

## Chapter 4

# Daring to Plan? Concepts and Models of Urban Regeneration in Thames Gateway

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How should we make sense of the Thames Gateway? With its uncertain genealogy, its shifting geography and a sense of its limited appeal in the imaginaries of people that live east of Tower Bridge is it no more than a politician's fiction or a bureaucratic chimera?

The most comprehensive attempt to provide a vision for what has been described as the largest regeneration project in Europe has been provided by Department of Communities and Local Government's Interim Thames Gateway Plan, published in November 2006. The projected numbers of homes and jobs associated with this major transformation have changed regularly in recent years between the agencies responsible for making official estimates but the numbers of jobs and homes predicted have generally risen, based on bullish underlying assumptions about the forward trajectories of London's growth and an aspiration to direct this transformation towards the part of the city most beset by postindustrial decline. The 2006 Thames Gateway Plan targets the creation of 180, 000 jobs in the region and 160, 000 homes between 2001 and 2016 (Thames Gateway Delivery Unit, 2006a, 2006b).

In 2005 in a piece of work conducted for the Secretary of State, the polling company MORI suggested that a significant problem with this story of grand scale city transformation was that it lacked 'a narrative' to make sense of the change. Similarly, with a fairly limited evidence base, the lobbying think tank the IPPR suggested that the Thames Gateway story was neither understood nor believed by people that lived or might live in the future in this new subregion of London (Bennett and Morris, 2006). At one level this might appear no more than a public relations concern with how to promote the Thames Gateway project. But in this chapter I want to suggest that there is in reality much at stake in the attempt to generate a plausible narrative of city transformation. A closer examination of the competing frames through which the Gateway is made visible undermines some commonly held oppositions between 'top down' and 'bottom up' change, politically left and right wing understandings of city regeneration, and community versus market led models of social change.

**Flesh and Stone: between Lego Builders and Community Heroes***A New Compass for Contemporary Urbanism*

Within different traditions of urban theory there has been a tendency to conceptualise city change two-dimensionally. At one extreme various paradigmatic approaches and even whole sub-disciplines have tended to regard the city as a functioning unit and have sought to maximise social good through optimising spatial configuration. The discipline of planning rests on a claim to know the good city; the architectural challenge of the modern (after Heidegger) requiring a coming to terms with the pastoral and counter pastoral readings of 'dwelling in the fourfold' (Heynen, 1999: pp. 14–19). Within the spatial disciplines of geography and social policy technocratic knowledges are produced which appeal to and depend on this functionalism; modelling or elaborating transport networks, built form and social organisation for the cities of tomorrow.

In contrast, various strands of 'radical', Marxian and post-structuralist urbanisms have appealed to an exposure of the city's artifice as their principal intellectual function. An analysis of the hidden power structures of regimes of governance, the logic of capital seen in patterns of uneven development and the coded norms of class, race, gender and sexuality located in the social order are the outcome of intellectual labours of great integrity which have an unremittingly deconstructionist purpose at their heart. The purpose of intellectual labour in such analysis is to expose the normative basis of processes that remain beyond the control of the academic gaze, rather than to improve their practical functioning. The register of voice is properly critical but scholars and academics in the critical tradition sometimes fail to engage with the policymakers and the politicians because their deconstructions are not always matched by the pragmatics required to devise alternative visions of the future city.

But when we begin to analyse the future of the metropolis this two-dimensional dialogue of the deaf between the critics of city transformation and the handmaidens of regeneration becomes more complex. We immediately run into some deeper entanglements of the moral and the empirical which do not necessarily fit our conventional binary divide of critics and technocrats. Decisions about the role of existing markets and the construction of new markets require analysis both of what is empirically plausible and what is ethically desirable in structuring city growth. Categories of identity politics do not always sit easily with each other, let alone with competing alternative moral imperatives that, rather than focusing on the existing city, might dwell on the city that is yet to come (Simone, 2004). A sense of urbanism that stresses the community obligations of 'the known' and the familiar sits in tension with a tradition of city thinking that privileges abstract senses of obligation, an ethics of hospitality or a privileging of 'the unknown' and the treatment of the stranger. These are contrasting ways of thinking about the moral order of the metropolitan.

I have argued elsewhere (Keith, 2005) that the constitutive tensions between the liberal and the communitarian strands of thinking in moral philosophy create a

tension in 'city thinking' that is as important in structuring a moral compass for the city as the alternative axis which contrasts deconstruction and functionality.

These tensions can bring together odd bedfellows. Those preferring a more egalitarian social settlement may rarely disagree about ends but nevertheless differ massively about means. Suspicion of the power of the state shares with suspicion of the market a scepticism that calls into question the essential commitments and genealogy of western liberalism. 'Anti-statism' appeals both to the conventional right and the left of the political spectrum and can be articulated as both a critique of the social engineering of the New East End (Dench et al., 2006; Keith, 2006) and as a new leftist nostalgia for the anti-statism of the Thatcher era (Pearmain, 2006). The tensions between *notions of liberalism* that privilege the rational ordering of the social, and *notions of the communitarian* that privilege the anthropological construction of the moral order might need to be taken seriously. Both perspectives are relevant if we are to reconcile the logic of the 'Lego builders' that foreground the bricks and mortar of city regeneration and the appeal of the 'community heroes' that appeal to the known social world to be placed within an understanding of the particular histories and geographies of this part of old London (Keith, 2005).

Further, urban studies needs to take more seriously both the ethical lessons of the governmentality debates that draw on Foucault's late work to refigure an understanding of the problem of liberal government in political theory (Rose, 1999; Rabinow, 2003) and the materialistic lessons of the new economic sociology that considers the entanglements of state and society which define the social construction of new markets (Callon, 1998; Mackenzie, 2006; White, 2002).

If we complicate the stale debates between old right and old left with a more nuanced compass that recognises the tensions between rational organisation and sentimental appeal, justice and loyalty, community and liberal government, we may begin to understand the different narratives that are used to make sense of the Thames Gateway. What is not said can be as important as what is said. For example, a foregrounding of community that fails to recognise the new travel to work areas emerging from the old economic base will not capture the dynamism of city change. Alongside continued deindustrialisation in sites like Fords in Dagenham there is an economic engine at Canary Wharf that has created what is arguably the second largest financial district in Europe in the heart of the Gateway itself; with over 80,000 jobs on site and a potential to grow over the next decade to 200,000 jobs (compared with an annual daily commute to the Square Mile of the City of approximately 300,000). In deciding who will get these jobs, what configuration of homes and transport will service this new economy and how London's travel to work patterns can be reconfigured by the capacity of public transport and the construction of new labour markets and their subjectivities, there are many dimensions to take into account. These include the logics of house-building and of economic development, the cacophany of Olympian rhetoric, and the risk of reproducing new forms of racial inequality.

The Thames Gateway, in other words is a confluence of socio-economic realities and regeneration stories. It is simply not possible to detach the future of this part of London from the emergent housing markets and the cartographies

of travel to work areas that are in fact both artefacts of the state. Narratives of the Gateway are much more than a matter of PR, since they help to shape policy-options. The Gateway envisaged as downmarket solution to the supply problems of low cost home ownership implies a suburban lack of aspiration. The Barker report, which is economically numerate but institutionally ignorant of the way the housing market is structured by legal, planning and political processes, amplifies this disappointing vision. However, a state-sponsored model that privileges development by fiat and by land site is hardly likely to win support from either the market or the community. And, in contrast again, a Sim City aspiration that stresses high-quality city life based on architecturally informed rhetorics of successful urbanism risks economic illiteracy if it fails to consider both the massive legacy costs of brownfield cleaning or the neo-Ricardian facts of life of large rental differences between Canada Square and the Royal Docks.

These new multiple realities, the complications of their spatial logics and their present pasts, contrast starkly with the simple ways in which in the immediate post war era faith in social engineering prompted the mapping of a 'London of bubbles' – a new London where community development was to sit organically alongside economic development in neatly constrained new neighbourhoods.

Would these new pluralities make Patrick Abercrombie turn in his grave? In the 1940s the reformer, planner and author of both the *County of London Plan* and the *Greater London Plan* had the temerity to attempt to rationalise London through mapping its future, choreographing its city spaces and land uses down to the smallest plot sizes. In contrast, in recent years the bullish literatures around the future of the city have suggested that the capital will be the site of sustained employment and population growth over the next two decades but are much more vague than Abercrombie about its configuration. Ken Livingstone's London Plan, the Deputy Prime Minister's Sustainable Communities Plan and the No. 10 Strategy Unit's London Analytical Report have all have echoed the mantra of growth. Looking eastwards from Tower Bridge, the Thames Gateway subregion has been earmarked to be the heart of this growth. Identifying the opportunities provided by carious tracts of brownfield deindustrialisation, the area is cast as the location for new forms of policy intervention (such as the return of Urban Development Corporations) and as a test bed for market responses to the housing boom of the early twenty-first century.

The notion of growth foregrounds a debate on what sort of a city London might become. In regional government Lord Rogers' Architecture and Urbanism Unit at the Greater London Authority attempted to deploy best practice urban design standards in the creation of new city spaces. In contrast, the *Guardian's* architectural critic Jonathan Glancey (2001a) has characterised the plans for the Gateway as a colonisation of the cockney Siberia. Multiple realities confound a rerun of Abercrombie today. These include the plural geographies that follow from the demographics of the city region; the growth profiles of different sectors of the economy, and the demands placed on the welfare state, in fulfilling its role of social reproduction, to generate a labour force 'fit for purpose' for the new twenty-first-century market places. There are also the tensions between idealist

conceptions of how people might dwell in the city, and the more prosaic realities of the building of homes on which the rest of this chapter concentrates.

The lens through which London is made visible structures our thinking about the dynamics of its present and the potential of its future. In particular, in thinking about housing development we might consider how the languages of city transformation inflect the relationship between state governance and institutionalised property markets. It is not the first time that the forces of city change have focused on housing but for the Gateway to realise its potential for twenty-first-century London a clearer set of analytical dynamics is needed than is usually obtained from the nebulous lexicon of urban regeneration.

It is possible to figure London through the lens of housing demand and it is essential to take the measure of such demand against feasible housing supply. (Hence the supply side concerns with mass production, planning inhibitions and regionalisation of Housing Corporation funding in London.) It is also possible to figure London in terms of its job growth in key economic sectors. The commensurability of these two future visions is moot. Both sit uneasily with an interdisciplinary invocation of city building that might be loosely captured under the rubric of 'urbanism', except that the notion of urbanism is itself susceptible to annexation by the discipline of architecture.

### *Urban Renaissance*

At its most optimistic the lessons of urbanism point to the possibilities of urban renaissance. At their crudest this might be identified with Lord Rogers' ideas, as set out in his Reith lectures of 1995, his subsequent publications and his work with John Prescott's Urban Task Force and as an advisor to the Mayor of London in the early 2000s. But their genealogy stretches further back. Most obviously, the coincidence of city growth and modernity in the late nineteenth/early twentieth century prompted many debates about the ability to plan and build the civilised metropolis with adequate residences for the citizens of the city. In Germany the Bauhaus was driven by such concerns and much of the Werkbund's brave efforts in cities such as Weimar Frankfurt epitomised a social democratic aim to mass build equity (Heynen, 1999: Lash, 1999). Significantly, the Werkbund triggered a major debate around the interplay of high numbers, rational interest and quality outcomes in housing provision.

Though they can seem like caricatures, there are really four principles which inform most contemporary urban renaissance rhetoric:

- by building densely it should be possible to maximise the value of a single acre of land;
- by maximising the value of a single acre of land it should be possible to *levy* significant amounts of social value against enhanced profit, translated into social housing at affordable levels of rent (and moot levels of subsidy and purchase price);

- by creating a new and *rational* planning framework the self-interest of the former principle and the equity of the latter principle should be harnessed to produce mixed development;
- finally, this should produce a high quality public realm and – with the immediate gains of Section 106<sup>1</sup> and the longer term gains of a sustainable revenue base from rents and a tax base from residents and businesses – it should be possible to engineer the future city. Or at least that is the script.

### **The Dynamics of Change: The Background to Growth Numbers**

Three reasons point towards the need for increased housing numbers in the Gateway area.

#### *Economic Production and London*

In 2003 we saw a collapse in the commercial office market with Foster's landmark Swiss Re building struggling to let space, and with considerable turbulence around the future of Canary Wharf Group, which was once an FT100 listed company on the basis of a single property portfolio on the Isle of Dogs. London's bullish projections around employment growth have looked less plausible in the 2004–2007 period than in the early years of the decade.<sup>2</sup> But this potential for continued employment growth in the east of London appears likely from forecasts of the financial services and business services sectors and the investment decisions of major corporates such as Citigroup, Clifford Chance, Barclays, and HSBC that have located on the CWG estate in recent years. The numbers of jobs on the estate itself will exceed 100,000 in the near future arising from buildings already coming through the ground. The cyclical trend of oversupply and depression of commercial office markets should not detract from the scale of this change. In 2007 one sign of a return to growth both in London generally and on the Wharf has appeared in the newly incorporated form of Songbird; the venture that emerged from the commercial property downturn when a struggle for control over the old Canary Wharf Group between Brascan, Paul Reichman (formerly of Olympia and York) and Morgan Stanley concluded largely to the advantage of the latter, with a return to expansion of the estate. The old ODPM (now DCLG) recognised the new financial and business services sectors on the Isle of Dogs as having the potential to drive the employment base up to 200,000 on the estate and in the related commercial developments in the adjacent Wood Wharf and Millennium Quarters. The impact of such change on housing demand is considerable, and will be mediated through the uneven impacts of poor transport infrastructure

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1 On Section 106 agreements, see Penny Bernstock's chapter in this volume.

2 See, for example, the claim that 'Taking our long-term projected output growth of 2.5 per cent this gives rise to a total employment increase of 970,000 between 2003 and 2026, equal to 22 per cent of total employment in 2003' (Cooper, 2005).

both eastwards and westwards, and continued uncertainty (mitigated slightly in mid-2007) about the future of Crossrail.

### *Social Reproduction*

Following the 1990s boom and related population growth, the south-east in general, and London in particular, faced labour shortages in key markets which facilitate the social reproduction of economic growth, though in some economic sectors demand has been matched by 'A8' migration from the accession countries of Eastern Europe. However, welfare state workers essential to the affluent city cannot afford to live in London or survive on national public sector pay settlements that incentivise moving away from the city to low-cost areas of residence outside the south-east. In essence, the city faces a problem of reproduction of itself alongside the production of affluence. As it most clearly seen in the debates around the chimeric search for a definition of the key worker, the city struggles to provide the supply of labour needed to support the civil institutions and the public sector itself. So in the first years of the new century, town halls across London sought to identify those public sector workers who would be granted privileged access to social housing by being defined as 'key workers'. This definition normally started with nurses and teachers and rapidly expanded to include other occupations where labour shortages hindered recruitment, for example, in the 'caring professions' of social services. The need to provide affordable housing for such a labour force is in this sense a condition of production. This echoes the institutional logic of Manuel Castells' definition of the city as a site of social reproduction and collective consumption. More prosaically in an era where 'liveability' is a key measure of metropolitan competition, the presence of a labour force that services not only economic growth but also consumption patterns and social infrastructure gives rise to a new form of housing crisis whose definition is not entirely philanthropic.

### *Household Demographics*

A third reason for the growth in households is culturally produced rather than being the outcome of cyclical commercial demand. Long-term reductions in household size and increasing numbers of households generate demand for additional residential units. Many of the estates in the inner part of the Gateway reveal of pattern of mass overcrowding and suppressed residential demand. In many areas of gentrification there is demand for dwellings for smaller families at rental and purchase prices which are beyond the range of many who need them.

Though linked, these sources of demand may generate different dynamics of spatial preference and fluctuations over time. The recent Treasury-commissioned Barker housing review has highlighted supply side constraints in bringing land forward, has cited the rational tendency for private developers to protect profits by deliberately limiting supply in some contexts and has put a spotlight on the relationship between housing subsidy and the roles of both developers and registered social landlords. This analysis has three consequences. It makes it

essential to reconsider the appropriate mediation of public interest and private profit. It demands a reconsideration of the complicated institutional architecture which includes regeneration agencies, social housing provision, housing subsidy, English Partnerships, local authorities and the newly-developed London Housing Board. The merger of English Partnerships and the Housing Corporation into a single new body, Communities England, which was announced in 2007, is perhaps the most significant statement of commitment to a 'new social engineering' that emerges from this way of thinking. But perhaps most significantly, Barker raises a question about the trade-offs between quality development in specific places and the rapid achievement of housing numbers in large tracts of land deemed suitable for development.

It is clearly the case that the vast majority of the housing numbers in the Gateway will need to be developed by the private sector, even by models which maximise the elements of social housing in the transformation. But the exact balance of private, low-cost (subsidised) and rental property is subject to political deliberation and social mediation, which returns us to the desirable balance between the rational ordering of liberal government, state direction and the ethnographic realities of 'real places'. The legacy of the property-buying fascination of the British in comparison with their continental peers will determine whether new models of housing tenure that involve flexible fractionalisation of ownership and renting can really be developed. This in turn implies a set of normative assumptions about the individuals, families, ethnicities and faiths that might occupy these new developments. The interface between an implicit white communitarian norm and the diversities of cosmopolitan London raises massive questions about integration and cohesion in these development sites.

But certain institutional changes might restructure the relationship between public interest and the market and the way such a relationship translates into housing outcomes. Post-Barker, housing subsidies may be paid to property developers and the Registered Social Landlords (housing associations) are to become developers in their own right, or hybrid characters, working in the space between the provision of public goods and of private residences. Planning law might attempt value capture through hypothecating future tax revenues in areas of physical infrastructure change. The principle of *polluter pays* could be mitigated by subsidies for the development of brownfield sites. Such changes suggest thinking carefully about the spaces of the Thames Gateway that will be developed in new models of residential change, and about the timing of such change. They logically demand a politics which both accepts the role of the market and brings back into play the potential to plan the city.

### **Thinking Spatially and the London of the Prime Ministers Strategy Unit**

In an important piece of research, led by Geoff Mulgan (then) at the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit (PMSU), a diagnosis of London's present and prognosis of its future was published in the London Analytical Report of 2003. In relation to the growth agenda it makes two significant points.

Its analysis conceptualises London's economy with relatively little reference to its geographical variations. It offers no explanation of where London's economic growth will be realised. It extrapolates exponentially from trends, but neither analyses the dynamics behind these trends (i.e. the problem of a hypothetical future cast as an extrapolation of yesterday's events) nor (more significantly) develops an understanding of where the jobs growth (putatively an additional 300,000 skilled jobs by 2010) will take place. In terms of the latter claim – given that the daily commute to the geographical area of the City Corporation equals approximately 300,000 – we could be talking about a 'new square mile' of jobs added to the London economy in the next six years. Where will they be located?

The London of this relatively recent report does not recognise the Thames Gateway at all as a possible spatial answer to either housing growth or job growth. The housing sections of the report (PMSU, 2003: pp. 48–71 and particularly 70) highlights the limited potential for London housing growth eastwards and suggests instead that the resolution of the housing supply problems are to be found in the inner suburban and central rings of London. This is undoubtedly true if analysis were to be based on extrapolated trends only, but it disregards other possible dynamics. The current number of 10,000–15,000 new builds a year in London which the Report describes reinforces Barker but potentially underplays the possibility that the intervention of regeneration agencies might restructuring residential preference. For example by 'making places' such as Docklands it was possible to create a new market for housing expansion in a part of London where previously there had been *low* demand over a long period. This demands an understanding of the *space-economy* of London and the capacity of institutional change to maximise the potential of the city and create new places within it. In short, this planning vision of London's future challenges (if only implicitly) the city's ability to build new communities, avoiding any definite view of the relative roles of social engineering and the market place in determining outcomes.

### Temporality and the Gateway Paradox

Part of the argument of this chapter is that the tensions in city building need to be seen as outcomes of the root problems of liberal government; not least the tension between the state's attempt to facilitate metropolitan development and the housing market's inclination, competence or facility to provide new housing units in the areas most essential to the public good. When we consider the time-scales of city change in the Gateway we can see that the differential demands made by players, organisations and institutions can lead to some suboptimal outcomes.

One example of this was seen in the summer 2003 update of the Sustainable Communities Plan, which had population growth numbers for Thames Gateway that may well be too high over the short term but too low over the long term. This arises because of:

- a) *the understandable need* to deliver a vision that is financially realistic and not over-ambitious on the longer-term supply side. With contemporary trends of

new house build at 10,000–20,000 units per annum a very large proportion of London's annual build would need to take place in the Gateway to meet even the modest targets for housing new build in the Sustainable Communities summer 2003 update. (These are well below the revised figures put forward in 2007.) This points to a broader debate about the plausibility of a step change in the supply side of housing units;

- b) *the understandable* desire to be seen deliver over the electoral cycle;
- c) *the understandable manner* in which the model in the sustainable communities update is driven by the dynamics of the housing new build crisis (the historically low numbers of new build) rather than by the regional employment potential of the Gateway (300,000 new skilled jobs in London 2004–2010 (PMDU), and by the global city growth pressures in the London and south-east economy)

A paradox arises because the resulting model of growth in the Gateway aims at financial modesty and limited demands on the Treasury, but as a result of this it is fiscally wasteful and economically sub-optimal.

*Over the long term*, lower aspirations could translate into suburbanised low quality development at below 'urban renaissance' densities. Physical infrastructure becomes *more expensive* because the costing/population growth ratio leads to *higher per capita costs* for each fixed cost public sector infrastructure decision. For example in investment decisions about public transport, the numerator (population growth) diminishes and the denominator (investment costs for any specific public transport project – e.g. Crossrail or Docklands Light Railway (DLR) extensions) remains fixed. Already at least one consultant has attempted to claim that if population targets are set at the levels of the summer 2003 targets, then there is no need for some of the major physical infrastructure projects that are in reality central to the future of the Gateway. There is effectively a chicken and egg argument that links together population density, growth targets and infrastructure investment. Higher growth targets are consequently economically performative in persuading the Treasury to invest upfront in transport infrastructure and socially normative in constructing implicitly the sorts of community that will arise from this development. They are also subject to the usual unintended consequences of policy decisions, for example, in the larger demands that would be placed on the development control process (potentially to the detriment of democratic scrutiny or buy-in to the planning system).

*Over the short term*, the overambitious targets for delivery costs exaggerate the public sector investment bill needed to realise the Sustainable Communities vision. Physical infrastructure becomes *more expensive* because the costing/time growth ratio leads to *higher per annum costs* for each fixed cost public sector infrastructure decision. For example, in public transport investment decisions the numerator (population growth) diminishes and the denominator (investment costs for any specific public transport project per annum increases.

Consequently the worries will be:

- a) as a *housing driven* model the planning framework of the Sustainable Communities Plan and the Thames Gateway more generally will be dislocated

from the *economic drivers* which would demand greater transport infrastructure investment. Put simply it is possible to realise modest housing targets in East London without infrastructure spend but it is not possible to realise a jobs-driven economic model without this. As a result south-eastern economic growth is potentially jeopardised if places such as the new business district of the Isle of Dogs cannot be *made to work*;

- b) the buy-in to the significance of the Gateway for London at regional governmental level potentially dissipates as the 'Global City' thrust of the London Plan is jeopardised;
- c) the buy-in at local government level is jeopardised because boroughs to the east of London that are the subject of medium-term patterns of deindustrialisation see the future they are offered in terms of low-quality suburbanisation which will bring few new jobs, limited social infrastructure and the 'export' of the overcrowded inner East End to the less densely populated outer London boroughs. A caricature of these tendencies was at the heart of the electoral successes of the (fascist) British National Party in the 2006 local government elections when they became the second largest party in the town hall in Barking and Dagenham, winning all but one of the seats that they contested.

### **The Institutional Architecture for Delivery**

In the post-war decades of the twentieth century we have witnessed a crisis of faith in the project of social engineering. The broadly consensual settlement of the Keynesian Welfare State was subjected to trenchant critique from liberalisms of both left and right. The command systems of state power were seen as oppressive (from the left), the structures of welfarism were seen as bloated and inefficient (from the right). The city articulations of this Keynesian era are frequently paraded as evidence for the prosecution from all points on this left/right spectrum: the tower blocks of the inner city and the wastelands of some of the new towns become iconic. But the iconography is performative, proclaiming the failure of hope as much as factually describing a failure of delivery.

In the final two decades of the twentieth century, a critical liberalism (again of both the left and the right) displaced such grandiose ambitions across the world. But the 1980s and 1990s highlighted the failures of this liberalism. The market – *sans* state – cannot be trusted to protect the public interest in the reshaping of the dual cities of polarisation and social exclusion. So in the last decade of that century the pendulum swung back tentatively to a belief in land-use planning, not least in order to supply the housing needs of London. And so – equally tentatively – we might look to cities across the globe for whom this penny has already dropped. For example, to Shanghai, where Pudong expands exponentially and even to New York, where the changing demands of the city underscore much of the debate around the shape of the city post-9/11.

At the heart of the debate is the degree to which we believe in a bureaucratic rationality that might consciously erase or mediate particular interests in delivering the principles of urban regeneration. Perversely, Jonathan Glancey's own book

on London (2001b) was dedicated to the work of Frank Pick, the exemplary bureaucrat whose dedicated service to a London Underground he celebrates as having been constructed to meet socially defined needs of the city more than the imperatives of the market. The sort of vision needed for a civilised expansion of the Gateway demands exactly the sort of bureaucratic commitment to the expansion of the city which was exemplified in the Underground lines that precipitated 20<sup>th</sup> century London expansion. This is precisely the regulation of interest that the Gateway demands for reasons that depend equally on the need to optimise public expenditure and to generate social value. For Max Weber, bureaucracy represented 'a discharge of business according to calculable rule and "without regard for persons"' (emphasis original) and 'the abstract regularity of the execution of authority'. We are searching for a bureaucratically efficient method of delivering the future city. But do we dare to whisper that bureaucracy might be a positive force for good as much as a pejorative metaphor for conventional governance? This would point to a need to consider the abilities of the institutions in the Gateway to develop optimal renaissance change.

## Conclusion

In considering the future of the eastern pie slice of London that includes the Thames Gateway, higher housing numbers and densities are not only possible but imperative if we are to deliver both high-quality urban change and social inclusion. High numbers can be achieved. They depend on achieving a harmonious institutional architecture from a governmental maze that might have confused Theseus. Among the entities that need to be linked together are the London Housing Board, the two new urban district councils in the Gateway, the role of the Housing Corporation/English Partnerships/Communities England, the hybrid forms of Registered Social Landlord and developers, the London Development Agency, the Olympic legacy, the big spending departments and regional and local government.

There is a default model. The concentrations of brownfield land within the perimeter of the M25 have the potential to provide plentiful housing land and serious residential growth if the lessons of the Barker review were to be read principally in terms of planning-induced supply constraints. Although density can become a fetish it is a fact that, while high density costs more in the short term, it yields higher financial and social returns in the long term. Relatively low-cost intervention could produce low-density housing in East London that would create the required residential numbers in some post-industrial areas. But it would be a future of low-cost mixed estates of low quality. It is not quite the post-1945 nightmare of utopian social engineering gone wrong. The default is rather a model of low-quality, economically suboptimal suburbanisation. But this would be a waste of the opportunity of a generation.

East London deserves better than this. Analytical clarity is needed to ensure that the timescales of public investment and the geographical planning of residential numbers are mediated through a new architecture of governance.

The Thames Gateway has the capacity to save much of the Green Belt (through the densification of polluted industrial land). It has the potential to provide extraordinary new places for residence and employment at the highest quality. The vision for the Gateway was bravely set out in the original Sustainable Communities Plan, but it is potentially diminished by a numbers-driven logic which seeks greater returns from Milton Keynes and more rural parts of the country better served by transport infrastructure. The challenge is to harness both market and state to deliver this vision. The Thames Gateway will provide the litmus test for the plausibility of urban renaissance.

In his recent book on the extraordinary growth phenomenon that is modern China, Will Hutton defends the enlightenment tradition of the west and suggests that people should have more faith in the ideas which made possible western affluence. His diagnosis rests on the assertion that beneficial globalisation requires both China and America to remember the Enlightenment principles that first sustained economic and political pluralism and the institutional forms that followed from this. (These included a free press, an independent judiciary, independent knowledge production and an effective state.) He suggests that this might be captured by ‘an approach to living, whose spirit the great Enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant summed up simply to “dare to know”’ (Hutton, 2007; p. 51). A reflexive synthesis of traditions of urbanism that recognises the tensions and the incommensurabilities of city building in the twenty-first century (in China or in the UK) might prompt us to consider – in the face of the cheap and easy critiques of left and right, communitarian and liberal – if perhaps the time has come to ask if we ‘dare to plan’ the Thames Gateway.

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