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Distinctive places in the reconfiguration of London tourism

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1   Introduction

Tourist visits are often motivated by the distinctiveness of places and destinations, but there is increasing concern that distinctiveness is being lost and that destinations are becoming more and more similar. This process of homogenisation can affect established and more recently developed destinations. It relates to the rapid growth of tourism and higher volumes of visitor   s in more destinations, as well as to the impact of broader processes of globalisation. It can be seen as part of a more general process of change that results in standardised environments that are 'placeless'.

Concerns about these supply side changes are being raised at a time when some commentators have identified the increasing importance of visitors who are more experienced, independent and discriminating in what they seek from destinations. These visitors have been variously categorised as 'new tourists' (Poon 1993) or 'post-tourists' (Urry 2001). It is argued that this group of visitors is particularly seeking an 'authentic' or non-homogenised experience when they choose a destination. They might be expected to be drawn to destinations that retain distinctiveness.

Our interest in this paper is in those areas of cities that attract tourists but which lack big attractions or an acknowledged distinctive heritage, and have not been planned as new destinations. We report research that explores the importance of local distinctiveness and the qualities of place to overseas visitors to London. It is based upon continuing research into the development of what can be termed New Tourism Areas (NTAs) in London, which includes surveys of visitors to Islington, King's Cross and the South Bank (Bankside, Southwark). These are both NTAs, but the process of development has been significantly different in each case, and it can be argued that both have grown organically rather than having been planned as tourist areas.   We report on the characteristics of visitors to the areas, what attracts them to the areas and what elements of the place and its culture they see as having particular value. For at least some visitors, it seems that these distinct qualities of place are the main attraction – they are attracted by what we might call 'placefulness'. The areas we examine are undergoing substantial change in their residential and commercial property markets, and we suggest that there are some complementarities between these changes and the attraction oif visitors to the areas.

2   Tourism Districts in Cities

Urban tourism has grown rapidly over the last 20 years, and moved beyond traditional places. Heritage and culture cities have grown in popularity, but there has been an increased interest in non-traditional urban destinations such as former industrial cities. Early pioneers like Baltimore USA have been joined by cities such as Birmingham and Bradford in the UK, Bilbao and Barcelona in Spain. The growth of urban tourism is ascribed to a combination of demand factors and the supply of new attractions (see, for example Law 2002), although the processes involved are not well understood.

Pearce (1998:51) points out that 'the empirical research on tourism districts that has been undertaken so far has tended to focus on medium sized cities…or specific areas within larger cities (e.g. Docklands in London)… the systematic examination of tourism districts in [large, polycentric urban areas] has been neglected'. He subsequently argued that

'Studies of more specific areas within the city are needed for two reasons. First tourism does not occur evenly or uniformly, but is concentrated in particular areas that warrant research in their own right. Second more detailed analyses requiring a narrowing of the lens and concentrating on problems at a smaller spatial scale are needed to develop a fuller understanding of patterns processes and interrelationships as well as to adopt a greater multidimensional approach to urban tourism' (2001: 933).

He argued that six types of tourism district could be identified, although the categories were not mutually exclusive:

1   Historic Districts
2   Ethnic Districts
3   Sacred spaces (pilgrimage cities)

4   Functional Tourism Districts (focusing on functional linkage between different tourism clusters e.g. a Tourism CBD)
5   Redevelopment Zones
6   Entertainment Destinations

Both redevelopment zones and entertainment destinations arise from the deliberate reconfiguration of parts of the city for tourism and leisure activity. Redevelopment zones are generally spatially separate tourist bubbles and become standardised venues featuring 'a mayor's 'trophy collection' of an atrium hotel, festival mall, convention centre, restored historic neighbourhood, domed stadium, aquarium, new office towers and redeveloped waterfront'. (Judd 1999:36) The idea of districts that are Entertainment Destinations derives from the work of Sassen and Roost (1999: 143), which sees cities becoming sites of consumption, with modern tourism centred on 'the urban scene or more precisely some version of the urban scene fit for tourism'. This means cities are reconfigured to develop 'districts like midtown Manhattan in which are concentrated entertainment oriented retailers, high-tech entertainment centers, cinema complexes and themed restaurants' (Pearce 2001: 955).

Redevelopment zones and entertainment districts follow stereotypical models of development based around standard components and depending on investment by large corporations, combined with significant contributions from the public purse. Concern about the standardisation that results has long been a theme of commentary on urban tourism. Waterfronts were early examples of tourist based regeneration in cities in US and then elsewhere. Jones (1998) points out that as early as 1985 there were concerns about nature of waterfront renewal projects and that research by US department of the Interior pointed to 'the loss of waterfront character by replicating waterfront development 'models' and applying them to sites which may differ considerably from one another' (438). Reviewing a series of UK studies of waterfront development Jones goes on to say that one of the key issues that has emerged in the UK has been 'problems associated with land-use mix and the 'standardisation' of waterfront development schemes' (439)

Wider processes of economic change and globalisation have promoted these tendencies. Smith (2003) discusses spatial transformation of cities and the idea of placelessness - a sense that one could be anywhere. She points out that this is not a new phenomenon, and quotes Relph's (1976:6) description of placelessness as 'the weakening of distinct and diverse experiences and identities of place'. In some cases placelessness may be deliberately sought by the creators of urban spaces. Kuntsler (1994) discusses the development of what he terms 'the geography of nowhere' in the USA, which he sees as deriving from Modernism's deliberate rejection of locality – through the International Style – and also from the search for cheap commercial buildings and suburban housing, which can be achieved through standardised construction and development.

There is some evidence that concern about loss of destination distinctiveness and its impacts is now moving up the research and policy agenda. The European Commission is currently funding the LODIS project to explore local distinctiveness in six European towns; this includes exploration of techniques of place management and interpretation of cultural areas (Grant 2002). In the UK, the Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) has just completed a pilot survey of six market towns, designed to assess the way in which they are changing and how far they are retaining distinctiveness. Concerns with local distinctiveness are partly economic: if destinations become more homogenous, will that affect tourist demand? Will visitors be less inclined to visit places that offer a less distinct experience, or one that is perceived as inauthentic? However, there is also concern to maintain local distinctiveness as an inherent value that contributes to residents' sense of place, local pride and culture. Whilst tourism can contribute to homogenisation, tourism management that maintains the distinctiveness of places could benefit local people and visitors alike. We have been concerned to examine how far new tourism areas could develop in ways that are less standardised, and more distinctive from a visitor's point of view.

3   **Urban Residents, Workers and Tourists**

In their discussion of the interaction between tourism and the character of places Gordon and Goodhall (2000) identify a range of factors affecting tourism demand – evolving tastes, holiday behaviour patterns - and important characteristics of the tourism industry. This range of factors join others, 'the functioning of labour markets, property development and local politics, as well as issues of

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place image…' to create tourism places. Some places, theme parks, cruise ships, may be under the control of a single provider but,

'More typically, in 'real' places the experience is conditioned by a range of services independently provided within a physical, social and cultural environment shaped (in both intended and unintended ways) by past patterns of development, as well as by the presence of visitors arriving independently.' 291

Gordon and Goodhall argue that these factors, 'all come together' (292), to define tourism places. We would include, in the already long lists, intangible factors such as aesthetics, the 'buzz' or 'atmosphere' of a place, alongside the more tangible physical characteristics of social and cultural environments. We are interested in this process of the coming together of very different sets of factors. Making tourism places involves complex interactions of differing attributes. Indeed it is the way in which such 'unlike' elements connect that defines the distinctive 'character' of a place (Molotch et al. 2000). We need to select from economic, social, physical and intangible elements that that are 'lashed-up' (Molotch 2000) to reveal distinctive character. Thus we would include the qualities and expectations of visitors alongside physical attributes and economic and social factors to understand how places come together.

But what are the common elements in the making of these new tourism areas? We turn here to the recent body of work on the importance of amenities in driving urban growth (see Clark et al 2002, Glaeser, 2000, Florida, 2002) Several authors argue that the competitiveness of cities depends less on those traditional locational, technological and corporate factors that defined the strength of firms and more on placed based factors. The success of cities derives less from market transactions and more from qualitative assets or 'nonmarket transactions' (crime rates, educational levels, aesthetics, for example) and 'amenities'. Urban economists emphasise the contemporary importance of the individual consumer, a more affluent urban class, new distinctions of taste in the consumption of housing and culture and concern with quality of life. For Richard Florida (2002) it is amenity that attracts talented workers to cities and thus underpins economic growth. Both intangible qualities of places and more tangible public goods – efficient transport, for example – matter for competitiveness but these are also the factors that matter to visitors to cities. Amenity and the unique qualities of places help attract discriminating urban tourists. Elements of the character of places - both tangible and intangible amenities – may be valued by visitors and residents and workers. One of the most comprehensive attempts to link the visitor economy into understanding of broader changes in urban economies is Clark's work on the city as 'entertainment machine' (Clark, 2000, Clark et al 2002). Clark lists several components of change: the volatility of taste, niche markets and a new affluent class, factors such as increased travel and the Internet that facilitate contacts, locational decisions that emphasise taste and quality of life, and the rise of leisure and concern about the arts (2002,497-8).

'A residential population of young professionals with more education and fewer children creates a social profile geared towards recreation and consumption concerns.' (2002, 500)

In some places in the contemporary city there is a clear complementarity between urban visitors and workers and residents. Urban space, amenity and cultures are valued commodities for residents, workers and visitors alike. This question of complementarity also connects to other debates about contemporary tourism. We referred earlier to a process of homogenisation and the serial reproduction (Law 2002, 188) that results in environments that are 'placeless'. At the same time some commentators have identified the increasing importance of visitors who are more experienced, independent and discriminating in what they seek from destinations. These visitors have been variously categorised as 'new tourists' (Poon 1993) or 'post-tourists' (Urry 2001). It is argued that this group of visitors is particularly seeking an authentic' or 'real' or non-homogenised experience when they choose a destination. They might be expected to be drawn to destinations that retain distinctiveness, that seem to grow organically and respond to the aesthetic and cultural demands of residents. Of course the creation of amenity and revalorised aesthetics may conflict with the tourist's search for authenticity. In turn some residents may feel that the neighbourhood is no longer recognisable. For others enhanced amenities meet lifestyle demands. Close analysis of how place characteristics operate and develop over time will be helpful to understanding such issues of taste and authenticity.

4　　New Tourism Areas in Cities

If some tourists were seeking out more distinctive places and areas within London, then we would expect the characteristics of tourists and their preferences to vary systematically between areas. The research reported below was designed to explore this. It did so by interviewing a sample of overseas visitors to Kings Cross / Islington and to Bankside, and comparing their responses to overseas visitors to London as a whole. Kings Cross / Islington were chosen as plausible but contrasting areas that could be seen as NTAs. Islington is well connected to but separate from the main tourist locations of central London. Although a number of initiatives had sought to develop tourism, there was no comprehensive plan, and no major new tourism attractions were developed. Bankside is adjacent to major tourism areas, and there appears to a clear policy intention to develop tourism in the area – to promote regeneration and to relieve pressure at existing tourist hotspots. The area includes two new flagship attractions – Tate Modern and Shakespeare's Globe.

Islington

The build up of tourism in Islington has been gradual and change in the area not dramatic. Islington was one of the playgrounds of pre-industrial London. This legacy remains in numerous (small) theatres and pubs. New commercial developments have located on Pentonville Road, which climbs from Kings Cross to the Angel. Whilst the road is architecturally uninspiring and traffic relentless, student residences have been refurbished and a site which lay undeveloped for many years now hosts a mid-range hotel. Behind the main roads residential areas divide into either high value private Georgian and Victorian Streets or mass housing blocks of the 1960s and 1970s. Kings Cross and the Angel have a rich mix of land uses. The area has very good public transport connections, to central London in particular. It has been estimated that over four million visitors spent an estimated £105 million in the London Borough of Islington in 1998 (Carpenter 1999).

There has been considerable investment in renewing cultural assets – including the Scala cinema (refurbished as night-club); Sadler's Wells theatre (refurbished with a £42 million national lottery grant); and the Almeida Theatre. However, no flagship attraction has been created. There has been substantial private investment in the area, and over the past few years a bustling Islington nightlife has seen the opening of numerous new bars and upscale restaurants. (These included Granita, site of the alleged deal between the UK Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer, which recently closed: an event whose symbolism is disputed). Tourism related policy in Islington has a broken history. The Council financially supported various visitor related initiatives from the early to mid 1980s and subsequently a Tourism Development Action Plan (TDAP), one result of which was the creation of Discover Islington, an independent not-for-profit organisation whose mission was to develop tourism to create economic activity and foster civic pride which was set up in 1991 and closed in 2001. However, tourist development has not resulted from comprehensive planning by either public or private sectors, in contrast to the process of creating a tourist bubble.

Bankside

The Bankside area stretches along the south bank of the Thames from London Bridge to beyond Blackfriars Bridge, at which point it reaches the long established South Bank cultural centre. Promotions for Bankside describe it as 'the new heart of London' where visitors can 'enjoy world class arts, architecture exhibitions and entertainment, superb restaurants and bars, all in the historic heart of London's Bankside' (Bankside Welcome Page http://www.bankside.org/ (6.10.03). Its best-known attractions are Tate Modern (housed in a converted power station), and Shakespeare's Globe theatre, but there are other galleries and theatres in the area. For many years, local politicians and community activists strongly resisted tourism and leisure development in the Bankside area. However attitudes and political control changed in the 1990s and Southwark now sees tourism as a key industry; full-time tourism officers have been employed since 1996.

The area has benefited from public investment through the national lottery (e.g. Tate Modern), charitable trusts (e.g. Shakespeare's Globe) and the private sector (e.g. Vinopolis museum of wine). Public investment in environmental and other improvements has frequently been coordinated and funded by two urban regeneration partnerships – the Pool of London Partnership and the Cross River Partnership. Tourism development in Bankside became part of public policy. Cross River Partnership,

which brought together the City of Westminster and City of London with Southwark and Lambeth councils, sought as one of its strategic objectives to spread the benefits and opportunities from congested locations north of the river to the new destinations of Lambeth and Southwark. A key element of the strategy was improving pedestrian links across the river and a new Hungerford Bridge, (from the Embankment to the South Bank Centre) and the new Millennium Bridge (creating a new route from St Paul's to Tate Modern) were opened in 2002. New culture and new tourism development seems to have been important in Bankside development but some commentators have argued that this is simply 'an opportunist and image-based response to dominant property speculation interests' (Newman and Smith 1999).

5 Findings

Understanding of the development of new areas for tourism in London is handicapped by familiar problems of lack of data at the London and particularly the local level (Bull and Church 2001). There are some data on overseas visitors to London as a whole derived from the International Passenger Survey (IPS) and on domestic visitors from the United Kingdom Tourism Survey. Both are annual samples with sizes large enough to allow accurate estimates of tourist numbers to London. Further information on overseas visitors can be obtained from the Survey of Overseas Visitors to London (SOVL), which is carried out annually on behalf of the London Tourist Board (now VisitLondon). The latter provides the most detailed information on the characteristics, actions and motivations of London's overseas visitors. It is based on a sample of around 1300 and provides longitudinal data. The major deficiencies however are at the more local level. Visitor surveys tend to be sporadic and ad hoc, and do not use consistent methodologies and questions – though inevitably they frequently seek similar information. It is difficult or impossible to define with clarity the areas which tourists visit, especially when one moves away from clearly defined attractions such as the Tower of London. Still less is known about the activities of London workers and residents in the development of tourism areas – in terms of visits to attractions, bars and restaurants, and their role in 'discovering' and creating 'new' areas. This is despite the fact that there is considerable internal tourism in London: Bull and Church (2001) point out that in 1995, 3.33 million domestic tourist visits (which include an overnight stay) to London were by people whose normal place of residence was in London.

Our research is intended to remedy some of the neglect of tourism districts in large polycentric cities that Pearce (1998) noted and to which we referred earlier. It was designed to begin to assemble some information on visitors and their characteristic and perceptions at the local level. We chose initially to focus on overseas visitors because of their perceived importance in London tourism, and because of better data availability at the London level. We wanted to be able to identify the characteristics of visitors in King's Cross / Islington and in Bankside and to compare them with the characteristics of visitors to London as a whole. In order to make this possible, many questions were designed to be compatible with the SOVL, allowing us to read across local and all London characteristics. Whilst this inevitably restricts what can be explored in the survey, it is necessary in order to determine whether the characteristics of visitors to the NTAs we identified differ from those of visitors to London as a whole. Further, qualitative research will be required to explore visitor characteristics in more detail.

The Islington research questioned people at a series of locations in the King's Cross and Islington areas of London in summer 2001. Interviews took place during the working week and at weekends, and at different times of the day and evening. People who permanently lived or worked in the area were excluded, and a total of 228 usable responses from overseas visitors was achieved. The Bankside research questioned people at a series of locations in the Bankside area in summer 2002. Interviews took place during the working week and at weekends, and at different times of the day and evening. People who permanently lived or worked in the area were excluded. A total of 230 usable responses from overseas visitors was achieved.

The findings discussed below compare characteristics of overseas visitors to London as a whole, derived from the Survey of Overseas Visitors to London (2001) overseas visitors to King's Cross/Islington (2001) and to Bankside (2002) derived for author's surveys.

Country of origin
There is no systematic variation in the visitors' country of origin, with origins of Islington and Bankside visitors similar to those of all London visitors as measured by SOVL. However visitors to

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the NTAs are older than all London visitors: 45% of Islington visitors and 39% of Bankside visitors are over 45, compared to 30% for London.

Purpose and Frequency of Visit
There are some notable differences. Whilst 65% of London visitors are on a weekend break or longer holiday, the proportion falls to 56% for Bankside, and 48% for Islington. Conversely, the proportion of VFR visitors in London is 15%, but in Bankside it is 21% and in Islington 35%. Islington has more business and educational visits.

There are differences too in experience of London. Whilst 55% of all overseas visitors to London have been to the city before, 69% of Bankside and 83% of Islington visitors are on a repeat visit. Over half (53%) of Islington visitors have made three or more previous visits (Bankside 38%). When asked about visits to the areas, 51% of the Islington visitors said they had been to the are before, and 30% were quite frequent visitors, have been there three times or more. Only 32% of Bankside visitors were making a repeat visit. There appears to be some variation in length of stay, with more visitors staying over a month in Islington (13%) and Bankside (20%) than London (7%).

Sources of Information Encouraging the Visit
There was variation in the sources encouraging the visit. The most important sources for London visitors were the Internet (38%) and travel agents (22%). However when it came to sources encouraging the visit to the areas of Islington and Bankside, the most important sources were recommendations by a friend or relative (21% Islington, 29% Bankside) and guidebooks (19%, 28%). The Internet was unimportant (5%, 1%). And visitors to Islington and Bankside would themselves recommend the areas to family or friends as good places to visit – 87% Islington, 97% Bankside.

Visitors' Likes and Dislikes
What did visitors like about the area? Visitors were asked what they most liked, and then asked to rank their responses in order of priority. The responses were analysed to see whether visitors had come to the area to visit a specific attraction – an activity place - or because of the qualities of the area as a whole – the leisure setting. In Islington 34% of visitors identified the element they most liked as an aspect of the leisure setting – either physical (e.g. architecture, trees, canals, river) or socio-cultural (e.g. 'bohemian', 'cosmopolitan', 'atmosphere', 'quaint'). If a wider definition of leisure setting is taken to include range of bars, restaurant and shops (rather than a specific bar, restaurant or shop), the leisure setting is the main priority for 57% of Islington visitors. In Bankside, 54% ranked leisure setting as their main priority.

Finally visitors were asked if they would return to the areas, and the responses were very similar. In both Islington and Bankside, 60% said they would definitely return and 34% (Islington) and 35% (Bankside) said they would possibly return. In other words, only some 5% said they would not return.

6   Discussion

The surveys allow us to develop some initial understanding of who is visiting London's NTAs, and what it is about the areas that attracts them.

1   The visitors in our surveys have distinctive qualities. They differ from the SOVL group overall, and in some ways have characteristics that seem to fit well the types of tourist described in the literature about 'post-tourism' or 'new tourism'. They tend to be older, they are considerably more experienced travellers to London and make use of friendship networks and guide books in deciding which areas to visit.

These qualities are particularly noticeable in Islington, and less prominent in Bankside. This is as one might expect. Bankside is newly well connected to the north bank of the Thames, and sits between the Tower Bridge and the South Bank / London Eye tourist hotspots. A riverside walk from Tower Bridge to Westminster runs through the area, providing easy pedestrian access. This is a new tourist area, but one that is readily accessible – physically and symbolically – from established tourist beats. Islington and King's Cross are less accessible in both respects, and so a higher proportion of its visitors are likely to be exploratory 'new tourists'.

2   Our visitors have a range of motivations for visiting the area. But in both Islington and Bankside, the area's attractiveness seems to have less to do with major individual attractions and more to do with distinctive built environment and the 'leisure setting'. In Bankside visitors most like the architecture, river, atmosphere, sense of history and views. In Islington, physical and cultural elements (e.g. architecture, cosmopolitan) are also important, but the presence of cafes, shops, bars and restaurants constitute an important component of the leisure setting. It is perhaps particularly notable that although Bankside has two major, new attractions in Tate Modern and Bankside, it is the broader qualities that constitute the sense of place that most appeal to visitors. In Moloch's terms, it is these intangible qualities that are 'lashed up' with the major attractions, shops and restaurants to create a distinctive character.

Whilst other areas in London can be seen as becoming more standardised and placeless, Bankside and Islington retain some distinct qualities identified by survey respondents. This raises a range of questions about the difference between authenticity and distinctiveness in attracting visitors. Those of us who watched the transformation of Bankside and saw the timber and plaster (reproduction) Globe Theatre roofed in shiny, fireproof stainless steel before its thatch was added might see this as a clear example of staged authenticity! Equally, visitors to Islington may well feel it is the 'real London' only in so far as London has become entirely middle class and affluent. Teedon (2001: 477) argues that Bankside is 'an increasingly coherent cultural space, heavily commodified for cultural consumption' but chides that this coherence has been achieved through design policies that 'pandered to perceived bourgeois needs' (461). Whether or not such commodified, aestheticised spaces catering for the bourgeoisie are more or less authentic than other parts of central London is a difficult question. Yet whether or not they are *authentic*, both areas are *distinctive*, and seem to be perceived to be so by visitors. They offer an experience that is less standardised or homogenised than tourist bubbles like Piccadilly Circus / Leicester Square or Covent Garden. In terms of our earlier discussion whilst the tourist bubbles offer standardised placelessness, Islington and Bankside offer what we might call *placefulness*.

Importantly, Londoners and London workers as well as visitors use these areas, and we would expect Richard Florida's talented workers, valuing amenity, to be prominent amongst them. Urban space, amenity and cultures are valued commodities for (some) residents, workers and visitors alike. From the visitors' point of view and this may contribute to a sense of being in a distinct *place* rather than a tourist bubble or enclave. Some visitors may see tourism as the sense of experiencing 'ordinary everyday life' rather than an extraordinary attraction or event that constitutes a 'tourism experience' (Maitland 2000). For them, places where they can mingle with local people will be particularly attractive. It seem reasonable to suppose that this search for distinctiveness and everyday experience will be most likely to be sought after by those who have had the opportunity to visit more conventional tourist sites in London and around the world, and this fits well with the characteristics of our survey respondents – experienced travellers who are repeat visitors to London.

3   The link between visitors and Londoners is important. Bull and Church (2001) point to the importance of VFR in generating more tourist visits to London the 1990s, but this is even more important in our NTAs. A higher proportion of those who visited Bankside, and many more visitors to Islington are in London visiting friends and relations. This may well fit with the fact that they are also much more experienced visitors to London. Recommendations by friends and relatives was the most important reason for visiting the area, followed by guidebooks and the visitors' own previous experience of the areas. Recommendations by tourism professionals – BTA/ VisitBritain, a TIC, travel agents – were of little or no significance. For this segment of the visitor market, and for New Tourism Areas, development seems to mean word of mouth and recommendations from a few guidebook sources, rather than conventional promotion. This itself raises interesting questions about what visitors are seeking. How far do they seek familiar landscapes of consumption in a distinct urban setting, and how far are they open to the qualities the place has to offer?

4   The role of public policy is ambiguous. In Islington, the development of tourism was not planned (though it was encouraged by a TDAP and Discover Islington), and it was comparatively laissez-faire land-use planning that allowed new uses for shopping and entertainment to develop. In Bankside, key elements were property speculation and development pressure on a fringe area of central London, together with social entrepreneurialism of key individuals in pushing forward the

Globe and Tate Modern developments with determination and opportunism. Public investment was important in renewing cultural assets, although this was not done primarily with the tourist in mind. Public investment was important in improving the physical environment, and in the case of Bankside, particularly in improving pedestrian links. The local authority developed a strong and deliberate design policy, but the major development projects were outside its control. In neither case was the creation of a tourist district the prime objective, and the areas have so far avoided the sanitisation and homogenisation characteristic of, for example Times Square. Indeed, in the case of Bankside, the new bridges add to the area's distinctiveness.

5   The development of Islington and Bankside offer some indications of what NTAs that are distinctive, rather than standardised tourist bubbles might look like. It may be that they represent a aseventh category in the list of tourism districts that Pearce suggests. Whilst they include some standard components and chain offerings – Starbucks are ubiquitous – they offer a distinctive environment or leisure setting that it the most important attraction to their visitors. They can distinguish themselves from other areas that rely on a standardised, commodity product. In part this is to do with the importance of resident and visitor interaction. Visitors are a distinct group, generally more experienced travellers to London more likely to have family or friendship connections, and more likely to use them in deciding the places they will go. The use of the areas by residents and visitors alike may be a key part of the attraction for many visitors: Londoners help create the bohemian and cosmopolitan atmosphere. This may be equally true for some residents; for Richard Florida (2002) it is amenity that attracts talented workers to cities and thus underpins economic growth, and part of that amenity may derive from the presence of (certain types of) visitor who add to a cosmopolitan atmosphere, and help support facilities such as bars and restaurants.

7   **Conclusion**

This account of NTAs, their visitors and how they develop remains preliminary and partial. We have shown that there are areas that have developed in ways that attract tourists without following the familiar route of the tourist bubble, and that they appear to attract a particular segment of visitors who have characteristics consistent with being 'new' or 'post' tourists, and who are drawn by the leisure setting or sense of place, rather than specific attractions. The main attractions of the areas may be there placefulness. There may be lessons here for the development of other NTAs in London and elsewhere.

It has become clear to city leaders that tourists can be tempted away from, sometimes congested, traditional attractions. The Mayor of London sees dispersal as one of four principles for the city's future tourism development, and aims for 'greater provision of tourism destinations across London' (London Development Agency 2002). Older areas become less congested and tourism brings revitalisation to new areas without the need for large capital investment. The logic has an obvious appeal for policy makers. The good news for the Mayor from our research is that new tourism areas or destinations can develop without the level of tourist focused investment and planning that is required to construct a tourism bubble or entertainment district. The less good news is that if 'real places' are made through 'independent' service providers and 'independent' visitors then their emergence may be beyond the control of tourism planners. Independent visitors select and ascribe values to neighbourhoods, and these 'external' processes are outside the control of local policy makers. The ambition of policy makers to disperse tourists from crowded areas may not be easily met. If we understand new tourism areas to be 'lash-ups' of many unlike elements then replication is clearly impossible. What policy makers can however focus on is the complementarities between tourists and residents. Local governments may find a policy agenda of amenity and tourism more attractive than past failures in housing or industrial policy. But Clark argues that the 'entertainment machine' is 'structurally uneven'. Only some parts of the city have been transformed in this way. The ambitions of city leaders to create new landscapes and attract talent and visitors may come up against barriers in some parts of the city where they are most desired.

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