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Spatial Economics Research Centre

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Space Rationing

In today's Guardian, [George Monbiot argues for a new approach to the housing crisis](#). The government should decide how much space we need per person and then find ways to strongly penalize anyone consuming more than this.

Funnily enough, my colleague Paul Cheshire raised this as a "suggestion" in a [SERC policy paper on planning](#): "The second choice would be rigorous to follow the logic of 1947 state planning. If we are intent on allocating land for each use without regard to price then logically we need to introduce space rationing. If price does not determine the supply of land then price must not determine its consumption. Each adult could, for example, have a ration of say 40 sq metres with dependent children having, say, another 20 sq metres each. We could, if we wanted, even introduce a trading system so young adults or those willing to live in more cramped conditions could sell some of their space ration perhaps buying back space in later life."

The difference between the two suggestions is that my colleague was joking, whereas George Monbiot appears to be entirely serious. You can read Paul's paper for the detailed arguments but I, for one, am convinced that central planning of space needs per citizen is not going to improve Britain's housing problem.

Posted by [Prof Henry G. Overman](#) on [Tuesday, January 04, 2011](#).

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