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Title	Making science history : the regionalisation of science policy?
Authors	Perry, B and May, T
Publisher	SURF Centre
Type	Monograph
USIR URL	This version is available at: http://usir.salford.ac.uk/id/eprint/17133/
Published Date	2003

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‘Making Science History’: The Regionalisation of Science Policy?

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Science and the UK regions

12th May 2003

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2. Context for Research

- North West case study – key regional challenge to national science priorities.
- Regionalisation - devolution and economic policy - created context for new demands.
- Has national science policy been regionalised? How significant are developments at the regional level?

3. *The Daresbury Controversy*

- ***The Issue:*** 1999, decision to build new DIAMOND synchrotron radiation source (SRS): *where should it go?*
- ***The Choices:*** Daresbury Laboratory, Cheshire, NW England ...OR... Rutherford Appleton Laboratory (Oxfordshire – ‘golden triangle’ of London, Oxford and Cambridge, SE)
- ***The Response:*** Regional campaign in NW to keep Diamond @ Daresbury, cross-institutional, scientific and political support

4. The Main Arguments

- ***National View:*** scientific criteria only; co-location important; national interest; politics should not enter into scientific decision-making:
- ***Regional View:*** scientific and regional criteria; regional innovation system; North-South divide in scientific funding revealed; scientific decision-making is unaccountable to regional interests.
 - NW – around 11% national GDP and population but only 5% Government and HEI R&D spend.

5. *The Decision*

- ***The Decision:*** 13th March 2000 to locate Diamond at RAL, in the South East
- ***Compensation?:*** Smith Review (£26m) for collaborative science projects in the NW. Byers Review, to ensure the future of science in the region and DL.
- ***Questions:*** Does this signify a change in national science policy with respect to the regional dimension? How significant have developments regionally been?

6. National Perspective: A New Role for the Regions? 2000-

- ***Strategic Oversight:*** RCUK established, departmental science strategies required. Regional dimension? YES, but minimal - regions as consultees.
- ***Knowledge-Based Economy:*** White papers place increasing focus on innovation, dissemination, exploitation and university-industry links – strong regional dimension. YES, explicit.
- ***International Excellence:*** increasing institutional selectivity and spatial concentration. NO explicit regional dimension but significant regional impacts...
- ***Increasing visibility of regional issues but not regionalisation...***

7. Regional Developments since 2000

- ***Before 2000:*** No (explicit) regional science strategy, science not considered major issue, weak relations between universities, industry and RDAs.
- ***2001-2002 Science Council and Strategy:*** industry-led, meets quarterly, advise NWDA and produce and oversee strategy, ongoing negotiations between CLRC, DL and NWDA as to future of lab.
- ***Ongoing:*** Extension of science issue in English regions, attempt to construct regional science policy.

8. Conclusions?

- Regions see Science - Science policy sees Regions - new relations, improved understanding of scientific and regional need
- Nationally – relatively little formal change in science policy – but new care in dealing with “regional issues”
- Regional agenda developing in England:
 - Build capacity across HEI, Corporate and RDA agendas...
 - Making vertical linkages to national science policy
 - Relevance of comparative experiences...
- Remaining tensions... concentration and distribution of funding; excellence and regional needs.