

London in Austerity

**A review of housing, planning
and public policy issues in 2010**

Edited by Kathleen Scanlon and Ben Kochan

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especially in light of the new coalition government's moves towards the decentralisation of planning, as it challenges one of the rationales for the regional tier of government (which still exists in London) – that it was needed to carry out strategic planning for local authorities.

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4. Scenarios and Planning for Alternative London Futures - or Making a Drama out of a Strategy

Ian Gordon

Introduction

London's first Mayoral Plan, produced by Ken Livingstone, embodied a strong 'vision', coloured by a set of progressive values of equity, sustainability and tolerance. It was however more fundamentally shaped by a deterministic view of long-term growth in population and employment, and of the need to accommodate this growth within the bounds of Greater London (MoL, 2002). Criticism of inflated growth assumptions, a disregard for major uncertainties about this growth and the resourcing of the required infrastructure investment – and of the lack of any 'Plan B' were all effectively swept aside during the Livingstone mayoralty.

The draft Replacement London Plan, produced by his Conservative successor, Boris Johnson, which is currently undergoing its Examination in Public (EIP), is much less deterministic in tone and less prescriptive about how the boroughs, as the local planning authorities, should ensure that growth is actually accommodated within the city (MoL, 2009). And, in relation to employment at least, its growth assumptions are rather more modest – even than in revised versions of the Livingstone Plan. Nevertheless, one strong theme in formal 'responses' to the new draft plan, was of the need to insert specific references to alternative growth 'scenarios' in the city. This was mentioned by at least 12 respondents, including: the Federation of Small Businesses; the Town and Country Planning Association and the Royal Town Planning Institute, the Just Space Network, Michael Edwards' and Transition Town Kingston Steering Group; South and West London Partnerships, London Councils and Hackney / Redbridge Borough Councils².

The topic was discussed at the EIP's opening technical seminar, and on the first day of its hearings, when the case was actually made by two of those most closely involved in formulating Livingstone's Plan (Professor Drew Stevenson, and former Deputy Mayor/current London Assembly member Nicky Gavron) as well as independent-ents associated with the Just Space network. Some alternative scenarios had actually been discussed in summer 2009 at a seminar organised by London Plan team

officers and GLA Economics although reference to these was eventually omitted from the draft Plan. And GLA Economics themselves (with an 'independent review' by close associate, Paul Ormerod³) produced a firm rebuttal of the case for inclusion of such alternative futures ahead of the EIP's opening sessions (GLAEC, 2010).

The strengthening of external interest in issues of uncertainty and the consideration of alternative futures since earlier versions of the London Plan, clearly owes a lot to developments since 2007 - both economically in the ramifications of a financial crisis with its origins in the City and Wall Street, and politically in the radical initiatives being pursued by the new Conservative/ Liberal coalition to cut-back public spending and direct state responsibilities. At the same time, firm resistance to addressing these uncertainties openly, together with the continuing centrality of a strong growth scenario / set of assumptions within the Johnson Replacement Plan reflect structural continuities in the politics of the Plan. As under the previous regime, this remains a strategic political document, having to serve a number of functions and interests, beyond the formal legal requirements set for it and purely technical analyses of evidence and possibilities. These other functions include management of the GLA's external relations, with central government and its regional neighbours (Gordon and Travers, 2010) as well as different interests within London.

The relevance of such 'political' considerations to the way in which 'scenarios' are formulated, debated and used is obviously not unique to the spatial planning context. In the military / defence planning contexts where scenario analysis emerged from simulation games against potential opponents (Wiki, n.d.), key elements of the process of imagining challenges and preparing responses to these naturally required secrecy. This could also be true when scenario planning was translated to a corporate business context, in companies such as Shell (Wack, 1985), even when conceived as involving 'games against nature', since rivals might seek to pre-empt the advantage that effective strategic responses could offer. In an urban planning context, the presumption is generally that such issues don't arise, and that if the scenario approach has value here also, it would be applied in an open manner that served to empower external stakeholders and facilitate rather more democratic input into strategic planning. That may be rather naive, however, since published Plans are clearly intended to influence behaviour in ways that make it more likely that their aspirations and assumptions - particularly about growth and investment - will be satisfied in practice.

But it raises some big questions about how the demographic legitimacy of strategic planning - which is about the big picture and long-run changes - can be secured, given that no-one has direct knowledge of these, unless 'the planners' can expose:

- o the range of alternative futures that may have to be confronted;
- o how they would propose responding to these; and
- o what the implications would be for various groups within a city's residential and business communities.

In this chapter we explore these issues in relation to the Replacement London Plan by: first considering how scenario analyses relate to the particular requirements of strategic planning; some particular alternative scenarios which ought to be seriously (and openly) explored within the London Plan process are then outlined; and finally discussing how far the 'plan, monitor and manage' approach emphasised in the Draft Replacement Plan does or does not obviate the need to investigate scenarios.

The Role of Scenarios in Strategic Planning

In a spatial planning context, the language of scenarios is used ambiguously to refer to either or both the challenge or response aspects of classic scenario analyses, though with some bias toward the second of these - thinking more about alternative strategies which might be chosen than about the alternative futures they might have to deal with. For a genuinely strategic approach, the two clearly need to be integrated, but starting from consideration of the challenges (and opportunities) that the environment may present, and with a realistic appreciation of how/how far policies can be expected to modify these challenges.

In general, there are probably three key characteristics expected of a strategic approach to planning, each involving extension of scope beyond simple accommodation of directly observable trends:

- o Adoption of a wider perspective - looking further ahead, across wider contexts, and toward fundamental processes conditioning situations which may have to be faced and how planned actions could impinge on these;
- o Clarifying the goals which would / should shape actions in these different sets of potential circumstances - distinguishing so far as possible between, on the one hand, the values and priorities to which planners / leaders are committed and, on the other hand, (reality) judgements about how contexts may change and the impacts that actions may turn out to have; and
- o Analysing interactions between processes and policies across what Friend and Jessop (1976) classically referred to as 'interconnected decision areas', i.e. those

fields routinely dealt with and thought about separately by distinct groups of professionals / decision-makers, but which are indirectly linked - particularly through the ways in which private individuals and businesses respond to these separate interventions.

At various points within the planning process – if not necessarily or simply within formal statutory Plans - scenario thinking has a crucial role to play in securing these defining characteristics of a 'strategic' approach. In order to fulfil this role, however, the scenarios need to be formulated in terms going beyond simply variant assumptions about a few variables with key roles within the default version of the plan (e.g. more / less growth, in a more / less dispersed pattern). They need to involve coherent accounts of how alternative paths of development might be shaped either by significant exogenous developments or by shifting patterns of behaviour among local actors. As such they require both the exercise of imagination (with a willingness to consider how things might evolve differently from the default internal view) and an evidence-based understanding of how cause-effect relations operate in key processes – in other words a story (or at least a story-board).

One issue, of course, is whether scenario 'exercises' of this kind would actually impact on anyone's established view of the direction of change and what should be done about this. In a passage quoted by GLAEC (2010a), a key player in Shell's pioneering work with scenarios notes that initially 'no more than a third of Shell's critical decision centres were really acting on the insights gained through the scenarios and actively preparing for (a) family of outcomes' judged to be the most likely, though at odds with the prevailing (expansion-oriented) world view within the company. The lesson learned was that relevant scenarios were not simply ones that seemed likely to correspond to reality, but rather ones that could change 'the image of reality in the heads of critical decision-makers' (Wack, 1985, 84). As GLAEC (2010a) suggest, this is a demanding criterion, which would not have been satisfied by the limited kind of scenario analyses commissioned for earlier rounds of London Plan development (see GLAEC, 2010a). But it is one which powerfully suggests why it is that more sophisticated, and committed, scenario work could be invaluable in this context, with its inbuilt biases toward consolidating the strategy around a single 'vision' or image of future reality.

Relevant Alternative Scenarios for the Replacement London Plan

Current concerns about the apparent absence of serious consideration of alternative scenarios within the draft Replacement London Plan seem to have two aspects.

One simply embodies scepticism about the likelihood of either the scale of growth forecast for population / employment or of the implied availability of funding for large scale infrastructure investment actually being realised. Some of us (including Buck et al, 2002) had expressed similar views about previous versions of the Plan, which actually embodied more expansionist assumptions – but these have become more widespread against the recent background of macroeconomic uncertainty and political change. The issues here are whether:

- o the central forecasts / assumptions are the most appropriate ones to underpin long-term planning; and/or
- o these should be supplemented by much clearer statements of the margins of uncertainty which inevitably apply even to the best central assumption; and/or
- o whether there should be some explicit statement of a Plan B (or partially modified Plan A), indicating which elements of the Plan would need reconsideration - in what ways and at what stage - if evidence suggested that actual outcomes were likely to offer substantially less (or more) growth potential than currently assumed.

The other is more concerned about qualitative ways in which the actual pattern of development, over an uncertain future (not simply the scale of growth), might come to differ from the one embodied in the Plan, which effectively embodies and projects forwards the norms of the past 20 years or so. This is actually closer to classic notions of how scenarios should contribute to strategic planning (public or private) and involves thinking more explicitly about how cause-effect processes might operate within the metropolitan system – not just how changing some of the numbers ought to affect decisions.

In either case, a natural starting point for thinking about the contribution that explicit consideration of (some) alternative scenarios could make to strategic planning in London is to identify the baseline scenario which effectively underlies the current draft Plan. Despite the change of regime in London and the major economic shocks of the past 3 years, this seems very much the same as for the Livingstone Plan, in its original and revised forms. Specifically, it involves the continuation of patterns of growth, and underlying sources of competitive advantage, associated with the city's economic and demographic growth since the early-mid 1980s. These would include, at an international scale, continuing promotion of liberal economic regimes, with low / diminishing barriers to trade (in services as well as goods) to factor mobility (both for capital and labour) and increasing convergence in terms of business cultures, regulatory

systems and consumer preferences. Within the UK, related conditions include continuation of light-touch regulatory regimes, out-sourcing of public service provision, and acceptance of an internationalised 'post-industrial' advanced service economy as reflecting the UK's real competitive advantage. Over this era, these factors together seem to have particularly favoured the London economy, over all other UK cities/regions and many elsewhere in Europe, because they play to its traditional strengths / first mover advantages, as a very large, flexible and diverse service economy, with strong international links, and within an Anglo-American business culture.

A side effect (at least) of the way in which these assets have affected London's development over the past quarter century has been a sequence of boom and bust episodes, of such strength (and variability) that it remains hard to pin-down what the underlying trends have been. The city has escaped much more lightly than might have been expected from the current recession, especially considering its origins within advanced financial service operations, but two intrinsic elements in a baseline scenario assuming continuation of these conditions ought to be:

- o expectation of a continuing series of further, irregular linked booms/busts; and
- o recognition that all evidence on the central long-term trend will leave large margins of uncertainty as to the actual scale of growth, in jobs particularly, that would be entailed⁴.

Beyond this, the obvious variant scenarios that deserve some consideration are ones involving shifts in one or more of the qualitative factors associated with strong (long-run) performance over this era. Among these, are a number previously sketched (in Gordon et al., 2009⁵), which hinged on the potential reversal (in the wake of the financial crisis) of one of factors favouring London. Whether involving:

- o a switch to a more sustainable macroeconomic strategy – supporting savings, production and exports;
- o financial re-regulation;
- o a halt to economic globalisation; or

- o potential anti-London revanchism on the part of communities suffering more (both directly and via corrective policy responses) from impacts of the financial crisis.

Each actually represented a down-side scenario which might simply lead to an extended period of much slower overall growth in the London economy. Each thus

bore essentially on the quantitative issue of whether the Plan's assumptions about long term growth in population, employment and (implicitly) public investment were likely to prove over-optimistic.

As such – though they could have been investigated in more qualitative terms – they actually related only to the first (more limited) aspect of how scenarios could / should be used in relation to the London Plan. For two more qualitative examples, we shall focus here on two related scenarios that seem to have become even more salient in the context of policy stances adopted (and/or intensified) by the new Conservative-led coalition government:

- o a major curtailment of international immigration into the UK; and
- o a shift in the balance of social activity and responsibility: from Big State to Big Society.

A little thought suggests that each could have important implications for London planning, though not necessarily ones that are obvious from the Plan itself or associated GLA papers.

Closing-off international migration: London is famously the major destination for international migration into the UK, but the presentation of population growth in each edition of the Plan underplays the significance of this factor. This is possible because there are several major components of population change in the city – a birth rate now greatly out-stripping deaths, heavy net in-migration from overseas and comparable net losses to the rest of the UK – which can be combined in different ways to show either immigration or local births as the key factor in a rate of London population growth which now matches or exceeds that in the country as a whole. Given the arithmetical options, there is a political significance (and attraction) to presenting future growth, and the housing requirements associated with it, as a consequence of London's own burgeoning birth-rate rather than of a flow of in-comers.

But it matters also to understand the causal connections among these elements in order to consider under what circumstances this rate of population growth might be liable to change. This is now a really important issue, given the new Con-Lib coalition's commitment to imposing 'an annual limit on the number of non-EU economic migrants admitted into the UK to live and work' (HMG, 2010), which Conservatives would like to see yield a net annual inflow below 100,000 (as in the 1990s), as compared with double that figure during the 2000s.

The draft Replacement Plan attributes the upsurge in London population growth since 1988 to the fact that: “more people of childbearing age have moved to the city, leading to strong natural population growth (the surplus of births over deaths).” (MoL, 2010, 14).

More specifically it is overseas migration that has been responsible for the upsurge in London births, evident particularly since 1998. The number of births to mothers from overseas increased from 32% in 1988 (about the average for the previous 20 years) to 37% in 1998 and then 55% in 2008: in numeric terms this involved a growth from 33,000 to 37,000 and then 70,000 births.

Simple comparisons of population change by broad age range (Table 1) and by UK/overseas place of (Table 2) show, however, that:

- o the really big changes in London population over the past two decades have occurred within the working age population; and
- o can be more than accounted for (in numeric terms) by increases in the foreign-born population (at least in the years since 1996).

Despite the rising birth rate, the numbers of UK-born children / youths living in London actually seem not to have grown – because of continuing out-migration by families to neighbouring regions within the greater South East. At the other end of the age distribution, among the elderly, high net losses (among the UK-born population) also reflect outward movement – which has served to lower death rates within London – another important reason why its rate of natural increase is now so strong. In this age range, growth in numbers of foreign-born reflects the ageing of London residents who arrived in earlier post-war waves of in-migration, rather than new arrivals. The overall growth – of one million, or about two thirds – in London’s overseas-born population over this recent period – is, however, evidently a direct result of contemporary flows of international migrants (heavily concentrated among those in young working age bands).

There is a more complicated story behind these data which needs to be unpicked, to understand why it is that out-migration to neighbouring regions increases as in-migration to London from overseas grows (Hatton and Tani, 2005), and how these relate to competition for constrained housing opportunities. But the simple point is that the great upsurge in overseas migration to London over the past two decades (particularly between the mid-90s and the mid-2000s) has been a crucial factor in the turnaround in London population trends. This had been the case a decade before in London’s counterpart, New York City, reflecting an earlier sharp up-turn in US immigration from

Table 1: Population Change by Broad Age Groups: London and UK 1988-2008 (000s)

Age	London Population Change	GB Population Change	Differential Change in London
0-24	+56	-622	+145
25-54	+923	+2,634	+639
55+	-141	+2,265	-364
Total	+838	+4,277	+420

Source: based on ONS mid-year estimates.

Note: Differential change is calculated as actual change in London, within an age group, less its expected share (based on initial population) of GB change in that age group.

Table 2: London Population Change 1996-2008 by Age and Place of Birth (000s)

Age	Foreign Born	UK born	Total Change
Under 18	+ 70	-25	46
18-60	+ 804	-158	647
Over 60	+ 161	-185	-24
All Ages	+ 1036	-367	669

Source: Labour Force Survey

poor countries than experienced in the UK. In both cases, an important factor was changes in the operation of migration controls - in the UK case their inability to restrain entry during the peak period of asylum seeker arrivals around 2000, or secure the return of many of those initially refused admission (Gordon et al., 2009).

The influx of asylum seekers was actually very largely curtailed during the time of the last government, with a rate of arrivals⁶ in 2009 which was 70% lower than in 2000 - while the balance between arrivals and departures had fallen from 36% to about 8% of net in-migration by non-EU citizens. Sustaining this reduction, in the face of further unexpected international shocks, and cutting back radically on the net influx of other non-EU migrants may prove a difficult challenge, but – given its importance to population trends in London and to the city’s housing/labour markets - a relevant scenario to explore in depth is how bringing the volume of net inflows back to their pre-1997 level would be expected to impact on significant features of the draft replacement Plan.

Within the Plan period (up to 2031) we might not expect this to greatly reduce the (recently elevated) rate of births in London, since there tend to be substantial lags

between migrants' arrival in the UK and family formation. As far as change in the adult population is concerned, however, a reasonable starting point is to envisage a rapid return to the lower rates of growth prevailing in the earlier 1990s (i.e. pre-1997). To provide a rough idea of the potential scale of change involved for London, its overall rate of gains from international migration increased by some 50,000 p.a. between these two periods, while its rate of population growth accelerated by just over half that (consistent with the idea of about 50% displacement of other groups as a consequence of on-migration to a constrained housing market). If tighter immigration controls simply reversed that shift, and were sustained, they would imply a halving of the Replacement Plan's projection of population growth – yielding an estimate for 2031 about 650,000 lower than with the base scenario.

The impact would not be even, however, since new migrants are concentrated in among relatively young working age people, while displacement is most likely to occur among households with children or people around the age of retirement. Thus a tightening of immigration controls might actually be accompanied by significantly faster growth in numbers of children and teenagers, with some further increase among those past retirement age.

How far such changes would impact on household formation and demand for housing in London might depend substantially on who actually the excluded migrants were. In general, past migrants from poor countries seem, at least in their early years, to have added less than might be expected to the effective demand for housing within London, which is probably why the rate of displacement of other residents has been well below 100%. This is something that can be expected to change over time, as migrants' incomes and expectations start converging with those of other residents. If, however, the potential migrants who fail to get admission under a much tighter regime, are disproportionately those who would be in the weakest labour market position, and perhaps also those with the lowest housing expectations, the rate of displacement of the average new arrival could be markedly higher than in the past.

Other effects which can be anticipated include some raising of wage levels at the bottom end of the labour market and reversal of the growth in low wage jobs within sectors such as catering and cleaning which expanded over the past decade in the context of a larger influx of labour from cheap labour economies (Gordon and Kaplanis, 2010). Many other features of recent trends within the city are also likely to have been substantially influenced by the scale and character of recent migration into the city, and more work would be necessary to uncover how these links operate, in order to see how far these trends would be modified by any much tighter immigration control.

From Big State to Big Society: the agreed priorities of the Con-Lib coalition include both:

- o rapid action to reduce the structural deficit in government financing, principally through cutting back substantially on expenditure over the next 5 years, and
- o promoting longer-term structural change in the relations between central /regional government, local authorities / communities and civil society, via decentralisation of responsibility and encouragement of the Big Society.

The first of these strands on its own might be seen as simply compounding medium-term uncertainties about the health of the macro-economy, and London's degree of vulnerability to continuing weak levels of demand. Taking a long term view over 8 episodes of contrasting public expenditure policies, Chick and Pettifor (2010) argue that (in peacetime) real increases in government expenditure have led to higher GDP growth (and thereby to falling public debt). GLA Economics (2010b) on the other hand, in responding to calls from EiP participants for consideration of the potential long term impacts of cuts, point to the absence of any simple correlation, over the past 35 years or so between decadal growth rates in (real) public expenditure and GDP. They also caution against any possible parallels being drawn with Japan's Lost Decade. On its own this evidence does not appear particularly strong – especially as the record includes no ten-year period in which real public expenditure showed zero growth, as the coalition's plans would entail - and no specific analyses of London's potential exposure to downside risks from this source are offered. But the argument that the overall expenditure targets do not in themselves justify revising down central estimates of London employment or population growth over the next 20 years is not an unreasonable one.

This seems particularly true given the attrition of London's traditional specialisation in governmental activities since the Thatcher era, when a shift to service management via arms-length agencies/quangos enabled activities to be shifted to cheaper locations further from the parliamentary centre. Now, London actually has the second lowest proportion of employment in public sector jobs (just ahead of the South East and level with the East of England), at 23.5% in 2009 (according to LFS data on main jobs) compared with 25.8% nationally and 30% in the North East, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. In crude terms, a simple shift in the balance of demand and activity from public to private might be expected to slightly favour the London economy.

What may be rather more significant, however, is:

- o London's potential vulnerability to cuts in elements of public expenditure; and

- o the much broader issue of how the current round of cuts relates to the longer-term prioritisation of 'society' (and/or private providers) over 'state'.

In the first case, two significant issues are public investment in transport and housing /community facilities, and welfare support for groups caught between economic deprivation and inflated living costs. The two categories of investment in London's built environment have each grown very substantially since the GLA was established, reflecting the previous government's commitment both to this institution and to urban regeneration. Neither can be assumed to survive the radical reappraisal of priorities currently underway, but if either were to be called in question within the next few years, this would clearly have major implications for the Plan. Publicly second-guessing imminent central government decisions may not be appropriate for a long term spatial strategy document such as the London Plan. It would however clearly be appropriate to place in the public domain a serious analysis of the implications for the strategy of any such major shifts in budgetary priorities during the course of the Plan – and in the potential of using development gains to fund investment - indicating not simply the necessity of protecting elements of the new Plan, but in what ways it would be modified if/when necessary to protect key interests and objectives.

Beyond this, however, the scenario approach ought to be applied in a broader / more exploratory fashion to examine:

- o the particular challenges and opportunities that a long term shift toward a Big Society rather than Big State agenda would present for London, and for such specific interests and policy objectives; and
- o how the Plan would need to be adapted if such a shift emerged as a reality rather than simply aspiration / vision.

Even more than in the case of intensified immigration control, development of a useful scenario analysis of the impacts and challenges associated with such a shift in the thrust of government policy would require both a more explicit investigation of cause-effect links, and careful exploration of the taken-for-granted assumptions underpinning the current trends which are extrapolated forward in the default view of likely future developments.

Plan, Monitor, Manage – but also Learn

Two main defensive responses to the proposal for considering alternative scenarios within the Spatial Development Strategy (the London Plan), as a means of respond-

ing to substantial uncertainties impinging on London's future development, emerged during early discussions in the EIP.

On the one hand, it was argued that it was the responsibility of planners to create greater certainty, as a context within which individuals (and other public officials) could take confident and rational decisions. In part, this involves the legitimate expectation that property owners (at least) be informed as clearly as possible about state policies that might affect their interests. But, more dangerously, it also seems to involve the view that plans should offer a clear view of the future, even when it is subject to uncertainties outside the planners' control.

On the other hand, it was claimed (by the Plan team) that the central role given to the 'plan, monitor and manage' approach in the replacement Plan represented an appropriate alternative means of responding - during rather than before the implementation process - to inevitable uncertainties affecting the course of development in the city. The problem in this case is that the approach only makes sense within the context of a clear view about the fundamentals of change and appropriate policy responses - providing a framework to which monitoring and management procedures can be related - whereas the scenarios approach involves seeking to face up to real uncertainties about the appropriateness of any such settled view.

As a procedural mantra, 'plan, monitor and manage' (PMM) sounds rather like a successor to the classic 'survey, analysis, plan' (SAP) formula (traditionally ascribed to Lewis Keeble), adapted to a less blueprint-oriented conception of planning. But, despite efforts of advocates such as Wenban-Smith (2002) to root PMM in a strategic choice logic, it shares with SAP a fundamental vagueness about how the key element in the triad - 'analysis' in the earlier case, 'management' now - is actually to be undertaken.

In a wider UK context, the emergence of PMM a decade ago owed much to the discrediting of (what were characterised as) 'predict and provide' approaches, to road-building and housing land allocation in particular, as 'sustainability' moved up the policy agenda. In the roads case, the main problem with 'predict and provide' could be seen as one of disjointed approaches to prediction, analysis and demand management leading (apparently) to ever more capacity being provided without actually relieving congestion. In the housing land case, similarly, a ready supply of planning permissions on ex-urban greenfield sites in areas of recent population growth was perceived as reinforcing demand there and obstructing a redirection of development back into cities with a surplus of potential sites on brownfield land. In both cases, the effect of a shift away from 'predict and provide' involved a more restrictive, tightly

'planned' approach to supply growth in the interest of urban compaction and rural protection. As such, PMM does not seem to be fundamentally concerned with issues of uncertainty – except that in the housing land case tracking the shifting patterns of demand becomes a more direct responsibility of planners, rather than something developers are insured against by allocation of more land than 'needed' in areas of potential growth.

In earlier versions of the London Plan, references to PMM were closely tied to the monitoring of outcomes against a series of target values for indicators, essentially checking the performance of Plan implementation, rather than testing the validity of the Plan's assumptions or the analysis that underpins it. In the draft Replacement Plan, where PMM is given a new prominence, signalling a more flexible approach to the planning process, there is a stronger suggestion that monitoring could potentially point to the need for significant revisions in the light of experience, when the review cycle comes round. Indeed GLA Economics conclude that – given the difficulty of imagining alternative scenarios which are both realistic and salient over the Plan's lifespan – PMM is 'a more flexible and effective way of adapting policies to meet changing circumstances' (GLAEC, 2010, 14).

One reasonable criticism of this position is that it involves substituting a reactive for an anticipatory approach to strategic planning. More fundamentally one might ask the question why it is so much harder to think of realistic / salient alternatives than it is to frame the default / surprise-free scenario on which the Plan is based. Two plausible, complementary answers are: that the default scenario is easy to frame because it is essentially based on an extrapolation of the status quo, rather than on any substantial cause and effect analysis of the processes at work; and (as Wack suggests in the Shell case) that the default scenario reflects a corporate worldview that resists the entertainment of alternative models of reality.

Both considerations are relevant to the two London examples on which we focused in the last section. In each case there are clear gaps in the cause-effect understanding that is deployed in considering/presenting the surprise-free view – even when some relevant elements of that understanding are quite readily available (as in the immigration case). From a social scientist's perspective this reflects a fundamental weakness of the London Plan process, namely a failure to spell out and look for evidence on key assumptions about cause-effect links that are implicit in extrapolations or policy prescriptions. The second factor in each case is that there appear to be issues that it is politically difficult to expose to explicit discussion – namely in these two cases: the fact that in-migration (from poor countries particularly) has been a key factor in the turn-

around of London population trends; and in the latter that growth in population, jobs and financial resources may be substantially more uncertain than the Plan's surprise and free vision takes for granted. Without more open discussion of these issues – and consideration of alternative scenarios – not only the democratic legitimacy of the Plan, but also its strategic character have a shaky basis.

Endnotes

¹ See Chapter X for a fuller discussion of the contribution of Michael Edwards and the Just Space Network.

² This count is based on the summary of responses prepared by the Panel secretariat, available at the EIP web-site: <http://legacy.london.gov.uk/mayor/planning/london-plan-review/docs/LondonPlan2010responsesbysection.pdf>

³ The basis of GLA Economics particular baseline employment projection methodology was set out in Cook and Ormerod (2004).

⁴ In my judgement this long term trend implies on average the net addition of about 21 thousand jobs p.a., reflecting a slight acceleration of overall growth, entirely attributable to the fact that accumulated job losses in manufacturing over the past 20 years have greatly reduced the potential for further shrinkage. This is still well below even the reduced rate of growth assumed by the current draft Replacement London Plan (of 32 thousand jobs p.a.). But the crucial point is that the time series analyses underpinning my projection actually suggest a margin of uncertainty (at the conventional 95% level) between growth of 1 thousand and 41 thousand p.a..

⁵ and previously in a contribution to the GLA Economics/London Plan team seminar/workshop on 'scenarios' in July 2009.

⁶ Strictly the recorded figure is of new applications for asylum, both those made at the port and in-country. The departures figure represents the combination of removals and (known) voluntary departures.

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Do Londoners make their own plans?

Michael Edwards

This chapter concentrates on the attempts of various organisations of civil society to influence the Mayors' London plans since 2000 and to widen the debate on crucial planning issues. It is largely the product of participant observation, the author having taken part and been partisan, in the events reported.

London has a long history of citizens and local campaigns playing an active role in urban political life and sometimes decisively influencing the development of the city. The St Pancras Rent Strike of 1960 (Burn 1972) was a major uprising against rent increases and means testing in council housing. The Save Covent Garden Campaign (Franks 1996) and Tolmers Square campaign (Wates 1976) of the 1970s are among the best known of local planning struggles. They both secured major defeats of developer-driven plans to restructure run-down areas and led to high-quality results, which balanced diverse social needs with commercial pressures. The campaigns tended to be localised, with the exception of the Homes Before Roads movement against the Draft Greater London Development Plan (Headicar 2009), also in the 1970s, and the protracted resistance against the London Docklands Development Corporation in the Thatcher period in the 1980s (Colenutt 1988).

These controversies, local and occasionally metropolitan, now play themselves out in a form of society which has sometimes been described as 'post-political' (Swyngedouw & Cook 2009) in that the neo-liberal discourse becomes so dominant that there is space in public life only for a consensus view of the world and of the city. Although inequalities and exploitation worsen, formal politics is almost entirely denuded of serious conflict and political party policies differ in relatively trivial ways. In such a context, there is little space for the expression of serious dissent and those counter-views, which are expressed, have little detectable impact on events. Even the near-collapse of the international financial system and the mounting evidence of environmental breakdown and peak oil (Atkinson 2010) scarcely yet disturb the prevailing orthodoxy.