CHARTING NEW TERRITORY FOR PUBLIC POLICY AND PRACTICE
At a time of unprecedented change and challenge, the Heseltine Institute provides policymakers and practitioners with an experienced and authoritative source of evidence and fresh ideas.

The Institute is set up to be versatile, robust and relevant. It connects a breadth of global perspectives with an in-depth knowledge of how places work. Its value is an engaged approach that applies this expertise to the needs of partners working in Liverpool, nationally and internationally.

The Heseltine Institute works with organisations to help them think harder and look further, delivering international research programmes, consultancy services and bespoke learning options. In a world without familiar landmarks, it is here to provide clear policy direction, practical solutions and space to think differently.

Professor Sir Howard Newby CBE, Vice-Chancellor

Discuss how to engage at: heseltine@liverpool.ac.uk @livuniheseltine +44 (0)151 795 2485
Foreword

Today more than ever universities must challenge the status quo and seize the opportunity to define the future policy agenda.

I have long argued that the energy of the UK’s cities needs to be unleashed. Their power lies within the connected strengths of their institutions, their businesses and their people. In these times of constraint, it is only by increasing their capacity to work together that international cities like Liverpool will increase their competitiveness.

The Heseltine Institute exists to address this challenge.

Since its establishment as a civic institution in 1881, the University of Liverpool has forged a reputation for producing internationally excellent and impactful research. Moreover, it is an increasingly important economic player, a ‘thought leader’, an international gateway and an honest broker.

This Institute harnesses these qualities.

It reflects the demands of today’s knowledge-driven, globalised society, providing a stimulus for economic growth and civic revival. By placing openness and exchange at the heart of its business, it renews the University’s core purpose and value.

The Institute’s goal is to combine intellectual energy with a breadth of focus and depth of engagement. It is accessible, inventive and useful – advancing ideas and solutions that are vital in an age of austerity, economic challenge and profound societal change.

I am delighted to be associated with the Institute’s pioneering work and fundamental purpose.
Responding to new challenges and opportunities in an environment of uncertainty and diminishing resources demands intelligent, collaborative thinking.

The Heseltine Institute connects policymakers and practitioners to the best of the University’s policy research and the full breadth of its local, national and international networks.

The Institute seeks to build prosperous and sustainable futures for places and enable them to manage the impacts of global economic, environmental, social and cultural change. To achieve this, we bring together leading researchers with expertise across:

- Economy
- Health and Wellbeing
- Society
- Governance
- Environment
- Technology.

Our focus is rooted and practical – the regions, cities and communities where people work and build their lives. We don’t view issues in isolation but in real-life contexts where policies connect and impact.

This enables us to respond to complex questions like:

- Why are some cities across the globe pulling away from the rest and what does this mean for our future?
- How can we make communities more resilient in the face of austerity and growing health inequalities?
- What will rural areas look like as cities seek to grow and yet become more sustainable?
- How can we harness the power of new technology to make smarter decisions whilst safeguarding the interests of citizens?

Reaching across the whole University campus, our joined-up expertise enables us to take a fresh and lateral look at problems. We identify the different academic specialisms that help us to tackle the policy challenge and bring the right people to the table.
Our approach is shaped by our partners and is responsive to shifting policy priorities. We offer a range of services to fit around your specific needs:

Evidence and new perspectives
We look continuously for new research opportunities from across the world and work with a host of partners to deliver pace-setting international research programmes. Collaboration brings international perspective to problems, generates new ideas and delivers better solutions.

Problem solving
We deliver policy advice to individual organisations and consortia through tailored research projects and evaluations. Utilising skills and expertise from across academic disciplines and experienced external associates, we offer bespoke ‘stimulus’ sessions for boards and senior teams on strategic policy issues.

Learning options
We offer an informed and specialised approach to continuous professional development, working across disciplinary boundaries and with leading policymakers and practitioners. Our research-led approach ensures that whatever the format of the programme, it will be informed by leading-edge subject knowledge and introduce the latest high-level skills.

Space to think differently
Our events programme offers access to new networks and perspectives.

• Our Fresh Thinking series brings together academics, policymakers and practitioners to focus on shared challenges and emerging policy agendas.

• The Policy Provocations programme addresses the big policy challenges shaping our future and poses new approaches and solutions. Debates engage public audiences as well as senior decision-makers. Previous contributors to the series have included the Archbishop of Canterbury, Mayor of Liverpool, Joe Anderson, and Lord Andrew Adonis.
Across the globe, long-term economic and political processes are driving differentiation at every conceivable scale – international, national, sub-national and intra-city. These processes are giving cities like Liverpool and their regions greater responsibility for their own futures.

We can view this new reality as either a threat or a creative opportunity – more space in which to innovate and chart new territory.

What is certain is that the challenges of lasting economic recovery, sustainable living, or lifelong health and wellbeing cannot be overcome by a ‘business as usual’ approach or a simple reversion to traditional models and practice. If they are to be managed for the benefit of places, we need to understand the mechanisms that produce them and then think carefully and creatively about how we can influence them.

The inserts contained within this folder are not a series of ready-made solutions. Instead, they represent some of our current work with public, commercial and third sector partners into still largely unchartered areas of policy investigation. What connects them is a common concern to find and create better places.

The Heseltine Institute is rooted in the traditions and strengths of the University, but is also an expression of Liverpool’s own spirit of intellectual discovery.

We hope that these pieces provoke, challenge and provide a point of departure for a more stimulating, problem-focused approach to public policy research.

Working together, we will take these ideas forward.

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Alan Harding
Professor of Public Policy

Alan is Director of the Heseltine Institute and leads our work on the economy.

Alan has played a prominent role in rethinking the relationship between urban and regional policy, governance and the role of key urban centres in the national and global economy. He has acted as a policy adviser to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), UK Government, House of Commons Select Committees, regional and sub-regional agencies as well as city councils and private sector organisations.

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How can we better understand and influence the factors that make some cities succeed?

Across the globe we see growing evidence that a select group of cities is outperforming the rest. Whilst the emerging metropolises of Asia, South America and Africa are undergoing explosive urbanisation, some European and North American cities seem better able than others to manage their transition from industrial to ‘knowledge-based’ economies. Put simply, larger, more dense, diverse and well-connected cities are doing better. They have shown greater capacity to adjust to today’s rapid and profound economic transformations.

In the UK, differences within cities are stretching whilst economic disparities between places are growing. Why that should be the case, and what this means for future public policy, however, remains deeply controversial.

The policy challenge

Successive UK governments have pledged to ‘rebalance’ economic activity. Making better use of physical and human assets beyond London and the South East was one of the core conclusions of the Government-commissioned review of UK competitiveness by Lord Heseltine. The European Commission’s cohesion policies are founded on the proposition that the geographical de-concentration of economic activity makes for better long-term social, environmental and economic outcomes, a conclusion also strongly endorsed by OECD research.

Many UK economic development and regeneration programmes have aimed to rebalance economic activity, but their impact has often been marginal, and more than counter-balanced by market-driven change and supposedly ‘place blind’ but geographically selective policy choices, investments and regulatory decisions. Similarly, European policies and cohesion programmes, which aspire to promote decentralised economic growth, have been outweighed by EU decisions that have strengthened the advantages of the more prosperous city regions.

The UK policy context

So, despite broad policy commitments and interventions, disparities in economic fortunes are accelerating. The reasons for this are longstanding, complex and inter-related. Growth and dynamism in the ‘information age’ has been much more concentrated within the larger, more dense, diverse and well-connected urban regions than was the case in the late industrial period. As a result, the convergence in UK urban and regional economic fortunes that characterised the post World War II decades has gone into reverse. We have seen profound changes in occupational structures stripping out many middle-income jobs, with growing levels of female participation in the labour force combining to produce more polarised household incomes. Disparities within places have therefore grown too. Internal disparities are particularly pronounced within our larger city regions, which are both the main drivers for wealth creation and home to the bulk of economically marginalised and disadvantaged people.

There are clear contrasts in how different northern industrial cities have experienced these changes:

- Manchester and Leeds experienced similar economic growth rates similar to the south during the pre-2007 boom years and have proven more resilient in weathering the global financial crisis
- Liverpool, Sheffield and Newcastle, along with smaller centres, such as York and Preston, witnessed significant resurgence pre-2007, but their reliance on public investment has resulted in them being more adversely affected by subsequent recessions
- Peripheral and less economically diverse areas like Hull, Middlesbrough and Blackpool benefited little from the UK’s economic growth pre-2007 and have proven especially vulnerable to the economic downturn and the impact of austerity.

Even within economic ‘hot spots’, there are communities whose life chances improved little, if at all, during the boom years and whose marginal position is now being re-enforced by the impact of sluggish or negative growth rates and the retrenchment of public finances.

How has academic debate shaped public policy?

Public policy and debate have been dominated by two alternative and opposing schools of analysis.

The first is founded upon neo-classical economics and emphasises the importance of agglomeration economies, citing the benefits that arise when businesses locate close to one another. According to this view, globalisation has interacted with technological change, falling transport costs and occupational restructuring to selectively reinforce the ‘natural’ agglomeration advantages of the ‘smartest’ cities and city regions.

Rather than ‘bucking the market’, public policies should limit themselves to reacting to the problems generated by economic growth and facilitating labour mobility so that all workers can take advantage of the opportunities available in these new economic ‘hotspots’.

In contrast, some commentators have critically analysed the ‘neo-liberal’ approach, challenging the idea that growing disparities are ‘natural’ and suggesting ‘the state’ has much greater agency and ultimately, impact, than ‘neo-liberals’ would choose to recognise.
This view holds that ‘neo-liberal’ influence has shaped the direction of policy and regulatory reforms. The resulting market-based allocations generate an intense place-based competition for public and private resources whilst ensuring that resources gravitate towards those areas that are perceived as making the biggest contributions to national prosperity. In the UK this dominant ‘neo-liberal’ influence can be seen in the direction of policy reforms across transport, housing and planning, skills and economic development.

Where next? Charting new territory

From the Heseltine Institute’s perspective, neither of these schools have all the necessary tools required to study the complex processes that create the effects they seek to explain. They struggle therefore to generate concrete proposals that can take account of the complicated and messy real world environment.

We believe that generating practical and concrete options for reform means moving beyond these competing perspectives, focusing more closely on real decision-making processes and real-life contexts. This will help us understand what kind of policy interventions we need to achieve more desirable patterns of spatial development, however these may be defined.

We need a new approach to help us understand why the urban asset base of some places is being developed and extended far more quickly than others. We need a much closer level of engagement with policymakers and practitioners and our methodology needs to draw upon more structured, international comparative work if we are to understand why it is that some national experiences of inter-urban disparities, such as Germany, differ so radically from those in the UK.

‘Urban massification’ is a term that can be used to describe the selective process of asset-development that lies at the heart of divergences in the performances of city economies. The football industry provides an instructive example of how this process works. Within the UK, the combined impact of global TV companies, national regulatory bodies, individual clubs and local authorities have led to a huge but highly selective influx of non-domestic capital. This now dominates the ownership of elite clubs whilst non-UK coaches and players provide the bulk of leading clubs’ staff. At the same time, steep inflation in the cost of attendance has radically changed the composition of the fan-base.

In Germany, the most economically and politically decentralised country in Europe, non-domestic majority ownership of clubs remains impossible. Home-grown players and coaches account for a far higher percentage of leading clubs’ personnel and attendance prices allow for a greater diversity in the active fan-base. By analysing the contrasting models we can focus not just on which produces greatest short-term ‘success’ for leading clubs but also how this helps or hinders the prospects of the national team, as well as much more fundamental questions including who the game is for.

Football is by no means an exceptional example with a similar pattern and process beginning to be replicated in the media industry and higher education sector with a similarly complex balance sheet. By focusing on a number of specific examples of ‘urban massification’ in different national contexts and by engaging closely with those engaged in decision-making processes, we believe we can offer a much more dynamic account of what is influencing the factors that make some cities succeed, what role is played by public policy and governance and, most importantly, how we can begin to make things different.

Diane Coyle
Vice Chairman,
BBC Trust

"The growing divergence within our economy and society - whether it is in terms of incomes, location, social opportunity, business success or house prices - is one of the most striking features of our times.

The boom and then bust in the business cycle do not seem to have disrupted the pattern. Understanding what seems to be a deep-seated structural phenomenon requires research across disciplinary boundaries and outside conventional frameworks of thought which did not predict these patterns of 'massification' and cannot explain them.

Past research has touched on some individual aspects of the phenomenon, so the plan to embark on serious systematic research into this important and common aspect of the real world is to be welcomed – as is the Heseltine Institute’s intention to engage practically with policymakers, who will be able to provide detailed knowledge of what has been happening and important insights into the kinds of policy response that might be effective."
HEALTH & WELLBEING
Rhiannon Corcoran
Professor of Psychology

Rhiannon is a Co-Director of the Heseltine Institute and leads our work on health and wellbeing.

Her main academic interests focus on the psychological determinants of mental health, where her work draws together social, environmental, cognitive and biological approaches.

Rhiannon co-directs the Prosocial Place Programme, which focuses on the interaction between people and urban environments. Her mission is to improve mental health and wellbeing by promoting co-operation and facilitating better urban design.

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What can we do to make cities better places for people?

The policy challenges

One of the most pressing challenges facing UK cities will be dealing with the worsening impacts of mental and physical health inequalities, exacerbated by the effects of an ongoing global economic downturn.

The big challenge to policymakers is how can we help communities prepare themselves for this widely anticipated epidemic of common mental health problems arising from the inevitable reduction in life satisfaction, rising unemployment and the growing divergence within our economy and society.

It is a question that looms particularly large for Liverpool, where unprecedented levels of investment over recent decades appear to have had little lasting influence on the quality of life of many of our communities.

The 2009 and 2012 North West Mental Health and Wellbeing surveys commissioned by the former Primary Care Trusts demonstrated what they termed the ‘toxicity’ of the urban districts for former Primary Care Trusts demonstrated what places for and Wellbeing surveys commissioned by the of life of many of our communities.

We can expect the thrust of UK health and wellbeing policies to be consistent with the Marmot Review: The Liverpool Clinical Commissioning Group has focused its Mental Health and Wellbeing strategy on building ‘resilient communities’, aiming to protect the city’s residents when the pressures of the strained economy hit.

The recent research conducted by the New Economics Foundation has shaped recent health and wellbeing policies with their “Five Ways to Wellbeing” approach. They are: Connect, Be Active, Take Notice, Keep Learning and Give.

At the same time, population research has emphasised the value of accessible green space for reducing health inequalities. Urban ecology researchers are exploring the effects that the physical quality of neighbourhoods has on individual and community-level decision-making. They are also developing ‘ecometrics’ tools that can evaluate how community action impacts on wellbeing.

The Marmot Review stresses that the successful delivery of its objectives will need joined-up action at central and local levels. It advocates an approach aimed at giving local people greater autonomy and influence through “participatory decision-making” bringing together the public, private and third sectors alongside ‘empowered’ individuals and community groups.

Prosocial places: a new approach

Currently our approach to urban planning and ‘place-making’ has been dominated largely by highway engineering, management considerations and architectural aesthetics. Taken together, these approaches tend to thwart the development of prosocial, engaged, active and co-operative communities. Nurturing prosocial communities will mean radically redefining our understanding of ‘good design’ and rethinking an existing approach, which is rooted in technocratic convenience, architectural aesthetics or short-term gain.

A prosocial place approach regards design as ‘fit for purpose’ only when the primary objective is to address and accommodate the wellbeing of the people and communities it serves. The Government’s overhaul of the planning system and the creation of the National Planning Policy Framework provide an opportunity to pursue such an approach. A prosocial design ethos provides the opportunity to integrate planning policy with health and wellbeing policy. We can begin to build a systematic evidence base to demonstrate the value of prosocial planning and to work within the NICE guidelines on community engagement.
Where next? Charting new territory

The Prosocial Place Programme is an action research initiative led via the Heseltine Institute in collaboration with Middlesex University, Liverpool Hope University, Public Health England and the Clinical Commissioning Group. This programme is linked directly to the Institute’s core agenda and our central preoccupation with the future sustainability of places. It seeks to promote best practice and community cooperation. It will work to break down ‘silo-thinking’ from the top down while guiding bottom-up community engagement using evolutionary psychological principles.

The programme aims to provide guidance for the design of new developments and regeneration programmes and to create urban places that encourage and nurture prosocial activities and engagements. It will help us begin to evaluate ‘places’ in terms of wellbeing and provide a focused evidence base for the National Planning Policy Framework. The Prosocial Place Programme will use ‘ecometrics’, including measures of individual decision-making and co-operativeness alongside dimensional measures of mental health and wellbeing and formal mental health impact assessments.

The opening of The Reader Organisation’s International Centre for Reading and Wellbeing in partnership with Mersey Care and Plus Dane Housing provides an excellent opportunity to track the development, roll out and expansion of a prosocial approach in Liverpool. The wellbeing offer coming out of the Centre can be evaluated and the city-wide effects tracked using social network analysis. As the programme expands, the systematic evaluation of an informed programme of ‘social prescription’ can really begin and the value of a prosocial approach to design in terms of individual and community wellbeing can be demonstrated.

By putting people first, we help foster long-term resilience within communities and avoid the creation of the kind of urban environments that become our future toxic assets. A prosocial approach to growth in Liverpool is one of the keys to a sustainable future and further proof that the city is reclaiming its reputation for pioneering public policy and progressive practice.

Robert Huxford
Director, Urban Design Group

I believe there is great potential to design and manage the built environment in a way that is far better suited to human need by capitalising on our increased understanding of people and societies.

There has been a four-fold rise in child obesity-related hospital admissions and the UK Government forecasts that normal-weight males will effectively be extinct by 2050. On the high street, the Centre for Retail Research predicts that one in five shops will close by 2018. Meanwhile local councils like Barnet have projected that their entire budget will be consumed by adult and child social care by 2020. These are all bleak indicators of an urban future disengaged from local economies, resulting from a breakdown in social contact, a collapse in locally-held friendships and the decline in active use of the public realm.

Research into areas such as anthropology and environmental, evolutionary and clinical psychology via the Heseltine Institute provides invaluable insights to underpin urban policymaking. I believe a new maxim of ‘Care by the Community’ will help people to live healthier, happier lives in vibrant enterprising communities, and may avert a looming financial crisis in the funding of local services.

Dr David Fearnley
Medical Director, Mersey Care NHS Trust

Mersey Care NHS Trust is one of the largest providers of mental health, learning disability and addictions services in England. We are actively engaged in many research programmes with partners from across the Liverpool City Region to North Western Europe. We are particularly committed to research into reading and the benefits of using creative approaches to improve wellbeing. The International Centre for Reading and Wellbeing provides a unique opportunity to support recovery from mental health conditions and demonstrate strong collaboration between the NHS, voluntary sector and academia.

This type of development stimulates new thinking about how we experience mental distress and underlines the value of holistic practice. We see the establishment of the Heseltine Institute as an important opportunity to broaden the scope of future collaboration in the formulation of policy and the development of new mental health services.
Alex Balch
Doctor of Politics

Alex has published extensively on the development of immigration policies in the UK, Spain and the EU, and has worked with a number of public and third sector organisations. These include: the European Commission, the UK Human Trafficking Centre, Gangmasters’ Licensing Authority, and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development. He is on the steering committee of the Forced Labour Monitoring Group, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council.

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How can we develop immigration policies that are genuinely ‘fit for purpose’?

Few would argue that immigration has become one of the key political issues of our time. In the UK it regularly tops the lists of voter concerns. Yet despite this sustained political focus, governments seem to find themselves constantly in deep waters over the subject. When in 2006 John Reid, then-Home Secretary, declared the system ‘not fit for purpose’ he could not possibly have foreseen that the same phrase would go on to haunt so many ministerial successors and civil servants.

For those involved or affected by the system, and those of us who research it, there is probably never a bad time to think about the operation of immigration policy, or how we might do things better. However, with the end of the current electoral cycle in 2015, we are presented with a very timely opportunity to take stock of our immigration policy after five years of the Coalition Government. These policies have been as bold as they have been controversial, and have been guided by the headline-grabbing promise to reduce inward flows of migration into the tens of thousands per year.

The policy challenges

What are the main challenges and what should be the main priorities for UK immigration system? Our answer, of course, depends entirely on where we sit. Opinion polls give us an indication of what the majority of the general public see as the main priority: to reduce aggregate levels of immigration to a minimum. This is easier said than done, however, and often leads to significant and painful ‘collateral damage,’ as the current government has been finding out.

Controlling the international movement of people is complicated by many things, not least the scale of the phenomenon and the massive numbers who travel in and out of the UK every year (over 30 million foreign nationals visited in 2011). Due to our globally connected markets and supply chains, we are of course massively dependent on international mobility in various forms.

What is also clearly relevant is the UK’s own employment profile and our highly flexible labour market. Many sectors have traditionally drawn and depended on migrant workers from the periphery, whether Ireland in the early stages of industrialisation, ex-colonies in the 20th century or Eastern Europe in the 21st century.

Whilst business has called for market forces to be the main driver, with less interference from government, the challenges are not simply about global economics. For immigrants and those who champion their interests, the main challenge is to mitigate the often cruel and irrational outcomes of government policies. For those implementing policy, the challenge is to relieve the acute pressure placed on the system by the sheer quantity and complexity of the work against a backdrop of constant organisational change and diminishing budgets.

Immigration policy poses difficult puzzles for both the Left and Right. For the Left, the debate poses the so-called ‘progressive dilemma’, where mass immigration and welfare supposedly cannot co-exist. On the Right there is a ‘neo-liberal’ dilemma or ‘gap’ between the pro-immigration business press, and right-wing politicians who claim to be simultaneously pro-business and anti-immigration.

For governments of both complexions, there is the incessant struggle to control public debate against a backdrop of unhelpful and inaccurate media coverage. The task of developing a convincing narrative and an illusion of control can be easily confounded by a hint of inconsistency or uncertainty as many former ministers have painfully discovered.

There is constant pressure to step up enforcement, but few governments want to be remembered for deporting large numbers of people or placing them indefinitely in detention centres. Political initiatives can quickly backfire, as evidenced by the ‘poster vans’ driving round London encouraging undocumented migrants to go home or face arrest.

Public demands for fairness and transparency are more than reasonable, but there are risks in pursuing a political direction that is so aggressively negative towards newcomers. Immigration policy is not merely a question of process, implementation and presentation: it raises deeper questions about who we are, and how others see us.

The question of integration is either shrouded by fears about different cultures and religions, or reduced to statistical debates about macro-economic impacts, which ignore the human and cultural impact of immigration. Politicians use the rhetoric of fairness and inclusion, but there needs to be more explanation of how immigrants and their families can fit into our society.

Where next? Charting new territory

The role of the Heseltine Institute must be to enable research that develops new ways of thinking about immigration policy, and provide space for actors from different sides to meet. By doing this we can begin to address the cycle of policy failure and reduce the toxicity of public and political debates over immigration.
Phill Clayton
Anti-Trafficking Manager,
City Hearts

City Hearts exists to provide hope to the most vulnerable. Our work with Alex has developed through lecture and seminar programmes around trafficking. These fora have created some key networking opportunities, resulting in better information sharing. They have also offered professionals and academics a practical outlet, including access to our volunteering opportunities – specifically our befriending scheme. Our engagement in roundtable discussion and conferences has brought an important and valued frontline perspective to academic research and debate.

The research community in Liverpool and beyond can play a crucial role in creating usable knowledge on immigration and asylum. Academics can ‘do’ as well as ‘talk’, evidenced by the Liverpool Law Clinic, which is working to bridge the widening justice gap created by the removal of legal aid for immigrants.

We rightly eschew overly simplistic ‘cost-benefit’ analyses that calculate how immigration entails short-term profit or loss for ‘UK plc’. Much of our research is rights-based and stands in stark contrast to the currency of much public debate. Our work can help to challenge prevailing assumptions and highlight the real-life policy impacts on the high number of families and communities that now include non-UK citizens. Examples include studies into the often hidden consequences of policies, from human trafficking to statelessness.

This is the kind of valuable work which urgently needs to be pushed into the political mainstream. Political debate driven by headline statistics and a race to appear ‘tough’ loses sight of the fact that immigration has been, and will continue to be, a significant part of life in this country. It is a necessary fact of life for any city or region that has global aspirations, such as Liverpool and the North West, and needs greater emphasis on its practical and social questions, free from xenophobic fears and myths.

The Heseltine Institute, by presenting and disseminating robust research, can improve the quality of debate in a number of ways. We can use the University’s unique position in regional, national and international networks to open the space for a more constructive discussion about immigration and asylum. We can encourage further collaboration between researchers across academic disciplines and those implementing and witnessing the impact of immigration policy at first hand.

For this to be successful, we need to find areas of common ground and agreed priorities for future research on immigration and asylum. If we can do this then Liverpool has a great opportunity to shape local and national debate by posing different questions about immigration and asylum policy, and start providing the practical evidence-based answers we so clearly need.

Research is beginning to be embedded in policy processes around immigration but the relationship has produced decidedly mixed results, and there is plenty of room for improvement. This is important because both sides of the political divide accept that we are in an era of ‘managed migration’. This is not only a shift from the zero-immigration policies of the past, but also implies much greater dependence on evidence and data as the basis of policymaking.

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Laura McAllister
Professor of Governance

Laura is a Co-Director of the Heseltine Institute and leads our work on governance.

A former Wales international footballer, she is Chair of Sport Wales, the government agency that leads all aspects of sport and physical activity policy. Laura is also a board member of UK Sport, Stonewall and the British Council Wales.

Laura researches devolution and constitutional change, gender and politics and political scrutiny. She teaches public management and policy, and government and business.

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Do lessons from Wales hold the key to successful devolution in England and internationally?

A different perspective

If the perspective of this piece is slightly different from those of my colleagues, then it no doubt reflects the rather untypical academic role that I have been fulfilling for most of the past decade.

In addition to my professorial roles at the University, I have worked closely on the development of devolution in Wales, applying my academic research on governance challenges there with practical influence on the architecture and operation of the National Assembly. This included a secondment to the National Assembly and membership or advisory work with three leading commissions on devolution.

For the past three years, I have also been Chair of Sport Wales. The specific challenges of leading a national organisation in charge of a public policy area where almost every citizen has a strongly held opinion or emotional connection has certainly given me a different perspective on academic engagement and policy impact.

Having said that, I firmly believe that fulfilling these different roles represents the future of our academic profession and offers a model for the Henley Institute to take forward. It brings benefits for us as public policy academics, for our institutions, and most importantly, for our students. The two areas of work are also more connected than might first appear.

The policy challenge

My academic focus has been on capacity constraints in devolution and how these have constrained the growth of a mature devolved politics. In this respect, there is a direct overlap with my work as a public leader – utilising the expertise from non-elected sources, developing cross-cutting public policy interventions and striving to operate more smartly within far tighter spending frameworks. For me, this academic-practitioner crossover, or ‘co-production’, has been enormously useful making our public policy research more relevant and timely.

I have a long-standing research interest in the changing governmental map of Britain, especially in constitutional change and its political fall-outs. Whilst much of this has been UK-wide and comparative in a European setting, one of the most fascinating case studies originates in the real-world context of Welsh devolution. Here, the focus has been on the consequences of a remarkable and, some would say, unique timeline of constitutional upheaval and political fluidity.

I believe that there have been at least three (soon to be four) Welsh ‘settlements’. This has been characterised by a period of debate about stability and change.

As a member of the Richard Commission between 2002-4, we produced a seminal report setting out what some believe will be the definitive statement on a workable devolution settlement, until or unless a new coherent and sustainable framework is established with the necessary inbuilt flexibility. Deputy Presiding Officer and Conservative Assembly Member, David Melding, described the Richard Report as: ‘the most authoritative constitutional report ever commissioned by a government in the UK’. Praise indeed, but the report’s real relevance relates to the challenges that we still face in UK governance and specifically, what academics working on Welsh devolution are trying to deliver in practice.

We now have another important UK Commission on Devolution, the Silk Commission. My evidence to it drew upon earlier research and focused on the capacity requirements of devolved parliaments and what they need to fulfil their core responsibilities. There are in my view certain essential principles around capacity including: clarity, simplicity, intelligibility (to internal and external stakeholders), profile, mutual respect and effective co-operation (between all UK legislatures), and legitimacy and autonomy (to act on matters affecting Wales, without excessive prescription or unnecessary obstacles).

How research is shaping public policy

My future research and the focus for the work of the Henley Institute will continue to concentrate on the key challenges around capacity and the equally important area of lesson learning. I believe the capacity theme is very much the golden thread that connects past research with the practical challenges that lie ahead.

Aside from a problematic settlement, the size of the National Assembly for Wales is, I believe, the single most critical material factor that prevents the maturing of the Welsh state. Given its immense importance, the debates about appropriate numbers of elected politicians and how these affect the quality of democracy – especially scrutiny and public service delivery – have been rather disappointing. It is almost impossible to offer counter evidence to the view that – by any international standards – the National Assembly is too small. This has huge implications for how we think about regional and national governance in any multi-tiered system.

Most researchers have begun with the World Bank Institute understanding of capacity, with effectiveness and size very closely connected to the discharge of the core functions of a legislature.

My work in this area has moved outwards from the two most conventionally used indices:

- ‘Critical mass’ to discharge legislative, scrutiny, financial, representational functions
- Population calculations: the average number of electors per elected politician.

The National Assembly has fewer politicians than most small US states, most small German Länder, fewer than Northern Ireland’s 108 (which has only half the population of Wales) and fewer politicians than two of Wales’s largest urban local authorities - Cardiff and Swansea. I believe that this hampers and constrains a mature democracy and, specifically, effective public policy delivery.
Using new comparative research, we hope to stimulate further debate on the numbers game and also its relevance to public perceptions of democracy and their political representatives. The next stage of research will develop a clearer idea of the optimum number of elected politicians in a multi-tiered system. We are of course aware that the political dimension remains a potent factor, with questions about the competence and calibre of representation relevant to every legislature, and the very idea of more politicians inevitably unpopular with voters.

Hence, in the spirit of pragmatism and seeking to ensure impact from our research, we are exploring alternative solutions, although these deal mostly with the symptoms, not the causes, of the problem. These include transferring the use of ‘overhang seats’ as in other mixed member electoral systems such as New Zealand; and introducing Assembly Associates to add expertise and scrutiny to committees. Both options raise obvious complications and challenges around remuneration, democratic deficit and accountability. Underpinning the research is a rationale that a credible case for change will eventually require a balancing reduction, meaning fewer Welsh MPs in Westminster, fewer local councillors in Wales and, probably fewer local authorities.

Where next? Charting new territory

This new and ongoing research has huge potential for transferability and far wider public policy relevance, not least in Liverpool, where the arrival of an elected city mayor has placed it at the forefront of debates on the governance of English urban areas.

With this in mind, we are extending our work on Welsh devolution via the Heseltine Institute into a broader governance and democracy framework that applies to the UK and beyond. The specific focus of this is on lesson learning, which in the first instance will focus on the other nations and regions of the UK.

At present we have two ‘live’ pieces of case study research. One of these relates to different interpretations of EU procurement rules across the four nations; the other is a study of the failure of a proposed Cabinet Office merger of a UK-sponsored body with an English one (UK Sport with Sport England).

The case studies have already taught us two things: first, that lesson learning is currently an immature and under-developed discipline and that there is a cost to this; secondly, that there is an essential dysfunctional in how the new multi-level UK governance system operates. Comparative studies across the UK and beyond will provide us with stronger evidence. But we also need a more engaged approach. Placing academics in roles at the heart of the policy process allows us to take account of real-life issues and to translate fresh ideas into better, more workable policy.

As the Director of Assembly Business at the National Assembly, I am responsible for the delivery of the core parliamentary services supporting the Assembly’s work as a legislature.

The focus of Laura’s research has been critical in shaping the practical operation of the National Assembly as well as the public discourse that has surrounded its evolution. I repeatedly see that influence first hand, manifested in the quality and focus of debate of politicians and civil society, and have also benefited enormously from being able to draw on such expertise to inform and shape the practical operation of the legislature.

Laura has a high media profile in Wales and throughout the UK as a leading commentator on Welsh devolution. Her current work and role with the Heseltine Institute now provides an opportunity for her to broaden this influence and shape thinking and policy across and beyond the UK.
Malcolm’s work focuses on infectious and wildlife diseases. Tackling these issues is as much about policy as science and requires a ‘one health’ approach, bringing together human and animal health, biodiversity, sustainability and environmental wellbeing.

As a Trustee of the North of England Zoological Society at Chester Zoo, a member of the UK Government’s Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens and a member of the Welsh Assembly’s Scientific Panel reviewing the control of bovine TB, Malcolm has engaged with a series of local and national bodies around biodiversity, rural development and disease control.

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Why should we be interested in the future of rural communities?

As cities across the globe grow and become increasingly viewed as the motors of the global economy, what is the future for rural places? How do we balance the need for food production with biodiversity, the ‘countryside’ as an escape for city dwellers and a dormitory for the urban rich with a dynamic and innovative rural economy? What does the rural do that the urban can’t – or shouldn’t?

The relationship between rural and urban areas is complex and dynamic. It carries profound implications for food production and safety, sustainability, our livelihoods and welfare as citizens. What makes this policy challenge so potentially troublesome is that rural areas, more so than cities, resist simple categorisation and prescriptions – it is the specifics of a place that determine how issues are experienced and may be resolved.

The policy challenge

It is the heterogeneous nature of rural communities that makes planning and governance of the rural environment and the management of the rural-urban interface so complex. For rural policies, even more than for urban, interventions into what appear to be single issue problems can have multiple knock-on consequences.

Take the current UK debates over the control of bovine TB and planning regulations. Superficially, the former is a straightforward animal health issue but, on examination, it rapidly expands to become an argument about ownership of the problem (industry vs. government/society), ownership of the ‘countryside’ and the ‘value’ of badgers.

Likewise, a simple evidence-based examination of the merits of planning policies about affordable housing and rural transport quickly raise issues of nimbyism and the economics of dormitory communities. Both also demonstrate the difficulties of reconciling local and national governance, and the complex relationships and disconnects between rural and urban.

This complexity and the frequent lack of evidence underpinning policy decisions are further confounded by persistent myths and false perceptions of rurality, often created by a largely urban-based and oriented media. Terms such as ‘rural’, ‘countryside’, ‘natural’ and ‘environment’ are themselves highly contested and politically shaped.

There are, therefore, some big questions to be posed about what, and whom, the rural environment is for: who owns it and who governs it? Is it all about the aesthetics of landscape – the view and ‘fresh air’? Or is it about ‘ecosystem services’, or about food production and food safety? What role does the rural have in the overall economy and what role does it fulfil in contributing to the nation’s potential for economic growth? Already, many rural areas have higher rates of business start-ups than urban areas. But is there greater scope still for novel rural industries, and could a new rurally-based industrial revolution be the powerhouse driving a radical and more sustainable economy?

Alongside these issues, there are urgent, but often ignored, big policy challenges relating to questions such as rural health and wellbeing infrastructures and the largely hidden social impacts of rural deprivation, exclusion and isolation.

All cities rely on a rural hinterland for the basics of life such as clean air, water and food. The countryside is also an important recreational resource for urban communities as well as providing a source of spiritual nourishment and wellbeing. More prosaically, many of us who can afford to choose to earn our money in urban centres while living in more rural communities. The effect is often to price out those with rural occupations so that they have to live in urban areas, commuting daily in the opposite direction to the rural rich.

It is not just a physical traffic in people, food and other goods that takes place across the rural-urban interface; ideas and (mis)information flow with equal fluency. Rural communities’ fear of crime, for example, is fed by urban media rather than an understanding of local circumstances and context.

The patterns of exchange and interdependence between urban communities and their rural hinterland is itself dynamic and changing.

How much food consumed in a city like Liverpool comes from the region’s rural industries (despite the North West having the UK’s second largest food industry)? Rather our locally-produced food is exported and much of what we consume imported – not just from elsewhere in the UK but from across the world.

The UK and global policy contexts

If the heterogeneous character of rural communities on a fine geographic scale makes policymaking and planning difficult, then competing imperatives such as visual aesthetics, conservation, economics, food production, social cohesion and biodiversity make one-size-fits-all prescriptions impossible.

The picture is complicated still further by the UK’s local government structure, which is rarely aligned with rural boundaries (social, economic or, often, geographical). Many rural areas are run from larger urban centres resulting in a drowning out of rural voices and thus both a perceived and a real loss of democracy.
If the challenges facing UK policymakers are complex they are nothing compared to those facing their opposite numbers in countries experiencing rapid urbanisation. In cities like Nairobi, the rural-urban interface is not about greenbelt, housing estates and planning permission for conservatories, but unregulated slum generation, with huge social, health and infrastructure problems, and very different relationships to the neighbouring urban and rural communities. Conversely, in China the fundamental issue focuses on who has the right to live in cities, with the ‘hukou’ permit system used by municipal governments to regulate access to social services, housing and other civic rights. Reconciling this system with the economic ‘pull’ of the employment opportunities in cities is a major policy challenge for the Chinese state.

What connects these divergent, cross-national examples is that – irrespective of where you live or work – the relationship between urban and rural areas matters. It is contested, complex and often highly place-specific. Furthermore, the responsibilities for addressing these challenges are not readily or specifically ‘owned’, often falling between government bodies and departments.

Where next? Charting new territory

The multi-faceted, often entrenched nature of these issues should not, however, cause us to throw up our hands in despair. Academic research and scholarship has been rightly influential in the development of government policy in the UK, especially in providing a sound evidence base for policymaking.

If we are to have greater impact and improve policy, research and debate about rurality and rural issues we must move beyond disciplinary academic silos. We need more interdisciplinary working and more ‘spaces’ in which to conduct open and frank discussion.

In the UK, the recent public sector budget cuts to departments such as the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs are having a disproportionate effect not only on research activity but on opportunities for discussion and debate. In this environment, the Heseltine Institute offers an important space – bringing academics from different backgrounds and disciplines to work more closely together, and providing a forum for the wider community to join in the debate, all with the aim of improving policy.

If we are genuinely committed to delivering a fair, prosperous and sustainable future, we cannot afford to see rural policy as an (almost literally) marginal pursuit, subordinate to urban challenges. By embracing the complexity of rural development and urban-rural dynamics, working across organisational boundaries and seeking to understand issues from the perspective of the places in which they are experienced, we can begin to make difference.

Graham Wilkinson, Agriculture Manager – Dairy, Tesco Stores Ltd

Tesco is the UK’s largest retailer, dominating the national grocery market. As such, we fully appreciate the need for a British dairy industry that is sustainable both economically and ecologically. We are delighted to be working closely with the University of Liverpool in achieving this aim.

Tesco sells 100% British milk and guarantees a price reflecting the cost of production to the 700 Tesco Sustainable Dairy Group (TSDG) members that supply our own brand milk.

The University’s Wood Park Farm is not only a high-performing member of the TSDG, but also hosts the Tesco Dairy Centre of Excellence, a national resource for TSDG farmers that offers research-based expertise in cattle lameness, fertility and calf health. Projects are carried out in collaboration with a management group of Tesco, farmer and milk processor representatives to ensure they are focused on the needs of the industry.

Our colleagues in the University are researching ways of decreasing the carbon footprint of dairying, and Wood Park is one of a small group of TSDG farms piloting a biodiversity programme that will assess the existing nature value of our farms and support and implement best practice in improving wildlife habitat.
TECHNOLOGY
Simon’s research interests relate to all aspects of analysing high volume and high velocity data to improve decision making in difficult scenarios.

Previously a Senior Fellow at Qinetiq, he focuses on developing high-performance computational algorithms. Simon is currently defining the University’s ‘Big Data’ offering, connecting a diverse range of academic disciplines.

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How can we exploit the opportunities of ‘Big Data’ whilst safeguarding the interests of citizens?

Defining the term

The rise of internet search engines and social media is underpinned by ‘Big Data’. It is a phrase that may require explanation and definition, but it is none-the-less a reality that has implications and relevance to all of us.

While some will use the label to refer to any analysis of large datasets, we are adopting a more focused definition. For us, ‘Big Data’ is a family of middleware typified by the open-source implementation framework, Hadoop. Historically, the programming of clusters of computers was the domain of the nerdy computer scientist conjuring up an image of a text-laden monitor and racks of computers with Ethernet cables billowing from their rear ends. Hadoop, and other ‘Big Data’ platforms, have relegated that network engineer to the back-office, whilst elevating the status and role of the highly sought-after data scientist.

Data scientists and network engineers are the people we depend on to develop the technologies that we all take for granted and which have been identified as vital to the UK’s prospects of economic revival. ‘Big Data’ is number one in the list of eight great technologies that will propel the UK to growth – according to George Osborne’s speech on 24 January 2013. So, as well as being the name of the inventor’s son’s toy elephant, Hadoop is free software that has succeeded in breaking down the barriers that hitherto made programming clusters of computers daunting to all but the geekiest of computer scientists. Hadoop lets you write software to analyse data and then submit the job to the cluster. You wait and the result arrives, thus overcoming the entry barrier that has hitherto inhibited the analysis of large datasets. This has made the ‘Big Data’ arena a domain pregnant with possibilities and a place where emerging SMEs and start-ups jostle for position, and pursue now the seemingly attainable ambition to become the next Google or Facebook.

New commercial possibilities

Every major commercial breakthrough will be closely coupled to the financial model that underpins it, and every financial model derives from the discovery of value that others have not seen or been able to exploit. This is the other key contributing factor to the recent growth of interest in ‘Big Data’: there are numerous readily accessible datasets that can be viewed as under-exploited in terms of the information they contain. The information is there; it has simply not yet been fully extracted for commercial gain. For example:

- Social Media: All tweets are available to anyone with an internet browser. Social media websites represent an immense resource of untapped information about how people act and what they think
- Mobile Phones: There are 11 phones per 10 people in the UK. Every time the nearest cell tower to the phone changes, the mobile phone operator receives data about the phone’s position. The big three UK networks (EE, O2 and Vodafone) each cover just less than a third of the UK’s mobile phones so, collectively, they possess a huge wealth of data relating to the population’s movements. This data contains information about population trends (over timescales ranging from minutes to years), which have never previously been accessible
- Malware: Cyber security is recognised as a growing and increasingly sophisticated threat to UK industry, government and individuals. However, the ability to monitor networks and so derive (often ambiguous) indicators of illicit activity is also growing. There is an increasing volume of data coming from such monitoring devices (which includes anti-virus software on your home PC as well as the firewalls that protect employers’ networks). The repositories of such monitoring data provide information about the malicious software or malware that is the manifestation of the cyber threat, as well as information about the ‘infected’ computer systems. Mining this data will uncover information about the malware, but also the people involved in developing and deploying it (both intentionally and unintentionally), their association with one another and indicators of their intent.

The policy challenge

When you click ‘I agree’ after running a piece of software for the first time, do you carefully read through the small print? Do you check what information will be passed back to a server farm somewhere? Do you think through how this information, when correlated with other information (provided by you or others), might make it possible to identify who you are? If like me your answer is ‘no’ then maybe it’s time we began to worry.

In the world prior to ‘Big Data’, agreeing to provide data to another party was something that implicitly assumed that the data would be thrown into a bottomless vat of random data. Everyone’s data was submerged in the sea of everyone else’s data. The tide has changed: and now it is the very enormity of the datasets that makes them such an appealing and underexploited asset.

More worryingly, we don’t really know what information is present in these vast datasets. The datasets are growing at the same time as the ability to correlate current data with historic information, and the ability to cross-reference between datasets, and the ability to extract this information are accelerating.
The rapid changes associated with ‘Big Data’ mean that legislation and the underpinning ethics of data analysis are poorly understood and underdeveloped. What does data protection mean if you don’t store records of individuals but simply cross-reference data that individuals have published on the internet? When does information about the design process of some software become information about the software’s designers? Is the information that is already out there enough to make the debate about future data futile? If the UK legislates in this area, will the internet’s lack of respect for national boundaries make it irrelevant in any case? We don’t have the answers and we are not necessarily asking enough questions either.

As we ask ourselves how we may exploit the tremendous opportunities that ‘Big Data’ presents for UK plc, we cannot afford to overlook the huge implications that it carries for how we educate the UK population and how we legislate to protect individuals.

Where next? Charting new territory

‘Big Data’ is a rapidly growing technology area. We are currently developing the technology to solve the problems that elude what we regard currently as state-of-the-art. These problems span the range of applications that we have described, with specific exemplar applications including:

- Developing tools to highlight emergent memes in social media and so enable vulnerable groups like children to be protected from illicit activity
- Improving the analysis of geospatial data from mobile devices so that city governance can understand where people travel from and to, and plan transportation infrastructure to better cater for their population’s needs
- Enhancing our ability to understand malware so that firewalls can modulate their behaviour to maximise the security of the computers we use every day.

The Heseltine Institute’s perspective is that ‘Big Data’ presents big challenges and big opportunities. We want to be at the frontier, developing innovative technology that transcends and redefines the state-of-the-art and expands the possible. However, this is an area where technological possibility is evolving faster than policy and regulatory frameworks. One of our key objectives therefore will be to contribute thinking about the policy and ethical principles that must underpin the application and use of this exciting emerging technology.

Dave Crane
Director, New Services Development at HP Enterprise Services

“HP Enterprise Services, one of the world’s largest IT, Application and Business Service outsourcers, recognises the latent and often hidden value of data in the ‘Big Data’ world. We are working with Simon and colleagues at the Heseltine Institute to explore how we push the boundaries further than ever.

We all leave a far greater data trail than we realise, in our interactions on the web every day. Combine this with web-based calendaring, and the potential exists for a composite view presenting a highly accurate digital persona.

By including in the mash up a three-dimensional data set that locates our movements and contextualizes the world around us, it is possible to anticipate, automate and simplify our interactions with the digital and real worlds, freeing up wasted time and enhancing our quality of life.

Here at HP, we are working to drive real change in the world of contextually aware services, but (and there’s always a but), it is fundamental to HP as a corporation and to us all as individuals that our data trail and essential right to privacy are safeguarded.

For HP ‘Big Data’ represents a Big Possibility.”