

# PLANNING Horizons

## Why places need to be at the heart of policy-making in the twenty-first century

The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) was established 100 years ago. In one sense, our societies face many of the same challenges now as we did a century ago – the need for quality affordable housing, improved public health and how to balance economic development with the protection of the environment.

In other respects, we are confronted by a wholly new set of challenges, such as climate change, demographic shifts (including an ageing society), the rise of 'lifestyle diseases', and increasing competition in a globalised world.

The RTPI's *Planning Horizons* papers, published during the Institute's Centenary Year in 2014, take a long term as well as global view of planning and the contribution it can make to some of the major challenges we face in the twenty-first century.

### Why we need to think spatially



The increasing reach and sophistication of transport and communication links means that, for those who live in the developed world in particular, our horizons appear to have changed radically. We eat food and wear clothes produced virtually anywhere in the world and communicate instantly with people on the other side of the planet at virtually zero cost.

This supposed 'death of distance' has distracted us from the fact that *place* and *space* still matter.

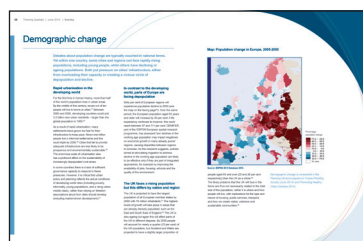


The first paper in the *Planning Horizons* series, *Thinking Spatially*, considers the consequences of the neglect of place – how we use land and the interactions between different uses – in much policy- and decision-making. This lack of spatial thinking is harming communities, causing ill-health, undermining growth and development, and destabilising the environment.

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## Our lack of thinking about place and space risks turning challenges into crises

*Thinking Spatially* presents examples of economic, environmental and social challenges and the consequences of how policy has failed to respond adequately to them with place and space in mind.



- Cities and regions experiencing population change suffer from pressures on transport, housing, energy and water resources, and are increasingly vulnerable to flooding and extreme weather.
- Economic growth and development is spatially unbalanced and sub-optimal in both developed and developing countries.
- Sprawling urban development threatens agricultural land, and our global food production system undermines food security and environmental sustainability.

### Thinking and acting spatially

Crucially, if these issues are inter-related, so should our responses be. We need to develop a new 'spatial policy' – a science of policy which incorporates place and space, and produces policy which is much more integrated, strategic and sensitive to place.

In particular, we need to develop integrated 'spatial maps' for policy-makers which could show how and where various policies – from housing to infrastructure, climate change responses to health and social policy – might interact in terms of their implications for land use, and so encourage greater integration between policies.

The full report can be downloaded from the RTPI website at: [www.rtpi.org.uk/planninghorizons](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/planninghorizons)

### The Planning Horizons series

The five RTPI *Planning Horizons* papers are:

- Thinking Spatially (June 2014)*
- Future-Proofing Society (June 2014)*
- Promoting Healthy Cities (October 2014)*
- Creating Economically Successful Places (November 2014)*
- Making Better Decisions for Places (November 2014)*

### About the RTPI

With 23,000 members worldwide working in the public, private, charitable and educational sectors, the RTPI is the largest professional institute for professional planners in Europe.