

MANAGING GROWTH IN THE WORLD'S CITIES

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Abstract

Major western cities have experienced strong growth in the 1980s and have become poly-nucleated urban areas. In order to solve the problems that growth and decentralization have created or exacerbated—in particular, housing and transportation problems—officials and planners have proposed and sometimes implemented new development policies and new forms of metropolitan planning. This article provides an overview of the major issues facing western world cities, presents the pros and cons of alternative courses of action, and proposes a set of guidelines to mitigate the social costs of current metropolitan growth.

Managing growth became a major concern, even an obsession, in the world's great cities during the 1980s. The reasons are evident. One of the longest and strongest upswings in the history of the capitalist system has brought huge pressures for commercial development and redevelopment. Though in most advanced countries and cities the natural rates of population growth have reached an historic low, continued immigration into most economically advanced cities has brought large numbers of relatively young people from less-developed countries with higher birth rates. People have been voting in the market for more space in and around their homes. New jobs have been created, and these too have demanded more space per worker. All these demands have come together in the market in the form of seemingly inexorable pressure for more development.

Some of these pressures have come in and around the urban cores, in the form of mega-developments to house the increasing numbers of jobs in the new informational economy. That has particularly been the case when—as in London, San Francisco, Toronto, and a score of other cities—the growth of this economy has gone side by side with the contraction and centripetal movement of the older manufacturing and goods-handling service activities, thus releasing large tracts of dockland or railroad freight areas in prime sites close to the central business district. But inevitably, only a small part of the total demand could be met in this way. The outward movement of people to the suburbs has been accompanied by an outward movement of jobs.

In consequence, every one of these cities has become more poly-centric over the past twenty years. The traditional downtown is now only the leading commercial center among a number of others, some

of which may compete strongly with it. Thus the traditional pattern of movement—radially, inward during the morning peak, outward during the late afternoon—has increasingly been overlain by other movements, both reverse commuting and criss-cross commuting. My Berkeley colleague Bob Cervero likens this last pattern to a box of matches thrown almost randomly onto a table.

Almost everyone in the field of urban studies can declaim the same litany of resulting woes. While pressures continue for development at the fringe, consuming top-class farmland or precious potential recreational areas, older inner-city areas may languish and decay. Consequently, there are increasingly insistent cries for help from inner urban electorates and from the politicians who represent them. The commuting system is forced to readapt itself to carrying more and more long-distance commuters, who may use different commuting modes: Network South East instead of the London Underground, the RER instead of the Métro, the S-Bahn rather than the U-Bahn, BART or Caltrain rather than the Muni, Gotrain rather than the Metro. And there are continued pressures on these longer-distance networks to extend themselves farther and farther out. At the extreme, as in London and Tokyo, commuters may increasingly be willing to commute up to 160 kilometers, each way each day, on high-speed trains. For the non-traditional commuters, the problem is even less tractable: their criss-cross journeys do not answer to any known pattern of transit service, yet by taking to their automobiles they congest a highway system that was never designed for these loads; this leads to the situation so aptly described by Bob Cervero as suburban gridlock. Local communities in the middle of the growth wave perceive all costs and no benefits, and become fervent supporters of anti-growth movements designed to stop development in its tracks. The result all too quickly becomes a kind of mass beggar-thy-neighbor policy, in which each locality attempts to pass on growth and its burdens to the next place down the line. And, if communities react by trying to tax development, the result will almost certainly be to shrink the supply of affordable housing for newcomers and old-time residents alike.

The Problem of Job Mismatch

One problem, which has expressed itself especially in American and British cities but has also been observed in Germany, is a growing spatial mismatch between the supply of labor and the demand for it. To simplify massively, the new jobs are being created in the suburbs while a labor surplus is left in the inner cities. That is too simple, because jobs are being created in the downtown cores also; the problem is that they are filled by in-commuters from the suburbs, while local workers remain unemployed. This phenomenon, which has been inten-

sively studied in the United States as part of the academic debate on the so-called urban underclass, seems to have one clear origin: the educational demands of employers are rising far faster than the qualifications of inner-city school-leavers. Here there is one misapprehension: contrary to popular belief, the qualifications of American school-leavers, especially black school-leavers, are rising; the problem is simply that the expectations of employers are rising more rapidly. An answer to this problem has to lie in further improving the performance of urban school systems, coupled with special programs to try to attract local workers into new jobs. The London Docklands Development Corporation is pursuing such a policy with the new jobs created in the Isle of Dogs Enterprise Zone, and reports some success.

The spatial mismatch expresses itself in the fact that many of the middle-level jobs are being created in the suburbs, necessitating long and often difficult commutes from the inner city, especially for those lacking access to a car. That at any rate is the theory; the actuality may be more complex. In metro areas where suburban jobs are clustered around transit interchanges, for instance, the theory may not be true at all. This logically brings us to the question of transportation and land use.

Coordinating Transit and Land Use

As homes and jobs leapfrog over each other, there are two almost-inevitable immediate results: the average commute becomes longer, and the pattern of commuting becomes more and more chaotic, no longer confined by traditional transportation corridors. Further, as just seen, the employment center of gravity moves ever further from the residences of underskilled, disadvantaged inner-city workers. The inevitable result is gridlock on the suburban highways and overcrowding on whatever longer-distance commuter trains may exist.

Down to about 1970, the most advanced metro areas sought to control this process by using land use planning to build up pyramids of density, both for job opportunities and for residences, around transit interchanges. Stockholm pioneered that approach in its Markelius plan in the late 1940s, structuring its new suburban satellites around the *Tunnelbana* stations; Toronto followed not long after, and Paris has applied the principle on the grand scale by building the five *villes nouvelles* around the RER stations. These are outstanding textbook examples of good land use planning. But there are two potential problems with them.

The first is that people tend to demand more space than their parents. Even if they have fewer children (and some have more), they almost certainly have many more possessions like hi-fis and boats and

workshop equipment, which are bulky. They are also apt to own not one, but several cars per household. In the Stockholm of the 1950s, coming out of cramped old city apartments and still aspiring to own their first Volvos, people were happy to move into a two-bedroom apartment in a tower block close to a stop on the new *Tunnelbana*. But their children in the 1990s are settling into American-style single-family homes 40 or 50 kilometers from downtown Stockholm, well outside the reach of the *Tunnelbana* and almost certainly out of walking distance to the SJ commuter trains too; you can see them gridlocked on the E4 and the E18 every morning and night.

In the San Francisco Bay Area, the architect Peter Calthorpe has devised what he claims is an answer to this dilemma, in the form of a new kind of subdivision: he calls it the Pedestrian Pocket (Calthorpe and Mack 1988, Kelbaugh et al. 1989). It consists of single-family houses with their own private garden space, developed in rows along pedestrian-scale streets; cars are banished to the periphery of the development, while a transit routes runs down the spine. This means that, just as in Stockholm in the 1950s, it is actually more convenient to take public transportation than to use the car; the difference is that in other respects, the Calthorpe design offers Californians the kind of housing they are used to and have come to expect.

The pedestrian pocket is a very exciting and innovative concept. It is not just a concept: Calthorpe has developed such a scheme in the City of San Jose, and the development has sold well in the open market. He is now designing a much more ambitious scheme for the Californian capital of Sacramento, a metro area of some 1.5 million people which has been experiencing acute growing pains. The problem though is that the solution, like all such solutions, depends fundamentally on radial hub-and-spoke patterns of transportation: in San Jose and Sacramento, as in Stockholm and Toronto and Paris, though in all three cases short-distance bus lines interconnect into the stations, these patterns cannot provide adequately for the almost random pattern of cross-trips that tends to develop in the post-1960 metropolis. Further, as the Toronto and Stockholm examples show, suburban development soon extends outside the feasible radius of a conventional, frequent-stop subway system; and the same will soon be true of the two Californian cases, where the transportation spine is a light-rail system.

To grapple with this problem, starting in the 1960s, metro areas have created new commuter networks on the model of the San Francisco BART, the Parisian RER, or the Frankfurt S-Bahn: express systems which link the downtown areas directly with distant suburbs and satellite towns. Especially in Paris, this strategy was linked with the creation of strong sub-centers in the satellites, thus distributing and reconcentrating

employment, and creating balancing sets of commuter flows. Such commuter networks may extend 70 or 80 kilometers from the urban cores, thus serving the great majority of all demands for radial transportation (though, as already noted, in both London and Tokyo, a small minority of commuters are now beginning to use high-speed trains to commute up to 160 kilometers each way each day). The main problem with this approach is still that it cannot cater adequately for the cross-flows, which were left on an overloaded highway system designed for the quite different purpose of carrying inter-city or by-pass traffic. Frankfurt offers a dramatic example here.

Very belatedly, some cities have begun to think of adapting their systems to give a more even pattern of grid-type access between any sub-center and any other. This was explicit in the original, never-realised plan for the San Francisco BART; the Frankfurt S-Bahn, which is a net connecting the cities of Frankfurt, Mainz, Wiesbaden, and Darmstadt, has some of the same characteristics; Paris is now pondering an outer circular RER connecting the satellites and other destinations like the airports. The problem is that, mapped on to metropolitan areas of this size, it still leaves a very large number of traffic desires inadequately catered for. Indeed, the nearest approach to meeting such demands is represented by smaller cities like Ottawa and Houston, which have recast their bus systems in the hub and spoke system, interconnecting reliably through a number of suburban exchanges. The planned express busway—non-guided in this case—through the southern suburbs of Paris, which would link with the RER system and with local buses at selected interchanges, provides another model.

These examples suggest a possible prototype for a future metropolitan transportation system which would give many-to-many accessibility partly over ordinary streets, partly over an automated guideway system. It would be based on small van-like vehicles rather like the shuttle buses which are now coming into such widespread use between airports and hotels. They would be either electrically-powered—a real possibility, given the huge push to the development of electrical vehicles which has come from the recent California air-quality regulations—or perhaps dual-mode, capable of switching between gasoline and electricity. At nodal points they would be coupled together, either physically or electronically, to run as automated trains along special guideways. At yet other nodes they would split again to serve local destinations. Of course, no metropolitan area in the world currently offers anything of the kind. But elements of the system exist: in the guided busways in use in Adelaide and Essen, in the dual-mode vehicles already in service in Essen and Nancy, and in automated transit systems in Lille, Vancouver, London Docklands, Osaka, and Kobe.

There is an alternative—perhaps only a partial alternative—which is to try to cater for these flows by Transportation Systems Management techniques designed to divert demand from the conventional, single-driver no-passenger automobile into more collective or shared modes such as vans and car pools. This is achieved by a variety of carrots and sticks ranging from access to preferential high-occupancy vehicle lanes and parking slots, through direct cash incentives, to physical limitation and charging for access to employment nodes. At least one suburban center in the United States, Bellevue in the state of Washington, has done that with considerable success. Road pricing, such as has been in force in central Oslo since early this year and is promised for central Stockholm at the start of next year, could be employed in the same way not only in congested downtown areas, but also in the suburban nodes.

The reason why this is only a partial alternative, of course, is that it could evolve into the first system. There is already a blurring of traditional distinctions between one mode of transportation and another: the difference between a rubber-tired Métro and a guided trolleybus is an extremely subtle one, as is the distinction between a small van and a taxi. And, as more and more information technology is injected into the traditional highway system, it increasingly takes on the characteristics of a transit operation. So, within the next decade, we could look forward to a convergence of the different modes, wherein cars were electronically locked together on transitways while transit systems increasingly offered on-demand service from any place to any other place.

By building up pyramids and corridors of density linked by such novel kinds of transit or para-transit, planners could reduce the total burden of commuting. And, as sub-centers built up and became increasingly attractive magnets in their own right, the average commute length might drop. This seems to be the experience in London, where research shows that, within ten years, half or more of the out-migrants are absorbed by the local labor market and so cease to be long-distance commuters. Californian evidence suggests that so far this is not happening: there, the average commute is increasing. But this may be due to the fact that the development of subcenters is lagging behind the outward movement of people—a result, perhaps, of the strength of the growth control pressures in the intervening tracts.

Paying the Costs of Growth

But there is more than just a transportation problem: increasingly, the suburbs do not want new suburbanites and the exurbs do not want anyone else at all. So we find everywhere the problem of local NIMBYism, whereby local communities draw up the drawbridge and bring down the portcullis against further development. Their argu-

ments against growth are numerous and unite people of different income, socio-economic status, and political persuasion. One argument, a very telling one, is that the tidal wave of growth drives up local housing prices for local resident and newcomer alike. Thus, affordable housing becomes increasingly rare. In the San Francisco Bay Area, house prices jumped 31.8 per cent between early 1988 and early 1989 to reach an average \$243,900, setting an unfortunate national record (Tuller 1989, A10). Only 17 per cent of all households in the region, it has been calculated, earn enough to qualify for a loan on a typical single-family home, even if they could stump up a down payment of some \$45,000 (Bay Area Council 1988, 8). According to a 1988 study, some 492,000 households in the region may already have been paying more than 25 per cent of their incomes for housing (Bay Area Council 1989a, 3).

More generally, growth brings negative externalities in the form of traffic congestion, crowded school systems, loss of local open space, and perhaps higher taxes—a very telling point in a time of constraints on public expenditure. Residents may perceive that they are paying more but are enjoying less quality of life. So long as they form local constituencies, they will organize to fight further growth. This movement, evident in southern England at least since the 1950s, has now spread to areas long thought immune, such as California, long the home of civic boosterism and growth-mindedness.

And, interestingly, the residents tend to prove equally effective in their negative objectives, almost independently of the precise legalities of the planning and zoning system under which they operate. Twenty years ago, before Petaluma, few people in California would really have believed that they had powers to stop growth in its tracks, British style; now, every community in the San Francisco Bay Area is going down that road, and the hapless developers are increasingly glad of what crumbs they can get from the local planners' table.

The problem with this approach is that it too equally leads to a beggar-thy-neighbor competition in which the only objective is to keep them, meaning the others, out. Greenbelts are used not to protect attractive landscapes or unique agricultural land, but simply as a means of urban containment—an unfortunate tradition begun in Britain in the mid-1950s and now being emulated all too widely. But since the pressures are there, they cannot really be stemmed: all that happens is that they are diverted onward to the first line of places either politically weak enough or economically depressed enough to offer no resistance. Currently, in the case of London, that area is East Anglia; in the case of San Francisco it is somewhere in the San Joaquin Valley. In both cases, the area is 80 kilometers and more from the metropolitan core.

There are two approaches to this problem, which may be seen as alternatives but which are not necessarily so. The first is to find a way of passing the costs of development from the community to the developer. The other is to develop a regional planning agency to minimize and at least share equitably the miseries that rise from development.

Extracting development value comes in two different forms. The simplest is the so-called impact fee, payable by the developer to mitigate the alleged negative impacts that the development is going to inflict on the community. At the beginning of 1989, the National Association of Home Builders and the American Planning Association reported that so-called impact fees were being levied in Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Minnesota, Nevada, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas, Utah, and Washington. They derive indirectly from a brilliant notion of Marion Clawson, published nearly a quarter of a century ago: to auction development permissions to the highest bidder (Clawson 1967). But they are not quite so elegantly audacious. Instead, local communities persuade developers to pay a huge package of fixed fees in order to mitigate growth pressures—real or imagined—on roads, sewers, fire service, parks, and swimming pools. In California, fees even cover child care facilities. The relationship between development and creches, you may think, is not crystal-clear.

The point is that developers, who in California are a fairly desperate breed, pay anyway. Local authorities in high-growth areas—meaning all the counties around California's major urban areas in the 1980s—have charged more or less what they pleased. In the sellers' market that prevailed in much of the 1980s, the costs were passed promptly on to the hapless home-buyer—which meant a hike in average new-housing costs varying, according to location, from anything between \$3,000 and \$24,000. Thus, impact fees become a tax imposed by existing residents on new arrivals.

The developers, nevertheless, have cried foul. So, in 1987, the California Assembly passed a bill to regulate impact fees; it took effect in January 1989. It states that a local government must establish a "nexus" between the fee and the development that is supposed to pay for it. The revenue must be put into a trust fund, with a plan for spending it; the money must be spent, or at least committed, within five years. But, according to reports last year, the big cities are actually extending the principle from new housing to new industrial and commercial developments. The developers are reacting by going to court, claiming that the "nexus" is not established.

A different reaction to the proliferation of impact fees is emerging in New England. States in New England are very small, rather like California counties, and the local authorities, called townships, are often

minuscule. In New Hampshire, one such state that is growing rapidly through suburban spread from Boston, state legislators have sought to pass a law that would standardize the fees throughout the state: local authorities would no longer be free to set their own levels. Ironically, home builders and realtors have opposed the legislation, claiming that a standard fee would drive up housing costs. Advocates of the bill argue that the fees are going to be charged anyway, so standardization would be better.

The second approach, development or planning agreements, seems to have arisen spontaneously and independently in Great Britain and California. Britain's 1971 Town and Country Planning Act established the principle in the form of Section 52 agreements: they have been used more and more widely in the boom years of the 1980s. California's law on development agreements dates from 1980, nearly a decade after the British legislation, which it closely resembles (Smith 1988). It was little-used at first, but, during the 1980s, local authorities, faced with unprecedented growth pressures and strapped for cash because of 1978's Proposition 13, have employed the device on an increasing scale. At the last count, there were more than 500 such agreements in California. They cover a very wide variety of developments, from fairly modest housing developments to the 300-acre Mission Bay redevelopment in San Francisco. One Californian expert, William Fulton, calls them "the institutionalization of development fees." Interestingly, Fulton concludes, they manage to extract even more out of the developer than traditional impact fees (Fulton 1989).

But the local communities, where NIMBY feelings run high, are still not satisfied. Reports keep surfacing in local newspapers that local officials and professionals are using agreements to circumvent local anti-growth pressures. Local voters have reacted by using California's referendum laws to pass "propositions" compelling their councils to control or stop growth. Several important such measures have passed recently, in both southern and Northern California. The point is that once approved by a development agreement, a development is secure from any subsequent anti-growth ballot.

But not quite. Development agreements are likely to face legal challenges. The lawyers, as usual, will find plenty of work. Still, given the fact that—in California as in southern England—an irresistible force is meeting an immovable object, the agreements seem likely to stay as the least-bad compromise. But they are unlikely to be sufficient, as British examples like Foxley Wood show. Foxley Wood, in Hampshire, 70 kilometers south-west of London, was to be an exceptionally well-designed new community developed by private capital. On regional planning grounds, it was unexceptionable. Development agreements

would have provided all kinds of good things for the local community, ranging from a by-pass to affordable housing. But implacable local opposition, coupled with the arrival of a new environmentally-minded incumbent at the Department of the Environment, settled its fate.

There is one interesting point about the agreements. By definition, they must be used to provide concrete measures in mitigation of the effects of growth. They can be, and are, used to provide affordable housing, for instance. That is equally true in the California agreements and in the incentives which developers have built into proposed new communities in southern England. This aspect is important because of the argument that the agreements themselves will inevitably drive up general house prices. The implication is that the newcomer can pay the inflated price while the existing resident enjoys some kind of cross-subsidy. Reducing the cost of housing to some deserving sub-group of the population is of course a well-known policy device: it has been employed in public housing everywhere and in the Thatcher government's sale of public housing to the sitting tenants. It has been less used in the case of new housing for sale. The problem with all such schemes is the difficulty of controlling them beyond the first regulated sale. Just like the ex-council tenant, the owner of affordable housing can simply profit from a windfall gain. There are two ways of dealing with this: either to turn a blind eye on the basis that the resident benefits anyway, or to insist on the return of the housing into some special pool, whereby any profits accrue in part to the community to be used for further affordable housing.

Towards Regional Agencies

The tensions between locals and newcomers also lead to a demand for more effective regional-planning agencies, which would try to balance these local antagonisms and devise some plan for sharing the misery. Metro Toronto set a model for the rest of the world over a quarter of a century ago. It was followed by Stockholm's Lan (provincial) government, with planning powers over a wide area around the city. The Région Ile-de-France, a body originally in the hands of administrators but now run by democratically elected representatives, falls into the same category.

Such an agency can, and must, be responsible for an overall strategic plan for the entire region, regularly updated. It must clearly indicate the areas which are to have major development or redevelopment, and those areas which in contrast are to be protected against development. Both on good planning grounds and in order to win political acceptance, the plan should make quite clear that most land will be protected for the foreseeable future. There is no point, here, in discussing details of the form of that green space; it will depend on circumstances.

Some half a century ago, Unwin and Abercrombie in London wrote about towns against a background of open country. In San Francisco, people now talk about a regional greenbelt, by which they mean not the old Abercrombie Green Belt for London, but the much more general backcloth that he imagined extending outside that belt. In the new *Livre blanc* for the Région Ile-de-France, the authors refer to a *trame verte* and a *couronne rurale*, which are terms so general as to be about right (Anon 1990). The point is that such a regional backcloth should be pervasive. Its precise form will depend on a multitude of factors: the pattern of existing settlements, the existing and planned transportation links, the quality of agricultural land and the intensity of agricultural production, and the existence of fine natural landscapes.

How to guarantee its preservation? Historically, cities have used various methods, more or less successfully. Amsterdam and Stockholm bought land in advance, allowing the Dutch to preserve the *Amsterdamse Bos* and the Swedes to ring each of their satellites with generous forest and lake belts. Frankfurt, similarly, preserved its own *Stadtwald*. The British, in their 1947 Act, nationalized the right to develop land. The Americans at first preferred to buy land for regional parks—an outstandingly successful policy in the San Francisco Bay Area, where it has produced one of the finest scenic green belts in the world. Latterly, indeed very belatedly, they have discovered that their general police powers allow them to reserve wide tracts in rural zoning without the need to pay any compensation to owners. That power has so far been upheld in the courts and has produced huge extensions of the San Francisco regional green belt in the northern and western parts of Marin County, for instance. The interesting fact about the American and especially the Californian experience, I believe, is that it demonstrates how changing public opinion can progressively mold the development of policy and indeed the legal framework itself. The reason that the Bay Area is protecting land is that there is a deep groundswell of grassroots opinion in favor of growth management. Developers read the signs and are willing to bend to the new reality, as we have already seen with development agreements.

The problem is not with the powers but with the size of the regional agency. The now-deceased Greater London Council covered only 1,600 square kilometers; the Région Ile-de-France, in contrast, covers 12,000 square kilometers. There is little doubt that the latter region is adequate for the strategic planning functions it has to perform. A similar region for London would need to embrace not only the entire South East of England, but a goodly chunk of the adjoining regions of East Anglia, the East Midlands, and the South West. In the case of San Francisco, as the debates within the Bay Vision 2020 commission now demonstrate, it would realistically need to embrace not only the nine-county

Bay Area but also at least the next neighboring ring, perhaps six or even nine counties more; in the case of Frankfurt, it would need to go right outside the area of the *Umlandverband* to embrace much of *Regierungsbezirk* Darmstadt and a substantial chunk of the neighboring *Land* of Rheinland-Pfalz.

The question becomes: where does such a region stop? For, in our large metro areas, we are now starting to see a pattern of complex urbanization, whereby one metro interacts with another, and that in turn with another, so that there is no discrete boundary to the spheres of influence at all. This is a more evident problem in those metropolitan centers which exist in densely populated territory occupied by other urban spheres. Thus, Paris has no real urban challenger within a 100-mile radius, but London's sphere interacts with Reading's, and its with Swindon's, and its with Bristol's. And the same is starting to happen between San Francisco and Sacramento and Stockton, which a decade ago could be regarded as reasonably discrete metro areas. On the mainland of Europe, the French urban analysts are now talking of the Blue Banana: a megalopolitan zone that extends down the middle of Europe from London to Milan, every area interacting with the next (Brunet 1990). What kind of regional planning agency, one wonders, would bring that under some kind of control?

For the fact is that the real action, the locus of maximum growth of people and jobs, is now way beyond the scope of a conventional regional agency. And such an agency, in consequence, may find itself administering and planning that part of the wider metro which is stagnating—the situation that the Greater London Council found itself occupying for virtually the whole of its 25-year life. The almost inevitable result would be that such a body would become obsessively concerned with consolidating its own population—in which it would make common cause with the beleaguered anti-growth communities in its own suburbs and outside its boundaries. This has been the experience in London during the 1980s, where the GLC and then the London boroughs were very happy to accept the central government's target that no less than one-third of all the houses in the South East region should be provided within London's boundaries. The result has been a very great deal of very substandard housing which people bought in desperation during the boom years of the mid-1980s but which is now virtually unsellable. And I very much fear that the same outcome could be true of a regional planning agency for the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area, which is the predicted recommendation of the blue-ribbon Bay Vision 2020 study.

There is another aspect to this problem, which is purely political. It is the relationship between such a regional authority and the next-

higher level of power. As everyone knows, the main reason for the demise of the GLC was that it came to be seen as an alternative government, defiantly facing down Mrs. Thatcher across the water from the Houses of Parliament. Similar conflicts with the Autonomous Region of Catalonia are said to have sealed the fate of the Metro government of Barcelona. The same problem is potentially acute both in Ontario and in the State of Victoria, where a metropolitan authority is bound to represent a large part of the population and an even larger chunk of the total provincial product. And it may very well prove difficult to manage the relationships between the German Federal Republic and the new *Land* government of Berlin—even though, there, the future suburbs are all within *Land* Brandenburg. It is perhaps because of this political problem, above all, that Australian states have flirted only for short periods with the metro government idea, though South Australia may well take the plunge again in the next couple of years.

So there are undoubtedly basic problems with the whole concept of effective regional government. That is not to say that the idea is not worth even contemplating. Toronto has made it work. So have a number of areas on the European mainland, including Frankfurt and Copenhagen. One lesson from those places is that it pays to keep the institutional structure very slim and very simple. There are two possible prescriptions.

1. *The Slimline Elected Model.* Most of the European examples are *ad hoc* creations that have no clear constitutional status, but were set up to deal with special cases; they are fragile because they depend on agreement. They can be very slim—Greater Copenhagen has only 115 employees, the Frankfurt Regional Union 187—and some of them, at least, have shown a capacity to survive for quite a long time. Greater Copenhagen's council is indirectly elected through the boroughs, and this might offer a good model for other areas, perhaps with an admixture of members representing the wider interest: either MPs or persons nominated by the Secretary of State. In *London 2001* I suggested such a structure for London, covering an area considerably wider than the old GLC, perhaps extending over the entire Metropolitan Area, perhaps even farther (Hall 1989). It would presumably take over all the functions of the current London Regional Standing Conference, SERPLAN. Its remit would be to produce statements of regional guidance which, after approval by the Secretary of State, would be binding on borough and district authorities in drawing up their own unitary plans. It would also have a specific remit to advise on investment plans for both main roads and public transport in its area.

There are, however, three basic doubts about such a body. One is whether the necessary modicum of agreement would be forthcoming

among its members. The experience of SERPLAN, ever since the first version was set up as long ago as the 1930s, is that it is a good research organization and talking shop but a weak decision-making body, tending to express the lowest common multiple of agreement among its members—particularly since one of its main remits, if not *the* main remit, would be to decide where to place growth that no one wanted. The second, closely-associated worry is whether it would have any teeth. Strategic planning is fine so long as it gets implemented in real decisions on the ground; otherwise, it is a pure waste of time and money. The GLC's history is salutary here: because it essentially lacked implementation powers, it became a purely paper authority. A slimmed-down authority, restricted by statute, could find itself powerless.

The third possible objection is that an indirectly elected body, especially if diluted by nominees, is not a democratically responsible body. To that the answer is that it would be very difficult to ensure direct democratic answerability over such a vast geographical area and on such general strategic issues; direct elections would hardly be likely to generate much excitement, save on rare occasions when some media-worthy issue cropped up.

2. *The Government-Appointed Model.* If, however, a streamlined, Copenhagen-style authority is excluded from consideration on the ground that it is too threatening to the central or provincial government, the only alternative seems to be central control by the next superior level of government: the provincial authority in a federal system like Canada or Australia or Germany, the central government in a country like Britain or France. Distasteful as it may seem to many people, it may be the only practicable option. In *London 2001* I suggested that under such a centralist prescription, there should be an advisory Metropolitan Planning and Transportation Commission for London, covering a wide area around Greater London, perhaps the whole South East. It would be appointed by the Secretary of State for the Environment, and would have a remit to advise him or her on future main lines of development within the region. It would be charged with producing a regional framework for development and redevelopment and channelling public investment in inner-city regeneration. It would identify the areas for major development and redevelopment within the region, including sites for new communities. It would also need to be centrally involved in coordinating regional investment in transportation and communications, whether by road, rail, or telecommunications. It would be the equivalent of an Urban Development Corporation on the scale of a whole region, but it would not itself plan in detail; its job would end once action areas were designated and the development rights sold.

Objections might well be raised to an authority with such draconian powers of direct development. In that case it might be possible to think of a weaker but still effective model. American regulatory agencies, and the similar organizations recently set up in Britain to oversee the privatized telecommunications and water industries, have no executive powers; yet they have proved surprisingly effective as watchdogs of the general public interest, even on matters of detail. So it might be possible to adopt that model, whereby the agency itself did not develop, but gave binding directives to the local authorities to do so. Something like this weaker model seems to be a likely outcome in California, where Assembly Speaker Willie Brown has proposed establishment of nine regional development authorities covering the entire state and administered directly by the state government. This bill lapsed during the gubernatorial election but may well resurface in some form hereafter. My problem with this alternative, which may prove to be a problem ;to many other observers, is that dealing with an elected authority, backed by an angry local electorate, is an entirely different business from dealing with an insecure private monopoly like British Telecom or Thames Water.

Summing Up

If there is one lesson to be learned from the preceding arguments, it is that there are no quick fixes. No great metropolitan area in the world has got it entirely right, though some have got it a great deal righter than others. No place has managed to grow fast and still have affordable housing, smooth short commutes, and positive attitudes to growth. The best we can hope to do is to develop efforts in mitigation of the worst social problems that arise.

Among the accumulated wisdom of urban scholars and in the libraries of urban literature, I think that the following propositions are almost indisputable.

First, it pays to plan boldly to decentralize jobs and homes *together* to the very fringe of the commuter field, and even beyond. This will require a framework of public action, even if much of the resulting investment will come from the private sector.

Second, such a program must be based on maximum accessibility by transit, including both good quality conventional transit and also state-of-the-art technologies that cater for new patterns of travel demand.

Third, such a system is likely to work better and to be more financially viable if it is based on a system of density pyramids and corridors, such that the maximum possible number of homes and jobs are within easy transit access.

Fourth, mechanisms must be found of collecting from the private sector some of the development gains in order to meet the impacts on the community, and to use these gains so as to assist the least-advantaged members of the local community, particularly through provision of affordable housing.

Fifth, despite protestations to the contrary, none of this is likely to happen very readily or efficiently without some kind of overall regional strategic plan, and that requires a strategic planning agency in some form or other.

These truths seem to me to be self-evident. Our next task is to find out how to get to where we want to go.

NOTE

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