

Planning for, with and by neighbourhoods

Six years after the introduction of neighbourhood planning through the Localism Act in 2011, the total number of Neighbourhood Development Plans has surpassed the 2000 threshold. The enthusiasm and expectations of those participating in this mass planning exercise have not declined. Positive experiences have encouraged others. Less positive experiences, and especially the lack of grip of NDP over development, have not dented its up-take. However, the number of plans produced or in production is not the most useful metrics to assess the outcomes of the initiative.

Neighbourhood planning is a manifestation of the government's localist agenda, predicated upon a transfer of some decision-making powers in planning from the state to society and upon a devolution of those powers from central and local government to neighbourhoods. It brings together ideas of the local, the neighbourhood, as a functional scale of urban organisation and spatial planning, with the political orientation towards rebalancing the distribution of decision-making powers between state and society in favour of the latter. By doing so, it creates a new and artificial layer of decision making in planning. But both *neighbourhood* and *community participation* are contested concepts in planning theory and controversial ideas in practice. This chapter presents elements from emerging and adopted neighbourhood development plans in London to discuss some of the challenges of bringing community-led activism in planning and development into the statutory and institutionalised format of neighbourhood planning.

The delineation of neighbourhoods as coherent urban and social entities and, as such, objects of planning has justified a variety of models of area-based interventions focused on urban renewal as a route to reducing poverty and social exclusion while at the same time it has been contested for its disregard of the wider structural, cultural and economic determinants of marginalisation in urban contexts and of the "high rate of mobility and complex social networks" (Mayo, 2000, p. 2) that characterise communities in urban industrial societies (Colomb, this book and 2016). The possibility of statutory community engagement processes to genuinely confront and challenge existing discourses in planning has also been challenged by critical approaches which see in the logic of deliberation and consensus building associated with these process a limit to the formation of political contents more often attributed to community activism and social movements (Legacy, 2016). This can become even more problematic at the hyperlocal scale of the neighbourhood, where mobilised communities might be unable or uninterested to scale-up their challenges (Inch, 2015, p. 17).

The combination of these ideas in the principles underpinning a new planning instrument which carries the same legal weight as the spatial plans prepared by statutory local planning authorities, has raised expectations, concerns and mixed receptions about the impacts of neighbourhood planning on the process for making and implementing planning and development decisions and their content. Critical reviews of the first five years of neighbourhood planning have predominantly scrutinised its outcomes against the presumptions that community led planning offers a more progressive outlook {REF} and have focussed on two main questions:

can neighbourhood planning bring forward a more inclusive route to community participation in planning? and can it lead to the identification and advance of equitable alternatives to the dominant valorisation of economic growth underpinning mainstream planning and development decisions? (Critiqued looked mostly at the preparation of plans)

The chapter first outlines the key ideas and ideologies that have informed neighbourhood and community delineation and traces their consequences for past models of urban policy intervention in the United Kingdom in order to highlight what continuities and innovations neighbourhood planning have in relation to these practices. It then summarises the key features of neighbourhood planning and the scale and scope of its implementation in England and highlights the main points made by ongoing critical reviews on its progress so far. Two cases of neighbourhood planning in London are presented and discussed to highlight the complexity and political tensions of bringing together the institutional, deliberative, consensual model of decision making of neighbourhood planning with the commitment to forward community interests into planning, however, with over 2000 neighbourhood forums now actively engaging in plan-making, the chapter is wary of drawing generalisations from the experiences of few cases taken from the very unique context of London. The conclusions discuss the challenges of neighbourhood planning to the understanding and advancement of community-led planning.

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Neighbourhoods in planning: ideologies and policy implementations

The review, monitoring and assessment of the implementation of and arrangements for neighbourhood planning has been predominantly delivered as a critique to the neoliberal nature of its outcomes, the unequal social and geographic distribution of its uptake and the inherently consensual and deliberative nature of the decision-making process it requires. This approach can be placed in direct continuation with the theoretical tradition that has consistently challenged the delineation of neighbourhoods in terms of their usefulness as unit of analysis to understand changes in urban societies and as site of policy intervention for addressing the negative impacts of such changes. This tradition specifically addresses the neighbourhood as scale, place and social entity and must be considered complementary to the critique that the more radical practices of community activism are being stifled and neutralised not just within the format of localism and neighbourhood planning but by the shift of policy making and delivery away from public scrutiny, and towards the domain of corporations, private structures of service delivery and procurement (Raco 2013).

The neighbourhood as object of study was crystallised by the Chicago School of Sociology in the early 1920s. The Urban Ecologists viewed neighbourhoods as the ecological niche of communities, miniature homogeneous societies with their own

history and character, organised around similar collections of institutions and spaces, divided by physical barriers. They were the natural outcomes of dynamics of invasion, succession and expansion producing cities as constellation of natural areas organised in a concentric urban structure with which the Chicago School is known (ref).

This conceptual development has had consequences for the discipline and practice of planning. It established the use of social survey methods, mapping techniques and descriptive statistics for the definition of urban neighbourhoods as areas which are at the same internally homogenous and sufficiently differentiated from each other. Pioneered by Charles Booth and facilitated by the increasing availability of small area census data, these methods informed the development of geodemographic profiling used in the analysis of the geographic distribution and clustering of social groups and for a variety of commercial purposes including marketing strategies and mortgage-lending redlining which Aalbers places at the prehistory of the neoliberal city (Aalbers, 2017). They resulted in the establishment of the Neighbourhood Statistics service (ONS) and area deprivation indices used to select and monitor areas targeted by urban renewal and anti-poverty investment programmes in the UK.

It also developed into a normative standard of how to plan and design the “good” neighbourhood both in terms of population size and service provision (Kallus and Law-Yone, 2016). The purpose was to address the problems caused by fast urbanisation of the early 20th century but equally to protect the interests and values of high-status social groups. The standards of a good neighbourhood included a mix of functional thresholds (enough population to support an elementary school, for example) and fuzzier metrics relating to the human experience of space and social relations, framed into the idea of a “sense of community” (Talen, 2006; 2016). The role of planning and design became and, in some way still is, to engineer the conditions for the formation of good (or sustainable) communities described as balanced and, importantly, stable rather than fragmented and subject to the transformation of traditional social bonds. These propositions have found implementation first in the idea of the neighbourhood unit, which was to become the dominant feature of post-war planning and modernist urban design, and later in the practice of urban redevelopment and regeneration which have become since the 1990s, the hegemonic format of public and private sector investments in the built environment [list?] in post-industrial economies. It is therefore ironic that the approach to regeneration has become almost synonymous with the displacement of stable communities from their neighbourhoods [ref].

From a sociological perspective however, “[t]he notion of community in terms of shared locality or neighbourhood is problematic” (Mayo, 2000, p. 2) and this is the conclusion reached by Chisholm and Dench in their review on community identity for the UK Electoral Commission: “[t]here is no general agreement regarding what a community is and hence the manner in which a map of local community boundaries could be drawn” (Chisholm and Dench, 2005). Interest-based social networks with no certain geographical dimension are as important in explaining communities and community identity as geographically bounded social ties developed through

physical proximity. The concept of place, which developed in geography and sociology [when? See Massey], is an attempt to understand the embodiment of non-physical social, cultural and historical meanings assigned to space.

Similarly, political economic traditions in urban studies and planning (Harvey, 1985; Fainstein, 2001; Sassen, 2013; Haila, 2016) have focussed on the economic, political and social struggles over the production and distribution of resources which collectively shape urban development and individuals' experiences of their position and opportunities in society and have investigated how these dynamics manifest at the neighbourhood level and questioned if neighbourhood are still relevant as explanatory factors of urban processes such as gentrification (Slater, 2009; Bridge, Butler and Lees, 2012; Slater, 2015).

The lack of consideration of the broader political and economic forces of urban development and social mobility is particularly evident in the use of the neighbourhood idea in the context of policy programmes designed to address social exclusion, described as a lack of participation in economic and civic life. The role of the physical neighbourhood dimension in explaining exclusion is given priority over other, more structural dimensions. Social exclusion (see policy xyz) is explained by area-based characteristics, such as poor physical accessibility or poor quality of the built environment. Spatial segregation and neighbourhood characteristics are, in this view the determinants of exclusion and of social and income deprivation. The solution to this problem is found in the formula of neighbourhood regeneration and mixed communities which aims to infiltrate "social diversity" in socially homogeneous and mostly poor neighbourhoods, where homogeneity is not seen as a beneficial to the stability of social identity but as a burden to social integration and mobility. But evidence shows that spatial patterns of disadvantage are more coherently and consistently explained by the implementation of institutionally designed form of exclusion from society, such as exclusion from education, the labour market, democratic engagement (Watt, 2007; Arbaci and Rae, 2013). This type of neighbourhood approach to policy making is inherently conducive of a process of selection of some social problems and solutions over others and the tendency to devalue some types of stability and homogeneity over others, particularly when they become an impediment to the implementation of area-based and property-led renewal programmes which require the dismantling and reconstruction of built and social infrastructures.

Having outlined the conceptual and disciplinary origins that have underlined the establishment of localisms and neighbourhood planning and in particular of the presumption of homogeneity, this section builds a brief chronology of how neighbourhoods have been referred to as units and objects of intervention by planning policy in the UK to demonstrate the continuity of this idea but also the way in which neighbourhood planning departs from previous models to make a case for neighbourhoods as autonomous decision making bodies with relative jurisdiction for plan-making.

In direct legacy with the ideas of the Chicago School of Sociology, the post-war Labour Government aspired to overcome the failings of single-class housing estates

built between the wars with the creation of socially balanced and mixed income communities that would “spark a greater understanding and interaction between members of different social classes” (Homer, 2000, p. 69). The Greater London Plan of 1944 identified a “highly organised and inter-related system of communities as one of [London’s] main characteristics”. To strengthen and sustain these communities was a major purpose of the plan: “[t]he proposal [was] to emphasise the identity of the existing communities, to increase their degree of segregation, and where necessary to reorganise them as separate and definite entities. The aim would be to provide each community with its own schools, public buildings, shops, open spaces, etc.”. Neighbourhood units, as they became known, informed the design and optimal size of urban expansions in London and the new towns built under the New Towns Act of 1946 but by the early 1960s the model had been abandoned and subject to criticism from both sociologists and the architecture profession, keen to promote a new type of urbanism based on the spatial segregation of urban functions and land-uses. However, area-based policies remained a key feature of urban and social policy programmes in the UK. These programmes found justification in the emergence of studies on the negative impacts of spatially concentrated poverty which mainstreamed the concept of “neighbourhood effect” as an explanatory factor of life conditions and opportunities. Area-based policies also established methods for allocating financial resources at a time when the Conservative government was withdrawing support for a population based welfare redistribution approach. Target areas for these programmes were identified either through competitive bidding, such as in the Single Regeneration Budget model established in the early 1990s by the Conservative government or needs-testing, measured by area-based indices of poverty or deprivation, such as in the Sure Start, New Deal for Communities, Neighbourhood Renewal Funds programmes and the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, all developed by the New Labour government in the 2000s.

In addition to improving the efficiency of funding, area-based policies were also seen as capable of facilitating a model of programme delivery based on governance partnership between local government, private partners and local resident and community organisations. Partnership-working and community participation became central in the 2004 reform of the planning systems which introduced statutory Community Strategies and Statements of Community Involvement designed to “empower [communities] to become involved in the [preparation and] continuing review” of local plans (Tewdwr-Jones and Morphet, 2006, p. 547). New Labour’s communitarian shift in government sought to draw in community and neighbourhood interests “as a means of encouraging different forms of [good] behaviour by involving local actors in making decisions about the places in which they lived” (Clarke and Cochrane, 2013, p. 13) while at the same time retaining strong control over the definition of good behaviour, the standards and quantitative outcomes of services, including regeneration and planning, delivered through area-based programmes (Clarke and Cochrane, 2013). In practice this meant that fundings made available to individual area-based regeneration programmes were managed by partnership structures formed between public agencies, local authorities and self-selected or, at

times locally elected representatives from businesses, local people, community and voluntary organisations although targets and objectives were predefined and monitored from the centre either directly or through a variety of “technologies of performance” (Clarke and Cochrane, 2013, p. 13) and quangos which proliferated during New Labour government.

A number of other planning related instruments of New Labour’s localism applied specifically to rural areas, parish and town councils and can be seen as precursor models, although with significant political and institutional differences, of Neighbourhood Development Plans. Village and Community Design Statements, Parish or Community-led Plans allowed rural communities and parish and town councils to identify planning and design expectations for an institutionally defined area and package them into a plan. These plans did not hold statutory planning powers but could and indeed were adopted by local planning authorities as part of the local plan or used as material considerations in the assessment of applications for development (Parker, 2008; 2017).

The neighbourhood planning approach is a central feature of the localist agenda brought forward by the British government since 2010 but, rather than the planning revolution it’s been hailed as, shows clear continuities with the planning formats created by New Labour and its aim to shift some elements of political power to localities as places and to communities as non-government. There are, however, some important elements of departures. The Coalition and later Conservative government’s localisms is committed to the dispersal of power away from Westminster by which it means a move to free local government from central and regional controls, while at the same time reduce its role in relation to a big society comprised of a variety of civil-society organisations and private sector firms provided with the tasks to deliver services. Education is a particularly poignant example where free school might be linked to local community or faith based organisation but could as well be delivered by larger corporation-style organisations with no local links such as the emerging Academy Chains. The presumption is that the big society will be predominantly local but the commitment to communities of the previous government is not central to this new version of localism.

The removal of central control and monitoring over local government’s activities (exemplified with the infamous “bonfire of the quangos” [ref]) is now counteracted by the dramatic cuts of government funding to local authorities and the pressure, via new tasks such as the duty to publish performance and financial data, to become more accountable towards their electorates. It is important to note that the central controls imposed in New Labour’s approach to localism, especially the centrally controlled allocation of resources, managed to contain the risk of spreading geographic inequality that instead characterises the implementation of many aspects of the current government’s agenda. The geographical unevenness in the uptake of neighbourhood planning is one example and has been a key concern for practice and research (Parker, 2017).

The implementation of neighbourhood planning in England

The approach to localism embedded in the 2011 Localism Act, is committed to

empowering neighbourhoods to become units of decision making through neighbourhood planning and of service delivery, through the creation of community rights. The 2011 Localism Act gives Neighbourhood Development Plans, the backbone of neighbourhood planning, legal weight and places them next and complementary to local government's planning policies to shape, in part, decisions on development. These powers were not available to Village Statements or Community Plans which had uncertain legal status or to past initiatives in urban areas including the work of the New Labour government which remained fundamentally top down interventions (Pople and Quinney, 2009).

Technically, neighbourhood planning is a package of instruments designed to bring the localism agenda into the planning policy arena. The two most prominent of these are Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) and Neighbourhood Development Orders (NDOs). Neighbourhood Development Plans and Orders have statutory powers but are non-mandatory, and the decision to produce them rests with the 'neighbourhood'. The voluntary nature of neighbourhood planning has led, inevitably to its uneven take-up both geographically and socially. There are currently over 2000 parishes and forums both established and emerging, who have started a NDP but data from early 2016 showed that over 40% of these were located in the South East and South West of England and only 16% were located in urban areas. Over 75% of the neighbourhood planning activities were initiated in the least deprived three quintiles (by local authority area) leading to a stereotypical representation of neighbourhood planning as an exclusive rather than inclusive model of democracy, predominantly taken up in areas dominated by highly educated individuals with above average earnings and considerable resources (human, time, knowledge, financial) to spare (Parker, 2017).

NDPs are produced by Parish Councils which are awarded additional planning powers through the Localism Act, and, where a Parish is not established, by Neighbourhood Forums (NFs) whose members are selected from and by local residents and businesses. NFs must include at least 21 members, regardless of the size of the area they want to represent and must obtain formal designation by the local planning authority before they can exercise the legal powers to make a plan. Because forums, differently from Parishes, are established for the purpose of making a NDP, the area of their jurisdiction must also be selected and proposed by the forum and approved by the local planning authority, avoiding any overlap with existing neighbourhood areas. These initial stages of neighbourhood planning have a foundational role in establishing the democratic credential of a neighbourhood plan and can therefore generate significant political tensions, which have been the subject of and inspiration for research and reviews, particularly questioning what models of representation neighbourhood forums and their formation typify (Davoudi and Cowie, 2013) or assessing the presumption of the neighbourhood as a coherent and self-aware homogeneous community against the reality of the increasingly diversified social fabric of cities and the co-existence of different types of communities and community ties within one neighbourhood (Colomb, 2017). (Parker, Lynn and Wargent, 2015) found that the majority of the NDPs is ultimately prepared by a small group of people rather than by the whole forum, with or without the support of a

privately appointed consultant, suggesting that even if current regulations require that the forum members be representative of their community, in actual practice the legitimacy of neighbourhood plans is not given (Cowie and Davoudi, 2015). The formula of a community represented through a forum who has the legitimacy to prepare a plan and consult that same communities on the content of the plan, should also raise questions over the imposed institutional isomorphism of neighbourhood forums with the established process of community engagement or public participation for whose shortcomings neighbourhood planning should be a remedy.

Once this preliminary institutional stages are completed, the process for the preparation of a NDP follows a sequence of steps that mimic the preparation of local plans and some of the practice standards established in the 2004 reform: initial consultations and visioning exercises are accompanied by the collection of evidence to support and corroborate the choice of principles and the preparation of policies; once the final plan is agreed, statutory consultation and independent examination take place. Differently from standard planning process, NDPs must pass a local referendum before they can be adopted and become material policy. Referendum results have been overwhelmingly positive but turnout is on average below 30% of the locally registered voters [ref].

Support to neighbourhood planning has been continuous and consistent. Since 2011, there have been different regimes of support to forums or parishes and local planning authorities. Locally authorities where neighbourhood planning is taking place, receive a financial grant to cover the costs of statutory public consultation, examination and referendum, but not the costs of additional staff time, despite the duty, inscribed in the Localism Act, of local authorities to collaborate with NFs. The Department for Communities and Local Government, responsible for the implementation of neighbourhood planning, contracts out the management of support for forum and parishes to a number of delivery partners from the private and non-profit sectors. Financial supports through fixed grants of £9000 (with additional £6000 for neighbourhoods in complex growth areas) is complemented by free or fee-based access to technical support packages provided by the delivery partners. Although the way in which NDPs are prepared and develop from one key step to the next are not regulated, the reliance on a limited number and diversity of delivery partners has led to a progressive standardisation of the guidance for the preparation of neighbourhood plans. In urban areas, where the relationship between planning and development is more complex than in rural areas, the technical and professional help needs have not always been met by the kind of support provided through fixed technical packages and ready-made expert responses. The cost of making a NDP varies considerably depending on its scope and complexity and it is not unusual for a forum to appoint planning consultant for producing parts or the whole plan. This suggests that the aspiration of the proponents of neighbourhood planning for remaking planning as a non-technical process, rebalancing the relation between local and technical expertise

Neither the 2011 Localism Act nor the 2012 The Neighbourhood Planning Regulations define what the content of NDPs must be, leaving it to communities to

decide the scope and detail of each plan in relation to their need and their resources. However, the content of NDP is heavily influenced by the requirement to be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the local plan (including, in the case of London, the London Plan) and more generally to deal exclusively with development and particularly development proposals as defined in planning legislation: “[o]nly policies that provide a clear indication of how a decision maker should react to the development proposal should be included in the plan” (NPPF §154). The large number of guides and examples for correctly wording neighbourhood plan’s policies and identifying development from non-development demonstrates the difficulty and frustration of non expert planners when facing the task of negotiating communities’ propositions and aspirations with the specialistic jargon of planning and its legal definitions. But the requirement to conform to what has already been agreed at strategic level has raised questions about the real purpose of neighbourhood planning and its role in the context of a growth-oriented model of planning and a neoliberal politics of urban development. For Brownill (Brownill and Bradley, 2017, p. 32) the purpose of neighbourhood planning is to create “spaces oriented to growth”, areas where neighbourhood planning becomes the tool for creating an acceptance (through, for instance, the promise of a share of developer’s contribution to be distributed to NFs) of the politics of economic and housing growth which originates from central government and has been strongly inscribed in the National Planning Policy Framework. Because of this underlying purpose, only those willing to accept the growth oriented politics and the consensual, deliberative format of decision making that accompanies it, will be suitable candidates for participating in neighbourhood planning. For Parker (Parker, Lynn and Wargent, 2015; Parker and Salter, 2016), the neoliberal nature of neighbourhood planning lies in the format of the device and its process, which do not allow for alternative, antagonistic content to emerge and therefore only favour a participation based not just on a degree of consensus with the strategic direction of planning but on an understanding of participation as deliberative consensus over how planning operates as a discretionary interpretation of planning policies (Bradley, 2017).

Neighbourhood planning in London

It seems unfair and even unhelpful to question neighbourhood planning for its progressive credentials and its capacity to foster counter-hegemonic action or even just a model of decision making that allows for disagreement between local needs and strategic growth oriented planning. Partly because the previous sections have highlighted how communities and neighbourhood, the local, are not necessarily progressive by nature of their scale; and partly because where organised communities exist, neighbourhood planning is not and should not be the only access to forward their interests, even in the context of neoliberal modes of governance (Clarke and Cochrane, 2013).

The following two London cases illustrate the complex relationship between community-led initiatives and neighbourhood planning in contexts where they effectively and symbiotically coexist and where the coexistence has emerged out of the necessity to combine the progressive nature of the former with the policy

credentials of the latter. Both neighbourhood areas are located in central London boroughs (Southwark and Camden) where the pressure of property development is highest in the city. Their neighbourhood planning experiences differ in their origins: as a continuation of and complement to a long history of community activism in Southwark and as the policy context to frame the community's response to the threat of displacement.

Community-led planning is here used to mean the type of grassroots activism which seeks to position community (Clarke and Cochrane, 2013, p. 104)] interests (wether local or issue-based) at the centre of planning and urban development, either through proactive and independent initiatives of engagement with planning institutions or through the production of alternative community and people's plans and land development models. Community-led planning can be better understood in terms community development and community organising than as an instance of community participation in planning. While in the latter, planning seeks legitimacy through establishing consensual community voices, in the former communities seek legitimacy by positioning their voice into and if necessary disrupting the process and content of planning.

There are currently (May 2017) 109 emerging and designated neighbourhood forums in London, of which four have successfully passed the referendum and are now part of the local plan and an additional nine have completed the preparation of the NDP and are moving through the statutory stages of consultation and examination. These figures confirm the concern that neighbourhood planning has made slow progress in London compared to the rest of the country where about 10% of NDPs have passed referendum. The actual number of forums in London has to be adjusted in consideration of the high proportion of forums (22) located within Westminster City Council where the formation of neighbourhood forums has been orchestrated by the council through fast-tracking the conversion of existing amenity societies and business groups into forums whose combined areas now which now cover roughly the entire council [ref from West minutes].

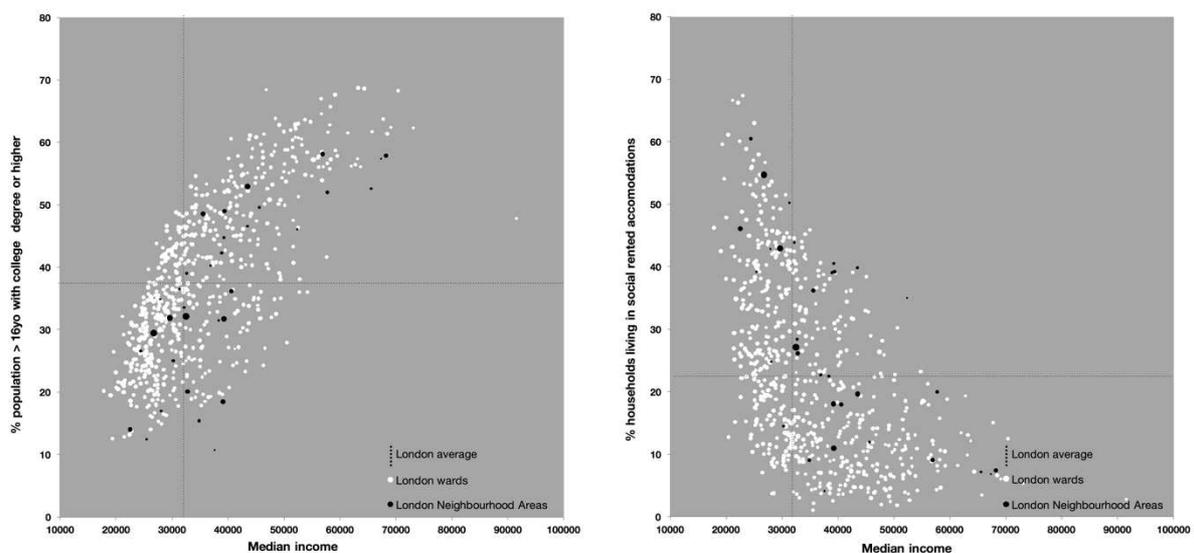


Figure 1

In contrast to the stereotype that neighbourhood planning is dominated by highly educated, wealthy groups, London's neighbourhood forums and areas spread across a wide range of incomes, levels of education, and tenures [fig 1]. Their internally diversity [fig 2] (measured as the range of incomes, tenures, education levels between the LSOAs that fall within the neighbourhood area) also shows significant variations among neighbourhood forums, suggesting that neighbourhood planning in London might be capable of adopting the city's underlying social and economic diversity. The neighbourhoods of Camley Street and Elephant and Walworth are characterised by a high proportion of households in social rented accommodation and income levels close to the London median. The share of population with a university degree is near the London average in both areas with the Elephant and Walworth neighbourhood area marginally lower. It is worth highlighting that the Camley Street neighbourhood area and forum include in equal proportion residents and businesses but the latter are not included in these statistics.

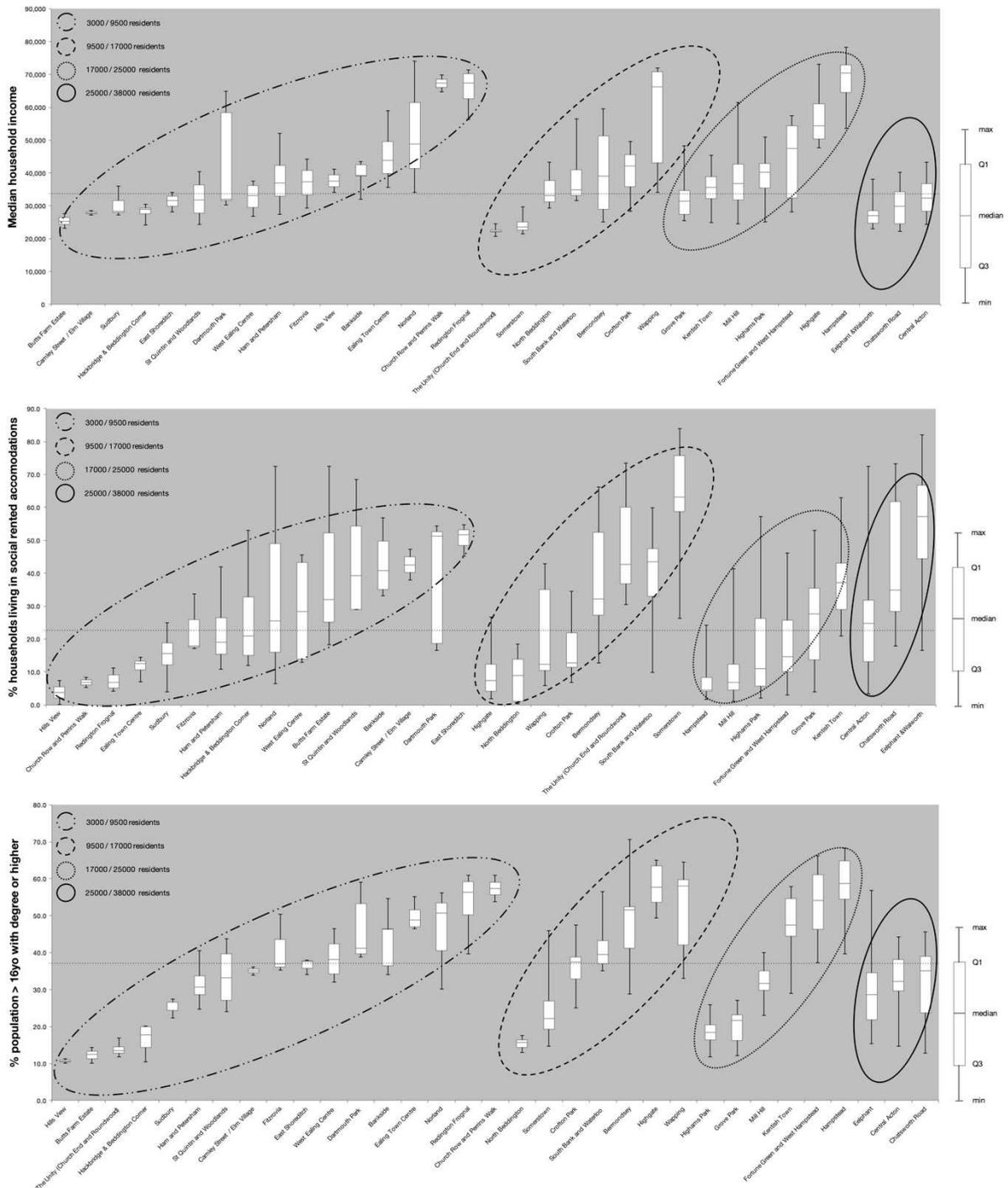


Figure 2

Elephant and Walworth Neighbourhood Forum: divide and conquer?

The Elephant and Walworth Neighbourhood Forum was designated by the London Borough of Southwark on 20 September 2016 as the group formally responsible for preparing the plan for the Walworth Neighbourhood Area, which had been approved for the purpose of neighbourhood planning two weeks earlier. These benchmark decisions came after three years of negotiations between the forum and the council and two unsuccessful applications. While it is standard practice and procedure to submit separate applications for the designation of the area and the forum, the order

in which the applications are submitted is often a political decision made case by case by the local authority to exercise control on the process. Examples of this politics can be found in a number of controversial London cases: the context of the Stamford Hill neighbourhood forum application (Colomb, 2017) where the council, to avoid deepening community division, has chosen not to designate any of the two forums had been competing over recognition as the representative group of the same area, or the East Shoreditch neighbourhood forum and area (ref to Hackney council's website) which crossed boundaries between two London Boroughs, Hackney and Tower Hamlet and was refused by the former but designated by the latter with the exclusion of the area falling into the Hackney jurisdiction. In the case of the application by Elephant and Walworth Neighbourhood Forum (hence EWNF), the justification used by Southwark Council was that designating the area before the forum would "ensure the neighbourhood forum is the most appropriate and representative forum for the neighbourhood area." (Ref to Southwark council report on application for forum / area in 2016).

However, as the unfolding of the case study demonstrates, this outcome was the outcome of two parallel and mutually influencing political dynamics which led to a neighbourhood forum comprised of a network of community groups whose geographical domain is significantly wider than the geographical boundaries of the neighbourhood area. The first is the negotiation between the emerging forum and Southwark council on the boundaries of the neighbourhood area, in large part influenced by the interest of the council to insulate pre-existing and emerging area-based planning frameworks from the potential influence generated by the neighbourhood planning process. During the negotiations, the neighbourhood area boundaries were amended twice. The first proposal agreed by the emerging forum in boundaries chosen in 2013 included the former Heygate Estate and the northern section of the Walworth Road, an area that local community groups had strong place and political attachment to and which corresponded with site of previous campaigns and struggles and sat within the council's adopted policy framework for the regeneration of the Elephant and Castle. Through initial discussions, council officers and cabinet members encouraged the forum to significantly expand the area of the neighbourhood plan but, at the same time, put pressure on the emerging forum to comply with the requirement to demonstrate its representativeness of the larger area and to complement this geographical expansion with the widening of the network of community groups formally included in the forum. This was met through a year long period of public engagement and community organising which concluded with the formal submission of the application for forum and area designation in 2014. However political changes within Southwark cabinet and the conclusion of the judicial controversy which handed the sites of the Heygate Estate and of the Elephant Shopping Centre to private developers, led to both applications being turned down with the recommendations that the neighbourhood area should be scaled down and exclude what had by then become contested sites: the former Heygate estate and shopping centre, the Old Kent Road, the Aylesbury Estate. The now expanded forum, representing over 90 local groups, successfully negotiated the retention of the southern parts of Walworth Road and agreed, not without internal

debates, to remove the contested sites from its planning area. In addition, the forum agreed that no changes to its size and composition be made in the applications for designation that was submitted in 2015 and finally approved in September 2016.

The second political dynamic is the commitment of the Elephant Amenity Network (the coalition of community organisations which emerged through the struggles for the recognition of community interests in the Elephant and Castle regeneration programme and especially in the development agreement between Southwark Council and its commercial partner LendLease) to maintain and extend a community voice and presence in the planning decisions for the area, despite and also in reaction to the frustration for the failure of the developer-led consultation on the masterplan for the area of the Heygate Estate to take generate little more than minor community inputs, despite the extended commitment of the EAN to the process. The neighbourhood forum format was seen to offer the opportunity to organise and keep local community groups connected around a shared objective, the preparation of the neighbourhood plan for the Elephant and Walworth area, that had some continuity with previous campaigns and existing expertise. Securing these interests and retaining the momentum of community organising around a community led agenda are key to explain the decision of the EAN to transition to the neighbourhood planning format and not to scale back the expanded structure of the forum even when the geographical scale of its planning area was reduced. An important dimension of this process is the commitment of the EAN before and the forum after to secure the recognition of the interests and accommodation needs of ethnic and minority businesses who always had a significant presence and economic role locally and have been central to the struggle on the future of the shopping centre led by the Latin Elephant organisation. The neighbourhood development plan and its forum were seen as the viable option to keep this struggle going.

Camley Street Neighbourhood Plan and business activism in Camden

The case of Camley Street in the London Borough of Camden is an important example of grassroots action emerging from the recognition of the potential and limits of neighbourhood planning to provide an institutional response to local community interests in the context of neoliberal urban politics manifesting in the local authority's strategy for coping with capital shortage and housing needs through public land privatisation and private-led housing development. Camden's Community Investment Programme (CIP) identifies publicly owned land that can be categorised as surplus to council's needs and disposed of. The capital receipts of these disposals are reinvested into the supply of housing and social infrastructure, predominantly schools. Due to the planning and financial conditions of private-led housing development in the UK (see chapter xx in this book), the CIP has therefore facilitated the loss of small open spaces, particularly within social housing estates and of employment land to high density infill residential development which offer a very limited affordable housing component.

Camley Street is a cul-de-sac road which acts as a shared border between mixed tenure housing of about 400 homes and 1000 people and a council-owned medium-

size industrial estate providing accommodation for around 30 businesses and 500 employees. The neighbourhood is adjacent to the King's Cross development whose near completion has pushed land values of Camley Street up and made the area more attractive to the council's policy to dispose of land for capital receipt and to private development investors seeking to capture the ensuing high land values. The current use as low density light industrial makes this part of the neighbourhood extremely vulnerable to redevelopment into housing, a change of use which has become so uncontested and frequent as to generate a loss of employment land at three times the speed set by the policies in the London Plan (see xxxx; chapter in this book) and an accommodation crisis for industrial businesses in London (see Jones, Ferm).

In this setting, the Camley Street Neighbourhood Forum emerged as a spill out from the wider King's Cross Neighbourhood Forum and was designated in February 2014 as the body responsible for preparing the neighbourhood plan for an area which includes both the residential and the industrial sites. The forum included in equal shares, representatives of the residential community and of the business community, but chose not to be designated as a business neighbourhood forum (why?). The main objective of the plan was to secure the retention of the existing mix of residential and industrial uses, mix of housing tenures and to proactively set parameters and conditions on the scale and type of future developments whose inevitability and even necessity had been acknowledged by the forum. In fact, as early as 2011 even before the forum was formed, Camden Council had granted permission for the redevelopment of one of the industrial sites in Camley Street for a high rise student accommodation building showing the direction of its strategic interest in the area. In July 2014 two further applications were submitted for the redevelopment of two industrial sites into residential use, both sites located within the boundary of the neighbourhood area. Despite early consultation run by the developer with the wider community in Camley Street and with members of the forum, particularly concerned with how the proposed developments represented an erosion of the industrial character of the area and therefore a potential threat to the objectives of the forum, the developments were granted permission as originally proposed in March 2015. Acknowledging the limitations of neighbourhood planning (and of planning more generally) to recognise diverse interests in the development of the area, the forum sought to gain more power in the decisions on the area and agreed to constitute itself as a community land trust, at first with the sole intention to acquire the land of the industrial estate owned by Camden and later, when it became evident that Camden's intention was to redevelop the area for housing, with the purpose to become the landowner and developer of the industrial site and to provide Camden's with a vehicle to meet its own policy objectives. The Camley Street Sustainability Zone CLT was established in 2016 to develop a proposal for a mixed use development for the industrial area which would retain the existing businesses in new premises (with the least possible disruption to productive activities) and provide a substantial amount (up to 1000) of heavily discounted housing units for rent under the CLT model of collective community ownership, shared equity but no private individual ownership in the development and the lock-in of profit for community benefits. In early 2017 the proposal found financial backing from institutional

investors and maintained open negotiations with Camden Council.

As in the case of the Elephant and Walworth neighbourhood plan, the realisation of the limitations of neighbourhood planning in the face of dominant planning strategies that transcend the local scale led to a change in community action, organisation and politics, but while the E&W NF transferred some of its campaigns into the neighbourhood planning format, the Camley Street forum moved some of its action outside the forum format, into a structure that would allow for a more proactive campaign for the promotion of the interests of the local business community. However, the neighbourhood development plan was not dismissed and indeed played a positive role in setting the planning policy environment that would lock future development to a fixed quantum of non-residential land uses therefore limiting the escalation of land values that is the main incentive for Camden council to dispose of land and for developers to acquire it.

Neighbourhood planning and challenge of community led planning

The claims of community-led planning can be summarised as: a demand for participation in the construction of the narratives of place, through a direct involvement in the production of evidence; a recognition and valorisation of social conflict and the opening of the decision making process to agonistic deliberation (Inch, 2015) and the inclusion of difference; a collective ownership of the planning process, not just an invitation to parts of it. How are these claims exercised through and transformed by the institutionalisation of the neighbourhood as a unit of planning and decision-making?

The cases of Camley Street and Elephant and Walworth Neighbourhood Forums illustrate how an ideology of growth which materialises in cities with the incessant need to capture land values through land redevelopment impact local communities and their responses. Their experience and actions within and outside the format of neighbourhood planning cannot be pigeon-holed as nimbyism (which would not be possible through the format of neighbourhood planning), nor can they be described as a consensual acceptance of the modalities in which growth is delivered.

These models of community-led planning cannot be completely absorbed by neighbourhood planning and neighbourhood planning (because it is “still planning” and uses the same practical and ideological devices of mainstream growth-oriented planning) cannot be used as the locus for their needs for progressive community-led development and local politics. Browill & Bradely suggests that questioning neighbourhood planning for its progressive credential, for its capacity to give “power to the people” is the wrong question to ask.

From here on, still sketchy.

[community-led planning is still important, not all community action can or want to become part of neighbourhood planning. What will happen to community activism in Westminster for example, if there is no space left for neighbourhood forums to emerge bottom-up. There are also good reasons for not initiating a process of

neighbourhood planning: how do other campaigns relate, integrate, conflict with neighbourhood planning. How many neighbourhood planning processes were started under expectations that revealed themselves as false, unattainable?]

The two cases are, in different ways, potentially instances of the Just Space Community-led Plan for London which asks that the emerging London Plan “implements measures to support under-represented and excluded groups to take advantage of the Localism Act 2011 and especially the community right to bid and asset transfer schemes, community economic development, community right to build and community right to neighbourhood planning.”

Bradley draws parallels between the devolution of planning powers to local communities and the traditions of citizen’s control and direct action in land-use planning. However, the nature of NP as it was established, a statutory component of the planning system (and therefore “still planning”) and the regulations for its implementation adding the requirement of conformity and establishing a number of basic conditions to be met, such as consultation and representativeness, can be said to have moved away NP from ideas of citizen’s control and direct action. It is a challenge to put neighbourhood planning at the highest tiers of Arnstein’s ladder of participation.

Is neighbourhood planning a bottom up model of community organising? Wrong question, but interesting ask what neighbourhood planning has to offer to less consensual and more radical forms of community development and how planning is, or whether it can be made more responsive to more radical side of the spectrum of community development. A solution without a problem?

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