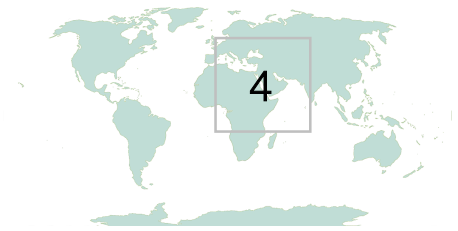


IN-Between Metropolitan Strategies Programme Interview #4 | London, UK



Within the context of the activities of the Community of Competence on Metropolisation¹, INTA and Deltametropool Association joined forces to design the programme In-between Metropolitan Strategies pursuing earlier discussions and exchanges on metropolitan strategies ongoing in a worldwide spectrum.

During the first phase, a series of interviews have been realised to several metropolitan cases covering various themes: the scale of the metropolitan area, the governance and cooperation, new forms of urbanity and metropolitan environments, the innovative economical sectors within the metropolitan area and how to develop the metropolis sustainably.

Greater London, UK

Interview with Roy Adams OBE, urban planning and development consultant

1. The metropolitan area

How extensive is the metropolitan area and how are the metropolitan values and identity formed for this the area? What makes your metropolitan area internationally attractive?

The metropolitan area of London, known administratively as “Greater London”, is comprised of the [City of London](#) (essentially the old Roman city that has become the financial district) and 32 [London boroughs](#), of which twelve are [Inner London](#) boroughs and twenty are [Outer London](#) boroughs, reflecting the fact that peripheral expansion led to the absorption of communities that were once beyond the boundary of London.

The [Greater London Authority](#) consisting of the [Mayor of London](#) and the 25-member [London Assembly](#), headquartered in [City Hall](#), has been responsible for strategic local government since 2000.

Greater London covers almost 1600 km² and has a density of some 4,800 inhabitants per km². London’s population in 2009 was slightly less than it was in 1939 (7.75 million compared with 8.6 million), though it is forecast to reach the 1939 level in 2026 due to immigration and an excess of births over deaths.

In 2009 the population of London grew by 800,000 through natural increase alone, which was 38% of the natural growth in England and Wales even though London has only 14% of the total population of England and Wales. London has attracted younger families and has 2.5 times the number of births over deaths, a fact which is reflected in the growing school population. However, forecasts to 2026 also show a 1/3 increase in the number of people above 65.

Since the 1970’s, there has been a major shift in the nature of employment in London. Currently, London has about the same number of jobs (almost 4.7 million) as existed in 1971. But there has been a major shift in the nature of those jobs. In 1971, 1 million jobs were in

¹ <http://www.inta-aijn.org/en/communities-of-competence/metropolisation/metropolisation-home>

manufacturing and 500,000 were in business and services.. Currently, the ratio has almost completely switched. In 2012, there were 300 000 manufacturing jobs and about 1 million in business services.

The employment forecast to 2031 is a total of 5.45 million jobs. The three districts with the highest percentage of those jobs will be Tower Hamlets, Hammersmith, and the City of London. Tower Hamlets has warehousing and industry but also a growing number of jobs in the business and financial services sector being developed at Canary Wharf and other dockland locations. Hammersmith is similar, and is expecting more development close to the Thames. The City of London (prompted by the success, and now the rivalry, of Canary Wharf) has very deliberately removed its tight controls on tall buildings to permit further growth of its financial and business services sector. The City and the two London Boroughs will be assisted by the greater accessibility and links between them to be created by the completion of the east-west Crossrail link by 2015.

2. Governance & Cooperation

Is there a form of metropolitan strategy in place and what fields of policy does it entail? Which stakeholders are involved and what is their role and responsibility in this metropolitan strategy? How are the different territorial levels associated to the metropolitan governance? And how is the cooperation of different territorial levels maintained in the planning process that is increasingly subject to a rapid changing economic, social and technological environment?

In 2008, Boris Johnson became the Mayor of the Assembly of Greater London.

After being elected, Boris Johnson managed to increase the powers of the GLA. He benefitted from the fact that, as from 2007, strategic transport powers for London, previously held by the central government, had been transferred to the GLA. But he also secured additional powers for economic development and housing strategy for London.

Mayor Johnson's battle-cry was that he wanted London to be "the best big city on earth". He defines that in terms of a city for business on the world stage and in terms of quality of life. He instructed the preparation of a new strategic plan for Greater London.

In 2009, the Mayor's team, after consulting with 944 organisations and agencies, and produced a draft Strategic Plan, which in 2010 was subjected to scrutiny by an independent panel and examined in public. In parallel with the Strategic Plan there were also planning policies produced on economic development, transport and housing strategy.

In 2011, The Spatial Development Strategy Plan for Greater London was published. It is a plan to 2031. The Economic and Housing plans were separate documents with policies feeding into the Strategic Plan. There was an environmental assessment – "Leading to a greater London". Before it was finally adopted, the formal London Plan was subjected to an integrated impact assessment including a number of specialist appraisals: sustainability appraisal, habitats regulations assessments, health impact assessment, equalities impact assessment and community safety assessment.

The GLA also collaborated with INTERREG IIIB. (INTERREG is an initiative that aims to stimulate cooperation between regions in the European Union and is financed under the European Regional Development Fund.) INTERREG IIIB worked on trans-European transport networks and viewed London as a "transport bottleneck", apparently on the sole criterion that its airport infrastructure is insufficient to meet predicted travel demand.

A stated aim of the London Plan is to cater for population growth by developing in a denser way. As a member of the conservative party, Mayor Johnson is aligned with their policies for a much more flexible and faster planning system. Yet he is also committed to protecting the "Green Belt" around London. It is not clear how these two sets of policies are to be reconciled, and there is a serious danger that Green Belt land around London will be further

diminished if planning decisions concerning new development are rushed and not well considered.

The GLA provides the strategic framework for growth, whilst the London Boroughs each have their own Plan and local development proposals. However, the GLA has an over-riding responsibility for certain strategic projects (involving expenditure of several billion pounds). Creation of the Olympic Park for the 2012 Olympic Games, and completion of the on-going project for Crossrail, are two of these (see below). For such projects the local authorities are consulted, and are obliged to facilitate, but not to act themselves.

For economic and for housing policy there is dialogue between the GLA and the Boroughs to ensure that strategies and actions are co-ordinated, and that they fit into the broad plan.

The Mayor's Transport Strategy (MTS) is a statutory document, developed alongside the London Plan² and Economic Development Strategy as part of a strategic policy framework to support and shape the economic and social development of London over the next 20 years. It sets out the Mayor's transport vision and describes how Transport for London (TfL) and its partners, including the London boroughs, will deliver that vision.

In the short to medium term, a package of investment in London's transport infrastructure has been secured that is unprecedented in recent generations. It includes Crossrail, together with a comprehensive upgrade of the Tube network, improvement of Thameslink and a massive expansion in the capacity of suburban rail services. It is forecast that this will increase public transport capacity in the three-hour morning peak by over 30 per cent in the period 2006 to 2031.

3. New forms of urbanity and metropolitan environments

What are the key development projects (flagships, major infrastructure, social or cultural equipment, etc.) and programs (information, incentives, investments), of your metropolitan strategy? How is the dialogue carried between the specific ambitions of local key projects and the ambition of the metropolitan territory?

The Spatial Development Strategy Plan for Greater London (July 2011) is a strategic plan and not a delivery-focused plan. But there were 2 principal strategic infrastructure projects that were extremely important to the plan – Crossrail and the Olympic/Paralympic Games.

1. The completion of Crossrail, the East-West rail link- which aims to provide London and the South East with a world-class, high-capacity, affordable railway, and is intended to ease congestion on London's public transport system, provide better access to the capital and also generate significant employment opportunities.

The network of London railways (especially the "Tube" system) is being upgraded through PPP (Public Private Partnership) deals. There are fundamentally different views about the success of the PPP approach in the provision of such infrastructure.

To pay for all of this infrastructure, especially Crossrail which will be in excess of 13 billion pounds sterling, the Government introduced the Community Infrastructure Levy, which is a financial charge on all new development schemes to pay for enabling infrastructure. This does not seem to be affecting decisions about whether or not to build in central London.

There were no strategic plans concerning roads.

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2. The Olympic Park. Ironically it was the former Mayor, Ken Livingston, and not the current Mayor, who helped win the Olympic bid. The provision of the infrastructure and the holding of the Olympic Paralympic Games were heralded as a great success. The legacy of the Games was always recognised as very important and this still needs to be dealt with. A special agency has been set up to ensure that there is a rich legacy in terms of facilities and social and economic impact. The Chairman of the Olympic Delivery Authority, Sebastian Coe, is also the Chairman of the Legacy Agency. It is hoped that Coe's winning touch (four Olympic medals as a runner, winning of the Olympic bid, and the successful hosting of the Games) will result in a powerful and successful legacy.

Other strategic projects are:

- Elephant and Castle, a huge mixed-use scheme that has been on the agenda for a number of years and it is of strategic interest for the GLA, but the planning application will be dealt with by the London Borough of Southwark which has the necessary planning powers;
- London Docklands, developed under the dynamic and auspices of a development cooperation, which is now wound up. Planning responsibilities have been transferred to the London Borough of Tower Hamlets;
- A new London Airport. There are 2 possibilities for increasing airport capacity. One is an additional runway at Heathrow and the other is a new, Norman Foster-designed airport at the mouth of the Thames estuary. The first option is opposed fiercely by west London residents. The second option (favoured by Mayor Johnson) is a massive infrastructure scheme, because the airport will be built on an island in the middle of the Thames estuary which will require expensive road and public transport connections. No decision has been reached on this subject.

4. Innovative economical sectors

Is the regional level competitive enough in a globalised economic and innovation-led system clusters and does it remove the obstacle of the vertical organisation of public policy?

There is a big emphasis on innovation in the GLA. Boris Johnson and his advisors have been quite sensible in trying to build on London advantages. Clearly the business acumen and the skills in the financial sector are the most important, but they are followed closely by skills in art, culture and performance arts. Theatre is important for the attractiveness of London. The GLA has policies to promote innovation but it is largely national government which sets the agenda and the pace on this subject.

There are also more city regions in Britain that are taking responsibility for promoting innovation and local economic development. For example the Sheffield City Region. This region is about 750 000 people and it is one of the 6 city regions identified in England for the purpose of economic development. They have what might be called the standard list of things that they are trying to put in place - business parks, innovation centres, advice and training, and the establishment of greater connectivity both within Europe and also further away. The innovation centres can be privately organised but they are mostly a federated initiative, with money from different sources. Universities are of course involved in direct and indirect ways. In Sheffield there is a very strong connection with a Chinese university and that exchange of students is very important for the city. All of the UK's city regions desire a greater connectivity with London which makes a higher-speed rail network a priority for future infrastructure spending.

5. Sustainable development

On which central themes and key policies is your metropolitan strategy set upon? How do these themes and policies overcome the short-term instability of any long-term vision and deliver a performing and resilient territorial development?

Sustainable development is important for the GLA's overall strategy. In 2010 they produced a report called: "Leading to a greater London". There were study groups on climate change and groups on preventing water shortages. A major concern in this area is the vulnerability of the capital city, London, to climate change and rising levels of the River Thames. Flood

barriers have been installed some 15 years ago but there are concerns that these are insufficient. The problem goes beyond the boundaries of London which means that although the GLA is involved, this remains a Government-level problem, requiring a Government-level response.

However, the GLA and the London Boroughs also see the need to collaborate and to take initiatives which represent good practice in sustainability and in local flood protection measures.