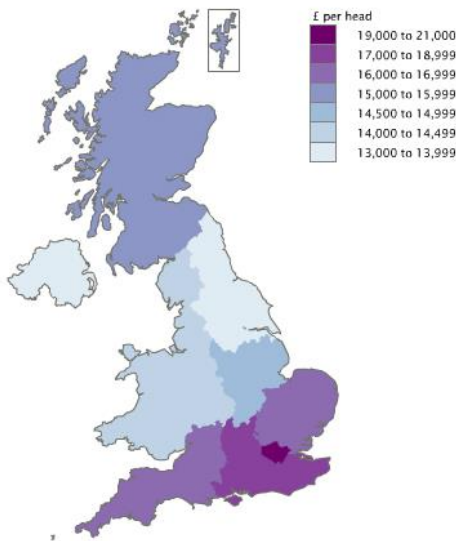


DISCUSSION PAPER 1: Why is Change needed?

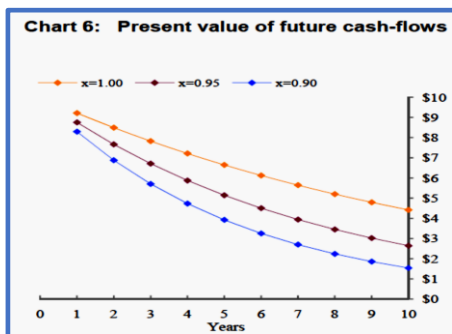
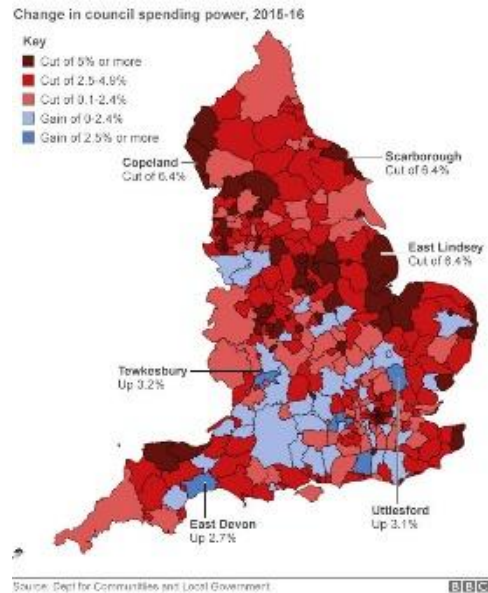
Where is the 'Missing Space'?



The UK is blessed with great wealth and opportunity, but faces socio-economic challenges. Despite the fact that the UK is the fifth global largest economy, with a disproportionate number of globally ranked universities, it has amongst the highest inequalities in terms of wealth, skills and education. Internally the UK is not only imbalanced but, as [McCann](#) described, there is also concern that various component parts of the nation are 'decoupling, dislocating and disconnecting' into three different (*regional*) economies, illustrated by the 2011 map of [Regional GDHI per head](#). This has variously been described as a combination of regional problems and urban issues driven by the differential and several impacts of globalisation and public policy. The challenges are known but unless we can provide suitable evidence on them we cannot begin to address them. The problem is that we are not currently equipped to address them, since public policy tends to be place-blind, short-term

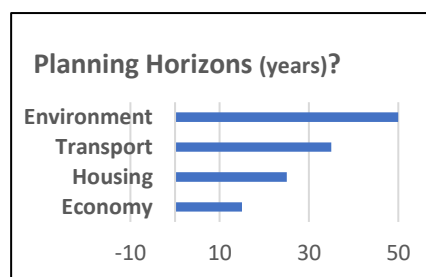
or silo-based.

Place-blind: There will be debate over the explanations for these inequalities, but it is clear that the imbalances and disparities in the state of the nation are not inevitable or unmanageable outcomes of economic and social changes. They are not 'beyond our control'. This has been described by Hildreth & Bailey as the '[Missing Space](#)'. National policies and programmes have a general and generic form and as a result can be insensitive to the spatial variations in their impacts— as Andrew Haldane put it '*by lifting all boats across the whole of the UK*' they are insensitive to their differentiated impacts. (Refer Box: Changes in Council Spending Power 2015-2016: Source CLG).



Short-term: the key issues facing the nation and localities within it have been long in the making and it will take a comparable long-term agenda to redress them. This requires analysis with timescales that reach way beyond Parliamentary cycles. However, current approaches to policy formulation are unduly conditioned by methods which undervalue the future, as illustrated by the diagram of future cash flows taken from a recent speech by [A. Haldane](#).

Silo-based: Policy approaches are sectoral in nature, and often operate within different time frames (see box). This can make them fragmented and insensitive to the implications for other policy sectors. This often sub-optimises the scope for effective action and, in some cases, places policies in conflict with each other. For example, areas being promoted for growth overlap with those more susceptible to water shortages or extreme flooding. (See Discussion Note 3)



The Future Challenges?

The future of the UK is inextricably tied up with longer-term large-scale shifts in the geo-political tectonic plates which are accelerating uncertainty for national forecasting and governance. This is demonstrated by the following illustrative issues with “inconvenient tipping points” waiting to happen:

- Climate change implications for settlement and infrastructure in Britain and Europe, and likely effects on investment and insurance markets
- Post peak-oil scenarios for global manufacturing activity and transport
- The implications of demographic shifts across Africa and Europe as a second-order economic consequence of labour shortages in Europe
- Global Water and Food shortages for such as in China and India, or even in the USA where 30% of US counties face shortage.

Similarly, changing geo-political geography whilst changing patterns of mobility and changing international relationships compound failure despite massive intent.

It is also necessary to be responsive to the accelerating rate of change in information technology. This will change the context for decision making (e.g. the impact of AI) and also the capacity to manage change. In particular, there is a whole new tool box of opportunities to understand and tackle problems at all scales, and highlighted by the work of the [Urban Big Data Centre](#) and [Centre for Advanced Spatial Analysis](#). This is not to claim that such developments in IT offer are a panacea but more a way of challenging what is becoming a world overloaded by data.

Tackling such challenges requires the *spatial-proofing* of public policy in terms of:

- Analytical frameworks integrating the analysis spatially in terms of social, economic and environmental systems. At present these tend still to be treated in a sectoral way, with impact assessments in which the spatial constructs are flawed. with environmental impacts, for example, internalised to the plan or programme area.
- Institutional Mapping addressing the democratic deficits in society posed by the mismatch of power and responsibilities arising from the geography of administrative arrangements which do not relate to the areas within which people search for homes, jobs or recreation.
- Technical capacity to cut through the emerging overload of data and the need to integrate ‘lay’ knowledge in decision making and political responses. This has serious implications for the nature of planning and the nature of ‘evidence-based’ planning.

The implications of these wider future challenges to public policy are that change is needed to be able:

- To support the development of fundamental research questions about spatial futures.
- To identify and sponsor specific future research needs, and to be a centre for the co-ordination and dissemination of research.
- To look at the institutional aspects of how physical and social sciences are applied to spatial futures, and to help identify ways of improving this.
- To have regard to how physical and social science is generated, communicated and applied in relation to the definition of problems in spatial futures, and to their possible solutions.
- To develop scenarios and forecasts illustrating spatial futures and their implications so that policy is not driven by past trends.