

News Archive - 2016

2016: Has it really come to this?

How far can development economists (and our public policy colleagues) work purposefully and progressively in the current chaotic policy context, and with the self-evident evil of leaders like Trump? At one level, isn't this precisely the time when we should do our most important work? But it is challenging when personal values and resultant actions become so intertwined with professional agendas.

My 'US/UK Plot against Europe' trilogy attempts to put the mega-events of 2016 into some sort of context and then suggest what one might do about them.

Trump's apparent electoral success in the US is **effectively a coup** - although it is difficult to determine who is pulling the strings of the FBI and the populist media and to what precise ends.

The read-across to the BREXIT referendum and May's assumption of the UK Premiership is strong. Trump and the Tory/UKIP government share the **need to destroy the EU** as their premier foreign policy goal. Their evil is immensely powerful and knows no honesty at all.

There is a potential agenda for **the fightback** - but whether progressives can be as single-minded and decisive as Trump and Tory/UKIP forces is questionable. Similarly, the EU's capabilities will be stretched, maybe beyond breaking point.

2016 has been a year of the passing of multiple icons many of whom made significant contributions to much that is positive in the world. It has seen the growing ascendancy of intolerance and xenophobia, of sociopathic vindictive bullies, of championing of these evils by a populist media.

Writing and posting 'The Plot against Europe' was partly personally cathartic in the face of changes which I profoundly abhor. But I hope it can contribute to understanding of and actions against the tide of evil assaulting tolerance, civilising and progressive globalisation.

Let me know what you think, and whether there are things we can do together...



We desperately need a new narrative for 2017!



And now for the archived news...

- **December 2016:** Devolution is appearing to stall in sub-regions outside those who have agreed Mayoral Combined Authority elections for May 2017. However, there has been keen interest in re-exploring both local government reform and updated local growth propositions on a functional economic area basis in non-metropolitan geographies. I am working on projects in both south-east and south west on this, and am happy to provide advice and support to other leadership teams where there is no conflict of interest with existing clients.
- **December 2016:** Exciting to be part of the Regeneris team assisting to refresh the [Leicester & Leicestershire LEP Strategic Economic Plan](#). Contributed to a major workshop on 6th December with local roleplayers to set the scene for this exercise. If you are a stakeholder and wish to get involved, please get in touch.
- **November 2016:** It is important that ambitious places refresh their international strategies - even (or especially) when resources are tight and the policy context is so uncertain. This [LGIU policy briefing](#) and this [Planning column](#) set out the arguments and how to advice, albeit from two differing perspectives.
- **November 2016:** The continuing nightmare of 2016 has increased even further with the [Trump coup](#) in the US, his inevitable ['Plot against Europe'](#) with UK government allies. My trilogy ends with thoughts on [strategies for the fightback](#).
- **October 2016:** [Inclusive Growth](#) and [regional rebalancing](#) are two related agendas that Planners need to get to grips with - because government is certainly struggling!
- **October 2016:** District Councils do much of the local growth 'heavy lifting', but are not always recognised and supported adequately by their LEPs, County Councils and Government. My work at **South Kesteven** includes huge housing and employment growth in **Grantham** - their sub-regional centre; leveraging the **Stamford** 'brand' - one of the 'best places to live' in the UK; and ambitions for fundamental **skills reforms** (which strictly is not a DC function). Pleased to be supporting these striking and important agendas.
- **September 2016:** Every place needs to be refreshing its local growth goals and priorities in the aftermath of the referendum and change of Government. Immensely enjoyed producing thought piece and facilitating workshop/roundtable with **Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee** and partners...
- **August 2016:** Great to be working with Mike Dearing of AMEO on the West Midlands Growth Company proposed by the **WM Combined Authority** - ambitious, challenging, and highly relevant.
- **Summer 2016:** Need to think through new models of growth, development and regeneration in the aftermath of the BREXIT referendum - [urban policy](#); [industrial strategy](#); [underperforming places](#); and the [rebirth of regeneration](#).
- **July 2016:** Difficult to move on after the referendum, but still immensely proud to have launched the University of Warwick [Chancellor's Commission final report](#) on the future role of the University in Coventry, Warwickshire and Midlands, for which I was Executive Commissioner. The roles and relationships of universities in cities and place-making probably even more important going forward. Complements my June Planning column on the potential [impact of the HE Bill and White Paper on University expansion and/or contraction](#) in your town or city.
- **June 2016:** One of the most momentous and disgraceful political moments of the century as 17m England and Wales voters (under 27% of the UK population) vote for BREXIT. I took no pleasure in 'calling it right' from the referendum absurdities of April's ["Anxious, angry but always an European"](#) to May's ["Democracy in terminal decline"](#), the tragedy of Jo Cox and the impending ["crisis of June 23rd"](#), and the [unravelling of results \(and BREXIT lies\)](#) in the immediate aftermath. It is a sad portfolio of pieces, rounded off by my allegation of the disgusting [criminal incitement of hate crimes by our purported Justice Secretary](#). Still as angry as ever!
- **June 2016:** The Queen's Speech seems a very long time ago, and almost to belong to a different era. But this [LGIU briefing](#) attempted to position its impact on and relevance for devolution and local growth.
- **May 2016:** ["How smart is England's approach to smart specialisation? A Policy Paper"](#), co-authored with friend and colleague Kevin Richardson has been published by European Planning Studies. Let me know if you can't get behind the paywall! Complements the completion of a piece of work on Synergies of EU structural and RD&I funding undertaken with Joe Marshall of NCUB and Adrian Healy, Cardiff University - again let me know if you want further details.



- **May 2016:** Launched the latest CURDS report "[Decentralisation: Issues, Principles and Practice](#)" of which I am delighted to be co-author. We seek to move devolution debates from the tactical 'haggles' of deals towards more robust and sustainable models of economic, social and political reform. Let me know how you think we have done! Followed this up with a look at the [Planning dimensions](#) of the report in my regular monthly column.
- **April 2016:** Another enjoyable contribution to Swedish local government leadership development programme - providing an introduction to UK local government. If you are interested in further details of this piece of work - which can provide an overview of UK local government issues and challenges - please get in touch. Of course, for the wonderfully tolerant Swedes, the debacle and disgrace of Brexit tyranny has resulted in them moving the programme to Netherlands!
- **April 2016:** Delighted to be invited to join the Innovation Council of Greater Lincolnshire LEP, and to be working with Mary Stuart, Chair of the Council and VC of University of Lincoln
- **April 2016:** How the Budget impacts on local growth and devolution explored with LGIU in [this briefing](#) and a stimulating workshop. If you want to see or discuss the workshop presentation, please get in touch.
- **March 2016:** A piece on primary urban areas, Centre for Cities Cities Outlook 2016, and Grimsby's 'relegation' from the 'top-63' UK cities! <https://t.co/bHBaYcXSj2>
- **March 2016:** Interested in 'synergies' between different EU funding streams (and with national and local programmes)? Get in touch to get involved in BIS project on which I am working with NCUB.
- **March 2016:** Serious intent in HotSW devolution as we convene and make progress in two major workshops - on Governance, and on Productivity growth respectively.
- **February 2016:** An unexpected but exciting short visit to Colombia to contribute to British Council's Global Education Dialogue on University roles in national and city development. See my [presentation here](#).
- **February 2016:** Both government and the Midlands Engine missing a real trick in NOT promoting Birmingham as a serious alternative solution to London's airport capacity challenges - <https://t.co/aS8Ozy0Ehr>
- **January 2016:** A pleasure to be working again with colleagues in Heart of the South West (HotSW) on their devolution agendas. Following a major workshop on 22/01, the [prospectus](#) was approved by over twenty partners and formally submitted to Government in February.
- **January 2016:** New Year, new extensive and intimidating challenges for local growth agendas - the [LGIU blog](#) and [fuller briefing...](#)
- **Xmas/New Year 2015/16:** [Do you believe in Father Xmas?](#) Seasonal greetings with read-across from some of the great Xmas anthems...particularly poignant given Greg Lake's passing later this year!