

Chapter 11

‘Alright on the Night?’ Envisioning a ‘Night-time Economy’ in the Thames Gateway¹

Karina Berzins and Iain MacRury

Young adults make their own nightlife, but not under conditions of their own choosing.

(Chatterton and Hollands, 2003, p. 8)

It has become increasingly recognised, London wide (GLA, 2005; New Start, 2005), nationally (ODPM, 2005) and internationally (Chatterton and Holland, 2003; Marshall, 2004; Hobbs, 2003, p. 2; Hobbs et al., 2003, pp. 25–8; Zukin, 1991; O’Connor and Wynne, 1996) that the quality of life – or ‘liveability’² as Department of Communities has it – in a town, borough, a region, or even in a particular *street*, must include a sense of the quality of the *night* life.

The working definition of a high quality ‘night’ can stretch from ‘getting a good night’s sleep’ to an all night venue crawl including drinking, dancing and a range of music, food and other entertainments – with a good deal else in between these poles. As we might imagine, ‘community cultures’ are (variously) affirmed, elaborated, transgressed, denied and – in a sense – *created*, in important and distinctive ways: *by night*.

In this sense evening/night-time leisure should be understood as constituted in, and through a wide array of significant as well as elusive ‘places’ and ‘goods’ which are more or less optimally provisioned. Such sites and ‘goods’, some

1 Thanks to: Phil Mullan, Julia Dane, Emma Roberts, Andrew Blake and to numerous respondents across three recent projects on NTE related development in the Thames Gateway.

2 Liveability: the liveability agenda is about creating places where people choose to live and work. This resource aims to give local authorities and their partners access to the good practice, guidance and practical tools that will help them improve the quality of people’s everyday lives. See also the National Agenda for ‘Sustainable Communities’ – ‘A sustainable community is a place where people want to live and work, now and in the future. It is safe and inclusive, well planned, well run and offers equality of opportunity to all citizens. Local authorities have a crucial role to play in creating sustainable communities and building a sense of community’ (<http://www.idea-knowledge.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=80829>).

basic, others complex – and various as they are – must be delivered through the development, maintenance and management of an *economy*.

The quality, range, sophistication and diversity of its night-time economy (NTE) writ large or small – village, city, or region or wide – is (we wish to argue) both index and locus, affirming (or otherwise) communities' ongoing 'livability', health and 'sustainability'.

The 'night-time economy' (NTE) describes the experiences and mechanisms attaching to the accessibility, development and provision of evening experiences; be it via a strip of bars, a new branch of Nandos, a casino, a vibrant arts centre, a famous (or trendy) bistro, an Internet café, a series of dance or comedy events, an ice skating rink, a bowling alley, a Blockbuster video store³ or a Bollywood film festival. As a concept NTE is predicated on the recognition that citizens and consumers, and those charged with planning, governing or managing the places and spaces where they live and work, inhabit a *24-hour society*.

Times, places and spaces of pleasure, rest and play, where the public extends into domestic experience, and where the private and domestic extend into public space – are integral to how places work – so that 'night-time leisure' is no longer a 'marginal' concern (Hobbs, 2003, pp. 1–3; Chatterton and Holland, 2003; O'Connor and Wynne, 1996) and no longer apprehended (just) in peripheral vision.

NTE 'cultures' are socially based within and around sites demarcated for specialised kinds of *consumption*, *production* and social interaction; all together framed by systems of legal and informal governance,⁴ habits, tastes and lifestyles – and by pressing commercial and economic imperatives.

It has been no surprise that when popular writers have imagined communities (sustainable or otherwise) in popular TV drama (classically in *EastEnders* or *Coronation Street*) it is to the motif of 'the local' ('The Queen Vic' or 'The Rovers') that we are so often returned. But what of the array of planners, developers and

3 While 'staying in is the new going out' was a fashionable phrase for a while, we focus away from domestic night-time leisure. However, the domestic sphere is a key competitor for the night-time economy – opening the likelihood of Thames Gateway nurturing a recession to the domestic amongst its numerous projected future residents. This, we think, would be a shame. Enhancements of domestic appliances home cinema etc., compulsion for families to stay home alone. This is clearly the antithetical to community spaces and the interactional multiculturalism which in optimistic moments we may want to assign to a Thames Gateway vision. Thus Putnam's (1995) vision of bowling alone will be re-inscribed into the TG of browsing alone, notwithstanding the techno-culturalists who insist upon this being a satisfactory stand in for offline life.

4 The 2005 Licensing Act – Changes to the licensing laws (contained within the Licensing Act, 2003) are aimed at spreading the time at which customers leave venues – and the 2005 Gambling Acts (ushering in a bid process to which a number of Thames Gateway boroughs have bid (e.g. Southend, Havering, Greenwich, Newham). However there is a further and complex network of governance including doormen, proprietors, friendship networks and social habit. Since this chapter was written, the Supercasino licence was granted to Manchester – and then revoked. Casino-led development appears for the moment to be out of favour with national government.

their governmental overseers? When Thames Gateway 'sustainable communities' are envisioned, where is 'the local'? And, who and where, *are* the locals? In this chapter we argue that acknowledging NTE as a central component of 'liveability' should be made more central to thinking about how Thames Gateway is developing.

While a good degree of NTE development, anywhere, is contingent and ad hoc (alongside homes, transport and general 'infrastructure' development) the relatively rapid and large scale of Thames Gateway planning and building cannot but benefit from time to time, recalling that NTE is at the heart of development and local experience, of the life of any community and of any household – this so that NTE is planned into the region sensitively, thoughtfully and strategically.

There is considerable concern about a (generalised) 'lack of amenity' in the Thames Gateway, with headline condemnation of sprawling housing estates and 'slums of the future'.⁵ It is useful to ask, (with future residents of TG in mind) alongside questions about where people will shop; where they will go to school; how they will get about; where they will get medical treatment – all core questions of practical social planning and policy – one further question: what will they (or we) do in the evenings?

While the London NTE serves a wide range of suburban communities (with the tourist markets a necessary and valuable supplementary NTE market) and with the West End NTE thriving on the transport infrastructure that services commuters by day, it is also the case that, on the outer fringes of London, and for those communities where NTE at 'commuting distance' is not an option (due to time and expense constraints) there is a strong sense of relative NTE 'deprivation' (say, in Beckon, Canning Town or Barking). Here, it is common to report a mode of 'deprivation' which is symptomatic of, and amplifying, other kinds of deprivation experienced in poorer boroughs and poorer areas – that is 'there's nothing to do round here'. This is, no doubt, a source of anxiety – linked as such sentiments often are to issues such as antisocial behaviour, drug-taking and other problems. At the same time the invigorated interest in all things property related: the 'location, location, location' phenomenon – ensures that boroughs are working, in sometimes contradictory ways – to portray the 24-hour desirability of this or that locale.

In some cases these anxieties provoke responses translated into a NTE strategy (e.g. Cheltenham, 2004; Croydon, 2003; and see GLA, 2005): local authorities have lately actively supported the inward investment and job creation attached to a thriving NTE, to promote their area in: '... proactive strategies designed to secure competitive advantage over their perceived competitors' (Hall and Hubbard, 1996). This can entail the re-packaging of urban space (Jessop, 1998),

5 The coverage in the popular press of a recent (2005) IPPR report into Thames Gateway residents' opinions conveys a good deal of anxiety about the level of infrastructure service provision. However, NTE did not appear high on the agenda. We argue that it should be. See *Evening Standard* (London), 20 January 2006, 'Inside Prescottgrad; Barrack-like Homes, No Local Shops, Schools, Playgrounds – Not Even a Post Box'.

often by focusing upon 'flagship' projects and the hosting of prestige events such as high profile sporting or cultural events (Hobbs, 2003, p. 3).

This chapter examines Thames Gateway NTE – with the thought that across the Gateway there may not be sufficient attention paid to this issue. The first and key point is this: Thames Gateway is not a local authority; nor does it have a Mayor's office or assembly (as London does) to devise and deliver any kind of NTE strategy (GLA, 2005). Thames Gateway could not be empowered in this way since the key NTE planning powers, through which NTE is governed and stimulated, reside in national legislation and (crucially) in local licencing. While housing and other social policy issues can be co-coordinated under the special Thames Gateway authority legislation and guided by policy statements (e.g., 'Sustainable Communities', 2003) there is a danger that NTE will 'fall through the cracks' or 'off the map', because the legislative structures are not in place to ensure any degree of coordination in the NTE sphere. NTE is bureaucratically and in terms of legislative frames 'out of sight and out of mind' in the Thames Gateway plan view.

Within the Thames Gateway there is also competition within and between city and region. As Salet et al. (2002) observe

There tends to be a divorce between the governance of the metropolitan area and the governance of the broader region. It should be stressed again that the mayor's geographical area of responsibility only covers the area within the green belt Many people travel into and out of this area for employment and leisure purposes. (Salet et al., 2002, p. 55)

If we consider this in practical terms there is a nightly tension between the NTE spheres in and around the employment hubs of central London (the West End, the City and Canary Wharf), all of which have well developed NTE facilities – and the 'home' borough or suburban NTE destination. In research we conducted in Newham (MacRury et al., 2008) we came to understand that the effort to stimulate local (dispersed) NTE locations is hampered by the pull exerted by work location (central) NTE spots. As a result the centre has traditionally been advantaged (in this respect) over the periphery – with consumers and providers variously put off by the risk of a 'too quiet' or 'dead' outer London or suburban NTE opportunity.

Thus the NTE of the TG as it is currently projected in the plans for large housing developments such as East Quarry, may well, predominantly, be located on the Strand, in Covent Garden, in Brixton and around the other SE facing London train stations, because effectively the NTE economy will be an extension of the daytime work economy. This will have disastrous effects on social cohesion because unless locally based night-time amenities are nurtured and developed in interesting and sensitive ways, there will be very few incentives for workers to leave behind the bright lights of central London. When necessity demands that they return home, it will be purely for domestic leisure in the home, for child care, and for screen culture.

It is quite apparent (we think) that the NTE of the TG should include many and varied and localised instances of evening oriented third space,⁶ venues to ensure that the gateway does not lapse into a hyper-trophied version of dormitory suburbia.

The Mayor's (2005) strategy (in the face of this issue) aims to stimulate dispersal *out*; igniting new centres in the Greater London areas, and taking pressure off Westminster and Camden. However, this strategic dispersal must surely also try to take account of the 'Thames Gateway effect', i.e., that 'the periphery' of London is evermore assertively *regional* rather than greater-metropolitan.

Alongside this strategy of dispersal, the main impetus to NTE development has come from local authorities' entrepreneurial competitiveness (see also Chatterton and Holland, 2003). In the Thames Gateway there is a likelihood that authorities will compete against one another – perhaps in the terms identified by Hobbs and others (2003, p. 3) above.

A related problem is that the structure of borough versus borough competitive bidding – ostensibly a mechanism to ensure that 'a locally based' case is made in structuring national regeneration – runs the risk in practice that national governmental priorities will overshadow local and regional ones,⁷ rendering the 'competition' merely gestural (see Allmendinger and Thomas's (1998, p. 226) analysis of governmental control of borough's unitary development plan bids).

And, of course, this has been the case; with the casino licensing competition ushered in via the 2005 Gambling Act a perfect exemplification of the disjunction between local authority planning, regional strategic (regeneration) development and (national) governmental priorities. When, as has happened in regard to the Casino licenses we throw the Mayor's office into the mix; well, it is no surprise that the casino development has produced a somewhat intriguing series of news stories; stories alleging conflict and interference across and between the various tiers, departments and levels of government.⁸

Much of the research we have conducted and which informs this chapter indicates that the current provision of NTE in the inner Thames Gateway is not meeting the needs and aspirations of local populations. Thus, while we regularly

6 Oldenburg (2000) gives examples of the importance of 'third places' – between domestic and public space – as a bulwark against a diminution of a sense of community.

7 Allmendinger and Thomas illustrate this dynamic with reference to UDP in the 1990s: the boroughs were incorporated into the public-private London Pride Partnership in 1994. However, it will be seen that this new role for the London boroughs was given on the government's terms. The content of a borough's Unitary Development Plan was constrained by central government guidance – strategic guidance and the PPGs – reinforced by the appeal process which gives central government much power in the British planning system (Allmendinger and Thomas, 1998, p. 226).

8 For example: 'Today allegations appeared that Prescott's office was deeply involved in the Dome development and its casino bid, including lobbying for rival schemes to stand aside. Anna Waite, former Tory leader of Southend-on-Sea council, said: "It was made clear to me pressure was coming from on high that there should be only one bid in the Thames Gateway area and it should be the Dome. The whole thing stank from beginning to end"' (*Evening Standard* (London), 'Changing Story of the DPM', 6 July 2006).

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Figure 11.1 A recent edition of *Time Out* had to work hard to highlight NTE activities 'hidden' in London's East End. It is useful to envision an East London edition of *Time Out* 2012, or for *Time Out* Thames Gateway 2015. Reproduced by permission Time Out Group Ltd

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hear the rhetorical announcements – some based in sound evidence that ‘London is moving East’ day by day we have been made strongly aware that ‘night by night’ it remains overwhelmingly that NTE entertainments and activities continue to thrive and develop in the traditional locations (the West End), and in a range of NTE hot spots (Croydon, Islington (Upper Street), and Covent Garden).

However, for every Upper Street or Covent Garden there are numberless areas which have underdeveloped NTE infrastructure. And as the provisioning of such spaces falls between the public (under-)resourcing of leisure centres, art centres and community centres on the one hand, and the commercial venues owned by a number of large global providers (operating under ‘super-brand’ names such as Tiger Tiger, Wetherspoons, All Bar One and so forth) on the other – the concern is that these locales will become clone like night-time brandscapes, will not be sustainable, and will not meet the needs of local populations.

When NTE Goes Wrong: In Anticipation of the Thames Gateway

The night-time economy is important to sustainability for a number of reasons. First, there is a clear economic benefit – in that jobs are created. Even while these are typically low skilled and casual in many instances – perhaps especially in high volume McDonaldised non-independent venues – nevertheless the tradition of the bar job, or waiter/ressing is often valued in local employment markets, in particular in providing jobs for young adults between home and living independently.

NTE venues can bring life and light to local high streets – especially at a time when the tendency, no doubt to be amplified in the Thames Gateway – is towards mega malls and super-supermarkets.

While this is by no means a uniform quality of Night-time experience and provision, there is a case to be made that NTE venues offer an opportunity for social mixing and exchange across and between disparate groups – across dimensions of ethnicity, gender, generation and social class. Typically also however there are countervailing tendencies – such that NTE venues might be marketed towards one narrow age or income group. Nevertheless this is a plausible benefit attached to good NTE provision (see Butler and Robson, 2003, on Islington)

NTE amenity – operating evening and day – can enhance the quality of (soft-) communality, thus, as Amin and Thrift (2002) propose:

Restaurants, football matches, musical events, golf clubs are places where ideas are developed and deals are struck, deliberately, or through casual socialization. They are places where standards are tracked, gossip is exchanged, rivals are noted and disputes are aired, rather as they are in business associations and interest groups. But these are not Marshallian spaces of interchange between members of the same community of interest (say, furniture makers in an Italian Piazza). Instead, they are more broadly constituted centres of sociability or professional gathering with a light economic touch; mixing pleasure, voice, search and business opportunity in emergent ways, (Amin and Thrift, 2002, p. 73)

They go on to add, in a point germane to considering sustainable communities, that the presence of such spaces, 'have become a significant factor in urban investment decisions' (Amin and Thrift, 2002, p. 73).

Thus, if Thames Gateway communities are really to host SMES and other businesses (providing job and local networks) in their midst, then it might be wise to plan in soft attractants such as NTE amenity can (in many instances) furnish. Without such soft infrastructure – delivered variously and to a high quality – the intention to create 'mixed' land use will be proved to have been largely rhetorical.

It is usefully to register some of the kinds of responses residents give when invited to think about the quality of a night-time economy which, largely, is understood not to be thriving. We want to suggest that the night-time economy in Newham (an inner Thames Gateway borough) can stand as a useful exemplar in thinking more broadly about the Thames Gateway NTE.

First, Newham is part of the Gateway – central to huge regeneration projects – and, especially, the Olympics. It is assertively at the cusp of old and new east London – and successes and failures in development and integration in Newham can stand usefully as in some ways more widely indicative across the projected Thames Gateway.

Second, it is anticipated that many Newham residents will be priced out of the area, such that Thames Gateway may be a medium term destination for many, in line (to an extent) with a long tradition of Eastward migration from the 'inner' East End outwards.

Detailed research into the NTE provision revealed some indication that the absence of adequate NTE provisioning can have a strong negative impact on people's sense of their quality of life – and a negative effect on sustainability (e.g., in the likelihood of choosing to stay in Newham). We report here some quantitative results as indicative of an NTE locale needing revivification:

- *General NTE offer*: how 'in general' did respondents rate Newham for going out?
- *Range of activities*: how did respondents assess the range, choice and variety of NTE offerings in the borough?
- *Restaurants*: how did respondents assess the provision of restaurants and eating-places?
- *Cinema/theatre leisure, etc*: to what extent was the provision of cinema and theatre type entertainment deemed sufficient?
- *Extent of feeling safe*: to what extent did residents and visitors feel safe and secure in Newham in the evening?
- *Transport*: how, in regard to NTE did residents rate the provision of transport links.
- *Five year view*: this question attempted to capture the degree to which residents felt optimistic about the future development of a thriving NTE in Stratford.

So it is worth pointing out that these indicators, expressing broad dissatisfaction with an array of indices of NTE provision – including an alarming tendency to

Table 11.1 Mean and modal satisfaction indices – summary table

	General NTE offer evaluation	Range of activities	Restaurants	Cinema/theatre leisure, etc.	Extent of feeling safe	Transport	Five year view
Mean	3.5195	3.7089	3.5181	2.8072	3.3253	2.6623	2.3158
Mode	4.00	4.00	4.00	2.00	3.00	2.00	2.00

Notes

- 1 Across these seven main indices of satisfaction/dissatisfaction responses have been recorded as headline data. We report both mean and modal scores to indicate both a scalar sense of satisfaction (mean) while also capturing the most frequently recorded specific assessments (modal score). This allows us to capture a sense of degree, frequency and kind of evaluations being relayed by respondents.
- 2 1 = very good and 5 = very poor.

feel unsafe at night – can save as a kind of warning, or premonition of a future Thames Gateway where NTE has not evolved because – in the conception NTE was ‘off the map’ – with regenerative effort coordinated most often towards the mega- and super-sized event and location – leaving local NTE development in abeyance.

Large regeneration projects – in housing and around the Olympics – as well as retail regeneration – should, ideally, be connected to, networked with and interspersed with the existing infrastructure (and people). There is a fear, for instance, that ExCel and Stratford circus, not to mention the Olympics – will yield event spaces but leaving new residents living *in parallel* with the present inhabitants. Thus the regenerated NTE infrastructure will serve a parallel universe of affluence – emphasising division and splitting across the locale.

In a study we conducted for Havering Council – again assessing NTE provision (in the context of their bid for a casino license) we found that over 70 per cent of respondents felt that the current leisure offer in Rainham is inadequate. The first focus group discussed the current leisure offer in some detail, and there was general agreement that it was poor. In particular, younger teenagers were pointed to as a group that had a lack of leisure provision. Alongside this, concerns were revealed in the focus groups regarding the increase in population of the local area with the proposed affordable housing agenda. There was acknowledgement that the existing leisure offer was inadequate for the present residents, and that there wasn't the infrastructure to support the increased population. Watching TV has far and away the most popular NTE activity – marking (what we see as) a regrettable recession to the domestic in that locale.

The competition from the domestic sphere is in the minds of marketers too. Thus in Mintel's (2003) assessment of the NTE markets (made before 2003 and 2005 legislation on gambling and licensing) they acknowledge the potential of a recession to the domestic, amongst some other ‘threats’.

Looking ahead, it is clear that the leisure industry will have its work cut out to improve market growth rates, particularly if consumers retrench in their homes – which are increasingly geared up to provide enjoyable leisure time or opt for spending more money on eating out and holidays abroad. Town-centre locations can be problematic for many leisure venues, with their risk – or perceived risk among older consumers – of crime, violence, parking problems and general rowdiness. Addressing the needs of children, of older people, of non-smokers and non-drinkers is becoming more urgent. The industry is only partly to blame for some problems. Endless delays in pushing through modernising legislation on drinking and gambling are holding back the sector. The optimistic scenario is one in which leisure outlets continue to break down old barriers between activities and consumers. There is much more entertainment available on the high street, for example, and health clubs could have a future role as social venues. Generally, however, the spread of leisure choices is unlikely to be radically different in ten years time. (Mintel, 2003)

It is useful to consider that in addition to these pressures – there is a range of social concerns. Table 11.2 illustrates the ‘aspirations anxieties’ surrounding NTE planning derived from three research projects we have undertaken (2004–2006). They condense various aspirations and anxieties – threats and promises – attaching to NTE/Tourist related development.

These, we suggest, can usefully gloss future planning and debate in different areas of Thames Gateway.

Visions and Versions of the Thames Gateway

There have been a number of visions for the Thames Gateway proposed by planners, and politicians. These include Peter Hall’s call for funding for infrastructure from casino regeneration:

My personal favorite would be a gambling tax used to promote casino-led regeneration in areas like Thames Gateway: Las Vegas on the Greenwich peninsula and the Swanscombe peninsula, with the punters pouring in from the mainland on Eurostar.⁹

Perhaps most famous is the call from Sir Terry Farrell, architect and master planner for a mega nature reserve, the ‘lakes district of London’ where people are conspicuous by their absence. Finally, and in stark conflict with this last vision is the ambition by the ODPM for large volumes of new dwellings to be built in the TG. It is this last vision, we think, that is most likely to conform to what finally arises.

Any one of these three visions of the TG is problematic, because overly identifying and identified with a too schematic understanding of the TG – it does however give worthwhile pause for thought.

9 Professor Sir Peter Hall, from his keynote lecture in December 2003. ‘Talking the Talk, Walking the Walk – How to Make Paper Plans Real’ (Royal Town Planning Institute’s (RTPI) annual lecture).

Table 11.2 Other indicative NTE/tourism problems – aspirations and anxieties

	Anxiety	Aspiration
ExCel	That this amenity exclusively services a visitor and business tourist economy, keeping NTE spin out benefits too tightly on the 'campus'. That locals rarely utilise the surrounding development – one experienced as 'not really in Newham'	That integrated into the development of the ExCel centre are spin off benefits in terms of jobs, but also NTE leisure opportunities that can serve local communities as well as visitor and tourist users more often
Stratford City	That new NTE amenities will emerge to service incoming professional residential groups, split off, geographically and reputationally from 'old Stratford' – instituting a 'right and wrong side of the tracks' culture – such that regeneration benefits don't sufficiently extend into an existing (and unsatisfactory NTE offer – one made even less appealing as rental increased push out established local providers in favour of chain-based pubs	That the influx of residents and visitors (up to and after the Olympics) will stimulate sympathetic redevelopment of Stratford town centre linking old and new towards producing a local and specific 'buzz' in Stratford and its environs – improving ambience and reputation of the area for all.
Casino (wherever located)	That this development will service 'high-roller' international tourism and high paid city workers – with little extra spin off amenity to enhance the broader leisure offer in the locale (be it Rainham, Greenwich, or Southend)	That while the casino itself may not appeal to local residents, there is sufficient leisure amenity built in (ice rink, fitness centres, welcoming bars and pubs etc.) to ensure that there is traffic between the super-structure and the local residents, in terms of both jobs and NTE enjoyment

In each case the night vision of the TG needs to be more clearly articulated and thought through, because clearly the gateway cannot and will not be reduced to a single vision of its NTE. So we have not set out to conduct an assessment or inventory of the TG as a whole, since as we have suggested this is not possible, nor perhaps desirable, however we have come to recognise the significance of the NTE to producing a more nuanced understanding of what is at stake in the TG.

Table 11.3 What NTE cultures are implicit in the planning? Hypothetical suggestions – but, what will happen?

	Main 'vision'	Implicit NTE provisioning/activities
Casino regeneration	Casino Regeneration – servicing mega venues	Casino and 'trickle down' NTE leisure offer serving tourist market and affluent city and suburban dwellers
Housing driven	New town style urban sprawl	Dormitory suburbanism and domestic privacy on large estates – and high volume drinking chain pubs – 'machines for drinking in'
National park/high density	Mini-urban style clusters in parkland	Mock Elizabethan country pubs interspersed between urban villages clustering on high end chain bars (All Bar One etc.)

The NTE, Tourism and the Post-Industrial

Sir Peter Hall's picture of Casino/Eurostar-led Thames Gateway regeneration (above), while no doubt somewhat glib, indicates what we see as a mistaken view of leisure planning, especially NTE leisure planning, in the Thames Gateway. The risk, we want to suggest, is that there will be considerable incentives offered up, considerable interest in leisure related land use, particularly with the lure of international, or at least interregional tourism spend. Thus while land use maps of the projected Thames Gateway may come to record good levels of day and evening leisure provision – there is a risk that this square footage will disproportionately cater to (day and night) tourist leisure. We want to argue that while tourism and NTE provisioning are similar – it is crucial to plan in specific and locally oriented NTE provision as both complementary and supplementary NTE infrastructure – and as a predominant proportion of leisure space as the Thames Gateway as its resident populations develop.

Tourism development is prominent among the strategies available to local, national and regional governments as they attempt to address issues of economic and social development in the post industrial era. It is natural to consider the NTE and tourism at the same time. However, as we will come to see, it is important to recognise that although there are some commonalities, there are also marked differences between the two.

Tourism offers nations and regions an important supplementary industry, one to set alongside and to enhance retail, cultural and entertainment based economic activity. For example, the UK and especially London, is increasingly dependent upon tourism for economic growth and for employment. Tourism frequently emerges as a panacea in the face of anxieties connected to post-industrial decline.

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The UK tourism industry's annual turnover is £76 billion, and accounts for 4 per cent of the GDP. As a growth industry, this is expected to rise to over £100 billion by 2010, however these figures were calculated without the impact of the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games (DCMS, 2004). Added to this, the UK tourism industry provides 2.1 million jobs, representing 7.4 per cent of all people employed in Great Britain (Great Britain Labour Statistics, 2002). In London, tourism accounts for 12 per cent of London's gross domestic product and supports 13 per cent of the workforce. It is against this financial situation that the Mayor of London, the London Development Agency and other regional stakeholders such as TourEast London have embarked upon a series of strategic plans to further enhance the tourist industries, and in particular to widen the distribution of economic gain, whilst minimising the social impact of tourism.

The Mayor of London has highlighted the fact that tourism facilities are too centralised (in the West of London), thus the LDA has committed to the devolution of budget and the delivery of strategic priorities to subregional level. One of the key vision's of the Mayor for Tourism is the principle of 'dispersal' – providing a greater provision of tourist destinations outside of West London (Great Britain Labour Statistics, 2004, p. 38). Indeed, if one examines the statistical data for London based tourist attractions, 80 per cent of both free and paid admission attractions are in West London.¹⁰ This principle of dispersal makes it crucial that high quality, successful tourist attractions are developed in strategic area to draw tourists away from the West.

There is certainly an intention from the Mayor to draw tourists to the East, however it is quite different to consider a tourism strategy for the East of London which of course includes a good deal of the inner TG, as opposed to considering the TG as a unified whole.

Under the heading of tourism and leisure planning there is a wide range of potential activities and spaces that come to mind – from a casino at the done, to Dickens world (in Chatham), to a license for a new branch of Wetherspoons to a small local theatre space and so on. However it is important to recognise that the markets and communities which habitually might make use of such facilities and resources are widely different. Tourist based leisure is not the same thing as the leisure required and taken locally by resident communities. The risk is that planners will become complacent in too closely aligning the provision of tourism destinations; superstructures, and super-branded amenities such as bars restaurants etc., equating these with an adequate provision of nighttime economy amenity taken in general.

For the TG to develop its wider leisure economy optimally, it is important that each and all tourist groups – business tourists, international tourists, the visiting friends and family market, students¹¹ and local residents – are catered to in terms of their general needs and desires, for nighttime economic activities and events.

However, and at the same time, it is crucial too that, as tourism is planned in and developed, that there is a strong understanding that tourism infrastructure and

10 'Key Facts of Tourism for London 2002–2003', <http://www.staruk.org.uk>.

11 Fn re students as tourists – fill in footfall when tourists not there.

amenity serving the various tourism markets are necessary to, but not sufficient for the proper and crucial broader provision necessary to deliver up the diverse range of amenity necessary to a sustainable NTE for residents of the Gateway. To put it bluntly, we say this: don't imagine that by building a casino or a tourist resort, an exhibition centre or super-club in the Thames Gateway, or four of five such developments, that the full repertoire of NTE needs has been addressed. Tourism NTE is not an adequate substitute for local NTE – even when synergies and cross fertilisation (as happens in London) is a very powerful stimulus to thrive.

Integrations: NTE and Tourism and the Superbrandscape

We argue that close attention needs to be paid to ensuring that NTE as part of the 'leisure economy' is planned into the Thames Gateway, that no too easy equation is made between provisioning the *tourist* economy and provisioning the domestic, local night-time economy. While necessarily tourism and local leisure consumers (day and night) cross paths, it is important to acknowledge that these are distinct constituencies, looking for different scale, scope and cost, at different times and places. The successful creation of any number of tourism venues, while increasing leisure spend and NTE classified incomes across a range of venues and outlets (restaurants, bars and miscellaneous attractions) as viewed from afar – will do little to address the project of building sustainable communities – which must be central to the proper development of Thames Gateway – in whatever forms and shapes it finally takes:

The world of supermodernity does not exactly match the one in which we believe we live, for we live in a world that we have not yet learned to look at. We have to relearn to think about space. (Auge, 1995, pp. 35–6)

The regeneration style made apparent in suffixes such as super- and mega- (respectively attaching to 'event' like the Olympics, to 'casino' or to 'club'¹²) invite the speculation that, in the ways such developments are envisioned and enacted, there is (in terms of the area) a developmental risk; that the structures feel *superimposed* within and around the places where they spring up.

When such super-structural plans are implemented and even during the – at times – quite extended phases of anticipation and anxiety that precedes the event/structure, the 'super-project' takes on a defining and imposing presence on future

¹² 'Superclub' definition: the term has also been used for massive, multistory, high-volume, high-profile nightclubs operating city- and region-wide. Pacha in Ibiza which opened in 1969, is a famous superclub; one that will be well known to large numbers of the likely future residents of Thames Gateway. It would be appropriate to categorise Bluewater and Lakeside as 'super-malls' in the same context.

horizon and then, if built,¹³ on the skyline – this has subsequent impacts on the feel and reputation of an area.

It is important that there is sufficient traffic between the 'super structure' (casino, stadium, mall or theme park) and the world around it. It is important to ensure that (as far as feasible) the location does not take on too much of the character evoked by Auge in his term 'non-places'. The notion of 'non-place' is a somewhat complex and elusive one;¹⁴ in this context it is useful to set it in contrast up against the context of 'sustainable community.'

The super-casino recently proposed for Rainham¹⁵ provides an indicative case in point – a way of figuring the relationship between a 'notional 'non-place' (the super-casino) and a place – Rainham.

Respondents certainly understood their community to be at risk of becoming 'unsustainable'. This was recorded, typically, in the observation that in an ageing population and in a village (close to London, but with a distinctly village feel) Rainham could not properly support a living and working community in the neighbourhood. While people would continue to live in Rainham, and commute there and back to London (on the excellent transport links), a sense of community as tied to neighbourhood – one precious to a good number of our respondents, would be deemed not to have been sustained.

Sustainability depended for the respondents on young people having a viable future in the locale. Both focus groups talked in terms of the development for 'future generations' to enjoy, and wanted to see Rainham's 'untapped potential' to be realised.

The sense of community as tied to neighbourhood (Blokland, 2003) was, in the testimony of our respondents, in some imminent jeopardy. They know that in the terms of being a place where people both live and work, where industry and productive labour take place side by side with domestic life, i.e., not as a dormitory suburb, they understand that Rainham was becoming an unsustainable community.¹⁶ It is increasingly also known as a junction, where the A13 and the

13 Rainham was speculatively earmarked for a development that never happened in the 1980s – with EuroDisney finally going to Paris.

14 Nevertheless Auge's gloss is relevant and illuminating: 'Clearly the word "non-place" designates two complementary but distinct realities: spaces formed in relations to certain ends (transport, transit, commerce, leisure), and the relations that individuals have with these spaces. Although the two sets of relations overlap to a large extent, and in any case officially (individuals travel, make purchases, relax), they are still not to be confused with one another; for non-places mediate a whole mass of relations, with the self and with others, which are only indirectly connected with their purposes. As anthropological places create the organically social, so non-places create solitary contractuality' (Auge, 1995, p. 94). It might be observed (and as Benjamin (2002, pp. 512–15) has observed) that 'the gambler is involved with the world in this mode: in a solitary and contractual – non organic "contact" – with "the cards" or a fruit machine mechanism'.

15 This was not, in the end shortlisted. See below for a discussion of the bidding process – and of the implications of this for the Thames Gateway.

16 The local industries had all but closed and Rainham continues largely to be identified as a dumping ground, with vast rubbish tips and land fill sites the 'landmark' activity.

M25 meet – it is a place becoming a non-place, and one in need of investment and development.

In their view however, and this was the prevalent one in the study – the casino was an acceptable development locally if, and only if, the attendant amenity (including an ice rink, fitness centre, restaurants and bars), was open, accessible, affordable and well managed. The casino was a necessary incidental – as none expected to gamble there. Others hoped they, or their children might find work there.

The vision Rainham citizens had of this superstructure was as a compromised hybrid space – an industry for the area, but not a leisure destination in itself. Whatever happens in Rainham, and across the Thames Gateway – when super-structural planning and development meets adjacent communities – it should be urged (through S106 and other mechanisms) that there is (at least) some degree of local input, management and planning gain' leveraged in to any regeneration deal; such that regeneration takes place in dialogue with residential groups – and not in parallel – adjacent but out of reach.

Conclusions

Mega events like the Olympics, super-casinos (wherever finally located), and the chain outlets of NTE super-brands, while obviously contributing to leisure infrastructure and to aspects of the NTE by virtue of their scale and scope, cannot satisfy what will be an emergent need for complementary, idiosyncratic, widely distributed localised facilities for night-time leisure; 'local' restaurants, independent theatres, affordable health and fitness centres, locations for night-time learning and other venues – for current, and perhaps currently unanticipated future leisure fashions, patterns and habits. This aspect of the NTE is the revenge of the multiple and specific on the general and the generalising plan view of the 'super-' this or the 'mega-' that. Currently there is no evidence that this all important dimension to the TG living spaces has been thought about, or talked about – let alone planned for. As we have argued, the rhetoric, the register and the scope of Thames Gateway – including its legislative scope – is towards delivering 'the biggest'.

This is not so much a plea for 'community' spaces; NTE venues, the Queen Vic and the Rovers notwithstanding, are no longer a 'glue' or a source of 'urban bonds' (Blokland, 2003). But it is a plea for the acknowledgement of spaces of intimacy; a plea that that plan views guiding the grand narratives of regional regeneration around London incorporate subtleties to allow for the incidental and the intimate – for these are the stuff of contemporary sustainability – and are at risk in the environments afforded by super-modern spatial plans and in the NTE arenas delivered by 'super brand' chains. So we argue for the dispersal and interspersal of spaces for intimacy – within and through the planning of tourism venues, local leisure facilities, in the planning of estates public spaces and in the mega event architecture – of the Olympics, of ExCel and the proposed Super casino. In practice this would mean a trans gateway scrutiny of emergent

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NTE provision – one charged with safeguarding the intimate and diverse in the face of the 'super-'.

To build local development of NTE into regional planning is, and we are under no illusions, beyond difficult. However, and as we have argued, super projects and open market super-brand developments will not, on their own, produce the regional NTEscape required for sustainability. As Chatterton and Holland (2003, p. 66) point out regarding NTE regulation – 'there are few examples of regulators consulting consumers as to their views on solving problems, let alone defining them'. We think this is true of NTE planning as well. This was captured by one of our interviewees on the Newham NTE project. He suggested:

Don't jump into just using ... statistics to develop the future, and how you're going to modernise the area, ask the youth and the community about what they want ... that would more likely help. (Male, 22)

Considering NTE helps us to think about an occluded aspect of the future. When Auge urges us that we need to learn to see better – in planning and living in spaces – it is particularly important that planners and those many others charged with enhancing the conditions for the building of sustainable communities to develop a capacity for a kind of 'night vision' so that the map view routinely entails serious consideration (place by place, estate by estate, venue by venue) of the question 'will it be alright on the night?'

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