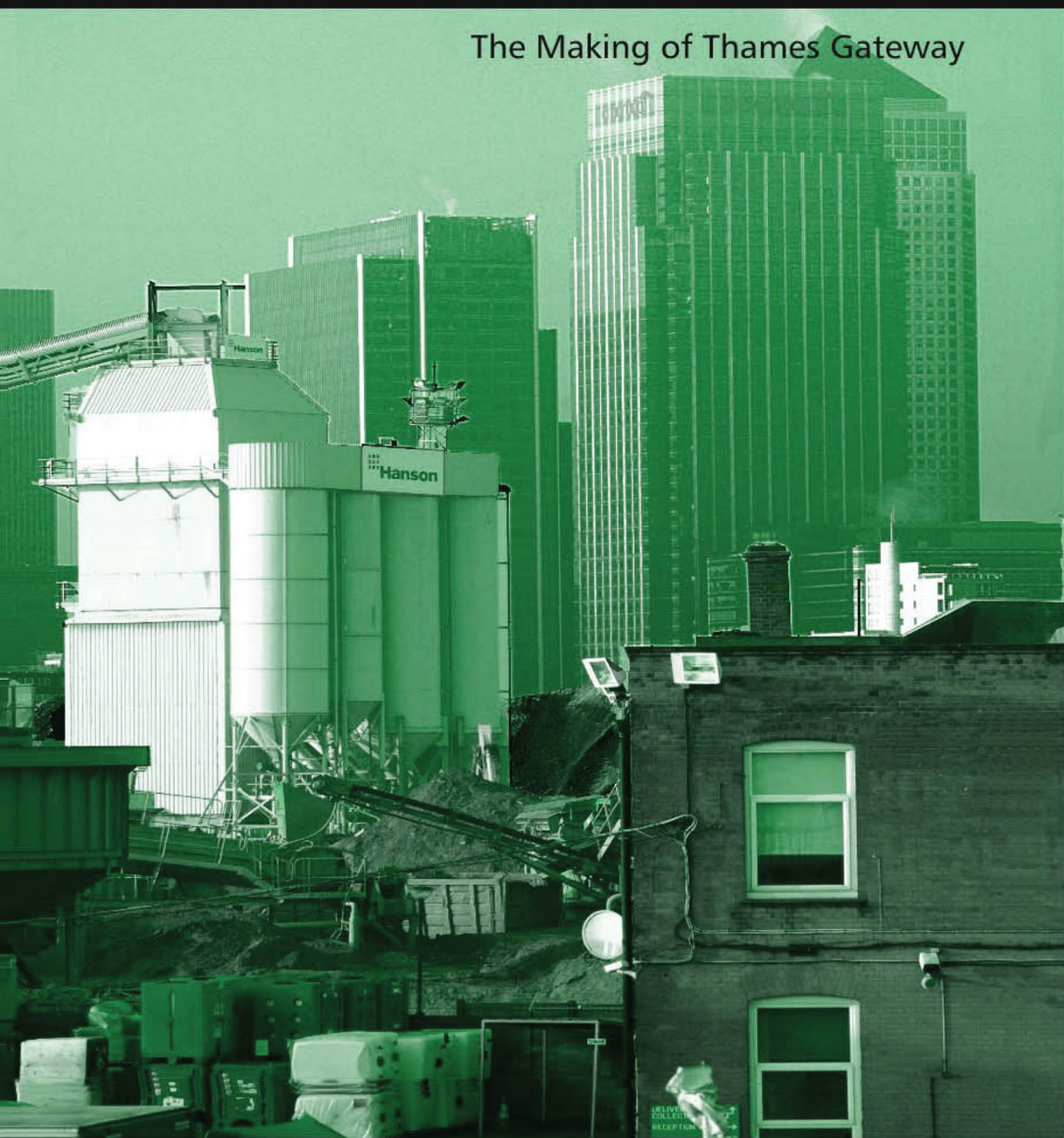


Edited by Philip Cohen and Michael J. Rustin

London's Turning

The Making of Thames Gateway



LONDON'S TURNING

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London's Turning

Thames Gateway: Prospects and Legacy

Edited by
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Contents

<i>List of Figures, Plates and Tables</i>	<i>ix</i>
<i>List of Contributors</i>	<i>xi</i>
<i>Preface and Acknowledgements</i>	<i>xv</i>

Editorial Introduction	1
<i>Philip Cohen and Michael J. Rustin</i>	

PART 1: BIG PICTURES, SMALL DETAILS

1	Ex-ports: The Laboratory Role of the London Docklands <i>Han Meyer</i>	9
	In which the author looks at the historical development of Docklands from entrepot to post industrial cultural quarter and considers the implications for planning and design concerned to revitalise the urban public realm	
2	Smokestack: The Industrial History of Thames Gateway <i>John Marriott</i>	17
	In which the author looks at the legacy of industrialism in Thames Gateway and the role which this 'heritage' is playing in re-inventing the area as a site of post industrial investment	
3	One Hundred and Twenty Years of Regeneration, from East London to the Thames Gateway: Fluctuations of Housing Type and City Form <i>William Mann</i>	31
	In which the author explores different tendencies in the development of the urban fabric in East London over the last hundred years and analyses the entrenched, recurring terms of debate on density and city form which have been reproduced in public response to the Thames Gateway plan	
4	Daring to Plan? Concepts and Models of Urban Regeneration in Thames Gateway <i>Michael Keith</i>	53
	In which the author situates the TG plan within the history of British Town planning and examines the different models and visions of urbanism which have emerged in recent debates. Is there a grand narrative of master planning still available, and if not, what other ways are there of 'curating' Thames Gateway?	

- 5 Thames Gateway Oxymorons: Some Reflections on 'Sustainable Communities' and Neoliberal Governance 67
Massimo De Angelis
 In which the author examines the rhetoric on 'sustainable community' as a master narrative and explore its links with globalisation and the changing meaning of location
- 6 Forcing the Market, Forging Community: Culture as Social Construction in the Thames Gateway 83
Andrew Calcutt
 In which the author critiques the the urban imagineering of Thames Gateway in the context of New Labour's cultural turn
- 7 Stuff Happens: Telling the Story and Doing the Business in the Making of Thames Gateway 99
Philip Cohen
 In which the author undertakes a detailed reading of the promotional literature and business discourse produced by and about Thames Gateway as an example of the narrative turn in planning theory and practice, and the emergence of a new syntax of governance in which 'stuff just happens'

PART 2: CASE STUDIES IN URBAN CHANGE

- 8 City to Sea: Some Socio-Demographic Impacts of Change in East London 125
Tim Butler, Chris Hamnett, Mark Ramsden and Sadiq Mir
 In which the authors trace patterns of socio-demographic change in East London and Essex and considers how far existing models of urban mobility and gentrification can account for these processes
- 9 Moving to a Better Place? Geographies of Aspiration and Anxiety in the Thames Gateway 149
Paul Watt
 In which the author presents some on his recent research on motivations to move from East London into Essex and considers how these relate to popular perceptions of Thames Gateway
- 10 Homing in on Housing 169
Penny Bernstock
 In which the author reports on her recent study of 106 planning agreements in Thames Gateway areas and draws out the implication for the current debate on affordable housing and the need to develop a new regulatory framework

- 11 'Alright on the Night?' Envisioning a 'Night-time Economy' in the Thames Gateway 189
Karina Berzins and Iain MacRury
 In which the authors draws on a series of recent impact studies to examine the limits and conditions of developing East London as the hub of a new international visitor and night time economy
- 12 From Bedsit-land to 'Cultural Hub': Regenerating Southend-on-Sea 209
Gareth Millington
 In which the author makes an essay in urban ethnography focussing on recent changes in Southend and the attempt to turn it into a new hub of the Thames Gateway's cultural economy
- 13 The Thames Gateway Bridge: A New 'Solution' to an Old Problem? 227
Andrew Blake
 In which the author sets the recent public consultation and public enquiry into the Thames Gateway bridge in the context of an appraisal of transport policy in London and the South east of England
- 14 The Airport Next Door: London City Airport – Regeneration, Communities and Networks 239
Iain MacRury
 In which the author draws on a recent community impact study commissioned by London City Airport to look at the implications of the airports master plan for local community relations and current debates on splintered urbanism
- 15 Involving Local Communities in the Thames Gateway Developments 261
Alice Sampson
 In which the author draws on some of her recent research to examines changing configurations of Community Politics in relation to the Thames Gateway initiative
- 16 Blue Sky over Bluewater? 283
Michael Edwards
 In which the author examines some of the key tensions in Thames Gateway planning between market led strategies of economic growth and the need to create publicly regulated and accountable structures to deliver affordable housing and other social goods to address Londoners' needs

17	After London's Turning: Prospects and Legacies for Thames Gateway <i>Philip Cohen and Michael J. Rustin</i> In which the editors highlight some of the main arguments of the book, and drawn on some recent thinking about inclusive governance to advance a modest proposal for a different kind of regional assembly for Thames Gateway to tackle its democratic deficit	293
	<i>Index</i>	315

List of Figures, Plates and Tables

Figures

3.1	Charles Booth – map descriptive of London Poverty 1898–89, sheets 1, 2 and 5 combined	33
3.2	Old Nichol Street, known as ‘the Jago’, 1880s	35
3.3	Boundary Road Estate, Shoreditch	35
3.4	LCC estate, Coate Street, Bethnal Green, East London, 2005	37
3.5	Bomb damage maps excerpts from nos. 51, 52, 63, 64	40
3.6	Balfron Tower, Poplar, under construction, late 1960s	41
3.7	Victoria Wharf, Mile End, East London, 2005	44
3.8	Thames Barrier Park housing, Silvertown	49
3.9	New housing, Barking	49
3.10	View of a street as envisaged in one of the medium density neighbourhoods at Barking Riverside	50
7.1	The Random Regenerator Regenerator	102
7.2	<i>Evening Standard</i> newspaper cutting – Prescottograd	114
7.3	‘The truth is that identity defines us. It changes perceptions, markets, places. People are much more likely to invest in places that have a clear and valuable identity’	117
7.4	‘Local people want to ensure their presence is recognised by continuity. This can come down to very simple things such as naming streets after local characters’	119
7.5	Mission statements	121
8.1	The old LCC boroughs	127
8.2	The GLC boroughs	128
8.3	The East London study area	128
8.4	Proportion of higher managerial and professional workers in inner London boroughs 1981–2001	130
8.5	Proportion of higher managerial and professional workers in outer London boroughs 1981–2001	130
8.6	Growth in SEG5.1 1991–2001 for six boroughs	132
8.7	Growth of SEGs 1–4 (higher managers and professionals) as a proportion of all groups’ growth 1991–2001	136
9.1	Satisfaction with area (%)	160
10.1	No. of bedrooms on Thames Gateway Housing Schemes	183
11.1	A recent edition of <i>Time Out</i> had to work hard to highlight NTE activities ‘hidden’ in London’s East End. It is useful to envision an East London edition of <i>Time Out</i> 2012, or for <i>Time Out</i> Thames Gateway 2015	194
14.1	Protest against the building of the London City Airport	243

14.2	Anti airport poster	243
14.3	Indicative list of some destinations from 'live' online departure board, June 2007	246
14.4	London City Airport square on the 70th anniversary edition of the Monopoly board game	254
14.5	The DLR extension was finally opened in 2006	255
16.1	Slogan on a site in Hackney: a workshop demolished to make way for luxury housing	284

Plates

1.1	Photograph of Royal Docks 1952	8
1.2	Photograph of Royal Docks 2008	8

Tables

8.1	SEGs 1–4 as a proportion of SEGs 1–15 (%)	126
8.2	Growth of SEGs 1–4 and 5 for whole of outer London	131
8.3	Growth in all middle classes (SEGs 1–5) as a proportion of all growth 1991–2001	135
8.4	Growth in managers and professionals (SEGs 1–4) as a proportion of all growth, 1991–2001	136
9.1	London borough location of respondents' previous address	155
9.2	Previous housing tenure by area of origin in London (%)	156
9.3	Most important reason for moving from previous address	158
9.4	Importance of moving to a better area by area of origin in London (%)	159
10.1	Planning permission granted or scheme completed 2000–2005 (inclusive)	171
10.2	House completions and housing targets, 2000–2005	172
10.3	House completions in London Thames Gateway 2000–2005	173
10.4	Kent Thames Gateway: housing completions 2000–2005	174
10.5	Essex Thames Gateway – house completions 2000–2005	175
10.6	Proportion of affordable housing stipulated in S106 agreements on 100 plus units	177
10.7	Proportion of affordable housing allocated for social rent	178
10.8	Housing density by Thames Gateway Authority	181
10.9	Proportion of houses and flats built in the Thames Gateway area	182
11.1	Mean and modal satisfaction indices – summary table	197
11.2	Other indicative NTE/tourism problems – aspirations and anxieties	199
11.3	What NTE cultures are implicit in the planning? Hypothetical suggestions – but, what <i>will</i> happen?	200

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Preface and Acknowledgements

Our first and greatest debt is to our fellow contributors who not only turned in their chapters on time, but responded positively to our editorial comments and suggestions.

There are a number of colleagues and associates whose work does not appear here but who have nevertheless made a significant contribution to this project. Syd Jeffers, Tom Wengraf and others who attended the LERI reading group on Thames Gateway made many useful comments and suggestions which we have drawn upon. John Lock and Carole Snee, who have a hands on role in developing the University's regeneration strategy, especially in relation to Thames Gateway, have been an unfailing source of local intelligence.

We would also like to thank Geoff Mulgan of the Young Foundation for hosting a series of seminars on the theme, and indeed with the title, of this book and to all those who took part and gave papers.

Finally, thanks to Jason Ditton and Alex Werner of the Museum of London for permission to use some of the illustrative material. We hope these photographs and maps as well as the text itself will help readers who have yet to explore the Thames Gateway to set out on their own account. While it is always better to travel hopefully, especially when you are not sure quite where you will arrive, it may sometimes be as useful to navigate one's pessimism with the aid of maps drawn by those who do not necessarily depend on such encouragement to embark on the journey. As we think this book shows, even these more negative lines of thought can be productive in ultimately leading us in a more fruitful direction.

*Philip Cohen and Michael J. Rustin
London East Research Institute
Royal Docks Newham, London
July 2007*

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Editorial Introduction

Philip Cohen and Michael J. Rustin

The title of this book, *London's Turning*, refers to the ambition to shift the unequal balance of London's development from the generally affluent west to the relatively deprived east of the city and its region. The history of this imbalance is in part a consequence of London's physical geography which has become overlain with socio-economic and cultural distinctions. To the east of the City of London, the River Thames soon becomes wide and hard to cross – there is only one overland crossing east of Tower Bridge to this day, though one has long been projected and may before long be built. The river flows through flat land which used to be marshy and susceptible to flood; this flood plain offers few vistas and panoramas of the kind which have always attracted the settlements of the better-off, except long views of the river itself. The prevailing wind, and of course the river's flow, is from the west, thus the east got the worst of the city's dirt, in its various forms – noxious industries, waste products, smells, polluted water – while those who could avoid these hazards stayed upstream. Of course modern technology, and indeed deindustrialisation, has made many of these original geographical disadvantages irrelevant today. But their effects live on, east and west, in the quality and texture of the built environment, in the types and locations of enterprises, and in the more intangible but nevertheless influential factors of social and cultural capital, in the capacities of the population to compete with those of other zones of the city for well-paid and satisfying work.

The Thames Gateway plan for sustainable communities to give it its full title, is a comprehensive attempt to tackle these issues. As such it is the largest and most complex project of urban regeneration ever undertaken in the UK. It has been compared, in proportionate scale, to the rebuilding that took place after the Great Fire of London, or to all the New Towns that were built after World War II. It involves the building of affordable homes for upwards of half a million people; the construction of a new transport network to attract people, goods and inward investment from across Europe; the creation of a whole new apparatus of governance to regulate London's historic turn to the east; the attempt to create a sustainable green environment out of some of the most polluted brown field sites in the country. And now, superimposed on this, the London 2012 Olympics

All this is being proposed against the background of widespread public scepticism about master plans and grand projects, coupled with concerns about the impact of global warming on London's flood protection systems, and the fear that market led construction of mass housing will lead to Los Angeles type urban sprawl. Will Thames Gateway be a bigger and better (and hence in some

views worse) version of Docklands? Will the polarisations of race and class that have occurred on the Isle of Dogs be displaced downriver and reproduced in Thurrock? Will the new deregulated regionalism generate a 'space of flows' in which the global knowledge economy and the local hidden economy combine to absorb the communities of labour made redundant by the decline of Fordism? Or will the outcome be new kinds of inequality, new forms of social immobility and peri-urban deprivation?

The Thames Gateway plan has produced a voluminous documentation, much of it frankly promotional, some of simply a collation of existing statistical data, little of it theoretically informed. There is also considerable media coverage, most of it negative, which has contributed to fixing a public image of the plan as an unwieldy, ill-conceived adventure in governmental megalomania. Yet for a project of this magnitude and social importance, it is very research-light. Notwithstanding the current emphasis on evidence-based policymaking there has been little attempt to grasp the impact of the project as a whole or to generate locally grounded case studies.¹ *London's Turning* sets out to remedy this by providing a critical assessment of the 'the Thames Gateway effect'. We trace the genealogy of the plan and explore its limits and conditions of realisation in and through a detailed examination of the problems of urban change it seeks to address. We use the plan as a lens through which to look at a series of important questions of social theory, urban policy and governmental practice, but we are also concerned to look at some of the possible answers.

The book is produced by members and associates of the London East Research Institute. The Institute was set up in 2002 to bring together the work on regeneration being done at the University of East London. The Institute built on earlier work but extended its scope and scale to focus on the Olympics and Thames Gateway.² From the outset we have emphasised the importance of building a collaborative and interdisciplinary research culture which critically engages with the changes that are going on in our midst. This book has not been written from the academic sidelines. The university is a key player in Thames Gateway and the work we do at LERI is produced from a position of direct engagement in the regeneration process.

However in putting this book together and in presenting its rationale we have resisted the temptation to impose any more editorial cohesion on our project than

1 A recent survey of the policy-oriented research literature undertaken by Oxford Brookes University identified a number of sectoral lacuna, but interestingly did not comment on the paucity of generic studies. See Oxford Brookes University (2006), 'Thames Gateway Evidence Review', London: Department for Communities and Local Government.

2 This earlier work appeared in *Rising in the East: the Regeneration of East London*, edited by Tim Butler and Michael Rustin (1996) and *Eastern Promise*, edited by Tim Butler, (2000) and the journal *Rising East*. A companion volume to the present book on Olympic cities. Our current journal, *Rising East On Line* (www.risingeast.org), combines academic studies with topical debates and photojournalism and focuses on regeneration in East London and Thames Gateway.

its subject matter could reasonably sustain. The Thames Gateway plan has elicited much public controversy and the job of the book is to reflect the full spectrum of academic opinion and policy debate. As a result there are many different kinds of arguments assembled here and our contributors certainly do not speak with one voice, let alone provide a common preferred reading of the same set planning texts. The book allows readers to sample different opinions, perspectives, and priorities and invites you to form your own judgement. Some of our contributors are deeply committed to the Thames Gateway project and still optimistic about what it may deliver. The alternatives, they argue, will almost certainly be worse. Others take a more sanguine or sceptical view and suggest that an alternative approach to regeneration is both necessary and possible.

This multiplicity of standpoints has also in part dictated how the book is organised. We are not hubristic enough to think that everyone will want to read the whole book from cover to cover, although our ideal reader – that implausible editorial construct – would of course do so!

We have deliberately designed the contents page to make it possible to pick and choose. But we also want to encourage the reader to take risks – to jump into topics and universes of discourse with which they may not initially be familiar. Thus architects and urban designers will find much to stimulate them in a chapter by a sociologist about the lived demographics of the big move east; equally social geographers will recognise much of their current concerns about city/country relations in a chapter by an architect on the changing forms of East London's urban fabric.

This is not a book just for those professionally engaged in regeneration, although we hope it will have much to say to them. It is designed to make sense of Thames Gateway to a much wider audience who have heard about it more as a rumour, or a news story, than as something which directly concerns them. And that includes a large number of people who live and work in the designated zones of change! Finally those who are interested in more general debates about the direction of change in contemporary forms of culture, economy and polity will find here a rich source book.

At this point it is worth entering a further caveat. Although the book takes a comprehensive view of both the official mapping and lived territories comprised by Thames Gateway, it does not aim or claim to be an all inclusive inventory of the issues raised by the plan sector by policy sector. For example there are no chapters on health, or social welfare, transport, civil engineering or education as such. This is not because we think these areas are unimportant or that joined up policy thinking should not address them. On the contrary you will find many of these issues discussed here as part of larger arguments and analyses about the changing nature of regeneration. We decided however not to organise the book into discrete policy areas but as far as possible to identify and explore cross cutting themes. One of the great challenges posed by the Thames Gateway is to break down the professional and institutional silos that currently exist, as much within the academy as within the world of local and central government

and we have tried to encourage that process in the way we have put the book together.

There is also a method in the madness. We have divided the book into two parts, broadly corresponding to the scope and scale of the contributions. In Part 1 we have asked our contributors to situate the Thames Gateway project within a wider set of debates about different cultures of modernity and postmodernity in contemporary urbanism. Contributors examine the origins and development of the plan in relation to the history of London, Docklands and port cities; we focus on the post-war development of British town planning and the more recent narrative turn in planning theory and practice; contributors also engage with the great debate on sustainability, focussing here on local issues of population density, neighbourhood ecology and the urban fabric, as well as the rhetoric and reality of globalisation. The impact of New Labour's commitment to the cultural turn in urban regeneration, and the role of the heritage industry in the branding of Thames Gateway is another important refrain.

Part 2 presents a series of detailed case studies into the impact of urban planning and demographic change on the material, social and cultural environment of London's growth downriver. New forms of ethnic gentrification, and the development of the eastern hinterlands, the lived demographics of population movement – and immobility – between city and country and, the role which 106 planning agreements play in regulating housing provision, these form a distinctive cluster of studies; the attempt to create new cultural hubs, for example in Stratford and Southend, linked into holiday and night time economies are another focus as is the effect of 'splintering urbanism' associated with the creation of premium sites around new transport hubs such as London City Airport and the proposed Thames Gateway Bridge.

The implications of these changes for redistributive strategies of urban development, and in particular for implementing anything like sustainable community, are drawn out in two concluding chapters; one focuses on issues of land use and sets out a possible policy for regulating the region's economic growth in the interest of all its citizens. In a tailpiece the editors build on some of the arguments advanced elsewhere in the book about the unequal impact of de-industrialisation and the failure of the cultural turn in regeneration to consider ways of tackling the democratic deficit in regional planning. Drawing on some of the ideas which Bruno Latour has recently advanced about how to widen and deepen the practice of political assembly, we make a modest proposal for regenerating the process of civic engagement with the Thames Gateway plan.

As we move into what is proclaimed to be a new political era, where change is the order of the day, and where the issues of affordable housing and the devolution of 'power to the people' has moved to the top of the rhetorical agenda, it seems important to take a longer term view of London's historic turn to the east. We hope this book will help inform the public deliberations that now have to take place if the heroic ambition of Thames Gateway to transform the prospects of the region, and not least of those communities who have been left behind by the

advent of the new economy, is to be translated into social fact on the ground. With so much at stake we cannot afford to fail.

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PART 1

Big Pictures, Small Details



Plate 1.1 Photograph of Royal Docks 1952. Author's photograph



Plate 1.2 Photograph of Royal Docks 2008. Author's photograph

Chapter 1

Ex-ports: The Laboratory Role of the London Docklands¹

Han Meyer

In port-cities all over the world docklands are the subject of radical changes and transformations, but the London Docklands area is by far the biggest, with the most extensive and radical transformations, with effects on the spatial, economic and social structure of the whole metropolitan and regional area, which even have national and international importance. Because of the enormous scale, the radical character of the transformations and wider meaning of these transformations, studying and discussing the London Docklands has a worldwide relevance. The area is a laboratory from which every port-city can learn lessons.

London as well as the Dutch port-cities can be considered as trend-setting types of port-cities over many centuries, alternating with each other in playing a leading role in the international port economy, but also in playing a leading role in the planning and design of paradigmatic relationships between port and city.

During the twentieth century, the London region and Holland became two showcases of modern urban planning: Sir Patrick Abercrombie's Greater London Plan (1946), Cornelis van Eesteren's Amsterdam Extension Plan of (1934) and Cor van Traa's reconstruction plan for Rotterdam (1946) were considered as the most important examples of modern city-planning in that period. Lewis Mumford, acknowledged worldwide as an important international expert on city planning at that time, celebrated the London and Dutch experiences as setting examples for every city.² All these typical modernistic plans demonstrated the ambition to plan and to control urban society by planning and controlling the spatial framework of the city. However, in all these plans the *port* was considered to be a world which it was not possible to plan and control and which should be excluded from the daily urban world.

The question of regeneration of port areas, especially in these countries most strongly influenced by modernism over many decades, puts something essential on the table concerning urban planning in general: these areas seem to have a great potential to function as the start of a another type of urban planning – not only

1 This chapter is based on my book *City and Port – Transformation of Port-cities, London Barcelona New York Rotterdam*, Utrecht, International Books, 1999.

2 Lewis Mumford, *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects*, Harcourt, Brace and World, New York, 1961.

because of the possibility of spectacular waterfronts, but especially because these areas escaped from the control of the modernistic planning machine.

The development of port-cities can be regarded as the most manifest examples of the general process of *modernisation*. In general, the process of modernisation concerns the development of a balance between the process of globalisation and the ambitions of local communities to improve the conditions of daily life. A second aspect of this modernisation process concerns the relation between urbanisation and the natural conditions of the territory, which should be revised in order to avoid an overly aggressive exploitation of nature, soil, water and air. These two themes are as old as the city itself, and especially as old as the port-city.

Establishing new relations between the local and global and between urbanisation and nature is important nowadays because of the scale of these developments worldwide. During the next 35 years, a 100 per cent increase of the population living in cities all over the world is expected,³ especially in developing countries, and most of this unprecedented urbanisation will take place in coast and delta areas. The developments in China are illustrative: more than 90 per cent of the Chinese industrial economy is concentrated in the coastal zones, where 330 port-cities are taking care of the worldwide distribution of the new products of the Chinese economy; all of these 330 port-cities seem to be trying to become the largest port in the world.⁴ It means that all the delta-areas of this enormous country are colonised by industrial and urban developments, with tremendous effects on the quality of urban life and on the quality of the natural environment.

China is currently an extreme example of this, but similar processes are happening in other parts of Asia, in Africa and Latin-America, while port-cities and port-regions in the 'western world' find themselves in the process of structural reorganisation, de-industrialisation and urbanisation. More than ever, coastal zones – and especially port-cities – are the backbone of economic traffic and urban development all over the world.

These processes of exploding economic growth and intensification in port-areas are developing parallel to two other important processes:

- the increasing need for an approach to urban development which pays attention to the specific cultural and historic identity of cities and regions, related to the general desire for local communities which have a clear identity, as a counterweight to the processes of globalisation;
- the increasing need for a careful approach to the natural environment, especially the water-systems of rivers, deltas and coastal areas.

Port-cities have already played a role as laboratories of modernisation for many centuries. Port-cities represent in the most explicit and critical ways new approaches to the two above-mentioned 'great themes' – the relation between the global and the local, and the relation between urbanisation and the natural territory.

3 According to UNESCO calculations.

4 James Wang, *New Trends in Port-City Interactions in China*, IACP-conference, Rotterdam, 2005.

From the early phase of modern urban development, from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, until the end of the twentieth century, there have been two contrasting ways of responding to these two ‘great themes’. In earlier times too, the case of the London Docklands had an important role as a ‘trendsetter’.

The First Arrangement: The Port-City as Intermediate Zone

The first arrangement, developed in most western port-cities from the late Middle Ages until the middle of the nineteenth century, was characterised by a strong interweaving of both port and urban infrastructure and of the natural conditions of the landscape and the port infrastructure. The construction of the port infrastructure was made possible by the presence of natural artefacts such as bays, creeks, etc. The development, construction and maintenance of the port and urban infrastructure were combined in one policy. City and port were interwoven with each other; the port was located near or on the immediate border of the city. In this enclosed system of the port-city, the harbour was a marketplace – the final destination on the transportation route – and the port’s infrastructure was organised within the enclosed boundary of the city.

However, this integration of urban system and port system was effected in different ways. The difference of Dutch and British port-cities is illustrative; very similar but dealing with different local configurations of the relations between water and territory and with different relationships between public and private initiatives.

In the Dutch port-cities – the most important centres of world trade during the seventeenth century – the urban port infrastructure was a transformed and manipulated part of the landscape drainage system. The systems of harbours and canals in cities like Amsterdam and Rotterdam were developed and constructed as public works; they functioned as port infrastructure as well as drainage systems and as the primary elements of the urban fabric. This enabled merchants and port entrepreneurs to build relatively small warehouses and depots beside the canals. The elements of hydraulic engineering – canals, quays, dykes, dams and sluices – were at the same time the main framework of the urban fabric. The quays and dykes were the most important urban streets; the dam was the main square and the core of the Dutch water-city. City, port and water-management infrastructure were completely interwoven.

In London, on the contrary, a large-scale port infrastructure, initiated and constructed by public authorities, did not exist. Here special companies, such as the West India Company and the East India Company, played a main role in the development of port equipment. During the 1700s, these companies gave emphasis to the development of a new type of buildings. During this period the port of London was concentrated on the River Thames, where ships could lie in the roads and could be loaded and unloaded at the riverbanks. The integration of port and city in London was demonstrated by the scale of building, with the famous Adelphi building by Robert Adams as the most prestigious and famous exemplification of the modern port-city of mid-eighteenth-century. London had

taken over the leading role as the most important trade centre of the world from Holland, and the Adelphi was the demonstration *par excellence* of the city that 'ruled the waves'.

The Second Arrangement: Creating Sharp Borders

While the Adelphi represented the peak of the special relationship between city and port, at the same time it marked its end. From the end of the eighteenth century London developed a quite different type of port infrastructure, by creating a brand new landscape of docklands. The *dock* was an innovative invention, which enabled mass ship-handling, protected against the tidal movement of the water, (which is rather extreme in London) and protected against robbery and raids, which was an established tradition on the open and unprotected water of the River Thames. The initiative, lay-out and construction of the docks was the result of initiatives by the companies, who originally owned and ruled these docks.

The moving of the port activities from the riverbanks to the new docks resulted in a sharp separation between city and port, which would deeply influence the spatial development of other western port-cities.

In many port-cities, it took a long time – from the middle of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century – for the development of a totally different relationship between port and city to take place. During the nineteenth century there was a great deal of construction of new large-scale public works of basins, quays and warehouses – designed and constructed by professional departments of public works, which also were responsible for the extension of the city and the water-management of the city – in many continental port-cities, for instance, in Holland. On the other hand, the first signs of specialisation and autonomous development of the port as an independent entity also became visible in the continental port-cities. From the 1920s and 1930s a new, modernistic arrangement of port-city relations was developed that finally departed radically from the original arrangement. Planning institutions became convinced that it was no longer fruitful to combine the scale of the port with the development of the city. An inspiring example for this new separation was the case of the London Docklands.

The London Docklands also became a showcase of something which other cities tried to avoid: the destiny of the leftover land between the docks as residential areas for the poorest people of the city. This London East End was made famous by Charles Dickens' novels, which described the poor and miserable conditions of the people in this zone, most of them dependent on employment in the port. The separation of city and port became part of a social policy, intended to insulate the urban community from the raw and strange world of the ships and the port.

During the post-World War II decades, the separation of port and city was concluded. Rotterdam, the world's largest port from 1961, built its new port and industrial complexes even further away from the city. In many cases, clear distinctions – in terms of both policy and space – were made between the industrialised port landscape, the city and the green landscape.

Port and urban planning came off worse in processes which were dominated by a conceptual separation between urban social values and large-scale infrastructures. The large *technical* framework of the large-scale infrastructure, including the port infrastructure, was regarded as being in conflict with the social, public domain of the city.

The Twenty-first Century: Towards a Third Arrangement of Port-City Landscape

As a result of the policy of concentrating all port activities outside the urban territory, many old dockland areas constructed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries lost their original function and instead became key targets of policies of urban regeneration in most European and North-American port-cities. Such famous examples as Baltimore's Inner Harbour, New York's Battery Park City, Barcelona's Moll de la Fusta and Rotterdam's Kop van Zuid established a new orientation of the city on the water, and created an urban waterfront which could play a major role in the economic and social regeneration of the whole city.

At first sight, the redevelopment of the London Docklands seemed to be part of this international series of urban regeneration projects. The big differences seem to be the scale and the more or less autonomous position of the London Docklands Development Corporation, which was allowed to follow a development policy which did not have to take much account of the interests of the surrounding communities. However, not only is the regeneration of Docklands a larger development than other examples of its kind, but its scale also creates the possibility that Docklands might become the forerunner of a comprehensive planning policy in large-scale delta areas.

At the time of writing, the situation of the urban water edges is changing. The port and transport economy and technology are undergoing fundamental changes. Some port activities need more large-scale concentration, deep water, etc.; other port and transport activities need greater decentralisation combined with an effective logistic organisation. Modern ports no longer have the linear character of the transit port, but consist of various specialised distribution hubs, which together make up a network.

Moreover, a new approach to water management is necessary. In previous times, 'modern' water management seemed to produce greater safety, but it also reduced the potential economic and recreational use of the land. Now, however, the management of water is itself being confronted with objective limits. A series of floods and near-floods all over Europe in the 1990s demonstrated that belief in total control of the water system an illusion. Existing water management policy, with its repeated strengthening and raising of the level of dykes, narrowing the rivers and increasing pumping-power in the polders (in Holland) showed that it had no answer to the fundamental effects of climate change. Radical changes in approach are giving a stronger emphasis on 'dynamic' and 'elastic' types of water management, which allow more space to the water in the rivers, more space for temporary water storage in the lowlands, and the replacement of the

narrow forms of coastal defence by a wider zone of artificial as well as natural defences of dunes, beaches, inlets, islands and breakwaters. The change from a static towards a dynamic water management – from ‘hard’ towards ‘soft’ forms of coastal defence – also offers new opportunities for economic development, especially for port development and recreation.

Finally, the character of urbanisation has changed fundamentally. Because of increasing mobility and new communication and information technologies, the ‘daily urban systems’ in the western world exist on an increasingly regional scale. However, in the large metropolitan areas there is a growing separation between the regional systems occupied on a daily basis by the urban middle class, and the world of the poor and the disadvantaged, who lack any linkage to the infrastructure of the modern information and communication technology. Urban planning and urban design should take into consideration not only the regional as the relevant scale of the modern city, but also the problem of how to enable every citizen to experience and participate in the urban world in its new regional form.

The new circumstances concerning water management, port development and city development challenge us to find a new approach to the transformation of the urbanised delta landscape, with more coherent relationships between landscape, urbanisation and port development, and between landscape design, urban design and hydraulic engineering.

Port-cities have a major responsibility for creating a new balance within the natural territory, which includes the water itself, the infrastructure of the port system and the public domain of the urban system. The design of the new urban waterfronts, the re-conversion of obsolete docklands and the lay-out of new port terminals have, in their combination, the potential to function as a coherent framework for the urbanising landscape and as the core of a public domain at a new, regional scale.

This new approach to planning and designing port regions creates the need to reconsider the existing assignment of duties of planning institutions and authorities. Existing separations between port authorities, city planning departments and institutions responsible for the landscape should be turned into their collaboration or even their converging. Related to these considerations, the redevelopment of the London Docklands could play an important role in the development of the larger Thames Gateway area.

Such a redevelopment strategy implies some principles which need to be elaborated during the planning and design process:

- 1) *Time and the long term*

An area such as the Thames Gateway needs a long-term perspective, which sets out clear *conditions* for urbanisation, environmental qualities and economic (port related) activities for the next 30 to 50 years without, however, seeking to impose a detailed blueprint.

- 2) *A regional scale and local projects*

A vision for development with a long-term perspective is needed on a regional scale. But at the same time it is important to define *projects* that can play a role as ‘generators’ of this regional perspective at the local scale and with

implementation in the short term. These projects should pay particular attention to the ways in which economic, social and environmental aspects are linked together. They play a role as the 'workbench' of the laboratory: each project can learn from the other projects and linkages between economy, social aspects and environment can be improved during the process.

3) *Considering river and docklands as a new type of public domain*

The river and the Docklands have the possibility to become the core of a public space on the regional scale. This partly natural, partly manufactured landscape is a neutral spatial structure which is owned by nobody and at the same time can be accepted and used by everyone. It is a carrier of the specific urban history of London and expresses the specific natural conditions of the landscape. Developing the river and the Docklands as a public domain of regional significance means that the Docklands should be transformed into a public feature, not only for the immediate surrounding districts, but for all people of the Thames Gateway region. The creation of public access entrance to this new public domain, and of possibilities for its public use, will be of fundamental importance in the development of the London region as a recognisable spatial and social coherent entity.

4) *Interweaving port and city*

This interweaving becomes more and more important for the city as well for the port. Examples of this are to be found in Seattle, Hong Kong and Barcelona: these cities exploit their ports as important public and urban features, combined with facilities for panoramic views, recreation, fishing, parks, etc. The port activity itself can be 'rediscovered' as a feature with a spectacular dimension which contributes to the identity of the city. In return, the city has become more important to the port, because the latter becomes more dependent on logistic and financial infrastructures, which prefer to locate themselves in 'interesting' urban areas. This new interchange between city and port should be elaborated as part of the regional and long-term strategy.

5) *Creating conditions for complexity and sustainability*

The changing climate and rising sea level make it necessary to create the conditions in which changing water levels can be managed. It means that new, innovative solutions must be developed to combine a sustainable system of water management with specific types of urbanisation and/or recreational facilities. New types of environments can be developed, which can play an exciting and generative role in the development of the river and Docklands areas as a public domain.

The challenge is not to *plan* what exactly should happen and what not, but to *create conditions* for a new urban, regional and environmental complexity. The London Docklands and the Thames Gateway together are one of the few examples in the world where it might be possible to create these conditions.

It will be extremely difficult both to manage this process and invent good innovative solutions. But if it can do so, London could become a showcase of international importance for such a development.

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Chapter 2

Smokestack: The Industrial History of Thames Gateway

John Marriott

Several years ago, when these matters were more fashionable, London's problematic and contradictory location within the industrial history of the nation received considerable attention. London, it was argued, was unlike so many of the great urban centres of the midlands and the north in that it was not begat of the Industrial Revolution. Despite the fact that London remained the greatest centre of production and consumption, it was seen to possess few of the features that defined the experience of industrialisation. Large factory production and heavy engineering, for example, were conspicuous by their absence. London manufacturing continued to be dominated by small-scale workshops employing fewer than 25 persons because the capital was simply too remote from the sources of coal and iron ore and land was too expensive to allow it to compete successfully with the burgeoning industrial heartlands.¹ Thus, although the most important metropolitan industries – clothing, furniture and printing – were mechanised in the course of the nineteenth century by widespread adoption of the sewing machine and the band-saw, the organisation of labour and production remained largely unaffected. J.L. Hammond captured prevailing sentiment when he declared that the Industrial Revolution was a storm cloud that passed over London but broke elsewhere.²

Such fine epigrams, however, reveal only part of a complicated story. To suggest that London was completely inured to the influence of the Industrial Revolution is patently false. The threat of the impending storm forced metropolitan producers to seek refuge in industries such as clothing, furniture and luxury items which

1 Peter Hall, *The Industries of London Since 1861*, London, Hutchinson, 1962; Gareth Stedman Jones, *Outcast London. A Study of the Relationship between Classes in Victorian Society*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1971; Raphael Samuel, 'The Workshop of the World: Steam Power and Hand Technology in Mid-Victorian Britain', *History Workshop Journal*, No. 3, Spring 1977, pp. 6–72; Leonard Schwarz, *London in the Age of Industrialisation: Entrepreneurs, Labour Force and Living Conditions, 1700–1850*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992.

2 J.L. Hammond, 'The Industrial Revolution and Discontent', *New Statesman*, 21 March 1925. This piece was a review of Dorothy George's wonderful *London Life in the Eighteenth Century* (London, K. Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., 1925) which had argued along similar lines. I am indebted to Simon McKeon for tracking down the reference.

had long been established to meet the seemingly insatiable demands of the metropolitan bourgeoisie. Other industries such as engineering and shipbuilding, for which London had an enviable reputation, fared badly. The emergence of iron-clad vessels driven by steam fatally weakened London's tradition of shipbuilding by dramatically cutting the demand for wooden ships; any attempt to switch production had to surmount the seemingly insuperable barrier posed by its disadvantageous location. Then the crash of the Overend-Gurney discount house in 1866 rendered irreversible the long-term decline of this metropolitan industry in particular and heavy manufacturing more generally.

To privilege heavy industry in this way, however, is somewhat myopic for it understates other vital dimensions of London's modernisation. Before industrialisation took hold in the first decades of the nineteenth century, London had established itself as the world centre of commerce and finance. Such authority was built on and sustained by a communications infrastructure, at the heart of which stood the Thames and an extensive docklands complex. Toward the close of the eighteenth century, powerful merchant traders combined with developers to construct the West India Docks on the Isle of Dogs. This was soon followed by Wapping, East India, Surrey and St Katharine's docks: with the completion of the Victoria Dock in 1855 London possessed the largest and most modern docks in the world, capable of accommodating the new breed of ocean-going ships. More than any other feature on the metropolitan landscape, docklands represented the capital's modernity, celebrated time and again in paintings, etchings and feature articles. And for good reason. The docks brought together finance, commercial and entrepreneurial capital. The Victoria Dock, for example, was financed by the City and built by entrepreneurs previously responsible for some of the most ambitious railway development schemes in Britain and abroad. More than this, the docks nurtured and sustained a large range of associated industries including ship repair yards, foundries, coopers and rope makers.³ Advanced hydraulic lifting gear in the Victoria Docks accelerated the unloading of seaborne coal from the north-east, thereby reducing its cost and compensating for London's remoteness from the country's mines. This ready supply of cheap coal in turn gave rise to massive gas and related chemical industries.⁴

Metropolitan industries varied considerably in terms of what they produced and how production was organised. London attracted such variety because it remained the largest centre of consumption, and although locational disadvantages proved decisive in the long term for the fortunes of heavier industries, London's supremacy as a manufacturing centre remained unchallenged. This renders any

3 Roy Porter, *London. A Social History*, London, Hamish Hamilton, 1994, p. 190.

4 John Marriott, 'West Ham: London's Industrial Centre and Gateway to the world', I: 'Rapid Growth, 1870–1923' and II: 'Stagnation and Decline, 1923–1939', *The London Journal*, Vols 13 (1988), pp. 121–42 and 14 (1989), pp. 43–58.

definitive statement on the impact of the Industrial Revolution on London difficult, if not impossible.⁵

As a way of out this impasse, I believe, with David Green, that we have to alter the terms of the debate.⁶ In foregrounding mechanised factory production, historians have defined the Industrial Revolution too narrowly. Well into the nineteenth century, small-scale production retained a significant presence on Britain's industrial landscape because it was sufficiently versatile and adaptable to compete successfully against mechanised production.⁷ Furthermore, an emphasis on production tends to understate the importance of the service sector, which overall contributed more to economic growth than manufacturing. These qualifications force a radical reassessment of the impact of the Industrial Revolution on the metropolitan economy.

London's Manufacturing Heartland

I wish to approach the matter rather differently and intend to begin by rethinking the spatial boundaries of the metropolis, for it is not only the Industrial Revolution that has been defined too narrowly but the metropolis itself. Scholarly research on London's industrialisation has taken the outer boundary to be that defined by the administrative limit of the London County Council. To the east, therefore, London stopped at the River Lea which marked the eastern edge of Poplar; south of the Thames its limit was the eastern edge of Woolwich. The narrowness of this spatial definition has resulted in a highly partial and distorted view of the industrial history of the metropolis; by including these 'suburbs' in the account (that is, what we now recognise to be the bulk of the metropolitan Thames Gateway), we gain a rather different picture overall.

Take as just one example data on workforces attached to particular industries conventionally thought to be outside London. At their height in the decades around 1900, the Great Eastern Locomotive works at Stratford in West Ham employed 7,000, the Thames Ironworks in Canning Town 6,000, Siemens in Woolwich 7,000, Woolwich Arsenal 70,000, Beckton Gasworks 10,000 and Ford's at Dagenham 15,000. At a time when London was putatively dominated by small-scale production units, these figures point to a rather different experience. It is true that historians have noted the existence of such industrial concentrations, particularly in the remarkable case of West Ham, but they are invariably viewed as part of the distinct experience of outer London or the outskirts, and are therefore considered beyond legitimate interest. To the contrary, I wish to argue that because the movement of capital did not recognise administrative boundaries

5 This is the implication of the recent argument in Francis Sheppard, *London. A History*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998, ch. 14.

6 David R. Green, 'The Metropolitan Economy: Continuity and Change, 1800–1939', in Keith Hoggart and David R. Green (eds), *London. A New Metropolitan Geography*, London, Edward Arnold, 1991, pp. 8–9.

7 Samuel, 'The Workshop of the World'.