THE COMMONS: PARTICIPATIVE APPROACHES IN GREEN URBAN SPACES

Dr. Mara Ferreri
Marie-Curie Postdoctoral Research Fellow, IGOP, UAB
Mara.Ferreri@uab.cat

IGOP
Institut de Govern i Polítiques Públiques

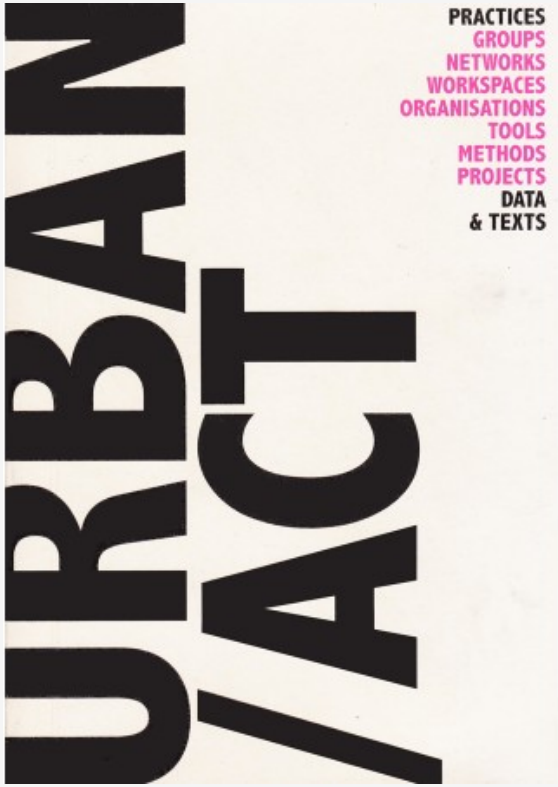
Urban commons, commoning and green spaces

- From commons as the management of 'resources' (Ostrom) to commoning as a verb (Linebaugh 2012).
- Commoning as material and imaginary
- Commoning as spatial appropriation and (re)claiming - constituting a 'radical politics of infrastructure' transforming cities (Vasudevan, 2015).
- Small-scale collective gardening described as examples of 'existing' urban commons (e.g. Eizenberg, 2012) and as tools for wider urban commoning (Thompson, 2015)

pop-up
interim
meanwhile
tactical
makeshift
guerrilla

"new practices of political *commoning* are enacting 'another world' within the neoliberal landscape, and in doing so are altering subjectivities, relations and spaces" (Kirwan et al, 2016, *Space, Power and the Commons*)

Urban/Act: A handbook for alternative practice (2007)



- a combination of oppositional and propositional tactics and modalities of action
- a critique of traditional architecture and urbanism towards more participatory approaches that challenge traditional urban power/knowledge dynamics and temporalities
- moving from collective 'desires' as a tool for visualising alternatives towards enacting them

'Desire archives'

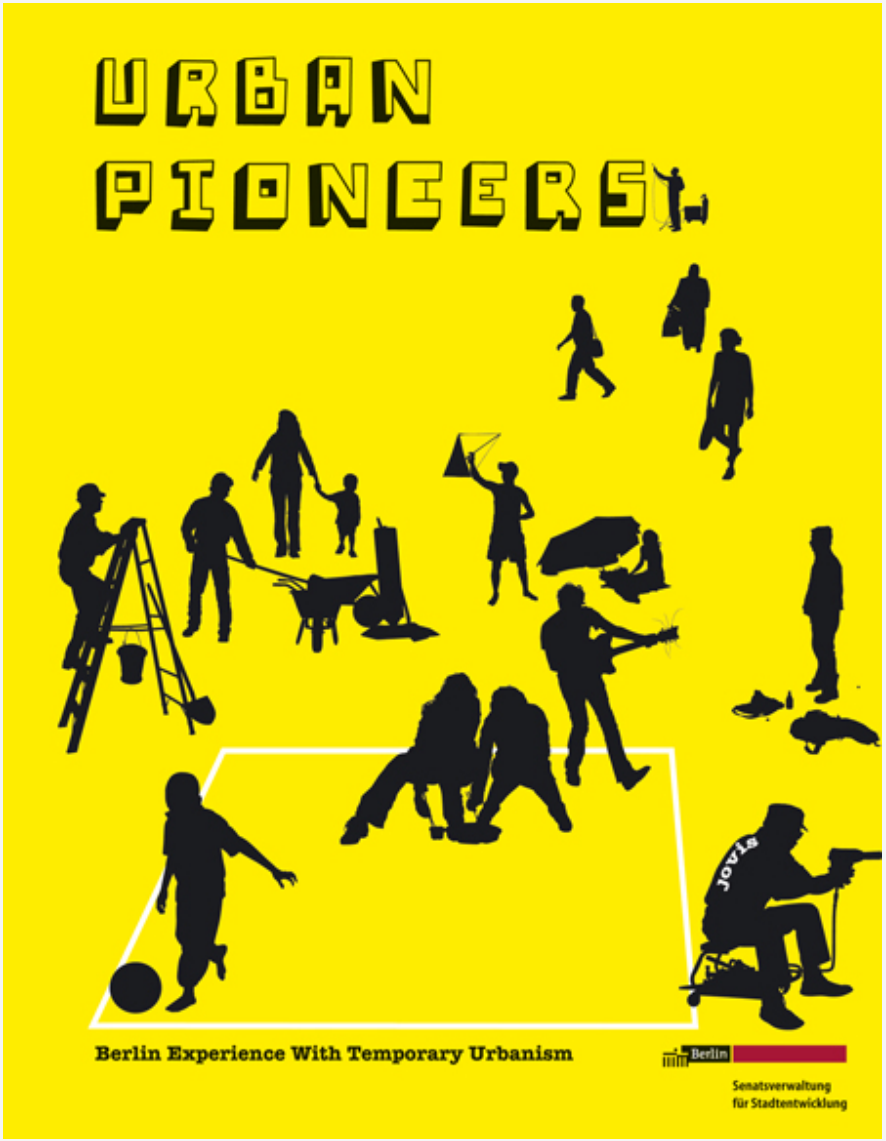
"The production of desire – as ideas and practice – should be the driving force behind the reshaping of cities".

(Czenki and Schäfer, 2007)

Park Fiction, St Pauli – Hamburg (1994-2005-ongoing)

Czenki, M. and Schäfer, C. 'Park Fiction', in aaa-PEPRAV (2007) *Urban/ACT.*

Petrescu, D., Querrien, A., Petcou, C. (2007) Agir urbain, *Multitudes*, 2007/4 (N.31), pp. 11-15.



"Temporary use has already become a magical term: on the one hand, for those many creative minds who, in a world ruled by the profit maxim, are trying nevertheless to create spaces that reflect and nurture their vision of the future; and, on the other, for urban planners to whom it represents a chance for urban development."

Preface by the Senator for Urban Development in Berlin, in Studio Urban Catalyst/ Klaus Overmeyer (2007) *Urban Pioneers. Temporary Use and Urban Development in Berlin*, p.17.

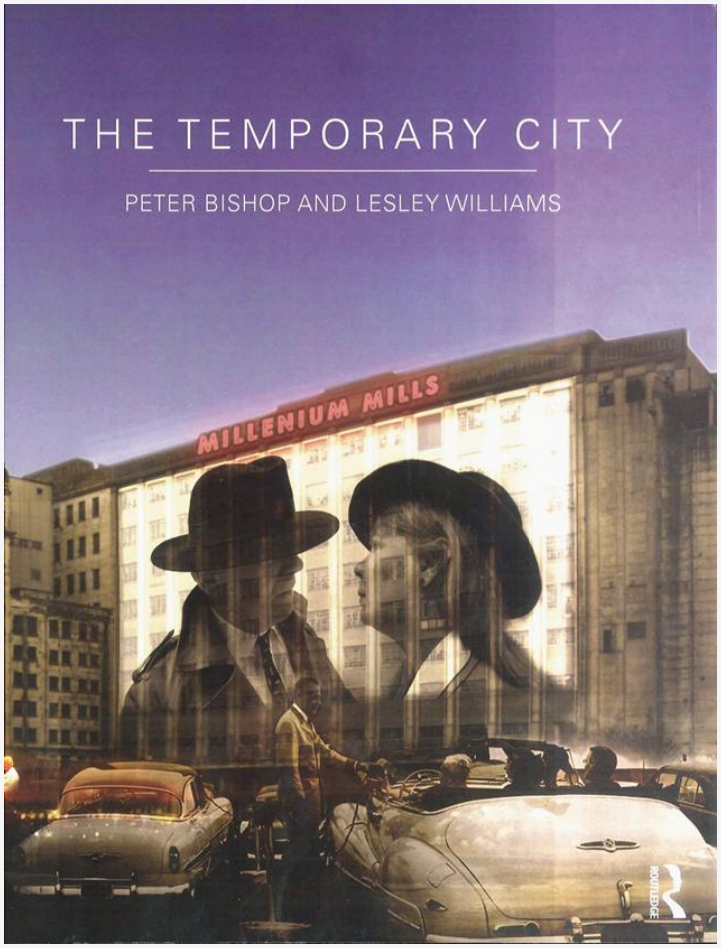
VACANT LAND, TEMPORARINESS AND AUSTERITY URBANISM

'Austerity urbanism'

- as a political response to the global financial crisis
- cities as most impacted but attention to a variegated and uneven landscape
- austerity measures as part of the neoliberal repertoire to 'roll back the frontiers of the state'
- a shifting of risk towards voluntarism and increased presence of private actors

"Austerity urbanism is driving new waves of institutional transformation, governance reform and public-service restructuring—with long- run and potentially path-changing consequences for both its winners and its losers." (p. 647)

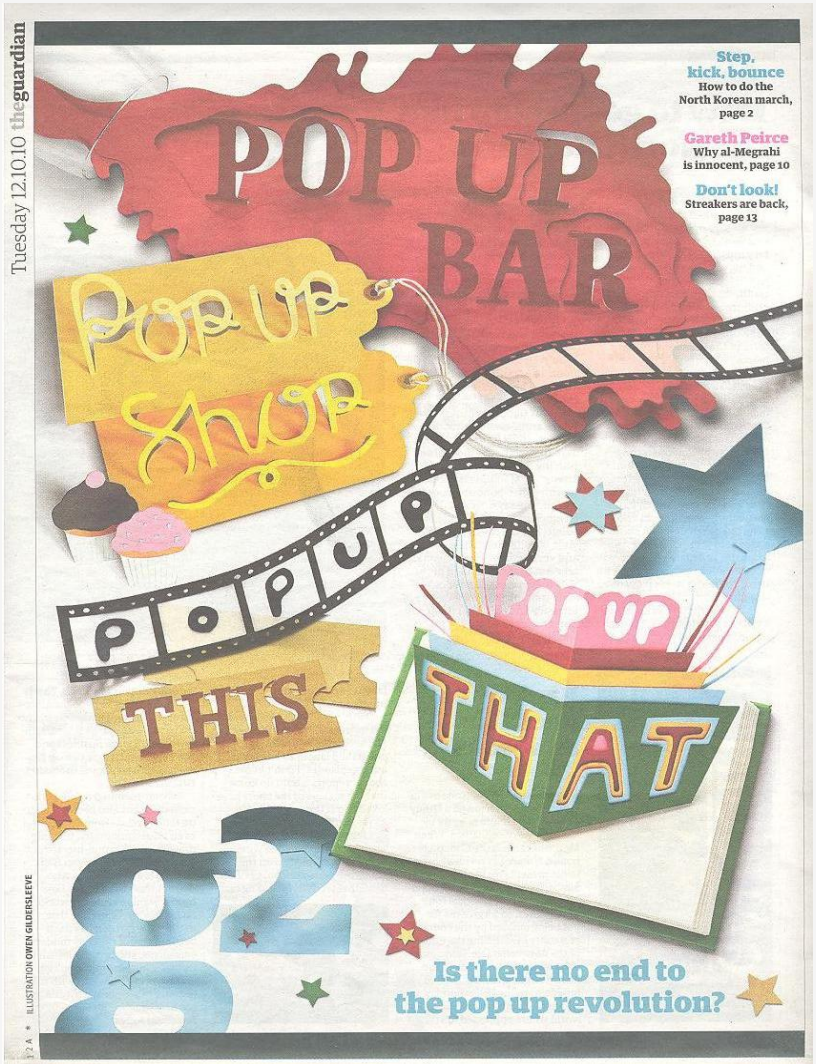
Jamie Peck (2012) Austerity urbanism, *City*, 16:6, 626-655



Bishop, Peter and Williams, Lesley (2012), *The Temporary City*. London: Routledge.

"Many city authorities in Europe and North America that are charged with the task of encouraging the revitalisation and redevelopment of urban areas are now finding that, for the most part, they lack the resources, power and control to implement formal masterplans. Instead some are beginning to experiment with looser planning visions and design frameworks, linked to phased packages of small, often temporary initiatives, designed to unlock the potential of sites".

(Bishop and Williams, 2012: 3)



'A pop-up revolution', *The Guardian* (2010).

RIBA's competition *Forgotten Spaces* (2011).

Hackney Art in Empty Spaces (2010).

DCLG and DCMS's *Looking after our town centres* (2009).

Makeshift cities and 'austerity localism'

- Temporary projects filling vacant spaces 'in the meanwhile'
- Piloting projects with an expiry date
- The value of community-led projects and the discourse of austerity localism (Featherstone et al, 2012) in the context of decreased public spending
- Celebration of volunteering and in-kind economies

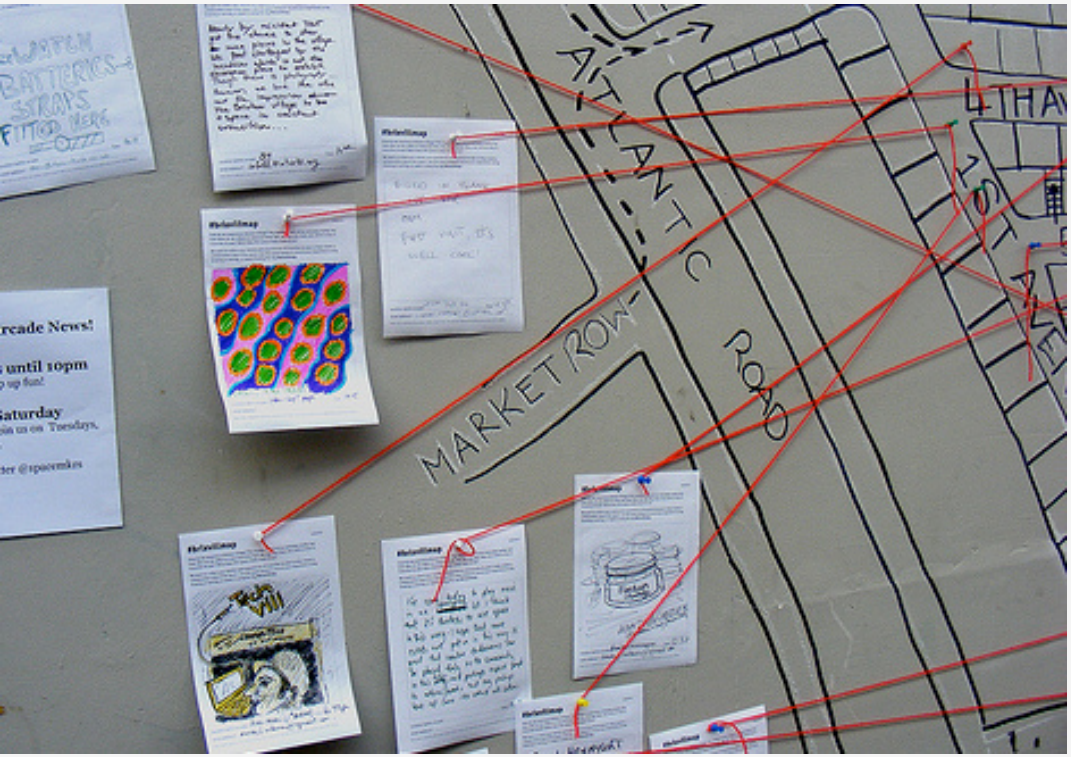
Tonkiss, F. (2013) Austerity urbanism and the makeshift city. *City: analysis of urban trends, culture, theory, policy, action*, *17*(3), 312-324.

Featherstone, D., Ince, A., Mackinnon, D., Strauss, K., & A. Cumbers (2012)Progressive localism and the construction of political alternatives. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 37(2), 177–182.

The myth of connectivity

"We know there are spaces out there, we certainly know there are projects that are looking for space, and we want to connect them."

Meanwhile Space (interview July 2011)



Space Makers Agency (2012)

POP UP PEOPLE

WE ARE POP·UP

Re-materialising temporary urban projects to understand conditions of participation

- Visible and invisible material conditions and 'diverse economies' (Gibson-Graham) of 'pop-up people' and their 'pop-up spaces'
- Causes and projected futures of vacant land and buildings
- Flexibility and networked condition can be seen as a symptom of wider urban work and life precarity
- On-demand availability in the meanwhile
- Pop-up greening projects…

1.The Dalston Eastern Curve Garden, London (2009-ongoing)

dalstongarden.org

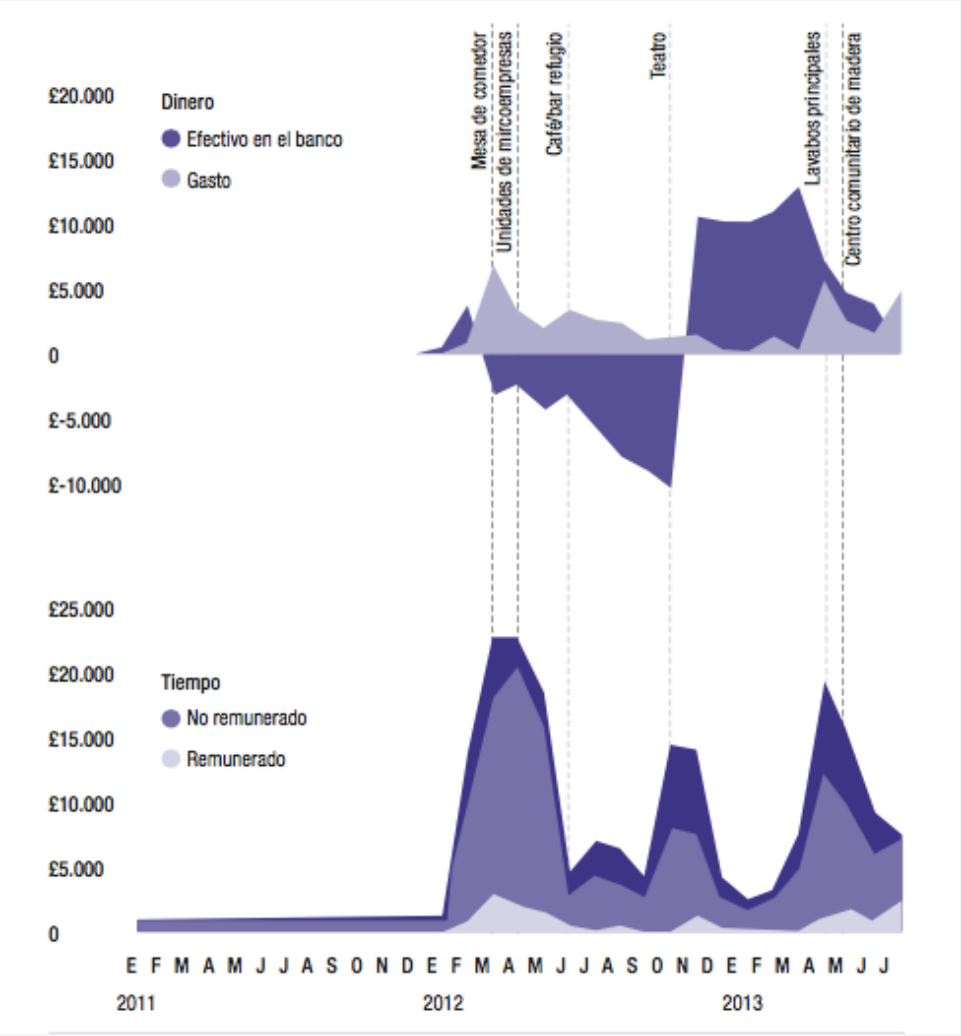
- Origin in community group Open Dalston collaboration with architects muf and J & L Gibbons.
- Profile raised by architectural platform exyzt (Barbican exhibition 2009)
- Rent-free use (mixed ownership)
- Initial two-year grant, followed by the establishment of a social enterprise for gardening and education

Refusing the label of 'temporary garden'; a "pop-up disquiet" (Marie and Brian, 2015)

2.Canning Town Caravanserai, London (2012-15)

caravanserai.org.uk

- Meanwhile London competition (2011)
- 2 hectares of land given for 2-5 years



Killing, A. (2016) Estrategias para el uso temporal de espacios, in Fernández, M. And J. Gifreu, (eds) (2016) *El uso temporal de los vacíos urbanos*. Barcelona: Diputació de Barcelona.

3.R-Urban's Agrocité Colombes (France) (2012-17)

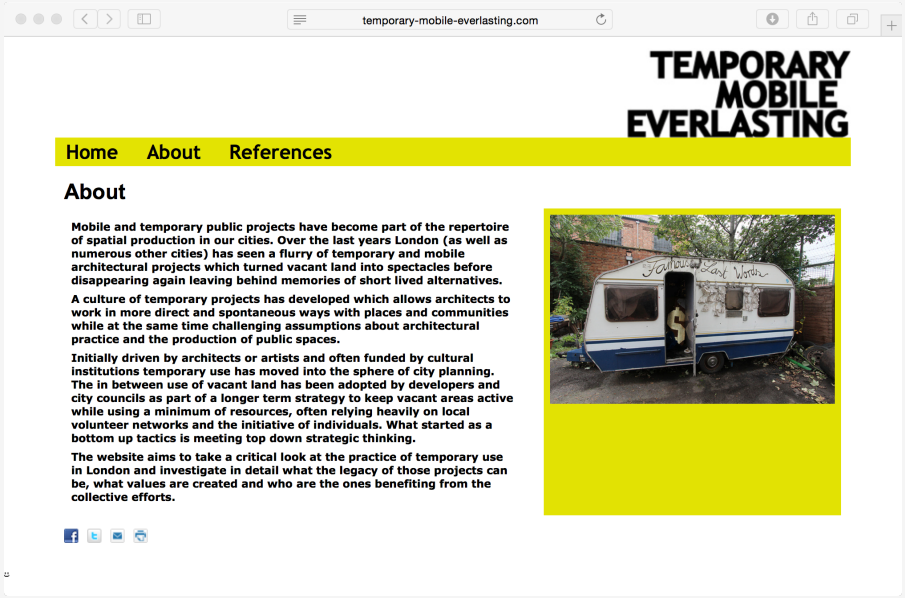
urbantactics.org/projets/agrocite/

- Demolition to make place for a car park
- Petition signed by 9,000
- Evicted in February 2017 > planned relocation at Gennevilliers

- Origin in architectural studio Atelier d'Architecture Autogérée
- 1,3 million of public investment (EU, regional, municipal)
- Citizen-led recycling and urban gardening

Petcou, C. and Petrescu, D. (2015) R-URBAN or how to co-produce a resilient city. *Ephemera*, vol. 15, no 1.

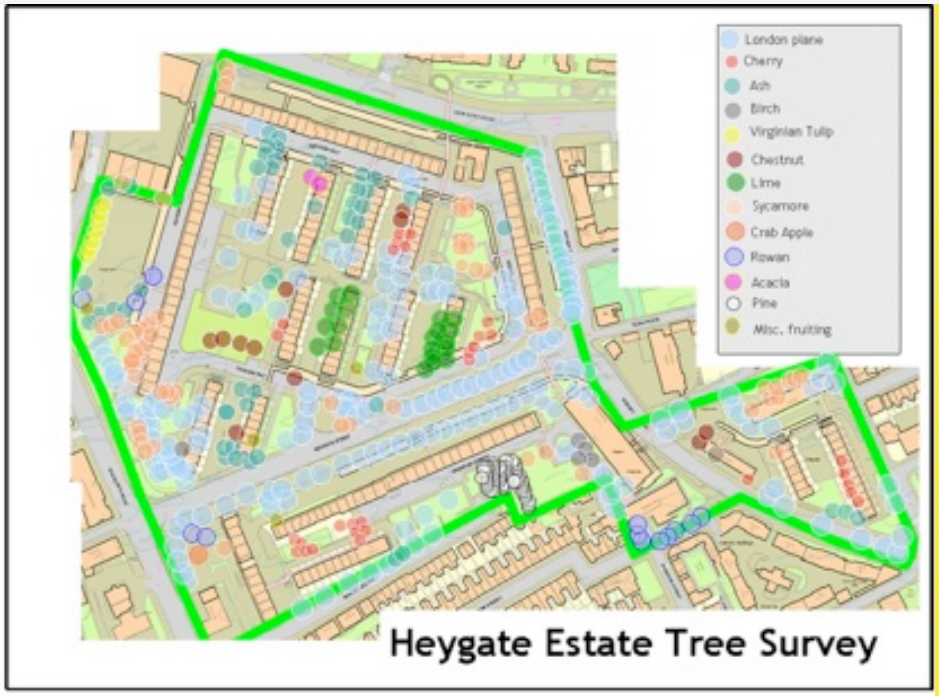
"It's really that dilemma of being very precarious, of precarity allowing certain reconfigurations, but also the vulnerability that comes with that precarity.. [...] the projects that I am interested in [are not designed] to be long-term necessarily....but the availability of land is quite crucial, and it seems that for projects that are not based on money-making per se, land is often only available in chunks of time".
(Andreas Lang, September 2014)



4. The Elephant and Castle Urban Forest, London (2010-13)

Heygate Estate, London boarded up (2011)

Elephant Amenity Network, 2010, Heygate Estate Tree Survey



Rebecca Davies, 2011, *The Heart of the Elephant and Castle Urban Forest*

heygatewashome.com

Heygate Regeneration
Scheme

‘Imagining the Elephant’ Visioning Workshop 4 June 2011

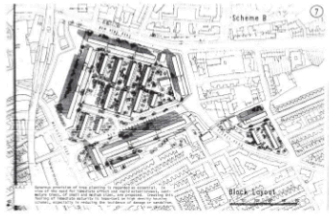
Trees and Biodiversity

The background

Extract from 1969 masterplan

4.4.3 Generous provision of tree planting is regarded as essential. In view of the need for immediate effect and rapid establishment, semi-mature trees, of small and medium sizes, are proposed. Creating this feeling of immediate maturity is important on high density housing schemes, especially in reducing the incidence of damage or vandalism.

Heygate Forest Site Pre Trees Aerial 1946



Heygate Redevelopment Planned Forest 1969

Heygate Forest Actual Canopy Aerial 2007/8

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Trees and Biodiversity

Workshop comments

Must do

Photos © Reem Akl

- Protect priority trees
  - All perimeter trees, on all streets; New Kent and Walworth Roads, Heygate, Wansey and Balfour Streets, Rodney and Victory Place to be protected and enhanced.
  - All significant clusters of trees mid-site must be protected, and their habitat enhanced, as promised in the Master-Plan Agreement [which speaks of “ensuring existing habitats are enhanced.”]
  - The 80-100 trees in the Elephant & Castle Urban Forest at the west end of the Forest must be protected and enhanced. It is recognised that this is more contentious, but it was agreed that approaching new high rise luxury apartments to the immediate E or NE through this unique habitat would be a major asset; if the shopping centre is to remain, and the arches thus to stay blocked then this is an open and shut case and raises the quality and marketability of the redevelopment.
- Recognise value of non-priority trees that have to be moved, and retain their value by local replacement
  - If remaining trees must be moved, their value must be openly recognised and retained on the site by replacements.
  - Where that is not possible on site, consultation with residents should be held to determine where else in the area immediately around the footprint they should be planted, recognising that this is meant to be a “community wide regeneration”, with radiating connectivity and added pedestrian porosity. Ideas include avenues of 25 year old London Planes and other species, radiating out from the footprint in every direction; to the river and local parks to the east, west, north and south.
- Implement a legacy tree map and planned programme for their preservation/ enhancement
  - Details of this plan should be consulted upon and discussed before any planning application can proceed. This requires the developer to undertake a CAVAT survey now, using an approved list of independent surveyors supplied to them by the Forestry Commission. This will then form the basis for comparison of welfare value with the People’s CAVAT and Southwark Council’s new valuation to form the basis for real consultation.

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Elephant Amenity Network, ‘Imagining the Elephant’ Report

Proposals for feedback

Place making & Social Infrastructure strategy

Artist's impression of the main public open space

Existing trees on the edge of the Heygate Estate

Key principles:

Over the past fifteen years urban designers have recognised that it is place making rather than space shaping that delivers successful masterplans. This is as much about considering people, how they use the existing space, and what is already good about the area as it is about designing urban form. Lend Lease and the masterplanners recognise, support and promote this as a key principle.

What this means for the masterplan:

- Informing the design process by considering the experiences of all those who visit the site whether as passers by or residents
- Designing a masterplan that will provide different

Existing trees & place making

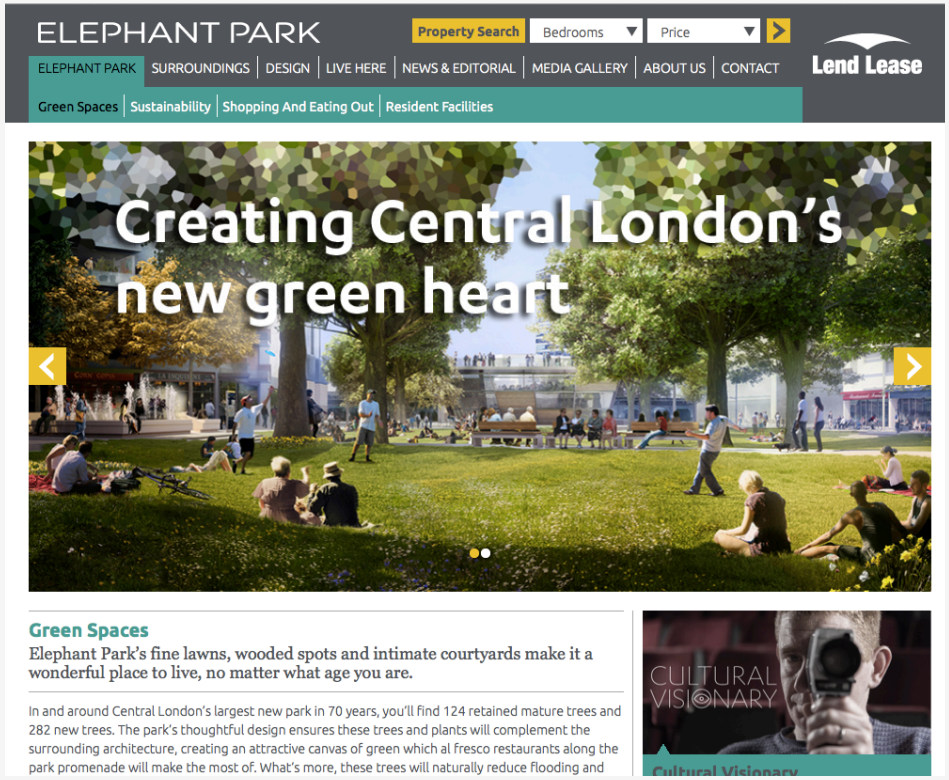
We recognise that the existing large and mature trees on the Heygate are currently one of the most significant assets of the development. Mature and big trees have multiple benefits including providing shelter and shade, reducing storm water flows and cleaning the air. We aim to integrate the existing trees on site into our masterplan where possible.

Our draft strategy towards trees is to:

- Retain the majority of the street trees along the existing streets surrounding and passing through the site
- Work with high value clusters of trees within the site where possible

The development and construction process will be managed to ensure the mature trees that will remain are protected to ensure they continue to thrive. The phasing of the development, site management & installation of utilities will be undertaken with this in mind, as well as considering the long term care of trees on the site.

Lend Lease, Heygate Masterplan feedback board (2011)



Lend Lease's *Elephant Park* website (2014)
www.elephantpark.co.uk

On commoning (temporary) green urban spaces

- Temporary uses: from spaces/practices of alterity to mainstream policy and planning
  - Local participation: pre-existing or facilitated?
  - Participatory urban practices: the role of professionals and intermediaries

- Material conditions, flexibility and 'on-demand availability':
  - Financial & temporal barriers to participation
  - Challenging the myth of connectivity?

- Short, medium and long-term outlooks
  - Resignation to transience or starting point for long-term democratic alternatives?
  - The value of green spaces in real estate dynamics

Commoning beyond exemplary islands…

Commoning as emerging practice and wider demand. Beyond exemplary green spaces?

In order for commoning to remain

> a force that produces forms of cooperation-through-sharing, it has to be a process which overspills the boundaries of any established community, even if this community aspires to be an egalitarian and anti-authoritarian one (Stavrides, 2014, 548).

The risk of becoming trapped into a 'theoretical and political one-way street', where the only recourse is the protection of exemplary autonomous 'islands' (Laval and Dardot, 2014, 154).

Laval, Christian, and Pierre Dardot. 2014. *Commun: Essai Sur La Revolution Au XXIème Siècle.*
Stavros Stavrides (2014) Emerging common spaces as a challenge to the city of crisis, City: analysis of urban trends, culture, theory, policy, action, 18:4-5, 546-550.