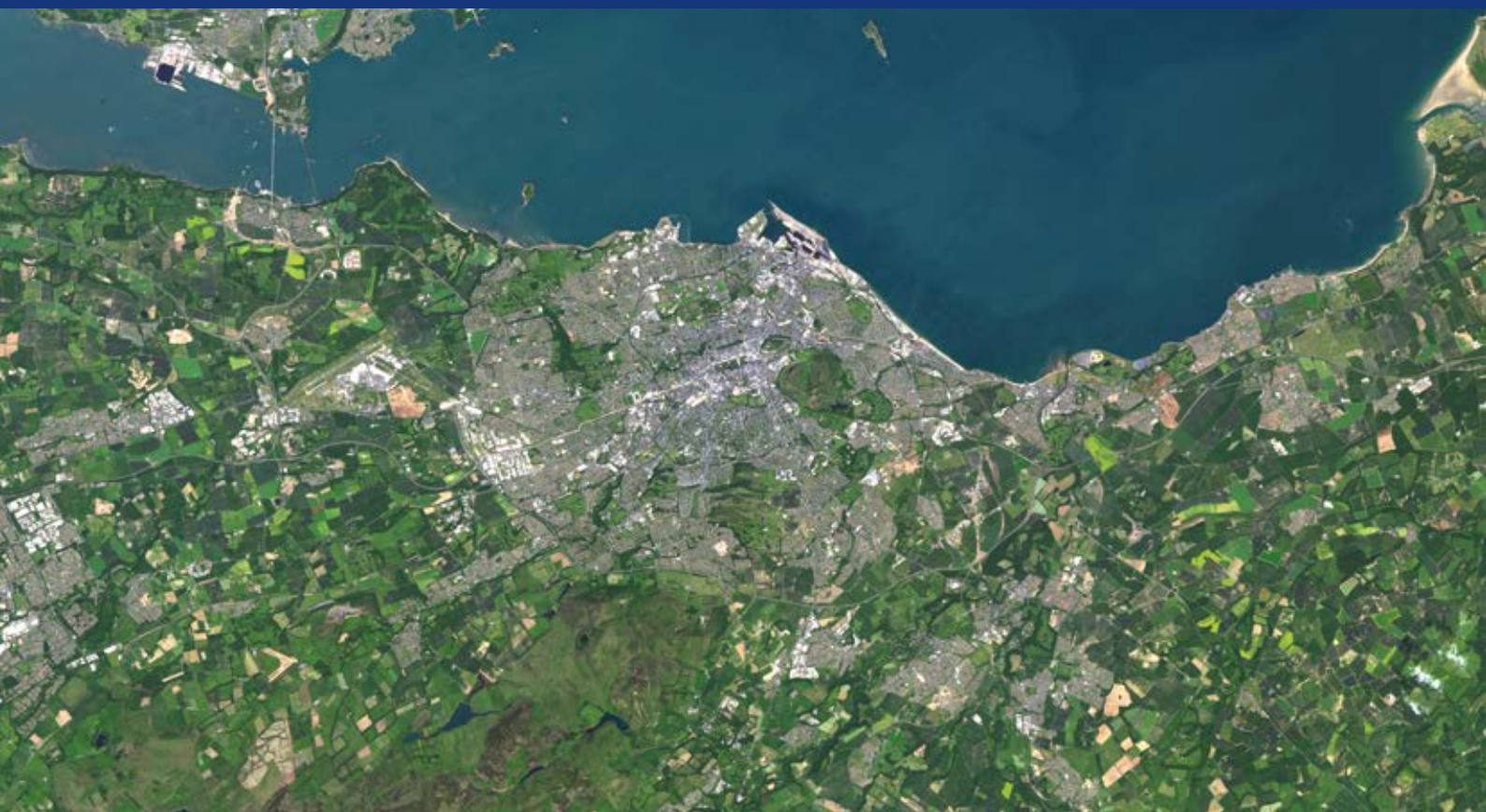




UNIVERSITY OF
LIVERPOOL

Heseltine Institute for Public
Policy, Practice and Place



‘National’ Spatial Strategies in an Age of Inequality *Insights from the United Kingdom, Ireland and France*

Executive Introduction

Edited and introduced by:

Mark Boyle (*University of Liverpool*)

Aileen Jones (*Liverpool City-Region Combined Authority*)

Olivier Sykes (*University of Liverpool*)

Ian Wray (*University of Liverpool*)

With articles by:

Neil Harris (*Cardiff University*) on *Planning Wales Spatially*

Xavier Desjardins (*Sorbonne Université*) on *Planning France Spatially*

Brendan Murtagh (*Queen’s University Belfast*) on *Planning Northern Ireland Spatially*

Greg Lloyd (*Ulster University and Wageningen University*) on *Planning Scotland Spatially*

Niamh Moore-Cherry (*University College Dublin*) on *Planning the Republic of Ireland Spatially*

Vincent Goodstadt (*Common Futures Network and University of Manchester*) on *Planning England Spatially*

FOREWORD



The persistent social and economic inequalities across the UK need to be challenged. This need is heightened by the political and economic uncertainties brought by Brexit and the global challenges of technological and climate change. This report by the University of Liverpool Heseltine Institute for Public Policy, Practice and Place, titled “National’ Spatial Strategies in an Age of Inequality’, is therefore very timely.

Cities and regions are increasingly taking ownership of their futures through the devolution agenda, yet deeper structural inequalities cannot be tackled by local action alone. National frameworks are needed, not least, given the lack of one for England and, more generally, because of the sectoral approach which is taken to policy.

In October 2018 I therefore launched the UK2070 Commission, an independent inquiry into city and regional inequalities in the UK. The UK2070 Commission not only aims to illuminate the nature of these inequalities but also to illustrate the potential value of national spatial frameworks, and to identify the range of policy interventions needed to address them, including governance and fiscal instruments. The UK2070 Commission will report its findings in November 2019.

This report profiles international practice and draws together valuable experience from Wales, France, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Ireland, and England. It identifies fifteen ‘lessons’ which in combination have implications for a potential new generation of national spatial planning in the UK and beyond.

This report was submitted initially as a response to the UK2070 Commission’s call for evidence. I am therefore delighted to see it now published as a Policy Report by the University of Liverpool Heseltine Institute. Gleaned from direct experience in the practice of national spatial planning, it will inform the considerations of the UK2070 Commission and of all those seeking more effective planning of development across the UK.

Lord Kerslake
Chair of the UK2070 Commission

EXECUTIVE INTRODUCTION

‘We have reached a tipping point. Inequality can no longer be treated as an afterthought. We need to focus the debate on how the benefits of growth are distributed. Our report ‘In it Together’ and our work on inclusive growth have clearly shown that there doesn’t have to be a trade-off between growth and equality. On the contrary, the opening up of opportunity can spur stronger economic performance and improve living standards across the board.’
(José Ángel Gurría Treviño, Secretary-General OECD Paris, 2015)

Background:

The Heseltine Institute for Public Policy, Practice and Place is a University of Liverpool research institute dedicated to bringing together academic expertise and policy makers in support of a new generation of public policy for successful cities and city-regions. This report has its origins in a Heseltine Institute sponsored event held on June 21st 2018 on ‘National’ Spatial Strategies at the University of Liverpool as part of the Department of Geography and Planning’s Civic Design Conference. It also originates from a submission made on the basis of this conference to the Lord Kerslake UK2070 Commission on city and regional inequalities in the United Kingdom. The editors would like to thank contributors for presenting at this conference and submitting written versions of their papers for publication herein.

- The main report incorporates a Foreword by Lord Kerslake and 7 articles:
- Foreword, Lord Kerslake, Chair of the UK2070 Commission inquiry into city and regional inequalities in the United Kingdom.
 - 1. Introduction - ‘National’ Spatial Strategies In An Age Of Inequality: Insights From The United Kingdom, Ireland And France *Mark Boyle University of Liverpool, Aileen Jones Liverpool City-Region Combined Authority, Olivier Sykes University of Liverpool, and Ian Wray University of Liverpool.*
 - 2. The Evolution Of National-Level Planning In Wales: A Retrenchment From Spatial Planning To Land-Use Planning *Neil Harris Cardiff University*
 - 3. National Spatial Planning In France: From Nostalgia To Reinvention? *Xavier Desjardins Sorbonne Université*
 - 4. The Regional Development Strategy Northern Ireland, Inequality And Balanced Development *Brendan Murtagh Queen’s University Belfast*
 - 5. National Strategic Planning In Scotland: Past, Present And Future *Greg Lloyd Ulster University and Wageningen University*
 - 6. Project Ireland 2040: Business As Usual Or A New Dawn? *Niamh Moore-Cherry University College Dublin*
 - 7. A New Agenda For England and The UK: The Missing Pieces In The Jigsaw *Vincent Goodstadt Common Futures Network and University of Manchester*

Although heavily informed by analysis presented by contributors, it is important to be aware that what follows in this Executive Introduction are conclusions and syntheses reached strictly by the editors. Readers are strongly encouraged to digest the main report to learn more about the specific case studies reviewed and the views of each of the contributing authors.

Corresponding author: Professor Mark Boyle, Director, Heseltine Institute for Public Policy, Practice and Place, University of Liverpool, 1-7 Abercromby Square, Liverpool, L69 7WY. Tel: 0151 795 7532, Email: mark.boyle@liverpool.ac.uk.

Further details about the Heseltine Institute can be obtained at: www.liverpool.ac.uk/heseltine-institute. E-copies of the main report can be accessed at this website.

Introduction

The Kerslake UK2070 Commission's 2018/19 'Independent inquiry into city and regional inequalities in the UK' provides an opportunity to think again about the status of 'national' spatial strategies and 'national' spatial plans in and for the UK, and for comparison, in and for the UK's nearest neighbours. The word 'national' is being used here loosely and of course imprecisely – to incorporate spatial strategies conceived and enacted in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and in nearby Ireland and France. Our supposition is that these countries might benefit by sharing their experiences of plan-making and execution, and in addition might usefully harness their collective learning to inform the possibility of a national spatial strategy for England, where territorial planning at scale has been conspicuous by its absence. And so in our main report we ask: what spatial strategies exist in these jurisdictions? What have been their recent histories? What is the current status of spatial strategising? What kinds of politics surround plan-making and implementation? Who owns plans? Who funds plans? How are plans governed? What works and what does not?

This Executive Introduction to the main report **first** asks: why national spatial planning and why now? It underscores growing concern throughout the advanced capitalist (OECD) world with the efficacy of the prevailing neoliberal model of development and widening social and spatial inequalities, exacerbated by spatially blind development policy and manifested most clearly in a so-called 'revolt of the rustbelt' and a rise in political populism. We argue that three significant developments may lead (in fact arguably already are leading) to a final exhaustion of consent for this model paving the way for an alternative template for growth and providing further impetus for a purposeful (re)turn towards national spatial planning: a) post-crash (post 2008) neoliberalism redux and austerity, b) Brexit, and c) the emerging importance of artificial intelligence and big data in the national economy. **Second**, alongside rethinking of the mainstream and dominant political-economic paradigm, we then argue that spatially conscious national regulations, policies and resource allocation practices and place-sensitive development policies can do more to support a broader number of flourishing city-regions beyond 'hot' core cities, and promote a more egalitarian, productive and sustainable distribution of national economic activity. **Third**, we read across the articles to follow in the main report, examining inter-alia spatial planning concerns, traditions, and practices in Wales, France, Northern Ireland, Scotland, the Irish Republic, and England and whilst recognizing that existing spatial planning has been enacted *within* neoliberalism, suggest that national spatial planning should attend to fifteen 'lessons' which together might enhance the capacity of territorial strategies to promote more balanced regional growth.

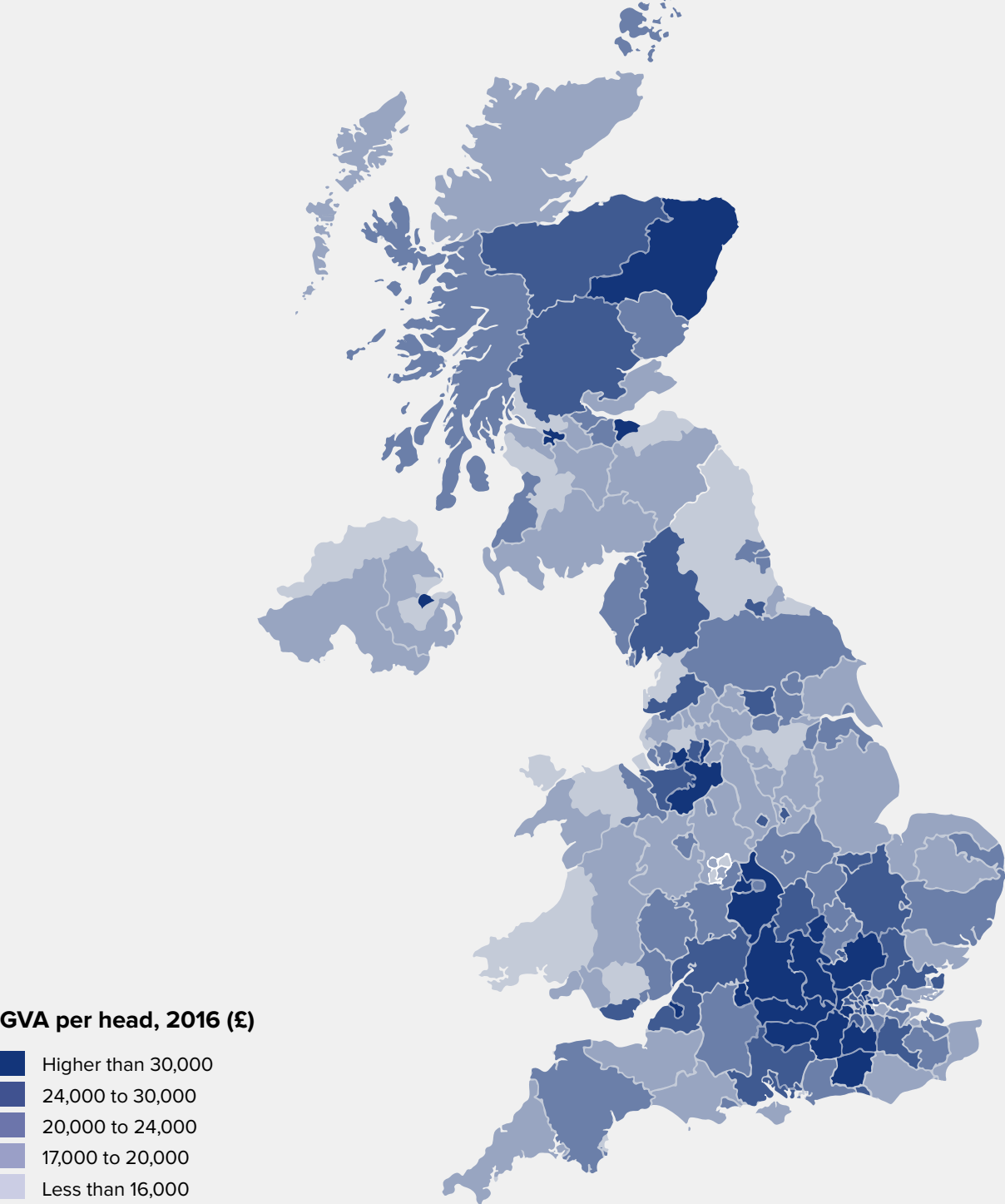
Why National Spatial Planning, Why Now?

After more than forty years of globalisation, deindustrialisation, neoliberal reform and entrepreneurial liberal capitalism, it comes as little surprise that socio-economic inequalities within the advanced capitalist (OECD) countries have forced themselves onto the political, policy and intellectual scene with heightened force and vigour. Inequalities not only exist and persist but over time it seems they have widened and become more impactful. For their part, planners, regional scientists, and geographers have contributed a geographical lens to these debates, pointing to the existence of accelerated socio-spatial polarisation, sharpening uneven geographical development, and growing regional disparities. Exacerbating already existing structures and geographies of inequality, supply side economics, deregulation, marketization, city-regional entrepreneurialism and trickle-down economics have in the end failed a generation; a rising tide, it transpires, does not lift all boats, certainly not at the same speed. An affront to social justice, inequalities are also now understood to be detrimental to economic growth and to political stability. Perhaps not surprisingly then, there has arisen a new politics of inequality signalled by claims of a growing dislocation between representative democracy and popular sovereignty. Political populism has mushroomed in so-called 'left behind' communities and transformed the political landscape.

In the UK and more specifically post-imperial England, this historical dynamic has etched an indelible imprint on the geography of the space economy leaving a much discussed North-South divide, although in reality spatial injustice and disparities in living standards are distributed in complex ways at a variety of scales throughout the entire country. The mid-twentieth century demise of the UK's metropolitan dominance over what has been referred to as an 'imperial world economy' or 'old international division of labour' paved the way for an age of globalisation and a 'new international division of labour' marked by both a consolidation of TNC headquarters, financial institutions and producer services in London and the South-East and as a result an accelerated growth of the UK's capital city as a cosmopolitan 'alpha' global city and a globalisation of some industrial processes, deindustrialisation of once vibrant imperial industrial workshops and port cities, in particular northern English city-regions, capital flight, and in consequence a comparative lack of prosperity and opportunity in certain places. Uneven geographic development has been accelerated by a disposition to favour a spatially blind national investment strategy which wittingly and unwittingly has reinforced and aggravated socio-spatial polarisation. There has emerged a growing sense in so-called 'rustbelt regions' of limited futures and alienation, and it is perhaps predictable that some (although importantly not all) registered their disaffection with the political status quo by voting to Brexit from the EU.

Three further developments are combining to ensure that the current direction of travel is not sustainable and will not self-correct in the absence of significant intervention.

Figure 1
Regional and Local Economic Growth in the United Kingdom



Source Harari 2018 1 Number 05795, 5 September 2018
<http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN05795/SN05795.pdf>

Firstly, post-crash neoliberalism redux and austerity has visited unprecedented pain on people throughout the OECD world but especially on these countries' most vulnerable communities, diminishing key local government services, entitlements and social protections, public and private sector pay, capital expenditure programmes, investments in education and health care and access to affordable housing. As already stated, the response has been a rise in political populism, anti-austerity protests, and a series of earthquake elections and referenda which have shocked the body politic. Something has changed in our politics. Second, Brexit, and in particular any hard Brexit, will have different consequences for different UK city-regions, seemingly impacting most negatively declining city-regions and blue collar towns, some of whom ironically voted for it. By dint of deindustrialisation and their marginality, arguably these places suffer from greater susceptibility (likelihood of suffering harm from Brexit), weaker coping capacities (less ability to withstand the shock of Brexit), and weaker adaptation capacities (ability to put in place purposeful Brexit mitigation strategies). Thirdly, a Fourth

Industrial Revolution, we are widely advised, beckons. Whereas the First Industrial Revolution used water and steam to power production, the Second, electricity to create mass production and the Third, electronics and information technology to automate production, the future prosperity of the UK will depend on the data revolution, powerful new data analytic tools and more complex automated systems, including and in particular machine learning and artificial intelligence. But this emerging economy risks aggravating existing inequalities. AI ecosystems are perhaps already more developed in some UK regions; for example in London, Bristol, Cambridge and Edinburgh. Will these regions benefit from this head start so as to further entrench uneven geographical development and open up a new productivity gap between them and say England's Northern Powerhouse?

Our thesis is that the UK's path-trajectory across the past fifty years, in combination with current and emerging developments, make it impossible to countenance a resolution to the country's social and spatial inequalities within the confines of the current political-economic status quo. Concomitant with a wider rethinking

of the mainstream political-economic paradigm, there is a need to interrogate policy options which might arrest and reverse unsustainable uneven geographic development and socio-spatial polarisation. The case for a new national spatial plan for the UK, and in particular for England where the need for such a plan has been particularly overlooked and ignored, has never been more compelling. With the nation bifurcating along class and regional lines we need to find a way to promote balanced regional growth and we need to do so urgently.

Framing Spatial Planning: In Support of Polycentric Place Sensitive Development Policy, Local Institutional Empowerment and Sustainable Urban Development

In the UK, territorial inequalities have expanded without recourse to a strong UK Government national spatial plan or redistributive regional policy. This was not always so. Following the second-world-war regional policy ascended to a position of some prominence as debates over the country's North-South divide captured the attention of elected representatives and Whitehall. Following accession to the EU in 1973 however, the UK steadily ceded the obligation to invest in lagging regions and regions undergoing sectoral restructuring, to EU Structural and Cohesion Funds. Undoubtedly, these funds have played a significant role in ameliorating what might otherwise have been even greater regional inequities. Given its history of professional expertise, the UK in fact played a central role in lobbying for and designing EU regional policy. But this transfer of responsibility to the EU did create something of a vacuum in the UK itself; as we will witness later in the report, certainly some parts of the UK have experimented with regional policy, plans and instruments, and not without success, but there has been no central national directive or dedicated fund of scale supporting balanced regional development. We note that the tax and spend regime has exerted a significant redistribution of income and that institutional innovations such as Regional Development Agencies (1998-2012) have made a meaningful contribution but still contend that a systematically planned spatial strategy envisioning a sustainable polycentric space economy has been lacking. Meanwhile Brexit is likely to remove or reduce EU investment in UK regions. Whether a new UK Shared Prosperity Fund will be capable of delivering the same resources and benefits as EU Structural and Cohesion Funds remains to be seen.

Concomitant with a reset of the wider dominant political-economic model, there needs to be a renewed focus upon national spatial planning. Both need to exist in conversation, the latter being informed by and playing a key role in realising the former. Quite

what needs to replace unbridled neoliberalism and its actually existing and mutant forms is unclear; certainly we refrain from venturing here into much wider debates concerning post-crash alternative varieties of capitalism, economic democracy, institutional redesign and structural reform. These debates are far from settled and in many cases are merely embryonic; intellectual and political positions remain underdeveloped and hotly contested. But we do note that the substantive content of and efficacy of national spatial planning will depend in no small way on the structural political-economic system within which it nests and draws strength from and to which it contributes and gives concrete expression.

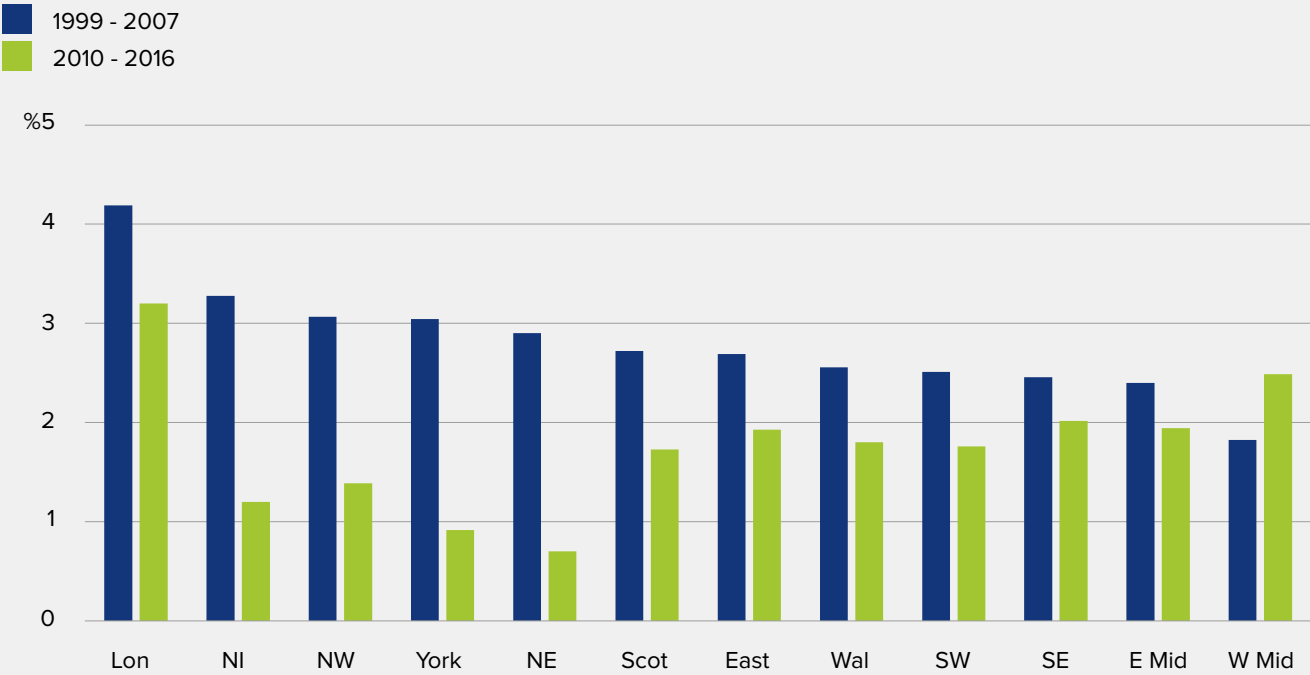
By national spatial planning of course we mean something other than central command of the national space economy. Whilst not an altogether moribund pursuit, at least in liberal capitalist polities efforts to reengineer the geography of economic activity through muscular state mandate have proven to be politically and practically problematic, not to mention largely ineffective. Instead, we envisage spatial strategising to occupy itself with deploying scarce resources (and by implication in the case of national spatial strategising, scarce national resources) to secure not only the ongoing flourishing of successful city-regions, but also to build resourcefulness and capacity in places left behind by globalisation and neoliberalism so that they too might become self-starting and energetic centres of sustainable urban development.

The key terms here are 'polycentricity', 'local institutional capacity' and 'sustainable urban development'.

Polycentricity: Our thinking is consistent with the European Spatial Development Perspective, a framework adopted by EU member states in 1999 which promotes balanced regional development through polycentricity.

To counter the established tendency for national economies across to EU to be increasingly dominated by their respective metropolitan cores, the space economy is now to be planned around a wider number of second-tier city-region hubs. Whilst growth in core cities is for the most part to be welcomed and has the potential to entrain second-tier cities in its wake, balanced regional development requires more spatially conscious and crucially place-sensitive national resource allocation models. Place-sensitivity matters as the particular mix and weight of policy instruments needs to be customised to the histories and structural prospects of different city-regions. According to the ESDP, city-regions comprise territories in which multiple (and frequently interlinked) spatial systems are simultaneously articulated, incorporating such activities as commuting, supply of consumer and public services, transport, communication, contact networks and production chain linkages. As such they are ideally placed to lead regional development and in so doing distribute national economic growth more equitably. The ESDP also devotes considerable attention to the simultaneous and integrated development of regional cities and their hinterlands (semi-rural, rural and marine) as complementary units. Polycentric place-sensitive development not only promotes social and spatial justice; arguably it mobilises a wider pool of national productive

Figure 2
Comparison of economic growth by UK regions/countries before and after crisis
Annual average real terms % change during period; ordered by 1999-2007 average



Source Harari 2018 1 Number 05795, 5 September 2018
<http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN05795/SN05795.pdf>

assets and generates more overall growth in the national economy. Equity and efficiency conjoin.

Local Institutional Capacity: Polycentric development is best realised through spatially sensitive national policies which harness local institutional capacity.

In order for cities to thrive, regional and local tiers of government must have effective powers. Consistently, weaker city-regional institutional capacity is associated with poorer economic and regional economic-social outcomes. Better national support for city-regions must unfold in tandem with and be underpinned by stronger local capacity. This philosophy has its origins in ‘New Regionalism’ scholarship which in broad outline evangelises for a widespread movement towards the acquisition by subnational regions of greater responsibility for their own affairs. In more centralised states, this demands a degree of devolution from central government to local governments. The UK for example remains one of the most centralised states in Europe, to a fault. But devolution of powers and resources from the UK parliament has commenced, albeit unevenly across the country: the Scottish Parliament, the National Assembly for Wales, the Northern Ireland Assembly and the London Assembly are all good examples. Moreover, since July 2012, waves of city deals (bespoke funding packages overseen by devolved decision-making powers, in particular local authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships) have worked to fortify institutional capacity in different localities and to harness local communities in decision making. And in the cases of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, Greater Manchester, Liverpool City-Region, Tees Valley, West Midlands, West of England, and Sheffield City-Region, devolution deals have been overseen by directly elected metro-mayors. National spatial strategies which seek to fortify the competitive strengths of multiple city-region economic engines will require these city-regions to have even greater institutional capacity, autonomy, and resources than they currently do, if they are to be effective.

Sustainable Urban Development: The objective of place-sensitive spatial planning is to prompt, prime and catalyse self-initiating and sustainable urban development in both fast growing city-regions and in a wide range of second-tier and otherwise stagnating, declining, and struggling city-regions.

The principles behind sustainable urban development are elaborated in the EU’s Leipzig Charter and Toledo Declaration which prioritise integrated development (institutions aligning their work horizontally and vertically so that plans are reinforced), participatory models of governance (co-created solutions with all impacted stakeholders included in key decisions), diverse economies (new wealth for (old) cities), social justice (inclusive growth and degrowth) and environmental sustainability (low carbon and resilient cities). The Leipzig Charter is consistent with the Quito Declaration, UN Habitat III, and the global New Urban Agenda and underpins the Urban Agenda for the EU which was launched in May 2016 with the ‘Pact of Amsterdam’. In support of this agenda, the EU has created 14 urban partnerships which collectively are working to help EU city-regions unlock their potential by attending to: sustainable land-use, public

procurement, energy transition, climate adaptation, urban mobility, digital transition, circular economy, jobs and skills in the local economy, urban poverty, inclusion of migrants and refugees, housing, air quality, culture and cultural heritage, and security in public spaces.

Of course there exists a vast literature on each of these concepts and each has been subject to sustained critical interrogation. For some, the ideas of polycentricity, local institutional competency and sustainable urban development come freighted with intractable limitations and remain too wedded to building resilience so as to maintain the political-economic status quo. We do not pretend these critiques are not without consequence. But we wish to persevere with these key terms, albeit with caution. They continue to speak to the significant themes we wish to engage and convey in spirit even if they lack in political awareness and analytic sophistication. We encounter again the need for parallel reflection on wider political-economic reform and the virtues and vices of key spatial planning concepts. Alternative political philosophies, institutional reform, new models of capitalism and revised market-state-third sector relationships will in due course imbue fresh meaning on and afford fresh possibilities for spatial planning lexicons, which by their very nature exist as meaningful only *within history*. But if approached as aspirations not necessarily tethered or better still untethered from the existing hegemonic order and invested with variable meaning in given contexts, they remain powerful ideas and laudable destinations to aim for.

Improving The Efficacy Of National Spatial Planning: Extracting lessons from Scotland, Wales, France, Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, and England

In the full report, Neil Harris first reviews the Welsh experience, observing that the Welsh Government is in the process of preparing a twenty year National Development Framework re-focusing on land-use planning, replacing the broader spatial planning approach preferred in the earlier Wales Spatial Plan. Xavier Desjardins meanwhile notes that whilst the uneven development of French regions has always been a major political and social preoccupation, the French State’s capacity to promote balanced regional development has been diminished; the heyday of ‘aménagement du territoire’ now presents itself to a degree as an exercise in nostalgia. Brendan Murtagh reflects upon changes over time in Northern Ireland’s Regional Development Strategy 2025, noting the particular challenges which attend to spatial planning in post-conflict societies. For his part, Greg Lloyd discusses Scotland’s highly regarded National Planning Framework but warns that post-crash neoliberal pressures and

austerity have conspired to degrade, dilute and dissolve key aspects of this model. Niamh Moore-Cherry then reflects upon Ireland’s bold new 2040 National Planning Framework, which aspires to a step change in spatial planning in Ireland following the poor performance of the earlier National Spatial Strategy. Finally, Vincent Goodstadt notes that whilst unlike other administrations England lacks an explicit national spatial plan, already one exists *de facto* by dint of the cumulative effects of spatially blind national policies. Alas, too frequently this has conspired to entrench existing inequalities.

Collectively these articles bear witness to the uneven mosaic of national spatial planning practices currently at work across the UK and its nearest neighbours. It is clear furthermore that the case for national spatial strategies in each jurisdiction has waxed and waned in popularity through time and although now more established in some nations than in others, has yet to secure universal consent anywhere. Equally variable over space and across time is the meaning of national spatial planning: its aims and objectives, approaches, concepts and practices. Furthermore, there exists insufficient evaluative work to extract a conclusion about the efficacy of different strategies and tactics. These qualifications made, a reading across the articles suggests that plans which attend to the following fifteen lessons (in no particular order) may stand a greater chance of success. Our final caveat is that the spatial plans under scrutiny exist within neoliberalism, albeit they occupy a complex relationship with market logics; our lessons need to be read with an awareness of history and context to the fore.



1 National spatial plans depend upon, and constitute a vital test bed for, new models of leadership within the planning profession. Plans require skillful leaders – perhaps even a new generation of planners/leaders – who are able to reconcile planning expertise with the demands of both national investment for economic efficiency *and* social control over national investment decisions for equity and economic democracy. The need for hard political choices and professional and technical expertise necessitates that plans cannot be

wholly driven by stakeholder communities. But radically new consultative mechanisms must be instigated from the outset, and the voices of often excluded communities heard and ingested. Balanced regional development is assuming new importance given the ascent of political populism. Traditional models of consultation risk deafness to historically novel grievances and modes of political organisation and proposed solutions upwelling from below. National spatial plans will only work if they are meaningfully coproduced with the communities they are seeking to support and underpinned by participatory governance. They need to be authentically co-authored, not least with so-called ‘left behind’ communities.

- 2. Both national economic cores and second-tier cities require support.** National spatial planning must concern itself with spatially conscious national investment strategies which foster sustainable urban development in both economic cores and a wider range of second-tier city-regions, including stagnating and declining city-regions. A focus upon polycentricity should not be taken to imply a disregard for already hot and surging economic engines, including capital cities and global cities. These city-regions deliver wealth for the whole nation and curbs on their healthy growth may not serve the public good. Moreover, second-tier cities are indeed imbricated in the hinterlands of large mega-cities and spillovers can cascade development throughout urban networks. These networks comprise complex power geometries in which second-tier cities are not always subordinate and passive actors. Growth in London, Cardiff, Dublin, Paris, Belfast, and Edinburgh is not always at the expense of the rest of the country. It is necessary both to further promote already thriving national champions as well as to build the capacity of city-regions whose performance has been less favourable and whose prospects are less promising.
- 3. Plans should make explicit the need for difficult investment choices.** This said, because of the highly charged political environments in which they operate, it is often difficult for spatial plans to acknowledge the fact that difficult choices need to be made and cannot be avoided. For as long as resources are scarce and there is a need to ration, decisions will be required vis-à-vis investing in one place at the expense of another. Win-wins are possible but are not the norm. Instead of persisting with creative ambiguity or spreading finite resources too thinly, it is best that hard choices be vigorously debated at the outset and consent (at least working consent or mutual understanding) reached concerning priorities before departure. If spatial justice, territorial equity, and new understandings of equity as a progenitor of efficiency are to be essential criteria in resource allocation formula, this needs to be made explicit and argued for. Which hot core-cities and second-tier cities are to be prioritized for investment and at what scale constitutes a key question; there must be no fudge when answering this question.
- 4. Plans must focus upon both inter-urban *and* intra-urban inequalities.** Distributive iniquities are not only inter-urban, they are also intra-urban. Whilst cities constitute potential

engines for wider regional development, it is important not to assume that trickle down to surrounding towns and hinterlands will inevitably follow. In fact some of the most severe inequalities exist between cities and their hinterlands, including cities and smaller satellite towns and depopulated rural areas. Urban planning, town, marine and rural planning and brown, blue and green growth strategies need to combine to effect growth which works for entire city-regions and not just for principal cities and their downtowns and CBDs.

5. **Plans must carry authority and be able to discipline decisions, behaviours and actions.** Plans must have a grip on and be able to influence and direct actions. Spatial strategies which merely inform and frame resource allocation, investment and development decisions all too often get sidestepped and even simply ignored. To deal effectively with laissez-faire development pressures, it may be necessary for plans to have juridical and legislative force and standing. This said slow moving statutory plans, prepared under the rubric of the regulatory Town and Country Planning system can be ineffective at steering activity and in some instances non-statutory and informal plans have been effective, faster to prepare, and more engaged with political decision making processes. Whether to place plans on a statutory basis then remains open to debate; whatever the outcome the key point is that plans must carry authority and a sufficient spirit of seriousness to discipline behaviour and direct actions and outcomes.
6. **Building the institutional capacity of city-regions is a prerequisite for the success of plans.** Top down directive solutions to regional inequalities, conceived and administered remotely and from afar from the political centre, will perform less well than local solutions, devised and enacted by local institutions, and in particular democratically elected local institutions. Weak local institutional capacity is consistently associated with poor regional policy outcomes. Strong local institutional thickness and competence is positively correlated with more effective regional policy outcomes. For more centralised states, national planning and devolution must be essential bedfellows
7. **Plans need to be accompanied by dedicated state spending strategies and capital investment funds.** National spatial strategies and national investment funds need to be brought into close alignment; ideally the latter needs to be devised and administered according to principles set forth in the former. Too often, competing pressures on capital spending and infrastructural funds results in a drift from what plans conceive to be a better or more strategic allocation of resources. Planning and investment need to be brought under a single governance mechanism; if administered by different institutions they should at least be legally obliged to cross-reference tightly to each other.
8. **Plans need to be governed so as to ensure they remain apart from the exigencies of political cycles and can consolidate**

around a long term vision. Whilst it is essential that plans are subjected to democratic accountability, it is also the case that they are best overseen by governance structures which are immune from immediate political pressures so that they can adhere to a long term vision. This is not to invoke an age old tension between professional technocratic planning and elected politicians but is to insist that strategies underpinned by sound planning principles must never be compromised by the need for quick political wins, or even in some cases ‘stroke’, patronage and clientalist politics.

9. **Plans need to promote both vertical and horizontal integration in decision-making.** National spatial plans occupy a niche within multi-scalar governance regimes and need to draw upon, inform, be consistent with and consolidate EU regional policy, regional and city plans and community and neighbourhood initiatives (vertical integration). At national level, there also needs to be integration across the breadth of the government’s own departments. A cross-sectoral, all-of-government approach is needed, in which departments future-proof their spend systematically against an agreed list of spatial priorities (horizontal integration). Plans need to be reinforced rather than undercut by sectoral policies enacted at other levels and elsewhere in the state machinery. National spatial planning can be compromised by fiscal regimes which bring city-regions into a heightened competition. Where the local tax base constitutes an important revenue stream, local authorities can be driven into a competition for investment and a ‘race for rates’ which can in turn undermine their enthusiasm for spatial equity and balanced regional growth. The fiscal environment has a role to play in incentivising and disincentivising popular subscription to the principle of national spatial planning.
10. **A wider concept of economy is required: economic development is best achieved by supporting a mixed economy cherishing each of the ‘market economy’, the ‘foundational economy’, and the ‘social economy’ and therein interactions between all three.** Spatial strategising should occupy itself with building resourceful city-regions. Certainly, such regions ought to be able to better compete in the national and global economy. Plans should work with national, regional, and local industrial and development agencies to support the attraction of FDI, the growth of SMEs and an indigenous export sector, and the promotion of skills and innovation policies. But alongside the central role of the market or ‘commodity economy’, the ‘foundational economy’ and the ‘social economy’ have a role to play in the renaissance of particularly lagging places. The former invites debate concerning the role of public ownership and public sector entrepreneurship in directing and better harnessing (through new procurement practices for instance) critical and often invisible, essential but mundane ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ infrastructure (for example transport, energy, digital capacity, ports) and items of collective consumption (for example schools, hospitals, and houses). The latter suggest a new focus upon social enterprise and economic actors with ethical motives who exist in opposition to strictly market

logics. Diverse economies should be managed so that they complement and reinforce each other. Finally, welfare and welfare reform has a role to play in supporting all three economies, by addressing health inequalities, education disadvantage, a lack of affordable housing, poverty, and precarity, all of which undermine productivity.

11. **Plans should knit together development visions which cross borders.** Spatial plans introduced in countries which share a border should be designed so as to be complementary. Where possible, cross-border spatial planning, itself a distinctive planning tradition with its own competencies, skills and expertise, should be undertaken, not least because border regions often face unique challenges and can in some cases be debilitated by especially marked isolation and marginality. Where formal cross-border spatial planning is not possible, national spatial planning should take cognisance of the aspirations and visions for border regions which exist in adjacent territories.
12. **Both ‘growth’ and ‘degrowth’ need to be planned for.** Whilst ‘overall growth through balanced growth’ constitutes a central objective for national spatial plans, there is a need at times also to plan for de-growth, either because city-regions are shrinking but doing so haphazardly or because further growth might contribute excessive carbon emissions and jeopardise aspirations to meet emissions reductions targets and transition to a low-carbon future. Increasingly, GDP per capita is coming to be understood as an insufficient and perhaps even a distracting and unhelpful indicator of regional development. Unplanned de-growth can be as deleterious as unplanned growth; planned de-growth in contrast can be as productive and beneficial as planned growth.
13. **Plans should be informed by international good practice.** It is clear that planners are interested in the work being undertaken in other countries and already policy ideas are being shared and trafficked. But much more could be done. There is now a wealth of expertise capturing learning from prior experiences of designing and implementing national spatial strategies. Of course learning culled from one context cannot easily be applied to good effect in other contexts. But equally there is no reason to begin in each instance from scratch and reinvent the wheel. Expertise is easily accessible and routinely sourced through established policy transfer and exchange networks. Networks such as those supported by the ERDF’s ESPON (territorial development) and Urbact III (sustainable urban development) programmes provide learning opportunities and resources for improved spatial planning. Universities and ‘knowledge quarters’ meanwhile present essential partners, not least as they themselves seek to build data infrastructures and extend their impact and reach through enhanced civic engagement.
14. **Plans need to be delivered on.** Once established it is important that plans are seen to be followed through on. Persistent failure to implement plans fully – or even partially – may undermine public enthusiasm for spatial planning per

se. Inaction is not only disappointing but it can be corrosive, and a litany of past failure can lead to paralysing apathy for the wider endeavour and unhealthy cynicism. We must not pretend to plan if we do not plan to plan.

15. **The efficacy of plans needs to be subject to constant appraisal.** To ensure that plans are evaluated according to their merit and their strengths and weaknesses are widely understood, there needs to be a political commitment to evidence based and scheduled monitoring – and from the outset so that a baseline and results framework can be put in place.

Conclusion

Forty years of neoliberal economic development and socio-spatial inequality, in combination with a decade of biting austerity, Brexit’s uneven geographical risks and impacts, and the potential geographically polarising consequences of a much vaunted Fourth Industrial Revolution, necessitate that urgent attention is placed (once again) on national spatial planning and national spatial strategies. These plans and strategies need to emerge in conversation with a rethinking on the institutional configuration of the dominant political-economic mainstream; spatial planning philosophies, lexicons, concepts, and practices assume meaning and purpose only within given historical conditions. For us, there is an urgent need to interrogate the spatially differentiated impacts of currently spatially blind national policies and resource allocation practices and within the context of debates concerning new varieties of capitalism, economic democracy, institutional and regulatory shifts, alternative growth paradigms, diverse economies, and evolving thinking on market-state-civil society relationships, to work towards a plan which fosters polycentricity, more strategic and spatially conscious and purposeful investment in support of a wider number of flourishing second-tier city regions, stronger local institutions, and a dedicated pursuit of sustainable urban development. Countries will prosper if the right balance of city-regions prosper; a more distributed space economy will address unsustainable social inequalities, will be good for the economy overall, and may arrest the currency enjoyed by at times regressive political populisms in the UK’s left-behind communities.

The purpose of this Heseltine Institute report is to bring into conversation the national spatial strategies currently being pursued in Wales, France, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and the Republic of Ireland – so as to inform each of the others and to extract lessons for England, a nation with an unfortunate absence of consequential national spatial strategising. These plans exist within the neoliberal mainstream – albeit working in complex ways with market logics. As such, conclusions reached as to their efficacy need to be understood within this context. Nevertheless, our reading of the articles contained in the full report led us to identify fifteen lessons which might prove helpful for spatial planners; our list is not exhaustive. We leave it to the reader to digest the full report and assess the extent to which they agree with our conclusions or extract alternative conclusions of their own.

Copies of the report can be accessed at:
www.liverpool.ac.uk/heseltine-institute