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Bachelor Thesis

THE NORTH-SOUTH DIVIDE IN ENGLAND

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Prohlašuji, že jsem práci vypracovala samostatně s použitím uvedené literatury a zdrojů informací.

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I declare that I have worked on this thesis independently, using only the primary and secondary sources listed in the bibliography.

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ABSTRACT

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The thesis deals with the North-South divide in England and aims to find out whether this divide truly exists and to discover more about the disparities between the northern and the southern parts of the country from different points of view. The thesis is divided into three main parts. The first one, also covering the first chapter, contains the historical background of the North-South divide. The second part is included in the second chapter and focuses on the political situation in England, how it changed throughout time and also discusses the term Red Wall. The last part is also included in the second chapter and aims to identify the differences between the north and south in the economic field.

Keywords: England, divide, the north, the south, politics, economy

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1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis focuses on disparities within England, specifically between the north of the country and the south where the border line lies, which is called the North-South divide. Those differences are clearly visible in some parts of the country more than in others and may be represented by various fields. Even though this dividing line has been a centre of debates in England for the past few years (especially since Brexit), the first major mention of this topic dates back to the industrial revolution in the late eighteenth century, though the evidence of a divided nation probably existed long before that.

The major research question set in this thesis aims to clarify whether the dividing line in England actually exists and if it does, what are the main aspects which give rise to it. Its purpose is to analyse the history of the North-South divide in individual periods of time. The development of the boundary is divided into four main time frames: 1560 – 1760, 1760 – 1840 (the industrial revolution), 1840 – 1918, and finally, 1918 – 1980. The thesis also determines the location of the mentioned dividing line and describes it more in detail with emphasis on the individual parliamentary constituencies which lie along it.

The second chapter aims to examine those aspects which may have induced the creation of a rather divided country. The very first factor that surely has an impact on the country as a whole and how it functions, is politics. Over the years, the political situation in England was modified and with that came some changes which affected the other major factor of the North-South divide mentioned in this thesis; the economy. This thesis focuses on this component in more detail in the last chapter and covers several subfields of it, namely the fluctuating inflation rates, the differences in unemployment (generally much higher in the northern part of the country than in the southern, or specifically in the south-east). The GDP per capita is determined as well along with the house market, particularly house prices. Both of those indicators almost copy the unemployment rate and reach the lowest values in the northern regions rather than the southern ones. Those two chapters (politics and economy) serve as a basis on which the final conclusion is drawn and where the results of those economic and political factors are compared. The research question is answered in the conclusion as well.

2 THE NORTH-SOUTH DIVIDE IN ENGLAND

2.1 Defining the divide

When talking about the North-South divide, it is essential first to demarcate the territory in question. The North embraces the North-East, North-West, Yorkshire and the Humber area. The South, on the other hand, consists of the South-East, Greater London, South-West and East of England. In between the two afore-mentioned areas, there exists a 'blind' spot called the Midlands, which cannot be clearly classified as either North or South. Nor is this the only reason why any precise border between the North and the South of England itself is very hard to determine. Several aspects also need to be taken into account, such as life expectancy, health, poverty, religion, employment, education, wealth, culture and, of course, politics. Some of these items will be further analysed in greater depth later. Yet the fact the dividing line in England is somewhat arbitrary has not prevented various geographers from trying to identify it and to draw such a line on the map. While there are some areas in England whose association either with the North or the South is partly assured; for example London belongs to the South and Newcastle to the North; there exists a blind spot which contains a strip of territory stretching from the Severn estuary; with Bristol on the southern bank and Cardiff on the northern one; and running through the country north-east. This whole area cannot be clearly classified as either North or West, since the actual dividing line supposedly passes there; this idea will be further analysed and illustrated. In short, the middle part of England and its classification to the North or South differs from geographer to geographer and map to map.

Nevertheless, Danny Dorling, a British professor of human geography at the University of Sheffield, by focusing specifically on such factors as poverty, life expectancy, education, employment and wealth, gathered sufficient data to enable him to pinpoint the divide more clearly: "This is the line that separates upland from lowland Britain, the hills from the most fertile farmland, areas invaded by Vikings from those first colonised by Saxons." (Dorling, 2010, p. 24) According to his research, the North lies "above the old counties of Gloucestershire, Warwickshire, Leicestershire and Lincolnshire and 'nips' only into parts of those counties." (p. 24) Given this description it is possible to distinguish the line quite clearly. As mentioned earlier, the dividing line lies in the so-called midlands where it runs from the estuary of Severn up to the north-west of the country and ends at the bank of the Humber. Above this line lay the

parliamentary constituencies of the Forest of Dean, West and Mid Worcestershire, Redditch, Bromsgrove, Meriden, Nuneaton, Bosworth, Loughborough, Rushcliffe, Newark, Bassetlaw, Scunthorpe, Cleethorpes and Great Grimsby. These constituencies are geographically parts of Midlands; however, according to the North-South divide elaborated by Dorling, they are actually located on the territory of northern England. Below the dividing line are located the parliamentary constituencies of Stroud, Gloucester, Tewkesbury, The Cotswolds, Stratford-on-Avon, Kenilworth and Southam, Rugby, South Leicestershire, Charnwood, Rutland and Melton, Sleath and North Hykeham, Lincoln, Gainsborough and last but not least Louth and Horncastle. The North-South Divide runs through the West Midlands and a big part of the East Midlands, which makes it harder to identify whether this area is in the North or the South. Dorling (2010) also proposed that the divide can be analysed in greater detail, as constituencies may be cut in half to create a more precise line.

A different approach to the dividing line in England is called the Severn-Wash line. The line runs from the same place as the North-South Divide, the Severn Estuary. However, the biggest disparity can be seen at the other end of this line. Unlike the divide mentioned earlier, which ends at the bank of the Humber, the Severn-Wash does not go so far up-country and ends at the Wash.

The last position of the dividing line, although this one seems to be the most controversial, is that proposed by Mark Tewdwr-Jones, an academic from Newcastle University. In an interview on Radio 4 in 2018, he proposed that England should be divided as follows: London and territories which are at most two hours drive away from the capital, and then the remaining parts of England. According to Tewdwr-Jones, the reason for dividing England this way is quite simple: he claims “London’s sphere of influence” takes up more than half the country. (2018) However, creating this line tilts some big cities such as Manchester, Leeds and York to the south even though they are traditionally viewed as northern cities.

Here it is worth considering why the need to create a dividing line arose in the first place? One of the main reasons for the country feeling divided is connected with finance and the economy. Even though Britain has one of the strongest economies in the world, it is evident that this description cannot be applied to all parts of the UK, or even individual regions of England. London - and the City of London in particular - is home to business and financial centres with the headquarters of the Bank of England. This creates a major gap not only between the North, which focuses on production and

industry, and the South, whose main concentrations are service, financial and administration sectors; but between individual cities themselves.

2.2 History

The North-South divide in England mainly refers to disparities in living standards between the northern and the southern population, and the political and socio-economic powers, which are mainly located in the south, primarily in the London sphere. After the Second World War, the nation had to face tumultuous events, such as the Suez debacle in 1956, the rise of Scottish nationalism at the beginning of the 1970s, then debates about federalism, economic and social integration and political devolution for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland during the 1990s. All these events cast the unity and meaning of the United Kingdom in doubt, especially in the 1980s when not only the ‘ordinary’ British but also politicians and academics questioned whether England had become a ‘divided’ nation. Society was supposedly divided between rich and poor, the employed and unemployed, those who lived in suburbia and those in inner city communities (Martin, 2004). There were debates on whether the line dividing the north from the south actually exists, when it started to occur (was it during the years of Thatcherism or was the line defined much earlier?), and how much of an impact it actually has.

The North-South divide is usually described as follows: it divides the poor and industrial north from the rich and profitable south. From this definition, one would think that all the rich and wealthy people reside in the south, whereas the poor and indigent live in the north. However, there are some really wealthy parts of the country which lie in the north and vice versa.

The first mention of this dividing line may be traced back to the industrial revolution between the years 1760 and 1840 however some sources claim that it existed even before that. The history of the North-South divide in England in this work will be divided into four stages: a period between 1560 and 1760, the industrial revolution (1760-1840) the post-industrial period and the First World War (1850-1918) and England after the war (1818-1980). The present line will be analysed in the next chapter, which covers individual aspects of the North-South divide in more depth.

1560 – 1760

During this period of time, from the late sixteenth to the late eighteenth century, it was possible to see the beginnings of a divide between the north and the south, even though it was in no shape or form the same kind of line which was described above and people certainly were not consciously aware of any such dividing line between the respective regions. Major gaps between relatively wealthy people and those less fortunate in financial matters showed a clear pattern which continued throughout the history of the North-South divide, with wealth being concentrated more in the south than the north of the country. The population was as unevenly distributed as the wealth: “average densities varied widely: the sparsest county population was 75 persons per 1,000 acres in 1570, falling to 65 in 1670 and 64 in 1750, but the densest (outside Middlesex, which included London) increased from 176 to 249 to 305 persons per 1,000 acres” (Langton, 2004, p. 120). At the same time, in the 1570s the density rate increased in proportion to the wealth rate where the wealthiest areas (located in the south) were much more populated whereas the poor north was the least densely populated. Generally speaking, the wealth and population are mostly concentrated in London and adjacent areas. Looking at population growth, the overall national population increased by 66% over the given period of time (1560-1760), specifically by 42% between 1560 and 1670 and by 17% between 1670 and 1750. The population growth was not the same in all areas of England. Most of the fastest growing areas were in the south and in the Midlands between 1560 and 1670. On the other hand, the slowest growing areas were located in the north (Langton, 2004).

The third important indicator when talking about differences throughout the country is the concentration of cities and their population. London was, of course, the biggest centre in terms of the inhabited area and number of people living there, representing a quarter of the population of the whole country. Even though the population density rate was higher in the south and in the Midlands (mostly due to the concentration of wealth), that does not imply most towns were located there. Towns of all different sizes were scattered throughout the whole of England and thus no dividing line was visible in this regard. The largest number of bigger cities were accumulated in East Anglia, but a considerable number of them were located in the Midlands and in the North as well. As far as the regional distribution of growing towns goes, the fastest

growing ones were located roughly in the same counties where the population density reached a higher rate, specifically in today's Lancashire, Devon or Greater London.

1760 - 1840

In the second stage of the history of the North-South Divide in England, it is possible to see a more clear divide between the two regions. This occurred as a result of the Industrial Revolution which took place between the years 1760 and 1840. This revolution caused a shift from a previously dominant agricultural world to an industry-oriented one, but that was not the only thing that changed rapidly: overall production, mining and even transport developed significantly. All these factors gave rise to a new era which was, according to several historians and scientists, essential in the development of a new modern world. However, this shift would not be possible without new inventions and machines which were designed to work faster than before and more efficiently. The major and most important invention was possibly the steam engine (created in 1765), which was, and still is, considered the symbol of the Industrial Revolution. As industry of all kinds expanded and factories needed more fuel to keep them going, it was crucial to develop new means of transport which would not only be much faster but would fit more coal. The railways evolved significantly for the purpose of transporting goods and fuel as well as for passenger transport.

All these improvements and developments in industry created an enormous number of jobs. This brought about migration towards the north and the Midlands, where there were enough resources, and thus, industry had the potential to thrive. The population of England almost tripled during this period, and a few years before that, the total number increased from 5.5 to 18 million inhabitants. The sudden change in population could have been caused by improvements in health or increasing birth rates. Even though those cities most affected by the Industrial Revolution were mostly polluted and disease spreaded throughout them, the mortality rates dropped and people were living longer.

To sum up, the Industrial Revolution in England gave rise to new factories and mines that were located mostly in the North or the Midlands, where mineral resources were located. Those newly built or improved factories were established in the area of Liverpool, Manchester, Lancashire and Yorkshire. Generally speaking, people moved from the rural areas, which were usually agriculture oriented, to live either in London or mostly to work in northern industrial cities. This indicates that there was most likely a

North-South Divide in terms of concentration of population during the time of the Industrial Revolution.

1840 – 1918

Even though industry and manufacturing was thriving until the middle of the nineteenth century, they were not such a leading pillar of the economy in England, as might be assumed. The main disparities in working life were, according to Howell (2004), in the fast decline in the agricultural sector and a rise in the service sector, which included retailing, banking, transport and other service industries. After the Industrial Revolution, the service sector was the most efficient and profitable one, and the employment rate in this sector increased, as well as the efficiency of the employees. Between 1850 and 1911, there was a clear pattern which divided the north from the south. Mining and manufacturing accounted for about 50% of all workers in the East and West Midlands and in the North and even reached 60% in Lancashire, Humberside and North-West of England. Services were roughly around 30% in these areas. Agriculture accounted for a similar percentage, but this number started to decline in the early twentieth century. On the other hand, the employment rate in manufacturing in the South-East, East Anglia and South-West accounted for 30%, whereas the service sector was thriving, with 30 to 40% of employees in East Anglia and South-West, and even over 50% in South-East coming to 60% at the beginning of the twentieth century. The highest percentage of employees working in agriculture was in East Anglia, the lowest in the South-East. (Lee, 1979)

During Victorian Britain, the South-East was the most advanced region in the whole of England in the economy field and it contributed greatly to the development of the economy. Throughout this period of time, the industrial North was subordinate to the South, which flourished in the financial and commercial sector. Even though the government tried to reduce the widening divide between the North and the South, the line had a tendency to re-appear during different periods of time. In order to explain why the divide was deepening in the first place, it is important to focus on banking and funding. When talking about finance and funds in the industry, the City of London did not play a big part: rather, the finances were in the hands of local and regional banks. The system of those banks meant “the City was free to assume its position as financial market to the world, promoting capital export and coordinating the flows of investment income, but there was no reason for this to be necessarily detrimental to the home

market” (Howell, 2004, p. 75). Even though there were two fractions of capital, given the fact the Bank of England did not focus on funding the industry, the institutions were able to cooperate and reached a degree of complementarity. In the 1870s, local banks were incorporated into national chains which had their headquarters in London. This caused a shift in the national capital market and the connection of local industry and local finances ended (Howell, 2004).

As for the layout of cities, those with over 100 000 inhabitants, most of them were located mainly in the industry-oriented North and also in the Midlands. One of the few exceptions in the South, or South-East to be precise, was London. It was not until about the beginning of the twentieth century that bigger cities started to develop in the South - and therefore in the South-East - and they in a way enveloped London. Between 1850 and 1910, a majority of the country's natural growth was located in the old industrial areas: “the agricultural counties lying to the south-east of a line between the Severn and the Wash (excluding London, Surrey and Middlesex) correspondingly declined from a proportion of 44 per cent of the population in 1801 to just 29 per cent in 1881” (Howell, 2004, p. 77). At the end of this period of time, that is by 1918, half of the population lived in bigger cities with over 100 000 inhabitants and that made England highly urbanised. The majority of those cities and areas lay, once again, in the North.

1918 – 1980

During the twentieth century, and especially in the first half of it, England was a socially divided country. What is meant by the term socially divided? People had different life's chances, such as living a long life, being ill or dying, the opportunity to find a job and also the type of job, finding a decent place to live etc. (Dorling, 2004) However, there were also differences in the distribution of wealth, or poverty on the contrary, and level of education. The interesting thing was, how little people in the 1920s and and 1930s acknowledged the North-South divide and all its disparities. If they were unable to recognise a growing gap between the North and the South at that time, could the current social situation in England be misunderstood as well? What if we are blind to the situation and we overlook the differences between wealth, education or living conditions of those being on the 'top of society' and those at the 'very bottom' of it?

In the second half of the twentieth century, especially in the 1960s and 1970s, England experienced a process called de-industrialization when the employment in industry and manufacturing fell rapidly, which simultaneously caused a rise in unemployment. Several factories in the North were shut down completely and people lost their jobs in a matter of days. However, the loss of jobs in the primary sector of the economy did see an increase in the number of jobs in the service sector. In 1971, the lowest unemployment rate was in London, which contrasted with the situation forty years previously, when the lowest rates were still in the South but in the rural areas (Dorling, 2004).

The dividing line in England certainly represents disparities throughout the country but this is by no means a unique phenomenon, as similar divisions can be observed in various parts of the world. One which perhaps has the most in common to the North-South divide in England is to be found in Italy, where the prosperous and rich south differs greatly, at least in terms of economy and its profits, from the less privileged north. A similar divide, although this one's focus point was rather different, appeared in the USA in the 18th century, when the so-called 'Mason-Dixon line' was established to mark a clear border between Maryland, Pennsylvania and Delaware.

3 ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF THE NORTH-SOUTH DIVIDE

Throughout the history of England, there has been a clear pattern of splitting the North from the South, even though this was more visible during different periods of time. Particular factors which gave rise to the North-South Divide have already been briefly discussed, such as migration and concentration of the population, the layout of cities and wealth. This chapter focuses on some of these in more depth. The individual economic aspects which caused the creation of the North-South Divide in England and will be analysed as well.

3.1 Economy

The economy of the United Kingdom might be the most important factor when it comes to the North-South divide, or at least its creation and deepening. The thought of the divided nation, or rather two nations, has occurred several times throughout this thesis already and we now finally come to the focus point of it: money and resources, which are major parts of the economy. All of this will be further analysed in this chapter,

which will look closely at some parts of English history which may have been of considerable significance in terms of disparities between the North and the South. Many people agree that there certainly is a marked difference between the North and South; however that does not mean the North cannot be great again; it simply needs a bit more help. The North was a highly industrialised area back in the day, which is why it was de-industrialised much more and thus logically had to deal with the economic decline further than any other part of England.

The origins of these disparities between the North and the South may be traced back to the twentieth century, to the period of time between the two world wars or even further, to the nineteenth century. At the end of it, the North has undergone a major change due to the Industrial Revolution, which made it a very prosperous and profitable area. New factories were built, which meant more employees were coming their way. The industry focused on manufacturing cotton, ship building, as well as engineering and mining. It was the South that had to deal with unemployment and lack of resources due to their focus on agriculture which was in decline. All this changed very soon in the 1920s, almost immediately after World War I ended. England's world trade transformation along with the rise of international competition caused the industrial north to face a major decline. Industry was now focused mainly on light engineering or on goods, both located mainly in the Midlands, the South and the East of the country. The roles had changed.

After the war ended, the economy started to change. The industrial areas in the north and the north-east were at their highest in the 1920s, at least in terms of share of national manufacturing employment, and it began to decline from there. On the other hand, the share of the south and the east on the other hand started to rise since they were oriented on different industries as well, such as development of new engineering or the consumer goods sector. The inequality within the country was caused primarily by the afore-mentioned de-industrialisation which resulted in unemployment rising in the manufacturing sphere, accounting for almost 2.8 million in the 1970s, most of it after 1979. With that comes the development and economic growth of the service sector; mainly banking and finances overall; which created new job opportunities and thus the employment rate in this sector was rising rapidly. Lastly, it was the political change which came with Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and the overall change of Britain's role in the international trade market. All these events did not affect only the industrial north; they reached the core region (West Midlands) as well as all the major

conurbations, including London. The difference was that these areas did not prioritise only one sector of the industry; there were already development and research companies based there as well as corporate headquarters. Thus, the picture here differed greatly from that in the northern regions. Moreover, those regions in the South, and in the South-East in particular, were able to recover quickly from de-industrialisation as well as orient towards the “new emergent regime of economic development” (Martin, 1988, p. 396).

3.1.1 Inflation rate

During this period of time, especially at the beginning of the 1970s, England, and the whole United Kingdom to be precise, had to deal with a rather difficult economic situation which was mainly caused by high inflation rates. This rate started to grow slowly in 1971, when it reached 9.4%, declined in the two following years, skyrocketed in 1974 to 16% and finally reached its highest point in 1975, when the inflation rate was almost 25%. Those numbers started to decline slowly, although the rate almost reached the 16% mark again in the following two years. This rapid increase in inflation rates was caused by several factors, which included rising wages, growth in consumer spending and mostly the oil crisis in 1973 when prices of oil more than doubled. Britain was on a three-day week at the time in an effort to save energy. Simultaneously, the government decided to increase interest rates as well as to cap wages. All these events led to numerous strikes organised by trades unions, the most prominent of which was that of the coal miners. By the end of the decade, the inflation rate had reached roughly 13%.

At the beginning of the 1980s, inflation had risen to 17.9%. The root of this problem was almost the same as it was in the previous decade: the ongoing oil crisis and rising wages which are associated with rising living costs. The inflation rate began slowly to decrease in 1981 (11.8%) and 1982 (8.6%). Over the next seven years, the percentage of inflation ranged from 4 to 6 and even dropped to 3.43% in 1986. The government had a clear plan on how to tackle inflation: increase interest rates (as it did in the 1970s), higher taxes but also lowering the amount of disposable spending money. The end of the 20th century was again in the spirit of rising inflation although the highest rate concentrated around 8% at the very beginning of that decade. The inflation curve continued to shrink greatly and even attained the lowest mark for the entire review period, 1.75% in 1999. The economy was slowly recovering, or at least it looked

like it from the numbers cited above. The inflation rate seemed to be under control and it even approached the government's goal, which was to keep inflation around 2%.

The biggest milestone in terms of the economy in the first decade of the 21st century has to be the Global Financial Crisis. From the beginning of the 2000s until the middle of it, the inflation rate was fairly low, accounting for 1.18% in 2000 and then around 1.5% in the four following years. The rate started to increase between 2005 and 2007 (2.09%, 2.46% and 2.39%) and then reached 3.52%, the highest number since 1992. Compared to those values that were recorded in the 1970s, it does not look like there was a financial crisis in the first place. However, this event mainly affected the gross domestic product and it also caused the growth of unemployment, falling into recession and an overall decline in economic activity. All those data mentioned in this section covering the inflation rate in the UK were borrowed from the World Bank (2022).

3.1.2 Unemployment rate

Even though the number of people who are unemployed has tended to be relatively lower in the past few years (the percentage decreased from 4.81 in 2016 to 3.74 in 2019 and then rose to 4.3 in 2020) it has not always been like that. Throughout its history, England has had to deal with periods of times when the unemployment rate came to 10% several times and even crossed the 11% mark three times since 1970. The biggest disparities could be seen from the beginning of the 1980s to the middle of 1990s, with the rate dropping significantly in 1989 (7.41%) and in 1990 (6.97%). The financial crisis affected the number of unemployed people greatly when the rate increased to 7% again. However, the biggest disparities could be seen in individual areas in the UK, even though “there has been a general similarity across the regions in the trends and cycles of unemployment over the past three decades” (Martin, 1997, p. 238). This means that even though there were major differences in terms of the unemployment rate in specific regions, the rate was increasing and decreasing in the same periods and, put simply, when the unemployment increased in the North for example, it increased everywhere else as well.

Starting off with the 1970s, the rate point was around 3% of the total labour force in the UK, which is one of the lowest rates, or at least in this particular decade. The disparities in the unemployment rate at the beginning of the decade ranged from 1.5% in the South East to approximately 5% in the North. All the other regions, the

West and East Midlands, South West, East Anglia along with Yorkshire and Humberside were all concentrated between 2% and 2.5%. The employment rate increased significantly in some of the regions between 1972 and 1973. The South West's rate came up to just 2% in comparison with the East and West Midlands, which almost reached 4%, the figure which was recorded in Yorkshire and Humberside. The North West's rate was, however, essentially much higher, accounting for 6%. The next two years saw a sign of decline in all the regions. On the lower end of the scheme was, once again, the South East and East Anglia (both approximately 1.5%) and the North on the higher end, accounting for about 3.5%. The South West, South and West Midlands as well as Yorkshire and Humberside all remained around 2%. There was another increase in the unemployment rate throughout the next five years where the regions were following the same pattern: the South East had the lowest rate, the North the highest, with the remaining regions somewhere in the middle, some getting closer to the South East (such as East Anglia) and others heading the opposite direction as, for example, the North West.

The beginning of the 1980s showed another cycle of rapid increase in the unemployment rate. This was recorded in all the regions and the quick change happened everywhere. The rate reached its highest point approximately in the middle of the decade, between 1985 and 1987, when each region underwent one of the highest percentages of unemployment over the previous fifty years. As for the rate in the individual regions, the highest one was, once again, located in the North, accounting for about 15%. Moving down the map of England, the rate started to narrow. A much bigger number of unemployed people lived in the North West (13.7%) as well as in the West Midlands (13%) and Yorkshire and Humberside (12.5%). The middle section of this scheme belonged to the East Midlands and South West, both reaching from 8.5% to 8.7%. The last two regions, East Anglia and the South East, had the lowest rate with roughly 7.5%. After this rapid increase in the middle of the decade, the unemployment rate started to fall just as quickly as it had grown. The end of the 1980s brought almost the same rates, only a few percent higher, as they had been at the beginning of this decade. The unemployment rate in the UK reached 11.49% during the major increase in 1985.

The last decade of the 20th century started off with a rather growing trend in the unemployment rate and reached its peak from 1993 to 1994. The results of this were as follows: the North's percentage rose from 8% to almost 12%; the North West went from

7.7% to 11%, the same rate as was recorded in the West Midlands, even though the second region started with only 5%; Yorkshire and Humberside reached roughly 10% from the original 5% in 1991. The East Midlands along with the East Midlands' highest rate came up to 9%. The lowest unemployment rates were in East Anglia (3.5% to 7.5%) and in the South East (3.7% to 10%). Towards the end of the 1990s, the percentage of unemployed people was narrowing again, following the same pattern as it did until then: the northern regions accounting for the highest rate and the South East and East Anglia having the lowest rates. In comparison, unemployment reached 10.35% in the UK at that time.

Another major fluctuation occurred during the financial crisis between 2008 and 2013. Unemployment overall rose to 7.54% in the UK, which represented a major increase given the fact the rate had previously been falling considerably since the end of the twentieth century. A similar percentage to that in 2008 had last been recorded in 1997 when the unemployment rate reached 7.07%. However, the rate did not stop growing in 2008 and it widened even more until it came up to its highest point of that decade, specifically in 2011 (8.04%). The data covering the unemployment rate up until now were mentioned in *Regional Unemployment and Disparities and their Dynamics* by Ron Martin (1997).

The last period of time to be analysed, 2019-2021, follows the UK's official departure from the EU in 2019. This certainly affected the economy of England, however, contrary to some predictions, it does not seem unemployment has skyrocketed as a result and, in fact, individual regions have recorded a slight increase in terms of unemployment. Overall unemployment changed throughout those three years as well, reaching 3.9% in 2019, 4.34% in 2020 and lastly, 4.2% in 2021. In comparison, the North East went up to 5.8% in 2019, 6.4% in 2020 and managed to decrease the number of unemployed people to 4.2% in 2021. The North West, on the other hand, only recorded a widening of the rate, coming from 4.1% in 2019 to 4.2% in 2020 and 4.4% in 2021. Yorkshire and the Humberside were able to keep the unemployment rate relatively stable, with 4% in 2019 and 2021 and a slight increase to 4.4% in 2020. The southern part of England, on the other hand, managed to keep the rate under 4%, especially the East of England which recorded 3.4% in 2019, 3.8% in 2020 and 3.2% in 2021. The South East marked a similar pattern with the rate coming to 3.1% in 2019, 3.9% in 2020 and 4.0% in 2021. London itself showed a somewhat higher rate: 4.6% in 2019, 5.9% in 2020 and 5.4% in 2021. Data covering the percentage of unemployment

in England in 2019 and 2021 came from the Office for National Statistics and data covering the year 2020 were borrowed from the statistics of the UK Parliament.

Looking at these unemployment figures, one can not only see that there were periods of time in the history of the United Kingdom, or in England in this case, but also that the rate was increasing significantly as well as falling back to the previous level. Also, the dividing line was clearly visible, in some cases more than in others, showing the disparities between the North and the South are surely there, at least in terms of the unemployment rate. The highest recorded percentage of unemployment was always located in the North East or North West along with Yorkshire and Humberside. The lowest rates were, on the other hand, concentrated rather in the southern parts of the country, especially in the South East, the East of England (or East Anglia) and in London.

3.1.3 GDP per capita

The last indicator covering economic disparities between the northern and the southern parts of the United Kingdom is gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, which only concentrates on the economic output of one person rather than that of the country as a whole. The next few paragraphs will cover the period from 1998 to 2021. There are once again major differences in this economic index throughout the country; these will be gradually analysed and then compared to the GDP per capita of the whole of England. Even though the curve of this economic indicator has been widening during England's history, the only exception happened during the great financial crisis in 2008, particularly in 2009, when the curve not only hibernated but also narrowed. The following year then brought an increase in GDP per capita and it has been increasing since then. The individual regions experienced a very similar pattern when the indicator dropped either in 2009 or 2010 and then started to rise again.

The North East region, the one that has the lowest GDP per capita of all the regions in England, ended 1998 with £12,890, making it more than twice lower than London (£26,954). The North West, along with Yorkshire and Humberside, East Midlands, West Midlands and the South West, were able to make something between £14,200 to £15,385 per head. The only three regions whose GDP was higher than that are located in the southern part of the country, specifically the East of England (£16,352), the South East (£19,113) and lastly London, whose total has already been mentioned above. England's overall economic output this year was £17,354. The

following years recorded a constant growth of the GDP per capita in all those regions mentioned above; however, their progress was by no means the same everywhere. For instance, the North East reached London's 1998 results after nine years, only a year before the financial crisis which slowed and decreased the growth of the whole country. Looking at the outcome of all England's regions in 2008, the North East was the only area which was not able to cross the £20,000 mark and ended shortly below that, making £19,698. The West Midlands (£20,899), the East Midlands (£21,086), Yorkshire and the Humberside (£21,145), the North West (£22,265) and the South West (£22,983) made roughly the same amount, gathering around £21,000 or £22,000 to £23,789 (East of England). The only two exceptions were the South East (£27,666) and London (£42,355), which was almost the same as any two regions combined. England's overall output before the financial crisis came to about £25,924.

The year 2009 has brought the result of the financial crisis (2008) which affected the whole world, not only England. The outcome of this crisis conditioned the economic growth of individual countries when the GDP per capita not only deteriorated but also declined. The lowest value of those England regions was marked in the northern part of the country, specifically in the North East (£19,434). On the contrary, this decrease was, in contrast to the previous year, the smallest of all the other regions. A similar decline, although slightly bigger, was marked in the North West (-£280), Yorkshire and the Humberside (-£515), the East Midlands (-£650), the West Midlands (-£851) and even the East of England (-£835) and the South East (-£785). Each of them recorded an incline in the hundreds of pounds. The biggest decrease, on the other hand, was filed in the remaining southern region, London (-£1,755). The overall GDP per capita in England has dropped as well and reached £25,170, which made it £754 less at the end of 2009 than it did the previous year. The curve of this economic indicator started to grow the following year in all the regions although it took some of them another year to overcome the number from before the crisis.

The GDP per capita has grown significantly since 2009, even though the development was rather quicker in certain parts of the country. However, the arrangement of regions has not changed since the very beginning, at least the lowest and the highest ranks. In 2019, the year when the UK left the EU, the North East still occupied the very bottom rung with £24,068 followed by Yorkshire and the Humberside (£26,667), the East Midlands (£26,852), the West Midlands (£27,574), the North West (£28,993), the South West (£29,147), East of England (£30,622), the South East

(£35,631) and last but not least, London (£56,1999) which had been the leader from the starting point. England's GDP per capita came up to £33,809 in 2019. Looking at those data covering the GDP of individual regions, those were borrowed from the Office for National Statistics, specifically from the dataset covering the period of years from 1998 to 2019, which were released in late May 2019. On the other hand, the data showing the GDP per capita in the whole of England came from Statista (2021) and covers the same period of years.

3.1.4 House market

The house market certainly resembles an important topic when talking about the main disparities between the northern and southern parts of England. There are definitely different price points on properties (whether that is a house or a flat) depending on its location. Buying a house in the southern area, more specifically in London and the South East, costs diametrically more than buying one in the Midlands or the northern area of England. When talking about these inequalities in prices, it is important to mention the ripple effect, the main principle of which is that the value of properties increases over time and it only depends on how quickly that happens. The growth of prices first appears in the southern areas mentioned above and slowly works its way through the whole country, reaching the north of the country much later.

Prices of houses depend greatly on several factors and although properties certainly cost significantly more in London and its agglomeration, the location of the property is not the only crucial aspect. The first thing to take into consideration when looking at the abysmal house market price differences resembles the economic prosperity in individual regions which goes hand in hand with employment, or rather unemployment. The highest index of local economic prosperity almost copies the mentioned factor and leaves clear results as to where to find the lowest score in terms of economic prosperity and where the highest one is concentrated. London and its surroundings along with the South East and the East of England dominate and contrast the North and the North-West, which have one of the lowest indexes of the specified prosperity, as Green (1988) suggests. Wealth of the region certainly plays its role in the price of properties and there is no doubt that the City belongs to the highest ranks in terms of the financial value of houses, however the differences between individual regions truly are alarming. According to Green (1988) buying a house in the northern regions costs up to three to five times less than in the south let alone in the south-east.

Looking at the development of house prices, the curve has been increasing across England since 2007 although there are some exceptions where the average prices decreased for some period of time, specifically during the financial crisis in 2008 and continuing to 2009 in some areas. All the regions throughout the country recorded a rapid decline in the expenses for a house however the prices differed greatly. The lowest value for a house was in the North-East where the average price came down to roughly £117,000. The second lowest prices were recorded in Yorkshire and Humberside (£125,000) followed by the North-West with approximately the same value, the East Midlands (£135,000), the West Midlands (£140,000) and the East of England with roughly £170,000 which came up to almost the same price as in the South-West. The highest house prices were in the South-East (£190,000) and London (£250,000). Given these values, there clearly are major differences between the north and the south of England. The curve signalling the price of houses changed after the crisis and increased, as well as decreased, several times until it started to increase much more visibly in 2013 and 2014 with the only exception in the North-West which recorded much larger fluctuations than any other England region. After almost ten years since the last reference period (in 2019), the prices have changed significantly. On the lowest ranks was the North-East with approximately £130,000 followed by the North-West and Yorkisher and the Humberside, both coming to £160,000, the West and East Midlands recorded roughly £200,000. The southern part of the country left all those mentioned regions behind and house prices came up much higher in the South-West (almost £260,000), the East of England (£295,000), the South-East (£325,000) and finally London reaching roughly £480,000. The average house price in the whole of England comes up to approximately £245,000 which is almost £100,000 more than in the North-East but also only half of the price of a house in London. Seeing these financial values which change greatly depending on the region, there is no doubt that the North-South housing divide truly exists. Data used in this section of the thesis came from the Land Registry (2022).

4 POLITICAL ASPECTS OF THE DIVIDE

Politics go hand in hand with the economy and while aspects cited above reflect the economic situation in England, it is mostly the politicians who play a crucial role. The political system in England allows the two main actors, the Conservative or the Labour Party, to control and guide the development of the country by expressing the values the ruling political party uphold. This chapter describes the above mentioned political system in more detail, along with a brief summary of politics at the end of the twentieth century. Brexit, an important milestone in the history of the United Kingdom, is analysed as well as the recent phenomenon, the Red Wall.

4.1 Post-war politics

English politics is a part of a larger whole, the politics of the United Kingdom (including the politics of Wales, Scotland and New Ireland), in which England, being the biggest and most populated country in the United Kingdom, realises executive power. To talk about politics in England and what role it plays, if any, in shaping the North-South Divide, it is necessary to identify the political system and how it works. England is a parliamentary democracy under a constitutional monarchy, which, put briefly, means the head of the state is the monarch (Queen Elizabeth II) and the head of the government is the Prime Minister (currently Boris Johnson). The government in England consists of the Prime Minister and his or her Cabinet and also junior ministers. Then there is the parliament, which consists of the House of Commons and the House of Lords. The political system of the United Kingdom consists of two dominant parties, the Liberal Party and the Labour Party.

The parliament, as mentioned earlier, is divided into two houses: the House of Commons and the House of Lords. The General Election may be called anytime throughout those five years if an event which requires that occurs. The main activity of the House of Commons is to pass laws and to monitor the government's activities. The House of Commons consists of members of Parliament who are elected at the General Elections every five years. Each one of those members represents one constituency in England, which makes 651 in total. Since the members of Parliament are elected, there may be members of the 'losing' party as well as those who are from the winning party but were not chosen to be ministers. (Schneider, 2000)

The second part of Parliament, the House of Lords, differs greatly from the House of Commons, at least in how they earn their place in the House. The membership may be appointed (for their achievements or experiences) or inherited and it mostly remains for life.^d Many of those members do not even belong to a political party. The other major disparity between the House of Commons and the House of Lords is the number of representatives. Since members of the upper house of the Parliament of the United Kingdom are not elected, the total number of them is not set. However, there are currently around 800 members, which is more than the House of Commons has. (UK Parliament, 2022)

When a political party wins the General Election, their leader is appointed a Prime Minister, who is the most powerful person in the government and also the head of it. The whole government (including the Prime Minister, his Cabinet and junior ministers) is responsible for running the country according to their best judgements, spending public money, setting taxes or delivering public services. (UK Parliament, 2022) Similar to the House of Commons, the government is elected for five years. The last but certainly not least member of politics in England is the Monarch, who is commonly known as the Crown. The Monarch is, unlike the government or the Prime Minister, the head of state. However, to the public eye, the Monarch is seen “as head of the nation. In this representative role, the Sovereign acts as a focus for national identity, unity and pride; gives a sense of stability and continuity; officially recognises success and excellence; and supports the ideal of voluntary service.” (UCL, 2022, “What is the role of monarchy?” para. 3) Queen Elisabeth II currently rules England and she has been doing that since 1952, which makes her the longest serving Monarch. So what exactly are the main functions of Her Majesty? The role of the Monarch was not always the same throughout the history of England. Over time, the powers of the Crown reduced a lot and the role in government is rather symbolic. The Queen approves bills, a process called Royal Assent. which indicates that it has become a law. Theoretically, she could disapprove of it, however, in reality, this process is only a formal matter and the Queen always approves the bills. The crucial function of the Monarch is mostly to represent England, which includes hosting high-ranking officials or politicians from abroad as well as the heads of other states. The Queen also formally appoints the Prime Minister as well as all the ministers. The Crown also gives speeches, gives honours and visits schools, hospitals and focuses on charities.

Now that the different parts of the government have been acknowledged and the parliament based in England, it is possible to look at how politics in general contribute to the creation of the North-South Divide. Analysing the political situation in England since the second world war to the present day will help to determine whether politics truly was, or still is, one of the major reasons why England feels so divided and the nation is split almost in half. The last general election in 2019 will also be discussed, where the Conservative Party won in areas of England which had previously always been loyal to the Labour Party.

After world war two, elections were held in England. The outcome was that the Conservative Party, with Winston Churchill as their leader, lost to the Labour Party. However, Churchill returned to power only six years later, replacing Clement Attlee, after which the Conservative Party ruled for thirteen years. Subsequently, Labour and Conservative governments alternated several times up to the spring of 1979, when Margaret Thatcher, leader of the Conservative Party, was elected Prime Minister. Her politics is commonly known as Thatcherism, which is worth describing in a little more detail. During the 1980s, there were debates over whether England was split into two nations; one of which was rich, profitable, employed and living in a city, the other rather poor, unemployed and living in rural areas. One nation occupied the profitable south and the other resided in the destitute north. Many people believe the policies of Thatcherism were the reason for a deepening of the North-South divide.

Who was Margaret Thatcher and what were the main ideas of Thatcherism? First of all, she promised a low inflation rate, primacy of competition and a free market and also privatisation of public goods and services. However, what happened was the service sector was thriving and the manufacturing was deeply declining, as well as the unemployment rate (over 25% in the 1970s). When Thatcher first became the Prime Minister, England was dealing with a high inflation rate. The government therefore had to get inflation under control, which they did by cutting expenditure. When the Conservative Party took office in 1979, the unemployment rate shot up and remained very high during the 1980s, mostly due to shutting down factories and pits in the North. Thatcher ordered the closure of several mines for economic reasons, which led to major strikes led by the miners. Another thing Thatcher did after becoming Prime Minister was raising the base rate from roughly 7 to 10% in 1978 to 17% in 1979. This brought about the desired decline in inflation but affected the manufacturing industry and

exports badly. The consequences of all this for the economy have already been analysed in the previous chapter.

4.1.1 Brexit

One of the most significant milestones in the modern history of England and the United Kingdom overall, is Brexit. Some people may disregard dissimilarities between the North and the South in general and we cannot blame them. The 2016 referendum, in which the voters had a chance to express their opinion about leaving or staying in the European Union, clearly showed that the nation truly is divided. Even though there was not a clear North-South division in the voting pattern, it was clearly visible that most of the votes for remaining in the EU came from the South, especially from London and its surroundings (Hazeldine, 2020). Even though the referendum on whether England will remain in the EU was held in 2016, it was not first of its kind. The very first one appeared much sooner, only two years after the United Kingdom became a member of the European Economic Community (this institution was renamed in 1993 to European Community, which became the main part of the European Union). In 1975, the voters had a chance to express their opinion on the important question: Should the UK stay in the European Economic Community? A majority of 67% of voters supported staying. Over the next thirty years, the UK had its ups and downs with the EU and finally decided to take the big step. In 2013, the then Prime Minister, David Cameron, promised to hold a referendum on whether the United Kingdom should remain or leave the EU - if his Conservative Party won the next elections. Following their victory, they began negotiating. The promised referendum was held on 23rd June 2016. On that day, more than 30 million people voted. However, the result of the referendum was very tight: 51.9% voted for leaving, 48.1% for remaining. As for the results of England, the old industrial regions in the north, such as Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds and York voted to remain in the EU. The same result arose from South Hams, South Lakeland, Harrogate or South Cambridgeshire, as well as from the capital and its surroundings. As already mentioned before, David Cameron was the Prime Minister who promised a referendum on whether to leave the EU or stay. Now Cameron himself wanted the United Kingdom to remain a member of the EU and so when the people spoke on behalf of leaving the EU he announced his resignation as Prime Minister. As a strong supporter of staying in the EU, he did not want to participate in negotiating the terms of Brexit. Cameron was soon replaced in his position by Theresa May who has been elected as

leader of the Conservative Party. As a new Prime Minister, May experienced some difficulties concerning Brexit. First she had to formally notify the EU of the intentions of leaving and also start the negotiations on the terms of the exit. May triggered Article 50 which started the countdown on the process of leaving the EU, which she did at the end of March 2017. In January 2019, the parliament voted against the deal that May had created and did so twice subsequently. Brexit was delayed until the 31st October at this point. In the summer of 2019, May announced that she would resign from her position and she was replaced by a new leader of the Conservative Party, Boris Johnson, the very next day. (Pruitt, 2017)

The UK left the EU on 31st January 2020 after all discussions and negotiations had been exhausted. The United Kingdom leaving the EU was certainly a bold move, especially in terms of the economy of the state and its independence. We can only imagine how this referendum and its result divided the nation furthermore. One could also argue if the decision to leave the EU was a right one in the first place. The outcomes of this vote, especially from an economic perspective, will be further described later.

4.1.2 The Red Wall

The term ‘Red Wall’ refers to parliamentary seats traditionally held by the Labour Party. This imaginary wall extends mainly across some constituencies in the Midlands, Northern England and North-East Wales. If a map of all the constituencies in England is coloured according to the party which they support (red for Labour, blue for Conservative) the area in question looks rather like a wall, keeping out the Conservatives. It may not look like a huge area but it contains approximately 4.7 million people which represents a considerable number of voters. All these constituencies have been supporting Labour for a very long time, some of them from the very beginning when the constituencies in question were formed: “They had stayed Labour because being Labour was part of their identity, practically written into their DNA. Voting Tory would surely be anathema to them” (Mattison, 2020, “*Introduction*” para. 3). Given the profile of those traditionally Labour areas, the results of the general elections in 2019 were quite surprising: the Tories not only won 43.6% of all the votes but, also got gained 365 seats in the parliament; on the other hand, the number of people voting for the Labour Party dropped to 32.2% with only 203 seats. This represented Labour’s biggest defeat since 1935. Surprisingly, many of the old industrial areas with

large numbers of working-class men and women who had almost always been loyal to Labour, switched sides and voted for the Conservative Party instead. The Tories also won “nearly half of all the manual workers and 58 per cent of those whose educational attainment was GCSE level or less” (Mattison, 2020, “*Introduction*” para. 6). Age certainly goes hand in hand with education and it seems like those indicators are starting to be much more important than social class. There was a clear pattern in the last few elections where the Labour party won a majority of votes from people aged 18 to 24 and the Conservative scored with the 60s and above. However, the most important change could be seen among middle-aged voters who switched from Labour to the Tories. This age pattern was also clearly visible during the referendum in 2016: those who were younger and well educated voted for remaining in the EU; those who were older and less educated wanted the UK to leave (Mattison, 2020).

People living in the Red Wall area seem to have one thing in common; the location of their homes. Two thirds of these voters live in town, only 15% in cities, 3% in major cities and 17% in villages. Mattison (2020) came with a rather extreme statement, according to which the towns look rather like small settlements which are usually close to bigger cities, but they are not easily accessible. They also drive cars a lot, simply because the public transport is not at its finest there. Although Mattison (2020) described the people living beyond the Red Wall almost as the stereotype of unsophisticated country people, the reality is different and while they may live in smaller villages, they certainly are not as backward the author suggests. It is quite hard to imagine what life is like beyond the Red Wall. Those who live there know there are few opportunities to find a good job or to get a proper education. However, many of them don't even think about moving somewhere else. Most of them still remember the good old days when the North and the Midlands were an important part of the economy and the factories employed thousands of people. The local people are very proud of what their fathers and grandfathers achieved in the past, they still cherish those moments and would not trade it for anything else, so moving away is not an option for a majority of them. It seems like the Red Wallers see England differently, as if they truly were on their own. What they really need is a party which will not only represent them but also help them be great again. The lack of money in those areas of the Midlands and the North where the Red Wall lies is visible and wage levels, as well as the infrastructure, are a clear example of that.

The Conservative Party had never seriously focused on those ‘red seats’ simply because they had always been loyal to the Labour Party and nothing ever indicated things could be otherwise. However, the referendum in 2016 transformed the situation in England and may even have altered some people's opinions and thoughts. The Conservatives possibly felt the change and thought that they might stand a chance at the next general election and decided to turn their attention to the Red Wall. That proved to be a highly effective strategy: the Tories gained 60 seats in 2019, with two-thirds coming from the traditional Labour voters. It has surely been some time since the Red Wallers not only agreed with the Labour party's agenda but identified with it as well. Times appeared to be changing in England and the Red Wall voting for the Tories is a clear indicator of this. The Red Wallers had never really identified with the Conservative Party, whom they saw as more upper class, well-dressed people who eat expensive food and work in the City; in contrast, the Red Wallers belong to the working-class. Here the question arises as to why the traditional Labour voters decide to change the habit of a lifetime and switch sides? One likely explanation is that the Labour Party was ambiguous about its position on leaving the EU, which large parts of the Midlands and the North had voted for. The Red Wallers also believed the Tories could get Brexit done and saw voting for them as a way forward.

5 CONCLUSION

This thesis is concerned with the frequently mentioned North-South divide in England. The aim of the thesis was to look at the divide from different angles and identify not only whether it actually exists, but also to track the references to it in different periods of time.

The thesis is divided into three main chapters. The first one identifies the dividing line throughout history and also analyses its exact location, which, logically enough, lies approximately in the middle of the country. This chapter also hints at the genuine existence of a North-South divide to some extent, since there certainly are some discernible differences in different parts of England. Regions are compared to one another in various aspects, such as population growth and concentration of towns at the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries or migration to the northern industrial regions during the period of Industrial Revolution. The divide was also evident in the twentieth century when the number of unemployed people was much higher in the north than in the southern regions.

Politics, which in the second part of the thesis, has played its role in creating and perpetuating the divide; this is also described in the final chapter along with the phenomena of the Red Wall and post-war politics. The third chapter supports the main idea of the first one and confirms that the North-South divide in England indeed exists. Economic factors are examined in detail and show significant differences between some regions within the north and the south, particularly the North-East and London. Those regions recorded the biggest gap in, for example, house prices (buying a house in the North costs up to three times less than buying one in London and its surroundings), GDP per capita or unemployment, both showing poorer numbers in the northern part of the country than in the South-West or East of England.

Further research regarding other aspects of the divide such as education or health care could be carried out in the future. The study could also focus on a questionnaire aimed at people living in England to identify whether they feel the presence of the North-South divide.

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SHRNUTÍ

Předmětem této bakalářské práce je problematika rozdělení Anglie na severní a jižní část, přičemž takovéto dělení je zapříčiněno hned několika faktory. Prvním z nich je jistě politika a její následky, které ovlivňují vývoj nejen samotné země, ale také jednotlivých regionů. Tento faktor jde ruku v ruce s ekonomikou, která hraje zásadní roli a vytváří regionální rozdíly. Tato práce se zaměřuje na specifické aspekty ekonomiky jako je inflace, nezaměstnanost, hrubý domácí produkt a v neposlední řadě trh s nemovitostmi. Tyto faktory jsou rozebrány v rámci časové osy, která se u každého ze zmíněných prvků liší, nicméně zaměřuje se vždy na období kolem konce 20. a začátku 21. století do současnosti. V závěru práce jsou výsledky především ekonomických ale také politických rozdílů porovnány a je zde potvrzena výzkumná otázka, a to že linie oddělující sever od jihu v Anglii skutečně existuje.