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# King's cross railway lands: A “good argument” for change?

Dave Brenner



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Dave Brenner

[dtbrenner@gmail.com](mailto:dtbrenner@gmail.com)

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## Abstract

Should the future differ dramatically from the past? Should historical patterns of growth be left by the way-side? If so, should it be a single vision which urges us towards the future or a complicated comingling of many? In the view of the theorist Jürgen Habermas, “ideal” stakeholder engagement tends to produce a “best argument” for development. This “argument” may range from the conservative and incremental to the radical and dramatic. For such processes to be “ideal,” however, a series of alternative development paths, or scenarios, must be expounded and debated as rationally as possible.

This working paper sets out to test some of Habermas’ assumptions by analyzing the 20 year planning process surrounding the King’s Cross Railway Lands in central London. This 26 hectare site of largely unutilized land represented one of the largest single development opportu-

nities in the modern history of London. To believe in the possibility of a best argument, it is necessary to first make some rough assumptions about rationality, or as this paper argues, rationalities. This raises several questions as to what a “best argument” might consist of and, critically, how values are appraised within development scenarios. In answering these types of questions, light is shed onto stakeholder claims to legitimization.

This working paper begins with an analytic framework for rationality and visioning and then lays out six visions of Kings Cross Railway Lands, all draw from planning documents. With visions in one hand and a theoretical understanding of rationality(ies) in the other, chapters 3 and 4 explore how they relate. Chapter 5, the conclusion, seeks to determine whether Habermas’ assertions and the discussion of rationality(ies) in general are indeed useful as tools to understand planning logic.



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## Glossary

*“The tendency of all men who ever tried to write Ethics was to run against the boundaries of language. This running against the walls of our cage is perfectly, absolutely hopeless.”* (Wittgenstein 1965 p.12)

**Communicative rationality:** the exchange of perspectives and coordination of collective reasoning (Albrechts 2004)

**Ideology:** A system of ideas, attitudes, standpoints, conceptions and beliefs which arise in relation to material activity, and which are capable of affecting the perception of reality (Morrison 2006)

**Instrumental rationality:** the identification of courses of action to solve a problem and achieve a desired future (Albrechts 2004)

**Model:** a simplified representation or description of a complex system, especially one designed to facilitate calculations and predictions (Oxford Dictionary)

**Planning gain:** provision by a developer to include in a proposal projects beneficial to a community in exchange for permission for a commercially promising but potentially unacceptable development (Oxford Dictionary)

**Principle:** a fundamental truth or proposition that serves as the foundation for a system of belief or behaviour or for a chain of reasoning (Oxford Dictionary)

**Rationale:** a set of reasons or a logical basis for a course of action or belief (Oxford Dictionary)

**Optimising:** make the best or most effective use of (a situation or resource)(Oxford Dictionary)

**Public rationality:** a sum total of public reasonings comparable to Habermas’ “public opinion”

**Satisficing:** seeking a satisfactory solution rather than the optimal one; the solution often satisfies some criteria and sacrifices others (Oxford Dictionary)

**Scenario:** a narrative description of a possible state of affairs or development over time (Albrechts 2005)

**Scientific rationality:** the investigation of phenomena and causality (comparable to “rational inquiry”)

**Strategic rationality:** the development of a strategy involving the broader public for dealing with power relationship (Albrechts 2004)

**Value:** one’s judgement of what is important in life (Oxford Dictionary 2012)

**Value rationality:** the design of futures based upon social values (Albrechts 2004)

**Visioning:** the act of creating a mental image of what the future will or could be like (Oxford Dictionary)

## Acronyms

**KXRLG:** King's Cross Railway

**KCC:** King's Cross Central

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction to King's Cross

King's Cross in the 1980s was an area of intense neglect: abandoned light industrial facilities interspersed by rail-tracks and parcels of vacant land used as temporary storage facilities (see Image 1.1). To add to the physical neglect, the 26 hectare tract of state land had a reputation for drugs, prostitution and physical crime.

The prospect of a development agreement in 1987 initiated public debates about the value of the neglected King's Cross site. The narrative perspectives were numerous and diverse:

- an impoverished local population and economy,
- an underutilized public transport hub in a congested city,
- a degraded collection of heritage landmarks,
- a profitable location in a city with a shortage of modern office space,
- an area population in overcrowded accommodation
- an environmental blight of urban industrial neglect
- etc.

The potential profitability of King's Cross created an opportunity for significant community benefits (e.g. planning gains) to be negotiated by the Camden Council.

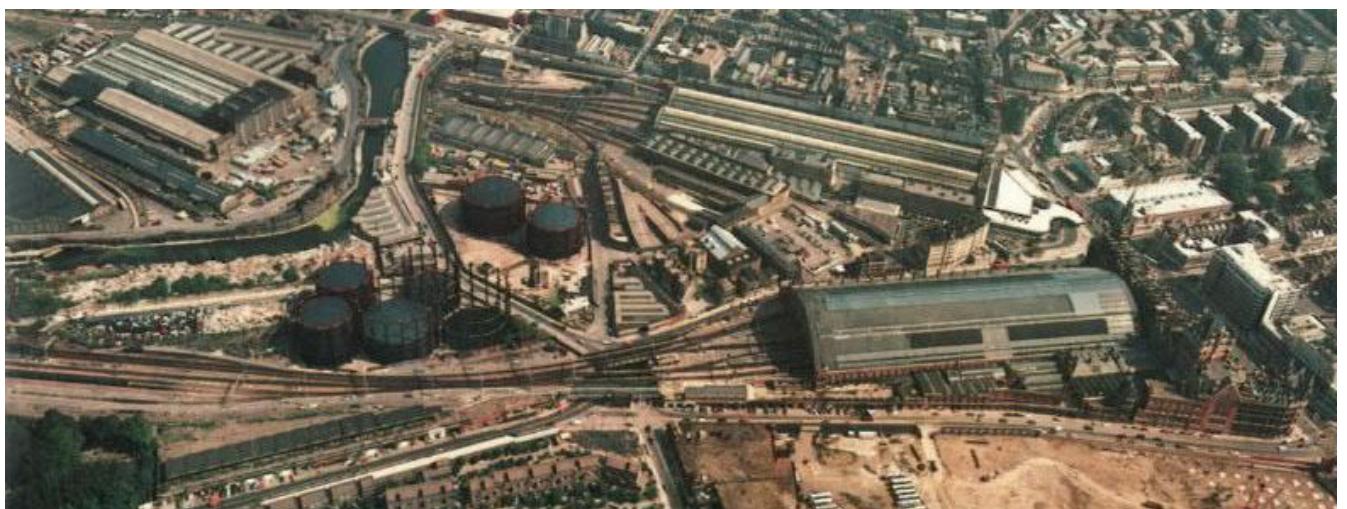
But what should the council propose and what right do they have to prioritise one problem over another, or one valued attribute over another? From where and from whom does the council derive its legitimacy?

The answer to the legitimization question, this paper argues, lies in a multi-layered concept of "public rationality." Habermas defines this as a process of rational inquiry which produces a reason which bears the weight of public scrutiny better than the others (Habermas 1996). The narrative perspectives of King's Cross encapsulated problems which were submitted to a variety of rational discourses, with each of these discourses influencing the priority of action for the Camden Council. This working paper, therefore, explores the interplay of rationality-types in planning practice in an effort to understand how they produce a "good argument" for the legitimization of state action.

## 1.2 Purpose

The intention is to move towards an understanding of the legitimization of state action (at borough level) as planners and developers engage in negotiations. Thus, to understand what the borough is compelled to demand from developers in London today.

**Image 1.1.** King's Cross, 1983. Source: Google Earth 1983



However, this paper aspires to be more than a commentary on procedural elements of the London planning process. It attempts, rather, to understand in what ways different rationality discourses occur and why. This exploratory approach is heuristic in its design and thus without a clear destination.

It is hoped that this paper, in addition to contesting the two claims, broadens the academic debate about rationality in planning. To this end, an exploratory question will be posed: *(how) does understanding the classifications of rationality add value to planning?*

The working paper begins with a review of past conceptions of rationality in planning traditions since the 1950s (1.2). The historical debates are built into a framework

which questions the significance of rationality types and the benefits of future thinking (2.1-2.2).

In the process of differentiating types of rationality in the King's Cross discourses, the possibility of radical change is brought to the fore (3.1-3.3). Questions of procedural parameters (4.1), of causality (4.2), of contextual knowledge (5.1), and of scales of impact (5.2) are posed in relation to the envisaging of new development. This is designed as a constructive step towards testing the claims of legitimacy (6.1-6.3).

Before scrutinizing the prevailing conception of public rationality, it is important to understand how planning has arrived at these conceptions. That is, which conceptions of rationality (and thus legitimacy) are today's theorists responding to and why.

## 2. Public rationality in planning

### 2.1 The evolution of rationality in planning theory

#### Optimization: Value rationality and scenarios in rational comprehensive planning

Planning theorists in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century expressed a deep faith in rationality and the ability of planners to rationally envision better futures. This faith in rational comparison, indebted to thinkers such as Weber (1905) and Mannheim (1936), fed into a linear conception of social progress. This perspective on progress, associated with the traditions of positivism, posited an accruing of knowledge as part of an increasingly scientific rational approach (Rydin 2007, p. 53).

Banfield offers a simplified definition of rationality: “a rational decision is one in which alternatives and consequences are considered as fully as the decision maker... can afford to consider them” (Banfield 1973, p.140). Rational comprehensive planning (RCP) proponents, of which Banfield was one, favoured a structured process of visioning and scenario generation. This theoretical process of “optimizing” encouraged planners to evaluate the feasibility of the means only after a valuation of the different ends (Forester 1989). What characterised this approach was a unitary understanding of value rationality, termed “public interest” (Mannheim 1936).

#### Step by step: Temporal considerations and instrumental rationality

Political decisions are often made as responses to immediate concerns because of political pressures in a democratic society (Crawley 1991). There is a long running debate in politics whether idealism and utopianism, with dramatic implications of reform, should be enabled or whether legal constraints should essentially preference incremental pragmatism. This debate occurred within the planning establishments in the 1960s and 1970s as the approach of incremental planning gained favour. Theorists like Herbert Simon raised questions about how “fully” a decision maker could actually decide issues, calling our cognitive ability to engage in rational inquiry limited or “bounded” (Sandercock 1998).

The “optimizing” frequently cited by rational comprehensive planners was, due to information deficiencies, un-

clear problems, and other practical limitations like time, more often a process of “satisficing” (Forester 1989 p. 51). The ontological questions raised by this critique have contributed to the shift away from comprehensiveness and towards fragmented planning specialties (Friedmann 1987).

The incremental approach to planning which arose in the 1960s critiqued the practical effectiveness of RCP visioning and means planning. Forester summarises the incrementalist position in a metaphor: “to cross an intersection, why look all the way across town?” (Forester 1989, p. 48). While RCP planners were able to offer narrow views of the future and prescribe optimal, efficient courses of action, they worked in an idealised state. The incrementalist Ward laments the existence of “many plans but no planning.” Planning to Ward was the mediation of ideologies, based upon realistic short-term planning objectives (Ward 1981, p.57). Incrementalism itself did not preclude vision but rather encouraged the pragmatic acceptance of short-term bargaining at the planning-political interface.

#### New conceptions of the public: Communicative and strategic rationalities

The 1970s witnessed the rise of diversity politics and a new search for legitimacy (Fainstein 2009). A major critique of traditional methods regarded the expertise of the planner. Who were these planners to exercise (their) rationality in the first place? Efforts to destabilise the notion of the planner as expert combined the aforementioned cognitive critiques with calls for recognition of emerging value-orientations, including gender and environmental perspectives (Thomas and Healey 1991). These dovetailed well with calls for the integration of diverse logics of development (Sandercock 2000). For traditional planners, this meant envisioning from a “heterogeneous base of knowledge” or selecting among competing visions without a legitimate rationale (Rydin 2007, p. 57).

Critiques of incrementalists were levelled against their limited agency to challenge the self-serving confines of the status quo (Forester 1989). Marxists advocated a more dialectical process of reasoning which challenged the underlying construction of the state’s ability to represent popular values (Sandercock 1998; Harvey 1998). Future thinking was critical to the construction of the types of radical transformations these thinkers began to advocate.

Forester, continuing the metaphor about intersections, answers his own question: "The incrementalist formulation could have us cross and re-cross intersections without knowing where we are going" (Forester 1989, p.48-49). Actions may be worse than conservative, according to Forester, they may be redundant without a metric to measure gains (Forester 1989).

Communicative planning theory, which arose from the work of Jurgen Habermas and was partially adopted by planners such as John Friedmann and John Forester, offered a different approach to the construction of rationality (Sandercock 1998). This process focused on the common ground between stakeholders which served as a launching point for the creation of a compromised vision. By offering new perspectives on "public rationality" and a set of procedural methods for communicative constructions, Habermas and others complexified the existing values-rationality framework, continuously re-defining "public interest" through public engagement.

While the communicative approach addressed many critiques of the RCP and incrementalism, critics pointed out that power relations influence constructions of rationality. Powerful actors exercise their influence to "define reality and the context of rationality" (Flyvbjerg 1991, p. 227). Communicative approaches, critics argued, could only work on small geographic scales and, even then, were slave to decisions made at higher levels.

In the 1980s the rise of strategic planning offered a new way of looking at the integration of interests across multiple geographic scales (Healey 2009). This approach included a set of tools for visioning and selective rational value identification. *Strategic rationality*, as defined by Albrechts (2004), assumes a cognitive ability to transcend parochial interests based upon recognition of common interests across diverse geographies. For Albrechts (2004) and Healey (1997), this approach builds on communicative discourses but ultimately seeks synergies across non-traditional power ranges with a wider perspective on spatial impacts.

### Public rationality: A search for legitimization

Why are different conceptualizations of rationality relevant to the debates in planning theory? The deeper question being asked concerns the legitimacy of planners and political bureaucrats to adjudicate and deliberately guide developments. Based in a utilitarian conception of state intervention, "modernist" planners often used the notion of 'public interest' to justify their courses of action (Sandercock 1998; Friedmann 1965). In the "post-modernist" era, the planner is no longer considered an expert in the domain of comprehensive rationality.

Without a claim to comprehensive rationality and without an overarching value framework, which in spite of its vague-

ness is what "public interest" provided, from where do planners derive their legitimacy? The answer, for some, lies in the liberal-legal structures which underpin governments like England's. For Rawls, with his focus on the safeguarding of liberal values, the definitive argument should be an imposed translation of broad principles (liberalism) through multiple channels of law and planning (Rawls 1973).

The second foundation for legitimacy is the representative democratic mandate. Under this conception of legitimacy, "bureaucratic positions" gave planners a remit for translating formal political sentiments into physical realities (Healey 1991). As a result, planning has undergone a process of fragmentation wherein specialised technical experts focus on their own translations (Friedmann 1987).

By the 1980s both the liberal-legal approach and the representative political mandate were under intense criticism. The response in recent decades has been to seek stronger democratic participatory mechanisms and to enhance procedures for determining public rationality<sup>1</sup>. The "democratic project," according to Mouffe (2005), is dependent upon constructive "agonistic" conflict between value rationality claims. The goal is simple: create a more direct link between public reasoning and state action. Habermas' (1996) concept of co-originality emphasizes the reinforcing relationship between the values of liberal rights and public participation. The tenuous relationship of managing the two in city development falls to planners.

## 2.2 Theoretical framework

### Public rationality: A basis for legitimization

Albrechts (2004) identifies four tracks of rationality in planning. The two main rationality tracks are associated with ends, *value-rationality*, and means, *instrumental rationality*<sup>2</sup>. The *value rationality* track is the process of value identification, valuation in context, and visioning. This is the principle route to defining desired futures and reasoning through their merits (Albrechts 2004, p. 752). This historic binary is expanded to include a *communicative rationality* track, defined as a collaborative process of prioritisation within a context, and a *strategic rationality* track, defined as a process of working creatively around power-dynamics and scales of concern<sup>3</sup>. This paper adds a final type of rationality, *scientific rationality*, to the four defined by Albrechts. Much of the values discourse has been put in opposition to *scientific rationality*, which strives towards a value-neutral way of analysing situational phenomena (or 'facts') and processes of change (Rydin 2003 & 2007).

A distinction needs to be made between rationality and rationalisation. *Rationality* is a cognitive method of comparing different options based upon consistent criteria.

Weber considers *rationalising* a method by which reasons are given for the purpose of institutions (Friedmann 1973). The discourse is further complicated by a division into techniques of rational inquiry. *Scientific rationality*, like *communicative rationality*, is conceptualised as both an objective, the framing of situational 'facts', and a technique of inquiry (Rydin 2003).

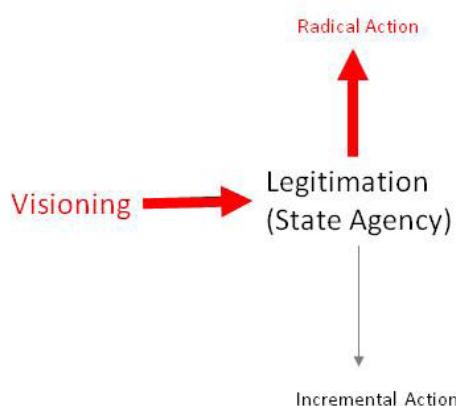
The normative relationship between public rationality and state agency (legitimacy acted upon) is continuously being challenged and adjusted at development level (Rydin 2007). In other words, "legitimizing means that there are good arguments for a political order's claim to be recognized" and these arguments are context dependent (Habermas 1996, p. 248). Habermas makes the claim that public rationality should form a basis for legitimization of public action (see Fig. 2.1). Public rationality, as such, is the sum total of the five types of rationality.

### Future thinking: Reasoning radical change

To better understand the perspectives which shape rationality debates, a temporal dimension is instructive. Planning is by definition concerned with the future. Comparing between future and present or present and past is how we understand our values as they relate to patterns of change (Fainstein 2010). Thus vision and scenario development, actions which force us to consider processes of change, are critical to the differentiation of types of rationality.

Friedmann summarizes the planning process in three questions: "What is likely to happen without intervention?" (*scientific rationality*), "What should happen?" (*value-rationality*), "How can the desired future be brought about?"

**Fig. 2.1.** Claim: Public rationality creates a basis for legitimization



(*instrumental rationality*) (Friedmann 1973, p. 115). 'What should happen?' is the impetus for *value rationality* debates projected forward in time, i.e. visioning. A vision, as defined by Healey (1997), is an imagined future shaped by the desires of those engaged in the exercise of imagining it.

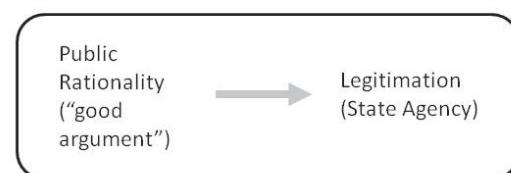
Planning tries, in most formulations, to shape development patterns so that future developments will reflect present values (Sandercock 1998). However, since manifested values inevitably conflict and since secondary effects are externalised, visions must be understood in relation to scientific projections. Thus a key addendum to Friedmann's set of questions is 'what else may happen?' To answer this question, planners have historically relied on scenario generation. Scenarios, as defined by Hall (1985), provide pictures of the future under different development conditions.

The specific type of *value rationality* which is visioning centres the other rationality debates. According to Friedmann, visioning moves reasoning beyond immediate concerns and, in so doing, changes the nature of the *value rationality* discourse (Friedmann 1973). The discourse becomes "ahistorical" with consideration to inter-generation concerns and broader societal shifts, e.g. environmental stewardship. Only through visioning, Friedman argues, can the possibility of radical change be explored (Friedmann 1973) (see Fig. 2.2)<sup>4</sup>.

### 2.3 Methodology

In exploring the case study of King's Cross, this paper seeks to apply the five types of rationality to a single borough-level development planning process. Methodo-

**Fig. 2.2.** Claim: Visioning creates the possibility of radical change



logically, the classification of rationalities determines the organization of the analysis. These rationalities are used to analyse both the intention and the procedures of each stage of the Camden Council's planning process.

Future thinking – visioning and scenario generation – has a guiding influence on each of the other types of rationality debates and thus functions as an entry-point to the study of King's Cross. Albrechts creates an ideal for rationality discourses by inverting time: "time flows from the 'invented' future...towards and into the experienced past" (Albrechts 2004). Thus, structurally, this paper begins by framing future interests within King's Cross. The paper then works backward to understand how different processes of rationality (*scientific, communicative, stra-*

*tegic, and instrumental*) are positioned in relation to the visions (*value-rationality*).

The two core claims in the theoretical framework are translated into two exploratory research questions:

- (How) do claims to public rationality ("good arguments") create claims to legitimacy?
- (How) does visioning legitimate radical change?

The first question considers the sum total of rationalities in a context and the second explores a specific type of rationality and discourse (*value rationality visioning*) in the same context. In effect, the first is designed as a prerequisite for the second.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 2

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**1.** I consider here the work of Forester, Sandercock, Gaventa, Mouffe and Habermas.

**2.** This division is indebted to Mannheim, who uses the terms functional and substantial (Mannheim 1936)

**3.** In this paper I expand Albrechts' definition of "strategic rationality" to focus on geographic scale issues emerging from development impacts.

**4.** There is no judgement in this paper on the merit or desirability of radical change

## 3. Visions of the future

### 3.1 Six visions of King's Cross

In the mid-1980s the King's Cross railway lands were granted to British Railways, a public company in the process of becoming private. The transfer was based on a contractual agreement that profit generated from the site's redevelopment would finance the construction of an expanded international rail station (Parkes and Mouawad 1991). Planning applications for the largest development, King's Cross Central (KCC), begin in the late 1980s.

The *planning gain* process brought King's Cross' value debates into the public arena. As is standard practice in London, developers negotiate community benefits (*planning gain*) in exchange for variances and eventually planning approval. The size of the development, coupled with potentially massive profits, created an unprecedented scope for community benefits. As the planning process witnessed a sequence of proposals and counter-proposals, contextual interpretations of value were turned into a series of visions.

The six visions outlined below represent some of the more commonly debated value-orientations<sup>1</sup>. The vi-

sions are structured around a dialectical question: what contextual need or concern were these visions responding to?

#### V1. World city vision

Since the "big bang," a dramatic period of financial liberalisation in the mid-1980s, London's economy has rapidly restructured towards high-productivity sectors such as finance and advanced business services (Sassen 2001). London currently sits as the number one ranked financial centre in the world. This transformation spurred a move, strongly supported by the central government, towards large developments with advanced infrastructure, such as Canary Wharf and Liverpool Street (Brownill 1990). These developments now provide spaces of agglomeration for firms within these high-productivity sectors.

The King's Cross development, with its excellent transport connections to the country and the continent, was seen as a potential piece to London's competitive World City image (Edwards 2009; *Parameters for Regeneration* 2001). The vision which emerged was of a cluster of architecturally distinctive buildings in line with a uni-

**Image 3.1** King's Cross railway lands, 2005. Photo: Gulzar 2005

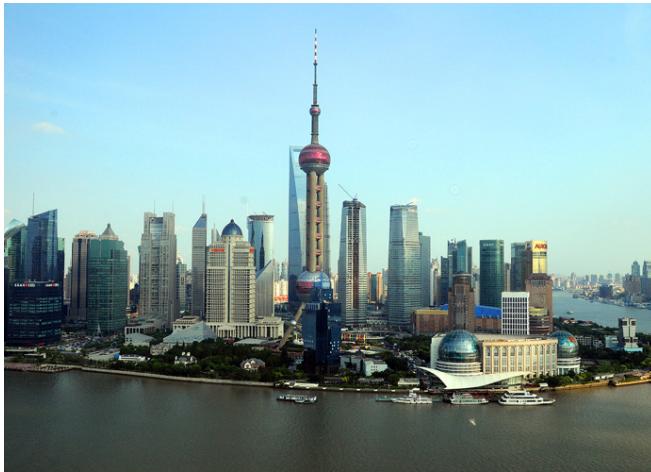


versal aesthetic (see Image 3.2). The resultant “critical mass” will, theoretically, “attract other global companies to London” (*Towards the London Plan*, cited in Argent St. George 2001b). World City ambitions and the potential contribution of King’s Cross are strongly reiterated in the London 2004 Plan (Holgersen and Haarstad 2009). Underlying the global imagery debate is a belief that general economic “competitiveness” is dependent on these types of developments (Argent St. George 2002).

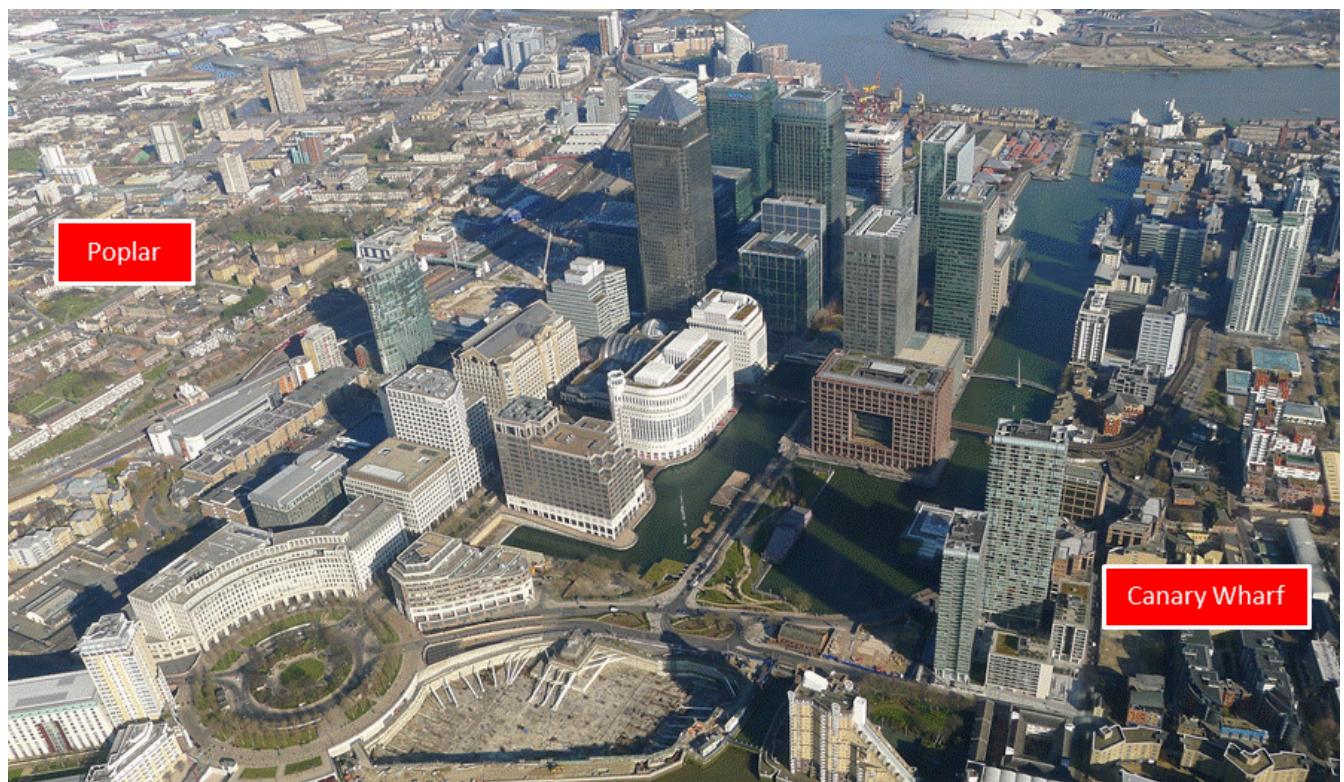
## V2. Regeneration vision

In dialectical opposition to the World City Vision is the Regeneration Vision. Brownill (1990) criticises the Docklands for creating islands of economic activity, disconnected from the surrounding areas (and unemployed labourers) and detrimental to small indigenous businesses (see Image 3.3). In the late 1980s deprivation in the wards around King’s Cross was signifi-

**Image 3.2 (a & b)** The World City image is dependent on a certain globally recognized aesthetic and the creation of a ‘critical mass’ of structures (Examples: Pudong, Shanghai and La Defense, Paris). Photos: Abalon 2010; Bonnet 2012



**Image 3.3.** Limited Convergence after 20 years: Canary Wharf, 90,000 jobs, and Poplar neighbourhood, lowest decile in the London deprivation index. (Londonprofiler 2007)



cantly higher than Camden Borough as a whole and unemployment was near double the London average (Sexton 1992).

In the Regeneration vision, the local economy is strategically supported through state investment, protective regulation, and large-scale retraining programmes (*Towards a People's Plan* 1991). The result is an integrated development wherein new white collar firms are dependent on local workers and local services. The notion of "convergence" assumes the possibility of a reciprocal economic relationship between high-level producer service industries (e.g. finance, technology, etc.) and local small businesses and low-skill workers.

### V3. Affordability vision

Historically a borough of middle-income small family residencies with interspersed commercial hubs, Camden in the late 1980s was experiencing an influx of ethnic minority residents. These new residents were typically younger and far more likely to have families (Sexton 1992). Priced out of areas in northern and western parts of Camden, these migrants found accommodation largely in the wards around King's Cross and southern Islington, areas which were experiencing significant over-crowding. Social housing had under-

gone a rapid transformation in the 1980s after a period of "Right to Buy" policies. As a result the provision of new units by councils was meagre and declining (Sexton 1992; Argent St. George 2001a).

The vision which emerged in King's Cross proposed upwards of 2,000 new social housing units, or 50% of the total number of new housing stock (Parkes and Mouawad 1991). In this vision, social housing with proper safeguards could "inoculate the area against pressures" of the highly competitive rental market (Edwards 2009 p. 23). The size of provision was predicted as a buffer, keeping rental costs in surrounding wards from escalating.

While responding to local problems of overcrowding (Sexton 1992), this vision recognizes both local dynamics and metropolitan social trends. The implication for the site is densification and social diversity, for the city it is a more just spatial distribution of lower-income residents (Ledgerwood, et.al, 1994).

### V4. Conservation vision

Traditionally a city focused on heritage conservation and the maintenance of its historic scale (e.g. height and density restrictions), London planners in the late 1980s and early 1990s were beginning to approve high-rise glass

**Image 3.4.** Heritage Spaces: One of three historic Stanley Buildings to survive in the King's Cross redevelopment, adjacent St. Pancreas Station extension. Photo: Yau 2012



and steel developments in places like Liverpool Street, the Docklands, and Paddington. A backlash against this trend was led by heritage-conservationists and planners favouring a more ‘human scale’ (see Edwards 2009; Argent St. George 2001a).

The vision for King’s Cross emphasized the conservation of listed heritage sites surrounded by developments which were of comparable scale (i.e. did not overshadow existing sites) and aesthetic. This included an emphasis on pedestrianism (“car-free”) and green spaces (Edwards 2009).

## V5. The nodal city vision

Central London in the late 1980s was beginning to feel the pressure of transport congestion. The commute of white collar workers into the city had become prohibitively time-consuming (Bertolini 2007). The city responded by pushing expensive underground and rail improvements into the pipeline (Holgersen 2007). In response to congestion, national and municipal level governments began incentivizing transport oriented de-

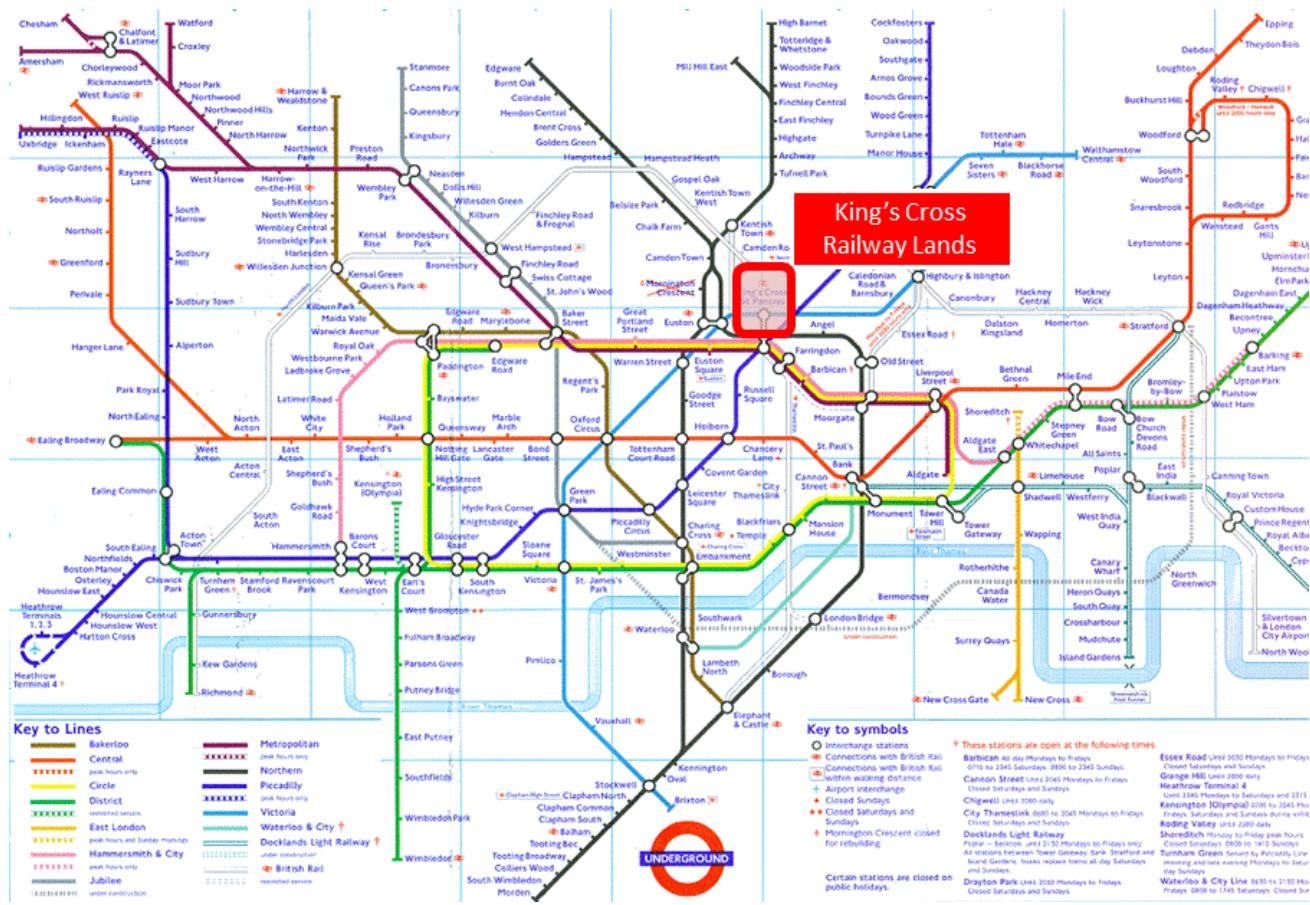
velopments. National Planning Policy Guideline 13, for one, prioritises development locations near transport interchanges as “key sites for intensive development” (Argent St. George 2001b).

London planners proposed “multi-centred” geographies based on a system of accessible specialised nodes (Bertolini 2007). The King’s Cross site fit these criteria – far enough from the centre to create a disconnected node of the economy, yet situated among optimal transport facilities. The vision which emerged for King’s Cross is one of commercial and office spaces clustered within walking distance of rail and tube stations.

## V6. Sustainability vision

In the early 1990s the environmental movement embraced the concept of sustainability (Rydin 2003). This soon translated into design ideals for new urban areas with minimal or net-zero negative impacts to the environment. By the 2000s green ratings were providing status boosts for new high-profile developments. The GLA made emission reduction a priority by setting

**Fig 3.1.** King’s Cross-St Pancras transport connectivity: rail service to northern England and Europe (2.5 hours to Paris), 6 tube lines, 63 million annual passengers. Map: Transport for London 2012



ambitious reduction targets for 2025 (Bulkeley et al 2010)<sup>2</sup>. At the same time stricter environmental regulations and a greater awareness of waterway and air pollution pushed environmental issues into the public consciousness.

The high profile of the King's Cross site presented an opportunity for "visible" green design. The vision of sustainability, as articulated by the development consortium, focused on the performance of their more prominent buildings and a few environmental aesthetics, e.g. parks and clean waterways (Argent St. George 2001a & 2004b). The scenario which emerges is largely indifferent to spatial materialisation. Additional environmental concerns, e.g. air pollution, were included within the planning gains debate after their identification as priority community concerns (London Regeneration Consortium plc. 1989)

### 3.2 Value rationality: Envisioning "ends"

"We hope to build a consensus about first the principles behind, and then the form of our proposals" (Argent St. George 2001a, p. 22)

"The principles" behind the consensus in the above quote are part of a common first step in the *value rationality* discourse. Within the *value-rationality* classification, however, a distinction needs to be made between generic ideological values and visions, i.e. values contextualised and projected (Mannheim 1936). Friedmann summarizes the difference between ideological goal formulation (and radical visioning): "[Ideological thinking] trusts in the gradual unfolding of the possibilities inherent in an established system of order" (Friedmann 1973, p. 120).

**Image 3.5.** Radical vision: Canary Wharf (1983 v. 2010). Photos: Google Earth



**Image 3.6.** Radical vision: Housing estate, Tower Hamlets, London. Photo: Author 2012



**Image 3.7.** Radical vision: the Olympic Park. Photo: Author 2012



What makes the components of a vision radical? For Friedmann (1973) radical “utopic” (Mannheim’s term) constructions of future realities differ from ideological wishes because they do not hypothesize a clear chain of causality. Radical change, therefore, requires an “ahistorical” reading of the future. The radical transformation of Canary Wharf from unused dock-space into a centre of high finance is a clear break with a historical progression (see Image 3.5).

While ideologies are value-laden, it is the *ahistorical* manifestation of values into the future, i.e. visioning, which Albrechts believes provides fertile ground for a values debate. “Value rationality is,” he argues, “a clear reaction against a future that extrapolates the past” (Albrechts 2004).

Proponents of radical change argue that rapid structural or cultural changes require a breaking away from historically-defined processes of gradual change (Bertolini 2007; Albrechts 2006). In London, the development of the “Tech City” ushered in a new way of looking at economic infrastructure and high-productivity sectors like information technology (see 4.3). Likewise, the O<sub>2</sub> developments in North Greenwich are a zero-carbon at a time when many new developments are working towards incremental reductions. Lastly, Stratford is a new commercial centre in a space once physically distant from the commercial heart of London (Fainstein 2010). These three radical visions emerged from economic transformations, a value-orientation shift, and changed transport geographies, respectively.

Proponents of radical change like Harvey (2000) frame the patterned confinement of planning procedures as adversary to debates of legitimacy. Embedded interests, particularly class interests in Harvey’s case, have set the existing parameters of the values debate. Harvey laments that the gradual (re)negotiation of precedents with entrenched actors “precludes time to imagine or construct alternatives” (Harvey 2000, p. 237). The Sustainability Vision represents the most fitting example of Har-

vey’s conundrum. A fully sustainable development – e.g. zero-carbon footprint, renewable energy, zero-affluent – would represent a dramatic departure from the existing planning norms and regulations. Instead the clashing of two ideological positions frequently results in a negotiation of minor environmental benefits (Rydin 2003). In King’s Cross, this ideological conflict translated into small aesthetic environmental improvements and moderate energy efficiency gains.

Ideologically driven decision-making, Forester (1989) argues, is the cause of many “muddling” approaches to planning. Mannheim (1936) and Flyvbjerg (1991) argue that the majority of planning decisions are made on an ideological, context-less value template. The granting of King’s Cross land to British Railways was an ideological decision, made on functional (instrumental) merits without a contextual and spatial vision. By attaching a “commercial imperative,”<sup>3</sup> the grantors initiated a context-less approach to planning (Argent St. George 2002; Arup 2006; Edwards 2012).

Critics of visioning argue that we are limited in our ability to see the scale of future conflicts. Frequently, we are seduced by principles even when we lack awareness of their consequences. For Sustein, et. al. (2001), the enthusiastic application of principles in the legal profession often produces outcomes with externalities to other foundational principles. In planning the passion of proponents to specific value-orientations leads to even greater blindness. It is the function of scenarios to put visions into future contexts and illustrate the scale, intensity, and form of their impacts.

### 3.3 Scientific rationality: Generating scenarios

*“Marginal surrounding communities face being squeezed out by speculative rises in land and rental values”* (*Towards a People’s Plan* 1991, p.17)

*Scientific rationality* is defined by its falsifiability, the ability of its fact-claims to be submitted to validity checks (Rydin 2001). *Scientific rationality* applied to future scenarios is thus defined by its plausibility. In the quote from *Towards a People’s Plan*, the authors make a statement of speculative ‘fact’ in support of their desire of affordable housing safeguards.

Scenarios allow us to test the prioritisation of our values under future conditions (Hall 1986). There are two sides to this future reflective action. They can be understood as projection and perspective. The former is the impact of actions and the degree to which these impacts (often accumulated) shape other factors in the future. Throughout the King’s Cross planning process reference is made to

**Image 3.8** “Tech City,” London: An “ahistorical” specialised node



the co-existence of realised visions. This view of harmonization of values is put into stark contrast in the scenarios (see Appendix II).

Perhaps the threat of gentrification best illustrates a future value conflict. The development of high-end office space and up-market accommodation create a high probability of rising rental rates in adjacent wards. In one scenario, there was a potential "loss of 50% of social housing" in these wards (Edwards 2009, p.9). While housing was a core issue in 1988, it was the awareness of potential gentrification effects on other wards which brought these debates to the fore (Sexton 1992; Parkes and Mouawad 1991).

What will the world look like in 2025? The second benefit of scenarios, perspective, is a new way of seeing the broader social and economic debates in a lived future space. For Albrechts, scenarios "enable us to reflect on a series of 'what if' stories" (Albrechts 2004, p. 256).

What if, for example we have greater spatial and economic segregation in 2025 than today? There is a notable progression in the Regeneration Vision from the 1988 Camden Council briefs, which emphasized parallel economies, to later proposals (Bertolini 2007; Parkes and Mouawad 1991). The ideals of convergence are replaced by scepticism about the propensity of real estate capital to transform indiscriminately and the vast gap between local workers and those required to fill the high-end office positions (Ledgerwood, et.al, 1994; Edwards 2009). This growing scepticism illustrates concerns raised by "what if?" scenario questions, based in part on lessons learned from other parts of London.

Critically, Hall points that "scenario-writing was never meant to be an exercise in wish-fulfilment" (Hall 1986, p.8). Hall goes on to say "at its best, [scenario-writing] was meant

to provide pictures of the unacceptable" (ibid). Scenarios in this conception are not goals projected, nor are they invaded by the optimism bias which visions encapsulate (Kahnemann et. al 1982). Rather, they are the accumulation of current trends (as well as proposed measures) on future realities. The appearance of externalities or generally "unacceptable" outcomes is critical because the prioritisation of our values today reflects our reading of the current conditions not future conditions.

There is also an important "edge effect": we see a problem but we cannot envision the future severity of the problem (De Bono 1997). As a result we do not act with urgency on issues with large cumulative future effects. These differences in perception are what shaped the public narratives which emerged from different stakeholders. There is a significant "edge effect" to achieving the Sustainability Vision, as its short-term benefits are difficult to valuate considering the uncertainty surrounding cumulative environmental effects, such as climate change, and the precise time and severity of their impacts.

In the Affordability debate, gentrification threats meant more than providing social housing within the new development; it meant safeguarding affordable housing in and around the development. Scenarios enable "problem anticipation" to become a central part of the interchange between politicians and planners (Banovetz 1971).

Finally, Hall (1986) adds that we learn from a scenario not just what is "unacceptable" but "how to avoid it." The benefits of scenarios are to anticipate the size of problems, grounding *instrumental rationality* debates in the present and future. Thus, scenarios aid the construction of a more coherent line of reasoning between our stated values and our goals in light of future threats.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

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**1.** Actors interviewed for this working paper do not fully agree with my delineations. The delineations are designed to structure debate (about King's Cross and more generally) rather than accurately portray stakeholders' positions.

**2.** "Target: stabilise CO2 emissions in 2025 at 60 per cent below 1990 levels" (Bulkeley et al 2010).

**3.** According to Edwards, the developers are expected to return as much as 70% of the profit to the rail consortium (Edwards 2005b)

## 4. Planning legitimacy in King's Cross

### 4.1 Development proposals: 1987 – 2012

*"Planning gain agreements....increasingly represent the principal, if not the only, means of obtaining socially desirable development"* (Parkes and Mouawad 1991, p.18)

The visions presented in this paper are in no way exclusive; nor were specific visions linked exclusively to specific actors. In the planning process these visions came together in various ensembles in each of the different proposals. The planning gain negotiations, as Parkes and Mouawad suggest in the quote above, became a centre-point for *value rationality* debates.

In London the debates of *value rationality* are translated into Section 106 Agreements. Circular 5 sets out the criteria these agreements: "relevant to planning; necessary to make the proposed development acceptable in planning terms; directly related to the proposed development; fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the proposed development" (Circular 05/2005).

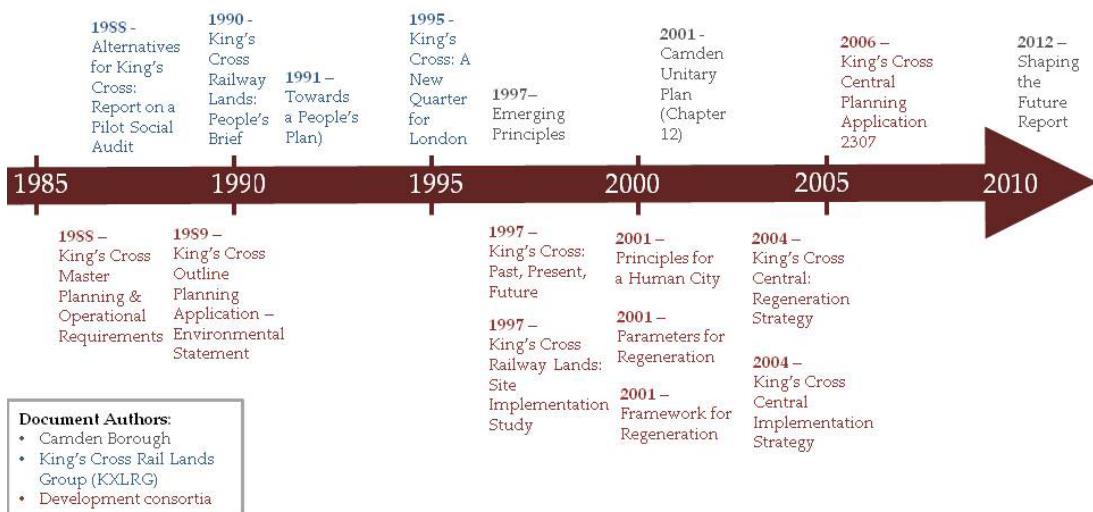
Between 1987 and 2012, the development consortia, the Camden Council, and community groups such as the King's Cross Railways Lands Group, published a number of reports, proposals, and statements of intention (see Fig 4.1). These documents express attempts

to frame the problems, elaborate the values which the visions embody, and compare the possible trade-offs in different scenarios.

As Forester (1989) critically points out, the "optimising" approach assumes the simultaneous construction of multiple scenarios with equal knowledge bases. The "satisficing" approach, in contrast, assumes a progressive construction of visions and scenarios in which each likely responds to the previous one. Once a scenario arrives which meets the minimal criteria, it is accepted with only minor instrumental adjustments to come. The process of proposal formation in King's Cross was a process of reaction to the core proposal submitted by the development consortium in 1988 (Ledgerwood, et.al, 1994). The parameters of expectation, with the World City Vision dominant in a highly profitable design-scheme, were largely set at this time<sup>1</sup>.

In 1988, Camden Council responded to the development proposal with a planning brief. The Affordability Vision and the Regeneration Vision were dominant in this brief. According to a borough survey there was widespread support for the provision of affordable housing (Sexton 1992; London Borough of Camden 2001)<sup>2</sup>. Between 1988 and 1991 a series of participatory exercises were run to identify priority issues and local landmarks. The Planning is Real exercise, conducted by Bartlett Planning School at

**Fig. 4.1.** Timeline of published planning documents (Reports, Proposals, and Statements)



the University College London, produced an alternative plan in 1991. This plan reinforced the Affordability Vision as well as proposed key elements of the Conservation Vision (Ledgerwood, et.al, 1994; *A People's Brief* 1988). The plans proposed compared four design schemes, including ones from the developer and a transport authority, in terms of their medium term benefits (Parkes and Mouawad 1991). Each scheme kept the World City office core, though one dramatically reduced it, and thus the general parameters (high-end offices, profit to renovate the rail station, etc.) of the debate remained.

In the mid-1990s two smaller developments were approved along York Way, namely Regent Quarter and King's Place. These developments were viewed by many as precedent-setting. Regent Quarter redeveloped a series of three and four storey residential buildings intertwined with medium-rise office spaces. Regents' Quarter represented many of the elements of the Conservation Vision – a preservation of heritage buildings prominent among modern buildings of a similar scale and aesthetic (see 5.1.1). The materialisation of plans and principles gave the King's Cross values debate a new comparative perspective. The King's Place development was notable for an S106 based upon the provision of an orchestral hall and related outreach activities in local schools; this represented a sharp break with historical precedent and the character of the area<sup>3</sup>.

By the time Argent St George, lead in the newest development consortium, submitted a new plan in 2004 for King's Cross Central, the rail upgrades were on-going and the property market had recovered from a mid-1990s slump. The World City and Nodal City visions, due to the renewed viability of their models, were again at the forefront of the debate. Between 2001 and 2003 the development consortium released three statements of vision, *Principles*

*for the Human City* (2001), *Parameters for Regeneration* (2001), and *Framework for Regeneration* (2002). The principles in these statements, as Albrechts' (2005) surmises of principles in general, provide some contextual reference but little recognition of the inevitable conflicts which present themselves in scenarios.

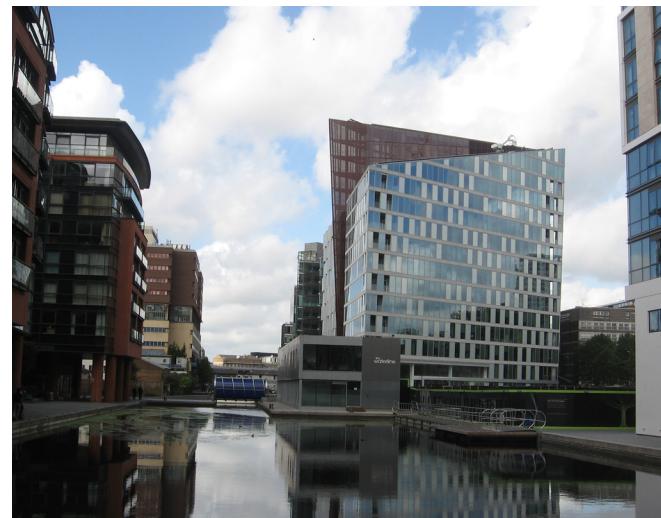
In the 2012 *Shaping the Future Report*, co-written by Camden and Islington councils, a strong emphasis emerges on convergence or "knitting together" of the new development with the old. This debate about integration revived the feared externalities of the new development on the surrounding communities in terms of economic loss, social segregation, and insufficient local transport. As of 2012, King's Cross Central had received general approval with only minor development decisions to be made (Edwards 2009).

The lengthy planning process, while expensive and spasmodic, provided a temporal perspective on many of the assumptions central to the visions proposed. Comparative analysis brought new positions to old debates about planning gain, the viability of the World City and Nodal City models, and broader responses to social trends. Places like the Docklands validated many of the assumptions of the World City model while also validating claims about local economic losses and social segregation. Likewise nodal transport oriented developments occurred in places like Stratford and Paddington. The issue of agglomeration ("critical mass") became apparent as some high-end developments remained too small to attract global firms critical to the World City Vision (*Regeneration Framework* 2001). In some instances, societal values shifted as well. Strong support for social housing waned while the awareness of sustainability values increased (Edwards 2005a; Bulkeley et al 2010).

**Image 4.1.** Redesign of heritage at Regents Quarter.  
Photo: Edwards 2009



**Image 4.2.** Paddington: A specialised node, yet "not a critical mass" (Argent St. George 2002). Photo: Author 2012



## 4.2 Instrumental rationality: Debating “means”

*“The Council considers it important that policies should be clear and succinct about what is considered necessary for a successful development”* (Unitary Plan 2001, sec. 13.27)

Assuming that “successful development” refers to a compromise between economic and non-economic values, as well as a “viable” level of profit, the quote above reflects the mystification which occurs in instrumental debates. Simply put, *instrumental rationality* compares different courses of action or causality based on their relative merits, such as efficiency, effectiveness, etc. The *instrumental rationality* track uses reason to describe courses, but not whether the goals are correct (Mannheim 1936).

Critical to instrumental debates is the accuracy of the model (assumed patterns of correlation), thus the likelihood of a set of actions producing a predicted end goal. The World City Vision, for example, relies on two core assumptions. First, a thriving high-end property market is necessary to bring the project to completion and second, a critical mass of a certain type of activity is necessary to generate the long-term economic benefits of agglomeration (Turok 1992). The probability of these outcomes occurring was a frequent subject of debate (Edwards 2009; Parkes 1990; Arup 2004).

There is a distinction here between the model, which is theoretical, and the communicative processes of planning. Models are often selective in their reading of contextual factors because they rely on a small number of simplified variables (Friedmann 1987). Models can be applied to local contexts but are usually not induced solely from them. The World City model relies on three key variables – infrastructure, a status-garnering aesthetic, and the agglomeration of a certain type of firms – to create a pareto-like effect (Argent St. George 2001; Arup 2006).

All of these debates occur around planning gain agendas because the models require different levels of inputs (financial, land, etc.). Efficiency, the ratio of inputs to the contribution of the preferred vision(s), and probability, the likelihood a model will produce the expected results, are at the centre of this debate. A model is theoretically falsifiable and thus utilises the norms of scientific rationality. However, each “causal story” is imbedded in selective perception of phenomena and thus these different “knowledge bases” complicate the testing of validity claims (Rydin 2009).

Comparative analysis plays a key role in the determination of both efficiency and probability because of the complexity of contingent variables (Ward 2010). However, since we are unable to calculate a numerical rating for different values, we are also unable to compare effectiveness between

different models. As a result, we compare within categories (e.g. this economic output is favorable compared to other economic outputs) rather than between them.

Instrumental debates are vulnerable to influence by ideologies (Mannheim 1936). These beliefs, abstracted or applied in context, combine values with patterns of (preferred) causality. Thus the models can become ideological, such as the property-led growth model (which appears in the World City Vision debates) and the welfare state poverty reduction model (which appears in the Affordability Vision debates). These ideologies affect the knowledge base upon which projections of causality are based and limit recognition of adverse factors (Rydin 2007).

As the value debates illustrate, there is often broad consensus about principles. Objections usually occurred when there are multiple ways to achieve the same end. The issue of safety in King’s Cross, for example, was widely subscribed to. The debates were solely instrumental: the model (public v. private security) and the catchment, i.e. how to limit the transfer of criminal activity.

The issue of economic convergence illustrates a disconnect between an ideological position and assumptions in a model. Comparatively, there is little evidence to draw upon to support the vision of integrated local and World City economies. Canary Wharf’s extreme economic segregation seems to bode poorly for the Regeneration Vision (Brownill 1990). This model is at the centre of debates elsewhere in London, including the regeneration of East London as part of the Olympic Legacy (Fainstein 2010). The model proposed for King’s Cross is a complex web of regulatory and investment compacts made between the developer and the Borough of Camden. Thus a situation occurs in which there is widespread support for a vision which seems improbable (Edwards 1995). Similarly, while the values of the World City Vision were not strongly critiqued officially, with the exception of Edwards (2012), the likelihood of the model producing the desired results was widely debated (Parkes and Mouawad 1991; Argent St. George 2001b; Edwards 2009).

Often the intermeshing of values and models occurs because one outcome is considered a means to another. The economic benefits of heritage conservation, for one, have been widely applied as both compatible and instrumental in processes of growth (Rypkema 2002). Do you want economic growth? “Creative reuse” of heritage buildings will produce “heritage-based regeneration,” claims the *Shaping the Future Report* (Borough of Camden 2012). Similarly, sustainability principles are often been put in the service of World City imagery. In King’s Cross Central, the developer embedded these as an instrumental means to creating the desired commercial image (Argent St. George 2001a). The end result, to the degree that it matches principles of the Sustainability Vision, is merely an outcome of instrumental calculations.

### 4.3 Communicative rationality: Rationality in the “democratic project”

*“If this is not to be a partnership between cat and mouse, there needs to be a movement away from entrenched positions on all three sides and the gradual acquisition of a common language”* (Towards a People’s Plan 1991)

The concept of communicative rationality assumes the possibility of an ethical discourse producing consensual agreements. The communicative turn implies less dependence upon the historical or apriori template of rationality imposed upon development projects (Habermas 1996, p. 186). Instead it focuses on stakeholders’ interpretations of contextual phenomena.

Communicative rationality for Sandercock (1998) holds the means for recognition of diverse perspectives; for Mouffe (2005) it is the foundation of a democratic legitimization. Habermas (1996) sees in it the promise of a more fluid normative. For communicative procedures to occur, as the quote above implies, both rules of subjective valuation and a foundation of discourse ethics must be established (Mouffe 2005).

There are three notable processes of communicative rationality within the King’s Cross case. The first is the participatory planning exercises which began in 1990 and produced several prioritisations of values (see *A People’s Brief* 1990 and *Emerging Principles* 1997). The second is the negotiation process between the development consortia and the councils which resulted in planning compacts and approvals. The third is an exchange of planning statements through published documents, including planning frameworks (e.g. *Parameters for Regeneration*) and academic research and press (e.g. Edwards’ articles). This last exchange feeds into both the participatory processes and the negotiations, standing as a public record of stakeholder’s professed reasoning.

The public articulation of values produces a need for valuation, a sort of measurement or weighing of the values against comparable values. Human cognition has low aptitude for translating values into precise quantities. Even when translating value judgements onto a numerical scale, as is common in law (e.g. monetary fines), there is rarely recognizable consistency from one adjudicator to the next (Sustein et. al 2001). As a result institutions of law rely heavily upon categorization, which tends to create a veneer of consistency while sometimes neglecting the particularities of context. In King’s Cross an initial agreement about affordable housing became a struggle to define the typology, with different interpretations of who and how affordable (or the role of the market) the houses would be.

For Habermas, communicative processes will enlighten participants to a “good argument” (Habermas 2003; Flyvbjerg 1998). This is assuming a merger of communicative and all other rationality tracks. The resulting legitimacy enables the state to act deliberately. “Deliberateness,” as defined by Mintzberg and Waters (1985), is the clarity of intention which occurs when clear public reasons have been articulated under fair conditions.

Habermas’s public rationality hinges on the creation of “ideal speech situations” (Habermas 1996). Is this possible in a Wittgenstein nightmare of language? The Wittgensteinian language problem is apparent in the interpretation of planning “principles.” In King’s Cross, both the development consortium and Camden Council attempted to appropriate the term “mixed-use.” When used by the Camden council, “mixed-use” seems to imply the values of social and economic integration between the new occupants and the local residents (London Borough of Camden 2012); when used by the development consortium it seems to imply self-sufficiency (Argent St. George 2002)<sup>4</sup>. For any type of consensus to be reached, Mouffe argues, there must be agreement on both the meaning and ethics of planning terms (Mouffe 2000, citing Wittgenstein), (see Appendix III).

### 4.4 Strategic rationality: Scales of impact

*“Any strategy for delivering community benefits must be underpinned by the realisation of development values”* (Argent St. George 2001a, p. 22)

*“[We] the applicants are committed to ensuring that King’s Cross Central generates significant regeneration opportunities at local, regional and national level”* (Arup 2004, p. 5)

In the quotes above, the development consortium highlights what it sees as an adversarial relationship between certain (unspecified) “development values” and local community values. As the scenarios prove, “development values,” understood to mean certain economic growth outcomes, resonate with stakeholders on different scales. “Regeneration opportunities” are recast here in equivalence to job creation and growth at other levels. The benefits of these values in practice are to those outside the local area, while the externalities or radical changes are often experienced locally.

In a decentralised system like London’s, local authorities play dual roles of applying national and municipal directives while simultaneously representing the community. The World City Vision, for one, is outward looking, attractive to national and municipal level politicians. The recognisability, as well as the functional representation of this vision, is designed to appeal to global investors. Thus, like Canary Wharf, the vision has little to say about the existing landscapes and histori-

cal patterns of place (Brownill 1990). The Nodal City Vision is municipally oriented, concerned with the distribution of people and physical sites in the most efficient way possible. The national government has contributed, indirectly, to this vision by promoting it as an approach (e.g. Planning Policy Guideline 13) and the GLA has emphasized it in its 2004 plan (Holgersen and Havard 2009). The actions are instrumental to their metropolitan visions, with the effects of goal reduction felt in constriction of local influence.

Legal policy, whether national or municipal, is characterised by a consistency of application, a levelling of the inequalities emerging from geographic differences. The GLA's affordable housing policy (i.e. mandated percentages) is indeed visionary in the sense that it imagines a London with fewer socio-spatial divisions. Categorization and consistency of this type are central to notions of justice (Rawls 1971; Fainstein 2010; Sustein et al 2001). Planning, unlike law, is largely the art of exceptions (Roy 2008). The challenges to the goal of consistency are prescient: e.g. should affordable housing be built on some of the most commercially favourable land in London?

There is a balancing act between the interests of different scales. In Fainstein's perspective, "the existing population should not be the sole arbiter of the future of an area" (Fainstein, 2010 p.175). The question raised in King's

Cross is the ability of a community to embrace radical change. The charge of conservative parochialism was often levelled at the community (Edwards 1995 & 2009). Table 4.1 identifies differences in the geographic source of concerns and the impacts of investments.

How should visioning work then? Local visioning is viewed by Healey (2009) and Albrechts (2004) as an exercise in goal mediation between higher levels and local authorities. Goal reduction from municipal directives, however, is often blind to local context (Friedmann 1973). The perception by local communities is often that higher level directives are imposing a vision on them, often for the benefit of others. In the Regeneration scenario, the Borough of Camden is in the role of damage limitation, addressing the externalities of gentrification, increased passenger flows, etc.

The Sustainability Vision highlights the complexity of multi-scalarity and the tentative balance of equity, diversity and public opinion. Environmental sustainability is both local and global in orientation. The air-quality emphasis placed by the Camden Council is a typically local issue; the prestige of a low-emission building is a typically global issue grounded in a geographically expansive conceptualisation of social responsibility (Bulkeley et al 2010).

**Table 4.1.** Geographic distribution of concerns and investment impacts. Author's construct 2012

	<b>Local Concern</b>	<b>Primary Scale of Investment Impacts</b>
<b>World City Vision</b>	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National/ municipal growth</li> </ul>
<b>Regeneration Vision</b>	Unemployment, local economic stagnation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Borough-level economic growth</li> </ul>
<b>Affordability Vision</b>	Overcrowding, shortage of affordable rentals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Borough-level housing provision</li> <li>• Municipal-wide distribution of housing</li> </ul>
<b>Conservation Vision</b>	Loss or neglect of local historical identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Municipal/ Borough-level historical identity</li> </ul>
<b>Nodal City Vision</b>	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Municipal distribution of economic activity</li> </ul>
<b>Sustainability Vision</b>	(limited contamination)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Global conception of environmental justice</li> <li>• Local environmental quality benefits</li> </ul>

#### NOTES TO CHAPTER 4

**1.** The initial proposal, composed by Norman Foster Associates, included four design options. These were aesthetically different but built on similar visions (Ledgerwood, et.al, 1994; A People's Brief 1988)

**2.** In one study, 85% of Camden respondents identified affordable housing provision as the planning gain they most desired

(Sexton 1992)

**3.** Edwards (2009) calls this "less normal in this area" than other community benefits.

**4.** The *Framework for Regeneration* (2002) derides a similar notion as "pic n' mix," an approach "we must avoid."

## 5. Conclusions

### 5.1 Legitimation in King's Cross, 25 years on

Do claims to public rationality create claims to legitimacy?

*Comprehensiveness reflects an unwillingness to act on a legitimated priority*

Did a “good argument” emerge triumphant? Did public reasoning increase the strength of Camden Council to demand specific planning gains? The 1988-1991 participatory planning exercises brought forward two citizen priorities: public housing and regeneration of the local economy. These would seem to legitimize the council’s efforts on the Affordability Vision and the Regeneration Vision. In the early 1990s, at least, the Council pushed harder on these issues. In the more recent documents (e.g. Borough of Camden 2012, “Emerging Principles” 1997), however, the Council stakes a fairly comprehensive position, claiming the importance of values across the many spectra.

*Development-level value debates feed into normative frameworks*

Habermas explains the function of communicative practices as “not a procedure for generating justified norms but a procedure for testing the validity of norms that are being proposed” (Habermas 1996, p. 187). Public rationality, as such, is not an isolated process based upon one development context. Rather, it is a gradual process with thousands of development debates feeding in.

We should not expect a single development to be viewed as a win or loss for any specific value-orientation. The accumulation of development debates is translated into new policy directives, plans, academic research, and higher level (e.g. electoral) expressions of public will. The failure to save the Stanley Buildings, for example, may be recognized as a cautionary tale for future developments even if it wasn’t the highest priority in King’s Cross. A Foucaultian reading of processes of change via societal discourses is helpful in thinking about the myriad impacts of a single process of public reasoning (Flyvbjerg 1998). For this reason it is crucial for frameworks of analysis to be applied which enlighten us to the trade-offs in public reasoning. These frameworks should raise questions like: were there specific conditions which made the loss of heritage tolerable or has our value-orientation shifted away from heritage values?

*Top-down actions illegitimately set the parameters*

For higher level rationality claims to become legitimate, these stakeholders need to be engaged in the communicative processes. In King’s Cross, the municipal and national perspectives were not subjected to discourse. The granting of state land with a “commercial imperative” without offering any type of vision needs to be justified through some process of public reasoning.

Private property, as an instrument for the creation of wealth and the expansion of national GDP, is the thousand pound elephant in the King’s Cross values debate. Economic growth is a widely-shared value and property-led development a proven (within limits) means of achieving it. That said, England has set a legal framework for its transaction and profit maximization which enables developers to set the parameters for visioning. Planning gain leverage should not be the only bulwark against this power.

*Models of causality are often untested “causal stories”*

Any attempt to identify the best argument depends on the degree to which different knowledge claims are believed. Instrumental debates, in specific, were characterized by a lack of clarity or agreement about the effects of proposed investments. If models of causality are poorly understood, our ability to rationally debate the relationship between ends and means is greatly diminished. Rydin’s (2003) characterisation of models as “causal stories,” with connotations of narrative seduction rather than scientific fact, seems to best capture the persuasive effect of these models. In an ideal world no legitimacy would come from untestable claims of causality.

*Bottom-up communicative legitimacy is only one type among many*

Gentrification, the core concern of the Affordability and Regeneration scenarios, is the type of issue which brings value-debates to relevance in a specific context. Local (bottom-up) is also conducive to communicative reasoning representing a greater number of perspectives. The higher the scales, the more narrow (selective) the debates become. Radical planning theorists, like Sandercock and Friedmann, tend towards communicative rationality as the primary means of legitimizing action-prioritisations. However, the benefits of municipal strategic action and the tendency of parochialism discredit this as a singular solution.

### *Spatial equality can lead to wasted local opportunities*

There will never be easy answers to the top-down, bottom-up debate (Albrechts 2005; Healey 1997 & 2005). Bottom-up approaches can be counter-productive without the coordination of horizontal action. This is evident in the Affordability debate which emphasized the need to distribute affordable housing equally across London. Affordability advocates were raising the right concerns about spatial justice, but were doing so in a very difficult locale – one ideal for commercial and office usage. The short-comings identified here are why Albrechts (2004 & 2005) sees the potential of strategic, multi-scaled reasoning.

### **Does visioning legitimate radical change?**

#### *“Ahistorical” Visioning can be diluted through processes of consensus building*

As King's Cross Central illustrated one vision survived the planning process – the World City, and by extension the Nodal City vision – near to its ideal specifications. The others, in the clamour of the communicative processes, survived in fragments. In this way the communicative process, or the legitimacy which the Council took from it, was antithetical to the full realisation of one or two “ahistorical” visions.

Changes in society – e.g. the growth of high-productivity sectors, transport advances, etc. – justify radical change in theory. The risk of compromise and comprehensiveness in negotiations is that significant thresholds of change will not be reached. What if the affordable housing “inoculation” is not enough to prevent widespread gentrification? What if a “critical mass” of office space is not achieved?

#### *Ideology complicates the rational comparison of visions*

Much work has been done on visionary v. “muddling” approaches to planning (Forester 1989; Sandercock 2000; Friedmann 1965; Mintzberg 2005). While it is easy to triumph the rational comparison of options in future time, the reality is that many overlapping processes of change and scales of interest mean that “muddling” is often the only route available. The more lively debates revolved around the models in question and it is clear to see the ideological underpinnings of these models. As the debates became bogged down in validity claims, the feasibility rather than the desirability of the visions was central to the communicative debates. Avoiding this bogging down seems critical to the success of visioning.

#### *Conflicts are enlarged in future time*

Most stakeholders in King's Cross subscribed to a similar set of values on paper. While some of these were prioritised quite differently (e.g. the difference between heritage conservation and selective appropriation) and others were

understood differently (e.g. mixed-use), the majority seem to be genuinely held by all. The conflict between these values is not fully understood until they are translated quantifiably into physical proposals and then again when their long-term impacts are conjectured (see Appendix II).

The probable conflicts identified in the King's Cross development area (local economic loss, etc.) are known outcomes of any development of this type. Comparative analysis offers lessons, but it is scenarios which sensitise stakeholders to the possible impacts.

#### *It is easier to be visionary in someone else's backyard*

Radical change is often to the benefit of people outside the development area. In King's Cross, some of participatory visions were quite reactionary: the Conservation Vision and the Regeneration Vision are attempts to protect or enhance existing patterns incrementally. The Affordability Vision vacillates from radically visionary, the provision of significant new social housing stock, to protectionist, limiting the threats of gentrification.

The documents released by the Camden Council are markedly not radical, often resembling comprehensive appeasement. This is in part the design of participatory exercises and their emphasis on issue identification rather than selective prioritisation. It was KXRLG and Edwards, Parkes and Mouawad, who proposed pushing a more radical vision of change in complete opposition to the one desired by the development consortia.

## **5.2 Analytic approach in retrospect**

(How) Does understanding the classifications of rationalities add value to planning?

*All rationality debates should be in the service of value rationality*

Does the calculation of the five types of rationality really add up to one “good argument”? In some cases it is a democratic plurality which determines the “good” argument, in others it is the strength of the argument amongst professionals or within political circles. The complex interdependency of rationalities is befuddling, as Appendix 1 shows, yet still often leads to rational choice (albeit usually less than optimal). The challenge in analysing a case like King's Cross is to understand which types of rationalities are in the driver's seat and when.

*Different rationality objectives have very different benefits*

Faith in rationality is ingrained in the planning profession, in spite of the cognitive (e.g. Sharot 2009, Susstein et. al 2001, Kahnemann 1982) and epistemological

(Sandercock 1998, Rydin 2007, Friedmann 1973) limits. Therefore heuristic value comes from enabling "it" to be determined publically and transparently. For planners, understanding how arguments are constructed – the discursive elements – and their epistemological roots are critical steps in the adjudication of claims. This works because each type of rationality has an objective (see table 5.1). The types of rationalities also offer techniques for achieving these objectives (e.g. visioning, scientific standards, etc.) which contribute dynamism to the determination of "good arguments."

#### *Within value rationality there are problems of isolation*

The overarching value of relative poverty reduction illustrates why many value-manifestations go without direct challenge. There are four visions (the World City, the Nodal City, the Regeneration, and the Affordability vision) which address poverty reduction in very differ-

ent ways – long-term v. short-term, locally v. regionally, spatially v. cumulatively, and income-generation v. redistribution. One actualised vision may have secondary effects which touch positively on a number of value-orientations. Thus the end value debates can never fully be separated from the instrumental debates nor the strategic debates.

#### *A multi-variable value framework is difficult to apply*

A pluralist value framework, as I have applied, does not enable an effective debate to the same degree as a dichotomous one. Habermas divides all values into two groups: economic and other. The state "manages" the negative effects of economic growth, as per a social contract, and its legitimacy is contingent on "keeping the dysfunctional side effects" in bounds (Habermas 1996, p. 260). In the London context there is a strong inverse relationship between capitalist economic growth and equity (Safier 2012).

**Table 5.1.** Areas of concern: Types of rationalities v. temporal objectives. Author's construct 2012

	<b>Scientific Rationality</b>	<b>Communicative Rationality</b>	<b>Value Rationality</b>	<b>Strategic Rationality</b>	<b>Instrumental Rationality</b>
<b>Present Situation</b>	* 'facts'	*Diverse knowledge claims	*Valued features	*****	*****
<b>Vision</b>	*****	*Mediation of difference	*Desired features	*political value-scale relationships	*Courses of action
<b>Scenario</b>	*Patterns of change *secondary effects of intervention	*Diverse Interpretations of change/ impacts	*Value prioritisation	*Geographic scales of impact	*Minimization of externalities

**Table 5.2.** Habermas' value binary: Growth v. equity. Author's construct 2012

	<b>World City Vision</b>	<b>Regeneration Vision</b>	<b>Nodal City Vision</b>	<b>Affordability Vision</b>	<b>Conservation Vision</b>	<b>Sustainability Vision</b>
<b>Growth</b>	*High productivity sectors	*Local Economic development/ employment	*Citywide increase in economic efficiency	*****	***** <sup>1</sup>	*Potentially minimal constraints on growth
<b>Equity</b>	Increasing spatial and economic inequalities	*Decreasing inequality within the borough	*Increasing spatial segregation	*Increasing spatial integration	*****	Inter-generational equity benefits

1. This approach does not effectively address co-benefits, such as the heritage-economic growth relationship.

### 5.3 Conclusion

The planning gain debates in King's Cross were excellent fora to understand the investment impacts, sift through epistemological claims, and build a prioritisation of local values. The length of the planning process and the level of profit by which cross-subsidization could occur, were both unique to this development. Therefore some of the conclusions made in this paper cannot be generalized.

What needs to be explored in light of this paper is how these development-level debates feed up into plans, policies, and conceptions of planning. The claim of a continuously evolving normative value-framework (Rydin 2007; Foucault in Flyvbjerg 1998; Friedmann 1989) is not clearly understood. Since it is developments elsewhere (e.g. as precedents) and legal rules (e.g. private property rights) which determine the limits of develop-

ment-level debates, this process of cycling should be of paramount concern. It is also relevant because the design of planning exercises and their types of rationality might aim to affect more than a single development. If over-arching value-orientations shift randomly (without rational comparison of alternatives) then does it really matter how rational the negotiation of a single development is?

The answer for me is yes, in the same way it matters that each and every person gets justice even if a major injustice is occurring at the same time. The intention of this paper is to provide a stepping stone to practical recommendations for planning in London. In my conclusions I have offered few such recommendations. All I can offer is a feeble next step. This step is to understand how the lessons from rational discourses can be built into the design of participatory and communicative planning exercises, as well as the general body of planning knowledge.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1. Forming good arguments

### The interplay of rationalities

There is a bilateral relationship between planning concerns and values, with aspects of proportionality and locality, among others, in consideration. Visioning (value rationality) sets out the desired elements of the development based upon an initial scan of the development context. The process then oscillates between the different types of rationalities as different considerations are weighed in relation to values. The legitimacy of the “best argument” in the public narrative differs greatly depending upon which process of rationality is used, by whom, and how rigorous the process is perceived to be.

#### Example 1: Scientific rationality

Value Hierarchy Identification	Modifying consideration: Size of the Concern	Planning Priority
Value #1		Priority #2
Value #2		Priority #1
Value #3		Priority #3

As the theoretical graphic shows, an abstract prioritisation of values does not produce the same hierarchy of priorities. In this case the size of the concerns alters the prioritisation. In King's Cross, the recognition that gentrification may lead to “the loss of 50%” of affordable housing stock (Edwards 1995) was more persuasive than the potential loss of a few heritage buildings. This is not to say that social diversity and spatial justice are more valued than heritage and identity, but merely that the size of the concerns (and thus benefits) were quite different in King's Cross.

#### Example 2: Strategic rationality

Value Hierarchy Identification	Modifying consideration: Scale of Impact/ Concern	Planning Priority
Value #1	Local	Priority #2
Value #2	Municipal	Priority #1
Value #3	Inter-borough	Priority #3

As Chapter 4.4 illustrates, the scale of concern and impact significantly alter prioritisation even within a local communicative process. The Nodal City vision is appealing to municipal level because it offers an efficient organization of the city; more specifically, it offers a movement of workers and customers within the higher levels of the economic strata. Thus, while transport efficiency may not be a higher value than say local employment, borough level planners are inclined to lower the priority of parochial concerns.

#### Example 3: Instrumental rationality

Value Hierarchy Identification	Modifying consideration: Casualty and Feasibility	Planning Priority
Value #1	High feasibility	Priority #1
Value #2	Low feasibility	Priority #2
Value #3	Low probability of success	Priority #3

*Instrumental rationality* has two key components. The first is the *model* discussed in Chapter 4.2: what is the probability one event will lead to another? The second is feasibility, which is the difficulty of completing a physical improvement either for cost or other reasons. The 50% affordable housing target was deemed “very difficult” by the development consortia due to cost considerations; it was also critiqued as an insufficient buffer against gentrification (Arnold 2007). Waterway clean-up and aesthetic improvements were, in contrast, favourable in terms of cost and in the probability they would achieve their objectives.

#### Example 4: Communicative rationality

Value Hierarchy Identification	Modifying consideration: Stakeholder's momentum	Planning Priority
Value #1	Secondary concern impeding momentum	Priority #2
Value #2	Limited momentum	Priority #3
Value #3	Strong momentum	Priority #1

The willingness of stakeholders to address an issue, regardless of its difficulty (*instrumental rationality*) and optimal desirability (*value rationality*), is often a determining factor in planning prioritisation. The safety concerns in King's Cross were addressed in the early 1990s by the Camden Council, with national funding, even when the King's Cross Central plans were on hold. Investments – CCTV, more police patrols, street upgrades - were made in part because of the ease with which consensus was reached through the communicative process.

The communicative process was characterised by a continuous effort to establish shared “principles.” Between 1997 and 2004 five documents were published by the Camden Council and the development consortium which laid out the general value-orientations on which planning should take place. The long-term conflicts which are likely to appear are not easily identifiable in these documents.

Visuals, like principles, also have the ability to obscure or distract from the conflicting impacts. In Image A2.1 the developer has imagined a relatively unobjectionable picture of a future King's Cross.

As Chapter 3.3 demonstrated, conflicts occur as a result of both primary investments and secondary impacts. Table A2.2 speculates about the primary conflicts and co-benefits between manifested visions. In King's Cross, gentrification provides the clearest case of conflict. There is a clear opposition between proponents of gentrification, including some of those who might profit off of KCC, and those against it.

## Appendix 2. Conflicting visions

### Identifying the “unacceptable” in scenarios

Table A2.1 summaries the six visions in their isolated forms. The primary societal impacts are those viewed as desirable by the visions' proponents. This type of division, as with most linear approaches, obscures conflicts as well synergies.

**Table A2.1.** Comparing the six visions. Author's construct 2012

	Vision	Primary Societal Impacts
<b>1. World City Vision</b>	Glass and steel offices, high-end commercial and residential spaces	Economic Growth (particularly in high-productivity sectors)
<b>2. Regeneration Vision</b>	Investment and integration of local economic activity and unemployed population	Local economic growth
<b>3. Affordability Vision</b>	Large-scale provision of new affordable housing units	Social housing stock
<b>4. Conservation Vision</b>	Maintenance of heritage and historic scale	Cultural identity benefits
<b>5. Nodal City Vision</b>	Commercial and work node strategically linked to transport hubs	Improved transport flows and accessibility to commercial services
<b>6. Sustainability Vision</b>	environmentally sensitive design and clean-up of existing contamination, pollution	Emissions reductions and environmental liveability benefits (aesthetic & quality)

**Image A2.1.** King's Cross Imagined. Image: Argent St. George 2009



**Table A2.2.** Scenarios: Exposing conflicts (bold) and co-benefits (italicized) between visions <sup>1</sup> (The table reads from left to write). Author's construct 2012

	World City Goals	Regeneration Goals	Affordability Goals	Conservation Goals	Nodal City Goals	Sustainability Goals
1. World City Vision		Potential loss of local businesses <i>Knock-on economic benefits, jobs</i>	Gentrification Cross-subsidization of housing	Demolition <i>Re-use of select heritage buildings</i>	[None] <i>Economic specialisation; nodal dev.</i>	Increased emissions, pollution <i>Innovative sustainable design</i>
2. Regeneration Vision	[None] <i>Local attractiveness</i>		[None] [None]	[None] [None]	[None] <i>Integration of node &amp; place</i>	Potentially small increase in pollution [None]
3. Affordability Vision	Character of the place [None]	Increased low-skill population [None]		Potentially some demolition [None]		Minimal transfer of pollution locally [None]
4. Conservation Vision	Image of development <i>Potential identity benefits</i>	None [None]	Limits to locations of new units [None]		Limits to specialisation and development of a node [None]	[None] [None]
5. Nodal City Vision	[None] <i>Transport efficiency</i>	Potential loss of local businesses <i>Economic ripple effects</i>	Gentrification [None]	Potentially some demolition [None]		Increased emissions, pollution [None]
6. Sustainability Vision	Potential constraints Status of green design	[None] [None]	Increase in the cost of construction [None]	[None] [None]	Potential constraints <i>Support of public transport</i>	

<sup>1</sup> This table considers only impacts and thus does not consider the developers profit as a goal

### Appendix 3. Wittgenstein's concern

#### Can we achieve "ideal speech" situations?

While Habermas primarily explored procedural suggestions to achieve his "ideal speech" situation, King's Cross shows the degree to which language is a significant impediment to the achievement of rational decision-making. Among language impediments at least three major types can be identified.

The first type concerns statements of value masquerading as statements of 'truth.' "Restrictions deter investors" or "the private sector is more efficient" are examples of a common discursive statement designed to shift the focus of a debate. The private sector is usually more efficient, but in most cases the degree to which we value efficiency is proportional to the degree we value the ends, minus the externalities. Loaded with implications, these types of statements "depoliticize" and "disable" value dialogues (Forester 1989). This is known in philosophy as the fact-value distinction. Statements of fact should not be confused with statements of value: "can" does not mean "ought." Following are four examples from King's Cross:

- "A critical mass attracts other global companies" (Argent St George 2002, p. 31)
- "Travel intensive uses insure efficient use of the land" (Argent St George 2002, p. 17)
- "There is a sense of place afforded by the historic environment" (Argent St George 2001b, p. 16)

- "Mixed use developments create a range of conflicts... e.g. noise, odour, traffic" (Argent St George 2002, p. 27)

The second type concerns the illusion of absolutes. As Wittgenstein (1965) argues, most statements of value are indeed relative ones, but appear as definitive moral judgements. Most statements can be compared to other situations quantitatively. If we could quantitatively measure the number of investors lost (or relocated) or the level of greater efficiency, and understand why, the trade-off might appear quite tolerable.

The third type concerns the mystification of values by the usage of (planning) terms. For Myerson and Rydin (1991), "we choose our words, but these same words have their own histories and those histories are all the time acting upon us." In King's Cross, "World City" took on many connotations, including the love-child of ancient utilitarian debates, "progress." When using "World City," a sense of perspective is unique to those with knowledge of the global competitiveness literature and obscured to others. For Flyvbjerg (1991), this manipulative use of language is often utilized by the powerful to control communicative discourses.

As discussed in Chapter 4.3, all of these linguistic impediments occur in addition to a generally unequal understanding of the implications of stated values. The early statements of value released by the developers seemed to suggest a strong appreciation of heritage values (London Regeneration Consortium plc. 1989). The limited amount of heritage which will remain when King's Cross Central is complete and the nature with which it is being demolished suggests otherwise.

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## DPU WORKING PAPER NO. 171

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