The quest for ‘sustainable communities’ in the context of Britain’s changing population

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- Introduction: context and aims
- Approach via eyes of population geographer
- National level: South & North
- Regional level: a ‘city region’ perspective
- Local level: city, suburb, new urban, rural
- Concluding comments on policy and research
Approach through the eyes of a population geographer

- Primary emphasis on evolving patterns of population distribution, but also composition: ageing, household change, incomes, ethnic complexion, etc., and implications for profile of locational preferences
- Population data 1971-2001 mainly from mid-year estimates (but NB revised final estimates for 2001 released today) and censuses (but care needed over variations in coverage and population definition, NB students)
South/North: a major challenge if attention is focused on long-term trends, as noted by Dorling & Thomas in their 2001 Census atlas

• ‘Our conclusion is that the country is being split in half. To the South is the *metropolis of Greater London*, which now extends across all of southern England in its immediate spatial impact. To the North and West is the *archipelago of the provinces*, a series of poorly connected city cluster islands that appear to be slowly sinking demographically, socially and economically.’

• And their representation of the future UK ‘if the UK continues to change in the ways of recent decades’ (p.187):
UK’s South/North gap continues to widen
1991-2001 North +41k, South +1.57m

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Population (thousands)</th>
<th>1971-2001 change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>55928</td>
<td>56356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>26577</td>
<td>27139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>29351</td>
<td>29217</td>
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<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>-0.5</td>
<td>-0.2</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>-0.5</td>
<td>0.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S/N gap</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
due to all three components of change 1991-2001 but primarily due to international migration

Population change, 1991-2001, for North and South, by component of change
And notably due to London’s spectacular turnaround since 1970s

Regional level: a ‘city region’ perspective

- Government Office Regions too crude for analyses for *Sustainable Communities*, and individual LA districts too fragmented
- ‘City Region’ a middle way that accords well with visions of settlement evolution from Howard, Geddes and Abercrombie through Hall and Self to:
  - latest academic version: Coombes, 2000
  - latest policy visions: Scottish Executive, England’s Core Cities, ODPM’s *Northern Way*
- Consistent with emergence of polycentric urban configurations
City Region ‘cores’ as leaders or laggards in City Region growth?

• Concerning the current debates about investing in ‘core cities’ so as to revive the regions
• To what extent are City Region cores growing more strongly than (the rest of) their Regions?
• How has the performance of the cores relative to their City Regions altered since the 70s?
• Definitions: ‘core’= Regional City of each City Region; performance = population change (from Census, with checks against MYEs)
• What City Regions? ....
The Localities and City Regions framework
Derived from research for ESRC by CURDS: see Coombes (2000)

- Defined on the basis of information on functional linkages and areal associations
- 307 Localities which typically comprise at least one urban centre and adjacent linked areas, delineated using a Synthetic Data method drawing on many different strands of evidence on area linkages
- 43 City Regions centred on Localities with ‘regional city’ characteristics, and containing others linked by commuting and migration
- Examples: in and around W Yorks ‘urban area’, and southeastern England …
Localities: clustered linkages = ‘towns’?
City Regions in northern England
City Regions in southeastern England
38 City Regions of England and Wales
with apologies to Scotland (5) & Northern Ireland (?)

City region ranked by RC minus CR 1991-2001 rate differential
Population change, 1971-2001, for 10 Regional Cities (‘Core’) and their City Region remainders (‘Rest’)

Population change, 1971-2001, for ten major cities and their City Region remainders

*NB. - actual rates (GB rate 1971-81 -0.7%, 1981-91 2.5%, 1991-2001 4.0%)
Population change, 1981-2001, for 10 Regional Cities and their City Region remainders (using 04.11.03 MYEs for LA-best-fits)

Population change, 1981-2001, for ten major cities and their City Region remainders (calculated from MYEs 4.11.03 using best-fit LAs)

*NB. - actual rates (GB rate 1981-91 1.9%, 1991-2001 2.7%)
And the latest picture for ODPM’s City Regions of the six Largest ‘Core Cities’ and London?

- Core Cities group = Birmingham, Leeds, Liverpool, Newcastle upon Tyne, Manchester, Sheffield (plus Bristol and Nottingham)
- City Regions comprises three components:
  1) ‘Central City’ = main LA
  2) ‘Ring’ = rest of Metro County (except not Coventry)
  3) ‘Outer Ring’ = Other ‘tied’ LAs
- For London, equivalents are (1) Inner Boroughs, (2) Outer Boroughs, 3) Rest of City Region (46 districts)
- As defined by Coombes for ODPM and Townsend
Relative recentralisation trend for London, but still absolute decentralisation for Manchester, Liverpool and Newcastle, other 3 in between (% change, 1991-2001)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% for decade</th>
<th>London</th>
<th>Birmingham</th>
<th>Sheffield</th>
<th>Leeds</th>
<th>Manchester</th>
<th>Liverpool</th>
<th>Newcastle</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central city</td>
<td>+9.2</td>
<td>-1.9</td>
<td>-1.4</td>
<td>+1.9</td>
<td>-3.3</td>
<td>-7.0</td>
<td>-5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ring</td>
<td>+5.7</td>
<td>-2.2</td>
<td>-2.0</td>
<td>+1.0</td>
<td>-1.3</td>
<td>-4.1</td>
<td>-3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outer ring</td>
<td>+4.5</td>
<td>+2.3</td>
<td>+0.6</td>
<td>+6.5</td>
<td>+1.0</td>
<td>-2.9</td>
<td>+1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City region</td>
<td>+6.0</td>
<td>-1.1</td>
<td>-1.2</td>
<td>+1.9</td>
<td>-1.3</td>
<td>-4.7</td>
<td>-2.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Definitions (as defined by Coombes for England’s Core Cities):
London: Inner Boroughs, Outer Boroughs, Rest of City Region.
Other cities: Named city, Rest of Metro County (excluding Coventry from Birmingham’s), Rest of City Region.
The picture so far

- UK’s South/North gap continues to widen, due to all three components of change and notably due to London’s spectacular turnaround since 1970s
- For GB’s 43 City Regions, Regional Cities were predominantly laggards in 1970s and 1980s, but half were leaders by 1990s
- For 10 main Regional Cities, all had lagging RCs in 1970s and 1980s, but in 1990s 6 had leading RCs
- BUT ‘student’ effect 1991-2001 casts doubt on this: Using MYEs for LA-best-fits, only for London was the RC leading CR in 1990s
- Other cities’ smaller and patchier recovery … and more limited ‘central city’ revival
More briefly, the local level: city, suburb, new urban, rural

- Nationwide, the population shift from larger to smaller urban places (‘counterurbanisation’) continues outside the South of England
- Outside metro areas, accelerating population growth for Small cities, Industrial, Accessible mixed urban-rural, Accessible rural districts
- BUT growth rate significantly lower in 1990s for New and expanded towns, Coastal towns (especially tourist-related), and Rural areas (but not ‘Rural fringe’) – though all these are still growing quite fast
- Some evidence: ....
Counterurbanisation continues outside the South of England – in Midlands/Wales, North & Scotland (Columns = Large cities, Industrial, Other urban, Rural)

Accelerating population growth for Small cities, Industrial, Accessible mixed urban-rural, Accessible rural districts, BUT Decelerating for New and expanded towns …

... and also decelerating for Coastal towns (especially tourist-related), and Rural areas (but not ‘Rural fringe’) - based on Vickers’ UK district classification 2001 -
Key dimensions of population redistribution: in summary

- Main losers 1991-2001: Metropolitan Counties, Clydeside, Industrial North
- Main improvers since 1980s: UK, LONDON, Leeds, Sheffield, Manchester, Small non-metro cities, S England industrial districts, Accessible rural and mixed districts
- Main backsliders since 1980s: Newcastle, New/expanded towns, Coastal resorts, Extreme rural
Main dimensions and drivers of change that policy levers need to recognise

• National: London’s world city role in job growth and attraction of immigrants
• Regional: The forces helping Regional Cities to begin to lead their City Regions
• Local 1: The continuing ‘flight from the city’ and ‘lure of the countryside’ among middle-class whites
• Local 2: The weakening dynamics of remoter rural areas and some urban neighbourhoods
Implications for developing ‘sustainable communities’ in town and country

- Planning must not ignore the factors behind the South/North gap in economic growth
- Regional Cities can be expected to enjoy a major and sustained revival only with growth elsewhere in their City Regions
- Where smaller Northern cities and towns are growing, how not to jeopardise this in the discrimination in favour of the larger cities?
- In regions of stronger growth, how to ensure the sustainability of the areas of new building?
- In regenerating urban areas, how to consolidate while reducing the appeal of the countryside?
Concluding comments

• Focus has been on deep-seated trends, where any hoped-for reversal takes time. Await revised annual MYE (7 Oct) etc …

• National/regional policy would benefit from better knowledge of the growth links between Regional Cities and their wider City Regions

• Regional/local policy would benefit from more info about the relationship between diversifying settlement patterns (eg polycentric regions) and diversifying household types (eg smaller, older, more varied ethnically)
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Major demographic trends affecting lifestyles and housing preferences

- **Ageing**: long-term trend that has traditionally favoured UK’s spas, coastal and rural areas, now the Mediterranean – where will the 1960s baby boomers be living in 2030?

- **Household types**: increasing household fission as people strive for independence and privacy – (officially) one-person household is modal type in London already, but not all ‘Yuppies’ in city centre locations – increasing number are Middle-aged and living in suburban areas
• **Ethnicity:** Non-whites as a rising share of population, but unevenly distributed – for how many and/or for how long will certain types of housing areas be preferred over others?

• **Social structure:** The ‘onion’ shape of the social hierarchy continues to transform, with growing bulge of middle class and a lengthening taper of least-well-off – towards continuing local-area discrimination between sought-after and low-demand areas?
And rise of ‘quality of life’ considerations in migration and residential choice

Households are less tied to particular locations irrespective of QoL, now that:

- the proportion with an employed person is falling
- more work at home or have no fixed place of work
- households with more than one worker opt for a ‘balanced’ location with access to a range of jobs
- daily mobility (‘circulation’) extends, as residential mobility (‘migration’) reduces

‘Rural idyll’ a deeply engrained attraction, along with escape from rat-race, congestion, high costs, crime, anti-social neighbours etc. Also a feeling that ‘city centre’ is no longer that central for many.
Population change, 1971-2001, by broad district type (major city, industrial, other urban, rural) and South/North.