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Democratising the high street: London's new commons for fairer local economies

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Democratising the high street: London's new commons for fairer local economies

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Abstract

"London's high streets and town centres have shaped the fabric of our great city. They are a focal point for our culture, communities and everyday economies. They support the most sustainable models of living and working, including active travel and shorter commutes. And they are where new ideas, new ways of living, new businesses and new experiences are made"

- Sadiq Khan in Major of London (2020, p.7)

Exploring a potential vision of the common good for London's economic centres, this paper asks why and how economic democracy should be enacted at the scale of the high street. While COVID-19 has exacerbated inequalities along many lines, evolving values around community, wellbeing and public space also pose an opportunity for re-imagining fairer economic trajectories through a focus on place.

Often magnifying wider economic issues, the long-run decline of British high streets has been well documented. While commonly focusing on curation and design as a way to 'activate' these once public spaces, their complexity has given way to an equally diverse discourse, lacking consistent frameworks for guiding planning, interventions and policy. While current high street rhetoric offers a growing focus on social value and 'community-led development', economic power and equity implications are frequently overlooked. This paper suggests, given the accessible and inclusive nature of high streets, the potential for situating a framework of economic development that considers a more radical restructuring of social and economic power. Placing the principles of economic democracy within an everyday site helps to foreground people and place. Through repurposing urban space for inclusive, collective and participatory workspaces, services or social centres, high streets can play a role in reformulating value concepts. Developing an analytical framework that considers rights, ownership and deliberation, through iterative empirical analysis, this paper will address practices that could re-frame high streets to better serve their communities.

Content

With much broader challenges around inequality and financialisation playing out acutely at this locality, a framework for place-based economic development which considers a more radical restructuring of social and economic power is missing.

01. Introduction

Despite being the 5th wealthiest city globally, 1/5 of London's residents earn under the London Living Wage (Trust for London, 2018). As the country's most unequal urban centre, increasing income and wealth inequalities, rising housing costs and public service disparities are corroding wellbeing and sustainability (Greater London Authority [GLA], 2018a; 2019; Trust for London, 2019). At the centre of this economic development is the high street. The city has over 600 high streets — home to 1.5 million jobs and 41% of London's businesses (ONS, 2020a).

High streets can be defined as "complex and dynamic mixed-use urban corridors that ensure easy pedestrian access to everyday goods and services, places of work and leisure" (Local Government Association [LGA], 2020a). Acknowledging the high street's networked nature, London authorities expand their classification to include front-facing premises, buildings behind, floors above and land use within 200m of retail frontages (Mayor of London, 2020). Power to Change[1] conceptualises high streets in terms of their purpose, "acting as a physical centre of a local community" (Brett & Alakeson, 2019, p.9). Beyond business exchanges, high streets offer spaces to form relationships, build exchange networks and set up associations — often proving integral to a place's identity (Ibid).

While emerging as civic spaces, the rise of mass production, out-of-town shopping and chain stores slowly untethered high streets from local communities (Simms, Kjell & Potts, 2007). The visible impacts of economic decline play out through high street vacancy, exacerbated by rising online retail, real estate costs, weakening social connections and municipal funding shortages (Wrigley & Labriri, 2015). With the British Retail consortium (2022) showing vacancy rising again from late 2018, further decline of these physical centres is anticipated in the wake of the pandemic (LGA, 2020b).[2]

While COVID-19 has exacerbated inequalities, uncovering disparities in work, mobility and health, evolving values around community, wellbeing[3] and public space may also pose an opportunity to reframe urban economic development (Sissons & Sanders, 2020). With high street trends in London already beginning to shift focus from mass retail to more local and sustainable models, this paper considers these urban centres an accessible and inclusive vehicle for further democratising the economy. Given the diversity of stakeholders, spaces and economic characteristics involved in high streets, the myriad of related studies - varying in focus from retail to placemaking, design and local economic development - have produced incongruent policy guidance. With much broader

NOTE 01

A National Lottery funded charity promoting community businesses.

NOTE 02

The oversupply of retail units was estimated to be 25% pre-covid (Landsec & JII, 2019). British Retail Consortium (2021) estimates that 1/7 of UK shops currently lie vacant, with 5000 fewer units than pre-pandemic. While between 2006-2022, 30,000 net closures are estimated, nationally, vacancy rates are set to be on par with 2013 levels (Deloitte, 2021).

NOTE 03

The 'Reset' survey of 57,000 people found that 2/3 want the UK government to prioritise health and wellbeing over GDP (APPG, 2021).

challenges around inequality and financialisation playing out acutely at this locality, a framework for place-based economic development which considers a more radical restructuring of social and economic power is missing.

Shifting economic discourse away from growth and redistribution, the democratisation of the economy ushers in new value creation mechanisms. Economic rights, diverse forms of collective ownership and deliberative and knowledgeable publics are seen as essential countervailing forces to rising inequality (Cumbers, 2020). While documenting cases of common production and ownership, the literature around economic democracy often lacks operational guidance. Municipalism, an interrelated social movement, helps place economic democracy within the city, providing practical urban precedents around deliberation, collaboration and restoration of the commons; but, its broad transnational character limits a sense of place. Therefore, the language of urban commons is then used to develop ideas around equitable governance forms applicable to the built environment. Finally, the discourse around high streets, as a diverse and social space, suggests a potentially significant scale for enacting welfare provisions, collective ownership and deliberative governance, helping to facilitate a more democratic economy.

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The methodology takes a two-step approach in response to the research question: how can a framework of economic democracy reshape London's high streets for post-pandemic opportunities, promoting more equitable local economies? Firstly, considering the importance of setting, the literature is used to derive a theoretical basis for democratising the high street (the why), before empirical examples are discussed which develop the application of economic democracy principles (the how). Chapter 2 argues that democratisation can help protect against current challenges, increase social value and localise economies, reducing inequality. Chapter 4 uses precedents to develop a place-based framework for evaluating interventions, centring the pillars of economic democracy and egalitarian values of inclusivity, collectivism and participation. From community plans to collaborative workspaces and social centres, high street interventions connect theory and practice, discussing how democratisation can promote fairer economies. Chapter 5 then applies the framework within London's context, researching economic trends, ownership structures, planning constraints, policy tools and local powers, before looking at place and scale through the evaluation of four high street practices. Key findings highlight the importance of high streets as a location for accessing resources that serve individual rights; new sites of work embodying collectivism, distributed social surplus and collaborative production, and open social spaces that promote networks for localism, participatory planning and autonomous collective action (Figure 1.1). The resulting discussion considers the possibilities and challenges for democratising high streets, critiquing the framework before drawing out recommendations directed at municipal authorities. As well as a timely study of pertinent issues, this research aims to contribute to the field by creating and applying a practical framework for analysing policies and practices which shifts the discourse from 'community-led development' to the democratisation of community wealth.

Key findings highlight the importance of high streets as a location for accessing resources that serve individual rights; new sites of work embodying collectivism, distributed social surplus and collaborative production, and open social spaces that promote networks for localism, participatory planning and autonomous collective action.

NOTE 04

London surveying in February 2021 implies some decline in community sentiment since the start of the pandemic (Belcher,Bosetti & Quarshie, 2021).

Nevertheless, with a great deal of uncertainty still surrounding the fate of high streets, including the persistence of conducive societal shifts around consumption and participation, this study may be limited by its prematurity.[4] Developing a broad framework, as opposed to analysing a single site, acknowledges the diversity and complexity of contexts, focusing instead on the value of a novel theoretical framing of this everyday setting. While there has not been the space to explore fully tactical concerns over design, regulation or taxation, this paper aims to spark the cultivation of fairer economic development pathways.

FIGURE 1.1

London's High Streets: Well Street & East Street Library (GLA, 2021a)

Ideas around economic democracy and municipalism suggest the root of current societal issues, from climate change to falling welfare, lie in contemporary capitalism. New development pathways imply a need to address power inequalities.

02. Literature review

This section will consider several distinct bodies of literature drawn together through this paper. Firstly, shifting economic narratives are explored. Ideas around economic democracy and municipalism suggest the root of current societal issues, from climate change to falling welfare, lie in contemporary capitalism. New development pathways imply a need to address power inequalities. By moving through the scales of radical decentralisation from the guiding pillars of economic democracy to the pragmatic urban principles of municipalism, and the organising values of the commons, discussions envision high streets through a lens of collectivity - using theory and empiricism to justify why to democratise the high street.

2.1 Democratisation: principles, practices & places for action

Economy, democracy & inequality

The association between democracies — primarily negotiated through labour rights and state intervention — and greater equality is eroding (Göran, 2020; Piketty, 2014).[5] As economic value theory devolved from its genesis in social welfare towards individual utility, ideologies connoting deregulation and privatisation came to span the political spectrum, strengthening current patterns of accumulation and the accompanying social costs (Gray, 2002; Harvey, 2005; Mazzucato, 2019). The loci of power, previously situated in the state, local communities and municipalities, has gradually shifted to corporations through liberalisation and technology, establishing a 'post-democratic' condition where public concern for welfare is sidelined and political decisions become driven by profit (Crouch, 2004; Hamm, 2010). Disenfranchisement has risen under increasing income polarisation, precarity and real wage stagnation, contributing to inequality's pernicious impacts on wellbeing (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009). Linking the current democratic crisis[6] to economic restructuring, Stiglitz (2012) suggests that addressing inequality is the answer to broadening economic opportunity. Lapavitsas (2011) implies that the retreat of public provisions in housing, health and education has facilitated financialisation. With hyper-mobile capital disconnecting commerce from place and people, a countervailing force with the potential to reassert community is needed (Harvey, 2012). Reversal is suggested to hinge on greater public sector participation and the reestablishment of the social and collective, over the private and individual, economic forms (Lapavitsas, 2013; Mazzucato, 2019).

NOTE 05

Piketty (2014) finds that the post-war decline in wealth and income inequality (US and Europe) has eroded over the last 40 years.

NOTE 06

In recent years, the Economist Intelligence Unit's (2020) Democracy Index plots a general decline in the world's most powerful countries, ranked on their commitment to pluralism, civil liberties and political culture.

Economic democracy

While advocating for social justice and greater equality, dominant economic discourse around inclusive growth remains conceptually vague, often overlooking systemic change (Casper-Futterman & DeFillipis, 2017; Burch & McInroy, 2018; Lee, 2018; Thompson et al., 2020). Economic democracy seeks to reconfigure this implied disposition towards power, tackling wealth accumulation and the associated concentration of economic decision-making (Rahman, 2017; Smith, 2000). Schweickhart (1992) proposed a model instigating economic democracy through worker self-management and social control over investment, evading the 'growth mania' of contemporary capitalism to provide greater stability. While Wolff's (2012) critique of capitalism places the onus on structural management flaws, Ellerman (1992) suggested employment contracts, as opposed to property frameworks, need to be reshaped. Often focused on failed state-socialist projects, critiques of economic democracy suggest that exercising consumer choice disperses power more efficiently, neglecting controls over escalating profits (Blackburn, 2007; Mises, 1951). However, Dahl's (1985) formative ideas take a systems approach, addressing deeper questions of value theory by reinstating the importance of social interaction and cooperation in economic activities. Incorporating those outside of labour contracts and conveying the role of ownership for urban application, Cumbers (2020, p.77) provides a comprehensive definition of economic democracy: "the collective visions of the common good that are given space for debate and contestation" among individuals "with the rights to flourish and participate in this space", assiduously justifying the pillars of individual economic rights, diverse forms of collective ownership and knowledgeable deliberative publics.

Cumbers provides a comprehensive definition of economic democracy: "the collective visions of the common good that are given space for debate and contestation" among individuals "with the rights to flourish and participate in this space".

Economic democracy demands equality through full individual rights, incorporating resources, opportunities for participation and skills in the promotion of 'choiceworthy' lives (Dahl, 1985; Smith, 2006). Questions of ownership explore collective appropriation over social surplus,[7] the construction of the common good and the need for new forms of community ownership (Cumbers, 2020). A mix of public and cooperative forms, and diverse production scales and modes, enhances economic pluralism (Johanisova & Wolf, 2012). By decommodifying land and labour and re-embedding resources within society, collective ownership, whether through community land trusts[8] or worker cooperatives, is expected to produce more equitable and sustainable economies (Peredo & McLean, 2019). With policymakers commonly drawn from unrepresentative classes, deliberative and knowledgeable publics provide contestation and rights for collective action (Cumbers, 2020). Greater pluralism, through broader participation, helps to orient development towards the common good - one which benefits all or most of a community (Cohen, 1997; Rosenberg, 2007). Johanisova and Wolf (2012) specify further demands for anti-trust regulation, social enterprise support, democratic money creation and redistribution, defining economic democracy more centrally within traditional state control as "a system of checks and balances on economic power" (p. 564). While more prescriptive, this interpretation implies the need for a greater balance of 'proactive' and 'reactive' measures to tackle entrenched economic powers. Nevertheless, economic democracy agendas, while critiquing current systems and offering alternative visions, rarely provide guidance for constructing facilitating institutions.

NOTE 07

Social surplus includes consumer and producer surplus not captured at equilibrium by market prices.

NOTE 08

Set up by community groups to develop and manage areas, community land trusts facilitate the local long-term stewardship of assets, encouraging broader access, socially productive land use and some protection from gentrification (Community Land Trust Network, 2021).

Choosing the city

A focus on the city, however, provides a wealth of precedents for economic restructuring. Space, place and the city lie central to Lees' (2004) 'emancipatory city' concept. The local scale, returning power to 'ordinary people', is seen as a productive terrain for collective civic provision, political solidarity and social justice (Cumbers & Paul, 2020; Engelen et al. 2017; Roth, 2019). Founding ideas of the municipalism movement — later developed by Bookchin (2014) into a framework for democratic participation— came from Murray Bookchin's (1995) egalitarian social ecology, which conceptualises the innate intertwinement of social and environmental issues. While acknowledging potentially negative impacts of urbanisation on some freedoms and social relations, Bookchin (Ibid, p.23) suggests "due to its immediacy, the city remains the most direct arena in which the individual…can attain…social solutions to broader problems of the privatised self". A reformulation of urban institutions that can foster community empowerment counter the processes that have "dispossessed the citizen of [their] place in the city's decision-making process" (Ibid, p. 24).

Nevertheless, Purcell (2006) warns against conflating the local scale with an assured democratic arena. Akuno and Nangwaya (2017), part of Jackson's municipalism movement, highlight societal ideas venerating an 'illusion' of democratic governance over social power. Although Oosterlynck and Gonzalez (2013) question whether municipalities, as a strategic site for neoliberal extension, can avoid capture, Russel (2019) documents the early successes of strategic municipal movements, acting inside-and-out of local government to provide a "hopeful politics of scale" (p. 1006). Suggesting that practice is running ahead of theory, discussion sources extend beyond academia to incorporate conference reports, media and lectures which discuss municipalism's focus, aims and tactics (Ibid).

The municipalism movement

New municipalism is "a nascent transnational social movement which aims to democratically transform the local state and economy", arising in the last decade to contest neoliberal austerity and platform capitalism (Thompson, 2020a, p. 317). Reorganising social power through the local scale is done by decentralising governments, implementing economic democracy models and reasserting the commons (Russel, 2020). While previous socialist movements have focused on labour agreements, redistribution and social infrastructure, new municipalism foregrounds participatory democracy, and grassroots challenges to contemporary capitalism (Angel, 2020; Russel, 2017). Broadly plotting onto Cumbers' (2020) pillars of economic democracy, the movement embodies a commitment to societal shifts in power, ownership and decision-making (Ball, 2019; Blanco, Salazar & Bianchi, 2019; Centre for Local Economic Strategies [CLES], 2019). While originating from citizen movements, local governments can facilitate the shift, with co-production experiments encouraging authorities to take an enabling over regulatory role (Bauwens & Onzia, 2017). Although boosted by significant federal funding, The Cleveland model - centred around democratic worker-controlled cooperatives - has been highly studied for its success in creating wealth without gentrification, while localising consumption and production (Alperovitz, 2016; Rowe et al., 2017). New municipalism also provides a platform for sharing precedents, as seen through the publication of the Fearless Cities manifesto, a promulgation of practices resisting growing inequalities, democratic deficits and social injustice (Barcelona en Comú, 2019)[9]. Nevertheless, Tomaney (2013), despite supporting the virtues of the local scale, warns against the isolating dialogue and detachment from place that can accompany transnational movements.

Failures of local economic development to address austerity urbanism have prompted a growing movement of municipal politics in the UK, shifting focus from comparative advantage to satisfying local needs through preexisting assets (CLES, 2019; Thompson et al., 2020).[10] Although dominated by state actors, the UK movement's aims remain centred on improving public goods, distributing

NOTE 9

In 2017, Barcelona en Comú (2019) hosted a summit which gathered 700 participants from 100 municipalist platforms globally, and led to the publication of practices in the subsequent Fearless Cities manifesto. See fearlesscities.com/en/map for global practices.

NOTE 10

CLES (2019) highlight the work of London's local authorities of Camden, Islington and Hackney in using local state power to ensure fairly priced and accessible public goods through insourcing and Living Wage contracts, encouraging democratic municipal or citizen ownership, and using planning policy to ensure more genuinely affordable housing.

control and creating more pluralistic and participatory economic development through the cultivation of commons, re-municipalisation and redesigning democracy (Russel, 2017). While Christophers (2018; 2019) identifies local authority-led urban developments implicit in financialisation, Thompson et al. (2020) explore the potential within the UK of municipal experiments to decommodify land by linking place-based assets to community organisations. Given the importance of reshaping built environment powers, a framework for urban economic democracy that can incorporate communities, place, and space, is required.

Re-defining commons

Given the centrality of reconceptualising high streets as a site for collectivism — a microcosm of a democratised economy — within a largely privatised built environment, the commons literature is used to draw out organising values for governing urban space. The commons, meaning 'what we share', refers to a local resource held in communal ownership or stewardship (Bollier, 2010). Following Hardin's (1968) influential research on non-excludable property regimes, Ostrom et al. (1999) mapped the potential of bottom-up commons processes within private property regimes, from Land Trusts to farmer's markets, developing the importance of institutional diversity for sustainable development. However, ownership discussions often discount the term's roots within the production and management of common work (Pannekoek, 1947). Dimitrou (2020), studying the recent reclamation of public spaces in Athens, also centres critical organising values. Hence, Stavrides and De Angelis' (2016) expanded definition of commons to include a common pool of resources, a community to sustain them and 'commoning' (a collective social process that recreates the commons) provides a germane conceptualisation for the high street's complex dynamics.

Revitalising urban commons

Urban commons — civic institutions for encounter, dialogue and collaboration such as public spaces, cultural centres and food markets — face eroding democratic control and protections under commodification's prioritisation of exchange value (Manfredi, 2019). With privatisation seizing common social resources under new technological and market threats, and 'commoning' helping to make work visible, the idea's contemporary revival has incited demands for new territorial governance structures (Hardt & Negri, 2009; Hardt, 2010; Lee & Webster, 2006). As a radically decentralised way of managing resources, commons can provide an equitable and sustainable municipal form for addressing collective interests (Calafati & McInroy, 2017; Russel, 2020). Cumbers' (2012) exploration of Latin America's growing movement of state and civil society groups reclaiming economies from private profit interests suggests a pluralistic approach of in-and-against state politics. Similarly, Roth and Baird (2021) suggest commons debates should move beyond the public versus private, to construct a new set of principles around access, ownership and management. Forné, Micciarello, and Fresnillo (2019) imply an opportunity to experiment with systems able to balance communal values (autonomy, economic rights and democratic management) and public service principles (accessibility, universality, transparency and accountability). Implying that commons already constitute fundamental urban infrastructure, Benkler (2017) demands a framework that values these collective spaces. Cumbers (2012), describing the 'fuzziness' of the commons literature in relation to the tactical construction of transformative economic institutions, also points to the need for a practical framework centring the commons' egalitarian principles. Despite the complexity of high streets, their universality, central economic and social functions and attachment to communities could provide a focal urban site for enacting collective economic forms and a new civicism that supports gradual decentralisation.

The evolution of the high street

High streets were once a place for traders and civic spaces, containing a higher proportion of housing; the 19th century saw a shift in focus towards consumption, dominated by micro-businesses and more informal offerings (Scott, 1997). By the early 20th century, mass production and retail had taken hold, detaching high streets from their local communities (Ibid). Britain's first out of town shopping centre was built in 1976, a model that proliferated under growing car ownership and the convenience minded society of the 1990s (Wrigley & Lambriri, 2015). Despite emerging as civic centres, the intensifying retail focus of this era produced an unsustainable high street model, threatening these common spaces (Simms, Kjell & Potts, 2007). National 'Town Centre First' policy increased the planning focus on high streets (Ibid). In 2006, the All-Party Parliamentary Small Shops Group (2006) estimated that in the previous 20 years around a third of the UK's post offices and a quarter of high street banks had disappeared. The knock-on effect of reduced high street service points — exacerbated by underinvestment in public services like libraries — was greater car dependence, fewer local jobs and declining civic pride, inciting a multiplier effect as less trips reduced demand for complementary local retail (Simms, Oram & Conisbee, 2003).

While responsive planning, including the retail-focused Town Centres First Policy, restored health to high streets, a growth of chain stores led to increasing homogenisation (Simms, Kjell & Potts, 2007). Following the 2008 financial crisis, vacancy on the British high street rose from 7% to 16.3% by 2012, creating visible decline and threatening social cohesion (Wrigley & Lambriri, 2015). Meanwhile, digitisation was posing increasing challenges; as communication technologies encourage price competition and online retailers benefit from lower operating costs, retail has migrated online, moving from an alternative to bricks-and-mortar to a mainstay (Zhang, Zhu & Ye, 2016). A torrent of reports from the broad stakeholder pool ensued, debating the value, function and survival of high streets; often spurred on by economic downturn and its visible impact on high streets, analysis shows an increased focus of London's regional government in recent years (Cox, Ryan-Collins, Squires and Potts, 2010; GENECON, 2011; Longlands, Johns & Round, 2021; Just Space & New Economics Foundation, 2015). Following the closure of over 15,000 stores from 2000-2009, Portas' (2011) government-commissioned independent review uncovered significant community belonging associated with high streets and, hence, public concern for the decline of these social spaces. Portas' (2011) extensive qualitative research produced recommendations stretching from increased community use of vacant spaces to town managers, which Wrigley and Lambriri (2015) suggest, once implemented, worked to raise footfall. The detailed and data-driven Grimsey Report (2013) demanded a more radical restructuring that prioritised local authority partnerships and community hubs, over a reliance on retail. A reflective second edition of the report suggested practice sharing and a focus on distinct heritage (Grimsey, 2018). However, these national-level debates, centring retailers and landlords, often provided a top-down focus on curation and management, overlooking wider economic implications and the diversity of place.

The social value of London's high streets

In a 2015 report, Carmona depicted the complexity of London's high streets, discussing built environments to movement, and exchange relations, while recognising their strategic importance in supporting sustainable development. Just Space (2016) suggests high streets can form a buffer against inequality, while supporting local economies and wellbeing. Beyond the transaction economy, they host social structures, informal acts of care and international networks (Hall, 2011). Putting greater emphasis on social value,[11] recent reports published by the GLA suggest high streets are diverse and accessible, forming a key public space for jobseekers, the young and the elderly (We Made That & LSE Cities, 2017). In the preface to the Mayor of London's (2020) 'Adaptive

NOTE 11

Social value is considered to include non-monetary social, economic and environmental benefits (HM Treasury, 2011).

Strategies' report, Mariana Mazzucato defines 'public value' as that created collectively for the common good; engaging the need for a shared vision and collective production, she calls for strategies promoting participatory structures and more equitable social value distribution. Furthermore, the recent High Streets For All Challenge posed by the GLA (2021a) aims to promote high streets as a tool for economic recovery, funding proposals for coalitions in every borough carrying out 'community-led' development.

Re-imagining the high street

Urban Pollinators (2011) envisage high streets as the 21st Century Agora, a marketplace for voluntary activity, learning, social interaction and creativity, as well as goods and services. The government's 'High Street Report' proposes greater community involvement, and the committees subsequent debate called for high streets to become activity-based community spaces, focusing on public services and the growing experience economy (MHCLG 2018; 2019a). In London, policies from the Community Spaces at Risk Fund to TFL's Healthy Streets Plan are already shifting high street rhetoric (see Appendix 1). Grimsey (2020), prioritising wellbeing over consumerism, has also proposed transferring greater power to communities, who have proved more responsive to local needs throughout the pandemic. Broader public debate has uncovered an appetite to protect the community infrastructure held in high streets - appreciating the role small businesses play in this – while acknowledging an opportunity for change, re-imagining these civic spaces through policies that prioritise social value and sustainability (Mayor of London, 2020). At the 2021 Venice Architecture Biennial UK Pavilion, which explored the privatisation of public spaces, Studio Pulpo (2021) tackled the topic of high streets. Considering the gaps in community provisions uncovered by the pandemic, their research also suggested a wealth of self-organisation and mutual aid has emerged, often staged on the high street (Ibid). With the domination of retail by multinationals contributing minimally to local economies, Studio Pulpo's (2021) installation explored the role of high streets beyond retail; incorporating community projects and public services, they depict an evolving discourse and opportunity for reframing high streets around the common good.

2.2 Why democratise the high street?

James Dean (2021) of the GLA argues that high streets are genuinely inclusive and, given the presence of marginalised groups, could provide a pivotal space to pilot democratic local economic practices. This paper argues for economic democracy, enacted at a local high street scale through the collective governance of urban space, discussed here through the pillars of rights, ownership and deliberation.

Individual economic rights

Economic rights prioritise labour over property, while also promoting equal opportunity (Cumbers, 2020). Linking power and equality, Dahl (1985) highlights the importance of basic welfare for legitimate participation. Local high streets are often home to supportive social infrastructure like public services, as well as high employment densities, key sites for mutual aid, social spaces and business networks (We Made That & LSE Cities, 2017). However, public services and the informal offerings of independent businesses are under threat. Democratisation would promote local economic development, encouraging communities to work together on issues rooted in social justice and sustainability (Zhang, Warner & Homsy, 2017). Since 2013, improved access to vacant spaces through temporary leasing has seen the proliferation of social enterprises on the high street, encouraging accessible community resources and a greater focus on inclusive capacity building (GLA & Arup 2020). Networks and high footfall also make high streets a prime location to incubate start-ups and community projects, providing spaces for experimentation and access to economic opportunities for incoming communities (Hall, 2011).[12]

NOTE 12

Incubator spaces have proven to increase employment and opportunities for female and BAME headed companies (Madaleno et al,. 2021)

Diverse forms of collective ownership

- **Ownership**
  Half of the UK's public lands and assets have been sold to private hands since 1979 (Thompson, 2020b). Lawrence and Mason (2017) suggest unequal ownership of capital is a powerful driver of the UK's inequality. Given the growing power embodied in markets, traditional regulatory economic democracy strategies have proven insufficient, demanding a greater focus on ownership and democratic control over social surplus (Evans & Shmalensee, 2013). Guinan et al. (2020) have suggested a pandemic recovery plan in which socially productive land uses replace extractive characteristics through greater community ownership. Small independent high street businesses rooted to place, while often privately owned, also encourage economic pluralism and the pursuit of the common good through fairer labour practices, greater informal support and community initiatives (We Made That & LSE Cities, 2017). Meanwhile, Brett and Alakeson (2019) suggest that community businesses[13] show productivity gains, greater local spending, higher employment and resilience. Democratic forms like cooperatives - a people-centred enterprise, owned, controlled and run by and for its members - while not necessarily rooted to place, also demonstrated resilience throughout the pandemic with liquidation rates at 1/4 of business averages (Co-operatives UK, 2021a). Collective ownership promotes common economic, social and environmental goals, responsiveness to local issues and the protection of rents, and hence diversity, in commercially attractive areas (Archer et al., 2019; Lee and Swann, 2019). Furthermore, Brett and Alakeson (2019), in a study of top UK high streets, found lower vacancy rates on the high street under ownership by community groups and private individuals, compared to institutional or developer landlords.

NOTE 13

A business that is locally rooted, trades for the benefit of a community and is locally accountable (Diamond et al., 2018).

- **Communal production**
  Angel (2020) suggests collective processes of 'commoning' play an integral role in economic democracy through the likes of community organisations and cooperatives. Economic policies encouraging locally rooted production generally produce cities with "less inequality, healthier citizens, more social capital and diversity" (Corrons, Álarez, & Fernández, 2019, p. 131). Social production is crucial for the political mobilisation of urban space and helps to replace extractive systems (Butler, 2012; Bhattacharya, 2017). With public spaces losing value when broken up, Benkler (2017) supports the value of collective spaces for encouraging innovation and creativity, arguing for greater access to such sites. Enacted on the high street, distributed social surplus can be seen through spaces of collaborative production, including non-hierarchic new workspaces[14] which promote up-skilling for marginalised groups and ideas sharing (Van Holm, 2017). Referring to the importance of creative and cultural industries in local economies, Lewis, Laine and Cringle (2022) express the importance of temporary experiments and shared workspaces — often drawn to high streets — which support local wealth through creating opportunity for collaboration, cooperatives, partnerships and collectives that drive broader economic value.

NOTE 14

Architecture 00 (2021) define Open Workspaces to include affordable rent, flexible terms and shared facilities.

- **Re-municipalisation**
  Cumbers (2012; 2020) encourages collective attempts within and through the state to reclaim space from capitalist social relations, proposing that democratic management, even under state ownership, facilitates more broadly dispersed benefits than under corporate control. Despite municipal funding cuts, targeted procurement from smaller local actors or community organisations has also been shown to improve services and provide fairer outcomes, while distributing economic power (Locality, 2018a; Casper-Futterman & DeFillipis, 2017). The CLES (2020) suggest municipalisation generally increases access, reduces costs and improves service. For example, Barcelona has municipalised utilities and housing developments in order to reduce living costs for the most vulnerable (Morozov & Bria, 2018). Whereas in London, local authorities such as Camden have in-sourced key services commonly situated on the high street, like employment support, improving standards and reducing the extraction of footloose private corporations (CLES, 2019).

Creating deliberative and knowledgeable publics

More distributed power, and hence resources, hinges on broad engagement and deliberative governance, incorporating diverse and competing perspectives (Cumbers, 2020). The redesigning of democracy, whether through solidarity economies or the establishment of citizen assemblies, shifts processes outside of formal political structures (CLES, 2019). Bentley et al. (2020) suggest economic justice demands an accessible public arena, with inclusive social infrastructure providing fertile ground for citizen-driven movements. Neighbourhoods often provide the most accessible scale for citizen participation, despite barriers which limit existing community planning in London (Wills, 2019). As diverse and accessible spaces, high streets can provide the essential conditions of pluralism (We Made That & LSE Cities, 2017). The chance for non-commodified experiences, found in spaces like community centres, can also encourage wider participation in social, cultural and material production (Williams, 2018). With space and social capital integral to deliberative democracy, the maintenance of such on the high street could support fairer urban development (Putnam, 1993). While Russel (2017) implies that often participatory processes within urban planning are largely aimed at legitimising existing governance structures, Patemen (2012) suggests meaningfully collective processes incorporate greater diversity into the ecosystem. Greater tacit knowledge within public policy design also helps define problems and solutions, while strengthening communities through more equal and cooperative social relations (Fung, 2004).

Summary

The pandemic has drawn attention to the locality of high streets, uncovering disparities in access to space and social infrastructure. While economic democracy and municipalism discourses suggest principles and mechanisms for redistributing economic power, overlap with the built environment and place-based study is still minimal. The commons literature uncovers increasing threats to urban spaces like high streets, which, if governed collectively, could promote creativity, encourage community ties and create more equitable places. With the role of high streets already evolving away from traditional retail, democratising the high street could support development that incorporates more socially productive land use and collective ownership; ensures accessible public services and inclusive economic opportunity; and brings deliberation and participatory planning to open social spaces. By reconnecting high streets to communities and adapting policy which works more closely to negotiated ideas of the common good — targeting resources and opportunities towards those most impacted by recent economic crises — democratisation can help build equity. High streets hold possibilities to host activities that better provide for health and wellbeing, collective wealth building and deliberative governance than current economic forms. Theory suggests that democratisation can reduce urban inequalities, broaden economic opportunities and support a more sustainable economy. Demands for a socially just recovery imply the need to experiment, for which the local domain is suggested to be the most productive level. This paper acknowledges the formative role that high streets could play as accessible, place-based, economic and social centres.

How can a framework of economic democracy reshape London's high streets for post-pandemic opportunities, promoting more equitable local economies?

03. Methodology

First developing a grounding of current economic issues, this working paper then uses an iterative analytical process to interpret secondary data. A focus on qualitative data supports the understanding of emerging phenomena, the exploratory research question and a study covering divergent settings (Becker, 1996). The research questions asks how can a framework of economic democracy reshape London's high streets for post-pandemic opportunities, promoting more equitable local economies?

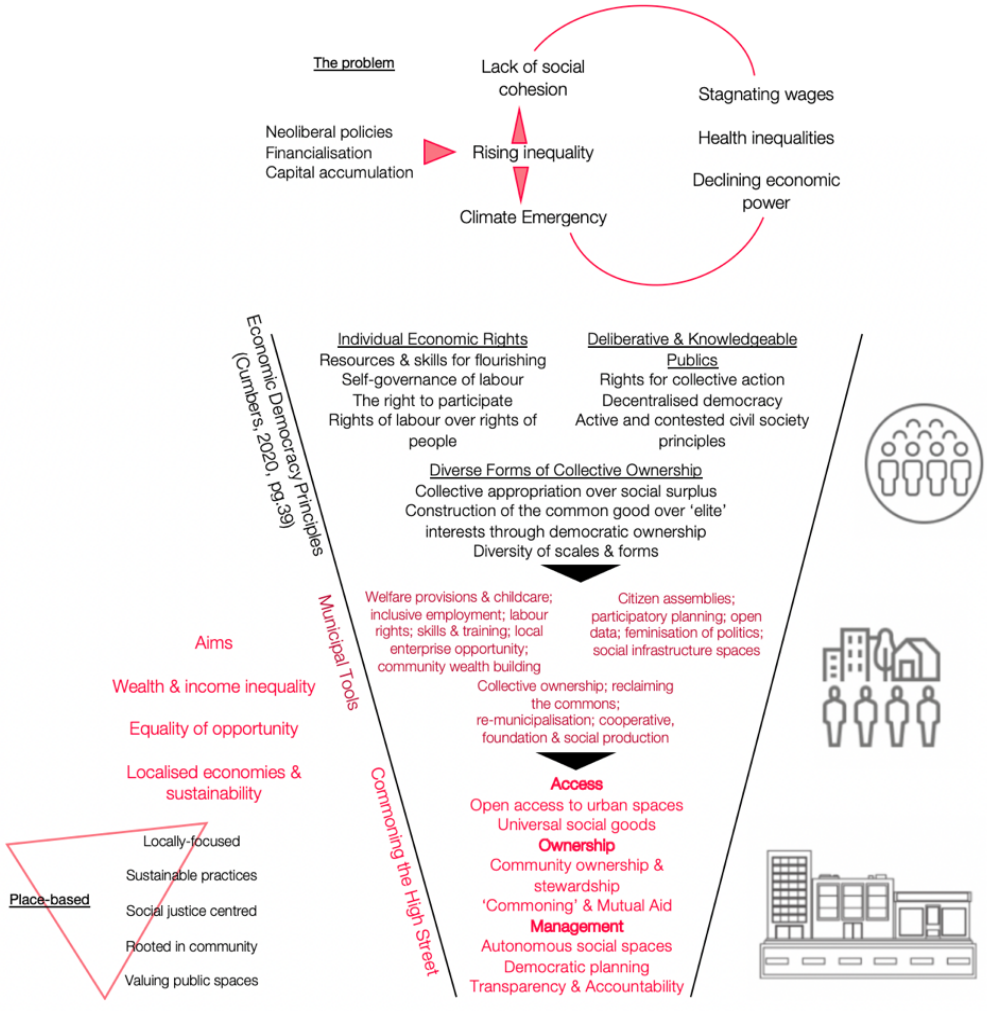


FIGURE 3.1
Principles and practices for democratising high streets (author's own based on literature).

With theoretical frameworks addressing the site of study currently limited, the literature review in Chapter 2 connects the body of theory with the value and characteristics of place, linking the political, social and economic realms in a discussion of why democratise the high street? Illustrated in Figure 3.1, interpretive theory building incorporates the need to reshape economic systems through democratisation, the tools for municipal application and the organising values of urban commons. With a focus on scale centring "the problem of where and how to facilitate the building of collective agency", high streets, given their trajectory, are justified as a suitable scope for action, fomenting the analytical framework addressed next (Russel, 2020, p. 109).

In Chapter 4, empiricism places the subject into context, using diverse practices to increase construct and external validity (Bhattacherjee, 2012). Analysed and codified into an evaluative tool that builds on the theory, applications of principles are drawn out to support the practical question of how to democratise the high street? With Dodd (2020) suggesting the need, within spatial practices, to actively reimagine alternatives as a form of multi-scalar design, this chapter creates an empirical arena for developing "abstractions about alternative social and territorial structures"(Jonas, 2013, p. 826). Applying democratic principles to this common urban space explores how broad demands for structural economic change can be enacted at this scale across varying contexts.

Chapter 5 situates the study within London, employed due to the heightened nature of high street challenges and opportunities. A comprehensive mixed paradigm methodology combines quantitative economic data and qualitative precedent analysis (Creswell, 1995). While primary data was not collected, several rigorous reports set the scene, providing in-depth high street studies supported by interviews, surveys, observational analysis and collaborative case studies with local authorities (e.g., Mayor of London, 2020). A SWOT analysis helps to contextualise London's high streets, whilst mapping existing policies, structures, ownership and spaces constructs a landscape of opportunities and constraints (Appendix 1; 2). Discourse analysis through policy reports, polling, media and forums also proves vital to research outcomes, drawing out the role of high streets and the potential for economic democracy within public and policy realms (Appendix 3). As Barnett (2014) highlights, processes of claim-making require analysis of the situated contexts in which solidarity and capacities for action can be developed. Therefore, utilising the evaluative tool, analysis of four specific interventions experiment with place-based application (Appendix 4). Given the diversity of high streets, sites of differing operations, spaces and actors are chosen for their relevance to broader trends, useful precedents and available data. Application of the framework draws out key trends, barriers to application and limitations. The suitability of economic democracy principles for framing high street interventions and building more equitable economies is then built into Chapter 6's recommendations for policy and future research. Recommendations focus on local authorities, given their significant political, legal and financial powers for harnessing endogenous assets, and the argued importance of this scale for democratisation.

Limitations

The diversity and complexity of high street sites poses the greatest research challenge. Considering high streets as a potential archetype for broader economic restructuring, a careful trade-off was made between the breadth and depth of the study, foregoing a single site analysis. Without the collection of primary data, it is expected that an ethnographic approach, incorporating perspectives of key actors, could have supported a more detailed study of specific collective governance forms. While a schematic approach could also have been achieved by choosing a particular high street form or function to focus on, the literature calls for systematic change, inspiring the examination of wide-ranging economic activities.

While not politically neutral, the speed of contextual change encouraged the use of contemporary sources, including numerous reports from think tanks, local authorities and social movements — often ideological and lacking critique. While risking bias, such dialogue and debates are expected to enhance the public sphere given accompanying critical evaluation and broad environmental analysis (Brucker, 2017). With a lack of data on failed municipal projects, the difficulties of implementation and the challenges of market forces will also need to be thoroughly considered.

Considering high streets as a potential archetype for broader economic restructuring, a careful trade-off was made between the breadth and depth of the study, foregoing a single site analysis.

Accessibility, as well as incorporating connectivity, hinges on a built environment inclusive of diversity. In Walworth, this meant opening up the library to the high street and incorporating community meeting spaces.

04. Analytical framework: how to democratise the high street?

This chapter develops a place-based analytical framework, using empiricism to connect high street initiatives with economic democracy principles. Initially, a wide range of economic issues, practices and outcomes were studied from London, the UK and further afield, considering their potential for promoting fairer local economies through the distribution of economic power via rights, ownership and deliberation (see Appendix 2: case studies (CS1-34)). Mapping practices based in London in Table 4.1 helps to identify key themes and spaces to explore further, while Figure 4.1 maps high street activities and structures onto the pillars of economic democracy which they can support, informing the following discussions and development of a framework (Figure 4.2; Table 4.2).

4.1 Discussion

Inclusive (rights)

Economic democracy recognises the rights of individuals in all their diversity to participate in collective processes, necessitating accessible, open and inclusive spaces (Dahl, 1985). With rights being a basis to participation, decent employment and welfare, high streets pose an accessible site for meeting local needs — whether this be through public or community services. In Islington, the high street provides welfare resources through St Luke's Community Centre. In Dalston, rights are supported through internet access with free Wi-Fi for all and digital support for traders, aimed at helping them compete against larger businesses.

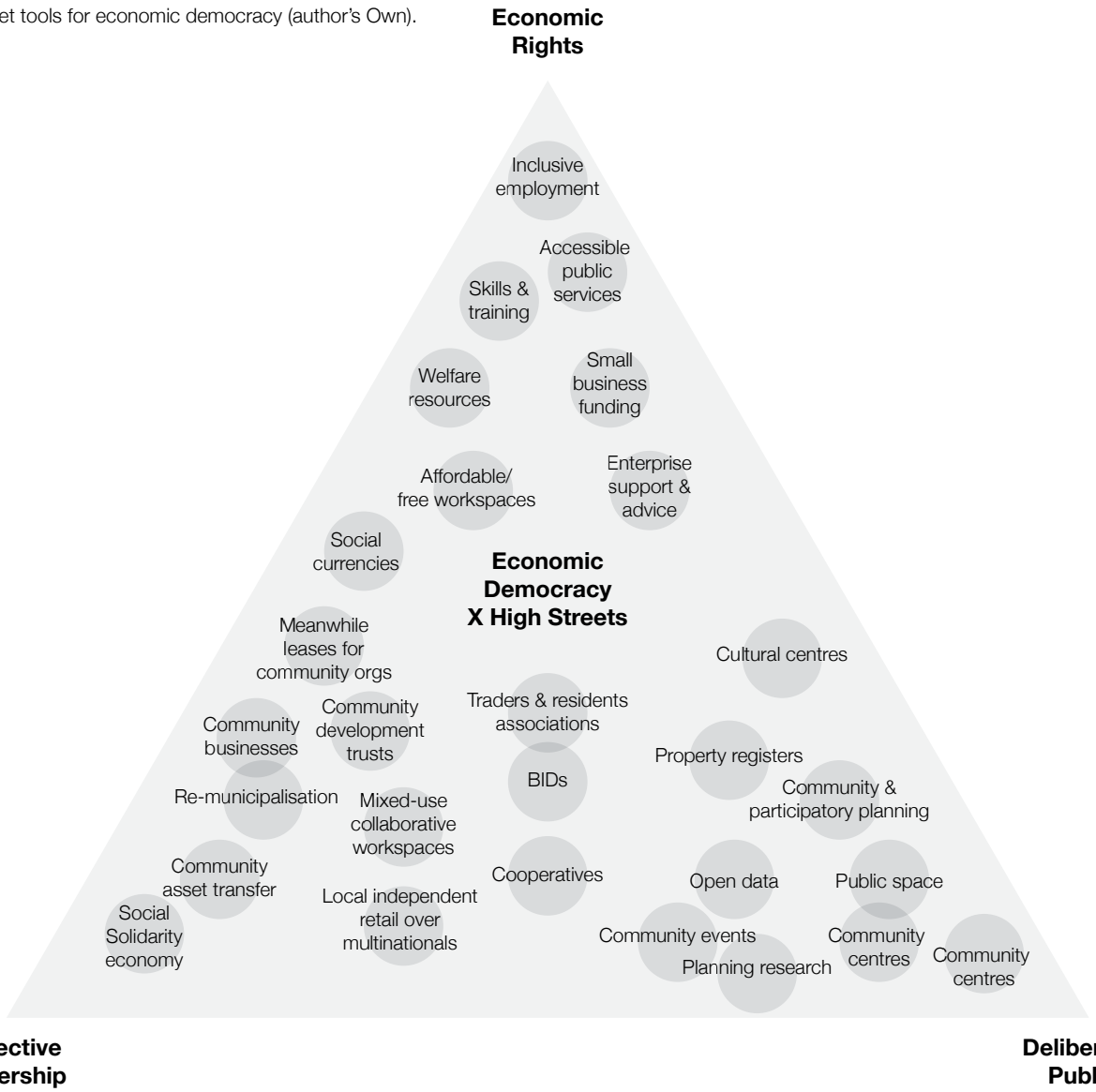
Accessibility, as well as incorporating connectivity, hinges on a built environment inclusive of diversity. In Walworth, this meant opening up the library to the high street and incorporating community meeting spaces. Meanwhile, Tower Hamlets Civic Centre is improving access by bringing council services together in one high street site.

TABLE 4.1

London's High Street Practices: Functions x Space. (sources: GLA, 2021a; GLA & Arup, 2020; Mayor of London, 2020)

SPACE / THEMES	MARKETS AND RETAIL SPACE		SERVICES AND SUPPORT	PUBLIC SPACE AND COMMUNITY CENTRES	FLEXIBLE WORKSPACES
Arts and culture	**Stanley Arts Centre (South Norwood)** - an inclusive community owned theatre focused on underrepresented voices (CS10).			**Old Manor Park Library (Newham)** - a council building converted to artist studios and a community space.	
Food, care and wellbeing	**Really Local Group (Catford Mews)** - a community-led food and leisure development. **Spacemakers at Brixton Village (Brixton)** - month free leases for empty market spaces (CS13). **Alexandra Rose Fruit & Veg Project (Lambeth)**- voucher scheme supporting low income families and markets traders. LATIN VILLAGE & WARDS CORNER COMMUNITY PLAN	EVERYONE EVERYDAY NEIGHBOURHOOD SHOPS	**Arcola Theatre (Hackney)** - a charity run zero-carbon theatre supporting community events and established artists. **Friendly Families Nursery (Deptford)** - a parent-led, cooperative childcare model.	**Croyden Arts Store (Croydon)**- an arts exhibition and events space aimed at incorporating young people into wider development (CS6). **St Luke's Community Centre (Islington)** - a High street community centre for socialising, art studios and employment support. MUSEUM OF FUTURES COMMUNITY CENTRE	**Bow Arts DEK Studios (Catford)** - town hall converted to affordable and creative workspaces. **LJ Works (Lambeth)** - low-cost art, textile and catering flexible workspaces, based within an urban community farm.
Employment, training and skills	**Dalston Kingsland Digital Connectivity (Hackney)** - free internet for tenants and residents, digital training and support for market traders to connect to contactless payments (CS9).		**Opportunity Support Team (Burnt Oak)** - cross function employment support team. **Community Hubs Programme (Redbridge)** - public services and spaces for residents to run their own activities. **Civic Centre (Tower Hamlets)** - a new civic centre bringing together council services for easy access and public use ground floor space.		**East Street Exchange (Walworth)** - a library extension, opening to the High street, including affordable meeting and work spaces (CS16).
Business	**Queen's Park Community Council (Queen's Park)** - funding from a retail association towards public realm improvements. **Chatsworth Road Traders & Residents Association (Hackney)** - collective organisation supporting high street development (CS12).		**Fair Finance (Hackney)** - a social business offering products and services for those financially excluded. **Tottenham Opportunity Investment Fund (Tottenham)** - funding for small businesses to carry out renovations and build workspaces with rate discounts and support.	**International House (Brixton)** – council owned workspaces and youth incubator for established and new businesses, with spaces for community orgs, public access and exhibition space.	CAMDEN COLLECTIVE WORKSPACES **The Startup Mall (Hammersmith)** - vacant units within the mall are offered to entrepreneurs and makers.
Circular economy and climate justice	**Growing Communities Market, Stoke Newington (Hackney)** - a weekly market supporting small sustainable farmers within 60miles of London and traders sourcing locally.		**Foodsave, Plan Zheroes and Borough Market (London Bridge)** - a group who collect surplus food from markets and redistribute it to local charities.	**Climate Emergency Centre (Hackney)** - a locally run communal hub for activities focused on issues of people and the planet (Nazir, 2021a).	**Think & Do (Camden)** - a communal space to work on net-zero economy ideas. **The Remakery (Brixton)** - a cooperative space for repairing and recycling surplus materials.

FIGURE 4.1
High street tools for economic democracy (author's Own).



An important source of employment, high streets can also support training opportunities through community centres or social enterprises. As seen through Islington and Camden councils, responsible public procurement places social inclusion and gender equality central to contracts, creating more stable jobs and fairer salaries within local public services (CLES, 2019). Economic opportunity can also be sustained through advice services, start-up funding, free spaces to experiment — like Spacemakers' Brixton market initiative (Appendix 2: CS13) — or rates exemptions, supporting local businesses in levelling high street power. Social currencies, experimented with in Brixton (Appendix 2: CS14), are those that can only be spent locally, helping keep wealth local and put power back into community busineses.

Collective (ownership)

Diverse forms of collective ownership, influenced significantly by local planning and regulatory frameworks, are vital for redistributing economic power. While facing considerable barriers, Community Asset Transfer provides a legal tool for transferring socially valuable properties from public to community ownership, at less than market value or no cost, as used by Stanley Arts Centre in South Norwood (Appendix 2: CS10). Democratic high street stewardship could also be supported through greater public over corporate ownership, community businesses or governance forms, such as traders' associations.[15]

NOTE 15

Trader associations are founded and funded by local businesses, and sometimes residents, and may play a role in PR, education or activism; they help form collective visions, encouraging collaboration and reinvestment in community projects (Appendix 2: CS12).

Alternatively, planning policy can distribute power by promoting more socially productive uses of land. Focused on high streets, meanwhile use reduces barriers to vacant spaces through lower demands on planning permissions for temporary occupation, increasing opportunities for start-ups to experiment and for charities to access prime sites given the rate reductions available for community benefit leasing (GLA & Arup, 2020). While temporary, policies discouraging vacant space often create social value, instead of accruing market value to landlords — contributing to the common good. International House, a local authority-owned office block, offers free workspace to local social enterprises and community groups for every lease purchased (Appendix 2: CS3). By buying ground floor units to offer Social Value Leases[16] and affordable workspaces, Hackney council is also helping diversify the high street offering (Mayor of London, 2020).

NOTE 16

Piloted through Good Growth funding, with use tested at Central Parade (see Appendix 2: CS5), these leases build in discounts for the achievement of quantifiable social value targets, for example, the number of jobs created for the long term unemployed.

Collectivism can also be encouraged through common production, promoted through mixed-use workspaces like Central Parade or Peckham levels (Appendix 2: CS5; CS7). Think & Do in Camden promotes sustainability through circular economy projects, and The Remakery in Brixton provides a collaborative space for recycling surplus materials.

Participatory (deliberative publics)

Corrons, Álvarez and Fernández (2019) argue that including local people in economic governance design provides better solutions to social justice issues, encouraging the use of participatory platforms such as commonplace.is which helped to integrate public perspectives into Dalston Kingsland's high street plans (Appendix 2: CS11). However, physical assemblies, as used in Newham, or public planning spaces like CoLab, Dudley, (Appendix 2: CS22) are also vital for broad engagement. Croydon Arts Store (Appendix 2: CS6), through hosting events and research in a shopping centre, helped incorporate young people into urban planning.

NOTE 17

BIDs are established through a ballot of all properties under a defined geographic footprint held every five years to provide additional or improved services, as identified by local businesses and funded by a mandatory business levy (Turner, 2020). Growing in popularity with 69 now in London, they are often focused on town centres, engaging community organisations and local authorities on local economic development (Ibid).

Associations, such as Business Improvement Districts (BID),[17] encourage democratic economic planning by promoting local business collaboration, incorporating wider community groups and campaigning for area improvements (Turner and Diaz-Palomares, 2014). However, it is suggested that management structures should suit the place and its objectives, with high streets also served well by traders associations or Town Teams[18] that centre local input and consultation (Ibid).

NOTE 18

Town managers are bodies employed by local authorities to serve as a connecting function between local businesses, landlords and authorities, helping to curate and encourage participatory planning, collaboration and collective vision; town teams are voluntary local groups who work with managers, locally rooted to prioritise community needs (see Appendix 2: CS18) (Wrigley and Labriri, 2015).

Given the importance of space for civil society movements to flourish, cultural assets such as Arcola Theatre provide an accessible high street location for established artists to collaborate and community workshops to reach broader groups. Open public centres like Redbridge Community Hub provide space for residents to host the events they want — providing autonomy, a chance to connect and the opportunity for social capital to form.

For knowledgeable and deliberative publics, accessible and transparent information is also integral. Increased transparency over high street ownership could allow for easier lease negotiations and improved utilisation of publicly valuable assets, whereas open data for small retailers could support local trade and planning (Appendix 2: CS29; CS31).

FIGURE 4.2

Developing an analytical framework for high street initiatives (author's own).

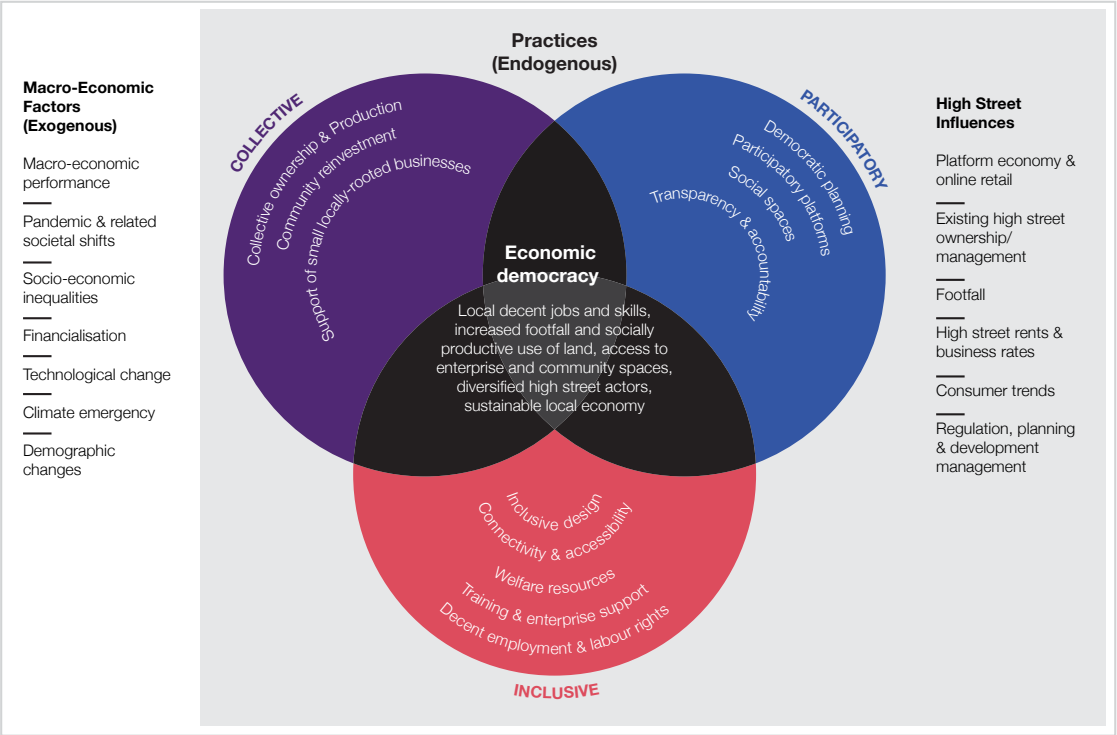


TABLE 4.2

Evaluative tool: criteria for enacting economic democracy on the high street (author's own)

Pillars (Principles)	Graphs (1-5) Market Provision — Economic Democracy
Individual Economic Rights (Inclusivity)	Welfare Resources Labour Rights Economic Opportunity Inclusive Design
Diverse Forms of Collective Ownership (Collectivism)	Collective Ownership Distributed Social Surplus Common Production
Deliberative & Knowledgeable Publics (Participation)	Democratic Planning Social Infrastructure Transparency & Accountability

4.2 Evaluative tool

Practices discussed can ensure more equitable local economies by empowering more diverse economic actors into the ecosystem; repurposing the social value of vacant properties for marginalised groups; reducing uneven power between capital and labour through capacity building, employment and enterprise support; designing standards for the common good through deliberative governance; encouraging greater accountability and transparency in planning, and valuing social over consumption spaces. Inclusive, collective and participatory governance of urban economic spaces can ensure that value is retained, recirculated and more equitably shared within the communities where it is created, helping to replace extractive models set only to worsen inequality. Combining theory and precedents analysis, Figure 4.2 outlines key environmental influences and the suggested principles for promoting democratic high streets — forming the evaluative tool in Table 4.2 (detailed in Appendix 4). While evaluation is qualitative, mapping principles (1-5) is designed to encourage analysis, discerning relationships and comparisons between values, governance structures and differing practices which develop frameworks further. The following chapter addresses a case study of London, compiling contextual data and then utilising the tool across specific sites — advancing understanding of the possibilities for application.

This chapter will first map high street conditions before evaluating specific sites and, finally, drawing out key trends and issues guiding application.

05. Applying the framework: reflections from London

Having explored practices in isolation, the objective of this case study is to understand: (1) how a framework of economic democracy can be applied to high street practices in London and (2) what factors, actors and policy conditions are required to support such practices. This chapter will first map high street conditions before evaluating specific sites and, finally, drawing out key trends and issues guiding application.

5.1. London's high street context

The SWOT analysis lays out the current strengths, weaknesses, potential opportunities and threats embodied in London's high streets (Table 5.1). The number, connectivity and social function of London's high streets make them highly accessible, encouraging diversity and promoting responsiveness to local needs and wants. While they provide high employment densities, support networks and access to culture, they contain minimal community-run spaces and a declining number of council-owned assets and statutory services (Table 5.1).[19] With rents,[20] business rates, material and wage costs rising compared to online operations, retail's increasing precarity is leaving an oversupply of empty units (Table 5.1). Vacancy on the high street escalates a feeling of decline, and the public have expressed the need to re-focus on civic functions, as well as demanding greater small business[21] support, co-working and community centres to fill spaces (Appendix 3). London's high streets also contain a high, and growing, proportion of residential buildings and a significant proportion of the expanding knowledge industries (Figure 5.1).

NOTE 19
In London, an annual average of 203 council fixed assets were sold off between 2012-2017 (Locality, 2018b). Revenue spending power also fell > 30% between 2011- 2018 for most London boroughs (National Audit Office, 2021).

NOTE 20
Making up the majority, 70% of small businesses in London suggested rent is unaffordable (We Made That and LSE Cities, 2017).

NOTE 21
While micro-businesses have 1-9 small businesses are defined as having 10-20 employees (ONS, 2020b).

Strengths

Adds to a places identity & trust (Warbis and Parsloe, 2017) // // High numbers living around high streets, with diversified activity encouraging greater safety across times of the day (ONS, 2020a) // Quality of life: food, cultural & religious footholds (Scott, 2015) // Public space for social, information & care networks // High employment densities // Opportunities for local suppliers & business mix // Accessible & connected // The majority are walkable, promoting active travel // Inclusive for marginalised groups & safe due to activity (We Made That & LSE Cities, 2017) // They provide an essential opportunity for experimentation with high footfall, strong social networks & relatively flexible leases, especially small units in mixed-use sites // Entry point for more resilient small and independent stores (PWC & Local Data Company, 2020) // Responsive and flexible to local needs, as well as incoming communities (Hall, 2011) //Fragmented ownerships protects from blanket redevelopment with mostly small business on leaseholds (Carmona, 2015).

Weaknesses

Minimal community run facilities (ONS, 2020a) // / Fragmented and opaque ownership, plus absent landlords, contributing to vacancy (Brett and Alakeson, 2019) // Oversupply of retail units (Landsec & JLL, 2019) // Complex regulation, planning policy & stakeholders // High business rates & rents rising faster than retail (Carmona, 2015) // Lack of affordable workspaces under the doubling of business rates between 2016-2018 (GLA, 2018b) // High degree of failure & turnover (Wrigley & Lambriri, 2015) // High costs of vacancy & further decline (loss of business rates, employment & earnings) (London Assembly, 2013; Kim, 2016) // Lack of night-time activity (GLA, 2021a) // UK household's top survey of online spending (Peachy, 2017) // Declining statutory public services on high streets and low public ownership under austerity (Just Space, 2016, Locality, 2018b) // Vehicle use deterring dwell times (Cooke, Streb and Burns, 2020)

Opportunities

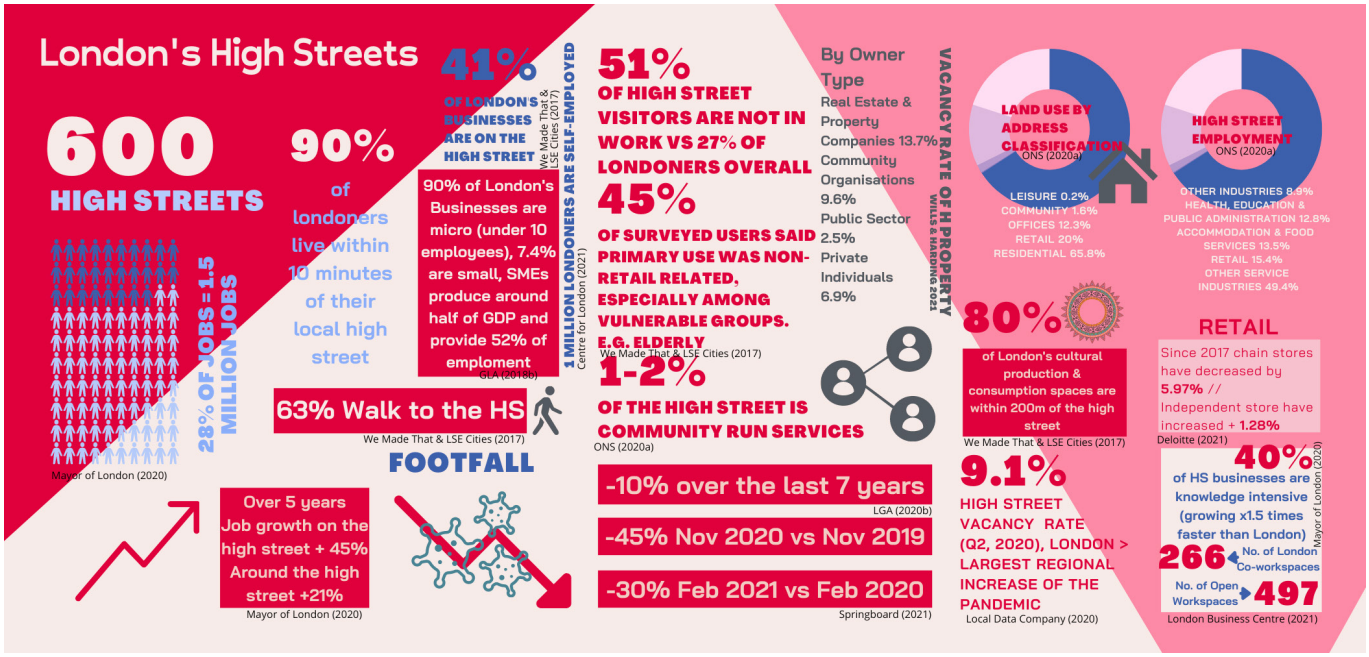
Office space cutbacks and remote working post-pandemic will likely encourage close-to-home working, reducing travel pollution and increasing time spent in local communities (MacLellan, 2021) // Consumer trends towards provenance and support of local independent stores (We Made That & LSE Cities, 2017) // Demand for services over products encourages sustainability through shorter supply chains (Deloitte, 2021) //Growing retail unit vacancies could provide opportunities for local businesses (Nazir, 2021b) // Repurposing existing infrastructure as a response to the climate emergency (JLL, 2020) // Shifting values towards community, public space and proximity providing opportunity for local & independent stores (GLA, 2020a) // Changes in planning policy means easier reuse of empty spaces for pubic spaces (e.g. galleries, libraries, education) (Clifford, 2021) // Chance to redesign for people over cars could increase equitable access (Cooke, Streb and Burns, 2020) // Growing number of jobs on and around the high street & opportunities for incubating start up businesses (ONS, 2020a)

Threats

Further infiltration of the platform economy & online shopping with catch all convenience shops challenging independents (GENECON, 2011) // NESTA suggests escalating digitisation could cause high street firms & SME's to fall behind (GLA, 2020a) // Unequal distribution of social capital inhibiting community action where most needed (Demos, 2021) // Further rises in real estate prices // Housing pressures potentially reducing shop floor activity - under policy changes 22% of B1 office spaces were converted to residential spaces between 2013-2015 (Ramidus Consultig Ltd, 2017). // Changes to Permitted Development Rights (PDR) could undermine the councils ability to shape town centres and discourage design quality (LGA, 2020b, Wright, 2021) // Risks of losing the mix of civic and local services integral to social interaction and integration (GLA, 2021a) // Damage done to central London retail means that low footfall could prevail post-pandemic (GLA & Google, 2021) // Deep economic recession

TABLE 5.1
London's high streets SWOT Analysis (author's own)

FIGURE 5.1
London's high streets trends infographic (author's own)



COVID-19 and the high street

The recent pandemic has accelerated changes to 'why' people visit high streets (PWC & LDC, 2021). While retail activity fell significantly, footfall was already in decline - and is recovering slower in London than in other urban centres (Figure 5.1; Cooper, 2021). Withdrawing high street visitors, internet sales - which rose from 7-21% in the pre-pandemic decade - reached 33.3% at the height of national lockdowns, since returning to pre-pandemic trend lines (LGA, 2020b; ONS, 2021). Exploring COVID-19's acceleration of e-commerce and digitisation on high street real estate, Nanda, Xu and Zhang (2021) have suggested increasing demand for retail satellite centres and out-of-town warehouse space has also altered dynamics. Retail tenants' demands for greater flexibility have encouraged a more symbiotic relationship with landlords (Ibid). Industrial properties have seen record-low vacancies throughout the pandemic, with e-commerce furthering demand for last-mile warehouse space (Parker, 2021). While bricks-and-mortar retail and the associated activity are stifled, lower demand could help reduce town centre rents. Meanwhile, small enterprises saw the most considerable halt in trading during subsequent lockdowns, putting pressures on survival (ONS, 2020b). However, many councils have actively supported local businesses through numerous grant schemes, while working to repurpose town centres for services (LGA, 2020b).

Responsiveness was also witnessed across London's high streets, with restaurants switching to meal delivery or selling fresh produce during restrictions (Nott, 2020). Growing demand saw greengrocers, independent convenience, and bike repair shops pop up wherever possible, while public spaces became hubs for soup kitchens and food banks, as civic engagement expanded (Bosetti & Belcher, 2020; Nolsoe, 2020; Wood, 2020). Although not always affordable, a shift to local fruit and vegetable collections and deliveries encouraged shorter supply chains, supporting community-driven operations, fair wages and greater transparency within food (Shveda, 2021).

Recognising post-pandemic challenges and opportunities, the GLA (2021a) have recommended greater use of citizen-led development, the diversification of ownership and use, and the protection of cultural assets, creative, community and independent enterprises on the high street. Faced with the challenge of promoting local employment for near to home working and facilitating new forms of businesses and civic organisation, The High Streets For All Challenge[22] is focused on enhancing public spaces across all boroughs for more participatory, inclusive and community focused economies by 2025 (GLA, 2021b).

NOTE 22
A competition encouraging collaboration between local authorities, community groups and third sector organisations to build on local assets saw the selection of an initial 35 projects (covering all borough) for seed funding in July 2022. Projects included incubator spaces, local enterprise support, community kitchens and cultural programs (London Assembly & Mayor of London, 2021e). Analysis shows a wide mix of lead actors from Traders Associations to Town Team, CICs, BIDs, Trusts and community organisations, focused predominantly on opening up underused space for inclusive community spaces and affordable local business workspaces, encouraging greater participation in high street planning and promoting collective projects through network building (Ibid).

5.2 High street practices analysed through an economic democracy framework

Following the context analysis, this section will address four sites based on the criteria for collective, inclusive and participatory practices constructed earlier, incorporating place through discussions of situated spaces, actors and governance. These cases were chosen for their alignment with broader trends — around work, demography, real estate and civic participation — the availability of data, and their suggested sustainability of practices, providing key learnings for future transformation across a range of actors, settings and functions.

Camden Collective workspaces: BID (Camden)

Mixed-use workspaces and start-up incubators have seen significant growth due to evolving ways of working (Madaleno et al., 2021).[23] Camden Collective combines free hot-desking, subsidised start-up offices and incubator support, using Meanwhile leases to take on under-used high street spaces. While demand is expected to rise, flexible workspaces remain undersupplied due to development pressures, rising land values and planning regulation, inhibiting the

NOTE 23
Around 65% of accelerators - defined as business supports spaces similar to incubators but with fixed programmes - are located in London — growing 78% annually since 2014 (Beauhurst, 2018).

FIGURE 5.2
Camden Collective at Temperance hospital street view and hot-desking space (CTU & ET, 2020c)

accompanying opportunities to increase high street activity, employment and local enterprise (Architecture 00, 2021; GLA, 2018b). Formed in 2009, Camden Collective, a charity started by Camden Town Unlimited (CTU) BID, has hosted pop-up shops, free courses and public realm projects across 18 diverse sites (Camden Collective, 2021). The BID was formed in 2006 to tackle local crime, later focusing on training and business support to improve local employment opportunities.

Benefits: Camden Collective has increased employment and opportunities for local start-ups, promoted local sourcing, encouraged business networks and facilitated collaborative projects (GLA & Arup, 2020). The free spaces, events and high street locations promote access, while democratic BID governance encourages wider participation in local economic development. BIDs encourage independent businesses, local sourcing, employment and community projects, while promoting transparency. They create a collective governance structure that can negotiate for local organisations who are more responsive to changing economic conditions and likely to be more invested in the common good (GLA, 2014).

Issues: A reliance on temporary leases over ownership maintains unbalanced power dynamics, but plans exist to build C3, a long-term site incorporating housing needs. // Limited obligations to include non-business communities. // While a focus on knowledge industries could be exclusionary to broader groups, this could be countered by increasing public access and retail space, as tested in previous sites (CTU, 2020c).

Every One Every Day neighbourhood shops: Social Solidarity Economy (Barking & Dagenham)

Neighbourhood Shops, managed by Participatory City Foundation, take on ideas of social solidarity economies already broadly practised in cities with strong civil participation traditions like Barcelona (Appendix 2: CS27; CS30). Responding to high deprivation levels and rapid migration into the area, the initiative aims to make community participation more inclusive as part of the council's broader plans to build a collaborative economy (Participatory City, 2019). Five high street shops and a central warehouse host neighbourhood designers who support community projects through skills training, connections and resources (Ibid). Around a thousand residents currently participate in collective projects to improve local living, ranging from batch cooking and re-wilding, to a teen trade school and child care clubs (Ibid).

Benefits: Municipal tools for building more self-sufficient communities tackle welfare needs directly through projects around food, care and the circular economy. Sharing knowledge, spaces and resources develops a sense of community and a culture of distributed decision making. Founded on inclusive design principles, individuals are empowered, and barriers minimised to increase participation (Ibid). A strong focus on collaborative research, drawing on diverse institutions separate from the state, increases pluralism (Forné, Micciarello & Fresnillo, 2019).

Issues: Sustainable funding, where self-sufficiency is not yet established. // A lack of community ownership over local assets. // Clearly defined project categories focus on need and efficiency, but deliberative governance could be expanded to the overarching planning. // With little evidence of economic impacts collected to demonstrate long term viability, extending development support to existing SMEs may help promote business diversity and growth in employment opportunities.

FIGURE 5.3
Every One Every Day Shops Interior and Exterior (Participatory City, 2019)

Latin Village Market & Ward's Corner Community Plan (WCCP): business & resident collective (Tottenham)

Seven Sister's Indoor Market,[24] owned by state enterprise TFL, has been under managed decline and threatened by demolition and redevelopment since 2004, with plans for chain store retail and unaffordable housing approved (Allin, 2019; Save Latin Village, 2021a). The market is home to over 43 businesses, 150 jobs and 15 nationalities, containing mainly restaurants, salons and other non-tradable services (WCCP, 2021). Designated as an Asset of Community Value in 2014 by Haringey Council, the site's value as a cultural resource and civic centre has been recognised by Trust for London (2011) and United Nations (UNHR, 2017). Put forward by the West Green Road/Seven Sisters Development Trust[25] (WGRSSDT), the 4th iteration of a 'community plan', which incorporates the market, two vacant upper floors and connected Wards Corner building, received planning permissions in 2019 (WCCP, 2021). Built on 15 years of consultation, the plan aims to support surrounding small businesses that serve predominantly low income and diverse ethnic and migrant communities (Ibid). Crowdfunded and designed by an architecture cooperative, the plan proposes improved spaces, a self-managed governance structure, the development of new office, retail and community spaces, and the reinvestment of profits into maintenance and community initiatives (Unit 38, 2019). Ideas of community wealth building guide plans to localise spending by utilising the council's institutional powers and democratically principled community organisations (WCCP, 2021).

NOTE 24
Known locally as Latin Village or Pueblita Paisa.

NOTE 25
Development trusts can take various forms but are generally concerned with regeneration which is focused on sustainability and community, over profit, facilitating collective asset ownership and stewardship (Partnerships, 2021) (see example Appendix 2: CS24).

NOTE 26
Registered as a legal entity involving industry, trade or business whose benefit is for the community, they are run democratically on a one member, one vote system and can be tied to a statutory asset lock to ensure accountable spending (Financial Conduct Authority, 2015).

↑ Benefits: Through collective activism and planning, the civil society group has protected the value of the market since 2004, culminating in withdrawal of the developer's plans on August 6th 2021 (WGRSSDT, 2021a). The recorded value of the market, demonstrated through consultation and related studies, includes informal support and advice, cultural offerings and economic opportunities for underemployed groups (King et al., 2018; WCCP, 2021). Incorporating small community-focused local businesses facilitates a more sustainable and equitable model, helping to build community wealth (Diamond et al. 2018; McInroy, 2018). Prospective plans could further redistribute economic power by protecting diversity with affordable rent, collective appropriation over social surplus and the incorporation of new uses to build resilience in an evolving market. Financial modelling suggests significant employment growth and sustainability under a range of renovation funding mixes, expected to include grants, ethical finance and the creation of a democratic Community Benefit Society[26], which would involve issuing shares to fund renovation costs (WGRSSDT, 2021b).

↓ Issues: Fundraising renovation with rising costs. // With building improvements yet to be enacted, planning and real estate market risks remain. // Negotiating a fair rental agreement, which could utilise the Social Value Leases under development by local authorities (Mayor of London, 2020).

Museum of Futures community space:

FIGURE 5.4
Seven Sisters Indoor Market Entrance (Author's own)

FIGURE 5.5
Museum of Futures Shop Front (Museum of Futures, 2021).

Community Interest Company (CIC)[27] (Surbiton)

While the pandemic caused a significant fall in central London activity, suburban areas like Surbiton have seen increased civic action as residents spend more time near home (GLA, 2021a). Museum of Futures community space was launched in 2015 — with Mayoral funding — by a social enterprise focused on community-led regeneration, The Community Brain (Ibid). Responding to demands for an accessible, democratic and collaborative permanent venue, trends around food and provenance were incorporated into a previously vacant shop space (Museum of Futures, 2021). A community kitchen provides use for local start-ups to test out ideas, groups tackling food poverty, community workshops, skills exchanges and advice sessions (Ibid). The site has also hosted wellbeing events, exhibitions and research groups from Kingston University (Ibid).

NOTE 27
A CIC is a limited company legal form commonly used for social enterprises, including several high street cases in Appendix 2, where commitment is made through a community interest statement to use assets for its social objectives (Korchak, 2018).

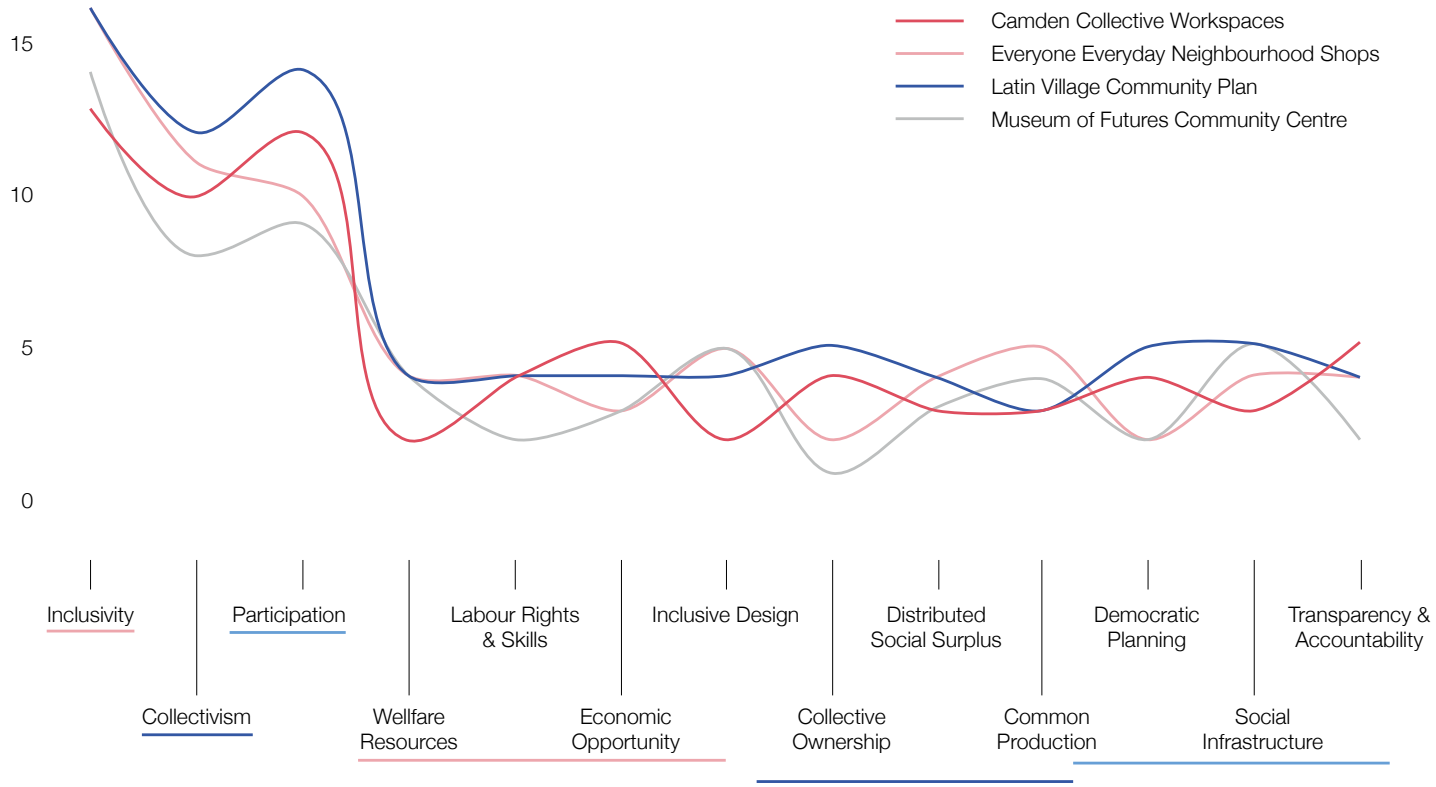
Benefits: With 40 organisations using the facilities, it has encouraged new businesses to grow and networks to form, causing a spillover of nearby projects, including Farm of Futures, an allotment hosting four start-ups (Community Brain, 2021). Creating a supportive space has enticed new residents to participate and empowered individuals to carry out their own projects, helping develop shared community visions. As key social infrastructure, it promotes flourishing through skills and training, economic opportunity through shared facilities, stronger social networks through events and opportunities for collective governance through the seeding of collaborative projects.

Issues: No community ownership or stewardship of assets. // Lack of participatory management processes. // Little collaboration with broader high street actors. // Focus is on leisure over economic value creation, meaning minimal local employment support.

Comparative analysis of economic democracy on the high street

Exploring the power dynamics of each practice, Figure 5.6 plots the relative evaluation of each pillar and criteria based on detailed analysis (see Appendix 4). While the Latin Village Community Plan and Everyone Everyday Neighbourhood Shops appear to excel within inclusivity - helping to address the fundamental rights of individuals - their approaches vary dramatically. While Everyone Everyday has designed inclusivity into its programmes, Latin Village works through established networks which provide affordable necessities, mutual support and employment in a well-connected location. This highlights the value of protecting existing community assets which support autonomous action and provide sustainable social capital for building democratic high streets. Likewise, when it comes to collectivism, the mayoral funded Museum of Futures Community Centre falls behind on a lack of community ownership and the distribution of social surplus. While the space may bring people together to learn, cook, or research, market dynamics will continue to extract economic power, limiting community wealth building potential, without collective ownership and governance. When it comes to participation, Latin Village and Camden Collective also support high street democracy through methods inside-and-out of formal structures. While Latin Village faces greater precarity, by including a wide variety of voices through Development Trust consultations and a cooperative created planning application — with future plans to develop a Community Benefit Society — they have gained widespread public support. Camden Collective, established through a formal BID structure, has supported placemaking initiatives, local enterprises, and training schemes, establishing greater agility in reacting to market changes. Both practices strive for broad public engagement and democratic planning, pursuing different legal forms which enforce transparency and accountability standards.

FIGURE 5.6
Comparing practices: principles and pillars of economic democracy (see Appendix 4)



Although non-commodified activities and social infrastructure are integral for garnering activities which support welfare needs and common production, Camden Collective provides an integral source of economic opportunity despite limited public space. Where retail roles are leaving the high street, support around skills, enterprise funding and workspaces for emerging creative and technology enterprises are vital for building and sustaining community wealth. Local authorities have a duty to advocate for the design of inclusive spaces, public engagement and services - accessible to all. If high streets are to become a catalyst for a fairer form of economic development, they need to refocus on values which can support more equitable centres, whether that be valuing informal support networks, making skills and resources more accessible to marginalised groups or using this everyday site as a way to engage with less heard communities.

Summary: methodological reflections

An analysis of rights, ownership and deliberation is challenging to negotiate; the innate intertwinement of the pillars, their compensatory nature, and complex funding, stakeholder and governance structures make prescriptive guidance unfeasible. With power dynamics tough to decipher through secondary data alone, interviews with stakeholders and surveys designed to capture the perceived values of initiatives could build on the place-based study of economic opportunity. More traditional economic analysis is also required to understand the value creation potential of initiatives that support sustainable high street employment amongst declining retail. Regardless, this study has highlighted the importance of the high street as a site for social production, collective action and local economic development, constructed by a diversity of actors. Although ratings are not analogous, this method has encouraged analysis deciphering the importance of inclusive access, collective ownership and participatory management while understanding the application of principles that guide the key findings discussed below. While civil society groups may govern more democratically, they often face greater precarity, suggesting local authorities play an essential enabling role, especially through providing space, funding or galvanising social infrastructure. In a recent report, Wills and Harding (2021) suggested that the principles and values guiding community high street governance are more important than its legal forms, supporting the focus on a value-based framework. By paying attention to economic opportunity, powers and decision-making, policy development can support high street democratisation capable of precipitating broader economic restructuring.

5.3 Findings & issues

Key themes: high streets

- A central role of high streets in economic democracy is that of an accessible and inclusive social space. Physical communal space is vital for developing networks, collaborative projects and mutual aid, providing the infrastructure necessary to foster autonomous civil action.[28] With non-commodified experiences integral for participation, maintaining open spaces, like the Museum of Futures or Neighbourhood Shops, is essential for encouraging 'commoning' on the high street.

- Studies of temporary high street use, from Camden Collective's support of startups to community organisations hosted in empty units within Brixton market (Appendix 2: CS13), highlight how access to free or affordable space can facilitate economic opportunity by supporting local organisations more focused on place, while reclaiming power from the real estate market.

NOTE 28
GLA (2021c) mapping shows that the most deprived areas already have limited cultural infrastructure, with art centres, libraries and community centres, in particular, concentrated in central London.

A central role of high streets in economic democracy is that of an accessible and inclusive social space.

- Collective stewardship or management is suggested to be key for vibrant high streets. Taking a range of forms, from development trusts to trade associations, these mechanisms often evolve out of adversity, as with Latin Village or CTU BID, sometimes filling the gaps of abdicated state responsibility (Bailey, 2012).
- The high street's social value has been accentuated by vacancy, but also wider concerns around economic restructuring impacting local economies and community ties. London's diversity emphasises the high street's importance as an inclusive space for new residents and immigrant communities, which Neighbourhood shops aim to achieve. An essential bridge for economic power, informal support and connections made through high streets help individuals find employment, obtain skills or access resources, especially under stretched municipal provisions.
- High streets provide vital employment opportunities for young people and volunteer activities for the elderly. Whether through community spaces, in-lieu agreements in temporary leases or the assembling of services, there is also often a focus on inclusive training and skills — a vital component of economic rights beyond employment and income.
- The high street's focus on place also promotes localised economies, protecting community wealth and building social networks. Analysis of pubic discussions suggests common high street visions include greater variety, demanding more local services and independent businesses (Talk London, 2021).[29] While often less affordable under burdensome London costs, demands were also made for the support of small local businesses (Ibid). These local businesses are suggested to be more responsive to community needs than corporate-office-run operations, dispersing social value through better service and community reinvestment – an argument supported throughout, especially by the Latin Village case (Mayor of London, 2020). The pandemic has also uncovered greater resilience in areas with more community-led businesses (Harding, 2021).
- Flexible co-workspaces are likely to be a growing component of the high street but do not currently align with demand and expected jobs growth (GLA, 2021c). With maker-spaces and creative co-working often situated on high streets, they are currently concentrated in central London, limiting opportunities in 11 boroughs with non or few (Ibid). Past research has supported the benefits that these spaces can provide for disadvantaged groups through hosting community organisations and addressing access to employment (IPPR, 2016). Camden Collective workspaces also provide evidence for the potential to localise economies and build social capital, while prioritising labour over property rights by supporting self-determination. Deciphering a need for greater state responsibility, municipal provision has also been shown to boost local economies through Living Wage contracts, affordability commitments, and diverse tenant mixes (Appendix 2: CS3).

NOTE 29
Talk London (2021) online consulting platform poses questions addressing current policy issues where comments and ideas can be left anonymously. While users may not be fully representative, a broad range of sites were addressed in a post on 'Tell us about your high streets'; all 253 comments were read and categorised to draw out patterns in issues and demands (Ibid). Concerns over high vacancy and demands for greater pedestrianisation, community spaces, design improvements and cleanliness also received significant mention (Ibid).

Key issues: barriers to action & limitations of application

- Fragmented property ownership, landlord absenteeism and control by large corporations disconnected from place inhibits the potential for collectivism to reconnect high streets to local economic concerns, especially in London where private real estate actors have significant power.[30] While the Latin Village case highlights existing power imbalances between developers and local actors, many have also expressed concerns over increased permitted development[31] which could shift power from communities and local authorities to developers, further concentrating real estate value (Clifford, 2021). Nevertheless, several central London councils, in order to protect social and environmental value and reinstate democratic consultation requirements, have enacted widespread Article 4 Directions, revoking the use of permitted development rights within certain areas and building types (Ibid).

- Even collective efforts can have unintended consequences when set within a financialised city. Warnings come from Chatsworth Road Traders and Residents Association (Appendix 2: CS12) in Hackney, whose successful high street revitalisation initiatives contributed to gentrification in the area, raising rental prices that impact on local livelihoods. The critical role, beyond participation, of collective appropriation over social surplus is highlighted. While council ownership could improve curation and affordability, especially under participatory democracy, increased community ownership is critical for redistributing economic power.

- Nevertheless, despite existing frameworks and rising popularity, collective legal ownership of land and property, especially in London, faces significant barriers around costs and asymmetric information (Dobson, 2011; Locality, 2021).[32] From stewardship to mutual aid, civil society action is also inhibited by a capacity gap in areas that lack local organising traditions, civic infrastructure or strong supportive organisations (Archer et al., 2019). Driven by inequality, a lack of time and resources also limits collective initiatives between civil society members and small businesses (We Made That and LSE Cities, 2017). Municipalism risks entrenching spatial power inequalities, especially where limited government support concentrates activities in often more affluent areas with greater organising capacity (Clifford, 2012).

- Given the increasing power of the platform economy, models of economic democracy need to consider the online sphere, especially given the potential impacts of an accelerated digital realm on high street firms and SMEs, who may be less equipped to adapt (GLA, 2020a). While the place-based framework used here fails to address these entrenched corporate powers directly, a focus on the local scale could have dramatic non-monetary benefits, with greater equality encouraging experiments capable of precipitating broader economic restructuring (Angel, 2020).

- Falling public service provisions on the high street further highlights the wider regulatory framework needed to support economic democracy, incorporating taxes that balance high street and online costs, funding, labour contracts, welfare provisions and improved frameworks for utilising assets for the common good. Angel (2020) suggests economic democracy demands radical democracy at levels beyond the urban, looking to examples where rights of access to public goods have been enshrined into national constitutions.

NOTE 30
Comparing Brett and Alakeson's (2019) UK study to Will and Harding's (2021) London study, suggests that proportions of community and public ownership are much lower on London's high streets than elsewhere, despite public ownership showing the lowest percentage. More than 45.4% of vacant properties are believed to be owned by developers or investors (Wills and Harding, 2021).

NOTE 31
Permitted development rights (PDR) refers to the physical alterations that can be made to a building without having to apply for planning permission; as of September 2020, it also allows easier conversion of commercial to public spaces, community centres and galleries (MHCLG, 2021a). However, full planning often includes S106 and a Community Infrastructure Levy, which ensure financial contributions and planning obligations from developers to secure affordable housing or provide specific social infrastructure (Planning Advisory Service, 2021).

NOTE 32
While funding opportunities for high street property community ownership is growing, current estimates suggest that only 15 out of 1000 designated Assets of Community Value end up in community ownership (Archer et al., 2019).

5.4 Summary

Discourse analysis has shown a shift towards ideas of economic democracy in response to London's inequality. Change is seen through a focus on inclusive civic spaces, collective production and participatory governance, beyond formal democratic processes; through local authorities taking on the experimental ideas of new municipalism; the language used around the GLA's high street policies, or the growing popularity of civil society initiatives, such as community development trusts, taking space from private corporations (CLES, 2019; GLA, 2021a). However, key application issues remain in the viability of collective governance under existing legal frameworks, the accessibility of collective projects under urban market dynamics and the broader deficits around living wages, public services and welfare that inhibit economic rights for participation.

Key application issues remain in the viability of collective governance under existing legal frameworks, the accessibility of collective projects under urban market dynamics and the broader deficits around living wages, public services and welfare that inhibit economic rights for participation.

Further development and use of Social Value Leases could shift credence away from market values, with collective economic activities now able to be more creatively measured.

06. Recommendations & further research

With elements of the framework implied through emerging planning and policy tools, this section builds on the potential for economic democracy on the high street through principles surrounding access, ownership and management, acknowledging the challenges drawn out through case analysis. While the research was set within London's economic, social and policy context, and the recommendations focused on local authorities, principles could hold relevance for other global cities.

6.1 Policy recommendations:

- Currently distributed unequally, community spaces are essential for reviving social high streets. Further development and use of Social Value Leases could shift credence away from market values, with collective economic activities now able to be more creatively measured through holistic tools like the Green Book, Social Value Portal and central government's 'Valuing Culture and Heritage Capital' framework (Lewis, Laine and Cringle, 2021). Encouraging rent discounts to those maintaining community spaces could help broaden access, allowing local organisations to reclaim social surplus and promote equality. With certain benefits assumed to come of democratic governance, deduction indicators should be focused on principles of inclusive access or participatory management. While large scale developers may negatively influence economic trajectories, Local Planning Authorities do have powers to embed policy dictated by democratically created local and neighbourhood plans. Binding foundations can lay out rules for social benefit around zoning, the allocation of vacant space and publicly-owned rental properties, public space requirements, Community Infrastructure Levies and S106 agreements, with financial viability supported through Levelling Up, Community Renewal, Arts Council Cultural Compact and Active Travel funding (Pragmatic Advisory and Trajectory, 2022).

- As well as digital tools[33] for participatory planning, physical platforms like Neighbourhood Shops are beneficial for inclusive economic development. Utilising vacant spaces to consult communities on urban issues can encourage interaction with the diversity of high street users, empowering residents to cooperate over wider economic issues.[34] This place-based approach to economic democracy, where authorities start by mapping the diversity of local economies and community groups, helps develop Local Plans that more genuinely approach collective demands. Effective engagement helps identify local needs, while building trust to provide successful partnerships and interventions that support local wealth development (Pragmatic Advisory and Trajectory, 2022).

- Further support for trade associations, BIDs and community organisations could be encouraged through capacity building, with crowdfunding encouraged to support these collective governance structures (Patti and Polyak, 2017). Architecture 00 (2021) propose creating High Street Trusts for overcoming fragmentation issues; facilitating greater participation in high street management by residents, actors and local authorities could create a common vision where shared ownership may be infeasible.

- With plans for a public beneficial ownership register already proposed, a degree of transparency over high street ownership remains integral to economic democracy (HCLGC, 2019, Q.628). Recommended by Grimsey (2018) and Portas (2011), a register would allow councils to identify underused and socially valuable sites, better employing resources and locating public services.[35] Democratic processes could also be facilitated by stakeholder mapping, in which the capacity, resources and willingness of actors are recorded (Mayor of London, 2020). If maintained by local authorities, alongside land, property and lease length records, this could support coalitions within high street development.

- The Education and Local Economy Scrutiny Commission (2021) for the London Borough of Southwark suggested supporting rights through encouraging participants in the GLA's nascent landlord charter.[36] They also suggest a pivotal role of councils is mapping property ownership and reviewing their existing asset portfolios to identify potential sites for transferring to community ownership (Ibid). While Community Asset Transfer provides an opportunity for collective ownership on the high street, market forces make use rare. More feasible alternatives could encourage collective appropriation over social surplus through flexible leases of public assets, greater financial support and improved planning protections for community assets. An analysis of potential high street governance forms (see Appendix 1) also suggests the promise of Public Commons Partnerships[37] as a tool for de-commodification, with Russel and Milburn (2019) suggesting Latin Village, where assets are already partly publicly owned, as a potential site for enactment. Replacing often extractive public private partnerships, democratic control by a board constituted of local government, experts, trade unions and a commons association would ensure a participatory, transparent and accountable form which could turn surplus to common value, through the capitalisation of collective self-governance (Ibid).

- With flexible workspaces addressing economic rights through opportunities for self-determination, they also often value common production and support diverse scales and forms, including locally-focused projects vital to economic democracy. As a new commons for knowledge and technology-based economies, direct municipal workspace provision could build on the learnings of Camden Collective and International House (Appendix 2: CS3), with cross-subsidisation between established paying tenants and community organisations helping to redistribute the power embodied in real estate. Increased access to low-cost sites could also be facilitated by local authorities playing a key connecting role, matching spaces to community businesses and third sector organisations or building a vacant space platform inspired by the pop-up listings site Appear Here, or Open Poplar's public and private property site.

NOTE 33
For example, the assembly platform decidim.org or commonplace.is, a consulting platform used in Dalston (Appendix 2: CS11).

NOTE 34
Croydon Arts Centre or Dudley CoLab (Appendix 2: CS4; CS22).

NOTE 35
Appendix 2: CS31 evidences the benefits of a public assets register.

NOTE 36
Find out more here

.

NOTE 37
A joint enterprise structure between local government and a commons association (see Appendix 1 for further details).

- Equality can also be addressed through local authority run incubator spaces that target resources towards social enterprises, young people and other groups most impacted by the pandemic, encouraging local wealth building through directed entrepreneurship funding, showcasing and support for community businesses (Education and Local Economy Scrutiny Commission, 2021). With local businesses most likely to provide social value and high streets posing a key site for experimentation, authorities could provide greater support for small and micro-businesses through space matching or subsidised costs, empty property rate relief, and the encouragement of occupancy through temporary leases, increasing integral assets and economic opportunity for place-based organisations. While Local Planning Authorities' ability to influence composition may be limited by existing ownership structures, they could also build on creative campaigns started throughout the pandemic to promote 'Shopping Local'.[38] Building on Barcelona's pilot (Appendix 2: CS29), useful public data could also be made available — and accessible through training — to independent retailers, developing the GLA's recently released High Street Data Service to address inequalities imbued in data and technology.

NOTE 38
See Hackney's comparison of supermarkets to Ridley Road Market

- What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth (2021) focus on the need for demand-side policies for economic development, as opposed to supply-side interventions such as physical improvements. Skills that empower and improve local consumer demand could focus on crafts, culture and small scale industrial activity that Scott (2015) highlights as integral and often hidden functions of London's high street networks of interrelated economic activities. Highlighted by Southwark's Education and Local Economy Scrutiny Commission (2021) as a key recommendation, increased apprenticeships alongside targeted young entrepreneurship funds are seen as a way to address economic rights through local high street renewal.

Fundamental to economic democracy are rights of access and participation [...]. Greater public ownership and community management of high street property should be used to increase accessible public services and support mutual aid initiatives.

- Fundamental to economic democracy are rights of access and participation, which depend on essential welfare resources. Greater public ownership and community management of high street property should be used to increase accessible public services and support mutual aid initiatives. Nevertheless, economic democracy requires national policy support around taxes, regulation and funding, allocating greater resources based on this grounded understanding of the high streets potential, and more equitably targeted support, as opposed to an over reliance on competitions, which may not fairly distribute resources (Harding, 2021).

Various reports have addressed the importance of high streets to communities, municipal contributions to urban democracy and the need for more equitable models for governing urban space, but rarely have these subjects been linked.

6.2 Further research:

- Various reports have addressed the importance of high streets to communities, municipal contributions to urban democracy and the need for more equitable models for governing urban space, but rarely have these subjects been linked. The framework given here could provide a succinct lens through which to theorise around future development pathways, with further research building on the codification of practices for imaging urban economic democracy (notably those in Appendix 2). By recording initiatives contributing to economic and social restructuring, benchmark examples could be replicated elsewhere, encouraging more equitable place-based economies.

- Primary research could address modes of participation, the sense of inclusion and civic pride of actors involved in high street practices. Mayor of London (2020) suggests high street interventions should also develop an in-depth understanding of particular areas through mapping networks — essential for site-specific studies. Longitudinal ethnographic research comparing practices within the same timeframe would support a better understanding of competing priorities and support needs, aiding the development of conducive policy. Whilst monitoring employment, spending and leakages would add to the knowledge of community wealth building potential.

- Furthermore, given the role of the built environment, collective legal asset ownership and stewardships models are integral for democratisation. Separate research is demanded to identify the role of national policies and frameworks. While mention has been made to organisational forms such as Community Development Trusts and Community Benefit Societies, whole studies could be dedicated to each. Therefore, future research could map the alternative forms of governance, their benefits, weaknesses and possible applications in more detail.

Analysis shows the active role that individual citizens, civil society groups, businesses and city governments can play in reshaping the economic system.

07. Conclusion

Post-pandemic high streets provide a pivotal space for restructuring social and economic relations. Growing vacancy, left behind primarily by department and chain stores, provides new opportunities for independent retailers, more connected to place through local spending and sustainable practices. Nevertheless, media analysis has identified a broad acceptance of retail's shrinking role in the high street, a growing focus on community and locality accelerated by the recent pandemic and the emergence of an experimental municipalism — symbolised through the conversion of empty consumption spaces to climate emergency centres.

The initial literature review considered the distribution of economic decision-making powers in perpetuating inequalities, while suggesting democratisation could be the answer to a fairer economic system. Discussions of municipalism, in theory and action, suggest that a radical urban politics is fundamental to reclaiming economic power, providing tools for local economic democracy. The language of the commons looked at how equitable modes of governance could reclaim urban space, while high street studies captured their potential value for supporting these collective practices.

The evaluative framework connects empiricism with theory, drawing out practical applications of principles, while the case study demonstrated, in situ, how collective high street practices can reclaim space from capitalist social relations. Analysing the distribution of economic power through rights, ownership and deliberation guides recommendations by drawing out the key trends and barriers to democratising high streets. The benefit of the study comes from a novel reframing, with the assessment of interventions highlighting principles and power relations commonly overlooked by positivist economic discourse.

With this theoretical application in its infancy, there has not been a chance through this research to address platform economy powers disconnected from place, or the broader national frameworks required to set up the economic system. Methodological limitations were also encountered in analysing dynamics through secondary data, suggesting that ethnographic research and the acquisition of related micro-economic data could enhance analysis. Nevertheless, the placing of high streets within an economic democracy framework helps to foreground people and place, promoting local economic experiments which reduce extraction, encourage collective action and promote social production. While local authorities may not be able to counter forces of digitisation which alter the ways we work, travel and consume, shifting the focus of high streets away from retail could in fact protect against forces of gentrification, especially when the shift is towards non-commodified experiences, flexible workspaces and the

protection of existing community assets through planning policy. Whilst the difficulty of quantifying such non-monetary benefits is likely to have inhibited similar previous research, prevailing shifts in public values and evolving urban discourse could support the precipitation of structural change which acknowledges local wealth through economic, social and environmental value.

Due to the complexity and diversity of high street settings, a more systematic approach to policy development was demanded. With nebulous discussions of 'community-led development' often overlooking economic power inequalities, the framework provided within for high street renewal looks to promote policy cohesion through broad and flexible guiding principles. Addressing the redistribution of economic opportunity on the high street, economic democracy aims to disperse decision making powers for fairer urban development, more aligned with the 'common good'.

Analysis shows the active role that individual citizens, civil society groups, businesses and city governments can play in reshaping the economic system. Fairer local high streets can be achieved through working, planning, campaigning and socialising together. Widespread change demands a reframing of economic rights that centres inclusivity, collectivism and participation, seeding a shift in value concepts through the democratisation of this everyday site — the high street.

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Appendix 1

High street initiatives, funding and governance frameworks

The Table 1.1 covers key initiatives and funding opportunities that could impact high street development, forming a key component of the context analysis. Policy mapping aids in understanding the opportunities and constraints that will impact the ability to enact economic democracy on the high street. This provides a foundational overview, fundamental for forming recommendations geared at the policy and planning arena, and further study and experimentation around policy change. The search process included recording policies suggested throughout reports and utilised in previous practices, then investigating further.

TABLE 1.1
High street policy and planning environment: initiatives, funding and policy

Initiatives and funding

Architectural Heritage Fund Support, loans & grants (Architectural Heritage Fund, 2021).	(NATIONAL) AHF is a registered charity that helps communities to find new ways of using historical buildings, particularly in economically disadvantaged areas. Aims: to conserve cultural assets and encourage sustainable reuse for community benefit.
Boosting Community Business programme Grants of up to £10K and mentoring (Co-operatives UK, 2021b).	(LONDON) A programme run by the Mayor of London in partnership with Co-operatives UK and Power to Change. Grants support community share offerings, as well as mentoring and development grants for existing and new community businesses. Aims: to encourage more collective forms of ownership, stewardship and management and projects to reinvest into the community, tackle local issues and more widely distribute social surplus.
Building Back Better High Streets Funding for public realm improvements and supporting planning regulations (MHCLG, 2021b).	(NATIONAL) The recent report proposes national policy which can support the reuse of vacant spaces, the support of high street businesses, public realm improvements, safer and cleaner spaces and the celebration of local communities. Aims: revitalise high streets and make them a more welcoming as a social community centre.
Community Spaces at Risk Fund Culture at Risk Office has supported 660 cases since the pandemic started (London Assembly & Mayor of London, 2020).	(LONDON) A partnership between Locality and the Mayor's Culture at Risk Office which includes funding to protect cultural centres, social clubs, youth, education and other community spaces. Aims: to protect locally-rooted spaces which provide critical support for vulnerable groups during the pandemic through mutual aid and often essential service provision.
Creative Enterprise Zone 6 designated areas in 2018 (London Assembly & Mayor of London, 2021a).	(LONDON) Local authorities have been chosen for demonstrating plans for affordable workspaces, skills and support, pro-culture policy (including supportive business rates) and strong creative networks. Aims: to support the growing creative economy, increase activity and create socially-inclusive places through consortiums of actors, while protecting arts and cultural industries.
Future High Streets Fund £830m worth of funding for 72 areas in England (MHCLG, 2019b).	(NATIONAL) Funding for recovery and regeneration plans, such as the renovation of Scala Theatre and Corn Exchange in Worcester. Aims: conserve cultural assets and protect high streets from decline, increasing community benefit through public realm improvements.
Good Growth Fund Supported 138 projects through £75 million (London Assembly & Mayor of London, 2021c).	(LONDON) A regeneration programme to encourage community development, providing funding to local authorities for projects from training hubs to public realm improvements and large infrastructure projects. Aims: to promote participatory planning, place-based economic development and diverse and accessible local economies.

High Streets For All Challenge Project seed funding x 35 (£20,000), Development funding for 10-12 projects (£100,000-200,000) & practice sharing. £4 million for councils, businesses and third sector organisations (GLA, 2021a)	(LONDON) A competition calling for partnerships to develop strategies backed by assets for boosting economic activity, cultural and civic renewal and wider public value. Bid proposals are encouraged to form local coalitions with authorities, other organisations or asset owners, responding to high street challenges such as using vacancy, cultural space losses and employment. Aims: to encourage projects which produce more accessible high streets, innovative enterprise, connected communities and responses to climate change.
High Street Heritage Action Zones 60 High streets to receive £95m in funding (Historic England, 2021).	(NATIONAL) Funding to support community ownership and use of disused historic buildings to create new homes, shops, work places and community spaces, enhancing the public realm. Aims: fuel economic, social and cultural recovery through a more socially productive use of space beyond retail.
Levelling Up Fund 57 high streets in England have received £4.8 bn investment (HM Treasury, 2021).	(NATIONAL)Funding to support town centre and high street regeneration through everyday infrastructure improvements including local transport, cultural and heritage assets. Aims: refocusing activity within local communities through the shared economy and culture, in order to reduce spatial inequality.
London Recovery Programme Long term strategy from London's Recovery Board (GLA, 2020b).	(LONDON)An overarching planning document developed under the Major of London. Aims: to promote a green new deal, robust safety net, high streets for all, a new deal for young people, good work for all, mental health & wellbeing, digital access, healthy food and stronger communities.
The National Lottery Community Fund Ongoing fund for projects lasting 1-5 years (National Lottery Community Fund, 2021).	(NATIONAL)Funding for community projects which could include building and land improvements, activities or equipment. Aims: to encourage not-for-profit activities which reinvest social surplus into the community through capacity building, practices for strengthening connections and support.
Pay It Forward London & Back to Business Fund Platform £1m of small business funds (Mayor of London, 2021).	(LONDON) Provided by the Mayor of London — a fundraising platform with zero fees. Designed to support the survival of London's businesses, the crowdsourcing site allowed customers to pay in advances. The 'Back to Business' fund offers up to £5000 match funding for small and businesses. Aims: to protect small independent businesses, promoting economic recovery and local place-based economies.
Restart Grant Scheme £5bn fund which offers one-off cash grants of up to £18,000 (Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, 2021)	(NATIONAL) Allocated based on application, the fund offers one-off grants to hospitality, accommodation, leisure, personal care and gym businesses affected especially by the pandemic and England. Aims: to maintain diversity on the high street by protecting those most at risk and providing funding for more small and independent businesses.
Small Business Grant Fund One-off £10k grants allocated by local authorities (Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, 2020).	(NATIONAL) Thousands have been allocated by local authorities to businesses impacted by the pandemic to support costs such as rent for those already receiving small business rate relief. Aims: to maintain diversity and protect small businesses from unexpected shocks.
TFL Healthy Streets Plans Cross London officers, a toolkit and funding (TFL, 2021).	(LONDON) Long term plans for an inclusive city where people walk, cycle and use public transport, encouraging more cultural spaces and pedestrianisation. Aims: to promote environmental sustainability and local high street use, creating safer and more accessible streets.
24-hour Economy Plans & Night Time Enterprise Zones (NTEZ) Night Czar, Night Tube and funding. (London Assembly & Mayor of London, 2021d)	(LONDON) Policies which work with local authorities to Increase opening hours, promote culture and ensure safety. Supporting high street experiments, Boroughs can bid to become a NTEZ, funding places to test out later opening hours, increased access to shops and events. Aims: to build on growth in the night time economy, bringing more activity, safety, culture and public uses to high streets and better protecting workers rights.

Planning regulation

Compulsory Purchase Order

- Promote public ownership of community assets.
- Socially productive land use
- Disperse power from developers

(Torridge District Council, 2021)

A legal function that allows local authorities to acquire land for a specific purpose if the landowner is not willing to sell. The council will only utilise if the development is aimed at improving the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of the area under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

High street application: can help bring underused high street buildings back into use for the public good while promoting more socially just forms of urban development.

Localism Act 2011

- Maximise social value
- Locally focused development.
- More democratic planning

(Department for Communities and Local Government, 2021)

Aims to return power to municipalities, creating a more democratic planning system and decentralising power. Community Rights increase local input in spatial planning and property markets and social social value is promoted in public procurement of local services. The potential of the act has been limited by a lack of accompanying resources, such as revenue funds (Wills, 2019).

High street application: greater local authority planning powers encourage high streets that address local needs, allowing influence over ownership and actors.

Meanwhile Use Leases

- More inclusive community use
- Socially productive use of land
- Promoting local economic development

(MHCLG, 2013)

Leases designed to encourage the temporary occupation of empty town centre retail premises for non-commercial occupiers by reducing demands and timespans on planning permissions. Vacant premises owners can also reduce business rates by up to 100 per cent by leasing for community benefit (GLA & Arup 2020).

High street application: commonly used by charities and community organisations to provide services, education or try out new ideas, such as the National Open Doors (Appendix 2: CS26) scheme that experimented with use across five UK high street sites.

Proposed governance frameworks

Community Improvement Districts

Locally rooted, common vision

- Democratic planning
- A focus on economic and community development

(Wills and Harding, 2021)

Proposed as a replacement for BIDs, they would incorporate a similar structure: created through ballot, operating within a defined geographic area and funded by a levy on council taxpayers, but they would incorporate wider groups, focusing on community as well as economic targets.

High street application: Possilpark in Glasgow is the first UK CID to be established. Driven by a small group of traders, a large social landlord and voluntary sector groups, the CID tackles social and economic challenges, coming to incorporate high street development.

Public Commons Partnerships

Associations (PCP)

- Collective ownership
- Reinvestment of social surplus
- More democratic control

(Russel and Milburn, 2019)

An organisational structure allowing for collective control of directors by workers, technical experts, local state representation and a commons association - a joint enterprise between government and civil society. Russel and Milburn (2019) suggest a model in which 50% of ownership and 1/3 of the board is made up of the local authority and a commons association (ie. a CIC or cooperative), while the final 1/3 of the board is made up of external experts and stakeholders such as trade unions or an environment agency. Overcoming factors limiting commons expansion, from financing to suitable legal forms and protection, under democratic control PCP's capitalisation of collective self-governance encourages a multiplier, expanding the movement of de-commodification.

High street application: ensuring that surplus is reinvested in municipal goals, PCPs can provide essential social services set on the high street, urban development or support public utility provision,

Appendix 2

Case studies: place-based practices

Table 2.1 shows a broad array of case studies (numbered CS1-CS33) from workspaces to retail centres, participatory planning and governance mechanisms, predominantly situated in urban centres and aimed at addressing critical economic issues through place-based practices. This helped to draw out the available tools for producing fairer local economies, using the high street.

TABLE 2.1
Urban economic issues, interventions and outcomes

No.	Name	Location	Key issues	Intervention description	Outcomes
CS1	Spark Project, Ilford (GLA, 2021b)	LONDON	Vacant space, low wages & high-cost accommodation. Lack of social & cultural infrastructure.	Use of council owned assets for meanwhile projects, including affordable workspaces, a market, a community growing space and public space. A 5 year lease of Malachi place was given to the Salvation Army for a hostel and workshop space.	New civic and community spaces, encouraging growing, cooking and eating together; welfare and housing for 42 people and, for new businesses, opportunities for incubation through the market space or affordable studious.
CS2	Seven Sisters Market & Ward's Corner Community Plan, Tottenham (WCCP, 2021)	LONDON	Vacant floorspace. Risk of demolition & relocation of a cultural hub and businesses. Managed decline of the site under corporate management.	Planning permission for the Community plan, which will maintain the UK's second largest Latin Quarter, explores an alternative model for community-led development. It aims to protect the market's heritage and self-manage restoration, ensuring affordable rent, new community spaces and the reinvestment of profits into the local area.	Instigator Save Latin Village have protected the site from redevelopment, ensuring the livelihoods of stall owners and maintaining the sites social and cultural value. 15 years of consultation and activism has seen the site recognised as an Asset of Community Value and the eventual withdrawal by developers.
CS3	International House, Brixton, Lambeth (3 Space, 2021)	LONDON	Low wages & opportunities for local creative enterprises. Unaffordable office space & rising real estate values.	The initiative came from consultation with 200 local organisations. Using an 11 storey council owned building, a 5 year tender has become an affordable mixed-use workspace with public space and seminar rooms for businesses, community groups and third sector organisation. An initiative offers free space to community organisation for every office purchased.	A London Living Wage agreement with actors and operator has raised wages in the area. The mix of established and small enterprises, community groups and charities, plus the 300 community events attended by 5000 people has created an open, collaborative and innovative atmosphere. 22 businesses were started in the Youth Business Launchpad.
CS4	Camden Collective, Camden (GLA & Arup, 2020)	LONDON	Vacant high street space. Unemployment & a skills mismatch. Lack of local businesses.	Camden Collective consists of affordable temporary workspaces with subsidised offices, events and classroom space. They have taken on over 18 high street properties under meanwhile leases, providing business support, start-up incubators, training, free events and public realm projects, such as Camden Creates festival.	Chance for collaboration and experimentation between freelancers, start-ups office users and business-led accelerators. Social capital created through events, training and a long term commitment. There has also been 200 jobs created and increased local procurement.

CS5	Central Parade, Waltham-stow (Meanwhile Space CIC, 2019)	LONDON	Lack of cultural, community & workspaces for creative workers.	A council owned building was renovated with local authority and GLA funding, and is operated by Meanwhile Space CIC. Now a mixed use creative hub that includes a variety of retail, co-working, studio, exhibition spaces and a bakery-cafe where events and workshops take place.	The space has helped to animate the high street and increase evening footfall. Increased opportunities for local creatives with low cost space and low risk leases in a prime high street location.
CS6	Croyden Arts Store, Croydon (Sca-fe-Smith, 2019)	LONDON	High high street vacancy. High youth unemployment	Includes the temporary take over of a shopping centre store in collaboration with the council, First Floor Space (artist collective) and Turf Projects (charity). The site included a research space for Kingston school of art, free exhibitions, desk space and workshop spaces for young people.	Participatory practices have been used to encourage youth engagement and to understand the role of arts in the future development of Croydon. The project has facilitated lasting networks, collective works and learning opportunities for young people.
CS7	Peckham Levels, Southwark (GLA & Arup, 2020)	LONDON	Lack of community spaces & workspaces for local businesses & creative industries.	Demands were identified by a local steering group with consultations ran throughout the borough. A, now 8 year, meanwhile creative and cultural hub has been created in a council owned car park conversion, containing space for studios, offices, events, the public, retail and food stalls.	The project supports 100 local and independent businesses, has increased footfall as a legacy destination, incubated start-ups, and has encouraged new projects to form through collaboration, events and practical workspaces.
CS8	Everyone Everyday Neighbourhood Shops, Barking & Dagenham (Participatory City, 2019)	LONDON	A lack of community cohesion due to large demographic shifts. High levels of deprivation.	As part of the councils larger development plans to build a collaborative economy, 5 high street shops and a central warehouse are run by neighbourhood designers who support community projects. The project aims to make community participation more inclusive by making it low or no cost, providing varied activities, resources, support and easy access through a focus on collaborative works.	Through knowledge sharing, spaces and resources for families to work and play, and support for growing community businesses, the wellbeing and sense of community is developing. Helping to build a practice of distributed decision making, the Open Corners project has also encouraged the collective management of open spaces.
CS9	Dalston Kingsland Digital Strategy, Hackney (Mayor of London, 2020)	LONDON	Gentrification threatening affordability & diversity. Lack of public engagement & support for traders.	London borough of Hackney is improving infrastructure through free internet access for all tenants and residents. Good Growth funding will also go towards new stalls for Ridley Road Market traders, a better layout and contactless payment machines for traders. Training aims to 'digitally future proof' their operations.	Contactless payment, training and internet will likely increase income opportunities for small traders, while protecting trade from the threat of large retailers. Use of data could help small local businesses access more customers, coordinate stock and create promotions.(Anticipated benefits).
CS10	Stanley Arts, South Norwood, Croydon (Mayor of London, 2020)	LONDON	Loss of community spaces. Lack of inclusive arts spaces.	The historical theatre was part of a Community Asset Transfer from Croyden Council. The charity, Stanley People's Initiative, is a group of residents created in 2013 who are committed to repairing the building and keeping it open as an entertainment, arts and enterprise venue for the community.	Maintenance of an inclusive performance and arts space for often excluded or under represented voices, including artists of colour and LGBTQ+ creatives.
CS11	Dalston Plan & Hackney Developments Co-operative, Hackney (Common-Place, 2021)	LONDON	Gentrification risking affordability & diversity. Lack of public engagement & support for traders.	A Supplementary Planning Document was created through the Common Place online platform to inform high street development. Council owned Hackney Co-operative Developments is also acquiring ground floor premises to help curate the high street, focusing on local needs and key services, and guided by the plan.	Highlighted local issues of priority include: the protection of Ridley Road Market, protection of independent stores over chains, affordable workspaces for local people, affordable housing and support for the arts, culture and night time economy.

CS12	Chatsworth Road Traders and Residents Association, Hackney (Chatsworth Road Traders & Residents Association, 2012)	LONDON	Fragmented ownership (60 landlords for 80 units). Loss of local market. High vacancy.	A businesses-led group formed of volunteers, campaigning since 2009 to revive the high street, created a CIC woking on local economic development. They reopened and managed the the market from 2011. The council took over the market in 2018, but the CIC still works on events.	They revived the Sunday market, negotiated rent reviews, reduced vacancy and extended opening hours; supported local initiatives and encouraged student engagement on planning, helping to strengthen networks, create new jobs and benefit local businesses.
CS13	Spacemakers, Brixton Village, Lambeth (Spacemakers, 2021)	LONDON	High vacancy. Proposed demolition & residential development.	SpaceMakers were employed by property owners and Lambeth council to help rebuild the area's social life under perceived decline. They filled vacant units through 3-month free leases for community projects from rehearsal spaces to galleries and shops.	After a year of the project, the market was revitalised and fully let for the first time since 1979. Meanwhile, small businesses were able to flourish through initial low risk opportunities to acquire customers.
CS14	Brixton Pound Currency Scheme, Lambeth (Whitehead, 2010)	LONDON	Economic decline & struggling independent businesses.	Following the 2008 financial crisis, Transion Town Brixton created a social currency with the aim of encouraging local spending - a physical currency that could only be spent with local businesses.	The project came to an end after a year with critics blaming the limited success on the transaction costs of paper money and the complexity of urban supply chains. A digital form has also been explored in Barcelona, aiming to democratise the economy by keeping wealth local, putting power in the hands of independent sellers over rootless multinationals (Morozov & Bria, 2018).
CS15	Museum of Futures, Surbiton (GLA, 2021a)	LONDON	Lack of community engagement and investment.	A vacant shop transformed into a sustainable community space aiming to be more inclusive in access and delivery, it provides a fixed space for social interaction. With a community kitchen, Kingston University also host research activities within the space and access was maintained for disadvantaged groups during the pandemic.	A kitchen was added in response to community demands and the space has been used by a wide range of groups and individuals, creating new community connections and a space to try out business ideas. The success has lead to two more similar local spaces hosting start-ups.
CS16	What Walworth Wants, Walworth (We Made That, 2017)	LONDON	Vacant shops and market stalls. Poor quality public space. Lack of social integration.	A public tool to be used by authorities, communities and other stakeholders for designing a more inclusive place through way-finding, community empowerment and support for local enterprises. Part of the planning proposals included an extension of the local library to include flexible and affordable meeting spaces for communities.	Changes have helped activate the space and encouraging greater cooperation between stall and shop owners, while making the community space more accessible from the high street.
CS17	Coming Soon Club Cottrell House, Wembley (Meanwhile Space, 2017)	LONDON	A large disused office space. Lack of activity.	The creation of a mixed use space through Brent Council and The Decorators. It hosted an enterprise hub, hot-desking space and training programmes, as well as a cafe and studios.	While providing opportunity for experimentation through the hub of activity, the space has now been demolished and replaced by a 10 storey residential building with only 2 commercial units.
CS18	SEE3 Town Teams, Forrest Hill, Lewisham (GLA, 2014)	LONDON	Fragmented high street ownership & management. High vacancy.	Funded by Portas Pilot, a voluntary partnership of residents, businesses and local authority members developed several projects including 'Shop Revolution', which gave new businesses the chance to trade on the high street, renovating empty units and offering temporary leases.	One of the first shop pop-ups in Forest Hll, the Butchery, collaborated with local greengrocers to provide fresh food and has since taken on a permanent lease. The group has also helped to create new networks and foster more activity around the high street.

UK

CS19	Fountain Mall Enterprise Arcade (Coman, 2021)	Stockton, UK	Vacant high Street spaces. High unemployment.	A vacated department store bought by the local council has been turned into a premises in which independent businesses pay peppercorn rent to test out ideas, helping them get off the ground.	Bringing activity back to the high street, many stores with unique offerings have developed, rooted in the local community. Around 15 former tenants have moved onto prime town centre locations, aided by £5,000 council grants for vacant property refurbishments.
CS20	Rock House (Rock House, 2021)	Hastings, UK	Risks of gentrification.	Part owned by a Community Land Trust, Rock House is managed on a cooperative model. A mixed-use project in an underused building contains living, working and community space for local people and newcomers to Hastings. Funders included Meanwhile Space CIC and Power to Change.	The project has provided affordable space and helped to foster creative enterprise, generate jobs and self-employment opportunities, as well as forming social infrastructure through a community hub with regular events.
CS21	Cafe Indie (Cafe Indie, 2021)	Scunthorpe, UK	Limited community spaces & activities for young people.	A social project made up of a cooperatively owned cafe and music venue.	Community ownership has helped build local networks, while prioritising work experience and training for young people.
CS22	CoLab Dudley (Mayor of London, 2020)	Dudley, UK	High levels of deprivation.	A social lab with an online platform and physical high street space which contains a core team of local people who help in the delivery of, often experimental, community projects.	This has helped develop skills and empower people in the area through the Repair Café and a trade school, while building more cooperative craft networks in the local area.
CS23	The Old Library Into Bodmin (Lee and Swann, 2020)	Cornwall, UK	High street decline impacted by reduced traffic, high costs & out of town retail.	A significant local building is being used by a community business as a cultural facility with a cafe, performance space, offices and events. Into Bodin, a CIC, redeveloped the site, leasing the site from the council on a 10 year scaling contract,	The Old Library now serves as a cultural attraction, bringing more people onto the high street and benefitting local businesses. The low priced cafe attracts less affluent residents, creating an inclusive social space.
CS24	Midsteeple Quarter, Dumfries (Lee and Swann, 2020)	Dumfries, UK	High vacancy due to high costs. Lack of residential buildings.	The first community-owned UK high street development, Stove Network formed to take over a cultural centre. In 2011 the main building was transferred freely to the council from the chamber of commerce and leased to The Stove, becoming an artist-led Community Development Trust. Currently, a group of high street buildings are being turned into a work/live quarter.	Midsteeple Quarter Community Benefit Society, created in 2017 to revitalise underused property, aided the renovation and community asset transfer of the, previously empty,The Oven, providing flexible community use and pop-up shops. The Stove Network, through local consultations, identified the need for more housing, currently under construction.
CS25	Malton Capital of Food, North Yorkshire (HCLGC, 2019)	Malton, Yorkshire, UK	High vacancy. Limited local employment opportunities.	Unusually, the high street is owned 60% by one landlord. However, local ownership has helped coordinate the strategic collective high street reinvention. Sports events, festivals and food stalls encouraged the development of local producers focused on small and sustainable production.	There has been 15 new businesses open in the small town, as well as 3 independently owned pubs that have re-opened, attracting significant visitor footfall and a growing population.
CS26	Open Doors Project, Piloted in 5 Towns (GLA, 2021a)	UK	High vacancy of retail spaces.	Funded by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, the scheme matched landlords struggling to fill spaces with community groups. The spaces were renovated and managed by Meanwhile Foundation and Meanwhile Space CIC.	Organisations were allowed to test community focused ideas, utilising underused spaces for public good and bringing people together. In Fenton, groups created cultural events for young people, independent living training for disabled people and a community hub.

INTERNATIONAL

CS27	SSE Resourceries (Barcelona en Comú, 2019)	Paris, FRANCE	Complex supply chains, food waste, damage from construction & a housing shortage.	A municipal authority initiative involving a network of 240 social agents tasked with creating a circular economy, repurposing waste, incorporating marginalised people into work, occupying public spaces and buildings, and creating points where community services can be exchanged.	The project has lead to the public funding of seven cooperatives, helped to get young people into work and lead to the creation of an artists' association with studious throughout a number of central public buildings.
CS28	Polis Athens (Cooperative City, 2019a)	Athens, GREECE	High vacancy. Loss of public space heightened by the financial crisis.	With 27% of public buildings vacant, many of which were storefronts, a platform designed by If-untitled studio aimed to encourage collaboration between municipalities and designers. It promoted community-led interventions and temporary use of vacant buildings, free of charge. 12 arcade spaces were renovated and rented for a year. Grants were also given for small neighbourhood interventions.	Increased high street activity. 25 workshops a month were held reaching 2500 participants. The success of the project encouraged government funding for two more years of the project aimed at reaching young people with 6-month free leases, including utilities and advertising, with the agreement to host events, and the possibility to extend leases.
CS29	Data X Commerce Pilot, Barcelona Digital City. (Ajuntament Barcelona, 2020)	Barcelona, SPAIN	Threats from the platform economy. Difficulties of promoting local economic development & more sustainable retail.	A website and an app created by Barcelona Open Data Initiative Association, the pilot aims to connect small commerce with open data to support decision making and better gauge customer behaviour. Three shopping areas will test the project which aims to make the digital sphere more inclusive.	Helping to protect local businesses from the threat of large retailers. Use of data could aid with reaching more customers, coordinating stock and deliveries, and creating promotions. (Anticipated benefits).
CS30	SSE Impulse Plan (Barcelona en Comú, 2019)	Barcelona, SPAIN	Social exclusion and spatial inequality. Cuts to municipal funding and public services.	Building on the city's existing SSE (social and solidarity economy) network, the initiative includes training, funding initiatives and support teams aimed at integrating cooperative projects into local plans. Millions of euros have been invested through financing and economic initiatives.	SSE projects now incorporate 8% of the working population and 7% of the city's GDP, with 100 new projects and 100 businesses advised annually, and 1500 individuals receiving training.
CS31	Community Use and Management of Citizen Assets Programme (Barcelona en Comú, 2019)	Barcelona, SPAIN	Lack of property ownership transparency. Social exclusion and spatial inequality.	The city has created a policy framework for the transfer of municipal assets to communities for social and cultural projects, community management and the remunicipalisation of basic services. A 'Community Monitor' also audits public assets to create a catalogue of those managed by communities.	The Citizen Asset Board has facilitated the cession of municipal assets to non-profit organisations, rebalancing real estate power. Also, the transfer of assets and register allows for greater citizen participation and accountability within the built environment
CS32	The Ecos Cooperative (Cooperative City, 2019b)	Barcelona, SPAIN	Social exclusion and spatial inequality. Cuts to local government funding and public services.	A cooperative of cooperatives which helps to promote the growth of the social solidarity economy, providing services to 18 cooperatives which are part of Barcelonas social solidarity economics network.	Setting standards for cooperatives as far as ethical finance, measurement of social output through data collection and synthesis, transparency and volunteer commitment, supporting policy advancement which can foster economic change.
CS33	Nightingale 1, Brunswick (Mayor of London, 2020)	Melbourne, AUSTRALIA	Lack of affordable housing in the face of a climate emergency. Social exclusion.	A housing project built on a community model and designed around principles of environmental sustainability, affordability and social inclusion. The ground floor is dedicated to commercial and community uses.	The creation of a model for fossil fuel free, carbon neutral housing build, it has produced affordable housing with greater community engagement between the street and residents.

Appendix 3

Media Discourse Direct Quotes

Topic	Exert	Source
High streets: agents for economic change'	"Local high streets have gained totemic significance as a bleak lens on what many experience as a broken economic system. With the potential to provide a beating heart for a community – connections into the economy, society, and community infrastructure – the decline of the high street has had massive knock-on effects on public and retail spaces across the UK."	Stir to Action conference registration 2019/2020 (Stir To Action, 2019)
'How to save the UK's crisis-hit high streets'	"According to the Centre for Retail Research there are around 50,000 fewer shops on our High Streets than just over a decade ago…it's not just shops and shoppers who are affected. High Streets have traditionally been at the heart of communities, but as shops close, it can make whole areas unwelcoming. As fewer people come to the High Street, it can make the cycle of decline even worse. For some it can lose its appeal - especially after dark. So, problems for the High Street are problems for us all."	Adam Shaw, Reporer, BBC News (13/01/2020) (Shaw, 2020)
'Beyond the Pandemic: The Future of our High Streets'	"We must seize the opportunity to reaffirm our appreciation for the high street, as a focal point for our communities and accordingly support the small businesses that make our towns shine…We are therefore asking authorities to resist landlords using permitted development rights to transform newly vacant units into more lucrative residential developments, instead putting it in the hands of trusted partners able to repurpose them for the use of small businesses that uplift the local economy….If we take the right action now, we will be able to reimagine these spaces as platforms for technical experimentation, networks of collaboration, testbeds for unique designs and hubs of culture."	Camden Town Unlimited and Euston Town BID, Medium (15/04/2020) (CTU, 2020a)
Imagining a post-pandemic London	"Fragmented ownership created high streets that were less responsive and resilient to change, meaning they would suffer terribly as consumer trends shifted. To remedy this, players such as local authorities and business improvement districts have created overarching guidelines that enable small businesses to be a part of a wider strategy…This includes design guidelines, access to knowledge sharing, collaboration opportunities and shared public spaces such as seating, which is collectively maintained…Our new business rates model rewards those who are adding value to the area…Proposals include a bookable public realm…co-working space models supportive of startups…multi-purpose function of underused buildings… functional civic spaces co-designed with stakeholders…harnessing of lockdown community spirit and mutual aid…and to bolster the independent business community."	Camden Town Unlimited and Euston Town BID, Medium (04/05/20) (CTU, 2020b)
'It's Time to Socialise the High Street'	"Socialisation of the high street… will happen through an active intervention at state and local level, along with civil society groups, to bring people back to commune rather than just to consume…Traffic needs to be diverted and high streets made safe, pollution-free, and walkable, with strong measures to safeguard women and people of colour in particular. Relief from business rates, some levelling on effective tax rates between online and bricks and mortar, and regulation of commercial rents for smaller firms owned by local people will help bring character and a sense of place, stimulating local economies."	Andrew Pedelton, New Economics Foundation, Tribune (17/08/2020) (Pedelton, 2020)
'The future of the high street'	"Prior to COVID-19, many councils were working with town centre planners to understand how high streets were used: making public realm improvement, digitising high streets, master planning and improving access…Despite municipal resource constraints, long-term changes are needed to reconnect communities with high streets."	LGA, House of Commons Briefing (10/12/2020) (LGA, 2020b)
'What urban development for people, not profit, can look like'	"How we rebuild our high streets and town centres after the pandemic is one of the most urgent questions facing communities across Britain… how – and for whom – we undertake urban development for will be critical to building a sustainable and just economy. The Wards Corner Community Plan is a viable and coherent answer to this question, which could offer a model for communities across the country seeking to rethink urban change."	Save Latin Village Actors, The Guardian (11/08/2021) (Burgos, Alvarez and Taylor, 2021)

Shaping London's Town Centres: Community Governance	"They need to become more diverse and functional spaces for community uses. The high street is only 'dying' if we take viability of bricks and mortar retail as its only vital sign"- Claire Harding (Centre for London). "There are too many competitions, no access for community organisations directly and coordinating them to make sense of something for a single place is difficult. Competitive processes that local authorities have to go through is unlikely to lead to sensible regeneration." - Vidya Alakeson (Power to Change). "There needs to be more facilitation, connection making by local authorities." - Caroline Wilson (Inclusive Economy Team, Islington Council). "We need greater transparency. If you've taken comments, make an Instagram account and share what you've done with them. Mapping is also important, as even for us a clear view of ownership is quite difficult." - Tom Sykes (TFL)	Alakeson, Wilson and Sykes, in: Claire Harding, presenter, Centre for London Webinar, Community Town Centres Report (26/05/21) (Harding, 2021)
Policy Paper: Build Back Better High Streets	"This past year and a half or so has seen towns, cities and villages right across the country rediscover their high streets. We've stayed close to home and shopped local. Turned to small independent retailers who found all kinds of innovative ways to keep us going…with a little help from government, they can once again become the proud and prosperous heart of every community… If a vacant shop isn't working for retail, arcane rules shouldn't stand in the way of it becoming a nursery, or small independent fitness studio."	Boris Johnson, Prime Ministers Forward (15/07/21) (in MHCLG, 2021b)
How one UK town ripped up the rule book to revive its high street	"What are town centres for?. If people are not coming into town to shop, what are they going to come in to do?"- Nigel Cooke (Stockton Councillor) "The Stockton vision is to buy up, repurpose, restore and reconfigure the heart of the town, emphasising events, independent enterprise, green space and conviviality. The Castlegate shopping mall will be replaced by a park, library and leisure centre" - Julian Coman (Observer)	Nigel Cooke in: Julian Coman, Reporter, The Observer (21/08/21) (Coman, 2021)
Creative and cultural industries in high street development	"For example, new patterns of living and working could, over time, bolster new types of enterprise, as well as a more inclusive, localised economies and community-led regeneration efforts. This changing context could point to the revival of high streets, alongside traditional focal points, and there is huge potential for the creative sector to contribute to a re-imagined model."	Creative High Streets, We Made That (31/04/22 (Lewis, Laine and Cringle, 2022

Appendix 4

High street practices evaluative framework expanded

This section shows a more detailed analysis of the four London cases addressed in Chapter 5, explaining the ratings in Figure 5.6, through qualitative evaluation of project attributes, assessed against the pillars and criteria deduced in Chapter 4 (Table 4.1). Although subjective and not a numerically robust method, the analysis aims to develop the framework for democratic high street models across diverse contexts, as opposed to creating a comparative scoring system. Scoring criteria encourages the prioritisation of areas for development with evaluation also demonstrating the compensatory nature of pillars; for example, a lack of collective ownership can be balanced by democratic governance, or essential service provision replaced by mutual aid emerging from social spaces.

TABLE 4.1
Evaluative tool: criteria for enacting economic democracy on the high street expanded (author's own)

Criteria	Application
Welfare Resources	• Accessible essential services • Access to wellbeing resources
Labour Rights	• Decent employment • Advice and support services • Skills & training • Prioritisation of labour over property rights
Economic Opportunity	• Small business funding & start-up incubators • Employment support services • Focus on Local Economic Development • Affordable spaces
Inclusive Design	• Connected • Accessible • Inclusive design
Collective Ownership	• Collective ownership of assets • Democratic stewardship of assets
Distributed Social Surplus	• Community re-investment • Socially productive use of land • A diverse range of organisations (in scale and form) and strong local independent businesses
Common Production	• Shared workspaces • Collaborative projects & collective production • Social Solidarity Economy
Democratic Planning	• Empowering participatory planning • Assemblies (physical and online platforms) • Other deliberative processes
Social Infrastructure	• Community & cultural centres • Open public space • Community events, development of networks & social capital
Transparency & Accountability	• Open & accessible information • Broad public engagement • Recourse to accountability

CAMDEN COLLECTIVE WORKSPACES

Pillars/ Principles	Criteria	Rating	Application
Individual Economic Rights (Inclusivity) 13/20	Welfare Resources	2	Limited public services and focus on wellbeing Engagement with environmental sustainability and social justice issues
	Labour Rights	4	Employment training programmes Increasing opportunity for small local enterprise employment Free desk space targeted at the young, community-focused and those pursuing projects for social good
	Economic Opportunity	5	Free workspaces, project seed funding and start-up incubators CTU also runs the Camden Future Changemakers fund which supports 16-35-year olds deciding on priorities and allocations of local grants Nurtured 917 new businesses, raised £25m in finance and creed 214 new jobs (Camden Collective, 2021) Local supply and employment encouraged through business networks Business advice and support services, as well as informal support
	Inclusive Design	2	High street location and a open cafe Meanwhile leases mean sites vary in design and the short-term locations could limit accessibility for some Limited use by those outside of the creative and knowledge industries
Diverse Forms of Collective Ownership (Collectivism) 10/15	Collective Ownership	4	BID ownership means a collective ownership and stewardship model where local businesses democratically vote on issues and renewal Common good depends on the composition of BID group - business actors may have varying powers in reality
	Distributed Social Surplus	3	A registered charity runs the workspace on a not-for-profit model, but focus is on businesses Reinvestment in community and placemaking projects Encourages diverse, socially focused and local small enterprises who reduce extraction
	Common Production	3	Evidence of collaborative projects emerging from networks formed Limited shared production due to separate offices and rotation of users Free space users contribute 2 hours a month to the organisation, with a skeleton staff operation relying on collective maintenance
Knowledgeable and Deliberative Publics (Participatory) 12/15	Democratic Planning	4	Decisions made largely through the BID voting mechanisms The BID campaigns for policies which benefit the local area, allowing community interests to influence local politics outside of elections. BID organisation works with other community groups and organisations on local issues and planning
	Social Infrastructure	3	Limited public space but free desk spaces and open events Host to Camden Creates Festival & other 'place making' events Actively building local organisational partnerships Networks created through the number of spaces and users over time
	Transparency & Accountability	5	BID structure ensures reporting and strong public visibility Desk space members engage through quarterly review meetings Recourse - ballot has seen renewal of the BID for over 15 years Broader public engagement through the Festival, placemaking activities and voluntary community consultations

FUNDING: Camden Town Unlimited BID Levy; The Mayor of London's High Street Fund; The Mayor of London's Regeneration Fund; The Mayor of London's Panel and Mayor of London's Growing Places Fund; Camden Council; City Bridge Trust Stepping Stones Fund; The Mayor of London's Good Growth Fund Development Funding. Originally relying on grants for funding, they are now more sustainably funded with paid office spaces supporting free-desk space .

Source: Architecture 00, 2021; Camden Collective, 2021; CTU, 2020c; GLA, 2014; GLA, 2018b; GLA & Arup 2020; Madaleno et al., 2021.

EVERYONE EVERYDAY NEIGHBOURHOOD SHOPS

Pillars/ Principles	Criteria	Rating	Application
Individual Economic Rights (Inclusivity) 16/20	Welfare Resources	4	Access to mutual care resources from shared cooking to food growing and child-minding services Wellbeing events and supporting programmes
	Labour Rights	4	The social solidarity economy prioritises mutual production over consumption Skills and training for project initiators by neighbourhood designers Skills sharing
	Economic Opportunity	3	Support for 250 projects over 5 years (Participatory City, 2019) Business support manager to encourage local start-ups through resources and training Limited creation of employment opportunities or sustained income
	Inclusive Design	5	Accessible high street location Designed around inclusive participation principles Projects designed to be accessible through low time commitments, low costs and shared responsibility
Diverse Forms of Collective Ownership (Collectivism) 11/15	Collective Ownership	2	Limited ownership of local assets by community members Shared use of workshop facilities and neighbourhood shops provide more opportunities to develop collective property ownership The Open Corners project is initiating the collective stewardship of open land but is in formative stages
	Distributed Social Surplus	4	Community focused projects encourage mutual care and support through developing the social solidarity economy Promoting small diverse projects and businesses Projects are designed to improve living conditions in the borough
	Common Production	5	Designed to promote collaborative projects and sharing economy Spaces for collective production, including a centralised workshop Incorporates platforms designed for sharing resources online Collective production of products and services with projects designed to encourage co-production and to be non-hierarchical
Knowledgable and Deliberative Publics (Participatory) 10/15	Democratic Planning	2	Little democratic governance of the overarching scheme Projects promote a culture of distributed decision making Chance for those taking part to shape the borough through participatory projects
	Social Infrastructure	4	Open Corners outdoor spaces, shops and workspaces provide space for social engagement but with some constraints of the overarching institutional management Collective project design, a newspaper, festivals, events and workshops encourage social capital to form
	Transparency & Accountability	4	Open publishing of results and research around participatory projects Collaborative research with outside organisations increases pluralism May be held accountable more by funders than local people

FUNDING: Barking & Dagenham Council, The City Bridge Trust, Bloomberg Philanthropies, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, National Lottery Fund, City of London, Mayor of London, Barking Riverside and BD Collective.

Source: Every One Every Day, 2021; GLA 2020a; Forné, Micciarello, and Fresnillo, 2019; Participatory City, 2019; Participatory City, 2021.

SAVE LATIN VILLAGE AND WARDS CORNER COMMUNITY PLAN

Pillars/ Principles	Criteria	Rating	Application
Individual Economic Rights (Inclusivity) 16/20	Welfare Resources	4	WCCP (2021) survey suggests the site provides an affordable source of food, personal care and other services - on average 44% cheaper than the surrounding areas Forms a key source of informal advice and support Access to cultural resource
	Labour Rights	4	Employment largely by long-term tenants rooted in local community Strong community and activism demonstrates the prioritisation of people over property rights The project aims for a "new economic common sense...centring everyday workers, tenants and community members as the main actors in social change" (WCCP, 2021) Little formal focus on skills development
	Economic Opportunity	4	Higher market stall occupancy compared to the national average (WCCP, 2021) As a key Latin centre the site supports small businesses by clustering activities, attracting customers from up to 10 miles away — the majority of who also visit other local amenities (WCCP, 2021) Protecting affordable rent for all tenants and employment for the under employed Financial modelling funded through the Democracy Collaborative predicts financial strength under a variety of different circumstances which support affordable rent, including private funding Economic analysis has predicted 450 jobs to come of the community plan due to community wealth building in the surrounding area (Unit 38, 2019) Networks and visitors encourage local economic development Limited economic support for actors to grow productivity with many retail traders facing significant market challenges.
	Inclusive Design	4	Well-connected high street site with plans to broaden use Clustering of services and shops for easy access Welcoming space for immigrant and ethnic minority groups
Diverse Forms of Collective Ownership (Collectivism) 12/15	Collective Ownership	5	Collective renovation and stewardship of the site proposed by the CIC with aims of raising capital through a Community Benefit Society (WGRSSDT, 2021a) Distributed ownership of community plans managed by the Development Trust and designed by an architecture cooperative Unit 38 (2019) Proposed Trust management of the Ward's Corner development
	Distributed Social Surplus	4	The West Green Road and Seven Sisters Development Trust was created in 2008 for the promotion of sustainability, local enterprise, local benefits and encouraging locally owned assets (WCCP, 2021) Plans to reinvest profits into community projects and renovations Contains a diverse range of nationalities and small businesses rooted in local issues High number of dependents to market traders (WCCP, 2021)
	Common Production	3	The market made up of largely retail sole traders Networks encourage informal collaboration between tenants Collective efforts helped to develop the community plan
Knowledgable and Deliberative Publics (Participatory) 14/15	Democratic Planning	5	Plan created through 15 years of consultation with the local community Management will be democratically controlled by the Trust If the Community Benefit Society is used, it will work on a democratic voting system of one member one vote, as apposed votes per capital input or no of shares
	Social Infrastructure	5	Plans for community and public space could encourage more collective projects and events Designation as a civil and cultural asset has created a key space for collective action and activist campaigns A survey suggests 90% of visitors partake in social interaction, mostly with those from different cultural or social backgrounds - evidencing strong networks and the social attraction (WCCP, 2021)
	Transparency & Accountability	4	Website, social media and planning documents open up information for the public The Development Trust hosts regular consultations and presentations Collaboration with other organisations and research institutions to improve understanding of the sites importance Approval based on planning permissions and strong public support Due to separation from local authorities and a lack of legal site ownership, processes of accountability and recourse are still informal

FUNDING: Crowdfunding Campaign, Market Income, Residents, Organisation & Business Contributions of Wards Corner Coalition (incl. Sustainable Haringey, Haringey Living Streets, Wood Green Friends of the Earth, The Ethical Property Foundation), possible support from Tottenham's Future High Streets Fund Programme. The Community Plan renovations are expected to be £12.9m. The trust aims to raise half (around £6m) through grants and £6m through ethical financing, with the rest coming from a Community Benefit Society, issuing shares which will work on one member one vote (Public presentation, WGRSSDT, 2021b).

Source: Alin, 2019; Diamond et al., 2018; King et al., 2018; Save Latin Village, 2021a; Save Latin Village, 2021b; Plunkett Foundation, 2020; Trust for London, 2011; Unit 38, 2019; UNHR, 2017; Wards Corner Policy Advisory Group, 2019; WCCP, 2021; WGRSSDT, 2021a; WGRSSDT, 2021b.

MUSEUM OF FUTURES COMMUNITY CENTRE

Pillars/ Principles	Criteria	Rating	Application
Individual Economic Rights (Inclusivity) 14/20	Welfare Resources	4	Focus on wellbeing events, growing plants and healthy food Key site for hosting public services and support
	Labour Rights	2	Site for workshops and skills, but the focus is on leisure activities Limited focus on employment, job creation or individual rights. Promotes the development of community-based businesses
	Economic Opportunity	3	Incubator for local food businesses, promoting local economic development Network and focus on empowerment encourages the proliferation of new projects and collaborations, but with limited financial support for new enterprises
	Inclusive Design	5	Accessible and connected high street location Focus on reaching less heard community members, as well as creating an open and empowering space
Diverse Forms of Collective Ownership (Collectivism) 8/15	Collective Ownership	1	Little collective ownership or stewardship Project run by a placemaking CIC
	Distributed Social Surplus	3	Projects focused around enhancing local community projects and development of small locally rooted businesses Supports small food businesses, but with little evidence of impact on the wider high street diversity Focus on events may attract those with availability over impacting the broader community
	Common Production	4	Kitchen space has provided a site for collective production - serving as a key site for a soup kitchen and other food services Community space hosts collaborative events and research groups from Kingston university
Knowledgeable and Deliberative Publics (Participatory) 9/15	Democratic Planning	2	Little democratic management processes in place Space responded to a survey suggesting that a barrier to participation was a lack of long-term community space Space has hosted events influencing local issues, providing a high street site to incorporate a broader section of society into planning
	Social Infrastructure	5	Long term site promotes use and the development of social capital Public space and events help to connect local people Serves as a community resource and space for cultural activities
	Transparency & Accountability	2	CIC is held accountable through reporting measures but little is done beyond this to publish information to the wider public Limited assessment and reporting on impacts Engagement and interest may be restricted to those with time and resources to participate

FUNDING: Mayor of London's High Street Fund, Surbiton Business Community, Kingston Council, Community BrainArts Council Grants & Heritage Lottery-funding for research groups.

Source: Community Brain, 2021; GLA, 2021a; Museum of Futures, 2021.

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