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Governance and 'Integrated' Planning: The Case of Sustainable Communities in the Thames Gateway, England

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Abstract

This paper explores the relationship between the increasing emphasis on the integration of social, economic, democratic and environmental objectives within planning practice and the emergence of new forms of networked governance. Using a framework which stresses the hybridity and tensions that characterise current governance arrangements, the article investigates attempts to create 'sustainable communities' in the Thames Gateway, England. The analysis reveals the tensions and contradictions arising from governing the Gateway, including those between the conflicting goals of economic competitiveness and social and environmental sustainability, between horizontal, networked governance and forms of and requirements for hierarchical direction and between a focus on delivery and participatory governance. The paper concludes by reflecting on the implications of the hybridity and complexity in governance forms for the search for sustainable communities and the forms of governance 'fit for purpose' in their realisation.

1. Introduction

The relationship between evolving forms of governance and particular approaches to the planning and creation of places has been the subject of increased attention in recent years (see among others: Allmendinger and Haughton, 2007a; Gonzalez and Healey, 2005; Swyngedouw, 2005). The emergence of flexible, multilevel networks of governance agencies involved in functions previously the domain of central and local government is recognised as a feature of contemporary societies (Rhodes, 1997; Jessop, 2000; Stoker, 2004). Moves to restructure the scale and scope of planning, as typified in the UK by the redefinition of 'land use' planning as 'spatial' planning stressing the interconnection with activities such as economic growth, social inclusion and well-being can be seen as having a dynamic relationship with these changes in governance (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2007a).

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There are, however, different ways of understanding and characterising this relationship. For some, governance is seen both as a mechanism for overcoming the contradictions between potentially competing policy objectives and as an integral means of achieving policy aims such as the creation of new forms of space and modes of participation. For example, Jones and Evans (2006, p. 1492) assert that governance is "essential in achieving the goals of sustainable development" and, as typified in writings on 'new localism', networked governance is seen as integral to successful places.

This approach to governance can be criticised for seeking to describe how governance arrangements should be, rather than analysing how they are developing (Lovering, 1999; Jones, 2001). At a more theoretical level, other critiques question the extent to which a monolithic shift to new forms of governance is occurring. Some stress the continuing predominance of particular relations and interests, especially those of competitiveness and the market, preferring to see these new forms as the expression of the neo-liberal restructuring of social and political relations (Brenner and Theodore, 2002). In addition, a growing body of work has highlighted the contradictory tendencies and hybridities visible in these emerging forms of governance (Swyngedouw, 2005; Whitehead, 2003; Raco, 2005a). Such dynamics include the interaction and clash between horizontal governance networks and 'vertical' relations of central control; tensions between the contradictory aims of current spatial polices which governance is unable to reconcile; and the gap between the rhetoric of empowering, participatory governance and the reality of competing agencies and privileged interests. We argue in this paper that such a framework provides a useful 'way in' to understanding and typifying current examples of the relationship between place-making and governance.

Such a focus also sheds light on the current search for the forms of governance 'fit for purpose' in creating a virtuous circle, reconciling the competing claims of economic competitiveness, social inclusion and environmental sustainability that lie at the heart of contemporary planning policies (Buck *et al.*, 2005; Deas, 2005). As Jessop (2000) indicates, the dilemmas in current governance forms produce an inherent tendency towards 'governance failure'. Rather than whether one form is better than any other, it is their location within the dynamics of change in current governance arrangements and their interaction with and management of them that become the focus of enquiry.

In this article, we explore these debates through examining the UK government's recent attempts to create 'sustainable communities', with a particular focus on the Thames Gateway. The definition of sustainable communities is itself contested, as we shall see later in this paper, but essentially refers to places which combine economic growth with the creation of environmentally and socially sustainable development. The role of governance in integrating these diverse policy aims has become an increasing focus of attention, especially within the Gateway where perceived 'governance failures' have been at the centre of critiques typifying the project as confused and failing to deliver. The Thames Gateway, an area stretching 40 miles (60 km) either side of the Thames from Canary Wharf to the coast (see Figure 2 for a map of the area), thus has a pivotal role in UK and New Labour spatial policy as, in the words of one government minister, "a symbol and test case of UK policy on sustainable communities" (Miliband, 2005). The area therefore provides fertile ground for exploring these debates on governance in more detail.

In section 2, we contrast different ways of understanding and characterising these shifts in the governance of planning and set

out a framework through which to explore the inevitable tensions and hybridity. Section 3 explores these issues in relation to the current focus on sustainable communities in the UK as illustrated by the Thames Gateway. Our analysis reveals that the perceived failure of governance in the Gateway is less the result of forms of governance 'unfit for purpose' and more a consequence of the playing out the contradictions inherent in current hybrid governance arrangements. In Section 4, the paper draws some conclusions on the nature of governance arrangements in increasingly networked arenas, including the challenges of hybridity and complexity in creating spaces such as sustainable communities.

2. Some Debates on Governance

As indicated earlier, an extensive body of literature exists which attempts to characterise the evolution of institutional arrangements that engage in the act of government outside and beyond the state (Swyngedouw, 2005). However, there are debates over the extent to which we are seeing the emergence of independent horizontal governance networks which themselves form an integral part of the renaissance of particular places, as opposed to forms of neo-liberal governmentality which privilege the influence of particular interests (notably the private sector) and which pursue a competitiveness agenda above all others.

2.1 New Localism

There are those who maintain that current governance arrangements are characterised by networks of state and non-state actors distanced from government (see for example, Rhodes, 1997). Within this, many writers have commented on the crystallisation of academic and policy debates represented by 'new regionalism' or 'new localism' (Jones, 2001; Lovering, 1999; Morgan, 2002). Within this, the notion of networked participatory governance becomes both a description of emerging policy and institutional arrangements and a prescription for effective governance (Filkin *et al.*, 2000; Corry and Stoker, 2002) including, by implication, the basis for the creation of successful places.

New localism draws on interpretations of governance that see the development of networks of agencies involving government, the private sector and citizens as producing systems of 'good' governance. In policy terms, this has combined with the view that places, be they cities, regions or sub-regions, are becoming (or should become) increasingly important in terms of economic growth and prosperity (see for example, DETR, 1997). As the nation-state is seen as less able to respond to the priorities of globalisation, so sub-national places become more important, alongside supra-national institutions such as the European Union. Further, the region holds advantages in terms of clusters, knowledge transfer and skills. This then enables it to concentrate on those areas of the economy that can give regions competitive advantage—namely, knowledge economies, high-tech and other innovative sectors (Cooke and Morgan, 1998; Storper, 1997). This results in 'multilevel' governance with a variety of agencies operating at different spatial scales.

Within this scenario, the importance of governance is stressed in a variety of ways. The role of governance to ensure competitiveness has already been referred to. Economic governance is seen as an important element of innovation and economic growth with new forms of 'reflexive self-governance' being required to secure advantage (Amin, 1999). This in turn demands greater flexibility and autonomy at the regional and local levels to enable cities and regions to respond to circumstances and opportunities. Such forms of governance also need to involve a range of stakeholders, particularly those from the economic sectors seen as generating growth.

Finally, governance is seen as the mechanism to resolve the issues of 'joining-up' the potentially competing elements of emerging policy agendas and of providing the requisite services to support them, creating a virtuous circle of places with strong economies and social and economic sustainability.

2.2 Challenges: Neo-liberal Governmentality and Hybridity

This view is, however, challenged from a number of perspectives. First, there are those who criticise the ideal-typical and normative prescriptions it contains. Lovering, for example, has dismissed new regionalism as

> a set of stories about how *parts* of a regional economy *might* work, placed next to a set of policy ideas which *might* just be useful in *some* cases (Lovering, 1999, p. 384; original emphasis).

Still others argue that, rather than independent networks, these forms of governance consist of 'regimes' of powerful actors including elected officials and the private sector (Stone, 1989; Dowding *et al.*, 1999). For example, Thornley *et al.*'s (2005) recent research into the development of the London Plan revealed the close co-operation with the business sector (seen as essential to maintain London's competitive world city status) which contradicted the official version that the London Plan was a result of consensus between different interests in the capital.

Other explanations, while accepting the emergence of networked governance, see it not as empowering or effective, but as a response to the imperatives of governance in a neo-liberal era (Jessop, 2000; Brenner and Theodore, 2002; Peck and Tickell, 2002). By neo-liberal is meant the commitment to markets as the optimal way of achieving economic development with minimal state regulation. It is expressed in the form of the competitiveness agenda which concentrates on the supply-side features necessary for cities and regions to attract economic growth. It is also typified as an unwillingness to interfere with the market. Rather, policy should aim to create and facilitate the conditions necessary for economic restructuring and globalisation.

This form of neo-liberalism is called 'rolled-out' in opposition to the 'rolled-back' form of previous decades which sought to reduce state activities and interventions (Peck and Tickell, 2002). The contradictions and shortcomings of the latter led governments to look to ways in which those activities now seen as necessary, such as welfare support and other policy programmes, can be included within neo-liberal agendas. In this way, there is a contrast between the development agendas of the 1980s which stressed private-sector provision as the motor of regeneration and the current concern with ensuring social provision within integrated spatial planning. This in turn creates a potential contradiction within policy between competitiveness and the social dimensions of the agenda (Boddy and Parkinson, 2001; Buck *et al.*, 2005; Jessop, 2000).

The priorities for neo-liberal governance are identified as promoting competitiveness, subordinating social to economic policy and favouring the private sector in decision-making (Jessop, 2000). New forms of partnership and networking are required to implement these. A further feature of neo-liberal governance is that it occurs at a variety of spatial scales. This notion of 'multilevel governance' and the 'hollowing-out of the state' is taken up by a variety of writers who stress the way in which governance functions are increasingly shifting from the central state to a variety of agencies at a variety of spatial scales.

Therefore, a different story emerges of economic competitiveness being the driver of the policy agenda. Governance forms, far from promoting active citizenship and local and regional empowerment, merely shift the task of supporting economic restructuring

to different spatial scales and private-sector interests take precedence over others. Inherent in these governance forms, as writers such as Jessop argue, are various contradictions and tendencies towards 'governance failure' centring round the conflicting priorities of competition and co-operation and the constraints placed by the operation of wider economic processes. We will return to these later.

Aspects of this characterisation of current events have been challenged. Work by Davis (2001) and Jones and Evans (2006), for example, points to the continued influence of central government and questions the extent to which we are seeing the emergence of horizontal networks independent from vertical influence. The concept of 'hybridity' is being used in a variety of senses in this context as a way of exploring the contradictions and tensions which exist within current governance arrangements. For example, Whitehead (2003) describes the persistence of a 'shadow of hierarchy' in contemporary governance arrangements as evidence of the 'hybrid' nature of governance which combines hierarchical and networked modes of governance. Similarly, Swyngedouw (2005) in his work on 'governance beyond the state', refers to a "complex hybrid form of government/governance" (p. 2002) in which the state seeks to regulate new governance arrangements and different interests are included or excluded.

According to these writers, we are not witnessing the wholesale movement from government to governance, but the evolution of a hybrid situation where governments are finding new ways to ensure influence in a changed environment. Whitehead refers to this as metagovernance (or how political authorities promote and guide the 'self-organisation' of governance). From a more Foucaldian perspective, Sywngedouw refers to this as 'governmentality'. Both see within these overarching relations tensions and contradictions which become played out in practice leading to new "choreographies of governance and technologies of performance" (Swyngedouw, 2005, p. 1998).

From a different perspective, both Newman and Raco also stress the hybridity of current governance forms. For Newman (2001), current governance can be understood by the dynamic tension between different modes of governance which sit alongside each other, including participatory, networked, hierarchical and technocratic. Focusing on current UK spatial policy, Raco (2005a) detects a 'hybridity' between neo-liberal priorities and those of inclusion and sustainability within both policy rhetoric and institutional arrangements. The tensions between these different narratives therefore become a focus for enquiry and a defining feature of strategies such as sustainable communities.

One further way in which such a hybrid view of governance and the creation of spaces has been addressed recently in relation to UK planning in general and the Thames Gateway (TG) in particular is the notion of 'hard and soft spaces' (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2007b). By hard spaces is meant the formalised systems of planning represented by plan-making for well-defined spaces and traditional top–down governance. In contrast, soft spaces relate to the forms and practices centred around networked governance, negotiated spaces, unclear geographical boundaries and the "fluid areas between formal processes" (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2007b, p. 306). While there are problems with such soft spaces and governance associated with them, Allmendinger and Haughton also see the potential for clashes when the two forms come into contact.

It is the notion of a dynamic situation with different modes of governance colliding and tensions and contradictions playing themselves out in particular places which we build on, to explore the governance of sustainable communities in the UK.

2.3 Methodology and Framework for Analysis

In the following section, we explore these debates within the context of current UK policy. This part of the article draws on a review of published work on the Thames Gateway recently carried out by the authors and others (Oxford Brookes University, 2006). Further evidence has come from participation in seminars and conferences attached to this review. The analysis of evidence for this article has been informed by a framework which facilitates the exploration of the hybridities and tensions outlined earlier. The framework is based on Jessop's identification of various 'dilemmas' within the governance of regeneration (Jessop, 2000), to which have been added further contradictions identified in the literature. According to Jessop, these dilemmas include

- *Governability versus flexibility*: the desire to have systems to allow negotiation and response to changing circumstances conflicts with meeting centralised strategies and targets. The dynamics between horizontal networks and vertical hierarchies and hard and soft spaces are also relevant here, along with the way these dynamics are managed.
- *Co-operation versus competition*, or the fact that various agencies and partners are urged to join-up but are also in competition for resources, inward investment, etc.
- *Accountability versus efficiency*, or the contradictions inherent in prioritising certain interests and objectives, such as competitiveness, over others, such as social inclusion or environmental concerns.
- *Openness versus closure*: who is involved and are the desires to involve only those who are needed to deliver contradicting the emphasis on participatory governance?

We apply this framework to the Thames Gateway after first exploring the context of the sustainable communities discourse in the UK.

3. Governance and the Sustainable Communities Agenda in the UK

In the UK, a persuasive narrative has emerged in recent years around the creation of 'sustainable communities'. Part of the wider restructuring towards a planning system based on 'spatial' as opposed to land use planning (Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, 2004), the concept of a sustainable community seeks to integrate economic growth, social inclusion and environmental sustainability while simultaneously encouraging good design and active citizenship. The sustainable communities action plan (SCAP) published in February 2003 (ODPM, 2003a) heralded a 'step change' in government housing and planning policies, jointly addressing ways in which to support the strong growth of the South East economy, meet housing shortages, protect rural environments and tackle the abandonment of urban areas in the Midlands and north of England. The Thames Gateway was included as one of the four areas in the South East seeking to make this vision a reality.

As with many concepts which become central to policy discourse, the definition of a sustainable community is both vague and contested. According to government

> Sustainable communities are places where people want to live and work, now and in the future. They meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to the environment, and contribute to a high quality of life. They are safe and inclusive, well planned, built and run, and offer equality of opportunity and good services for all (ODPM, 2005a, p. 7).

Such statements have been illustrated and further clarified by the Egan wheel (Egan, 2004) (see Figure 1), but as with previous areas of policy

> Politicians and policy-makers, along with academics and practitioners, are beginning to speak a language in which the vocabulary,

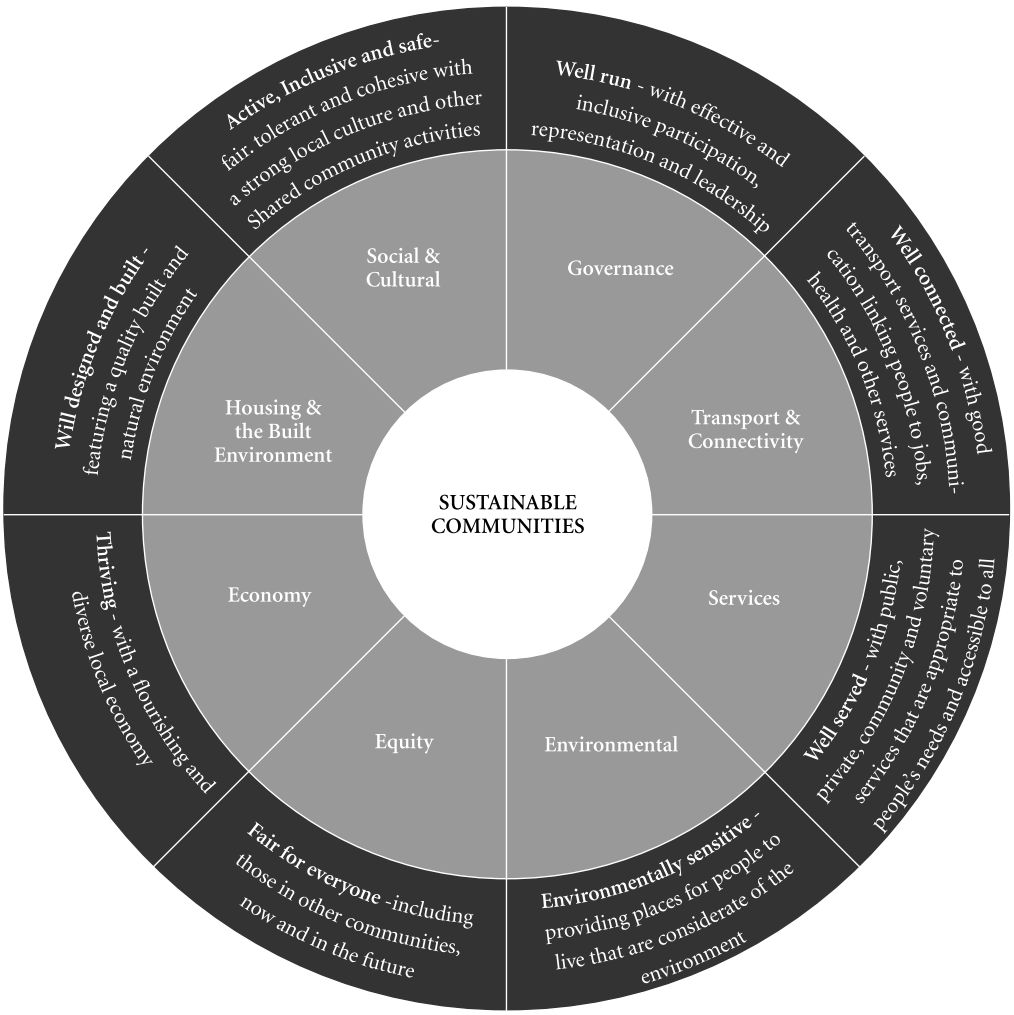

Figure 1. The Egan wheel: defining sustainable communities
Source: www.integreatyorkshire.com/think_sustainable.asp.

> beguiling as it might seem, actually elides some very important issues (Morgan, 2002, p. 191).

Arguments concerning these 'very important' issues and critiques of the normative assumptions behind the concept of sustainable communities have been rehearsed elsewhere (Raco, 2007). Indeed, early criticisms of 'new localism' are also equally applicable. Here, we concentrate on the role of governance in the creation of sustainable communities.

Within the normative model of a sustainable community promoted by New Labour, the role of governance has equally ideological undertones. Its inclusion as one of the spokes in the Egan wheel underlines the significance that is placed on governance as a means of realising sustainable communities. This represents an extension of what Buck *et al.* (2005) refer to as the 'new conventional wisdom'—the idea that for places to succeed they need to combine economic competitiveness, social inclusion

and good governance. This focus on new spatial forms and "the way the uncertain relationship between competitiveness and social cohesion can be mediated and shaped by institutional arrangements" (Thornley *et al.*, 2005, p. 1950) is illustrative of the tensions and contradictions outlined earlier.

It is equally clear that, for governance to be 'effective' in enabling sustainable communities, it should conform to the ideals of networked governance and participatory democracy essential to new localism. Among other things

Sustainable communities enjoy:

- representative, accountable governance systems which both facilitate strategic, visionary leadership and enable inclusive, active and effective participation by individuals and organisations
- strong, informed and effective partnerships that lead by example (e.g. government, business, community) (HM Government, 2005, pp. 184–185).

However, policy does not favour one particular institutional form over others, such as with the 'new right' and Urban Development Corporations (Imrie and Thomas, 1999). As we will illustrate in the Thames Gateway, it is part of the new conventional wisdom that there can be no 'one size fits all' solution and that flexibility and networking of different types of agency appropriate to different places are the ways forward.

As Raco (2005a) has indicated, the idea of hybridity is clearly relevant to understanding the sustainable communities discourse. The influence of new-localist thinking has already been underlined. Aspects of neo-liberalism are present with the stress on competitiveness and the unwillingness of government to intervene in decisions relating to the location of economic activity. However, elements of social inclusion and environmental sustainability are also evident. Hybridity is also useful in understanding some of the criticisms of the governance and delivery of sustainable communities already appearing, such as the problems in joining up levels of activity and the different elements of the blueprint. These issues will be explored in more depth through the following exploration of the governance of the Thames Gateway.

3.1 The Choreography of Governance in the Thames Gateway

The Thames Gateway is arguably the most significant 'actually existing' attempt to create a sustainable community (Raco, 2005b). According to policy statements it is "Europe's largest regeneration area" (ODPM, 2004) stretching over 40 miles (60 km) from the City to the coast (see Figure 2). The vision for the Gateway is a linear, poly-nucleated city where by 2016 up to 160 000 homes and 225 000 jobs will have been created within sustainable communities.

> The Thames Gateway provides an unrivalled offer of increased prosperity, enhanced environment and vibrant quality of life (DCLG, 2006a, afterword).

Such plans are not new, although the focus on sustainable communities is a new element. Ten years before the publication of SCAP, and in response to lobbying by local authorities, the area was branded by government as the East Thames Corridor and an accompanying strategy aimed at rebalancing the economies west and east of the capital was published. This strategy was taken further by an interregional planning statement published in 1995 (DoE, 1995). Prior to this, the London Docklands Development Corporation had started this process from the early 1980s onwards (Brownill, 1993).

The Gateway area includes a wide variety of localities, from major development sites such as Canary Wharf, Stratford, Ebbsfleet and Barking Reach, to declining/static industrial and port areas such as Thurrock, Dagenham and the Kent ports. It also includes areas of environmental value such as Rainham

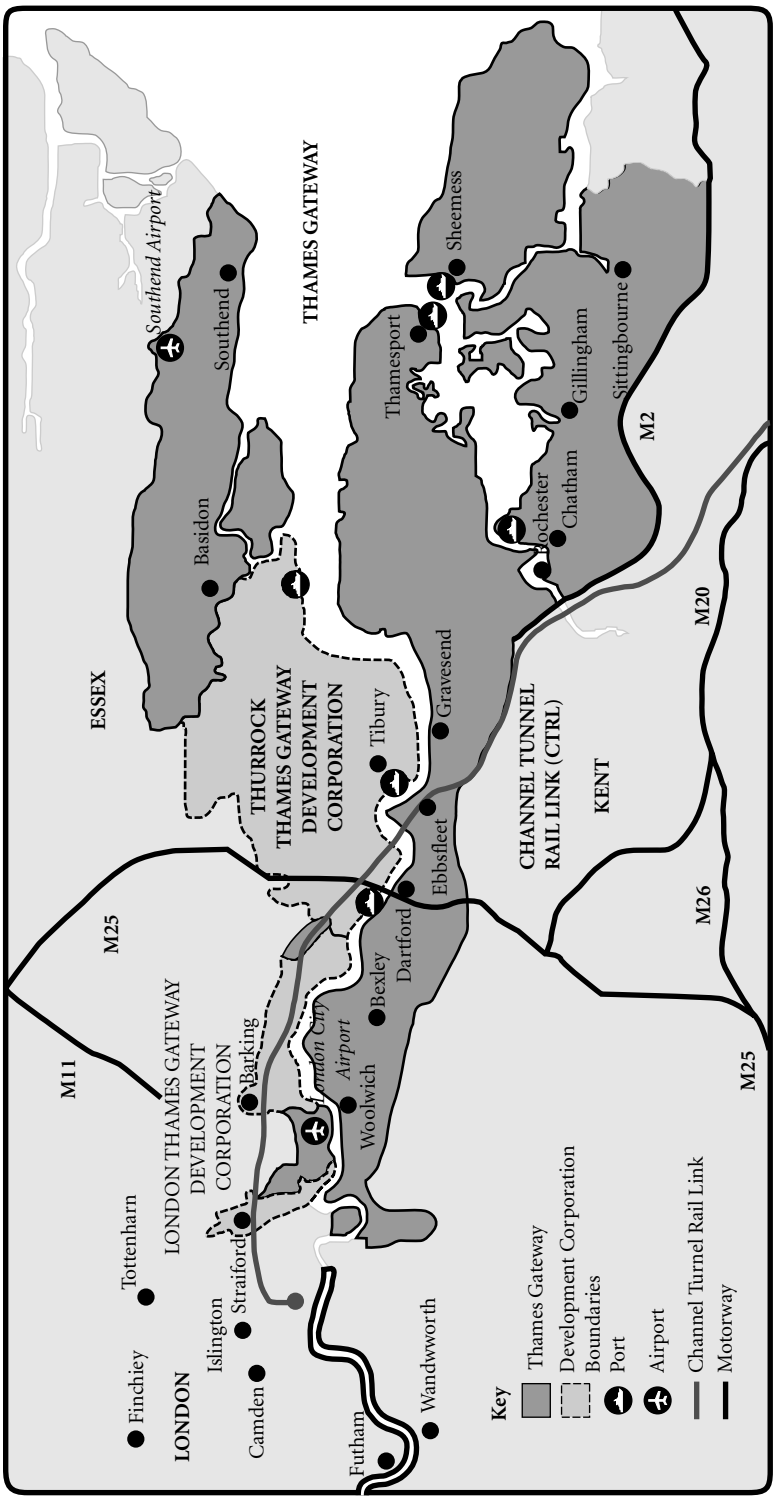

Figure 2. The Thames Gateway area
Source: www.thamesgateway.gov.uk/areamap.html.

Marshes and other areas suffering from intense environmental degradation. The population of the Gateway is equally diverse with its 1.6 million inhabitants including those living in some of the areas of most severe deprivation in the country and others in areas of relative affluence.

This diversity and complexity are reflected in the governance and delivery structures established to achieve the vision (see Figure 3). Nine Local Delivery Vehicles (LDVs) (7 partnerships and two new Urban Development Corporations) are charged with implementation, overseen by a Thames Gateway Delivery Unit within the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). Indeed, this very New Labour pragmatic focus on delivery and not governance is a feature of the Gateway and repeats the conflation of the governance and delivery functions of regeneration agencies that has been commented on in the past (Hall and Mawson, 1999; Carley *et al.*, 2000).

The variety of delivery agencies is indicative of New Labour's pragmatic approach, a fact illustrated by the reincarnation of the Urban Development Corporation (UDC) as one of the Gateway delivery agencies. While the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC), which had proved so controversial in the area previously, was seen as reflecting the ideology of rolled-back neo-liberalism (see Brownill, 1993), these second-generation UDCs are termed "benign", operating "in co-operation with the boroughs", and with the existing local community "at the heart of the UDC's programmes" (ODPM, 2003b, p. 9). This can be seen either as further evidence of hybridity (Raco, 2005b) or as the less ideological times we live in.

These new delivery vehicles interact with existing authorities and agencies at a variety of regional and sub-regional levels including 17 local authorities, 3 Regional Development Agencies, the Greater London Authority (GLA), 2 other Regional Assemblies and the Olympic Development Agency. In addition, various partnerships and committees exist to 'co-ordinate' activity including sub-regional partnerships such as the Thames Gateway London Partnership, the Gateway-wide Thames Gateway Strategic Partnership co-ordinated by the DCLG and, at central-government level, a cabinet committee.[1] In all, there are over 50 agencies at a variety of spatial levels, making the Gateway a classic example of networked multilevel governance.

The complexity or 'hyperactivity' (Catney *et al.*, 2006) of governance in the Gateway has attracted much attention. Most of this has been negative but some (for example, Allmendinger and Haughton, 2007b) see some cause for optimism in the 'soft spaces' of the Thames Gateway. However, as we shall show in the following sections, governance in the Gateway is largely seen as resulting in confusion, lack of strategic direction and leadership, failure to market the area and slowness of delivery. In particular, delivery of housing has been affected. It is estimated that the number of homes built each year between 2007 and 2016 will need to more than double, to an average of 12 500 per year, if the target of 160 000 homes is to be met (NAO, 2007). The response from government to these charges of governance failure has been to introduce a variety of measures and changes. What we shall see in the resulting 'choreography' of governance in the Gateway is that these failures are themselves a result of the underlying contradictions in the governance of sustainable communities. Further, far from overcoming these dilemmas, attempts to address them have merely altered the nature or level of these contradictions, or introduced new ones.

Indications of some of these tensions are evident from this initial description, including those between a complex horizontal network and the systems put in place by government to oversee its vision for the area. The fact that

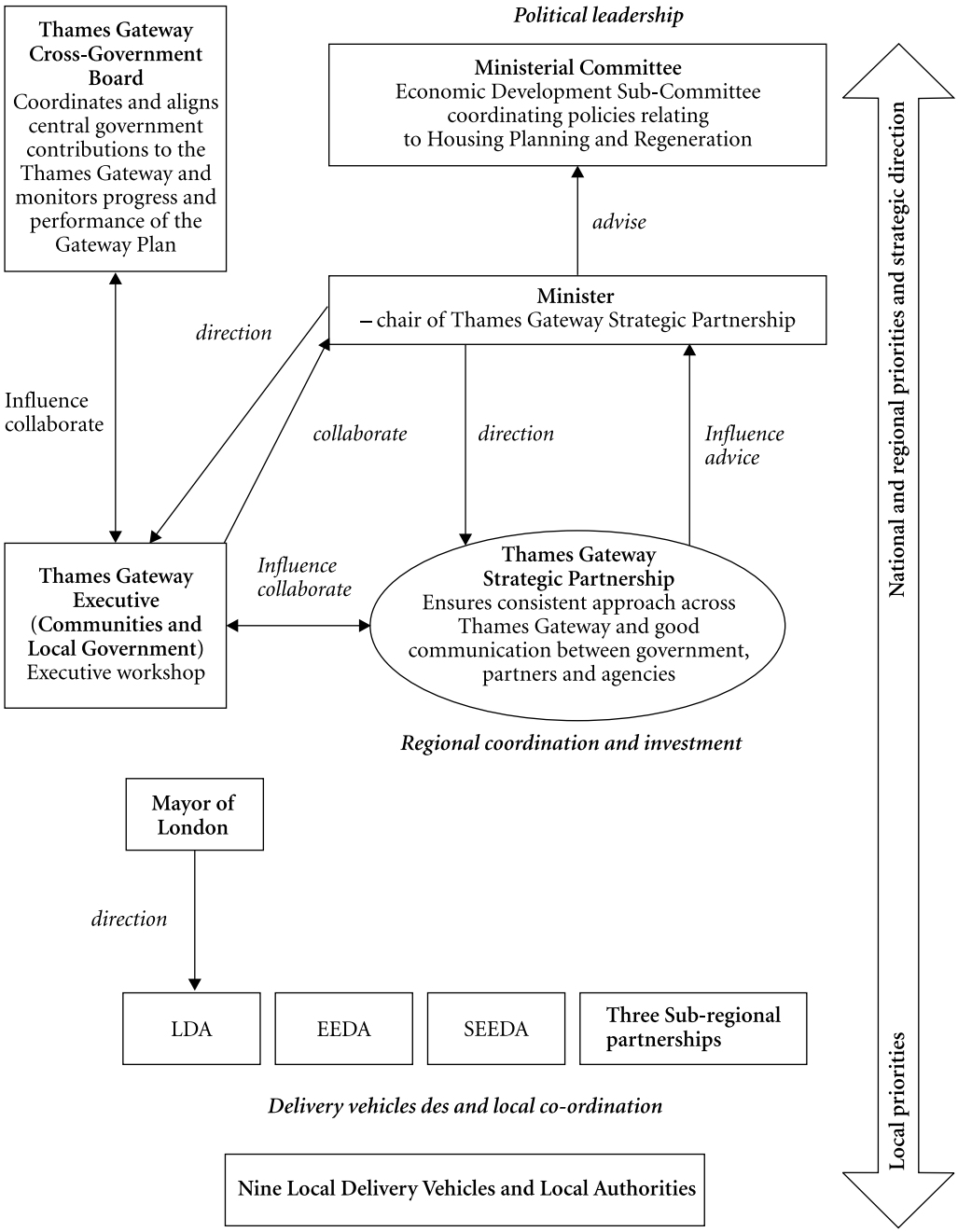

Figure 3. Governance and delivery structures in the Thames Gateway

Source: DCLG, 2007.

Notes: *Sub-regional Partnerships*: Thames Gateway London Partnership, Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership, Thames Gateway Kent Partnership. *Local Delivery Vehicles*: London Thames Gateway UDC, Thurrock UDC, Kent Thameside Delivery Board, Basildon Renaissance Partnership, Invest Bexley, Woolwich Regeneration Agency, Medway Renaissance Partnership, Renaissance Southend, Swale Forward.

part of the Gateway area comes under the Greater London Authority with its Mayor and its own particular governance arrangements adds to the scalar complexity. Previous work on the GLA (Buck *et al.*, 2005; Thornley *et al.*, 2005) has indicated that these arrangements are potentially better suited to the competitiveness agenda, particularly at the regional level. We go on now to explore these and other contradictions.

Network governance and the tension between governability and flexibility. With such a complexity of arrangements, the issue of joining up different agencies in the Gateway has drawn a large amount of attention. Many of these debates centre around the dilemma between governability and flexibility identified by Jessop—the desire to have governance arrangements which can take account of different circumstances, while at the same time maintaining government influence and ensuring strategic objectives are met. This mirrors the tension between vertical and hierarchical relations outlined previously. Evidence from the Gateway would suggest two things. First, that there is an uneasy tension between different scales of governance and, secondly, that arrangements for 'governmentality' or meta-governance have not been working in the Gateway and that attempts to reinforce them are likely to increase the tensions already existing between different levels.

This dilemma was neatly summarised by an exchange at the end of 2005 between Lord Rogers, the architect who had been heavily involved in the formation of New Labour's policy towards cities and regeneration, and David Miliband, then government minister responsible for the Gateway. Rogers labelled the situation in the Gateway as unworkable with too many agencies, a lack of joining-up and no leadership. In a Taskforce reconvened specially to address this issue, he asserted that

> The plethora of overlapping, but differently funded and monitored, regeneration bodies has reduced the effectiveness of public-sector regeneration schemes (Urban Taskforce, 2005, p. 3).

As a result, "we are squandering the opportunity we have now with a piecemeal free-for-all development" (*Regeneration and Renewal*, 2005). In response, he called for the imposition of a single agency covering the whole Gateway area with the London Docklands Development Corporation as "an exemplar" (*Regeneration and Renewal*, 2005).

Miliband, on the other hand, argued for a more 'bottom–up' approach, rejecting 'one-size-fits-all' solutions and stressing the importance of the institutional capacity of local authorities and other agencies within the regeneration process itself.

> I believe it is right to draw on the energy and ideas of a more decentralised structure for delivering the Gateway, drawing on the knowledge and skills of a wide range of partners (Miliband, 2005).

Talking of the need for "network governance" and "horizontal as well as vertical linkages", Miliband rejected "one institution in Stalinist control" adding that a complex institutional structure is a response to "a complex set of projects; complex in joining economic, social and environmental objectives. and a number of communities" (Miliband, 2005).

Arguments in favour of this networked approach appear elsewhere in government documents based on the assertion that different parts of the Gateway have different conditions and histories and therefore need different solutions

> To make a success of the Gateway we need to take a tailored and flexible approach, working on a local basis to agree local priorities and meet local needs (ODPM, 2005a, p. 52).

However, not many of the actors in the Gateway shared the government's optimism with

these arrangements. Respondents to a survey of stakeholders by consultants Hornagold and Hills commented

> "Organisations with the words 'Thames Gateway' in them are confused and confusing by definition" (quoted in Hornagold and Hills, 2006, p. 15).
>
> "Thames Gateway is a struggle between central and local government, the lack of thinking about their roles is deeply unsatisfactory" (quoted in Hornagold and Hills, 2006, p. 12).
>
> "I haven't got a clue who is leading it, nothing is streamlined and there is not much direction" (quoted in Hornagold and Hills, 2006, p. 12).

Such criticisms were underlined by critical reports from the National Audit Office (NAO, 2007) and the House of Common's Public Accounts Committee (2007). Many of the points raised in these reports point to problems in 'meta-governance' and managing the tension between horizontal and vertical networks. For example, the National Audit Office (NAO) pointed to the failure of DCLG to provide effective leadership of the project across central government, noting that the cabinet committee (Misc 22) originally charged with bringing together the different government departments involved failed to meet regularly let alone co-ordinate activity. Its subsequent replacement by a committee with a wider remit for housing and planning in general further undermined efforts to join up activity focused on the Gateway. The relative lack of power of the DCLG, both in relation to harder-hitting departments such as the Treasury and in terms of what was needed on the ground, was emphasised by the Members of Parliament on the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), as was the fact that this was the only major regeneration project directly overseen by the DCLG as opposed to other agencies such as English Partnerships.

Reports also point to the lack of a clear strategic framework to co-ordinate activity and guide private sector activity. The NAO notes the lack of SMART[2] targets—clear objectives given to delivery agencies to ensure delivery of the overall programme. For example, the annual reports of the two UDCs reveal no information on progress towards targets for housing units and floorspace. Evidence from past regeneration schemes shows that achieving strategic direction through such flexible arrangements as opposed to setting and monitoring targets and outputs is problematic (Rhodes *et al.*, 2002).

A 'technology' of power often used to good effect in ensuring central control is funding (Davis, 2001; Whitehead, 2003). In the Gateway, this has been made difficult by the relatively small amounts of money initially allocated in relation to the size of the task. Between 2005 and 2008, a total of £800 million was allocated to the Gateway, with a further £720 million between 2008 and 2011. However, the NAO report strongly criticised the management of these funds and the government's failure to contribute to the co-ordination of strategy. The original state-of-the-art computerised management system devised to monitor this concentrates on outputs and spending on time, rather than how these projects are going to contribute to the overall Gateway strategic objectives (Oxford Brookes University, 2006). The 2007 Delivery Plan seeks to improve these systems through a 'portfolio management framework', setting out new systems for project management.

In response to these criticisms, the government instigated a number of changes. First, the issue of leadership was addressed by announcing the creation of a Thames Gateway 'Czar' within the DCLG. Judith Armitt was appointed as Thames Gateway Chief Executive in August 2006 (DCLG, 2006b). This was followed by a new governance model included in the 2007 Delivery Plan which includes a Thames Gateway Cross-Governance Board and the co-location of the different parts of the DCLG involved in the Gateway and

the TG teams of other relevant government agencies such as the Environment Agency. The Community Infrastructure Fund between the Department for Transport (DfT) and the DCLG is an example of how to achieve a joined-up funding mechanism. Nevertheless, government has affirmed its support for networked governance in stating that "there will inevitably be a degree of complexity in the delivery structure" (DCLG, 2007, p. 79) and stressing the need for "dynamic spending programmes" as opposed to "fixed long-term budgets" (DCLG, 2007, p. 14).

Secondly, in the speech that responded to Rogers' criticisms, it was announced that a strategic framework would be drawn up. An Interim Plan was published in November 2006, with a more detailed Delivery Plan in November 2007. While the former was criticised for being too vague (*Regeneration and Renewal*, 2006a), the later Delivery Plan has three main strategic objectives and seven 'regeneration outcomes' to steer the 'vision'. In addition, programmes and spending have been agreed with all LDVs. Following the Comprehensive Spending Review in 2007 (which sets out three-year budgets agreed by the Treasury), the government has committed £500 million for regeneration and £100 million for local transport improvements dedicated to Gateway projects within a total government spend in the area of £9 billion (DCLG, 2007, p. 72).

> It sets out programmes and the investment to match the scale of our ambitions, which is nothing less than to create an exemplar of regeneration, sustainability and development (DCLG, 2007, p. 82).

The ability of these governance changes to achieve such ambitions has proved problematic with Armitt resigning from her post in November 2007 (*Regeneration and Renewal*, 2007) amid speculation of disagreement between the chief executive and Ministers. Subsequently, proposals were put forward to transfer responsibility for the Gateway to a new 'super-agency' (the Homes and Communities Agency) to be formed by the merger of the Housing Corporation and English Partnerships (*Regeneration and Renewal*, 2008). A follow-up report by Hornagold and Hills revealed continuing criticisms and confusion amongst stakeholders in the Gateway with only 36 per cent of respondents believing that roles and responsibilities had been clarified over the previous year (Hornagold and Hills, 2007). According to respondents, Ken Livingstone, then Mayor of London, was seen as the most influential person in the Gateway, perhaps underlining Thornley *et al.*'s view that the governance arrangements in London are more suited to the development of global cities (Thornley *et al.*, 2005). However, while practitioners comment on the continuing governance failure, from a theoretical perspective, it is interesting to speculate whether the changes in the Gateway are aimed at supporting networked governance or, by bringing the Gateway more 'under the shadow of the hierarchy', are further evidence of hybridity in the TG governance structures.

Joining-up and the tension between co-operation and competition. The sustainable communities rhetoric suggests that different levels of government, at different spatial scales, will co-operate through joined-up strategies and collaborative implementation. However, the competitiveness agenda means that in effect different locations and sub-regions within the Thames Gateway, and more widely, are in reality competing against each other to achieve the aspirations of their strategies. Since the announcement in July 2005 that the 2012 Olympics will be held in Stratford, there has been a shift in focus of resources and delivery to the Olympics site, with implications for reduced resources and emphasis on the rest of the Gateway area.

Each of the three main sub-regions of the Gateway has identified remarkably similar

priorities for economic growth. All, in various combinations, identify retailing and leisure, advanced manufacturing and engineering, financial services, environmental technology, transport and logistics and knowledge-based industries as key sectors for future growth (TGLP, 2001, p. 29; TGSEP, 2003, p. 17; TGKP, 2002, p. 67). The North Kent Area Investment Framework goes further and identifies Shellhaven in South Essex across the Thames as a potential threat to its own strategy and vision, and as a possible barrier to its own development potential (TGKP, 2002, p. 3), a threat made real by the granting of planning permission for Shellhaven in May 2007.

In addition, the Greater London Authority (GLA), through its East London Sub-regional Framework (GLA, 2006), indicated that it could exceed the targets for jobs and housing included in the original TG strategy. This would impact on the ability of other parts of the Gateway to achieve their aspirations and have inevitable consequences in terms of creating sustainable communities or commuter settlements for London workers. As a response, targets for houses in the 2006 Interim Plan were increased from 120 000 to 160 000 and targets for jobs in the 2007 Delivery Plan were increased from 180 000 to 225 000 by 2016.

It is a fundamental element of the wider sustainable communities agenda that government will not intervene in economic location decisions. This pits the Gateway against the other growth areas and the wider South East in realising its ambitious targets. For example, between 2001 and 2016, projected employment growth in the whole of the South East is around 1.1–1.2 million jobs, depending on the forecast model. Llewelyn Davies *et al.* (2003) estimate that of this growth only 23 per cent will go to the Gateway with the rest occurring in the other growth areas and the South East.

As well as the issue of co-ordinating these competing strategies, there is also the question of whether or not they are likely to be achieved. While areas such as the London end of the Thames Gateway at Canary Wharf have managed to transform their local economies, based on knowledge-intensive business services and major public and private investment, evidence suggests that the path-dependent nature of the Thames Gateway economy further east will be harder to change (Local Futures Research Group and Binks, 2005).

The tension between economic competitiveness, social inclusion and sustainability. One of the tasks of governance in the sustainable communities agenda is to combine the different elements into a virtuous circle of development. Previous research (see for example, Buck *et al.*, 2005; Jessop, 2000; Fuller *et al.*, 2004) has indicated that these aims may be in contradiction with each other, or even mutually exclusive. Evidence of similar dilemmas is present in the Gateway. For example, the recent Delivery Plan (DCLG, 2007, p. 16) cites its three main objectives as building a vibrant economy, improving the quality of life for residents and establishing the Gateway as an eco-region, without acknowledging that these aims may be in conflict with each other. In addition the impact of recession is likely to make the achievement of these and other objectives in the Gateway more difficult.

Other evidence points to the problems of joining-up. For example, concerns have been expressed about ensuring that environmental issues attain the same priority as meetings targets for houses and jobs (ABI, 2005; Every and Foley, 2005; London Assembly Environment Committee, 2005) and the Environment Agency has become one of the strongest critics of new housing in the Thames floodplains. Here, however, we explore the contradiction between economic growth and social inclusion. At the level of delivery agencies, some have thought through how they might join-up these objectives. For example, in North Kent,

local area renewal plans for 'deprived' areas have been drawn up looking at what needs can and cannot be met by new developments. However, for the majority the connections are not so clear. There is also a tendency in many of the Gateway strategies for issues of inclusion to be marginalised. Often put together with consultation, inclusion becomes an add-on rather than an 'engine of growth' in itself (Oxford Brookes University, 2006).

Allmendinger and Haughton (2007a) note that this emphasis on 'joining-up' has a political purpose—for example, to place demands for environmental sustainability within the context of the continued need for economic growth. Such political processes are also evident in the Gateway. Raco (2005b), for example, argues that the sustainable communities agenda is not as inclusive as it might appear. In particular, definitions of who are the sustainable citizens welcomed into these new communities elides the notion of sustainability with non-dependency

> Creating communities that can stand on their own feet and adapt to the changing demands of modern life (ODPM, 2003a, p. 5).

An example of this is the emphasis on funding 'key-worker' housing in Gateway developments, an emphasis justified on the basis of providing accommodation for those necessary to drive the sustainable communities agenda, such as teachers and nurses, but who are currently priced out of the housing market. "In these terms a sustainable citizen is one who actively contributes to the (economic) well-being of a community" (Raco, 2005b, p. 339). While there is uncertainty about the levels of affordable housing that will be built in the Thames Gateway overall, even though the target is for at least 35 per cent (ODPM, 2005a, p. 6), at least one economic strategy is explicit about the need for "adequate provision of executive style housing" in the context of attracting inward investment to the area (TGSEP, 2003, p. 28). In contrast to this vision of state gentrification (Lees, 2003), local far-right political parties such as the British National Party have exploited the concerns of local communities that their needs will not be met, by implying that most new Gateway residents will be from ethnic minorities (IPPR, 2006). This failure of Gateway plans to address local needs was again highlighted by the NAO and Members of Parliament.

Michael Keith has also questioned how far meeting the needs of a diverse population, particularly a multiethnic population, has permeated the current TG strategies (Keith, 2005). He raises some interesting questions over competing views of how the relationship between social form and the built environment might emerge in the Gateway, contrasting a communitarian view which tries to capture diversity and a liberal one which has a more limited view linked to particular strategic and economic priorities. Whether the current vision of the built form of the TG will be able to reflect truly the diversity in the area, he argues, remains to be seen.

A second illustration of this tension between competitiveness and inclusion can be found in the area of jobs and skills. Currently a low-skills equilibrium exists in the Thames Gateway, whereby the skills offered by the relatively low-qualified resident workforce broadly match the job opportunities in a labour market that is dominated by relatively low-skilled, low-paid employment (CESI and DTZ, 2005). Yet this is a far cry from the employment aspirations described in the economic strategies, emphasising high-value-added employment and high-skill job opportunities.

Embedded in this are inherent questions about whom the new jobs will be for

> By 2016 ... 180 000 new jobs will provide local residents more choice as to where they live and work (ODPM, 2005a, p. 6).

> We will support employment growth that will provide the right balance and quality of

> jobs and will foster the coherence and sustainability of local communities (ODPM, 2005a, p. 47).

However, there is no attempt to define what the "right balance and quality of jobs" might be. In addition, local residents cannot be offered choice if the new jobs on offer do not match the skills available. Ideally, the supply of, and demand for, skills will be matched and local people will fill the employment opportunities. More probable, however, will be a degree of commuting, both in and out of the Thames Gateway, and a shift away from the ideal that whole communities will live and work in the same area. In response to criticism by the PAC, the revised strategy for the Gateway includes reference to a skills strategy devised by the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and makes meeting local needs a strategic priority. Whether these are able to overcome the contradictions remains to be seen.

Tensions between openness and closure. In bringing together the different elements of the sustainable communities vision, the ability of 'good governance' to be open, accountable and to involve a full range of stakeholders is part of the sustainable communities narrative. Also as we have seen, the rhetoric of sustainable communities includes effective public participation and engagement. However, as Jessop (2000) points out, this can also lead to dilemmas in that the more open structures are, the more likelihood there is of conflict and delays and therefore the imperatives of delivery may override openness. There is therefore a contradictory desire to have only those involved who are necessary to achieve the objectives (in particular the private sector) and to arrive at a manageable number.

Table 1 summarises and brings together the pattern of membership of five of the main delivery agencies in the Gateway—the Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership, the Thames Gateway Kent Partnership, the Thames Gateway London Partnership and the two UDCs. Although it only represents a 'body count' and does not give information on the processes as opposed to structures of governance, the table reveals an overwhelming predominance of public-sector representatives (71 per cent) including elected members (46 per cent) chief executives (3 per cent) and other public-sector agencies such as Business Link, RDAs, Health Authorities and Housing Associations. The much lower percentage of private-sector representatives (25 per cent) is striking, as is the very low incidence of community and voluntary-sector (CVS) representation. Various issues arise from this.

First, there is evidence of overlapping 'élites' on these agencies. For example, there are three past LDDC members and officers on the new UDC boards and many chief executives of one agency sit on the board of another. The degree of openness of decision-making is therefore questionable. In this respect, it also has to be borne in mind that many of those on the delivery agencies, particularly the UDCs, were appointed by government. Although this round of UDCs is different from the last, in that interested candidates had to apply first rather than being sought out by ministers, there are still tendencies to appoint those from within

Table 1. Composition of Boards of the three sub-regional partnerships and two Urban Development Corporations, as of September 2006

Sector	*Number*	*Percentage*
Local authority	35	49
Councillors	33	46
Chief executives	2	3
Private sector	18	25
Other public sector	16	22
Community and voluntary sector	3	4
Total	72	100

existing networks rather than open it out to a range of views. There is, however, little evidence of regimes in terms of business involvement.

The relative lack of private-sector involvement is underlined by Raco's (2005a) reports on difficulties in finding a private-sector Chair for the London UDC (although a similar problem in finding a chief executive for the Thurrock UDC suggests that a generic lack of regeneration skills is also an issue). Representatives from the targeted industries of the private sector, especially high-tech and knowledge economies, are also absent. While this may indicate a lack of Gateway regimes, the influence of business is often disproportionate to the numbers involved. Brownill (2007), for example, has shown how the public sector is becoming adept at expressing business concerns within regeneration agendas. The spectre of competitiveness hovering over the Gateway is also evidence of this.

However, equally significantly, concerns over private-sector involvement are linked to problems of delivery, particularly of infrastructure and the desire by government to procure private-sector contributions towards this. The funding of infrastructure is seen by many as the major barrier to implementing the sustainable communities vision (Power, 2004; BURA, 2005; Roger Tym *et al.*, 2005). Yet calls for central government to assess fully the costs of infrastructure and identify how these will be met over the lifetime of the TG strategy have been resisted. Estimates exist for some areas of the costs of implementing the sustainable communities vision in the TG. The Kent Area Investment Programme estimates that £11.6 billion gross investment is needed between 2002 and 2021 of which £4.3 billion is public-sector funding. As the document says "achieving this requires a different view of how to make things happen. Traditional public and private sector mechanisms are not adequate". Levels of funding to the new UDCs are modest in comparison with the levels given to the LDDC for infrastructure. The Thurrock UDC has £60 million over 7 years of which £2 million a year will be spent on administration, etc. This leaves relatively small amounts for the task of land reclamation and servicing. The Gateway UDCs are constantly being compared with the LDDC and there have been recent calls to give them greater powers (CAG, 2006). This is interesting as the UDCs were set up under the same legislation as the LDDC with the same powers. It is the funding levels that are different. As a result, the private sector is viewed as a way of filling this gap

> A measure of our success in regenerating the TG will be the extent to which it attracts private investment ... Government's role will be to create confidence in the Gateway by appropriate infrastructure investment.. Where the scale of the regeneration required is beyond the private sector's ability to deliver on its own, we will work on public–private partnerships to develop major projects (ODPM, 2005a, p. 57).

As While *et al.* (2004) have shown in Cambridge, service provision for growth and sustainable communities is subject to conflicts between the actors and levels of governance over the socialisation of the costs of infrastructure provision. These conflicts also develop between the different levels of governance. For example, Barking and Dagenham council blocked the London Riverside development until funding for the Dockland Light Railway extension was agreed. The council rightly argue that building substantial numbers of new houses prior to the provision of public transport is not in the spirit of a sustainable community (*Regeneration and Renewal*, 2006b). As Morgan (2002) has pointed out in relation to RDAs, they have been devolved responsibility to deliver without the power in the form of resources to implement the vision. The same

can be said of the TG governance and delivery agencies. It remains to be seen whether new tariff arrangements agreed with developers (DCLG, 2007, p. 43) will meet this infrastructure funding gap.

Finally, there is the particular gap between rhetoric and reality which can be seen when we look at community and voluntary-sector involvement in the TG governance and delivery structures. Figure 3 shows that only 4 per cent of board members are from the CVS and, as all these are involved in just one partnership—the Thames Gateway Kent Partnership—the picture is even more bleak. There is no improvement higher up the hierarchy, with no representation on cross-regional or strategic bodies, despite the existence of the Thames Gateway Forum which is a consultative body involving community, voluntary and other organisations across the Gateway area. Other reports have shown that consultation on individual sites has been more extensive (CAG, 2006). However, our literature review only showed one Gateway partnership, again North Kent, which had considered a strategy for community involvement, a criticism repeated by the NAO (Oxford Brookes University, 2006; NAO, 2007).

There is therefore an implication that once the major decisions are over, the community can get involved. Community involvement at the strategic level is largely expected to be delivered by other mechanisms of local governance, mainly by Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) which act to bring partners together at the local authority level. However, other research has shown LSPs to be imperfect mechanisms for involving communities (Urban Forum, 2006; ODPM, 2005b). In recognition of this vacuum, the latest proposals include a commitment to resident opinion polls and establishing a 'citizens' panel' (DCLG, 2007, p. 81) but it is unlikely that these will lead to the vision of participatory democracy which is meant to typify a sustainable community.

4. Conclusions

The experience of the Gateway provides compelling evidence of the emerging complexity in the governance of planning. We have shown how the notion of hybridity is of relevance in a variety of ways to an exploration of this complexity, allowing as it does the focus on the contradictions which lie at the heart of current arrangements. In particular, it underlines the tension noted by other researchers between networked forms of governance and the continuing importance of hierarchical relations. The Gateway clearly illustrates the 'Janus face' (Swyngedouw, 2005) of such governance forms, with New Labour publicly rejecting 'stalinist control' while simultaneously using less transparent mechanisms to assert central influence. However, through the ways that these mechanisms were constantly evolving in the face of criticisms of ineffectiveness, the Gateway experience also shows the difficult balancing act engaged in by governments in the search for the forms and language of governmentality which can address and hide this ambiguity. Other tensions inherent in current governance reforms are also evident, in particular the inclusion and exclusion of particular interests and between contradictory policy objectives.

These contradictions are deepened through the promotion of particular governance arrangements as being essential to the creation of better places. In the UK, this is illustrated by the ideology that networked governance is integral to achieving sustainable communities. This led to a confusion between governance and delivery in the Gateway in a way which undermined many of the assertions about participatory governance. Further, the rhetoric of sustainable communities served to act as a 'beguiling narrative' (Morgan, 2002) which attempted to hide the contradictions between networked governance and centralisation

outlined earlier. The impossible task given to governance of attempting to reconcile the competing and contradictory objectives at the heart of the sustainable communities model only served to widen this gap between rhetoric and reality and illustrates the tendencies to 'governance failure' inherent in current arrangements. Questions about the forms of governance 'fit for purpose' in delivering sustainable communities ignore these contradictions and tensions and perpetuate the myth that the ideal-typical sustainable community is achievable. While current governance arrangements may well deliver elements of sustainable communities on the ground, whether they can resolve the tensions between economic competitiveness, environmental sustainability and social inclusion is open to question—not because they are unfit for purpose, but because ultimately these aims are irreconcilable. This suggests a fundamental problem in the sustainable communities agenda.

What does this mean for the Gateway in the future? It is likely that the complex dance of governance will continue with adjustments being made to the arrangements, particularly those of 'meta-governance'. Inevitably, these issues and processes will play themselves out differently in different areas; thus, we could see an emerging a Stratford/Olympics story, an Ebbsfleet story and a Thurrock story. It is also likely that conflict between different scales and levels of governance will centre around particular issues as it has already over the provision of infrastructure. The clash between the 'hard' spaces of formalised planning and 'soft' spaces of networked regeneration may well emerge more sharply in the future—for example, over environmental and flooding issues. Whether this results in Allmendinger and Haughton's (2007b) optimism concerning the possibilities for soft-spaces such as the Gateway remains to be seen. Finally, the implications of the economic downturn for 'growth areas' such as the Gateway are likely to be severe. Whatever the outcome, the dynamic tension within current governance arrangements will continue to play itself out over the space of the Thames Gateway.

In conclusion, we argue that, despite being a child of New Labour, events in the Gateway have wider implications. The evidence from the Gateway suggests that fluid, diverse and multiple forms of governance may become more widespread both in response to new forms of spatial planning and as a reflection of emerging governance systems (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2007a). The plethora of agencies within one area as evidenced in the Gateway also suggests that diverse forms of governance can emerge in different localities, fulfilling potentially different objectives. The landscape of governance and government that is emerging in the Gateway and beyond is therefore becoming increasingly dynamic and complex suggesting that managing this permanent diversity is becoming a growing task for governments. This dynamic relationship between forms of governance and systems of planning is therefore one which is likely to emerge in a variety of forms in a variety of places. We would argue that a focus on the hybridity and dynamics of the governance of spatial interventions as outlined here can best capture the fluidity of these arrangements and allow for explorations of these dynamics and dualisms as they emerge over time and space.

Notes

1. Until 2006, the relevant cabinet committee (Misc 22) dealt exclusively with the Thames Gateway, but in 2006 this was replaced by a more general Ministerial Committee that deals with all issues relating to housing, planning and regeneration.
2. SMART stands for: specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timed.

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Appendix

Table A1. Glossary of acronyms

CVS	Community and Voluntary Sector
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
DETR	Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions
DfT	Department for Transport
GLA	Greater London Authority
LDA	London Development Agency
LDDC	London Docklands Development Corporation
LDV	Local Delivery Vehicle
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership
NAO	National Audit Office
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
PAC	Public Accounts Committee
RDA	Regional Development Agency
SCAP	Sustainable Communities Action Plan
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timed
TG	Thames Gateway
TGKP	Thames Gateway Kent Partnership
TGLP	Thames Gateway London Partnership
TGSEP	Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership
UDC	Urban Development Corporation