RISE:
Region Integrated Strategies in Europe

Targeted Analysis 2013/2/11

Final Report | Executive Summary
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List of authors

Chris Collinge   Department of Management, University of Birmingham

Gill Bentley   Department of Management, University of Birmingham

Ole Damsgaard   Nordregio, Stockholm

John Gibney   Department of Management, University of Birmingham

Niels Boje Groth   Danish Forest and Landscape Research Institute, Copenhagen University

Lars Larsson   Centre for Regional Science, University of Umeå

Stewart MacNeill   Department of Management, University of Birmingham

Karina Sehested   Danish Forest and Landscape Research Institute, Copenhagen University

Robert Sörensson   Centre for Regional Science, University of Umeå

Marjolein Spaans   Delft University of Technology – OTB Research Institute for the Built Environment (The Netherlands)

Bas Waterhout   Delft University of Technology – OTB Research Institute for the Built Environment (The Netherlands)

Wil Zonneveld   Delft University of Technology – OTB Research Institute for the Built Environment (The Netherlands)

Introduction
Over recent decades it has become increasingly obvious that the skills and resources of a variety of sectors – not just the public but also voluntary and private sectors – must be brought together in order to achieve successful regional development. This new approach necessitates the creation of new more inclusive forms of governance, with a movement away from traditional hierarchical institutions towards flexible cooperative networks, clusters and partnerships. It also involves a recognition that policy-makers operate within a system of multi-level governance, and that the interventions of different levels of governance may not necessarily be aligned with one another.

In this report we set out the findings of the RISE project, which examines the pursuit of integrated strategies in four European regions: the Randstad (NL), West Midlands (UK), Västerbotten (SE), and Zealand (DK). These regions illustrate the diversity of Europe. The Randstad contains the Netherland's two major conurbations and encompasses a complex range of powerful governance centres. The West Midlands includes the urban centres of Birmingham, the Black Country, Solihull and Coventry, as well as an extensive sub-urban and rural hinterland of shire counties. Västerbotten and Zealand are both primarily rural with low levels of urban concentration, although Zealand is adjacent to the capital region of Copenhagen. Despite their differences, these regions are amongst the more economically advanced territories of the EU.

Methodology
The purpose of the RISE study is to examine the approaches that are being taken to achieve policy integration, and to build the governance structures that facilitate or inhibit integration, in these European regions. There are three main components to the research methodology of the RISE project.

1. *Regional profiling* involves an examination of secondary data on regional spatial strategies, and the circumstances of the four regions.
2. *Review of the literature* regarding key concepts such as policy interaction, policy integration, multi-level governance and collaborative planning.
3. *Semi-structured interviews and focus groups* with key individuals, which explored the development of regional integrated strategies.

A common topic guide was used across the four case regions. Interviewees were asked about the *composition of their partnerships*; the nature of *local organizational arrangements* (vertical and horizontal relationships); the *strategic focus* of their organizations; the *implementation levers* being used; their *future aspirations* and *trajectory* and the constraints upon these.

Key Concepts
A number of key concepts have been identified from the literature review which was undertaken:

– **Policy interaction and policy integration**. A distinction can be drawn between the level of the *interaction* which exists between separate policies

(ranging from contradiction to consistency); and the efforts that are being made by policy-makers to manage this interaction, and to improve the *integration* between policies.

 − **Policy transfer and learning**. It is important to reflect on some of the challenges which arise in transfering policies from one context to another. A distinction is drawn between top-down planning and bottom-up learning methods of strategy development.

 − **Governance and meta-governance**. The position of governmental actors in nearly all European countries has changed dramatically over recent years. Policy integration now takes place in settings with an increased number and diversity of actors, and this affects the ways integration must be approached.

 − **Collaborative planning**. Policy integration in the context of a plurality of actors makes it necessary to reflect on the relationships between government, stakeholders and civil actors in terms of challenges to cooperation and collaboration as well as political legitimization.

The pursuit of policy integration reflects the ambition to achieve more efficient policy processes and more effective policy outcomes. A distinction can be drawn between sectoral and territorial integration. Sectoral integration is about "joining up" different policy domains within a given territorial area. Without proper coordination or integration individual policies may remain inefficient, with competing and contradictory objectives and duplication of effort. Territorial integration concerns the integration between spatial policy areas. Current planning approaches are, to a greater or lesser extent, disjointed across territorial divisions, a situation that can lead to inefficiency and ineffectiveness in dealing with policy issues that transcend administrative boundaries. Territorial integration is often advocated in the case of positive or negative externalities of certain developments, and in the case of spatial systems which cross administrative boundaries. The category of territorial integration also encompasses different dimensions: both "vertical integration"—policy coherence across spatial scales, and "horizontal integration"—policy coherence between neighbouring authorities (nations, states, regions etc.).

Regional Profiles and Cases
West Midlands, the Randstad and Västerbotten are all strong in the field of research and scientific activities, whilst Zealand does not have that solid research infrastructure, but is adjacent to the Capital Region of Copenhagen, which is among the top ranked regions in the EU in terms of research activities. Most research activity in Region Västerbotten is spatially concentrated in the coastal city Umeå, and to some extent also to Skellefteå. All RISE regions have intensive knowledge networking – they all have high level of spatial inter-linkages in form of external R&D, external patent applications and external framework programme budgets.[1]

In each of the case studies efforts are being made to co-ordinate policy sectors – economy and business, land use, infrastructure and transportation,

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[1] KIT – Interim Report, applied research 2013/1/13 Version 24/02/2011 p. 27-28

employment and environmental policies. In Västerbotten EU policies relating to economic growth and cohesion are key drivers for policy co-ordination, to a somewhat lesser extent in Zealand. In the Randstad the EU is one of many influences for action, whereas EU influence is relatively limited in the West Midlands. Inter-sectoral aspect of integration exists in all case study regions, and of specific importance are the public-private sector interactions. In Denmark the public sector (regional) production of RUPs (*Regional Udviklingsplan* – Regional Development Plans) have to include strategic decisions made within the Growth Fora with strong business representation. In the UK the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) have strong business representation, together with other sectors. In the Randstad the main strategic document is a state and public sector concern. As for Västerbotten, inter-agency integration is formalised in strategic partnerships and through the financing of inter-agency projects.

In the West Midlands the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP) strives to promote a new sub-regional functional economic geography, whereas Västerbotten has a strong territorial orientation towards the long established administrative level of Västerbotten county. The Randstad is fluid in shape, being continuously renegotiated, and Region Zealand is working towards institutionalisation within newly defined regions. In the Randstad coordination on the horizontal dimension is limited compared to the vertical one, and the MIRT (*Meerjarenprogramma Infrastructuur Ruimte en Transport*) territorial agenda focuses on this vertical dimension. In Västerbotten, infrastructure investments include both vertical (across national, regional and local scales) and horizontal integration between neighbouring authorities. Within the GBSLEP Local Authorities are expected to co-operate over plans for the housing, transport and infrastructure that local people need. This suggests that planning might be done jointly, and that the local authorities in adjoining LEP areas might in future produce a joint planning strategy. In Zealand the Business Development Strategy is one of three pivotal strategies, the other two being the RUS (*Regional Udviklingsstrategi* - Regional Development Strategy) and the Agenda 21.

A Typology of Regional Integrative Strategies
In the development of a typology of RISs, we have focussed upon two aspects of regional governance that are germane to the current study. The region here is defined as the primary sub-national functional economic area:

1. **Governance consolidation**: the degree to which the governance of the region is institutionally centralised at the regional level, or devolved to the sub-regional level in various ways, or centralised above the region to the national level. This establishes a scale from nationally centralised regional governance, to unitary regional governance, to bifurcated sub-regional governance (where regional governance is divided between the metropolitan core and the sub-urban or rural hinterland), to pluralistic sub-regional governance (involving a plurality of sub-regional agents).

2. **Policy integration:** the degree to which policies for different sectors or sub-regional territories are drawn together and harmonised within

overarching strategies, to produce integrated strategies at the regional-level. In some regions a high proportion of the policies have been coordinated with one another, whether within a single or several strategies. In other regions less progress has been made in this direction, and more policies remain uncoordinated. This establishes a scale from low to high integration.

		REGIONAL POLICY INTEGRATION		
		LOW	**MEDIUM**	**HIGH**
REGIONAL GOVERNANCE CONSOLIDATION	**Nationally Centralised**	*West Midlands*		
	Regional Unified			*Västerbotten*
	Sub-Regional Bifurcated			*Zealand*
	Sub-Regional Pluralistic	*West Midlands*	*Randstad*	

Figure 1: typology of RIS

These two dimensions generate a typology as set out in Figure 1 above. There may be a causal relationship between *regional governance consolidation* and *regional policy integration*. It may be, for example, that regional institutional consolidation will generally simplify regional policy integration, making this more feasible by bringing it within the scope of a single agency of governance and a single authority structure. But it is also possible to argue that the less consolidation there is at the regional level, the more sub-regional governance agencies will want to cooperate or compete with one another by putting forward alternative templates for regional integration. In a complex and fluid economic environment it is also likely that multiple, overlapping geometries will be required in the integration of policies, whilst in more stable economic environments consolidated regional governance may be most appropriate. If regional governance is to be achieved from the cooperation of sub-regional agencies, it will take time and effort to build the trust that is required. The least promising scenario is likely to be the national centralisation of regional governance.

Ladder of Integration
It has been noted elsewhere that different policies interact with one another to different degrees. The degree of policy integration can be assessed by considering the **inclusiveness** of strategy frameworks – the range of different interacting policies that are embraced within the same strategic framework. And it can be assessed by considering the level of **harmonisation** achieved within this framework between different policies – the degree to which each policy is designed in order to enhance rather than to inhibit the effects of other policies within the framework. A fully integrated regional strategy is one that has high inclusiveness and high harmonisation. Questions that arise in

reference to the integration of the different strategies within regions concern the following dimensions or levels of integration:

a) How well do policy-makers in different agencies and at different level understand the *intrinsic performance* of any specific policy measure? This concerns the methodologies that policy-makers have put in place to *measure* the intrinsic performance of policies (in terms of inputs, outputs and outcomes from the different strands of policy considered separately). In the present context it should be stressed, for example, that one set of factors which affect the performance of each policy is the degree of consistency between coexisting policies.

b) The next question concerns how well policy-makers consider, and understand the degree to which different policy strands (e.g. those concerning *economic growth*, *environment and climate change*, *transportation*, *business needs*, *social* and *health*) interact with one another? This concerns the methodologies that are in place to identify and measure policy interactions – from mutual *synergy* to *allergy*, between different policy strands in different thematic areas.

c) This leads on to the next question – to what degree have the main interacting policy strands been brought together within the same strategic framework – the strategy-making, implementing and reviewing cycle – and have any crucially interacting strands been left or separated out? Where there are several RISs within a region (as will often be the case) this concerns the leadership amongst agencies sponsoring each RIS and the extent of coordination between agencies.

d) How well are policy-makers building towards – planning for and addressing – the enhancement of policy integration over time? This concerns their identification of interacting policies and establishing *communications* between the managers of the different thematic policies within and between RISs around the achievement of their mutual consistency and synergy. It also concerns the managerial and political procedures that are in place to enhance integration. Politicians may in some cases want to segregate – disintegrate – policies for different sectors in order to protect certain vested interests.

e) How much progress have policy-makers made in strengthening and vertical integration? This concerns the *responsiveness* and *mutual adjustment* of the proponents of different policy themes in the light of feed-back, the efforts made to overcome obstacles. It may also concern the degree of institutional and territorial alignment, and the level of trust that has been established. Again this concerns internal and external integration within/between agencies sponsoring RISs, and it involves established the time-lines for the development of this integration in each region.

f) The ability to achieve policy integration is affected by the degree of territorial and institutional alignment which exists between the agencies involved. Where agencies share **common territorial boundaries** then it will be easier to aggregate the data they collect in a comparable form, and

it will be easier to allocate resources in a concerted manner. Where they share a **common point of binding authority**, it will be easier to bring policy-strands together, and to resolve disagreements over the 'treatment' of overlapping problems. Where there is a plurality of overlapping agencies and territorial units involved in the delivery of different policies or services then – although this may incorporate more stakeholders – it will require more effort over a longer time scale to establish measures to improve consistency. Politicians who want to discourage the integration of certain policies may fragment the governance framework.

g) The degree to which the network or partnership can act as a binding point of authority will depend upon the establishment of shared procedures, and upon the establishment if trust between participants, both of which take time. It may also depend upon the degree to which sponsors of the territories concerned have been able to establish these as recognised 'places'. One way to undermine regional strategy-development is to routinely change the structure and personnel of governance. On the other hand, where there is **structural continuity**, and territorially-based agencies have been cooperating over several years, they may have created the relationships, power structure, procedures and identities to facilitate coordination of policies.

Taken together these represent the main operational dimensions of policy-integration and form the basis for a ladder of integration. Although both West Midlands and the Randstad have fragmentary and multi-level regional governance, the Randstad has much more experience of making this work, and – in the context of a federal state – policy integration has proceeded much further. The bifurcated pattern in Zealand has made policy integration at the regional level more difficult to achieve than in Västerbotten.

The Toolkit

A key objective of RISE is the elaboration of a tool-kit to guide the preparation of integrated regional strategies. This illustrates how it is possible to govern and create integrated strategies in a complex environment with a multiplicity of semi-autonomous actors. A model for strategic analysis is conceptualised by means of the 'strategic circle'. This identifies *key elements for consideration and learning processes* of the strategic agents as: 1) the outer world of the territory; 2) the role of the city or economic functioning area; 3) visions for the future for the city or economic functioning area; and 4) the stakeholders sharing the vision. The strategic circle can be used as a mental map for strategy-making, but as the case studies show certain elements of the model are more important than others. They are related to each other under four headings: Functional Position, Opportunities, Joint Visioning and Spatial Positioning. In the strategic analysis, the role of a city or a region in the external world is seen as changing when a new division of labour emerges between territories, caused by (for example) globalisation and outsourcing. In this context policy-makers need to re-imagine their territories and the roles these can play in order to guide policy priorities. The search for local development potentials and comparative advantages – regional entrepreneurialism – comes to the fore along with a shift of focus from short-term problem-solving towards long term visioning. This is reflected in the

emergence of development perspectives that involve 'growth corridors', 'development zones', 'clusters', 'cooperation areas'.
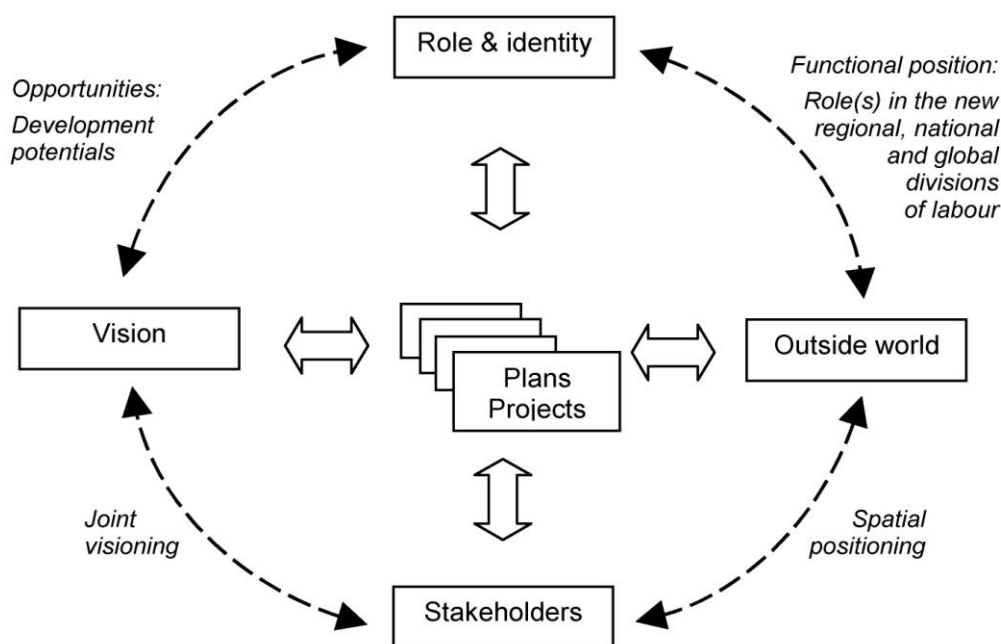

Figure 2: The strategic circle

Territorial strategies depend crucially upon collaboration between stakeholders sharing a common vision of the future. These visions may involve the redefinition of socio-economic and territorial boundaries. In developing a new vision 'spatial positioning' is an important tool for identifying opportunities, comparative advantages and possibilities. Spatial positioning reveals the new spatial division of labour and permits the mobilisation of stakeholders across professional and administrative boundaries.

Further Research

The RISE project suggests that two key conditions for the achievement of integration between regional policies are the form of regional governance, and the nature of the regional policy coordination processes. Governance structures can be organised to promote or to inhibit policy-coordination processes. It is possible to argue that pluralistic regional governance offers greater opportunities for the redefinition of territories and for the flexible inclusion of different stakeholders. But it is also possible to argue that this makes policy-coordination and strategy integration much more difficult to accomplish. At a more technical level, research questions also arise regarding the techniques that can most usefully be used to measure the interaction between policies, and the harmonised of these around certain priorities.

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