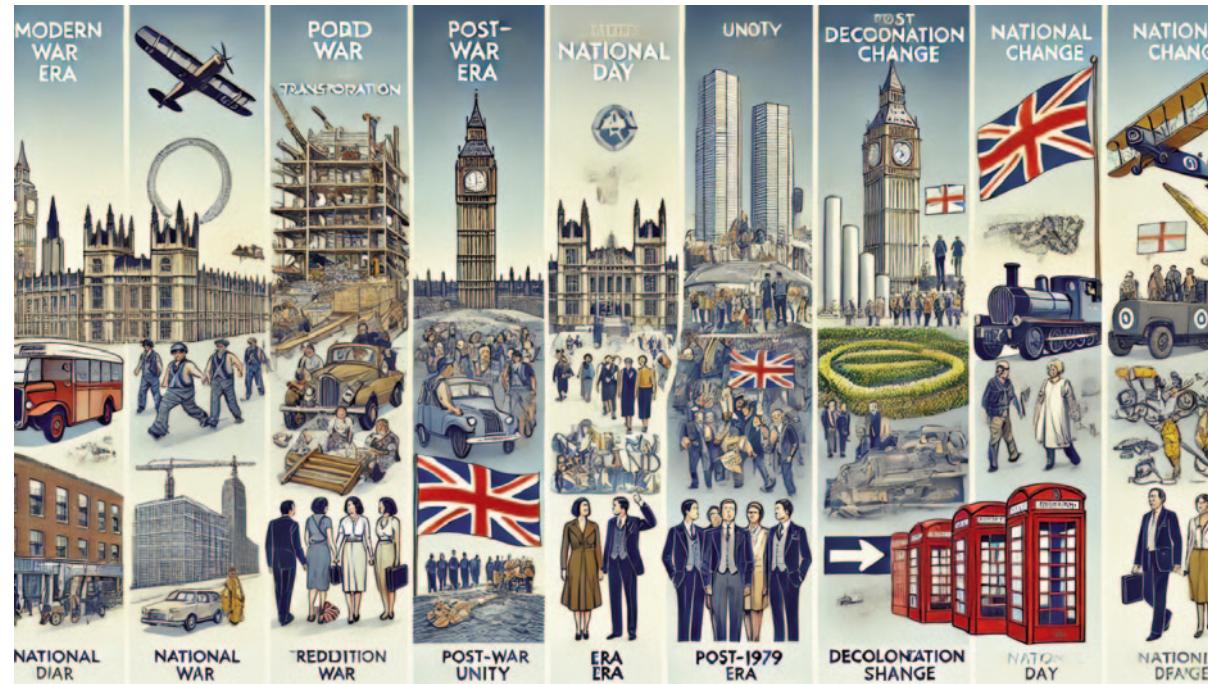


Brothers in Arms: London priorities for a prosperous England

Lars Christian thinks about improving social mobility, social well being, and quality of life. both for Londoners within a streamlined London and for the inhabitants of the nine largest cities of northern and middle England



England is maybe in need of a reset after fourteen years of Tory and LibDem merry-go-round governments; Akin to a banana kingdom? London is by many seen as the solution; As England's saviour in shining armour? I will in this article, argue that London and Londoners need to tweak direction, and tweak attitude: For north and middle England to resurrect and prosper. I the author, is London born, and lived for a short decade, north-of-the-north, in Edinburgh.

England and London need to find a common Identity. Politics, government ministers, and the media need to be less divisive. Political office holders need to respect each other, and respect their differences. I am unsure when England and the English lost a common focus-post WW2, post 1952 or post 1979? Almost all nations have a national day, England is one of a few odd ones out. Lastly, Londoners need to be better able to identify with fellow Londoners-irrespective of postcode, origin and tribe.

Why is it important for London, the East South East, and north and middle England to find a better equilibrium between the four? For one, average wage working families with children, need better quality of life in London.

Only a better equilibrium between the number of jobs, homes and households within London will make that possible.

More high earners and premium professional jobs can be accommodated throughout the dozen largest cities of England. A quarter century into a new millennium, the pandemic has proved that maybe as many as a quarter of the premium paid jobs in London, can be accomplished elsewhere.

Further, does London need thousands of cultural and research institution, or may half the present number be adequate? A quarter century of English, Scottish and Wales devolution, has proved that cities beyond London can deliver as good or better as the capital, in most if not all matters. And if a spread of institutions is possible in all other neighbouring nations, NO, DK, DE, NL, BE, FR and IR included; Maybe it may also work in England?

The top 7x7+7 blue-green wonders of Greater London:

- The paths along the Thames from Oxfordshire to Margate and Southend; the London Loop; Capital Ring; Green Chain;
- The top 7+7 remaining paths along major canals, rivers & brooks;
- The top 7+7 hills with panoramic views;
- The top 7+7 outer borough modern monuments;
- The top 7+7 sports venues;
- The top 7+7 outer borough arts & cultural venues;
- All bathing ponds and lidos.

>>>

IMAGE:
AI generated response to 'England and London need to find a common Identity'



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>>> Similarly, it is tough to build yet another ½-1mn homes in London, and the social and physical infrastructure that comes with it-lack of builders and SMEs included. House building away from the East South East is 1½ or more cost effective. With more SMEs, lower land prices, less complex logistics, lower labour costs, less dependency on imports of finance, labour and materials.

London will for the foreseeable future still have a superior advantage and competitiveness in a quarter, a third, a half or more of what it does best.

But maybe only if London and Londoners recognise; That a quarter or a third or more can be equally well delivered elsewhere, away from the East South East.

London and England are struggling to achieve higher scores for teenage and young people's well being. Despite a higher proportion of above average school achievers in London than elsewhere in England. With nine million inhabitants, the number of young people under-achieving is considerable. But can the local social and physical environment better cater for young people? In a social media age when fewer teenagers engage in sports. Survey after survey prove that more and more teenagers are struggling. With added pressure on the need to achieve well - in exams, among peers, on social media.

London's 1.3mn increase in population post 2000 and almost one million jobs since 2008, has brought some tremendous opportunities, but also tremendous challenges. The four most serious are maybe; The housing shortage and cost; Longterm poverty among working families with children;

Longterm unemployment among the (London born) unskilled and over-skilled; Knife crime...

For England to become more competitive, London may need to offload half of its public sector employment not serving Londoners directly. And for institutions serving the 15 mn population of the East SouthEast to relocate to hubs like Ashford, Gatwick, Guildford, Reading, St Albans, Luton, Stevenage, Stansted. All places accessible by both concentric and radiant commuting. However, since 2010, the opposite has happened, national public organisations and institutions have cut more jobs throughout England than within London-in percentage and absolute numbers (IfG).

Conceive five research & bio/science cities: With all larger parties working towards this goal over several decades. Where Silicon-Ouse-York transforms itself into an Oxbridge of the north, with a federal university, with additional colleges initially developed by the six largest colleges/universities in London and Oxbridge. With Silicon Preston, Teeside-Middlesbrough, Hull-Riding and Pottery-Trent undertaking a similar but smaller transformation into B-STEM research cities. Tripling the number of school leavers and uni graduates doing B-STEM subjects, medicine, nursing, languages and construction in the six counties. Similarly, establish an elite B-STEM London Thames university, with a dock or riverside campus east of Blackwall.

Does London need to become a **dual-capital**, more like

the Netherlands, a comparable dense and compact nation? So that ten percent of economic activity leaves the city. So that the pressure on the housing market, public services, labour and skills shortages eases. So that the default tenure for working families with children over time returns to owner occupy. Where ten percent of premium private jobs, ten percent of premium public jobs, ten percent of students, ten percent of research leaves the city. Resulting in a win-win also for London and Londoners; The latter with better quality of life and social well being; Working families with children included.

Can England excel and prosper with a dinosaur London and East South East? The capital should move elsewhere, halfway between two metropolitan cities. Three options include, between Sheffield and Nottingham, Leeds and Bradford, Birmingham and Manchester. The latter implies Stoke-on-Trent, to become a superior accessible and connected city. Creating a premium economic growth corridor, on par with M4, CaMkOx, Randstad. For half of the London civil servants to relocate; within 30-60 min commuting distance of the tri-city Birmingham-Pottery Trent-Manchester conurbations. With the Treasury in Manchester, Ministry of Defence in Leeds, Foreign Office in Birmingham, Royal Navy in South Wales. And the remaining ministries within 90 min commuting distance.

The main political parties of England need to agree on structural reforms. Not ideally, but a requirement and a necessity. Similarly, make a mechanism where certain policies are in place for more than one election cycle. The structural reforms can be introduced by Labour, or the Tories, or ideally both. Within a decade, or within a quarter century. Delaying reforms beyond a quarter century, risks degrading even further the competitiveness and the productivity of England, for the long term.

The 2010-2024 merry-go-round of policy changes and prime ministers-turned out to be a lost 1½ decade. Yes, merry-go-round of policies and direction creates (social) media headlines. But the merry-go-round did not benefit the nations, economy, society, environment, employment, education, health, quality of life, well being, social mobility. Parliament knew that; and knows that.

How can a revised compulsory purchase compensation system, improve access and mobility within London and elsewhere in England? With all undeveloped and underdeveloped urban land to be nationalised. With the freehold land owner given a medium term leasehold of the land. A leasehold typically lasting 100 years minus twice the time the land has remained underdeveloped or vacant. With compensation payed as the land is developed. The freehold of smaller plots to be transferred to the local authority. The the dozen larger sites per authority to be divided equally between the local authority, housing associations, the Metro Mayor or county if applicable, and a (regional) development corporation. To manage, develop and pass the freehold to the new (shared) freeholders upon completion.

England has five prosperous dream cities outside the East

South East: Bristol, Birmingham, Leeds, Manchester, Nottingham. With Cardiff, Dublin and Edinburgh further a field. So next please, ensure that the five runner ups also reach this top tier within a quarter of a century: Bradford, Leicester, Liverpool, Newcastle, Sheffield.

So far, BBC, C4, ENO, ONS and PINS are five institutions that have (half) moved out of London. DVLA and GCHQ are two that were established away from the East South East. If a further 5+5 institutions (half) move to each of the above ten dream cities. That requires 93 to uproot and (half) move, including the big five museums/ galleries. And for no more token satellites in (eastern) London suburbs. But for the 93 to move to the No-Yo-Mid; More than half of the decision makers included.

Low/zero carbon and public realm issues for the London Mayor, the Assembly, and think tanks to investigate; And for the former to sponsor secondary legislation:

How can new large shallow inner London lidos, adjacent to intersecting deep tube station, floating ones included, cool platforms and tunnels*?

How can an outer borough blue-green mixed path network, for commuting and leisure trips, contribute to halving car commuting, and halving overweight? (PIL 103/17)

How can Swedish/Norwegian style urban road pricing work in London? How can Danish/Germany style lorry trunk road pricing work in the East South East?

How to promote thermal insulation, (vertical) solar panels and quality window design; Throughout all refurbished (social) housing?

How to promote heat pumps, solar panels, one floor roof extensions and/or street side dormer roof extensions; Throughout all post WW2 row housing neighbourhoods?

How to retrospect promote permeable surfaces, hedge rows and tree planting; between all front gardens used for car parking?

How to promote street trees in front of all new buildings; Both within (residential) front gardens-and with slightly wider pavements-in front of all (urban) apartment and commercial buildings?

How to promote a minimum distance between fences, walls and hedge rows; Along all pavements and all paths; And tum all paths to shared bike-walk; Throughout London and the metropolitan green belt?

How to promote quality shop front facades and signage; Quality upper floor window design; And quality public realm; Throughout high streets in all 32 boroughs?

How to promote friendliness, politeness and goodwill between Londoners-irrespective of age and backgrounds-geographical, ethnic and socio-economic?

***Cavendish Square; Embankment; Elephant & Caste; Euston; Finsbury Park; Green Park, Lincoln Inn; London Bridge; Monument/Bank; Russel Square; Soho Square.**

The post 1979 model of 'accidental' concentration of a majority of everything public to London and the East South East, is an outdated model.

From 1994, accelerated by lottery grants. One quarter way into a century of globalisation and footicose information and knowledge. Where far a way China is the winner, with India

and maybe others catching up.

London can still continue to deliver upon its great heritage, for decades and generations to come. But only with an equally prosperous northern and middle England. Raising all three, to match other G7 and G20 nations; In social mobility and social well being.

The UK government may wish to pursue some of the below strategies, to bring the North, Yorkshire and the Midlands-where almost half the population live-as well as London, closer to other G7 and G20 nations in quality of life and social well being-working families with young children included:

Introduce a national community service, of 26+26 weeks, typically served between the ages of 18-23 and 60-67;

Devote three of the two dozen cabinet members to the No-Yo-Mid as secretaries of state;

Move half of the 100 largest government agencies; And half of the 100 top state sponsored NGOs away from the EastSouthEast, And for the remaining half, to move half of their activities;

-Reduce the royals, Army, Navy and RAF presence in the EastSouthEast by two thirds; To relocated to the No-Yo-Mid;

Reduce foreign students numbers in London by two thirds; And triple the numbers in the cities of the No-Yo-Mid;

Introduce peak hour e-car road pricing throughout London and the EastSouthEast; To half overweight and half car commuting; With half of the revenue towards public transport, E-bike commuting and B&R; And half for a complete and sound proofed strategic/motorway network;

Produce more coastal and offshore wind power within the No-Yo-Mid-with UK assembled turbines-than the total regional power consumption; Heating, cooling, vehicles, construction and production combined;

Built 1+1 million apartments for the 55+, half private, half public, most on public land (see PIL131/2024).

Afterword

The future of London and England is bright and promising; But only if national, regional and local decisions makers act together, Universities, research institutions, royals, churches, businesses, unions; professional, voluntary and non-government organisations included. Maybe for a quarter, third, or half of these organisations, to refocus their 'raison d'être' away from London as we know it. And for half of these organisations to anchor their centre of activities in one of the dozen largest cities elsewhere in England, away from the East South East. The rich, academics, intellectuals and educated included.

Will this be London's armageddon? Without parliament, government, lobbyist, political media, political NGOs, two dozen ministries; Altogether 50-100k high income people and professionals; Including their spending power and influence; Throughout London and the home counties? Or will London continue to succeed and prosper? Like non capital cities across the North Sea and beyond; Places such as Rotterdam, Hamburg, Frankfurt, Munich, Geneva, Zurich, Milano, Lyon and Barcelona.

What do the above strategies mean for London? Is it the end of the metropolis as we know it since 1945, 1979 or 2000? Can London adapt, tweak and nudge itself into an accelerator of prosperity; Of not just itself, but also the nine largest cities of the North, Yorkshire and Midlands included? For London, this may result in one hundred thousand fewer superior paid jobs, a quarter million fewer households, and a hundred thousand fewer students. A apocalypse or armageddon? Or a manageable tweak of direction? Improving social mobility, social well being, and quality of life. Both for Londoners within a streamlined London. And for the inhabitants of the nine largest cities of northern and middle England. ■