

The Olympic Re-Construction of East London in the Economic, Political,
Media and Legal Discourse.

A Possible Theoretical Framework for Social-Political Action

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Abstract

This research investigates the *preconditions* for the Olympics-led process of urban *transformation* and *change* of East London. The pre-conditions are interpreted in terms of *discourse* (the economic, political, media, and legal discourse); which is conceived as reflecting and being reflected in the social, urban, economic and institutional order of the city. The aims of the work are, therefore, to understand: *a)* how such discourse is *construed*; *b)* how the complex of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests that discourse expresses becomes *constructed* in the actual urban, social, economic and institutional order of the city; *c)* how discourse works in enacting and shaping processes of urban transformation and change in East London – and London as a whole. According to the official discourse, the transformation of East London into a site for tourism, shopping, leisure and lifestyle (which is aimed at attracting corporate investments) is the only possible way to enact processes of economic and social growth of ‘derelict’ urban areas. As it answers the requirements of global capital, which is regarded as an impersonal force, such model of urban renewal is represented as unquestionable. By exploring the possibility of a discourse theory of urban transformation and change (which emphasises the role of social-political action) and employing Critical Discourse Analysis as a methodological framework, the research demonstrates that the corporate-led transformation of East London is instead a social construction. In other words, it relies on the vision of the city of specific social actors. Such vision (which expresses sets of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests) shapes the economic, political, media and legal discourse; and is reflected at the same time in the urban form and functions, social order, economic organisation and institutional structure of the city.

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Abbreviations

CDA – Critical Discourse Analysis

CLM – CH 2 M Hill, Laing O’ Rourke and Mace

CR – Critical Realism

DHA – Discourse Historical Approach

DRA – Dialectical-Relational Approach

EGT – Evolutionary Governance Theory

GLA – Greater London Authority

LOCOG – London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games

ODA – Olympic Delivery Authority

SRF – Strategic Regeneration Framework

TFL – Transport for London

Introduction

This research investigates the *preconditions* for the Olympics-led process of urban *transformation* and *change* of East London. The pre-conditions are interpreted in terms of *discourse* (the economic, political, media, and legal discourse); which is conceived as reflecting and being reflected in the social, urban, economic and institutional order of the city. The aims of the work are, therefore, to understand: *a)* how such discourse is *construed*; *b)* how the complex of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests that discourse expresses becomes *constructed* in the actual urban, social, economic and institutional order of the city; *c)* how discourse works in enacting and shaping processes of urban transformation and change in East London – and London as a whole.

As the most prominent financial centre in Europe, London has undergone a deep transformation of its economic base through the 1980s and the 1990s. Such a transformation (to put it simply, the shift from industrial to financial capitalism) has been characterised by a reshaping of the image of London as a city for ‘culture’ and ‘lifestyle’ – meaning, as we shall see, shopping, tourism, entertainment, and leisure.

Due to the coming to prominence of other cities as centres for culture and lifestyle (which in most instances was a consequence and at the same time an answer to the crisis of industry- centred economies), London had to reinforce its image as a unique place for tourism, shopping, leisure and inward and corporate investment – especially after the economic crisis triggered by the 2008 equity market collapse. The 2012 Olympic Games represented a major opportunity to do so. It constituted a major opportunity to revive a sluggish economy, through the regeneration and re-connection of East London to the city. In turn, the public investment associated with the Games, provided the sheltered conditions to attract foreign investors seeking opportunities to invest in a location that offered relative stability in the wake of the international financial crisis and subsequent global recession (Poynter 2015).

Since the success of the bid to host the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2012, East London has not only been constantly under the media spotlight, but has become the site of a substantial process of urban renewal that involved the urban form and

functions, the social order and the economic organisation of place, as well as the construction of a precise structure of governance known as 'the London model'. The importance and the implications of such transformation are the basis of the choice to focus the analysis on East London.

The idea of the Olympics as a catalyst for urban regeneration is strongly related to Westfield Stratford City, which is a key component of the urban renewal of Stratford. Such a strong relationship does not simply arise from the fact that Westfield is the gateway to the Olympic Park – itself an important signifier of its central role in the *re-construction* of East London's image. Through its impressive array of brand name stores, luxury shops, five star hotels, fancy restaurants and bars, cinemas and casinos, the Westfield reshapes and defines the official image of East London as a new pole of attraction for shopping, tourism, lifestyle, leisure and entertainment. This image is in stark contrast to the image of East London as a run down and deprived place; and has been used throughout the whole planning process as a justification for such a massive project of urban reconstruction. Thus, Westfield becomes the symbol of the 'rebirth' of East London according to the official discourse – social and economic underdevelopment being apparently the only alternative to the kind of urban regeneration that Westfield symbolises. However, Westfield does not only symbolise such a narrative of place, it also materialises it on different levels: new urban-architectural forms and functions, a new social and economic order (which is characterised by a progressive process of gentrification), and a new kind of public space (ownership, practices and uses of space being clearly established). The Westfield complex provides, more than other elements of the Olympic Park (like, say, the Olympic Stadium or the Mittal Tower) a prime example of corporate-led processes of urban renewal, and the icon of the urban, social and economic transformation of East London.

Having said so, the question arises as whether East London 'really' is 'one of the most deprived areas in Europe'. That is, whether the official representation of place reflects its actual social-economic conditions. As we shall see, this is no yes/no question, as East London's social-economic conditions are more nuanced than it may seem – and it is my belief that any sort of urban intervention to be enacted should take into consideration such nuances. Certainly, it would be unrealistic to say that East London is as rich as its wealthy counterpart, West London. On the other hand, it would be unfair, as well as scientifically incorrect, to label this part of the city 'a run down

place’.

Despite the consequences of de-industrialisation, East London retained a strong social-cultural identity, coexistence between many different cultures and ethnicities being its main feature. Such a variety somehow managed to fill the gap caused by the dispersal of the industrial working class following the so-called ‘financial turn’ of the city’s economy. A network of small business played an important role in the economic reorganisation of the area, only to be jeopardised by the Olympics-led process of urban transformation.

As I shall demonstrate in chapter 3, East London is characterised by higher deprivation and number of people on benefits than other parts of London. Still, deprivation and benefit score, as well as other anti-social behaviours, are not as high as to justify the image of East London as a decaying place and an area of crime. Data show that no correlation exists between deprivation and benefits on one side, and crime of the other – these variables being quite normally distributed across the whole London.

All this suggests that the official image of East London reflects no ‘objective’ quality of place, itself being a ‘subjective’ construal to justify a project of urban transformation that mirrors ‘subjective’ vision of the city and interests.

The theoretical framework I employ to understand the *construal* (the discourse) and the *construction* (the way in which discourse is materialised into a precise the urban, social, economic and institutional order) of the urban renewal of East London, is the *discursive theory of urban transformation and change* discussed in Chapter 5. The theory challenges base-superstructure and/or cause-effect models that envision the city and urban space as products of impersonal, hence unquestionable, economic forces. The model does this by reinstating social agency in processes of urban transformation and change. For, it is argued, the complex of urban form and functions, social order, economic organisation and institutional structure of the city is a social construct that can be discussed, questioned and changed. The model, therefore, also provides a possible framework for the restoration of democracy into the processes of policy and decision-making. However, since transformation and change do not necessarily imply the questioning of the *status quo* from a critical perspective, change is interpreted both in conservative terms (the corporate construction/re-construction of urban space), and in progressive terms (the challenging of the corporate-led processes of urban renewal).

The research analyses a number of documents: economic reports, political statements, policy frameworks, newspaper articles, laws, acts, plans and development strategies. The methodological framework that is adopted for the analysis of these documents is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and, more precisely, Norman Fairclough's Dialectical-Relational Approach (DRA). The relevance of CDA and DRA to this work lies in the focus on social agency. In other words, CDA and DRA provide a tool for the analysis and interpretation of the worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests that shape the discursive *construal* and the material *construction* of East London. Such analysis and interpretation are based on the identification, from a critical perspective, of what is called the 'social wrong'.

The notion of social wrong indicates elements, dynamics and mechanisms that are detrimental to democracy. In the case of the urban regeneration of East London, such a notion identifies the curtailing of public accountability and control over policy and decision-making. It is argued that the lack of democracy in decision and policy-making reflects a discursive *construal* in which: *a*) the Olympics-led renewal of East London is represented as a necessary, hence unquestionable, project to answer the requirements of global capital and *b*) the transformation of East London into a site for tourism, shopping, leisure and corporate investment is the only possible way to enact the dynamics of social and economic improvement. To correct the social wrong, therefore, requires us to

1) demonstrate that the transformation of East London into a site for shopping, tourism, leisure and corporate investment is dependent not on impersonal and unquestionable forces, but on a very precise vision of the city's urban, social, economic and institutional development, and on clearly identifiable sets of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests;

2) present this model of urban regeneration as only one among many others in which economic development can be combined with democracy and social participation;

3) acknowledge the possibility for social agency to question, hence change, the capital-led process of East London's urban renewal.

This thesis is based upon theoretical research that explores the possibility for *a discourse theory of urban transformation and change* and its viability as an analysis of

urban change. Though this research offers a model, the model which it offers is not an abstract construal that is imposed upon the case of East London's urban renewal. The opposite is true. In analysing the official discourse of the Olympic regeneration of East London and investigating the way in which it is reflected in the urban, social, economic and institutional order of the city, I became aware of the necessity for a theoretical model able to offer sufficient acknowledgment of the active role of social agency in the processes of urban transformation and change. Two things, I considered, were important in the formulation of such a model: 1) to avoid both the radicalism of extreme versions of social constructionism – which reduce the societal world to the realm of subjective representations and envision nothing outside them; 2) to avoid the extremism of radical forms of social realism – which envision the societal world as being regulated only by intrinsic mechanisms and laws that can be objectively known. In order to avoid these pitfalls, the model had to be able to account for the dialectical relationship between the *discursive* (social action and interaction) and *non-discursive* (the 'material' urban, social, economic and institutional order of the city) dimensions of the social process. Thus, while the model aims at providing a possible framework for other examples of processes of urban transformation and change, it has been actually developed on the basis of what I consider are the peculiarities of the case study. The model is, therefore, deductive and inductive at the same time. For it allows an understanding of how social agency works in processes of urban transformation and change on the basis of the specific aspects that characterise each case study that one may consider.

Words and concepts

The words and concepts that are used in this research entail a precise epistemological and theoretical perspective, and need therefore to be explained.

1. *Preconditions.* This research is based on the assumption that there is nothing fundamental in the societal world (Foucault 2002a; 2002b; 2002c). In other words, the elements of the urban realm (say, the urban form and functions, the social order, the economic organisation and the institutional structure of the city) are not regulated by any intrinsic law and/or mechanism to be 'objectively' analysed. This does not mean that there is nothing 'objective' in society; but that the urban, social, economic and institutional organisation of cities is substantially reliant on the sets of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests that social actors accept and sustain. The term

precondition therefore indicates this complex of values and the dynamics of social-political action and interaction through which such values gain consent and hegemony. Thus, it is not the urban form and functions, the social order, the economic organisation and the institutional structure themselves that are analysed – what might be called the *what*; but the *preconditions* for their *formation*. That is, the vision of the city's urban, social, economic and institutional order as it arises from the dominant complex of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests – what might be called the *how*.

2. *Subjectivisation and de-subjectivisation.* *Subjectivisation* indicates the transformation of the elements of the urban realm, say economy, into independent processes. As social agency is expunged from the processes of urban transformation and change, the elements of the urban realm are transformed into self-sufficient subjects that function out of internal laws and mechanisms – which in turn can be objectively known and observed. Thus, *subjectivisation* entails *de-subjectivisation*. That is, the elimination of social agency from processes of change, or its reduction to the role of passive receiver of forces that cannot be controlled. Such a tendency not only characterises dominant discourses in society. This tendency also characterises critical thinking on society and urban space; which is in most cases founded on base-superstructure and cause-effect theoretical patterns. Marxist and systemic interpretations of society and urban space (Saskia Sassen, 2001; Henri Lefebvre, 1991; Michel Foucault, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c; David Harvey, 2006a, 2006b), envision social-economic systems as *depersonalised* structures in which social agents are passive receivers of forces they cannot control. This way of envisioning society and urban space, it is argued, immobilises the social process and precludes the possibility to think and enact change. For it does not answer the question of how impersonal processes can shape what comes to be an impersonal urban order; and how the dynamics of transformation and change that exclude free, conscious and independent social agents are possible.

The rigidity of these various versions of base-superstructure and cause-effect theoretical systems is in part mitigated, for example, by David Harvey's work on 'the right to the city' (2008). Talking about capital-led dynamics of urban, social and economic restructuring of the city, Harvey acknowledges that social movements failed to construct a real opposition to such dynamics, as they were unable to converge "on the singular aim of gaining greater control over the uses of the surplus – left alone over the conditions of its production" (2008: 39) (the surplus being the exceeding share of capital that needs to be reinvested in order to create more profit). Thus, the author

emphasises the importance of constructing a broad social movement to democratize the right to the city – such a right relies “upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization” (23). However, Harvey’s idea of the ‘right to the city’ is more a hypothesis than a theory that provides a possible way to understand how to engage in transformative social action. It is my belief that in order to understand processes of urban transformation and change (and to envision the possibility for alternative patterns to corporate- based dynamics of urban renewal), we need to acknowledge the central role of social agency; and focus on the complex of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests that shape visions of the city’s urban, social, economic and institutional order.

3. *De-spatialisation*. The concept of *precondition* entails the concept of *de-spatialisation*. As said above, one of the main characteristics in both the dominant discourses and critical thinking on society and urban space, is to conceive urban space as being shaped by impersonal forces. The implication of this is to regard both the processes of urban formation and the forces that shape them as being determined by intrinsic laws and mechanisms – which make them predictable and objectively observable. The mechanism of *subjectivisation/de-subjectivisation* that is briefly outlined above is at stake. According to Michel Foucault (2002c), there is nothing fundamental in the societal world. Buildings and urban spaces, for example, do not have any objective qualities. They neither entail liberty in terms of democracy and freedom, nor do they entail oppression in terms of lack of freedom and democracy by, say, their simple aesthetic, structural and spatial organisation. For freedom and oppression rely on the intentions of the architect, the planner and the subjects on behalf of whom they are realised. This means that if we are to understand the content and meaning of urban space we need to *de-spatialise* space. That is, to operate a shift from the ‘objective’ features of urban space (form, spatial organisation, and structure, which are not sufficient to understand the content and meaning of urban space) to the *preconditions* for its formation. When it comes to public urban space *de-spatialisation* entails *publicness*.

4. *Publicness*. There is no such thing, I believe, as a public space. In other words, the word ‘public’ does not express any intrinsic quality of urban space. As Jürgen Habermas explains in relation to the concept of the public sphere (1992), there exist different kinds of public spaces in terms of use, accessibility and openness. To provide an example: governmental buildings such as the White House in Washington D.C. or

Westminster in London, are not the same as, say, a park in terms of ‘public’ use, accessibility and openness. However, the nature of public space is not defined by just such qualities as accessibility and openness there are other elements that matter. The Westfield Stratford City in East London, it will be explained, is represented in the official discourse of marketing and advertising as a brand new public space in the heart of a once deprived area. Although the Westfield is a privately-owned space (which does not necessarily mean that it is an undemocratic space), it is in fact open and accessible to everyone (which does not necessarily mean that it is a democratic space). What makes the Westfield an undemocratic space is: 1) the rigid prescriptions (hence, restrictions) on the uses and practices of space; 2) the structure of governance in which it is embedded. It transpires that people can only buy and consume goods while other activities (say, biking, skateboarding, picketing and protesting) are banned. Furthermore, the Westfield complex is the product of an undemocratic structure of governance aimed at curtailing and/or excluding the mechanisms of public control and accountability from policy and decision-making. *Publicness* entails no objective notion of ‘public’. Therefore, if we are to understand the nature of urban public space, we need to focus on the *publicness* of public space, rather than on the concept of ‘public’ itself. For *publicness* indicates the qualities of what is ‘public’.

5. *Discourse*. The *preconditions* for public space and the processes of transformation and change of urban space, lie in *discourse* and *discursive practices*. As it shall be explained, the term *discourse* has different meanings. Discourse can be interpreted both in terms of meaning-making (for example, New Labour’s discourse of ‘modernisation’ implies a specific vision of the world and is translated in texts through a precise syntactical and grammatical form); and in terms of the language and texts in a particular field of social action (say, the economic discourse); and in terms of a specific social perspective (say, the neo-liberal discourse of globalisation) (Fairclough, 2010a: 162-163). Such diverse dimensions of discourse are not mutually exclusive and imply each other. However, there is still another dimension of discourse that needs to be explored. Such a dimension is *discourse as site for social-political action* (chapter 5). Discourse, in other words, constitutes the site where different social actors act and interact from the particular perspective of their own set of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests in order to gain the consent and hegemony required to enact processes of urban transformation and change. To summarise, since social-political action can only occur through discursive action, discourse constitutes the site for social-

political action and the *pre-condition* for processes of urban transformation and change. For such processes are not determined by impersonal and anarchic forces, but require free, independent and conscious social actors.

6. *Discursive and Non-discursive elements of the societal world.* To say that *discourse as site for social-political action* constitutes the ‘source’ of the processes of urban transformation and change does not mean that the societal world only exists in discourse – and that nothing exists outside it. I interpret social-political action as mediating between *discursive* and *non-discursive* elements of the social process. *Discursive* elements are the complex of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests, and visions of the city’s urban, social, economic and institutional order that inform the content of social-political action. When social actors renounce their power to engage in social-political action, such complexes of values remain at the level of subjective statements, and cannot therefore be defined in terms of discursive action. *Non-discursive* elements are those ‘material’ (say, the urban form and functions, the social order, the economic organisation and the institutional structure of the city) and ‘immaterial’ elements (say, dominant sets of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests) that constitute the background for social action. Such ‘material’ and ‘non-material’ elements exist whether or not social actors question them, and whether or not social actors are even aware of them. However, *non-discursive* elements constitute no strong and unchangeable system of truth. They constitute instead a weak system of truth that can always be discussed, questioned and changed (Habermas, 1997). For systems of truth and the structure of power relations are social facts.

7. *Construal and Construction.* The dialectical relationship between *discursive* and *non-discursive* elements of the social process entails the dialectical relationship between the *construal* and the *construction* of urban space. The word *construal* indicates the construction of narratives, discourses and representations of urban space. For example, in the economic, political and media discourse on the Olympics and the urban regeneration, East London is represented as a decaying place to be transformed into a venue for shopping, tourism, leisure and corporate investment. Such a narrative of place entails a precise legal discourse (the discourse of laws, acts, plans, development strategies and contracts analysed in chapter 7), which sets out the preconditions for the curtailing of politics from decision-making processes. The *construal* of urban space entails the *construction* of place. That is, the materialisation of the corporate vision of East London into consequent urban forms and policies, social order, economic

organisation and institutional structure. Thus, whilst *construal* refers to the *discursive* dimension, *construction* refers to the *non-discursive* dimension of the social process. In other words, although the *construction* of urban space relies on the *construal*, it constitutes something 'objective'. For the transformation of East London into a site for shopping, tourism, leisure and corporate investment is actually occurring. However, since the *construction* is a social act, and does not depend on any impersonal and necessary process, it can be questioned and challenged. By the same token, the *construal* of urban space, that is, the construction of a new narrative of space, occurs within an existing context whose existence is independent from the willingness social actors to accept or question it.

8. *Urban realm*. One of the aims of this research is to challenge the idea that urban space is determined by impersonal and necessary economic forces. To accept this idea, it is argued, is to accept that a separation exists between urban space and economy. It is my belief, instead, that no clear-cut separation exists between urban space and economy. Urban space and economic organisation are distinct, but not separate elements of the urban realm. For, it is explained in chapter 5, economic organisation cannot be thought of and materialised apart from the dynamics of spatialisation; and urban space cannot be conceived and constructed apart from some form of economic organisation. To put it simply, when it comes to the city, the economy operates in urban space, and urban space is economically organised – a dialectical and horizontal relationship existing between the two. Urban space, however, is not just about economic organisation. Urban space is itself too generic a notion to constitute an adequate conceptual tool to analyse processes of urban transformation and change, and to account for the several dimensions that constitute it. Thus, the concept of urban space comes to identify an organism (rather than a system, which denotes a structure that works according to rigid cause-effect mechanisms) that is made of urban form and functions, social order, economic organisation and institutional structure. The relationship between these realms is a reciprocal and dialectical one – no hierarchy existing between them. Urban form and functions entail the social order, the economic organisation and the institutional structure; in the same way as the institutional structure implies urban form and functions, the economic organisation and the social order, and so forth. The same is true for the relationship between discourse and these various spheres of the urban realm. There is no dominance of discourse on the urban realm as a whole. Discourse, it will be explained, *is not* the urban form and functions, the social order, the economic

organisation and the institutional structure of the city. Discourse *is in* the urban form and functions, the social order, the economic organisation and the institutional structure. However, the being of discourse in these spheres is only potential. The urban form and functions, the social order, the economic organisation and the institutional structure are *discursive* and *non-discursive* elements of the urban realm at the same time. They exist and constitute the background for social-political action; while their discursive dimension is enacted as long as social actors engage in social-political action to question the existing urban, social, economic and institutional order of the city.

9. *Neo-liberalism*. The concept of neo-liberalism is often used in the text as synonymous with such concepts as ‘global capital’, ‘global financial capital’ and ‘highly financialised economy’. These concepts indicate descriptions of the ‘dominant discourse’ in society, which is reflected in the urban, social, economic and institutional organisation of the city. ‘Dominant discourse’ denotes the idea of an unregulated economy in which finance plays a primary role. However, far from being unregulated, such a type of economy is highly regulated. Regulation occurs in the form of complex structures of contracts between public authority and corporate subjects that bypass the mechanisms of democratic control and accountability, and aim at reducing competition in the market (Crouch, 2004 and 2011; Levi-Faur, 2005). As far as the city is concerned, ‘dominant discourse’ entails a vision of urban space as a hub for tourism, shopping, leisure and lifestyle – which are thought to attract increasing volumes of corporate investments.

10. *Marxism*. This concept refers to the traditional base/superstructure interpretation of society. A critique of orthodox Marxism arose from within the so-called ‘new Left’ in the 1960s that challenged such a rigid distinction between an economic base and a cultural, political, social, etc. superstructure. Such a critique has expanded well beyond the borders of the ‘new Left’ and has involved the writings of a number of diverse authors and ‘schools’ that cannot be easily labelled: to mention just few of these authors and schools, the ‘post-structuralist’ work of Michel Foucault (2002a, 2002b, 2002c), Henri Lefebvre’s critique of urban space production under capitalism (1991), the radical thinking of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (2014), the more ‘liberal’ view of Hannah Arendt and Jürgen Habermas, and the scientific production of CDA and the Evolutionary Governance Theory (EGT) (Assche van, Beunen, Duineveld, 2014). I will not engage in the historical-theoretical debate on Marxism. I will reflect on these various theoretical contributions to elaborate on the

possibility for a discourse-theory of urban transformation and change to be able to: 1) break the rigidity of base-superstructures models; 2) avoid the reduction of discourse to a structural element that immobilises, as I shall explain, the social process; 3) disclose the possibility to theoretically conceive, hence practically enact processes of urban transformation and change.

Genesis

I started reflecting on the range of issues informing this thesis during the final stage of my MA in Architectural History. Since this discipline is apparently distant from urban sociology, it is therefore important to briefly account for the process that led me to the discourse on/of the Olympics-led regeneration of East London – as well as to the elaboration of the theoretical and methodological approaches that are employed.

The first element to trigger my interests in discourses, narratives and representations of urban space was Fredric Jameson's critique of post-modernism (2009). In late capitalism, Jameson explains, a concept of culture is construed that embraces and absorbs fields of human activities that exceed those practices that are traditionally identified with the production of culture (literature, art, music, science, philosophy). Things such as food and fashion have become 'cultural'. The city has become the site for the production and reproduction of such culture, while shopping and consumerism are the mechanisms through which culture is produced and reproduced.

Jameson's critique of post-modernism echoes Roland Barthes' theory of the myth, Naomi Klein's critique of branding (Klein, 2010), and Hal Foster's critique of post-modern architecture. The element that these authors have in common is the commodification of culture. This commodification of culture reflects the commodification of urban space that is at the core of a politics of space that is aimed at putting marginal urban areas on the map of international tourism and finance. The literature on tourism architecture (e.g. Lasansky and McLaren: 2004) and on place branding (Nelson: 2005; Klingmann: 2007; Kearns and Philo: 1993; Zukin: 1991, 1995) shows that a relationship exists between the way in which architecture and urban space are represented, and the way in which they are physically materialised. And suggests that specific politics and strategies of representation can be enacted that reflect precise social and economic interests.

This critical analysis led me to reflect on the role of Mega-Events and the Olympics as major catalysts of urban regeneration. To give an example, 2008 Beijing Olympic Games signalled to a global audience that the country was ready to manage increasing flows of financial capital – despite the severe restrictions on civic and political liberty under communist rule. To be more precise, the Games marked China's emergence as a global player in the capitalist world – its main driving force being industrial production, rather than finance. By the same token, the transformation of East London into a new venue for shopping, tourism, leisure and corporate investment is aimed at reinforcing the image of London (as it moves east) as one of the most prominent world-class centres – the construction of the Westfield Stratford City constituting the symbol of such a 'rebirth'.

This range of issues prompted me to investigate the role that discourse and discursive practices play in the processes of urban transformation. I therefore started exploring the viability of CDA, and DRA in particular, as methodological frameworks to analyse the dynamics of urban regeneration. From the analysis of the economic, political and media discourse of the Olympics and the regeneration, a particular discourse on public space emerged that required the analysis of structures of urban governance. Mike Raco's (2012, 2014) analysis of the complex of contracts between public authorities and private subjects in relation to the Olympic regeneration of East London, Colin Crouch's interpretation of *post-democracy* and neo-liberalism (2004, 2011), and David Levi-Faur's (2005) focus on regulatory capitalism, have been contributions central to my understanding of the dynamics that lead to the creation of exclusive relations between public authorities and private subjects, and to the construction of undemocratic systems of urban governance. This triggered my interest in the analysis of the *preconditions* for such systems of urban governance; which I believed, and believe, reside in the discourse of laws, acts, plans and development strategies that shape the processes of East London urban regeneration, and define the nature and quality of urban public space.

It was clear to me, at an early stage in the research, that no dominance of one of the various elements of the urban realm (the urban form and functions, the social order, the economic organisation and the institutional structure) existed over the others. Traditional analyses and theories of urban space that envisioned some sort of structural primacy of the economy in the production of urban space proved inadequate to analyse the urban regeneration of East London – and, I think, processes of urban transformation

and change in more general terms. I therefore embarked on the elaboration of a theoretical model of urban transformation and change to facilitate: 1) the understanding of the relationships between the various spheres of the urban realm in dialectical and dynamic terms; 2) the reinstatement of social agency in the dynamics of urban formation. As explained in chapter 5, one of the possible solutions to this problem is to conceive discourse as articulating the relationships between these various spheres of the urban realm.

Structure

II.

The research consists of 8 chapters, including this introductory chapter (chapter 1) and the concluding chapter (chapter 8). Chapter 2 is the literature review. Four sections articulate the chapter: narratives and representations of space, global games and mega-events, urban governance and public space, theories and approaches to the production of urban space. The literature review reflects the interdisciplinary approach that proved to be necessary for a thorough comprehension of the Olympics-led urban renewal of East London. Processes of urban transformation and change are not just a matter of urban planning. For they also involve the way in which urban space is represented, the way in which narratives and representations of space reflect the social and economic structuring of the city, and the construction of structures of urban governance that regulate the relationships between different social groups and classes.

The section on the narratives and representations of space presents a variety of case studies. The case studies focus on the way in which narratives and representations of urban space and architecture to be found in the discourse on/of tourism entail and sometimes precede the actual transformation of place into a site for tourism. The main argument is that the architectural and urban re-construction of place, the practices and uses of place, and the way in which place is perceived and experienced by both visitors and local people are affected by the way in which place is *re-construed*. The London 2012 Olympic Games demonstrate in fact how narratives and representations of the ‘Olympic city’ are *construed* that reflect the way in which the city is actually *re-constructed*. Such *construal/construction* entails the reconfiguration of the social and economic order of the city by dynamics of gentrification that clearly establish who owns

urban space and who belongs in urban space (Bernstock, 2009; Bernstock and Poynter 2012).

Gentrification processes, hence the dynamics of social inclusion/exclusion from space, also entail the construction of democratic and/or undemocratic structures of urban governance. As Mike Raco explains in relation to the *delivery* London 2012 (2012, 2014), a structure of undemocratic governance is created that establishes exclusive relations between public and private actors to curtail the mechanisms of public control and accountability from decision and policy-making. The concept itself of delivery, Raco explains, as opposed to the concept of *deliberation*, entails the removal of politics, hence democracy, from urban governance. The shift from *deliberation* to *delivery* reflects the mechanism of what Levi-Faur calls ‘regulatory capitalism’ (Jordana J. and Levi-Faur, 2004; Levi-Faur, D., 2005); in which exclusive relationships are established between public and private subjects. The democratic and/or undemocratic nature of structures of urban governance also defines the quality of public space (*publicness*) – no objective meaning of public space and sphere exist in the societal world.

Thus, the Olympics-led urban renewal of East London also raises the issue of how to conceive of processes of urban transformation and change. In the literature review, different epistemological, theoretical and analytical approaches are considered: from the tendency to *subjectivise*, hence *de- subjectivise* processes of urban formation (Sassen, 2001); to the base- superstructure and cause-effect vision of the relationships between economic forces and urban space (Lefebvre, 1991; Harvey, 2001, 2006a, 2006b); to the theories of power and discourse that help focus on the *preconditions* for the formation of urban space (Foucault, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c); to the theories of communicative and political action that allow an understanding of the active role social actors play in the dynamics of urban transformation and change (Arendt, 1970, 1998; Habermas, 1997).

III.

Chapter 3 employs statistics to assess the extent to which it is possible to think of East London as an area of extreme deprivation so as to require the adoption of ‘extraordinary’ policies and intervention – meaning the vast transformation of the social and economic structure of the area.

The chapter does not question that East London scores higher deprivation rates

and number of people of benefits than wealthier areas of London. What is questioned is: 1) the widespread idea of an immediate correlation between deprivation and crime, as well as a variety of other anti-social and unhealthy behaviours; 2) the fact that East London's deprivation, benefits and crime rates represent abnormal values far exceeding the average values of London as a whole; 3) the use of such image to affirm the representation of East London as 'one of the most deprived areas in Europe'.

Data demonstrate that no significant correlation either between crime and deprivation, or benefits and crime that makes East London an area of crime and exceptional deprivation.

Comparison between the Olympic boroughs and all the other boroughs of London, shows that deprivation, benefits, crime and other variables such as binge drinking, male and female life expectancy, obesity, etc., are quite normally distributed across the whole London. Once again, this demonstrates that no extra-ordinary social condition characterises the Olympic boroughs that justifies the representation of East London as 'one of the most deprived areas in Europe'.

IV.

The complex of epistemological, theoretical and methodological issues that emerges from the literature review is addressed in chapter 4, where the theoretical and methodological framework of this research is presented. The framework is built on the assumption that the transformation of East London into a site for shopping, tourism, leisure and corporate investment is a social fact. Such transformation reflects, in other words, dominant sets of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests that dominant social actors managed to translate in a consequent urban, social, economic and institutional order. Such an order, it is argued, is at the same time 'subjective' and 'objective'. It is 'subjective' in that it relies on sets of values that specific social actors sustain. And it is 'objective' in that it is reflected into a shared *knowledge* of the city and into real urban forma and policies, social order, economic organisation and institutional structure.

Jürgen Habermas' theory of communicative action allows an understanding of the tension between 'subjective' and 'objective' elements of the urban realm, and of the role that social actors play in such tension. The example of the urban renewal of East

London shows that it is commonly accepted that the transformation of place into a venue for shopping, tourism, leisure and corporate investment is the only viable way to regenerate ‘decaying’ urban areas; and that the Olympics are regarded by central and local governments as a catalyst for this kind of urban renewal. As stated above, a vision of the city is actually translated into a real urban order. In Habermasian terms, *validity claims* are reflected into *facts*. However, Habermas explains, such *validity claims* constitute no strong systems of truth but weak systems of truth that social actors can discuss, question and change. One of the issues at stake in this research is that the new discursive, hence ‘subjective’ urban order, that is being *construed/constructed* in East London, and London as a whole, can be questioned, challenged, and changed.

The site of the *construal/construction* of the London’s East End is discourse. Here lies the relevance of Michel Foucault’s theory of power and discourse (or of power as discourse and vice versa) to this research. The analysis of the various discursive dimensions of the Olympics-led process of East London urban regeneration (the economic, the political, the media and the legal discourse) shows that there is no fundamental, hence objective, meaning of regeneration. The model of urban regeneration that is being realised in East London reflects global capital’s vision of the city’s urban, social, economic and institutional development – global capital being itself a social fact that depends on the complex of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, interests and beliefs of specific social actors. Foucault’s theory of power allows the identification of such a complex of values, hence the identification of a precise knowledge of the city, by the de-structuring of discourse. The theory allows, in other words, what is called the *de-spatialisation* of space.

However, as it is discussed in chapter 4 e 5, the problem with Foucault’s theory of power is that it does not allow an understanding of how the urban transformation and change of East London actually occurs. According to Foucault, a free and independent social action is not possible. Social action is determined by a structure of power relations that pre-exists social actors and shapes their conscious – and that social actors can only passively receive.

The implication is that the *social wrong* (that is, the fact of thinking that the corporate transformation of East London is inevitable and constitutes the only possible way to regenerate place) can be neither identified, nor can it be fixed. For social actors would think, hence accept, what the system ‘thinks’. Furthermore, the question remains

unanswered of how processes of urban transformation and change are possible without free and independent social actors. This is true whether change is interpreted in conservative terms – as in the case of the Olympic transformation of East London –, or in progressive terms – say, the contestation of the transformation of East London into a site for tourism, shopping, leisure and corporate investment by an alternative model of urban renewal.

Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (2014) provide a possible solution to such a theoretical impasse. Laclau and Mouffe conceive, in fact, society as a discursive space that has no fundamental and necessary quality and constitutes no objective order. According to the authors, politics is a central element in the structuration of society (p. xii). To be more specific, politics is the site of hegemonic articulations, which challenge the construction of any kind of subjective universality of the social order. Universality (that is, the attempt to construct an objective *we* in society) is the product of political struggle. Universality is, therefore, political, hence *subjective* universality.

This leads to the main argument of Laclau and Mouffe's work, which is linked to the notion of *antagonism* (p. xiii). The emphasis on antagonistic relations has two consequences, which are both relevant to this work. The first is that "antagonisms – as the authors explain – are not *objective* relations, but relations which reveal the limits of all objectivity" (p. xiv). The second is that the political realm is not to be conceived as a superstructure, as it pertains to the *ontological* order of society (ibid.). The relevance of this interpretation of antagonism and politics to this research lies in that no stable and permanent equilibrium can be reached in society. From this it follows that no narrative and representation of the societal world can be constructed that cannot be questioned and contested – social division being inherent to the possibility of politics (ibid.). Thus, the dismissal of both objectivist and base-superstructure paradigms of social organisation allows the possibility to theoretically conceive transformation and change, and to question the *status quo*.

Laclau and Mouffe's idea of democracy as the realm of social division and conflict diverges from Habermas' notion of deliberative democracy. Advocates of both radical democracy and deliberative democracy, the authors explain, have in common the critique of the aggregative model of democracy and the idea that such a model does not acknowledge that no pre-given political identities exists, as they are produced and reproduced through debate in the public sphere (xvii). However, they point out,

important differences exist that prevent these models from converging. The notion of antagonism forecloses any final reconciliation in terms of a fully realised consensus. In other words, conflict and division are intrinsic to the social process. They are essential elements of society. A notion of pluralist democracy that denies the role of conflict and division would become a 'self-refusing' ideal (xviii).

While I agree with the idea of a consensus never to be fully reached between different social actors, I do not believe, however, that Habermas' notion of deliberative democracy and theory of communicative action are in principle incompatible with the idea of progressive politics – as Laclau and Mouffe put it.

As shall be explained later in the text, the consensus Habermas talks about is based on no strong system of truth, but on questionable validity claims. These validity claims can always be discussed and challenged by competing social actors, until a new set of (weak) validity claims is established, contested, subverted and so on. Positioning himself halfway between the liberal conception of the state (in which the democratic process consists of compromises among interests, and law secures that election results through universal suffrage are respected and parliamentary bodies are constituted accordingly) and the republican concept of the state (in which society is from the very start political society and the community becomes aware of itself through the citizens' practice of political self-determination) (Habermas, 1997: 296- 297; Habermas, 2006), Habermas conceives of society as consisting of a variety of different social agents that act on both a formal and informal level. Processes of will formation do not just occur in the regulated space of the state apparatus – which consists of political parties, trade unions, the parliament, the government – but in the informal and 'anarchic' space, as Habermas himself calls it, of the lifeworld as well – which is made up of the press, the media, public discussions, private conversations, and all the different kinds of interaction between free individuals. Once deliberative democracy is considered against the background of such a complex idea of society, concerns about it leading to universal consensus and an inclusive 'we' are dismissed. For through the political process and discursive practices validity claims are established that can always be discussed, challenged and subverted. No stable and perennial equilibrium in the social world can ever exist.

As we will see, Hannah Arendt's notion of power leads to the same consequence. In her work on violence (1970), Arendt is clear in saying that even the most tyrannical

and repressive of the regimes cannot operate apart from some sort of ‘independent’ will – be it the slave owner that needs to rely on the support of the community of the slave owners in the pre- Civil War North America, or, we might say, Mussolini’s fascism that needed to rely upon the consensus of the king, the army and the catholic church. In their interpretations of Evolutionary Governance Theory (EGT), Kristof Van Assche, Raoul Beunen and Martijn Duineveld (2014) draw on the same sort of concepts: the instability of structures of governance and the impossibility for narratives and representations to construe universal semantic universes. Governance is the site where discourses sustained by different social actors compete. In this way, governance becomes itself the site of power conflicts, which produce different versions of reality – these different versions of reality giving rise, at the same time, to power conflicts. Reversing the traditional base-superstructure paradigm of the social process, van Assche, Beunen and Duineveld locate the source of change in ideology, which has the power to transform everything, as they put it. “If new ideologies arrive, if new conflicts between existing ideologies arise, if the boundaries of ideologies harden for some reason, this can affect literally everything, up to the most minute detail in the most local governance arrangement” (52).

The relevance of this way of conceiving ideology and governance to this work lies in two propositions. First, it challenges the idea that the city (its urban forms and functions, social order, economic organisation and structure of governance) is regulated by laws and mechanisms that can be objectively analysed. The emphasis on ideology acknowledges free and independent social agents (and the complex of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests out of which social agents act) a central role in the processes of urban transformation and change. Second, ‘economy’ ceases to constitute the fundamental cause of change in the urban realm. As a consequence, governance, ideology and narratives can no longer be interpreted in terms of superstructure, as they become structuring elements of the urban realm. EGT helps replace base-superstructure and cause-effect models of urban change with a more dynamic vision. According to this vision, as I shall explain, economy certainly plays a crucial role in the processes of urban transformation and change. But it does so alongside other spheres such as the social order, urban forms and functions and institutional structures – no hierarchy existing between these different spheres. EGT lays the groundwork for a theory that allows the understanding of the role that social agents play in such processes. It is my belief that the emphasis on social agency entails

the possibility to actually understand change – as change cannot be the product of impersonal forces; and constitutes the preconditions for more democratic frameworks of policy and decision-making.

Relating this to the subject of this research, the transformation of the London's East End is enacted not by impersonal, hence unquestionable, economic forces; but by free and independent social agents that consciously act to materialise their vision of the city's urban, social, economic and institutional order. To think that a free and independent social action is possible means to acknowledge, on both theoretical and practical levels, that patterns of urban regeneration that provide an alternative to corporate models of urban development are possible. Thus, Hannah Arendt's idea of politics as condition for democracy and Jürgen Habermas theory of communicative action and deliberative democracy allow conceiving the Olympics-led urban regeneration of East London as the product of a free and independent social action; hence as something that can be contested and challenged by alternative visions of the city. Furthermore, Arendt's emphasis on the possibility for social actors to exert their power to act – hence, to contest the existing structures of power relations –, constitutes the basis for the elaboration of the *discourse theory of urban transformation and change* that is discussed in chapter 5.

The chapter also addresses the viability of CDA and DRA as methodological frameworks to analyse the discourse on/of the Olympic regeneration of East London. CDA and DRA allow a *critical* understanding of the processes of urban transformation and change. Such a critical understanding is aimed at identifying possible solutions to correct what are called 'social wrongs'. Such social wrongs are to that: 1) economy is governed by impersonal, hence unquestionable, forces; 2) processes of urban transformation and change are determined by such forces and are also unquestionable; 3) the corporate-led transformation of East London is the only possible pattern of urban renewal; 4) the curtailing of democracy and politics from decision-making processes is required in order to speed up the delivery of the project of urban regeneration. The analysis instead demonstrates that the transformation of East London into a site for shopping, tourism, leisure and corporate investment is a social construct, which relies on a vision of the city's urban, social, economic and institutional development that is questionable. The analysis also shows that the elimination of democracy and politics from policy-making is a social construal and that they can be restored – should an alternative vision of the city be translated into social-political action and achieve the

social-political consent that is required to be enacted.

V.

The analysis of the various dimensions of the discourse on/of the urban regeneration (the economic, political, media and legal discourse) shows how such discursive dimensions reflect and are in fact reflected in the restructuring of the urban, social, economic and institutional order of London. They reflect and are reflected, in other words, in the creation of specific urban form and functions, social order, economic organisation and institutional structure. The analysis also emphasises the interconnectedness between these different realms. For the urban renewal of East London does not just involve the form and function of urban space, but also a reconfiguration of its social, economic and institutional organisation. Such transformation, it is argued, is discourse-led. That is, it relies on the emergence onto the social-political plane of a new set of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests; and a new vision of the city.

Chapter 5, therefore, explores, the possibility for a *discourse theory of urban transformation and change* to allow the understanding of the role that *discourse as site for social- political action* plays in: *a)* the reconfiguration East London's urban space – and of London as a whole and; *b)* the articulation of the relationship between the various spheres of the city's urban realm (the urban form and functions, the social order, the economic organisation and the institutional structure). Likewise, since these various spheres constitute at the same time *discursive* and *non-discursive* dimensions of the urban realm, the theoretical model provides a framework to understand how the relationship between the *discursive* and *non-discursive* elements of the urban realm works.

Different theoretical and analytical approaches to urban space are discussed. Saskia Sassen, David Harvey and Henri Lefebvre's analyses and theories of urban space are adopted as examples of *de-personalisation* (*subjectivisation* in the form of *de-subjectivisation*) of both the city and the forces that shape it. It is argued that these authors regard urban space and the dynamics of urban formation as 'objective' facts that function according to intrinsic laws and mechanisms that can be objectively known.

Social actors do not play in these theories and analyses any active role. For their actions are determined by necessary and impersonal forces. It is my belief that such a lack of emphasis on a free and independent social agency prevents the possibility to understand how processes of urban transformation and change occur – as the question of who enacts such processes remain unanswered; and how alternative models to capital-led processes of urban renewal might be possible. The same is true for Michel Foucault's theory of power. In fact, while on the one hand, Foucault's theory allows the focus on the *preconditions* for the formation of urban space, it freezes, on the other, the social process by transforming discourse into a structural order that determines both the urban realm and social action. As indicated above, the solution to this is seen in Jürgen Habermas' theory of communicative action and in Hannah Arendt's theory of politics. Since both these theories are employed to emphasise the central role of social agency in processes of urban transformation and change, the model that is discussed in the chapter also constitutes a possible framework for the restoration of politics, hence democracy, in urban policy and decision-making.

VI.

Chapter 6 explores the *construal* of East London in the official narrative and representation of the Olympics and the urban regeneration. Such narrative and representation are investigated in different discursive dimensions: the economic, the political, and the media discourse. It is argued that such discourse is reflected in the *construction* of the urban form and functions, the social order and the economic organisation of place. The issue of the *construal* of the legal discourse is addressed in chapter 7.

A key concept in the *construal* of the chapter's argument is CDA's idea of *recontextualisation*. The term indicates the *colonisation* of the political and media discourse by the economic discourse according to precise linguistic strategies that work at both the micro level (words, the grammar and the syntactic structure of texts) and the macro level (the overall meaning and content of texts). *Colonisation*, however, does not indicate in this research any necessary dominance of economy over the other spheres of the city and the societal world. *Colonisation* indicates, instead, the dominance of specific social actors (say, multinational corporations) who act on the basis of specific worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests. Such dominance, it is argued, is

neither necessary, nor it is unquestionable, and can instead be challenged. Thus, the relationship between the economic, the social, the urban and the institutional spheres of the city, as well as the relationship between these domains and discourse as site for social-political action, is interpreted in dynamic and dialectical terms.

In the first part of the chapter two texts are considered: Rem Koolhaas' introduction to "Shopping", a work produced by the "Harvard Project on the City" on shopping; and "Junkspace", an essay on the 21st century's architectural and urban space (Kearns and Philo, 1993; Koolhaas, 2000). In the 1990s and the 2000s Koolhaas theorised that shopping would become a new form of democratic public space: the ultimate form social activity to substitute more traditional forms of social-political engagement as site for the formation of citizenship and community. No longer the *agora*, but the shopping mall was envisioned as the latest form of public space that expressed the 'spirit' of the time. Koolhaas embraced financial capitalism as a necessary, irresistible and positive force, and strongly contributed to the *recontextualisation* of financial capitalism discourse into the discourse and practice of architectural design and urban planning – shopping and mass consumerism being for Koolhaas structuring principles of new architecture and urban space.

The relevance of Koolhaas' texts to this work is that they constitute a valid example of the relation between the *construal* and the *construction* of urban space and architecture. As it is explained, the discourse of shopping and mass consumerism (with its combination of *genres*, *discourses* and *styles*) is translated in both editorial products that are different from more traditional books, magazines and journals on architecture and urban planning; and reflected in real architectural and urban configurations: the shopping mall. The same occurs with the Westfield Stratford City, a complex of luxury shops, brand product stores, fancy restaurants and bars, five star hotels, cinemas and casinos. Westfield is key in the re-construction/re-construal of East London as a site for tourism, shopping, leisure and lifestyle. Such a vision of urban space, I argue, is not neutral, as it entails a reconstruction of place along non-democratic lines in terms of ownership, uses and practices; and, as it will explained in chapter 7, a structure of governance from which the mechanisms of democratic accountability and control are excluded.

The second part of the chapter focuses on two texts: the Lloyds Banking Group's report on "The Economic Impact of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games"

(2012), and an article published by Patrick Foley (chief economist at Lloyds) in *The Telegraph* commenting on the report (2012). This part explores the *construal* of the economic discourse.

The *subjectivisation* of the Olympics is at stake. The Olympics are turned into a subject that is capable by its very nature to improve the social and economic conditions of East London. To contrast this tendency to *subjectivise/de-subjectivise* the Olympics, both the Games and the urban renewal associated with them are analysed as social facts. That is, as elements of the social process whose nature depends on a specific vision of London's urban, social, economic and institutional order. Such a vision of the city entails a precise idea of *modernity*. This idea of modernity indicates a place for tourism, shopping, leisure and corporate investment, and is *construed* in opposition to East London as 'a long neglected area'.

The third part of the chapter focuses on three documents: The Greater London Authority's text, "Games Accelerate the Rebirth of East London", which reformulates the concepts of *rebirth* and *regeneration*; "Convergence", which constitutes a policy road map to achieve the social convergence between the East and West End of London; and the Oxford Economics' "Strategic Regeneration Framework". SRF is a statistical-economic analysis of the impact of the regeneration on East London. The reason why the document is analysed in the section on the political discourse, rather than in the section on the economic discourse, is because it constitutes the analytical framework on which Convergence is based.

The London Authority's text reproduces the discourse of 'rebirth' and the 'regeneration'. Rebirth and regeneration have intrinsic positive qualities and objective meaning, which entail the transformation of place into a site for financial services, tourism, shopping and leisure. *Subjectivisation* in the manner of *de-subjectivised* is, again, at stake. For the subjectivisation of the elements of the social process – that is, their transformation into independent and impersonal subjects – entails their *de-subjectivisation* – that is, the fact of ignoring the role that social action plays in such processes. It is observed that 'regeneration' and 'rebirth' are treated as the necessary consequence of the Games and the project of urban renewal; and that their meaning is construed in the image of East London as a decaying place.

Differently from the economic discourse, where the Olympics and the regeneration are represented as impersonal processes, the political discourse is

characterised by a certain degree of personalisation. Social responsibility, in other words, is reinstated in the social process. For a ‘we’ is construed that refers to both politicians and society: what ‘we the politicians, with the support of the community as a whole’, need to do in order to attract investments for the development of the area.

“Convergence Framework and Action Plan 2011-2015” (Mayor of London, 2011) is a framework for policies and actions to undertake in order to close the gap between the East and the West End of London. What is questioned is not the fact that such a difference in the social and economic conditions of the two parts of the city exists. What is questioned is the implicit assumption that East London is an intrinsically deprived area (*de-subjectivisation* in the guise of *subjectivisation*) and the idea that to transform the area into a site for tourism, shopping, leisure and corporate investment (*westendisation*) is the only way to improve the area’s conditions.

Apparent ‘neutrality’ and unquestionability characterise the document. It is in fact focused on objectives that people can hardly disagree with: Creating Wealth and Reducing Poverty (“which captures education, skills, employment and child poverty”); Supporting Healthier Lifestyles (“which captures health, sport and culture”); Developing Successful Neighbourhoods (“which captures strategic Housing provision, Crime and Public Realm and in particular the contribution they make to the development of sustainable communities”) (13-14). It will be shown how such neutrality and unquestionability is employed to present the corporate transformation of the East End as the only viable solution to enact a dynamic of social-economic growth.

The SRF constitutes the background on which Convergence is based. The document considers growth in relation to a number of domains: employment, GVA, occupations, wages, rent, house prices, consumer expenditure, demography, housing stock, households. There are two interesting elements in the construal of the SRF’s narrative. The first is that performance in these sectors is considered on the basis of a hierarchic and vertical relationship between different layers of economic activity: the global, the national, the regional and the local. This has important implications for the kind of development that is expected. Since the global level is identified with the financial economy, and the national economy level is finance and service oriented, both the regional and the local level are to be renewed in ways consistent with the logic of the financial economy. The consequences are:

- 1) the ‘new’ social, economic and demographic structure of East London has to

emulate the social, economic and demographic structure of the rest of London – meaning the West End; 2) the economic organisation of East London, as well as of London as a whole, the South-East of England and the UK, needs to be consistent with the kind of social and economic organisation that the global financial economy entails; 3) social and economic development in East London, and London as a whole, can be achieved as long as the convergence between these different levels of social and economic activity is realised; 4) divergence from the social and economic model of global capital produces negative results. It shall be argued that to think that the urban regeneration of East London can be successful as long as models of economic and social development that proved to be ‘successful’ in West London are adopted, is just as arbitrary as to think that economic success on the national level relies on the adoption of economic policies consistent with an hegemonic global model of economic development.

The second interesting element in the construal of the SRF’s narrative is that growth is only considered in terms of leisure, retail and financial activities. In this way, an equation is construed between the increase in leisure, retail and financial jobs (which reflects the increase in these sectors of economic activity) and economic growth. What is more, in order to reinforce the idea that London and the UK’s economic recovery depends on the solidity of London’s financial services, the increase in finance and services is compared to the decrease in manufacturing over the period 1971-2007/09. In other words, such a dynamic is represented as something intrinsic to financial services and manufacturing. At stake is, once again, *subjectivisation* in the guise of *de-subjectivisation* and vice versa. To question the SRF argument, it is claimed that: 1) the increase in leisure, retail and financial activities do not necessarily imply economic growth; 2) no intrinsic logic to financial services and manufacturing exists that explains the respective growth and fall in these sectors of economic activity. For such growth and fall were determined by the changes in UK economy that were enacted in the 1980s and the 1990s by the Conservative and New Labour governments.

The last section of the chapter focuses on the media discourse. The section analyses three texts: An article published by Graham Ruddick in *The Daily Telegraph* on March 2nd, 2012 (Ruddick, 2012), which focuses on the purposes of the regeneration in terms of housing; an article published by *E-architect*, an on-line magazine, which focuses on the Westfield Stratford City and a video released by the *Viral Factory* on the Westfield and East London as a site for the production of fashion.

The relevance of the texts to the research is that they provide examples of the way in which the *construal* of a narrative/discourse of place is reflected in and reflects the material *construction* of place. Ruddick's article is clear on what the regeneration is about: real estate interests. In fact, the author takes for granted that a housing boom should be expected as an outcome of the regeneration. The article also raises the question as to whether people (meaning people from wealthier areas of London) and businesses may want to relocate to East London. This proposition implies, again, a negative image of East London. The meaning of 'regeneration' is thus redefined in terms of 'westendisation'; and the question as to whether wealthy people will be willing to move to East London implies that a radical transformation of the social, economic and urban organisation of the area is indeed needed.

The article published by *E-architect* focuses on the Westfield Stratford City. As it is explained, the *genre* and *style* of the text (which differ from the traditional forms of specialised architectural writing and reproduce the *genre* and *style* of fashion magazines) reflect the spatial organisation and uses of the building: an uninterrupted space for high-end shopping and leisure with fancy restaurants, luxury hotels, cinemas, and casinos whose purpose is to encourage the processes of selling-buying-consuming goods.

The video realised by the *Viral Factory* reinforces such an image of the Westfield by re-inventing Stratford's historical identity as a place for the production and the dissemination of fashion. Fashion becomes the narrative element that reformulates the history of East London from 1911 to 2011 as a sequence of different styles. Eric Hobsbawm's theory of invented traditions is relevant here. According to Hobsbawm, traditions are ritualised practices that are aimed at creating and/or strengthening identities by repetition. In the case of Stratford, fashion is transformed into a ritualised practice that is aimed at creating a new form of public space and sphere. Using Adrian Forty's notion of public space as aimless space, it is argued that the Westfield Stratford City is no public space in the sense of the public democratic sphere. It is a place *for* shopping, tourism, leisure, lifestyle and corporate investment in which ownership, uses and practices are clearly established.

The texts analysed in this section are just a few among the hundreds of texts that have been produced to support the idea of the Olympics and the urban regeneration of East London as positive facts. Differently from the documents that are analysed in

chapter 7, the documents that are considered in chapter 6 are different from one another. Therefore, as I shall explain in the conclusion to the work, the question that arises as to *why* I selected these particular texts.

The texts had to be able to provide a framework for analysis – which necessarily relies on the existence of some shared elements to bind all the documents together. Such an element is constituted by the word and concept of ‘regeneration’, which expresses a specific vision of the city and urban space. That is, East London as a site for tourism, shopping, lifestyle, leisure, entertainment and corporate investment. Such a concept and vision of urban space remain stable through the various discursive dimensions I explore: the economic, political and media discourse.

The texts, as we shall see, are not homogeneous and present some differences from one another. Some documents (like, for example, the Lloyds Banking Group’s report and the Greater London Authority’s text) required a more micro-oriented approach focusing on the linguistic and syntactical structure. Such linguistic and syntactical structures are strategically employed to establish the transformation of East London into a site for shopping, tourism, lifestyle, leisure and corporate investment as the only viable solution to challenge deprivation and social-economic underdevelopment. Other texts (like Convergence and the SRF) required a more macro-oriented approach focusing on the meaning of the methodology that the authors of these text adopted to assess the impact of the Games and the urban regeneration. I do not question the scientific validity of such methodology. This is, in fact, interpreted as the element of a discursive strategy that depicts corporate-based models of urban development as the only possible ones to enact processes of social and economic development to be consistent with the requirements of global financial capitalism – which is itself represented as the only possible model of economic development. Ruddick and *E-architect*’s articles required both a micro and a macro-approach, while the *Viral Factory*’s video required a visual-oriented approach aimed at understanding the meaning of the ‘text’.

However different, these texts formed a coherent narrative in which the idea of the Olympics and the urban regeneration of East London as a site for tourism, shopping, leisure, lifestyle, entertainment and corporate investment is re-contextualised in the economic, political and media discourse through different linguistic, syntactical and sematic strategies.

VII.

Chapter 7 focuses on the discourse of laws, acts, development strategies and contracts as *precondition* for the structure of governance that shapes the urban regeneration of East London. Such discourse, it is argued, also defines *publicness*. That is, the content of urban public space and sphere.

The chapter divides into two parts. The first part is propaedeutical to the second one. I start from Hannah Arendt's discussion on politics (1998) and Robert Dahl's interpretation of plurality (2002) to elaborate a basic interpretation of the democratic public sphere. Such an interpretation constitutes the ideal model against which the potential of the legal discourse as a set of conditions for the constitution of a democratic public space is measured. Colin Crouch's analysis of 'post-democracy' and neo-liberalism (2004, 2011), and David-Levi Faur's (2005) interpretation of regulatory capitalism are employed to put into a critical perspective the progressive curtailing of plurality, hence democracy, from structures of governance and processes of policy-making – as well as the reduction of competition between different economic actors in the market place.

The second part of the chapter focuses on the discourse of a number of key texts. The texts provide the framework for policy and decision-making, and regulate the relationships between different social agents: the central and local government, corporations, local communities, governmental and non-governmental agencies. They reflect a specific vision of the city's urban, social, economic and institutional order, and a specific set of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests. The texts that analysed are: the Greater London Authority Act 1999, the London Plan 2011, the London Implementation Plan 2011, the Deregulation and Contracting Out Act 1994, the CLM-Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA) contract, and the Mayor's Cultural Strategy.

The Greater London Authority Act 1999 established the Greater London Authority. Since this chapter is about the *preconditions* for the re-construction of East London's urban public space, I thought it was important to go back to the text that first introduced the concept of 'strategy' in relation to the key economic sectors for London to be considered as a leading global city; namely, culture and tourism. Mayoral prerogative and functions are also defined in terms of strategy. It shall be explained that

democracy and democratic public space are aimless. They have, in other words, no other aim but the reproduction of democracy and democratic public space. The word ‘strategy’, instead, entails something very different from aimlessness. For it indicates a means to an end.

The consequence of thinking of culture in terms of strategy is that culture does not any longer refer to, say, the dissemination of knowledge as a realm for the reproduction of citizenship, and becomes the realm of consumption and lifestyle. Culture is conceived as a sector of economic activity and needs therefore to be managed – rather than being left to the free play of different social actors in society. Culture also requires governance. Section 10 of the text, “Culture strategy and tourism”, establishes the Cultural Strategy Group for London, whose aim is to advise the Mayor on ways to maintain and promote London as a world-class city of culture.

The London Plan 2011, which is also known as the Mayor’s Spatial Strategy, turns the discourse of delivery into a planning strategy. The strategy is aimed at meeting the requirements of the global economy to strengthen the role of London as a global city and make it attractive to tourists and investors. This entails specific linguistic strategies, which operate at both the macro and the micro level of the text, and identify the *publicness* of public space. One such strategy is the transformation of the financial economy into an impersonal form that is independent of human agency. Since, according to this strategy, social agents cannot control the dynamics enacted within the financial economy, the solution is adaptation. The political imperative thus becomes to do what ‘we’ (we the Mayor, Londoners and the British people as a whole) ‘must do’ in order to meet the requirements of such an impersonal, hence unquestionable, condition.

What is interesting about the Plan is the lack of specific policies and the means by which policies would be enacted. As it is explained, the Plan provides a generic ‘what’ without indicating the ‘how’. The same is true for the Implementation Group. The Implementation Group is established by the London Implementation Plan, which is in turn part of the London Plan and is aimed at setting out the Plan’s policies. The Implementation Group is not itself preclusive of any form of democratic participation to the processes of policy and decision- making. However, a vision of the city’s urban, social, economic and institutional development is expressed that is based on the concepts of strategy and delivery; whose enactment needs to be accelerated in the face of severe constraints on public expenditure through exclusive relationships between

private subjects and public authorities.

A key text in the construal of the legal discourse is the Deregulation and Contracting Out Act 1994; which enables severe restrictions on the disclosure of information and regulates the relationships between the subjects that directly and indirectly take part to the regeneration project. No mention is made of public disclosure. The Act provides the ground on which the contract between the ODA (the Olympic Delivery Authority) and its delivery partner (CH 2 M Hill, Laing O' Rourke and Mace – CLM) is elaborated. The contract is also known as the ODA-CLM contract. Restrictions on disclosure of information are made explicit through reference to the concept of 'ambush marketing'.

The last text analysed is the "Mayor's Cultural Strategy – 2012 and Beyond" which addresses the enlargement of the concept of culture to embrace different social and economic activities. Here culture involves a number of strategic sectors such as education, jobs, transport, and infrastructures. As outlined above, the text reflects the shift in the concept of culture from a free and independent realm of human activity, to an investment sector that enacts the processes of the production-absorption-reproduction of capital. The Olympics and the regeneration are meant to trigger such process, and East London provides the space for the process to occur. Since culture is not a free and independent, hence, aimless, field of human activity, its meaning articulates in terms of 'priorities' and 'prioritisation'; which means that cultural activities are ranked and financed out of their capacity to produce profit.

The research concludes that:

1. The analysis of the discourse on/of the Olympics-led regeneration of East London requires the adoption on an interdisciplinary approach. This project of urban renewal does not just involve the form and functions of urban space, but also the reconfiguration of the social- economic order, and the construction of a precise structure of governance by social action. All this requires the use of a wider literature that embraces the relationship between narratives and the material construction of architecture and urban space, theories of space branding, Olympics and Mega- Events studies, theories of discourse and social action, and studies on the formation of systems of urban governance.

2. The transformation of the London's East End into a site for shopping, tourism,

leisure and corporate investment – and the consequent process of gentrification – is not the only possible way to enact the dynamics of social-economic growth. This model of corporate urban development is neither intrinsic to Mega-Events and Olympics-led processes of urban renewal, nor it relies on impersonal economic forces. For it depends on the vision of the city that specific social actors sustain – economy depending itself on sets of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests.

3. The urban regeneration of East London and the forces that shape it need to be interpreted as social facts. The emphasis on social-political action (discourse) has two important consequences for urban theory. The first is theoretical. The focus on discourse allows an understanding of how processes of urban transformation and change occur. For a subject is identified that can actually enact such processes and produce a vision of the city on the basis of which the city is constructed. The second consequence is practical, and it involves the reinstatement of democracy in the dynamics of urban formation. Since such dynamics (whether they entail the curtailing or the implementation of democracy) rely on the engagement of social actors in social-political action, existing urban orders can always in principle be contested and changed – as long as social agents are willing to use their power to act politically.

Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

This research focuses on the preconditions for the Olympics led process of urban regeneration of East London. Focusing on the preconditions rather than on the actual process of urban regeneration, on the ‘how’ rather than on the ‘what’, has important implications in epistemological (how to know urban space), theoretical (how to conceptualise it), methodological (how to analyse it) and analytical (what to observe) terms. It is my belief that the *construction* of urban space implies *construal*. In other words, the ‘material’ dimension of urban space in terms of urban forms and functions, social order, economic organisation and institutional structure (*construction*) entails precise narratives and representations of the city (*construal*). The former cannot be understood without analysing the latter.

As the focus of this work is the *construal* of urban space as precondition for its *construction*, I rely on a wider literature that brings together a number of apparently separate disciplines and fields of enquiry that I grouped into four categories: narratives and representations of space, global games and mega-events, urban governance and public space, theories and approaches to the production of urban space. The object itself of this investigation requires, I think, the adoption of such a broad approach. Olympics and Mega-Events led processes of urban regeneration, it is argued, entail specific visualisations of what the city should look like (Raco and Tunney, 2010) and very complex processes of policy and decision making – which together establish the nature of public space (*publicness*). The aim of this literature review is, therefore, to explain how such diverse disciplines and fields hold together and why such an approach is needed.

The literature review consists of four sections: 1) Narratives and Representations of Urban Space and Architecture; 2) Global Games and Mega-Events; 3) Urban Governance and Public Space; 4) The ‘Production of Urban Space’: Theories and Approaches.

The first section focuses on the relationship between representations and narratives of architecture and urban space on one side, and their physical realisation, on the other – thereby suggesting that discourse is no secondary element in the process of space production.

The second section shows how the Olympics and Mega-events are part of wider strategies for the city. Olympics and Mega-Events, it is explained, reflect the shift in economic and social structures at both the global, national and local (the city) level. They also express specific visions of urban space and the underpinning complexes of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests. Such visions and values (which shape discursive construals) entail precise patterns of urban, social, economic and institutional development of cities.

The third section demonstrates how such visions and values are enacted through the creation of structures of governance and legal frameworks that regulate the relations between the different social actors (national and local governments, associations, corporations, unions, political parties, local communities, governmental and non-governmental agencies, etc.) which may or may not be involved in the processes of urban regeneration. In so doing, structures of urban governance and legal frameworks also define the nature of public space (*publicness*). For they establish entitlement to participate in the processes of policy and decision-making.

The fourth section addresses the issue of the way of knowing and conceptualising urban space. This issue is intertwined with the construal of narratives of urban space (section 1); the way in which the Olympics and Mega-Events express specific narratives of the city (section 2); and the way in which narratives of the urban space and mega-events based processes of urban renewal are enacted through the precise structure of governance and legal frameworks (section 3). As visions, narratives and legal frameworks are discursive construals that need political engagements to be materialised, this sections also introduces the issue of discourse as site for social-political action.

2.2. Narratives and Representations of Urban Space and Architecture

In this section I discuss the relevance of the literature on the narrative and representations of architecture and urban space to this work. Such relevance, it is argued, lies in that representations and narratives of urban space and architecture entail specific political agendas, economic interests, social relations of power and legal frameworks. The Olympics as catalyst for urban regeneration imply a precise idea for the city's urban, social, economic and institutional development. This section constitutes a first step into a wider discussion on the role that discourse plays in the processes of urban formation.

Sharon Zukin focuses on *culture* as a means for controlling cities. Since the industrial crisis of the 1970s and the 1980s, culture has become a complex of strategic agendas designed to revive the urban environment and make it attractive for investors and tourists. Far from being just a matter of subjective representations, interests and identities (whether in individual or collective terms), culture defines what Zukin calls the “symbolic economy”: a complex of “visual artefacts” – buildings, squares, streets, art – that expresses social relations of power and forms a consequent “landscape of power” (1991). Culture is, therefore, materialised in real physical spaces out of precise relationships between land, labor and capital – and “reflect decisions about what and who should be visible and what should not, on concepts of order and disorder, and on use of aesthetic power” (1995, 7).

Anna Klingmann (2007) addresses these issues in terms of the “experience economy” and the creation of what she calls “brandsapes”. Klingmann interprets the concept of brand as a principle that shapes architecture and urban space. Brand, she explains, operates in such a way that the creation of iconic architectural objects to sell the city replaces the idea of more comprehensive urban interventions to maintain the relations between space and the complexities of the social fabric. In the same way as the commodity market operates in late capitalism, she observes, architecture shifts from “use value” to “experiential value”, from “materiality” to “ephemerality”. In the brand economy, the value of an object no longer relies either on its use value, or on its sign value – that is, on its capacity to act as a medium for self-representation – but on its experiential value. In other words, on its capacity to make people feel part of a specific world to be shared with other people: a feeling that is enacted and inculcated as a specific lifestyle. In this way, architecture becomes a catalyst for both individual/collective experience and urban transformation. For it is its capability to

sell experiential value that architecture becomes a valuable asset for investors and an attractive element for tourists and consumers. “Frank Gehry’s Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao – she explains – is not mainly assessed by its primary function (museum) or by its capacity to act as a sign for the city (Bilbao), but by its ability to instigate change (economic growth and urban renewal). The building compounds use value, sign exchange value, and transformational value, converting the building into a piece of brand equity. Thus, whereas modern architecture was evaluated by its ability to increase productive efficiency and early postmodern architecture by its aspiration to convey symbolic value, current architecture must be assessed by its economic potential to raise the perceived value of its beneficiary, be it a single client, a corporation, or a city” (pp. 6-7).

The relevance of this analysis to this research is that since the last decades of the 20th century, sport has become an integral part of mega-event driven tourism in which the Olympics (more than any other global event) play a crucial role. The capacity of the city to create the right environment for people to share the experience of the Games and to turn such experience into a catalyst for economic growth is paramount. As Poynter and MacRury explain, “bidding for the Games (successfully or unsuccessfully) and in particular hosting the event, can signal to a global audience that a place (city, region or nation) is in transition, increasingly ready to accommodate new businesses, new events and new ways of life” (Poynter and MacRury, 2009, 59-60). Olympic urbanism and architecture are employed to re-articulate the city (or specific parts of it) according to the new conception of urban space as a site for mass consumption and big events (Munoz, 1997). In this way, previously marginal places are revitalised and put on the map of global tourism. To put it simply, the Olympics have become catalysts for processes of urban regeneration. London won the Olympic bid in 2005 because of its commitment to the extensive regeneration project for the city’s East End.

As I said above, the production of a powerful apparatus of images capable of prompting emotional responses is key in the branding of cities as desirable destinations for tourism, leisure and investments. As Iain Borden points out, images do not just depict objects, but express a relationship between people. “Bringing together images of different subjects can lead to the production of a new meaning that goes beyond any one of them on their own” (2007, p. 62). Promotional images constitute the first encounter tourists have

with their destination. Therefore, the way in which architecture and space are depicted, the meanings that images produce as well as the psychological associations they prompt, are crucial in determining consumers' choices.

There exists a strong connection between the way in which architecture and urban space are conceived, the way in which they are represented and the specific politics of place. In late capitalism, architecture and urban space are often conceived as two-dimensional objects that lack in spatial depth and only fit the pages of glossy magazines. Frank Gehry's Guggenheim museum in Bilbao is one example. "In Bilbao – Hal Foster explains – Gehry moved to make the Guggenheim legible through an allusion to a splintered ship; in Seattle he compensated with an allusion to a smashed guitar (a broken fret lies over two of the blobs). But neither image works, even as a Pop version of site specificity, for one cannot read them at ground level; in fact one has to see them in media reproduction, which might be the primary site of neo-Pop architecture in the Internet age. [...] And it is a winning formula for museums, companies, cities, states, and other corporate entities that want to be perceived, through instant icons, as global players (175)".

Foster's criticism reflects Rem Koolhaas' celebration of shopping as both an urban-architectural principle and a collective practice through which people construct their self-conscious. According to Koolhaas, shopping creates a specific kind of space; a hyper-connected and continuous space that reproduces the flows of capital and goods and envelops the entire city within a homogeneous dimension. As Fredric Jameson (2009) observes in relation to the Westin Bonaventure Hotel built in Los Angeles by John Portman, such principle and practice fail, in fact, in establishing a harmonic relationship between architecture and the social-urban fabric. For they create self-contained and isolated objects. Different from Modern Architecture, the surroundings are not meant to be transformed by the power of a new architectural language. They are left decaying to be substituted by a brand new space: a self-centred dimension where the human subject is no longer the 'creator' of a space that is disclosed as he/she walks it; but the passive receiver of a dizzying spectacle, as they are transported by elevators and escalators. As I explain later in this work, this is what happens with the Westfield Stratford City, which is the only gateway to the Olympic Park and the final destination of the London Underground's Central Line. The Westfield is the key element of a project of urban regeneration whose

aim is to make the London's East End attractive to investors and tourists – and wealthier West-enders.

Such reduction to surface reflects the reduction of the thickness and complexity of history to a simulacrum, and the re-invention of place's identity (Barthes, 2009; Foster, 1985, 1998; Hobsbawm, 1992; Klein, 2010). A video released by the Viral Factory to celebrate the Westfield's opening presents the shopping centre as a place where fashion is created and disseminated (Chap. 6). One hundred years of East London's history, from 1911 to 2011, are re-constructed in 1:41 minutes through the image of two dancers who perform in clothes that change over the decades and according to the idea of an 'East London style'. At stake here, is the construction of what Eric Hobsbawm calls "invented tradition".

According to Hobsbawm, " 'invented tradition' is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past" (1992, 1). Such a definition raises a number of critical issues that involve the way in which the Westfield is represented and the role it plays in the construal of Stratford and the East End's image.

First, as Hobsbawm explains, no matter how old a tradition is, the link it seeks to establish with the past is always arbitrary. Traditions constitute in fact the attempt to preserve the present from the transformations of society. This may occur by the recasting of old uses and customs to current or new purposes, and – as it happens with the Westfield – by inventing new historical materials for branding new traditions; for sometimes, the historian explains, institutions or ideologies can be "so unprecedented that even historical continuity [has] to be invented" (7).

Second, different to what is normally referred to as custom, traditions are established by repetition and invariance over time. They are, in other words, ritualised practices. Lastly, traditions have purposes. They aim at constructing identities and a sense of belonging – as it occurs with the representations of collective identities in terms of both nations, regions, cities, groups, associations, political parties and so on.

Thus, the Westfield promotional video reconstructs Stratford's identity through the

invention of new historical materials (East London fashion) and the ritualisation of shopping as an individual and collective practice. Although Hobsbawm's notion of invented tradition implies a certain degree of formalisation and consciousness, shopping may in fact be regarded as a ritualised informal practice that produces highly formalised spaces (shopping centres, high end streets, tourist and leisure venues) and shapes individual and collective identities. Shopping entails in fact specific sets of non-written rules that involve the production of urban-architectural space in terms of design, function and form; and in terms of collective practices and behaviours. The aim of such rules and requirements is at the same time to stimulate consumerism and discourage any individual and/or collective behaviour (e.g. protests and picketing); which may interrupt the process of selling-buying-consuming commodities.

At stake here is also the process of myth formation as it has been theorised and analysed by Roland Barthes. According to Barthes, myth is a “second-order semiological system” that reformulates the classical linguistic triad signifier, signified, sign “in order to build its own system” (2009, p. 138). More specifically, while in De Saussure’s system the sign constitutes the last term of the linguistic triad, it is transformed by myth into a mere form: a signifier to be filled with a new signified, so as to form a new sign (which is formally the same as before, but is now called signification). For example, a black boy in ragged outsize clothes once signifying poverty, ghettoisation and racial segregation, is turned by the fashion industry into an image of “cool” (Klein, 2010).

“Tommy Hilfiger – Naomi Klein observes – soon realized that his clothes also had a peculiar cachet in the inner cities, where the hip-hop philosophy of ‘living large’ saw poor and working- class kids acquiring status in the ghetto by adopting the gear and the accoutrements of prohibitively costly leisure activities, such as skiing, golfing, even boating. [...] Like so much of cool hunting – the author continues – Hilfiger’s marketing journey feeds off the alienation at the heart of America’s race relations: selling white youth on their fetishization of black style, and black youth on their fetishization of white wealth” (p. 76).

The same is true for the Westfield-like representation of East London’s culture. The

image of black boys and girls singing and dancing and the multicultural milieu of Stratford (once signs of social exclusion) now become symbols of cool'. The homogenisation of culture by the fetishisation of commodities curtails diversity within the social fabric – which is seen as a source for dissent and critical awareness.

The relationship between 'official' representations of architecture and urban space, the way in which they are conceived and realised, and the re-construction of place's identity and history, is explored by Jordana Mendelson and Medina Lasansky in two different works that show how promotional images have been employed to transform once marginal places into venues for tourism and leisure. As Jordana Mendelson explains in her work about the relationships between images and place packaging, architectural pictures of several Spanish cities have been employed as models to construct a 'typical' Spanish village for the 1929 International Exposition in Barcelona (2004). In a similar way, Medina Lasansky focuses on the role played by glossy journals, illustrated magazines and documentary films in construing Habana Vieja as a tourist site during the 1990s. "Habana's touristic success resides as much in the physical form of architecture as in the methods of mass mediation and dissemination of that form. The designers of maps, pamphlets and postcards, the travel agents and tour guides, scholars and historians, emerge as the true architects of the city's new image" (2004, p. 166).

Although it is not specifically focused on architecture and urban space, Velvet Nelson's semiotic investigation of Grenada's tourist economy and practices shows how specific strategies work in the construal of Grenada as an attractive destination for Western tourists. The work focuses on three semiotic elements (people, places and nature) that are analysed via a number of opposing concepts such as active-passive, natural-artificial. Local people are in fact not depicted in the same way as tourists are, and are represented as active subjects only as long as they perform jobs that are functional to the tourist economy. 'Authentic' nature may be either depicted on the background of landscapes created by human beings, or symbolised by the rainforest (no matter whether they refer to Grenada or not); or represented by white sand beaches with blue water and green vegetation with some white girl in the foreground. Such strategies imply experiential values and appeal to the imagery generated for British/American tourists.

Returning to architecture, Mario Carpo shows, from a theoretical perspective, how the

availability of printed and reproducible images of the classical orders of architecture to a larger number of scholars and architects deeply affected the way in which architecture and space were imagined, conceived and designed – thereby strongly contributing to the birth of Renaissance architecture (2001). By the same token, Beatriz Colomina highlights the role played by media images in constructing and disseminating the new language of Modern architecture in the United States during the 1930s under the label of “International Style”. The book “The International Style” – which was written by Hitchcock and Johnson as a more popular version of Hitchcock's book *Modern Architecture* – and the exhibition “Modern Architecture: International Exhibition” (which was made of the book's material) actually created a new code. Colomina writes:

“[...] The International Style publicized the private, not simply because it exhibited the private houses of some art collectors, but because it offered that image for mass consumption in the form of the multiple, relatively affordable, designer objects that were part of it: rugs, chairs, lamps, tables, appliances, and so on. [...] The publicity campaign launched by the Museum of Modern Art paradoxically returned modern architecture to everyday life by transforming it into a commodity, a fashion to be consumed by a worldwide and to a larger extent) middle-class market” (1994, pp. 207-212).

The relevance of Carpo and Colomina's arguments to this research is the focus on the intimate relationship between mass culture, the media representation of architecture and the very way in which architecture is conceived, shaped and realised.

The relationship between image, the production and reproduction of culture and identities, and social control is explored by Norman Denzin. As Norman Denzin argues, images engage the beholder in a self-reflexive dynamic of seeing and being seen where he/she is at the same time the looking-at and the looked-at-subject. Denzin writes

“From this reflection, arose self-ideals and self-appraisal, self-feelings and feelings toward others. The reflected, everyday self and its gendered presentations attached itself to the cinematic self. [...] Movies created “emotional representations of self, sexuality, desire,

intimacy, friendship, marriage, work and family [which structure our] everyday life [and] created an everyday politics of emotionality and feeling that shaped real, lived, emotional experiences. [...] Real, everyday experiences soon came to be judged – and we may add performed – against their staged, cinematic counterparts. The fans of the movie stars dressed like the stars, made love like the stars and dreamed the dream of the stars” (1995, pp. 28-32).

As far as the media representation of the Westfield Stratford City is concerned, such a mechanism is meant to stimulate identification with a precise lifestyle. Images, however, do not just shape identities, but also suggest social behaviours – thereby working on the level of both individual and collective control. By the same token, the framing of people into a pervasive system of surveillance does not only imply the massive use of CCTV cameras, but also the prescription of the very practices of space through a powerful apparatus of images. This brings to the fore the issue of whether or not the Westfield Stratford City may be considered a ‘public’ space. Images and texts express social relations of power between various groups and classes, each claiming its own right to own, access and practice space. An intimate relationship therefore exists between discourses and representation, and the processes of urban, social, economic and institutional structuring of cities.

As Naomi Klein sharply argues, there is a strong relation between the “privatisation of language and cultural discourse occurring through copyright and trademark bullying, and the privatisation of public space taking place through the proliferation of superstores, theme-park malls and branded villages like Celebration, Florida. Just as privately owned words and images are being adopted as a de facto international shorthand, so too are private branded enclaves becoming de facto town squares – [...] with troubling implications for civil liberties” (2010, pp. 182-183).

Adrian Forty notices how the way in which we experience public buildings is most of the time determined by external elements and/or purposes. Examples are the railway station (whose spatial and architectural configuration is shaped by the requirement of travel, which in turn affects the user's experience and practices of space) and, more significantly, the shopping centre. In the shopping centre architecture and space are conceived to encourage people to buy as many commodities as possible (2002). Although they are often represented as a modern version of a piazza, social encounters and practices in shopping centres are in

fact strongly regulated. They are tolerated and encouraged as long as they conform to the logic of consumption. Practices such as, say, protesting and picketing are banned. With regard to the “Occupy London” eviction, Anna Minton underlines a paradox: while corporate powers claim their right to protect public space from the protesters' disturbing presence, they prevent public space from actually being public by eliminating the very condition of the public dimension: the liberty to freely manifest one's opinion and thought (2012).

The meaning of the idea of ‘public’ (*publicness*) is at stake. As I discuss later, the preconditions for the construction of *publicness* lie in discourse as site for different worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests coming together and competing to gain consent and hegemony in society; so as to enact the processes of urban transformation and change. As Sharon Zukin says,

“To ask 'Whose city?' suggests more than a politics of occupation; it also asks who has the right to inhabit the dominant image of the city. This often relates to real geographical strategies as different social groups battle over access to the center of the city and over symbolic representations in the center. At stake are not only real estate fortunes, but also 'readings' of hostility or flexibility towards those groups that have historically been absent from the city center or whose presence causes problems: women, racial minorities, immigrants, certain types of workers, and homeless people. Occupation, segregation and exclusion on every level are conceptualized in streets and neighbourhoods, types of buildings, individual buildings and even parts of buildings. They are institutionalized in zoning laws, architecture and conventions of use. Visual artifacts of material culture and political economy thus reinforce – or comment on – social structure. By making social rules legible, they re- present the city” (1996, pp.43-44).

By analysing these contributions and works on the narratives and representations of urban space and architecture my aim is to explain how the relationships between discursive practices on the one side and the physical construction of urban space on the other work. It is argued that such construction reflects specific economic interests, social-political agendas and social relations of power; so that a specific vision for the urban development of the city goes hand in hand with a specific idea of its social development – with no hierarchy or

separation existing between them. To explain such a relation is key to understand the role that global games and mega-events play in the processes of urban formation.

2.3. Global Games and Mega-Events

Global games and mega-events have become over the last 30 years instruments to rebrand the image of cities and signal to a global audience their presence on the map of financial capital, investment flows and tourism. The literature I discuss in this section shows how the Olympic Games as a discourse has shaped the processes of urban formation.

John Nauright analyses how mega-event processes of urban branding often entail “the packaging of an imagined vision of local culture for global consumption”. As such this packaging is mainly aimed at attracting developed countries’ consumers. ‘Ethnicity’, he observes, becomes the main tool by which indigenous cultures can be assimilated within ‘white culture’ (2004, p. 1328). As we saw above, these processes imply the reduction of history’s thickness and complexities to *simulacra* that result both in the absence of history and in the invention of history. The first case applies to 1995 South Africa Rugby World Cup. Quoting the South African writer JM Coetzee, Nauright explains that

“the making of history in the new South Africa is so contentious that the organisers decided to be ‘history-less’. The ceremonies presented a de- historicized vision of Tourist South Africa: contented tribes and happy mineworkers, as in the old South Africa, but purified and sanctified, somehow, by the Rainbow. When it got to the paler end of the spectrum, however, it found that it could not proceed without becoming, intermittently, not only a pageant but an historical pageant as well. And so to the procession of timeless Sotho in blankets and timeless Zulu in ostrich feathers it had to add what looked very much like happy eighteenth-century slaves and slave-owners in knee- breeches, bearing baskets of agricultural produce to the Rainbow feast” (p. 1327).

Conversely, the 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Olympics were an example of historical

misrepresentation to comply with consumers' expectations and stereotypes. Nauright explains how image-makers emphasised the role that Mormons played in the history of both the city and the state of Utah – while only some of their inhabitants were Mormons. “In contrast to the South African RWC case, history was not written out, but rather a history was written in, one that prioritised the Mormon migration to the West in general, and Utah in particular, at the expense of non-Mormon Utahans” (p. 1328).

David Black and Janis Van Der Westhuizen analyse global games in semi-peripheral countries at the intersection of global capitalism's expansion, on the one hand, and the construction of power, national identities and political order, on the other. “Semi-periphery” and “semi-peripheral polities”, the authors explain, go beyond the traditional North-South divide to include developed but more marginal countries, regions and cities seeking visibility; and also marginal sports such as football in Japan. Such definitions helps to understand not only why hosting a mega-event is so important for emerging countries and cities, but also why it is so important for a city like London – which is already one of the most prominent financial centres in the world. As far as London is concerned, much of the stress for winning the bid was put on the project of regeneration of the city's ‘deprived’ East End. The relevance of such concepts as semi-periphery and semi-peripheral polities is not the fact that the London's East End *is* a peripheral area of the city. But the fact that the peripheral character of East London and the policies being adopted (which are also referred to in terms of ‘special policies’) (GLA, 2011) are social constructions that rely upon a specific social context and social relations of power. Employing Bourdieu's field theory, the authors question the neo-realist and neo-Marxist discourse of power as depending on some form of necessary force, and suggest instead that they are “highly socially context-dependent” (Black and Van Der Westhuizen, 2004, p. 1202). They suggest that power and institutions, as well as identities and interests, arise out of values and ideas that imply worldviews, cognitive maps, discourses, symbols and mental frames, as well as shared understandings of social reality (p. 1203). By the same token, they argue, capital cannot be reduced to the forms officially accepted by economic theory and needs instead to include other ‘immaterial’ forms – which are, at the same time, cultural and social:

“Cultural capital – they explain – can be found in three forms: an embodied state

(dispositions of the mind and body); an objectified state in the form of cultural goods (pictures, books); and an institutionalised state - a form of objectification which sets apart, such as educational qualifications. Social capital, in turn, refers to social obligations and useful relationships ('connections') that bestow a form of credit. Whereas economic capital is immediately and directly convertible into money, the convertibility of both cultural and social capital is highly context-de-pendent. Conversion of the different types of capital is the basis for attempts to reproduce capital by the least costly means of conversion and the inherent risk of loss that accompanies social and cultural capital" (*ibid.*).

The interest of cities and states in hosting mega-events is thus interpreted in terms of the expectations to turn the advantages obtained from place promotion into economic and social capital in both the short and the long term (*ibid.*). However, (and here lies the relevance of this study to an interpretation of discourse-led processes of urban formation) these forms, and the processes of urban transformation they entail, do not depend on impersonal forces, but on social agents' actions and interests.

The issue of the imbalance in power relations at both the national and the global level in the *construction* (infrastructures and economic development) and the *construal* (discourses, narratives and representations) of mega-events is addressed by Paul Dimeo and Joyce Kay (2004). Focusing on the 1996 Cricket World Cup (CWC) in India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, they explore the issues of "how South Asia is made 'knowable' to wider audiences" through press coverage (p. 1264); and how the availability of English-written sources affected the representation of these countries in relation to their capability to organise the event and manage the social tensions in the eyes of a British audience. "South Asian countries faced a number of problems, not least the prejudicial attitudes inherent in much of the media coverage, which severely dented any hope of projecting a positive image to a wider audience and thus gaining international 'marketing power'" (*ibid.*).

That also raises some methodological problems. 'Direct' press coverage of the event is to be found in the languages of the countries that hosted the event; while principal sources in the West are provided by English newspapers. The analysis of the games needs therefore to take into account the extent to which their representation is influenced by the values and perspectives shaping, broadly speaking, the views and perspectives of sport journalists.

A further issue is how to measure and assess the real impact of the media on the audience. The issue at stake is that of privileging either a realist or a constructionist theoretical-methodological approach. According to the authors, a realist interpretation of the CWC may describe the event as a failure in terms of organisation (from image control and production to the opening ceremony and the playing format) “Such a view – they explain – suits pre-existing stereotypes and the interests of traditionalists who want cricket to remain bound up with notions of gentlemanly England” (p. 1274). On the contrary, from a constructionist perspective, it may be argued that the representation of the event reinforces traditional stereotypes of South-Asia and South-Asian people. They conclude that the representation of the CWC reflects the imbalance in power relations between the host countries on the one side and the UK on the other; hence the former’s lack of power or control over the production of media images. Biased representations, they suggest, may affect the efficacy itself of mega-events as catalysts for economic regeneration and development.

The relationship between the Olympics, on one side, and the processes of political change and democratisation, on the other, is addressed by David Black and Shona Bezanson (2004). Focusing on the political, social and economic conditions of South Korea since the 1950-1953 war against North Korea, the two authors argue that the democratic turn of the 1987 spring-summer and the birth of a liberal democracy were the outcome of a number of factors: steady economic growth, a decrease in the unemployment rate, and consolidation of an educated middle class that insistently demanded their economic freedom to be turned into political liberties. These factors, the authors argue, led to questioning and contesting the legitimacy of the repressive military regime that had ruled the country. The 1998 Summer Olympic Games in Seoul were the catalyst, rather than the cause, of a process of liberalisation.

Adopting a comparative approach to assess the differences and similarities between Seoul in 1988 and Beijing in 2008, the authors try to understand the extent to which the Olympics may enact the same dynamics of democratisation in China. The study concludes that the Chinese social, political and institutional context is such that processes of political and civil liberalisation on the model of South Korea are unlikely. As Black and Bezanson explain,

“the CCP, whatever its internal fissures, is too well entrenched and its opponents too weak and diffuse to imagine it acquiescing so strikingly in the demise of its current monopoly of political power. Furthermore, there is no comparable historical or contemporary social basis for movement towards the variant of multiparty electoral democracy that quickly took hold in South Korea” (p. 1258).

They conclude that a stronger awareness at the international level of issues of democracy and civil rights, along with the values of human dignity and liberty proclaimed by the Olympic Charter might create more favourable conditions for debating civil rights and liberal reforms in the country; so that the Chinese government may feel compelled not to ignore these issues.

All these examples raise theoretical issues I discuss later. Such issues involve the way in which we know and analyse the Olympics in relation to the social process. The Olympics do not themselves have any transformative power in the same way as, I explain drawing on Michel Foucault’s interpretation of power, urban space and buildings do not themselves have any democratic and/or undemocratic character. The Olympics can be hosted in both liberal and tyrannical regimes, while urban space and architecture can serve both liberating and undemocratic social-political agendas. Economic development and the existence of an educated and wealthy middle class do not necessarily imply processes of political liberalisation. The transformative power of the Olympics (and of other mega-events), urban space architecture, and economic development relies both on systems of social relations of power and, more importantly, on the willingness of social actors to engage in social-political action to change the existing systems of power relations. Transformation and change in institutional systems, political regimes and, as far as this research is concerned, the urban, social, economic and institutional spheres of cities cannot be reduced to cause-effect mechanisms, but depend on more complex and dynamic processes in which social actors play a key role.

In a study published in the *British Journal of Sociology* in 1992, Maurice Roche criticises the traditional economic and functionalist approach to mega-events and urban tourism. According to Roche, the analysis of mega-events and new forms of urban tourism

need to be placed in a broader framework to consider: a) structural change, the discontinuity and reorganisation of local economies; b) the relationships between mega-events, tourism and culture; c) policy making processes (1992: 565). What is really interesting in Roche's work is the interpretation of tourism and mega-events as multidimensional and dialectical phenomena. Tourism and mega-events, he suggests, need to be regarded in terms of the "*unity-in-difference* in social reality of such complex phenomena as action and structure, continuity and change, consciousness and material conditions, micro and macro levels and so on" (p. 591).

Employing a figure-background relation to interpret the societal world, Roche explains that to see action as figure (as it often happens) provides only a partial view of the social realm, for action needs also to be regarded as the background. By the same token, what is generally envisioned as the background (say, the economy) needs to be interpreted at the same time as the figure. The same is true for culture. Interpretation and analyses of tourism exclusively based on culture as background are, according to Roche, inadequate to explain the complexities of tourism-driven economies. Culture needs therefore to be envisioned in relation to other social, economic and political factors – which are to be interpreted at the same time as background and figure.

That does not mean to revive the traditional paradigm base-superstructure to explain the social process. It means, on the contrary, to analyse tourism, mega-events and culture in the light of the dialectical relationship they establish with the social, economic and political process.

“The Weberian notion that societies exhibit three dimensions of inequality (class, status, power) and the conventional notion that societies exhibit three structural dimensions (namely, the economic, the cultural, the political) can be interpreted along these lines, selecting one dimension as the figure and treating the other two as a composite ground or context” (p. 592).

All this entails a flexible theoretical approach to prevent the distortions and oversimplifications of abstract theoretical systems. In a later work mega-events are thus analysed at the intersection of various dimensions (modern/non-modern, national/non-

national, local/non- local), while the importance of regarding them from different theoretical and methodological approaches (ethnography, textualism, cultural functionalism, economic functionalism, political instrumentalism, critical functionalism, etc.) is emphasised (2000).

All this implies a change in the way sport is interpreted today. As Michael Rustin argues, “sports have never existed in isolation from the societies in which they took place” (2009: 11). Sport competition and events have always been the site for the emergence and interaction of different sets of values where individuals express and construct their identities. What characterises today’s sport events is the pervasive role and influence of market interests; so that they have become a “mode of production and consumption in their own right” (p. 9). The Olympics, in particular, have emerged as a “globalised institution” that operates at the same time at the level of international competition between cities and states, and at the national and local level as means to restructure social relationships of power through the redefinition of dominant cultural values and identities.

As Iain MacRury explains, the Olympic Games have become part of developmental strategies to assert and/or reassert the centrality of cities on the global map of tourism and investment. Sometimes, as in the case of London 2012, this entails a tension between the Games as a wider urban enterprise and the Games as a catalyst for the regeneration of specific urban areas.

“The Olympics can assist in promotional strategies towards: improving ‘location factors’ to bring in investors, new businesses; gaining attention from businesses and leisure tourists; signifying ‘the good life’ to tourists and potential inhabitants; reassurance against anxieties about ‘unfamiliar’ cities and nations or countries in political, economic or social transition” (2009, p. 59).

This has important implications in terms of the reduction of competition in the market place. MacRury observes that there has been a strong stress at the institutional level of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the London Organising Committee for the Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG) on the concept of ‘ambush marketing’. But

such a concept does not only involve the relations between Olympic institutions such as the IOC and the LOCOG, on one side, and multinational companies, on the other, on the use of the Olympic brand. For it also operates at the level of urban governance.

In relation to London 2012, Mike Raco demonstrates how the concept of ambush marketing is translated into a regulatory framework to define the exclusive contracting out of public services to private companies; so that mechanisms of public accountability and scrutiny are suspended for the sake of ‘getting things done on time and to budget’ (Raco, 2013). Maurice Roche calls this “local corporatism”. The role of institutions such as Urban Development Corporations (UDCs) and Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) is, in the case of UDCs, to “both cut through and cut-back local land-use planning controls and to attract external private sector investment to key inner city areas”; and, in the case of TECs, to “take control of local vocational education and training, reducing the influence of LEAs, and attempting to maximise the capacity of local training systems and markets to respond quickly and flexibly to changes in local labour market conditions and local employers’ labour skill needs” (Roche, 1992, p. 584). All this results in the progressive ‘privatisation’ and ‘bureaucratisation’ of policy and decision-making processes at urban level – which reflects the shift from *government* to *governance* at the national level.

The Olympics, therefore, need to be analysed within a multidimensional context (economic, social, political, cultural, etc.) in which a number of different interests and dynamics operate at different levels (global, international, national, regional, local). Apart from the ‘original’ stress on the values of reason, science, progress, equality, etc., the Olympics have been filled throughout their history with different values and social, economic, political and cultural agendas. They provided the stage for the rising power of Nazi Germany. They were the site for the ‘clash’ of competing ideologies during the Cold War; and constitute today the means for cities to assess their role as global hubs for tourism, investment and culture (Poynter, 2009).

Gavin Poynter suggests grouping the Olympics into three categories – depending on the approach that has been adopted to organise the games: *Commercial*, *Dynamic* and *Catalytic*. The *Commercial* approach (Los Angeles 1984 and Atlanta 1996) focuses on the rebranding of the city’s identity by the model of the ‘informational city’, such as Disney World. Such a model is characterised by the central role of the private sector in taking over

public planning functions – which results in a reduction of public scrutiny over the processes of decision and policy-making. The *catalytic* model has a larger social and geographic scope. It is characterised by the emphasis on social, economic and urban regeneration and aims at expanding its positive effects on a larger area that involves the region and the nation. Such is the approach adopted by Barcelona, Athens and London. The *dynamic* model is employed by those countries and cities that need to assert their role as key players in the world economy. One example is, Poynter explains, South Korea; where the Olympics further accelerated the process of democratisation of the country. The other example is China, where the Games have been employed by the government to signal to a global audience the dynamism of the Chinese economy.

However, while the Barcelona Games were a success in terms of urban, economic and cultural development, the same cannot be said about Athens. Addressing the relationship between architecture and language in terms of the dynamics of social inclusion/exclusion, Eleni Tzirzilaki shows how the principles of ‘Europeanization’ and ‘modernization’ that Athens 2004 architecture was called to express were interpreted in the sense of ‘cleanliness’ and ‘decency’; and how this fact caused the further marginalisation of those subjects (e.g. Roma people) who were seen as incompatible with the image of a ‘modern’ European city (2009). Poynter shows how the surge in employment in construction, hotels and restaurants in the run up to and during the Games, was sharply reversed during the following months. “The catalytic impact of the Games upon the fortunes of Athens has been a mixed affair. Infrastructure and environmental improvements have occurred along with the creation of new organisational expertise in project management [...], but these have to be balanced against the growing evidence of a weaker legacy in relation to employment and the progress of the wider Greek economy” (2009, p. 35).

As far as Beijing is concerned, ‘success’ may instead be measured out of the capacity of the Games to legitimate the power of ruling elites: to enact, adopting Roche’s dialectical model, *change* within *continuity*. That is, economic change as the country emerges onto the global stage as a world class player; and continuity in terms of political and institutional organisation. As Andrew Calcutt explains (2009), China is a country where rapid ‘liberal’ economic growth might engender the need for more democratic forms of political

organisation. Doubts are raised in fact on the capacity of the Chinese government to maintain and increase the current growth rate without political reforms. A tension thus exists between the power of the Chinese Communist Party and the rhythms of economic development. To put it differently, between the capacity of the Party to ensure economic growth and its capability to maintain power. This is the context in which culture is played out in Beijing 2008. The slogan of the Games was ‘One World, One Dream’.

“The creation of ‘one world’ – Calcutt writes – or even the dream of creating such a world, is just as important domestically, within China itself. More accurately, there is no such fixed thing as ‘China itself’; instead China will have to be fixed and fixed again in today’s turbulent conditions, and it seems that cultural tradition is an important means for achieving this. As deployed in and around the Olympics, cultural tradition is a mechanism which allows the elite to get a fix on China today - over and above the market and was a socially constructive counterpoint to its corrosive effects - and disseminate this to the masses” (p. 293).

Drawing on Guy Debord’s *Society of Spectacle*, Hyun Bang Shin interprets Beijing 2008 Olympics, 2010 Shanghai World Expo and 2010 Guangzhou Summer Asian Games in terms of spectacle and the key role it plays in reinforcing the *status quo* (2012). Rather than being the vehicle of a process of democratisation, these mega-events (and the accompanying rhetoric of a ‘Harmonious Society’ and of the ‘Glory of the Motherland’), were meant to foster capital accumulation and strengthen the existing social-political order. Functional to that has been the creation of a ‘unified space’ through spectacle as a ‘means of unification’ (Debord, 2006). The urban spectacle is a means to reinforce Communist party hegemony in a context where the concentration of the means of production and wealth in few hands required social and political stability for capital accumulation to continue and grow (p. 734).

The relationship between mega-events, urban gentrification and social exclusion is discussed by Marcelo Lopez de Souza in relation to Rio de Janeiro 2014 Soccer World Cup and the 2016 Olympics. Lopez de Souza’s discussion focuses on the ‘right to the city’; which, he argues, does not have to be “reduced to mere specific material gains (more and better infrastructure, social housing and so on) within the capitalist society”; but in terms of

“the right to full and equal enjoyment of the resources concentrated in cities” (2012, p. 563). De Souza also focuses on the distinction between urbanisation and ‘citification’. That is, between the construction of increasingly complex urban systems that do not entail, but rather prevent, public life (urbanisation); and the formation of authentic cities with a vibrant public life (citification) (*ibid.*). Mainstream media’s attention on corruption, waste of public money and infrastructural inefficiency is considered in relation to the politics of marginalisation of larger strata of the population: the disappearance of the low-income population from the dominant representation of the city reflects its exclusion from urban space.

As Kevin Hylton and Nigel Morpeth argue, “sport and its related activities cannot be understood outside of the power relations that constitute it” (2009, p. 225). The London 2012 Games are thus considered in the context of the urban regeneration of East London – and the racial and identity politics it entails. The authors suggest that while black people are employed to signify success in sport, the social agenda underpinning the politics of space leads to social and ethnic exclusion. At the time of the publication of their chapter for the book edited by Gavin Poynter and Iain MacRury on the relationships between London Olympics and the “re-making” of East London (2009), the displacement of ‘travellers’ communities were already occurring. A “race- centred” approach to policy making is suggested to enact a ‘positive’ regeneration process in areas with high level unemployment, social exclusion and deprivation (226).

The issue of social exclusion and polarisation is addressed by Penny Bernstock in terms of housing policies. The urban regeneration of Stratford (the core of the project of urban redevelopment) is placed in the context of the regeneration of the wider East End area. The issue here is whether the Olympic regeneration of Stratford is characterised by social inclusion or by social polarisation. Considering variables such as house prices and flat typologies, Bernstock observes that a gap exists between the housing needs of a socially deprived resident population and the main aims of the regeneration – the attraction of wealthy buyers and tenants to the area (2009).

This issue is further explored in a more recent contribution that analyses the housing crisis in London in relation to the current trends and conditions of financial capitalism – and its failure in creating more sustainable patterns of social and economic development.

The London Olympics and urban regeneration are therefore considered in relation to London's role as a 'global city' and the implications of the economic crisis – with the consequent credit crunch and austerity measures (Bernstock and Poynter, 2012).

Talking about 'legacy' and the Olympic Park, the authors notice that rather than the Park, the first dimension of legacy has been the compulsory acquisition and demolition of 425 properties for low cost rent; and the displacement of long established Traveller families. Bernstock and Poynter also observe that the Olympics worked as catalyst, rather than as cause, of urban regeneration. As they explain, the housing market was already booming when London won the bid in 2005; while the project for the construction of Stratford City and the Westfield Stratford City had been approved in 2004 (pp. 288-289). House prices started increasing before the Olympics as a result of these wider changes, so that the overall trend since 2006 may cause the exclusion of low-income residents. All this is taking place in the context of central government policies aimed at reducing benefits and public subsidies; which along with the difficulties in securing private and public investment, raises serious doubts about the possibility to build affordable houses.

The implications of the Olympics in terms of 'culture' are also explored in relation to the issue of how the Games helped restructure the role of London and England within the cultural geography of the United Kingdom. Unlike Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland and, to a certain extent, London, England, Blake explains, is, the least stable element in the UK in terms of political, geographical, historical and cultural identity. (Blake, 2009, p. 259). The reinterpretation of culture as art, sport and leisure, as "a viable way of modernising society and economy alike" (p. 260), is functional to the reinvention of the role of London and England as a whole, in contemporary Britain. As far the Olympics are concerned, culture is broadly interpreted as a means to strengthen London's economy, facilitate black and ethnic minority groups in terms of employment through education, boost the East End's social and economic development, and reduce the gap between different parts of the city. It is argued that the risk of a London based Olympics, which is aimed at re-asserting the image of the city as a global economic hub, is to widen, rather than reduce, the 'cultural' distinctness between London and the rest of England and between London and other prominent English cities.

Culture, then, plays a crucial role in the positioning of London on the national and

global stage. Andrew Calcutt suggests that the relation between finance and culture in London cannot be interpreted just in terms of proximity, but, we might say, osmosis. As he explains, “London’s twin towers – finance and culture – exists not only alongside each other: the one is already inside the other; inherent in what is also its opposite” (2012, p. 68).

The role of finance in London’s economy and its relation with the ‘material’ production are analysed in three moments in history: 1811, 1911, 2011. These moments signal very significant shifts in London’s social and economic history. 1811 both marks the early development of financial economy and the very first time Beethoven’s *Pastoral* was heard by a London audience. 1911 is the year when Elgar’s second symphony was performed and signals a phase in which British Empire was under considerable pressure. 2011 is the year when ‘Plan B’ won the British Awards and, also, the year of the riots. Each of such music formulations, Calcutt explains, constitutes an abstraction from the structure and patterns of previous music formulations. In the same way, each of these years marks a shift in capitalist economy from a direct relationship between finance and the actual processes of production to the estrangement between the two. The alienation of large masses of the population (mainly black people and ethnic minorities) from the city reflects such process of abstraction.

The London Olympics are addressed at the intersection of a number of issues in an interview with two members of “Games Monitor” – a East London based network of activists, researchers and journalists based in east London (Gibbons and Wolff, 2012). Interviewees put emphasis on the fact that the Games and the ‘spectacle’ they entail go hand in hand with an increasing militarisation of urban and public space (“important things need important security”) (p. 471). What is relevant to this research, however, is not only the stress on disempowerment by dominant social, economic and political actors; but the fact that people somehow spontaneously renounce their power to act on the basis of the dominant propaganda “this is the greatest show on earth, so how do you present an opposition to that?” (p. 469). The paper establishes a correlation between the high level atomisation and the disintegration of the social fabric on one side, and a lack of interest in both political action and critical awareness about the Olympics on the other (*ibid.*).

One of the issues I address later in this work, is the fact that transformation and change in urban governance, urban space and the social-economic order of cities are the

product of specific set of worldviews, ideologies, beliefs and interests that are enacted through social-political action; and that the *status quo* can only be contested and changed as long as such sets of values rise from the level of mere statements onto the level of social-political action. The literature that has been discussed in this section shows how the Olympics reflect specific visions of the city and how such visions entail specific worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests. Such sets of values are enacted by social actors and inform consequent patterns of urban, social, economic and institutional development of the city – at the same time producing and reproducing systems of power relations.

2.4. Urban Governance and Public Space

This section explains how the worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests that underpin representations and narratives of urban space are materialised in real policies. Governance is a key element in the enactment of policy frameworks, as it regulates the relationships between the various social actors (institutions, local communities, central and local governments, corporations, associations, unions, political parties, governmental and non- governmental agencies etc.) involved in the process of urban regeneration. The types and forms of structures of governance (which imply the relations of power between these social actors) also define *publicness*, that is, the nature of public space. It is my belief that nature of public space does not rely on intrinsic qualities of space but on social relations of power, which inform at the same time a specific politics of representation.

The concept of ‘post-democracy’ is a useful one to understand current changes in structures of governance. Colin Crouch calls ‘post-democracy’ today’s forms of democratic organisation as they are determined by the changes in the relationships between public authority and the private sector.

According to Crouch, post-democracy is not simply the opposite of democracy. The traditional opposition between democratic and ‘non’ democratic (p. 21) is substituted by a more articulated notion of political and institutional organisation to take into account the reduction of all the elements and institutions of democracy to *simulacra*, rather than their disappearance. Hence, the prefix ‘post’. Post-democracy is where decision and policy

making processes no longer rely upon mechanisms of democratic control and accountability, but on the work of experts, consultants and special advisors that ‘regulates’ the exclusive relations between government and private interests.

The implication of this is the reduction of politics to spectacle and persuasion, and the simplification of political language according to advertising and marketing criteria. Such bureaucratisation of public life, however, does not entail the disappearance of state institutions under corporate interests; but, quite differently, the strengthening of such institutions. For companies to gain exclusive control over specific sectors of the market, they need to operate within an environment to be protected from competition – which can only be guaranteed by the state. Private companies and corporations, therefore, seek support from governments as much as these latter seek support from the former. Not ‘privatisation’, but instead ‘contracting out’ is what characterises the shift from democracy to post-democracy. “Under the former - Crouch explains - ownership of a previous public resource is transferred to private firms. Under the latter, ownership remains with the public sector, but the performance of individual parts of the service is provided by profit-seeking firms, on contracts of varying length” (p. 94). The distinction is important. While in fact with the transfer of public assets to private subjects the public and private still maintain their independence; in contracting out, the public and the private enter a relationship of reciprocal dependence. Such transformation in the forms of governance reflects the forms of urban governance operating in the Olympic regeneration of Stratford.

Privatisation of services, whether it occurs in the form of transfer of public assets to private companies or in the form of contracting out, does not entail marketisation. In the neoliberal order, Crouch observes, privatisation often implies the freezing of competition in the market place (2011). Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) operate in global markets, which are characterised by a high level competition. Companies and corporations exert pressure over governments and international organisations to secure contracts. The consequence of such strong relationships between public authorities and private subjects is the curtailing of economic competition. This demonstrates “how the Neo-liberal policy shift is more about firms than about markets. A contracting authority loses its chance to exercise a customer’s power for the duration of the contract, and there is not necessarily any element of market choice for the ultimate consumer or service user. The

subcontractor's customer is the public authority placing the contract. The subcontractor has no market relationship to the users, while the public also loses its 'citizenship' claims on the public authority, which is no longer responsible for the details of service provision. In some cases, where a lengthy chain of sub- and sub-contractors develops, any responsiveness to the user becomes a matter for lawyers for the various corporate partners to the contracts" (2011, p. 87). These mechanisms, therefore, do not just regulate the relationships between public authority and the private sector, but, as it has been said above, involve the very form and the content of public space (*publicness*).

Focusing on Seoul 1988 Olympics, Hyunsun Yoon (2009) shows how a state-centred model of governance reflected the shift towards more democratic forms of social and political organisation. Even though the Olympics cannot be considered the cause of democratic change in South Korea (despite the attempt of the government to be identified as the guarantor of freedom and new civil liberties) they surely worked as a catalyst of a wider process of democratic change in the system of government and governance in South Korea. Brunet refers to Barcelona's system of governance in terms of "inter-institutional consensus", as it was characterised by a certain degree of communities' involvement in the decision making processes and a certain responsiveness to these latter's concerns (2009). Poynter and Roberts analyse the business-centred approach adopted in Atlanta 1996; which informed not just the bid, but also the governance structure that was created, with consequent outcomes in terms of legacy. "The mega-event – it is argued – provided the opportunity to utilise the Games to commence a process of urban renewal that marginalised community groups and local forms of political accountability while 'privileging investors interests'. This process has given rise to claims that the Games initiated a programme of gentrification that is set to be continued in the form of the latest stage of urban renewal, the BeltLine project" (2009, p. 130).

With regard to Sydney 2000, Cashman discusses the adoption of a structure of governance working at different institutional and geographical levels, and involving both private and public actors to address the post-event phase; as no post-Olympics vision and policies were conceived at the time of the bid (2009).

As far as Athens is concerned, it has been noted how the difficulties in coordinating various agencies had negative consequences on the organisation of communication

campaign and on the completion of the works on schedule (Panagiotopoulou, 2009). Such a public-centred approach, however, did not entail the creation of ‘public’ urban space in terms of social inclusion. The image of a ‘European’ Athens has been played out in terms of ‘cleanliness’ and ‘decency’, with the consequent exclusion of those subjects, namely the Roma people, who were thought to be affecting such an image. The work of Brunet and Xinwen (2009) demonstrates how a strong state- centred governance approach was used in Beijing to assert the image and the role of China as a global financial hub. While this reflected the strengthening of financial sector in the country’s economy, it did not imply either a process of democratisation of social-public life, or any widening of civil liberties – as happened in South Korea.

MacRury and Poynter focus on the intimate relationship between legacy and structures of governance (2009). Systems of governance, they suggest, entail the content of legacy, while the meaning of legacy implies specific systems of governance. According to the authors, legacy is to be interpreted as a ‘discourse’ that enables specific types of urban, social and economic intervention. Such discourse and types of intervention reflect specific political agendas and, I believe, the complex of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs, interests that underpins precise configurations of social relations of power. Legacy, MacRury and Poynter explain, is a fluid concept that refer to a number of various and diverse things – which are not mutually exclusive. It refers both to roads, transport and other kinds of material networks – which are generally interpreted in terms of ‘hard legacies; and to jobs, employment and social activities such as sport; and to ‘inspirational’ values which are generally referred to as ‘soft legacies’ (2009, p. 315).

The authors focus on the disjuncture between two dimensions of the legacy discourse: ‘rhetoric’ and ‘fact’. The disjuncture, in other words, between legacy promises and the complex of programs, means and instruments to fulfil them. They observe that such a disjuncture entails what they call a ‘pre-occupation’ with “the nomination, delegation and redistribution of ‘legacy’ responsibilities across the various stake holding bodies (LDA, LOCOG, ODA and other governmental agencies) while popular or local participation is accorded a marginal or merely ‘consultative’ status consistent with [a] ‘state- centred’ mode of governance” (p. 320). Analysing the complexities of London 2012 structure of governance, Poynter observes that the dominance of cost/benefit and risk

management logic almost inevitably implies a top-down approach that leaves unaddressed the concerns for more socially sustainable models of urban regeneration. Such an approach also entails the reduction of politics, democracy and public accountability from decision making processes – to the point that local communities and people are reduced to passive receivers of processes of urban transformation that they cannot control (2009a).

Mike Raco analyses these processes in terms of the shift from ‘deliberation’ to ‘delivery’; and places the discussion on structures of governance within the broader forms and transformations of contemporary capitalism (2012). Such forms and transformation imply what is currently called ‘regulatory capitalism’; that is to say, the formations of “hybrid relationships [...] between states and powerful corporations, to the point that the distinctions between providers and policymakers become increasingly blurred. The implications for decision-making, policy effectiveness and accountability – Raco explains – are potentially enormous as private interests become involved in co-producing all aspects of urban projects” (453).

A complex governance structure for London 2012 was deployed for the preparation of the bid, the delivery of the Games, and the project of urban renewal. Accountancy companies and experts such as PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC), EDAW, Ernest & Young and KPMG were employed to provide risk and cost assessment for the bidding and holding the Games. PCU3ED, a project consultancy firm, has been recruited for the design of master plans for the Olympic site. Deloitte has been appointed by the London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games (LOCOG) to manage a broader range of tasks that include “tax, human capital and management consulting [...]. In taking on this role, Deloitte began to act as a delivery agent and a key part of the regulatory architecture surrounding the Games, thus further blurring the boundaries between public and private responsibilities and accountability” (454). While in fact the ODA is a public body, LOCOG, Raco points out, is a private company. This fact has important implications in terms of public scrutiny and control; which, as Raco shows and I discuss later, is severely limited by considerations concerning the ‘risk factor’ implied by public disclosure of information about contracts and agreements.

Raco further develops these issues by showing the complexities and intricacies of the contract and agreement writing processes involved in the ‘delivery’ of the Olympics. He

focuses on the contract between the ODA and CH2M Hill, Laing O' Rourke and Mace (CLM). The scope of responsibilities taken on by CLM is such that

“the boundaries between decision making and delivery have become increasingly blurred. [...] The rolling out of governance by a delivery network in this way requires the establishment of a control structure that delegates responsibility down the contractual chain, to create what [has been] termed ‘a cascade of obligations’. There were two elements to this strategy. First it was decided to split the tasks associated with the development of the site and infrastructure and to establish substantial contractual ‘packages’ for the development. These became known as tier 1 level contracts and 1,433 of these were awarded by the ODA. [...] Below this, 7,500 tier 2 contracts were awarded for smaller but still significant projects. Thousands of much smaller subcontracting contracts were also signed, bringing the overall total to approximately 43,000. The quantitative scale of contracting out makes CLM more than just a partner organization. Its responsibilities are such that it has become a central component of the institutional structures governing the Games, and its actions will play a key part in efforts to meet policy objectives and legacy-building commitments” (2014, p. 188).

The pyramidal framework of information from the top (where the majority of information is available) to the bottom (where contractors have only access to the information they need to deliver their work) makes it difficult to locate the source of power (p. 194). The whole process of conceiving, designing and managing urban renewal is therefore reduced to a process of bureaucratic management independent from any form of public control and accountability. This fact raises, again, the issue of legacy. If, as Raco observes, legacy is evaluated against the capacity of building a complex and highly efficient structure of governance to ‘deliver’ the Games ‘on budget and to time’, then the ‘London model’ is to be considered a success (Raco notices in fact how an ODA has been created on the London model to deliver Rio 2016 Olympics). If, on the other hand, legacy is understood in terms of social sustainability, inclusion and involvement, then the London model is a failure; for it reflects and materialises the progressive privatisation of and elimination of politics (hence democracy) from the processes of policy and decision-making.

As said above, the issue of governance entails the issue of the nature of public space. Questioning the divisions of private/market vs. civic/collective, consumption vs. civic spirit, to define public space, Claudio De Magalhães suggests that public space is not an absolute but relative concept; and that its content relies on the nature of the contracts and agreements between public authorities and private subjects that shape politics of space (2010). He explains how public space is defined through the intersection of four processes and the way in which they combine with each other: the regulation of uses and conflicts between uses; the definition and deployment of maintenance routines; investment and resourcing; the co-ordination of interventions in public space (p. 570). The way in which these elements combine in relation to the distribution of power between different stakeholders, defines the rights of access, use and control and, hence, publicness.

By the same token, George Varna and Steve Tiesdell question the validity of mono-perspective approaches to public space that tend to focus on ownership and public/private dichotomies. They emphasise the importance of a more flexible approach to understand the complexities and various nuances of public space. The model they elaborated (the Star Model) is based on five qualitative indicators (ownership, control, physical configuration, animation, civility) that create quantified diagrams (2010, p. 593). It aims at providing a useful tool for comparative analysis and at producing analytic and normative models based on the perception of specific social groups (p. 593-594).

Matthew Carmona identifies in the critique of public space two main strands: those who argue against the over-management of public space; and those who argue against the under- management of public space. According to Carmona, these two strands are different sides of the same coin. Critique of under-management of publicly owned space often leads to exclusive management by private subjects; while critique of private over-management often leads to over- management by public authorities. Drawing on Kohn's triad of 'ownership', 'accessibility' and 'intersubjectivity' to address the complexity and the contradictory nature of public space, Carmona's model relies on the three indicators of 'function', 'perception' and 'ownership' (Carmona, 2010b; Kohn, 2004) – out of which he identifies twenty spatial typologies. In their attempt to find ways to visually assess space, Forsyth, Jacobson and Thering focus on the strengths and weaknesses of several methods (Score Sheet, Inventory, Design Workshop, Community Representatives, Mapping

Analyses, and Visual Contrast Assessment Worksheet) and therefore make a claim for a multi-perspective approach in order to obtain a more balanced and 'objective' view of urban space.

It is my belief, however, that there is no 'objective' character and knowledge of space. Function, perception and ownership can certainly provide important information about the 'nature' of space, but they cannot establish what space 'is' once and for all. In terms of function, a park might be freely accessible by people, but it might not be publicly owned and might impose some sort of monopoly on, say, the sale of food. As far as ownership is concerned, a building might house a state institution and not be publicly accessible (Habermas, 1992). Since perception is subjective, it cannot be 'objectively' assessed. By the same token, no 'objective' knowledge of space can be based on it. Talking about liberty, and the relation between liberty and urban space/architecture, Michel Foucault explains that there is no place or institution that can themselves enact and guarantee freedom. Liberty only exists insofar as it is practiced and, we may add, as long as the right for people to practice it is actually guaranteed (Foucault, 1994). The same is true for democracy.

Jürgen Habermas shows how the meaning, content and functions of the 'public' sphere has changed since the 18th century; and how these were transformed as the relation between the 'public' and the 'private' changed. The bourgeois public sphere emerged during the 18th century as the coming together of private property owners. It was the space for political action and discussion that reflected individual property owners' autonomy in commercial activities and market exchange from the state. At the time, the public sphere emerged out of the opposition with public authority. The publicness of public authority, therefore, did not correspond in meaning, content and functions with the meaning, content and functions of the bourgeois public sphere. With the rise of territorial states during the 19th century and up until the beginnings of the 20th century, such relationship between public sphere and public authority changed; as states took over wider functions of production and economic administration. The boundaries between public sphere and public authority blurred, so that the former was increasingly limited to the intimate sphere of the family. And so it was for the private sphere as well, for it did no longer indicate the privateness of the private property owners as distinct from public

authority, but the privateness of the household. With the rise of mass consumption market, culture (once the domain of public discussion and the emergence of the public sphere in the clubs, cafes and the press), became the site for leisure and consumption (Habermas, 1992).

Another change took place from the 1980s, which further modified the relationships between the private sector and the public authority. A change that brings us back to the discussion on regulatory frameworks and structures of governance that is addressed above. The processes of globalisation and financialisation of the economy made market exchange a more competitive, hence risky, activity. The need for state support to sustain and cover the risks connected with economic activities resulted in stronger relationships between public authority and the private sector. Complex regulatory frameworks and practices emerged that reinforced the role of state, curtailed the space for democratic control and accountability and reduced competition in the market place – rather than freeing the market from the role of public authority by deregulation. In regulatory capitalism, David Levi-Faur explains, representative democracy is turned into indirect representative democracy (2005).

“Democratic governance is no longer about the delegation of authority to elected representative but a form of second-level indirect representative democracy - citizens elect representatives who control and supervise ‘experts’ who formulate and administer policies in an autonomous fashion from their regulatory bastions” (p. 13).

Any consideration on the issue of the structures of governance that has been constructed for the bid and the organisation of London 2012 Games (which also involve and on the issue of public space and how to conceptualise public space), needs therefore to take into account these changes in the meaning, content and functions of the public sphere – as well as the shifts in the relationships between public authority and the private sector.

The literature discussed in this section demonstrates how the structures of governance that frame mega-event led projects of urban regeneration express specific worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests. They reflect representations and narratives of cities and urban space, which in turn reflect social relations of power. By regulating the relations between diverse social actors, structures of governance also define the nature of public

space (*publicness*); which is socially constructed and does not rely on urban space's intrinsic qualities.

2.5. The 'Production of Urban Space': Theories and Approaches

There is a further issue to be considered and that is of no secondary importance: how we know and conceptualise the processes of urban formation, and the relationships between the various realms through which the city is made (the urban form and functions, social order, economic organisation and institutional structure). This is a very relevant issue. For the way in which we envision these processes and relationships (for example, whether they are determined by the agency of social actors or by some form of impersonal economic force) involves the elaboration of specific policies for the city; and the possibility to find alternative patterns to the models of urban renewal that reflect dominant interests in society. In other words, according to the neoliberal narrative of 'global cities', capital is a self-dependent force that determines urban change and cannot be controlled. Expunging social action (hence, social responsibility) from urban change means that 1) capital-led processes of urban transformation are the only possible ones; and 2) such processes cannot be questioned.

The discussion that follows constitutes the core of the theoretical chapter in which I elaborate on the possibility of a discursive theory to analyse processes of urban formation. In this section of the literature review I present some of the most relevant theories and approaches to the analysis of the dynamics that shape urban space – focusing on their limits and their potential to aid the understanding of such dynamics.

Although Saskia Sassen envisions the production and reproduction of the social and economic order of 'global cities' as a *process* where a number of forces (not just finance) operate on different levels, she transforms these various trajectories into impersonal processes that articulate the functioning of what becomes an independent subject itself: the global city. Social agents, policy and decision-making processes enacted by conscious and independent social agents are absent from Sassen's account. The implication of such *de-subjectivisation* of the city and the societal world is to reduce such changes to one single trajectory (financial capital), and reinforces the dominant representation of financial

capitalism as necessary and unquestionable. To think, in other words, that processes of urban transformation and change depend on impersonal, hence unquestionable economic forces – which human beings cannot control. The *de- subjectivisation* of the city and the social realm (that is, the fact of eliminating social agency from the processes of urban transformation and change) entails, I believe, the *subjectivisation* of the forces driving transformation and change – and, consequently, of the city and the societal world.

The same is true, I believe, for David Harvey's analysis of the dynamics of spatialisation and urbanisation of capital. Urban space is where, Harvey argues, capital is structured. Such structuring takes the form of spatial configurations, institutional arrangements, legal forms, political and administrative systems and hierarchies of power – which in a class-bound society necessarily acquire a class content. According to Harvey capital also shapes experiences and practices of space, even to the very depth of people's identity and conscious (2001: 350). As I shall explain later, one of the consequences of such a way of envisioning the relations between capital and urban space is to separate, rather than relate them. Such a non-mediated relationship between the economic sphere and the urban realm does not in fact imply exchange – for exchange necessarily requires the existence of a medium; but the passive dependence of one (the urban) upon the other (capital). This fact entails the *subjectivisation* of economic forces and the processes of urban transformation and change. The transformation of such forces and processes into self-sufficient subjects also implies their transformation into *subjects* that can be *objectively* known. Human agency and politics are themselves reduced to super-structural elements determined by capital. It is my belief that by reducing social agents to the role of passive receiver of capital the possibility to understand change, and how change occurs, is in principle denied. For it does not answer the question as to how impersonal economic forces may affect what comes to be impersonal processes of transformation and change. Hence, it does not say who enact such processes.

In his work on the 'right to the city' (2008), Harvey actually acknowledges the possibility to enact a dynamic of urban change that is an alternative to the pattern shaped by capital. Harvey puts a strong emphasis on the importance to exert a collective power in order to reshape processes of urbanisation. Whereas processes of urban formation have been so far the object of undemocratic decision-making resting upon corporate interests,

they need now to become the site of democratic involvement. Harvey calls for the construction of social movements to contest the concentration of power in the hands of capital and democratize the right to the city. Still, Harvey does not provide any framework to understand the mechanisms by which alternative social action may be enacted and, hence, how alternative change may occur. In this way, the right to the city remains at the level of a proposition and does not achieve the level of a framework for action.

Although Henri Lefebvre claims that it is necessary to envision a level of mediation between discourse and the production of space, the reduction of discourse to the mere description of existing processes reinstates the dependency of urban space upon economic forces. Lefebvre envisions space as being produced through the teleological progression from *absolute space- historical space-abstract space* (1991) from which any kind of discursive mediation is eliminated.

According to such a Marxist-based idea of the social process, Lefebvre also believes that abstract space evolves toward what he calls *differential space* out of its own internal contradictions. Such space is the space where the differences in practices, uses and functions of space, which had been eradicated by capital, are now restored. But then the question: How can such difference occur within a rigid base-superstructure relationship in which the urban is reduced to the role of superstructure and social agency to the passive receiver of impersonal forces?

Differently from Sassen, Harvey and Lefebvre, Foucault questions the tendency to subjectivise the elements of the societal world. According to Foucault, both the subject and the object of knowledge are the products of specific epistemological orders. Such epistemological orders reflect the power relationships between institutions, social agents, disciplines, and the underpinning systems of norms, rules and classification. All this constitutes what Foucault calls *discourse* (2002a: 49-52). The implication of Foucault's theory of discourse to a discourse theory of urban transformation and change is the 'de-spatialisation' of space. That is, the shift from space itself to the very preconditions for its formation. I identify such preconditions in the complex of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests that shape different visions of the city's urban, social, economic and institutional development – and that different social actors sustain. Such a complex of values can eventually become the content of a social-political action aimed at transforming

and changing the existing urban, social, economic and institutional order of the city. However, while Foucault is clear in saying that power (hence discourse) is the realm of freedom (for, he explains, power can only be exerted over free individuals) (2002c), he transforms power and power relationships into a structure that imprisons the social subjects and determines the social order. This fact, I believe, freezes the social process and denies in principle the possibility for processes of transformation and change of cities and society.

A solution to this is seen in Hannah Arendt's theory of power, politics and democracy, and in Jürgen Habermas theory of communicative action. Differently from Foucault, for Hannah Arendt power is the realm of politics and political action. Politics is in fact the space where social actors come together in the manner of *speech* and *action* (1998); while power is the realm where the freedom to politically act can be exerted (1970). Power is also seen as the antidote to the bureaucratisation of public life. That is, the antidote to the curtailing of politics from the processes of policy and decision-making. As I shall explain later, such bureaucratisation of public life is not to be interpreted as the product of impersonal and unquestionable processes. For it results from the enactment of specific visions of the city and the social realm – with the underpinning sets of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests.

The materialisation of such a complex of values into urban form and functions, social order, economic organisation and institutional structure needs to be interpreted, I believe, out of the Habermasian tensions between *validity claims* and *facts* (Habermas, 1997). Such tension constitutes in this research the basis for the distinction between the *construal* and the *construction* of the societal world, and between the *discursive* and *non-discursive* dimensions of the urban, social, economic and institutional spheres of the city. Communicative action is for Habermas the space where social agents come together to reach an agreement on validity claims and turn them into facts. I use this theory to explain how different sets of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests (which pertain to the *discursive* dimension of the societal world) are turned by independent social agents into the content of social-political action to transform and change the material urban, social, economic and institutional order of the city (which pertains to the *non-discursive* dimension the social world).

In her work on the role of social agency in institutional change, Vivien Schmidt

addresses the question of how and why “some ideas become the policies, programs, and philosophies that dominate political reality while others not” (2008: 307). The question, she explains, is both ontological (what institutions are and how they are created, maintained and changed) and epistemological (what we can know about institutions and their dynamics of change). The answer that Discursive Institutionalism provides is based on the interpretation of institutional structures as both given (the context in which social agents think, speak, and act) and contingent (the result of social agents’ thoughts, words, and actions) (313-314).

The relevance of Schmidt’s version of DI to this work is to break the rigidities of the traditional Marxist-based view of the relation between base and superstructure. Far from being envisioned as impersonal structures, institutions work both internally (a framework of worldviews, ideas, programmatic beliefs, laws, rules, norms and practices that the agent takes for granted); and externally to social agents (a framework of values and practices social agents can critically distance themselves from).

Basing their theoretical framework and analysis on Jürgen Habermas’ reflection on the public sphere and the possibility for a discourse theory (1989, 1996), John Dryzek’s work on discursive and deliberative democracy (1990, 2000), and John Searle’s notion of “speech acts” (1995), Schmidt regards discourse as an interactive process which “enables agents to change institutions, because the deliberative nature of discourse allows them to conceive of and talk about institutions as objects at a distance, and to dissociate themselves from them even as they continue to use them. This is because discourse works at two levels: at the everyday level of generating and communicating about institutions, and at a meta-level, as a second-order critical communication among agents about what goes on in institutions, enabling them to deliberate and persuade as a prelude to action” (316).

Focusing on the relationships between the USA and the Soviet Union during the Cold War, Rey Koslowski (1994) and Friedrich Kratochwil challenge the neorealist assumption that international politics is the realm of autonomous forces whose determining factor is military capabilities. Moving from a constructivist approach, the authors operate a shift from structures to subjects, arguing that the processes of production and reproduction of specific political- institutional systems do not depend on impersonal forces but on social actors’ agency. Change in beliefs, identities, values, norms and rules, they explain, affect change at the level of both internal and international politics. Thus, to maintain that

international (hence internal) politics are dominated by structural and unquestionable forces is to deny the possibility of change both in 'practical' and theoretical terms. This fact corroborates one of the main assumptions on which this work is based. That is, we cannot fully grasp change if we ignore the role of social agents. An example of the role that social agency plays in processes of transformation and change of the social realm is what happened in Poland with Solidarność and the clandestine activity of catholic, liberal and socialist intellectuals and politicians to change the repressive system of power relationships of the time.

As we have seen, some of the theories, approaches and analyses that have been mentioned both in this and the preceding sections (Habermas, Foucault, Arendt, Smith, Koslowski and Kratochwil) refer, in a more or less explicit way, to discourse as site for social-political action. Discursive action has received increasing attention over the years, and a number of approaches have been suggested. While these different approaches share a common ground – that is, the idea that society is constituted by no necessary structure and that discourse is key in the construction of democracy; they differ in the content and meaning of democracy and discursive action. To give an example, Laclau and Mouffe (2014) interpret discourse in terms of antagonistic struggle. Antagonism, they argue, reveals the limits of any universality. For universality (what the authors call *objective we*), is never an objective construction, but the attempt by specific social actors to construe uncontested representations of, say, the state, the market and the social order. As universality cannot be fully achieved, it entails antagonism – that is, social division and conflict. The aim of conflict is, according to the authors, to subvert dominant representations by brand new ones, hence to change the social order. Therefore, for Laclau and Mouffe social division and conflict are the conditions for any democratic politics, as no real democracy is possible without social division and conflict.

Laclau and Mouffe explain that progressive democratic politics is incompatible with the idea of reaching understanding between different social actors; which is the core of Habermas' theory of deliberative democracy and communicative action (1997, 2006). It is my belief, instead, that the idea of reaching understanding between different social actors does not entail the theoretical construction of any universal consensus – as Laclau and Mouffe put it. In fact, Habermas' theory of communicative action is based on the idea of

weak systems of truth, whose existence can be collectively accepted and at same time discussed, contested and changed by an alternative system of truth – which in turn can be discussed, contested and changed. To give an example, financial capitalism is a system whose existence everybody agrees on. As it constitutes a social construction that is based on a questionable set of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests (as I shall explain in the fourth chapter of this work), financial capitalism can be challenged and subverted by an alternative system, on whose existence social actors will agree. The new system can survive until another set of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interest arises and is translated in social-political action by conscious social actors. The Habermasian tension between *objectivity* and *subjectivity* in the social realm and the ever-granted possibility to contest accepted systems, narratives and representations of society guarantees, I believe, the possibility to conceive and practice progressive democratic politics.

Evolutionary Governance Theory goes in the same direction by emphasising the role that ideology, hence social actors, play in the construction of systems of governance (Kristof Van Assche, Raoul Beunen and Martijn Duineveld, 2014). The idea of evolution is itself based on the dynamics of interaction between different social actors and institutions, which cause systems of governance to evolve. “The effects of governance arrangements are always influenced by the dynamic networks of actors, discourses, and institutions” (4-5).

“Structurally, change is always possible. Change can come from formal and informal histories of coordination, and at each point in these histories, discursive worlds can enter and reshape the course of evolution. An ideology can lose its luster, a community can become obsessed with cars, a person convinces a community that he is the leader, that a leader is a hero and that changing some rules will bring glorious deeds. The concept of institutions thus directs the attentions to the agency- aspect of evolution, and to the potential for governance reform by of different players and by changing rules [...]. Governance for us includes individuals and organizations that can become actors by participating in governance. Actors coordinate decision-making by means of institutions formal, informal and dead. Governance implies taking decisions, and given the plurality of actors and continuous changes in society, many different and ever changing versions of reality, of past, present and (desirable) future are continuously intervening in the *configuration of actors and institutions*. Both actors and institutions are remoulded in and by discursive dynamics” (23).

The relevance of this review of theories of governance to this thesis is that current processes of economic transformation occurring at local, national and global level are not governed by impersonal forces over which social agents do not have any power of control. I see such processes as socially based. That is, as a framework that social agents share, in which they live and operate; and at the same time create and change. The implication of this for the urban renewal of East London is that the transformation of place into a site for tourism, leisure shopping and corporate investments is not the only possible answer to address changes in economy and society – as the official discourse maintains. They constitute, on the contrary, one among other possible ways to engage in processes of urban transformation. For they rely on specific sets of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs, interests that has become hegemonic in the wider social- political realm and have been enacted by policies, laws, acts, plans and development strategies.

In a paper on the clearance of small businesses (SMEs) for the construction of the Olympic Village as a part of the wider process of East London regeneration, Mike Raco and Emma Tunney explain how the dynamics of urban renewal are mostly about the visibility of some social actors and the invisibility of others in terms of the capability to affect processes of policy and decision making, construe narratives and representations of cities, and construct the built environment (2010). With an emphasis on the role of social agency, the authors explain that the difficulty of small enterprises to resist and oppose corporate processes of urban regeneration often depend on the failure

“to organise themselves into collective groups. As with other urban communities, they tend to mobilise in response to perceived threats and are much less likely to engage in the key upstream phases of urban planning and policymaking. [...] And yet, research has also shown that, as with other types of urban communities, SMEs are not merely passive actors in the governance of regeneration. In some instances, they can act reflexively to develop coping strategies and establish strategies and tactics to contest and challenge programmes. Owners can be adept at mobilising support from local development agencies in order to extract maximum concessions within the compulsory purchase process or, in some cases, actually prevent relocations from going ahead. Institutional processes and spaces of action can be opened up and modified by co-

ordinated and targeted political action” (pp. 2073-2074).

As I explain later, the existence of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests is not enough to challenge the dominant order. Such values need to be translated into social-political action in order to gain transformative power; which lies in the pursuit of social and political consent. This fact has also a theoretical relevance. For the idea of discourse as a level of mediation between the material and non-material elements of the city, and between the various dimensions of which the city is made; such idea of discourse helps understand how sets of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs, interests, narratives and representations are translated into the urban, social, economic and institutional order of the city.

2.6. Conclusions: The reasons for a multifocal approach

Talking about the importance to place the analysis of London 2012 within a multifocal perspective to understand the wider impact of the Games on the social-economic order, the institutional organisation, the built environment of the city, Andrea Gibbons and Nick Wolff write:

“Through marshalling political, media and private sector interests, the construction of hegemonic and dramaturgical urban narratives remaking and representing the city around the Olympics reproduce narratives of growth, reinforce ‘global city’ imagery and suppress opposition to the project. The architectural legacy is often one of under-used civic and sporting infrastructure peppered with iconic buildings, commissioned from a select pool of transnational star architects reproducing a globalised language of elite architectural imagery. Public investment that may have been spent on programmes of widespread public benefit is sucked into the Olympic budget, citizens’ daily lives are disrupted, rents, house prices and taxes increase and yet the revenues are largely privatised. Additionally, to achieve the levels of redevelopment, regulation and security required by the IOC, new forms of urban governance are introduced, covering new planning laws and public- private development partnerships, and, for the duration of the Games themselves, highly restrictive marketing laws

and authoritarian security controls” (2012b, p.443).

The aim of this literature review is, therefore, epistemological, theoretical, methodological and analytical at the same time. The review, in other words, addresses the issues of how to know and conceive the Olympics and the processes of urban regeneration it engenders and/or catalyses (meaning the wider processes of urban, social, economic and institutional restructuring of the city); how and from which perspective (multi or mono-disciplinary) to analyse such processes; and what to look at to understand them (the built environment in its urban-architectural form, its representation and narratives, the processes of decision and policy making, structures of governance, housing policies, gentrification, etc.). The review presented here is the product of my own view of mega-events and, in particular, the Olympic Games, and of the dynamics of urban, social, economic and institutional change they entail.

The Olympics do not constitute an extra-ordinary event for cities and their inhabitants. As Mike Raco points out, while there are some features that are distinct, such as the timeframes for development and the multi-scalar attention to development and planning processes; they cannot be considered apart from the modes of contemporary capitalism (Raco, 2012, p. 452). Olympics and Mega-events, with the processes of social, economic and urban regeneration they engender and/or catalyse, cannot be analysed apart from very specific visions of the city and social relations of power; which are translated into the urban, social, economic and institutional order of cities. “In many ways - Raco and Tunney write - urban regeneration is principally concerned with highly geographical visualisations of places and spaces. It is both a normative process in which policy-makers and others determine what an urban area should look like in an ideal sense, and a practical process of identifying and selecting particular places and spaces for concerted action in order to bring these visions to fruition. How these spaces and places are ‘seen’ from different perspectives and the processes through which they become visualised are therefore critical elements in shaping any regeneration project. Some interests and actors are more visible than others. Some are able to mainstream their particular visions for cities, whereas others remain relatively invisible” (2010, p. 2071). Therefore, the reason to bring all these apparently separate disciplines and fields together (which I grouped in three categories:

Narratives and Representations of Urban Space and Architecture, Global Games and Mega-Events, Urban Governance and Public Space, Theories and Approaches to the production of Urban Space) is that they imply each other.

In the first section it was explained how the relationship between narratives and representations of urban space and architecture (*construal*), and their materialisation in real urban/architectural objects (*construction*) works; and how these two dimensions of *construal* and *construction* entail specific worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs, interests whose materialisation make some social actors visible and some others invisible – thereby establishing ownership, uses and entitlement to space.

The second section has shown how the Olympic games and Mega-Events have become part of wider politics and strategies of urban space for cities that need to affirm or re-affirm their role as global, national or regional centres for investments, tourism, leisure and culture. It is therefore suggested that the Games and Mega-Events receive their content from specific sets of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs, interests; which entail precise representations, narratives and visions of space that are translated into ‘real’ processes of urban, social, economic and institutional transformation of cities.

All this brings to the fore the issue of public space and of the construction of structures of governance – which shape the meaning of public space (*publicness*). Visualisations of spaces entail both normative processes in which policy makers take decisions about the architectural layout, form and uses of urban space; and politics of representation which establish who should and should not be visible in space (Raco and Tunney, 2010). In so doing, such visualisations also define the nature of public space (*publicness*) – which implies the formation of structures of governance and legal frameworks. Governance regulates the relationships between the various social actors (institutions, local communities, central and local governments, governmental and non governmental agencies, associations, unions, political parties, etc.) who may or may be not involved in the process of urban regeneration. Thus, structures of governance and legal frameworks enact and produce policies, and at the same time establish which social actors can and cannot take part in policy and decision-making processes – thereby reflecting social relations of power.

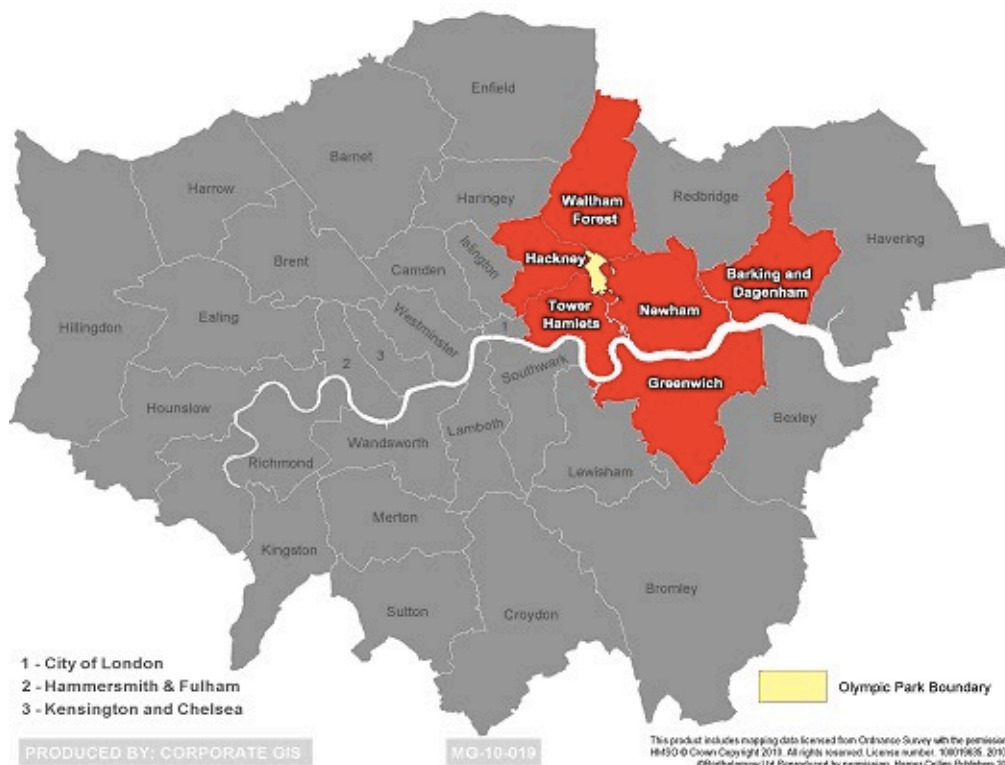
The adoption of such a multifocal approach to the Olympics and Mega-Event led processes of urban regeneration implies a specific way of knowing and conceptualising the processes of urban formation and transformation. This issue is discussed in the fourth section of the literature review. Here the issue of discourse is raised as the site for social-political action to explain the role that social agents play in the processes of urban, social, economic and institutional transformation and change. The importance of these issues goes beyond their theoretical and epistemological relevance. In fact, the way in which we address these issues (whether we think of the forces shaping the social realm as independent from or dependent on social action; whether we think of the relationships between the urban realm and economic forces in terms of verticality of horizontality; whether we think of power and social relations of power as overdetermining structures or as site for social-political action) does not only affect the way in which we know and understand cities. For it also affects the elaboration of the policies that shape the processes of urban formation and transformation – with an impact on both the level of social involvement in decision-making and on the possibility to envision alternative patterns of development to those imposed by corporate interests.

London in Numbers

Is East London ‘one of the most deprived areas in Europe’?

3.1. Introduction

The six Olympic Boroughs (Waltham Forest, Hackney, Tower Hamlets, Greenwich, Newham, and Barking and Dagenham), renamed ‘Growth Boroughs’, are located in the Lower Lea Valley, which is part of the Thames Gateway. They account for 18% of the whole London’s population (<http://www.growthboroughs.com/>) and form the London’s East End.



Pic. 1 East London - The Six Growth Boroughs (<http://www.growthboroughs.com/>)

East London is known to be ‘one of the most deprived areas in Europe’. The chapter investigates the extent to which it is possible to accept such a representation, which has worked as justification for the corporate-led transformation of the area into a new pole of attraction for tourism and corporate investments.

It does so by analysing a group of variables (Deprivation, Male and Female Life Expectancy, Smoking, Binge Drinking, Obesity, Hospital Episodes, Benefits and Crime) to understand: 1) the extent to which they are correlated to one another; 2) how these variables distribute across London; 3) whether is correct to accept the idea of East London as an area of extreme deprivation so as to enable the adoption of some sort of special policy and intervention.

In the first part of the chapter I assess the extent to which the above variables are correlated. To be more precise, I try to understand the extent to which a higher deprivation score and number of people on benefits correlate to crime. For it is commonly accepted that the former entails the latter.

In the second part I assess how such variables distribute across the whole London, in order to understand the extent to which East London can be considered an area of exceptional deprivation needing exceptional policies and intervention to ‘heal’.

The chapter concludes that despite higher deprivation and benefits scores, East London does not represent any extreme case to be treated accordingly. Deprivation, as well as the number of people on Benefits, are quite normally distributed across London as a whole. The same is true for Crime.

This chapter is an updated version of the coursework I submitted in 2013 as part of the final exam for the module on Statistics for Social Sciences, taught by Prof. Allan Brimicombe (Desiderio, A.: 2013b).

3.2. East London as an area of crime?

I first consider the level of correlation between these variables employing Spearman’s non parametric correlation analysis (Tab. 1) – relations that equal to and/or are higher than .700 being significant. Deprivation has a significant negative relation with Male Life Expectancy, a significant positive relation with Benefits per thousand

people and Crimes per thousand people. Meaning that the higher Deprivation score the lower Male Life Expectancy. And the higher Deprivation score the higher the number of Crimes and people on Benefits.

By the same token, Benefits has a negative correlation with Male Life Expectancy and a positive correlation with Crimes. Female life expectancy is not significantly related with any of the variables but Male life expectancy. Variables that are traditionally related to anti-social and/or unhealthy behaviours (Smoking, Binge drinking, Obesity and the rate of Hospital episodes) are not significantly related to one another. Hospital episodes get close to .700 (.674) only when related to obesity. This suggests that Hospital episodes have no relation with deprivation and crimes, but with more general issues regarding health.

Having said so, data seem to suggest that a strong correlation between the number of crimes, the number of people on benefits and deprivation exists.

However, as some crime and benefits indicators are often considered in statistics about deprivation, the analysis of the correlation between these variables might be distorted. This is all the more true for estimates on benefits, which are regularly and largely employed to calculate deprivation. If on the one side it is possible to correlate crime and benefits and also crime and deprivation; on the other, benefits and deprivation cannot be possibly compared, as we would compare two variables that are already strongly correlated. Therefore, I assume crime, benefits and deprivation as dependent variables to be analysed separately against all the other variables here considered.

Tab. 1 – Correlations

			Deprivation score	Male life expectancy	Female life expectancy	% smoking	% binge drinking	% obese	Hospital episodes per thou pop	Benefits per thou pop	Crimes per thou pop
Spearman's rho	Deprivation score	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.804**	-.598**	.506**	.574**	.034	.128	.972**	.861**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.003	.001	.852	.484	.000	.000
		N	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32
	Male life expectancy	Correlation Coefficient	-.804**	1.000	.880**	-.610**	-.353*	-.200	-.316	-.870**	-.611**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000	.048	.273	.078	.000	.000
		N	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32
	Female life expectancy	Correlation Coefficient	-.598**	.880**	1.000	-.645**	-.184	-.290	-.262	-.675**	-.406*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000	.315	.108	.147	.000	.021
		N	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32
	% smoking	Correlation Coefficient	.506**	-.610**	-.645**	1.000	.319	.234	.323	.542**	.356*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.000	.000	.	.075	.197	.071	.001	.045
		N	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32
	% binge drinking	Correlation Coefficient	.574**	-.353*	-.184	.319	1.000	-.566**	-.421*	.501**	.715**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.048	.315	.075	.	.001	.016	.004	.000
		N	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32
	% obese	Correlation Coefficient	.034	-.200	-.290	.234	-.566**	1.000	.674**	.123	-.173
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.852	.273	.108	.197	.001	.	.000	.502	.342
		N	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32
	Hospital episodes per thou pop	Correlation Coefficient	.128	-.316	-.262	.323	-.421*	.674**	1.000	.211	-.137
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.484	.078	.147	.071	.016	.000	.	.247	.454
		N	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32
	Benefits per thou pop	Correlation Coefficient	.972**	-.870**	-.675**	.542**	.501**	.123	.211	1.000	.815**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.001	.004	.502	.247	.	.000
		N	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32
	Crimes per thou pop	Correlation Coefficient	.861**	-.611**	-.406*	.356*	.715**	-.173	-.137	.815**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.021	.045	.000	.342	.454	.000	.
		N	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32

Tab. 2 - Partial Correlations - Excluding Crimes per thousand population

Control Variables			Male life expectancy	Female life expectancy	% smoking	% binge drinking	% obese	Hospital episodes per thou pop	Benefits per thou pop	Deprivation score
Crimes per thou pop	Male life expectancy	Correlation	1.000	.920	-.577	-.140	-.303	-.585	-.816	-.766
		Significance (2-tailed)	.	.000	.001	.452	.097	.001	.000	.000
		df	0	29	29	29	29	29	29	29
	Female life expectancy	Correlation	.920	1.000	-.614	.026	-.397	-.551	-.653	-.595
		Significance (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.891	.027	.001	.000	.000
		df	29	0	29	29	29	29	29	29
	% smoking	Correlation	-.577	-.614	1.000	.230	.310	.426	.481	.430
		Significance (2-tailed)	.001	.000	.	.213	.090	.017	.006	.016
		df	29	29	0	29	29	29	29	29
	% binge drinking	Correlation	-.140	.026	.230	1.000	-.574	-.332	.216	.264
		Significance (2-tailed)	.452	.891	.213	.	.001	.068	.243	.151
		df	29	29	29	0	29	29	29	29
	% obese	Correlation	-.303	-.397	.310	-.574	1.000	.663	.258	.153
		Significance (2-tailed)	.097	.027	.090	.001	.	.000	.161	.412
		df	29	29	29	29	0	29	29	29
	Hospital episodes per thou pop	Correlation	-.585	-.551	.426	-.332	.663	1.000	.528	.479
		Significance (2-tailed)	.001	.001	.017	.068	.000	.	.002	.006
		df	29	29	29	29	29	0	29	29
	Benefits per thou pop	Correlation	-.816	-.653	.481	.216	.258	.528	1.000	.963
		Significance (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.006	.243	.161	.002	.	.000
		df	29	29	29	29	29	29	0	29
	Deprivation score	Correlation	-.766	-.595	.430	.264	.153	.479	.963	1.000
		Significance (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.016	.151	.412	.006	.000	.
		df	29	29	29	29	29	29	29	0

Tab. 3 – Partial Correlations – Excluding Benefits per thousand population

Control Variables			Male life expectancy	Female life expectancy	% smoking	% binge drinking	% obese	Hospital episodes per thou pop	Deprivation score	Crimes per thou pop
Benefits per thou pop	Male life expectancy	Correlation	1.000	.897	-.352	.280	-.293	-.480	.228	.432
		Significance (2-tailed)	.	.000	.052	.128	.110	.006	.218	.015
		df	0	29	29	29	29	29	29	29
	Female life expectancy	Correlation	.897	1.000	-.442	.363	-.395	-.444	.239	.344
		Significance (2-tailed)	.000	.	.013	.045	.028	.012	.196	.058
		df	29	0	29	29	29	29	29	29
	% smoking	Correlation	-.352	-.442	1.000	.094	.224	.220	-.153	-.056
		Significance (2-tailed)	.052	.013	.	.614	.225	.233	.412	.766
		df	29	29	0	29	29	29	29	29
	% binge drinking	Correlation	.280	.363	.094	1.000	-.717	-.680	.314	.534
		Significance (2-tailed)	.128	.045	.614	.	.000	.000	.085	.002
		df	29	29	29	0	29	29	29	29
	% obese	Correlation	-.293	-.395	.224	-.717	1.000	.694	-.426	-.354
		Significance (2-tailed)	.110	.028	.225	.000	.	.000	.017	.050
		df	29	29	29	29	0	29	29	29
	Hospital episodes per thou pop	Correlation	-.480	-.444	.220	-.680	.694	1.000	-.252	-.578
		Significance (2-tailed)	.006	.012	.233	.000	.000	.	.171	.001
		df	29	29	29	29	29	0	29	29
	Deprivation score	Correlation	.228	.239	-.153	.314	-.426	-.252	1.000	.261
		Significance (2-tailed)	.218	.196	.412	.085	.017	.171	.	.157
		df	29	29	29	29	29	29	0	29
	Crimes per thou pop	Correlation	.432	.344	-.056	.534	-.354	-.578	.261	1.000
		Significance (2-tailed)	.015	.058	.766	.002	.050	.001	.157	.
		df	29	29	29	29	29	29	29	0

Tab. 4 – Partial Correlations – Excluding Deprivation per thousand population

Control Variables			Male life expectancy	Female life expectancy	% smoking	% binge drinking	% obese	Hospital episodes per thou pop	Crimes per thou pop	Benefits per thou pop
Deprivation score	Male life expectancy	Correlation	1.000	.907	-.410	.281	-.376	-.517	.402	-.460
		Significance (2-tailed)	.	.000	.022	.125	.037	.003	.025	.009
		df	0	29	29	29	29	29	29	29
	Female life expectancy	Correlation	.907	1.000	-.482	.354	-.443	-.474	.319	-.382
		Significance (2-tailed)	.000	.	.006	.051	.013	.007	.080	.034
		df	29	0	29	29	29	29	29	29
	% smoking	Correlation	-.410	-.482	1.000	.091	.275	.258	-.048	.281
		Significance (2-tailed)	.022	.006	.	.625	.134	.162	.799	.126
		df	29	29	0	29	29	29	29	29
	% binge drinking	Correlation	.281	.354	.091	1.000	-.682	-.668	.503	-.184
		Significance (2-tailed)	.125	.051	.625	.	.000	.000	.004	.321
		df	29	29	29	0	29	29	29	29
	% obese	Correlation	-.376	-.443	.275	-.682	1.000	.705	-.299	.430
		Significance (2-tailed)	.037	.013	.134	.000	.	.000	.103	.016
		df	29	29	29	29	0	29	29	29
	Hospital episodes per thou pop	Correlation	-.517	-.474	.258	-.668	.705	1.000	-.553	.296
		Significance (2-tailed)	.003	.007	.162	.000	.000	.	.001	.106
		df	29	29	29	29	29	0	29	29
	Crimes per thou pop	Correlation	.402	.319	-.048	.503	-.299	-.553	1.000	-.113
		Significance (2-tailed)	.025	.080	.799	.004	.103	.001	.	.545
		df	29	29	29	29	29	29	0	29
	Benefits per thou pop	Correlation	-.460	-.382	.281	-.184	.430	.296	-.113	1.000
		Significance (2-tailed)	.009	.034	.126	.321	.016	.106	.545	.
		df	29	29	29	29	29	29	29	0

Partial correlation analysis allows an understanding of the relation of crime, benefits and deprivation one the one side with the rest of the variables on the other, excluding from the analysis the multiplying effect that the former produce on the latter. I first consider all the variables controlling for crimes (Tab. 2). Male life expectancy still has a significant correlation with the number of people on benefits and deprivation.

Excluding Benefits per thousand people from analysis (Tab. 3), Male life expectancy does not have any significant correlation with Deprivation – which in turn has no significant correlation with Crime. This seems to suggest that the ‘real’ incidence of deprivation on crime (that is to say, deprivation net of the multiplying effect benefits) is not significant. All the other variables (apart from Female and Male life expectancy) do not show any significant correlation between each other and with the dependent variables. The only exception is between Binge Drinking and Obesity (-.717 correlation coefficient); and between Binge Drinking and Hospital episodes (.680 correlation coefficient).

Lastly, I excluded Deprivation from analysis (Tab. 4). Crime resulted to have no significant correlation with Benefits; which would, again, suggest that the relation of crime with benefits considered apart from the multiplying effect of deprivation is low. Benefits also seem to have no significant relation with Male life expectancy; while the correlation of binge drinking with obesity and hospital episodes (respectively -.682 and -.668) is still of some significance.

Such results seem to question the stereotype of a direct correlation of benefits and deprivation with crime; and therefore the assumption that urban areas characterised by a higher deprivation score and a larger number of people on benefits are necessarily areas of crime.

Regression and Factor analysis lead to the same conclusion. The coefficient (R square) of Crime per thousand people with Benefits, Obesity, Smoking, Hospital Episodes, Female Life expectancy, Male Life expectancy, Binge drinking and Deprivation is .612 (Tab. 5). Such a value suggests that it is not possible to think of a necessary relation between crime and the independent variables, although it does exist a relation. To put it differently, it suggests that it is not appropriate to think of areas with lower female and male life expectancy, a higher deprivation score, a higher number of hospital episodes, a larger obesity rate, and a higher number people smoking and drinking as areas of crime.

On the contrary, the relation of benefits with all the other variables excluding deprivation and of deprivation with all the other variables excluding benefits is significant – respectively .817; .779. (Tab. 6; 7).

Does that necessarily mean that higher crime rates, smoking, obesity, hospital episodes, binge drinking necessarily imply the presence of a larger number of people on benefits and a higher deprivation score and vice versa (that is to say, that a larger number of people on benefits and a higher deprivation score automatically entails higher crime rates and other unhealthy and anti-social practices)?

Regression analysis considers the dependent variables as equalling contributing to determine the relation with the independent variables. To better assess the relation between the independent and the dependent variables we need instead to consider to what extent each independent variable correlates to the dependent variable.

Factor analysis group variables into dimensions determined by the degree of their reciprocal correlation and arrange them according to a decreasing order of relevance. Factor analysis (each time excluding crime, benefits and deprivation) shows a discontinuity between the third and the fourth factor (Charts 1, 2, 3). We can now analyse again the correlation between the first three factors with each of the dependent variables (crime, benefits and deprivation).

As far as crime is concerned, regression analysis shows a coefficient of .472 (Tab. 8) – which further confirms the result of the previous correlation analysis. Correlation analysis conducted considering the result of factor analysis shows a coefficient of .672 for benefits (Tab. 9). Similarly, the correlation coefficient for deprivation is .635 (Tab. 10). This suggests that there is no significant correlation between all the variables considered and crime. And that, despite a correlation between deprivation and benefits on the one hand, and the independent variables on the other still exists, this is not as high as to affirm that an immediate a necessary correlation exists between the former and the latter. We may therefore reasonably argue that areas with high deprivation score, large number of people on benefits, drinking and smoking, and a large number of hospital episodes are not necessarily areas of crime; and that areas with higher crime rates, a large number of people drinking and smoking, and a large number of hospital episodes do not necessarily entail higher deprivation score and a large number of people on benefits.

Tab. 5: Regression – Crime

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.782 ^a	.612	.499	27.74627	.612	5.412	7	24	.001

a. Predictors: (Constant), Benefits per thou pop, % obese, % smoking, Hospital episodes per thou pop, Female life expectancy, % binge drinking, Male life expectancy

b. Dependent Variable: Crimes per thou pop

Tab. 6: Regression - Benefits

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.904 ^a	.817	.764	25.30233	.817	15.325	7	24	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Crimes per thou pop, Female life expectancy, % obese, % smoking, Hospital episodes per thou pop, % binge drinking, Male life expectancy

b. Dependent Variable: Benefits per thou pop

Tab. 7: Regression - Deprivation

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.883 ^a	.779	.715	5.24795	.779	12.119	7	24	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Crimes per thou pop, Female life expectancy, % obese, % smoking, Hospital episodes per thou pop, % binge drinking, Male life expectancy

b. Dependent Variable: Deprivation score

Chart 1: Factor analysis – Excluding Crime

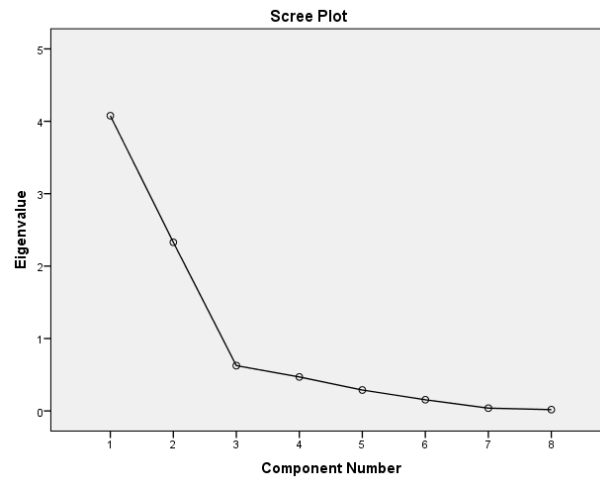


Chart 2: Factor Analysis – Excluding Benefits

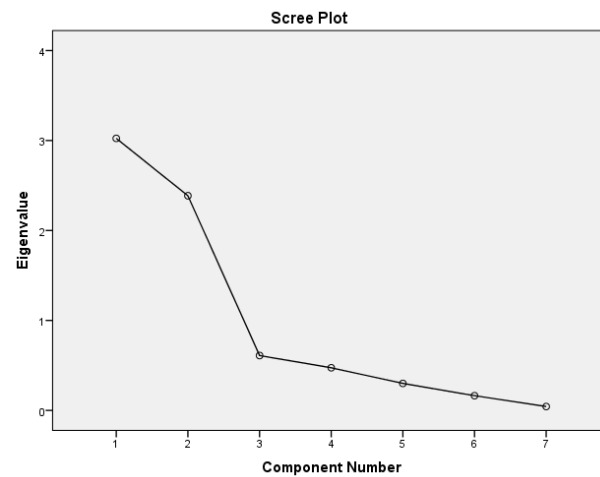
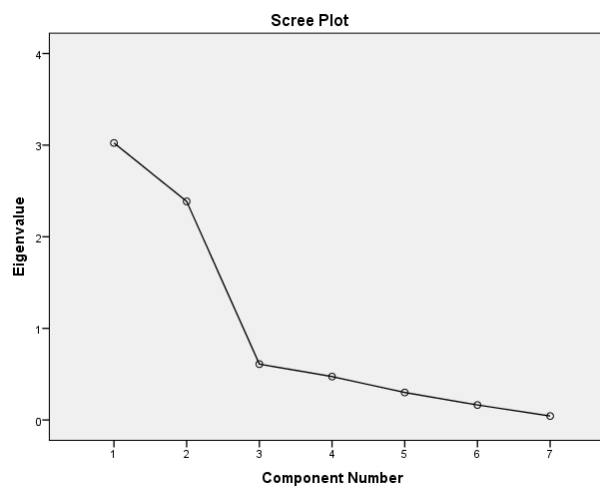


Chart 3: Factor Analysis – Excluding Deprivation



Tab. 8: Regression – Crime after Factor analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.687 ^a	.472	.416	29.96526	.472	8.352	3	28	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), REGR factor score 3 for analysis 2, REGR factor score 2 for analysis 2, REGR factor score 1 for analysis 2

Tab. 9: Regression – Benefits after Factor analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.820 ^a	.672	.636	31.39317	.672	19.093	3	28	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), REGR factor score 3 for analysis 2, REGR factor score 2 for analysis 2, REGR factor score 1 for analysis 2

Tab. 10: Regression – Deprivation after factor analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.797 ^a	.635	.596	6.24927	.635	16.251	3	28	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), REGR factor score 3 for analysis 2, REGR factor score 2 for analysis 2, REGR factor score 1 for analysis 2

Tab. 11 - Frequencies

		Deprivation score	Male life expectancy	Female life expectancy	% smokin g	% binge drinkin g	% obese	Hospital episodes per thou pop	Benefits per thou pop	Crimes per thou pop
N	Valid	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32
	Missin g	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		26.0853	77.413	81.981	23.463	12.784	18.291	194.1495	188.5233	109.6243
	25	16.7975	75.750	80.700	21.100	11.175	16.200	183.8717	148.5217	79.2265
Percentile s	50	25.6450	77.750	82.000	23.850	12.300	19.150	198.6641	181.6765	108.8494
	75	33.7875	78.800	83.100	26.450	14.675	20.200	208.2130	230.7183	128.4830

3.3 East London as an area of ‘extra-ordinary’ deprivation?

We can now explore how these variables distribute across the whole London. We can do this by assessing the difference between the mean and the median to detect signs of non-normality in the distribution of values, and then compare these results with comparative box plots between all the variables.

1) Benefits. According to the T test (Tab. 13) the null hypothesis of no significant difference between the mean and the median (.463) can be accepted. The Box plot (Chart 4) shows quite normal distributed values. Still, if we look at the QQ plot (Chart 9), there appear some odd values. These are Richmond upon Thames and Kingston upon Thames on the lower side of the chart (97.39; 100.28); and Islington and Hackney on the upper side (282.27; 287.79). However, these are no odd values. For they are part of a ‘normally’ distributed curve including all the boroughs of London, along with the other Olympic boroughs. If we look at a chart representing all London’s boroughs in a increasing order (Chart 18), the Olympic boroughs are in fact on the right side of the median along with all inner London’s boroughs – with the only exception of Westminster (which is not far from the average value) and Kensington Chelsea (which is among the wealthiest areas of the city).

Tab. 12: One-Sample Test – Hospital episodes

	Test Value = 198.6641					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	90% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Hospital episodes per thou pop	-1.244	31	.223	-4.51462	-10.6654	1.6362

Tab. 13: One-Sample Test - Benefits

	Test Value = 181.6765					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	90% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Benefits per thou pop	.744	31	.463	6.84677	-8.7596	22.4531

Chart 4: Box plot – Hospital episodes; Benefits; Crimes

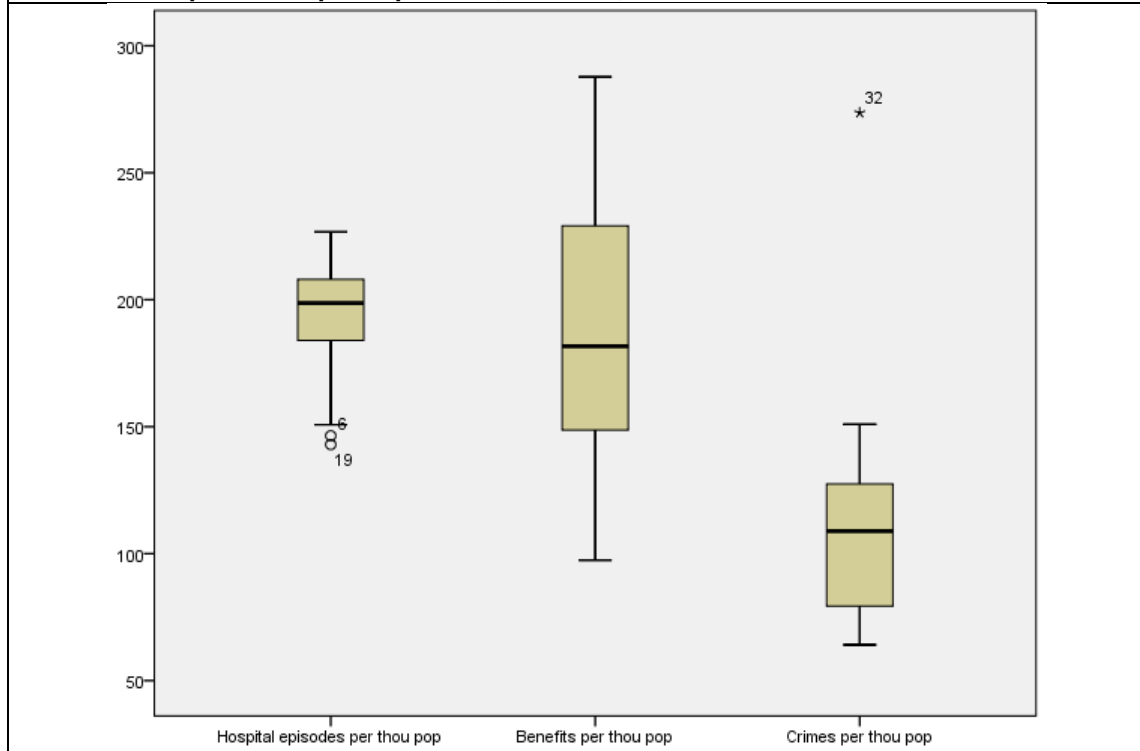


Chart 5: Box plot – Smoking, Binge drinking, Obesity

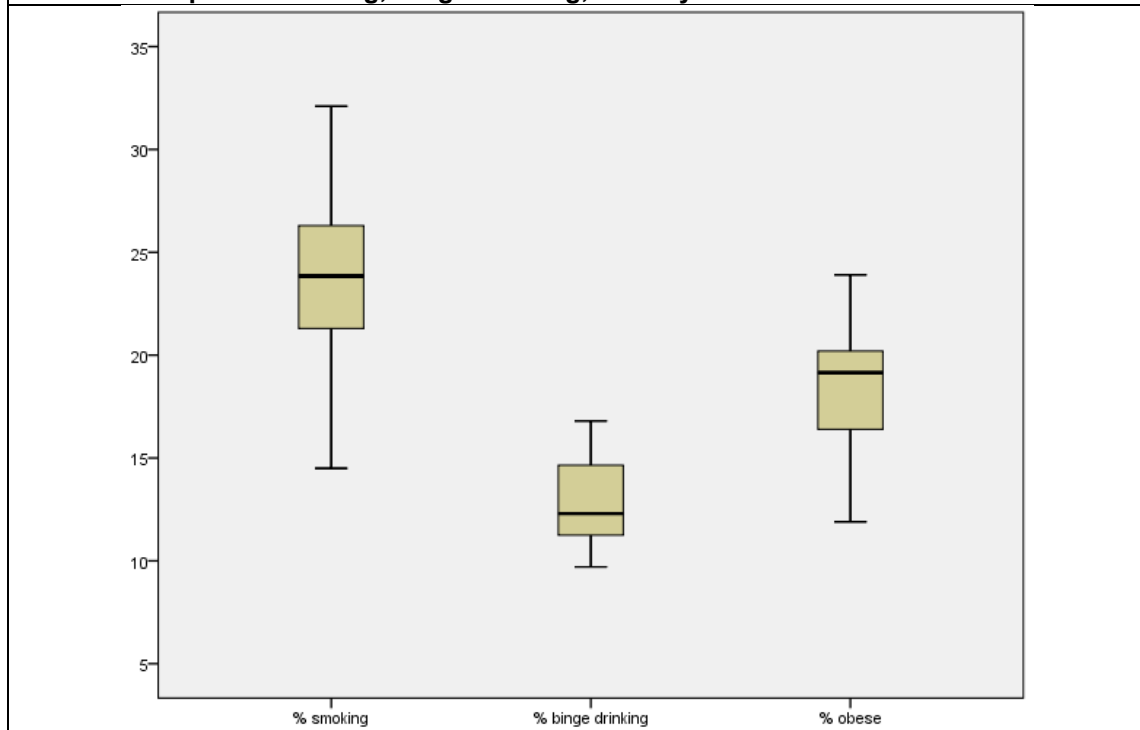


Chart 6: Box plot – Male life expectancy; Female life expectancy

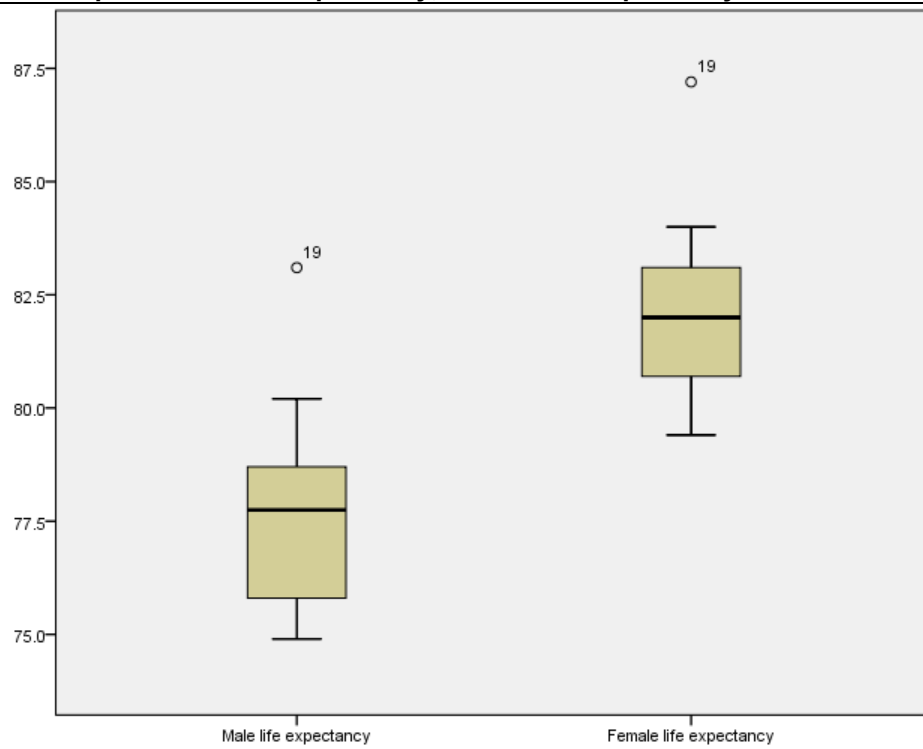


Chart 7: Box-Plot – Deprivation

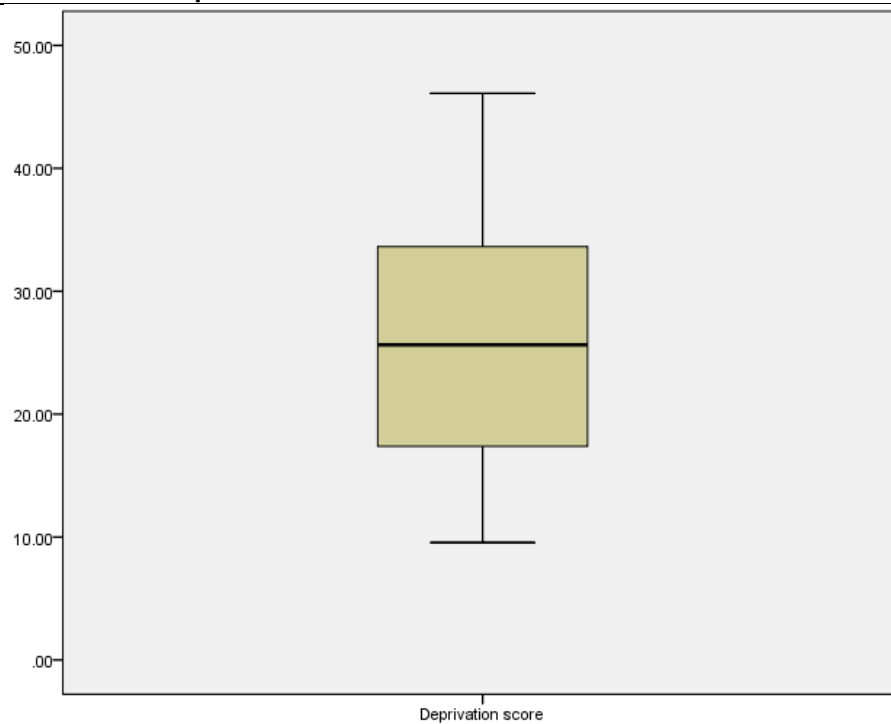
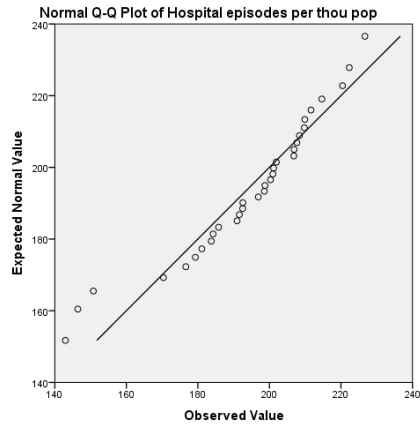
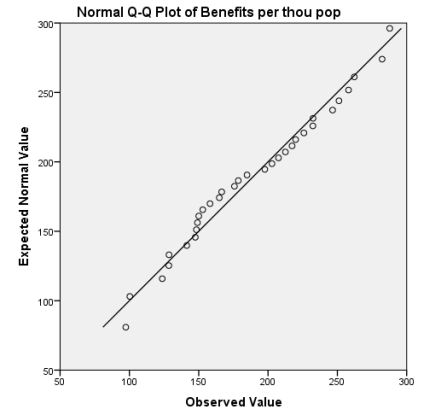
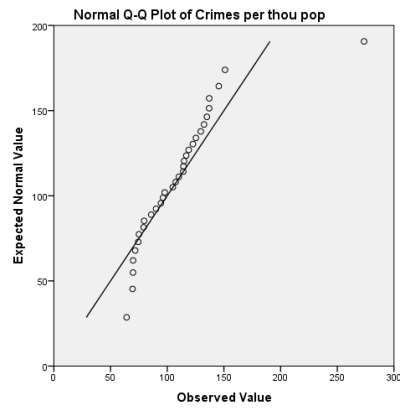
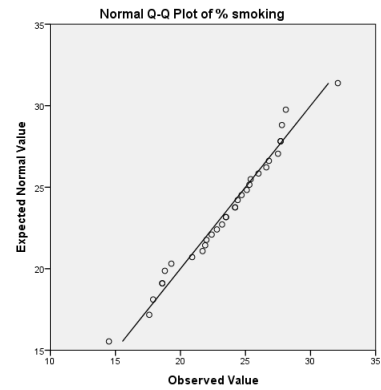
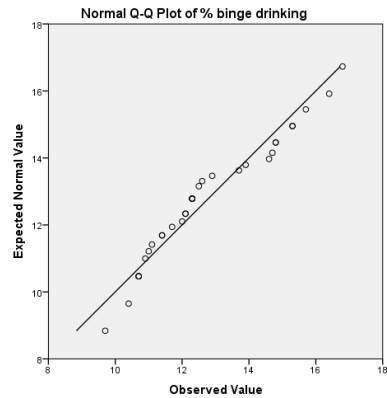
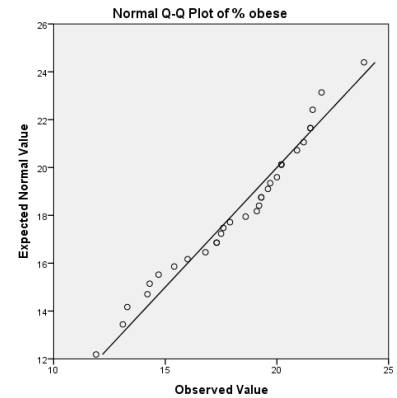
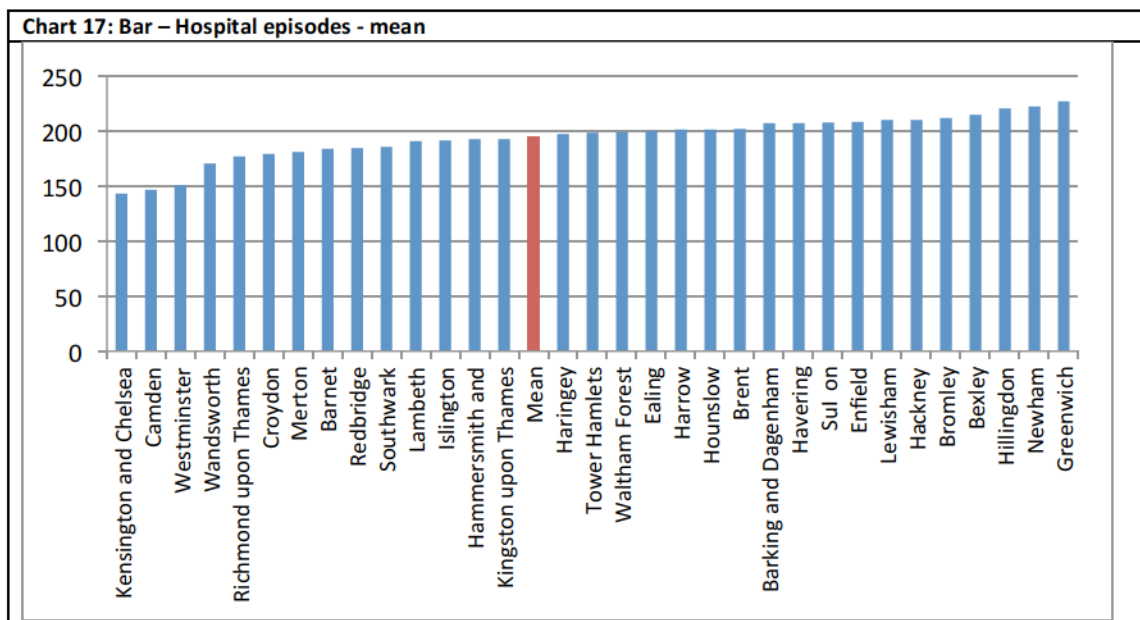
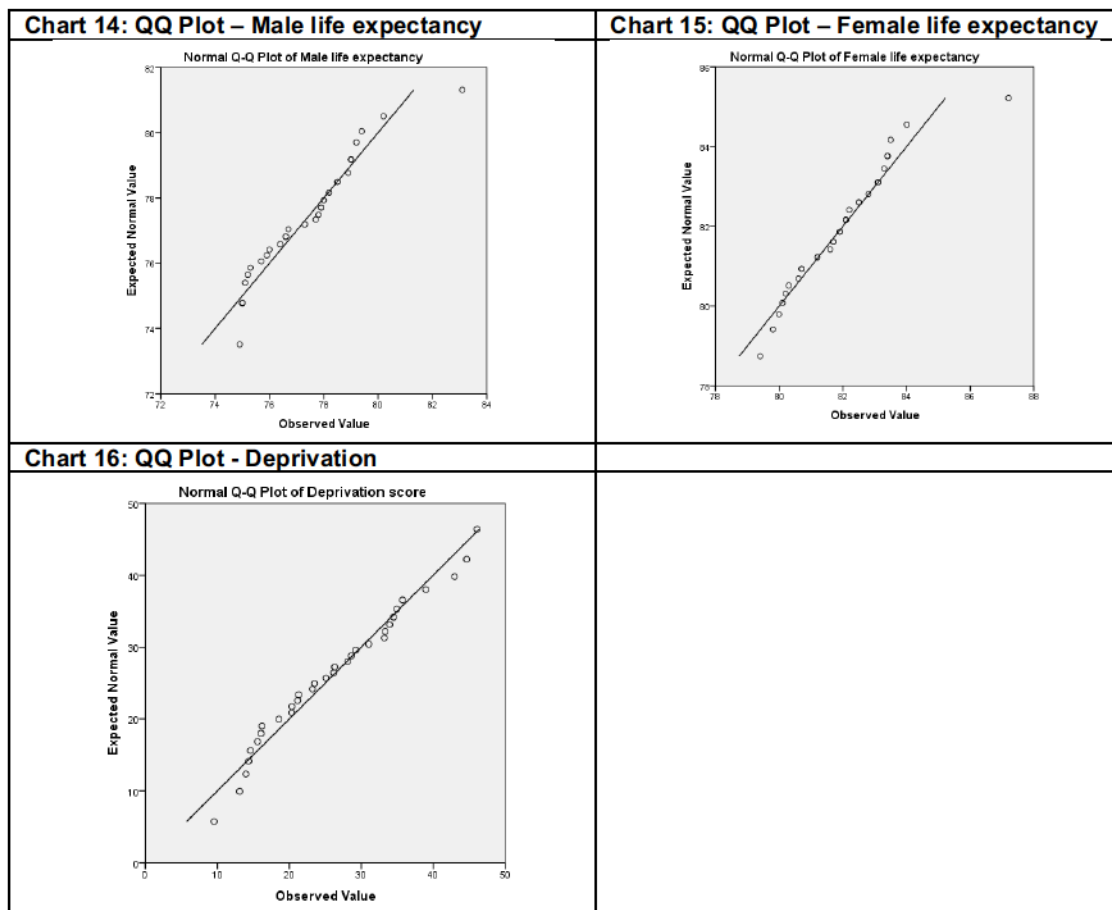
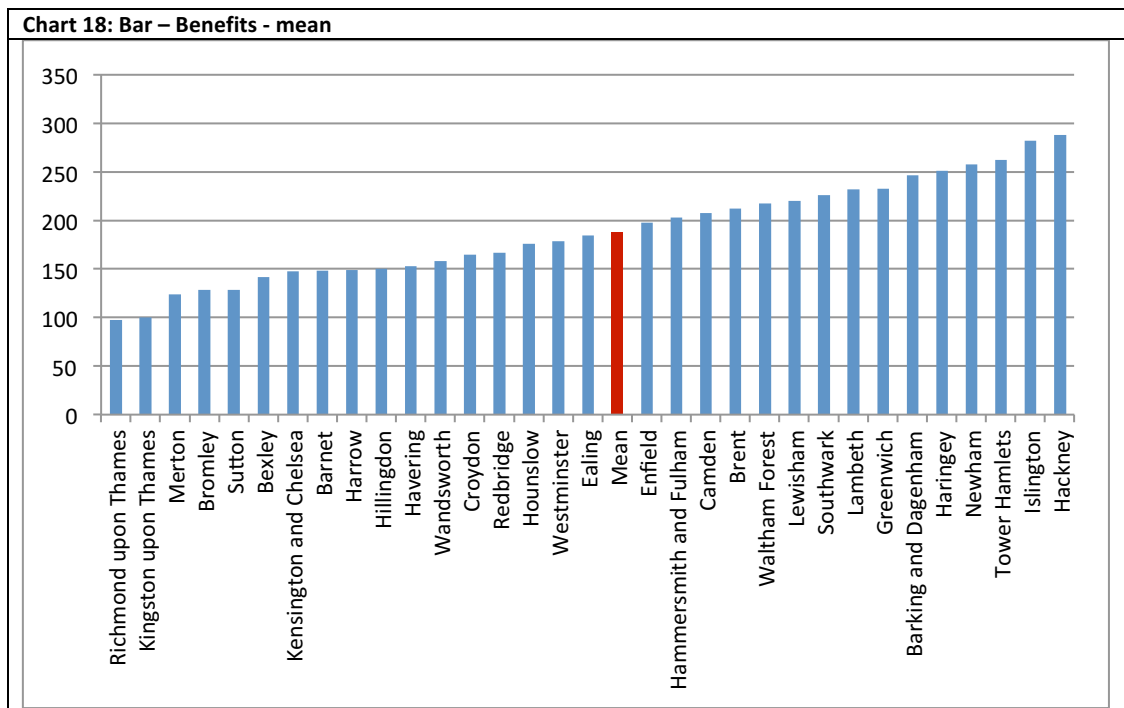


Chart 8: QQ Plot – Hospital episodes**Chart 9: QQ Plot - Benefits****Chart 10: QQ Plot - Crimes****Chart 11: QQ Plot - Smoking****Chart 12: QQ Plot – Binge Drinking****Chart 13: QQ Plot - Obesity**

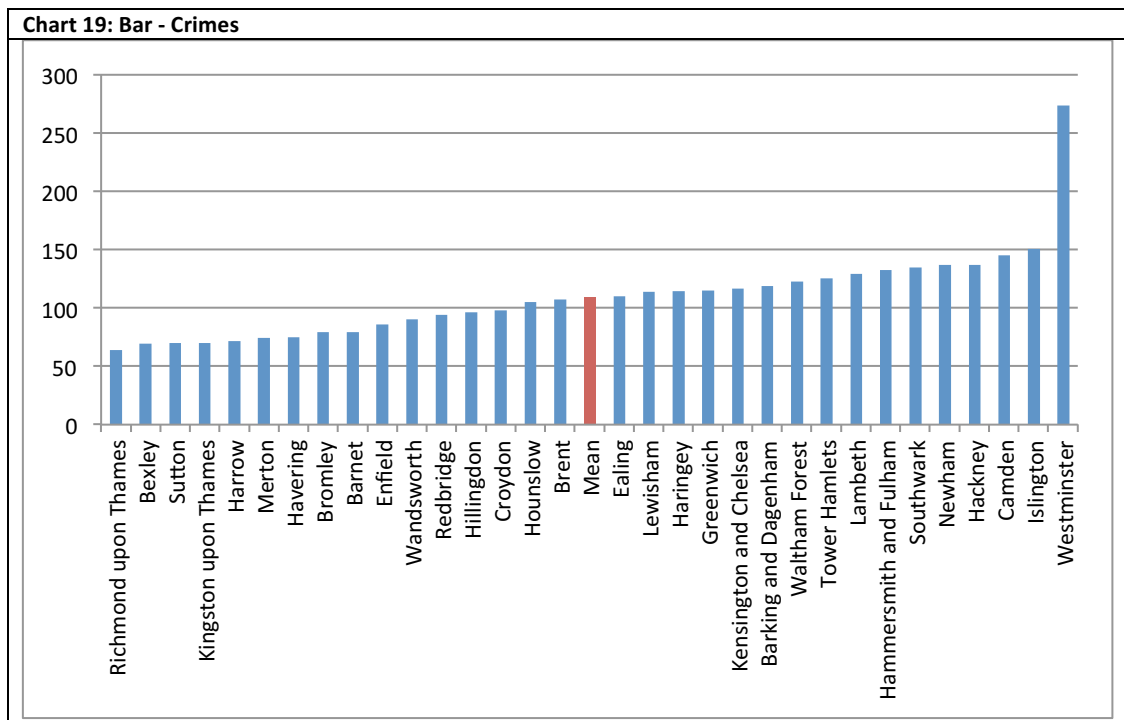




2) Data on Crime show one odd value (Westminster: 273.36), which greatly exceeds the average of crimes per thousand people in London (Chart 4 and 9) – Westminster being a tourism venue. Despite the presence of such value, crimes are quite normally distributed across the city (there is no significant difference between the mean and the median). The Olympic boroughs are positioned on the right side of the chart along with the other inner London's boroughs – including Kensington and Chelsea (Chart 19). That means that the number of crimes in East London is included in the normal distribution of crimes across the whole London, and does not indicate any 'extraordinary' value.

Tab. 14: One-Sample Test - Crimes

	Test Value = 108.8494					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	90% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Crimes per thou pop	.112	31	.912	.77492	-10.9748	12.5247



3) Deprivation is characterised by normally distributed values (Chart 7) which slightly tend toward the lower region of the chart (Richmond upon Thames: 9.55) – no significant difference existing between the mean and the median (Tab. 20). The boroughs with the highest deprivation score are Newham (42.95), Tower Hamlets (44.64) and Hackney (46.1) – which almost double the average value (26.08). However, similarly to Benefits and Crime, they do not represent extreme values exceeding the normal distribution of deprivation across London (Chart 18).

Tab 15: One-Sample Test – Smoking

	Test Value = 23.850					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	90% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
% smoking	-.572	31	.572	-.3875	-1.537	.762

Tab 16: One-Sample Test – Binge drinking

	Test Value = 12.300					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	90% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
% binge drinking	1.435	31	.161	.4844	-.088	1.057

Tab. 17: One-Sample Test - Obesity

	Test Value = 19.150					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	90% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
% obese	-1.646	31	.110	-.8594	-1.745	.026

Tab 18: One-Sample Test – Male life expectancy

	Test Value = 77.750					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	90% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Male life expectancy	-1.012	31	.319	-.3375	-.903	.228

Tab. 19: One-Sample Test – Female life expectancy

	Test Value = 82.000					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	90% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Female life expectancy	-.068	31	.946	-.0188	-.488	.451

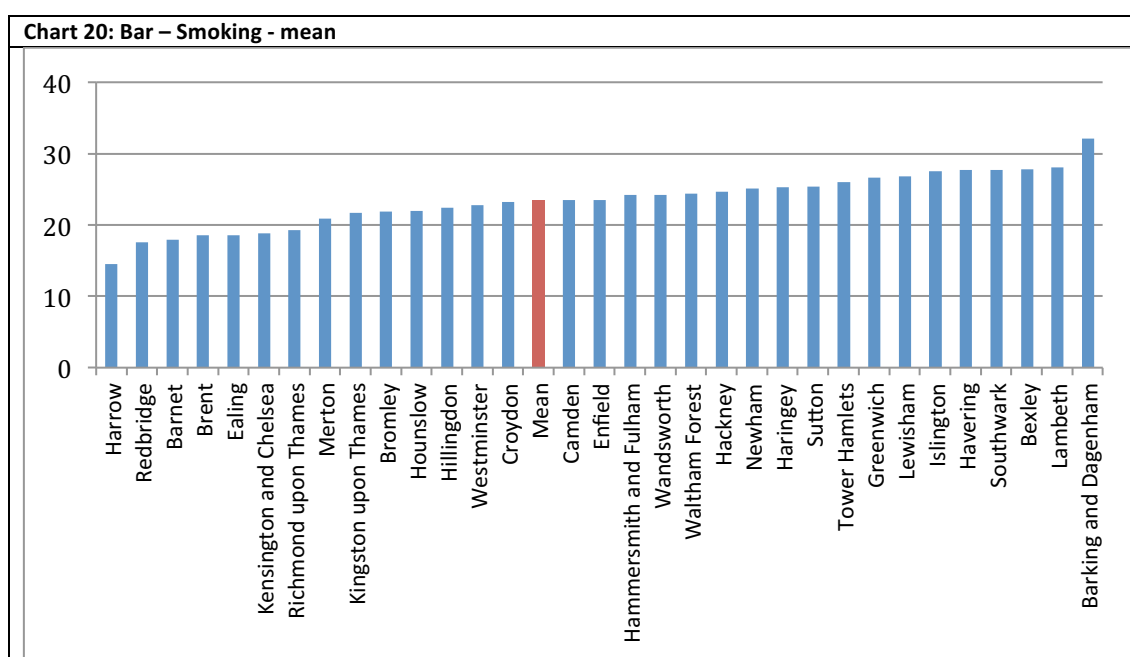
Tab. 20: One-Sample Test - Deprivation

	Test Value = 25.6450					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	90% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Deprivation score	.253	31	.802	.44031	-2.5070	3.3876

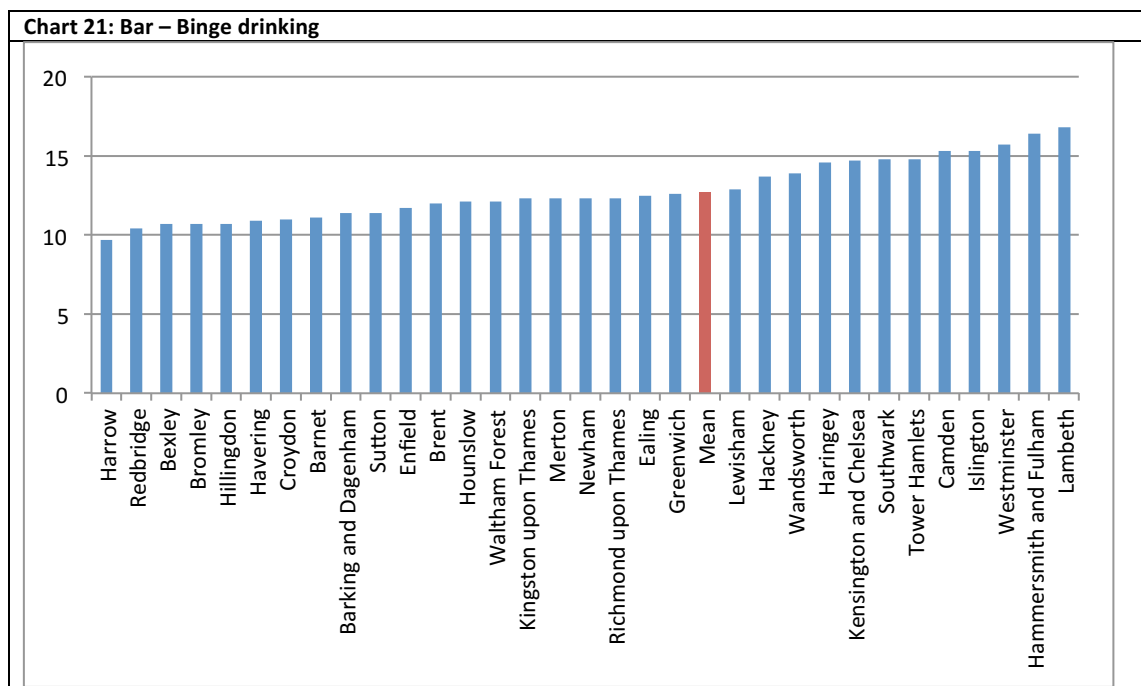
4) Hospital episodes. The box plot reports some odd values (Chart 4), while the T test indicates that the null hypothesis cannot be accepted (Tab. 12). Such odd values correspond to Kensington and Chelsea (142.96) and Camden (146.43). Westminster (150.78) is quite far from the average value too. Newham and Greenwich have the highest number of hospital episodes, but do not represent extreme values, as they are reasonably coherent with the average value and the values of all the other boroughs of London (Chart 8; 17).

5) Smoking. The T test (Tab. 15) coefficient is .572, which indicates a relatively significant difference between the mean and the median. That is a consequence of two values on the upper and the lower side of the Box plot (Chart 5) and the QQ plot (Chart 11), which are far from the average value and tend to diverge from a linear distribution. These values refer to Harrow (14.5) and Barking and Dagenham (32.1). Despite that, the Box plot shows that smoking is quite normally distributed across London and that, therefore, there is no specificity characterising East London and the Olympic boroughs (Chart 20).

6) Obesity is characterised by a significant difference between the mean and the median (Tab 17). The Box plot (Chart 5) suggests that there are few boroughs characterised by a higher number of obese people. Two boroughs show values significantly different from the majority of other boroughs (Chart 13). These are Tower Hamlets and Barking and Dagenham (Chart 22); which, however, represent no extraordinary values and are coherent with the values of all London's boroughs.



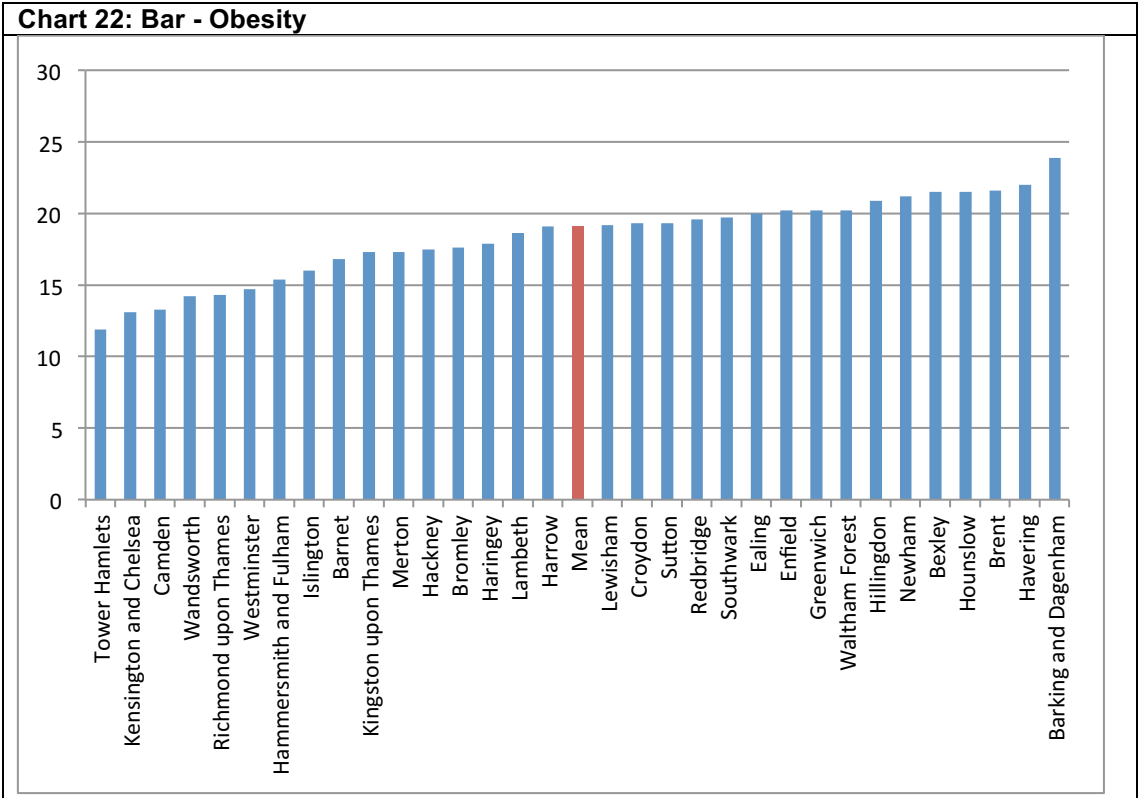
7) Binge drinking. The Frequency test (Tab 11) and T test (Tab 16) report a significant difference between the mean and the median. The Box plot (Chart 5) shows that the median is positioned in the lower side of the plot, shaping a long tail in the higher part of the chart. The QQ plot (Chart 12) also indicates that some values tend to diverge from a normal distribution curve. However, there is no odd value regarding the binge drinking, which emerges as a phenomenon equally diffused across London. Again, as for the other variables considered so far, there is no specificity characterising East London, whose values are coherent with the average value (Chart 21).



8) Male Life Expectancy. The Frequency test (Tab. 11) does not show any significant difference between the mean and the median. Nevertheless, the T test (Tab. 18) reports a .319 two tailed significance coefficient. The Box Plot (Chart 6) indicates that Kensington and Chelsea's male life expectancy is far above the mean (83.1). The Q_Q plot (Chart 14) also indicates the existence of values that tend to position significantly above the mean. This is Islington: 74.9. Although such values alter the relation between the mean and the median (which is drawn toward the upper side of the plot by Kensington and Chelsea's value), no oddity characterises the Olympic boroughs (Chart 23).

9) Female Life Expectancy. Box plot (Chart 7) and QQ plot (Chart 15) f show more normally distributed values than Male Life Expectancy. This is the reason why the T

test (Tab. 19) reports a two tailed significance coefficient of .946; which indicates a non significant difference between the mean and the median. Apart from the odd value of Kensington and Chelsea (87.2) all the other boroughs indicate quite normally distributed values. Olympic boroughs' values are coherent with the average (Chart 24).



3.4. Conclusions

This chapter employs statistics to understand the extent to which East London has to be considered an area whose level of deprivation that far exceeds the levels that characterise wealthier areas of inner-London.

Such image came to colonise public discourse so as to justify a massive corporate-led urban intervention as the only viable option for East London to regain social-economic dynamism.

The correlation between deprivation, crime, the number of people of benefit and other variables indicating unhealthy and antisocial behaviours such as binge drinking, obesity and smoking has been assessed to understand whether areas with higher

deprivation and benefit score can be considered areas of crime, and how all these variables distribute across the whole London.

The analysis shows that a higher deprivation score and larger number of people on benefits do not entail a larger crime rate. This fact means that East London is not an area of crime.

Comparing the six Olympic Boroughs with all the other boroughs of London, analysis also showed that there is nothing exceptional about East London in terms of either deprivation, or benefits, of crime. For these variables are quite normally distributed across the whole London – the same being true for all the other variables that have been considered here.

All in all, despite we cannot deny that East London suffers higher deprivation than wealthier areas of inner London, numbers show that the hypothesis of East London as ‘one of the most deprived areas in Europe’ (deprivation meaning a whole range of unhealthy and antisocial behaviours) cannot be accepted. As there is nothing ‘extraordinary’ about East London, there is no need for any ‘special’ policy and intervention to enact processes of social and economic growth.

The Theoretical and Methodological Framework

4.1. Introduction

To focus on the *preconditions* of the process of East London urban regeneration raises a number of epistemological, theoretical and methodological issues.

First: Why *preconditions*? As I shall explain later, most of the literature on cities tends to envision urban space as a ‘subject’, with intrinsic qualities to be ‘objectively’ observed and analysed. Such *subjectivisation* of cities implies their *de-subjectivisation*. That is to say, the fact of looking at cities and the dynamics of urban, social, economic and institutional structuring as the product of impersonal forces from which social agency is either expunged or reduced to a passive role.

Drawing on Michel Foucault’s theory of power, I start from the assumption that nothing is fundamental in the social realm (2002c). The urban form and functions, the social order, the economic organisation and the institutional framework are not essential features of cities. In other words, it is my belief that such urban form and functions, social order, economic organisation and institutional framework are not objective facts that work according to some sort of self-sufficient mechanism and force. These different spheres of the urban realm are social constructions that rely on precise sets of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests.

To give an example, cities such as London and New York are not ‘global cities’ because they *are* global cities. Although the notion of ‘global’ involves a range of diverse kinds of economic and productive activities (Sassen 2001), it refers in the case of these two cities to a very specific sector: finance. The dominant representation of London and New York as ‘global cities’ relies on their ability to succeed in the financial services industry. The existence of such a structured financial industry needs therefore to be interpreted in relation to a precise vision of the city, which entails:

1) a specific set of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests; 2) a precise system of power relations; 3) a consequent model of urban, social, economic and institutional development. More importantly, for such set of worldviews, ideologies,

ideas, beliefs and interests to be enacted; for such system of power relation to be imposed; and for such a model of urban, social, economic and institutional development to be realised, social actors need to engage in social-political action. For social-political action (which I call *discourse*) is the space where different social agents act to gain consensus and hegemony and realise their vision of the city.

First, if we are to understand the urban renewal of East London, we need to shift from the description of the actual transformation of place to the analysis of the complex of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests that shape the discourse (the economic, political, media and legal discourse) of regeneration. Discourse is enacted by specific social actors to turn a precise idea of the city into a consequent urban, social, economic and institutional order.

Second, what is to be understood by *urban*? Most of the interpretations and studies on urban space (Carmona 2010b, Kohn 2004, Varna and Tiesdell 2010) focus on the urban-architectural form, uses, functions and ownership; which are thought to be able to affect the very practices and character (public/private, democratic/undemocratic) of place. As I said above and I will explain later, urban space has no intrinsic qualities. Space cannot engender freedom or oppression, democracy or tyranny by its mere urban and architectural configuration (Foucault 1994). The same is true for ownership. A publicly owned and/or controlled space does not necessarily imply publicness in terms of democracy, openness and inclusion. It might be as undemocratic (in terms of public control over decision-making processes) and inaccessible to public use as a privatised space can be. Other scholars like Sassen (2001), Harvey (2006) and Lefebvre (1991) interpret cities as being determined by some sort of impersonal social, economic and productive forces.

I believe instead the city consists of the reciprocal relations between urban form and functions, the social order, the economic organisation and the institutional structure. In cities the notion of the 'urban' implies a specific social order and economic organisation; while at the same time the social order and the economic organisation are materialised in a specific urban order. The urban, the social and the economic are reflected in a precise institutional structure; which is where the relationships between different institutions operating at different levels (multinational companies, corporations, the national and local government, governmental and non-governmental agencies, associations, local communities, etc.) are regulated. There is no dominance of

one these dimension over the others and no clear-cut distinction between them. These dimensions are embedded each within the other and together constitute the urban realm.

Therefore, the third question is: How does the relationship between the urban realm and the economic organisation of cities work? How is such a relationship to be conceived? Once we accept the idea that there is a reciprocal relation between urban space, the social order, the economic organisation and institutional framework; and the urban is made of all these dimensions together, a vertical and hierarchical understanding of the relationship between the urban and the economic realm is no longer a viable one to understand urban change. The implication of such a vertical and hierarchical understanding is to reduce the urban to the passive receiver of an over-determining function, typically the economic order. This in turn implies the separation of the urban from the economic and the creation of two different spheres. For to establish the dominance of one sphere (the economic) over the other (the urban) does not entail a dialectic exchange between the two. It implies the transformation of the city into a subject to be objectively known from which social agency is either absent or reduced to a passive role (*subjectivisation by de-subjectivisation*).

In fact, to think that the urban is determined by the economic does not entail any integration of these spheres; but their separation in the form of the dominance of one (the economic) over the other (the urban). Implicit to the idea that the economic sphere is the realm of impersonal forces is the notion that it is possible to objectively know cities; hence the elimination of social agency from the social process. The main limit of objective ontological and epistemological frameworks, I believe, is that they ignore the fundamental fact that the city is socially constructed – and so are the conceptual frameworks being adopted to analyse cities. To expunge social agency from both the level of construction and interpretation of the social world means to theoretically preclude the possibility of transformation and change – as there is no one who can enact such processes. Conversely, to accept the idea that the societal world is made of the action and interaction between different social agents acting from different perspectives means to reinstate social agency at the level of both the construction and interpretation of the social reality, and to allow the understanding of the dynamics of transformation and change.

It will be explained how the site for such processes of transformation and change

in the urban realm is *discourse as site for social-political action*; which allows a horizontal and dynamic interpretation of the relationships between the urban, social, economic and institutional spheres of which the city is made.

Apart from complex theoretical issues, there is, I believe, a more basic reason for this. Exchange in the social realm occurs through communication. *Discourse as site for social-political action* is where different social actors sustaining different sets of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests, act and interact to gain consent and hegemony – action and interaction occurring through speech. Once consent and hegemony are achieved, this complex of visions and values can be turned into real policies that enact processes of transformation and change of the urban, social, economic and institutional spheres.

It is my belief that to emphasise the role of discourse (hence of social and human agency) in processes of urban formation entails the possibility to theoretically envision and practically enact the dynamics of urban transformation and change. How is it possible to conceive change without an active agent to enact such change? How can an impersonal economic force determine what would come to be an equally impersonal urban order? If impersonal, hence unquestionable, economic forces necessarily produce a consequent urban order how do processes of transformation and change occur?

The relevance of all this to this research is that the transformation of East London into a site for shopping, tourism, leisure and corporate investment is the product of no impersonal force. For it relies on precise sets of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests that active and independent social actors sustain.

4.2. Epistemological and theoretical framework: Communicative action, discourse and power

4.2.1. Habermas' theory of "communicative action"

The focus on discourse as site for social-political action is based on the idea that social reality is made up of social interaction; and that for social interaction to occur communication between individuals is necessary.

The relevance of Habermas' theory to this work lies in the *de-idealisation* of

truth. In his discussion about the foundation of law, Habermas takes a critical stance toward the XVIII century concept of practical reason, the XIX century concept of history (in both its Hegelian and Marxist form), and systems theory. By placing the source of law in the subject's universal apparatus of categories, Kant detaches practical reason from social, political and cultural orders. As Habermas explains, the concept of practical reason relates to the sphere of the individual "moral autonomy", but cannot account for the construction of society and citizenship (1). Hegel envisions history as a teleological process that finds its fulfilment in the state, which becomes the subject of law. In so doing, Hegel de-subjectivises the process of law production, as he makes it depend on the agency of an impersonal force that he calls the "objective spirit" (ibid.). Such a de-subjectivisation is not resolved in the Marxist view of history and the social process.

Although Marxist theories substitute Hegel's objective spirit with the millenary process of the liberation of the proletariat, individuals are somehow enveloped within a process that they cannot control and that culminates in the dissolution of the state itself. The Marxists would argue that the individual is supplanted by a class interest that is conscious of its capacity to effect social change. The emphasis on such a class interest might seem to acknowledge the possibility for a free and independent social action. Still, in the Marxist view of the social order, the proletariat is turned into an impersonal force that leads to the dissolution of the (bourgeois) State and the realisation of communism by a teleological process. To put it simply, the proletariat becomes itself a structuring force as powerful as capital that absorbs individual subjects. However, I believe that without free and independent subjects to question the status quo (whether this is determined by capital or the proletariat) no change is possible.

In a different way, but with similar epistemological consequences, system theories look at the state as a subsystem alongside other subsystems (2). Social agents and individuals do not play any active role in the production of law and cease to exist as independent and conscious knowing subjects.

By *de-idealising* truth, Habermas aims at constructing a theory of communicative reason to envision communication as operating neither at the level of the individual conscious in a way that it is detached from the process of society production; nor at the level of a 'macrosubject' such as the state (3). Communicative reason instead operates at the level of the interactions between social actors, which is where shared validity

claims are construed. What is important in Habermas' theory of communicative action is that such validity claims are not intrinsically objective. Once there is agreement among the members of a community and/or society about the truthfulness of a validity claim, then such claim becomes part of the background of shared values on the basis of which individuals operate and interact. Here lies the tension between *validity* and *facticity*, *facts* and *norms*. Validity claims and values are in fact open to criticism.

“Communicative reason thus makes an orientation to validity claims possible, but it does not itself supply and substantive orientation for managing practical tasks – it is neither informative nor immediately practical. [...] Normativity in the sense of the obligatory orientation of action does not coincide with communicative rationality. Normativity and communicative rationality *intersect* with one another where the justification of moral insights is concerned. Such insights are reached in a hypothetical attitude and carry only the weak force of rational motivation” (5).

Such weakness resides in the fact that communicative reason does not coincide with any transcendental, *a priori*, impersonal and structural dimension that determines human actions and morality. For it is construed through the non-coercive process of reaching understanding between social actors (6). In other words, through the dynamic process of linguistic, logical and rational argumentation and interaction, which always makes validity claims questionable and criticisable. Therefore, the use of language to reach mutual understanding “functions in such a way that the participants either agree on the validity claimed for their speech acts or identify points of disagreement, which they conjointly take into consideration in the course of further interaction” (18).

There is a circular relationship in Habermas' thought between language, the construal of mutual understanding on validity claims, their transformation into facts, and the construction of the societal world. Such a relationship works on the two interconnected levels of reaching understanding between individuals on validity claims and the construction of a background of shared values on the basis of which social actors operate, and that they take for granted. In other words, validity claims are socially construed through the action and interaction between social agents; and constitute at the same time an ‘objective’ system of values that provides the background for further actions and interaction. The implication of this for research on the processes of urban

transformation and change is that social agents operate within a pre-existing (hence, 'objective') urban, social, economic and institutional context. Transformation and change in the urban realm occurs once agreement has been reached on a new vision of the city. Once such an agreement has been reached, the new vision of the city is turned into an 'objective' fact: a new urban, social, economic and institutional order.

Habermas' theory of communicative action allows the de-structuring of social relations and their re-contextualisation within the realm of human affairs. To say that processes of transformation and change are discursive in nature does not mean that the societal world is fragmented into a multiplicity of unrelated individual representations. It means, on the contrary, that transformation and change occur on the basis of shared, hence 'objective' values that can be discussed, questioned and changed. The site for such discussion, questioning and change is action and interaction through speech; that is, discourse as social-political action.

This fact entails two assumptions on which this work is based. The first is that the city and its urban order, social, economic and institutional order are a social construction that relies on discursive practices. The objective quality of such a construction lies in a secular process of accumulation of knowledge. A knowledge that is construed through discussing and questioning the validity claims that people living in a precise space and time share. The concept of democracy, for example, was first developed during the 6th century B.C. in ancient Greece. It has been constantly changing in content, forms and practices since then, giving rise to different types of state organisation, social order and structures of governance. The idea of democracy constitutes today in the so-called Western world a background value that each individual has internalised and gives for granted – and this is true also for those who question it. However, the content, forms and practices of democracy are still changing through a constant process of discussion, revision and amendment of validity claims.

This brings us to the second assumption of this work: transformation and change in the social realm are possible as long as social actors engage in a communicative action – the intrinsic purpose of communicative action being the reaching of an understanding among social actors.

This also means that if, on the one hand, social actors are the most fundamental agents of transformation and change; these are only possible as long as social actors transpose their worldviews, ideologies, ideas beliefs and interests from the level of mere

statements onto the level of social-political action. In other words, for Habermas the production of society relies on processes of discussion on validity claims between social actors. Once an agreement has been reached, a validity claim can be turned into a fact, which can be interpreted as an element of social integration – only to be questioned once doubts are raised about its truthfulness and legitimacy.

The relevance of Habermas' theory of communicative action to this research is that it facilitates an interpretation of the processes of transformation and change in cities based on social-political action. It is my belief that the urban form and function, the social order, the economic organisation and the institutional structure of cities are discursive and non-discursive at the same time. Transformation and change in these various spheres occurs through the discussion on the possible models of urban, social, economic and institutional development – which entail different visions of the city. Change in the knowledge of one of these realms implies change in the others. As this change occurs it becomes a *fact*. For it reflects a new knowledge of the city and a new organisation of the city's urban, social, economic and institutional order that social agents share and accept. Once they become a *fact*, that is, something that social actors accept and share, both such knowledge about and organisation of the city are no longer subjected to discursive action. However, since facticity reflects a weak reason, the new order can be questioned, and the process of transformation and change can be enacted.

4.2.2. Foucault and Arendt's theory of power

This interpretation of communicative action implies a further dimension of discourse: the dimension of power. As I shall explain, dominant sets of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests imply precise social relations of power between different social actors (political parties, unions, institutions, corporations, companies, local communities, associations, governmental and non-governmental agencies, etc.).

Michel Foucault interprets power in terms of discourse. That is, a system of knowledge and truth that arises from the specific relations of power between social actors. In relation to the construction of knowledge, this means that there is no objectivity in the object of analysis, the field of enquiry, or the knowing subject. The object of analysis, the field of enquiry and the knowing subject are the products of relations of power between institutions, social actors, systems of laws and norms, grids

of classification that operate at different levels (2002a: 49).

XIX century psychopathology, for example, constitutes a discourse that is made of the relationships between specific “surfaces of emergence” (the family, the immediate social group, the work situation, the religious community), “authorities of delimitation” (police, penal law, religious authority, literary and art criticism), and “grids of specification” (the soul, the body, the life and history of individuals, the interplays of neuropsychological correlations) (45-47). The relationships between authorities of emergence, delimitation and specification produced in the XIX century both the discipline (psychopathology) and the object of analysis (the mentally ill) and the knowing subject (the psychiatrist).

The very same kind of power relations involves society as a whole. Power does not just entail the coercive force of states (Foucault 2002c: 122), but, more broadly, the systems of truth that individuals share, accept and agree on. This constitutes a very important element in Foucault’s theory of power. For, differently from violence, which is an act of coercion, power needs acceptance to be exerted. Power implies, to put it differently, freedom: the freedom to accept, but also question it.

The relevance of such a notion of discourse to this work lies in what follows. To focus on the preconditions of East London urban regeneration means to focus on the framework of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests that sustains a specific vision of the city’s development, and implies a specific system of power relations between different social actors. Furthermore, the idea of power as entailing freedom, creates the possibility to envision transformation and change on a theoretical level and not be paralysed by the rigid cause-effect theories of change. If power implies freedom, it is always possible for social actors to question existing orders of truth, knowledge and power; and thus enact the dynamics of transformation and change.

However, while Foucault, on the one hand, discloses the possibility for processes of transformation and change; he freezes such possibility, on the other, by envisioning power as a structural order that determines everything that occurs in the social realm.

“The state – Foucault writes – is superstructural in relation to a whole series of power networks that invest the body, sexuality, the family, kinship, knowledge, technology, and so forth” (123).

The implication of this perspective for a theory of urban transformation and change is to envision the city and its urban, social, economic and institutional order as a superstructure that depends on a dominant structure of power relations. Foucault also says:

“One has to dispense with the constituent subject, to get rid of the subject itself, that’s to say, to arrive at an analysis that can account for the constitution of the subject within a historical framework. And this is what I would call genealogy, that is, a form of history that can account for the constitution of knowledges, discourses, domains of objects, and so on, without having to make reference to a subject that is either transcendental in relation to the field of events or runs in its empty sameness throughout the course of history” (118).

If in Foucault’s theory the ‘subject to be dismissed’ is not only a specific discipline, but also, at the same time, the object of investigation and the knowing subject, then this latter as the agent of change disappears. For his/her actions are determined by an over-determining structural order of power, truth and knowledge over which he/she has no control. To avoid this, we need, therefore, to complement such theory with a notion of power as the realm for a free and independent social-political action. That is, as the realm where accepted orders of truth, knowledge and power can be at the same time discussed, questioned and criticised – so that processes of transformation and change can be enacted.

A solution to the disappearance of free and independent social agents, hence to the freezing of the dynamics of transformation and change, is to be found in Hannah Arendt’s theory of the public sphere, democracy, politics and power. In a similar way to Habermas’ communicative action, this theory places speech as a form of political action at the core of the social process.

According to Arendt, power works at the level of the public sphere and political action. The public sphere is the ‘space of appearance’ of differences: the space where subjects acting from different perspective interact and acknowledge their reciprocal differences. Such is the space for political action (Arendt 1998). The public sphere and

political action constitute for Hannah Arendt the precondition for (and almost synonymous with) democracy. Democracy as political action is only possible as long as social actors make use of their power to act, that is to say, of their power (and freedom) to engage in political action. Should individuals renounce such power and freedom, democracy would disappear and politics would be transformed into a matter of bureaucratic administration.

Bureaucracy is for Hannah Arendt a form of violence, which does not have to be identified with an act of coercion or physical threat only. Violence is primarily the elimination of politics from public life, hence the suspension of the power to engage in political action. In a significant page of her work on violence, Arendt writes:

“The greater the bureaucratization of public life, the greater will be the attraction of violence. In a fully developed bureaucracy there is nobody left with whom one can argue, to whom one can present grievances, on whom the pressures of power can be exerted. Bureaucracy is the form of government in which everybody is deprived of political freedom, of the power to act; for the rule of Nobody is not no-rule, and where all are equally powerless we have a tyranny without a tyrant” (1970: 81).

The antidote to bureaucracy lies, therefore, in political action. Political action and democracy are in fact practices that need to be exerted to exist. When social agents renounce their power to act, then bureaucracy takes over and democracy disappears. On the contrary, when social agents exert their right to political action, democracy thrives and bureaucracy as form of government vanishes, only to be reduced to its ordinary function. This also means that both political action and democracy are ends in themselves: in the same way as the aim of politics is to guarantee the possibility to engage in political action, so the aim of democracy is democracy.

Both the idea of political action, hence democracy, as ends in themselves, and the notion of power as the realm for politics and democracy are key to the theoretical framework of this research. The dominant element in the discourse of East London Olympic regeneration is the concept of strategy: a strategy aimed at transforming East London’s public space into a site for tourism, leisure, shopping and corporate

investments. As I shall discuss, the need to fulfil the strategy ‘on time and to budget’ is reflected in the creation of a legal framework and a structure of governance designed to minimise the level of political discussion and limit the mechanism of public control, accountability and participation to the processes of policy and decision making. Habermas himself acknowledges that since communicative action reflects a ‘weak’ order of truth, as it guarantees the possibility for contestation, it can be turned into a strategic action to resolve (or avoid) the conflict between different parties (Habermas, 2010: xvi-xvii). The discourse of strategy in relation to the urban renewal of London’s East End is thus reflected in a limitation of the power to act for those social actors who might sustain an alternative vision of urban space and its development; in Arendtian terms, in a limitation/elimination of the play of differences from the processes of policy and decision-making.

To complement Foucault’s theory of discourse (discourse as systems of truth, knowledge and power relations) with Arendt’s notion of power as the realm of politics, allows an understanding of East London urban renewal as being based on a precise epistemological-theoretical assumption. Such an assumption is that the enactment of the vision of urban public space as site for tourism, leisure, shopping and corporate investment does not depend on an impersonal structure of power relations over which social actors have no control. The enactment of such a vision, it is argued, relies on a specific set of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests that conscious social actors have turned into a social-political action. Such an action has succeeded in gaining a wider social-political consent and being turned into real policies, structures of governance and legal framework; which in turn enabled a consequent dynamic of urban, social, economic and institutional transformation and change. To place social-political action at the core of processes of transformation and change, and to acknowledge that consent and hegemony can always be denied, means that dominant visions of urban space can be questioned, criticised and challenged – should different social actors succeed in gaining consensus and hegemony.

In this section we have seen how Jürgen Habermas’ theory of communicative action is useful to understand the formation of orders of truth and knowledge on the basis of a dynamic process of discussion on criticisable validity claims. It has been argued that the agreement on validity claims and their transformation into facts imply the structuring of precise power relations between different social actors – each one of them sustaining different sets of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests.

Drawing on Michel Foucault's theory of power, it has been discussed how it is such sets of values and their underpinning orders of knowledge, truth and power relations that give processes of urban, social, economic and institutional transformation and change their content. The implications of this way of envisioning such orders of truth, knowledge and power, in terms of an over-determining structure over which social actors have no control, have also been discussed. It has been explained how such a way of understanding discourse is to risk freezing the possibility of transformation and change in terms of questioning the *status quo* and in terms of the process of the internal transformation of an existing urban, institutional, social and economic system. The solution to this has been identified in Hannah Arendt's theory of public sphere, politics, power and democracy. In fact, Arendt provides a way to understand power as the realm for social-political action. According to this theory, power becomes the site where different sets of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests sustained by conscious and independent social actors compete to gain social-political consent and hegemony. And thus be turned into 'real' policies, structures of governance and legal frameworks to materialise a specific vision of the city and its urban, social, economic and institutional development.

4.3. Methodology: Critical Discourse Analysis

4.3.1. The relevance of Critical Realism to a discourse theory of urban change

The processes of urban formation rely on a dynamic and non-hierarchical interaction between *discourse as site for social-political action* and the different spheres of which the city is made (the urban form and functions, the social order, the economic organisation and the institutional structure). As these spheres constitute *discursive* and *non-discursive* dimensions at the same time, this kind of horizontal interaction becomes possible. These spheres are *non-discursive* constructions as they have an existence that is to a certain extent independent of social actors' agency. They are, in Habermasian terms, a *fact*: the background for action and interaction that social actors take for granted; which exists whether social actors are consciously aware of it or not – and whether they question it or not. These spheres are at the same time *discursive*, as they are construed through the discursive action and interaction between social actors. Once social actors reach an agreement about the urban, social, economic and institutional order of the city, such spheres are again turned into *non-discursive* construction.

To analyse the complex of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests and the way in which they are reflected in the economic, political, media and legal discourse (that together constitute what I call the *preconditions* for the Olympic regeneration of East London) I adopt Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The relevance of such methodology to this research is in that it is concerned with *semiosis*. That is to say, with “the intersubjective production of meaning, in its general approach to social relations, their reproduction and transformation” (Fairclough, Jessop and Sayer, 2010: 202). Since the dynamics of urban transformation and change rely on the dialectical relationships between the *discursive* (read ‘subjective’) and *non-discursive* (read ‘objective’) dimensions of the urban, social, economic and institutional spheres of cities, the version of the CDA that I adopt is rooted in Critical Realism (CR).

In addressing the issue of causation in relation to semiosis, Fairclough, Jessop and Sayer argue that “semiosis is both meaningful and causally efficacious” (2010: 204). They explain this on the basis of three fundamental features of critical realism.

The first of such features regards the distinction between the *real*, the *actual* and the *empirical*.

“The ‘real’ refers to objects, their structures or natures and their causal powers and liabilities. The ‘actual’ refers to what happens when these powers and liabilities are activated and produce change. The ‘empirical’ is the subset of the real and the actual that is experienced by actors” (204).

Such tension between the ‘real’ and the ‘actual’ is at the basis of the tension between the *discursive* and *non-discursive* elements of the processes of urban formation. Whereas the relevance of the ‘empirical’ to this research lies in the key role that is played in such processes by the way in which social actors represent and perceive the urban realm.

The second of these features is that everything that occurs in the social realm can engender change.

“Critical realism views objects – but they also make the example of persons – as structured and as having particular causal powers or liabilities” (204).

More importantly:

“Causation is about what produces change (the activation of causal powers) not about (whether observers have registered) a regular conjunction of cause events and effect events” (205).

In the theoretical model I propose, causation between discourse and the diverse spheres of the urban realm is not interpreted in rigid terms; for such causation occurs on a horizontal and non-hierarchic plane. According to this model, there is no primacy of discourse on the urban, the social, the economic or the institutional. These dimensions are discursive in nature, even though they are not to be reduced to discourse. A change that occurs in one of these spheres can provoke change in the others, as long as a different set of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests are transposed onto the level of social-political action and succeed in gaining social- political consensus and hegemony.

The third feature of CR is that:

“Reasons can operate as causes, that is, can be responsible for producing change”.

However, reasons are not synonymous with action and cannot themselves engender processes of transformation and change. According to Fairclough, Jessop and Sayer, reasons are better to be placed within “more extensive networks of concepts, beliefs, symbols and texts” (205). In the same way as reasons, networks of concepts, beliefs, symbols and texts are not themselves transformative. For they need to be turned into social-political action to be able to enact processes of transformation and change.

4.3.2. *The Dialectical-Relational Approach to CDA and its functioning in the analysis of urban change*

The critical analysis of texts (political statements, economic reports, newspaper articles, laws, acts, plans and development strategies) is the method that is employed to understand both the *construal* of the official discourse of the Olympic-led urban renewal and its construction in terms of a precise urban, social, economic and institutional order.

The distinction between *construal* and *construction* that Fairclough, Jessop and Sayer operate is key to this research. *Construal* refers to “the fallible ideas” that inform the elements of the social world; while *construction* refers to the “material processes, if any, that follow from it (2010: 209). It is, therefore, not by chance that Habermas’ distinction between ‘truth’, ‘truthfulness’ and ‘appropriateness’ in relation to *validity claims* plays a central role in Fairclough, Jessop and Sayer’s work – being truth “what is the case”, truthfulness “the intensions, beliefs, integrity, etc. of [social] agents, and appropriateness “the relation of the text to its social context” (2010: 208). The texts that I analyse relate to the truth (the urban, social, economic order of East London and the legal-institutional structure that frames the process of regeneration); the truthfulness (the worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests of the social actors that enact the process of regeneration); and the appropriateness (the relation of the texts and the values underpinning them to the context of London in the age of financial capitalism) of the Olympic regeneration of London’s East End.

CDA is “concerned – Fairclough, Jessop and Sayer explain – with the truth, truthfulness and appropriateness of texts, their production, and their interpretation. That is, it is concerned with the relationship between semiosis and the material and social world; persons and their intentions, beliefs, desires etc.; and social relations” (2010: 212).

Before discussing the relevance of such methodology to my research, it is worth focusing on the meaning of words and concepts such as *critique* and *discourse* in CDA.

According to Fairclough, the term discourse can be used in three main ways. As a way to indicate:

“a) Meaning-making as an element of the social process; b) the language associated with a particular field (e.g. ‘political discourse’); c) a way of constructing aspects of the world associated with a particular social perspective (e.g. a ‘neo-liberal discourse of globalization)’” (Fairclough, 2010a: 162-163).

Fairclough refers to *semiosis* as “meaning making as an element of the social process” (ibid.) Still, I believe that these different meanings of semiosis are not mutually exclusive and imply each other. In fact, the discourse of strategy that is analysed in this research implies both a processes of meaning-making, and a language associated with a particular field, and a way of constructing the social world from a specific perspective.

Critique is interpreted in terms of the analysis and explanation of the way in which semiosis works in the production and reproduction of unequal relations of power; and of the way in which such relations of power can be questioned, challenged and changed.

CDA is, therefore, employed to understand the way in which discourse (say, the discourse of ‘strategy’ in the Olympic regeneration of East London): a) reflects a specific vision of the city’s urban, social, economic and institutional order; b) shapes the language of the political, economic, media and legal discourse.

A further reason to employ CDA is that it relates both to the semiotic (say, sets of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests) and the non-semiotic elements of the social process (say, the urban form and policies, the social order, the economic organisation and the institutional structure of cities). The emphasis on the dialectical and relational tension between the semiotic and non-semiotic elements of the social process is at the basis of Norman Fairclough’s Dialectical-Relational Approach (DRA) to CDA; which is, to be more precise, the actual methodological framework that I employ.

The relationship between semiosis on one side and the construction of the social world on the other, is interpreted in terms of *genres*, *discourses* and *styles*. According to Fairclough (2012), genres are “semiotic ways of acting and interacting, such as news or job interviews, reports of editorials in newspapers, or advertisements on TV or the internet”; discourses are “semiotic ways of constructing aspects of the world (physical,

social or mental) which can generally be identified with different positions of perspectives of different groups of social actors” (the discourse of ‘marketing’ applied to public education and health is, as Fairclough himself explains, a valid example); style are “identities, or ‘ways on being’, in their semiotic aspect – for instance, being a ‘manager’ in the currently fashionable way in business or in universities is partly a matter of developing the right semiotic style” (164).

The order of the discourse of ‘strategy’, which I analyse in relation to the legal framework of the regeneration project, expresses an idea of public space as a site for tourism, leisure, shopping, and corporate investments. Public space, I argue, is not interpreted as an end in itself; that is, as a place where people can go without being urged to engage in some sort of superimposed activity. Public space is instead envisioned as a means to serve the interests of specific social groups, including consumers, which more or less consciously sustain a more or less homogeneous vision of the city: the city as site for shopping, tourism, leisure and corporate investment. This fact implies a specific combination of genre, discourse and style; which involves the urban, the social, the economic and the institutional dimension of the city.

As a *genre*, that is to say, as a way of acting and interacting, such a strategy based on tourism, leisure, shopping and corporate investment implies: a) precise urban form and functions, along with a process of spatial reorganisation that redefines the relationships between the East End and the West End of London; b) a change in the social order, as entitlement, access and ownership of place are redefined by a process of gentrification that is socially exclusive; c) a change in the economic organisation of place, which is reflected in a change in the way in which people use and experience space; d) a change in the structure of governance, which has an impact on the level of democratic participation and control over the processes of decision-making.

The construction of the Westfield Stratford City and its massive architectural structure to host a variety of activities (hotels, restaurants, bars, shops, stores, cinemas, concert areas, congress centres, etc.) does not just constitute a change in the architectural layout of Stratford; but involves a more profound reconfiguration of the entire area, its social-economic fabric and of the relations with the rest of East London and London as a whole. As the ‘biggest shopping centre in Europe’ and headquarter of the London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC), the Westfield is now an integral part of London’s commercial fabric, and the geographic core of one of the most

prominent institutions in the regeneration process. Stratford is the point of convergence of a number of the Underground lines and one of the key national and international rail services stations in London. The increase in house prices is forcing low income families to migrate to more affordable areas, and is at the same time encouraging international investors and West enders to relocate or buy properties – thereby sustaining the growth of the real estate sector. This fact, and the fact of being the destination of tourists and middle and upper class Londoners, is not just changing the practices and uses of space; but also the way in which Stratford, once described as one of the most deprived areas in London, is perceived, experienced and represented. Such an urban, social and economic transformation is accompanied by a transformation in urban governance. The necessity to ‘deliver’ the regeneration project ‘on time and to budget’ entails the weakening of the mechanisms of democratic control and accountability. The formation of public- private partnerships and a rigid policy on information disclosure are aimed at limiting politics and public discussion – so to accelerate the completion of the project as much as it is possible.

The transformation of Stratford into a site for shopping, leisure, tourism and corporate investment also entails a change in *style*; that is, in the identity of place, values, habits and collective behaviours. Such a change in style is key in the politics of representation that is enacted to attract more and more tourism and investment flows. The shift in the construal of Stratford’s identity from a place of deprivation to a place for lifestyle is accompanied by the rise of a new set of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests that underpins a specific vision of the city and public space. The city and public space are no longer envisioned as sites for exerting citizenship and reproducing democracy; but as spaces where the mechanisms and values of financial capitalism are constantly produced and reproduced. This new way of acting and interacting in space affects social behaviours and habits; and the way in which people think about their role and position in relation to the new urban, economic and social environment. As I explain later, such a transformation of the city and public space also entails a transformation in the style and form of political communication. Once the mechanisms of democratic participation in the processes of decision and policy-making are circumvented, there is no one to try and come to an agreement with; no one to find a common ground with. Thus, the more prescriptive and direct language of bureaucracy and advertising, the more such language constitutes the styles and forms of political communication.

As a *discourse*, that is, as a ‘way of representing’, ‘strategy’ implies a precise vision of the city’s urban development, which is based on tourism, shopping, leisure and corporate investments. As I shall explain, such a way of representing East London is functional to the strengthening of London’s image as a leading global city, with a vibrant economic and ‘cultural’ environment. Culture itself becomes a marketing strategy. The concept of culture largely exceeds the scope of traditional cultural activities – to the point that the relation with the ‘original’ referent is lost in the background; and becomes structured in a complex of development strategies to attract investments and tourists, and transform East London into a site for lifestyle.

The combination of discourses, genres and styles forms what Fairclough calls *orders of discourse*. The notion of *orders of discourse* in DRA is of crucial importance to understanding how the discourses of various *semiotic systems* and/or *languages* (say, urban planning, architecture, advertising, etc.,) are dialectically reflected in *social structures* (say, financial capitalism), and shape *events* and *texts*. Norman Fairclough, in fact, envisions the social process as articulating in *social structures*, *social practices* and *social events*; which relate to *semiotic systems* (languages), *orders of discourse* and *texts* (including talk and ‘utterances’) (2010b: 74). Both the horizontal relations between structures and semiotic systems, practices and orders of discourse, events and texts; and the vertical relationships between structures-semiotic systems, practices-orders of discourse and events-texts are dialectic and non-hierarchical.

As outlined above, the societal world is made of discursive and non-discursive elements that imply each other but cannot be reduced to one another. So for instance, urban planning as a semiotic system where the intersubjective production of meaning occurs (Fairclough, Jessop and Sayer, 2010: 202), relates to the construction of urban space and its underpinning structure of truth, knowledge and power. But then both the physical existence of urban space and its structures of truth, knowledge and power exist independently of social actors. In other words, they constitute a background of material objects and values on the basis of which social agents act – but that social agents can change. The same is true for the relationship between social practices and orders of discourse; and the relation between social events and texts. The order of discourse of strategy in urban planning certainly shapes urban planning as a social practice. At the same time, however, the complex of worldviews, ideologies, ideas and interests shaping urban planning as a social practice affects urban planners’ actions and exists independently from urban planners’ willingness or unwillingness to critically engage

with them. Both urban planning as an order of discourse and social practice are affected and affect each other. By the same token, the Olympics and the accompanying process of East London urban regeneration rely on a discursive action that expresses a specific vision of the city and produces policies, legal frameworks and structures of governance. Once such policies, legal frameworks and structures of governance are produced, they have an existence of their own. They constitute the background for social action, but can at the same time be questioned.

According to Fairclough's model, orders of discourses mediate between semiotic systems on the one side and texts on the other.

"The relationship between what is semiotically possible (as defined by semiotic systems) – Fairclough explains – and the actual semiotic features of texts is mediated by orders of discourse as filtering mechanisms which select certain possibilities but not others" (2010: 74).

Such a causal relationship between semiotic systems and texts, hence social structures and social events, is not a hierarchic one and it needs instead to be interpreted in dynamic terms.

"Events (and texts) are locally and interactionally produced by situated agents, but in ways in which depend on the continuity of structures and practices [...]. At the same time, texts have causal effects on non-semiotic as well as semiotic elements of social life [...]. Texts are caught up in processes of meaning-making, but they are also (thereby) a part of the causal (including ideological) effects of events" (75).

The implication of this is that texts are shaped by and at the same time shape social structures and semiotic systems. This means that orders of discourse do not only work at the level of social practices, but also at the level of social events and social structures. Combinations of discourses, genres and styles shape both texts and semiotic systems/languages – indicating that there is no clear-cut distinction between social structures-semiotic systems, social practices- orders of discourse, social-events-texts.

Each of these levels operates within the other (interactionality), even though they need to be distinguished from one another.

This section focuses on the relevance of CDA to analyse the preconditions for the process of East London urban regeneration. Such preconditions lie in the complex of political statements, economic reports, newspaper articles, acts, laws, plans and development strategies, which together form the official discourse of the regeneration. It has also been discussed how a critical realist approach to discourse (discourse interpreted as a way to produce meaning through intersubjective exchange) accounts for the dialectical relationships between the *discursive* and *non-discursive* elements of the social realm – thereby avoiding the risk of the excessive subjectivisation of social life inherent in too radical social constructionist approaches.

This approach plays a central role in my understanding of the processes of urban transformation and change. It has been argued that discourse (discourse as social-political action) is not separate from the urban, social, economic and institutional dimensions of cities. In other words, in the same way as there is no primacy of the economic upon the production of urban space; so there is no deterministic dominance of discourse over the various dimensions of the urban realm. The urban form and functions, the social order, the economic organisation and the institutional structure of cities are construed through social-political action. But once such urban, social, economic and institutional context is construed/constructed, it constitutes a background of shared values and ‘material’ objects that is no longer the object of social-political action: it has an existence of its own (whether or not social actors are aware of it and critically engage it) and forms the context for a future social action.

Mediating between Processes of Urban, Social, Economic and Institutional Structuring of the City: a Discourse Theory of Urban Transformation and Change

5.1. Introduction

This chapter explores the possibility for a discourse theory of urban transformation and change to explain: 1) how processes of urban transformation and change occur; 2) how discourse works in enacting such processes; 3) how discourse works in articulating the relationships between the various spheres of which the city is made – which I synthetically indicate as urban form and functions, the social order, the economic organisation, and the institutional structure. The model I propose is based of four assumptions.

First, the city (which in this thesis is synonymous with the urban realm) is not the domain of impersonal, hence, unquestionable, economic forces, but is a social fact. That is, a social construction that relies on the visions of urban, social, economic and institutional development that social actors express on the basis of precise sets of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests.

Second, the city (as social construction) is not the product of base-superstructure and/or cause-effect relationships between the economy and the urban sphere – ‘economy’ and ‘urban sphere’ being themselves too generic notions to explain the complexities of the processes of urban formation. The city, I argue, is constituted by the dialectical and horizontal relationships between the urban form and functions, the social order, the economic organisation and the institutional structure – no hierarchy existing between them.

Third, discourse, which I interpret as site for social-political action, is neither a structural element that determines social action, as in Foucault’s work (2002c); nor it is just a semiotic element that reflects social practices and structures, as in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 2010a and 2010b; Lees, 2004). Discourse

articulates in a dynamic and dialectical way the relationships between the urban, the social, the economic and the institutional spheres of the city, and enacts processes of urban transformation and change.

Fourth, these are *discursive* and *non-discursive* spheres at the same time. They are ‘objective’ constructions that are independent from social-political action. That is, they exist whether or not social actors critically reflect on and question the existing urban, social, economic and institutional order; and whether or not social actors are aware of such an order. At the same time, these spheres are ‘subjective’ construals. For they are based on ‘material’ (the urban form and functions, the social order, the economic organisation and the institutional structure), and ‘immaterial’ elements (the visions of the city and the underpinning sets of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests) that can be questioned, challenged and changed – hence, become the object of social-political action.

The hypothesis is, therefore, that processes of urban transformation and change are not the outcome of independent forces that work according to intrinsic mechanisms and laws, but are based on social-political action. That is, discourse. Discourse as the site for social-political action is the space where social actors act and interact to gain the consensus and hegemony that are required to turn their vision of the city into a material urban, social, economic and institutional order.

The analysis is articulated in four sections. Section 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3 are propaedeutical to the discussion in section 5.4, which addresses the possibility for a discourse theory of urban transformation and change. In the first part I discuss the work of some of the most prominent urban theorists such as Saskia Sassen, David Harvey and Henri Lefebvre. These authors provide an example of a vertical and hierarchical understanding of the relation between the economic and the urban. It is argued that such an approach is not adequate to explain change as it expunges social agency from the social process. It is also argued that it has the effect of separating the economic and the urban in two different spheres; which become impersonal subjects with intrinsic characteristics to be objectively observed. Herein lies what I call, drawing on Foucault (2002a, 2002b, 202c), the tension between *subjectivisation* and *de-subjectivisation*.

The tension between *subjectivisation* and *de-subjectivisation* is addressed in section 2 in terms of discourse. Two approaches to discourse are discussed: Foucauldian

discourse analysis and CDA. Foucault's theory of power allows the interpretation of the urban realm as a social construction made of a complex of power relations, orders of truth and systems of knowledge – which the philosopher indicates in terms of discourse and/or power. However, Foucault's transformation of discourse into a structural order that determines everything that occurs in the social realm, immobilises the social process into an inescapable base-superstructure system, and freezes the possibility for transformation and change.

CDA provides a more dynamic interpretation of discourse, which is based on semiosis. That is, the way in which discursive practices reflect and are reflected in social structures and practices. The interpretation of discourse as semiosis allows the analysis of the *construal* of visions of the city's urban, social, economic and institutional order. Still, it does not account for the political dimension of discourse. That is, discourse as space for the action and interaction between different social actors, where processes of urban transformation and change are enacted.

The solution to this theoretical impasse is seen in Hannah Arendt's theory of power (1970), politics and democracy (1998); and in Jürgen Habermas' theory of communicative action (1997) – whose relevance to the theoretical model I propose is addressed in section 3. According to Hannah Arendt, power is the precondition for political action, which is the site for the action and interaction between different social subjects. That is, the site for the emergence and the coming together of differences. According to Arendt, power is the realm of freedom and politics. Differently from Foucault, Arendt envisions the formation of weak structures of power that can be challenged. This allows the existence of free social actors, hence, the possibility to enact processes of transformation and change. The same is true for Habermas' communicative action, whose emphasis on weak systems of truth allows the possibility for social actors to question the status quo.

Based on Arendt and Habermas' theories, part 4 focuses on the possibility for a discourse theory of urban transformation and change. Discourse is interpreted as site for social-political action that articulates the relationship between the urban, social, economic and institutional spheres of the city. Discourse is seen, in other words, as the space where different sets of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, belief and interests compete to gain hegemony and be turned into 'real' policies to enact processes of urban

transformation and change.

The chapter concludes that since cities, their urban form and functions, social order, economic organisation and institutional order, are social constructions, there is always in principle the possibility to enact processes of transformation and change to question the *status quo*. Such possibility relies on the willingness of social actors to engage in social-political action.

This chapter is the updated version of a paper that I wrote in 2014 (Desiderio, 2014). One of the limits of the paper was the fact of envisioning the city as being made of the dialectical relationships between what I called the social-economic realm and the urban realm. Other spheres were ignored, as for example the institutional structure – which is key in enacting processes of urban transformation and change. Discourse was articulating the relationship between these spheres. Yet, this early version of the model I am discussing in these pages did not provide a way to understand how the relationship between the *discursive* and *non-discursive* elements of the urban realm (meaning the city) was working. For these spheres were interpreted as being made of just ‘subjective’ values such as worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests – while their ‘objective’ dimension was ignored. In doing so, the model was still providing a too static interpretation of the processes of urban transformation and change. One of the consequences of ignoring the existence and role of the *non-discursive* elements might be, the transformation of discourse into a structural order that shapes processes of urban formation out of a cause-effect relationship.

5.2. From the Abstractness of the Social Process and the Absence of Politics to the Re- empowerment of Power and the Return of Politics

5.2.1. Sassen: the subjectivisation of the city and the social process

Saskia Sassen’s work on ‘global cities’ questions some of the traditional assumptions about the impact of globalisation and the financial economy on the social order of such cities. Sassen emphasises the tensions, contradictions and multifaceted nature of the global city’s forms of economic and social organisation. The first of such tensions is that between *dispersal* and *concentration*. The geographic dispersal of manufacturing, which accompanied the decline of old industrial centres and activities in

Western countries, and the rise of a finance and service-led economy brought about the centralisation of functions of control and management. The second tension is that between major cities and nation states. The growth of the former does not correspond to the growth of the latter and there is often a pronounced gap between leading cities and other prominent cities in the same country (2001: 333). A third tension regards social polarisation: the surge in high-income jobs and urban gentrification are accompanied by a surge in low-wage jobs and low-income urban areas. As Sassen explains,

“highly dynamic, technologically advanced growth sectors may well contain low- wage dead-end jobs. Furthermore, the distinction between sectoral characteristics and sectoral growth patterns is crucial: backwards sectors, such as downgraded manufacturing or low- wage service occupations, can be part of major growth trends in a highly developed economy. It is often assumed that backward sectors express decline trends. Similarly, there is a tendency to assume that advanced sectors, such as finance, have mostly good, white collar jobs. In fact they contain a good number of low-paying jobs, from cleaner to stock clerk” (10).

High-income gentrification in cities like New York, London and Tokyo is labor intensive – whereas the 1950s and 1960s forms of gentrification were capital intensive (construction of highways, reliance on cars and trains, etc.);

“Renovation of town houses and storefronts and designer furniture and woodwork all require workers, directly and indirectly. Behind the gourmet food stores and specialty boutiques lies an organisation of the work process that differs from that of self-service supermarket and department store”(285).

The weakness of Sassen’s work in terms of its capacity to envision a model of social-economic development to challenge the patterns of global financial capitalism, is the transformation of these various trajectories into impersonal processes that articulate the functioning of what becomes an independent subject itself: the global city. Social agents, the processes of policy and decision-making and the complex of worldviews,

ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests on which such decisions are based are placed in the background, or treated as superstructural elements. The tension and the reciprocal implication between the *subjectivisation* (the transformation of the city into a self-sustained entity to be objectively observed) and the *de- subjectivisation* of the city (the fact of being considered apart from human agency and specific systems of truth and knowledge) (Foucault, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c) produces, I believe, the effect of making it depend on one single trajectory: financial services (which is itself turned into an independent subject).

To put it differently, the lack of a discursive level to articulate the relation between the dynamics of urban formation and the processes of social-economic transformation, and to explain the mechanisms by which the worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests of various social actors are turned into ‘real’ policies; such a neglect leads to a cause-effect relationship between economy and the processes of urban formation. A cause-effect approach to the relationships between the dynamics of urban formation and the process of economic structuring of cities separates, rather than relating them, and establishes the dependence of the latter on the former.

A further consequence is that other spheres of the urban realm, such as the processes of institutional structuring, are either excluded or reduced to the role of ‘superstructure’. Whereas, I shall explain, a clear-cut separation between the urban, the social, the economic and the institutional spheres of cities cannot be established. For these different spheres influence and imply each other in a dynamic and dialectical way.

5.2.2. David Harvey: subjectivisation in the dynamics of spatialisation of capital

The same tension between *subjectivisation* and *de-subjectivisation* characterises David Harvey’s analysis of capitalism and its dynamics of spatialisation and urbanisation (2006a). Urban space is, according to Harvey, where capital is structured through processes of accumulation and over-accumulation, so that the growth of capital corresponds to its spatial expansion. Economic crises, Harvey explains, happen anytime phases of over-accumulation of capital occur. This can happen either in the form of, say, unemployment, or inflation, or excess of unwanted assets on the stock markets (*ibid.*). Over-accumulation is also a way for multinational corporations to gain more favourable

policies in terms of deregulation and taxation from central governments. In such cases, corporations threaten central governments to relocate pieces of their productive activities to countries with low regulation and labour costs, so as to engender an over accumulation of the domestic workforce (unemployment). In general terms, phases of over-accumulation of capital are overcome and dynamics of accumulation recovered by the creation of new investment opportunities, as in the case of urban regeneration processes or war.

According to Harvey, the city is a complex of artefacts, spatial configurations, institutional arrangements, legal forms, political and administrative systems and hierarchies of power – which, he explains, in a classbound society necessarily acquire a class content. Such class content and the underpinning social relations of power also affect the construction of the inhabitants' conscious; that is, their perception of the urban and the knowledge of what urban means (2001: 350). For “under capitalism, it is the broad range of class practices connected to the circulation of capital, the reproduction of labor power and class relations, and the need to control labor power, that remains hegemonic” (349). Although the emphasis that Harvey puts on social relations of power as providing the urban with meaning opens up the possibility for transformative practices (for the notion of urban can in principle be filled with different meanings as social relations of power change), social relations of power become a structural element of society that reproduces an economic base. This fact raises the following question: if over-determining economic forces and structures of power relations engender urban and spatial configurations with no mediation between the former and the latter, how are processes of transformation and change possible? And how are impersonal economic forces and structures of power relations reflected in urban and spatial configurations?

One of the consequences of interpreting the relations between the economic and the urban realm in terms of a base-superstructure dynamic is that such an interpretation actually separates rather than relates them. The absence of any mediation in the relation between the economic and the urban does not in fact imply exchange (exchange necessarily requires the existence of a medium) but the passive dependence of the latter on the former. Strictly related to that (as I explained in relation to Sassen's work) is *subjectivisation*: the transformation of the economic configurations and the urban organisation of cities into *subjects* that can be *objectively* known. Human agency,

politics, institutions and society are themselves reduced to superstructural elements whose only *raison d'être* is to pave the way to capital's interests. The absence of a level of mediation between the economic and the urban, which would also acknowledge social actors a certain degree of independence and autonomy, does not only preclude the possibility to understand how transformation and change as contestation of the *status quo* may occur; it also precludes the possibility to explain how the reproduction of impersonal economic structures in the form of equally impersonal urban and spatial configurations works. If we are to understand the urban, social, economic and institutional order of cities in terms of power relations between different agents, as Harvey himself initially says, then we need to accept the idea of a certain degree of freedom from economic structures; for, as Michel Foucault explains, power is only conceivable in relation to freedom (Foucault, 2002c). But we cannot conceive of freedom without conceiving of free human beings to be able to act independently from economic structures. This creates the possibility to understand how pre-existing urban, social, economic and institutional orders (and the underpinning systems of truth, knowledge and power) can be questioned – hence, transformed and changed.

The realm where such power and freedom are exerted is *discourse as site for social-political action*. As I explain later in this chapter, Hannah Arendt establishes a very close relationship between power, politics, speech, and democracy (1998). Without power (power to act), hence freedom, there can be no politics, hence democracy – which is the coming together of differences. Since differences emerge and interact through speech, social-political action has a discursive nature. Therefore, I interpret discourse as the space where different social actors sustaining different sets of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs, and interests, compete to gain social-political consensus and hegemony. Once they reach such consensus and hegemony, they become able to transform and change the existing urban, social, economic and institutional order of the city. This way of envisioning processes of transformation and change entails that there is no dominance of the economic domain on the urban, social and institutional; nor is there dominance of discourse on the urban as a whole (meaning the urban, the social, the economic and the institutional). Discourse is in fact no separate sphere from the other spheres that form the urban realm. As discourse is activated each time the urban form and functions, the social order, the economic organisation and the institutional structure are questioned, discourse is part of the urban, social, economic and institutional spheres of the city. Such spheres are, therefore, *discursive*. But such a

discursive quality is only potential; as for the urban, social, economic and institutional order to be questioned, social actors need to engage in social-political action. The moment social actors accept the urban form and functions – the social order, the economic organisation and the institutional structure – the urban realm as a whole remains unchallenged and forms what I call the *non-discursive* background for social-political action.

5.2.3. Lefebvre: the absence of a medium between social-economic structures and the processes of space production

Henri Lefebvre emphasises the importance of mediation as a way to understand the dynamics of space production and to challenge epistemology's transformation of space into an abstract object. According to Lefebvre, since Descartes space has been reduced to a "mental thing" completely detached from its social nature (1991, p. 3). Epistemology has enveloped the social into the mental with no mediation between them. Whereas, he explains, it can only "be expected to reproduce and expound the process of production" (36). It can only work, in other words, *ex post*.

Such a view leads to a different kind of abstraction from what Lefebvre sees in epistemology. Discourse, I believe, cannot be limited to the re-production of an existing space. Discursive interaction in the form of communication between different social actors (institutions, associations, political parties, local communities, entrepreneurs, companies, corporations, local and national government, governmental and non governmental agencies, etc.) about the form, functions, uses and ownership of space comes before space is physically constructed – and are based on precise sets of values. It constitutes, to put it simply, the preconditions for space production.

Lefebvre interprets, instead, the process of space production as a teleological progression from *absolute space* (civic and religious), to *historical space* (the space of accumulation of knowledge, technology, wealth, etc.), to *abstract space*, (or the space of capitalism, "founded in the vast network of banks, business centres and major productive entities, as also on motorways, airports and information lattices") (53). In accordance with such a Marxist view of the urban process, Lefebvre argues that abstract space itself bears the elements to contest and transform it into what he calls *differential*

space, that is, the space fostering differences and contrasting to the tendency toward homogeneity. However, to establish a cause-effect relationship between the economic and the urban is to deny in principle the possibility (that Lefebvre himself sustains) for urban practices to enact change in the social-economic order of cities.

Lefebvre also envisions the urban as being composed of a number of realms whose reciprocal relations change in the teleological progression from *absolute*, to *historical* and, finally, *abstract* space. *Spatial practices* involve the many aspects and activities of producing and using space: from the politics of air transport to roads and networks, and the “daily life of a tenant in a government-subsidized high-rise housing project” (38). *Spatial practice* also constitutes the dimension of what Lefebvre calls the *perceived*. That is to say, the space people perceive through sensory organs. *Representations of space* are the ‘official’ conceptualisation of space made by officials, planners, architects, etc. They constitute the realm of the *conceived*. An example is perspective as a *scientific* conceptualisation of space in Renaissance urban planning and architecture. *Representational space* is space as it is experienced through symbolic associations and meaning-making. It thus constitutes the ‘subjective’ realm of the *lived*, where imagination operates to appropriate and change space (38-39). The relationship between *spatial practices* and the *perceived*, *representations of space* and the *conceived*, *representational space* and the *lived*, changes over time. During the Renaissance, Lefebvre explains, *representations of space* and the *conceived* dominated over *representational space* and the *lived*. On the contrary, during the Middle Ages the symbolic imagery of Christian religion was dominant. Perception of space and spatial practices thus changed accordingly.

By this teleological view of history (whose implication is the *de-subjectivisation* of the forces that shape the dynamics of space production) Lefebvre himself undermines the possibility for the formation of a space of resistance. As Lefebvre rejects the idea of an active role of discourse in the production of space, the question remains of how the *lived* may be practiced and the *representational space* may be possibly constructed – the *lived* and the *representational space* being the realms for practices of resistance and contestation.

The question remains of how transformation and change happen. How the *lived* may be practiced and the *representational space* may be possibly constructed. What is

more, since Lefebvre reduces discourse to a passive role in the processes of space production, the other question is how the lived and representational space may be turned into a transformative political action, rather than being limited to the realm of the individual and the fortuitous. There is, however, a vast literature focusing on practices of the everyday and the unexpected, whose lack of a discursive dimension affects their capacity to enact transformation and change.

It is my belief that the everyday, the improvisation and the unexpected cannot enact, by their own very nature, any kind of transformative process. For they lack the dimension of the political. To give an example, the collapse of the Soviet Union's power in Poland was not the consequence of violent outbursts in the streets; nor it was the outcome of an individual and fortuitous dissent. Such a collapse was, instead, the outcome of the coming together of different social-political actors (Solidarność, the Catholic Church, liberal and anti-Soviet socialist intellectuals, etc.), which together construed an alternative discourse. The opposite is true for the Black Power in the US; which did not prove to be able to establish any common ground between the students, workers and other sectors of civic society – and remained limited within the narrow boundaries of the student community.

As I explain in the section 4 of this chapter, processes of urban transformation and change are potential. Such processes rely on the willingness of social actors to engage in social-political action; and cannot rely on the fortuitous, spontaneous and subjective events of the everyday life – as Lefebvre, instead, suggests. Real transformative practices, therefore, imply the existence of a space where the different visions of the urban, social, economic and institutional order of the city come together in the manner of speech and action – that is, politics (Arendt, 1998). Such space I call *discourse as site for social-political action*. It sets out the preconditions for processes of urban transformation and change (it comes *before*, rather than *after* the formation of urban space); and constitutes the space for self-conscious social agents to act and interact.

5.3. Foucault: the Disempowerment of Power and the Disappearance of the Subject

The relevance of Foucault's theory of power to this work lies in the focus on the

subjectivisation of the object of knowledge. According to Foucault, the object of knowledge does not exist *per se*, but is the product of specific epistemological orders. Such epistemological orders are made of the power relations between institutions, social agents, disciplines, and systems of norms, rules and classification that together form specific discourses (2002a, 49-52). To turn an object of knowledge into a unitary subject to be ‘objectively’ observed implies its *de- subjectivisation*; that is, the idea that it exists apart from the discourse that provides it with meaning. In his work on power (2002c) Foucault explains that no building or space that can engender liberation or oppression by its mere physical, spatial or functional configuration – and the same is true for laws and institutions. In other words, liberty and oppression are not intrinsic qualities of building, spaces, laws and institutions. They are practices. They only exist as long as they are exercised; and as long as the intentions of architects, planners and lawmakers “coincide with the real practice of people in the exercise of their freedom” (2002c, 354-355).

The implication of this for a theory of urban transformation and change is what I call *de- spatialisation*. In the works that have been considered so far (Sassen, Harvey and Lefebvre) space is envisioned as an object to be objectively observed, measured and analysed. Space is, in other words, *subjectivised*, and so are the processes and the dynamics that shape it. An example of this is the notion of global city. The global city has become a sort of ‘metaphysical’ entity, which is characterised by specific features (urban-architectural form, spatial order, economic structure and social organisations). As I said in chapter 4, cities like, say, London and New York are not global cities because they *are* global cities, but because a very specific vision of the city (with the underpinning complex of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests) has at some point become dominant. What I say is that in order to understand urban space, we need to go beyond the description of its urban form and functions, social order, economic organisation and institutional structure to the very preconditions for its formation. Such preconditions lie, I believe, in discourse as social-political action; which is where different sets of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests compete to become hegemonic and be turned into real policies and politics for the city.

Visions of the city certainly imply social relations of power. However, in order to avoid deterministic interpretations of the social order (e.g. structures of power relations determining a consequent urban, social, economic and institutional development) and

theoretically allow transformation and change, power needs to be placed at the level of discourse as site for the social-political action and interaction between different social actors.

According to Foucault (2002c) power can only be exerted over free subjects, as it implies the right for individuals to accept or contest it. Differently from violence, which is an act of coercion, power entails freedom (342). While this fact entails a certain degree of unpredictability in the social process, Foucault himself freezes the social process by placing discourse at a structural level. In this way, the dynamics of transformation and change come to depend on structures of power relations, and the social process is immobilised within an inescapable cause-effect dynamic. If everything that occurs in the social realm is the ‘product’ of systems of power relations, and if the categories framing individuals’ thought, the concepts they make use of and the very language they speak pre-exist them, then transformation and change are impossible. For transformation and change imply the existence of free and conscious individuals. In Foucault’s theory the subject disappears and power is disempowered.

5.4. Arendt and Habermas: the Re-empowerment of Power and the Reappearance of the Subject and Politics

A possible solution to this is Hannah Arendt’s notion of power as the realm of politics, hence social-political action. Hannah Arendt questions the idea of the 1960s and 1970s Left that the social world is the product of a rigid base-superstructure relation that can only be broken by means of violence (Arendt, 1970). Although none of the authors I have mentioned so far refer to or postulate violence as a solution to capitalism’s ‘social wrongs’, the ‘for grantedness’ of the base-superstructure relationship that shapes their theoretical models leave no room for any other solution but subjugation or violence to the ‘irresistible’ structuring capacity of economic forces.

Power is for Hannah Arendt the power to act. It is only potential and relies upon its actualisation (1998, p. 201). It therefore implies freedom. The freedom to question the *status quo*, to deny consent to those who are in power, and even to renounce the power to act. Power requires, to put it simply, legitimacy and legitimation. Neither of them are absolute. As consent, legitimacy and legitimation disappear, power in fact

vanishes. Violence, on the other hand, is an act of imposition upon others by physical threat and deterrence (beating, killing, war, genocide, etc.). It does not need recognition and consensus and is employed to avoid the unpredictability of politics. Violence can surely destroy power. But a regime based on violence is unstable. As it implies the use of sheer strength, a relationship of violence can be reversed as the strength of those whom exert violence is exceeded by the strength of those on whom violence is exerted (1970: 56). However, Hannah Arendt explains, even a form of domination like slavery cannot be based on mere coercion, as it needs the support of the community of the masters to be effective. (50).

Speech plays a key role in Arendt's idea of politics and democracy. Politics is for Arendt the space where different subjects act and interact through speech – public space and sphere being the realm where subjects become known to each other by their differences. This is true to the extent that politics is identified with speech. There can be no politics, according to Arendt, without speech. For speechless action belongs to the realm of tyranny and violence. Violence, however, does not necessarily need extreme actions such as beating, killing, war and genocide to be exerted. For its primary condition is the suspension of politics. Such suspension of politics Arendt calls bureaucratisation.

“The greater the bureaucratisation of public life – Arendt explains – the greater will be the attraction of violence. In a fully developed bureaucracy there is nobody left with whom one can argue, to whom one can present grievances, on whom the pressures of power can be exerted. Bureaucracy is the form of government in which everybody is deprived of political freedom, of the power to act; for the rule by Nobody is not no-rule, and where all are equally powerless we have a tyranny without a tyrant” (1970: 81).

Since power needs consent, it implies plurality: the precondition for politics and democracy. Politics is the coming together of different subjects from different perspectives. Without the play of differences between equals, there is no politics, hence no democracy. This does not mean that even a tyrannical regime allows some degree of democracy, but that, as long as human beings with their differences exist, there is

always the possibility for transformation and change. Here the relevance of Arendt's theory of power to a theoretical framework of urban transformation and change. Once power becomes the realm of social-political action and of its unpredictable outcomes (1998, p. 178), the urban ceases to be a dependent variable of the economic, and transformation and change of the dominant order can be both theoretically envisioned and practically achieved. The possibility for man to act, hence to engage in political action, implies that whatever the economic structure, the power relations, the spatial order, the system of knowledge and truth, dynamics of transformation and change which question and challenge the *status quo* are always possible. From an Arendtian perspective, I therefore conceive of discourse in terms of site for social-political action, which articulates in a dynamic and non-hierarchical way the relationship between the processes of urban, social, economic and institutional structuring of cities. Conversely, to interpret the processes of urban formation out of a cause-effect relationship between the urban realm and economic forces, and to expunge social action from the social process means that: 1) the social order should be accepted as unquestionable and unchangeable; 2) not only critical thinking but also politics is pointless and better be reduced to a matter of bureaucratic organization; 3) violence is the only means to interrupt such an automatic processes (1970, p. 30).

To say that the processes of urban transformation and change are discourse-based does not mean either that the city is a mental construction, or that discourse is a structural element that determines the urban realm. On the one hand, the first hypothesis would lead to an extreme form of social constructionism, which envisions nothing outside the subjective realm of mental representations. On the other hand, the second hypothesis is conducive to Foucauldian and cause-effect interpretations that do not allow the possibility to envision processes of transformation and change of the urban realm. Whereas, the urban realm is made of both *discursive* and *non-discursive* (that is, 'subjective' and 'objective') elements that are dynamically and dialectically related.

Habermas' theory of 'communication action' is based on the tension between *validity claims* and *facticity*, *norms* and *facts* (1997). Such tension provides a way to understand how discourse works in mediating between the *discursive* and *non-discursive* elements of the urban realm. That is, between the complex of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests that shape specific visions, representations and narratives of the city – which I also refer to as the *construal*; and the existence of such

visions, representations and narratives in the form of urban form and functions, social order, economic organisation and institutional structure – which I also refer to as the *construction*.

I interpret the urban, social, economic and institutional order of cities as an ‘objective’, hence *non-discursive*, background for social-political action; which is made of both ‘material’ and ‘immaterial’ facts that people share, and whose existence they give for granted. ‘Material’ facts are the actual urban form and functions, social order, economic organisation and institutional structure of the city. While ‘immaterial’ facts are the worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests that shape urban space and specific visions of the city. However, such ‘material’ and ‘immaterial’ facts are also ‘subjective’, hence *discursive*, at the same time; for they are social *construals* and constitute the outcome of social-political action. Therefore, they can always be questioned, challenged and changed.

The theory allows the dialectical tension between *non-discursive* and *discursive* elements of the urban realm, as it does not envision the existence of strong systems of *truth*, but of weak systems of truth that social actors can question and challenge. As Habermas explains, truth arises from the non-coercive process of reaching understanding between social actors (1997, p. 6) – which makes validity claims always questionable and open to criticism.

Relating this to the urban realm, social agents operate in a pre-existing (hence, ‘objective’) context that can be transformed and changed once social actors reach an agreement on a new vision of the city. In democratic systems such an agreement can be reached through, say, elections. Once an agreement is reached, the new vision of the city is turned into a new urban, social, economic and institutional order.

Throughout this section we discussed how cause-effect analyses of the relationship between dynamics of economic structuring and urban formation cannot adequately account for the processes of transformation and change of cities. Such analyses ignore social action and regard the forces that operate in the societal world as impersonal. This fact leads to a separation between the economic and the urban and to a sort of dependency of the latter upon the former. Such a deterministic view of the social process freezes the dynamic of transformation and change – whether change is interpreted in terms of questioning the *status quo* or of the internal mutation of an

existing social-economic order (say, capitalism).

One of the possible implications of such a way of looking at cities is of accepting the dominant representation of the forces shaping society as necessary and unquestionable. The risk is to see politics as pointless and to accept its reduction to a matter of bureaucratic management of society. If we are to understand how the relations between the different spheres that form the urban realm work (urban form and functions, social order, economic organisation and institutional structure), we need to conceive of the existence of a level of mediation between them. This level I call *discourse as site for social-political action*. There is, in principle, a very simple reason for this. It is not possible for two or more individuals to establish a relation without them using any sort of written, spoken, visual or audio language. In the public realm language assumes a political character, as it relates to the construction of the *polis*. It becomes *speech* as a form of (social-political) *action*. Second, to maintain the existence of such a level of mediation entails the existence of an element of unpredictability in the construction of consent and hegemony; hence the possibility for transformation and change in the sense of questioning and contesting dominant orders.

The Olympics-led regeneration of East London is an example of the bureaucratisation of policy and decision-making, and of the consequent privatisation of the public sphere and space.

It will be explained how the structure of governance that is constructed to 'deliver' the Games and the urban regeneration, implies the curtailing of the mechanisms of public control and accountability from the processes of policy and decision-making. The remaking of place relies on the horizontal and exclusive relationships between public authority and private subjects; which are reflected in the ownership, access and uses of space – that is, the quality of public space. The case of East London shows that undemocratic policy and decision-making produce undemocratic public space. For while some are acknowledged the rights to own, access and use urban space (multinational corporation, wealthy West Enders, tourists and investors, etc.), others are denied such rights (local communities, small businesses, low-income families, and political opposition, etc.). The one-sidedness in the perspectives and interests of the urban renewal in the bureaucratisation of the public sphere – which Hannah Arendt calls violence.

However, bureaucratisation of the public sphere and space, and the transformation of place into a site for shopping, tourism leisure and corporate investments, is not unquestionable – as it relies on no unquestionable structure of power relations. Drawing on Arendt's interpretation of politics and on Habermas' theory of communicative action, the next section shows how dominant discourses in society and the 'material' urban order (meaning the accepted urban, social, economic and institutional organisation of the city) can be challenged by alternative discourses and models of urban organisation – as long as social actors engage in social-political action.

5.5. A Discourse Theory of Urban Transformation and Change

As we discussed in the previous section, to ignore the active role that social agents play in the processes of urban, social, economic and institutional formation of cities means to envision such processes as depending on some sort of impersonal, hence unquestionable force. This has some important implications.

The first of such implications is theoretical. If we accept the idea that impersonal forces engender a consequent urban order, there is no possibility to theoretically conceive the possibility of transformation and change: the subject is imprisoned within an inescapable system and is turned into the passive and 'unconscious' receiver of forces that cannot be questioned. I am not just referring to transformation and change in terms of contestation of the *status quo*; but also to the internal processes of transformation and change of an existing social, political, economic and institutional order. An example of this is the shift from industrial to financial capitalism. Such a shift has been characterised by the coming to prominence of a new discourse that implied a brand new urban, social, economic and institutional order for cities. Even in this case, it would be hard to understand how an impersonal economic structure might itself, without an active human agency, produce a specific urban order.

The second implication is practical. The theoretical dismissal of the idea of a free subject entails in fact its dismissal on the level of social-political practice. In a system where there is no active role for social agents to play, not only critical thinking and politics would become pointless, but democracy itself would well be replaced by

bureaucracy.

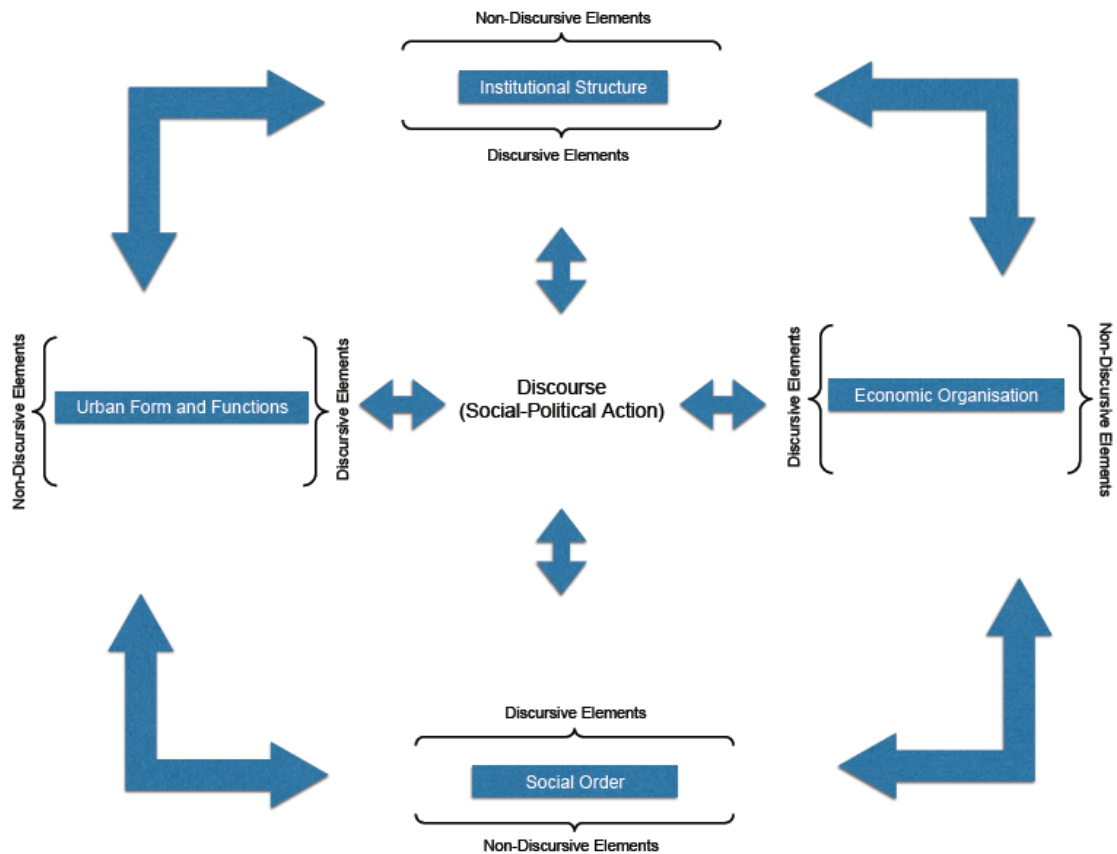
Therefore, to reflect upon how to conceptualise the processes of social, economic and urban change within cities and the role that social agents play is not a mere intellectual exercise, as it answers the need to understand current processes of political disempowerment of citizens and democratic institutions. The implications of such process in terms of the *construal-construction* of public urban space will be discussed in the next two chapters. The dominant representation of global financial capitalism as a necessary and unquestionable force is reflected in both the transformation of East London into an area for tourism, shopping, leisure and corporate investments; and in the construction of a legal framework that weakens the mechanisms of democratic control over and participation to the processes of policy and decision-making. There is nothing necessary about such model of urban renewal. For it is based on specific set of 'subjective' values, and is, therefore questionable.

As I have argued so far, the processes of urban formation are articulated by the tension between the *discursive* and *non-discursive* dimensions of the urban, social, economic and institutional spheres of which the city is made of; and by the dynamic and dialectical interaction between each one of these spheres. No hierarchy existing either between *discourse*, on one side, and the urban realm as a whole; or between these spheres.

The diagram below is a synthetic representation of the urban realm. It is a visualisation of: 1) how the relationships between discourse as site for social-political action and the processes of urban formation works; 2) how the relationship between the *discursive* and *non-discursive* dimensions of the urban, social, economic and institutional spheres of the city works; 3) how the relationships between these spheres work.

The way I interpret the meaning of such concepts as urban form and functions, social order, economic organisation and institutional structure reflects the way in which I interpret their reciprocal relationships. *Urban form and functions* indicate the complex of architectural objects, urban layouts, uses and practices of space that together shape the urban sphere. Such a notion of the urban sphere in turn implies the notion of *social order*, which involves the relationships and hierarchies between individuals, groups and classes; and the way in which such relationships and hierarchies are spatialised – that is,

are reflected in the spatial organisation of the city. Thus, the *social order* and the *urban form and functions* cannot be thought about apart from the *economic organisation* of the city, which involves the kind of economic activities and functions that characterise urban space. All this (the urban form and functions, the social order, the economic organisation) implies the institutional structure; which entails the construction of structures of governance and legal frameworks that regulate the relationships between different social actors: national and local government, governmental and non-governmental agencies, companies, multinational corporations, local communities, associations, etc. The extent to which structures of governance and legal frameworks allow public accountability and participation to inform policy-making determines the democratic\non-democratic quality of urban public space and sphere.



1. Discourse Theory of Urban Transformation and Change

The relationship between discourse and the urban, social, economic and institutional spheres of the city is a horizontal, dialectical and dynamic one. So it is the relation between the urban form and functions, the social order, the economic

organisation and the institutional structure; and between the *discursive* and *non-discursive* dimensions of such spheres. *Discourse as site for social-political action* is not something external or separate from the city. If that were the case, a separation and hierarchical relationship between the former and the latter would be established. I believe, instead, that discourse is enmeshed in the urban, social, economic and institutional spheres of cities, but it is not to be identified with them. In other words, discourse *is in* the urban, the social, the economic and the institutional, but it *is not* the urban, the social, the economic and the institutional. By the same token, each one of these spheres entails the other without being reduced to them. The urban implies the social, the economic and the institutional, but is not the social, the economic and the institutional. In the same way, the economic implies the urban, the social and the institutional but it is not (hence, it does not determine) the urban, the social and the institutional. The same is true for the social and the institutional with respect to the other spheres.

How does discourse come to be enmeshed into the urban, social, economic and institutional spheres of the city? And what does it mean to say that such spheres are *discursive* and *non-discursive* at the same time?

To put it simply, the transformation of East London into an urban area for wealthy professionals (social order), leisure and tourism (economic organisation, which entails the urban forms and functions), with the underpinning legal framework to ensure the corporate transformation of place to bypass the democratic process of discussion and deliberation (institutional structure) is, in Habermasian terms, a ‘fact’. As long as such urban form and functions, social order, economic organisation and institutional structure are not questioned and discussed, they pertain to the *non-discursive* sphere of the urban realm. They exist whether people accept this transformation or not – or are even aware of it. Conversely, as this process is questioned and discussed through discursive action (whether to challenge or reinforce it with further corporate urban interventions), it becomes part of the *discursive* dimension of the urban realm. As an agreement on new urban forms and functions, social order, economic organisation and institutional structure is reached between social agents, they are turned once again into *non-discursive* elements of the urban realm. That is, a ‘fact’ – which also includes the new vision of the city social agents agree on. In other words, something social actors accept and share. However, since facticity reflects a weak reason, the new order can be

questioned, hence changed.

The diagram above is just an approximate visualisation of the functioning of the relations between the various spheres of the urban; and it could not be otherwise. I am aware of the fact that the social realm is a complex matter to be captured in such a way. Any attempt in this direction might result in a too static model to explain the complexities of the social process. However, I think it can be of some use to provide the reader with a model to visualise the kind of dynamic interaction between urban form and policies, the social order, the economic organisation and the institutional realm of cities that is being discussed in these pages.

However, discourse's transformative power is only potential. The simple existence of consciously processed values does not itself imply enactment in the form of transformation and change. Values are not by themselves transformative, as they still pertain to a pre-political phase. Here the relevance of discourse lies. Politics, as Hannah Arendt explains, is where subjects starting from different perspectives come together in the form of speech and action and compete to gain consent and hegemony in the wider social-political realm (1998). This is also the meaning of Jürgen Habermas' communicative action. But politics is also the realm of power, and power entails both the power to act and the power to not act. It means, to put it differently, freedom to engage in social-political action but also freedom to renounce it. Therefore, insofar as subjects embrace their power to act and the values they sustain become hegemonic, transformation and change are possible. Conversely, insofar as subjects renounce their power to act, the values they express remain at a pre-political level and no transformation and change are possible.

What this means is that the worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests of specific social agents need to be turned into social-political action for them to affect the urban, social, economic and institutional order of cities. Visions of what the city should look like in terms of architectural and urban form, of what activities its economy should be based on, of which social subjects should be included and/or excluded from the processes of decision and policy-making, of what structures of governance should be created to enact such decisions and policies; such visions depend on the worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests of specific social groups. Once this complex of values becomes the content of social-political action (which includes public debate,

discussions, newspaper campaigns, public demonstrations, picketing, conferences, the formation of political parties, movements and associations, election campaigns, etc.) and succeed in becoming dominant and hegemonic, they can be turned into real policies that shape the processes of urban formation and structuring of cities. This is not only true for ideas that contest the *status quo*, but also for the dynamics of internal transformation of an existing system. Any modification of the social-economic and/or the urban always entails dynamic processes of encounter and collision between different interests and agendas; some of which succeed in becoming hegemonic, some of which do not. For this to happen the existence of free social actors and a space for social-political action is required.

5.6. Conclusions

Throughout this chapter we discussed how the traditional base-superstructure and cause-effect models are no longer adequate to explain how processes of urban formation occur. These types of rigidities paralyse the social process, with important consequences that span from the theoretical to the practical.

Whether we think of transformation and change in terms of the internal dynamics of an existing system or in terms of contestation of the *status quo*, they are never the outcomes of some sort of impersonal and anarchic forces. Processes of urban transformation and change always articulate through the agency of conscious human subjects, who act out of specific sets of worldviews, ideologies, ideas and interests that they internalise and at the same time produce and reproduce (Schmidt, 2008). That means that corporate-based models of urban regeneration and dominant urban, social, economic and institutional orders can be questioned by alternative visions of the city and alternative dynamics of urban formation.

The precondition for such alternative visions to be materialised and for such alternative dynamics to be enacted, however, is action; that is to say, the willingness of social-political actors to make use of political power and engage in social-political action. Since power means not just the liberty to politically act, but also the liberty to renounce such liberty, the responsibility of both acting and non-acting relies on nothing else but a free, individual and human-based choice.

The *Construal* of the Olympic Regeneration of East London in the Economic, Political and Media Discourse

6.1. Introduction

This chapter explores the various dimensions of the discourse on the Olympics and the regeneration of East London: the economic and political discourse, and the discourse of the press. That is, the *construal* of a specific urban, social and economic order of East London in the official narrative of the Olympics and the accompanying process of urban regeneration. It is argued that such a narrative is reflected in the material *construction* of place, as the example of the Westfield Stratford City in Stratford demonstrates.

Such narrative is analysed in relation the *re-contextualisation* of the economic within the political sphere and the media. It is important to keep in mind that such recontextualisation is not unidirectional. That is, it does not vertically proceed from the economic to the political and the media. The concept of recontextualisation accounts for the emerging of a new discourse in society that occurs at the same time in economic and political reports, and in newspaper articles.

The chapter articulates in four parts. The first part is an introduction that shows how CDA and Fairclough's DRA work in the analysis of the relation between discourse and the *construal*/construction of architecture and urban space. Focusing on two of the most influential texts produced by Rem Koolhaas, 'Shopping' and 'Junkspace', this part discusses how the discourse of consumerism colonised the discourse and practice of architecture and urban planning. The analysis shows how the discourse of consumerism does not just shape texts, but it is actually materialised into real architectural and urban spaces. In so doing, it is argued, the discourse of consumerism also informs a specific idea of the public realm; which is no longer envisioned as the space for the production and re-production of citizenship and social-public life, but as the site for the consumption of brand products. These texts are a clear example of how the tension between *construal* and *construction*, the *discursive* and *non-discursive* dimension of the social realm, works. The text translates the discourse of a deregulated capitalistic

market (that reflected the shift from industrial to financial capitalism) into urban-architectural ideas and forms. It is today taken for granted that processes of urban regeneration need to follow the path of consumerism; so that place needs to be transformed into a venue for tourism, leisure, shopping and corporate investment in order to gain national and international relevance and be put on the map of global capital. As the discourse of consumerism constitutes a background value in contemporary society and is materialised into real physical spaces, it is non-discursive. However, it managed to gain hegemony and consent in society through discursive practices (discourse as social-political action); and it is through the very same discursive practices that it can be questioned and transformed.

The second part focuses on the way in which the discourse of urban space, as a site for tourism, shopping leisure and corporate investment, shapes the economic discourse of the Olympics and the regeneration of East London. In particular, it is explained how the grammatical and syntactical structure of text and sentences is strategically aimed at depicting the Olympics and the regeneration of East London as the sole way to engender processes of social and economic growth and make East London fit for entering the global economy – which is depicted as being constituted by the impersonal and is hence unquestionable.

The third part focuses on the political discourse and the way in which the economic discourse of the Olympics and the regeneration is reflected in political statements and plans for East London. As has been said above, there is no cause-effect relation between the economic and the political discourse. The economic influences the political, no less than the political affects the economic; as the discourse of the transformation of East London into a site for tourism, shopping leisure and corporate investment is the outcome of a social-political action that determined the hegemony of specific social actors with a specific set of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interest. Such a set of values shaped a new knowledge of the city that simultaneously affected all the dimensions of society and in a non- hierarchic way.

The fourth part focuses on the way in which the discourse of the Olympics and the regeneration of London's East End is reformulated by the press and the media. The discourse of the social-economic divide between West and East London, which is integral to the economic and the political discourse, translates into what might be defined as the 'westendisation' of the East End. The social-economic disadvantage of

East London is addressed in such a way as to justify the transformation the East End into a new West End where West Enders might be willing to relocate, thereby enacting a process of gentrification. At the same time, a new 'brand' identity for East London as a site for fashion is construed that displaces its past as a site of manufacturing and industry – a past that fades away through the new representation of place.

The chapter concludes that far from being limited to the realm of mental representation, discourse can inform and be informed by the knowledge and physical construction of architecture and urban space. The relation between discourse and urban space, that is to say, between *construal* and *construction*, the discursive and non-discursive elements of the social world, is dialectical and dynamic.

Discursive practices occur in cities within an existing context. Such a context consists of urban form and policies, the social and institutional orders and economic organisation as well as the underpinning systems of power, knowledge and truth; and constitutes the background for social-political action. Discursive practices (social-political action) can question such structuring elements of society and produce new ones. The discourse of the Olympics and the urban regeneration of East London entails a new urban, social, economic and institutional order for East London and London as a whole. Such an order is not confined within the boundaries of utterances and mental representations. For it is materialised in the actual urban form and policies, social order, economic organisation and institutional structure.

This chapter is the updated version of a paper that explores the relationship between the official representation of Stratford (East London) in the economic, political and media discourse, and the physical transformation of place (Desiderio, 2013).

6.2. DRA and the Analysis and Architecture and Urban Space

Since the 1980s, architecture and urban space have become in the discourse of some architects, urban planners, theorists and critics, the site of pop culture, market and consumption. As Hal Foster reminds us, the discourse of pop culture and consumerism was introduced into the architectural debate during the 1950s by the Independent Group (IG). The group was formed by young British artists, architects and historians such as Richard Hamilton, Reyner Banham and Alison and Peter Smithson, who proclaimed the democratic nature of pop culture and consumerism and the necessity for

architecture to express them. Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, Michael Graves and Robert A.M. Stern further developed such a discourse in the U.S. during the 1980s. According to these authors and architects, architecture needed to overthrow the language of Modern architecture as it had been developed by such figures as Walter Gropius, Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe and restore a language capable to connect with people's desires and feelings. Far from fulfilling such an apparently democratic aim, this version of post- modernism – which Hal Foster defines “neoconservative postmodernism” (Foster: 1985: 121) – turned out to be the carrier of capitalism's cultural and aesthetic values:

“Common to both groups was the sense that consumerism had changed not only the look of things but the nature of appearance as such, and all Pop found its principal subject here: in the heightened visibility of semblance, in the charged iconicity of people and products (of people *as* products and vice versa) that a mass media of corporate image had produced” (Foster 2008: 164).

At the beginning of the 2000s, Rem Koolhaas interpreted consumerism as unquestionable and necessary. According to Koolhaas, architects and planners would have to come to terms with consumerism, as it would inevitably transform every aspect of the social world.

I will consider two of the most relevant Koolhaas' texts: the introduction to “Shopping”, a work produced by the Harvard Project on the City ; and “Junkspace”, an essay on the 21st century's architectural and urban space. The concept of *recontextualisation* is key to the analysis of these texts. According to Fairclough,

“recontextualization has an ambivalent character: it can be seen as the ‘colonization’ of one field or institution by another, but also as the ‘appropriation’ of ‘external’ discourses, often the incorporation of discourses into strategies pursued by particular groups of social agents within the recontextualizing field” (Fairclough 2010a: 165).

The relevance of these texts to this work lies in that they show how the words and concepts forming the discourse of capitalist economy are recontextualised into architecture and urban planning; thereby changing both the discourse *of* and *on* architecture and urban space, and the very way in which architecture and urban space are conceived, designed and realised. Fairclough himself explains that discourses are not just *enacted* in ways of acting and *inculcated* in ways of being, but also *materialised* in spatial and architectural forms (Fairclough 2010b: 77). At stake is the causal tension between *construal* and *construction* and the *discursive* and *non-discursive* dimensions inherent in discourse as a form of social-political action and the social process.

As we saw in the theoretical and methodological section of this work, CDA does not interpret the relationship between structural and discursive elements in the social process in terms of a rigid cause-effect relationship. If we adopted such a deterministic cause-effect vision, as Foucault does, then processes of transformation and change would not be possible, as the social process would be imprisoned in some sort of over-deterministic structural principle. CDA envisions such relationship in reciprocal and dialectical terms. Relating this to the processes of urban change, discourse does not determine the urban form and policies, the social order, the economic organisation and the institutional framework of cities; in the same way as the urban, social, economic and institutional order of cities does not determine discourse. Discourse is the site where the preexisting urban, social, economic and institutional organisation of the city is discussed and questioned – such urban, social, economic and institutional organisation being ‘objective’ until it becomes the object of discursive action. Once a new vision of the urban realm arises through discursive action, and once an agreement is reached (in the form of consensus and hegemony), such a vision is turned into a new organisation of the urban realm; which constitutes the background for further social-political action.

The tension between the discursive and non-discursive elements of the social process therefore implies a ‘weak reason’ that can always be subjected to the intersubjective process of ‘reaching mutual understanding’ between different social actors. Such a dynamic of reaching mutual understanding that Habermas analyses in relation to the tension between *validity* and *facticity* (Habermas 1997), is reflected in the tensions between *construal* and *construction* that Fairclough sees in the intersubjective production of meaning (semiosis and/or discourse) (Fairclough, Jessop, Sayer). The implication of this for the understanding of discourse related to the processes of transformation and change in the urban realm is that visions and

understanding of the city's urban, social, economic and urban development are *construed* in discursive exchange; and are then *constructed* in 'objective' urban form and policies, social order, economic organisation and institutional frameworks. Such an 'objective' construction affects discursive practices of construal of the urban sphere, as the latter occurs in the context that is provided by the former; and is shaped by discursive practices of construal, as such practices constitute the site for the discussion, questioning and change of the 'objective construction of the urban realm.

6.2.1. Construing text: A New Medium for Disseminating Architecture and Urban Space

Rem Koolhaas' work on shopping architecture and urban space that is briefly discussed in this section is not explicitly related to Stratford and the Westfield Stratford City.

Koolhaas' interpretation of the mall as an architectural and urban element provides an example of the way in which the economic discourse of consumerism (hence, a specific set of ideological and cultural values) is translated into an architectural language that aims at shaping urban space and the city. This is what happens with the Westfield in Stratford, which symbolises the coming to prominence of a new discourse of the city as a site for tourism, shopping, leisure and lifestyle. Such discourse, as I shall explain, is not neutral, as it expresses a precise complex of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests. As this complex of values becomes materialised into urban-architectural forms, it clearly establishes ownership, uses and practices of space that are socially exclusive, and entails processes of gentrification. Here lies the relationship between Koolhaas' work and my research.

"Junkspace" is part of "Content", a book published by Rem Koolhaas in collaboration with his two companies OMA (Office for Metropolitan Architecture) and AMO, and &&& (a graphic design firm). This text operationalizes the recontextualisation of the economic discourse (and language) of shopping and consumerism within the architectural and the urban discourse, envisioning a consequent kind of space. Two anthropomorphic figures forming the Guangzhou Opera House in China say, as in a comic strip:

“I’m not sure – wonders the first – if this is a book or a magazine”; “Actually – the second replies –, I find the tension between the two super-interesting” (Koolhaas 2004: 15).

In the “editor's letter”, Brendan McGetrick writes:

“Content is a product of the moment. Inspired by the ceaseless fluctuations of the early 1st century, it bears the marks of globalism and the market, ideological siblings that, over the past twenty years, have undercut the stability of contemporary life. The book is born of that instability. It is not timeless; it's almost out of date already. It uses volatility as a license to be immediate, informal, blunt; it embraces instability as a new source of freedom” (Ibid.: 16).

The idea of ‘freedom’ is construed on the basis of the interpretation of global capitalism and the market in terms of ‘fluctuation’, ‘instability’, ‘volatility’ and ‘informality’. The text clearly tells whose such freedom is and what it is about. This notion of ‘freedom’ does not reflect the idea of economic development as it occurred in Western industrial countries (especially Northern European countries) from the end of the World War II to the 1980s: a model of economic development based on the progressive expansion of the welfare state, the regulation of the market, and public control and accountability over the processes of policy and decision-making. Such a notion of ‘freedom’ entails instead a different model of economic development based on the reduction of the welfare state, the deregulation of the market and the creation of structures of governance to limit the power of democratic politics and strengthen the horizontal relations between governments and corporations. By the same token, the notions of ‘instability’ and ‘volatility’ refer to the ‘liberation’ of the market and the curtailing of all those systems of social protection and democratic control that seemed to suffocate the economic process. By envisioning a different model of economic and institutional organisation, this discourse entails a new configuration of social hierarchies and a new order of social relations of power. In doing so, it also envisions a new kind of urban-architectural space. What is also important to keep in mind is that this new discourse neither questions nor does it challenge capitalism. It reflects instead the

internal process of transformation and change from an industrial to a finance based model of capitalist development.

The discourse of shopping and consumerism, and its *recontextualisation* from the economic, to the social, institutional and the urban-architectural (*construal*) is materialized in *genre* and *style*. “Content” is in fact quite different from a traditional book on urban/architectural theory and criticism. It is designed as a glossy magazine, with pasted-up pictures, video games-like images, colored words and Prada, Gucci and BMW advertisements. Twenty pages of advertisements precede the summary. The back cover is also a BMW advertisement. Most architectural works are presented in the form of advertisement, so that the reader may not even be aware of reading some sort of architectural criticism. “Content” translates the concepts of instability, volatility, informality into a new medium that merges the traditional *genre* and *styles* of academic and specialised writing with the *genre* and *styles* of a mass culture.

In the essay on “Junk-Space”, celebrating the pervasiveness of consumerism as the ultimate expression of mankind and structuring principle of architecture and urban space, Rem Koolhaas writes:

“Rabbit is the new beef... Because we abhor the utilitarian, we have condemned ourselves to a life-long immersion in the arbitrary... LAX: welcoming – possibly flesh- eating – orchids at the check-in counter... “Identity” is the new junk food for dispossessed, globalization’s fodder to the disenfranchised... If space-junk is the human debris that litters the universe, junk-space is the residue mankind leaves on the planet. The built (more about that later) product of modernization is not modern architecture but Junkspace. [...] Modernization had a rational program: to share the blessing of science, universally. Junkspace is its apotheosis, or meltdown... Although its individual parts are the outcome of brilliant inventions, lucidly planned by human intelligence, boosted by infinite computation, their sum spells the end of Enlightenment, its resurrection as a farce, a low-grade purgatory” (Koolhaas 2004: 162).

Different to an academic paper, this text is characterised by an informal language made of slogan-like sentences, metaphors, a paratactic syntax, and neologisms. Junkspace itself is a neologism. It merges together two words: junk and space. It is the

metaphor of a new culture, aesthetic values and identities at the centre of which is consumerism. Consumerism thus becomes the content of an idea of ‘modernity’ that is not just opposite to the ‘modernity’ of the Enlightenment and the Modern culture; but also to the notion of ‘modernity’ that shaped industrial capitalism. The idea of ‘junk’ as an expression of a democratic culture challenging the ‘elitism’ of Modernism, is conservative in nature. As will be explained in relation to the urban regeneration of East London, the kind of urban, social and economic order of space such ideas entail is socially exclusive. For it reflects the worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests of specific social actors and is enacted at the institutional level through policy frameworks that circumvent the mechanisms of democratic control and accountability over the decision-making processes.

Koolhaas’ discourse on shopping and consumerism comes at the peak of twenty years of Thatcherite and New Labour deregulation policies designed to dismantle the ‘old’ social, economic and institutional order of industrial capitalism – deregulation policies being actually based, as will be discussed in the chapter on the legal framework of East London urban regeneration, on the re-regulation of the exclusive relations between governments and corporate power. Such discourse is now at the core of a shared knowledge of urban-architectural space that is reflected in real spaces. It is now taken for granted that for urban space to be attractive and enact processes of economic accumulation, it needs to be transformed into a space for shopping, tourism and leisure. This is true not only for buildings (public libraries, book stores, museums, art galleries, etc.) but also for entire urban areas (the Olympic regeneration of East London is an example) and cities that seek to reinforce their images of global hubs for corporate investments, or to be put on the map of global tourism and financial capitalism.

“Shopping – Rem Koolhaas claims – is arguably the last remaining form of public activity. Through a battery of increasingly predatory forms, shopping has been able to colonize – even replace – almost every aspect of urban life. Historical towns centers, suburbs, streets, and now train stations, museums, hospitals, schools, the internet, and even the military, are increasingly shaped by the mechanisms and spaces of shopping” (Koolhaas 2000: 125).

The vision of the public sphere and space as the realms of shopping, and the transformation of shopping into an impersonal ‘mechanism’, feed on the dominant narrative of anarchic, hence unquestionable, economic-productive forces that determine every aspect and element of the societal world. As will be discussed later, there exists an intimate relationship between this idea of public sphere and space, and such representation of shopping and economic forces. There is in fact no such a thing as ‘the mechanisms and spaces of shopping’ in the social world. They constitute social constructions that rely on the complex of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests of specific social actors; which are in turn ‘objectified’ in ‘material’ urban form and policies, social order, economic organisation and institutional framework. The idea that economic and productive forces ‘require’ specific patterns of urban change implies ‘strategic’ views of public sphere and space. Public sphere and space are no longer envisioned as the site for social encounters; which is one of the conditions for the production and reproduction of the community of citizens, and constitutes an end in itself. Public sphere and space become the means to enable processes of economic accumulation, so that social encounter and relations are tolerated as long as they are functional to such processes. As the chapter on the legal framework of East London Olympic regeneration shows, the discourse of strategy ‘to deliver the regeneration project on time and to budget’ entails the creation of a structure of governance to curtail politics from the processes of policy and decision-making.

The discourse of shopping does not remain limited to the realm of the *construal* (the discourse as site for the intersubjective production of meaning), but is reflected in an actual knowledge of space (*construction*). The need for the maximum *circulation* of people into the shopping area, for *movement* to be *smooth*, for spaces to be *seamlessly* connected, and for an environment to be freed from the unpredictability of nature, conjoin into the formula:

“Comfort + greater willingness to spend increasing amounts of time indoors
= greater likelihood to spend” (ibid.: 128).

This formula produces in turn a series of equations:

Air conditioning = endless interior = Windowless = Mall = More shopping Escalator = smoothness

Maximum circulation = maximum sales volume

Air conditioning is regarded as a revolutionary element of architecture, which supplanted the need for windows as elements to regulate inner environment's climate conditions.

“Along with the escalator, mechanically engineered climates enabled an explosion of the depth of the interior, creating spaces increasingly divorced from the outside, increasingly inescapable and increasingly able to accommodate virtually any type and scale of human activity, in almost any combination” (ibid.: 128).

The essence of this brand new environment is *continuity* as condition of *bigness*. In other words, the combination of air conditioning and the escalator (which are now new structuring elements of architecture) allows in fact once fragmented spaces to be unified into a continuous, uninterrupted space, which exceeds the physical limits of the architectural and expands into the urban. The city is thus envisioned as a space for shopping and structured by shopping.

“Churches – Koolhaas writes – are mimicking shopping malls to attract followers. Airports have become wildly profitable by converting travellers into consumers. Museums are turning to shopping to survive. The traditional European city once tried to resist shopping, but is now a vehicle for American-style consumerism” (ibid.: 125).

Such structuring of architecture and urban space (*genre*) implies and is implied by specific aesthetic values (*style*). In the same way as Roland Barthes' *myth* empties history of its 'original' meaning to fill it with new meanings that express a specific

cultural and ideological agenda; so shopping architecture empties ‘traditional’ structuring elements (the arch, the pilaster, walls, the module, etc.) of their meaning (function) to turn them into decorative elements.

“There are no walls, only partitions, shimmering membranes frequently covered in mirror or gold. Structure groans invisibly underneath decoration, or worse, has become ornamental; small shiny space frames support nominal loads, or huge beams deliver cyclopic burdens to unsuspecting destinations... The arch, once the workhorse of structures, has become the depleted emblem of ‘community’, welcoming an infinity of virtual populations to non-existent there’s. Where it is absent, it is simply applied – mostly in stucco – as ornamental afterthought on hurriedly erected superblocks. Junkspace’s iconography is 13% Roman, 8% Bauhaus, 7% Disney (neck and neck), 3% Art Nouveau, followed closely by Mayan... [...] Junkspace’s module are dimensioned to carry brands. [...] Like the deactivated virus in an inoculation, Modern architecture remains essential, but only in its most sterile manifestation, High Tech (it seemed so dead only a decade ago!). It exposes what previous generations kept under wraps: structures emerge like springs from a mattress, exit stairs dangle in didactic trapeze, probes thrust into space to deliver laboriously what is in fact omnipresent, free air, acres of glass hang from spidery cables, tautly stretched skins enclose flaccid non-events. Junkspace thrives on design, but design dies in Junkspace. There is no form, only proliferation... [...] All surfaces are archaeological, superpositions of different ‘periods’ [...]... Traditionally, typology implies demarcation, the definition of a singular model that excludes other arrangements. Junkspace represents a reverse typology of cumulative, approximative identity, less about kind than about quantity. But formlessness is still form, the formless also a typology” (Koolhaas 2004: 163-165).

In shopping space, structural elements of architecture are deprived of their function and become ornaments. The module itself, which has characterised Renaissance architecture and has been revived by Modern architecture as the essence of public social housing, now articulates retail unities, which do not conjoin anymore into the *organic* composition of the building’s form, but are wrapped in the surface – which is in turn arbitrarily imposed upon the building’s structure. Because of the disproportion between the dimensions of the building and the beholder, form cannot be perceived at the ground level, but only from the pages of glossy magazines, TV

programs, tourist brochures, etc. (Foster 2008). Architecture is thus turned into iconic surface that aims at creating an attractive image for tourists and investors.

Rem Koolhaas' writing on shopping architecture and urban space is an example of how discourse as a site for the production of meaning is reflected in consequent urban-architectural forms, which in turn conform to a specific social, economic and institutional organisation of cities. Such a relation between the discursive and non-discursive elements of the social process, however, is not to be interpreted in terms of a rigid cause-effect relationship; but in terms of a dynamic and dialectic exchange. Koolhaas' discourse needs in fact to be placed within an existing background of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests; which has progressively taken hold of society since Thatcherite policies of deregulation and was continued by New Labour governments. Such background of values that questioned the previous one based on a stronger welfare state and a different system of market regulation and managed, by reaching consensus and hegemony on the social-political plane, to substitute it.

How does all this relate to the urban regeneration of East London and the construction of the Westfield Stratford City as one of the key elements of the project? As I said above, this brief overview of shopping architecture and urban space demonstrates how the discourse of shopping can be materialized in real buildings and spaces. Such discourse openly embraces the neo-liberal vision of the city and urban space as sites of consumption; a vision that entails processes of gentrification and the construction of exclusive narratives of the city – shopping architecture and urban space being a form of representation. The construction of the Westfield Stratford city as the starting point of a wider reconstruction of East London as a new venue for shopping, tourism, leisure and corporate investments clearly establishes ownership, practices and uses of space – which are socially exclusive and entail processes of gentrification.

6.3. The Economic Discourse

The economic discourse of the Olympics and the regeneration of Stratford was, and continues to be, played out through a variety of places, formats and genres: economic analysis papers by government, financial opinion pieces in newspapers and non-governmental reports on the economic impact of the games on the region. In virtually all cases it is presented through texts with a precise syntactic narrative and a

clear one-directional grammatical structure. This *genre* helps present the Games and the “regeneration” of East London as processes independent of any human agency or individual interest. At the same time, it is assertive and confident and presents itself as unbiased and objective. A typical example was the July 2012 report by the Lloyds Banking Group, “The Economic Impact of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games” (Lloyds Banking Group, 2012).

Six issues structure the report: the total economic impact of the Games in terms of GDP; the impact on the construction industry; the impact on tourism; the impact on small and medium sized enterprises; the “happiness effect” – that is to say, the level of consumer’s expenditure after the Olympics; housing.

These purely economic indicators reflect the worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests of the subjects and institutions that actually ‘make’ the regeneration of Stratford. As a result, they cannot be leading to what the title suggests: a study of *the* economic impact of the Games. On the contrary, the report has to be read as a partial interpretation of the Games and their impact. A different institution might have in fact analysed the impact of the Olympics in a different way using different indicators.

In addition to being indicators of only one interpretation of the Games, these assessments are also potentially misleading. GDP, for example, is a macroeconomic indicator that says nothing about the distribution of wealth among the population. Nor does it say anything about wages, the kind of contracts and relations between employer and employee – which are key to the standard of living of employees and might be the cause of substantial inequalities between the richer and the poorer strata of the population.

Evidence of the report’s one-sidedness is in the claim that:

“11.9 billion (2012 prices) will be spent on 2012 Games-related construction between 2005 and 2017 [...]. London 2012 Games-related construction activity will support an estimated £13.5 billion contribution to UK GDP, and that “the construction activity is expected to support the equivalent of 267,000 years of employment in the UK economy during the 2005 to 2017 period (8)”.

The report does not explain how “years of employment” are calculated in this case but standard definitions include: *a unit of measurement in accountancy based on an ideal amount of work done by one person in a single year*, and *the amount of work performed by an average worker during one year*. Interpreted in these terms, the number of jobs created is multiplied by the number of years and months that job is created for, thus inflating the quoted figure accordingly. In addition, if a given worker does 30% overtime (as would be typical in a case like this), the “work performed” factor incorporated into the calculation increases by a factor of 30%. As a result, the use of the “years of employment” definition in this case produces a base quoted figure considerably higher than the actual number of jobs created. It is a clear attempt to use statistics to artificially inflate the apparent impact of the Games. Furthermore, the report ignores the negative impact that the loss of these inevitably temporary jobs will have once the short term increase in economic activity instigated by the Games comes to an end.

The document also estimates a 10.8 million increase in tourist visits between 2005 and 2017 and predicts a £ 2 billion contribution to GDP. Related to this is growth in commerce, which is said to significantly increase thanks to a rise in consumer confidence and the willingness to spend (“happiness effect”) as an effect of staging the Games. At the core of such a substantial economic regeneration of the London’s East End is the construction of the Westfield Stratford City, which is meant to transform Stratford into a site for tourism, high-end shopping and leisure. Once again, the report offers no consideration of the possible negative consequences of this particular development on local communities in either social or economic terms – neither gentrification nor the impact of the Westfield on small local shops and commercial activities is mentioned.

Lloyds Group’s narrative is structured as a one-dimensional cause-effect process that is highly selective with regard to where it casts its eye. The phraseology employed throughout the report locates the Games as the grammatical (and actual) *subject* of the arguments. As has been said in the previous chapters, the subjectivisation of the elements of the social realm has important implications in the way we think of (hence enact and experience) processes of transformation and change. The first of such implications is to eliminate the role that active social agents play in the social process. In relation to capitalism, Richardson explains that “capital, as a social relation cannot have an existence independent of people” (Richardson 2007: 56). To personalise capital

means: to hide the role that real subjects (multinational companies, corporations, entrepreneurs, etc.) play in reinforcing and sustaining capitalism's social structure and power relations; and to represent it as fact of life that cannot be questioned (Fairclough 1997). The second implication of such subjectivisation is therefore to freeze the possibility of transformation and change. If dynamics of structuring of the social process have an existence of their own, they become unquestionable. To go back to the discourse of the Olympics and the accompanying process of urban regeneration, there is no such a thing as '*the* impact of the Games'. There are in fact as many *impacts* of the Games as different visions of and approaches to mega-events projects of urban regeneration exist. The kind of urban regeneration that is occurring in East London is nothing more than the product of a specific way of envisioning the Olympics and the relative processes of urban regeneration. That is, the Olympics as a way to place cities on the map of global investments and tourism. All this in turn relies on a specific idea of the city's urban, social, economic and institutional development and on the complex of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests of precise social actors.

To present its arguments as not only objective but also unquestionable, the phraseology of the Lloyds Report identifies the Games and/or regeneration as a specific subject seen to be producing specific effects. This implies precise linguistic strategies. In terms of *transitivity*, the Olympics constitute the subject of transitive actions. As for *modality*, verbs are used in the present and future tense to convey certainty. As a result, the independent and innocent *subject* is presented in direct terms as something with inevitably (positive) consequences. Talking specifically about the report, Patrick Foley, chief economist at Lloyds Banking Group, writes:

"There have been a catalogue of economic reports on the Games so far, some of which proclaim fantastical benefits; others which have condemned the whole affair as a waste of taxpayer money. But many have been politically-charged, or have told only a part of the story. What's been missing so far is any attempt to take a broad look at the lively impact of the Games, and to examine not only what the Olympic Park development might do for London, but also how the staging of the Games might deliver benefits across the UK and, critically, to small and medium-sized businesses" (2012).

In dismissing many alternative documents as inaccurate and biased, Foley's critique of reports "which proclaim fantastical benefits" is intended to reinforce the perception of the 'objective' character of the Lloyds' document instigated by its linguistic construction of impartiality, objectivity, inevitability and benefit. Such an objective character is said to lie in the fact that the document considers not just the positive impact of the Olympics on London but on the UK as a whole. The Olympics are represented as a win-win deal. The possibility for negative impacts is not even considered. In addition however, the Lloyds' Report and its justification, frame an essentially negative view of Stratford in its existing condition revealing its neoliberalism. Foley claims:

"The Games *will doubtless* (italics mine) help build London's image as a truly *modern* city. But the bigger impact *will* be the regeneration of a *neglected area* of East London [...]" (Ibid).

The subject of the sentence is 'the Games', which become the agent of the 'building' of London's image as a modern city. However, what is actually operating change is not the Olympics, but various social agents (London's municipality, multinational companies, corporations, entrepreneurs, estate agents, etc.) which agreed on an idea of the city's urban, social and economic development based on shopping, tourism, leisure and corporate investments – which, as it will be explained later, implies the construction of a specific structure of governance. To personalise the Games is therefore a way to disguise the role that social agents play and represent the Olympics as something necessary.

Therefore, not only does this *social* interpretation label Stratford as neglected, poor, and decaying, the modal 'will' and the adverb 'doubtless' again express certainty, and the word 'modern' is framed in purely neoliberal economic terms. Presented as an almost ethical phenomenon – the 'truly modern city' of capitalist free-market economics is portrayed as regenerated and wealthy. The reference to Stratford as "a neglected area of East London" needs therefore, to be read in opposition to the "modern city" being constructed by the Olympics – the modern urban space of a privatised site for shopping, leisure and tourism that has come to characterise much of today's contemporary architecture and cities. Defined in these terms, the phrase:

“The Games *will doubtless* (italics mine) help build London’s image as a truly *modern* city. But the bigger impact *will* be the regeneration of a *neglected area* of East London [...]”.

might have been reformulated as:

“The Games *will doubtless* help build London’s image as a truly *modern* city. But the bigger impact on the Olympics will be the redevelopment of Stratford”.

In this way, the sentence would have had a simple geographical meaning: the fact that a great part of the intervention takes place in Stratford. The aim of the article is instead to represent the Games as something good correcting Stratford’s negative character. Hence the image of Stratford as a decaying area is necessary.

To further sustain this representation of things, in the last paragraph of the article Foley significantly writes:

“The economics are complex, but the bottom line is that in today’s economic climate this is unlikely to be an issue”.

The author thus underlines his reinterpretation and representation of the Games as a purely economic matter by linking them with the current economic crisis. This not only narrows the discussion to the knowledge base of a few ‘experts’ – those *implementing* and supporting commercially led interventions in Stratford. It reinforces the representation of the Olympics, and the project of urban regeneration they entail, as necessary steps in the recovery of the UK and the London economy.

The discourse of the Olympics and the urban regeneration as a mere economic issue that the layman cannot understand, hence question, implies the discourse of *strategy* and the construction of a specific legal framework (which will be analysed in

the next chapter) and structure of governance. If the Olympics and the progressive transformation of East London into a venue for financial and business services, tourism, leisure, retail and shopping is the only way to enact economic recovery and growth, then it must be delivered on time and to budget. This fact, as Mike Raco explains (2012, 2014) implies the shift from *deliberation* to *delivery*. That is, from the lengthier and more complex mechanism of public discussion, accountability and control, to a horizontal system of public-private relationships that eludes such mechanisms and curtails politics in the decision-making processes.

6.4. The Political Discourse

The economic discourse, with its own configuration of genres and styles, reflects and is reflected in the political discourse. The Olympics, the economic regeneration it will produce and the rebirth of Stratford that will ensue, are again represented as independent – and thus unquestionable processes. However, as the discourse shifts from the economic to the political, a change occurs – emphasis is placed on *who* must create the conditions for the ‘necessary’ transformations required by the ‘market’ and ‘capitalism’ not the Games themselves. The ‘we’ of politicians comes to prescribe what ‘we’, UK society as a whole, must do in order to make the ‘modernisation’ of Stratford and East London happen.

6.4.1. The ‘rebirth’ of East London

The Greater London Authority’s text, “Games Accelerate the Rebirth of East London” expresses the position of the Mayor of London in this regard and reformulates the concepts of *rebirth* and *regeneration*. The headline is formed as a transitive action whose denoted meaning is that of the Games doing and/or causing the acceleration of East London’s “rebirth”. The personalisation of the Games and the ‘rebirth’ is then reinforced by the verb “to accelerate” which implies the idea of an existing process. As a result, the Games are again presented as an independent entity and the inevitability of their ameliorative benefits is reinforced by being presented as a process already in motion.

With regard to the use of rebirth and regeneration however, the game being played

is different. To say that East London is being regenerated and brought to new life is different from saying that East London is being transformed or redeveloped. ‘Transformation’ indicates a change that is not necessarily positive – and may indeed be negative. By the same token, ‘redevelopment’ indicates an act of re-construction (to construct anew) and does not necessarily equate directly to improvement.

By contrast, ‘rebirth’ and ‘regeneration’ are selected as connoting something positive. They are expected to suggest that the new situation born or generated cannot be anything but ‘good’ and, by extension, suggest that what existed before cannot be anything but ‘bad’. An underlying presentation of Stratford as a run-down, neglected and deprived area is thus once more reinforced. The document in fact reports:

“As a result of this massive public and private investment, transforming what has been one of Europe’s most impoverished areas for decades, investors from around the world are getting in touch about the multitude of investment opportunities that now exist” (GLA, 2012).

Three issues structure this text’s narrative:

1) The transformation of “what has been one of Europe’s most impoverished areas for decades”; 2) the creation of a “brand new district” to “generate an unprecedented amount of opportunities” and attract “investors from around the world”; 3) The transformation of Londoners’ job prospects.

At work here is a dynamic of opposition of images (‘bad’ East London vs. ‘good’ East London) and what linguists call *personal deixis*. As Fairclough explains, identities are commonly construed by difference - ‘we’ as not being ‘them’ (but implying them) - ‘me’ as not being ‘you’ (but implying you). In the recontextualisation of the economic discourse in the political arena any opposition between the economic and the political is turned into a coincidence between the two. The ‘we’ of politicians comes not just to indicate ‘we’ the government and/or politicians, but ‘we’ the country.

Accordingly, the ‘is’ and the ‘will’ of economic discourse are turned into the ‘should’, ‘ought to’ or ‘must’ of political discourse – which then prescribes what ‘we’ (the government and the society as a whole) should do in order to answer the challenges faced by capital. The text states:

“Our commitment is to transform job prospects of Londoners” (Ibid.).

This translates into: ‘We politicians’ have to create favourable social and economic conditions so as to attract companies that will invest in the area.

In addition to formulating this discourse into one that conflates the government, the people and big business however, this article conflates employment in general with employment by Westfield Stratford City specifically. It reports Sir Robin Wales, Mayor of Newham declaring:

“Our great partnership with Westfield has enabled us to equip local people with the training and expertise they need to get back into work” (Ibid.).

The determinant article employed in this phraseology (*the* training and expertise) implies the assumption that this is *the* training and expertise that people need to get a job in any sector or area of London and the UK. They are, in fact, *the* training and expertise forming the Westfield’s workforce.

All in all, the text reinforces the stereotype of East London as a decaying place, and hence represents an image of its inadequacy to meet the requirements of the market. In doing so, it intends to generate social consensus on the Olympics and the regeneration of Stratford specifically. It is a strategy repeated in numerous other texts that, when analysed do the same thing, one example of which is the “Convergence Action Plan 2011-2015”. In this text, the Mayor of London and the six host boroughs agree that the major legacy of the Games and the regeneration of Stratford is that they will:

“...ensure that over 20 years the scale of disadvantage experienced by Host Borough residents is greatly reduced.”

It claims that this will be achieved through:

“...higher education attainment; the improvement in skills qualifications; increases in the number of economically active adults; a reduction in child poverty; increases in life expectancy; a reduction in housing overcrowding; and a reduction in violent and gang crime.”

As no mention is made of either the existing potential of the area and its inhabitants or the positive aspects of East London's socio-economic context, this document again represents a one-sided statement that reinforces the stereotype of East London as a decaying place. By repeating the mantra that the Olympics and business offer the only way of improving living standards for East Londoners', and the only method through which the area can be 'modernised', it partakes in a political discourse aimed at generating social consensus for a one dimensional neoliberal economic interpretation of Stratford's future.

6.4.2. Convergence

All these elements shape the discourse of one of the key political texts that construe the narrative of the Games and the urban regeneration of East London: “Convergence Framework and Action Plan 2011-2015” (Mayor of London, 2011). ‘Convergence’ identifies the

“socio-economic Convergence between the Host Boroughs and the rest of London over the period to 2030” (1).

The aim is to close the gap between the host boroughs and the more developed areas of London through:

“Higher educational attainment, Achievement of greater skills qualifications, Increases in the number of economically active adults, Reduction in child poverty, Increase in life expectancy, Reduction in housing overcrowding, Reduction in violent and gang crime” (1).

There is something peculiar about this text, which makes it different and somehow more difficult to analyse from a critical stance than other texts analysed in this chapter. The entire document is in fact a list of projections and data that show the progress that has been made since 2009 in three major areas: Creating Wealth and Reducing Poverty (“which captures education, skills, employment and child poverty”); Supporting Healthier Lifestyles (“which captures health, sport and culture”); Developing Successful Neighbourhoods (“which captures strategic Housing provision, Crime and Public Realm and in particular the contribution they make to the development of sustainable communities”) (13-14).

Neither analysis of the data is provided; nor is it explained how the data have been collected, how they have been analysed and what the sources are. The text only describes *what* will be made, without explaining *how* it will be made. The text is ‘neutral’, and because of such neutrality it might seem pointless to analyse it in terms of the preconditions for the urban regeneration of East London., that is, in terms of the knowledge of the city and the underpinning systems of power relations and orders of truths. It is instead my belief that such neutrality is apparent, and needs to be placed in the context of a strategy that is deployed to represent a precise model of urban regeneration (the transformation of East London into a site for tourism, shopping, leisure and corporate investment) and its beneficial effects for the community as necessary and unquestionable *facts*.

Such a strategy of neutrality is based on three elements. First, nobody can in principle disagree with the objectives set by the document and the means to fulfil them: higher educational attainment, achievement of greater skills qualifications, increases in the number of economically active adults, reduction in child poverty, increase in life expectancy, reduction in housing overcrowding, reduction in violent and gang crime. Second, the text is based on certainties: a) it is certain that the objectives set by Convergence *will* be achieved; b) it is certain that local communities and Londoners *will* benefit from the Olympics and a West London-like pattern of social and economic

development; c) it is certain that such pattern of social, economic and urban regeneration is the only possible one. Third, the text does not provide anything to be questioned: no data analysis, and no explanation of the methods employed to analyse the data. Still, the document has content and meaning, which articulate in three elements.

The first of such elements is the representation of London's East End as an area of crime, deprivation, unemployment and decay. In the 'Convergence Annual Report 2011-2012' the host boroughs are described as being

“among the most severely deprived in England”(2).

This element implies the second one. That is, the Olympics as

“the greatest opportunity in the UK”(ibid.).

The form of the sentence produces the content. The Olympics are not in fact described as one among other possible opportunities for the UK. They are instead depicted as 'the greatest' opportunity for the UK, hence London and East London. By the same token, the regeneration process is defined as

“the greatest regeneration challenge”(3).

According to the text, there is no alternative to the Olympics and the pattern of regeneration they entail to raise East London from its social-economic decay. The 'host boroughs' are therefore turned into 'growth boroughs'; meaning that the growth enacted by the Olympics and the regeneration process is an 'objective', unquestionable *fact*. The document reads:

“Already the residents of the Growth Boroughs are starting to feel the benefits of all this in terms of jobs and investment in their area but the scale of the task to achieve Convergence is huge as we come to terms with rectifying centuries of poverty and deprivation against a background of reducing public spending, rapid population growth and migration” (2).

As it has been observed above, the depersonalisation of the economic process that characterises the economic discourse implies the personalisation of the political process. While economic forces need to be represented as impersonal and necessary, hence unquestionable, political processes need instead political actors, as accountability is key in the construction of social-political consent. In this case, such personalisation involves both the identification of the subjects enacting the project of urban regeneration and the subjects who benefit from it. Thus, ‘we’ comes to clearly identify the social, political and economic actors who sustain the Olympic regeneration of East London and are concerned “with rectifying centuries of poverty and deprivation”: the Mayor of London, the Mayors of the Host Boroughs, private investors, etc. ‘We’ comes at the same time to embrace East London residents; which are said to be benefiting from the regeneration process – and need therefore to grant it their consent.

‘Priority’ is a key concept in the official narrative of the Olympics. As it will be explained in the next chapter, the discourse of ‘priority’ and ‘prioritisation’ has important implications in terms of who actually makes the regeneration. The implication of ‘prioritising’ the regeneration process is, in other words, the creation of a structure of governance to ‘deliver’ the project ‘on time and to budget’; which in turn entails the curtailing of politics to accelerate the processes of policy and decision-making. Convergence is in fact defined as “a regional and national priority” that needs to be preserved in a context of recession and reduction in public expenditure (2011: 3). As a consequence, it is explained in the plan,

“The Mayor of London and the Elected Mayors and Leaders of the Host Boroughs, alongside Government, and the public and private sectors, have agreed to work together to realise the economic potential of the host boroughs area. This action plan incorporates priority actions to deliver Convergence goals, promotes investment and the marketing of development opportunities in the area, and seeks to exploit new and existing Government measures to encourage growth” (4).

As these two sentences show, ‘opportunity’, ‘priority’ and ‘delivery’ are key concepts in the structuring of the official discourse of the Olympics and the regeneration. The Olympics and the urban regeneration of East London are represented as ‘the greatest opportunity’ for London and the UK. They are therefore a ‘priority’ that has to be ‘delivered’ to “realise the economic potential of the host boroughs area” and that cannot be questioned. As it will be discussed drawing on Mike Raco, ‘delivery’ (2012; 2014) indicates a sort of political action that goes in an opposite direction to the kind of political action implied by the concept of ‘deliberation’. While in fact deliberation indicates the complex process of coming to an agreement between different subjects (which is at the core of democratic governance); delivery entails the suspension of such process to accelerate the completion of projects. This is true to the extent that it might be argued that undemocratic governance is intrinsic to the concept of delivery, as delivery mechanisms are enacted with the specific purpose of bypassing the mechanisms of democratic control and accountability. Social and political dissent is seen as a risk. This is the reason why:

“The move from Host Boroughs to Growth Boroughs requires the boroughs to agree both priorities for growth and potential funding mechanisms” (2012:30).

Meaning that if there is no agreement (read acceptance) on the priorities and on the ‘potential funding mechanisms’ that are set for the regeneration of East London (which imply specific relations between public authority and private sector), the host boroughs will not be able to emerge from their condition of underdevelopment. Thus the questions: Who is delivering the project? Who establishes what such potential is? What does potential mean? Who establishes what the priorities for growth and the funding mechanisms are?

To answer these questions is relevant to reaching a more comprehensive understanding of the content and meaning of Convergence. A first answer to these questions is provided by the rhetoric of the crisis in public finance, which calls for ‘new approaches’ in the allocation of financial resources to “meet the Convergence target” (2011: 8).

“The momentum created by high profile private investment in the Host Boroughs – it is explained – will be further amplified by the profile and impact of the Games themselves, giving us a unique opportunity to attract new private partners to East London, and to explore new opportunities to deploy private sector resources and expertise in the pursuit of the Convergence targets” (ibid.).

As the document analysis has demonstrated so far, the private sector plays a key role in the capital-led transformation of East London. And it does that on the basis of a specific institutional organisation of the relations between the public and the private sector that allows private companies, governmental and non-governmental agencies to operate apart from mechanisms of public accountability and control. The curtailing of such mechanisms is in turn justified by the ‘priority’ of ‘delivering’ the Olympics and the regeneration of East London – ‘the greatest opportunity’.

6.4.3. The ‘Strategic Regeneration Framework’

A deeper understanding of the model of social, economic and urban development that is enacted and who are the subjects enacting it, is provided by the Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF). The SRF is a document realized by Oxford Economics (a business enterprise that provides economic forecasting and modelling to companies and financial institutions). It provides the model for East London social, economic and urban development and constitutes the ground on which Convergence is elaborated.

The baseline analysis discusses

“the prospects for the sub-region in terms of what might normally be expected for the area on the basis of existing economic forces and projects that are certain to take place, such as the Olympics. Scenario analysis looking at making the most of the future, building on the baseline analysis to assess in more detail what the opportunities faced by the sub-region could mean for the future and the barriers that

might impede the area from making the most of them” (Oxford Economics, 2010: 11).

Oxford Economics analysis is based on a top-down forecasting process, “with each forecast relying on inputs from an higher level” (14). As it is explained in the report, economic and demographic performance at the local level of the six boroughs is considered in terms of an input-output relationship between different levels of economic activities: the global, the national, the regional, and the local. The economic performance at the local level in terms of employment, GVA, occupations, wages, rent, house prices, consumer expenditure, demography, housing stock, households is deemed as depending on the outlook of the same variables (apart from housing stock and households) at the regional level. The regional level is in turn seen as depending on the performance of the UK industry. Which is considered in relation to a ‘UK Macro Model’ that includes UK income and consumer spending, unemployment, export, inflation, public spending, etc.. The national level is finally made dependent on the outlook of global economy, “with global demand for UK exports, oil prices, and so on” (14-15).

The assumptions at the basis of such analysis is therefore that the forecasts for the six Olympic boroughs “are *constrained* (italics mine) to be consistent” with forecasts for London as a whole. And that forecasts for London are consistent with regional, national and global outlooks. Such assumptions play a central role in the construction of the discourse of the Olympics and the urban regeneration of East London.

There are four elements shaping the SRF discourse. First, the social, economic and demographic structure of East London has to ‘converge’ with that of the rest of London – meaning the West End, as the section on the social and media discourse suggests. Second, the economic organisation of East London, as well as of London as a whole, the South-East of England and the UK, needs to be modelled on the mechanisms of global economy. Third, positive outcomes can only be achieved as long as local patterns of social, demographic and economic development are consistent with those operating at the global level. Four, any divergence from the form of social and economic development entailed by global capital produces negative results.

The meaning of ‘convergence’ is thus construed in terms of homogenisation of the local, the regional, the national with the global. However, to think that the urban regeneration of East London can be successful as long as it meets the requirements of

global financial economy is arbitrary.

Such a model is in fact a social construct that reflects the specific positioning of the UK in the context of global financial economy, and the policies that have been enacted since the 1980s. The so-called world economy is made of various sectors of economic activity, of which financial services are just one among others. To give an example, Germany, currently the solidest economy of the Eurozone with the lowest level in social imbalance among European countries (including the UK), employed a different model of social-economic development from the UK. Different to the UK economy, which is characterised by an increasing reduction in manufacturing, the curtailing of the welfare state and the dominance of financial services; the German economy is instead characterised by a strong relationship between manufacturing and education, and by the idea of a socially sustainable market. Since the specific positioning of London and the UK in relation to global capitalism is a social construction, there is no scientific argument to support the idea that for the Olympic boroughs to ‘succeed’, they need to embark on the same model of social- economic development that is based on planned developments in East London such as Canary Wharf: their transformation, in other words, into a site for tourism, shopping leisure and corporate investments. By the same token, there is no scientific argument to support the idea that for London to have a balanced economic and social development such a homogenisation is required.

The discourse of East London urban regeneration reflects therefore not objective fact, but a very specific set of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests. The SRF thus constitutes a tautological construal that considers the increase in leisure, retail and financial services jobs on the basis of the increase in leisure, retail and financial services activities. In other words, it presents the obvious fact that a ‘x’ increase in leisure, retail and financial activities in Stratford and East London, will generate a consequent increase in these sectors of economic activity.

Two tables compare the boost in “Finance and Business Services”, with related activities such as “Hotels”, to the performance of other sectors of economic activities such as “Primary and utilities”, “Manufacturing”, “Construction”, “Retail”, “Transport and Comms”, over the period 1971-2007/09.

“London’s growth – the document reads – was fuelled by a huge increase in jobs in private services, with financial & business services employing more than twice as many people in London in 2009 than at the start of the 1970s, and major increases in jobs in hotels & restaurants, and other personal services too. In contrast, manufacturing, construction and primary & utilities sectors have all seen the number of jobs available in London falling, as have retail & distribution and transport & communications within the service sectors” (19).

Such a growth in jobs in private and financial & business services is not dependent on some sort of intrinsic quality of this kind of economic activity compared to the incapability of manufacturing and related productive activities to enact processes of economic growth. What is described as a ‘huge increase’ in jobs actually depends on the financial turn in the UK economy that was enacted during the 1980s.

The data provided accounts for the simple fact that an increase in financial services and related activities determined an increase in jobs in this field of economic activity. Nevertheless, the regeneration of East London and the recovery of London’s economy are placed in the context of global financial capitalism and are made dependent upon it. No other sector of economic activity is considered. Three case scenarios are in fact constructed (Major Developments, Housing, and Wider Policies) to evaluate the capability of the regeneration process to transform the area in a site for leisure, tourism, financial services and the related activities. Both the micro (the grammatical construction) and macro (the content) analysis of text confirms this fact.

“[...] Our forecast of London leading the UK recovery depends on London’s international financial and related business services sector maintaining a competitive position in the global economy as recovery becomes established” (21).

The verb “to depend on” in the present tense is used to provide certainty about the capability of “financial and related business sector” to engender economic growth and enact recovery. The contrary is at the same time established: alternative paths to recovery that do not contemplate any key role for financial and business services cannot generate any process of economic recovery and growth. At the same time, coherently with the policies that have been enacted since the 1980s, taxation and regulation are

regarded as “potential threats” (ibid.).

The host boroughs are once again described as ‘the most deprived areas of the country’:

“[...] The area suffers from significant levels of deprivation – on almost all indicators, people living in the host boroughs face worse odds than the average Londoner, including crime and health as well as educational attainments, jobs and wages” (27).

While this is to a certain extent true, what I discuss is the assumption that only specific sectors of productive-economic activity and only specific types of development can engender processes of social-economic recovery. In the “Major Development” scenario, the document reads:

“We have consulted each of the host boroughs on the range of developments that should be modelled as part of the scenario analysis – the intention is only to include developments that might be expected to shift the economic outlook away from the path that would otherwise be expected, rather than to include more modest developments that might be required simply to allow the baseline projections to come about (38).

The questions are: 1) How is that possible to know *a priori* which developments might be so substantial to positively change the economic structure of an urban area, and which development might not enact positive changes so to be excluded from evaluation? 2) Which are the “more modest developments” that can only provide trends for the baseline against which the impact of ‘major developments’ is analysed? 3) How are such developments analysed that are deemed ‘modest’?

The major developments the documents refers to are: the Stratford City zones 2-7, the Royal Docks and Canning Town/Custom House; the Greenwich Peninsula MDL scheme; the Wood Wharf extension to Canary Wharf; the redevelopment of the IPC/MBC venue in Hackney; the Dagenham Dock sustainable industrial park (38). The

impact on the social-economic structure of such development is compared with the impact of the existing planning work, whose data are provided by the Olympic boroughs (the source is not quoted). The evaluation of impact of the new developments is said to be calculated also considering “displacement”: “the extent to which jobs or economic activity in a new development simply take the place of other jobs or economic activity that would otherwise have been located elsewhere, either within the local area or further afield” (42).

The baseline developments (the developments of the existing planning work being considered apart from ‘major developments’),

“are expected to lead to just over net 50,000 additional direct jobs, with business services accounting for the majority of these, followed by financial services as the next most important sector for net new jobs” (45).

Evaluation of major developments impact shows instead:

[...] A net increase of 83,500 jobs in the host boroughs by 2030 compared with the baseline – two-thirds as much again as the direct employment impact. Of these 83,500 jobs, the scenario shows 43,000 taken by increased inward commuting and 40,500 by residents. GVA in the sub-region is £6.5bn higher than in the baseline, eliminating the “lost output” gap shown in the baseline between the size of the sub-region’s economy and what it would be with regional average productivity and employment rates, with a net gain to the Exchequer of around £4.5bn (47).

My criticism does not focus on the fact that major developments cannot produce any significant outcome on the social-economic structure of East London. My criticism focuses on the fact that such developments, which are aimed at transforming East London into an area for offices, hotels, retails, restaurants and financial services, do not necessarily imply inclusion of local communities, both in terms of jobs and in terms of an active participation to the processes of policy and decision-making. If the levels of deprivation and the lack of skills are as deep as they are described, and since the time

span of the development covers roughly 15 years (which is too little to actually experience the effects of an organic process of training and education), then the most probable outcome is that the top level jobs will be assigned to workers from wealthier areas, while local communities will provide lower skilled and low waged workforce for hotels and restaurants.

Apart from this fact, which is still to be demonstrated, such developments entail the creation of a structure of governance aimed at curtailing the mechanisms of democratic control and accountability from the processes of policy and decision-making. As will be discussed in the next chapter, public authority is not put in the background, as the discourse of deregulation might suggest. On the contrary, according to the mechanisms of regulatory capitalism (Levi-Faur, 2005), the public authority establishes horizontal and exclusive relations with corporate power to *deliver* ‘on time and to budget’ projects of urban regeneration from which politics is excluded or much reduced. By taking for granted that such developments, and the way in which they are delivered, are the only possible ones to engender social-economic growth, the dominant discourse of global financial capitalism as a necessary, anarchic and unquestionable force is thus reinforced.

The same is true for housing. Housing and its impact on jobs are considered in the context of the discourse of major developments analysed above. Three scenarios are constructed. The first scenario (2a) considers employment rate in relation to housing. It is assumed that workplace employment increases in relation to the increase in the demand for services; and that such demand for services, hence employment, is also reinforced by the proportion of out-commuting residence workers. However, it is said, “this is not enough to prevent the employment rate falling” (53). The second scenario (2b) considers the level of residents employment rate in relation to the increase in out-commuting. While scenario three (2c) combines scenario 2a and 2b to evaluate whether or not an adequate level employment is reached. The increase in population is estimated around 339,000-343,000, which is considerably more than the baseline’s 200,000. Key in the Oxford Economics assessment of the employment level in the host boroughs is scenario 2a, as it relates to major developments in the area. Since scenario 2b focuses on just the relation between out-commuting and level of residents employment (workplace is in this case located outside the host boroughs), the conclusion is that the increase in out-commuting reflects the increase in employment rate of local workers. Scenario 2a shows instead that without major developments, the increase in housing in the area is

likely to result in an increase in unemployment. Scenario 2c shows that

“Alternatively the level of additional population implied by this scale of housing could happen with less of a fall in the resident employment rate if the jobs-related developments in scenario 1 come about” (54).

The major developments that are supposed to transform East London into an area for financial and business services, offices, retail, shopping and tourism are therefore deemed as necessary to increase employment rates.

The third and last scenario considers the impact of “Wider Policies” (including skills, training, health policies, citizenship/civic pride policies, enterprise policies, housing policies) on employment. Analysis carried out in this scenario also refers to scenario 1. It is explained that such wider policies considerably increase the number of jobs in the area as they accrue the level of skills and training: 63,500 higher than the baseline by 2030 and a 66.7% employment rate that almost equals 69.6% for the whole London (60).

The relevance of Convergence and the SRF to this research is not to engage in statistical- economic analysis and provide an alternative model of economic development for the area. Consistent with the intention to analyse the preconditions for East London urban regeneration, the aim of this section is to understand how the discourse of the regeneration is construed and what its content is. By assuming that the model of financial capitalism is solely capable of engendering economic recovery and growth in the UK, London and East London, the transformation of East London into a venue for financial and business services, retail, leisure and shopping is also assumed as the only way to enact a positive dynamic of economic growth in the host boroughs and London as a whole. Alternative paths of social- economic development are excluded or simply ignored. Herein lies the meaning and content of ‘convergence’; which I believe is to be interpreted in terms of homogenization; to put it simply, in terms of the transformation of the London’s East End into a new West End.

But such discourse relies on a number of underpinning assumptions that reflects specific sets of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests. Global financial

capitalism is in fact no impersonal *subject* that acts independently from human beings. Global financial capitalism is a complex of diverse social practices whose discourses, and their reciprocal relations, change as models and forms of economic developments change from one country to another. The UK way to global financial capitalism is just one single example among many others. The ‘UK model’ is in fact a social construction, which reflects the specific interests of the City of London and a very specific system of social relations of power. It is important to keep in mind that such interests and relations of power do not reflect the social-economic conditions of London as a whole. And that, as Saskia Sassen reminds us (2001), there is often a considerable gap between the economic and social organisation of so-called global cities such as London, New York, Tokyo, and the forms of social-economic organisation of the rest of their respective countries.

The summarise, the aim of this discussion is not to question the outcomes of the Convergence and SRF’ analysis of the social-economic impact of the regeneration of East London and London and the UK’s economy. The aim here is to show the way in which these documents construe a narrative of place that legitimizes the dominant discourse of capital; and the way in which such a narrative is reflected in the actual transformation of the urban, social, economic and institutional order of the city.

6.5. The Media Discourse

Another discourse through which the neoliberal agenda of a consumerist and gentrified development of Stratford was, and is, played out, is that of the media. In the shift from the economic to the political and into the media discourse however, there is another change in the genre and style of texts and language employed. In this case, the change – which answers the requirements of a different kind medium – is in the dominant social representation of place that is being reinforced. This discourse entails the promotion and presentation of a precise way of acting and interacting in space, as well as a specific identity of both the place and the people who are supposed to inhabit it. It revolves around narratives of shopping, tourism, and living and can be defined as promoting the ‘westendisation’ of Stratford.

The headline of an article published in *The Daily Telegraph* on March 2nd, 2012 by Graham Ruddick reveals this clearly, “London 2012 Olympics: The Games are

coming, so where is the housing boom?” (2012). In this headline, Ruddick is clear about what the Olympics are about: real estate interests. In a critical discourse analysis of the text, the ‘inevitability’ of this housing boom is reflected in the adverb “where” – that implies not only the possibility, but more specifically the expectation of just such an outcome. It goes on to say:

“The organisers of London 2012 desperately hope there will be a surge in demand for property in East London. The regeneration of the area, particularly Stratford, was one of the core ambitions behind the bid proposal to the International Olympic Committee in 2005. However, there remains concerns about whether people will actually want to live in the area and whether businesses, who will support the jobs for residents, can be attracted to East London”.

According to this text, London won the Olympic bid because of the stress it placed on the concepts of ‘regeneration’ and ‘legacy’, whose meaning is here redefined in terms of ‘westendisation’. Since people already live in Stratford, the doubts about whether people “will actually want to live in the area” is a curious one. In reality, what it actually reflects are doubts about whether West Enders will be willing to move to East London. This representation of Stratford as a place so unattractive that it discourages wealthy people to move there, reinforces the idea that a radical transformation of the social, economic and urban structure of East London is needed. Quoting Yolande Barnes, head of *Savills Residential Research*, the Ruddick article continues:

“The legacy will effectively be a managed ‘landed estate’ with an eye on long-term quality that means some localities will have the potential to rival the more prime areas of west London. This should attract newcomers who would otherwise not have considered the location previously”.

According to Barnes – the author continues:

“... an improvement in the local environment would not just attract families to Stratford, but also wealthy overseas investors. If that happens, then the Government and Locog, the London 2012 organising committee, are likely to fulfil their legacy

pledge to regenerate East London – even if the housing market is yet to see any real benefits”.

Writing from the perspective of the ‘social subjects’ actually behind the allegedly independent Olympics and the regeneration of Stratford, the Barnes article expresses the vision of a specific group of interests that is *construing* and imposing its own image upon place. On the ground in Stratford itself, all of this is captured perfectly by the architectural and urban development that is the Westfield Stratford City – presented in the media in precisely these gentrified and commercial terms. *E-architect*, an on-line magazine on architecture, describes Westfield as:

“an innovative fusion of different brands, experiences and formats [that] will grace the three-level curved mall (with M&S and John Lewis at either end) and beautifully designed 24- hour lifestyle street that links the Stratford international and regional stations. Art and culture will be integral to the experience – from the striking architecture of individual retail districts and new retail concepts to cultural collaborations, events and installations that will enhance the next generation of retail spaces. Westfield Stratford City is set to transform London's retail landscape and provides the ultimate opportunity for the world's most stimulating and interesting brands”.



Pic. 2 Westfield Stratford City

This discourse articulates the concepts of brand, experience and lifestyle through its own specific textual genre and style. Its *genre* differs from an academic or specialised text in that it does not provide any information about the structure of the building, the organisation of space, its relation to context or its architectural language. It only provides information on the quantity of stores and the brand of restaurants, bars, cinemas, shops and supermarkets to be found there. It takes on the form of a tourist guide or a glossy magazine.

This is all reflected in its *style* that is aimed at promoting a product rather than analysing architecture. The text employs a terminology appropriate to the sale of a luxury, cutting-edge, and smart lifestyle and, importantly, promotes the chance to experience it. These stylistic features are repeated in a short film celebrating the opening of the Westfield, “100 Years/Style/East London”. In this video piece, the *Viral Factory* production company presents Westfield as a place both creating and disseminating fashion. Through a stream of images representing one hundred years of history as a succession of different styles, it presents fashion as a narrative element that reformulates the history and the identity of East London from 1911 to 2011.

What is at stake in presentations such as these is the re-invention of East London’s identity through what we may call, an invented tradition. According to Eric Hobsbawm:

“Invented tradition is taken to mean a set of practices normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules of a ritual or symbolic nature, that seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition – and which automatically imply continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, it normally attempts to establish continuity with a suitable historic past” (Hobsbawm, 1).

Hobsbawm argues that no matter how old a tradition is, the link it creates with the past is always arbitrary and identifies three ways in which such links can be established: 1) by adapting old uses and models to new times and conditions; 2) by employing old materials to construct brand new traditions; 3) by inventing new historical materials for new traditions – because institutions and ideologies can be “so unprecedented that even

historical continuity [has] to be invented.”

According to this framework, traditions (in contradistinction to customs) are ritualised practices enacted through repetitions that are invariant over time and, as such, are aimed at constructing and strengthening identities. In the case of this creation of a tradition of design, fashion and creativity for Stratford, it is an invented tradition aimed at reinforcing a contemporary image whose goal is commercial gain. It is a social and media based discourse that is a clear manipulation of history.

Through a critical analysis of the economic, political and social/media discourses around the Games then, it is possible to understand *who* is behind the transformation of Stratford, in *whose* interest the transformation is taking place, *what* it is about, and *how* it reformulates the identity of the place in social, cultural, architectural, urban and functional terms. As a text, that is to say, as a semiotic element of a social event, Westfield Stratford City specifically reformulates the discourse of shopping into the media representation of place and, in addition, into a specific spatial and architectural form.

As such, Westfield produces two levels of discourse: *construal* (its social representation) and *construction* (its material existence in terms of urban-architectural form, entitlement, practices and functions). In this case, these discourses become so intertwined that they are, at times, seemingly indistinguishable. This is most clearly evident if we consider how the flow of images structuring the narrative of the short film mentioned above, reflects the concept of the continuous space of shopping architecture represented by the complex itself.



Pic. 3 Westfield's internal alley

Westfield is a flawless and uninterrupted space conceived to maximise the circulation of people and its sales volume. It is a self-referential domain that expresses autonomy through its form and its glazed facades - the glazing prevents any view of the inside for those on the exterior while its form represents a clearly disharmonic intervention in its surroundings - both in urban and specifically architectural terms. Reinforced by its dimensions, which reflect the intention to create a self-contained environment, this autonomy is a perfect example of the Rem Koolhaas attitude to a building's position and relation to its surroundings; 'fuck context' (Koolhaas 1997).

The building rejects the pre-existing city and tries instead to create an alternative city: the city of flow (a flow of people, money and goods) - a continuous dimension of shopping and consumerism held together by a complex system of transportation. The mimicking of the language and aesthetics of hi-tech architecture (symbolising the 'modernity' of financial capitalism), the spectacle of lights it offers (expressing the excitement of consumerism), and its stunning display of goods and leisure activities, all create an experiential dimension in which people are offered the chance to enact lifestyle.

All this brings to the fore the issue of the nature of space which Adrian Forty describes when talking about the capacity of architecture to enact a form of dynamic of reflexive perception. He writes:

“Any public building – a railway station, for example – or even any public space – a street – can provide the setting for reflexive perception, which allows an individual, through an encounter with the other, to realize his or her own being. But the majority of public buildings in which we both see and are seen belong to someone or some agency, and one’s experience of the other is always subordinate to the purposes of the owner. In the railway station, the dominant requirement is to travel; and the form of the building ensures that one does this in the manner, and in the state of mind, that has been ordained by the railway operator. Similarly in the shopping centre, the primary aim of the architectural experience is to ensure that one wants as many of the commodities on sale as possible. In either case, the owners’ interests are always dominant, and our experience as individuals is always marginal and alienated; in phenomenological terms, a part of our being is taken from us, but not returned” (Forty 2001: 207).

Consistent with these arguments, the purpose of Westfield Stratford City may be seen as not providing a *free* public space, but providing a space that guarantees the mechanism of the selling, buying and consumption of goods – a reality perfectly reflected by its lack of benches or seats which would favour social encounter over shopping. People cannot just ‘stay’ in Westfield – they are prompted to buy. There are in fact neither benches nor seats in the internal alleys of the buildings. In the external alleys and plaza, benches are placed in a way that people’s gaze is constantly directed toward shop windows.

In contrast (in principle at least) to publicly owned spaces, privately owned spaces such as Westfield remove the right to freely express one’s civic-political liberties. These liberties are in fact suspended – or at least strongly regulated by the owner – with activities such as picketing, protesting, skateboarding and taking pictures being banned. However, the banning of these activities is not just enacted by a *material* system of surveillance and private security, but is also played out through an *immaterial*, and more subtle and powerful, tool of control – images.



Pic. 4 Westfield's internal alley

Norman Denzin argues that images enact a self-reflexive dynamic of seeing and being seen that transforms the beholder into the looking-at the looked-at-subject simultaneously. He states:

“From this reflection arose self-ideals and self-appraisal, self-feelings and feelings toward others. [...] Movies created emotional representations of self, sexuality, desire, intimacy, friendship, marriage, work and family. These reflective representations drew upon the ideological structures of everyday life. They created an everyday politics of emotionality and feeling that shaped real, lived, emotional experiences. [...] Real, everyday experiences soon came to be judged – and we may add performed – against their staged, cinematic counterparts. The fans of the movie stars dressed like the stars, made love like the stars and dreamed the dream of the stars” (Denzin 1995: 28-32).

According to this argument, images and texts construct a narrative of place in which people see themselves reflected - and which they themselves then reflect. In Westfield, such narratives are based on the fetishisation of commodities and consumption through advertising imagery that not only prompts longing for, and identification with, the lifestyle that the Westfield promises, but also indicates the way in which space is to be used – for the parading of gentrified middle class glamour. By saying *what* space is for, images and texts say *who* the space belongs to and *who* is entitled to it.



Pic. 5 Westfield's bridge

These images thus help control social behaviour and shape identities by homogenising the uses and practices of the space. They do not express any class, gender and race exclusion and present an image of the space as one that is universally inclusive. Such inclusivity however, entails the acceptance of explicit and implicit rules that have not been collectively negotiated, but rather arbitrarily established by the owners on the basis of the people and behaviours they seek to attract and foment. Westfield thus becomes a space *for* everyone, but not *of* everyone, as the democratic mechanism of negotiation and discussion about the uses and the practices of space is in

fact suspended.

6.6. Conclusions

Discourse is therefore not just a matter of mental representations, but reflects a specific vision of the city and its built environment and is reflected in the way in which urban space and architecture are physically constructed.

In the first part of the chapter I explored the way in which the discourse *on/of* architecture and urban space affects and is affected by the physical construction of the latter through the mediating agency of language. I did that by analysing Rem Koolhaas' theoretical work on consumption and shopping, and how such discourse is actually translated into material space and architecture.

In the second, third and fourth part I focused on the way in which the economic, political and media discourse of the Olympics and the regeneration of Stratford/East London translated into a specific vision and knowledge of urban space; which is seen as site for tourism, leisure, shopping and corporate investment. The construction of the Westfield Stratford City demonstrates how such a vision is materialised in actual urban and architectural form, social practices and economic organisation of place. As the next chapter explains, such reorganisation of the urban, social and economic order of place is also reflected in the creation of a specific structure of governance and legal framework. Such structure of governance and legal framework reorganise the relations between the different social actors (public authorities, companies and corporations, local communities, etc.) that are involved in the process of transformation and change of place.

I also tried to demonstrate that there is no vertical and hierarchical relation between the economic on the one side, and the political, the social and, as we shall see, the institutional discourse on the other. Such different dimensions of discourse together reflect the emergence of the neo-liberal discourse of the city as site for shopping, tourism, leisure and corporate investment; a discourse that has managed to become hegemonic in London and the UK since the de-industrialisation in the 1980s; and has been translated, as this research tries to demonstrate, in a new urban, social, economic and institutional order. The theoretical implication of this is the following. In the same way as there is no primacy of the economic on the urban, social and institutional

dimension of cities, so there is no dominance of discourse on all these non-discursive elements of the social world (economic being included). Discursive practices occur in a pre-existing context of social relations of power, orders of truth and systems of knowledge, and can question, transform and change them – which does not necessarily mean to subvert the social order, but also to enact processes of internal transformation of an existing system (as it happened in the shift from industrial to financial capitalism).

Publicness in the Olympic Regeneration of East London: the Preconditions for the Construal of Public Space in the Official Discourse of Laws, Acts, Plans and Development Strategies

7.1. Introduction

As Mike Raco (2012) argues, the Olympics are not exceptional events whose analysis can be circumscribed within the narrow boundaries of the literature on mega-events. They need instead to be considered in relation to the current forms of urban politics and contemporary capitalism. Such forms are characterised by the shift from *government* to *governance*, which is turning representative democracy into a “second-level indirect representative democracy – citizens elect representatives who control and supervise ‘experts’ who formulate and administer policies in an autonomous fashion from their regulatory bastions” (Levi-Faur, 2005, p. 13).

Raco’s most recent work focuses on the framework of contracts and agreements between public authorities and corporations that shape the process of policy making, planning and *delivering* of London 2012 (Raco, 2014). This paper goes back to the preconditions for the formation of such a structure of governance. It focuses on the discourse, in Foucauldian terms, of laws, acts, plans and development strategies that construe a specific *knowledge* of urban public space; a knowledge that, I believe, shapes the actual policies being enacted. This chapter aims, therefore, at understanding how the official discourse of laws, acts, plans and development strategies works in creating the preconditions for the formation of East London’s public space. As the focus is on the knowledge of public space (*publicness*), rather than on public space itself (on the *how*, rather than on the *what*) the question is how the dominant discourse of laws, acts, plans and development strategies shapes the concept of public space in East London urban regeneration.

Since the notion of public space involves a number of diverse and even contrasting meanings that cannot be synthesised in a single definition (Habermas, 1992), we need to outline what might be called an ideal model against which to evaluate the *publicness* emerging from such discourse. The basic features of this model must be

identified since defining these makes it possible to establish how and why urban space may be called public. Drawing on Hannah Arendt's reflections on democracy and the public sphere (1998), the conceptual element I assume as essential to any definition of public democratic space is *plurality*: the dialectical interaction between differences arising in the social realm. This chapter also addresses the extent to which the idea of *publicness* that is construed by contemporary official discourse differs/corresponds to an interpretation of the public sphere based on the idea of plurality – Arendt's precondition for democracy.

In the previous chapter I analysed the economic, political and media discourse of the Olympics and the urban regeneration of East London to understand the preconditions for the urban-architectural, social and economic transformation of place into a site for tourism, shopping and corporate investments. That is, the complex of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests shaping a specific idea of the city's urban, social and economic development. The same approach is used here to understand how such an idea is reflected in the creation of a precise structure of governance and legal framework to enact such complex of values and materialise it into a 'real' urban, social, economic and institutional order. Once again, CDA is used to de-construct the worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests, and the underpinning social relations of power that shape the official discourse of the Olympic-inspired regeneration of East London and to provide the content to a precise idea of public space (*publicness*).

The chapter divides into two parts. Starting from Hannah Arendt's discussion on politics, the first elaborates on the notion of democratic public space. Here, I also draw upon Robert Dahl's interpretation of plurality (2002) and Colin Crouch's analysis of 'post-democracy' – his term for the current phase of capitalism's development (2004, 2011). The concept of post-democracy helps to put into critical perspective the progressive elimination of plurality, hence democracy, from within the processes of policy and decision making; and from its expression in the competition between different economic actors in the market place. The second part focuses on the discourse presented in a number of key texts that have provided the framework for policy-making in London: the Greater London Authority Act 1999, the London Plan 2011, the London Implementation Plan 2011, the Deregulation and Contracting Out Act 1994, the CLM-Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA) contract, and the Mayor's Cultural Strategy.

The chapter concludes that the preconditions for the physical materialization of public space (*construction*) are set out in structures of governance and legal frameworks (*construal*). Such structures of governance and legal frameworks constitute discursive practices that reflect social relations of power and define the nature of public space itself (*publicness*). Contrasting the tendency to envision the dynamics of urban transformation and change as being determined by economic processes, I argue that economy is part of a wider structuring dimension that involves the urban, the social and the institutional realms in the same way as it involves the economic sphere. I call this structuring dimension *discourse as social-political action*. The complex of acts, laws, plans and development strategies that is analysed in this chapter is an expression of the worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests that has become socially and politically hegemonic in the UK since the 1980s and the 1990s until today. Such a legal framework materialises these ideas, ideologies and beliefs into urban form and policies, social order, economic organisation and institutional structure – the latter regulating the relations between the different social actors that are actively and/or passively involved in the regeneration of East London. Herein lies the meaning of discourse as social-political; a meaning that accounts for the tension between *construal* and *construction*, and between the discursive and non-discursive dimensions of the social process.

The social process – it is argued throughout this research – articulates through the production of sets of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests that shape narratives and representations; which constitute the discursive elements of the social world. At the same time such worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests inform systems of knowledge and truth, and entail structures of power relations; which are together enacted in actual urban form and policies, social order, economic organisation and institutional structure. Systems of knowledge and truth, structures of power relations, urban form and policies, social order, economic organisation and institutional structure constitute the non-discursive dimension of the social world.

This also means, to return to the premises of this work, that there is nothing absolute in the societal world. Publicness is not determined by ownership. A publicly owned space might well have severe restrictions on, say, access and use that make it ‘non-public’. The processes of policy and decision-making regarding urban space’s form and function – as this chapter demonstrates – might be preclusive of the mechanisms of democratic control and accountability, and be restricted to the exclusive relations between public authority and private subjects. Public space would be in this

case ‘privatised’. ‘Publicity’ is a concept whose content relies on the power relations between social actors (institutions, local communities, political parties, unions, corporations, governmental and non-governmental agencies, associations, individuals, etc.) and on the knowledge of public urban space that such relations entail.

These issues I addressed in a paper that I presented during the “Olympic Legacies: International Conference” that was hosted by the University of East London (UEL) in September 2013. The paper has been later published as a chapter (Desiderio, 2016) of a book exploring the different facets of the impact of the Olympic Games on East London and London as a whole.

7.2. Public sphere: a definition

There is no single definition of public space. The concept spans, as Claudio De Magalhães explains, from all non-private realms of social life to all those spaces that perform public functions – no matter whether they are publicly or privately owned (2010, p. 561). This discussion reflects the wider debate on public sphere, which Jürgen Habermas analysed in relation to the development of state institutions since the Greek *polis*. In order to understand the publicness of East London urban space in the official discourse of laws, acts, plans and development strategies that frame the policies shaping East London urban regeneration, we need to identify some core principles to provide a definition of public urban space.

As outlined earlier, the starting point for such a discussion is Hannah Arendt’s idea of politics. The relevance of Hanna Arendt’s work to this paper lies in that it focuses on the conditions for politics rather than on politics itself (Canovan, 1998: vii). An important example is *plurality*; which is “not only the *conditio sine qua non*, but the *conditio per quam* of all political life” (Arendt, 1998, p. 7). Despite sharing a common nature, men are different from one another. *Action in speech*, that is to say politics, is where differences are revealed. Politics is therefore to be understood as the dialectical interaction between differences. As the public realm is where such interaction occurs, public space is the space for individuals to interact with each other and express their reciprocal differences. This is true to the extent that “action (read politics) would be an unnecessary luxury, a capricious interference with general laws of behaviour, if men were endlessly reproducible repetitions of the same mode, whose nature or essence was

the same for all and as predictable as the nature or essence of any other thing” (ibid, p. 8). Plurality is, therefore, the condition for the existence of politics, while the *polis* and public space are where such plurality is expressed and practiced. This implies an immaterial notion of *polis*, whose possibility does not rely on its physical location, but on the acting and speaking together of people (ibid., p. 198). A close relationship is thus established between plurality, politics, public sphere, the *polis* and democracy; each cannot exist without the other. That brings to the fore the concept of *entelechia*: Aristotle’s idea of things developing out of an internal reason. According to this principle, Arendt explains, the means to achieve the end “would already be the end; and this ‘end’, conversely, cannot be considered a means in some other respect, because there is nothing higher to attain than this actuality itself” (ibid, p. 206-207). The implication of this for public space is that its purpose is nothing more, nor less, than the existence (and permanence) of public space itself. For public space is where plurality, hence democracy, is exercised.

In his attempt to identify a pure model of democracy against which to evaluate actual forms of government and political organisation, Robert Dahl argues that plurality, which he calls *polyarchy*, is a necessary requirement for democracy. Apart from free elections (which are a necessary but not sufficient condition for democracy) one of the essential requirements of representative democracy is to guarantee all citizens equal possibilities to engage in political activity, to take part in and affect the processes of policy making within political parties, unions, associations, interest groups and other civic associations – which need in turn to be sufficiently autonomous from dominant political and economic forces (Dahl, 2002). From a critical standpoint, Colin Crouch shows how one of the consequences of increasingly closer relationships between governments and corporations in the form of the contracting out of services and functions, is the progressive reduction of both public control and accountability in policy making, and of economic competition in the market. The antidote to such a reduction of democracy is seen in the strengthening of civic society; that is to say, the plurality of forces, institutions, organisations and actors constituting the societal world.

Plurality and *entelechia* are necessary preconditions for the creation of democratic urban space. Their suspension to ‘deliver’ projects and keep up with the pace of economic change reflects in the progressive elimination of politics – hence democracy – from policy making and planning. As I shall discuss later in this chapter, insofar as culture and urban space are no longer ends in themselves and become means to attract

tourists and investors' money, the democratic mechanisms of discussion and negotiation between different social forces, groups and subjects is turned into the mere bureaucratic management of top-down strategies. Such strategies constitute, in turn, the preconditions for the degradation of the civic and the formation of an undemocratic public space.

The formation of a democratic or an undemocratic space has an intrinsic discursive nature; for it is enacted through consultation, law making, public discussion, and the media. As I argued in the previous chapter, far from being something immaterial, discourse play a central role in shaping the societal world in its physical form, and in establishing who does and does not belong in the city. Hanna Arendt explains that in the Roman Empire “the curse of slavery consisted not only in being deprived of freedom and of visibility, but also in the fear of these obscure people themselves that from being obscure they should pass away leaving no trace that they have existed” (1998, p. 55). To be included in the official representation of the city means therefore to be acknowledged as a citizen. By the same token, to have the power to shape such representation means to play a dominant role in the play of social forces. The implication of this in terms of urban politics is that who shapes policies also establishes who has the right to own, access and practice urban place.

By enacting policies, the discourse of laws, acts, plans and development strategies also shapes the form and the practices of urban space. As Norman Fairclough, Simon Pardoe and Bronislaw Szerszynski explain, discourse can be interpreted as a combination of *discourses*, *genres* and *styles*.

“Discourses: ways of *representing* the world from particular perspectives [...]. Genres: ways of *acting* and *interacting* with other people, in speech or writing [...]. Styles: ways of *identifying*, constructing or enunciating the self, including both social and institutional identities [...]” (Fairclough, Pardoe, Szerszynski, 2010, p. 418-419).

The discourse framing the regeneration of East London (in which urban space becomes an asset: a means to achieve the accumulation of capital in various forms) entails a specific genre, that is to say a specific way of acting and interacting in space.

One such genre is shopping, which becomes the principle of a planning policy envisaging London as a place for lifestyle. In this context culture is no longer an end in itself, but a complex of marketing strategies aimed at attracting more tourists and investment. Such discourse and genre imply in turn style: a specific way of being of urban space in terms of form and practices – which also entails the construction of individual and collective identities.

Such discourse also reflects the shift from government to governance described by Colin Crouch (2011) and David Levi-Faur (2004; 2005). The shift is characterised by the contracting out of public services to big corporations – whose aim is to freeze competition in the market place by securing exclusive relations with governments and public authorities. Such “privatisation of the market” – as Crouch calls it – reflects the privatisation of decision-making processes and the weakening of the mechanisms of public accountability and control. By assuming exclusive control of public services, firms and corporations are not, in fact, accountable to taxpayers, voters and citizens but to their clients, and are judged by their capability to fulfil the terms of the contract. The elimination of politics at the level of law making by this process of privatization, is reflected in the elimination of plurality at the level of the forms, uses and practices of space.

7.3. The GLA ACT 1999

The organisation of the London Olympics 2012 is characterised by a shift from *deliberation* to *delivery* (Raco, 2012); which entails a change in the policies, practices and interpretation of democracy. Deliberation implies processes of decision-making that occur within the space and mechanisms of representative democracy; whereas delivery implies the handing over of a product within a short time span and with a precise purpose. This is an important shift, as it marks the difference between democratic government, where the possibility of discussing issues from different perspectives and approaches is guaranteed; and non-democratic governance, where institutions focus on the delivery of a product. The key principles of such non-democratic urban governance, as Raco explains, are to ‘get things done’ and deliver ‘on time’ and ‘to budget’ (Raco, 2014).

The discourse on the Olympics is composed of words and concepts such as change, priorities, delivery and strategy. Accordingly, social practices and services such as urban planning and culture become *strategic sectors* – elements of a wider strategy aimed at delivering a product. I take as a starting point of this discussion the GLA Act 1999: the governmental act that establishes the Greater London Authority and its functions. The Mayor's prerogative and actions are defined in this legislation in terms of 'strategy': 'The Mayor's strategies', 'General duties of the Mayor in relation to his strategies', 'The Mayor's spatial development strategy', 'Culture strategy and tourism', 'The Cultural Strategic Group for London' (Greater London Authority Act 1999, pp. 25- 44).

The word strategy originates from the ancient Greek *strategós*: general, commander, literally army leader. *Strategema* is the Greek word for war trickery, stratagem, ploy. The verb *strategeo* means "I employ a stratagem", "I manoeuvre in order to", "I deceive somebody". Strategy has, therefore, an intrinsic military meaning that implies shrewdness and the capacity to overcome obstacles and defeating enemies, by plotting and deceiving. It indicates a means to an end. As we shall see later in this paper, in the Mayor's Spatial development strategy and Culture strategy, planning and culture are not the domain of specific policies aimed at improving London's public sphere, but instruments to make London attractive to investors and tourists. Planning and culture thus become part of a mayoral culture strategy that sets out the objectives to be fulfilled through the hosting of the Olympics and the urban regeneration it entails.

7.3.1. Culture Strategy and Tourism

The discourse of strategy implies the discourse of delivery and vice versa. Both need to be considered in the context of global financial capitalism and the progressive reduction of democracy from decision-making processes. The creation of independent agencies with the power to contract out services and projects to private subjects, and the complex of contracts and agreements establishing the relations between the public authorities and the contractors are meant to deliver projects without going through the process of political discussion and control. According to the dominant representation of global capital, this allows a prompt response to the challenges raised by a rapidly changing economic environment. As culture is part of the Mayor's strategic plan or London, the act establishes the Cultural Strategy Group for London, whose task is to

“formulate and submit to the Mayor a draft strategy containing policies with respect to culture, media and sport in Greater London” (section 376, p. 232). The questions are: Why does culture need a strategy? How is the concept of culture articulated?

I shall answer the second question, first. In this context culture is a key sector in which to invest in order to maintain and increase London’s status as a global city. As Fredric Jameson suggests, in a consumerist society and an economy dominated by multinational enterprises the concept of culture exceeds the original meaning entailing the production of knowledge (or its attachment to a people living in a specific place and time). This hypertrophy of culture comes to include all the elements of spectacle and consumerism, so that the boundaries between art, history, shopping, food, music, tourism, sport, etc. blur. To put it simply, culture becomes entertainment. The GLA Act 1999 reflects this meaning of culture; for culture becomes integrated within the same strategy as tourism, media and sport (the title of part 10 of the act is “Culture strategy and tourism”).

That also answers the first question. Culture here is a key investment sector to maintain London’s status as a global city. As Frederic Jameson suggests, in late capitalism the concept of culture exceeds more traditional meanings such as knowledge or, say, civilisation, and comes to include the disparate elements of spectacle and consumerism, so that the boundaries between, for example, art, history, shopping, food, music, tourism and sport blur. The GLA Act 1999 reflects this dynamic, as culture is conceived as part of a strategy of urban development along with media and sport (the title of Part 10 Chapter 1 of the Act is ‘Culture Strategy and Tourism’). That also answers the first question. Since culture is a key element in London’s image as global capital and, as Andrew Calcutt suggests, finance’s twin sister, it becomes an asset (Calcutt, 2012: 67). It is turned into a product to be traded on the market on the basis of calculations about its capacity to produce more capital. The implication of this is that governance, for culture’s development, cannot be left to the free play of different social actors in society.

The GLA Act sets out the conditions for such a form of cultural governance. The Cultural Strategy Group for London is currently composed of 23 members who are appointed by the Mayor (at the time of writing Boris Johnson) and are selected from a number of public and private institutions. The official page on the GLA’s website reads: that the group’s

“primary role is to develop the Mayor’s Culture Strategy – maintaining and promoting London as a world-class city of culture. Members represent regional cultural agencies and key institutions across London, acting as the voice of the cultural sector, to monitor and present to the Mayor the ongoing challenges and needs of the sector” (<http://www.london.gov.uk/priorities/arts-culture/london-cultural-strategy-group>).

These few lines present the reader with claims that characterise, according to Norman Fairclough, contemporary political discourse:

“a) Globalization in its dominant neo-liberal form has been associated with changes in the State and national (as well as international) politics; b) There is a tendency of the State to become a ‘competition state’ with the primary objective of securing competitive advantage for the capital based within its borders; c) There is an associated tendency within mainstream politics for the political division and contestation (e.g. between political parties) characteristics of the previous period to weaken, and for consensus to emerge on the main strategy and policy” (2010a, p. 172).

As Fairclough suggests, changes in the way that States are governed are deemed as necessary to answer the challenges presented by global financial capitalism; which means that states and cities need to compete against each other to secure a privileged position on the map of global capital. Since in the current economic and political discourse to gain such a position has become an unquestionable priority, as a result the traditional distinctions between ‘right’ and ‘left’ blurs. By the same token, general consensus is sought for policies and projects deemed to answer the requirements of the global financial market; so that any opposition to such policies and projects is silenced. The Olympics as catalyst for urban regeneration and culture as a complex of strategic policies are to be understood in this context. They become, in other words, an instrument for “maintaining and promoting London as a world-class city of culture”; that is to say, London’s status as a city for tourism, lifestyle, investments and

consumption. The delivery of the Olympics and its accompanying urban regeneration and cultural strategy implies the curtailing of politics and democracy from decision-making processes. Culture is, in turn, transformed into a sector of economic activity to be bureaucratically managed on the basis of the logic of marketing.

As culture becomes a key asset, cultural strategy has to be delivered without any political interference. The GLA Act provides the conditions for the elimination of politics. The Act establishes the right for the group to

“enter into arrangements with any other person or organisation for or in connection with the carrying on by that person or organisation of any activity which the Authority has power to carry on” (Section 378, subsection 3d, p.234).

According to the Act, the planning of cultural activities is a top-down process enacted by the Cultural Strategy Group, whose decisions can in principle rely on the expertise of subjects and organisations, which may have the right to elaborate and enact policies on behalf of the group. Despite being contracted by public funds, these subjects and organisations would not be accountable to representative bodies such as London’s Assembly or the Parliament; for they act on the basis of contracts and agreements signed with the group, which is the only authority they need to answer to. Thus, the primary role of culture in London is not as a horizontal and independent practice, but as a privatised business aimed at making the city an attractive place for tourists and investors.

7.4. The London Plan 2011 and the London Implementation Plan

The London plan 2011, also known as the Mayor’s Spatial Strategy, turns the discourse of strategy and delivery into a planning strategy. The first objective of the strategy is to

“retain and build upon its world city status as one of three business centres of global reach. It must be somewhere people and businesses want to locate,

with places and spaces to meet their needs. This economic dynamism is vital to ensuring the prosperity Londoners (and the rest of the United Kingdom) need, to maintaining the world-beating innovation increasingly needed to address global challenges, and to secure the highest quality development and urban environments” (GLA, 2011, p. 6).

In these introductory lines we find the very same semiotic elements characterising the Cultural Strategy Group’s statement. The Mayor re-contextualises the language and meanings of the global financial economy discourse into the guidelines of ‘his’ planning policies that entails specific linguistic strategies operating on both the macro and the micro level.

The dynamics at work in global financial capitalism are represented as self-sustaining, a-historical and necessary forces whose existence is independent from human agency. In so doing, such forces become unquestionable: natural facts that ‘we’ all have to adapt to in order to prosper. As Fairclough explains, the ‘we’ = the government as opposed to “they” = past governments and/or political opposition. The characterising narratives of identities is turned into a “we” = the country. In the Mayor’s discourse “we” is identified with Londoners and the rest of the United Kingdom. ‘We = the Londoners and the rest of the UK’ embraces the entire political, ideological and cultural spectrum, so that the existence of any political, ideological and cultural opposition is denied. Political discourse thus becomes assertive and normative. This fact is reflected in verb modality, which indicates what ‘must’ and ‘needs’ to be done in order for London: 1) to maintain its status as “world city and one of three business centres of global reach”; 2) to be “somewhere people and business want to locate”; 3) “to ensure the prosperity of Londoners and the rest of the UK”. The equations “financial economy = prosperity” and “no financial economy = poverty” are thus construed (GLA, *ibid.*: 6). It is significant that the Plan is limited to the provision of guidelines, without indicating any specific policies or the means by which they will be enacted. To put it simply, the Plan provides a very generic ‘what’ without providing the ‘how’; for the how is contained in the contracts and agreements between public authorities and private contractors. The plan thus becomes an open and flexible instrument to allow the enactment of specific policies formulated in contracts and agreements. Such openness and flexibility therefore do not equal neutrality. The plan expresses a specific set of worldviews, which are materialised in consequent urban form and policies, social order,

economic organisation and institutional structure. The transformation of East London into a site for tourism, shopping, leisure and corporate investments entails a specific urban-architectural form of place, the reconfiguration of the social order, a change in the economic organisation, and the enactment of specific policies for which a precise structure of governance is required.

The Olympics are said to be “providing a global showcase for the capital” and to constitute a unique opportunity to secure and accelerate the delivery of many elements of the Mayor’s strategies, and for this reason it is the Mayor’s highest regeneration priority for this period” (GLA, 2011, p. 24). “Deprivation” is a key concept. Once East London is classified as a “priority”, the adoption of “special policies” is urged. The second chapter of the plan, in fact,

“sets out special policies for areas of London facing particular needs or with distinctive parts to play in the capital’s development over the period to 2031, particularly using the legacy of the 2012 Games to regenerate the Lower Lea Valley.” (ibid., p. 34).

Indeed, there it exists an intimate relationship between the representation of East London and the Lower Lea Valley as ‘extra-ordinary’ places, the ‘delivery’ of the Olympics as catalyst for urban regeneration and the adoption of special policies to ‘get things done’. From a theoretical perspective, discourse is not limited to the realm of mental representations, but becomes materialised into ‘real’ practices and policies, which in turn shape the physical transformation of urban space. The implication of the discourse of ‘special policies’ and ‘delivery’ in terms of democratic control and accountability is that processes of policies and decision making rest, as Mike Raco demonstrates, on a complex system of contracts and agreements that determine the exclusive relations between the client (the Government, the Mayor, etc.) and the contractor (private companies, corporations, etc.) – to the exclusion of the mechanisms of participatory democracy. To give an example, CLM (the contractor in charge of the entire process of conceiving, planning and realising the regeneration) is only accountable to the ODA for delivering the project.

As the Cultural Strategy implies the Cultural Strategy group, so the London Plan implies the London Implementation Plan. The latter is designed to “support and facilitate the implementation of the Plan’s policies” (GLA, 2011, pp. 278, 280) and “set out how the policies of the London Plan will be translated into practical action (GLA, 2013b, p. 5)”. The Implementation Plan in turn establishes the Implementation Group whose aims are to:

“a) assist in providing the Mayor with data or potential sources of data required for the development and updating of the Implementation Plan; b) assist in providing the Mayor with advice and analysis; assist in suggesting and delivering actions for inclusion in the Implementation Plan; c) assist in making policy recommendations to the Mayor on matters relating to implementation and infrastructure planning for possible inclusion in the London Plan and/or other strategies. The Implementation Group is chaired and managed by GLA officers. Representatives are drawn from delivery agencies covering different types of strategic infrastructure. Local authority officers and community representatives as well as other key stakeholders involved in infrastructure planning are also represented (GLA, 2013b, pp. 5-7)”.

The concepts of strategy and delivery articulate the text. It might be argued that such discourse does not preclude the exercise of a form of democratic control; for local authority officers and community representatives are, in fact, involved. The issue at stake, however, is not the disappearance of democratic representatives, institutions and instruments, but that they are deprived of their content, hence disempowered, since the Plan establishes a discourse which sets out the preconditions for the ‘privatisation’ of the processes of decision and policy-making. No matter that the principal agent enacting such discourse is a public authority, the publicness that is entailed lacks in plurality – plurality meaning the variety of civic organisations and social actors that should be involved in the processes of policy and decision making, and the wider regime of economic competition.

In this document the concepts of strategy and delivery are in fact employed to reinforce the image of states, governments and public finance as incapable of undertaking and managing projects as big and demanding as the Olympics. The

emphasis is on the importance of the private sector in financing and delivering the strategy, (see, for instance, paragraph 2.19); the relevance of tools such as Business Development Districts (see paragraphs 2.7 and 2.14) and the reference to ‘significant constraints on public expenditure’ (paragraph 4.3). All this needs to be read in the context of a more or less explicit critique of public institutions. The Implementation Group’s role in supporting the implementation of the Plan is important, as it affirms, “in the light of the demonstrated complexity of implementation planning and the lack of capacity of public sector planning staff in this area” (GLA, *ibid.*, p. 75, paragraph 5.13).

7.5. The Deregulation and Contracting Out Act 1994 and the CLM-ODA Contract

The Deregulation and Contracting Out Act (1994) enables the reduction of democratic control and accountability within the decision-making processes involving public and private sectors. The Act establishes restrictions on disclosure of information whenever “a contractor is authorised to exercise any function of a Minister, office-holder or local authority” and whenever “the disclosure of relevant information, in or in connection with the exercise of the relevant function or a related function, is restricted by any enactment or by any obligation of confidentiality” (UK Gov., Deregulation and Contracting Out Act 1994: 120). The act does not just regulate the relations between public authority and one single contractor, but the relations between these latter and several other contractors. A public authority can in fact disclose information to contractor “A” and ‘A’ can in turn disclose information to contractors “B” and “C”, as well as to an authority “D”. No mention is made of public disclosure, as disclosure is only conceived between contracting parties and as long as it is “necessary or expedient for the purpose of facilitating the exercise of the relevant function” (120-121).

Such criteria inform the contract between the ODA (the Olympic Delivery Authority) and its delivery partner, CH 2 M Hill, Laing O’ Rourke and Mace (CLM). The section 70.1 clearly states that

“each party does not disclose information to any third party without the other Party’s prior acceptance; does not use information it receives from the other except for the purpose of this contract; does not copy information it

receives from the other except to the extent necessary for it to use information for the purpose of this contract” (ODA, 2005, p. 40).

Furthermore, the contract establishes that the delivery partner has the right to disclose information

“to its employees and subconsultants only to the extent necessary for them to undertake their duties to provide the services; and is treated in confidence by them and not disclosed without the Employer’s prior acceptance or used by them otherwise than for the purpose of providing the services” (ibid.).

As Mike Raco explains in relation to the ODA’s information policy (Raco requested a copy of the ODA-CLM contract on the basis of the Freedom of Information Act), while the ODA acknowledges that there is a public interest in obtaining information about important process of decision and policy making; it also says that disclosure of information is restricted to protect CLM in relation to competitors. Since CLM acts on behalf of a public authority, the ODA’s, restrictions on the release of information are justified on the basis of public interest itself, as it may be prejudicial to it. Large parts of the ODA-CLM contract are for this reason redacted and classified as ‘commercially confidential’ (Raco, 2012, pp. 456-457).

The concept of ‘ambush marketing’ is in this regard significant. Ambush marketing, the contract reads:

“means any activity, commercial or non-commercial, undertaken by any person or entity, whether public or private, that creates, implies or refers to a direct or indirect association of any kind (including an association in the minds of members of the public) with any Games Body or the Games (including by reference to the City of London and the year 2012), which has not been authorised by the LOCOG or any other Games Body” (ODA, p. 40).

At stake here is what may be called the ‘privatisation of language’. Such privatisation of language exceeds, I believe, the realm of spoken and written language and involves the realm of mental associations. How is it possible to establish which words and/or images prompt an association with the Games, the Games bodies, the City of London and even the 2012 in people’s mind? How is it possible to establish how such an association works? The ODA-CLM contract reflects the reduction of plurality (competition) within the market place, as it establishes the exclusive relations between them; but there is more at stake here. The fundamental issue is the shift of judicial and legal frameworks from an instrument for the enactment of the bourgeois public sphere in the eighteenth century (the division between public authority and the public sphere within which a space arises where private owners independently and ‘freely’ engage in economic exchange – the classic liberal model of *laissez faire* capitalism); to a founding principle for the capitalist relations of production of the late nineteenth/early twentieth century (in which the state actively engages with the sphere of economic exchange to secure the conditions for their re-production) (Habermas, 1992); to an instrument for the top-down regulation of the public sphere by regulatory frameworks in which the state, the market and society are no longer distinct entities (the ‘closing down’ of public sphere) (Levi-Faur, 2005: 14). Such contemporary regulatory frameworks rely on a complex process of contracts and agreements written by ‘experts’ and specialised firms (Raco, 2012, 2014); which are aimed at mitigating “negative externalities through ‘social regulation’ (or the regulation of risk)” (Levi-Faur, 2005, p. 14). The function of law is, therefore, to protect the exclusive commercial relations between the public authority and private contractors and subcontractors, rather than guaranteeing competition in the market place and the mechanisms of democratic participation in the processes of policy and decision-making.

7.6. The Mayor’s Cultural Strategy

Culture and planning constitute strategic elements of a wider strategy, “Cultural Metropolis. The Mayor’s Cultural Strategy – 2012 and Beyond”; which also involves a number of ‘strategic’ sectors such as education, jobs, skills, transport, infrastructure. Culture does not indicate here the traditional fields of cultural activity (music, literature, visual arts and so on) or the attitudes and customs of specific people in specific space

and time. Culture indicates a complex of economic and productive strategies that need to be managed and cannot be left to the spontaneous play of social actors:

“Culture is widely recognised– as a major factor in London’s success. It is a key reason why people visit – seven out of ten cite culture as a reason for their stay. London is the most visited city on the planet and receives almost as many visitors annually as Paris and New York put together. People move to London because it is one of the most cosmopolitan and welcoming cities on earth, and business relocate here because it attracts from a range of sectors” (GLA 2008, p. 17).

By the same logic, the Olympics become a means to revitalise an economic system whose capacity to create and absorb surplus value has much decreased over recent years (Poynter, 2012). The regeneration – or we should say the transformation – of East London (the commitment to which won London the Olympic bid) is the element for the production and the absorption of new capital. The regeneration of East London provides the space for the production and the absorption of such new capital (Harvey, 2006a); while the materialisation of culture as lifestyle in a ‘real’ urban space is what enacts the process of production-absorption-reproduction of capital. The major source of such a cycle of production-absorption-reproduction of capital for cities in the social-economic context of global financial capitalism (which was initially shaped by the deindustrialisation policies of the 1980s and 1990s) is tourism, leisure and corporate investment. As the construction of the Westfield Stratford City demonstrates, the transformation of East London is aimed at making a place attractive for tourists and investors. Culture as a strategy serves such purpose.

In the chapter on “Infrastructure, Environment and Public Real”, the Mayor says:

“An exciting example of this kind of more coordinated approach to culture and planning can be seen in High Street 2012 – an ambitious Mayoral initiative in partnership with London Thames Gateway Development Corporation, TFL, English Heritage and the boroughs of Tower Hamlets and Newham that will use the 2012 Games as a catalyst for major improvements to one of London’s great

through routes – the A11/A118 corridor that runs out from the City of London to Stratford, through the centre of Tower Hamlets and taking in a series of famous road such as Whitechapel High Street and Bow Road. Through better design, signage, public realm improvements, green spaces and pedestrian walkways, the intention is to create a thriving ‘high street’ that encourages local enterprise, with a sense of heritage, community and identity” (GLA 2008, p. 117).

Shopping becomes a force holding together all the parts of the city into a single homogeneous dimension with no differences of space and time. The Mayor’s high street becomes what the bridge is in Heidegger’s reflection on the nature of architecture: an element gathering other elements in space and actually creating space (Heidegger, 1993; 1997). A space where no difference exists between here and there, now and then; for space is ‘the’ space: a self-contained dimension characterised by its own internal relations between things and objects, and where things and objects are brought together without discontinuity. Shopping creates a self-sufficient dimension insulating the inside from the outside. Thus, no matter whether people live in West, East, South or North London, whether it is rainy or sunny, night or day, winter or summer, anytime and anywhere people enter such space, they enter always the same space. The Mayor’s high street is aimed at putting together different places and areas of London into a unique and homogeneous dimension: shopping and consumption.

Culture is thus defined as a complex of economic and productive strategies to be managed and delivered ‘on time and to budget’. This fact implies the concepts of ‘priorities’ and ‘prioritisation’:

“The role of the GLA and the Mayor, therefore, is to work in partnership across the cultural sector and its myriad organisations, in order to set priorities, provide leadership and deliver long-term improvements. The cultural sector is large, complex and highly interdependent. Therefore this strategic role is crucial in helping make better use of existing resources, develop innovative solutions, and link culture to other strategic areas of importance in the capital. A key responsibility of the Mayor is to advocate the importance of culture, ensuring it is supported with appropriate investment, and remains free from unnecessary bureaucracy and interference” (Mayor of London, 2012, p. 155).

Culture and cultural activities are not therefore considered as ends in themselves, as they are ranked, hence financed, out of their supposed capacity to produce profit. That has important consequences in democratic terms; for such an interpretation of culture excludes alternative interpretations of social, economic and urban development. To free policy-making from “unnecessary bureaucracy and interference” means to bypass politics and the mechanisms of social control and accountability. In this way ‘culture’ becomes the realm for the bureaucratic management of an asset, rather than the realm for the free interaction of different social actors and ideas. Providing a single authority (the ODA) with planning powers for the realisation of the Olympic Park and the consequent contracting out of planning functions to a private subject such as CLM needs to be read in this context:

“Giving planning powers to the ODA will facilitate an efficient planning process for the Olympics, bearing in mind the scale of development involved, the timescales attached to the development, and the value of a single planning authority focused on and able to deal most effectively with the integrated nature of the project” (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister 2006, p. 5).

Bernstein’s concepts of *classification* and *framing* are relevant here. As Fairclough explains:

“Classification is matter of which categories (which discourses, subjects, voices) are included in a practice, and of whether they are strongly or weakly insulated from each other – whether the classification is strong or weak. Framing is a matter of how interaction is managed – if it is jointly managed then framing is weak, if it is asymmetrically managed then framing is strong” (2010, p. 398).

Fairclough also says that “effective public space dialogue entails a regulative practice which is maximally open to diverse discourses and subjects, where insulations between these categories are weak, and where there is jointly managed control of interaction, i.e., weak framing”. This recalls Arendt’s concept of public democratic

space as space for differences to emerge and dialectically interact with each other. As Kenneth Frampton argues from his critical standpoint (1998), the blurring of boundaries between different discourses often implies undemocratic purposes of control and repression; for the unification of differences from a single dominant perspective (the high level of framing and classification Fairclough refers to) prevents the play of differences to take place. The discourse of strategy, delivery and change shaping the official discourse of laws, acts, plans development strategies that has been analysed in this chapter, sets out the precondition for such mechanisms of a mono-perspective classification and framing to occur.

7.7. Conclusions

This chapter analysed how the official discourse of laws, acts, plans and development strategies that framed the decision making process of the Olympics and the urban regeneration of East London creates the preconditions for public space formation; and how the language of such discourse works in defining the nature of public space (publicness). It employed a deductive approach, which proceeds from the identification of a pure idea of democracy, public sphere and public space, and goes on to compare this idea with the kind of publicness emerging from the analysis of texts. The element informing such an ideal-type (that is to say, the element without which it is not possible to refer to urban space in terms of democratic public space) is Hannah Arendt's concept of plurality; which is to be understood in terms of the free play of differences (in visions, perspectives, values, ideas, identities and economic actors) in the social realm. Democratic public space is, therefore, a space to provide the conditions for such differences to emerge and interact. The opposite of democratic public space is the imposition of one single vision, perspective, and identity; which is reflected in the reduction of competition between different economic actors in the market place.

The kind of publicness of East London's public space is analysed against the three interrelated dimensions of legislation, culture and governance. The level of legislation to be found in the complex of laws, acts, plans and development strategies establishes the content of a politics of space that is mainly articulated in terms of *strategy* and *culture*, or of *cultural strategy*. Culture comes to indicate a strategic sector for the management and the transformation of space as a site for leisure, tourism, investments and consumption, rather than as a site for the free play of different social-economic

actors. This implies the construction of a system of governance (Raco, 2012, 2014) to deliver such strategies ‘on time and to budget’ and regulate risk (“social regulation”) (Levi-Faur, 2005). This form of governance in turn, entails the reduction of politics (and the ‘risks’ connected to it) within the processes of policy and decision-making and, hence, the curtailing of democracy.

Such a dynamic needs to be placed in the context of the transformation of the public sphere. As Jürgen Habermas explains, with the rise of the market economy the separation of the public sphere from public authority – that is to say the separation of the space for political action and economic exchange between private owners from the state – was substituted at the end of the 18th\beginning of the 19th century by the concentration of political and economic power in territorial states (Habermas, 1992, p. 141). This brought about a different kind of separation between the public and the social - the former taking over powers of political and economic administration, the latter being limited to the intimate sphere of the family and cultural consumption. In the current phase of late capitalism, another shift has occurred, which did not cause the separation of the state from the economy in the form of deregulation, but, as Levi-Faur shows, resulted in an even stronger relationship between the state, economy, politics and society in the form of regulatory capitalism (Jordana and Levi-Faur, 2004; Levi-Faur, 2005). Regulatory frameworks are required that limit the risks of competition in the global market and adjust social change to needs of capital, so that political and social opposition are restrained. A shift therefore occurs “from representative democracy to indirect representative democracy. Democratic governance is no longer about the delegation of authority to elected representatives but becomes a form of second-level indirect representative democracy - citizens elect representatives who control and supervise ‘experts’ who formulate and administer policies in an autonomous fashion from their regulatory bastions” (Levi- Faur, 2005, p. 13).

However, it would be simplistic to say that urban, social and economic processes of transformation and change are solely economy-led. The economy is part of a wider structuring dimension in which I regard discourse as a site for political action. Legislation, culture and governance construe a precise knowledge of space and the societal world that is enacted through texts. Such a discourse, which implies specific social relations of power, sets out the preconditions for the construction of physical ‘public’ space, and defines the content of publicness itself. The implication of this is that no matter how many people use space, no matter whether space is publicly or

privately owned, no matter whether the ultimate agent of regeneration is a public authority, public space does not necessarily equal democracy; for democracy and ‘publicity’ are not intrinsic qualities of urban space, but only exist as long as they are practiced and enacted.

Conclusions

8.1. The findings

This research investigated the *construal* of the official discourse on/of the Olympics-led process of East London urban regeneration (the economic, political, media and legal discourse) as *precondition* for the material *construction* of the urban, social, economic and institutional order of the city's east side. The research aimed to understand: 1) how such discourse is *construed*; 2) how the relationship between the *construal* of discourse and the *construction* of the urban, social, economic and institutional order of the city works; 3) how discourse works in enacting and shaping processes of urban transformation and change.

The emphasis on the role of discourse in the processes of urban formation is based on the assumption that “nothing is fundamental” in the societal world (Foucault, 2002c: 356). The urban form and policies, the social order, the economic organisation and the institutional structure of the city are not ‘objective’ elements that function according to intrinsic laws and mechanisms. For they depend on precise sets of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests, and on specific visions of the city. Such a complex of values I call *preconditions*. Thus, the research also questioned the idea that impersonal economic forces shape the city. Such an idea characterises both the prevailing, capital-based representations of the societal world, and the dominant, Marxist- oriented critique of capitalism and urban space – which envision the economic process as the realm of self- governing/regulating forces. That is, forces that are independent from, and actually govern, social action. The consequence of this perception, it is argued, is the paralysis of social process. For the dynamics of transformation and change can only be enacted by free social actors. This is true whether transformation and change are interpreted in ‘conservative’ or ‘progressive’ terms.

The Olympics-led regeneration of the London's East End represents an example of urban renewal where an undemocratic structure of governance is constructed to transform place into an area for tourism, shopping, leisure and corporate investment –

which the dominant powers represent as the necessary answer to the requirements of national and by implication global capital. Therefore, the emphasis on social- political action (which is called discourse) serves the purpose of demonstrating that: a) the transformation of East London into a site for tourism, shopping, leisure and corporate investment relies on a specific vision of the city's urban, social, economic and institutional development, and on a precise set of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests; b) this model of urban development is not the only possible option to improve the socio-economic conditions of the area; c) such a project based upon this dominant discourse of urban renewal can be questioned.

However, the research is not just about the analysis of the various discursive dimensions of the Olympics-led regeneration of East London. A number of epistemological, theoretical and methodological issues arose that involve: 1) the role that discourse plays in the urban, social, economic and institutional structuring of the city; 2) the way in which we think about these various realms, their reciprocal relationships, and the role that discourse plays in determining how these relationships are conceptualised; 3) the way in which we conceive processes of urban transformation and change.

Words and concepts have been employed throughout the text that reflect such issues: 1) *preconditions*; 2) *de-spatialisation* of urban space as opposed to the tendency to 3) *subjectivise/de-subjectivise* the city and the forces that shape it; 4) *publicness* as indicating ways of being public; 5) *discourse as site for social-political action*; 6) the tension between *discursive* and *non-discursive* elements of the social process as reflecting 7) the tension between the *construal* and the *construction* of the city; 8) the notion of *urban realm* as being made of the dialectical relationships between urban form and functions, the social order, the economic organisation and the institutional structure of the city. Thus, the literature review (chapter 2), the epistemological, theoretical and epistemological framework (chapter 3), the *discursive theory of urban transformation and change* (chapter 4), and the analytical sections of the thesis (chapters 5 and 6), are all designed to address these issues.

These words, concepts and the structure of the thesis reflect the idea that the city's urban, social, economic and institutional order is a social construction that can be questioned and changed. Still, it is argued, this order is something that 'objectively' exists. It is constituted by the material (the urban form and functions, the social order,

the economic organisation and the institutional structure) as well as immaterial elements (the complex of dominant worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests) that people share. The epistemological and theoretical perspective of this work is based on a moderated version of social constructionism – which allows the analysis of the relationships between ‘subjective’ and ‘objective’ elements of the urban realm and on the theories that emphasise the role of speech acts and discourse in social interaction – namely, Hannah Arendt’s theory of politics and power, and Jürgen Habermas’ theory of communicative action. The methodological framework I employed is CDA, and, more specifically DRA; which allowed the analysis of the relationship between the *construal* of the discourse on/of the regeneration of East London, and its material *construction* in terms of urban form and functions, social order, economic organisation and institutional structure.

The first conclusion of the work is that in the same way as the London-like version of financial capitalism is not a necessary form of economic organisation (that is, the natural answer to the crisis of welfare state-oriented systems of social-economic organisation, and the peak in the evolution of capitalism as a self-sustaining force); so the corporate-based model of East London urban renewal (that is, the transformation of place into a site for tourism, shopping, leisure and corporate investment) is not the only conceivable way of transforming urban space. This model expresses, in fact, a ‘subjective’ vision of the urban, social, economic and institutional development of the city. That is, a specific vision of the city, with the underpinning worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests, that specific social actors sustain. The Olympic bid itself was conceived to reinforce the image of London as a global capital for tourism, ‘culture’ and investments. Other models of urban development might be envisioned that entail different urban form and functions, social order, economic organisation and structures of governance.

This leads to the second conclusion of the work: there is no intrinsic logic or mechanism to this pattern of urban redevelopment. As we have seen, in the official discourse of the Games and the urban regeneration, a cause-effect relationship is construed between the global financial economy and the economic organisation of London that entails the corporate-based redevelopment of the London’s East End. The idea that a highly financialised economy is the only possible form of economic organisation that is capable of generating widespread wealth is a social construction. And so is the idea that London and the UK need to answer the requirements of such a

model of economic organisation; henceforth, the idea that the corporate-led transformation of the East side is intrinsic to London. The transformation of East London into a site for tourism, shopping, leisure and corporate investment is intrinsic to London only insofar as the neo-liberal discourse and practices of the economy has managed to colonise the political, social and institutional discourse and practices in both the city and in the country. Therefore, the vision of the city as a global hub for tourism, shopping leisure and corporate investment is prior to the material re- construction of place – the latter following the coming to prominence of precise social actors and discourses.

That brings to the fore the third conclusion of the research: the possibility to question and challenge this vision of the city and its materialisation into a ‘real’ urban, social, economic and institutional order. The emphasis on social-political action as source for the processes of urban transformation and change does not just facilitate an understanding of how such processes occur. It allows us to identify the *doer*, that is, the subject who enacts the processes of urban transformation and change, it also discloses the possibility to challenge the status quo. One of the issues at stake in the urban transformation of East London is the establishment of horizontal and exclusive relationships between public authorities and private subjects that entail the formation of undemocratic systems of governance and a dynamics of gentrification, which clearly establish who does/does not own and belong to urban space. Thus, the emphasis on social-political action (hence, on the transformation of East London as a social fact) also provides a possible way to envision more democratic forms of public and social engagement in the processes of urban decision-making and in the dynamics of urban transformation and change.

8.2. The content, methodological issues and limits of the research

The research is composed of seven chapters: 1) the general introduction; 2) the literature review; 3) the epistemological, theoretical and methodological framework; 4) the chapter in which the possibility of a *discourse theory of urban transformation and change* is explored; 5) the chapter on the construal of the economic, political and media discourse; 6) and the chapter on the construal of the discourse of laws, acts, plans and development strategies; 7) the conclusions.

The literature review addressed the issue of the interdisciplinary approach that proved to be necessary to analyse the Olympics-led process of East London urban regeneration. Such a process, it is argued, does not just entail changes in the urban form and functions of space. The Olympics are, in fact, a matter of urban re-branding in the first place. That is, a means to put cities on the map of global capital and tourism. Re-branding in turn implies the dynamics of social and economic re-structuring that are often socially exclusive. For the taking over of place by corporate capital is detrimental to small businesses and low-income workers and families – which are often forced to relocate. Policies of regeneration also entail legal frameworks that regulate the relationships between different social actors (local communities, small businesses, corporations, the level of local and national government, etc.). In fact, the urban regeneration of East London demonstrates that dominant narratives and representations of cities and urban space are materialised into a new urban, social, economic and institutional order that clearly establishes who owns and who belongs in place. Thus, in order to understand the Olympics-led urban regeneration of East London, a diverse literature must be analysed that brings together apparently different disciplines such as urban and architectural criticism, sociology, semiotics, linguistics, Olympic studies, and the anthropology of tourism.

The chapter on the epistemological, theoretical and methodological framework addressed the question of how to think about the processes of urban transformation and change in terms of *preconditions*, hence *discourse*. It is argued that Jürgen Habermas' theory of *communicative action*, Michel Foucault's theory of *discourse*, and Hannah Arendt's theory of *political action* allow such an understanding. For they focus on social agency and the relationships of power between social actors as sites for the *construal* and the *construction* of urban space. Foucault provides a framework for the *de-spatialisation* of space. That is, for the interpretation of urban space as depending on sets of dominant worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests in society – rather than on some sort of intrinsic and objective meaning. Habermas' theory of *communicative action* allowed the interpretation of dominant values in society as a weak order of truth that can be discussed and questioned by social actors. Arendt's theory of power allowed an interpretation of *political action* as the realm of power (and vice versa). That is, as the realm for social actors to use their *power to act*, hence to question the dominant structures of power relations. CDA and DRA provided a methodological framework to analyse the relationship between the *construal* and

construction of urban space. That is, between the content of the official narrative of place and its materialisation in consequent urban form and functions, social order, economic organisation and institutional structure.

Chapter 3 is propaedeutical to chapter 4, where the possibility for a *discourse theory of urban transformation and change* is explored. The theory challenges the dominant critique and narratives of urban space – which envision the urban realm as being determined by impersonal, hence unquestionable, economic forces; and places social-political action (*discourse*) at the core of processes of urban transformation and change. It is argued that to envision urban space as a social construction, rather than the outcome of base-superstructure and/or cause-effect dynamics, allows to understand how processes of urban transformation and change occur, and how alternative visions of city might be enacted that challenge the status quo – hence, a possible framework for the reinstatement of democracy in urban policy and decision-making.

Chapter 5 analysed the *construal* of urban space in the economic, political and media discourse on/of the Olympics-led process of urban regeneration. The relationships between these various discursive dimensions were analysed in terms of *recontextualisation*: the translations of the corporate discourse on/of the urban renewal colonises in the economic, the political and media discourse. The chapter also analysed the way in which the *construal* is reflected in the material *construction* of place – the Westfield Stratford City being a clear example of the relationship between the *construal* of discourse and the *construction* of urban space. Thus, the chapter demonstrated how the transformation of the London's East End into a site for shopping, tourism, leisure and corporate investment does not rely on any impersonal economic forces, but reflects a precise complex of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests, and a precise vision of the city.

The legal-institutional dimension of the *construal/construction* of the city was addressed in chapter 6. The institutional dimension is analysed in terms of legal discourse. That is, the discourse of laws, acts, plans, development strategies and contracts. It is argued that by regulating the relationships between different social actors, the legal discourse defines the nature of public space, which is referred to as *publicness*. Assuming Hannah Arendt's concept of politics as condition for a pure model of the democratic public sphere, the analysis demonstrated how the legal discourse set out the *preconditions* for the construction of an undemocratic structure of

governance, hence for an undemocratic public space. For the mechanisms of democratic control and accountability are in fact precluded from policy and decision-making.

One of the methodological issues at stake involved the documents to analyse. The issue was not just about *which* documents to select for analysis, but also *why* they were to be selected and *how* they were to be interpreted and analysed – the *why* and *how* being the condition for the definition of the *which*. The selection depended on the extent to which the documents formed a framework to analyse; which relied on the existence of a shared element to remain stable throughout the diverse discursive dimensions (the economic, the political, the media and the legal discourse) and texts that were considered. Such an element is constituted by the word and the concept of ‘regeneration’, whose invariance allowed the analysis of the discourse of the Olympics-led renewal of East London in terms of recontextualisation. As Fairclough explains (2010b), recontextualisation involves the flows of discourses between different social practices and fields of social action. In this case, recontextualisation indicates the way in which the corporate discourse of regeneration with its combination of discourses, genres, and styles (meaning the representation of urban space as a fancy place for tourism, leisure, shopping and corporate investment) goes to shape the economic, the political, the media and the legal discourse; and entails a specific model of urban, social, economic and institutional change.

Apart from the word and concept of regeneration, which played a pivotal role in the construction of the discourse, most of the texts that have been analysed are actually linked together. For example, Convergence explicitly refers to the SRF – the latter defining the content of the former and filling its apparent neutral character with meaning (chapter 5). The backdrop for Convergence and the SRF is constituted by a broader framework that originates from the GLA Act 1999; which defines the Mayor’s power in terms of ‘strategy’ in relation to key sectors such as planning and culture. As it has been explained, there exists an intimate relationship between these apparently separate realms. For in the neo-liberal discourse of the city that emerged in the 1990s, culture is interpreted in terms of lifestyle and consumption (of food, fashion, sport, etc.); and urban space is the site for such lifestyle and consumption to take place. In the narrative of the Olympic city, East London is in fact to be transformed into an international hub for tourism, shopping, leisure and corporate investment. Coherently with such a context, ‘strategy’ entails the formation of undemocratic systems of governance to speed up the ‘delivery’ of the project of urban renewal and the processes

of decision-making. The document that enables such curtailing is the Deregulation and Contracting Out Act 1994 – which in turn provides the framework for the ODA-CLM Contract.

The selection of documents to analyse also involved the issue of agency. That is, of: *a) who* wrote the texts; *b) which* worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests the discourse reflects; *c) whose* vision of the city's urban, social, economic and institutional development the discourse conveys. As the title of the research suggests, these documents reflect the dominant narrative of the Olympics-led regeneration of East London. Such a dominant narrative promotes a specific model of urban development, but says nothing on how it is perceived by other social-political actors that are excluded by policy and decision-making – say, local communities and small businesses. To focus on the perception of the regeneration by marginal social-political actors would allow us to understand whether alternative visions of urban space exist, and the extent to which such visions are translated in social-political action. The focus on just dominant narratives and representations might reinforce the idea that only the interests of dominant groups in society can be reproduced in the 'material' construction of urban space – meaning urban form and functions, social order, economic organisation and institutional structure. This fact would somehow contradict the idea that is sustained in chapter 4 and throughout the research. That is, that unequal urban, social, economic and institutional order can be questioned and changed; and that a social-political action that challenges dominant systems of power relations can actually be enacted. There are two main reasons that account for the decision to leave aside the exploration of a possible alternative discourse. The first involves the scope and the objectives of the research. The aim of the research was to demonstrate that the corporate-based regeneration of East London reflect the vision of the city and the sets of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, interests and beliefs of specific social actors; and is not the product of impersonal economic forces. Secondly, to bring together a group of people to adequately represent the social categories and groups that are excluded from the *re-construction* of place, and to explore the extent to which an oppositional narrative of place existed would have generated a different research project, with a different set of aims and objectives, and, most likely, a different method and methodological framework.

However, the issue of the construal of an alternative discourse of place has not been ignored. For the research provides (chapter 4) a way to understand how alternative visions of the city in which the underpinning sets of worldviews, ideologies, ideas,

beliefs and interests can be translated into social-political action and gain the social-political consent required to be materialised into a real urban, social, economic and institutional order.

8.3. Contribution to the discipline and future potential

This research is located in discourse-based analyses of urban policies. As Keith Jacobs explains (2006, 48), four issues arise for discourse analysis' future development that have not received adequate critical scrutiny: 1) the way in which words such as 'regeneration' and 'sustainability' are employed by policy makers; 2) the impact of innovations in computer technology on policy and decision-making, and modes of consultation; 3) the way in which different policy audiences interpret texts; 4) the way in which visual representations of urban space and architecture are construed.

This research addresses the first, second and fourth issues Jacobs raises. It analysed how words such as 'regeneration' and 'delivery' are construed, and the way in which these words shape the discourse of the Olympics-led urban renewal of East London. Although the relationship between developments in new technologies and policy-making is not the focus of this investigation, the research showed how these words and concepts entail precise modes of consultation and decision-making that are characterised by the curtailing of democracy and the mechanisms of public control and accountability. It was also demonstrated how a relationship exists that involves the discourse of regeneration and delivery, the formation of a structure of undemocratic urban governance, the construal of a visual representation of urban space and architecture, and the material construction of place. The research did not focus on the way in which marginal audiences perceive the regeneration. As I explained in the previous section of these conclusions, the reason for this lies, first, in the scope and objectives of the work. These were to demonstrate that: 1) the corporate-based transformation of East London is not the inevitable answer to unquestionable forces, but a social fact; 2) such a model of urban renewal can be challenged and substitute with more democratic and socially inclusive one. Second, to focus on how the official representation of the Olympics-led urban renewal of East London is construed in the eyes of other, marginal, groups would entail such methodological issues to embark in a different research project.

In an attempt to provide a systematisation of discourse-based literature on urban policies, Jacobs distinguishes between two main strands of discourse analysis – which reflect the two approaches to discourse studies that have been mostly employed by scholars: political economy- informed discourse analysis (which draws upon the work of Norman Fairclough and is known as Critical Discourse Analysis), and Foucauldian-informed discourse analysis (which draws upon Michel Foucault's theory of discourse). Drawing on the work of Lees (2004), Jacobs explains that Foucauldian discourse analysis is generally employed by those researchers interested in historical- focused analyses that emphasise the role of systems of truth, knowledge and power in shaping the social process. The political economy-based approach is employed by those who explore the relationships between economy and policy-making, hence, the relationships between language and power. This schematisation prompts a number of observations. In addressing Jacob's approach, this thesis suggests that:

First, Foucauldian discourse analysis and CDA are not mutually exclusive. The latter's emphasis on the relationships between structures of power relations and language necessarily entails the interpretation of discourse in Foucauldian terms. For example, the legal discourse shaping the Olympics-led regeneration of East London can only be understood in the context of precise relationships between different subjects operating at different levels, and on a precise idea of the city urban, social, economic and institutional development. In fact, such a context is the realm of systems of truth, knowledge and power.

Second, CDA is not to be identified with Fairclough's method only – DRA. As Wodak and Meyer explain, CDA emerged in the early 1990s as a network of scholars characterised by different problem-oriented approaches and is, therefore, necessarily interdisciplinary and eclectic (Wodak and Meyer, 2010: 3). Fairclough's DRA is only one among many other methods. It is a deductive method of analysis, which provides a theory to understand social change on the basis of the relationships between semiosis and social practices. Still, a more inductive approach might be required that is capable of addressing the specificities of a different case study. This is the case of the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA), which argues for the development of tools adequate for specific social problems and for the dismissal of grand theories (2010: 26). Big textual datasets are a further example. For they might require the use of a quantitative approach to complement qualitative techniques. The Corpus Linguist Approach (CLA) is focused on the employment of software called

‘concordance programs’, which provides discourse analysis with an additional analytical tool (Mautner, 2010). Researchers might be interested in social action. The Social Actors Approach (SAA) developed by Theo van Leeuwen provides a framework to analyse the relationship between what leaders ‘do’ and knowledge of what leadership ‘is’. Drawing on Foucault, Leeuwen argues that discourse goes to produce and reproduces structures of power relations.

Third, the possibility of discourse as site for social-political action (that is, as site for challenging the city’s urban, social, economic and institutional order) still remains unexplored. As it has been explained, although Foucault envisions power as the realm of freedom, discourse is in the Foucauldian theoretical system the realm of structures of truth knowledge and power that pre-exist human conscious. According to such system, social action comes to be determined by structures of power relations. Fairclough’s DRA draws upon Systemic Functional Linguistics, which interprets language as being shaped by the social function it serves (Wodak and Meyer, 2010: 27), and focuses on the dialectical relationships between semiosis and social practices/structures. However, it does not provide a way to explain how social actors might enact processes of transformation and change of social structures. To put it simply, what both Foucault’s discourse analysis and Fairclough’s DRA lack is the political dimension of discourse.

The recovery of the social-political dimension of discourse constitutes, therefore, a further contribution of this research to the discipline. Such a contribution relies on the integration of Foucault’s theory of discourse and Fairclough’s DRA with Hannah Arendt’s notion of power and politics, and Jürgen Habermas’ theory of communicative action. For Arendt and Habermas emphasise the active role that social actors play in shaping the social process by means of *speech acts* – that is, *politics* (Arendt); and *communicative action* – that is, the questioning of accepted *validity claims* (Habermas). According to the model that is discussed in chapter 4, differently from both Foucault and Marxist-based theories and interpretations of urban space, social actors are no longer passive receivers of structures they cannot control, but are independent subjects that can discuss, question and change the existing urban order – and the underpinning system of truth, knowledge and power. By the same token, discourse is neither a structural element that determines the urban realm, nor it is just as a semiotic element of the social process that reflects and/or is reflected in social practices and structures. Discourse comes to be the realm for a free and independent social-political action; the space where social actors can exert the power to engender processes of urban

transformation and change.

Here lies the future potential of this approach. The interpretation of discourse as site for social-political action allows the interpretation of the urban, social, economic and institutional order of the city as socially constructed – rather than as the product of an impersonal and unquestionable force such as the market. In the neo-liberal discourse, the market is a self-sustaining subject that cannot be resisted, nor can it be governed and controlled. The city and urban space constitute the site for the production and reproduction of such a force. As we have seen in the official discourse of the Olympics-led regeneration of East London, the form of such a process of production and reproduction is the transformation of place into a venue for tourism, shopping, leisure and corporate investment – which, therefore appears to be the only viable solution to enable the social and economic growth of a so-called ‘derelict’ areas. The research, however, demonstrated how there is no such a thing as ‘the market’ as a self-sustained subject. For both the neo-liberal interpretation of the market and the idea of the city as a space for tourism, shopping, leisure and corporate investment are a social construction – which rely on specific sets of worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests, and can be, therefore, questioned and challenged. This research has attempted to explain the way in which the dominant narrative of the Olympics-led urban regeneration of East London has been construed by specific social actors, and how such construal is reflected in the actual construction of place.

The emphasis on social-political action is also a means to understand the quality of public space. That is, the *publicness* of public space. In the same way as there is no such a thing as ‘the market’, so there is no absolute notion of public space. For public space can be, say, both democratic and undemocratic – depending on the extent to which a variety of social actors are allowed to take part to its construction. Here lies the relevance of Hannah Arendt and Jürgen Habermas’ theories of politics and communicative action to this work. To put it simply, basing the analysis on the assumption that democracy is the site for different social actors to exert their power to politically act (that is, to join together and question the status quo), democratic public space is the space where different social actors are acknowledged the right to take part in the construction of the city. The emphasis on social-political action provides, therefore, both a theoretical device to explain processes of formation and transformation of urban space, and a possible framework for the reinstatement of democracy in urban policy and decision-making. In other words, by providing the *doer* (that is, a free and

independent subject that is actually capable of enacting processes of urban transformation and change) with the interpretation of discourse as site for social-political action allows the possibility to understand how urban space is construed\constructed; and how alternative visions of the city can be construed that challenge the existing urban, social, economic and institutional order of the city.

One of the main arguments in chapter 4 is that alternative worldviews, ideologies, ideas, beliefs and interests remain at the level of subjective and fortuitous statements, and have no impact on the urban, social, economic and institutional order of the city, unless they are translated in social-political action. Further research on how alternative visions and representations of urban space are construed might prove that the failure in the challenging of dominant narratives might depend on the incapability, unwillingness or difficulty encountered by some social actors (say, local communities and small businesses) to translate their ideas and interests into social-political action. The theoretical model discussed, and CDA's emphasis on social action in the processes of construction of the social world, offer social actors the possibility to recognise their capacity to challenge dominant narratives of place by engaging in social-political – social-political action being key to the materialisation of such alternative narratives and representation of place.

Mike Raco and Emma Tunney conducted research on the relationship between the clearance of the small businesses that had existed on the area of the soon-to-be Olympic Village before the summer of 2007 in East London, and their invisibility in the official narrative of the Games. The paper shows that the absence of a collective action and the difference in attitudes toward the regeneration by local firms (some wanting to build a collective response, other pursuing the option of individual negotiation), made it easier for development agencies to implement regeneration policies (Raco and Tunney, 2010: 15).

Thus, by placing the source of urban change in social-political action, the model questions the idea that corporate-based processes of urban renewal are the inevitable outcome of unquestionable economic forces; and demonstrates that such processes and forces can be contested, reversed and changed as long as people make use of their power to act (Arendt, 1970).

8.4. East London after the Olympics. Whose Legacy?

Almost five years have passed since the Olympics. A detailed analysis of 1) what is the current state of the process of urban redevelopment in East London; 2) whether this managed to fulfil the promise of engendering a dynamic of social-economic growth to include local communities and disadvantaged groups; 3) what such communities and groups think about the urban renewal of East London and how they perceive it; 4) whether any oppositional strategy to current development has been enacted. Such an analysis is missing in this research. For, I believe, a brand new research project would be required for these issues to be explored in depth.

Yet, few words can be spent about what has happened so far, since the closing ceremony in Summer 2012.

The underlying hypothesis of this work is that the shift eastward the Olympics entailed was a means to reinvigorate the image of London as a global hub for tourism and entertainment, hence investments, in a phase of economic downturn and stronger international competition.

The analysis of the official discourse of the Olympics and the project of urban renewal demonstrates that the reconstruction of East London was indeed meant to find corporate capital new spaces to operate. Such discursive construal seems to be reflecting the material redevelopment of East London in terms of employment, housing and the whole process of social re-design of the area.

As Gavin Poynter explains, one of the issues affecting East London at the moment of the bid in 2005 was the lack of an economy of entertainment and leisure to be able to attract tourists, West Londoners and investors. London needed to be transformed into a prominent 'metropolitan centre' to appeal capital (2016). In fact, the construction of the Westfield Stratford City, smoothly and rapidly connected to Central London and the Westfield Centre in Shepherd Bush, was the first step to achieve this.

However, "living in a metropolitan centre is one thing but being able to access its new amenities located in the new Stratford city for a significant proportion of the borough's local resident is another" (ibid.).

The transformation of East London into an area of leisure is reproducing the pattern of social division that has been characterising the area Isle of Dogs-Tower

Hamlets since the emergence of the financial centre in Canary Warf. High-paid jobs in the former, low-wage jobs serving the functions of a highly financialised economy in the latter.

The same true when it comes to housing as well. As Poynter explains, three trends are reshaping the housing market in the area (ibid.). First, a steep increase in pricing with a much higher rate than West London. Second, the construction of new homes to attract overseas buyers and young professional, which is unlikely to meet the need for affordable housing of local residents. Third, the initial objective of 100% of new the homes within the Olympic Park to be affordable has been deemed no longer a viable solution (Bernstock, 2014, pp. 191-202; Poynter, 2016).

The material *construction* (or *re-construction*) of East London largely reflects the *construal* of the official discourse of the Olympics and the project of urban renewal of the East End. As discourse is dominated by corporate interests, the re-construction of place is shaped by developers and financial investors' interest to turn the whole area into a site of leisure to appeal the needs of young, wealthy professionals and tourists.

However, the theoretical model I discussed in chapter 5 and the following analysis suggest that such model of urban renewal, and the underpinning discourse, actually won a large social-political consensus and support through a successful social-political action – the same being true for the curtailing of democratic debate that the discourse of 'delivery on time and to budget' entailed. For nothing happens in the societal realm without a certain degree of consensus and acceptance.

In fact, an alternative narrative of the city failed to arise that might provide the content for an organised social-political action to question current developments. It is my belief that, however strong corporate interests may be, the willingness of corporate interests to engage in social-political action, has won over the unwillingness of local communities and business to challenge the new narrative of the city.

Nevertheless, despite the construction of an undemocratic structure of governance, there is room for democratic debate and practices to be recovered and, ultimately, for the interests of local communities/business and disadvantaged groups to challenge the official discourse of the urban regeneration of East London. For democratic discourse and practices are possible even in the most undemocratic regime.

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