**Introduction**

The North-South divide in the UK is a well-known phenomenon that has been discussed in both political and academic circles since the inter-war period almost one hundred years ago now. Over that period many different policies have been used in an attempt to reduce the economic divide between the North and the South to little avail. However, while the typical discussion revolves around the divide in economic terms at the NUTS1 level, little attention is paid to the difference at a more fine-grained level along with the social outcomes that are also indicative of a divide in the country. This essay therefore seeks to explore how the North-South divide has evolved over the past 20 years at different spatial scales, along with how the economic divide relates to social outcomes. This is done through …. The results of which sugest …

**Literature Review**

The North-South divide has received significant attention from both academics and policy makers for the better half of the last century (Martin, et al., 2015). Therefore, in attempting to understand the current manifestation of this divide it is worth exploring the history to understand why this dynamic is so entrenched within England and the UK, and what the response has been over the last 100 years.

Conventional wisdom sees the North-South divide as developing during the inter-war period of the 1920s and 30s, however the history of the divide goes much further back than this (Martin, 1988). This is because prior to the war while the North was seen as the manufacturing powerhouse of the UK, there is significant evidence to suggest that the South, or more specifically the South East, was ahead of the rest of the UK in terms of lower unemployment and higher wages from as early as the 1850s. This is because while much of the manufacturing was indeed concentrated in the Northern regions of the UK, these outputs were subject to the whims of international trade-cycles leading to fluctuations in unemployment and productivity (Martin, 1988). It is therefore suggested that the North-South divide becoming a prominent issue during the 1920s and 30s was only because the global economic climate consolidated and emphasised the divide between the North and South during this period (Gardiner, et al., 2013).

The reasons behind these differences emerging are said to be from a variety of factors including adverse shifts in Britain’s world trade position, restrictive domestic economic policies, and several recessions in the 1920s and 30s which imposed severe shocks on the industrial North (Gardiner, et al., 2013). At the same time, the South did not suffer as much due to the development of advanced manufacturing in the region along with the development of the ‘new economy’ (Armstrong & Taylor, 2000). These factors led to the Barlow commission report of 1940 which highlighted the imbalances between the North and South, suggesting that the South acted as ‘a serious drain on the rest of the country’, hence advocating for a policy of spatial rebalancing (Ward, 2010). The recommendations found in this report, including calls for financing to fund the dispersal of industry across the country and restrictive development in and around London, was the foundation for the 1945 Labour governments introduction of a radical new regional policy system intended to promote a more balanced distribution of employment across the country (Gardiner, et al., 2013). This included mechanisms such as the Distribution of Industry Act 1945, which included loans and grants to firms, power to build factors and the government being able to establish industrial estates and subsidies (Armstrong & Taylor, 2000).

Since then there have been many attempts to tackle this North-South divide through a variety of mechanisms. This includes a shift towards supply side mechanisms from 1979 to tackle labour market rigidity and a lack of enterprise under the conservative government, the development of the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) and the focus on competitiveness under New Labour, and the scrapping of RDAs, the introduction of Local Enterprise Partnerships and the devolution agenda under the 2010-15 coalition government and 2015+ conservative government. The basis for these policies comes from arguments for both economic efficiency and social equity (Gardiner, et al., 2013). The former is based on the idea that the persistent existence of underutilised resources in slower growing regions is economically inefficient and so measures bringing these resources into productive use would boost national economic growth. Furthermore, concentration of economic activity and population in one region may have inflationary pressures which then harm national economic competitiveness. On the other hand, the social equity argument focused on the belief that employment opportunities and incomes should not significantly differ between regions (Gardiner, et al., 2013). This social equity argument therefore focuses on social fairness in terms of economic equity and ignores the potential social divide in other social indicators and outcomes such as education and healthcare.

Despite this, the scale of the spatial imbalance in the UK has been increasing faster than any other major European country (Martin, et al., 2015). The result of which is that the UK has the largest interregional variation in regional productivity of any OECD country (McCann, 2016). In this sense, the policies that have used are suggested to have been found lacking for a variety of reasons. The first of which is the fact that the UK is now one of the most spatially centralised nations, both politically and financially, in Europe (Bambra, et al., 2014). This is seen to inhibit the effectiveness of policies that aim at spatial rebalancing, whilst at the same time there is also concern that there is a lack of clarity and agreement on what rebalancing means (UKCES, 2011). This is further compounded by the argument that governments tend to focus on too many objectives for regional policy to achieve, and there is tension between economic and social objectives of regional policy that reduce effectiveness to tackle the issue in hand (Armstrong & Taylor, 2000).

What this shows is that the North-South divide has been entrenched for almost a century despite multiple attempts by different governments to tackle the issue. This also shows that the focus of the literature and policy is firmly on the economic divide at the regional level and on the underlying economic outcomes. This therefore ignores how this divide manifests itself at different spatial levels and through multiple social indicators such as health and education. While there has been increasing recognition on the health divide, as seen in the articles by Hacking, et al., (2011) and Copeland, et al., (2014), there has still been relatively little exploration or mapping of the way in which this divide extends beyond pure economic factors and how this can influence attitudes.

**Research question**

The literature review above highlights the deficiencies inherent in the existing conception of the North-South divide. The research question therefore concerns to what extent is there a North-South Divide evident at different geographical levels as measured through differences in Gross Value Added (GVA)? Furthermore, beyond the standard economic indicators of GVA and unemployment does the North-South divide extend? This includes an exploration of how the North-South divide has evolved over the past 20 years at the NUTS1, NUTS2 and NUTS3 level through measures of GVA compared to the national average. The current extent of this is then compared other social indicators including health and education which are then sought to understand to what extent can the geographical manifestation of social divides help to explain the Brexit vote.

**Methodology**

**To what extent does Dany Dorlings dividing line hold**