

# A CITY FOR ALL LONDONERS

An Inclusive City Growth Workshop  
11<sup>th</sup> November 2016, 9.30 – 13.00

## **Social Integration and inclusion** **Table 6 Session 1**

**Facilitator in bold facilitator – comments in bold**  
Respondents in regular text

*These notes are a summary of the conversation*

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*Session 1 Table 6*

No table

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# Activating, Managing and maintaining Public Spaces

## Table 6 Session 2

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*Session 2, Table 6*

### **Paul Harper, (Facilitator)**

Jane Carlsen, formerly of the London planning team

Nicholas Fonty, urban designer, doing research at markets

Toby Laurent Belson, Brown baby community artist, activist and work on campaigns in West London.

Dianne Gilmour, The Lane Family Network, is involved in similar activities as Toby. Family network of parents.

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**We were looking at the design space. We will look at the issues of public space and used and maintained. Might be linked to ownership. Have questions I will run through around things we could do to make sure public spaces can be enjoyable. How we can ensure fairness. And how public spaces are provided and how access is open as possible. And how we can use public space to bring communities together. Before we start, Toby you were talking about encouraging volunteer wardens. Interesting. Would it be better to encouraging neighbourliness, people you might know who might give advice and know the neighbourhood etc. issue is there are a lot of people who are frightened and move quickly through the space from A to B?**

It is a balance.

Exactly.

If you tip the balance, more people become not anxious; you define a feeling, which is a continual problem in north Kensington, under the Westway. Toxic. Funny because it brings people together but has disenfranchised the community in other ways. Prime land. Was one of the poorest areas of London, lots of ex council is now development land. If you allow the community to engage with itself; this is a problem, a body which is a charity, would you like to get involved, instead of involving each other. How do you empower people without isolating them or making them feel reliant?

Child/parent, supposed to do good work, there are limitations end up not really doing what they set out to do. Tick box culture. Not activate manage and maintaining. If it comes down to an organisation doing it, for example a tenant's management organisation that has become a fiefdom. Bizarre, twisted its position, impossible to remove.

As little as possible.

Their voting form is a proper stitch up. Says tick this box and you have given us your proxy vote. They can do their job but if you come across instances where they speak for the community you have a serious problem. You have created this separation, the community is disenfranchised. We represent you even though you don't even know you exist. Who is doing it, managing these spaces? People taking these spaces on as wardens, it is a balance. Formal and informal. We had community champions thing, family champions, for a start it was a bit embarrassing, cringe worthy, and community manager nametags. People do that informally.

One of the things that has come out is the power of the elders. Has been amazing. So many of our meetings where the elder generation come in, 60, 70, 80 and 90 year olds get respect in these meetings. You realise how much knowledge they have  
And how much support they give to us and the others, younger generation.

Informal. Not necessarily formal.

People move away. You have to be engaged to a certain extent to be here. From the brief agenda and list of people here, I am probably the least qualified to be here. Most people here are working within companies and charities. How do you engage with our neighbours with something that is devastating our area? People feel vulnerable, no point. It has got to shift. Then people don't feel alone and can feel empowered. I go when I can, how do you make these things really possible and inviting rather than Parent Champions, Community Champions.

Who are these people? They are the kid in class with the badge. It is the wrong model, not good.

**Focussing on how we make the public space inclusive, how does this translate into how we manage public space? Broad range of areas of what people consider public space, greens, parks, streets, traffic areas, how do we bring to bear influence on how those places are regulated with the broader community?**

Must be careful about how you look at things and how metrics are used. When you talk about a hostile street. My background is of graffiti, people think it is negative, and that is hostile. A bad street. Go to Berlin, graffiti everywhere. Not threatening. People paint beautiful murals and it doesn't get touched. We have a right to express ourselves in our public spaces. There is a top time sterilisation going on. In our area, artists representations that have no disabled or elderly or black people. Need to be careful.

**Street environment, how quickly a bus might run through it. They might measure this. You can value the amount of money it takes to put a bus on the street. Looking at ways to value other things?**

Do people go to a street because it is smooth running or quick? Oxford Street is packed; there is a diversity of opinion of needs and wants.

Trying to protect London clubs, perspective, for some this is a nightmare. But on the other hand there are others who want this. Listening to people and trying to understand what they care about, not Time Out top 50 businesses, like coffee shops. Things we are losing, can we actually say to artists there are walls you can graffiti on. What is important for people? Our streets are being gentrified. Where do the youths go? Community space, if there is none left, not just parks, I would take my 4 year old to parks every day, that is the only place I could take him. Not my thing to chat with everyone at the park, for the community by the community. Everything is really sterile, leaves no creativity.

**There is something about character. Authenticity and culture and how that is expressed in the public realm.**

Yes.

**Murals don't represent the community, and taking that thought one step further, is it reasonable to say you don't want all the public spaces to be the same way.**

Absolutely.

**Some of the areas of London, Brixton market, one of the reasons that is important is of culturally expressive, black people, a good thing, diversity, protecting the character. Recognising the difference in places.**

We want everyone to feel comfortable. I have a right to be comfortable. What about discovery, this magic of that?

The wardens can reanimate public space and can be mediators between groups. Also not good to have official wardens. A way to make that informal is to have public space reactivated. Like public farming. A presence of people. It is not about producing food and more about connecting.

We have urban farming but have fallout pollution because of pollution. We wouldn't want to eat that food.

### **Are there other possibilities?**

Yes, an environment manager, reclaiming spaces for growing. You have to be careful about how close you are to pollution. Also community notice boards and these things that are available. You often see the hoardings that are taken over by posters. Informing people, getting information for events from those posters. How can these be included? Lots of people who are looking for those things. Local papers.

Mayor is looking for ways to empower people to take part in their communities. Pilot projects. Without formalising into structures and exclusive, how can we ask the Mayor to set out principles? Or do we say sit back and let it happen?

Sit back a bit. Ask what is happening here? Maybe we will see trends. In accommodating growth workshop, there was more participation coming through, you can begin to engage that.

We are a community group; the family network group is part of a wider group. We have applied for membership from this trust that is governing an enormous part of the area. Because we are unincorporated we cannot get membership. Difficult to become involved. Maybe we will invite community groups, not charities.

It scares people a lot. People use the word charity without understanding what that means. There are loads of organisations that call themselves charities. We have found that in trying to support our members there is a fear of that red tape. People might not know you only need 2 people. Can print leaflets. A lot of people are intimidated by those structures.

**Shifting focus slightly, we want to look at where there is privately owned public space. Worry is that the restrictions upon use of that space mean that you can no longer consider these areas public space. Flip side is that the local budgets are shrinking and everything is shifting lower. The move is towards private developers taking care of public spaces. Places like Royal London, around City Hall, a corporate feeling space, skateboarding, on the other hand it is well planned if you have a wheelchair, used a lot of the time, people are not intimidated there. So a balance. Occupy movement in Paternoster Square adjacent to St Paul's, public/private space. Thoughts on how we deal with that? More likely to shift from public to privately own.**

**Publically own public space, rules around people drinking in the space, introduced through by-laws etc.**

Does public space get sold?

**Not usually.**

How does it become private?

**When private places are built, they begin to take care of them. Streets built by the developer are adopted by the public council or authority.**

Kings Cross.

Portobello Road.

Kings Cross was developed and the developer owns the area.

**The public spaces there are owned and managed by the developer but Camden council has adopted the roads. Because of the increase of pressure on budgets they may give authority back to the private owner.**

There are pockets of area that have been threatened, some has been redeveloped, and it is prime land. Awful lot of streets that could be redeveloped, not council buildings, maybe luxury flats. What percentage will be in the future?

**Good point. The last Mayor said the best position is that it is publically owned and publically managed. Most will continue to be like that. We could feed back to say that should be the case. But recognise there is a relatively small but increasing percentage that is privately owned and managed. Need to make sure that those spaces are as well managed as the public ones.**

Destroying night-time economy outside the developers remit, like pubs in Kilburn, closing at 1 instead of 3 am, and at the same time, King's Cross saying we will have a nightclub and cultural space, not publically owned.

Clubs are closing down because of the NIMBYs. Need to find that balance or ground.

Portobello square, massive redevelopment, designed default you feel eliminated, them and us scenario, new world I don't feel a part of.

Pubs and clubs are private enterprises but also public. I step into my home when I go outside, feeling comfortable, trying to make sure everyone feels good. Pubs and clubs have been there for a long time. In a large sense they are supported by the public, not private. These new spaces are not about that. These new spaces are defined by corporations.

**The work that was done around King's Cross was extensive in terms of the kinds of uses. They are not completely corporate; Giraffe, but they have theatre use, university.**

Those are exclusive. I am not interested in university. Performance and theatre.

## **Is there an effort that the Mayor can define things that are important to the local community?**

Make it easier for people to support communities.

Put forward community values, pride ourselves on diversity.

In terms of parks and green spaces in that same way as community assets, they should be for the public good. We are in real danger that those will get privatised, like Crystal Palace. We need to see these safeguarded.

Private entities might know better how to maintain them. These spaces exist. How to engage the animation of these spaces. Often an argument, the building is degrading, that may be demolished or prove that the community can maintain a public space. Perhaps a community group could promote initiatives.

I grew up in a council flat in west London, one of Boris' pilot projects to regenerate, but my mum wanted to stop this. Majority of redevelopment there would be 200 more social housing, they wouldn't have stopped it. In that space in the estate there is an enormous amount of green space. Beautiful private park on your doorstep. Not all people who want to see, they want to secure their home, work done in the parks, enormous amount of space the public can use. Problems with young males who have nowhere to go, sit where they want drinking beers, no community centres, one is church led, eliminates a certain element. When I grew up in the neighbourhood we had 5 youth centres, canoeing every Sunday, they would take us away. All of those kids from the estates would have been on the streets. Estates have got land, many people who have got land, want a community centre. Willing to be involved, I know there are wacky full on members as we know but there are a lot of people who have a lot to give, would love to give. Things can seem bureaucratic, might not be able to talk properly. How you offer people taking control of where you live. For example no car zones, reconnecting with their neighbours. My mum is British white 70 year old, has always been a minority on the estate, things are changing and integration is a problem, in the hardest hit areas, there is movement, and disenfranchised elders, desperation and so for the, how you make it easier for people to be involved.

Youth provision was cut. Can the GLA or the Mayor help with this? Many councils are looking at ways to get behind this to have an impact.

**I need to bring the conversation back to public space. We need to bring the definitions around, pubs, community centres and so forth. Common areas, accessible places that are available to everyone. Extending public spaces. It is another table perhaps.**

It is important for public spaces, for young people to be prioritised in public spaces. It is for the commons, it is not, a lot of public space is aimed at certain people. How much of that public space aimed at young people, where they can feel relaxed. Like chicken shops, issues around that, but young people might feel comfortable there. That is there space because there is no other space.

Providing an alternative to that space is important. Could local councils take that kind of engagement forward?

Yes. They may have encountered resistance in terms of representing their views. Some areas are desperate for the Mayor to create a shift. You have tenants organisations wrapping up the voices, then you are destined for more protests. Serious warning. Can't go around Granville centre, you can't just knock them down and expect people to sit back. Mayor needs to support.

Many surveys sent out, like carnival, the money that is put into creating the language in a certain way, pushing a voice in the community to be louder, you can do surveys, engage with the community, their reply is coerced. Voices of what they are saying, trying to push their voice, representing the community, it is only when it is in their interest. They make it feel inaccessible. Parks are accessible, they are open spaces. There are many children who go into parks but not buildings because there are closed doors.

**Looking at spaces that are privately owned like Westfield shopping centres get a bad rep because they are exclusive. On the other hand they are seen as safe spaces to be in, welcome, familiar. .**

I grew up next to Westfield; I can't stand it myself, but can see how certain people find it comforting. Comes back to balance. The industrial flat that used to be there, made the area what it was, was razed to the ground so that the mall can stretch out. Westway has a traveller's community, different reality, that is being threatened by an opportunity area expanding out. There is a space for Westfield and middle of the road spaces. There is also a need to retain the spaces that need more creative mindset to engage with them and make the most of them. You have a situation where the system is built to create a mindset that you like that space. I work around young people, built to create a factory line to create people who love spaces like Westfield. The so-called trouble makers.

In terms of opportunity areas, which is what the Mayor has, the so-called indigenous areas, developing those areas. Set against that he has to meet overall housing numbers.

**We need to come up with 3 things.**

Can I give you an example, there is a festival happening, a wooden structure, art based, packed, safe areas like my son and have a son be entertained. Allowing spaces more than Westfield. We can create more spaces. We have 23 acres in the heart of London that can be developed in this way, or protected. I have no idea, are we an anomaly? 70% of community use would be great.

There are successful examples of this; the media doesn't pick this up.

These things should be protected. Maybe we need to form co-ops.

**London is blessed relative to other cities. Three points to draw out. 1) engagement and civic pride, needing to engage people in a way that isn't bureaucratic. Aim is to build a place where neighbourliness is the norm 2) value of public space and making sure those measures are not just moving busses through. Value of local space, positive value on graffiti 3) not every place needs to be comfortable. Discomfort and intensity of use is also good 4) private space, a balance, design is important in terms of being welcoming and not corporate 5) parks and community spaces, not a statutory duty on private holders, better protection.**

Needs to be a lot of protection. Some form of authenticity. Like King's Cross, and British Land or Vauxhall, collaborating with the guy that started secret Cinema, 40 acres around Vauxhall,

very clever if that is the case, can redevelopment not involve authentic people? People move to Portobello and then it is polished and white. Gentrification. Spot the black person.

Any way to bring private spaces to standard of public space.

And mention council estates as an interesting space to protect in particular ways.

**Thank you very much.**