

Retaining local distinctiveness

Ghosts and clones in the UK

24 September 2009



economics
real wealth
means well-being



environment
lifestyles must
become sustainable



society
communities need
power and influence

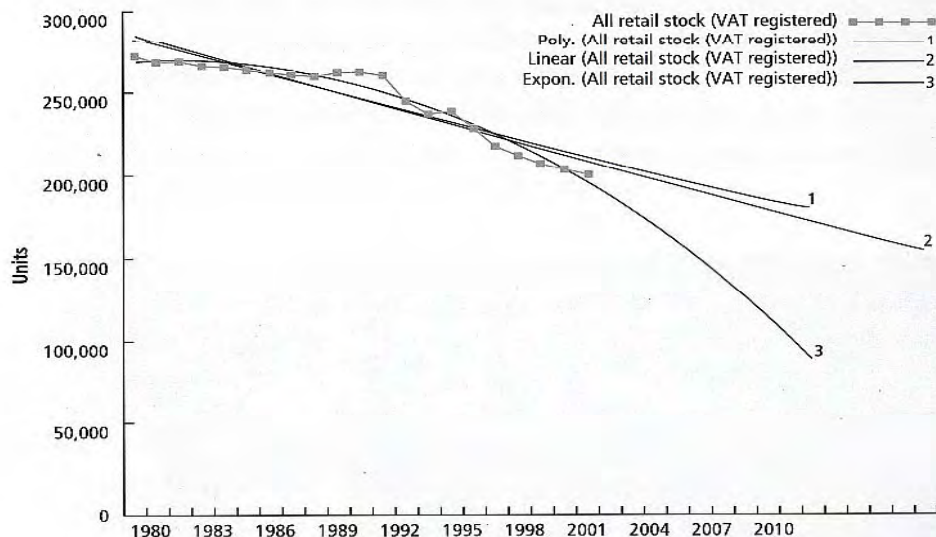
Ghost Town Britain (2003-4)

- Six wholesalers closing every week.
- 2,000 small shops closed last year.
- 1,500 football pitches lost in London since 1989.
- Third of UK bank branch network lost 1992-2002.
- 60 cottage hospitals lost in 2002.
- 20 traditional pubs close every year.
- Average person travels 893 miles a year to buy food.
- 30,000 economic units lost 1995-2000 (another 25,000 expected by 2005).



Tipping points

Figure 8: Ghost Town Britain trends and forecasts for all retail outlets (VAT registered) 1980-2000 and trends to 2010



Clone Town Britain (2006-7)

- Of the towns surveyed 41 per cent are clone towns, 26 per cent border towns and 33 per cent home towns.
- Of the London villages surveyed; 48 per cent are clones, 19 per cent borderline and 33 per cent are home towns.
- Clone town high streets are not only populated by identikit chain stores, they also have a smaller range of categories of shop than border, or home towns, meaning a poorer range of services available for people in a given area.



Clone Town Britain

Clone Town Britain: the response 1

38 Daily Express Saturday August 21 2004

How Britain's being cloned

Chain stores make every town look the same as local charm is wiped out

By Tom Prices

CHAIN stores are spreading "like weeds" and turning traditional high streets into "clone towns", a think tank will claim today.

It says local traders have been wiped out by the invasion of big name firms, with Britain's towns losing their character as a result.

And shoppers could suffer by being starved of choice.

The New Economics Foundation, which published the report, wants the public to send in pictures of the most "cloned" parts of their towns as part of a survey looking at how far Britain has come towards becoming...

LOOKS FAMILIAR? Stores in London's Kensington are seen across the UK



Clone Town Britain: the response 2



“Developers are like urban Domestos. They destroy 99% of all known distinctiveness.” **Hugh Pearman, *Sunday Times***

Behind both reports

- Local money flows.
- Local enterprise.
- Economic centralisation: ghosts and clones are mirror images of each other.
- Scepticism about comparative advantage.

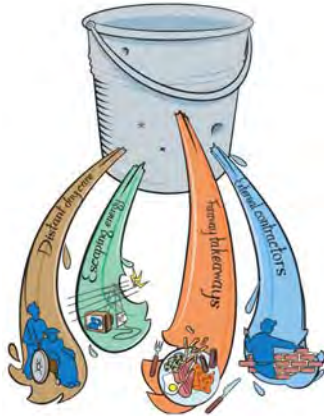
Money flows in

Money entering the economy



Money flows out again

THE LEAKY BUCKET
Money leaks out of an economy in many different ways



Knowlsey study (2001): only 8% stays put

Cornwall study (2001):

£1 in supermarket = £1.40

£1 in veggie box = £2.50

Money flows implications

- Making regeneration spending go further (Northumberland)
- Plugging the leaks/enterprise (Marsh Farm)
- Procurement (Camden)

Why this matters

- Economically
- Choice and diversity
- Socially

Economics: research

- Average Wal-mart store in the USA leads to closure of four small retail businesses, one mid-sized store, and one large store (they also vote less).
- In the UK, every time a new supermarket opens 276 jobs are lost.
- £50,000 is spent in a small shop to generate one job, it needs £250,000 to be spent in a superstore to create one job.
- Jobs tend to be lower paid, part-time and less flexible.

Economics: distinctiveness

- People invest, and want to live, in places that are distinctive.
- People visit places that bustle.
- People are attracted to what is real.



Where is it?



And where is this?



And this?



And this?



The rise of authenticity: 1



The rise of authenticity 2

“The next time you are phoned by a computer, gently place the phone on the floor, thereby allowing the disembodied voice to drive on and occupying the line so that others will not be bothered by such calls for a while.”

“If you are a regular at McDonald's, develop personal ties with the counterpeople; try to get to know them.”

“Rage against the dying of the light.”

George Ritzer
The McDonaldization of Society

Choice, diversity: UK

- Monopoly leads to higher prices
- Office of Fair Trading limit when market share is destructive: **8%**
- Tesco market share of food market: **33%**
- London markets: Lewisham street market, 34% cheaper than local supermarket; Walthamstow market, 29% cheaper (*Lewisham market generates over £3.6m for local economy*)

Choice, diversity: USA

- 38 sq ft of retail space per person (plus 3x that for cars).
- 350 empty Wal-marts.
- Wal-mart's hidden subsidy: \$2.6bn a year

Enterprise Act 2002

- (5) For the purposes of this Part, in relation to a market investigation reference, there is a detrimental effect on customers if there is a detrimental effect on customers **or future customers** in the form of-
- (a) higher prices, lower quality or less choice of goods or services in any market in the United Kingdom (whether or not the market to which the feature or features concerned relate); or
 - (b) less innovation in relation to such goods or services.

(Section 134)

Social

- Health risks of not having social networks are as high as smoking.
- “When a confederate ‘stranger’ speaks briefly in the hallway to an unwitting subject, the subject is quicker to provide help when she subsequently ‘overhears’ the confederate having an apparent seizure than if there had been no previous contact.”
(**Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone***)
- Crime is primarily to do with social networks.
- So is economic resilience.

Jane Jacobs

“One ordinary morning last winter, Bernie Jaffe and his wife Ann supervised the small children crossing at the corner [on the way to school]; lent an umbrella to one customer and a dollar to another; took custody of two keys; took in some packages for people in the next building who were away; lectured two youngsters who asked for cigarettes; gave street directions; took custody of a watch to give the repair man across the street when he opened later; gave out information on the range of rents in the neighbourhood to an apartment seeker; listened to a tale of domestic difficulty and offered reassurance; told some rowdies they could not come in unless they behaved and then defined (and got) good behaviour...”

Jane Jacobs

The Death and Life of the Great American Cities

What can we do (tackle clones)?

- Section 106 agreements.
- Tackle local monopolies.
- Local purchasing.
- Measure money flows.
- Tackle landlords.
- The Local Communities Sustainability Bill.
- But in the end, it's down to us...



What can we do (find new assets)?

- Local money flows and spending power
- Local people and skills (BizFizz)
- Local networks and institutions (B2B barter)
- Local buildings and land (food)
- Local energy (waste heat, water etc)
- Put these to work, and you get diversity.

... local pride

keep Louisville weird®

Find out more...

New Economics Foundation

www.neweconomics.org

New Rules

www.newrules.org

Common Ground

www.commonground.org.uk

Plugging the leaks

www.pluggingtheleaks.org.uk

Local money flows

www.lm3.org.uk

BizFizz

www.bizfizz.org.uk

Louisville

www.keplouisvilleweird.com

