

# ARE LONDON'S CENTRES OF CULTURAL, CREATIVITY AND TECHNOLOGY GRAVITY MOVING EASTWARDS?

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**ABSTRACT:** As London grows beyond its previous maximum size of 8.6 million people, the city's development follows an eastward direction along the banks of the Thames towards former dockyard and heavy industry sites. A corresponding move to develop a cultural hub, "Olympicopolis", on the Olympic site at Stratford links into the Crossrail extension and also existing cultural industries activity in Hackney and east London. This paper considers the policy decisions that are taking place to ensure a corresponding growth in the cultural [and 'eCulture'] sector as the city expands.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Some perceptive foreign visitors to London [from our field] in the last couple of years have been surprised at the [apparent] absence of a long-term Government ICT strategy for London in the Cultural Sector. Does an emphasis on the 'Creative Industries' compensate? +++ Aim: provide background/inputs for this session, the two selected papers and discussion.

London's approximate and growing culturally diverse population, millions of commuters, business and other visitors including - importantly - foreign and UK tourists [NB Current focus on Chinese] are not easy to represent/analyse Our perspectives however, do provide some contrasting and complementary points of view, e.g. One London born; one studied undergraduate and one postgrad., both away for many years but have also lived and worked in London

The academic [and practitioner] literature and journalist/media reports on "Smart" and "Cultural" Cities is vast including from many different disciplines including considerable interdisciplinary work. The term "Smarter" was first brought to our attention at the Major Cities of Europe Annual Conference in Hamburg in June 2015 with reference to efforts to go beyond the State of the Practice.

Exploratory work is described in [1] in which we, together with Lizzie Jackson, examined London computer artists, designers, the performing arts {live-steaming to Cinemas} and Public Services

Television Broadcasting with Lizzie Jackson. We presented two further papers with Professor Jackson at EVA Florence and EVA-MINERVA Jerusalem in 2014. Please also see the paper in the afternoon session today by Jackson and Glowacki, with London and Warsaw case studies including attention to the BBC and its Polish equivalent. We are endeavouring to begin to build up an initial basis for Comparative Analyses..

## 2. POPULATION SIZE & HISTORICAL INFLUENCES

Greater London, comprising thirty-three boroughs has a population currently estimated at just under ten million and growing quite rapidly with increasing diversity and average age, projected to reach 11 million in a quarter of a century The latest official 'principal projection' in late October, 2015 for the entire UK indicates, at current trends, a population of almost 75 million by 2040 rising from the current level of 65 million [2]. This represents an increase corresponding to an *additional London*, as the British media has been quick to report.

There are significant historical factors in play in a city such as in London, e.g. the relatively slow, steady rise of the suburbs, such as the 'archetypal' Penge in the Borough of Bromley [3] and long-standing Environmental policies such as London's protective Green

Belt. The Museum of London and local museums, libraries, archives, history societies, and academia provide a wealth of objects and information on London.

These are many cross-disciplinary questions for politicians, political scientists [public administration], geographers, historians, lawyers, urban planners, economists and Social Scientists as well as other disciplines. Such diverse views are generally outside the usual EVA realm of Culture & Technology/Visualisation, although EVA Berlin, since its beginnings, has specifically included History within its scope. Some of these other perspectives are hoped to be discussed at this Conference.

### 3. LONDON'S CREATIVE INDUSTRIES & SELECTED CONTEXTUAL ASPECTS

In [1] it was suggested that the centre of the London's greatest concentration of creative industries had shifted east during the 1990s-2000s from and around Soho (which is still quite vibrant in various niches, e.g. the post-processing film sub-sector). However the overall focus moved on to Shoreditch in East London, where Tech City and "Silicon Roundabout" are now found, along with a host of government initiatives and corporations. Many small tech firms founded earlier are still located here, along with many more established in the last 20 years.

We also proposed that with the new developments at Kings Cross, including the move of Google, *The Guardian* plus *Observer* newspapers and Central St Martins College (University of the Arts, London), that a creative shift is also occurring in this part of the borough of Camden, in part due to the St Pancras terminus of Eurostar.

Further eastwards the continuing massive extension of London's financial sector from the 'City' to Canada Wharf is being followed by dynamic impulses from the 2012 Olympics. Meanwhile, artist communities in East London have been affected by rising prices and 'gentrification'. These changes are so important that we next focus on certain aspects of these London transformations.

A particular focus of the developments in relocation of the creative industries is the former

Olympic site near Stratford, now being branded "Olympicopolis" (a conscious echo of "Albertopolis", the area planned by Queen Victoria's husband Prince Albert around South Kensington that now contains a complex of museums, universities and conservatoires, and of course the Albert Hall). Nigel Carrington, Vice-Chancellor of University of the Arts London, outlines its purpose in these terms:

*'Olympicopolis, which will become a major centre for the broader creative and cultural industries, and fashion in particular, and it will become for those broader cultural and creative industries, and fashion in particular, what silicon roundabout, the image here, is doing for the digital industries in Shoreditch.*

*[We] need to develop more geographical clusters of like-minded people and like-minded sectors, we need creative people living near each other, this isn't just a mystical preference, it's the most practical way to get new ideas and collaborators, it's why university still, despite all of the focus on the digital, are physical places. [4]*

### 4. CURRENT & FUTURE CHANGES AS LONDON EXPANDS EASTWARDS

These developments around the former Olympic site near Stratford demonstrate a further eastwards expansion of the creative side of the city, coinciding with the opening of the east-west Crossrail line. There are several aspects to these developments as follows.

*Local Government Role: Borough Level 'Smart City' Case:*

Whilst such developments receive encouragement from the Mayor of London's office, [See next Section], the role of local borough councils in this work should not be underestimated. One example is the way that Greenwich Council is using its Smart City initiative to support the parallel development of digital information exchange for its world-famous museums et al (e.g. the National Maritime Museum and the Royal Observatory) and the O2 entertainment venue, whilst simultaneously increasing the flow of tourists to Greenwich businesses hoping to enlarge its digital and creative communities. Emerging initiatives, which the Smart City initiative intends to connect,

are as follows:

*‘Greenwich aspires to be recognized as London’s “smart” and innovative Borough, able to deliver resource-efficient, low-carbon, healthy and liveable neighbourhoods. It aims to be a Borough where citizens enjoy improved social and economic opportunities, while feeling part of the community and part of the decision making processes affecting the environments and communities they live in, and where services are delivered efficiently and reflect the needs and aspirations of residents. The objective is to place Greenwich as a leader in the delivery of public services, to create new business and employment opportunities within the Borough and to make Greenwich a vibrant and great place to live, work or visit.*

*This strategy is underpinned by the use of technology and the ability to collect, transmit, manage and interpret data and make it available to enable both service providers and users to make better decisions.’ [5]*

Greenwich Council published its Smart City Strategy (as part of ‘Digital Greenwich’) on 22<sup>nd</sup> October this year.

#### *Academia & Cultural*

There are also developments around the former Olympic site near Stratford that suggest a further eastwards expansion of the creative side of the city, coinciding with the opening of the east-west Crossrail line. A number of universities including UCL are moving to sites in this area (a branch of the Bartlett School of Architecture, for instance) whilst the Smithsonian Museum is also set to open in the area, along with another branch of the V&A. This might signal a new “pole” of creative attraction that will draw more designers and artists to this region of London, perhaps in recognition of the now-established artistic communities in Hackney. As Nigel Carrington, Vice-Chancellor of the University of the Arts London said in a lecture at the Westminster Policy Forum on 17<sup>th</sup> June this year:

*In 2021 the University of the Arts London, UAL, will bring 5,500 students from our current 6 London College of Fashion sites to a new site at Stratford Waterfront, that’s*

*the blue space to the left of the Zaha Hadid Aquatic Centre, and we will be alongside the V&A, Saddlers Wells, the Smithsonian, and just to the right of that very large red site, UCL East, a new home, a new East London campus for University College London. [6]*

This move to the eastern area along the Thames was spear-headed by Ravensbourne, a university-sector college of communication and design that moved to the North Greenwich peninsula in 2010 a mere stone’s throw from O2, [the former Millenium Dome, next a billion euro ‘White Elephant’ which now claims the title of the largest Entertainment venue in the world] and is now at the heart of a rapidly-growing neighbourhood of businesses and housing developments .

Many other geographical changes are occurring in London -- as over all its history -- but this move Eastwards, including the creation of the very large new Canary Wharf financial district has been, and is currently, one of the most noticeable ones to many observers

#### **5. LOCAL GOVERNMENT POWER STRUCTURE AT GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY , GLA, AND BOROUGH LEVELS: THE COMPLEXITIES OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE**

London has a multi-layered government administrative structure which is essentially two-tiered:

- Greater London Authority, GLA, with Boris Johnson heading it as the Mayor of London
- Thirty-three Boroughs such as Camden and Greenwich with both having just over 200,000 population, and [Borough] mayors. The borough governing bodies have considerable powers over Culture and the Arts as well as ICT for their individual areas.
- One of the boroughs is the ‘City of London’, otherwise known as the ‘Square Mile’ or simply: ‘the City’. This is administered by the

Corporation of London and has the Lord Mayor of London {serving a one year term}. Currently Alan Yarrow has this position

Thus, confusingly for many visitors especially from abroad, the **‘City of London’** [a borough] is not the same as the **‘city of London’**. The division of roles and relationship between these two London mayors is described in [7]

The overall Mayor of London’s Office/GLA has rather limited budgets for Culture & Arts and ICT and thus restricted powers regarding our topic today. In contrast the boroughs have considerable scope and flexibility as shown by the case of Greenwich Borough with its ‘smart city’ initiative mentioned above. However, national bodies such as the Arts Council, England, provide substantial funding to many London cultural institutions.

## 6 THE CAPITAL ROLE: LONDON’S NATIONAL CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS AND ITS HINTERLAND

Due to London’s role as the capital and its history London has a high proportion of the UK’s major cultural institutions such as the British Library, British Museum, V & A] These institutions rely primarily therefore neither on Borough nor overall London GLA funding, but instead on English and central UK Government grants They are therefore subject to the responsible Govt. Department, currently the Department of Culture, Media & Sports [DCMS], from which they receive a major part of their public funding.

London benefits from an ambitious Cultural Strategy established by the previous Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, and continued by Boris Johnson [8]. Ambitious plans for London museum scene include a [slight] shift eastwards in the early 2020s from its current location in the Barbican.

London, formally an English Region, has a ‘Hinterland’ stretching far beyond the

neighbouring regions with its *‘imagined community’* [Benedict Anderson concept] has global reach. The influences are reciprocal; for example, the oft-quoted case of London being the sixth largest French city with this part of the London diverse population mix numbering some 300,000. *‘Paris on Thames’* is not the only case.

## 7 CONCLUSIONS & FUTURE APPLIED RESEARCH

First, our response to the question posed in the title of this brief Work in Progress paper is a definite ‘YES’ as regards towards East London [and also increasingly towards China]. Furthermore it may be seen that Arts & Culture play a major role in the Greater London Authority’s Strategy although not [yet?] an eCulture one like Hamburg. Due to the absence of GLA ‘Greater London eCulture Strategy’, we opted in this London Session to try to provide insights to its *‘creative chaos’*.

- Individual/Small team perspectives from Graham Diprose and Mike Seaborne [both ‘semi-retired’; the latter is an ex-Museum of London photographic specialist]
- Victoria & Albert Museum; Melanie Lenz [NB The current director, Dr Martin Roth, is from Germany]

In addition, thanks to the participation at this EVA Berlin of other speakers from London, the diversity of approaches may be further observed.

Not possessing [yet?] an ‘eCulture Master Plan’, this lack may reflect a corresponding ‘thousand flowers’ Zeitgeist or an enduring London characteristic, like its architectural development over the centuries, including the new high-rise skyline, reportedly developed without an overall plan.

Current and possible future applied eCulture research topics and questions include:

- Drilling down to Boroughs e.g. Camden, Greenwich, Southwark and Westminster re eCulture

- Barriers to eCulture? [including complaints on lack of sufficient advanced Broad band capacity across the whole of London]
- The roles of: London's rich Cultural/Ethnic/Linguistic mix?
- Can London eCulture help the hoped-for counterweight of England's projected 'Northern Powerhouse' [perhaps from Hull to Liverpool and Newcastle]?
- How to Improve London eCulture in cooperation with to the other three UK capitals Belfast, Cardiff, and Edinburgh?
- International City eCulture Comparative Analyses, beginning with the other EVA Cities at EVA Berlin 2015.

We welcome expressions of interest!

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