

APPLYING THE COMMON TOUCH

Utilising the Commons to Capture Community and Place Identities in Suburbia

KERRY CSUKA



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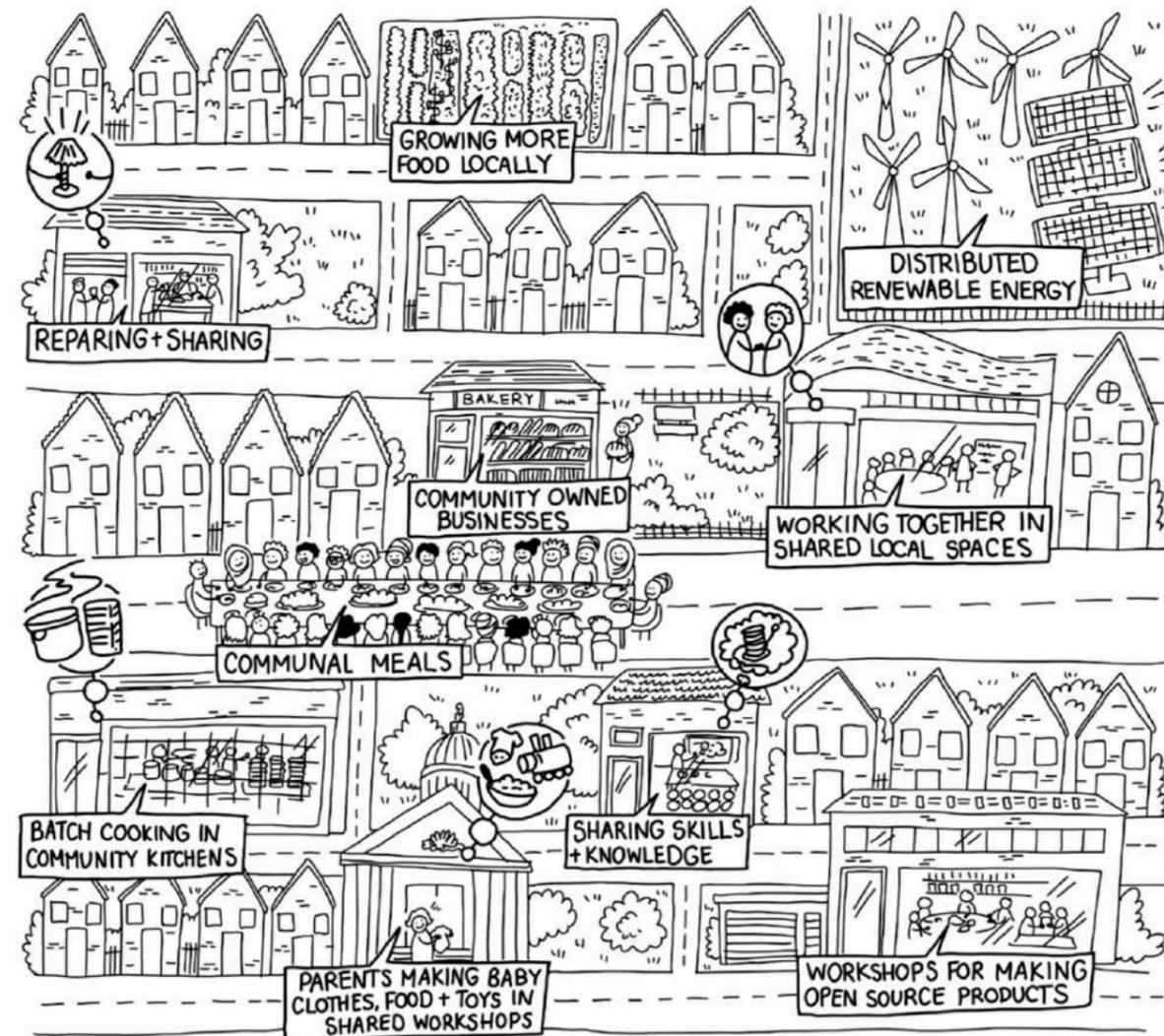
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**UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON
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Being a major project in Urban Design and City Planning submitted to the faculty of the Built Environment as part of the requirements for the award of the MSc in Urban Design and City Planning at UCL, I declare this project is entirely my own work and that ideas, data and images, as well as direct quotations drawn from elsewhere are identified and referenced.



Source: Participatory City (2015)

“In a relentlessly neoliberal climate, the commons seems to offer an alternative to the battle between public and private. The idea of land or services that are commonly owned and managed speaks to a 21st-century sensibility of participative citizenship and peer-to-peer production. In theory, at least, the commons is full of radical potential”
 (McGuirk 2015a)

ABSTRACT

This project examines how the use of the Commons – in simple terms, community-managed resources - could be applied to London’s suburbia to recognise and capture place identity, confronting its identity and austerity crisis. This project also investigates whether the private sector can work collaboratively with communities to create Commons.

The key outcomes of this project are that the tools to common can be applied to the suburban setting just as effectively as the urban, both displaying similar issues of gentrification, vacant land and the privatisation of public space. The study application part of this project prove that London’s suburbia is characterful and this character can be unlocked through commoning to enhance place identity.

This project also shows that a partnership can be achieved between the private sector and communities to create Commons. This can be realised through brand exposure and community projects reactivating vacant shopping units.

This project reframes the basis on which citizens, the private sector and the public sector can work together to build commons, with the private sector becoming an endorser rather than the enemy of community enterprise and spirit.

The future must focus on the innovative capabilities of retrofitting suburbia on a local level by and for the people who live there.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisor Professor Peter Rees for providing me with consistent guidance throughout. For answering all my questions in moments of confusion and for a willingness to set aside time to meet with me, helping the project to be where it is today, I am very grateful. I would like to thank all the individuals who contributed to this study. In particular, many thanks to Bexley Village Library and the businesses who kindly took time out of their schedules to help my research. I would like to thank my parents, whose support has motivated me to keep going, and my UDCP peers who have provided support, laughter and great memories over the past year.

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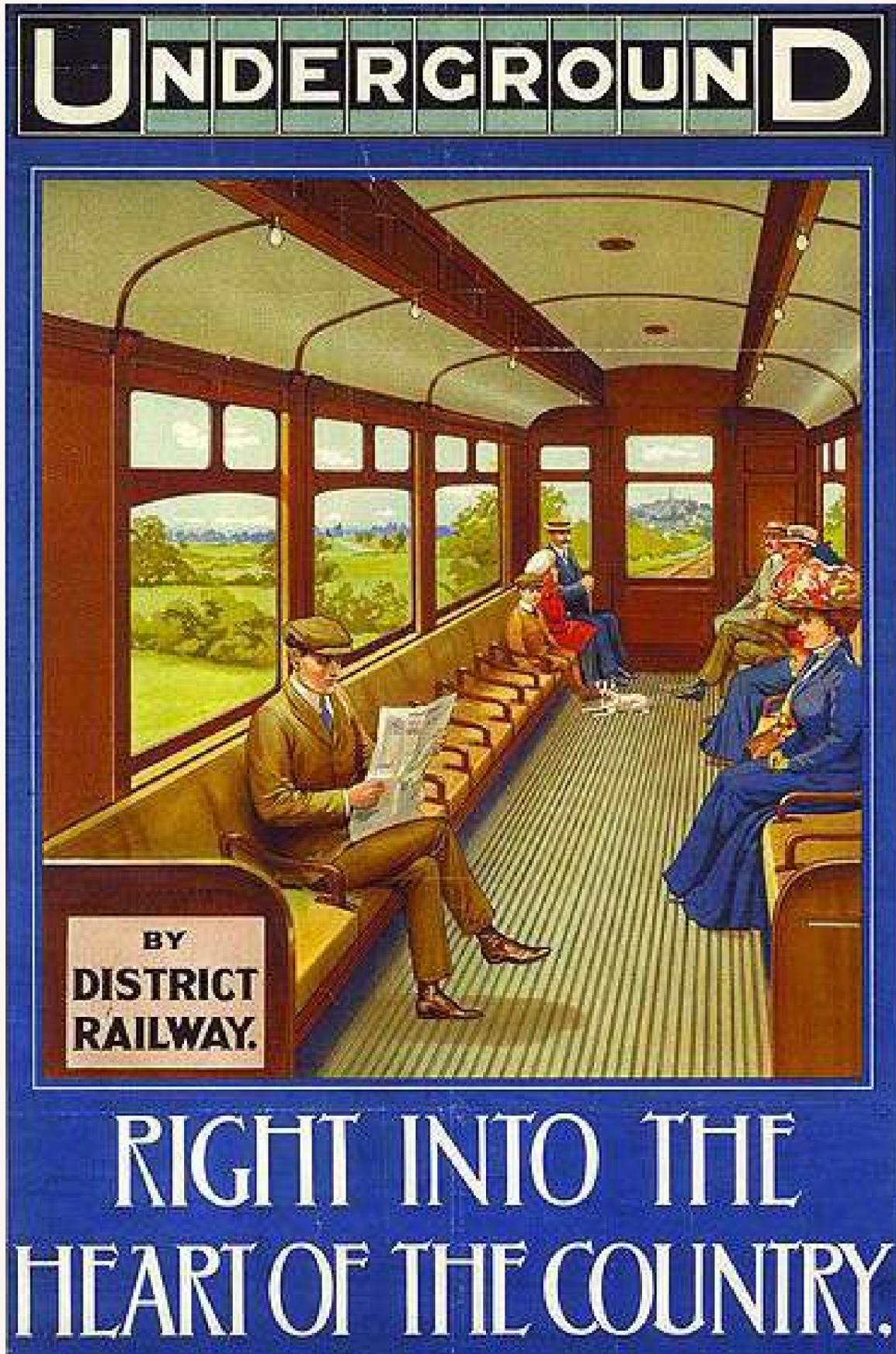
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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

1.2 The Problem

- 1.2.1 A new urban politics is emerging across our cities
- 1.2.2 Suburbia is in a state of flux
- 1.2.3 London's Suburban Identity Crisis
- 1.2.4 Private Sector Urbanism

1.3 Project Overview

1.4 Project Methodology

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Central government austerity policies and reduced local authority spending has sparked a renewed interest in the management of our cities.

Tonkiss (2013, p. 7) states that we are in a state of “austerity urbanism”. With central government cuts affecting the ability to deliver community services, local community advocates have taken it on themselves to deliver these.

Austerity has been felt most acutely in city suburbs all around the world – the core of cities experiencing investment whilst the peripheries suffering disinvestment. With local authorities inclined to make a quick buck to mitigate their budget deficits, suburbs around the world are witnessing an influx of private development, public space commodification, gentrification and displacement. I have witnessed this in Bromley, South-east London (Figure 1) which sparked interest in this project topic. This is leading to a loss of place identity, creating homogenous suburban centres similar to the urban core.

This project explores the use of the Commons – in simple terms, community-managed resources – to rediscover place identity in suburban localities, confronting suburbia’s identity and austerity crisis. This project will investigate how participatory planning and urban design can together reclaim land and achieve a new model of governance for the common good.

This project will first engage with theoretical debates and design practice surrounding London’s suburbia, place identity and the Commons, followed by a review of Commons activity around the world. This will be followed by a step-by-step design toolkit for community advocates to be able to Common their neighbourhood. These tools will be applied to the suburban setting of the London Borough of Bexley, to prove that suburbia is rich and characterful and that commoning can be the antidote to local authority cuts, the identity crisis and privatisation.



Figure 1: Bromley Town Centre (Source: Bromley Times 2014)

1.2 THE PROBLEM

1.2.1 A new urban politics is emerging across our cities

Tonkiss (2013 p. 312) talks of this new “post-crisis city age” and the political economy of “austerity urbanism” across the world. As a result of diminishing public sector funding, local authorities’ ability to deliver community services has diminished. As a result, public spaces have become “commodified” into public-turned-private assets, owned and managed by private companies, limiting the activity they can play host to (Garrett 2015). This “consumption-based approach” to public space diminishes opportunities for true social interaction and public life, impeding the opportunity to create “stronger bonds and communities” (Theatrum Mundi 2015, para.3).

The impact of the recession and ability of local government to cope with economic shocks has prompted deep questions about how public spaces and services can be sustained. The

Commons has been cited as offering a solution that enables community members to be key actors in the governing process, relieving governments of maintenance duties.

Local Authority budget cuts have triggered innovative bottom-up ways of addressing local issues by communities. The ‘City as a Commons’ is an emerging body of ideas and practices that have the potential to transform the ways in which we are governed and how we organise ourselves to deliver communal services. Elinor Ostrom (1990) brought the notion of commoning back to academic consciousness via the Nobel Prize, displaying that natural resources, such as forests and fisheries, are managed by cooperative organisation, allowing a self-managed community of user’s equal access, without private ownership or state control. This has inspired

academics and communities alike to look at how the Commons can be applied to realms beyond this. It is aligned with the idea of Lefebvre’s (1996) “right to the city” – that citizens have the right to be co-producers of their city.

The Commons, more practically, are grassroots projects supporting collective participation and ownership of space, examples highlighted in Figures 2 to 5. This growing movement has been endorsed by Theatrum Mundi, an urban design network, who have created a competition to use existing land across London to be re-imagined as common spaces. The commons has the momentum to transform the way our cities, towns, neighbourhoods and villages are governed.

THE SOLUTION?



Figure 2 : Theatrum Mundi Commons Competition (2017)



Figure 3: AGROCITE, PARIS: community-owned civic hubs promoting ecological sustainability (Source: McGuirk 2015)

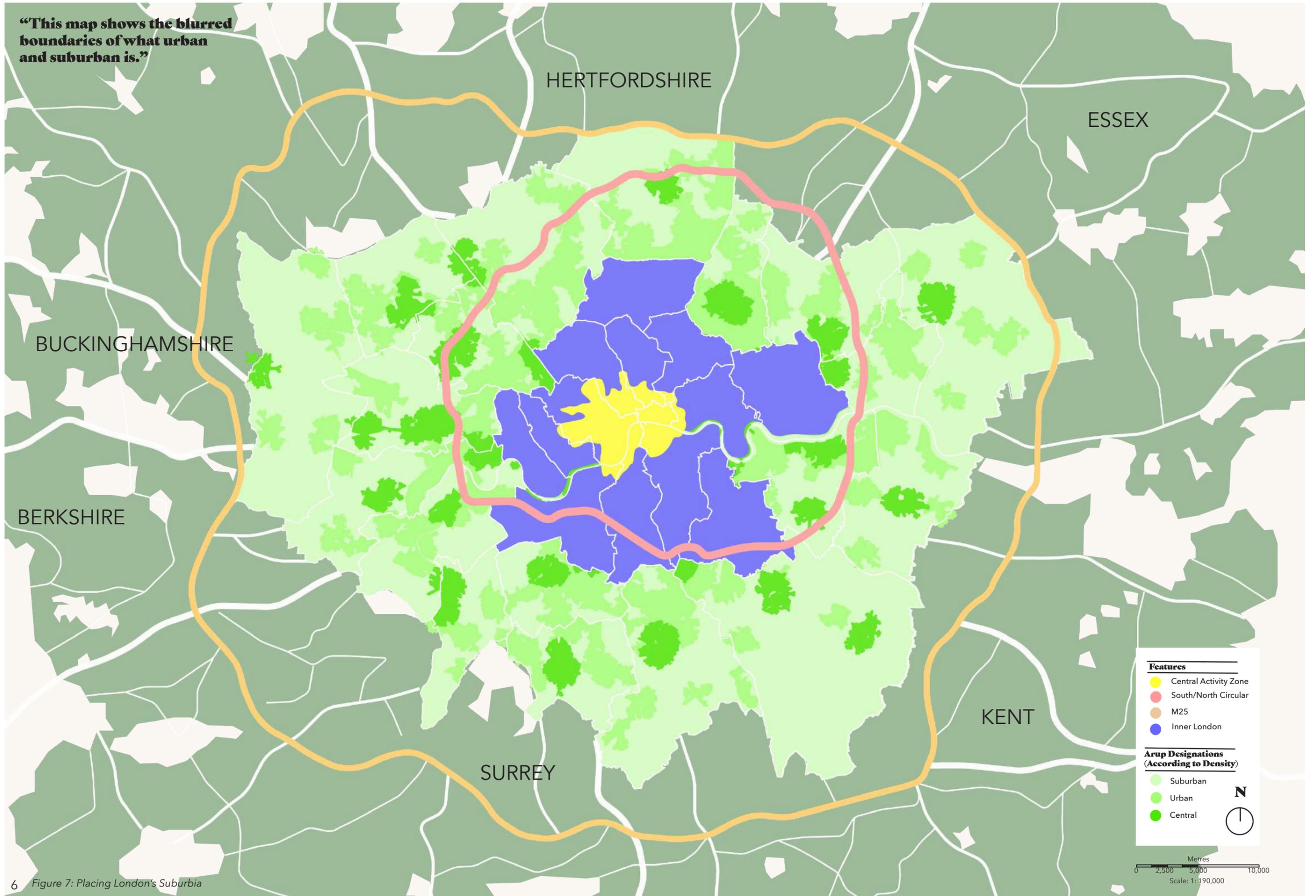


Figure 4: CO-INVESTING IN THE HEART OF THE VILLAGE: A community-owned pub/shop/library, Yorkshire, England (Source: Architecture 00 2015)



Figure 5: RAINBOW OF DESIRES: a set of pavilions in spaces around a social housing estate in Dalston, London. Encourages communal life in an ‘endangered’ type of space by processes of privatisation and gentrification (Source: Theatrum Mundi 2015)

“This map shows the blurred boundaries of what urban and suburban is.”



6 Figure 7: Placing London's Suburbia

1.2.2 Suburbia is in a state of flux

Definitions of suburbia are elusive but share common characteristics: on the outskirts, low density and within commutable distance of the centre (Forsyth 2012). Urban designers have started to discuss the premise for the 21st century suburb as places that are sustainable and characterful (Mitchell 2010). Retrofitting suburbia is an immediate requirement and the concern for American, Australian, European and UK cities alike (Dunham-Jones 2013).

According to Woodman (2015) London needs "to stop laughing" at suburbia, thinking of it as merely dormitory villages. Changing this perception poses difficulties due to the social construction of suburbia as dystopian, suffocating, boring and the butt of all jokes, portrayed by popular culture (Figure 6). Urban and rural studies have ignored suburban studies, which is the reason for low priority in suburban management (Urbed 2002; Carmona 2015). This is surprising since 84% of the UK population live in these environments (Vaughan et al. 2009).

1.2.3 London's Suburban Identity Crisis

Table 1 identifies the issues Outer London is currently confronted with.

Where is Suburbia?	New Suburban Realities	Gentrification	Developer's Free Reign	Lack of Associational Life
<p>What was suburban is now urban. Figure 7 shows the blurred boundaries of what is suburban and what is urban. Arup highlight what was once suburban has urban population densities, found in Inner London. On the ground this also rings true: places classified as Inner London (Blue) have a suburban feel such as Hampstead Heath, whilst Outer London have urban neighbourhoods such as Peckham and Lewisham.</p> <p>Some of the remnants of village-like suburbia still remain in places such as Dulwich and Blackheath, but this is due to maintaining rich, identifiable characteristics whilst other suburbs have been broken apart by social migration and gentrification.</p>	<p>Suburbia conforms to old identities, unresponsive to new needs and realities (Figure 8). Scholars and urban practitioners have not fully comprehended these changes and it is difficult to understand what place is in London's Metroland.</p>	<p>Increasingly city dwellers are moving further out to suburban town centres for what's left of real London authenticity (Vaughan et al. 2009). As a result, these places are becoming the same as the areas that they are moving from - hard to differentiate between, identity missing (Bridge 2013). This is the rise of gentrification in suburbia, due to cheaper land values (Mace and Paccoud 2017). The number of Foxtons (estate agents) has spread across Outer London (Figure 9) - a 'hearsay' gentrification indicator. Suburban centres are following a gentrification model, with standard measurements of successful town centres looking for prestige brands, overlooking community and mundane activities (Vaughan and Griffiths 2010).</p>	<p>Private developer's have had free reign over suburbia (Jones 2015), creating anonymous, mass-produced landscapes. Increasing corporate power, selling off land and property and privatisation of once public spaces has raised citizen concern.</p>	<p>As residents change in suburbia, with people moving in and displaced residents moving out, people do not know their neighbours (Britton et. al 2015). New spaces are needed for associational life in communities, helping to build community identity - something the suburbs are challenged with.</p>

Table 1: Outer London Problems



Figure 6: Media Portrayals of the Suburbs

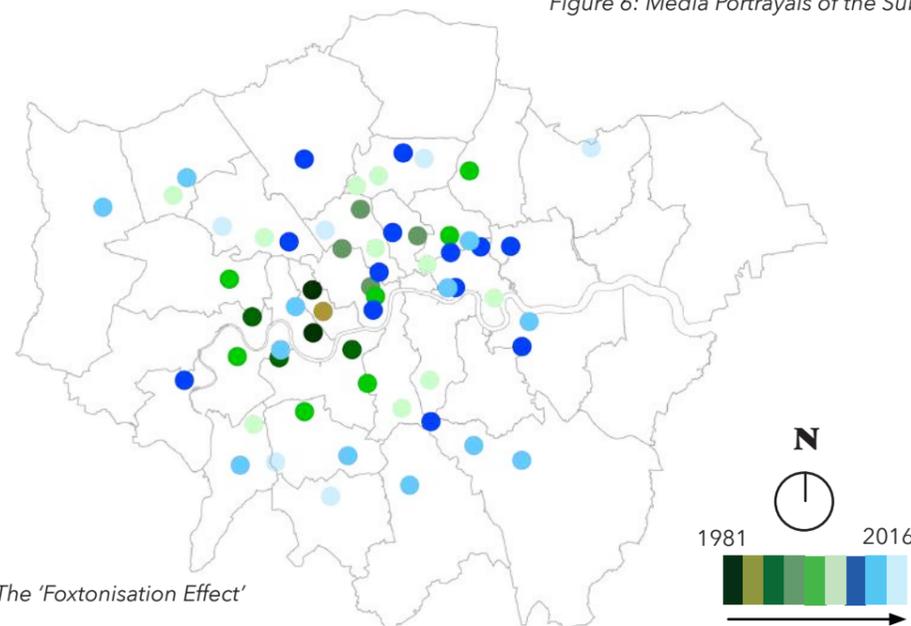


Figure 9: The 'Foxtonisation Effect'

The Suburban Dream

The Suburban Reality



Figure 8: The Literature on Suburbia Dream and Reality

There is an increasing interest in Outer London to accommodate London's housing and employment growth aspirations (Figure 11), with 24 out of 38 of the Greater London Authority's (GLA) Opportunity Areas, designated for investment (GLA 2017).

There is increasing evidence of people collectively fighting back against privatisation, gentrification and displacement, dissatisfied with the inequality of access this creates (Figure 10). However, an increasing number of value-driven private companies are going beyond traditional corporate social responsibility, to put social and community concerns at the heart of their operations (Architecture 00 2016). More innovative governance models need to be imagined, allowing collaboration between communities, local authorities and the private sector, lying outside of the "market logic" (Theatrum Mundi 2015, para 2).

1.2.4 Private Sector Urbanism

Brand exposure in cities is "the creation of vibrant public spaces combined with brand exposure" (Pop-Up City 2016) and has become an integral part of urbanism. A growing number of governments have less money to spend, requiring the financial support of companies to take care of primary tasks.

Large companies such as Santander, Coca-Cola, Lidl and Nike (Figures 12 to 15) have invested in these interventions. This provides them with positive publicity whilst providing "fun, vibrant and lively streets" (Pop-Up City 2016, para 6). *Golfstromen*, the urban design agency launching Pop-Up City strongly believe that "this trend is going to develop further in the next years".

At a time of central government austerity, dwindling local government budgets and privatised public spaces, all of which are affecting London's suburbia more significantly than it's Inner London counterpart, the Commons take on greater significance as a socio-political process than ever before. Gentrification challenges the questions of who the community is and what is place identity. The solution this project offers is community action through the Commons, whereby the "people shape the physical, cultural, and social identity of space" - rethinking urban governance and place identity at the most fundamental level (Theatrum Mundi 2015 para.3).

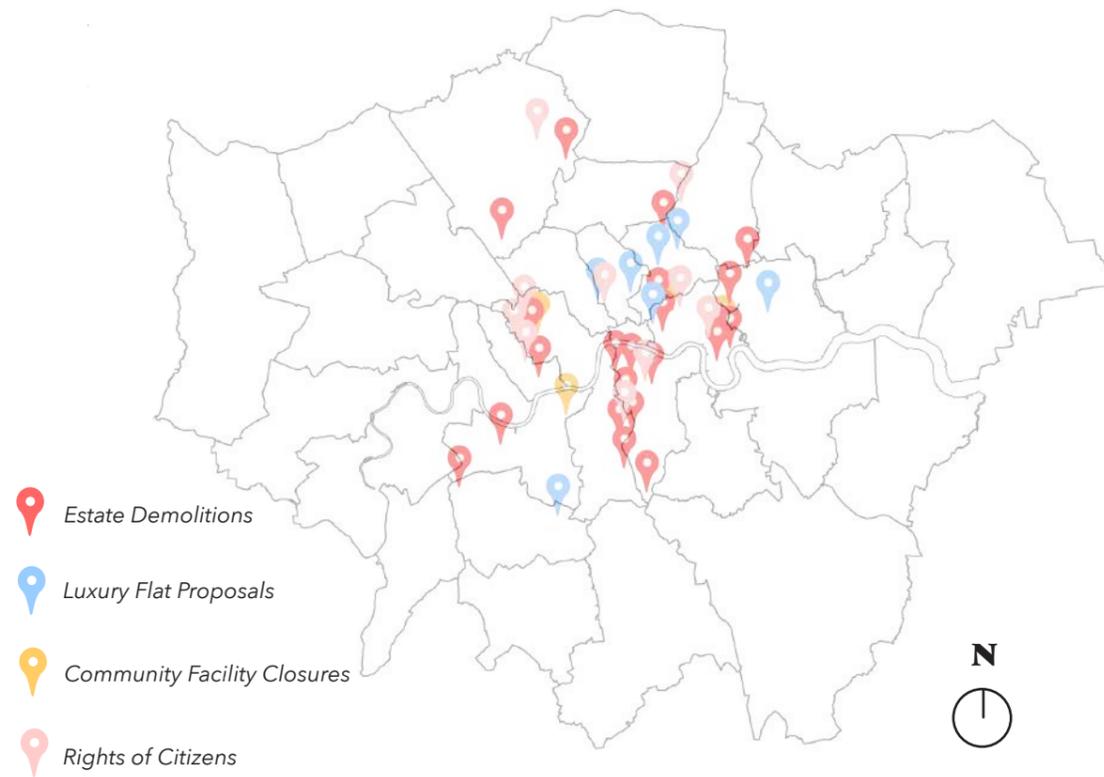


Figure 10: Local Protests Responding to Gentrification/displacement in London

Figure 11: Designers and planners have a growing interest in the suburbs, as evidenced by a range of events that are held each year



Figure 12: Santander Bicycle hire program, London, UK



Figure 13: Coca-Cola Mini Kiosks, Berlin, Germany



Figure 14: Lidl Pop-up Library, Sofia, Bulgaria



Figure 15: Nike, The 'Brand is in your Court', Paris, France

1.3 PROJECT OVERVIEW

Figures 16 and 17 summarise the Research Project's overall agenda.

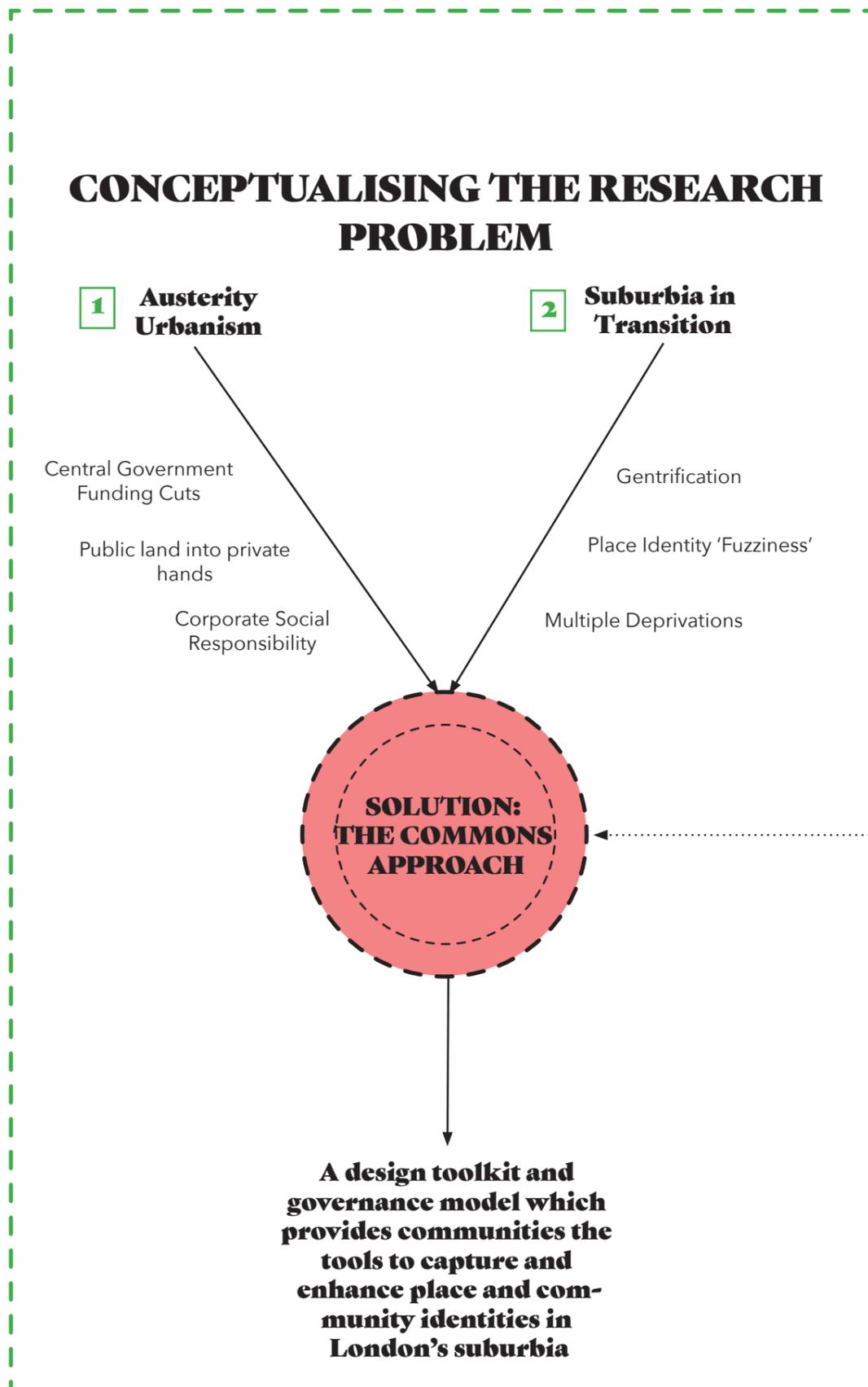


Figure 16: Conceptualising the Research Problem

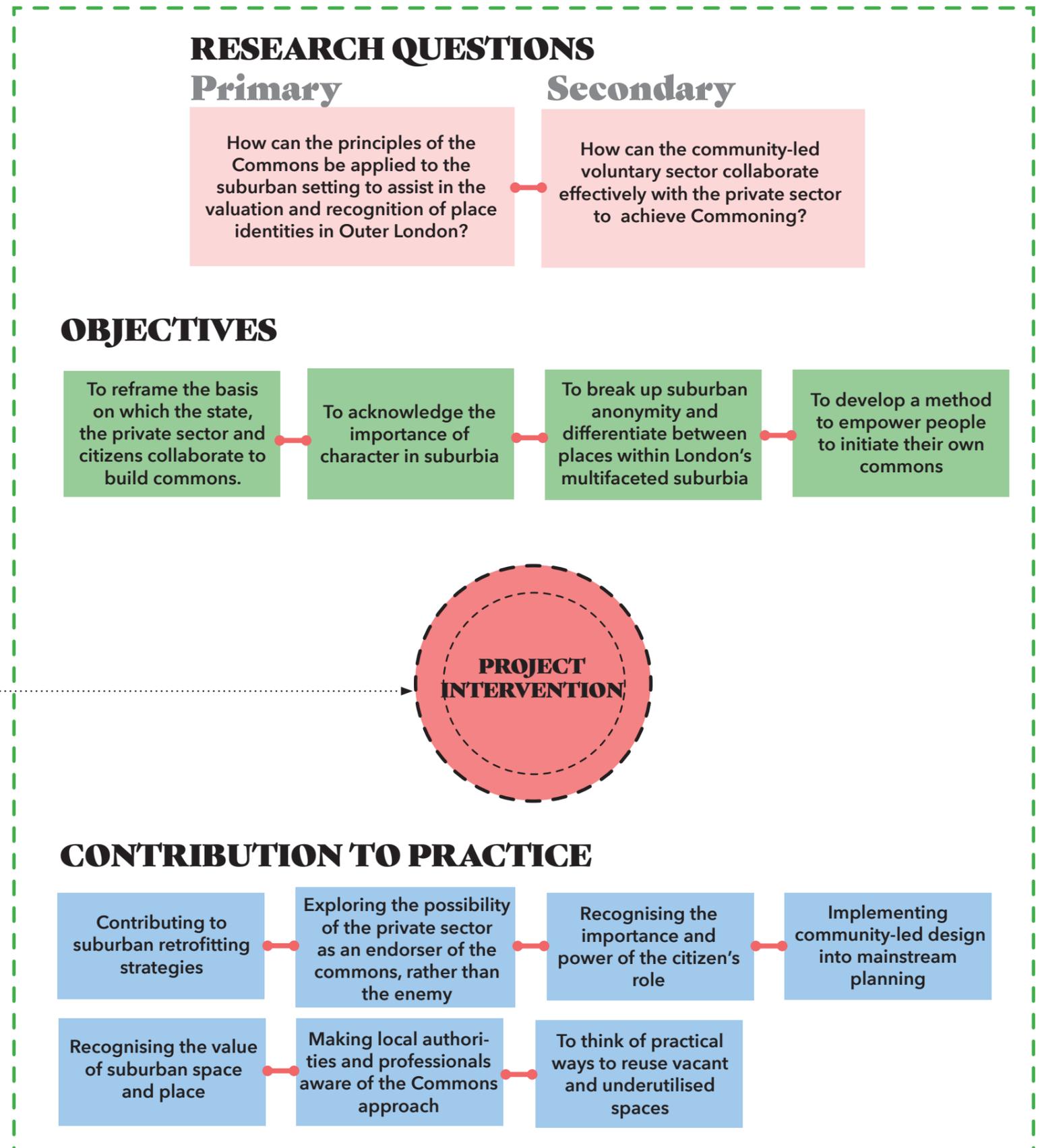


Figure 17: Research Questions, Objectives and Contribution to Practice



1.4 PROJECT METHODOLOGY

Figure 18 displays the project methodology.

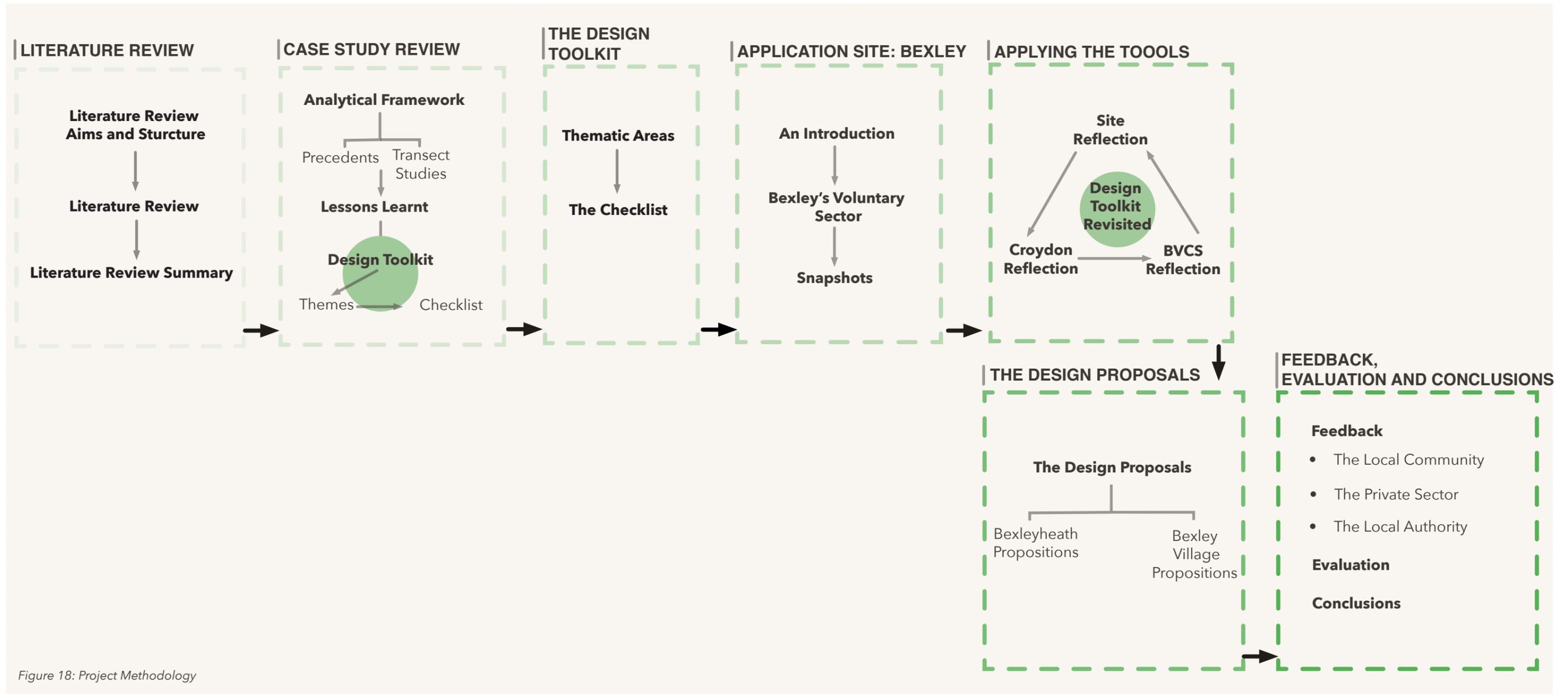


Figure 18: Project Methodology



2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Suburbia: how did we get here?

2.2. The Suburbs in Transition

2.3 Place and Community Identity

2.4 Instigating Neighbourhood Change through Civic Action

2.5 Process Over Result

2.6 Literature Review Summary

The purpose of this literature review is to provide a context for this project; grounding it within academic literature and practical studies. Figure 19 highlights the literature review aims and Figure 20 provides the overall structure.



Figure 19: Literature Review Aims

2.1 Suburbia: how did we get here?

- 2.1.1 Placing Suburbia in a post-suburban world
- 2.1.2 Outer London Suburbia
- 2.1.3 Suburban Wealth and Poverty

2.2 The Suburbs in Transition

- 2.2.1 Outer London Interest
- 2.2.2 Suburban Gentrification
- 2.2.3 NIMBYism

2.3 Place and Community Identity

- 2.3.1 Definitions
- 2.3.2 Principles for Designing for Identity
- 2.3.3 Sense of Community
- 2.3.4 Policy

2.4 Instigating Neighbourhood Change through Civic Action

- 2.4.1 The Market, the state, the alternative?
- 2.4.2 The Commons
- 2.4.3 Participation Culture
- 2.4.4 Civic Economy
- 2.4.5 Tactical Urbanism (TU)
- 2.4.6 DIY Urbanism
- 2.4.7 Vacant Spaces
- 2.4.8 Scaling Up Participation

2.5 Process Over Result

- 2.5.1 Community by Doing
- 2.5.2 Sense of Community

2.6 Literature Review Summary

Figure 20: Literature Review Structure

2.1 Suburbia: how did we get here?

2.1.1 Placing Suburbia in a post-suburban world |

The assumption that suburbia is one-dimensional, anonymous and boring is deep-rooted (Glass 1964; Hall 2009). Whilst this is a crude characterisation challenged in the literature, it remains persistent (Tongson 2011). However, scholars point out that suburbs are judged from external perspectives - an imaginary that is "stripped of people and the experience of the area as a lived space" (Mace 2013 p. 12). Peter Hall (2013) believed that suburbs have diversified hugely in character in the UK, Germany, Netherlands and USA. Scholars now argue that we have entered a post-suburban world (Kling et al. 1995) where there are many types of suburbs (Figures 21-24). This reflects Soja's (2000) postmetropolis theory, suburbia as a dispersed urban form where old definitions of centre, suburb and rural no longer hold.

2.1.2 Outer London Suburbia

In the early twentieth century, what is now Outer London was a radical laboratory for new forms of urban living. Ebenezer Howard's (1898) and Unwin's (1932) Garden Cities,

New Towns and infrastructural advances of the Metropolitan railway are key examples. These transformed rural areas into commutable suburbs. Levison (2008) concludes that from 1871-2001 a positive feedback loop was created: railways generated demand for residential development, stimulating demand for further infrastructure. This allowed the 'bourgeoisie' to live outside the city, benefitting from clean air and greenery (Biddulph 2002).

Although many scholars discuss the evolution of London's suburbia, few define its boundaries. According to the railway guide of 1915 "Metroland is still elusive and subjective with elastic borders that each visitor can draw for himself". Practitioners today still struggle to define suburbia, the map on page 6 expresses this. According to Hall (2009), this is why suburbia has been given little recognition - we do not know where it lies.



Figure 21: Transit-oriented Suburbia (UK)



Figure 22: Technoburb (Silicon Valley, California)



Figure 23: Transit-oriented and Edge Cities (Los Angeles)



Figure 24: Exurbs or Edge Cities (Shanghai)

2.1.3 Suburban Wealth and Poverty

Centre for London (CfL) conduct regular research on the geography of wealth and poverty in London, proclaiming the city has turned “inside out” (CfL 201, p.1). CfL states that significant changes are happening (see Figures 25 and 26). Florida (2017) claims that suburban poverty is the result of displaced families from the core moving outwards, as well as home-grown suburban residents falling out of their “middle classness” due to house price surges, resulting in inequalities that rival the urban core. London Mapper (2016) analysis disapproves this, stating that inequalities are less in the urban core than the periphery.

CfL’s distorted maps show relative changes in borough sizes according to certain analysis. Figures 28 and 29 show the distributions of wealthy households in London in 1980 and 2010 respectively. In 1980 (Figure 28), Inner London shrinks from its regular geography (Figure 27). 3% of Southwark’s population are deemed as wealthy households. At the same time, Outer London expands, with Barnet having 29%

of households classed as wealthy. In 2010, the distribution of these household’s changes significantly. Although relative wealth increases across all of London, Barnet has grown from 29% to 41%, Southwark’s growing from 3% to 13%. Wealth is clearly growing in Inner London, whilst wealth growth in Outer London is slowing. Although wealth is not defined in this analysis, other research supports these conclusion (Just Space 2015; Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2016).

Post-suburban theory sidesteps decline as a characteristic of suburbs today. This is however the reality for Outer London, made up of “exclusive” and “excluded places” (McManus and Ethington 2007, p. 31). Peck (2011) describes the “shrinking suburbs”, as a consequence of development pressures around transport hubs, some suburbs intensify whilst others shrink, experiencing disinvestment.

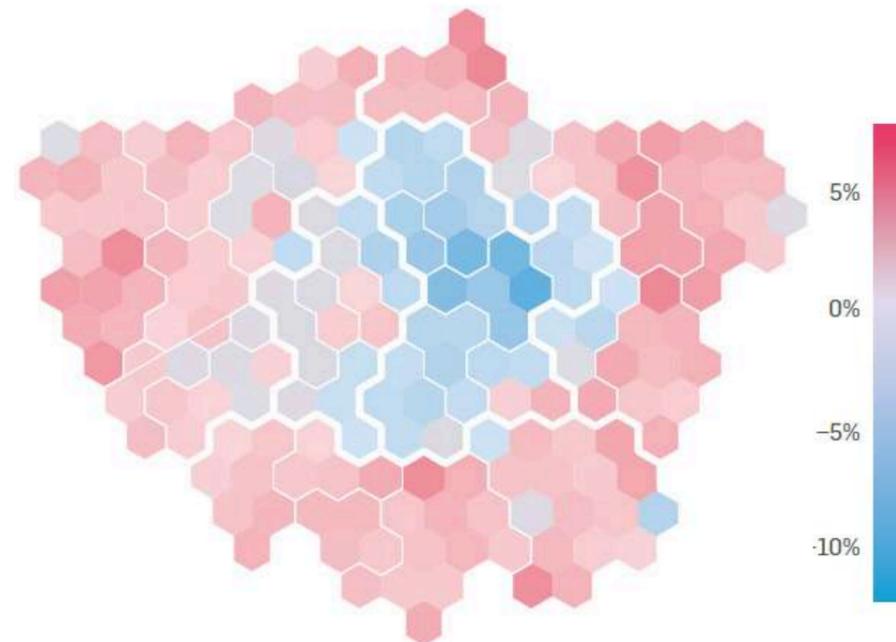


Figure 25: Change in the rate of households claiming means-tested benefits, 2001-2013 (Source: Centre for London 2015)

A COSMOPOLITAN OUTER LONDON	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued rise in the number of Londoners born abroad in Outer London than Inner London, undermining stereotypes of a cosmopolitan centre and mono-cultural suburbs.
OUTER LONDON IS POORER THAN IT USED TO BE, INNER LONDON IS RICHER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Islington and Hackney saw reductions in poverty rates, falling 7% over the decade. Poverty rates increased in all outer London boroughs over the same period.
PROFESSIONALS MOVING BACK INTO THE CENTRE	<p>The number of people employed in skilled occupations increased:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> From 49% to 64% in Hackney From 60% to 73% in Islington From 46% to 57% in Lewisham From 54% to 64% in Lambeth. <p>Conversely, Barnet’s residents from 54% to 48%. The changes documented do not exclusively reflect the relocation of poorer people to outer London. Other factors include falling real median wages (Machin 2015).</p>
OUTER LONDON HOUSES MORE PRIVATE RENTERS THAN EVER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proportion of owner-occupier households in Outer London fell from 67% to 60% between 2001- 2011. The share of households who rent privately grew from 12% to 21%.

Table 26: ‘Inside Out’ London (Source: CfL 2016)



Figure 27: The Geography of London. The different colours reflect the different London Boroughs (Source: Londonmapper 2016)



Figure 28: Number of Wealthy Households in 1980 Distorted Map. N.B. the larger the distortion, the greater the wealth. (Source: Londonmapper 2016)



Figure 29: Number of Wealthy Households Wealth in 2010. N.B. the larger the distortion, the greater the wealth. (Source: Londonmapper 2016)

2.2 The Suburbs in Transition

2.2.1 Outer London Interest

Carmona (2015) proclaims that the suburbs have low priority in terms of urban management. However, times are changing due to inner-city pressures. Peter Hall (2013) said the real issue was that high density is very attractive in Outer London. This is valid, as in recent years' urban practitioners have formulated density studies to retrofit suburbia, highly regarded practices such as HTA (Figure 30), Pollard Thomas Edwards and the Architecture Foundation. However, little attention has been paid to character, activity, community building elements and bottom-up approaches. The studies also do not reflect the "multifaceted nature of the suburbs", instead anonymising solutions, losing the essence of what they are trying to achieve - placemaking (Architecture 00 2015, p. 15).

2.2.2 Suburban Gentrification

A vast amount of literature focuses on the gentrification of urban places (Butler et al. 1995; Atkinson 2004; Harvey 2008). Ruth Glass first coined the term in 1964, with concerns in Islington. By definition, gentrification is a social and economic change where:

"the movement of middle income people into low-income neighbourhoods causing the displacement of all, or many, of the pre-existing, low-income residents" (Butler et al. 2012).

Some scholars claim that gentrification benefits all by drawing in investment, increasing job opportunities, revenues

and improving infrastructure (Brenner et al. 2012; The Economist 2015). Brenner et al. (2012) goes further, stating gentrification is extremely valuable for local authorities by increasing land values, raising taxes and additional resources. Although this is true, these assertions are one-sided, not addressing poverty, inequality and social exclusion through the division of "exclusive and excluded places" (Ludi and Bird, 2007, p.4).

According to Fishman (1987) the 'bourgeoisie' contain the seed to their own destruction. This is not true for London's contemporary suburbs. It is the bourgeoisie from the centre who are pushing less affluent residents out of the suburbs altogether and according to Mace and Paccoud (2016, p.34) "this certainly warrants further research".

2.2.3 NIMBYism

Literature suggests that a state of NIMBYism (not-in-my-backyard) prevents positive change in London's suburbs (Hall 2013). The University of Reading (2014) concludes that a significant number of emerging London plans are purely protectionist. However, literature suggests that this is not always the case. Davison (2012) researching place-identity in Dalston states that residents resist not because of self-interest but due to the way character is recognised by the local authority. A NIMBYist approach to reinstating character is needed whilst also closing the gaps in character constructions between different stakeholders.

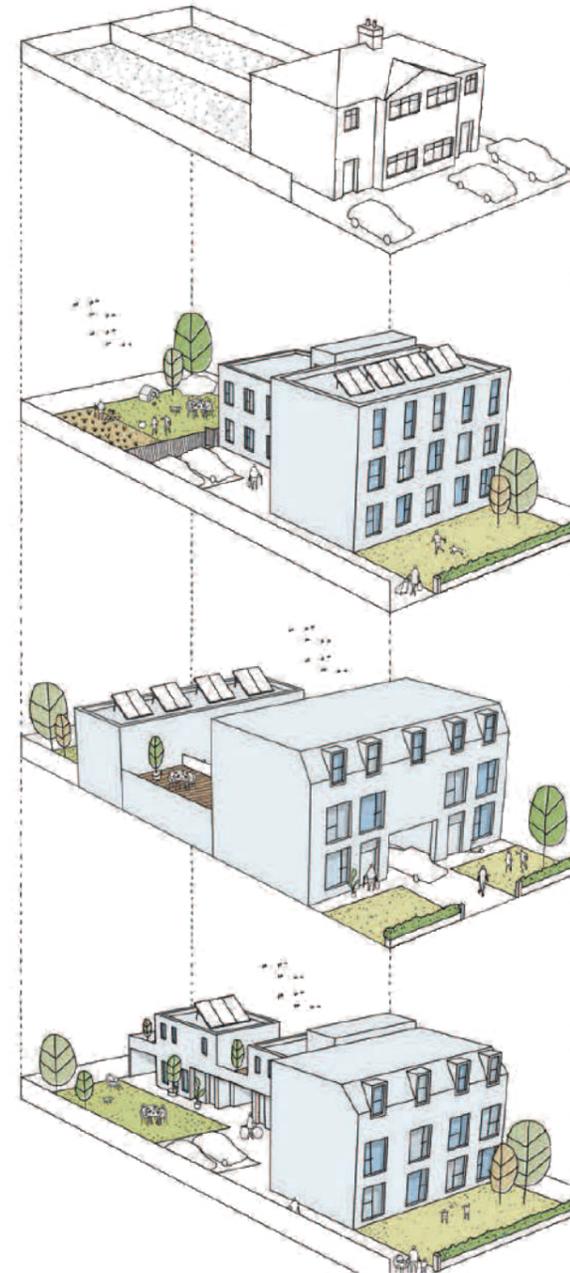


Figure 30: Intensification iteration by the design practice HTA, illustrating how semi-detached houses with large gardens, commonly found in suburbia, can be developed to cater for new residents (Source: HTA 2015)

2.3 Place and Community Identity

2.3.1 Definitions | The distinctiveness of locality has been a dominant theme in urban design's revival over the last twenty years (CABE 2008) with countries across the world using "city branding" to achieve a unique identity (Kavaratzis 2004; Dinnie 2010). According to CABE (2008, p. 4) character is "a place with its own identity", classified as combining the 'spirit of place' with the 'story of place', making a strong case for the latter is not utilised (Figure 31). Character can be tied to the more extensive literature on theories of "place" (Cresswell 2004) "genius loci" (Norberg-Schulz 1980) and "townscape" (Cullen 1961).

2.3.2 Principles for Designing for Identity | Lynch (1981, p. 131) defines identity as:

"The extent to which a person can recognise a place as being distinct from other places, as having a vivid, unique, or particular character of its own."

Scanlon et al. (2016) from the London School of Economics (LSE) produced a framework for creating community identity (Figure 32). The framework claims that the key to creating community identity is to recreate village life. Whether this framework produces a village feel is questionable - LSE's report was for the Berkeley Group, who wanted them to assess their new development Kidbrooke Village. Due to vested interests, LSE's assessment downplays the pitfalls in Kidbrooke's village evolution.

Masterplanning practice Urbed has vast experience in developing the urban village concept and suburban extensions, learning from Scandinavian suburbs. Figure 33 shows the principles for the Uxcester Garden City Model

(Urbed 2014). This is a strong approach, successfully delegating neighbourhood management to local people - the opportunity for community energy schemes, allotments and sports clubs to enhance social capital. However, no recommendation of how to create village-like identity in existing communities is explored. Practitioners should be aware that the pioneers of the garden city attempted to 'bottle' this village-like identity, building it elsewhere, but this did not work due to its organicness and place-specificity.

2.3.3 Sense of Community This can be described as "a feeling that members have of belonging to each other and a shared faith that member's needs will be met by the commitment to be together" (McMillan and Chavis 1986, p. 8). Few scholars have empirically explored sense of community within the built environment (Beauregard 2002; Talen 1999). Sociability and community identity in urban spaces has been on the decline in recent years, due to no longer needing to be in the same place to be together, by technological advancement (Putnam 1995) and globalisation (Mitchell 2013). Kim and Kaplan (2004) explore what aspects make residents feel belonging to a community, expressed in Figure 34. Unlike other academics, they emphasise walkability and pedestrian scale as key agents.

2.3.4 Policy | The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2012) explores character in terms of physical design such as materials, good architecture and landscape design.

The GLA launched an Outer London Fund in 2011, a three-year initiative dedicated to

"strengthening the vibrancy, growth and character of Outer London's high streets and town centres". Although it was spread evenly across Outer London, its effectiveness was mixed: delivery teams were poor, reflecting high staff turnover and limited funds created a poor legacy in some places and a lack of stewardship by local authorities (Regeneris 2012).



Figure 31: CABE's (2008) Character Definition



Figure 32: LSE's (2014) Framework for Creating Community Identity

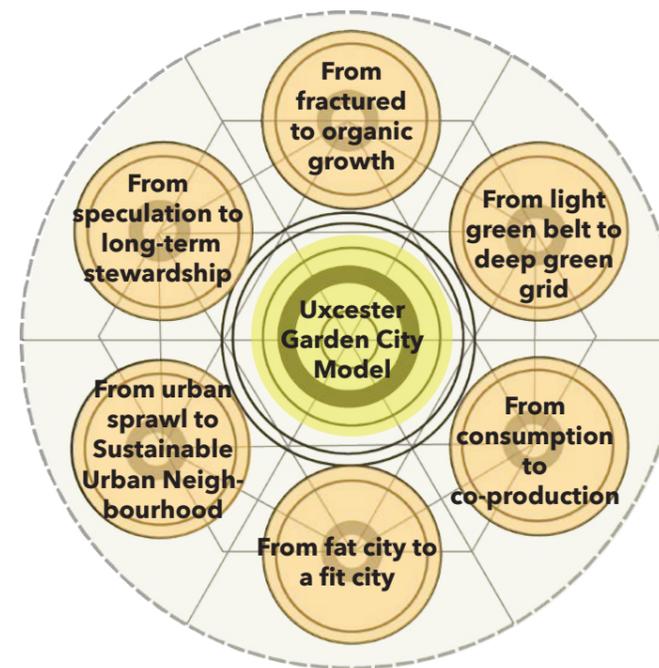


Figure 33: Urbed's (2014) Garden City Model Principles

The 4 Dimensions of Sense of Community

<p>1 Community Attachment</p> <p>Community satisfaction Connectedness Sense of ownership Long-term local integration</p>	<p>2 Community Identity</p> <p>Uniqueness Continuity Significance Congruence Cohesiveness</p>
<p>3 Social Interaction</p> <p>Neighbouring Casual social encounter Community participation Social support</p>	<p>4 Pedestrianism</p> <p>Walkability Pedestrian propinquity Mass transit Pedestrian scale/ street-level activities</p>

Figure 34: Sense of Community: Theoretical Dimensions (Source: Kim and Kaplan 2004)

2.4 Instigating Neighbourhood Change through Civic Action

2.4.1 The Market, the state, the alternative?

For a long time the market and state have generated a symbiotic relationship (Bollier and Helfrich 2012). Bollier and Helfrich (2012, p. xiv) believe that after the 2008 economic crash, people saw that the state did not represent the will of the people, nor did the market enact preferences for consumers, rather the system was a “closed oligopoly of elite insiders” (Figure 35). The impact of the recession and overarching austerity led to many ill-fated consequences (Figure 36). According to Tonkiss (2013) the UK invokes a permissive role for planning and must change its governance structure toward a positivist role, acknowledging community land trusts and more collective ownership models, goals of the Commons (Figure 37).

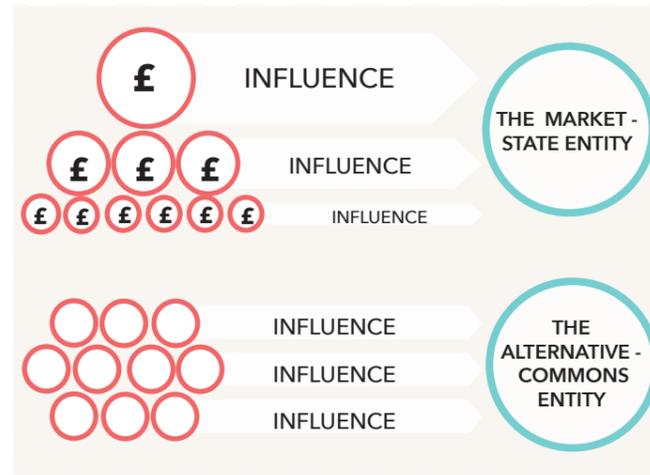


Figure 35: Money and Access to Power
(Source: Architecture 00 2015)

2.4.2 The Commons

Commoning has the potential to transform urban spaces through small acts, self-help, non-market exchange, sweat-equity and volunteering (Eisenburg 2012; Tonkiss 2016). Many academics have dismissed these niche, transient and often considered low-impact acts (Moses 1965; Hewitt 2005). However, Tonkiss (2016, p. 17) argues that these interventions scale up “to a broader urban political economy of investment, intervention and social return”. These benefits are not just tied to commoning, there are many other similar but different approaches to tackle austerity urbanism which can be placed under the umbrella of “participation culture”, see Figure 38 (Participatory City 2016).



Figure 36: Consequences of Austerity Urbanism

Existing UK Model Proscriptive Planning

Little or no space for negotiation, initiative or the collective expression of energy.

Abandonment Planning

Left entirely to independent agency, based on self-help. Associated with “poor-world urbanism” such an “extreme economy” is now the reality for numerous US cities at the “bleeding edge” of austerity policies.

Aspirational Model Positive Planning

Securing bidder status for Community Land Trusts (CLTs)
Planning permits for temporary structures and uses.

Offer temporary and low cost leases for underused public land and property.

Asset transfers to community ownership.

Integrating community planning into formal decision making.

Figure 37: Tonkiss’s (2013) Interpretation of the UK Planning System and Aspirational Model

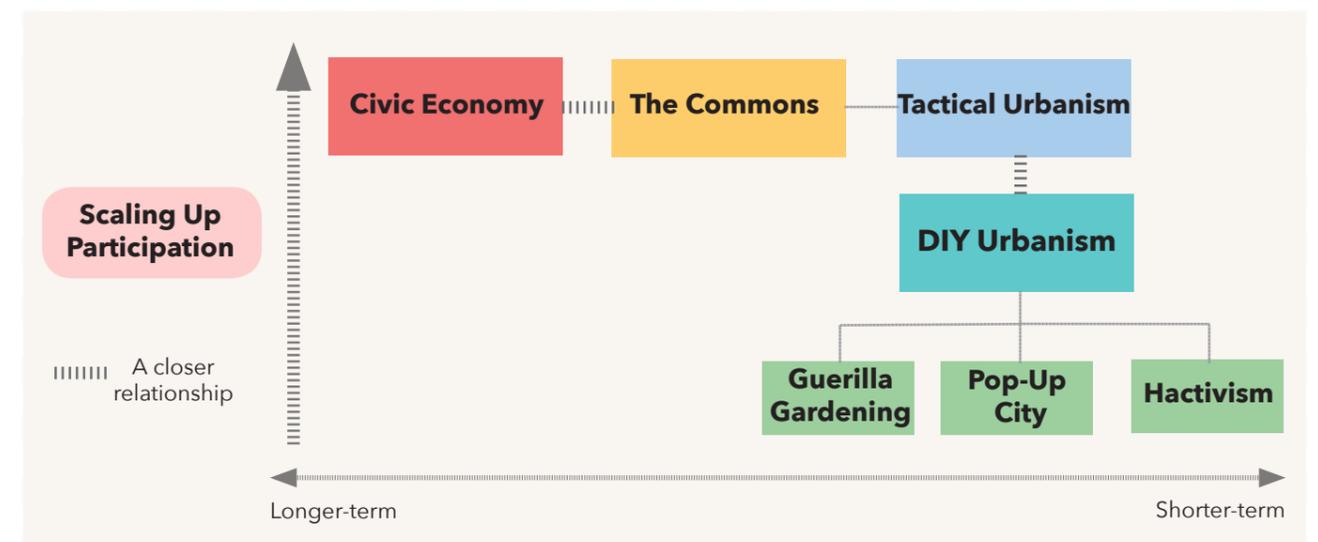


Figure 38: The relationship between different participatory activities, differentiated according to duration and participatory scale, with thicker lines between activities representing closer relationships

2.4.3 Participation Culture | According to the UK Household Study (Participatory City 2016) of the 50,000 people asked, 3% were involved in neighbourhood projects but 60% were willing to collaborate to improve their neighbourhood. A participation culture, “places created by many people working together through a large network of projects and community businesses... putting people at the heart of how a neighbourhood works” is a growing desire for people, however there are various barriers to do so (Participatory City 2016, p. 5). Figure 39 shows some of these barriers, together with solutions created by Participatory City (2016).

2.4.5 Tactical Urbanism (TU) TU is a similar trajectory to civic economies and the commons, in that it proposes “flexible responses to neighbourhood building using short-term, low-cost and scalable interventions” (Garcia 2016, para. 4). Interventions are built upon over time, highlighted in the process cycle by Lydon and Garcia (2015) (Figure 40). However, TU differs from the Commons in that it is used by a “range of actors including governments, business, non-profits, citizen groups and individuals” (Garcia 2016, para.4).

In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau (1984) argues that strategies are the formal tool of the powerful (government) whilst tactics serve as the response of the weak (citizens). However, it is important to note that most of the actors featured in Lydon and Garcia’s (2015) catalogue of DIY interventions had familiarity with civic processes or had a background related to city building. This helped make pro-

jects successful - a process of engaging people not educated in city planning is required.

2.4.6 DIY Urbanism | Do-it-yourself (DIY) urbanism has emerged from governance and creative class literature (Landry 1996; Mould 2014). American urbanists Lydon and Garcia (2015, p. 6) document the resurgence of DIY culture which includes “pop-up urbanism, guerrilla urbanism and urban hacking”.

The literature reveals that austerity urbanism is closely tied to the guerrilla gardening movement due to its low-cost, low maintenance, sweat-equity model (Bramall 2013; Mould 2014). This relationship is reinforced by urban designers Loesing and Lewis (2017) at Urban Design Practice East who believe this is an important device to capture in Outer London, utilising “suburbia’s green elastic borders” for community infrastructure.

2.4.7 Vacant Spaces | Tonkiss (2013) calls for practical design solutions for vacant land and disused spaces, Fiona Scott (2017) at well regarded London architects Gort Scott, believes that “backlands” - underused surface car parks, garages and parcels of greenfield land - can be repurposed in times of austerity and are untapped resources in suburbia which bare the “physical scars of disinvestment, disuse and decline” (Scott 2017). Ryan (2012) calls this “patchwork planning”, a useful tool to rebuild shrinking cities after economic decline. However, Loesing and Lewis (2017) state that whilst they can foster creative thinking, responses must be site-specific.



Figure 39: Participation Obstacles and Solutions

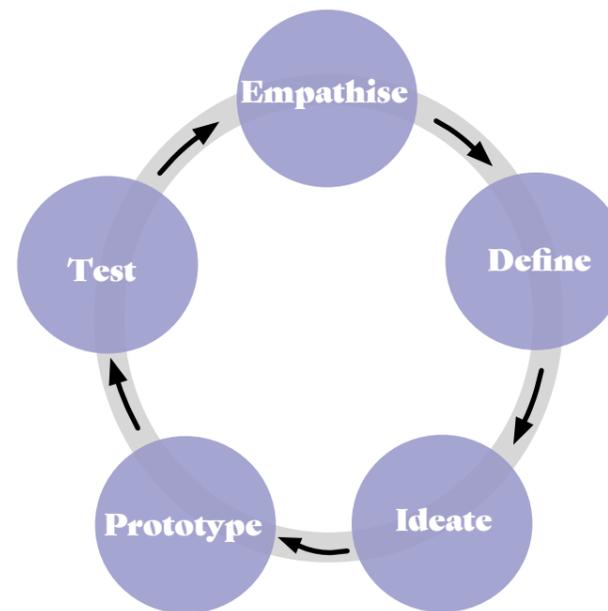


Figure 40: Tactical Urbanism Process (Source: Lydon and Garcia 2012)

2.4.8 Scaling Up Participation | In 2014, the Participatory City Foundation tested how to grow a large network of projects in West Norwood, south London, believing that peer-to-peer coproduction generates many benefits for “people directly and neighbourhoods as a whole” (Participatory City 2016, p.9). The *Open Works* created a network of 20 projects in collaboration with 1000 local residents. The scaling platform identifies three principles for this to occur: networked interventions, inclusivity across politics and society and creating value through co-production. Residents were asked what are the benefits of being part of a large network, shown in Figure 41. This highlights how small acts can scale up to create significant benefits, working together to solve local issues.

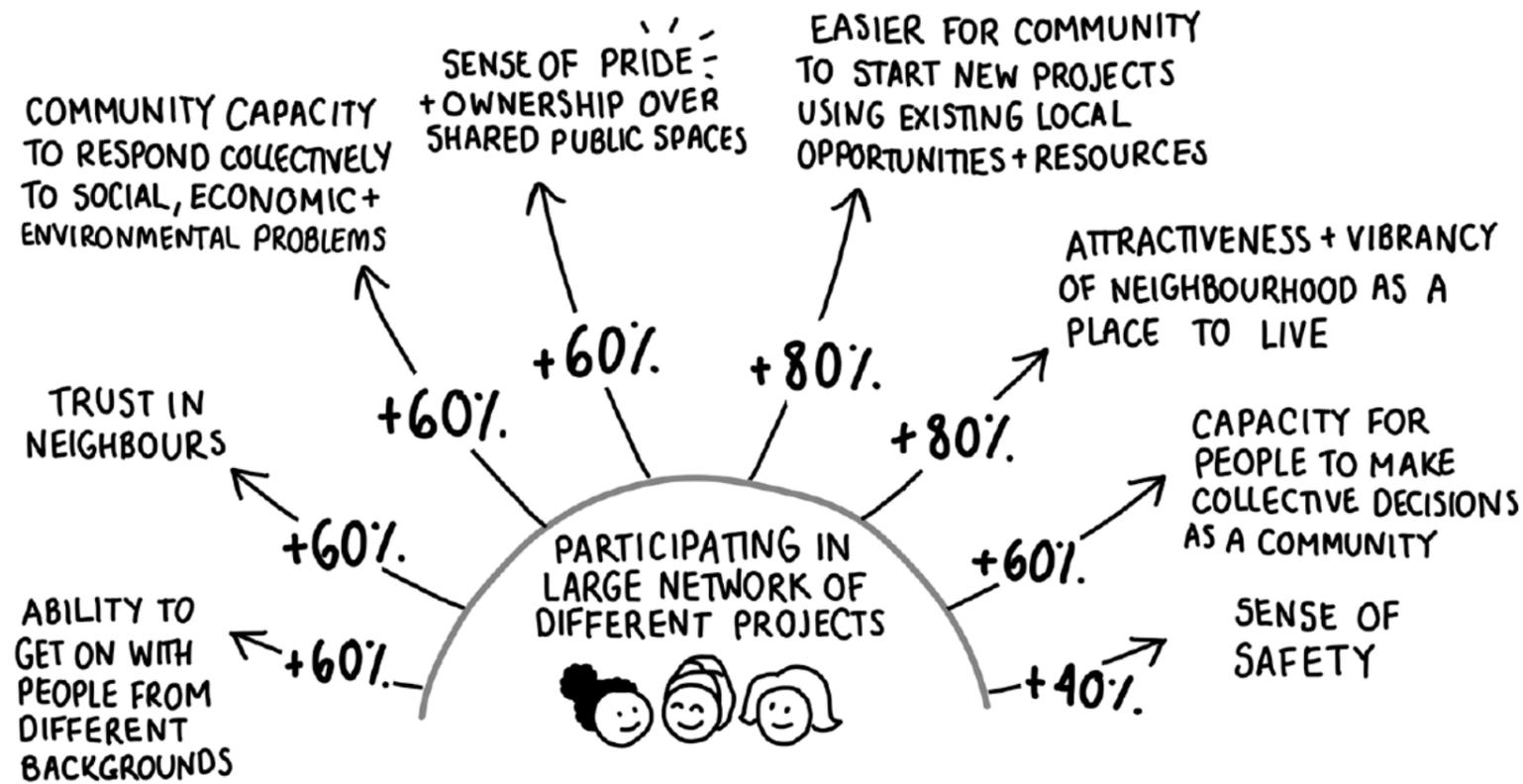


Figure 41: Benefits of Scaling Up Participation (Source: Participatory City 2016)

2.5 Process over result

2.5.1 Community by Doing | In this new era, De Angelis (2007) and Hardt and Negri (2009) argue that initiatives such as commoning and DIY urbanism constitute a communal identity not just because they share a common resource, rather because they “cooperate, collaborate and communicate on the usage, production and maintenance of a common resource” (De Angelis 2007, p. 45). This is a recurring theme amongst academics - it is not the end result which creates community but the process of doing it. It is more “about creating platforms than stuff” (Beunderman 2011, para. 5).

2.6 Literature Review Summary

Table 1 illustrates the key ideas to take forward into the next project stages, what the literature was light on, literature gaps and gaps to explore, related to the overall project aims (page 9).

Key Ideas To Take Forward	What the Literature is Deficient in
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What it means to be suburban no longer holds, we have now entered a postmetropolis phase where the suburbs can be reimagined as merely subservient to the centre. • Suburban poverty is growing. • Social interactions and collaboration in public life helps to create belongingness to place. • Participation culture exists in suburbs, but there are many problems required to be productive • It is not only the end result of commoning which creates community but the process of doing it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definitions and studies of commons lean toward the urban setting. What makes it urban? Villages and rural places experience the same difficulties of deprivation and vacant land. • Only touched lightly on sense of character and place as construed differently between communities and local authorities. • Designing for identity is hard to catch hold of and apply it to place. • How less affluent, original suburbanites, are being pushed out of the suburbs altogether.
Gaps in the Literature	What gaps should be explored in the next stages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CABE's (2008) 'Story of Place' is not utilised by urban practitioners. • Heritage-led regeneration is suggested to stimulate community regeneration by the NPPF and London Plan, however no tools are provided, it is more of a "lip service". • How to engage people not educated in city planning in civic activity and projects is not provided. • How to procure vacant and underutilised land for community use. • Little literature highlights how to evaluate whether projects have been successful. • Private sector relationship to the commons. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That Commons can work in rural/village settings in suburbia, not just in the urban, inner city atmosphere. • Create spaces where social interactions and collaboration in public life can create belongingness to place and community identity. • Provide solutions to encourage better participatory culture. • Create tools to procure vacant/underutilised land. • Explore how the private sector can contribute to encouraging community activity such as commoning.

Table 2: Literature Review Critical Summary



3 CASE STUDY REVIEW

This chapter showcases the analytical framework, derived from the literature review, to analyse the case studies. The case study review is made up of precedents (internet-based research) and transect studies (interview and observation based) This exercise will help to produce the design toolkit and design proposals.

3.1 Analytical Framework

3.2 Case Study Review

3.2.1 Precedents

3.2.2 Transect Studies

3.3 Lessons Learnt

3.1 ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Figure 42 displays the analytical framework which will be used to analyse and assess the lesson's learnt from real life Commons around the world.



Figure 42: Analytical Framework

3.2 CASE STUDY REVIEW

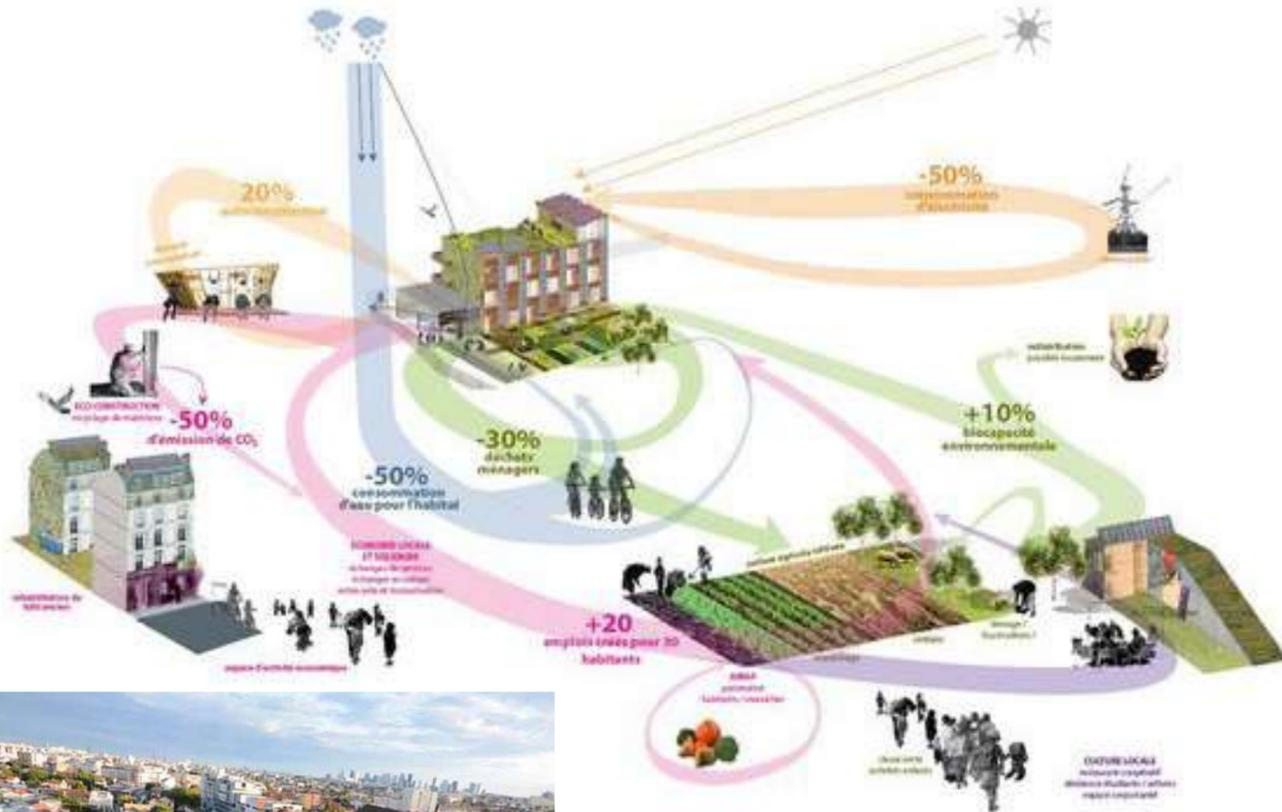


Case studies were selected based on one or more of the following characteristics:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 Community initiation and collaboration | 4 Suburban context |
| 2 Using vacant or underutilised spaces | 5 Community action to reinstate place identity |
| 3 Gentrification pressures | 6 Provide the tools to rediscover place identity |

1 R-Urban PARIS

A network of collective hubs serving complementary functions to create environmental resilience



Identity Before: Colombes, a Parisian suburb with a high proportion of council estates. Suffers from social and economic deprivation and youth crime. High unemployment rate of 17%.
Intervention(s): Resident-run facilities that create complementary activities between key fields (economy, housing, urban agriculture, culture). Initiates closed ecological cycles that support alternative models of living, producing and consuming.
Identity Now: Bridges social networks; environmental self-governance; sustainable economic model.

- Right to the city in jeopardy - shrinking of suburbs
- Using residents to generate local ideas
- Partnerships with planners/architects/EU and The City of Colombe
- Network emphasis; national scaling up of R-URBAN Strategy - spread to Italy, Spain and London.
- Collective action and Community Land Trust
- Organic growth; opportunity spotting and entrepreneurial flair
- Sweat equity and civic economy
- Identity of self-reliance
- Inter-generational and forming new communities

Additional Tactics:

1. Complementary uses
2. Start small, think big
3. Utilising roofspace
4. Multifunctional

2 Seething Festival SURBITON

Dedicated to using creativity, folklore and nonsensical events to bring people together



Identity Before: Characteristic of suburbia, with a homogenous High Street and lack of community events. Commoning began by making up the legend of 'Lefi Ganderson - the Goat Boy of Mount Seething' in 2009. Since then the people of Surbiton have worked to develop a stronger sense of community by creating events surrounding this local legend.
Identity Now: Recognising the distinctiveness of place in a playful way through 'nonsense' events. Events tied to history of place, creating collective memories.
Impact: Seething won £25,000 after taking first prize in the Britain Has Spirit awards. Fostering community spirit leading to a backing of the Surbiton Neighbourhood Plan.

- Gentrification of High Street, creating homogenous place
- Using underutilised public space to host events
- Organised by a small resident team. Not horizontal management
- Events created to honour made up legends
- Collective action
- Organic growth
- Community-Local authority partnership
- Strangers meet and forge friendships. Interaction by trying new things. Intergenerational

3

Can Batlló Barcelona



An important community asset, once a derelict factory



Identity Before: Can Batlló is a former industrial site, the buildings left derelict to be developed into luxury apartments and hotels. In 2011 La Bordeta neighbours occupied the site, where a participatory process defined the uses and projects the neighbourhood wanted. The neighbourhood suffered from lack of basic social infrastructure.

Intervention(s): Library Josep Pons, bar, auditorium, climbing wall, gym, community garden, park, sports ground and multipurpose rooms. Workshops on infrastructure, carpentry, circus skills, and musical creation are just some of the activities.

Identity Now: Distinctiveness of place by utilising an iconic local landmark to create a new neighbourhood heart.



Additional Tactics:

1. Multifunctional
2. Use of heritage asset to reinstate identity

4

Nevicata14 Milan

Temporary configuration of newly pedestrianised Castello square in Milan



Identity Before: Public space but busy with vehicular movement.

Intervention(s): Nevicata14 is the Italian for "snowfall of 2014" - an original idea to artificially recreate what happens when snow covers the city, erasing all the traces that cars leave, a vision of a space as a white page for everyone to tell their story. 40 events took place including: gardens, seating areas, event space, sensory spaces.

Identity Now: A commons square which was an experiment but has now become permanent.



Additional Tactics:

1. Experimentation
2. Modular Installations - adaptable and moveable
3. Temporary

5

Urban Farming NEW YORK

Using Data Mapping to Help Reclaim Urban Commons



Identity Before: Utilising unused city spaces for community use through food.
Intervention: In 2011 the organisation 596 Acres identified vacant lots that could be re-purposed into public gardens, farms and parks. The group provide communities the tools to reclaim these spaces.
Identity Now: New community spaces, engaging people to foster community spirit through growing.
Impact: A catalyst for city-wide and national interventions.

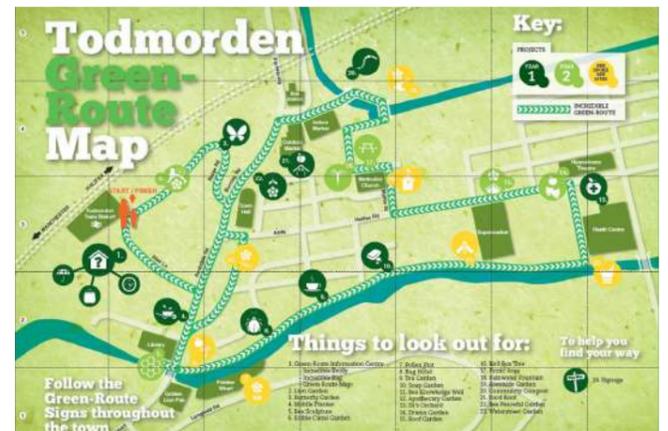
Collective action- residents organise themselves to breathe life into vacant spaces, some transform into CLTs	Iterative and growing - moved beyond vacant lots to neglected NYC parks and buildings	Self-help and sweat equity	Creating identity from nothing, starting the story
Vacant and backland sites that are neglected by city planners	Small group manage mapping, but people to organise themselves. Long term collaborative governance	Network of community gardens that learn from each other	Turning strangers into neighbours

- Additional Tactics:**
1. Catalyst for similar interventions
 2. Utilising roofspace
 3. Locally relevant opportunity
 4. Visualising potential - signage

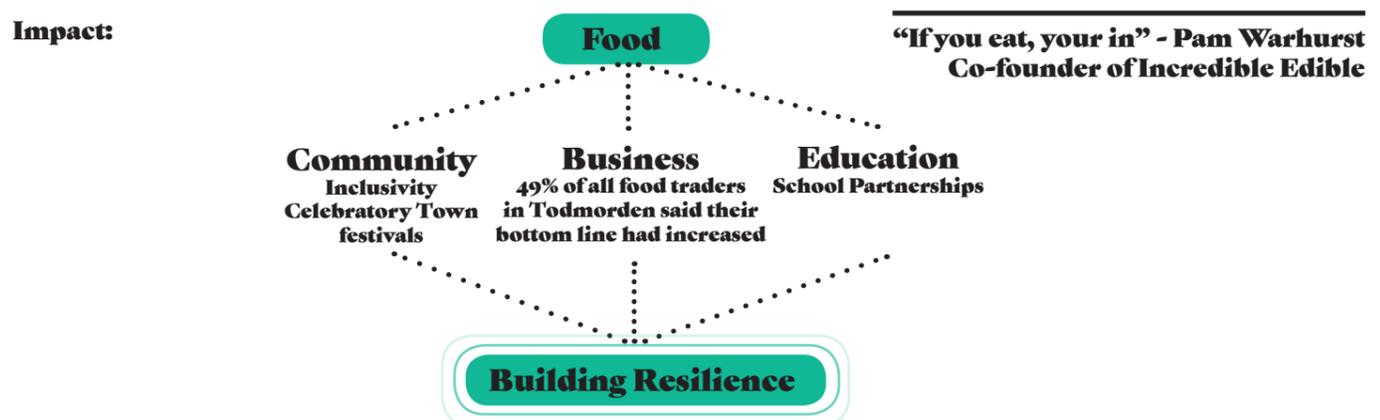
6

Incredible Edible Todmorden

Re-purposing the commons for open source food and agricultural biodiversity



Identity Before: A market town of 15,000 people, former industrial town, once supporting the textile industry during the Industrial Revolution. Has more recently suffered high unemployment rates and has little backyard space.
Intervention: In 2008, a small group of residents sat around a kitchen table and set out what they wanted to do, without permission or a documented strategy. Using underutilised public space to grow fresh food - DIY urbanism at its best.



Desired a common language that cut across age, income and culture	Organic Growth - all experimental. Power of small actions to achieve large scale change	Horizontal management. Scaling out across borough, nationally and globally - Incredible Edible Movement and online network
Collective action, growing over time	Initiated by small group but grown into co-production	Identity based on food as a platform for community inclusivity
Using vacant and underutilised spaces such as the canalside, the train station, cemeteries and school fields	Civic economy. All voluntary. No major funding mechanisms. Land donations by public/private stakeholders	Inclusivity, a common good regardless of income/culture, residents growing together

- Additional Tactics:**
1. Community partnerships - working with schools
 2. Incredible Edible Green Route
 3. “Tod talks” - engagement leveraged resources, skills and interests.
 4. Highly Visual - interventions labelled with community logos.



LESSONS TO LEARN FROM...



3.2.2 TRANSECT STUDIES

Transect studies are a useful tool to discover this multifaceted nature - particularly to discover how people pool together to recapture place identity. Just like an ecosystem, an imaginary 'quadrant' has been 'thrown over' Crystal Palace and Croydon in order to sample it's different microisms.

Surveys, observations and interviews were conducted with local people, professionals and managers of community assets to provide a glimpse of each place.



Figure 43: Other Precedents to Learn From

CRYSTAL PALACE

An interview with the Penge Tourist Board, a community-run voluntary group highlighted how multifaceted Crystal Palace is, made up of different places with different character. They also discussed the issues the area faces (Figure 44), together with existing community activities.

“Gentrification has really taken its toll in Crystal Palace”

“Existing people are finding it harder and harder to pay rents, there’s a rise in food banks and many have moved further away to have the same quality of life elsewhere”

“It has been felt a lot more in Penge and Anerley”

Upper Norwood is a very affluent area, with more and more people wanting to live here, places around it are being swallowed up.

“There has always been a lot of community activity here, but more so now than ever”

“It’s funny how these places are branding their own neighbourhood with particular activities, Penge and community food projects celebrating Penge’s diverse population, Anerley and social inclusiveness and Upper Norwood and the sport scene.”

The Penge Community Brand

“Us and other volunteers created a branding campaign to encourage a sense of pride in Penge, using “I love Penge” and postcode “SE20” as the two taglines. We posted these all over Penge, from posters, to clothing to drink coasters, which actually generated some income for us to put back into Penge activities.”

Figure 45: Interview with Penge Tourist Board Highlights

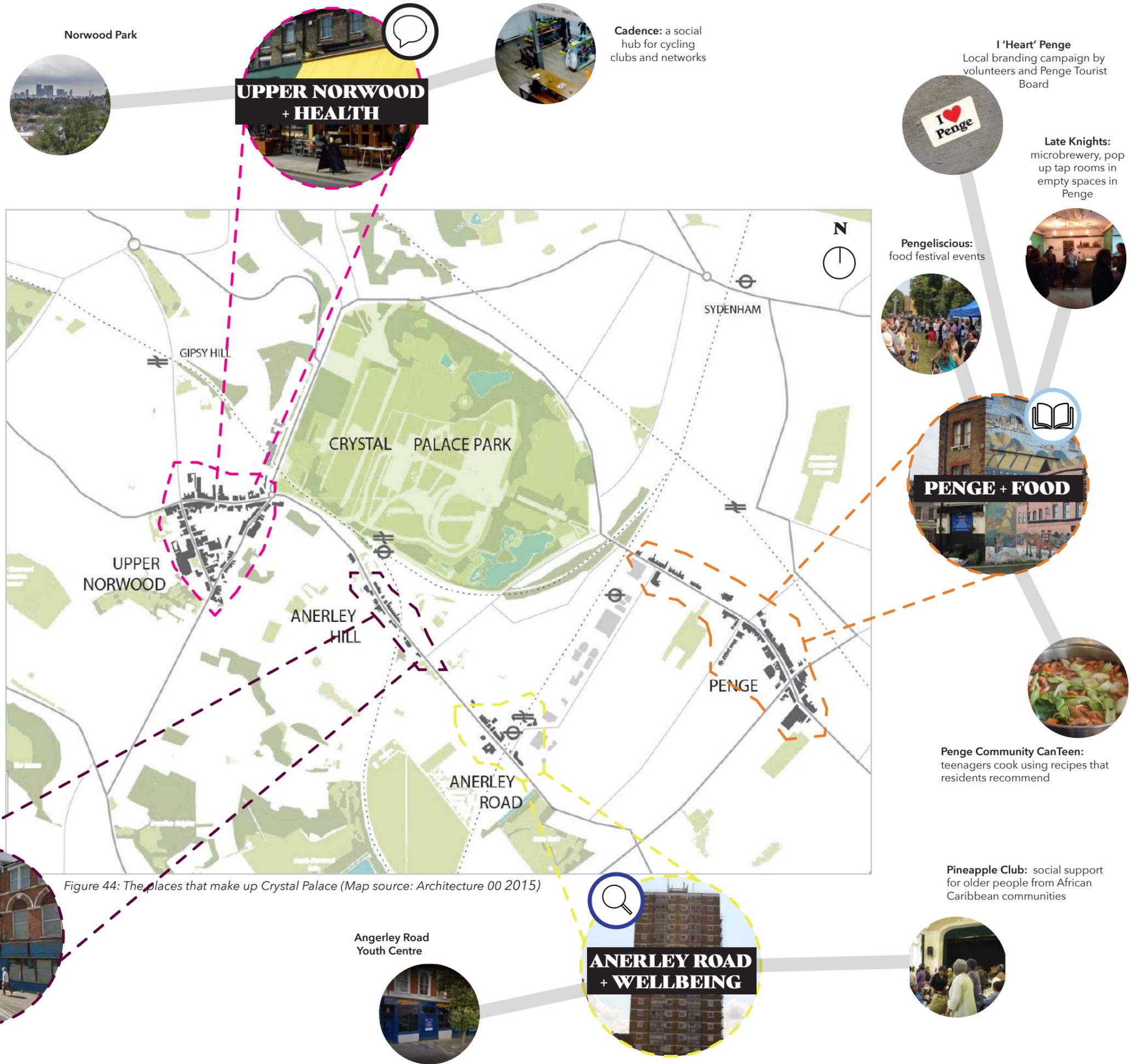


Figure 44: The places that make up Crystal Palace (Map source: Architecture 00 2015)



An interview with the Urban Design Team at Croydon Council highlighted how Croydon Town Centre is celebrating its past through urban design as well as civic action helping to generate positive change in this traditional suburban area.

“The motor vehicle is king”

Suffers from poor public realm and “concrete jungle” architecture.



“A brand identity was imposed”

“In 2000, the council tried to create new identity for Croydon. This didn’t ring true, with no sense of connection with the place and did not bode well with the community.”

“We asked ‘what’s already good about Croydon?’”

In 2006, we attempted not to impose a singular identity but to see what’s on the ground - questions of where you are, who you are, how you use it, working, living...”

“There is a bigger emphasis now than ever before for co-design”

“The current Labour-led Council and chief executive officer is keen for more freedom for people to innovate.”

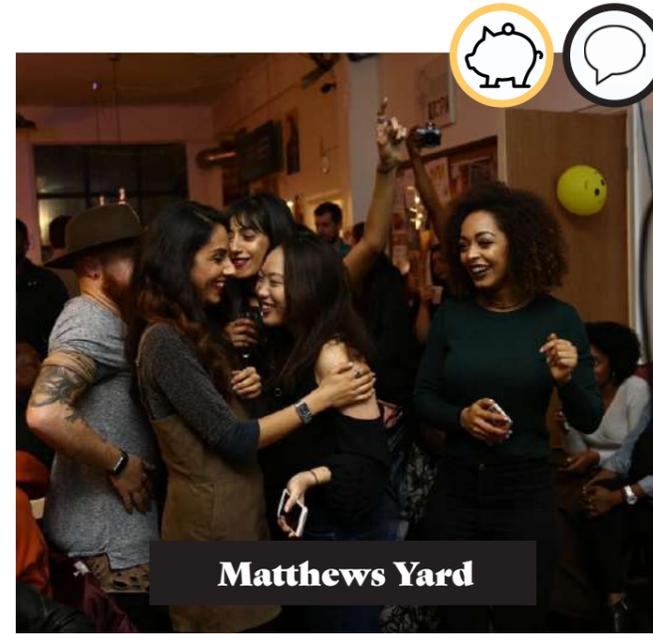


Figure 46: Interview with Croydon Urban Design Team Key Highlights



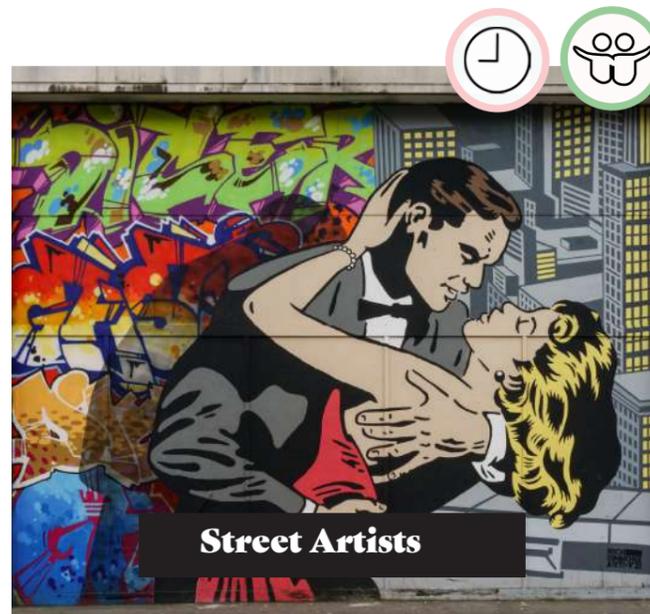
Play Streets

- Resident-led initiatives to close roads temporarily
- The Council’s role is to decide whether a road can be temporarily closed and provide support.



Matthews Yard

- Multifunctional space - was a bar with work space and now includes a small theatre and host space.
- Run as a private enterprise - but community funded through community-share scheme.



Street Artists

- Street art on shop fronters and office block walls
- New identity: ‘Art Quarter’.
- The Council had artists ask for permission but they want to make clear that artists do not need it: **“bureaucracy is too much in the way...we need to make sure people know their position, that they can do it.”**



Saffron Central Pop Up Farm

- An identity: the world’s largest urban pop-up saffron farm.
- Source of income: crowdfunding
- Brownfield vacant site in the city centre
- Local councillors bought into the scheme at an early stage - contributing to its success.
- Now Croydon Saffron Central are looking to become a registered business and negotiate an asset transfer.

3.3 Lessons Learnt

Key lessons can be drawn from the precedent study review which can be applied to the project design toolkit.

R-Urban, Can Batllo and Nevetica14 provided the most useful lessons and are highlighted in black in Figure 47.

Discussing the choice of case studies with a local resident from Bexley, it came to light that commoning occurs more regularly in places that are socially and economically deprived, where they have nothing to lose but do something about their situation, such as the residents occupying the factory at Can Battlo, Barcelona. It brings to mind that if existing municipal authorities do not provide you with the social infrastructure you desire, you can take matters into your own hands.

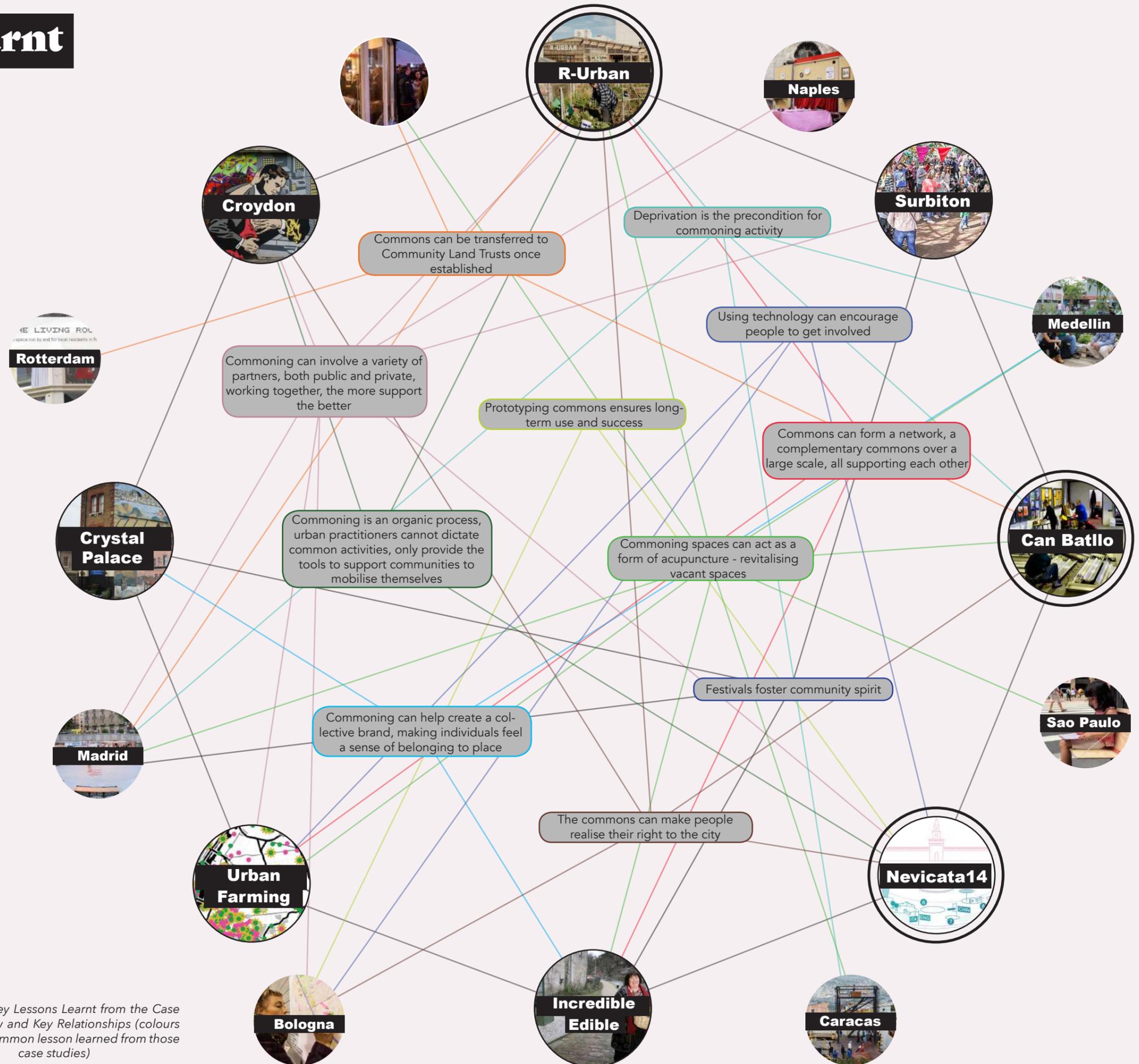
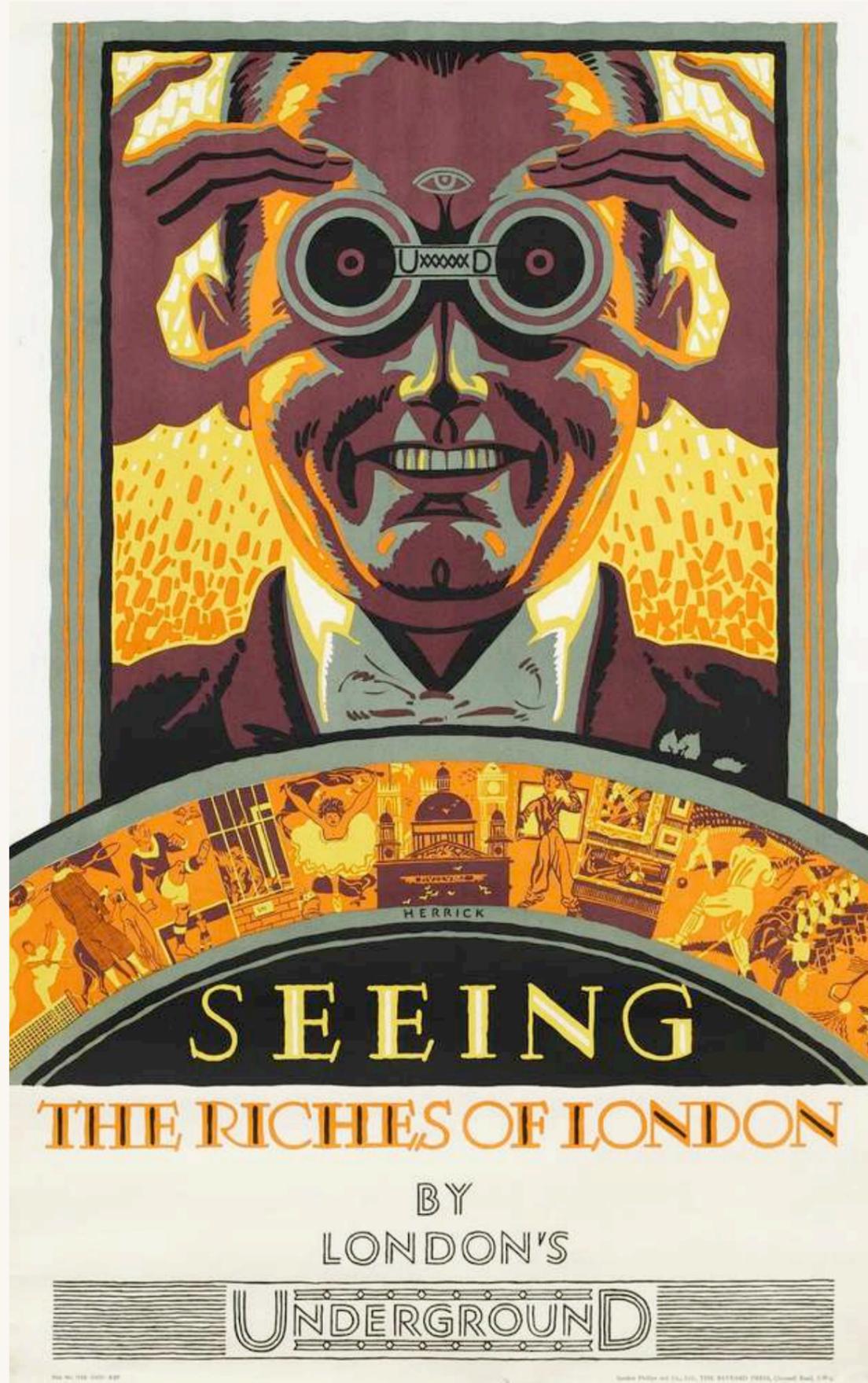


Figure 47: Key Lessons Learnt from the Case Study Review and Key Relationships (colours relate to a common lesson learned from those case studies)



4 THE DESIGN TOOLKIT

This chapter illustrates the project design toolkit, created by combining the lessons learnt from the literature review and case study review.

4.1 Thematic Areas

4.2 Design Toolkit Checklist

4.1 Thematic Areas

The Design Toolkit is divided up into six overarching themes, identified in Figure 48. Together, they aim to:

1 | Empower people to initiate their own Commons.

2 | Make town centres and neighbourhoods more distinguishable and self-sufficient.

3 | Mainstream the process of commoning into everyday life and spaces.

T1 Establishing Place Narrative

Tools to help communities fully understand place and understand the challenges and opportunities - ultimately to match the right commons approach to the place in question.

T3 Design

Design tools to establish creative interventions.

T4 Infrastructure

Technological tools to ensure a wide audience and encourage commons initiation and use.

T5 Governance

Tools to ensure residents are at the heart of commons management and growth.

T2 Procurement

Tools to obtain the right space(s) for commoning and secure community support.

T6 Key Foundations

Underlying general design interventions required to ensure commons success.



Figure 48: Design Toolkit Themes

4.2 Design Toolkit Checklist

Figure 49 shows the project design toolkit. The intention is for individuals or a group of local community advocates to go through each tool and tick off the series of instructions in order to complete the overarching tool, before moving onto the next.

The tool boxes highlighted in grey reflect those drawn from the literature review, whilst the white boxes are drawn from the case study review. A lot more tools are drawn from practice over theoretical studies.

This poses questions about the relationship between Commons theoretical debate and Commons in practice.

1 | Have academics had experience of commoning in the practical sense?

or

2 | Have they only approached it from a theoretical point of view?

T1	Appraise Historic Character Identify historic assets. <input type="checkbox"/> Understand development changes and new development. <input type="checkbox"/> Identify iconic local landmarks. <input type="checkbox"/>	Appraise Social Character Identify key places of social interaction. <input type="checkbox"/> Identify existing community and cultural events. <input type="checkbox"/>	Understand the People Conduct walkabouts. <input type="checkbox"/> Have conversations with local residents. <input type="checkbox"/> Look at online community forums. <input type="checkbox"/>	Recognise Existing Community Assets Identify existing community/voluntary groups. <input type="checkbox"/> Identify community asset buildings and uses. <input type="checkbox"/>	Identify Place Opportunities and Challenges
T2	Identify Backlands Identify vacant/ underutilised spaces and buildings that could benefit from transformation. Potential spaces include (but is not limited to): surface car parks, garages, parcels of greenfield land. <input type="checkbox"/>	Identify historic assets and places of meaning Seek out historic assets that are vacant or underutilised. <input type="checkbox"/>	Identify Ownership Discover whether spaces are privately/publicly owned. <input type="checkbox"/> Discover whether they are awaiting new development. <input type="checkbox"/>	Empower Communities to Co-create commons Apply for temporary use of public space to prototype intervention. <input type="checkbox"/> Create a place for residents to generate ideas and strengthen networks. <input type="checkbox"/> Use signage to make citizens realise their right to the city and collective potential. <input type="checkbox"/>	
T3	Mobile and Modular Make sure interventions are moveable so can be experimented in different locations. <input type="checkbox"/>	Utilise Roofs Identify roofs that have potential to be transformed. <input type="checkbox"/>	Provide Multifunctional Activities Make sure commoning interventions are: Age inclusive <input type="checkbox"/> Income inclusive <input type="checkbox"/> Religiously inclusive. <input type="checkbox"/>	Create a Chain of Complementary Commons Identify multiple sites that commoning can take place, these can be different in size and type and relative location (residential neighbourhood, town centre). <input type="checkbox"/>	
T4	Provide an Online Platform Discover the tools, partnerships and mechanisms required to set up a networking website. This can provide possibilities to schedule and share activities, connecting people in common. <input type="checkbox"/>	Create Interactive Mechanisms Use technology in public spaces to get people in touch with local commons. <input type="checkbox"/> Identify with the Council where these interventions could go in public space. <input type="checkbox"/>			
T5	Ensure Asset Transfers Ensure strong community - local authority partnerships are established from the start <input type="checkbox"/> Establish the conditions to hand over power in the form of Community Land Trusts over time. <input type="checkbox"/> Establish the conditions for horizontal management. <input type="checkbox"/>	Councils as enablers The Council must provide prototype space to trial interventions to evaluate their success; <input type="checkbox"/> The Council should map vacant sites for potential community takeover. <input type="checkbox"/>			
T6	Be Walkable Create commoning in locations that are close to existing centres. <input type="checkbox"/> Establish safe pedestrian and cycle routes to/from/in-between commoning sites. <input type="checkbox"/>	Be Legible Ensure ease of access through designing wayfinding signage. <input type="checkbox"/>	Create a Collective Brand Create a common language through a branding campaign to distinguish place. <input type="checkbox"/> Establish partners and volunteers to do this. <input type="checkbox"/>	Share what you learn To ensure success across all commons, share best practice and common resources. <input type="checkbox"/>	

-  Tool Theme
- TEXT** Tool
- TEXT Checklist
- Tool from Case Study Review
- Tool from Literature Review & Case Study Review
-  Tag

Figure 49: The Design Toolkit

UNDERGROUND



FLORIAN

HOW LONG SINCE YOU
SAW A SUNSET IN THE COUNTRY ?

BY DISTRICT RLY

5 SITE CONTEXT: THE LONDON BOROUGH OF BEXLEY

This chapter provides essential information for understanding the context of the study application site, which the project design toolkit will be applied to.

5.1 Borough Context

5.2 Bexley's Voluntary Sector

5.3 Snapshots

5.1 BOROUGH CONTEXT



Figure 50: Greater London and the Borough of Bexley (Blue)

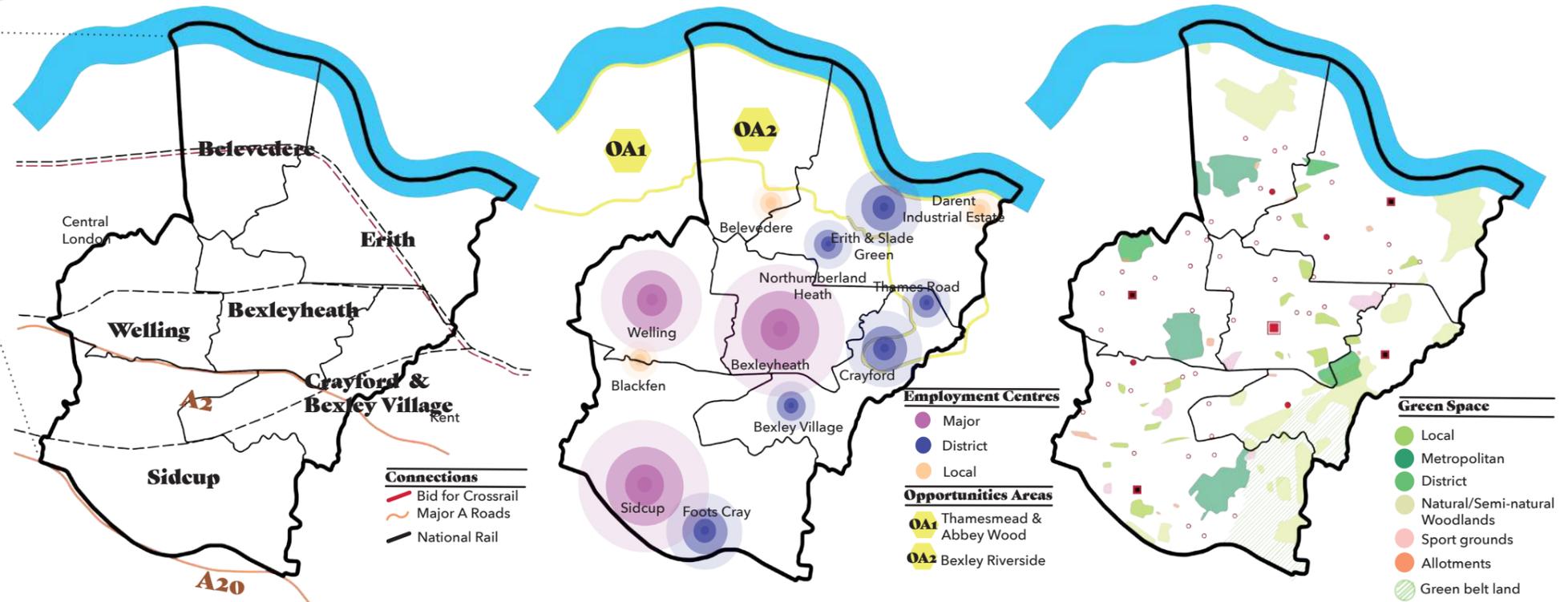


Figure 52: Borough Transport Connections (Source: Bexley Core Strategy 2012)

Figure 53: Borough Employment Centres and Opportunity Areas (Source: Bexley Core Strategy 2012)

Figure 54: Borough Green Spaces (Source: Bexley Core Strategy 2012)

Bexley: Losing it's Commons?

There is a borough-wide attack on existing green commons as a result of the Borough Council's budget cuts. This is resulting in a lack of maintenance, public closures and selling of land - affecting the number and quality of existing community assets.



HALL PLACE, BEXLEYHEATH

Once owned by the local Heritage Trust, it has now been transferred to Bexley Council due to the former running out of money. Workers are worried what the future of Hall Place will be.



DANSON PARK, BEXLEYHEATH

Once open to the public under the Heritage Trust, it is now been transferred to the Council who use it as a Registry Office and other private events. The park lacks from proper maintenance.



OLD FARM PARK, SIDCUP

A local park has now been bought by private developers who have been given outline planning permission for residential development. Residents are not happy, stating the Council are "selling off public land to developers to fund budget deficit"

Figure 51: Losing it's Commons?

Bexley was chosen for the project application site because it displays the following conditions:

- Foxtons, the estate agents, are yet to appear in Bexley - a sign that gentrification has not been established (yet).
- Local residents called Bexley the "new commuter suburb" - with an influx of new residents from inner London.
- An example of where place identity is fuzzy.
- Significant growth aspirations.
- A Council challenged to maintain community services by central authority budget cuts.

Population changes

There are two distinctive set of populations:

1 | *The Central London commuters*
Young couples and families moving into Bexley for a more affordable way of living, with good access to Central London for work, yet not integrating themselves with their new community.

2 | *The Senior Citizens*
An ageing population who have lived in the borough for decades, who require services nearby preventing social isolation.

Bexley in Suburbia

The Borough has different architectural identities. According to Alex C, Bexley Planning Officer, the north is a "concrete jungle" of postwar tower blocks whilst the South is more "interwar suburbia" made up of detached homes and the original "aspirational place to live".

Growth in Bexley

Two opportunity areas lie to the north of Bexley which will accommodate housing and employment growth. Transforming this industrial land will meet their 31,500 homes and 17,000 new jobs targets.

Bexley are currently bidding for the extension of Crossrail 1 to pass through Bexleyheath which they believe will "produce the wealth needed to reinvigorate" the Borough. According to Alex C, "development drives wealth and **wealth is the salvation for providing community services**".

Population



BAME% - 21.4%

Average Age

39 years

Median House Price

£348 609

London average £594 202 (Rightmove 2017)

Political Control

Conservative (71.4%)

Figure 55: Key Statistics (Source: GLA 2016)

5.2 BEXLEY'S VOLUNTARY SECTOR

Figure 56 shows that volunteers are predominantly female, within the age bracket 24-64 years and white. In terms of status, the employed (24%) and students (19%) partake the greatest, with the number of retired people (12%) is half of that of working people.

Figure 57 shows what Bexley registered charities are involved in. There are a vast array of different activities, the largest group of charities in Bexley are involved with Education (136), followed by the Environment (70).

Figure 58 shows who these charities support. The largest group of charities in Bexley are aimed at Children/Young People (151), significantly larger than all others. People of particular ethnic or racial origin are the least aimed at (30).

Since the economic crash, funding for Bexley's voluntary sector almost doubled in a year, from £5.73m in 2007-8 to £10.17m in 2008-9, signifying that support was needed for communities. Since 2013, voluntary funding has been on the decline (Table 3).

In terms of total income (Figure 59), between 2006-2016 this has generally increased. In recent years, voluntary income (freely given as a grant or donation) has declined, whilst fundraised income (fundraising events or income generated through a charity shop) has increased. This data however is limited, only available from charities with an income greater than £500,000. In 2015-16 for example only 12 charities returned data about their income.

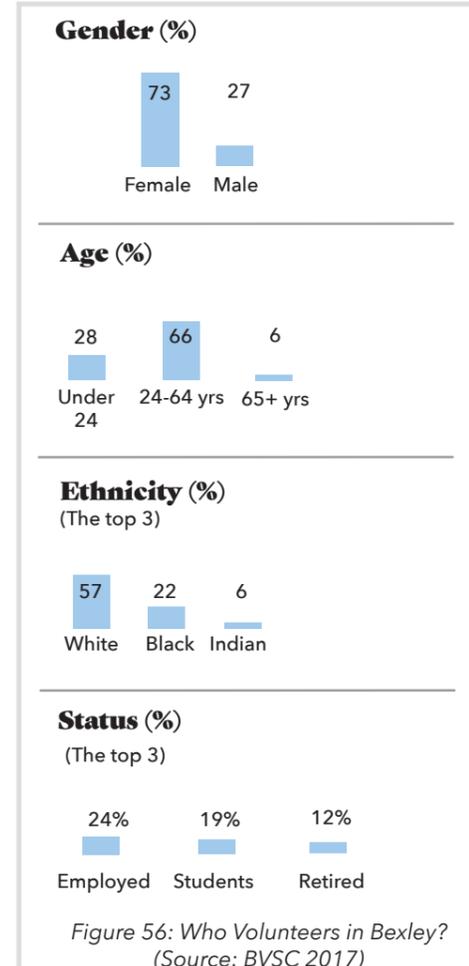


Figure 56: Who Volunteers in Bexley? (Source: BVSC 2017)

Funding (£m)

	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
	5.73	10.17	10.79
	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
	11.15	11.15	11.63
	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
	11.79	10.08	9.66

Table 3: Voluntary Sector Funding (£m)

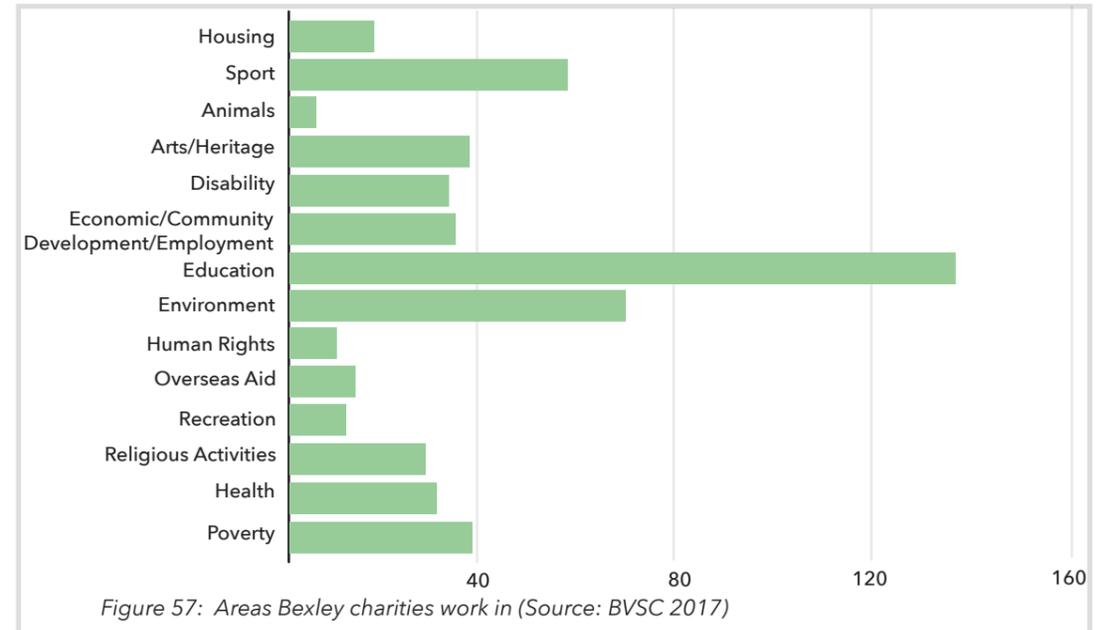


Figure 57: Areas Bexley charities work in (Source: BVSC 2017)

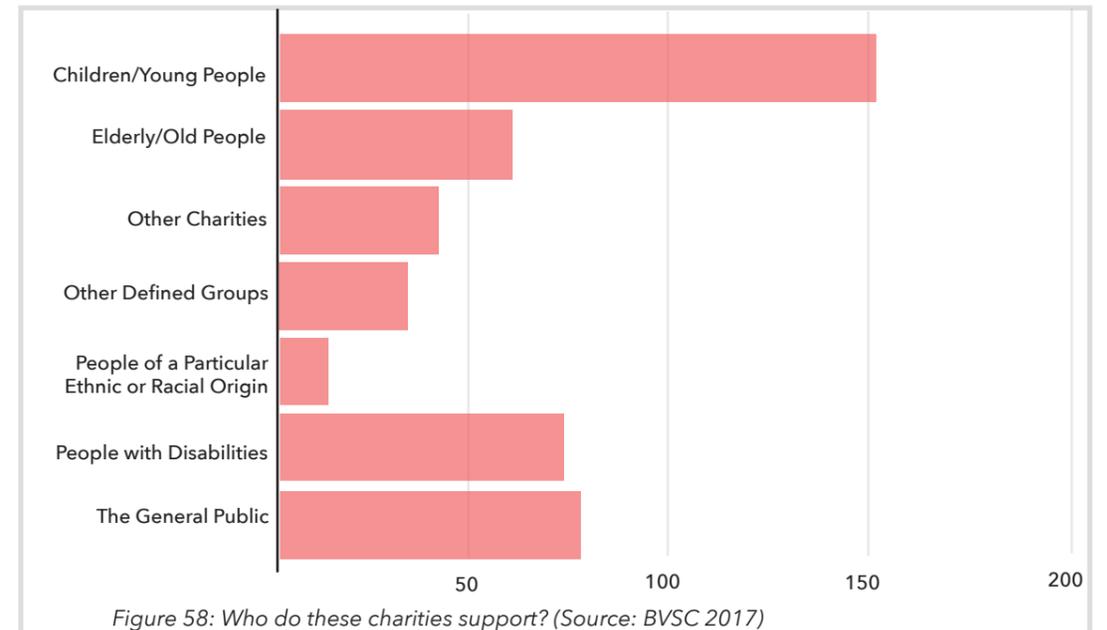


Figure 58: Who do these charities support? (Source: BVSC 2017)



Figure 60: BVSC Interview Highlights

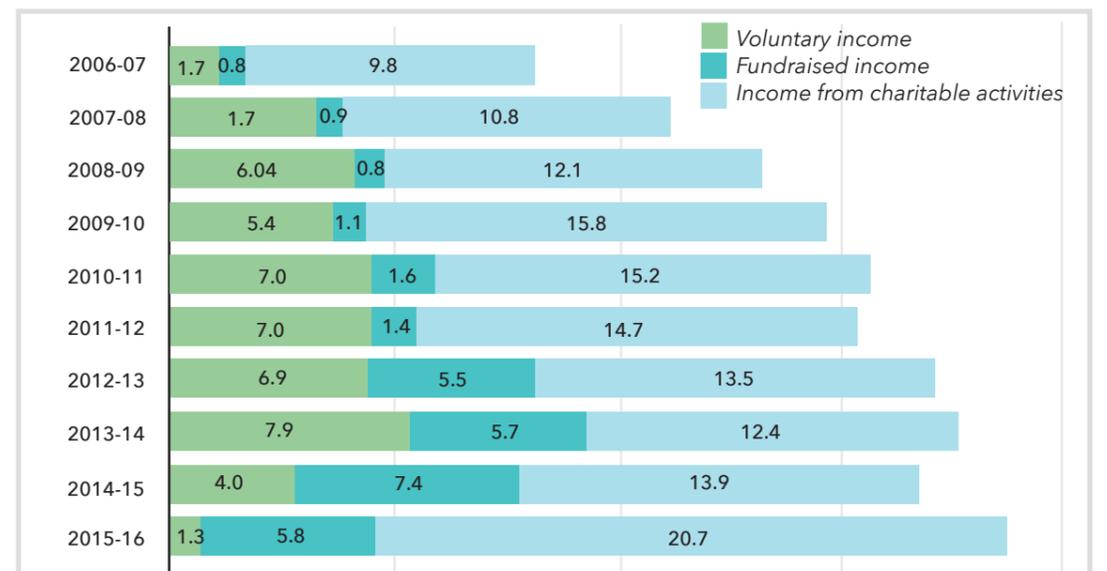
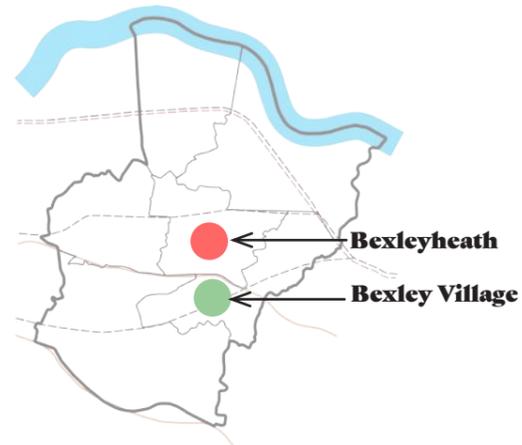


Figure 59: Total Income split into Income Type (£m) (Source: BVSC 2017)

5.3 SNAPSHOTS

Figure 61 illustrates the two places the toolkit will be applied to and design proposals established. Bexleyheath is a typical suburban town centre, significantly growing since the 1970s, focused on commercial activity. Bexley Village is a small community which has maintained its village feel. Both are facing challenges of increased privatisation, commercialisation, gentrification and growth aspirations (see Table 3).

They are also typical of a wide range of suburban places across London but very different from one another despite being close. This ensures a better test for my toolkit - proving it can be applied to all suburban places regardless of scale and character.



Bexley Core Strategy (2012)

Bexleyheath

- "The Borough's civic centre."
- "This 'larger town centre' to accommodate growth."
- Has been identified as the "best opportunity to locate taller buildings."
- "Public space could be better utilised."

Bexley Village

- A designated conservation area.
- Contains many buildings of historic interest.
- "Changing shopping/leisure patterns lead to debate over the need for smaller centres to diversify."

Table 3: London Borough of Bexley Core Strategy (2012) Aspirations for Bexleyheath and Bexley Village

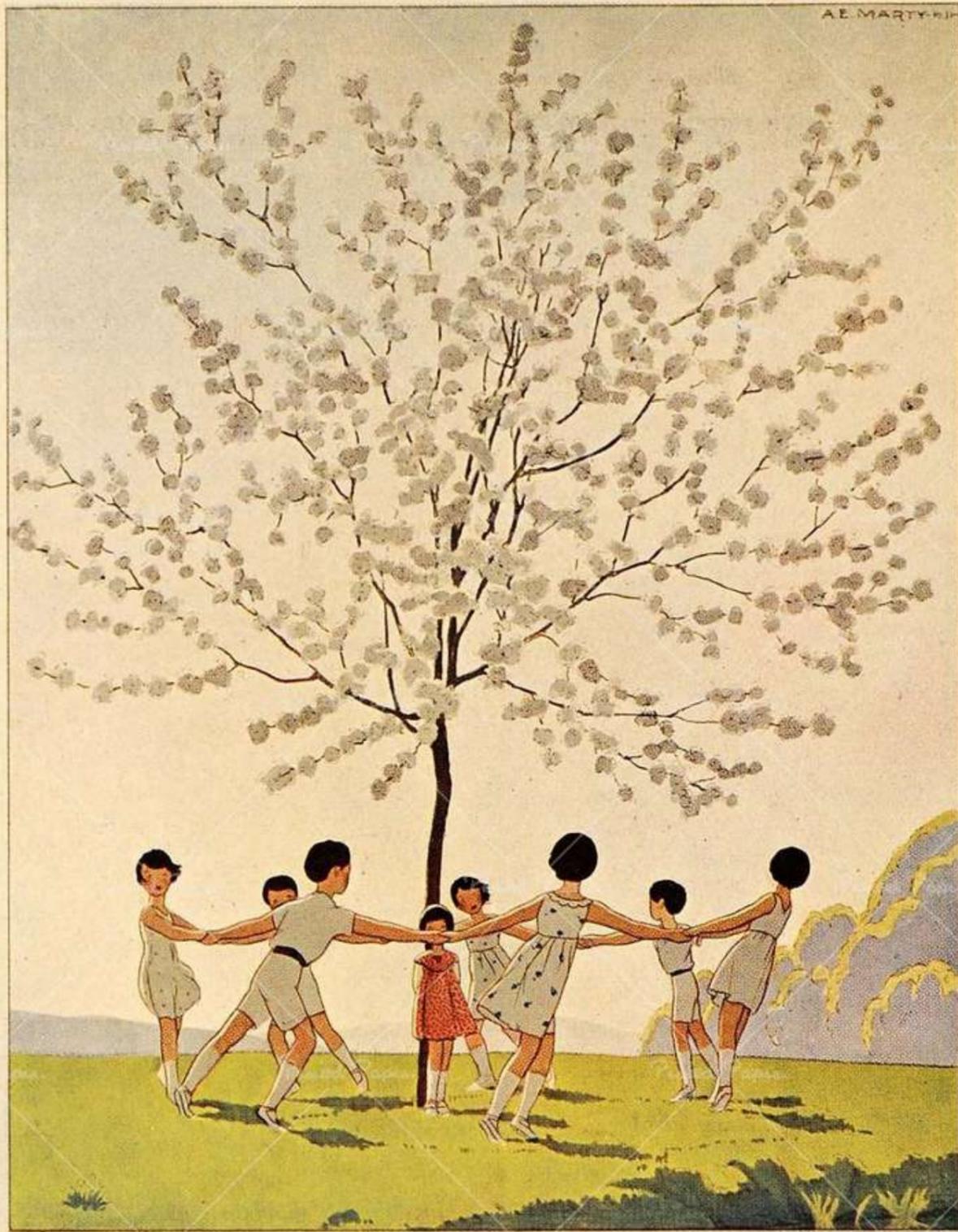
Bexleyheath



Figure 61: Snapshots of Bexleyheath and Bexley Village



Bexley Village



"As we dance round a-ring-a-ring,
A maiden goes a-maying;
And here a flower, and there a flower,
Through mead and meadow straying:"

By  GREEN LINE

6 TESTING THE TOOLS

This section critically assesses how the toolkit would work, highlighting any pitfalls before it is applied to the study area. Three tests were run, followed by revisiting the design toolkit:

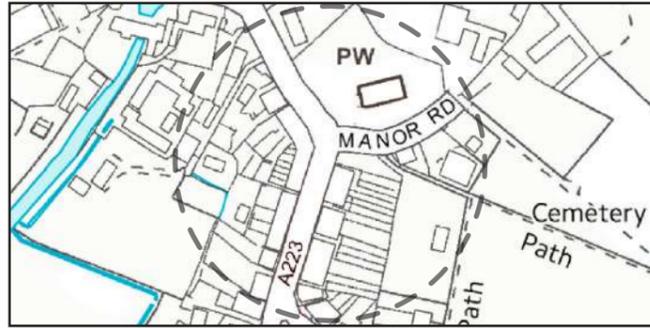
6.1 Application to Site

6.2 Application to Case Study: Croydon

6.3 BVSC Reflection

6.4 Design Toolkit Revisited

6.1 APPLICATION TO SITE



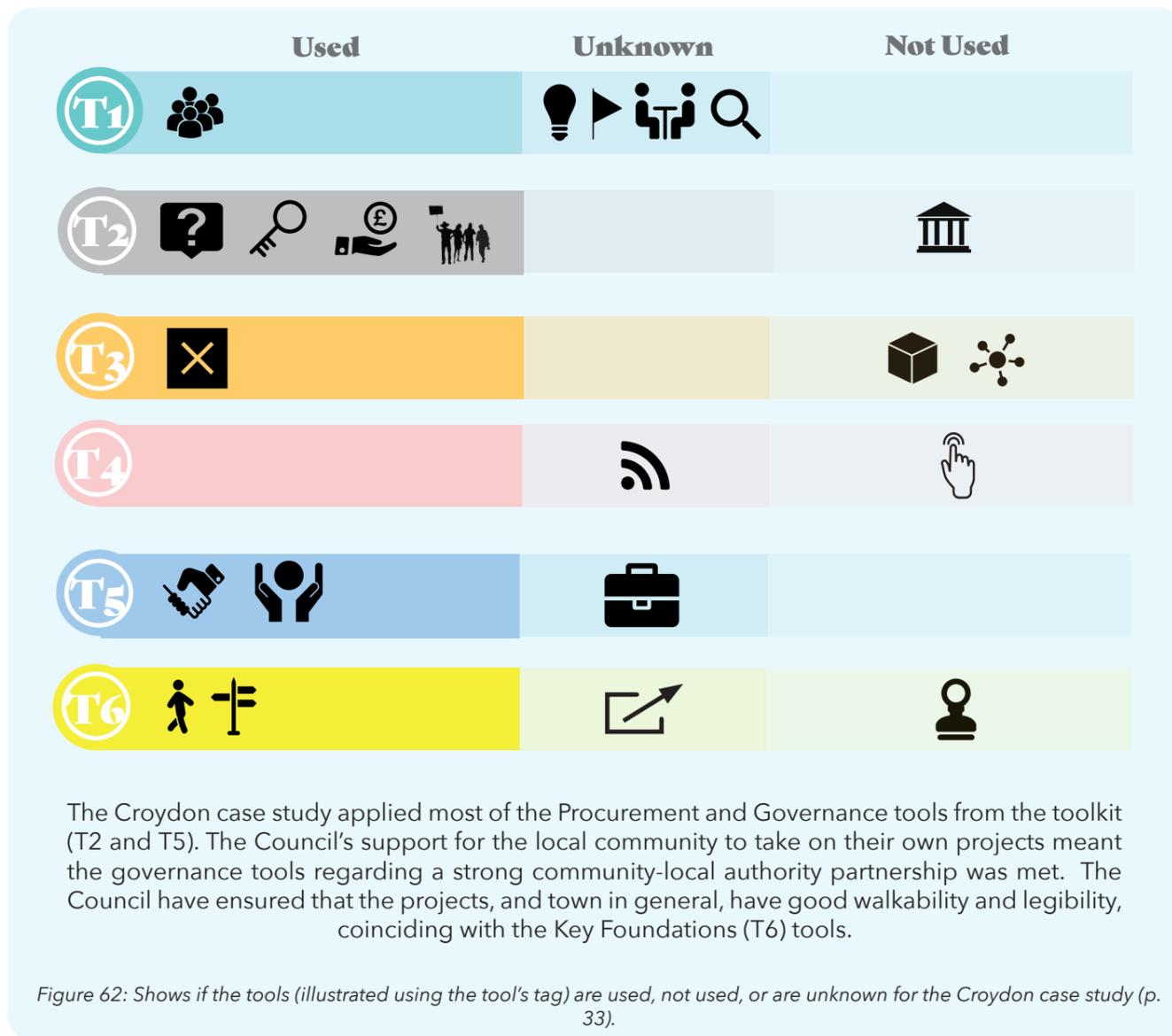
A sub-area of Bexley Village was chosen to test the toolkit, the testing is illustrated in table 4. A small site was chosen to simplify this task. It is predominantly residential and a through road with heavy traffic.

Tool	Checklist	Can it be tested?	Evaluation	What is missing?/What does not work?
Appraise Historic Character 	Identify historic assets. <input type="checkbox"/> Understand development changes and new development. <input type="checkbox"/> Identify iconic local landmarks. <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A variety of means can identify historic character: the Local History Society, Heritage Walk Trail, historic maps and Council's listed buildings maps. Planning applications were easily accessible on the Council's website. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek out community members likely to have a wealth of knowledge of the area and how it has changed over time. In this case, a local Vicar proved very knowledgeable on the subject.
Appraise Social Character 	Identify key places of social interaction. <input type="checkbox"/> Identify existing community and cultural events. <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observation was a useful method to test this - Church ground hosted a summer fete, no other places for social interaction observed. Can easily identify what community events are existing but tool does not enable the user to discover if there are other community events desired by residents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should note how to conduct this tool - through observation. Should ask people what community events they wish to see. Social demographic data.
Understand the People 	Conduct walkabouts. <input type="checkbox"/> Have conversations with local residents. <input type="checkbox"/> Look at online community forums. <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducting walkabouts is the most important tool to help establish place narrative. Conducting walkabouts and having conversations with local residents is the same thing. Looking online at existing Bexley Village forums showed they were generally biased, only people with strong opinions posting - this tool could give a distorted picture. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What to do on these walkabouts e.g. interviews, surveys. Remove Online Forum instruction.
Recognise Existing Community Assets 	Identify existing community/voluntary groups. <input type="checkbox"/> Identify community asset buildings and uses. <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community/voluntary groups can be identified by looking at noticeboards. Community assets can be identified by accessing the Council's Community Right to Bid documents, showing which buildings have been transferred to the community, as well as bids rejected - a very useful source. The application for a pub in the sub-area to be transferred to the community was turned down. 	-
Identify Place Opportunities and Challenges 		No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These will be identified after the previous tools are completed - perhaps this should be made more explicit. 	-
Identify Backlands 	Identify vacant/ underutilised spaces and buildings that could benefit from transformation. <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An easy tool to conduct, through observation. One was found in the sub-area, a former solicitor's office. 	-
Identify historic assets and places of meaning 	Seek out historic assets and places of meaning that are vacant or underutilised. <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Places of meaning is ambiguous and subjective - not a useful tool. Historic assets have already been identified in T1- Appraise historic character. This tool would be better in T1. The real interest here is heritage assets that are under threat. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change tool to make it clear here historical assets under threat need to be identified.
Identify Ownership 	Discover whether spaces are privately/publicly owned. <input type="checkbox"/> Discover whether they are awaiting new development. <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not just spaces, also buildings, need to add this. The vacant building identified, the former solicitor's office is privately owned and has been vacant for 2 years and not awaiting development. This information was available from the Council. This is a useful tool to identify potential opportunities for transformation. 	-
Empower Communities to Co-create Commons 	Apply for temporary use of public space to prototype intervention. <input type="checkbox"/> Create a place for residents to generate ideas. <input type="checkbox"/> Use signage. <input type="checkbox"/>	No	-	-

Tool	Checklist	Can it be tested?	Evaluation	What is missing?/What does not work?
Mobile and Modular	 Make sure interventions are moveable so can be experimented in different locations. <input type="checkbox"/>	No	-	-
Utilise Roofs	 Identify roofs that have potential to be transformed. <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No roofs to utilise in the sub-area. This can be conducted through observation and Google Earth, an explanation of this can be added. Should be moved to Procurement section - T2. Permissions and feasibility (e.g. structural integrity) need to be investigated- this needs to be added. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add instruction: Permissions and feasibility (e.g. structural integrity) need to be investigated.
Provide Multi-functional Activities	 Make sure commoning interventions are: Age inclusive <input type="checkbox"/> Income inclusive <input type="checkbox"/> Religiously inclusive. <input type="checkbox"/>	No	-	-
Create a Chain of Complementary Commons	 Identify multiple sites that commoning can take place, these can be different in size, type and relative location (residential neighbourhood, town centre) . <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be conducted using the tools stated in T1 and T2- Procurement To create this network, residents need to seek out other individuals/community groups with similar aspirations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add instruction: Seek out other individuals/groups with similar aspirations.
Provide an Online Platform	 Discover the tools, partnerships and mechanisms required to set up a networking website. This can provide possibilities to schedule and share activities, connecting people in common. <input type="checkbox"/>	No	-	-
Create Interactive Mechanisms	 Use technology in public spaces to get people in touch with local commons. Identify with the Council where these interventions could go in public space. <input type="checkbox"/>	No	-	-
Ensure Asset Transfers	 Ensure strong community - local authority partnerships Establish the conditions to hand over power in the form of Community Land Trusts <input type="checkbox"/>	No	-	-
Councils as enablers	 The Council must provide prototype space to trial interventions to evaluate their success; The Council should map vacant sites for potential community takeover. <input type="checkbox"/>	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This section (T5) should include the private sector as enablers of the commons movement which has not been provided here. 	-
Be Walkable	 Create commoning in locations that are close to existing centres. Establish safe pedestrian and cycle routes to and from commoning sites. <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These can be determined by observation in this sub-area. The same method can be transferred to a larger area - an easily testable tool. The sub-area is walkable in relation to the Village centre, but from observation, pedestrian safety could be improved and cycle routes were lacking. 	-
Be Legible	 Ensure ease of access through designing wayfinding signage. <input type="checkbox"/>	No	-	-
Create a Collective Brand	 Create a common language through a branding campaign to distinguish place. Establish partners and volunteers to do this. <input type="checkbox"/>	No	-	-
Share what you learn	 To ensure success across all commons, share best practice and common resources. <input type="checkbox"/>	No	-	-

6.2 APPLICATION TO CASE STUDY

Does the toolkit work in a place of existing commoning activity? Figure 62 illustrates this using the case study of Croydon. The design toolkit tags are used to illustrate this.



6.3 BVSC REFLECTION

BVSC provided constructive feedback after reviewing the toolkit (Table 5), allowing some positive changes to be made:

MISSING TOOLS	
Funding Streams	The source of funding should be identified prior to the procurement and design stages of the toolkit as this will be the determining factor as to whether it will come to fruition.
Identify a core group of people	This is needed in order for the project to be followed through from start to finish.
A set of values	A set of values or rules could make people understand the project and how to behave. Commoning is not a well-known practice so would be useful for people to understand.
What identity?	Importance of the community identifying the characteristics of place, or the characteristics the majority of the community agrees with.
Likes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prototyping activities and a dedicated area for this Online platform - enhances accessibility 	Dislikes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modular units Using historic assets - need to ensure health and safety checks and impact on building.

Table 5: BVSC Toolkit Comments

6.4 DESIGN TOOLKIT REVISTED

Figure 63 illustrates the finalised design toolkit, edited from the three test runs to ensure a successful outcome for the design proposals.

T1	Appraise Historic Character <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify historic assets. <input type="checkbox"/> Understand development changes and new development. <input type="checkbox"/> Identify local landmarks. <input type="checkbox"/> Seek community members with a wealth of knowledge of the area's evolution. <input type="checkbox"/> 	Appraise Social Character <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observe key places of social interaction. <input type="checkbox"/> Identify existing community and cultural events. <input type="checkbox"/> Research social demographics. <input type="checkbox"/> Ask locals what community events they wish to see. <input type="checkbox"/> 	Understand the People <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walkaround and have conversations with local residents. <input type="checkbox"/> 	Recognise Existing Community Assets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify existing community/voluntary groups. <input type="checkbox"/> Identify community buildings and uses through Community Right to Bid information, accessible from the Council. <input type="checkbox"/> 	Identify Place Opportunities and Challenges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Derived from the information collected from the previous four tools. <input type="checkbox"/>
	T2	Identify Backlands <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify vacant/underutilised spaces and buildings that could benefit from transformation. <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Potential spaces include (but is not limited to): surface car parks, roof-space garages, parcels of greenfield land.</i> Examine permissions and feasibility (e.g. structural integrity). <input type="checkbox"/> 	Identify Heritage Under Threat <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek out heritage assets that are community used at under threat from providing existing services. <input type="checkbox"/> 	Identify Funding Streams <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify funding streams to make sure the project is viable. <input type="checkbox"/> 	Identify Ownership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discover whether spaces are privately/publicly owned. <input type="checkbox"/> Discover whether they are awaiting new development. <input type="checkbox"/>
T3	Mobile and Modular <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make sure interventions are moveable so can be experimented in different locations. <input type="checkbox"/> 	Provide Multifunctional Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make sure commoning interventions are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Age inclusive. <input type="checkbox"/> Income inclusive. <input type="checkbox"/> Religiously inclusive. <input type="checkbox"/> 	Create a Chain of Complementary Commons <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify multiple sites for commoning to take place. <input type="checkbox"/> <i>These can be different in size and type and relative location (residential neighbourhood, town centre)</i> Seek out other individuals/groups with similar aspirations. <input type="checkbox"/> 		
	T4	Provide an Online Platform <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discover the tools, partnerships and mechanisms required to set up a networking website. <input type="checkbox"/> 	Create Interactive Mechanisms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use technology in public spaces to put people in touch with local commons. <input type="checkbox"/> Identify with the Council where these interventions could go in public space. <input type="checkbox"/> Create a commons map. <input type="checkbox"/> 		
T5	Ensure Asset Transfers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure strong community - local authority partnerships are established from the start. <input type="checkbox"/> Establish the conditions to create Community Land Trusts over time. <input type="checkbox"/> Establish the conditions for horizontal management. <input type="checkbox"/> 	Councils as enablers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek Council approval for the proposed prototype spaces to trial Commons' interventions. <input type="checkbox"/> Liaise with the Council to obtain information required to map public land for potential community takeover. <input type="checkbox"/> 	Private Sector as enablers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (Applicable only if on private land) Reach out to the private sector to form collaborative projects. <input type="checkbox"/> Establish the conditions for length and type of intervention(s) and gain agreement over financial aspects. <input type="checkbox"/> 		
	T6	Be Walkable <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create commoning in locations that are close to existing centres. <input type="checkbox"/> Establish safe pedestrian and cycle routes to and from commons. <input type="checkbox"/> 	Be Legible <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure ease of access through designing wayfinding signage. <input type="checkbox"/> 	Create a Collective Brand <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a common language through a branding campaign to distinguish place. <input type="checkbox"/> Establish partners and volunteers to do this. <input type="checkbox"/> 	Share what you learn <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure success across all commons, share best practice and common resources. <input type="checkbox"/>

- Tool Theme
- TEXT** Tool
- TEXT Checklist Instructions
- Tag

Figure 63: The Design Toolkit Revisited



7 DESIGN PROPOSALS BEXLEYHEATH

7.1 Bexleyheath Findings Snapshot

7.2 Bexleyheath Commons Network

7.3 The Open Laboratory

7.4 Reutilising the Heath

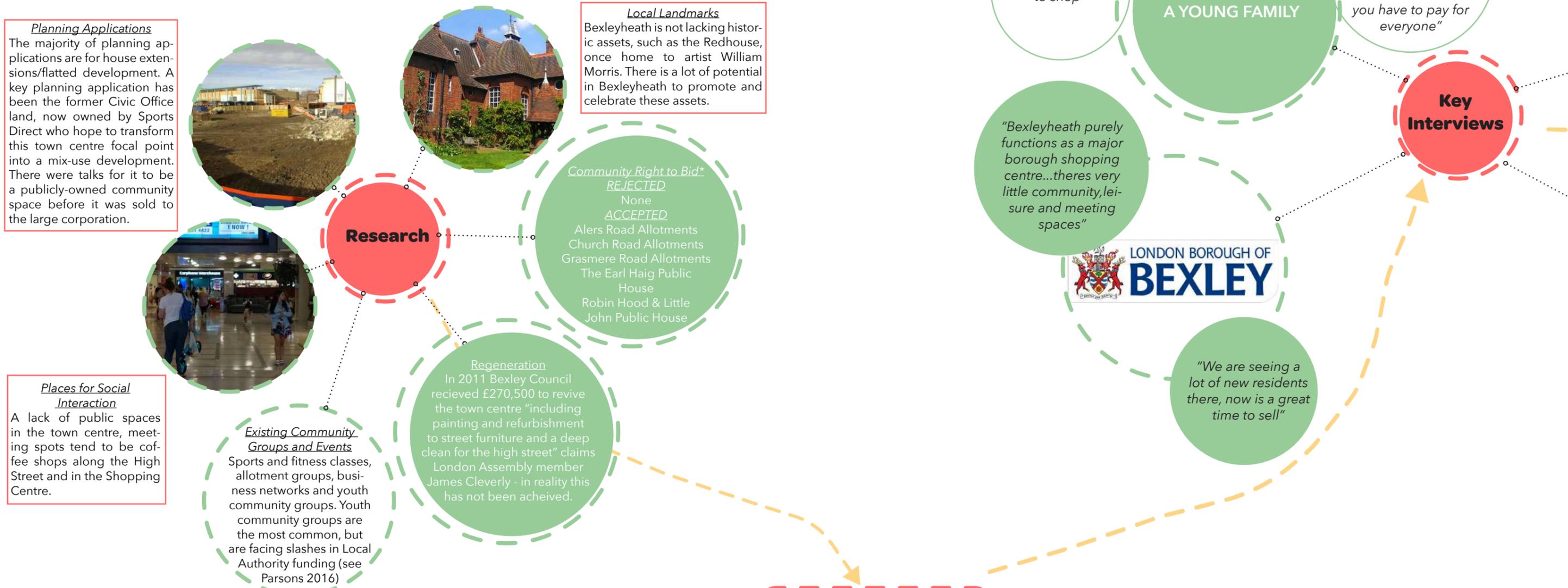
7.5 Private Rooftop for Community Use

7.6 Other Interventions

7.7 Infrastructure

7.1 Bexleyheath Findings Snapshot

The Design Toolkit identifies that the first step for communities is to 'Establish Place Narrative' (T1) in order to identify opportunities and challenges facing their neighbourhood, providing the right Commons approach to place. Due to the project time frame, accessing a community group to conduct this was not feasible. Instead, a personal assessment was conducted, using observation, interviews, surveys with local people and businesses and secondary research (Figure 64). This has enabled the creation of the design proposals.



Personal Observations



'Family Outing' Statue, 1985. Signifies the town as a place for families to enjoy. It now seems outdated, in front of a Burger King.

The town centre focal point, Market Place, lacks street furniture and has damaged, legible signage. A space to pass through rather than to stay.

Surface car parks and rooftop car parks are common, in prime town centre areas.

Traffic is extremely bad, cars dominate the town centre.

A concrete jungle, the town centre seems like it is purely for shopping.

A community music cafe, closed on a Saturday afternoon.



"We were brought in to propose improvements to the public realm, road junction design and for a nighttime vision for the town...a lack of funding meant our hands were tied from the start"

"There's potential here, a lot of vacant sites and buildings which could be managed as community land trusts if there's no public money"



"We need some people to be the catalysts to evoke change with fresh ideas"

"We are oversubscribed for a lot of the groups and classes we provide...there are waiting lists for months for language classes and mother and toddler classes"

Survey Summary

15 short surveys were conducted in Bexleyheath Town Centre:

- Only 3/15 people had visited Hall Place.
- Those who had not said they were not aware of where it was or what was there.
- 11/15 disliked how shopping orientated it was, for that reason they only visit the town centre for this purpose.
- 7/15 people said that they did not know their neighbours but would like to.
- More family oriented leisure activities were suggested for improvements.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Reconnecting the town centre with its vast green spaces which are currently underutilised and at risk of closure.
- Using vacant and undervalued backlands, in particular roof tops, into Commons.
- People need to be made aware of existing place assets, through legible signage and a local branding campaign.
- Regenerating Market Place into an attractive place to stay in and a Commons focal point.
- Building on Bexleyheath's historic assets to promote the Commons.
- Rethinking how to use small parcels of land between residential developments for community activity.
- Many community groups own allotments yet huge waiting lists still persist.
- Providing spaces for young families.

CHALLENGES

- To rebrand a predominantly borough-wide shopping desination as a community centre.
- Creating a harmonious relationship with businesses and private land within the Town Centre.
- Funding mechanisms to deliver the types of community activities suggests from interviews and surveys.
- What are the rewards for those who invest time and effort into the commons?



* Allows communities and parish councils to nominate buildings/land listed by the local authority as community asset. If assets come up for sale, the community can 'pause' the sale and find funding to buy the asset for up to 6 months.



7.2 Bexleyheath Commons Network

A series of design proposals have been produced for Bexleyheath Town Centre. The Town Centre has vacant and underutilised spaces, both public and private, as well as under threat public facilities, providing opportunities for commoning interventions. Figure 65 shows the possibility for co-producing urban resilience by introducing a network of resident-run commons projects. The network starts at a neighbourhood level, projects acupuncture into small spaces, progressively scaling up to the town level over time. They would serve complementary functions as well as the transfer of knowledge, skills, people and support.

Figure 65: Proposed Network of Commons Activity in Across Bexleyheath

7.3 The Open Laboratory

Market Place, Bexleyheath



Figure 66: Shape and Configuration of Market Place (Source: East 2015)

The Open Laboratory (Figure 67) is a Commons testing ground, supporting the development of local residents, charities and organisation's ideas and projects. Residents wishing to initiate their own Commons or strengthen existing ones can showcase/ prototype their project. An incubator for local ideas, the laboratory could provide inspiration, advice, join wider networks as well as help residents connect with local partners, both public and private. The proposition could be a temporary intervention, using pop-up stands to showcase Commons activity.

The proposition is located in the town's largest public space, Market Place, a gateway for many travelling to the town by bus, currently lacking social activity (Figure 66). The space is owned by Bexley Council, but an advantageous relationship could be established between the Council and Commoners to reinvigorate it together.

This proposition breathes new life into this space, a catalyst for the commons movement to flourish.

TOOLS USED

 Identify Ownership	 Council as Enablers	 Private Sector as Enablers
 Empower Communities	 Mobile and Modular	
 Be Legible	 Share what you Learn	



Figure 67: Market Place Open Laboratory. Booths adapted from Hobson and Boudier (2016) 57

7.4 Reutilising the Heath



Figure 68: Bexleyheath, no users on a hot summers day

Visiting on a pleasant summer's day (Figure 68), on observation the heath was not being used even though only a 10 minute walk from Market Place. The space is owned and maintained by Bexley Council, but an advantageous relationship could breathe new life into this deserted 'backland' (Scott 2017).

As Figure 69 illustrates, a group of commoners could collaborate to start a community allotment. Over time, as this gains interest and publicity from passers-by and the Open Laboratory at Market Place, it could diversify. If successful, the Commons collective could attempt to become a Community Land Trust. This could be beneficial for the Council, whose funds are dwindling for park maintenance.

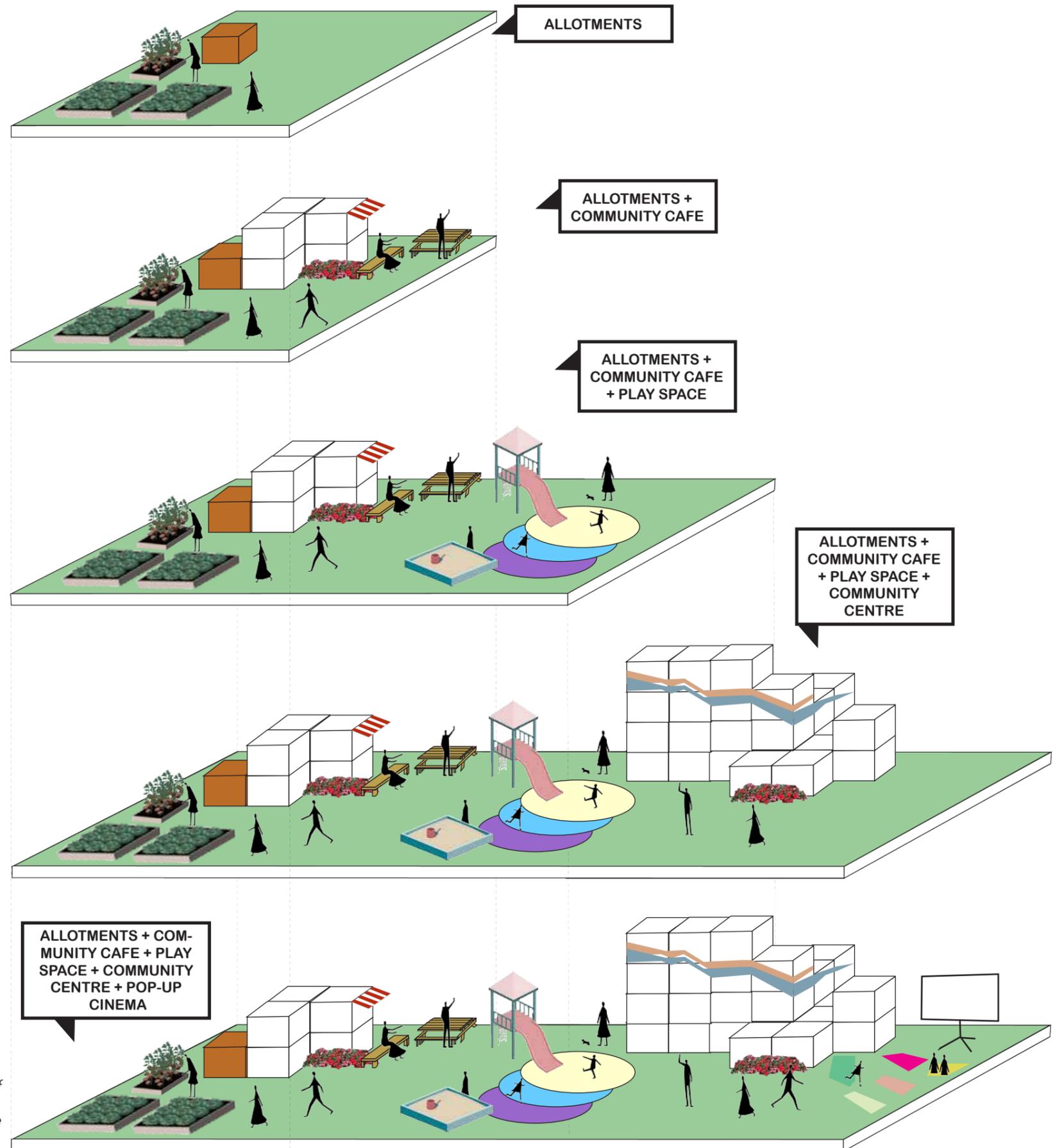


Figure 69: Series of Commons Projects Evolving Over Time

TOOLS USED

Identify Backlands	Identify Ownership	Multi-functional	Mobile and Modular	Ensure Asset Transfers	Council as Enablers	Be Walkable

7.5 Private Rooftop for Community Use



Figure 70: Birds Eye View of Bexleyheath Shopping Centre Roof Car Park (Source: Google Earth 2016)

Personal research showed that the carpark (Figure 70) was approximately 20% occupied by vehicles on three separate visits. This seems like a waste of town centre space. Although it is unlikely that commoners could eventually own the rooftop, a relationship between the shopping centre and commoners could develop. Figure 71 shows the proposition. Commons projects could include community gardening and host spaces for commons groups to meet. Community projects involved in trade could sell their goods using pop-up interventions. For Commoners this is a central, walkable location, a focal point adjacent to Market Place, the Open Laboratory. For the shopping centre, this encourages people to walk past their shops, increasing footfall.

This proposal occupies vacant space currently not making money whilst adding fun and vibrancy, something many towns and cities are encouraging. A tranquil, iconic spot dedicated to the community - a win-win situation. Structures could be modular providing the opportunity to adapt and test new activities.

TOOLS USED

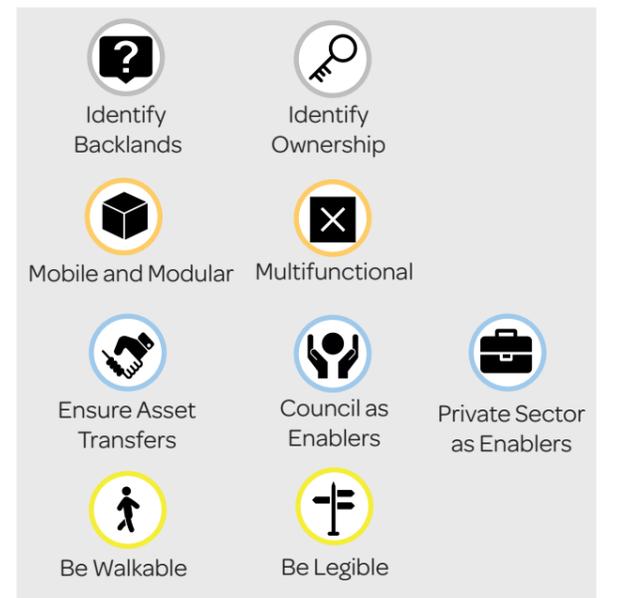


Figure 71: Proposal for Bexleyheath Shopping Centre Roof Car Park 59

7.6 Other Interventions

7.6.1 From Council Managed Heritage Asset To Community Land Trust

BEFORE



Place Hall, Council-owned but under threat could become a CLT. Activities could include a community café, amphitheatre for performance space, community art gallery, gardens and swimming area.

COMMONS APPROACH



PRECEDENTS



TOOLS USED



Identify Ownership



Multi-functional



Ensure Asset Transfers



Be Walkable



Identify Historic Assets



Council as Enablers



Be Legible

7.6.2 From Parcels of Green Backlands To Small Scale Common Activities



Residents could seek out opportunities right where they live. The Commons approach could include a community food system, growing and sharing locally produced food, micro-breweries and pop-up cinemas.



Identify Backlands



Mobile and Modular



Chain of Complementary Commons



Ensure Asset Transfers



Multifunctional

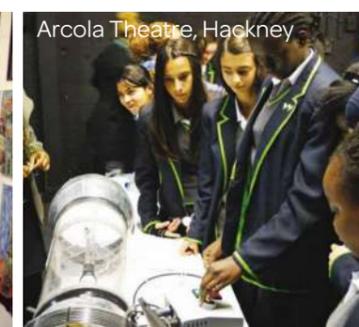
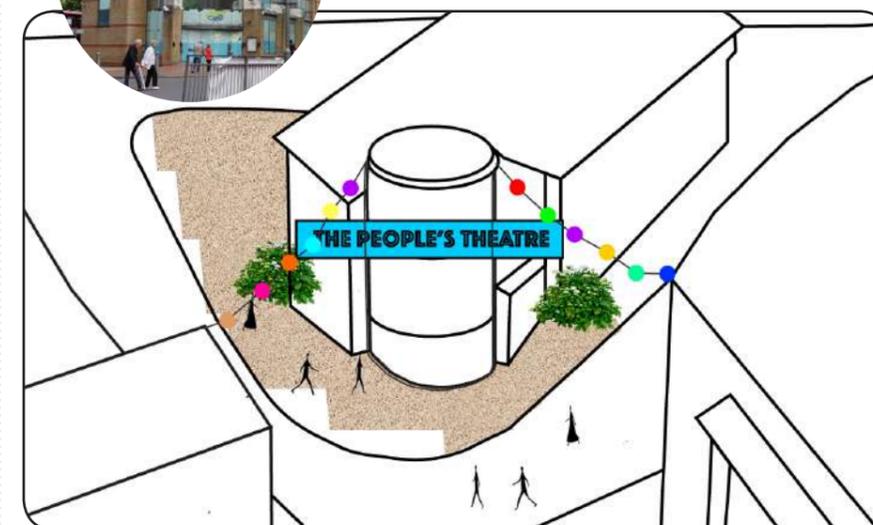


Be Walkable

7.6.3 From Vacant Retail Unit To Arts + Community Theatre



The vacant building along Bexleyheath High Street could be acquired by the community through the Right to Bid. Surveys signified a lack of child and young adult facilities which this scheme offers. It could be multifunctional, providing a gallery, theatre and comedy club.



Identify Backlands



Multifunctional



Ensure Asset Transfers



Private Sector as Enablers



Identify Ownership



Council as Enablers



Be Legible

Figure 72: Proposals for Community Land Trusts, Small Scale Residential Activity and Community Theatre

7.7 Infrastructure

TOOLS USED

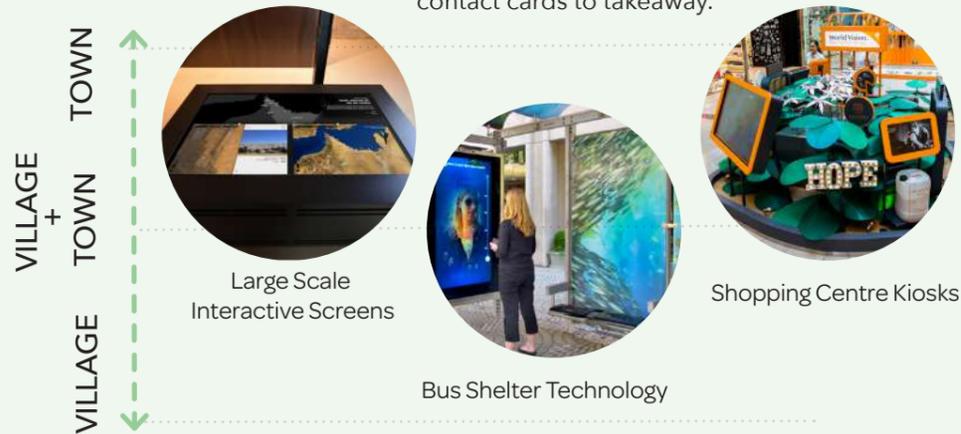
 Interactive Mechanisms
 Online Platform
 Empower Communities

The use of technology can enhance awareness of the local commons movement, ensure wayfinding and prove that the place fosters a community identity. The Local Authority should provide funding and cooperation for this infrastructure in public spaces to ensure long-term Commons success. Figure 73 illustrates the design proposals for incorporating technology.

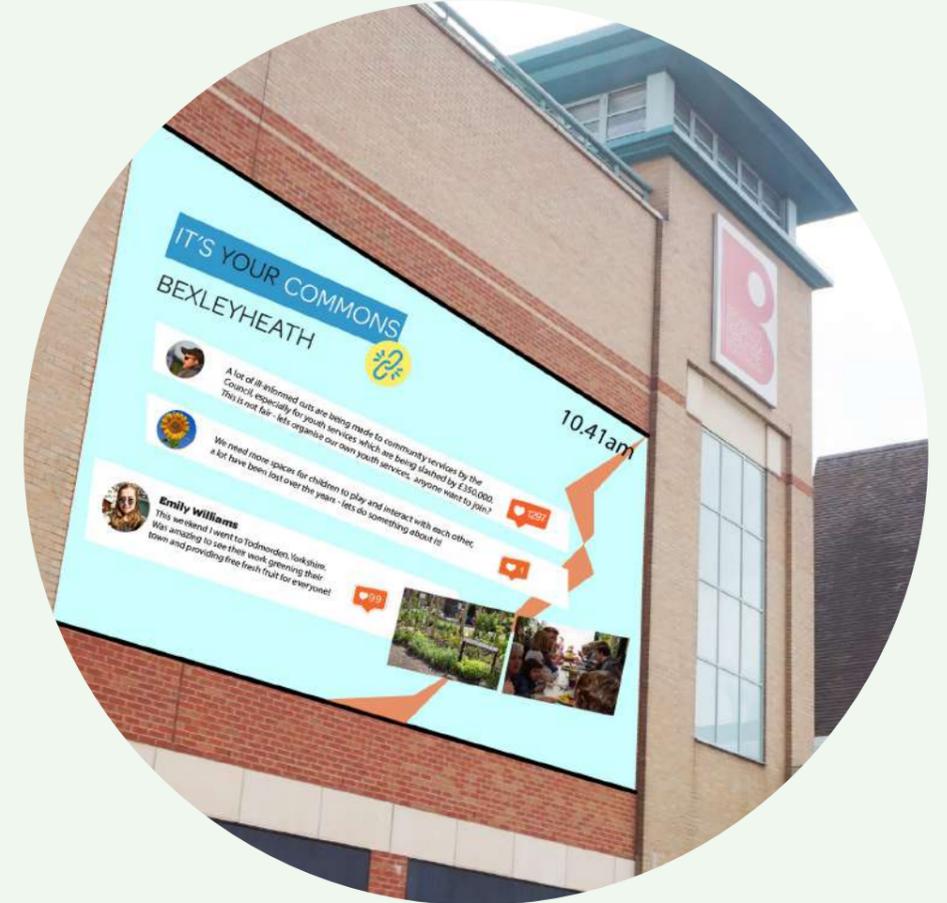
Interactive Commons Stands



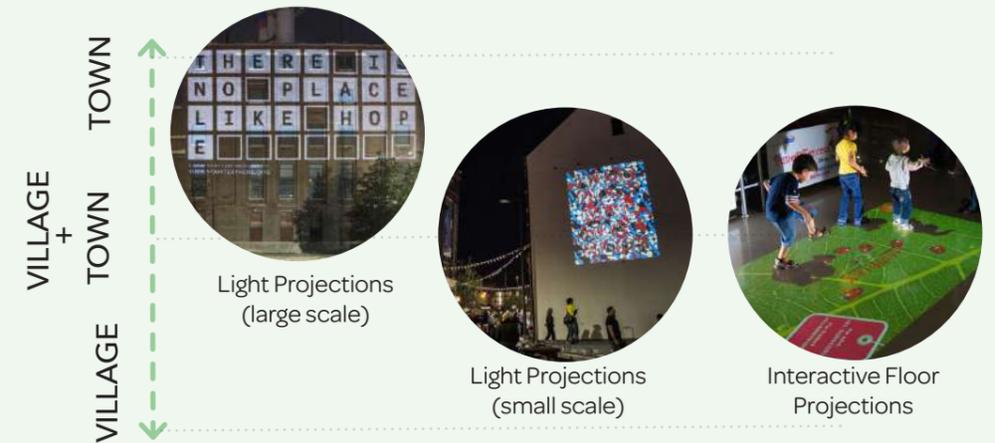
Digital commons stands allow people to log into the app and maps existing commons and other community projects to enhance wayfinding. It will also consist of a totem, holding flyers and community enterprise contact cards to takeaway.



Real-time Commons Technology



The digital screen is located on a vacant brick wall above Market Place, showcasing real-time community opinions, ideas and commons projects.



The scale of the technology must differ according to the scale of the place. Figure 73 shows a variety of infrastructure options for the town and village scale.



8 DESIGN PROPOSALS BEXLEY VILLAGE

8.1 Bexley Findings Snapshot

8.2 The Bexley Commons Network

8.3 The Enterprise Quarter

8.4 Other Interventions

8.5 Realising Potential

8.6 Establishing a Shared Platform

8.7 Funding Streams

8.1 Bexley Findings Snapshot

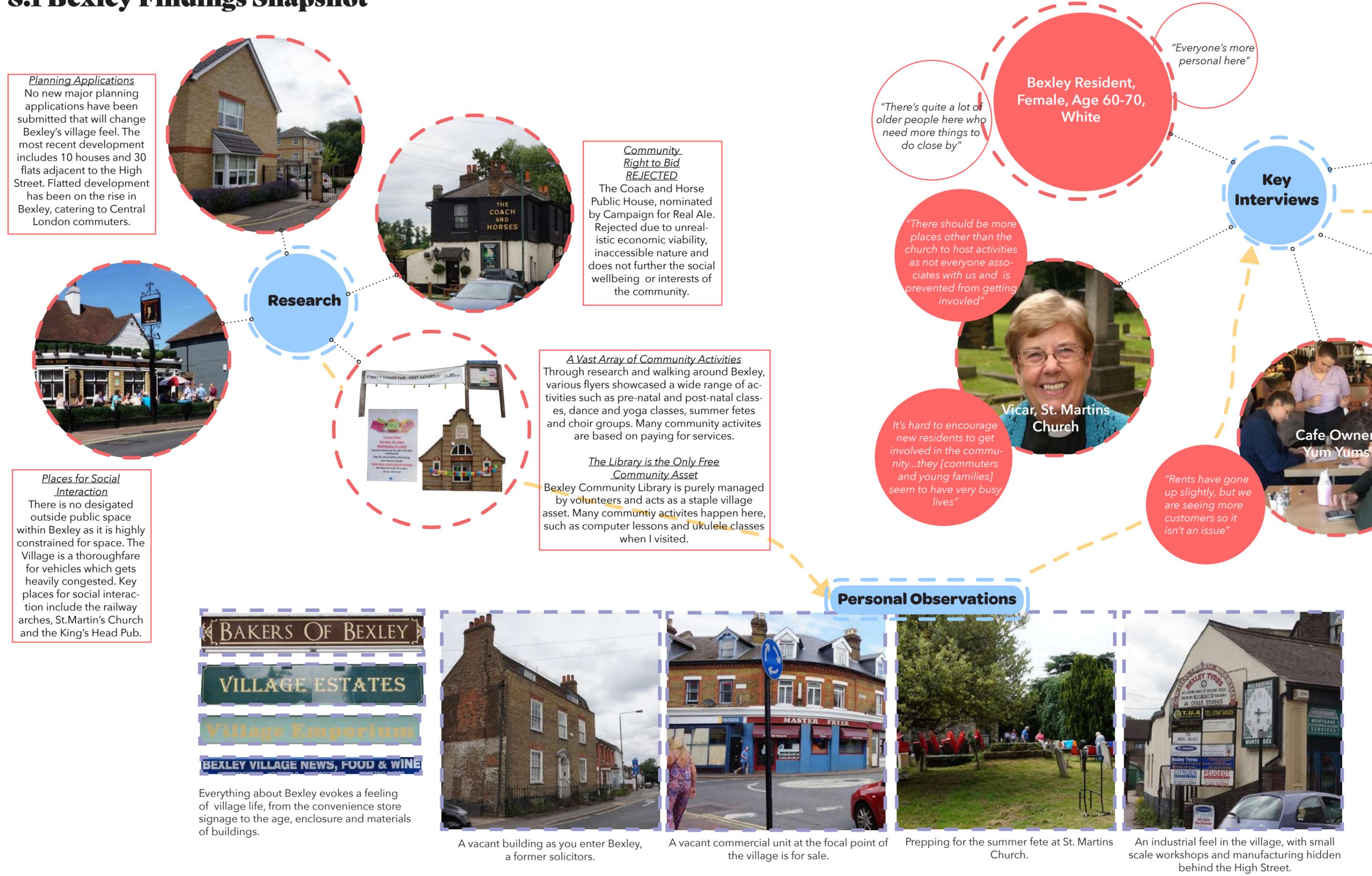


Figure 74: A Summary of the Preliminary Research Conducted in Bexley Village

"Council budgets will not get better...we have to be entrepreneurs ourselves...we have diversified our activities"

"We are now a commuter borough"

"There's not enough room for us to host all our activities...we are trying to expand somewhere else"



Librarian, Bexley Community Library

Bexley Resident, Male, Age 30-40, Black

"There's a perception of community here but it is just that...perception...but it depends who you talk to"

There's no place identity here...it's the classic rich white suburbia

"We've seen more yummy mummies and families over the last few years, moving away from central London to raise their kids"

Survey Summary

10 short surveys were conducted along Bexley High Street:

- 1/10 currently volunteer within the Village.
- 6/10 said that could not make the commitment regularly.
- In terms of community services, people would like to see more sports/yoga classes and children activities.
- People wanted to see more meeting spaces, workspaces and a central community focus.

OPPORTUNITIES

- The biggest opportunity is for more community hosting space. Many small group community activities go on in the village but a lack of physical space to do it in.
- There are a number of vacant shopping units along the High Street, which gives the appearance of neglect and a struggling village centre.
- Surveys suggest industrial spaces are diminishing yet there is still a need for small businesses and low rents.
- Events for children and teenagers.
- A need to make sure community activities are inclusive to everyone, along the lines of race, age, gender and social background.

CHALLENGES

- The key challenge is to establish how to integrate new residents (predominantly young couples and families) into the existing community fabric and take part in commoning activity.
- Traffic is the key obstacle to making Bexley a walkable and safe place to walk through.
- Will more affluent residents dedicate their time to commoning?
- What are the rewards for those who invest time and effort into the commons?
- An emphasis on how to integrate the older community is essential.

The Proposition?



Create SE20 Workshops, Penge, London



We Work



Open Works, West Norwood, London



Workshop Space



Loughborough Junction, London

8.2 The Bexley Commons Network

A series of design proposals have been produced for Bexley Village. The Common approaches suggested are using predominantly vacant sites and spaces, as well as greenfield parcels of land. Figure 75 shows this network, accessible all within a 10-minute walk from each other. Legible signage is key to navigating people to commons, as well as safe pedestrian routes and crossings. With the village having a high vehicle count, the village acting as a thoroughfare, a walkability assessment and design strategy is required.

Figure 75: Proposed Network of Common's Activity Across Bexley Village



8.3 The Enterprise Quarter

The Enterprise Quarter in Bexley Village is a reaction to the loss of existing industrial and work space from the High Street. Only a small proportion of the arches are utilised, there is a large stretch which lies vacant.

This Commons approach can further renew the archways, incorporating micro-businesses, social enterprises and start-ups. Rents would be regulated, but could be a promising venture for the private owner, not currently receiving an income from this historic asset.

The project would require a collective of individuals to kick start the project, motivated and with a clear sense of direction. Overtime this grouping could work closely with businesses to create a collective identity, increase local participation and create a social focal point which has been the case for some places (Figures 76-78).

Examples of activities shown by Figure 79 include a community dressmaking and craft shop, bike shop, florists, community kitchen and workshops.

Re-investment (sweat-equity and money) is required, to host events, pop-ups, media coverage, legible signage and community branding.



Figure 76: Pop-up Community Hub, Limehouse



Figure 77: Brixton Village



Figure 78: Creative Industries, NDSM Wharf, Rotterdam

Figure 79: Proposal for Bexley Village Enterprise Quarter



TOOLS USED



8.4 Other Interventions

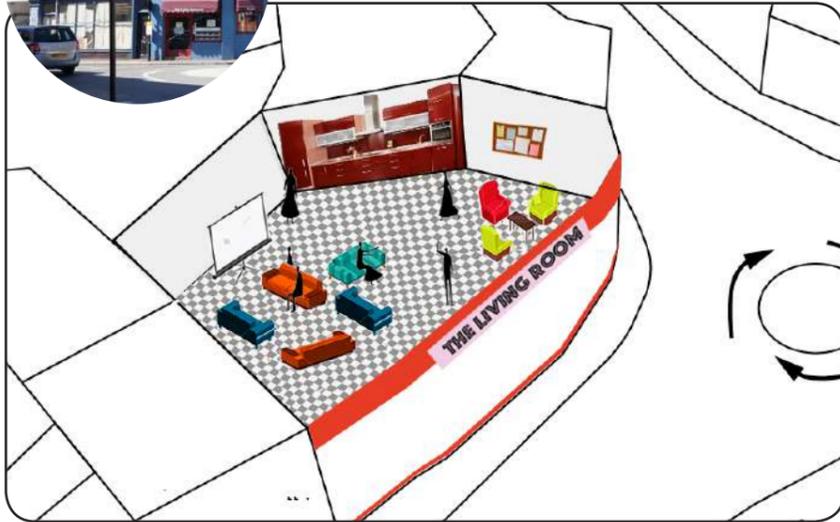
8.4.1 From Vacant High Street Unit To Village Living Room

BEFORE



Vacant commercial units along Bexley High Street could become community-run living rooms. Findings shows a lack of spaces for community groups to gather.

COMMONS APPROACH



8.4.2 From Parcel of Greenfield Land To Community Wellbeing Hub



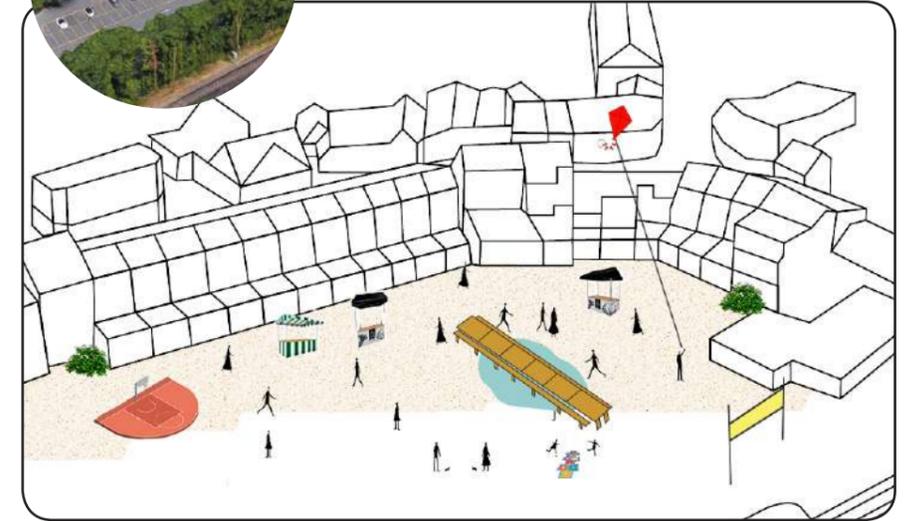
This proposition is for a community wellbeing hub, which BVCS stated desirable but funding is a key concern (p. 43). The Village does not have enough space to host existing projects- this offers a potential solution.



8.4.3 From Vacant Building To the Open Laboratory



Currently a half vacant/car park space behind the High Street, this could become the Village's Open Laboratory. This would be a temporary intervention, based on the size and scale of the Village.



PRECEDENTS



TOOLS USED

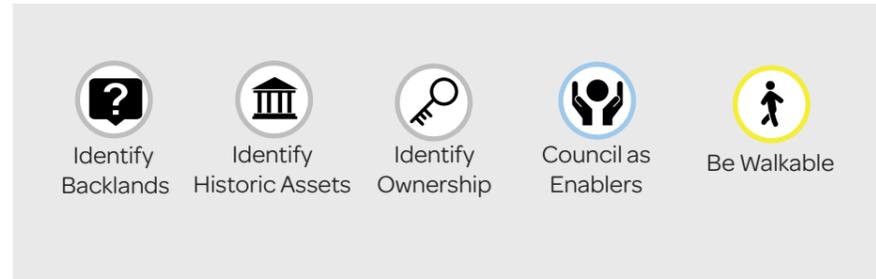
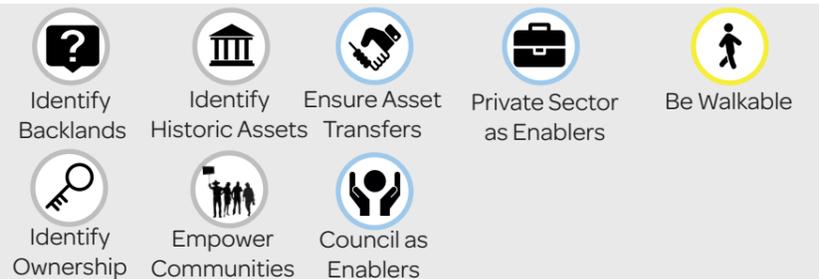


Figure 80: Proposals for Community Living Rooms, Wellbeing Hub and Open Laboratory

8.5 Realising Potential

TOOL USED



Empower
Communities

Figure 81 displays the tools to empower people, raise community awareness and display optimism for the Commons movement. These should be positioned in key focal positions and/or attached to vacant land that could be utilised. This could be conducted by a community-council partnership.

<p>PROPOSALS</p>	<h3>Your Community Needs You</h3>  <p>Use of comedic posters to catch residents attention and encourage them to be part of the commons movement.</p>	<h3>Community Tokens</h3>  <p>Use of token ballot boxes placed in front of vacant/underutilised land which could be regenerated. A series of options could be stated and residents can choose what type of use they would like to see.</p>	<h3>Community Moodboard</h3>  <p>A community moodboard could be used to start a conversation on the type of interventions desired by residents. This should be created in accessible spots around towns and villages and also outside, to make aware of the importance of local ideas and conversations.</p>
<p>PRECEDENTS</p>	<h3>Insert __ Here New York City, USA</h3>  <p>Local people are given the opportunity to place arrows and fill in what they think is needed in their neighbourhood. This encourages communities to work together to raise their unique voice.</p>	<h3>This is Your Land New York City, USA</h3>  <p>596 acres, a case study reviewed on page 30, uses signage to make people aware of the public ownership of land around their city, using emotive language to make people feel empowered to do something about it, also suggesting what the land could become.</p>	<h3>Memories Left on the Asphalt Turku, Finland</h3>  <p>An interactive installation to share the ideas and thoughts of citizens. The artist Candy Chang's project involved fill-in-the-blank sentences on pavements. This idea could be adapted to the commons agenda and use of space in neighbourhoods.</p>

Figure 81: Tools to make people realise their 'Right to the City'

8.6 Establishing a Shared Platform

TOOLS USED

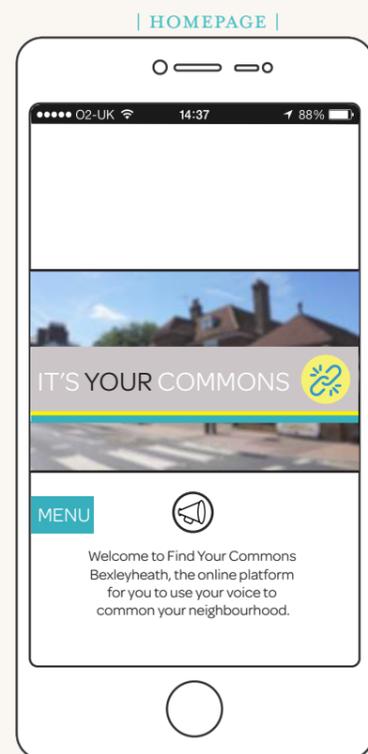


Figure 82 illustrates the phone application for everything commoning - Find Your Commons.

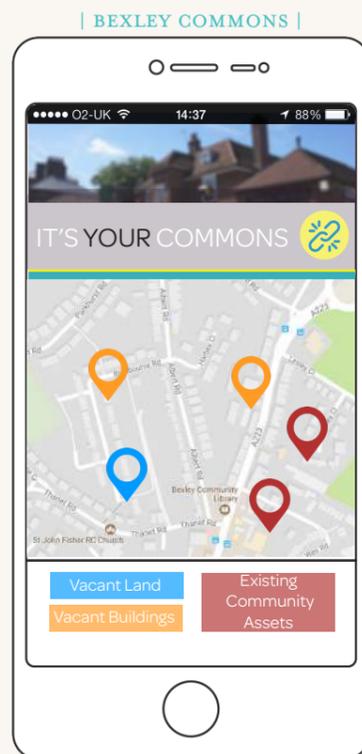
Those less inclined to use the app can access it and receive assistance at local libraries. The App would also be accessible through the interactive Commons Stands (p. 61).

This is real time information, which some Bexley residents interviewed said was an issue, especially not knowing what community groups existed and their programmes.

A partnership with the Local Council would be established in order to access some funding streams and map publically-owned land.



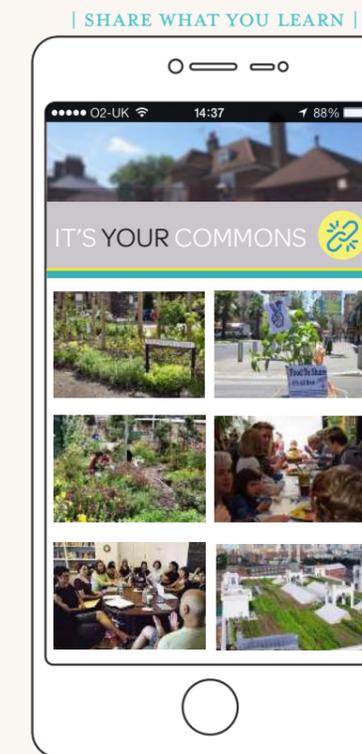
A free phone application anyone can access by creating an account. High numbers of users should create appetite among local businesses to advertise on the app, creating funds for the app and community initiatives.



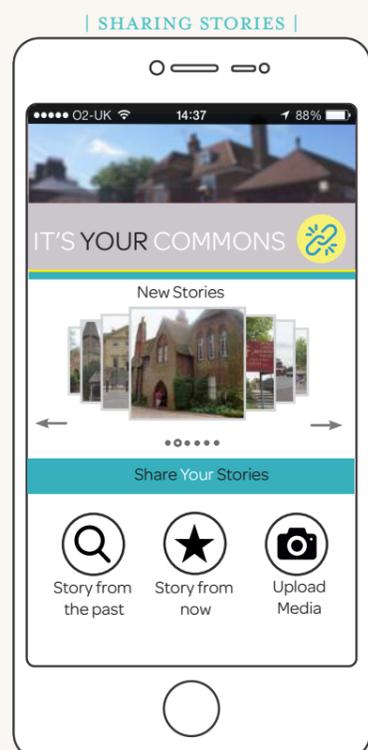
Mapping of vacant land, buildings and existing community assets and commons will be uploaded, locating new opportunities.



A directory matches individuals with local commons projects and community groups and vice versa. People interested in joining a project can create an account, showcase their skills/interests and select projects they would like to join.



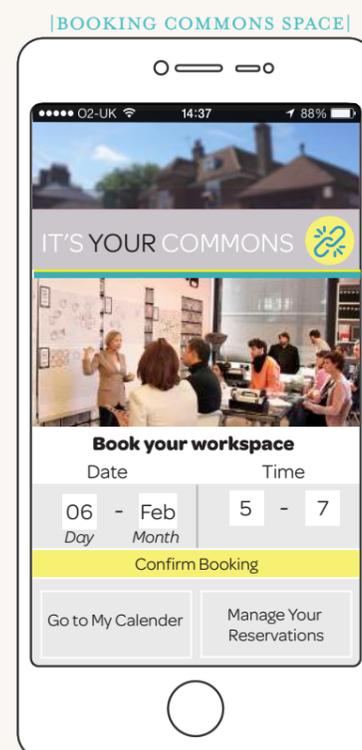
To spark inspiration as well as help existing commons to grow, local users can be showcased by app users. Comments can be left under pictures, connecting commoners and transferring knowledge.



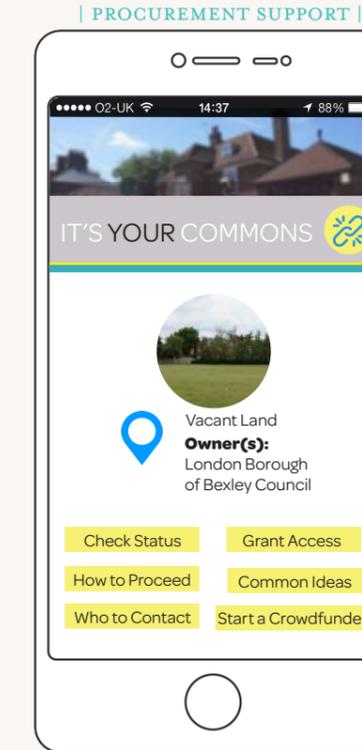
Citizens can upload their stories allowing people to learn about Bexley's past commons, cultural history, historic assets and local landmarks under threat.



For people to able to keep up-to-date with what community groups and projects they can get involved in.



Provides a matchmaking service connecting community groups to host spaces. Short-term and long-term can be stated.



Selecting specific vacant sites from the map tells you who owns it. If procurement is challenging, support is at hand.

WHERE IT HAS WORKED |



Figure 82: It's Your Commons Digital Application

8.7 Funding Streams

The funding landscape has changed. Grant schemes were once more accessible from Local Authority fund pots (Architecture 00 2015). Now, as this project emphasises, this has been drastically reduced. Civic entrepreneurs have stated that this encourages greater levels of creativity (Beunderman and Lengkeek 2012) and introduces more imaginative ways of accessing money. Figure 83 shows some of these options, as well as hypothetically matching the project design proposals to funding streams.

Cooperative funding, such as community-share schemes and crowdfunding are an increasingly significant funding stream. This project develops the idea that the private sector should not be ignored and could play a vital role providing funds. Local Authorities should negotiate on behalf of community groups the conditions for development, requiring the need to provide economic help to commons projects in the local community, through section 106 planning obligations (S106) and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) contributions.

Considering the amount of opportunities for applying for funding, perhaps a group of people need to be organised to grasp these opportunities, similar to Participatory City's (2014) *Open Works Network* (p. 21).

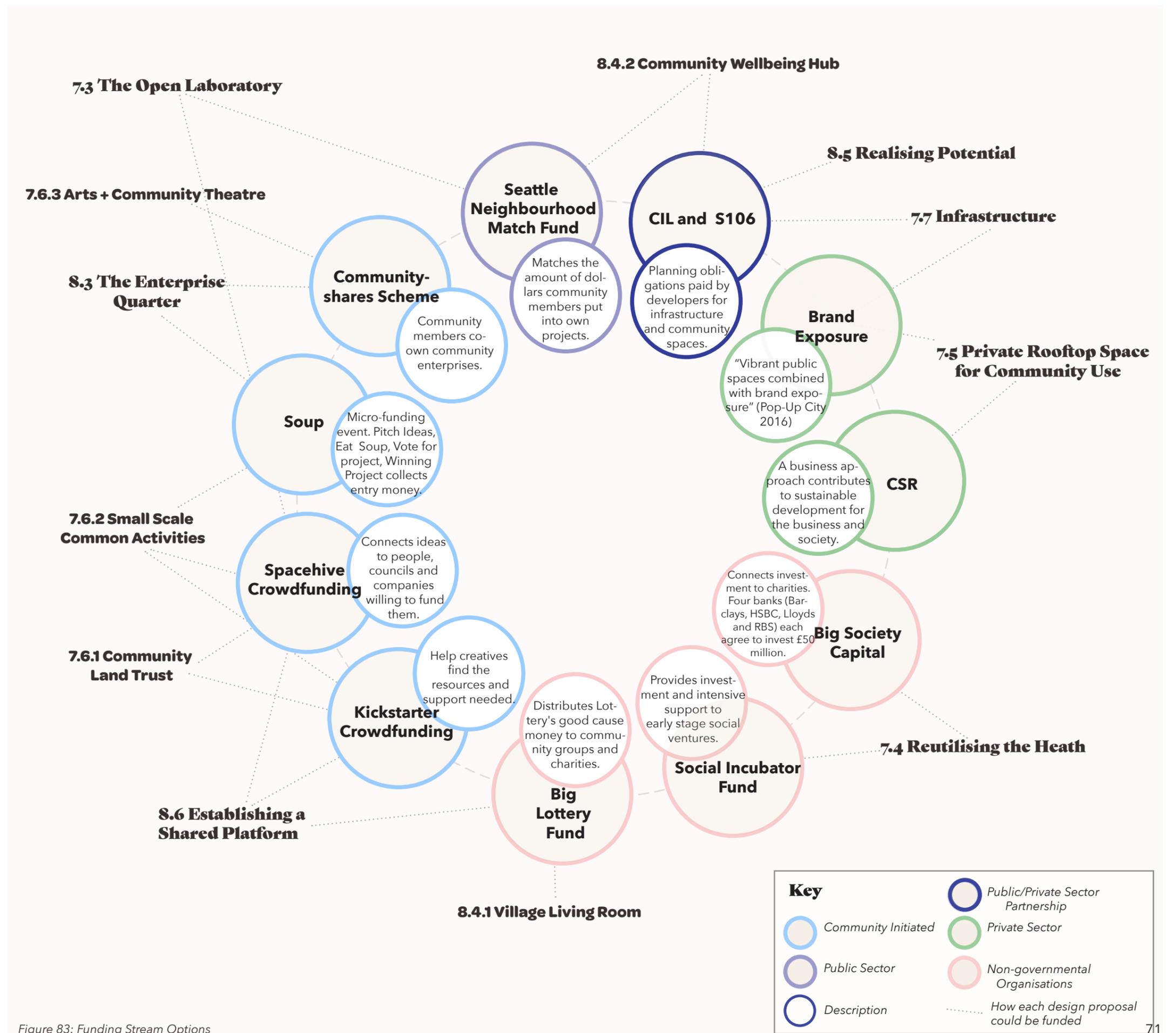
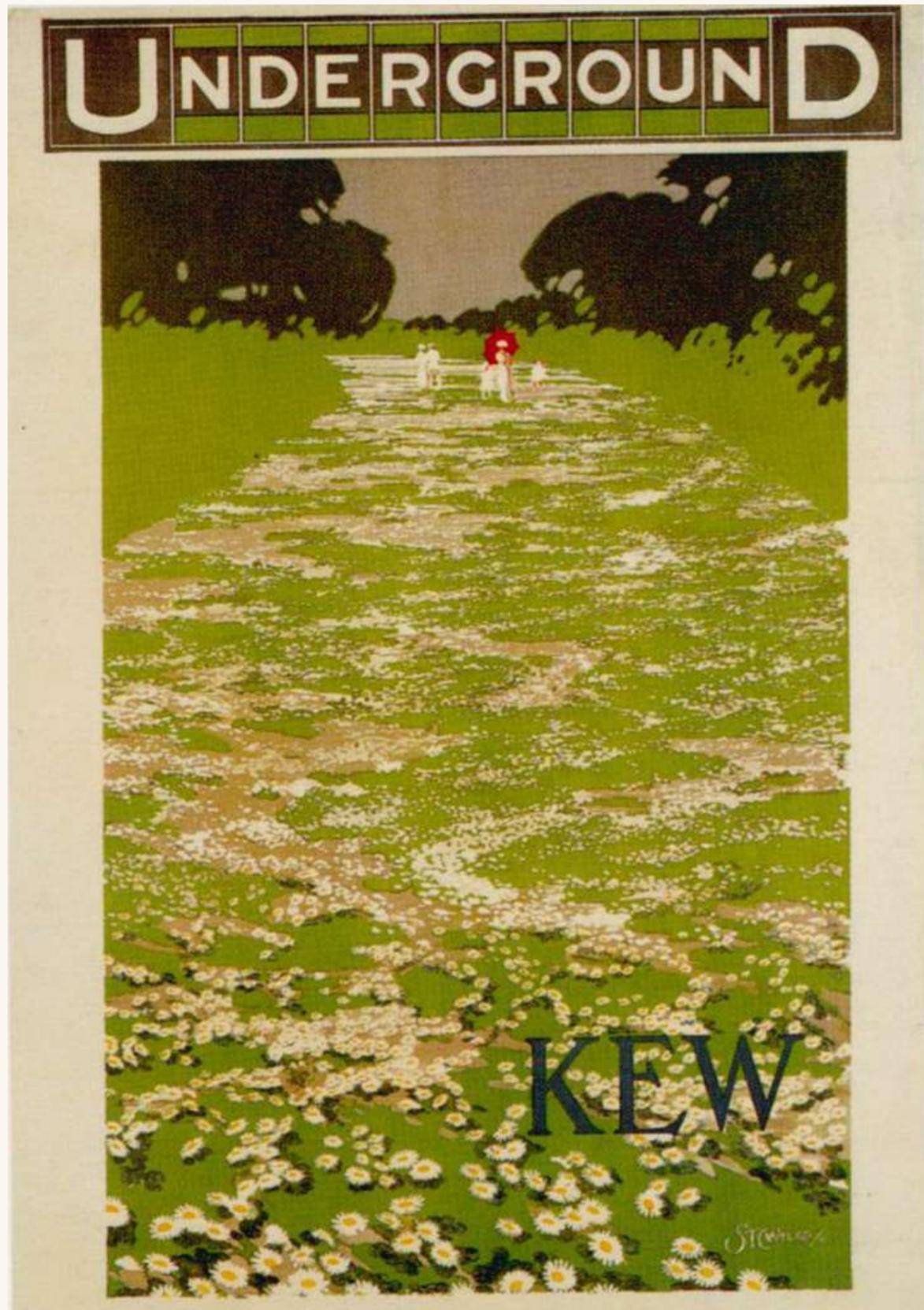


Figure 83: Funding Stream Options



9 FEEDBACK, EVALUATION AND CONCLUSIONS

9.1 Feedback

- 9.1.1 Local People: Bexley Village
Community Library
- 9.1.2 Private Sector: Landsec

9.2 Evaluation

- 9.2.1 Reflection
- 9.2.2 Further Research

9.3 Conclusions

- 9.3.1 Answering the Research Questions
- 9.3.2 Final Conclusions

9.1 FEEDBACK

9.1.1 Local People: Bexley Village Community Library



Figure 84: Bexley Village Library (Source: Author's Own)

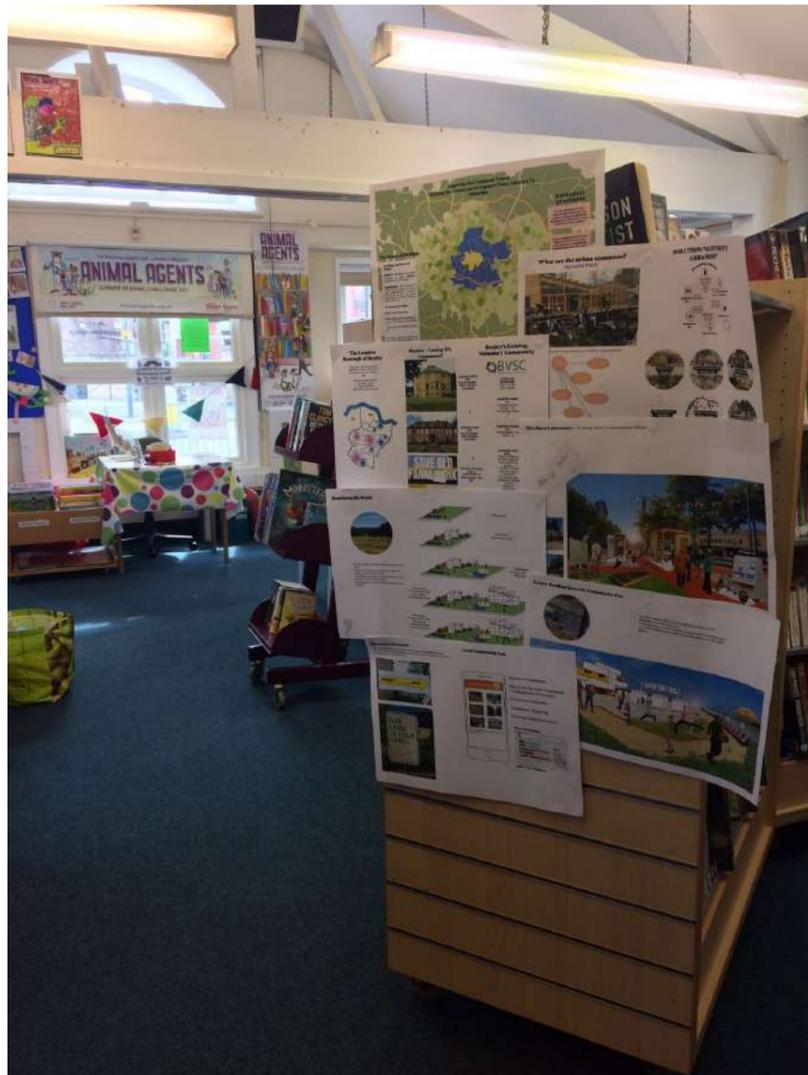


Figure 85: Project Display (Source: Author's Own)

The design proposals were displayed in Bexley Village Community Library (Figures 84 and 85), a charity run by volunteers. Conversations with 10 local residents provided feedback, shown in Table 6.

Proposal Benefits	Proposal Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8/10 liked the Open Laboratory proposal - testing ideas before they are fully implemented. • 7/10 enjoyed the community rooftop proposal, saying they would definitely be interested in using it. • 7/10 said they would use the app. • Many commented on the use of these interventions in regenerating vacant spaces, which there are a lot of in Bexleyheath Town Centre. • Many believed that the use of 'pop-up' would not be an issue, the word itself implies short-term duration. • Many liked the idea that these projects brought people together, particularly a good opportunity for the growing older population in Bexley. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposals require time, energy and enthusiasm. • Need to make sure they do not exclude anyone. • There's a difference between using and doing - need to be able to get people involved in the projects rather than just use them.

Table 6: Community Feedback at Bexley Village Library

9.1.2 Private Sector: Landsec

Landsec are the largest commercial property company in the UK - buying, selling and managing iconic properties. Key holdings include the Nova development, Victoria, Bluewater Shopping Centre and until recently, 20 Fenchurch Street.

A recent placement undertaken at Landsec came at the perfect time for this project. Whilst there, I presented my design proposals for Bexleyheath - commoning shopping centre roofspace and a collaborative management venture in order for them to evaluate its suitability for their 15 shopping centres.

This placement proved to be a fantastic opportunity to get valuable insights to answer my secondary research question. Table 7 presents the sequence of the presentation I gave to a group of Landsec employees within the London Portfolio team.

Key lessons (Figure 86) came out of this experience, helping to inform the project evaluation and conclusions.

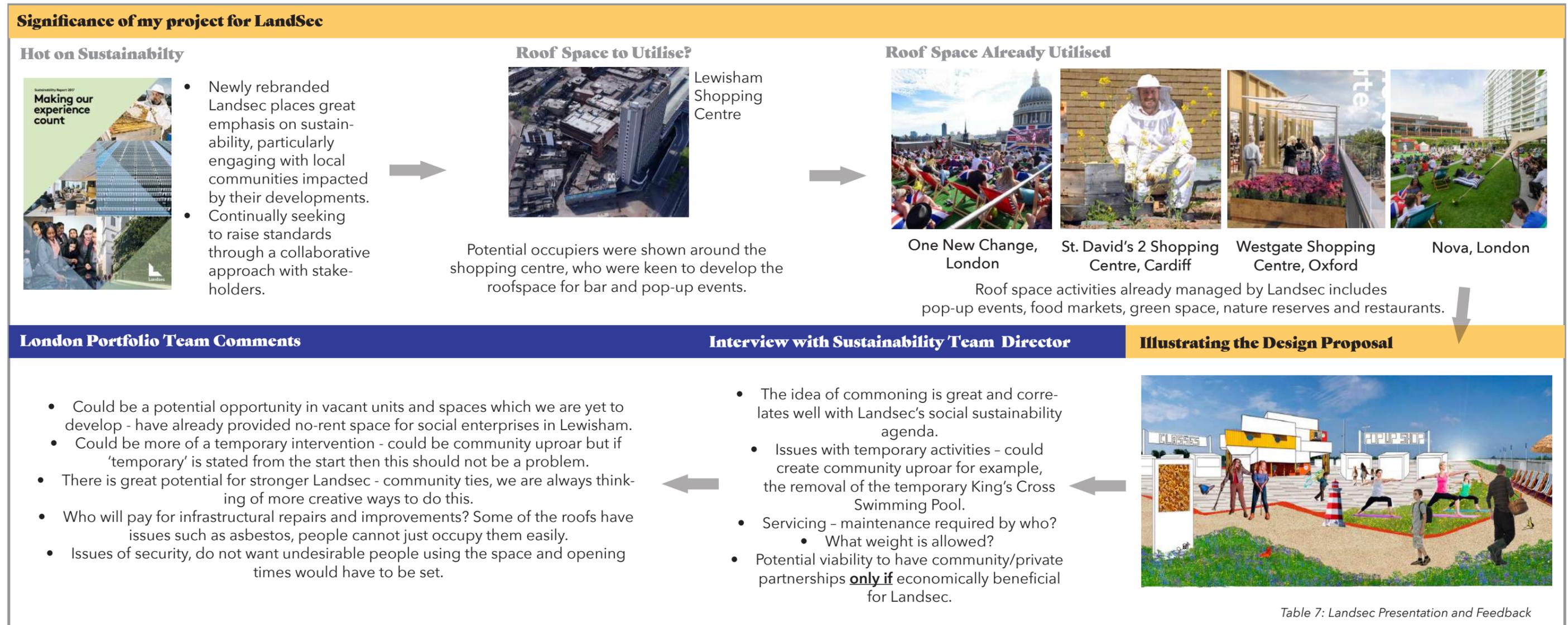


Figure 86: Key Lessons for Evaluations and Conclusions

9.2 EVALUATION

9.2.1 Reflection

This project makes the assumption that people want to see change in their neighbourhoods through the commons approach, which might not be the reality in every case. However, the tools to increase “participation culture” (Participatory City 2016), such as the Open Laboratory, the mobile app and interactive digital stands could change this.

Due to the project time frame, the ability of a community group to apply the project tools was not feasible, limiting the project’s legitimacy. Nonetheless, the design toolkit was applied to three situations: a sub-area, a case study and evaluated by a voluntary organisation, alleviating this concern.

It was surprising that the literature and the case study reviews showed that design tools were less important than governance and procurement tools. This is why few are implemented in the design toolkit. Specific design tools were not necessary as the design of commons projects are place-specific and home-grown by the community.

Traditional forms of commons were chosen for the design proposals, such as allotments, prevalent in the literature. Although these proposals tied well to the suburban context (using parkland), more imaginative commons could have been proposed, for example community energy schemes. However, from speaking to the community, it was key to start small in order to engage people with the movement. Starting with smaller, traditional forms of commoning could lay the foundation for community identity, to then grow into more creative commons ideas.

The study application sites, Bexleyheath and Bexley Village represented town and village settings, proving that the toolkit can be applied to multiple contexts. Although they face some deprivation, they are relatively wealthier than other parts of London’s suburbia - perhaps more deprived pockets of Outer London could have been sought to apply the toolkit to.

9.2.2 Further Research

The project process sparked new questions that warrant further academic research:

1. Find a more cohesive language for defining commons ways of working, gain an awareness of the commons and inform people of their rights in the process.
2. Establish a way of making a toolkit for gaining funding for commons projects.
3. A universal framework to measure and evaluate the long-term success of the ability of commons to create place and community identities post-implementation.

9.3 CONCLUSION

9.3.1 Answering the Research Questions

Can the principles of the Commons be applied to the suburban setting to assist in the valuation and recognition of place identities in Outer London?

Commoning as a process, provided for by the design toolkit, allows communities revalue their local area through: seeking opportunities for vacant buildings, identifying existing community assets that are under threat and looking at historic asset reactivation. The process of commoning therefore helps to recognise and recapture place identities. As result, a community identity can be forged, based on the co-production of community facilities.

The commons movement is currently prevalent in inner cities. However, this project shows that the tools to common can be applied to the suburban setting just as effectively, in town and village settings alike. The study application part of this project proved that London’s suburbia is characterful and this character can be unlocked through commoning to enhance place identity.

Can the community-led voluntary sector collaborate effectively with the private sector to achieve Commoning?

By definition, the commons and the private sector are two separate entities. However, this project shows that a partnership can be achieved through two methods.

First, commoning interventions can be funded by private businesses in return for brand exposure. This is already a growing phenomenon, increasing publicity for businesses as well as beneficial for their corporate social responsibility.

Second, commons projects can activate vacant shopping units. For landlords, empty units are not producing income. The commons can provide animation and interest in otherwise vacant street scenes. Landsec feedback showed that a more temporary approach would be appropriate - commoning could be a prerequisite to attract the redevelopment of town centres. This benefits the private sector but less so than the commons community. A solution could be commons that are modular and moveable, as suggested in the design toolkit.

Activating vacant units brings to light that regenerating suburban centres through this method could encourage gentrification processes. However, if people are fully aware of the commons movement and understand the power of collective action, the bargaining power of communities can ensure a fairer deal for local people. Gentrification can also be repelled by the asset transfer of community-used spaces and buildings to community lands trusts which this project proposes.

9.3.2 Final Conclusions

This project sought to discover how the commons could be applied to London’s suburbia to recognise and capture place identity, together with how the private sector and community-led voluntary sector could work collaboratively to common.

This project concludes that the act of commoning can bring people together to rediscover place identity, reutilising vacant and underutilised spaces and buildings, as well as heritage assets under threat from insufficient resources. In turn, the social practice of discovering place identity through commoning can reinstate community identity.

This project has reframed the basis on which citizens, the private sector and the public sector can work together to build commons, with the private sector in particular an endorser rather than the enemy of community enterprise and spirit.

The future must focus on the innovative capabilities of retrofitting suburbia on a local level by and for the people who live there.

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