Making science history : the regionalisation of science policy?

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

The SURF Centre, University of Salford
Simon Marvin and Beth Perry

Science and the UK regions
12th May 2003
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:** 13\textsuperscript{th} 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.