

## Impact case study (REF3)

<b>Institution:</b> University of Liverpool		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> Geography and Environmental Studies – 14		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Spatial Planning research reforms practice, participation and policy to empower city regions and communities		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2005 onwards		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
John Sturzaker	Lecturer and Senior Lecturer in Civic Design/Planning	2010-present
Alex Lord	Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, Reader and Professor of Planning	2006-present
Olivier Sykes	Lecturer and Senior Lecturer in European Spatial Planning	2004-present
Alex Nurse	Lecturer in Urban Planning	2009-present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> August 2013 to July 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> No		
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>Planning research at the University of Liverpool has transformed the relationship between Planning and “the planned” and reformed professional Planning practice. The research has influenced national, regional, city-region and neighbourhood Planning processes in Liverpool, North West England, England, France and South Korea. Engagement with policy makers and communities, leading to co-production and empowerment, has produced changes that benefit practice and policy, and increased community participation by, amongst other things:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving the capacity of deprived communities across NW England to create their own Neighbourhood plans</li> <li>• Developing Liverpool’s City Region’s spatial development strategy for 1.6 million people for the next 15 years.</li> </ul>		
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>Planning is the main tool by which decision-makers can mediate the needs and preferences of different interest groups to decide upon the type, scale and location of new built development, including housing and transport infrastructure. Over the last 10 years the nature of Planning as an activity, profession and discipline has been the subject of particularly intense scrutiny. Whilst such scrutiny, and accompanying reflection, has been a periodic feature of Planning since the mid-20th Century, the depth and pace of change has accelerated since the 2011 Localism Act sought to fundamentally re-shape Planning in the UK. This legislation, and the agenda it embodies, “raises complex questions about the distribution of power and control in democratised decision-making” (Ref 3.2, p. 1328). A group of researchers at the University of Liverpool have been undertaking research into planning from that point onwards, influencing reforms instituted by governing agencies and how those reforms have been enacted “on the ground”. The</p>		

research has involved a range of methods, including in-depth individual case-studies in England (Ref 3.3) which have illustrated how new forms of Planning, specifically Neighbourhood Planning, can be important in bringing communities together and empowering them; analysis of legal decisions in relation to emerging Neighbourhood Plans to show that other stakeholders involved in the Planning process can act to limit and constrain the work of communities (Ref 3.2); comparative case-studies of deprived communities in North-West England and elsewhere in Europe, revealing the need for adequate resourcing to enable community action (Ref 3.1); and work advancing the theoretical landscape in relation strategic planning in order to consider the implications of extensive regional and city-regional restructuring (Ref 3.4; Ref 3.6).

The key insights in relation to the impact include advocating that:

- The scale at which Planning takes place needed to change to ensure it more closely related to how people live their lives and the functional relationships between places. This is relevant in relation to driving the re-birth of “city-regional” Planning (Ref 3.4; Ref 3.6) and an increased focus on the neighbourhood scale (Ref 3.1; Ref 3.3).
- The relationship between Planning and “the planned” needed to change, so the predominant 20th century model of Planning, whereby communities have things “done to them” is replaced by a new more consensual model of Planning which focuses on Planning for and with communities (Ref 3.2; Ref 3.5).

### 3. References to the research

1. Lord, A. D., Mair, M., Sturzaker, J. and Jones, P. (2017) “The planners’ dream goes wrong?” Questioning citizen-centred planning. *Local Government Studies*, 43 (3), 344-363. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03003930.2017.1288618> (WINNER OF THE JOHN STEWART PRIZE FOR BEST PAPER IN THIS JOURNAL, 2017)
2. Sturzaker, J., & Gordon, M. (2017). Democratic tensions in decentralised planning - Rhetoric, legislation and reality in England. *Environment and Planning C-Politics and Space*, 35(7), 1324-1339. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2399654417697316>.
3. Sturzaker, J., & Shaw, D. (2015). Localism in practice: lessons from a pioneer neighbourhood plan in England. *Town Planning Review*, 86(5), 587-609. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3828/tpr.2015.34>.
4. Nurse, A. (2015) Creating the North from the Sum of its Parts? Research questions to assess the Northern Powerhouse, *Local Economy*, 30(6), 689-701. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0269094215600654> (WINNER OF THE SAM AARONOVITCH MEMORIAL PRIZE FOR BEST PAPER IN THIS JOURNAL, 2015)
5. Lord, A. D. and Tewdwr-Jones, M. (2018) Getting the planners off our backs: questioning the post-political nature of British planning policy. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02697459.2018.1480194>. *Planning Practice and Research*, 33 (3), 229-243.
6. Sykes, O. and Nurse, A. (2017) Cities and Regional Development in England – A carnival of scales and regionalisms? *Pole Sud*, 46 (1), pp.79-96. <https://doi.org/10.3917/psud.046.0079>

#### **Grant income details**

Funder: Royal Town Planning Institute

Amount: £10,000

Project: Liverpool City Region Climate Resilience Strategy

#### 4. Details of the impact

In the past, Planning for how land is used and developed has been perceived as being disconnected from the places it affects, with limited involvement from the communities it serves. In England, the 2011 Localism Act changed the structures of the planning system, abolishing regional planning and introducing Neighbourhood Planning, ostensibly to give more power to city-regions and communities. A body of spatial Planning research at the University of Liverpool has empowered communities and city regions in England to take up the opportunities now available to them to develop their own plans for their own areas. This research has also influenced policy and practice in other international contexts, as discussed below.

##### **Changing the relationship between Planning and the Planned**

The Localism Act 2011 opened up “new channels for democratic participation by citizens” (Ref 2, p. 1325), enabling them to prepare their own Neighbourhood Plans and thus exercise more influence over development taking place in their communities. Our research on Planning at the neighbourhood scale is empowering communities and helping them to participate in Planning through active neighbourhood planning groups, building capacity and improving understanding of effective Planning, thus increasing the reach of the Localism Act. Communities receive very limited grant support for Neighbourhood Planning activity, so additional support where other professional help is unattainable is invaluable in building capacity and enabling them to produce their own Neighbourhood Plans (Ref 3).

##### *Neighbourhood Planning Groups - Liverpool*

Dr Sturzaker, with support from undergraduate students, has directly educated five communities across Liverpool, from 2013 onwards. This is part of a rolling programme of support for individual communities. Engage Liverpool, a local charity with whom researchers have worked, state that this work “*has built capacity for Neighbourhood Planning in communities which, due to their demographic or socio-economic characteristics, have found it difficult to engage in the reforms introduced by the 2011 Localism Act*” (Ref 5.1). One community that has benefited from the support, the Wavertree Triangle group, state that the programme has “*enhanced the community’s engagement in Neighbourhood Planning*” (Ref 5.2). Additional Impact is demonstrated by Dr Sykes’ membership of the L8 Neighbourhood Planning Group, which serves an intensely deprived area of Liverpool. The group is benefitting from increased understanding of and participation in Planning as a result of Dr Sykes’ action research as a full member of the group. This builds upon his ongoing engagement in the area, including evidence submitted to a public inquiry into the proposed redevelopment of the *Welsh Streets* neighbourhood in 2014. The Welsh Streets Home Group (WHSG) comment that Dr Sykes’ work meant that the WHSG were “*able to effectively counter existing developer narratives, and work towards a plan that included a more equitable approach to planning. This proved invaluable to the residents whose homes were relieved for refurbishment after a 9 year battle with the local authority. Dr. Sykes was an important contributor to the process*” (Ref 5.3). The planning application was subsequently refused, as argued for by Dr Sykes in his evidence. Dr Sykes’ profile in this area is such that he was interviewed on the Today programme on BBC Radio 4 in April 2017 (Ref 5.4).

##### *Neighbourhood planning groups - NW England*

Dr Sturzaker’s research on the status of Neighbourhood Plans across the 40 Local Planning Authorities in the North West of England has been used by Planning Aid England, who recognise the “*important contribution*” to “*policy and practice around Neighbourhood Planning in the North West of England*” (Ref 5.5). Planning Aid England is a charitable body helping

individuals and communities engage with the planning system. They have used this research to target the support they offer to community groups to assist them with the production of Neighbourhood Plans, improving the quality and quantity of Neighbourhood Plans, and making more efficient use of resources: *“This database has subsequently been used to direct Planning Aid activity, including engaging with local planning authorities to generate more support from them for Neighbourhood Planning; and in targeting our limited volunteer resources to the communities where we can be of most help. These activities have built capacity for Neighbourhood Planning in deprived communities in the North West”* (Ref 5.5). By influencing local planning authorities (decision and policy makers), this work is reducing barriers to Neighbourhood Planning identified in our research (Refs 3.2 and 3.3).

The North West Neighbourhood Planning network was co-founded by Dr Sturzaker and Dr Sykes to share good practice on this issue. The network is a platform for collaboration between Neighbourhood Planning groups across the North West of England, enabling them to learn from each other and build greater capacity for community-led Planning, demonstrated to assist with Neighbourhood Planning (Ref 3.1). Planning Aid England agrees that the network, through events and online activity is *“raising awareness of, and building capacity for, Neighbourhood Planning in the region”* (Ref 5.E).

### **Empowering City Regions**

Planning activity has been rescaled to give city-regions greater control over development in their areas. This has been achieved through direct engagement with city-regional and national governing bodies. Specific examples for the Liverpool City-Region, Seoul (South Korea) and France are given to demonstrate this reform.

#### *Liverpool City-Region Combined Authority (LCRA) - UK*

Over a four-year period since 2016, Dr Sturzaker and Prof Lord have made direct contributions to the first Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) of the Liverpool City-Region Combined Authority (LCRCA). The SDS is a blueprint for the development and use of land for the next 15 years. The policies that make up the strategy will be considered when determining planning applications across the City Region, affecting one million, six hundred thousand residents. Liverpool's *Spatial Economic Audit*, published in 2016 (Ref 5.6), is a key evidence base for policies within the SDS. The Audit enabled plan-makers to better understand the City Region in order to develop a better-informed strategy. Following the utility of the Liverpool audit, in February 2019 the LCRCA commissioned Dr Sturzaker and the Royal Town Planning Institute to develop a bespoke climate resilience policy for the SDS (Ref 5.7). This involved educating Planning professionals on best practice to ensure the policy could robustly protect the city region from the worst effects of climate change. The LCRCA explains the value of this (Ref 5.8): *“The recent work led by Dr. Sturzaker on best practice in strategic policy for climate resilience has been important in raising our team's awareness of different policy options in use elsewhere, building our capacity around climate resilience, and in shaping how the Spatial Planning team positions itself with partners, thereby increasing the likelihood of successful policy delivery.”*

#### *Seoul Metropolitan Government - South Korea*

For the last three years, Dr Nurse has been an advisor to the Mayor of Seoul on urban regeneration, influencing planning practice and policy at a city-regional level. For example, Dr Nurse is the only UK adviser on the International Strategy Committee Meeting for the Establishment of the *Changdong-Sanggye Industrial Cluster*. The Cluster is a 380,000m<sup>2</sup> former

industrial site undergoing regeneration including a large employment hub and stadium and is the last major development site in Seoul. The Seoul Metropolitan Government has hosted Dr Nurse on site in order to learn transferable lessons from his research on urban regeneration – specifically large-scale regeneration of land – in order to inform their Planning strategy. Dr Nurse also worked with Seoul Metropolitan Government to inform the sectoral nature of the industrial cluster providing evidence from Liverpool of EU-funded activity on innovation-driven regeneration. A senior member of the team in Seoul explained that Dr Nurse’s work helped them in “developing a new type of outside investment to Korean development project... [and] influenced the projects on the Changdong-Sanggye Industrial Cluster” (Ref 5.9).

#### *Plan Urbanisme Construction Architecture (PUCA) - France*

The scaling of Planning policy in major French city regions is overseen by the French state’s inter-ministerial PUCA (Plan, Urbanisme, Construction, Architecture) unit. Since 2016 Dr Sykes has advised PUCA on housing and city regional governance and planning. His evaluation of existing activity, in the context of his own research, has directly influenced PUCA’s next pipeline of projects under the POPSU2 programme. As they have confirmed, Dr Sykes’ insights “helped to enrich our own knowledge and thinking on how to approach this policy area in the French context... [and] fed into the design and focus of our new research programmes” (Ref 5.10).

### **5. Sources to corroborate the impact**

5.1 Letter from Engage Liverpool corroborating Sturzaker’s role in supporting local communities to engage in the planning process since the reforms.

5.2 Letter from Webster Triangle Community Interest Company corroborating Sturzaker’s role in supporting the Webster Triangle community to engage in the planning process since the reforms.

5.3 Letter from Welsh Streets Home Group corroborating Sykes’s role in supporting the Welsh Streets community to engage in the planning process and protect their homes.

5.4 Programme schedule for BBC Radio 4’s ‘Today’ programme interviewing Olivier Sykes on the Housing white Paper in 2017, verifying Dr Sykes profile and reach (see highlighted text on page 2) (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b08n1y60>).

5.5 Letter from North West England Planning Aid Task Group Sturzaker’s role in supporting communities across the North West to engage in the planning process since the reforms.

5.6 Spatial Economic Audit for Liverpool City Region corroborating Lord and Sturzaker’s input to plan making in the Liverpool City Region.

(<https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/media/livacuk/publicpolicyamprpractice/An,Agenda,for,the,Liverpool,City,Region,081217,FINAL.pdf>).

5.7 Strategic Planning for Climate Resilience report, corroborating Sturzaker’s input to plan making in the Liverpool City Region (see page 2 confirming contribution)

(<https://www.rtpi.org.uk/research/2020/november/strategic-planning-for-climate-resilience/>)

5.8 Letter from Liverpool City Region Combined Authority corroborating Sturzaker’s contribution to plan making in the Liverpool City Region.

5.9 Letter from Hanyang University corroborating Nurse’s contribution to plan making in South Korea.

5.10 Letter from PUCA, France corroborating Sykes’ contribution to plan making in France.