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Abstract: In this article we explore the tensions in metropolitan level governance between strategic planning and desires for political decentralisation. We do this through a three-part analysis. First we focus on the 2008 election strategy of Boris Johnson to become Mayor of London, with its aim of gaining suburban votes and giving more autonomy to the local Borough level. We then look at the impacts of this campaign on electoral results and, finally, the outcome of the Outer London Commission, which was set up by the Mayor after the election to deal with strategic issues concerning London's suburbs. We find that a strategic intent to benefit suburban residents and the decentralisation of power to the Boroughs, are contradictory and have led to a policy stalemate.

Key Words: Metropolitan Government; Strategic Planning; Localism; Multi-level Governance

1 Introduction

The focus of our attention in this article is the relationship between metropolitan and local government in London. We show how this underwent a significant change around the Mayoral election of 2008. Since the advent of globalization the politics of world cities such as London has been dominated by the desire to ensure economic competitiveness. Increasing social polarisation in world cities, with its potential for social unrest, has also been widely acknowledged. The political response has tried to formulate policies to address both international business priorities and the needs of deprived areas. Our purpose here is to show that in London there has been the rise of a third dimension in the political mix. There has been an awakening of the usually

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politically dormant suburban areas. Cities as big as London cannot be governed by a single political entity and a division of responsibilities between metropolitan and local authorities is inevitable. However the relationship between these levels can vary both between cities and over time. The increase in the salience of suburban politics has created questions for this metropolitan/local relationship in London.

Boris Johnson won the London Mayoral election in 2008 having fought a campaign to raise his political profile in London's 'neglected' suburbs, and we will show how their support was pivotal in his victory. His election manifesto promised to reduce the influence of the Mayor and give more autonomy of policymaking to the local level. This was a response to the strongly held desire expressed by local suburban communities for less Mayoral imposition, especially on housing policy. The result of this approach was to potentially reduce the ability of the Mayor to pursue metropolitan-wide policymaking and fulfil his strategic leadership role. After his election Johnson wanted to use his position to benefit suburban areas and he set up the Outer London Commission in 2009 to explore possible policies. This Commission, which was made up of representatives of the Boroughs, business, the development industry and the voluntary sector was charged with developing a new direction that responded to the perceived needs of the Outer London economy. In the final part of the article we will review the experience of this Commission. We use it to illustrate two complications that arose from the entry of suburban politics and the shift in the balance of power towards the local level. One is that the promise to reduce Mayoral authority over the local level does not sit easily with the Mayor's desire to use his strategic role to benefit suburban areas. The second is that the suburban areas may have a common interest in gaining more autonomy, and freeing themselves from certain metropolitan-wide policies, but they find it difficult to agree on beneficial positive policies.

So we start our analysis with a discussion of multi-level government before turning to the way this has evolved in the London case. As many authors have pointed out it is important to take on board the issues of 'path dependency' and the specific political and institutional conditions that apply in a particular city (Cox, 2011; Keil, 2011; Gordon et al 2012). We then review how the metropolitan/local relationship was operating between the establishment of the Greater London Authority in 2000 and Johnson's election in 2008. It is necessary to do this in order to back up our argument that this election was the harbinger of a significant shift. We then present a detailed analysis of the 2008 election through examining the manifesto of Boris Johnson and the electoral results. We then turn our attention to the some of the policy difficulties resulting from

the new political landscape that prioritises the suburbs. In this section we use the experience of Outer London Commission as an illustration of these difficulties. However first of all we need to be more specific about our definition of 'suburban' given the particularity of London's political geography.

2 Suburban London

As discussed in other contributions to this special issue there has been a trend for cities to expand into their periphery, and many new urban forms such as polycentric cities or edge cities, have been identified. Much of this literature stems from the US experience where sprawl, the development of fragmented jurisdictions, and post-suburban politics are central issues (Phelps & Wood 2011; Phelps et al 2010; for a comparative perspective see Phelps and Wu 2011). However London is very different largely due to the stronger interventionist role played by the state. In discussing the literature on suburbia in relation to London the impact of one important urban policy needs to be kept in mind – namely the Green Belt (Cochrane, 2011). This policy, imposed by national legislation in 1955, has been consistently and vigorously applied. Although there has been constant debate over its value and impact, it is still in force. Thus a belt of land approximately three miles wide surrounds the city in which development cannot take place. The orbital motorway, the M25, travels round this Green Belt.

This land on the edge of the built up area and containing the motorway junctions would be the natural location for edge city development. However it is not possible to find such development in London and the pressure is deflected either inward to any available land or outwards beyond the Green Belt. This latter area has experience considerable growth in recent decades. Major developments have occurred around existing cities such as Reading or Cambridge, or in the form of planned developments such as Milton Keynes or the emerging Ebbsfleet/Bluewater complex. The inward pressure places increased importance on any land that becomes available within the Green Belt such as brown field sites. Key examples of this kind are London Docklands and the Olympic Park.

However the spatial focus of our study here is the outer edge of the metropolitan area – the built up area that abuts the inside of the Green Belt. Institutionally this ring roughly equates to the Outer Boroughs (see fig.1). People began to move out of inner London in the early twentieth century with the increasing access provided by new public transport. London Underground

undertook propaganda campaigns to encourage the middle classes to relocate to the new estates being built around the more distant tube stations. This was facilitated by the rise of the Building Societies who offered loans for house purchase. This process established a broad distinction between inner and outer London based on income and house tenure. The outer area, labelled the 'suburbs' continued to grow to satisfy housing demand during the interwar and post war decades. By the 1970s most land between the inner area and the Green Belt that was not protected by environmental policies had been developed.

This outward growth of London led to governmental reforms. The London County Council (LCC), set up in 1888, no longer represented the metropolitan area. The Greater London Council was formed in 1965 to extend the coverage right out to the Green Belt involving the incorporation of the outer suburbs. Within this metropolitan level 32 local authorities, the London Boroughs, were formed alongside the City of London Corporation. Historically the Outer Boroughs have been seen as politically 'conservative' and primarily concerned to safeguard their existing advantageous life style. As Cox (2011) notes the political priority of outer suburbs generally is oriented to issues of consumption and the creation of desirable living places. In London the Outer Boroughs in the past usually pursued protectionist policies and preferred to detach themselves from metropolitan-wide policies – at times directly opposing them. For example when the GLC adopted its 'fares fair policy' to cut bus and tube fares by 25%, the Borough of Bromley successfully took the GLC to court to stop the policy as they did not believe that their residents would benefit.

INSERT FIGURE ONE HERE

However within this general pattern there is some variety. For example the Borough of Croydon took advantage of the 1960s national policy to ban office development in central London to develop a major office and retail centre that could be described as a complete town centre rather than a suburb. In more recent years further changes have taken place that have added to the suburban variety. For example immigrant communities have moved to some parts of outer London generating more mixed communities and, often, political tensions (Mace 2013). As MacLeod and Jones (2011) point out 'suburbs are diversifying quickly and can no longer be easily catalogued as bastions of White middle-class uniformity offering refuge from inner-city blight' (p. 2462). While some suburbs remain prosperous others are experiencing increasing economic problems with the withdrawal of investment from employment activity and local high streets.

Increasingly these outer suburbs are expressing a feeling of 'neglect'. This has led to more political involvement and a new scenario for metropolitan/local relations. We will return later to the increasing variety amongst the Outer Boroughs and the implications for any concerted policy for suburbia that might address such problems.

2.1 Multi-level governmental relations

In recent years the issue of the power relationship between levels of government has attracted considerable attention in urban politics literature (e.g. Sellers, 2002 & 2005; Peters & Pierre, 2001). There have been a number of strands to this. A major one has been the discussion of the changing relationship between nation states and cities. There has been a trend for unitary states to decentralise creating greater complexity in intergovernmental relations (Kübler & Pagano, 2012). The impact of globalisation on the nation/region/city relationship has also attracted considerable attention (Brenner, 1998 & 1999; Savitch and Kantor 2002, Newman and Thornley 2011). In the London case the formation of the Greater London Authority (GLA) in 2000 can be seen as devolving some central government powers to the city - part of the new Labour Government's devolution strategy that included the establishment of Assemblies for Scotland and Wales.

A second avenue in the literature has focused on the relationship between the city and its surrounding region. Discussions here have highlighted the inadequacy, as the economic city-region expands, of limiting attention to cities within their administrative boundaries (Storper, 1997; Scott 2001). When the functional city-region extends beyond these administrative boundaries greater problems of governability are created (Kantor et al, 2012). Another aspect of this city/region relationship, attracting a growing literature, has been the politics of suburban sprawl and 'edge city' settlements, drawing especially from the US experience (e.g. Phelps & Wood 2011; MacLeod & Jones, 2011).

A third dimension, which is more central to our analysis, has analysed the interaction between levels of government within the metropolitan area. Salet et al (2003) in a coverage of 19 European cities explored the way the coordination of strategic spatial policy was achieved, covering local, metropolitan and city-regional levels. City responses ranged from a dominant unitary metropolitan government, epitomised by Madrid, through a more common approach in which a dual structure operated with collaboration between city and regional levels (sometimes voluntary but sometimes within a statutory framework), to a minimalist approach based on particu-

lar services or projects (see also Lefevre, 1998; Hooghe & Marks, 2003). Salet et al conclude that 'the local and meso-level governmental relationships still are the most controversial and complicated relationships in metropolitan governance' (2003: p 381.). Our focus is on this intergovernmental relationship, in particular that between the metropolitan city and the lower level authorities within it. As we have already said, it is our contention that this relationship has undergone a significance shift in London since 2008. The new Mayor, Boris Johnson, has pursued an agenda of giving the lower level more autonomy. However the whole raison d'être of the GLA, and the elected Mayor, was to overcome the deficit in strategic vision that had become evident since the abolition of the GLC. As we will see this decentralisation agenda has created tension and lack of clarity.

Large cities have a variety of multi-level arrangements and differ in the power available to their respective metropolitan mayors. A few characteristics of London government need to be outlined from the outset as the city could be regarded as rather a-typical. In London the issue of multi-level governance has been a matter of debate for a long time and predates globalisation. Governing the metropolitan area has always been full of political tension. The best way to govern a population of over seven million people has rarely gained a consensus of opinion, with the questions of the role of the central state, and whether there is a need for a strategic level authority, being particularly contentious. This was highlighted in 1986 when the Thatcher government abolished the strategic authority for London – so the capital was without a city-wide elected body for the next fourteen years. The UK is sometimes referred to as a 'dual polity' (e.g. Leemans, 1970; Bulpitt, 1989). In contrast to many countries, the UK has a strong central state. Then at the lower level, local authorities act as 'agencies' of this central state (Stoker, 1991). The way this works is that central government passes the laws, sets out the regulations and allocates finances from a centralised tax system to specific local authority budget headings. Local authorities have wide responsibilities that include providing the local services that matter to people.

The local level, with this wide responsibility for local service delivery, is the most immediate and recognisable level of government for most residents. Local authorities gain legitimacy from this high profile. However local authorities are strongly constrained by the regulations and the finances they are allocated by the central state. Meanwhile the intermediate level of metropolitan government has an uncertain, and often uncomfortable, position within this 'dual polity'. As we have already noted, since 1965 metropolitan London has comprised a lower tier of 32 local authorities (London Boroughs) with their directly elected councils. A basic debate for London

has been whether there is a need for a coordinated strategic body, how extensive its remit should be, and how democracy should be incorporated. Over the last thirty years there have been a number of institutional changes reflecting different ideological positions taken by central government on this issue (see for example Travers, 2004). Meanwhile globalisation, and the perceived need for London to compete with other cities, has also exerted pressure to reform city governance (Newman & Thornley, 2012; Thornley et al. 2005).

In 2000 central government re-established a strategic authority for London in the form of the Greater London Authority, with a directly elected Mayor. This reintroduced the intermediate tier into the inter-governmental power game increasing its complexity. As we will see the first Mayor – Ken Livingstone – spent most of his energy on his relationship with central government and tended to take a rather authoritarian attitude to the local tier. However, as we have already said, we believe that there was a sea change in the metropolitan/local power game with the arrival of Boris Johnson as Mayor in 2008. In order to demonstrate the novelty of his approach we need to establish the nature of governmental relationships over the preceding period in more detail

2.2 The relationship between metropolitan and local government before Boris.

When the GLC was abolished in 1986 London was left without an elected metropolitan authority. Its functions were redistributed to the Boroughs and central government – thus re-asserting the dual polity. The difficult power relationship between elected governments at metropolitan and local levels was therefore removed from the equation. However by the early 1990s there was increasing concern, led by business organisations, that London government was not equipped to play its role in the increasing global competition between cities (Gordon, 1995). Stronger leadership and vision was needed to give London a voice in this global competition. Central government and business organisations formed new joint bodies to try and fulfil this mission (Newman & Thornley, 1997; 2012). When a new national Labour government was elected in 1997 a different approach was taken. The Labour Party accepted that the UK and London had to respond to the pressures of globalisation but they were also concerned about the lack of transparency and democratic involvement in London government. Their response was to set up a new metropolitan strategic authority – the GLA - led by a strong directly-elected mayor.

Ken Livingstone was elected as the first London Mayor (for details see Travers 2004). He had to fight the election as an independent because the Labour Party would not back his candidacy. This independence meant that, once in office, he was free to take a strong line in his dealings with a Labour central government. In fact his early years were dominated by his opposition to central government policy on the funding of the underground – he went as far as taking the government to Court on the issue. He also devoted a lot of attention in his first term to lobbying government for additional powers. His attention was thus very strongly placed on the relationship between central and city government. He also spent a lot of energy on developing his relationship with business interests and there was close co-operation in determining the world city agenda of the first London Plan in 2004 (Thornley et al. 2005).

Far less attention was placed upon his relationship with the lower level Boroughs. He claimed that he just did not have the resources and time to develop a close working relationship with all 32 Boroughs (he suggested that they should be amalgamated into five). The preparation of the Mayor's London Plan, the statutory framework for the Boroughs' own local plans, did not involve much discussion with the lower-tier authorities. Their main input was confined to making representation at the Examination in Public. Thus, rather than developing a close working relationship with the Boroughs, Livingstone relied on his statutory powers to impose his policies. Some of these were strongly disliked by some of the Boroughs – a prime example was housing policy. Livingstone had the power to allocate house-building targets to the Boroughs and he also formulated a policy that all large new residential developments should contain about 50% percentage of 'affordable' units. This was to ensure that there was sufficient housing for those in social need and for key workers on low incomes, such as nurses, teachers and transport operators. A world city relies on such provision. However many Boroughs in outer London opposed the idea of having to accommodate such people in their area.

Thus Livingstone's policies put much emphasis on improving conditions in the central city with facilities needed for its world city role, including improved access (e.g. Cross Rail), congestion charging and allowing tall buildings. He also designated 'opportunity areas ' in poor neighbourhoods in need of regeneration. His lack of attention to his relationship with the Boroughs, and his geographical focus on the centre and areas of poverty provided the setting for Boris's election campaign.

3 The 2008 Mayoral Election

A great deal has been written on the 2008 London mayoral election and the rise of Boris Johnson (see Holman & Thornley, 2011; Gordon & Travers, 2010; Froncoli & Ward, 2008; Johnson, 2008). Our aim hre is to demonstrate that devolution of authority was a central theme in Johnson's election campaign and then, via an analysis of voting patterns, illustrate how he benefitted from this through increased suburban support. Through this analysis we will try to unpick how and why Johnson sought to transform London's governing dynamics from one typified by strong Mayoral control to one based more on conciliation between tiers[1]. Later in the analysis of the Outer London Commission we will explore the material consequences this had on intergovernmental relations in terms of policy (Fairclough, 2003; Robertson, 2007).

The 2008 campaign saw Johnson issue seven separate political manifestos covering accountability, environment, housing, transport, business, crime and senior citizens. It is our contention that these manifestos illustrate Johnson's aim to create a new governing arrangement between the GLA and the lower tier[2] (in this case specifically Outer London Boroughs). He did this through the constant utilisation of the concept (or 'identity narrative') of *self-determination*. He sought to extend further autonomy to the local level and right the perceived wrongs perpetrated on the Boroughs by the more autocratic managerial style of Livingstone (for a discussion of this regarding sustainability policy see Holman & Thornley, 2011). Self-determination was central to all seven of Johnson's election manifestos. He pledged to "…create a new style of government at City Hall" with"…measures designed to make the Mayoralty more accountable and spending more transparent" (Johnson, 2008a: 1). He also notably promised to work "…with locally-elected councillors instead of berating them." (Ibid: 3). Here, Johnson was careful to point out several instances where centre/local relations had been strained under Livingstone. Using examples like the 2004 withholding of £1.5 million of the Mayor's transport funding from Barnet Council when they pursued policies contrary to the Mayor's transport agenda and Livingstone's public rebuke of both Redbridge and Hammersmith & Fulham for attempting to circumvent his

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[1] This section draws on a wider analysis of the election campaign and the Outer London Commission that utilises discourse analysis (Reisigl and Wodak, 2009: Robertson, 2007). This work uses the concept of 'identity narrative' to demonstrate the Mayor's set of ideational and representational notions.

[2] Whilst it could be said that Johnson's conciliatory tone applied equally to inner and outer boroughs, it appears that much of this positioning was based on trying to gain electoral advantage in outer London, as many of the inner Boroughs were less marginal.

affordable housing policy, Johnson painted a picture of an insular, untouchable mayor at odds with local officials. To counter this Johnson pledged to usher in "...a new era of cooperation between London's Mayor and the borough councils" (Johnson, 2008b: 1) noting that this new relationship would be strongly based on the idea of localism "...allowing councils the freedom to pursue policies that their local residents have elected them to implement" (Johnson, 2008a: 9).

He also sought to exploit the tensions with London's electorate that had built up over locally unpopular policies like the West London tram and the western extension of the congestion-charging zone that had been pushed forward by Livingstone despite high levels of local opposition. Here Johnson again seized on an image of Livingstone as a distant and not altogether benevolent leader who, whilst comfortable with the central focus of London as a world city, was hopelessly lost when it came to the more quotidian desires of London residents.

The impact of this identity narrative was evident in the Mayoral election results (Fig. 2). Voting behaviour in 2008 produced a striking visual image of a blue (i.e. Conservative) outer ring encircling a red (i.e. Labour) inner core. Whilst election data for 2000 and 2004 were reported at constituency rather than the smaller ward level it is possible to discern that the Conservatives were able to make gains in all areas other than in Tower Hamlets. However, looking at the intensity of the gains in outer London constituencies is revealing. Johnson made striking gains in the Southwest taking Richmond, Kingston and Hounslow, all of which had been originally held by Livingstone. He also won in Greenwich and Croydon, which had also voted for Ken in 2004. The following table gives first choice mayoral votes by constituency level for 2004 and 2008 showing the percentage of the vote gained by Johnson in each instance. It is notable that, whilst clearly Johnson did better overall in the election, his seven highest gains (all of which are at least three standard deviation points from the mean of 10.09%) are in outer London boroughs.

INSERT TABLE ONE HERE

INSERT FIGURE TWO HERE

As discussed above, the divide between inner and outer London has typically been conceptualised as one between poorer inner city residents and their more wealthy outer suburban neighbours, whilst historically this division bears considerable weight the divide is no longer as rigid, as suburban London has diversified its population both in terms of race and class (see Mace, 2013 and MacLeod & Jones, 2011) and the policies of the urban renaissance have brought more

middle class residents back to the centre (see Hamnett & Butler, 2010; Butler et al, 2008). The election results may therefore be illustrative of a rather more nuanced story than one that sees a simple switch back to the 'political norm' of a Tory suburban fringe challenging an inner core of Labour voters. A different story can be told. Here the carefully crafted campaign by Johnson which sought to establish a new identity narrative of self-determination capitalised on feelings of neglect amongst the constituents in outer London, and the clear political tensions between the centre (GLA) and the periphery (Outer London Boroughs) noted by outer London councillors. This ideational and representational shift helped to create the space for a new type of governing arrangement in London and reshaped intergovernmental relations.

3.1 The problem of turning suburban votes into suburban policy: the example of the Outer London Commission.

Having won the election Johnson then sought to use his position to develop policies that would benefit his bedrock support in the suburbs. In his manifesto he had made suggestions on how transport policy might be changed to benefit the residents of the Outer Boroughs. He also specifically noted how some of outer London's transport woes could be directly linked to Livingstone's focus on transport in central London (Johnson, 2008c: 5). Recent research has shown that suburban areas were starting to experience problems with their local economies and to address this Johnson also aimed to better integrate London's suburbs into the fabric of London's economy.

Once in office one of the first actions Johnson took to address these policy issues was to set up the Outer London Commission (OLC) early in 2009. Its purpose was to advise the mayor on how outer London could be better integrated into the London economy and benefit more from the city's economic success. William McKee, CBE, who has a long history of leadership in the property and planning industry in London, chaired the Commission and its membership was drawn from the businesses, boroughs, and voluntary sector of outer London and from representatives of the development industry. In the trade press it was often framed as the commission that would represent the views of the 20 'doughnut' or 'forgotten' boroughs of London (Property Week, 2009a & 2009b).

The OLC was specifically charged with the task of understanding how outer London might be able to contribute to the economic success of London as a whole; what factors were holding it back from doing so; and to make recommendations for it to achieve these aims (OLC website).

Here they were to examine the role that quality of life, outer London townscape, local skills, transport and funding could have in increasing economic output and integration. One of the most specific spatial policies the OLC was tasked with exploring was the development of four large 'super-hubs' to be located in the east at Stratford, the west at Heathrow, the north at Brent Cross and in the south at Croydon. As we will see in the analysis this policy proved strongly unpopular with the boroughs and was actively challenged.

In order to undertake this work the Mayor's office, through the OLC, set up a series of initial questions organised around the themes of economic growth, quality of life and transport that were designed to give stakeholders a structure for the consultation exercise. The Commission then invited written responses and held a series of meetings, which were set up around the four sub-regional alliances[3] of outer London between March and June of 2009 to give stakeholders the opportunity to comment on the questions proposed. Whilst this may have been an efficient way to shape the consultation process it might also be viewed as pre-setting the agenda (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962). It could be argued that this moved away from the narrative of self-determination apparent in the Mayor's election strategy by imposing a series of pre-formed ideas on the stakeholders. It is in fact notable that one OLC member commented that the questions posed "…came out of the Mayor's office and were entirely proscribed" giving even the members of the Commission little room for autonomy (Personal communication).

The following section draws upon a detailed analysis of the written responses to the OLC initial questions and the minutes of the four sub-regional meetings described above. Here we will see that as the Mayor attempted to reshape his political relationships with the outer London Boroughs by offering greater autonomy and flexibility through self-determination, he was hampered in his ability to set strategic policy that may have offered better spatial integration between inner and outer London. This was primarily because the outer boroughs, bolstered by the idea of higher levels of self-determination, were resistant to the broader and grander schemes for economic integration put forward by the OLC. The outer boroughs instead saw the OLC as a means through which they could lobby the Mayor for more bespoke policies related to the specific transport, urban design, housing and education needs of their areas.

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[3] Sub-regional alliances are partnerships between the public, private and voluntary sectors whose purpose is to provide clear strategic leadership and vision to the area covered. There are four sub-regional partnerships that cover outer London, each spanning a number of Boroughs.

3.2 *Strategic suburban policy meets Self-determination – super-hubs and beyond*

When the OLC was set up much was made of the fact that whilst outer London had 60% of London's overall population and 40% of its jobs, employment growth in outer London, in the periods of 1989-2001 and 2001-2007, had lagged significantly behind both inner London and the adjacent counties (GLA, 2009). In order to reverse this trend the Mayor, through the Commission, proposed four super-hubs that were to be key to directing growth and regeneration in outer London. The thinking behind super-hubs came from a *First Thoughts* paper written by the Mayor's office, which helped to set the terms of reference for the OLC. The paper described the need for a "new geography of regeneration" in outer London that would be able to make better use of the limited regeneration resources available in the capital by building on areas of success (2009 Annex 1 paras 25-26). These new spaces for growth were therefore seen as a strong strategic policy designed to better integrate the economy of outer London with the economy of the capital as a whole by focusing investment where it was most likely to have an impact. However in order for super-hubs to be successful, given the identity narrative of self-determination which called for more autonomy at the borough level, there was a clear need to ensure that the boroughs accepted the policy's rationale.

In the consultative meetings and in in the responses from stakeholders, the concept of super-hubs met significant opposition. The idea was described by the leader of Ealing Council as not only inappropriate for west London but as a "recipe for civil war between the boroughs" (OLC meeting minutes June 2009). The strength of feeling against this particular idea of spatial re-ordering arose from both the sense of concern expressed by those boroughs set to miss out on receiving this transfer of funds and infrastructure, and the way in which such an investment would integrate the economies of outer and inner London. There was also considerable evidence that these 'forgotten' or 'doughnut' boroughs had a quite different agenda and set of concerns, which super-hubs in no way met.

In the first instance, many boroughs and their sub-regional alliances noted that two of the proposed areas, Stratford and Croydon, were already successful and that providing additional state funding to them did not appear to be necessary or equitable. Greenwich argued that injecting additional funding to areas "…enjoying the benefits of substantial private investment" appeared misguided (LB Greenwich, written response) and the Borough of Bexley commented that super-hubs would be likely to "…further polarise growth in outer London through the concentration of

investment in already successful areas and ignoring of the potential for growth and improvement in smaller centres." (LB Bexley, written response). Indeed, several boroughs pointed to their own town centres (e.g. Kingston, Canning Town, Barking, Romford or Ilford) all of which might suffer if attention and funding was diverted to super-hubs. They saw this as counterproductive and damaging to the economy of outer London overall. The boroughs noted that the potential super-hubs represented a significant strategic investment from the centre, in terms of both funding and infrastructure, and each argued that at least a portion of this investment should be spent in their local town centres.

The second argument against super-hubs linked the idea of investment in existing town centres with a different spatial notion for proposed growth. In this instance the boroughs argued that in order for outer London's economy to grow a series of "super corridors" rather than super-hubs should be developed. As Havering Council explained in their written response, focusing on a number of nodes connected via adequate transport would be better at promoting the diversity and extent of East London's economy. The North London Strategic Alliance and the South London Partnership were also vocal supporters of the growth corridor approach, with Ealing Council setting out particularly cogent arguments about nodal connectivity based on a super-corridor scheme. Through this initiative a very different spatial pattern of growth was suggested by the boroughs, which would not only spread investment more evenly (albeit more thinly) across outer London but would also create new transport opportunities. However the development of such a growth corridor strategy is constrained by two factors. The spatial areas concerned do not relate to specific political entities and rely on voluntary collaboration. Secondly such a strategy would have to incorporate areas beyond the GLA boundary and there is no institutional mechanism for this. It is not a strategy that any Mayor will find easy to take on board.

 Given such high levels of opposition, in the end the idea of super-hubs was dropped as the OLC realised that it was highly unlikely that the stakeholders, most especially the boroughs, would ever buy-in to the policy (OLC REPORT).When looked at in the round we see a polycentric approach advocated by both the OLC and the outer London Boroughs. The difference lies in the number and importance of the centres to be supported. The OLC sought to focus limited funds on four core super-hubs as it was felt this would have the best opportunity to positively impact on the economy of outer London. Conversely, the boroughs fought for a greater spread of locations linked together by a more effective transport system and made repeated references to their specific local characteristics and circumstances - appealing to the identity narrative of self-

determination. What is evident from this example is how the Mayor's aim of integration was defused by the desire of individual boroughs to gain from any potential investment. We can also begin to understand how specific and locally important issues, like increased transport inter-connectivity, counteracted the idea of a new economic geography of regeneration for outer London.

The final problem with the ill-fated super-hubs, and indeed with the desire to develop a strategic policy to benefit the Outer Boroughs, was that it misread the problem of metropolitan/local governmental relations. Looking back to Johnson's political manifestos we see issues of economy, employment and skills featuring heavily in his policies toward outer London. There is a real sense that efforts should be made to economically integrate the outer and inner boroughs more effectively. However, as we have noted, the language of conciliation also comes through strongly in these manifestos with Johnson promising to allow the boroughs more self-determination on policy. The representations made to the OLC drew heavily on this promise and we would argue that in many respects the boroughs saw the OLC as an opportunity to push forward their own locally salient issues. As one OLC commissioner described it, "…there was a mismatch between Boris and the Boroughs" with Johnson believing that employment was a locally popular concern and the boroughs thinking that, for example, more flexible locally controlled parking standards were paramount. In fact, the issue of a more flexible, locally determined, parking policy featured in three of the four sub-regional meetings held (the East London meeting being the exception) and in numerous responses from the boroughs.

As we have noted, in the end the concept of super-hubs was jettisoned and the work of the Commission lost momentum. However it was reconvened in 2011 to inform the preparation of the Mayor's Supplementary Planning Guidance on Land for Industry and Transport, Housing and Town Centres and to advise if alterations to the London Plan were necessary. In this instance the Mayor asked the OLC to focus on issues like the distribution of a new Outer London Fund, more locally flexible commercial and residential parking standards, more flexible housing density targets and town centre renewal. All issues that clearly map better onto the identity narrative of self-determination.

4 Discussion

The governance of London is complex – some have even described the city as ungovernable (Travers, 2004). A major aspect of this complexity arises from the power relationships between national, metropolitan and local governments. There are elections at each level giving them all claims to legitimacy. The central government and the boroughs have longstanding positions of authority – the London Boroughs have existed in their current form for nearly fifty years. However the fortunes of the metropolitan level have fluctuated fairly dramatically. This level is not consolidated in any written constitution allowing central government to modify its powers, or as show in 1986, even abolish it altogether. When the GLA was established in 2000 the Mayor was able to establish a new degree of legitimacy for metropolitan government in the capital. This was gained from the realisation, based on the experience of the years without a metropolitan government, that this level of government was necessary in the face of inter-city global competition. He was also able to draw on a popular mandate for his role through the direct Mayoral election, and the fact that in the referendum on whether to establish a London Mayor around three quarters of Londoners voted in favour (the figure was much lower in the outer Boroughs). The Mayor is a highly visible figure and able to use his mandate in his power relationships with other levels of government. As we have seen Livingstone used this in his early years to challenge central government.

However the Mayor is highly constrained. Central government is an important player in the government of London as it controls financial allocation. The Mayor also has to abide by the legislation set out by central government in the Greater London Authority Act. This sets out certain responsibilities and requirements for any mayor. These focus on policy co-ordination, sustainability and promoting the city's economy. This common framework can explain much of the continuity between Livingstone and Johnson – such as the promotion of London as a world city. So one of the questions that arises is how much scope does an individual Mayor have to set out his/her own agenda and exert personal leadership? In our case this question becomes – how far can individual Mayors vary the way they relate to the local level? The statutory framework states that the policies of local authorities have to follow the strategies set out by the Mayor. However the Mayor has scope to vary the level of detail in these policies and how far he will go to enforce compliance. Livingstone relied on his statutory powers to take a strong role in enforcing his policies on the Boroughs. As we have seen Johnson' s position was more complex.

So, what does the example of the Outer London Commission tell us about broader issues of suburban politics, and the relationship between the strategic and the local? In the first instance it sheds light into the difficulties faced by Mayors of large cities like London where the strategic tier of government is always in some form of tension with the local. This is in part due to the fact that in large cities there is almost always an inevitable dissonance between the economic and social geographies defined by inner and outer areas. Here mayors are often faced with a choice of setting firm strategic direction at the risk of appearing autocratic or being more conciliatory at the risk of loosing a guiding vision for their cities. In the case discussed above, it was clear that Johnson saw both electoral and political advantage in moving away from Livingstone's strategic but arguably dogmatic approach. He extended an olive branch to the boroughs promising them that, under his leadership, more flexibility would be given in deciding policy.

However, he also saw a role for a more strategic approach that sought to tie the diverse economic geographies of outer and inner London together to create a more cohesive whole and provide benefits for declining suburban areas. To do this required some sort of new spatial configurations to be created in outer London. This goal necessitated a degree of strategic planning and vision that ultimately could not be sustained given the promises of greater levels of local self-determination that he gave to the boroughs. It is in this tension between strategic vision and local control where the problems truly lie. Livingstone placed his emphasis on strategic vision that engendered considerable hostility from the local level. Johnson moved significantly towards allowing local autonomy. However he also tried to pursue a form of strategic vision that would benefit the suburbs and this recreated tension. In its latest mode the Outer London Commission is moving to a position of confining itself to locally defined policies. This will remove the tensions but also any claim to strategic leadership – raising questions over the role of the Mayor.

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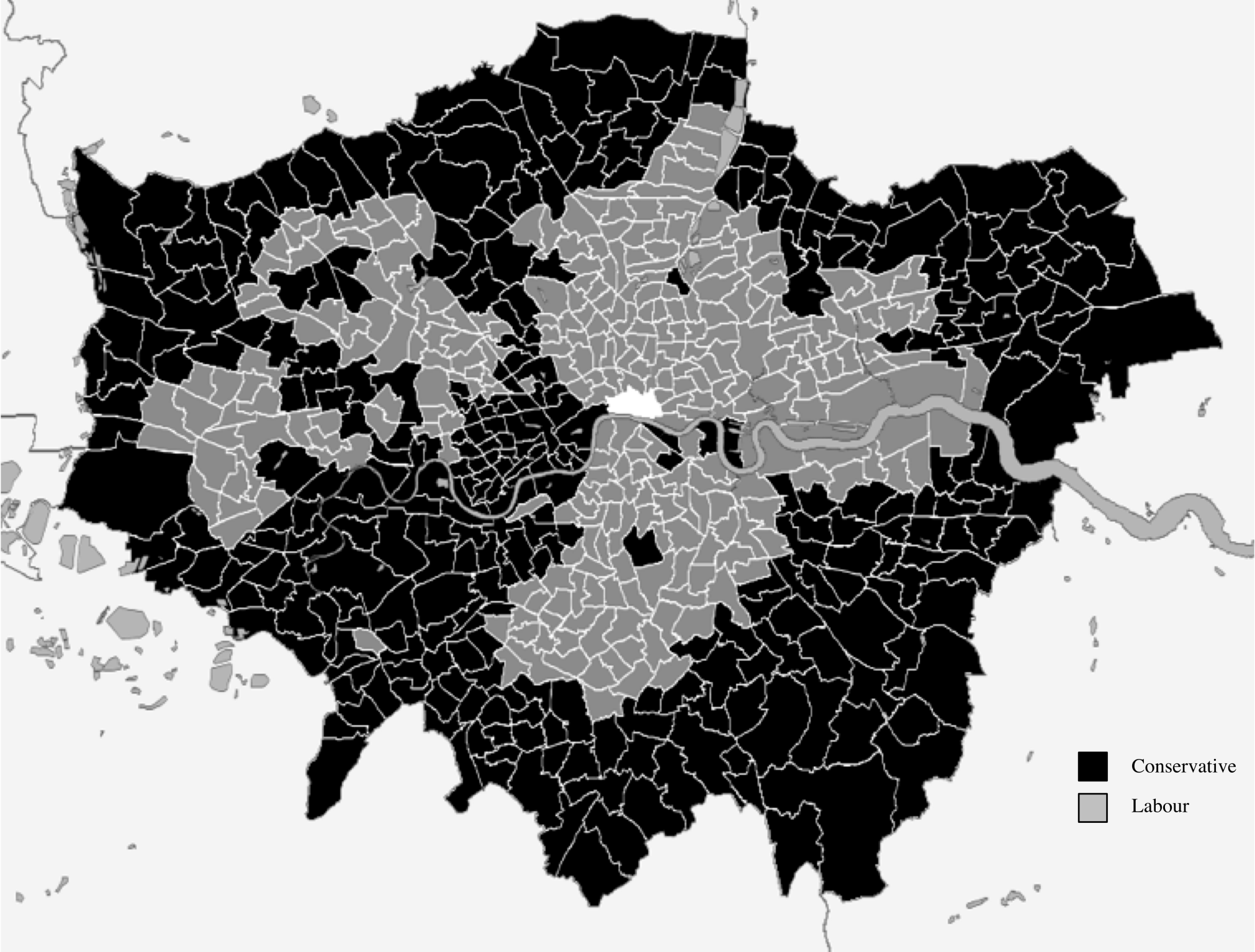
Ham. Hammersmith & Fulham
Ken. Kensington & Chelsea

Table 1 First choice mayoral votes by constituency Source: London Datastore

Borough	Constituency	Livingstone 2004	Norris 2004	Livingstone 2008	Johnson 2008	% vote Cons 2004	% vote Cons 2008	Cons Gain	Standard Deviation
Bexley	Bexley and Bromley	17,182	23,027	16,832	48,370	57.27	74.18	16.92	3.52
Havering	Havering and Redbridge	16,128	24,705	15,066	50,507	60.50	77.02	16.52	3.44
Richmond upon Thames	South West	19,560	19,157	19,397	36,439	49.48	65.26	15.78	3.28
Kingston upon Thames	South West	13,633	12,983	14,601	26,349	48.78	64.34	15.57	3.24
Bromley	Bexley and Bromley	23,801	36,494	23,838	73,682	60.53	75.56	15.03	3.13
Greenwich	Greenwich & Lewisham	21,227	11,716	27,651	27,978	35.56	50.29	14.73	3.07
Hillingdon	Ealing and Hillingdon	19,702	22,160	21,040	43,617	52.94	67.46	14.52	3.02
City of London	City and East	863	726	1,140	1,708	45.69	59.97	14.28	2.97
Sutton	Croydon and Sutton	12,701	16,513	14,326	32,799	56.52	69.60	13.08	2.72
Wandsworth	Merton and Wandsworth	30,259	25,227	35,375	48,781	45.47	57.96	12.50	2.60
Hounslow	South West	19,963	13,833	23,940	27,273	40.93	53.25	12.32	2.56
Southwark	Lambeth & Southwark	25,099	8,655	39,531	23,737	25.64	37.52	11.88	2.47
Barking and Dagenham	City and East	11,918	6,923	16,799	15,710	36.74	48.33	11.58	2.41
Islington	North East	18,582	6,613	29,404	17,658	26.25	37.52	11.27	2.35
Lewisham	Greenwich &	26,623	10,729	35,392	23,173	28.72	39.57	10.84	2.26

	Lewisham								
Merton	Merton and Wandsworth	20,923	15,196	25,700	28,762	42.07	52.81	10.74	2.23
Kensington and Chelsea	West Central	8,929	16,749	9,430	29,050	65.23	75.49	10.27	2.14
Ealing	Ealing and Hillingdon	32,876	20,568	38,880	36,751	38.49	48.59	10.11	2.10
Croydon	Croydon and Sutton	30,019	29,504	35,772	52,681	49.57	59.56	9.99	2.08
Barnet	Barnet and Camden	29,620	34,730	32,843	57,747	53.97	63.75	9.77	2.03
Camden	Barnet and Camden	22,740	11,623	31,069	23,971	33.82	43.55	9.73	2.02
Lambeth	Lambeth & Southwark	30,448	11,575	40,641	24,017	27.54	37.14	9.60	2.00
Hammersmith and Fulham	West Central	14,592	15,153	19,541	29,807	50.94	60.40	9.46	1.97
Westminster	West Central	15,157	18,340	18,734	32,658	54.75	63.55	8.80	1.83
Enfield	Enfield and Haringey	23,424	23,651	30,941	42,526	50.24	57.88	7.64	1.59
Haringey	Enfield and Haringey	26,272	9,050	35,742	17,713	25.62	33.14	7.51	1.56
Harrow	Brent and Harrow	22,238	21,449	28,070	35,877	49.10	56.10	7.01	1.46
Waltham Forest	North East	20,601	13,160	31,588	25,646	38.98	44.81	5.83	1.21
Redbridge	Havering and Redbridge	23,398	22,220	30,849	36,795	48.71	54.40	5.69	1.18
Hackney	North East	21,805	6,642	35,410	14,090	23.35	28.46	5.12	1.06
Brent	Brent and Harrow	26,204	15,498	37,792	25,948	37.16	40.71	3.55	0.74
Newham	City and East	22,832	7,697	39,352	14,739	25.21	27.25	2.04	0.42
Tower Hamlets	City and East	16,229	10,157	37,630	17,509	38.49	31.75	-6.74	-1.40

Conservative
Labour