenced by the prevalent narrative around 'co-operation' in Ipswich, a narrative whose limits reach a point where institutions of power are seen to be threatened.

Norwich has a long history of place-leadership in Norfolk, and a recent history of municipal activism that forms a core part of the political culture of the dominant political party in the city. The result is an inherited belief by actors in Norwich that 'the city' is a potent symbol of power, albeit that the definition of what 'Norwich' means is disputed and contentious. Collaboration between actors from different parts of the area has been limited, and not always seen as a partnership of equals. As a consequence many of the actors in the Norwich case study perceive the bodies through which they instantiate power as being critical

institutions that are under threat, making institutional preservation the highest strategic priority.

A history of collaboration and power sharing through different institutions marks out Cambridge as having a different inheritance in its institutional/political culture to Ipswich and Norwich. The existence of a dual institutional power matrix in Cambridge, with the University being perceived rightly or wrongly as being as influential as the formal governance structures of local government, and a history of collaboration and sharing of sovereignty has created a culture where actors in Cambridge have appeared, until very recently, less possessive of specific formal institutional structures, and more open to co-operative approaches and innovative institutional forms.

These three East Anglian urban areas have much in common – their urbanity within a largely rural hinterland, a recent political history as 'red dots in a sea of blue' that is particularly marked in Ipswich and Norwich, and the shared challenge of a pressure for growth that has overspilled their institutional boundaries – but beneath the surface there are subtle and important differences. Those differences play out in the strategies and narratives that actors in each place follow, with important consequences for the institutional evolution of each.

Ipswich is the county town of Suffolk in Eastern England; built on the banks of the river Orwell, it has a twin history as both a hub for the agricultural economy of the region and a trading port linking Eastern England to other parts of the UK and to continental Europe. While it is one of the largest urban areas of Eastern England it is still a relatively small city (formally it is actually still a town, not having been granted city status) with a population a little under 150,000 within its administrative boundaries and around 180,000 in the built up area.

During the 1960s Ipswich was considered as a potential site for significant expansion under the third wave of the New Towns programme, but these plans were eventually abandoned. Gradual housing development in the second half of the twentieth century on either side of Ipswich Borough Council's tightly drawn administrative boundary has led to a situation where it is now acknowledged that there is insufficient land to meet future housing need within those boundaries (Ipswich Borough Council, 2017).

In governance terms Ipswich was a County Borough between 1889 and local government reorganisation in 1974, and thereafter a district council in a wholly two-tier Suffolk. In common with other former County Boroughs across England there have been residual tensions and conflicts between Ipswich and Suffolk over which authority has primacy in local affairs, with several unsuccessful attempts by Ipswich to become a Unitary Authority over the last 20 years (Hehir, 2008).

SUBREGIONAL PLANNING IN IPSWICH AND EAST SUFFOLK

The earliest major effort at developing a sub-regional plan for East Suffolk arose from the *Town and Country Planning Act 1932*; Abercrombie and Kelly's East Suffolk Regional Survey, published in 1935 (Abercrombie and Kelly, 1935). In line with the recommendations of the Chelmsford Committee (Chelmsford Committee, 1931) and the stipulations of the Act that such regional surveys should be voluntary affairs, the East Suffolk Regional Survey was indicative rather than prescriptive, and three of the area's local authorities declined to take part – including Ipswich itself.

Following the original proposal by the Town and Country Planning Association in 1961 that the town could be a focus for substantial population growth (Town and Country Planning Association, 1961; Vincent and Gorbing, 1963) Ipswich was selected along with Northampton and Peterborough for the New Towns programme. Shankland, Cox and

Associates were given the task of developing proposals, and in 1966 published the first part of their report to the Minister for Housing and Local Government outlining the potential for the expansion of Ipswich: the eventual population of the expanded town was to be 'about 270,000 people' (Shankland/Cox, 1966, introduction to report, unpaginated); the town would "continue to be the principal shopping and service centre for its expanding sub-region".

As well as the geographic form of expansion, Shankland, Cox were concerned with the institutional mechanisms for ensuring that the scheme was delivered. The consultants were strongly of the view that Ipswich's expansion was dependent on the creation of a Development Corporation to manage the process. The report noted that it was important to consider expansion within a wider context than the town itself, and criticised the existing New Towns instigated in the 1940s for not doing so (1966, p. 16).

However, local farming and landowner groups opposed the expansion because of the loss of agricultural land, and were backed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. The infighting in government slowed the project down, and it was only finally approved after a planning inquiry in 1968, over a 'much reduced area' (Odell, 2003). By this time cost overruns on the expansion of Swindon, and the worsening financial situation stemming from the devaluation of sterling in 1967 led the Treasury to advise the Cabinet that the expansion of Ipswich should be abandoned "in light of the costs of the project to the national exchequer at a time of severe difficulties in Government finances" (Odell, 2003).

Reflecting the expansion of Ipswich's built up area beyond the local authority boundaries of the town itself, the Suffolk Structure Plan, first adopted in 1979 and revised three times before it was superseded by the East of England Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) in the 2000s, introduced a geographically defined Ipswich Policy Area (IPA) "which extends into the three adjoining districts – Mid Suffolk, Babergh, and Suffolk Coastal – … as the functional area for strategic policy purposes, including the provision of guidance on the future scale and distribution of housing growth around the town and the monitoring of growth" (Suffolk County Council, 1986).

Figure xi – Ipswich Policy Area, 2015 (Ipswich Borough Council, 2015a)

Emerging regional planning policy documents referred to both the potential for growth and expansion at Ipswich and the need for cross-boundary co-operation between local authorities to realise that potential. Both RPG6 and its successor, the RSS for the East of England, contained specific policies setting out policies for the town's expansion, and proposed mechanisms for how it should be delivered (Department of the Environment Transport and the Regions and Government Office for the East of England, 2000; Government Office for the East of England and Department of Communities and Local Government, 2008).

However, in trying to assign precise housing growth numbers to different areas, the RSS around Ipswich became highly complex. Local authority boundaries were overlaid by not just the Ipswich Policy Area, inherited from the Structure Plan, but also a new cross-authority designation known as the Haven Gateways Sub-Region. This sub-region, covering the ports of Harwich, Felixstowe and Ipswich and the areas around them, was designated by the Government as a 'Growth Point' in 2006, a "special status [that] will help deliver critical funding for vital infrastructure and development projects through a new long-term partnership between the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) and the Haven Gateway Partnership" (Fordham Research for Ipswich Borough Council, 2008, p. 66).

The Examination in Public (EiP) into the RSS noted that "the splitting of district housing provision involves unnecessary complications and rigidities for local planning…[and there is a] cross-boundary issue requiring special treatment as arising at Ipswich, which introduces a third layer of complexity in draft Plan Policy HG3" (Fordham Research for Ipswich Borough Council, 2008, p. 66). The EiP Panel had to issue a further letter of clarification to the Regional Assembly (East of England Draft Plan Examination in Public Panel Secretariat, 2006) after their report was published in order to confirm how these layers of complexity were to be treated, and the subsequent East of England Plan draft published in 2008 referred the

boundaries and numbers back to the relevant local authorities: "The geographical extent of the Gateway and, within it, an Ipswich Policy Area spanning Ipswich and adjacent parts of Babergh, Mid Suffolk and Suffolk Coastal districts should be agreed for monitoring purposes between EERA and the local authorities concerned" (Government Office for the East of England and Department of Communities and Local Government, 2008, p. 89).

What differentiated Ipswich from Norwich and Cambridge during this period is that while the latter two cities undertook major efforts during the 2000s both to prepare for and to implement the policies emerging from the East of England Plan, Ipswich had made little concrete progress. There is no equivalent in Ipswich to the Joint Core Strategy for Greater Norwich, or the interlocked Local Plans in Greater Cambridge (Greater Norwich Development Partnership, 2014; Cambridge City Council, 2018; South Cambridgeshire District Council, 2018). After the building out of new sites at Kesgrave in the 1980s and 1990s the efforts to identify another strategic site for meeting Ipswich's housing needs "was an adventure that took 15 years to deliver a decision, let alone a development" [IP01 interview]. Other efforts at cross border planning "just faded away" [IP05].

The abolition of regional structures by the Coalition Government in 2010 appeared briefly to do away with these complexities before any such arrangements were agreed and established, but the NPPF with its Duty to Co-operate and requirements for a five year land supply rapidly reintroduced a new version of the same issue. The Ipswich Policy Area mechanism was revived to initiate collaboration between local authorities over planning and housing numbers; new links and partnerships were emphasised while others – for example the Haven Gateway which was such a major focus for institutional cooperation in 2006 –faded away to near irrelevance.

As with the other urban areas examined as part of this research project, Ipswich was successful in pursuing a City Deal – signed in 2013 – during the Coalition Government period. As one of the 'second generation' City Deals, Ipswich's was less ambitious than the first wave, and certainly less significant that the Cambridge City Deal in terms of targets and resources. Nonetheless it was a successful multi-agency approach to identifying the needs of the town and its hinterland – notably around shortcomings in skills and education - and in collaboration to address those needs (Cabinet Office and Deputy Prime Minister's Office, 2013).

The somewhat chaotic Devolution Deal process in 2015 and 2016 appeared to have a quite different impact in Suffolk than it did in Norfolk. While in the latter the result was ill-feeling on a very wide and deep scale, in Suffolk the relationships built seemed to be more positive. After the failure of the Deal the different authorities in Greater Ipswich explored a number of initiatives such as the work begun in 2016 on the Suffolk Planning Infrastructure Framework (SPIF) as an informal partnership between the different local authorities in the

County and the revived Ipswich Policy Area mechanism. But as with the period up to 2010, actual outcomes on the ground seemed less apparent than might have been anticipated.

As discussed in detail in the theoretical framework the analysis of each case study is done by bringing together the various strategic objectives pursued by local actors and the relative priority that they give to each and the constraints that operate on those actors, and by observing how these two dimensions – the relative priorities of objectives and the nature of constraints – vary over both time and place draw tentative conclusions about the underlying forces that might be at work to produce the observed changes.

Figure xii - Areas of Interaction between Strategic Objectives and Constraints (see figures v and vi above)

Strategy		Narratives			Practices			Rules		
		+ive	=	-ive	Co-op	=	Un-coop	Stable	=	Unstable
Recognition	+									
	=									
	-									
Investment	+									
	=									
	-									
Control	+									
	=									
	-									
Self-Preservation /Ambition	+									
	=									
	-									

In Ipswich, more than in Norwich and far more than in Cambridge, the strategic objective of *Recognition* looms large. As with the other two urban areas, there is a strong desire for investment in the area, but there is a broad acceptance that for that to happen there first needs to be a recognition by internal and external agencies, notably the Government, that Ipswich and Suffolk have both problems and opportunities that will respond positively to such investment. In other words, what Cambridge takes for granted, Ipswich and Suffolk very much does not.

One experienced professional pointed to the way in which neighbouring areas had achieved investment in infrastructure to support their economies, but Ipswich and Suffolk had not, highlighting the fact that successive Governments had invested heavily in A12 as far as the Suffolk boundary, but not beyond it: "Suffolk absolutely punches below its weight" [IP01]. As another put it, "Ipswich for a town of its size just slips under the radar" [IP09].

An interesting angle on this was suggested by one interviewee when describing the process of developing the initial Suffolk Devolution deal in 2015; they felt that the original bid was 'weak' as a result of an absence of any sort of prior relationship between local actors and civil servants in Government: "that know-how was missing" [IP01]. In other words and despite the success of the City Deal bid two years previously, while Norwich and Cambridge were talking to Government about investment, Ipswich and Suffolk were still learning how to go about having that conversation.

A similar sense of being a step removed from pursuing a strategy of *Investment* could be found in the 2015 Ipswich Vision, drawn up by the Business Improvement District (Ipswich Central (BID) et al, 2015): one interviewee familiar with it observed that "…an issue that the Ipswich Vision is still getting to grips with is an appropriate geography for inward investment and place marketing…it's about identifying the best channel for getting something done, and I'm not sure we've cracked that" [IP08].

The issue of recognition is both an internal and an external one, and one of the key challenges that many local actors in the town identified was that "Norfolk doesn't look down on Norwich in the same way that Suffolk looks down on Ipswich"; if strategic objectives around investment were to be followed "there is a growing understanding that you can't have a successful Suffolk without a successful Ipswich", and making sure that this 'understanding' permeates local, regional and national discourse is a fundamental strategic objective [IP09]. Thus *Recognition* is positioned as a necessary precursor for the strategy of *Investment*.

At a local level actors in and around Ipswich pursue a range of similar and overlapping *Investment* objectives through the formal and informal institutional infrastructure of governance for the town and its surrounding areas. The area of overlap is often summarised under the catch-all term 'growth', but within that umbrella concept there are different priorities and meanings.

For the professionals working in the various local authorities growth is about meeting a demographic need for housing; put simply, more homes are needed, so they should be provided. As one interviewee described the process, the 'growth number (of homes) is identified, and then we try to identify constraints' [IP08]. Local authority members in Ipswich also expressed their support for housing growth, but their objective is somewhat differently framed. For them the purpose is to provide more and better housing because

doing so is a social good for local people; in contrast to the officers, there was an explicit focus on affordable and social rented housing [IP03, IP04].

Many interviewees frame their desire for investment through the context of shortages of skills in the area: as one interviewee put it when referring to the East Anglian Devolution deal proposals, a key driver for support in Suffolk for the largest scale project was "to get some of the benefits from Cambridge's growth" [IP04], meaning the uplift in skills and productivity that would come from the spread of the Cambridge high tech economy.

But above all the support for growth by local actors is linked to investment by central government in infrastructure. In describing the approach by Suffolk's various local actors to the central government Devolution initiative, an interviewee set out the thought process: "Devolution was seen as a mechanism by which you'd get money back for infrastructure and a means [by which] you'd get local autonomy over infrastructure spending decisions" [IP01]. This theme of lack of investment in major infrastructure such as road and rail links, and the resulting limits that that this lack of investment is viewed as having imposed on the Ipswich and broader Suffolk economy, appeared repeatedly in the strategies of all different local actors.

The same interviewee continued "there was real concern that we hadn't achieved up to then with regard to the infrastructure - the failure to get investment was self-evident"; a local authority member said "We were never going to get major strategic infrastructure projects..." without the opportunity that the Devolution proposals offered; a local authority officer emphasised that the two biggest challenges facing Ipswich are the need for skills and training and investment in infrastructure [IP01, IP02, IP06].

While the need for *Recognition* and the desire for *Investment* are broadly shared across Greater Ipswich, the strategic objective of *Control* has been of particular concern to the actors in areas around Ipswich, but less so to Ipswich itself. This objective stems almost entirely from the NPPF, and its insistence on a five year supply of development sites to meet housing need.

The failure to have such a supply can lead to a significant loss of control over the development management process through the application of the 'tilted balance' assessment, something that was brought home to the rural authorities around Ipswich with the loss of a major planning appeal case (*Suffolk Coastal District Council (Appellant) v Hopkins Homes Ltd and another (Respondents)*, 2017). Along with Suffolk Coastal, Babergh and Mid Suffolk also came under considerable pressure during this period for failing to identify a five year land supply: as more than one interviewee noted, that has "focused minds" [IP01, IP04, IP10].

For rural district councils bordering Ipswich then, this fear of loss of control over what is a politically critical policy lever for politicians needing to respond to the wishes of their local

support coalitions led to an adoption of what is not just the language of the growth agenda but a specific and separate strategic objective.

One Ipswich politician noted that all three surrounding districts had recently lost appeals over the land supply issue, and this had been a major factor in ensuring their co-operation in discussions over the Devolution Deal and other areas of collaboration: "...it's marvellously concentrated their minds" [IP04]. Another interviewee explained that the conjunction of failure to have a five-year land supply and impending all-out elections in two neighbouring rural district councils was a significant driver in the adoption of a cautiously pro-growth agenda [IP01].

The final strategic objective, and one that was identifiable in many of the interviews carried out in Ipswich, was that of *Institutional Ambition and Self-preservation*. Ipswich, like many former County Boroughs, has had a history over the last twenty years of proposals or active campaigns for some sort of unitary authority status based on the town, and there have been initiatives that have promoted unitaries on a wider 'Greater Ipswich' area that includes the nearby town and port of Felixstowe, or based on the current county boundaries (Hehir, 2008). Even when all actors are at pains to emphasise their collaboration and partnership working with one another, it was noticeable how frequently the residual tensions from previous local government reorganisation debates were raised.

For example, politicians in Ipswich referred to "the County Council asserting itself" as it facilitated Suffolk-wide partnerships, while explaining that for the ruling party in the town a major reason for wanting a Devolution deal for Norfolk and Suffolk rather than just Suffolk was that they were wary of any new institutional arrangement that reinforced the importance of the county boundaries [IP02]. A narrative that counties are "too big to be local, too small to be strategic" clearly forms a strand of the strategic objectives of Ipswich's town-based actors.

Similarly those operating within county-wide structures were also keen to emphasise the importance of operating through county-wide institutions: one interviewee made much of the fact that "the County Council is THE [their emphasis] key infrastructure provider" [IP02, IP04, IP08]. The roll out of the important skills element of the Greater Ipswich City Deal gradually became a 'county-wide' scheme as a result of what one observer called "the County Council wanting to justify their existence" [IP04].

Similarly, after the failure of the Devolution Deal and the emergence of new forms of co-operation between the authorities in Suffolk such as the Suffolk Planning Infrastructure Framework (SPIF), despite not having formal powers over strategic planning, actors at the County Council were keen to avoid terms that down-played their role: "the County doesn't *'facilitate'* – it is *involved with* sub-regional planning discussions" because the SPIF is "another layer above the Ipswich Policy Area" [IP08].

As with the other two case studies, actors in Ipswich tended to prefer approaches that are based on the geographies of their own institutions, and to be wary of approaches that use the geographies of rival institutions. While not putting the same very high priority on this strategic objective as actors in Norwich have done, and which actors in Cambridge are beginning to do, actors in Ipswich rarely lost sight of the need to advance the cause of their preferred institution or to protect it from the advances of others.

CONSTRAINTS IN IPSWICH: NARRATIVES, PRACTICES AND RULES

As described in the theoretical framework, the strategic objectives of actors interact dynamically with the institutional constraints that operate on those actors in the form of narratives, practices and rules. The various narratives that were used to describe the 'way things are done' in Ipswich are remarkably consistent across different actors and strategies. There was a great emphasis on describing a negative past characterised by conflict and lost opportunities, and a largely positive present and future marked by co-operation and collaboration.

Many interview subjects in Ipswich described conflict between actors or within institutions, but it was almost always in the context of somewhere geographically or temporally 'other', either the past in Ipswich or a different location such as the adjoining county of Norfolk. On the occasions when respondents were talking about the possibility of conflict or poor relationships in the present, these were usually described as resulting from the views of the others rather than the interview subjects themselves. For example, one Ipswich interviewee suggested that "there's a hostility towards us from some councillors at the County that's not there with us - I don't mind who I work with as long as it's for the benefit of the town; what are we here for, for goodness sake?" [IP03].

This perception of a rural-urban divide was often portrayed in explicitly class-based terms: one interviewee described Ipswich as being seen as "a Northern town in East Anglia… people tended to hold their nose when they came into Ipswich", while others described a county that "looked down on" the town in a way that would not be true of the relationship between Norfolk and Norwich, for example: "Ipswich - it's the grimy place with the problems" [IP05, IP09, IP08, IP07]. But again these descriptions were in the context of being long-standing issues from the past – albeit ones which impact the present - that actors were now working together to overcome.

As is often the case in two-tier local authority areas, disagreements between the County and District councils were clearly part of the historic narrative around institutional relationships in Ipswich – one Ipswich elected member said "we've never got on well, we'd have been

better off on our own" [IP02] - but again the way in which they were portrayed indicated a narrative of reduced or at least reducing conflict. Another interviewee, unconnected with either authority, remarked that "there was a time not that long ago when you couldn't have the County and the Borough in the same room...they'd disagree over the colour of the table" [IP07]; while the conflict was raised, the significance is in the use of the past tense in describing it.

In other parts of England the issue of unmet need for housing for a tightly bounded urban area having to be met by development in its neighbouring more rural district councils has led to bitter and unresolved conflict, but in Ipswich actors were at pains to argue that while the initial reactions were negative - "[the Districts]… threw the toys out of the pram… a bit of a hoo-ha for a few months" [IP10] – the subsequent relationship was more positive and engaged.

Many interviewees cited the Devolution process in 2015 and 2016 as being a significant milestone in the path from a conflict-ridden past to a more collaborative present and future. While the ultimate failure of the Devolution deal itself was widely regretted (the potential allocation of a substantial sum for housing investment in Ipswich was seen as a "pretty good deal" [IP04]) – and very largely blamed on central government and on poor relationships between local authority actors in Norfolk – the process of developing the bid in re-shaping narratives and practice was seen as being almost entirely positive.

The narratives surrounding this period emphasised both the financial imperative and the need for greater drive if Ipswich and Suffolk are to make up ground: "There was this real urgency to catch up - and if devolution was a train that we could catch to catch up then we were going to try to jump on board" [IP01] and "as politicians we need to refocus our energy...if the reality is that...there is a capacity issue in Central Government departments and therefore devolution is off the agenda...we have to carve our own vision out of that" [IP02].

In describing the launch of the Ipswich Vision programme (Ipswich Central (BID) et al, 2015) one of the institutional partners said that "the main reason we did it was that Ipswich was going to change, or needed to change...that change needed to be very dramatic" [IP07]. This emphasis on change, and in particular on the need for change to be visible, exemplifies the prevailing narrative of moving from an unproductive past into a different present.

The most obvious emphasis in the narratives of the various different actors in Ipswich was on co-operation. Actors from different institutional and political backgrounds were at pains to ensure that a narrative of collaboration is clearly understood. Relationships across political boundaries were frequently described in positive terms: when one Labour politician spoke of the then Conservative MP for Ipswich Ben Gummer and said "We work well with our MP, despite disagreements over the best way to do things - but he's pro-growth. I kind of like him, you know" [IP03] it was typical of way that such relationships were described.

The example of the Suffolk Public Sector Leaders Group reinforces this approach. This body, an informal gathering of leading figures from the local authorities, the police, education and health sectors and so on, meets roughly six times a year to discuss issues of mutual interest. Disagreements were rare, and the approach was described in positive terms: "we all know each other, and we get on reasonably well" [IP04].

The City Deal for Ipswich, which has a significant focus on skills, was described as important in showing how co-operative approaches could be beneficial: "there were other, pre-existing, forms of collaborative working across the whole of Suffolk...in relation to skills, in relation to environment...that meant it was conducive to this kind of thinking". The clear narrative in Ipswich was that these co-operative approaches have now been applied more broadly, including to areas like planning for housing need that had previously been highly contested, and that this approach should be seen as beneficial and more likely to lead to successful outcomes for strategic objectives: as one interviewee concluded "where there's a willingness to make it work then you make it work" [IP01].

In terms of the theoretical framework then, Ipswich in this period from the early to the later 2010s shows a shift in the nature of narratives, from a neutral or even a mildly negative characterisation to one that emphasised the positive. But while the narratives around Ipswich indicated a desire to see more collaboration – and to be seen as being more collaborative – it is only by examining the practices of actors that it is possible to see the extent to which the 'way things are done around here' was as collegiate as the way in which it was described.

While the Ipswich Policy Area (IPA) designation latterly became both a means and an arena for co-operative practices, this is a phenomenon associated with its more recent iterations, not its original appearance in the Suffolk Structure Plans from the late 1970s onwards. An interview with an experienced planner made clear that the IPA didn't necessarily lead to collaborative approaches to planning between authorities: "[we] carried on without any cross-boundary planning" leading to "suburbs around the town which are basically, not very well planned, random, ad hoc; there was no proper global planning"; "[the rural districts] did what they wanted without reference to Ipswich, which was inevitable, I suppose". [IP10]

The limited practical impact of the IPA on practices was made clear by the Statement of Compliance with the Duty to Co-operate published by Ipswich Borough Council in 2015 as part of its Local Plan submission: "The Ipswich Policy Area Board was established in 2007 *and meetings have been held regularly since December 2011*...[my emphasis]" (Ipswich Borough Council, 2015a, p. 3). The comparison with Norwich and Cambridge, where shared or congruent Local Plan documents were already being prepared by 2010, is clear; while the IPA had the potential to serve the same purpose as the equivalent designations in Norwich and Cambridge – also inherited from Structure Plans through the East of England Plan – the actual practice on the ground didn't show the same degree of collaboration, or urgency.

Nonetheless, from 2011 onwards the IPA Board did become a forum where the five local authorities can work together, as the aspiration in the Statement of Intent to joint working agreed by in May 2011 and revised in 2013 had it (Ipswich Borough Council, 2015a). The need to do so was further emphasised by the development of Ipswich's Local Plan in the period leading up to its adoption in 2017, as the Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) for housing in the town was greater than could be delivered on sites within Ipswich's tightly constrained boundaries. In contrast to the previous inaction, local actors began to work increasingly collaboratively to address the challenges to their strategic objectives inherent in the planning process.

From the same period there is a clear example of collegiate practice in the approach taken when there was a change of political control in Ipswich Borough Council in 2011 from Conservative to Labour. Previously meetings between the different local authorities in Suffolk had taken place with the leaders and chief executives present, and before the collective meeting the two groups – the politicians and the heads of paid service – would meet separately.

When this informal institution had begun the political leaders of the councils were all from one political party, but the change of political control in Ipswich meant that one of the leaders was now from an opposing party. The Labour leader of Ipswich described how easily the institution adjusted to the new reality, showing the relative importance of consensual practice over political division: "I don't think they quite knew how to frame it [at the first meeting after election], whether it was going to be a Conservative-only meeting...but I just went and sat down, and from then on I went to all the meetings and that's fine".

As with narratives, the example of Ipswich during this period show a movement from a position where practices weren't actively uncooperative but didn't display any great evidence of practical cooperation to one where different actors and institutions were interacting with another with some sense of shared ambitions and objectives and an appreciation that working together might lead to more positive outcomes than working separately. In the terms of the theoretical framework, there is a movement from a neutral to a slightly positive degree of collegiate practice.

The third constraint in the theoretical framework alongside narratives and practices is rules, and in the context of Ipswich's formal institutions these are largely the legislative and regulatory framework established by successive national governments with which local authorities and other agencies operate, whether these impact on the routes for funding, nature of the devolution of powers, or rules as they apply to the planning system.

In the Ipswich context the impact of the rules embodied in the NPPF are significant, for example. There has been considerable discussion of the 'Duty to Co-operate' (Marlow, 2015) and whether a duty without significant sanctions for non-compliance has real impact,

but the fear of the consequences of not having a five-year land supply that lies behind the strategic objective of *Control* for the rural authorities surrounding Ipswich.

In comparing the strategies of institutional resistance that many rural and largely Conservative local authorities followed to thwart New Labour's 'top-down' approach to planning from 2003 to 2010 with what appears a more positive approach to growth now it is possible to conclude that the various 'sticks' introduced into the planning system by central Government since 2010 have had a greater perceived impact locally than the previous 'target-based' approach.

The negative consequences of resistance to Regional Plans for local political actors were limited (or indeed positive, if they are measured in the popularity of that resistance among electors and consequentially in election results). By contrast failure to comply with the rules of the NPPF can have immediate and very difficult consequences as local politicians find themselves unable to resist speculative developments that are strongly opposed by their constituents (Solomon, 2019); in these circumstances blaming the 'other' in the form of the planning inspectorate or the Government has only limited impact, not least when the Government since 2010 and rural local authorities in Suffolk tend to be of the same political colour.

Similarly, the highly centralised funding arrangements for local government in England are well known (Stoker, 2002; Lowndes and Pratchett, 2012). Successive central governments have established funding regimes based on tightly constrained and opaque revenue funding formulae and limited access to capital investment resources through the mechanisms of competitive bidding rounds (Ball and Maginn, 2004; John and Ward, 2005) or specific and highly controlled programmes. One Ipswich interviewee laughingly described the development of the Greater Ipswich City Deal with civil servants: "We were told what we needed to do - it's a 'bottom up process' but this is what you need to do" [IP04].

A specific impact for Ipswich of a change of rules, driven by a national actor, can be seen in the Haven Gateway partnership. In 2006 this area covering local authorities in south Suffolk and north Essex was a seen as an important focal point of the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy. But a decade later actors in Ipswich and the surrounding area of Suffolk no longer saw it as relevant at all, and the partnership had all but disappeared (it did still exist, but the use of the words "There used to be the Haven Gateway Partnership" by an Ipswich interviewee suggests that for actors in Suffolk it had to all intents and purposes ceased) [IP04].

The causes for this shift can be found in two early actions of the 2010 Coalition Government. The first was the abolition of the structures and process of regional planning, thus removing the regional plan within which the Haven Gateways partnership existed. The second was the remaking of the boundaries of the agencies of economic development, at the behest of the new Secretary of State Eric Pickles.

An MP for a constituency in south Essex, Pickles was seen as instrumental by actors in Suffolk as having ensured that Essex – formerly part of the East of England (regional) Development Agency (EEDA) together with Suffolk – was linked instead with northern Kent across the Thames Estuary in the new geographies of Local Economic Partnerships set up after 2010, despite the wishes of local authorities in the north of Essex: "If Eric Pickles hadn't said 'Essex and Kent, you've got to go in the same LEP'...Colchester and Tendring would have been very much for joining us in a LEP" [IP04, IP09, IP01]

This intervention, or 'reaching in' (Allen and Cochrane, 2010) by the Secretary of State helped to create a new geography, where the county boundary between Suffolk and Essex was reinforced by the creation of a new boundary between LEPs rather than being blurred and elided as it had been under the former EEDA. As one interviewee put it, "There's a clear correlation between the demise of the RDA and [the arrival] of the LEP and the direction that we local authorities tend to look." [IP06]. The significance of the role of economic development agencies, and particularly their importance as conduits for investment, was clear in the discussions with local actors about the Haven Gateway and broader links between Ipswich and south Suffolk and adjoining areas in North Essex.

A further disruption to the stability of rules stemmed from continued Government speculation around the forms and institutions of local governance. Under successive administrations – New Labour, Coalition and then Conservative - pressure to consider or adopt new governance forms, whether it was the combined authority and elected mayor proposed in the Devolution Deal, or calls for proposals for the merging of local authorities or the creation of unitary authorities, created a potential or actual instability in the rules constraint.

There is therefore over this period a series of destabilisations of the rules as they apply to Ipswich, and to local government more broadly, through changes to the planning system, the abolition and creation of different regional and sub-regional bodies, and the various attempts through the City Deal and Devolution deal programmes or calls for local government 'reform' to forge different forms of partnership between and within national and local entities.

ASSESSING CHANGES IN STRATEGIES AND CONSTRAINTS OVER TIME IN IPSWICH

The changes over time in the rules, practices and narratives as they act as constraints in Ipswich can therefore be mapped against the similar processes in the relative importance of the strategic objectives of recognition, investment, control and institution self-preservation and ambition (see figure xiii below).

Figure xiii - Analysis of the strategic objectives and constraints in Ipswich, and their movement over time: narratives move from negative to positive while practices become more co-operative, and rules become more unstable. The <u>relative</u> importance of Control and Recognition increases, while the importance of Institutional Self-Preservation remains significant.

CONSTRAINTS / STRATEGIES		Narratives			Practices			Rules		
		+ive	=	-ive	Coop	=	Un-Coop	Stable	=	Un-stable
Recognition	+									
	=									
	-									
Investment	+									
	=									
	-									
Control	+									
	=									
	-									
Institutional Self-Preservation /Ambition	+									
	=									
	-									

As *figure xiii* indicates, in Ipswich narratives and practices tended to move towards the positive and the collaborative, even as rules were destabilised by governmental change. This coincided with a greater emphasis on strategies favouring *Control* and *Recognition* in particular. And as the analysis below shows, collaboration was pushed onto some actors in greater Ipswich by the rule changes in the NPPF, and the subsequent sharp increase in the

relative importance of the strategic objective of *Control*, while for other actors it was the experience of collaborative practice that appeared to increase the priority given to *Control*.

The pursuit of *Recognition* and *Investment*, from or through other institutions, both shaped and was shaped by narrative and practice constraints, in particular during and after the failed Devolution Deal process. But throughout the period, echoing older and ongoing tensions, the strategic objective of *Institutional Ambition and Self-Preservation* acted as a brake or limiter on the extent to which institutional innovations are pursued.

Prior to 2010 the predominant strategic objectives of actors in Ipswich centred around *Recognition* and then *Investment*, particularly for those focussed on what were seen as long-standing issues around skills and infrastructure shortfalls. Within the institutional environment developed by the New Labour government, the chief route for pursuing those objectives was through the East of England Development Agency, and the associated Haven Gateway partnership. The abolition of EEDA by the incoming Coalition Government in 2010 and its replacement by separate Local Economic Partnerships (LEPs) for Essex and Suffolk removed the Haven Gateway partnership's function as a conduit for investment and took away the place where the needs of Ipswich, and Suffolk, were recognised.

Without these function, the Haven Gateway was no longer seen as relevant for the strategic objectives of actors in Ipswich: the partnership was "limping on…it does do something, but not quite sure what" [IP10], and it limped on without the involvement of Ipswich. The change of rules embodied in the abolition of regional structures did not directly change the strategic objectives of *Recognition* and *Investment*, but in either removing entirely or rendering essentially impotent the arrangements through which those objectives had been pursued, the rule changes impacted on their relative importance. Instead of having regional bodies and regionally based actors who might be assumed to have already recognised Ipswich's need for investment, those relationships would be need to be developed anew. From 2010, because of this change to the rules, seeking *Recognition* became a relatively higher priority.

Of equal consequence was the abolition of the existing mechanisms around regional planning and the allocation of housing numbers, and their replacement with the obligations in the NPPF to have a five year land supply and to adhere to the 'duty to co-operate'. While the impact of these parts of the NPPF, in particular the latter, has been variable, not least as successive appeals and court cases sought to clarify the meaning of key terms, in East Suffolk and Ipswich the impact was real and significant. Successful appeals from speculative developers citing the lack of five year land supply in the rural local authorities around the town meant that actors in those institutions began to give sharply increased priority to the strategic objective of *Control*.

In 2011 then, facing an environment in which rules were changing, and where previous narratives and practices had been either neutral or negative or simply non-existent in terms

of collegiate approaches, strategic objectives needed to be pursued differently. Initially the approach taken by local actors was to turn to an existing but semi-dormant institutional model, the Ipswich Policy Area (IPA); a body "which had faded away almost" was revived explicitly to address the concern that "… we'd fallen out at that point" [IP10]

The IPA was introduced as a designation in the Structure Plan adopted by Suffolk County Council in 1979 (Suffolk County Council, 1977) for an area covering Ipswich itself and the parishes outside but immediately adjacent to it on all sides. The designation continued through several iterations of the Structure Plan, and was then used in the subsequent East of England Plan developed during the New Labour period. Despite the abolition of first Structure Plans and then regional plans the Ipswich Policy Area persisted as a both a spatial designation and as an institutional locus through which local actors could address the housing and planning challenges of the greater Ipswich area.

This persistence appears to derive from the practice of the Ipswich Policy Area; the repeated use of the IPA designation and the processes associated with it embedded it as an institutional solution that extended beyond the statutory – or rules-based – institutions that first created it. As with other similar spatial designations in this study – notably the Norwich Policy Area – the IPA was intended to foster an environment in which collaborative practice could develop, even though unlike the Norwich example actual collaboration was slow to begin and of a limited extent.

For example the Ipswich Core Strategy, adopted in 2011, espoused cross-boundary collaborative planning within the IPA as one its main Objectives (12): 'To work with other local authorities in the Ipswich Policy Area and with LSP (local strategic partnership) partners to ensure a co-ordinated approach to planning and development', an objective that is operationalised through policy CS6 of the same document: "Ipswich Borough Council recognises the importance of joint working and the coordination of planning policies around the fringes of Ipswich, in order to deliver appropriate development" (Ipswich Borough Council, 2011; Ipswich Borough Council, 2015b).

Similarly the 2013 Suffolk Coastal Local Plan (Suffolk Coastal District Council, 2013) made the IPA designation a significant focus for policy-making in describing potential locations for new housing, and subsequent iterations of the various policy documents that made up the Plan were explicit that the IPA and its Board should be seen as a primary mechanism for delivering planning policy reviews: "The review, which will replace the Core Strategy, the Site Allocations and Area Specific Policies and the Felixstowe Peninsula Area Action Plan, is being carried out through an aligned/joint Local Plan with the Ipswich Policy Area local planning authorities (Ipswich Borough, Mid Suffolk, Babergh and Suffolk Coastal)" (Suffolk Coastal District Council, 2017).

The Ipswich Policy Area was also an institution that allowed both for shared and separate strategic objectives to be pursued. For actors in the town itself the IPA was a means to

pursue *Investment* "… a mechanism to try to coordinate the local planning processes to ensure we get the housing numbers we need" [IP10], while for the rural districts it acted as a mechanism to ensure the retention of *Control* over where housing was built.

Alongside local initiatives to instigate co-operative practice through the Ipswich Policy Area, and the 'stick' of the changes to rules embodied in the NPPF, the Coalition Government made clear that there were 'carrots' in the form of promises of major investment for infrastructure in return for cooperation between local and national government in support of the Government's growth agenda (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2012b; Wintour, 2015).

For local actors on the ground in East Suffolk pursuing the strategic objectives of *Recognition* and *Investment*, there was an increasingly clear incentive to follow collaborative practices, and moreover to be seen to be doing so by others. This is where the greater priority given to the objective of *Recognition* in Ipswich when compared to Norwich and Cambridge appears to shape constraints differently to the other two case studies.

In Ipswich, with its widely shared perception of being overlooked entirely by actors and institutions who are potential sources of investment, carrying out collaborative practices alone was insufficient; what was essential is to be seen to be doing so, and in order to achieve that, narratives had to emphasise the positive in describing interactions and relationships. Those positive narratives in turn help to reinforce collaborative behaviours, or practices.

Thus for local actors the Greater Ipswich City Deal (Cabinet Office and Deputy Prime Minister's Office, 2013), the multiple attempts at agreeing a Devolution Deal with the Government on a number of different geographies (Suffolk, then Norfolk and Suffolk, then Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire, then back to Norfolk and Suffolk before the project "petered out" [IP04] as central Government energies became consumed by Brexit) and the evolving Suffolk Planning Infrastructure Framework project were all attempts to better position the area to receive Government funding and investment through both collaborative practice and positive narratives.

The City Deal, with its focus on skills issues, demonstrated how long-standing strategic objectives intertwined with the different constraints around rules, practices and narratives that were emerging alongside, shaping, and being shaped by, those objectives. The City Deal was driven largely by the Local Economic Partnership (LEP) for Norfolk and Suffolk (NALEP), and was deliberately linked to the simultaneous City Deal bid for Greater Norwich (Cabinet Office and Deputy Prime Minister's Office, 2013; Deputy Prime Minister's Office and Cabinet Office, 2013); "we got the most bang for our buck out of the Government by doubling up with Norwich" [IP06] so Ipswich focussed on skills while Norwich picked up other issues. This focus on skills "is a legacy of EEDA … the whole of EEDA was about skills" [IP02], and indeed

can be traced back to similar concerns expressed 50 or more years previously (Vincent and Gorbing, 1963; East Suffolk County Council, 1964; Shankland/Cox, 1966).

The management of the City Deal was through the LEP's Skills Board; this was set up after the City Deals for Ipswich and Norwich were signed, but as a key actor explained: "we already knew that we wanted to set up a Skills Board across Norfolk and Suffolk…we knew that the governance mechanisms were going to be created" so the City Deal bid was written accordingly [IP06]. The advantage for actors concerned with *Institutional Self-preservation* – in Ipswich and Suffolk as elsewhere often expressed as a strong aversion to the use of the geographies of perceived rival institutions for new arrangements – was that the LEP was based on a geography that was neither Suffolk County Council's, nor Ipswich Borough Council, and thus not on any geography that might form the basis for a new institution of governance that might pose a threat to existing institutions (as opposed to the Norwich Policy Area discussed in the next chapter).

The Greater Ipswich City Deal and the process both of preparing the bid and administering it afterwards therefore show how the pursuit of strategic objectives around *Recognition* and *Investment* shaped practices to be more collegiate and narratives to be more positive, while the existence of the strategic objective of *Institutional Self-preservation* led actors to prefer certain administrative geographies over others.

The same patterns can be seen in the work before and after the abortive Devolution deal, with the clear linkage between collective and unified practices and the likelihood of successfully gaining investment: one interviewee described how Suffolk's political leaders "act together, they act in concert, they are consistent in terms of the message" while another non-politician remarked that "…I'm constantly surprised at how the politicians from different parties work together…" [IP01, IP09]. Frequently this was contrasted with other areas, particularly Norfolk, whose fractious political and institutional relationships were described using terms like 'bloodbath'.

During the long-drawn out process of discussing the Devolution Deal with Government and partners from Norfolk and Cambridgeshire, actors in Suffolk showed both a shared strategic priority for *Recognition* and *Investment* and a clear commitment to collegiate practices; from the beginning Suffolk demonstrated its willingness to adjust the boundaries of the proposed bid to suit others, whether that was Government or local actors, as part of a clear effort to be seen as a 'good partner'.

That all actors in Suffolk were at different times prepared to countenance an elected mayor, something that actors in Norwich never were, demonstrates a lower relative priority given to *Institutional Self-preservation* in Ipswich than in Norwich; although it should be noted that the bid 'petered out' before that commitment could be fully tested, and subsequent developments showed the importance of this strategic objective in providing limits within which institutions would be allowed to develop.

As the Devolution Deal ran out of steam in 2016 local actors in Suffolk and Ipswich adapted two existing institutions to pursue the same objectives through the Suffolk Planning Infrastructure Framework or SPIF (Ipswich Borough Council, 2016) . The IPA Board, which had been overseeing work on collaboration across the formal boundaries of Ipswich, and the Suffolk Growth Group, an informal body set up in 2012 to identify and exploit short-term opportunities for investment from public and private sector sources (Ipswich Borough Council, 2015b).

This group, with actors from all the Suffolk local authorities, gradually took planning issues into its remit, and as the Devolution deal lost its way in 2015 and 2016 (one interviewee described the SPIF as "an instrument to the same end") began to assemble an informal version of what an elected mayor for Suffolk and Norfolk – or whatever the eventual geography for Devolution turned out to be – would have had the power to create as a Statutory Strategic Plan [IP01]). Nonetheless, the limitations that stemmed from concerns about *Institutional Self-preservation* were again apparent.

The primary purpose of the SPIF was the attracting investment in infrastructure to the county. The task of the institution was described by planning professional as looking at potential spatial arrangements without forming a judgement on them; in particular the District authorities are very keen to emphasise that "this is NOT a Structure Plan" [IP08], despite the temptation to do otherwise as another interview made clear: "[would you need a] single Suffolk-based policy process to maintain it? It would be very difficult not to" [IP01]. In other words, the strategic objective of *Institutional Self-preservation* means that anything that might imply that a unitary council on the County Council's boundaries could be workable was to be avoided; but although limited by that strategic objective, it was still a place in which collegiate practices could be played out.

The SPIF was another in a series of carefully designed informal institutions in Ipswich and East Suffolk: there was no appetite for making this body and its output formal, as the informal institutional model still allowed for coordination and collaboration in assembling a shared assessment of the infrastructure needs for Ipswich and Suffolk. A non-politician interviewee in Ipswich described the advantages that actors in Ipswich feel can be derived from these informal institutions: "these kind of semi-formal groups, properly constituted but not part of the political process, create the space for arriving at consensus", a consensus which can then be conveyed back to the constituent (formal) parts [IP09].

This creation of layers of informal institutions is shaped by the constraints of both narratives and practices, as well as the strategies around *Recognition*, *Investment* and *Institutional Self-preservation*; Ipswich's actors show a predilection for operating within a particular institutional model that encourages consensual practice and allows positive narratives, furthers the pursuit of *Recognition* and *Investment*, while simultaneously not posing a threat to existing institutions through which those actors access power.

In reaching for previous institutional approaches, Ipswich is demonstrating a comfort with reusing former tools, the 'bricolage' approach described by Lanzara (1998). Institutions are frequently the result of a gradual tinkering with existing resources. Informal institutions are developed from previous models, some of which may have lain dormant for considerable periods, and adapted to new purposes. While this creative recycling isn't always welcome – one interviewee highlighted what they saw as the limitations of the approach when they said that "if you put [an issue] in the hands of a local authority, they'll go to their parts bin … and they'll create you something...no matter how many times it's failed before they'll fish it out" [IP09]- the main actors of Ipswich have in recent years repeatedly done just that, and have done so because the constraints of collaborative practice and of positive narratives privilege a process of consensus building in an informal setting before seeking to move into a formal decision making process.

This inherent preference for the informal can be seen not just in the nature of the institutions, but also in processes and geographies, which frequently emphasise informality, loosely defined or fuzzy institutional and geographic boundaries and gradual processes of change. In describing the IPA Board, the institution set up to administer the revived Ipswich Policy Area - frequently referred to in official planning documents such as the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan as the means by which much of the work in developing policy should be done - interviewees were clear that its role was informal and advisory: the Board was a "sounding board, a way of making recommendations", and power and sovereignty still lies with districts [IP04].

But not only are the Board's practices informal, but the boundaries of the IPA itself were represented as mutable rather than firmly fixed. While it began as a geographic area precisely defined by which parishes were included and which therefore were not, the IPA at times came to be described in terms of a 'travel to work area' or a 'strategic housing market area' around Ipswich, allowing greater flexibility in how the rural authorities in particular could respond to work emerging from the IPA Board.

As one interviewee noted, the original 'necklace of parishes' geography was somewhat discredited by reflecting proposed changes to Ipswich's boundaries in the 1980s and to proposals for unitary status on expanded boundaries in the last years of the New Labour Government, and the fuzzier geography helped allay any residual concerns from Ipswich's neighbours [IP01]. The contrast with Norwich, where the equivalent Norwich Policy Area became a bitterly contested proxy for arguments over rival visions (or rather, fears) of future unitary authority boundaries, is significant. When the strategic objectives of *Control* and *Institutional Self-Preservation* came into potential conflict with the new norms of practice and narrative, the preference for actors in Ipswich was to follow behaviours that were consensual and positive.

A similar set of preferences was apparent when Ipswich Borough Council set up an informal group to discuss issues arising from the development of the only large remaining site inside the town's boundaries, the so-called Ipswich Garden Suburb in the north of the town. This 'community steering group' brought together representatives from residents groups, the neighbouring (and very opposed to development) parish of Westerfield, Ipswich Borough Council itself and would-be developers to discuss the issues arising from the proposed development; one interviewee described this as the "right thing to do", but it also marked a different approach to this site to the previous two decades. Instead of taking a formal approach through the plan-making process, actors elected to use an informal institution within which consensual behaviours could be cultivated, only moving away from this informality when the time came for the formal process of creating a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for the site [IP03].

The interactions between the different institutions and partnerships reinforces this use of informality to sidestep or avoid structural issues: Greater Ipswich Partnership board meetings (the City Deal, run as a sub-committee of the LEP) acted as 'critical friend' to the business-led Ipswich Vision group "without changing any of the governance structures, so to do it a wholly informal feedback way". That this was driven by concerns that interactions through formally defined relationships were not seen as conducive to collaborative practices was confirmed by interviews with non-local government actors: "it's got to break out... to something that encompasses a broader area without getting too entwined in local authority politics" [IP09].

The approach was spelt out explicitly by the same interviewee: "Ipswich Vision was a response to the fact that, if you haven't got a unitary authority in an area...then you have to build it yourself by informal structures because the formal structures don't work". This confirms a strong sense in Ipswich that strategic objectives for *Institutional Self-preservation* act as a brake or limit on collaborative practices, and a perception that a past history of failure to collaborate has contributed to the town being overlooked and losing out on investment. Because of the increased importance to both collegiate practices and positive narratives, the deliberate approach now is to elide and blur formal divisions to allow continued collaboration and progress towards both shared and individual strategic ends.

The influence of the three different modes of constraint – rules, practices and narratives – can be seen in the strategies that the actors in and around Ipswich follow to achieve their strategic objectives. The framework of rules established for the functioning of local government and the channelling of scarce financial resources for investment in infrastructure and housing in particular significantly shape the ways in which actors behave. The 'rules of the game' are understood by all, and when those rules change, it impacts on the way that strategic objectives are pursued. The example of the Haven Gateway and its shift from being a prime focus for institutional development and support to an irrelevance makes that clear: when national government, specifically a Secretary of State with his own

objectives, fixed the boundaries of the LEP in a different place to where they had been before, it fundamentally altered the way in which actors in Ipswich pursued their strategic aims. When the aim is *Investment*, only institutions which hold out the promise of being conduits for that investment are worth maintaining.

By contrast, when institutional tools that are tried and tested hold out the prospect of being reused, actors in Ipswich reached for them. The revival of the Ipswich Policy Area as a mechanism for tackling the twin problems of unmet housing need in Ipswich and a lack of five-year land supply in areas outside Ipswich showed a willingness to make use of institutional remembering, and the subsequent flexibility over scope and geography an equal willingness to convert institutions to meet needs and circumvent obstacles. The evolution of the Suffolk Growth Board into the SPIF, and the proposed merger of this with the IPA Board, showed a continued commitment to recombination of elements from a pre-existing institutional toolbox.

And perhaps most importantly, the actors in and around Ipswich are constrained by their practices and narratives, most notably the shared narrative around the need for cooperation and collaboration and for institutional approaches that promote that in practice. Where previously actors might have responded to conflict on institutional or political grounds by taking up adversarial positions, the shared narrative of co-operation rules out or at the very least seriously constrains them. The desire not just for things to work in practice, but for them to be seen to be working, is a fundamental factor in shaping the institutional and strategic choices of Ipswich and Suffolk's actors, and one that is in turn shaped fundamentally by the strategic objective of *Recognition*.

The existence of the institution of the Ipswich Policy Area, and the experience – or practice – of using it as a means of resolving issues of shared interest, meant that the IPA became synonymous with the 'way things are done' in Ipswich (Lowndes and Roberts, 2013) and that practice shaped the institutional preferences of different actors when it came to pursuing their strategic objectives within an institutional environment being reshaped by new rules set by national Government. From 2013 to 2016 the IPA Board created an institutional 'safe space' for issues to be discussed and debated, in an atmosphere described using a narrative of entirely positive terms.

What is not wholly clear is whether this preference for 'safe spaces' led to spaces that are productive in terms of pursuing strategic objectives. As one interviewee put it: "there is a degree of consensus - but I don't think we're quite at the stage of co-production" , so while both the objective of collaboration and the informal mechanisms for achieving it are spelt out - "[there's a] understanding of common purpose… you don't find that two or three are having a conversation out of the group…the tensions are smoothed out in these working groups" – concrete achievements in terms of investment or indeed recognition are less apparent than they are in either Norwich or Cambridge [IP02, IP01].

Actors in Ipswich were largely in agreement in assessing past poor relationships and conflict and framing them in terms of lost opportunities: "…in Suffolk - we hadn't achieved … with regard to the infrastructure - the failure to get investment was self-evident" [IP01]. This failure to get investment wasn't just lost opportunities for public sector funding: another interviewee remarked that "[the conflict between Borough and County was] … a running sore for as long as I can remember; [it] stopped things from happening…[and] given the private sector no confidence to do things for far too many years" [IP07].

Equally, shared strategic objectives around *Recognition* and *Investment*, together with the constraints of positive narratives and collaborative practices, shaped the development of informal bodies like the SPIF which would further the process of identifying infrastructure needs and prioritising them, but it was widely accepted that this "is something we need to get better at - and we are [starting to] …" [IP08]. But at a time when investment in infrastructure in Cambridge and to a lesser extent Norwich was substantial, the acknowledgement in Ipswich that this was the start of a process rather than the successful outcome of strategic objectives was widespread.

Figure xiv – Inter-relationships between Objectives and Constraints in Ipswich over time: high relative priority for the objectives of Control and Recognition shape, and are shaped by, the constraints of positive Narratives and co-operative Practices
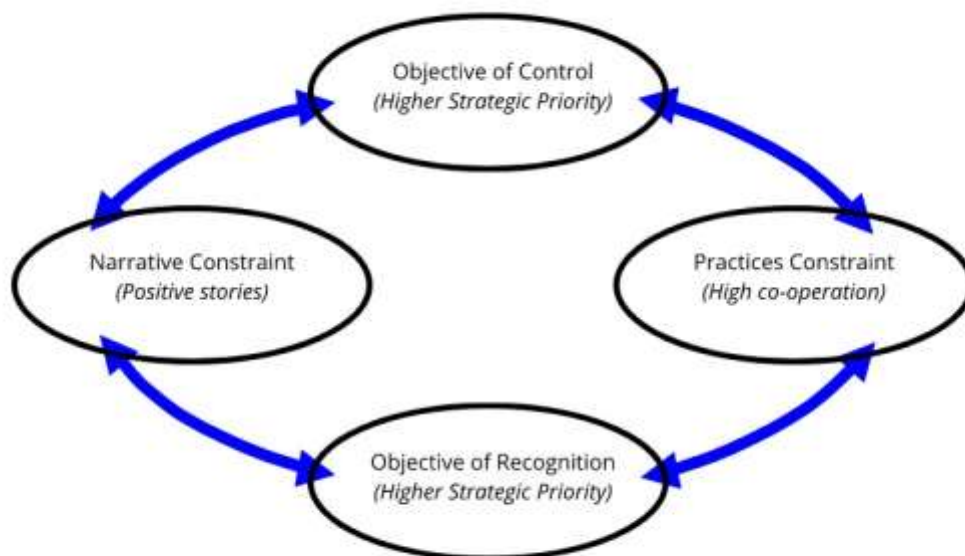
The example of Ipswich over this period is one where shared objectives around *Investment* and *Recognition* struggled to overcome longstanding indifference between potential institutional partners and individual actors, until changes to rules brought about by the NPPF, and the resulting sharply increased priority to the strategic objective of *Control* helped to foster – along with a recognition that these were pre-requisites for successful

engagement with the Government and other agencies - increasingly collaborative practices and positive narratives, initially through the IPA and subsequently through the City Deal and Devolution Deal processes.

IPSWICH: CONDITIONAL CO-OPERATION AND PERFORMED POSITIVITY

Actors in Ipswich found that the use of informal institutions allowed them to square the circle of seeking to further the strategic objectives of *Recognition*, *Investment* and *Control* with the final objective of *Institutional Self-preservation*. The repeated shying away from more formal institutions or approaches that might by reinforcing the powers of one existing institution put at existential risk another and preferred one, shows the way in which this strategic objective constrains the range of acceptable options for actors in Ipswich.

The clearest indication of the outcomes of this approach is the way in which the Ipswich Policy Area became no longer firmly bounded, as it had first appeared in the Structure Plans: one officer's understanding of the IPA was that it was to be considered as meaning roughly the housing market area [IP01], while members were unclear as to exactly what the boundaries were and regarded the issue as "uncontentious" [IP04].

The conclusion from the Ipswich example is that the seeking of greater *Control* and *Recognition* as strategic objectives is not just congruent with the constraints of collegiate practices and positive narratives, but that the constraints and the objectives interact with one another in a positive cycle to reinforce the direction of travel. However the final strategic objective, that of *Institutional Self-Preservation*, acts as a brake or limit on the extent to which both the other objectives and the positive constraints are followed.

The existence of previous tensions over unitary bids and institutional restructuring means that actors in Ipswich turn to informal institutional forms through which to interact with one another, which help to reinforce positive narratives and practices and avoid any increase in existential fears about preferred institutions and a consequential increase in a strategic priority for *Institutional Self-Preservation*. That doing so in all probability reduces the potential for *Investment*, when Government funding is dependent on new governance forms or processes, indicates the limiting impact of currently preferred constraints on norms of behaviour.

In Ipswich, where actors feel consistently overlooked by those outside their immediate institutional environment, the initial strategic objective during the study period is *Recognition*. Making others, notably national government but also actors and institutions in the broader public and private sectors, aware of the town is the highest priority. While

Investment is important, it is seen as a something that follows from *Recognition* – in other words, *Recognition* is a pre-requisite for *Investment*.

The strategic objective of *Control* became a significantly higher priority in Ipswich, notably for the rural local planning authorities surrounding the town, when rule changes in the NPPF around the need for a five year land supply, the duty to co-operate and the 'tilted balance' in planning decisions threatened to remove control by local political and professional actors over a vital function for their electoral coalitions. It was this strategic objective that seemed to provide sufficient incentive for local actors to revive moribund institutions and begin to develop more collegiate practices and positive narratives, where previously relationships had been inactive or antagonistic.

However the strategic objective of *Institutional Self-Preservation* is also significant, in particular for the two main local authorities, Ipswich and Suffolk. On its own this strategic objective acts as something of a brake, or limit to the degree of co-operation and institutional co-evolution, but that limit has seemed congruent with the degree of sub-regional institutional co-evolution seen by local actors as appropriate for their most highly prized objective, that of *Recognition*.

This is clearly evidenced by the preference for informal and 'fuzzy' institutions and processes that prioritise collaboration above co-production of concrete outcomes. While where necessary formal institutions have been used – as when the strategic objective of *Control* required that the outcomes of work on the Ipswich Policy Areas be implemented through formal Local Plan documents – this has tended to be the exception rather than the norm.

Moreover, the institutional constraints in Ipswich do not – yet – interact with the mix of strategic objectives in a way that reinforces and destabilises the institutional structures that have been set up to address planning issues. The narratives in Ipswich are almost uniformly positive, and the practices of the sub-regional governance institutions are marked by a tendency towards collegiate and co-operative approaches.

Changes to institution rules through new legislation, governmental or ministerial initiative and regulatory reform have introduced a degree of instability, notably at the end of the New Labour era when local government restructuring was seriously considered for Suffolk, but latterly the impact has not been as disruptive as elsewhere.

This has meant that the self-reinforcing cycle of unstable rules, uncollegiate practices, negative narratives AND a strategic preference for *Institutional Self-preservation* has not developed in Ipswich, leaving its largely informal institutions of governance in reasonably good order.

However it is also clear that the constraints around positive narratives and collegiate practices have tended, together with the reservations stemming from the strategic objective of *Institutional Self-preservation*, to themselves shape the kinds of institutions that have developed in Ipswich in recent years, leading to a preference for institutions within which the desirable characteristics around practices and narratives can be demonstrated.

The result appears to be a situation where strategic objectives can be pursued, but only to a point. The evidence of concrete achievement on the ground is limited, and an objective assessment of whether either recognition or investment have significantly advanced over the period from 2010 onwards would probably lead to a similar assessment. Some things have been achieved, notably the re-assertion of control over the local planning system that was a priority for rural actors after 2011, and some limited investment from the City Deal in 2013, but when compared to Norwich and particularly Cambridge, recognition by Government and investment in significant infrastructure is limited.

The picture in Ipswich is, therefore, one where the practices and narratives of co-operation are more prevalent than the achievement of strategic objectives. The consequence might be that the range of informal and semi-formal institutions that exist are sufficient for limited goals, but may not be sufficiently robust to address 'wicked' issues like debates over growth and housing numbers. Ipswich's approach may in the end be enough to demonstrate the kinds of collaborative approaches appreciated by investment partners at the national governmental level, and thus achieve the objective of *Recognition*. But because they have been shaped to that end by the objectives and constraints of those operating within them, they may not prove sufficient to take formal decisions of the kind that have been taken in Cambridge, and which have been the object of great tension in Norwich.

Of the three urban areas in this survey, Norwich has the longest history as a settlement with national as well as regional significance. Sufficiently far from London to be relatively independent of its influence, close to the trading cities of the North Sea coast on mainland Europe, and at the heart of a wealthy agricultural county, the city was one of England's largest before the industrial revolution, and retained its self-identity as a regional centre thereafter.

Figure xv – Greater Norwich Local Plan Draft Key Diagram, showing urban Norwich within its suburban and rural context (Greater Norwich Development Partnership, 2020).
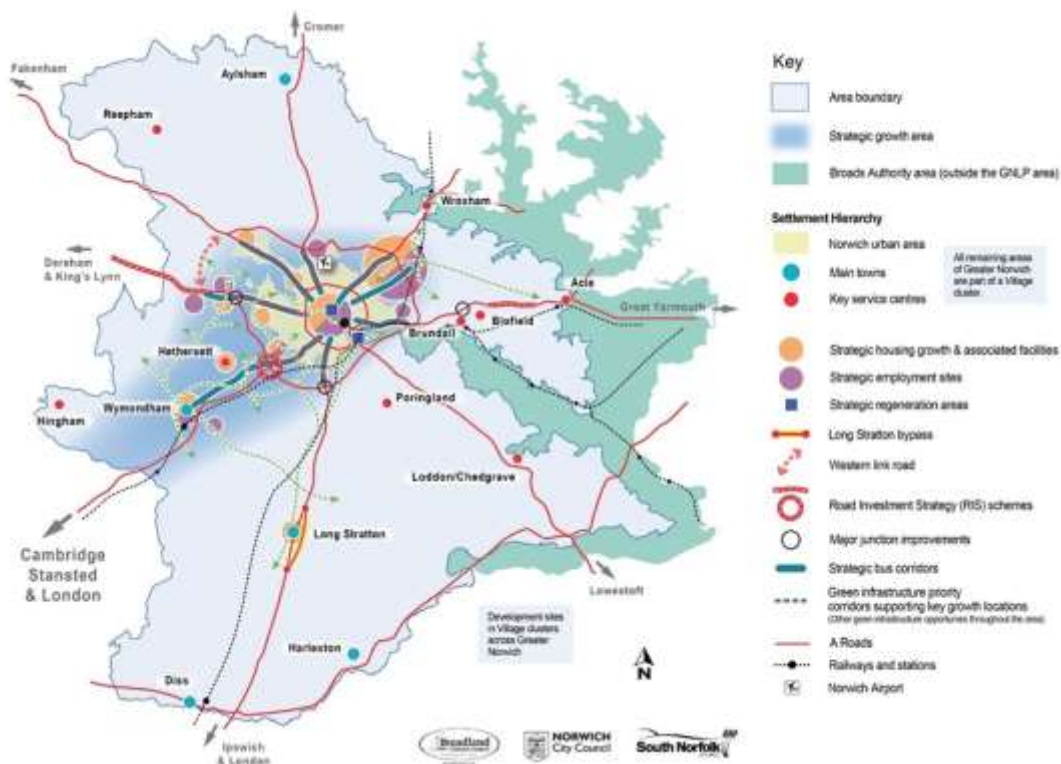
Like Ipswich, Norwich was a County Borough from 1889 to 1974, and was notable for its municipal activism, particularly in terms of housing provision directly by the Council. That tradition has continued since 1974, despite the loss of powers over education and transport to Norfolk County Council. The city's built up area now expands significantly beyond its administrative boundaries, and its travel to work area stretches across much of the eastern half of Norfolk.

Distance from other parts of the country, and a sense of being 'at the end of the line', is a frequent issue raised in Norwich, but unlike Ipswich both those within and outside Norwich are clear that they see the city as being 'of' its surrounding hinterland, and vice versa. This

contested notion of what 'Norwich' means is a theme underlying much of the discussion of this case study, in particular through the prolonged debate over the Norwich Policy Area, an apparently dry planning policy designation that became a proxy for much more significant dispute.

THE CONTESTED NOTION OF 'NORWICH': GREATER NORWICH AND THE NORWICH POLICY AREA

Like the other case studies in this research, Norwich fits the definition of an 'underbounded city'. The 2017 mid-year estimate for the population of Norwich's built up area was 213,000, of whom only two thirds lived in Norwich proper. The focus on new housing throughout the mid part of the 20th century had first expanded the city up to its boundaries and then beyond them, and by 1974 and local government reorganisation Norwich the city was already significantly larger than Norwich the administrative entity (European Commission, 2011; Boughton, 2015).

In what has proved a crucial period for shaping the relationships between actors and institutions in Norwich and Norfolk, when considering unitary council options for Norfolk in 2008-9, the Boundary Commission for England considered that "… presently the City's potential growth is constrained by its existing boundaries. Furthermore we believe that the current City Council boundaries for Norwich do not reflect Norwich's true position and importance in this part of, and across, the county." (Boundary Commission for England, 2009b, p. 36).

As a result the Commission proposed as an option for the Government to consider further a unitary "Greater Norwich", consisting of the existing city and the parishes that made up the city's suburbs and nearby villages; this option was subsequently dropped, mostly on financial grounds relating to the viability of the remaining rural Norfolk unitary, in the Commission's final recommendations (Boundary Commission for England, 2009a). The commission noted in paragraph 4.47 that support was considerably greater within the proposed Greater Norwich than without. But it is a concept with a significant history that has proved both persistent and influential.

The genesis of this 'Greater Norwich' area can be traced back to the first reports to the Committee of Norfolk County Council tasked with the creation of a Structure Plan following the restructuring of local government under the Local Government Act 1972 (Chaplin, 1975). A Structure Plan sub-committee was created to take the project forward, and an early report set up the objectives of the work: the Draft Structure Plan would set out "a firm strategy for the development of the Norwich Area up to the mid 1980's (sic)" and on the

basis of the choices that the Council would have to make a "draft Greater Norwich Urban Structure Plan will be prepared" (Chaplin, 1975, p. 1). The intention therefore from the start was the creation of a Greater Norwich plan that recognised that the built up area of Norwich went significantly beyond the administrative boundaries of the city itself.

At this early stage these were abstract conceptual terms and diagrammatic representations, rather than clear lines on the map: the 1975 report suggests an 'inner area' with a six mile radius and an 'outer area' with an 11 mile radius, while at the same time differentiating between these potential plan areas and the boundaries of the built up area and the political boundaries of the new District Councils (Chaplin, 1975). These proposals were eventually adopted as policies in the first Norfolk Structure Plan, approved in 1979, and were termed the 'The Inner Norwich Policy Area' and 'Outer Norwich Policy Area' respectively. The policy area concept was widely used in the 1979 Structure Plan with separate policies for most of the major urban areas in Norfolk, and the remainder of the county designated under a single 'Rural Policy Area' (Norfolk County Council, 1979).

By the 1990s the problems with the dual Structure Plan/Local Plan approach to planning established under the 1968 Act were made clear in the Report of the Panel of the Examination in Public into the Review of the Norfolk Structure Plan and the Norwich Policy Area in 1991. The 'Outer Norwich Policy Area' had been dropped already in the 1988 Structure Plan, and the Panel went on to recommend the abandonment of the 'policy area' approach across the rest of the county, because it duplicated and slowed down the Local Plans prepared by the various district councils: "….the Panel give their reasons for believing that, with [one] exception…, the policy area approach holds no advantages as a vehicle for the housing provision and distribution proposals of the Structure Plan..." (Examination in Public Review Panel, 1991, p. 2).

The exception was the Norwich Policy Area: "…in the Norwich area, the boundaries of the City are tightly drawn, with housing development spilling over into the adjoining districts…The Panel…consider that the appropriate area [for strategic planning] should approximate to the housing and labour market for the City. The Norwich Policy Area as currently defined is too restricted, and as a result, the policy options which should be open to the districts in the preparation of local plans are too limited. The Panel conclude that …in a future Review or Alteration of the Structure Plan the County Council should adopt a more widely drawn boundary for the Norwich Policy Area." (Examination in Public Review Panel, 1991, p. 24).

The Panel noted that the boundaries of the various policy areas "have not been immutable" over time, with the Norwich Policy Area being proposed for expansion through the inclusion of five parishes to the south of the city. The Panel then added a caveat: "[the Panel] take the view that the Policy Area boundary, which is somewhat artificial, should not be interpreted too rigidly in selecting locations for new housing." (Examination in Public Review Panel,

1991, p. 26). This caveat, with its intimation that policies and policy areas in Structure Plans should be illustrative and with 'fuzzy' boundaries, highlights a key difference between a Structure Plan and a Local Plan where policies are required to be precise at the site level, a difference which was echoed in the debates over the Greater Norwich Development Plan some twenty five years later (Norwich City Council, 2017).

The Panel's recommendations were adopted and approved by the Secretary of State, and the five parishes added to the Norwich Policy Area to the south of the city, notably Long Stratton, were promptly designated (policy N.16, Statement N.16 (b), p98-99) as preferred locations for growth allocations (Norfolk County Council, 1993) .

While during the 1990s and 2000s the planning policy context for Norwich altered as Structure Plans were replaced first by RPG 6 for East Anglia and then subsequently by the Regional Spatial Strategy and Regional Plan for the East of England (Standing Conference of East Anglian Local Authorities, 1992; Department of the Environment Transport and the Regions and Government Office for the East of England, 2000) these regional documents continued to emphasise the importance of cross-border planning co-operation in Norwich: "In… Norwich … the urban area and [its] immediate surroundings cross local authority boundaries. The local authorities should therefore co-operate closely at structure and local plan levels to ensure that there are consistent and coherent policies" (p27).

The 2008 East of England Plan, which marked the first (and last) strategic plan iteration based wholly on the regional tier of government, retained the Norwich Policy Area concept, and formed the basis for the current approach to planning in and around Norwich. The term "Greater Norwich" was used when talking about economic and employment policies (policy E1), but the term "Norwich Policy Area" was retained for housing policy (policy H1). These two terms were now essentially the same thing as far as many local actors were concerned: a spatial definition of Norwich that reflected the built up area rather than the administrative boundaries, and the meaning that the Boundary Commission meant in their use of the term 'Greater Norwich' in the report into Unitary options for Norwich (Boundary Commission for England, 2009b). This conflation of a term for a strategic planning designation and a term with significant institutional implications was to have profound consequences.

While the East of England Plan itself was abolished by the incoming Coalition Government in 2010, its housing allocations for the Norwich Policy Area were taken forward in an innovative approach to collaborative planning, the Joint Core Strategy (Greater Norwich Development Partnership, 2014). The three district councils – Norwich, South Norfolk and Broadland - had been working informally together for a number of years as the Greater Norwich Housing Partnership [NR07], a project that looked at housing rather than planning functions and led to a common housing register and shared back office delivery.

The opportunity to pursue a bid for Growth Point status had led to the creation of a Development Partnership between the local authorities in the mid-2000s. Like the Housing

Partnership, the Development Partnership was deliberately set up to be an informal body meeting in private rather than public: "we set up a governance arrangement around that, it was all informal, so no formal decision making powers …any decisions it made had to be ratified by each of the individual councils." [NR07]

The bid to make the Norwich Policy Area a Growth Point was confirmed as being successful in October 2006 (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2007), and formal work began on the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) in mid-2007 with the early stages of public consultation on Issues and Options (Greater Norwich Development Partnership, 2009). The development of the JCS followed the usual succession of stages for a Local Development Framework document, with formal documents consulted upon in 2009 and 2010 before the Examination in Public in December of the same year, and the subsequent adoption of the JCS as part of their Local Development Frameworks.

By the time of the Joint Core Strategy had been adopted, the local authorities of the wider Norwich area had what appeared to be a considerable list of achievements as a result of their collaboration. The JCS itself was one of the first joint planning policy documents to be produced under the provisions of the 2004 Act (*Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004*), and moreover the three planning authorities had come to a ground-breaking arrangement over the pooling of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) receipts which prioritised spending on projects to unlock strategic housing sites.

In September 2013 the Greater Norwich Development Partnership was replaced with a new and more formal body, the Greater Norwich Growth Board. The rationale for the decision was widely shared by the actors that made it: the Development Partnership had been tasked with the *creation* of the Joint Core Strategy, and that had now been adopted. The new institution, the Growth Board, would be responsible for the *delivery* of the JCS, and for the delivery of the Greater Norwich City Deal which was agreed with Government in December 2013: "the GNDP, which was a wider based organisation... [whose] purpose was policy formulation…" was replaced by "…the Board, that was coming along in the wake of the City Deal, to manage implementation [and] delivery" [NR04, NR09].

The Growth Board was created by resolutions of the constituent councils in early 2014, and a Joint Working Agreement – in essence a formal constitution and set of basic standing orders – was a part of those resolutions. In contrast to the informal and essentially private workings of the Greater Norwich Development Partnership, the Growth Board had clear rules and laid down that "Board meetings will be held in public providing an open forum for debate and decision" and that "all Board papers, technical reports that support decision making and scheme business cases will be made publicly available" (page 11, paras 3.3 and 3.4) (Greater Norwich Growth Board, 2014).

Almost as soon as the Growth Board was created in 2014 it faced two key issues. The first was the opportunity that appeared to open up for further national Government investment

through the Devolution deal for East Anglia. The second was the realisation that the changes to national planning policy encompassed in the National Planning Policy Framework (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2012b) meant that the Joint Core Strategy would need to be reviewed and refreshed almost as soon as it was adopted.

The East Anglian Devolution Deal proposal started as a bid by Suffolk for a county-based devolution arrangement with the Government along the lines of similar deals being discussed with major urban areas, primarily in the north of England. Similar discussions began in Norfolk along informal lines, and the two sets of local authorities were quickly encouraged to work together on a two-county basis, on the same boundary as the New Anglia LEP: "we were then pushed into working with Suffolk … it made logical sense because of the LEP geography - I suppose it was the LEP and the Government who was inching us into that path." [NR07].

While substantial progress was made in Norfolk and Suffolk towards developing a deal, key players at central government level made it plain that it would not be supported without expansion to include Cambridgeshire: one individual intimately involved in preparing the bid said that "[Lords] Heseltine and O'Neill arrived on Valentine's Day in Cambridgeshire, invited Norfolk and Suffolk along and effectively said to them, 'you're doing great stuff, but you're not going to get anywhere on your own, pull the two teams together and you're on to a winner'". [NR07]

The three-county bid was the one finally put forward and signed by both Government and council leaders in early 2016, promising substantial government investment of up to £1bn in exchange for confirmation of housing and economic growth and new governance arrangements, but it almost immediately broke down. From the start several Norfolk councils, including Norwich, had made clear that a directly elected mayor would not be acceptable [NR07, NR01], and now voted to pull out of the deal. Cambridgeshire put forward its own separate bid for a Devolution Deal for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough which was successful; something described by one Norfolk participant as "stealing our homework and getting all the money" [NR05].

The consequences of the failed Devolution Deal were profound and put pressure on the new institutional arrangements at the same time as they were being used to address the need for a replacement for the JCS. Having just been abolished and replaced by the Greater Norwich Growth Board, the Greater Norwich Development Partnership was resurrected and tasked with the creation of a new Greater Norwich Local Plan. However both the Development Partnership and the Growth Board became increasingly bogged down in debates about the Norwich Policy Area, the designation that had formed part of the planning environment since the mid-1970s.

Arguments over whether or not to continue with the NPA designation became sufficiently heated so as to bring to a halt work on the new Greater Norwich Development Plan almost

from the off, and by mid-2017 formal meetings of the Growth Board were being abandoned after those present were unable even to agree the minutes of the previous meeting where they related to the NPA (Greater Norwich Growth Board, 2017).

From this low point progress was fitful – with legal processes such as the Regulation 18 consultation on the new Greater Norwich Local Plan running late or failing to cover sufficient options because of political inertia, meaning that they had to be run again (Greater Norwich Development Partnership, 2018). While the complete breakdown of the governance structures established from 2013 onwards was avoided, they remained fragile.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES IN NORWICH

As with Ipswich, the theoretical framework requires that the relative priorities over time of four different broad strategic objectives - *Recognition* (by Government), *Investment*, *Control* and *Institutional Self-preservation/Ambition* - as pursued by actors in Norwich are drawn out and assessed. These evolving objectives are set against a similar assessment over how constraints – rules, practices and narratives – have also changed over time, in order to identify the particular interactions and dynamics that might be at work. In Norwich a long-standing priority for *Investment* and to a lesser extent *Recognition* was gradually overtaken by concerns over *Control* and *Institutional Self-Preservation/Ambition*.

Compared to Ipswich *Recognition* was a less prevalent strategy in Norwich; where actors in Suffolk felt overlooked by those beyond their immediate locale, Norwich's actors were more confident that they were 'on the radar' of those that they wanted to engage with. However at the same time they were aware that they did not have the same degree of recognition as Cambridge: interviewees commented that the East Anglia Devolution deal would have "… allow[ed] us to ride on Cambridge's coat-tails", and its failure "has left us lagging behind" Cambridge. The conclusion is very much that "we've not yet managed to find a niche that keeps Norwich in the limelight in a national context", and the consistent efforts to identify that niche characterise strategic priorities for Norwich [NR03, NR05].

This strategic desire for *Recognition* was often wrapped up with the objective of attracting *Investment* but was clearly a separate and important strand of work. In describing Norwich's bid for Growth Point status in 2006 one key player began by saying that "the Government were providing the opportunity for you to secure some funding if you bid and were successful as a Growth Point", but then went on to make clear that investment in cash terms was not the only object: "this is something we should pitch for... Norfolk has a history of always being at the end of everything... this was an opportunity to put Norfolk back on the Government's radar" [NR07].

Nonetheless, a strategic priority for *Investment* was also a critical factor in attracting local actors in Norwich to follow particular courses of action. The highly centralised nature of local government financing in England, and the increasing preference for governments of all political stripes to use bidding competitions for access to limited resources (Stoker, 2002) means that often the only way to progress a piece of infrastructure is to be granted funding from central government.

Actors in Greater Norwich repeatedly responded to opportunities for external investment, demonstrating that it is an important strategic priority for them. From Growth Point status, through the City Deal to the abortive Devolution Deal, investment opportunity has been a key motivation, albeit one that hasn't always delivered the intended results: "With £80m [in the Growth Point bid for infrastructure] to grease the wheels, you can live with that - of course when the announcement came it was less than £4m, so really we felt we'd been sold a pup." [NR05]

The same motivations lay behind engagement with the City Deal and the subsequent Devolution Deal: the bids were about "anywhere where we thought we could get more resources and more powers" [NR09].

Sometimes the pursuit of investment from outside meant that innovative options were followed locally. The CIL pooling arrangement, whereby funds raised from developments in all three district council areas were brought together to help pay directly for infrastructure investment and as seed funding for external investment and borrowing, was a first but one that fitted perfectly with strategic objectives: "The notion of pooling CIL was one that the politicians could freely accept...[because it would deliver infrastructure to enable the full array of growth]" and "…most of our discussions were about the Northern Distributor route, because that was going to create the triangle in which we could build". [NR10, NR02]

The strategic objective of *Control* is one that was always apparent in Greater Norwich, but was given a much greater importance after the publication of the NPPF in 2011, and its requirement for a five year land supply to meet housing targets. The changes to rules around the issue of a five year land supply, and the potential for a local planning authority to lose the ability to make decisions around development in its area, had a particular significance for Greater Norwich because of the interactions between those changed rules and the pre-existing and contested designation of the Norwich Policy Area (NPA): "… five-year land supply issues have created...political problems for members back at base … it's about a loss of control" [NR08].

This issue stemmed from the NPA designation, inherited from the County Council Structure Plans via the East of England Plan and incorporated into the Local Plans of all three councils through the Joint Core Strategy, and its assignment of separate house building requirements to the two rural district councils, Broadland and South Norfolk, for both the areas *within* the NPA and critically *outside* it.

The critical text in Policy H1 of the East of England Plan 2008 continued the flexibility – or ambiguity – desired by the Panel report into the Structure Plan from 15 years previously. The East of England Plan assigned a total figure of 37,500 homes to be produced during the Plan period by the three district councils but made it clear that it was up to those councils to allocate the total between them: "Figures for Broadland and South Norfolk include provision related to Norwich as part of the Norwich Policy Area, for which there is a total of 33,000. District totals for Norwich, Broadland and South Norfolk are indicative only and may be varied by mutual agreement provided they sum to 37,500." (Government Office for the East of England and Department of Communities and Local Government, 2008)

The final version of the plan both required the three district councils to work together and also made clear that the Norwich Policy Area remained as defined in the Structure Plans, covering some but not all of the two rural district councils that border Norwich. The allocation of some 4500 homes to the three councils and assigning them to an area *other* than the Norwich Policy Area, created a situation where the two authorities had to have separate land supplies to meet the need for housing for both the NPA and non-NPA portions of their area. Once the NPPF gave the need for a five year land supply critical, this pushed the issue of *Control* to be an increasingly high priority strategic objective.

The two rural authorities, in particular South Norfolk, had been somewhat reluctant partners in the joint planning arrangements that existed prior to 2010, and after the election of the Coalition Government in that year considered the option of "declaring our own housing figure and going off on our own" [NR10], something that was as much about demonstrating independence and control over the planning process. Even after accepting that the apparent promise of the Conservative Manifesto that there would be no more 'imposed' housing targets wasn't quite what it seemed, for actors in the two rural district councils a primary strategic objective was to be seen to be in control of the planning process: "...the biggest tension in all of this, certainly politically … was we accept that Norwich has got to grow, but we've not having Norwich City [Council] telling us where that growth has got to go" [NR10].

But while *Control* has been of increasing importance as a strategy since 2011, the main objective for most actors in Greater Norwich has been *Institutional Self-Preservation and Ambition*. Of major importance already at the time of the bid for Growth Point status in the later years of the New Labour Government, this objective assumed increasing importance throughout the study period.

As described in the theoretical framework, actors are acutely aware that certain institutions give them the means to actualise power, and thus set out to protect those institutions from actual – or perceived – threats, and where possible follow strategies that grant greater powers to institutions, existing or new, which can then be exercised by the actors in question while resisting the granting of powers or the creation of new institutions that

might be exercised by others. In Greater Norwich, there has been a range of competing institutional preferences, in particular around local government reorganisation, unitary status, and over the boundaries of actual or potential governance institutions. But the terms in which the strategies are framed differ.

For example, actors within Norwich City Council, cite a fear of the loss of 'their' institution just as much as they promote their ambitions for it to be granted greater powers and cover wider geographic areas. Both politicians and officials tend to frame this strategy in party political terms: "[Norwich is] a relatively isolated Labour urban area...surrounded by a different political colour, the Conservatives"; "... the Greater Norwich Development Partnership, whose aim...was to work across those political boundaries, [left] this small Labour authority surrounded by organisations with different political views"; "[Greater Norwich is] a boundary which gives just about enough opportunity [for a political party] to win, to hold control" [NR01, NR02].

By contrast, those operating outside the city's institutions were seriously concerned about the ambitions for a unitary Norwich, and the impact this would have their own institutions: "There was always that suspicion, even among officers, that Norwich and the County could [carve up two unitaries between them] - not sure that would ever have worked, but that was the fear, and that did cloud a lot of what we were working on"; "as soon as you try to cut it [Norfolk] up into two or three you end up with some very odd shapes, and Greater Norwich is at the heart of that" [NR10, NR08].

Support for the Devolution bid was heavily shaped by the desire to maintain particular preferred institutions. Actors within the City saw an elected Mayor as a threat to their autonomy - "... we [Norwich City Council] would very much be a minority shareholder in that arrangement" - while those within Norfolk County Council were lukewarm supporters because they saw a Combined Authority with transport powers as weakening their own institution. Even local MPs lobbied against the creation of an elected Mayor in case it created an alternative powerbase to their own entrenched positions [NR01, NR10].

Successive periods of tension, from the Norwich unitary status bid in the final months of the New Labour government, and then the City Deal, the failed Devolution bid and arguments over the Norwich Policy Area during the attempts to develop a new Greater Norwich Plan all coincided with increased strategic priority for *Institutional Self-preservation*, or promotion of a preferred institution in competition with other institutions.

Narratives, the way in which actors describe 'the way that things are done around here', are an important part of the matrix of constraints operating in conjunction with the strategies followed. The evidence from Greater Norwich is that throughout the period from the mid-2000s to 2018/19 there is a significant emphasis on negative narratives, and that that emphasis grows over time.

As well as distrust between the politicians, which is less surprising given the range of political complexions of the various councils during this period (Liberal Democrat; Labour; Lib Dem and Green; Conservative; a 'rainbow alliance' of Labour, Liberal Democrat, Green and UKIP; not accounting for variations within political parties at different times) but contrasts with the more positive narratives in Ipswich and (historically) Cambridge about cross-party working, there was also significant distrust between politicians and non-politicians, and amongst the non-politicians.

One respondent described the "main battles in the early days [being] fundamental issues of principle with the officers [whose preferences]...were for their own convenience", while another described fellow officials as having "a lack of imagination" and "not responding with any kind of conviction", and a third official identified problems with elected members in their authority: "...one of the problems we suffer with is we don't have as many members as we used to have that have strategic views, they are very parochial". All of these point to a fundamental lack of personal confidence in the abilities of other actors working within the institutions of Greater Norwich [NR09, NR05, NR08].

A lack of understanding of – or empathy for – the positions of other actors is something frequently remarked on: "The City seemed to [act] as if South Norfolk didn't exist", there's "fear on both sides...everyone is paranoid about everyone else", and "it's like a multi-layered game of chess – [we're] seeing in that [the sharing of services by two other councils] a potential threat" are typical indications of a wide ranging narrative of distrust and the assumption of 'hidden agendas' by others [NR05, NR03, NR01].

Alongside these narratives of distrust and lack of co-operation sits a persistent narrative around positive outcomes having been lost, or achieved despite rather than because of the work of local actors and institutions. According to the narrative, the Growth Point bid promised much but delivered little, and the same was true of the City Deal bid a few years later: "all sorts of promises were made…which delivered three parts of bugger all", another summed it up as "starting off as something more spectacular… [but all it]...has basically meant is we could borrow cheap money" [NR05, NR01].

Across the piece the views of the competence, professionalism and even intent of others emphasised the negative over a prolonged period. In this narrative, successful outcomes were not to be celebrated but something that happened against the odds: as one interviewee noted, the JCS went through many "trials and tribulations ... it was more held together by the fact that... no-one wanted to be seen to walk away" [NR04]. When things had gone wrong, such as after the collapse of the Devolution Deal bid amid acrimony and recriminations, the narratives were even more damning: "No-one's seen another deal and the Government will hardly talk to us anymore, they think we're such a rabble" [NR09].

That narratives and practices have at times been different in Greater Norwich is clearly evidenced by close examination of how business has been done in Norwich; there are clear examples of situations described within a negative narrative but where the behaviours were rather more collaborative.

For example, during the mid to late 2000s, the Development Partnership established to take forward the Joint Core Strategy showed clear evidence of not just a collaborative intent, but cooperative practice: "Working through consensus...has been very powerful...there was a genuine willingness to work together and solve problems" [NR08]. In particular what one political figure described as the "horse-trading" over housing numbers during the development of the JCS demonstrated collegiate practices.

Both politicians and officials described this as a period when "The three leaders had breakfast, lots of times...I think there were times [there was a] need to sit outside the committee meeting…" … "It just felt that battling it out, in front of officers, round a table where our meetings were open to the public was not the best way to do it". This was in spite of the tensions that were publically apparent over the issue of Norwich's bid for unitary status: "that's why we made it private - because we couldn't afford to have the unitary fall out appear in public through our planning process where we were virtually on the same page" [NR05, NR07, NR02, NR10].

As the Joint Core Strategy was developed new and innovative collaborative approaches were agreed such as the pooling of Community Infrastructure Levy funds, demonstrating that cooperative practices around shared institutions were in existence. Others saw the CIL pooling arrangement as something that deliberately blurred the institutional dividing lines: because "it removes the boundaries between us: we've planned together, we know what growth we want to support, we know what infrastructure we need to make that happen, we've got this income stream, so [lets] pool it and spend it on our joint priorities" [NR07]. The County Council as Highways Authority, seeing the opportunity for a new funding stream for a key piece of infrastructure in the NNDR, wrapped its transport strategy into the JCS and CIL mechanism [NR09].

However by 2017 there was clear evidence that the institutional practices had become almost entirely uncooperative. Meetings such as that of the Growth Board in September

2017 broke down because it proved impossible to agree what the minutes of the previous meeting should say, while meetings of the Development Board included documents tabled in public by one set of actors without prior discussion with their partners, in clear contravention of previous norms (Greater Norwich Development Partnership, 2017; Greater Norwich Growth Board, 2017). As one person present summed it up, "over the last year the Growth Board hasn't achieved very much - it's more of a forum for members' bickering" [NR04].

The CIL arrangement, having delivered the NNDR, got bogged down in disagreements over whether the maintenance of existing infrastructure could be funded alongside the building of new infrastructure: that the biggest maintenance needs were in the city, and the biggest needs for new infrastructure were outside it, reinforced existing lines of tension and demonstrated the shift away from the collegiate approaches that had led to its creation [NR01, NR05].

The evidence of the public records of meetings in combination with the descriptions of them by those involved show a clear shift from co-operative to unco-operative practices in the governance institutions in Greater Norwich. But the evidence also shows that the tensions between partners had been there throughout the JCS period, but the way in which those tensions were addressed was different, as was the nature of the institutions through which they played out: "There have been quite a number of tetchy meetings - which in the past might have been skilfully swept under the carpet, gone on behind the scenes" [NR04]. The practices of the game in Greater Norwich had changed, as had the rules of the game.

While local actors can establish rules for new shared institutions, as actors in Greater Norwich did with the creation of the Greater Norwich Growth Board (Greater Norwich Growth Board, 2014), a series of 'rule changes' by national governments have also had consequences in Greater Norwich, some minor, some significant.

For example, the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, by allowing Local Development Plans to be broken down into different documents and by encouraging strategic co-operation between planning authorities, changed the rules and contributed to the decision by actors in Greater Norwich to develop informal institutions to take forward a JCS.

More significant was the adoption of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in 2011, which had particular impacts for Greater Norwich. The requirement for a five-year land supply and the 'titled balance' in favour of development where such a land supply was absent caused immediate and particular problems for the two rural planning authorities who had to demonstrate separate five-year land supplies for both the parts of their area inside the Norwich Policy Area (NPA) *and* the area outside it.

When the JCS was developed, the Policy Area concept was treated as being largely uncontentious when used as a planning tool, both within the informal Greater Norwich Development Partnership that was working to draw up the strategy, and also with the wider public (although its other potential significances, particularly in relation to the pursuit of unitary local authorities, were far more controversial). The summary of consultation responses on the JCS noted that 65% of respondents felt that no change to the boundaries of the NPA was needed, and even greater proportions agreed that the NPA should be used as a tool for the allocation of housing required by the city of Norwich but for which there was insufficient space within the city's boundaries (Greater Norwich Development Partnership, 2009).

Combined with the JCS and its allocation of housing numbers both to the three councils AND to the Norwich Policy Area, the revised rules set by the NPPF meant that five different areas had to demonstrate a five year land supply [NR07]. While there was a twenty or thirty year land supply in the *residual* areas of each of Broadland and South Norfolk and a sufficient land supply for the two local authorities when taken as a whole and for Norwich City, there was not a five year supply in either of the *NPA* areas outside the city, leaving both rural authorities exposed to speculative development. Thus the change of rules within the NPPF brought with it a serious risk of loss of control over the planning system, a key strategic priority for actors within local authorities.

The most important changes to the rules constraint for the institutions of Greater Norwich however have been the repeated openings up of the potential for local government reorganisation. Both the *Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007* and the *Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016* explicitly invited proposals for the replacement of two-tier authorities such as those in Norfolk with new unitary authorities. Responses to both Acts are a critical part of the dynamics at work in the co-evolution of strategies, constraints and institutions in Greater Norwich.

TRACING CHANGES OVER TIME IN NORWICH

The theoretical framework set out earlier shows how the interaction of strategies with aspects of constraint is co-evolutionary, leading to increased emphasis on particular strategies and the development of particular narratives and practices. The analysis shows that process at work in Greater Norwich, as actors moved from a situation prior to 2006 where there were "cordial relationships with our neighbours … but nothing formalised" [NR05] through the development of informal institutional arrangements through which strategic aims around *Control* and *Recognition* were to be pursued, to one where semi-

formal structures struggled in the face of increasingly negative narratives and practices and where strategic priorities have become predominantly about *Institutional Self-preservation*.

Figure xvi - Analysis of the strategic objectives and constraints in Norwich, and their movement over time: the importance of the objective of Recognition remains low over time, while that of Investment remains high. The relative importance of Control increases significantly, while that of Institutional Self-Preservation/Ambition, already relatively high, increases sharply to become the most important objective. Narratives become negative, while practices move significantly from co-operative towards unco-operative; rules tend towards instability.

CONSTRAINTS / STRATEGIES		Narratives			Practices			Rules		
		+ive	=	-ive	Coop	=	Un-Coop	Stable	=	Un-stable
Recognition	+									
	=									
	-			→	→	→				→
Investment	+			→	→	→				→
	=									
	-									
Control	+						↗			↗
	=		↗			↗			↗	
	-									
Institutional Self-Preservation /Ambition	+					↗				↗
	=		↗		↗				↗	
	-									

The first informal institutional arrangement in Greater Norwich was the Housing Partnership, originally established in the mid-2000s to improve processes around the management of housing responsibilities for the three district councils but which acted as the

precursor to the subsequent Development Partnership. The Housing Partnership included the commissioning of evidence of housing need, part of the evidence base needed for the local development plan (Greater Norwich Housing Partnership, 2011) and it also provided a proving ground for how the authorities and individuals within them could work together: "it was important because it was the forerunner of us accepting that we can work together, politically" and that "members can get on with each other" [NR07].

The way in which institutions and strategies were interdependent was spelled out in the 2004 draft iteration of the East of England Plan (East of England Regional Assembly, 2004), which emphasised the importance of the Norwich Policy Area not only as a designation within which the local authorities would work, but also as a causal agent in that collaboration: "The Norwich Policy Area is the main focus for housing growth in the sub-region. It will facilitate co-ordination between the three districts responsible for the administration of the urban area (my emphasis)" (draft policy NSR 4). The Norwich Policy Area was seen not just as a spatial designation, but as an emergent institution which would constrain and shape the actors operating within it.

At this earlier stage of partnership working both the narratives and the practices of the Housing Partnership were largely positive, emphasising collaborative approaches and outcomes. The deliberate evolution of the Housing Partnership into the first iteration of the Greater Norwich Development Partnership, and the simultaneous development of the Growth Point bid, demonstrate evidence of the range of strategic objectives being pursued by different actors in Norwich, and the potential for those strategies to interact with and impact upon the narratives and subsequently the practices of the institutions of governance in the city. The draft East of England Plan showed how institutions and practices might co-evolve and depend upon one another.

The importance of both the strategic objective of investment to the Growth Point bid - "the Government were providing the opportunity for you to secure some funding if you bid and were successful as a Growth Point" - but also the objective of recognition - "this is something we should pitch for... Norfolk has a history of always being at the end of everything... this was an opportunity to put Norfolk back on the Government's radar" – is clear [NR07].

However another interviewee confirmed that while the primary incentive for the Growth Deal bid was financial – "we were told it would be £80m to grease the wheels" in return for an uplift in housing numbers and economic growth – there were other strategic objectives at work for some of the actors involved. "Norwich [City Council] had a sweetheart deal with [Secretary of State at the time] Ruth Kelly over the Growth Deal…. which they played into their unitary bid… it was aggressive, non-consensual" [NR05].

When compared with Ipswich and in particular with Cambridge over this period, it is the much greater emphasis on strategies around *Institutional Ambition and Self-preservation*

that stands out in Greater Norwich. Moreover, there is a correlation with negative narratives even while more collaborative practices, such as the work through the Development Partnership, were progressing.

This strategic objective for key actors in Norwich, that of making a bid for unitary status as a Council more likely to succeed, led them to pursue strategies such as the Growth Point status that enhanced the institutional arrangements of the Norwich Policy Area, the planning designation that had existed in various Structure and Regional Plans since the 1970s. For actors in Norwich, a unitary Greater Norwich on larger boundaries was seen as more likely to find favour with the New Labour government because of perceived economies of scale and organisational efficacy, and thus strategies that used these geographies as the basis for institutional structures were preferred through this period.

But for opponents of Norwich's ambitions the opposite was true, meaning that different actors each following their own version of the same strategic objective of privileging their own preferred institutions while operating in the same institutional infrastructure put an increasing emphasis on that objective in reaction to one another's perceived – and real – strategies. The result was that the strategic objective of pursuing ambitions for particular institutions shaped the institutional infrastructure by putting increased emphasis on the contested Norwich Policy Area designation, which in turn further shaped and emphasised the priority given to the strategic objective.

The practices from the mid-2000s through to the mid-2010s are reflected in the nature of the institutions developed. The Development Partnership, which if constituted as a semi-formal body would have only included the planning authorities, was deliberately kept as an informal body. One rationale for this was that it enabled the County Council, which was not a planning authority, to be involved and 'bound into' the process, but more important was that the informal structures allowed a space in which disagreements could be worked out.

One senior officer at the time commented "it enabled political differences to be set aside…publicly the politicians were totally opposed to each other but privately, through the GNDP, they could sit, talk, and resolve issues. That's why we made it private - because we couldn't afford to have the unitary fall-out appear in public through our planning process where we were virtually on the same page" [NR07]

A clear example of the co-constituting role of strategies and modes of constraint in this period was the impact of the *Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007*, which changed the rules constraint by allowing bids for new unitary councils to be put forward. What had been a latent, albeit widely known and understand, strategic objective of a unitary Norwich City Council preferably on wider boundaries was now something that could be pursued. Given the opportunity to give this objective a higher strategic priority, actors in Norwich did so; without this change of the rules the opportunity to pursue the objective would have remained latent.

However the change of the rules was not something that had come wholly out of the blue; Norwich, together with other provincial cities that felt that they had been unfairly overlooked in the local government reorganisations of the 1990s, had been lobbying hard for the inclusion of such a provision in legislation for some time (Raine *et al.*, 2006). Thus Norwich's strategic objective had helped to shape the change in the rules, which had in turn increased the importance of the strategic objective.

Norwich submitted a bid for unitary status to Government in 2007; after prolonged debate the Government announced in February 2010 that Norwich would become a unitary council. During the campaign for the 2010 General Election the Conservative Party pledged to reverse this decision, and did so soon after the formation of the Coalition Government in May of that year. During the consultation period the Boundary Commission for England proposed a number of draft options, including a 'Greater Norwich' unitary that roughly matched the Norwich Policy Area boundary, appearing to confirm the fears of those seeing a risk to their own institutions from Norwich's ambitions.

This period of institutional development in Greater Norwich shows two examples of the interaction of strategies and constraints leading to new institutions. First, the changes to the rules of the 'planning game' in the 2004 Act and its associated regulatory changes (*Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004*; Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2004a) encouraged the conversion of the existing Housing Partnership, which had already begun to commission work such as a Housing Needs Survey that would be required for the Core Strategy. Narratives and practice were positive and cooperative, and the resulting innovative approach to planning fitted with the strategic objectives of seeking recognition from government, and making it easier to pursue investment from the same source. The result was the evolution of the Housing Partnership to a new, still informal, Development Partnership.

The second is the opportunity to pursue ambitions for preferred institutions created by the rules changes in the 2007 Act. While these changes to rules introduced some instability into the institutional environment, and narratives became more negative, what were not yet evident were uncooperative practices. It appears that the informal institutional arrangements designed for the Development Partnership created the space required for actors to work through their differences, and despite increasingly negative narratives enabled reasonably co-operative practices to continue.

The informal institutions of the Development Partnership were designed to deliver strategic objectives around *Recognition* and in particular *Investment*, and while it remained apparent that these objectives both were priorities for the actors in Greater Norwich and were also being delivered to a reasonable extent, the informal institution arrangements were deemed both necessary and sufficient for their purpose. It was as these informal arrangements became semi-formal ones that their inherent instability - stemming from the ongoing

interactions between unstable rules, negative narratives and an increasing emphasis on a strategy of *Institutional Self-preservation and Ambition* - became all too apparent.

The decision to move from the informal Development Partnership to a semi-formal Growth Board model of governance in 2013, and the related pursuing of a City Deal bid in the same year was seen as a logical next step - "The City Deal was another way of way of binding the three Districts, the County and the LEP together" – and one that was linked to a long running strategic ambition. [NR09]. The success of the Joint Core Strategy, something it was felt was being seen by Government as "almost best practice", meant that a bid for some of the financial resources being offered by Government was more likely to succeed and "why wouldn't [we] fall on some of that City Deal money?" [NR09]

Significantly, as another senior official explained, the decision to put forward a bid for a City Deal came as a result of the decision to create the Growth Board, not the other way round: "we had governance in place with the Growth Board, with the LEP on it as well - so we ticked all the relevant boxes, so we bid for the City Deal" [NR07]. In other words, the creation of the required institutional structures was partially responsible for shaping the decision of the actors operating within that institution to pursue a new tactical objective, albeit one that was in line with the broad strategies that had been pursued for ten years or more – to seek additional investment from and recognition by central Government.

There is a contrast with the situation in Cambridge where, as the analysis in the following chapter shows, new institutions tended to be developed in exchange for external investment in a transactional approach to institution building. The example of the Greater Norwich City Deal is subtly different, reflecting two different ways in which different strategic priorities were interacting with the process of institutional development.

In Greater Norwich, the creation of the semi-formal Growth Board was seen more as a means to the end of more collaborative working, rather than being a consequence of it, the inverse of the situation in Cambridge. However, as analysis of the response to the MacPherson Report into institutionalised racism in the Metropolitan Police showed, changing rules without changing embedded practices does not necessarily succeed in resolving the issue (Lowndes and Roberts, 2013); the evidence from Greater Norwich paints a similar picture.

In Cambridge the primary strategic objective at the time of the City Deals was the pursuit of additional investment. While investment was important for actors in Norwich, the decision to 'bind in' different groups shows an awareness of, and desire to limit, the strategic objective of institutional ambition and self-preservation. The knowledge of the relatively high importance of this objective shaped the development of revised institutional forms in the shape of the more formal Growth Board.

Another difference from Cambridge was the relatively higher importance of *Recognition* as a strategic objective in Norwich, and how this shaped the form of institutions that were developed: the need for Government to see and recognise the newly created governance institution meant that changing the rules to make the institution formal was the obvious step – again the strategy was shaping the institutional constraints. As a senior official put it: "we laboured the point [in the bid]: we've got the Joint Core Strategy, we've got the governance body in place already, we work very closely together, this is exactly, Government, what you want to see". [NR07]

In the end the outcome of the City Deal bid was generally felt to be a disappointment, contributing to a growing negative narrative that following these strategic objectives was delivering less than anticipated [NR01, NR05]. This narrative, apparent from the bid for Growth Point status, through the New Homes Bonus to the City Deal, begins increasingly to dominate the perceptions of a range of actors in Norwich.

At the same time the effect of this shift to a semi-formal model that met in public was to provide an arena within which disagreements between actors within the institution could be played out if that suited the strategic preferences of those actors (and it frequently did). Clashes of strategic objectives and negative narratives could now be performed in public as uncooperative practices.

The development and subsequent collapse of the Devolution deal bid in 2016 not only reflected underlying narratives of distrust between actors, but also made them much more pronounced. The consequence was a further reduction in the capacity for the institutions to be effective places in which the various actors in Norwich could resolve differences; rather, those institutions made it less likely that those differences could be resolved, with narratives around mutual distrust and fear of hidden motivations being reflected and amplified by debate in public rather than being dampened down in private informal institutions as they had been prior to the creation of the Growth Board.

While the Devolution Deal finally fell apart after a number of Norfolk's district councils withdrew, it was also clear that the County Council would also have opposed it, and had been given an effective veto by ministers: "they had been given that power and of course they used it" [NR05 interview]. That this veto was exercised using 'soft power', influencing the actions of some of the rural district councils in Norfolk rather than a direct vote against the proposal, was noted by several interviewees [NR07, NR09].

The Devolution Deal debacle demonstrated both the importance of rule changes by the 'reaching in' (Allen and Cochrane, 2007) of central Government into the institutions and processes of sub-regional governance in East Anglia, and the further increasing impact of the strategic objective of institutional self-preservation and ambition on the contested choices of boundaries for new and potentially powerful institutions. The two County Councils – Suffolk and Norfolk – initially supported bids based on their own boundaries but

were pressured by national level actors to instead use the 'two-county' boundaries of the New Anglian LEP. Actors operating within other institutions that did not operate on county boundaries – primarily the district councils and the LEP itself – were suspicious of single county approaches, but more open to two-county structures and institutions as being less of a risk to their own preferred institutions. And when offered an effective veto over institutions that were not coterminous with their boundaries, Norfolk County Council in particular was content to see the proposal fall away: "Counties were told that they had a veto – so of course they used that power" [NR05].

The consequences for the narratives around the governance institutions in Norfolk of this collapse appeared profound; every interviewee pointed to this as a crisis point (using words like "nadir" and "debâcle" [NR03, NR04]. Supporters of the Deal saw the actions of players in Norwich, both politicians and officers, as having amounted to throwing away huge amounts of potential investment on a whim: "[after that] …. "it's a miracle that we managed to work with them" [NR05]. But as the analysis of the period before the failure of the Devolution Deal shows, narratives in Greater Norwich were already negative, and the 'debacle' was not therefore a break with the past but a new low point on a pre-existing trend.

Further, as other interviewees make clear, the nature of the fundamental objections to the elected mayor element of the package by all the key players in Norwich – and elsewhere – were known from the start: "there appeared to be some consensus to move things forward - but from the outset the City Council was completely opposed to the concept of an elected mayor, their position was clear" [NR07, NR01]. Thus despite the narrative of a 'betrayal' by those who eventually brought the Devolution Deal to a halt, it is clear that it was an entirely predictable outcome, which thus raises the question of exactly what strategies were being followed by the various actors.

The reasoning behind Norwich's opposition to the Devolution Deal points to the underlying strategic priority that made the Deal's collapse predictable; interviewees from within and without the City Council highlighted the issue of Norwich being "a red dot in a sea of blue" [NR01, NR03] but the objections go beyond concerns over political complexion and are described in terms of the city's autonomy being reduced, and reflect the view that the creation of a new institution would draw power away from the existing institution – the City Council – that provides the basis through which the city's actors can best articulate their own power [NR01, NR02, NR08, NR10].

Thus the objections to, and ultimate failure of, the Devolution Deal process in Norfolk stem largely from the increasingly dominant strategy of preserving the institutions that enable actors to actuate power, and to oppose institutions that might provide alternative loci of power for others. When actors with a high priority for *Institutional Ambition and Self-preservation* perceive existing or emergent institutional structures as posing an existential

threat to their own institutional powerbase then any support is conditional and highly likely to be withdrawn, as it was from the Devolution Deal by key actors in Norwich, and elsewhere in Norfolk.

The failed Devolution Deal is evidence of how existing constraints were interacting with particular strategic priorities in a self-reinforcing cycle. Increasingly negative narratives around distrust and mutual suspicion interacted with an increasing prioritisation of the strategic objective of *Institutional Self-preservation* to drive increasingly uncooperative approaches to institutional practices, accompanied by uncertainty about the stability of institutional rules.

Figure xvii – Interactions between Objectives and Constraints in Norwich over time: a reinforcing cycle of higher priority for the strategic objective of Institutional Self-preservation and Ambition with increasingly negative Narratives, uncollegiate Practices and unstable Rules.
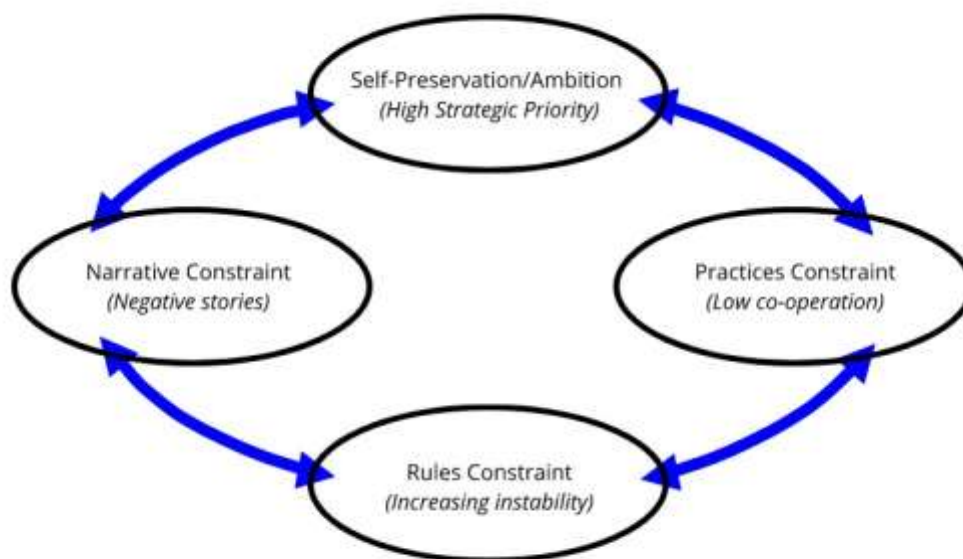
Following the collapse of the Devolution Deal efforts to bring forward a replacement of the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) provide further evidence of this cycle at work. The original JCS had been developed by the informal Development Partnership; the task of developing a new Greater Norwich Local Plan was given to a revived Development Partnership, but this time one that was a semi-formal body with meetings in public. Again the rules of the institution had been altered to 'bind in' the partners, and to create a body that was seen to fit what national government was looking for – a further example of strategic objectives shaping the form of institutional constraints. At the same time the changes to the rules inherent in the NPPF and its requirements for up to date plans and five year land supplies meant that what

had previously been technical issues became arenas for intense political contestation. Unlike in the mid-2000s, narratives were now much more negative, and practices increasingly uncooperative, and strategic objectives were giving a much greater priority to *Control* and in particular to *Institutional Self-preservation*.

The proxy for these debates was the Norwich Policy Area, the planning policy designation originally introduced in the mid-1970s, retained through into the first iterations of Regional Planning documents in the 1990s and 2000s, and which formed the basis for the Joint Core Strategy developed and adopted by the three Councils in the early 2010s. Following the change in the rules brought about by the NPPF, the policy area designation began to cause problems of loss of control for the two rural local authorities, and for the actors working within them. And as was clear from the concerns expressed about the Growth Point and Unitary Status bids in the mid to late 2000s, the Policy Area concept already carried meaning beyond its status as a planning designation.

Therefore when the requirement in the new NPPF to maintain a regular updated Local Plan meant that that JCS would need to be reviewed and refreshed almost immediately after it had been adopted, it became clear that the issue of the NPA would need to be considered as part of the new Greater Norwich Development Plan (Greater Norwich Growth Board, 2014).

For actors in the districts surrounding Norwich the issue was framed initially as about the problems with the five-year land supply: "Because we haven't got a five year land supply ... Broadland and South Norfolk are losing sites on the five year land supply issue that we haven't planned for - it's undermining our JCS, it's frustrating local communities" [NR07]. For actors in Norwich the initial framing was that the NPA ensured that development would be concentrated around the city, rather than being 'dispersed' across more rural areas. The technical planning arguments here are real, but as several interviewees pointed out, the difference in the number of dwellings between the most concentrated and most dispersed options in early consultation drafts of the Development Plan is very small – around 3300 out of a total of 43,000 dwellings being allocated [NR06].

However the evidence of interviews makes clear that none of the actors participating in or observing the debates over the continuation or otherwise of the Norwich Policy Area considered that the dispute was actually one over spatial planning policies or the allocation of sites for these 3000 or so dwellings in the Local Plan. Instead, the actions taken by actors were primarily driven by what was now clearly the dominant strategic objective, that of *Institutional Self-preservation and Ambition*.

For those outside the city, the logic behind the City Council's support for the NPA seemed clear: "What it is actually about is that if at some point in the future 'unitary' comes back onto the agenda they have a map with a logical unitary boundary on it that they can say that

[the rural districts] have signed up to" [NR07]; "Norwich still harbour ambitions to be a Unitary – that's why they wanted to keep it (the NPA)" [NR05].

Actors within the city are equally suspicious of the motives of their rural neighbours: "[the rural Tories are]…angling for a unitary solution" as long as it isn't based on the NPA according to one, while another noted that the last ditch attempt by South Norfolk and Broadland to salvage a Devolution Deal involving them and Suffolk alone, and the subsequent decision to merge the officer teams of the two councils had triggered "fear and trepidation from a Norwich point of view". [NR03]

For those observing the dispute as third parties (though not disinterested ones) the motives of the actors are also clear: "Part of the reason that [the Districts] want to get rid of the NPA is that they fear that in the future Norwich might propose it as a unitary boundary. There's absolutely no evidence of that but there is that fear." [NR06]; "It's difficult - it's linked to unitary authorities, isn't it." [NR08]. Another believed that rival unitary proposals – one a Greater Norwich based on the NPA boundary, and one an 'East Norfolk' based on the boundaries of three districts – were being pursued through the proxy of debate about the planning merits of the NPA [NR09].

This mutual suspicion that others were pursuing strategies that posed existential threats to the institutions through which actors exercised power was worsened by proposals from national government welcoming bids for local government reorganisation under provisions in the same legislation that allowed for Devolution Deals (*Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016*).

The Act gave the Secretary of State powers to recommend to Parliament local government restructures in non-unitary areas (section 15), and several such proposals were either publicly discussed or formally proposed (Bunn, 2019). The then leader of Norfolk County Council publicly mooted a bid for a unitary county while floating privately the idea of an East Norfolk unitary, leading to what one actor described as a "year and a half of manoeuvres" [NR01].

Again, the changed institutional rules stemming from the 2016 Act – both in terms of inviting proposals for local government reorganisation, and through the various national actors pursuing different forms of Devolution deal in East Anglia - interacted with and reinforced particular strategies, narratives and practices. This period in Greater Norwich from the collapse of the Devolution Deal onwards was marked by increasingly negative narratives, a growing preference for the strategy of emphasising protection of formal and informal institutions that instantiated power for particular actors against perceived threats both real and imagined, and repeated disruption of the rules of the local institutional environment by the 'reaching in' of national government.

The narratives of interviewees about this period are uniformly negative: one noted that "(the politicians) couldn't agree what day of the week it was" while another said "It's a really poisonous atmosphere, and has been for twelve to eighteen months" and a third that "For six months it was hard for [the Leaders] to be in the same room as each other" [NR04, NR08].

The narratives correlate with the evidence of practice constraints: the evidence of cancelled public meetings and performed non-cooperation in those that did go ahead in 2017 demonstrate that uncollegiate practices were developing hand in hand with negative narrative constraints, reinforced by one another and by instability of rules and the increasing priority for the strategic objective of institutional self-preservation. Comparing the situation in 2017-18 with the situation in 2010, actors repeatedly considered it to be much worse [NR02, NR09].

The development and adoption of the Joint Core Strategy would seem to bear this out. At a time when Norwich had very nearly become a unitary authority in 2010, and was seen by its partners as having acted entirely uncollegiately [NR05], the same concerns about fear and mistrust of one another's motivations faced the actors who set themselves the task of bringing about the JCS, and despite a long and sometime tortuous process (dragged out further by a successful legal challenge to one aspect of the Strategy that delayed implementation in Broadland until 2014) that objective was achieved. The creation of the innovative CIL Pooling arrangement was a further significant achievement of this period.

Yet by 2017 work on the new Greater Norwich Development Plan had effectively halted over the NPA debate, and there was an almost complete breakdown in relations. What had changed was that over the intervening period the reinforcing cycle of narratives, practices, rules and strategies had become more deeply embedded, while at the same time the body through which this cycle was being played out had moved from being private and informal to public and semi-formal as a result of those strategies.

This move to semi-formal institutions of governance forced disagreements that had previously been thrashed out in private into the public domain, making compromise more difficult to arrive at [NR08]. And the 2016 Act and its reopening of the existential threat to institutions through which actors instantiated their power further destabilised the already fragile balance of relationships in Greater Norwich.

During the period from 2006 onwards the sub-regional governance institutions of Greater Norwich underwent gradual change from informal to increasingly formal structures, a process that has been shaped by responses to the strategies followed by both local and national actors. In particular the strategic objective of *Recognition* led local actors to develop institutions that followed forms believed likely to find favour with Government. At the same time concerns about negative narratives, and concerns about risks to preferred institutions, were factors in the shaping of institutional rules that would 'bind in' a full range of partner organisations.

However, throughout this period narratives became increasingly negative, in a process of co-evolution with a growing strategic emphasis on *Institutional Self-preservation* and a breakdown in cooperative practices, a process fuelled but not solely caused by increasing instability in the rules set by national government.

In the early years of this self-reinforcing cycle the informal institutional environment proved sufficiently stable despite rising negativity to deliver a number of concrete outcomes. By the time of the move to a semi-formal governance structure in 2013 the reinforcing cycle of co-evolution meant that all the factors that decreased institutional durability were increasingly in evidence, and further instability from rule changes from national government sped and deepened the cycle. In combination with the move to an institutional form less able to cope with the pressures put on it, the result was governance arrangements that were struggling to remain intact.

If in Ipswich informal institutions appeared reasonably robust because of the limited scope of the ambitions being pursued through them, by contrast in Norwich the semi-formal institutions of governance were put under great strain, and struggled to function as the means by which strategic objectives could be delivered. Achievements such as the creation of the Joint Core Strategy and the CIL sharing mechanism were delivered to some extent despite rather than because of the institutional arrangements in place at the time, and progress on the new Greater Norwich Local Plan became bogged down.

From the mid to late 2000s onwards it is clear that while *Recognition* and *Investment* had been important strategic objectives, *Control* and increasingly *Institutional Self-Preservation and Ambition* became the overriding aims of actors in Norwich. The long-running and bitter dispute over the Norwich Policy Area, and the range of different ambitions for local government reorganisation and unitary authorities on a range of boundaries, offer unambiguous evidence that it was this ambition, to enhance the influence of preferred institutions while maintaining a constant nervous vigilance for any real or imagined projects that might be enhancing the influence of rival institutions, was paramount.

Furthermore, the impact of changes to the rules constraint in Norwich appear to have been markedly different when compared to the other case studies. The legislative opportunities created for the establishment of unitary authorities, the impact of the NPPF particularly around the five year land supply issue, and regular reaching in by Government seem to led to an unstable institutional environment in Norwich, much more so than in Ipswich and Cambridge.

The inter-relationship between these two factors is significant here. The aspiration for what actors in Norwich see as the overdue restoration of the unitary status lost in 1974 is profound, and stems from a long-standing political culture of municipal activism within the city. While Ipswich is also a former county borough, and during the 1990s and the late 2000s was part of a group of smaller cities across England seeking unitary status, there is a difference in the extent to which that ambition was pursued, and the perceived threat that it posed to other actors and their preferred institutions.

Cambridge had never been a County Borough and never sought unitary status, and Ipswich's most recent attempt to regain unitary status petered out in the late 2000s, and was thus not seen as a significant existential threat to other bodies and institutions. Norwich, on the other hand, was actually granted unitary status by the outgoing Labour Government in 2010 only to have that status rescinded by the newly elected Coalition Government.

Further, while both urban areas were at the centre of wider geographies established in Structure Plans and then carried over into the East of England Plan, there were differences in the way in which the two Policy Areas were reified. In Ipswich, in keeping with the preference for informal institutions and fuzzy boundaries, the Ipswich Policy Area became a tool within which consensual practices and positive narratives could be pursued.

In contrast the Norwich Policy Area became a proxy for expansionist institutional ambitions, supposedly – and actually – pursued as a strategy objective by actors in the city, and whose continued existence posed an existential threat to actors outside the city.

Thus the instability of rules and the preference for strategies of *Institutional Self-preservation and Ambition* interacted with one another to further decrease stability and to increase the preference for the strategic objective. Furthermore these two factors are simultaneously exacerbated by and in turn exacerbate increasingly negative narratives and uncollegiate practices, all four factors working together to create an unstable institutional environment.

The strategic objective of greater *Investment* is strong in Norwich, just as it is in Cambridge, and various semi-formal institutions have emerged as means of trying to pursue that objective. However the interaction between the unstable rules constraint and the strategic objective of *Institutional Self-preservation*, together with the associated narratives and practices, means that these semi-formal institutions seem impermanent at best.

Geographically Cambridge is very similar to the other two urban areas in this study. It is a city with a largely rural hinterland, where the formal boundaries of the local authority increasingly no longer correspond to the built-up urban area itself, let alone with its wider housing market or travel to work area. Pressure on housing is particularly acute in Cambridge, now one of the least affordable cities in which to live in the UK (Centre for Cities, 2019), but the issues of an underbounded city are familiar (European Commission, 2011).

Figure xviii – Cambridge and other local authorities in the context of the area covered by the then Local Economic Partnership (2012). The Greater Cambridge Partnership covers Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire, while the Combined Authority and Mayoralty also includes Peterborough, Fenland, Huntingdonshire and East Cambridgeshire (DEFRA Rural Statistics Unit, 2012).
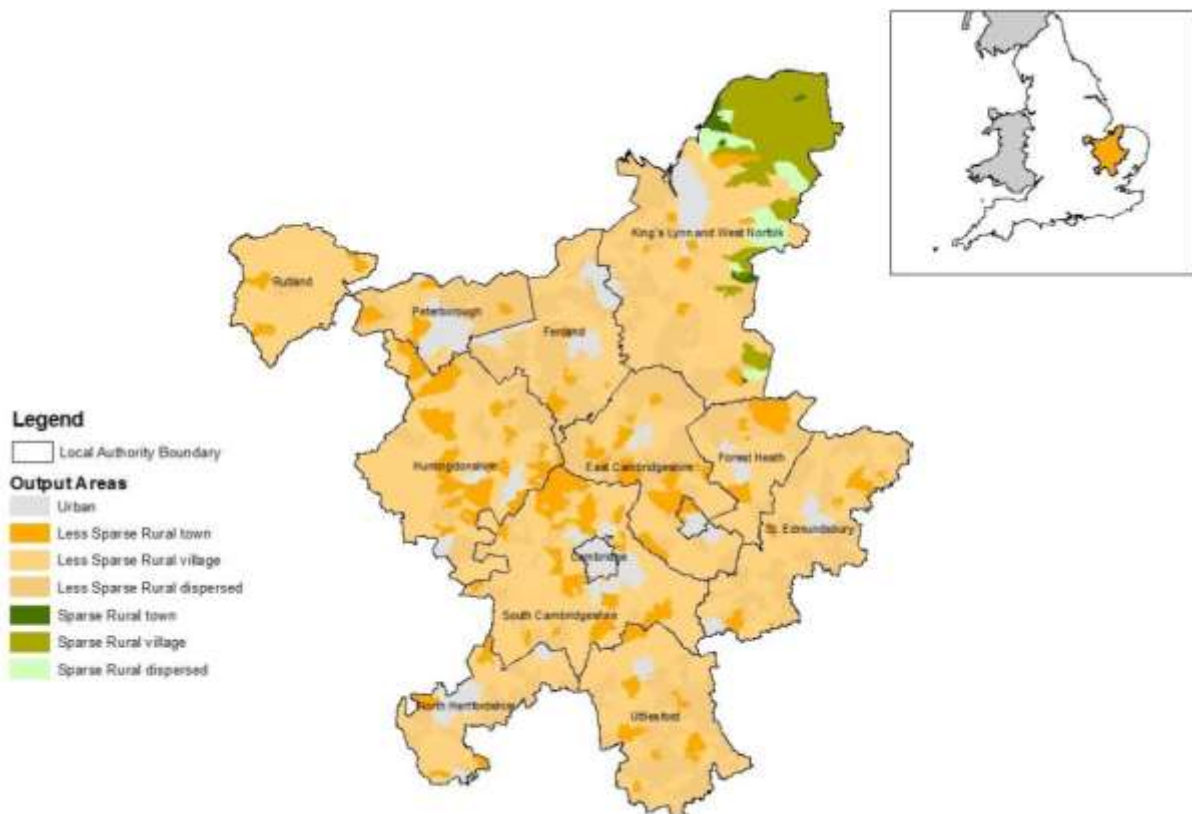
However in governance institution terms, Cambridge's inheritance is somewhat different. While Ipswich and Norwich had County Borough status until the *Local Government Act 1972* came into force in 1974, Cambridge did not. Politically too Cambridge was different; where Ipswich and Norwich had long-standing histories of Labour controlled Councils pursuing

policies of municipal activism, Cambridge's political heritage was less at odds with the areas surrounding it.

Most importantly the significant role of the University of Cambridge not just in the history but in the ongoing debates over the direction of the city's economy provides a dimension that is not present in its counterparts in Suffolk and Norfolk. That influence was most clear at key points in the development of ideas over strategic planning in Cambridge, in the early 1950s, in the late 1960s and then again in the 1990s.

SUBREGIONAL PLANNING IN GREATER CAMBRIDGE

In the first half of the 20th century Cambridgeshire was unique among English counties in having only one urban area of any significance within its boundaries, something that was decisive in the decision in 1913 to refuse Cambridge the status of a county borough (Hansard, 1914). The first proposals for planning the city and its surroundings were initiated in 1928 and published in 1934 (Davidge, 1934). As was typical of reports of the time, Cambridgeshire's Regional Planning Committee had "...the twofold purpose of preserving its native character and providing for its proper development", while noting that "it has not been their function to elaborate details, or even to provide a regional scheme" (Ramsay and Cambridge Preservation Society, 1934, p. v).

The area covered by this carefully unambitious work was the city itself, Chesterton and South Cambridgeshire Rural Districts, and Newmarket Rural District which almost entirely surrounded but did not include the town of Newmarket itself, which remained in Suffolk. This geography is something that remains embedded in both plan-making and local governance institutions through to the present day – Chesterton and South Cambridgeshire Rural Districts were merged in 1973 to form South Cambridgeshire District Council, and together with Cambridge itself make up the area covered by the Greater Cambridge Partnership.

The 1934 Report set out principles which were to be important for the future development of Cambridge and its surroundings: the growth of the city should be limited on its outer edges, and a 'belt' created around it to constrain sprawl, with development directed towards specific villages that 'have the right possibilities'. It also reflected the reality that the city was already larger than its functional boundaries: the Cambridge and District statutory town planning scheme, instigated in the early 1930s, was a detailed blueprint for areas that crossed the boundary between the urban and rural districts. The recommendations from the Report included one that the County Council should co-ordinate different statutory schemes: "it is essential that all statutory schemes in the County are

property linked up with each other…[which requires]… the fullest co-operation between authorities and any interested societies or organisations" (Davidge, 1934). This recommendation carries at its heart all the main issues, actors and potential tensions that characterise planning and its governance in Greater Cambridge today.

Following the Second World War and the passing of the *Town and Country Planning Act 1947* which removed the relevant powers from Cambridge UDC and gave them to the County Council, Cambridgeshire returned to plan-making for Cambridge (Senior, 1956). Holford and Wright's Cambridge Planning Proposals (Holford and Wright, 1950) were commissioned as one of two Development Plans for the county, this one covering a smaller area than the 1934 Report. But the concerns were the same, made more urgent by very rapid growth in population in Cambridge during the intervening period.

The introduction to the Plan set out the issues and objectives: population growth "is likely to continue, and even accelerate, unless special effort is made to prevent it", and a special effort to do just that was what was proposed. As the Plan put it "One cannot make a good expanding plan for Cambridge", and so the core objective was that population should not increase, and retain "conditions of life and work and movement that do very well as they are" (Holford and Wright, 1950, pp. vi-x).

The first principle of the Plan was 'that Cambridge should remain predominantly a University Town', and whenever other demands conflicted, this principle should take priority (Senior, 1956). The other two core principles to support this were that the city's population should not be allowed to exceed 100,000 and that industrial growth should be actively discouraged (Senior makes a rather caustic reference to Holford's personal enthusiasm for being able to cycle home for lunch).

Again, the importance of the different institutions that constituted power in Cambridge was noted: success will require "…the agreement and support of the county, town and University", which was likely to be "…much more difficult where three powerful bodies have interests which, in the nature of things, cannot be identical…".

The success of the plan rested on "…a much closer relationship…between the County and the Borough…", and the problem it sought to address was not "only the problem of urban Cambridge, but clearly one affecting this…Greater Cambridge area". This recognition of the importance of Cambridge the town (and then from 1951 the city) within a complex institutional governance framework both echoes the recommendations from Davidge's Report in 1934 and is a precursor of debates and challenges to follow.

One of the three over-riding principles of the resultant Cambridge Plan, that population should be limited, was driven by the belief that "…a large growth would hinder the work of the University" (p49), but Holford and Wright went on to warn that one possible consequence of the policies put forward was that "overcrowding" might occur. It was the

reversal of its position by the University on the former in the 1960s and the increasing awareness that not only was the predicted overcrowding happening but that it was this – not population growth – that was hindering the work of the University that started the shift away from the restraint policies adopted in the early 1950s.

The first signs of this repositioning were found in a report by the City Architect and Planning Officer called the *'Future Shape of Cambridge'*, published in March 1966 (Cambridge City Council and Logie, 1966). The report was commissioned jointly by the City and County Councils and the University, and set out a radically different perspective on how to plan for the future of Cambridge and its surroundings, and challenged one of the basic assumptions on which the 1950 Plan was based, that the city's population could be controlled.

This new report noted that while the County Council's Plan aimed to cap the population of Cambridge at 100,000 in perpetuity, it had in fact grown rapidly, was already above 99,000 and was likely to reach 120,000 by the end of the century. It also noted that land would 'run out' by 1981, meaning that this increase in population could only be accommodated by increased density and overcrowding (Cambridge City Council and Logie, 1966).

Rather than the University needing protection from this demographic challenge from the city, the City Architect proposed a new symbiotic relationship between the two: as one of the Future Aims put it, the objective should be "to foster the national function of Cambridge as an 'ideas centre' by encouraging the growth of new technological industries, research and development centres, educational bodies and other organisations which would benefit by proximity to the University" (Section B).

The report also challenged the spatial planning approach that had held sway since the 1930s: instead of the "suburbanisation of villages" (para D11) while trying to prevent any increase in the population of Cambridge, an alternative approach (1966, see Map 7) reminiscent both of the never-realised 1930s proposals for Ipswich and of the 2014 Wolfson Economics Prize-winning Uxcester plan (a lightly fictionalised version of Oxford) of urban extensions in the form of 'tongues' developing along transport corridors was proposed (Abercrombie and Kelly, 1935; Cambridge City Council and Logie, 1966; Rudlin and Falk, 2014).

Crucially the report continued to recognise the importance of Cambridge's place in a sub-region; it drew on work by the Working Party on the Future Size of Cambridge, a body convened by the Government and which used the Cambridge Employment Exchange Area as a 'sub-region', an area more or less equivalent to the later Greater Cambridge area. As the author put it, planners "…must ignore the boundaries of County Districts (of which the City is one) and regard the City and its surroundings as one indivisible problem" (Section C).

Despite this clarion call for Cambridge to be an 'ideas centre', a crisis point came two years later when a proposed European headquarters for IBM in Cambridge was refused,

coinciding with the commissioning by the University of the Mott Report (Mott, 1969; While, Jonas and Gibbs, 2004). The report made clear the dangers to the University of failing to find places for the increasing number of high tech businesses wanting to locate in or near Cambridge; as a further report a few years later put it "…any firm… in any field with some air of science or erudition [wants to be able to] boast of a Cambridge connection…" (Parry Lewis, 1974). The conclusion was that enabling the 'national function' of Cambridge identified by the City Architect in 1966 through careful relaxation of the controls from the 1950s was the appropriate way to proceed.

In a presentiment of the later reports, Mott's findings were backed by local economic interests, and by the City Council; the latter were increasingly frustrated with the policy of locating housing growth outside the city, as the consequence was increasing problems inside the city, particular in terms of transport and congestion, but no additional rates income to help pay for the means of addressing them (Parry Lewis, 1974).

The immediate consequence of the Mott Report was the development by Trinity College of the Cambridge Science Park in 1970, and the beginnings of the 'Silicon Fen' phenomenon. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s Cambridge saw a significant growth in spin-out and co-situated industries, with up to 100 start-ups a year in the latter decade (Evidence submitted by the University of Cambridge, 1999).

By the middle of the 1980s contradictions between the encouragement of growth in the high-tech sector and the deliberate restraint of housing growth were beginning to become apparent (Segal Quince Wicksteed Partnership, 1985) but it was not until the mid-1990s that significant efforts to change the status quo of planning policy around the city emerged; during this period the first Regional Planning Guidance (RPG) for the East of England, and the Cambridgeshire Structure Plan that stemmed from it (Department of the Environment, 1991; Cambridgeshire County Council, 1995) maintained effectively the same uneasy balance as had been in place for a quarter of century.

Two elements came together to indicate the change of direction. The first was the establishment of a local forum for debating the future development of Cambridge and its surroundings, Cambridge Futures, following the publication in the local press of an article by a well-known entrepreneur under the heading *'Cambridge is Full Up'* (Dawe, 1997; While, Jonas and Gibbs, 2004). The second was the decision by Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott to uphold the refusal of planning permission for a major expansion to the Wellcome Trust's Human Genone campus near Cambridge, a decision which triggered many of the same concerns at a national as well as local level as the refusal of the IBM project some 30 years previously (While, Jonas and Gibbs, 2004).

Cambridge Futures was seen by those interviewed for this research as having played a critical role in setting a new direction for planning in Cambridge. For one, it was about "the recognising of the need to do spatial planning in a different way for the area - we needed to

do something about Green Belt hopping, congestion - there just [wasn't] growth being done inside the city..." [CA06]. The 'we' in this instance was a coalition of local businesses, a number of local authorities including both the City and County Councils, the University and others: what While et al described as "locally dependent pro-growth interests" (2004).

The culmination of the Cambridge Futures project was a prolonged set of discussions and debates locally between 1997 and 1999 about spatial planning options for the future development of Cambridge. These didn't start from a neutral place – as the summary of the consultation put it "Since the continued economic prosperity of the region _depends on growth_ (my emphasis), it is essential that it should be sustainable and not only maintain but enhance the quality of life enjoyed by the local population." (Platt, 2000) – but the result showed that of the options put in front of the public the 'status quo' of continued constraint of housing growth combined with strict protection for the city's Green Belt was the least popular (Platt, 1999).

At the same time, the Human Genome campus refusal was seen in central Government as running counter to national as well as local economic interests. The New Labour government, which had as a "central concern, and rhetorical device …to build more competitive regions through its regional policies" (Counsell and Haughton, 2003, p. 226) saw the Cambridge Phenomenon as being emblematic of that policy. Ministers equated the interests of Cambridge's economy with the national economic interest (Hetherington, 2000).

The consequence was that this combination of a national focus on regional competitiveness and the synergies between scientific research and the high tech economy – all of which played into that favourite framing concept of the New Labour era, 'modernisation' (Inch, 2009) – and a pre-existing development of a 'growth coalition' of local actors operating around and through the Cambridge Futures project signalled a reversal of half a century of spatial planning preferences.

The shift, which had been developing for some years, was made concrete by the preparatory work on and eventual publication of the revised RPG6 in 2000 (Department of the Environment Transport and the Regions and Government Office for the East of England, 2000). However it is important to note that the bulk of the conceptual work on the revised RPG was done locally, with Cambridgeshire County Council in particular playing a leading role in both the technical studies that backed the new pro-growth strategy, but also the concerted efforts to construct a coalition to support that strategy – not just by co-funding Cambridge Futures but by orchestrating the creation of the Greater Cambridge Partnership (not to be confused with the later body of the same name), a lobbying and eventually a new semi-formal governance institution (While, Jonas and Gibbs, 2004).

The new strategic approach to planning for 'Greater Cambridge' was embedded within a sequence of formal planning documents. The first was the revised RPG6, which was

followed in 2004 by what was to be the final Cambridgeshire Structure Plan (Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City, 2004). This was in turn lifted almost verbatim into the Regional Spatial Strategy, or draft East of England Plan (East of England Regional Assembly, 2004), as confirmed by an interviewee: "because the Structure Plan provided such a strong and clear strategy for the growth of the Cambridge sub-region...it was no-brainer to pick up that Structure Plan and put it straight into the RSS almost unchanged" [CA03].

At the same time the Structure Plan was being embedded in the Local Plan for Cambridge (Cambridge City Council, 2006) and South Cambridgeshire's Core Strategy and Site Specific Policies DPD (South Cambridgeshire District Council, 2007; South Cambridgeshire District Council, 2010) thus creating a coherent set of planning strategies whose delivery could now become the focus of effort. This coherent strategy was able to survive the abolition of the East of England Plan by the incoming Coalition Government in 2010 with limited disruption; as one interviewee explained, the RSS system gave local politicians "a massive fig-leaf to hide behind" when it came to housing numbers, in effect creating a 'safe space' for horse-trading away from direct public gaze [CA03]. In Cambridge that horse-trading had already taken place from the late 1990s and the results gradually baked into the Structure and Local Plans, so there was less of a challenge when the fig-leaf was removed.

Prior to the 2010 abolition of the regional tier of governance, the local authorities in what was described as the Cambridge Sub-region in the East of England Plan had started to put in place institutional arrangements to deliver the strategy first put forward in the 2003 Structure Plan. As key growth sites straddled the boundary between Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire, a joint planning committee was established by the two Local Planning Authorities to develop master plans and design codes, and in due course to make decisions on the sites themselves [CA06]

At the same time, using funding from the Government set aside for the *'London-Stansted-Cambridge'* growth corridor, a body known as Cambridge Horizons was established to accelerate delivery of major schemes across the county. Set up as a limited company, after local resistance to the creation of a fully-fledged development corporation [CA04, CA05] Horizons played an important role in developing and implementing the strategy set out in the Structure Plan and emerging East of England Plan, but was wound up along with the regional governance system after 2010, in what one interviewee described as "the Pickles bonfire" [CA04]

To further embed the 2003 strategy, the two planning authorities and the County Council agreed a co-ordinated updating of the two Local Plans and the County Council's Transport Strategy for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire, work on which began around 2011. The plans remained separate – unlike the approach in Norwich – but were to be integrated and congruent. To assist with the process, funding extracted from Cambridge Horizons as it was

closed down was used to create a Joint Planning Unit, a shared resource able to support all three local authorities in developing the technical and evidence base for their plans and to "broker" contentious issues around housing numbers.

While the eventual approval and adoption of the two Local Plans was substantially held up during the Examination in Public process, they together with the new Transport Strategy formed the underpinning for a successful City Deal bid to Government in 2013-14, one which came with very substantial levels of additional investment. After a slow and problematic start the governance and delivery institutions for the City Deal were refreshed and in 2017 renamed as the Greater Cambridge Partnership, reviving an institutional branding from a decade and half previously.

Simultaneously the debate over devolution options, where debate raged across East Anglia over whether one, two or three county models of Combined Authority were desirable, was resolved in Cambridgeshire by the signing of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Devolution Deal (Paun and Campbell, 2017) in late 2016 and the creation of the Combined Authority as a new institutional layer in 2017.

The election of the Mayor for the Combined Authority in May 2017, and subsequent debates over which powers had been delegated to the Combined Authority, which to the Greater Cambridge Partnership and which remained with previously existing bodies have begun to dominate the discourse locally. New institutions have been added to the previous matrix, and considerable ambiguities have begun to open up about how those institutions interact.

THE PURSUIT OF STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES IN CAMBRIDGE

While there are elements of all four strategic objectives to be found in Cambridge, it is clear that the greatest priority over a prolonged period has been given to *Investment*. Objectives around *Recognition* and *Control* have played a role, but a considerably less significant one than in either Ipswich or Norwich. *Institutional Self-Preservation* was for a long time seen as a low priority by actors in Cambridge, but has more recently assumed a much greater importance. The reasons for that, and the potential consequences of it, are bound up in the interactions with the changes to different forms of constraint.

Recognition, for Cambridge, is a relatively low strategic objective. As the events around the refusal of the Human Genome campus and the reaction from the New Labour Government confirmed, Greater Cambridge has an international importance that belie its size and population – as one interviewee put it, "Cambridge punches well above its weight" [CA04].

This importance is well recognised by players from the other case studies in this research: one figure from Norfolk described being asked to indicate his home county on a map while on a promotional trip in China – when he did so his hosts were delighted that he appeared to be pointing to Cambridge [NR05].

While actors in Cambridge have repeatedly wanted to ensure national Government in particular remained aware of Cambridge as a reliable partner for investment, it is as a secondary objective to that of gaining funding. Unlike Ipswich, and to a lesser extent Norwich, it is not a matter of reminding Whitehall of the existence of the city, but of "saying 'look at us, we've already got our house in order'" [CA03]

For actors in local governance systems, *Control* over the planning system is primarily about ensuring that decisions about the type, scale and location of development can be shaped to fit the political and professional interests of the actors and those that they represent. For local politicians, being not just able to deliver development in the 'right places' and prevent it from happening in the 'wrong places' but also to be seen to be doing so, is a fundamental part of their offer to their local electorates and support coalitions. For local government officers and representatives of locally embedded institutions, there is a similar need both to be able to deliver and to be seen to be able to deliver.

In the case of Cambridge, there have been three overlapping aspects to the strategic objective for control of the planning system. The first can be seen clearly in the shifts of planning policy in the late 1990s, with the sense that the old policies had been overtaken by demographics, and that a new strategy was needed to get politicians, planners and other local actors back to being if not a step ahead, then at least in step with, the forces of underlying economic growth.

The second element was the impact of the NPPF introduced by the Coalition Government in 2011, specifically the need to provide a five year land supply for local planning authorities, something that posed a specific challenge to South Cambridgeshire District Council. The third and most recent element, and one that forms part of a clear change in the relationships in Cambridge, stems from the creation of new institutional layers in Cambridge since 2014. Ambiguity over which institution had what responsibilities coincided with a greater focus on *Control* as a strategic objective.

In the late 1990s the approach was governed by a sense that "that we can't continue in this way..." with 'Green-belt jumping' by development leading to "completely unsustainable patterns of commuting coming back into the city...."; there was a clear need for planners, politicians and the broader membership of Cambridge's 'growth coalition' to re-establish control over shaping that development. That development would happen was a given; the issue was to ensure that it took place within a coherent framework and reflected, at least to the extent that the nature of the Cambridge Futures consultation allowed, the public's priorities [CA03].

South Cambridgeshire District Council and its politicians were at best reluctant members of this period of the policy shift, moving from outright opposition in the early years (While, Jonas and Gibbs, 2004) to a partnership approach with Cambridge City Council that needed careful management and nurturing – the presence on the board of Cambridge Horizons of the Leader of South Cambridgeshire was seen as a critical part of binding them into the new strategic direction [CA03].

When the East of England Plan and with it the targets for housing delivery were abolished in 2010 there were concerns that the previous oppositional approach might reappear, but locally generated work on housing need and growth confirmed that the East of England plan figures – figures that had been developed initially for the 2003 Structure Plan - were essentially correct. This combined with the 2011 NPPF requirement for a five year land supply generated the second element of *Control* as a strategic objective; national Government funding cuts to work on a major highways project on the A14 led to delays in the deliverability of the major development site at Northstowe, and without this site South Cambridgeshire were unable to demonstrate a sufficient supply of land under the NPPF test and found themselves "hammered at appeal" [CA06].

This need to regain control over the planning system was a major factor in support for a new Local Plan in 2011, and could be seen again after a change of political control in SCDC in 2018: "the new administration were elected on a ticket that was pretty hostile to new homes and infrastructure, but they're recanted pretty [quickly]...because they know that the biggest risk is maverick, unplanned development" [CA04].

The most recent manifestation of *Control* as a strategic objective is in the context of the City Deal and Combined Authority, and their associated new institutional layers. One strategic objective behind the City Deal was "that [actors in Greater Cambridge] wanted … more influence over transport because they felt that decisions were being made by people who didn't understand or care about the city" [CA07]. The ambiguity (or 'bugger's muddle' as one interviewee colourfully put it) around the different delegations of powers under the *Transport and Highways Act*s to the Greater Cambridge Partnership and to the Combined Authority led to repeated attempts by different actors to assert control over this critical policy area [CA03, CA04, CA06, CA07].

But aside from these periods where control has been pushed to the fore by demographic pressures, or changes to the rules of the game – the NPPF, variations in delegations of powers over transport –neither *Control* nor *Recognition* have been the main strategic objective for Cambridge; that has been *Investment*.

The message to Government was one of "we've been very virtuous by planning for growth, now help us deliver it", something that was apparent from the earliest days of the Greater Cambridge Partnership when they produced a 'single hymnsheet' with which to lobby Government (Greater Cambridge Partnership, 2002) and emphasised by interviewees for

this research: "...that understanding, that to do this you needed to have the money to invest in infrastructure, and you've got to have the influence nationally to do this...this all followed from the recognition that we had got a particular [shared] growth agenda..." [CA06, CA03]. This strategic objective, and the institutional framework put in place to deliver it, became dominant themes for Cambridge over the next 15 years.

From the early 2000s onwards, inward investment by Government and the private sector to support the 'Cambridge Phenomenon' has been the highest priority for local actors; whenever opportunities have arisen for trading support for a central government initiative for resources to invest locally "grant funding has always been the attraction" [CA03]. While there are different stated priorities for that investment – actors in Cambridge itself particularly emphasise investment in housing, while the County Council emphasise investment in infrastructure, a difference that stems both from their respective political priorities as well as their functional roles – the support given for the overall strategic objective is consistent.

A key difference between Cambridge and Norwich is the degree to which actors in Cambridge have been willing to create new institutional forms as part of a transactional arrangement with governments of all different political persuasions. The three successive and overlapping investment programmes – the 'growth point status' under New Labour, the City Deal under the Coalition but particularly associated with the Liberal Democrat part of that government, and the devolution deal leading to a Combined Authority under the Conservatives – all involved an exchange of substantial investment for new institutional arrangements that pooled or diluted the sovereignty of existing institutions.

In the case of Cambridge Horizons the initial proposal for a formal development corporation model was rejected over concerns about loss of sovereignty; the final model "was one of those delivery agency vehicles that was popular at the time, and they were the conduit for the money that was coming in [from Government]..." [CA06]. Horizons acted as the formal delivery vehicle for major projects, with no delegated powers but an important role in 'enabling' bodies like the County Council to deliver infrastructure like the Guided Bus and access roads to Addenbrookes hospital just south of Cambridge.

The process of collaboration and joint working from the early 2000s through the dissolution of the East of England Plan and Cambridge Horizons after 2010 led to the Greater Cambridge City Deal, where again the strategic priority was the investment available. While the initial wave of City Deals had been targeted at the UK's largest urban areas, mostly in the north, the second wave included smaller cities such as Cambridge.

As the policy was increased associated with Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg and Danny Alexander, the other Liberal Democrat member of the so-called 'Quad' at the heart of the Coalition Government, the fact that both Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire at this time were under Liberal Democrat control was seen as advantageous for the Greater Cambridge

City Deal: direct access by local politicians to Danny Alexander "significantly helped in its scale" [CA04] while it was "understandable that the Lib Dems wanted something to shout about, so they created these City Deals which were angled towards Lib Dem areas" [CA01].

The City Deal for Cambridge was substantial, with £500m of investment spread over 15 years. With much of the investment directed towards transport infrastructure it was for the County Council "an opportunity that was too good to miss" [CA02]. For the then Labour opposition on the City Council, whose political priorities gave a greater emphasis to housing, the deal was a good one with its promise of future funding if Greater Cambridge was seen to be a reliable partner: "...provided we get on and deliver these fast transport routes and come up with solutions to congestion, we're meeting what's required and we're likely to get favour[able treatment] from Government..." [CA04].

New institutional structures were created for administering the City Deal in the form of an Executive Board and an associated Assembly. The Board was designed with a member from each of the three local councils, with another two non-voting representatives from the education sector and the business community – which in practice meant the University of Cambridge and the Local Economic Partnership (LEP). Of critical importance was the delegation of powers over transport decision making from the County Council to this new institutional arrangement as part of the formal Deal.

For Cambridge in particular increased control over transport was important. For the County Council the amount of investment the City Deal brought with it was more than sufficient to overcome any concerns about pooling their sovereignty with other organisations, but it is important to note that at the time there were no such concerns. The Executive Board was set up with a veto arrangement in place, whereby any partner unhappy with a particular policy or proposal had the power to block it. While there were considerable teething troubles with the Assembly, the Board was seen as functioning reasonably effectively.

The priority given by the all local partners in Cambridge to *Investment*, and their willingness to exchange that investment for institutional innovations that they saw as the reasonable cost of achieving that strategic objective, is widely seen as lying behind the signing of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Devolution Deal in 2016, and the creation of the Combined Authority the following year.

This new deal with Government offered investment in areas that were high political priorities for Cambridge City Council: "the reason we ended up with a Mayoral Authority here was because of the acute housing crisis in Cambridge: Cambridge City Council - Labour-led - was prepared to trade off having a weak Combined Authority, which they were pretty dubious about but could live with, in return for a decent investment in Council Housing in Cambridge" [CA01].

The emphasis on the importance of funding is made clear by all interviewees in Cambridge: "With the Combined Authority [Cambridgeshire] put its hands up for that kind of approach....because it brought powers but more importantly brought funding with it" [CA03]; "there weren't any other options on the table at that time, and for long-term influence and guarantee of money, that was your only option" [CA06].

However since the creation of the Combined Authority, and with it the elected Mayor, the fourth strategic objective – *Institutional Self-preservation*– has started to rise in relative importance in Greater Cambridge. However unlike Ipswich and Norwich, where the focus is heavily on preserving inherited formal institutions in the form of the district and county councils, in Cambridge the focus has been on the relatively new institutions created as part of the City Deal.

While Ipswich and Norwich had made efforts in the final period of the New Labour Government to become unitary councils, no such proposal came forward in Cambridge, or was even considered: "it just wasn't thought about" [CA01], "There hadn't been the same kinds of unitary fallings out in Cambridgeshire as there had been in Norfolk and Suffolk ... [after Peterborough was spun out in the mid-1990s] it just hadn't been an issue, really" [CA06].

In the early days of the Combined Authority, this was still "a boat that doesn't need to be rocked", with a recognition that by the County Council that "if you start to say 'unitary' to the Districts, that gets them excited, very excited - 'over-my-dead-body' excited" [CA02].

The creation of the Combined Authority, the overlaying of its institutions on top of the existing ones, and ambiguity over exactly what powers sit with which institution - "... it immediately raises the question, what is the link between the Greater Cambridge Partnership... and the next layer introduced by the Devolution Deal - and the answer has never been very clear" [CA01] - has seen conflicts open up over the role, and continued existence, of the Greater Cambridge Partnership, and with those conflicts a much greater priority has been given to preserving that institution.

That the Combined Authority had been established without statutory planning powers was a reflection that the constituent local authorities had concerns that the new body would impact on the powers and position of existing institutions: "But not all the local authorities this time were fully bought into it... [and that shows up in] the refusal to allow this Mayor [unlike others] to have statutory strategic planning powers. It was a sovereignty argument." [CA03]

Concerns over the Combined Authority and in particular the Mayoralty were raised after "the abolition and wholescale cannibalisation of the LEP by the Combined Authority" [CA04]. The Local Economic Partnership and its Chair had become embroiled in complex

local political issues in north Cambridgeshire, with the local MP there seen as having led a successful campaign to destabilise and then dismantle the organisation (Bristow, 2017).

These conflicts increased significantly as the object of institutional ambitions became the Greater Cambridge Partnership itself. Attempts by the Mayor to put a 'pause' on all GCP projects in 2018 were temporarily resolved by what seems likely to have been intervention via senior political figures within the Conservative Party and 'the Greater Cambridge Establishment' [CA04, CA01], but for those invested in the success of the Greater Cambridge Partnership the Combined Authority and Mayor was now perceived as an existential threat to that institution: "... my view for a long time was that [the Mayor] wanted to grab everything, and kill the GCP, which he saw as a problem...." [CA01]

By 2019 actors in Greater Cambridge were clearly giving a much greater priority to *Institutional Ambition and Self-preservation* than previously. Representatives of the previously existing institutions were no longer prepared to pool or dilute sovereignty in the same way that they had done before, particularly Cambridgeshire County Council: "There's a perceived, and an actual, degree of reluctance to accept the structures that have been put in place" [CA03]. The Combined Authority and especially the Mayor were attempting to expand their areas of influence, perhaps as a reaction to the limited – when compared to other Metro Mayors across England – powers that had been granted when the Combined Authority was created.

The two districts that were members of both the Greater Cambridge Partnership and the Combined Authority were increasingly being pushed into a position of needing to choose between the two, with advocates for the Partnership making the case strongly which way that choice should fall: "You have to question what's in it for them [the two districts] being a member of the Combined Authority; the GCP is much more valuable for them". The other key parts of the Cambridge growth coalition started to take sides in the debate: "Should this ever get to the stage [of abolition of the GCP or wrapping it into the Combined Authority] we have both the support of the business community...as well as the University, and they have the direct lines into ministers that are far more influential...and that's what will make the difference" [CA07, CA05].

Over a period of 20 years or so, therefore, the strategic objective of *Investment* had long been the highest priority for actors in Cambridge, while *Recognition* – felt largely to be a given resulting from Cambridge's national and global appeal – and *Control* have been less significant. *Institutional Ambition and Self Preservation* was not a significant objective for much of this period, but latterly as new institutions have been created and layered on top of the existing ones in Greater Cambridge, this became a strategic priority of rapidly increasing importance.

Narratives, the way in which actors describe their interactions with one another, are an important part of the mesh of interacting constraints and strategic objectives analysed in the theoretical framework. If in these three case studies Ipswich has tended to the positive and Norwich to the negative in the way in which narratives are played out, Cambridge has tended to sit somewhere between the two.

Political differences are described in a way that emphasises positive behaviours by political opponents: "Cambridgeshire politics, in my experience, is ordinarily fairly consensual..." - geographically there is a largely Conservative block in the more rural areas to the north and a Liberal Democrat and Labour block in and around Cambridge, but not much competition between the two blocks - "We get on perfectly well with the Tories - we don't agree with them always, but on the stuff that matters [we collaborate]". [CA01]

Similarly, in a way that is markedly different to Norwich, actors are frequently happy to compliment the skills and professionalism of those working in and through different institutions: "… the skill with which it was handled by the politicians, the local authorities and the employers was really important too" [CA03] and "some longevity in the political, civic leadership - good officers who understood [the issues], far sighted things that politicians put their necks on the line for - [there was] long term civic and political investment in doing the right thing" [CA06].

Nonetheless there are more negative narratives that have grown in intensity since the creation of the Combined Authority. For actors in Cambridge the political culture of the Mayor (the former leader of East Cambridgeshire District Council, a predominantly rural part of the county) and his political allies represent something alien - "it's a style that might work in Fenlands, but it's not how Cambridge works" – and unprofessional [CA01, CA04].

Even those more sympathetic to the Combined Authority used negative terms to describe interactions between actors since it was established: "It's fair to say that in the early days the relationship between the JCP and the Combined Authority was bumpy; and the reason for that was as much as anything that we didn't fully understand each other's roles, each other's views, where we were aligned and where we were not aligned" [CA02].

When describing past periods of potential tension, such as in the development of the Structure Plan in 2003 or at the start of the first cycle of congruent Local Plans in the late 2000s, or during the early days of the City Deal, those tensions aren't downplayed but are seen as having been overcome by hard work: "the first 18 months or so of the City Deal were a bit of a disaster... it didn't have a Chief Executive, it made some regrettable

decisions, and a lot was learnt from that that allowed it go forward on a very different basis" [CA05].

This is typical of how the way of doing things in Cambridge and Greater Cambridge up to 2017 is described – challenges and difficulties, eventually being resolved by what one interviewee called "grown-up discussions" [CA02]. But narratives about recent events started to take a distinctly more negative tone: the Mayor was described as running a "crony organisation", and the Combined Authority structure as creating space for a 'Warrior Mayor' to "go out and inflict damage…" [CA04]. And as narratives became less positive, so practices also became less co-operative.

Throughout the period which saw the shift of policy on strategic planning in Cambridge from the 1990s onwards the way in which business was done was largely co-operative and consensual. Even where there was disagreement, local politicians, planners and other interested actors worked in a way which was more often than not collaborative in order to overcome those disagreements: "It was acknowledged as a very mature debate, compared to the mud-slinging or nimby-ism these things are often about - this was very much the opposite" [CA03].

The way in which Cambridge Futures brought together different interest groups and then set out to build – and shape – a consensus among the broader public of the best way for Cambridge to develop was viewed as an exemplar, and an approach that was returned to over the following fifteen years in a "continuum of relationship building" [CA03]. For example, as Cambridge City Council and the previously growth-sceptic South Cambridgeshire District Council began to work together on their linked Local Plans in the late 2000s, those involved in the process of consensus building achieved it through "lots of heavy lifting behind the scenes, lots of careful coordination between officers; ...we had to organise the meetings very carefully, with leaders sessions beforehand to have the difficult discussions, it was a carefully orchestrated process with lots of three-way coordination" [CA06].

This co-ordination was further reinforced by the establishment of a joint planning department between the two local planning authorities, creating "embedded links" between the two sets of politicians as well as between professional planners. This shared service approach was described as a sign of a "mature relationship" and when compared to the Council mergers that have been pursued in Suffolk and Somerset "…a softer way of addressing the growth issues" [CA04, CA03].

Similarly, the creation of the institutions to govern the City Deal – in due course the Greater Cambridge Partnership – was built around existing relationships between the three local authorities and the University and business sectors that had existed since the Cambridge Futures project. The decision-making process for the Executive of the City Deal gave votes to

the three local authorities, and a requirement that should any one authority wish to wield a veto, the decision would not proceed without a further cycle of debate.

But the norm was for the five partners to reach a consensus "...and so far, apart from one decision where we had an abstention ... we have sustained that; and that's quite an achievement over four years" [CA07]. The Executive holds informal and private 'briefing' meetings to identify where consensus has not yet been reached: "we meet a week prior to any Board meeting for a briefing, to go through recommendations and decisions, and that's when it's clear whether or not there's going to be support, and if there isn't then we don't take the item forward until we've sorted it" [CA05].

The University of Cambridge, a clearly powerful institution with networks internationally and nationally as well as locally, was widely seen by the actors it works alongside as having "always played by the rules" in pursuing its strategic interests, in particular working as a constructive partner within the City Deal/Greater Cambridge Partnership institutions [CA03, CA07]. Overall the City Deal was seen by those operating within it to have been successful because of the way in which behaviours have supported collaborative approaches: "Overall it's worked, but you've got to be willing to take [hard] decisions... The City Deal model we have relies on a lot of leadership and determination, because it's very fluid." [CA04].

Just as the collaborative working relationships between actors and institutions had led successively to the shared planning service and then the City Deal, the Combined Authority subsequently "grew out of those good working relationships between the authorities, and the leaders" [CA04]. Those good working relationships had been built up over time, and the resilience of the practices developed over this period was demonstrated by successive challenges within the electoral and professional environment: "....there's been relationships built that, despite some of the people changing and [political] administrations changing, have provided a very solid foundation for continued positive working..." [CA03].

One period of challenge came at the start of the City Deal, when a somewhat cumbersome bi-cameral structure had been put in place to oversee the project. The Executive, tasked with taking decisions, worked reasonably well from the outset but the separate Assembly struggled to work effectively and became the focus for opposition to the City Deal as a whole. Significant efforts not just to redefine the purpose of the Assembly, but also to reform its working practices, had positive outcomes, with the two parts of the institution subsequently seen as working collaboratively together.

But from 2017 the way in which business is done in Greater Cambridge started to become less collaborative. While the majority of interviewees pointed to behaviours that had changed since the creation of the Combined Authority and the election of the Mayor, there was already evidence of the limits to previous co-operative approaches during the creation phase of the Combined Authority, when both officers and members of the local authorities that made it up refused to pool sovereignty in the same way as had been done with the City

Deal (though it is important to note that the Combined Authority included four other local councils – Peterborough, Fenland, Huntingdonshire and East Cambridgeshire - which were not part of the City Deal and its institutional predecessors, so the same history of partnership working did not exist) [CA03].

In the main, though, it was the advent of the elected Mayor and the Combined Authority that coincided with the gradual breakdown of previously consensual behaviours: "this carefully constructed system has been trampled all over [by the Mayor and CA] and quite a lot of those strong relationships were severely tested by that period…" [CA01]. A particular trigger point was the demand for a 'pause' of major GCP projects followed a draft paper tabled by the Mayor in May 2018 that asserted control over all highways issues in the Greater Cambridge area, a paper that had to be withdrawn and "drastically" rewritten for its final public form after its legality and accuracy was challenged [CA04] (Palmer, 2018).

By June 2018 a well-publicised letter was sent to Government complaining about the Mayor's behaviour, signalling a considerable breakdown in the working relationships between the partners in the Combined Authority (Thomas, 2018). That the signatories included both the city's universities, representatives of the business community and Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire councils, but not Cambridgeshire County Council, also indicated stresses opening up in the Greater Cambridge Partnership.

Following a change of political control at South Cambridgeshire - from Conservative to Liberal Democrat – at the 2019 local elections, those tensions became clearer still. The County Council was now "flexing their muscles" over powers previously delegated to the GCP without great controversy; a 'crisis workshop' designed to rebuild relationships in late 2019 became embroiled in further debate after the County Council signalled that only its officers, rather than those of the other partners or the GCP itself, 'could be trusted' to run the workshop in a fair and impartial way [CA07].

For many actors in Greater Cambridge, the Combined Authority and the Mayoralty were now seen as a "terrible mistake" [CA01] and the complexity of the layers of governance were seen as being as much to blame as the Mayor himself: "It's added yet another layer of governance congestion, and not helped the GCP deliver its mission - in fact, in some ways it's got in the way of that" [CA05]. The way in which the rules of governance in Greater Cambridge had become increasingly unstable over time is an important part of the combination of factors at work.

While Cambridge was subject to the same disruptions to the 'rules of the game' as Ipswich and Norwich after the change of Government in 2010 when the formal institutions of regional governance were abolished, the impact on the stability of those rules as they applied locally was rather less. This was in part to do with the fact that Cambridge was not engaged so deeply in the debates over unitary status in the final years of the Labour Government, and partly because at that point those regional bodies had less importance in

comparison to the sub-regional structures that had been put in place to deliver the policies of the 2003 Structure Plan – which had been lifted and embedded in the Regional Plan. Moreover, changes of rules are not necessarily indicative of a lack of stability, if those changes are predictable and manageable.

By the time of the abolition of the regional tiers after the 2010 General Election, the partnership between the three local councils – Cambridge, South Cambridgeshire and Cambridgeshire – and the business sector and the University was well established. This point was strongly reinforced by an interviewee who referred to the City Deal as being "much easier [than implementing the Combined Authority] because there was no change of governance" [CA04]; formally there WAS a change of governance, with new institutions being created in the form of the City Deal Executive and Assembly, but these were seen as being a repurposing and a formalisation of what was already there.

The establishment of the City Deal and its institutions was based on existing institutional boundaries. While some early discussions explored the possibility of looking at areas of economic influence or travel-to-work areas, which for Cambridge would include parts of Hertfordshire and Suffolk, these were quickly dropped: "Central Government wanted...to know where the money was going ... crossing those [institutional] boundaries stretches their imagination too far...". The formal rules of Whitehall accountability, which required an existing institution to act as the 'responsible body' in financial and reporting terms, meant that the local authority boundaries had to be the boundaries for the City Deal: "here's Cambridge, here's South Cambs, here's the border, end of conversation" [CA02].

When in the early days of the City Deal the rules for the bi-cameral institutions established for governance proved to be problematic, those formal rules were remade by the partners in the City Deal in order to improve involvement of the Assembly and to make its improvement more productive, an objective that was widely seen as having been achieved. Stability came not from rules that were unchanging, but from a process of change that was predictable for all concerned.

The creation of the Combined Authority with its elected Mayor introduced a new set of rules, but it quickly became clear that those rules were not stable. Much of the source of this instability lay in the ambiguities over the precise powers and sovereignties held by the Combined Authority: "…when it came to the link to the City Deal there is a major flaw because on transport powers the County Council has got some, the GCP [Greater Cambridge Partnership] has got some and the Combined Authority has got some" [CA04].

The comparison with the relative clarity over the City Deal arrangements was frequently made: the GCP is reasonably clear about what is delegated to it, while the delegations to the Combined Authority are "a complete muddle, [with] transport chucked in at the last minute" [CA07]. That a barrister's opinion had to be sought in 2018 to try to make sense of

this 'muddle' is indicative of the lack of clarity, and consequent lack of stability, in the rules for the Combined Authority.

This ambiguity in the rules goes beyond the confusions over transport powers; the rules that govern the operation of the Combined Authority itself are not clear or stable. When concerns were raised about the Mayor the response from Whitehall demonstrated a failure to grasp how the rules as written were not working as planned: "… 'it's the Board that makes the decisions, not the Mayor, it was carefully designed that way': they don't understand how these things work, they don't understand local politics" [CA07].

Thus the rules of governance that were now at play in Greater Cambridge appeared to have become top-heavy and unstable as additional layers have been added. As well as the rules set at a national level, such as the NPPF, Treasury finance rules and so on, there were multiple local layers of rules – two tiers of local government, the City Deal/GCP with its bicameral structure, the Combined Authority and its elected Mayor – and there was now a shared sense that "...the layers, the messiness, the additional complexity - that's all making it more difficult to do the long term strategic planning that should be happening...." [CA06].

HOW STRATEGIES AND CONSTRAINTS HAVE INTERACTED IN GREATER CAMBRIDGE

The theoretical model posits that where the strategic objective of *Institutional Self-preservation and Ambition* is relatively low in comparison to strategic objectives such as *Recognition* or *Investment*, and where narratives tend to be positive, practices collaborative and rules stable, there is a positively reinforcing cycle. Conversely, a relative high priority towards *Institutional Self-preservation* in combination with negative narratives, unco-operative practices and unstable rules tends to lead to a negatively reinforcing cycle.

The history of Greater Cambridge over the last 20 years or so provides examples of each form of cycle. During the period from the early 2000s, dating from the final Cambridgeshire Structure Plan, the strategic priority for actors in the sub-region was primarily *Investment*. The objective of *Recognition* was a low priority, in part a reflection of the fact that as a nationally and internationally renowned economic and research centre Cambridge was not in need of additional recognition. *Control* was relatively important, something demonstrated by the limits beyond which sovereignty would not be willingly pooled, but by far the overwhelming objective was to gain investment to support the growth being driven by the Cambridge Phenomenon. Concerns about *Institutional Self-preservation*, let alone the ambitions for local government reform and unitary status seen in Suffolk and Norfolk, were a 'non-issue' in Cambridgeshire.

During this period initially somewhat mistrustful narratives became increasingly positive, sitting alongside practices which were increasingly collaborative. Partnerships put in place to implement the objectives of the Structure Plan – subsequently to become the objectives of the Regional Plan which succeeded it – became embedded, alongside personal, political and professional relationships that were not just described as positive, but which were positive in practice as well.

As with all English local governance outside the major cities, the formal rules of doing business weren't entirely stable, first as a result of changes of institutional arrangements during the last years of the New Labour Government and then in particular following the 2010 election and the abolition of the regional tier of government by the incoming Coalition. But this disruption caused by the 'reaching in' of national government resulted in less instability in Cambridge than elsewhere because it did not fundamentally disrupt the informal and formal partnerships that had been built in Greater Cambridge. There were bumps in the road as local actors took stock, and then worked within the local institutions that had developed to move forward, as shown by the remaking of the Cambridge Horizons project as the Joint Planning Unit, but the disruption here was clearly less than elsewhere.

By the time the opportunity arose to pitch for the second wave of City Deal funding, this self-reinforcing cycle was clearly apparent. The City Deal was an opportunity to further the strategic objective of investment in Greater Cambridge, and the interplay of relatively stable structures, collaborative behaviours and positive narratives both established a solid basis for making the bid and were largely reinforced by the bid's success. The personal and structural relationships, working practices and formal and informal institutions built over a period of 15 years created what appeared to be a self-sustaining and resilient structure through which the shared strategic objectives of actors in Greater Cambridge could be pursued.

Yet by 2018 a different self-reinforcing cycle can be identified beginning to operate in Greater Cambridge. Narratives became increasingly negative, in particular when describing the impact of the Mayor; practices became unco-operative and fractious; and the addition of governance layers in the form of the Combined Authority and Mayor whose powers were not clearly defined in the critical area of transport rendered rules increasingly unstable. Alongside institutional self-preservation and ambition – visible as a defensive attitude to the Greater Cambridge Partnership from those actors who saw that body as giving them greater access to power, in a muscular and expansive Mayor seeking to expand his area of influence, and a County Council increasingly wanting to position itself as *primus inter pares* in the bodies where it was a partner - was becoming increasingly important as a strategic objective.

Over a relatively short period four key factors in Greater Cambridge had shifted, and what had previously appeared to be a positively reinforcing cycle started to appear more as a

negatively reinforcing one. The task is therefore to identify how these changes occurred, and to tentatively explore what the causal factors might have been.

Figure xix - Analysis of the strategic objectives and constraints in Cambridge, and their movement over time: narratives shift from positive to negative, practices from co-operative to unco-operative while rules become more unstable. The relative importance of Recognition (low) and Investment (high) remain steady, while the relative importance of Control rises then falls over time. Most notable is the change of the objective of institutional self-preservation/ambition from relative low importance to both relatively and absolutely high importance.

CONSTRAINTS / STRATEGIES		Narratives			Practices			Rules		
		+ive	=	-ive	Coop	=	Un-Coop	Stable	=	Un-stable
Recognition	+									
	=									
	-	→			→					→
Investment	+	→			→					→
	=									
	-									
Control	+									
	=	⤻			⤻				⤻	
	-									
Institutional Self-Preservation /Ambition	+		↗			↗				↗
	=									
	-									

For some advocates of the Greater Cambridge Partnership the causality was self-evident: the arrival of a 'warrior mayor' led immediately to a shift from co-operative to unco-operative practices, which in turn brought about negative narratives. In this thesis the Mayor's aggressive ambition for his institution, demonstrated by the demise of the LEP through a process widely seen as engineered by the Mayor in an underhand way, brought about an entirely understandable defensive reaction from the partners in the Greater Cambridge Partnership when it was seen to be threatened.

For others less vested in the Greater Cambridge Partnership the causality was more subtle. The creation of the Combined Authority and the Mayor had come about in the same way as the City Deal and the Greater Cambridge Partnership – a transaction with national Government whereby new institutions were developed in exchange for substantial funds for infrastructure and housing, as part of the pursuit of the strategic objective for investment. But while the City Deal institutions had in effect repurposed and formalised existing informal institutions, and so had not fundamentally destabilised the rules of governance in Greater Cambridge, the Combined Authority had added a wholly new set of institutions which had inevitably unbalanced the previously carefully calibrated set of relationships.

In this analysis, the destabilising of the rules led quickly to a shift in strategy with a much greater emphasis on *Institutional Ambition and Self-preservation*, and thus a consequential worsening in both practices and narratives. The governance layers had become top-heavy and unstable, and it was this instability that had driven the shift from positive to negative reinforcing cycles.

A third analysis, though, suggests a more deep rooted issue located in the strategic objectives being pursued in Greater Cambridge. From the mid to late 1990s and the work of Cambridge Futures, a shared vision of how the sub-region should be planned and developed was first promoted and then formalised through the successive Structure Plan, Regional Plan and then 'tessellated' Local Plans and Strategic Transport Plan, and it was this shared vision that lay behind the relative importance of *Investment* as the highest strategic priority [CA06].

However the life span of the Structure Plan is coming to end, and with it the consensus that stemmed from the Cambridge Futures project is in flux. The "tough questions" that haven't been asked for nearly twenty years are being asked again, and the processes for answering them don't currently exist [CA03]. A new body, Cambridge Ahead, has been created to advocate for a similar pattern of growth and development, but it is not seen as being inclusive in the same way that Cambridge Futures was, but rather being the creature of specific interest groups: "... [Cambridge] is in something of a mess, caught between the purpose of planning and vested interests having too powerful a say..." [CA06].

In this analysis it is the emphasis on the strategic priority of Investment that is beginning to lose its importance as the consensus underpinning that emphasis is brought into question.

Without a drive for investment to act as a unifying force between different actors and groups, the momentum of the positively reinforcing cycle is running down, and in its place comes a growing emphasis on the more divisive strategic objective of *Institutional Self-preservation*. In essence, rather than pooling power to pursue a shared strategic objective, actors in Greater Cambridge are beginning to see the possession of power itself, as actualised by their preferred institutions – GCP, County Council, Mayoralty and so on – as a strategic end in itself.

CAMBRIDGE: RISING TENSION AND DECLINING CONSENSUS

Each of these analyses – the 'warrior mayor', the overcrowding of the institutional space, the loss of faith in the pursuit of investment – put forward by actors in Greater Cambridge is on its own a plausible but incomplete explanation of why a seemingly stable and positive situation has changed over a relatively short period into one that is the opposite. Shifts in rules, practices and strategic objectives have all contributed to the changed nature of the politics of governance in the sub-region, but it is the combination of the changes that is important, rather than seeking to identify one as being the causal agent that has determined the changes in the others.

As Jessop's 'strategic-relational approach' (Jessop, 1990) explains, structure and agency do not have a separate existence but a mutually constitutive one. In the context of Greater Cambridge the strategic pursuit of investment over time shaped and developed the form and structure of the institutions of governance, while at the same time the existence and apparent efficacy of those institutions constrained the actors seeking investment to pursue familiar institutional forms to those that they already knew.

This process can be seen at work in the successive adoption of first informal and then formal institutions of governance for Greater Cambridge. The steps from Cambridge Futures through the period of 'heavy lifting behind the scenes' as the work to turn the strategic level policies of the Structure Plan and Regional Plan into delivery on the ground, absorbing the abolition of Cambridge Horizons body by converting it into the joint planning unit, and on to the City Deal all follow a logical progression where investment is exchanged for new or remade institutions, and those institutions resemble closely – or indeed are identical to but for a change of name – those that have gone before.

And critically, the creation of the Combined Authority and its Mayoralty is not then a break from this process, but a continuation of it. It stemmed from a desire for investment, and the new institutions to be made appeared – though after-the-fact experience quickly proved

otherwise – to be similar to those that been successfully created, assimilated or remade before.

Equally, the impact of the structural constraints within which strategies in Greater Cambridge were being pursued is clearly visible in the way in which those strategies are followed. The objective of investment was largely delivered through the exchanging of that investment for either the formalisation of an existing informal institution – as with Cambridge Horizons or the City Deal – or the establishment of a new institution that appeared similar to existing ones, as with the Combined Authority.

But this continual process of formalising and layering of governance institutions in turn acted to shape the strategies being pursued; alongside seeking investment, actors began to shift towards seeking to prioritise their preferred institutions over others, and as the institutional environment became ever more crowded and institutions came to be seen as being in conflict with one another this strategic objective began to assume an increasingly greater relative significance.

Figure xx – Interactions between Objectives and Constraints in Cambridge over time: as with Norwich, a reinforcing cycle of higher relative priority – when compared say to Investment, which retains an absolute high priority- for the strategic objective of Institutional Self-preservation and Ambition with increasingly negative Narratives, uncollegiate Practices and unstable Rules.
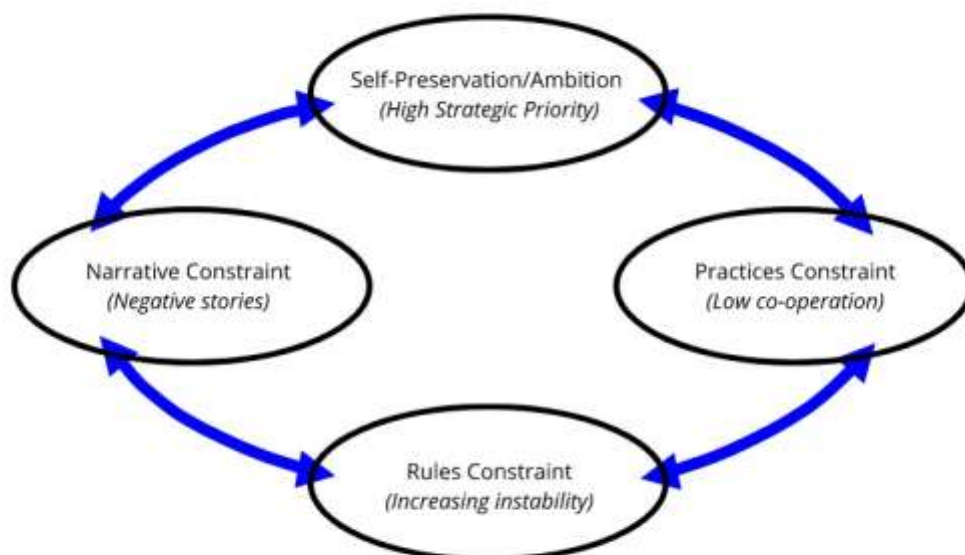
Again, this shows that the shift in strategy is not a sudden shift away from previous objectives, but the gradual consequence of the way in which the strategy followed in Greater Cambridge over two decades had both shaped and been shaped by the structures within which that strategy was being pursued. Conceived thus, the shift in relative strategic

priorities isn't so much a decline in the importance of the pursuit of *Investment* – that is still a key objective of all actors in Greater Cambridge – but is much more about the increasing priority of *Institutional Self-preservation* in the face of growing competition in a confined and ever more crowded arena.

In conclusion, therefore, the situation in Cambridge is not one where a previously stable equilibrium was fractured by the addition of one too many layers of governance in the Combined Authority and its Mayor, and nor is it one where the agency of a single actor – the Mayor – is solely responsible for the breakdown of a positively reinforcing cycle and its replacement by a negatively reinforcing one. By seeing the changes in the strategies, narratives, practices and rules as being mutually contingent as well as mutually reinforcing, it becomes clearer that the positively reinforcing cycle that characterised the period from around 2000 to around 2016 was not inherently stable, but contained within it the factors that would gradually bring about a shift to a negative cycle.

In part because of its globally established 'brand' and in part because of the importance of its local economy not just regionally but nationally, actors in Cambridge have never needed to prioritise a strategy of *Recognition* in the way that Norwich and in particular Ipswich have. Rather, the greatest strategic priority has been *Investment*, in infrastructure and latterly in housing to maintain levels of economic expansion and to address the localised pressures of that expansion, whether that was manifested in traffic congestion or unaffordable house prices.

Having formed a growth coalition around a broadly shared agenda from the late 1990s onwards, practices were carefully developed to be collaborative and collegiate, with narratives reflecting both these collaborative practices and the challenges and efforts in working towards them. The Greater Cambridge Growth Deal, with its significant levels of additional investment from central Government delivered both through and in exchange for a new set of governance institutions, was typical of the approach in Cambridge.

The strategic approach of exchanging new and formalised institutions for existing and informal ones for investment in Greater Cambridge led, gradually but inexorably, to the point where projects to preserve or enhance the powers of preferred institutions became the strategic priority. With that changing priority came increasingly negative narratives, unco-operative practices and unstable rules, which in turn have served to accelerate the priority given to the strategy of *Institutional Self-preservation*.

While local actors in Cambridge were happy to assign causality to individuals, notably the elected Mayor, a deeper analysis shows that a process where the growth coalition consensus that lay behind the strategic priority of *Investment* is beginning to break down at the same time as the strategic priority of *Institutional Self-preservation* has risen, where the clarity and stability of rules has been weakened by institutional crowding and uncertainty, and where collegiate practices and negative narratives are becoming more prevalent, is the

result of the mutually constitutive interaction of all these factors rather than being caused by just one of them.

The two objectives set out at the beginning of this research project were:

A.   To describe the nature of sub-regional governance institutions, and where sub-regional institutions 'fit' among an environment of formal and informal institutions at different scales, and the actors that make both up;

B.   To develop an analytical framework that explains how the institutions of sub-regional planning and governance change, and identifies what distinctive internal and external forces and processes are at work to generate that change.

The aim of the project was to develop a tool that could be applied not just to this particular research and the three case studies on which it was based, but more generally to the study of regional and sub-regional governance arrangements. This concluding chapter therefore sets out first the extent to which that broader objective of creating a robust and transferable analytical framework has succeeded, before turning to the conclusions about the three case study areas that can be drawn from its use in that particular context.

A TOOL FOR STUDYING SUB-REGIONAL GOVERNANCE: THE ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework of this thesis takes as its starting point the terminology and tools of Third Wave Institutionalism, and uses them to create a model that allows for the complex interactions of strategies and constraints over time and in particular environments. The model takes as a given that structure and agency have a co-constitutive role to play, and that if actors have agency, then the choices that they make with that agency might have a range of consequences.

A further assumption is that while local actors work within institutional environments that are themselves part of a wider network of institutions, and which operate at different rhythms and which have their own sets of institutional constraints, actors and strategies, it is possible to identify and study that local institutional environment and draw tentative conclusions from those observations.

That the observations are tentative is a reflection of a realist ontological approach – by necessity that which can be observed allows conclusions to be drawn about what the underlying causal mechanisms might be that bring about the observed phenomenon, but the emphasis has to be on the word 'might'. Further observation and a different lens might

bring about different insights into those mechanisms and thus the underlying reality (Bhaskar, 1989).

Finally the assumption of the model is that, following Streek (2001) and March and Olsen (1989), institutions are in a constant state of change and that therefore an observed stability at a single point time is likely to disguise underlying forces of 'disorganisation' (after Streek) that are operating upon it. Thus the theoretical approach needs to capture observations over a period of time in order to allow for conclusions to be drawn about the nature of those underlying forces and the mechanisms by which they are activated.

The resulting model, therefore, takes the interactions of three modes of constraint – rules, practices, narratives – and four strategic objectives pursued by actors in the case study areas – *Recognition*, *Investment*, *Control* and *Institutional Ambition and Self-Preservation* – and observes those interactions over time in order to suggest some of the underlying realities and mechanisms at work in sub-regional governance in England.

The importance of considering the three constraints separately can be seen both in observing where and how changes to each occur over time, and how they relate to different strategic objectives. For example changes to the narrative and practice constraints are largely endogenous, in that local actors can and do follow particular self-disciplines when it comes to talking about the way in which things are done, and in the ways that they are done.

By contrast the rules constraint is more prone to be impacted by exogenous interventions, notably through changes to legislation or regulation by national government. The abolition of regional structures in 2010, for example, or the changes to the 'duty to co-operate' and the five year housing supply test in the NPPF, had a significant destabilising impact on the rules constraint in the local environment, and are often associated with a subsequent growth in the relative importance of the strategic objective of *Institutional Self-preservation.*

But if changes to the narrative and practice constraints are largely endogenous, and can be shaped by actors in order to pursue particular strategic objectives, and changes to the rules constraint is often exogenous, and can generate changes to the relative importance of strategic objectives, then the reverse must also true and needs to be taken into account. The theoretical framework should not just allow for a causal relationship in one direction, but for a mutually constitutive set of interactions.

Thus in Norwich and in Cambridge local actors, following the logic of long-standing strategic objectives, set new rules constraints themselves or in collaboration with central government, and by doing so altered the balance of strategic objectives followed subsequently. There is a trap in seeing changes to rules as being purely exogenous and causal that the model is designed to avoid.

The need for differentiation between narrative and practice is more nuanced, but still important. The way in which practices are described may not reflect the reality of the way in which practices are carried out, even by those actors directly engaged in both, and there is a potential for a difference between the two to be a useful indicator of a direction of travel, even though it is important not to leap to conclusions about which might be causal on the other.

For instance, where narratives are more pessimistic about the practices they describe than might be justified, that might indicate that one of these constraints is a 'lagging indicator', but not which. In other words, the practices might be heading towards the state suggested by the negative narrative, or the narrative might not have caught up with the more positive practices. That it is why it is important to track the evolution of each set of constraints over time in order to be able to derive more accurate conceptions of the underlying realities and mechanisms.

The identification of four broad but particular strategic objectives to examine is an important one for the model in the context of this research project, and comes from an iterative process in developing the analytical framework, but the model still has the capacity to offer insights if different strategic objectives were identified and used. The critical point here is that these four strategic objectives are the ones that the actors in these specific case studies are pursuing; other actors, in other circumstances, might pursue different objectives. The framework is sufficiently robust for interactions of different objectives and constraints to be traced over time, and conclusions drawn.

The importance of viewing the strategies and constraints as interacting to shape each other, rather than being causal in one direction only, can be seen emerging from the case studies. In Ipswich, for example, the importance of 'being seen to be collaborative' for the strategic objective of recognition shows the strategy shaping the constraint, but that constraint then in turn shapes other objectives, and limits ambition to those objectives that can be pursued while still 'being seen' to work together. The interactions can be traced backwards as well as forwards, with the strategic objective of recognition being seen as a necessary precursor for investment, and so on.

That agential actors can and do follow different strategic objectives, and that those different strategic objectives have different impacts, is an assumption inherent in any theoretical model that grants agency. That means that it is necessary to tease out the range of objectives pursued, and to measure them. Any attempt to quantify something as intangible as a strategic objective is of course impossible, but what is possible is to gauge the relative importance of one strategic objective against others at a given point in time, and to gauge the change in the relative level of importance of each strategic objective over time.

The model, therefore, is a multi-dimensional one, where a series of four intangible strategic objectives and three constraints, using terms borrowed from the Third Wave Institutionalist

model, interact with one another over a temporal period. To this already complex framework it was necessary to take into account 'environment', or the political and institutional history and culture of each case study.

This was a particularly challenging part of deploying the model; there was a danger that placing too great a weight on the particular environment of each case study would be to slip into a form of topographic or historical determinism, and render other factors in the analysis moot. If everything that happened in Norwich or Cambridge in the 2010s was because of what Norwich was like in the 1930s or Cambridge in the 1950s, then not only was the agency of contemporary actors lost, but so would any means of assessing the impact of either constraints and strategic objectives and their impacts in such a way that lessons could be applied, however cautiously, more generally.

However the ontological assumptions in the realist model, with its separation of the empirical, the actual and the real, allows for the careful deployment of place-specific factors. Rather than being directly causal, the place-environments of the case studies need to be seen as potentialities within the actual layer of reality, affecting the likelihood of particular consequences and outcomes in combination with deeper and more universal forces.

Another complicating factor was identifying an appropriate temporal dimension for analysis, given that the potentialities and underlying forces that the model seeks to identify may operate with significantly different tempos and rhythms. As with climate science, a complex system such as sub-regional governance is likely to be shaped by a mixture of short, medium and long-term cycles, sometimes operating in opposition to one another. Setting a time window for observations, though necessary for the purposes of providing a structure to the research process, can mean inadvertently privileging some cycles at the expense of others by focussing on a point when a critical force or potentiality is masked by others that are less important.

It was to address, if not to wholly resolve, these challenges that this research and its theoretical model is set in a longer-term historical context. This makes it possible to see long wavelength cycles in, for example, national government policy towards regional structures in England, and draw conclusions about how the impacts of those cycles might be felt at a local and sub-regional level.

Equally, the examination of place-specific environments and cultures is as much a temporal factor as it is a spatial one: the pattern of attitudes to the resisting and embracing of a growth agenda by actors in Cambridge for example could be seen as a merging of the temporal and spatial dimensions.

Clearly there is something of a risk in using any of these observable cycles as the starting and end point of the study period, in that this initial focus on a particular cycle will distract

attention from other cycles operating at the same time and in the same place. However there are also advantages, the same advantages as come from comparing case studies with some common characteristics: that by isolating characteristics that are not common, some conclusions about the kinds of forces that are at work can be made. By acknowledging the impact of common cycles such as the creation and subsequent unmaking of regional governance systems and structures from around 2000 to around 2020 on all three case studies, it is possible to deduce cycles that might be operating at different tempos and concealed from view.

In summary, the design of the research project – with three case studies with both common and individual elements – and the development of the theoretical framework and analytical model around four dimensions of strategic objective, constraint, place and time, was intended to both embrace the inherent complexity of a networked series of actors, institutions and institutional environments and to provide a set of more or less fixed points which would allow conclusions to be drawn about what would otherwise seem an unintelligible mass of overlapping and competing forces. So how then has the theoretical framework succeeded in practice, as a tool to assist understanding and the drawing of tentative conclusions?

It is important to emphasise the word 'tentative' here. It is inherent in any attempt to arrive at conclusions using observations of a complex system that those observations are likely to be incomplete and partial, and that therefore the conclusions drawn can only be provisional. Implicit in the realist approach to understanding is that knowledge is always tentative and that each theoretical model is a means to further a process, not reach an ultimate goal. The test of the utility of the model is therefore twofold: does it add to the understanding of the case studies that are the subject of the research project, and does it have the potential to be deployed in other circumstances?

The basic premise of the theoretical approach here is that agency and structure are mutually constitutive, which means that the model has to allow space for each to influence the other, and to avoid uni-directional causality. At the same time the model needed to rationalise the potentially infinite variety of strategies and account for the impact of structures using tools that were meaningful and easily applicable.

In the context of these case studies, the reduction of strategic objectives to four headings, through a process of initial identification and coding, classification and then re-coding, was relatively simple. There are clearly overlaps and blurring between each objective, and with that comes the risk that any attempt to differentiate between them is an artificial exercise, but nonetheless the different case studies showed clear separation in the relative priority given to each objective, and changes to those relative priorities over time were equally observable.

The biggest concern here was that the objective of *Institutional Self-preservation or Ambition* would become dominant, rendering the differentiation between the other three objectives moot, or even making the concept of different objectives entirely irrelevant. It was easy to see how a model which only involved what in an early draft was termed 'existential institutional paranoia' could appear simpler and easier to draw out of the research. But this would have been to disregard the more subtle but equally important ways in which other strategic objectives appeared to shape, and be shaped by, the institutional constraints operating in the case study areas.

The decision to deploy the terminology of Third Wave Institutionalism, with its three forms of institutional constraint, was essential in the development of the model. Instead of trying to correlate observable characteristics of institutions – formality, temporality and so on – with strategies and outcomes, the use of the three-fold constraint toolkit allowed for a clearer separation of the structures and the actors within them, which in turn allowed for a more dispassionate analysis of how the two interacted, and to start to draw conclusions about what this analysis might reveal about the underlying forces at work.

Nonetheless it is important to reflect on the potential limitations of this approach. While identifying formal rules constraints, and changes to them, is a relatively simple task, differentiating between practices and narratives is more challenging. Even more so is the task of classifying these three constraints on axes – stable/unstable, collegiate/uncollegiate, positive/negative – when doing so is inherently a subjective process, involving as it does the potentially distorting role of the researcher's own preconceptions on qualitative classifications.

To a considerable extent to acknowledge these risks is to take sufficient account of them: they cannot be avoided, because the nature of knowledge here is contingent, so it is enough to be aware of them and to accept them as limitations inherent in the approach to developing the theoretical model. And, with these risks acknowledged, the insights that this approach makes possible are a demonstration of its worth, particularly once the temporal and spatial dimensions are taken into account.

Without the temporal dimension, the model would simply allow coincidences to be observed – that a particular strategic preference might appear to be associated with particular characteristics and types of constraint. It is observing changes in relative strategic priorities and the nature of different constraints *over time* that allows conclusions to be drawn not just about coincidences but about co-constituent relationships. The risk in the model, as already described, is that in focussing on a particular period for analysis longer cycles can be overlooked. But by viewing the period of analysis in a longer context, just as spatially each case study sits within a set of overlapping and interlocking environments, it is possible to take proper account of a full range of potentialities and forces.

The spatial dimension in the analytical framework, the extent to which particular historic inheritances might shape outcomes in each instance, is the final aspect to be considered in deciding how the model has performed here, and how it might perform if deployed elsewhere. The challenge is to allow for these inheritances to have the potential to shape, but not to determine, the way in which strategies and constraints interact with one another. The model uses the spatial or environment dimension carefully, and in an uncodified way, which is both a strength and a potential weakness. A strength, because it treats this potentially disrupting factor for the validity of the entire theoretical approach with great caution so as to avoid the risk of environmental determinism; a potential weakness, because in effect it does so by saying 'because there cannot be environmental determinism, there shall not be environmental determinism'.

This then is probably where the greatest strain in the theoretical approach rests, because the model relies on a qualitative deployment of the spatial/environmental dimension in a process that can only be validated by the assertion of the researcher that it has been done in the way described. But in the end, that is compatible with ontological and epistemological assumptions set out at the start of the research project, and in the end, true of each of the elements of the model.

The realist approach means that explanations for observed behaviour and conclusions about what may lie beneath them are necessarily contingent. The position of the researcher *vis a vis* the research means that all the judgements made about classifications of strategies, constraints, time and space are not objective, but come freighted with prior knowledge, prejudices and assumptions.

The theoretical framework, the tools used to develop the model and the model itself are all to some extent contingent and subjective, but in the end can be judged as useful. The lens of the model provided additional insight into the case studies of this research project, and by repeatedly emphasising the critical co-constitutive processes at work, ensured that no one factor, whether strategy or constraint, time period or environment, came to be considered as individually causal.

The ability to compare across case studies, and across time, enabled conclusions to be drawn about universal forces at work rather than simply ones specific to a place and a time. Thus the answer to the challenge, does the theoretical framework and model add to the understanding of the case studies that are the subject of the research project, and does it have the potential to be deployed in other circumstances, is – perhaps fittingly – a cautious yes. The question is what conclusions about the forces at work here did the theoretical framework help to reveal.

The thesis of this study is that the complex interactions of the strategic objectives of actors operating in the institutions and institutional framework of sub-regional governance with the matrix of constraints – narratives, practices and rules – that make up those institutions shape, direct and ultimately limit the co-evolution of both the strategies and the institutions.

A cursory examination of the types of institutions of governance in each of three case study areas over this period appears to reveal a difference of emphasis. In Ipswich, institutions have tended to be informal, in Norwich semi-formal and in Cambridge increasingly formal; but it is important not to attribute causality to these apparent institutional preferences. The nature of the institutions of sub-regional governance in each area have developed alongside strategic objectives and the ways in which those objectives are pursued, and in each case the historic context plays a role in shaping both strategies and institutions.

The OECD report cited in the introductory chapter to this thesis has an implicit preference for formal governance institutions: while a "prerequisite for well-functioning cities are effective governance arrangements that fit the situation in a city and its surrounding areas" it is clear that informal arrangements "cannot be considered fully fledged local governments because they are not a legal tier of government…[that]… often emerged bottom up through local initiatives." (OECD, 2015, p. 57).

The OECD's definition of a good governance structure is one that gives policy makers "the necessary information, the required powers and the proper incentives" to design and implement good policies. In the context of English local government, while information is equally available to informal as to formal institutions, the implication of the OECD position is that only the latter would have the necessary powers and incentives to make them capable of delivering good governance.

A simplistic approach then would suggest that Norwich's semi-formal institutions are more likely to deliver 'good governance' than Ipswich's largely informal approach, but less likely than the mostly formal structures in Cambridge. But this would be to give a causal power to the form of institutions, and to underplay the co-constitutive role of the strategic objective of actors in shaping those institutions.

For example in Ipswich it is the relative importance given to both particular strategies and to promoting collegiate practices and positive narratives that have shaped the form of institutions, as much as the other way round. Familiar tools, such as the Ipswich Policy Area, have been re-used or re-shaped to act as the locus for performances of collaborative behaviour. The importance of control as a strategic objective has meant that the tasks that

needed to be resolved were limited in scope and relatively clear in their definition. More challenging tasks that would require greater acts of compromise and accommodation to the strategic priorities of others are simply not as apparent in Ipswich as they are in Norwich or Cambridge.

The informal institutional tools are limited but adequate for the limited roles that they are required for, shaped and constrained by the prevailing narratives and practices, and by the particular balance of strategic objectives that puts *Control* and *Institutional Self-preservation* on a par with *Recognition*, and which – despite protestations to the contrary – appears to value the act of aspiring for *Investment*, in the end, above making the compromises necessary to ensure the delivery of it.

In Cambridge, by contrast, local actors pursuing successive major waves of investment have been prepared to establish new formal layers of governance institutions, because the rules of that particular game – the requirement by Government for formal bodies to be responsible and accountable for that investment in particular – have required them to, and past collegiate practice and positive narratives have made it seem an acceptable bargain to make.

That these formal institutional layers in Cambridge now appear unstable is not indicative that their formality is causative of that instability, any more than earlier instances of informal structures were causal of collegiate practices and positive narratives. The layers of formal governance in Cambridge came about as a consequence of the strategic objectives followed locally, in particular that of seeking investment, and the interactions and co-evolutions of those strategies with the constraints of rules, practices and narratives.

However what is clear from the situation in Cambridge, particularly when compared with the situation in Ipswich, is that as novel governance institutions become means through which power can be instantiated and exercised, the imperative for actors whose power is increasingly derived through those institutions is to seek to guard them from real and imagined threats. As institutions become loci of power, so grows the strategic objective of *Institutional Self-preservation*, and with that comes a dilution of previous shared strategic objectives that formed underlying growth coalitions.

In Cambridge the desire for investment is as strong as it was in the early 1990s when the current growth coalition was first assembling, but that strategic objective is now competing with concerns about preferred institutions for priority. In Ipswich, the objective of *Investment* was never translated into the same sort of growth coalition – it was issues around *Control* that pushed collaboration onto the agenda there – and the pre-existing objective around preserving preferred institutions put limits on the extent to which other strategies could be pursued in an environment where positive narratives and collaborative practices had become constraints. These constraints and strategies interact, in effect setting a limit on the extent to which strategies are pursued.

In Norwich the strategic ambition for *Investment* and growth was strong enough initially to overcome long-standing and strongly held objectives of *Institutional Ambition*, together with robust efforts to create collaborative practices and positive narratives. But the disruption to the stability of rules around the failed Devolution deal and the consequent shift to increasingly uncollegiate practices and negative narratives meant that the objective of investment no longer had priority over the objective for institutional self-preservation.

Looking at the three case studies what at first appear to be differences actually turn out to be examples of the same underlying patterns and cycles. A botanical metaphor might describe the governance institutions in Ipswich as a sapling that hasn't yet grown, those in Norwich as a young tree struggling in difficult ground, and those in Cambridge as a mature specimen whose mature canopy belies what is increasingly apparent as its unstable root system. But each is the same plant, whose past development, present appearance and future prospects are shaped partly by the environment in which it exists and partly by the organisms that exist alongside it in a symbiotic relationship.

In each case, when strategic ambitions around *Control*, *Recognition* and *Investment* are priorities, there is an incentive for collaborative practices and positive narratives, which in turn shape the nature of local governance institutions through which these objectives can be pursued and in turn – as with Ipswich – shape the ways of and degree to which those objectives are pursued. But that shaping process, particularly the way in which the successful pursuing of those initial objectives can lead to the development of more complex sets of increasingly formalised and less stable institutional layers, alters the relative importance of strategic priorities, in particular tending to increase the relative importance of the objective of *Institutional Self-preservation and Ambition*.

As this objective becomes a relatively higher priority, the practices and narratives that it engenders tend to become increasingly negative, and this in turn further fuels concerns - both unjustified and justified - of existential risk to the preferred institution, confirming the existence of a reinforcing cycle of unstable rules, uncollegiate practices and negative narratives acting together with the strategic objective of *Institutional Self-preservation*.

The importance of the *relative* priority of *Institutional Self-preservation and Ambition* is emphasised by the three case studies. In Norwich it was and remains a very high priority, but from the mid-2000s until the collapse of the Devolution deal in late 2016, objectives around *Investment* were relatively as high, coinciding with a period of substantial progress in tackling 'wicked issues' around growth; in Ipswich the increased relative importance of the objective of *Control* after the rules changes in the NPPF led to improved levels of collaboration and more positive narratives, but the constraints inherent in those practices and narratives intertwined with the ongoing objective of *Institutional Self-preservation* meant that as the imperative of resolving issues around *Control* faded, progress on addressing issues began to revert to the inertia of previous years; and in Cambridge years of

concrete achievement in developing a broad growth coalition are being followed by a period of uncertainty and fracture as *Institutional Self-preservation* starts to challenge *Investment* as the main strategic objective for actors there.

As can be seen from the case studies, the increase in the *absolute* priority of *Institutional Self-preservation* in Cambridge is not matched in Ipswich; there it is the decline of other priorities, notably that of *Control*, that has meant that its *relative* importance has increased. Norwich sits somewhere between the two, with a pre-existing high absolute level of importance for *Institutional Ambition* vying over the period with *Investment* for the highest relative importance, with periodic instability of rules contributing significantly to changes in the relative standing of the two objectives for local actors.

What the three case studies show is that strategic objectives wax and wane in relative importance in part because they are responses to immediate concerns, but also because the ways in which those objectives are pursued create their own ways of shaping and directing the objectives themselves. It is tempting to see the cases of Ipswich, Norwich and Cambridge as just being different points on the same cycle – Ipswich at the beginning, Cambridge at the end and Norwich somewhere in between – of the creation, evolution and eventual decay of a growth coalition that pushes the strategic objective of *Investment* as the highest priority. In this model, Ipswich is yet to address the challenges inherent in pursuing a growth objective, Norwich is being battered by the challenges of having done so, and Cambridge shows the results of the momentum behind the objective fading away.

But this would be to ignore the local factors at work on longer cycles than the 25 years or so of the Cambridge growth coalition. The much longer-standing and deep-rooted objectives of *Institutional Ambition* in Norwich and to a lesser extent Ipswich when compared to Cambridge have acted as significant shapers and constraints on the way in which other objectives have been pursued and the practices and narratives that mould them have developed. That local political and institutional culture, evolving over decades or even centuries, has to be taken into account alongside the shorter cycles of growth coalitions.

It is important in taking into account these longer cycles not to avoid the error of disregarding layers of political and institutional cultures by veering the other way into the pitfall of 'environmental' determinism. These shorter and longer term cycles, the strategic objectives that actors pursue, the institutions through which they do so and the political environments within which both are situated are linked in a mutually co-constitutive relationship. The institutional and political culture of Norwich – or of Ipswich or of Cambridge - shapes but doesn't determine the current form of its strategic objectives and governance institutions.

What can be drawn out from comparison between these three urban areas and their three different histories and cultures of place is the way in which patterns of interaction are shared. Collegiate practices and positive narratives in the pursuit of limited strategic

objectives can lead to the development of both more ambitious aims and increased collaboration, as happened in both Norwich and Cambridge in the 2000s and early 2010s. But if the pursuit of those objectives, and the way in which they are pursued, leads to an increase in the priority of *Institutional Self-preservation* as a strategic objective, then the evidence of all three case studies is that limits on other ambitions will be established, and a reinforcing cycle of negative narratives and uncollegiate behaviours will develop.

'STRUCTURES DON'T GUARANTEE BEHAVIOURS'

The history of English local governance is full of examples where changes to structures, often imposed from above, have been seen as a panacea for addressing perceived failures of co-operation – which are very often actually failures to agree at a local level with whatever the policy priorities of the national government day actually are. That this resorting to structural tinkering is returned to again and again is, perhaps, an indicator that it hasn't worked in the past and is unlikely to work in the future.

In 2020, as the final studies for this thesis were undertaken, the financial crisis in local government appeared to be providing a justification for another round of top-down institutional re-making, with all the disruption that that entails. Whether the primary purpose of this latest bout of reorganisation is financial efficiency, greater centralisation of power or a political project designed to benefit the Government of the day is outside the scope of this research, but the evidence of previous efforts is that remaking the rules of the game is an ineffective way of delivering changed practices and narratives, let alone achieving the strategic outcomes desired by national actors.

Speaking just before the 2020 Covid Lockdown Marvin Rees, the directly elected executive Mayor of Bristol, set out the essence of the problem: "The Government got it the wrong way round with Combined Authorities. They should have identified what behaviours they wanted and let local government work out how to deliver that. Instead they put structures first. Structures don't guarantee behaviours." (Rees, 2020)

This is borne out by the findings of this research project; in Ipswich, Norwich and Cambridge structures have been made, un-made and re-made, but there is no simplistic link between the nature of those structures and their efficacy. Instability of rules can help to generate the reinforcing cycle of negative narratives and uncollegiate practices, but the corollary – stable rules – is not of itself sufficient to prevent that cycle developing.

In the introduction to this study, the naïve original objective to find 'what works' was replaced by the more subtle 'what governance form for sub-regions is sufficiently durable to

allow for policies to be put into place and given time to work'; in other words, what might the 'good governance' that the OECD sees as a pre-requisite for a successful city look like in the context of these smaller regional towns and cities in England? (OECD, 2015)

The detailed analysis of the relative importance of different strategic objectives in Ipswich, Norwich and Cambridge, how that relative importance changes over time, and how those strategic objectives interact with, shape and are shaped by the constraints of narratives, practices and rules in each case shows that far from there being a linear progression from 'not-good governance' to 'good governance', there are phases or cycles at work, operating at different temporal levels.

The theory of 'environmental equilibrium' holds that all ecosystems have a steady state which they will tend towards over time – but recent studies have shown that this is far from always the case, and that complex systems can and will oscillate unpredictably between different states without settling at a point of equilibrium (AccessScience Editors, 2018). The example of Cambridge in this research, where the practice of exchanging new infrastructural forms in exchange for investment, and the consequential rise in concerns among local actors about threats to preferred institutional forms beginning to compete with investment as the strategic objective with the highest priority, is something of a mirror of those studies – an apparently stable and successful institutional ecosystem had the roots of its own instability buried within it from the start.

Equally, if stable rules are not sufficient for equilibrium and 'good governance', the example of Norwich shows that lack of stability can amplify pre-existing strategic objectives of institutional ambition – and the fears of the ambitions of others – and create a self-reinforcing cycle of negative narratives and uncollegiate behaviours that in turn increase instability and with it the priority for the objective of *Institutional Self-preservation*.

If Cambridge and Norwich are examples where the durability of governance institutions is being questioned because of the building pressures of the negative cycles described in the case studies, then Ipswich points to a different challenge, because the institutions there might appear durable only because the policies which are being pursued through them are limited in scope and ambition.

That ambition is limited by the great weight given to collegiate practices and positive narratives; the calculation by actors in Ipswich is that having been overlooked and ignored their primary objective is to recognised, and for that objective to be realised requires them not just to collaborate but to be seen to be collaborating. As a result, and also as a result of long-standing desires to retain preferred institutional structures, the scope to pursue other objectives into arenas where difficult decisions might need to be made is limited.

What unites each case study is the critical role that the strategic objective of *Institutional Self-preservation* plays in negative reinforcing cycles: the existence of this objective puts a

limit on the extent to which other objectives are pursued, and increases in its relative importance compared to those other objectives serve to reinforce the kinds of narratives and practices that further exacerbate fears about risks to preferred institutions. But as Cambridge shows, a situation where concerns about institutional ambitions were minimal can quickly turn into one when those concerns start to paralyse previously durable processes.

The task then is to avoid the negative reinforcing cycle of unstable rules/uncollegiate practices/negative narratives and the primacy of the strategic objective of *Institutional Ambition and Self-preservation*, and instead look to develop the kinds of positive reinforcing cycles that were characteristic of Cambridge from the late 1990s until the mid-2010s and of Norwich from the late 2000s to the mid-2010s, and perhaps are what began to appear in Ipswich in the aftermath of the failed East Anglian Devolution Deal.

The evidence from all three case studies during these periods of 'good governance' is that it required great efforts by local actors to identify common objectives, and to develop the relationships and practices that would enable them to be pursued – what was called "the heavy lifting behind the scenes" by a key player in Cambridge during this period. That each case study area has its own distinct history and its own political and organisational cultures makes the way in which this heavy lifting needs to be done different in each example, but these histories – or long-cycles – shape but do not preordain outcomes, because to assume that would be to deny the agency of the local actors involved.

As Mayor Rees identified, focusing efforts on rules to the exclusion of practices and narratives not only misses key issues, but can by destabilising those rules contribute to a spiral of decline, as has happened in Norwich. Equally, failing to account for the destructive potential of the objective of institutional ambition, whether that objective is one that is long-standing (Ipswich and Norwich) or one that develops as a result of the overcrowding of the local institutional environment (Cambridge), is likely to end up with governance that is not durable and thus is incapable of giving time and space for policies to develop and to play out.

And far from solving the problem of 'not-good' governance, the formalising of institutions can create it; it both removes the safety valve that is inherent in informal institutions, where actors can back away in times of stress, and in creating new mechanisms which instantiate power the creation of formal institutions can increase the strategic preference for *Institutional Self-preservation*, and with it the negative reinforcing cycle that is apparent in Cambridge.

This cuts to the heart of the challenge of good governance: the process of planning, the accountability required by Government for the bodies through which it makes finance available, and the accountability to the local public that is necessary for a working democratic system all require formal governance institutions. Yet it is often informal

institutions that can best allow the cultivation of the practices and narratives that will deliver the objectives of good governance without generating the institutional jealousy that in the end leads to not-good governance.

It seems that at the time of writing, as England begins to emerge from the Covid-19 lockdown with the formal institutions of national and local government facing acute financial pressures, that the Government's solution might be simply to sweep away as many existing institutions as possible. But this further instability in the rules and fears about the loss of preferred institutions are likely to sour good relations and make bad situations worse.

Even if existing institutions are dismantled, as the experience of 2010 showed, the pieces of those institutions and the actors within them will be reassembled, in new but recognisable forms. New relationships will be formed, and those actors will start to pursue their objectives through institutions whose narratives and practices and often even rules are yet to be firmly established. The process of establishing new ways of 'doing things around here' is one that takes time, and these disruptions make that process longer.

So where then does that leave the question of how to achieve good governance? The evidence of the cases of Ipswich, Norwich and Cambridge over the last 15 years or so is that the cycles of mutually constituent constraints and strategic objectives are inherent, and that breaking out of them is difficult but not impossible, and that those periods of good governance might be durable but not permanent. Local and national actors have agency, albeit limited and constrained, and their deliberate actions can and do have impacts. The political and culture environment of a particular place shapes, but does not determine, strategies, behaviours, tools and outcomes.

The lesson is therefore, not that 'structures guarantee behaviours', but that good governance relies both on an environment conducive to it and on the choice of actors to pursue their objectives through collegiate practices and with positive narratives, and within institutional forms that encourage those practices and narratives, and critically, in ways that discourage the growth of institutional ambition and self-preservation. Whether the metaphor is 'heavy-lifting' or – a phrase often used in the interviews for this research – 'plate spinning', good governance is the unending maintenance of stability and durability in a complex and inherently unstable machine.

REFERENCES

Abercrombie, P. and Kelly, S. A. (1935) *East Suffolk regional planning scheme: prepared for the East Suffolk Joint Regional Planning Committee.* Liverpool and London: The University Press of Liverpool and Hodder and Stoughton Ltd.

Ablett, S. and Cambridge Network, T. (1998) *Cambridge 2020: Meeting the Challenge of Growth.* Cambridge: Analysys. A Cambridge Network Project.

AccessScience Editors (2018) 'Predator-prey relationship of wolves and moose on Isle Royale', *AccessScience*. doi: doi.org/10.1036/1097-8542.BR1023181.

Adam, D. and Green, A. E. (2016) 'Soft spaces and soft outcomes: Experiences from City Strategy on local partnership working and measures of success', *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space,* 48(8), pp. 1514-1531. doi: 10.1177/0308518x16642225.

Addie, J.-P. D. and Keil, R. (2015) 'Real Existing Regionalism: The Region between Talk, Territory and Technology', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research,* 39(2), pp. 407-417. doi: https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.12179.

Agnew, J. (1997) 'The dramaturgy of horizons: geographical scale in the 'Reconstruction of Italy' by the new Italian political parties, 1992–1995', *Political Geography,* 16(2), pp. 99-121. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0962-6298(96)00046-7.

Alden, J. (2001) 'Devolution since Kilbrandon and Scenarios for the Future of Spatial Planning in the United Kingdom and European Union', *International Planning Studies,* 6(2), pp. 117-132.

Allen, J. (2003) *Lost Geographies of Power.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Allen, J. and Cochrane, A. (2007) 'Beyond the Territorial Fix: Regional Assemblages, Politics and Power', *Regional Studies,* 41(9), pp. 1161-1175.

Allen, J. and Cochrane, A. (2010) 'Assemblages of State Power: Topological Shifts in the Organization of Government and Politics', *Antipode,* 42(5), pp. 1071-1089.

Allen, J., Cochrane, A. and Massey, D. B. (1998) *Rethinking the Region.* London: Routledge.

Allmendinger, P. and Haughton, G. (2009) 'Soft Spaces, Fuzzy Boundaries, and Metagovernance: The New Spatial Planning in the Thames Gateway', *Environment and Planning A,* 41(3), pp. 617-633. doi: 10.1068/a40208.

Allmendinger, P. and Haughton, G. (2010) 'Spatial Planning, Devolution, and New Planning Spaces', *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy,* 28(5), pp. 803-818. doi: 10.1068/c09163.

Allmendinger, P. and Haughton, G. (2012) 'Post-political spatial planning in England: a crisis of consensus?', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers,* 37(1), pp. 89-103.

Allmendinger, P., Haughton, G. and Shepherd, E. (2016) 'Where is planning to be found? Material practices and the multiple spaces of planning', *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy,* 34(1), pp. 38-51. doi: 10.1177/0263774X15614178.

Alvis, S. 2017. We need a radical solution to fight populism: the answer might be federalism. Online: Left Foot Forward.

Amin, A. (2002) 'Spatialities of Globalisation', *Environment and Planning A,* 34(3), pp. 385-399. doi: 10.1068/a3439.

Amin, A. (2004) 'Regions unbound: towards a new politics of place', *Geografiska Annaler,* 86B, pp. 33-44.

Angelo, H. and Wachsmuth, D. (2015) 'Urbanizing Urban Political Ecology: A Critique of Methodological Cityism', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research,* 39(1), pp. 16-27. doi: https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.12105.

Archer, M. *et al.* (1999) 'Critical Realism and Research Methodology', *Alethia,* 2(1), pp. 12-16. doi: 10.1558/aleth.v2i1.12.

Archer, M. S. (1995) *Realist Social Theory: The Morphogenetic Approach.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Archer, M. S. (2010) 'Morphogenesis versus Structuration: On Combining Structure and Action', *The British Journal of Sociology,* 33(4), pp. 455-483.

Bachrach, P. and Baratz, M. S. (1962) 'Two Faces of Power', *The American Political Science Review,* 56(4), pp. 947-952.

Baker, A. R. H. (2010) 'Controlling the growth of Cambridge (UK): challenges to planning its built environment', *Annales de Géographie,* 673(3), pp. 293-304. doi: 10.3917/ag.673.0293.

Ball, M. and Maginn, P. J. (2004) 'The Contradictions of Urban Policy: The Case of the Single Regeneration Budget in London', *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy,* 22(5), pp. 739-765. doi: 10.1068/c35m.

Balls, E., Healey, J. and Leslie, C. (2006) *Evolution and Devolution in England: how regions strengthen our towns and cities.* London: New Local Government Network.

Barlow, M. S., Jones, J. H. and Thomson, G. W. (1940) *Royal Commission on the Distribution of the Industrial Population ('Barlow Commission').* London. Cmd. 6153.

Barnett, C. (2014) 'What Do Cities Have to Do with Democracy?', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research,* 38(5), pp. 1625-1643. doi: https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.12148.

Baumgartner, F. R. and Jones, B. D. (1993) *Agendas and Instability in American Politics.* University of Chicago Press.

Beall, J., Parnell, S. and Albertyn, C. (2015) 'Elite Compacts in Africa: The Role of Area-based Management in the New Governmentality of the Durban City-region', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research,* 39(2), pp. 390-406. doi: https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.12178.

Benneworth, P. *et al.* (2006) 'The rise of the English regions: an introduction', in Hardill, E. *et al.* (eds.) *The Rise of the English Regions?* Abingdon: Routledge.

Bhaskar, R. (1979) *The possibility of naturalism: a philosophical critique of the contemporary human sciences.* London, Routledge.

Bhaskar, R. (1989) *Reclaiming reality: a critical introduction to contemporary philosophy.* London, Routledge

Blackman, D. (2020) 'Inspectors torpedo St Albans local plan over duty to cooperate concerns', *Planning Resource,* (20th April 2020).

Blaikie, N. (2007) *Approaches to Social Enquiry.* 2nd edn. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Blaikie, N. (2018) 'Confounding issues related to determining sample size in qualitative research', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology,* 21(5), pp. 635-641.

Board, G. N. G. (2018) *Joint Core Strategy for Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk: Annual Monitoring Report 2016-17.* Norwich: Greater Norwich Growth Board.

Bolgherini, S. (2014) 'Can Austerity Lead to Recentralisation? Italian Local Government during the Economic Crisis', *South European Society and Politics,* 19(2), pp. 193-214.

Boudreau, J.-A. (2007) 'Making New Political Spaces: Mobilizing Spatial Imaginaries, Instrumentalizing Spatial Practices, and Strategically Using Spatial Tools', *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space,* 39(11), pp. 2593-2611. doi: 10.1068/a39228.

Boughton, J. (2015) *Council Housing in Norwich: 'I thought we were ever so posh'.* Available at: https://municipaldreams.wordpress.com/2015/09/22/council-housing-in-norwich-i-thought-we-were-ever-so-posh/ (Accessed: 10th June 2020).

Boundary Commission for England, T. 2009a. Advice to the Secretary of State on unitary local government in Norfolk. London: The Boundary Commission for England.

Boundary Commission for England, T. (2009b) 'Further draft proposals for unitary local government in Norfolk '. London, The Boundary Commission for England.

Bradley, Q. (2018) 'Neighbourhood planning and the production of spatial knowledge', *Town Planning Review,* 89(1), pp. 23-42.

Breathnach, P. (2010) 'From Spatial Keynesianism to Post- Fordist Neoliberalism: Emerging Contradictions in the Spatiality of the Irish State', *Antipode,* 42(5), pp. 1180-1199. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8330.2010.00798.x.

Brenner, N. (2001) 'The limits to scale? Methodological reflections on scalar structuration', *Progress in Human Geography,* 25(4), pp. 591-614.

Brenner, N. (2004) *New state spaces: urban governance and the rescaling of statehood.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Brindley, T., Rydin, Y. and Stoker, G. (1996) *Remaking planning: the politics of urban change.* London: Routledge.

Bristow, G. 2012. State Spatiality and the Governance of Economic Development in the UK: The Changing Role of the Region. Cardiff: Centre for Economic Geography.

Bristow, T. (2017) 'Under-fire LEP will be scrapped and replaced by new business board', *Eastern Daily Press*.

Brown, G. (1971) *In My Way: the Political Memoirs of Lord George-Brown.* London: Gollancz.

Bryman, A. (2016) *Social research methods.* Fifth edition. edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bulkeley, H. (2005) 'Reconfiguring environmental governance: towards a politics of scales and networks', *Political Geography,* 24(8), pp. 875-902.

Bunn, J. (2019) *New dawn in Dorset but what next for reorganisation?* Local Government Chronicle. London: EMAP Publishing Available at: https://www.lgcplus.com/politics/governance-and-structure/new-dawn-dorset-next-reorganisation-08-08-2019/ (Accessed: 8th August 2019).

Burnham, P. (2004) *Research Methods in Politics.* First edn. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. Political analysis.

Bus Services Act, 2017, c.21., London, HMSO

Buser, M. (2012) 'The production of space in metropolitan regions: A Lefebvrian analysis of governance and spatial change', *Planning Theory,* 11(3), pp. 279-298. doi: 10.1177/1473095212439693.

Byrne, D. (2005) 'Complexity, Configurations and Cases', *Theory, Culture & Society,* 22(5), pp. 95-111. doi: 10.1177/0263276405057194.

Cabinet Office and Deputy Prime Minister's Office (2013) *Greater Ipswich City Deal.* City Deals. London: Gov.UK Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/city-deal-greater-ipswichAvailable at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/253854/Greater_Ipswich_Deal_Document_WEB_VERSION_301029.pdf (Accessed: 28th December 2017).

Cambridge City Council (2006) *Cambridge Local Plan 2006.* Cambridge: Cambridge City Council.

Cambridge City Council (2018) *Cambridge Local Plan 2018.* Cambridge: Cambridge City Council.

Cambridge City Council Department of Architecture and Planning and Logie, G. (1966) *Future shape of Cambridge: report of the city architect and planning officer.* Cambridge: Cambridge City Council.

Cambridgeshire County Council (1995) *Cambridgeshire Structure Plan 1995.* Cambridge: Cambridgeshire County Council.

Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council 2004. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan. Cambridge: Cambridgeshire County Council.

Castells, M. (1983) *City and the grassroots: a cross-cultural theory of urban social movements.* California series in urban development v.2.

Castells, M. (1996) *The Rise of the Network Society.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Castells, M. and Sheridan, A. (1977) *The urban question: a Marxist approach.* Social structure and social change. London, Edward Arnold.

Centre for Cities (2019) 'City Outlook 2019'. London, Centre for Cities.

Chaplin, F. (1975) *Norfolk Structure Plan: Norwich Area: Report on Strategic Choices (Reports to the Structure Plan Sub-Committee, 1974-75 dated 20th June 1975).* Norwich: Norfolk County Council.

Chelmsford Committee 1931. Interim Report of Departmental Committee on Regional Development. London: HMSO.

Churchill, W. 1912. Newspaper cutting...attacking the Ulster Unionists' declared intention of preventing the Home Rule meeting in Belfast [Ulster, Ireland] and claiming that William Gladstone favoured a measure of Home Rule for all parts of the United Kingdom as early as 1866. *Huddersfield Examiner.* Huddersfield.

Cities and Local Government Devolution Act, 2016 (c. 1). London, HMSO

Clark, G. L., Gertler, M. S. and Feldman, M. P. (2000) *The Oxford handbook of economic geography.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Clark, J. and Christopherson, S. (2009) 'Integrating Investment and Equity:A Critical Regionalist Agenda for a Progressive Regionalism', *Journal of Planning Education and Research,* 28(3), pp. 341-354. doi: 10.1177/0739456x08327371.

Clerk, G. *et al.* (1942) 'Discussion on the Geographical Aspects of Regional Planning', *The Geographical Journal,* 99(2), pp. 61-80.

Cochrane, A. (1999) 'Just another failed urban experiment? the legacy of the urban development corporations', in Imrie, R. & Thomas, H. (eds.) *British Urban Policy: An Evaluation of the Urban Development Corporations.* London: SAGE Publications Ltd, pp. 246-272.

Cochrane, A. (2012) 'Making up a Region: The Rise and Fall of the 'South East of England' as a Political Territory', *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy,* 30(1), pp. 95-108. doi: 10.1068/c1149r.

Colin Buchanan and Partners (1966) *South Hampshire study. Report on the feasibility of major urban growth.* London: Ministry of Housing and Local, Government.

Commissioner for the Special Areas (1935) *First Report.* London: HMSO.

Conservative Party (2010) 'Open Source Planning: The Conservative Planning Green Paper, Conservative Party: London'.

Copus, C. (2011) 'Elected Mayors in English Local Government: Mayoral Leadership and Creating a new Political Dynamic', *Lex Localis,* 9(4), pp. 335-351.

Copus, C. and Steyvers, K. (2017) 'Local Leadership and Local-Self Government: Avoiding the Abyss', *Lex Localis,* 15(1).

Copus, C., Sweeting, D. and Wingfield, M. (2013) 'Repoliticising and redemocratising local democracy and the public realm: why we need councillors and councils', *Policy & Politics,* 41(3), pp. 389-408.

Counsell, D. and Haughton, G. (2003) 'Regional Planning Tensions: Planning for Economic Growth and Sustainable Development in Two Contrasting English Regions', *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy,* 21(2), pp. 225-239. doi: 10.1068/c0221.

Cox, K. (1998) 'Spaces of Dependence, Spaces of Engagement and thePolitics of Scale', *Political Geography,* (January), pp. 1-23.

Creswell, J. W. and Poth, C. N. (2018) *Qualitative inquiry & research design: choosing among five approaches.* Fourth edition. edn. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Crouch, C. (2005) *Capitalist Diversity and Change: Recombinant Governance and Institutional Entrepreneurs.* Oxford University Press.

Crouch, C. and Farrell, H. (2004) 'Breaking the path of institutional development? Alternatives to the new determinism', *Rationality and Society,* 16(1), pp. 5-40.

Cumbers, A., MacKinnon, D. and McMaster, R. (2003) 'Institutions, Power and Space:Assessing the Limits to Institutionalism in Economic Geography', *European Urban and Regional Studies,* 10(4), pp. 325-342. doi: 10.1177/09697764030104003.

Dahl, R. A. (1961) *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Davidge, W. (1934) *Cambridgeshire Regional Planning Report: Prepared for the Cambridgeshire Joint Town Planning Committee.* Cambridge: The University Press (Printed at).

Davies, J. S. (2005) 'Local Governance and the Dialectics of Hierarchy, Market and Network', *Policy Studies,* 26(3-4), pp. 311-335. doi: 10.1080/01442870500198379.

Davoudi, S. and Strange, I. (2009) 'Space and place in twentieth century planning: an analytical framework and an historical overview', in Davoudi, S. & Strange, I. (eds.) *Conceptions of Space and Place in Strategic Spatial Planning*. London: Routledge, pp. 7-42.

Dawe, P. (1997) ''Cambridge is Full Up'', *Cambridge Evening News*.

Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. l. 1987. A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Department for Communities and Local Government (2007) *Homes for the future: more affordable, more sustainable [green paper].* Cm 7191. London, HMSO

Department for Communities and Local Government (2012a) *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).* London: DCLG.

Department for Communities and Local Government, N. A. D. (2012b) *Local Enterprise Partnerships Map*. London: HMSO.

Department for Transport (2017) *The Bus Services Act 2017: New powers and opportunities.* London: Department for Transport.

Department of Communities and Local Government, *(DCLG)* (2010) *Written statement to Parliament: Revoking regional strategies.* London: Hansard.

Department of Economic Affairs (1965a) *The North West: a regional study.* London: HMSO.

Department of Economic Affairs (1965b) *The West Midlands: A Regional Study.* London: HMSO.

Department of the Environment (1974) *Strategic choice for East Anglia. Report of the East Anglia Regional Strategy Team.* London: HMSO.

Department of the Environment (1989) *The Future of Development Plans: presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Secretary of State for Wales.* London: HMSO.

Department of the Environment (1991) *Regional planning guidance for East Anglia (RPG6).* London: HMSO. Regional Planning Guidance series.

Department of the Environment Transport and the Regions (2000) *Regional Planning (PPG11).* London: TSO. Planning policy guidance.

Department of the Environment Transport and the Regions and Government Office for the East of England (2000) *Regional planning guidance for East Anglia to 2016 (RPG6).* London: HMSO.

Deputy Prime Minister's Office and Cabinet Office (2013) *Greater Norwich City Deal.* London: HM Government.

DiMaggio, P. and Powell, W. (1991a) 'Introduction', in Powell, W. & DiMaggio, P. (eds.) *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*: Chicago University Press.

DiMaggio, P. and Powell, W. (1991b) 'The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields', in Powell, W. & DiMaggio, P. (eds.) *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*: Chicago University Press.

Downs, A. (1957) *An Economic Theory of Democracy.* New York: Harper Row.

Dudman, J. (2020) 'It's divide and rule as English devolution crumbles where it began: in Manchester', *The Guardian*. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/oct/23/divide-and-rule-english-devolution-crumbles-where-it-began-manchester (Accessed: 23rd October 2020).

Dörry, S. and Walther, O. J. (2015) 'Contested 'Relational Policy Spaces' in Two European Border Regions', *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space,* 47(2), pp. 338-355. doi: 10.1068/a130315p.

East of England Draft Plan Examination in Public Panel Secretariat (2006) *Letter to EERA re: Panel Report for the East of England Plan – EERA queries of 28 July 2006.* National Archive Available at: http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100528203245/http://www.gos.gov.uk/goee/docs/Planning/Regional_Planning/Regional_Spatial_Strategy/Panel_clarification_EERA.doc (Accessed: 28th December 2017).

East of England Regional Assembly (2004) *East of England plan: draft revision to the regional spatial strategy (RSS) for the East of England.* Flempton, Bury St Edmunds: East of England Regional Assembly.

East Suffolk County Council, T. 1964. Report of the County Planning Officer on the South East Study. Ipswich: East Suffolk County Council.

Empire Settlement Act, 12 & 13 Geo. 5, c. 13., London, HMSO

European Commission Urban Audit Project 2011. Harmonised Definition of Cities. Brussels.

Evenhuis, E. (2017) 'Institutional change in cities and regions: a path dependency approach', *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society,* 10(3), pp. 509-526. doi: 10.1093/cjres/rsx014.

Evidence submitted by the University of Cambridge. 1999. *Select Committee on Science and Technology.* London: HMSO.

Examination in Public Review Panel, T. 1991. Norfolk Structure Plan Review and Norwich Policy Area Alterations: Examination in Public September 1991 – Report of the Panel. Norwich.

Fawcett, C. B. (1919) *Provinces of England: a study of some geographical aspects of devolution.* London: Williams and Norgate. Geography.

Fay, B. (1990) 'Critical Realism?', *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour,* 20(1), pp. 33-41. doi: https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5914.1990.tb00173.x.

Feldman, M. S. (2004) 'Making Sense of Stories: A Rhetorical Approach to Narrative Analysis', *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory,* 14(2), pp. 147-170. doi: 10.1093/jopart/muh010.

Finer, H. (1932) *The Theory and Practice of Modern Government.* London: Methuen.

First Secretary of State and Secretary of State for Economic Affairs (1965) *The National Plan: presented to Parliament by the First Secretary of State and Secretary of State for Economic Affairs by command of Her Majesty, September 1965.* London: HMSO.

Fletcher, A. J. (2017) 'Applying critical realism in qualitative research: methodology meets method', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology,* 20(2), pp. 181-194.

Fordham Research for Ipswich Borough Council 2008. Ipswich Housing Market Area: Strategic Housing Market Assessment.

Gardner, A. (2016) *How are local public services responding to austerity? English local governance between 2010 and 2015* University of Nottingham.

Geddes, P. S. (1904) *City development: a Study of Parks, Gardens and Culture-Institutes, a report to the Carnegie Dunfermline Trust.* Edinburgh: Geddes and Company.

Getis, A. and Getis, J. (1966) 'Christaller's Central Place Theory', *Journal of Geography,* 65(5), pp. 220-226.

Giddens, A. (1984) *The constitution of society: introduction of the theory of structuration.* Cambridge, Polity Press

Glasson, J. (1978) *An introduction to regional planning: concepts, theory and practice.* 2nd ed. edn. London: Hutchinson.

Goess, S., de Jong, M. and Meijers, E. (2016) 'City branding in polycentric urban regions: identification, profiling and transformation in the Randstad and Rhine-Ruhr', *European Planning Studies,* 24(11), pp. 2036-2056. doi: 10.1080/09654313.2016.1228832.

Golding, N. (2020) 'Read the Simon Clarke devo speech the ministry doesn't want you to see', *Local Government Chronicle,* 17 July 2020.

Goodin, R. (ed.) (1996) *The Theory of Institutional Design*: Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Goodwin, M. (2013) 'Regions, Territories and Relationality: Exploring the Regional Dimensions of Political Practice', *Regional Studies,* 47(8), pp. 1181-1190.

Government, M. O. H. A. L. (1964) *The South-East Study, 1961-1981.* London: HMSO.

Government Office for the East of England and Department of Communities and Local Government (2008) *East of England plan: the revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England.*

Greater Cambridge Partnership (2002) 'Our Approach to Working with Government'. Cambridge: GCP.

Greater Norwich Development Partnership (2009) 'Joint Core Strategy for Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk. Issues and Options: Report of Consultation'. Norwich.

Greater Norwich Development Partnership (2014) *Joint Core Strategy for Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk. Adopted March 2011, amendments adopted January 2014.* Norwich, Long Stratton: Greater Norwich Development Partnership.

Greater Norwich Development Partnership (2017) 'Agenda and Reports for Meeting, 20th November 2017'. Norwich. Available at: https://www.greaternorwichgrowth.org.uk/dmsdocument/2377 (Accessed: 20th December 2020).

Greater Norwich Development Partnership (2018) 'Agenda and Reports for Meeting, 19th June 2018'. Norwich. Available at: https://www.greaternorwichgrowth.org.uk/dmsdocument/2393 (Accessed: 20th December 2020).

Greater Norwich Growth Board (2014) 'Agenda and Reports, Meeting of 31st July 2014'. Norwich. Available at: https://www.greaternorwichgrowth.org.uk/dmsdocument/1944 (Accessed: 20th December 2020).

Greater Norwich Growth Board (2017) 'Agenda and Minutes of Meeting, 21st September 2017'. Norwich. Available at: https://www.greaternorwichgrowth.org.uk/dmsdocument/2372 (Accessed: 20th December 2020).

Greater Norwich Housing Partnership (2011) 'Greater Norwich Housing Market Assessment: Update September 2011'. Norwich.

Groenewegen, J., Berg, A. v. d. and Spithoven, A. H. G. M. (2010) 'The Dynamics of Institutions', in Groenewegen, J., Berg, A.v.d. & Spithoven, A.H.G.M. (eds.) *Institutional economics: an introduction*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Gustafsson, O. and Magnusson, J. (2016) *Inter-Organizational Collaboration - In Theory and Practice: Based on a multiple-case study in the automotive industry.* Chalmers University of Technology.

GVA Grimley Limited (on behalf of Norwich City Council) 2017. Norwich Economic Analysis Part 1: Norwich Economic Geography - Research commissioned by Norwich City Council into the functional economic geography of Norwich and its growth potential. London: GVA Grimley Limited.

Hacking, I. (1999) *The Social Construction of What?* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Hall, P. A. and Taylor, R. C. R. (1996) 'Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms', *Political Studies,* 44(5), pp. 936-957. doi: https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9248.1996.tb00343.x.

Hall, T. and Hubbard, P. (1998) *The entrepreneurial city: geographies of politics, regime, and representation.* Chichester: Wiley.

Hammersley, M. (2018) *What's Wrong With Ethnography? Methodological Explorations.* First edition. edn. London: Taylor and Francis. Routledge Revivals.

Hansard (1914) *Local Government Provisional Orders (No 21) Bill (Third Reading Debate, 26th March 1914).* London: Hansard.

Hansard (2018) *WH Deb, Vol 644, column 174WH-175WH, 4 July 2018*. London, Hansard

Harré, R. and Secord, P. F. (1972) *The Explanation of Social Behaviour.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Harrison, J. (2010) 'Networks of connectivity, territorial fragmentation, uneven development: The new politics of city-regionalism', *Political Geography,* 29(1), pp. 17-27.

Harrison, J. (2012) 'Life after Regions? The Evolution of City-regionalism in England', *Regional Studies,* 46(9), pp. 1243-1259.

Harrison, J. (2013) 'Configuring the new 'Regional World': on being caught between territory and networks', *Regional Studies,* 47(1), pp. 55-74.

Harrison, P. (2014) 'Making planning theory real', *Planning Theory,* 13(1), pp. 65-81. doi: 10.1177/1473095213484144.

Harré, R. (2002) 'Social Reality and the Myth of Social Structure', *European Journal of Social Theory,* 5(1), pp. 111-123. doi: 10.1177/13684310222225333.

Harvey, D. (1973) *Social justice and the city.* London, Edward Arnold

Harvey, W. (2011) 'Strategies for Conducting Elite Interviews', *Qualitative Research,* 11(4). doi: 10.1177/1468794111404329.

Haughton, G. (2010) *The new spatial planning: territorial management with soft spaces and fuzzy boundaries.* Abingdon: Routledge.

Haughton, G. and Allmendinger, P. (2008) 'The Soft Spaces of Local Economic Development', *Local Economy,* 23(2), pp. 138-148. doi: 10.1080/02690940801976216.

Haughton, G., Allmendinger, P. and Oosterlynck, S. (2013) 'Spaces of Neoliberal Experimentation: Soft Spaces, Postpolitics, and Neoliberal Governmentality', *Environment and Planning A,* 45(1), pp. 217-234. doi: 10.1068/a45121.

Hay, C. (1995) 'Structure and Agency', in Marsh, D. & Stoker, G. (eds.) *Theory and Methods of Political Science*. London: Macmillan.

Hay, C. (2002) *Political Analysis: A Critical Introduction.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hehir, J. 2008. Letter to Archie Gall, Head of Boundary Reviews & Director of the Boundary Committee for England. Ipswich: Ipswich Borough Council.

Henning, M., Stam, E. and Wenting, R. (2013) 'Path Dependence Research in Regional Economic Development: Cacophony or Knowledge Accumulation?', *Regional Studies,* 47(8), pp. 1348-1362.

Herbert, L. *et al.* (2015) *Cambridgeshire Peterborough devolution letter to DCLG seeking to powers to vary legislation as part of devolution deal.* Cambridge/Peterborough: Unpublished Available at: http://www.lgcplus.com/Journals/2015/07/21/m/j/b/Cambridgeshire-Peterborough-devolution-letter.pdf (Accessed: 11th November 2015).

Hertfordshire Life (2016) *Stevenage at 70.* Stevenage: Hertfordshire Life, Archant Community Media Ltd (Accessed: 16th February 2017).

Heseltine, M. (1979) 'Secretary of State's Address', *Report of the Proceedings of the Town and Country Planning Association Summer School 1979*.

Hetherington, P. (2000) 'Green belt limit lifted to boost Silicon Fen', *The Guardian*. Available at: http://www.guardian.co.uk/guardianpolitics/story/0,3605,182895,00.html (Accessed: 20th December 2020).

Hinoul, M. (2008) *Creating the Dynamic Technology Region: The knowledge pearl Leuven–Flanders.* Dordrecht: Springer. Pathways to high-tech valleys and research triangles: innovative entrepreneurship, knowledge transfer and cluster formation in Europe and the United States.

HM Government (2007) *Review of sub-national economic development and regeneration.* London, HMSO.

HM Government, Cabinet Office (2011) *Unlocking Growth in Cities.* London: HMSO.

HM Government (2015) *Cornwall Devolution Deal / Kevambos Digresennans Kernow.* London: HM Government Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cornwall-devolution-deal (Accessed: 4th February 2020).

HM Government, Prime Minister's Office (2019) *Queen's Speech December 2019: Background Briefing Notes.* London. London, HMSO

HM Government and Arc Leaders Group, Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government & HM Treasury (2019) *The Oxford-Cambridge Arc: government ambition and joint declaration between government and local partners.* London: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

HM Government (2011) *Localism Act 2011*: London, HMSO.

HM Government (2017) *Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal.* London Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/oxfordshire-housing-deal (Accessed: 3rd February 2020).

HM Treasury (Local Government & Reform Team), HM Treasury (2019) *Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) Interest Rates (Letter to Chief Finance Officers)*: HMG.

Holford, W. and Wright, H. M. (1950) *Cambridge planning proposals: a report to the Town and Country Planning Committee of the Cambridgeshire County Council.* Rev. edn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Holly, N. (2017) 'Accidental antagonism? Technical governance and local struggles over housing numbers in southern England', *Town Planning Review,* 88(6), pp. 683-704.

Inch, A. (2009) *The new planning, and the new planner: modernisation, culture change and the regulation of professional identities in English local planning.* Oxford Brookes University. Available at: http://capitadiscovery.co.uk/brookes/items/1145432 (Accessed: 15th March 2017).

Ipswich Borough Council 2011. Core Strategy and Policies Development Plan Document. Ipswich: Ipswich Borough Council.

Ipswich Borough Council (2015a) *Ipswich Borough Council Local Plan: Statement of Compliance with the Duty to Co-operate (SUCD21).* Ipswich: Ipswich Borough Council.

Ipswich Borough Council (2015b) *Ipswich Policy Area Board Action Notes 5th June 2015.* Ipswich: Ipswich Borough Council Available at: https://www.ipswich.gov.uk/sites/default/files/ipa_board_action_notes_5_jun_2015.pdf (Accessed: 21st March 2017).

Ipswich Borough Council (2016) *Ipswich Policy Area Board, Action Notes, 13th July 2016.* Ipswich Available at: https://www.ipswich.gov.uk/sites/default/files/ipa_board_action_notes_13_jul_2016.pdf (Accessed: 13th March 2017).

Ipswich Borough Council (2017) *Ipswich Local Plan 2011-2031.* Ipswich: Ipswich Borough Council.

Ipswich Central (BID) et al 2015. Turning Our Town Around: The Vision for Ipswich, East Anglia's Waterfront Town. Ipswich.

Ipswich Policy Area Board (2014) *Topic Paper - Boundary Review.* Ipswich: Ipswich Borough Council Available at: https://www.ipswich.gov.uk/sites/www.ipswich.gov.uk/files/boundary_review_topic_paper_for_ipa_board_4_jul.pdf (Accessed: 28th December 2017).

Jackson, P. (2006) 'Marking Sense of Making Sense: Configurational Analysis and the Double Hermeneutic', in Yanow, D.S.-S., P (ed.) *Interpretation and Method – Empirical Research Methods and the Interpretive Turn*. New York: ME Sharpe.

Jacobellis v. Ohio [1964].

Jessop, B. (1985) *Nicos Poulantzas: Marxist theory and political strategy.* London, MacMillan.

Jessop, B. (1990) *State Theory: Putting the Capitalist State in its Place.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Jessop, B. (2010) 'The "Return" of the National State in the Current Crisis of the World Market', *Capital and Class,* 34, pp. 38-43.

Jessop, B. (2013a) *State Power.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Jessop, B. (2013b) *State Theory: Putting the Capitalist State in Its Place.* Cambridge, Polity Press.

Jessop, B., Brenner, N. and Jones, M. (2008) 'Theorizing sociospatial relations', *Environment and Planning D,* 26, pp. 389-401.

John, P. and Ward, H. (2005) 'How Competitive Is Competitive Bidding? The Case of the Single Regeneration Budget Program', *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory,* 15(1), pp. 71-87. doi: 10.1093/jopart/mui004.

Jones, M. (2001) 'The Rise of the Regional State in Economic Governance: 'Partnerships for Prosperity' Or New Scales of State Power?', *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space,* 33(7), pp. 1185-1211. doi: 10.1068/a32185.

Jones, M. and Macleod, G. (2004) 'Regional spaces, spaces of regionalism: territory, insurgent politics and the English question', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers,* 29(4), pp. 433-452. doi: 10.1111/j.0020-2754.2004.00140.x.

Jones, M. and Woods, M. (2013) 'New Localities', *Regional Studies,* 47(1), pp. 29-42. doi: 10.1080/00343404.2012.709612.

Jones, R. *et al.* (2004) 'Devolution, State Personnel, and the Production of New Territories of Governance in the United Kingdom', *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space,* 36(1), pp. 89-109. doi: 10.1068/a3685.

Jones, R. and Merriman, P. (2012) 'Network Nation', *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space,* 44(4), pp. 937-953. doi: 10.1068/a44159.

Keating, M. (1998) *The New Regionalism in Western Europe: Territorial Restructuring and Political Change.* Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Keller, J. (2010) *Patterns and Dynamics of European Sub-National Governance: Institutional Transformations in Hungarian Micro-Regional Associations 1990-2006.* European University Institute.

King, A. (1999) 'The Impossibility of Naturalism: The Antinomies of Bhaskar's Realism', *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour,* 29(3), pp. 267-288. doi: https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-5914.00102.

Kirk, K., Cotton, C. and Gates, B. (2012) *The Cambridge Phenomenon: 50 years of Innovation and Enterprise.* London: Third Millenium.

Krasner, S. (1984) 'Approaches to the state: alternative conceptions and historical dynamics', *Comparative Politics,* 16.

Kuhn, T. (1962) *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Labour Party (1995) *A choice for England: a consultation paper on Labour's plans for English regional government.* London, The Labour Party.

Lanzara, G. F. (1998) 'Self- destructive processes in institution building and some modest countervailing mechanisms', *European Journal of Political Research,* 33(1), pp. 1-39. doi: 10.1111/1475-6765.00374.

Latour, B. (2005) *Reassembling the Social: An introduction to actor-network theory.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lazzeroni, M. and Piccaluga, A. (2015) 'Beyond 'town and gown': the role of the university in small and medium-sized cities', *Industry and Higher Education,* 29(1), pp. 11–23. doi: 10.5367/ihe.2015.0241.

Lefebvre, H. (1976) *The survival of capitalism: reproduction of the relations of production.* New York: St. Martin's Press.

Leftwich, A. (2004) 'Thinking politically: on the politics of politics.', in Leftwich, A. (ed.) *What is politics?: the activity and its study*. Cambridge: Polity, pp. 1-22.

Lemprière, M. 2016. Institutional synchronicity, institutional change and multi--level governance: the case of low--carbon housing in Oxford and Cambridge City Councils *(UNPUBLISHED DRAFT PAPER).* https://www.psa.ac.uk/sites/default/files/conference/papers/2016/PSA%20Edit%20-%20Synchronicity%20as%20A%20Determinant%20of%20Institutioanl%20Change%20-%20March%202016%20-%20ML_0.pdf.

Liesbet, H. and Gary, M. (2003) 'Unraveling the Central State, but How? Types of Multi-level Governance', *American Political Science Review,* 97(2), pp. 233-243.

Lipietz, A. (1994) 'The National and the Regional: their autonomy vis-a-vis the capitalist world crisis', in Palan, R.P. & Gills, B.K. (eds.) *Transcending the state-global divide: a neostructuralist agenda in international relations*. Boulder, Colo. ; London: Lynne Rienner, pp. ix, 283 p.

Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act, 2009, c. 20., London, HMSO

Local Government Act, 51 & 52 Vict. c.41., London, HMSO

Local Government Act, 19 & 20 Geo. 5, c. 17., London, HMSO

Local Government Act, 1972, c. 70., London, HMSO

Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act, 2007, c.28., London, HMSO

Localism Act, 2011, c. 20., London, HMSO

Logan, J. R. and Molotch, H. L. (1987) *Urban fortunes: the political economy of place.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Lowndes, V. (2005) 'Something old, something new, something borrowed…: How institutions change (and stay the same) in local governance', *Policy Studies,* 26(3-4), pp. 291-309. doi: 10.1080/01442870500198361.

Lowndes, V. and Pratchett, L. (2012) 'Local Governance under the Coalition Government: Austerity, Localism and the 'Big Society'', *Local Government Studies,* 38(1), pp. 21-40.

Lowndes, V. and Roberts, M. 2013. Why Institutions Matter: The New Institutionalism in Political Science. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Lowndes, V. and Skelcher, C. (1998) 'The Dynamics of Multi-organizational Partnerships: an Analysis of Changing Modes of Governance', *Public Administration,* 76(2), pp. 313-333. doi: https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9299.00103.

Mackinnon, D. and Shaw, J. (2010) 'New State Spaces, Agency and Scale: Devolution and the Regionalisation of Transport Governance in Scotland', *Antipode,* 42(5), pp. 1226-1252. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8330.2010.00800.x.

MacLeavy, J. and Harrison, J. (2010) 'New State Spatialities: Perspectives on State, Space, and Scalar Geographies', *Antipode,* 42(5), pp. 1037-1046. doi: https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.2010.00792.x.

MacLeod, G. (2011) 'Urban Politics Reconsidered: Growth Machine to Post-democratic City?', *Urban Studies,* 48(12), pp. 2629-2660. doi: 10.1177/0042098011415715.

Macleod, G. and Jones, M. (2007) 'Territorial, Scalar, Networked, Connected: In What Sense a 'Regional World'?', *Regional Studies,* 41(9), pp. 1177-1191.

Madanipour, A. and Davoudi, S. (2015) 'Localism: Institutions, Territories, Representations', in Davoudi, S. & Madanipour, A. (eds.) *Reconsidering Localism*. New York: Taylor & Francis.

March, J. and Olsen, J. (1984) 'The New Institutionalism: Organizational Factors in Political Life', *Political Science Review,* 78, pp. 738-49.

March, J. and Olsen, J. (1989) *Rediscovering Institutions.* New York: Free Press.

March, J. and Olsen, J. (2004) *The Logic of Appropriateness.* Oslo: Arena Working Papers.

Marlow, D. (2015) *Beyond 'duty to cooperate' - towards a new era of strategic planning.* London: Planning Resource Available at: http://www.planningresource.co.uk/article/1330939/beyond-duty-cooperate-towards-new-era-strategic-planning (Accessed: 11th November 2015).

Massey, D. (1991) 'A global sense of place', *Marxism Today,* (24-29 June).

Massey, D. B. (2004) *For space.* London: SAGE.

McCann, E. and Ward, K. (2012) 'Policy Assemblages, Mobilities and Mutations: Toward a Multidisciplinary Conversation', *Political Studies Review,* 10(3), pp. 325-332. doi: 10.1111/j.1478-9302.2012.00276.x.

McGuinness, D. and Mawson, J. (2017) 'The rescaling of sub-national planning: can localism resolve England's spatial planning conundrum?', *Town Planning Review,* 88(3), pp. 283-303.

Medeiros, E. (2013) 'Euro–Meso–Macro: The New Regions in Iberian and European Space', *Regional Studies,* 47(8), pp. 1249-1266.

Medema, S. G. (1998) *Coasean economics: law and economics and the new institutional economics.* Boston and London: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government, MHCLG (2019) *National Planning Policy Framework (2019).* London: HMSO.

Ministry of Labour 1934. Reports of Investigators into the Industrial Conditions in Certain Depressed Areas: Report on West Cumberland and Haltwhistle. London: HMSO.

Morgan, C. (2020) *A Guide to Devolution and Why it Matters.* New Local Government Network (NLGN) Available at: http://www.nlgn.org.uk/public/2020/undivided-attention-a-guide-to-devolution-and-why-it-matters/ (Accessed: 4th February 2020).

Morgan, K. (2007) 'The Polycentric State: New Spaces of Empowerment and Engagement?', *Regional Studies,* 41(9), pp. 1237-1251.

MORI 2000. *Perceptions of the East of England: Research Report to the EEDA*. London: MORI.

Morphet, J. (2017) 'Sub-regional strategic spatial planning: the use of statecraft and scalecraft in delivering the English model', *Town Planning Review,* 88(6), pp. 665-682.

Morphet, J. and Pemberton, S. (2013) ''Regions Out—Sub-regions In'—Can Sub-regional Planning Break the Mould? The View from England', *Planning Practice and Research,* 28(4), pp. 384-399. doi: 0.1080/02697459.2013.767670.

Mott, N. C. (1969) 'The Mott Report'. Cambridge: University of Cambridge.

Mouffe, C. (2000) *The Democratic Paradox.* London: Verso.

National Loans Act, 1968, c. 13., London, HMSO

New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership 2014. New Anglia Strategic Economic Plan. Wymondham: NALEP.

Norfolk County Council Department of Planning and Property (1993) *Norfolk Structure Plan 1993.* Norwich: Norfolk County Council.

Norfolk County Council, P. D. (1979) *Norfolk Structure Plan.* Norwich: Norfolk County Council.

North, D. C. (1990) *Institutions, institutional change and economic performance.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Norwich City Council 2017. Summary of issues raised by Cllr Waters for recording in minutes of GNDP meeting of 20th Nov 2017. Norwich: Norwich City Council.

Nurse, A. (2015) 'Creating the north from the sum of its parts? Research questions to assess the Northern Powerhouse', *Local Economy,* 30(6), pp. 689-701. doi: DOI: 10.1177/0269094215600654.

Nurse, A., Chen, C.-L. and Desjardins, X. (2017) 'The Northern Powerhouse: a comparative perspective', *Town Planning Review,* 88(4), pp. 383–400. doi: https://doi.org/10.3828/tpr.2017.25.

O'Callaghan, C. *et al.* (2015) 'Topologies and topographies of Ireland's neoliberal crisis', *Space & Polity,* 19(1), pp. 31-46.

Odell, P. (2003) *No Enlargement of Ipswich: Why the Enlargement of Ipswich Didn't Happen.* The Ipswich Society Newsletter. Ipswich: The Ipswich Society (Accessed: 21st December 2017).

OECD (2015) 'The Secrets of Successful Cities', *The Metropolitan Century: Understanding Urbanisation and its Consequences*. Paris: OECD Publishing.

OECD (2020) *The Future of Regional Development and Public Investment in Wales, United Kingdom.*

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2004a) *Planning Policy Statement: Local Development Frameworks.* PPS 12.

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2004b) *Planning Policy Statement: Regional Spatial Strategies.* PPS 11.

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, ODPM (2014) *Greater Cambridge City Deal.* London: Gov.UK.

Oosterlynck, S. (2010) 'Regulating Regional Uneven Development and the Politics of Reconfiguring Belgian State Space', *Antipode,* 42(5). doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8330.2010.00797.x.

Orren, K. S., S (2002) 'American Political Development', in Katznelson, I.M., H (ed.) *Political Science: The State of the Discipline*. New York: Norton.

Osborne, G. *et al.* 2016. The East Anglia Devolution Agreement. London: HM Government.

Ostrom, E. (1999) 'Institutional rational choice: an assessment of the institutional analysis and development framework', in Sabatier, P. (ed.) *Theories of the Policy Process*. Boulder: Westview, pp. 35-72.

Ostrom, E. (2007) 'The Challenge of Crafting Rules to Change Open Access Resources into Managed Resources', *International Economic Association*. Beijing, pp.

Overgaard, S. and Zahavi, D. (2009) 'Phenomenological Sociology – The Subjectivity of Everyday Life', in Jacobsen & M.H. (eds.) *Encountering the Everyday: An Introduction to the Sociologies of the Unnoticed*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

O'Brien, P. and Pike, A. (2015) 'City Deals, Decentralisation and the Governance of Local Infrastructure Funding and Financing in the UK', *National Institute Economic Review,* 233, pp. R14-R26. doi: 10.1177/002795011523300103.

O'Brien, P. and Pike, A. (2019) ''Deal or no deal?' Governing urban infrastructure funding and financing in the UK City Deals', *Urban Studies,* 56(7), pp. 1448-1476. doi: 10.1177/0042098018757394.

Paasi, A. (1986) 'The institutionalization of regions: a theoretical framework for understanding the emergence of regions and the constitution of regional identity', *Fennia,* 164, pp. 105-146.

Paasi, A. (2010) 'Regions are social constructs, but who or what `constructs' them? Agency in question', *Environment and Planning A,* 42(10), pp. 2296-2301. doi: 10.1068/a42232.

Paasi, A. (2013) 'Regional Planning and the Mobilization of 'Regional Identity': From Bounded Spaces to Relational Complexity', *Regional Studies,* 47(8), pp. 1206-1219.

Page, A. C. (1976) 'State Intervention in the Inter-War Period: The Special Areas Acts 1934-37', 3(2), pp. 175-203.

Painter, J. (2010) 'Rethinking territory', *Antipode,* 42(5), pp. 1090-1118.

Palmer, J. (2018) ''Mayoral Interim Transport Strategy Statement' (Item 3.2, Agenda and Reports for Meeting, 30th May 2018)'. Alconbury. Available at:
https://cambridgeshirepeterboroughcagov.cmis.uk.com/Document.ashx?czJKcaeAi5tUFL1DTL2UE4zNRBcoShg
o=Ka92rK9I23HRLasJbA4rhijIWi6ECIYIE4wMiOXTn9dNwMJHtSs53A%3d%3d&rUzwRPf%2bZ3zd4E7Ikn8Lyw%3d
%3d=pwRE6AGJFLDNlh225F5QMaQWCtPHwdhUfCZ%2fLUQzgA2uL5jNRG4jdQ%3d%3d&mCTIbCubSFfXsDGW9
IXnlg%3d%3d=hFflUdN3100%3d&kCx1AnS9%2fpWZQ40DXFvdEw%3d%3d=hFflUdN3100%3d&uJovDxwdjMPo
Yv%2bAJvYtyA%3d%3d=ctNJFf55vVA%3d&FgPlIEJYlotS%2bYGoBi5olA%3d%3d=NHdURQburHA%3d&d9Qjj0ag1
Pd993jsyOJqFvmyB7X0CSQK=ctNJFf55vVA%3d&WGewmoAfeNR9xqBux0r1Q8Za60lavYmz=ctNJFf55vVA%3d&
WGewmoAfeNQ16B2MHuCpMRKZMwaG1PaO=ctNJFf55vVA%3d (Accessed: 20th December 2020).

Parker, S. and Harloe, M. (2015) 'What Place For The Region? Reflections on the Regional Question and the International Journal of Urban and Regional Research', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research,* 39(2), pp. 361-371. doi: https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.12175.

Parry Lewis, J. (1974) *A study of the Cambridge sub-region: a report.* London: HMSO.

Paun, A. and Campbell, L. (2017) 'Devolution to the East of England: two steps forward, one step back'. London: Institute for Government and the British Academy.

Pawson, R. (2000) 'Middle-range Realism', *European Journal of Sociology,* 41(2), pp. 283-325. doi: 10.1017/S0003975600007050.

Peck, J. (1998) 'Geographies of governance: TECs and the neo-liberalisation of local interests', *Space and Polity,* 2, pp. 5-31.

Peters, B. G. (2005) *Institutional Theory in Political Science: The New Institutionalism.* 2nd edn. London, New York: Continuum.

Pharmafield (2006) *Divided loyalties: a mixed response to PCT restructuring.* Events4Healthcare Group Available at: https://pharmafield.co.uk/in_depth/divided-loyalties-a-mixed-response-to-pct-restructuring/ (Accessed: 10th June 2020).

Phelps, N. A. and Valler, D. (2016) 'Urban development and the politics of dissonance', *Territory, Politics, Governance*, pp. 1-23. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/21622671.2016.1231629.

Pickles, E. 2010. Eric Pickles puts stop to flawed regional strategies: Revoking the regional strategies. London: Department for Communities and Local Government.

Pierson, P. (2004) *Politics in Time.* Princeton University Press.

Pike, A. *et al.* (2016) 'Austerity states, institutional dismantling and the governance of sub-national economic development: the demise of the regional development agencies in England', *Territory, Politics, Governance*. doi: 10.1080/21622671.2016.1228475 (subsequently published in *Territory, Politics, Governance,* 6(1), 2018, pp. 118-144)

Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, 2004., London, HMSO

Planning Advisory Group, T. (1965) *The Future of Development Plans. A report by the Planning Advisory Group.* London: HMSO.

Platt, S. (1999) 'Cambridge Futures 1 Housing: Survey report '. Cambridge: Cambridge Futures.

Platt, S. (2000) 'Cambridge Futures: Partnership in planning in the economic landscape '. Cambridge: Cambridge Futures.

Platt, S. (2017) 'Cambridge Futures 1990-2030'.

Poulantzas, N. A. (2014) *State, power, socialism.* London, Verso.

Powell, A. G. (1978) 'Strategies for the English Regions: Ten Years of Evolution', *The Town Planning Review,* 49(1), pp. 5-13. doi: 10.2307/40103572.

Pred, A. (1984) 'Place as historically contingent process: structuration and the time-geography of becoming places', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers,* 74(2), pp. 279-297.

Prytherch, D. L. (2010) ''Vertebrating' the Region as Networked Space of Flows: Learning from the Spatial Grammar of Catalanist Territoriality', *Environment and Planning A,* 42(7), pp. 1537-1554. doi: 10.1068/a42430.

Quinlivan, A. (2014) 'Northern Ireland's diminishing councils and what this means for democracy', *The Guardian*.

Raco, M. (1999) 'Competition, Collaboration and the New Industrial Districts: Examining the Institutional Turn in Local Economic Development', *Urban Studies,* 36(5-6), pp. 951-968. doi: 10.1080/0042098993295.

Raine, J. *et al.* (2006) 'An Independent Review of the Case for Unitary Status: Oxford, Norwich, Exeter and Ipswich: Key Regional Cities'. Birmingham.

Ramsay, A. and Cambridge Preservation Society (1934) 'Introduction', *Cambridgeshire Regional Planning Report: Prepared for the Cambridgeshire Joint Town Planning Committee*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. v.

Redcliffe-Maud, J. P. (1969) *Royal Commission on Local Government in England, 1966-69.* London: HMSO.

Rees, M. 2020. Speech to LGA Labour Local Government conference panel, 8th February 2020. Nottingham.

Regional Development Agencies Act, 1998, c. 45., London, HMSO

Relph, E. (1976) *Place and Placelessness.* London: Pion.

Rhodes, R. (1995) 'The Institutional Approach', in Marsh, M. & Stoker, G. (eds.) *Theory and Methods in Political Science*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Riddell, C. (2013) 'Coalescing Views Around A Strategy', in Swain, C., Marshall, Tim and Baden, Tony (ed.) *English Regional Planning 2000-2010*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 9-30.

Roberts, J. M. (2014) 'Critical Realism, Dialectics, and Qualitative Research Methods', *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour,* 44(1), pp. 1-23. doi: https://doi.org/10.1111/jtsb.12056.

Roberts, P. and Baker, M. (2006) 'Regions and Regional Identity', in Hardill, E. *et al.* (eds.) *The Rise of the English Regions?* London: Routledge.

Rorty, R. (1980) *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Rudlin, D. and Falk, N. (2014) *Uxcester Garden City: second stage submission for the 2014 Wolfson Economics prize.* Manchester: Urbed.

Salet, W. and Thornley, A. (2007) 'Institutional Influences on the Integration of Multilevel Governance and Spatial Policy in European City-Regions', *Journal of Planning Education and Research,* 27(2), pp. 188-198. doi: 10.1177/0739456x07307207.

Sanders, W. S. (1905) *Municipalization by provinces.* Fabian Society. Fabian tract no. 125 ('New Heptarchy' Series no. 1).

Santamaria, F. and Elissalde, B. (2018) 'Territory as a way to move on from the aporia of soft/hard space', *Town Planning Review,* 89(1), pp. 43-60.

Sargeant, J. *et al.* 2019. No-Deal Brexit and the Union. London: Institute for Government.

Sassen, S. (2006) *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Sayer, A. (2000) *Realism and Social Science.* London: Sage.

Schaap, L. *et al.* (2010) 'Innovations in Sub-National Government in Europe', *Politica y Sociedad,* 47(3), pp. 145-163

Schattschneider, E. (1960) *The Semi-Sovereign People: Realist's View of Democracy in America.* New York.

Schofield, J. 2001. Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, Incorporating the First Alteration; planning policies and proposals to guide the future of the Suffolk Coastal District in the period up to 2006 (Adopted by the Council 27th February 2001). Woodbridge: Suffolk Coastal DC.

Schutz, A. and Natanson, M. (1967) *Collected papers 1: The Problem of Social Reality.* 2nd unchanged edition edn. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.

Scott, A. and Storper, M. (2003) 'Regions, Globalization, Development', *Regional Studies,* 37(6-7), pp. 579-593. doi: 10.1080/0034340032000108697a.

Scott, A. J. and Storper, M. (2015) 'The Nature of Cities: The Scope and Limits of Urban Theory', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research,* 39(1), pp. 1-15. doi: https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.12134.

Scott, J. C. (1998) *Seeing like a state: how certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed.* London: Yale University Press.

Scottish Development Department, T. (1963) *Central Scotland: a programme for development and growth.* Edinburgh: HMSO. Cmnd. 2188.

Secretary of State for Health, Health, D.o. (2006) *Our health, our care, our say: a new direction for community services [white paper].* London: TSO (0101673728).

Secretary of State for Housing Communities and Local Government, MHCLG (2018) *Limits on Indebtedness (Revocation) Determination 2018.* London.

Segal Quince Wicksteed Partnership (1985) *The Cambridge Phenomenon: the growth of high technology industry in a university town.* 1st) reprin. edn. Cambridge: Segal Quince & Partners.

Sen, A. (2001) *Development as freedom.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Senior, D. (1956) *A Guide to the Cambridge Plan.* Cambridge: Cambridgeshire County Planning Dept.

Shankland/Cox, P. (1966) *Expansion of Ipswich: designation proposals: consultants' study of the town in its sub-region: a report to the Minister of Housing and Local Government.* London: HMSO

Sharp, T. (1963) *Dreaming Spires and Teeming Towers: the Character of Cambridge.* Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.

Skeffington, A. M. (1969) *People and planning: report of the Committee on Public Participation in Planning.* London: HMSO

Smith, M. J. (1998) *Social science in question.* London, Sage in association with the Open University

Smith, N. (1995) 'Remaking Scale: Competition and Cooperation in Prenational and Postnational Europe', in Eskelinen, H. & Snickars, F. (eds.) *Competitive European Peripheries*: Springer Verlag.

Soja, E. (2015) 'Accentuate The Regional', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research,* 39(2), pp. 372-381. doi: https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.12176.

Soja, E. W. (1989) *Postmodern geographies: the reassertion of space in critical social theory.* London: Verso.

Solomon, G. (2019) 'What is the latest on five year housing land supply?', *Local Government Lawyer,* (18th October 2019).

South Cambridgeshire District Council 2007. Core Strategy DPD. South Cambridgeshire District Council.

South Cambridgeshire District Council 2010. Site Specific Policies DPD. South Cambridgeshire District Council

South Cambridgeshire District Council (2018) *South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018.* Cambourne, Cambridgeshire: South Cambridgeshire District Council.

South East Economic Planning Council, T. (1967) *A Strategy for the South East.* London: HMSO.

South Northamptonshire Council v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government [2014].

Special Areas (Amendment) Act, 1 Edw. 8 & 1 Geo. 6, c. 31., London, HMSO

Special Areas (Development and Improvement) Act, 25 & 26 Geo. 5, c.1., London, HMSO

Special Areas Reconstruction (Agreement) Act, 26 Geo. 5 & 1 Edw. 8, c. 19., London, HMSO

Squires, J. (2004) 'Politics Beyond Boundaries: A Feminist Perspective', in Leftwich, A. (ed.) *What is politics?: the activity and its study*. Cambridge: Polity Press, pp. 119-134.

Standing Conference of East Anglian Local Authorities, T. (1988) *East Anglia: the Next 25 Years.* Ipswich: SCEALA.

Standing Conference of East Anglian Local Authorities, T. (1992) *East Anglia: a regional strategy 1992 - revised in the light of the Regional planning guidance for East Anglia (RPG6).* [Ipswich]: Standing Conference of East Anglian Local Authorities.

Stoker, G. (2002) 'Life is a lottery: New Labour's strategy for the reform of devolved governance', *Public Administration,* 80(3), pp. 417-434. doi: 10.1111/1467-9299.00311.

Storper, M. (1997) *The Regional World: Territorial Development in a Global Economy.* New York: Guildford Press.

Streek, W. (2001) 'Introduction: Explorations into the Origins of Nonliberal Capitalism in Germany and Japan', in Streek, W.Y., K (ed.) *The Origins of Nonliberal Capitalism: Germany and Japan*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Streek, W. and Thelen, K. (eds.) (2005) *Beyond Continuity: Institutional Change Advanced Political Economies*. Oxford University Press.

Suffolk Coastal District Council (2013) *Suffolk Coastal Local Plan: Core Strategy and Development Management Policies.* Woodbridge.

Suffolk Coastal District Council (2017) *Suffolk Coastal District Plan: Site Allocations and Area Specific Policies.* Woodbridge.

Suffolk Coastal District Council (Appellant) v Hopkins Homes Ltd and another (Respondents) [2017].

Suffolk County Council (1977) *Structure Plan: Written Analysis.* Bury St Edmunds.

Suffolk County Council (1986) *Suffolk towards 2000: County structure plan; proposed alterations, statement on publicity and consultation.* Bury St Edmunds

Swain, C., Baden, T. and Marshall, T. (2013) *English regional planning, 2000-2010: lessons for the future.* London: Routledge.

Swyngedouw, E. (2004) 'Globalisation or 'glocalisation'? Networks, territories and rescaling', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs,* 17(1), pp. 25-48.

Swyngedouw, E. (2005) 'Governance Innovation and the Citizen: The Janus Face of Governance-beyond-the-State', *Urban Studies,* 42(11), pp. 1991-2006. doi: 10.1080/00420980500279869.

Sykes, O. and Lord, A. (2011) 'Whither a Europe of the (English) regions? Reflections on the prospects for the representation of English territorial interests in Europe', *Local Economy,* 26(6-7), pp. 486-499. doi: 10.1177/0269094211418895.

Terlouw, K. and van Gorp, B. (2014) 'Layering Spatial Identities: The Identity Discourses of New Regions', *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space,* 46(4), pp. 852-866. doi: 10.1068/a45689.

Tewdwr-Jones, M. (2012) *Spatial planning and governance: understanding UK planning.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

The Buckinghamshire (Structural Changes) Order 2019, 2019 No. 957., London, HMSO

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Order, 2017, SI. 251., London, HMSO

Thelen, K. (2009) 'Institutional Change in Advanced Political Economies', *British Journal of Industrial Relations,* 47(3), pp. 471-498. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8543.2009.00746.x.

Thomas, J. (2018) '£400m Greater Cambridge Partnership funding may be withheld if our political leaders can't stop squabbling', *Cambridge Independent*.

Thomson, B., Mawdsley, G. and Payne, A. (2014) 'Scotland's Future: The constitutional report card'. Edinburgh: Reform Scotland.

Thrift, N. (2004) 'Intensities of feeling: towards a spatial politics of affect', *Geografiska Annaler,* 86B, pp. 57–78.

Thrift, N. J. (1983) 'On the Determination of Social Action in Space and Time', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space,* 1(1), pp. 23-57. doi: 10.1068/d010023.

Tilley, C. (2002) *Stories, Identities and Political Change.* Oxford: Rowman and Little.

Tomàs, M. (2015) 'If Urban Regions are the Answer, What is the Question? Thoughts on the European Experience', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research,* 39(2), pp. 382-389. doi: https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.12177.

Town and Country Planning Act, 22 & 23 Geo. 5, c. 48., London, HMSO

Town and Country Planning Act, 1968, c. 72., London, HMSO

Town and Country Planning Act 22 & 23 Geo. 5, c. 48., London, HMSO

Town and Country Planning Association (1961) *The London Region and the Development of South East England: 1961 to 1981 (a policy statement of the Association).* London: TCPA.

Uthwatt, A. and Expert Committee on Compensation and Betterment, T. (1942) *Expert committee on compensation and betterment. Final report. ("Uthwatt Report").* London: HMSO

Van Assche, K., Duineveld, M. and Beunen, R. (2014) 'Power and Contingency in Planning', *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space,* 46(10), pp. 2385-2400. doi: 10.1068/a130080p.

Varró, K. (2014) 'Spatial Imaginaries of the Dutch–German–Belgian Borderlands: A Multidimensional Analysis of Cross-Border Regional Governance', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research,* 38(6), pp. 2235-2255. doi: https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.12202.

Verhoeven, I. and Duyvendak, J. W. (2017) 'Understanding governmental activism', *Social Movement Studies,* 16(5), pp. 564-577. doi: 10.1080/14742837.2017.1338942.

Vincent, L. G. and Gorbing, R. (1963) *The County Borough of Ipswich. A Planning Study for Town Development. A report to the Ministry of Housing and Local Government on the practical and financial implications of town expansion.* London: Ministry of Housing and Local Government.

Walsh, C. *et al.* (2012) 'Soft spaces in spatial planning and governance: Theoretical reflections and definitional issues', *Regional Studies Association Conference*. Delft, 13-16 May

Wannop, U. and Cherry, G. E. (1994) 'The development of regional planning in the United Kingdom', *Planning Perspectives,* 9(1), pp. 29-60.

Ward, K. and Jonas, A. E. G. (2004) 'Competitive City-Regionalism as a Politics of Space: A Critical Reinterpretation of the New Regionalism', *Environment and Planning A,* 36(12), pp. 2119-2139. doi: 10.1068/a36223.

Ward, M. (2020) 'City Deals'. London: House of Commons Library Number 7158). London, HMSO

Ward, S. V. (2004) *Planning and Urban Change.* London: Sage.

Watson, V. (2014) 'Co-production and collaboration in planning – The difference', *Planning Theory and Practice,* 15(1), pp. 62-76.

West, G. (2004) *Prescott's Folly - A Step Too Far.* Democratic Broadsheet (Number 18): Campaign Against Euro-Federalism (Accessed: 2nd February 2020).

Wheeler, S. M. (2002) 'The New Regionalism: Key Characteristics of an Emerging Movement', *Journal of the American Planning Association,* 68(3), pp. 267-278.

While, A., Gibbs, D. and Jonas, A. E. G. (2013) 'The Competition State, City- Regions, and the Territorial Politics of Growth Facilitation', *Environment and Planning A,* 45(10), pp. 2379-2398. doi: 10.1068/a45210.

While, A., Jonas, A. E. G. and Gibbs, D. C. (2004) 'Unblocking the City? Growth Pressures, Collective Provision, and the Search for New Spaces of Governance in Greater Cambridge, England', *Environment and Planning A,* 36(2), pp. 279-304. doi: 10.1068/a3615.

Williams, P. (2002) 'The Competent Boundary Spanner', *Public Administration,* 80(1), pp. 103-124. doi: 10.1111/1467-9299.00296.

Wilson, W. (1890) *The state; elements of historical and practical politics, a sketch of institutional history and administration.* Boston: DC Heath & Co.

Wintour, P. (2015) 'Chancellor to unveil devolution deals for two more city regions', *The Guardian*. Available at: http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/oct/23/chancellor-to-unveil-devolution-deals-for-two-more-city-regions.

Code	Place	Short Description	Longer Description
CA01	Cambridge	Elected politician	Elected politician at a local and national level, with a long involvement in regional politics
CA02	Cambridge	Elected politician	Elected politician at a local and sub-regional level
CA03	Cambridge	Local public official and third party paid consultant	Former official in a regional and then local authority, third party consultation and adviser to sub-regional, regional and local bodies
CA04	Cambridge	Elected politician	Elected politician at a local and sub-regional level
CA05	Cambridge	Appointed member of a partnership group	Appointed as representative of a non-local authority partner organisation to a sub-regional group
CA06	Cambridge	Local public official	Former senior official in a local authority
CA07	Cambridge	Local public official	Senior official in a sub-regional organisation
IP01	Ipswich	Appointed member of a partnership group	Senior official in a local authority, former senior official in a regional body
IP02	Ipswich	Elected politician	Elected politician at a local level
IP03	Ipswich	Elected politician	Elected politician at a local level
IP04	Ipswich	Elected politician	Elected politician at a local and sub-regional level
IP05	Ipswich	Appointed member of a partnership group	Former senior official in a local authority, leading member of local amenity groups
IP06	Ipswich	Local public official	Official in a local authority with specific responsibility for regional and sub-regional partnership working
IP07	Ipswich	Appointed member of a partnership group	Appointed as representative of a non-local authority partner organisation to a sub-regional group
IP08	Ipswich	Local public official	Official in a local authority with specific responsibility for regional and sub-regional partnership working
IP09	Ipswich	Appointed member of a partnership group	Appointed as representative of a non-local authority partner organisation to a sub-regional group
IP10	Ipswich	Local public official	Former senior official in a local authority
NR01	Norwich	Elected politician	Elected politician at a local and sub-regional level

NR02	Norwich	Elected politician	Former elected politician at a local and sub-regional level
NR03	Norwich	Local public official	Senior official in a local authority
NR04	Norwich	Local public official	Senior official in a local authority
NR05	Norwich	Elected politician	Elected politician at a local and sub-regional level
NR06	Norwich	Local public official	Senior official in a local authority
NR07	Norwich	Local public official	Senior official in a local authority
NR08	Norwich	Local public official	Senior official in a local authority
NR09	Norwich	Local public official	Former official in a local authority with specific responsibility for regional and sub-regional partnership working
NR10	Norwich	Local public official	Former senior official in a local authority

Alex Hollingsworth
School of the Built Environment
Oxford Brookes University
Headington Campus
Oxford OX3 0BP

Dear xxxx

Research Study: English Sub-Regional Planning: Institutions, Governance and Economic Development

I am a part-time doctoral research student at Oxford Brookes University's School of the Built Environment. I am studying the institutions of sub-regional planning and economic development, focussing on the major urban areas of East Anglia.

I would like to invite you to *take part in my research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve.* To help explain my research and what taking part might mean for you, I have prepared a list of questions and answers, which is attached as an Information Sheet to this letter. *Please take time to read this document carefully.*

The purpose of my study is to better understand how planning around sub-regions – or city regions – really works. In the background is the development of formal regional planning structures from the 1990s through to their abolition in 2010, but also informal links that predate these formal institutions; my interest is in how formal and informal sub-regional planning has developed given that background, right through to present day initiatives such as City Deals and Devolution Deals.

The aim is to draw conclusions about how sub-regional planning and economic development institutions function and develop, and what lessons those conclusions might offer to local, regional and national organisations wanting to promote more effective governance.

The research interviews will be carried out in three urban areas of East Anglia – Ipswich, Cambridge, Norwich - over the next 12-24 months or so; my scheduled date for completion and publication of my research is xxxx *[updated as the research project evolved]*.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this letter, and the attached Information Sheet.

If you are able and willing to take part, or would like to ask me for more information before deciding, please contact me using the email or phone below, or the postal address above. Your input into my research would be greatly appreciated, and very valuable.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Alex Hollingsworth

Information Sheet for Research Study

Who has been invited to participate?

Between 8 and 10 individuals who have experience of participation in or working with sub-regional planning institutions have been selected in each case study area. In each case, individual names were identified through a desk-top study of publicly available documents such as strategies, meeting records, inter-agency agreements and the like, as well as the websites of particular organisations.

Is participation required?

Absolutely not; it is entirely up to each person invited to decide whether or not to take part. Those who take part will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. All participants are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. If a participant withdraws, any unprocessed data will be deleted.

Employer's Consent

If an employer or organisation's consent is required, they can be signatory to the consent form as well. In that instance the organisation can decide to withdraw that consent at any time and without giving a reason. Seeking your organisation's active consent is optional, and a decision for each participant.

How will the research be carried out?

The main research will be a face to face interview with each participant, at a time and place that's convenient for them. The interview should last for no more than an hour, although longer interviews will be possible if a participant is happy to continue. The interviews will be audio recorded so an accurate transcript of what was said can be made; each participant will be offered a copy of their transcript.

Are there any risks or costs in taking part?

Oxford Brookes University takes both the personal and professional safety of all participants in research very seriously. The University has carefully considered any potential risks, and do not believe that there are any. What each participant says will be absolutely confidential, and will only appear in the final published research in anonymised form. Other than any correspondence to set up the interview, this research will make no other calls on participant's time beyond the interview itself.

Are there any benefits from taking part?

The main purpose of the research is to improve understanding of how sub-regional planning institutions work, so benefits to participants are likely to be tangential rather than direct. A copy of the final published thesis, and an abbreviated summary of its conclusions, will be made available to all participants upon request.

Confidentiality

All personal information about participants or their organisations collected in this study will be kept strictly confidential, within the limits of UK law. Any material quoted from an interview will be fully anonymised, so that neither participants nor organisations can be directly identified.

It is important to note that the number of interviews for each case study area in this research is likely to be relatively small, and this means that anyone reading the research may try to draw inferences about which organisation or individual is being referred to.

The recordings and transcripts of the interviews will be stored securely in encrypted electronic form, using Google Drive with which Oxford Brookes University has a security agreement. Under the University's policy on academic integrity, all materials relating to the research must be kept for ten years after the completion of the project; this includes any research materials where the participant has later withdrawn from the project. However these materials will only be stored, and will not be used in any way in the project.

Taking part

To take part in this research, please reply to this letter by email, telephone or post to arrange an interview. Each participant will only formally take part once they have signed a consent form, and any conversation had beforehand will not be recorded, used or referred to in any way in the research project.

What will happen to the results of the research?

The main purpose of the research is to form part of a PhD thesis, and the findings will be published as part of that thesis. There are no current plans to write separate academic articles, but if such articles are written, any reference to the interviews will use the same strict rules of anonymity as with the main thesis.

Who is organising and funding the research?

I am carrying out this research as a doctoral student at Oxford Brookes University, as a member of the School of the Built Environment (Department of Planning). I am a part-time and mature student, and my research is entirely self-funded; I am receiving no financial support or sponsorship from the University or any other organisation.

Who has reviewed the study?

This research has been approved by the University Research Ethics Committee at Oxford Brookes University.

Contact for further information

Research Supervisor - Dr Dave Valler (Department of Planning, School of the Built Environment, Oxford Brookes University, Headington Campus, Oxford OX3 0BP, ph: xxxxx, e: xxx@brookes.ac.uk)

If a participant has any concerns about the way in which this study has been conducted, they can contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Committee on ethics@brookes.ac.uk.

NB – this is NOT a set series of questions that will be asked to every interviewee. The questions are designed to be starting points for conversation under each heading. Some questions will be more relevant to certain interviewees than others. Some questions are different ways of eliciting the same information; the most appropriate would be selected for each interview. The questions will not be shared with the interviewee in advance, but will be asked 'live' by the researcher during the face to face interviews.

Boundaries/Edges

Q. Tell me about the areas that you/this body covers: what's the remit? What functions are you carrying out, and for whom?

Q. I'm interested in what happens at the edges of your area, where your boundaries run into/overlap with neighbouring institutions. How do those overlaps/borders work? How are problems addressed, resolved (or not)?

Q. Is there a core area and a periphery? For example, in a city region, where is the city and where is the edge of the region round it?

Links/Networks

Q. Do you have links with other similar city regions/areas/subregions? How do you work together with them.

Q. What other bodies/institutions/partnerships are working in the same area/with the same objectives? How well does that relationship work? Where are there tensions?

Q. How does accountability work? Is that a help or hindrance in developing policies/plans/projects? Do the public find ways of holding you/your institution to account that you hadn't expected?

History/Change

Q. What's the history here? Are there previous institutions/partnerships that used to carry out similar functions? How did the current system develop? Were you involved with X previously existing institution?

Q. What's your view of why things changed?

Q. Has there been continuity between institutions? How has that helped or hindered achieving your current objectives?

Leadership/Decision Making

Q. Is there a 'leader' or 'leadership' for your body/institution/partnership? How does that work? What support does it get, if any?

Q. How are decisions made? How do you get things done? Once made, how are decisions implemented, and by whom?

Q. How are the broader public engaged with the work of your body/this area?

Identity/Place

Q. How do you see identity with this sub-region/area/place working? Is it something that's always been here? Or is something that has had to be 'worked at'? If so, who's doing the work, what are they doing and what is it achieving?

Q. How does local identity contribute to 'place-shaping'?

Q. You used to work in/with x previous partnership? How do you think things are different comparing the old and new regimes? (if several previous regimes reword accordingly)

Success/Failure

Q. What do you think the successes are of your partnership/institution/body?

Q. How do you measure that success? How do you think others measure it?

Q. How do you think different groups perceive and understand what you do? Do they have the same measures of success?