Dynamics of Spatial Inequality:
Towards new vision for spatial policy

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Finding a new vision

• Is this a timely moment to catalyse a new vision for addressing spatial inequality?
  • £1.6bn “bribe” for Left-behind towns in England
  • Sheffield City Region devolution agreement
£1.6bn 'bribe' for poorer towns as May seeks Labour's backing for Brexit deal

Much of Stronger Towns Fund to be allocated to leave-voting towns in north of England and Midlands
Is Theresa May’s £1.6 billion fund for English towns enough to rebalance Britain’s skewed economy?

March 8, 2019 1:59pm GMT
• Controversy highlighted the degree of spatial inequality in the UK
  • The plight of towns “left behind” by globalisation.
  • “UK is one of the most regionally unbalanced countries in the industrialised world ... on many levels the UK economy is internally decoupling, dislocating and disconnecting” (McCann, 2019)
  • A key cause of Brexit?

• But also huge inequalities within cities and city regions:
  • 10 years since Danny Dorling’s “Tale of Two Cities” report.
Sheffield City Region devolution breakthrough as deal worth £30m a year is agreed by local leaders after 18 months of deadlock

The Sheffield City Region devolution deal worth £900m over 30 years could finally come into force after local leaders reached an agreement following months of deadlock, it was announced today. A letter has been sent by the region's mayor Dan Jarvis and the leaders of the four local councils, to Communities Secretary James Brokenshire setting out the "productive conversations" held over the transfer of money and vital powers from Whitehall.
Sheffield City Region devolution breakthrough as deal worth £30m a year is agreed by local leaders after 18 months of deadlock
South Yorkshire political leaders in devolution 'breakthrough'  

• £900m over 30 years  
• How should this money be spent to reduce spatial inequality?
• What should we do with the £1.6bn bribe and the £900m devolution deal?
  • Should we focus on individuals in poverty?
  • Or regenerate target towns and neighbourhoods?

• Does spatial inequality matter?
  • Has spatial policy fallen down the political agenda for good reason?

• And if spatial inequalities do matter, what might a new vision for spatial policy in the 21st Century look like?
Does spatial inequality matter?

• Spatial concentration of poverty and disadvantage:
  • Undermines social cohesion and governance
    • Brexit?
  • Impact on life outcomes
  • Exacerbates reproduction of inequality down generations
How can we reduce spatial inequality?

• Need to understand the causes before we can find solutions
  • Particularly since the causes are complex and sometimes counter-intuitive. E.g.
    
    Income inequality in the country as a whole
    ↓
    Residential sorting in the housing market
    ↓
    Spatial concentration of poverty
    ↓
    Neighbourhood effects heighten inequality of outcomes
Lessons from a pan-European comparative study
Marcińczak, et al., 2016, Inequality and rising levels of socio-economic segregation
Why has spatial inequality fallen?

Decentralisation of Poverty?
Rising Inequality in access to employment
Conclusion

• Spatial inequalities matter but in complex ways
  • Complex and compounding effects of spatial scale

• Need to understand the wider changes at work
  • Changes to different sections of the income distribution
  • Industrial/commercial shifts
  • Decentralisation of poverty

• Need to understand the processes:
  • Discrimination in the housing market
  • Intergenerational housing wealth
  • Political decision making at different levels
  • Geographic mobility

• Need for dialogue between research & policy