



England's urban growth challenge: Messages from the ESPON programme

“The key drivers of territorial performance are: innovation, economic diversity, skills and human capital, connectivity, place quality and strategic governance capacity. City regions’ performance on those drivers shapes their trajectory”¹.

In *Unlocking Growth in Cities*² the Government recognised the critical role that England’s cities have in driving economic recovery. It noted that the core cities were not “punching their weight”³ when compared with European counterparts. It challenged local leaders to make a step change in how they support economic development. The Government has backed this by setting out the City Deal programme, as well as earlier measures such as enterprise zones, business improvement districts, a regional growth fund, reform of the planning system and the establishment of Local Enterprise Partnerships. All these measures are underpinned by a commitment to localism.

Unlocking Growth in Cities drew in part on findings in the ESPON research programme. ESPON is the European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion. It supports policy makers by providing comparative evidence and analysis across 31 European countries. Its work puts a strong emphasis on factors shaping competitiveness and methods to capitalise on the diverse potentials of places. In the context of the Government’s approach to growth, localism and big society, with a co-operation approach to strategic issues, research such as that provided by the ESPON Programme provides a useful context for UK practitioners.

The ESPON Programme, part funded by the European Regional Development Fund, supports policy development through research on spatial and territorial issues. The UK participates in the current ESPON Programme and this paper by the UK ESPON Contact Point brings together the findings of a number of projects relevant to UK practitioners on issues facing urban England. References to relevant research report are provided, summaries of which are available at www.espon.org.uk. This complements evidence already highlighted in documents such as *Unlocking Growth in Cities*. Those working on planning and economic development, in local government or in the LEPS, should find here a concise guide to the practical implications of current European research on urban competitiveness and governance.

¹ SGPTD Final Report: http://www.espon.eu/main/Menu_Projects/Menu_AppliedResearch/SGPTD.html

² *Unlocking Growth in Cities*: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/unlocking-growth-in-cities--5>

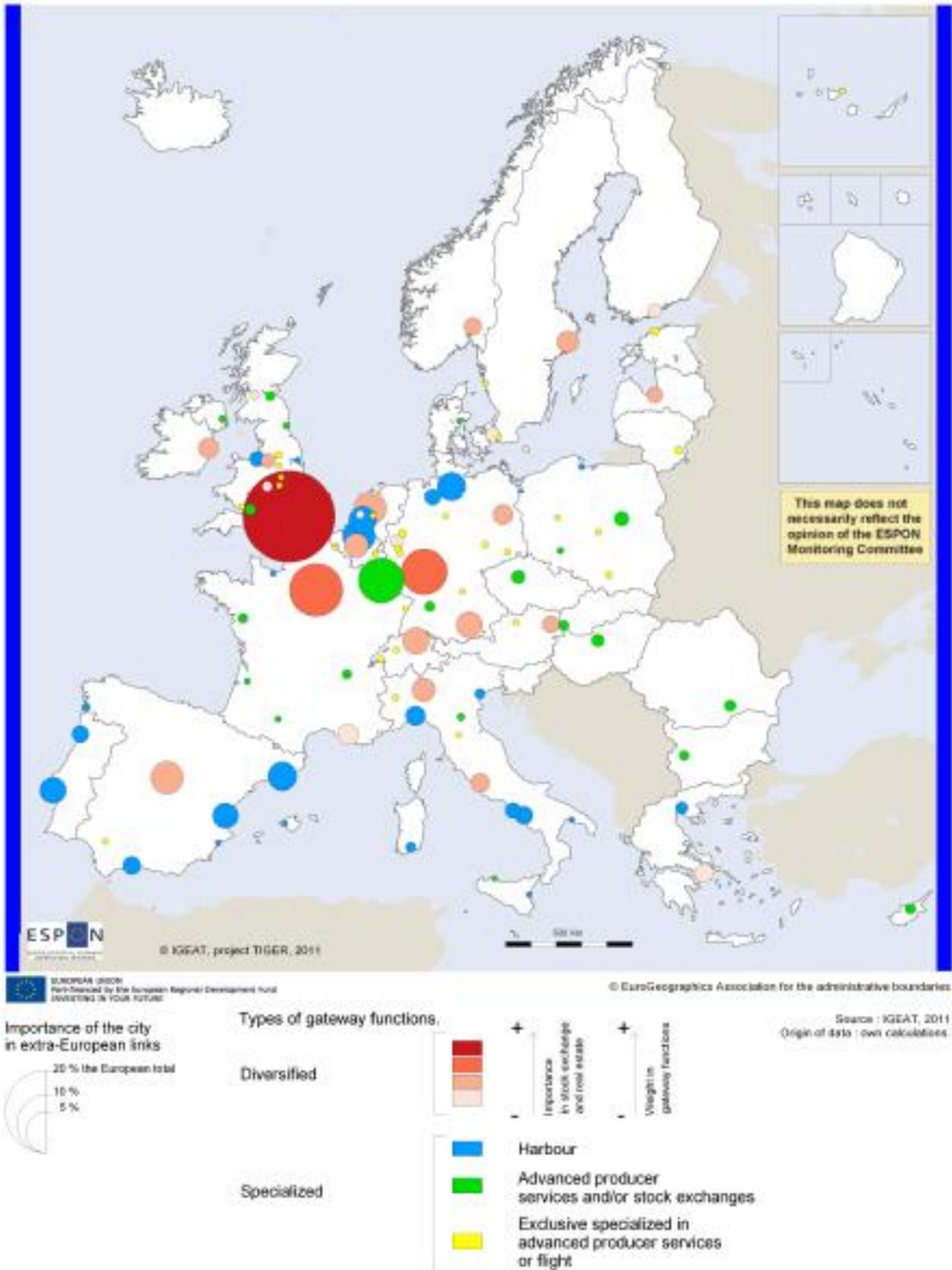
³ *Unlocking Growth in Cities*: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/unlocking-growth-in-cities--5>

English cities in a globalised world

Cities connect people and firms through local and global networks. They are the interface where global and regional/national/continental economies meet. Thus cities have a **gateway function**. As Map 1 shows, a number of English cities have gateway functions for places outside Europe that are of considerable significance, albeit they perform different roles. The scale and diversity of London's global gateway functions dominates all other cities, not just in England but throughout Europe. However, Manchester also stands out a gateway of comparable significance to Oslo, Stockholm or Rome, while Birmingham also has visibility similar to Helsinki and Copenhagen. Liverpool and Hull are important as gateway ports, although not on the scale of counterparts that give access to the larger markets of the continental landmass. Newcastle and Birmingham have a different type of gateway function in terms of advanced producer services, while the conurbations of West and South Yorkshire and the East Midlands also have some specialist functions, albeit of modest scale in European terms⁴.

⁴ TIGER Draft Final Report: http://www.espon.eu/main/Menu_Projects/Menu_AppliedResearch/tiger.html

Map 1: Classification of cities according to the nature of their links with non-European cities (with more than 500,000 inhabitants)⁵.



⁵ TIGER Draft Final Report: http://www.espon.eu/main/Menu_Projects/Menu_AppliedResearch/tiger.html

Box 1: London's pre-eminent role as Europe's gateway

London's population has grown by one million in the last 20 years. The City of London in that time has become Europe's key gateway city, connecting Europe to the rest of the world more fully than any other city does. Global capital invested in its compact spaces, flows into London, from London, and within London, giving it a nodal role and a vital need for local and international accessibility for through-flows of city workforce and customers extending far beyond its administrative borders.

The international and multi-sector constitution of the City of London cluster means that transnational interactions and transactions are taking place within the space of the City which is a node for flows of labour, information, business, capital etc. London's high concentration of global gateway functions such as airports and company headquarters appears to have contributed to its high rate of growth in GDP per capita during the period 2001-08.

London is thus a special case. More generally, there seems to be no direct correlation between city **connectivity** and **competitiveness** (when measured by GDP), though there may be some relationship between air connections from a city and GDP per capita⁶. This raises questions about how much reliance local authorities should place on projects aimed to promote their connectivity. A city's business links, for example, are often shaped by a legacy of past connections and the specialist strengths that different cities have.

One conclusion is that local policies aiming to attract investments in higher and interconnected global functions may not be the most efficient policy interventions, since the process of creating global connectivity is probably working largely independent of state intervention. Efforts are better directed to at tackling congestion or housing shortages, conditions which undermine competitiveness in the long term.

Supporting innovation

The European Commission has released guidelines for regional smart specialisation strategies (known as RIS3)⁷. Smart specialisation is a strategic approach to economic development through targeted support to research and innovation (R&I). It will be the basis for Structural Fund investments in R&I 2014-2020. Smart specialisation strategies need to be evidence based and must include analysis that takes a broad interpretation of innovation, looking at a place's position in its EU context. We have identified two ESPON projects that can help in the preparation of an RIS3 smart specialisation strategy.

The ESPON KIT project⁸ took a wide definition of innovation, covering product innovation, process innovation and organizational innovation. The research identified spatial patterns of innovation and knowledge creation as well as patterns of innovation and knowledge spill-overs. The argument is that attempts to work with and reinforce local forms of innovation

⁶ TIGER Draft Final Report: http://www.espon.eu/main/Menu_Projects/Menu_AppliedResearch/tiger.html

⁷ Guide to Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisations (RIS3): http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=a39fd20b-9fbc-402b-be8c-b51d03450946&groupid=10157

⁸ KIT Draft Final Report: http://www.espon.eu/main/Menu_Projects/Menu_AppliedResearch/kit.html

offer better prospects than pursuit of some top-down target such as achieving a set percentage of GDP investment in R&D.

England's urban centres and their surrounding areas are characterised mainly by "smart technological application"⁹ forms of innovation. This contrasts with a stronger orientation to science and applied science as forms of innovation in urban Germany, Switzerland, Austria and the south of Denmark, for example. The ESPON research recommends that the best innovation strategy in smart technological application areas is likely to be one that focuses on "co-inventing application"¹⁰, i.e. responding quickly to innovations which may originate elsewhere. This can be done by nurturing links with external partners in specialised sectors.

AMCER is another project that looks at innovation systems. Though looks directly at only one part of the UK, the East of England, it considered participation in Framework Programme 7¹¹, collaboration patterns, possible headquarter effects, main R&D sectors to be targeted, etc. Its approach could contribute to identification of priorities; definition of an action plan with a coherent policy mix; and monitoring and evaluation¹².

The AMCER approach can also contribute to the identification of 'niches' or specific domains for (present and future) competitive advantages, from an international stance, and inform on the positioning of the regional economy in international value chains and on identification of specific key assets.

Box 2: Innovation strengths in the East of England

The East of England is made up of the counties of Essex, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, and Suffolk. SMEs account for over half of the employment, though revenue and turnover is dominated by large enterprises. In 2007 R&D expenditures per GDP were 4.4%, far better than the UK average of 1.78%.

The main R&D sectors are in the fields of pharmaceuticals, life sciences and biotechnology, aerospace industries, computing/ICT, renewable energy technologies, creative industries, and food technologies. These research fields are often high-tech-oriented and mostly dominated by the business sector. However, the seven universities in the East of England play a significant role for both realization of and co-operation in R&D activities. Of course, Cambridge has a leading role. However, 9,000 people work on the Norwich Research Park, which has one of Europe's largest single-site concentrations of research in Health, Food and Environmental Sciences. The Research Park is a collaboration between the University of East Anglia, the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital, and four independent research centres

The high degree of business orientation in R&D is due to the presence and scale of firms and research-intensive universities. The East of England is home to many national and multinational high-tech and research-intensive enterprises such as CSR, Domino, Uni-path, Lotus Engineering, Plastic Logic, Xaar, Microsoft, GSK, AstraZeneca, BAE Systems, BT, Unilever, and Ford. They are all conducting at least a part (in many cases the whole) of their

⁹ KIT Draft Final Report: http://www.espon.eu/main/Menu_Projects/Menu_AppliedResearch/kit.html

¹⁰ KIT Draft Final Report: http://www.espon.eu/main/Menu_Projects/Menu_AppliedResearch/kit.html

¹¹ Framework Programme 7: http://ec.europa.eu/research/fp7/index_en.cfm

¹² AMCER Interim Report: http://www.espon.eu/main/Menu_Projects/Menu_TargetedAnalyses/amcer.html

R&D activities here. Many of these enterprises could in principle carry their R&D anywhere in the world.

However, there are significant differences in performance between places across the East of England. The economically stronger places are Luton and Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire, and Peterborough. The economic centres are Cambridge and the south-western regions. The latter benefit from both Cambridge's strong research landscape and the proximity to London. The south-eastern parts are increasingly linked with London and the South East in terms of labour and housing markets. In contrast, Norfolk and Suffolk, Southend and Thurrock perform less well. Reasons for this divergence are complex, such as industrial restructuring, access to large markets, proximity to London, and differences in employment rates and skills.

The AMCER researchers found that despite the current economic and financial crisis, the regions like the East of England which have already managed to build up a knowledge-driven economy are likely to have better, more sustainable, and less volatile growth perspectives.

In light of this, LEPs and local government need to work closely together, and with their universities, to sustain local business networks, connect them to regional, national and international sources of ideas, and capitalise on the expertise and potential within the area. Box 3 sketches how this has been achieved in Oxford and Oxfordshire.

Box 3: Nurturing business growth: The Bio-Tech cluster in Oxfordshire

Bio-tech firms cluster for research (and hence like to be near universities), though they tend to innovate with more distant partners. Other influences on location choice include the presence of specific service expertise; legal, financial, specialist property, and other business related services; the presence of a skilled workforce, including technical skills; and development agencies and their financial support.

Part of the success story of bio-technology growth in and around Oxford is the long-term support provided by industry, the university and a range of public and charitable bodies. For example, the Oxford Trust is an independent charitable foundation that encourages public engagement, study and application of science and technology, and growth through innovation and technology transfer. The Trust has developed a number of projects and played a leading role in developing innovation centres and incubation facilities for high-tech companies and venture angel networks (such as Oxford Innovation, which now manages innovation and business centres across the UK) that are now being delivered and developed by other organisations.

Co-operative working amongst local authorities and other public agencies has also been important. The county and city councils have worked with a number of business organisations and networks to support high-tech companies, including those in the biotech sector. Local government support is manifested in planning decisions to release land for development of science parks and other high growth sectors, infrastructure, and skill development.

The County Council and all the District Councils in Oxfordshire have worked together to contribute to the SPIP (Spatial Planning and Infrastructure Partnership) to ensure that all public sector organisations have a common focus to support the infrastructure requirements

of key industrial sectors (e.g. in extending super-fast broadband networks). The Local Authority bodies have also participated with others in developing a ten year economic development strategy for the county in 2006 through the Oxfordshire Economic Partnership. Now the LEP has secured an Enterprise Zone also.

In short, an innovation strategy has to work with the dynamics of the local business environment and trajectory, and it also needs a spatial element. But spatial planning policies should also be alert to the needs of business and the potential for innovation – particularly innovation clusters. ESPON provides a number of examples of economic development practices in other countries which can be used to reinforce messages and compare with English cities. Box 4 sketches the situation in Munich, which is more fully described in the project on secondary cities¹³.

Box 4: Economic development in Munich

A series of Bavarian government initiatives have supported innovation and clusters, e.g. supporting technology transfer, business start-ups (especially in risky sectors) through venture capital, provision of patent advice; a Business Angel network; investment in university research etc. City of Munich economic development policies mesh with these, but also emphasise social inclusion and environmentally sustainable development.

The City also holds shares (sometimes a majority) in the airport, public utilities, Technology Centre, Olympic Park etc. It has an extensive land portfolio and uses planning gain to fund infrastructure and social facilities.

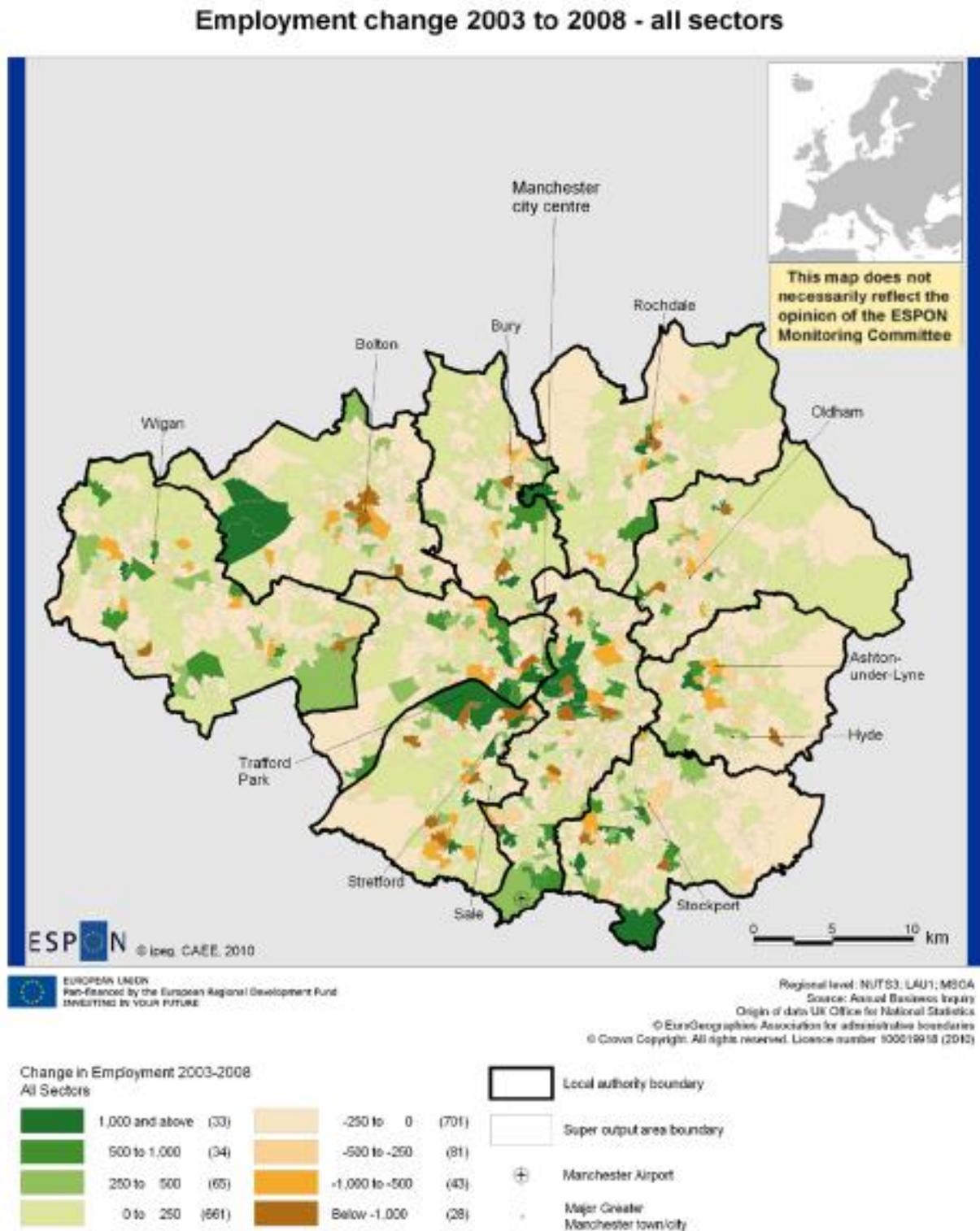
Where do businesses like to cluster?

The Oxford example demonstrates how firms in the same sector tend to cluster together. In this way they are able to enjoy agglomeration economies. In the Oxford case, the local cluster of companies employing staff with similar skill sets was found to be a strong draw for companies and a persuasive reason to establish and remain in the area. Similarly, research that looked at Manchester, Dublin, Lyon and Barcelona¹⁴ found that higher value manufacturing activity and some of the more routine service sector activities – particularly those requiring extensive land – tend to cluster around key transportation infrastructures, often on the fringe of the core urban area.

¹³ SGPTD Final Report: http://www.espon.eu/main/Menu_Projects/Menu_AppliedResearch/SGPTD.html

¹⁴ CAEE Final Report: http://www.espon.eu/main/Menu_Projects/Menu_TargetedAnalyses/CAEE.html

Map 2: Patterns of employment change in Greater Manchester¹⁵.



Map 2 shows the extent to which the city centre of Manchester and adjoining areas in Salford (Salford Quays) and Trafford (Trafford Park) were able to achieve employment growth – in a conurbation that had suffered a long-term decline in its traditional

¹⁵ CAEE Final Report: http://www.espon.eu/main/Menu_Projects/Menu_TargetedAnalyses/CAEE.html

manufacturing base. The ability of this core part of the city-region to adapt and absorb these new commercial pressures has been critical to sustaining growth and opportunities.

The map also highlights the high economic growth achieved as a consequence of the clustering of economic activities around Manchester's international airport in the south of the city. The benefits of this growth have **spilled over** to Cheshire and some of the other areas adjoining the south of Manchester, though the north of the city fared notably less well. The other high employment growth areas within this map tend to be focused upon the conurbation's 16 smaller town centres. These were places where the expansion of public employment played a significant role. In addition there are a small number of business parks and successful industrial/commercial development areas.

Importantly, analysis of data and interviews for Greater Manchester also reveals a connection between **housing markets** and the geography of **economic development**. Skilled workers in financial and professional services who have worked in the regional centre during the early part of their careers have a tendency to found or join related businesses nearer to their homes if they wish to remain part of the commercial life of Greater Manchester. This is one reason for the presence of a small number of high employment growth areas in these sectors, particular but not exclusively in the south of the conurbation. The southern suburbs (and beyond) provide the choice of housing, environmental quality, schooling and accessibility that such workers tend to prefer. While each urban agglomeration is unique, the link between housing, a quality environment and business opportunities needs to be a central concern in local planning.

Attracting residents and tourists

Successful cities, with self-generating agglomeration economies, risk being undermined by their own success. Housing shortages, land and inflating property prices, traffic congestion, inadequate infrastructure and deterioration in environmental quality, and social exclusion are a typical price paid for urban economic growth. It is no surprise that London, Europe's pre-eminent global city displays such symptoms. High net out-migration rates for older adults from both Outer and Inner London can credibly be ascribed to a feeling that the city has lost its charms as a place to live for significant numbers in this age band.

Awareness of such **diseconomies of growth** has prompted a new concern to explore the concept of attractiveness for residents. The notion of **quality of place** has become increasingly a concern for policy-makers and practitioners, as well as for researchers. With the growth of the knowledge economy, cultural industries and the attraction of creative workers has assumed a new significance, with major cultural projects playing a catalytic role in regeneration strategies in cities, not least those in parts of England that experienced major losses of industrial jobs. The underpinning logic has been that in an age of fluid and competitive labour markets, such projects are a way of enticing and retaining mobile human capital of the type likely to generate innovation and thus enhance the competitiveness of the city. In a related way, **experience marketing** has become a significant part of tourism-based economic development: by creating a unique and memorable place-based experience towns and cities that had lost their traditional industries were able to reposition themselves to attract a new set of consumers.

City authorities and LEPs can use planning policies to make their areas attractive to residents and visitors, e.g. protection/enhancement of environmental assets, along with investment in appropriate forms of infrastructure (e.g. health care and transport) and the creation of more efficient administrative systems. Investment in human capital such as education can also be encouraged. However, as the Cornwall case in Box 4 illustrates, these need to be part of a long-term strategy related to a clear vision of where the area is going¹⁶.

Box 4: Higher education as a driver of development: Cornwall.

Combined Universities in Cornwall (CUC) is a partnership of six universities and colleges working together to give more people the chance to study in Cornwall, and to use university level education to help local businesses and communities to thrive. The CUC partners are located in Exeter, Plymouth, Truro and Falmouth, and there are campuses in some of the other towns.

Many institutions and stakeholders have been involved in developing and delivering the CUC concept: the EU (European Structure Funds, objective 1), various departments of the UK government, the Higher Education Funding Council for England, the South West Regional Development Agency, Cornwall County, several universities and colleges and representatives of the private sector.

CUC has developed into an important regional actor. It is intended to be a key driver of growth and change through reversing the “brain drain” and tackling skills shortage by working with businesses to address their needs and enable change towards a knowledge-based economy, plus the development of new niche technologies related to Cornwall’s strengths. All of this is seen as key to attracting inward investment and the development of high value-added firms able to compete nationally and globally.

CUC thus not only aims to attract and retain students but also to stimulate the development of a regional knowledge-based economy (e.g. through a Research Knowledge Transfer Team and the establishment of Innovation Centres).

The ATTREG project argues that a supply-led approach could identify skill gaps and then attract people that the city and its neighbours consider as necessary to enhance their competitiveness: e.g. the creative class, entrepreneurial migrants, etc. Tourism can also target audiences (e.g. high value added tourists and ‘silver migrants’). Some key points to consider are:

- re-branding the territory
- providing services
- using tourism as strategy for (re)activating in-flow of population and long-term mobility
- partnership between sending and receiving regions.

A crucial aspect is that these activities should not be pursued in isolation, but as part of a long term integrated place-based strategy that has been developed on the basis of a systematic analysis of the area’s strengths and weaknesses and relationship with investment and population flows.

¹⁶ ATTREG Final Report: http://www.espon.eu/main/Menu_Projects/Menu_AppliedResearch/attreg.html

Lessons from benchmarking and comparisons

The ESPON research programme offers the opportunity to benchmark England's cities against European equivalents. This has been done, for example in the project on Secondary Growth Poles¹⁷, which drew together data not only on 31 capital cities but also on 124 "secondary" cities across Europe¹⁸. Leeds is one of the case studies of second tier cities, along with Cork, Tampere, Barcelona, Lyon, Munich, Turin, Katowice and Timosoara. This enables a benchmarking comparison, such as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Performance on Population, Employment and Total GDP, 2000-2007¹⁹.

Second tier city/ metro region	Population			Employment			Total GDP		
	Change 2000-07 (%)	Better than national	Better than capital	Change 2000-07 (%)	Better than national	Better than capital	Change 2000-07 (%)	Better than national	Better than capital
Barcelona	11.7	Yes	No	22.9	No	No	23.4	No	No
Cork	13.3	No	No	21.2	No	No	56.7	Yes	Yes
Katowice/ Katowice-Zory	-3.1	No	No	5.5	Yes	No	28.6	No	No
Leeds/ Bradford-Leeds	4.9	Yes	No	4.2	Yes	No	11.1	No	No
Lyon	5.4	Yes	Yes	7.0	Yes	Yes	14.1	Yes	Yes
Munich	7.3	Yes	Yes	5.5	Yes	Yes	10.8	Yes	Yes
Tampere	5.6	Yes	No	15.1	Yes	No	34.4	Yes	Yes
Timosoara	-2.9	Yes	No	-9.2	Yes	No	86.6	Yes	Yes
Turin	4.2	No	No	4.1	No	No	2.1	No	No

Table 1 raises many questions about the growth trajectory that took countries into the financial and economic crisis, and in particular the relations between these second tier cities and their capital cities. The research extends the comparison to take in accessibility by air, human resources and performance in terms of patents. What emerges is a picture of cities that are similar in their place in the national urban hierarchy, and which share many aims, such as increasing competitiveness, social inclusion, and working in partnership with the private sector. However, different histories and patterns of government mean they all have different stories to tell.

Research shows that city regions which strategically mobilised and exploited their assets flourished more in the boom years, and are more likely to do better in the economic crisis. Increasing strategic governance capacity to deliver economic place-based policies at city region level must be a key target for all partners²⁰.

¹⁷ SGPTD Final Report: http://www.espon.eu/main/Menu_Projects/Menu_AppliedResearch/SGPTD.html

¹⁸ Second Tier Cities in Europe: Why invest beyond the capital?: <http://www.ljmu.ac.uk/EIUA/second-tier-cities/index.htm>

¹⁹ SGPTD Final Report: http://www.espon.eu/main/Menu_Projects/Menu_AppliedResearch/SGPTD.html

²⁰ SGPTD Final Report: http://www.espon.eu/main/Menu_Projects/Menu_AppliedResearch/SGPTD.html

Governance, economic development and planning

The scales across which businesses – and consequently cities – operate are difficult for local authorities or LEPs to manage. Global networks cannot be compressed into the boundaries of a council, nation state, or even the EU. Every minute in urban agglomerations, flows of people and information pass across the lines on maps that demarcate local government areas. In this challenging world, it is possible, nevertheless, to identify through research the “ideal type”²¹ for a policy regime seeking to exploit and manage agglomeration processes. The key characteristics for a successful approach are found to be:

- A **supportive national context** which provides clarity about overall understandings of, and aspirations for, patterns of spatial development and links them to core investment plans and choices.
- Strong **technical capacity** at the metropolitan/city-regional scale for the purposes of strategic analysis and programme delivery (directly or through partner organisations).
- **Metropolitan/city-regional institutions or networks** that seek and achieve significant ‘vertical’ influence, at higher levels of government (regional/national), and are able to shape policy agendas and encourage policy integration.
- A compelling, broadly shared and **evidence-based narrative** which provides the basis for collective, strategic priorities and aspirations and is clear about the relationship between the metropolitan and city-regional scales.
- Strong **political leadership** (at metropolitan/city-regional or central city level), able to construct strong ‘horizontal’ connections across municipal authorities and with other public and private stakeholder organisations, and
- An ability to recognise and deal with the **environmental and social implications** of pursuing strategic development ambitions.

Thus planning and economic development in England’s cities ideally requires a capacity to operate in an integrative manner across spatial scales, across sectors and agencies. Research on the strategic planning process in the West Midlands, along with Zealand (Denmark), Västerbotten (Sweden) and Randstad (Netherlands) in the RISE project²² has led to the idea of “the strategic circle” which can guide thinking about making strategies. It is illustrated in Figure 1, while Box 5 outlines recent regional reform and changes in planning in Denmark.

Box 5: Planning reform in Denmark

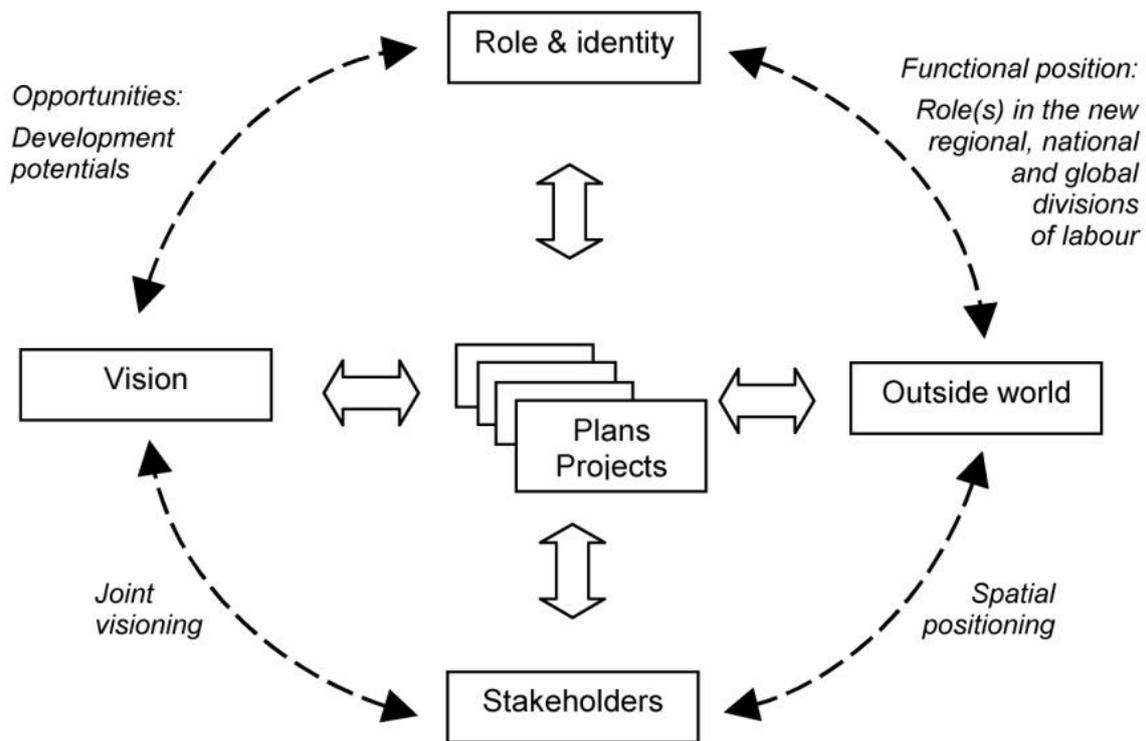
Zealand Region (Region Sjælland) is one of five administrative regions in Denmark, established by the administrative reform in 2007. The former 14 counties were merged into five regions. Zealand Region consists of a number of equally medium-sized cities, and includes areas within commuting distance of Copenhagen.

²¹ CAEE Final Report: http://www.espon.eu/main/Menu_Projects/Menu_TargetedAnalyses/CAEE.html

²² RISE Draft Final Report: http://www.espon.eu/main/Menu_Projects/Menu_TargetedAnalyses/riise.html

Following the reforms, the regional plans, which previously focused on land use, have been transformed into development plans. These regional development plans are now a non-binding strategic and communicative instrument, the role of which is to facilitate dialogue between all regional stakeholders: public and private, local and regional. A Regional Growth Forum, containing public and private stakeholders, is responsible for preparation of the regional business strategy and action plan. The regional development plan uses the regional business strategy as its core input. The new system has weakened the role of regional spatial planning, but it remains to be seen how effective this new more economically-focused plan will be.

Figure 1: The strategic circle elaborated from Groth (2011).



The general guides recommended by the RISE project for preparation of integrated strategies are:

- Clarify the **purpose** of the strategy making.
- Review the **image** of the place to determine whether this is valid, appropriate, and as positive and it could be. Appeal to the area's real strengths.
- Identify a unifying **vision** and mission that can guide strategy formulation across a range of policies.

- Clarify how do we relate to the elements of the strategic circle? Which are most relevant in our case? Like a business, the strategy must set out its strategic **objectives** clearly and concisely.
- The relation between strategies, local conditions and projects has to be strengthened.
- Ensure that any strategy is based on a thorough **understanding of local conditions**. Surveillance of development trends in the territory and presentation of scientific and professional knowledge about development is needed. Integration of multiple sources and forms of knowledge about issues affecting the place are equally important. A capability to discover and understand emergent patterns, new insights and new events has to be developed. What are the strong sectors and which sectors are under-performing? There may be considerable diversity amongst the people who live or work in the region: understand, recognise and value this diversity.
- To garner the most support the strategy must be **realistic** and credible, balanced without avoiding tough choices.
- Review the **institutional environment** to decide where this environment needs to be strengthened, and what contribution the strategy itself can make to the area's institutional presence.
- Established and agree procedures to **check the performance of the strategy** over time against its stated policies and objectives.

Conclusions and follow up

The current European research summarised here unambiguously recognises the economic importance of cities – in England and across the globe – in shaping our economic futures. Agencies at national and local levels of government need to focus on the contributions they can make to improving the performance of our cities. The challenge is particularly acute for LEPs and local government as they are closest to the ground and best placed to grasp local conditions and opportunities.

The ESPON 2013 programme will continue to provide a wealth of ideas, evidence and techniques that can be drawn upon to assist in this task. The UK contact point is available to assist and can be contacted at research@rtpi.org.uk.

As the current programme draws to a close, the contact point will continue to disseminate research. A new programme is expected for the period 2014-2020 which will continue to provide evidence on territorial issues and provide opportunities for UK practitioners to access such research.