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LEYTON

URBAN CO-PRODUCTION

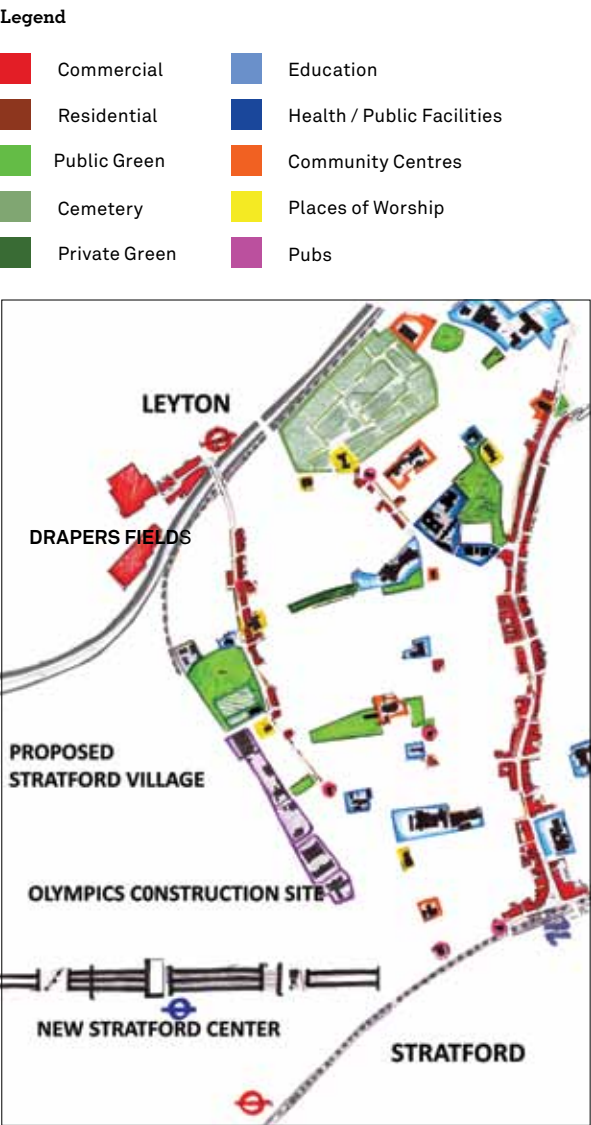
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The aim of our project is to achieve a fine-grained and intimate knowledge of the everyday reality of life in Leyton. We focus on three different ways of seeing, and combine quantitative, qualitative and spatial approaches. Our research revealed a diversity of strong social relations within the site. However, these relationships were divided along community lines with little social integration, creating problems of fear and mistrust. These problems are likely to be compounded by social segregation arising from the future development of the affluent residential complexes in the nearby Olympic Village.

We propose a series of strategies organised around targeted spatial interventions that will increase the social integration of the area and develop connections with the new developments. A key ambition is to retain an individual’s ownership over their area, while preserving communal spaces that provide a sense of stability and comfort. Spatial interventions must therefore be complemented by a wide-ranging process of social interventions, which we name urban co-production.

SITE OVERVIEW

Location
Leyton is located in the north-east of London, in the Borough of Waltham Forest, to the north-east of the Olympic Park, opposite the Olympic Village. This zone 3 area is well connected by public transport and road: it is on the Central Line, ten minutes from Stratford Station and close to the A12 motorway.



Population and services

With a population of 12,000, this is a primarily residential area, with a density twice the borough average. The site also boasts a wide range of key services within a small area.

Landmarks

The backbone of the site is Leyton High Street, home to many small businesses, including grocery stores, take-away shops, cafés, restaurants, beauty parlours, real estate agents and shops catering to a high number of recently arrived migrants. This diversity is visible at street level, where specialised shops serve a diverse public.

The dominant typology of the area is two to three-storey terraced houses.

Apart from terraced houses, the other residential form is 1960s and 70s council estates.

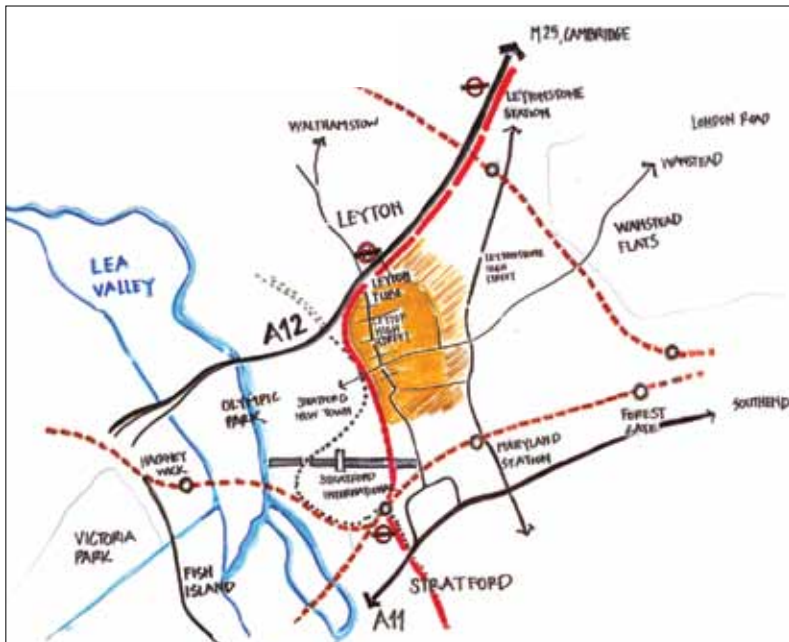
There are no less than 12 educational facilities in our site, including three important primary schools, including the Downsell primary school.

With Draper's Field Park, Langthorne Park and Chandos Park, our site has an abundance of green space.

Typologies of Leyton



Locating Leyton



Issues at Stake

The Olympic development will undoubtedly affect the neighbourhood: unprecedented infrastructural investment is presently flowing into Leyton, and the opening of high-end residential developments in the Olympic Village will change the social mix of the area. Four key themes emerge:

- The importance of a close knowledge of the site: Leyton is a residential, working-class area of East London. A neighbourhood of terraced houses and council estates; its daily rhythm is punctuated by commuters and schoolchildren. Trips to the mall, teenage groups on bicycles, mundane conversations in local shops and cigarettes in front of pubs are the everyday episodes
- Recognition of a fragmented society: Leyton, like most of residential East London, is largely home to a multicultural population. Immigrants arriving in London often stop in Leyton. Community groups frequently have strong solidarities among members, but few ties with other groups in the area. This translates into a limited interest in the neighbourhood's issues and future. Our objective is to identify ways design can help people live in a diverse society
- Redirecting existing resources: There are an abundance of financial and human resources with the Olympic investment and with a great number of borough planners, social workers and local organisations. Our ambition is therefore to guide and channel existing resources towards an improved neighbourhood, relying on the aforementioned close knowledge of the site
- The participation process. An important question in our proposals is the place of local residents and urban practitioners in the design process. We wish to challenge the traditional participation process, asking how users can effectively engage in their neighbourhood.

The plans outlined in the Northern Olympic Fringe masterplan (NOF) and by the Olympic Delivery Authority show the profound changes happening opposite the site. Particularly relevant is the large housing development immediately west (being constructed at present) and the proposed development south of Leyton



WAYS OF SEEING

Focus and Methodological Overview

We explored the site through different lenses, focusing on three 'ways of seeing': official representations and quantitative approaches, macro-level, spatio-temporal approaches, and qualitative approaches including observations and interviews.

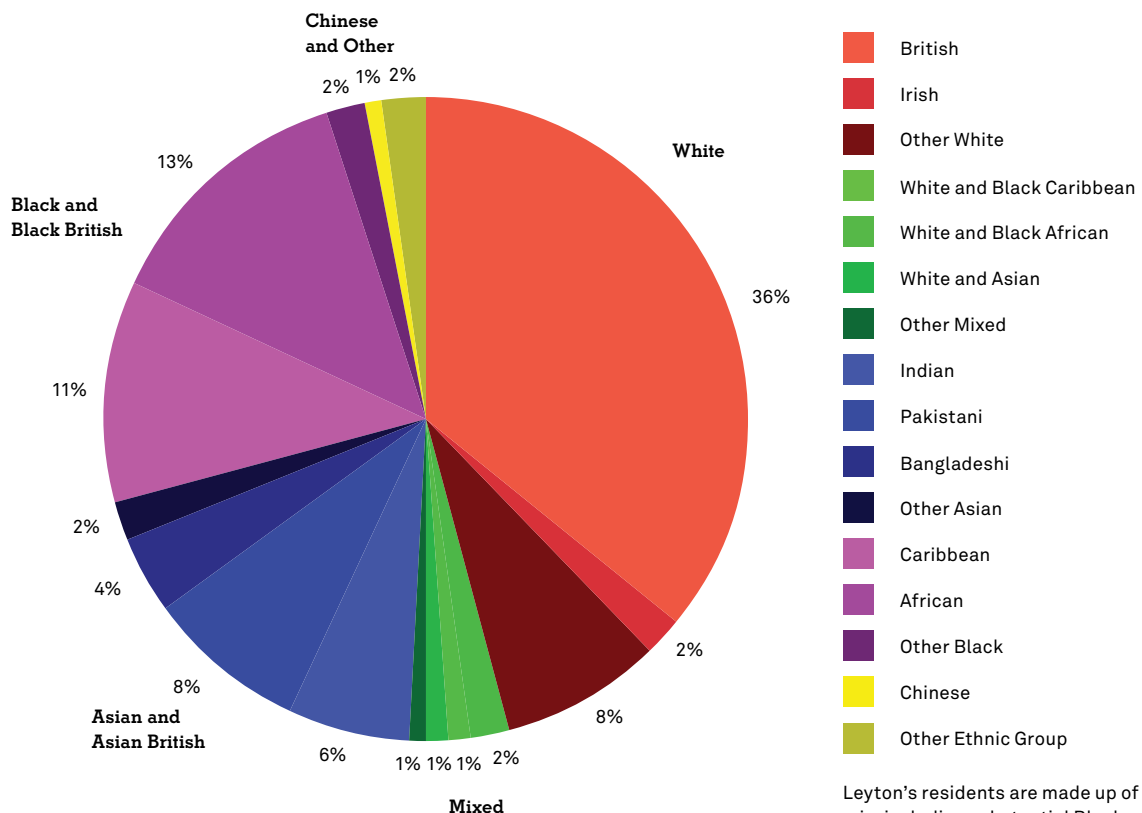
Official Representations and Quantitative Approaches

The overall image of our site presented in the Indices of Deprivation is one of a severely deprived area. All seven constituent LSOAs are in the third most deprived on the Index of Multiple Deprivation. Key findings from the Indices were the overall low rankings in the Barriers to Housing and Services index, and the unexpectedly high level of skills and education present in the site, which may be a result of the high number of immigrants. Also of interest was the relationship between income deprivation and employment deprivation: whilst the levels of employment deprivation in our site were consistently higher than the combined level of deprivation, income deprivation was without exception lower than combined deprivation. This disparity suggests that although the residents of our site were often able to find employment, it was typically in low-income positions.

Analysis of our site's demographics found that it had a particularly young population: 24% of the population is under sixteen years old. 25% of residents lived in housing rented from the council, and 25% of houses are considered 'overcrowded'. The site also had a very mixed ethnic makeup, and a fairly high rate of population change: 53% of its 2002 population was non-white from a variety of backgrounds, up from 43% in 1991.

Understanding the Wider Context

The second 'way of seeing' was to consider our site in relation to its surrounding area, particularly the Olympic Village development, and how this relationship would evolve over time. This architectural perspective complemented the less spatial methodologies of the social sciences employed. It identified a lack of physical and social connectivity with the Olympic site, which threatened social segregation.



Leyton's residents are made up of a diverse mix, including substantial Black and Asian populations. Reflecting London as a whole, it is a 'majority minority' neighbourhood with the white population making up only 46% of the total (source: ONS 2001)

Time matters

The main spatial plans for Leyton are laid out in the Northern Olympic Fringe (NOF) Masterplan (Urban practitioners 2009). These plans propose the construction of Stratford Village, a 'high quality housing quarter designed to attract families to the area', with 'tree-lined streets and good convenience shops within walking distance' (London Legacy Company 2010:14). This development provides 1572 new homes.

This planned development will take place directly opposite Draper's Field Park, but will be separated by a railway line and poorly connected by road. Road connections outlined in the NOF Masterplan privilege links to the Olympic Village and Westfield to the south, and neglect east-west connections between Stratford Village and Leyton, to the East, and Hackney Wick to the West. The NOF masterplan proposes new high-value residential apartments directly South of our site. These will be closely connected to the Olympic site by 2000 square metres of decking constructed over the railway tracks, at an estimated cost of £2.6 million (FOI request 2010). This decking ends at the Southern side of Draper's field, leaving Leyton poorly connected to the Olympic site.



A 'weak' East-West corridor currently runs from Wanstead Flats to Victoria Park, through Leyton and the Olympic site. This corridor currently consists of undefined residential streets with little continuity



A number of institutions (highlighted in black) cluster along this corridor, both in our site currently and projected in the Olympic Village. The blue circle shows a 10' walking radius departing from drapers field

This Is Not a Fringe

These plans treat Leyton as a fringe.

Looking at our site in a wider context, Draper's Field and Stratford Village lie at the centre of a weak 3.8km corridor connecting Victoria Park in the West, and Wanstead Flats in the East. This corridor can be broken up into a series of '10 minute worlds', which serve as bases for everyday life. Strengthening the corridor and emphasising these 'everyday worlds' may stimulate urban regeneration, and assist in fully integrating our site with the surrounding area.

Qualitative understanding

The methods employed included detailed ethnographic fieldwork, interview-based mapping and approximately 20 inductive in-depth interviews with representatives from a diverse range of groups. These included residents, shopkeepers and restaurateurs, groundskeepers, community police officers, and neighbourhood managers employed by the Borough. We developed close relationships with several residents and government employees which endured over the period of research. Efforts were made to ensure a diverse mix of ethnicities, genders and ages were represented.

Three core themes stood out to us as the most vocalised experiences of our site.

- 1** The level of fear and mistrust present in our site: every single respondent mentioned how unsafe the area was at night, and most expressed fear of other ethnic groups. The extent and acuity of this fear cannot be overstated.
- 2** The degree of diversity and social fragmentation present in our site. Once again, each community group had its own clearly signified spaces, beyond which they appeared to seldom linger. This meant that these spaces were remarkably homogenous, in terms of ethnicity or gender.
- 3** The rapid pace of change of the surround area and its population; people felt that they had few sources of stability and permanency, outside the social groups and 'urban living rooms' that they socialised in.



Reconceptualising our site along this axis places it at the centre of a new neighbourhood rather than perceiving it as a transitional land between the affluent Olympic Village and the suburbs. Such a shift in perspective may unlock the legacy potential of the Olympic Games

Spatialising the Findings

Having identified a lack of interaction as a key focus of our research, we developed ways to spatialise our findings as a tool to inform both analysis and design. We developed a map showing the location of different forms of interaction throughout our site based on the interaction typologies outlined in the maps below; this was based on the idea of a land use map, and allowed us to identify spatial configurations of community. A key finding from this interaction map is the importance of street corners as the location of vibrant informal forms of interaction between strangers and friends.

Retail Services Plan

- RCT (restaurant, catering, coffee, pub, take away, snacks)
- SFG (supermarket, food, groceries, off licence)
- H/S (home and related Services)
- IT/Elec (internet communications, IT Services, electronic services in general)
- GS (general services, estate agents, accountant, solicitor)
- H/B (hair dressers, barbers, beauty)
- LB (library, stationary)
- CL (clothing, fashion)
- R (religion: Islam, Christian)
- Edu (education)
- PH (public health)
- PF (local facilities, services)



Left Our observations informed the development of a typology of interactions. These were formal, informal and fleeting. Spaces of interaction were categorised according to this typology in order to develop an interaction map (bottom) which was contrasted with a traditional land-use map (top). This showed the importance of street corners to social interaction regardless of the land use

Below The ‘Formal Affiliation’ type represents all the cases where official inscription or membership is required. More precisely, we mean spaces commonly accepted as community institutions; spaces in which entering is a clearly legible act

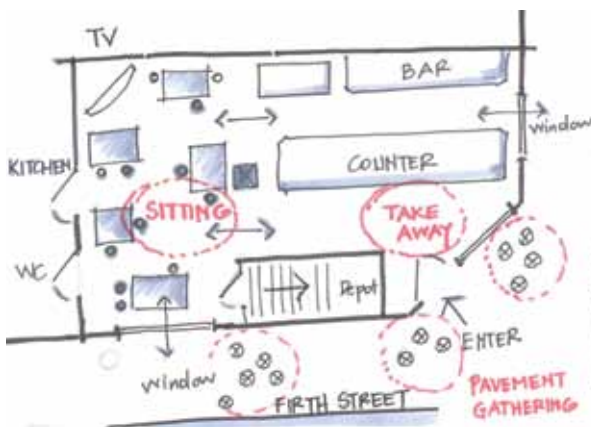
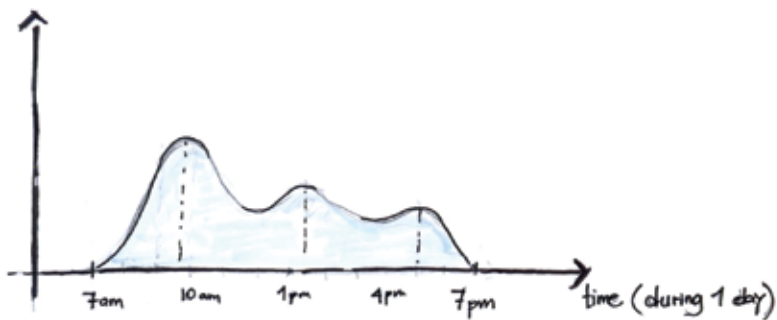
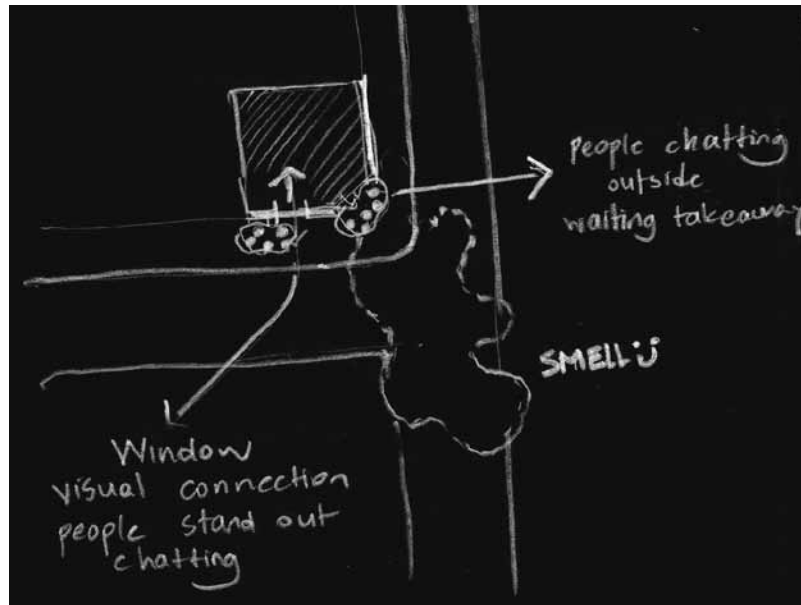
‘Informal Affiliation’ relates to places where there is an underlying though formalised sense of membership. Even though using these spaces can be extremely ritualised, and denote clear belongings within the community, they could not be defined as institutional community centres

‘Fleeting interactions’ refer to encounters of close proximity with minimal social interaction, such as passing in the street, shopping or waiting at the bus stop. These encounters accustom people of different backgrounds to each other’s company

Type of Interaction

- T1: Formal Affiliation
- T2: Informal Affiliation
- T3: Fleeting Affiliation

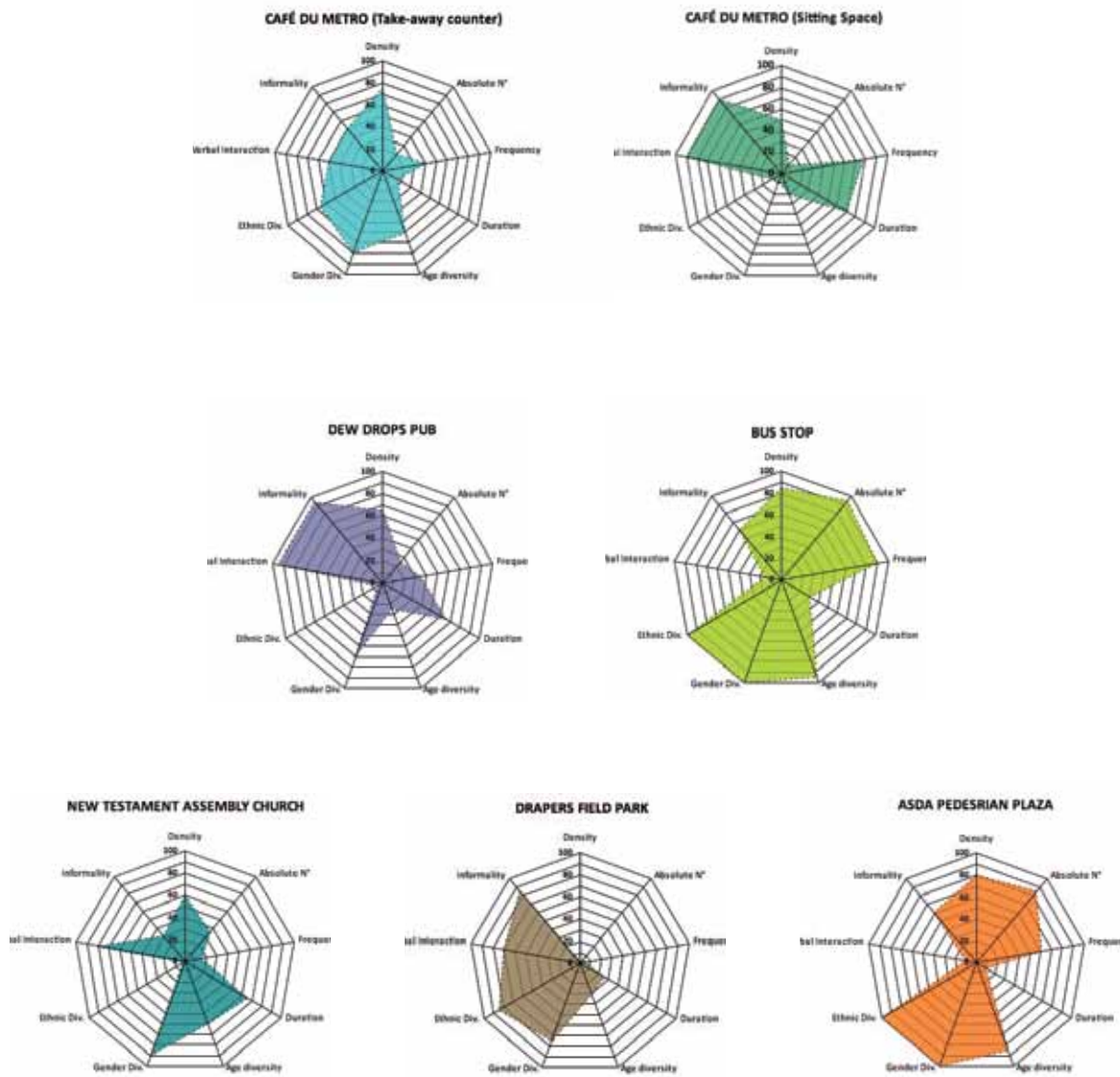




Café du Métro was a particularly interesting example of a space of social interaction because of the different processes at work. The sitting space had a steady, male, Algerian customer base who knew each other on first-name basis. These customers treat the space as their living room, even bringing young children to play and gathering to watch Algerian football matches

The corner outside the café was an extension of this space (for smoking). The take-away counter has a larger and much more diverse range of users. A popular bakery, the Café caters for many parties and events in Leyton, and was a favoured place to buy lunch or snacks. These customers often had brief conversations with staff while waiting for their food

Radar graphs were developed to show different characteristics of spaces of social interaction. Rather than a precise measurement, these were a tool of comparison. These showed spaces with low levels of commitment to have high degrees of diversity, and pointed to the importance of everyday commerce as a form of sociability



Everyday Spaces of Interaction

In-depth case studies of everyday spaces of interaction were carried out. Open-ended interviews, participant observations, photographs and sketch maps were employed. The objective was to capture the subtleties and intricacies of different spaces in which Leytoners gather in their neighbourhood, such as the ASDA retail centre, the tube station, the New Testament Assembly Church or the Café du Métro, the example developed here.

APPROACH

Our Ambition

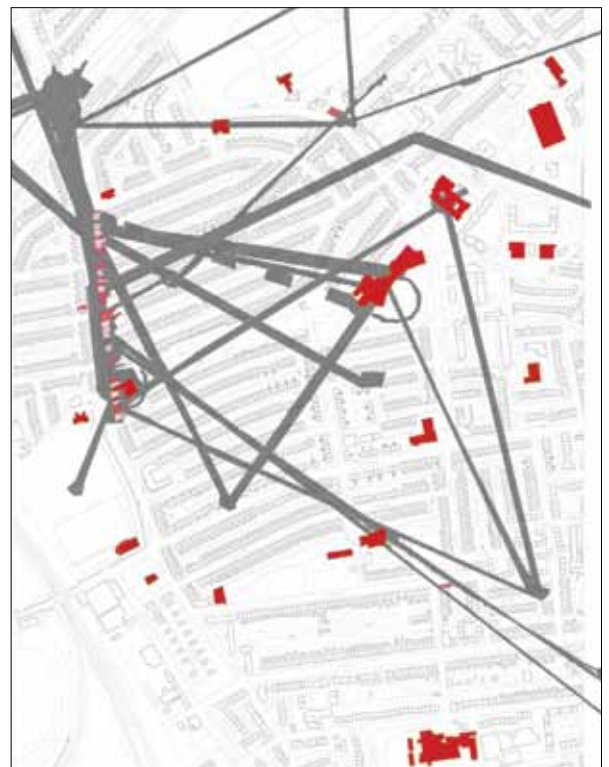
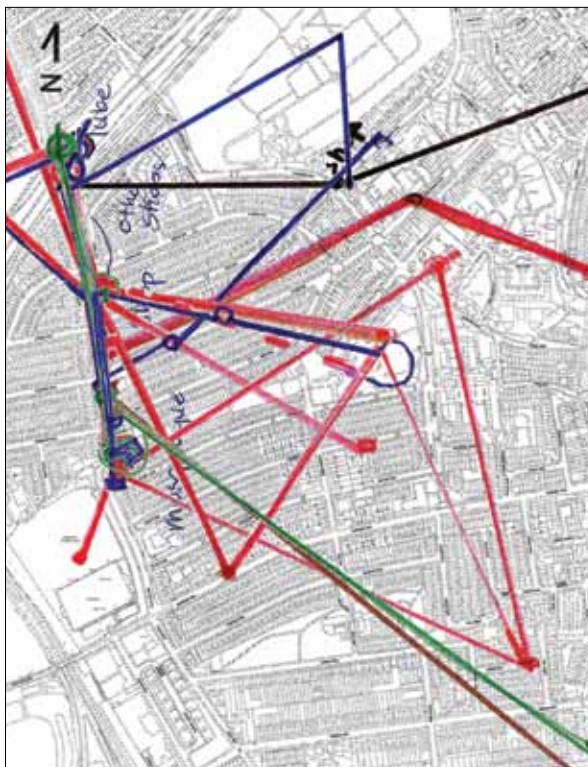
Leyton's 'problems' are, in many ways, those common to London more generally: it is a place of deep social fragmentation, which is unsettling to those who live, work and travel in the area. This fragmentation occurs along a number of fault lines: age, ethnicity, social class, religion and space. These divisions have the potential to deepen with the development of poorly-connected affluent residential areas in the Olympic Village.

Given that our site is profoundly residential, we need to operate at the level of the everyday – this means paying close attention to the relationship between design and social life and designing for patterns of everyday routine. Our design strategy is therefore to foster everyday interaction, both spatial and social. We aim to increase the frequency and intensity of minimal encounters with those who are visibly different, on the basis that frequent minimal engagements will gradually overcome the widespread fear of the other that exists today.

We developed three strategies:

- To increase in number fleeting instances of interaction, or co-presence, such as buying in a shop or waiting at a bus stop
- To protect spaces of informal affiliation such as cafes, pubs and open spaces to provide people with a space to feel comfortable and retreat from a foreign and rapidly changing world
- To increase the visibility and urban presence of spaces of formal affiliation such as mosques, schools, or football clubs, as an acknowledgement of the presence and importance of these institutions, and the role they can play as a unifying force.

Interviewees' patterns of everyday commute were mapped and revealed the central importance of the High Street, and some of its key hinterland spaces. This was overlaid with the interaction map



ENGAGING SPACES: PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS

Overarching strategy: Urban Co-production

In order to foster, increase and protect different types of everyday interactions in Leyton, we developed three projects:

- Expanding Draper's Field Park to connect Leyton and Stratford Village
- Focusing street life on Leyton High Street corners
- Creating a pedestrian network and integrating key sites of social significance.

These three interventions are designed according to a philosophy of urban practice that we call urban co-production.

What

Urban co-production is a shift in planning and urban design governance that seeks to devolve power by incorporating individuals in to the process of producing urban form. Urban co-production consists of two complementary elements:

The collaboration of residents with urban practitioners through formal and informal workshops, across a range of spatial scales, to assist in developing the unique local identity of our site. The provision of 'neutral spaces' with institutional encouragement for the users of these spaces to design and appropriate them as they see fit.

It is difficult to precisely define what the substance of urban co-production will be: we perceive it as a process rather than a series of isolated events. The outcomes of urban co-production will be determined through the workshops.



Spaces of informal affiliation, such as this shipping container behind which acts as a local hangout for Leyton teenagers, or the Algerian café should be protected and nurtured, in recognition of the valuable role they perform in a context of rapid change and uncertainty



Fleeting interactions should be encouraged and promoted, to accustom residents of Leyton to being around difference and promote a visible street life



Spaces of formal affiliation such as Mosques and community centres should be acknowledged as community hubs

Why

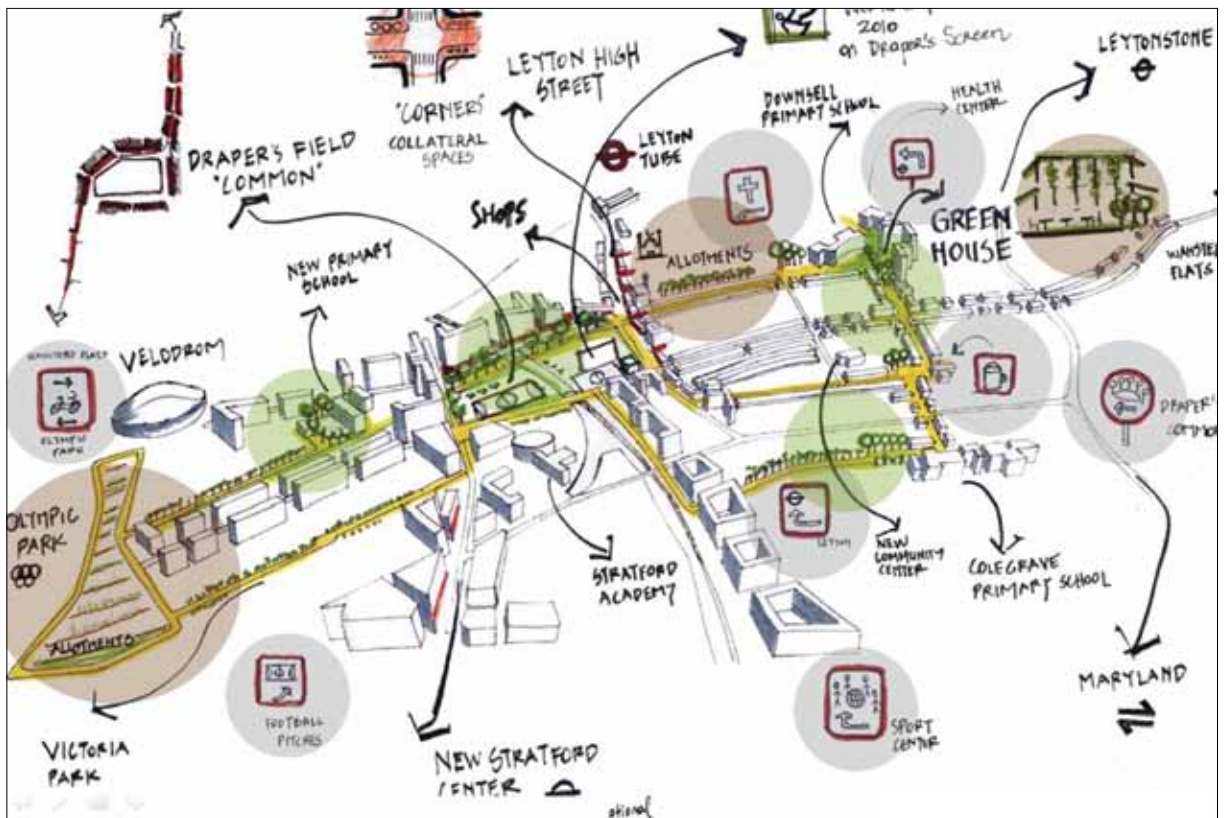
We see urban design as a 'practice of the unfinished': architects and planners work to provide space which is yet to be defined and reshaped by its occupants. We want to avoid providing overly-programmed spaces, and instead allow for the subversive, diverse and unpredictable ways that people inhabit the space that they live in. Urban co-production is a method that goes beyond traditional 'consultation' or 'participation' in urban planning. Not only do local residents and users of the space have to have their say; they must have a decisive input on transformations in their neighbourhood. Urban co-production is therefore about political empowerment, transferring power from the borough to local dwellers and workers.

How

Urban co-production is a significant shift in the way that city making is conceived, but does not mean a complete, drastic change of the institutional structure. Most resources are already present: urban co-production seeks to better employ these existing resources. The main idea is to implement an ongoing set of urban workshops, the outcome of which have a real political impact on the neighbourhood. The Waltham Forest Borough will create an urban

co-production workshop structure. The purpose of these workshops would be to identify needs and propose solutions for small-scale urban modifications – particularly placemaking workshops, rather than the typical decisions of planning. They would be organised and run by a collaboration between the Borough planners and the Neighbourhood Managers. The former bring in their pragmatic knowledge of the borough's reality, and the latter bring in a deep comprehension of the networks in place, along with a pre-established trustful relationship with local residents.

Workshops would be both formal and informal. To ensure a diversity of voices are heard, workshops will take place between employees of the Borough and users of pubs, mosques, schools, cafes and other spaces of community. 'Days of action' will see the realisation of the projects determined in these workshops. On these days of action, visible changes to the urban environment will be made. Examples may include the installation of way finding signs, or communal garden planting. The workshops would be conducted by existing neighbourhood managers and borough planners, with minimal additional funding required. The main challenge is thus a transfer of resources.



This is an example of workshop output showing the potential evolution of the urban co-production process and people's relation to their space. By identifying spaces of subjective importance, such maps can be developed to inform signposting and wayfinding activities

4.2 Draper's Field Common

What

Draper's Field is located between the Olympic Village and Leyton High Street, it potentially acts as the 'frontier space' between Leyton and the future Stratford Village. We propose decking the train lines in order to create a single continuous park and a new neighbourhood with Draper's Field at its centre.

Why

Creating a continuous neighbourhood incorporating Stratford Village and Draper's Field will address issues of spatial and social severance which pose a severe threat. The reshaping of the park addresses both the key issues of the current under-use of the park, and future threats of a lack of contact between Stratford Village and Leyton. An extended Draper's Field Park could act as the centre of a new, single neighbourhood, linking it functionally and spatially and allowing for social mixing.

How

Shifting the railway decking outlined in the NOF masterplan would serve the residential developments located south of the park. Instead of connecting these apartments to the Olympic Games, the decking would be relocated 300m north and connect Draper's Field Park to the opposite Stratford Academy Park. The cost of the southern decking is estimated at £2.6 million, and would not be privately funded by the developer (FOI request 2010). These funds would cover the cost of creating the new Draper's Field Park.

The Borough will continue the general management of the park, in collaboration with existing sports organisations. The urban co-production workshops will generate temporary events and fairs in the park. The park's proximity with the Olympic site could be tapped on to make Draper's Field a centre of such and important popular event, with outdoor screens projecting the sport; barbecues and food stalls enlivening the park. Our research revealed football to be a universally common passion among Leyton's residents, and similar events could be held for the World Cup. The new Draper's Field Park could host ethnic and community cultural fairs, which Borough staff perceive as sorely needed (Interview, Neighbourhood Manager 2010).

To ensure our aim of creating a unified neighbourhood and ensuring social mix, we propose two changes to Waltham Forest and Newham borough policies:

Our first proposal is to allow equal access to public schools in both boroughs to residents of our site and Stratford Village: the latter will require 550 new school places (Olympic Legacy Company 2009; 199).

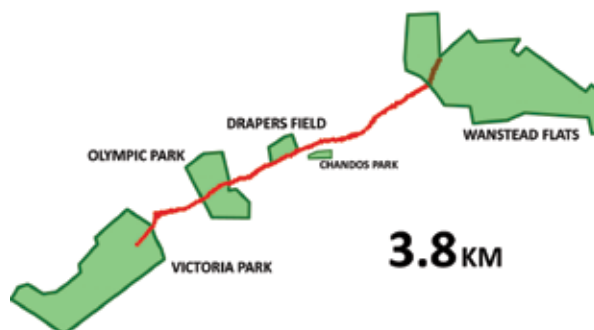
Downsell Primary School has a strong reputation but its existing catchment area does not include Stratford Village. Similarly, the new Stratford Academy in the Olympic site is not accessible to residents of Leyton. A reciprocal arrangement between these two schools would encourage relationships to form and daily commutes between both sides of the park.

Our second proposal is equal access to social housing. Both Waltham Forest and Newham Borough deny, in practice, social housing to non-residents. A quota of social housing to be constructed in both Stratford Village (part of Newham Borough) and the proposed Draper's Field residential developments (Waltham Forest Borough) would be set aside for residents of the other Borough.

Floor use of these developments will be organised as follows to activate the space:

- 1/3 subsidised; empty shop competition (short-term cheap leases for non-profit organisations wanting a public storefront)
- 1/3 available space for local residents to rent/ use as community space (weddings, birthday parties, music rehearsing).
- 1/3 shops and cafés (market price)

The extended Draper's Field would be 5.75 hectares. This expansion would put it on the map of the bigger parks, and help activate the East-West corridor



The proposed redevelopment showing the shifted decking creating Draper's Field Common and the relocation of residential development to the North of the park. These buildings contribute to the formation of a new neighbourhood centred around the park



The phasing of the Draper's Field project, showing current state, improved accessibility, social activation through events such as outdoor screenings and the Northern residential development and decking



Leyton High Street Corners

What

The Northern Olympic Fringe masterplan currently proposes general streetscape improvements along the length of Leyton High Street, such as new lighting, better signage and better quality pavements. Instead, focusing improvements on street corners by widening them and opening shops on the corners up to the street will increase street life and fleeting social interactions.

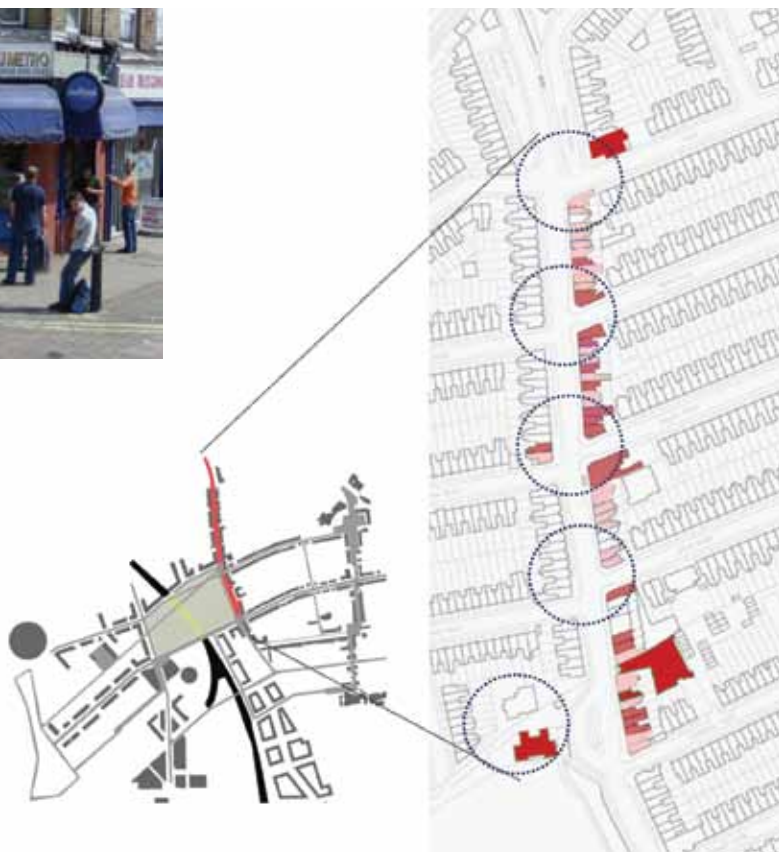
Why

Social activity in Leyton High Street clusters on street corners. They are vital spaces of everyday associations and interactions regardless of the time of day or night. The interaction map demonstrated that spaces of informal affiliation were overwhelmingly located on street corners. By increasing the vitality of street life and opening up the lateral facade of these communal spaces, the redesign encourages frequent minimal interactions and helps residents become comfortable with their coexistence.

How

Side streets leading off Leyton High Street will become one-way to accommodate for increased corner width. This will also act as a traffic calming measure, encouraging recreational use of the street. Parking spaces that will be lost on will be relocated further down into side-streets, meaning no net-loss of parking space. This spatial strategy must work in cooperation with planning policies to prevent franchise-led gentrification, particularly in light of the affluent residential developments occurring in the Olympic Village and Draper's Field. This too can be achieved without significant changes to the regulatory framework. Waltham Forest Borough's planning policy notes that commercial developments must be considered in light of their "compatibility with the neighbourhood character and their avoidance of adverse impact on local amenity and street appearance." (Waltham Forest Borough 1999: 4) A selective interpretation of this policy will help protect the local and diverse character of the High Street.

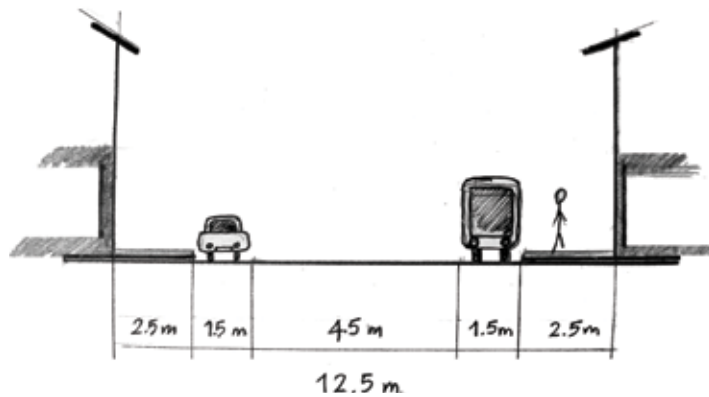
We propose this redesign through the strategic redirection of funds already allocated in the Northern Olympic Fringe masterplan, supplemented by funding from the Waltham Forest 'cash boost' (WF Borough 2010) and the Big Lottery Fund's emphasis on urban regeneration for 2010-2012 (Big Lottery Fund 2010).



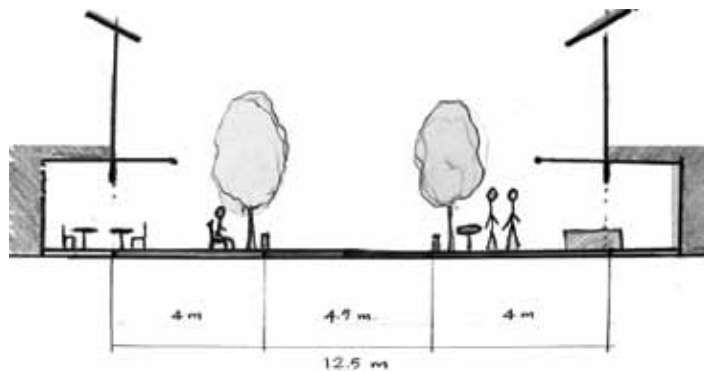
Our interaction map showed street corners to be key spaces of formal and informal sociability



In order to allow for increased pavement width, streets leading to the High Street will become one-way



Spaces of interaction on street corners will be opened up to increase the frequency of fleeting interactions and the urban prominence of these places and the groups that use them



Pedestrian Network and Downsell School Gate

What

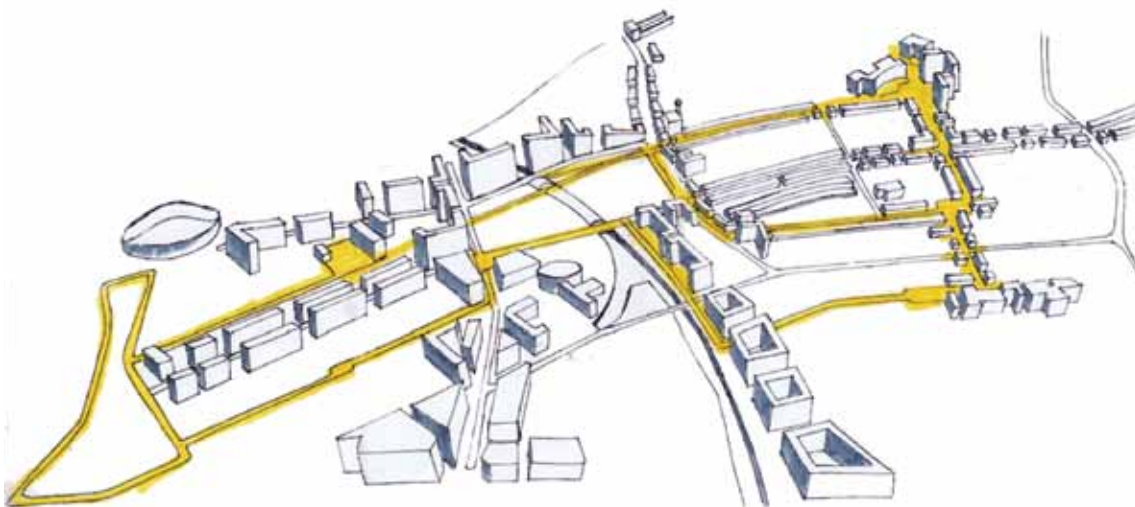
Linking key spaces of interaction will create a network of sidewalks that prioritises pedestrian traffic. This will include levelling roads and footpaths to slow car traffic, and organising signposting workshops as part of the urban co-production process. One example of the integration of these key spaces into the pedestrian network is the redevelopment of Downsell Place, a wide street which can serve as a hub for a number of key interaction spaces including Downsell School and Avenue Estate that currently serves as a car park.

Why

Downsell School is one of the few places where all ethnic groups from our site interact, and is the only place of formal affiliation that is not also a communal space. Creating an intermediary zone at its front gate will foster 'everyday interactions' as parents come to drop off and collect their children, and socialise around the already-existing pavilion and garden.

How

The funds for the development of the pedestrian network will come from the money set aside for Northern Olympic Fringe urban regeneration, and funding from the big lottery fund. Urban co-production workshops will be organised to determine wayfinding and signage. The school gate is the site of interaction between these diverse groups, as parents chat while waiting for their children. Creating an intermediary zone between the school gate and the pedestrian network will encourage this kind of interaction.



Key sites such as the High Street and Draper's Field are connected by a network of (predominantly terraced) streets with higher pedestrian traffic. We propose prioritising this traffic in these streets by co-production workshops to create a pedestrian network



Among the key spaces we wish to integrate within this pedestrian network is Downsell Primary School, one of the everyday spaces shared by many social and ethnic groups

CONCLUSIONS

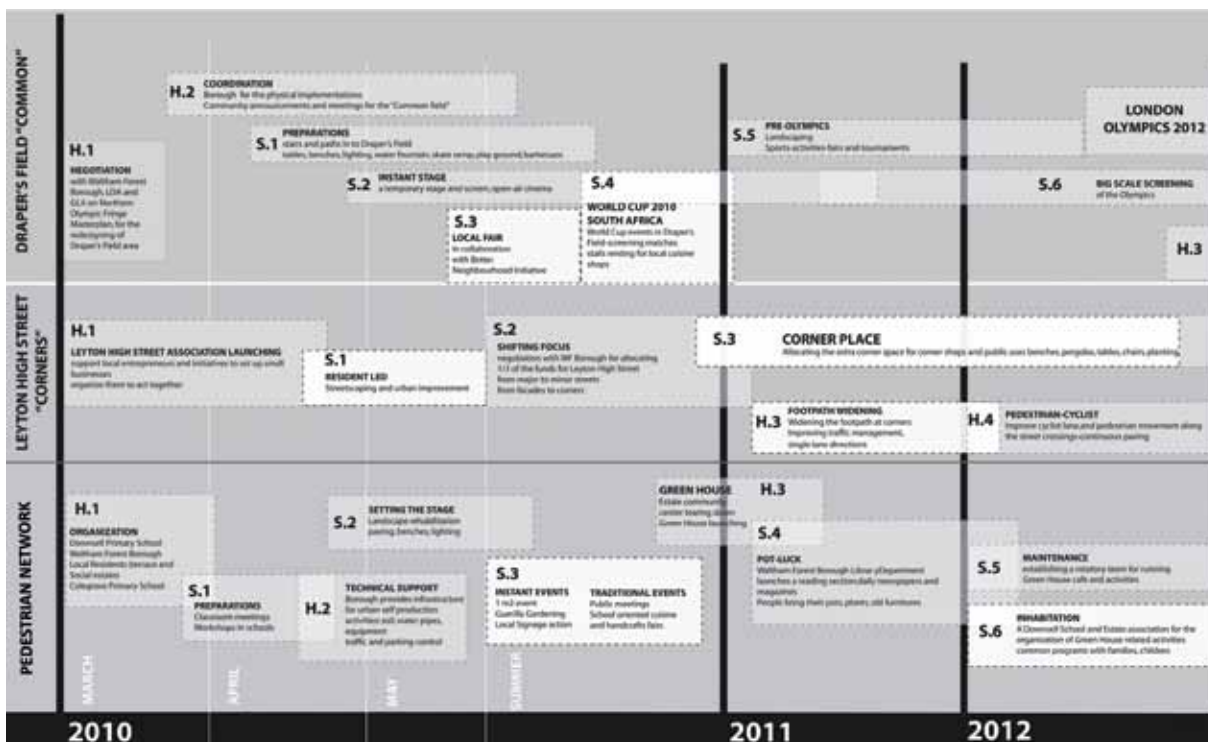
Towards Spatial and Social Cooperation

We realise that 'urban co-production' has a touch of romanticism – even naivety. Encouraging the active use and interpretation of local spaces by local people, and encouraging the active role of individuals and groups in their neighbourhood is nevertheless a crucial task for urbanists. Developing a methodology based on 'unfinished' spatial interventions is an important step in the engagement of residents, users and citizens with public space, and should be on the agenda of urban practitioners. Our intervention strategies can only be implemented if the processes of urban co-production are built upon a close knowledge of the site, and sustained by ongoing relationships between residents and institutions of governance.

In Leyton, we have recognised public space as the one element common to a diverse array of everyday worlds. By treating space as a social process, we have attempted to bridge the design process and social policy.

This chart shows the potential phasing and overlapping of the interventions through time. Even if heavy, infrastructurally demanding interventions cannot start immediately, we see that smaller, inexpensive projects can be promptly launched

Urban co-production is not a intervention per-se, but feeds into each intervention as an overarching strategy



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All images are produced by the authors

All aerial photographs are copyright Google Earth; <http://www.earth.google.com>

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