CITY & CONURBATION DISCUSSION PAPER

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. This paper provides background information to one of a set of three seminars to be held in November and December 2006. These seminars are based around three themes originally identified in my analysis of "Socio-Economic Change in the Glasgow Conurbation", in order to test out the main findings for further discussion. This particular seminar looks at the changing balance between Glasgow and the surrounding conurbation, and at the possible implications of continued growth and development in the city.

1.2. The initial approach separated out various processes affecting the city and looked at them individually and in depth. Accordingly, demographic processes were separated from economic ones, and so on. But it soon became clear that there were similarities in the way each of these processes developed, that could have been missed if seen in isolation. These similarities have formed the focus of this and further work.

2. CROSS-CUTTING PROCESSES

2.1. Three broad processes have affected Glasgow in the last 25-30 years. Two relate to geographical differences: firstly to changes in the geographical distribution of poverty and deprivation; and secondly to different trends taking place between Glasgow and both the surrounding area and reference cities. The third process relates to the particular way change in Glasgow has taken place, and the wider implications of the pace and rate of change on the city. These three processes form the content of the seminars.

2.2. This approach sets out a view that different aspects of Glasgow should be seen not as individual or unrelated, but as a set of general features that together define the city. Recent development in the conurbation has focused on the city, and brings with it an opportunity to deal decisively with urban deprivation: it is a contrast with much post-war urban policy that sought to manage the city through overspill and out-of-town development. By turning the focus away from the city, the outcome might have been to limit growth in the conurbation as a whole.

2.3. Part of Glasgow's story is how cycles of deindustrialisation and deurbanisation occurred simultaneously rather than sequentially to doubly-disadvantage the city. A better understanding of how the conurbation and the city centre co-exist and are co-dependent is arguably a new phenomenon. How can the opportunities around employment growth and urban development be used to reinforce positive change for the future? That will be the task of public policy in the next 10 to 15 years.

3. CITY & CONURBATION: WHAT'S NEW

3.1. Trends in the location of employment, and in the geographical location of the ageing population in the area, suggest that development in the city and in the surrounding conurbation are diverging. The trends are for employment growth and a relatively young population in the city centre, with lower employment growth and large projected increases in the elderly population in the surrounding area. This is an entirely new situation in the postwar development of the conurbation.

3.2. These trends are paralleled by an increased political profile of cities in general, as shown by the Core Cities profile of English cities, and the new Cities Growth Fund in Scotland, to name but two. However, there is no political counterpart to the view that cities underlie regional development, and local government funding through for example the Council Tax still operates to reward suburbanisation. Moreover, the strong cultural and historical identity of many small- and medium-sized towns means that they may find it difficult to accept city-regions led by cities.

4. POPULATION PROJECTIONS

4.1. Population projections to 2024 show that the population of the conurbation will fall from 1.747 million to 1.693 million: a reduction of 3.1%, or 54,000. Glasgow's population is set to fall even faster, from 577,700 to 552,300, a reduction of 4.4% and a population loss of 25,400. While these projections do not take into account inmigration from Eastern Europe, the overall message appears to be that the city's population will decline, or at best stabilise at the present level.

4.2. These projections do not affect all age groups in the same way. While the working-age population is set to decline in Glasgow, from 391,000 to 379,000, as a proportion of the city's population it will increase, from 67.7% to 68.6%. And as a proportion of Scotland's overall working-age population it is set to increase, from 11.8% to 12.1% (+2.5%). For the population aged between 16 and 49 years the increase is even greater, from 12.8% to 13.2% (+3.1%).

4.3. This is in stark contrast with the projected trends in the surrounding part of the conurbation, where the proportion of the population of working age, already lower than in Glasgow, is anticipated to fall even further, from 65.0% to 61.0% (-6.2%). Moreover, the 2024 rate in parts of the conurbation is set to be lower, in East Dunbartonshire at 58.1% (-8.6%), and in East Renfrewshire at 59.1% (-5.6%).

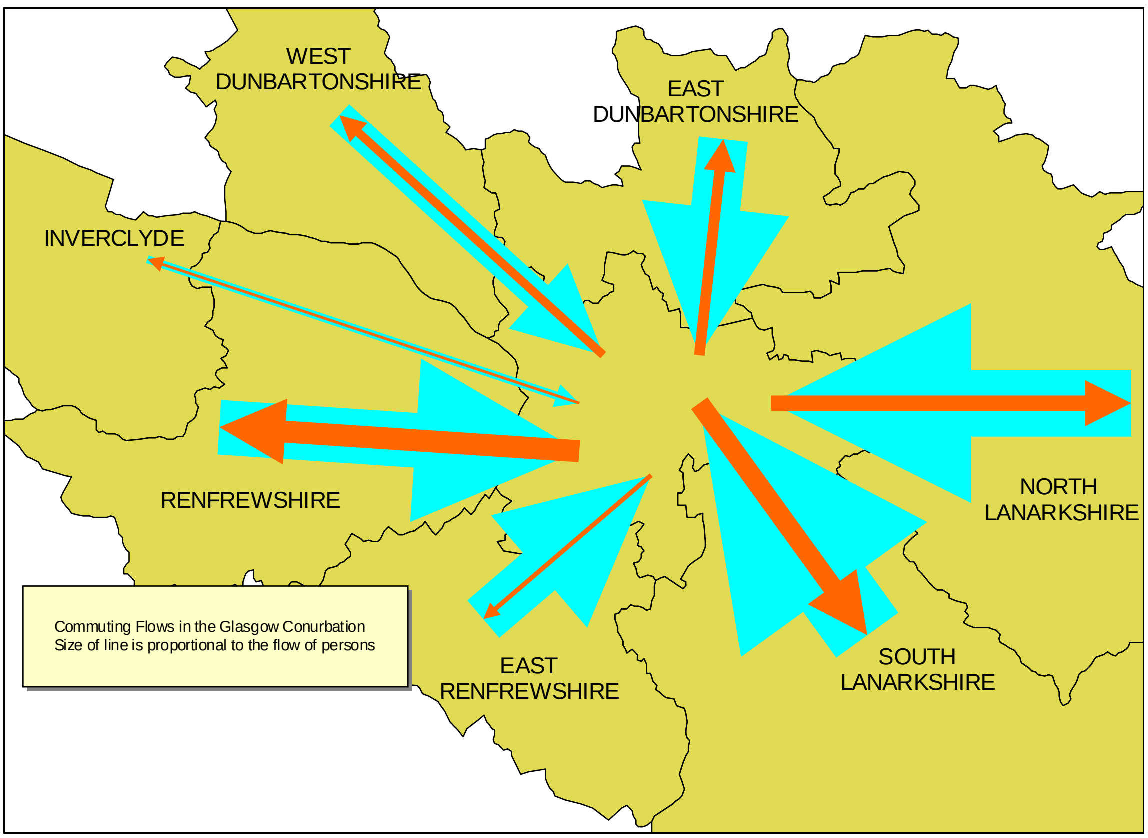
	2004	2010	2014	2024	2004-24
Glasgow	67.7%	69.9%	70.1%	68.6%	+1.3%
North Lanarkshire	65.8%	65.5%	64.6%	62.1%	-5.6%
South Lanarkshire	65.3%	65.4%	64.4%	61.5%	-5.8%
East Dunbartonshire	63.6%	63.8%	62.7%	58.1%	-8.6%
West Dunbartonshire	65.2%	66.2%	65.1%	61.5%	-5.7%
Renfrewshire	65.5%	65.3%	64.1%	60.7%	-7.3%
East Renfrewshire	62.6%	63.2%	62.5%	59.1%	-5.6%
Inverclyde	64.5%	64.8%	63.8%	59.9%	-7.1%
Non-Glasgow Conurbation	65.0%	65.1%	64.1%	61.0%	-6.2%

4.4. Although Glasgow has low rates of employment linked to worklessness and to a lesser extent higher education, the mere fact that there is an increasing number of people able to participate, relative to the overall population, suggests that in economic terms Glasgow will become more dominant. If a lower proportionate working-age population translates into weaker local economies through a reduction in the amount of available income capable of being spent in the local area, the difference between areas will become even greater. Patterns of in-commuting will shield some areas from the full consequences of these changes, although they will make surrounding areas more dependent on Glasgow than before.

4.5. The projection is also that by 2024 the proportion of Glasgow's population aged 65+ (15.7%) will not only be less than the rate in Scotland in 2004 (16.3%), but will also represent an increase of only 4.0% from 2004 compared to an overall Scottish increase of 38.7%. At 43.4%, the surrounding part of the conurbation will have an increase greater than the Scotland rate. In some areas the effect may be even more dramatic: in East Dunbartonshire nearly half the population (47.5%) is set to be aged 50+ in 2024, and there could be more people aged 75+ than in the 65-74 category. This will create spatial differences in the location of services and how they are funded.

5. EMPLOYMENT GROWTH

5.1. Glasgow is at the centre of conurbation and, while there is both in- and out-commuting, provides more jobs for in-commuters than the surrounding area does for out-commuting. Here, the width of the arrows is in proportion to the number of jobs.



5.2. Between 1998 and 2004 the number of jobs in Glasgow increased by 13.3%, more than three-and-a-half times the increase in the surrounding area (3.6%). While the increase in Glasgow was 46,200 the increase in the surrounding area was one-third of this, at around 14,300. Crucially, the overall increase in the surrounding area conceals reductions in the number employed in both Renfrewshire and West Dunbartonshire, of 9.5% and 7.6% respectively. But in spite of this the employment rate in Renfrewshire increased by 2.9% (the rate fell in West Dunbartonshire by 1.9%), suggesting that in Renfrewshire commuting patterns conceal a weak local economy, in terms of employment growth.

5.3. In Manchester there is a similar pattern, but to a lesser degree. Over the same period the number of jobs in Manchester and Salford combined increased by 15.9% while those in the surrounding area increased by 8.2%. Although the increase in Manchester/Salford was almost double that of the surrounding area, the latter increase was still greater than the GB increase of 6.9%. Strong employment growth in the centre has been complemented by growth in the surrounding area, albeit to a lesser extent.

5.4. The trend in Liverpool is also the same. The number of jobs increased in Liverpool by 8.6% while the increase in the surrounding area was 6.4%. While the centre grew faster than the surrounding area, the difference between the centre and the periphery was not as great as in either Glasgow or Manchester/Salford. But the surrounding area has made a clear contribution to the overall employment growth in the conurbation.

5.5. Employment growth in the surrounding part of Glasgow has been proportionately lower than in the comparator cities. Within the surrounding area, the lowest rates of growth are in the western part of the conurbation: Inverclyde, Renfrewshire and West Dunbartonshire. Both North and South Lanarkshire had employment growth rates above the GB rate (9.8% and 10.0% respectively between 1998 and 2004), but below the Glasgow rate.

5.6. While 6.0% of the jobs in Glasgow are in manufacturing, this rises to 12.7% in North Lanarkshire, 13.6% in Renfrewshire, and 15.1% in South Lanarkshire. If the view is taken that this sector is vulnerable to further job losses, then the effect will be more severe in the areas surrounding Glasgow, than in Glasgow itself.

6. IMPLICATIONS

6.1. There are two possible conclusions from this analysis of Glasgow and the surrounding area: either expansion in Glasgow has been at the expense of surrounding area, or it has been a consequence of circumstances in the surrounding area. Continuing development in Glasgow, the availability of additional sites and the continued supply of labour all suggest that further growth is possible. But is further city centre growth sustainable? And should the policy consequence be to support areas not currently experiencing growth, or to maximise growth in the centre to achieve spin-offs for surrounding area?

6.2. These changes may be better understood in the light of the geographic location of economic change. The knowledge economy favours cities in the same way that light and electrical engineering favoured greenfield sites during the 1980s and 1990s. Networking, informal links and the attractiveness of face-to-face contact means that cities have the edge over smaller areas, quite apart from the advantages cities have in terms of higher education, the provision of suitable premises, a larger pool of available labour and better connectivity to other locations. For these reasons cities will continue to have an importance not necessarily related to the size of their population. There is no reason to suppose that Glasgow's population should be directly representative of that of Scotland, given the nature and variety of opportunities the city provides.

6.3. Glasgow is not only surrounded by suburbs tapering by distance from the city centre, but also by a ring of small- and medium–sized towns that owe a large part of their economic viability to Glasgow (in terms of commuting), and which also retain their own identity. However their size may mean that their ability to function in the knowledge economy is constrained. While some have experienced employment growth between 1998 and 2004 (such as +8.5% in Coatbridge), the record in areas such as Airdrie (+4.8%), Cumbernauld (+3.1%), Motherwell (+0.9%) and East Kilbride (-1.6%) has not been as good. For these areas the priority may be to maintain existing levels of employment, as they may not have the capacity to increase levels in absolute terms.

6.4. The view of the conurbation as a uniform entity, in which all areas benefit from development regardless of their location, has been influential in the past; with the effect (intentional or otherwise) of relegating the importance of the city centre in favour of injecting or sustaining growth in other areas. Examples of this include the location of IBM in Greenock, and other examples of light/electrical engineering during the transition from heavy manufacturing to service-based industries. It is also shown by administrative and organisational boundaries that do not reflect a metropolitan entity, and poor connectivity between the city centre and Glasgow airport.

6.5. The alternative is to see the centre driving economic growth in the region, as is currently the case, but the extent to which surrounding areas are prepared to forego opportunities in order to sustain continued growth in the centre can be questioned. Scale arguments mean that these opportunities may develop more fully in a centralised location in comparison with a more peripheral site where agglomeration economies of scale can more difficult to achieve.

7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

7.1. From the point of view of developing the city, socio-economic and demographic trends appear to favour Glasgow, and some of the policies and attitudes that restricted the full development of the city in the past are not as apparent. While there is potential for further development in the city, and the realisation of further agglomeration economies of scale, new problems may emerge if this growth is at the expense of the surrounding area, especially if the effects are absolute as well as relative.

7.2. Polarised development would bring the future of areas surrounding Glasgow into sharper focus. While they might have a clearly defined form, their function might be less obvious, especially if the trend towards higher-level services that further favours cities continues. How these areas adapt to new circumstances will be key to their future development.

7.3. The choice could therefore be to maximise growth in the city, or to manage development across the conurbation, with the risk that there are fewer opportunities to maximise the returns on development, however defined. Ultimately the task may be to create an environment where the centre develops to its full potential, while providing at the same time enough routes out of the city to enhance quality of life, defined by history, culture, landscape, activity or some other means.

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