

Just Space conference, 4th February 2016, City Hall

Economy workshop

Introduction

Michael Edwards (ME) opened the workshop, thanking Myfanwy Taylor for her work in the past two years leading the work of Just Space Economy and Planning, and explaining that she couldn't attend the workshop as she is on maternity leave. ME explained that there were a number of strategic questions guiding the workshop:

- Do we pursue growth? If so, how much growth? Growth of what?
- How do we produce an economy that is fairer, that reduces inequalities (wages/jobs)?
- Should London continue to pursue growth at the expense of Britain?

The workshop would also focus on some of the more familiar issues of loss of workspace and the diversity of the economy.

Discussion – strategic questions:

Participant: We need to consider the global context for the economy.

Eileen Conn (Peckham Vision): If we are to influence the mayoral election, we need to link with partners e.g. NEF

Rachel Laurence (NEF):

- NEF is starting to pull together thoughts on London Mayoral election (and other Mayoral elections outside London too). Currently topics include: 1. The unpaid economy (caring, childcare etc). 2. Energy/environment. 3. Regional banking. 4. Community economic development. NEF may prioritise one or more of these topics but those decisions have not yet been made.
- Important question to be asked is this: Is London's economy about generating growth for the UK, or benefits for London? The mainstream view is around the former. London does this very well. If we are to argue against this mainstream view, we need to be able to demonstrate how it's doing badly for Londoners. We need to develop different ways of measuring impact (on well-being for example).

Michael Parmar: At the social inclusion workshop (earlier), we discussed social value rather than economic value and that social value needs to be elevated as a criterion in Planning. We need broader measures of success.

Someone argued that London is undermining its own economy by the way it develops, that the rush for 'development' of property has a major downside for the rest of the economy.

Tom Chance: Advice on influencing Mayoral elections. Do it now (or a month ago). Candidates have already written their manifestos. Focus on two different types of asks: 1. Visionary. 2. Once we get a Mayor, can we get follow-through on pledges (London Citizens are very good at this).

Can we show, or show there is not, a trickle down effect? Workers are sleeping in parks, in beds in sheds.

Can we ask candidates to commit to working with us to do a full review of the London Plan?

Roy Tindle (LTGF) – We need to challenge conventional methods of measuring success. For example, the London Plan sees no value in industrial land. But if all suppliers move too far away, London dies. This is not being taken into account by economists. It is crucial that goods & services remain close to London.

Michele – those in power never do what they say they are going to do. We need critical theory.

David Boardman (Oval/Vauxhall) – we are constantly fighting planning applications, where decisions are being made that are contrary to the local plan. In Lambeth, the borough is only meant to lose 0.4 ha a year of industrial land, but there are disused gasholders that needs redeveloping, which would lead to a loss of 5 years' supply.

David Farnsworth – Central question is surely whether London needs to grow for the benefit of the UK. And we need to focus more on **at what cost** (social, environmental etc)? Could those jobs not be created elsewhere at less cost? We need to address that London mentality that everything starts and ends in London.

Sofia – the increasing emphasis on viability studies means that we are focusing on the monetary value – which is seen as hard evidence - at the expense of other softer factors.

Jane Clossick (CASS Cities) – If we have evidence, where do we put it so that it is visible to policymakers?

ME – JSEP has been having discussions with GLA Economics team to discuss/influence what evidence they should be collecting for the next review of the London Plan.

People are spending half their income on rent and the rest on travel. What sort of an economy is that?

We need to focus less attention on the provision of transport infrastructure and more on promoting closer proximity between live and work.

ME – Bartlett Planning public lecture last week by Michelle Dix on Crossrail 2. Asked the question about what TfL was doing to get homes closer to jobs. She acknowledged that would involve a very different type of transport network (with an emphasis on the orbital), but his impression that TfL seems to have given up on that strategy.

Corinne Turner (Peckham Vision) – there is a concern that workers in London have become service workers only.

Krissie Nicholson (EETG) – NEF is doing some work on alternatives to GVA, could they please elaborate?

Rachel Laurence – The mainstream view of the economy is that the purpose of the economy is to increase national productivity (GVA/worker). It does do that. The problem we have in fighting this mainstream argument is that our goals are different, therefore it is very difficult to win the argument. First you need to redefine the terms on which you judge the economy. At NEF, we are suggesting using “headline indicators” instead of GVA – focusing on things like human well-being, good jobs, environmental benefits. We need to first get them to commit to the same outcomes. This is all available on NEF’s website. ME confirmed that there is also a link to NEF’s website on the JSEP document prepared for the workshop.

Jenny Robinson (UCL) – We need to bring in the city context. London is undermining its capacity to be a good city. To what extent is the rush for development about trying to save the UK’s economy? London is being sacrificed not just in local terms. The Mayor is obliged to balance these things.

David Farnsworth – The London growth machine is being subsidized by the UK taxpayers’ money e.g. transport, bailout of the City of London

Land use issues

ME - There are two main planning issues: 1. Loss of employment land. 2. Targeting of high streets and town centres for massive redevelopment. Both driven by the housing imperative.

Jessica Ferm (UCL) – update on main issues around loss of employment land. Latest research commissioned by the GLA is confirming loss is around three times the rate of ‘managed release’ prescribed in the London Plan; in inner London it is up to 8 times the target. Also focus in London Plan has been to consolidate employment into larger centres – so for example Strategic Industrial Land (the larger industrial estates), and the larger Metropolitan centres (for retail). This has meant a loss of finer grain employment across London over time.

ME – what do we do next?

We need to add policy proposals in the document to deal with the issues we have identified.

Can we introduce a requirement for an assessment of what is already there?
Questions around who/when should so such studies need to be resolved.

David Farnsworth - Can we ask for a mechanism to be involved in co-producing the Plan, rather than producing an alternative London Plan? There is no Statement of Community Involvement for the Mayor at all.

JS strategy is to focus on process as well as propose alternatives.

Tom Young – Planners cannot know whether a business that is currently on the periphery will become a world leader in the future or not. We don't know the future, this is the market system. WE don't know if a start up in Hendon is going to one day be a big employer. Planning has to have the flexibility to allow for uncertainty.

Eileen Conn – suggest that the paragraph on 'participation' in the Just Space conference handout be revised. It sounds like a plea for extra resources for community groups. We need to be careful.

David Boardman(Vauxhall) – As a practitioner (at public inquiries) I need policies for encouraging employment and defending employment. Focus normally is on floorspace. WE do not need floorspace in order to get employment (coffee and internet is fine for many businesses). We need protection and encouragement policies (clusters, nodes). ME asked if David could put these suggestions in an email.

ME – we need to be careful not to make the mistake in assuming that start ups are only interesting if they turn into big enterprises later. In fact, we have been trying to defend enterprises that don't prioritise growth, they just want to produce and stay put but are a valuable part of the local economy.

David Farnsworth – Practical suggestion: Go to each of the Mayoral candidates and ask them to commit to five principles, including the principle of community involvement. Include Assembly candidates too?

Jane Clossick – in Old Kent Road (Southwark), the business consultation and the residents' consultation was held on different days. Run by Southwark.

ME – recounted Mark Brearley's (CASS Cities & proprietor of Kaymet manufacturing business in Old Kent Road) experience with the London Chamber whose Chair is Mr Pidgley (of Berkeley Homes, also Chair of the LEP). Reveals that business interests are being represented by real estate people. There is a real representation problem of the non-real-estate business sector.

Eileen Conn – there is no requirement for local authorities to consult business groups, only community groups. There should be.

Market Traders Association feel completely powerless also.

Could we team up with the FSB to make our asks? Should we make an 'ask' to the LEP?

Nicky Gavron (London-wide Assembly member). For small businesses, Permitted Development Rights is a real problem. The current government is dismantling the current planning system. Homes – and the wrong sort of homes – are trumping affordable workspace. We are losing 3,000 artists studios in the process. NG suggested engaging with the process of preparing “Towards a London Plan” which will be the first step for the new Mayor.

Jane Clossick – should we propose strategic high street locations as well as strategic industrial locations?

Jessica Ferm – cautioned the introduction of more hierarchies in policy, which somehow give planners the impression that it is okay to lose 'non-strategic' retail or industrial. Issue of cumulative loss being strategic in outcome.

Ilinca Dianconescu (LGTU)– urged members of the workshop to provide their email addresses if they would like to be on the JSEP email circulation list. Email: ilincadiaconescu@gmail.com to get added.

It was also pointed out that the “economy” work needs to cross-check at least with the groups working on opportunity areas and on social inclusion.

END notes by Jess Ferm

The following had signed up in advance for this workshop, tho' were not all present. Others may have been present too.

Jane Clossick – CASS Cities
Michael Edwards – Bartlett School of Planning, UCL
Patsy Cummings- Crystal Palace & Upper Norwood Neighbourhood Forum
Jonathan Rosenberg – West Ken & Gibbs Green
Lisa Greensill – London Voluntary Service Council
Glenn Power - Tower Hamlets Tenants Federation
Sofia Roupakia - Migrants' Rights Network (MRN)
Heather Gillmore – Deptford Neighbourhood Action
David McEwan
Dee Searle – Green Party/ IF project
Mama D – Ubele, CFGN
Stephen Kenny - Grove Park Neighbourhood Forum
Santa Pedone – Ubele
Rachel Laurence – NEF
Daniel Fitzpatrick, Bartlett, UCL
David Farnsworth – Freelance consultant, Bristol
Clare Moore – LTF

Sarah Sackman – Barrister, Francis Taylor Building
Duncan Bowie – University of Westminster
Nicolas Fonty – UCL Geography
Ilinca Diaconescu – London Gypsy and Traveller Unit
Jessica Ferm – UCL Planning
Teresa Hoskyns – University of Sheffield
Luisa Vallejo – Clitterhouse Farm Project
Alessandra Mossa
Jo Meehan – Old Kent Road People
Corinne Turner – Peckham Vision
Adrian Glasspool – Elephant Amenity Network
Tamsin Curno – Disability Action Islington
Eva Psychriani – LTF
Ade Sawyer – Ubele, Diversity and Community Engagement, COMA.
Dr Michael Parmar – DharArt Ltd
Roy Tindle – London Thames Gateway Forum
David Boardman – Kennington Oval and Vauxhall Forum