



ENGLISH REGIONALISM: RHETORIC OR SUBSTANCE? EVALUATING DECISION MAKING PROCEDURES FOR REGIONAL FUNDING ALLOCATIONS (RES-061-23-0033)

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Background: In the absence of political devolution in England, the Government is committed to extending the responsibilities of the regional tier in delivering public policies, strengthening and coordinating the activities of regional agencies and promoting the participation of 'social and economic partners' in policy and implementation processes. The Government's guidance on Regional Funding Allocations (RFAs) (HMT *et al*, 2005) aims to promote greater sub-national discretion and coordination and reflects the expectation that regional institutions will play an increasingly significant role in determining their region's priorities. These developments are significant. Yet, little is known about how regional actors are responding to this agenda or their capacity to deliver.

Aims: This research will address this issue by providing an in-depth evaluation of the quality and rigour of regional decision making procedures for RFAs in all English regions. It will tell us precisely how the different resource capacities and objectives of regional stakeholders are being managed in efforts to achieve integration between (i) economic development, (ii) housing and (iii) transport policies and the extent to which regional policy making is underpinned by robust, inclusive and evidence based procedures.

Methodology: The research will be conducted in five key stages. First, a set of theoretical 'criteria for good governance' will be identified to evaluate regional decision making. Second, interviews with Whitehall officials will be conducted to determine departmental motives and aspirations for RFAs. Third, detailed case studies will be undertaken in three English regions, including London, to examine the extent to which procedures for decision making meet Whitehall's aspirations and the 'criteria for good governance' identified in the literature. Fourth, survey questionnaires will be carried out in the remaining six English regions to determine the extent of variation and, in particular, to compare procedures under London's devolved system with decentralised arrangements in the rest of England. Finally, the critical factors that facilitate and impede decision making in all English regions will be analysed and judgements made about how these can be managed more effectively.

Outcomes: This information is essential in informing current debates about devolution and decentralisation and will contribute to the Government's objectives to improve economic performance and the effectiveness of public administration in the UK. The empirical findings will also be of practical value in providing policy makers and practitioners with guidance on how best to manage the complexities of regional working. Research findings will be widely disseminated via the internet, academic journals, conferences and seminars and data archives.

Funding: £256,000 over 24 months.

For more information visit the project website at:
<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/sps/regionalism/default.shtml>