

# Some Current Issues in Practical Governance for London's Suburban Rings: Outer London and the Outer Metropolitan Area

**Ian Gordon**

London School of Economics

Regional Science Association Research Network on Comparative Development of  
Governance in London, Berlin and Paris Metropolitan Regions:  
Berlin conference 29<sup>th</sup> November 2013, TU Berlin

# Introduction

- On a conservative definition of its scope, the London FUR approximates to the London Metropolitan Region (as defined by planners in the 1960s):
  - i.e. only about half of the region is included in within the GLA
- The rest was split between 2 government regions pre-2010
  - but now is very highly fragmented
  - disconnected both from itself, and from its London 'Other'
- Outer London (OL) & the Outer Metropolitan Area (OMA)
  - differ in economic dynamism (generally stronger in OMA)
  - but share (more than most IL) a strong localist politics – at odds (since C19) with politics of metropolitanism

# Foci of Metropolitan / Local Politics

METROPOLITAN	LOCALIST
<b>EFFICIENT FUNCTIONING OF THE METROPOLITAN SYSTEM</b> – including infrastructure provision	<b>RESIDENTIAL COMFORT OF (CURRENT) VOTERS/FAMILIES</b> – socially and environmentally
<b>EQUITABLE FUNCTIONING OF THE METRO SYSTEM –</b> including action to reduce incidence of poverty	<b>INTER-LOCAL ECONOMIC COMPETITION –</b> for landed and/or localised business interests

# Relations to London Plan

- Mayoral Plans (from 2001 on) have had:
  - very strong CBD ('zone 1') 'global city' orientation
    - reflecting its strategic role
    - privileged access of London First lobbyists
    - perception of what required for central government support for big infra
    - Less conspicuous under Johnson than Livingstone
  - Largely ignored relations with the OMA
    - just symbolic 'corridors' on edges of diagram (via airports and Thames)
    - Pretending that London would / could accommodate all its own' growth
    - Even though for past 60 years net pop. outflows of 50-100k p.a.
  - Population growth to be accommodated by
    - Using vacant land in east along Thames – past Docklands
    - Densification – including in suburban Outer London

# Responses since 2008: Outer London

- Mayor Johnson elected with Outer London votes
  - And more politically 'responsive'
  - Recognised Outer London concerns
    - Establishing Outer London Commission (OLC)
- Really two kinds of concern:
  - Boroughs = economic underperformance
  - Residents = threats to residential quality:
    - Population change (relative status had fallen)
    - Densification
  - Despite political / electoral sensitivities OLC brief related to boroughs agenda
    - Symbolism has been positive, however
    - And route for Plan Team to interact with OL stakeholders

# OLC Activity

- First round focused entirely on economic performance (jobs)
  - Initially in relation to idea of creating 4 (office?) **superhubs** within OL
  - Source of this idea very unclear (and original candidates)
  - Might have come from economic analysis for Outer borough groups
  - Actually turned out to be a Transport for London idea as to how an orbital rail link might be made viable
- Failed to get off the ground
  - Maybe not appropriate candidate hubs
  - But crucially – boroughs could / would not agree & developers thought economically unviable
- In present round issues are:
  - Need to fill growing housing gap
  - Overcapacity in town centre retail stock
  - Proposals – going into Plan revisions (Jan 2014) include
    - rationalisation/restructuring of town medium town centres
    - Including (dense) housing there (and public services)

# GLA-OMA Inactivity

- National Planning Framework includes new 'duty to co-operate',
  - but not much sign of this yet in GLA planning across London border
- Replacement of Regional Development Agencies with Local Enterprise Partnerships + worries about OL performance
  - encouraged some borough/district collaboration – sub-regionally – a good step toward building habits of co-operation
    - Notably in north (London Stansted - ? Cambridge corridor)
    - But also in south - Croydon linked to 2 LEPs
- But still complete failure to acknowledge interdependence of housing markets
  - And necessary role of OMA in helping fill housing gap
  - Engendered partic by international migration (