

THE POTENTIAL OF DESIGN IN NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

-A DESIGN-LED RECONSTRUCTION OF THE KENTISH TOWN CASE-

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Abstract

Under the widespread perception of a democratic deficit in practices of local governance across European cities, the neighbourhood has become the principal site for experimentation with participatory models of urban regeneration. In the UK, the recent assimilation of 'Localism' thinking into mainstream urban policy and planning has opened up an institutionalised channel for citizen engagement in the production of the built environment at the local scale. In particular, Neighbourhood Planning procedures as outlined in the Localism Act 2011, have been presented as a new instrument for local communities to produce the statutory planning documents for their area.

The conceptual and practical implications of Neighbourhood Planning have been widely debated in the fields of urban studies and social science; the debate has reanimated academic discussion on appropriate forms of local democracy and community empowerment. Comparatively little consideration has been given to the potentials and limitations this planning framework presents for design activity itself, its methods and the quality and relevance of its spatial outcomes.

On one hand, institutionalised, state-enabled participatory formulas (Cornwall, 2004) such as Neighbourhood Planning have been presented as an instrument for rebalancing power at the scale of the neighbourhood. In this sense, the localism-driven reforms have been denounced for serving neoliberal agendas in times of austere reorganisation of welfare provision (Clarke & Cochrane, 2013) and for resulting in a mere transfer of service delivery functions to citizens rather than in a significant devolution of control (Williams, Goodwin & Cloke, 2014, p.2802). However, advocates of participatory governance still see in these frameworks some potential for various degrees of local transformation "from within" where power can be renegotiated (Bailey & Pill, 2013). Neighbourhood Planning, although associated with problems of legitimacy, representativeness and political efficacy (Painter, Dominelli, MacLeod, Orton, & Pande, 2011), is considered an ongoing process of expansion of citizens' own spaces for engagement, where the scope for empowerment is yet to be redefined (Gaventa, 2006).

However, independent of the current academic debate, Neighbourhood Planning is emerging as a burgeoning field of practice where planners, architects and urban designers converge and work together with locals (RIBA, 2011). This is promoting the revival of participatory approaches to planning, architecture and design from the 1960's and 1970s' (Davidoff, 1965; Di Carlo, 1969; Cross, 1972), with a renewed underlying assumption that increasing participation will directly lead to the improvement of the urban landscape. However, the Neighbourhood Plans adopted in London risk reproducing the negative consequences born out of planning and design being artificially phased -first planning, then later design- in the process of local space development.

With the first wave of Neighbourhood Plans and Forums operating across London, the city is providing a wide collection of case studies for critically examining the roles architects and urban designers are playing in the context of the Localism Act 2011. I use the case of Kentish Town to demonstrate that current approaches to Neighbourhood Planning require a re-valorisation of designer expertise, which is often overshadowed by the practicalities of participation. In the purely instrumental use of expert knowledge, urban design could miss out

on an opportunity to introduce a spatial approach to planning that remains under-explored and has not yet served to re-imagine policy-making processes and inform the outcomes (Allmendinger & Haughton, 2009). In light of this trend, my research seeks to (re)construct an amplified role for design in Neighbourhood Planning that would make better use of design professionals beyond their current scope of involvement.

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Authors declaration

During the period of registered study in which this thesis was prepared the author has not been registered for any other academic award or qualification. The material included in this thesis has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted.



Signature _____

Date _5.12.2019_____

Introduction: Grounds for enquiry

In 2011, during the culmination of my studies in architecture at ETSAM- Polytechnic University of Madrid, I was developing a project on Indian public space¹ in which I first explored design's potential to support different forms of user engagement in urban regeneration strategies. While working with the community inhabiting a traditional neighbourhood of the historic city centre of Ahmedabad, I witnessed the explicit ways in which the Indian urban fabric is continuously updated by ordinary citizens, who spontaneously adapt the rules and programmes of the space to meet their daily needs, thus correcting its planning failures and becoming themselves active agents of change.

That same year, my home city, Madrid, became the epicentre of a civic movement that went far beyond an anti-austerity protest in its response to increasing citizen discontent with representative democracy. The 15-M *indignados* inspired other movements across the world, such as Occupy Wall Street in the US and Occupy London in the UK, with their call for more radical and direct forms of participation in decision-making. Many European countries were, at the time, expanding citizen participation to implement their public services and modernise local governance structures, including innovative participatory practices in the areas of policy-making and planning.

The circumstances unfolding in the spaces around my home and work began to shape my professional trajectory as an architect and urban designer. I was actively testing different modes of collaboration with local communities and other stakeholders mainly in neighbourhood-scale projects across European cities (i.e. Spain, Austria, Sweden, Germany) and beyond (i.e. India, Chile, Morocco). These professional experiences allowed for an on-going inquiry into the role of design, along with its limits and potential for the processes of local space production.

This PhD continues to explore these questions in London, a city that like Ahmedabad is at the heart of the debate over the renovation of its urban fabric. This is true of London especially since the "Localism"-driven reforms of the UK planning system favour neighbourhood space as a working instrument for testing new forms of participation in local democracy.

The introduction of the Localism Act 2011, and, in particular, the formula of Neighbourhood Planning, provided an incomparable field of research that linked my three main themes of interest: participation, design and planning.

Neighbourhood Planning, the new form of institutionalised public participation in planning at the local scale, differs from other forms of community-led planning in the statutory weight and status of the planning documents produced. This has transferred unprecedented rights for

¹ The project "Urban Strategies to Regenerate Indian Public Space" received national and international awards such as COAM "PFC Innovation Prize 2012", ISARCH Award 2012, Graduates Architecture Award 2012, Hunter Douglas Awards- Archiprix 2013 and the XII Bienal Española de Arquitectura y Urbanismo. It was widely published in specialized journals and exhibited at the 13th Biennale di Venezia, XII BIEAU, ARCH Moscow NEXT2013 and India-Under-Construction Forum among others.

local communities to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and for them to guide future development through the production of Neighbourhood Plans (NPs), sometimes called Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs). In unparished areas (usually within urban areas), this also means that local authorities no longer lead the planning process at neighbourhood scale; unlike Local Plans, Neighbourhood Plans are prepared by citizens themselves. To undertake this planning route, local residents and those with business interests in an area have to organise themselves to become a 'qualifying body', a Neighbourhood Forum (NF) that can prepare a Neighbourhood Plan through a predefined protocol (that will be further explained in Chapter 1 of this thesis).

This formal procedure controls the channels of participation, thereby possibly neutralising the potentially empowering effects of community engagement in planning issues. For local groups, this legislation implies a slow and expensive process that raises suspicions of a mere transfer of responsibilities rather than offering a true shift in power relations. For professionals of the built environment working with local groups, the new planning framework urges them to redefine their role, and in particular, that of designers whose relevance within the process and contribution to the outcomes should be clarified.

Still, the legal status of the Neighbourhood Plans provides a unique opportunity to ensure that the local landscape is developed according to local aspirations. As long as the Neighbourhood Plan is in conformity with higher tiers of planning, the specific planning issues that it covers is for the Neighbourhood Forum to determine. This leaves considerable room for conceiving, designing and organising neighbourhood spaces "differently", which "in turn somehow changes the political, economic and social settings in cities" (Bialski, Derwanz, Otto, & Vollmer, 2015, p. 2). For designers, this offers an opportunity to initiate "different or 'alternative' spatial processes within the neighbourhood" (Schneider & Till, 2009, p.100).

However, the transformative potential of design within Neighbourhood Planning contexts remains understudied. When I started this work in 2014, research on Neighbourhood Planning was focused on "explaining both the nature of the new participatory spaces and the terms on which they are offered, and how citizens are navigating the legislative framework" (Wargent, 2017, p.9). As highlighted in the literature review found in Chapter 1, there was no study at that point that was looking into Neighbourhood Planning from the perspective of design and the designer.

During the course of this PhD, the reality of Neighbourhood Planning has evolved significantly. There is currently a widespread acceptance of the new planning reform and the formula has been enthusiastically embraced by "over 2,000 communities, representing approximately 12 million people" all across the UK (Locality, 2017, p. 12). Although London has been slower to adjust to the new formula than the rest of the country, as of today over 120 Forums are operating in the capital; there are only 9 boroughs without Neighbourhood Planning processes happening within their limits, and 12 Neighbourhood Plans have been completed so far.

Despite all this progress, and the growing body of literature on the Localism planning frameworks developed over the intervening years, research work continues to overlook the role of design within this context. This PhD seeks to fill this important gap in knowledge and provide insights on the barriers designers face as well as their potential contributions to the process and outcomes of Neighbourhood Planning.

In keeping with the ideals of the 'PhD by Design', a mode of research that "allows for designers

to produce knowledge based on the skills and capacities of the design field itself” (Bang, Krogh, Ludvigsen & Markussen, 2012, p.1), design is an integral part of my research methods, as is further explained in Chapter 2.

In Chapter 3, an in depth analysis of a case study from the first wave of Neighbourhood Planning processes taking place across London serves to exemplify the limitations of the role designers are currently playing in Neighbourhood Planning settings. This analysis also reveals the entry points by which to apply my designer expertise and propose an amplified role in that capacity.

At this point it is necessary to clarify that the understanding of ‘design’ and ‘designer’ in this PhD is strongly influenced by my study of architecture. In contrast to the way architecture programs are structured in the UK, Spanish architectural education combines architecture, urban design and planning disciplines in the same programme of study, without distinguishing between the professions of planner, architect, urban and landscape designer. The Spanish approach results in an architectural education characterised by an “original interpretation of the relationship between architecture and urban planning within a visionary, design-oriented approach” (Palermo & Ponzini, 2010, p.14).

Therefore, it is not surprising that in order to expand the scope of design action within Neighbourhood Planning, my proposals are rooted in the introduction of a spatial approach to the process that advances the improved integration of design and planning practices at local scale. In Chapter 4 I test this proposition through a set of design demonstrations applied to the case study that highlight the urgent need for design to overcome some of the case deficiencies, notably the disconnect between some of the initial intentions of the Forum and the final planning decisions that they took. This lays the groundwork for reframing the practice of design in Neighbourhood Planning settings so that it not only informs the decisions made regarding the built environment, but also leads the decision-making process itself.

Finally, in Chapter 5 I discuss the findings from this study, the lessons transferable to other Neighbourhood Planning processes that suffer from similar problems, and a future research agenda that not only concerns architects and designers, but also local communities, authorities and other stakeholders involved in the regeneration of neighbourhood space.

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Chapter 1: Literature review

The following review explores the landscape of literature on the three main fields of thought and practice that this PhD covers: participation, planning and design. This seeks to map out the state of knowledge, identify gaps, and develop an understanding of the subject of Neighbourhood Planning as a pivotal focus where the intersections between those three fields are tested and challenged.

1.1 The intersections between participation, planning and design

1.1.1 Participation

The concept of participation is a very convoluted term, frequently used, misunderstood, loosely applied and difficult to define (Gomes, 2010, p.4).

Early attempts to define the concept of participation relate to the redistribution of power in decision-making processes. In her influential *Ladder of Citizen Participation* (Arnstein, 1969), Sherry Arnstein proposed the metaphor of a ladder with progressive levels, starting from non-participation (manipulation and therapy) and moving through tokenism (informing, consultation, and placation) to various degrees of citizen power (partnership, delegated power, and citizen control). In this model, the relative power of the citizen is seen to increase as they climb 'up the ladder', imbuing the higher rungs of the ladder with a superior status to those beneath them.

The simplicity of this model inspired theories and practices of participation in policy-making, planning, design, and other fields, with other 'ladders' being proposed ever since. For example, Wilcox transformed Arnstein's ladder into *A Continuum of Involvement* (Wilcox, 1994) that identifies five interconnected levels of community participation (Information, Consultation, Deciding together, Acting together and Supporting individual community initiatives). In a similar vein, The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2, 2014) proposed a spectrum based on increasing degrees of participation (Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate, Empower) defined by the goals, the promises to the public and the techniques used to achieve each level.

However, the ladder-inspired models are difficult to apply in practice because the boundaries between the levels are often ambiguous and they do not recognize the complexities of the varying interests of different players in the process (Sharp & Connelly, 2002).

More recently, born out of a collaboration with the South Lanarkshire Council in planning processes, Scott Davidson (1998) proposed an alternative metaphor to the hierarchical structure of the ladder in which citizen control was the ultimate and sole aim of involvement. The *Wheel of Participation* outlines four dimensions of public engagement that are all appropriate at different stages of the participatory process (information, consultation, participation and empowerment) and are linked to specific objectives.

There is an extensive body of research on participatory practices that “explores people’s motivations, barriers, enablers and triggers of participation, as well as recruitment and retention” (Brodie, Cowling, & Nissen, 2009, p. 33).

Other authors emphasize the underlying ‘politics of participation’, trying to unpack the tensions around who is involved, how they are involved, and on whose terms. For example, White (1996) defines participatory settings as sites of contestation and conflict with the capacity to challenge, but also and often, reproducing existing power dynamics. Her model highlights the multiple interests in participation by examining top-down (by the government and associated agencies) and bottom-up approaches (by both individuals and communities of place, interest and/or identity).

Similarly, other categorizations of participation have placed emphasis on the types of relationships between the individual and the structures of governance. The recent work of Andrea Cornwall (2004) *Introduction: New Democratic Spaces? The Politics and Dynamics of Institutionalised Participation* reviews the emergence of new sites and practices of public participation in governance across a range of political and cultural contexts. She offers a useful distinction between “invited” and “popular” spaces for participation that moves beyond the traditional dichotomies of top-down vs. bottom-up approaches to governance. The first set of spaces refer to participatory sites provided by authorities at diverse levels, where citizens are invited to participate in public policy and decision-making through institutionalized procedures; the second set of spaces, on the contrary, refer to the “popular” spaces that self-emerge under the public’s perception of a “democratic deficit”(p.1).

This distinction provides a useful starting point for exploring what participation means in the context of the Localism Act 2011. In its aim of reforming of the planning system, the Localism Act 2011 introduced a new model of citizen engagement into the practice of local governance that can be categorized as an “invited” space for participation, as Cornwall described. Neighbourhood Planning is an unprecedented model of state-enabled participation in the production of the built environment, that connects with the rich tradition of forms of public participation in planning and design fields.

1.1.2 Participation in planning

As is true with the concept of participation, planning theory, too, has created an extensive terminology for planning that actively involves the public.

In the 1960s, traditional views of planning as a rational process of decision-making aimed at resolving spatial problems through strategic plans and policies were challenged by the view that planning was a form of political action. With the rise of civil rights protests in Europe, along with the birth of the neighbourhood movement and grass-roots organizations in the United States and Canada, some planning theorists began to “promote forms of participatory planning that would simultaneously improve democracy as a whole” (Horelli, 2002, p.607).

Early US theories include advocacy planning, which aimed to correct inequalities in the political system. Its main proponent, Paul Davidoff (1965), motivated by his background as a lawyer, proposed that the role of the planner should be to advocate for unrepresented voices in the planning process. Transactive planning (Friedman, 1973) proposed involving the public

by focusing more on interpersonal dialogue as part of a process of mutual learning, in which citizens become more educated about planning issues and take increasing control over the social processes that govern their welfare.

This contributed to a communicative or collaborative “turn” in planning that started highlighting the interactions and communication among various stakeholders involved in planning processes. This approach draws on the philosophy of Dewey and Rorty, as well as on Habermas’ theory of communicative action and notions of ‘deliberative democracy’. Planning was seen as a consensus-driven practice in which the opposing interests of stakeholders can be negotiated and reconciled through rational deliberation (i.e. Healey, 1997; Forester, 1999; Innes & Booher, 1999;).

At the other end of the spectrum, in opposition to the Habermasian-inspired tradition, Chantal Mouffe’s political theory begins to find supporters in spatial planning scholarship (Haughton & Allmendinger, 2012; Gualini, 2015; Legacy, 2016; Metzger et al., 2015). Planning is seen as being defined by the struggle between adversarial participants with opposing hegemonic projects that can never be reconciled rationally and that compete for power and influence (Mouffe, 2005).

However, Neighbourhood Planning is aligned with the tradition of collaborative planning that mobilises Habermas’ ideas of “ideal speech” and the “search for consensus-based outcomes resulting from stakeholder deliberation, reinforced with feed-back from the wider community” (Bishop, 2001, p. 18).

1.1.3 Participation in design

Participatory design is an attitude about a force for change in the creation and management of environments for people. Its strength lies in being a movement that cuts across traditional professional boundaries and cultures (Sanoff, 2011, p.12).

According to Johann Albrecht (1988) ‘urban planning was the first among the design professions to be influenced by participation’ (p. 24), but the idea of the public’s direct involvement in the definition of their physical environment also had a profound impact on other design disciplines, including architecture and urban design. The public’s influence can be found across research and practice under different umbrella terms from participatory design, co-design and co-creation, to cooperative design and community-led design.

The history of participatory design has run in parallel to that of participatory planning. In the 1960s in the midst of community movements in the US and influenced by Davidoff’s advocacy model, there was a blossoming of ‘community design centers aiming to offer design and planning services to enable the poor to define and implement their own planning goals’ (Sanoff, 2011, p.11).

In Europe, the origin of the participatory design tradition is founded in the Scandinavian political landscape of the 1970s, with a focus on the rights of workers and the quality of work life. The project of Kristen Nygaard and Olav-Terje Bergo in conjunction with the Norwegian Iron and Metal Workers Union, pioneered the engagement of workers in the introduction of new technology at their workplaces. This approach spread to other countries (i.e.

Sweden, Denmark) and inspired projects in other fields such as human-computer interaction, information systems, software development (Cross, 1972) that emphasized 'the active collaboration between users and designers' (Bodker & Pekkola, 2010, p.45).

Such explicit demands for the involvement of the users in the design process reflected a growing interest during the preceding decade in renewing the legitimacy of the disciplines of planning and architecture through participation. Key precursors of these ideas were, for example, Bernard Rudofsky (1964) with his valorisation of vernacular architecture in *Architecture without Architects* and Giancarlo di Carlo with his famous lecture in 1969 and subsequent article *Architecture's Public*¹.

Other authors also influenced generations of practitioners towards involving users in housing design and building, such as John Turner (1972) with his ideas of community architecture in *Freedom to Build: Dweller Control of the Housing Process*, and John Habraken (1972) with his flexible design approach to housing in *Supports: an Alternative to Mass Housing*.

In the UK, Nick Wilkinson and Nabeel Hamdi applied the ideas of Habraken in the design of public housing at Stamford Hill, Hackney and at Adelaide Road, Camden in 1979. Ralph Erskine's late 1960's design of the Byker Wall housing estate in Newcastle was another prototype of community participation in which the architect became a part of the local neighbourhood for the duration of the project.

In those years, the 'self-build' movement gained momentum due, in part, to the involvement of leading architectural pioneers such as Walter Segal. Initially, user participation in design and construction processes depended on voluntary, idealistic architects and planners working with communities. However, with the increasing success of this movement, government agencies began to support community participation. As a result of this institutionalisation, the Community Technical Aid Centres (CTACs) of the 1970s and 1980s were born. They provided local level technical assistance on architecture, landscaping, planning and other related issues within communities that wanted to influence their built environment. Like the community design centers (CDCs) in the US, CTACs acknowledged that diverse professions could contribute to neighbourhood development and relied on a combination of these skills to promote community-building along the way.

However, while community architects in Europe tended to "look on participation as a means to produce good design", advocacy planners in the US 'were interested in community empowerment itself' (Jenkins, Milner & Sharpe, 2009, p.6). The inherent tension between the processes and the outcomes of a participatory project - whether the inputs/outputs be related to design, to the social or to the political - remains an ongoing challenge in current participatory practices.

The historical context, precursor theories and projects mentioned above have all contributed to the argument for participation in the planning and design processes of local space production. Neighbourhood Planning sits within this rich tradition of participatory formulas, and in particular, constitutes the latest model introduced in the British planning system by the Localism Act 2011.

1 Originally published in 1970 in the Italian journal *Parametro*: Di Carlo, G. (1970). Il pubblico dell'architettura. *Parametro*, 5.

1.2 The UK context and the Localism Act 2011

1.2.1 Spatial planning within the British planning system

Nigel Taylor (1998) describes in *Urban Planning Theory since 1945* how an emphasis on “physical or urban design” dates back to the origins of planning in Britain. In fact, in the immediate post-war period, UK planning “was still viewed and taught as a natural extension of architectural training, involving the same kinds of spatial design skills”(p.10). Most practising planners were “architect-planners”, engaged in design-based exercises concerned with physical location, form and layout of land uses, buildings and urban spaces. It was not until 1971 that planning became “fully recognised as a distinct profession” (p.8), replacing the design-based tradition with “the systems and rational process views of planning” (p.160). That shift put planning activity in the hands of specialists in transport, energy, economy, and policy-making, among other areas, and whose purview no longer included the spatial because they no longer received visual training the way the “architect-planners” had before them. From a theoretical perspective, the concept of ‘spatial planning’ has long been a subject of academic enquiry, professional bodies’ reports and government policy guidance, and widely presented as a way of going “beyond traditional land use planning to bring together and integrate policies for the development and use of land with other policies and programmes which influence the nature of places and how they can function” (ODPM, 2005, p.12). Spatial planning theory promises to overcome a narrow technical perspective on planning issues by way of correlating them with physical outcomes on the ground. Spatial change would better respond to the local vision agreed by all members of society affected by development and this would be “intimately linked to a concern for, and an engagement with, design” (Carmona, 2005, p.5).

In recent years, the spatial approach to the British planning system has once again been brought to the fore in successive Planning Acts in 2004 and 2008 with Regional Spatial Strategies (RSSs) “that set out a ‘spatial vision’ to guide development in their region” and Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) in line with the spatial priorities established within these RSSs (Natarajan, 2013, p.41). Since the Localism Act 2011 removed the regional tier of planning and introduced Neighbourhood Plans, the spatial dimension of planning seems to be more and more circumscribed to the lower scale of the borough and the neighbourhood.

Critics of spatial planning say that it presents planning as “apolitical, raising expectations of ‘win-win-win’ solutions” that fail to present spatial alternatives in this “era of recession and economic instability” (Allmendinger & Haughton, 2009, p. 2547). Again, aspirations for consensus-driven outcomes and the problem of the contested nature of planning practice emerge as obstacles to realising the project of spatial planning in its full potential.

However, as Graham Haughton and Phil Allmendinger (2012) noted in *Spatial Planning and the New Localism*, it is only the RTPI and planning academics who might be foreseeing the opportunities emerging from the localist-driven reforms to “be the saviour of spatial planning by allowing the broad approach that it represents to evolve and adapt to meet the demands of different places and circumstances”(p. 4).

1.2.2 The ‘participatory turn’ in the British planning system

Concurrently to the most recent ‘spatial turn’ the UK planning system has undergone, there has been a turn toward participatory models (Davoudi & Strange, 2009). The British planning system was the first UK public service that incorporated participation into its protocols in an attempt to restore trust in local governance and appease the growing discontent with modernist planning. In 1969, the Skeffington report ‘People and Planning’ formalized the need to involve the public in planning, first through publicity and consultation requirements that provided “local people with opportunities to comment on and object to development plans and planning applications” (Townsend & Tully, 2004, p.4).

Since then, and using different approaches, the emphasis on public participation has grown steadily with successive governments. In the Thatcher era, that emphasis was shifted toward a more ‘consumerist perspective’, and under New Labour, there was a turn toward a ‘devolutionist agenda’ (p.5) that has continued to date. The coalition government linked the efforts of citizen participation to the rhetoric of ‘Big Society,’ ‘Localism,’ and ‘decentralisation’:

“The time has come to disperse power more widely in Britain today.”

The Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister, Coalition Agreement, May 2010²

These ideas underpinned the latest reforms of the British planning system introduced by the Localism Act 2011, in which Neighbourhood Planning presented an experimental form of institutionalised public participation in planning at the local scale that deserves particular attention. It differs from other forms of community-led planning in the statutory weight and status of the planning documents produced. As such, it was a legal instrument that would promote a shift in power away from central government and towards local people³ by allowing them to influence the renewal of their area through neighbourhood development plans. Neighbourhood Plans were promoted as the antidote to planning’s recurrent failure to meet community needs and aspirations.

Officially, Neighbourhood Planning was intended to generate “more active citizenship and civic responsibility, maximising the opportunities in devolution”(Richardson, 2012) and community empowerment across the UK. However, critics of Localism policies point out the risk of embracing a form of participation that is carried out within existing structures and hierarchies with predefined limits, which could arguably neutralise the potentially empowering effects of community engagement (Allmendinger & Haughton, 2011).

In Neighbourhood Planning, the ‘participatory’ and ‘spatial’ paradigms that have inspired the British planning system over decades converge. As a result several questions emerge: Will this model live up to the promise of community empowerment by rebalancing power at local level? Will it allow spatial planning aspirations to develop in new directions by reconfiguring the relationship between planning and design disciplines?

2 For an overview of the measures of the Localism Act 2011 refer to: A plain English guide to the Localism Act. (2011, November 15). Retrieved April 7, 2015, from https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/5959/1896534.pdf

3 The Coalition Agreement promised to ‘end the era of top-down government by giving new powers to local councils, communities, neighbourhoods and individuals’ (Cabinet Office, 2010:11)

In order to analyse the emergent dynamics between participation, planning and design fields in the context of the Localism Act 2011, the next section reviews the specific discourses of advocates and critics of Neighbourhood Planning in relation to the preceding questions.

1.3 Neighbourhood Planning: limitations and potentials

1.3.1 Dominant discourses: Neighbourhood Planning as an instrument of community empowerment

Heir to the debates described above on the links between participation and democratic theory, academic discussions on Neighbourhood Planning have revolved around appropriate forms of local democracy and their potential for community empowerment. However, a critical assessment of Neighbourhood Planning as an instrument for community empowerment first requires an examination of the implicit notions of ‘community’ and ‘power’ mobilised under localism agendas.

Conceptualisation of community in Neighbourhood Planning

Localist discourses present Neighbourhood Planning as a radical reconfiguration of the actors involved in local governance by “giving communities a stronger voice in planning decisions and a real choice about future development of their area” (DCLG, 2012, p.1). Here, the ‘community voice’ is drawn from an area-based notion of community that presupposes localities to be cohesive and discrete entities and fails to take full account of London’s intricate network of mixed, self-determined local groups that very often overlap in territory.

As outlined in the Localism Act 2011, local groups have to come together as a formalised Neighbourhood Forum of at least 21 members, who live, work or are councillors in a neighbourhood. The groups need to be established and have an agreed constitution and membership. The Forum’s first task is to define itself according to a geographical area that all members relate to - the neighbourhood - with boundaries that must be appropriately justified in a formal application to the pertinent planning authority. This is because ultimately, both the Forum and the Area have to be formally recognised by the local authority in order to start developing the plan.⁴

The process of defining the neighbourhood boundaries has proved to be a major obstacle for the Neighbourhood Forums operating in London. Two cases highlighted by the Planning Advisory Service in *Briefing Note: Neighbourhood Area and Neighbourhood Forum Designations* (2015) exemplify the kind of boundary disputes that might emerge between local groups competing for the same area to be formally designated as a neighbourhood.

In 2013, Hackney council rejected the applications of both Stamford Hill Neighbourhood Forum (SHNF) and the North Hackney Neighbourhood Forum (NHNF) because of ethnic and religious divisions that created tensions among neighbours:

4 For further information see: Localism in London What’s the story? (2014, November 1). Retrieved March 11, 2015, from http://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/14-11-20-Localism-Report_0.pdf

It is clear that the complexity of the area in terms of social and cultural mix has proven a significant challenge for the local community in their aspiration to deliver a socially cohesive neighbourhood plan (Cooke & Macdonald, 2014).

In 2014, Southwark Council had to deal with rival applications in an area proposed by both the Bermondsey Neighbourhood Forum and the Bermondsey Village Action Group.

In both cases the “community” is seen as an already constituted entity in a given area. This is because the localism rhetoric has promoted a notion of “community” that is linked to ideas of local identity and a sense of belonging, thereby emphasizing the social over the spatial. The tension between the dimensions of the social and the spatial becomes explicit when deciding the geographical borders of the areas covered by Neighbourhood Plans. In the formal application, those borders have to be delineated on a map and described according to their physical features (i.e. streets). For Nick Clarke and Allan Cochrane (2013), the Coalition Government’s localism tends “to make naïve and romantic assumptions about the geographies of social structures”(p.17). However, local communities in London can’t be considered “self-evident and unproblematic social categories” (Hickey & Mohan, 2004, p.17) and can’t be associated to a particular area in a straightforward manner (Wills, 2012).

Neighbourhood Forums need to move beyond the idealised, coherent idea of community put forth in the official localism discourse. The Forums are primarily composed of individuals or groups brought together by the fact of being affected by the same current or future urban development and regeneration schemes. A Neighbourhood Forum includes local groups with multiple conflicting views “rather than being an actor with a ‘position’ ” (Natarajan, 2013, p.193); its members might be transient and not respond to shared feelings of identity and interests, but still have a common relation to a certain territory.

Neighbourhood Forums are, therefore, communities of interest that come into being throughout the process of developing a Neighbourhood Plan; they are “dynamic, becoming, contingent, (...) plural heterogeneous, contested”(Clarke & Cochrane, 2013, p.18). To become operative, they need to work with a grounded concept of neighbourhood that refers specifically to the socio-spatial entanglements within a territorial unit. In order to do so, as recommended in the guidelines produced by Planning Aid England on *How to designate a neighbourhood area?* (2015), it is necessary to highlight the importance of the spatial by encouraging local groups to “identify any features that could form logical boundaries to your neighbourhood area such as rivers, main roads or railway lines” (p.4), and emphasise the need of doing so through a collaborative process with other individuals, groups and organisations geographically bound to those same geographical features.

Academics and professionals refer to another key challenge when discussing Localist reforms: the forms of legitimacy and representativeness that Neighbourhood Forums build when developing the plans (Cowie & Davoudi, 2015). The question was first advanced in 2012 by the Planning and Housing Committee in their report *Beyond consultation: The role of neighbourhood plans in supporting local involvement in planning*. The document states that Neighbourhood Forums in London have expressed difficulties in engaging local people around the production of the plan, thus creating a risk of excluding certain groups from participating. This isn’t just a problem particular to Neighbourhood Planning, but one of the main problems associated with all forms of participatory action (Bloomfield, Collins, Fry, & Munton, 2001).

Eileen Conn, an activist in South London for over 30 years, points out that “a lot of neighbourhood

involvement in planning, and probably the majority of it, is from the smallest scale of interest and unlikely to lead to people wanting to set up new community organisations to play a major role in development issues". Throughout 10 years of activity in the community group that she leads, Peckham Vision, Conn has observed that Peckham's residents have multiple ways of engaging with planning matters that very often remain "beyond the mainstream policy radar" (Conn, 2011, p.3). Once the community group has internally opened up a debate on how to use Neighbourhood Planning frameworks, the perceived obstacle is how to recognise this kind of micro-level activity and stimulate neighbours' capacity to be involved in planning in a wide variety of forms towards the production of a Neighbourhood Plan. For Conn, this task requires an understanding of the difference between the organisational dynamics of community groups and the institutionalised world that the Localism agenda fails to recognise (Conn, 2011). Neighbourhood Forums would have to find their appropriate organisational forms, beyond that of the institutions, and build those organisational forms on more fluid informal associations with diverse actors operating within the neighbourhood. In other words, the Forums cannot only rely on consultation processes to legitimate their decisions; they need to envision appropriate vehicles to ensure inclusiveness and openness to all of those potentially affected. Otherwise, these forums may end up being unrepresentative and/or unaccountable.

Conceptualisation of power in Neighbourhood Planning

It is possible to identify at least two notions of power within mainstream debates around localist forms of participation that distinguish between the process and the outcomes of Neighbourhood Planning (Brownill & Bradley, 2017). Both notions pull apart the underlying assumption that empowerment naturally occurs along with participation, and reveal particular barriers to levelling the power imbalances at the local level through Neighbourhood Planning.

The first notion associates power with decision-making control during the process of developing a Neighbourhood Plan. Localism discourses promise the reconfiguration of power relationships among the actors involved in urban regeneration schemes, namely local authorities, developers, experts and communities.

Those local communities now have unprecedented rights to pilot a seven-stage planning process that goes as follows:

Neighbourhood Planning, as introduced in the Localism Act in 2011, starts with the formalisation of a local group into a Neighbourhood Forum that takes the lead. After designating a Neighbourhood Area that has to be approved by the local authority, the draft of the plan has to include evidence of community engagement and go through an initial consultation on the vision of the future for the neighbourhood. When the plan is submitted, an independent examiner appointed by the local authority checks that the plan meets legal requirements and is in conformity with broader planning strategies at the national and EU levels. Then, additional approval is required in the form of a local referendum that needs at least 51% "yes" votes to bring the plan into legal force.

The main scepticism regarding this form of participation holds that it only provides "citizenries with limited opportunity to set the planning agenda or to hold decision-making power" (Rogers, 2016, p.11), because through Neighbourhood Planning procedures, local major decisions remain under the control of local authorities. For instance, the designation of the

Neighbourhood Area usually raises opposing interests between forums and authorities, but ultimately, the decision rests in the hands of the latter. Elephant and Walworth Neighbourhood Forum serves as an example of this power imbalance when it recently submitted its third application, including a revised proposed area, after Southwark Council rejected the boundaries proposed by the forum in January 2014. The reasons given by the new Cabinet Member for Regeneration in Southwark Council, Cllr Mark Williams, for the application's rejection were that the proposed area was "too large" in population size and it covered "too many different types of areas".⁵

The second notion of community empowerment through Neighbourhood Planning considers that power lies in the efficacy of the policies outlined in the Neighbourhood Plan to deliver the changes that local groups want to see in their area (Duffy, 2007). In other words, empowerment relates to the scope and level of influence of the outcomes of a Neighbourhood Planning process.

Once adopted, a Neighbourhood Plan can be part of The Local Development Framework (LDF) and influence Opportunity Area Planning Frameworks (OAPFs). The formula differs from other forms of community-led planning in the statutory weight and legal status of the documents produced. With no restrictions as to content, the policies developed can cover a wide range of local issues related to site allocation, land use, protection of certain spaces and design features, among others. However, Neighbourhood Plans must take into account EU directives, national planning policies and strategic policies in the development plan for the local area (i.e Mayor's London Plan).⁶ For example, in the case of Kentish Town Neighbourhood Forum, the group had to amend several sections of the Plan such as the Town Square policy (SP1) and the Industry Area policy (SP2) after the Greater London Authority, Transport for London and Camden Council, declared incompatibilities with policies at higher levels.

Critics of Neighbourhood Planning see the imperative for the outcomes to be in conformity with higher planning frameworks as a major limitation "for neighbourhood plans to truly reflect local wishes of local residents"⁷. As Matthew Wargent (2017) noted in his thesis *Democratic participation and agonism: citizen perspectives of participatory spaces created under the Localism Act (2011)*, the need of Neighbourhood Plans to conform with strategic planning policies, means for example, "that communities cannot reduce or object to housing allocations that have been pre-determined for their neighbourhood. This subordinates the

5 For more information of Elephant and Walworth's case see:

http://www.southwark.gov.uk/info/200413/neighbourhood_planning/3436/neighbourhood_planning_in_elephant_and_castle_and_walworth

<http://www.peoplesrepublicofsouthwark.co.uk/index.php/hold-news/news/3638-support-elephant-and-walworth-neighbourhood-plan>

6 For further information, see for example:

Planning and Housing Committee. (2012). Beyond consultation: The role of neighbourhood plans in supporting local involvement in planning. London: Greater London Authority. Retrieved from https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/NBH%20Planning_v3%20AB.pdf

7 Notes taken by staff at "Community involvement in neighbourhood planning - Stakeholder consultation event" (City Hall, 7 October 2011) and found in the report Beyond consultation: The role of neighbourhood plans in supporting local involvement in planning. (2012, February 1). Retrieved March 11, 2015, from <http://www.london.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s8691/>

localism agenda “to a wider growth agenda, circumscribing the plenipotentiary powers on offer and framing the ‘bounded’ participation” (p.198).

Conversely, it could be argued that the subordination of the Plans to higher tiers of planning responds to strategic reasons for delivering broader structural changes that need to be addressed beyond the scale of the neighbourhood.

1.3.2 Dominant critiques: Barriers to community empowerment in Neighbourhood Planning.

In light of the obstacles local groups must overcome to control the process and the scope of influence of the outcomes, Neighbourhood Planning has provoked strong scholarly critique. The UK localism discourses have often been identified with government policies of austerity and restricted budgets as they shift “risk, responsibility and accountability from central government onto new subjects” (Williams, Goodwin & Cloke, 2014, p.2802). Spaces for participation such as Neighbourhood Planning have long been perceived as “consistent with a neo-liberal approach to development” (Cornwall, 2008, p. 271) that helps maintain rather than subvert existing power structures.

The ability of Neighbourhood Planning to empower is often measured in the context of local power struggles. Accordingly, arguments from advocates and detractors of the Localism reforms are mainly discussed in relation to an individual Neighbourhood Forum developing a Neighbourhood Plan.

Firstly, Neighbourhood Planning is seen as a new model of local service provision with statutory backing rather than a direct devolution of control to locals. Though local people are included via formalised Neighbourhood Forums at the negotiation table, and legitimised to take part in a process once closed off to public scrutiny and engagement, power still needs to be negotiated. To do so successfully, local groups not only need support and resources - be they financial, organisational or technical - but it is also necessary for the relationship between Neighbourhood Forums and local authorities to evolve so that it includes space for conflict arising from the various forms of operation of the new stakeholders involved in the planning process.

Secondly, the existing hierarchies of the planning system and the unclear relationships among them (i.e. Local Plan/Neighbourhood Plan relationship) are considered to restrict the Plan’s ability to solve neighbourhood spatial problems (Neighbourhood Planners.London, 2017). In practice, Neighbourhood Plans are being prepared before, after and in parallel to Local Plans, so it is necessary a “reconciliation of hyper-local and strategic concerns” (Parker, Salter, Dobson, Wargent, & Lynn, 2018, p.4) within different tiers of planning. This demonstrates the need for mechanisms that set up multi-directional relationships between Neighbourhood Plans, borough-wide and London-wide planning levels. Responses to particular local needs articulated through Neighbourhood Plans might positively inform higher-scale development frameworks. The potential for these Plans to help adjust strategic policies that have not been successful still remains underexplored.

Neighbourhood Planning is often interpreted as an instrument that either results in or fails to result in empowered communities at the scale of the neighbourhood. However, according to Cornwall’s reflections, it is also interesting to consider Neighbourhood Planning processes

collectively: a movement of local groups previously unconnected, now actively engaged in planning issues through the same process and sharing common concerns and goals. This alternative framework for the discussion opens up a new space of possibilities for more empowering forms of action and use of Neighbourhood Planning frameworks.

1.3.3 Potentials of Neighbourhood Planning

The burgeoning map of Neighbourhood Forums operating across London reveals emerging interconnections that the Localism Act 2011 was never intended to produce. In order to elucidate on this space of possibilities⁸, I read Neighbourhood Planning as an emergent movement rather than functioning primarily as an instrument for individual groups to deliver planning documents. This would mean, on the one hand, that we would need to move beyond the scale of the neighbourhood and review Neighbourhood Planning processes at the London-wide level, and on the other hand, it would also mean acknowledging the space of interrelationships and interaction among Neighbourhood Forums as a field for political action where power can perhaps be renegotiated.

In this landscape, local groups are moving from the isolated space of the 'local' and beyond the restricted empowerment given by Neighbourhood Planning procedures. They are starting to build inter-community alliances to navigate the process, share resources and conceive of new sites for participation. Such sites allow for "more autonomous forms of action through which citizens create their own opportunities and terms of engagement" (Cornwall, 2002, p.3). These new spaces are emerging from within localism frameworks, but with aspirations of broader transformations to the role of the public in planning issues. They embrace multi-scale struggles to prevent the negative effects of inappropriate urban regeneration strategies and share the common objective of altering power relations along the way.

Two examples serve to illustrate the kind of spaces for participation that Neighbourhood Planning is opening up:

The first is Just Space, a platform for community groups working with planning issues across London at strategic levels. The platform was active prior to the Localism-driven reforms and its work has always intended to "influence planning policy at the regional, borough and neighbourhood level" (Just Space, 2012). Since 2015, Just Space has supported the day-to-day work of various Neighbourhood Forums at local scale in collaboration with UCL's Bartlett School of Planning. By linking academics and researchers to processes of Neighbourhood Plan preparation, new debates have arisen that center on how the Localism Act 2011 might be used for progressive purposes. In addition, the latest Just Space initiative, which aims to produce a Community-Led London Plan, has provided an opportunity to examine the interactions between groups working inside and outside the Localism planning frameworks, in addition to offering an indication of individual Neighbourhood Forum's interest in also working at strategic planning levels. This initiative facilitated a "convergence space" (Routledge, 2003) for the inclusion of groups with a long history of engagement in planning issues as well as new forums resulting from the Localism reforms. After two successful conferences, and more than six months of work with more than fifty local groups, their demands were presented in a paper

⁸ According to Eve Mitleton-Kelly (2003), in complexity theory the space of possibilities is explored when a social entity is faced with a constraint and is forced to find new ways of operating, creating new patterns of relationships and different structures.

that “will be used to lobby Mayoral candidates”⁹. One of the issues raised in this document was the need for the Mayor to collaborate with the boroughs in supporting “minority and excluded groups to take advantage of the Localism Act 2011”. It also served to question the interrelation of strategic levels of planning with local neighbourhood plans.

The second initiative is Neighbourhood Planners.London, an initiative that supports Neighbourhood Forums across the capital. The platform, led by consultants Tony Burton, Ben Stephenson and Angela Koch, initiated the first London Neighbourhood Planning Gatherings that brought a significant number of London forums at various stages of plan preparation together with planners, professionals of the built environment and representatives of the Department for Communities and Local Government. Neighbourhood Planners.London conducted an extensive survey¹⁰ over the summer of 2015 to gain insights on the capital’s Neighbourhood Planning experience. Participants, including Neighbourhood Forums, advisors, academics, practitioners authorities and elected councillors, largely expressed the need for a website that provided information, online resources and support from experienced suppliers and policy consultants, as well as networking events that help raise the profile of Neighbourhood Planning at a London-wide level. Consequently, the initiative concentrated efforts on educational activities rather than campaign actions. In challenging the underlying assumption that growing participation directly leads to better Neighbourhood Plans, Neighbourhood Planners.London aims to reposition the role of urban experts within these processes and “raise awareness of the potential of Neighbourhood Planning” (Burton, 2016, p.2).

These two initiatives help illustrate that community empowerment could be seen not as the outcome of Neighbourhood Planning, but as an ongoing process of expansion of citizens’ own spaces for engagement in decisions about their built environment. Following Gaventa’s approach in *Finding the Spaces for Change: A Power Analysis* (2006) “the transformative potential of spaces for participatory governance” could be analysed “in relationship to the other spaces which surround them” (p.27). Furthermore, it should be analysed in relation to the potential to transform other fields, such as planning and design, circumscribed by the processes of participation.

1.4 Conclusions

According to the *Connecting Localism and Community Empowerment* (Painter et al., 2011) project report, localist instruments favour a model for community empowerment that “is based on increasing citizen participation in the practices of local government, rather than on independent community action” (p.34). Neighbourhood Planning in London has proved to be a framework for this dynamic to begin evolving.

Having outlined the significant limitations of the intended localism-driven participatory procedures to empower local groups across London, this PhD suggests that the most empowering effects of the Act lay in the unexpected implications and evolving outcomes of adopting localism instruments such as Neighbourhood Planning, and the opportunistic use of such instruments by those involved to meet their own agendas.

9 For more information about this initiative refer to: <http://justspace.org.uk>

10 Access to Local London Survey results can be found in: https://gallery.mailchimp.com/fcee4877ec5fc6d78ad5d96b9/files/Local_London_presentation.pdf

For design professionals, this presents an invaluable opportunity to challenge their current role and contribution to the built environment at neighbourhood scale within the Neighbourhood Planning frameworks. This is a chance to learn from and update past discussions on the conceptual and practical implications of the promise that participation could offer the design professions “a socially and politically aware form of agency, situated firmly in the context of the world beyond, and critical of the social and economic formations of that context in order to engage better with them in a transformative and emancipatory manner” (Schneider & Till, 2009, p.98).

This shift would, of course, intensify the calls for designers who can move beyond problem-solving to instead encourage “the consideration of different points of view” and promote “common understanding and consensus” (Salama, 1995, p.25) within a design context. Perhaps, however, a move in this direction would bring back controversies about how to manage conflicts of interest around the emerging designs, and whether it makes sense to be deliberative within conflictual, adversarial participatory settings (Forester, 1999).

Neighbourhood Planning may also bring a revalorisation of the experiential knowledge of participants in the design process, thus leading to the proliferation of new techniques and methods for knowledge exchange that focus on overcoming the obstacles in communication and language inherent in co-design activities. With a process that bears in mind that design deserves as much attention as the politics of participation (Comerio, 1987), Neighbourhood Planning could, in addition, reinvigorate spatial, design-oriented, approaches to planning and avoid “isolating itself in a merely discursive and procedural world” (Palermo & Ponzini, 2010, p.197).

In light of this literature review, many questions regarding the role of design in Neighbourhood Planning contexts remain underexplored. While Neighbourhood Planning has been widely debated in the fields of urban studies and social science, by reanimating academic debates on community empowerment in the face of a crisis of representative democracy, designers risk blindly embracing this participatory framework without subjecting it to critical analysis, and without reassessing the contribution of design along the way.

The following chapters seek to address this gap in knowledge, and identify the limitations and opportunities for design, in Neighbourhood Planning settings, to redefine itself and provide alternative approaches to planning and local space production.

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Chapter 2 Methodology: Framing design as research

Two central questions frame the research methodology developed for this PhD: what are the roles designers are playing in Neighbourhood Planning, and what is the potential for design beyond what is currently offered within this context? Within the long tradition of participatory models that have inspired theories and practices of urban design and planning (See Literature Review section...), Neighbourhood Planning proposes an unprecedented reconfiguration of the actors involved that can relegate designers to an irrelevant role. Citizens themselves lead the plan-making by following Neighbourhood Planning protocols with no statutory need to receive expert input. This should encourage design professionals to articulate the added value they can bring into the process. But how can they do so if there is no existing research on Neighbourhood Planning undertaken from a design perspective?

This PhD ultimately seeks to generate insights on new forms of interaction between the traditionally separated disciplines of design and planning, in a context in which citizen participation has challenged both fields. Toward this aim, I have developed a bespoke methodological approach that engages with forms of design research that can enter into a critical dialogue with established modes of research from other disciplines.

This chapter outlines the methodology and the institutional frameworks that have influenced the research design and determined the selection of research methods.

2.1 Framing design as research

This research has been developed in the institutional framework of the London Doctoral Design Centre (LDoc), funded by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council. LDoc is a collaboration between three internationally leading London based higher education institutions: the Royal College of Art (RCA), Kingston University (KU) and University of the Arts London (UAL). I'm part of the first 'cohort' of researchers offered a studentship to develop a 'Phd by Design'. While the researchers all explored their research interests individually, LDoc's programme of doctoral training consisted of a series of workshops, regular meetings and events that provided opportunities for knowledge exchange and shared inquiry into the breadth and complex nature of 'Design Research Study'. These activities, especially in the first year, were shared efforts to conceptualize design research in relation to the context, scope and modes of proceeding in our own investigations.

Early discussions on the fundamentals of design research revolved around how design processes could be legitimately used as a research method and could reveal research insights that pass "the triple test of originality, significance and rigour" asked of traditional modes of research (Till, 2011, p.2). This prompted fervent debates on the types of knowledge that design activity produces and the variety of methods it deploys.

One of the first attempts to categorize this particular form of research is found in Christopher Frayling's seminal *Research in Art and Design* (1993), which distinguishes three types of relationship between design and research: research *into*, *for* and *through* design. For Frayling,

research *into* refers to “a variety of theoretical perspectives into design” and research *for* design focuses on the end product as an artefact, where the research is “embodied in the artefact”. Research *through* design uses the act of design as a part of the research methodology itself (Frayling, 1993, p.5).

Another traditional categorization of research that takes the nature of design practice as its central focus is the distinction between practice-based and practice-led research. The former often refers to “an original investigation undertaken in order to gain new knowledge partly by means of practice and the outcomes of that practice” in which the creative work (artefacts, images, designs, among others) generated from that process plays a vital role. While in practice-led research, “the primary focus of the research is to advance knowledge about practice, or to advance knowledge within practice” (Candy, 2006, p.3).

My research is informed by Frayling’s triad, as well as the practice-based/-led debates. However, the process of knowledge production in my PhD doesn’t fit into predefined categories and responds to a much more complex dynamic that doesn’t neatly fit into the above-mentioned categorizations.

This is due to the fact that, on the one hand, the emphasis of this PhD is on achieving new

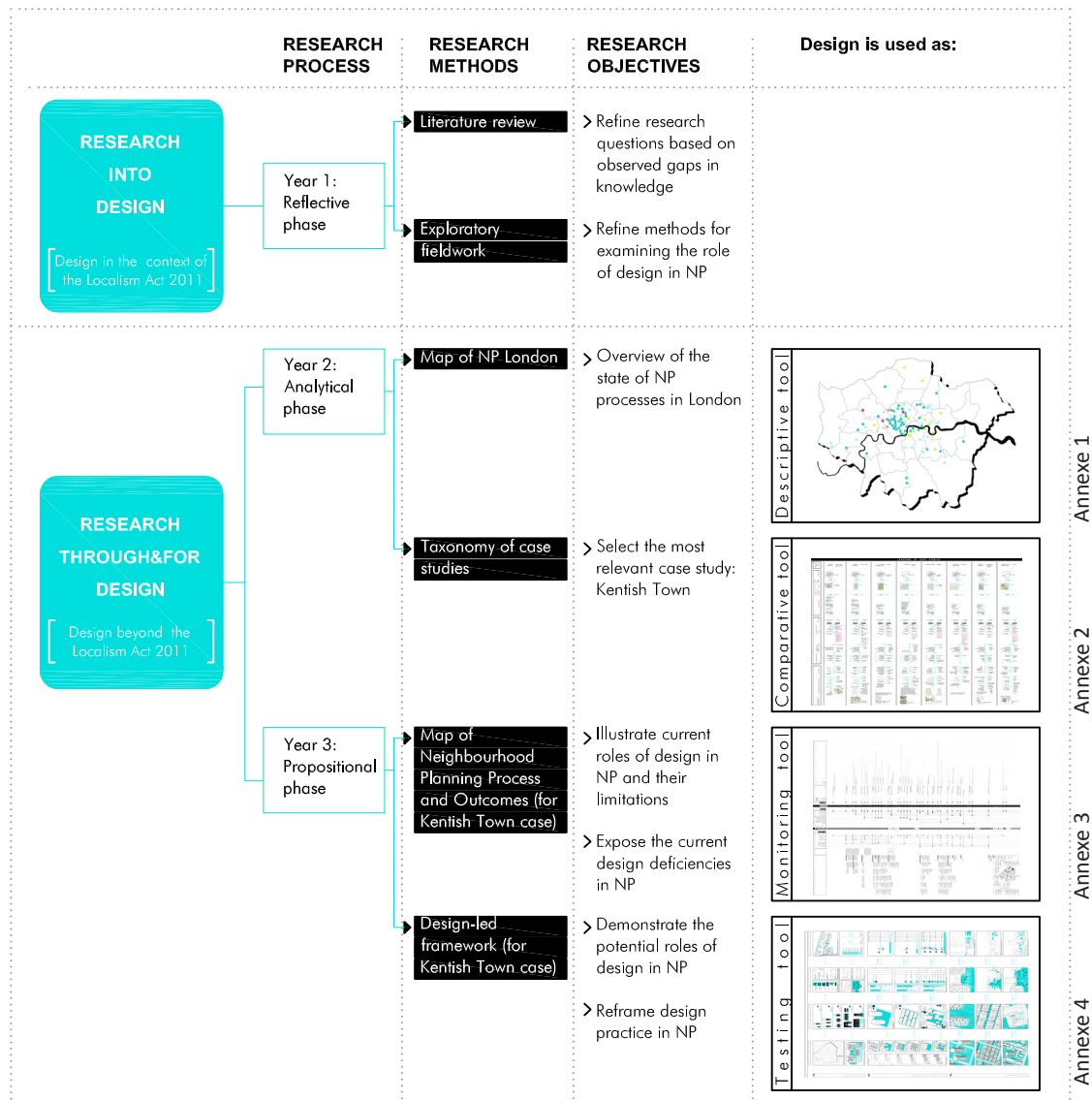


Figure 2-1 Diagram of research process in relation to Frayling’s models of Research by Design (1993)

knowledge about the nature of design practice and how to expand it within the context of Neighbourhood Planning, rather than on creating and reflecting on the design outputs. On the other hand, design is an integral part of my research methods, and design outcomes are generated. Without them, the contribution to new knowledge couldn't be demonstrated.

The following diagram unpacks how my research process relates to the above-mentioned categorisations; what kind of methods were incorporated at each stage, including the design-led ones; and how those methods shaped the knowledge production in this thesis. The diagram also illustrates how knowledge production within this PhD unfolds into three consecutive stages of reflection, analysis and proposition, with the insights derived from one research stage informing the next:

Year 1: Reflective phase

Upon reviewing the relevant literature on the intersections between planning, design and participation, I conducted a more contextualised literature review of the Localism Act, its forms and its expressions, in Neighbourhood Planning schemes. It was necessary to begin by parsing the particularities of Neighbourhood Planning, which as a distinct model of public participation in the planning system, entails singular and unprecedented challenges for designers to take part in and play a relevant role in the process. At the same time, I engaged in a period of exploratory fieldwork with local groups active in planning matters, the academics and practitioners working with those local groups, and other affected voices of the 'Localism'-driven reforms. This fieldwork gave me insights into the practical obstacles and barriers that must be faced when the groups embarked on Neighbourhood Planning processes.

Combining both the review of theory and the observation of the process of Neighbourhood Planning allowed for critical reflection that served to refine the research questions and evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of the different research methods available to explore them. The conclusion reached after conducting this work was that empirical research on the practice of design in Neighbourhood Planning settings would address the dearth of attention given to this area that was uncovered in the Literature Review (See Chapter1, section... for more information). I determined that I would use a case study to first develop an understanding of what design was offering within this context, and then use that exploration to unveil what potential remained underexplored.

Year 2: Analytical phase

The initial work was followed by an analytical phase that had as its main objective to evaluate in detail the current roles of design and the designer in Neighbourhood Planning frameworks. I conceived a research strategy that moved from the general to the particular via three methods: the design of a Map of Neighbourhood Planning in London, a Taxonomy of Case Studies and a Map of Neighbourhood Planning Process and Outcomes.

First, I generated a Map of Neighbourhood Planning in London, a design-led descriptive tool for the collection, centralization and visualization of all the data needed for my research that included details such as the location of each neighborhood that had embarked on a Plan, stages of the Planning process, actors involved and policies developed in each case. In a continuously and rapidly evolving context, this map provided an updated and reliable overview of the state of Neighbourhood Planning processes in London. Second, I developed a typological taxonomy of case studies, a design-led comparative tool that was crucial in determining the most appropriate case study for analysing the reality of urban design practice in Neighbourhood Planning. And third, once the case study was selected, I designed a map

of Neighbourhood Planning process and outcomes as a monitoring tool that primarily sought to elucidate the different contributions of design professionals and to expose deficient areas/stages of Neighbourhood Planning in need of design input.

Year 3: Propositional phase

Finally, the research took on a propositional character to demonstrate the potential for new roles for design in Neighbourhood Planning. Having exposed the inadequacies of both the process and the outcomes of the specific case study, I proposed a design-led framework as a testing tool that sought to overcome such deficiencies by amplifying the contribution of design. This design-led framework took the shape of three design demonstrations that illustrated how design could better reconnect initial planning intentions with final planning decisions. This generated situated knowledge (Haraway, 1988) on how design could have contributed to that case in particular, which prompted reflection on what lessons are transferable to other Neighbourhood Planning processes that suffer from similar problems. In going from the specific to the general, design practice within Neighbourhood Planning was ultimately reframed.

The following section elaborates on the rationale for the chosen research methods, outlining why those methods provide the most appropriate means by which to answer the research questions and what kind of knowledge is advanced at each stage. There are detailed descriptions of the design-driven methods, of data collection and visual data management techniques, and of the analytical approach, along with the reasons behind the use of each of these. The following section also aims to clarify the shortcomings of the chosen modes of study, and how these were addressed.

2.2 Research process and methods: Design as means of inquiry

2.2.1 Reflective phase

The first year of research was dedicated to unpacking the intrinsic limitations and potentials of Neighbourhood Planning as a particular form of institutionalised public participation in planning at the local scale. This model differs from other forms of community-led planning in the statutory weight and status of the planning documents produced, which control the scope of action and influence of the actors involved, design professionals included.

Since its introduction into the British planning system in 2011, “over 2,000 communities, representing approximately 12 million people” (Locality, 2017, p. 12). have initiated Neighbourhood Planning processes across the entire country. However, the London context has been slower than other areas to adopt the new local rights. A reading of updated reports on the impact of these reforms in different neighbourhoods in London provided an overview of how the city faces particular challenges that affect the process and the outcomes of neighbourhood plans.

This review of the London Neighbourhood Planning context was complemented with over six months of exploratory fieldwork during which I had the opportunity to attend a great number of workshops, talks and forums for debate that helped me gain first-hand experience of the reality of Neighbourhood Planning practice. The list of encounters and collaborations is long (see chart below), and established an ongoing dialogue with the true protagonists of

the application of the new planning reforms at the local scale. The field research prompted conversations with Forum representatives, architects, planners, policy-makers and other actors who were interested in my perspective on Neighbourhood Planning, due to the combination of my background as a design practitioner and my new role of researcher. This expertise allowed me to work on a voluntary basis with several local groups to engage at the ‘front line’ and learn first-hand how Neighbourhood Planning was being used to address their particular needs and aspirations.

PERIOD (dates)	RESEARCH ACTIVITY	with whom?			fields of expertise			
		local groups	practitioners	academics	participation	design	planning	Neighbourhood Planning
27/31.03.2015-10.05.2015	Informal interviews with design firms working with London local groups in diverse formats (Assemble, We Made That, Julia King, Soundings-Fluid Office, Imagine Places,...)		X		X	X	X	
16.04.2015-08.06.2015	Informal interviews with academics working with Neighbourhood Forums (Place Alliance-UCL, Helen Hamlyn Center-RCA)			X				X
14.01.2015-07.07.2015	Collaboration in academic research project with Neighbourhoods Made: -Workshops in Maylandsea, Latchingdon, Tollesbury. (Lawling Park Hall&Latchingdon Village Hall)			X				X
06.02.2015	Conference WICK SESSION NO. 23 “planning for forums, forums for planning” (Hackney Wick).	X	X	X				X
10/17.03.2015	Seminar at the RCA ‘Temporary Spaces and Commoning’			X	X	X	X	

21.05.2015	London N'hood Planning Gathering Spring Series (initial meetings of Neighbourhood Planners London)	X	X	X				X
15-19.06.2015	PhD Exhibition at Kingston University 'Research Practices in Art & Design'			X		X		
18.06.2015	LDOC Student workshop at Royal College of Art			X	X	X		
12.08.2015	Chatsworth Road Neighbourhood Forum meeting	X						X
05.06.2015-01.04.2016	Collaboration with Peckham Vision -Interview with founder Eileen Conn -Preparatory meetings about Neighbourhood Planning -Workshop with Tony Burton about Neighbourhood Planning -Coordination of UCL-Peckham Vision academic project	X			X		X	X
08.06.2015-08.07.2016	Collaboration with Concrete Action -Interview with founders of Concrete Action -Working meetings for ongoing campaigns/projects -Preparation of Ethical Charter -Workshops on planning & Neighbourhood Planning with local groups (ie. PEACH-Custom House)		X		X	X	X	X
04.11.2015-04.02.2016	Working groups 'Community Visions for the London Plan' with JUST SPACE -Talk at Just Space Conference (London City Hall London)	X			X		X	X

Figure 2-2 Chart of fieldwork research activities covering the relevant groups of agents involved in Neighbourhood Planning (local groups, practitioners, academics) working in the main fields of research (participation, design, planning, and specifically Neighbourhood Planning) that my PhD addresses.

In particular, three collaborations were influential in shaping my research:

Collaboration with Peckham Vision

In southeast London, a local group called Peckham Vision has led citizens' active engagement in the development of Plans for the area since 2005. They started promoting an "informed discussion about the management and future of Peckham Town Centre, and (...) ways of connecting local people who want to contribute"¹. Over the last decade, Peckham Vision has been collaborating with other local organisations to strengthen an informal network of people who live, work and/or run independent businesses in the area. This loose network has been working on the revitalisation of the town centre, and has been operating informally under different names: Peckham Town Centre Forum and Peckham Planning Network.

When I approached them, an internal debate on the formalisation of the group as a Neighbourhood Forum had recently been opened. That embryonic stage of the formation of a Neighbourhood Forum involved intense discussions on how the legal process of creating the Forum might strengthen their voice in planning decisions and whether or not a Neighbourhood Plan would positively influence their area. As a researcher, I could observe the motivations behind taking up the Neighbourhood Planning route, the suspicions and opposing views on the benefits of the Localism protocols, as well as the early obstacles the local groups encountered (namely the lack of resources, support, capacity).

Collaboration with Concrete Action

Concrete Action is an initiative that links architecture, design and planning professionals with communities involved in urban regeneration projects across London. The platform seeks to disseminate design and planning knowledge for communities, civic organisations and activists dealing with housing struggles and disruptive redevelopment schemes. As a practitioner, I was mainly required to offer independent advice on the conceptual and practical implications of Neighbourhood Planning processes. For example, in our collaboration with the local group People's Empowerment Alliance for Custom House, I provided information on funding opportunities and organised meetings with expert consultants to explore how the group could make practical use of Neighbourhood Planning frameworks

Collaboration with Neighbourhoods Made

Neighbourhoods Made is a practice-based research project partially funded by the University of East London, the University of Oxford and Ground Plan. It offers expert support for the production of Neighbourhood Plans under the Localism Act 2011. When I approached them, they were working with rural communities in Maylandsea, Latchingdon and Tollesbury. As a researcher, working with those communities helped me comprehend the differences between the rural and the London contexts, while as a practitioner my role involved creating a community engagement strategy suitable

1 For an overview of the work of Peckham Vision refer to: Conn, E. (n.d.). *Peckham Vision: About*. Retrieved September 22, 2015, from http://www.peckhamvision.org/wiki/Peckham_Vision:About

for them that would work in concert with the development of the Neighbourhood Plan.

This first year of exploratory fieldwork, together with the review of the relevant literature on Neighbourhood Planning practices in London, helped me design the research in various ways:

First, I limited the scope of the research study to Neighbourhood Planning activity in London. The collaboration with neighbourhoods in the application of the Localism reforms faced particular challenges in London that needed careful examination. The literature review also corroborated that most of the scholarly research on Neighbourhood Planning to date had come out of a nation-wide approach without taking into account the rural/urban distinction. Second, I selected the most appropriate research methods to conduct such a study. The exploratory fieldwork with local groups engaged in Neighbourhood Planning processes made me decline the invitations to conduct *participatory action research*.

I declined, on one hand, because the average timeframe for local groups to get a Neighbourhood Plan approved in London is four years. As a researcher, I had to adapt the research methods to the reality of the circumstances in which I was operating; this meant that the time constraints of the PhD made it unviable to conduct my research in conjunction with the activities of a particular Neighbourhood Forum if I hoped to establish relationships between the process and the outcomes of Neighbourhood Planning and the impact of design on both ends.

Another reason I did not opt for *participatory action research* was the high level of risk that my position as a researcher would be compromised if I continued working closely with local groups. In my period of exploratory fieldwork, local groups tended to confuse the role of a researcher with that of a practitioner, with implicit expectations on me to provide professional services that were urgently needed for the progress of the Neighbourhood Planning process. After ten years of practice, in which I've faced the practical and ethical obstacles of working hand-in-hand with local communities on urban design and planning projects, I saw in this PhD a unique opportunity to address the challenge of participation in those fields from a different angle: the position of a researcher detached enough to collect data and critically analyse and interpret the problem under investigation.

Ultimately, case study research would be more appropriate to provide a closer and more in-depth approach to the phenomenon of design in Neighbourhood Planning settings. According to the well-known definition of Robert Yin (1984), "a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p.23). By using a case study method, I could examine design practice within the context of its use and formulate a hypothesis on how its role could be amplified. To conduct the study that I intended, it was crucial to use this approach to minimise the interference between local groups agendas and my academic objectives.

However, case study research has been often criticised for providing a weak basis for generalising conclusions. But, Yin defends case study's capacity to generalize toward theory, which can in turn be tested and used as "the vehicle for examining other cases" (p.430 architectural research methods*). Yin actually points to the example of Jane Jacobs' *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961) as a highly influential instance of single-case study research; it is a study of New York socio-spatial dynamics that "has had an enormous impact on the planning and architecture professions" (Groat & Wang, 2002, p.415).

In this sense, while each case of Neighbourhood Planning is unique, this first stage of reflective research pointed to a common set of obstacles that are inherently related to the common formalised route all the Forums have to take to develop a Neighbourhood Plan. This means that transferable lessons might emerge from a case study investigation in this context.

I considered the possibility of a multiple-case study method, but from a practical point of view, given the level of complexity involved in each Neighbourhood Planning process, I chose to study one setting in detail rather than limiting the theoretical scope of the research by looking at more settings only superficially. The literature review revealed that there was no academic research on Neighbourhood Planning (not to mention a lack of research on design within Neighbourhood Planning in particular) to provide detailed insights on the correlation between process and outcomes of a case study. This method could give us a full picture of the phenomenon from a perspective never taken before.

2.2.2 Analytical phase

After having settled on the case study approach to the research, the second year of the PhD was an analytical phase that started with the rigorous work of selecting the most appropriate case study to explore design's potential within Neighbourhood Planning. This was done via three design-led methods:

A Map of Neighbourhood Planning in London

In order to see the full picture of how London had embraced the new Localism rights, I started developing an evolving Map of Neighbourhood Planning in London (Annexe 1). When I started my research, the only integrated source of information of this kind was a map from November 2013 that had been produced jointly by the London Communication Agency, London First and the neighbourhood planning team at the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). By the time I was conducting my analysis, the map was completely out of date, with only 23 Neighbourhood Forums designated and no Neighbourhood Plans approved.

In an echo of this mapping format, I generated a Map of Neighbourhood Planning in London that provided not only the geographic location of Neighbourhood Forums and the stage of the process in which they were, as the LCA map already did, but also the boundaries of the designated Neighbourhood Areas and their size, as well as the policy themes that were being developed for each Neighbourhood Plan.

The information for the mapping exercise was collected from public data on the state of Neighbourhood Planning processes that were spread out across London boroughs' official websites and local groups' websites. Design was used to centralize and visualize vast amounts of information that had been collected in an integrated way.

This visualization enabled a new reading of Neighbourhood Planning processes, not as one-off local experiences, but as an unstoppable and spreading wave with the potential to change the capital's local landscapes in the coming years. It also became clearer that the Neighbourhood Planning process is an emergent field of practice for designers that they need to contribute to in a different way.

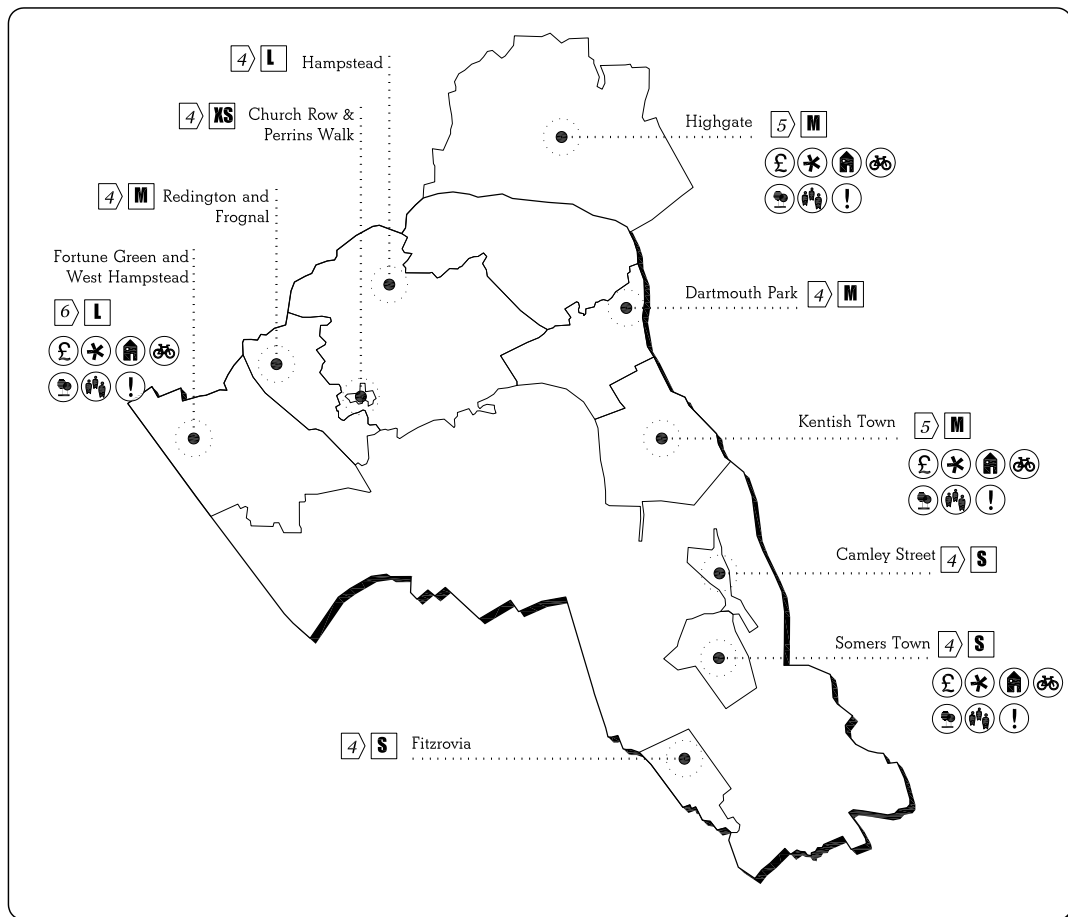
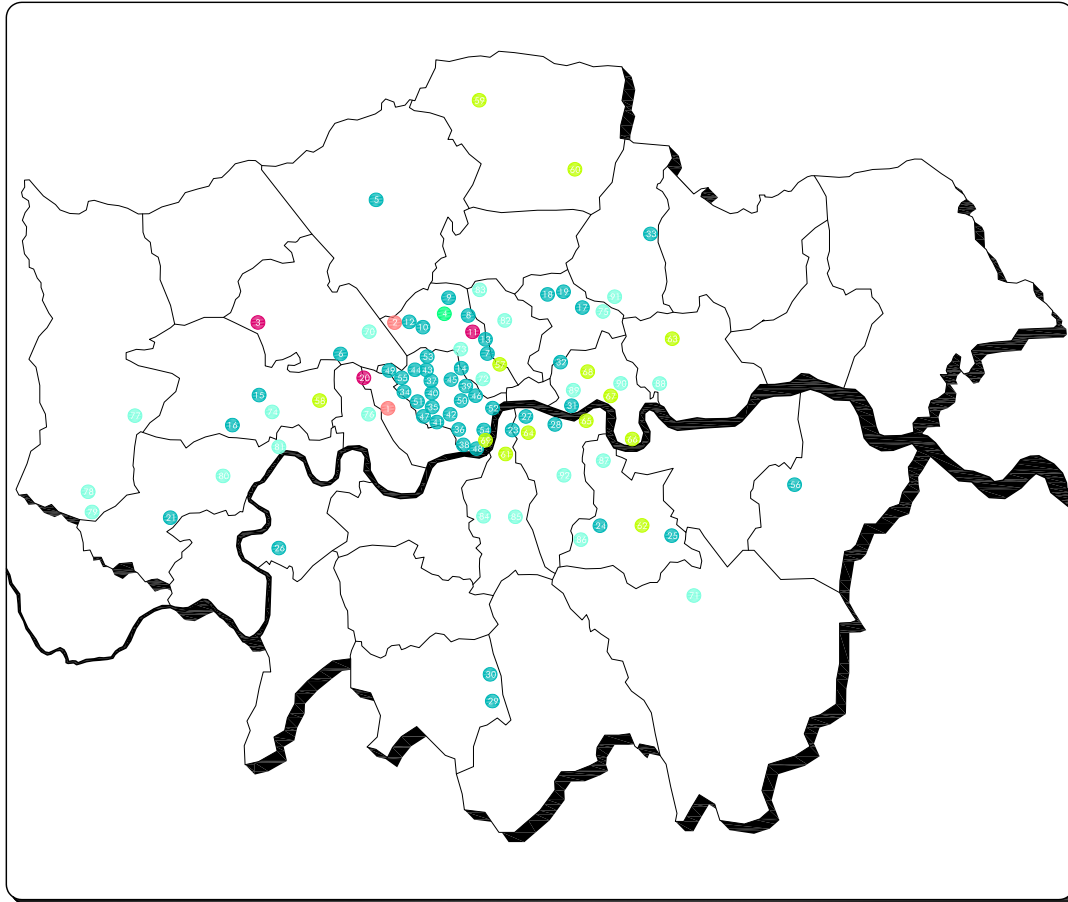
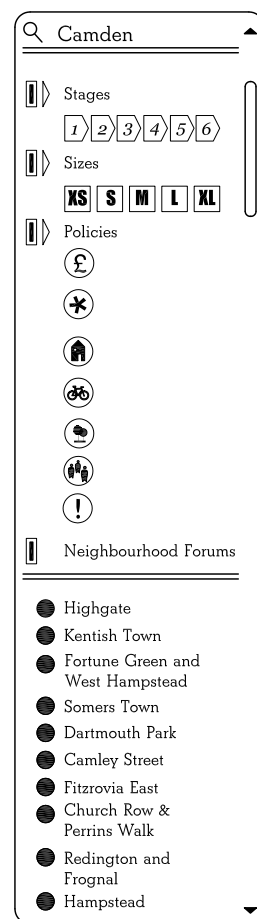
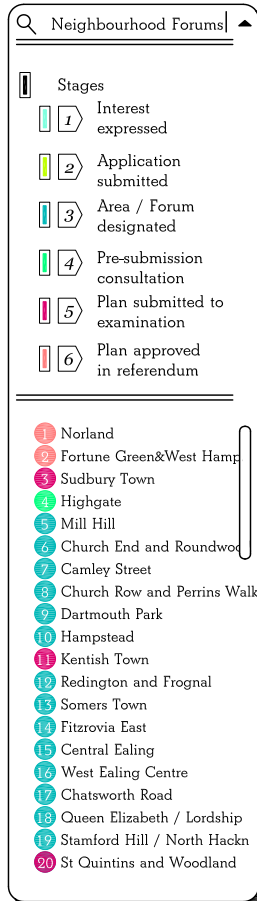


Figure 2-3 Reduced Map of Neighbourhood Planning London. See Annexe 1 for full-size document



A Taxonomy of Case Studies

With such a broad collection of Neighbourhood Planning processes, it was necessary to find a systematic way to approach them. In order to arrive at the most appropriate case study, I built a Taxonomy of Neighbourhood Planning processes in which architectural/design professionals played significant roles (Annexe 2).

The taxonomy needed to include enough variety of location, scale, duration, process and resulting outcomes to create a representative sample of the complex Neighbourhood Planning phenomenon. The chosen Neighbourhood Plans had to differ according to the stages at which they were, the actors involved in the process of preparation, the capacity for funding, as well as the engagement strategies mobilised. The Plans also had to provide an overview of the diversity of Plan-type that can come out of such processes: the wide range of policy areas, design outcomes and discourses on neighbourhood space the Plans can cover.

With these criteria in mind, I selected a sample of eight case studies for the taxonomy: Fortune Green & West Hampstead NP, Kentish Town NP, Norland NP, Exeter St James NP, Highgate NP, Bankside NP, Hackbridge and Beddington Corner NP and Thame NP.

For this selection, I examined each of the Neighbourhood Plans in detail, and also reviewed documents and reports of the pertinent Neighbourhood Forums that were available on their websites. As the Localism procedures are intended to engage as many local people as possible, the Neighbourhood Forum websites are designed to offer public access to key documents in the elaboration of the plans, including draft Forum documents and meeting minutes.

The taxonomy consists of a visual representation and organization of all this data in a comparative chart. The chart enables comparisons between cases, divided into the following sections:

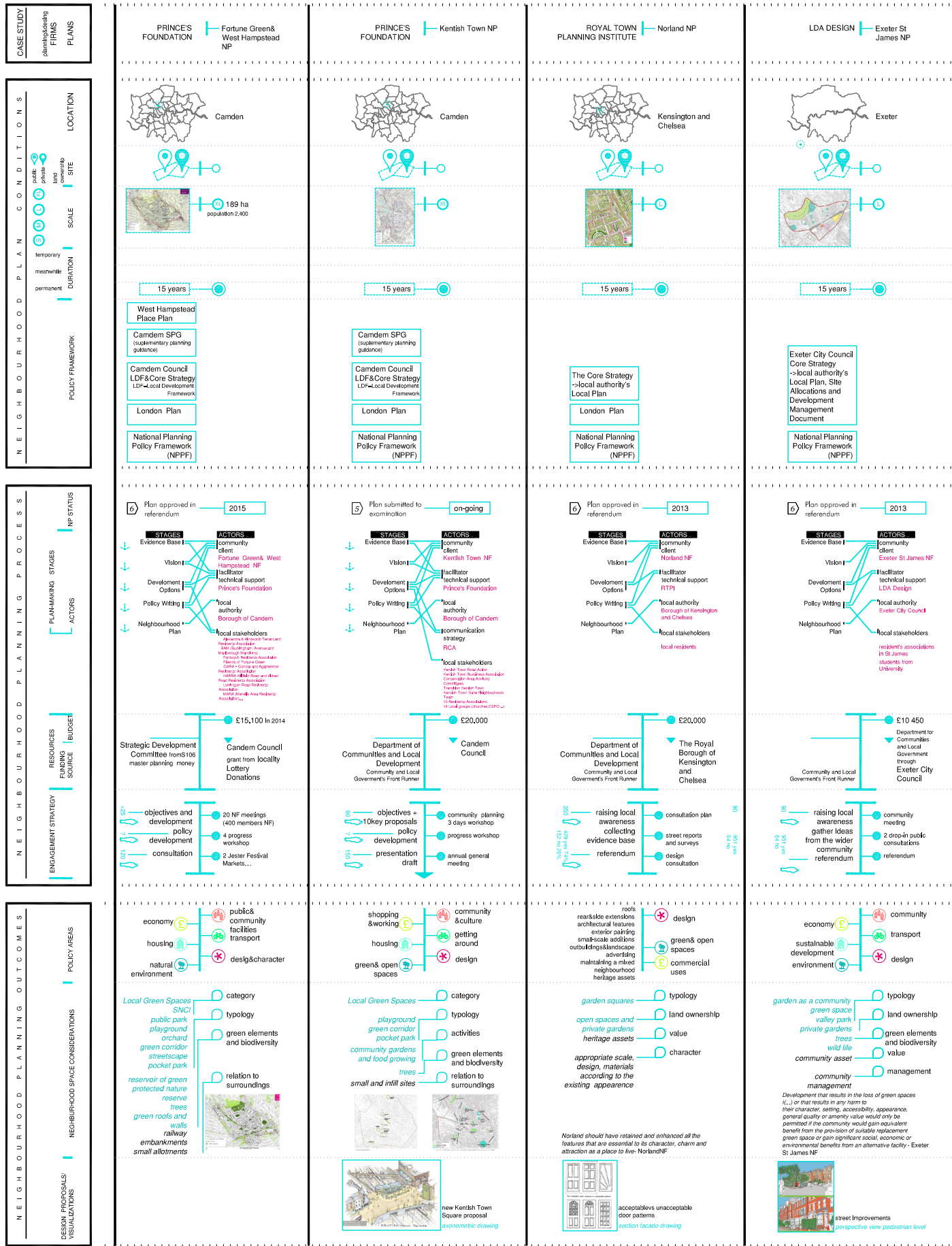


Figure 2-4 Reduced Taxonomy of Case Studies. See Annex 2 for full-size document

ASE STUDIES

MARCOM PLANNING | Highgate NP



Camden and Haringey

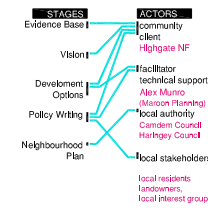


4800sq population 18,000

15 years

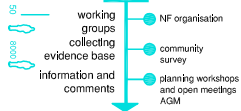
The Core Strategy
->Camden + Haringey Local Plan
London Plan
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

7 Pre-submission consultation on-going



£7,000

Department of Communities and Local Development Community and Local Government's Front Runner



- high streets typology
- major open spaces land ownership
- small local parks activities
- pond square green elements and biodiversity
- 44% public open space
- 27% residential gardens
- educational, cultural and recreational uses
- trees
- habitats



THE ECOLOGY CONSULTANCY | Bankside NP



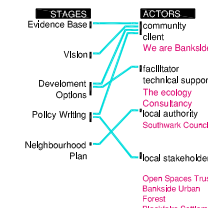
Southwark



15 years

Southwark's Council Core Strategy
London Plan
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

3 Area / Forum designated on-going



£20,000

Department of Communities and Local Development Community and Local Government's Front Runner London Borough of Southwark



- open spaces typology
- pocket parks value
- high streets green elements and biodiversity
- Low Line (=High Line NY)
- positive impact on economic development
- new attraction for tourists
- greening

creating a network of green and open spaces alongside urban greenways- Bankside NF

CABE BEES Design Council | Hackbridge and Beddington Corner NP



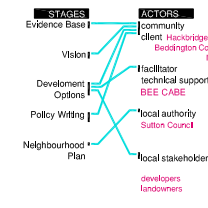
Sutton



10 years

Sutton Councils Core Planning Strategy
London Plan
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

3 Area / Forum designated on-going



£20,000

Department of Communities and Local Development Community and Local Government's Front Runner London Borough of Sutton



- Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) category
- green corridor typology
- increasing economic value of the area
- access to nature wildlife
- poor access and linkages
- soft landscape permeable surfaces and collection of rainwater
- relation to surroundings
- materiality

improve and open up community and public access to the Land North of Beid2E-H8BC NDG



TIBBALDS Planning and Urban Design | Thame NP



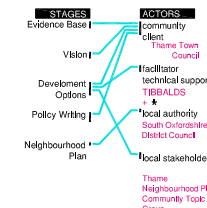
Thame



15 years

South Oxfordshire District Councils Core Strategy
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

6 Plan approved in referendum 2013

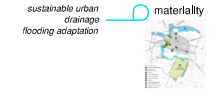


Exx 2 grants

Department of Communities and Local Development Community and Local Government's Front Runner South Oxfordshire District Council



- Recreation Area category
- park typology
- open space activity
- sport facilities walking, cycling
- access to nature wildlife green elements and biodiversity
- riverside walks relation to surroundings
- sustainable urban drainage materiality
- flooded adaptation



>Plan conditions: Location, scale, land ownership, duration, policy framework

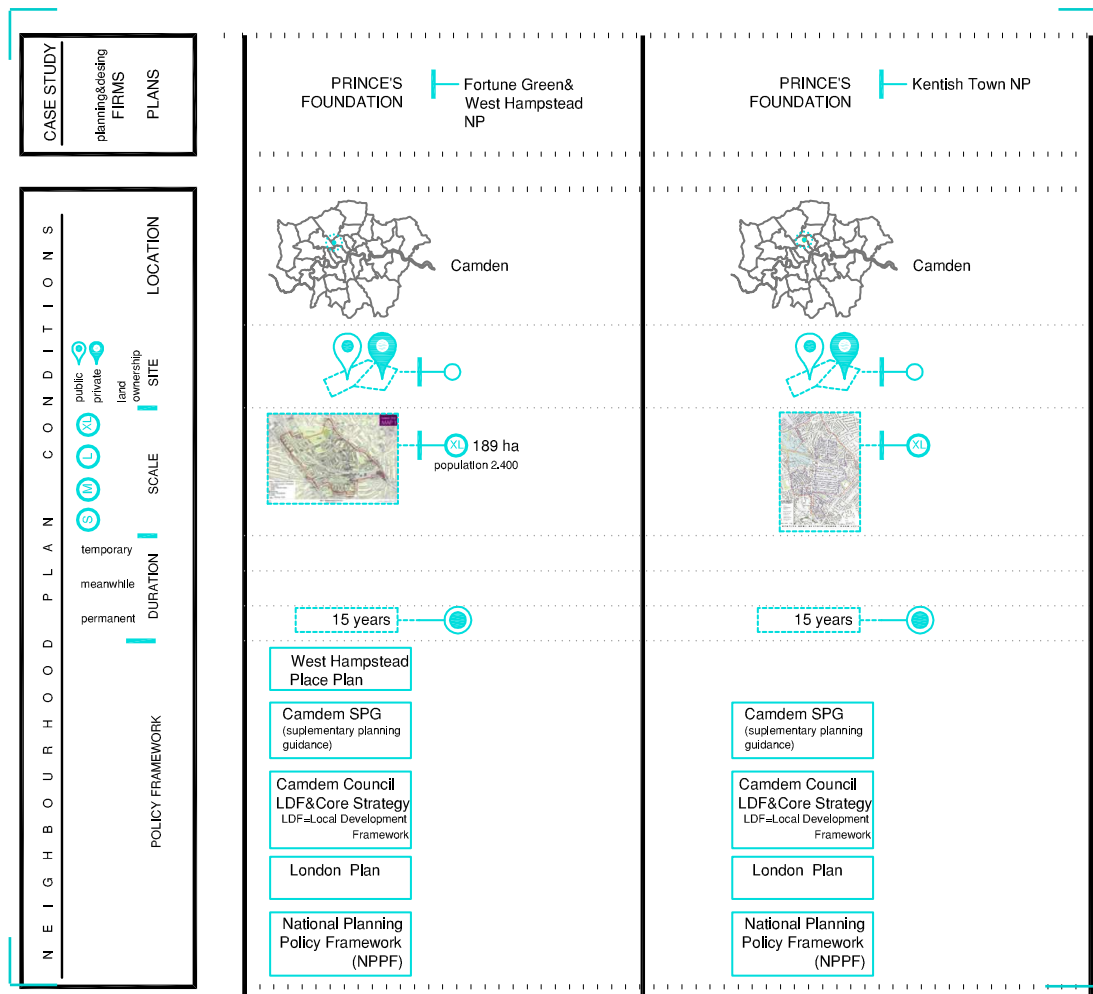


Figure 2-5 Extract of Taxonomy of Case Studies

The case studies were selected to cover sufficient locations, including two locations outside of London (Exeter St James NP and Thame NP), to also compare the reality of Neighbourhood Planning in smaller, rural areas. In London, four of the selected Neighbourhood Areas are north of the river: two of them are in the Borough of Camden (Fortune Green & West Hampstead NP and Kentish Town NP), one is in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (Norland NP) and one is the first cross-borough plan in the country (Highgate NP), which straddles both Camden and Haringey². South of the river, I selected Hackbridge & Beddington Corner NP in Sutton and Bankside NP in Southwark, one of the most active boroughs in Neighbourhood Planning with more than six formal Forums operating in the area. In addition, the Bankside

2 This case exemplifies the phenomenon of cross-boundary applications, which are not an exception in London, where “Even commonly recognised geographical neighbourhoods often cross local authority boundaries” (Greater London Authority, 2012, p. 19). Other examples are East Shoreditch neighbourhood area - cross borough application submitted to both Tower Hamlets and Hackney and Crystal Palace and Upper Norwood Neighbourhood Area in-between Southwark, Lewisham, Bromley, Lambeth and Croydon Boroughs.

case is an example of London's Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) ³.

In Neighbourhood Planning frameworks, the scale and timeframe for the Neighbourhood Plan is for communities to decide. For the taxonomy, I selected cases of large-scale areas with a mix of public and private land-ownership as it is a mix representative of more than 90% of the ongoing Neighbourhood Plans in London. This combination of factors exemplifies the complexity of applying the localist protocols in the capital. The chosen Plans have a duration of 15 years once they are approved, except the example of Hackbridge and Beddington Corner NP, which was conceived to cover a period of 10 years.

The taxonomy also displays the information related to the policy framework that surrounds the selected Neighbourhood Plans. Neighbourhood Planning protocols establish that once approved, the Plans become the lowest tier of the planning system, below the adopted strategic planning policies of their areas (borough-wide Local Development Frameworks), the London Plan and the National Planning Policy Frameworks. However, being at the lowest level of the hierarchical planning system does not necessarily result in a weak position. According to *The New London Plan: Views from Neighbourhood Planners*. London (Neighbourhood Planners.London, 2018), Neighbourhood Plans are "fine-tuned" in response to local needs, are "faster to completion than many Local Plans" and are "low-cost", whereas the London boroughs do not have the capacity to undertake the additional workload the London Plan envisages: "Neighbourhood forums in London involve many people with the relevant backgrounds and expertise who contribute on a voluntary basis, because they care deeply about their local neighbourhood and its future" (p.4)

> Process: stages, actors, resources, engagement strategy

The case studies were selected to capture different moments of the six-stage protocol required in the development of a Neighbourhood Plan. At the moment of elaborating the taxonomy (July, 2015), only four of the cases had completed the whole process and had their Neighbourhood Plans approved: Fortune Green & West Hampstead NP and Norland NP in London; and Exeter St James NP and Thame NP outside of London. In fact, Norland NP and Fortune Green & West Hampstead NP were the first two Neighbourhood Plans adopted in the capital⁴. The rest of the cases were at earlier stages in the Neighbourhood Planning process: Kentish Town NP had already been submitted to examination and Highgate NP had done the pre-submission consultation, whereas Bankside NP and Hackbridge & Beddington Corner NP only had the Area/Forum designated. Obviously, the situation of the latter four cases has evolved during the time of this PhD research, and at the moment of completion of this research, only Bankside NP remains unadopted⁵.

3 This case exemplifies the phenomenon of business-resident partnerships in Neighbourhood Planning: Bankside Neighbourhood Forum was designated as a joint business and resident-led forum in June 2013, with the backing of the local Business Improvement District, Better Bankside and the local residents forum, Bankside Residents Forum.

4 Norland NP passed the referendum on 5th December 2013 with 74% of support from a turnout of 26% and Fortune Green & West Hampstead NP passed the referendum on 9th July 2015 with a YES vote of 93%.

5 According to Southwark Council website, the designation of the Bankside forum expired in June 2018 and the council has not received any application to renew the status of the Bankside Neighbourhood Forum.

The taxonomy also includes an array of actors involved in each stage of the process of preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan. In all the cases, the Neighbourhood Forums lead the whole process from the beginning through the final approval of the plan. The eight cases were also chosen because they all relied on the support of expert professionals. However, the stages at which those experts enter vary from case to case. Local authorities are also key actors in each of the statutory steps of the Neighbourhood Planning process: not only must they approve the designation of the Forum, Area and the Plan prior to its examination, but they are legally required to “take a proactive and positive approach, working collaboratively with a neighbourhood planning body” (Chetwyn, 2018, p. 5) and defray some of the costs (ie. the examination and the public referendum expenses). All the Forums have to work closely “with key local stakeholders and potential partners” (p.13) such as other local organisations, groups and individuals that have a particular interest in the area. However, the working agreements and relationships these actors establish differ substantially from case to case. The taxonomy does not capture the details of such dynamics, but provides an overview of the interventions of all those actors throughout the whole process of preparing the plan.

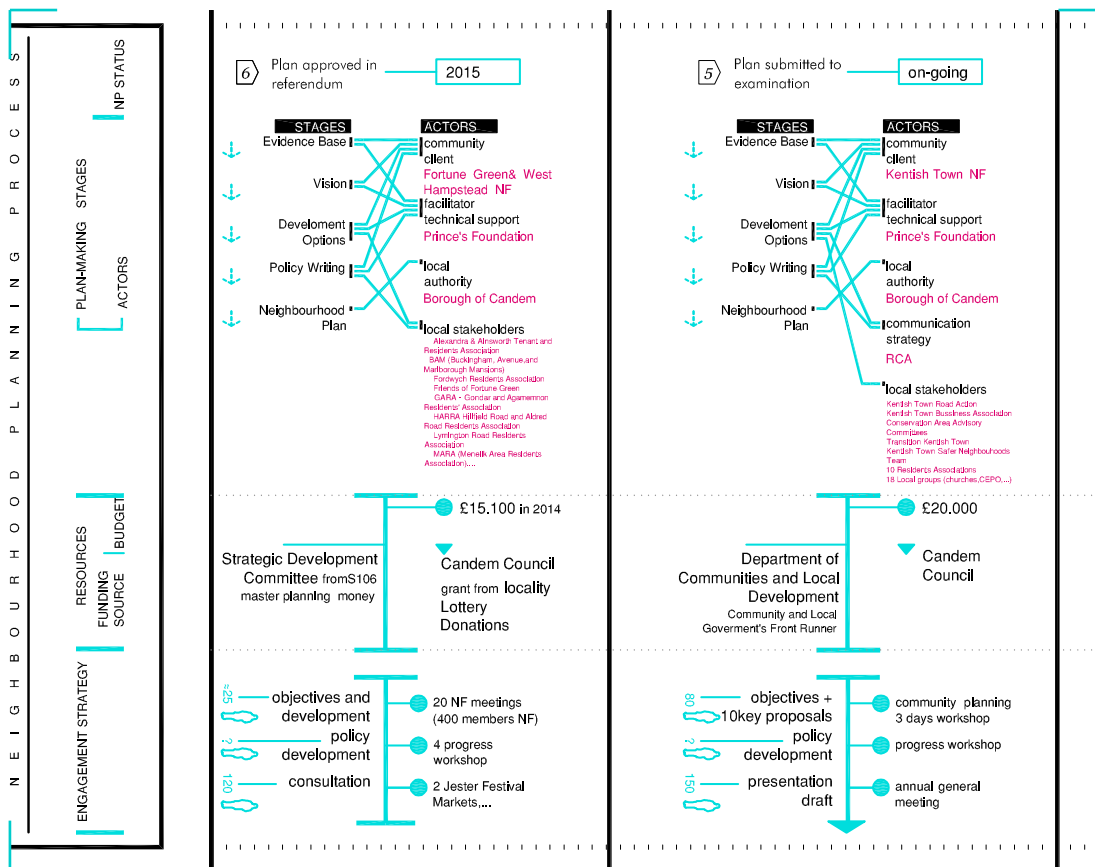


Figure 2-6 Extract of Taxonomy of Case Studies

Together with time, the cost implications of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan are one of the main challenges the Forums have to face. Reports such as *People Power: Findings from the Commission on the Future of Localism* produced by Locality in 2018, clearly indicate that lack of funding and resources “is a significant and compounding barrier to the opportunities of localism” (p.16). For this obstacle not to be a determining factor in this investigation, all the cases I selected had been able to raise funding from the government and other sources. Three of them in fact, were part of the Front-Runners support programme, which promised “to help communities eager to trial neighbourhood planning” (MHCLG, 2011): Hackbridge

and Beddington Corner NP were part of the first wave of front-runners in May 2011, and Norland NP and Kentish Town NP, which were part of the fifth wave of front-runners in March 2012, received grants of £20,000 to prepare their plans.

All the cases in the taxonomy comply with the statutory requirement of community involvement in Neighbourhood Planning protocols. The engagement strategies that each Forum put in place vary from case to case, as well as, the number of participants that attended the activities. In all cases, there was an effort to gather local opinions from the very beginning through different consultation methods. This initial endeavour was followed by planning and design workshops in some cases, such as in Kentish Town, Highgate, Fortune Green & West Hampstead. The taxonomy provides evidence of the wide range of engagement techniques displayed at early, mid, and final stages of the process; but the scope and impact of such methods requires an in-depth analysis that was later done for the selected case study.

>Outcomes: policy areas, design outcomes and discourse on neighbourhood space

The case studies respond to diverse non-prescriptive themes depending on the Forums' priorities. Except Norland NP, which is focused on heritage and conservation, all the selected Neighbourhood Plans address other themes in addition to design and new development: housing, transport, community, economy, environment and sustainability, open spaces and public realm issues. The emphasis on one or another theme of course depends on local concerns.

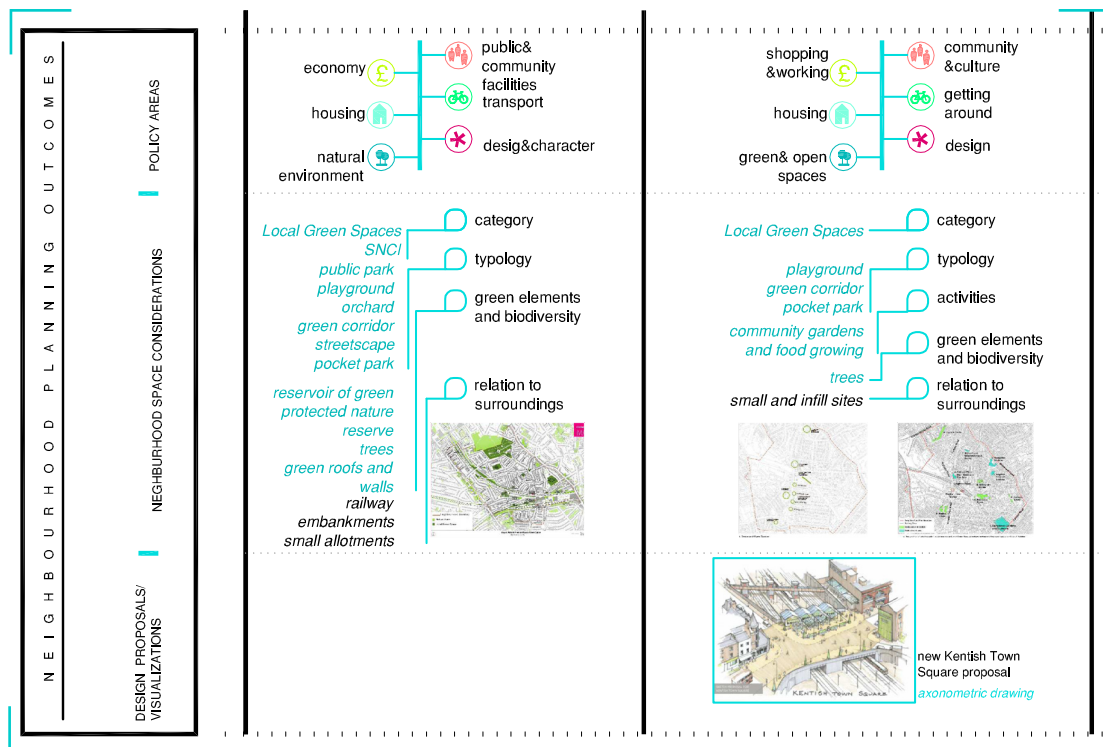


Figure 2-7 Extract of Taxonomy of Case Studies

For example, four cases (Exeter St James NP, Bankside NP, Hackbridge & Beddington Corner and Thame NP) give special consideration to policies that promote environmental sustainability and a “wise” use of local resources such as energy, water, and waste (H&BC NDG, 2016, p.22).

In fact, Thame NP even proposes the funding of a “Green Living Plan for the town as a whole” (Tibbalds Planning & Urban Design, 2013, p.46 Thames NP) with CIL⁶ resources. Another example is the allocation of new development: in particular, Fortune Green & West Hampstead NP, Kentish Town NP, Highgate NP and Thames NP have a whole section of site specific policies with criteria for the redevelopment of “key areas” (HNF, 2015, p.72). In Thames NP, the policy requirements for those areas are even visually set out in the 2D diagrams for each site. All the selected Neighbourhood Plans have policies that “seek to secure high quality design” (p. 18, FG & WH) and “enhance local character” (KTNF, 2016, p.22), which is described with more or less accuracy depending on the case. Notably, the whole Norland NP is oriented toward ensuring that new development “does not have a negative impact on the character” (Norland Conservation Society, 2013, p. 19), thus giving form to a different type of Neighbourhood Plan with very specific policies that regulate architectural features such as roofs, rear- and side-extensions, exterior painting, and small-scale additions, among others. The rest of the cases all make use of a greater variety of planning tools such as the listing of local assets (ie. Local Green Space designation), land use considerations, infrastructure and service provision, site allocation, statement of community involvement and allocation of Neighbourhood CIL.

Lastly, the taxonomy pays particular attention to the discourse on neighbourhood space that is mobilised throughout the NP, as it is a common theme among to the more-than-100 Neighbourhood Plans in-progress across London. Under different headings (ie. green space, open space, public realm), all the Plans include policies in which neighbourhood spaces are described in terms of their type, their legal category, their value for the community and the environment, as well as other material, access, use and management considerations. Neighbourhood Plans, “as a localised and responsive part of the planning system”(p.7 Neighbourhood Planners London report), could potentially engage with current discussions on the future of London public spaces in response to Mayor Sadiq Khan’s pledge to establish a Public Space Charter:

“The effective management and ongoing maintenance of public realm should be a key consideration in the design of places and secured through the planning system where appropriate.” [Paragraph 3.7.9, Policy D7 Public Realm] Mayor of London. (2018, August 13). Draft New London Plan Showing Minor Suggested Changes (UK, Greater London Authority).

The taxonomy provides an overview of the complexity of the context in which architects and designers operate when involved in Neighbourhood Planning practices. Despite the predetermined common route Forums follow towards the completion of their Neighbourhood Plans, the process and outcomes of each case develop differently due to multiple causes, internal and external limitations and opportunities. From those, in order to disentangle the particular limitations and opportunities for design practice within this framework, it is necessary to conduct a more in-depth analysis.

For this reason, I selected a single case study to be subjected to closer examination. From

6 The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a planning charge that local authorities can set on new development in order to raise funds to help pay for infrastructure, facilities and community services. For more information on the use of CIL in Neighbourhood Plans, see for example: Neighbourhood Planners London. (2016). Neighbourhood element of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL): The London experience (Rep.). Retrieved from http://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/95f6a3_684e0bae1dec48c9a7edd92f485a0bee.pdf

the eight cases in the taxonomy, I needed a completed process, or one close to completion, in order to reconstruct the correlations between process and outcomes. I also needed a case with the most favourable conditions for design to play to fulfil its potential, which includes the most resources and support from the widest range of design experts possible:

The case of Kentish Town

I selected the Kentish Town case study, because as part of the Frontrunner Funding Programme⁷ it is considered an exemplary process of Neighbourhood Planning, as outlined in the Localism Act 2011, resulting in a Plan that was approved in the local referendum of 12 June 2016. After four and a half years of work, Kentish Town Neighbourhood Plan was the second in Camden and fifth in London to be officially recognised into planning law. In addition, Kentish Town Neighbourhood Forum (KTNF) is one of the local groups across London that has benefited from plentiful resources for the development of the plan, receiving not only financial aid, but also extensive professional support throughout the whole process. Five different institutions worked with KTNF at different stages of the preparation of the plan: Planning Aid England, AECOM and Camden Council - mainly to offer technical support; and the Prince's Foundation and the Royal College of Art - to address the engagement and communication strategy. In addition, KTNF pioneered the introduction of an Advisors Team, initially formed by nine architects and planners who lived or worked in the area, in order to tap their expertise during the process. The Advisors were "called upon, when necessary" but they didn't have "voting rights" as they weren't part of the Committee that runs the Forum⁸. With this broad group of urban professionals involved in the production of the plan, the KTNF case provides an ideal vantage point for evaluating its unique framework and the contributions made by urban experts to a prototypical Neighbourhood Planning process.

Map of Neighbourhood Planning Process and Outcomes

In order to examine the roles these actors have played in the production of the Kentish Town Neighbourhood Plan, I designed a monitoring tool for Neighbourhood Planning practices.

The monitoring tool consists of a timeline that serves to track the correlation between the two poles - process and outcome - of Neighbourhood Planning cases. It is, therefore, a Map of Process and Outcomes (Annexe 3) that compiles all the information publicly available on how a Neighbourhood Plan is prepared. A monitoring tool of this kind could be used at various stages of a Neighbourhood Planning process.

Firstly, it offers unparalleled insight, in real-time, into everything happening in an ongoing process, such as how much time and what resources are being dedicated to each task; the evolution of the number and diversity of participants in the activities; and the interactions

7 Neighbourhood Plan Frontrunners receive a grant of £20,000 to develop a Neighbourhood Plan. More information about the programme can be found in the website of the Department for Communities and Local Government: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-planning-powers-continue-to-be-a-hit-with-communities>

8 For more information on the members and purpose of the Advisor Team see the minutes of the first Annual General Meeting of KTNF collected in the Appendix 3 (p.57) of the Consultation Statement.

between decision-makers, among other variables. This could be used as a tool to help contain deficits and leverage strengths in order to redirect efforts from the Forum and other stakeholders towards a more efficient and engaging process. Secondly, as a tracking tool, it is able to record what worked well and what didn't in an already-finished Neighbourhood Planning process, which opens up the possibility for others to make use of that learning. If, as concluded in Chapter 1, one of the potentials of Localism protocols is the sharing of resources among Forums, then there is an urgent need for strategic tools to facilitate learning from others' experiences.

The Map of Neighbourhood Planning Process and Outcomes could be adapted to visualize different input and output parameters depending on the specificities of the case that needs to be examined. In the specific case of my PhD, the reconstruction of the process and the outcomes through this visual tool primarily sought to elucidate the different contributions of design professionals and to allow for a diagnosis of deficient areas/stages of Neighbourhood Planning in need of design. This analysis provided early insights into the potential roles of design and the designer that would be tested in the next stage of research.

Building the Map for the Kentish Town case

The Kentish Town Map of Process and Outcomes (Annexe 3) was visually structured around a timeline of the five-year process of Neighbourhood Plan preparation. As a map(making) format, the timeline allowed the displaying of events in sequence and the identifying of process-related patterns, trends and interrelationships involving a broad range of factors (Rosenberg & Grafton, 2010). I designed the Map to pull together a great amount of quantitative (i.e. number of participants) and qualitative (i.e. project changes) data.

The strength of this graphic choice is that it provides a picture of the Neighbourhood Planning process that is visible all at once. Simultaneously, it emphasizes the evolving nature of its outcomes and helps more easily track the path that the Forum's initial planning intentions took to transform into planning decisions embedded within the final Neighbourhood Plan.

Integrating such variety of information into a single chart was a highly complex design exercise in which the main challenge was to achieve a degree of visual simplicity that would increase the readability of the subject under investigation. This is why the main task was to select and organize the variables that were relevant to studying the roles and impact of design throughout the whole process.

As shown in Figure 2-8, the upper part of the timeline chronologically displays all the activities/ events through which the Plan was prepared and distinguishes between meetings open to the public and those the Forum conducted internally. For both public and internal activities, the number of participants and event facilitators that attended is listed.

The lower part of the timeline displays the key decisions that were taken in each of the events and how those impacted the evolution of the Plan. First, the nature of the decisions is specified: communication and organisational arrangements, area definition choices, definition of design analysis, objectives and principles; and finally, the delineation of planning policies is shown.

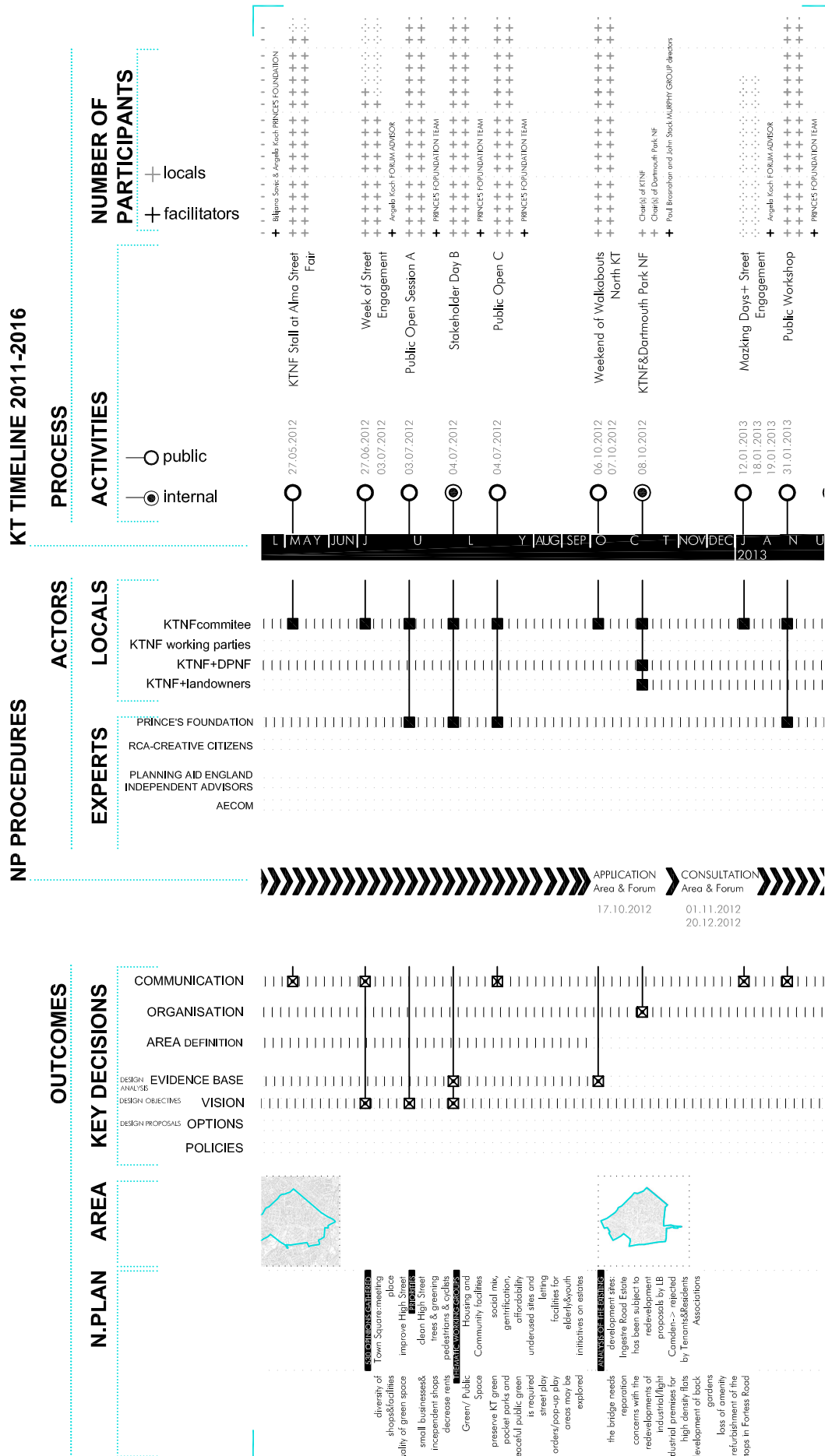


Figure 2-8 Extract of Map of Neighbourhood Planning Process and Outcomes (see Annex 3)

Lastly, the themes that were raised in each of the meetings are also depicted, so it is possible to then analyse how local concerns regarding housing, public space, and transport issues, among others, evolved until they were translated into the final policies of the Neighbourhood Plan.

The central part of the timeline indicates the various actors that have played a role in the Kentish Town case, thereby showing the connection between process and outcomes throughout the preparation of the Plan. It is important to differentiate between local actors and expert professionals who have joined the process at specific points. On one level, the timeline depicts the performance of the leading local actor, the self-determined Kentish Town Neighbourhood Forum and its subgroups - the committee and the working parties - as well as the interactions between this group and other local stakeholders, such as landowners and neighbouring Forums. And on another level, it also captures the field of action of various expert professionals in order to unveil the precise stages at which design practitioners intervened, as well as the skills and methods they brought into the process.

All the visual and textual data regarding the production of the Kentish Town Neighbourhood Plan that were included in the timeline come from a document called the Consultation Statement (KTNF, 2015) that was submitted to Camden Council alongside the content of the Plan. This is a mandatory document that all the Forums have to produce according to Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning protocol. The Consultation Statement accompanies the Neighbourhood Plan and “helps to demonstrate that there has been a rigorous programme of community and stakeholder engagement throughout the process” (Chetwyn, 2018, p. 34) as it contains all the details of how a Plan is prepared so the information is publicly accessible and transparent.

This primary-source material was contrasted and completed with information obtained from key people directly involved in the process. First, I used the notes collected in my period of exploratory fieldwork, including informal interviews I conducted with Caroline Hill, the former chair of Kentish Town Neighbourhood Forum (29.07.2015), and Angela Koch, Kentish Town Forum Advisor and facilitator of Prince’s Foundation workshops (25.08.2015). And then, I looked to the notes collected during conversations with Forum members and assistants to the public meetings organized by the Forum prior to the referendum (i.e. Kentish Town Plan Open Evening on 7.07.2016 and Launch of KT Neighbourhood Plan on 7.05.2016).

This mapping exercise made it possible to reconstruct the decision-making environment of the Kentish Town case and expose its deficiencies. This provided early insights into the potential roles of design and the designer, which would be tested in the next stage of research.

2.2.3 Propositional phase

In Frayling’s words, the research at this point moved from research *into* to research *through* and *for* design. This shift came about at this point because this propositional phase ultimately sought to inform and expand design practice within Neighbourhood Planning contexts, and it did so by using design as a method of enquiry.

Drawing on the findings from the analytical phase, particularly as related to the diagnosis of deficient stages and policies in the Kentish Town case, I proposed a new design-led framework that would make better use of design professionals beyond their current scope

of involvement. The framework was not only laid out, but also tested through design demonstrations. This allowed for comparison between the process and the outcomes with and without the application of a design-led approach, so we can explicitly see the benefits of introducing design at certain stages and to guide certain decisions.

Methodologically, this design-led reconstruction of Kentish Town applies a ‘multi-criteria decision-making (MCDM)’ approach to Neighbourhood Planning. MCDM is a theoretical framework and a set of practical methods “for helping people make decisions according to their preferences” (Mardani, Jusoh, MD Nor, Khalifah, Zakwan & Valipour, 2015). The guidebook ‘Multi-criteria analysis: a manual’, produced in 2009 by the Department for Communities and Local Government, points out that MCDM techniques have been used increasingly in public policy making in the UK (p.6) as they are appropriate for decision-making processes with no single optimal solution or in which the alternatives are not explicitly known. This is the case with Neighbourhood Planning, and with design processes as well, a process in which the outcomes are infinitely variable and respond to multiple criteria defined by multiple stakeholders.

MCDM first identifies a set of objectives, the options for achieving them, the criteria to be used to compare the options, and finally, the decisions to be taken. In applying the MCDM approach to the case study of Kentish Town, I first determined the Neighbourhood Forum’s planning intentions, or “set of objectives”, and introduced a design-led discussion aimed at appraising options for future development that would inform the Forum’s final planning decisions.

A design-led framework for Kentish Town

In applying the MCDM approach to the case study of Kentish Town, I first determined the Neighbourhood Forum’s planning intentions, or “set of objectives”. I then framed a design-led discussion aimed at appraising options for future development that would respond to the Forum’s initial set of intentions and inform their final planning decisions. With this response, my aim was to move past the limitations of the current process and its outcomes, particularly as relates to the depreciation of the value of design and designers.

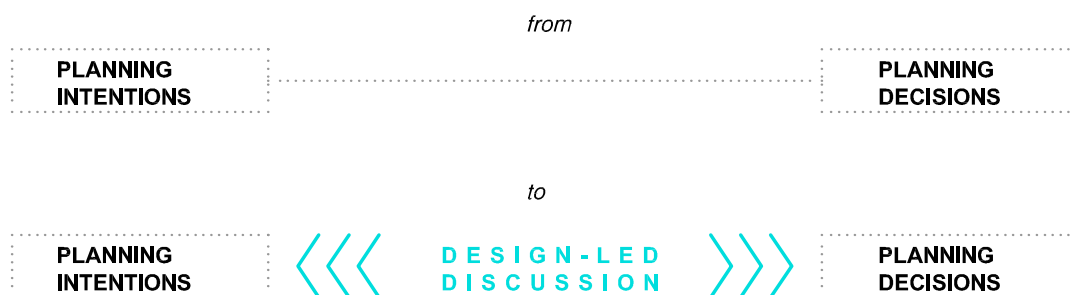


Figure 2-9. Application of MCDM principles for generating a design-led framework for Kentish Town

The resulting design-led discussion was structured around design demonstrations (DDs) that unveil the potential contribution of design at various stages of plan preparation, and complement the different policy areas that lack a design approach.

The design demonstrations in the thesis made use of design techniques that have long been utilised by designers in urban plans and projects, for example, on-site observation and

analysis, diagrammatic visualizations and projections through axonometric and perspective drawings. In choosing deliberately conventional design tools, I sought to demonstrate that in their multiple variations, these techniques continue to be effective for overcoming a narrow technical perspective on planning issues by correlating them with physical outcomes on the ground.

The visual language deployed for such demonstrations also responded to a methodological choice. It is “informational” (Sale & Betti, 2007, p.12), rather than representational, focused on design content more than the final expression of design. The line drawing and colour coding seek a balance between the general and the specifics of design, indicating recognizable spatial values and relations without providing a fixed image of how the resulting environment will look. In my practice as an architect and urban designer, I have developed this kind of visual language over the years working with local communities in different geographic, cultural and normative contexts (Spain, Sweden, Vienna, India, London, Morocco, Chile, and so on). In those projects, the graphic balance between information and expression was tested and refined to redirect the discussion toward the strategies for local space production rather than focusing on the material and aesthetic considerations favoured by urban design renderings.

The risk of using drawings in a PhD by design like this one, is that “drawings can become the focus the attention rather than a representation of knowledge about an emerging design” (Lawson, 2004, p.57). The visual language deployed for the demonstrations serves an additional function: to divert the attention from design content, or more specifically, to what might appear as design solutions. It is necessary to clarify that the design demonstrations do not seek to constitute an alternative Neighbourhood Plan for Kentish Town, but instead aim to facilitate a discussion on how the revalorisation of design techniques, skills and outputs might contribute toward giving the Forums more choice and allowing for more informed planning decisions.

The value of the design demonstrations is therefore instrumental, as they allow for reflection beyond the Kentish Town case: on the kind of design expertise most needed, on the point in the Neighbourhood Planning process designer input should be incorporated and in relation to which actors, and finally, on how designer input will affect planning decisions and outcomes. The conclusions of this reflection enabled a reframing of the role of design practice within Neighbourhood Planning.

Chapter 3: Design in the context of the Localism Act 2011

With over 2000 active Neighbourhood Planning initiatives across the country, and more than 100 being undertaken in the capital, a critical mass has been reached, with outcomes already shaping the UK's local landscapes.

Since the introduction of the Localism Act 2011, Neighbourhood Planning has become a burgeoning field of practice for all the professions concerned with the built environment. In particular, an increasing number of urban, architectural and landscape designers are working hand-in-hand with local Forums in the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans, in coordination with other professionals such as planners and policy-makers and other sets of stakeholders (i.e: local authorities, developers, landowners).

It is therefore imperative for such design professionals to better understand Neighbourhood Planning as a particular form of institutionalised public participation in planning, that controls the scope of action of the actors involved, as well as their potential influence on local space production.

This chapter explores the prevailing barriers and opportunities Neighbourhood Planning presents for design to evolve alongside this participatory framework. To do so, I first introduce Neighbourhood Planning as an emergent field for design practitioners to engage in diverse models of collaboration with local groups undertaking the Localism-driven route. And second, I present the case of Kentish Town as a paradigmatic, empirical example to examine the different roles urban designers are currently playing in this context.

This analysis is done through the Kentish Town Map of Process and Outcomes (Annexe 3), a design-led data visualization tool with a tripartite purpose: to track when designers enter a conventional Neighbourhood Planning process and what the impact of this timing has on its outcomes; to understand the current limitations designers face, and to expose the precise stages of the process and policy areas in need of a new design approach.

With this analysis in mind, a second reading of the Kentish Town Map of Process and Outcomes serves to highlight some of the openings for design to challenge and reframe its current contribution to Neighbourhood Planning.

3.1. Introduction: Neighbourhood Planning as an emergent field for design practice

Neighbourhood Planning has emerged as a field of practice for designers stemming from the need of the new leading actors, that is, the local Forums, to engage in the highly complex process of preparing statutory Neighbourhood Plans. This activity, previously reserved for expert professionals from various disciplines, still demands specialized types of knowledge, be that technical, managerial, normative or creative in nature.

In response to this need, increasing governmental resources are being dedicated to implementing the Localism agenda via supporting local groups. In 2013 the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) announced the £9.5-million Neighbourhood Planning programme delivered by Locality, the Royal Town Planning Institute's Planning Aid England (RTPI PAE) and AECOM, together with a number of voluntary organisations. In October 2014, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (formerly DCLG) announced a new £23m support programme for 2015-2018 "to provide community groups with expert advice, grant funding and technical assistance to get neighbourhood plans" and provided an additional sum of "£100,000 to enable groups to organise workshops on neighbourhood planning in their local area" (MHCLG, 2014). In March 2018, a new £22.8m support programme for 2018-2022 was announced, Locality and Groundwork UK continued to be the "delivery partners" (AECOM, n.d.). In this new programme, groups working on a neighbourhood plan can apply for grants of up to £17,000 and the technical support of AECOM.

AECOM, the global firm that, in its own words, provides "world-class design, architecture, engineering and consulting services" (AECOM, n.d., p.1), has positioned itself as a privileged actor within Neighbourhood Planning practice since support packages began to be commissioned for delivery to local groups that have embarked on Neighbourhood Planning. Over the past years, the company has worked with over 500 local groups across England. The most recent contract guarantees the extension of its services to all the Forums working on Neighbourhood Planning in the next four years.

Stuart Woodin, Lead Technical Director for the project at AECOM, describes "this unique Private-Voluntary Sector Partnership" (AECOM, n.d.) that began its work by mostly helping groups with very technical assessments (ie. Strategic Environmental Assessment, Housing Needs Assessment), but currently offers support packages to cover the wide range of themes found in Neighbourhood Plans.

In addition to being provided with advice from AECOM via pre-designed, state-enabled programmes, local groups preparing Neighbourhood Plans can use their funding to incorporate consultants into the plan-making process. To help in the selection of those professionals, Locality published a guideline on Commissioning Consultants (2015) in which they set "a limit of £550 a day for consultancy paid for from the Neighbourhood planning support grants" (p.12), and encouraged seeking out experts and registered practitioners in the "RTPI online directory of planning consultants, Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) (...) and Urban Design Group (UDG)" (p.8).

Such professional bodies are increasingly interested in Neighbourhood Planning as a niche practice area. For example, right after the introduction of the Localism Bill in 2011, the RIBA produced a *Guide to Localism - Opportunities for Architects* composed of two volumes that outline how architects can use their design skills to get involved in the development of neighbourhood plans. Years later, in October 2016, former RIBA president Ruth Reed had to offer another reminder that the support given to Neighbourhood Forums should extend beyond technical planning assistance: "It should include some elements of design support, such as preparation of design codes, to give expression to the kind of development they want to see and make the process more real for them" (Morris, 2016, p.1).

Not surprisingly, the possibility of incorporating individual consultants into Neighbourhood Planning processes is encouraging small to mid-size urban design and architectural firms

to enter this field of practice. Some of them have long been exploring the intersections between architecture, urbanism and participation; for firms like Fluid, with more than 15 years of experience “working directly and creatively with various communities” (Fluid, n.d.), the involvement in Neighbourhood Planning processes is a natural step. Some of these firms were born in the midst of the Localism reforms, in response to the need for support voiced by local communities, such as Neighbourhoods Made, a small research-based practice with links to the University of East London, set up ‘ad-hoc’ to assist Neighbourhood Planning processes¹.

Collaborations between local groups and academic institutions are also becoming more frequent. In recent years, students from the main schools of architecture and planning in London have had the opportunity to contribute to several Neighbourhood Planning processes across the capital. For example, students from the UCL’s Bartlett Development Planning Unit (DPU) worked in 2017 with Crystal Palace & Upper Norwood Neighbourhood Forum on a number of projects designed to collect and build evidence in support of an emerging cross-border neighbourhood plan. This is part of an on-going partnership with the MSc programme in Spatial Planning, from which at least six other London Forums have benefited in recent years: Crouch Hill and Hornsey Rise NF, Camley Street and Elms Village NF, People’s Empowerment Alliance for Custom House, Elephant and Walworth NF, Kennington, Oval and Vauxhall Forum, Heathrow Villages NF. Other examples of collaborations with academia include extensive research projects such as *Creative Citizens: New media and community-led design*², an AHRC/ EPSRC-funded project led by the Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design associated with the Royal College of Art. These kinds of learning experiences bring together London’s neighbourhood forums with the students and researchers who can work with them to support their capacity to influence planning policy through the preparation of neighbourhood plans.

In turn, these collaborations could help improve the general preparedness of design professionals to engage in the particularities of the Localism protocols. Not only universities, but also firms such as Urban Vision Enterprise CIC, have started to capitalize on the rising interest in having experts with the education and training to respond to these needs. Urban Vision Enterprise CIC, a community interest company run by Dave Chetwyn and Hannah Barter, describes itself as “a leading authority on neighbourhood planning” (Urban Vision North Staffordshire, n.d.). What is interesting is that in addition to supporting local groups to produce their Neighbourhood Plans, the company currently dedicates most of its efforts to providing training on neighbourhood planning to a wide range of organisations including professional bodies such as the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI), the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) and the Consultation Institute, national organisations such as Locality and Design Council CABE, local authorities (i.e. East Staffordshire Borough Council) and academic organisations (i.e. Sheffield University).

This hotbed of activity is certainly beneficial and profitable to the field of specialized practitioners that has sprouted around the NP process, but there hasn’t yet been an independent analysis of whether this investment is leading to beneficial outcomes. This is true not only from a design perspective, but also from the perspective of the local groups and stakeholders the practitioners are supposed to be aiding.

1 See Neighbourhoods Made website for more information about the project <http://www.neighbourhoodsmade.com>

2 See Creative Citizens website for more information about the project https://www.rca.ac.uk/research-innovation/helen-hamlyn-centre/helen_hamlyn_student_programme/creative-citizens/

According to the *Neighbourhood Planning HIVE report: experiences of participants* (Parker, Salter & Dobson, 2018), around 75% of all Neighbourhood Planning groups have used expert advice throughout the process, but they “found it challenging to identify what input they need and the value of support” (p.19). These consultant commissions used to be put together ad hoc when the Forums felt they needed help with particular issues and they knew some local professionals who could assist. It presented a genuine opportunity to invite local professionals “to move between the world of expert and user, with one set of knowledge and experience informing the other”. By playing both the role of “expert citizen as well as citizen expert” (Till, 2005, p.7), a local designer for example could contribute to the Neighbourhood Plan in ways someone without ties to the area couldn’t manage to do.

However, despite the existing potential to tap local professionals with a uniquely tailored perspective, Locality³, the body formed in 2011 to manage the governmental grants available for Neighbourhood Planning, seems to be tipping the scales in favour of a more one-size-fits-all kind of help for the Forums by making such a sizeable investment in a single large player like AECOM. The advantages and disadvantages of “standardisation of support versus bespoke support” are currently being discussed in Neighbourhood Planning circles. For example, during the Neighbourhood Planning HIVE that brought together 35 active neighbourhood planners on 6th June 2018, participants considered that general guidance is widely covered by the online resources published by Locality but “advice on particular issues is missing or in short supply”. While some participants had found standardised guidance very useful, “others reported that reliance on templates, and a standardised support package from consultants, had resulted in some NDPs running into trouble at examination / in the High Court” (p.18). In this sense, the type, quality and pertinence of support offered through consultants undeniably affect the progress of the process and the nature of the outcomes of Neighbourhood Planning.

Within the complex amalgam of professionals of the built environment that Neighbourhood Planning settings attract, urban designers are probably the most in need of evidence and clear communication to reveal the added value they could bring to the field. Local groups are already benefiting from a wide variety of models of collaboration with urban designers, ranging from informal to formal advice, and from pro-bono to paid partnerships that are publicly and privately funded. Design input is coming from intellectual and practical alliances with the academic, institutional and practice-led worlds: from small to large firms offering a wide range of services. Some of them provide more specialized design-centered guidance; others supply a combination of design, planning and engagement services. Some rely on standardised support and templates; others prefer a tailor-made approach for each case. This wide variety of interventions hints at the broad range of roles for design already emerging in the wake of Neighbourhood Planning.

However, within this rich field of practice, the expertise all these professionals could potentially bring into Neighbourhood Planning contexts needs to be further analysed and better explained to local groups. The prototypical case of Kentish Town, selected from among a wide variety of London cases (see Taxonomy of Case Studies presented in the Methodology Chapter), offers an unparalleled framework to begin this investigation.

3 Locality is a network for community owned and led organisations at national and local levels in the UK that is funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government. See: <http://locality.org.uk/resources/neighbourhood-planning-roadmap-guide/>

3.2 Kentish Town case study

After Westminster City Council, Camden Town is the second most active borough in Neighbourhood Planning across London, with twelve Forums working within its boundaries. The proactive attitude of the local authorities towards the new reforms of the planning system has encouraged existing local groups to come together around the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans.

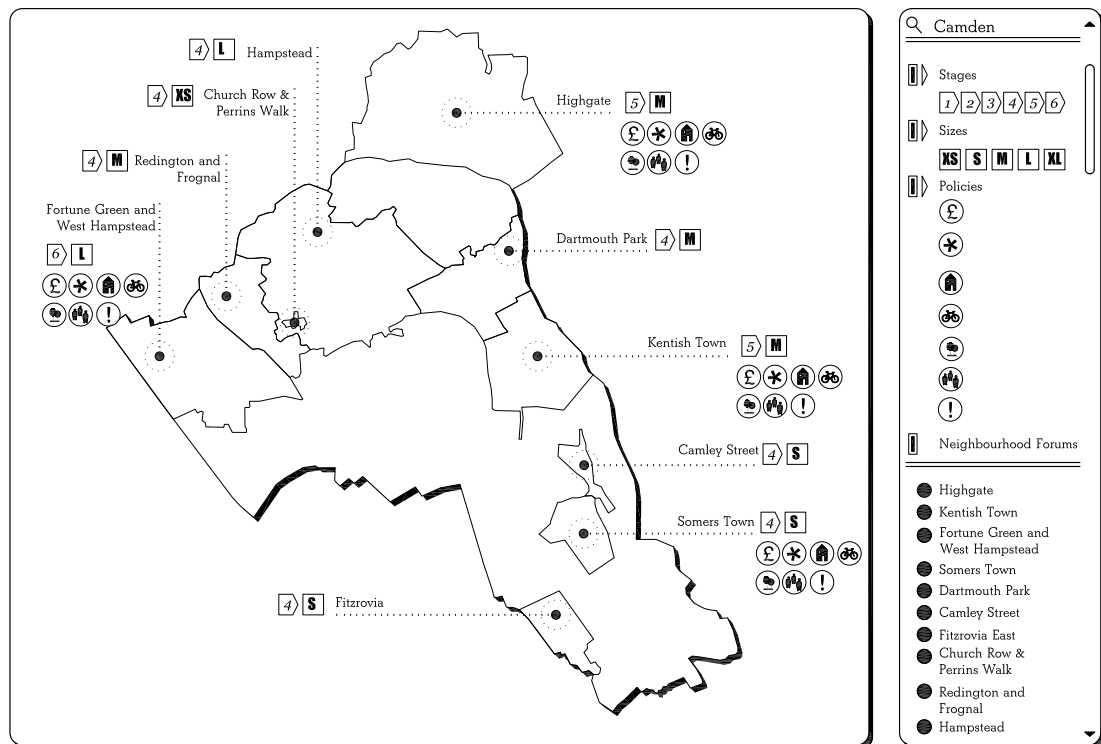


Figure 3-1 Extract of Map of Neighbourhood Planning in London (Annex 1) with a focus on Camden state on January 2016: nine active Neighbourhood Forums at different stages of the process and no plans approved. As of today, four of the plans have been adopted and another three Forums have been formally designated

Kentish Town Neighbourhood Forum (KTNF) was officially designated as such in January 2012, but the origin of KTNF dates back to 2010 when it was known as Kentish Town Road Action. This “pressure group of local residents working to make Kentish Town Road a more vibrant and attractive shopping and meeting centre”⁴ spurred the conversations that brought together existing local associations of residents, businesses and faith groups into a Forum under the provisions of the Localism Act. The perception of cultural, social and economic particularities displayed on the main streets allowed for an idea of the “local”⁵ and defined a town centre that needed to be protected and improved. Neighbourhood Planning was seen as the most effective way to influence the future of the area. And this was the main reason why Kentish Town Neighbourhood Forum, chaired by Caroline Hill at the time, adopted the new rights as proposed in the Localism Act and developed a Neighbourhood Plan. As stated

4 For further information see Cindex, the local community database containing details of around 4,000 organisations and services; clubs and societies, community groups and associations, charities: Hill, C. (2012, June 17). Kentish Town Road Action. Retrieved September 22, 2015, from <http://cindex.camden.gov.uk/kb5/camden/cd/service.page?id=CHwkOlqSncY>

5 Kentish Town Neighbourhood Plan. (n.d.). Retrieved May 18, 2015, from <http://ktnf.org/plan/>

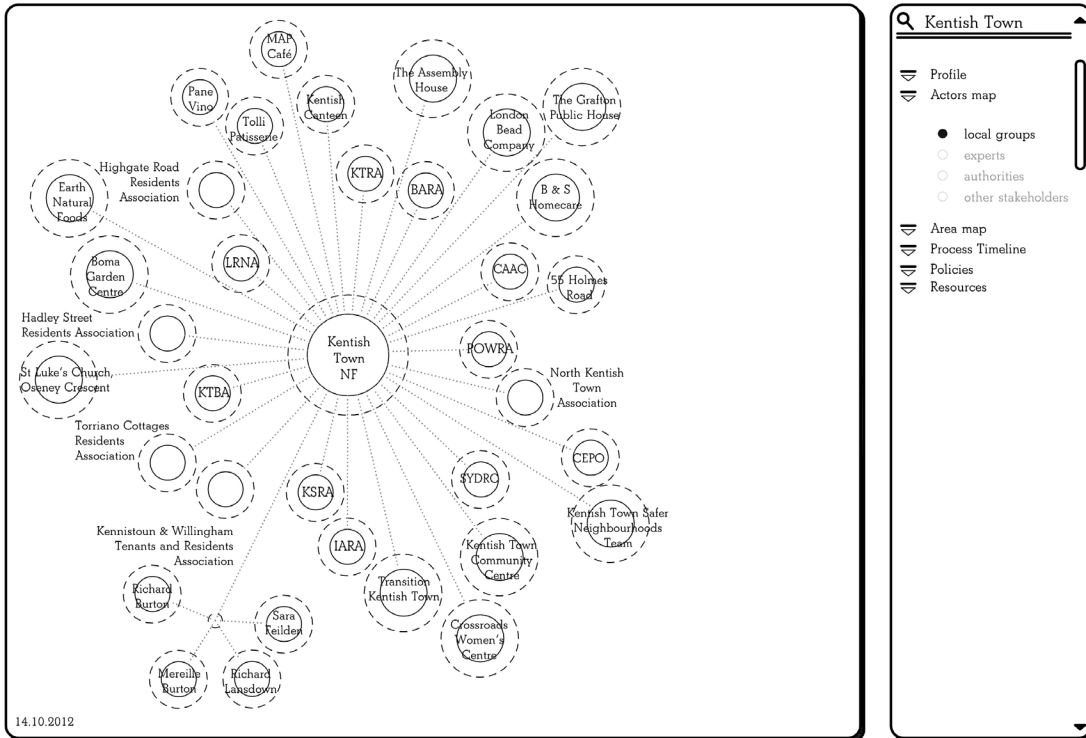


Figure 3-2 Extract of Map of Neighbourhood Planning in London (Annexe 1) with a focus on the local groups connected to Kentish Town Neighbourhood Forum in its early steps (14th October 2012)

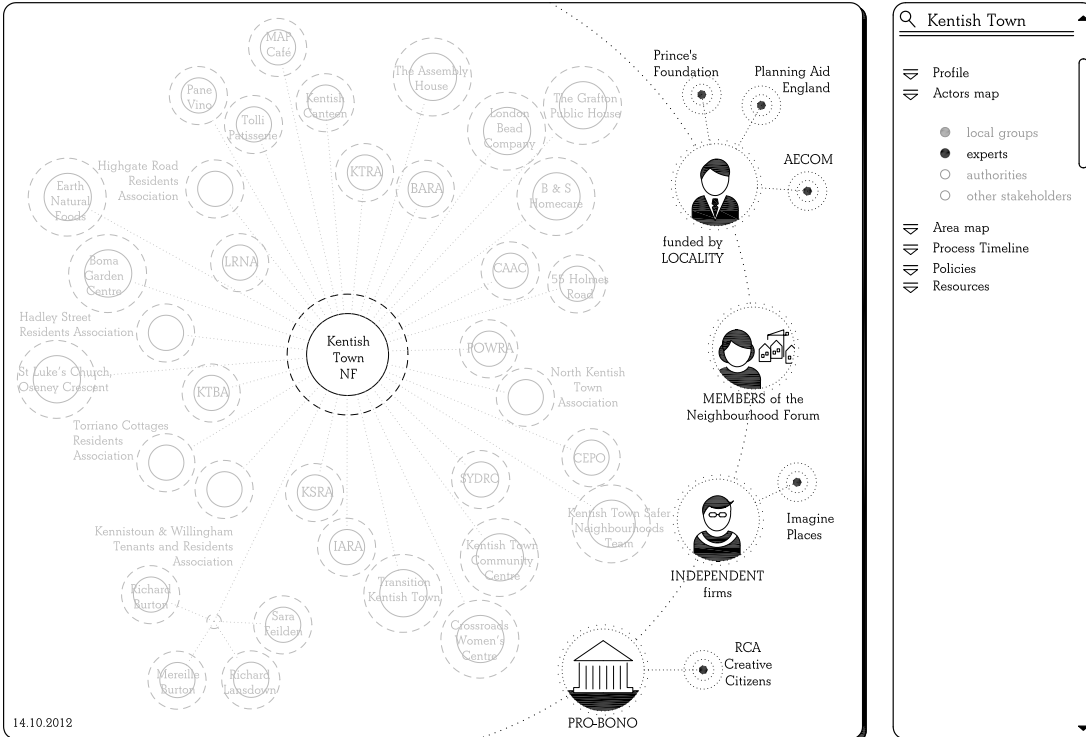


Figure 3-3 Extract of Map of Neighbourhood Planning in London (Annexe 1) with a focus on the experts connected to Kentish Town Neighbourhood Forum in its early steps (14th October 2012).]

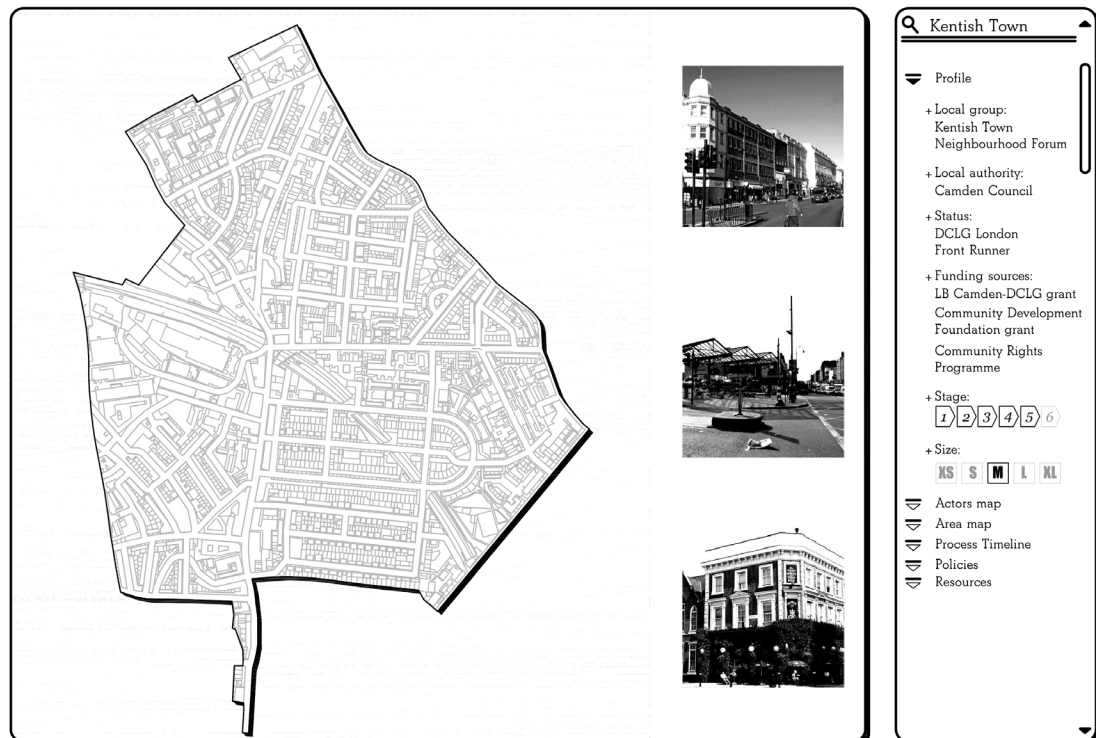


Figure 3-4 Extract of Map of Neighbourhood Planning in London (Annexe 1) with a focus on the designated Neighbourhood Area (14th October 2012).]

in a Prince's Foundation report about the progress of KTNF, the group prepared a consistent policy document that focused "on the regeneration of the High Street, and providing new affordable housing, community facilities and jobs on brownfield sites in public and private ownership"⁶.

Kentish Town Map of Process and Outcomes

Unpacking the roles of design in the illustrative case of Kentish Town entailed a thorough reconstruction of the decision-making process that resulted in the final version of Kentish Town Neighbourhood Plan. To complete this reconstruction, I conceived a Map of Process and Outcomes in the format of a timeline that enabled multiple readings:

First, a linear description of the actors as they become involved is provided, with a special focus on unveiling the skills, techniques and contributions of design professionals throughout the whole process. This step not only served to illustrate what the experts offered in Neighbourhood Planning, but also, upon a second reading, shed light on the intrinsic obstacles preventing them from expanding their roles. A third analytical reading of the timeline helped uncover the precise stages of the process in which design is most needed and the effects of such design deficiency in the resulting policies.

This section goes through these multiple readings of the Kentish Town case in detail, to make it possible to extract some lessons and to discern the opportunities to revalue design in Neighbourhood Planning frameworks.

6 See complete report: Koch, A. (n.d.). Case Studies: Kentish Town Neighbourhood Planning. Retrieved September 22, 2015, from <http://www.princes-foundation.org/what-we-do/projects/engage/clg-planning-scheme/case-studies/kentish-town-neighbourhood-planning-2012>

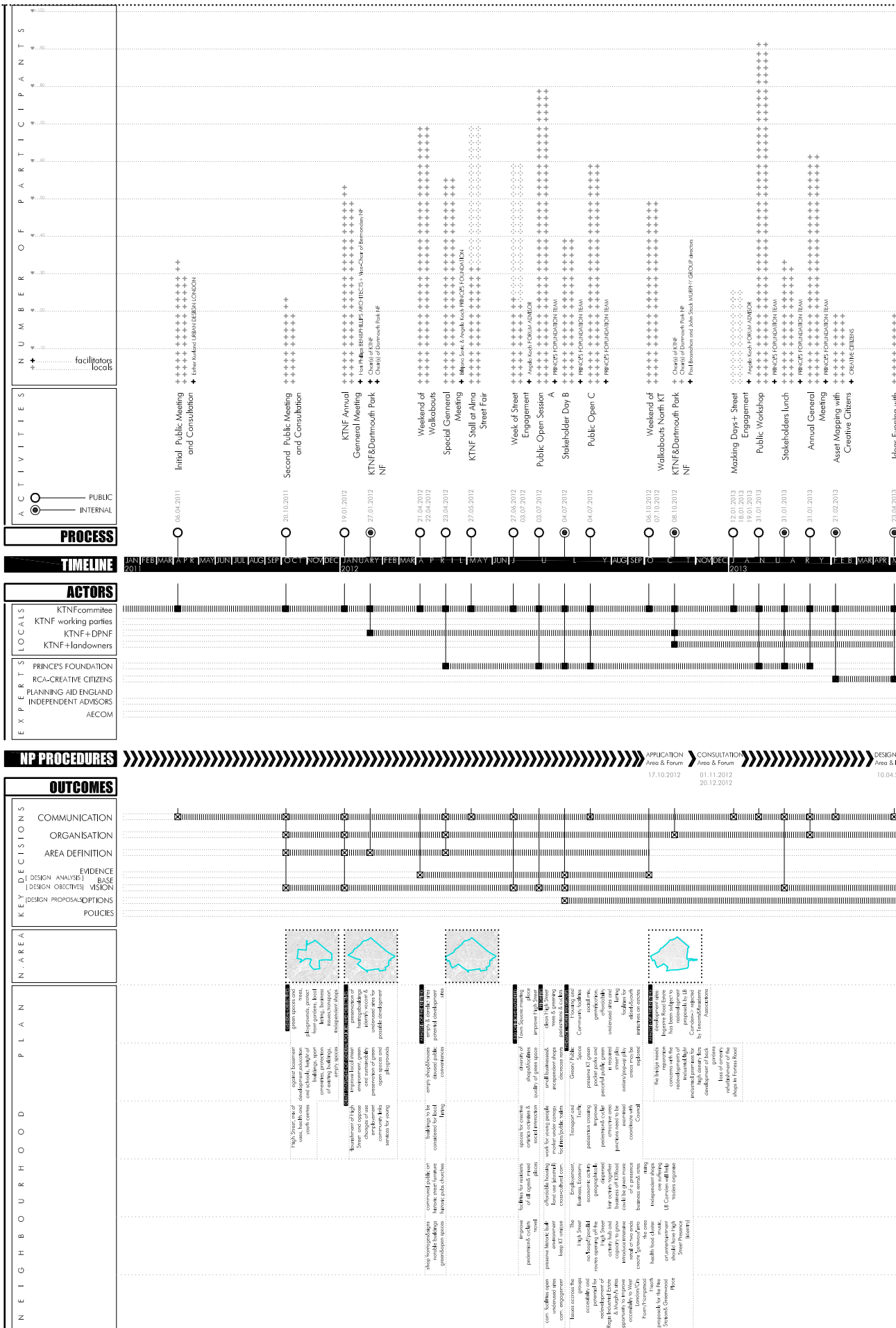


Figure 3-5 Reduced Kentish Town Map of Process and Outcomes. See Annex 3 for full-size document

3.2.1 Kentish Town Map of Process and Outcomes: First reading

Illustrating design's role

The initial public meeting of KTNF, held in April 2011, was facilitated by the director of Urban Design London, an organisation that offers training, courses and advice on planning and urban design issues. The director of Urban Design London first introduced the Localism Bill and Neighbourhood Planning in relation to the hierarchical planning system: the National Planning Framework, the London Plan, Camden's Local Development Framework. In dealing with a particularly technical field, Neighbourhood Forums often demand a clarification of the prescriptive seven-stage planning process in which the wider community has to be involved with at specific moments.

The explanatory session was crucial for the local group, as it decided whether Kentish Town "wanted and needed a Neighbourhood Plan" (KTNF, 2015, p.48). Initial debates on the benefits of taking up a statutory role in development lasted eight more months. Other experts were invited to contribute to the discussions, such as the Director of Ben Phillips Architects, who in the Annual General Meeting (January 2012) described his experience as Vice-Chair of the Bermondsey Neighbourhood Forum and his vision of the most effective way to influence the future of an area via Neighbourhood Planning. Local groups increasingly rely on the experiences of neighbouring Forums and consult examples of best practice collected in specialised websites such as the *Forum for Neighbourhood Planning*⁷.

The first meetings of KTNF mainly took into consideration the purposes of the Forum, as well as its constitution and its organisational dynamics. Early attempts to define the Neighbourhood Area also dated from this period during which the local group informally benefited from urban experts' support via members of the Advisors Team. An example of this support was the organization of a weekend of walkabouts covering the entire neighbourhood in April 2012, which from a designer's perspective could be considered the first exercise of analysis on the existing situation of the area produced by KTNF.

In April 2012, the Prince's Foundation entered the picture and offered professional services to KTNF for a year. The Foundation is one of the four national organisations funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to assist Neighbourhood Forums. As explained by the Urban Programme Manager from the Prince's Foundation for Building Community, "their principal role was to facilitate the process of drawing up a Neighbourhood Plan and to provide a range of specialist advice"⁸. The "specialist advice" provided by the Foundation included an engagement strategy designed and facilitated by a team of two architects, an urban designer, a landscape architect, a transportation specialist and a property/delivery advisor. The programme consisted of a three-day event with two public sessions and an internal design workshop featuring key stakeholders that had been invited to participate. The event drew upon the method of "Enquiry by Design", which had already been tested by the Prince's Foundation as an effective tool in collaborative planning processes to gather input on issues affecting the community and develop a shared vision of

7 The website was launched by Planning Aid England to "share experiences around neighbourhood planning". For further information, see: <http://www.ourneighbourhoodplanning.org.uk/resources/case-studies>

8 For more information on the session facilitated by the Prince's Foundation, see Appendix 6 (p.87) of the Consultation Statement.

the development site⁹. According to the *Kentish Town Makes Plans: Community Engagement & Neighbourhood Planning Workshop Report* (Prince's Foundation, 2012), 80 participants in the first public session were invited to complete both a map-based and a post-it note exercise to establish priorities that could form “the basis for the stakeholder workshop on the following day” (p.22). For the workshop, around 50 local stakeholders were invited to identify key issues in the areas of housing and community facilities, green/public spaces, transport/traffic, employment, business and economy, and the High Street. According to Imagine Places, a young firm specialised in Neighbourhood Planning whose leader was both part of the Prince's Foundation and the KTNF Advisors Team, sessions with stakeholders need to be “externally facilitated to give confidence to all involved” by independent design experts in their own professions with “added mediation skills”. The outcomes of this event were presented to the wider public the following day in a session that gathered 75 interested parties. In response to the event results, later on the Prince's Foundation team developed six site-specific renewal strategies that became the first design-driven proposals that appear in the context of the preparation of the Plan. Prince's Foundation recommended that these spatial solutions be put forward and suggested that they “should be translated into Neighbourhood Plan policies”(p.48).

From January 2013 to February 2014, the RCA Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design also developed creative engagement activities with KTNF as part of a research project called Creative Citizens. The project explored the use of new media in community-led design processes. Their team of experts organized an “Asset Mapping Workshop” with a small group of KTNF members, produced an “Online Neighbourhood Plan” to encourage hard-to-reach groups to comment on the Plan, and distributed “beer mats” in the pubs of the area to publicize KTNF's work. The methods used in Creative Citizens were clearly oriented to the communication of and promotion of the Plan, as well as toward increasing the collection of local opinions on the policies. It is indicative of the limited impact of these activities in enhancing the involvement of the community that the Online Neighbourhood Plan gathered less than 150 comments from 35 people¹⁰. But most importantly, the project didn't clarify how user-generated content was analysed, filtered and used by KTNF for the production of the Plan.

At the same time as these consultation methods were put in place, from June 2013 to January 2014, six working groups started developing planning policies covering the six areas of study that make up the Plan: working and shopping, planning and design, housing, getting around, green and open space, and community, social and culture. The working groups, comprising from 4 to 12 people, included local residents and businesses, KTNF committee members and Forum Advisors. The formulating and refining of planning policies took place within the working parties through regular meetings and internal workshops, combined with public exhibitions and Q&A sessions to get feedback from the wider community. This work was assisted by Planning Aid England, Groundwork UK, two independent planning advisors and Camden Council planning officers, who helped with policy writing, interpretation and implementation. According to the independent examiner of the Plan, Jeremy Edge, KTNF submitted a remarkably competent plan “in terms of structure, justification and formulation of policies” due to the assistance and support of the above mentioned professionals (Edge, 2015, p.11). Lastly, as an annexe to the Plan, a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), produced by the planning consultancy AECOM in March 2015, was submitted to public consultation.

9 For further information on Enquiry by Design (EbD) see:

<http://www.princes-foundation.org/content/enquiry-design-neighbourhood-planning>

10 For a review of the comments on Kentish Town Online Neighbourhood Plan, see Appendix 14 of the Consultation Statement.

As previously mentioned, this global firm is now working with all the Forums across the country that have applied for governmental funding and is monopolizing the emergent field of practice resulting from the Localism-driven reforms. It is yet to be determined how this filtering of all the Forums through AECOM will affect the outcomes of Neighbourhood Plans in the coming years.

The result of this five-year process is a Neighbourhood Plan in which each policy is grounded in the evidence-base built in the consultation events and cross-referenced to Local Development and National Planning Policy Frameworks. Though the Plan is accompanied by maps of the area indicating where the policies apply, it barely includes visual documents (ie: master plan proposals, architectural perspectives and projections, design options and scenarios), that specify the coordination of policy and practice affecting spatial organisation of the neighbourhood. The collection of policies, including spatial and site-specific policies, refers to conventional planning instruments -land use, allocation of development sites and criteria for planning permissions, listing of local assets to protect, Statements of Community Consultation and Community Infrastructure Levy- applied to Kentish Town. (This is described in detail in Chapter 3 Section 3.2.3)

The Kentish Town case illustrates the wide range of actors, including design professionals, that take part in a Neighbourhood Planning process. Forums can choose from pro-bono, publicly funded or private services on their own or in different combinations; to independent professionals residing in their local areas; to universities and research organizations; to big corporations appointed by the government to support local groups. But what are the typical challenges those professionals must face in Neighbourhood Planning settings?

3.2.2 Kentish Town Map of Process and Outcomes: Second reading

Analysing the obstacles

The decision-making environment is subject to at least three sets of constraints: financial, regulatory and operational.

Financial constraints on the process

Cost implications of Neighbourhood Planning are one of the main restrictions to incorporating designers in the process. Neighbourhood Planning is a resource-constrained environment in which the Forums have to prioritise where they will direct their financial efforts.

Planning Aid England published a guideline on *How to resource your neighbourhood plan* (n.d.) that estimates the average cost of producing a neighbourhood plan is around £13,000. However, in the *DCLG's Impact Assessment – Neighbourhood Plans and community Right to Build* (2012) it is estimated that the average cost of preparing a neighbourhood plan is £20-£86k per plan. Notably, the amount depends on the scope, complexity and size of the plan. What several reports, such as *People Power: Findings from the Commission on the Future of Localism* produced by Locality in 2018, clearly indicate is that lack of funding and resources “is a significant and compounding barrier to the opportunities of localism” (p.16). This is why financial support from the government was put in place upon the arrival of the Localism Bill.

Even in Kentish Town, a case that benefited from more funding than most of the cases ongoing in London at the time, the availability of resources was determinant to commissioning work

from external professional support. The Kentish Town Map of Process and Outcomes clearly reveals that the contribution of different experts is very limited in time; it shows that individual experts spent a maximum of one year with the Forum without overlaps in time with other experts (See Annexe 3-A). Consequently, none of those experts had the opportunity to follow the Plan's preparation from beginning to end, nor could they take advantage of the possibility of cross-disciplinary knowledge transfer.

This condition is unlikely to be particular to Kentish Town. It is certainly common throughout all London Neighbourhood Planning cases that, as they are called only occasionally when needed for tasks, designers are not a constant driving force across the whole process of Neighbourhood Planning.

The landscape has evolved since the Kentish Town Neighbourhood Plan was approved, and government financial aid for Neighbourhood Planning has increased over the years. The massive injection of public funds to AECOM's programme of support ensures that all Forums in the country have equal access to a similar minimum degree of support, which could help Neighbourhood Planning not tie its "success to a postcode lottery of uneven resources and support" (Parker & Wargent, 2017, p.16). In particular, AECOM's 2018-2020 programme has recently introduced two new support packages with a design focus: Masterplanning and Design including Design Codes. This has been a major change since the start of my PhD research that could potentially contribute to further consideration of design aspects throughout the plan-making process.

However, this also brings a potential threat to design practitioners interested in the field of Neighbourhood Planning. Most Forums will work with AECOM consultants regardless of whether the guidance provided is extensive enough and well-suited to their specific needs. The "costless" advice of AECOM could discourage Forums from considering other design firms. The chances of being commissioned for some design work are increasingly limited in a highly competitive context in which several big players (i.e. AECOM) are already in a position of privilege. There is a risk of diminishing the variety of approaches and types of support from which Forums could benefit, leading them to missing opportunities to "benefit from input from architects and planners who live or work in the area" such as the Advisors Team that KTNF put together for their Neighbourhood Plan (KTNF, 2015, p.57).

Regulatory constraints on the outcomes

The regulatory context in which designers are embedded when Forums prepare a Neighbourhood Plan is also determined by the Neighbourhood Planning protocol. Although the content of the resulting Plan is not pre-defined by Localism-driven legislation, designers are constrained by the intrinsic limitations of the planning system itself.

Kentish Town Neighbourhood Plan, for example, has to be in conformity with the Core Strategy and Camden Development Policies at a borough-wide level, the London Plan at a London-wide level and the National Planning Policy Framework at a national level. When looking at Kentish Town timeline, it is possible to see that the timeframes of plan preparation and those of the three above-mentioned documents does not concur; in fact, those documents are currently undergoing an updating process themselves (See Annexe 3-B).

This is not an exceptional condition of the Kentish Town process, according to the study *Neighbourhood Planning Users Revisited (NPUR)* conducted by Gavin Parker and Matthew

Wargent (2017), a major concern for local groups is that the status of Neighbourhood Plans remains ambiguous against higher tier policies. This affects not only Neighbourhood Plan preparation but also the implementation of its policies. For example, where no five-year housing land supply exists at LPA level, because NDPs had preceded the Local Plan, “it is unclear as to how NDPs might be revised” in light of emerging Local Plans and changing housing numbers” (p.4). Designers have to operate within this uncertainty.

The good news is that in response to that problem, the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017 recently introduced a new procedure to allow Neighbourhood Plans to be modified. This indicates that the relationship among the different tiers of the planning system is continuously evolving with each level informing each other in both directions. Similarly evolving are the scope and influence of planning documents in local development and the real transformations that can happen on the ground. So even with the constrained environment of the Neighbourhood Planning context, the realm of possible design contribution to that environment is highly elastic.

Operational constraints on the decision-making environment

Neighbourhood Planning schemes had reconfigured the weight and level of influence of the actors involved in the process. With Forums leading the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans, designers have to deal with the intrinsic limitations associated to professional-client relationships. Designers’ work is undoubtedly influenced by the models of relationships established with the Forum. There is a wide spectrum of models available, from professionals acting to advance the client’s ends to professionals acting as neutral advisors detached from the client’s purposes. Neighbourhood Planning forces designers to re-address the usual questions of agency, power, ethics, “attitude, relevance and responsibility” (Till, 2011,p.1) that are inescapable within the profession.

In addition, Neighbourhood Planning brings further challenges to this set of operational constraints:

For example, a Forum emerges as newly created decision-making body in the planning process, acting on behalf of an entire community that is difficult to define and does not often have a unified voice (see Chapter 1 Section 1.3.1 for further discussion). In this sense, the Forums have their own objective of strengthening a cohesive group with the capacity to work together, because without that cohesion their primary goal of producing a Neighbourhood Plan cannot be secured. This group-building process runs in parallel to the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan and often overshadows the priorities and needs of the overarching planning process.

The Kentish Town Map of Process and Outcomes provides evidence of this phenomenon in the decision-making process: it indicates that 15 out of the 35 Neighbourhood Planning events were focused exclusively on the Forum’s communication and organisational decisions, rather than on design and planning aspects of the Plan (See Annexe 3-C). These activities, although necessary for the Forum to move forward, prolonged the plan-making process and subjected it to the ups and downs of the group’s internal dynamics.

The need to build an effective decision-making environment is not exclusive to the Kentish Town case, and it ultimately relates to another factor that is decisive in the process of plan preparation: the Forum’s own aspirations and ambitions for the plan. More than half of the

participants of Parker and Wargent's study reported changes in the scope of ambition of their Neighbourhood Plans throughout the plan-making process: 28% of respondents admit that their plans had been "unable to accommodate the many and various community aspirations expressed", whereas another 28% of respondents felt that their plan had increased in scope of ambition as they started with the intention of addressing a particular site or reinforcing a conservation area, and "they realised that NDPs could address wider issues across a whole neighbourhood" (p.3).

The initial ambitions of local groups might change from case to case, but the position designers assume in the face of such aspirations is key to adding value to the process and the outcomes of Neighbourhood Planning. Whether designers act to fulfil, control or extend those aspirations has an impact on the way they operate and their potential contribution. This goes hand in hand with the Forums' expectations as to what the designer's work should be and what kinds of expertise they can bring to the equation.

A self-imposed challenge: the designer as facilitator of participation

The expectations that Forums' have formed in relation to the professionals they work with have been key in shaping the role of designers under the new planning reforms. In the words of Ian Harvey, a member of Civic Voice¹¹, local communities are mainly calling for a "network of community enablers" that put their expertise at the service of local groups in order to help them "realise their ambitions" (Farrell, 2013, p.50). In response to this legitimate demand, designers are stepping in to fill the role of expert-enablers, and consequently, are increasingly focused on facilitating the participation of local groups engaged in the complex planning process.

Although reports on the Forums' experiences show that "it is confusing for many groups to identify and draw in the best set of inputs for their situation" (Parker, Salter & Dobson, 2018, p.20), the Kentish Town Map of Process and Outcomes reveals an underlying pattern of the main skills required of professional experts depending on the stage of the planning process the local group is facing:

In the case of Kentish Town, it was first necessary to tap communication skills to explain the highly-technical details and steps of Neighbourhood Planning to local groups, as well as laying out the relationship between Neighbourhood Plans and Borough-wide/London-wide planning levels. During the drafting of the plan, due to the limited capacity of the local group to involve the wider community in planning issues, experts helped in gathering information about the area through creative forms of consultation. Alongside this task, having good relationships with other stakeholders (i.e. landowners, businesses, councillors) became essential, and mediating skills were required in order to take those stakeholders' suggestions on board and also negotiate conflicting interests. And finally, the local group demanded technical help for translating the above-mentioned work into policy.

Thus, technical aid, mediation and community engagement support are the most-demanded services among the Forums. Designers have embraced this set of activities to different degrees, with particular enthusiasm and attention placed on addressing the need to engage

11 Civic Voice is a national charity advocating on behalf of civic societies across England. The comment was found in The Farrell Review (2013), a national report commissioned by the Department for Culture, Media and Sports.

a wider variety of constituencies in communities undertaking the planning process, an issue which has been perceived to be a real challenge¹² to the Localism Act. This is contributing to a shift in focus in the practice of designers in Neighbourhood Planning that puts participation, rather than design, at the centre of their activities.

In Kentish Town, for example, designers from the Prince's Foundation and the RCA Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design (See Annexe 3-D) were highly involved in collecting and synthesising neighbours' comments as part of the effort to establish the priorities and needs of the community. Designers invested a great amount of time and effort in increasing participation through creative media (i.e. street stands, wish cards, blackboards, screen-printed balloons, interactive 'dots and post-its' maps, digital apps): for example, in addition to the hours spent preparing the Week of Street Engagements in June 2012, they "spent three to six hours a day in the week and eight hours a day at the weekend asking hundreds of local people, in the street, playgrounds, pubs, churches, the industry area and shops, how they would like to see Kentish Town develop" (KTNF, 2015, p.10). This information was used by the Prince's Foundation team, which included two architect/urban-designers, an urban designer and a landscape architect; who comparatively spent much less time (nine hours during the Internal Design Workshop held on 5 July 2012) on "drafting spatial strategies to illustrate the ideas and proposals put forward" (Prince's Foundation, 2012, p.25). Yet, this was the only activity in the whole process of plan preparation entirely focused on design, and oriented toward testing "the concrete possibilities for an area's development from a physical and morphological point of view, but also in terms of land use, urban practices and feasibility" (Palermo & Ponzini, 2010, p.197).

This perfectly illustrates that designers are missing out on a great opportunity to push for the inclusion of more design and design-based solutions within Neighbourhood Planning practice. Kentish Town, one of the cases in London with the most involvement by design professionals, and therefore occupying a privileged position of proximity to the design perspective, produced planning decisions that were barely informed by design; instead designers collectively focused their attention on participation.

On 21 March 2019, years after the Kentish Town process was completed, the leader of that Prince's Foundation team of designers, Angela Koch, who continued to be involved in other Neighbourhood Planning cases across London, recognised the missed opportunity and argued for the importance of a design-led approach to Neighbourhood Planning in her lecture *Time for Design: What role for neighbourhood planning?*

Arguably one of the main reasons that professional designers are so focused on participation is that public bodies, institutions and organisations concerned with the design of the built environment actively contribute to reinforcing the image of the designer as facilitator of the

12 See for example the report *Beyond consultation: The role of neighbourhood plans in supporting local involvement in planning*, which was produced in 2012 by the Planning and Housing Committee to review existing challenges for community involvement in planning in London.

participatory framework. Since the first emerging reports¹³ on the Localism Act recognised the need for expert advice regarding the application of Neighbourhood Planning's new rights, professional associations such as the *Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA)* have advanced that "supporting the active engagement of local people" is the "key service" (RIBA, 2011, p.8) that architects can offer to local communities.

One of the first versions of the *Neighbourhood Plans Roadmap Guide* (2012), produced by Locality and Urban Vision Enterprise CIC, emphasized the importance of early community engagement and involvement in creating "a well-informed plan and a sense of ownership" (p.70). The guide offered various techniques for effective involvement: workshops, market/street stalls, questionnaires, model-making, social media, school and college projects; and Placecheck. To that list, the RTPI's *Guidelines on Effective Community Involvement and Consultation* (2005) added community walks, digital survey tools, storytelling and "over 40 methods of community involvement" (RTPI, 2005, p.12). Similarly, the second volume of the *RIBA Guide to Localism - Opportunities for architects* (2011) is entirely dedicated to outlining the principles of successful community involvement in a series of participatory processes in which creative engagement methods are applied.

What we can infer from this growing body of guidelines, handbooks, manuals and toolkits is that for design professionals involved in Neighbourhood Planning "(...) the quality of the places created by this new process will be dependent on their ability to appropriately engage with local people and local issues" (RIBA, 2011, p.3). The underlying message is that increasing participation is equivalent to facilitating good design and planning decisions. Though a professional's listening skills, along with their ability to build effective dialogue, are obviously fundamental for operating in the Localism planning context, it is unclear whether their ability to increase participation will lead to sufficiently improving the spatial qualities of the area via a Neighbourhood Plan.

However, we can't forget that the aspiration for a higher quality development is the main motivation for local groups to embark on Neighbourhood Planning; they primarily seek in the Localism protocol a more effective path toward reversing the increasing discontent with current urban development and "reinvigorating the local area (usually through providing a vision for the future)" (Parker & Wargent, 2017, p.3). The aim to achieve higher quality development is what designers should ultimately be responding to, because they are specially trained for that. While community engagement can be undertaken by many professionals, designers are uniquely skilled to "set out a clear design vision and (...) provide a framework for creating distinctive places" (Koch, 2019, p.5), in line with the Forums' aspirations.

An overemphasis on participation shouldn't outshine the potential contribution of design towards fulfilling the ambition of improving development. Therefore, in light of the demands and pressures to adopt the more limited role of facilitators of participation, "one must necessarily challenge the self-image of the design profession" (Fezer, 2010, p.4) in this context and start questioning whether the practicalities of the participatory process are relegating

13 See for example one of the reports that reviews the evidence three years on from the introduction of the Localism Act 2011: London Assembly Planning Committee. (2014). *Localism in London: What's the story?* London: Greater London Authority. Retrieved from <https://www.london.gov.uk/mayor-assembly/london-assembly/publications/localism-in-london-whats-the-story>

design into a trivial role in Neighbourhood Planning settings.

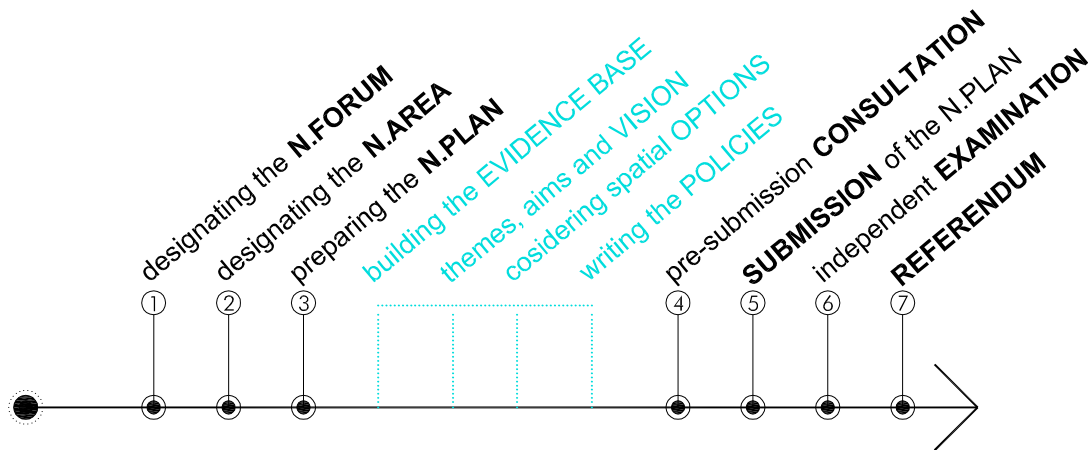
The next section explains, through a closer look at the Kentish Town Map of Process and Outcomes, that some of the deficiencies the case study presents are intrinsically related to this lack of design, or more precisely, to the lack of a design-led approach capable of building bridges between the initial intentions of the Forum and the final planning decisions articulated in the Neighbourhood Plan.

3.2.3 Kentish Town Map of Process and Outcomes: Third reading

Uncovering design needs in the Neighbourhood Planning process

Neighbourhood Planning protocol establishes a seven-stage process, as a common route for all the Forums wanting to develop a Neighbourhood Plan (See Annexe 3-E). This includes the formal designation of the Forum and the Neighbourhood Area, the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan, a pre-submission consultation to gain local consensus before the formal

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING PROCEDURES



KENTISH TOWN NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING PROCESS

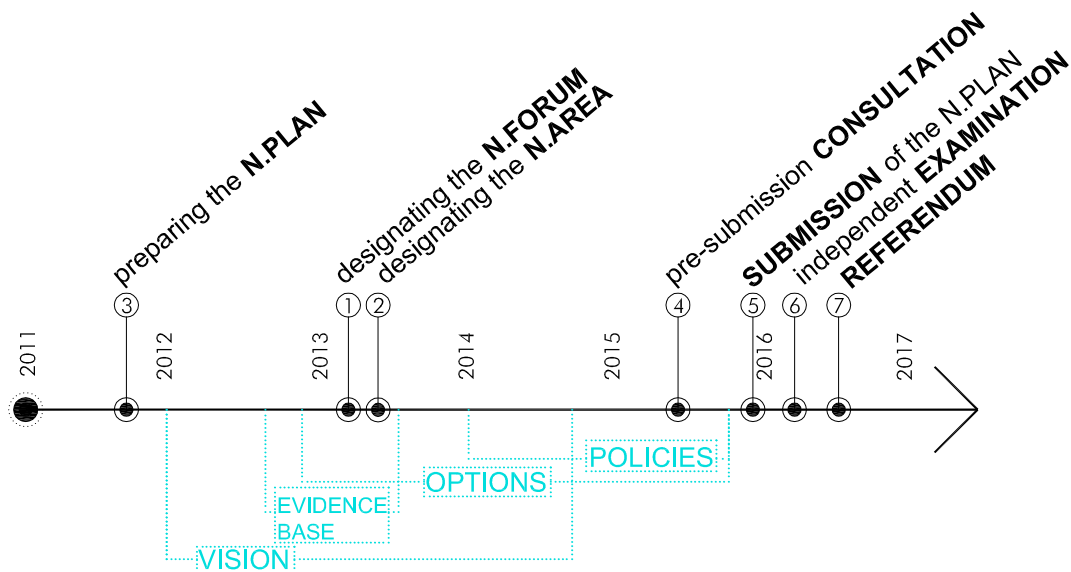


Figure 3-6 Neighbourhood Planning ideal process VS Kentish Town NP real process

submission to the relevant local authority, followed by an independent examination and a referendum that approves the final version of the Neighbourhood Plan.

According to the Neighbourhood Plans Roadmap (2018) produced by Locality, the stage of plan preparation consists of a logical sequence in which each step informs the following steps: “the building of an evidence base (...) will inform the development of a vision and/ or aims for the plan. These in turn will inform the formulation of policy, proposals and site allocations” (p.16).

When looking at Kentish Town Map of Process and Outcomes, it is possible to see that this process is not as linear and straightforward as that. In fact, the formulation of the vision started in the Second Public Meeting and Consultation on 20 October 2011, six months earlier than the first Weekend of Walkabouts when they began to analyse the neighbourhood and gain input for the evidence base. That evidence base then continued to incorporate data from the project Creative Citizens, which was completed nine months after the KTNF working parties started with policy writing. The stages of the plan-making process overlap in time in more iterative and back-and-forth ways than is suggested in the guidelines of Neighbourhood Planning.

This demonstrates that empirical reality is much more complex than the ideal linear process of Neighbourhood Planning outlined by Locality. Forums, and the designers working with them, have to embrace the complex and asynchronous trajectories that lead from general intentions of a vision through varying degrees of concretion into spatial proposals, as well as from the conceptualization of such scenarios into abstract design codes and regulations.

However, even if each Neighbourhood Planning process is different, with the particular stages overlapping and differing in duration in a myriad of ways, the stages that remain vulnerable to a shortage of design are the same (Figure 3-7) :

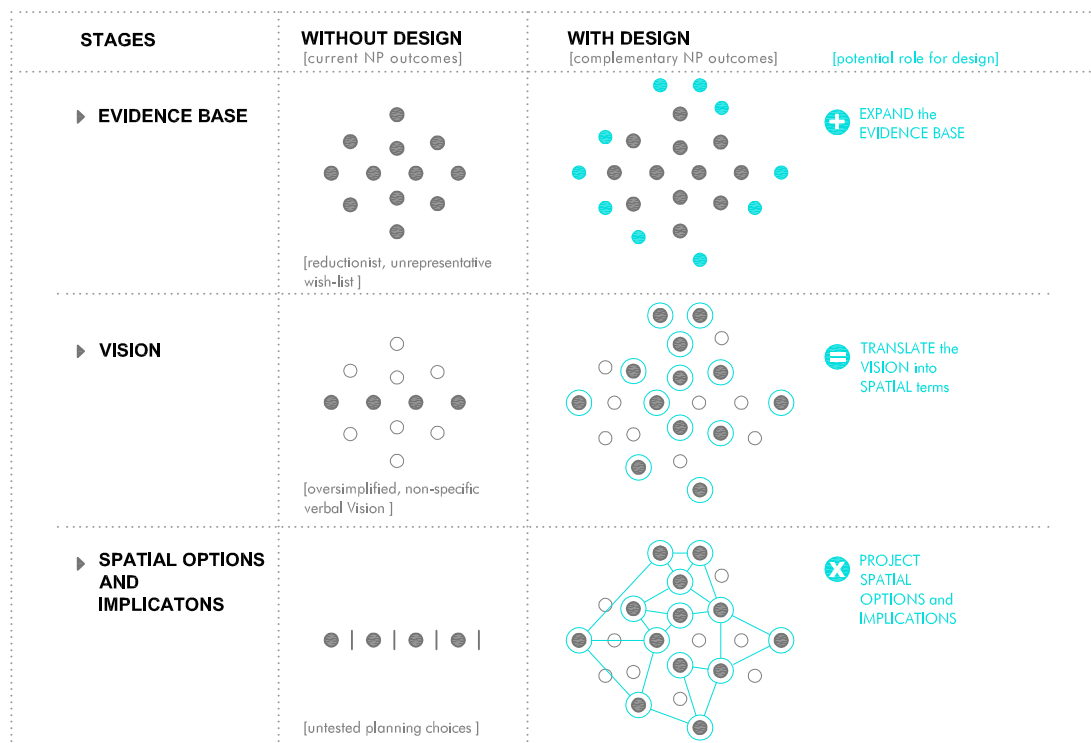


Figure 3-7 Deficient stages in need of design

Stage 1: Building the Evidence-Base

In the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans, the task of building the evidence-base is mainly done through countless consultation exercises to gather as many local opinions as possible.

The analysis of the Kentish Town Map of Process and Outcomes (2016) reveals that the plan was prepared over the course of 35 events (ie. workshops, meetings, exhibitions), 60% of which were open to the wider public. Even though there is a population of over 16,200 people within the Neighbourhood Area of KTNP, only an average of 57 people attended the events - with a maximum of just over 100 people attending one particular event (See Annexe 3-F). Moreover, the turnout of the referendum held on 9 June 2016 was 13.75%. Given the evidence, and despite the efforts of KTNF to engage the locals, it is clear that the plan suffers from a deficit in representation.

In light of this deficit, it is necessary to recognize that although increasing participation can serve as a useful starting point, “the practice of collecting individual ‘wish lists’” (Krivý & Kaminer, 2013, p.4) from a limited number of community members is insufficient for developing an evidence-base for preparing a Neighbourhood Plan.

This research suggests that these limitations won't be overcome by obtaining an even more representative sample of local needs collected in consultation and at engagement events, but rather by including specialists' sets of data (ie. spatial, functional, programmatic, aesthetic) obtained through design-led analysis of the neighbourhood.

Stage 2: Harnessing the Vision

Formulating the ‘vision’ is the crucial stage during which the objectives and priorities of a Neighbourhood Plan are defined. “These can relate to a wide range of planning and regeneration matters – social, economic and environmental” (Chetwyn, 2018, p. 22). This means that the ‘vision’ tends to cover a wide range of local aspirations, including some that go beyond spatial considerations and branch off into wider socio-political ambitions (ie. Chartsworth Road Neighbourhood Plan establishes in the ‘vision’ a need for the neighbourhood to be social, diverse, accessible, independent and sustainable).

Activists and local groups across London complain that “slippery terms like ‘sustainable’ and ‘diverse’” have become buzzwords in planning documents and are used “to legitimise almost any urban property development” (Edwards, 2013, p.26). This trend is also reflected in the Kentish Town case: concepts such as “accessibility” and “sustainability” were constantly brought up in the Forum’s early meetings and are explicitly mentioned in 60% of final policies (See Annexe 3-G). Moreover, 100% of the policies that refer specifically to the transformation of potential sites in the area “support proposals for sustainable development” (KTNF, 2016, p.51). However, this language is so broad as to open up the possibility that it will be interpreted quite differently by various actors involved in the development of such sites. The ‘vision’ therefore doesn't live up to the promise inherent in its name by failing to narrow down the definition of the kind of spatial changes needed in order to advance toward the Forum’s initial intentions.

It is necessary to recognize that Neighbourhood Plans are only effective in responding to these demands insofar as the Plans outline spatial conditions that can be regulated through planning policy, that is, that require planning permission. If the ultimate purpose of community-led

plans is to “set boundaries round the power of market forces in their localities” (Just Space, 2016) then the spatial ambitions defined in the ‘vision’ must be radical enough to counter this power. “The quality of the development is dependent upon the quality of the design vision for a site or area” (CABE, 2006, p.36).

My research suggests that Neighbourhood Plans can effectively connect nebulous, overused concepts like sustainability, inclusion, accessibility, and diversity with the actual spatial implications of density, use, public realm, mobility, etc. that different types of development can offer. Design can take on the crucial role of translating the ‘vision’ into spatial terms thereby imbuing the planning process with heightened clarity and specificity.

Stage 3: Understanding Spatial Options and Implications

Once the ‘vision’ establishes the kind of spatial changes that are desirable within the neighbourhood, Neighbourhood Plans need to turn into propositional documents that provide guidance as to how these changes will be achieved in practice. This guidance is necessary because future “planning applications will be determined in accordance with the neighbourhood plan’s policies”, so “policies should provide a clear indication of how a decision maker should react to a development proposal” (Chetwyn, 2018, p. 22). Leaving important decisions to the subjective judgement of other actors involved in the planning process (ie. developers, landowners, masterplanners) sets the stage for conflict during later parts of the process of local space production.

At this point, it is necessary to understand that the Forum’s planning intentions can be delivered on the ground in a wide variety of spatial options. The more consideration the Forum gives to such options along with their spatial implications for the neighbourhood, the better the derived planning policies can guide future development.

In the case of Kentish Town, the Forum denounced a legacy of “inappropriate development over the decades” which has had “a negative impact on the visual amenity and sense of the area”(KTNF, 2016, p.12). However, during the preparation of the Plan, the task of considering possible spatial options for the neighbourhood was limited to a single design exercise within the Prince’s Foundation Workshop in July 2012. From the various spatial proposals that came out of that workshop, only the redevelopment of Kentish Town Square was visualized through concept plans and a perspective drawing. Those visualizations are some of the very few added to the Plan to illustrate the textual policies. It is not a coincidence then that the policies referring to that area are the most “concise and unambiguous” and able to “give clear requirements for development” (Chetwyn, 2018, p. 23).

However, this style of design-led procedure is an exception within the whole Neighbourhood Plan, in which the aims of the ‘vision’ are often turned into a list of verbal demands directly written as policies. This research suggests that prior to policy writing, rather than merely popping up in the occasional workshop, a design-led anticipation of the spatial options and related implications for the area should be considered an indispensable step in making informed planning decisions instead of largely remaining the exception to the rule.

Uncovering design deficiencies in Neighbourhood Planning policies

The design deficiencies in the above-mentioned stages lead to deficits in the outcome of the main process - the Neighbourhood Plan. The completed document reflects, in policy wording, the final planning decisions taken by the Forum with regard to future development.

Since the Localism Act 2011 does not prescribe the content of Neighbourhood Plans, the nature, scope and themes it addresses can differ enormously from case to case in response to the Forum's initial planning intentions. These intentions could be oriented toward setting out infrastructure requirements, site allocations, 'Local Green Space' designations, and addressing a wide variety of policy themes such as employment, town centres, housing, design, historic environments, natural environment, community facilities and transport, among others (Chetwyn, 2018, p. 24).

In addition, these Forums' intentions can be underpinned by pro- or anti-development approaches. Although the legislation clearly establishes that the Plans cannot be used to prevent development, research at national level published in 2014 by the planning consultancy Turley revealed that "more than half of the draft plans published for consultation (55%) have 'protectionist' agendas and many are openly anti-development" (Turley, 2014, p.26). Most Neighbourhood Forums operating in London (Map of Neighbourhood Planning in London, 2015) have been born out of existing local groups that have become actively engaged in planning matters due to an increasing discontent with the urban development options presented to them.

The varied motivation behind Forums' involvement in the planning process has resulted in a broad range of types of Neighbourhood Plans emerging across the capital, from strategic to detailed plans that "may address an area's weaknesses, build on its strengths and deal with any other issues identified" (Chetwyn, 2018, p. 23). The Kentish Town Neighbourhood Plan is typical in the sense that it has been formulated to inhabit the middle ground - a type of plan that combines both protectionist and pro-growth positions; with a balance between a significant number of policies oriented toward preserving what currently exists and those that deal with new development.

In this particular case, the document is structured in three different sections: General Development Policies, Spatial and Site Specific Policies, and Projects. General Development Policies refer to five different policy areas: Working & Shopping, Design, Getting Around, Green & Open Spaces, and Community & Culture. The planning policies for these areas of study were developed from June 2013 to January 2014 by six working groups of 4 to 12 people that included local residents and business representatives, KTNF committee members and Forum Advisors. Spatial and Site Specific Policies address the future transformation of particular areas within the neighbourhood, such as Kentish Town Square and Kentish Town Potential Development Area, as well as seven sites in need of redevelopment. Finally, the Projects section outlines "community aspirations that are not linked to land development or intended to form statutory planning policy or may not be achieved within the lifetime of the Plan" (KTNF, 2016, p.8).

If the main intention of the Forum was to "provide a framework for how planning decisions will be made in the Area, with clear policies to be followed and applied" (KTNF, 2016, p.6), the policies should be specific enough to guide spatially future development. Kentish Town Map of Process and Outcomes reveals that some of the Forum's initial intentions were translated

into imprecise policies that could be interpreted differently by developers; design could have helped “make their interpretation clear” and “ensure the policies are applied as intended” (Chetwyn, 2018, p. 23).

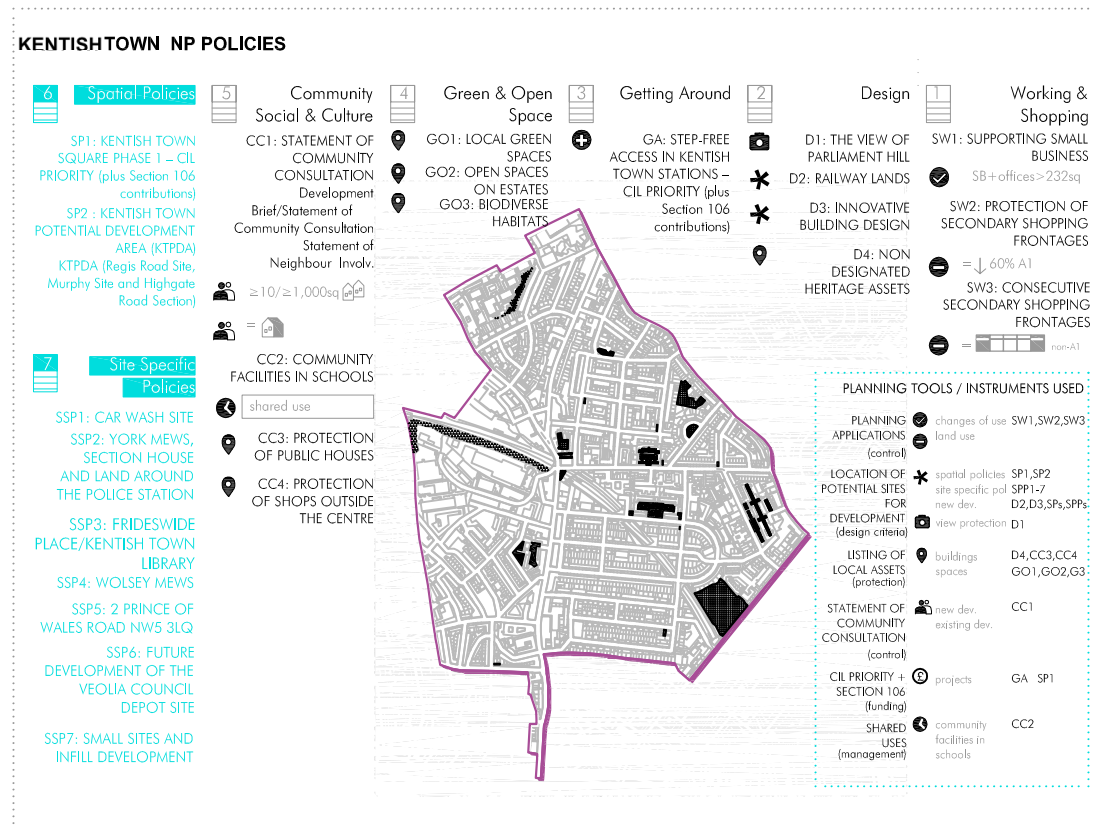


Figure 3-8 Kentish Town final policies with deficient policies in need of design highlighted in blue

There is a need for specificity, which in particular, applies to the ‘Spatial and Site Specific Policies’ and to three interconnected themes: density, typologies and public space (See Annex 3-H). Due to the inherent propositional nature of such policies, I argue, their formulation requires a different decision-making process where the role of design is particularly relevant (Figure 3-8).

All the Neighbourhood Plans with policies that address development in specific sites of the neighbourhood, risk suffering from the same lack of spatial specificity. My research suggests that this recurrent problem cannot be overcome without design informing some of the planning choices the Forum has to make throughout the plan’s preparation.

3.3 Opportunities for design within Neighbourhood Planning frameworks

The deficiencies in process and outcomes found in Kentish Town, as a paradigmatic case of Neighbourhood Planning practice, serve as a starting point to understand how the role of design in this context could be amplified and what benefits would be conferred.

This section anticipates some of the opportunities I see in Neighbourhood Planning settings

to revalue designers' skills, techniques and potential contribution, and in doing so, redefine design activity itself, "in [the] search for an alternative urban practice" (Fezer, 2010, p.1):

3.3.1 Potential to revalue design skills:

From technical, communicative, organisational to propositional skills of analysis, translation and anticipation

In the Kentish Town case, experts brought three main talents to the process of plan-making - technical guidance (AECOM, PAI), mediation (Independent Advisors), and community engagement skills (Prince's Foundation, RCA). The role of the designer unfolding based on these specific facets isn't at all rare because a narrow understanding of their role prevails that relegates them to playing the part of effective managers and enablers of the participatory dynamics inherent to Neighbourhood Planning.

As Jeremy Till points out in *The Negotiation of Hope* (2005), too often in participatory settings designer expertise is not used "transformatively", but rather their skills are used "instrumentally" to deliver previously known solutions. As a result, experts are "unable to re-imagine their knowledge from the perspective of the user" (Till, 2005, p.6) and extend their contributions beyond the technical, organisational and communicative.

The first volume of the RIBA guidelines designates architects as key contributors to Neighbourhood Planning practice in that "their specific skills of analysis, interpretation and visioning of place are vitally needed" (p.8). These are examples of designers' skills that can bridge the gap between the Forum's planning intentions and planning decisions at different stages of the process. For example, analytical thinking is essential in understanding the particular "cultural, social, and economic interrelationships" in the area as "a key way of comprehending 'the local'" (Hall, 2011, p.28); integrative and strategic abilities can help in the translation of planning intentions into spatial terms to avoid oversimplified visions; skills of synthesis are important to "coordinate designs qualitatively on the more concrete level" (Steinø, 2013, p.186) and anticipate the spatial consequences of the planning choices prior to policy writing.

Neighbourhood Planning processes present an invaluable opportunity to revalue the designer skill set as essential for succeeding in the production of Plans that are responsive to the neighbourhood's needs and aspirations.

3.3.2 Potential to revalue design techniques:

From engagement techniques to co-design techniques

In the documentation of Kentish Town Neighbourhood Planning process, disproportionate attention is given to the techniques applied in the collection of data rather than those used for data processing – validation, classification, filtering and incorporation of these data into the decision-making process. Other than mentioning that "some policies were discarded or transformed" as a result of the public events, the reports don't sufficiently clarify how spatial knowledge was generated and used to inform design judgements and planning choices. This omission stems from the fact that design techniques and engagement techniques tend to be used interchangeably to describe the production of design knowledge and its derived

outcomes.

Whereas a wide range of *engagement* techniques (Community Place, 2014) are increasingly becoming available in Neighbourhood Planning, too little consideration is given to developing appropriate *design* techniques. As opposed to *engagement* techniques that refer to the “tools for ideation and expression” (Sanders & Stappers, 2008, p. 12) of users’ desires and needs, *design* techniques are focused on capturing the design rationale as it unfolds in the co-design process by making the reasons behind design decisions explicit.

For example, scenario testing is a design technique that AECOM is starting to explore with some local groups: in Leek Wootton and Guy’s Cliffe, designers developed a number of density options for a brownfield identified as potential development site; the exercise allowed the local group to debate “about how various densities of housing would affect the setting and historical character” and propose a “preferred sensitive option” that was turned into a design code for the plan (Locality, 2018, p.1).

Neighbourhood Planning settings offer a genuine opportunity to revalue design techniques that articulate both the “tacit-localised” knowledge of users (Natarajan, 2013, p.10) and the specialised-abstract knowledge of experts in order to conceive of new spatial responses for the Neighbourhood Plans.

3.3.3 Potential to revalue design contribution:

From conventional solutions to alternative responses

As long as designers’ propositional skills remain diminished and appropriate design techniques underexplored, Neighbourhood Plans are likely to continue reproducing the same spatial outcomes at local scale. In the case of Kentish Town, there was little consideration given to different development options prior to policy writing: only the above-mentioned event facilitated by the Prince’s Foundation generated some “visual proposals explaining where changes may happen, how places might function better and what they might look like” (CABE, 2016, p.3). Unfortunately, those proposals were not further explored and developed beyond that event. Although it is unclear why there was no further exploration, it is certain that, without designers going beyond the role of reactive facilitators towards a proactive position, the outcomes of the Neighbourhood Plans are limited to the repertoire of spatial solutions for transforming the neighbourhood that already exist. For Ezio Manzini, the cultures of “participation-ism and post-it design end up transforming design experts into administrative actors with no specific contributions to bring” (Manzini, 2016, p.58).

According to *Localism and Neighbourhood Planning: Power to the People?* (Brownill & Bradley, 2017), one of the main motivations for local groups to create a statutory plan is that they “wanted to be able to shape the design, timing, location and scale of development in their own area - and in a way that their local planning authority had not in the past” (p.87). If they don’t want the planning system to continue replicating its current shortcomings as relates to delivering social, economic, political and environmentally appropriate spatial strategies, there is potential to use Neighbourhood Planning participatory frameworks to envision “alternative aesthetics and spatialities” (Jones, Petrescu & Till, 2005, p.15). The introduction of a spatial approach to planning, I argue, is the major contribution designers could bring into the process.

As Prof. Matthew Carmona points out in one of his online articles, current plans remain far from being inextricably linked to urban design aspirations, they tend to use “fairly generic development management policies as a substitute for spatial vision. (...) The ‘spatial’, in this sense, seems to have been lost from planning, to be replaced with the ‘standard’” (Carmona, 2015). The lack of the ‘spatial’ broadens the disconnect between planning and design, a division that is rooted in the education system as they are taught as separate and unrelated disciplines in postgraduate courses, and extends to the professional world with artificial demarcations and sequential logics of local space production - first comes planning, later comes design.

In the same vein, the revised National Planning Policy Framework updated in July 2018, which “has a stronger emphasis on design than its predecessor” (Kaur & Tewis-Allen, 2018, p.1), explicitly mentions that Neighbourhood Planning offers a genuine opportunity for a shift in local planning actors’ approach to design¹⁴.

I share this encouraging outlook. But in light of my research findings, for a positive shift toward design to take place, designers would have to develop a more propositional role within the process that re-centers their focus away from increasing participation and instead toward re-establishing the emphasis on design as the main driver of neighbourhood transformation. This hypothesis will be further explored in Chapter C through a new design-led framework for Neighbourhood Planning that will seek to take advantage of the above-mentioned opportunities.

14 Paragraph 125 of the NPPF says: “Plans should, at the most appropriate level, set out a clear design vision and expectations, so that applicants have as much certainty as possible about what is likely to be acceptable. Design policies should be developed with local communities so they reflect local aspirations, and are grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each area’s defining characteristics. Neighbourhood plans can play an important role in identifying the special qualities of each area and explaining how this should be reflected in development.”

(Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2018, p.38)

Chapter 4: Design beyond the Localism Act 2011

This chapter explores the potential of design and the designer in Neighbourhood Planning.

Neighbourhood Plans are currently primarily text-based documents, in which spatial change is articulated through a collection of planning policies that are verbally discussed but rarely visualized. In the decision-making environment, visualizations force participants to go one step further, because they translate abstract verbal intentions into concrete future scenarios that can be tested and contested. This scenario-testing activity visualizes the scope and impact of the neighbourhood transformations proposed by the locals, thereby providing a solid common ground for the discussion on planning and policy choices.

As exemplified in the case of Kentish Town Neighbourhood Plan, without such spatial approach to the discussion, the resulting policies are too general to become operative for the given context (See Chapter 3, Section 3.2.3). This lack of a specifically visual dimension in spatial policies in Neighbourhood Planning plays to the advantage of other actors (ie. developers, local authorities, built-environment professionals) in decision-making and therefore contributes to exacerbating some of the democratic deficits observed within these processes and described in previous chapters of this PhD. Design, by visually demonstrating the spatial consequences of different planning choices, could reverse this trend and provide a level playing field for the negotiation.

Therefore, there exists a role for designers in Neighbourhood Planning that remains underexplored. As proponents of visual scenarios that inevitably require professional expertise and training to produce, designers can introduce a spatial approach to planning that would impact both the forcefield of existing power relations that is a Neighbourhood Planning process, and the future local landscape the Neighbourhood Plan intends to produce.

An analysis of the first wave of Neighbourhood Plans and Forums operating across London reveals that the kind of spatial dimension that design can offer in the context of planning is yet to come. According to Jessop (as cited in Allmendinger & Haughton, 2009), spatial planning has not yet served to re-imagine policy-making processes and inform the outcomes; it is “in effect unable to offer a more creative role in generating alternative ways of confronting the consequences of uneven development” (p. 2547). This is because the emerging plans are confined to a narrow range of choices that already exist (ie. land use, site allocation, protection of certain spaces and aesthetic values), thereby making those plans “inherently reactive” to the planning system. Instead, design could proactively challenge this trend and allow “spatial planning to develop in new directions” (p. 2548).

As advanced in Chapter 3, there have been recent hopeful signs that the importance of design in Neighbourhood Planning is starting to be taken into consideration. The brand-new Forum support packages in *Masterplanning* and *Design including Design Codes*, introduced in 2018, encouraged Forums “to establish a high level vision and start to detail up the designs that would be welcome” (Locality, 2018, p.13). To achieve said objective, “plans, drawings, illustrations,

3D sketches and mapping” will be produced by an AECOM team of urban designers with a view to being directly included in Neighbourhood Plans “as policies, supporting text or evidence-base documents” (p.13). This approach is aligned with the argument for design that I make in this PhD. However, we don’t yet know how many Forums will apply for these support packages, how the collaboration between designers and locals is working, nor how the design input is affecting, if at all, the resulting Neighbourhood Plans. It is too early to evaluate how these recent changes are contributing to broadening the scope of design activities in Neighbourhood Planning frameworks, so we need another way to demonstrate and communicate the value of design in this context.

For this reason, I use the Kentish Town case to present in this chapter a proposal for an amplified role for design in Neighbourhood Planning that would make better use of designers’ skills and techniques beyond their current contribution. Having unveiled in the previous chapter, the need for design in both the stages of the process and the related deficient policies, I propose a design-led framework that seeks to overcome such deficiencies and reconnect the initial planning intentions of the Forum with their final planning decisions. To conclude, I discuss how this mode of operation necessitates the re-valorisation of not only the designer’s expertise but also of the designer’s potential contribution to Neighbourhood Planning practices.

4.1 A design-led framework for Kentish Town

Rather than delivering a prescription for all Neighbourhood Planning processes, in this chapter I develop a design-led framework for the Kentish Town case that illustrates the timing, procedure, and outcome of design input the way it could have been introduced in an empirical case.

According to the common path predefined by Neighbourhood Planning protocols, it can be said that the nature of the Neighbourhood Plan is determined as the ‘evidence-base’, ‘vision’, and ‘spatial options and implications’ stages unfold – a process of consideration that takes place prior to the articulation of those stages into planning policies. This sequence of phases varies within each particular Neighbourhood Planning process as does their duration; continuity and consistency in the outcomes of one stage versus another also varies.

However, as Kentish Town Neighbourhood Plan exemplifies, the lack of design as a driving force for navigating those stages and building cumulative spatial knowledge across them inevitably leads to deficient planning policies. In particular, those policies that hope to express more than a ‘wish list’ of verbal demands and require spatial specificity to guide future development that is spatially in line with the Forum’s aspirations. In Kentish Town, the design deficit is remarkably explicit in the ‘Spatial and Site Specific Policies’ that relate to the intersections between the Forum’s concerns on density, typologies and public space.

Drawing on this diagnosis of the Kentish Town process and outcomes (further developed in Chapter 3), I introduce, in the following sections, a design-led discussion aimed at informing planning choices:

The discussion first unpacks the Forum’s initial intentions as regards the above-mentioned policy areas: density, typologies, public space. I explain how these three themes, frequently brought up in the Forum’s activities, are addressed in the final policies of the Neighbourhood

Plan.

Secondly, I propose three Design Demonstrations (DDs) to explore the potential contribution of design to inform said policy areas (see Figure 4-1). Each of the Design Demonstrations unveils the contribution of design at different stages of plan preparation: first, the potential of design as a method of analysis of the neighbourhood to expand the evidence-base (DD1); second, the potential of design as a method of translation of the proposed vision into spatial terms (DD2); and third the potential of design as a method of projection of possible options and their spatial implications for the future transformation of the neighbourhood (DD3).

And finally, I advance how this kind of design-led discussion could have affected the planning decisions of the Forum and, accordingly, the final planning policies.

This reconstruction of the Kentish Town case from a design perspective seeks to lay out a field of potential departures for designers working in Neighbourhood Planning.

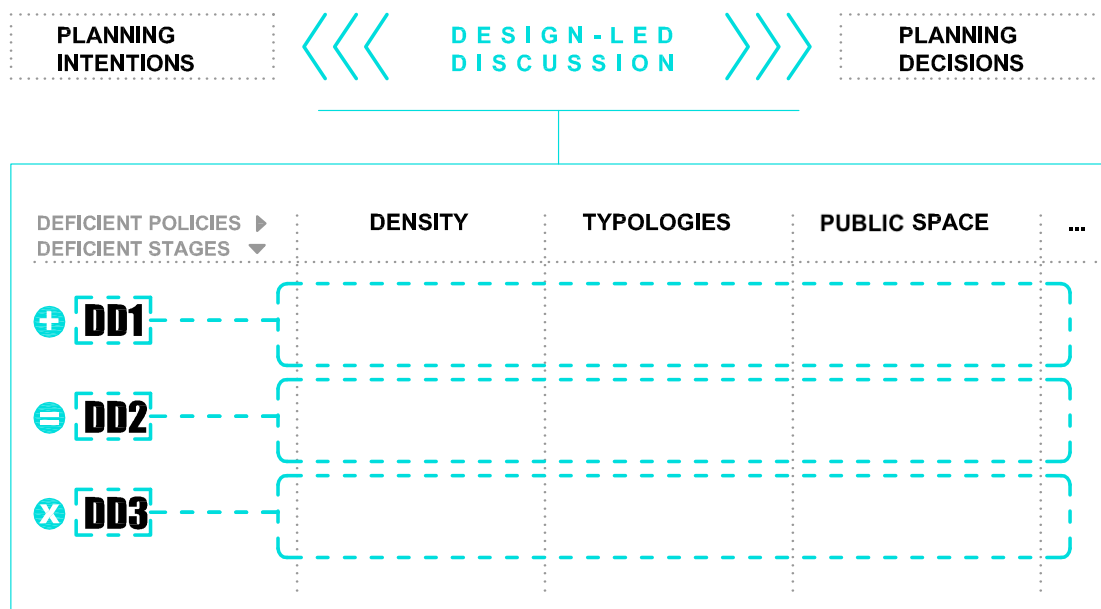


Figure 4-1 Diagram illustrating the structure of the design-led framework for Kentish Town

4.2 Integrating design in the Kentish Town case: Current Neighbourhood Plan and complementary outcomes

4.2.1 Planning intentions

Neighbourhood Planning requires “a comprehensive and rational framework for structuring a decision problem, for representing and quantifying its elements, for relating those elements to overall goals, and for evaluating alternative solutions” (Majumder, 2015, p.39). In this sense, the process implies establishing preferences among planning options “by reference to an explicit set of objectives that the decision making body has identified”. Therefore, the first step is that of intention-setting. Though designers are not typically consulted in that first phase, as was the case in Kentish Town, any design-led approach to Neighbourhood Planning must be rooted in the original planning intentions of the Forum.

In this section I first determine some of the Forum’s initial goals when formulating Policies SP2 and SP2a, in particular, and what the Forum wanted to achieve in terms of density, typologies and public spaces in the future re-development of the Regis Road Site. And secondly, I explain why the final version of these policies is inappropriate for delivering their objectives, in addition to describing the consequences of not addressing policy inefficiencies.

Kentish Town Neighbourhood Forum Aim: BALANCED DENSITY

How does the Kentish Town Neighbourhood Plan address density?

Since the initial public meetings of the preparation of the Kentish Town Neighbourhood Plan, the Forum made explicit the intention to identify “areas of sensible development” in a Draft Statement of General Policies and Objectives: “We will go into considerable detail about what we want and do not want” (KTNF, 2015, p.62). One of the first areas identified by the Forum was the Regis Road Site, 7.5 hectares of underused land that could benefit from a “potential intensification of the site through additional mixed use development” (KTNF, 2016, p.44). The local Council also emphasizes that this area “offers a significant opportunity to deliver higher density industrial provision as part of a redevelopment scheme that will also deliver a substantial increase in homes and jobs” and that any planning framework referring to that area should be prepared in partnership with key landowners, the Kentish Town Neighbourhood Forum and other stakeholders” (LB Camden, 2016, p.29). This collective endeavour was pursued in public and internal meetings over the course of five years and collected in Policies SP2 and SP2a of the final version of the Plan.

The final policies reflect one of the major concerns of the Forum: “(...) Future development should reflect the capacity, density, scale of this an inner London location (...)” (KTNF, 2016, p.46). The original planning intention of KTNF is that these policies “deliver the long-term goal of a balanced and vibrant neighbourhood” (KTNF, 2016, p.6).

However, the lack of further definition of this policy makes the policy inefficient to meet the Forum’s expectations.

Firstly because, as stated by Planning Aid England in *How to write planning policies* (RTPI, 2014, p.9), policies in a neighbourhood plan should add “value to the existing policy framework” and not just repeat what has already been covered in higher tiers of planning. In this case,

the Camden Local Plan already has a Design and Heritage policies section establishing that re-developments in areas of growth should consider “(...) the prevailing pattern, density and scale of surrounding development” (LB Camden, 2016, p.223). In this case, the Local and Neighbourhood Plans have the same level of specificity regarding density matters though the latter document was originally intended to provide a locally-driven response to the particularities of a specific neighbourhood area.

The Plan would also fall short of Forum expectations because open interpretations of what ‘balanced density’ is for areas such as the Regis Road Site might cause conflicts of interests at later stages of the planning process, such as the preparation of planning applications. Here, the Forum has missed an opportunity to clearly define a desirable density range, support that choice with evidence and provide their decision with legal back up through a Neighbourhood Plan.

Kentish Town Neighbourhood Forum Aim: INTEGRATED TYPOLOGY

What does Kentish Town Neighbourhood Plan say about typologies?

The question of how to “use neighbourhood planning to influence the type, design, location and mix of new development” was first raised in the Second Public Meeting and Consultation in October 2011. Back then, the small group of about 20 attendees was unclear about the level of detail planning policies could achieve. But they concluded that since the Localism Act 2011 didn’t introduced restrictions as to content, Neighbourhood Plans could address typological aspirations, together with Neighbourhood Development Orders (that directly grant planning permission for certain types of development to go ahead). The Forum’s concern over the spatial outcomes of future development within the area is expressed in the “Vision and Objectives” of the Plan:

High quality design development in the Kentish Town Plan Area will illustrate understanding of the site and its context in terms of grain, shape, scale and use of materials and will contribute to the existing character (KTNF, 2016, p.12).

Policy SP2a is supposed to complement Policy D3 towards a desired type of development for the Regis Road site. However, the only addition in design terms is that “Developers will be encouraged not to obstruct the view of Parliament Hill from the canopy area besides Kentish Town Station with the height and bulk of proposed development (...)”. It is notable that Policy D1 had already covered the intention to preserve the view in that area.

Again, there is an ineffective duplication of the policies and the failure of the Plan to add specificity when needed. Although the Plan warns that in recent years “inappropriate development” and “badly designed buildings have been approved by Camden despite local opposition”(p.23), its design policies remain completely open to the subjective judgment of other actors -developers, local authorities, landowners, etc.- thus missing an opportunity to fulfil the original planning intention.

Kentish Town Neighbourhood Forum Aim: IMPROVED PUBLIC SPACE

What does Kentish Town Neighbourhood Plan say about public spaces?

The Weekend of Walkabouts that the Forum organized in April 2012 was the first exercise of

collective analysis on the existing conditions of the local environment. In the guidance criteria for undertaking the task, “public realm issues” and necessary improvements to “public space” were among the suggested things “to look out for and make note of during the walkabout” (KTNF, 2015, p.65).

One report from a Walkabout participant explicitly demonstrates the Forum’s interest in using the Neighbourhood Plan to address public space deficiencies: “one of the big challenges we face is the planning values (or lack of) in our public realm”. Although there has been a longstanding and explicit commitment to public realm quality in successive National Planning Policy Frameworks, London-wide frameworks such as the London Plan (GLA, 2017) and supplementary documents such as *City Public Realm: People, Places, Projects* (City of London Corporation, 2016), as well as borough-wide guidance such as *Public open space* (London Borough of Camden, 2017); the participant gave examples of open spaces in Kentish Town that are designed, laid out and managed “without real thought and imagination”, suffering from underuse, proliferation of car parks and storage areas, and inadequate pavement, lighting and landscaping features. But mainly, what the participant found problematic was the traditional council “top-down” approach to the provision and configuration of public space that doesn’t inquire as to residents’ needs:

But the lack of concern about residents’ perceptions, the lack of joined up thinking (as each council silo focuses on its own narrow brief), the lack of efficient, effective use of valuable inner city space all cry out low aspiration and lack of interest in the public realm (KTNF, 2015, p.70).

Neighbourhood Plan preparatory sessions were seen as an opportunity to counter this trend and jointly discuss “not just the buildings we like and want to keep”, but also how public spaces could become “more useful, more appreciated, contributing more to quality of life” (KTNF, 2015, p.70).

From then on, design-related details about neighbourhood spaces were raised periodically in the Forum’s public and internal meetings until one of the working groups set up in June 2013 took over the formulation of planning policies specifically concerned with ‘Green and Open Space’. This is the umbrella term used to describe the Neighbourhood Planning policies oriented to protect existing public green areas, open spaces on council and private estates and areas of biodiverse habitats -Policies GO1, G2O2, GO3. Spatial policies that regulate new development, such as Policy SP2a for Regis Road Site, also refer to the provision of different open space types: “Green spaces, play spaces, leisure facilities and fully accessible public squares are provided in accordance with Camden policies DP31 and CS15” (KTNF, 2016, p.44).

However, the above-mentioned Camden policies mainly consist of standards and thresholds that address needs and deficiencies of open space in quantitative terms. They fail in advancing more details of the requirements for open spaces to be thought of as ‘public’ that could drive a set of normative principles for public space generation in Kentish Town development areas. These requirements, as the participant of the walkabouts perspicaciously pointed out, are to be defined locally and collectively at the heart of the Neighbourhood Plan so that “a different ethos in designing (or redesigning) such areas” might be achieved in later development stages (KTNF, 2015, p.70).

4.2.2 Design-led discussion: Analysis, translation and projection

Upon reflection, it became evident that though the Forum's concerns were laid out as they embarked on the planning process, the final policies for achieving balanced density, integrated typologies, and improved public space lacked the specificity that a design-led discussion could impart.

The Design Demonstrations I present here explore specific options for how designers' skills and techniques might inform the Forum's planning choices. First, design is presented as a way to complement their analysis of the area. Second, design is explored as a vehicle for ensuring the visual and spatial translation of the Forum's overall aims. And finally, design projections visualize potential spatial outcomes and the consequences of choosing one option versus another.

4.2.2.1 Design Demonstration 1 [DD1]: DESIGN as a method of ANALYSIS

According to Carmona (2005), the first step for effective policy writing is an "in-depth understanding of local context" and "evaluation of an area's characteristics and needs" (p.9). Design has the potential to drive this stage of the Neighbourhood Planning process by way of analysing the existing local landscape.

Designers have long developed and applied site analysis techniques. In the Kentish Town case, I propose in DD1 an analysis of the neighbourhood through direct observation on-site. To do so, I first define the design elements that best describe the spatial conditions of density, typology and public space to be observed; and secondly, I select the areas within the neighbourhood where those conditions are best exemplified. Design is used here to make them explicit, operational and understandable for decision-makers.

It is necessary to recognize that every analysis is a reductive interpretation of local conditions into a restricted number of comprehensible elements "that can be represented and put into operation to study" (Van Der Voordt & De Jong, 2002, p.447). Consequently, the designer necessarily influences the subject under study; although systematic and empirical, experts can only provide a subjective, external and specialist frame of reference for the discussion. The value of the designer's input at this stage lies in putting this kind of specialised design knowledge at the service of the Forum so it can interact with the "tacit-localised" knowledge of the users (Natarajan, 2013, p.10) gathered through public and internal meetings.

The walkabouts would be an exercise perfectly suited for the designer to offer a structured spatial analysis for the Forum as it begins the Neighbourhood Planning process. On the one hand, this analysis has the potential to inform the next stages of the design-led discussion as described in the following sections. And on the other hand, it could directly expand the Evidence Base of the Plan, which as evaluated in Chapter 3 Section 3.2.3, needs to be complemented to adequately inform planning decisions.

In order to demonstrate such potential, this section is organized around the design-led analysis of the three themes of density, typology and public space. For each theme, I first provide a brief description of how it is usually defined in the British planning system. And second, I propose how the designer could complement such an approach by incorporating in the discussion a set of design elements and spatial qualities related to the theme under study.

Those design elements and spatial qualities reflect the Forum’s concerns, various interest groups’ positions and overlooked experts’ perspectives on each theme, and ultimately, establish a frame of reference for the discussion against which to judge planning decisions.

ANALYSING DENSITY IN KENTISH TOWN

How is density measured in planning documents?

According to the study *Defining, Measuring and Implementing Density Standards in London* (Gordon, Mace & Whitehead, 2016), the use of density measurements in planning documents responds to the need of anticipating both the capacity of an area to accommodate housing needs and “that of appropriate built form” (p.10) to provide sustainable development. Different planning systems across the world vary in the way in which density is described: from quantitative measurements (ie. number of dwellings, habitable rooms and square metres) to qualitative design specifications (ie. physical relationships between built and unbuilt environment and typologies of development), to person-based measurements (ie. persons per hectare).

In the London context, density guidance, first introduced by the London Planning Advisory Committee (LPAC) in the late 1990’s, has evolved to balance quantitative and qualitative descriptors into a 9-cell matrix that links accessibility and local context. Since 2004, Mayoral London Plans have used the SQR Matrix as an operational tool to articulate city-wide spatial development strategies and borough-level planning decisions about density. The *GLA Density Project 4: Exploring Character and Development Density* report (Arup, 2016) describes how the matrix has been updated over time, with the initial removing of the car parking category and the incorporating of “setting” categories (suburban, urban, central), and later on introducing the accessibility index of the Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL) and the combining of locational and typological factors within the definition of “setting” (p.9). As indicated in Table 1, the most recent version of the matrix has been simplified and establishes the upper and lower density limits of habitable rooms per hectare in relation to three broad bands of PTAL levels on the one hand; and three settings -central, urban and suburban- on

	Setting	Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL)		
		0 to 1	2 to 3	4 to 6
Indicative Average Dwellings size	Suburban	150 - 200 hr/ha	150 - 250 hr/ha	200 - 350 hr/ha
	3.8 - 4.6 hr/unit	35 - 55 u/ha	35 - 65 u/ha	45 - 90 u/ha
	3.1 - 3.7 hr/unit	40 - 65 u/ha	40 - 80 u/ha	55 - 115 u/ha
	2.7 - 3.0 hr/unit	50 - 75 u/ha	50 - 95 u/ha	70 - 130 u/ha
	Urban	150 - 250 hr/ha	200 - 450 hr/ha	200 - 700 hr/ha
	3.8 - 4.6 hr/unit	35 - 65 u/ha	45 - 120 u/ha	45 - 185 u/ha
	3.1 - 3.7 hr/unit	40 - 80 u/ha	55 - 145 u/ha	55 - 225 u/ha
	2.7 - 3.0 hr/unit	50 - 95 u/ha	70 - 170 u/ha	70 - 260 u/ha
	Central	150 - 300 hr/ha	300 - 650 hr/ha	650 - 1100 hr/ha
	3.8 - 4.6 hr/unit	35 - 80 u/ha	65-170 u/ha	140 - 290 u/ha
	3.1 - 3.77 hr/unit	40 - 100 u/ha	80 - 210 u/ha	175 - 355 u/ha
	2.7 - 3.0 hr/unit	50 - 110 u/ha	100 - 240 u/ha	215 - 405 u/ha

Figure 4-2 SQR Density Matrix. Source: Greater London Authority

the other. The description of settings combines quantifiable proximity to town centres and built environment characteristics that remain open to local interpretation.

In the context of Neighbourhood Plan preparation, the significance of numerical density thresholds in the SQR Matrix can be taken as a starting point, but might remain opaque for local residents if the data are not framed in relation to the “qualities of the physical and ambient environment” as well as to local “behaviours, needs and perceptions” (Boyko and Cooper, 2011, p.4).

How can designers best describe what ‘balanced density’ means in Kentish Town?

The recent work by designers Christopher T. Boyko and Rachel Cooper (2011) *Clarifying and re-conceptualising density* examines the contested concept of density and the role it plays in the design of urban environments. The authors review 75 density-related studies coming from academic and practice literature from the planning, urban studies, and environment-behavior disciplines that discuss density definitions (Alexander, 1993; Rapoport, 1975), calculating measurements, as well as debates on the positive and negative impact of increasing density in relation to economic (Dave, 2011; Churchman, 1999), social (Jacobs, 1961; Mitchell, 1971, Batty, Besussi, Maat & Harts, 2003), psychological (Walton, Murray, & Thomas, 2008) and environmental factors (Haughton & Hunter, 2003; Burton, Jenks & Williams, 2016).

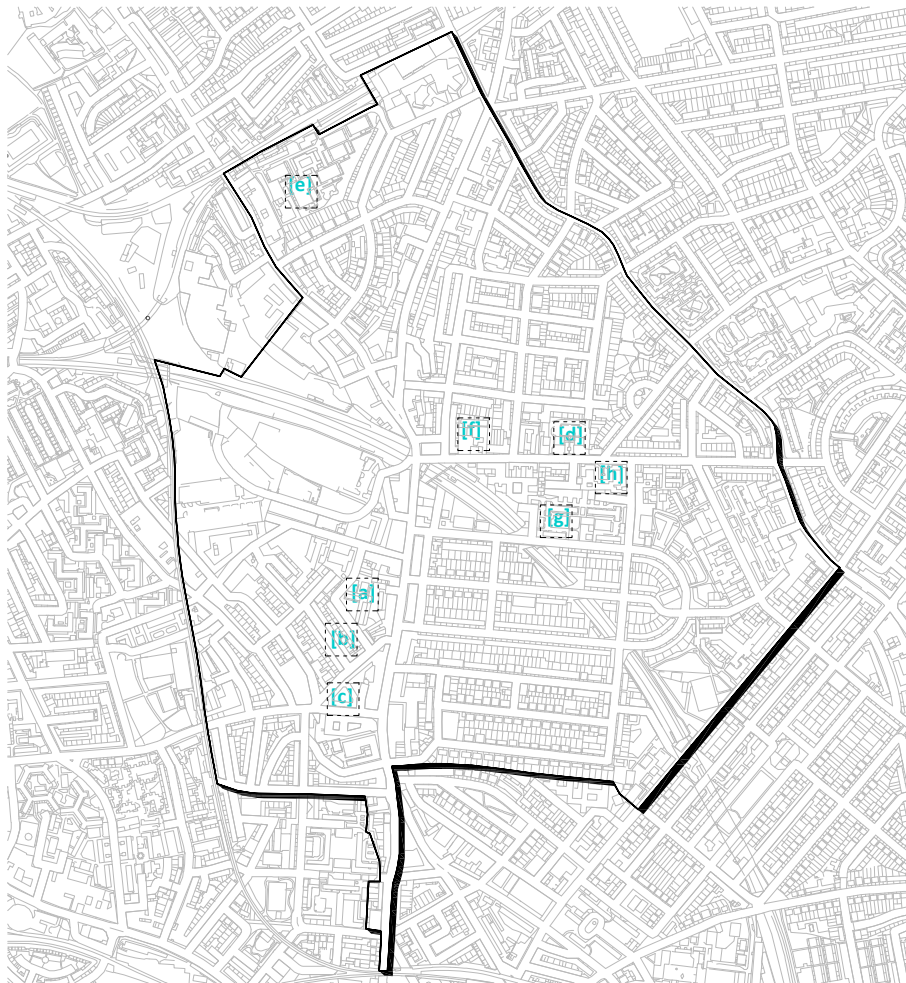
The study concludes that “policy needs to be more versatile in its conceptualisation of density” (p.52) to balance ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ elements of density: the former refers to quantitative calculations, while the latter focuses on the physical and perceived qualities of the urban environment. Both ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ design elements respond to the wide range of interests of different decision-making actors: local authority planners; landowners and developers; transportation, water and infrastructure engineers; architects and neighbours. A ‘balanced density’ therefore requires “an understanding of the differences in needs and expectations of relevant groups so that they can offer choices that can meet these needs and expectations” (Churchman, 1999, p. 408).

In order to broaden decision-makers’ understanding of density-related policies and their consequences for the built environment, it is necessary to add to the evidence base a designed analysis of the different existing densities within the Neighbourhood Area.

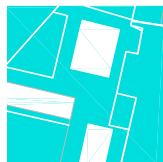
‘Hard’ elements of density (dwellings per hectare)

As described in the previous section, spatial density in London planning policy is viewed mostly as the number of dwellings per area (DETR, 1998). This quantitative measurement used in the SQR Matrix allows for establishing comparisons between density ranges within the neighbourhood and across London. The study of the local conditions of density begins with a catalogue of tiles of urban fabric from within the neighbourhood area, comparable in size and measured in dwellings per hectare (Figure 4-3). The samples cover the great variety of typological situations typically found across Kentish Town.

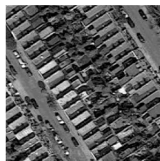
The analysis reveals that despite the morphological differences of the selected density samples, there is little distinction among them in terms of dwelling per hectare. This indicates that Kentish Town Neighbourhood Area has developed within a moderate density range, which serves as a starting point for the Forum’s discussion on density ranges that could be considered appropriate for new developments.



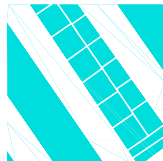
[a] 100-110 dwellings/ha



0.97 FAR



[b] 35-45 dwellings/ha



0.55 FAR



[c] 50-60 dwellings/ha



1.00 FAR



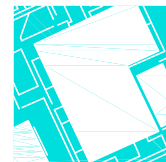
[d] 160-170 dwellings/ha



0.86 FAR



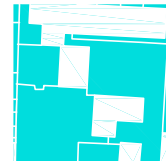
[e] 60-70 dwellings/ha



0.51 FAR



[f] 55-65 dwellings/ha



0.41 FAR



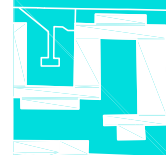
[g] 155-165 dwellings/ha



1.18 FAR



[h] 160-170 dwellings/ha



1.05 FAR

Figure 4-3 Analysis of existing densities in Kentish Town Neighbourhood Area

However, from the perspective of the designer, a purely demand-led approach to density is insufficient for decision-making. The conceptualisation of density in dwellings per hectare is limited to an abstract quantitative relationship between buildings and open space, but it doesn't indicate the living implications and the quality of the resulting environment. However, this interdependent relation is one of the 'soft' design elements that most affects perceived density (Cooper Marcus & Sarkissian, 1986).

'Soft' design elements of density (FAR)

Designers have long used the solid/void correlation within the urban fabric for understanding the spatial consequences of density. Architects concerned with shaping the city have worked with the articulation of building masses and open space as two complementary halves of one and the same entity (Farhady & Nam, 2009) with "positive space (P-space)" and "negative space (N-space)" in need of reconciliation (Ashihara, 1981). In planning practice, Plot Ratio or Floor Area Ratio (FAR) metrics first appeared in the 1961 Zoning Resolution in New York to relate bulk of building and land (Kayden, New York City Department of City Planning, & Municipal Art Society of New York, 2000). FAR is the ratio of a building's usable floor area to the total area of the lot on which the building stands.

Although FAR measurements are not commonly used in the UK planning system, they have often been considered a more flexible regulatory device as they permit variable dimensions within an overall volume limit. FAR measurements have been "extensively adopted as standard indicators for the regulation of land-use zoning and development control" (Cheng, 2010, p.5) and are widely used in design briefing and development budgeting in "most European countries, the USA and Australia" (Williams, 2009, p.3).

With the guidance of designers, decision-makers can be provided with visualizations of the reciprocal relationship between built and open spaces within the neighbourhood. Figure 4-3 also analyses how the previous tiles of urban fabric perform in terms of FAR.

The understanding of both 'hard' and 'soft' design elements of density is the first step towards the balanced transformation of the neighbourhood initially sought by the Forum. However, it is also necessary to acknowledge that future density requirements can be accommodated through very different development typologies that bring very different spatial qualities to the neighbourhood. For example, the same FAR ratio can be achieved with different building heights and site coverage proportions.

ANALYSING TYPOLOGY IN KENTISH TOWN

How are typologies defined in planning documents?

Typological thinking has historically enriched architectural and design understanding of urban morphology, that is, the structure of urban form and its constituent elements (Kropf, 1993). In turn, as Tony Hall and Paul Sanders (2011) defend in their study *Morphological Design Control for Large-Scale City Development: A New Proposal*, morphological research has informed planning controls oriented to "ensure that new buildings and urban spaces embody the desired outcomes" (p.427).

KTNP refers to a list of planning documents that expand on the theme of types of development that are adequately integrated within local character: from very general supplementary planning guidance such as *Shaping Neighbourhoods: Character and Context* (GLA, 2014) to borough-specific reports such as *Camden Streetscape Design Manual* (Camden Council, 2005). The only document that provides a systematic review of building typologies within the area is the *Camden Character Study* produced in 2015 by Hugo Nowell, director of Urban Initiatives Studio. The firm's holistic approach to urban design, masterplanning and public realm design, is manifested in the way typologies are inventoried through "site observation and careful analysis of built form, urban morphology and land use" (Nowell, 2015, p. 10).

The study identifies 21 different typologies textually described in terms of building type and age, scale and massing, as well as street character, building interface and interface with the surrounding area and public realm.

The selection of typologies is used to characterize the neighbourhood as "largely composed of connected streets fronted by Victorian housing, in places interspersed with 20th Century estates". The inventory distinguishes among Victorian villas and terraces, early 20th century apartment blocks, low and medium/high rise post-war estates, factory conversions/studios, land dedicated to storage/distribution, mixed use areas and local centres.

The relationship between those kinds of buildings and their adjacent open spaces is also depicted as an important element of the typological description. There is a textual explanation of how dwellings are grouped, whether they provide street frontage and front-back contrasts, enclose shared courtyards or delineate large open areas, and other sorts of solid/void correlations. However, these considerations didn't inform Kentish Town Neighbourhood Plan.

Frequently, open spaces are either disregarded in typological analysis, or analysed separately from the built fabric. For example, London-wide policy guidance and strategies, and more locally, *Camden Open Space, Sports and Recreation Study* (Atkins, 2014); both include categorisations of open space types as autonomous entities such as parks, playgrounds or green pocket spaces. Consequently, planning policies for built and unbuilt neighbourhood space are often conceived independently.

How can designers describe what 'integrated typologies' means in Kentish Town?

Moving away from a theoretical academic discussion on how the concepts of type and typology are constructed and differentiated, in the context of preparation of KTNP, the Forum needs a typological discussion where not only buildings, but also the open spaces they configure are considered "an integral part of the urban fabric and contribute towards local character and distinctiveness" (Atkins, 2014, p.12).

In this sense, Nowell's study provides a practical starting point for the Forum to understand the relation between density and built form across Kentish Town. However, rather than verbally describing local typologies, the Forum needs a visual analysis capable of informing design criteria for the densification of the Regis Road site. This is why this study regroups the typologies identified Nowell's report with regards to two principal design elements that resonate with the Forum's concerns: scale and spatial configuration of built form and open space.

Scale and Configuration

Scale, as the size of buildings in relation to their surroundings, is fundamental in how neighbours perceive the impact of density in the area. As registered in the Consultation Statement produced by the Forum (2015), since the second public meeting of the Forum in October 2011, comments from participants pointed out the need to introduce limits to the buildings' heights (p.55) so they don't negatively affect the valued views of Kentish Town landscape:

"There is a beautiful open view to Hampstead Heath which will be blocked by oversized modern development" (p.124).

"Modern design will therefore be welcome where the height and massing of the new development or extension is in keeping with the surrounding area" (p.126).

The final POLICY SP2a for the redevelopment of Regis Road Site reflects this widespread interest on the visual experience of the site: 'the height of all buildings will therefore have to take into account the potential impact on views and will be limited in some circumstances to avoid obscuring sight lines' (KTNF, 2016, p.46). However, the suggestion of controlling height is not further explored, despite the comment of Camden Council on the Pre-Submission version of the Neighbourhood Plan that 'protecting the view as it exists today might restrict the positive opportunities for change anticipated' by this policy. Here, Camden officers explicitly refer to 'the role of design in ensuring that development is compatible with the identified view in terms of setting, scale and massing' (KTNF, 2015, p.221).

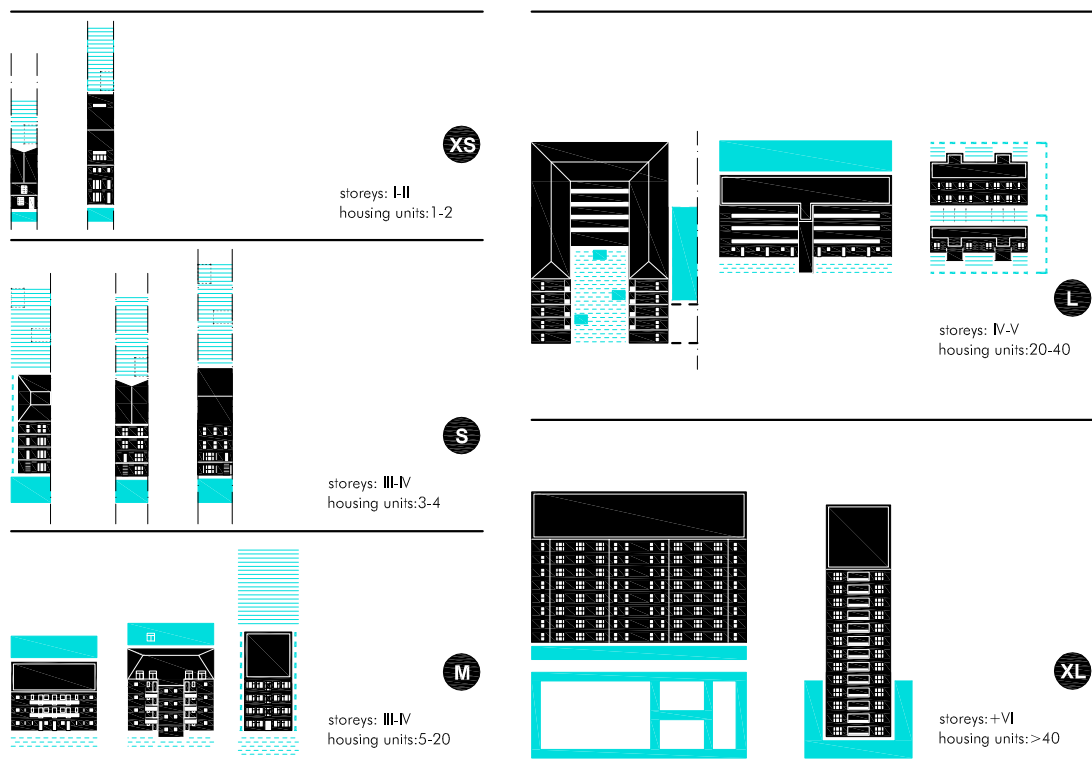


Figure 4-4 Analysis of existing typologies in Kentish Town according to their scale

Figure 4-4 characterizes five typologies of buildings and open spaces according to their differentiated scale: XS, S, M, L, XL.

In addition to scale, the Forum highlighted the importance of spatial configuration, as the

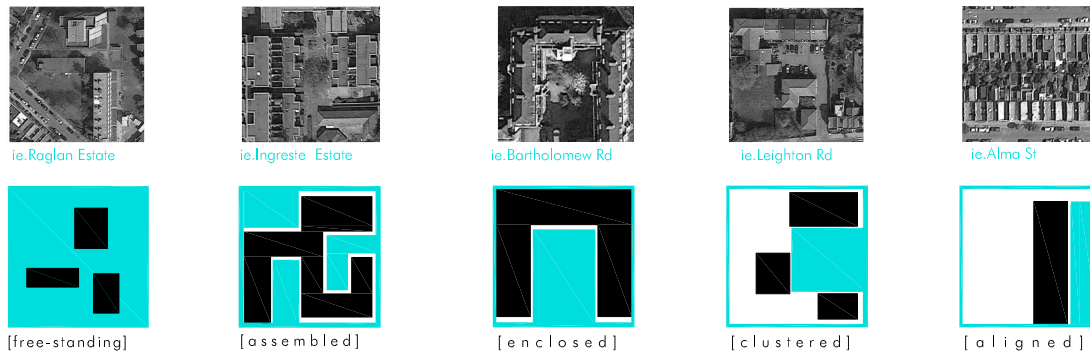


Figure 4-5 Analysis of existing typologies in Kentish Town according to their spatial configuration

arrangement of building masses in relation to the adjacent open spaces. This directly affects the pedestrian-level experience of the site and is considered essential for “generating spaces with public, semi-public or private character in which certain social practices of housing unfold” (Baldea & Dumitrescu, 2013, p.180).

Figure 4-5 classifies local typologies in terms of five spatial configurations that are repeatedly found in the area: free-standing, assembled, enclosed, clustered, aligned.

Design guidance developed from this kind of understanding of local typologies could be used to “stitch in and integrate development into its surroundings by virtue of its analytic tools for this analysis and the provision of a language” (Hall & Sanders, 2011, p.5).

Identity and diversity

The interplay between scale and configuration is essential to delivering design responses for Regis Road site that qualify the entire area spatially. But how does the Forum interpret whether new development schemes contribute to the quality of neighbourhood spaces? Particularly, if the “criteria by which one judges the quality or the performance of a solution are variable and are precisely what defines so many ideologies in architecture” (Malfroy, 2001, p.63).

Designers could help decision-makers explicitly state and visualize what spatial values they want to achieve. Firstly, the Forum’s main concerns regarding the future development of Regis Road is linked to their intent to retain “character and local identity” (Prince’s Foundation, 2012, p.47). This could be achieved by incorporating recognisable typologies in the design of the urban environment, and therefore reproducing some of the spatial qualities the residents value and identify with. Planners and designers often refer to spatial identity as place identity (Hernan & Fatima, 2012) or sense of place (Relph, 2008; Davenport & Anderson, 2005), thereby replacing the abstract concept of space with a notion of ‘place’ that embeds the interdependence of physical form, activities and meaning (Montgomery, 1998). Theoretical and practical accounts of spatial identity can be found in numerous environmental psychology, urban morphology and conservation studies (Stewart, Williams & Kruger, 2013). In the context of planning decisions for the Regis Road site, design strategies for spatial identity do not necessarily involve replicating existing architectural languages, but choosing typologies that reflect the underlying morphological and organizational patterns found in Kentish Town.

In the Forum’s Vision of the area, one of the objectives associated with design is that new development contributes to the existing character while adding “vitality to the local shopping streets” (KTNF, 2016, p.12): “KTNF aims to deliver the long-term goal of a balanced and

vibrant neighbourhood” (p.7). This could be achieved if new development continues to offer the diversity of local typologies and a mix of building sizes, ages and forms within the area that characterises Kentish Town.

The previous analysis of the existing conditions in the neighbourhood reveals that Kentish Town urban fabric combines a typological variety of buildings and outdoor spaces that the Forum values because they often function as “social spaces that allow community interaction” (KTNF, 2016, p.13). Precisely that emphasis on spatial diversity, inspired in Jane Jacobs’ observations on the connection between spatial diversity and the vitality of urban life (1961), has been the driver of numerous urban design and planning theories and practices in the US and Europe, including, notably, the advocacy planning movement and New Urbanism approaches. In the context of planning decisions for the Regis Road site, designers could demonstrate spatially how promoting a “diversity of building types will allow for a diverse range of jobs, (...) the coexistence of high- and low-income residents in the same area” (Sung, Lee, & Cheon, 2015, p.2) and that together with a mix of land uses and accessibility to facilities, it will “encourage high levels of walking activity” (p.13). And how this connects directly with other important Forum’s aspirations, such as the call for “car free” development “to improve the permeability” of the Regis Road site (KTNF, 2016, p.44).

ANALYSING PUBLIC SPACE IN KENTISH TOWN

How is public space defined in planning documents?

According to John R. Parkinson (2013), in his study *How is space public? Implications for spatial policy and democracy*, the prevalent conception of public space in British planning policy is that of “openly accessible space” (p.687).

This conceptualization is first expressed at national planning policy level, where the government’s Planning Policy Guidance PPG17 (DCLG, 2002) describes public spaces as outdoor spaces that include parks and public gardens, natural and semi-natural spaces (including wastelands and derelict open land), green corridors, outdoor sports facilities, amenity green spaces, provision for children and young people, allotments, community gardens and city farms, cemeteries, churchyards and other burial grounds, accessible countryside in urban fringe areas, civic spaces (including civic and market squares and other hard surfaced areas designed for pedestrians).

Furthermore, Parkinson’s analysis of a set of planning documents for London reveals that the term ‘open space’ also dominates the official discourse at the regional level and leaves more nuanced accounts of public space “absent from urban spatial policy” (p.683).

At the regional level, the London Plan also sets out a hierarchy of public open spaces by function and size that distinguishes among regional, metropolitan and district parks; local parks and open spaces; small open spaces, pocket parks and linear open spaces. Complementary to this approach, there is also a great emphasis on the concept of ‘public realm’, which “includes all the publicly-accessible space between buildings, whether public or privately owned, from alleyways and streets to squares and open spaces” in addition to some “internal or elevated spaces” (GLA, 2017, p.123). ‘Policy D7 Public realm’, in the chapter of the Plan dedicated to design -Chapter 3 Design-, explains that publicly accessible open spaces have “significant influence on quality of life” (p.23) and that they should be designed and managed by drawing on an in-depth “understanding of the types, location and relationship between public spaces

in an area, identifying where there are deficits for certain activities, or barriers to movement” (p.22).

The problem is that during the Kentish Town Neighbourhood Planning process, the Forum didn't pursue an in-depth analysis of neighbourhood public spaces and instead relied on borough-wide and local planning guidance to support the planning policies for “an improved public realm” (KTNF, 2016, p.8). For example, the Forum mentions that *Camden Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study* (Atkins, 2014) includes an assessment of needs and quality of supply of a number of types of open spaces and describes the values associated with them as mainly recreational, structural, amenity, historical/heritage, ecological, educational, cultural and social. In addition, the Forum mentions *The Value of Public Spaces* (CABE, 2014), a study that also includes the related economic value, the impact on physical and mental health, the benefits for children and young people, crime reduction and pedestrian movement.

Although those studies offer a useful starting point for a general reflection on the roles of open spaces within the neighbourhood area, neither document helps specify the spatial conditions needed for such spaces to be perceived and experienced as ‘public’ by locals. And more importantly, the documents don't explain how design could improve this experience. Without designers drawing on public realm design guidance and proposing a range of future spatial options, local groups won't be able to have an informed discussion on the spatial qualities they want for their public spaces and, consequently, Neighbourhood Plan policies will fail to guide development proposals “to improve public realm” on sites such as Regis Road (KTNF, 2016, p.40).

How can designers better describe the public spaces of Kentish Town?

Academic literature across diverse scholarly traditions has distinguished between the concepts of ‘public realm’ (or sphere) and ‘public space’ (or place), which are often interchangeably used in planning policy and notably in Kentish Town Neighbourhood Plan. To start with, Ali Madanipour (2003) offers a useful distinction: while ‘public space’ refers to “that part of the physical environment, which is associated with public meanings and functions”, the broader term ‘public realm’ involves “the entire range of places, people and activities that constitute the public dimension of human social life” (p.4).

The primary consideration that I propose for the analysis of public spaces in Kentish Town takes into account is precisely Madanipour's emphasis on the physical nature of ‘public space’ as it connects with the expression of its qualities in the built environment -qualities that can be regulated through planning policy. Therefore, virtual spaces where public life unfolds are left out of the study.

Along the same lines, I propose a study of public spaces in Kentish Town that only refers to exterior open spaces and their potential to become public. In doing so, the analysis aligns with the rest of the planning guidance used by the Forum to prepare KTNP. Enclosure is therefore considered one of the main physical determinants of the spaces under scrutiny, thereby drawing on the idea of public spaces as “outdoor rooms” that has recently regained acceptance among architects and planners (Lehtovuori, 2010). Consequently, the study doesn't include interior public spaces in buildings open to the public such as libraries, community centres, and churches the way numerous public realm mapping exercises do¹.

1 Many of them have been inspired by the ichnographic plan of Rome engraved in 1748 by G. Nolli.

This is because different kinds of regulations would apply to such spaces and don't fit within the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Though within public space theory and practice, the term 'public' has been subject to a wide variety of interpretations and subsequent critiques, scholars have reached no consensus on the best way to conceptualise and measure the "publicness" of public space. Georgiana Varna's (2011) literature on public space has delineated five main dimensions of "publicness" according to "ownership, physical configuration, animation, control and civility" (p.126). Other authors add accessibility and intersubjectivity (Khon, 2004), function and perception (Carmona, 2010), agency and interest (Madanipour, 2003), management and use/users (Németh & Schmidt, 2011) as important constituents of the definition of public space. I propose, as the third consideration in analysing public space, that it is necessary that the designer provide an ad-hoc frame of reference that takes into account the Forum's perceptions on the subject.

Based on the information available on how the Forum prepared the Plan, it seems relevant to include at least three main elements that shape public space beyond the physical

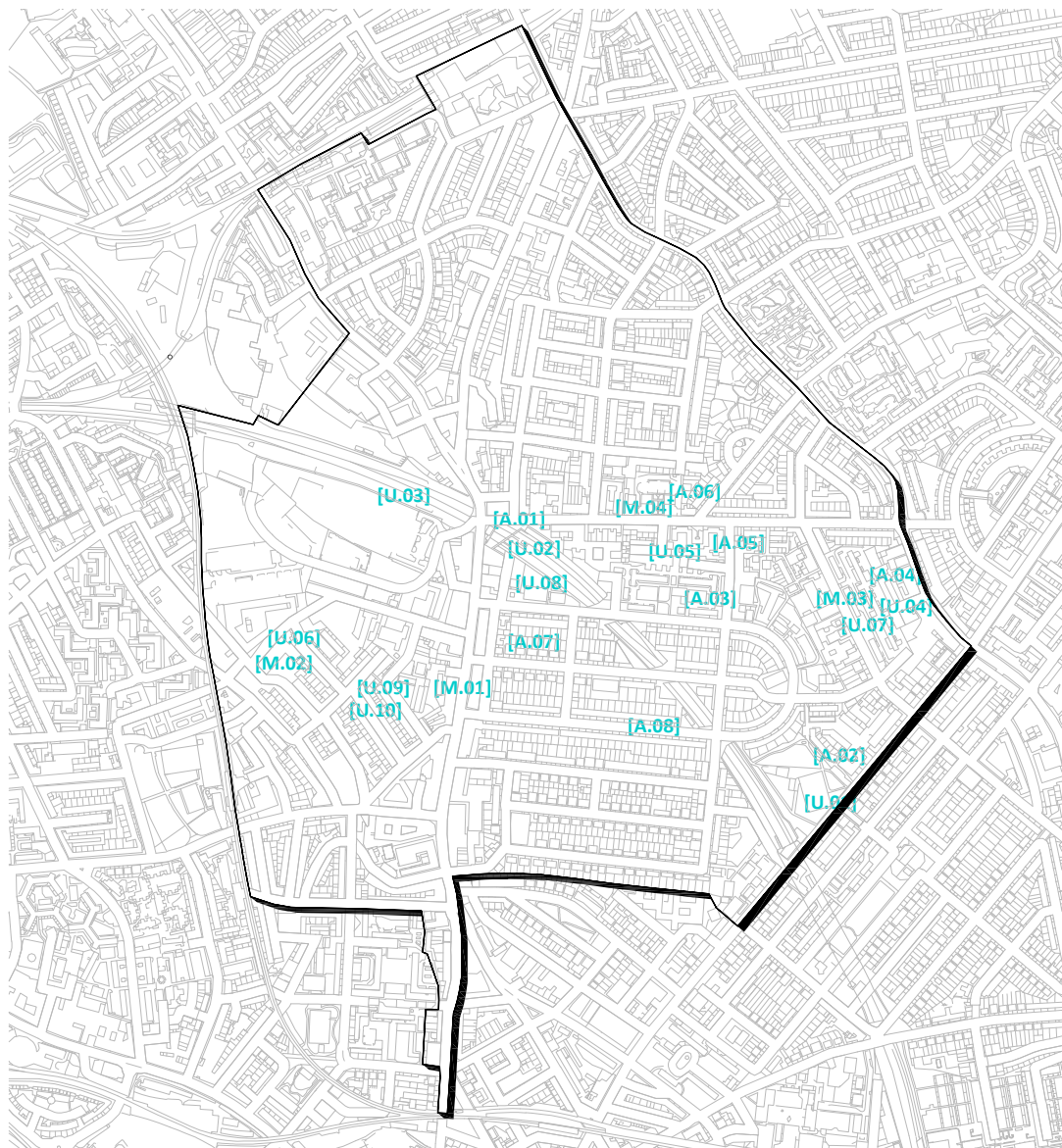


Figure 4-6 Analysis of Kentish Town public spaces in terms of access

attributes derived from different typologies: access, use and management. These elements have to be taken into account when designing and planning for public spaces, but it is also important to know that through the actual use, management and access to these spaces, users might subvert the original intentions of design. The interplay between design and the unexpected possibilities of access, use, and management has the potential to bring a range of spatial qualities to the neighbourhood that should be at the heart of the Forum's discussions.

Access and spatial porosity

The Forum considers access a strategic planning matter related to public spaces, which is mainly concerned with the limitations of pedestrian movement and use of spaces. For example, Policy GO1 on Local green Spaces supports "to improve the access and use of the spaces by individuals and groups with protected characteristics" (KTNF, 2016, p.21) and Policy SP2a for Kentish Town Development Area calls for "fully accessible public squares" at Regis Road Site (KTNF, 2016, p.45). In addition, the argument that supports the protection of Parliament Hill view in Policy D1 is that "they enjoy the feeling of openness and space they receive when emerging from the station or walking in the street in this part of Kentish Town. The space is accessible and acts as an important counterpoint in this very built-up area." (KTNF, 2016, p.7).

The notion of accessibility underpinning these policies, focuses on removing physical and visual barriers. Widely spread in urban and transport policy, planning and design guidance, the Forum's idea of accessibility resonates well with Tibbalds' definition of public spaces (2000) as "parts of the urban fabric to which the public have physical and visual access" (p.1).

However, in architecture and urban design discourses "the extent to which an environment allows people a choice of access through it" is concerned not only with removing physical and visual barriers, but also with the "interplay between public and private spaces (...) and the interfaces between them" (Bentley, McGlynn, Smith, Alcock & Murrain, 1985, p.12). The crafting of these interfaces has been long explored by architects and designers to produce different levels of spatial permeability (Ghel, 1987), also called porosity (Benjamin and Laci, 1925), capable of dissolving simple public-private binaries. Spatial arrangements where domestic life and productive life flow into the street and where public life penetrates into the street (Dovey, 2016)



Figure 4-7 Access and porosity of KT public spaces

are seen by designers as an essential contribution to a rich neighbourhood environment. The quality of porosity “may therefore be considered an experience of habitation, which articulates urban life while it also loosens the borders which are erected to preserve a strict spatial and temporal social order” (Franck & Stevens, 2007, p.175).

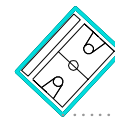
Porosity, achieved through mechanisms of separation and continuity into and through space, enables a more nuanced classification of spaces from the most public to the most private, regardless of ownership considerations. Figure 4-7 provides examples of open spaces within the area that exemplify this gradation of successive levels in the public-to-private continuum.

Use and spatial adaptation

Public spaces are also defined according to how they are used (Whyte, 1980): the activities and patterns of occupancy that complete and continuously update the original design beyond its physical configuration. “Use gives meaning to space and decisively shapes the experience of it” (Carmona, 2014, p.22). In *Re-theorising contemporary public space: a new narrative and a new normative*, function is one of the design elements Matthew Carmona (2014) uses to categorise 130 London public spaces: he distinguishes between community, corporate, domestic, civic, consumption, service, transit and undefined functions. In planning policy, it is easy to find numerous functional classifications of open space that differ depending on the specificities of the context in which they are embedded. The Forum, for example, mentions green and biodiverse spaces, playgrounds, and areas for leisure, sports and informal recreation (KTNF, 2016) in policies for future development. This indicates that, whether it is programmed or spontaneous, use of space defines the local landscape in recognisable ways for Kentish Town residents.

Therefore, analysing public spaces in Kentish Town means not only considering access distinctions, but also the main use of such spaces. Direct observation of a number of open spaces mentioned by the Forum throughout public and internal meetings revealed the most representative functions such spaces play in local life: sports, cultural, ecological, productive, play, ornamental green, infrastructural green and storage activities (Figure 4-8).

To obtain a more comprehensive picture of use patterns, spaces were observed across representative time slots. Some of those spaces were used by different groups for



[sports]



[U.01]



[cultural]



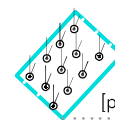
[U.02]



[ecological]



[U.03]



[productive]



[U.04]



[play]



[U.05]



[ornamental]



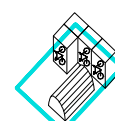
[U.06]



[infrastructural]



[U.07]



[storage]



[U.08]

Figure 4-8. Use of KT public spaces

different purposes than originally envisaged. In other spaces, activities changed at different times of the day showing a multifunctional nature. This suggests that defining spaces in terms of single use in planning documents doesn't do justice to the adaptability and unpredictability of users, particularly "the manner with which public space users engage with spaces and, through their use, define and redefine the nature of each space over time" (Carmona, 2014, p.30). The quality of being adaptable to the changing needs and aspirations of "multiple publics" (Fraser, 1990) and accommodating those publics over time is a spatial criterion acclaimed in numerous design and planning guidelines. For example, the guide *By design Urban design in the planning system: towards better practice*, jointly produced in 2000 by the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) and the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), considers that "Well-designed public spaces allow for different uses (...) Development can be related to the public realm in ways that encourage rather than discourage flexible use of buildings and space"(p.30). Among academics and practitioners, spatial adaptation has also been linked with flexibility (Ardeshiri, Esteghlal & Etesam, 2016), inclusion (CABE, 2008) and diversity (Franck & Stevens, 2007).



[U.09] Temporary uses and adaptations -Alma Street Fest



[U.10] Temporary uses and adaptations -Alma Street Fest



Figure 4-9 Appropriation of KT public spaces

Management and spatial appropriation

How space is managed and by whom is another element against which the publicness of public space is often assessed. Management "refers to the manner in which a space is controlled and maintained, and specifically refers to the methods by which owners indicate acceptable uses, users, and behaviors." (Németh & Schmidt, 2011, p.11). Management models have awakened the most ardent debates in literature about privatisation, control and surveillance leading to the decline of contemporary public space (Mitchell, 1995; Minton, 2006). However, "more integrated, negotiated and nuanced approaches to public space management" (Carmona, Magalhães, & Hammond, 2008, p.205) that require ongoing collaborations between public, private and community agents; are increasingly being tested at neighbourhood scale and incorporated within planning policy frameworks. In Kentish Town, for example, maintenance and "care" of spaces such as St Benet's Garden "is shared between Camden Council and the Friends group" (KTNF, 2015, p.128). Also, local associations such as the Kentish Town Community Centre extend their programmes to and curate activities in open spaces such as the Kentish Town Festival in 2017 that took place in nearby Cantelowes Gardens. Even in the Neighbourhood Plan, the Forum anticipates specific uses of facilities and spaces "to be shared by the community and other local groups such as local schools, sports clubs and similar groups" (KTNF, 2016, p.44).

These practices entail forms of spatial appropriation through proactive participation of different users and user groups in the management of neighbourhood spaces. At local scale, spatial appropriation has been associated with strategies of resistance and community empowerment (De Haan, 2005; Hou & Knierbein, 2017), more democratic management

(Harvey, 2008), and even self-management claims and the right to the city discourses (Lefebvre, 1968; Purcell, 2013). As exemplified in the theories and practices of Hamdi (1985) and Turner (1972), planners and designers have long worked around the criteria of spatial appropriation, in an attempt to open up the political potential of public spaces. Figure 4-10 Kentish Town examples of different levels of association for the provision, maintenance and stewardship of those spaces. Lessons from highly appropriable spaces in the area might inform management models for the future development of Regis Road contemplated in the Neighbourhood Plan.

Conclusions of DD1

As the proposed analysis unpacks design elements related to density, typology and public space questions, the interaction among such elements needs to be considered and discussed in-depth prior to making any planning decisions. This enables the specification of aspects of the densification of Regis Road in a holistic way, to facilitate understanding their consequences on the ground rather than relying on the artificially disconnected planning regulations.

For example, the introduction of a particular density range within the policies might appear to be an effective tool for preventing unwanted future development. However, if the Neighbourhood Forum defines density only quantitatively, there still might be a very extensive scope of spatial responses coming from developers and other actors within the planning system. We know that different “combinations between plot ratio and site coverage will manifest into a variety of different built forms, and urban development of the same density can have very different urban forms” (Baldea & Dumitrescu, 2013, p. 178). Figure 4-11 visualizes development possibilities that belong to the same density threshold but exhibit notable typological differences. It is possible to see how neighbourhood spaces resulting from these different schemes exhibit dissimilar possibilities of access, use and management, which in turn shape the public dimension of such spaces.

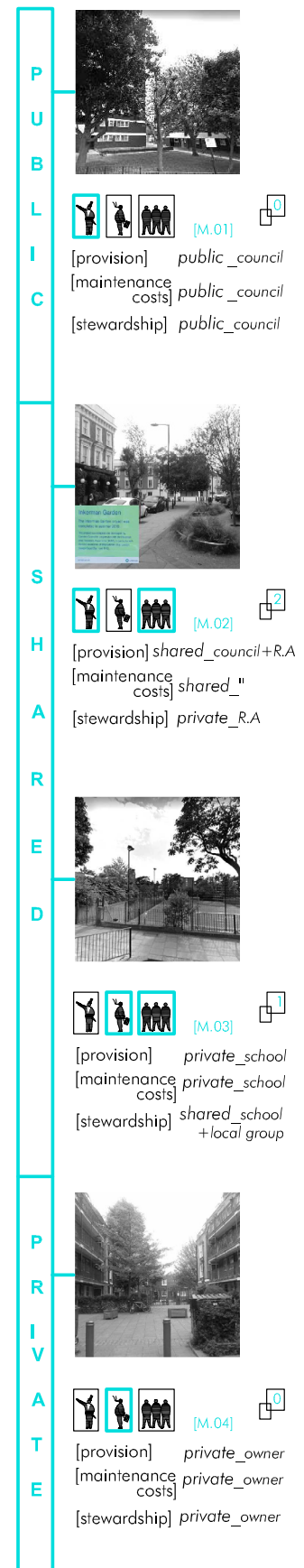


Figure 4-10 Management of KT public spaces

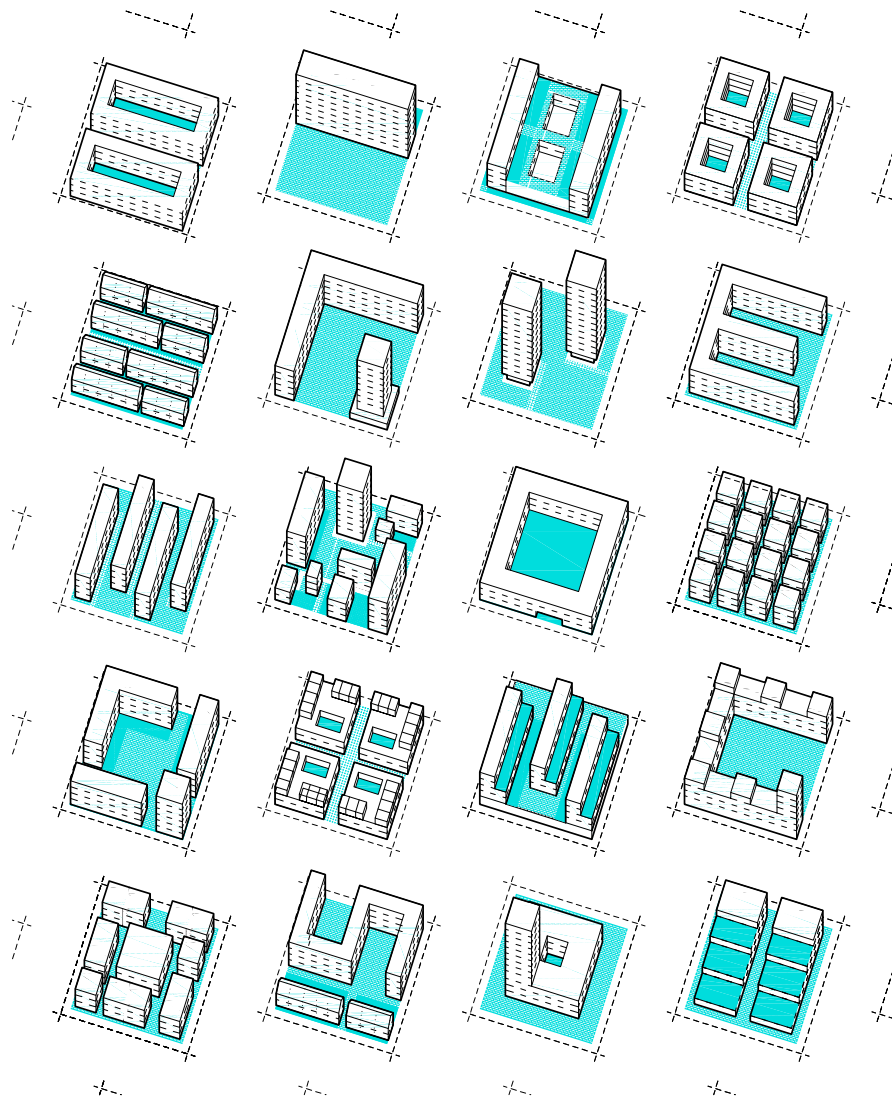


Figure 4-11 Large variety of typological examples with a fixed density range

4.2.2.2 Design Demonstration 2 [DD2]: DESIGN as a method of TRANSLATION

When Forums formulate a vision for the future of their neighbourhood, they need to understand that the spatial translation of their planning intentions can vary greatly depending on the design strategies used for development. Such strategies, in the case of Kentish Town, refer to various ways in which design elements of density, typology and public space relate to each other and can be combined into different spatial options for the development of Regis Road. Design strategies are non-neutral in that they respond to urban concepts and theories underpinned by often-contested planning ideologies. The examination of design strategies in the Neighbourhood Planning process is the point at which architects and urban designers could potentially act as “brokers” that engage in “the processes of translation, coordination and alignment between perspectives” and carry “enough legitimacy to influence the development of a practice” (Wenger, 1998, p.109), in this case, that of Neighbourhood Planning itself.

Accordingly, I propose in DD2 to take a multiple-choice approach and present a number of design strategies for Regis Road through diagrammatic visualizations. These visuals are conceived to “operationalise’ the vision for a site or area, securing higher quality outcomes”

(CABE, 2006, p.13). They enable a design-led conversation about how the original planning intentions might be best delivered on the ground, and allow a participant's understanding of development to be reframed in the context of collective meaning-making. In this sense, the proposed visualizations function as "boundary objects" that translate both concrete sets of concerns and theoretical aspirations across intersecting social worlds (Star & Griesemer, 1989).

In the process of plan preparation, planning intentions are often expressed verbally but remain under-explored spatially; the introduction of design strategies to test these intentions in a spatial way are an exercise in which designers can help articulate a space-based vision. Offering design strategies through diagrammatic visualizations would allow for early discussion on the appropriateness of each option, which has the potential to inform the next stages of the planning process, notably, policy writing. In addition, this exercise could be the starting point in developing design codes that can themselves be appended to the Plan and become part of the statutory planning framework. Design codes "establish with precision the two and three dimensional design elements of a particular development or area – and how these relate to one another without establishing the overall outcome" (CABE, 2006, p.10). Although, typically prepared in later stages of the planning process (ie. masterplans, planning permissions), the inclusion of design codes in the Neighbourhood Plan gives them statutory weight, and "formal adoption of a code as part of the local planning (...) increases certainty in relation to future planning applications" (CABE, 2006, p.44).

In order to demonstrate the potential impact of the inclusion of design codes in Neighbourhood Plans, this section proposes an exercise to visually explore the spatial options in the intricate relationships between density, typology and public space in the Kentish Town area. As a starting point for testing the densification of the Regis Road site, I introduce a sample of scenarios that might emerge from a predefined density range: a floor area ratio (FAR) of around 1.65, which is double the existing average density of the neighbourhood (FAR=0,8). This responds to the Greater London Authority (GLA)'s call to increase density around the capital: the Draft New London Plan (2017) "seeks to double London's housebuilding target to almost 65,000 new homes a year" (Ijeh, 2018, p.1). In the context of the Forum wanting to preserve the character of Kentish Town, the sample includes eight scenarios that present spatial configurations and scales that are typical of the area (as analysed in the tiles of the previous section). Of the eight scenarios, four are composed of buildings of the same scale, while the other four feature a combination of diverse scales. This distinction allows for an early discussion on how the design elements of scale and configuration, can be appropriately combined to fulfil the Forum's aspirations of fostering local identity and diversity.

In order to examine the different design strategies in detail that might be used to achieve the selected density, each scenario is visualized (top left) and broken down in two diagrams. The diagram at the top-right extracts the built form to visualize the three-dimensional expression of the amount of development on a given plot; which allows a debate on the combined effects of volume, shape, height and massing of each strategy. The bottom-left diagram is a 'figure-ground' visualization generally used by designers to depict the relationship between built and unbuilt space in equal weight – that is, to emphasize that voids between buildings are as much part of the design as the building exteriors that define them. This facilitates the discussion on the different mass-to-void proportions, site coverage and kind of open spaces that can be created with the same density standard. In addition, both diagrams are accompanied by a matrix (bottom-right) that unpacks the typological differences found among scenarios of the same density.

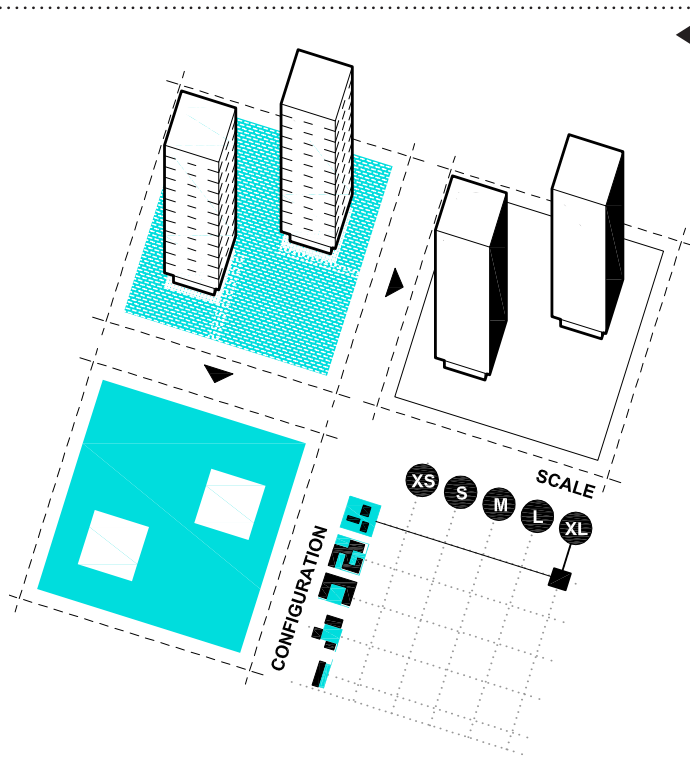


Figure 4-12. Scenario A comprises two multi-storey towers (scale XL) laid out freely on a large piece of open land (configuration 1). This high-rise typology minimizes the building footprint, thereby reducing considerably the site coverage (13%) in favour of non built-up surface area.

◀ Design Strategy A- The Towers in the Park

Scenario A responds to the “towers-in-the-park” concept popularized by the European modernists of the early 1930s that has influenced development schemes where multi-unit residential buildings are set back from the street and placed on large lots of open space. Although tall residential buildings are not particularly representative of Kentish Town, the 13-storey Monmouth House in Raglan Estate is a recognised landmark in the area. Whilst proponents of vertical living have historically praised the “the view, the freedom, the detachment” it provides (Cifali, 2007), this kind of development has also been criticised for the lack of diversity of ground floor spaces left by the free-standing objects.

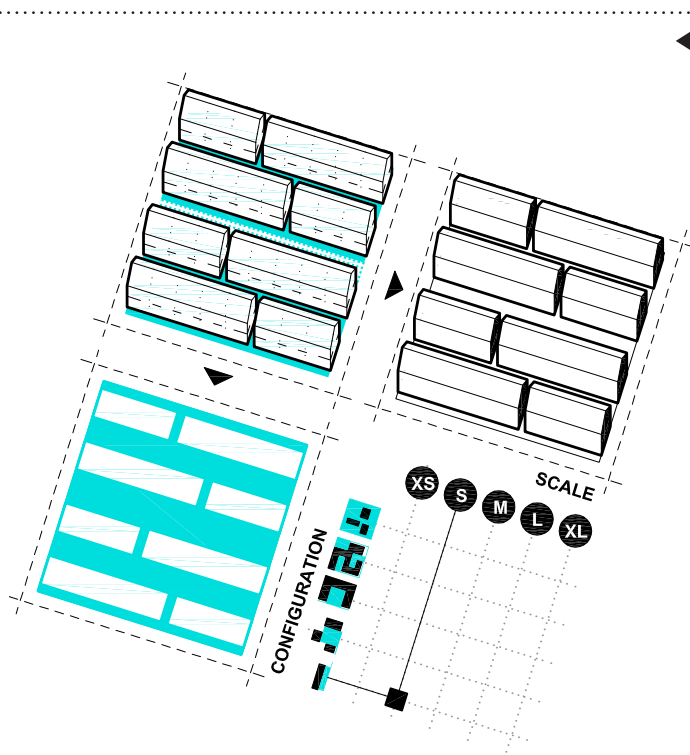
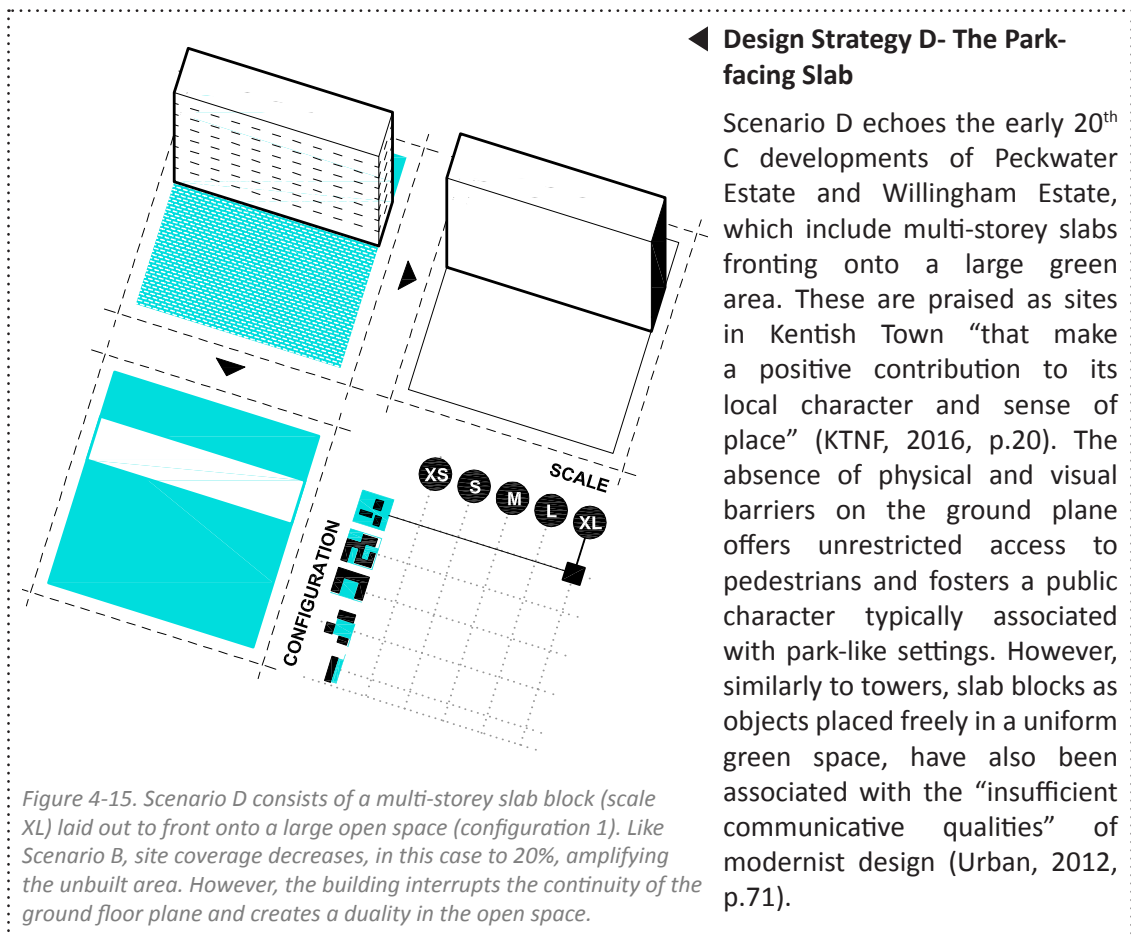
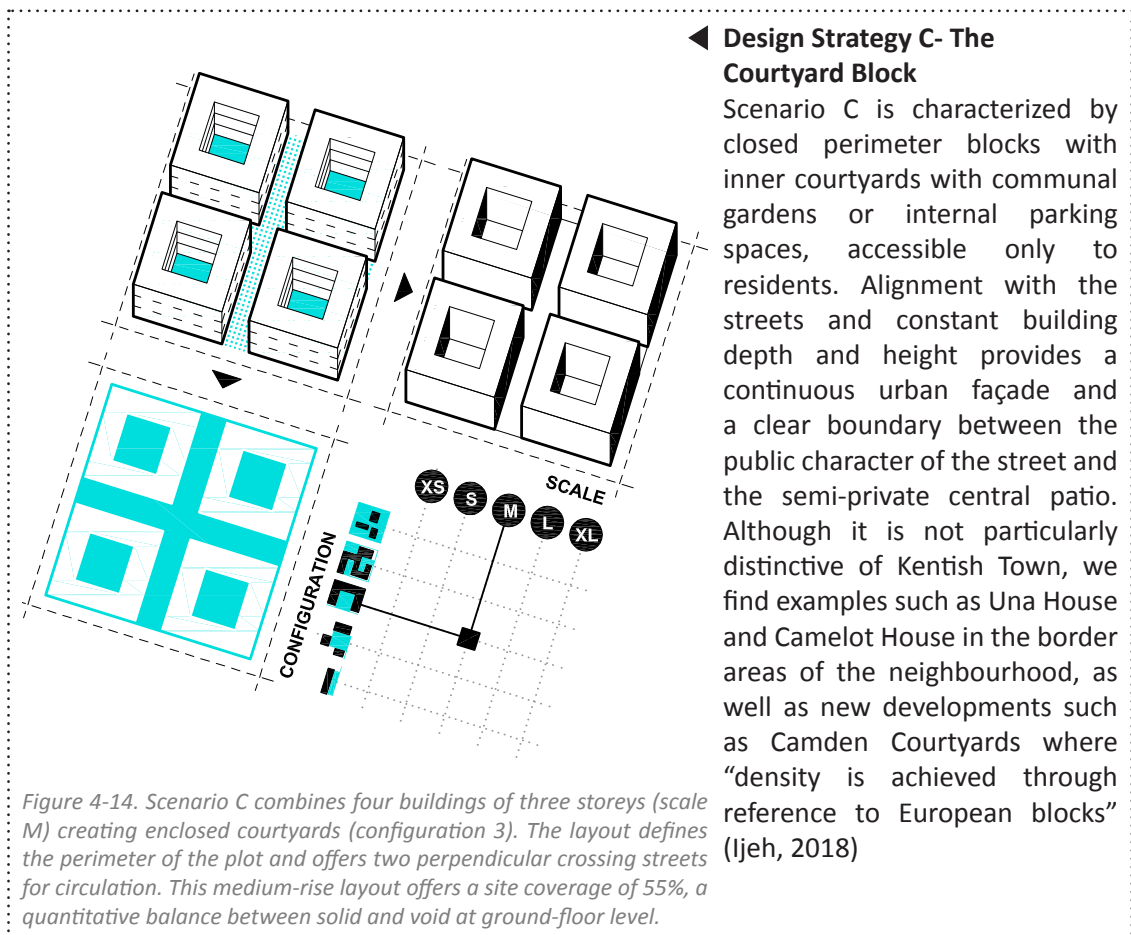


Figure 4-13. Scenario B consists of parallel rows of three-storey houses (scale S) aligned with open spaces (configuration 5). In this arrangement, mass-to-void relationship is also balanced, with a site coverage of 53%, but most unbuilt space is reserved for private use. Internal alleyways in between gardens are opened to facilitate pedestrian connectivity.

◀ Design Strategy B- The Row Houses

Perhaps the most recognisable scenario is that created by a connected network of public streets lined by terraced houses. At three storeys high, the residential dwellings sit back slightly from the road to offer a small front garden and a larger rear one mirroring the next row of houses. Residents enjoy the front-back differentiation and the dual aspect of houses, both onto the private courtyards and onto the public realm. Victorian-inspired spatial arrangement and proportions of this scenario is reminiscent of Kentish Town’s much-loved conservation areas, which are vital for the preservation of a particular local identity or distinctive sense of place (Nowell, 2005).



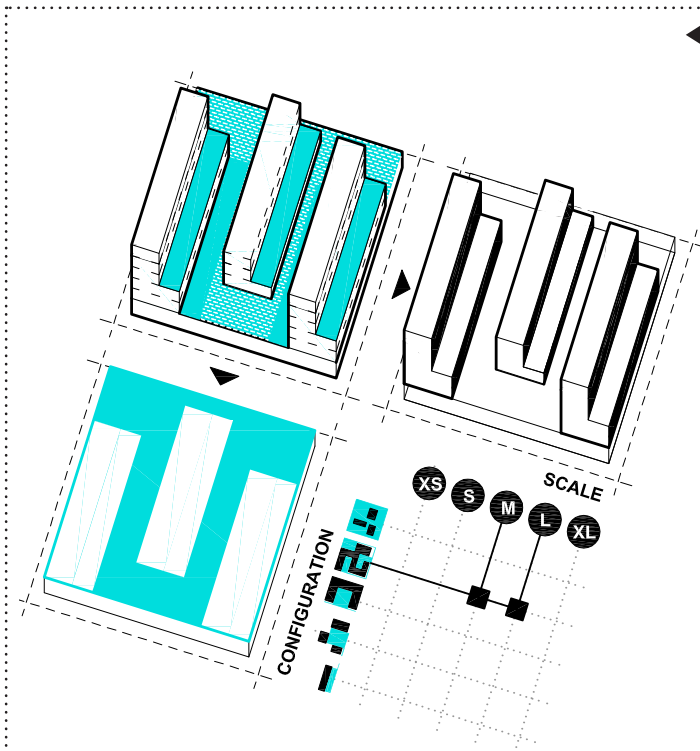


Figure 4-16. Scenario E comprises three parallel linear terraces of varying heights (scales M and L) elevated on a plinth of shared spaces. In this typology, built masses and outdoor spaces are composed as one entity (configuration 2), keeping a balanced solid-void relationship (52% of site coverage). The plinth separates pedestrian and vehicular movement.

◀ Design Strategy E- The Terraced Podium

The modern utopia of a multi-layered city that separates pedestrians from cars arrived to the scale of the neighbourhood in the form of raised developments. This kind of development is represented in Kentish Town by Ingestre Road Estate designed by John Green during Camden Council's 'golden age' of modernist social-housing. In a similar way, scenario E offers an elevated landscape that includes walkways providing pedestrian access to all the dwellings. Freed from car parking, the open space in-between the parallel rows of houses, provides a mix of private gardens and shareable outdoor spaces. The ground floor level could be used for parking behind the houses, storage facilities, and commercial functions in connection with the public street.

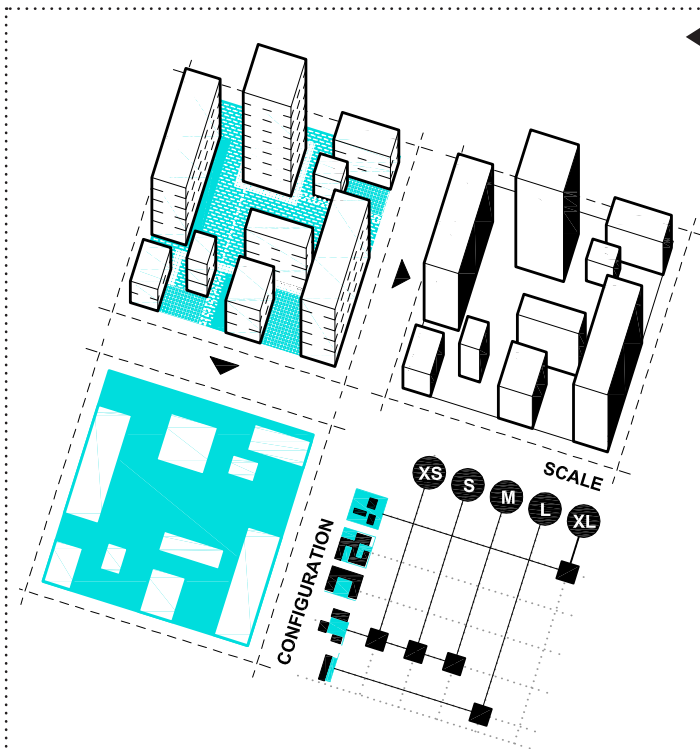


Figure 4-17. Scenario F combines a tall free-standing tower (scale XL, configuration 1), two multi-storey slabs aligned with the street (scale L, configuration 5) and clustered blocks and terraces of various sizes (scales M, S, XS and configuration 4). The proportion of open space is higher than the built space in terms of site coverage (37%), but the layout results in a continuous yet fragmented landscape.

◀ Design Strategy F- The Clustered Plan

Scenario F results from a combination of recognisable typologies found in Kentish Town representative of high-, mid- and low-rise living. The composite achieves a diverse environment of connected spaces of different scales and character: public streets, domestic squares and shared courtyards, mews, closes and private gardens. This kind of spatial configuration in which spatial complexity is realized by additive, repetitive principles of composition, was popularized in the late 1950s by a group of young architects including van Eyck (1959), Bakema, Hardy and Hertzberger. They sought a dynamic mix of built-up and open spaces forming a comprehensive whole that is able to adapt to social conditions, individual interpretation, and change.

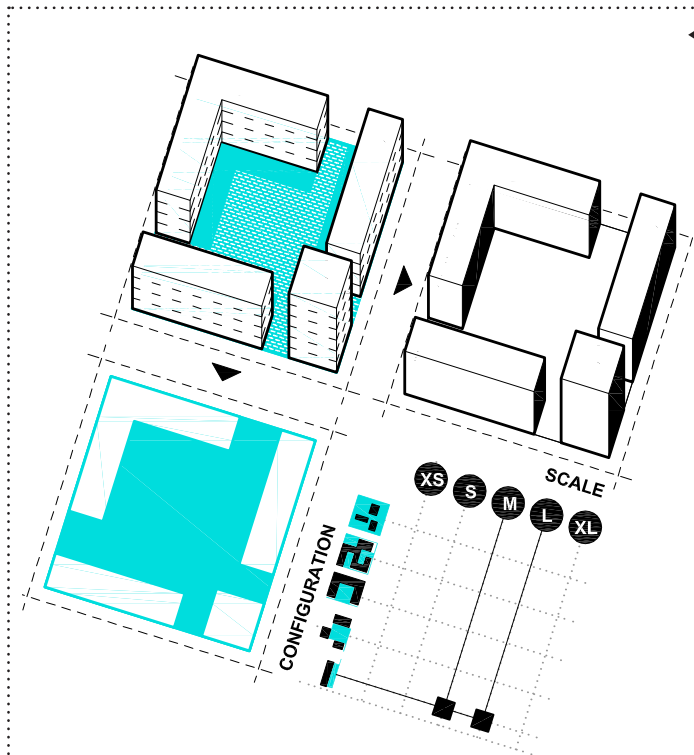


Figure 4-18. Scenario G is characterized by three multi-storey slabs and a mid-rise tower block (scales M and L) all aligned with the perimeter street (configuration 5). With a site coverage of 44%, this spatial arrangement generates a large central open space that can be accessed from the public street in all directions of the plot.

◀ Design Strategy G- The Broken Perimeter Block

It is possible to recognise in this scenario the building types of Raglan Estate, but clustering round the open space like in Peckwater Estate; both are well-known and valued developments in Kentish Town. On one side, the L-shaped and linear buildings frontage, together with the corner tower, delineate the public street edge. On the other side, buildings' façades front onto a partially enclosed internal space that still connects with the system of public pathways and parks. Even when the sizable open space in-between buildings remains entirely accessible to the public, it is partially enclosed and overlooked by all the dwellings, which gives a semi-public character that could foster community uses and appropriation

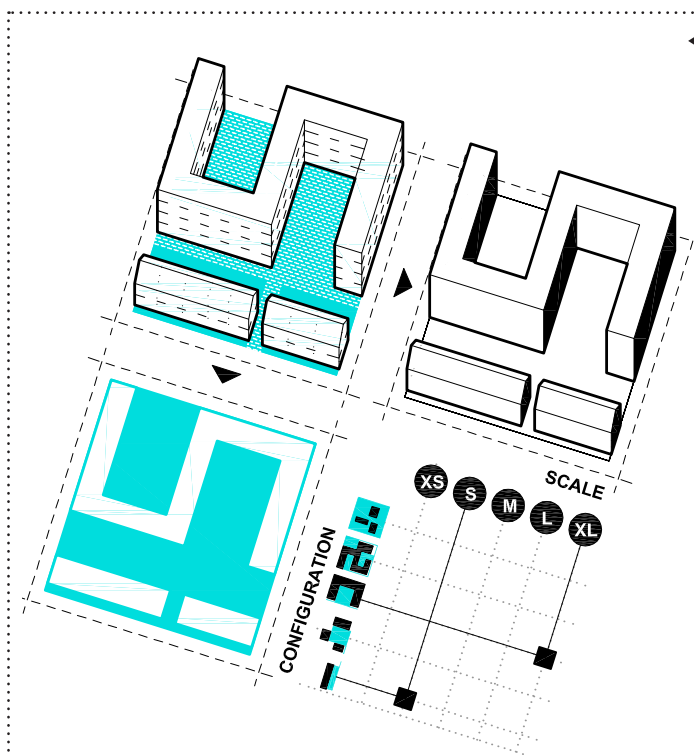


Figure 4-19. Scenario H mixes a meandering building (scale XL) wrapping around two differentiated courtyards (configuration 3) and a row of terraces (scale S) aligned with the street (configuration 5). With similar site coverage of scenario G (44%), this layout offers both enclosed and linear open spaces.

◀ Design Strategy H- The Meandering Block

In Kentish Town, U-shaped spatial layouts are well known and represented by, for example, two estates in Leighton Road: one of them has fenced and privatised the common courtyard enclosed by the building, while in the other estate, courtyards remain accessible to the public with a strong semi-private and domestic character. The inward-looking areas resulting from the U-shape building offer outdoor-shareable space that is highly appropriable by the residents and where community uses have the potential to flourish. The open courtyards are connected in one case to the public street, and in the other case to the alleyway created by the line of terraced houses, which gives them a different character that can be strengthened accordingly.

Identity and Diversity in Scenarios A to H

Scenarios A to H exemplify a number of design strategies for densification that have long been used by architects and urbanists in regeneration projects. Unlocking the process of design for the Forum will require visuals that explain how these scenarios come to be formed (ie. how different scales can be articulated, how building masses are shaped, their height and form, how they are grouped in space). Only when they understand how the design elements analysed can be applied at the Regis Road site through very different design strategies, can decision-makers evaluate the spatial qualities such strategies might bring to the site:

Firstly, these visuals facilitate a discussion as to which of options A to H realise the Forum's efforts to preserve a certain local identity. In addition to being more or less embedded in the local collective imaginary, the eight scenarios appraised combine scales and configurations of buildings and open spaces that are identifiable by the locals. Using these scenarios, would allow for an evaluation of how typologies that are already familiar for residents would contribute to an 'integrated development' within the surroundings and how each scenario would unfold differently depending on the organisational idea behind them.

For example, it is clear that the first four scenarios (A,B,C,D) function as residential monocultures, while the second group (E,F, G, H) offers a diverse blend of dwelling and open space types. This distinction aims to introduce a new variable in the discussion: the positive and negative connotations of spatial diversity. According to *A General Theory of Urbanism: Towards a System of Assessment* proposed by Andrés Duany, Paul Roberts, Emily Talen (2014) a "multitude of building types integrate a variety of socioeconomic profiles: younger, older, poorer, wealthier, singles and families" to access the housing market according to their different investment capacities (p.63). This would connect directly with the intention of the Forum to fulfil Kentish Town's "potential for a diverse but balanced population of young and old in a mix of housing ranging from private to affordable" (KTNF, 2016, p.12).

It is possible to imagine that if identity and diversity were employed as elementary indexes of value to shortlist the range of spatial options that are acceptable at the Regis Road site, only the second group of scenarios would be shortlisted. However, said aspects might have relative importance for the Forum in comparison with other spatial, functional, aesthetic, economic, social and environmental implications.

For example, initial observations on the kind of neighbourhood spaces that emerge from different design-led strategies might introduce another important variable in evaluating the Forum's preferences. In *Camden Character Study*, a document of reference for the Forum, the Victorian grid is highly regarded for creating "an attractive rhythm and verticality to the streetscape" (Nowell, 2015, p.54). This might bring back to the shortlist scenario B, where the layout of properties fronting streets and backing onto one another, can be valued for providing a familiar pedestrian environment, while maintaining the overall visual cohesiveness of the area. Another consideration that could play an important role is the perceived "lack of small to medium sized, publicly accessible green spaces in the neighbourhood", which makes the Forum praise the modernist layout of Raglan Estate "where the urban planning ideals were to create object buildings with open space around." In this sense, the kind of park-like setting emerging in scenarios A and D "could be developed into an effective green asset for the area" (Prince's Foundation, 2012, p.39).

These examples evince the complex process of evaluating alternative spatial options and

relating them to the initial planning objectives. DD2 demonstrated that the choice and arrangement of house typologies should signal the density, hierarchy and character and help establish the quality and experience of the public realm, but this is not enough for making planning decisions. This task requires an even deeper understanding of the interrelations between density, typologies and public space, because the solutions also need to be capable of satisfying the expectations of the Forum as regards street-level experience.

Design Demonstration 3 is precisely oriented toward helping participants imagine and anticipate the spatial qualities of the living environment at pedestrian level as delivered by each option. This is tested through a hypothetical shortlist result from the previous discussion. To configure the shortlist, Scenarios F and G are first selected as the options that offer the greatest diversity of buildings and spaces. Second, from the group of scenarios that lack diversity, Scenarios A and B are included in the shortlist for the spatial values above-mentioned and highlighted by the Forum.

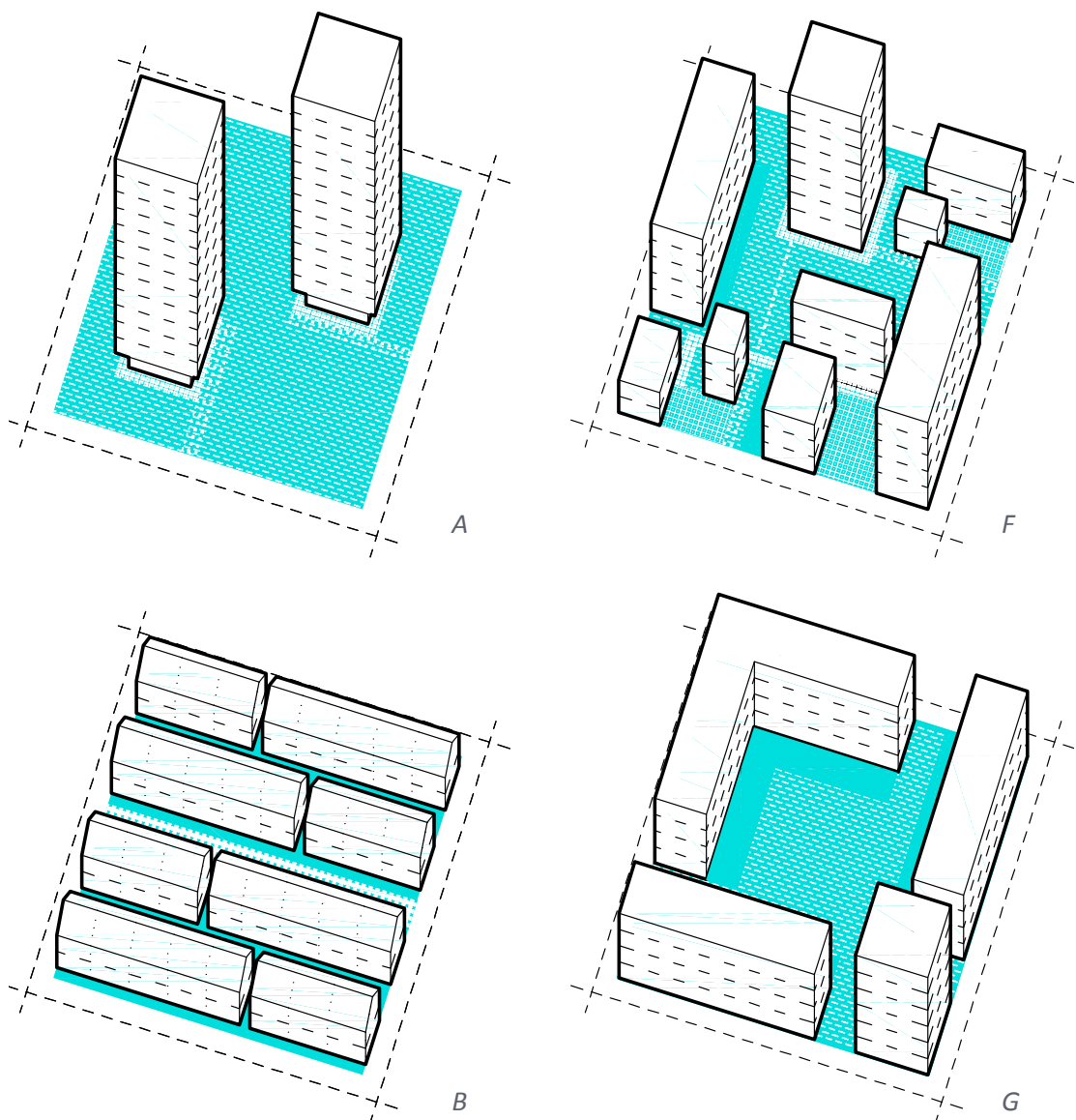


Figure 4-20 Hypothetical shortlist with scenarios A,B,F,G

4.2.2.3 Design Demonstration 3 [DD3]: DESIGN as a method of PROJECTION

Contrasting perspectives on future development of the neighbourhood might prove difficult to synthesise among a heterogeneous group of decision-makers with different backgrounds and personal experiences on the subject. Moreover, the spatial consequences of the design strategies to be appraised may remain particularly inaccessible to some participants in the discussion if those design strategies are presented with a certain level of abstraction: What is the impact of having a large flat open space in front of a high rise building? How do I access and move through the space? Does the scheme provide an attractive, safe and comfortable pedestrian environment? Does the car dominate the streetscape? Do open spaces feel over-scaled, or do they encourage activity and social interaction? In the case of Kentish Town, questions of this kind refer to the redevelopment of Regis Road Site, and those questions need to be part of the Forums' discussions when making planning choices for the area and certainly, prior to policy writing.

Designers can play a crucial role in providing a means for shared understanding, or at least, for inquiring into the future spatial conditions, relations and values that new development might bring about and how these can be fostered through planning policy. By employing the "tactic of projection", designers provide "an advanced indication of what might be, informed by knowledge of the past and present, and rendered by means of a skilled supposition of how the 'yet to come' might occur and to what effect" (Di Salvo, 2009, p.52).

Accordingly, in DD3 I propose the projection of scenarios to explore the spatial qualities of the three-dimensional environments resulting from alternative design strategies. To achieve this aim, designers have long used axonometric drawings and sequences of perspectives that immerse the viewer in the projected scenarios "in an accessible and compelling manner" (Di Salvo, 2009, p.53) so that informed preferences on the development options can be formed. I've developed a variety of these techniques that deliberately avoid detailed and realistic visualization of the scenarios, and tread a fine line between the literal representation of design renderings and the informational nature of design diagram.

The process of finding a balance between the generic diagram and the bespoke design has become a field of experimentation and a hallmark of my practice as an architect and urban designer over the years. In particular, when working with local communities on collaborative projects, deploying a visual language with the ability to appeal to the everyday spatial experiences of participants that can also sustain the kind of strategic thinking necessary to navigate the decision-making process has presented a recurring challenge. When the supplied drawings have been too detailed, the discussion has often gotten stuck on purely visual and aesthetic concerns. And yet, the drawings need to go beyond the abstraction of diagrams to engage participants in questioning the linkages of place and activity at local scale. The main challenge lies in achieving drawings that favour a reading of "context not as a purely visual phenomenon but as a physical, social and cultural frame for design" (Putner & Carmona, 1997, p.73).

Along these lines, drawings in this chapter are conceived of as "objects-to-think-with" (Lueder, 2011, p.5) that seek to explain the effects of design decisions rather than function as representations of finished designs. This reveals much about my particular approach to the use of drawings in Neighbourhood Planning "as instruments of design, invention and speculation, of iterative explanation and negotiation" (Lueder, 2018, p.4).

Ultimately, these visual tools are intended to facilitate a discussion on desirable spatial changes that Neighbourhood Planning policies might address and would be hardly conceivable otherwise. The use of projections seeks to integrate a level of specificity in the Neighbourhood Plan that is often found in Development Briefs, Masterplans and Supplementary Design Briefs; these are normally prepared at later stages of the planning process, a point during which local residents have less power to influence planning decisions. But the use of projections in the plan-making process can be useful in influencing policy determination or agenda setting, as well as during the negotiation of specifics with other stakeholders (i.e. local authority, landowners, developers) during policy writing. These visual projections can also be formally added as annexes to the Plan to illustrate the textual policies, a step that could be crucial to ensuring that the application of the policies at later stages of policy delivery, monitoring and implementation is aligned with initial local planning intentions.

In order to demonstrate such potential, I've selected four scenarios from the previous section that exemplify how eye-level design projections would function as "anticipatory designs" that would indicate "possibilities by revealing previously unknown relationships among complex systems" (Howard, 2007, p.6). The drawings are accompanied by brief descriptions of the performance of each option with respect to the elements of access, use and management of the emerging neighbourhood spaces. With these descriptions I intend to include in the discussion some overlooked insights into the qualities of porosity, adaptability and appropriation that these spaces might bring to the area. This can serve to narrow down the number of possible scenarios, distinguish those that are acceptable from unacceptable ones, identify the most preferable alternative and/or encourage the search of new scenarios that "combine the strong points of one existing option in some areas with the strong points of another in a different area" (DCLG, 2009, p.32). But most importantly, this exercise re-introduces the perspective of the designer in the Forum discussions, for a guided and shared exploration of the options.

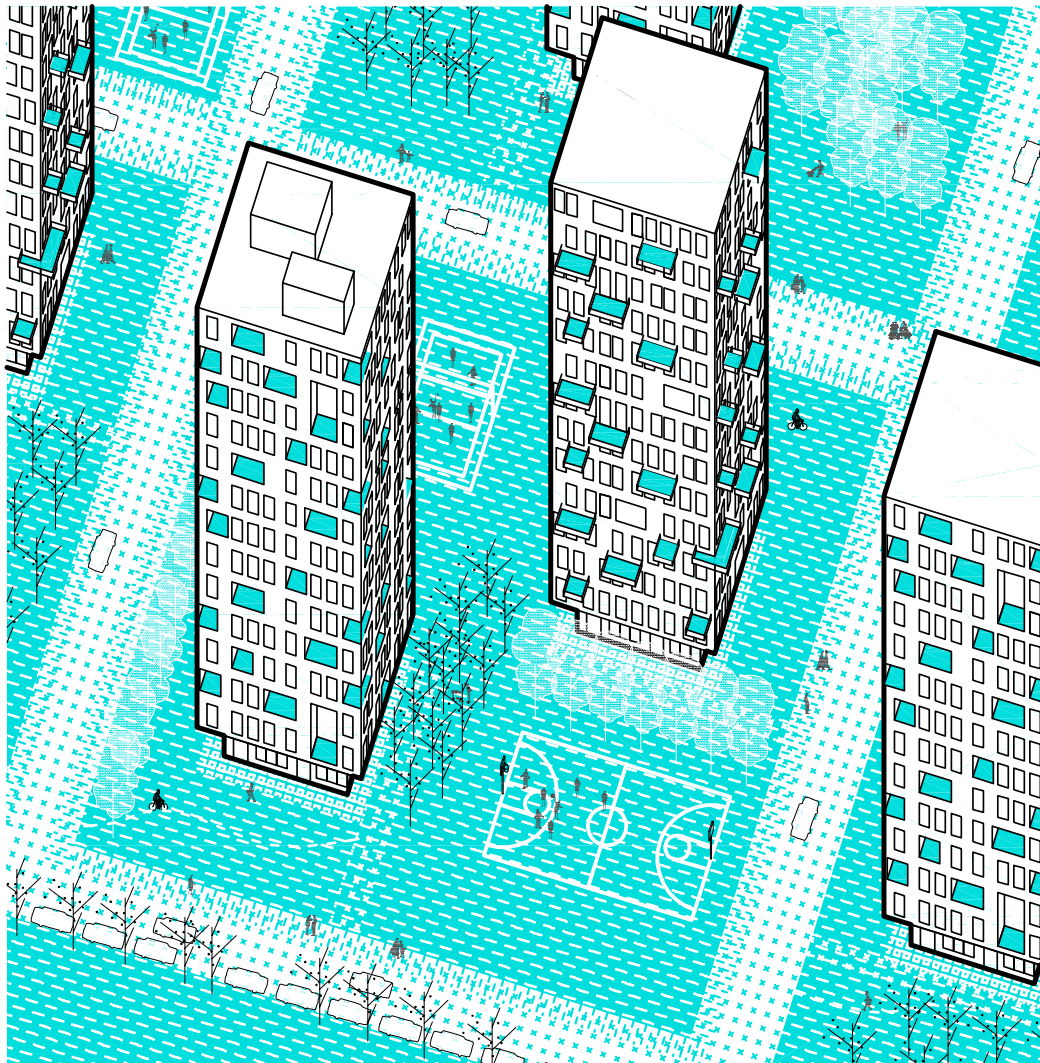


Figure 4-21 Axonometric projection Scenario A

Projection A- The Towers in the Park

High-rise living in London's cityscape spreads out across more than 700 tower blocks, from the first post-war council housing to the latest developments of luxury flats. Initially welcomed for offering spectacular views, light and fresh air to the dwellings, this kind of development have often been discredited (Newman, 1973) for offering a poor ground-floor experience, with open spaces being so undefined and homogeneous that often remain under-utilized and hardly appropriated by the towers' residents. Activities take place closer to the towers spurred by the movement of people towards housing entrances and ground floor uses (ie. commercial, retail, workspaces).

Throughout the years, urban tower blocks have divided the collective imaginary in opposing ways. On one hand, incidents such as the Grenfell Tower fire have reinforced the image of towers as low cost housing associated with poor maintenance, social problems and an insecure communal environment. On the other hand, the resurgence of high-rise developments marketed towards young, wealthy professionals, have framed images of luxury and exclusive forms of vertical living. According to Tim White and Mel Nowicki from the LSE, "Today we see a complex juxtaposition of these two narratives, highlighting how our relationship with the high-rise is as much about social construction as it is architectural form" (Nowicki & White 2018, p.1).

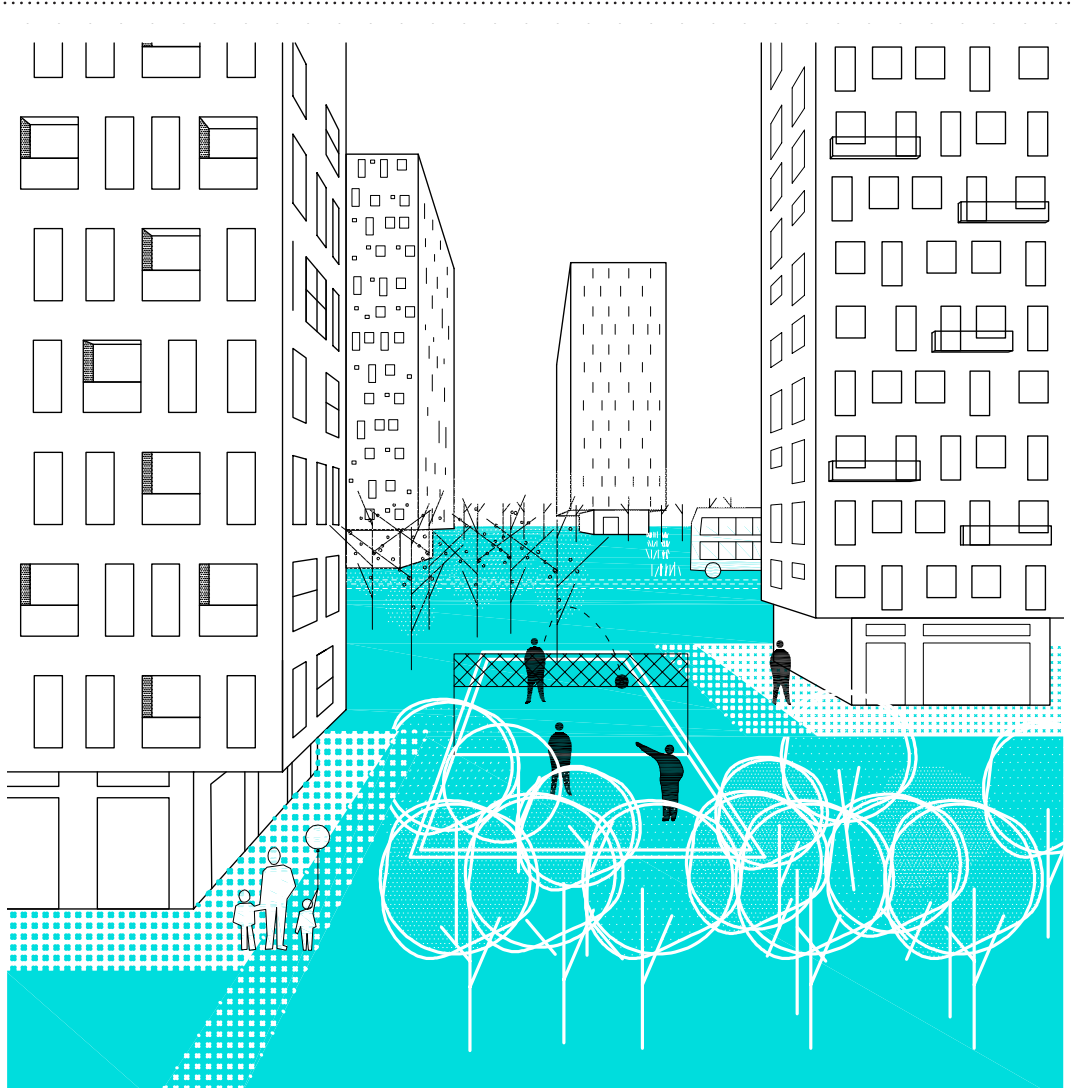


Figure 4-22 Perspective Scenario A

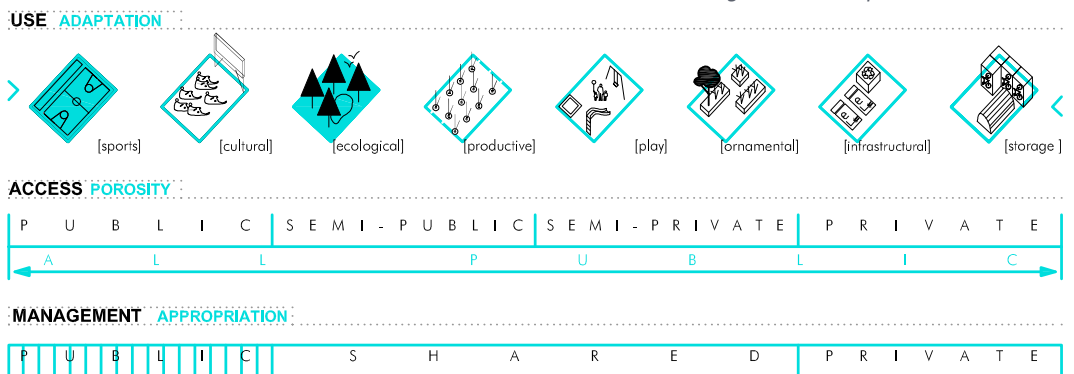


Figure 4-23 Analytic diagrams Scenario A

Scenario A sits in one of the extremes of the public-private continuum: it offers an entirely accessible area where one can move across with no restrictions. Its scale favours uses that require large outdoor surfaces such as sports or ecological-wooded areas. Community-related programmes on the contrary barely proliferate unless the scale is reduced via the design of areas for specific uses (i.e. playgrounds, urban farming), thereby restoring a pedestrian-scaled environment. In Scenario A maintenance costs and programming of such large grassy areas is difficult to assume by local associations. There is little potential for resident appropriation of the free space and its management often remains in the hands of public authorities.

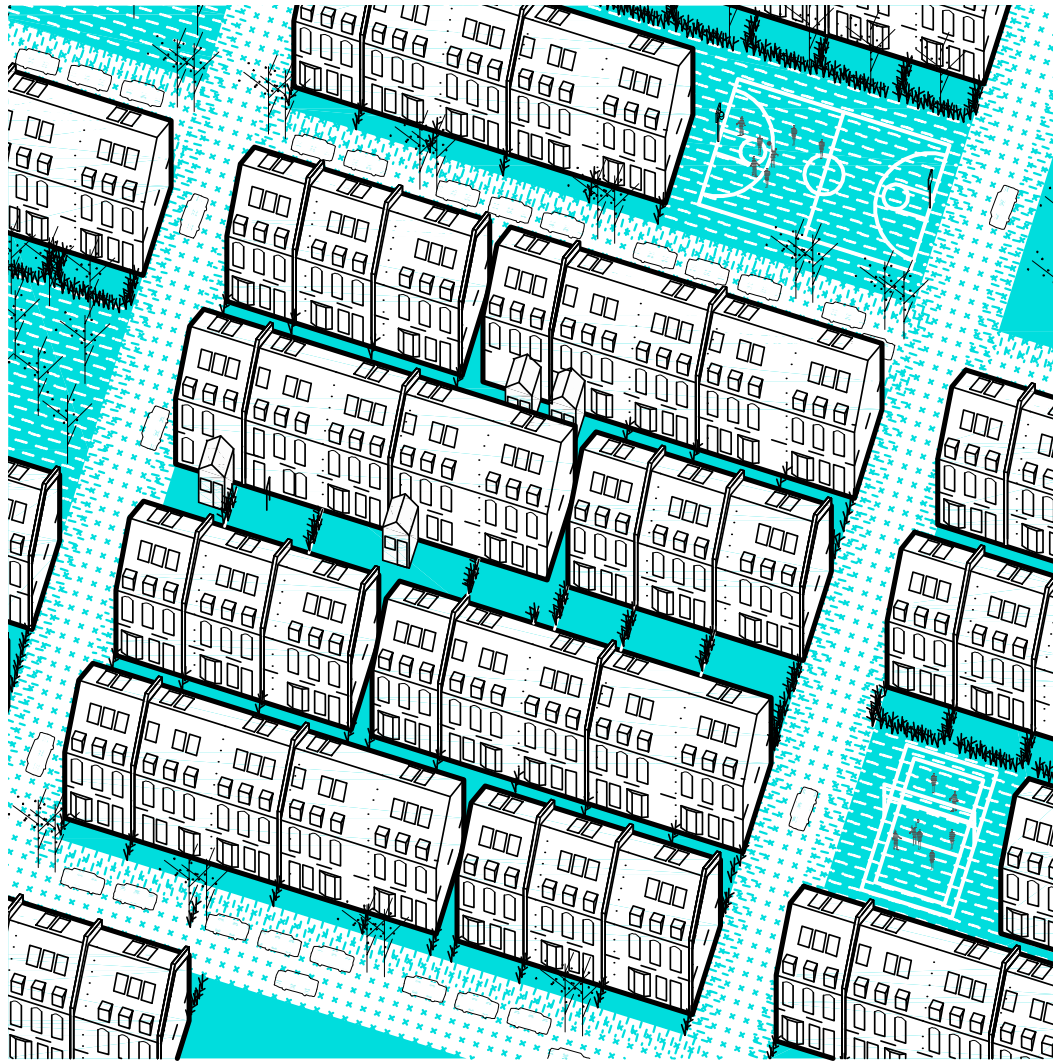


Figure 4-24 Axonometric projection Scenario B

Projection B- The Row Houses

In this popular pattern of parallel rows of houses with open space in-between, an accentuated front-back distinction sustain the traditional public-private duality.

Small entrance gardens provide a transitional space between the privacy of the dwellings and the public character of the streets, which are spatially defined by building frontages and functionally dedicated to local traffic connections. Architectural and green elements such as fences, stairs and porches, trees and ornamental vegetation, limit the physical permeability of these front thresholds. Their small size and visual exposure to the public domain leave those spaces underused.

Meanwhile, the invisible interior of the city block remains hidden from street view and subdivided into narrow backyards. They can be serviced from the rear by pedestrian alleys called “mews”, but in such gardens access is restricted to private residents and activities taking place are inherently disconnected from public life. Although the area for communal facilities is limited, residents often enjoy having their own private open space. Opponents on the contrary, highlight the “critical association of automobile parking and housing development pattern (...) in a row house neighbourhood” (PAS, 1962, p.8), where parking lots are placed at the street side of the house taking up valuable space.

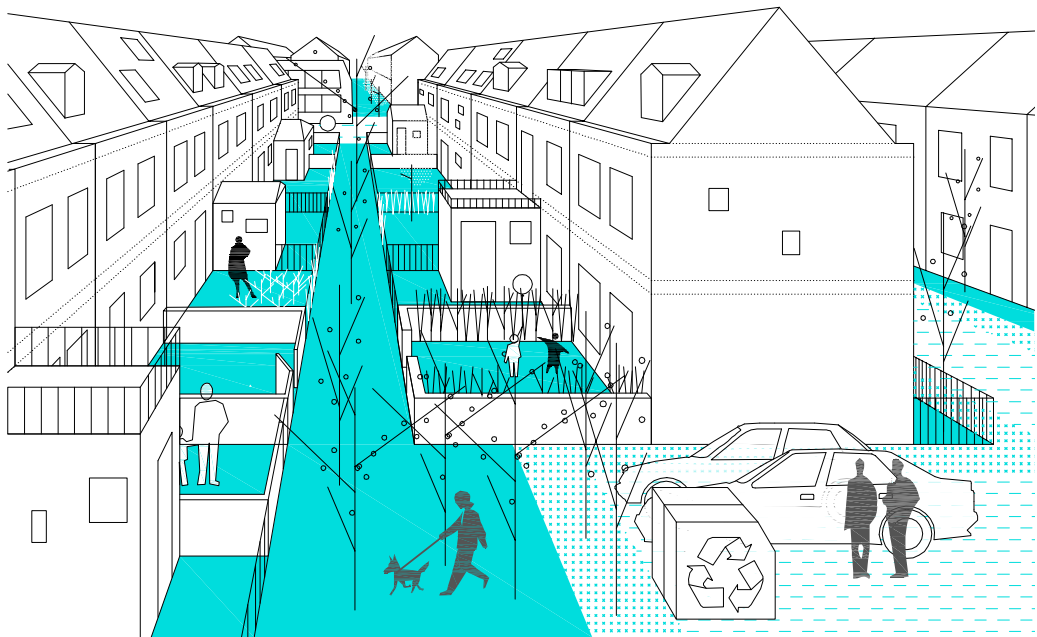


Figure 4-25 Perspective Scenario B

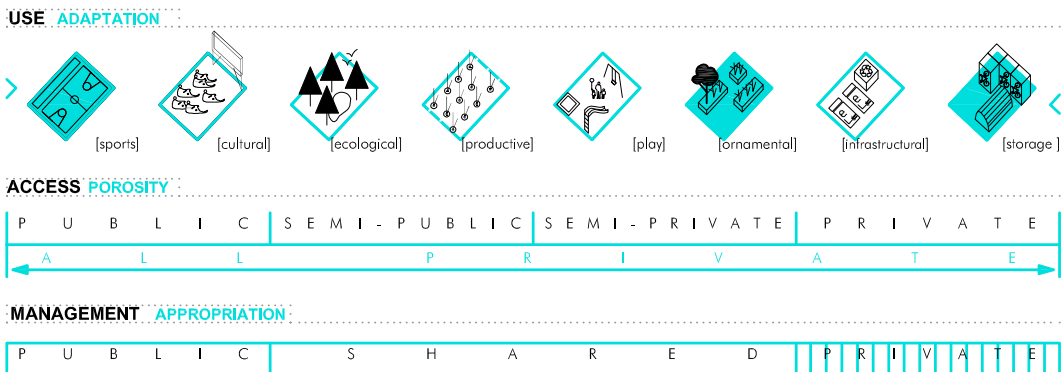


Figure 4-26 Analytic diagrams Scenario B

Scenario B sits at the other extreme of the public-private continuum: the front and back gardens are limited to private access of their specific residents. This reduces the possibilities of collective use of open space: the entrance zones are mainly ornamental green spaces and only in small scale pocket spaces carved out of the private fabric can other uses flourish (i.e. play, sports, storage, transport infrastructure). In Scenario B, shareable areas for play and recreation take the form of parkettes connected with the public street system, which barely encourages appropriation and maintenance by the whole community. At best, only the residents surrounding those pockets become involved in their management and programming.

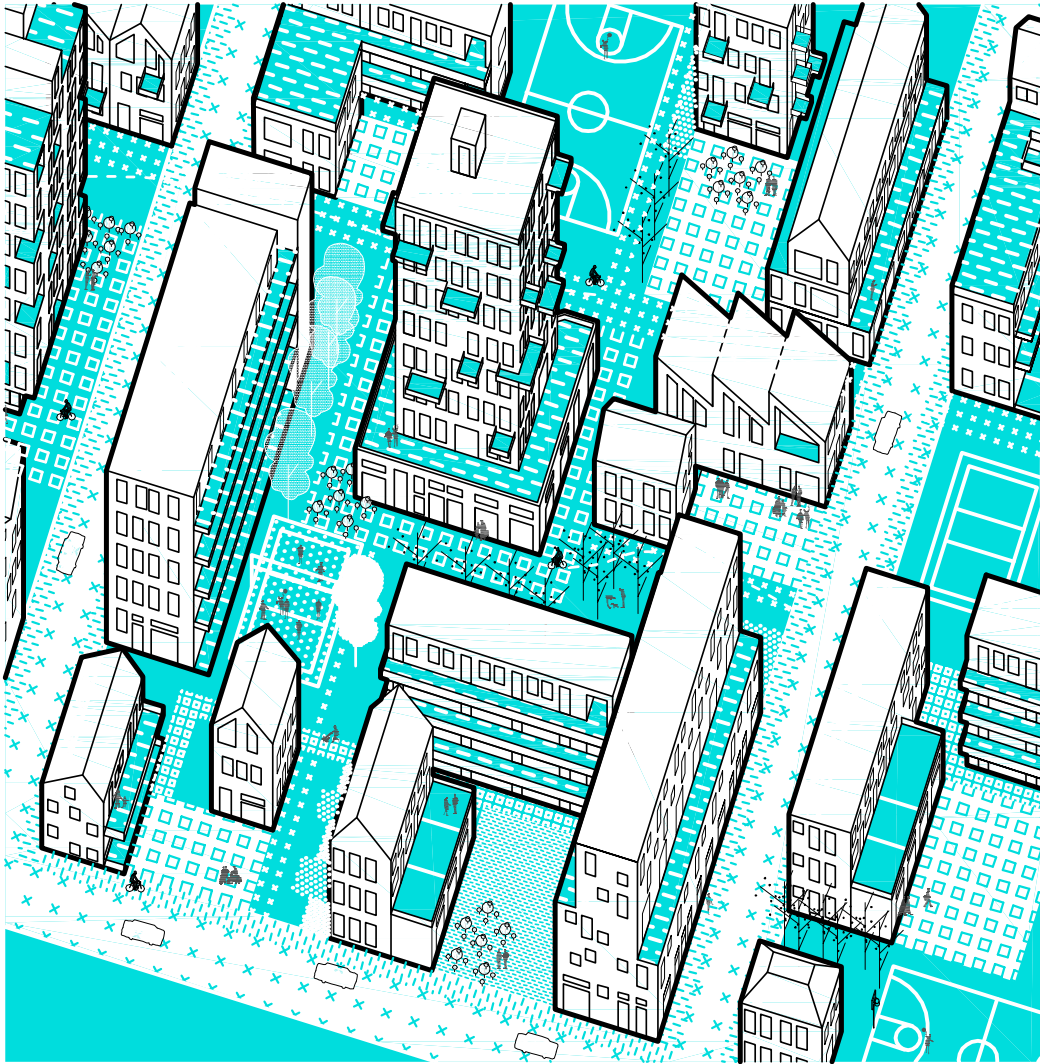


Figure 4-27 Axonometric projection Scenario F

Projection F- The Clustered Plan

Instead of a large park-like space or the subdivision of land into private property, Scenario F offers a continuous open space fragmented enough to facilitate a wide variety of activity patterns, from completely public street-related uses, to common utilization of clustered spaces, to individual use of private gardens.

Although it is an area completely accessible at pedestrian level, the grouping of buildings provides a sequence of spaces that are partially enclosed but connected, with different degrees of publicness and privateness. Conceived “to transcend the very limitations of building typology, to go beyond the slab block and other conventional urban building forms” (Oxman, Shadar, & Belferman, 2002, p.323), the clustered configuration offers a hierarchy of community spaces with an increasing sense of intimacy at the smaller scales.

Together with a wide variety of dwelling types and sizes, the spatial arrangement contributes to a close-knit integration of built and open space, which can adapt to the needs of diverse user groups.



Figure 4-28 Perspective Scenario F

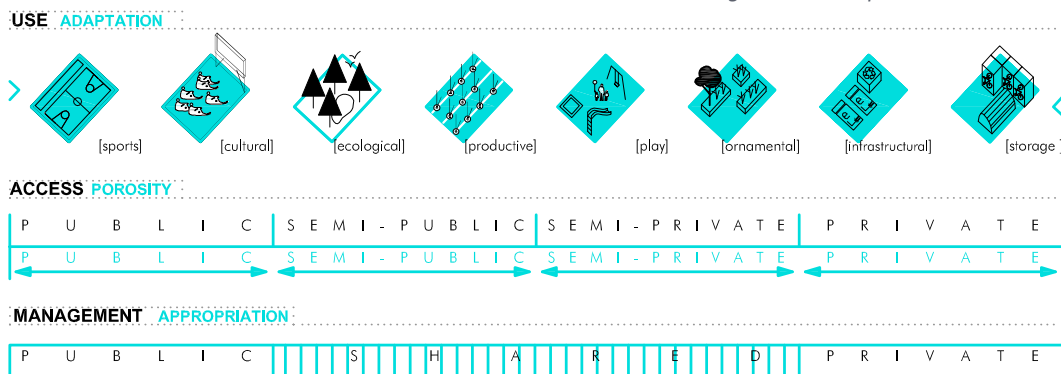


Figure 4-29 Analytic diagrams Scenario F

Scenario F offers all the gradients of the public-private continuum: the organisational concept enables diverse levels of physical and visual access to spaces resulting in subtle public, semi-public, semi-private and private distinctions. The combined diversity of scales of such spaces favours multiple uses: from large scale sports and agricultural areas to medium size play and cultural zones, to small transport infrastructure and storage spots. In Scenario F, the diversification of open spaces also enables different levels of ad-hoc associations and self-organization around daily spatial practices occurring in the area: from temporary appropriations, community management and maintenance of the smaller areas, to publicly operated larger spaces for sports, play, cultural events and recreation.

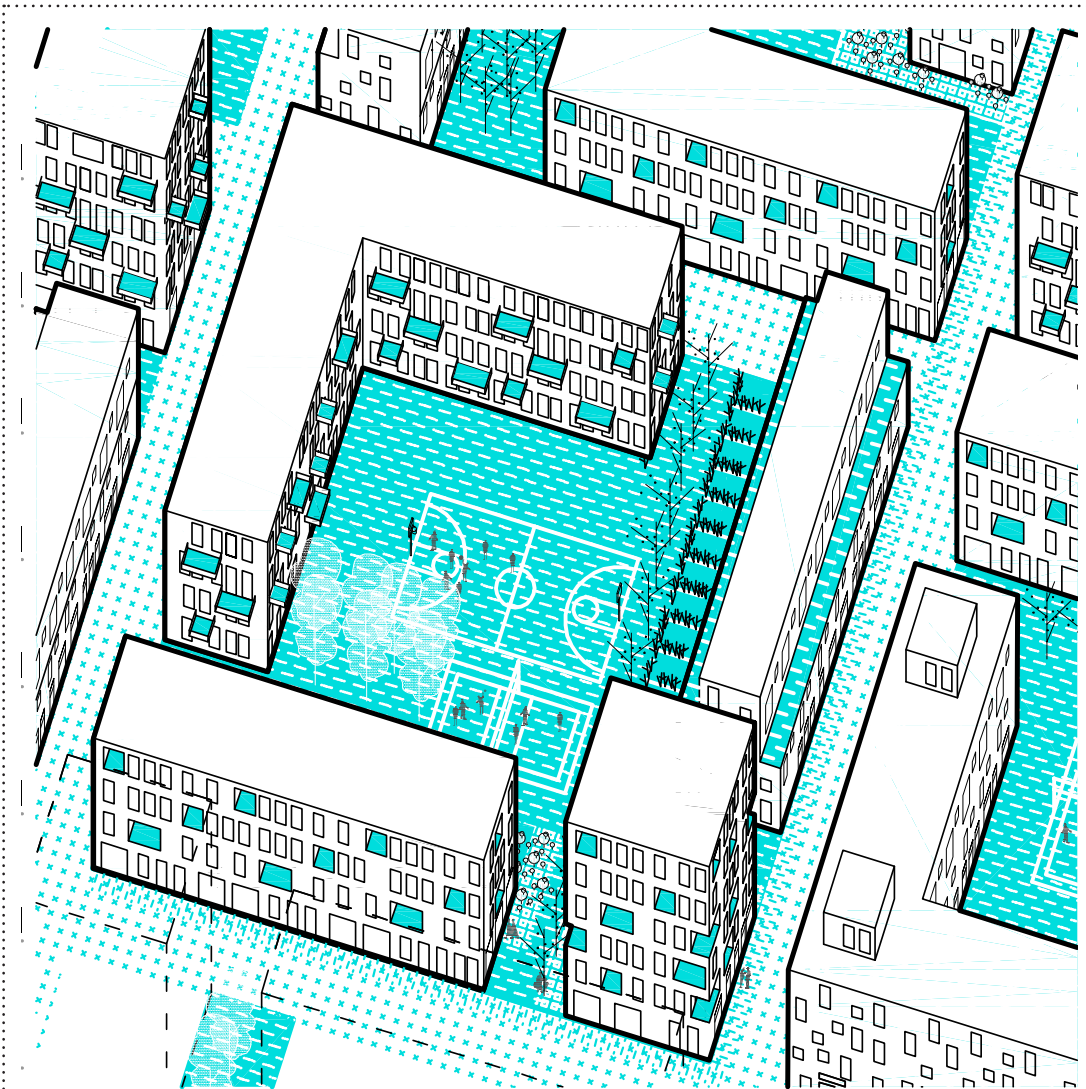


Figure 4-30 Axonometric projection Scenario G

Projection G- The Broken Perimeter Block

Unlike scenario B, freestanding building masses are this time arranged around the perimeter of the plot functions as an open space defining mechanism.

Flanked by the façades of the blocks, the character of this shared open space will be highly determined by the design of the inner buildings' interface, where visual connections and overlooking could play a vital role in activating the space. Similarly to Scenario A, the ground floor plane risks being underused if the design of this central space is not carefully considered. However, even if access to the public is not limited in this inward-looking area, the sense of spatial enclosure favours communal uses more than scenario A and therefore, there is more ripe with potential for informal users' appropriation and shared models of management between residents and public agencies.

This could be encouraged by reducing the large-scaled space through landscaping, pedestrian walks, and smaller functionally defined areas (ie. playgrounds, sports pitches). Occupancy patterns in such areas may vary at different times of the day depending on sunlight changes and the wind protection offered by building frontages. Only in case of poor management of the space, residents might be tempted to consider closing it to the wider public thus turning it into a gated community.

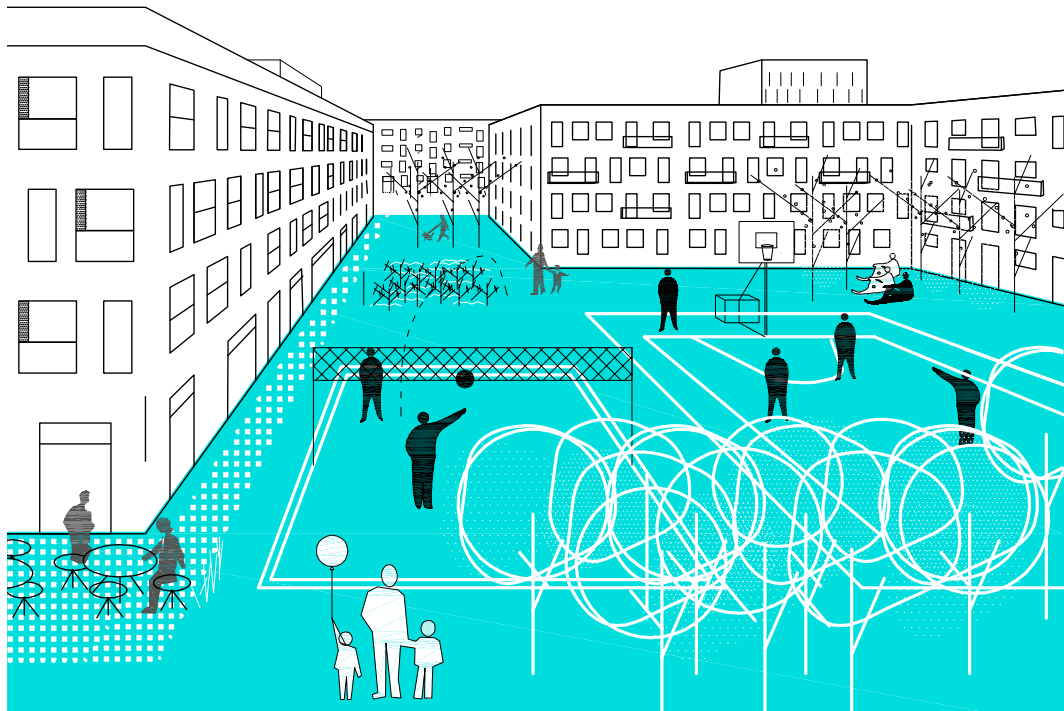


Figure 4-31 Perspective Scenario G

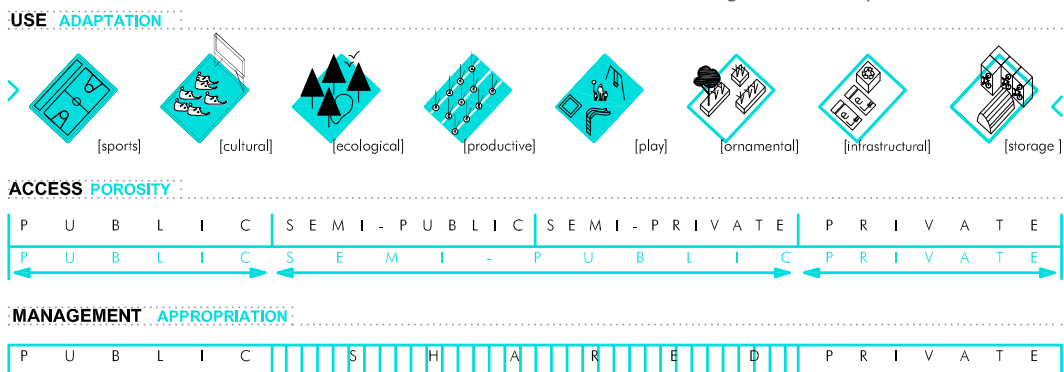


Figure 4-32 Analytic diagrams Scenario G

Scenario G offers an intermediate state on the public-private continuum: a semi-public parkland, large enough to encourage public uses such as sports and cultural activities, and enclosed enough to favour more specific community uses (i.e. urban farming, playgrounds). The large scale of Scenario G's central space makes it difficult for the residents to assume its maintenance costs. However, the arrangement of this circumscribed area with defined limits favours a sense of belonging that might encourage residents to get involved in the programming and management.

Porosity, adaptation and appropriation in Projections A, B, F, G

As the three-dimensional qualities of the projected scenarios are explored through perspective drawings, more specific design elements come into play. Planning decisions become capable of guiding the physical determinants of indoor and outdoor spaces.

For example, the Forum's aspiration to promote pedestrian-friendly environments and provision of "footpaths and cycle ways" (KTNF, 2016, p.45) might connect better to some scenarios than others, such as those that offer a porous ground plane with multiple possibilities of access and movement through it. The linear layout of Scenario B presents more limitations in this sense than the rest of scenarios. Scenarios A and G present continuous landscapes with a dominant public character, while Scenario F offers connected sequences of open spaces with a wider gradation from public to private environments.

Along the same line, observations on use opportunities may help evaluate the benefits of the shortlisted scenarios. Scenarios A and G might be suitable for extensive uses such as sports grounds and recreation, while the various scales of spaces of Scenario F might allow also informal uses to flourish (ie. smaller play spaces and urban orchards). This kind of discussion might not only unveil preferences, but also the need to introduce more specific requirements to achieve the desired spatial conditions. For example, if decision makers understand that relationships between the fronts and backs of buildings influence use patterns in different ways, they might prescribe where main entrances and façade openings are located with respect to the street. If the analysis of Kentish Town public spaces reveals that smaller-scale spaces are more easily adaptable to the community needs, then dimensions, distances and width-to-height relations can be regulated.

In addition, the consideration of everyday maintenance of such spaces might raise questions as to whether it is desirable that the community takes on responsibilities of management, as opposed to strictly public or private control of such spaces. In scenarios that exhibit spaces with certain degrees of enclosure might offer more potential for space appropriation, such as Scenarios F and G. Hybrid management models and the reprogramming of spaces over time can also be anticipated in planning policies.

Anticipating the effects of development described earlier might end up with the reconfiguration of the preferred scenario to incorporate emerging demands. Thus, projections become testing tools against which the Forum can reconsider planning decisions, instead of resolving conflicting views by finding the lowest common denominators that satisfy the minimal objectives of each party. Again, in order to illustrate such capacity, a particular scenario is selected to exemplify how the design-led discussion might bridge the gaps between initial planning intentions with final planning decisions.

4.2.3 Planning decisions

In *By Design: Urban design in the planning system, towards better practice* (DETR & CABE, 2012), the importance design thinking plays in the preparation of development plans is clearly outlined: “Good design is indivisible from good planning, and should be at the heart of the plan making process.” Furthermore, “as design is an integral part of planning, there is no need for separate planning briefs and design briefs” (p.53). A development brief would not be required if the Neighbourhood Plan provided adequate guidance for any developer.

According to this document, planning policies should “describe the sort of place it is hoped to create by physical development” (p.42) because they provide the basis for deciding planning applications and granting of permissions. However, “too many plans” simply specify that “the scale, density, massing, height, landscape, layout and access of development must be ‘appropriate’” without taking into account that “such phrases by themselves, however, offer no more guidance to a developer than is already contained in PPG1” (p.43). This, too, is the case with the Kentish Town Neighbourhood Plan, in which such lack of specificity fails to guide and control development in important areas like Regis Road Site. In planning contexts, where there are not more specific policies that apply (ie: supplementary planning guidance or design guides), Neighbourhood Plans are a useful instrument to ensure the delivery of locally relevant spatial responses.

However, it is not possible to make more detailed decisions about these matters without design driving a more thorough understanding of the area and supplying a spatial vision based on an informed consideration of future scenarios. For the Kentish Town case, this kind of design-led discussion might have brought forward planning decisions related to at least three challenges:

1. The need to introduce relevant design requirements as part of the planning policies.

For example, the design-led discussion has demonstrated that establishing some kind of density guidance, including typological alternatives, is needed to prevent unwanted developments and preserve local character. As the potential for densification of the area ties directly into the conflicting interests of authorities, landowners, developers, businesses, community organisations and other affected parties, it is important that the Forum decides on their starting position and an acceptable margin for negotiation. Design offers solutions for increasing density requirements with preferred scenarios and testing the admissible limits for the Forum (Figure 4-33).

Forums might consider introducing density minimums or maximums, measured in terms of FAR, into the policies. But if in the course of the negotiation this requirement generates strong opposition, they might decide to introduce a density threshold. This has the potential to develop into a new design-led approach to density that goes beyond the existing London Plan Density Matrix and comes “bottom-up” from the Neighbourhood Forums. In the discussion document from Neighbourhood Planners.London (2018) *The New London Plan: Why so little support for neighbourhood planning?*, the authors already foresee that the new London Plan policy on Optimising Housing Density will presumably emphasize a design-led approach that will end up replacing the Density Matrix, but “it remains to be seen whether the new London Plan policy will make it easier for neighbourhood forums” to put forward design-driven neighbourhood planning policies on this matter (p. 6).

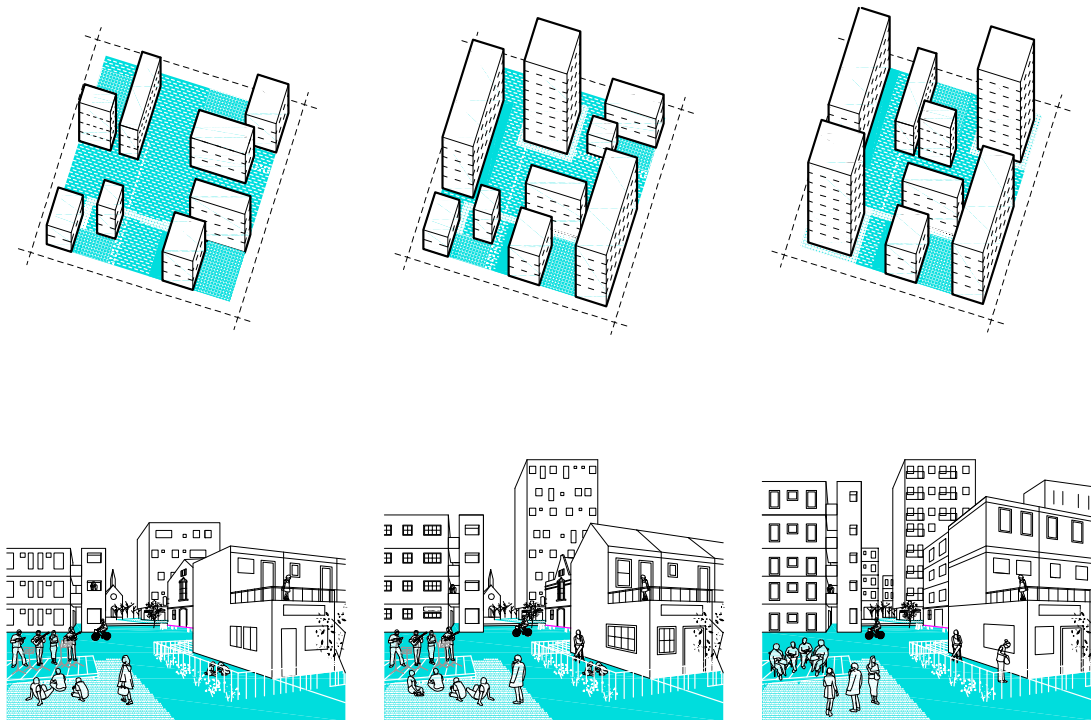


Figure 4-33 Density test for Scenario F: FAR 0.8 / FAR 1.65 / FAR 2

2. The need to balance flexibility and prescription of policies in order to meet original planning intentions.

Introducing future scenarios in the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan does not necessarily lead to rigid policies; there is room for flexibility in the development outcomes.

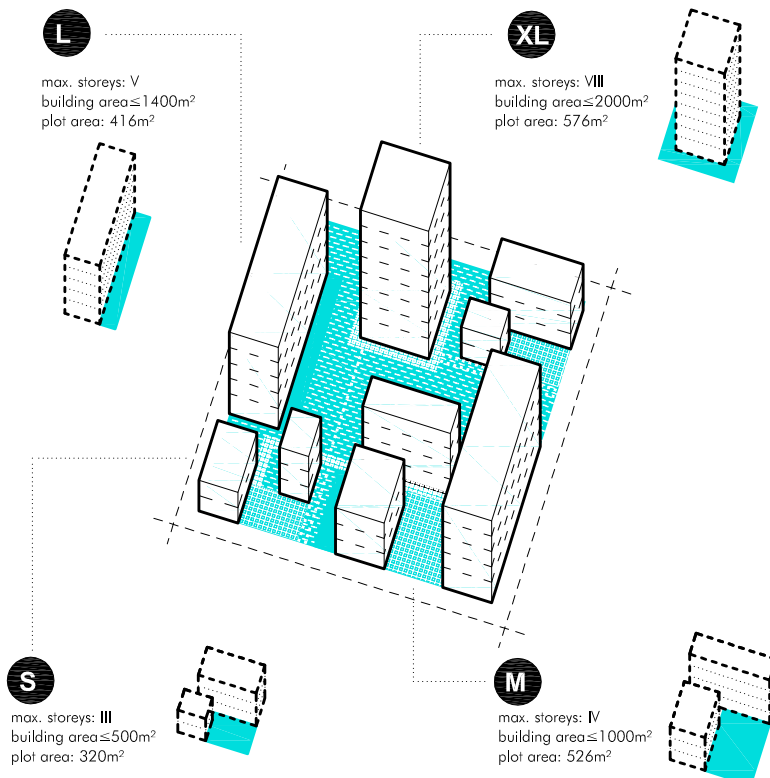


Figure 4-34 Definition of design elements of typologies in Scenario F

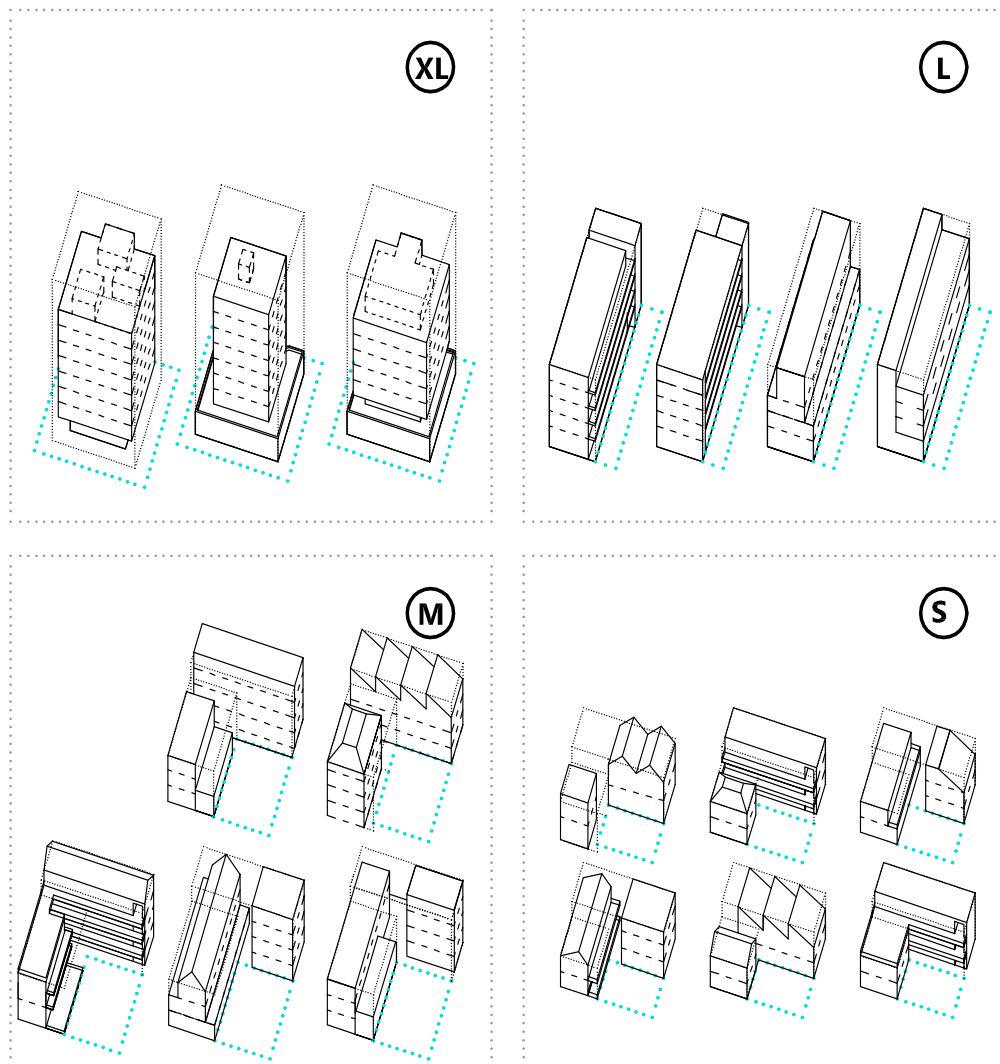


Figure 4-35 Catalogue of typological variations with fixed design elements

For example, if the Forum wanted to introduce the use of locally valued typologies for future development as part of the Plan, visualizations could help distinguish between the elements defining such typologies that play a critical role in the resulting spaces, and the discretionary elements that can instead be left open to interpretation. The former could be included in the planning policies, while the latter could be further developed in advisory guidance.

Figure 4-34 shows how typologies in one of the scenarios (F) can be regulated in terms of elements such as height (number of storeys), floor area (sqm), as well as the relation between indoor and outdoor space at ground-floor level. Other elements such as building lines, setbacks, façade articulation, treatment, and materiality, which don't interfere with the typological aspirations of the Forum, can be left outside the Plan. Figure 4-35 indicates that a wide catalogue of variations is still possible if the definition of design elements is well-balanced.

Forums might engage “in questions of over-prescription vs. under-prescription in design policy” that have long been subject of debate among design and planning professionals (Carmona, 2016, p. 714). This connects directly with their intentions to preserve local character and identity, while at the same time encouraging “design innovation” (KTNF, 2016, p.22).

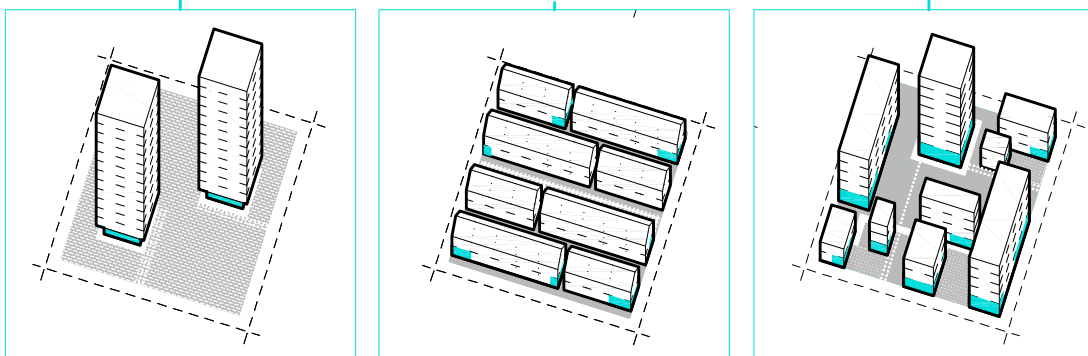
3. The need to coordinate policies on different themes for a more holistic Neighbourhood Plan.

For example, the Forum wanted to promote a mixed-use development on Regis Road Site with “some residential buildings incorporating active commercial uses at ground level, where appropriate” (KTNF, 2016, p. 46). Design could be used to analyse, translate and project the effects of this requirement in relation to the open space network offered by different scenarios (Figure 4-36). This allows for a reconsideration of such scenarios, in search of the one that best reconciles the coexistence of small business and residential activities at street level. Out of this discussion, planning decisions could be taken on the ideal distribution and amounts of residential, commercial, retail, community and employment uses in the area; as well as questions of subdivisions of blocks, active frontages and shopfronts that could be incorporated in the policies.

+ DD1 Analysis of existing non-residential uses in Regis Road Site



= DD2 Potential relocation of uses into Scenarios A, B, F



* DD3 Projections of Scenarios A, B, F - street level view mixed-use activity

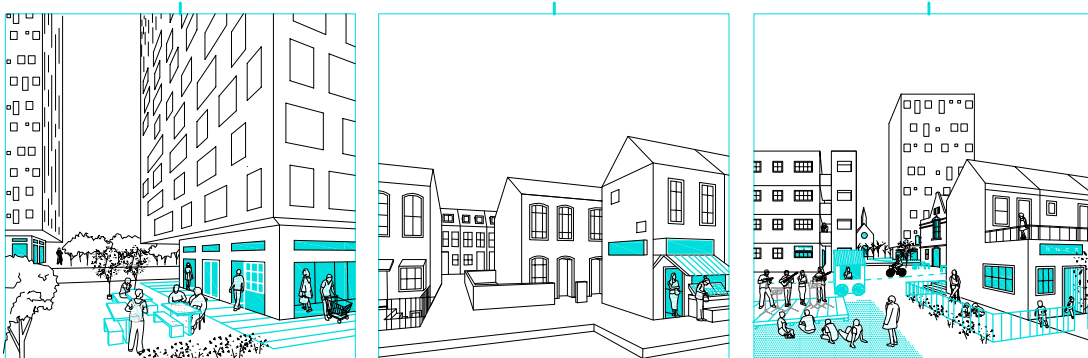


Figure 4-36 Design-led demonstrations in relation to mixed-use aspirations

This sequence of design-led analysis, translation and projection of development options, and their spatial consequences, needs to be at the heart of the Forums' discussions. In the decision-making process, this kind of design-led discussion might take place in iterative feedback loops "where `alternatives' as much as `priorities' drive the debate" and provide opportunities for the participants to "mix `values' with `evidence'" and progress towards agreeing planning decisions (Bloomfield, Collins, Fry & Munton, 2001, p. 504).

This means for example, that the design-led discussion on the themes of density, typologies and public space might not directly end up with a decision (ie. a preferred scenario and its derived policies), but could open up more questions on housing, transport, community, economy, environment and sustainability, among other issues. New iterations of analysis, translation and projection in relation to these themes would then be necessary, resulting in an increasing understanding of the local development context, a refinement of the space-based vision for the neighbourhood, and a wider and more complex range of spatial outcomes to be considered before taking any planning decision. This is a process open to challenge and debate, to different perspectives and to the priorities of all the stakeholders involved, and "does not easily boil down into neat, efficient and predictable considerations for decision makers"; but it ensures that the outcomes could rise above the lowest common denominator (Carmona, 2016, p. 713).

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Conclusions

This chapter summarizes the PhD findings as answers to the initial research questions and their implications for design in Neighbourhood Planning, together with presenting an outline of possible future avenues for exploration.

I began by reflecting on how all the methods deployed throughout my research process enabled me to arrive at a deeper understanding of the limited role designers are playing in Neighbourhood Planning settings and how their contributions might extend beyond that currently being offered.

5.1. Developing a 'PhD by Design' within the LDoc framework: reflections on the nature of design research

The institutional context of the London Doctoral Design Centre (LDoc) has had a significant impact not only on the content of the research presented in this PhD, but also on my personal approach to the challenges and weaknesses of using design "as a vehicle to develop understanding and new knowledge" (Verbeke, 2013, p.137). Being part of an institution specialized in doctoral training in Design Research Study gave me the opportunity to get involved in a shared exploration of the wide range of modes that could define design research and how those modes might be pursued. My LDoc colleagues came from different academic and practice backgrounds, and were conducting research on themes as varied as service design, fine arts, illustration, fashion, metaphysics and architecture, among others. Therefore, the approaches and methods they brought into play for developing PhDs by design were quite diverse.

For some of these researchers, design outputs were generated more or less intuitively at a very early stage of the research process and served to contest existing theories, explain present phenomena or advance future possibilities; usually the process involved a combination of these three. In other words, they started with design to derive a hypothesis and subsequently, conclusions. For others, including me, the inquiry into the phenomena under study began with a hypothesis, which was then tested through design work that led to new insights on the subject.

LDoc students using the former approach often struggled to defend the rigour in their methods and to make their findings transferable; and students following the more traditional approach found that it constrained the creative spirit of inquiry of the act of design. For all of us, questioning the nature of design research became a driving force throughout our own PhD processes.

The LDoc training sessions we received in the first year of PhD helped most of us transcend a preconceived view of design and research as opposites. One of these training events was particularly enlightening: In a Student-led Ldoc Workshop in June 2015¹, I discovered the work of David Leatherbarrow (2012) *The project of design research*, which proposes a reconciliation

1 For more information on the event see: <http://ldoc-cdt.ac.uk/an-exploratory-inspirational-day/>

of both terms, design and research, when seen as *projective* activities. For Leatherbarrow, “when design is seen as projection, not production”, design practice anticipates “an outcome that has formed itself in the space between discovery and recollection” in similar ways to scientific research (p.11). Perhaps because I’m familiar with the particularities of project-making in architecture, I found Leatherbarrow’s perspective very useful to start articulating the logic behind my own research process, which was “not the kind of ‘experimentation’ whose techniques close the work in on itself, nor a method untainted by extra-disciplinary involvements” (p.12).

I established a path for answering my initial research questions (derived from personal experience, empirical observation and my literature review) that combined design-led methods with more established research methods in the arts, humanities and science (i.e. literature review). The following section describes more explicitly the ways in which both types of methods have operated “together in an interactive and symbiotic manner, with each feeding into the others throughout the whole process from start to finish” (Fraser, 2013, p.2) and generated new insights on the role of design in Neighbourhood Planning as a result.

5.2. Connecting research methods and findings

5.2.1 Reflective phase: the refining of research questions and methods

In my first year, I combined the literature review with a period of exploratory fieldwork among the protagonists of Neighbourhood Planning — including local groups, and the academics and practitioners working with them, as well as other voices affected by Localism-driven reforms. The literature review soon revealed that research on Neighbourhood Planning was mostly focused on investigating the nature and dynamics of this unprecedented space for citizen participation in planning, as well as the empowering effects of this model. However, there was very little academic attention being paid to the constellation of expert professionals working together with local citizens in the production of Neighbourhood Plans. This gap in knowledge served to refine my research questions and to identify the original contribution my PhD could make: there hadn’t been, as of that date, a study looking into this field from the perspective of design and the designer.

In my professional career as a designer, prior to coming to the UK I had never worked within a regulatory context as favourable as Neighbourhood Planning is when it comes to incorporating design vision that has statutory weight within completed plans. But as I looked more closely at the resulting Neighbourhood Plans, I recognized that efforts to move towards better integration between design and planning practices had been either overlooked or proved a difficult feat.

Having narrowed down the subject under study, my fieldwork experience was a determining factor in the process of assessing the advantages and disadvantages of particular research methods to answer the initial research questions. As my investigation required an empirically grounded approach to the common barriers and opportunities for design in Neighbourhood Planning processes and outcomes, the most viable method for pursuing that investigation was to study a case that could provide me with a full picture of the phenomenon. My multiple encounters and collaborations throughout this period with the wide variety of actors, private and public entities involved in Neighbourhood Planning, enabled me to refine the approach to the case study research:

First, I had to make an important decision regarding whether to embed my research activity in a live case or to look into an already-finished case. The former option would have been guided by ‘Participatory Action Research’ principles and would have been easily built on my relationships with some of the groups in the midst of Neighbourhood Planning that I was already working with on an informal basis. However, there was an unsolvable limitation to this kind of study: the case would not be able to establish the correlation between the process and its outcomes, and the potential of design at both ends, which was my central hypothesis; as it takes an average of four years to approve a Neighbourhood Plan in London, it simply wouldn’t fit within the timing of a PhD. Choosing a completed case, on the other hand, would not only give me detailed insight into the stages of the process in which design is most needed in relation to the outcomes of that particular case, but it would also help in examining other cases with similar problems, thus ensuring the transferability of my findings (which will be further discussed later on this chapter).

Nevertheless, the option of a completed case presented me with a real challenge after my many years of practice and research testing various modes of ‘hand-in-hand’ collaboration with local communities in neighbourhood regeneration projects, in which my personal involvement with those groups was key for the progress of the projects. I’ve explored varied approaches ranging from intense immersions in the daily activities of local groups, including interviews and collaborative on-site mapping, to 1:1 prototyping (i.e. in India and Morocco), to organizing co-design workshops, consultations and user experience testing (i.e. in Spain and Austria). The different socio-cultural contexts in which I’ve been involved entailed particular challenges to which I have had to respond very differently.

In 2012, I worked on an academic project in the city of Ahmedabad, India’s 5th most populous city which was later declared India’s first UNESCO world heritage city in 2017. Working in one of Ahmedabad’s historic neighbourhoods offered me a unique opportunity to enter a “close-knit living ecosystem underpinned by an intense connection between the built environment and the user group” (Cano, 2016, p.104), in which residents take the modification of the built environment into their own hands. In a context like that, the contribution of a professional designer is inevitably challenged and thus I began a process of personal enquiry into the role of design that continues today. Since that early experience, each project I’ve embarked on has made me question the approach I take as a designer when collaborating with others on urban regeneration.

In the case of the Ahmedabad project, there was no institutionalised culture of public participation in the planning system. Yet there existed a rich tradition of user engagement in the local landscape, through informal, spontaneous and unmediated negotiation between users (Cano, 2016). My design task in these conditions was mostly focused on taking advantage of this tradition and reorganising neighbourhood spaces around the day-to-day collective experiences of the inhabitants (Figure 5-1). By conducting a brief ethnographic study (through interviews and participant observation in community activities), I was able to interact with residents in their real-life environment and identify, for example, an underused space that had an important role in the constitution of a ‘micropublic’ (Amin, 2002): the women of the community came together regularly to cook in a common courtyard that became not only a place of encounter, but also a space for them to participate in public life; and it was precisely the courtyard’s in-between spatial condition, not public but not private, that reinforced that particular social dynamic. I proposed a collective urban kitchen as an alternative type of public space to work with and design for within the larger neighbourhood regeneration strategy (Figure 5-2). Though without any official protocol for public participation, this kind of



Figure 5-1 Visual material from the project *Urban Strategies to Regenerate Indian Public Space: Spatial analysis of day-to-day activities through collaborative mapping*. Image from A. Cano, 2012.



Figure 5-2 Visual material from the project *Urban Strategies to Regenerate Indian Public Space: Axonometric view of one of the design proposals*. Image from A. Cano, 2012.

initiative couldn't have gained legal back up and become part of the planning regulations for the area, the Ahmedabad Development Plan. In fact, authors like Bhargav Adhvaryu (2011) warn that the plan "lacks analytical rigour and transparency and [that] there is lack of clarity on how the final plan was finally decided" (p.229).

For me, Neighbourhood Planning protocols introduced by the Localism Act in the UK sit at the extreme opposite of what I found in India, and are far more advanced than the participatory formulas I've worked with in other European contexts, so they offer the unique potential to democratize processes of local space production through a formalised channel. This spurred me to question the new opportunities this legal framework could open up for designers. The exploratory fieldwork with London local groups soon enough revealed that this potential was far from being fulfilled. What obstacles were designers then facing in this context?

When approaching Neighbourhood Planning, exploring these questions required from me the adoption of a completely different position than that expected from a design practitioner working in participatory settings. I saw myself as a more detached observer pursuing transferable knowledge rather than a specific design outcome.

Retrospectively, I can say that embracing this position not only made me address the challenge of participation in design and planning fields in a more critical and propositional way compared to my years of practice, but it also enabled self-reflection on the nature of my own practice, the collaborative methods I had already developed, and my contributions to the field throughout these years. In my trajectory as an architect and urban designer, this PhD has turned out to be pivotal. I've been prompted to deploy my previous experience, design skills and processes in new ways as they were tested in the context of a PhD, and are now being tested beyond academia in new urban regeneration projects (which I will explain later on in section 4).

5.2.2 Analytical phase: the current limitations of design in Neighbourhood Planning

After this reflective period that served to refine the research questions and determine the most suitable methods by which to answer them, design was then introduced as a fundamental component both for the testing and evaluating of emerging insights, and as a means of communicating them, or demonstrating how they would be communicated to collaborators in the Neighbourhood Planning process.

First, my research focused on unveiling the current roles designers are playing within Neighbourhood Planning. After having made the important decision on taking a single and completed case study approach to explore this question, I needed to select the most appropriate case to conduct the study. My visual skills and training as a designer provided a rigorous and systematic way to approach this selection. Design was used here, not as an act of projection, but as an act of recording what is there, and it took the form of various mapping techniques.

Mapping is a key technique that has been long used in architecture, planning and urban design disciplines "for its capacity to incorporate a wide variety of distinct forms of information" (Schoonderbeek, 2015, p.8) within an organized visual representation that can advance design thinking. Its use goes far beyond the representation of spatial conditions of a geographical area, and can include non-physical features such as concepts, behaviours, processes and relationships, among others.

I used mapping in three different research operations – visual description, comparison and analysis:

First, I developed a ‘Map of Neighbourhood Planning in London’ in which design was used to integrate, into a single visualization, all the information I needed for my research that was being put forth by the Forums operating in London. This map proved a key tool as this information had been previously spread out across various sources that were infrequently updated and often inaccurate. In fact, some years after I created this tool for my PhD, Neighbourhood Planners in London recognised that centralizing information on Neighbourhood Planning was urgently needed and they started developing a similar map to conduct their research.

The insights emerging from my map were twofold:

Firstly, the map enabled me to visually describe the bigger picture of the state of Neighbourhood Planning processes in the capital. The map showed that London was slow to adopt this participatory model of local planning and that the proliferation of Forums in the territory was initially uneven, with some central boroughs North of the river such as Camden or Westminster leading the way. In addition, the Map allowed me to observe the wide variety of plans being prepared and the emerging patterns among them, such as the frequent combination of pro-growth and conservation agendas covered by the resulting plans.

Secondly, and perhaps most importantly, the Map uniquely visualized an empirical reality of Forums and processes always in relation to each other. This innovative way of looking at Neighbourhood Planning helped transcend the space of the ‘local’ within which the empowerment effects of the Localism Act are usually theoretically discussed. Instead, the new perspective revealed a potential field of interactions and knowledge exchange between Forums, which had previously been disconnected, that remains under-researched by academics (Chapter 1 section 1.3.3 provides examples of London-wide initiatives connecting local Forums). In my case, this shift in perspective also made me aware of the importance of the transferability of my research findings and encouraged me to think about how the lessons of the case study could be expressed in a way that could be applied to other cases.

The second type of mapping exercise I undertook was a ‘Taxonomy of Case Studies’ derived from the wide variety of Plans in the previous Map. I chose eight cases that covered enough variety of location, scale, duration, and outcomes to form a representative sample. The main purpose of this visual taxonomy was not to merely to create a descriptive tool, but to instead allow for visual comparisons between the cases so I could choose the most appropriate case for an in-depth study. Design was employed not only to centralize widespread information, but to organize it into comparable categories related to case conditions, processes and outcomes.

The taxonomy provided evidence that despite the wide variety of conditions and processes under which the Plans were prepared, the spatial dimension of the resulting Plans was noticeably limited, if not entirely missing, in all of the cases. Designers and consultancies offering design services of all kinds (i.e. Prince’s Foundation, RTPI, LDA Design, Maroon Planning, Design Council CABE Built Environment Experts, Tibbalds Planning and Urban Design) were key players in the processes of plan-making. However, design was not the driving force behind any of the processes, as is reflected in the vagueness of the spatial policies included in the Plans and how rarely visualizations were used to illustrate them.

This was particularly disturbing in the case of Plans containing policies that intended to guide

new development in their Neighbourhood Areas. It is poignant that the most conservative type of plan in the taxonomy, Norland NP, has the most complete design-based analysis of the area to inform its policies. However, its idea of good design is rooted in the preservation of the neighbourhood as is. Therefore the Plan intends to control new development rather than act as a propositional document. In comparison with Norland NP, other plans with a more ambitious and pro-development agenda, such as Fortune Green & West Hampstead NP, Kentish Town NP, Highgate NP and Thames NP, were much more open to innovative design solutions and had been successful in allocating new areas for development. But the site-specific policies outlining the criteria for the redevelopment of such sites were barely developed through design methods. And thus, their idea of design quality was blurred and ambiguous. The policies developed in these Neighbourhood Plans were very often reproducing what local plans already said about housing, mobility, sustainability, etc. thereby failing to add the spatial specificity needed to address the particularities of neighbourhood spaces.

Uncovering the reasons behind this failure to incorporate design at several stages of the process, as well as the impact on the resulting Neighbourhood Plans, required closer examination and an analysis of more detail than that collected in the taxonomy. For this reason, I selected just one case for in-depth study. The taxonomy, however, was very useful in selecting the case of Kentish Town, because compared to the other cases it had benefited from the most financial resources and had received the most extensive professional support throughout, from a broad group of experts with a wide variety of profiles.

Once the case study was selected, I developed a third kind of map: a 'Map of Neighbourhood Planning Process and Outcomes' applied to the case of Kentish Town. Design, this time, was used as an analytical tool that could propose several readings of the relationship between the process and the outcomes of the case. This kind of visual analysis served as an index of entry points highlighting where it would be possible to introduce the propositional design work in the next research phase. The map provided "a specific form of analytical knowledge that can be activated directly towards architectural work [and] should thus be considered as the pre-text for architectural work itself" (Schoonderbeek, 2015, 28).

The Kentish Town 'Map of Process and Outcomes' was designed as a timeline that correlated publicly available information related to the participatory process (i.e. number of participants, type of actors involved) with its outputs (i.e. decisions made, policies developed). My objective was to better understand the different contributions of design professionals throughout the preparation of the Plan and to also unveil deficient areas and stages of the process in need of design input.

Overall, this 'Map of Process and Outcomes' revealed that there exists a fundamental lack of understanding about what designers do best and how they can contribute a design-based approach to the Neighbourhood Planning process that capitalizes on their unique skill-set.

Thanks to the Map, I could also identify the main causes (outlined in Chapter 3) for this limited role of design, which predictably respond to the financial, regulatory and operational constraints of the decision-making environment. But more surprisingly, I discovered that one of the major barriers for designers to play a larger role was self-imposed and rooted in a narrow self-image of themselves as 'facilitators of participation', reinforced by the image professional bodies transmit to the public and the demands of local actors.

The case study showed that Neighbourhood Planning is widely conceived of as a consensus-

oriented enterprise in which the competing interests of those involved need to be reconciled at all costs; and in which experts, designers included, are expected to act as facilitators of the process by selflessly articulating the desires of local citizens without influencing them. This, added to the fact that Neighbourhood Planning guidance encourages local groups to be “practical” and “realistic” (Burton, 2014, p.1) and emphasizes that they should not “allow others to tempt [them] into complexity” (p.12), contributes to the adopting of a form of pragmatism that seeks to reduce the complexity of the collective endeavour of local space planning and production.

However, my experience as a designer has taught me the nature of planning problems is not simple at all and that optimal solutions don’t exist (Rittel & Weber, 2015). Working in participatory processes also teaches that an early “subjugation of dissensus” (...), in which ‘getting things done’ is the priority (Parker & Street, 2015, p.6), could lead participants, experts included, to a “mode of operating by the smallest common denominator” (Steinø, 2003, p.187) that could negatively impact the quality of Neighbourhood Plans.

Consequently, designers should not be complicit as relates to the trend towards *solutionism* (Manzini, 2015). Design, could be a powerful tool in maintaining the complexity of the process and the outcomes of Neighbourhood Planning if it were understood and practised beyond consensual and problem-solving modes. Although this conclusion is in itself an original contribution to the under-explored field of design in Neighbourhood Planning, my background as a designer pushed me to go beyond the critique and become propositional.

Chapter 4 is my attempt to formulate and test a working model that can help designers avoid foreclosing the potential of design within Neighbourhood Planning. Therefore, at this point, the primary audience of this PhD became designers themselves and my next research phase, in terms of content and narrative, reinforced this position. Unlike other research into Neighbourhood Planning that prioritizes other actors’ voices, for example through interviews with lay participants, my propositional work was intended to articulate, through a deliberate interplay of text and drawings, the designer’s missing voice in Kentish Town.

5.2.3 Propositional phase: the potential contribution of design to Neighbourhood Planning

The set of constraints and possibilities for design I identified in Kentish Town allowed my research to enter a new phase in which “the creative aspect becomes the dominant part of the investigation” (Fraser, 2013, p.2). As a result, design moved from being used analytically to instead becoming a generative force to expand the role of design within the field.

According to a traditional understanding of what a ‘PhD by project’ is within Architecture and Urban Design disciplines, Chapter 4 could be considered the closest thing to ‘the project’, as it consists of the translation of my spatial analysis into design strategies and options. These options are part of an effort to produce spatial knowledge and communicate it visually to citizens and decision-makers within a Neighbourhood Plan preparation process.

However, as I previously stressed in my methodology chapter, the visual material produced via design in Chapter 4 should not be taken as an alternative Kentish Town Neighbourhood Plan, nor as a better solution to the Kentish Town process. Rather, the design methods generated in that phase served as tools for demonstrating the ability of design inform planning decisions by increasing the understanding of available options, and taking a step back, for determining

the benefits of introducing said design at particular stages of the process.

The following section lays out the field of potential departures I propose for designers to operate in a way that would be driven by a revalorisation of their skills, techniques and contributions to Neighbourhood Planning. And this, I believe, stands to benefit the process' participatory nature and, by extension, its outcomes in various ways.

5.3. Implications of re-establishing the focus on design

In Chapter 4, the designer's practice within a process of this kind has been framed as a design-led discussion intended to bridge the gap between planning intentions and planning decisions.

As a starting point, the design-led discussion takes in the initial planning intentions expressed by local citizens and stakeholders in the earliest meetings, during the production of the Evidence-Base for the Neighbourhood Plan. It is necessary to clarify that the voice of participants in this PhD is not gathered through direct contact with them in those early meetings, but through an exhaustive the review of the vast documentation publicly made available (i.e. website posts, minutes of the meetings, workshop reports); these insights were later on corroborated in person when I attended some events at the final stage of decision-making prior to the local referendum.

In any case, I propose that the designer first approach the area through the eyes of locals, attentive to their perceived needs and desires, to engage in "a process of skilled examination and reconstruction that renders problematic situations sense-able" (Di Salvo, 2015, p.116). However, an analysis of the existing conditions of the area has to be able to overcome the limitations of an evidence base mainly produced by collecting the individual wish-lists of the involved participants (see Chapter 3 for an extended discussion on the limitations of the Evidence Base). This would require designers to extend their expected role by introducing overlooked aspects, under-represented concerns and specialist frames of reference that complement the Evidence-Base (e.g. F.A.R considerations, typological specifications, public-private gradients).

Such input has the potential to inform and invigorate the formulation of a shared vision that establishes the objectives and priorities of the Neighbourhood Plan. As shown in the Taxonomy of Case Studies, too often, reductive evidence-bases lead to oversimplified visions based on planning options and tools that neighbours are already familiar with. Such visions are verbally discussed, but rarely visualized in Neighbourhood Planning processes.

I argue that design is instrumental in spatialising the local stakeholders' vision. Moreover, at this stage it is crucial to demonstrate that different design strategies (ie. design strategies A to H) can produce a myriad of distinct spatial outcomes, thereby encouraging stakeholders to consider alternative courses of development. This exercise requires that designers be further trained in becoming proactive agents in the act of interpreting local citizens' objectives in spatial terms. As both representatives of local citizens' claims and proponents of their own views, designers engage here in "a combined reflexive learning of what we aspire to in our social relations and values, and the invention of possible courses of action towards those aspirations" (Di Salvo, 2016, p.33).

The consideration of different development options has proved to be an indispensable stage prior to policy-writing. Without this stage, the vision remains so abstract that decision-makers do not always understand the spatial consequences of the planning choices they have to make. As there is no simple solution and there are consequences to any choice they make, participants have to make the most informed decisions they can. Hence, I urge designers to anticipate and explain the effects of development on the living environment through projections that can help residents arrive at informed decisions. To achieve this aim, designers would have to take into account that any visual projections produced would need to engage a non-expert audience and support a discussion on spatial qualities, values and relations. Therefore, the projections I'm proposing are, to the greatest degree possible, not descriptive and representational drawings, but rather informational visuals.

In this sense, the production of multiple projections is an implicit recognition of the limitations of design to provide a single optimal solution for the neighbourhood. In fact, it is a reminder that it would be undesirable to do so, as it would reduce the multiplicity of local voices from the outset. The designer in Neighbourhood Planning "does not produce the final product that is implemented, but rather generates the alternatives that are the objects of evaluation and choice" (Basta and Moroni, 2013, p.8). Therefore, value decisions such as which scenario to choose and why, as opposed to the spatial choices that give rise to them, are outside the remit of the designer.

However, this does not mean that design professions would again be divested of agency and unable to influence the development of neighbourhood space. If, as Tatjana Schneider and Jeremy Till (2009) propose in *Beyond Discourse: Notes on Spatial Agency*, "we take 'agency' in its transformative sense as action that effects social change, the architect becomes not *the* agent of change, but one among many agents" (p.97). The authors take Anthony Giddens' notion of 'agency' as the ability to "transform the given" (p.99).

To further this notion of transformational agency, I illustrated in Chapter 4, in a number of examples, how the introduction of design at certain stages of the Neighbourhood Planning process can affect and benefit the outcomes thereby making a difference "to a pre-existing state of affairs" (109). First, I show how a design-led discussion could affect the Forum's decisions as to whether or not they need to introduce relevant design requirements as part of the planning policies. Second, we can see how this could lead to a debate on the level of flexibility and prescription of the policies to ensure that they meet the initial planning intentions. And third, I explore how design could help coordinate policies on different themes for a more holistic Neighbourhood Plan. Each of these examples has the potential to strengthen the relationship between planning and design disciplines and allow "spatial planning to develop in new directions" (Haughton & Allmendinger 2009, p.2548).

Similar to Schneider and Till, I consider that designer agency in the Localism context lies in the designer's ability to effect change "through the empowerment of others", which the designer can achieve by proposing "different or 'alternative' spatial processes" (p.100) that can be initiated through Neighbourhood Planning. Designers expressing agency in this context are never neutral and instead push design beyond an exclusively problem-solving practice towards one that adopts a critical stance — a "discursive practice based on critical thinking and dialogue" — that questions the status quo (Mitrovic, Golub and Šuran, 2015, p.13); it is a kind of practice that has been rechristened by many authors as critical design, interrogative design, radical design and anti-design.

To provide an example of how designers can introduce a critical position, in Chapter 4 I used design to enrich the Forum's discussion on the neighbourhood's future public spaces and the distinct spatial qualities of those spaces. To do so, I first exposed that the main characteristics associated with the notion of public space used in the Kentish Town Neighbourhood Plan are those of a space that is 'open and accessible'. However, the Neighbourhood Planning process could be a potential learning arena to challenge this limited, pre-established notion, usually taken for granted in planning documents, and could instead offer a fresh approach to public space as a working concept that is open to local exploration in the course of the discussions. To fulfil the potential of a design-led analysis of Kentish Town's existing spaces, I brought in more nuanced considerations of public space from geographers, planners, architects and other spatial-theorists that focus on access, use and management. Drawing on this analysis, I first proposed various future development options that offer neighbourhood spaces with different spatial qualities, and used design projections to anticipate the experience of the resulting spaces from a pedestrian perspective.

In this sequence of design operations, the designer's role is initially circumscribed to engaging the locals in a reflective experience of their own neighbourhood that allows them "to understand the forces and variables that have an effect on the production of space" (Miessen, 2013, p.42). In this case, the aim is for the Forum to become aware that the question of public space is interconnected with decisions on other planning matters (i.e. their choices on density and typologies affect neighbourhood spaces) and that this awareness could inform a critical discussion on the spatial qualities they want to bring into neighbourhood spaces.

However, designers could take the critical potential of design even "one step further, towards imagination and vision of possible scenarios" (Mitrovic, Golub and Šuran, 2015, p.13). The objective would then be for the Forum to envision alternative spatial outcomes beyond what they already know, and as a result, introduce precise design requirements in relation to the access, use and management of future neighbourhood spaces. Thus, design would redefine itself as a speculative practice (Dunne and Raby, 2013) that not only refers to the plausible and probable, but would also amplify the range of the possible and desirable conditions of the future public spaces of Kentish Town.

5.4. Transferability and further application of the findings in Neighbourhood Planning settings

5.4.1 Transferability of the findings

At this point, readers might wonder whether the design-led framework I'm proposing in this PhD is applicable beyond the Kentish Town case. This section provides some evidence that the findings of this research are not only inherently transferable, but that they are already being applied in other neighbourhood regeneration projects, within and beyond Neighbourhood Planning frameworks.

Overall, this PhD is a wake up call for designers working to reposition design at the centre of their practice when working in other Neighbourhood Planning processes. This could only be possible by overcoming consensus-driven planning ideals rooted in the Habermasian collaborative line of thinking that Neighbourhood Planning has inherited.

To do so, some adherents of Chantal Mouffe's thinking on democratic politics argue that consensus always implies a form of exclusion, thus foreclosing any potential for transformative political action. As opposed to the dis-empowered facilitator, advocates of

the Mouffian approach, such as Markus Miessen (2017), encourage the designer to be the *uninvited outsider*, or *crossbencher*, “someone who is intentionally unaware of prerequisites and existing protocols, one who enters the arena with nothing but creative and projective intellect” (p.144). For Miessen, the main role of design in the planning process would be that of instigating and initiating debates that might not take place otherwise.

However for me, bringing designers’ own agendas independent of the needs and desires of the rest of the participants, could make the work of designers be perceived as irrelevant and unnecessary for the locals, as the “relevance of any given project is only found when it is informed by the multiple voices of the insiders” (Till, 2011, p.2). Though I agree that competing views on planning matters cannot be reconciled, the question remains: how can designers deal with the adversarial nature of the Neighbourhood Planning processes without their practice becoming sterile?

First of all, it is necessary to conceptualize Neighbourhood Planning beyond this idea of mutually exclusive notions of democracy. To do so, I found inspiration in the line of thought developed by Elisabet Van Wymeersch, Stijn Oosterlynck and Thomas Vanoutrive in *The political ambivalences of participatory planning initiatives* (2018). The authors understand that “participatory planning processes as an empirical reality can sustain and accommodate radically different, even incompatible views on democracy” (p.2). From this perspective, “in which both consensus-building and divisive social struggles are seen as different ‘moments’ in the same democratic planning process” (p.2), the roles of the designer-facilitator and the designer-instigator could be put to work simultaneously in Neighbourhood Planning settings. Consequently, I urge designers working in Neighbourhood Planning to move across extreme positions – neither acting solely as facilitator, nor solely as instigator – and adopt more flexible and nuanced roles depending on the stage of the process they are facing and the deficits they find along the way. But how can they start taking this approach towards Neighbourhood Planning?

This PhD actually offers a method that captures the stages during the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan in which designers are most needed and can intervene most effectively, as well as what kind of design input would be most beneficial. Both the timeline for design and the content of design are perfectly transferable because all the Neighbourhood Planning processes, despite their particularities, go through a similar path (defined in the Neighbourhood Planning protocol) and are therefore vulnerable to similar design deficits.

The eight cases of the Taxonomy already hinted at that conclusion, but with the Kentish Town case, I was able to determine more precisely that design was mainly needed in the building of the Evidence-Base, the formulation of the ‘Vision’, and the consideration of spatial options and their implications to inform the written policies.

In other words, one of the main lessons of this research is that all Forums preparing plans should undertake an analysis of the process as their first step. In this sense, I provide in Chapter 3 a very powerful tool for them to use: the Map of Process and Outcomes in the form of a timeline as developed for Kentish Town that is easily adaptable to other cases in order to illustrate the impact of the engagement activities on the plan and how it evolves. This is a reproducible analytical tool that could end up replacing the ‘Consultation Statement’ document that has to accompany the Neighbourhood Plan, which provides only a description of the engagement strategy but doesn’t serve to analyse the process itself, overcome deficiencies or redirect resources.

An experience of this kind is already taking place as part of the largest urban regeneration project in Europe. To take the design-led methods used in my PhD back into my practice as a designer, I'm currently developing a much more complex version of the timeline to evaluate design deficits and opportunities in the project Madrid Nuevo Norte, in my hometown of Madrid. This is the first masterplanning process in Spain that has been conducted in parallel with a participatory process, by a private developer, Distrito Castellana Norte (DCN), and in partnership with the local authorities².

In Spain, there is no protocol for public participation in planning as advanced as Neighbourhood Planning, so this project is a unique opportunity to test the methods proposed in my PhD. The timeline I'm building for DCN (Figure 5-3) analyses more than 30 Key Performance Indicators of the plan preparation process in relation to 7 Standards of Quality from the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2, 2009). The timeline, this time is not used retrospectively as I did for Kentish Town, since it is a digitally based app that enables evaluating the process in real time. Thanks to this tool, we have been able to identify more than sixty changes in the masterplan in response to participants' concerns about nine policy areas (housing, public spaces, mobility, community facilities, mixed use, heritage, sustainability, gender and redevelopment work). For example, it has been possible to evaluate how the participatory workshops with women of the areas affected by the master plan served to introduce a gender perspective in the planning decisions about neighbourhood spaces, their accessibility, and uses and location in relation to the public transport network and community facilities, which in turn informed a series of design criteria for the development of a ground-floor level that favours women's autonomy and security perception (DCN, 2019).

I anticipated the potential of this timeline tool in the Methodology Chapter (page 49), and it is now proving to be an example of good practice³ that could be directly applied in the UK Neighbourhood Planning context. Currently, Locality recommends the Forums to use their 'Neighbourhood Plan Project Planner' tool to follow "a structured approach to plan making" and "keep track of timescales and targets" when developing a Neighbourhood Plan (Locality, 2018, p.1). This consists of a basic excel sheet on which to record "key dates on the neighbourhood planning journey" (Locality, 2019, p.2). However, this tool doesn't help with resource planning, task and goals tracking or reporting. Although presented as one of the "key resources" (p.2) for the Forums as a project management tool, it is clearly insufficient.

In contrast, the timeline app developed for Madrid could be easily adapted to the needs of Neighbourhood Forums and provided by Locality, alongside a quick training session to learn how to use it. This training could even fit into one of the support packages AECOM already offers on 'Setting up a Neighbourhood Planning Group'. In the guide *Achieving well-designed places through Neighbourhood Planning*, Locality (2019), they already recommend

2 For a brief description of the project Madrid Nuevo Norte see the website of the London-based architectural practice Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners, who participated in the preparation of the masterplan: Madrid Nuevo Norte. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.rsh-p.com/projects/madrid-nuevo-norte/>.

3 The process of development of this timeline, as well as a diagnosis of results, has been presented in the 8th edition of Engendering International Conferences: "Urban planning, gender and participation: new ways of thinking the city" in July 2019 at the Universidad Internacional Menéndez Pelayo (UIMP). For further information see: <https://engenderingevents.webnode.es/copia-de-eng8-uimp/>

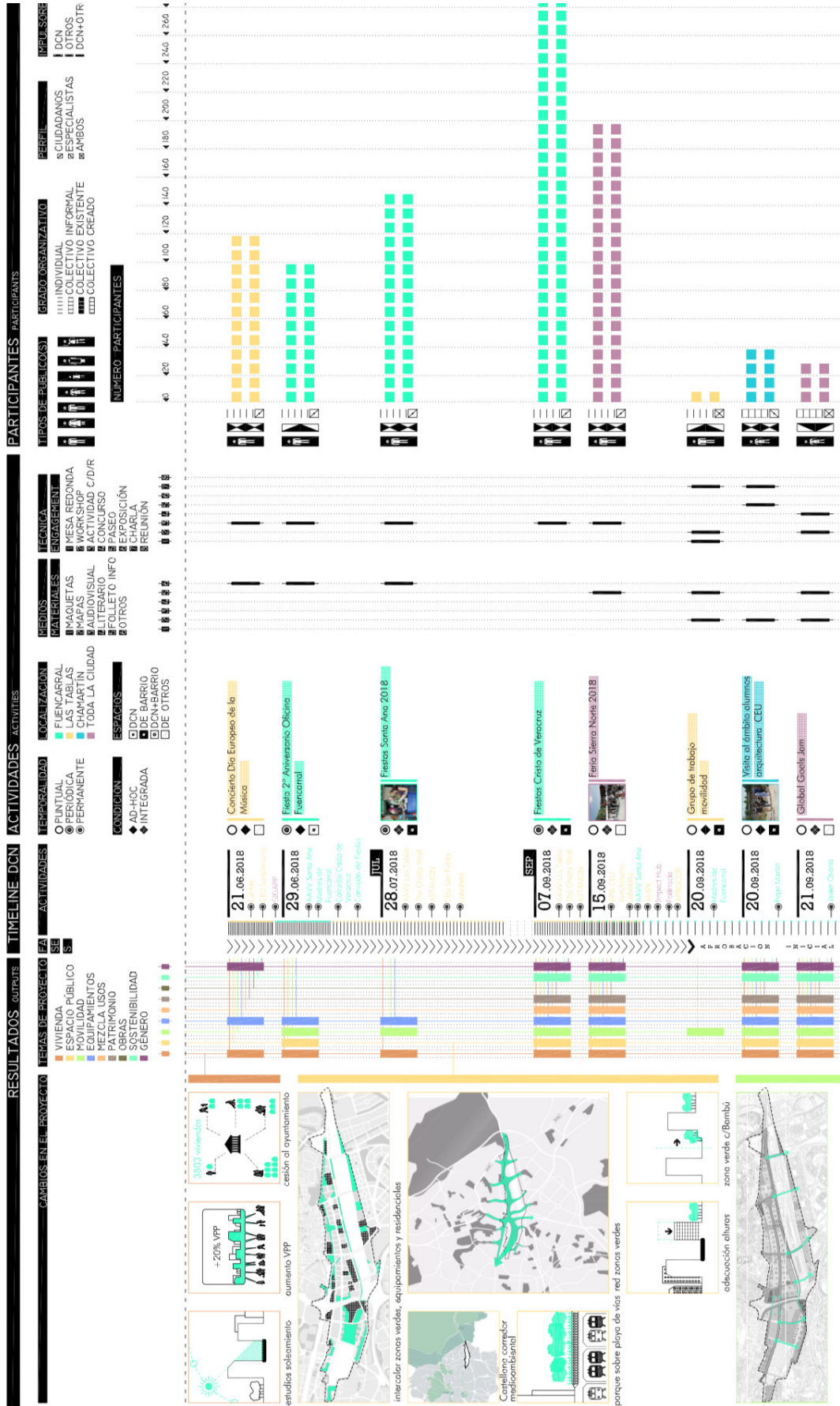


Figure 5-3. DCN Digital Timeline of Process and Outcomes. Image by A. Cano, 2019, presented at 8th edition of Engendering International Conferences: “Urban planning, gender and participation: new ways of thinking the city”.

using “apps or online tools such as www.confers.com and www.commonplace.is” (p.21), but these are mainly project consultation software that allow stakeholders to comment online on the Neighbourhood Plan. A tool like the timeline would not only assist the Forums’ internal functioning, but would also help build a culture of transparency, as it can record each Forum activity in relation to the decisions adopted and changes in the plan made.

With regard to the kind of design input that I generate in Chapter 4 for Kentish Town, there are two main aspects that can be reproduced and transferred to other Neighbourhood Planning processes:

The first element is the sequential logic behind the way the design content is generated, as described in section 5.3.2, that has been intentionally conceived of to develop cumulative spatial knowledge that informs the Forum discussions. Other professionals working on other cases might have other understandings of design, their own methods and themes to address, but what Kentish Town has demonstrated is that any design input needs to be rooted in an analysis of the existing spatial conditions. In the case of Kentish Town, the existing spatial conditions included the range of densities and types with which the locals were already familiar. Any abstract intentions for future development would need to be translated into different spatial strategies so their implications on the ground could be fully understood and evaluated within the Forum’s discussions; in the case of Kentish Town, this ‘translation’ of intentions examined how certain densities can be achieved using existing typologies and what kind of neighbourhood spaces they would produce as a result.

The second element, the choice of the visual language, is instrumental in supporting the design-led discussion. Various architects might have different styles, but what Kentish Town demonstrates is that the visuals can be diagrammatic enough to present densities and typologies, but illustrative enough to give participants an idea of how it would feel to use one density versus another, one scale versus another, one configuration versus another, and so on. This, added to the fact that they are presented as tables of choices, helps architects stick to a strategic approach to urban design, far from solution-giving. Although it was never within the scope of this PhD to examine how these drawings could have worked in live Kentish Town Forum conversations, I can confidently defend their efficacy in redirecting conversation towards design content, rather than the final expression of design. This is because this kind of visual language has been tested and refined over my years of practice with participants from very different socio-cultural backgrounds in Spain, Sweden, Vienna, India, Morocco, and Chile, among other countries, with very good results in keeping focus on design processes and relations, rather than on specific design solutions. In some of those projects, ideas initially presented through these kinds of drawings were later on explored through additional visual formats (i.e. 3D models, game boards, VR), but always served as a common ground for the design-led discussions.

An example of how these two elements have been successfully combined, from early stages to completion and beyond, in a participatory planning process to develop a real neighbourhood, lies in the regeneration project of *Wildgarten* in Vienna (Austria). I had the invaluable opportunity to take part in a long redevelopment process begun in 2009; the process stemmed from the winning project of the international competition European 10 to redevelop a vacant lot of 10 hectares next to a rail line, similar to the Regis Road Site in Kentish Town (Figure 5-4). The renowned architectural firm, Arenas Basabe Palacios, which has led this process to date, understands “urban planning as an open collaborative process in which everyone can be represented” (Arenas Basabe Palacios, 2015, p.1).



Figure 5-4. Wildgarten-Graphic novel for communication of the process, actors and project in local workshops. Image from Arenas Basabe

ARTEN

Emil - Behring - Weg, Vienna'

'The Commons' presents the story of the project 'Wildgarten': an innovative process of democratic planning. It began in 2009 with the winner project of the international competition European 10 Vienna, made by our office Arenas Basabe Palacios.

For the planning development, we formed a multidisciplinary team with the local partners Mascha & Seethaler and a group of experts in mobility, sociology, participation, landscape and energy. Each expert, in thematic workshops, contributed with their specific knowledge to the project. The collective work has resulted into the master plan for the suburban area of Emil-Behring-Weg, Meidling, approved by the city of Vienna in September 2015.

But urbanism is not only made by the technicians. We understand urban planning as an opened collaborative process in which everyone can be represented. Therefore the institutions, developers and citizenship have been involved in the workshops, taking part of the planning with his own interests, necessities and capabilities.

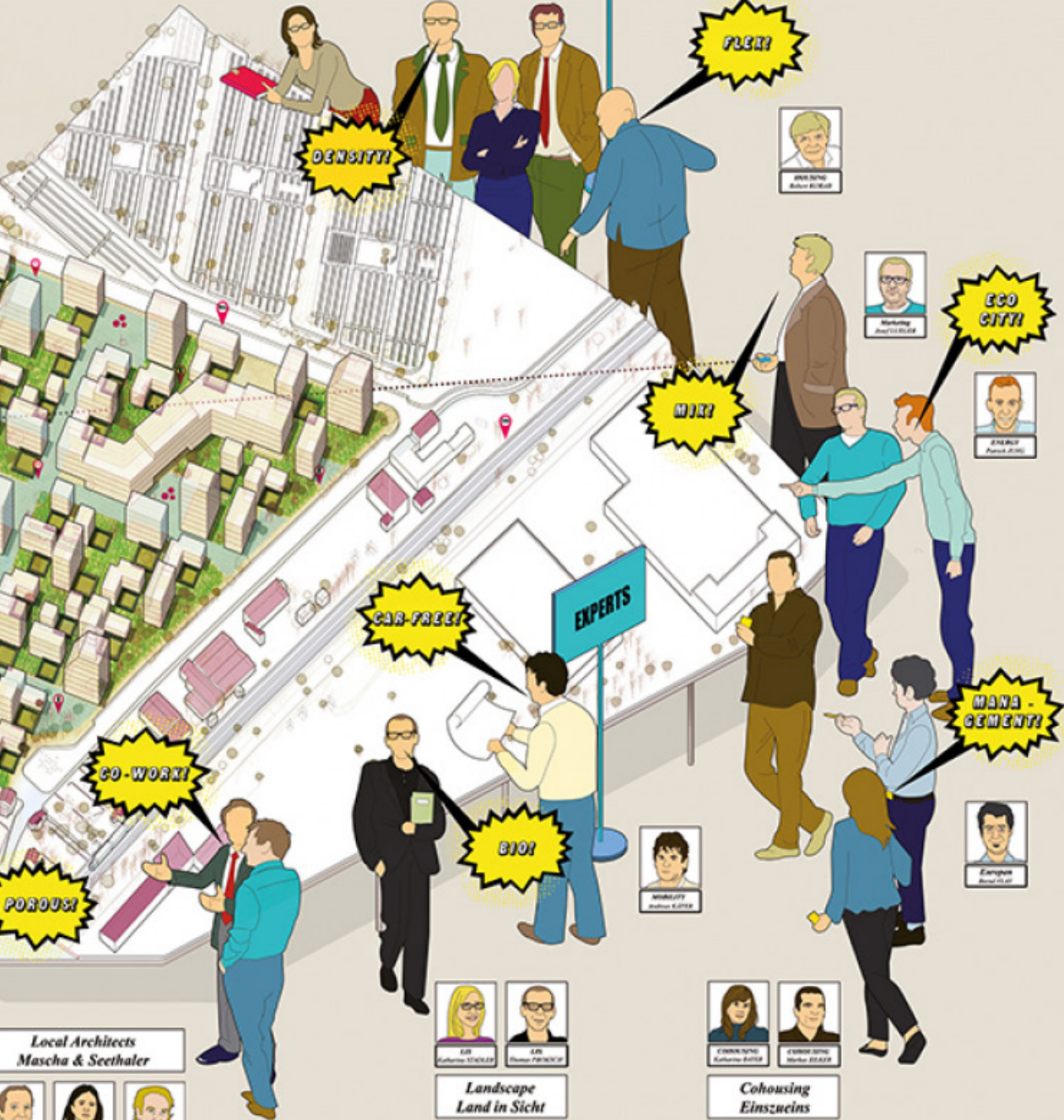
Public Institutions
MA 21 Stadt Wien



Developers
BIG (ARE)



DEVELOPERS



Local Architects
Mascha & Seethaler



Landscape
Land in Sicht



Cohousing
Einszweins

Arenas Basabe Palacios. (2015). The commons: a story of collaborative urbanism tentatively illustrated. Madrid: Marea Libros.

They conceived of a series of design-led workshops with local residents, institutions, developers and experts of the built environment (i.e. energy, transport, housing sectors) aimed toward the preparation of a masterplan approved by the municipality of Vienna in 2015. The design content and language developed for and within these workshops, as well as the architects' approach to the process, is very much in line with the role I propose design should take in Neighbourhood Planning. In fact, it is an example of how the typologies in Chapter 4 are generated: through an analysis of existing types and densities, translation into four spatial strategies familiar for the locals (in this case i.e. urban sprawl, Wiener block, 60's towers and row housing) and projections of scenarios that anticipate the strengths of the strategies. When this content was presented to the different stakeholders in successive workshops, they could understand and discuss the pros and cons of taking some key decisions; for example, the final plan doubled the initial density from 56 to 100 houses/hectares (p.6). In the Neighbourhood Planning context, with many of the Forums reluctant to further densify their areas, this type of shift would exemplify how design could be used to tear down myths and accommodate different stakeholders' interests when planning (Figure 5-5).

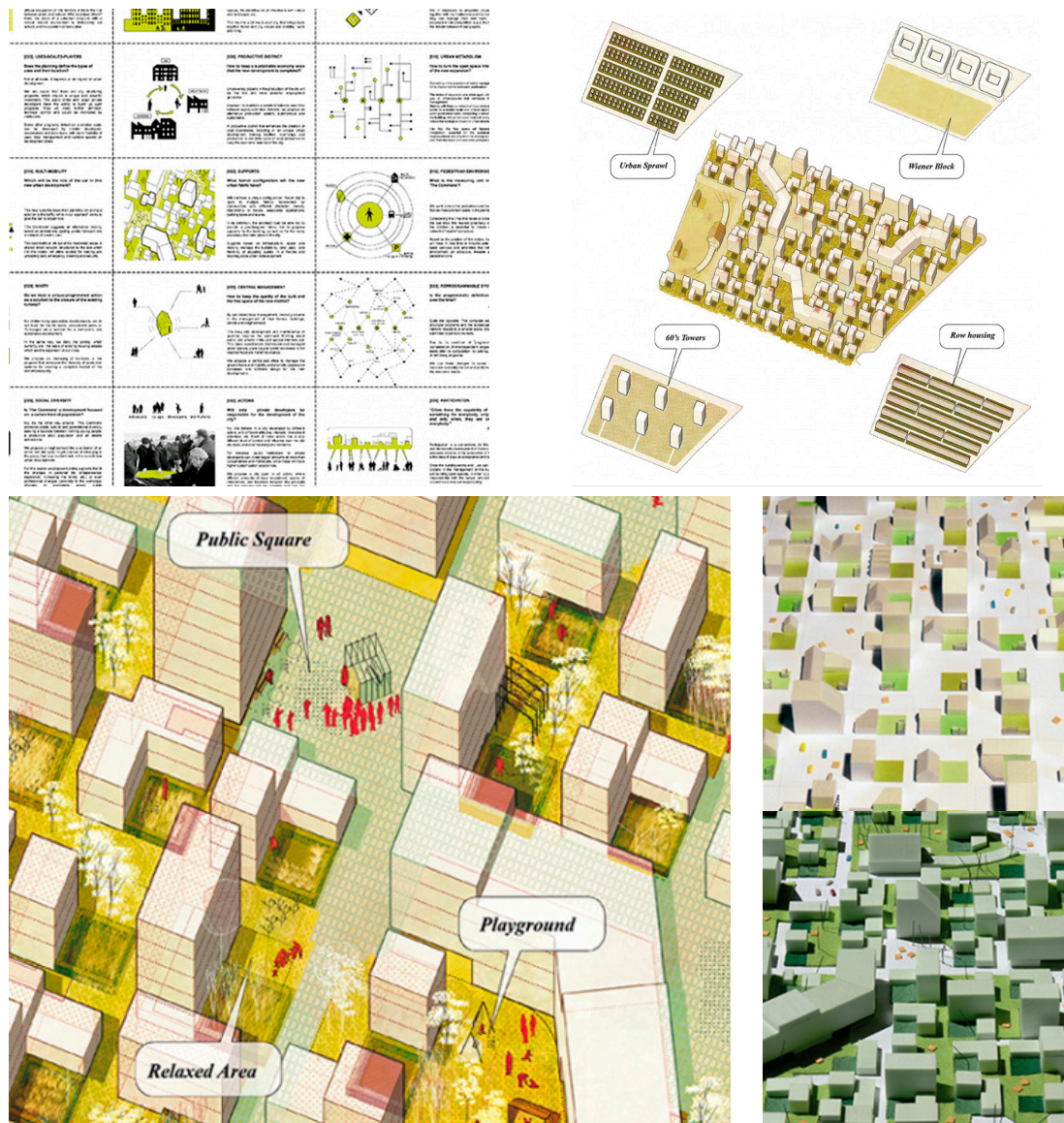


Figure 5-5. Wildgarten- Sequence of design operations. Top left: analysis of typologies and densities. Top right: translation into four spatial strategies. Bottom left: projection of scenario with mix of typologies. Bottom right: models for density testing. Images compiled from Arenas Basabe Palacios. (2015). The commons: a story of collaborative urbanism tentatively illustrated. Madrid: Maireia Libros.

In *Wildgarten*, several developers have taken the resulting plan for the neighbourhood forward. Currently, 14 different residential projects are being built by different architectural firms under a coherent set of planning rules (Figure 5-6). By the end of 2020, it will be possible to see a whole neighbourhood that the Global Holcim Awards jury praised for promoting “a form of democratic architecture, foregrounding participatory process in decision-making, while involving a great number of stakeholders and actors (...) to be employed by particularly complex tasks that require collective consensus” (Leutenegger, 20015, p.53).

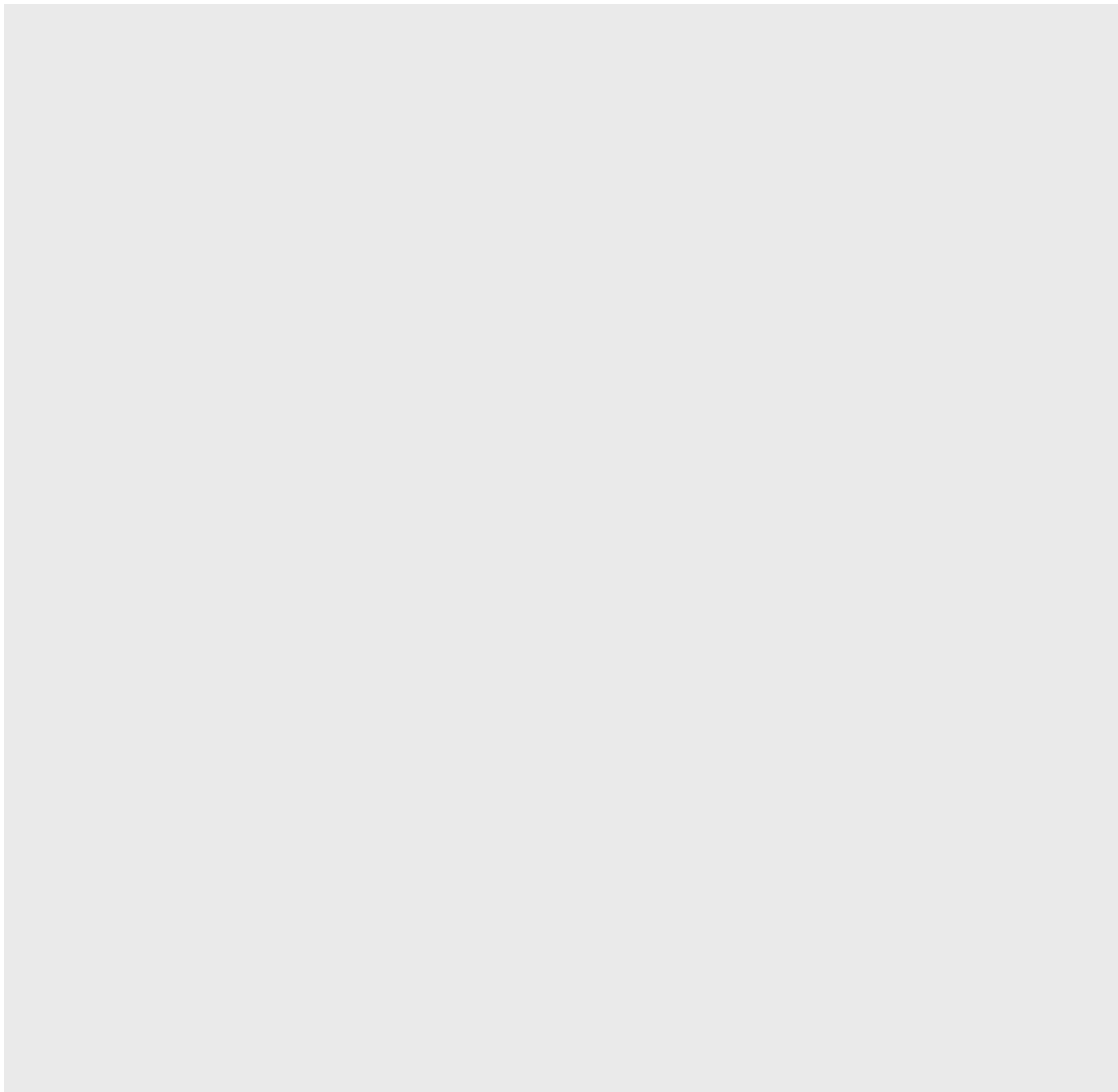


Figure 5-6. *Wildgarten-Redevelopment beyond the masterplanning stage. Top left: residential projects of several developers. Top right: aerial view of Wildgarten. Bottom: current state of the development works. Images compiled from <http://www.wildgarten.wien/der-wildgarten/#planung> and ARE Austrian Real Estate, & Development GmbH (Eds.). (2019). *Der Wildgarten. Wohnen außergewöhnlich gestalten. Wien.**

This project serves as an example that the role of design I’m advocating for with this PhD is not only possible, but that there is fertile ground in the young professionals already working in this way for other neighbourhoods. But the expansion of design within Neighbourhood Planning does not only depend on individual practitioners involved in Neighbourhood Planning processes and the kind of role and contribution they need to bring. At the heart of this PhD, there is also an implicit call for a more productive relationship between researchers and the institutional constellation of universities, governmental agencies, professional bodies and other colleagues concerned with the future of local space.

5.4.2 Further application of the findings and future research agenda

In a constantly evolving context such as Neighbourhood Planning, a section about the application of the findings of my PhD has to be subjected to continual review. Proof of this lies in the fact that a few months ago, most of the initiatives and documents I mention here didn't even exist. This offers a brief glimpse into the limitations of a study of this kind, at the cutting edge of the phenomena under investigation. As a result, in this section I provide a static picture of a field in flux, in an attempt to exemplify the kind of processes that could be implemented and developed thanks to the body of knowledge generated throughout this PhD. This hints at the limitations of this research, but also serves as a reminder of its relevance, as well as the urgent need for further research into the rich field of investigation that Neighbourhood Planning has the potential to become for designers.

After developing this research, I can point to at least four major shifts that are urgently required within the normative, institutional, professional and educational contexts that surround Neighbourhood Planning. These are four direct applications of my findings, which raise questions for further study:

The normative level: Is the wider planning system supporting the introduction of design aspects in Neighbourhood Planning?

As indicated in Chapter 3, some of the constraints found by the actors involved in Neighbourhood Planning reflect the intrinsic limitations of the planning system itself. This is true also for the barriers designers might experience if they indeed start amplifying their role. Their undertaking should be accompanied by wider and more effective support from other tiers of planning to effectively introduce design aspects in Neighbourhood Planning. Luckily, in the years coinciding with the latest phase of this PhD, several steps have been taken in this direction:

For example, at the national level, the National Planning Policy Framework, updated in February 2019, has come to emphasise the role of Neighbourhood Plans in achieving well-designed places through design policies and indicates how this could be realized: "to provide maximum clarity about design expectations at an early stage, plans or supplementary planning documents should use visual tools such as design guides and codes" (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2019, p.38).

At a city-wide level, the draft of the new London Plan, currently undergoing a period of public examination, also recognises in paragraph 3.1.1 that "good design and good planning are intrinsically linked" (GLA, 2017, p.99) and dedicates a whole section (Policy 2 Delivering good design) to describing how to embed good design principles in each stage of the planning process in ways that would ensure that these principles are carried through to the completion of development. This recommendation includes, as I have proposed in this PhD, design analysis and visualization to inform plan-making and decision-taking: "Where appropriate, visual, environmental and movement modelling/assessments should be undertaken to analyse potential design options for an area, site or development proposal" (GLA, 2017, p.103).

However, organisations such as Neighbourhood Planners.London claim that there are still major improvements that need to be made, and that the new National Planning Policy Framework and London Plan are still "missing a major opportunity to promote neighbourhood planning as a route to achieving its own stated objectives" (Neighbourhood Planners.London,

2018, p.1), including the aim to achieve greater interaction between planning and design.

The application of my PhD findings would involve the introduction of a formal requirement in the Neighbourhood Planning protocol to incorporate design at certain stages, similar to the requirement for a 'Consultation Statement'. Currently, this document is a mandatory requirement that provides evidence of the engagement strategy put in place throughout the preparation of the plan. This responds to the perception, which is true, that the main challenges of the participatory protocol of Neighbourhood Planning are those related to participation itself. However, I have demonstrated in this PhD that beyond those struggles, the lack of design to inform the consultation and the decision-making process can also result in a democratic deficit, and damage the quality of the Neighbourhood Plans.

The good news is that, since the introduction of Neighbourhood Planning in the Localism Act 2011, the formula has undergone several reforms (the latest is defined in the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017). These shifts would indicate that the planning system is constantly accommodating changes and that if there is enough concern about the need to introduce design on a normative level, it will be possible to find room for implementation in the new revisions of Neighbourhood Planning protocols. The role of future researchers here would be to increase awareness of the importance of design with more research evidence and to explore viable modifications of the next Neighbourhood Planning Act in this direction.

The institutional level: Is the support provided for Neighbourhood Planning being targeted more toward ensuring good design quality?

Institutional support for promoting design in Neighbourhood Planning directly connects to the kind of resources made available for the actors involved. As demonstrated in Chapter 3, financial as well as material resources to incorporate experts' input throughout the process were a key challenge for most of the Forums operating in the UK. Again, several signs of hope have recently emerged in this regard:

First, design has become an important topic in the most recent planning practice guidance produced by the government. In October 2019, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government published a new *National Design Guide*. The new guide is to be read alongside an updated version of *Design: process and tools*, which covers issues of planning for well-designed places, the making of design decisions, the tools to be used for assessing and improving design quality, and the effective engagement of community in matters of design. The commission of the *National Design Guide* went to Tibbalds Planning and Urban Design in the amount of £48,616, which would indicate that more governmental resources are being used and that other consultancy firms, not just AECOM, are being given the opportunity to participate as part of this growing official interest in design.

In addition, Locality (2019) has published a new design tool-kit, *Achieving well-designed places through neighbourhood planning*, aimed at neighbourhood planning groups "looking to influence the design of development in their area" (p.4). These kinds of support materials are continually being revised, and my PhD findings could directly update the coming design tool-kits. For example, the Locality design tool-kit includes a "process diagram" to promote design quality throughout the preparation of the plan, "highlighting the tools available at each stage of the process and the external inputs that you can draw upon" (p.20). Similar to my PhD, there has been an effort to identify certain stages, common to all neighbourhood planning groups, in need of design. However, the Locality diagram, which remains fairly generic, could be easily complemented by the insights emerging from my PhD process diagram (see Chapter

3, section 3.2.3) that more explicitly unpacks how design knowledge could be built effectively to navigate those stages. In addition, the design demonstrations featured in Chapter 4 could be used to illustrate the diagram with exemplary outputs at each stage.

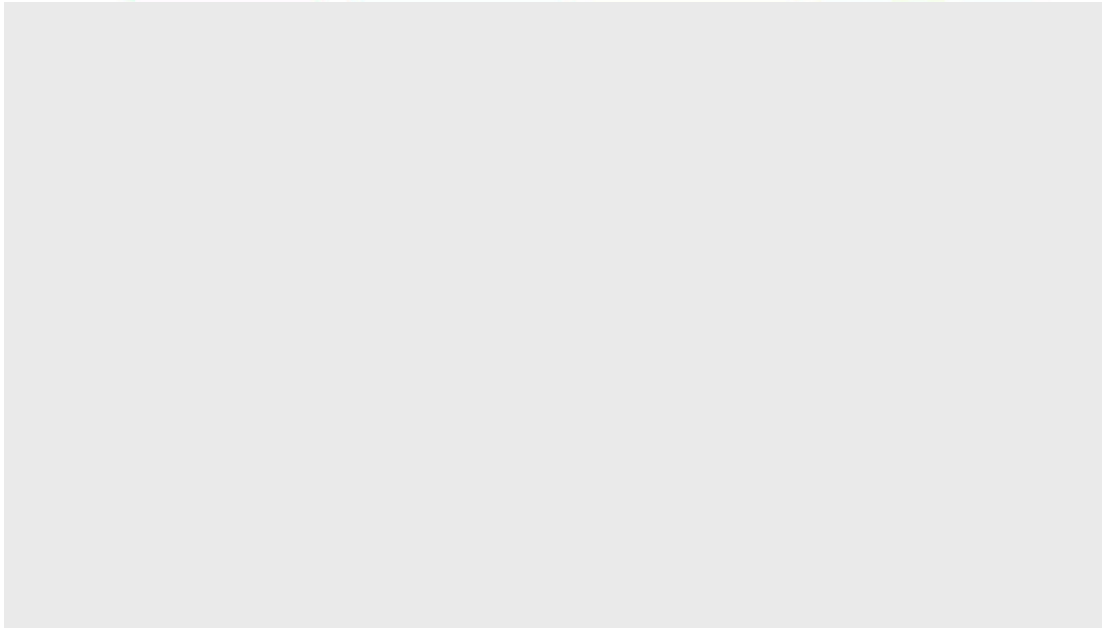


Figure 5-7. Design process diagram by Locality (2019) downloaded from <https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/toolkits-and-guidance/good-design-neighbourhood-planning/>

In the review *Taking stock of neighbourhood planning in England 2011-2016* produced by Gavin Parker and Kat Salter (2017), there is recognition that guidance materials of this kind have proved to be some of the documents most frequently consulted by Forums preparing Neighbourhood Plans. The empirical evidence gathered in this PhD could be directly applied to completing and better communicating the content of such documents so that they become more useful resources.

The same study indicates that most Forums also rely on the governmental support packages that offer expert input in relation to the main challenges the Forums face. It is encouraging to see that, as put forth in this PhD, the most recent AECOM 2018-2020 support programme has introduced two new packages focused on design: *Masterplanning* and *Design including Design Codes*.

It is too early to evaluate the relevance and effects of these new packages. However, if an increasing number of local groups request this kind of support, it could indicate that there is rising awareness of the importance of design within Neighbourhood Planning. Further research is needed to examine how these support packages are being used, to what extent this support is resulting in further consideration of design aspects throughout the plan-making process, and whether this ultimately affects the nature of the Neighbourhood Plans themselves. It would be important to ask, for example, whether design-led input is radically transforming the final stage of policy writing in Neighbourhood Planning.

In the meantime, it would be fairly easy to continue conducting research into the kind of support being provided and the kind of design techniques that AECOM professionals are deploying. It would be important to analyse what visual tools (i.e. drawings, plans, perspectives) they are using, when in the process they are employing them, and whether

those tools are contributing to overcoming communication obstacles between participants in the plan-making process. This PhD offers an empirically grounded approach as to when and what kind of design inputs are most effective in facilitating shared understanding of spatial considerations aimed at informing planning decisions. Therefore, one of the most effective ways in which my findings could be directly applied and tested, is in the shaping of the content of this kind of support package.

In conclusion, knowledge generated by this research could be incorporated into the processes of production, and the implementation of guidance and training programmes that the government is already fostering. In turn, further research is needed on the impact of this increase in resources on the design profession itself; how are other practitioners affected by AECOM's monopoly in providing support? Is this resulting in fewer commissions for smaller, local firms? If so, how could designers reverse this trend? This opens up several lines of inquiry that future researchers looking into Neighbourhood Planning could take on board, with the much needed support of other institutions and professional bodies, such as the RIBA, concerned with the added value designers could bring in the production of the city.

The professional level: Is there knowledge transfer between designers working inside and outside Localism frameworks?

In recent years, the neighbourhood has re-emerged as the principal site for experimentation with participatory approaches to urban regeneration in London. This PhD has placed me in a privileged position to encounter architects and designers who are currently proposing innovative ways to engage local communities and other stakeholders with urban design processes. Some of them are already showing some interest in Neighbourhood Planning:

For instance, the firm We Made That set up *Open Office* (2013) at the Architectural Foundation in an effort to explore the implications of the Localism Act. The co-director of the practice, Holly Lewis, whom I interviewed informally during my exploratory fieldwork, declared at that time that she was “fascinated by the fact that communities were being given the power to write their own future, and yet they weren’t being shown how to do it” (Wainwright, 2013, p.1). The office did some research on the emerging Neighbourhood Plans of Chatsworth Road, Croydon urban centre, Bankside business area, Somerstown and Southall industrial area, but unfortunately, the study’s conclusions weren’t applied to the framework of the Neighbourhood Plans’ preparation. Later on in 2016, We Made That started working with Kilburn Neighbourhood Forum and undertook a place-based analysis “to provide a firm base” for the emerging plan (We Made That, 2016, p.1). Their work was very much aligned with the type of content and visual material developed in this PhD’s Design Demonstration 1 in Chapter 4; in line with my own suggestions, they also directly incorporated their visuals in the Evidence Base they worked on developing. In addition, other conclusions have been recently taken forward, this time by AECOM, to develop the ‘Vision’. The *Kilburn Neighbourhood Plan Visioning Document* produced by AECOM (2019) aims to “form the basis of future spatial, social and design policies in the Neighbourhood Plan” (p.4). It is too early to see whether, as I propose, this work leads to the consideration of different spatial strategies and projections of scenarios for future development that can inform and visually illustrate such policies. I certainly encourage interested designers to follow the Kilburn case to further explore this line of work.

An example of how this design input could be taken forward is the work done by the firm Imagine Places (2016) and the Prince’s Foundation (2013) for Look! St Albans ‘Our Community Voice on Design’ local group, which produced the draft of detailed design codes for central

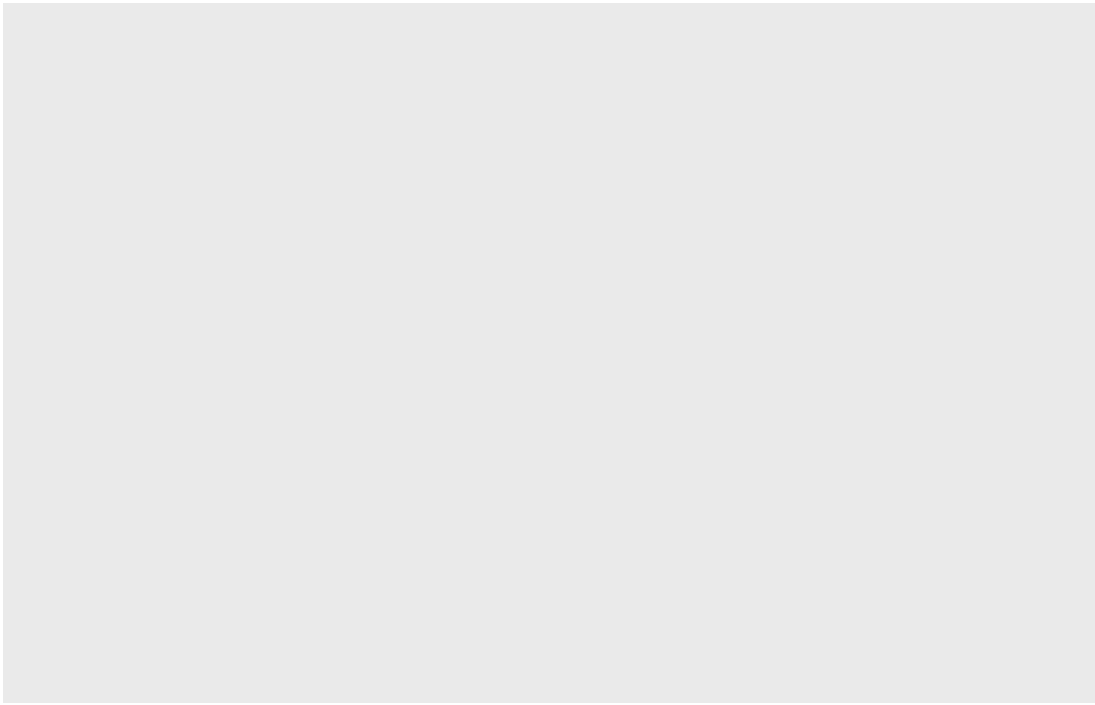


Figure 5-8. Visual material (plan, axonometric and streetlevel perspectives) to support design-led discussion on two spatial options for St Albans, within workshop led by Imagine Places in September 2016. Image compiled from Koch, A. (2016). Design Charrette St Albans Civic Centre Opportunity Sites & The Maltings: Part 3 Debriefing Document (Rep.). Retrieved from https://www.lookstalbans.org/uploads/2/7/7/4/27749191/ip_156_imagineplaces_part_3_look_ccos_charrette_debrief_update_oct_2016__.pdf

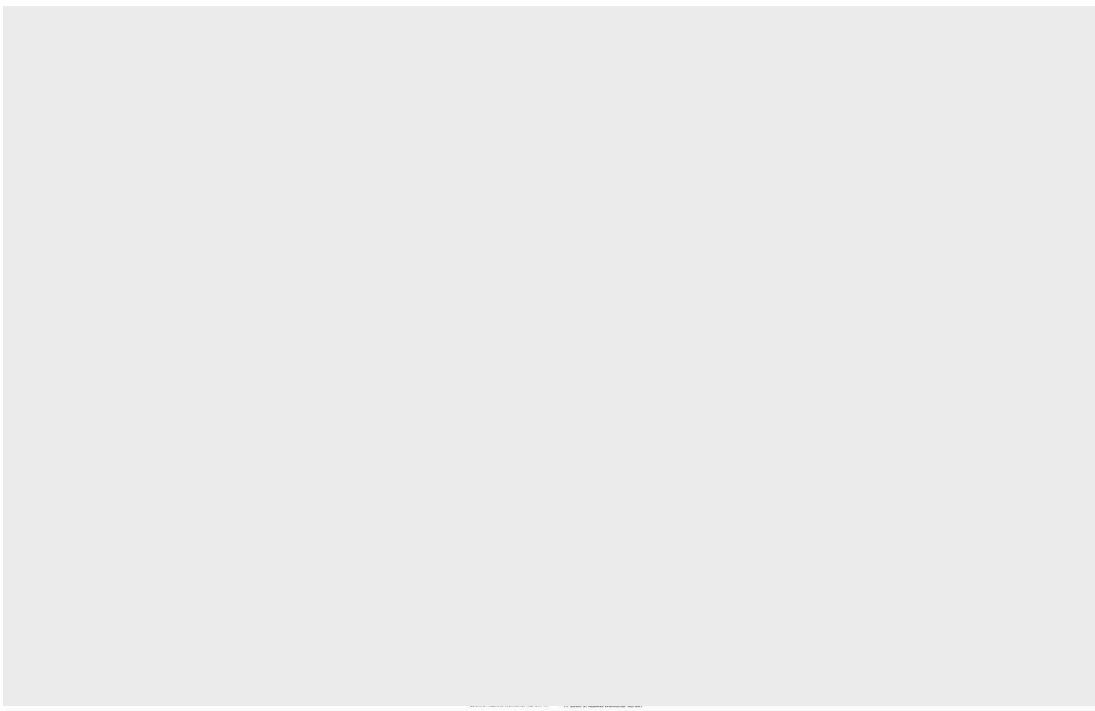


Figure 5-9. Design codes for St. Albans developed in design workshops. Images compiled from Prince's Foundation. (2013). Look! St Albans Design Workshop Report (Rep.). Retrieved from http://www.weebly.com/uploads/2/7/7/4/27749191/look_st_albans_final_design_workshop_report_jan_2013.pdf

St Albans. For instance, a successful design charrette was led by Angela Koch, founder of Imagine Places and part of the Prince's Foundation team that worked on the Kentish Town Neighbourhood Plan.

On that occasion, design was indeed put at the centre of a participatory process aimed at rethinking the future development of the City Centre Opportunity Site (CCOS), similar in many ways to Regis Road Site in Kentish Town. The event (Figure 5-8) brought together local neighbours and local planning authority, along with affected landowners and developers, to meet with “technical experts in architecture, urban design, landscape architecture, transport and traffic engineering, planning, viability advice and 3D modelling” (Jenkins, 2017, p.32). To develop the design codes, six teams came up with design strategies for the site, which were then tested through visual projections and 3D models of the proposals. Angela Koch also presented international cases of similar projects with exemplary integration of retail, residential and civic facilities, which facilitated the discussion on design concepts that would be used. According to Look! St Albans chair Vanessa Gregory, the aim was “to inform landowners and developers, mitigating some planning risk (...) at an early stage before irreversible key decisions have been made” (Jenkins, 2017, p.33). The resulting work (Figure 5-9) ended up as a finalist in the category ‘Excellence in Plan Making Practice’ for the RTPi (Royal Town Planning Institute) Awards for Planning Excellence 2017.

However, over the past years, I've also become familiar with young architectural practices with proven records of innovative design-led approaches to participatory urban regeneration processes that remain outside the Localism framework. Most of them engage in explorations via small-scale, ad-hoc interventions across London's local landscape. These temporary scenario-based prototypes proliferate with the aim of reactivating neglected spaces in a way that can open up conceptualisations of place unimaginable through traditional consultations and design charrettes:

The Turner Prize-winning firm Assemble has several projects of this kind: *Folly for a Flyover* (2011), which transformed a disused motorway undercroft in Hackney Wick into an arts venue and new public space for the area; and *New Addington Central Parade* (2011-2013), which re-activated an underused town square in Croydon with a programme of community events to test temporary models of design solutions at 1:1. Several vacant sites in London are known for their experimental design interventions, such as 100 Union Street, which has hosted the *Southwark Lido* (2008), the *Union Street Urban Orchard* (2010), the *Urban Physic Garden* (2011) and *The ReUnion Public House* (2012), that were designed by several architectural collectives. The *Eastern Curve Garden* (2009) by muf architecture/art and J & L Gibbons, emerged from the flagship partnership project ‘Making Space in Dalston’, commissioned by Design for London to address the deficit in the quality of public spaces in the area; this project demonstrated the potential for temporary interventions to become permanent spaces for community life and interaction. The *Wick on Wheels* mobile unit, part of the project *R-URBAN* (2014) by the London-based office Public Works in partnership with the French Atelier d'Architecture Autogérée, specialises in “nomad and reversible projects encouraging the participation of inhabitants at the self-management of disused urban spaces” (AAA, 2019, p.1).

The first element these examples of scenario-based prototypes have in common is that they test action-based forms of local engagement and provide a direct and dynamic experience for participants to transform their built environment. Critics of these kinds of interventions warn that “ad-hoc” regeneration projects are not offering a radical alternative to “neoliberal

urbanisms” (Peck, 2009) and that they have limited potential for upscaling their exceptional nature and triggering broader structural changes (Ferreri, 2015). This is because these approaches remain under the radar of institutional frameworks.

But, what would happen if these projects became integrated into spatial strategies that aim for long-term change, such as Neighbourhood Planning? Both approaches to urban regeneration are usually discussed and practised independently, partly because the former deals directly with architecture and the design of spaces while the latter concerns policy and planning. Again, the strong academic and professional demarcations between planners and architects overshadow the potential of knowledge exchange between professionals working within and outside Localism frameworks.

In relation to Neighbourhood Planning processes, for example, these kinds of ‘ad hoc’ projects could become useful tools for gathering the local actors needed to create, develop and consolidate Neighbourhood Forums, particularly those that are experiencing serious problems increasing participation within their areas. However, the guides for successful community engagement, such as *Neighbourhood Planning Community Consultation* published by Locality (2018), barely mention these kinds of experiments as potential engagement techniques, nor do they include them as examples of good practice. Yet ‘ad hoc’, scenario-based prototypes could become not only effective engagement techniques, but also successful design techniques that can become part of the scenario-testing activities developed in Chapter 4.

This could be the case because there is second element that distinguishes the latest ‘ad hoc’ examples mentioned above: they are inherently design-led. These projects apply the sequence of analysis, translation and projection described in my proposed design-led framework, and go one step further by testing the projections on-site. They are urban interventions that respond to the existing spatial conditions and advance unexpected future alternatives of access, use and management of neighbourhood spaces. Locals, through the actual use of such spaces, are active agents in the formulation of these alternatives and participants of their becoming. Users might complete or subvert what was originally designed, by changing and adapting the interventions to their needs and desires, which in turn help designers refine future development options. If incorporated in Neighbourhood Planning practices, these design-led experiments could push forward the decision-making process by materializing preferable options in 1:1 models that can then be translated into policies and also serve as real demonstrations of their viability and local acceptance when negotiating with all decision-makers. In this sense, these kinds of interventions have the potential to not only link planning intentions with planning decisions, but to also introduce changes to the nature of the Neighbourhood Plans themselves, leading to alternative ways of planning, such as ‘planning by projects’ and ‘acupuncture planning’ (Manzini & Rizzo, 2011).

Further illustrating this point is the above-mentioned project New Addington Central Parade (2011-2013); design team Assemble, in collaboration with local community group New Addington Pathfinders, built full-sized prototypes of design solutions for renovating a square in Croydon and “tested how [those design solutions] worked with a programme of events that brought activity typically held indoors outside” (LDN_gov, 2016, p.1). This helped in the review of future development options for this priority regeneration site. Assemble’s projects are often mentioned as standard bearers when discussing the potentials of ‘tactical urbanism’ to inform planning processes (Courage, 2013). However, Croydon remains one of the nine London Boroughs with no designated Forums working on Neighbourhood Planning. The situation is ripe with potential for knowledge transfer between designers working outside the Neighbourhood Planning framework and those individuals working within its boundaries.

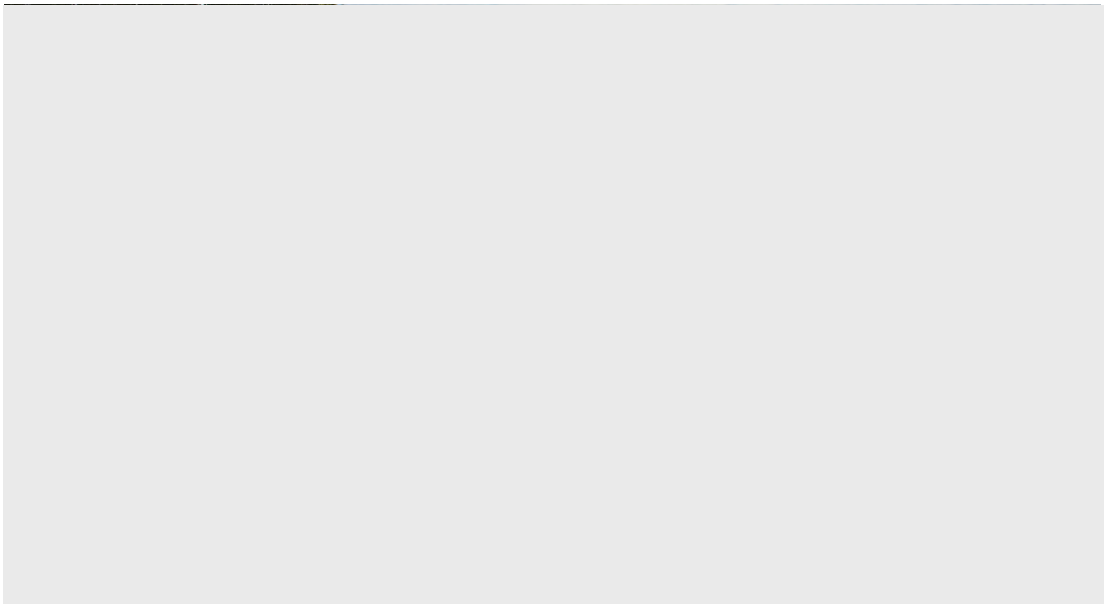


Figure 5-10. Scenario-based prototype at 1:1 for New Addington by Assemble, 2011. Image retrieved from: <https://assemblestudio.co.uk/projects/new-addington>

Currently, these kinds of synergies remain under-explored within Localism frameworks, and the architecture and design offices mentioned above rarely get involved in Neighbourhood Planning. To amplify the relevance of design in Neighbourhood Planning in the coming years, it is crucial that we have a much more fluid exchange of methods, techniques and knowledge between designers working within and outside Localism frameworks. The contribution of this PhD to promoting this knowledge transfer is twofold:

On one hand, this research could attract design professionals who are not familiar with Neighbourhood Planning protocols and allow them to see the rich field of creative investigation that it offers. And on the other hand, it could persuade those already preparing Neighbourhood Plans to rethink their practice and to look for other inspiring design-led approaches to participatory planning beyond Neighbourhood Planning, and even outside the UK.

The educational level: Is close interaction between planning and design being promoted in the education of planners, architects and designers?

Although the focus of this PhD is design practice in Neighbourhood Planning, I can't pass up this opportunity to reiterate that the educational system has a key role to play in increasing interaction between the disciplines of planning and design. The architecture, planning and design students of today will be future practitioners who will have to face the very challenges highlighted in the conclusions of this PhD. Therefore, there is an urgent need to rethink the kind of training they receive and whether or not it is inspired by forms of practice that extend the profession's scope.

In *The Design Dimension of Planning Theory, content and best practice for design policies*, Matthew Carmona and John Punter (2013) indicate that planning education has favoured a strong social science and generalist approach, while minimising the importance of design. However, in recent years, this traditional view has shifted with "the increasing number of post-graduate urban design courses, and the emergence of both planning courses specialized in design and joint architecture-planning courses" (p.362).

Further research could look into the effects of applying “service learning pedagogies” (Angotti, Doble & Horrigan, 2011), that engage with Neighbourhood Planning, to studio-based architectural education. The service-learning model provides formal opportunities for BA and MA students to engage local communities as part of their studies. Within the framework of this PhD, I was part of some initiatives that linked architecture and planning schools with Neighbourhood Forums. Through those exchanges, I witnessed the importance of creating “alliances between universities, civil society and professionals” (Just Space, 2019,p.1). For example, The UCL-Development Planning Unit is well known for their ongoing collaboration with Just Space, the London-wide association of community groups working on planning issues, which put UCL students to work with several Neighbourhood Forums (i.e. Crouch Hill and Hornsey Rise NF, Camley Street and Elms Village NF, People’s Empowerment Alliance for Custom House, Elephant and Walworth NF, Kennington, Oval and Vauxhall Forum, Heathrow Villages NF). Another example is the Neighbourhoods Made initiative, which connected UEL BA students with rural communities developing Neighbourhood Plans (i.e. Maylandsea, Latchingdon and Tollesbury).

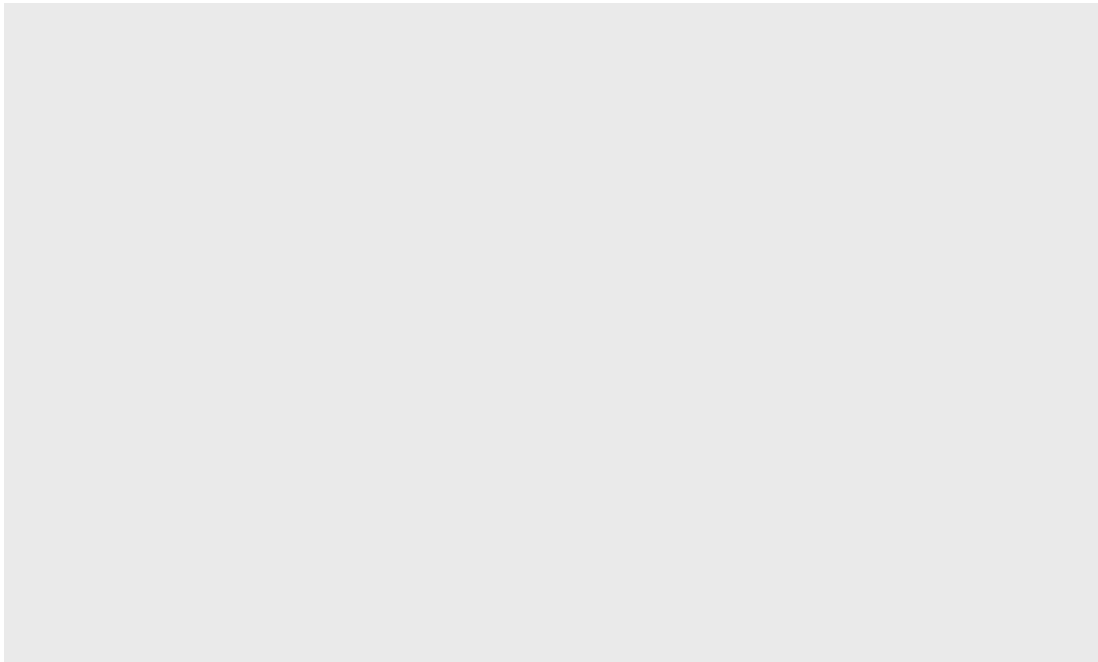


Figure 5-11. Neighbourhoods Made collaborative workshop in Lawing Park, Mayland, on January 15th 2015. Image by J. Scott Baxter, 2015.

From this project, in which I was deeply involved at the beginning of my PhD, I came to understand that for architecture, planning and design schools to contribute meaningfully to Neighbourhood Planning processes, a key challenge is to synchronize studio structure, content and pedagogical goals with the short/mid-/long term needs of the Neighbourhood Forums. Those agendas are difficult to reconcile in terms of timing and objectives, but I’ve seen unquestionable benefits for both ends that made it worth the effort.

Students benefit from direct contact with local groups and learn how to build working relationships with local participants, as well as gain an opportunity to explore architecture as a socially embedded discipline and practice in which the processes and products of design have tangible effects that can be activated and examined within the studio. As a result, the design studio agenda starts to focus less on finding *the* solution to a particular problem and instead focuses more on the necessary cycles of “analysis, synthesis and evaluation” of design responses through a collaborative process with local stakeholders (p.83). The Forums

in turn benefit from the students' analytical, interpretative and generative skills as they navigate all the stages of the planning process; those skills can be applied to activities that can directly inform the Neighbourhood Plan, such as data gathering, and the formulation and development of an innovative design hypothesis.

As an architect and urban designer who has been engaged in teaching for many years, I see that this pedagogic model is full of potential, particularly within the context of Neighbourhood Planning, and it opens a line of investigation that I would like to personally explore in a post-doctoral framework. Further research in this direction could set the stage for a new kind of Neighbourhood Planning practice that reconciles participation, planning and design aspirations towards a more integrated production of local space.

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Annexes

Annexe 1 Map of Neighbourhood Planning in London

Annexe 2 Taxonomy of Case Studies

Annexe 3 Kentish Town Map of Process and Outcomes

Annexe 4 Design-led framework for Kentish Town