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ABSTRACT

London and South East England, in the late 1980s, are exhibiting many similar features to the San Francisco Bay Area: rapid growth of some economic sectors (informational services, high-tech manufacturing) coupled with polarization of the labor force and the development of an urban underclass; decentralization of people and economic activities over an increasingly wide geographical framework; and distinctive economic effects of rapid growth, including suburban traffic gridlock and escalating house prices. The paper, based on the author's new book London 2001, reviews these problems, and ends by outlining a possible regional strategy to meet them.

This IGS working paper will be subsequently published as a chapter in Breheny, M., Congdon, P. (1990) Growth and Change in a Core Region: The Case of South East England. London: Pion. It is based on the author's new book: Hall, P. (1988) London 2001. Boston: Unwin Hyman.

LONDON 2001
Peter Hall

A year and a half ago, I became gripped by a compulsive sensation that history was going round in circles. Such obsessions are by no means unusual among academics at the end of a long year of lecturing and committee-going, and are usually dealt with by a visit to the university health centre and a couple of weeks in the sun. But this one persisted. It caused me to drag down from the shelves an aged and dog-eared book, which I had written as a naive and callow lecturer a quarter of a century ago, called London 2000. Having leafed through it, I found my anxiety unallayed, indeed increased. The result, on January 12, was the publication of its sequel, London 2001.

The obsession was, and is, this: just as in the early 1960s, the British media are again full of the problems of London and the South East: population growth and spread, escalating land and house prices, traffic congestion, overcrowding on the tubes and British Rail, fights about development in the Home Counties. Almost unbelievably, some of the current scenes of battle, like Hook in Hampshire, are the same now as then. Once again, we are in a period and under a government devoted to the principle of setting the people free. And everywhere, voices are being raised that it is not good enough; that something must be done. In other words, regional planning has reached its nadir, and is just about to come back into fashion.

Perhaps it is all a manifestation of half a Kondratieff long wave, or (better) a Kuznets construction cycle. Perhaps, as the American historian Arthur Schlesinger has recently suggested, political issues really do recycle at roughly 25-year intervals. Whatever the explanation, it may be useful to ask whether history is truly repeating itself.

In reality there seem to be both uncanny similarities, and also some significant differences. Looking back at my rash predictions of a quarter-century ago, I found some on target, some wildly off the mark. I was in good company. Almost everyone in the 1960s wildly overestimated the growth of population and employment in the London Region. Obsessed with problems of a buoyant economy, no one could have predicted that there would be fewer jobs in the London Metropolitan Area in the late 1980s than in the early 1960s. On the other hand, almost everyone then seems to have been right in accepting the fact of massive decentralization of the population from core to periphery, and in predicting its continuation. In fact the only mistake we made was to underestimate the scale of the movement.

In the intervening quarter-century there have, I think, been at least two huge changes in the socio-economic landscape of the South East and in our perception of it. The first, known to everyone, is what could be called the progressive polarization of the economy, which David Eversley was the first to identify and

predict nearly twenty years ago. Above all in London itself, we now witness an extraordinary set of contrasts: on the one hand, the overheated Yuppie economy; on the other, minutes away, a society with no jobs and no prospects. It is most poignantly expressed by the almost unbelievable variations that now exist in residential unemployment rates across a few miles: from less than 9 per cent in Redbridge to over 24 per cent in Hackney, or from 6 per cent in Sutton to 20 per cent in Lambeth. It is encapsulated in the conclusion of Buck and Gordon, in their ESRC-funded study of local employment, that an unqualified, unmarried, black worker, aged 16-19, in an unskilled manual occupation, living on a council estate, is 30 times more likely to be unemployed than their statistical "standard male".

We all know the reasons; they have been explored in meticulous detail in the ESRC study. We might well differ about some of the prescriptions that follow. Basically, there are three underlying structural causes. The first is that the whole base of unskilled manual work has dramatically collapsed. The second is that this base was particularly concentrated in inner east and south London, which only a quarter century ago contained a mass of factories and workshops as well as the Port of London. I do not think it is generally appreciated, even now, that behind the hype, the London economy actually performed less well during the 1960s and 1970s than that of any other major city in Britain; less well even than Liverpool, that archetypal case of economic failure. The ESRC study has confirmed just how catastrophic was the destruction of the London job base in those years: a loss of nearly three quarters of a million jobs between 1966 and 1984; more than 600,000 lost in manufacturing alone. In comparison, the growth in the so called informational sector was negligible. It may have been better very recently, but the latest evidence we have gives no proof.

As a result, in these working class districts of east and south London we now find a kind of ghettoized society, reproducing itself through the failures of the education system; hence the ESRC conclusion that anyone in this or a similar society would have better prospects almost anywhere else. The third, special factor is race prejudice, which reinforces the poor performance of some ethnic groups (but not others) in the London schools - a performance that may itself be related to self-reinforcing racial stereotypes.

This is not uniquely a British problem. On the contrary, the key features have been analyzed for a long time in American cities, and - as the comparative work of John Kasarda and Jurgen Fredrichs has shown - are now observable in West German cities also. As they show, the most important single cause is what, twenty years ago, the American economist Charles Killingworth identified as job twist: a structural decline in demand for unskilled work coupled with a rapid escalation in the qualifications required to enter almost any job at all.

However, the interesting point is that this is no longer the aspect that interests the media. It is a 1970s issue, not a 1980s one. In the middle class view of London life, which is now the view of 80 per cent of the population, it is of interest only in terms of a high crime rate, the distant possibility of a riot, and the indirect impact on the package of services provided by the local borough (support for community groups versus fixing the cracks in the pavements). For this average consumer of the media, the problems of London are not those of economic failure but of explosive economic success: escalating house prices, the return of gazumping, overcrowded tube trains, difficulty in finding a good builder. The underclass are of interest only when, by accident, they physically impinge on the gracious but harried life of Yuppiedom.

Tom Wolfe's The Bonfire of the Vanities might thus equally be a parable for contemporary London as for New York. Nevertheless I share the view of Begg, Moore and Rhodes, in the conclusion of their ESRC study: that the possible consequences of prolonged deprivation might be "severe alienation, crime and violence, extreme and widespread poverty, large-scale vandalism and physical dereliction, the eventual removal of the private sector from such areas, and a gradual deterioration and breakdown of law and order and any sense of community". It sounds uncannily like Woolf's New York. Surely no Londoner, who had seen the reality of the South Bronx, would relish the prospect.

But let us go back to the middle class. The other dominant feature is that they are escaping from London, and that they are going ever farther afield. It is true that Tony Champion has identified a break in trend, in terms of a reversal of London's long population decline during 1984 and 1985. The gain was concentrated in Outer London, but in Inner London the population stabilized after years of loss. There are good reasons: the high birth rate among certain immigrant groups, the bonus from housing completions in Docklands and elsewhere. Time alone will show whether the reversal will be maintained; the 1987 figures again showed a fall in London's population. And out-migration is continuing at a high rate.

Meanwhile, the really important news is that the wave of really rapid growth is moving steadily farther and farther out. Martin Mogridge's analysis, indeed, suggests that the process has been occurring at a very steady rate since 1861, come war come peace, come plan come nonplan. It crossed the boundaries of Greater London in the 1950s or earlier; it leapt over the limits of the Outer Metropolitan Area during the 1960s; during this decade, it has rolled on outward beyond the boundaries of the South East region. The really significant growth now is occurring in a zone that has no name: you can call it the Golden Belt or the Sunbelt or, more pedantically, the Rest of the Greater South East. It consists of a belt of counties from Dorset, though Wiltshire and Northamptonshire and Cambridgeshire to Suffolk; by the 1990s, according to the OPCS projections, it may embrace Lincolnshire.

Within it, the growth is strongly concentrated in a few major city regions: Bournemouth-Poole (which, unnoticed, has become one of the most dynamic places in Britain in the 1980s), Swindon, Milton Keynes-Northampton, the belt that stretches through the Fenland border from north of Cambridge to Peterborough, and Ipswich.

What is happening in this belt? Did the people get pushed there, or were they pulled, or is it some combination of the two? What is the economic base that keeps these places running? Since there is presently no research on the causes, let me hazard some speculations. Some, the younger ones in the family building cycle, are doing so because only down the lines can they find the single family housing they need, at a price they can afford: an exact repetition of the 1960s story. Others, the older ones, may be cashing in their accumulated housing gains while the going is good.

As to jobs: there is some long-distance commuting via British Rail's Inter-City 125 services, though not as much as the media suggests. There is much more growth of irregular commuting on the part of people who do not have fixed, 9 to 5 Monday to Friday patterns of employment, like professional consultants or TV cameramen or academics. There is retirement and semi-retirement and anticipation of retirement on the part of people who have decided to cash in their London house values, sometimes investing the difference in small businesses. There is also a local economy, in the form of high tech and decentralized office employment along the M4 corridor. There is the development of certain places in the 80-100 mile range from London as strong regional service centres. All these can interact, as in the case of the older professional who retires early and starts up a business or a consultancy from a small town in Dorset or Suffolk, catering to the demands of the buoyant local economy.

There is scope for much research here. One is to try to establish exactly how the economy of such places is growing. I hope that the current ESRC research on the urban system may throw light on that question. Another is to disentangle the effects on commuting patterns. For all the media attention to the plight of long distance straphangers, now as 25 years ago, there is next to no evidence of a long term growth in London's commuter field; rather the reverse. The explanation, again, comes from the ESRC Inner Cities study. When people move out, at first they join the army of commuters. But then, at the rate of about 7-10 per cent a year, they find local jobs. After ten years, something like three quarters work locally. The indirect result of population movement is to reinforce the local economies of the towns of the fringe. This mechanism has worked very well, and it is the reason for a major paradox revealed in the ESRC research: though the London economy has performed so terribly, the fact has not led to higher unemployment there: the out-movers eventually release jobs for those who stay behind.

Further, as they do so, they cease to be long-distance commuters. It could well be that we are now witnessing a temporary transitional phenomenon, which will subside. But there may be a different problem in the making: a tangle of shorter and medium length journeys into the towns of the fringe, almost all made by car, leading to the condition which in the United States Robert Cervero has labelled Suburban Gridlock. It is now abundantly clear that there, decentralization of office functions has reached such an advanced stage - northern New Jersey for instance has more office space than downtown Chicago and Los Angeles combined - the traditional dominance of radial journeys is being completely overlain by this new pattern of daily movement. And everywhere - Orange County south of Los Angeles, Silicon Valley and the so called I-680 Corridor in the San Francisco Bay Area, the New Jersey and Connecticut suburbs of New York - the result is increasing paralysis, to which conventional transportation planning has no solution. I do not think that the Greater South East has yet reached that point, but some parts are approaching it. Martin Boddy and his colleagues are studying the patterns on the western end of the M4 Corridor; but we need more analysis closer to London, around such major recipients of office decentralization as Reading and Basingstoke.

But it is not the commuters who have provided the biggest stories for the media during recent months. It is the house buyers - or, more precisely, the people who want to build houses for them, in the form of the House Builders Federation and Consortium Developments, arrayed on one side of the battlefield, and the planners, in the form of the districts and counties and SERPLAN, the Standing Conference of South East Planning Authorities, on the other. They have been locked in conflict, with the statistical departments of the major Building Societies providing cannon balls in the form of regular analyses showing South East house prices increasing at a dizzying rate: according to one much-quoted account in mid 1987, by #53 a day. They have not risen as spectacularly this year, but that is because the zone of maximum growth has now moved out into the South West and East Anglia.

Both sides have engaged their professional experts to bolster their cases. They seem to agree on one point: that house prices have risen roughly in line with incomes. They have probably risen much faster than the Retail Price Index. The proportion of house price represented by land has risen, though no faster than in the rest of the country. Builders, interviewed, quote land availability as the main constraint in their achievement of their plans, but they have always tended to say that.

The arithmetic, which applies only to the South East Standard Region, is simple. SERPLAN has for a long time stuck with a figure of a need for 460,000 homes in the 1990s. It thinks one third of these can and should be built within Greater London.

The house builders say that the real figure is much higher, perhaps 800,000 or more. Nicholas Ridley, after some dithering, has recently settled on a figure between 560,000 and 580,000.

Predictably, no one is satisfied. The house builders paint a picture of continued shortages. The protestors paint a rival picture of the concreting over of the South East. That is rather far from the mark: Robin Best's estimate, 20 years ago, was that between 17 and 19 per cent of the region was urbanized; a more recent estimate from Margaret Anderson gives only 16 per cent, rising to 17 per cent by the year 2000. The one almost indisputable fact is that there is likely to be a very large surplus of farmland by the end of the century, as a result of subsidy reductions to farmers. The Countryside Commission in 1987 estimated that on the most likely set of assumptions it could be as much as one quarter of the present agricultural area of the country, though clearly this might be lower in a relatively fertile region like the South East. So, as in the 1930s, farmers may once again discover that their most profitable crop is a crop of bungalows.

The critical questions clearly are: how much? and where? The latter question really splits into two parts: how concentrated or how spread at the regional scale? and how much at a local scale? At one extreme, as in the South East Strategic Plan of 1970, we could seek to concentrate a large part of the total growth into a few well sited growth areas. That strategy did not work very well, for the population figures show that three of the five so called major growth areas failed to grow very much at all; but that, perhaps, was because the local planners were not trying very hard to provide for growth, or were even trying to stop it. One irony is that the people who seem to believe in the 1970s plan are the volume builders. A very substantial part of all the twenty or more new communities now proposed for the South East are in the major or medium growth zones designated in the Plan. If all of their proposals for the Reading-Wokingham-Aldershot-Basingstoke quadrilateral came to pass, for instance, we should get an urban structure for that area very much like what the 1970 plan team had in mind. The contrary irony concerns the SERPLAN planners: apart from wanting to crowd one third of their calculated need into London, they wish to spread the other two thirds quite evenly across the region, on the ground that the demand will come mainly from locals and must be met locally. The strategic planners have completely rejected the strategic planning orthodoxy of eighteen years ago. No wonder that the government can dismiss strategic planning as an outdated notion from the 1960s.

My personal opinion - it can be no more - is that they are about 50 per cent right, 50 per cent wrong. Much of the demand will arise locally, but a lot will also arise from footloose households, and it would be right - as the 1970 report argued - to concentrate this in places which offered easy commutes to central London, and which also had a sufficiently large and

varied economic base to provide for subsequent commuter drawback. The Reading-Wokingham-Aldershot-Basingstoke area is an outstanding example. Milton Keynes-Northampton, Crawley-Gatwick and South Essex are others. Notice that they are neatly placed roughly at the four compass points, on major transportation corridors. Cambridge-Peterborough-Huntingdon might well be added to them, because of the access offered by the newly electrified East Coast main line and the M11-A604 corridor.

We come back, then, to the arithmetic in the book. It will prove right to put, say, about two in every five of the new houses and the new people into growth around the existing towns in Roseland, and in the South East Fringe; and to put another quarter into new communities within a few major growth areas. Since many of the existing towns are also in the major growth areas, that means that we can expect upwards of 40 per cent of overall growth to be there -- 15-20 per cent around existing towns, 25-30 per cent in new communities -- and perhaps 20 per cent in medium growth areas, leaving another 40 per cent to be scattered across the extended region.

What this means, for the way the Greater South East region will look and feel in the early 21st Century, is again: not much different from now. Most of the region will remain deeply rural: a landscape of fields, fens, woods, villages, dotted with country market towns. At widely spaced intervals of 30 or 40 miles, as now, there will be bigger -- properly, medium-sized -- towns, typically county towns like Cambridge, Colchester, Maidstone, Guildford, Oxford; some of them, designated medium growth centres, will have grown appreciably, some less so. Additionally, there will be perhaps a score of new communities built by private enterprise, especially close to towns, like Oxford and Cambridge, which are themselves subject to exceptionally strict containment policies. But green belt and other restrictions will ensure that these are kept quite separate from their parent towns, surrounded by green countryside.

Then, somewhat different in feel, will be the major growth areas. They will be based on the areas identified in the 1970 Strategic Plan, because these were the places best suited -- by their location on the major motorway and inter-city rail corridors, by the scale of their existing urban development -- for large-scale growth. But now, some at least may take a different form. Southampton-Portsmouth will be extended out to Bournemouth-Poole, as a kind of Randstad around the green heart of the New Forest. Reading-Wokingham-Aldershot-Basingstoke will be extended eastwards to include Bracknell, and perhaps westwards to take in Newbury. Crawley-Gatwick will also embrace Horsham immediately to the west. Milton Keynes-Northampton will logically extend eastwards and northwards in a linear development to include Wellingborough, Kettering and Corby. South Essex will form another Randstad together with Chelmsford.

Several of these extensions, very importantly for the region's future development, take in fast-growing cities and towns at the fringe of the extended region, like Bournemouth-Poole and Northampton-Wellingborough. And two other major planned developments in this fringe belt, the expanded town of Swindon and the new town of Peterborough, should be further developed as major growth centres: the latter, additionally, incorporating further growth around Huntingdon-Godmanchester and one or more new communities in the Cambridgeshire Fenland, immediately to their east. Finally, without doubt, there will need to be a further look at two growth centres identified, but then not pursued, in the planning studies of the 1960s: Ipswich and Ashford, each of which may well need satellite new communities around them to help house their growth.

Further, it would also make sense to try to develop these locations in association with the commercial regeneration of selected accessible locations in the inner and middle rings of London, along the same transportation corridors, which could attract the necessary skill mix by intercepting the commuters, but which could also provide jobs suitable for the local unemployed workforce. It is interesting that, just before London 2001 went to press, the London Planning Advisory Committee published its strategic planning advice for Greater London, with a similar policy for selected sites in East London, notably Stratford Broadway. I had also identified that site, but I disagree with LPAC that the policy should concentrate solely on East London. There are extraordinarily accessible sites elsewhere in the inner and middle rings, some of which are almost completely undeveloped because the accessibility has never been exploited. Among them, perhaps the most outstanding are Deptford Park near the Millwall football ground in south east London, and the Old Oak Triangle in west London. There are also developed sites ripe for redevelopment, like the Finsbury Park-Wood Green corridor, which could fulfill exactly the same role.

There is another critical element in this strategy. It is to enhance accessibility within the South East by a balanced programme of rail and road investment. Planning in the region, over the last quarter century, has been bedevilled by starvation funding and by the fact that transportation planning has become a political football: one lot all pro-road, the other all pro-rail. The right solution, surely, would be to concentrate on rail investment for the job that rail is good at - inter city and commuter services - and accept that the rest of the region will ride on the roads.

This means selective investment in new and improved roads, with more orbital capacity both in South London and in the Outer Metropolitan Area, at roughly 40 miles from central London, together with new radials into congested OMA centres like Reading, Luton, Chelmsford and Maidstone; both should provide for priority for buses and other high occupancy vehicles - a contribution to transport planning that the Americans have made,

in Washington DC and Los Angeles and elsewhere. But it also means, as top priority, the creation of a new regional express rail system, on the model of the Parisian RER or the new S-Bahn systems of German cities, which would bring long-distance commuters into and under the centre of London. A first element of such a system has been in place since May this year: Thameslink, which connects Bedford and Luton directly via King's Cross and Blackfriars with Sevenoaks, Orpington, Gatwick and Brighton. A first step should be to complement it by an east-west line, linking Reading and Heathrow with Docklands and Southend. Later would come a line lining Northampton and Milton Keynes with Basingstoke and Tonbridge. Such a system would be a key element in linking the major growth centres with the zones of regeneration within London.

Does this sound over impressive, even fantastic? As a twenty-year plan, it is the reverse. Much of it will be needed, come what may. A joint LRT-BR study, to emerge later this year, will almost certainly recommend a rail package along these lines. Much of the investment could and should come from the private sector, which has shown itself willing and eager to put money into new road and rail schemes as well as into new communities. It needs a modicum of imagination plus political will. Above all, it needs a commitment to a notion of public planning and private investment working hand in hand. To this point, I will return towards the end of this lecture.

Investment, however, will make no sense at all unless it is balanced by two other prior policies. First, we need a proper charging and subsidy policy which is uniform and equitable, so far as possible, as between road and rail, drivers in private cars and commuters on the trains. At present, the paradox is that we are probably providing transport on the cheap. We are providing a lot of low-quality service, both on the roads and the rails, at too low a price. In particular, we are permitting a serious and deteriorating level of congestion on the roads, a situation no one would rationally want but no one can avoid: a modern version of the medieval tragedy of the commons. The way around that is the solution first canvassed 25 years ago in London 2000: pricing for the use of roadspace. We got near it, twice, but the London politicians funked it; ironically, the Singapore planners borrowed the scheme and made it work. We badly need to borrow it back, or, better, the superior scheme tested in Hong Kong and based on our own British technology, which is waiting to be used. It could provide a model, and an export platform, for all the other great cities of the world.

Second, we need above all effective enforcement of the regulations we have. It is an appalling comment on the state of London, in 1988, that we can everywhere see miles of so-called urban clearway actually lined with parked cars. There are two clues to making this better. First, the pathetically small resources now applied to enforcement - 1800 wardens, against the Metropolitan Police estimate of 4000 needed for a proper job -

need to be increased. Second, they need to be redeployed to focus on the most serious problems of obstruction of traffic flow. One way to achieve this would be to privatize the service and pay for it out of fines and two charges. The objective would be to ensure, by a combination of enforcement and high penalties, that no one contemplated illegal parking on main traffic arteries. If Paris and Frankfurt and San Francisco can manage it, to name only three, then so can London.

In summary, then: on transport we need a combination of five policies.

First, an RER type network for London. It would have two elements: short-distance lines within London, created by joining BR suburban services across the centre; and longer-distance operations, created in the same way.

Secondly, completion of a minimal good-quality highway network. It would consist of motorway standard orbital and circular highways, with motorway-standard connecting radials; and arterial tangents skirting the central area.

Thirdly, development of a local transport system for orbital and other non-central journeys within the middle ring, based on express buses and light rail, utilizing the new highway system, and focussing on the main commercial activity centres of this ring, there connecting with radial (underground and RER) services.

Fourth, intensive and effective management of street and parking space, including both existing streets and the new highway system, to ensure its effective use, with high priority for public transport and other high occupancy vehicles (HOVs).

Fifth, a plan for movement in Roseland, which would start from the Regional Express Rail Network but would recognize that here, most people would continue to travel by road; and which, in consequence, would work through trying to use the existing system more effectively and by upgrading it to the same end.

A balanced programme of pricing, traffic control and enforcement, and of road and rail investment, will not only improve the quality of movement in and around London; it will also improve the quality of life, by allowing us to remove extraneous traffic and to calm the rest. We would start, as just argued, by putting a much more realistic price on the use of roadspace in most of London. Then we would ensure that people paid that price, either through parking or road use charges; the relatively modest cost would be fully recouped by the charges themselves, including fines for delinquent behaviour. Then we would invest as the pattern of behaviour indicated: much more off-street parking around shopping centres, for instance. At the same time, we would progressively introduce traffic calming schemes throughout the residential areas of London, including precinctual solutions

to ensure that rat-running traffic did not penetrate back streets. Where this put severe burdens on the main road system, in terms either of congestion or of environmental quality, we would seek to mitigate this by selective road construction. We would seek to challenge the biggest traffic flows on to a relatively skeletal high-quality system, some of which would take the form of new tollways, built depressed beneath the surface and even tunnelled in order to minimize environmental damage.

That was a brief excursion into planning down at the level where it impacts directly on the quality of people's lives; I wish we had the time for more of it. But I want to come back now to the main topic of this lecture: the question of strategic planning, a term I make no apology for using. The problem is that in the last 25 years, strategic planning has got itself an undeserved bad name. The reason for that largely lay with the failure of the BBC as strategic authority. The truth is that the GLC did the things it was supposed to do badly or not at all, and it tried to do too many things that it should never have tried to do. It was created as a slim strategic authority for the coordination of land use planning and transport. It never managed to be one. My argument is that this job is not merely desirable; it is necessary. Someone has got to do it. The problems that brought the GLC into being have not gone away; they are endemic. London's traffic is still stalled; its public transport functions less smoothly than it might; there are huge decisions to be taken about major developments. If they are not in the hands of a designated authority, civil servants will take them by default.

There are two ways to go. Either we seek to develop a slim, streamlined elected regional strategic authority such as the Herbert Commission (1957-60) presumably had in mind, an authority prohibited from performing any other function and presenting no real threat either to central government or to the boroughs; this time making sure that it starts that way and stays that way. Or, as suggested by a Working Party which I chaired back in 1984, we admit that central government is going to control London, and start to plan a structure on that basis: a Ministry for London, and a Grand Committee of the House of Commons.

There are plenty of precedents for the slimline elected Authority on the European mainland. As Alan Norton has shown in his useful review of metropolitan government abroad, "Britain is an odd exception not only in proposing to abolish intermediate authorities which serve approximately half its population but also in paying scant regard to the case for decentralization". True, events have shown that Britain is an extraordinarily centralized state, in which local government has no real defence against attack from Westminster. Nevertheless, the argument that London has been deprived of a democratic voice is an uncomfortable one, even for a centralist and confident government. Norton's own examples suggest that some of these European-type authorities could potentially exist within such a

centralist framework. Most of them are ad hoc creations that have no clear constitutional status, but were set up to deal with special cases; they are fragile because they depend on agreement. But they can be very slim - Greater Copenhagen has only 115 employees, the Frankfurt Regional Union 187 - and some of them, at least, have shown a capacity to survive.

Such an authority, on the model of Greater Copenhagen, might be indirectly elected through the boroughs, with an admixture of members representing the wide interest: either MPs, or persons nominated by the Secretary of State. It might cover an area considerably wider than the old GLC, perhaps extending over the entire Metropolitan Area, perhaps even farther. It would thus begin to approximate to the regional prescription advocated by the Royal Town Planning Institute in their 1987 policy statement. It would presumably take over all the functions of the Standing Conference, SERPLAN. Its remit would be to produce statements of regional guidance which, after approval by the Secretary of State, would be binding on borough and district authorities in drawing up their own unitary plans. It would also have a specific remit to advise on investment plans for both main roads and public transport in its area.

But, if a streamline Copenhagen-style authority is rejected, we are logically left with central control. Distasteful as it may seem to many, it may be the only practicable option. The argument, as our Working Party set it out, may be expressed as a series of propositions. The Government in 1983-6 was determined to abolish the GLC, and it succeeded. Though many functions can and should go to the boroughs, there are certain functions that can properly performed only on a London-wide basis. The question is how to do this effectively, economically and accountably. If no one else can do them, they logically fall upon central government and its agents. This is underlined by the fact that at the end of the day, Central government pays for the key physical plant: main roads, public transport, basic infrastructure for major developments like Docklands. Therefore these powers should go to the Departments of the Environment and Transport, where they will be overseen by Parliament.

Under this centralist prescription, there would be an advisory Metropolitan Planning and Transportation Commission. It should cover at least the Metropolitan Area (the zone within the 40-mile ring), if not the whole South East. Like its indirectly-elected equivalent, it would have a remit to advise the Secretary of State on future main lines of development within the region. The main difference would be that it was 100 per cent appointed by the Secretary of State, though it might - as of custom, not as of right - contain some local authority members.

Such a body must be capable of balancing the concerns of the local community against the needs of the wider community, in a way that the present local government system in Roseland cannot achieve. We might call it, for want of a better name, a Regional

Development Authority. It would be charged with producing a regional framework for development and redevelopment, and channelling public investment in inner city regeneration. It would identify the areas for major development and redevelopment within the region, including sites for new communities. It would also need to be centrally involved in coordinating regional investment in transportation and communications, whether by road, rail or telecommunications. It would be the equivalent of an London Docklands Development Corporation on the scale of a whole region, but it would not itself plan in detail; its job would end once action areas were designated and the development rights sold.

It would be unique. It would correspond to no present level of local government. So there is no easy way of ensuring its democratic accountability. In a centralist system, there appears no alternative to setting up such an authority through central government and making it responsible to Parliament through annual reports, just as the New Town Corporations and the LPTB were in their day and the LDDC in ours. Like all these, it would be limited special purpose authorities; like them, it would sit side by side with the local authorities, which would keep nearly all their present powers save some strategic planning responsibilities.

Once this body had specified such locations, there would clearly be massive consequences in terms of enhanced land values and consequent land speculation. So, whether indirectly elected or appointed, it would exercise enormous influence. Yet if it did not do this, we should be left with planning by roulette. I draw the conclusion that it should, but that in consequence it should carry out its remit within a rather strict set of procedures, which I outline in Chapter 7.

The question of its areal remit is a difficult one, because of the enormous extent of London's commuter area. That suggests that the appropriate region would be minimally the area of the present SERPLAN, and might indeed be the Greater South East. This is a huge area, having around one-fifth of the area and more than one-third of the entire population of the country. It is however comparable in many ways with the <u>Région Ile de France</u>, the corresponding unit for the Paris region. And it must be underlined that by far the greater part of it consists of reasonably self-contained labour market areas, only lightly touched by the outward ripple of London's commuter field. There is a critical contradiction between the region as defined in <u>functional</u> terms, as suggested by everyday movements, and that defined in terms of <u>planning</u> needs. London's outward growth throws a shadow that is far greater than the extent of its commuter field: it is this penumbra that requires strategic planning.

"Requires" strategic planning: that is a strong word for the late 1980s. For the government of the day has declared that there is

no need for any such thing. My argument is that soon enough, just as in the 1960s, there will be a call for the return of the strategic stance. Soon enough, planning by the turn of the roulette wheel will not prove satisfactory to anyone: neither to the volume housebuilders, determined to press ahead with their plans for a score of new communities in the South East; nor to the beleaguered citizens and politicians of the Shire counties, who live in fear of their depredations; nor to Ministers, left in the hot seat with the need to take massively unpopular decisions. And this will prove particularly true if, as a quarter-century ago, the future estimates of regional growth undergo sudden radical upward revision. Then, strategic planning will suddenly become politically acceptable, even desirable, again. It lets the politicians, even if partially, off the hook. And that argument will be a clinching one.

Let me now try to sum up on my argument in London 2001. Essentially, as I try to summarize it in the final chapter, I argue that we need to achieve four things. For work and also for services and entertainment, a many-centred city. For living, including community services and the education of children, real communities. For moving about, a choice of transport systems from any A to any B. For recreation or the plain enjoyment of looking, a continuous green backcloth. And, behind them all, a slimline regional planning system.

These elements are startlingly unoriginal. So, in a sense, is the argument of the whole book. The great names in the pantheon of British planning -- Ebenezer Howard, Raymond Unwin, Patrick Abercrombie, Jimmy James -- all made them the keystones of their planning philosophy. But they need reinterpreting, and reasserting, for each successive generation. This is what we must now do.

The first essential, once again, is precisely that argued in London 2000: to make London progressively into a polycentric city. To the two existing cities, around which London has been shaped down the centuries, we now need to add a third, a fourth, a fifth. Each should have its distinctive function and character. All should feel like a city. And not any city, but part of one of the greatest urban complexes of the world.

Some of these new cities would in effect be wrapped around the old, forming subsidiary nodes at the edges of the City and West End: King's Cross, Spitalfields, the South Bank downstream from London Bridge. Others -- Canary Wharf, Deptford Park, Old Oak -- will form new complexes apart from the old, thus helping create a truly polycentric structure within the built-up mass of Greater London. Yet others -- Reading, Milton Keynes, Chelmsford, Cambridge, Ashford, Bournemouth, Swindon -- will perform more specialized functions for their surrounding sub-regions toward the edge of the region, thus reinforcing and enhancing its multi-centred character. All will be tied together by a regional transportation network, built through upgrading and extension of

what we have now, which will interconnect the nodes both with the existing centres of this vast sprawling region, and with each other.

These will be nodes for working and also for entertainment and public life. Each will be surrounded by residential areas which will also contain local jobs and services. Thus, increasingly, people will find a wide range of employment, services, entertainment opportunities within easy reach. But that does not mean a slavish pursuit of self-containment, which was an unattainable goal in the London of 1963, let alone that of 1988. Many inhabitants of the extended London of 2001 will have the means of mobility and will exert their right to exploit the fact. What it does mean, what planning should always mean, is choice: if people dislike long-distance commuting, if they tire of it, then they should be able to avoid it. That is what the polycentric structure is intended to achieve.

There is another quality it ought to be able to produce: a great variety of places to live in, some more urban in feel, some more rural; some big and bustling, some small and intimate; but all distinctive places, with a sense of community. Planners, in planning them, should above all strive to avoid Gertrude Stein's over-quoted epitaph on her native city of Oakland: "There's no there, there". Or, in the California Department of Transportation's less well-known but equally devastating words: "Oakland: Next Eleven Exits".

There is the ever-present danger that new communities, however labelled, will acquire just that last quality, and thus be no communities at all. They will be too homogeneous in age both of buildings and the people in them, in socio-economic class, in lifestyle, in political sympathies. They will be all too tidily planned, like with like. It is not easy to avoid this: the postwar New Towns certainly did not, and the privately built new communities may be prone even more to fall into the trap. Variety in planned provision will help: some housing for old folks, some affordable housing, some bits of old urban structure (though that, if anything, will make achieving them politically harder). At very least, every such place should be a place. You should know when you enter it and leave it, and if perchance you leave the motorway at the wrong exit, you should immediately know you are in the wrong place.

The same goes for London itself. I have suggested a new battle to achieve what Abercrombie strove for but what was seldom achieved: a reshaped London, in which the structure of the village-like communities emerged more clearly, and within which people could make safer, quieter, more comfortable lives for themselves. It does not need drastic urban surgery: the contrary. It does mean reshaping the pattern of both vehicle and pedestrian movement, to keep through traffic away from front doors and playing children, and to give people security and solidarity when they emerge from their houses. Traditional urban

structures do this not badly, though by gentle management they can be persuaded to do it even better. Untraditional structures, of which we seem witlessly to have built all too many these last three decades, may require more change.

A polycentric region, I argued above, would give people choice: choice to work nearer home, choice to commute if the job were worthwhile. And a range of varied communities would give them choice of another critical kind. But equally, the entire region must be connected by a transportation lattice which will enable them to get from any node to any other, quickly and conveniently. Once again, the idea is not novel. It was inimitably spelt out by Ebenezer Howard, in that famous diagram of the polycentric Social City, in his first edition of 1898; all we should be doing is to build his Inter-Municipal Railway, on a scale appropriate to the present-day South East. The latter-day equivalent is a new kind of commuter rail network, which the Parisians have invented and which we should be emulating: a Regional Express Rail, passing under and through Central London, connecting the inner nodes and the outer nodes, and linking both with London Underground, the existing Network South East, and local light rail systems such as that in Docklands. It needs to be balanced by road investment, especially in Roseland, and by effective pricing and management of existing roadspace.

The third element is a background of open space. Reading the acrimonious debates of 1988, a visitor from another country or another planet might well think that South East England was in imminent danger of being concreted over; that the green belt, that most sacred cow of British planning philosophy, was about to be sacrificed on the altar of speculation; that the school parties would soon need to be ferried to Devon or Derbyshire to see a cow. It is of course sheer fantasy. The South East is, as it always has been, by no means the most heavily urbanized part of England; that distinction belongs to the North West. Some one fifth, at most, of its territory is covered by bricks and mortar, and much of that consists of the giant blob of Greater London. No one in authority has seriously proposed to follow the Adam Smith Institute in even nibbling at the green belt. Proposals to that end, like Consortium Developments' ill-judged proposal at Tillingham, or the retail development at Wraysbury, immediately become objects of the most intense controversy.

The sound and fury obfuscate the real issue, as perhaps they are intended to do. The real issue is the extent and shape of new urban development outside the Green Belt -- or, more accurately, Green Belts: not merely London's, but also those around smaller places like Oxford. There is plenty of open land in the South East that is, in the planners' expressive parlance, White Land. We could cater for the most ambitious estimates of the House Builders Federation and still leave more than three quarters of the region in fields and woodland, now and for the foreseeable future.

The real questions are different. Should we crowd the new developments into certain parts of the region, or scatter them more or less equally, sharing the agony as between Berkshire and Essex, Northamptonshire and Kent? And then there is a subtly different question: within each of these areas, should we concentrate the development in rings around the existing towns? Or build new towns in the open countryside? Or extend a large number of villages just a little? Or some combination of these? Whichever choice we make, at either the larger regional scale or the local scale, there will still be plenty of green space left; that is not the question at all. The question at both scales is whether we want a greater degree of concentration or of scatteration.

There are of course arguments both ways: there always have been. In favour of concentration: better access to a wide range of local jobs and services, not merely for the present generation, but also for their children; a better chance of maintaining a good public transport system as an alternative to universal motorization; bigger continuous green spaces elsewhere, good not merely for those living in them, but also for those who come out from the towns at weekend. In favour of scatteration: modern technologies, which allow people to work in smaller units, even at home; more people within walking distance of green fields, good both for adults and children; a greater sense of village community, which meets many people's preferences; less traffic concentration, and less congestion.

Of course, they are not either/or choices. And the answer will prove to be one of balance. We will not be able to crowd the whole of the population growth into a few mega-growth zones, because people will be getting born and growing up and marrying all over the region, and plans must make provision for that. But, since people will also be moving on a large scale, and since some parts of the region are much more accessible and are already more developed than others, and since there are such qualities as economy of scale and economy of scope, some concentration of growth makes perfectly good sense. Earlier, I have suggested the balance I thoink right.

The alarm sirens, doubtless, will start to wail. But before someone presses the button, let this be stressed and again stressed: major growth centres do not mean urban sprawl. On the contrary: here, as elsewhere, we are talking about that classic phrase first coined by Unwin, Towns against a background of open country. A town like Swindon or Northampton or Peterborough might well expand further; a town like Ipswich or Ashford may not. Instead, much of the growth -- both of homes and of job opportunities -- will take place in discrete communities some distance away. Local road networks -- partly in place, partly to be developed -- will ensure that the resulting traffic flows bypass the communities rather than overwhelming them. The great majority of people will have open countryside within a few minutes' drive, even a few minutes' walk.

It will not be achieved by osmosis. It will need a tougher approach than anyone has shown, these last twenty years, to plan the development of the entire region in the best interests of the people in it; above all, to balance the claims of the established populations against those of the new generations and the generations still unborn. It will not be achieved in talking shops representing sectional local interests, wherein decision-making resembles that of the ancient Polish parliament: any member, by lifting a finger, may block any motion he pleases. Too long in the South East, things have fallen apart; too long, the centre has not held. Now, the centre must reassert itself; the necessary action can only come from the centre, or so close to the centre as to make no difference.

It could be a Regional Planning Commission, rather like a standing Royal Commission, if those had not gone so utterly out of favour. It could be like the old Regional Planning Council, if those had not gone out of fashion too. It would need to be insulated from local political pressure though it would have to take account of it. So it would need to be stuffed with the Great and the Good, even the Grand: people of a fiercely independent cast of mind. It would be there to advise the Secretary of State for the Environment, and thus act as a kind of political lightning conductor, diverting much of the opprobrium for unpopular decisions away from him; he could hide behind its ample coat tails.

Its main job would be to produce and then revise a plan for the broad development of the region: nothing too detailed, nothing too fancy, above all nothing expensive to prepare. But it would have to say fairly definitively where development should occur and where not. And it would need to relate this to a long-term transportation plan, both road and rail, which would necessarily carry a hefty price tag; hence, it would have to be agreed with the Department of Transport, within Treasury guidelines.

Once it was approved -- through either an Examination in Public, or scrutiny by a Commons Select Committee -- it would, like any Ministerial guidance now, provide guidelines to the planning authorities in drawing up their local plans. In perhaps 90 per cent of the region, that should be enough. But in the other 10 per cent, where substantial development is expected -- in the major and medium growth areas above all, but also wherever new community developments were proposed -- a special planning regime should come into operation. A planning brief would be drawn up, and the development rights would be auctioned. Thence, a mixed public-private development corporation would come into existence, incorporating representatives of the local authority and of the developers as well as independent members, to bring the scheme to completion.

Such a system, and nothing much short of it, is needed to bring order out of chaos in the South East. Once again, as in 1963, the question is: Which?

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