

# **Towards a sustainable negotiated mode of strategic regional planning: a political economy perspective**

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***Planning Regional Futures* sessions,  
Regional Studies Association Winter Conference  
London, 15-16th November 2018**

# Source References

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# 1: Introduction: Planning Strategically without a Strategic Plan

# A Time to Think Again about Strategic Regional Planning – and Making it Work

- **Pendulum is swinging back from pure localism – in the face of a recognisable housing / land supply crisis**
  - across some broad version of South East England
  - initially to some unworkable/panicky forms of authoritarian centralism (antithetical to return of local ‘control’ in 2010)
    - ignoring political/economic complexities, and
    - the very long-term dimension of private asset management
- **But cannot count on a restoration of some successful / acceptable strategic regional planning model**
  - Past (UK and SE) versions didn’t actually achieve results
    - even with less (evident) uncertainty
  - National mood is not one of accepting top-down ‘expert’ guidance

# Aims of the Paper

- **A rethinking of how a genuinely strategic/regional dimension to planning can be developed/practised**
  - longer run + spatially broader & more fundamentally grounded than operational planning
  - but *not* necessarily (or desirably?) *embodied in a Strategic Plan*
- **On a basis that is**
  - ***sustainable*, in sense of being:**
    - Organic, resilient, built over/for the long run – and functional
  - ***realistic and anticipatory/ proactive* in relation to:**
    - Power and responsiveness of Economic (Market) and Political (agency) forces
  - ***attentive to:***
    - *complexity* of extended regional/metro systems,;
    - evolving sources of *uncertainty*;
    - and current *suspicion/resistance to the authority of experts*
- **Its argument works from**
  - some *conceptual* analysis (general?)
  - via *empirical* review of dysfunctional (UK) experience
  - to *normative* proposals (for UK and beyond)
- **Presented in two halves:**
  - *A sketch of this argument*
  - ***Illustration of some key issues*** - in relation to ***spatial dynamics of population***
    - interactions with planning strategies/politics + market forces
    - sharing understanding of indirect effects
    - and role of forecasting/targets.

## 2: A Sketch of the Argument

# Decentring Strategic Regional Planning

# Some First Principles

- **Strategy** is about securing a purposive/positive sort of coherence in a complex system;
- But the **capacity to steer** (regional) systems is not simply available to/possessed by ‘planners’/the state
- **Governance** = policy + markets + informal institutions/ norms/ understandings
- **Planners who blind themselves** to two thirds of this cannot effectively / positively contribute to the process
- (Predictable) **market responses** can produce perverse effects – especially when they reflect a longer-term view – and/or exaggerated notions of planners’ influence
- **Inattention to institutional factors** can invoke (unnecessary) resistance
- **Realistic planning** for how implementation can be secured is a vital element of strategic planning, but is a matter of developing practice as much as of sophisticated ideas

# Learning from Past Experience

- **The empirical track-record in UK/SE since 1940s has**
  - **instances of sophisticated analysis + ambition**
    - from LTPD, SPSE, sub-regional LUTS ..... RA **spatial strategies**
  - **undermined by**
    - naïve assumptions about implementation, and
    - repeated discontinuities and/or lack of persistence in the political environment
  - **compounded by**
    - an over-emphasis – in issue-definition – on some fragile forecasts (e.g. of sharp population growth)
- ***The priority should be developing a continuing capacity for:***
  - sub-national reflection, sustained action and response to shifting circumstances/situations
- ***This is something that has to be learned/built***
  - it's not just a matter of overcoming resistance to a well-grounded professional model



# Four Foundations for Realistically Sustainable Strategic Practice

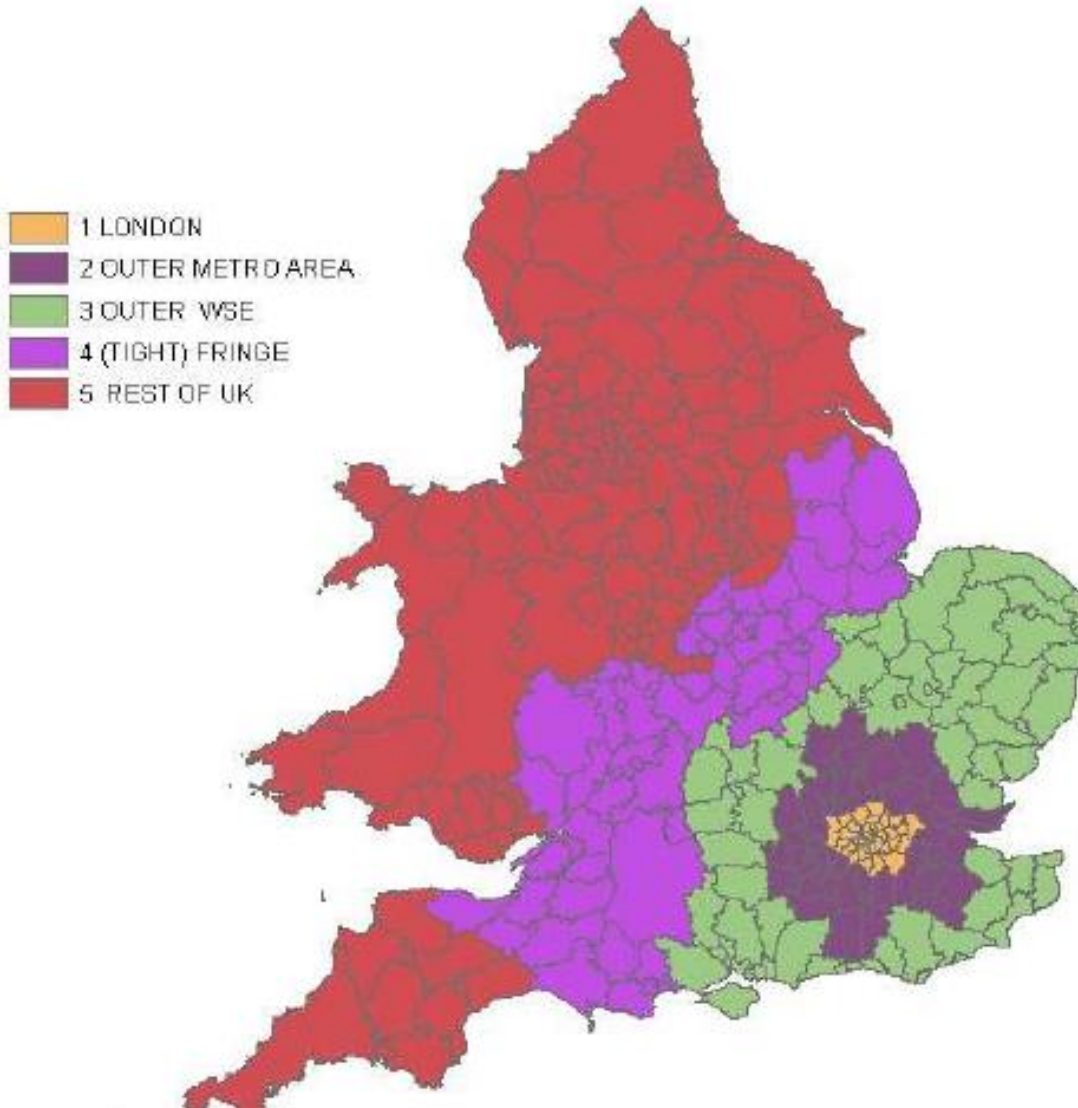
- An emphasis on *building* collective understandings and *habits of co-operation* across agencies/areas (in a pluralistic way, not just across ‘a region’);
- Reducing *incentives to non-co-operation* (e.g. business rate) as well as boosting those for co-operation;
- **Some enabling (rather than authoritative) leadership from a CG super-regional minister** (maybe Mayors too?)
  - with a capacity to *commit resources* as well as sticks/carrots
- **Establishing a ground for negotiating acceptable deals among parties**
  - including the (broader) *collective understandings* of how the ‘regional’ system functions and is/may be liable to change
  - *backed up by a lot of tactical and operational planning*
    - *just not an iconic Strategic Regional Plan*

# 3. A Key Illustrative Aspect Understanding and Steering the Spatial Dynamics of Population Change

# Need for Shared Understanding of the Extent of the Region

- **A century ago** – before interwar suburbanization – London’s daily urban system was only just beginning to extend into Middlesex and other ‘Home Counties’
- **A quarter of a century on**, Abercrombie’s ‘Greater London Plan’ (GLP) set out a blueprint embracing the new suburbia and, beyond it, including a wide Green Belt (with strict building controls) and a ring of New Towns (for planned overspill designed for a once-and-for-all reduction in London’s density)
- **After 25 years of unexpected population growth**, Hall et al (1973) noted the GLP’s inadequacy and observed voluntary/market deconcentration ‘leap-frogging’ the Green Belt, widening the region further and increasing commuting distances – a case of ‘containment strategy’ having perverse spatial effects
- **25 years on again**, the POLYNET study identified a polycentric urban region extending as far as Dorset to the west and Norfolk to the north, powered by pervasive displacement effects due to the intervening areas of inelastic housing supply
- **Now** not just a Wider South East (WSE) but a ‘Still Wider South East’ (SWSE), seen as a complex structure of overlapping labour market areas requiring a genuinely strategic dimension to its planning – as reflected by results of migration data analysis ...

# THE WIDER SOUTH EAST and BEYOND 5 ZONAL RINGS



1. **London** - population of 9 million and a radius of c30 kms;
2. **Outer Metropolitan Area (OMA)** - population of 7 million and a radius of c50-60kms;
3. **Outer Wider South East (OWSE)** - population of 9 million and a radius of c120 kms);
4. **A Fringe**, outside the WSE – population of 9 million and a radius of c180kms;
5. **The rest of the UK** including Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland - population of 33 million.

### Net migration between zones, 2001-2016

Zone (total within-UK net migration, 000s)

thousands per annum  
Net outflow      Net inflow

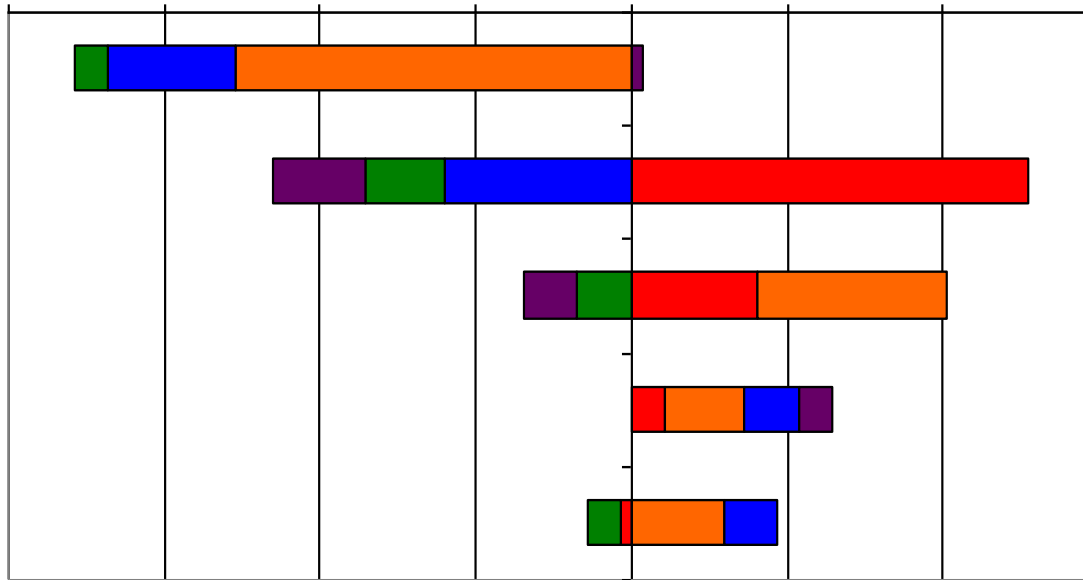
London (-70.2)

OMA (+4.9)

OWSE (+26.6)

Fringe (+25.7)

Rest of UK (+13.0)



Source: calculated from ONS data

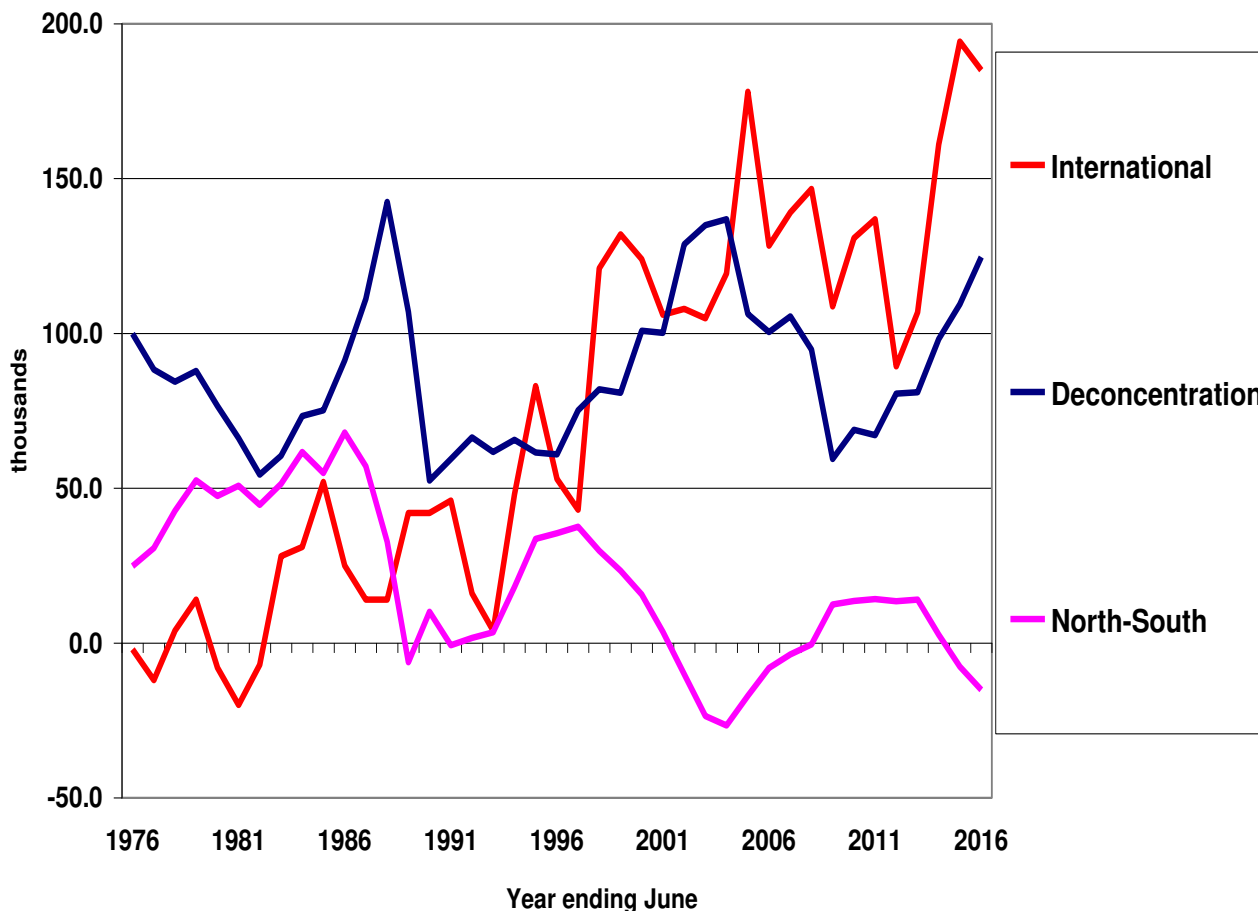
Net flow from/to:

London OMA OWSE Fringe Rest of UK

- London lost residents to the SWSE's 3 rings, especially OMA (51k/year)
- Despite OMA's big gain from London, it barely gained overall because of losing to the other three UK zones (as type of *entrepot*)
- OWSE gained both from OMA and directly from London, i.e. continuing the *cascade* as well as via *leap-frogging*
- In gross terms, London supplied 104k/year to OMA and 61k/year to OWSE, while OMA supplied 77k/year to OWSE

# Need for Shared Understanding of the Dynamics of the Region

Three Currents of Migration affecting the WSE, 1975-2016



- Major changes in migration over the last 40 years:
- North-to-South net migration averaged 50k/year in early 1980s, now zero
- International net migration up from zero in 1970s to ca 150k now
- Deconcentration is a constant feature though fluctuating considerably

# A New 'Migration Regime' for the SWSE?

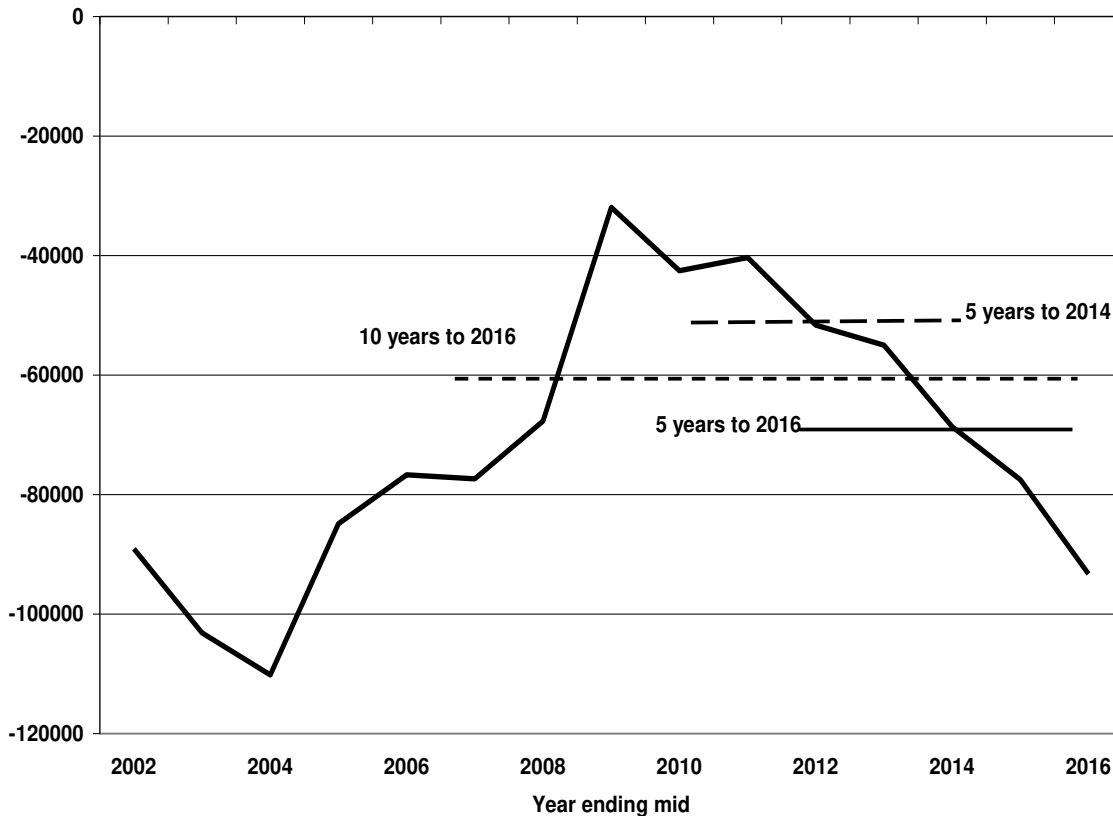
- Clearly, the SWSE's migration dynamics now are very different from 40, even 20, years ago
- The Deconcentration current is very important for the SWSE's internal population structure, with its fluctuating behaviour
- One factor is the business cycle affecting housing & labour markets, but its latest dip predates the 2008/09 recession
- Potential sources of long-term change in deconcentration:
  - \* Fall in the numbers arriving in London from abroad post-Brexit
  - \* Shift in London's population mix towards 'city-loving' groups
  - \* Decline in frequency of moving home over all distances
  - \* Delayed progression of people through the life course
  - \* Apparent increase in the power of agglomeration economies
- These sources all tend towards less movement out of London, but some changes could also alter in-migration from the rest of the UK

# Need for Shared Understanding of How to Interpret Projections

- The ‘internal migration’ component of the ONS’s projections of population & households is a forward projection of past age/sex-specific rates & patterns
- It is based on the (unweighted) mean of the latest 5 years of records, though variants are promised on a longer span that will give quite different outcomes for the Deconcentration current
- It is based on the trend in recorded data, not on any modelling of potential drivers – most notably, no link with the future level of London’s international migration
- It projects forward the (implicit) impacts of past policies, but does not allow for future decisions & other changes – so, e.g.:
  - \* LAs that have enabled development are expected to take more
  - \* Failure to meet housing targets in London is assumed to continue



# Projecting London's Population



**London's net migration balance with the rest of the UK, 2001-16, plus annual averages for selected periods**

## Latest three ONS projections for London

Population (000s)	2012-based	2014-based	2016-based
2012	<b>8,308</b>		
2014	8,531	<b>8,539</b>	
2016	8,759	8,832	<b>8,770</b>
2037	10,662	10,820	10,142
2039		10,976	10,245
2041			10,346
<b>Change</b>			
Full 25 years	2,354	2,437	1,576
2016-37	1,903	1,988	1,372

- In the light of problematic implementation, political discontinuities, demographic uncertainties and a populist revolt against ‘experts’, the time for iconic strategic plans (and trend-based projection) has passed
- In London’s case, regional planning must be based on understanding that:
  - \* its effective migration region now stretches beyond the WSE
  - \* chains of displacement effects link areas across this region
  - \* migration currents interact strongly – notably internal with international
  - \* marked fluctuations still partly reflect macro-cycles in space demand
  - \* a new ‘migration regime’ may be emerging
- More generally, there must be realistic appraisal of and explicit attention to both economic (market) and political (conflictual & consensual) processes in shaping future regional development
- A necessary strengthening of the strategic regional dimension to planning needs efforts to develop trans-local habits of co-operation, with deal-making grounded in a shared understanding of how extended regions function

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