

Governmentality and Regional Economic Strategies

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Introduction

Unlike many of the other contributions to this collection, this chapter draws its immediate inspiration not from Pierre Bourdieu and the concept of habitus, but from the notion of 'governmentality' proposed originally by Michel Foucault, but developed more broadly by subsequent writers. Given the theme of the book, some explanation of my decision to focus on governmentality rather than habitus seems in order. My substantive focus here is on the output of the state policy process, exemplified by the production of 'regional economic strategies' in the United Kingdom. The idea of habitus, with its concern for the dispositions of human agents draws attention to, among other things, the social character of the state bureaucracy; for example the ways in which the characteristic outlook of the state's personnel is shaped by the acquisition of cultural and symbolic capital through schooling and professional training. These issues are of course vitally important. However, my principal focus here is on the forms of knowledge written into state policy and the ways in which those knowledges constitute particular kinds of objects of governance (such as 'regions'), in particular ways. There are some obvious connections here with Bourdieu's ideas – the concept of field, for example – and as I have shown elsewhere, (Painter 1997) Bourdieu's work has much to offer this kind of study. However, for my specific concerns in this piece I have found the idea of governmentality more immediately relevant. This should not be taken to mean that approaches of Bourdieu and Foucault are somehow neatly complementary, or can be unproblematically combined. The tensions between them are as clear as they are fascinating. A full comparative analysis, though, is beyond the scope of this chapter, and in what follows I shall develop my argument principally in relation to the notion of governmentality.

The concept of 'governmentality' is becoming quite widely used across the social sciences (Barry et al 1996, Burchell et al 1991, Dean 1999). Approximately the term denotes 'the art of government' and, by combining the ideas of 'government' and 'mentality', refers in particular to the relationship between the practices of government and knowledge of the objects of government. In line with Foucault's insistence on the intimate connections between power and knowledge, the idea of 'governmentality' suggests that knowledge is not simply a tool or resource for government, but is a condition of the very possibility of government itself. Knowledge affects government, but it also effects it.

Governmentality focuses attention on the diverse political rationalities of government, on its 'technologies', and on the considerable intellectual labour involved in bringing into being the things, people and processes to be governed. The idea has been applied in a number of fields including the welfare state and the realm of 'the social' (Donzelot 1984, Donzelot 1988), risk and insurance (Ewald 1991, O'Malley 1996), economic life (Miller & Rose 1990), the concept of empowerment (Cruikshank 1999) and many others. Indeed the methodology with which the concept of governmentality operates is one that shies away from grand

generalisations about the nature of government in favour of more limited excavations of the operation of governmental power in specific contexts. It is in that sense more a methodological *approach to the analysis of government* (a kind of 'analytics of government' (Dean 1999, pp.27-39)) than a substantive *theory of government*.

While territoriality has been identified by many writers as central to the governmentalities of the modern state, relatively little attention has been devoted to the importance of the state's *internal* territorial structure¹ and it is this issue that will form the main focus of this paper. In keeping with the emphasis in the governmentality literature on empirical analysis I want to outline a preliminary interpretation of the governmentalities embodied in the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) in the UK. In what follows, therefore, I shall first describe the genesis and functions of the eight RDAs, and consider one of the primary purposes of each RDA: to devise, publish and implement a 'regional economic strategy' for its region. I shall then outline the governmentality approach in a little more detail before applying it to the RDA phenomenon through a preliminary analysis of the eight strategies. In doing so I shall focus on the forms of knowledge, particularly geographical knowledge, embodied in the documents. The chapter concludes with a brief reflection on the value of the governmentality approach.

Governing territorially: England's Regional Development Agencies

In one sense almost all the government undertaken by the state is territorial. States are themselves territorial phenomena and they expend much energy on policing, integrating, developing, regulating and monitoring their territories. Many, perhaps most, state policies are implemented in spatially sensitive ways. Public administration, policing, welfare provision, economic development, defence and many other activities commonly depend on a particular set of central-local relations and are undertaken at and through particular sites and locales. Indeed the constitutive role of space and place in social life is now so widely recognised that it has ceased to be the specialist preserve of geographers and increasingly commands attention from scholars across the social sciences and humanities.

However, my concern here is with governmental activity that addresses territory directly by treating it as its primary object of concern and intervention. The nature of such intervention varies markedly from state to state. In one case cities may be the prime focus, in another rural areas; in some countries interventions are highly selective and spatially targeted, in others policies apply uniformly across the territory and so on. Such variety cautions against sweeping generalisations about the nature of spatial restructuring: the 'inexorable' rise of regionalism, for example, or the 'universal' importance of global cities, or the 'inevitable' emergence of a borderless world. Foucault's approach emphasises specificity, detail and uniqueness.

The case of the UK is a complex one simultaneously hinted at and glossed over in the state's full name: The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. In his recent magisterial survey of the history of 'The Isles', Norman Davies notes that over the last 2000 years, at least fifteen distinct territorial states have existed in the territories that today make up the UK and the Republic of Ireland (Davies 1999, pp.xl-xli). Moreover, the nomenclature relating to those territories is confusing, ambiguous and contested (pp.xxvii-xl).

¹ Exceptions include Danny MacKinnon's recent work on local economic governance MacKinnon D. 2000. Managerialism, governmentality and the state: a neo-Foucauldian approach to local economic governance. *Political Geography* 19: 293-314.

Discounting for the moment its overseas colonies and imperial possessions the UK has existed within its present territorial boundaries only since 1922 when the Irish Free State was established in what is now the Republic of Ireland. The state today consists of two 'countries' (England and Scotland), a 'principality' (Wales), and a 'province' (Northern Ireland). All of these labels are ambiguous and contested.

The UK is commonly regarded as a highly centralised state:

The United Kingdom is [...] unusual for a large Western unitary state in that it has no comprehensive and uniform level of decentralised territorial administration between local and central government. It could be argued that because of this high degree of centralisation, government is fundamentally concerned with a national public and policy agenda rather than with regional and local publics and policies, and public accountability tends to focus on national rather than local political institutions. (Mawson 1998, p.228)

On the other hand this situation is now changing significantly. There has long been a degree of administrative decentralisation in the UK, as Mawson recognises. Noting the 'emphasis in Whitehall upon functional division at the expense of territorial integration and coordination', he adds that 'the exception to this situation arises in the case of the three Offices for State for Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland which have emerged over the past 100 years for various pragmatic political reasons associated with their historic national identities and political pressures for decentralisation' (Mawson 1998, pp.228-9). Thus territorial government in the UK has long been asymmetrical; today it is becoming markedly more so.

Devolved government was introduced in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in 1999 and in London in 2000. Although the precise nature of devolution varies between these four territories, the process has produced a distinctive break with the pattern of centralised government that was previously the norm, to the extent that some commentators identify an emerging '*de facto*' or 'quasi-' federalism within the UK albeit one that involves a 'variable geometry'. As the Neil MacCormick, legal philosopher and Member of the European Parliament for the Scottish National Party, puts it:

It is tempting to see the new pattern of devolved governments in the UK as yet a further instance of quasi-federalism inside a state which itself is confederated with the other member states of the [European] Union. [...] There remains, however, an acute problem – how to deal with England? If the UK is becoming a kind of federation, is England to be within it one federal state, or a patchwork of federal regions? Each solution has its own problems, and both are bedevilled by the absence of any widespread popular wish to create new units of government and new assemblies, though this may be changing in some parts of the country. There are now to be Regional Development Agencies and 'Regional Chambers' in the regions of England. In particular, there seems to have been some growth of opinion in Yorkshire, and in Tyneside and the North East of England in favour of emulating the Scots and the Welsh in seeking directly elected assemblies or parliaments, and of securing a similar budgetary settlement. Yet if developments along these lines do take off, and subsequently spread to other regions of England there will remain important differences with Scotland. [...] This means that there is inevitably a strangely uneven and unequal quality built into the kind of quasi-federalism the UK can have [...] It is not inconceivable that

the right way to resolve the difficulties inherent in the emerging constitutional settlement is to put up with imbalance. [...] Variable geometry may be the very thing for the United Kingdom in the long run. (MacCormick 1999, pp.193-5)

This helps to explain a remarkable reversal in the tenor of dominant political discourse on territorial and constitutional issues in the UK in the last five years. Previously, England was the norm, with Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland viewed as peculiar, aberrant or anomalous. Today the position is exactly the opposite, with the 'anomalous' post-devolution constitutional and cultural position of England currently the focus of obsessive media and academic attention.

In fact the genealogy (in Foucault's sense) of the concept of the English 'Regional Development Agencies' is to be found less in the development of the idea of devolution than in the history of the discourses and practices of 'public administration', 'regional economic planning' and 'regional economic development'. RDAs are more accurately seen as examples of regionalization (a relatively top-down process of region-making) than of regionalism (a more bottom-up movement for decentralisation). It is only very recently that the institutional structures involved in regional administrative decentralisation in England have been viewed by campaigners for regional devolution as regional governments in waiting.

Some of the most comprehensive recent research on the regionalization of the British state is that by Brian Hogwood (Hogwood 1996a, Hogwood 1996b, Hogwood 1997). Hogwood (1996b) traces the history of England's 'standard', 'planning' or 'statistical' regions over the last 60 years. Their origins lie in the ten 'regional commissioners' appointed during the Second World War to provide the 'eyes and ears of central government' (1996b, p.11). Other government department appointed 'divisional officers' in each region, who kept in close touch with their respective commissioners. In the event of an invasion or other wartime crisis, the regional commissioners would have taken over direct control of government in their regions (Hogwood 1996b, p.11).

After the war, and until about 1956, the Treasury (finance ministry) tried to ensure that the regional organisation of all government departments conformed to standard regions. Thereafter, Hogwood notes, and until the mid-1960s there was a proliferation of different regional structures and a decline in the use of regional offices by central government. In 1964, the election of the modernising Labour government under Harold Wilson saw a revival of regional thinking. Regional Economic Planning Boards and Regional Economic Planning Councils were established in each region and the number of regions was reduced to the current eight. However, central government departments not directly concerned with regional planning did little to bring their boundaries into line with the new standard regions and even in the planning field coordination was limited (Hogwood 1996b, p.12). The present regional boundaries were established in 1974, the time of major local government reorganisation. The eight English regions are:

- Northern
- North West
- Yorkshire and Humberside
- East Midlands
- West Midlands
- East Anglia

- South West
- South East

Ironically, as Hogwood notes, no central government department uses the exact boundaries of these regions for its own regional structures and in many cases there is 'substantial deviation'. Their only remaining functions today are to form the standard regions for statistical purposes and to provide a framework within which central government issues strategic planning guidance to local authorities (Hogwood 1996b, p.13).

This, then, was the picture until the early 1990s. As Hogwood describes it:

The picture up to mid-1993 [...] therefore appeared to be one of acceptance of the need for regional administrative arrangements for some infrastructure and regional industrial policy purposes, and a recognition of some need for administrative coordination, but antagonism to regional government or regional councils reflecting regional interests and to regions as a focus for economic planning. (1996b, p.16)

However, in an unusually decentralising move for a Conservative government, from April 1994 'Government Offices for the Regions' (GOs) were established. These brought together the regional offices of the Department of Trade and Industry, the Department of Employment (Training, Enterprise and Education Directorate), the Department of Transport, and the Department of the Environment (in 1997 the incoming Labour government merged the latter two to form the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions and merged the Departments of Employment and Education to form the Department for Education and Employment). The aim of the GOs was 'to work in partnership with local authorities and private firms to maximise the competitiveness, prosperity, and quality of life of their region' (Dynes & Walker 1995, p.257). This formulation contains several of the key discursive terms that will appear as particularly important in the subsequent analysis of the Regional Development Agencies. While part of the declared purpose behind the establishment of the GOs was to make policy more sensitive to the regional voice, it was central to the Conservative tactic that no political mechanism was established for this and in particular that no elected representation was proposed.

Ten government offices were established with somewhat different boundaries from the 'standard regions' described above. In apparent recognition of the severity of its socio-economic problems Merseyside got its own GO subtracting territory from the North West standard region. The GO for the North West gained Cumbria from the North standard region. An Eastern GO was established covering the standard region of East Anglia plus Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Essex from the South East standard region. London also gained its own GO also from territory within the South East standard region. The regional boundaries of the Government Offices for Yorkshire and Humberside, the East Midlands, the West Midlands and the South West coincided with the standard regions of the same names. As Hogwood graphically illustrates, several major government functions, have regional boundaries that vary, sometimes markedly, from those of the Government Offices. This is even true for several functions of the departments included in the Government Office scheme where those functions are delivered by the semi-autonomous 'Next Steps' agencies. For example, the regional structure of the Employment Service (an agency of the then Department of Employment that delivers job search and related services) differs from that of the GOs.

In May 1997 the Labour Party formed a new government under Tony Blair that came to power committed to an enhanced role for regional bodies in economic development, and possibly to devolved regional government in England, though this objective seems now to be firmly on the back burner. In April 1999 eight Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) were established by central government to cover the whole of England except London (which was to have its own devolved government and associated development agency from 2000). Their boundaries coincided with those of the Government Offices except that Merseyside was absorbed into the North West Region again. The Government Offices continue to exist and are required to work with the RDAs.

The full list of RDAs is as follows:

Region	Agency	Budget (£M)*
North East	One North East	121
North West	North West Development Agency	176
Yorkshire & Humberside	Yorkshire Forward	137
West Midlands	Advantage West Midlands	114
East Midlands	East Midlands Development Agency	59
East	East of England Development Agency	32
South West	South West of England Development Agency	60
South East	South East of England Development Agency	73

*Source: (Robson et al 2000, p.2)

The Agencies were established by the Regional Development Agencies Act 1998, which states:

4. - (1) A regional development agency shall have the following purposes-

- (a) to further the economic development and the regeneration of its area,
- (b) to promote business efficiency, investment and competitiveness in its area,
- (c) to promote employment in its area,
- (d) to enhance the development and application of skills relevant to employment in its area, and
- (e) to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development in the United Kingdom where it is relevant to its area to do so.

(2) A regional development agency's purposes apply as much in relation to the rural parts of its area as in relation to the non-rural parts of its area.

[...]

7. - (1) A regional development agency shall-

- (a) formulate, and keep under review, a strategy in relation to its purposes, and
- (b) have regard to the strategy in exercising its functions.

(2) The Secretary of State may give a regional development agency guidance and directions in relation to the exercise of its functions under subsection (1), in particular, with respect to-

- (a) the matters to be covered by the strategy,
- (b) the issues to be taken into account in formulating the strategy,
- (c) the strategy to be adopted in relation to any matter, and
- (d) the updating of the strategy.

Thus the Secretary of State is able to issue both statutory and non-statutory guidance to the RDAs, and this he chose to do in some detail (Department of Environment Transport and the Regions 1999b, Department of Environment Transport and the Regions 1999c) . The non-statutory guidance runs to seven fairly lengthy chapters covering respectively: regeneration, competitiveness, skills, sustainable development, rural policy, equal opportunities, and the voluntary and community sector (Department of Environment Transport and the Regions 1999c).

Although RDAs are not elected and there is currently no elected regional level of government in England outside London to which they might be held accountable, they are required to undertake consultation within their regions. For this purpose eight 'regional chambers' have been designated. These 'are voluntary groupings of councillors from local authorities in the region and representatives of the various sectors with a stake in the region's economic, social and environmental well being. They generally include representatives from business; education and training; the voluntary, cultural and environmental protection sectors; and the trade unions' (Department of Environment Transport and the Regions 1999a).

The Regional Economic Strategies

One of the most important initial tasks for the new RDAs was to develop a regional economic strategy (RES) for each region. The completed strategies were presented to the Secretary of State in October 1999. Each strategy consists of one or more A4 booklets, usually well illustrated in full colour. They vary in length from 48 pages (West Midlands) to 128 pages (North East) and, as if to convey their seriousness, usually contain a lot of fairly closely-spaced text in a small font size. The production and design quality is variable, but fairly high, though there is clearly some tension between glossy publicity and place marketing functions on the one hand and the official reporting function in relation to central government on the other. The strategies are loaded with business school rhetorical devices such as bullet points, Venn diagrams, organigrams, flow charts and mission and vision statements. There are also copious supporting quotations from the 'great and the good' (and 'ordinary people'), as well as numerous case studies and vignettes of successful regeneration schemes, inward investors, innovative business start-ups, training programmes, community development initiatives and so on. All the strategies are available electronically, usually in .pdf format, on the World Wide Web.

The influence of the extensive statutory and non-statutory guidance from the Secretary of State is clear to see in all the RESs, most of which have chapter or section headings that reflect the issues set out in the *Supplementary Guidance* document (Department of Environment Transport and the Regions 1999c). References to competitiveness, the environment, skills, sustainability, rural areas and so on abound. The similarities between the eight strategies are so strong that it is tempting to suggest that they represent a single central blueprint for regional development, with limited adaptation to regional specificities. This view concurs with an early study of the RDAs, conducted by Robson, Peck and Holden:

The similarity of the RESs does not suggest that the specific weaknesses and potentials of different regions have figured strongly in the formulation of strategies of the various RDAs. The hand of the centre seems to have lain heavy on the process. This may be inevitable, a consequence of the fact that the RESs have a common generic quality that reflects a process of synthesising existing policies and rationalising them within the context of an all-embracing and commonly shared vision. But the dilemma of bodies attempting to be *of* their regions while the centre may see them as agencies *in* the regions lies at the heart of an as-yet unresolved tension. (Robson et al 2000, p.2)

This tension can be seen as an expression of the UK's enduringly fraught pattern of central-local relations and this is undoubtedly part of the picture. However, while this perspective points to the likelihood that the centre will attempt to inscribe some generic approach, it does not address the issue of why the approach that *is* so inscribed has taken the particular form that it has at this particular time. In my view, it is here that the concept of governmentality proves particularly useful.

Governmentality

The concept of 'governmentality' was first used by Michel Foucault in a lecture at the Collège de France in 1978. A transcription of the lecture by Pasquale Pasquino was published in Italian in 1978, with translations into English and French appearing in 1979 and 1986 respectively. A revised version of the English translation by Colin Gordon appeared in 1991 (Foucault 1991) in a collection of essays on governmentality under the title *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* (Burchell et al 1991). In Anglophone social science, very little attention was paid to Foucault's innovation until the appearance of *The Foucault Effect*. Since then, however, there has been an accelerating growth in the use of the concept, and evidence of its application across a diverse range of domains, including pedagogy, colonial studies, geography, citizenship theory, rural studies, welfare policy, risk and insurance, agricultural policy and political economy. The concept came of age in 1999 with the publication of a dedicated textbook (Dean 1999).

Since there are now several useful guides to the concept of governmentality (e.g. Barry et al 1996, Burchell et al 1991, Dean 1999), I shall confine myself here to a brief outline only. As noted in the introduction above, governmentality can be defined approximately as 'the art of government' and combines the ideas of 'government' and 'mentality'. The term denotes an approach to the understanding of governmental power that focuses on the intersection of governmental practices, ways of seeing, knowledges, political rationalities and the formation of subjects. 'Government' here is understood to include not only state practices, but also other kinds of activities that seek to coordinate or 'steer' processes, people and things. Thus we have the government of the self, corporate government, the government of children, the government of households and so on. Foucault's original essay is highly suggestive, but also relatively short and specific. In elaborating on the field of governmentality, therefore, Dean (1999) draws not only on Foucault's own formulations but also on a range of subsequent research to define an approach to the issue of governmentality that he terms an 'analytics of government'. In the following preliminary analysis of the RDAs' regional economic strategies I have drawn (rather loosely) on Dean's arguments, and it may be useful to highlight some key elements here.

First, there is a focus on the *constitution of objects of government*. Those engaged in government face an almost limitless array of possible targets for governmental action

(people, things and processes). For government to occur some sub-set or aspect of these must be identified, made visible, and brought into being as something requiring and amenable to government. Foucault identified 'population' as perhaps the most significant object of government. National populations only exist today because they were constituted as an object of governmental attention from the second half of the eighteenth century.

The second element is *knowledge* of the objects of government (and increasingly of the process of government itself). Knowledge makes the objects of government visible, constitutes them in certain ways and enables certain kinds of governmental techniques to be applied to them. In the population example, statistics were (and remain) central to the discovery of 'population' as something with which government should be concerned. Such knowledges typically draw heavily on (certain branches of) the social and human sciences, such as economics, demography, and psychology. Part of the analytics of government thus involves an excavation of the genealogy of the knowledges embedded in governmental practices.

Third, there is an irreducibly *technical* element to government. 'Here the literature on governmentality asks: by what means, mechanisms, procedures, instruments, tactics, techniques, technologies and vocabularies is authority constituted and rule accomplished?' (Dean 1999, p.31). For example, the government of populations involves technologies such as census taking, birth control, fiscal policy, public health measures and so on.

The fourth aspect concerns the *rational and reflective* element of government. Government involves not only the collation of knowledge in the sense of data and intelligence gathering, but also the formulation of strategies, plans and policies on the basis of that data and intelligence. These political rationalities include reflection on the process of government itself a recognition of the chronic failure of government - compare Bob Jessop's concept of 'governance failure' (Jessop 2000). In the field of population these rationalities appear in the form of policies for the growth, health and welfare of the population, or for its control, as in the case of the 'one child policy' in the People's Republic of China.

Fifth, governmentality involves organisations and practices that extend well beyond the institutions of the state. Drawing an analogy from the work of Bruno Latour, Miller and Rose (1990) refer to this as '*action at a distance*'. To continue with the example of population, the exercise of governmentality depends in good measure on the practices of the governed including the adoption of contraception, the work of families in raising children, cooperation or acquiescence in the exigencies of changing welfare regimes and so on. It thus has some similarities with the recently popular idea of 'governance', which denotes coordination through networks of state and non-state institutions (Rhodes 1997), or, more abstractly, the 'self-organization of inter-organizational relationships' (Jessop 1997, p.59). However, governmentality should not be confused with governance. From the perspective of governmentality, the development of inter-organisational networks are one among a number of possible 'technologies of government' and these are failure-prone; thus it is possible to conceive of governmentality without governance.

Sixth, governmentality involves the production of particular kinds of *identities and subjectivities*. Indeed as with the constitution of objects of government more generally, particular aspects of subjects are made visible, knowable and governable through governmental practices. Thus identities such as 'family man' or 'housewife' that form part of a broader subject of the modern come into being through the invention of the idea of

'population' from the eighteenth century onwards, with 'families' being constructed as one of the building blocks of the national population.

The seventh element is the governmentality approach's resolute *anti-naturalism*. By this, I mean that entities (such as 'family', 'population', 'economy', 'nation', 'state' and even 'person' and 'individual') that are treated by much of the conventional social and human sciences as natural or quasi-natural and transhistorical phenomena are revealed as irreducibly historical and produced through, among other things, the process of government itself. So before the eighteenth century the aggregation of people residing in the territory of a state were not understood governmentally as 'the population' and 'populations' thus did not exist. 'Populations' are not naturally occurring aspects of a reality that exist prior to and outside government that governmental practice then seeks to control or develop. Rather, they are produced through the process of governing itself.

Finally, over time the art of government comes to be turned in on itself. Thus we see first the *governmentalisation of the state*, as the state become preoccupied with 'the art of government' in addition to its longer-standing concern with the exercise of 'sovereignty', and then the *governmentalisation of government* as the processes of government themselves become objects of government. In the field of population this can be seen when agencies involved in the government of population, such as health care organisations, themselves become the target of governmental action, perhaps through auditing, evaluation and the development of strategies for the future of the organisation, as well as for the future of the population.

There are several other elements to the governmentality approach that could be highlighted, but the ones I have mentioned are those most directly relevant to the situation of the Regional Development Agencies and their Regional Economic Strategies.

Governmentality and the Regional Economic Strategies

The governmentality approach is not an exercise in policy evaluation. Not only are such evaluations of the RDAs and the RESs available elsewhere, but more importantly 'evaluation' is itself a technology of government and thus internal to governmentality. Nor is the application of a critical analytics of government intended to belittle or undermine the important work being undertaken by RDAs (Robson et al 2000). However, it is intended to disrupt some of the taken-for-granted assumptions on which the very idea of a 'regional economic strategy' depends.

A good starting place, albeit one easily overlooked, is to consider the implications of the very term 'regional economic development strategy'. 'Development' implies that regional economic change is not, or at least need not be, a process without coherence or lacking in 'direction' in the sense of 'heading'. 'Development', a term that has been subject to wide debate and more recently critique in the 'development studies' literature, implies progress from a less ordered, less prosperous, simpler economy to a more organised, more prosperous and more complex one. It is now so taken for granted by governments and society more generally that development is an unequivocal good that the use of the term in this context seems entirely unremarkable. Yet the idea that an economy (regional or otherwise) can undergo development, let alone be actively developed, should not be taken for granted. The possibility and process of 'development' are not natural features of economic life, but rather reflect ways of discursively ordering otherwise disparate and

chaotic social processes and to describe differing forms of economic order in value-laden ways. This value-driven aspect of government is central to governmentality.

The term strategy also deserves to be problematised. To produce a strategy is self-consciously *not* to produce a plan, nor is it entirely to leave matters to 'market forces'. There has been over time a shift in governmentality away from planning and its discourses and towards strategy. Erstwhile planners have had to learn to be strategists, even if the degree of central government influence on the RESs suggests there is some way to go before *local* strategic thinking is the main influence on the content of the documents. To 'strategise' or to 'act strategically' are not a neutral activities (Painter 1997), but are themselves freighted with assumptions about the nature of government and the governability of regions and economies. It is no coincidence that the origins of the term lie in warfare, nor that there is strong tradition of formal analysis of strategy in game theory. Whereas some of the dominant connotations of planning (though not necessarily the practices of planners) seem to depend on the assumptions that external environments are, if not completely controllable, at least predictable and knowable, and that direct control of development processes is possible, the concept of strategy accepts unpredictability, incomplete knowledge, and the impossibility of direct control. Thus developing a strategy is more about process, while traditional models of planning are more focussed on outcome. A good strategy accepts that change will occur that cannot be foreseen or entirely controlled and is likely to focus on developing robust procedures and organisational cultures to respond to an unpredictable environment. The shift from 'plan' to 'strategy' can thus been seen in part as an element of rise of neo-liberalism, and in part as a governmental response to the neo-liberal critique of previous regimes of government. It is also worth pointing out that in RDA-speak no distinction is made between the strategy and the paper or electronic document in which the strategy is described. Thus developing a strategy becomes a matter of documentation, or writing, rather than of practice, and the document thereby forms one of the key technologies of governmentality.

The possibility of a *Regional Economic Strategy* depends on the assumption that there exists an entity called the 'regional economy'. A Regional Economic Strategy can thus be seen as a governmental technology through which an RDA seeks to bring into being, and make visible and governable 'its' regional economy. From a realist perspective (Sayer 1992), the concept of the regional economy is largely spurious, if what is meant by the term is a relatively integrated, interacting economic whole, more or less bounded by the territory of the region. In practice, economic actors in regions (especially in the regions of England) have as many economic linkages beyond the boundaries of the region as they do within them, if not more. Most regions are highly heterogeneous and incoherent, unevenly developed and internally fragmented and certainly can't be considered to be the subjects of economic and political action, nor the objects of effective governance. David Harvey, for example, notes that the 'tendency to the structured coherence of urban regions' (Harvey 1985, p.140) is just that, a tendency, and one that is continual undermined by the disrupted effects of counter-tendencies. In any case, the boundaries of the 'urban regions' discussed by Harvey are defined by the operation of substantive socio-economic processes, and have little or nothing in common with the bureaucratically defined and largely arbitrary boundaries of the RDAs.

In such circumstances, from the perspective of governmentality, the task of the RDAs, through their RESs, is quite literally to produce and constitute regional economies. This takes a huge effort of intellectual labour, much of which is hidden, but some of which can be

excavated from the strategy documents. Much of this labour involves the construction of geographical knowledges:

The state apparatus, with its interests in governmentality, administration, taxation, planning, and social control, has steadily been built up from the eighteenth century onwards as a primary site for the collection and analysis of geographical information. The process of state formation was and still is dependent upon the creation of certain kinds of geographical understandings [...]. For the last two centuries, the state has been perhaps *the* site for the production of geographical knowledges necessary for the creation, maintenance and enhancement of its powers. [...] Insofar as the state is itself organized hierarchically, it will typically produce knowledges at different spatial scales (local, regional, national). [...] The state, through planning mechanisms, likewise institutes normative programs for the production of space, the definition of territoriality, the geographical distribution of population, economic activity, social services, wealth and well-being. (Harvey 2000, p.3)

Harvey argues that there are four generic elements of geographical knowledge associated with governmentality. These are:

- cartographic identifications, or knowledge of position in geographic space;
- understanding of spatio-temporal dynamics;
- knowledge of the qualities of locale, place and region;
- knowledge of environment, or the relations between the cultural and natural.

The map is fundamental to the first kind of knowledge, and most of the Regional Economic Strategies contain one or more maps sometime used mainly rhetorically. Thus the RES for Yorkshire and Humberside includes an outline of the region superimposed on a map of the world with Europe highlighted; a fairly obvious attempt to link the region symbolically with both Europe and the global economy. Intriguingly the UK has no special significance in this representation. The understanding of spatio-temporal dynamics is present in a number of ways. A good example is the reliance of the RESs implicitly or otherwise on particular theories of regional development, a point that will be discussed in more detail below. Each of the strategies attempts to construct a knowledge of the distinctive qualities of its regions, based on, among other things, its particular economic mix, social make up, environmental qualities, and urban and rural contrasts. Finally, the strategies express particular understandings of society-environment relations, most obviously in their generic concern with 'sustainable development', but also in a variety of other ways such as a concern with technological innovation to reduce activities thought harmful to the environment and to promote new forms of technological mastery over nature.

In developing the Regional Economic Strategies, the RDAs have both drawn on existing geographical knowledge and developed their own. In the background of most of the strategies are a set of assumptions about regional development that can be traced back to theories of regional development current in academic geography in the late 1980s. Among many others, the work of Michael Storper and Allan Scott was particularly influential in refocusing attention on the importance of the regional scale in the process of capitalist production (Scott & Storper 1986, Scott 1996, Storper 1995, Storper 1997, Storper & Scott 1992). They identified 'territorial production complexes' at the regional scale as providing the basis of a nation's position within the world economy. Regional milieux were seen as

the key sources of competitiveness, providing networks of untraded interdependencies, social capital, and innovative cultures. The region was 'rediscovered' as a central concept in economic development, and the 'new regionalism' quickly became the received wisdom in business schools, textbooks and monographs (see for example Keating 1998, pp.136ff) and policy formation. Since Scott and Storper's early work their ideas have been subject to much criticism and further refinement. However, for my purposes here, and from the perspective of governmentality, the accuracy of their analysis is less important than the impact it has had on the government of regions as a kind of received wisdom in regional development theory (not least as a result of the publication of many over-simplified or even vulgarised accounts of their approach).

According to the 'new regionalism', economically successful regions are those that gain a competitive advantage in the world economy by exploiting the distinctive characteristics of their regional and local milieux. The two most famous, and most frequently cited, examples are the Italian region of Emilia-Romagna and the Silicon Valley district of California. In these regions, so the argument goes, economic prosperity and dynamism derives from the growth of 'new industrial districts', which consist of clusters of firms with strong economic, intellectual and cultural linkages between them. Much of the 'new regionalism' literature has been criticised for depending too heavily on these and a handful of other examples, for assuming that their model of development can be replicated, and for assuming that such replication can be generated through government action. Nevertheless such assumptions are written into the RESs. One of the clearest examples is provided by the RES for the North East region, produced the Regional Development Agency 'One North East'. The strategy includes a description of the characteristics of economically successful regions to provide 'lessons' for the North East (Figure 1).

Lessons from Successful Regions

In preparing this Strategy, the characteristics of successful regions were identified:

- a pool of entrepreneurs who can access readily available sources of venture capital;
- a sound, diverse base of knowledge driven companies, competing in global markets, with a commitment to continuous innovation in process and product technologies;
- strong collaborative company and university research and development projects;
- a versatile healthy workforce which offers a wide range of advanced skills with all young people staying in education or work-based training;
- very high quality schools, colleges, and universities;
- a clear commitment to building socially inclusive urban and rural communities by providing routes back into the labour market;
- advanced telecommunications and transport links to the rest of the world;
- attractive urban and rural villages in the hinterland of a large metropolis with a thriving cultural and commercial life;
- an exceptionally beautiful natural environment; and
- effective public-private sector partnerships.

Figure 1

While not all the other strategies spell out these characteristics so clearly, they all implicitly adopt a broadly similar definition of regional economic success, and no doubt few people would object to their region acquiring these desirable features. What is interesting about the One North East case, however, is the reference to *lessons* from successful regions. This is an explicit recognition of the use of knowledge in the construction of the regional strategy, and on the importance of knowledge acquisition. Indeed the taskforce that drafted the strategy included two senior academics from the University of Durham; one from the Business School and one from the Department of Geography. An even more direct reference to the new industrial districts/new regionalism literature is provided by another aspect of the One North East strategy, namely its emphasis on 'clusters' and the establishment of a 'regional service for clustering' to assist their development. This latter feature is based clearly on the assumption that clusters can be developed through strategic governmental action.

This concern with clusters stems directly from the embedding in the strategy of knowledge derived from practitioners, management gurus and theoretical and empirical academic research. Such knowledge is, however, adapted by the RES. Thus the strategy contains two lists of actual and potential clusters in the North East of England. These lists include clusters such as 'low volume manufacturing' that are typical of the kinds of clusters emphasised in the academic and management literature, but they also include 'tourism', 'public authorities' and 'the voluntary sector' that appear to stretch conventional definitions of the term 'cluster' to breaking point or beyond. This all-inclusiveness is fairly typical of all the RESs and applies across a range of fields besides cluster development. It stems in part from a political requirement that the RESs should offer something for every locality, social group and economic sector. The danger where clusters are concerned is that the original concept may be so watered down by applying it too broadly that any benefits may be difficult to discern, or lost altogether.

This example of cluster policy in North East England, is a clear instance of attempts to generate the 'action at distance' that defines governmentality (Miller & Rose 1990). Cluster development (and regional economic success more generally) cannot occur through state action alone, but depends crucially on the actions of companies and partnership bodies such as the Regional Service for Clustering. Governmentality thus involves attempts to coordinate actions by disparate institutions, most of which are not amenable to direct state control.

In addition to seeking to promote regional economic integration (whether through cluster development, or in other ways, such as infrastructure development), the RESs work to constitute regional economies by providing knowledge of the region and by aiming to develop improvements in regional data collection. This task is assisted to some extent by the coincidence (for the most part) between the boundaries of the RDAs and those of the standard regions that are used for statistical purposes. Nevertheless, it remains the case (and a number of the RESs make this point) that there is a distinct lack of broadly based, high quality social and economic statistics at the regional scale in England. In some regions the idea this knowledge acquisition element is being taken further in proposals for 'regional observatories' to collate data about the region and promote improvements in regional statistics.

This emphasis on 'knowing the region' is a key aspect of governmentality. To know is to be better able to govern. However, the collection of data and information and the development of knowledge are far from innocent exercises. The methods of data collection and the types of data collected are shaped by, but also shape, governmental understanding of the process

of regional economic development. The governmentality of the central state is an issue here, as the RDAs are required to measure their performance against certain centrally determined benchmarks. These are shown in Figure 2.

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| <p>State of the Region: Core Indicators Proposed by Government</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• GDP per head and GDP per head relative to the EU average;• ILO unemployment rate;• proportion of the population with above average living conditions – life expectancy measure drawn from the Standard Mortality Ratios;• per cent new homes built on previously developed land;• labour productivity – manufacturing gross value added and all sector GDP per worker;• skills – per cent of 19 year olds with level 2 qualifications and per cent of adults with level 3 qualifications; and• business formations and survival rates. |
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Figure 2. Source: (South East England Development Agency 1999, p.40)

One of the consequences of requiring all RDAs to measure themselves against a common metric is that it will be possible to evaluate their relative performances, and even to construct a league table of RDAs. Whether this kind of competitive evaluation is undertaken or not, the use of these kinds of statistical indicators remains a core feature of the governmentality evident in the RDA initiative.

The similarity between the eight RESs has already been mentioned, and this extends to the kinds of regional economic development knowledges to be found in the eight documents. Thus all the RDAs want to build to be ‘world class’, ‘excellent’, or ‘globally competitive’ regions, and there is a common view that this can be achieved by developing ‘learning regions’ (despite recent academic criticism of that idea), focusing on ‘e-commerce’ and promoting ‘sustainable development’. These similarities could be dismissed as the product dependence on a litany of ‘New Labour’ shibboleths, but that would be to miss the ways in which many of the common themes feed directly into governmentalities which extend well beyond the phenomenon of New Labour.

To illustrate this, I will focus briefly on one of these themes, ‘equal opportunities’. RDAs are required to by central government guidance to address the issue of equal opportunities in their work, and to show how equal opportunities issues are incorporated into their strategies. Typically this can involve a separate section dealing with equal opportunities in the strategy document, though in some of the documents the treatment is much more gestural. For the most part the discussion of equal opportunities is highly conventional. From radical beginnings in the women’s, black, disabled and gay and lesbian movements, a concern with equal opportunities has today become largely routinised and incorporated into standard public sector and business practice, partly to ensure compliance with the law, but also because ‘equal treatment’ has become, in public discourse at least, part of the common sense of everyday life. This is not to deny the importance of equality legislation and practice for groups suffering discrimination, but it is to point to the ways in which attempts to disrupt the status quo can come, not least via governmentality, to form part of the status quo.

A typically example (albeit from the more gestural end of the spectrum) can be found in the RES for the South East. Equal opportunities is mentioned explicitly in the strategy only twice, in the section on ‘World class workforce’:

The priorities set out for world class business and learning need to be priorities for organisations, individuals and trade union and other employee representatives alike. Equally, the priorities for inclusiveness and equal opportunities within the workforce must be mirrored throughout all areas of the region's economic strategy. (South East England Development Agency 1999, p.23)

and:

Objectives

Develop discussion across the region at workplace level, particularly on a cross-organisation basis, to share, develop and promote best practice in employee participation, equal opportunities/flexible working and strategies for achieving work/life balance, job enrichment and growth. (South East England Development Agency 1999, p.23)

The increasingly 'taken for granted' character of equality concerns has arguably seen a diminution in the profile of active efforts to combat racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination. What seems to happen is that the RDAs (in common no doubt with other public agencies) can say that they have discharged their duty by including a section or a statement on equal opportunities, while leaving much of the rest of the strategy unchanged. There is thus the *performance* of equality, rather than the active *production* of equality. Indeed the priority of performance over production is evident throughout the RES documents, and is a further example of the reflective nature of governance in the sense that there is an awareness of the need to be seen to be engaging in certain kinds of practices. This is a clear example of the operation of a particular governmentality and produces particular kinds of effects in terms of the constitutions of subjects and identities. In the RESs, members of minority ethnic groups, for example, appear largely as members of the labour force, and frequently as 'socially excluded', that is as *unemployed* member of the labour force. They are thus implicitly cast as *victims* of a double exclusion: economic exclusion (unemployed) and discrimination (ethnic minority). Note that the term racism is never used. Without wishing to downplay the very real problems faced in the labour market by many people, the dominant application of the idea of 'equal opportunities' (at least in the regional economic strategies) leads to the construction of Black and Asian people principally as victims, or, more rarely, as community activists and voluntary workers. There are, for example, few references to Black or Asian entrepreneurs or to the enormous importance of minority-owned businesses to the economies of many British cities. To summarise more simply, ethnic minorities appear rarely in the strategy documents, and when they do they tend to be ghettoised in the 'equal opportunities' chapter or section. The featuring of the black businessman Arthur Blackwood is an honourable, if limited exception to this pattern in the strategy for the East Midlands. The unfortunate consequence of the way in which equal opportunities is understood in the strategies, is thus to perpetuate the perception that ethnic minorities are an economic cost to regions, rather than an economic resource, and that they act as a brake on, rather than as a motor of economic growth.

Conclusion

Equal opportunities is by no means the only aspect of the regional economic strategies that exemplifies the operation of governmentality. Similar arguments could be made concerning the concepts such as 'community', 'learning', 'sustainability' and so on. On the other hand,

it might be objected that the RDAs and the RES documents are rather too mundane to carry the weight of theory involved in the application of the concept of governmentality. However, as Foucault emphasised, it is often in the most taken for granted and commonplace areas of social life that the exercise of power is most significant, in part because it is most hidden. The operation of power/knowledge is most successful where it is embodied in routine.

Following from this, though, it should not be thought that the exercise of power is inherently negative. As Foucault argued and as Dean forcefully stresses in his development of the concept of governmentality, there can be no place of freedom beyond the reach of power relations. Power is productive and can generate all kinds of social outcomes, both positive and negative. The kind of analysis presented here, therefore, is not a substitute for programmes of policy evaluation that seek to assess whether RDAs have been successful on their own terms. Many of the aims of the RDAs are admirable and we need to know whether they have been achieved.

That said, there is also scope to step outside the framework of regional development within which the RDAs work and seek to analyse it in terms of the 'art of government'. The governmentality approach disrupts our taken for granted understandings of things and helps to reveal how the government of regional development is made possible, through the use of particular means and technologies and through the production of particular forms of knowledge, including geographical knowledge in the terms suggested by David Harvey.

A concern with geographical knowledge also draws attention to the relationship between governmentality and space. In one sense space is just another object of governance, constructed as such through particular kinds of spatial understandings and governed through particular kinds of spatial technologies. At the same time, space also lies at the heart of governmentality more generally. Like population, territory is fundamental to the constitution of modern governmentalities, and knowledge of space and spatial relations is central to the very possibility of government of any kind. From this perspective, the governmentalities embodied in RDAs may be seen not only as another example of the art of government, but also as the latest stage in a long struggle of states and other governmental institutions to manage the tension between central control and regional voice and between territorial integration and the pressures generated by uneven development.

Postscript

My chapter on 'governmentality and regional economic strategies' argues that economic regions and regional economies are not pre-existing natural entities but are brought into being through the practices of government. This may occur through the production of regional statistics, the elaboration of regional economic strategies, the formation of institutions of regional economic governance and in other ways. My original analysis used concepts of governmentality; how does it relate to habitus? First, although the phrase is suggestive, I am doubtful whether it makes sense today to speak of a 'regional habitus', if by that we mean a relatively enduring set of behavioural dispositions that is shared by a majority of inhabitants of a region and that arises somehow from the supposedly unitary character of that region. For one thing, such a 'regional habitus' would be disrupted by class, gender and ethnic differences (each of which, in Bourdieu's terms, function to structure habitus very strongly). More importantly, though, the idea of 'regional habitus' posits the existence of distinct integrated regions, that have a persistent enough internal

unity and external differentiation to provide the basis for the enduring set of dispositions that (for Bourdieu) defines habitus. To be sure, some such territories can be distinguished within existing nation-states: Catalonia, Scotland, Quebec and so on. But these cases acquire such distinctiveness because they are widely understood (from within and without) not as regions but as nations, albeit stateless ones. Regions that do not enjoy the cachet of nationhood are much more weakly differentiated from one another, and in many (I suspect most) such cases it is difficult to identify much spatial congruence between social, economic, cultural and political boundaries.

Second, and in consequence, the concept of region can be related quite clearly to Bourdieu's notion of field – a dynamic space of forces, contradictions and determinations (Bourdieu, this volume). A region does not 'have' a habitus of its own, but it is both the product and the object of practices (economic, cultural and political) that are themselves generated through the workings of (numerous) habitus(es). The development of regional economic strategies (to take the example discussed in my chapter) can be understood as the effect of a certain habitus (that of public policy professionals and economic planners) in relation to a certain field (the management of the regional differentiation of economic processes). Such strategies are not purely technical or instrumental documents (techniques and instruments are in any case never pure), but express and embody particular ways of seeing, of circumscribing problems, and of imagining the 'regional', the 'economic', and the 'strategic'.

In the five years since the English regional economic strategies discussed in my original essay were published they have been developed, updated and elaborated, and have to some extent become more regionally specific and less generic. At the same time they remain, of course, governmental technologies through which each region and 'its' economy is defined, described and diagnosed, and thereby, in many ways, created. Conflict is concealed (though 'diversity' is celebrated), visions are always bold, and renaissance is everywhere imminent. Bourdieu always insisted on the generative and productive potential of habitus; the evidence of official regional development policy in England suggests that the habitus of contemporary economic development professionals is certainly productive, but within necessarily circumscribed limits.

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