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# London, its infrastructure and the logics of growth

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In fast-growing, global cities such as London and Toronto the social and physical infrastructural systems they depend upon are often stretched. As a combination of global and local drivers increase demand through rising population and inflows of capital, it is these systems that need to catch up and, in some cases, will constrain the abilities of cities to grow. As discussed by Theresa Enright, some of these systems, in particular those geared towards mobility, face outwards, connecting cities to patterns of global circulation of people and capital. Yet not all systems facilitate this sort of global engagement so directly. They also function at a more local and regional level, enabling cities, for example, to process the waste they produce, to relieve pressure on their housing markets through accessing land beyond their boundaries and to connect in other ways to regional and national economies.

In the same way, the politics of infrastructure is both global and local at the same time. Both London and Toronto share the experience of populist former mayors for whom infrastructure is part of their appeal to voters, be that cycle infrastructure (and its removal) for Rob Ford or the Garden Bridge for Boris Johnson. There are similarities in the political geographies that pit suburban against urban voters (Walks 2014). Yet there are also differences, with Johnson's use of the bicycle as his choice of urban transport functioning as a symbol of his approach to the city and Ford's preference for the SUV communicating a very different position. While the challenges of globalisation and accommodating growth are something infrastructural systems share, the geographies they serve and the regimes by which they are planned, delivered and governed can also be highly context specific. Mega-infrastructure projects in particular seem to generate their own politics yet they also spring from local political cultures. They are costly and disruptive, and voters have good reason to be sceptical of the claims made by the civic boosters that promote them (Flyvbjerg 2014). Nevertheless, the politics still often remain local, and the groups that are affected by and oppose megaprojects differ, as do the justifications that are made.

This chapter looks at one element of the justification used for two of London's recent megaprojects: the Thames Tideway Tunnel and High Speed Two (HS2).

This is unique to the UK, London and its history as an imperial capital, harking back to an era of Victorian prowess. The following sections establish the context in which this discourse sits. Firstly there is the city itself, its recent growth and the way London has promoted itself as a place where a distinctive 'megaproject ecology' has apparently resolved the difficulties global cities around the world face in meeting their infrastructural needs. In the case of London these needs and the infrastructural systems that seek to accommodate them are rarely fully contained within the city's boundaries, constantly spilling over both physically and politically. This is reflected in a description of the two projects themselves, their history and the opposition to them. While they are different in terms of their scale, form and function, the following section discusses their political framing as responses to 'our Victorian forebears'. The concluding discussion reflects upon the extent to which such responses can be seen as responding to common global challenges as opposed to being the products of very local context- and time-specific discourses.

## London: Its infrastructure and 'megaproject ecology'

London's position in the first and second decades of the twenty-first century as a contender for the role of premier global city comes after a recent history of post-war, post-industrial decline. The political response to this, the way it has shaped the city with the globally connected Docklands development and the infrastructure that has enabled one form of global trade to replace another, is reflected in the narrative and politics of infrastructure. As a national capital, London, its economy and its infrastructure serve a symbolic and economic function which is often hard to disentangle from the country as a whole, despite significant regional disparities. Thus, the perception of a country seen as economically moribund and paralysed by political strife (between labour and capital) was reflected in the belief that the country struggled to deliver major infrastructure, a story also played out in the capital. There was a narrative of interminable public inquiries, such as those over the expansion of London's airports in the 1960s, and a series of 'planning disasters', which again often centred on London, its motorways and civic infrastructure (Hall 1980). As with the wider economy, the Thatcher government was seen as the turning point in the ability of the country to deliver projects, seen in both the infrastructure required to support what became a global hub in London's Docklands and a growing appetite for megaprojects. The anecdote of the then Prime Minister's fury at the unfavourable comparison between French and British rail infrastructure and the British inability to complete their high-speed rail connection on time made by French President François Mitterrand is often treated as a pivotal moment in which a political commitment to infrastructure delivery was forged (Faith 2007).

Following this, a team from the consultancy Arup appeared successful in breaking the deadlock of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (CTRL, later rebadged as

HS1) where the former nationalised rail provider British Rail had failed. In connecting London to Paris via high-speed rail, Arup was able to design a route that minimised the demolition and threat to property values that had united urban and rural opposition to the initial British Rail proposals. The local politics that saw successful lobbying for stations in Kent to placate rural opposition and at Stratford in east London was fortunate, as it would be the same link to the optimistically named 'Stratford International' that was to become a key component of London's bid to host the 2012 Olympics. This enabled the then Mayor Ken Livingstone to connect the mega-event to the ongoing planned regeneration of the east of London, turbo charging the development of brownfield land with the Olympic Park at Stratford.

The significance of this for the way infrastructure was planned and delivered was that from a perceived inability of UK governance systems and constructors to manage large infrastructure, an alternative narrative of success emerged. Buoyed by the successes of CTRL and the 2012 Olympics, it was in many ways the zenith of what its advocates had begun to describe as 'London's megaproject ecology' (Davis 2017). London is a centre for not only global finance but also construction, engineering and architecture, with a dense network of consultancies. This network was boosted by the quasi-public Olympic delivery and legacy organisations, the growing role for Transport for London and recently bodies such as HS2Ltd and Bazalgette Engineering that are delivering the projects discussed in this chapter. This nexus of skills, knowledge and personnel aligned neatly with a city and wider political culture in which both parties were eager for infrastructure development.

In tandem with this turnaround, the system for planning major infrastructure has seen an overhaul in the form of the 2008 Planning Act. Driven by the perception that the previous public inquiry process was prohibitively slow, and by the use of key projects such as Terminal 5 at Heathrow (London's main airport) to create narratives of delay, the new system was heavily skewed towards rapid delivery of consent (Marshall and Cowell 2016). Furthermore, the wider institutional framework around infrastructure has also been reconfigured, most prominently in the establishment of a National Infrastructure Commission in 2015 by the former Conservative Chancellor of the Exchequer under the Coalition and Cameron governments, George Osborne. The Non-Departmental Public Body is charged with producing a National Infrastructure Assessment once in each parliament, setting out the needs of the UK and monitoring the government's performance. While tasked with offering impartial advice to government, the Commission is made up of key figures from industry, construction and finance. The Commission promotes what it defines as 'economic infrastructure', with the recent history of infrastructure provision described as an 'endless cycle of delays, prevarication and uncertainty' that has 'limited growth' (Armitt 2018, 3).

HS2 and the Thames Tunnel are not the only significant infrastructure projects underway. In recent years London's megaproject ecology has fostered a return to several, once rejected, transport projects. Crossrail, a new regional rail link, is currently under construction and will connect the West of London and Heathrow

Airport to both Canary Wharf in the Docklands and the north-east, beyond London's boundaries into Essex (Hebbert, 2014). The project was due in 2018 but at the time of writing (mid-2019), the final completion date is becoming increasingly uncertain. Plans to expand Heathrow Airport, scrapped by the incoming Coalition government of 2010, are currently back on the agenda, with a new National Policy Statement on airports (DfT 2018) setting out government support for expansion under the 2008 Act. There are other major investments in transport infrastructure, such as the extension of the Underground's Northern line opening up the Vauxhall Nine Elms Battersea Opportunity Area, home of the iconic Battersea Power Station (Ward et al. 2016) – yet another in a series of projects that appear to have come to fruition after what had been years of deliberation and false starts.

The politics of London's infrastructure is played out at different scales, and at the local level there are opponents of the specific impacts of projects. These, nevertheless, will often connect to wider national and global issues such as the costs to taxpayers or the environmental damage caused. The narrative of projects such as the expansion of Heathrow or HS1 in the past often reflected the desire for global connectivity discussed by Enright (see Chapter 4), yet there is always a distinct character to this. The former, for example, has been framed as an important signifier that via London's main airport the post-EU referendum UK is still 'open for business'. Yet there is also an important internal dimension to the national politics of London's infrastructure. The way in which the city constantly rubs up against its institutional boundaries has recently proved contentious in its transport connections to the wider South East of England where a significant proportion of its workforce actually live. The national (Conservative) government has been unwilling to allow Transport for London (controlled by Labour Mayor Sadiq Kahn) to govern the wider rail networks that connect to the city in what is seen as an unpalatable overreaching of mayoral authority into areas that are not represented (see O'Brien et al. 2018 for a detailed discussion). More generally the advocates of London are keen to stress that investment in the city's infrastructure is of benefit to the UK as a whole (London First 2015). Yet this view has never been without contestation, Cobbett's (1821) dismissal of the 'metropolis of empire' (as proclaimed by the civic boosters of the day) as the 'Great Wen'[1] being a notable example. More recently and specifically this can be seen in the annual, unfavourable, comparisons between per capita infrastructure spending in London and the less affluent regions of the UK (Raikes et al. 2018), a comparison that is particularly acute given that infrastructure spending in the capital held up well in contrast to the recent austerity inflicted disproportionately upon local governments.

## HS2

HS2 is intended to provide a high-speed rail link connecting London, the Midlands and ultimately the North of England. It is currently planned to run from Euston Station in central London via an interchange on what has become

a major brownfield redevelopment at Old Oak Common in the north-west of the city. From here the initial phase runs directly to Birmingham, passing through the Chiltern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in Buckinghamshire with a second phase planned to split, forming the 'Y', to connect to Leeds and Manchester. The overall costs of the project are hard to discern at the time of writing, as they have risen from an initial estimate of £32 billion to around £65 billion (Haylen 2019), with a review of the project ongoing, as discussed below. Phase 1 and part of phase 2 have been granted consent via a hybrid Bill, a parliamentary process distinct from the 2008 Planning Act, the same consenting regime used for Crossrail. It is being delivered by HS2Ltd, a company wholly owned by the Department for Transport (DfT), with the costs shouldered directly by central government. In contrast to previous UK megaprojects of this scale – the Channel Tunnel (Gourvish 2006) and CTRL (Faith 2007) – HS2 has had a relatively short gestation given its origins in the lobbying of a number of influential rail industry executives, Jim Steer of Steer Consulting in particular. Steer's initial suggestion that the UK should consider additional high-speed rail lines, indeed a whole network, came in the form of a report from the consultancy Atkins, commissioned in 2003. The report itself is a technical analysis framing the issue as one of increasing rail capacity on the overburdened lines into London and sets out a broadly similar network to the one proposed by the government in 2010 (Atkins 2003).

Initially conceived under the Labour government, the project was adopted largely unchanged by the incoming Coalition (2010–15). A significant figure within this transition was Lord (Andrew) Adonis, a vocal advocate of the project who as a Labour peer embodies the cross-party consensus on infrastructure, having recently served as Chair of the National Infrastructure Commission. Since 2010 the key political figures championing the project have always been Conservatives, with DfT led by a Conservative minister under the Coalition and with Conservative administrations from then on. Thus, the framing of the project, and to a certain extent its form and approach, have been via the lens of Conservative Party politics. As discussed, the basic form of the project has, thus far, changed little, and some of the approach, such as an aggressive strategy to acquire land and to secure rapid parliamentary consent, can be explained in part by the small 'p' politics of infrastructure. The early stages are crucial as the infrastructure delivery industry is well aware of the political risks of cancellation, which, it could be argued, explains the overly optimistic estimates of cost and delivery time. Some of this is also fed by the narrative of delay that has shaped the streamlining of infrastructure planning, indeed planning more generally, as a project that has spanned the party political divide. The specific Conservative dimension to the project can be seen in the removal of regional development objectives attached to the project under New Labour and its framing as a component in George Osborne's 'Northern Powerhouse' agenda. While the mostly Labour leaders of Birmingham and Manchester have always been vocal in their support, the extent to which the benefits of the project

will flow from London rather than to it is highly contested, clouded in rhetoric and based on limited evidence (Tomaney and Marques 2013).

There has been a party political character to the opposition, with civil society groups in the Labour-controlled London Borough of Camden mounting a challenge to the widespread demolition of housing and businesses required by the expansion of Euston Station. Yet, in contrast, the Chilterns AONB is a Conservative heartland. Until recently opponents here have felt marginalised within a Conservative Party that has seen central figures supportive of the project. Yet the febrile politics of Brexit has seen Boris Johnson promise a review of HS2 as part of his appeal to the wider party. The Chilterns has also been the centre of some of the key civil society opposition, in particular HS2 Action Alliance, led by two former rail economists who have taken what they describe as an 'evidence-based approach' to criticisms of the technical and economic arguments for the project. There has also been organised opposition from local authorities through the 51M group led by Buckinghamshire County Council. National and regional media maintain ongoing scrutiny of the project, which saw peaks during the initial consenting phase, but as of early 2019 this seemed to be ramping up, with a number of documentaries pointing to rising costs and the impact on those households and businesses in the path of HS2 from both the BBC and independent broadcasters Channel 4. This could be considered a success for those opposed to the project given that one target of the campaigning organisations has been the economic case, a tactic that has proved effective in other struggles against transport megaprojects (see Griggs and Howarth 2013, 294, for a further discussion of the way opposition groups sought to undermine the economic arguments for airport expansion).

## Thames Tideway Tunnel

On the face of it the Tideway Tunnel is, in contrast to HS2, located completely within London, conceived as an addition to the city's Victorian waste water system designed and built by the engineer Joseph Bazalgette. It is intended to enhance London's capacity to deal with rainwater which, flowing into the sewers from an increasingly impermeable urban environment, results in the discharge of raw sewage into the Thames. It is framed explicitly as a 'necessary extension to the legacy of the Victorians' (Halliday 2013 cited in Loftus and March 2017), as grafting new infrastructure onto the still functioning system in order to accommodate London's growing population (Stride 2019). However, where this framing of the project and particularly its solution is apparent is in the construction of excess capacity. The initial study conducted by the Thames Tideway Strategic Study Group (TTSSG), a multi-agency group established by the Department for the Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) in 2005, set out the project's objectives as ensuring compliance with the EU Directive on Urban Waste Water, which the discharge of sewage into the Thames threatened to breach. Yet a 2017 report on the project by

the UK's National Audit Office identifies an additional objective. Added in 2014 (considerably later than the initial reports setting out the need for the project), it is to ensure 'that a lack of strategic sewer capacity does not constrain London's growth over at least the next hundred years' (NAO 2017, 42). This commits the project to the construction of a larger system than is necessary with a view to future expansion of the city.

Unlike HS2, the Tideway Tunnel is private sector-led, delivered by a consortium of investors that provide construction finance with the ultimate client being a privatised utility, Thames Water. Yet on closer inspection, as is the case with many large infrastructure projects, many of these boundaries and distinctions become decidedly fuzzy. The Tideway itself (the tidal reaches of the Thames that will see a reduction in sewage discharge as a result of the tunnel) stretches out through the Thames Gateway in Kent and Essex into the North Sea. The £4.2 billion cost of the project is borne by Thames Water's customers, a catchment area that spreads into the surrounding counties as far west and north as Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire. Indeed, due to the way in which investors have been incentivised (Plimmer 2017) households are currently paying on average £13 per year for the project (NAO 2017) despite a completion date of 2027. Critical analysis of the project points towards a nostalgia for Victorian achievements, combined with a form of financialisation that appears to encourage the production of mega-infrastructure. Furthermore, it is argued that Thames Water's 'Neo Victorian hubris' cloaks a relative lack of ambition (Loftus and March 2017, 7). The solution is outdated and energy intensive, excluding the 'socio-ecological' integration reflected in the smaller-scale combination of environmental measures and the maximisation of the existing infrastructure.

In contrast to the often frenzied coverage of HS2, the Tideway Tunnel has seen less media scrutiny. However, the UK broadsheet the *Financial Times* has given considerable coverage to critical voices highlighting the role of Thames Water and its 'opaque' corporate structure (Allen and Pryke 2013), which includes holding companies in the Cayman Islands and sees it paying little in the way of corporation tax (Plimmer 2017). Opposition to the project has been more localised and technical, with residents' groups and London local authorities raising concerns about the impact of construction on their residents. The latter group formed the Thames Tunnel Commission in 2011, which called for a re-evaluation (Dolowitz et al. 2018, 84) in line with the green infrastructure options and called for further critical analysis from water industry experts and engineers. Of particular significance among this group is the opposition to the project from Professor Chris Binnie. As the original Chair of the 2005 TTSSG, he had originally recommended the tunnel solution to DEFRA, the government department with oversight of the privatised water companies, at its original estimated cost of £1.7 billion. Binnie now argues that in its current form it represents a costly and unnecessary solution to which alternative solutions in the form of Sustainable Urban Drainage and the greening of London's built environment (in order to attenuate flows of stormwater) are available (Binnie et al. 2014).

Unlike HS2, the broadcast media has been kinder to the Tideway Tunnel in the form of a recent hagiographic documentary from the BBC. This gave minimal coverage to any countervailing voices, seemingly beguiled by both the scale and momentum of the construction phase of the project. Recently, though, both HS2 and the Tideway Tunnel have seen opposition as part of a new wave of direct action. This has always been a feature of UK infrastructure politics, having been successful in opposing London's urban motorways in the 1960s, the large Conservative national road building programme in the 1990s and plans for the expansion of Heathrow Airport in the first decade of this century. Most recently, both projects have been the target of direct action from the environmental campaign Extinction Rebellion, with tunnel sites blocked in protest against the impact of lorry movements on local air quality and the carbon emissions of the vast amounts of concrete used in their construction. For HS2 there has been some localised protest in Camden, particularly around the destruction of a local park and cemetery, St James Gardens, and more recently the occupation of trees due to be felled at the Colne Valley nature reserve in the west London Borough of Hillingdon.

## Matching up to 'our Victorian forebears'

The allure of megaprojects such as the Tideway Tunnel or HS2 not only captivates broadcasters; such projects also work their magic on decision-makers. At times the logics by which they are justified are as projections of national virility, with infrastructure such as Heathrow Airport, the Channel Tunnel and its rail link connecting the national capital to the outside world. Mega-events such as the Olympics showcase the city, its infrastructure and in this case its capacity for regeneration. Yet decision-makers must also justify projects both to themselves and to the publics who are affected and bear the costs. This justification is particularly important in those early stages where the political risks are high and the benefits of such massive investments are far from being realised. In order to explain the hold such projects have over their promoters, both in politics and within London's megaproject ecology, it is useful to look at one feature of the discourse through which such costly additions to the capital's infrastructure and outward connections are justified. This is a logic that connects the technocratic boosters from within the city's megaproject ecology to national politicians, fitting neatly with a specific narrative within contemporary Conservatism, and may go some way to explaining one framing of the current appetite for mega-infrastructure.

First, though, in order to understand the unique hold megaprojects have over the political imagination of 'growth coalitions' (Molotch 1976), it is necessary to explore the discourse, narrative and logics that underpin the mythic quality of these hegemonic projects. In Flyvbjerg's addition to Frick's (2008) application of the concept of the 'technological sublime' to explain the impact that the sense of awe generated by megaprojects has on both the physical form of infrastructures

and the politics surrounding them, Flyvbjerg adds three – political, economic and technical – to the now four 'megaproject sublimes' (Flyvbjerg 2014). The language used to describe them is in itself revealing of the psychological content. There is the *enjoyment* political leaders derive from the 'ceremonious ribbon cutting', the *delight* of business and trade union leaders at profits and jobs and the *pleasure* generated by these iconic structures (Flyvbjerg 2014, 9, italics added).

In focusing upon the discourses through which such coalitions operate it is important to acknowledge that, as Glynos and Howarth (2007) point out, there is never a single logic that justifies political projects such as investment in the capital's infrastructure. Logics are plural and multidimensional. The technical dimension, however, cannot be simply ignored. There are perfectly valid reasons to increase the capacity of both the capital's waste water systems and the rail system that serves it, yet these have to be appraised against alternative solutions for attenuating and managing demand. The materiality of both systems means they generate their own timescales through the lifespans of the physical elements from which they are constructed (Anand 2015) – the 318 million bricks of Bazalgette's sewer system, the mortar that binds them together, the stations and tunnels of the rail network were all built in a different era and are ageing (albeit remarkably well). It is also true that both these infrastructural systems were either constructed, or saw major inflows of investment, at a time when London was the capital not merely of the United Kingdom but of a dominant, expansionist global empire, with all the resources that entailed. From that early investment these systems have been subject to the ravages of time, although in the case of the transport system, relatively recent analysis concluded that it is still fit for the needs of modern Britain, or at least the way its economy was envisaged as of 2006, cautioning against the 'pursuit of icons' (Eddington 2006).

Cycles of investment in the built environment, the way problems are conceived and options are explored (or rejected) have been shown to be intrinsically shaped by discursive constructions (Weber 2016; Griggs and Howarth 2013). Such constructions do not only shape or frame the reality of the way the problems of London, its growth and infrastructure are defined, they also establish hegemony and permitted solutions. Within these discourses, multiple elements (words, things, humans and non-humans) are assembled and crucially reconfigured, given their contingency. Thus, one key element of the discourse in this case, Victorian infrastructure and prowess, and the Victorian era more generally, can be seen to be deployed in different ways by different discourse coalitions. The contingency of the way a concept such as the Victorian era operates within the structure of the discourse that frames each project is revealed in the different ways it appears and is used in both cases. With the Tideway Tunnel, though it can be seen to be used in a rhetorical sense by Boris Johnson (cited in Loftus and March 2017, 7), generally it is very much front and centre embodied by one person. Joseph Bazalgette was the renowned Victorian who, as Chief Engineer of the Metropolitan Board of Works from 1856 to 1889, oversaw the construction of London's original system of

interceptor sewers. The present-day organisation delivering the 25 kilometre sewer has named various entities within the structure of holding and financing companies after Bazalgette. Bazalgette's original system of sewers was commissioned by the government of the day following the 'Great Stink' of 1858, when Parliament was unable to sit due to the stench of raw sewage discharged into the Thames by London's chaotic waste water system. As an episode in London's infrastructural history it is often depicted as a tale of political leaders finally compelled to finance new infrastructure after being forced to confront the consequences of their own inaction (Stride 2019).

In the case of HS2, the Victorian era is deployed in what are portrayed as technical arguments, as in the case of the Tideway Tunnel; however, there is also a more overtly political use. The establishment of the Victorian era as both a problem and a benchmark against which modern Britain ought to be measured has been heavily, but not exclusively, associated with politicians of the liberal right and the Conservatives. Early policy documents, in which the DfT began to release the proposals for the project, problematise the 'acute connectivity limitations of the Victorian rail network'. The same documents apply a strong temporal framing to the 'once in a generation opportunity' to meet this 'twenty-first century transport challenge' (DfT 2010). This is a framing of the project that survives the change of government, with the language becoming more strident under the Coalition. In the first public consultation on the route, then (Conservative) Secretary of State for Transport Philip Hammond describes the current network as a 'tribute to our Victorian forebears' but also states: 'Our current railway system dates back to the Victorian era and will not be sufficient to keep Britain competitive in the twenty-first century' (DfT 2011, 7), here further problematising the Victorian network, not only in terms of its capacity but also in terms of national competitiveness. HS2 is presented as a national project rather than one centred on London. It is an essential feature of the UK's 'Twenty First Century economy', with Hammond evoking the 'horrific fantasy' (Griggs and Howarth 2013, 415) of the country being 'left behind'. The fantasy in this case serves a similar function to the way competitiveness and fear of the consequences of a reluctance to invest in infrastructure have been deployed in the discourse around aviation and the expansion of the capital's airport capacity, albeit by the 1997–2010 Labour administration (Griggs and Howarth 2013).

Where this combination of global competitiveness, infrastructure investment and the way the Victorian legacy is deployed in the case of HS2 has a unique character is in the intersection with the notion of a 'global race' that was a broader feature of the political milieu during the Coalition administration. While adopted by figures such as David Cameron in reference to HS2, its clearest exposition came in a polemic authored by a group of young MPs from the wing of the Conservative party that under Boris Johnson triumphed in the internecine struggles over Brexit. *Britannia Unchained* sets a narrative of national economic decline in the context of a retreat from Britain's 'Victorian Liberal principles' (Kwarteng et al. 2012, 8). The

solution is given as an investment in skills development, but crucially this is coupled with a combination of massive deregulation and infrastructure investment. This group and the ideas they expound form one of the overlapping and competing views of the direction the country ought to take on leaving the European Union. The significance of this vision for London can be seen in the current popular description of this option as *Singapore on Thames* (Wolf 2019), placing the capital and its further deregulated financial sector at its centre.

## Conclusion: The logics of growth

In the attempts to construct hegemonic narratives in support of both the Tideway Tunnel and HS2 it is possible to see the 'radical contingency' of the Victorian era, Victorian engineering and Victorian engineers. As objects within the discourse, they are deployed by different actors and in different ways yet always to buttress a narrative in which investment in costly mega-infrastructure is the only possible response to the pressures facing London. They cut across the city's megaproject ecology, dovetailing neatly with the narratives political leaders construct for themselves. These are narratives that are startlingly devoid of reflection on the iniquities of an imperial project that had established London as the premier global city of a previous era. Were these narratives simply confined to the realm of politics, then perhaps they would be little more than background noise to the functioning of London and the infrastructure that connects the city to both its immediate surroundings and the wider world. Yet as hegemonic projects the risk is that they do more than this. At a time when the claims of the boosters of London's megaproject ecology are looking hollow, with uncertainty over the time taken and the cost of Crossrail and the delivery of HS2, coupled with growing concerns about the environmental costs, they actively exclude and silence the countervailing voices. These are voices advancing solutions to contemporary challenges that are not dependent upon damage to the ecology of London, its hinterlands and urban environment, and that are not predicated upon global circulation or financialised infrastructures directing revenues offshore.

Such tensions between global drivers of growth and the pressure they place upon infrastructural systems are not unique to London or Toronto, nor are trends in politics, such as the rise of right-wing populism which has touched both cities. Yet crucially they have touched both cities in different ways and at different times and via different individuals. Thus, while the logics that appear to determine the growth of such global cities must have a global dimension, the narratives through which they are articulated, that frame urban problems and justify certain (mega) infrastructural solutions over others, are also highly contextual. They are constructed and maintained by key figures within urban growth coalitions and so reflect their psychology, their view of themselves, the world and the extent to which they do, or do not, match up to their mythic forebears.

## Note

1. Wen meaning boil or pustule.

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