

# **TOWARDS SPATIAL JUSTICE**

**A guide for achieving  
meaningful participation  
in co-design processes**

## **Towards Spatial Justice** **A guide for achieving meaningful participation in co-design processes**

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The report and accompanying resources are for general guidance only and are not legal or professional advice.

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# Background to Guide

## Who this guide is for

**Designers, co-design facilitators and students**  
This research builds on the growing interest in co-design processes within both architectural practice and academia. It is intended to provide a resource for those individuals and groups who are committed to integrating participatory methodologies within their design practice through providing tools, documentation and analysis of case study projects.

**Individuals and community groups**  
Successful co-design is predicated on opening up design and decision-making processes to those outside of design professions. As such, the guide is intended for use by community organisations and individuals that are often neglected, unrepresented, or overlooked in conventional engagement exercises. It provides key definitions to help navigate design processes, tools for exercising agency and encouraging authorship, and case studies as a resource to inspire action.

**Local authorities and policymakers**  
It is vital that those with the power to make decisions that affect the development of the built environment recognise the intersectionality of the issues that 'impact' spatial justice', and understand the potential benefits that co-design offers in the context of post-Covid planning and reprioritisation. In recent years, local authorities have begun to see the value of co-design in the planning process, especially in large-scale projects, but this has also spread to localised temporary interventions over the course of the pandemic. The research would be a valuable resource for local authorities to consider future co-design practices as they review the experimental processes undertaken, and would empower them in planning processes, especially for significant schemes.

**Clients and developers**  
This research will benefit clients and developers that seek to engage with a wider range of people, their histories and lived experiences in creating more imaginative and inclusive spaces where users have greater ownership.

## How to use this guide

The guide is structured with the following sections which provide context, examples, tools and resources for readers to consult:

**Co-designing Towards Spatial Justice:** This section presents an overview on the key concepts of spatial justice and co-design, with diagrams that unpack theoretical concepts and references to relevant projects across different scales and typologies.

**The Process of Co-design:** This section outlines and elaborates the practical aspects of the co-design process, with reference to the RIBA Plan of Work.

**Co-design Assessment Tool & Co-design Checklist:** An assessment tool and checklist consolidating the key principles and activities of co-design is provided to support readers in conducting and assessing co-design processes.

**Case Studies:** Concise case studies covering a variety of projects by co-design commissioners and facilitators who were interviewed as part of this study.

**Glossaries:** Explanation of key terms and compilation of useful co-design attitudes and activities from case studies for reference and inspiration for future projects.

## Research context to the guide

The guide is the culmination of two years of work by the authors, in conversation with a network of mostly London-based research collaborators and critical friends, initially over virtual meetings over the course of the Covid-19 pandemic. In the later half of the research, site visits and a symposium were held, which brought together the voices and reflections of practitioners, academia and representatives from local authorities.



# Executive Summary

## Co-designing towards spatial justice

This research and guide builds on the rich legacy of co-design work that has run alongside the more conventional development models and architectural design practices of the built environment, and frames the discourse under the broader framework of spatial justice to draw out the contingencies, challenges and opportunities of collaborative and power-sharing processes in addressing pressing social and economic inequities, the climate emergency and other intersectional issues that communities face today.

'Towards Spatial Justice: A guide for achieving meaningful participation in co-design processes', a research developed with funding from the Royal Institute of British Architects and the University College London, results from a close dialogue between academia and practice, the public and third sector, and professional and lived experiences. Over the course of the Covid-19 pandemic, through interviews, workshops and an in-person symposium, multiple insights – similarities and differences of co-design approaches – were uncovered and consolidated in the following pages. The nuances, complexity and diversity of experiences are captured in case studies, from which broader values and principles are drawn to inform concise co-design planning and assessment tools for readers to adapt for their own use in their different realms of practice.

With London as the primary site of reference, the authors also draw from their teaching practice in the Royal College of Art, University College London and Central Saint Martins, and their ongoing practice at DSDHA, a studio whose work spans architecture, urbanism and research under a broader ethos 'The City is our Client', a commitment to designing with and for a more diverse and inclusive city.

To offer a 'one-stop shop' for those seeking an introduction and overview to the subject, this guide concisely captures the key co-design concepts and themes with sign-posts to relevant resources for further reading.

## Key findings from the report

### *The case for co-design*

- Co-design especially important for strategic work (design codes, neighbourhood plans), masterplanning & public realm, and meanwhile projects.
- Co-design is not the answer to everything, just as 'community land trusts' are not the only answer to the housing crisis.
- Just as social value and equality impact assessments should be embedded in the design and procurement process, the impact of co-design should be continually evaluated across project stages.
- Co-design, when understood as a workflow within a project, sits between planning, project management and the RIBA Plan of Work.
- Co-design needs statutory and local authority leadership in setting the standards and requirements for engagement.

### *Co-design in action*

- Defining and being transparent about parameters is the first step to co-design.
- Co-design is an attitude and process, that needs to be contextual and site specific.
- The designer is not always best placed to facilitate co-design, sometimes a neutral role is needed.
- Co-design is a cyclical process.
- Different team structures and methods of engagement (e.g. steering groups, champions, Community Design Review Panel) have different implications for the co-design process and impact.
- Value for community is value for project.

### *DNA of good co-design processes*

- Local authority leadership.
- Embedded client with a strong commitment to ESGs.
- A client, design and project team that reflects local demographics.
- A recognition that co-design is part of commissioning and planning process.
- A contract between all parties involved (e.g. community charter).
- A procurement process with funding schedules that work with the cyclical programme of co-design.
- Capacity building and skills exchange front-loaded and throughout the process.

# Co-designing Towards Spatial Justice

## 3.1 Overview



**Figure 1:** Diagram illustrating how 'spatial justice' can serve as an intersectional lens to more holistically address overlapping issues that concern and/or shaped by design, such as the climate crisis, cost of living, social justice and health inequality.

The built environment has always been complicit in political change, economic pressures and social movements. It is actively shaped by multiple actors – those in power and those disempowered – with different values, contested interests and varying degrees of agency. At its best, design can be a collective and inclusive process that addresses spatial injustices, empowering all those that the built environment serves, but more often this is short-circuited by 'community engagement' conducted at a superficial or tokenistic level.

This research seeks to assess existing forms of 'community engagement', identify current challenges that hinder citizens, communities, designers, clients and authorities in engaging meaningfully in a collaborative design process. It has been informed by a survey of 'best practice' in participatory design and exemplary projects that have found ways to integrate co-design into the design process at different scales, which have both demonstrated its value to resultant design and - crucially - empowered those involved.

Whilst the Covid-19 pandemic, Black Lives Matter and climate emergency movements have reframed discourse within the architectural profession as well as wider societal consciousness, they are more often addressed as independent, topical concerns. This research posits that the multiple crises in health, race, climate and others cannot be addressed in isolation and that it is only through the prism of intersectionality that 'spatial justice' can be sought: the housing crisis cannot be remedied without a robust sustainability vision; public spaces cannot truly celebrate neglected histories without addressing entrenched socio-economic inequities; post-pandemic, the city cannot nurture better health and wellbeing for its inhabitants without challenging deep-rooted petroleum-fuelled habits that dictate urban design. Acknowledging the intersectionality of the challenges that the built environment faces, this research poses co-design both as a powerful design tool to uncover inequities and opportunities to redress them, and as an invaluable civic process in the generation, exchange, and application of collective knowledge.



### 3.2 Ethics and practice

In the context of professional practice in the UK, architects are guided by the ARB Architect's Code (2017) and the RIBA Code of Conduct (updated 2021), which are complemented by emerging codes and protocols that address gaps in the ethics of design and research, such as the UK Architects Declare Practice Guide.

Whilst the ARB Architect's Code does not explicitly address the architect's duty to society and the environment, the RIBA Code of Conduct enshrines duties owed by its members 'to the wider world', 'towards society and the end user' alongside clients, colleagues, profession and oneself. The precedence of the duties to the environment (2.13) and communities (2.14) is further clarified by the Code, which spells out that where two or more principles of the Code – Integrity, Competence and Relationships – come into conflict, the one that best serves public interest takes precedence. Building on these ethical foundations, spatial justice can be understood as a lens through which practitioners can more critically make design, research and business decisions with an ethical framework that confronts the environmental collapse and and systemic inequities head on.

With the ethical framework of spatial justice, practitioners first need to acknowledge the power and capital structures that shape the conditions for practice:

- Land ownership, which dictates the possibility and conditions of development;
- Forms of politics, from direct and representative democracies that determine processes of decision-making;
- Distribution of resources, what is being invested and in who.
- The built environment, the manifestation of political and design decisions.

#### Related resources

##### Practising Ethics

An open access project bringing together a lexicon of ethical principles, guidelines, reading lists and overviews of ethics protocols.

##### RIBA Code of Professional Conduct

The RIBA's Code of Professional Conduct sets out the standards of professional conduct and practice.

##### Coproduction in Housing & Regeneration

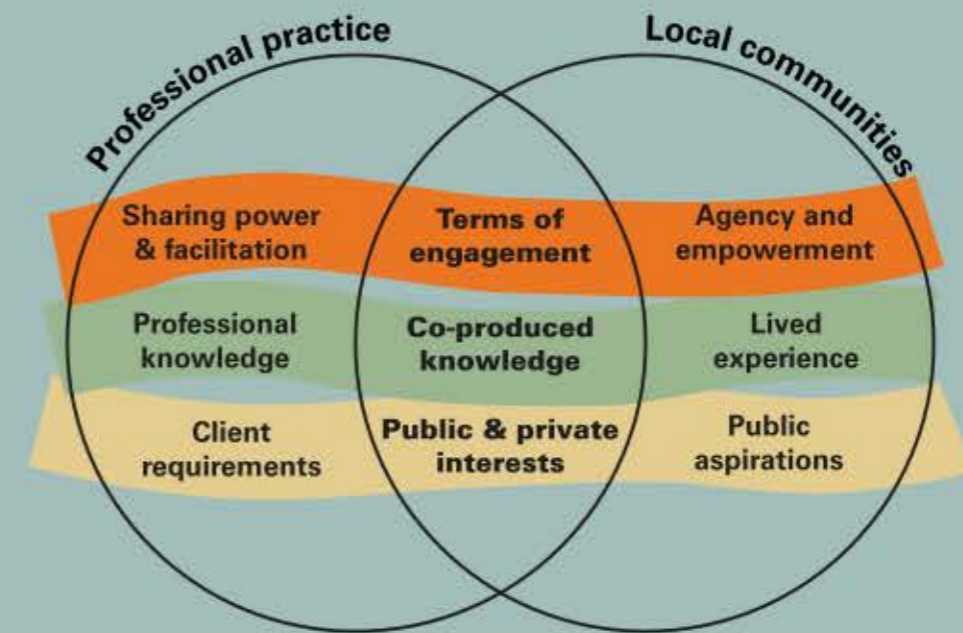
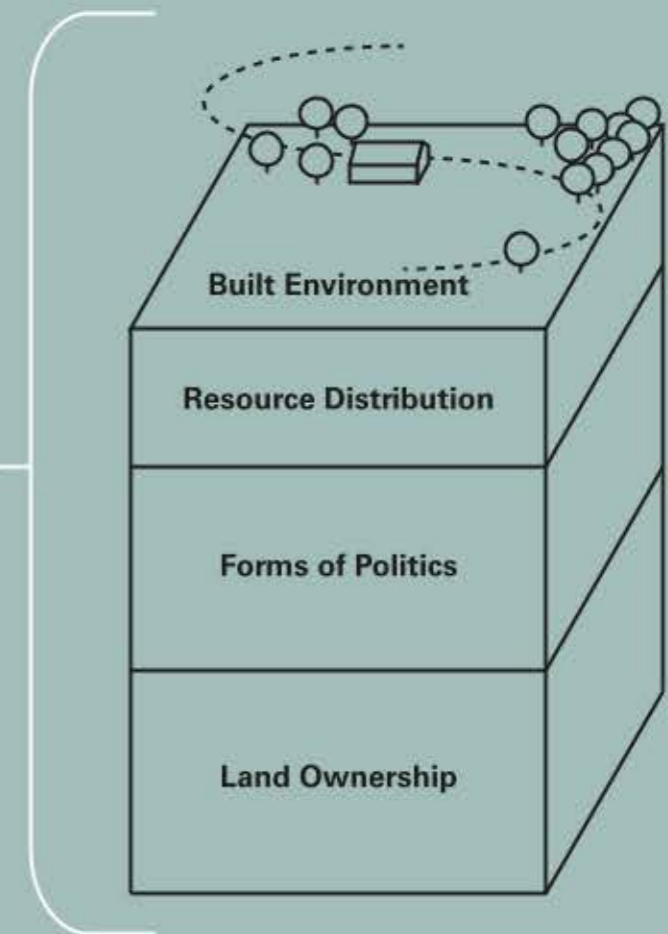
A Framework for Communities and Practitioners, authored by Community Led Housing London (CLHL).

##### UK Architects Declare Practice Guide

Based on a collaborative practice network, the AD provides guidance for regenerative design, underpinned by social justice.

Typically, practitioners solely operate at the last and most superficial strata, but with the framework of spatial justice, one must consider the fuller stratum of development layers, address deeper structural issues and find opportunities to leverage more meaningful and impactful change. The architect, or the designer in this sense will likely find themselves in the role of the 'double agent', where one has to negotiate between the interests of large landowners and small local groups, balance client requirements and one's obligations to the public. It is important to acknowledge that this professional positionality is not entirely neutral – every design decision has the potential to exclude and include, to provide generosity or withhold it. Within the framework of spatial justice, co-design (if conducted ethically and effectively) can be a means for different parties of the project to reconcile different value structures, and crucially, alter the power dynamics to facilitate meaningful collaboration and partnerships.

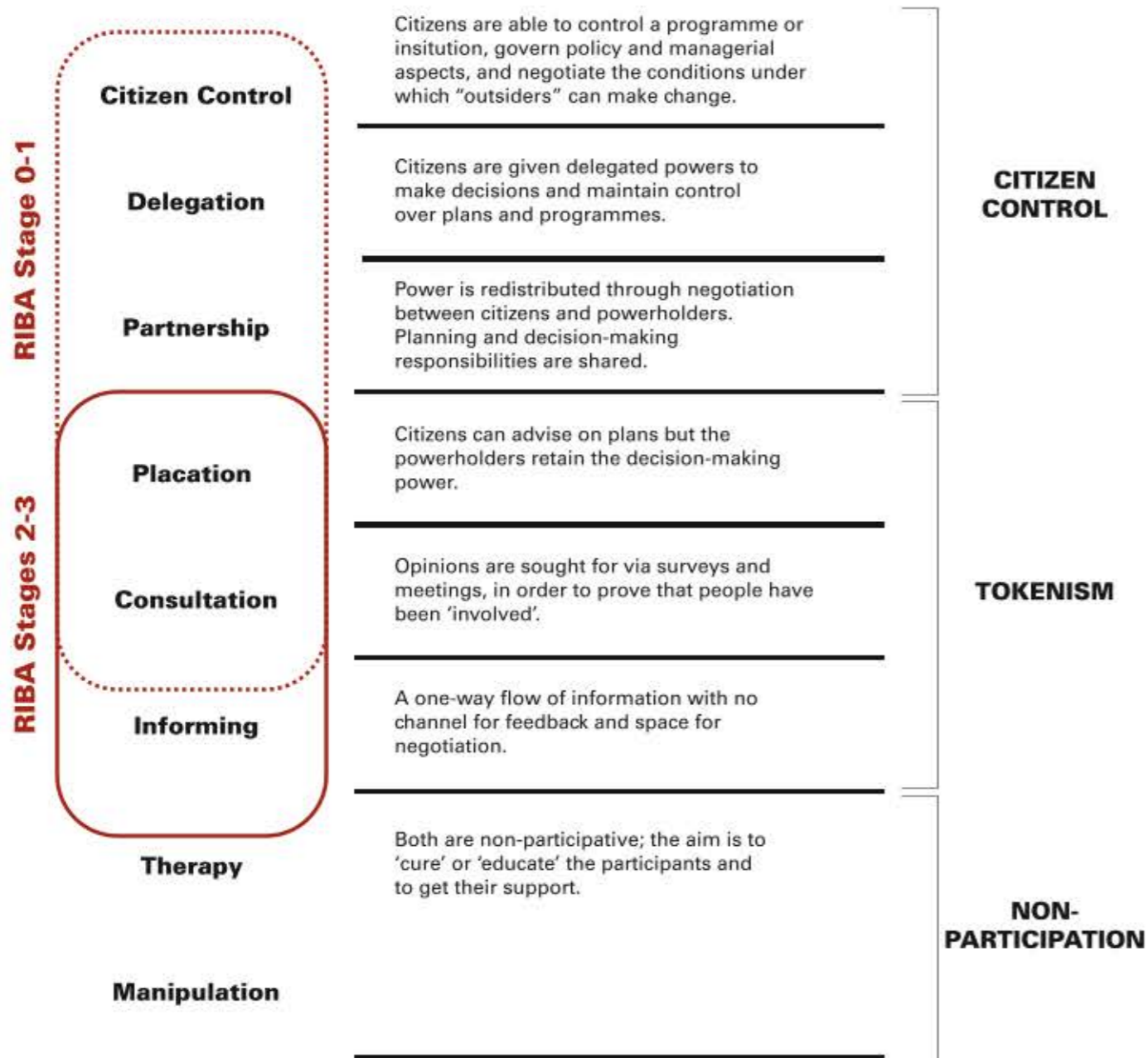
### Spatial Justice



**Figure 2:** Diagram illustrating how under the framework of spatial justice, the production and use of space can critically acknowledge, negotiate and challenge a set of deep and far-reaching legal and political conditions.

**Figure 3:** Diagram outlining how aspects of professional practice can be reconciled with those of local communities typically treated as secondary.





**Figure 4:** Sherry Arnstein's 'Ladder of Participation' (1969) showing degrees of citizen participation, annotated with RIBA stages and the levels of agency that stakeholders and members of the community could potentially hold or attain in the process. In the current UK planning context, 'community engagement' activities usually take place at RIBA Stages 2-3 and occupy the middle rungs of the ladder.

### 3.2 Ethics and practice (continued)

Equity sits at the centre of the spatial justice framework; to work towards spatial justice in the development context, is to acknowledge existing barriers, disadvantages and asymmetrical power dynamics – especially those between the local authority, developers, and the wider community – and redistribute power where appropriate and possible. As such, it is important to be conscious of who is being engaged in the design process, and crucially, how much agency they have, and how a co-design process might amplify and elevate seldom heard voices and positions.

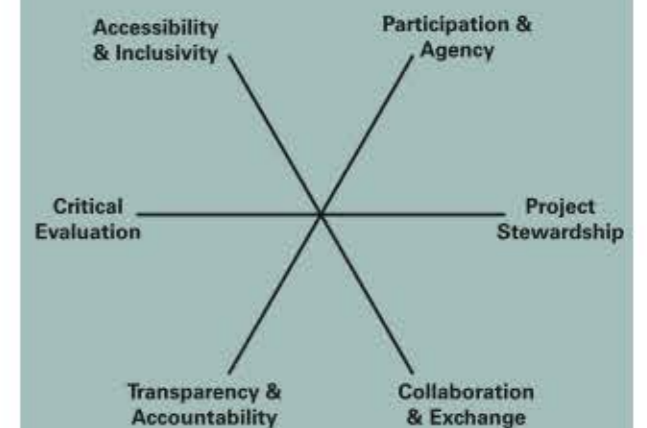
Sherry Arnstein's 'Ladder of Participation' is a useful framework to employ for reflecting on the positionality of a project, in terms of its relationship to its collaborators, stakeholders and the wider community, and the different levels of agency they hold. The ladder outlines different levels of citizen participation, from the lowest rung of 'manipulation' where engagement is tokenistic, through to 'citizen control' where citizens have most agency. In the contemporary context of the UK, 'community engagement' practices largely fall in the middle range of the ladder, between 'informing', 'consultation' and 'placation', and takes place between RIBA Stage 2 Concept Design and Stage 3 Spatial Coordination. In order to reach the higher levels of the ladder, the co-design process needs to begin earlier, at RIBA Stage 0 Strategic Definition before the project brief is produced, or arguably even before, where the playing field first needs to be levelled by capacity building, skills exchange and education. Stakeholders and members of the community have significantly more leverage at the early stages of a project. In masterplan projects, where there are significant gestation periods, the nurturing of relationships and the establishment of partnerships, steering groups or community bodies are particularly critical, as they help to safeguard the agency and legacy

built up over the course of the project, and beyond its completion.

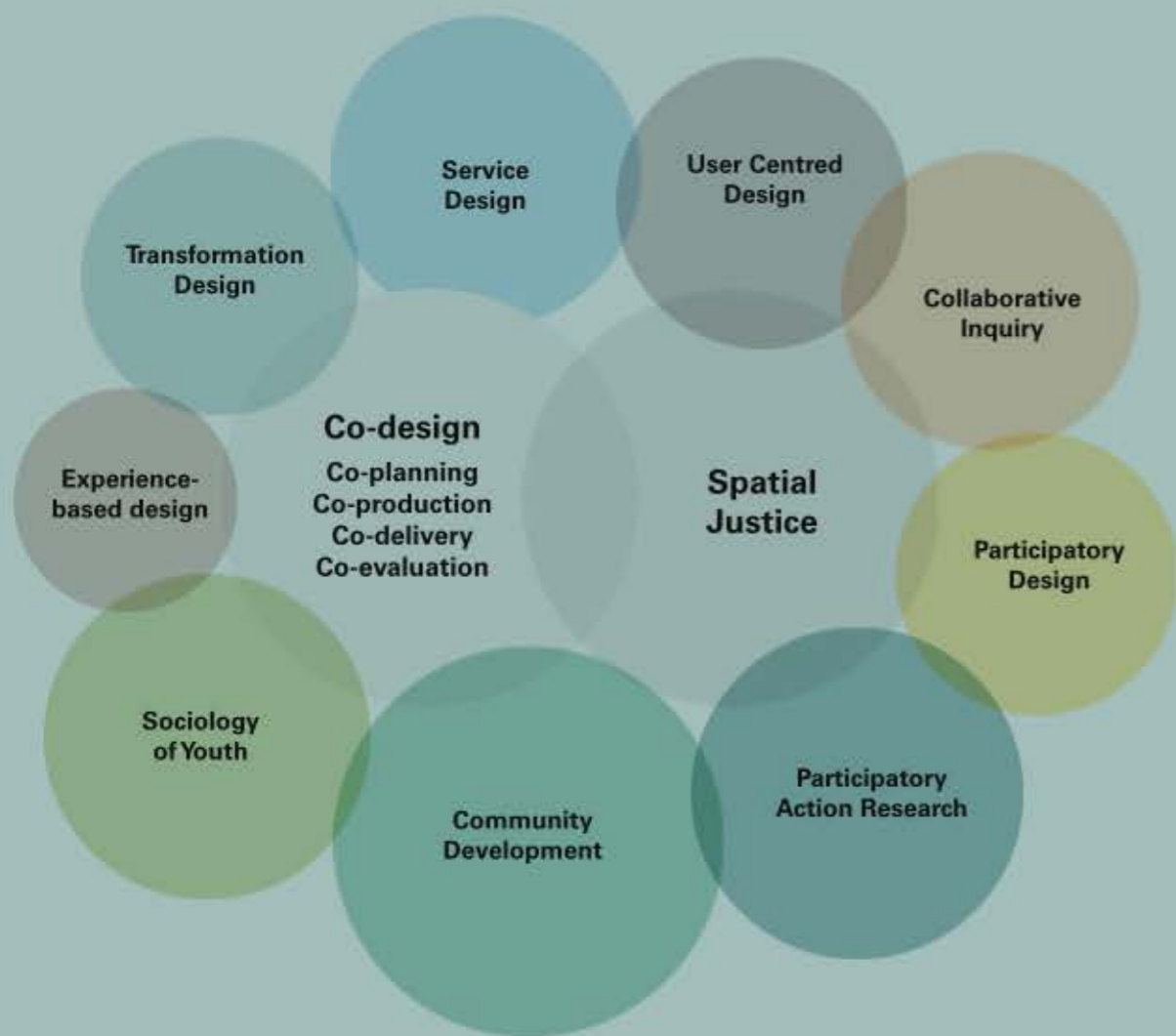
In Arnstein's formulation, each project will not necessarily occupy a single rung of the ladder – many will occupy multiple rungs, and for some, it may shift over the lifetime of a project. In the absence of industry-wide, or statutory benchmarks, targets and metrics for assessing community engagement, the 'Ladder of Participation' and social value toolkits can begin to help plan and track societal impact and levels of engagement and empowerment across the different stages of a project. The 'Ladder of Participation' is an important counterpoint to other forms of measurement as it clearly privileges the 'citizen' in the framework, subverting the professional gaze which at times limits the evaluation to quantifying more granular impacts.

#### Co-design Planning & Assessment Tool

A tool that captures the main principles of co-design, which if adhered to, would help a project to reach the higher rungs of Arnstein's Ladder. See page 26 for tool.







**Figure 5:** Diagram expanding on Hagen et. al.'s diagram of 'Intersecting fields that influence co-design' (2012). In this report's version, the diagram centres 'co-design' amongst other user-centric and participatory methodologies, and distinguishes it from others through its coupling with 'spatial justice' as a contingent process.

### 3.3 The case for co-design

In the context of the UK, co-design has gained momentum in various disciplines in the last two decades, especially in the field of healthcare where participatory approaches have proven critical for shifting professional-patient and clinical pathway paradigms. Within more design-focussed disciplines, it has been largely deployed in the realm of product design as part of its user-centric methodologies, "where the user is placed front and centre in the design"<sup>1</sup>. In disciplines associated with the built environment, co-design and other forms of collaborative and participatory practices have, for the most part, taken place on the fringes of the history of development, but have more recently gained traction as communities, developers, the architectural profession and local authorities come to reckon with inequalities laid bare by the Covid-19 pandemic, and the urgent need to address intersectional issues in urban space collectively.

There are numerous definitions of co-design, and in some contexts, the term has been misguidedly attributed to public consultation and community engagement processes. At its core, co-design is an approach which enables multiple parties to design together; to co-design, is to design collectively, to share power, and exchange knowledge. Whilst it is connected with some of the activities associated with 'community engagement', such as stakeholder mapping and deep listening, co-design is distinct in its redrawing of design roles and decision-making process which enables participants to shape a project with a higher degree of agency. The level of the participants' involvement and agency would differ from project to project, and possibly between project stages, but they generally require more conscious planning and effort for the following key ingredients to co-design:

- Accountability and Inclusivity
- Participation and Agency
- Project Stewardship
- Collaboration & Exchange
- Transparency & Accountability
- Critical Evaluation

Co-design is not a guarantee of a spatially just outcome, nor is it the only route to achieving an equitable development, just as Community Land Trusts are not the only solution for the housing crisis, but it can be especially effective in strategic work (e.g. design codes, neighbourhood plans, masterplans), and projects with significant public interface (e.g. public realm projects) or those of an experimental nature (e.g. meanwhile projects). In these projects, co-design could be a means to embed local aspirations into strategic policy and guidance, which in turn will form part of material considerations of future planning. In public realm and meanwhile projects, co-design can help make better and more equitable decisions based on collective intelligence, build trust between stakeholders, and nurture partnerships for the use, maintenance and management of spaces post construction.

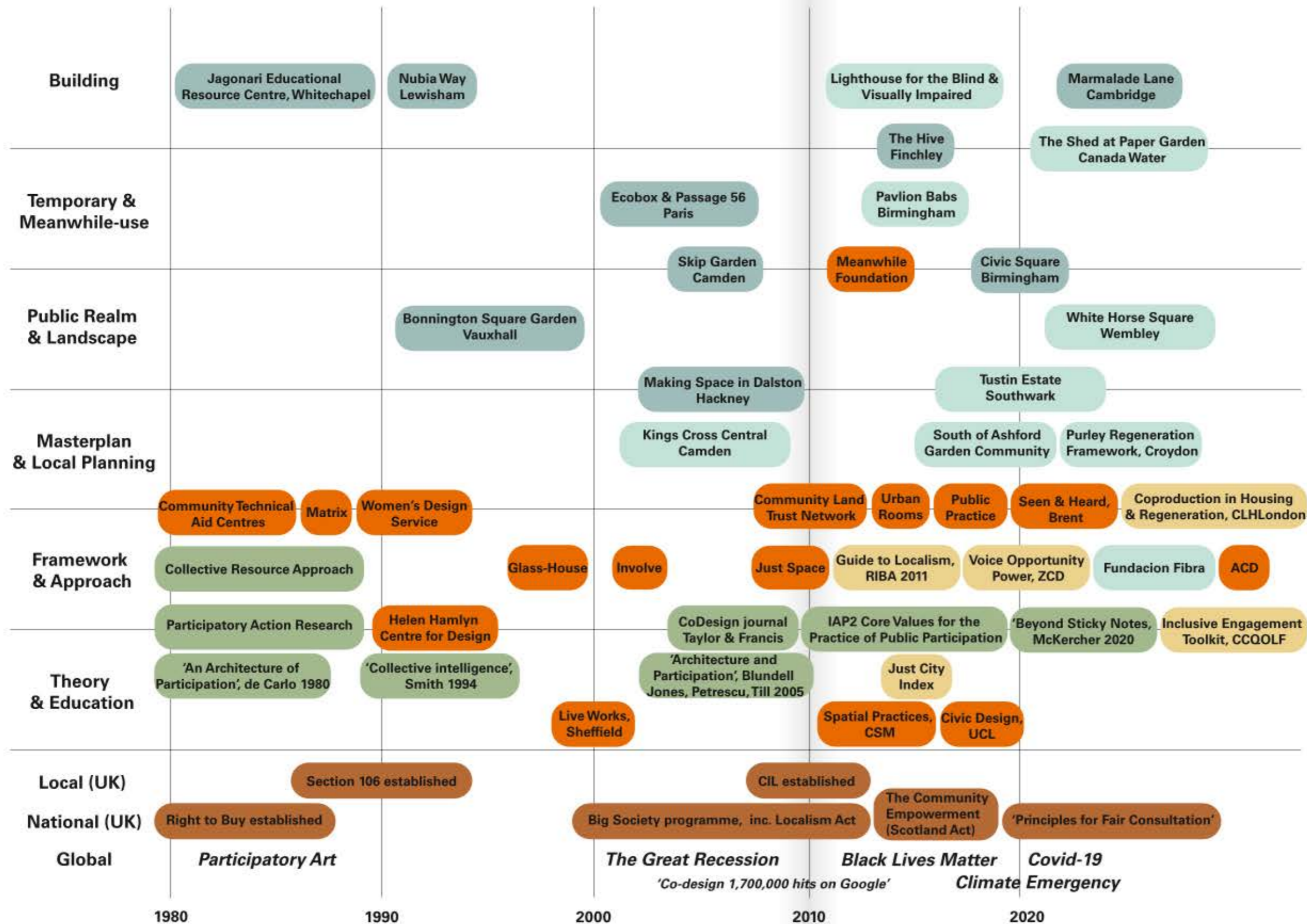
Just as social value and equality impact assessments should be embedded in design and procurement processes, the impact of co-design can be continually evaluated across project stages to ensure that the process and outcomes are safeguarded throughout the project lifetime, especially post planning permission.

<sup>1</sup> Stephanie Edwards describing the ethos of her multidisciplinary practice Urban Symbiotics which focuses on user experience (interview as part of the 'Towards Spatial Justice' research, 30 March 2022).



### 3.3 The case for co-design (continued)

The timeline below captures key co-design projects, organisations, guidance and literature, against the broader social, economic and political climate in the UK. The mentioned projects are predominantly located in London.



Whilst many co-design projects have predated the 1980s, the timeline charts the evident growth of projects and associated activities in the past two decades, which more recently culminated at the Covid-19 pandemic when different actors – local authorities, developers, designers and citizens – come to recognise the intersectionality of the climate emergency, health crisis, racial injustice and other issues, and the pivotal role co-design can play in certain projects that have significant public interface and CIL funding (e.g. public realm), and potential wide-ranging impact on neighbourhoods and communities (e.g. masterplans, strategic visions).

Figure 6: Matrix of co-design activity between 1980s to 2020s map against different categories.

- Case study projects
- Related projects
- Initiatives/ Organisations
- Guidance
- Literature
- Context



# The Process of Co-design

## 4.1 Demystifying the process

Co-design as a concept and method is inherently durational, as opposed to one-off events. The process is often misunderstood, or worse, feared due to the perceived chaotic and fluid nature of collaboration. This section of the report begins with the unpacking and debunking of common myths associated with the collaborative design processes.

### Myth #1 Community engagement is a one-off event

In the UK development context, the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is required for major developments where significant public interests are at stake. In practice, too often, the SCI is treated as a tick-box exercise where the very notion of 'community' is not interrogated, or assumptions are made with little consideration to the complexity of its makeup, multiple motivations and lived experiences. Without careful planning, community engagement can be biased towards loud voices, property owners, those with more comfortable incomes and those who already navigate the built environment confidently both physically and digitally.

Establishing a co-design approach at the beginning of site research and strategic planning can on one hand produce a more nuanced understanding of different groups and demographics that constitute the 'community' as a basis for engagement and collaboration, and crucially on the other nurture new forms of community that can safeguard the legacy of projects through engagement and dialogue. Currently, in the absence of statutory checks on the SCI, there is little incentive for developers to be held accountable to the community, to rigorously track, test and implement ideas, nor to maintain dialogue with those engaged after planning permission has been secured. When contributions are consistently disregarded, 'consultation fatigue' may take hold, a term that is at times used to justify low turnouts and lack of interest. Community engagement can certainly empower certain communities when the process is built upon trust, mutual exchange and accountability, but equally can foster a sense of false agency if not conducted with care. It is important for designers, who at times act as a mediator between public and private interests, to acknowledge at which rung of Sherry Arnstein's 'Ladder of Participation' they are operating in different projects. Whilst often having little to no influence over land ownership, forms of politics, governance or resource distribution, designers could be sensitive to ethical issues and champion best practices especially in early stages (RIBA Stage 0-1) where community input will likely make substantial impact on the course and outcome of the project.

### Myth #2 An accessible space equals an inclusive space

In recent years, there has been significant development in guidance for and application of inclusive design – defined by the Design Council as 'making places everyone can use' – from the creation of the Built Environment Access Panel (BEAP) at the LLDC to the suite of GLA Good Growth by Design guidance including 'Safety in Public Space'. Designing towards spatial justice aims to go further than just following inclusive design codes, by including people in the process of design, acknowledging male, cisgender, ableist and other privileges in design teams, prioritising the diversity of lived experience and collectively challenging what is 'normal'.

One of our research collaborators, Mei-Yee Man Oram, Access and Inclusion Lead at Arup, has posed co-design as a means to identify gaps of engagement for inclusive design, and blind spots in existing design codes, some of which are predicated on standardised dimensions based on the average white male, or outdated mobility equipment, the dimensions of which have evolved over time<sup>2</sup>. Whilst inclusive design aims to create an accessible playing field, such spaces may still feel intimidating for some. Co-design or other collaborative practices can give space and time to explore, acknowledge and reflect on subjective experience of space, alongside objective means of measurement, through which users can find a greater sense of welcome, belonging and ownership. Co-design is durational, and its value lies both in its outcome and in its process where multiple injustices – mobility, race, health, climate and others – can be addressed. Co-design and inclusive design can mutually reinforce each other and produce results that are more inclusive by the nature of collaborative design.

<sup>2</sup> M. Man Oram (interview as part of the 'Towards Spatial Justice' research, 25 April 2022).

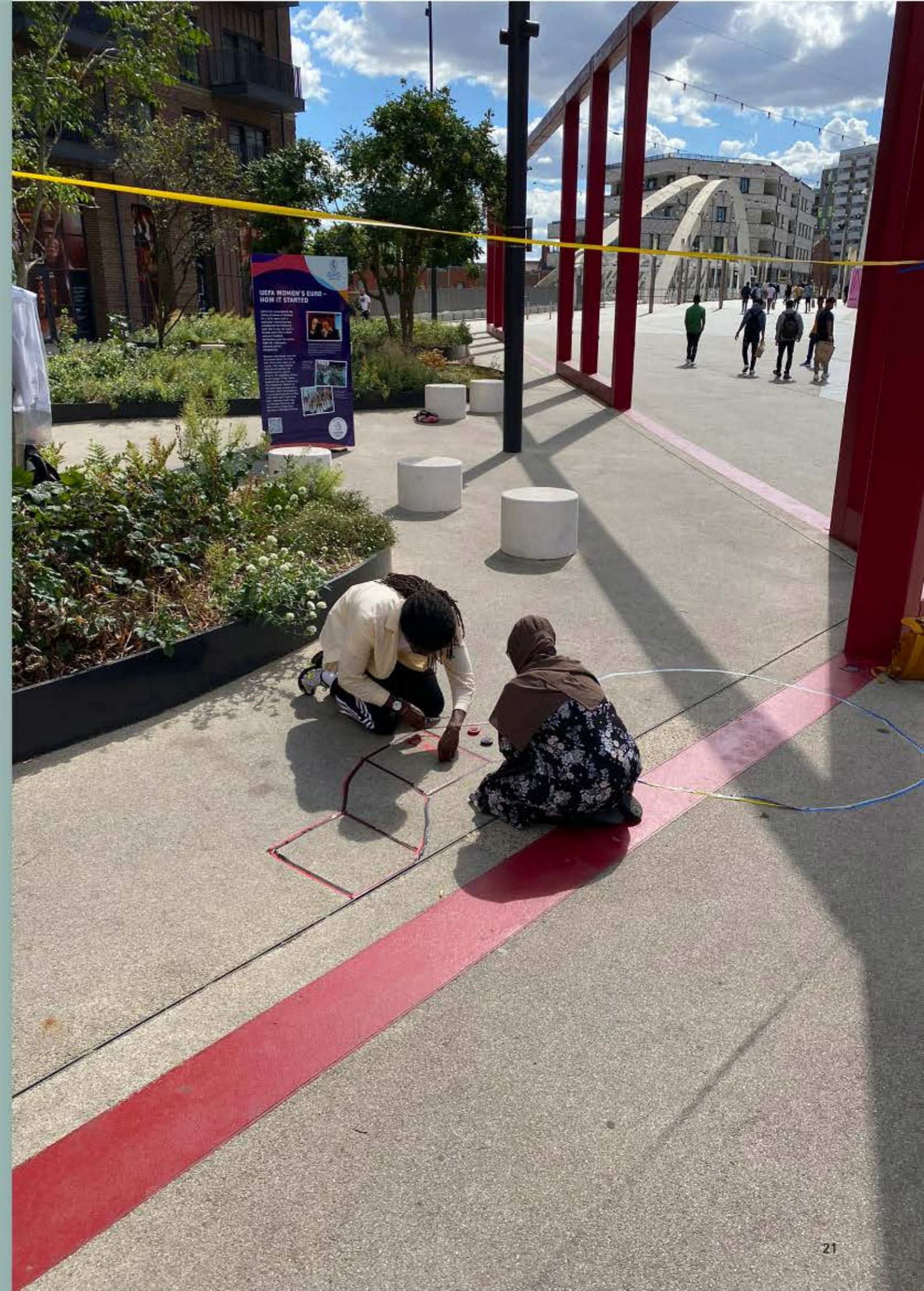


#### 4.1 Demystifying the process (continued)

##### Myth #3 People can't co-design

In the realm of design and construction, it is often said that each project could only occupy two points of the Time-Cost-Quality tripartite. Each of these – insufficient project programme, funding constraints and aesthetic concerns – are often seen as obstacles in implementing co-design principles or processes in projects. On top of these, is an inherent distrust that non-professionals can contribute knowledge and value to the design process. At the heart of these challenges and assumptions, is that co-design is rarely considered at the outset when strategic decisions are made with regards to the definition of roles and responsibilities.

We have discussed at length with our collaborators the extent to which different team structures can facilitate co-design, for example integrating local members on the design team, or conversely, appointing a facilitator who is impartial to design and client teams, and co-design participants. The role designations may differ from project to project, but the clarity of the designation is critical as it sets out what each party will bring to the table, how they will communicate, and where they potentially overlap. Connected to this is the importance of paying for participants' time in co-design processes. Too often, it is assumed that participants at an engagement event are there in a voluntary capacity. This immediately establishes an inequitable relationship between 'professional' and 'local'; and excludes those who cannot afford to donate their time for free. Developers will often argue that to pay a member of the community for their time risks being seen as bribery for supporting the application. This simply exposes the mindset that the purpose of co-design is to achieve planning permission rather than to create a scheme that addresses the needs of the local community. Compounding this problem further is the fact that co-design practitioners face a significant challenge to be paid reasonably for their time and effort, and frequently facilitate co-design processes on either a pro-bono basis, or through working at a loss in order to invest in capacity building work and apprenticeships in their embedded communities. Whilst everyone can draw from their personal experiences in the built environment, capacity building is especially useful in equipping participants with skills to communicate design ideas, tools to take ownership of or initiate projects, and knowledge to understand and navigate the local development context beyond the timescales of a specific project, empowering them to participate in the shaping their neighbourhoods. Capacity building does not preclude knowledge exchange, in fact, good co-design approaches always recognise that learning can be mutual despite the power dynamics between participants, designers, local authorities, funders and developers.





## 4.2 Co-design in stages

Co-design is defined earlier in this research as the act of designing collectively, sharing power and exchanging knowledge. Following this definition, the specific activities of co-design are mapped against the RIBA Plan of Work in relation to the objectives of each stage.

The stages can be broken down as follows:

- Co-creation** (RIBA Stage 0)
- Co-production** (RIBA Stage 1)
- Co-design** (RIBA Stages 2-4)
- Co-delivery** (RIBA Stage 5)
- Co-evaluation** (RIBA Stage 6-7)<sup>3</sup>

The activities are outlined here with the collective pronoun and plain English to ensure communicability and underpin the the process with the collaborative nature of co-design. The following co-design overlay raises further questions as to how the level of co-design

intensity for each stage may shift over time, e.g. communities may become more interested in Stage 4 given the climate emergency; Stage 7, which often is neglected as a creative stage in itself, can produce valuable SCIs that can inform future projects.

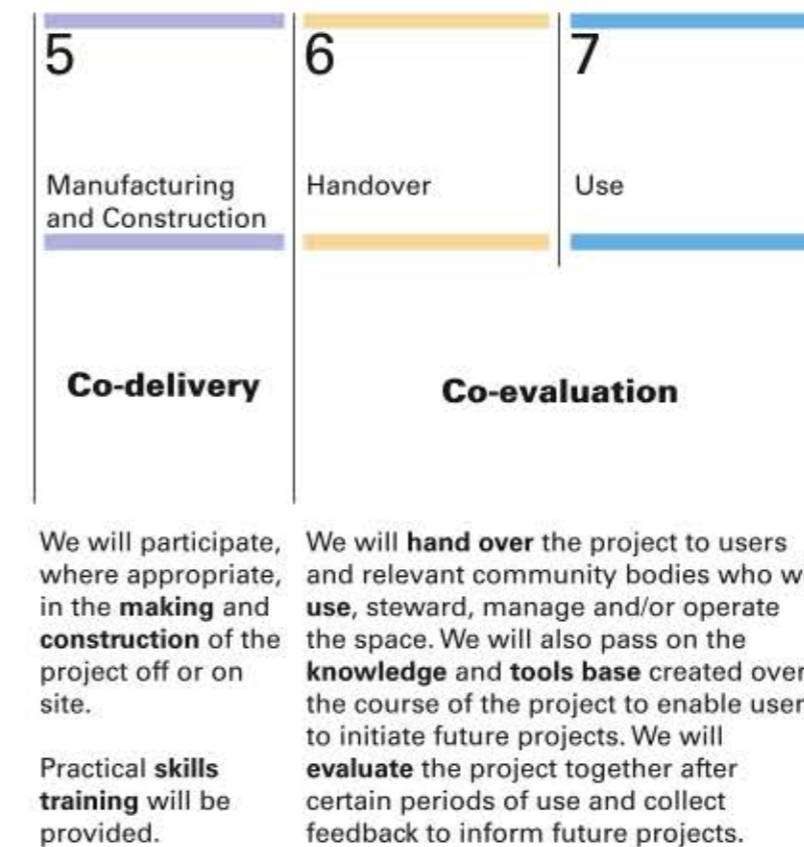
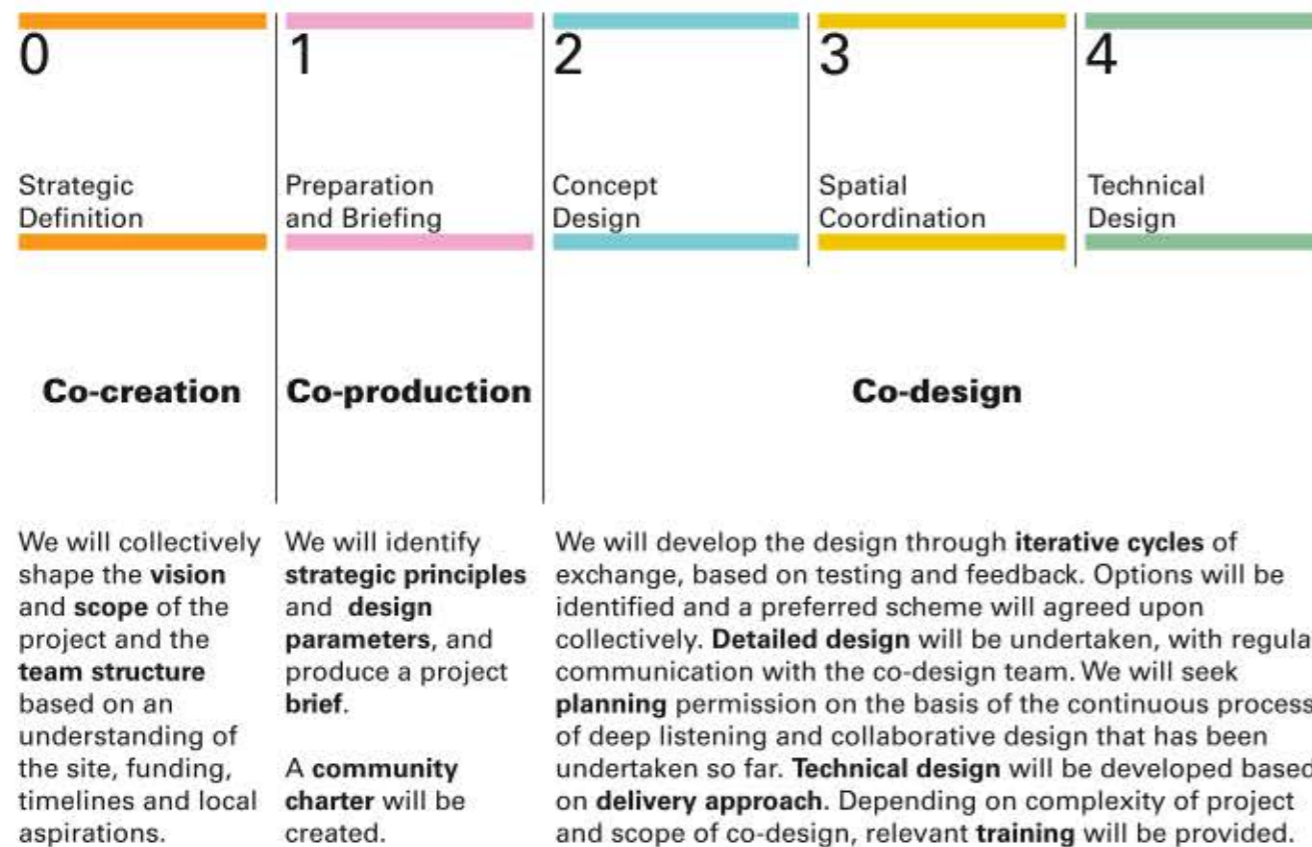


Figure 7: Co-design overlay for RIBA Plan of Work

<sup>3</sup>The breakdown of stages was developed in conversation with research supervisor Neal Shasore (review as part of the 'Towards Spatial Justice' research, 3 August 2022).



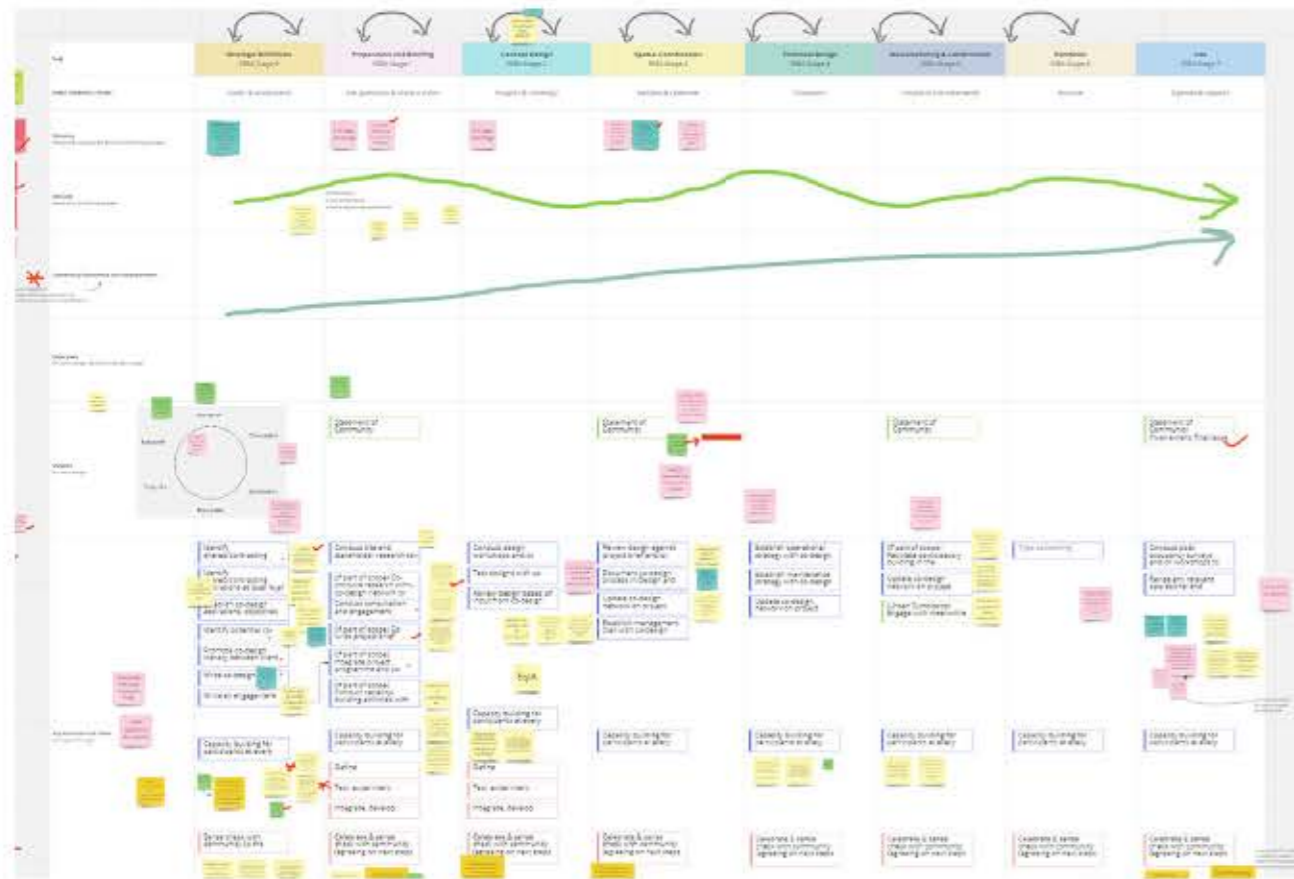
### 4.3 Co-design and the RIBA Plan of Work

The RIBA Plan of Work is more commonly referred to by its linear process map than its cyclical wheel representation. Whilst the language of the process map is more compatible with day-to-day programme planning, the wheel-form reinforces the strategic significance of the cyclical relationship between project stages.

The diagrams on the adjacent page, which visualise the implications and nature of co-design in relation to the Plan of Work, offer provocations and speculations as to how co-design processes can be better understood in relation to more traditional work stages.

| Stage   | 0                        | 1                        | 2                        | 3                        | 4                        | 5                        | 6                        | 7            |
|---------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------|
| Stage 0 | Strategic Definition     | Project Definition       | Concept Design           | Schematic Design         | Developed Design         | Technical Design         | Construction Preparation | Construction |
| Stage 1 | Project Definition       | Concept Design           | Schematic Design         | Developed Design         | Technical Design         | Construction Preparation | Construction             | Handover     |
| Stage 2 | Concept Design           | Schematic Design         | Developed Design         | Technical Design         | Construction Preparation | Construction             | Handover                 | Handover     |
| Stage 3 | Schematic Design         | Developed Design         | Technical Design         | Construction Preparation | Construction             | Handover                 | Handover                 | Handover     |
| Stage 4 | Developed Design         | Technical Design         | Construction Preparation | Construction             | Handover                 | Handover                 | Handover                 | Handover     |
| Stage 5 | Technical Design         | Construction Preparation | Construction             | Handover                 | Handover                 | Handover                 | Handover                 | Handover     |
| Stage 6 | Construction Preparation | Construction             | Handover                 | Handover                 | Handover                 | Handover                 | Handover                 | Handover     |
| Stage 7 | Construction             | Handover                 | Handover                 | Handover                 | Handover                 | Handover                 | Handover                 | Handover     |

RIBA Plan of Work 2020 Template, commonly used as a shared framework for design and construction. The work stages are often referred to and adapted for design processes, project management and payment schedules, with overlays such as procurement routes, statutory requirements and sustainability.



Key considerations for co-design have been identified and mapped against the RIBA Plan of Work through multiple workshops with our research collaborators.

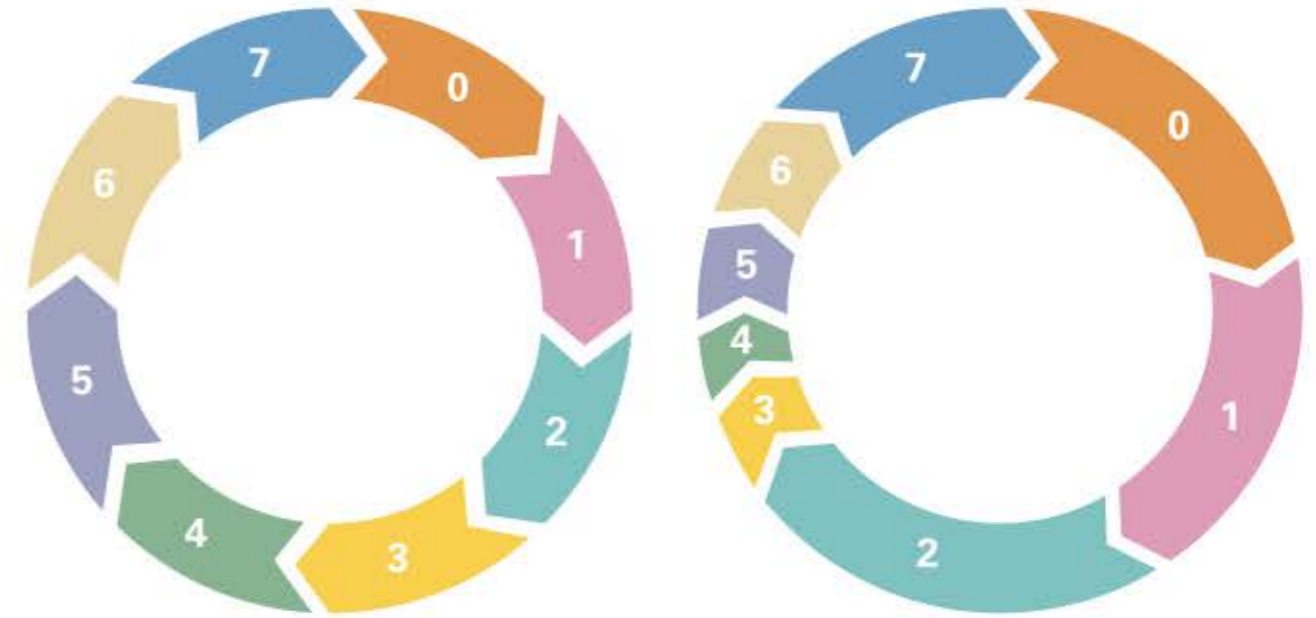


Figure 8: RIBA Plan of Work wheel as represented in RIBA publications, showing the seven work stages in equal segments.



Figure 9: RIBA Plan of Work wheel with stages adjusted proportionally to time and resources needed typically in corresponding co-design stages, with the emphasis on early-stage involvement.



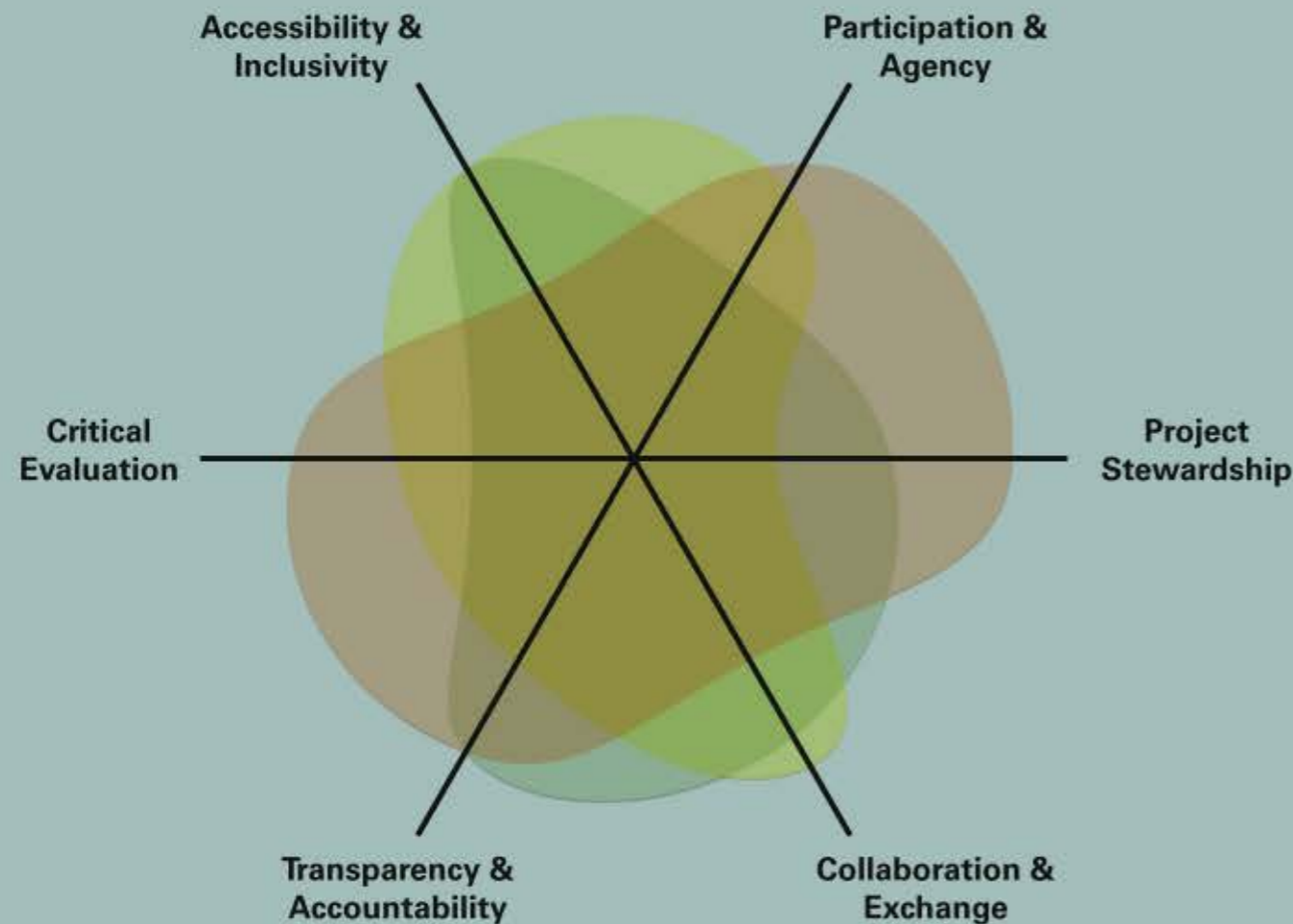
Figure 10: RIBA Plan of Work wheel with overlapping project stages, highlighting the importance of maintaining an iterative process and constant dialogue over the course of the project's lifespan.



Figure 11: RIBA Plan of Work wheel with softer and looser stages, alluding to the importance of factoring in more organic and fluid processes within the framework of RIBA stages.



# Co-design Assessment Tool



## How to use this framework?

Acknowledging the unique challenges and opportunities of each project, and the site-specificity of co-design processes, this framework is not intended to be a metricised form of measurement. Its purpose is to help designers and co-design participants to align and review priorities, based on an overview of the six key principles of co-design. The regions of colour on the radar diagram above are indicative only.

## Towards Spatial Justice An assessment tool for planning and evaluating co-design processes

### Evidence and prompts

#### 1 Accessibility & Inclusivity

Thorough site analysis has been conducted, which uncovers a wide and diverse range of voices, and identifies potential co-design collaborators and networks.

Young people and locals are given relevant training and/or employment opportunities as co-design participants in the project team.

Local groups and networks have been engaged with to identify and address gaps in accessibility and potential participation barriers.

The project actively reaches out to those who may be excluded.

The project team reflects the local demographics of the site, and/or there is local representation on the team.

The language(s) used is accessible and inclusive, and where necessary, abridged or adapted for co-design communication.

#### 2 Participation & Agency

Co-design participants are part of the project team with clearly defined roles, scope and responsibilities.

Co-design participants have relevant skills and confidence to participate in the design process.

The strategic ambitions of the project are collectively shaped by the co-design process.

Participation is nurtured and sustained throughout the duration of the co-design process, and communication is maintained across high and low-intensity co-design periods.

#### 3 Project Stewardship

Funding and payment structures are adequate to support co-design processes.

Clear protocols have been established between co-design participants and other members of the project team.

Co-design process and programme is clearly planned and managed, with appropriate core design, feedback and review periods.

#### 4 Collaboration & Exchange

There is a collective aspiration and will to adopt a co-design approach in the project.

Acknowledgement of time, skills and resources needed for the process has been translated into tangible exchanges, e.g. apprenticeships, employment, remuneration, handover of toolkit.

There are appropriately varied channels and means of communication between co-design participants and the rest of the project team.

The local authority is involved and shares relevant local networks, contacts and knowledge, e.g. related initiatives, development pipeline.

The knowledge, methodologies and tools generated from the project is passed onto participants and users.

#### 5 Transparency & Accountability

The parameters of the project, e.g. project timeline, budget, site constraints – both negotiable and non-negotiable – are clearly set out at the beginning of the process.

A form of commitment has been created between co-design participants and the wider project, e.g. community charter, manifesto.

The co-design facilitator – whether the role is undertaken by designers or third-party facilitators – maintains neutrality in the process.

Decision-making processes are fair, transparent and accountable.

A Social Value Action Plan has been developed to track actions and impact.

The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) captures, with integrity, the process and outcome of the process, which informs planning conditions.

The co-design process and outcome are safeguarded post-planning permission.

#### 6 Critical Evaluation

The project learns from other co-design projects, and where relevant, the outcome of Stage 7 post occupancy evaluations.

The co-design process continually builds on collective discourse and is iterative – a cyclical process of testing, feedback, revisions and review.

Post-occupancy evaluation has been planned or conducted to learn from use and inhabitation and identify blindspots to inform future projects.



# Co-design Checklist

## How to use this checklist?

This checklist highlights a concise set of points around the six main phases of co-design projects for designers and co-design participants to shape more holistic co-design approaches and methodologies. Whilst not all questions need to be answered at the outset, they act as prompts for more informed decision-making and conscious evaluation of the process.

## Towards Spatial Justice

### A checklist for achieving meaningful participation in co-design processes

#### Brief

- Is there an opportunity for implementing a co-design approach on the project, whether in full or in part?
- Are there client or project partner aspirations to co-create a vision or co-produce the brief?
- Can the project vision and brief be challenged and shaped, and to what extent?
- Are funding and payment structures adequate to support co-design processes?
- Has thorough site analysis been conducted and have potential co-design collaborators been identified – e.g. the seldom-heard, youth?
- Are strategic parameters – e.g. project timeline, budget, site constraints – communicated to co-design participants?
- Has there been a form of commitment – e.g. community charter, manifesto – that safeguards accountability of co-design processes?
- Have past lessons and knowledge (RIBA Stage 7) of similar projects been applied?

#### Team

- Does the project team reflect the local demographics of the project?
- Are there local groups and networks that can be brought onto the process?
- Who are the seldom heard and how does the project reach out to those who may be excluded?
- Who is best placed to be the facilitator of the process e.g. designer, third-party facilitator?
- Where do co-design collaborators sit in the team structure? Has their role and scope been defined?
- Do community-based structures (e.g. community steering group) need to be set up to facilitate communication and decision-making?
- Have protocols been established and agreed between parties – e.g. meeting cycles, methods of communication?
- Has a fair, transparent and accountable decision-making process been established?

#### Design

- Do co-design participants have relevant skills to participate in the design process?
- Is relevant skill-training provided to co-design participants?
- Has jargon been eliminated for accessibility and language been considered and adapted for the co-design process?
- Are channels of communication open and accessible for co-design participants?
- Has the design process – e.g. cycles of testing and feedback – been outlined and agreed with co-design participants?
- Is the co-design process iterative?
- Do technical design decisions take into account co-delivery opportunities?
- Has a Social Value Action Plan been developed?

#### Planning

- Does the local authority have knowledge of local networks and contacts that can contribute to the co-design process?
- Is there an opportunity to build on existing local initiatives and networks and to address wider local strategic ambitions?
- Are planners brought into the co-design process?
- Does the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) capture the process, knowledge and value generated from the co-design process?
- Is the co-design process and outcome safeguarded post-planning permission?

#### Delivery

- Is there scope for co-delivery of project at procurement and construction phases?
- Is relevant skills-training provided to co-design participants?

#### Use

- Is the project handed over to users, co-design participants and relevant bodies with appropriate and sufficient support for use, stewardship, management and/or operation?
- Have the knowledge and tools base generated from the project been passed onto users, co-design participants and local bodies?
- Has post-occupancy evaluation been planned or conducted to inform future projects?



# Case Studies

## Overview

In the current UK planning system, there are limited statutory requirements for community engagement, statutory planning application consultation applies to developments that exceed a certain size, let alone the quality of such or more radical forms of participatory planning or co-design. Pre-planning engagement methods and Statement of Community Involvement are locally managed. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) encourages pre-app and early engagement; currently consultation undertaken by applicant split between statutory consultees (neighbours, councilors, amenity groups, residents associations) and non-statutory consultees (residents, BIDs etc.).

The landscape of community engagement and co-design is changing. With Covid, we have seen the rise of digital engagement, such as those championed by local authorities for experimental traffic schemes and alfresco dining, and alternative forms of community-led governance, thinking about how to embed the community in early stages of strategic visioning, and post-construction stages of custodianship and maintenance.

The following case studies are largely drawn from the UK context, with a few from abroad that covers the five main typologies for co-design:

1. Temporary and meanwhile-use
2. Public realm and landscape
3. Building
4. Masterplan
5. Framework & approach

**The Paper Garden – The Shed**  
Yes Make  
with Joel De Mowbray and Morgan Da Silva

**Pavilion Babs**  
Intervention Architecture  
with Anna Parker

**White Horse Square**  
Dr Julia King & Akil Scafe-Smith of LSE Cities  
and DSDHA

**LightHouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired**  
Arup Accessible and Inclusive Environments  
with Mei-Yee Man Oram

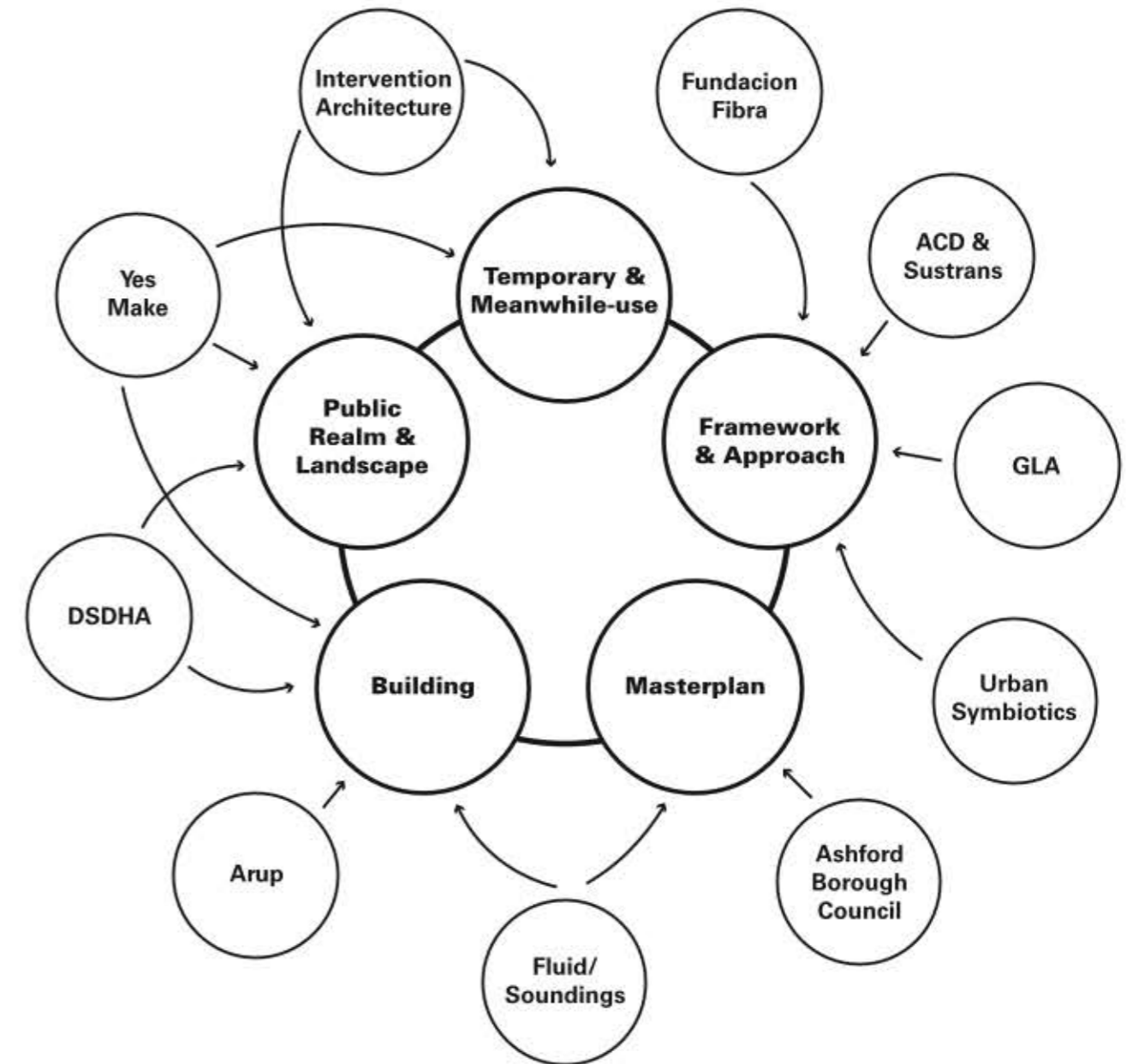
**Kings Cross Central**  
Soundings  
with Steve McAdam and Christina Norton

**South of Ashford Garden Community**  
Ashford Borough Council  
with Dan Daley

**Tustin Estate**  
DSDHA and RESOLVE

**Purley Vision & Regeneration Framework**  
Urban Symbiotics  
with Stephanie Edwards

**Fundacion Fibra**  
with Isidora Larrain de Andraca



**Figure 12:** Diagram illustrating the collaborator network that contributed to this research. Each individual / practice provided valuable reflections from lived and professional experience; many wear multiple 'hats' and shared insights that crossover from strategic planning to on-the-ground work, from practice to academia and advocacy.





## The Paper Garden – The Shed

Yes Make with Joel De Mowbray and Morgan Da Silva

|                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Project Type                    | Meanwhile-use, Educational facility                     |
| Co-design Methodology           | Co-design, Co-delivery                                  |
| RIBA Plan of Work Collaborators | Stage 2-6<br>Global Generation & Jan Kattein Architects |
| Client Location                 | British Land<br>Canada Water, London                    |
| Duration                        | 2021, in progress                                       |
| Project Scale / Size            | 239 sqm   |

### Project Overview

The Paper Garden is a temporary educational garden situated in the heart of the developing Canada Water Masterplan. As these long-term redevelopments often cause disruption to local communities, the garden utilises meanwhile space for temporary communal learning and growing, creating a local sense of ownership and agency alongside large-scale redevelopments.

Nested within the garden, The Shed will provide an educational space, community kitchen and administrative offices, and remain as a legacy project after the masterplan's completion. Its regenerative design is built from recycled and low-tech materials. Yes Make leads workshops with volunteers, local businesses and school children, who participate in its construction. In their words, "making things together in workshops builds skills, experience, confidence and an opportunity to have tangible conversations with the community about design and its impact on our lives".

### Process

- 1. Co-design of the Paper Garden**  
The design for the Paper Garden were conceived through workshops with British Land, TEDI and young people participating in Global Generation's Generator Program (a youth and environmental action programme for 10-18 year olds).
- 2. Detailed design**  
Global Generation, with Jan Kattein Architects, took forward the concept designs to planning and detailed design. Cordwood masonry was chosen for the construction of 'The Shed' as it is an inexpensive, simple and environmentally sound method of building walls, combining wood logs with lime mortar and a cavity filled with insulation that can be made from the sawdust. This low-tech construction method allowed for an effective co-build process.
- 3. Co-delivery of The Shed**  
Yes Make conducted a series of co-delivery (construction) workshops with volunteers, local businesses and school children to construct the walls for The Shed, which took shape over the course of a year.
- 4. Co-delivery of the Paper Garden**  
50 local people will have access to community growing beds as a part of the garden proposal, with priority given to people without access to green space, clients from Time and Talents Food Larder, or those in need of mental health support. The garden will thus grow and thrive as a result of the continued planting by local groups.
- 5. Long term legacy**  
The Paper Garden and The Shed will be used as a base to run activities which informs Global Generation's involvement in the development of layers of biodiversity and community engagement within the public realm of the wider Canada Water Masterplan. These include: bi-weekly twilight gardening workshops, monthly workshops for families visiting with the NHS mental health intervention scheme; holiday clubs for school children, nature explorer

workshops for smaller groups chosen by the school's heads of inclusion and pastoral care team, setting up food growing areas and natural habitats for education and wildlife in three local schools, and cooking workshops for local 'Time & Talents Food Pantry' clients.

### Key takeaways

#### Meeting people where they're at

"When we start carving in a space, being there and doing something, it draws people in. Creating curiosity and physically doing something in the area gets people involved."

#### Empowerment through engagement

"We believe in community empowerment through the construction of public spaces which inspire and are inspired by nature."

#### Turning 'spaces' into 'places'

"We build conversations with people throughout the process to understand how to turn unused spaces into valued places."

#### Collaboration over competition

"We choose collaboration over competition."





## Pavilion Babs Intervention Architecture with Anna Parker

|                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Project Type                    | Temporary installation                               |
| Co-design Methodology           | Co-production, Co-design, co-delivery, co-evaluation |
| RIBA Plan of Work Collaborators | Stages 1-7<br>Arup, Scale Rule, iStructE             |
| Location                        | Birmingham Weekender Festival                        |
| Duration                        | 2017, annual initiative                              |
| Project Scale / Size            | Pavilion   |

### Project Overview

In 2017, IA were invited by Arup and Scale Rule to collaborate with them on providing workshops with local school children, to promote and encourage careers in design, construction and engineering as a part of 'Next Generation Design - Brum 2017'. The focus was to design (and build) a pavilion for Birmingham, which would form a central focus point for the Birmingham Weekender festival in 2017.

The workshop weekend, hosted at NEST, involved students in years 9/10 who could enter either individually or as part of a team from across 42 different schools. The priority was to get young people excited about sustainable co-creation and make careers in the construction industry more accessible to those from disadvantaged backgrounds through knowledge exchange, networking and creating opportunities for future work experiences or apprenticeships. The winning team consisted of 3 girls from King Edward VI Handsworth. Their design 'Pavilion Babs' was inspired by artist Barbara Hepworth. The design consisted of a dome-like structure with a number of openings for access and light, focusing on natural shapes and forms.

### Process

The below outlines the key process of the Next Generation Design weekend event and the ongoing co-design and construction process:

1. *Demystifying the industry*  
The weekend began with an open lecture format from different industry members, explaining the different key roles that exist within the built environment sector.
2. *Site walk (RIBA Stage 1)*  
The attendees were taken on a site visit, exploring techniques of site analysis and how to draw site conditions to scale.
3. *Design workshops (RIBA Stage 2)*  
Workshops were held with architects, structural engineers, M&E consultants and lighting designers to show team-working across a broad range of disciplines and provide the participants with professional contacts across the built environment.
4. *Presentation (RIBA Stage 2)*  
With the support of practice volunteers, each group prepared a 10 minute presentation to the judging panel. The selection process and criteria were transparent which ensured that attendees understood how their design responses were assessed.
5. *Feedback forms (RIBA Stage 2)*  
Feedback forms were distributed to the students to evaluate the process. This ensured a continual learning and adaptation of future iterations of the programme based on their experience and reflections.
6. *Design development (RIBA Stage 3-4)*  
The selected design was taken to Arup for a discussion on the buildability, wind-loading and connection details. The design team went back to the school to develop a detailed model and assembly drawings, including a VR walkthrough.
7. *Build (RIBA Stage 5-6)*  
IA set out a safe 5-hour construction plan, involving the slotting together of 126 pieces by hand using one scaffold tower. The pavilion was then de-constructed and rebuilt at the school of the winning design.

8. *Ongoing legacy (RIBA Stage 7)*  
The process has led to three further iterations of the festival, allowing for the design process to be honed and differing pavilion architectural outcomes. IA keeps in touch and offers work experience to those interested in exploring the profession further. A brochure was also created which the schools use as a career insight tool to explain wider roles within the construction and design industry.

### Key takeaways

#### Integrating play

"Creating a common ground with play components is a way of opening a conversation and creating intrigue. It instigates a different standing point and breaks the initial barriers which more formal processes often present."

#### Creating a meaningful exchange

"A key aspect to co-design is creating an exchange which is long-lasting and relationship-building."

#### Learning from young people

"Young people have their own unique insight which is without the restrictions of our own professional experiences - we need to learn from this!"

#### Connecting with place and locality

"Some of the children participating hadn't visited their own city centre before, so working the Access Project and providing opportunities to those who wouldn't otherwise have access to gain experience in the industry was really important."

#### Prioritising participant safety

"Ensuring the safety of the children is paramount - it is essential make sure anyone in the space or conversation was DBS-checked."





## White Horse Square

Dr. Julia King of LSE Cities and DSDHA

|                       |                               |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Project Type          | Public Realm                  |
| Co-design Methodology | Co-production, Co-design      |
| RIBA Plan of Work     | Stages 0-2                    |
| Collaborators         | Akil Scafe-Smith (LSE Cities) |
| Client                | Quintain                      |
| Location              | Wembley Park, London          |
| Duration              | 2022, ongoing                 |
| Project Scale / Size  | 4,000 sqm                     |

## Project Overview

White Horse Square, Wembley, is a public space that experiences extreme fluctuations of foot traffic and demographics – residential amenity by day, passage for 12,000 people by night on event days – DSDHA designed a phased scheme which provides integrated solutions to wayfinding and crowd control through the introduction of two large sculptural red trusses and generous planting zones, which provide an urban oasis for surrounding residents. The first green space – a flowering perennial garden with generous seating – has already been delivered, while the second – a ‘playable landscape’ is being designed in collaboration with local young people – facilitated by Dr Julia King and Akil Scafe-Smith (LSE Cities) and supported by Quintain, the developers of Wembley Park. Being embedded in Brent, one of UK’s most diverse neighbourhoods with a significantly younger population, and on the back of the wealth of knowledge and trust built across different initiatives – Seen and Heard, the Brent Youth Parliament, the Blueprint Collective and the London Borough of Culture – it was critical for the co-design process to build upon the existing relationships, aspirations and findings from earlier engagement and dialogue.

## Process

- Leveraging existing networks**  
King launched an open-call to previous participants of the ‘Seen and Heard’ initiative, as well as local schools, to put together a team of 5 paid collaborators between the ages of 15-18 to participate in the design of the final part of White Horse Square.
- Strategic briefing**  
The process involved strategic briefing to cover scope and constraints of the project, precedent studies of public spaces around the world, mapping and visioning, and design development with DSDHA. These processes were supported by online and physical workshops, including a workshop on ‘public space’ where Julia provided an engaging seminar on the contradictions and possibilities of the design and management of public spaces in the UK context.
- Experience-based design**  
Participants, who knew the area intimately, articulated their experiences of different public spaces in Brent, and the nuanced observations about how certain behaviours were encouraged or deterred. Equipped with an understanding of the covert or more explicit tensions between use and management and the needs of different user groups, the participants shared their desires and aspirations for White Horse Square, from which key themes – ‘shelter’, ‘escape’, ‘play’ & ‘multipurpose’ – were identified for the entire design team within a wider aspiration to create ‘judgement free space’. The articulation of this aspiration by the young people created a prism through which design decisions could be tested – from the layout and the scale of the space down to the colours of the furniture.
- Enacting proposals**  
The designs that emerged from these collective conversations were then tested on site via a series of temporary enactments and taping exercises that played with dimensions and orientation, which identified

- different opportunities for conviviality and intimacy.
- Long-term impact**  
The dialogue and findings from workshops and site visits fed back into the detailed design of the space, which DSDHA translated and synthesised into a coherent scheme. The scheme is due to be completed later in 2023, but in the meantime, the co-design process has transformed the way participants and their social networks see and experience Wembley, their sense of belonging to a space that they have helped shape, and their sense of empowerment to both critique and enjoy the spaces they inhabit.

## Key takeaways

**Acting in space / situating knowledge**  
Being in a space and testing interventions out physically, even just with tape or chalk, helps to create a sense of ownership and agency over the tested ideas. It also helps participants to work with a better sense of scale and speculate possibilities that might be eluded otherwise in drawings.

**Centring participants’ experiences**  
The design brief of the project was informed by listening to the experiences of those who know an area intimately and personally. Their articulation of their experiences helped to shape a wider aspiration to create a ‘judgement free space’, which empowered the entire team to make design decisions that respond specifically to existing issues of ‘judgment’ that young people experience, as people who are ‘too old to play as kids do’, and ‘too young to carry the confidence of adults’.





## LightHouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired

### Arup Accessible and Inclusive Environments, with Mei-Yee Man Oram

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| Project Type          | Building   |
| Co-design Methodology | Co-creation, Co-production, Co-design, Co-evaluation |
| RIBA Plan of Work     | Stages 0-3, 6-7                                      |
| Client                | LightHouse   |
| Architect             | Mark Cavagnero Associates Architects                 |
| Location              | San Francisco, USA                                   |
| Duration              | Completed, 2016                                      |
| Project Scale / Size  | 3,500 sqm  |

### Project Overview

LightHouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired is on the forefront of technology and training for blind and low-vision individuals. LightHouse needed a new headquarters that would allow them to expand their services and provide an uplifting, positive and beautiful environment through the thoughtful integration of acoustics, materials, and technology. Arup were appointed as Acoustics, Audiovisual and ITC designers for the project, with specific coordination with the Access and Inclusive Environments team. Before the design was finalised, the plans were run through the Arup SoundLab to simulate options for the acoustic experience of the space, ensuring the design was effective not only in terms of configuration but also acoustics. The project focussed on stakeholder engagement, creating pilots to test and gain feedback on different acoustic treatments before finalising the proposal. The process involved VR/AR headsets which ensured an inclusive and effective engagement for the user's needs.

"To be able to say 'this is the sound I want' and be able to tune a room to that specific acoustic quality was extraordinary." – Bryan Bashin, CEO, LightHouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

### Process

The following outlines the overall process of the Accessible and Inclusive Environments team:

- 1. Research and consultation**  
 "We begin with research and consultation, forming user groups to explore the asset's true purpose and needs". This typically takes the form of focus groups, interviews and site walks.
- 2. Audits**  
 Audits provide a starting point to identify the current situation and existing barriers. Items are categorised to ensure there is a clear set of prioritised actions to implement improvements to access and inclusion within the space.
- 3. Wider impact**  
 "We identify the right inclusion standards and understand the wider impacts on the local environment and community". This involves consultation which prioritises learning from the lived experience of local groups.
- 4. Inclusivity**  
 "During the inclusive design process itself we ensure no-one is overlooked and that all standards are met or exceeded."
- 5. Consistency and delivery**  
 "The construction phase is important too; we undertook tests which ensure lighting, noise and crowding factors are robust, and that inclusion aspects of the design are not inadvertently 'managed out'."
- 6. Ongoing support**  
 "Once the building is complete our inclusive design team can provide ongoing support, to make sure the asset stays relevant and usable by all."

### Key takeaways

#### Every stage consideration

"Inclusive design should be considered at every stage of the project life-cycle. If you start earlier, the stronger the solution will be, avoiding expensive late-stage alterations, lowering the ongoing cost of management/maintenance and reducing the need for retrofit or redesign later on."

#### Learn from lived experience

"There are often gaps in guidance. Starting with understanding the lived experience of those who use a space provides a rounded, and current (not past) analysis. It provides an opportunity to understand requirements beyond the minimum that has been set in building regulations."

#### Clearly identify parameters

"Outlining the negotiable and non-negotiable items at the beginning of the process reduces potential tensions as it ensures that everyone is clear and agrees on the direction of the project."

#### Supplement with research

"Supplementing engagement with research trends ensures both current, and future conditions of an area can be considered. This can also be used to paint a picture of what might change over time for specific communities."

#### Be proactive

"Attitudes in highlighting inequalities have shifted since Covid-19, but it is not enough to carry on as we are. Advocacy is important in changing people's perceptions of what they should be doing."





## Kings Cross Central Soundings with Steve McAdam and Christina Norton

|                       |                            |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| Project Type          | Masterplan                 |
| Co-design Methodology | Co-creation, co-production |
| RIBA Plan of Work     | Stages 0-1                 |
| Client                | Argent St George           |
| Collaborators         | Allies and Morrison        |
| Location              | Kings Cross, London        |
| Duration              | 2002-2004                  |
| Project Scale / Size  | 58.5 acres                 |

### Project Overview

Soundings was appointed in September 2002 to advise on and implement a full programme for consultation on Argent St George's framework plan for King's Cross Central (KXC). Since 2002, Soundings has been involved in the project for over a decade; this case study focuses on the initial years of their work leading up to the submission of the Outline Planning Application. Soundings' work builds on Argent St George's initial consultation activities, in which Argent sought for feedback on 'Principles for a Human City' (2001), a document which sets out their philosophy of regeneration and makes clear their commitment to 10 principles of citymaking. As the regeneration framework was being developed, Soundings designed and stewarded a consultation programme specifically targeting young people in the area as part of a wider consultation and engagement process involving complementary studies and activities, some of which were jointly led by Argent and King's Cross Partnership and the London Boroughs of Camden and Islington. Soundings' work involved an extensive, varied and innovative programme of events and activities in collaboration with youth groups, youth agencies and schools, the findings of which were fielded back to the client and design team regularly. The work culminated in a 3-volume Statement of Community Involvement (2004), which is widely considered a benchmark for public consultation.

### Process of Initial Engagement (RIBA Stage 0)

#### Stage 1: Consultation

- Contacting youth groups and schools
- Educating young people and building awareness about the future of KX
- Providing a forum for discussing with young people the potential impact of the development on their lives
- Deploying engaging tools and techniques to collect ideas and aspirations

#### Stage 2: Findings

- Collating of information gathered
- Analysis and development of information
- Mapping of information

#### Stage 3: Ideas and recommendations

- 20 rough ideas – Soundings consolidated the contributions and devised a series of challenging propositions for the area, under three themes ('youth projects', 'non youth projects' & 'wider area planning')

#### Stage 4: Dissemination and feedback

- Continued feedback on the process, and the propositional ideas
- Development of dedicated website
- Holding public open days for feedback
- Agreeing on next steps

### Process of Developing the Framework (RIBA Stage 1)

#### Stage 1: Vox Pop

- Gathering initial reactions to the Framework via events, questionnaires and interviews
- Producing film capturing vox pop reactions and young people interviewing decision makers
- Consolidating reactions to create the agenda for subsequent workshops (of next stage)

#### Stage 2: Discussion workshops

- Hosting workshops for open discussions of emerging issues
- Hosting interactive exhibitions

#### Stage 3: Processing and analysing responses

- Transcribing, databasing, analysing and interpreting information

- Detailed analysis of consultation on each section in the Framework

#### Stage 4: Drawing conclusions

- Understanding the nature of responses to the Framework and its ideas
- Reviewing all material gathered and how the range of issues are categorised and interpreted
- Identifying and describing the key issues across all consultation activities
- Channelling conclusions to the development of the outline planning application

### Key takeaways

#### Be realistic about time-frames

"Ensure clients are aware of both the social and economic value of the process and the outcome of co-design so that sufficient time and financial support is allocated."

#### Inclusivity

"Some community voices can be louder than others. Make sure that the process reflects the genuine diversity of the community on the ground."

#### Creative communication

"There is currently no language that adequately articulates the social dynamics of a space over time. This needs to be developed as an overlay to be used with conventional communication tools."

#### Remove jargon

"Language can be exclusive. Jargons need to be removed from co-design, e.g. the term 'public realm' is not accessible."

#### Value the process

"One of the main values that comes from co-design is the merits from the process, rather than the end outcome. The process creates empowerment, capacity building and a sense of local ownership over the space – but these social values are often not recognised or understood."





## South of Ashford Garden Community

Ashford Borough Council with Dan Daley

|                       |                             |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| Project Type          | Housing-led urban extension |
| Co-design Methodology | Co-creation, co-production  |
| RIBA Plan of Work     | Stages 0-1                  |
| Client                | Ashford Borough Council     |
| Location              | Ashford                     |
| Duration              | 2014, ongoing               |
| Project Scale / Size  | 6,000,000 sqm               |

### Project Overview

This case study focuses on the South Ashford Garden Community (SAGC) project, a housing-led urban extension encompassing three former greenfield sites, where a mix of landowners and development partners are working with local communities to retroactively shape a holistic vision and strategy for a new community south of Ashford in Kent. It reflects on how principles of co-production and co-design can be integrated in masterplanning at an early stage before physical design, and how community-led stewardship structures can be set up to deliver a high-quality garden community.

Above: Ashford Borough Council commissioned Vincent Design to create a logo and identity for the SAGC. They reached out to illustrator Sara Mulvanny to produce a bespoke piece of art which could help tell the story of this emerging place. Over the course of five months, several local people were asked to help shape this drawing. Their input drove multiple revisions to the drawing until the final that you see here was agreed.

### Core Project Structures & Activities

- Design Code & Quality Charter**  
 A charter was co-produced through public consultation and charettes. The charter sets out a benchmark for design quality through 36 commitments across all facets of the development – such as ensuring that every home will receive a fruit tree in its back garden. All of the developers, the Local Authority and the County Council signed their names to this document.
- Non-profit Stewardship Organisation: Chilmington Management Organisation**  
 The CMO was set up as a socially-minded, community-led organisation that would take a proactive approach to community asset management and long-term development. This is a hybrid model which operates like a traditional land management company but is led by its membership – the residents of Chilmington.
- Community Stakeholder Group**  
 To ensure that the Delivery & Implementation Board is responding to the concerns of local people, a pre-existing Community Stakeholder Group was asked to meet bi-monthly with the Head of Planning and lead developer. This group, comprising residents in and around rural Chilmington Green, had built a strong understanding of planning matters, having been through significant consultation on previous Local Plans and an earlier policy framework from which the development had emerged.
- Project team**  
 Known as the Chilmington Project Team, a team of three at Ashford Borough Council were responsible for the programme management and governance at Chilmington, operating the CMO through a service agreement and coordinating the SAGC until the CMO received enough funding to self-operate.
- Meanwhile projects**  
 An artist-in-residence led a project about local heritage with existing community

members around Chilmington. The artist spent two months building relationships, running school workshops and developing a final output which was co-produced by members of the local Repair Café. This contributed to establishing stronger local ties, providing direction for the community development and the branding of the Garden Village.

### Key takeaways

#### Be visible & accessible

Without the temporary operating premises open, there is little 'face' to the Chilmington Management Organisation (CMO), which has required greater effort to maintain communication with residents.

#### Champion agile project management

An agile approach to project management is needed to facilitate meaningful community involvement. This involved an iterative process (e.g. 'Sprint') where cycles of engagement, reflection and production are maintained for different workstreams. This ensures regular contact with the groups and reinforces a productive exchange between project managers, designers and the consulted group.

#### Define the stewardship model early

The difference between a stewardship body and a land management company was highlighted early on in the process, which helped to shape . The project highlighted the benefits of a socially-minded, community-led organisation that takes a proactive approach to community asset management over a more traditional model which tends to be transactional in its nature.





## Tustin Estate DSDHA and RESOLVE

|                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Project Type                    | Housing, Masterplan                        |
| Co-design Methodology           | Co-production, Co-design                   |
| RIBA Plan of Work Collaborators | Stages 1-2<br>Hayhurst & Co, Kennedy Woods |
| Client                          | London Borough of Southwark                |
| Location                        | Tustin Estate, London                      |
| Duration                        | 2019-20                                    |
| Project Scale / Size            | 4.7ha                                      |

### Project Overview

After winning the competition by public vote in October 2019, DSDHA were appointed to explore a series of strategic feasibility options ranging from modest refurbishment to improve the quality of life of residents through to a more extensive redevelopment that would provide additional council homes within the Tustin Estate.

It was key to the brief that all Tustin residents were involved in deciding what they see on their estate, with DSDHA leading an inclusive and meaningful community engagement process that culminated in a referendum to agree the preferred option.

### Process

- Common Grounds team established**  
DSDHA led a group brought together specifically for the project, under the name 'Common Grounds', comprising of members from the design team, which included local design firm Kennedy Woods, interdisciplinary design collective RESOLVE, and the education architects Hayhurst & Co. This allowed several ongoing relationships to be forged between designers, individual residents and businesses via outreach.
- Residents Project Group established**  
A unique approach to project governance was adopted, which saw the establishment of a Residents Project Group. This group was trained to engage in the briefing and viability assessment process. They were also responsible for writing a constitution for the project, for selecting DSDHA as their architects, and for meeting formally with the design team on a monthly basis.
- Wide-reaching engagement**  
A structured series of engagements were promoted by newsletters and door-to-door visits, managed by the Southwark Council, alongside public meetings and community events – such as an estate gardening club and games of football.
- Regular and targeted outreach initiatives**  
Running a weekly drop-in hub as well as outreach initiatives – like the Common Grounds Coffee Cart – the team were able to show design progress and run one-to-one engagements with residents, tenants, leaseholders and freeholders to get personal feedback on options and inform design development. As a result, the team were able to reach residents who are otherwise unable to attend traditional consultation events.

### Key takeaways

#### Continuity without repetition

Engagement has to acknowledge the input from residents throughout the process, ensuring there is continuity without repetition.

#### Real-time input

Regular communication with the community meant that the designs were developed in parallel with their input – seeing physical outputs of the conversations builds trust.

#### Meeting people where they're at

Going out to people rather than asking them to come to you is important to make it easier for people to be involved and show respect for participants' time and effort. It can also make people feel more at ease and confident as they are in a familiar setting. Walkabouts with local stakeholders help emphasise the importance of moving towards an engagement process that is led by people who will manage a place long after the project is 'complete'.





## Purley Vision & Regeneration Framework

### Urban Symbiotics with Stephanie Edwards

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| Project Type          | Vision Framework   |
| Co-design Methodology | Co-creation, co-production   |
| RIBA Plan of Work     | Stages 0-1   |
| Client                | Croydon Council  |
| Collaborators         | McGregor Coxall<br>Momentum<br>Graham Harrington<br>Gbolade Design |
| Location              | Purley, Croydon  |
| Duration              | 10 months with continuing support of the Purley Panel              |
| Project Scale / Size  | Strategic scale  |

### Project Overview

Urban Symbiotics (US) established the Purley Panel in late 2019 to co-produce the Purley community-led vision and framework.

Under US's stewardship, the Purley Panel was established as a group to represent the demographic profile of the town, involving local stakeholders that were active within the community, such as local resident associations, teachers, parents, representatives of local youth organisations, local mosque representatives and the Purley Business Improvement District (BID). US ran initial 'insight workshops' followed by a programme of 'co-solve workshops' that saw participants actively solve local issues and develop projects that would maximise their aspirations. The panel used their extensive 'trust routes' and local networks to disseminate surveys and information to the wider community. US now supports the panel in the realisation of the community vision and regeneration framework by building capacity, supporting funding applications and helping to deliver the projects associated with the Framework in Purley.

### Process

- 1. Internal stakeholder engagement**  
US started by engaging with local councillors and council staff who work in Purley to identify key community groups for the setting up of the Purley Panel.
- 2. Setting up a Community Panel**  
Through stakeholder mapping, interviews and community meetings, US facilitated the identification of members for the Purley Panel from across the community. The long-term vision for the Panel is for it to grow into a self-sufficient, representative community group capable of seeking funding that will help deliver future local initiatives.
- 3. Wider Community Survey**  
The Panel assisted in developing and distributing a survey which covered key sites in Purley to gather insight to focus the emerging framework. The survey was promoted on a dedicated website and had 423 responses, which were reviewed with the Panel in subsequent workshops. Continuous engagement has now led to the Purley Panel engaging with over 1,000 participants through targeted activities and events as a part of their inclusive high street pilot.
- 4. Schools Programme**  
A schools programme was developed to address the low survey response rate from under-15s. The programme involved the co-design of spaces, workshops, assemblies and pizza nights as well as introducing wider discussions about careers in the built environment and targeted tasks for key sites identified in the vision and framework.
- 5. Draft Vision & Regeneration Framework**  
Through continuous engagement with the Purley Panel, the vision and framework was co-produced to identify strategic principles and community visions for key sites, as well as deliverable projects to be taken forward alongside a community led projects handbook. Selected projects are now being funded by the Mayor's High Streets For All challenge to be piloted and tested in Purley.

### Key takeaways

#### Removing 'shocks' in the process

"Involving people along the way removes 'shocks' as those involved are engaged and informed with the project development. This is particularly important for large-scale projects and regeneration plans."

#### Early engagement

"Often we come in at Stage 0 of the RIBA Plan of Work, where engagement is most useful and insightful. Opportunities could be missed if you join after this stage."

#### Managing expectations

"Talk to clients about managing expectations. Be clear and open about what people can and cannot change."

#### Capacity exchange

"Instead of just 'capacity building', where communities are empowered with skills to engage with certain topics, exchange is equally important, where their experience and knowledge feeds into the design."

#### Embed yourselves

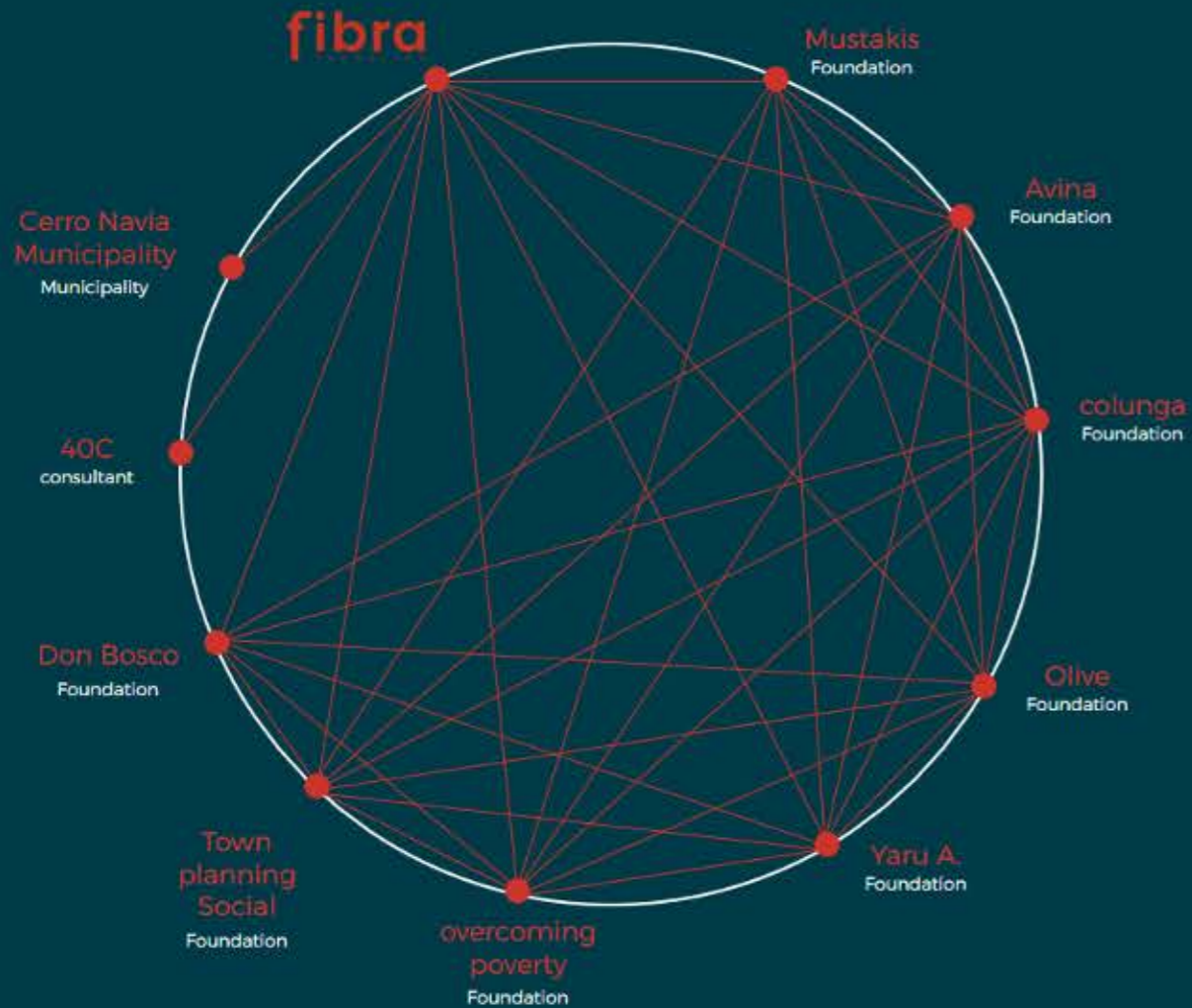
"Embed yourselves – go to local boxing classes, local cafes, be present – so that people know who you are. Walking around and getting to know everyone develops personal relationships and trust."

#### Spaces between stages

"It's helpful to have a shared language via the RIBA Plan of Work. Get people on board with the framework but expand the process introduce co-design between stages were appropriate."



fibra



## Fundacion Fibra with Isidora Larraín de Andraca

|                       |                            |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| Project Type          | Practice Approach          |
| Co-design Methodology | Co-creation, co-production |
| RIBA Plan of Work     | Stages 0-1                 |
| Location              | Chile, South America       |
| Duration              | Ongoing                    |
| Project Scale / Size  | Strategic scale            |

### Project Overview

Fundacion Fibra was founded on the principles of practising participatory processes, with the six founders sharing executive decisions and responsibilities as a collective.

The practice exists to support effective engagement and co-design in a variety of projects, all operating within four territories in South America, including: rural settings, city centre high streets, informal settlement areas, and social housing developments in local and challenging neighbourhoods.

Due to Chile's current social crisis, ensuring projects create a tangible output in a short amount of time is a priority. Therefore all projects operate within a three-month cycle, allowing the outcomes and learnings from the previous project to be taken into the next.

Further information can be found here:  
[www.fundacionfibra.org](http://www.fundacionfibra.org)

### Process

Fundacion Fibra (FF) supports projects through the provision of four components, which all operate under the driving theme of collaboration:

- Local boards**  
 Local boards in each area are created to decide on the priority of topics and issues to be addressed locally, such as early childhood education, entrepreneurship (local shops) and mental health & community activities.
- Participatory funding**  
 There is a local call to everyone in the neighbourhood to apply to be a part of the project, with the only requirement being that collaboration must be a part of the process. FF offers support to applicants throughout the process, with the Local Board selecting the successful applicants.
- Capacity building**  
 The Local Board decide on the specific skills the participatory funding should be spent on, such as public speaking, budget management etc. with FF offering capacity building through skills training.
- Shared experiences**  
 Wrapping up the process, FF works with a production company who specialise in creating environments where all participants feel comfortable to share their experience of the process. This feedback is then used to directly inform the next project cycle.

### Key takeaways

#### Learn to fail

"Learning from failure is an essential part of succeeding. Open thinking processes in design allow a freedom to test solutions; the process of figuring out what doesn't work is as important as finding a process that does work."

#### Embrace flexibility & change

"There are different routes to the design process and we have to be willing to change the plan and edit as we go. Flexibility and change has to be accepted in co-design."

#### Risk-taking leadership

"In order to learn from processes that might fail, there needs to be a leader who isn't afraid to take risks."

#### Respond to cultural differences

"Our experience working in London was that people are less eager to engage. We therefore changed the engagement methodology to a game which encouraged children and their families to get involved."

#### Diversify representation

"As the saying goes, 'If you are not at the table you are on the menu.' A variety of strategies need to be implemented to bring stakeholders from different sectors to the table."

#### Promote equality

FF has been through a process of redesigning their stakeholder map; the horizontal format represents more equal decision making powers between all the partners throughout the process, even though they have different roles, resources and interests.



# Glossary of Co-design Terms

## Accessibility

The consideration and centring of the needs of a wide and diverse range of people with different impairments, disabilities and backgrounds in the design and use of space.

## Agency

The power to take a position, assert, influence, deliberate or decide on something.

## Co-design

To design collectively, to share power, and exchange knowledge.

## Co-design participant

They are actively part of decision-making processes or in some cases, the design team, with more direct agency than 'stakeholders'.

## Collaboration

The process of two or more people, parties or organisations working together to complete a task or achieve a goal.

## Communities of Practice

Physical or virtual groups of people who come together, develop and share knowledge and learn through active or peripheral participation.

## Diversity

Diversity in design means diversity of experience, perspective and creativity – otherwise known as diversity of thought – and these can be shaped by multiple factors including race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual identity, ability/disability and location, among others (AIGA, 2014).

## Empowering

Enabling someone or communities to become more informed and stronger in claiming and exerting rights, influencing and making decisions, and building long-term confidence.

## Equity

Designing towards equity is a creative process that addresses discrepancies of agency, access and use between users by centring the power of those historically disadvantaged by systemic inequities.

## Inclusivity

Enabling broader participation and providing

equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalised.

## Intersectionality

Coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, it is an analytical framework for understanding how social and political identities (such as race, class, and gender) combine to create different modes of discrimination and privilege.

## Lived Experience

Personal knowledge about the world gained through direct, first-hand involvement in everyday events rather than through representations constructed by other people (A Dictionary of Media & Communication, 2016).

## Positionality

Positionality refers to the stance of any project actor (be it designer, facilitator, participant, client etc.) and how differences in power and social position can shape the co-design process.

## Power Dynamics

Power is the capacity of an individual to influence the actions, beliefs, or conduct of others. Therefore, power dynamics refers the way different people or groups of people interact with and control each other, due to the different levels of power on each side.

## Representative

A process that involves and are driven by a group of people who represent the diversity (see definition above) of the area or group in question.

## Situational

A process which relates to the location, surroundings and character of a place.

## Social Justice

Justice in terms of the distribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a society.

## Spatial Justice

The conceptualisation of a framework that addresses how intersecting issues of justice – climate, health, inclusivity etc. – manifest in space, be it in commissioning and planning processes, urban and building design, and the claim to and use of space.

# Glossary of Co-design Attitudes

## Address 'consultation fatigue'

'Consultation fatigue' is really disillusionment – often people are not tired of being consulted, they are tired of nothing happening as a result of that. Understand the true cause of the fatigue. "To overcome a negative response to ongoing consultation (particularly for masterplans), the project must identify early wins and reinforce the importance of a deliverable scheme with a realistic timetable for implementation" (CABE, 2004).

## Ask how to ask

Engagement strategies should continually work with established resident networks to understand directly from them the best way in which the process of consultation can take place (DSDHA, 2022).

## Address intersectional experiences

Explicitly seek out marginalised communities by working with organisations that represent them, being adaptive to times of day, engagement style and platforms that meet their needs and interests (Cosgrave, 2022).

## Be accessible

Accessibility is for all – ensure a mix of visual and verbal communication. Always design for mobile-first in web layout terms. Use Plain English and accessible information and communication formats.

## Be an advocate

"Attitudes in highlighting inequalities have shifted since Covid-19, but it is not enough to carry on as we are. Advocacy is important in changing people's perceptions of what they should be doing" (Man Oram, 2022).

## Be careful when using/defining 'the community'

'The community' should not be used as a broad brush stroke to define the range and complexity of different local groups in an area.

## Be honest

Be honest about what you want to get out from the process. Consider what 'nudges' you are giving through the wording of questions and the supporting information you supply.

## Be realistic

Model what potential impacts your engagement findings might have: what can realistically be changed and what is determined by other factors? How will feedback be provided to participants about what impact they have had?

## Be visible & accessible

A consistent presence and 'face' for the project, be it physical or virtual, is vital to engagement.

## Build trust

"The public are becoming much clearer about the politics and priorities behind a project; ensure the question 'what's in it for me and my community' has a transparent and authentic answer before engaging" (McAdam & Norton, 2022).

## Challenge power dynamics

Ensure the capacity and needs are being described by the participants themselves, rather than being assumed by the project team. Position the participants as experts (Cosgrave, 2022).

## Champion agile project management

An agile approach to project management is needed to facilitate meaningful community involvement. This involved an iterative process (e.g. 'Sprint') where cycles of engagement, reflection and production are maintained for different workstreams. This ensures regular contact with the groups and reinforces a productive exchange between project managers, designers and the consulted group (Daley, 2022).

## Clearly identify parameters

"Outlining the negotiable and non-negotiable items at the beginning of the process reduces potential tensions as it ensures that everyone is clear and agrees on the direction of the project" (Man Oram, 2022).

## Continuity without repetition

Engagement has to acknowledge the input from residents throughout the process, ensuring there is continuity without repetition (DSDHA, 2022).



### **Creating a meaningful exchange**

"A key aspect to co-design is creating an exchange which is long-lasting and relationship-building" (Parker, 2022).

### **Cross-disciplinary education**

Co-creation and co-production are explored in different ways across disciplines; we need to learn from how other sectors approach it and share learnings (ACD, 2022).

### **Curiosity rather than unsolicited attention**

"Our process of 'making' in community spaces fosters engagement from the community, from a place of curiosity rather than us giving unsolicited attention" (De Mowbray, 2022).

### **Diversify representation**

"As the saying goes, 'If you are not at the table you are on the menu.' A variety of strategies need to be implemented to bring stakeholders from to the table" (Andraca, 2022).

### **Diversity of experience**

Actively seek out and understand a diversity of experiences. For example including racialised women, disabled women, LGBTQIA+ women, older women and gender diverse people (Cosgrave, 2022).

### **Embrace flexibility & change**

Designers and local authorities must stay open to the plan changing dependent on feedback (Daley, 2022).  
"There are different routes to the design process and we have to be willing to change the plan and edit as we go. Flexibility and change has to be accepted in co-design" (Andraca, 2022).

### **Emotional maturity**

Be aware of the emotions involved in the process (anger, anxiety) and provide training to address and manage them (Parker, 2022).

### **Empowerment through engagement**

"We believe in community empowerment through the construction of public spaces which inspire and are inspired by nature" (De Mowbray, 2022).

### **Equal partnership**

"Everyone in the co-design process is learning, it is a two-way exchange. Designers / local authorities are learning to understand an area, and the participants are trained in how the construction process works. They are equal partners who are exchanging knowledge to improve their environments" (McAdam & Norton, 2022).

### **Every-stage consideration**

"Inclusive design should be considered at every stage of the project life-cycle. If you start earlier, the stronger the solution will be, avoiding expensive late-stage alterations, lowering the ongoing cost of management/maintenance and reducing the need for retrofit or redesign later on" (Man Oram, 2022).

### **Exchange not extraction**

Empowerment through the legacy of knowledge exchange prevents repetition and allows communities to take ownership over a project / initiate new ones post PoW Stage 7.  
"A way to test if knowledge exchange is really happening on a project is to ask: if the funding was removed for the designer/local authority, could the participants carry on without them?" (Phiri-Witti, 2022).

### **Immersive approach**

Immersing yourself in an area and with the people who inhabit it uncovers deep-rooted social histories, charisma and character (McAdam & Norton, 2022).

### **Inclusive**

"Some community voices can be louder than others. Make sure that the process reflects the genuine diversity of the community on the ground" (McAdam & Norton, 2022).

### **Integrate ownership**

Make a point of passing over 'ownership' over the space to participants – it is their space to steward (Edwards, 2022).

### **Informality**

Experiment with more informal approaches to engagement so that people do not feel like 'outsiders' in the process (Cosgrave, 2022).

### **Learn from lived experience**

"There are often gaps in guidance. Starting with understanding the lived experience of those who use a space provides a rounded, and current (not past) analysis. It provides an opportunity to understand requirements beyond the minimum that has been set in building regulations" (Man Oram, 2022).

### **Learn to fail**

"Learning from failure is an essential part of succeeding. Open thinking processes for designing allows a freedom to test solutions; the process of figuring out what doesn't work is as important as finding a process that does work" (Andraca, 2022).

### **Learning from young people**

"Young people have their own unique insight which is without the restrictions of our own professional experiences - we need to learn from this!" (Parker, 2022).

### **One size does not fit all**

Users have different ways of drafting and submitting comments. Allow users to comment in ways that suit them, then ensure analysts have sound research and analysis methodologies that can draw out the insights accurately.

### **Principles then parameters**

"Always begin conversations with establishing the principles, which then can inform the definition of parameters. Never start with asking for feedback on a pre-defined parameters or a spatial strategy – this should be the outcome of engagement not the conversation starter" (McAdam & Norton, 2022).

### **Prioritise people**

"The starting point for a co-design process should always be 'thinking about people'" (McAdam & Norton, 2022).

### **Prioritising participant safety**

"Ensuring the safety of the children is paramount – it is essential make sure anyone in the space or conversation was DBS checked" (Parker, 2022).

### **Real-time input**

Regular communication with the community meant that the designs were developed in parallel with their input – seeing physical outputs of the conversations builds trust (DSDHA, 2022).

### **Remove barriers to engagement**

Accommodate the needs of participants, such as using accessible spaces to conduct conversations, paying for travel costs of childcare and organising events by time of day (Man Oram, 2022).

### **Remove jargon**

"Language can be exclusive. Jargons need to be removed from co-design; e.g. the term 'public realm' is not accessible" (McAdam & Norton, 2022).

### **Removing 'shocks' in the process**

"Involving people along the way removes 'shocks' as those involved are engaged and informed with the project development. This is

particularly important for large-scale projects and regeneration plans" (Edwards, 2022).

### **Respond to cultural differences**

"Our experience working in London was that people are less eager to engage. We therefore changed the engagement methodology to a game which encouraged children and their families to get involved" (Andraca, 2022).

### **Risk-taking leadership**

"In order to learn from processes that might fail, there needs to be a leader who isn't afraid to take risks" (Andraca, 2022).

### **Share power**

Redesign the stakeholder map, e.g. a horizontal format represents the equal decision making powers between all the partners throughout the process, even though they have different roles, resources and interests (Andraca, 2022).

### **Spaces between stages**

"It's helpful to have a shared language via the RIBA Plan of Work. Get people on board with the framework but expand the process introduce co-design between stages where appropriate. (Edwards, 2022).

### **Transparent communication**

You have to come back and tell people why you did or did not take on their suggestions. A lack of trust is created when people are not communicated with. A consolidation of ideas and explanation of decisions should be included in the Plan of Work (Edwards, 2022).

### **Trust = Accountability + Transparency**

Engagement should give agency. A lack of trust often stems from engagement that is not done well or authentically.  
"Engage with people properly or don't do it at all" (Phiri-Witty, 2022).

### **Turning 'spaces' into 'places'**

"We build conversations with people throughout the process to understand how to turn unused spaces into valued places" (De Mowbray, 2022).

### **Value the process**

"One of the main values that comes from co-design is the merits from the process, rather than the end outcome. The process creates empowerment, capacity building and a sense of local ownership over the space – but these social values are often not recognised or understood" (McAdam, 2022).



# Glossary of Co-design Activities

## **Acting in space / situating knowledge**

Being in a space and testing interventions out physically, even just with tape or chalk, helps to create a sense of ownership and agency over the tested ideas. It also helps participants to work with a better sense of scale and speculate possibilities that might be eluded otherwise in drawings.

## **Actually 'do' it!**

Temporary interventions and physical outputs can help communities visualise and understand complex and often unseen processes that may take a long time to fully develop. These interventions can serve as a catalyst for further community engagement, sparking conversations and encouraging residents to take an active role in shaping the future of their neighbourhoods.

## **Capacity building and training**

Capacity building and training provides learning opportunities for participants who may not be familiar with architectural and design processes, or other relevant skills.

At Fundacion Fibra, the local board, consisting of community leaders and representatives, decide on the specific skills the participatory funding should be spent on, such as public speaking, budget management etc. with Fundacion Fibra offering capacity building through skills training. (Andraca 2022)

## **Capacity exchange**

To get the most out of the co-design process it is essential to create an exchange between participants, designers and other involved stakeholders.

"Instead of just 'capacity building', where communities are empowered with skills to engage with certain topics, exchange is equally important, where their experience and knowledge feeds into the design" (Edwards, 2022).

## **Developing a compelling visual language**

Clear communication is important to accurately explain proposals and avoid confusion or disappointment. Infographics and images can be easier to understand than words, especially

if engaging with children or communities where English is not the first language of many people.

## **Digital engagement**

Digital engagement can provide many advantages, such as wide reach and longevity, but only when integrated into a wider engagement process. Like with other forms of engagement, trust and a low barrier for entry is important, so avoid asking for lots of personal information or using unfamiliar platforms/apps.

## **Early engagement**

To ensure the co-design process can be as effective and impactful as it can be, it is ideal to begin the process in RIBA Stages 0 and 1. This enables ideas and opportunities raised in the process to be fully integrated into the project brief. Engaging at the start of a project also allows for participants to have prolonged involvement and see their involvement make tangible impacts.

"Often we come in at Stage 0 of the RIBA Plan of Work, where engagement is most useful and insightful. Opportunities could be missed if you join after this stage" (Edwards, 2022).

## **Enabling access**

"Some of the children participating hadn't visited their own city centre before, so working the Access Project and providing opportunities to those who wouldn't otherwise have access to gain experience in the industry was really important" (Parker, 2022).

## **Embed yourselves**

Building a relationship with a community is important to prevent a them-versus-us mindset. A great way to do this is to 'embed oneself' – go to local boxing classes, local cafes, be present – so that people know who you are. Walking around and getting to know everyone develops personal relationships and trust (Edwards, 2022).

## **Find neutral ground**

As important as it can be to meet people in their own community, it is also valuable to host events in neutral but easily accessible spaces. This is particularly important when engaging

with various areas or demographics who may be excluded if events are only hosted in specific areas that are perceived to not be for them.

## **Integrating play**

The element of play is often an effective way of opening up conversations and encouraging engagement. As a tool for engagement, play breaks down initial barriers and creates a relaxed atmosphere, making participants feel more comfortable and confident to get involved.

## **Managing expectations**

Part of building trust with a community is about managing expectations, so openness about the timescale of a project, the social and economic outcomes of the process is vital, whilst ensuring sufficient time and financial support is allocated for co-design processes.

## **'Meanwhile' and 'pop up' projects**

During the long gestation of masterplans and large developments, 'meanwhile' and 'pop up' projects can help bring people together around a shared vision and identify community champions early on in the process.

In the South of Ashford Garden Community project, the meanwhile initiative 'Artist-in-Residence' was able to build strong connections and meaningful experiences with many local residents in just two months. The availability of a temporary premise on site fostered a greater sense of community among residents, establishing relationships before the completion of the development (Daley, 2022).

At the King's Cross redevelopment project, Soundings led and carried out a range of events in a range of locations, such as people's places of work, youth clubs, market stalls and festivals. These were called 'mole' events, named after the ambition to 'pop-up' whenever and wherever possible (McAdam & Norton, 2022).

## **Meeting people where they're at**

Going out to people rather than asking them to come to you is important to make it easier for people to be involved and show respect for participants' time and effort. It can also make people feel more at ease and confident as they

are in a familiar setting. Walkabouts with local stakeholders help emphasise the importance of moving towards an engagement process that is led by people who will manage a place long after the project is 'complete' (DSDHA, 2022).

## **Open-door policy**

In order to gain trust from local communities, it is helpful to be open and easily contactable.

During the redevelopment of King's Cross, Argent had an open door policy, offering meetings to anyone who wanted to hear more and discuss the proposals. This led to hundreds of meetings from one-to-one meetings with community and interest groups to large meeting with institutions and businesses (McAdam & Norton, 2022).

## **Re-frame 'Evaluation' into a 'Feedback Loop'**

Post occupancy evaluation is a useful tool for designers and developers to assess the successes and limitations of a project, but reframing it as part of a feedback loop integrates lessons from use and lived experience into future design, management and operations.

## **Retaining land ownership**

Where possible, the Local Authority should pursue the retention or acquisition of land ownership (in full or in part) in large development sites.

In the case of the South of Ashford Garden Community, the Local Authority did not have ownership of the land which placed the project in the hands of the market. Retaining some stake can allow community assets to be brought forward earlier. (Daley, 2022)

## **Space for dreaming**

It can be easy to get stuck talking about the immediate situation, but taking time for aspirational conversations about participants dreams for an area can help push a project and identify their wants and needs.

## **Varied outreach methods**

To establish a meaningful connection with the local community, it is important to carry out a variety of outreach methods. This ensures that a diverse range of people are targeted and that different ways of engagement are provided.



# Appendix

## Biographies of authors & collaborators

### The Association for Collaborative Design

The Association of Collaborative Design responds to a growing number of built environment collaborative and participatory design practitioners and community groups who felt the need to come together to have a stronger voice in advocating for empowering people to have agency. Their process includes; championing, networking, researching, events and training and collaboration. This process promotes change to the built environment from the street to the neighbourhood to the regional scale. It aims to meet people's needs through participatory and democratic decision-making.

### Anna Parker

Anna Parker is the founding Director of Intervention Architecture, a strategic thinker championing creativity at any scale, collaborating with diverse stakeholder groups to enable a greater access to the design process with meaningful engagement. Anna has been shortlisted for RIBA Rising Star, Birmingham Entrepreneur of the Year, Birmingham Young Professional of the Year, and sits on the Birmingham City Council Conservation and Heritage Review Panel.

### ARUP Accessible and Inclusive Environments

ARUP's Access and Inclusive Environments team improves equity in the built environment by considering the diverse requirements within our communities. They believe that inclusive design must reflect the widest range of people's requirements, and should be a feature of every building, space and interaction within the built environment. The team works on projects to ensure they are as easy to navigate and use whatever the individual's personal circumstances or identity, including age, culture, disability, gender and family or economic status.

### Dan Daley

Dan Daley works as Senior Project Officer (formerly Masterplanning and Delivery Coordinator) on the South of Ashford Garden Community project, a new role created as part of his Public Practice placement at the Ashford Borough Council between 2019 and 2020.

The role was created to establish communication channels between multiple developments and to prepare a community development programme on behalf of the Chilmington Management Organisation (CMO), a hybrid management model led by residents of Chilmington. The role was funded by Homes England's Garden Communities programme with the aim of increasing Local Authorities' capacity to advance the delivery of new homes.

The case study is based on an interview with Dan Daley and his study produced for Public Practice titled "Sustainable Stewardship: Setting-up structures for community-led governance on strategic sites" (Dan Daley, Public Practice, 2020).

### Diana Phiri-Witty

Diana has worked in the public and private sector in planning, regeneration, design research and community engagement roles in the UK, Malawi and South Africa. She is currently working on a co-design high street recovery project alongside a community group in South London.

### DSDHA

DSDHA's work spans from macro-scaled urban strategies and infrastructure studies through to highly acclaimed individual crafted buildings, which celebrate the act of making and materiality within architecture. These projects have evolved through a unique design methodology that deploys tactics developed across 15 years of parallel research in academia and on the ground.

Their body of work that is engaged in a constant search for new forms of responsive design and sustainability through active design and research, spanning from crafting beautiful and sustainable buildings, welcoming landscapes and whole new neighbourhoods, through to writing briefs that will shape how spaces might be used long into the future. The studio's aim is to foster positive change and to empower communities, creating social value through collaboration and meaningful engagement, often looking at how relationships and partnerships can make best use of the city's latent spatial potential.

### Isidora Larraín de Andraca

As a practitioner, Isidora Larraín has experience in a variety of capacities on different levels from national, local, regional and third-sector work.

#### National government

Larraín started her career developing a neighbourhood recovery programme for the Ministry of Housing and Urbanism in the Chilean National Government (2011-13). This involved researching how to standardise participatory processes for neighbourhood development recovery programmes (such as public spaces, schools and hospitals). The challenge of this project was to provide a top-down, government-approved standardised methodology whilst taking into account the individual, and sometimes contradictory, needs of each neighbourhood.

#### Local government

This role led to a local government position in the Municipality of Santiago (2015-16), affording her the opportunity to take a step back from the top-down approach of national government and work with people on the ground through urban rehabilitation design.

#### Regional level

Larraín's work at a regional level required neither a top-down or bottom-up approach, but created a balanced network of communities where people could share lived experiences.

#### Third sector

This led to the formation of Fundacion Fibra; free from the structure of government and bureaucracy of international organisations, this third sector organisation offers a platform where multiple stakeholders can be included through active participation across sectors. This model has proved most effective in terms of time and financial constraints, allowing for the exploration of new community-based approaches for the rehabilitation of abandoned and under-utilised structures.

### Intervention Architecture

Intervention Architecture (IA) is an interdisciplinary RIBA-chartered design studio based in Birmingham. They are interested in site responsive works and engaging users throughout each stage on a variety of project scales.

They invite people to engage with space in innovative ways, from working on the development of sketches to material details, to the making of space and collective involvement, from community-led architectural regenerations, to artist collaborations: "Our way of working is collaborative and open, to enable extensive exploration of ideas, an inherent appreciation



# Appendix

## Biographies of collaborators (continued)

for craft, and the value of workmanship and materials.”

They operate under a number of ‘umbrellas’ and scales of co-design, including work with children, students and international partners (such as ‘City for Culture’ in Coventry). Whereas community engagement and consultation are undertaken at key points in a project, IA use co-design as an essential continuous reference point carried through from project inception to delivery.

### Jane Wong

Jane is an architect working across design, visual culture and writing. Her work focuses on the relationships between familiar and neglected histories, social and political processes that shape landscapes and the built environment. She has led numerous public realm projects and strategic visions at DSDHA for historic estates and the cultural sector, such as the Royal Albert Hall, Manchester Square and the Portman Estate, and research studies on accessibility and inclusivity. She teaches at the Bartlett School of Architecture, previously co-leading UG6 at the BSc and currently teaching on MAHUE and MSci programmes. She was born in Hong Kong and studied at the Architectural Association.

### Joel De Mowbray

Classic institutional engagement approaches accentuate inequalities by accommodating those with the privilege of time. After six years in local government Joel founded Yes Make in 2021 to get out from behind the desk and provide alternatives to this paradigm.

### Julia King

Dr. Julia King is a Research Fellow at LSE Cities and a design practitioner. Trained as an architect her research, design practice, and teaching focus on urban marginalization, infrastructure, and micro-economies. She also directs the ‘Apprenticeship Programme in City Design’ at LSE Cities. The scheme is a novel outreach programme for young adults from London to learn through practice at the LSE. Uniquely for such a scheme, outcomes will influence the real-time design development and realisation of a number of public space projects that will be realised by the developers of Wembley Park from 2021 onwards. It is a legacy project of *Seen and Heard* - a study of privatised public space and youth culture - a project coordinated by Julia and commissioned by Brent 2020.

#### *Seen and Heard*

Across a series of workshops during summer 2019, 22 members of the collective worked with a team of researchers from LSE Cities in a summer-school type environment at the Yellow Community Centre in Wembley Park, learning about public space and exploring different options for designing it. Across five day-long workshops, they built models, went on walkabouts and met with Quintain, the Wembley Park developers. The outcome of the process was a co-designed space for young people in the new Wembley Park development, a set of policy recommendations for addressing the needs of young people in public space, and the ‘Yellow Charter’ a statement written by the Blueprint Collective calling for young people to have a greater role in the planning and design of public spaces. LSE Cities is continuing to work with Quintain on the design of White Horse Square on the Wembley Park site for young adults.

### Lydia Toohey

Lydia is an Urban Designer with a specialism in stakeholder engagement and public realm design. Since joining DSDHA, she has worked on a variety of projects specialising in strategic public realm visioning and is currently leading public realm design projects for the Green Park and Piccadilly Gateway and for Berkeley Square. Lydia is a specialist in local stakeholder engagement, networking and co-design research, working on the design of public spaces at the British Library Extension, Essential Exchange in Vauxhall, and this ‘Towards Spatial Justice’ research. She has recently led DSDHA’s co-design of public spaces for young people at White Horse Square in Wembley in collaboration with the LSE Cities Programme. Lydia is also a collaborator of ‘Reclaim Public Space’ and ‘Public Studio’ with Central Saint Martins, coordinating and co-designing interventions with local stakeholders in order to create connectedness in the public realm.

### Mei-Yee Man Oram

Mei is the Access and Inclusive Environments Lead at Arup. She evaluates the accessibility & inclusivity of the built environment in relation to the local & national requirements, social / cultural setting, and best practice, and considers the changing trends and demographics of our societies to address future requirements of a diverse population.

### Neal Shasore

Dr Neal Shasore is Head of School and Chief Executive of the London School of Architecture. He joins the school following positions at the RIBA, the University of Westminster, the University of Liverpool, and the University of Oxford. He is particularly passionate about diversifying architectural education, heritage and practice. An architectural historian by training, his research and writing has primarily

focussed on architectural culture in Britain and the Empire in the first half of the twentieth century and this critical perspective informs his own pedagogy and practice. He is a Trustee of the Architectural Heritage Fund and the Twentieth Century (C20) Society.

### Soundings

Soundings are a public and stakeholder engagement consultant in the built environment working for clients in London and across the UK. Some of the key belief statements of the practice include: investment in communities develops real opportunities; a collaborative process builds communities of interest; trust, clear responsibilities and accountability lead to success.

### Stephanie Edwards

As a Co-founder of Urban Symbiotics, Stephanie leads on a variety of scales from strategic masterplanning to meanwhile activation programmes. She is currently working on co-created regeneration strategies in the UK and globally with UN Habitat’s Global Future Cities Programme.

### Steve McAdam and Christina Norton

Steve and Christina are founding directors of Fluid/Soundings, with over 25 years’ experience of working on demanding development projects across residential, commercial and cultural sectors in urban and rural settings. They are acknowledged as one of the UK’s trailblazers for public participation in planning and design processes and many of the innovative approaches they have piloted have now become accepted norms for good practice.



# Appendix

## Biographies of collaborators (continued)

### Tom Greenall

Tom is an architect, educator and Director at DSDHA. His experience covers a range of scales and sectors, from landscape design for the Royal Albert Hall and the British Library to public realm frameworks for the West End, Mayfair, Broadgate and Loughborough Junction, and from residential and commercial schemes in central London through to education projects in Sheffield and Doncaster. Since 2011, Tom has taught a design studio in the School of Architecture at the Royal College of Art. He is also a Part 3 examiner at the University of Westminster and was previously a visiting tutor at the Sandberg Institute in Amsterdam, where he taught as part of the founding faculty of an experimental, tuition-free masters programme.

Together with colleagues from DSDHA, Tom was awarded the 2016 Fellowship in the Built Environment by the Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851. He is currently a member of the Ealing Design Review Panel and Chair of the Wandsworth Design Review Panel. Expanding on DSDHA's research-led agenda, Tom previously guest-edited an issue of AD magazine titled 'The Business of Research: Learning and Knowledge Redefined in Architectural Practice'.

### Urban Symbiotics

Urban Symbiotics are an insight and research led multi-disciplinary design, architecture and masterplanning practice that focus on user experience to provide unified design solutions: "we ultimately believe that it is only by truly engaging communities and understanding how people live and aspire, that the development of unique integrated and relevant spaces can take place. Our innovative placemaking strategy is underpinned through a process of engagement, insight and ideation."

### Yes Make

Yes Make specialise in designing and making beautiful public spaces rooted in the ethos that access to beautiful things should not be limited by your ability to pay for it. They primarily use trees that have fallen in the city as a zero carbon, circular material, complemented by a wider material palette. Their process prioritises shared physical work as a research tool to create the time and space for conversations with local people that are otherwise impossible.

### Yip Siu

Yip is as a Senior Project Officer at the GLA (Regeneration). Having completed his Masters in Architecture at the Bartlett, he has a keen interest in social and participatory co-design, where his research has focussed on the pedagogical potentials of architecture in society and leads on capital project delivery as part of the Mayor's Good Growth Fund and High Streets Missions in North-West London.

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