

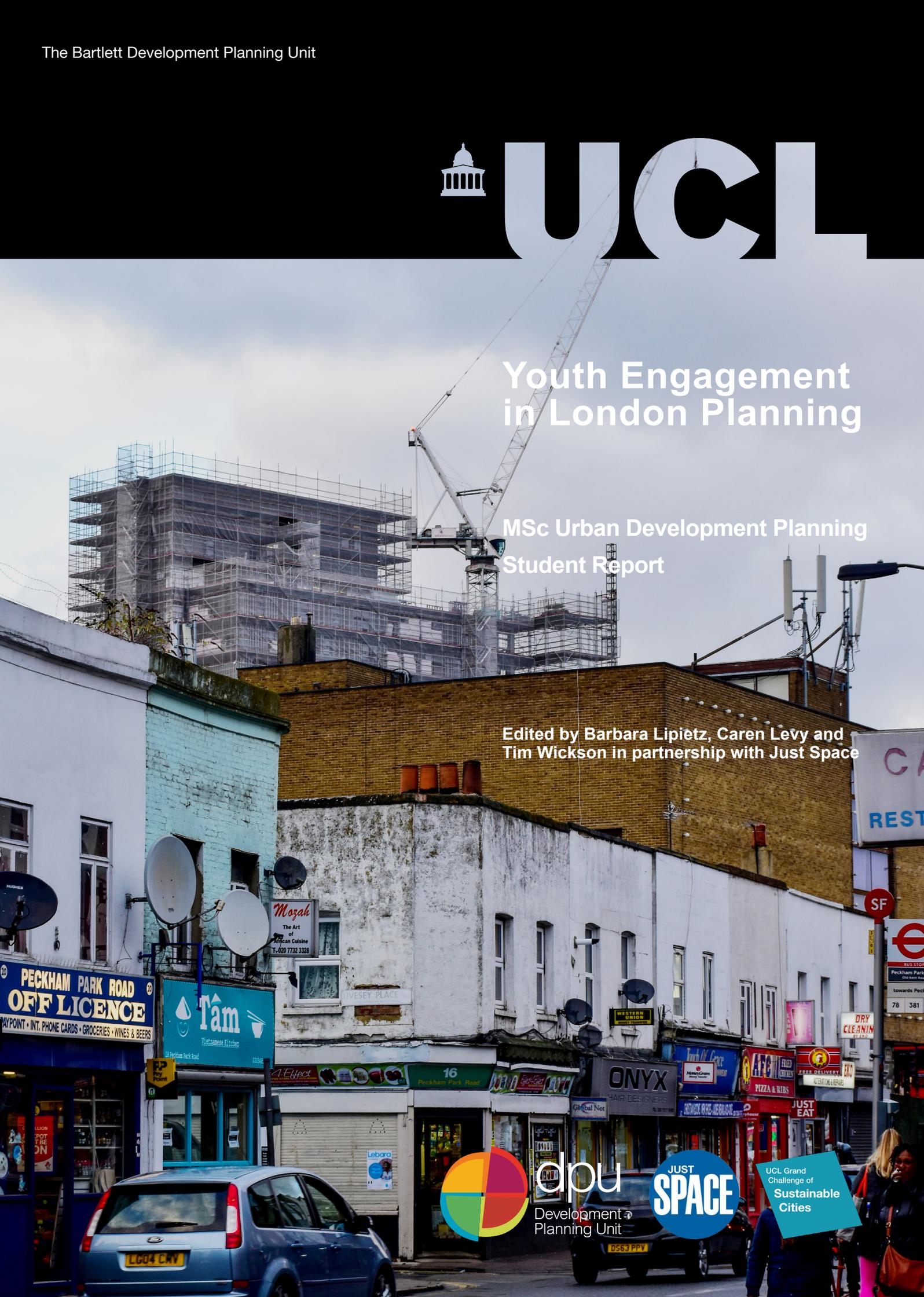


UCL

Youth Engagement in London Planning

MSc Urban Development Planning
Student Report

Edited by Barbara Lipietz, Caren Levy and
Tim Wickson in partnership with Just Space



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May 2017

Acknowledgements. We are very grateful to all the young people, youth workers and community groups who gave their time to this project and shared their thoughts and experiences with MSc students. In particular, we would like to thank Just Space, Grove Park Neighbourhood Forum, PemPeople and Take Back the City for inspiring and supporting this project. We are also grateful for the valuable contributions offered by members of the Greater London Authority's (GLA) Peer Outreach Team (POT).

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Foreword by DPU

For those working for socially and environmentally just cities, the exclusion of young people from formal planning is of profound concern. This exclusion takes multiple forms, and relates as much to a marginalisation of young people from formal planning processes, as to their self-exclusion from procedures that too often seem impenetrable, and which they do not trust. Either way, the result is that young people's diverse needs and aspirations remain largely unaddressed. In London, this generalizable trend is exacerbated by the recent national funding cuts of youth services and youth organisations, that have taken their toll on already tenuous relations between government and this 'hard to reach' demographic.

Yet, currently, planning in London seems to offer an opportunity to revisit the terms of a meaningful engagement, in the making of London's shared future. Elected on the back of widespread discontent over the London housing crisis, and in celebration of London's rich diversity, Mayor Sadiq Khan's new administration has announced an intention to review its approach to community engagement in advance of preparing a revised London Plan 'for all Londoners'. Amplifying the voice of young Londoners has been identified as an area of focus for the new mayoral team.

This is the context for the action-research partnership between the Bartlett's Development Planning Unit (DPU), University College London (UCL) and the Just Space network. Located in the Practice module of the MSc Urban Development Planning, the output of this engagement is presented in the pages that follow. The DPU/Just Space partnership is part of a wider project of practice-based education in planning within the MSc Urban Development Planning (UDP), whose main objective is the

promotion of a community-led approach to planning in the global south and north.

The MSc UDP' pedagogy relies on equipping budding professionals with the capacity for critical diagnoses of the urban, as a basis for developing propositional responses within the framework of socially and environmentally just urban governance. This implies working in coproduction with diverse urban communities, particularly those generally excluded from planning processes. The Just Space network, a community-led network of voluntary and action groups influencing plan making and planning policy across London, has been an invaluable partner for the programme over the last three years, and on this project specifically.

The present report is a compilation of the MSc UDP students' work, in partnership with UDP staff, the Just Space network, a variety of local and city-wide community groups working with young people in London and activist groups of young Londoners, as well as the Greater London Authority's youth-focused Peer Outreach Team. The report, and the subsequent activities developed to share learnings from the project among interested London-based groups, are sponsored through a UCL Grand Challenges grant for Sustainable Cities.

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Foreword by Just Space

"At the heart of Just Space is a demand for the participation of all Londoners – including those under-represented or completely excluded – in the planning of the city."

When, in 2016, Just Space produced "Towards a Community Led Plan for London" we did not give voice to young people. So, the opportunity of a research project with the UCL Development Planning Unit was attractive to at least start addressing youth participation in the planning of the city.

Now that we have the report, we are asking all of the groups who are part of the Just Space network to make use of the report's recommendations and to mobilise youth voices.

The focus of Just Space in 2017 is to influence the production of the London Plan and the related strategies (for example on Housing and the Economy) for which the Mayor of London is responsible. We have a series of roundtable discussions with the GLA at which

we will share the report. These will lead into 3 months public consultation later in 2017 which is the time for the GLA to enthusiastically pick up the recommendations of this report and find richer and more grounded ways to engage young people in policy making. The challenge for the GLA post consultation will then be to make changes to its Housing, Economy and Planning strategies to demonstrate that youth engagement has been meaningful.

The social movement Take Back the City could be the key to making this happen. They have mastered the formats and languages that make spaces inviting and they have an impressive range of contacts with young people. There is an opportunity for Take Back the City, Just Space and the GLA to work together to meaningfully engage young people in the production of the Housing, Economy and Planning Strategies for London. Then we will see the real value of this research project.

Richard Lee
Coordinator Just Space

Figure 1.1. MSc UDP Students on a walking tour of Silver Town. Source: Chapter Authors



Figure 1.2. Image from a Take Back the City event. Source: Take Back the City Facebook



1. Introduction

1.1 Youth Engagement in Planning: Introduction

Despite community participation having been a statutory planning requirement for almost 50 years¹, there still exists a significant gap between participatory *policy* and *practice* in the UK. This gap is particularly noticeable when it comes to the engagement of so-called ‘hard to reach’ demographics, of which young people (aged 16-25) are a prime example.

As one of the largest user groups of public spaces in cities, young people should be central to the planning of our urban environments. However, as recent research has shown, the reality is somewhat different. Young people typically report feeling “unheard, marginalised or misrepresented in the consultations over, and representations of, city spaces”².

According to the 2015 London Poverty Profile, young Londoners are twice as likely to find themselves unemployed than adults aged 25 years and over. This is despite being more likely to leave school with qualifications than young people from outside of London. Young Londoners also suffer disproportionately from low paid and insecure work, and are twice as likely to suffer from benefit cuts than other demographic groups³.

The capital’s spiraling housing costs mean that many young Londoners face a struggle to find appropriate, affordable housing in the communities that they grew up in. Indeed, with home ownership increasingly out of reach, young people are particularly vulnerable to housing challenges such as overcrowding, poor conditions, high rents and eviction. Given the established correlation between housing issues and mental health problems such as anxiety and depression (Shelter, 2017), it is clear that London’s housing crisis is placing the mental wellbeing of young residents at risk.

How can planning in London respond to this reality, and what changes are required to better reflect the diverse needs and aspirations of today’s youth?

1.2 Youth Engagement in Planning: The current situation

To date, London-level initiatives designed to support young people in having a voice at the GLA (such as the

Peer Outreach Team and the Lynk Up Crew⁴ have mainly focused on issues related to education and employability (GLA, 2015). Historically, this narrow focus has come at the expense of a more meaningful engagement with broader questions relating to social and spatial planning and issues of regeneration.

A similar story can be traced within youth engagement platforms at the Borough-level, such as young mayor and youth assembly programmes. Indeed, all too often, youth engagement in local planning extends no further than a routine consultation on local play space strategies.

In recent years, funding cuts for youth services have further undermined even these small gestures towards youth participation in London planning. Recent reports put the cuts to UK-wide youth services at £387 million in just 6 years, a figure that equates to the closure of more than 600 youth centres (Unison, 2016).

Occasioned by nationally set austerity budgets, these cuts have affected both the spaces available for youth engagement and also the inclination of young people to engage with state actors.

“They [the youth] are like, ‘if it doesn’t matter to the council and to the government then why should it matter to us?’¹

I’m upset but what can we really do about it? It’s not like we’ve got a chance to win in a fight against the government.” Erika Lopez, aged 19, a youth organiser in Haringey⁵

1.3 Youth Engagement in Planning: An opportunity for change

Whilst local government funding streams are unlikely to change in the foreseeable future, a new context for London planning is nonetheless emerging. Elected on the back of widespread discontent over the London housing crisis, and in celebration of London’s rich diversity, Mayor Sadiq Khan’s new London administration creates an opportunity to do some things differently.

Having already announced an intention to review their community engagement approaches in advance of pre-

paring a revised London Plan, the GLA has opened up space for groups previously under-represented within the planning process to make their voices heard. In particular, amplifying the voice of young Londoners has been identified as an area of focus for Sadiq Khan's administration.

"You will shape the future, so it's important that we unlock the potential of the next generation." **Sadiq Khan, London Mayor**⁶

As a statutory document that will not only bring together the spatial dimensions of the Mayor's planning responsibilities and strategies, but which will also set the tone for local and neighbourhood planning processes across London, the revised London Plan will be the cornerstone of Sadiq Khan's promise to develop a *City for all Londoners*.

From a community planning perspective, it is essential that this process place a renewed emphasis on *meaningful* participation from the outset. Moving beyond staged, tokenistic consultation events, the GLA will need to develop flexible engagement strategies that offer all citizens, regardless of age, class, gender, ethnicity, race, religion or sexuality, the opportunity to join in co-creating London's urban future.

1.4 Youth Engagement in Planning: DPU & Just Space action research partnership

This report is part of an ongoing action-research partnership between the MSc Urban Development Planning (UDP) programme at the Bartlett Development Planning Unit (DPU), University College London (UCL) and the Just Space network.

Just Space is a community-led network of voluntary and action groups influencing plan making and planning policy across London. Just Space aims to amplify public debates around the crucial issues of social justice and economic and environmental sustainability.

1.5 Youth Engagement in Planning: Report structure

This report represents the culmination of a three-month action-research project conducted by DPU students of MSc Urban Development Planning between October and December 2016. The project was entitled 'Engaging Youth in London Planning' and the project's objective was to interrogate current youth engagement processes in London with a view to developing strategies to enhance and extend such efforts going forward.

The project was a collaborative endeavour that involved crucial inputs from a variety of actors. These included the community network of Just Space; community groups (e.g. Grove Park Neighbourhood Forum and PemPeople); activist groups of young Londoners (e.g. Take Back the City); the GLA's youth focused Peer Outreach Team (POT); UCL staff members; and, of course, the MSc students themselves.

The MSc UDP students were divided into four groups, each working to support a community-based organisation (CBO). Two of the groups worked with the same CBO and, as such, this report is structured around 3 case studies:

- (1) The Case of Grove Park Neighbourhood Forum:**
Reclaiming Grove Park Youth Club
Providing Opportunities for Young Entrepreneurs
- (2) The Case of PemPeople:**
Amplifying Youth Voices on the Old Kent Road
- (3) The Case of Take Back the City:**
Re-imagining Citizenship

This report does not seek to summarise all of the strategies proposed by MSc UDP students in response to the particular youth engagement challenges and opportunities presented by each of the CBOs in question. Instead, this report aims to draw out broad learnings with regards youth engagement in London, exploring how these could influence efforts to engage young Londoners in the preparation of upcoming Mayoral strategies on Health Inequalities; Housing; Environment; Economic Development; Transport and Culture.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 1

1. Community participation in planning was introduced as a statutory obligation by the 1968 Town and Country Planning Act. During the same year, the Skeffington Committee was convened to assess how the public might be better involved in the preparation of local development plans. In 1969, Arthur Skeffington MP and the Ministry of Housing and Local Government published the committee's findings in a report entitled 'People and Planning: Report of the Committee on Public Participation in Planning'. This document, commonly referred to as the Skeffington Report, proposed that local development plans should be subject to full public scrutiny and debate.
2. Butcher & Dickens, 2016, pp.800-801
3. Aldridge, Barry Born, Tinson and MacInnes, 2015
4. Peer Outreach Team: The Peer Outreach Team is made up of 30

- young Londoners aged 15-25 years old. They are commissioned by the Mayor to engage and collect the opinions of other young people in the capital. Lynk Up Crew: The Lynk Up Crew play a similar function to the Peer Outreach Team with a focus on representing young Londoners in the 7-15 year old age group.
5. Erika Lopez worked with HYPE (Haringey Young People Empowered), a youth-led group that tackled gang and postcode violence in Haringey through activities such as football tournaments held in neutral areas. In 2011, the Guardian reported HYPE's funding to be under threat, and the organisation has not been active on social media since 2013 (Topping, 2011).
6. Mayor Sadiq Khan, speaking at the Evening Standard's Youth Progress Makers event in January 2017 (in Conor, 2017)

2. The Case of Grove Park Neighbourhood Forum

2.1 Introduction

In 2011, an attempt by developers to demolish Grove Park's historic Baring Hall Pub (constructed in 1882) and replace it with a new apartment block inspired local residents and campaigners to unite with the Grove Park Community Group and campaign to save the building as a community asset. In the process of saving Baring Hall from demolition, it became clear that Grove Park lacked an overarching plan to guide its future development. This absence inspired the formation of the Grove Park Neighbourhood Forum.

Taking in all of the Grove Park Ward boundary, as well as small sections of two adjacent wards, Grove Park received designation as a neighbourhood forum area by Lewisham Borough Council in October 2014. Gaining this designation represented the first step towards creating a Grove Park Neighbourhood Plan (under the 2011 Localism Act). This process is on-going and will include introducing the concept of an Urban National Park.

In principle, the establishment of neighbourhood forums and the production of neighbourhood plans offers a formal mechanism for local communities to participate in determining the type of development they want to see within their neighbourhoods. However, as a relatively recent addition to the UK planning framework, it is yet to be seen how far this principle will translate into reality. To this end, the work of community activists, such as Stephen Kenny and his fellow members of the Grove Park Neighbourhood Forum (GPNF), is essential. Only through testing the boundaries of this new tool for community participation in planning, can its value to wider participatory objectives be understood and its functionality refined.

Identified as one area of focus for the neighbourhood, the case of Grove Park Neighbourhood Forum highlights the challenges and opportunities involved in engaging young Londoners in neighbourhood planning processes.

2.2 Part A: Reclaiming Grove Park Youth Club

MSc UDP Student Group 1: Anya Cardwell, Catharina Degraeff, Colin Chu, Daniela Trejo Rojas, José Caceres Martinez, Muhammad Fahri Akbar, Putro Widodojati, Wu Gang

2.2.1 Introduction

In 2013, spending cuts imposed by Lewisham Council, forced the Grove Park Youth Club to close after almost 50 years of community service¹. Once again faced with the threat of losing a valued community asset, residents in Grove Park mobilised to launch the Save Grove Park Youth Club campaign.

Four years on, the campaign is ongoing. The Youth Club remains closed, but, as yet, it has not been demolished to make way for residential development. As part of the Just Space network, Grove Park Neighbourhood Forum, together with the recently established Grove Park Youth Club Building Preservation Trust, is currently working on strategies to reclaim the building and re-launch Grove Park Youth Club.

Part A of this case study explores the needs and aspirations of young people in the Grove Park area; reflects on the challenges of engaging youth in neighbourhood planning processes; and considers ways that youth participation could be enhanced and extended at the neighbourhood scale.

2.2.2 Understanding the needs and aspirations of young people in the Grove Park Area

A focus group interview conducted with students (aged 11-14) from the Bonus Pastor Catholic College School in Lewisham helped highlight some of the needs and aspirations of young people in Grove Park and the surrounding wards.

Whilst all of the young people interviewed engaged in structured extra-curricular activities (dance classes, foot-

ball practice, swimming lessons, acting groups etc.) it was acknowledged that few, if indeed any, of these activities currently occurred within their immediate neighbourhoods. Indeed, the majority of activities involved significant travel time and parental accompaniment.

When asked to describe what they would like to see in their neighbourhood, almost unanimously, the young participants expressed a desire for a local space, outside of the home, where they could go to meet up with their friends. Prior to its closure, Grove Park Youth Club provided such a space.

Given the cost and time commitments associated with travelling to extra-curricular activities in distant locations, and in recognition of the fact that 27.6 percent of children in Lewisham are defined as “living in poverty” (Lewisham Council, 2015), it is clear that the lack of locally accessible youth services will serve to exclude a significant number of young people from accessing social opportunities that are essential to both physical and mental wellbeing.

The connections between accessible opportunities for play and improved physical and mental health outcomes for children and young people is clearly illustrated within a literature review entitled “A World Without Play” that was prepared by Gleave and Cole-Hamilton on behalf of Sport England in 2012.

2.2.3 Can neighbourhood forums help reconnect a youth voice that has been fragmented by closures and cuts to youth services?

Based on the findings of this student focus group, it is clear that many young people in the Grove Park area would welcome the re-opening of a youth-orientated space such as the Grove Park Youth Club. However, partly because of the current shortage of such spaces in Grove Park, Stephen Kenny and the Grove Park Neighbourhood Forum face the challenge of engaging a youth presence and voice that has been fragmented / dislocated from its geographic neighbourhood.

As a result, the Save Grove Park Youth Club campaign has largely focused on the building’s value as a non-designated heritage asset rather than its potential function as a revived centre for youth and community activity. Whilst both components of the campaign are valid, from a strategic perspective, the overall case to save Grove Park Youth Centre would benefit from direct youth participation. Unable to demonstrate an authentic youth-led demand, Lewisham Borough Council is able to point to the availability of youth services in neighbouring wards as evidence of sufficient borough-

wide provision.

When asked to outline possible reasons for the absence of a youth voice within the Grove Park Neighbourhood Forum, one of the directors of Grove Park Heritage Trust, explained how the closure of youth services was, in itself, a key driver of youth disenfranchisement:

“We’ve kind of lost the young people, because they all stay at home now.”

It was also noted that traditional participatory processes often fail to provide attractive and flexible space for young people to engage in local issues:

“I think with youth engagement, it needs to be flexible... you can’t just have a focus group and assume that everybody is going to actively participate.”

This reflection is key. The Localism Act (2011) might have notionally moved decision making closer to communities. However, it is unrealistic to expect neighbourhood forums to contain youth engagement specialists. This capacity will need to be nurtured through partnerships and capacity building initiatives (of which more later).

2.2.4 Engaging with Lewisham’s Young Mayor Programme

As part of the research project, MSc UDP students connected the Save Grove Park Youth Club campaign with Lewisham’s Young Mayor, Kayla Sh’ay, and her cabinet of Young Advisors. Elected by Lewisham’s school and college students, this initiative is designed to give Lewisham’s youth a voice in Borough-level decision-making.

Unlike the traditional Local Council structure, which is designed to ensure equal representation for residents in all wards, the young mayor / advisor scheme drew representatives from geographies associated with school catchment. As such, Kayla Sh’ay and her advisors were previously unaware of the Save Grove Park Youth Club campaign and their potential value as an advocate left unrealised.

Whilst certainly limited in influence, young mayors often have symbolic recognition as official advisors to the overall mayor’s office. As such, building connections between such platforms and youth-orientated campaigns at the neighbourhood planning level is worthy of exploration. From a communications perspective alone, young mayor programmes are well positioned to publicise local youth-centred activities across their networks.

2.2.5 Building youth engagement from the ward-level up

Neighbourhood forums have an opportunity to help create representative youth groups at the neighbourhood level. Doing this would provide a platform for young people to have their voice heard in neighbourhood planning and could potentially be linked to borough-level initiatives, such as young mayor / young advisor programmes, or even city-level schemes, such as the GLA Peer Outreach Team programme. By broadening the networks of support available to neighbourhood forums, these connections would benefit both youth and, cross-community initiatives.

Grove Park Neighbourhood Forum has expressed a clear desire to speak to, as well as on behalf of, all residents. The challenge remaining is to develop strategies to locate and engage young people within the neighbourhood.

“Youth participation is about the real influence of young people in institutions and decisions, not about their passive presence as human subjects or service recipients”¹

To this end, neighbourhood forums need support to proactively engage existing youth groups, whether assembled in schools, after-school clubs, sports associations or community centres, and conduct listening workshops / events that invite young people to express their aspirations for shaping their local communities. One possible vehicle for such engagement would be for the GLA to support neighbourhood forums to present themselves as case studies for examination within the GLA’s London Curriculum programme².

Figure 2.1. Focus group conducted with students at Bonus Pastor School. Source: Chapter Authors



Adequately supported, neighbourhood forums have an opportunity to amplify the reach of their existing youth-centred campaigns, whilst also generating increased awareness of neighbourhood planning processes more generally. However in order for such engagement opportunities to emerge, neighbourhood forums need to be supported to develop meaningful youth engagement methods and essential safeguarding procedures. This support could be sourced within civil-society networks such as the Just Space network, and resourced by the GLA.

Figure 2.2. Cognitive mapping workshop with students at Bonus Pastor School. Source: Chapter Authors

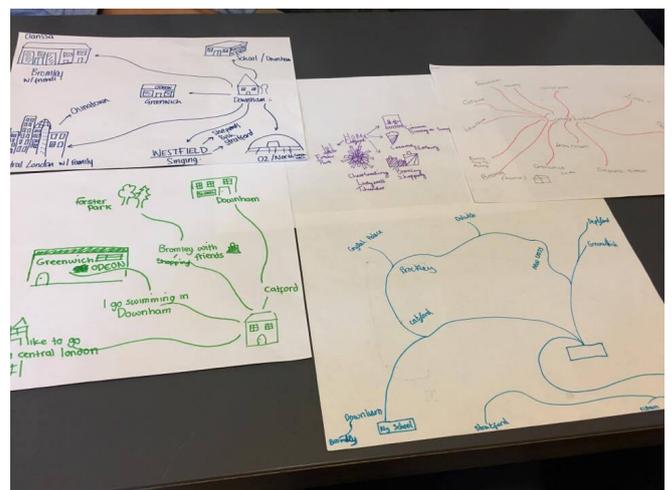


Figure 2.3. Meeting between MSc UDP students, Grove Park Neighbourhood Forum and the Lewisham Young Mayor and Young Advisors. Source: Chapter Authors



2.3 Part B: Providing Opportunities for Young Entrepreneurs

MSc UDP Student Group 2: Ester Bellod Cano; Laureine Guilao; Ran Jiang; Olga Kytea; Omar Singh; Nicolás Smith; Sihan Wan; Jinghuan Zhu

2.3.1 Introduction

As part of their strategy to attract support and funding for the revival of the Grove Park Youth Club, Stephen Kenny and the Grove Park Neighbourhood Forum are currently exploring opportunities to provide enhanced opportunities for young entrepreneurs in Grove Park.

Part B of this case study examines the challenges and opportunities contained by such an approach, asking whether neighbourhood forums have an opportunity to reinterpret the meaning of youth entrepreneurship in a London context.

2.3.2 Different metrics, different stories

In recent years, Lewisham Council has committed significant resources to providing opportunities for specific categories of young entrepreneurs at the borough level. For example, the Council currently supports three co-working hubs in Catford, Deptford and Ladywell each of which offers opportunities for young start-ups, entrepreneurs and existing businesses who work “primarily in the creative, digital media, business and social enterprise sectors” (Lewisham Council, no date). Viewed at the borough-level and applying Lewisham’s narrow definition of *entrepreneurship*, such investment decisions could be interpreted as positioning Lewisham at the forefront of youth entrepreneurship in the capital.

However, such metrics can be misleading. Within Lewisham, significant inequalities exist at the sub-district level. For example, whilst local employment opportunities are available for 22 percent of all Lewisham residents, this figure drops to just 11 percent for residents of Grove Park. Similarly, Lewisham’s borough-wide transport accessibility score of 3.9 (out of 6) falls to just 3.1 in Grove Park; and the proportion of residents reporting to have no qualifications is 5 percentage points higher in Grove Park (22.5 percent) than for Lewisham as a whole (17.5 percent)³.

In such unequal contexts it is necessary to question what *entrepreneurship* means for different groups and individuals. Indeed, without a broader understanding of the term, there is a risk that certain residents will continue to be excluded from the opportunities being provided. In short,

“[e]qual treatment in an unequal society could still foster inequality”⁴.

As such, it is important to reappraise the value that is placed on *off-trend* entrepreneurial activities such as market trading, small-scale manufacturing, catering, textiles and hair and beauty. In the race to compete with Old Street’s much-hyped *Silicon Roundabout*, boroughs such as Lewisham might fail to recognise the important social role played by lower-tech industries. For a city that trades off its rich diversity, it is ironic that local planning policy in London can tend towards monoculture.

2.3.3 Neighbourhood Forums: an opportunity to do things differently

Neighbourhood forums have an opportunity to ground city and borough-level objectives in the daily realities of local residents. For example, in a city committed to addressing youth unemployment through the promotion of entrepreneurial opportunities, neighbourhood forums, such as Grove Park, are well positioned to gather the local needs and aspirations of existing and aspiring young entrepreneurs and reflect these spatially within a neighbourhood plan.

With the right support, neighbourhood forums could disrupt the prevailing one-size-fits-all association between *entrepreneurship* and digital, creative start-ups. However, as discussed in Part A, this opportunity will only be realised if neighbourhood forums are supported to develop crucial youth engagement capacities.

In the case of Grove Park, Stephen Kenny and the Grove Park Neighbourhood Forum have recently placed increased youth entrepreneurship opportunities at the heart of their business case for reviving Grove Park Youth Club. This move is strategic as it has the potential to attract funding from sources outside of severely limited Youth Services budgets. However, before these ideas crystallise into concrete proposals and plans, there is a need for Grove Park Neighbourhood Forum to develop proactive youth engagement strategies so as to ensure that the types of entrepreneurship opportunities being promoted accurately reflect local youth aspirations and needs. Without such engagement, there is a risk that neighbourhood forums will replicate the mistakes already being made at the city and borough-levels, reaching for rigid, off-the-shelf solutions to locally specific challenges.

Young Entrepreneurs in areas such as Grove Park may require co-working desks and fibre-optic broadband or they may require secure storage lockers and work benches; open spaces for classes and training or private spac-

es for meetings and mentoring. The list goes on and the answers will inevitably change over time. Particularly in areas as broad as *entrepreneurship* this research makes clear the need for effective and on-going engagement in order to deliver relevant, realistic and re-programmable opportunities for young Londoners.

Figure 2.4. Focus group conducted with Grove Park residents on the subject of youth entrepreneurship. Source: Chapter Authors



Figure 2.5. Flyer produced to publicise youth entrepreneurship event. Source: Chapter Authors



A WORD FROM GROVE PARK NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM

Grove Park Neighbourhood Forum is very thankful for the support provided by the MSc Urban Development Planning students, UCL and Just Space in the process of helping to give young Londoners a voice in the city they live in.

The MSc UDP report helped to provide supporting evidence for the case to re-open the heritage asset known as Grove park Youth Club, as a youth driven enterprise hub. The reports will be included as appendices in The Grove Park Neighbourhood Plan.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 2

1. Checkoway & Gutierrez, 2006, p.2
2. A GLA initiative which provides London-based teachers with an assortment of lesson plans / resources that use London as a living classroom.
3. Koch and Woo, 2015
4. Desmond, 2016, p.252

3. The Case of PemPeople: Amplifying Youth Voices on the Old Kent Road

MSc UDP Group 3: Brendon van Niekerk, Camille Fassin, Carolina Moore, Xige Liu, Diego Puente Garrido, Maureen Kinyua, Yinghao Tan, Yizhou Yao

3.1 Introduction

Located in the London Borough of Southwark, Old Kent Road is one of thirty-eight Opportunity Areas identified in the current London Plan as having significant capacity for future development. The area is subject to a draft Area Action Plan (AAP), produced by Southwark Council in 2016, which sets out a strategic 20 year vision for the delivery of 20,000 homes, 5,000 jobs, associated retail facilities and an extension to the Bakerloo London Underground Line (Southwark Council, 2016a).

Set against the GLA's renewed commitment to increase public participation in planning decisions, this section presents an analysis of Southwark Council's most recent efforts to engage local residents, and in particular young residents, in regeneration plans for the Old Kent Road.

The MSc UDP research project was conducted in collaboration with PemPeople, a community based organisation that aims to help Southwark residents build skills and address locally identified challenges. Founded in 2010, PemPeople periodically functions as a "community communicator"¹ intermediating between the local community and the local authority. One of many community organisations active within the Old Kent Road Opportunity Area, PemPeople were engaged in this research due to their work on youth empowerment issues.

3.2 An opportunity area for whom?

When studying opportunity area proposals, it is always important to consider who is actually benefitting from regeneration?² In the case of Southwark's Old Kent Road, an ethnically diverse area (48 percent Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) characterised by a youthful demographic profile (64 percent aged between 10 and 39 years old) and recording higher unemployment levels (8.7 percent) than the London average (Southwark Council, 2015), interviews with local youth voices captured a prevailing sense of loss rather than opportunity:

"We feel like we are being pushed out of our neighbourhood"

"I don't belong here anymore"

"The place stopped being good for me"
(Youth voices in Southwark)

Indeed, for the young people engaged by this research project, redevelopment was most commonly associated with rent increases, the loss of public space and the closure of local shops and facilities.

Young interviewees typically described themselves as "not the target" of redevelopment and articulated a sense that their community was being segregated by an influx of, predominantly white, affluent "newcomers". Rather than integrating with the existing community, these newcomers were seen as triggering the emergence of shops, restaurants and leisure activities that reflected a different social, cultural and economic identity.

This process is often referred to as "affective displacement", whereby local residents are transformed into strangers in their own streets³. This shift can happen rapidly, for example when entire buildings are demolished or converted into a radically new use; or it can happen more insidiously through subtle changes to the types of music played, or beers stocked, in neighbourhood bars.

3.3 Assessing Southwark's current youth engagement methods

Between February 2015 and September 2016, Southwark Council hosted ten public consultation forums, with the stated ambition of engaging local residents in developing the Old Kent Road Area Action Plan. Of these ten forums, one event placed a specific focus on youth engagement.

However, according to the interviews and focus groups conducted with young residents, youth workers and council representatives, the actual level of youth engagement in these sessions was limited. Overall the forums were described as poorly attended and criticised for only attracting views from older, predominantly white, middle-class residents.

Asked to explain why young people in Southwark had failed to engage through this participatory platform, interviewees outlined a number of barriers working against youth participation. These included: ineffective advertising; exclusionary venue choices; impenetrable consultation material; and a general absence of confidence in the Council’s willingness to listen.

“When [you feel that] the Council have never done anything for [your] parents and for you, it is difficult to trust it when it tries to include you” **(Nicholas Okwulu, founder of PemPeople)**

For one of the youth workers interviewed, the fact that this consultation process was set against a backdrop of drastic, austerity driven cuts to youth services and public open spaces in the Borough ensured that it was interpreted as a hollow gesture.

“It was like the Council came to our house, walked around in their dirty shoes, made a mess and then asked if they should take their shoes off”

Another youth worker suggested that:

“If they [the Council] were honest about wanting [the] youth’s point of view, they would come and find the youth at places like the Damilola Taylor Community Centre⁴, instead of advertising and holding the forum in places that the youth are unfamiliar with”

Here, the phrase “if they were honest” is key, as it reflects a common sentiment held by the young people interviewed, namely that youth engagement by Southwark Council was often just a box-ticking exercise:

“People say [the] system isn’t working but it is, actually the system [is] working really well because the real intention is to keep us away, to leave us ignorant.” **(Youth voice in Southwark)**

Even for those young people electing to engage with the formal forum process, the experience of participation was far from positive. One attendee described how, upon arriving, he was “just handed a book” [the entire Area Action Plan document] and offered no guidance through the complex planning jargon. Such an approach only further entrenched disengagement, and created an impression that the Council speaks a language that is largely irrelevant to young Londoners:

“This is the problem with politics, everything has to be so perfect and polished.” **(Youth voice in Southwark)**

Without the time, support and space to translate and digest complex planning proposals, young people feel unable to make informed contributions, and can quickly become disillusioned with participatory processes.

Figure 3.1. MSc students outside PemPeople’s pop-up shop. Source: Chapter Authors



Figure 3.2. What Black History Means to You? A display board in PemPeople’s pop-up shop. Source: Chapter Authors



Figure 3.3. Local shops in Southwark at risk of displacement. Source: Chapter Authors



3.4 Rebuilding trust: A possible role for community organisations

At present, too many of the *opportunities* being provided in *opportunity areas* such as Old Kent Road are inaccessible to young people. Faced with a choice between dislocation and displacement it is little surprise that young people feel increasingly distant from their elected representatives.

Efforts to increase youth participation in planning decisions are severely undermined by a lack of trust between young people and local government actors. In order to rebuild this connection, local authorities must completely rethink their approach to participatory youth engagement. Simply rebranding tried and tested consultation methods, such as the public forums discussed above, is clearly insufficient.

Moving forward, there are lessons to be learnt from community organisations such as PemPeople who, in contrast to local authorities, are able to demonstrate strong, positive relationships with young people in the local area. PemPeople's popularity derives from its ability to offer flexible services that are responsive to locally expressed needs and aspirations. Operating from a pop-up shop in the heart of Peckham, PemPeople provides practical, accredited training in bike maintenance, hosts a programme of art and music events and runs youth discussion groups and LGBT meetings. Recognising that young people often feel *talked at*, rather than *listened to* by local politicians, PemPeople also facilitate meetings between young residents and council representatives in this space.

Engaging more closely with organisations such as PemPeople offers one possible mechanism for local authorities to re-establish their bond with young residents, and, in so doing, increase the reach of participatory planning activities. However, to be meaningful, such a relationship would also need to be backed by a significant political, and indeed financial, commitment to approach youth participation differently.

Specifically, this research has highlighted the importance of:

(1) Engaging young people on their "own turf". Different arenas have different power dynamics. Meeting

young people in spaces that they feel comfortable in not only increases likely turnout figures; it also acts as a gesture of goodwill and indicates a genuine willingness to listen.

(2) Translating technical planning documents into accessible visual material. Young people use public space more than most Londoners. As such, capturing their input is crucial. The challenge for planning authorities is to translate technical planning documents into accessible material that enables young people to make informed contributions.

(3) Drawing a closer connection between participatory engagements and realistic short-term outcomes. Operating in a context characterised by a chronic lack of trust, policy makers and councillors should consider realistic short-term outcomes that can deliver early results and help build confidence in the participatory process. Whether delivered through a youth-led public realm design project, such as the SPACEmakers scheme in Bristol⁵, or participatory budgeting initiatives, offering a tangible connection between engagement and action is key to constructing positive, sustained relationships.

A WORD FROM PEMPEOPLE

Although not exclusively a youth focussed organisation, for PemPeople youth engagement is growing in importance.

As this research project shows, young Londoners are very aware of their exclusion from London's regeneration, and many are concerned about being priced-out of the neighbourhoods that they grew up in.

To help young people have a voice in regeneration decisions, PemPeople - along with other organisations and Southwark Council - are organising meetings between young residents and the Council and will continue to encourage young Londoners to express their views.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

1. Wood and Fowle, 2009

2. Lipietz, Lee and Hayward, 2014

3. See Butcher and Dickens, 2016

4. The Damilola Taylor Community Centre was established in memory of Damilola Taylor who was tragically killed in 2000 by an act of violence by two boys not much older than him. Supported by the Damilola Taylor Trust, the Damilola Taylor Community Centre forms part of a wider strategy to provide "inner-city youths with

opportunities to play, learn and live their lives free of fear and violence, and with optimism for a future where opportunities flourish" (Damilola Taylor Trust, no date).

5. SPACEmakers was a two-year project in which young people, aged between thirteen and fifteen, designed a new public space in an area of Wilmott Park, Bristol. The space was within their own community in the Hartcliffe and Withywood area of Bristol.

4. Re-imagining Citizenship: The Case of Take Back the City

MSc UDP Student Group 4: Amy Gastinger, Amelia Neoh, Aarathi Kumar, Ilinca Diaconescu, Xiaochen Xu, Katrin Hofer, Luis Saenz, Renata Seabra, Michael Tung

“Participation is having the opportunity to express a view, to influence decision-making and to achieve change. Young people’s participation is an informed and willing involvement of all young people of different ages and abilities, including the most marginalized, in any matter concerning them either directly or indirectly.” (MSc UDP Group 4 building on Save the Children, n.d.)

4.1 Introduction

In contrast to the other case studies presented in this report, Take Back the City operates at a citywide scale:

“From Lewisham and Ladbroke Grove, the consensus is clear. We need a city we can afford to live and raise children in, not luxury flats on every other corner. We need people in power who really represent us, who reflect the ethnic and cultural diversity of the city and who walk like us and talk like us.” (Take Back the City, 2016d)

As such, rather than considering a specific planning proposal, campaign or project, this chapter focuses on unpacking the lessons that can be learnt from Take Back the City’s general approach to engagement, before exploring some of the potential challenges and opportunities that such organisations face when considering how to engage with more formal actors within the London planning system.

4.2 Who are Take Back the City?

Founded in March 2015, Take Back the City is a majority-youth organisation that “want[s] to take back the city from the super-rich and the corrupt politicians that serve them” (Take Back the City, 2016a). The group draws inspiration and solidarity from urban social movements from across the globe. As a touchstone for the type of urban politics they are seeking to promote in London, Take Back the City reference the case of Barcelona, whose current May-

or, Ada Colau, rose to office on the back of a progressive anti-eviction movement (*Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca*), as a key influence.

“Take Back the City aims to turn politics on its head – so that the people of London run their city, not the politicians” (Take Back the City, 2016b)

Take Back the City speaks directly to an otherwise under-represented constituency, working through a range of creative mediums, “from impromptu debates on buses to poetry recitals in corner shops”¹. Interpreting the current planning system as functioning to “keep people out who they [the state] don’t want to listen to”², Take Back the City actively targets their programme of listening workshops into spaces outside of mainstream participation: workers unions, homeless shelters, sport clubs, community centres, schools and housing co-operatives etc.

In 2016, the organisation published a People’s Manifesto which drew together crowdsourced inputs from across their network. This document compiled informal representations from over 1,000 Londoners, and offered a crucial platform for expressing the needs and aspirations of minority groups such as young people, migrants, single parents, refugees and the homeless. The People’s Manifesto covers core planning topics such as housing, employment and the environment, as well as key social issues including policing and education policy.

Amina Gichinga, an organiser with Take Back The City, ran on the platform of the People’s Manifesto as a candidate in the 2016 London Assembly elections (City and East Constituency). Although ultimately unsuccessful, this experience offered Take Back the City the opportunity to build their campaign profile, whilst also piloting alternative forms of political engagement premised on direct, participatory democracy.

During the campaign, Amina and her fellow members engaged Londoners in the spaces where everyday city life happens – corner shops, shopping parades, public parks, the bus network etc. – and communicated their messages in a language that ordinary people could relate to.

The group distilled the Manifesto into simple demands such as rent control; the reinstatement of Education

Maintenance Allowances (EMA); a compulsory £11 per hour London Minimum Wage and a 20 per cent decrease in TFL fares and then pitched these to Londoners through art, music, poetry and face-to-face engagement events. In so doing, they tapped a vein of everyday politics, which is essential to reviving civic engagement amongst those groups who are wary (and indeed weary) of existing channels.

4.3 Moving from *invited* to *inviting* spaces

Following the election of Sadiq Khan in 2016, the GLA has made a number of positive steps towards encouraging more meaningful public participation in London planning processes. For example, as part of the consultation process around creating a new vision for London (*A City for all Londoners*), the GLA is hosting a series of thematic stakeholder workshops.

However, whilst such engagement is certainly welcome, this project has shown that the *invited* nature of such spaces³ can serve to limit their ability to reach under-represented voices. By their very nature, formal spaces of engagement risk excluding marginalised voices, particularly those that are not otherwise represented by established civil society organisations. Without support, many marginalised groups, and particularly individuals within such groups, can lack the confidence to engage with formal participation opportunities, feeling that their knowledge is somehow inferior or inappropriate. This perception distorts a crucial communication channel between communities and their representative governance structures, acting to artificially amplify the voices of those groups more comfortable in such environments.

For young people, this is a particular risk. A fact that was identified directly by one anonymous participant at the Social Integration and Inclusion Round Table, hosted by the GLA in November 2016:

“As an observation, we’ve mentioned young people a few times, but I don’t think there’s anybody in the room under 25. [...] We’ve moved on in technology but we haven’t moved on in how we take views. Young people communicate online but we’ve not moved on, so we’re excluding them.”
(GLA, 2016a)

If effective participation can be defined as “having the opportunity to express a view, to influence decision-making and to achieve change”⁴, then the GLA must increase their commitment to providing inviting, as opposed to invited, spaces for young people to make their voices heard. Here, a closer look at the methods and approaches adopted by the likes of Take Back the City could prove invaluable.

Figure 4.1. Take Back the City organiser Amina Gichinga canvassing for opinions at a bus stop. Source: Take Back the City Facebook



Figure 4.2. Image from Take Back the City’s ‘Demand the Impossible’ Summer School. Source: Take Back the City Facebook



Figure 4.3. Image from a Take Back the City workshop. Source: Take Back the City Facebook



In contrast to the structured, formal approaches deployed by the GLA, the informal engagement methods promoted by Take Back the City offer greater flexibility and place fewer assumptions regarding which forms of knowledge are deemed relevant or appropriate to planning / policy making. In their own words, Take Back the City aim to “create a space where every expression is carried with the same weight, where every contribution is valued” and to “encourage the expression of politics in whatever form that may take whether that is spoken word, musical performance or a bog standard speech” (Take Back the City, 2016c).

One such event, dubbed a Tale of Two Cities, drew more than 800 attendees, highlighting the reach that such approaches can have. Similarly, when co-creating the People’s Manifesto, Take Back the City reached out to their communities through an array of on- and offline communication channels, actively targeting under-represented voices and drawing a direct line between demands and actions. In stark contrast to the lengthy, inflexible processes involved in submitting compliant, duly-made representations during formal plan-making processes, Take Back the City embraced and published ideas that were jotted on post-its, voiced during listening workshops and double-decker debates, hashtagged, emailed, rapped, stenciled... the list goes on. This approach established an immediate connection between input and action, a feature that is particularly important for maintaining the engagement of younger demographics.

The People’s Manifesto is a living document and this approach emphasises the importance of considering participation as an ongoing process rather than a discrete event. Since publishing the manifesto, the organisation is looking to develop strategies to enhance and

extend their impact on the ground and begin converting demands into actions.

4.4 What can be learnt from Take Back the City’s approach to engagement?

“Take Back the City is a campaign to put the majority, the marginalised and the disillusioned back in the driving seat of decision-making in London”
(Take Back the City, 2016d)

Part of a wider expansion of grassroots political organising in London, the emergence of Take Back the City gives cause for London planning authorities to reflect on their current participatory processes. Self-defined as a rejection of the city’s current decision-making processes, the movement makes a clear case for increasing accountability and transparency at all levels of urban governance. The new GLA administration has an opportunity to change their public perception, but will need to take steps to rebuild trust. To this end, there are significant lessons to be learnt from organisations such as Take Back the City.

At present, the rigid, and seemingly opaque, engagement opportunities provided by the GLA act to undermine its legitimacy as a voice for *all Londoners*. All too often, collectives such as Take Back the City are unaware of engagement opportunities until they have passed, highlighting a communications deficit within current GLA engagement strategies.

By failing to create inviting spaces for the likes of Take Back the City to participate in planning processes, the GLA are

Figure 4.4. Take Back the City canvassing for opinions at a London festival. Source: Take Back the City Facebook



Figure 4.5. Take Back the City listening workshop: How can we make our stories heard? Source: Take Back the City Facebook



missing a ready-made opportunity to tap into the diverse needs and aspirations present within London today. When amplified by organisations such as Take Back the City or Just Space, voices previously lost within the planning process become audible. It is the responsibility of London's planners and policy makers to open up spaces in which these voices can be heard within the decision-making process.

Take Back the City have clearly demonstrated the existence of a latent desire for meaningful political engagement by young people in spaces, forms and languages relevant to the everyday experience of life in London. Indeed, many of the techniques deployed by Take Back the City have the potential to be taken up or adapted by other community groups and networks (or indeed neighbourhood forums). The challenge for Take Back the City is locating avenues through which their unconventional engagement outputs can have weight within the planning system. Further collaboration with the Just Space network is one possible platform for this, and others will also need to be explored.

Overall, organisations such as Take Back the City have a significant potential to emerge as drivers of engaged citizen education in London. They benefit from an authenticity that is rooted in an anti-establishment tradition and are, therefore, able to engage groups otherwise disenchanted with municipal politics. For the GLA, learning to embrace such community groups, networks and organisations as co-producers of London plans will demand both new ways of thinking and doing. However, such changes will be important if bridges are to be built between City Hall and the capital's diverse communities.

Figure 4.6. Take Back the City guerilla advertising.
Source: Chapter Authors



A WORD FROM TAKE BACK THE CITY

This report offers some important suggestions for the kind of change we need in terms of how the GLA engage with young and marginalised people across London. We can't allow 'engagement' to become a buzzword, which grants policy-makers and institutions legitimacy but doesn't actually mean they have listened to the people of our city. As this report highlights, the GLA needs to go beyond consultations in meeting rooms in City Hall, moving from 'invited' to 'inviting' spaces, in terms of the mode of engagement and who is being engaged. Take Back The City both shows that this must not be cursory and that it requires real, hard work, but that it is also empowering, valuable and possible.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 4

1. Harris et al, 2016
2. Zahra Dalilah in White, 2016
3. Gaventa, 2004
4. MSc UDP Group 4 building on Save the Children, n.d.

5. Conclusion

The MSc UDP research featured in this report highlights a number of findings relevant to the new London administration when revisiting its processes and policies for youth engagement. These are:

1. Effective youth engagement involves an element of citizen education: Whilst young people are very aware of changes occurring in their neighbourhoods, they currently have limited knowledge or understanding of planning processes / or proposals for their communities. Public engagement materials must be relevant to the everyday realities of young people in London and facilitators must be prepared to guide young people through the process.

2. Effective youth engagement happens in the spaces where young people feel most comfortable and empowered: Efforts to engage young people in formal civic spaces often fail to reach significant numbers of young people. Young people are better engaged on home turf in venues that are relevant to their day-to-day lives. Retaining and reviving attractive and accessible youth centres is essential to building youth engagement in planning.

3. Effective youth engagement encourages uninvited contributions in an array of formats: Rather than privileging certain kinds of contributions over others, effective youth engagement must create inviting spaces “where every expression is carried with the same weight, [and] where every contribution is valued” (Take Back the City, 2016c). More familiar with expressing their politics online or in conversation, too often Young Londoners can feel alienated by formal consultation processes. To better capture youth needs and aspirations, engagement practices must adopt diverse, flexible and informal engagement techniques.

4. Effective youth engagement draws strength from short-term tangible changes: Young people currently lack trust in formal decision making processes and feel quite alienated from these avenues of influence. At present, redevelopment is most commonly experienced as a negative process, imposed from above and most likely to lead to their longer-term exclusion from city space. To

regain trust, young people must see their opinions converted into actions in the short-term.

5. Effective youth engagement works with, not around, community organisations: Young people are best engaged through projects / organisations that already offer them support and which have an established relationship of trust; or through engagement with existing trusted community members. Planning authorities must develop flexible engagement strategies that maximise the value of these relationships and offer resources for such networks to expand and consolidate. It is essential that community organisations with a track record of mobilising youth voices be informed of upcoming engagement opportunities and supported to bring youth voices to bear on these processes. Moreover, for any engagement to be meaningful, community organisations should be “involved from the very beginning, treated as equal co-producers... [and] be provided with a full range of options” (Just Space, 2016).

A number of Just Space members are well positioned to support efforts to increase youth engagement in planning. However, as the research has also demonstrated, these groups will require support to develop the specific skillsets required to engage and work with young people.

As part of its endeavour to develop a *City for all Londoners*, the GLA must promote a coordinated effort to put in place the necessary infrastructure required to meaningfully engage young people in planning decisions at all scales.

The GLA should actively support and enable this process, creating an expectation that such a transformation happens, supporting the development and dissemination of best practice and funding necessary capacity building work at all levels.

Without this commitment, young people will remain peripheral to the London planning scene, and a *City for all Londoners* will fail to move from rhetoric to reality

6. Afterword

Through the actions of young Londoners comes real change

This is what real participation means and this is the statement that motivates the Peer Outreach Team to encourage and support young people to do something, change something and become more confident as a result.

All across London, lots of young people are already engaged in projects, programmes and campaigns. However, there are many more who do not currently see themselves as being able to change policy, programmes or services, environments, spaces or places. The Peer Outreach Team aims to alter this perception, because every young person deserves to have a voice.

The MSc UDP programme at University College London's (UCL) Bartlett Development Planning Unit (DPU) aims to promote a more meaningful participation for young peo-

ple in London and the Peer Outreach Team are happy to be involved in this journey. There will be a lot of experimenting along the road, but the partnership sends a key message to decision-makers: To build a city without involving the views and actions of young people is short-sighted. Not just because young people are the future but because they are also the present.

Young people have a way of seeing through bureaucracy and their engagement can open-up a whole new world of brave and creative ideas. Moving forward, the Peer Outreach Team are interested in working with different partners such as Just Space and the DPU to help young people in London transform not just their own lives but also those of the communities they live in.

Rebecca Palmer
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Figure 6.1. Group photo of members of the Greater London Authority (GLA) Peer Outreach Team. Source: GLA



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UDP STUDENTS REPORT 2017 - DPU

The Development Planning Unit, University College London, is an international centre specialising in academic teaching, research, training and consultancy in the field of urban and regional development, with a focus on policy, planning management and design. It is concerned with understanding the multi-faceted and uneven process of contemporary urbanisation, and strengthening more socially just and innovative approaches to policy, planning management and design, specially in the contexts of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East as well as countries in transition.

The central purpose of the DPU is to strengthen the professional and institutional capacity of governments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to deal with the wide range of development issues that are emerging at local, national and global levels. In London, the DPU runs postgraduate programmes of study, including a research degree (MPhil/PhD) programme, six one-year Masters Degree courses and specialist short courses in a range of fields addressing urban and rural development policy, planning, management and design.

Overseas, the DPU Training and Advisory Service (TAS) provides training and advisory services to government departments, aid agencies, NGOs and academic institutions. These activities range from short missions to substantial programmes of staff development and institutional capacity building.

The academic staff of the DPU are a multi-disciplinary and multi-national group with extensive and on-going research and professional experience in various fields of urban and international development throughout the world. DPU Associates are a body of professionals who work closely with the Unit both in London and overseas. Every year the student body embraces more than 45 different nationalities.

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MSc Programme in Urban Development Planning. The course focuses on international practices in urban development policy, planning and management that address contemporary political, socio-economic, spatial and environmental transformations in cities of the global south. As urban growth continues apace, fuelled by the uneven effects of globalization processes, cities and towns are being reconfigured as key drivers of regional and national development. Increased fragmentation, intensifying inequality and environmental degradation are taking place in a context marked by the differentiated impacts of neoliberal policy, altering the roles and relationships between those involved in the development and management of cities. This programme argues that planning has an important contribution to make to these contemporary urban challenges. Accordingly, the programme seeks to provide candidates with the analytical and practical approaches to engage reflexively with urban development and planning processes, as well as enhance their strategic and propositional capacities, within the framework of socially just urban governance. Working with an appreciation of the situated complexities of practice, along with a recognition of processes of inequality, difference and diversity, the course aims to delineate collective agency for planning, and the contours of strategic action planning.

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