

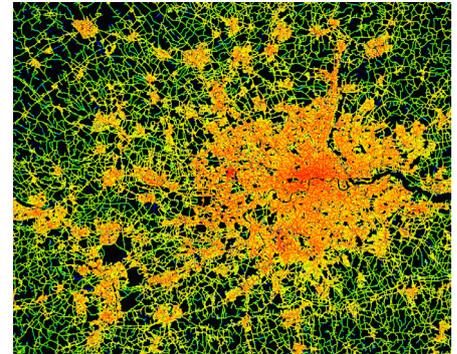
Towards Successful Suburban Town Centres

Within the next 20 years, most housing growth in England and Wales is predicted to occur in suburban settlements. This development is expected to be sustainable economically and environmentally, which means that the suburb is required to provide local economic activities in order to minimise travel and to support cohesive and vibrant communities.

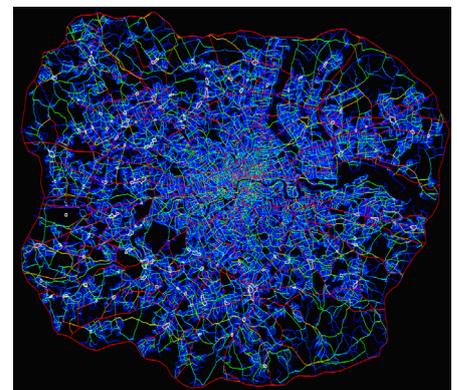
The Towards Successful Suburban Town Centres (SSTC) research project at University College London is investigating the strategic contribution of Greater London's smaller and district centres to the sustainability of the metropolitan region. We interpret 'sustainability' as referring to those conditions that are favourable to local concentrations of socioeconomic and cultural activity that persist over time. The research has found that the widespread perception of suburbia as synonymous with social and architectural homogeneity belies its spatial, social, ethnic and economic diversity. With pressure to build large numbers of new homes increasing, there is a real danger that such perceptions become self-fulfilling.

The project has developed space syntax methodology in a geographical information system to enable mapped land use data to be analysed in relation to *space syntax* measures of network accessibility. This has enabled a novel understanding of the relationship between urban form and patterns of land use activity. Initial findings suggest that the success of local centres is dependent on the ability of their urban layout and built form to adapt to social and economic change. We believe that adaptability is important as it can help small centres support a wider range of locally generated activity than retail alone. Adaptability seems to contribute to the economic sustainability of suburban town centres.

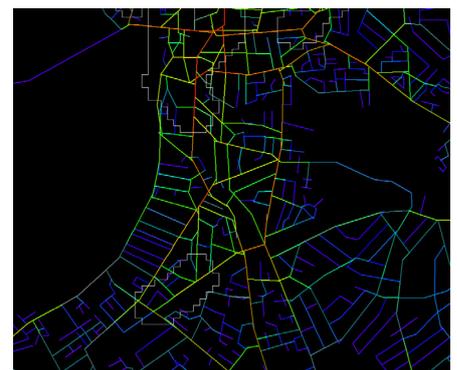
We have found that where the town centre supports a diverse range of activities, there is the benefit of *by-product* movement: where people do more than one thing during their movement through or stay in the centre. This is not purely an economic benefit. More time spent locally leads to a more vibrant mix of people on the streets and helps enliven the town centre throughout the day. We suggest that this street network potential is a critical element for sustaining the vitality of local centres. The extensive and varied activity in areas with such characteristics seeds daily/weekly/periodic movement as well as the engagement of individuals with their locality.



London is part of a regional network



London's town centre network within the M25



Local routes connect between town centres