
INFRASTRUCTURES FOR DISORDER:

STRATEGIES FOR INTERVENTION IN THE PUBLIC SPACE
IN SOCIAL HOUSING NEIGHBOURHOODS.
THE CASE OF LONDON.

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INFRASTRUCTURES FOR DISORDER

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Esta tesis versa sobre el diseño del espacio público de las barriadas de viviendas sociales de post-guerra en Reino Unido. Estas barriadas carecen de vida urbana y han caído en un estado de obsolescencia. La tesis analiza la influencia del diseño del espacio público en esta falta de vida urbana y propone estrategias de diseño urbano que tengan la capacidad de transformar el espacio urbano de estas barriadas en un lugar de interacción social y actividades en público.

El análisis se centra en dos casos de estudio localizados en Londres: Loughborough Estate, Brixton, en el municipio de Lambeth, y Gascoyne Estate en el municipio de Hackney. Ambas son barriadas de postguerra proyectadas y construidas en la década de 1950 por el London County Council.

Las estrategias de diseño urbano propuestas toman como punto de partida la postura de Richard Sennett: las ciudades necesitan “ciertos tipos de desorden” para que las personas aprendan a tolerar lo diferente y a aceptar la incertidumbre. Sennett argumenta que el diseño urbano moderno se concibió desde el orden, lo cual no permite la espontaneidad y ha construido un espacio público alienante. La tesis revisa esta idea y la traslada a la situación actual de los polígonos de vivienda británicos, los cuales, después de décadas de abandono, transformaciones urbanas y cambios socio-económicos, todavía carecen de espacios para la improvisación. A través de la revisión del trabajo de Sennett, la tesis identifica afinidades entre su obra más reciente y el uso del concepto *assemblage* (ensamblaje, asociación, agenciamiento) en la teoría del urbanismo crítico. A partir de este hallazgo, la tesis usa el término *assemblage* como instrumento para aplicar la idea de desorden de Sennett a estrategias de diseño urbano que revitalicen el espacio público obsoleto de las barriadas en cuestión.

ABSTRACT

This thesis looks at the design of the public space of British post-war social housing neighbourhoods. It argues that these neighbourhoods have no urban life and have fallen into a state of obsolescence. The thesis analyses to what extent the design of their public realm is responsible of this lack of urban life and proposes urban design strategies that transform the urban space of these neighbourhoods into a realm for social interaction and activities in public.

The analysis focuses on two case studies located in London: Loughborough Estate in Brixton, London Borough of Lambeth, and Gascoyne Estate in Hackney. Both are post-war housing estates designed and built in the 1950s by the London County Council.

For proposing the urban design strategies, it takes Richard Sennett's approach that cities need "certain kinds of disorder" so people learn how to tolerate difference and to accept uncertainty. Sennett argues that there is too much order in modernist urban design, which does not allow spontaneity take place and has built an alienating public space. The thesis revisits this idea and brings it to the current situation of British housing estates, which after decades of decay, urban transformations, and socio-economic changes, are still in need of spaces for improvisation. In revisiting Sennett's work, it finds affinities between his more recent work and how 'assemblage' thinking has been used in critical urbanism. From this finding, the thesis uses 'assemblage' as a concept to explain how to take Sennett notions of disorder into urban design strategies that bring life to the obsolete public spaces of council estates.

Building on Sennett's "uses of disorder" and using 'assemblage' as a tool to apply it to the design of the public space, the thesis proposes the term "infrastructures for disorder":

Basándose en los “usos del desorden” de Sennett y utilizando *assemblage* como herramienta para aplicarlo al diseño del espacio público, la tesis propone el término “infraestructuras para el desorden”: estrategias de diseño urbano en el espacio público de las barriadas de viviendas sociales que creen condiciones para el uso no planeado del espacio público y que motiven la interacción social.

Las infraestructuras para el desorden presentan dos tipos de contribución: una contribución a la teoría crítica urbana y una contribución a la arquitectura y al diseño urbano. Por un lado, este término contribuye a la teoría crítica urbana ofreciendo una postura ante la intervención en estas barriadas. El uso de *assemblage*, que connota proceso, emergencia e incertidumbre, para implementar los “usos del desorden” de Sennett, lleva al uso del término ‘infraestructura’, que se refiere a que las estrategias propuestas pretenden ser el comienzo de un proceso, crear condiciones iniciales. Por otro lado, las infraestructuras para el desorden presentan una contribución a la arquitectura y el diseño urbano: proponen estrategias de diseño urbano usando términos que son comúnmente utilizados por arquitectos y urbanistas: ‘superficie’, ‘sección’ y ‘proceso’. Las estrategias en superficie y en sección proponen una reconfiguración física del espacio público a través de una suma de pequeños cambios que atienden a los problemas del espacio público descritos en la primera parte de la tesis. Las estrategias sobre el proceso proponen una metodología para llevar a cabo las estrategias en superficie y en sección, haciendo especial énfasis en la necesidad de reformar y mejorar constantemente el espacio público de estas barriadas. A través de estas contribuciones, la tesis ofrece una alternativa a la forma de intervenir en el espacio público de las barriadas de viviendas sociales que puede ser utilizada por profesionales de la arquitectura y el diseño urbano. Su implementación debe tener en cuenta que estas estrategias son pautas flexibles que deben ser adaptadas dependiendo del contexto.

urban design interventions in the public space of social housing neighbourhoods that create conditions for the unplanned use of the public space and encourage social interaction.

The infrastructures for disorder present two kinds of contribution: a contribution to critical urban theory and a contribution to architecture and urban design. On the one hand, they contribute to critical urban theory offering an approach to intervene in these neighbourhoods. Using ‘assemblage’, which connotes process, emergence and uncertainty, to implement Sennett’s uses of disorder leads to the use of the term ‘infrastructure’, which means that the strategies proposed aim to be the beginning of a process, to create initial conditions. On the other hand, the infrastructures for disorder present a contribution to architecture and urban design: they propose urban design guidelines using terms commonly used by architects and urban designers: ‘surface’, ‘section’ and ‘process’. The surface and section strategies propose a physical reconfiguration of the public realm through a sum of small changes that address the problems of the public space described in the first part of the thesis. The process set of strategies functions as a method to implement the surface and section strategies, making special emphasis in the need of constant upgrade of the public space of these neighbourhoods. Through these contributions, the thesis offers an alternative approach to intervention in the public space of social housing neighbourhoods that can be taken by practitioners. Their implementation must acknowledge that these are flexible guidelines that need to be adapted depending on the different contexts.

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INTRODUCTION

Urban public space is the site for the expression of civic culture, where ordinary life and human relationships unfold. The relationship between public space and civic behaviour can be reflected in the growing interest in regenerating public spaces that has taken place in Europe since the end of the twentieth century. However, this has been mostly reflected in creating well-designed public spaces in the historic centres, while social housing neighbourhoods remain abandoned and has fallen into a state of obsolescence.

Social housing neighbourhoods were built in Europe mainly between the 1950s and the 1970s. Depending on the particular context of each country and each city, they responded to specific needs. In many European cities, the construction of these neighbourhoods sought to tackle the housing shortage after World War II (WWII). After decades of decay, urban transformations, and socio-economic changes, these urban areas have become obsolete. Their state of obsolescence is reflected in their public realm, which lacks public life and does not encourage people to develop activities and socialize.

In London, the debate on how to intervene in these neighbourhoods has been present during the last decades and has gained importance since the end of the 1990s. London accomplished a large reconstruction process in the post-war period. The construction of housing estates supposed a concentration of poverty, a fact that has influenced in the bad reputation of these neighbourhoods and which has been crucial in the subsequent urban transformations that they have suffered. Today, London's housing estates, which are scattered all across the city, and which once were built seeking the egalitarian society of the welfare state (Cordell, 2010), are seen as signs of inequality and urban decline. They are places with no urban life, which have become obsolete.

0.1 Object of study

The object of study of this thesis is the public space of social housing neighbourhoods. As the first chapter will argue, this thesis will attempt to address the lack of urban life in the public space of such neighbourhoods. The lack of urban life is a sign of urban obsolescence, which makes necessary a reflection on how the public space of these neighbourhoods could be upgraded.

The factors that have contributed to the obsolescence of these neighbourhoods are quite complex and diverse:

- * There are structural and socio-economic factors that have conditioned city life in these neighbourhoods and which have made them enclaves of poverty and deprivation.
- * Issues such as property and type of tenure have also influenced wealth distribution in the city. The subsequent policies—such as Thatcherism’s Right to Buy—have had different outputs and influenced the social composition of the neighbourhoods.
- * There are social and cultural issues, which in some occasions are linked to the structural factors and to the property/tenure policies, which also influences social relationships in the neighbourhoods.
- * The causes of obsolescence can be also linked to the housing typologies, which need to be flexible to adapt to the high variety of family structures that housing estates can hold in such a diverse city like London.

- * They can also deal with the maintenance and investment of the houses and the communal spaces. In many occasions, councils and local authorities have not been able to afford the maintenance of a large housing stock.
- * Technological obsolescence can be another factor, which includes issues such as environmental sustainability and other building facilities.
- * The management of these neighbourhoods, its communal areas, its public services and its housing stock is also another fact that conditions city life, the engagement of people with local activities, their access to services, and social well-being.
- * Furthermore, it has been strongly argued that the spatial configuration of these neighbourhoods and its urban design also hinders co-presence and therefore social relationships in the public space (See the work of Space Syntax: for example Hanson, 2000). In addition to the spatial configuration, the design of the public space itself and of all the material elements that shape the built environment can have a strong influence in how is “life between buildings” (See Gehl, 2011 [1971]).

Among these factors, this thesis will focus on the design of the public space and on the physical aspects of the urban environment. It will acknowledge that there are other factors that influence, but the scope of the thesis will concentrate on the public realm.

The problem of urban obsolescence of social housing neighbourhoods affects many European cities. This thesis will focus in the case of London. The reason for choosing London is the interest in how they were conceived, how they have evolved and their current situation. In London, as in many British cities, the socio-political situation after the war made possible that many modernist architects participated in the construction of

the welfare state, which made modern architecture the style for the new city that the post-war governments were aiming for. London's housing estates soon became associated to crime and deprivation, which have resulted in various debates in media, politics and urban studies about their future, their regeneration, and even about their demolition as a solution to the problem. Currently, many of these neighbourhoods are still in a very disadvantaged situation and the debate about their future is still on. Their deprived situation means that the studying the design of the public realm must acknowledge that the inhabitants of these neighbourhoods may belong to vulnerable social groups that are susceptible of suffering exclusion or difficulties. Depending on the specific context of each neighbourhood, these social groups can be, among others, young people, the elderly, or certain ethnic minorities. The design of the public space by itself cannot tackle a socioeconomic problem that has much more complex reasons. However, the design of the public realm can improve the liveability of an area and offer a more active urban life to the neighbours.



0.2 Background

As it happened in many European cities, in London, the housing shortage after WWII led to the construction of large tracts of social housing. In Great Britain, the post-war governments took on the responsibility of building the welfare state and providing housing to slum-dwellers. The unhealthy Victorian city of slums had raised the alarm at the end of the nineteenth century about the need to provide housing for the poor (Hall, 1988). Building the welfare state involved demolishing working-class districts and moving their inhabitants to newly built housing estates. This process, known as slum clearance, became more intense in the post-war period, carried out in conjunction with the reconstruction of urban sites damaged by WWII bombings.

The British case is relevant due to the active role that modern British architects played in the reconstruction process. The socio-political situation after the war made possible that they participated in the government's objective of building the welfare state. It is significant that some of them held positions at the public administrations (Mumford, 2000: 169-170, quoting Richards, 1947), such as Robert Matthew and Sir J. Leslie Martin, who were successively Chief Architects of the London County Council (LCC) (Hall, 1988: 225) and conducted groups of talented young architects to design the housing estates during the 1950s (Carolin, 2008: 106). The role of modern architects in the reconstruction process did not only happen from within the administration, but also private firms working with authorities such as Skinner, Bailey & Lubetkin, who designed housing schemes in Bethnal Green ('Bethnal Green: Building and Social Conditions after 1945 Social and Cultural Activities', 1998) (Figure 0.1). This close relationship between architects and

Figure 0.1: Cranbrook Estate, designed by Skinner, Bailey & Lubetkin, Bethnal Green, London Borough of Tower Hamlets, London, UK. April 2008. Photograph: Chris Guy (CC-BY-NC-ND 2.0).

governments made possible the participation of modern architects in the construction of many of these housing estates.

The reactions to the reconstruction process emerged as soon as the post-war housing estates were being built and the slum-dwellers were being relocated in them. The earlier reactions came from urban sociologists such as Michael Young and Peter Willmott (1957), who identified the problems of relocating families from the inner-city slums to new suburban housing states, and also from other architects, urbanists and sociologists that were critical with modern architecture, who blamed modernist urban designers for creating alienating spaces where communal life was not possible. In the following years, the reactions that blamed directly modern architecture for the social problems of social housing neighbourhoods (See Newman, 1972) proliferated to the point that British council estates and their characteristic architecture came to be associated with social problems, poverty and criminality.

Among the diverse reactions against modernist urban developments and the process of relocating poor families on the new housing estates, this thesis finds particularly interesting Richard Sennett's contribution in his book *The uses of disorder: personal identity and city life* (Sennett, 1970). Sennett's contribution to the debate is that he claims that "certain kinds of disorder need to be increased in city life" (Sennett, 1970: xxiii), so people become more tolerant towards difference and more prepared to face unexpected situations in the public space. He proposes that certain kinds of disorder can lead to negotiations and social interaction in the urban space. He criticizes post-war modernist urban developments for avoiding any kind of disorder and for seeking to achieve an ideal of communal life free of conflict. This brings a very interesting debate that has

been addressed by urban studies since then: the idea the act of removing disorder from the city by modernist architects and planners had the effect of removing the spirit of the city (Campkin, 2013: 1, quoting Duffy, 2002) and building an alienating public space. This thesis revisits Sennett's approach to apply it to the current situation of precisely the urban developments that he criticized four decades ago. As the first chapter of the thesis will argue, the subsequent interventions in the housing estates have aimed to remove any 'inappropriate' use of the public realm, which has restricted its use and has transformed the open spaces of these neighbourhoods into places that do not encourage citizens to develop their ordinary life there. This makes pertinent to reconsider how to intervene in the public space of these neighbourhoods and to take as point of departure Sennett's notion of urban disorder.

This debate on how to intervene in social housing neighbourhoods has gained importance recently both in urban studies literature and in the political agenda of public authorities. In the UK, this is particularly visible since the New Labour Party won the general elections in 1997 and established as one of the strong points of their political agenda regenerating the urban spaces that were suffering urban decline (Campkin, 2013:2). The Urban Task Force, established by the government in 1998 and led by Richard Rogers (See Urban Task Force, 1999, 2005), proposes in its reports a series of actions for achieving the 'Urban Renaissance'. The public space plays a very important role in Rogers's idea of 'Urban Renaissance', with special emphasis on creating well-designed public spaces in the inner city.

The political agenda of the New Labour government also included a major problem that had been identified: the urban decline of the housing estates. The new government

claimed for regenerating these urban areas where the poorest people in the country had been forgotten by the previous governments (Campkin 2013: 97, quoting Blair, 1997). This concern has a great presence in the Urban Task Force (1999, 2005) reports. The latest report (Urban Task Force, 2005) includes a full chapter—Chapter 2: “Social well-being”—that addresses the regeneration of housing estates and makes recommendations to improve the living conditions of these neighbourhoods.

Despite the state’s intention of building socially-mixed and sustainable communities that live in renewed neighbourhoods with well-designed public spaces, close to amenities and public services, the reality is that housing estates are still today in a very disadvantaged situation. Their public spaces lack urban life and are in need of upgrade.

0.3 Literature review

Once defined the object of study and explained its context, it is possible to identify the initial keywords of this thesis and accomplish a brief literature review that will help to define the objectives. These keywords are:

- * Neighbourhood
- * Urban obsolescence
- * Public space
- * Regeneration
- * Urban design
- * Great Britain
- * London

The literature review will look at books, book chapters, article, doctoral thesis, conference papers, and reports¹. Attending to the outlined keywords, the literature review will be divided in three:

¹ The search engines, library catalogues and databases consulted has been: 'Teseo', n.d. [Online]. Base de datos de tesis doctorales, Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte, Gobierno de España. Available on the World Wide Web: <https://www.educacion.gob.es/teseo>; 'Scopus', n.d. [Online]. Elsevier. Available on the World Wide Web: <https://www.scopus.com>; 'Web of Knowledge' [v.5.12], n.d. [Online]. Thomson Reuters. Available at the World Wide Web: <http://apps.webofknowledge.com>; 'Dialnet', n.d. [Online]. Fundación Dialnet, Universidad de la Rioja. Available on the World Wide Web: <http://dialnet.unirioja.es>; Google Académico, n.d. [Online]. Google. Available on the World Wide Web: <http://scholar.google.es>; 'Fama: Catálogo de la Biblioteca de la Universidad de Sevilla', n.d. [Online]. Available on the World Wide Web: <http://fama.us.es>; 'UCL Library Services: Explore', n.d. [Online]. University College London. Available on the World Wide Web: http://ucl-primio.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/primio_library/libweb/action/search.do; 'UCL Discovery', n.d. [Online]. University College London. Available on the World Wide Web: <http://discovery.ucl.ac.uk>; 'RIBA: British Architecture Library Catalogue', n.d. [Online], Available on the World Wide Web: <http://riba.sirsidynix.net.uk/>

- * **Public space regeneration:** Keywords: public space, regeneration, urban design.
- * **Obsolete social housing neighbourhoods:** Keywords: neighbourhood; urban obsolescence, urban design.
- * **Interventions in the public space of obsolete social housing neighbourhoods. The case of London:** Keywords: neighbourhood; urban obsolescence; public space; regeneration; urban design; Great Britain; London.

0.3.1 Public space regeneration

In Spain, and to certain extent in Europe, the paradigm of public space regeneration is Barcelona's urban renovation during the 1980s and 1990s, which pedestrianized and repaved small plazas at the Ciutat Vella, carried on major urban renewals in deprived inner districts such as El Raval, and connected peripheral neighbourhoods to the city through new "ramblas". The urban regeneration strategies of Barcelona have been considered as exemplar and have influenced many European cities. Actually, many of the recommendations of the Urban Task Force for achieving what Rogers define as the "Urban Renaissance" have been inspired in Barcelona's policies for recovering the public spaces of the inner city. Actually, Rogers and Power (2000: 3) start their book using the example of Barcelona as a compact city to introduce their idea of the urban renaissance.

Barcelona's urban projects and strategies for recovering public space have been accompanied by an outstanding academic research that have analysed the outputs of many of those regenerations projects. The Department of Urbanism and Planning² of the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, whose mentor has been Manuel de Solá Morales, has produced an important number of doctoral thesis on analysis and critical thinking on public space.

Estanislau Roca and Miquel Martí (2013a) have recently edited the book *Public Space: experiences, projects and management*, which includes a series of articles by researchers of the Grup de Recerca en Urbanisme (Research Group of Urbanism) from the mentioned

Department of Urbanism and Planning. Roca and Martí, in their article “About public space and urban project”, highlight precisely this fact: Barcelona has been an “exceptional laboratory” (Roca and Martí, 2013b: 16) for studying public space regeneration and the Department of Urbanism and Planning have produced a significant reflection on these processes, which has produced very interesting doctoral thesis on public space. In their article, they go through the evolution of the city—and its public space policies—and they review the parallel scientific production of their department. They mention relevant doctoral thesis on public space such as those by Josep M^a Fortià (1999), Enric Batlle (2002), Jaume Barnada (2002), and Miquel Martí (2004).

The book *Espacio público: ciudad y ciudadanía* (Public Space: city and citizens) by Jordi Borja and Zaida Muxí (2003) accomplish a deep analysis of the public space regeneration projects that have taken place in Barcelona since the 1980s until the turn of the twenty-first century. It affirms that Barcelona’s initiatives of recovering public spaces influenced many other European cities, creating a new conscious of the public realm. The book advocates for building the city over the existing city (“hacer ciudad en la ciudad”) (Borja and Muxí, 2003: 43), an approach that has been taken by Barcelona City Council since the 1980s. This urban projects and strategies have included opening up new squares to regenerate degraded historic centres, creating new “ramblas” in peripheral sites by transforming traffic roads into pedestrian promenades, creating public spaces from private commercial developments, and recovering obsolete industrial and port sites transforming them into public spaces (Borja and Muxí, 2003: 136-137). The book advocates for inventing or enhancing “new centres” by recovering obsolete urban areas. The book does not only describe these urban regeneration processes, but is also critical with the outcomes that this interest in the public space has had in the turn of the

twenty-first century: public spaces based on retail shopping, and the gentrification of the inner city.

The influence of Barcelona's urban policies in creating a new culture of public space in Europe was also identified by Albert García Espuche and Teresa Navas (1999) in the book *La Reconquesta d'Europa* (The Reconquest of Europe), which was published in occasion to an exhibition of the Centre of Contemporary Culture of Barcelona (CCCB) with the same name. The book exposes that, after decades of urban developments that prioritize traffic and not spaces for human relations, a new culture of public space has re-emerged in all Europe, where many cities are recovering spaces for their citizens.

This fact is also explained in the research project coordinated by Miquel Martí, which results are exposed in the article "Public space policies in European cities" (Martí, 2013). The project is a comparative research between nice cities in Europe: Barcelona, Seville, Lyon, Paris, Amsterdam, The Hague, Rotterdam, Berlin and Rome. It studies that public space policies, strategies and urban projects that have taken place in these cities in the last decades. The article explains how in these different cities, the redesign of streets and squares has been the genesis of this culture of public space. One of the facts that have provoked this has been the leadership of public authorities in carrying on these projects. The tools that have been the development projects at a city scale and the individual public space urban design projects. Overall, the article shows a positive review of how public space renewal has been approached in Europe.

From looking at these pieces of research on public space regeneration, it can be concluded that the last two decades of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first century have been characterised for a growing interest in public space regeneration in all Europe.

However, this interest has gone towards recovering the historic centres, building new avenues in the periphery, and accomplishing big infrastructure projects, while little has been done on public space regeneration of obsolete social housing neighbourhoods. This can be observed in academic research: while there is an extensive research on public space regeneration, the public space of these neighbourhoods has not been sufficiently studied. In Spain, there is not any concluded doctoral thesis that address specifically urban design intervention in the public realm of obsolete social housing neighbourhoods³. The theses that have studied the public space of social housing neighbourhoods have done it from the fields of community studies and human geography, analysing what kind of relationships unfold in these public spaces (See Berroeta Torres, 2012), and analysing the policies of intervention in the neighbourhoods, making special emphasis in methods of public participation (See Díaz Cortés, 2009). None of these theses is developed in architecture or planning schools, neither is approached from the urban design discipline. Nevertheless, the public space of obsolete of obsolete social housing neighbourhoods is one of the main topics that have been discussed in recent debates in diverse kind of forums: conferences, workshops, online platforms, and articles. This thesis aims to fill this gap in academic research: to accomplish a doctoral thesis that addresses specifically the urban design of the public space of social housing neighbourhoods and proposes strategies for intervention.

3 Search on Teseo, the database of doctoral thesis concluded in Spain (<http://www.educacion.es/teseo>, accessed 2013-12-30), the doctoral theses defended between 2005/2006 and 2013/2014 which include in its title or abstract the words: *barri** and *espacio** and *público**. The result only showed two theses that deal with the public realm of neighbourhoods (Berroeta Torres, 2012; Díaz Cortés, 2009). None of them are developed in architecture or planning schools and, by the information provided in the abstract, it seems that they do not propose strategies for design interventions in the public spaces. They approach the issue from the field of community studies and human geography. Another search has been thesis that include in title or abstract the words *polígono** and *vivienda** (housing estate) with no date limit and it did not show any result specific on public space of housing estates.

O.3.2 Obsolete social housing neighbourhoods

The obsolescence of social housing neighbourhoods is an emergent topic in academic research in Spain. While in other countries such as Great Britain or the United States the intellectuals on urban design and urban studies soon identified the necessity of intervening in post-war social housing neighbourhoods to address their social problems (See Jacobs, 1961; Newman, 1972; Coleman, 1985; and the work of Space Syntax, for example Hillier et al, 1983), this debate has arrived later to Spain.

The debate on intervening and “recycling” (Valero Ramos, 2010) social housing neighbourhoods that show symptoms of obsolescence has emerged in Spain in the turn of the twenty-first century and has become much stronger with the financial crisis, which have evidenced the need of updating the existing housing stock and built environment to the new technical requirements and to the changing necessities of the society. This interest reflects the idea of “growing inside” (Valero Ramos and Chacón Linares, 2009) the city in opposition to the urban sprawl that has characterised Spanish cities since the 1960s. The growing interest on reactivating social housing neighbourhoods have generated a very interesting debate on how to intervene in these neighbourhoods. This has been reflected in different forums where academics, professionals, and public authorities participate: online platforms, conferences, workshops, academic journals, academic research groups that are carrying on or have already accomplished funded research projects on this topic, the drafting of manual of good practices, policies for neighbourhood refurbishment, and particular cases of intervention in social housing neighbourhood that combine urban regeneration with social programmes that tackle exclusion.

Mapping this debate on ‘obsolete social housing neighbourhoods’ would require a longer literature review section. Since it is not the aim of this thesis to accomplish a broad and extensive literature review, it will focus on:

- * Concluded doctoral thesis.
- * Accomplished funded research projects.
- * Reflections and pieces of research on a case study.

Although intervention in obsolete social housing neighbourhoods has generated an intense debate, in Spain, the production of concluded doctoral thesis in the field of architecture regarding this topic has been very low⁴.

The first doctoral thesis in Spain regarding this topic is by Dorotea Blos (2000): Los poligonos de vivienda social. Perspectivas hacia su recuperacion en España, Francia y Brasil (The social housing estates. Perspectives towards its recovery in Spain, France and Brazil), directed by Amador Ferrer Aixala at the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya. Blos’s thesis seeks to look for urban policies to regenerate these neighbourhoods, studying the already carried on interventions and the problems in Spain, France and Brazil. It

4 This is concluded from searching in the database of doctoral thesis in Spain, Teseo. The first general search has looked in either in the title or in the abstract the words poligono* and vivienda* (housing estate). This first search has no date limit. From this search, it has been found the thesis by Dorotea Blos (2000) and Martín Fernández Prado (2010), that deal with analysis and intervention on housing estates. It has also been found the thesis by López Medina, which focuses on process or participation, and has a part that deals with participation processes in a housing estate. A further search has looked in the title or in the abstract of the thesis between 2005/2006 and 2013/2014 the following words: barri* and obsole*; barri* and espacio* and público*; barri* and regen*; recicel* urban*; obsole* and urban*; rehab* and barri*. This search has show only two cases that deal specifically with architectural and urban design interventions in obsolete social housing neighbours: the theses of Eva Chacón Linares (2012) and Montserrat Solano Rojo (2012), both supervised by Elisa Valero, Universidad de Granada.

includes suggestions in many aspects, including the urban layout of the neighbourhoods, the relationship between the neighbourhood and the surroundings, and policies and management of the interventions.

More recently, there are two remarkable doctoral theses that have dealt specifically with the necessity of intervening in social housing neighbourhoods and have proposed design guidelines or recommendations. These are the theses of Eva Chacón Linares (2012) and Monserrat Solano Rojo (2012), both supervised by Elisa Valero Ramos at the Universidad de Granada. Both theses advocate for the conservation and recycling of the residential architecture from modernism.

In the case of Solano Rojo (2012), she analyses two neighbourhoods—one in Italy and one in France—, their design, their construction, their evolution, and the different interventions that have been implemented in them. It also mentions the threats of demolition that these neighbourhoods have undergone and proposes the “recycling” of the neighbourhoods as a more effective approach. It addresses the issue of the public realm, particularly when it describes the design of one of the two neighbourhoods, which was inspired by the principles of the Team 10. It also analyses the interventions in the public space that these neighbourhoods have undergone. However, it is not the central topic of the thesis. The issue is approached from the position of conservation and reactivation of emblematic architecture from modernism.

Chacón Linares’s (2012) thesis, in contrast, is more methodological than analytical. It establishes indicators of obsolescence and identifies elements that encourage regeneration: “activadores de reciclaje” (activators of recycling). It also proposes a work methodology

for projects of urban recycling. Chacón Linares's thesis has a very broad approach to the issue of recycling obsolete social housing neighbourhoods, covering technological, design, and social issues.

Other doctoral thesis that has deal with intervention in social housing neighbourhoods is by Martín Fernández Prado (2010), directed by José Juan González-Cebrián Tello at the Universidade da Coruña, which focuses in the case of housing estates in Galicia, Spain. Fernández Prado's thesis analyses the origin and evolution of housing estates in Galicia with the aim of understanding their urban situation and defining a methodology for future interventions in them. This thesis has a very important analytical part that covers the region of Galicia.

Finally, there is also a doctoral thesis that deals with the intervention in housing estates. This is the case of Jose María López Medina (2012), directed by Esteban de Manuel at the Universidad de Sevilla. This thesis is not specific about housing estates. It focuses in process of participation in matter of dwelling and contains a part of the thesis that focuses on a case study of a deprived housing estate in Seville: Polígono Sur. In this case, the thesis focuses in understanding design as a process.

In addition to these few doctoral thesis completed on the topic, there are some funded research projects that have already been accomplished that deal with regenerating social housing estates. Recent call for projects has conceded funding to more projects related

to this topic⁵, so it is predictable that quite soon there will be an increasing amount of scientific contributions on this field.

“Reciclajes Urbanos: Recualificación del tejido residencial para un desarrollo sostenible”

⁶ (Urban recycling: requalification of the residential urban fabric for a sustainable development), led by Elisa Valero Ramos (2009-2011), Universidad de Granada. Valero Ramos’s research group is carrying on an outstanding academic research on interventions in social housing neighbourhoods. The fact that Valero Ramos has directed the two mentioned doctoral thesis is a good indicator of the active scientific production of her group. The research project proposes “recycling” instead of “refurbishing” (Valero Ramos, 2010: 9) the neighbourhoods, which implies seeking for a new life for these neighbourhoods, not just repairing. They also oppose to demolition and redevelopment and advocate for a more sustainable approach.

Regeneración urbana integrada, la intervención en polígonos de vivienda de 1960 a 1980. Integración urbana, cohesión social y responsabilidad ambiental⁷ (Integrated urban regeneration, intervention in housing estate built between 1960 and 1980. Urban integration, social cohesion, and environmental responsibility), directed by Agustín

⁵ See, for example, the research contracts of the Agencia de Obra Pública de la Consejería Fomento y Vivienda de la Junta de Andalucía, which is currently funding various research projects on this field.

⁶ Funded by the Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación. VI Plan Nacional I+D+i (Ministry of Science and Innovation. 6th National Plan of Research, Development and Innovation).

⁷ Funded by the Ministry of Science and Innovation. National Plan for Research and Development 2008-2011. Sub-programme of fundamental non-oriented research projects 2012. Abstract available online: <http://www2.aq.upm.es/Departamentos/Urbanismo/blogs/re-hab/plan-nacional-de-idi-2011/>, accessed 2014-02-08.

Hernández Aja (2012), Department of Urbanism and Planning, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid. This is a one-year-long research project which objective is to analyse the interventions that have been carried on in these neighbourhoods in the past twenty years with the aim of understanding their impacts and their consequences. The project has created an online platform on housing estate regeneration—RE-HAB⁸—, it has organised a seminar on this topic, and it has obtained conclusions to develop a model for urban regeneration that will be developed in a further three-year project⁹. This three-year project has not been accomplished yet.

Finally, this literature review on social housing neighbourhoods will look at pieces of research derived from the analysis of experiences on the ground. Continuing with Barcelona as “laboratory of urban experimentation”, it is remarkable the case of regeneration of La Mina, a deprived neighbourhood from the 1970s located in Sant Adrià de Besòs, Barcelona, next to the Forum site. The beginning of its process of regeneration started at the turn of the twenty-first century—coinciding with the construction of the Forum—

8 RE-HAB Online platform: <http://www2.aq.upm.es/Departamentos/Urbanismo/blogs/re-hab/>, accessed 2014-02-08.

9 Estrategia para el diseño y evaluación de planes y programas de regeneración urbana integrada. La intervención en las periferias españolas a través de las áreas de rehabilitación integral y el programa URBAN (Strategy for the design and evaluation of integrated urban regeneration plans and programmes. Intervention on Spanish urban peripheries through the areas of integral refurbishment and the URBAN programme. Funded by the Ministry of Science and Innovation. National Plan for Research and Development 2008-2011. Sub-programme of fundamental non-oriented research projects 2012. Abstract available online: <http://www2.aq.upm.es/Departamentos/Urbanismo/blogs/re-hab/proyectos-investigacion/plan-nacional-idi-2013-15/>, accessed 2014-02-08.

and currently most of the planned works have been accomplished. The regeneration has included both urban design strategies and social programmes. The urban regeneration project has been considered as exemplar¹⁰ and has received various awards. Although it is soon to evaluate its impact on the social fabric of the neighbourhood, it has already generated articles and forums of debate on the effects that this process of regeneration has had.

Firstly, the architects that have coordinated the urban design transformations of this regeneration process—Sebastià Jornet, Carles Llop and Joan Enric Pastor—have published articles and reports that describe the regeneration process, the scope of the works, and the first outcomes of this process (See Jornet, Llop and Pastor, 2004, 2008, 2009; López de Lucio, 2009). As this articles and reports describe, the regeneration process has included a significant public space operation, which is the construction of a new “rambla” that connects the Parque del Besòs with the Littoral Front. This public space is proposed as the centre of the project.

The regeneration process generated debate since the beginning of its implementation. This can be seen in the book published in occasion to the research seminar *Urbanisme i barris en dificultats. El cas de la Mina*, edited by Fundació Carles Pi i Sunyer (2004). This book includes contributions by Jordi Borja and Mireia Fiori (2004), who make a critical reflection on the articulation between urban design intervention and social inclusion programmes, by Joan Roca (2004), who looks at the evolution of the neighbourhood, by

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See articles that put it as example of good practice, for example, Sainz Gutiérrez (2011).

Sebastiá Jorner (2004), one of the architects coordinator of the regeneration, who explain the objectives of the intervention, and other urban thinkers.

The interventions on the public space in these neighbourhoods are also generating reflection on academic research. The article by María Daniela Idrovo Alvarado and Pilar García Almirall (2013), using the case study of the regeneration process of La Mina, looks at how certain urban design measures can reduce crime. They conclude that urban design can contribute do reduce crime but they need to go hand-by-hand with social programmes that promote inclusion.

From this brief literature review of obsolete social housing neighbourhoods, it can be concluded the following:

- * Since the issue of intervening in obsolete social housing neighbourhoods is an emergent research topic in Spain, there are very few doctoral thesis concluded that address this topic. However, an intense debate is taking place in online platforms, academic journals, recently concluded or on-going academic research projects, conferences and other forums. The mentioned doctoral theses are outstanding pieces of research that cover broadly methodologies of intervention in these neighbourhoods. However, to deepen on the different research lines outlined in the different pieces of research and forums, it is necessary the production of doctoral theses that look a particular factors that can tackle the obsolescence of these neighbourhoods. What the present thesis aims to address

is precisely one of the factors that need to be studied in depth: the design of the public space.

- * The cases of intervention in social housing neighbourhoods in Spain are quite recent, which makes difficult to extract conclusions from the impact of the transformations of the neighbourhoods. Some of the mentioned theses (Chacón Linares, 2012; Solano Rojo, 2012) have looked at other European cases, where the neighbourhoods have undergone transformations with diverse approaches and also threats of demolition. In the case of the present thesis, it looks at the case of London. In Great Britain, the debate on social housing neighbourhoods regeneration has been present for decades. The way to approach regeneration by public authorities has undergone through different approaches that are related to particular political periods, which has affected differently intervention on the public space of these neighbourhoods.

0.3.3 Interventions in the public space of obsolete social housing neighbourhoods. The case of London

The journal *Architectural Design* published an issue in 2012 under the title of “London (Re)generation” (edited by David Littlefield, 2012). It is significant the fact that in a special issue about regeneration there is not any case of intervention in deprived social housing neighbourhood, which are areas of the city that are in urgent need of upgrade. The only case that appears is the urban renewal operation of Elephant and Castle (Littlefield, 2012: 120-123), which involves the complete demolition and replacement of a council estate with a new master plan that attempts to build a ‘compact city’, creating streets with frontage, and piazzas. The article is not critical with the intervention. It just describes briefly the redevelopment of the area repeating the arguments of the designers. The issue of the journal focuses mainly in three processes of regeneration¹¹: the docklands, the Olympic site, and public space strategies such as the ‘100 public spaces’ promoted by Mayor Livingston and the ‘Urban Renaissance’ proposed by Richards Rogers and the Urban Task Force, which influenced the first London Plan of 2004. This reflects what has happened in the first decade of the twenty-first century: there is a new conscience of public space, but this has been materialized in recovering inner-city town centres and in major urban renewal projects. In contrast, although some attempts of neighbourhood renewal have been carried on, there are deprived neighbourhoods all across the city that remain in need of physical intervention and social programmes that tackle social exclusion.

¹¹ There are also other kinds of developments mentioned such as the Green Enterprise District, the Barking Town Centre, and the Overground.

The Urban Task Force was appointed by the New Labour government to produce a manual of recommendations for the future development of British cities. Its report, *Towards an urban renaissance*, was published in 1999. A year later, Rogers and Power published *Cities for a small country*, a book that is a “follow-up to the Urban Task Force report” (Rogers and Power, 2000: viii). An additional report has been produced in 2005: *Towards a strong urban renaissance*. The reports and the book pay special attention to housing estate regeneration. The key points that the report proposes are, among others: ensure mixed tenures, income and ethnicity; refurbishing and adapting the housing stock to the current needs; involve residents, community organisations and local authorities in making the decisions about the provision of services and in the delivery of them; increase the provision of amenities and services close to affordable housing, with special emphasis in the provision of activities for your people such as “sport, supervised open space and imaginative use of the arts and music” (Urban Task Force, 2005: 11). At the time of writing, nearly fifteen years after the first report was published, certain attempts of regeneration have been carried on. However, as mentioned, other kind of regeneration processes have been prioritised.

The Urban Task Force have influenced other initiatives by local authorities, such as the creation of Design for London¹², and its plan to recover ‘100 public spaces’. Peter Bishop (2012), who was director of Design for London, explains his approach to regeneration through the work of Design for London. He explains that the local authority’s role has “moved from provider to enabler” (Bishop, 2012: 29) and claims that the role for public

12 Design for London, previously the Architecture and Urbanism Unity, was created in 2006 by Mayor Livingston. Its first director was Peter Bishop.

authorities is to “address market imperfections” (Bishop, 2012: 30). In addition this reflection on the combination of private and public investment, he makes very interesting reflections about how to approach regeneration that could be implemented in housing estate regeneration, such as using the exiting social capital, and physical features of the place (Bishop, 2012: 29) and proposing flexible strategies that can adapt to changing conditions.

Matthew Carmona (2012) describes this approach of combination of public and private investment as the ‘third way’¹³, which has been the norm since 1997 onwards. Carmona analyses the limitations of the ‘100 public spaces’ scheme: five years have the plan was proposed, only five public spaces had been regenerated. He describes this period as having a “stronger vision of the city” (Carmona, 2012: 38), but also describes the difficulties of the implementation since they needed the involvement of the boroughs and of the private sector.

The urban policies carried on from 1997 onwards suppose a shift from the predominantly market-driven approach of the period 1980-1997. It is true that public space regeneration on town centres has predominated over regeneration in housing estates. However, the different attempts of regeneration and the diverse approaches have generated a very intense debate on the urban renewal and regeneration processes in social housing neighbourhoods that can help to rethink these urban sites and redirect the strategies for

13 The ‘first way’ is the market-driven, which took place from 1980 until 1997, and the ‘second way’ is when the state takes “a much stronger leadership role” (Carmona, 2012: 38), which took place in the post-war period.

the coming years. Then, this literature review exposes some of the voices on this debate in order to define how this thesis aims to contribute to it:

Jonah Lowenfeld (2008) “Estate regeneration in practice: The Mozart Estate, Westminster, 1985-2004”. This paper compares different approaches to housing estate regeneration using a case study: Mozart Estate, a neighbourhood that have undergone a regeneration process with different phases over a period of nearly twenty years. The paper exposes the debate between two different approaches: Alice Coleman’s (1985) ‘corrective’ urban design measures to prevent crime and Space Syntax’s response to Coleman’s approach, who criticized that these measures created too much enclosure (see Hillier, 1986). Both approaches have had a strong influence in policy making and in the way of approaching housing estate transformations in the UK and have influenced recently accomplished urban renewal processes in social housing neighbourhoods. Coleman’s approach belongs to the line of research that proposes urban design measures to prevent crime. Space Syntax’s¹⁴ approach has been applied in the analysis of housing estates to explain, among other issues, how the urban layout of “pavilions in landscape” hinders copresence in the public space in comparison to the street layout (See Hanson, 2000).

Space Syntax’s approach to the urban design of housing estates: the paper “Urban transformations” by Julienne Hanson (2000) is a good synthesis of Space Syntax’s approach to the urban design of housing estates. The article studies the changes in the

¹⁴ Space Syntax was founded by Bill Hillier, Julienne Hanson and other academics at the Bartlett Faculty of the Built Environment, UCL, in the late 1970s. Since then, they have developed a methodology that “investigate(s) how well environments work, rigorously relating social variables to architectural forms” (Hillier et al, 1983).

urban fabric since the beginning until the end of the twentieth century. Firstly, it analyses the changes in the urban fabric from the pre-war to the post-war period: Hanson argues that the housing estate layout resulting of the slum clearance and reconstruction processes are fragmented and segregating spaces, which buildings have no direct interface with the street (Hanson, 2000: 100). According to Hanson, this urban layout hinders co-presence in the public realm. In opposition to this, Space Syntax's approach advocates for continuous, permeable, and integrating streets, which building entrances face directly the street, as an urban layout where there are more probabilities of copresence in the urban space. By analysing the urban fabric of different periods of the twentieth century, Hanson analyses the subsequent "design paradigms" that have influenced the urban transformations. In addition to the modernist paradigm, she identifies a more recent one, which builds on the principles of 'territoriality' and attempts to build ethnic enclaves by creating a hierarchy of spaces from private to public (See Hanson, 2000: 119). Finally, she analyses the postmodern approach to housing developments and finds influence from the early discourse of Space Syntax: recovering permeable, continuous and 'constituted'¹⁵ streets.

This study of the urban form characteristic of the different periods of the twentieth century have been further studied by [Hanson and Zako \(2009\)](#): "[Housing in the twentieth-century city](#)". In their paper, they quantify characteristics of the urban morphology and of the open spaces in four different periods: pre-war, early modern, high modern and postmodern. They examine: the layout of buildings and open spaces (figure/ground); the types of open spaces; the types of boundaries in the public space—classifying as 'primary' the buildings and as 'secondary' the fences and walls—; and they also analyse the 'axiality', i.e. the

15 Streets where the door entrances faces directly the street.

axial structure of each urban grid (See Hanzon and Zako, 2009: 126). They relate the urban form and the design of the public realm with the liveability of the urban area and propose design recommendations that build on Space Syntax's approach of permeability, integration and 'constitutedness'. It highlights the importance of creating well-defined public spaces with ground floor activities that have a direct interface with the street for the liveability of the public realm.

'Secured by design' (<http://www.securedbydesign.com>, accessed 2014-01-09): 'Secured by design' is an UK Police initiative that supports the principles of 'designing out crime'. Their website provides with recommendations for communities, homeowners, tenants, developers, architects and other professionals to build safer communities. They give advice on how to prevent crime and they also provide with a design guide—'3D Virtual design toolkit'—that points out urban design measures to prevent crime. Although these principles build on urban theories that emerged decades ago (See Newman 1972; Coleman, 1985), the design recommendations of 'defensible theory' and 'territoriality' have a strong influence in today's urban policies, particularly in the interventions on the public space of housing estates. These design recommendations were implemented in Thatcher's scheme to transform housing estates (See Lowenfeld, 2008) and they are still being used in the New Labour approach to estate urban renewal (See Minton, 2009; Campkin, 2013).

This approach to housing estate urban renewal and the current government and policy-led initiatives that build on defensible space theory have been criticized by authors such as Campkin (2013) and Minton (2009), who make interesting contributions to the debate on social housing regeneration. Ben Campkin (2013), in his book *Remaking London:*

Decline and regeneration in urban culture, dedicates the fourth chapter to make a critical analysis of how housing estate regeneration has been recently approached in London, and how the stigmatisation of deprived neighbourhoods is represented in media and used by politicians. He uses the case of Aylesbury Estate in Southwark, London, and its diverse attempts of regeneration, to illustrate how defensible theory have influenced current policies and how the image that media is transmitting of housing estates is contributing to its stigmatisation and provoking a “paralysis about how to improve these environments” (Campkin, 2013: 103). Anna Minton’s (2009) book, *Ground control: fear and happiness in the twenty-first-century city*, focuses its critic in the current tendency to create urban spaces and neighbourhoods where the stranger is seen as a threat. In the UK, the neighbourhoods—both rich and poor—are being fortified. The result is that the only possible use of the public space is shopping and the public realm for ‘doing nothing’ no longer exists.

These critical voices that question the current policies and strategies of urban renewal suggest that there must be alternatives. The current debate deals with diverse issues that affect social housing neighbourhood: the involvement of private developers in social housing regeneration, the mixed tenure and ownership of the dwellings¹⁶, whether it is better to demolish and redevelop or to refurbish, the urban design of the neighbourhoods—which includes the architectural style of the buildings, the urban layout, and the design of the public realm—, the ‘community development’ schemes, and social programmes to tackle exclusion.

16 Whether it is owned by the council, housing associations, or private owners.

This thesis aims to contribute to this debate by addressing the *design* of the public space, attending both at the spatial configuration of the neighbourhoods and at the micro-scale of the design of their public spaces. It will analyse the current situation of the public space in British post-war social housing and it will *propose design guidelines* to intervene in the existing open spaces of the neighbourhoods. The thesis aims to propose alternatives to how intervention in the public space of social housing neighbourhoods has been approached. Since much of current debate on neighbourhood renewal is focusing in housing property, this thesis also claims to pay special attention to the public realm of the neighbourhoods.

0.4 Objectives

0.4.1 General objectives

Since this thesis approaches the problems of social housing neighbourhoods from the design of the public space, the first research question that it seeks to address is:

1. To what extent is the lack of public life in post-war housing estates explained by the design of their public realm?

Because the thesis aims to be propositional and not only analytical, the first question inevitably leads to a follow-up question, which the thesis also seeks to address, and which aims to be the main contribution of this piece of research:

2. Which urban design interventions in the public realm of such neighbourhoods can encourage public life in their open spaces?

For addressing this second question, the thesis proposes the following hypothesis, which builds on Sennett's notion of urban disorder:

- * Hypothesis: Since these places were conceived taking order as fundamental principle, and this imposition of order has been regarded as one of the factors that inhibit city life: Can urban designers encourage social interaction and urban life in the public realm through interventions that introduce certain kinds of disorder?

0.4.2 Specific objectives

The thesis aims to propose urban design strategies on the public realm of social housing neighbourhoods that contribute to transform them into:

- * Places that invite people to stay and not just to pass through, which encourage people to gather together in the public realm.
- * A public space that catalyse the emergence of unplanned outdoor activities.
- * An urban space that can easily adapt to changing situations. This flexibility can make it resilient to future changes and avoid obsolescence.
- * A built environment that inspire tolerance towards strangers, which encourage social interaction.

0.5 Methodology

To accomplish the analysis of the public realm of the current situation of British post-war housing estates, the thesis will:

- a) Study the British context of social housing neighbourhoods.
- b) Analyse two case studies.

To propose urban design guidelines in the public space of social housing neighbourhoods, the thesis will:

- c) Take Sennett's notion of urban disorder as an *approach* to intervene in the public realm of social housing neighbourhoods.
- d) Use 'assemblage' thinking in critical urbanism as a *method* to bring from theory to practice Sennett's notion of urban disorder.

The fieldwork of the analysis of the case studies, as well as the search on archives and specific bibliography, has been done while taking the MArch in Urban Design at the Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London (2009), and while being Visiting PhD Student at the Bartlett School of Graduate Studies (2013), under the supervision of Professor Laura Vaughan and Dr Ben Campkin. During this last period at University College London, the PhD candidate was working with academics from the Space Group and Space Syntax Laboratory, which allowed using syntactical analysis in the study of the neighbourhoods.

The theoretical section of the thesis, specially the one that proposes assemblage thinking as a method to implement Sennett's uses of disorder in the public space, has been developed while

being Visiting Scholar at the Department of Geography of the University of Cambridge (2011), under the supervision of Professor Ash Amin.

Detailed explanation of the methodology:

- a) British context of social housing neighbourhoods: the thesis will look at specific bibliography of British history and theory of architecture and urbanism, focusing on the post-war period and on the urban theories that emerged in reaction to post-war reconstruction. It will also look at the legacy of the reconstruction process, at how the regeneration and redevelopment of these areas have been approached in some cases, and at the policies that have been implemented in matter of intervention in social housing neighbourhoods.
- b) Case studies: Using two case studies to understand the process that these neighbourhoods have undergone since they were built, and their current problems. These case studies are Loughborough Estate in Brixton, London Borough of Lambeth, and Gascoyne 2 Estate in the London Borough of Hackney. Both cases were built in a similar context: they were designed by the LCC Architect's Department in the 1950s and they were built in sites damaged by WWII bombings in the inner city. Both boroughs of Lambeth and Hackney were severely damaged by bombing, which led to a massive construction of inner-city council estates in bombed sites. The analysis of the case studies have used the following work methodology:
 - i) Historical analysis: including the consultation of historical maps, old photographs, original plans and documents of the scheme, and planning information about the subsequent interventions on the estates from the following sources: Digimap Historic Map Service, Edina Digimap Ordnance Survey Mastermaps, the Lambeth Archives, the Hackney Archives, the London Metropolitan Archives and the Planning Application Database of Lambeth (London Borough of

Lambeth. Planning Application database, n.d. [online]), and the Planning Archives of Hackney.

- ii) Qualitative analysis: In both cases, the qualitative analysis has consisted in site visits at different times of the day¹⁷, with different weather conditions, and both during weekends and weekdays. The site visits included observations on the use of the public realm, a qualitative analysis of the public space, and an analysis of their accessibility. These observations have been complemented with conversations and unstructured interviews to residents and key agents of the management of the estates. In the case of Loughborough Estate, the site was visited in nine occasions between January and June 2009 and in four occasions between May and June 2013. In addition to the observations and analysis, the site visits also included unstructured interviews with twenty-seven people, including neighbours and workers from the areas of Loughborough Estate and Loughborough Junction, as well as key agents such as members of the community panel, active members and coordinators of community activities, staff of the neighbourhood housing and management offices, local youth facility staff and police officers. The fieldwork done in 2013 has helped to understand the changes that the neighbourhood has experimented in recent years. In the case of Gascoyne 2 Estate, the site was visited on eight occasions between April and August 2013. Some of the visits coincided intentionally with neighbourhood events such as the Spring Fete in the Children’s Centre and the ELFA’s¹⁸ fruit and

17 The duration of the site visits has been between 60 and 90 minutes each.

18 “East London Food Access (ELFA) Ltd promotes access to affordable fresh fruit and vegetables within the London Borough of Hackney. ELFA was formed in response to the growth of areas of ‘Food Poverty’ in East London, areas where good quality fresh fruit and vegetables are no longer locally available at an

veg market to analyse how this emergent events affect the use of the public space. The fieldwork has also included conversations with residents from the estate and its surroundings, as well as with key actors such as people responsible of children activities, staff of organizations that give support to the neighbourhood, and also with the responsible of the works that are being carried on in the estate for meeting the Decent Home Standard programme.

- c) Proposing Sennett's notion of urban disorder as an *approach* to intervene in the public realm of social housing neighbourhoods: For explaining how this approach addresses the specific objectives of this thesis, the thesis will:
 - i) Explain the context in which Sennett's book *The uses of disorder* (Sennett, 1970) was published.
 - ii) Analyse how this notion of disorder has evolved in Sennett's work.
- d) Use 'assemblage' thinking in critical urbanism as a *method* to bring from theory to practice Sennett's notion of urban disorder: 'Assemblage' thinking will be used as instrumental, as a tool to materialize Sennett's notion of disorder into urban design interventions. For proposing this tool, the thesis will:
 - i) Explain which readings of assemblage thinking address the positive uses of disorder in the public space.
 - ii) Propose design concepts that build on these readings of assemblage thinking.
 - iii) Use examples of places or urban situations where these 'assemblages' take place to illustrate the proposed design concepts.

affordable price to people living on low incomes. (...) ELFA is a Social Enterprise and not-for-profit company Limited by Guarantee." ELFA, <http://www.elfaweb.org.uk>, accessed 2013-05-02.

0.6 Structure of the thesis

The core¹⁹ of the thesis is structured in four chapters. The first chapter is analytical and seeks to address the first research question of the thesis: “to what extent is the lack of public life in post-war housing estates explained by the design of their public realm?”. The second and third chapters compound the theoretical core of the thesis: they aim to propose a theoretical approach to the design of the public space of social housing neighbourhoods and a method to take this approach from theory to practice. Finally, the fourth chapter aims to propose urban design strategies for intervention in the public realm of social housing neighbourhoods.

Chapter 1. Revisiting public space in post-war social housing. The case of London: as stated, the first chapter of the thesis aims to analyse the public space of post-war housing estates, relating its design to how people use it. The article is divided in two differentiated parts: one that looks at the British context and another that looks at two particular case studies. The first part of the chapter looks at the British context in matter of social housing neighbourhoods: it looks at the situation that prompted a mass construction of social housing and at the role that architects had in this process. Furthermore, it looks at the legacy that the post-war reconstruction have had in British cities: it looks at the theories that emerged in reaction to the construction of housing estates and at how these have influenced the subsequent transformations that have been implemented in these neighbourhoods. It also explores some of the policies that have been applied for the intervention in housing estates. The second part of the chapter analyses the public space of two post-war housing estates: Loughborough Estate in Brixton, London Borough of Lambeth, and Gascoyne Estate in the

19 The “core” of the thesis means the whole thesis excluding the introduction and the conclusions.

London Borough of Hackney. Firstly, it looks at the construction of these neighbourhoods and at the subsequent urban transformations that both urban areas have undergone since the mid-twentieth century until today. Secondly, it exposes the symptoms of obsolescence that the public realm is currently showing. The main sign of obsolescence is the lack of use of the public space. Finally, the chapter analyses which physical characteristics of the built environment hinder the use of the public realm. This analysis is divided into “spatial configuration²⁰—which explores how the neighbourhood relate to its surroundings and how the different spaces of the neighbourhood relate to each other—and the design and maintenance of the public realm, which look at a closer detail how the materiality of the public realm influences the way people use it.

Chapter 2: From theory to practice (I): Sennett’s uses of disorder and city life: this is the first chapter of the theoretical core of the thesis. In 1970, Richard Sennett wrote *The uses of disorder*, a book that argues that twentieth century urbanism is removing ‘disorder’—i.e. any unexpected situation, possibility of conflict or ‘deviant’ behaviour—from the city. According to Sennett, this has resulted in the formation of adults that are not prepared to tolerate difference or any unpredicted event. It also has resulted in public spaces where there is no room for improvisation and social interaction. Sennett wrote this book as a reaction to modernist urbanism, which included the construction of post-war social housing neighbourhoods. This chapter revisits Sennett’s approach and aims to bring it to the current situation of the urban areas that he criticized over four decades ago, which situation has not improved since they remain as places with no public life. For doing so, the chapter first explores the context in which Sennett’s book was published, influenced by the socio-political

situation of the moment. Secondly, it explains the readings of ‘urban disorder’ that will serve as an approach to intervene in the public realm of social housing neighbourhoods. Thirdly, to take it to the current situation, it analyses how these readings of disorder have evolved in Sennett’s work. Finally, it exposes how Sennett sees urban disorder today and finds affinities between Sennett’s recent work and ‘assemblage’ thinking in critical urbanism. It concludes the chapter stating the ‘assemblage’ thinking can be instrumental for applying Sennett’s notion of disorder to design interventions in the public realm of these neighbourhoods. This final remark will be developed in the following chapter.

Chapter 3: From theory to practice (II): ‘Assemblage’ and urban design: this chapter proposes ‘assemblage’ thinking as a tool for bringing from theory to practice Sennett’s uses of disorder. Firstly, it introduces the term ‘assemblage’ and explains how it has been used in critical urbanism: to explain the relations of dependency between different components of a system, to attribute to these relations functional capacity rather than a fixed function, and to describe indeterminacy, processuality, and emergence (see McFarlane, 2011a). Secondly, it explains which readings of assemblage address Sennett’s conception of urban spaces for improvisation, informality and social interaction. It identifies three readings: how sociomaterial assemblages can build a public space that encourage tolerance and social interaction, the virtues of uncertainty and allowing the emergence of non-planned activities, and how leaving disconnections in the design of the public realm can make the public space more susceptible to adaptations and to be upgraded. Finally, from these findings, the chapter will propose two sets of design concepts—‘assemblage’ and ‘disassembly’—that will help to outline the design strategies in the next chapter. The first set of concepts is compound by those that respond to the action of ‘assemblage’ and works on creating new associations in the public space: ‘reassembling’, ‘convergence of diversity’, and ‘complex connections’.

The second set of concepts responds to the act of ‘disassembly’ and seeks for the flexibility and resilience of the public realm: ‘open system’ and ‘failure and disconnections’. The chapter will use examples of public spaces and urban situations where these ‘assemblages’ take place to illustrate the design concepts.

Chapter 4: Infrastructures for disorder: this chapter presents the main contribution of this thesis: design strategies for intervention in the public space of social housing neighbourhoods. It aims to propose guidelines, a method for approaching interventions that can be taken and adapted to different contexts by practitioners. For doing so, this final section of the thesis first explains the conceptual definition of these strategies: the thesis proposes the term ‘infrastructures for disorder’ as urban design interventions in the public space of social housing neighbourhoods that create conditions for the unplanned use of the public realm and encourage social interaction. Secondly, after the conceptual definition, the thesis describes the design strategies. For presenting the results, the chapter divides the strategies in three groups that respond terms commonly used by architects and urban designers: ‘surface’, ‘section’, and ‘process’. The surface strategies explore the physical dimension of the public space: the materiality. The section strategies address a more subjective dimension of the space, which deals with the urban environment, the atmosphere of place. Finally, ‘process’ presents a set of strategies that is necessary to accomplish the other two. The need of creating conditions for the beginning of a process is present throughout the whole the thesis and this last set of strategies addresses how to implement it, outlining possible stages of this process. The chapter uses the case studies of the analysed neighbourhoods to provide hypothetical illustrations of how these strategies could come to the ground.

REVISITING PUBLIC SPACE IN POST-WAR SOCIAL HOUSING.
THE CASE OF LONDON.

CHAPTER ONE.



Social housing neighbourhoods in London, as in many European cities, have fallen into a state of obsolescence. The lack of urban life in the open spaces of these housing estates reflects the obsolescence of their public realm. As it has been stated in the introduction, there are diverse factors that contribute to this situation. Among these factors, this thesis is particularly interested in the design of the public space. This chapter analysis the object of study of this thesis: the public space of social housing neighbourhoods, focusing in the case of London.

The main objective of this chapter is to address the first research question outlined in the introduction: To what extent is the lack of public life in post-war housing estates explained by the design of their public realm? Given the importance of understanding the situation of such council estates to approach their regeneration, this chapter seeks to comprehend the process by which these neighbourhoods were built, the urban transformations they have undergone since their construction, and the complexity of their obsolescence, outlining weaknesses and potentials.

To address this question, the chapter uses the following work methodology:

1. Analysis of the urban design of these neighbourhoods in the context of Great Britain: looking at the origin of their construction, the theories that emerged as a reaction to modernist architecture and the reconstruction process, and the effect that these theories have had in the transformations and in the attempts of regeneration of these neighbourhoods.
2. Using two case studies to analyse in depth the process that these neighbourhoods have going since they were built, their current problems, and to identify the physical factors that hinder the use of their public realm. In both case studies,

Figure 1.1: Gascoyne Estate, London Borough of Hackney, August 2013. Photograph by the author.

a historical and a qualitative analysis have been done. The historical analysis have used the diverse sources outlined in the methodological section of the introduction to understand the specific context in which they were built and the urban transformations that they have undergone since then. The qualitative analysis has been done through site visits and it has focused on the use of the public space.

1.1 Post-war reconstruction and slum clearance in Great Britain: origin and legacy

The slum clearance and the post-war reconstruction processes led to the displacement of more than four million families and the construction of ten thousand large council estates over a fifty-year period (Rogers and Power, 2000:76). This great process changed drastically the urban landscape of British cities, which were characterized in the pre-war period by the predominance of low-rise terrace houses. This has had great effects on how British cities are today and on wealth spatial distribution. The concentration of poverty in post-war housing estates, together with the obsolescence factors outlined in the “object of study” in the introduction, have resulted in socio-spatial segregation and in an uneven urban landscape where there are neighbourhoods in a very disadvantaged situation. For studying the role that the design of the public space plays in this situation, it is necessary to study this phenomenon in the context of Great Britain. This implies looking at:

1. The origin of the reconstruction process: which socio-political situation prompted the slum clearance and the reconstruction process, how it was carried out, and the role played by architecture and urban design.
2. The legacy that the reconstruction process have had in British cities: which theories emerged as a reaction to the reconstruction process, how these theories have influenced policy and the urban transformations of these neighbourhoods, and which is the current situation of these neighbourhoods today.

1.1.1 Post-war reconstruction and modern architecture in Great Britain

Different factors prompted a socio-political situation where modern British architects were offered the opportunity to participate actively in the reconstruction process after the war: firstly, the unhealthy and overcrowded working-class districts of the Victorian city, and secondly, the socio-political situation that emerged after World War One and that was consolidated after WWII, subsidising and encouraging public housing built on cleared sites (Rogers and Power, 2000: 76) and promoting the construction of the welfare state.

The reasons for this massive operation of replacing slums with new housing estates had their origins in the situation of late-nineteenth century British cities, with abysmal living conditions in working-class districts, with large families living in single-room dwellings and sharing facilities with other families. As Hall (1988: 16) describes, the pamphlet published in 1883 by Mearns, *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London*, was quite influential, as it made the middle-class and authorities realize the need for a solution to the deplorable situation of the working classes. It seems that there were two issues derived from these poor living conditions that particularly worried the British middle class, the clergy and the authorities. On the one hand, Mearns's publication drew a picture of certain situations in the slums to raise the alarm about how these people lived. He laid particular emphasis on the immorality and the criminality of the slums: drunkenness, prostitution and highly disadvantaged situations for children (Hall, 1988: 16-19). The second main concern of the middle class was the threat of insurrection: the economic depression of the mid-1880s led to riots and mobilizations that also made the need for a solution for poor districts evident (Hall, 1988: 26).

As Hall (1988: 16-31) highlights, the immediate consequences of these perceptions were the Royal Commission of 1885 and the Booth survey, which quantified the problem. The conclusions were that it was necessary to build new working-class neighbourhoods to rehouse the slum-dwellers.

If Mearns publication was the one which denounced the poor living conditions of the slums, Charles Booth's survey and poverty maps were the first studies on socio-spatial distribution of wealth. Booth's work is considered as the first 'empirical sociology' (Vaughan et al, 2005, quoting Pfautz, 1967: 127). He produced three maps—the first in 1889, a later update in the same year, and a third ten years later in 1899—based on house-to-house survey. The map recorded mainly economical status and represented geographically this data block-by-block, which provided with very accurate information. Moreover, the fact that there were two studies separated 10 years from each other helps to analyse neighbourhood change within this period (Vaughan et al, 2005). The map divided the social conditions of families in London in seven classes (figures 1.2 and 1.3) (Charles Booth Online Archive, LSE, n.d. [Online], accessed 2013-12-16):

- * BLACK: Lowest class. Vicious, semi-criminal.
- * DARK BLUE: Very poor, casual. Chronic want.
- * LIGHT BLUE: Poor. 18s. to 21s. a week for a moderate family
- * PURPLE: Mixed. Some comfortable others poor
- * PINK: Fairly comfortable. Good ordinary earnings.
- * RED: Middle class. Well-to-do.
- * YELLOW: Upper-middle and Upper classes. Wealthy.



Figure 1.2: Booth Poverty Maps of London. 1898-1899. Source: LSE Charles Booth Online Archive.

Figure 1.3: Detail of Booth Poverty Maps of London. 1898-1899. Source: LSE Charles Booth Online Archive.



Figure 1.4: Poster Your Britain - Fight for it Now (Health Centre) © IWM (Art.IWM PST 2911)

During the war, modern buildings such as Finsbury Health Centre by Berthol Lubetkin and other housing and school projects served as propaganda posters to illustrate the construction of the welfare state, although Churchill objected to this posters and they were withdrawn (Imperial War Museums, ‘Your Britain – Fight Now Health Centre (Art. IWM PST 2911), n.d. [Online], accessed 2013-05-02). The poster shows the health centre as a brick wall on top of the unhealthy slums and claims: “Your Britain, fight for it now”.

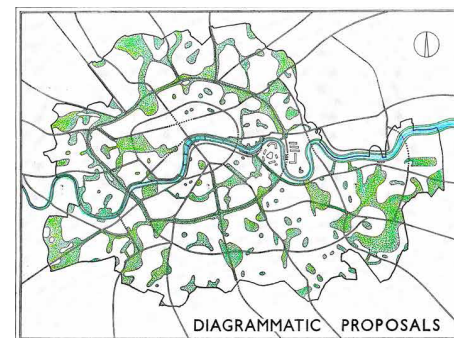
Booth’s work was published in a multi-volume book, *Life and Labour of the People in London*, composed of seven volumes published between 1889 and 1903. The cartographic representation of this class division marked geographically the most deprived areas, which made Booth maps a primary tool to develop the earlier slum clearance operations in the turn of the century.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, public administration has tended to favour public housing and support the construction of new neighbourhoods to rehouse the working class. It was quite unique the rent control policies that were introduced in 1915 and lasted until 1988 (Rogers and Power, 2000: 74), which decreased the number of private landlords and favoured the construction of council houses. This tendency became more marked after WWII when the slum clearance process was reinforced with the reconstruction of the bombed sites. The war left London with a serious housing shortage, to the point that in 1951 the LCC estimated that there were 250,000 families waiting for new homes (Harwood, 1999: 131). This made necessary to build a large amount of dwellings in a short period of time. After the war, the Labour government concentrated on the construction of the welfare state by proving housing and services to everyone (see figure 1.4), with the aim of building an egalitarian society. The large reconstruction process started.

Patrick Abercrombie and John Henry Forshaw’s County of London Plan (CLP)—published in 1943, and Greater London Plan (GLP)—published in 1944—were determinant in the implementation of the reconstruction process. One of the main objectives of Abercrombie and Forshaw’s plans was to lower the density of the inner city and moving the population to outer suburbs and new towns. Their vision of London implied an inner-city with

lower density, newer dwellings replacing the unhealthy and over-populated slums, in which the population can enjoy larger green areas parks that were connected to each other, providing a ‘Green Belt’ as part of the open space and park system (Abercrombie and Forshaw, 1943: 36-47). This objective had to be accomplished through a major slum clearance process (Mumford, 2000: 167) accompanied mainly by two operations of housing provision: the construction of new satellite towns and the reconstruction of inner-city working-class districts with council estates that mixed high-rise and low-rise buildings. The implementation of the plans was quite effective in achieving the objective of lowering the population in the inner city. This decline of density can be appreciated in areas that went through a major slum clearance and construction of housing estates such as Bethnal Green in the East End of London, where the population declined from 129,727 in 1901 to 47,078 in 1961 (‘Bethnal Green: Building and Social Conditions after 1945 Social and Cultural Activities’, 1998, n.p.).

The LCC was the largest housing authority in the country (Bullock, 2002: 232), so it played a very important role in implementing the CLP. Its Architect’s Department is quite a paradigmatic case in the reconstruction on Great Britain. It was considered the largest architectural practice in the world (Carolin, 2008: 106), which employed 750 architects—300 of which worked in the Housing Division—and more than 2,000 administrative and technical staff (Bullock, 2002: 219-220). During the first years of the post-war period, it was the Valuer’s Department who took the responsibility of building most of the housing. The Valuer’s Department repeated the pre-war housing typologies and gave preference to building a larger amount of housing than to the design of the neighbourhoods (Harwood, 1999: 133). However, in 1949, a campaign led by the Architects’ Journal resulted in transferring the responsibility of housing reconstruction



GREATER LONDON PLAN

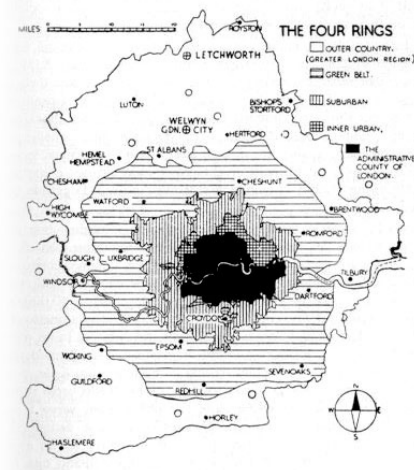


Figure 1.5: County of London Plan, 1943. Source: Abercrombie and Forshaw. 1943. County of London Plan. Chapter 3: Open space and park system.

Figure 1.6: Greater London Plan, 1944.

from the Valuer's Department to the Architect's Department, which was directed at that time by Robert Matthew.

From 1949, Robert Matthew directed the Architect's Department—later, in 1953, Sir J. Leslie Martin succeeded him as Chief Architect—and organized it into “groups with specific projects and tasks” (Patridge, 2008: 115). According to John Patridge, one of the architects at the LCC Architect's Department, at the office “the architecture was debated and analysed in an atmosphere more like a postgraduate school than a local authority office” (Patridge, 2008: 116), since the department recruited many young enthusiastic architects who had just graduated, many of them coming from the Architectural Association, and organised them into groups to work on public housing schemes.

British modern architects had an important role in the construction of post-war social housing, both because of the presence of major modern architects in the LCC and because other authorities worked with private firms on designing public housing. In addition to this, members of the British CIAM group, MARS, held positions in public administration, allowing them to lead the reconstruction process. Moreover, MARS started to play such an important role in CIAM meetings that it led to the celebration of the first post-war CIAM meeting in Bridgewater, England in 1947 (Mumford, 2000: 168).

At this point, James Maude Richards, editor of the journal *Architectural Review*, led the discourse of British modern architecture and represented the group with a speech in CIAM 6 in Bridgewater. The main concerns at this point dealt with the aesthetics of modern architecture, with making it more appealing to the “common man” (Mumford, 2000: 168). In the search of the welfare state by the first post-war Labour government,

taking the Swedish social democracy as an example, the Sweden architectural style had a great influence in British post-war public housing developments. This style, defined as “New Empiricism”, implied the mixture of low-rise and high-rise buildings and the use of materials such as wood, bricks and different colours (Mumford, 2000: 167, referencing Richards, 1947: 199-204).

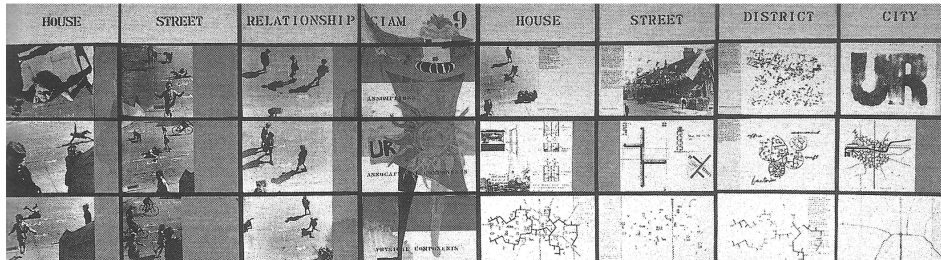
The Swedish style as a model for the welfare state had a great influence on British post-war reconstruction. This can be perceived in the housing estates designed by the LCC Architect’s Department while Matthew was Chief Architect, with outer neighbourhoods with Scandinavian influence like Alton East Estate in Roehampton or inner-city neighbourhoods such as Lawson Estate in Southwark. However, within the Architect’s Department, there was another sector that was deeply influenced by Le Corbusier’s recently built *Unité d’Habitation* in Marseille. This resulted in British adaptations of the *Unité* following the recommendations of the CLP and the LCC housing standards. This made the architects to combine slab blocks, low-rise and medium-rise housing in their schemes to meet the CLP recommendation of ‘mixed developments’. It also forced them to design a cheaper and smaller version of the *Unité*, with less and smaller dwellings and without the *rue intérieure* (Bullock, 2002: 103-105). These British versions of the *Unité* resulted in outer neighbourhoods such as Alton West in Roehampton—next to the Scandinavian-inspired Alton East—and to inner-city council estates such as Loughborough Estate in Brixton and Bentham Road Estate in Hackney, which are the case studies that this thesis uses. Apart from these representative schemes, many of these mini-*Unités* can be found spread all around many inner-city areas in London. In many occasions, this kind

of developments have been accused of being more appropriate for suburban areas than to inner-city council estates²¹, were they present a discontinuity in the urban fabric.

The reactions to these processes soon emerged. They came from both urban sociologists and architects. In 1953, the *Architectural Review* edited by James Maude Richards published an editorial denouncing the disadvantages of the new towns for their lack of urbanity (Hall, 1988: 222, referencing Richards, 1953: 29-32). In addition, Michael Young and Peter Willmott's work (Young and Willmott, 1957), which criticised the slum clearance process for breaking the bonds of family and communal life in working-class districts, was quite influential in urban sociology. In their book, they compared family and communal life in a working-class district in Bethnal Green in East London with that of a newly built council estate in Essex, where many of the families from Bethnal Green had been rehoused.

The critics also came from within the CIAM, where Team 10, led by British architects Alison and Peter Smithson, challenged the CIAM discourse on the Functional City and proposed an alternative discourse to the Athens Charter based on the "hierarchy of human associations" (Mumford, 2000: 225). This was presented through the non-built project for Golden Lane "Urban Reidentification" (Figure 1.7), in which they explained this hierarchy of associations: the house, the street, the district and the city. With this project, they were trying to suggest new forms of building and ways to associate people without destroying the street life characteristic of working-class districts (Mumford, 2000: 232-235). In the later CIAM congresses the Team 10 discourse focused the discussion on the

21 Interview to one of the LCC architects in the film *Utopia London*, (Cordell, 2010).



concept of habitat (Team 10: “The Doorn Manifesto”, 1954, reproduced in Smithson, 1991: 21), an issue that had scarcely been discussed in the CIAM. Their concerns were with public space, places for human relationships and not just with housing units and the organization of functions.

However, the materialization of this discourse in the drawings did not seem to differ much more from Le Corbusier’s slab blocks except for their organic shape. Actually, this resulted in the “New Brutalism” style promoted by the Smithsons. This inspired the construction of council estates such as the Robin Hood Gardens (figure 1.8) in Tower Hamlets, London, by the Smithsons, which at the time of writing is being redeveloped, and Park Hill in Sheffield by the architects Jack Lynn and Ivor Smith, whose first phase of regeneration has recently been completed by the developers Urban Splash and the architectural practices Studio Egret West and Hawkins Brown (figure 1.9).

Despite the many critics, the processes of slum clearance and reconstruction lasted until the mid-1970s. Because of the need to provide extensive housing and the government’s interest in controlling urban growth (Hall, 1988: 223) and avoiding moving former slum-

Figure 1.7: “Urban Reidentification” grid for CIAM 9. Allison and Peter Smithson, 1953.



dwellers into outer suburbs (Rogers and Power, 2000: 76), the authorities started to prioritise the construction of inner-city neighbourhoods in cleared and bombed sites. This also implied the proliferation of high-rise buildings in the new council estates in order to increase the density of these neighbourhoods. Many of these were carefully designed by well-known architects, although their results have not been shown to be very satisfactory. However, this was not always the case, and on many occasions the design was devoid of architectural interest, so that these were standard council estates, with inadequate communal space and no services or amenities (Hall, 1988: 225), a hindrance to social relationships in the public realm.



Figure 1.8: Robin Hood Gardens. Architects: Alison and Peter Smithson, April 2009. Photograph by the author.

Figure 1.9: Park Hill under regeneration, May 2013. Photograph by the author.



1.1.2 The legacy of the reconstruction process

The urban discourses against modern architecture and the slum clearance process which emerged in the 1950s became stronger in the following years. Various urban studies criticised the reconstruction process and modern architecture for being antisocial and not facilitating human relationships. However, the approach to this criticism was not always the same. Whereas some focused on the importance of recovering human contact in the public space and on encouraging public life, other approaches concentrated on designing urban configurations to avoid anti-social behaviour and prevent crime.

The idea that modern architecture led to anti-social behaviour was widespread not only in certain sectors of academia and urban thinking, but also among the general public, who observed the social problems and criminality associated with council estates, which led to the stigmatisation of post-war neighbourhoods. This has affected the public conception of people who live in London and other British cities, where until the present day, post-war high-rise housing is still seen as housing for the poor. Some critics and architectural historians (see ‘Bethnal Green: Building and Social Conditions after 1945 Social and Cultural Activities’, 1998, n.p.; Allan, 2010) see the collapse of Ronan Point in 1968 because of a gas explosion as an emblem of modernism failure and as the turning point that stopped authorities building high-rise. By the 1970s, council estates and their architectural design were associated to crime, poverty and deprivation.

Although many of the critics have unquestionable arguments about the negative effects of modern urban design, some theories have led to certain effects that have not improved poor conditions in these areas but have been even more of a hindrance to life in the

Figure 1.10: Demolition of Nightingale Estate, London Borough of Hackney, 1998. © Museum of London. Mike Seaborne.

public space. Firstly, one of the effects of the decreasing interest in social housing was the abandonment of these urban areas, attributed to the difficulty of the authorities in assuming the cost of the maintenance of the large housing stock built in the post-war period. Secondly, another output was the corrective urban design measures to prevent crime, first promoted by Oscar Newman (1972) and later implemented in Britain by Alice Coleman (1985). As Campkin^(2013: 77-104) and Minton^(2009: 142) suggest, their ideas on “designing out crime” have had a strong influence on policy-making until today. Thirdly, the stigmatisation of these neighbourhoods and their relation to crime and deprivation has also led to their demolition and redevelopment recreating traditional street patterns and, in some occasions, recalling vernacular architecture.

The initial lack of amenities in the open spaces in many of these neighbourhoods was not supplemented with later interventions. Most of the interventions that took place in the council estates just after their construction did not deal with the outdoor spaces, but with repairing the construction problems in the buildings. The public authorities had difficulty in maintaining the large housing stock built in the post-war period. Moreover, when the Greater London Council (GLC)—the former LCC—transferred its housing stock to the boroughs, they had to face the management of a large number of dwellings.

In the 1980s, Margaret Thatcher implemented the “Right to Buy” council housing, which allowed tenants to buy their houses. Lupton and Power, referencing to some local studies, talk about the effect of it, which led to “residualisation within the social housing sector” (Lupton and Power, 2004: 33), since houses were bought in the most popular estates and the available stock started to be concentrated in the least popular ones, which also led to the stigmatisation of these places.

The stigmatisation of housing estates also led to relating its urban design to crime. In 1972, Newman proposed corrective measures to prevent crime based on “*territoriality*”, “*natural surveillance*”—easily identifying strangers and undesirables—and “*image and milieu*” (Newman, 1972): avoiding architectural designs and urban images contributing to the stigmatisation of an area. Newman’s ideas were taken up by Coleman (1985), who held that there were certain architectural features in modern architecture that encouraged crime, and proposed some corrective interventions such as eliminating the elevated pathways or creating enclosures by adding new buildings to provide surveillance to the street. Coleman’s corrective measures were implemented in different council estates, as Margaret Thatcher supported it by approving a scheme that tested Coleman’s measures in seven different council estates in England (Lowenfeld, 2008: 169, quoting Kelly, 1993). Jonah Lowenfeld (2008) describes how Coleman’s guidelines were implemented in Mozart Estate in Westminster—although this was not part of the mentioned scheme—and the opposition it found in Space Syntax’s founder Bill Hillier, who argued that Coleman’s measures provoke too much enclosure and proposed increasing the permeability of the council estates.

This focus on preventing crime in council estates has led to prioritising investment in security measures such as providing a single safe access to the tower blocks, installing CCTV cameras, fencing off the gardens and placing barbed wire on walls and buildings. Campkin (2013) explains the impact that the stigmatised image of the council estates has had in media since the 1990s and the increasing interest of finding a “solution” to the problem of council estates, a claim that the New Labour Party championed when it won the elections in 1997. He also explains the influence that ‘defensible space’ has had in the recent approach to council estate regeneration—talking about the case of Aylesbury



Estate—and claims for “radical alternatives, and a more democratic and incremental approach, responsive to residents and the existing built environment, and less vulnerable to short-term ideological and economic shifts” (Campkin, 2013: 104) Minton (2009: 142) has also highlighted the impact that ‘defensible space’ has had on policy making. She identifies the main difference between Newman’s approach and that of others such as Jacobs (1961) and Sennett (1971). She states that, while Jacobs and Sennett consider interaction with strangers as something positive, Newman’s measures try to avoid the presence of strangers on the public realm, considering them as intruders. She also states that, although “Sennett’s and Jacob’s works are revered as classics” (Minton, 2009: 142), Newman’s ideas of ‘defensible space’ have had a greater influence on urban policy.

In some cases, the stigmatisation of the architecture of council estates has resulted in their demolition (Rogers and Power, 2000: 81). As Hall (1988) explains, at the beginning of the 1980s the situation that had taken place a century ago when Mearns and Booth identified the vices of the slums was being repeated: concentration of poverty, poor living conditions, high rates of crime, and threat of insurrection. As it happened a century before, this has led to the thought that demolishing and redeveloping these deprived urban areas can be a solution to the social problems. Furthermore, the idea that modern architecture leads to crime has led to a return to vernacular architecture as a more appropriate style for human relationships. This can be appreciated in certain processes of urban renewal that have carried on the partial or complete demolition of council estates and redeveloping the sites following Victorian street patterns. An example of this is the regeneration and redevelopment of Holly Street Estate in Hackney (figures 1.11, 1.12, 1.13 and 1.14), a process that has lasted for 19 years and that has consisted in a phased demolition of a big council estate and the construction of new buildings that shape a traditional street pattern.

Clockwise:

Figure 1.11: Snake blocks in Holly Street Estate, London Borough of Hackney, before demolition. Source: Love London Council Housing Blog.

Figure 1.12: Holly Street Estate during demolition. Source: Love London Council Housing Blog.

Figure 1.13: Holly Street Estate redevelopment scheme by Levitt Bernstein. Source and copyright: Levitt Bernstein website.

Figure 1.14: Holly Street Estate after redevelopment, April 2013. Photograph by the author.

According to an interview by Lowenfeld (2008: 173) to Levitt—one of the principal architects of the firm Levitt Bernstein, who has carried on the regeneration process—, he uses Jane Jacobs’s (1961) strategies of “eyes on the street” and creates a more traditional street layout. Holly Street is an example of the result of certain interpretations of Jacobs book, which creates historicist revivals of a British city of the past and try to recreate urban spaces like the squares from Renaissance that can be found in Bloomsbury (figures 1.13 and 1.14).

However, as Sennett (2008a) suggests, the historic city cannot be created from scratch by imitating architecture from the past. The historic city is the result of a process of overlapping different moments in time and the character of public space comes from how people use it. Although the process of Holly Street Estate’s redevelopment has lasted for 19 years and the replacement has been phased, the result is a completely new neighbourhood that only maintain one of the towers.

The explained transformations—or lack of transformation—that some council estates have undergone since the 1980s have focused on preventing crime through interventions in the existing built environment or through demolishing and developing a traditional urban street design featuring street frontage, natural surveillance and, on some occasions, vernacular architectural style. However, the magnitude and scope of these interventions has been different in each case and it is impossible to generalize. That is why it is necessary to use case studies. The kind of regenerations or redevelopments described may reduce crime, but they do not manage to bring public life into the street since they do not manage to address the interaction between the built environment and people, as the case studies will show. It seems that the main objective of certain regeneration processes

is surveillance, while it is not addressed how people would begin to interact and how improvisation might happen on the public realm.

However, crime prevention has not been the only worry that has led to implement urban policies to accomplish the renewal of these places. The social problem of council estates has been a major urban worry of public authorities since the 1980s and this has led to different policies to address the different problems and factors of obsolescence outlined in the introduction. Although the aim of this thesis is not to analyse the urban policies regarding housing estate regeneration, it is necessary to recognise which problems have been addressed. This will help to analyse the case studies and to understand their urban transformations. Recognising their impact can be also very helpful. However, as Lupton and Power (2004) highlight, there are great difficulties in understanding neighbourhood change. The issues addressed by the urban policies in the UK has been the following:

- * Property/tenure: Thatcher implemented the Right-to-buy in 1980, which allowed people to buy council houses at low prices. Some people argued that this policy would help to the deconcentration of poverty, favouring mixed tenure and property. As Lupton and Power (2004), this was not the effect. Another change in the property and tenure of council housing has been the proliferation of housing associations²² as providers of affordable housing for people who have low income or need extra support.
- * Management: the fact that a great proportion of the properties of the housing estates belong to housing associations has supposed a different management.

²² Housing associations, also known as Registered Social Landlords or Private Registered Providers of Social Housing, are private non-profit organisations that provide social housing. For more information, see <https://www.gov.uk/housing-association-homes>, accessed 2013-12-19.

This has been accompanied by the creation of Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMO), private companies that manage housing services on behalf of local councils. Their creation has been related to the improvement of the housing stock.

- * Housing upgrade: the Decent Homes Standard Programme was set up by the New Labour government with the aim of reaching certain standards in the existing housing stock. This programme has been implemented in many housing estates, where the housing units have been repaired and upgraded. Both case studies have accomplished important works to achieve this standard.
- * Crime prevention through urban design: as this epigraph has insisted, this has been one of the major worries regarding neighbourhood regeneration. Coleman's corrective measures motivated Thatcher's programme to regenerate seven housing estates. More recently, boroughs such as Hackney have carried on major redevelopment schemes, such as Nightingale Estate (figure 1.10) and Holly Street Estate (figures 1.11, 1.12, 1.13 and 1.14), which has consisted in demolishing a great proportion of the estate and building a new neighbourhood meeting the "designing out crime" recommendations. Furthermore, the UK Police has created an initiative named "Secured by design", which "objective is to reduce burglary and crime in the UK by designing out crime through physical security and processes" (See <http://www.securedbydesign.com>, accessed 2013-12-19). In their website, they provide recommendations for architects, developers, other professionals, home owners and tenants.
- * Other recommendations on urban design good practices: the Urban Task Force report, *Towards a strong urban renaissance* (Urban Task Force, 2005 [1999]), is a manual of good urban practices that includes the regeneration of housing

estates. In comparison with other urban policies or design recommendations, it is one of the few that highlights the importance of intervening on the physical environment of the public spaces: it proposes providing open spaces for imaginative use.

- * Programmes to tackle social exclusion: the government and the local authorities have promoted various programmes which objective is to minimise social exclusion. Programmes such as Single Regeneration Budget attempt to bridge the gap between deprived and non-deprived urban areas. Lupton and Power explain the outputs, the benefits and also the limitations of these programmes (See Lupton and Power, 2004: 34). There are also other community development programmes such as Sure Start, which attempts to provide services for children in those neighbourhoods that are in need (See <https://www.gov.uk/find-sure-start-childrens-centre>, accessed 2013-12-19). Furthermore, the government also launched the Nation Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal in 2000, an ambitious programme that put emphasis on community empowerment, jobs and economic development of disadvantaged neighbourhoods (Rogers and Power, 2000: 257). However, as Rogers and Power highlight, the agenda of this programme focuses just on social and economic integration and do not pay attention to the regeneration of the physical environment, which is fundamental for the future of these neighbourhoods.



1.2 Public space obsolescence in council estates: two case studies

To understand the current situation of the public realm in British council estates, this thesis analyses two neighbourhoods designed by the LCC Architect's Department in the 1950s: Loughborough Estate (figure 1.15) in the London Borough of Lambeth and Gascoyne 2 Estate (figure 1.16)—mentioned in architectural history literature as Bentham Road Estate—in the London Borough of Hackney (see location of both boroughs in Greater London in figure 1.17). As explained previously, the council estates designed by this department during this decade are quite paradigmatic in thinking about the construction of the welfare state. Both cases are inner-city neighbourhoods built in places damaged by WWII bombing. They both also are British adaptations of Le Corbusier's *Unité d'Habitation* modified to meet British standards²³. This means that they are mixed developments that combine slab blocks and low-rise houses.

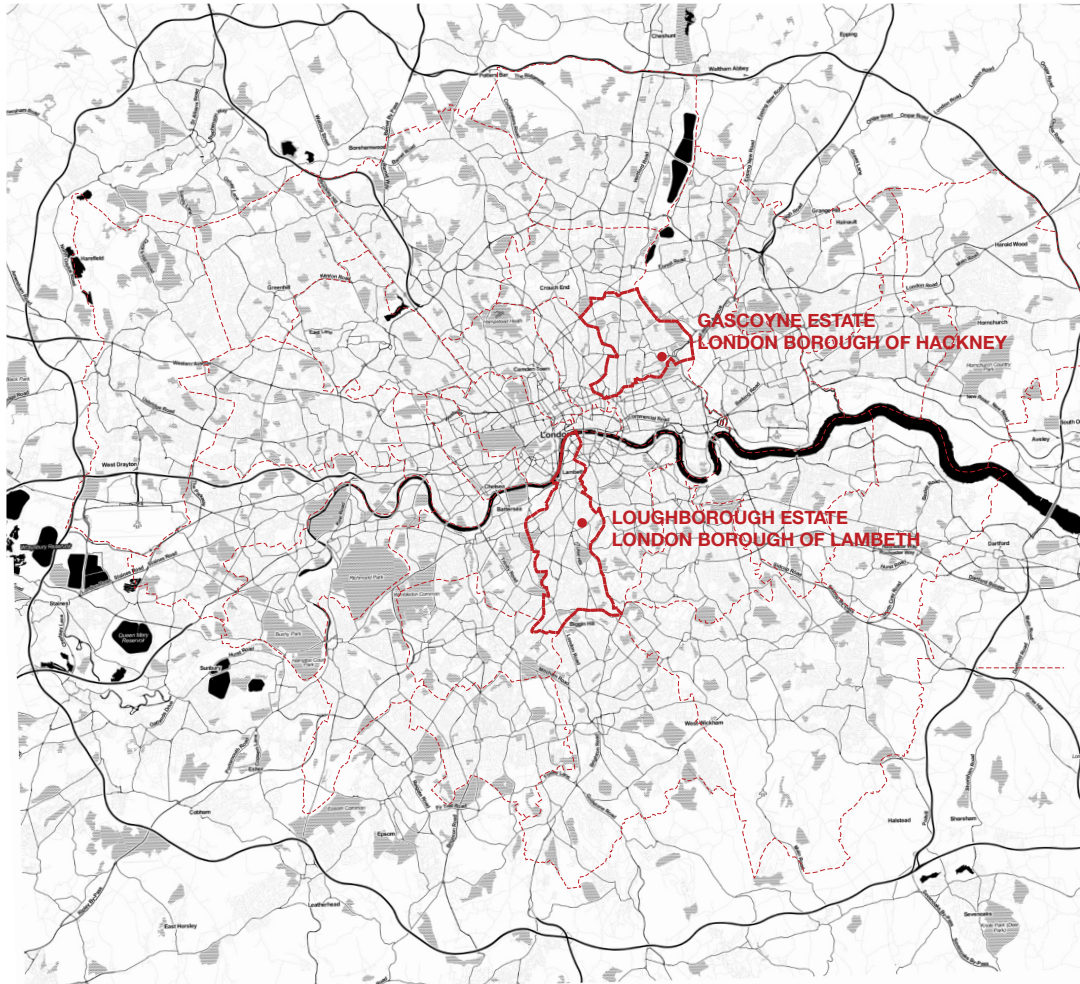
Loughborough Estate is located in Brixton, in the London Borough of Lambeth, whereas Gascoyne 2 Estate is located in the south of Homerton district, in the London Borough of Hackney. Both the boroughs of Hackney and Lambeth are also quite representatives of the urban changes experimented across the twentieth century and at the beginning of the twenty-first century in inner city areas of London. They are both inner-city boroughs just outside Central London: Lambeth in South London and Hackney in East London. Both boroughs experienced a decline of population following Patrick Abercrombie and John Henry Forshaw's CLP (table 1.1). This decline of population had already started with

From left to right:

Figure 1.15: Loughborough Estate from Wick Gardens, March 2009. Photograph by the author.

Figure 1.16: Gascoyne Estate, May 2013. Photograph by the author.

23 As it has been explained when describing the architectural styles of the LCC Architect's Department, this British adaptation of the *Unité d'Habitation* was smaller, had less dwellings, did not have the central corridor.

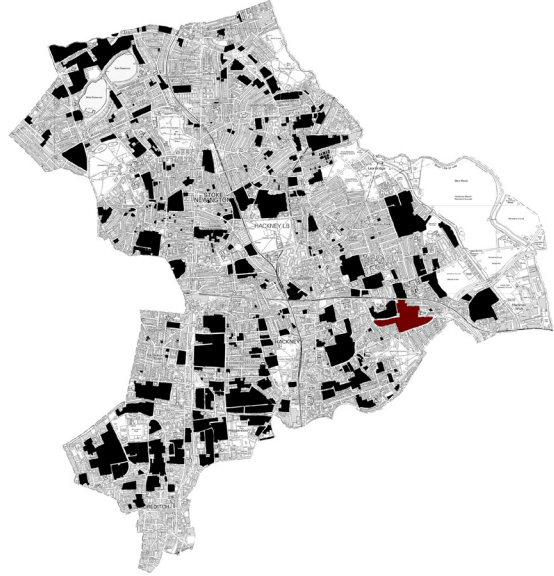
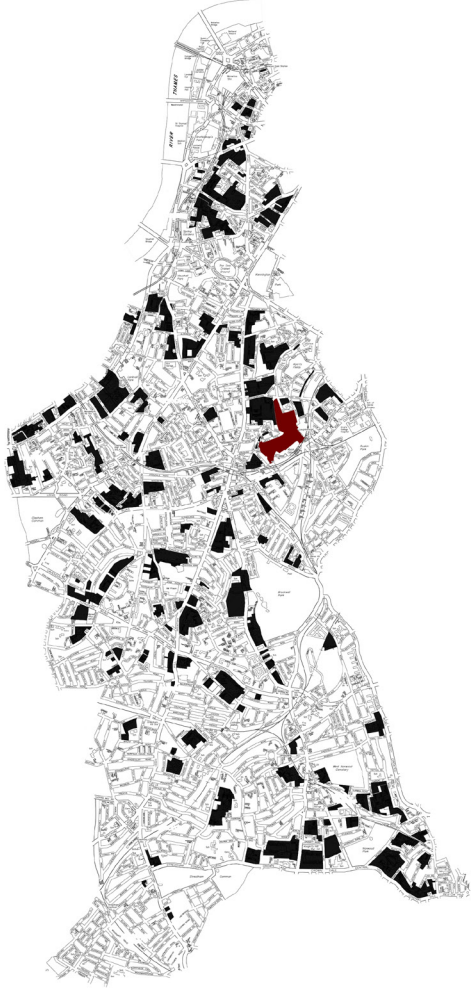


slum clearance process in the 1930s and became stronger in the post-war period. Both were severely affected by WWII bombing and carried on a significant reconstruction process that have resulted in the construction of many large housing estates that still today constitute a high proportion of their housing stock (figures 1.18 and 1.19).

During the second half of the twentieth century, both Hackney and Lambeth experimented a great influx of immigrants, which have provided them with a strongly diverse population. Currently, in both boroughs, over 40% of the population are from ethnic minorities (Office for National Statistics. Neighbourhood Statistics, 2011, [Online] accessed 2013-05-29). This diversity of population has strongly affected the ethnic composition of the council estates, which currently have a highly diverse population, as the case studies will show. Recently, the decrease of population has reversed and both boroughs are experiencing an increase of population (table 1.1). This change of tendency responds to the trend of neighbourhood change in inner city areas explained by Lupton and Power, who describe that inner London is experiencing an influx of both “high-income gentrifiers and new immigrants” (Lupton and Power, 2004: 6). According to them, this is creating housing pressure and provoking within neighbourhood polarisation. On the other hand, they also explain that inner city neighbourhoods have a stronger potential of recovery due to their connections to urban centres, which is something that must be taken into account when intending to bring street life to the public space of these neighbourhoods.

In both boroughs, the image of the housing estates is associated to crime and deprivation, which has given a bad reputation to these neighbourhoods. The analysis will show that the Indices of Crime and Deprivation of both case studies classify them as being in a disadvantaged situation in comparison with other neighbourhoods (table 1.10). As it was

Figure 1.17: Location of Loughborough Estate and Gascoyne Estate in Greater London. Elaborated by the author from Toner map: <http://maps.stame.com>.



explained previously, this association of housing estates with crime has led the London Borough of Hackney to carry on the demolition of big estates with the aim of removing delinquency and marginality from these areas.

Year	1931	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Lambeth	≈415,000	≈342,000	341,624	307,516	244,153	244,834	266,169	303,086
Hackney	363,583	265,349	257,522	220,279	179,536	181,248	202,824	246,270

Table 1.1: Population in the London Boroughs of Lambeth and Hackney²⁴.

Loughborough Estate, which houses over 3,000 people²⁵, is located between Brixton Town Centre and Loughborough Junction. It is just five-minute-walk from Brixton tube station, which makes it having a strong potential for being connected to Brixton’s urban life and

24 In 1965, with the government reform and the creation of the GLC, the boundaries of the boroughs changed. The Metropolitan Boroughs of Hackney, Shoreditch and Stoke Newington were combined to form the current London Borough of Hackney. The Metropolitan Borough of Lambeth was combined with part of the Metropolitan Borough of Wandsworth. The population shown in the table correspond to the current boundaries of the boroughs. The population of Lambeth in 1931 and 1951 is approximate extracted from a graphic from Lambeth development plan 1975, topic papers, population and housing. Sources: Census 1931-2011: Census of England and Wales 1931, County of London, 1932; Census 1951 England and Wales, County Report, London, 1953; 1971 Census, Borough population, size and structure (Hackney), 1973; 1971 Census data for London, 1974; Lambeth development plan 1975, Topic papers: Population and housing, 1975; Office for National Statistics, National Neighbourhood statistics, <http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk>, accessed 2013-12-20; Office for National Statistics, Nomis Web, <http://www.nomisweb.co.uk>, accessed 2013-12-20.

25 The two areas recorded by neighbourhood statistics, which together cover a zone a bit larger than the estate, have a total population of 3,490, which suggests that the population is approximately of 3,000. Source: <http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/>, accessed 2013-05-29.

From left to right, both reproduced at the same scale:

Figure 1.18: Housing Estates in Lambeth. Source: London Borough of Lambeth, 2010.

Figure 1.19: Housing Estates in Hackney. Source: London Borough of Hackney, 2007.





Left page: from left to right:

Figure 1.20: Loughborough Estate. Elaborated by the author from photomap captured from Google Maps 2009-07-30.

Figure 1.21: Gascoyne Estate. Elaborated by the author from photomap captured from Google Maps in 2014-01-22.

This page:

Figure 1.22: Street market in Electric Avenue, Brixton Town Centre, November 2008. Photograph by the author.

to the Victoria Line, which connects it quickly to Central London. Brixton is known for its multiculturalism, for its street life and for its street market in Electric Avenue (Figure 1.22). Particularly in the 1950s, Brixton experienced a great influx of Afro-Caribbean immigrants, which came to be known as the “Windrush generation” (See Whitfield, 2006). Currently, it has large African and West Indian populations. This is representative of what happened in Great Britain, where post-war immigration had given rise to a large number of ethnic minorities living in social housing by the 1980s (Hall, 1988: 395-396).

The street life of Brixton Town Centre, which is bringing higher-income new residents, contrasts with the dead streets of the social housing neighbourhoods, which remain associated with crime—particularly gang crime—and deprivation and has contributed to the area’s poor reputation. However, the area that covers Electric Avenue and a great part of the town centre in Neighbourhood Statistics shows worse Index of Crime and similar Index of Multiple Deprivation than Loughborough Estate²⁶, which shows the difference between actual crime and perception of crime, since one can feel safe walking along the streets of the town centre—since there are activities and street life going on—, while the urban environment of the housing estates do not invite to stay there because nothing is going on in the public realm.

26 According to the Indices of Deprivation 2010, Loughborough Estate is within the 10.70% of the most deprived neighbourhoods in England and within the 21.71% with highest rates of crime, whereas the area that covers part of Brixton Town Centre is within the 10.39% of the most deprived neighbourhoods and within the 1.83% with the highest rates of crime. Indices of Crime 2010, National Neighbourhoods Statistics, Neighbourhood Lambeth 009B, which covers a high proportion of Loughborough Estate, and Neighbourhood Lambeth 0011B, which includes Electric Avenue, <http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/>, accessed 2013-05-29.

Gascoyne 2 Estate houses over 2,000 people²⁷. Unlike Loughborough Estate, it has not such a direct relationship to a town centre. Its closest transport link to Central London is Homerton Overground Station and it is close to Homerton High Street, although separated from it by the railway and accessible through Barnabas Road. Homerton (figure 1.23) is a district in Hackney that is bordered to the west by Hackney Central, to the east by the industrial Hackney Wick, which is next to the Olympic area, to the north by Lower Clapton, and to the south by South Hackney. The urban fabric of Homerton has been characterised in the twentieth century by the presence of industry and by the presence of Hospital facilities. In the 1930s, the LCC carried on a sever slum clearance process and construction of council housing, which removed the slums but also destroyed the commercial uses of the area. This has influenced in the fact that Homerton does not have such an active street life as other parts of Hackney such as Dalston or Hackney Central. Although Gascoyne Estate is not next to a commercial town centre, the neighbourhood is only fifteen minutes walk from Hackney Central and there are some adjacent areas with more street life. It is also really close in distance to Well Street Common and Victoria Park. Moreover, the arrival of the Overground East London Line and the proximity of the Olympic site can have an impact on the neighbourhood, although it is still very soon to evaluate the possible outcomes that this will have. As Lambeth, Hackney has also quite a strong diversity of ethnic origins, which is also translated into a diverse population in their council estates. Like in Lambeth, the trendy image that Hackney is offering to young professionals to move into the borough contrasts with the still bad reputation of the council estates, which remain associated to crime, youth gangs and deprivation.



Figure 1.23: Homerton High Street, April 2012.
Source and copyright: Google Street View.

²⁷ Since neighbourhood is three areas in Neighbourhood Statistics, it is difficult to calculate the population. However, the area that covers the majority of the estate houses 1,890, which means that the estate has definitely a population over 2,000.



Figure 1.24: Millbrook Road, May 2013. Photograph by the author.

Figure 1.25: Bentham Road, April 2013. Photograph by the author.

1.2.1 Construction of Loughborough Estate and Gascoyne 2 Estate

Both Loughborough Estate and Gascoyne 2 Estate were built in sites severely damaged by WWII bombings. Both pre-war maps of the areas that currently occupy the housing estates show a street pattern with terraced houses (figures 1.39 and 1.42). In Brixton, the houses that remain in Millbrook Road next to Wyck Gardens (figure 1.24) can give an idea of how the area that occupies Loughborough Estate might have been. In Gascoyne 2 Estate, the remaining terraced houses in one of the sides of Bentham Road (figure 1.25) can also give an idea of how the place might have been in the pre-war period. Also some pictures from the Lambeth Archives show how were Loughborough Road and Millbrook Road before the war (figures 1.46 and 1.47). In the Hackney Archives, the only remaining pictures of the area are from the damages caused by the bombings (figures 1.50 and 1.51). The pictures and the historic maps give an idea of the type of architecture that occupied the areas before the war, which were predominantly terraced houses of Victorian and Georgian architecture. These housing typologies were severely affected by the slum clearance and reconstruction process.

After the war, the Bentham Road site in Hackney was occupied with Nissen huts²⁸ until in the 1950s the housing estate was built, as it can be observed in the areal picture (figure 1.26). There are also photographs of similar Nissen huts in 1945 “near Loughborough Junction”, but from the picture it cannot be deduced if they are in the site of Loughborough Estate (figure 1.27).

28 Nissen huts were prefabricated constructions with a semi-circular shape in section (figure 1.25). They were quick to build. They were used in WWII “as shelter for bombed out civilians” (see <http://www.nissens.co.uk/default.htm> for more information, accessed 2013-12-23).

Loughborough Estate was designed at the beginning of the 1950s by a team of architects from the Housing Division of the LCC Architect's Department, while Robert H. Matthew was Architect to the Council and J. Leslie Martin was Deputy Architect—he succeeded Matthew as Architect to the Council in 1953—. Whitefield Lewis was Principal Housing Architect and Michael Powell was Assistant Housing Architect. The team of architects included: “C. G. Weald, H. J. Hall, Miss G. M. Sarson, E. J. Voisey, S. J. Howard, A. A. Baker, C. A. St John Wilson, P. J. Carter and A. H. Colquhoun. The consulting Engineer was James E. Wardropper” (LCC Housing, 1958: 2). The design scheme was approved in 1952 (Day, 1988: 279, referencing GLRO, H.Com., Minutes 1952, Vol. 15, 2nd July) and the construction of the first phase took place between 1954 and 1955 (LCC Housing Statistics 1954-1955, 1955: 27), although the last extension of the scheme was finished in 1961 (Civic Trust Awards – 1961 Entry: London County Council. Loughborough Estate Extension, Lambeth, 1961).

The estate was built in the 1950s next to an existing council estates from the 1930s—Old Loughborough Estate—. The scheme is a mixed development that combines *Unité*-inspired slab blocks with terrace houses and four-storey maisonette blocks. It has five big eleven-storey slab blocks of maisonettes and four smaller eleven-storey slab blocks of flats, “one six-storey and fifteen four-storey maisonette blocks; eight terraces of two-storey houses with gardens; one three-storey block with shops on the ground floor; and one two-storey block” (LCC Housing, 1958: 2). The park that was planned together with the housing estate—Wyck Gardens—is delimited by the railway viaduct on its south-eastern part (figure 1.29 and 1.32). Three of the big slab towers are facing perpendicularly the park, with flats with views on it.



Figure 1.26: Nissen huts in Bentham Road, Hackney, 1946. Source: Flickr / Peter Kurton.

Figure 1.27: Nissen huts built by American Engineers, 1945. Source: London Borough of Lambeth.



Figure 1.28: Loughborough Estate scheme (Civic Trust Awards – 1961 Entry: London County Council. Loughborough Estate Extension, Lambeth, 1961). Source: Lambeth Archives.

Figure 1.29: Model of Loughborough Estate. Source: London Metropolitan Archives.

The 1950s scheme covers an area of 12.49 Hectares, from which 10.91 are allocated for housing, 0.32 for old people’s home, 0,79 for school extension, 2.63 for a park—Wyck Gardens—and 0.06 for public home. The new Loughborough Estate has 1028 dwellings, which provides it with a density of 94.39 dwellings per hectare if its counted just the area allocated for dwelling and of 82.31 dwellings per hectare counting the area of the whole site (Civic Trust Awards – 1961 Entry: London County Council. Loughborough Estate Extension, Lambeth, 1961). The analysis will show the difficulties of comparing the local densities of the specific site before and after the war²⁹.

The neighbourhood was planned with an open layout: the slab blocks were standing on large open areas of grass (figure 1.30). The ground floors of the slab blocks stood on pilotis and were open. The ground floors also included “one-room flats, a laundry and tenant stores”³⁰. The structure of the blocks is of “reinforced concrete slabs, cross walls and columns cast *in situ*” (LCC Housing, 1958: 2). The external surfaces were originally of exposed concrete with different kind of finishes (LCC Housing, 1958: 7) (figure 1.31), although today they are painted.

Little attention had been paid to design in the public realm of the original development, which consisted basically of large areas of grass where communal life was supposed to

29 The analysis will show that although the post-war reconstruction implied a loss of general density in the London Borough of Lambeth and in Angell Ward (see tables 1.1 and 1.4)—where Loughborough Estate is included—, it is not possible to measure the local density of this particular site in the pre-war period, since there is not statistical date at neighbourhood level.

30 Source: scanned page from an unknown book in the website of the documentary Utopia London, <http://www.utopialondon.com/loughborough-estate>, accessed 2013-05-10.

take place. The photographs at the Lambeth Archives and the Metropolitan Archives show large green areas with low fences, some benches and paths that no longer exist (figure 1.31) and a playground next to the smaller slab towers (figure 1.32) that has fall into decay. This scheme focused on the buildings and not on the common spaces. A photograph in the Metropolitan Archives records the “bad state in which the contractors left the site after the completion of work” (London Metropolitan Archive, Photograph record, 1960) (figure 1.33), which probably required further investment after the completion of the work. The exposed concrete slab towers were soon painted in white, as photographs from 1966 show (figure 1.34).

Loughborough Road can be considered as a “restricted and frustrated attempt” (Day, 1988: 282) to develop Le Corbusier’s *Unité d’Habitation* by the LCC Architect’s Department. The restrictions forced them to build smaller blocks with no communal facilities. C. A. St John Wilson, implied in the design of both Loughborough Estate and the Bentham Road development in Gascoyne Estate, published an article in *The Observer* on the 20th of July 1952 about two other housing estates where he complained about the “out-of date law or conventions: the height of blocks, the relationship between private and public open space, the proportion of communal facilities to dwellings and above all, the actual plan-form of the dwellings themselves all need reconsideration at an administrative level” (Wilson, 1952: 8).

This attempts to build *Unités* in London was further studied in the Bentham Road site in Gascoyne 2 Estate, where the scheme was more about experimenting with the typology of the slab block itself than with building a large comprehensive mixed development of slab towers and low-rise houses as in Loughborough Estate. As Bullock describes, “the



Figure 1.30: Loughborough Estate, Brixton, 1961.
Source: Lambeth Archives.



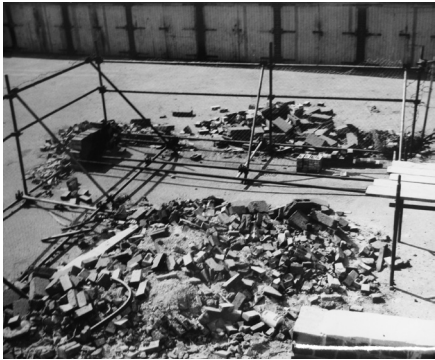
Figure 1.31: Slab block finished in exposed concrete. According to the information found in the Metropolitan Archives, the photograph is circa 1958.

Bentham Road blocks established the viability of the *Unité*-inspired ten-storey slab block that was to be used by the LCC on a number of major developments during the 1950s and 1960s” (Bullock, 2002: 106). Kite and Menin (2005: 81) describe how C. A. St John Wilson and Alan Colquhoun had the chance to meet Le Corbusier and returned back to London fascinated and designed, together with Peter Carter³¹, the British version of the *Unité*, which did not have the communal facilities nor the ‘streets in the sky’ and was much smaller than the one in Marseilles. The architectural critic Banham (1966: 89-90) identifies this work of the LCC as an emerging Brutalist Style. The periodical *Prospect* in 1958 considers the development as “probably the finest local government housing to be seen” (quoted in Robinson, 1999: 76) and is very confident about its success: “Until the blocks have been occupied for some time the result of the sociological experiment cannot be judged although there is no reason to doubt its success” (quoted in Robinson, 1999: 76).

Gascoyne 2 Estate is an extension of the Gascoyne Estate developed in the 1930s, although today they work administratively as separate neighbourhoods. Unlike Loughborough Estate, it is not a comprehensive mixed development, but it was built in different phases. The first phase was in the Bentham Road site and was designed by a similar team of LCC Architects as the Loughborough Estate. This development included two slab blocks—Granard House and Vaine House—, terraced houses and four-storey blocks, as it can be appreciated on the plan from 1953 (figure 1.36). In this case, the towers are not oriented south-west / north-east as in Loughborough Estate. Instead, they are located almost south / north, parallel to Cassland Road. Another difference with Loughborough Estate is that

31

Other authors also include C. G. Weald as architect. See Robinson, 1999: 75.



the Bentham Road development changed the existing streets, since a part of Bentham Road disappeared with the construction of the slab blocks.

Further developments of Gascoyne 2 Estate at the end of the 1960s included the construction of another slab block that was built perpendicular to Vaine House and four point blocks were built in the remaining piece of Bentham Road that had not disappeared. This extension does not match with the proposed extension in the models done in 1960s (figure 1.37), which would have totally erased the remaining piece of Bentham Road. During the beginning of the 1980s, the housing estate kept growing on the north side of Wick Road replacing the old housing³². Services such as a health centre and a school also were built in the estate. A tenants' clubroom was built at the end of the 1970s in the same grass surface as the four point blocks, facing Wick Road³³.

The initial development in Bentham Road included 379 dwellings in an area of 4.03 hectares, which gives a density of 94.15 dwellings per hectare. However, after the subsequent phases, Gascoyne Estate has over 1,100 dwellings (Robinson, 1999: 76). As in Loughborough Estate, it is difficult to compare the local densities of the specific site before and after the war³⁴.

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Figure 1.32: Aerial view of Loughborough Estate, 1958. Source: LCC Housing, 1958. Found in the London Metropolitan Archives.

Figure 1.32: Loughborough Estate, playground next to one of the smaller slab blocks. According to material found in the archives, it is circa 1958. Source: London Metropolitan Archives.

Figure 1.33: Loughborough Estate, photograph showing the “bad state in which the contractors left the site after the completion of work”, 1960. Source: London Metropolitan Archives.

Figure 1.34: Loughborough Estate, slab blocks painted in white, 1966. Source: London Metropolitan Archives.

32 Plans of the Ballance Road Development, 1980. Source: London Metropolitan Archives.

33 The plan found on the Metropolitan Archives is dated in 1976.

34 The analysis will show that although the post-war reconstruction implied a loss of general density in the London Borough of Hackney and in Wick Ward—where Gascoyne Estate is included—, it is not possible to measure the local density of this particular site in the pre-war period (see tables 1.1 and 1.4).

As in Loughborough Estate, the towers were originally finished in exposed concrete (figure 1.38) and painted some years later. The periodical *Prospect* in 1958 highlighted the high cost of their structure and foundations and suggested that maybe they were not suitable to the site due to the characteristics of the soil. During this first phase, a playground was built out of concrete, which can be appreciated in the photograph (figure 1.38), although it does not exist anymore. Apart from this playground, not much treatment was done in the outdoor spaces. Again, the scheme focused more in the buildings that in the public space.

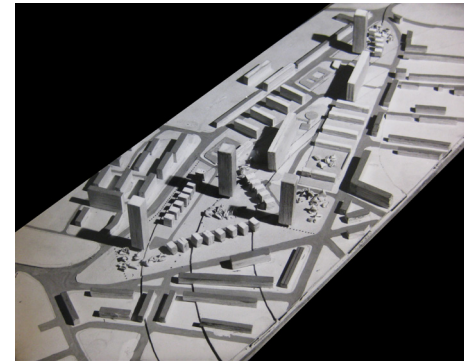
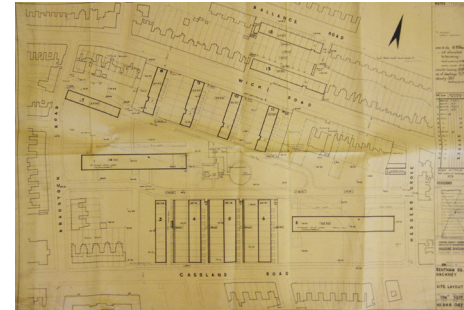


Figure 1.35: Plan of Bentham Road development in Gascoyne Estate, 1953. Source: London Metropolitan Archives.

Figure 1.36: One of the models of the extension of Gascoyne Estate, 1960. Source: London Metropolitan Archives.



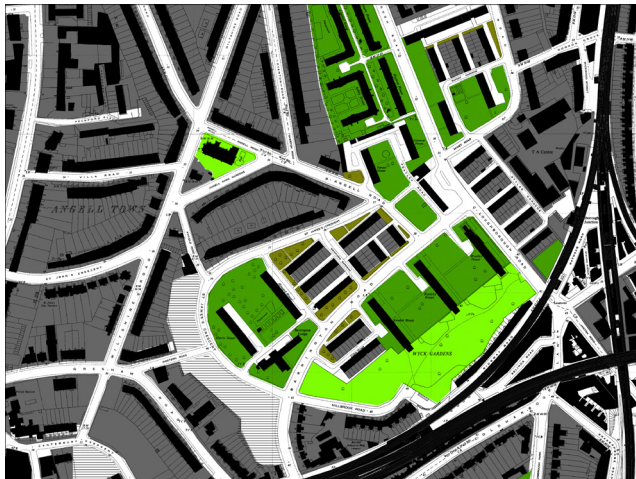
Figure 1.37: Construction of Bentham Road development in Gascoyne Estate, 1957. Source: London Metropolitan Archives.

Figure 1.38: Slab Tower finished in exposed concrete and playground built out of concrete. Source: London Metropolitan Archives.

1.2.2 Urban change of the post-war reconstruction process

The figure/ground maps (figures 1.39-1.45)—which also show the private/public spaces—of the pre-war and post-war periods show how dramatic was the change of the urban fabric of both sites. However, as tables 1.2 and 1.3 show, in the cases under study, the change on the urban fabric was not that much in figure/ground ratio as in the street layout and in the proportion of public, semipublic, semiprivate, and private space³⁵. Hanson (2000: 97-101) explains very clearly the urban transformations that took place with the construction of the housing estates since the slum clearance process started at the beginning of the twentieth century. She explains how the change from a traditional street layout to an estate layout supposed the transformation from a continuous and integrating street space with front doors facing the streets to a fragmented space with buildings standing in an open landscape not facing the streets, which means that there is not a direct interface between the buildings and the street. Hanson highlights the effect of changing from ‘constituted’ streets—which means that the dwellings and the buildings have direct door entrance from the street—to ‘unconstituted’ streets, which are those that have no direct access to door entrances, since the buildings are not facing the street (Hanson, 2000).

³⁵ As shown in table 1.2, in the case of Loughborough Estate, the built ratio changes from 24.77 in 1886 to 25.37 in 1958. However, there is a significant increase in public and semipublic spaces. Table 1.3 shows that in Gascoyne Estate the built ratio changes from 31.31 in 1916 to 29.23 in 1960—when the first phase of the estate is concluded—and to 25.00 in 1970, when the second phase is concluded. Moreover, there is a significant increase of semipublic spaces.



- Buildings
- Private
- Semiprivate (fenced communal areas)
- Semipublic (open communal areas)
- Public parks
- Grass verge
- Cleared sites or brownfield
- Sites damaged by bombings

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Figure 1.39: Brixton before WWII, 1886.

Figure 1.40: Brixton: damages caused by WWII bombings, 1952.

Figure 1.41: Construction of Loughborough Estate, 1958.

Key of the figures 1.39-1.45, 1.53, and 1.56.

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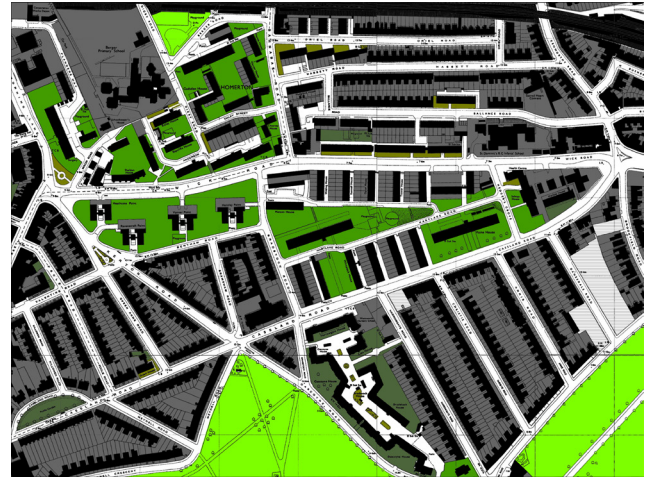
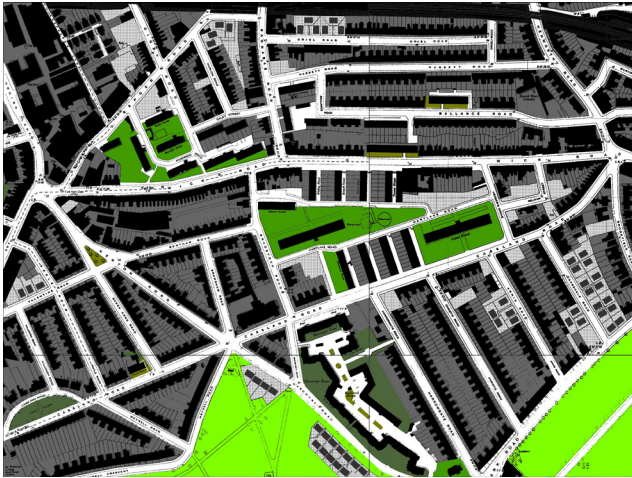
Figure 1.42: Pre-war Gascoyne Estate site. 1916.

Figure 1.43: Damaged by WWII bombing, 1948.

Figure 1.44: Construction of the first phase of the Gascoyne 2 Estate, 1960.

Figure 1.45: Construction of the second phase of the Gascoyne 2 Estate, 1972.

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Loughborough Estate spatial distribution (%)	1886	1952	1958	2009
Built	24.77	25.92	25.37	24.64
Non-built private space	54.07	35.59	33.46	25.51
Semiprivate	0.00	0.00	0.00	7.17
Semipublic	0.27	2.43	9.32	2.24
Public	0.33	0.33	3.87	8.05
Grass verge	0.00	0.00	2.26	1.40
Cleared site or brownfield	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.61
Bombed site	0.00	9,79	0.00	0.00
Road, path or sidewalk	20.57	21.93	24.79	30.37

Table 1.2: Urban change of the spatial distribution of Loughborough Estate. Elaborated by the author from the maps shown on figures 1.39, 1.40, 1.41 and 1.53. Calculated taking a rectangular sample of 800 x 600 metres that contains the estate³⁶.

³⁶ In tables 1.2 and 1.3: semiprivate is considered every communal garden that is fenced or surrounded by walls and which is not directly accessible from the street. Semipublic is considered every communal garden that is adjacent to a building and which is directly accessible from the street.

Gascoyne Estate spatial distribution (%)	1916	1948	1960	1970	2013
Built	31.31	29.69	29.23	25.00	24.62
Non-built private space	39.26	27.54	27.39	26.93	28.68
Semiprivate	0.33	1.50	1.80	2.13	6.53
Semipublic	0.00	0.14	3.74	8.09	4.37
Public	7.83	4.70	7.28	8.57	8.10
Grass verge	0.06	0.09	0.33	0.73	0.93
Cleared site or brownfield	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.29	0.00
Bombed site	0.00	13.35	4.98	0.00	0.00
Road, path or sidewalk	21.21	22.98	25.26	27.75	26.78

Table 1.3: Urban change of the spatial distribution of Gascoyne Estate. Elaborated by the author from the maps shown on figures 1.42, 1.43, 1.44, 1.45 and 1.56. Calculated taking a rectangular sample of 800 x 600 metres that contains the estate.

Another significant change was the amount of public or communal spaces. Before the war, most of the non-built spaces were private backyards or front yards, while after the war there was a large proportion of open public or communal spaces, although time has demonstrated that they are disused. Hanson describes this change from “(d)ensity-maximising morphology, streets carved out of the solid (to) (d)ensity-minimising morphology, pavilions in a landscape” (Hanson, 2000: 100).

These changes in the urban space layout were accompanied, in some of the slum clearance process, by a decline of population and the resultant loss of density following

Abercrombie's Plan recommendations. Although this was a general change that took place in most of the post-war developments (see the decrease of density in Angell and Wick wards: table 1.4 and 1.5), it seems not to be so much the case of Loughborough Estate and Gascoyne Estate, which at that time were considered by LCC architects as high-density developments (LCC Housing, 1958: 2). Then, this analysis will explain how this change was in each of the

In the case of Loughborough Estate, the historic maps reveal relevant information about how was the area before and after the war. The figure/ground ratio in the area changed from 24.77 in 1886 to 25.37 in 1958. As mentioned before, although there was no change in the figure/ground ratio, there was a dramatic change in the layout of the buildings, which changed from a 'constituted' street layout to an open layout of slab towers and low-rise housing that did not shape (i.e., align) the street and which door entrances did not face directly the street in the majority of the cases. As can be appreciated in the historic map from 1958 (figure 1.41), the entrances of both the large and the smaller slab blocks are not from the main streets, but from paths that go into the open courtyards between the blocks. The low-rise houses are in many cases perpendicular to the main streets. In those cases that the entrance of the houses is from the main streets, there is an area of grass in the front that establishes some distance between the street and the buildings. This change of urban layout can be also appreciated in the proportion of private/public: whereas the proportion of non-built space has remain the same from 1886 to 1958, this non-built space has changed from being mostly private—excluding roads, paths and sidewalks—to including semipublic and public gardens with the construction of the estate (see table 1.2).



Figure 1.46: Pre-war Loughborough Road. Source: Lambeth Landmark.

Figure 1.47: Pre-war Millbrook Road. Source: Lambeth Landmark.



Figure 1.48: Shops in Loughborough Road, 1958. Source: London Metropolitan Archive.

Figure 1.49: Wick gardens with few people gathering and slab blocks, 1958. Source: London Metropolitan Archive.

As stated before, this change to the urban fabric in the post-war period came normally associated with a decrease of population. In Loughborough Estate, it is difficult to guess the change of population since there is no data recorded at neighbourhood level. Neighbourhood Statistics started in 2001 and before that statistics were calculated at ward level. A further difficulty is that ward boundaries have been changing in the different censuses. However, knowing the area of the ward and the population in different decades, some conclusions can be made about the change of density in the area (table 1.4).

The impact of the post-war reconstruction in the density of population can be summarized in the decline from 183.47 people/hectare (p/Ha) in 1931 to 122,73 p/Ha in 1971, when much of the reconstruction process had taken place. From 1931 to 1951—there was no census in 1941—, it can be appreciated a decrease of population that might be associated to the slum clearance process of the 1930s and to WWII bombing that took place at the beginning of the 1940s. During the 1950s there was a little increase of density that can be associated to the construction of housing estates in bombed sites such as Loughborough Estate, which last extension phase was completed in 1961. This can be understood since the bombed sites were not inhabited in 1951. During the 1960s, there was a significant decrease of density that can be associated to the continuing slum clearance and reconstruction processes.

Although there was an overall 33% decrease of density on the whole Angell Ward, it can be deduced from the historic maps that Loughborough Estate did not suffer the same decrease. The scheme was conceived for a *local* density of 336 p/Ha (LCC Housing, 1958: 2), which is a much higher than the *global* density of the ward (see table 1.4). Since local

and global³⁷ density cannot be compared, it is difficult to measure the change of density, although some conclusions can be extracted from the analysis of the historic maps. The figure/ground ratio remained the same from the pre-war to the post-war period (see table 1.2 and 1.3). Furthermore, the average height of the buildings probably increased with the construction of the slab-blocks. However, there is a factor that is difficult to measure since there is not information at neighbourhood level, which is the occupation of the households. It is possible that the number of people per dwelling decreased in the reconstruction process, which makes very difficult to measure the change of population.

Year	Area (Hectares)	Population	Density (People/Hectare)
1931	157	28,883	183.47
1951	157	24,197	153.71
1961	105	17,679	168.37
1971	105	12,887	122.73

Table 1.4: Population change in Angell Ward 1931-1971³⁸.

³⁷ Local density is measured in a particular block or delimited neighbourhood, whereas global density is measured in a bigger area. Global density is normally lower than local density since it takes into account non-built areas and non-residential areas such as roads, railway, and industrial estates.

³⁸ *Census of England and Wales 1931. County of London; Census of England and Wales 1931. County of London; Lambeth Development Plan 1975. Topic papers: Population and Housing*, p. 11. Table 1: Population Change in Lambeth Wards 1961-1971; *1971 Census Data for London*.

Year	Area (Hectares)	Population	Density (p/Ha)
1931	127	16,240	128.21
1951	127	9,545	75.35
1971	176	11,148	63.34

Table 1.5: Change of population density 1931-1971³⁹.

There is also little information about social statistics or ethnic composition of the estate compared to the one before the war. The “Windrush Generation” arrived to Brixton mainly in the 1940s and 1950s, but it is not clear when these families started to be a high proportion of Loughborough Estate population. In Angell Ward in 1971 (Angell Ward Profile 1979), there was 15.7% of population whose both parents were born in the New Commonwealth, which supposed a quite diverse population. 6.8% of the economically active were seeking work and 52.3% of the housing stock was rented from the local authority. This data and the socio-economic statistics shown in tables 1.6 and 1.7, which show the age composition and the Socio-Economic Groups classification, give an idea of the social composition of the estate, which was within Angell Ward, characterised by a working class population, which normally rented from the local authority.

³⁹ *Census of England and Wales 1931. County of London; Census of England and Wales 1931. County of London; 1971 Census Data for London.*

Age	Angell Ward	Wick Ward
0-15	23.7	20.5
16- 59(female)/64(male)	60.6	63.3
Over 60(f)/65(m)	15.6	16.20

Table 1.6: Age composition of Angell Ward (Lambeth) and Wick Ward (Hackney).⁴⁰

Socio-Economic Groups (SEG) 1971	Angell Ward	Wick Ward
Professional workers	1.1%	1.5%
Employers and managers in central and local government, industry, commerce, etc., including farmers	7.8%	7.6%
Own account workers other than professionals	5.1%	6.1%
Foremen and supervisors (manual), skilled manual workers	29.2%	40.7%
Intermediate non-manual workers and junior non-manual workers	19.2%	13.4%
Personal service workers, semi-skilled workers, and agricultural workers	18.6%	18.9%
Unskilled manual workers, members of the armed forces, and persons whose occupation was inadequately described	18.9%	11.9%

Table 1.7: S.E.G. percentages for Angell Ward and Wick Ward, 1971⁴¹.

40 Sources: Angell Ward Profile 1979; 1971 Census Data for London.

41 Source: S.E.G. percentages. *1971 Census Data for London*.

The historic maps of the site of Gascoyne Estate can also provide useful information about how the place changed from before the war to after the war. By comparing the pre-war map from 1916 to the post-war map of 1970—when some phases of the development of the estate were already completed—, it can be appreciated how the street pattern changed from a ‘constituted’ street layout to an open layout: part of Bentham Road disappeared and the two slab blocks were placed on top of grass surfaces where Bentham Road used to be. These slab blocks, unlike in Loughborough Estate, are oriented parallel to the street. However, they have a grass area in front that makes the access from the street not so direct. The low-rise housing next to the slab towers do not conform to constituted streets, but are placed perpendicular to them. The point towers, which were built at the end of the 1960s, were located in the middle of a grass area between Bentham Road and Wyck Road, on a site that used to be occupied by houses facing the surrounding streets, which were cleared during the 1960s. In front of the point towers, in Bentham Road, there remained a terrace of housing, whose door entrances are facing the street. Today, we can appreciate the difference between the two sides of Bentham Road, one with houses facing the streets and the other one with blocks in the middle of a grass area.

In the case of Gascoyne Estate, the figure/ground ratio changed from 31.3 in 1916 to 29.23 in 1960—when the first phase of the post-war housing estate was completed—and to 25.00 in 1972, when the second phase was completed. As in Loughborough Estate, the most significant change was the transformation from a continuous street layout into a housing estate layout with towers surrounded by gardens. This change is also visible in the proportion of public/private space. Whereas in the pre-war period most of the non-built space was private—excluding the roads, paths and sidewalks—, in the post-war period there was a significant increase in semipublic spaces (see table 1.3).

As in Loughborough Estate, it is difficult to guess the change of population that took place from before to after the construction of the post-war Gascoyne Estate. It can be useful to look at the changes of population that took place in Wick Ward. Although, it is difficult to extract precise conclusions since this is a ward that mixes housing estates, traditional streets, large parks and industrial areas, which makes it an area not very populated. It could be easier to extract conclusions if the boundaries had not changed through time. As table 1.5 shows, there was a huge decline of density from 1931 to 1951, which can be associated to the slum clearance process that started in the area in the 1930s and to the damaged caused by bombings. From 1951 to 1971, which is the period in which the majority of Gascoyne Estate was built, there was a little decline of density that can be associated to two facts: firstly, the construction of the estate on a site that was destroyed and almost empty in 1951 increased the population and, secondly, the further clearance and construction of the following phases of the estate decreased again the density of population. In contrast to Loughborough Estate, in Gascoyne Estate there was a decrease in the figure/ground ratio (from 31.31 to 25.00, table 1.3). However, since it is not possible to know at neighbourhood level the average height of the buildings and the number of people per dwelling, it is not possible to affirm that this decrease of the figure/ground ratio supposed a severe decrease of the population in this particular area.

Some conclusions of the people that lived there in 1971 can be extracted from the Wick Ward statistics: 11.7% of the population were not born in the U.K. and 6.8% of the population were born in the New Commonwealth or other Commonwealth countries, which means that the population was not as diverse as in Loughborough Estate area. The age structure is similar to the one in Loughborough Estate (table 1.6). The socioeconomic distribution was similar to the one in Loughborough Estate, with the exception that there



Figures 1.50: Bentham Road bomb damage, 1940-1945. Source: Hackney Archives.

Figures 1.51: Bentham Road bomb damage, 1940-1945. Source: Hackney Archives.

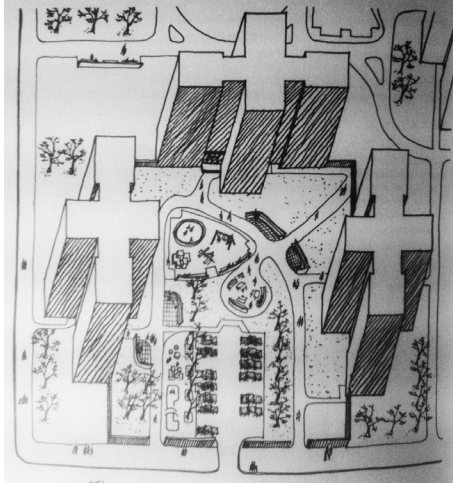


were more skilled manual workers in Gascoyne Estate (table 1.7). 50.80% of the housing stock was rented from the local authority. These socio-economic statistics give an idea of the social composition of the estate, which was within Wick Ward: as in Loughborough Estate, it was predominantly working class, although the nationality of the population was less diverse and there were more skilled manual workers.

As it has been explained, both areas experimented a radical change in their urban fabric from a traditional street layout to an open layout characteristic of post-war housing estates. The changes on the density of population and on the socio-economic composition from the pre-war period to the post-war period are not so clear. However, it can be said that at the beginning of the 1970s, the housing estates were occupied by a working class population.

Figure 1.52: Bentham Road site in Gascoyne Estate.
View of the playground and Granard House, 1960.
Source: London Metropolitan Archives.





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Figure 1.53: Analysis of the open spaces in Loughborough Estate, 2009. Elaborated by the author from Ordnance Survey Maps © Crown Copyright/database right 2014. An Ordnance Survey/EDINA supplied service.

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Figure 1.54: Oscar Newman proposal for Bronxdale. Source: Newman, 1972.

1.2.3 Process of decay, transformations and interventions in the housing estates

Before evaluating the current situation of the public realm in these two case studies, it is also important to look at the transformations—or absence of transformation—that these housing estates have suffered since they were built until now. Both cases have undergone analogous processes although with some differences. In both cases, the public spaces had very little treatment except for some playgrounds. After their construction, they were under a process of decay and minor repairs until in the 1990s some attempts were done to reorganize the public and communal spaces.

In the case of Loughborough Estate, from reading the Angell Ward profiles between 1979 and 1982, which included the interventions taken in Loughborough Estates, it is possible to see the necessity of repairing certain problems derived from the construction of the estate, such as the removal of asbestos and other minor repairs. It seems that this emergency repairs were the one that took the whole budget for the estate and not the improvement of the public space. The profiles talk about planned projects such as the construction of car-park areas or new paths, but there is no evidence of this until the major plan was implemented in Loughborough Estate between 1992 and 1994 (London Borough of Lambeth. Planning Application database, n.d. [online], accessed 2013-08-05). The profiles also mention the existing facilities in the estate, such as the elderly centre in Barrington Lodge, which no longer exists, the youth centre, which still exists, the community centre and the health centre, which have been replaced by the new community centre. They also mention the existence of a mobile library that stopped at the pub in the estate.

The profiles also mention another fact that it is important for the maintenance of the estate: the transfer of the public housing stock from the GLC to the borough. This had started in the early 1970s (Lambeth Housing Committee, 1969) and was completed in 1982 (Angell Ward Profiles, 1979-1992). This supposed that the boroughs started to have a large housing stock that was difficult for them to manage and to maintain.

Major interventions were carried out in between 1992 and 1994 (London Borough of Lambeth. Planning Application database, n.d. [online], accessed 2013-08-05), which included: closing the ground floor for the creation of concierge spaces and room for the bins, creating secured entrances with video cameras. It also included fencing around the gardens between the big slab blocks, landscaping the gardens and creating playgrounds. Furthermore, car-park areas were created. Finally, windows and doors were replaced.

The current map of Loughborough Estate that shows the fenced gardens (figure 1.53) has many similarities with Newman's proposals to intervene on the American's housing projects by introducing some hierarchy in the open space through fences (figure 1.54).

Recently, at the beginning of the 2000s, CCTV cameras have been installed all over the estate and the headquarters of Coldharbour Lane Neighbourhood Team are located in Loughborough Junctions. The installation of CCTV has not fully solved the problems of criminality.

The 'Secured by Design' pieces of advice are recorded in the London Borough of Lambeth Replacement Unitary Plan – October 2006 (Lambeth Planning, 2006: 96). Secure by Design (see Secured by Design, n.d [Online], accessed 2013-06-05) is a police-led

association created in 1989. In some of its statements, it can be found similar principles to those of ‘defensible space’. However, the policy encourages improving pedestrian activities rather than installing fences and barbed wire that produce hostile public spaces.

Another recent intervention in Loughborough Estate has been the construction of the new community centre, which is on the same site as it used to be the old community and the health centre. The demolition of the old community centre—circa 2002—and the construction of the new one supposed stopping community activities for a period of time and the consequent loss of communal bonds in the neighbourhood⁴². Actually, the old community centre still exists in the ground floor of one of the towers, but its only activity is a children’s nursery. After the construction of the new one, the new building could not be used for a while because of bureaucratic problems. Actually, when the first fieldwork was done for this thesis in 2009, the community centre was still closed with the exception of Loughborough Estate Management Board (EMB) and United Resident Housing (URH) offices. During the site visits in 2013, it could be observed that there are some activities going on, although the attendance to the activities is not very high⁴³.

This example of intervention in a neighbourhood, which is supposed to be for good since a newer building is being built, is a clear example of how certain interventions do not take advantage of the existing potential in the neighbourhood. On the contrary, what this intervention originated was cutting the existing activities and starting from scratch some years later.

42 Conclusions from unstructured interviews to residents and workers of the area, 2009 and 2013.

43 Conclusions from site visit during activities, 2009 and 2013.

A further intervention in the estate—although this is not urban—is the creation of Loughborough EMB in 1995 (‘Loughborough EMB | United Resident Housing’, n.d. [Online], accessed 2013-06-05), which is part of the arms length management organisation (ALMO) URH. Apart from rent collecting and housing management, they take care of the repairs and maintenance of the estate and the neighbourhood and the internal gardens are in better condition. United Resident Housing has carried on works to meet the Decent Home Standards. These interventions have focused in the buildings and not in the public space, and have included, among other actions, the improvement of façades, insulation, and roofs, the installation of solar panels in Style Gardens and other actions that are detailed in United Resident Housing’s web site (‘United Resident Housing’, n.d. [Online], accessed 2013-05-16). During the site visits in 2013, it has been observed that the tower blocks and in a much better state of maintenance.

A remarkable recent intervention on the open space of the estate is the Ebony Horse Club (‘Ebony Horse Club’, n.d. [Online] accessed 2013-06-05), which is located in Wyck Gardens. When the first fieldwork was done in 2009, this was still a project that was collecting funding. The horse club was finally built and opened in October 2011. The site visits in 2013 have shown much more activity in Wyck Gardens, a fact that can be influenced by the presence of the horse club and the organization of youth activities in the park. Whereas in 2009 the park was quite disused, in 2013 it is possible to find people there in the playgrounds and in the football pitch. In sunny days, a lot of people can be seen there.

Gascoyne Estate has also gone through a process of transformations, although they are not so significant since there is not so much open space. As mentioned previously, the

periodical *The Prospect* in 1958 remarked the high cost that the towers had due to their expensive foundations. This probably did not left much money for the open spaces, since the only treatment that they have is the playground built out of concrete. In the figure 1.55, it can be appreciated the changes from 1987 to 2002.

As explained previously, Gascoyne Estate kept developing between the 1960s and 1980s and some services were included within the site, such as a clubroom, a school and a health centre. However, no major interventions were done in the Bentham Road site for forty years, which left the blocks “in need of drastic overhaul” (Robinson, 1999: 76). Between 1997 and 1998, a refurbishment scheme with some similarities to the one undertaken in Loughborough Estate was carried on in the estate⁴⁴. This included “removing asbestos, improving communal areas, replacing lifts and enclosing the semi-open ground floor to house concierge facilities. Each coloured was given different coloured metal balconies” (Robinson, 1999: 76). The “concierge scheme”⁴⁵, as this set of interventions in called in the documents found in the Hackney Planning Archives, also included the demolition of the playground that was made out of concrete as part of the original scheme, and the construction of the football / basketball court. It also included the provision of some car-park areas.

44 Information found in the Hackney Planning Archives. The “concierge scheme”, which included, among other interventions, the closure of the ground floors for the creation of concierge spaces and the demolition of the playground for the construction of the football / basketball court, was carried on between 1997 and 1998. Archives visited on

45 Information found in the Hackney Planning Archives.

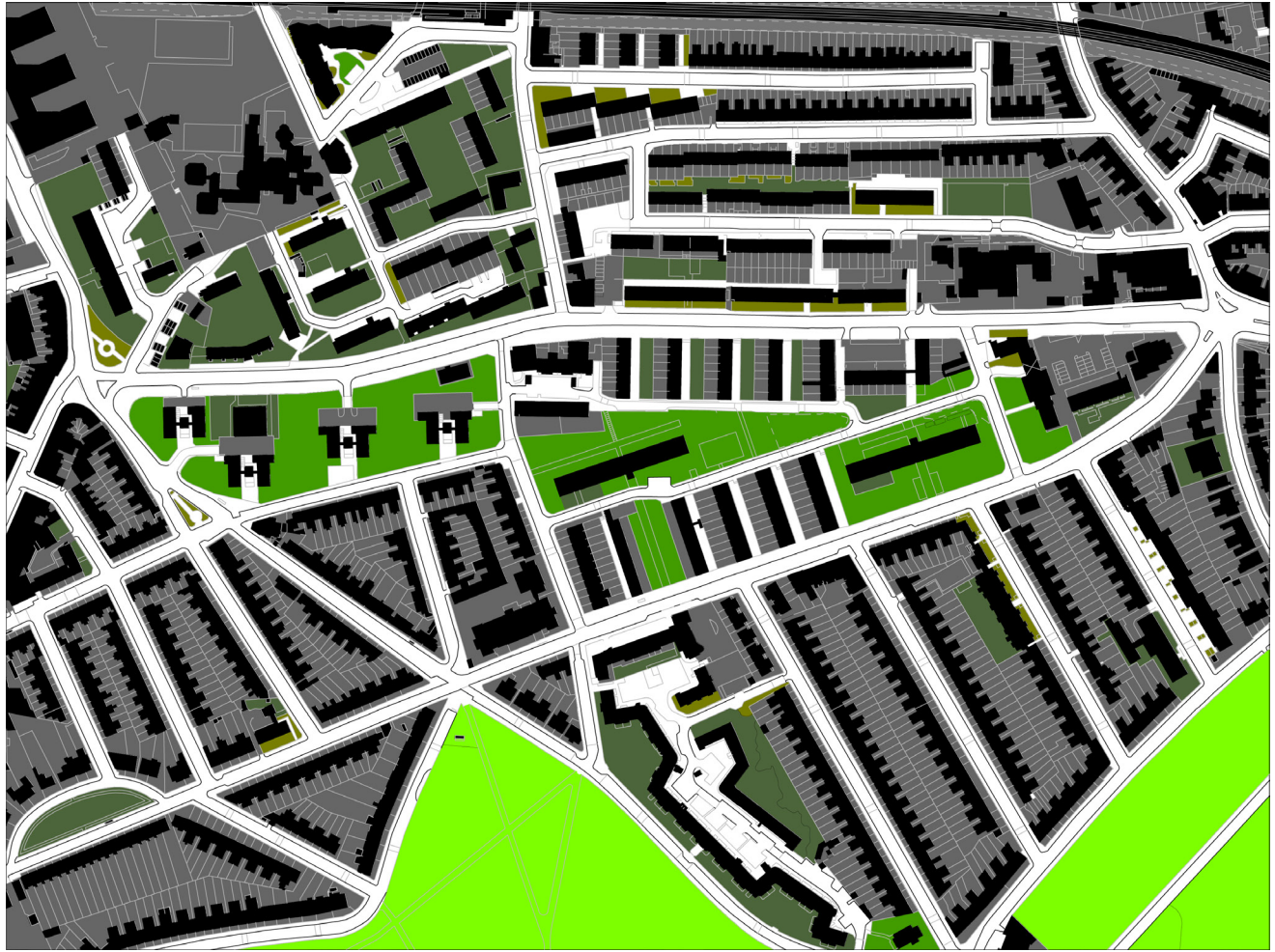


Another intervention on the public realm that can be appreciated today is the new adventure playground, which was built around 2010. Although the architects that planned the playground tried to design it through workshops with children (Greater London Authority, 2012: 69) to create some kind of ownership, the reality is that the playground is not intensively used⁴⁶.

Apart from these interventions, the Wentworth Children’s Centre was built attached to one of the towers as part of the Sure Start scheme, which provides activities for children under five that go accompanied by their parents and also provide skill training for the parents. Since Gascoyne Estate is in the centre of five major housing estates, it serves a high population. The centre has a lot of activities. However, it is surrounded by tall fences, which does not allow a direct interaction with the public realm. This has obvious security reasons, since parents prefer their children to be controlled. However, other ways of including children activities in the public space could be tested.

Apart from public space interventions, the social inclusion programme “Kickz: Goals thru football” started in Gascoyne Estate in 2009. Different partners including Arsenal Football Club, police authorities and Hackney Homes among others develop this programme. It aims to engage young people to practice sports, activities and “create routes into education, training and employment” (‘Kickz: Goals thru football. Gascoyne Estate Hackney’, 2009: 5). Its main goal is to engage young people in positive activities to avoid that they relate to youth criminality. The project includes providing a youth centre in a disused space in one of the slab towers—Vaine House. Testimonies from the

Figure 1.55: Gascoyne Estate 1987 (left) and Gascoyne Estate 2002 (right). © Chris Dorley-Brown.



Homerton Safer Neighbourhood Team explain the positive effect that this has had in the community and in the reduction of antisocial behaviour ('Kickz: Goals thru football. Gascoyne Estate Hackney', 2009: 7).

The interventions on Gascoyne Estate do not suppose such a closure with fences of the open spaces as Loughborough Estate. However, the responsible of the works that are being carried on the point towers and on the slab blocks to meet the Decent Home Standard affirms that they are waiting for planning permission to install railings around the grass surrounding the point towers.

Figure 1.56: Analysis of the open spaces in Gascoyne Estate, 2013. Elaborated by the author from Ordnance Survey Maps © Crown Copyright/database right 2014. An Ordnance Survey/EDINA supplied service.

1.2.4 Symptoms of obsolescence of the public realm

The main symptom of obsolescence of the public realm is that it is disused. Both case studies show a lack of life in the public space: it is quite difficult to see people sitting, standing, socializing or enjoying the outdoor spaces. Only when there is good weather, holidays or weekends, some people can be seen in the public realm: in the case of Loughborough Estate the most used public space is Wyck Gardens and in the case of Gascoyne Estate the open spaces are less intensively used. Only some children can be seen regularly in the football pitch and, in some sunny days, in the adventure playground.

For encouraging the use of the public space, it is essential to qualify the public realm to support the different kind of activities that Jan Gehl (2011: 9-14) describes: the ‘necessary’ activities, which are related to everyday life activities, the ‘optional’ or ‘recreational’ activities, which are those that people do when they want to enjoy the outdoor space, and the ‘social’ or ‘resultant’ activities, which are the social interactions that result from the co-presence of people in the public realm. According to Gehl, the recreational and social activities have a direct relation to the quality of the public space. He also states that the three types of activities are interwoven, which means that a combination of them must take place in the public space.

In the case of Loughborough Estate, the evidences explained in the urban transformations that took place after the war and in the subsequent interventions from the construction of the estate until today suggest that the public space has never been intensively used.

As explained, the recent opening of Ebony Horse Club in Wyck Gardens has supposed an increase of use in the gardens. However, this increase has not been perceived in the rest of the housing estate. The internal gardens between the big slab blocks and the basketball pitch in rare occasions have been observed to be used⁴⁷. The only playground that is sometimes used when children go out of school⁴⁸ is the one between the community centre and one of the small slab towers, which is fenced around but visible from the outside. During the 2013 site visits, some emerging activities have been observed, such as a bike club that stops in front of the shops in Loughborough Road to fix the bikes of the neighbours and encourage the use of the bicycle.

In the case of Gascoyne Estate, there is no evidence of the intensity of use of the public realm. However, the fact that the old playground of concrete was removed suggests that it was not used by the residents. Currently, the most used public space amenity is the football pitch, where some kids and teenagers can be seen regularly. However, it is not used very intensively. Only in sunny days in holidays and weekends, some children can be seen in the new adventure playground. It is quite difficult to see people enjoying the gardens around the point towers in Bentham Road, since it is just a grass surface with no treatment. The only people that can be seen are just leaving their dog there to do their necessities⁴⁹.

47 Conclusions from the site visits and observations, 2009 and 2013.

48 Conclusions from the site visits and observations, 2009 and 2013.

49 Conclusions from the site visits and observations, 2013.

The lack of use of the public space suggests that there is a lack of communal bonds in these neighbourhoods, since it is not possible to see neighbourhoods socializing in the public space. This can be related to many factors, for instance the shifting population: the statistics show that, in Gascoyne Estate, between July 2009 and June 2010, there was an inflow of 10.3% and an outflow of 11.2%, which are similar numbers to those in the area that covers Loughborough Estate. This trend of population turnover has increased since it started to be measured in 2001⁵⁰.

There are other statistical data about the social composition of the estate that indicates that the neighbourhood could have an active public life if it had an arousing public realm. Table 1.8 shows that the population of both estates is ethnically diverse. As authors such as Amin (2008) has pointed out, if multiplicity is qualified with certain kinds of urban environment, it can provoke positive encounters and social relationships in the public realm. Moreover, table 1.9 shows that none of the estate have a large elderly population and they do have a young population, which can provide with vitality to the public realm if there are activities in it.

50 Neighbourhood Statistics, 2001-2011. Middle Layer Super Output Area Hackney 019 and Lambeth 009.

Ethnic composition	Loughborough Estate	Gascoyne Estate
White	27.9	29.8%
Black	56.7%	47.2%
Mixed black	5.5%	4.2%
Other ethnicities	9.9%	18.8%

Table 1.8: Ethnic composition of the neighbourhoods. The statistics include many other ethnicities that have been grouped in “other ethnicities”. The reason of shown the percentages “white” and “black” is because they are the larger ethnicities in both neighbourhoods. See the full detailed ethnic composition in Neighbourhood Statistics, 2011.

Age	Loughborough Estate	Gascoyne Estate	London
Aged 0 - 15	24.6%	29.7%	19.6%
Aged 16 - 59 (f) 64 (m)	66.9%	62.0%	60.9%
Aged over 60 (female) and 65 (male)	8.5%	8.3%	19.5%

Table 1.9: Age composition of the neighbourhoods. Neighbourhoods Statistics, 2011.

Other statistical data show some of the socio-economic problems of both neighbourhoods. However, the causes of these problems are quite complex and cannot be directly related to urban design and to the quality of the public realm. The Index of Multiple Deprivation show that both neighbourhoods are virtually within the 10% most deprived neighbourhoods (table 1.10). This 10% is generally classified as the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods: Lupton and Power point out that in the UK there is no definition of poor neighbourhoods, just a ranking that focuses on the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods,

which are often the top 10% of the Index of Multiple Deprivation⁵¹. Loughborough Estate and Gascoyne Estate are also virtually within the 20% with higher rates of crime (table 1.10). The Work Deprivation indexes (table 1.11) show that both neighbourhoods have higher rates of Benefits claimants compared to the whole Greater London, although the proportion claiming Jobseeker’s Allowance is not as high in Gascoyne Estate. The Index Education Deprivation (table 1.10) is not as bad as the overall deprivation, although it is still under the third of the most deprived neighbourhoods.

Indices of Deprivation 2010	Loughborough Estate	Gascoyne Estate
Index of Multiple Deprivation	10.70%	5.18%
Index of Crime Deprivation	21.71%	18.78%
Index of Education deprivation	27.98%	26.88%

Table 1.10: Indices of Deprivation 2010. The percentage shows that the neighbourhood is with this proportion of most deprived neighbourhoods in comparison with all the neighbourhoods in England⁵².

51 “The English Indices of Deprivation 2010 use 38 separate indicators, organised across seven distinct domains of deprivation which can be combined, using appropriate weights, to calculate the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010 (IMD 2010). (...) These are Income, Employment, Health and Disability, Education Skills and Training, Barriers to Housing and Other Services, Crime and Living Environment.” Source: English indices of deprivation 2010. Statistics on relative levels of deprivation in England, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6871/1871208.pdf, accessed 2013-05-29.

52 Indices of Crime 2010, National Neighbourhoods Statistics, Neighbourhood Lambeth 009B, which covers a high proportion of Loughborough Estate, and Neighbourhood Hackney 019F, which covers a high proportion of Gascoyne Estate, <http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/>, accessed 2013-05-29.

Work deprivation: Benefits claimants	Loughborough Estate	Gascoyne Estate	London
Total Benefit claimants	29%	26%	17%
Jobseeker's Allowance	9%	6%	4%
Incapacity Benefit	10%	10%	4%

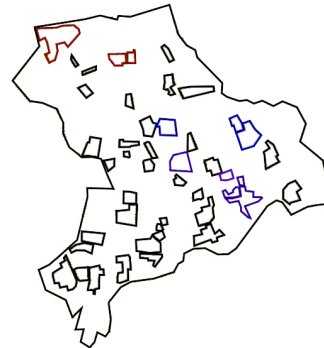
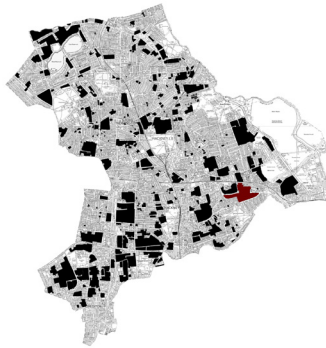
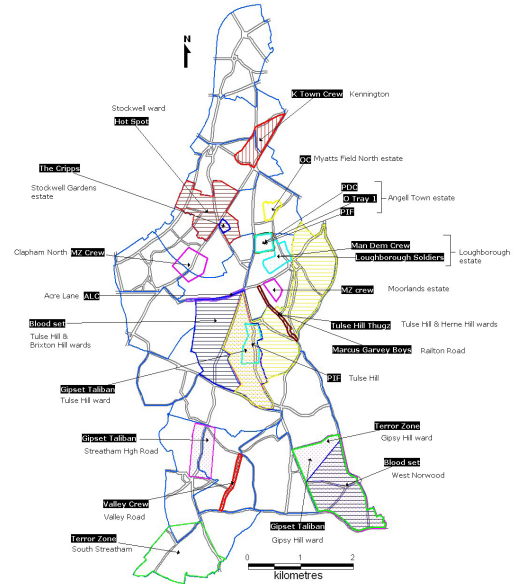
Table 1.11: Work Deprivation 2010. Benefits claimants⁵³.

As the Indices of Crime Deprivation show, crime is regarded as one of the main problems of Loughborough Estate and is also seen as a problem in Gascoyne Estate, as the Kickz programme report suggests ('Kickz: Goals thru football. Gascoyne Estate Hackney', 2009). In both places, the major worries are about youth criminality and gang membership. However, it seems that crime has fallen during the last years⁵⁴. Gang membership is still very related to housing estates, to the point that the geography of gangs shares similarities with the geography of council estates (figures 1.57-1.60). This makes the presence of young people in the public space as something threatening.

The causes of these social problems are very complex, since they derive from structural problems, concentration of poverty and other socio-economic issues, which this thesis does not aim to analyse since its approach is from the urban design discipline. Trying

53 Neighbourhood Statistics, 2011. Lower Layer Super Output Areas Lambeth 009B and Hackney 019F. Work deprivation. Indices of Deprivation are from 2010.

54 According to the statistics show at Neighbourhoods Statistics: Notifiable Offences Recorded by the Police (2001 - 2011), most of the type of offences has decreased from 2001 to 2011. See 'Office for National Statistics - Neighbourhoods Statistics - Notifiable Offences Recorded by the Police (2001 - 2011)', n.d. [Online], accessed 2014-01-26.



to tackle these criminality problems directly with urban design measures can drive to similar interventions to those proposed by Newman's concept of 'defensible space'. As this chapter has described, these measures can reduce crime in the short term but may hinder the use of the public realm.

Alternatively, if urban design interventions concentrate on creating a more meaningful public realm that encourages people using it, this may have an indirect long-term effect in producing a positive change in the neighbourhood: a change that comes from how people use the public space.

The last part of this chapter will examine the contributory effects of certain physical aspects of the public space to the lack of use of the public realm. From there, the following chapters in the thesis will develop a theoretical approach to intervene in the public space and suggest guidelines and strategies for intervention that provoke social interaction and encourage the unplanned use of the public realm.

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Figures 1.57: Housing estates in Lambeth. Source: L.B. of Lambeth, 2010.

Figure 1.58: Gangs in Lambeth. Source: L.B. of Lambeth, 2007

Figure 1.59: Housing estates in Hackney. Source: L.B. of Hackney, 2007.

Figure 1.60: Gangs in Hackney. Source: Map by LSG in Google Maps, 2010.

1.2.5 Physical factors that hinder the use of the public space

Urban designers need to concentrate on proposing public spaces that encourage people to develop part of their daily life in the outdoor spaces. In the public spaces that are intensively used, people do not feel threatened by the presence of strangers and there are more possibilities that social interaction take place. At least, the “passive contacts” that Gehl (2011: 15) talks about will take place, which means that people feel the presence of others as something positive, even if they do not know each other or do not talk to each other.

Gehl (2011: 13) explains that social activities take place when people are in the same outdoor space. He states that when two people are sharing the same space, the passive contact of seeing and hearing will start taking place and this can be a beginning for a more intense social interaction. This brings the idea of the importance of co-presence in the public space, which has been deeply studied by the Space Syntax approach to the relationship between the built environment and society. Julienne Hanson (co-founder with Bill Hillier of Space Syntax) states that co-presence is a “precondition for face-to-face human social interaction without in any way determining what takes place” (Hanson, 2000: 120). She explains how cities and towns structure co-presence and identifies certain terms such as ‘permeability’, ‘integration’ and ‘constitutedness’—which are the basis of Space Syntax approach—that facilitate co-presence in the urban space.

However, how people perceive strangers and interact to each other not only depends on a spatial configuration that facilitates their presence on the public realm. As Sennett (2008a, n.p.) states, “(s)patial engineering in the form of the pressurized street cannot alone

induce people to interact”. Apart from the social and cultural aspects that make some people have more affinities with certain kind of individuals, which deal with the dressing, the way they move and other visual factors, there are also other kind of physical features of the environment that can influence the way people perceive strangers or influence the possibility of activities taking place in the public space. These factors deal with the materiality of the public space, its design and the existence of elements that facilitate the emergence of processes.

Because of the necessity of addressing these two scales of physical causes of the lack of use of the public space, this part of the chapter will look at the ‘spatial configuration’⁵⁵ and the ‘design and maintenance’ of the public realm.

1.2.5.1 Spatial configuration

The socio-spatial segregation, provoked by the low-income concentration deriving from the post-war reconstruction process, is on some occasions exacerbated by the spatial configuration of neighbourhoods like Loughborough Estate and Gascoyne Estate. Hillier and Vaughan define spatial configuration as “relations between spaces which take into account other relations, and so in effect relations between all the various spaces of a system” (Hillier and Vaughan, 2007: 207). These spatial relations can hinder the presence of people in the public realm both because of how the neighbourhood relates to its surroundings and also because of the layout of the buildings and open spaces within the neighbourhood. Firstly, regarding how these neighbourhoods relate spatially to the adjacent areas, although in some cases their location in the inner city and the polycentric character of London mean that they are close to the town centre, which normally provides amenities and different activities, they are usually segregated by physical barriers and discontinuities in the urban fabric. Secondly, concerning the relation of the different spaces within the neighbourhood and how these relate to the surrounding streets, as explained by Hanson, the post-war urban transformations involved a change from the traditional urban street fabric—which is continuous and integrating, with buildings in a direct relationship with the street—to an estate layout, which is fragmented and segregated and where the buildings have no direct relation with the street (Hanson, 2000: 100).

In the case of Loughborough Estate, the neighbourhood is located between Brixton Town Centre and Loughborough Junction. The neighbourhood is a five-minute-walk away from Brixton Town Centre, a place full of amenities, street markets and local retail businesses that give Brixton a vibrant street life. However, that street life does not

reach Loughborough Estate due to physical urban barriers such as the elevated railway, walls and a tangled and discontinuous urban fabric north of the town centre. The way Loughborough Estate relates to its surroundings can be visualised using Space Syntax methodology, which uses different measurements to relate built form to social variables. The measurement calculated here is “through-movement potential”, which “assesses the degree to which each space lies on the simplest or shortest path between all pairs of spaces in the system” (Hillier and Vaughan, 2007: 214). This is considered the most appropriate measurement for this study since it can give an idea of the people that pass through Loughborough Estate⁵⁶. Movement potential can be calculated with different radii depending on whether the study needs to consider a local area or a bigger scale area (Hillier, 1996: 127). Since the analysis aims to understand the relationship between Brixton Town Centre and Loughborough Estate, movement potential has been calculated using a radius of 800, which takes local structures into consideration.

As figure 1.61 shows, there is an urban void between Brixton Town Centre and Loughborough Junction. This void marks the location of Loughborough Estate. The analysis also suggests that Barrington Road has movement potential which could be enhanced by introducing street activities to encourage people using this street as a cross-path from Loughborough Junction and Brixton Town Centre.

To find out ways to encourage the co-presence of people in the public realm, it is also necessary to analyse the relationship between the different spaces within the neighbourhood and how these spaces relate to the streets outside the neighbourhood. Drawing a detailed

56

The software calculation has been carried out using segment line analysis with road centre lines.

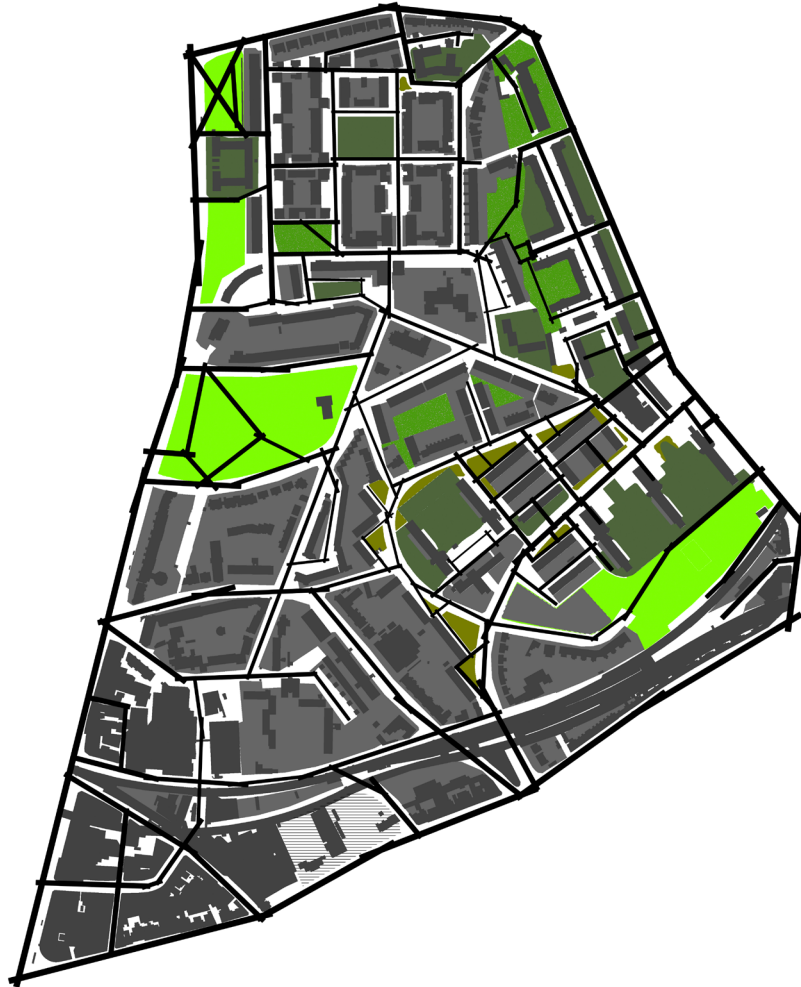










axial map with all the pedestrian paths counting the axial steps⁵⁷ from the main roads that delimit the neighbourhood to the entry door of the buildings can provide additional information on how the spaces within the neighbourhood relate to their surroundings (figure 1.62). Furthermore, overlapping this axial map with the classification of private/public space can help to visualize the spatial relationships within the neighbourhood.

This map can show how the post-war urban transformations influenced co-presence (see Hanson, 2000). Whereas in the pre-war urban fabric of Loughborough Estate the street was delimited by buildings whose entrance doors faced it directly, the post-war Loughborough Estate is composed of buildings in an open landscape (see figures 1.39, 1.40, 1.41, 1.53). From these buildings, the slab towers have one single access, which is not directly to the street, and many of the low-rise houses are built perpendicular to the street or with a grass verge in front of them that prevents direct interaction between the private and the public (figure 1.62). Although the axes of the streets are almost the same in the pre-war and post-war period, the street pattern is totally different and the access to the dwellings is much more indirect. The sense of living in a street is totally lost. Further interventions on the neighbourhood have attempted to establish some hierarchy between private, semi-private, semi-public and public space by placing fences and building paths towards the entrance of the towers. Most of the interventions have focused on preventing crime and increasing security, understanding the presence of strangers as something threatening and unexpected situations as something unwanted. Furthermore, these interventions have not

Figure 1.61: Movement potential of Loughborough Estate. Calculated with a radius of 800 metres. Elaborated by the author with Depthmap. Axial map provided by Space Syntax Ltd.

57 In Space Syntax terminology, an axial step is each necessary turn or change of direction for going from one space to another.



-  Surrounding main roads
-  1 step from main road
-  2 steps
-  3 steps
-  4 steps
-  5 steps
-  Buildings
-  Private
-  Semiprivate (fenced communal areas)
-  Semipublic (open communal areas)
-  Public parks
-  Grass verge
-  Cleared sites

solved the problem of the lack of activities on the ground floor directly related to the street, which means that the streets and public spaces are still disused.

Although car ownership is not very high in the neighbourhood, since 70% of the households do not own a car⁵⁸, there is a large proportion of the space that is dedicated to cars. There are areas of car park between the street and the semiprivate gardens between the slab-blocks. Furthermore, the section of Barrington Road is quite wide (figures 1.53, 1.63)—over 11 metres—considering that it is a street that goes within a neighbourhood. Since many blocks and houses have an indirect access to Barrington Road, there are many neighbours that use it to go to Brixton Town Centre⁵⁹. Despite people use it for walking to the town centre, the width of the street make it more appropriate for vehicular traffic. The street is used in some occasions as a shortcut for cars to avoid traffic lights at Loughborough Junction⁶⁰. This great presence of cars makes that people use it to walk through and not to spend time in the public space.

Gascoyne 2 Estate does not have such a direct relationship to a town centre, since it is located between different parts of Hackney, bordered by Homerton on the North, by South Hackney in the South and not far from Hackney Central. The lack of permeability, its convoluted urban fabric and the change of levels create discontinuities that potentiate the isolation of the place (figures 1.56, 1.64). The analysis of the “through-

Figure 1.62: Axial steps from the surrounding roads to the door entrances of Loughborough Estate. Elaborated by the author from Ordnance Survey Maps © Crown Copyright/database right 2014. An Ordnance Survey/EDINA supplied service.

58 Neighbourhood Statistics, 2011. Lower Layer Super Output Area Lambeth 009B.

59 Concluded from observations and unstructured interviews, 2009 and 2013. Although not all the neighbours take the same way, Barrington Road is the most used to go to the town centre.

60 Concluded from observations and unstructured interviews, 2009 and 2013.



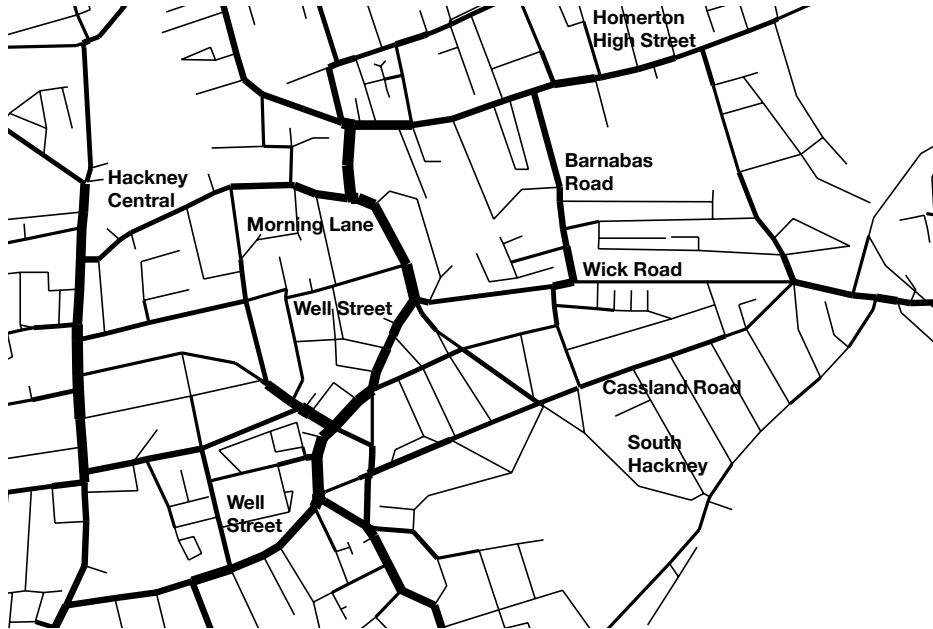
movement potential” (figure 1.64), which is calculated using the same parameters as in Loughborough and represented with the same line-width scale, shows that the state does not have clear potential connections with any town centre. The segments with stronger through-movement potential are those in Well Street – Morning Lane, which is tangential to the estate and go towards Hackney Central. Barnabas Road, which connects directly to Homerton Overground station and Homerton High Street, has certain movement potential that can be taken into account when proposing public space interventions.

The construction of the estate implied a severe erosion of the urban fabric. The street that used to be the centre of the site, Bentham Road, partially disappeared when the slab towers were built in the 1950s (see figures 1.42-1.45). Currently, the remaining segment of Bentham Road has Victorian houses on one side and the four late-1960s tower blocks on the other side (figure 1.56). This street ends when it reaches the grass surface that surrounds the 1950s slab blocks. Unlike in Loughborough Estate, in Gascoyne Estate

Figure 1.63: Barrington Road. Loughborough Estate, 2009. Photograph by the author.

the urban fabric has changed with the trimming of Bentham Road and this implies that reaching the houses from the outer streets of the estate requires more turns. In this case, however, the slab blocks are not orientated perpendicular to the streets but parallel to them. However, the fact that they are placed in the middle of a grass area with not much treatment makes them have very little relation with the public space. The same happens with the point towers, which are located in the middle of a grass surface and need of secondary paths to access to the vertical nuclei of the towers. Most of the low-rise buildings do not have direct access from the streets either and also require of secondary paths to access them. These spatial relationships are represented for the southern part of the estate—south of Wick Road—in the map of axial steps from the main roads that delimit the neighbourhood to the entry door of the buildings (figure 1.65). The map shows that, in Gascoyne Estate, the streets are not constituted by direct door entrances. Furthermore, the construction of the estate also implied the creation of differences of street level that hinder the connectivity between the different spaces of the estate, make difficult walking through it and provoke the loss of perception of street in certain parts of the estate (see figure 1.66).

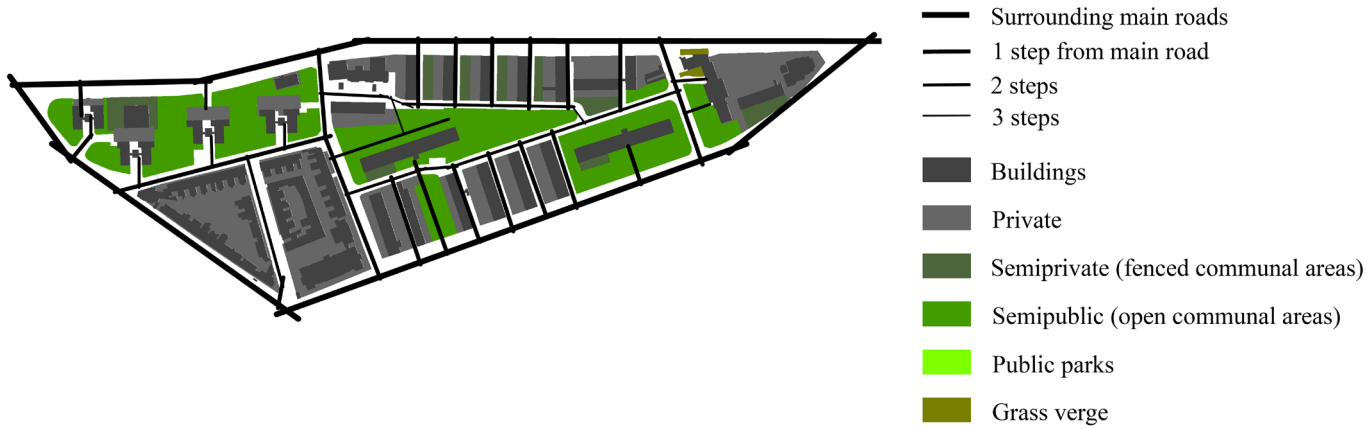
The estate has two roads with high-speed one-way traffic: one is Cassland Road, located on the south border of the estate, and the one is Wick Road, which cuts through the estate. All the constructions on the north of Wick Road have very little permeability. For instance, to access the dwellings of Ballance Road, a lot of turns and walking distance is required when located on the other side of Wick Road, next to the 1950s slabs towers. This tangled urban fabric and the high-speed traffic of Wick Road makes the estate to be divided in two differentiated and non-connected parts.



There are certain aspects of the spatial configuration of some streets of the estate that hinder pedestrian activity. In the mentioned Wick Road, what hinders pedestrian activity is the speed of the traffic and the fact that the southern part of Gascoyne Estate is not facing the estate. Barnabas Road, the street that goes from Wick Road to Homerton Overground Station, is currently used for people walking through and crossing to Homerton. However, they do not stop and stay because there are very few buildings facing the street and very few spaces that encourage staying. In the Bentham Road site, the described discontinuity of the urban fabric and the indirect access to building affect negatively the presence of people in the public space.

As it has been shown, in both case studies the construction of the housing estates supposed a great change in the spatial configuration in how the neighbourhood relate to its surroundings, in the relation among the different spaces within the neighbourhood, and in how the dwellings and the buildings relate to the streets and to the public space. Some interventions has been made—more significantly in the case of Loughborough Estate—, which attempt to establish some hierarchy between private, communal and public space by placing fences and building paths towards the entrance of the towers, which have been reoriented towards the street and provided with answerphones with cameras. Most of the interventions have focused on preventing crime and increasing security, understanding the presence of strangers as something threatening and unexpected situations as something unwanted. Furthermore, this interventions have not solved the problem that there are no activities in the ground floor directly related to the street, which means that the streets and the public spaces are still disused.

Figure 1.64: Movement potential of Gascoyne Estate. Calculated with a radius of 800 metres. Elaborated by the author with Depthmap. Axial map provided by Space Syntax Ltd.





From this it can be concluded that the spatial configuration originating from the construction of the housing estates and from the subsequent transformations hinders the co-presence of people in the public realm. Conversely, strategies should intervene in the spatial configuration of the streets to encourage outsiders to pass through the neighbourhood, instead of creating spaces that discourage the presence of strangers. However, as stated previously, merely looking at the spatial configuration can lead to overlooking specific aspects of the public realm that deal with its materiality, its design, its maintenance, its capacity to host different types of activities and the process through which people may start using it.

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Figure 1.65: Axial steps from the surrounding roads to the door entrances of Loughborough Estate. from Ordnance Survey Maps © Crown Copyright/database right 2014. An Ordnance Survey/EDINA supplied service.

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Figure 1.66: Gascoyne Estate. Change of levels and closed ground floor of the blocks, 2013. Photograph by the author.

1.2.5.2 Design and maintenance of the public realm

As explained in this chapter, the initial conditions on which the public realm was designed, the subsequent lack of upgrade of the common spaces and the interventions that have taken place on them since the 1990s are factors that discourage people using the public realm.

The urban change on post-war reconstruction did not only implied the segregating spatial configuration described earlier. The fact that the new urban design was configured by “pavilions in a landscape” (Hanson, 2000: 100) also implied that this landscape was in many of the cases just a grass surface with very little treatment. This was the case of Loughborough Estate and Gascoyne Estate, where the 1950s and 1960s photographs found in the archives reveal the absence of design of the urban surface, which provided big green spaces but did not provide any kind of infrastructure that could be used by the residents to develop activities in the public realm. The only concessions to recreation on the public space were ‘hard’ playgrounds in the midst of these surfaces that did not seem very inviting. These urban surfaces did not have any kind of upgrade for forty years, which meant that the ideal situation of people enjoying nature in inner city that LCC architects imagined (figure 1.67) turned into disused, abandoned and not maintained grass areas where people did not feel safe.

This state of abandonment that the public space of these neighbourhoods reached in the 1990s called for a need of intervention. As explained, this intervention was more significant in Loughborough Estate than in Gascoyne Estate. The interventions were straightforward responses to the main concern of neighbours and authorities at that time:



Figure 1.67: Watercolour drawing of Loughborough Estate scheme, 1952. Source: London Metropolitan Archives.

security. They also attempted to give responses to other concerns such as car-park, the introduction of amenities on the public realm and establishing some hierarchy between the private and public spaces. These interventions probably reduced burglaries, but they did not solve the problem of the lack of use of the public realm. Instead of implementing enabling interventions that motivate the emergence of processes and the unexpected use of the public realm, they were restrictive interventions that avoided the unexpected and did not provide any possibility for developing non-planned activities in the urban surface.

In the case of Loughborough Estate, the concern about security was one of the main ideas that led the works on the public space carried on between 1992 and 1994⁶¹. Refurbishments regarding security included the closure of the ground floors, the new secured entrances and the tall fences between the big slab towers. Later, in the early 2000s, CCTV cameras were installed in the neighbourhood. This has resulted in a forbidding ground floor, which does not invite to walk or to stay close to the buildings or the fences, since there are no activities and no possibilities of developing any kind of activity next to it. Furthermore, in some of these open areas, certain activities such as ball games are explicitly prohibited (figure 1.69). These measures restrict the use of the public space, contribute to over-determination of functions and to a sense of over-control and surveillance.

These interventions also deal with the maintenance of the outdoor spaces. Fencing the gardens is also related to preserve the gardens and avoid vandalism or any unwanted use of them. Currently, the gardens between the big slab blocks are in good state of

61 Conclusions from: London Borough of Lambeth. Planning Application database [online]. London: London Borough of Lambeth, n.d. [Quoted on August 5, 2013] Available at the World Wide Web: <<http://planning.lambeth.gov.uk/online-applications/>>.

maintenance. However, during the site visits, no one has been seen using these gardens⁶². The gardens surrounding the smaller tall blocks are not in good conditions: they are just grass areas and since they have shorter fences neighbours use it for taking their dogs.

Another concern that has driven some of the interventions in Loughborough Estate is the lack of amenities in the public realm. This lack of amenities seems to be one of the factors of the youth criminality and membership to youth gangs that characterize council estates in Brixton. Since the 1970s (Angell Ward Profile, 1979-1992), it existed the Marcus Lipton Youth Centre next to the neighbourhood, although its management is by the borough and not by the neighbourhood. Later interventions have included fenced playgrounds between the big blocks, which, during the site visits, in rare occasions were observed to be used, and a fenced playground between the community centre and one of the smaller slab towers, which has been observed to be used in the site visits when it is the time that children go out of school⁶³. There has been a very recent intervention which has had successful results and that has managed to bring some activities to Wyck Gardens, which is the mentioned Ebony Horse Club. However, the effect of this initiative is more visible in the use of Wyck Gardens than in the use of the public space of the interior of the estate, which is still disused.

It can be concluded that the interventions on the public realm that have been done in the last years do not encourage the use of its by its residents, with the exception of the mentioned horse club, which has improved the use of Wyck Gardens. Most of the spaces



Figure 1.68: Fenced gardens and playgrounds in Loughborough Estate, 2009. Photograph by the author.

Figure 1.69: Restricted use of the public realm. Loughborough Estate, 2009. Photograph by the author.

62 Conclusions from the site visits and observations, 2009 and 2013.

63 Conclusions from the site visits and observations, 2009 and 2013.



Figures 1.70 Gascoyne Estate from Cassland Road. Vaine House, 2013. Photograph by the author.

Figures 1.71 Gascoyne Estate from Cassland Road. Granard House, 2013. Photograph by the author.

surrounding the buildings are disused gardens and a large proportion of the public realm is used as car park. The result is that there is actually no public space for people to use.

In the case of Gascoyne 2 Estate, the 1998 “conciierge scheme”⁶⁴ for refurbishment of the buildings and the open spaces did not have the same magnitude as in Loughborough Estate. This is probably because it does not have so many open spaces. These means that less spaces are fenced but also means that many of the green surfaces are just grass areas that have not undergone any kind of upgrade. In this case, the security measures consisted in closing the ground floors for the creation of conciierge spaces and secured entrances⁶⁵. The little treatment of the garden surrounding the blocks together with the blank walls that close the ground floor of the towers present and unfriendly relationship between the private and the public space that do not encourage the development of any activity in the public space or immediately close to the blocks.

There have been some attempts to include amenities for children and young people in the public realm. As described previously, in the late 1970s, a clubroom was built in Wyck Road next to the point towers, where some activities are organised. The clubroom is fenced around. During the site visits, it was always closed and nothing was happening around it. Later interventions included the substitution of the old playground by the football pitch and the new adventure playground. As stated before, they are not very intensively used, although the football pitch is probably the most used outdoor space. The construction of a

64 This is the name given in the planning documents found in the Planning Archives of Hackney, visited on August 9, 2013.

65 Planning documents found in the Planning Archives of Hackney, visited on August 9, 2013.

Sure Start Children’s Centre attached to one of the blocks has supposed that many parents with children from different estates in Hackney go there when it is opened⁶⁶. However, since it is a closed area with tall fences, this activity is not translated in a more intense of the public realm. There is a similar fenced children area in the same position of the other tower, but during the site visits, it has always been empty. Some interventions has tried to introduce some recreational use in the vacant spaces in the ground floor of the towers, such as the youth centre in the back of Vaine House promoted by the mention “Kickz” social inclusion programme. However, during the site visits, the place has always been closed and there is no evidence that they are still organising youth activities.

In addition to this, there remain many disused spaces in Gascoyne Estate, such as the grass surrounding the towers or the spaces between the low-rise houses. As stated, these spaces do not provide any kind of infrastructure to develop activities and the trend is going towards fencing them and not providing with an enabling public realm.

To conclude, as a result of the initial conditions and the subsequent interventions, in Loughborough Estate and in Gascoyne Estate the urban surface do not encourage people staying in the public realm and developing outdoors activities in them. Although both estates have different state of maintenance, in both places the urban surface is dominated by cars, grass verges with no treatment and paths over the grass verges. The footpaths do not normally give access to ground floor activities, just to single secured access to the dwellings. The urban surface does not provide any possibility of developing activities, especially when the weather is not good, since there is no protection against bad climate



Figure 1.72: Clubroom from Wyck Road, 2013. Photograph by the author.

Figure 1.73: Granard House and Wentworth Children’s Centre, 2013. Photograph by the author.



conditions such as wind or rain. There are also no spaces to sit or to gather, just one lonely picnic table in front of each slab block.

Interventions have focused on the over-determination of functions by dividing the original limitless green spaces and fencing them. Instead of these limiting strategies, there is a need of providing a public space that helps neighbours to develop outdoor activities. This thesis will work on how to create this enabling public space by looking at the existing potentialities and attempting to enhance them by the design of the public realm.



Figure 1.74: Football pitch, 2013. Photograph by the author.

Figure 1.75: Adventure playground, 2013. Photograph by the author.

1.2.6 Brixton riots: history and failure of the egalitarian dream

The popular song of The Clash “The Guns of Brixton” (1979) describes the police repression—particularly to black people from West-Indian origin—and the social discontent in Brixton at the end of the 1970s because of this police action and the difficulties derived from the economic recession. The song pre-empted the disturbances that occurred in 1981.

In 1981, the racial tensions and the “stop and search” that the police was carrying on contributed to the emergence of Brixton Riots. After the riots, Lord Scarman wrote a report that denounced the disadvantaged situation that black ethnic groups were suffering (Scarman, 1981). This report supposed a shift in the way to approach racial tensions by the Metropolitan Police, although racial prejudices have persisted (Whitfield, 2006).

This situation of socio-economic difficulties, class inequalities and racial tension was also taking place in Britain’s housing estates, particularly in multiracial boroughs like Hackney and Lambeth. As Hall (1988) highlights the social tensions that nearly a century before had prompted the slum clearance was being reproduced. The post-war objective of building an egalitarian society providing houses and social services for everyone could not be fully accomplished, since by the 1980s the gap between poor and rich neighbourhoods was quite deep, as studies on neighbourhood inequalities have argued (see Lupton and Power, 2004).

Thirty years after the Brixton Riots, in August 2011, other riots took place in many boroughs of London, including in Brixton (Lambeth) and Hackney. The factors that prompted these

“When they kick out your front door
How you gonna come?
With your hands on your head
Or on the trigger of your gun
When the law break in
How you gonna go?
Shot down on the pavement
Or waiting in death row
You can crush us
You can bruise us
But you'll have to answer to
Oh, Guns of Brixton”.

The Clash, “The Guns of Brixton”, 1979.

recent riots have been debated by media and academic research. Although the factors are quite diverse, class inequality, socio-economic problems and racial tensions are among the aspects that have motivated the riots.

Inequality and intolerance persists in many London's neighbourhoods. As Vertovec (2007) describes, London is a 'super-diverse' city, which means that after over sixty years of migration since the 'Windrush Generation' arrived, diversity has become a much more complex phenomenon since there are migrants of different generations, with diverse levels of education, labour conditions, and different risk of exclusion.

As it has been argued, urban renewal operations cannot solve structural problems that have more serious causes. However, upgrading the public space can transform London's 'super-diverse' neighbourhoods into places for positive social interaction. The chapter has exposed that certain urban interventions have attempted to avoid conflict between different groups by subdividing the open spaces and creating a sense of territoriality. In contrast to this kind of urban interventions, the following chapters will propose providing inclusive and well-designed public spaces that encourage sociability and avoid social segregation.

1.3 Conclusions in chapter

The research developed in this first chapter presents a historical context of the construction and subsequent urban transformation of British post-war housing estates and a detailed analysis and fieldwork of two case studies. Both analyses explore the context in which they were built, the transformations that they have suffered since then, and identify the causes of why the public space is disused. This understanding of their context and of their current situation will help to develop a theoretical approach and urban design guidelines in the following chapters.

From the analysis of the historical context of the construction and subsequent urban transformations of British post-war housing estates, the chapter concludes that the negative social effects of the construction of British social housing neighbourhoods provoked an initial reaction against modernist architecture in urban studies in the 1950s which became stronger over the following decades. This reaction resulted in the association of the architecture of housing estates to crime and deprivation, and led to the abandonment of these neighbourhoods and interventions that focused on preventing crime and restricting the use of the public realm and, in some cases, to the demolition and redevelopment of these neighbourhoods.

Through the analysis of the two case studies, the chapter concludes that, in addition to the decrease of urban life caused by the post-war urban transformations, subsequent interventions on the public space have not helped to encourage social relationships and the use of the public realm. On the contrary, when interventions have been carried out,

they have focused on increasing security and on restricting and over-determining the use of public space.

What this chapter highlights is that a generalist critique to modern architecture does not solve the problem of these disadvantaged urban areas. Demolition and redevelopment is not an answer since it would repeat the mistakes of the slum clearance process. Local authorities, planners and urban designers must understand the importance of proposing a radical reconfiguration of the public realm without destroying the existing social capital of the place. From the analysis of the case studies, it can be concluded that strategies should aim, firstly, to address the spatial configuration issues that hinder co-presence in the public space. Secondly, strategies should also address the explained design and maintenance factors that discourage public life in the open spaces of the neighbourhoods. From the analysis of the historical context of British housing estates and from the case studies, it can also be concluded that such interventions should be always understood as a process and not as an imposition. The following chapters will explore how to approach this process-oriented regeneration of the public space of post-war housing estates.

FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE (I):
SENNETT'S USES OF DISORDER AND CITY LIFE

CHAPTER TWO.



“certain kinds of disorder need to be increased in city life, so that men can pass into a full adulthood and so that, as I hope to show, men will lose their current taste for innocent violence” (Sennett, 1970: xxiii).

The present chapter exposes the theoretical approach that this thesis takes as point of departure to address the interventions in the public space of social housing neighbourhoods. The previous chapter has identified that certain aspects of the spatial configuration and of the design of the public space of post-war housing estates hinders sociability and the emergence of activities on the open spaces of these areas. It has also shown that this fact has been already observed from different perspectives and from diverse disciplines⁶⁷. These reactions against modernist urban design started as soon as the 1950s, when the construction of large housing estates was still taking place in Great Britain and in many other Western cities. Among the diverse responses to the construction of modernist housing developments, this thesis takes as initial approach Sennett’s idea that “certain kinds of disorder need to be increased in city life” (Sennett, 1970: xxiii) so people become more prepared to encounter strangers and to experience unexpected situations in the public realm. This chapter will explain why the thesis has chosen Sennett’s notion of positive urban disorder—which came out as a reaction to modernist urban developments such as the neighbourhoods under study—to address the current situation of the public space of precisely these urban areas that he criticized, which situation, as he has pointed out recently, has only worsened (Sennett, 2009, 2011).

Fig. 2.1. Halstead Street, Chicago, 1910. Used by Sennett to describe the ‘contact points’ (Sennett, 1970). Source: Chicago Tribune.

67 See the literature mentioned in the previous chapter, which includes early reactions from architects within the CIAM such as the Smithsons, 1954, reactions from urban sociology such as Willmott and Young, 1957, from the urban design discipline such as Gehl, 1971, from relating urban form and society such as the Space Syntax approach, pioneered by Hillier, Hanson and colleagues, 1983, and other studies that related modern architecture to crime such as Newman, 1972, and Coleman, 1985.

The aim of this chapter is to revisit Sennett's early notion of urban disorder to bring it to the current situation of the public space of social housing neighbourhoods. From revisiting the concept, the subsequent chapters will extract ideas that can be applied to urban design interventions that bring life to these urban areas.

The chapter will first look at the context in which Sennett's book was published, framing his ideas in a particular socio-political situation that was taking place at the end of the 1960s. Through explaining this background, it will expose Sennett's ideas and why their essence is still important today. After explaining the context, the following hypothesis will be explained: Sennett's notion of urban disorder can be applied to urban design interventions that bring life to the neighbourhoods under study. Acknowledging that the situation of these urban areas have changed since Sennett wrote his book in 1970—as the previous chapter has exposed—, it is necessary to bring Sennett's theory to the contemporary situation of these urban areas. The methodology followed to achieve this is to look at how this concept of disorder has been accounted by Sennett in his later works. Through looking at this evolution and further definitions of the positives uses of disorder, two findings will be presented: firstly, that Sennett reasserts his idea of disorder and updates it in his subsequent works, introducing certain nuances according to the current situation and being more specific about how certain urban settings can produce these kinds of productive conflict. Secondly, this chapter identifies how this updated notion of disorder and certain urban design concepts that Sennett develops in his later works—which are rooted in his early notion of disorder—share affinities with certain concepts used by 'assemblage' thinking in critical urbanism: emergence, process, uncertainty, functional capacity (See McFarlane, 2011; Simone, 2011). Identifying this relationship between Sennett's notion of urban disorder today and 'assemblage' thinking will help to apply it to urban design strategies in the subsequent chapters.

2.1 A context for *The Uses of Disorder*

Richard Sennett's book *The Uses of Disorder: Personal Identity and City Life*, published in 1970, came out in the context of distrust in modernist urban design and in the slum clearance process that was taking place in Europe and in the United States. As has been explained in the previous chapter, since the end of the 1950s, certain urban sociologists started to identify negative social effects in the construction of social housing neighbourhoods, such as the loss of communal bonds and of contact points. These critics were directed both to the spatial design of the neighbourhoods, which was blamed for not facilitating social relationships, and to the fact that many families were being displaced from their demolished neighbourhoods to newly built housing estates either in the inner city or in new towns. In Great Britain, one of the most influential books was Peter Willmott's and Michael Young's *Family and Kinship in East London*, published in 1957—which is not mentioned in Sennett's book—. In this book, the authors conducted a deep sociological study through participant observation following working class families that were displaced from Bethnal Green in East London to a housing estate in Essex. From their research, they identified how working class families were living as a community in the inner city slums and the impact that moving to an outer housing estate had in their lives. In the United States, one of the most influential criticisms to modernist urban design and the urban renewal process at this time was Jane Jacob's book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, published in 1961, where the author affirmed that the replacement of traditional urban districts by new housing estates was destroying social relationships and city life and claimed for the street life characteristic of diverse, dense, historic urban settings.

In addition to this context of reaction against modernist urban design and slum clearance, Sennett's book is also influenced by the milieu and the socio-political situation of the late 1960s, as he recognises in the preface of the 2008 edition of the book (Sennett, 1970 [2008 preface]: xi-xiv). The way this socio-political situation influences Sennett is probably what differentiates his position from the other reactions to modernist urban design and what makes it inspiring for rethinking the public spaces of the areas under study. Sennett wrote this book when he was twenty-five, in the context of the Protests of 1968. The book is influenced by the New Left of the 1960s, the Neo-Marxism, and by the counterculture against the social norms of the 1950s, when young people "sought to break out of social convention for the sake of dwelling in (their) own subjectivity" (Sennett, 1970 [2008 preface]: xii). This made Sennett focus on personal identity and how city life influences it, as the subtitle of the book exposes. In this context, he claims for urban experience, its complexity, and its uncertainties as necessary to develop an adult identity (Sennett, 1970 [2008 preface]: xiii) that prepare people to face unexpected situations and encounter difference. Sennett's position has affinities with that of the Neo-Marxist sociologist Henri Lefebvre—although he does not reference him in his early book—, who claimed for qualified places that facilitate simultaneity, encounters, imaginary, play and creative activities in everyday life (Lefebvre, 1996 [1968]: 147-148)⁶⁸. Likewise, there are similarities with what the Situationists claimed, who shared position with Lefebvre about the crisis of everyday life because of the isolation produced by the modern city and modern capitalism, which inhibit any kind of emotions and cultural expression in the public realm (Thomas, 1975).

68 Reference from Lefebvre, 1996. The books *The right to the city* and *Everyday life in the modern world*, which introduced these ideas, were originally published in 1968.

Unlike some of his predecessors and its contemporaries who also criticized modernist urban developments, Sennett wrote his book “as a reflective essay on urban culture rather than as a planning manual or sociological treatise” (Sennett, 1970 [2008 preface]: xiii). In this way, Sennett’s position differs from Jacob’s claim for restoring the “small, intimate relationships between neighbourhoods in city life” (Sennett, 1970: 51) characteristic of the past. Instead of claiming for a romantic revival of the past neighbourhood life, Sennett proposes finding new conditions of urban life for the future, where people learn how to accept disorder through the urban experience. This positive understanding of disorder is what differentiates Sennett from other reactions to modernist urban design. It contrasts strongly with its contemporaneous urban design treatise for crime prevention *Defensible Space* by Oscar Newman (1972). As it has been exposed in the previous chapter, while Sennett sees the encounter with strangers as something necessary for city life, Newman considers the stranger as a threatening agent that must be identified (see Minton, 2009: 142; Campkin, 2013: 88.). Newman’s concept of ‘territoriality’ seeks to create a hierarchy from public to private spaces in which the neighbourhood can be subdivided into social units, where everyone knows each other and where the feeling of security is based on adopting “proprietary attitudes” towards a delimited place, and on easily identifying the penetration of strangers in this delimited area (Newman, 1972: 51-53). In contrast, Sennett describes this phenomenon of enclosing communities as the necessity of creating a coherent image of “us”. He calls this phenomenon the “myth of a purified community” (Sennett, 1970: 27-49), which is a mechanism for avoiding disorder.

The notion of positive disorder comes in opposition to the modernist principle of order through which the social housing neighbourhoods analysed in the first chapter were designed. This idea of order is inherited from the Enlightenment, which proposed the

Cartesian geometry and the idea of order as means to remove the diseases of the cities. As Psarra (2012: vii.) notes when revisiting Hanson's distinction between 'order' and 'structure'⁶⁹, order has been introduced in three forms to remove the pathologies of the city: geometry, functionality and regulation.

Sennett's notion of disorder should not be misinterpreted with introducing geometrical disorder in the urban fabric as an attempt to imitate the organic morphology of the historical city. In contrast, he proposes in his book the necessity of increasing "certain kinds of disorder" (Sennett, 1970: xxiii.) in city life so people learn how to tolerate difference, see encounters with strangers as natural and accept uncertainty and unknown situations. He argues that there is too much order in modernist urban design and that all the functions and uses of the public space are predetermined, which does not allow spontaneity take place, as the Situationists had also point out a decade before⁷⁰. In contrast to the over-determination of functions, the positive understanding of urban disorder that he proposes is that which leads to the unplanned use of the public realm and encourages social interaction. As this chapter will show, later works of Sennett show that these kinds of disorder take place when space is structured in a certain way, when public space is not designed as a whole unity, but as an incomplete form, as a process (Sennett, 1990, 2006, 2008a). As he notes in his later work, incompleteness does not mean absence of

69 Hanson (1989) differentiates 'order'—which can be appreciated when a city is represented in a plan—and 'structure', which talk about the socio-spatial relationships that take place on the ground. She points out that the confusion between an ordered urban fabric and a well-structured urban layout come from the incapability of "conceptualizing complex overlapping socio-spatial realities like cities". Hanson, 1989, p. 39.

70 See Thomas (1975), where he describes the position of the Situationists towards planning.

structure, since “designer needs to create physical forms of a particular sort, ‘incomplete’ in a special way” (Sennett, 2007: 294).

The new conditions of the city that Sennett proposes are those that provide truly urban experiences for the transition from an adolescent to an adult identity. Young people, in the search for their identity, create a coherent predetermined image of their self, what he calls a “purified identity” (Sennett, 1970: 3-26). He describes the transition to adulthood as the process of accepting disorder. An adult identity is created by experiences and not by a predetermined image. Sennett states that this phenomenon is normal in adolescence, but it can become quite dangerous when it persists in adulthood and when it is a community phenomenon. As previously mentioned, Sennett also explains when this takes place at a community level though the concept of “the myth of a purified community” (Sennett, 1970: 27-49), the visible fact which happens when a community tries to create an image of ‘us’ and ‘sameness’ instead of defining the community by its “actual social experiences together” (Sennett, 1970: 32.).

Sennett points out how certain pieces of research on youth gangs identify this phenomenon of young people trying to “create an aura of invulnerable, unemotional competence for themselves” (Sennett, 1970: 15). Gang membership is one of the problems that the housing estates described in the previous chapter have been facing for decades. The causes of this problem are quite complex and this thesis does not go into criminological or sociological studies about gang membership. However, from the urban design discipline, the interest of this thesis is on how to create what Sennett describes as a “challenging social matrix for adolescents” (Sennett, 1970: 138), a public space that provides them with opportunities

for developing different kind of activities and to grow into adults through truly urban experience.

He criticises modernist planning such as that of the inner city housing estates under study for its brutality and its functional simplicity (Sennett, 1970: 83). He suggests recovering the ‘contact points’ (Sennett, 1970: 56) that these developments have taken out of the city. He identifies that one of the main problems of modernist planning is over-determination: “disorder is *better* than dead, predetermined planning, which restricts effective social exploration” (Sennett, 1970: 142). Still in his recent works he insists that today this problem persists since public institutions and private developers still prefer predetermined planning given their fear to unknown situations (Sennett, 2008a, n.p.). Planners want to avoid conflict by zoning and creating places with predetermined use as, for planners, conflict leads to violence. In contrast, he suggests that planners should concern about creating “fields of unpredictable interaction” (Sennett, 1970: 98).

2.2 Disorder as an approach to the public space of social housing neighbourhoods

This challenging task for planners that Sennett suggests is precisely what this thesis aims to bring to the design of the public spaces of social housing neighbourhoods; these are the kinds of disorder that this thesis seeks to propose through urban design interventions: public spaces that are not regulated, where improvisation can happen, a productive public realm where diverse activities can emerge simultaneously, which is permanently on the move and where people do not feel threatened by strangers or unknown situations.

Following the work of Jacobs and Sennett, academics such as Ash Amin (2008, 2010) have highlighted the virtues of these disorderly and non-regulated spaces. As Amin notes, these kinds of situations—of ‘urban surplus’⁷¹ as he calls it—only take place when “public space is structured to a certain way” and “(i)t is linked to a particular form of public space”: “open, crowded, diverse, incomplete, improvised, and disorderly or lightly regulated” (Amin, 2008: 8). This kind of public spaces can be found in certain streets, squares, markets and they can contribute to the “civic appreciation of a shared urban space” (Amin, 2008: 8) and to the tolerance towards the encounter with strangers. Moreover, certain urban experiences also suggest that open and non-regulated public spaces contribute to the unplanned use of the public realm, to the emergence of activities, to feel comfortable with the presence of strangers, and to develop shared and social activities. These experiences, among others, can be: going to a street market in London—

⁷¹ Amin (2008: 5) defines ‘urban surplus’—or ‘situated surplus’—“as the force that produces a distinctive sense of urban collective culture and civic affirmation in urban life”.

where people share activities, exchange goods, encounter with strangers, exchange greeting rituals with people that are not part of their intimate circle—, sitting in an open and permeable square—where different activities take place, where people pass by or stay, and when people feel comfortable in the presence of strangers—, or the intense activity in skate parks built in the margins of some urban areas—where people share a common interest, sport, passion, and develop the same activity in a particular place—.

Despite these arguments that support the benefits of conceiving non-regulated places, many of the interventions that have taken place in social housing neighbourhoods—like those described in the previous chapter—have focused on restricting the use of the public realm through subdividing the open spaces with fences, and introducing urban elements and new arrangement of the spaces that make the presence of strangers as something threatening. These interventions do not tackle the functional simplicity of these neighbourhoods, do not make the neighbourhoods more permeable and inviting, and do not provide spaces for improvisation. Instead, they respond to Newman's (1972) concepts of 'defensible space' and 'territoriality'. Their effect is that there is a lack of urban experience and of the truly social life that Sennett talks about, since the public realm is restricted and the gardens are intended just for the use of residents, trying to avoid any possible conflict. The remaining open spaces are places to pass by when neighbours are seeking their homes, not places to stay in.

This thesis takes Sennett's notion of disorder as an alternative approach to the interventions that have taken place in the neighbourhoods in the last decades. It takes it as a point of departure, not as a "planning manual" as Sennett warns in the 2008 preface of his book. It looks at the potential that this provocative concept of 'disorder' can offer to rethink

the public spaces of post-war social housing neighbourhoods, which are the places where Sennett proposed to recover the ‘contact points’ that modernist developments had removed.

However, in using this approach, it must be acknowledged that the situation of these urban neighbourhoods and of the city in which they are located—London—have changed since they were built and since Sennett wrote *The Uses of Disorder*. As Sennett recognises in the preface, this book was written in a particular “time and milieu”. Nevertheless, the essence of the ideas still remains and they have been present in Sennett’s work in the last four decades. Some of the subsequent works of Sennett address the current situation of inner city housing estates, even the specific case of London. These recent works acknowledge both the physical transformations—or process of decay in some cases—and the changes in demography that these areas have undergone until reaching the current situation. He also highlights that in some cases the situation of these neighbourhoods has worsened, but, conversely, he also points out some facts that make these areas have potential for recovery.

On the one hand, he exposes that the situation of many of these neighbourhoods have worsened with two arguments that can be found in different works: firstly, he notes that “social housing estates, as they have aged, have become even more places where the poor are gated-in, sealed off from daily contact with other Londoners” (Sennett, 2011: 327). This is also expressed in Sennett’s response to Sampson (see Sampson, 2009; Sennett, 2009), where he highlights that the rigid urban environment of the 1970s which he denounced on his early book have only got worse with the “rise of gated and guarded communities” (Sennett, 2009: 58). Secondly, Sennett affirms that “over-specification

of form and function is to make the modern urban environment peculiarly susceptible to decay” (Sennett, 2008a: n.p.). This state of decay is especially more serious in poor neighbourhoods.

On the other hand, Sennett highlights another fact that is of great interest when thinking about urban design interventions in these neighbourhoods, which is the potential of recovery that they have. Sennett explains that because local authorities in London during the post-war period made the effort to build social housing estates through all the different parts of the cities, London is full of urban spaces that can be transformed into places for interaction between different social and cultural groups. Furthermore, he also explains the positive outcome that the influx of immigrants in the inner city can bring to these neighbourhoods, since they can bring dynamism to cities (Sennett, 2009). As the case studies analysed in the previous chapter show, whereas at the beginning these neighbourhoods had a homogeneous working class population, immigration has made them have a diverse population that could have a strong potential to contribute to the urban experience that Sennett seeks. As Vertovec notes when explaining the concept of ‘super-diversity’ (Vertovec, 2007), in London the immigration phenomenon has become quite complex in the past decades and diversity can no longer be measured just in terms of terms of ethnicity and country of origin, since there other variables and factors that interplay, such as “differential immigration statuses and their concomitant entitlements and restrictions of rights, divergent labour market experiences, discrete gender and age profiles, patterns of spatial distribution, and mixed local area responses by service providers and residents” (Vertovec, 2007: 1025). Since this thesis is done from the urban design discipline, it does not pretend to study this complex phenomenon. However, it has

to acknowledge that the population that inhabits the neighbourhoods under study are in the context of the 'super-diverse' city par excellence: London.

The following epigraph will show how the changing situation from the modern to the contemporary city has affected Sennett's notion of disorder in his subsequent works. Through looking at the evolution of Sennett's work, it will build an idea of Sennett's notion of disorder today.

2.3 Evolution of the notion of disorder in Sennett's work

This section looks at the evolution of the notion of disorder in Sennett's work with the aims of understanding how it can be read from the *current* situation of the neighbourhoods under study and of analysing how this can be applied from the urban design discipline.

Since Sennett wrote *The Uses of Disorder*, part of his work has focused in how people express themselves to strangers in the public realm, as it can be appreciated from his subsequent book *The Fall of Public Man* (1977), where he looks at the relationship between the built environment and social behaviour by comparing the dramatic stage to the urban street in different moments in history. Since *The Conscience of the Eye* (1990), where he approaches much more directly the urban design discipline, Sennett's work on cities focuses on the relationship between "the visual and the social" (Sennett, 1990, 2008a), which is highly relevant for this research due to the implications that it has for architecture.

Sennett proposes that through 'visual design', it can be influenced the way people see each other in the public space. Conversely, he looks critically at those studies that affirm that strangers in the public realm, through communication, will eventually interact. He warns that the sheer co-presence of strangers in the public realm does not necessarily induce social interaction, but it also can provoke indifference towards difference (Sennett, 1990, 1994, 2008a). In this way, he proposes that people can be aware of the stranger through visual experience, through encountering the unexpected, through discovery (Sennett, 1990: 150). The influence of the physical environment and of material things

that accumulate on the street on how people relate to strangers gain more and more relevance in the subsequent works of Sennett. Although this is in some way present in *The Uses of Disorder*, it becomes more explicit in his later works.

This evolution of Sennett's work towards attributing a greater importance to the urban design of the physical environment makes Sennett's work very useful for answering the second the research question of this thesis: How can interventions in the public space of such neighbourhoods bring life to their streets? Actually, Sennett attempts to answer to a similar question in his later essays by addressing the question "Which designs might abet social relationships that endure through being given the opportunity to evolve and mutate?" (Sennett, 2007: 293). In the essays 'The Open City' (2007), 'The Public Realm' (2008a), and 'Boundaries and Borders' (2011), he attempts to make urban design proposals that are rooted in his early notion of urban disorder. These suggestions encourage architects to explore how to materialize them. This section will look at the evolution of Sennett's notion of disorder to accept Sennett's invitation to explore how to materialize his ideas in the subsequent chapters.

2.3.1 *The stage and the street: the dramaturgical scene in The Fall of Public Man*

The Fall of Public Man (1977) represents a transition between Sennett's earlier book *The Uses of Disorder* (1970) and his later book on urban design *The Conscience of the Eye* (1990). The book focuses on how people express themselves to strangers, a concern that was already present in *The Uses of Disorder* and which will be central in all the urban sociology works of Sennett.

The main argument of the book is that public life has been eroded because of the confusion between the public and the intimate. When citizens measure public life in terms of how it affects their own personality and internal psyche, the intimate erodes social life and constrains external expressions and passions in public. The stranger becomes threatening and people take refuge in familiar environments.

Sennett explains how architects are professionals that have been “forced to work with present-day ideas of public life” (Sennett, 1977: 12) and describes how the will of isolation in the public space has been reproduced by modern architecture after World War II, which has resulted in a “dead public space” (Sennett, 1977: 12-16). Through using as examples certain post-war urban developments, Sennett explains different ways in which these urban environments produce isolation. The kinds of isolation produced by the environment that Sennett describes can be found in some extent in the case studies analysed in the previous chapter. Firstly, isolation can be produced by inhibiting any kind of relationship between people and the built environment, making people look at the public realm as meaningless. Secondly, by prioritizing the functional aspect of the public space as a place to move from one point to another in a private automobile. According to



Fig. 2.2: Theatrical Set. Sebastiano Serlio, 1545.

Sennett, motion has become the main function of the public realm, especially of the urban street. Sennett identifies a third mode of isolation, which is the one “directly produced by one’s visibility to others” (Sennett, 1977: 14-15). According to him, these post-war urban places provoke an intimate observation by strangers that hinders sociability. In contrast, people need public spaces for gathering together and for social contact.

Although it was after WWII when most of the destruction of the public realm has taken place, Sennett states that the will of isolation comes from before these developments were built: from the shift from the *ancien régime* of the 18th century to the industrial capitalism of the 19th century. However, the present thesis does not concentrate on the origins of this shift from a public to an inward life, but on the effect that this post-war urban design has had on society and on how to upgrade these alienated environments through design.

Sennett’s book is a call for a more meaningful public realm, capable of arousing emotions in public, of encouraging people to develop their social life there, and of provoking positive encounters among strangers. As stated in the introduction, turning the alienated public spaces under study into places that invite people to stay in and not just to pass through is one of the specific objectives of this thesis. Among other studies⁷² that have also claimed for a more meaningful public realm, what it is interesting about Sennett’s contribution is the study of the relationship between the people and the milieu created by their urban environment, which is highly relevant to the study of strategies for intervention. This can be seen in the methodology that Sennett follows to analyse the destruction of public life,

72 See, for example, some of the already mentioned in this thesis: Smithson, 1954; Jacobs, 1961; Gehl, 1971.

which is comparing the street to the dramaturgical scene in different times in history. According to Sennett (1977: 37), in truly social life, the street and the dramatic stage have many similarities: how the space—or the stage—is structured, the different urban elements—or props—that compound the scene, how people dress and codes of belief. In contrast, when the imbalance between the private and public life occurs in the modern city, these similarities begin to fade. He compares people and roles much in the same way he compares the street and the stage. He states that, in modern cities, people have lost their artistic expression in daily life, as they are incapable of expressing their passions in public. This relationship between the environment and people—between the stage and the roles—will be of great important when proposing the urban design guidelines to intervene in the public spaces under study. From looking at this relationship, the thesis will try to answer to the question: how can the urban stage be rearranged so that people are encouraged to become more active in public life?

2.3.2 *The visual and the social in The Conscience of the Eye*

After more than a decade, when Sennett takes a break from writing in urban sociology to write fiction ('Richard Sennett Website', n.d. [Online], accessed 2013-07-10)—although the novel *Palais-Royal* (1986) can be also read as a reflection on urban sociology—, he resumes his work on how people express themselves to strangers in the public space with a book that focuses on urban design: *The Conscience of the Eye: The Design and Social Life of Cities* (1990).

This book explores the “connection between the visual and the social” (Sennett, 1990: 202), which makes the urban design of cities and the influence that it has in social life the central theme of the book, as its subtitle suggests. Actually, Sennett states explicitly that the book “aims at relating architecture, urban planning, public sculpture, and the visual scenes of the city to its cultural life” (Sennett, 1990: xiv), which is the essence of the research question of this thesis. The methodology that Sennett uses for looking at the relationship between the visual and the social in cities is analogous to the one used in some of his other works (see Sennett, 1977, 1994), which is looking at how this relationship has changed through history and how they influence present cities and society. Firstly, in “Interior Shadows”, Sennett (1990: 5-68) explains how the “fear of exposure” in the modern city is inherited from the Christian culture of medieval cities. He explains how the “opposition between chaos and definition” (Sennett, 1990: 31)—between the disorderly streets and the ordered sanctuary—was expressed in the urban fabric of the medieval city and how this has influenced cities today, where home has become the modern sanctuary, where people refuge themselves. This “opposition between chaos and definition” was already studied in *The Uses of Disorder*. Secondly, in “The Eye Searches for Unity”, he

explains how the “Enlightened ideal of wholeness has passed into the modern definition of integrity of well made things” (Sennett, 1990: 98). He explains that buildings are designed as fixed forms for specific uses, as a finished piece that cannot be touched or modified. He explains that the result of this is that the urban fabric has become “more rigid and brittle” (Sennett, 1990: 98). This problem of the rigidity and over-determination of uses in modern urban environments was also identified in *The Uses of Disorder* and it is one of the reasons why it is so difficult to intervene in the neighbourhoods under study, since they are conceived as single-use urban environments and the adaptation of these urban structures to other kinds of uses is a real challenge.

This book is of great importance for this thesis for two main reasons: firstly, because it positions Sennett among those who argue that shaping the different urban elements in the street can influence the way people express themselves to strangers. Secondly, because it attempts to materialize his ideas into urban design conceptual guidelines, which are rooted in the early notion of disorder.

Sennett takes a position arguing that the city is not only *civitas*—a place of communication—but it is also *urbs*—a physical place. He shows himself critical with those that avoid design and advocate for ‘communication planning’ as a substitution of ‘visual planning’, expecting that encouraging people to talk will result in a feeling of ‘communal solidarity’ (Sennett, 1990: 87-89). Sennett had already highlighted the consequences of trying to create this ‘communal solidarity’ in *The Uses of Disorder*, which is not forged in actual social relationships, as it has been explained previously. Conversely, Sennett argues that “shaping the physical elements which accumulate on the street is also necessary. It is by

sensing the form given to time in space that we perceive the street as a more arousing experience that a mere record of what has happened about it” (Sennett, 1990: 176).

This argument is useful to clarify that disorder does not mean that no intervention is necessary. The word disorder can be misinterpreted with ‘no intervention’ and letting human interaction and urban activities happen. However, in obsolete public spaces there are fewer probabilities that these processes will emerge. For this reason, shaping the urban environment is also necessary to provoke the emergence of the unplanned.

In *The Conscience of the Eye*, there is a great interest in the relationship between humans and material objects, between people and the urban environment. Sennett explains this interaction as the relationship between the ‘I’ and the ‘It’, using the example of the graffiti. He explains how in urban settings that are not arousing, the graffiti focus on the ‘I’, since they are just a sign, “an aggressively rather than exploratory relation to the environment” (Sennett, 1990: 209). In contrast, he describes other kinds of graffiti such as stencils, which are not signed and try to establish some kind of dialogue with the urban surfaces on which they are placed. This example of the graffiti is quite useful for looking at the kind of relationship with the environment that this thesis is seeking. Graffiti is normally seen as a sign of negative disorder or anti-social behaviour in these particular places, whereas in other contexts it can have the opposite outcome and make an area more attractive to some people. Sampson (2009: 25) notes how these signs of disorder are ‘socially mediated’ and can be seen as a negative in some places whereas in others can be seen as ‘edgy’. What Sampson does not account is that this contrast might have other reason apart from the reputation of a place, which is how people interact with the physical environment, which is an aspect in which urban designers can intervene to modify it.

In the last part of the book, Sennett proposes that through this “consciousness of thing”, the neutral urban grid of the modern city—which he defines as the “least humane of all urban designs” (Sennett, 1990: 214)—can be transformed. He proposes “making grids expressive” (Sennett, 1990: 214) through introducing certain kinds of “mutations” on it. This proposal can be applied to the object of study of this thesis: proposing alterations and new arrangements in the public space of the inner city neighbourhoods to make these neutral spaces more expressive. These mutations that Sennett proposes are rooted in the concept of disorder that he used in his earlier book. He proposes certain ways in which visual design can induce these changes: he proposes as design principles the “disruption of linear sequence” (Sennett, 1990: 168) and the overlaying of differences in the street, which provokes discovery and the encounter with the unexpected. For materializing this, he proposes concepts such as ‘simultaneity’ and exploring how to use “the principle of the machine—repetition—to create expressions that aren’t mechanical” (Sennett, 1990: 217). Although these proposals remain conceptual, they provide a base for the works that he has developed more recently (Sennett, 2007, 2008a, 2011), where he takes these concepts further and develops more concrete urban design proposals.

2.3.3 Approaching urban design in recent essays: ‘The Open City’, ‘The Public Realm’, ‘Boundaries and Borders’

Recent essays by Sennett have continued the work of *The Conscience of the Eye* by attempting to apply the concepts explored in the book in more concrete urban design guidelines. In the first two essays (2007, 2008a), the main question Sennett asks is whether architects can design urban spaces that can mutate and evolve in time according to how people use them. Although both essays use the example of New York City to explain the relationship between the visual and the social, the proposals seem directed to intervene—broadly—in the existing modern city. As in the previous book, it seems that Sennett interest is directed towards intervening in the existing non-expressive urban layouts to make them more arousing and to create more enriching urban experiences.

The texts are also useful to clarify the concept of disorder, since they also point out what he *does not* mean. Firstly, the lack of regulation should not be interpreted as deregulation and free market (Sennett, 2007: 293). He warns about the reading of freedom that neo-liberals can make. This thesis coincides with Sennett’s position: the lack of regulation and liberalisation always favours the most powerful. Furthermore, it is necessary to clarify that the fact that citizens must take initiatives does not mean the avoidance of responsibility of public administrations. In contrast, a very important role of public administrations and governments should be to be constantly seeking for equality and for favouring the most vulnerable. Secondly, he warns about certain wrong interpretations of the importance of time in space when he talks about ‘closed contextualism’ (Sennett, 2008a: n.p.), which takes place when designers simply quote

forms of the past to avoid disruption. As it was observed in the previous chapter, this ‘closed contextualism’ has been one of the responses to housing estate regeneration or redevelopment: demolishing tower blocks and building historicist recreations of the Victorian city.

For exposing the ideas, the essays use the contrast between cities as closed systems and cities as open systems. This opposition closed/open system can be understood as an updated version of the opposition order/disorder that Sennett described in 1970. He defines closed systems as those that are in equilibrium and open systems as those that are in unstable evolution (Sennett, 2008a). According to Sennett, modern urban environments are closed systems because of the over specification of form and function, a fact that makes them “peculiarly susceptible to decay” (Sennett, 2007: 292). He also states that closed systems are conceived avoiding any kind of disorder or “experiences that stand out” (Sennett, 2007: 292), which connects this contraposition directly with his earlier book. In contrast, he defines an open system “as one in which growth admits conflict and dissonance” (Sennett, 2007: 296).

To turn the closed system into open systems, he proposes three strategies in his 2007 essay: Firstly, ‘passage territories’, where Sennett (2007: 294) warns architects about the importance of designing the experience of the passage. Secondly, he proposes exploring how to build ‘incomplete forms’, in the way that buildings and the urban space can change in time with new additions and adaptations. This concept was to be further developed in the 2008 essay. Thirdly, he proposes the development of narratives, a concept already introduced in *The Conscience of the Eye*. With this

concept, Sennett acknowledges the importance of the process and of thinking about each step when intervening on the public space.

The 2008 essay contributes to the contraposition between closed and open system by another opposition, which is also built on ecosystems: boundaries/borders, an idea that is further developed in his work in 2011. Continuing with the analogy to natural systems, he defines borders as ‘interactive’, places ‘full of time’, whereas boundaries are limits, static places. He defines that the main characteristic of a ‘membrane’—a border—is that it is “porous and resistant”, which “make(s) exchange possible yet resists simply dissolving into formless flux” (Sennett, 2011: 326). Here, Sennett shapes his early idea of disorder, inviting architects to create urban spaces that act as a framework that encourage social interaction. He also warns that creating endless open spaces is not the alternative to closed boundaries, since this is what modernist architects did in the 20th century and the result was the creation of places with a boundary condition (Sennett, 2011: 326), as this thesis has shown with the analysis of the case studies in the previous chapter. He refers specifically to the case that this thesis is studying, the social housing estates in London. He points out two characteristics that reveal both the potential that they have to be an interactive border and the disadvantaged situation that many of them currently have as a sealed boundary: on the one hand, thanks to the post-war will of placing the housing estates in different parts of the city, according to Sennett, “London is full of local membranes”. However, on the other hand, he points out that these neighbourhoods, as they have evolved, have become more and more isolated places where residents do not interact with outsiders. The potential of transforming them into places of social and cultural interaction and the problem of socio-spatial isolation are two of the main conclusions from the previous chapter and

also what motivates the interest on intervening on these neighbourhoods. Sennett's proposal is to design places for social exchange in the edge rather than in the centre. In contrast to the tradition of intervening on the centre, he proposes the edge as a place where different social and cultural groups can meet and interact. Once more, he claims for the visual stimulation that make people interact with strangers and create the places that he claimed for four decades earlier in *The Uses of Disorder*.

In his later works, he insists in this idea of visual stimulation that encourages interaction with difference. In the 2008 essay, he warns about the tendency of indifference towards difference that take place in cities like New York, a fact that he had previously noted in *Flesh and Stone* (Sennett, 1994: 378-394). In these recent works, it can be perceived a certain clarification on his idea about encounter with strangers. While in *The Uses of Disorder* Sennett (1970: 194-195) affirms that people, through the experience of difference in the street, can become more tolerant, in his recent work he warns that this can lead to a sense of “comfort in the midst of strangers” (Sennett, 2008a: n.p.)—what is defined as ‘cosmopolitanism’—but not necessarily to social interaction.

In the search for designing public spaces that support social interaction, Sennett encourages architects and urban designers to use the available technological resources to build the public space as an ‘incomplete form’, which is how he suggests to materialize the idea of public space as an ‘open system’, as a process. Instead of defining the buildings and the open spaces as finished and fixed structures to be contemplated, he proposes leaving them unfinished, “partially unprogrammed” (Sennett, 2008a: n.p.). He even proposes how to build them, which can be very useful for this thesis to give shape to the strategies for intervention: he suggests building a structural skeleton

formed by the addition of different elements that can be added and subtracted and that provides with different possibilities to the space surrounding the buildings. This challenging idea of building public spaces out of the assemblage of different elements that provide with different possibilities to the public spaces and that makes it flexible and changeable in time is what the strategies for intervention will explore.



2.4 Urban disorder today and assemblage thinking

In this development of Sennett's ideas, this thesis finds two conclusions: firstly, that Sennett refines his notion of disorder and introduces urban design concepts that are rooted in the early ideas of his 1970 book. Secondly, in this updated notion of disorder, this thesis finds direct relationships to the concept of 'assemblage' and its application to critical urbanism. This finding will be explained below and will serve in the following chapters to use 'assemblage' thinking as a tool to apply Sennett's notion of disorder into urban design guidelines for intervening in the public space in social housing neighbourhoods.

As it was been explained when reviewing the works on public space that Sennett have written since *The Uses of Disorder*, he reasserts his idea of disorder in his subsequent works with certain nuances and also attempts to find its applications in the urban design discipline.

Some of the clarifications that Sennett makes about his idea of urban disorder today can be found in his response to Sampson (see Sampson, 2009; Sennett, 2009). In Sampson's article about order/disorder, the author examines how "perceptions of neighbourhood disorder are socially mediated, surprisingly stable and that are contextually shaped by much more than actual levels or disorder" (Sampson, 2009: 15). He explains that certain observations of disorder can make some areas be stigmatised while the equivalent can be seen as 'edgy' in other areas, depending on the context. He concludes the article with a discussion about the positive outcome that ethnic and cultural diversity can bring to cities, which is one of the issues that Sennett addresses in his response. Sampson argues that,

Fig. 2.3. 'Adieu New York', Fernand Léger, 1946. Used by Sennett (1990) to illustrate the "places full of time", where different parts of machines overlay, and where the street is a constantly shifting scene.

because the relationship between “cues of disorder and perception is socially mediated” (Sampson, 2009: 26), it is subject to change and there is a hope that immigration and certain elements of disorder increase the value of cities. Because Sampson refers to Sennett’s early book, Sennett responds to Sampson article to clarify his idea of ‘urban disorder today’, influenced by his personal experience and how cities have changed in the last four decades. Sennett recognizes that when he wrote *The Uses of Disorder* four decades ago, he accounted the “contrast between definition and ambiguity in urbanites’ perception”, but did not account disorder “in terms of perception of decay” (Sennett, 2009: 58) and how it shows the abandonment of poor areas and inequality. He states that when he wrote his book, it responded to the rigidly segregated built environment of the 1970s and highlights how in certain cases this situation have gone worse with gated and guarded neighbourhoods. As it has been explained, this might be the case also in the social housing neighbourhoods under study, where interventions have gone towards protecting against strangers. On the other hand, as mentioned, he states how this is countervailed with the dynamism introduced by the arrival of immigrants, which should be understood as a “resource for the city” (Sennett, 2009: 58).

Although Sennett’s response to Sampson does not go very deep into his view of ‘urban disorder today’, it reaffirms his idea of disorder and also introduces how it can be interpreted according to the new conditions of the contemporary city, which deal with the physical changes—or abandonment in some cases—of the neighbourhoods and with the changes in demography. Furthermore, from the review of his later works, this thesis has also found that Sennett has specified what he means about urban disorder by relating the visual and the social in the street. As it has been explained, this has resulted in an increasing concern with the physical environment and how it influences how people

express themselves to strangers. In *The Conscience of the Eye*, he looks at how people, through the “consciousness of things”, through contemplation, can be more prepared to accept unexpected experiences, tolerate difference, and to interact with strangers. For achieving this relationship with the physical environment, Sennett (1990: 151-152) proposes creating urban settings that arouse discovery and provocation. When he proposes how to build these kind of urban settings, he introduces concepts that derive from the early idea of disorder and that clarify how he sees the way his ideas could be applied to intervene in the contemporary public space: creating non-linear narratives in the public spaces (Sennett, 1990, 2007), mutations in the urban grid that induce change (Sennett, 1990), turning public spaces into open systems—which are in constant evolution—, designing public spaces as a process, and exploring construction techniques to build them as an ‘incomplete form’, which can be constantly upgraded (Sennett, 2008a, 2009).

It is in this revision of his ideas—and in the formulation of these new concepts that are descendants of the notion of disorder—that this thesis finds a close relationship with how ‘assemblage thinking’ has been used in critical urbanism. ‘Assemblage’ in social sciences attempts to describe relationships between the different agents within a system (McFarlane, 2011a: 206). In philosophy, the concept was introduced by Deleuze and Guattari in their book *A Thousand Plateaus* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980 [1987]). Since then, it has had multiple readings from different disciplines and lines of thought related to social sciences and urban geography, as McFarlane (2011a) notes⁷³. It is not the intention of this thesis to deepen neither on the concept of ‘assemblage’ itself nor on its primary

73 McFarlane (2011: 206) explains how it has been used by lines of thought such as Actor-Network Theories and critical urban geography.

definitions by Deleuze and Guattari, but rather on its application to critical urbanism. More specifically, the thesis looks at the usage of ‘assemblage’ by McFarlane (2011a) and Simone (2011) recently in *City*⁷⁴, where they refer to it to describe the relationship between the different agents—both humans and material things—on the urban scene, as well as processuality, emergence, adaptability, and spontaneity on the public space.

Although Sennett has not explicitly refer to the notion of ‘assemblage’ in his work, this thesis has found that McFarlane and Simone’s discussion is directly related to the mutations of the urban grid, to the public realm understood as a process that Sennett proposes in his later publications, and to the other mentioned urban design concepts that derive from his early idea of disorder. For explaining and structuring these connections, this thesis has identified three aspects of Sennett’s later urban thinking that build bridges with the notion of ‘assemblage’.

Firstly, the explained increasing interest in the relationship between human and material things is directly related to ‘assemblage’ as a concept to explain sociomaterial interaction⁷⁵. His concern on the sociomaterial ‘symbiosis’⁷⁶ between people and the city is present since he compares the street and the stage—and people and roles—in *The Fall of Public Man*. Since then, Sennett’s work on cities focuses on the relationship

74 *City*, 2011, 15 (2). Special issue on assemblage thinking and critical urbanism.

75 See McFarlane (2011a) and Simone (2011), who use assemblage to describe interaction between people and material things.

76 McFarlane, 2011, p. 208, also explains assemblage as a symbiosis of human and non-human components.

between the visual and the social. On studying this relationship, he states that there is a “consciousness of material objects which can resonate to the consciousness people have of one another in cities” (Sennett, 1990: 213). This connects to the work of other authors such as Ash Amin (2008, 2010), who through a certain interpretation in urban theory of posthumanism supports the idea that the production of public culture does not come just from the relationship between people within the public space, but also comes from the relationship between human and non-human bodies, between people and the environment. The following chapters will study how architects and urban designers can enable these associations through interventions on the public space.

A second aspect in which this thesis finds connection between Sennett’s discourse and ‘assemblage’ thinking is differing from the understanding of urban design as a unified, finished and stable whole. As Sennett explains in *The Conscience of the Eye*, modern and contemporary architecture have inherited the Enlightenment will for unity and the integrity of form. This has resulted in finished designs that do not allow the citizens to interact with them, buildings and spaces that cannot be touched or modified. In contrast, Sennett (2007, 2008a), in his recent essays, proposes leaving the design of the buildings and of the public spaces incomplete, allowing uncertainty and the constant changes. Sennett explains this idea with the contraposition between closed/open systems: whereas a closed system is stable, an open system is in constant evolution and allows adaptation to changing conditions. This idea connects with one of the basic principles of ‘assemblage’ thinking, which is concentrating on the relationships between the parts, and what can emerge from these interactions, rather than in the whole. This contraposition of closed/open systems leads to another characteristic of ‘assemblage’ thinking tightly related to Sennett’s work, which is attributing to the urban elements functional capacity rather

than a fixed function. As Sennett affirms, in closed systems functions are predetermined, whereas open systems are unpredictable and enabling.

This advocacy for creating public spaces as open systems rather than as a finished and integrated whole is explained in a more illustrative way when Sennett proposes an architectural materialization of his urban theories, which is the third aspect in which this thesis finds connections with ‘assemblage’ thinking: instead of neatly designed public spaces, he proposes building them bit-by-bit, giving shape to a structural skeleton that is built by the addition of elements (Sennett, 2008a). In this way, the public realm is understood as a process and allows continuous adaptation and upgrade. Another urban design guideline suggested by Sennett which has a close relationship with ‘assemblage’ thinking is introducing ‘mutations’ in the urban grid (Sennett, 1990): as this chapter has revealed, he proposes making the grid expressive by introducing changes and alterations into repetition. These mutations of the grid can be taken to the interventions that are necessary on the urban fabric built in the twentieth century, where certain mutations can induce change and influence the way people express themselves to strangers. The term ‘mutation’ is tightly related to how ‘assemblage’ has been used in social sciences, which connotes “indeterminacy, emergence, becoming, processuality, turbulence...” (McFarlane, 2011: 206).

From these findings, the following chapter will study in depth the different readings of ‘assemblage’ in critical urbanism that can address the different kinds of disorder that Sennett advocates for—as well as the concepts that have derived from this notion in his subsequent works—. The main objective of studying these connections is using ‘assemblage’ thinking as a tool to materialize these notions about disorder into urban

design strategies on the public spaces under study, which need certain kinds of ‘mutations’ to induce social interaction in them. ‘Assemblage’ thinking can help to apply Sennett’s work to the current situation of the public spaces of social housing neighbourhoods and to propose urban design guidelines that enable associations and connections that provoke this kind of productive conflicts that bring life to these areas.

2.5 Conclusions in chapter

This chapter has argued that Sennett's notion of urban disorder can be an approach to intervene in the public space of obsolete social housing neighbourhoods. Firstly, by exploring the context in which *The Uses of Disorder* was published and revisiting its position towards modernist urban planning, the chapter has explained that the ideas presented in the book responded to a particular moment in time, which was precisely just after the post-war housing developments were built. Secondly, the chapter has explained that, since many of the subsequent transformations in these neighbourhoods have attempted to introduce more 'order' through security measures and restricting the use of the public realm, this approach of introducing certain kinds of disorder is still pertinent. However, since the situation is not the same, this notion of disorder needs to be revisited. Thirdly, by reviewing how Sennett has used this idea of urban disorder in his later and recent works, the chapter has attempted to elaborate an updated notion of how Sennett sees urban disorder today and has identified which uses of disorder can bring social interaction and urban life to the public real in the current situation of social housing neighbourhoods.

Once the chapter has presented the arguments that propose disorder as an approach to intervene in the object of study, a further question needs to be addressed: How to materialize this concept into urban design strategies? This is the real challenge that this thesis needs to address. The last section of the chapter proposes an hypothesis that will be developed in the following chapter: 'assemblage' thinking in critical urbanism—which

share affinities with Sennett's recent work—can be a tool to bring from theory to practice Sennett's notion of urban disorder.

FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE (II):
'ASSEMBLAGE' AND URBAN DESIGN

CHAPTER THREE.



Having analysed the factors that contribute to the obsolescence of the public space of social housing neighbourhoods and exposed the theoretical approach that this thesis takes as point of departure to propose design interventions in such spaces, the present chapter seeks to address the hypothesis presented at the end of the previous chapter: assemblage thinking in critical urbanism can be a tool to materialise Sennett’s “uses of disorder” in city life into urban design strategies in the public space of social housing neighbourhoods. Sennett’s early thoughts about providing “fields for unpredictable interaction” (Sennett, 1970: 98) and about the need of experiencing unexpected situations for preparing people to tolerate difference have not been implemented in its full potential in urban practice. As explained in the previous chapters, while his first single-authored book was quite influential at its time and has inspired Sennett’s own work and many other authors, it has had a more limited effect in urban policies and in urban design practice. Sennett (2008a) has recently noted that, in architecture and urbanism, indeterminacy is still regarded as impractical. Furthermore, he also states that architects do have the technology available to build the public realm as an ‘incomplete form’, but they do not use it properly since they are still “prisoners of specification” (Sennett, 2008a: n.p.). This fact makes pertinent looking for tools that help practitioners to combine definition and indeterminacy when intervening in the public realm.

Dovey, paraphrasing Deleuze, explains that “concepts are tools for thinking and assemblage theory is a toolkit” (Dovey, 2011: 349). This thesis uses certain contributions of assemblage thinking to critical urbanism precisely as toolkit to bring from theory to design practice Sennett’s notion of urban disorder presented previously.

Figure 3.1: Marcel Duchamp. Bicycle Wheel, 1913.

For achieving this, the chapter will follow this methodology: firstly, it will define both the concept of ‘assemblage’ and the body of thought known in academic literature as ‘critical urbanism’ or ‘critical urban theory’. Since the term assemblage has been used by diverse disciplines, it will focus on how assemblage thinking has been used in critical urbanism, which is particularly useful for the purpose of this chapter. Secondly, it will identify different readings of assemblage in critical urbanism that address certain kinds of productive disorder. Thirdly, from this finding, it will attempt to use assemblage as instrumental: it will identify certain concepts of assemblage thinking that can give clues to design the associations that must take place in the public space to provoke this positive uses of disorder. In doing so, the chapter will illustrate these concepts with examples of public spaces and urban situations where these socio-material associations take place in certain way. The examples used are Gillett Square in the London Borough of Hackney and Stockwell Skatepark in Brixton, London Borough of Lambeth⁷⁷. Both public spaces are located in the same two boroughs as the housing estates analysed in the first chapter. They are not explained as exemplary urban design interventions to be directly applied to the case studies, but as descriptive of physical places where the different kinds of urban assemblages take place.

⁷⁷ Both sites have been visited in different occasions. Gillett Square was first visited in November 2011 during the event ‘Inspiring Cities’, where the participants of the event had a lecture and a Q&A session by Adam Hart of Hackney Cooperative Developments, a key actor on the development and management of the square. It has also been visited in August 2012 and in a more systematic way between April and August 2013, carrying on participant observation on the square. Stockwell Skatepark was first visited in November 2008 and has been visited systematically between May and June 2013. Observations have been made on the use of the skatepark.

3.1 Conceptualising ‘assemblage’ and ‘critical urbanism’

The objective of this chapter is *not* to develop a reflection in assemblage theory, but to study its potential for being a design tool for introducing certain kinds of disorder in the public space of the social housing neighbourhoods analysed in the first chapter. However, although this thesis is not going to deepen on the concept itself, it is necessary to make a brief description of the general conception of assemblage and to identify which readings of assemblage are useful for achieving the objectives of this thesis. For studying assemblage as a tool to describe the city—both the *urbs* and the *civitas*⁷⁸—and to think and propose alternative ways it could work, it is particularly helpful to look at the contributions of assemblage to critical urbanism proposed by authors such as McFarlane (2011a, 2011b), Simone (2011) and Dovey (2011). Since the definition of the body of thought known in urban literature as critical urbanism is also under debate (see Brenner, 2009; Dovey, 2011), it is also necessary to make a brief description of the general conception of critical urbanism.

Assemblage is a term introduced in philosophy by Deleuze and Guattari (1980 [1987]), which has had multiple readings from different disciplines. In social sciences, as in other fields of knowledge, it has been generally used to describe the associations of different agents within a system. As McFarlane (2011a: 2) explains, it focuses on the interactions and on the relationships of dependency between the different components of a system rather than understanding the city as a “resultant formation”. In critical urbanism, it has been used to describe the relationship between human and things, between people

and the built environment, by authors such as Amin (2008, 2010), McFarlane (2011a) and Simone (2011). Furthermore, assemblage thinking, rather than attributing a fixed function and a pre-given definition to the different urban elements, it attributes functional capacity: different possibilities of co-functioning that will depend on how they interact with the different elements of the system (McFarlane, 2011b: 653). In this definition of assemblage, this thesis finds affinities with Sennett's advocacy for unplanned public spaces: he proposes eliminating predetermined zoning and defining the character of the neighbourhood by the "specific bonds and alliances of the people within it" (Sennett, 1970: 142).

This characteristic of assemblage—functional capacity versus function—means that the interactions between the different elements are not predetermined either. As McFarlane explains, assemblage connotes "indeterminacy, emergence, becoming, processuality, turbulence and sociomateriality of phenomena" (McFarlane, 2011a: 206), which also connects to Sennett's (1970, 2009) debate on ambiguity versus definition in city life. As Dovey (2011) and McFarlane (2011b) explain, this character of fluidity and disruption is what differentiates the concept of assemblage from the concept of 'network'. Although both concepts have certain similarities, they describe different modes of interactions. While in a network the relationships between the different elements have a fixed nature, in an assemblage, the relationships are constantly changing. For this reason, they find more appropriate to understand the city as an assemblage rather than as a network of relationships.

Assemblage has become quite useful to describe the city, its complexity and how multiple human and non-human actors overlap in the urban space (see Amin, 2008, 2010;

McFarlane 2011a, 2011b). As McFarlane (2011b: 652) explains, assemblage does not consider the different aspects of the city separately—cultural, social, political, spatial, material, economical—but seeks to study how they interact to generate certain kinds of urban situations. He adds that assemblage also attempts to understand why and how these relationships take place in order to propose innovative ways of arranging things differently that produce alternative relationships and urban situations. This is what authors such as McFarlane and Brenner call the “disjuncture between the actual and the possible” (Brenner, 2009: 203)—how the city is and how it could be—. For addressing this disjuncture, assemblage has been used in critical urbanism to describe the relationships of power in the city with the aim of looking for alternative kinds of urbanism that provide with possibilities of circumventing the different modes of domination in the city.

Critical urbanism has been generally used to reference the post-1968 leftist and Marxists urban thinkers such as Lefebvre (Brenner, 2009: 198). As explained in the previous chapter, this body of thought emerges in the same socio-political context as Sennett’s book *The Uses of Disorder*. These urban scholars emphasize “the politically and ideologically mediated, socially contested and therefore malleable character of urban space” (Brenner, 2009: 198).

Critical urbanism studies the relationship between the urban space and practices of power with the aim of proposing alternative and radical forms of urbanism. Dovey explains this task of critical urbanism of looking for new assemblages. He introduces certain ideas that make his position more useful for achieving the objectives of this thesis than Brenner’s definition of critical urbanism, which focuses on the macro-scale aspects of political economy (see Brenner, 2009 and Dovey, 2011). Dovey introduces two ideas that enrich

the critical urban discourse: he introduces the idea of power as *capacity* (my emphasis) rather than power as oppression (Dovey, 2011: 349). This positive understanding of power involves thinking about possibilities of change in the micro-scale that can have a certain impact at the macro-scale. This leads to the second idea that he introduces. He argues that the city as an assemblage is multi-scalar. He calls for looking not only at the macro-scale but also at the micro-scale assemblages in the city, arguing that the sum of small-scale changes in the city can have a great impact (Dovey, 2011: 349). This multi-scalar understanding of the city as an assemblage means that urban design transformations can propose new ways of arranging things and provoke new assemblages that can contribute to the emergence of social interaction and the unplanned use of the public space. This chapter will address how to provoke these urban design transformations through the processes of disassembling, assembling and reassembling.

3.2 Readings of assemblage in critical urbanism that address Sennett's uses of disorder

For addressing the hypothesis presented at the end of the previous chapter and proposing *design concepts* derived from assemblage theory that propose certain “planned” urban design interventions that encourage the *unplanned* use of the public realm, it is necessary first to identify which readings of assemblage thinking in critical urbanism can address the different kinds of disorder proposed by Sennett: social interaction, tolerance towards difference and unknown situations, and the unexpected use of the public space.

This epigraph will identify three readings of assemblage thinking in critical urbanism—‘sociomaterial symbiosis’, ‘uncertainty’ and ‘disassembly’—that address different kinds of urban disorder proposed by Sennett in his earlier and later works. The design concepts proposed in the following epigraph will come out from these readings of assemblage.

The first reading of assemblage in critical urbanism that can be useful to propose design concepts that encourage certain uses of disorder involves understanding that it is the assemblage of both social and material agents what produces cities, as McFarlane (2011a: 215) argues. This means understanding the interactions and relations of dependency that take place between the different agents of the system as a ‘sociomaterial symbiosis’. This body of thought within assemblage thinking emphasize the active role of material elements in the assemblages. These material elements can include, among other things, urban infrastructure, spatial configurations, vegetation, and other physical and material features of the built environment. McFarlane (2011a: 215), referencing Bennett (2010:

20), also argues that these material elements are not stable objects, but are constantly changing depending on the different relationships within the assemblage. In this way, “urban materials function not simply as objects but as processes that are put to work in various ways” (McFarlane, 2011a: 218). This focus on materiality builds on a post-humanist or transhumanist account of the public space, which has been also proposed by Amin both in his work with Thrift and in his own work (see Amin and Thrift, 2002; Amin, 2008, 2010). Amin (2008, 2010) explains that the production of public culture does not come just from the relationship between people within the public space, but also comes from the relationship between human and non-human actors. He argues that material elements such as urban infrastructure can have “cultural resonance” (2010: 3) and shape the way people relate to each other in cities. The previous chapter already explained the affinities between Sennett’s work and this body of thought. As explained at the end of the second chapter, Sennett, in his later work on the relationship between the visual and the social, explains that the consciousness and contemplation of material things can influence the way people see each other in cities. Considering how urban design interventions on the public space of the neighbourhoods under study may ‘assemble’ to the citizens—and how these sociomaterial assemblages may be constantly changing—is vital for achieving the reconstruction of the public realm as a place for social interaction, spontaneity and urban life.

Secondly, assemblage thinking connotes ‘uncertainty’. As McFarlane explains, “(r)ather than focusing on cities as resultant formations, assemblage thinking is interested in emergence and process, and multiple temporalities and possibilities” (McFarlane, 2011a: 206). This changing nature of assemblage is implicit since its conceptualization by Deleuze and Guattari and has been taken to the body of thought of critical urban theory

to explain the fluidity and adaptability of cities. This reading of assemblage addresses Sennett's interest on indeterminacy, on ambiguity versus definition that he proposes in his early work (Sennett, 1970) and in recent essays that suggest building the public space as a process (Sennett, 2007, 2008a). In critical urban theory, the spontaneity that emerge from the sociomaterial assemblages in the city has been explained through the description of the processes that take place in informal settlements by authors such as McFarlane (2011b), Simone (2011) and Dovey (2011). The self-generation of certain urban processes that take place on places of scarcity such as the favelas in Brazil or the slums in Global South cities are good examples of how slack and necessity can give rise to improvised sociomaterial assemblages. However, since the situation that this thesis is studying is different—the lack of urban life in social housing neighbourhoods, where over-determination hinders the spontaneous use of the public space—, this characteristic of assemblage will not be used to describe urban assemblages, but to propose interventions that encourage the unplanned use of the public space, to propose reconstructing a public realm rich in functional capacities and with a great potential of generating assemblages.

Thirdly, a further reading of assemblage that can contribute to the notion of urban disorder is that of 'disassembly', which is an extension of the concept of assemblage itself. Graham and Thrift (2007: 7) argue that social theory has focused in the study of assemblage while it has given less attention to the notion of 'disassembly' and disconnections. The importance of the disconnections is present in the conceptualization of assemblage since its origin. Deleuze emphasises the importance of this points of disconnection when he argues that "(t)here is no diagram that not also include, beside the points which it connects up, certain relatively free or unbound points, points of creativity, change and resistance" (Amin and Thrift, 2002: 108, quoting Deleuze, 1986: 44). Graham and

Thrift—although they do not quote explicitly Deleuze’s statement—take this idea to the urban infrastructure. They argue that failure and disconnections are key to the construction and reconstruction of infrastructures that can be constantly upgraded. According to them, “disconnection produces learning, adaptation and improvisation” (Graham and Thrift, 2007: 5). The essence of their paper “Out of Order” is understanding failure as a natural condition of the urban infrastructure, which can be taken beyond that and understand failure as a natural condition of the city. This has a direct link to Sennett’s understanding of disorder, of a public space that it is not completely designed, which allows certain disconnections that permit improvisation. The following epigraph will attempt to extract design concepts from this notion of disassembly. It will take Graham and Thrift’s account of urban infrastructure to the public space, which can be considered a piece of urban infrastructure. As the title of this thesis suggests, understanding the public space as an urban infrastructure that enables certain positive uses of disorder in city life the key for developing the strategies for intervention.

3.3 Concepts for designing the uses of disorder: assemblage and disassembly

This chapter has identified three readings of assemblage that address different uses of disorder proposed by Sennett: how sociomaterial assemblages can build a public space that encourage tolerance towards “the other” and social interaction, the virtues of uncertainty and allowing the emergence of non-planned activities, and how leaving disconnections in the design of the public realm can make the public space more susceptible to adaptations and to be upgraded.

From these findings, and building on the reflections of the referenced authors (Amin and Thrift, 2002; Amin, 2008, 2010; Dovey, 2011; Graham and Thrift, 2007; McFarlane, 2011a, 2011b; Simone, 2011), this epigraph will identify two sets of design concepts that use assemblage and disassembly as tools for proposing uses of disorder in the public spaces under study. These concepts will use assemblage to *describe* certain urban situations where these interactions take place in order to *propose* how to encourage these assemblages in the public spaces under study in the following chapter. These two sets of concepts will be the basis on which the strategies for interventions proposed at the end of this thesis will be built.

The first set of concepts will build on the first two readings of assemblage presented: the sociomaterial nature of the urban assemblages and their character of uncertainty. The second set of concepts will build on the third reading presented: the disassembly and the disconnections. According to this division, this epigraph will classify the concepts

between those that respond to the notion of 'assemblage' and those that respond to the notion of 'disassembly'. However, the design concepts presented here are interwoven: they may overlap and even produce 'assemblages' between them to provoke the desired social interaction and improvisation in the public space.

3.3.1 Assemblage

For proposing design concepts from the explained readings of assemblage, it is necessary to go back to the analysis of the public space of social housing neighbourhoods developed in the first chapter. As shown in the analysis, the construction of these neighbourhoods and the subsequent transformations that have taken place in their public space until today have been directed towards the over-determination of functions and uses of the public space. The result has been that many of the open spaces of the neighbourhood do not encourage the spontaneous use of the public space and do not support sociability.

Assemblage can be the key to understanding the kind of associations of human and non-human agents with these public spaces that add the cultural expression they currently lack, encouraging the specific kinds of disorder this thesis seeks to achieve. As explained, assemblage thinking focuses in the interaction between the different elements rather than in the resultant whole. This reading of assemblage is useful to rethink these rigid urban spaces, which were conceived as rationally-finished whole structures. The city as an assemblage contrasts with the Athens Charter conception of the city as a machine where every function is rationally distributed. In contrast, assemblage theory is interested in the process and how different situations emerge in the city (McFarlane, 2011a: 206).

Building on the explained readings of assemblage, this section will propose three design concepts—‘reassembling’, ‘convergence of diversity’, and ‘complex connections’—that propose urban assemblages that encourage different uses of disorder in the public realm. ‘Reassembling’ will propose rearranging the different urban elements in unexpected and innovative ways that produce sociability and a certain interaction with the environment.

‘Convergence of diversity’ will propose creating an atmosphere of place where encountering difference prompts positive feelings. ‘Complex connections’ will look at the sociomaterial assemblages that encourage an informal use of the public space.

3.3.1.1 Reassembling

The concept of reassembling, when applied to intervening on the public spaces under study, is defined here as the capacity of the urban designer to identify the still-latent emergent processes in the public realm and to produce new and innovative ways of rearranging things in a way that will strengthen these processes and that will allow new associations and possibilities to take place. This concept addresses Sennett's proposal of introducing mutations in the neutral urban grid to make it expressive and provoke new situations. As shown in the previous chapter, Sennett (1990: 216-219) proposes using in visual design in the city certain techniques that have been used in art such as 'repetition' or 'simultaneity'.

This design concept builds on McFarlane's reflection on the "*process of reassembling*" in the city, which is to think "how urbanism might be produced otherwise, [...] how an alternative world might be assembled" (McFarlane, 2011a: 211, same emphasis). McFarlane's (2011a: 211, same emphasis) concern on "*making alterity*" builds in one of the principle of critical urbanism: that of thinking about the actual and the possible. As it has been explained when conceptualising the body of thought known as critical urban theory, one of the main tasks of critical thinking is to analyse the existing relations of power in order to think how they might be produced otherwise: to look for certain gaps in these hierarchies, to look and to build spaces for alterity which can produce different relations of power. Ultimately, it seeks to describe the city to look for alternatives. This means that it does not only have a descriptive aim, but it is also propositional.

Critical urban theory is generally directed towards influencing policy-making to build a more just society. The interest of this thesis in the concept of reassembling is not as much in its implication in policy-making but in its implication in urban design and in how to produce an alternative city through architectural interventions in the public space. Dovey argues that “design [...] is a process of assembling possibilities out of actualities”. He also argues that it “connects us with vision, image and imagination; it produces hope and is productive of desire” (Dovey, 2011: 350). He also states that it is the task of architects to experiment in the city (Dovey, 2011: 350, referencing Thrift 2011). This is what it is meant here when proposing reassembling as the capacity of urban designer to think about new ways of assembling things in the public space. Urban designers should use their skills to produce different ways of arranging the urban elements, ways that will surprise citizens and arouse their creativity.

This capacity for enabling urban transformation can produce the ‘mutations’ on the public spaces under study, which, as shown in the analysis in the first chapter, are disused and inexpressive. Reassembling the public spaces of social housing neighbourhoods involves looking at the existing processes that are taking place and proposing alterations in the public realm that will make it expressive.

This act of reassembling can be seen in how the notion of ‘assemblage’ has been used in art. The technique was first described by Jean Dubuffet in 1953 to describe “(a)rt form in which natural and manufactured, traditionally non-artistic, materials and *objets trouvés* are assembled into three-dimensional structures” (Cooper, 2009: n.p.). The term was brought to public in 1961 with the exhibition in the New York MOMA *The Art of Assemblage*, which included the work of Marcel Duchamp, Man Ray, and Pablo Picasso, among



Figure 3.2: Findikli stairs on twitter. Source: New York Times. Original Source: Twitter.

others. Assemblage as an art form has similarities with Deleuze and Guattari’s notion and with how it has been used in critical urbanism: according to Cooper, an assemblage, “(a)s much as by the materials used, it can be characterized by the way in which they are treated” (Cooper, 2009: n.p.). This idea connects with what this chapter is proposing for the public spaces under study: rearranging the urban elements in unexpected ways and attributing to them new functional capacities. This can be seen in the ready-mades of Duchamp and also in some of the works of Surrealist artists, who use the technique of juxtaposition to create distorted images of reality (Cooper, 2009: n.p.).

Urban art and Urban Guerrilla have also attempted to induce change in people’s perception through alterations in the public space. In certain occasions, urban art is full of political intention and activism, while in other occasions it just seeks for creating a more expressive public space. In any of the cases, the interesting thing about these actions is the effect that they produce in the citizens. A very recent example of an action with no initial political intention but that had a great socio-political impact was the action of painting a public stairway in different colours by a retired man in Istanbul. The author of the painting did it to make the public stairway more expressive and to “make people smile”. The colours of the rainbow were identified with the gays and lesbians collective, which produces two kinds of reactions: the government repainted back the stairway in grey, an act of repression that was widely denounced in the social networks and which produced a chain reaction that encourage people to paint many of the public spaces in colours, an action that made the government to rethink its repressive action and agree to paint it back in colour (Arsu and Mackey, 2013). What is fascinating about this action is that the very fact of painting a stairway in colours can produce certain sociomaterial assemblages between: a socio-political claim—the equal rights for gays and lesbians—, an particular situation

in the country after the Gezi Park protests, a material transformation of the public space, a government repressive attitude towards the action, the identification of the action with an act of solidarity and tolerance towards a vulnerable collective, and the use of technology to denounce repression and to promote a wider urban action of disobedience that change the urban landscape. This is a clear example of how reassembling the public space can suddenly include other human and non-human actors such as people, socio-political claims, technology and urban action.

Following Dovey's argument that architects have the task to think how the city might be assembled in a different way, the question now would be how to reach similar outputs as the urban guerrilla actions with urban design: how to apply the concepts of disassembling, assembling and reassembling to architecture without reducing the ideas to "formal images that feed cycles of architectural fashion" (Dovey, 2011: 350). The aim here is to study how to apply it to the public spaces under study, which have become obsolete and need certain mutations that bring some cultural expression in them.

A great example of the capacity of urban design to reassemble the public space and encourage citizenship and sociability is the process of transformation of Gillett Square in the London Borough of Hackney. Although it is not the case of a social housing neighbourhood, it is an open space that used to be a car park (figure 3.3) and which has been brought back to life. What it is interesting in this process is that design has had a very important role in transforming this space into a public realm where improvisation take place and where people interact with strangers. This process make pertinent one of the research questions of this thesis: Can design help to transform the public spaces of social housing neighbourhoods into places for social interaction and improvisation?



Figure 3.3: Gillett Square before regeneration. Source: Hawkins/Brown Website.

Figure 3.4: Reassembling Gillett Square: installing the kiosks in 1996. Source: Hawkins/Brown Website.

The process of bringing this place back to life started in the 1980s and it has been developed jointly by Hackney Co-operative Developments (HCD) and the London Borough of Hackney (LBH) (Hart, 2003: 238). HCD detected a lack of public realm in the area and saw that this derelict area could become a place for the citizens. For this purpose, they worked with the designers Hawkins/Brown in the process of turning this space into a public square. This necessity might not have been noticed by the citizens, who were using the vacant space as a car park. However, it was the act of reassembling the public realm that visualized this necessity of a place for social interaction.

The first act of reassembling was the refurbishment of the workspaces and the installation of the kiosks in 1996 (Hart, 2003: 238) (figure 3.4). The kiosks hosted local businesses, many of them run by Afro-Caribbean people from the area. The presence of the kiosks made people start congregating between the stalls and the car park. This made the need for public space evident, and the change all the more natural. The process continued with the design of the square, a collaboration process between HCD, LBH and the designers—the architectural practice Hawkins/Brown—. The design of the square was carried out with public consultation, but this alone would not have sufficed to achieve the vitality that the square has today. One of the keys of the success was reassembling this derelict space by introducing new material elements that provide with an urban surface that people can engage with. An urban infrastructure is provided in the form of kiosks for starting local businesses, an urban surface to develop activities and storage for temporary structures, equipment for sports and games such as table tennis and many other urban ‘props’ that can be arranged in different ways by the citizens. In this way, the square is assembled and reassembled everyday for different purposes.

When applying this idea to the public spaces of social housing neighbourhoods, it is important to think how the public space might work otherwise. Instead of just identifying the problems, designers should propose new situations, new arrangements of the public realm. For doing so, the first step should be to identify the processes and activities that are already taking place in the area. Some of the could be already in the process of consolidating, such as the Ebony Horse Club next to Loughborough Estate mentioned in the first chapter, while others might be latent or ephemeral, such as the bicycle repair that takes place in front of the shops in Loughborough Estate, the sport activities that take place during the weekends in the sport pitch in Wyck Gardens near Loughborough Estate or the allotments for growing food. In Gascoyne Estate, some activities such as the Children Centre, the football club for teenagers and the ELFA fruit and veg affordable market have been also observed. The strategies, which will be developed in the following chapter, should aim to incorporate urban objects, new spatial configurations, mutations on the urban grid that make it expressive, potentiate the existing activities and encourage the emergence of new ones.



Figure 3.5: Gillett Square during the African Market, June 2013. Photograph by the author.



Figure 3.6: People playing table tennis in front of Vortex Jazz Club and Dalston Culture House in Gillett Square, April 2012. Photograph: Estrella Sendra.

3.3.1.2 Convergence of diversity

This concept addresses the relationship between the atmosphere of place and the way people perceive and interact with strangers. Looking at this reading of assemblage can help urban designers to build the “inclusive urban commons” (McFarlane, 2011a: 220) that McFarlane invokes. Amin (2008, 2010) has argued in several occasions that whether diversity is successful or not in an urban space depends not only on the ethics of interhuman encounter, but also on the assemblage between people and their environment. This means that in order to create spaces which provoke constructive conflicts, practitioners should think of public spaces that create an atmosphere of place where encountering difference prompts positive feelings, which addresses Sennett’s claim for public spaces that prepare adults to face unknown situations.

Diversity has been regarded in urban literature as one of the main factors for encouraging social interaction and inclusive public spaces. Sennett in *The Uses of Disorder* also argues that people, through the everyday experience of diversity, will become more tolerant. However, the simple idea of throwing diversity together will produce social interaction can lead to policies—which promote diversity without qualifying the public space—that spark social tension and antagonistic conflict which, in turn, contribute to the destruction of the public space, achieving the opposite of the desired result. Multiplicity must be qualified to achieve positive civic outcomes, since “simply throwing open spaces to mixed use and to all who wish to participate is to give sway to practices that may serve the interests of the powerful, the menacing and the intolerant” (Amin, 2008: 15). Amin explains that the virtues of diversity in public space are subject to certain spatial

arrangements: “open, crowded, diverse, incomplete, improvised, and disorderly or lightly regulated” (Amin, 2008: 10).

The question here is how to build these kinds of public spaces that encourage what Amin (2008: 18) defines as ‘conviviality’: the “everyday virtue of living with difference based on the direct experience of multiculturalism”. This kind of feeling is one that occurs in a street market or in a public square, where the milieu created by the diversity of people and materials, and the feeling of sharing a space for a common activity makes people feel at ease when interacting with strangers. Conviviality involves both people and the environment. According to Amin, it is a “form of solidarity with space” (Amin, 2008: 18). He claims the role of the physical public space and of urban infrastructure in arousing this civic feeling of conviviality. For producing this civic attitude towards strangers, this epigraph proposes two ways of intervening on the public space that build on the “politics of togetherness” that Amin (2010) explains: ‘multiplicity’ and ‘common ground’. Building on Amin’s proposals, this epigraph proposes creating spaces for the convergence of diversity in two possible ways that can act simultaneously: firstly, by creating enabling public spaces that allow the citizens to participate, which may result in tolerance towards difference, and secondly by proposing public spaces for a shared activity that provide the citizens with a sense of the commons. These two ways of qualifying public spaces for the convergence of diversity can be explained through two examples respectively: the explained case of Gillett Square in Hackney and Stockwell Skate Park in Lambeth.

Gillett Square is a good example of the “inclusive urban commons” that McFarlane talks about. It is a place where different people meet, interact and share a common ground. People live comfortably in the midst of diversity and interaction might or might not

happen depending on the situation. The place is frequented by young skaters, by local children that play with the available games, with people that stand around the kiosks, people playing table tennis and also people drinking in the benches. They all share the space and interact in certain occasions. This feeling of conviviality has been possible due to the sociomaterial processes that has taken place: the affordable kiosks have enabled that collectives that would not have been able to afford renting a place in the area have been able to develop their business in the square. This has allowed these people be a key part of the process and has made the place welcoming for everyone. This was combined with the location of the cultural centre Dalston Culture House and the jazz bar Vortex in the square, which attract other kind of public and add diversity to the square. The management of the square also plays a very important role in making it inclusive. Volunteers are in charge of opening the containers that lay in the side of the square and to take out the different props that enable activities such as table tennis, children games or film screenings. This has made this people be responsible of the place and has created a very important sense of responsibility of maintenance of the square.

Stockwell Skatepark is a very different case than Gillett Square, but it shows how a place can provide with a shared idea of the commons. It was built in next to Stockwell Park housing estate in the 1970s, in a piece of vacant land that typically surround council estates in London. While in other cases these open spaces lie empty or are used as a car park, this skatepark is teeming with activity. Since the beginning, it became very popular for the practice of skateboarding and BMX. Over time, the surface was deteriorated and recently, after many requests from local skateboarders, the skatepark has been resurfaced.



Although in this case the urban surface is provided for very specific activities—skateboarding and BMX—, it is actually used by a wide range of people. Among the people who use the space, it can be observed families with their children, teenagers and also more mature skateboarders. They go to the same place because they share a common activity, a common interest and a common space. This responds to one of the new forms of sociability that Amin and Thrift (2002: 47) talk about, one that comes from the common enthusiasm about a particular activity or subculture. It is a sociomaterial assemblage that encourages people to share a space: an assemblage between the urban surface, a common activity or sport, a device—the board or the bike—, the people and the place. Another important actor of this sociomaterial assemblage is the fact that the space is self-regulated: it is always open and entrance is free of charge and not controlled in any way. It is not only used by skateboarders, but also by children that play around it, neighbours that stand outside watching people practicing the sports or develop occasional activities around it. It has become very popular and has attracted skaters from outside the neighbourhood, thanks to the originality of its ramps. Currently, this space next to Stockwell Park estate is one of the most intensively used spaces of the area.

These two public spaces exemplify how a space can become a shared place for everyday life and for specific activities. In both cases, the urban surface becomes a ‘patterned ground’ (Amin, 2008) out of its use by the citizens, where the hierarchies of power and domination are faded, where citizens feel comfortable with the presence of strangers and where this sense of comfort can lead, in certain moments, to social interaction and other forms of citizenship. This is the agonistic public space that this thesis is aiming for.

Figure 3.7: Stockwell Skatepark, June 2013.
Photograph by the author.

3.3.1.3 Complex connections

This concept addresses how the planned and the unplanned city interact. It looks at how the urban surface and urban life interact to create unpredictable situations, as Simone puts it. Simone (2011: 360) explains how the formal and the informal city are assembled and fit together as surfaces that act simultaneously. For encouraging these complex connections and informal situations to happen, it is necessary to look at how to build a platform, an urban surface, which will add qualities to the space, supporting and encouraging people to think about different ways of using public space. This can help practitioners to design *planned* interventions that give rise to the *unpredictable* interactions championed by Sennett (1970: 98).

As it was shown when defining the notion of assemblage in critical urbanism, assemblage does not only deal with the separate part, but it particularly studies the interrelations. It is precisely the nature of these interrelations, of these complex connections, what can produce the unplanned use of the public space and encourage the emergence of process. Since assemblage thinking does not attribute a fixed function to the different elements but functional capacities depending on the associations in which they participate, this fact provides with an infinite number of possibilities of associations that enable limitless possible uses of the public realm.

Simone looks at how urban life and urban surfaces are assembled in such complex relationships. He explains that both urban layers—that which is planned, has fixed functions, responds to hierarchies of power and domination, and that which is not planned, is product of emergence and of the unpredictable acts of the citizens—act simultaneously and depend of each other. He emphasizes that both urban surfaces coexist. This means that the emergence

of non-planned situations from the complexity of the connections is possible, in part, due to the sociomaterial assemblage between certain policies, acts of domination, planned urban interventions, non-written laws or hidden orders in the public space, and by the very acts of the citizens.

Different authors have identified how these complex connections take place in informal settlements such as the slums or the favelas or in conflictive areas. In many of the cases, the emergence of these informal settlements in the margins of big cities are product of hierarchies of domination and the processes that take place within them are product of necessity or conflict. Simone (2011) sees this intersection between the formal and the informal in Jakarta market in Indonesia, where both layers work simultaneously and provoke certain types of hidden order. Koolhaas sees it when talking about Lagos in Nigeria, where he sees how the planned is also needed to let the unplanned happen and highlights the importance of the built infrastructure for the emergence of these informal processes (Koolhaas, van der Haak, 2002). Pullan (2006) also sees informal processes emerge from very conflictive situations occurring at Damascus Gate in Jerusalem, where urban developments interpreted as an act of domination of Israelis over Palestinians have actually resulted in a contested space where Palestinians develop small scale and non-violent subtle claims on the space by installing improvised market stalls.

These examples from the studies of Simone and Koolhaas of Global South cities—where citizens improvise out of necessity—or from Pullan’s study—where conflict transforms the urban scene into a contested space—do *not* aim to be a celebration of neglect, misery or extreme conflict. What these examples seek is to highlight how the planned and the unplanned city interact and how these complex connections can have unpredictable outputs. The question that this thesis needs to answer is how to encourage these connections to happen

with urban design interventions. How to provoke informality in these spaces with no urban life? The public spaces of the neighbourhoods under study are in a different situation from the informal settlements described by these authors. They are in a city like London and under different forms of order as described in the analysis of the first chapter. However, the character of border that they have can transform them into places of opportunity. Although they are not far from town centres, they are not as influenced by commercial and economic impulses as town centres are. The fact that they are in the margins of the town centre makes possible improvisation and the emergence of processes. Sennett (2011) has highlighted the effectiveness of intervening in the borders rather than in the centres, since it is in the borders where interaction takes place.

The two examples that are being used in this chapter can explain how a designed intervention can encourage unpredictable or informal uses of the public space. They are both interventions in the borders: Gillett Square is located close to a high street but it is in a side street, between workspaces, car parks, private houses and close to council estates. Stockwell Skatepark is located next to a council estate, which makes it having a border condition.

What it is interesting about the case of Gillett Square is that design has a very important role in encouraging informality. Normally, in the examples that different authors use to describe informality, the role of design is almost insignificant and the unplanned activities are product of other kind of assemblages. In contrast, in Gillett Square the provision of an urban surface, of urban infrastructure and of other material objects are some of the actors that enable new assemblages and prompt situations that may not have been planned by the designers. The conception of the square, the activities that take place in it, and the human relationships that occur there would not have been possible without a design intervention. This case illustrates

how the provision of an urban surface makes possible the intersection between urban life and the urban surface.

The case of Stockwell Skatepark is slightly different. In this case the surface is provided for a specific activity, so its main function is actually planned. However, this does not mean that the place has a fixed function, since it produces different kinds of assemblages, meetings, encounters, affinities between very different kinds of people and even other activities different from skateboarding and BMX next to it. The fact that a particular subculture or urban sport takes a space makes people stop around to watch it. It also produces other activities associated to this subculture such as certain kinds of music, which can produce other uses of the public space.

The design concepts explained here look at the importance of looking at the sociomaterial relationships and connections in order to propose new possibilities of arranging the public space. As explained, it is from these connections where the unplanned use of the public space can emerge. However, some of these processes may also come out from disconnections in the systems, points that are not designed or that are in the margin. This prompts the issue of creating spaces where not all the elements are rationally connected and function in their traditional position, allowing disconnections to happen by leaving the public space unfinished and adaptable to changes, as Sennett (2007, 2008) suggests in his recent essays. Consequently, it becomes necessary to introduce another set of concepts to explain how to incorporate certain types of disorder into the public spaces of the neighbourhoods under study: the set of concept that work on 'disassembly'.

3.3.2 Disassembly

Graham and Thrift (2007) argue about the importance of ‘disassembly’ and ‘disconnections’ for keeping the city in continuous state of adaptation and upgrade. They explain their argument through the repair and maintenance of urban infrastructure. As they explain, it is when a piece of infrastructure stops working when people notice about the existence of a hidden system that makes infrastructure work everyday. It is when there is a failure when infrastructures are repaired, improved and upgraded. For this reason, they argue that failures and disconnections are necessary for being constantly upgrading the urban infrastructure. They also argue that infrastructures that are built bit-by-bit are more susceptible to adaptation—which makes them more resilient—than those that are conceived as a whole.

Building on this reflection about the importance of repair and maintenance in the contemporary city, this thesis takes this discussion to the intervention in the public space of the neighbourhoods under study. As Sennett (2007) argues, the rigidity of modern urban environments have made the very difficult to adapt to changing conditions, a fact that makes the public space of these urban areas ‘brittle’. This rigidity has made it very difficult to intervene on them and to adapt it to new necessities, something which has facilitated their obsolescence and decay, contributing to their present disadvantaged situation. To reverse this character of modern urban environment, this thesis takes Graham and Thrift’s notion of urban infrastructure to the public spaces under study and proposes two design concepts derived from ‘disassembly’ that seek for the plasticity of the public realm, i.e. to improve the capacity of a public space to adapt to changeable conditions.

Plasticity is the opposite of brittle. It is another way of introducing certain kinds of disorder in these rigid urban environments by improving their capacity to adapt⁷⁹. Simone uses a similar term when talking about ‘fluidity’ to argue that cities need constant intervention while allowing “a spontaneous, undetermined, and unfixd character” (Simone, 2010: 11, referencing Osborne and Rose, 1999).

From these notions of ‘disassembly’ and ‘plasticity’, this epigraph proposes another two design concepts that introduce certain positive uses of disorder in the public spaces of the neighbourhoods under study: the first one in turning public spaces into ‘open systems’ (Sennett, 2007, 2008a)—which are built bit-by-bit, evolve daily and experience constant additions—and the second one is accepting ‘failure and disconnection’ as natural to the public realm and as an opportunity to upgrade.

⁷⁹ Organic theories in contemporary urban thinking have explained the complexity of the city by comparing its form and function with the formal and functional logic of living organisms (García Vázquez, 2004: 120). This thesis does not intend to provide more in-depth analysis of complexity theories, since this would serve as a distraction from its main objective. However, the term plasticity, used in neuroscience to describe the capacity of the brain to adapt in response to changes, is very useful in describing a public space that allows adaptation and continuously upgrades to changeable conditions.

3.3.2.1 *Open systems*

The neighbourhoods analysed in the first chapter were conceived as machines, as stable entities where everything is functionally arranged and works properly. The Athens Charter proposed the ‘functional city’, where the four functions of the city—live, work, transport and leisure—are fixed to specific places or zones. This conception of the city is what Sennett (2007, 2008a) defines as ‘closed system’. Comparing urban complexity to nature, he defines closed systems as being in “equilibrium”, while open systems are in “unstable evolution”. In modernist urban developments such as the social housing neighbourhoods under study, all functions are predetermined and there is no room for improvisation, for the uses of disorder that he claimed in his earlier book (Sennett, 1970). As it has been explained, this rigidity has facilitated the obsolescence of these urban areas, since they have not been able to adapt to the current social and cultural needs. To reverse this stagnation, Sennett proposes turning public spaces that work as ‘closed systems’ into ‘open systems’. He suggests that this transformation is possible through architecture and urban design: he proposes the provision of a ‘skeleton’ composed by adding different pieces, meaning the public space is actually built piece-by-piece, as Graham and Thrift suggest for urban infrastructure.

This idea of public space composed of the assemblage of little elements that can be substituted, re-plugged in other places and continuously modified according to how citizens use it can transform the rigid public spaces of the neighbourhoods under study into places that can be in continuous adaptation. This implies leaving the public space partially *unfinished*, which allow citizens to modulate it according to their needs and desires. Sennett’s argument suggests a direct relationship between public participation

and the physical public space and its design. The strategies that the following chapter will propose aim to understand participation beyond urban governance and to make it a physical experience that comes with the design of the public space. This experience is possible when the design is left unfinished.

When imagining how to apply this design concept to the public space of the neighbourhoods under study, designers must add elements to the public space that transform it into an open system that allows more additions. As Graham and Thrift (2007: 6) argue for urban infrastructure and for innovation in knowledge, the addition of “small increments” can produce “large changes”. This means that urban design is a pure act of assemblage of small interventions that interact between each other and which sum has effects on the urban life of the neighbourhood. Transforming the public space of such neighbourhoods in ‘open systems’ can be possible through rearranging their big open spaces and converting them into a “colonisable ground” (Sennett, 2008a: n.p.) where different elements can be added through time. The strategies developed in the following chapter will work on this concept.

The example that this chapter is using to illustrate the different design concepts, Gillett Square, is a good illustration of creating an open system through small additions and leaving the process open. The success of Gillett Square lies in its conception as a process. As it has been explained, the first steps taken—installing the kiosks with affordable rents for local business and refurbishing the workspaces—made evident the need of the public square. This made the urban transformation follow a step-by-step process that made the citizens part of it.

However, this initial process that has been carried on to achieve the construction of the square is not sufficient for keeping the space alive. The key for keeping the space in continuous use is that the process has been left open and non-finished. The urban design intervention has provided an urban surface and a set of temporary structures, equipment for sports, games, facilities, and different urban elements that are stored in containers that are managed by local volunteers. This very simple system makes possible to reinvent the use of the square everyday. It also allows different collectives and minorities to participate: groups of school children, old people, locals, young people from the area. This permits to develop *organized* activities such as markets or film screenings and other *improvised* activities such as skateboarding, table tennis or other kinds of meetings and encounters in the square.



Figure 3.8: Container for storage of structures, games and different elements for developing activities in the public space, April 2012. Photograph by Estrella Sendra.

Figure 3.9: Gillett Square while the screening of a documentary film, July 2013. Photograph by the author.

3.3.2.2 Failure and disconnections

As it was analysed in the first chapter, modernist projects based on the Athens Charter tried to keep everything under control through urban design. Nowadays, institutions still avoid uncertainty (Sennett, 2008a), feeling threatened by unpredictable activities that may emerge, and prefer projects where everything is precisely defined. However, contemporary urban thinking has experienced a shift that acknowledges failure as a condition of the city (García Vázquez, 2004: 134). Accepting failure and disconnection as natural conditions to the public realm implies seeing discontinuities as opportunities for upgrading the public space. Thus, urban interventions should not aim to remove the failures of the city, but to redirect them into something positive. Failure is what causes infrastructure to be constantly upgraded (Graham and Thrift, 2007). In the same way, failure in the public space should be seen as an opportunity to conceive things differently, to look for opportunities for upgrading and allowing uncertainty. This concept contributes to materialize the positive uses of disorder of Sennett addressing the following question: how can failure and disconnections can cause innovation and alternative uses of the public space in social housing neighbourhoods?

This epigraph identifies two positive uses of failure: firstly, failure as an opportunity to upgrade and improve the public space. Secondly, failure as a possibility to allow uncertainty and to provide urban spaces that are beyond the forces of domination in the city.

Identifying a failure in the urban public space is an opportunity to think about how it could work otherwise. This disjunctive between the actual and the possible is one of the main points of assemblage and critical urbanism. Graham and Thrift argues that infrastructure is a black box, a set of services of the city that people take for granted and do not pay

attention at how it works. They point out that it is only when a piece of infrastructure fails that this infrastructure is visualized and it can be repaired. They also argue that “(r)epair and maintenance does not have to mean exact restoration”, but it can also serve to think about how this infrastructure might work otherwise, to think it differently according to new conditions. Dovey argues that architects and urban designers are among those that have the task of thinking how the city might work differently. He also argues that, although they have gone wrong in many occasions, “the challenge is to get better” (Dovey, 2011: 350). Urban designers should assume that there is a possibility of going wrong. For overcoming this fear, they should make their interventions reversible and with possibilities of improving and adding other interventions to it.

When applying this idea to the public spaces of social housing neighbourhoods, instead of resorting to an all-too-easy criticism of modern architecture, which can lead to the total replacement of the neighbourhoods as it was explained in the first chapter, urban designers should think about how to redirect the errors. These interventions should work in rearranging, replacing and introducing new urban elements instead of a total substitution. They should allow disconnections, without trying to plan that everything is rationally connected and working.

The second positive reading of failure deals with allowing uncertainty and providing spaces that escape from the forces of power and domination in the city. Here the question would be how to build the “unbound points” and the “points of creativity” that Deleuze talks about. Amin and Thrift propose “providing space-times where practices of power do not reach, or are heavily contested” (Amin and Thrift, 2002). They also use the example of the failure in the urban infrastructure and talk about how to “negotiate the break downs”



Figure 3.10: Stockwell Skatepark, June 2013.
Photograph by the author.

(Amin and Thrift, 2002). Creating these spaces where uncertainty is possible is one of the main challenges that Sennett proposes in *The Uses of Disorder* and in more recent works. As it has been explained, the housing estates under study have a great potential for escaping the forces of domination. Their margin condition makes them an opportunity for urban designers to think how they could work in a different way. The strategies explained in the following chapter will work about how to create these non-regulated spaces.

The two examples used in this chapter can also explain the positive uses of failure exposed here. In the case of Gillett Square, identifying the lack of public spaces in the area was what made the different agents to think that this place could work differently and be upgraded. In the design of the square, it has also been important to leave some unbound points, realities that are not designed, which keep the place on the move and allow deviancy in the public space. However, the place is not totally freed to the forces of domination of the city. Certain interests are trying to remove deviancy from the public space. However, the interesting thing about this place is that despite these attempts of removing the non-wanted from the public space, the place is still resisting as a place where different kind of people can meet, and where conflicts do not necessarily lead to forms of violence.

Stockwell skatepark is also an example of these positive uses of unbound points. This urban surface, which has recently been repaired, is located in a vacant site between council housing. It has leaky and not well-defined margins, pieces of grass surrounding it that provide space for other activities outside the skatepark, for children playing around it and for people stopping and looking at the activity inside the skatepark. This non-delimited urban space and its non-regulated character make this facility an area that allows informality and where the forces of domination of the city are erased.

3.4 Conclusions in chapter.

This chapter has argued that assemblage thinking can be a toolkit to introduce the positive uses of disorder explained by Sennett in the public spaces of the social housing neighbourhoods under study.

Chapters two and three—‘From theory to practice I and II’—have explained which are these positive uses of disorder in the public space, which can be summed up in four: building meaningful places that arouse cultural expression in the public space, generating citizenship that prompt tolerance and sociability, creating productive atmospheres that encourage the emergence of unplanned activities, and building a flexible public space that can easily mutate and adapt. These positive uses of disorder address the specific objectives outlined in the introduction of this thesis.

For transforming the public spaces under study into meaningful places, the explained design concepts have addressed how to introduce mutations in the urban grid that make it expressive, which is one of Sennett’s (1990) proposal. For doing so, the concept ‘reassembling’ proposes rearranging the public space with existing elements, introducing new ones in a way that encourage people to be more active in public life.

Another challenge that brings Sennett’s notion of disorder is how to create spaces that encourage tolerance towards difference and generate sociability. The design concept ‘convergence of diversity’ have proposed to build enabling public spaces that allow all the citizens—including the minorities—to participate and to provide spaces to develop

shared activities that give people a sense of the commons. A further proposal has been to provide spaces that escape from the forces of control and domination in the city: non-regulated spaces that are in the margins and that are inclusive.

For converting the urban surface into a productive atmosphere, into a fertile ground where informality and improvisation take place, the design concept ‘complex connections’ has proposed to work on the sociomaterial associations between the planned and the unplanned city. The chapter has shown that for letting the unplanned happen, it is necessary to leave the public realm partially unfinished, with no fixed functions.

This notion of leaving the public realm unfinished brings the fourth use of disorder: building a flexible public realm that can constantly be upgraded, an idea that Sennett (2007, 2008a) proposes in his recent essays. The set of design concepts that respond to the notion of ‘disassembly’—‘open systems’ and ‘failure and disconnections’—have proposed to design the public realm as an addition of different elements that can be assembled, disassembled and reassembled. It has also shown that ‘failures’ in the public realm can be seen as opportunities to rethink it and upgrade it.

These four uses of disorder have been addressed through two sets of design concepts proposed in this chapter. However, they remain as conceptual guidelines, whereas the aim of this thesis is to propose urban design strategies. The next chapter will build on these conceptual guidelines to take them into architectural and urban design interventions.

INFRASTRUCTURES FOR DISORDER.

CHAPTER FOUR.

The first chapter of the thesis has analysed the problems of the public space in social housing neighbourhoods in London. It has been exposed that the public realm is barely used and does not motivate citizens to socialize and develop activities outdoor. The over-determination of functions has been seen as one of the factors that contribute to this lack of public life. This over-specification has its origin in the conception of these neighbourhoods in the post-war period, which followed the principles of the Functional City of the Athens Charter. As it has been exposed, the subsequent urban transformations—or lack of transformations—have contributed to this rigidity on the use of the public space. The chapter has identified certain aspects of the built environment that contribute to this lack of public life. These aspects deal with the spatial configuration and with the design and maintenance of the public realm. Addressing these factors will be of great significance when considering the strategies for intervention on the public realm.

The second chapter has exposed the approach that this thesis takes to the public space of social housing neighbourhoods. In opposition to their over-specification, this thesis proposes that certain kinds of disorder must be introduced in the design of the public space. Sennett introduced this notion of positive uses of disorder in 1970 as a reaction to modern architecture and urban planning. The chapter uses this approach to address the current situation of the neighbourhoods that Sennett criticized four decades ago. It exposes that, although the situation of these neighbourhoods may have changed, this approach is still pertinent since the urban transformations that have been carried out on them have contributed even more to over-determination and these urban areas still lack public life.

The third chapter has used assemblage thinking as a tool to materialize the notion of disorder into urban design strategies. Firstly, it has identified affinities between assemblage and urban disorder—emergence, associations, process, uncertainty, redirecting failure, functional capacity

instead of fixed function—. Secondly, it has proposed design concepts that will be useful to develop the urban design strategies.

Having identified the problems of the public space in social housing neighbourhoods, defined the positive uses of disorder as an approach for intervening in them and proposed concepts from assemblage thinking as design tools, the *objective* of this chapter is to *define* and *propose* strategies for intervention in the public space of social housing neighbourhoods that address the problems presented in the first chapter: lack of use and activities in the public space, the little possibility of improvisation and the fact that the physical environment does not encourage socializing in the public realm. Namely, the aim of this chapter is to address the second question of this thesis, which was posed in the introduction: Which urban design interventions can encourage urban life in the public realm of social housing neighbourhoods?

Once this thesis have exposed its approach to the problem of public space in social housing neighbourhoods, this research question brings forth a follow-up question: How to apply Sennett's notion of positive uses of disorder to architectural and urban design guidelines to intervene in the neighbourhoods under study?

However, the aim of this chapter is *not* to propose normative strategies that can be applied to any social housing neighbourhoods. In contrast, the aim is to propose guidelines, a method of approaching, an attitude towards urban design, that practitioners can take and modify depending on the context.

To achieve these objectives, the chapter will follow this methodology: firstly, it will develop a conceptual definition of the strategies, explaining the proposed notion of “infrastructure for

disorder” that gives title to this thesis. Secondly, it will apply this concept to the urban design practice. For doing so, it will translate the concept into an architectural language, using common terms from architecture: surface, section and process. Furthermore, it will use the case studies of the neighbourhoods analysed in the first chapter to illustrate the strategies.

However, the aim of using these case studies is not to propose a regeneration project to each area, but to illustrate how these strategies could come to the ground. Developing a regeneration project would involve a more complex process and a greater involvement with the neighbours, which is not in the scope of this thesis⁸⁰. What this thesis has done is just a hypothesis based on the analysis carried on in the first chapter, on the theoretical approach developed in the second chapter and on the design tools of the third chapter. This hypothetical proposal⁸¹ has been supported by the fieldwork carried in 2009⁸² and in 2013⁸³. Since this is just a hypothesis and it has not been implemented, it cannot provide certainty that it would certainly work. The proposals assume their unpredictable condition. They attempt to build an imaginary place that illustrates how these neighbourhoods could be.

80 Developing a regeneration process requires an involvement of the residents, different urban actors, and stakeholders. This could be only done with a real commission or an actual intention to propose a regeneration process to the authorities. Involving the residents into a regeneration project just for academic purposes can create false expectations and make the residents reluctant to participate in possible future projects.

81 The hypothetical proposal was developed for the Master’s thesis project at the MArch Urban Design, The Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London, 2008/2009.

82 Fieldwork carried on for the MArch Urban Design, The Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London. Nine site visits to Loughborough Estate between January and June 2009.

83 Fieldwork carried on during a research residency as Visiting PhD Student at The Bartlett School of Graduate Studies, University College London. Four site visits to Loughborough Estate between May and June 2013 and seven site visits to Gascoyne 2 Estate between April and August 2013.

4.1 Conceptual definition of infrastructure for disorder

The strategies that this thesis proposes to address the problem of public space in social housing neighbourhoods are defined as ‘infrastructures for disorder’: urban design interventions in the public space of social housing neighbourhoods that *create conditions* for the unplanned use of the public realm and encourage social interaction.

They respond to the problems of the public space in social housing neighbourhoods presented on the first chapter by proposing urban design strategies that create conditions for the positive uses of the disorder in the public realm that Sennett describes. They take this theoretical proposal to practice and to the current situation of the housing estates. Furthermore, they use assemblage thinking and the design concept presented to seek for these uses of disorder: looking at how to design connections, create additions, mutations and relations.

The interventions presented here are proposed from the standpoint of urban design: a discipline that conciliates architecture and urban planning and acknowledges many other fields of knowledge related to urban studies—such as geography, environmental sciences, sociology, culture studies and political economy—to shape urban places and propose alternative ways of how the physical environment of the city could be⁸⁴.

Thinking of urban design as an assemblage means that it should provide functional capabilities rather than fixed functions. It should propose initial conditions as an open and

84 See the definition of ‘urban design’ by Larice and MacDonald (2013).

flexible system by introducing urban elements that establish patterns of occupation of the public space while allowing citizens to use it in an unpredictable way. This flexibility can allow a great number of possibilities and encourage citizens to be more active in public life. In this way, the design of the public realm will be a result of community actions and negotiations, as Sennett (1970: 142) suggests. These negotiations may cause discussion, arguments and possibly some conflicts. But this could be interpreted in a positive way, as it will create social interaction in public spaces that currently have no urban life.

For explaining in detail the phrase ‘infrastructure for disorder’, this thesis will explain what it means by each of the two terms that compose the phrase: ‘infrastructure’ and ‘disorder’.

4.1.1 Infrastructure

Since the term ‘infrastructure’ has been used in different ways by diverse disciplines—such as engineering, urban planning, political economy, and geography—it is necessary to clarify here what is meant by ‘infrastructure’.

The definition of infrastructure here must not be misunderstood with the Marxist definition of ‘infrastructure’ and ‘superstructure’, which has been extensively used in political economy and which understands ‘infrastructure’ as the forces and relationships of production—divisions of labour—, which conditions the superstructure—culture, society—. The approach this thesis proposes is not from the macro-aspects of political economy, but from the standpoint of urban design, understanding the public space as a physical infrastructure that *create conditions* and *provides possibilities*.

The use of the term infrastructure here describes interventions that attempt to be a point of departure for a continuous and open process. They are initial interventions for reactivating obsolete public spaces. Urban design is understood here as the provision of an urban infrastructure in the form of a flexible system that can be occupied freely.

These initial conditions are an assemblage of local interventions—and in some cases also interventions at the metropolitan scale—that work together to improve sociability in the public space. These pieces of infrastructure work together connected—not as isolated elements or as a whole intervention—: they are an addition of interventions that interact between each other and form part of a larger system that keeps changing with new additions and new relationships.

These ‘associative regime’⁸⁵ of the pieces of infrastructure establish a close relationship between assemblage thinking and the idea of infrastructure exposed here. As Graham and Thrift (2007) suggest, this thesis proposes an infrastructure made out of addition of pieces, with its connections and disconnections, which is in continuous repair and maintenance, and which is flexible and easy to upgrade.

In the strategies proposed here, ‘infrastructure’ is what makes ‘disorder’ possible. The proposed infrastructures here will use the design concepts explained in the third chapter: reassembling, convergence of diversity, complex connections, open system, and failure and disconnections.

85 Deleuze and Guattari (1972) describe that their proposed ‘Desiring Machines’ work with an ‘associative regime’.

4.1.2 Disorder

The second chapter has already explained how this thesis takes the notion of disorder: it has explained the context in which Sennett introduced the idea, the evolution of this notion in his work, and how it can be an approach to the *current* situation of the public space of social housing neighbourhoods. Since this has already been explained in the second chapter, there is no need to go much deeper on this. However, it can be useful to outline the positive uses of disorder concluded from the reflection on the second and third chapter of the thesis. As the conclusions in chapter three have exposed, these can be grouped in four⁸⁶:

1. Making the public space more expressive: introduce mutations on the urban grid (Sennett, 1990) that arouse the creativity of the citizens. Improve the expressivity of the public realm in a way that encourages people to stay in and not just to pass through.
2. Spontaneity and informality: provide an urban field that encourages the emergence on non-planned activities.
3. Adaptability and resilience: ‘disorder’ as *capacity* to adapt and mutate according to changing needs in time.
4. Atmosphere of tolerance towards difference and the unknown: building an urban environment that enables social interaction, negotiations and agonistic conflicts. Providing common places where people can share interests and experiences.

86 These four uses of disorder address the specific objectives of the thesis, outlined in the introduction.

4.2 Urban design strategies

Having defined the concept of infrastructure for disorder, the aim of this epigraph is address the question: How to re-design the public space of such neighbourhoods to encourage public life and sociability in their streets? To address this question, the epigraph will propose architectural materializations of the concept of infrastructure for disorder.

For presenting the results, this section of the thesis will use common terms from the architectural practice: surface, section and process. Through these three group of strategies, this epigraph propose urban design interventions that provoke the kinds of associations that give rise to the explained positive uses of disorder.

Each of them proposes assemblages and rethinking the public space in three different levels or dimensions. Furthermore, each of them proposes a shift from the way of conceiving the city inherited from modernism to the contemporary urban praxis⁸⁷, which is influenced by critical urbanism and builds on the theoretical approach explained in chapters two and three. Ultimately, each of them address from different perspectives Sennett's suggestion for architects to build the indeterminate, the incomplete form.

The strategies on the surface will explore the physical dimension of the public space. They will propose interventions on the materiality of the public space that influence

87 Tejedor Cabrera and Linares Gómez del Pulgar (2010) explain the shift on conceiving the architectural project from modernism to the contemporary situation throw seven pair of opposite concepts: "process vs. space, material vs. language, system vs. object, icon vs. function, landscape vs. place, environment vs. tectonic, and communication vs. representation".

the way human bodies perceive the environment. These strategies represent the shift from the interest on the architectural form and on a universal language characteristic of modern architecture to the interest on the expressivity of the materiality (Tejedor Cabrera and Linares Gómez del Pulgar, 2010) of the urban surfaces, which is characteristic of contemporary urban design. This conception of the physical city as a bodily experience has been always present in Sennett's (1994) work. He proposes building a physical environment that is changing and not stable. For building public spaces where functions are not fixed and predetermined, Sennett (2008a) proposes building the public space as an addition of interventions that can be constantly adapted. The strategies on the surface will look at the how to build these assemblages on the horizontal level.

The set of strategies on the section, in contrast, explore the subjective dimension of the space. The concept of section itself is a mental construction, an interpretation of the reality. This set of strategies permits proposing assemblages that cannot be formalized by just considering the horizontal level. The strategies on the section allow proposing associations on the three dimensions of space. This permits relating the physical and the cultural environment, as authors such as Gordon Cullen (1961) and Kevin Lynch (1960) proposed in their texts. Their books supposed a shift from the interest on the individual buildings to the interest in the urban landscape, in the resultant space between buildings. Sennett (2007) highlights that architects should pay attention to design the experience of the passage, a concept that the strategies on the section will attempt to formalize.

Finally, the chapter will present a set of strategies which is embedded in the other two and which has also been implicit when explaining assemblage thinking and the concept of infrastructure: process. This set of strategies introduces a further dimension: that of

time. It also explores the functional dimension of the public space. The program of the public space is defined by a process and not by fixed functions, as it has been discussed in chapters two and three. Sennett, when he proposes “development narratives”, highlights the importance of understanding “what elements should happen first and what the consequences of this initial move will be” (Sennett, 2007, p. 296). He gives particular importance to the ‘beginning’ (Sennett, 1990: 196), to establish which are these initial conditions that encourage the beginning of a narrative that can change and mutate in different directions.

4.2.1 Surface

The set of surface strategies proposes assemblages at the horizontal level: how the physical environments, the rhythms, the activities and the people assemble in the urban surface. Namely, this set of strategies explores how to create conditions for enabling the ‘complex connections’ explained in the third chapter, which can provoke the emergence of the unplanned.

This set of strategies explores the capacity of the urban surface—its materiality, its characteristics, its infrastructure, its possibilities—to connect and to encourage the emergence of activities and of social relationships. It particularly looks at how to create these initial conditions through the materiality of the physical urban surface. As authors such as Wall (1999) and Tejedor Cabrera and Linares Gómez del Pulgar (2010) have identified, in contemporary architecture and urban design, there is a growing interest towards the materiality of the urban surfaces—skins, membranes, pavement—, its expressivity and its enabling capacity. This approach contrast with that of modern architecture, which trusted that a particular architectural language and form could address social problems such as housing shortage.

The surface strategies also propose a more intense interaction between the urban materiality and humans. It suggests a more active role of the physical environment, which can enable sociomaterial assemblages exposed in chapter three. Thus, the surface strategies propose the urban environment as a bodily experience, as Sennett proposes in his work. In *Flesh and Stone*, Sennett denounces the “sensory deprivation” (Sennett, 1994) of the modern city. Throughout much of his work, he proposes a more intense relationship with the built

environment. His reflection on the relationship between “the I and the It” (Sennett, 1990: 205), which as been explained in chapter two, supports the idea that the urban surface can induce certain behaviour towards the environment.

The strategies on the surface propose a more active role of the physical environment as well as a changing and mutable condition. As Wall states, “the space of form is replaced by the space of events in time” (Wall, 1999). This idea contrast with the stable and inert urban environment that characterizes the public spaces under study, as the analysis shows in chapter one.

For achieving this active, enabling and changing condition of the physical environment, the surface strategies propose intervening on two scales. These two proposed scales of intervention have a close relationship with the two scales of analysis exposed in the first chapter: “spatial configuration” and “design and maintenance”:

- * Surface as connective materiality: interventions on the urban fabric that work on the relationship between the neighbourhood and the surrounding areas, creating conditions for urban life.
- * Surface as enabling materiality: qualifying these connections for supporting the emergence of activities, facilitating sociability and making more expressive and attractive the public realm in a way that encourages people to stay in it and not just to pass through it.

4.2.1.1 Surface as connective materiality

Surface strategies that connect or enhance connections between the neighbourhoods under study and certain surrounding urban areas. The aim of these strategies is to include in urban life neighbourhoods that have weak connections with their surroundings, as it is the case of the ones analysed in the first chapter. This analysis has observed that the neighbourhoods are not far in walking distance from the closer town centre. However, the weak connections, certain urban barriers and certain aspects of their spatial configuration isolate the neighbourhoods.

Hanson, when explaining the urban transformations on the urban form in the 20th century, states that the urban fabric inherited from the 19th century is “(c)ontinuous (...), open, shallow, expanding, integrating and overlapping”, while the urban space resulting of the construction of housing estates is “(f)ragmented (..), bounded, deep, enclosed, segregating and hierarchical” (Hanson, 2000: 100).

For tackling this urban segregation, Sennett highlights the importance of intervening in the margins to connect urban areas and create intermediate spaces for social and cultural exchange between areas that were previously isolated from each other. As it has been explained, he proposes turning boundaries into permeable borders, which is something that the surface strategies attempt to materialize.

Thus, the *surface as connective materiality* seeks to recover the continuity of the urban fabric and to turn the place into a border⁸⁸ that connects and encourages social and cultural exchange between the neighbourhood and other parts of the city. For achieving these objectives, the strategies proposed are:

- * Identifying potential connections.
- * Continuity and diversity.
- * Functional capacity of the connection.

Identifying potential connections: the analysis of the spatial configuration of the neighbourhoods exposed in the first chapter can help identifying the potential streets or urban spaces that can become borders or places for connection, association and exchange. As it was explained in the analysis, using Space Syntax logic can be very helpful to understand how the place relates to its surrounding, how the inner spaces of the neighbourhoods relate to each other. It can also help to identify which streets can work as a cross-path use and in which urban space there is more probability of co-presence. Moreover, using some of its measurements such as “through-movement potential”⁸⁹ can identify in which spaces there is more probability that people pass through it when going from any point to any other point in the area (see figures 1.57 and 1.60). However, the point here is not to deepen on which Space Syntax measurements can be more appropriated for identifying the potential connections, but to use their logic to develop a qualitative analysis of the site. Taking their logic into account, the qualitative analysis of

88 See Sennett’s (2011) comparison between boundaries and borders, explained in the second chapter.

89 As explained in Chapter One, according to Hillier and Vaughan (2007: 214), through-movement potential “assesses the degree to which each space lies on the simplest or shortest path between all pairs of spaces in the system”.



- First choice route to go from Loughborough Estate to Brixton Town Centre
- - Second choice route to go from Loughborough Estate to Brixton Town Centre
- Main traffic roads
- Secondary traffic roads
- Shortcut to avoid traffic lights

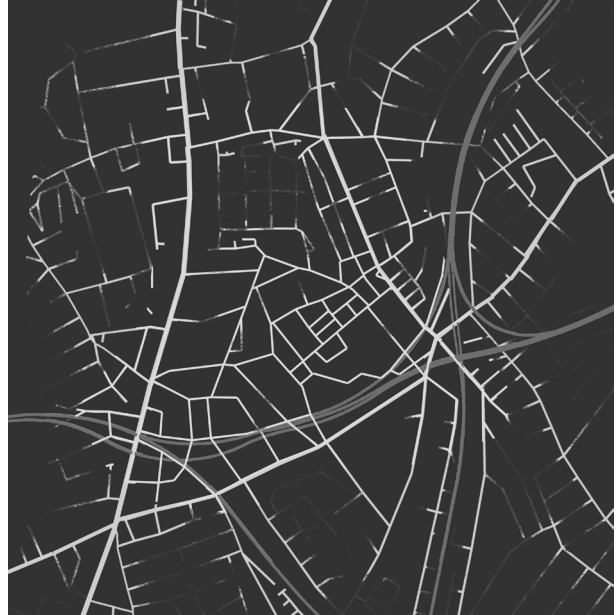
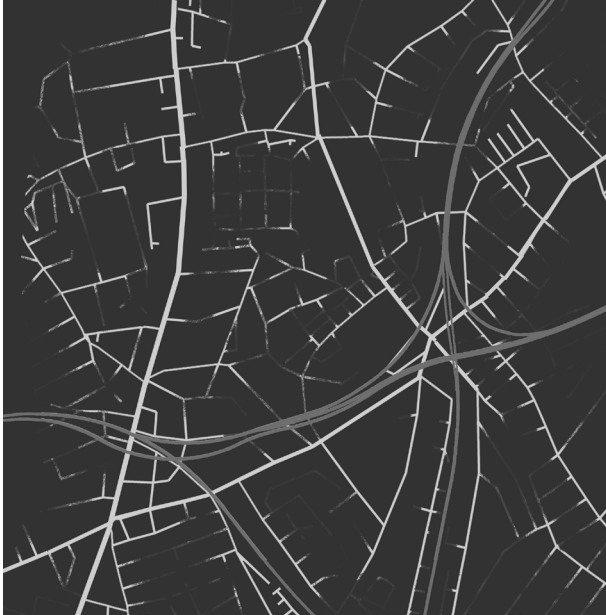
Figure 4.1: Qualitative analysis of the potential connections based on the observations carried on the site visits: pedestrian movements from Loughborough Estate to Brixton Town Centre and traffic analysis. Elaborated by the author from Ordnance Survey Maps © Crown Copyright/database right 2014. An Ordnance Survey/EDINA supplied service.

Barrington Road is the street that residents from Loughborough Estate normally use when walking to Brixton centre (conclusions from observations, 2009). At the same time, this street is used by cars as a shortcut to avoid traffic lights on Loughborough Junction, where it connects with Coldharbour Lane. The street is also used for parking. As it is not considered an internal street of the estate, all cars are allowed to park there and occupy a large proportion of the public realm surface (this situation corresponds to the fieldwork developed in 2009). From the analysis carried out, it can be deduced that Barrington Road is highly suitable for establishing connections between the neighbourhood and Brixton Town Centre. The street can be redefined by pedestrianizing it and converting it into a social field where anything can happen, introducing new activities.

the area must look, firstly, at the relationship between the social and the spatial structure to identify any possible physical devices that provoke isolation. Secondly, It must also look at how the place works and the human habits: where are the main pedestrian fluxes, where are the main points of destination, where do people stop and spend some time, how often and when do outsiders enter the area. Thirdly, it must look at the accessibility to public services such as public transport, public infrastructure, public parks and places where neighbours can meet with people from outside the neighbourhood. Furthermore, it must also look at how the space between buildings is distributed: which part of it is for pedestrians, traffic, car-park, and for the enjoyment of the citizens.

Carrying on this qualitative analysis can help to identify eroded places that may have lost their character of continuous and constituted street due to the succession of urban transformations, but that have a strong potential for reverting this process and recovering their character. A better definition of the continuity of the street and turning the space between buildings into meaningful public spaces can contribute to turn the urban surface into a place for stay in and spend time, not only to pass through it. This can be done by opening new streets, but not necessarily. It can also be done by enhancing existing connections and increasing the potential to host activities through surface operations.

Continuity and diversity: one of the surface operations can be seeking for a combination of continuity and differentiation. Borja and Muxí (2013) clarify that continuity does not necessarily mean homogeneity. They also highlight the virtues of introducing differentiating elements that can help orientating on the city. Sennett (1990) also proposes introducing alterations on the non-expressive urban grid, which can introduce some character and expressivity on the public realm. Thus, the surface strategies must



provide a continuous and diverse experience when going from one place to another and when entering the neighbourhood. This would make more attractive the path towards the neighbourhood and make it more inviting.

Functional capacity of the connections: connecting does not just mean opening a street that link physically two points of the city. It means creating a succession of events that encourage people to go and stay in the area. For doing so, it is necessary to qualify the connection for this succession of activities. Thus, the *surface as connective materiality* is not just a mere intervention in the urban fabric, it also should create conditions for the emergence of activities in the public space. This takes to the other surface strategy, which is necessary for making these connections effective: *surface as enabling materiality*.

Figure 4.2: Surface as connective materiality. Loughborough Estate. Elaborated by the author from axial maps provided by Space Syntax Ltd.

Barrington Road can be converted into a stronger spine that connects Brixton Town Centre and Loughborough Junction, currently two centres disconnected from each other—the only direct connection is Coldharbour Lane—. This intervention should go together with opening streets at the north of Brixton Town Centre. This would require the elimination of some urban barriers and blank walls. Repairing Brixton's urban grid can help to integrate the neighbourhood into Brixton's urban life. However, this intervention is necessary but insufficient, and must be complemented with a redefinition of the public realm. The public space of Barrington Road must be redesigned in a way that encourages the citizens to use it.

4.2.1.2 Surface as enabling materiality

This strategy seeks to go beyond the connective function of the surface. It aims to turn the connective materiality into a public space where people stay and develop activities.

The capacity of the urban surface to host activities is influenced by the design and maintenance of the public realm, as the analysis developed in the first chapter has argued. This analysis has identified that currently, due to the evolution of the public space and the subsequent urban transformations, the urban surface of the neighbourhoods under study does not encourage people to stay and to develop activities in there.

In response to this restrictive and uninviting public realm, this thesis proposes the provision of an infrastructure in the form of an equipped platform that increases the capacity of the urban surface for supporting activities. This means designing an active surface, as Alex Wall (1999) puts it, that enables the complex connections described in chapter three, which allows people assembling to the urban surface and establishing a closer relationship to the urban environment, and which encourage social relationships in the public space.

The design of this surface is quite a challenge for urban designers. Koolhaas has exposed the difficult task of urban designers to anticipate the demands of changing programs and to design for uncertainty (Ducatez, 2005, referencing Koolhaas 1988). Constructing this flexible urban surface which is capable to adapt to changing demands implies not focusing so much on the buildings as fixed objects, but on the design of interactive surfaces, skins, membranes, paving systems, soil, and other sort of surfaces. How to construct

Figure 4.3: Dreamhamar, a process for redesigning the city centre of Hamar, Norway, by Ecosistema Urbano. Urban action “Paint-Hamar”, developed by Ecosistema Urbano together with Boa Mistura. September, 2011. Photograph: Ecosistema Urbano (CC BY-SA 2.0).

Ecosistema Urbano has been commissioned to develop a participation process to turn a car park in the city centre of Hamar, Norway, into a town square. For doing so, they have proposed a series of urban actions that act as a point of departure for encouraging public participation and the engagement of the citizens of Hamar in the process. One of the first urban actions was to paint in colours with typical Norwegian patterns the car park and to disarray and relocate the cubes that were ordering the car park. What they have done is precisely using the existing elements to propose a new arrangement of the public realm, to reassemble the urban surface. This new arrangement seeks to surprise the citizens and to encourage them to use this space as a public square. The immediate effect was that people started using the place as a public square: sitting on the cubes, playing and developing activities there. The rearrangement of the urban surface made people realize that “this was not a car park any more, it was something different” (Martín de Lucas, Lecture at the E.T.S. Arquitectura, Universidad de Sevilla, 2013).

Sources: <http://www.dreamhamar.org> (accessed 2013-11-12); Ecosistema Urbano (Forthcoming) *Dreamhamar*. Sevilla: Lugadero; lecture by Rubén Martín de Lucas, Boa Mistura, at the E.T.S. Arquitectura Universidad Sevilla, October 2013. In addition to this, the author of this thesis has been in charge—with Lugadero Publishing—of coordinating the publication about the Dreamhamar process.



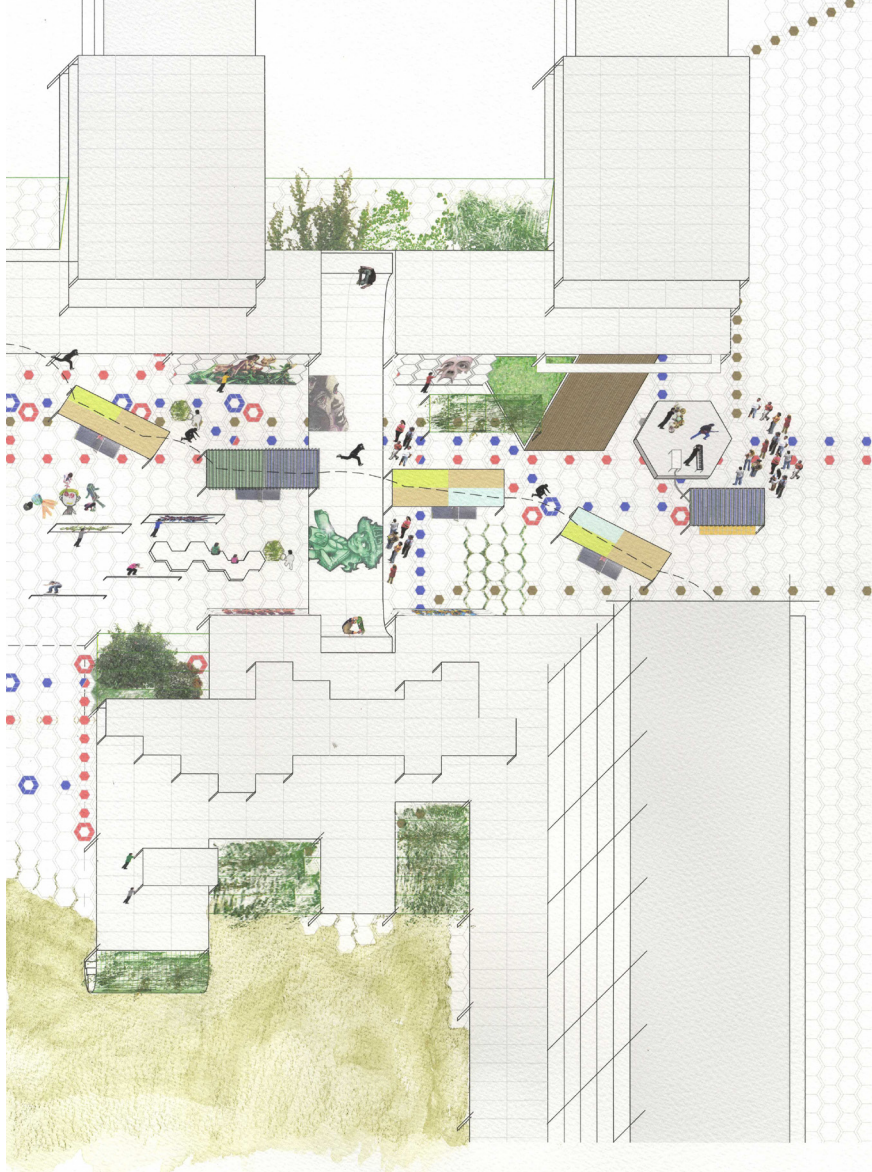


Figure 4.4: Possible scenario of Loughborough Estate. Elaborated by the author.

The picture illustrates how the introduction of different textures and of certain material elements can facilitate certain activities that encourage a greater interaction between people and the environment. The space between buildings is redefined, the street has pedestrian priority and permits being closed to traffic at some points to develop activities. Different devices are provided to encourage urban art, sports and events.

these surfaces? Building on the explained idea of the positive uses of disorder and using assemblage thinking as a tool, this thesis proposes five strategies for building *surface as enabling materiality*:

- * New arrangements.
- * Expressivity of the materiality.
- * Equipping the urban surface.
- * Concentrations of infrastructure.
- * Modular system.

New arrangements: thinking up new ways of arranging things implies applying the concept of reassembling to urban surface. It requires analysing and diagnosing the existing potentials of the urban surface. Then, from the knowledge of the existing urban surface, urban designers can propose mutations, distortions and alterations in the urban surface that enhance these potentials and produce new situations. These operations require a manipulation of the urban surface.

Expressivity of materiality: as part of these mutations on the urban surface, the interventions should actuate on the materiality of the public space. One of the problems identified in the analysis of the first chapter is that that the urban surface that lies between buildings is structured in large green areas with no treatment and, in many cases, fenced, car park areas and wide roads for cars. The strategies should transform this space between buildings into a different thing. Firstly, the intervention should seek for the diversity of materiality that makes people engage with the public space and allows different uses of the public space. Providing different textures such as wood, metal, rubber, mixed hard-soft surfaces, can induce people stopping at different points, play with the urban surface, or

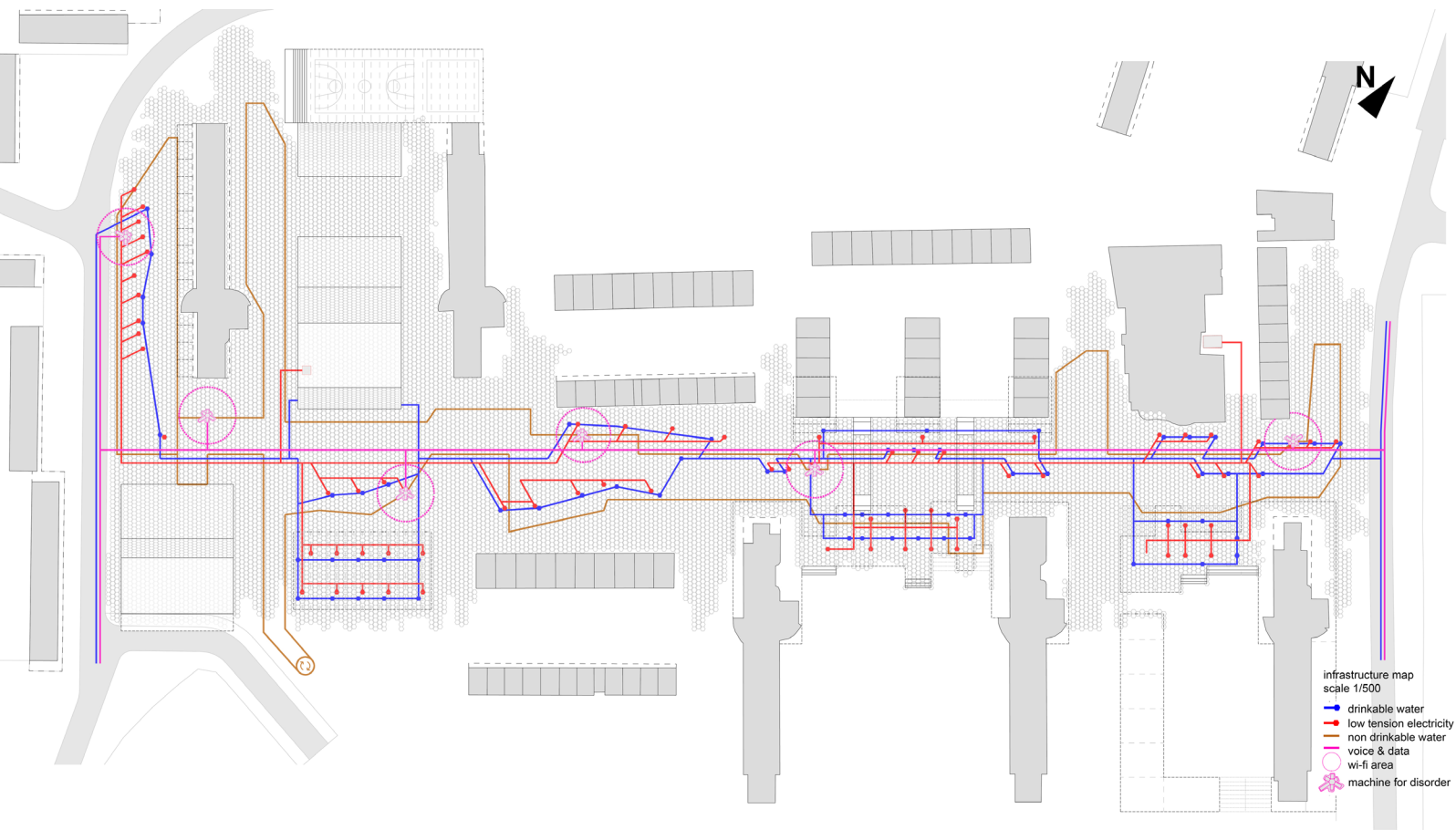


simply appreciate the environment. This diversity can help to build the “textured surface” (Simone, 2011) that Simone claims. Secondly, the materiality of the surface should allow a close relationship between people and material things: the interaction between “the I and the It” (Sennett, 1990) that Sennett claims. This can be done by providing devices for urban art and urban sports that make people have a more direct interaction with the environment. The resulting sociomaterial associations can help to create this “patterned ground” that Amin proposes to counteract “demarcation and division” (Amin, 2008: 12). Thirdly, this new materiality of the urban surface should seek to lower the speed of the public space. This means building a continuous and accessible surface that is suitable for pedestrian use and free of urban barriers that hinder mobility for disabled and those who have difficulties. It also means building a surface that encourages people to stop and to lower their pace.

Sennett (2008b) explains how people—and particularly children and teenagers—can become more prepared to accept ambiguity through the materiality of the public space and the absence of clear demarcations. He puts the example of Aldo Van Eyck’s small parks in post-war Amsterdam, where he equipped empty spaces of the city with playgrounds that had no boundaries, and which changes of materiality—with different textures such as sand, grass and water, with stones to climb (Sennett 2008b: 288-289)—invited children to explore. These tactile variations (Sennett, 2008b: 284) on the surface provided with opportunities for surprise. In Van Eyck’s parks, security was achieved through the presence of people in the public space, not through fencing the children areas (figures 4.5 and 4.6).

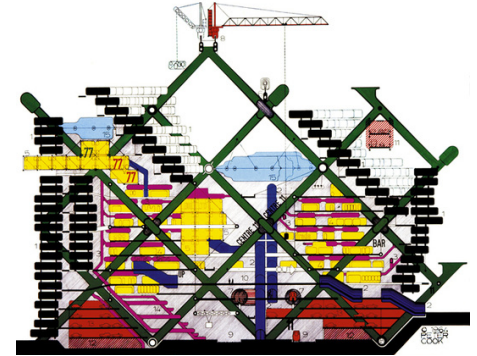
Figure 4.5: Amsterdam-Nieuwwest. Buskenblaserstraat, 1955. Source: Architektur für kinder.

Figure 4.6: Intervention by Aldo Van Eyck. Buskenblaserstraat, 1955. Source: Architektur für kinder.



infrastructure map
scale 1/500

- drinkable water
- low tension electricity
- non drinkable water
- voice & data
- wi-fi area
- ⊗ machine for disorder



Left page:

Figure 4.7: Hypothetical proposal: “equipped surface”: provision of infrastructure in Loughborough Estate. Elaborated by the author.

The proposed initial open system consists on providing a continuous grid in Barrington Road, which is equipped with different kind of infrastructure: drinkable water, low tension electricity, non-drinkable recycled water for irrigation, voice and data. The provision of this infrastructure implies taking the decision of which points of the surface should have higher concentration of infrastructure. This will establish initially which spaces have higher possibilities of being colonised by activities.

This page, from left to right:

Figure 4.8: “Supersurface” by Superstudio, 1972.

Figure 4.9: “Plug-in City” by Archigram, 1964.

Equipped surface: to support the assemblage between people and the urban surface, in addition to this new materiality, it is necessary the provision of infrastructure that allows people to develop activities in the public realm. These pieces of infrastructure can be water, electricity, fibre optic or other sort that permit people to plug in the urban surface to develop a particular initiative and benefit from this public infrastructure. These pieces of infrastructure—which aim is to *support* activities—may also include foundations on the surface to plug in other structures that give shelter or support the possible activities. This concept of urban infrastructure where citizens can plug-in was already proposed by the ‘radical architecture’ of the 1960s and the 1970s, which was also born as a reaction to modern architecture. Superstudio, in their conceptual project “Supersurface 5” (Figure 4.8), proposes creating a grid in a flat and continuous landscape as a device that provides energy and information. Archigram, in their “Plug-in City” (Figure 4.9), also proposes building a massive vertical infrastructure where the different activities of the city, the dwellings and the public spaces can be plugged in and, later, when they are not needed any more, can be detached from the infrastructure and plugged in somewhere else.



Concentration of infrastructure: one of the main challenges of building an open system is defining the initial interventions that will stimulate the emergence of activities: how is beginning of this process of creating an alternative urban surface? The answer to this question can be creating points of concentration of infrastructure: spaces within the urban surface that have a wide range of services, so there are more possibilities for activities to take place. These outbreaks of ‘disorder’—points where there are more possibilities of emergence—can be the beginning of the process and can later reproduce themselves throughout the surface.

Figure 4.10: Hypothetical proposal for Loughborough Estate. Enabling surface. Elaborated by the author.

The proposed system is composed of a grid based on the standard measures 1220mm by 2440mm, which are common in many prefabricated elements and other kinds of ordinary elements that can be joined to form more complex structures. The paving system will follow this modulation, which will allow building a flexible surface that can be easily modified by adding new textures or changing the uses of the surface. Within this grid, certain areas of the surface will be provided with supply of infrastructure and with foundations for plugging in structural elements on the surface. In this way, the concentration of certain pieces of infrastructure in certain areas will encourage the initial issues of the public space. For instance, concentrations of electricity supply can facilitate certain activities such as music events, while concentration of non-drinkable water supply can facilitate the creation of new areas of vegetation. In the same way, each kind of infrastructure will provide with different possibilities to the different areas of the surface. This modulated system will achieve a continuous surface that, at the same time, has diverse areas with different qualities.

Modular system: This processual character of the public space can be achieved through building the urban surface as a modular system. Actually, the previously described strategies—new arrangements, expressivity of materiality, equipped surface, concentration of infrastructure—can be implemented through establishing a modular system. This can materialize the process, the public space as an open system, as an incomplete form made out of the addition, subtraction, and change of different elements, as the design concepts from assemblage thinking explained in the third chapter suggest. Sennett’s proposal for an open public realm, which has been explained in the previous chapters, suggests this modulation: building a public space out of “a series of cores” that “permit(s) “hinge” addition” (Sennett, 2008a: n.p). This modulation can be literal: proposing a construction system that has a modular logic and designing the urban elements that compose it as elements that can be easily attached, detached, and altered according to the changing demands. However, in other cases, this modulation may not be so literal and it will not necessary to propose a very sophisticated construction system, as long as there is a modular and open logic behind.

4.2.2 Section

“a fully *volumetric* urbanism is required which addresses the ways in which horizontal and vertical extensions, imaginaries, materialities and lived practices intersect and mutually construct each other within and between subterranean, surficial and suprasurface domains” (Graham and Hewitt, 2012: 74-75, referencing Lerup, 2006, same emphasis).

Proposing assemblages just on the urban surface can imply missing those relationships that take place on the third dimension of space. The strategies on the section can complement the strategies on the surface in this way. They can help to understand and propose new relationships between the horizontal plane—the urban surface—and the vertical axis, which actually describes many characteristics of the built environment.

Graham and Hewitt state that critical urbanism has concentrated on the horizontal plane while it has given less attention to the vertical axis. They claim for a deeper study of the “vertical qualities of contemporary processes of urbanization” (Graham and Hewitt, 2012: 73). In their paper, they identify how certain processes of segregation are taking place at the vertical axis: placing houses on vertical towers far from the disorderly public space. Furthermore, they highlight the importance of looking at the intersections and relationships—i.e. the assemblages—between the horizontal and vertical urban dimensions.

Proposing urban processes on the section implies approaching urban design as the construction of the urban landscape—or the townscape, as Gordon Cullen (1961) states—,

both from its physical and cultural dimension. Studies by Cullen (1961) and Lynch (1960) focus on the perception of the city by the individual. They also give importance to the position of the individual within the urban space (Cullen, 1961). These ideas have had a great influence in post-modern and contemporary urban thinking. As the previous chapters have shown, how the urban material culture influences how people perceive strangers is one of the main interests of Sennett's work. Taking these ideas to the study and the proposals on the section, this set of strategies will seek to influence the subjective perception of people within the public space.

The section itself, as used in architectural drawings, is a mental construction of the urban landscape in its physical and cultural dimension. Drawing a section implies taking a decision. In contrast to the plan, it is a subjective representation. Thus, the section can be considered an appropriate mean for proposing strategies on the symbolic and affective level of the urban space.

Proposing urban design interventions on the section also represent a shift from modern to contemporary urban thinking. The urban design approach that this thesis proposes is not so much interested in the morphology of the buildings as it is interested in the resultant section of the urban space. This interest towards the atmosphere and of the phenomenology of the city has been taken by urban thinkers such as Landry (2000: xlv) who states that "(a)n atmosphere is made up of the sensory experiences that comprise a city. (...) They are a vital part of the perception of a place and can determine its chances of success". Tejedor Cabrera and Linares Gómez del Pulgar (2010: n.p.) also state that "today we talk about atmospheres and not spaces".

For intervening in the physical and cultural urban landscape—continuing with the analogy to the section as an architectural drawing—, this thesis proposes urban design interventions to induce changes in the:

- * Longitudinal section, which seek to create a narrative through the different urban spaces.
- * Cross-section, which propose actions that create an atmosphere that encourage positive social relationships on the public space.

This pair of strategies is analogue to pair of strategies proposed on the surface—connective and enabling materiality—. They also work in both scales of the analysis developed in chapter one—spatial configuration and design and maintenance—, but, in this case, in the vertical axis.

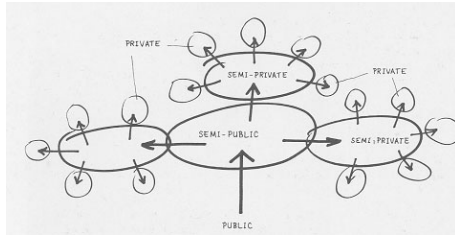


Figure 4.11: Oscan Newman's proposal for hierarchy and sub-division of communal space. Territoriality. He proposes delimiting the transition between public, semi-public, semi-private and private space. Source: Gehl, 2011. Original source: Newman, 1972.

4.2.2.1 Longitudinal section

Proposing interventions on the longitudinal section seeks to address Sennett's proposal of designing 'passage territories' (Sennett, 2007: 294), which is explained in his essay "The Open City". This idea had already been included in his previous works: in *The Uses of Disorder*, he suggests that increasing the permeability of isolated neighbourhoods can make people feel more comfortable sharing a space with strangers (Sennett, 1970). In *The Conscience of the Eye*, Sennett (1990) proposes designing 'narrative spaces'—in opposition to linear spaces—, which are those spaces that disrupt the linear sequence of the city and allow conflict and dissonance (Sennett, 2007: 296). Sennett insists on the importance of designing "the experience of passing through different territories" (Sennett, 2007: 294) and claims that architects and planners should design more carefully this experience.

The analysis developed in chapter one shows that the neighbourhoods under study lack these narrative spaces. In contrast, their spatial configuration responds to a linear sequence in which there is a hierarchy that isolates these places from urban life.

Newman proposes delimiting the transition from public, to semi-public, to semi-private, and to private spaces. Through this linear sequence, he proposes his concept of territoriality, which optimizes surveillance and makes it easier to identify strangers within a neighbourhood. The transition that Newman proposes could seem at first sight quite logic. However, the clear demarcations that he proposes leave no room for improvisation and disruption. Furthermore, they promote the creation of enclosed spaces that do not allow the entrance of intruders and isolate the neighbourhoods from urban life. Other

urban thinkers such as Gehl also support this transition from private to public. However, he warns that “indication is not so firm a demarcation that it prevents contacts with the outside world” (Gehl, 2011: 61).

In contrast to this linear sequence, the strategies on the longitudinal section aims to design a succession of narrative scenes. For doing so, Sennett suggests building porous borders rather than strong walls (see Sennett, 2008a, 2011). Furthermore, it is also necessary to provide—within these narrative scenes—spaces for disruption. For materializing this succession of narrative scenes, the proposed strategies on the longitudinal section should go together with the strategy ‘surface as connective materiality’, which seeks for continuity and differentiation. In the case of the longitudinal section, the strategies will seek to create this continuity and differentiation on the urban landscape.

For achieving continuity in the longitudinal section, the strategies will attempt to include the neighbourhood in an uninterrupted urban section. For doing so, they will avoid creating hierarchies that isolate these urban spaces. They will avoid building strong walls and they will eliminate the urban barriers that hinder the connectivity of the neighbourhood. Nevertheless, as stated when explaining the surface as connective materiality, continuity does not mean homogeneity and each urban space should have its own character. The urban space at the town centre or at a high street should be different from this at a residential street.

Seeking for differentiation in the longitudinal section means creating these places of disruption and agonistic conflict. These are the places “full of time” that Sennett (1990) describes, the “urban surplus” that Amin (2008) talks about. In these spaces is where

activities can start emerging, where the beginning of the process can take place. For creating these spaces in the longitudinal section, the interventions can consist on the addition of structures to the existing buildings, plugging them in the urban surface or in the façade of the buildings, adding new vegetation and new textures to the section. In this way, the hierarchy will be provided by the diversity of the urban landscape and not by a fixed hierarchy of walls. This will permit to blur the lines of power and segregation that dominate the city. Through assembling new structures and urban elements, the strategies on the longitudinal section will, firstly, construct porous borders that constitute spaces for interaction between the different spaces of the city. Secondly, they will provide diversity to the townscape. And thirdly, they will create spaces for disruption, for the emergence of unexpected activities that contribute to the positive perception of disorder that these strategies are aiming for. The assembling of structures that can host the diverse kind of activities will be explained in depth when exposing the strategies on the cross-section.

4.2.2.2 *Cross-section*

In connection to the longitudinal section—which seeks to create a succession of experiences—the cross-section can attempt to make detailed proposals for each of these urban experiences. The interventions will modify the physical environment taking into consideration how the resultant street space influence how people perceive the urban space and how people perceive stranger in the urban space. Authors such as Jan Gehl (2011) have studied that there are factors such as the proportion of the street, the relationship between the size of the buildings and the human scale, the sense of enclosure people may feel or the diversity of the urban space that can influence the way people perceive strangers.

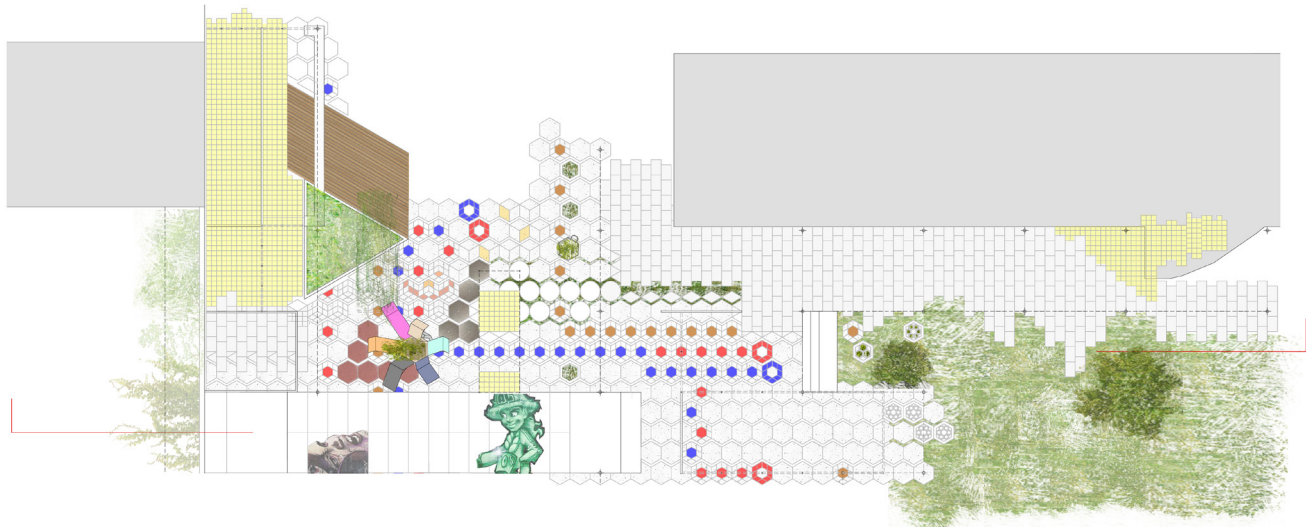
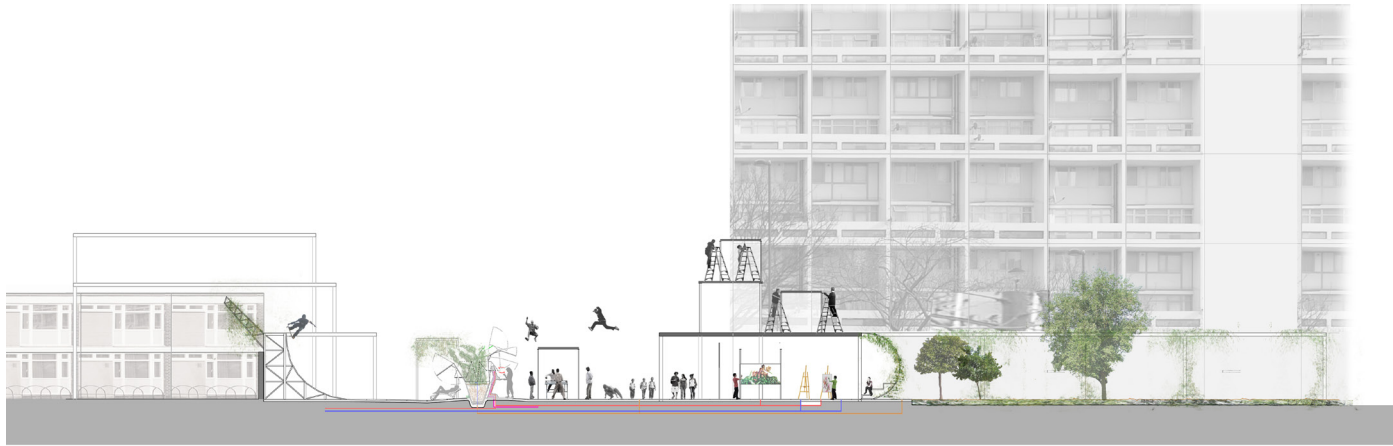
This relationship between space, urban and human scale, distance, and how people perceive strangers has been developed by the study of “proxemics”, defined by Edward T. Hall (1966) as “the study of the human use of space within the context of culture”. Hall defines social distances that go from the most intimate to the public distance, which determine different forms of communication: the intimate distance (0–0.45 m), where the most intense feelings are expressed; the personal distance (0.45–1.30 m), which is the conversation distance between family and close friends; the social distance (1.30–3.75 m), the normal distance of conversation between friends; and the public distance (>3.75 m), where communication is one-way or when people prefer seeing or hearing but not getting involved (Gehl, 2011: 69, referencing Hall, 1966).

Authors such as Gehl have found proxemics studies quite useful for understanding how people relate to each other and communicate in the public realm. He uses this study

to propose a correspondence between the social and physical structure of the city. He identifies that some public housing have “a diffuse interior structure and imprecise boundaries” and states that this “undefined physical structure is a tangible obstacle to life between buildings” (Gehl, 2011: 58). As it was explained in the analysis of the first chapter, the disappearance of a defined and constituted street has hindered life between buildings. However, the answer to this might not be to create more defined boundaries as Gehl proposes, but to create more permeable borders as suggested by Sennett.

Hanson highlights how studies like those of Hall have led to new forms of urbanism such as territoriality, generating urban enclaves, creating mosaics of subcultures, defensible space, community and privacy. These new forms of urbanism try to eliminate the cultural tensions by creating cultural enclaves and building a transition from them to the city (Hanson, 2000: 118-119). These new forms of urbanism result in cultural segregation.

Sennett also identifies forms of segregation that deal with the vertical axis. He uses the urban element that was used for landscaping and separating humans from animals in the Enlightenment, the “haw-haw”, to describe certain modes of isolation that take place in the contemporary city, where some urban elements allow visibility but still promote isolation and avoid possible conflicts that come out of the interaction between two urban places. Graham and Hewitt also state that segregation takes place both at the horizontal and at the vertical level. They talk about the vertical isolation that is taking place in some Global South cities, where the construction of skyscrapers attempts to protect people from the disorderly ground floor. Although the situation is very different in British council estates, vertical isolation also takes place in them: people live in towers with one single controlled access and the interior of these towers has no interaction with the disused public space.



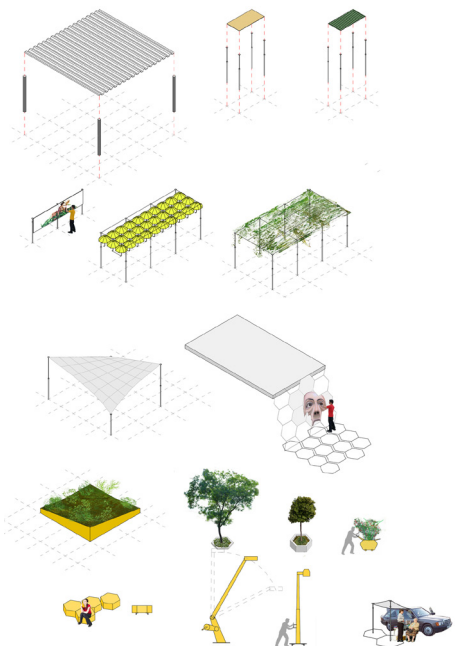


Figure 4.12: Cross-section of Barrington Road, Loughborough Estate. Elaborated by the author.

Figure 4.13: Illustration of possible structures that can be assembled, disassembled and reassembled. Elaborated by the author.

In contrast to these modes of segregation, what the strategies on the cross-section propose is to create permeable borders that allow social interaction, social exchange, and agonistic conflict. The creation of these spaces can contribute to overcome the fear of strangers. For doing so, this thesis proposes three strategies on the cross-sections:

- * Assemblages between the horizontal and the vertical dimensions.
- * Interaction between the private and the public.
- * Invisible connections.

Assemblages between the horizontal and the vertical dimensions: This strategy will propose creating new relationships—reassembling—between the horizontal and the vertical. It will connect with the surface strategies as “enabling materiality” to propose new “extensions, imaginaries, materialities and lived practices” (Graham and Hewitt, 2012: 74) on the section. Because it connects to the strategies of surface as enabling materiality, they will be attached to the same modular system and will propose adding structures that can be assembled, disassembled and reassembled. Likewise, they will promote initial concentrations of infrastructure that serve as beginning of the process and will introduce diversity in the materiality of the public realm.

The assemblage of vertical elements on the section will seek to build a particular urban environment, which influences how people perceive the space and encourage social contacts by providing an urban landscape with a human scale. In addition to modifying the proportions of the street in relation to humans, the reassembling of vertical elements and the new structures will seek to give shelter to diverse activities.

The interventions can consist on providing initial structures to be used, extended and reassembled in different ways according to the needs and desires of the citizens. These initial structures can be light constructions located on the edge between the public and the private. Since these modern urban developments were conceived as “pavilions in landscape” (Hanson, 2000: 100) and this particular urban layout brought about the disappearance of the street, the assemblage of structures need to address a better definition of the street. For building an urban environment that promote social contacts is necessary to re-structure the urban space and shape “constituted”⁹⁰ streets that transform the endless surfaces inherited from modernism.

However, the interventions should avoid executing this better definition of the street with very solid constructions or walls. In contrast, they should address Sennett’s proposal of building the cellular wall, which is both resistant and porous and permits interaction. Thus, the interventions on the cross-section will begin with light constructions that delimit the street occupying the space currently taken up by car park surfaces and by the fences of the gardens. They can hold initial activities that motivate the appearance of others and they can also serve as storage for other possible structures. In addition to this, they can have structural capacity to support other activities on the top and grow vertically if the demands of activities suggest it. In this way, these structures might just cover the ground floor at the beginning, with the option of assembling structures on the top.

The initial structures have the possibility of associating to other structures and growing by the addition of elements. In this way, they are part of an open process that can be

90 In Space Syntax terminology, see Hanson, 2000.

modified. These associations can also take place with other kinds of structures that are not necessarily delimiting the street, but that can be plugged in any part of the surface. This category can include the combination of ordinary elements that can be joined to compose more complex structures. This can be prefabricated elements or ordinary components which can be obtained everywhere and are easily understood by the citizens, allowing them to combine them easily to develop their activities. Furthermore, the term structure can be extended to elements such as lampposts, trees, mobile vegetation or street furniture that can be plugged in the surface. Their presence on the urban surface will depend on the activities they enable. All these structures will form part of a flexible and open system, where the different assemblages respond to a particular moment in time.

Interaction between the private and the public: the fear of public space has led people, communities, and institutions to establish strong street limits between the private and the public, in an attempt to make people safer inside their homes. Sennett (1990) describes this feeling of looking for refuge at home in *The Conscience of the Eye*, and how this has influenced the way cities are made today. This division between the private and the public is one of the factors that hinder the use of the public space.

To counter this effect, interventions should work on providing spaces of transition between the private and the public. These spaces of transition can provide with more plasticity to the rigid relationship between the private and the public and can encourage people to start feeling more comfortable in public when they leave their homes.

The challenging question here is: how to draw this “limit” between the private and the public? How to achieve delimiting the street space without provoking isolation? As it

has been explained in the previous point, these “limits” should be permeable borders that allow exchange and interaction between the public and the private.

The construction of this limit should avoid falling into building walls, fences or other elements that hinder interaction. They should also avoid provoking vertical isolation between the tower block and the urban surface.

Space Syntax approach to the social logic of space (Hillier and Hanson, 1984) expose that streets that are constituted are those which buildings have a direct interaction with the public space. This constitutedness can be achieved—as explained in the previous point—by adding structures that build these permeable borders. The borders should have the following features: firstly, they should seek for the porosity of the limits between the different degrees of privacy, allowing hearing, visibility and enjoying the gardens or open spaces. Secondly, the structures should also host activities that have a direct interaction with the public space, which will introduce the buzz that the public space currently lacks. Thirdly, since studies of urban thinkers such as Gehl (2011: 68) suggest that streets with lower buildings and narrower streets are more suitable for social relationships, the introduction of these new structures can change the proportions of the street and locate lower constructions as a transition to the tower blocks.

Invisible connections: certain interventions on the section may imply relations and assemblages that are not visible, which are result of the intersection between the physical and cultural landscape. The invisible connections are those originated by a particular milieu, which generates an atmosphere of place that is symbolic, affective and subjective. As the mentioned studies by authors such as Sennett and Amin suggest, the urban material

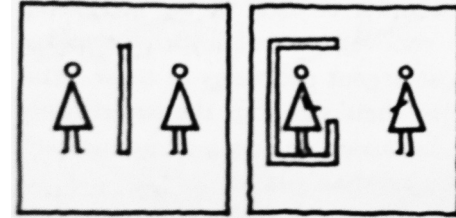


Figure 4.14: Jan Gehl: “Physical arrangement can promote or prevent visual and auditory contact” (Gehl, 2011: 62). Left: inhibiting contact. Right: promoting contact.

culture of a place influences the way people perceive strangers. Gehl also states that the concentration of people and the concentration of activities—life between buildings—is what makes people feeling safe and comfortable in public and in the midst of strangers.

Thus, as it has been explained in the exposed section strategies, for creating spaces where people feel comfortable in the midst of strangers, the strategies can create initial concentrations of activities and also the spaces for disruption that have been described when explaining the longitudinal section. The peripheral condition of these neighbourhoods suggests that they can be suitable for producing these alternative spaces that scape from the forces of domination of city centres. These counter-spaces can be places where conflict is redirected into positive social relationship. As it has been exposed in the sections strategies, for achieving this, urban designers should produce non-hierarchical spaces that are permeable and act as interactive borders. Furthermore, they should have a changing nature that permits the constant reassembly of the section.

Process

Having proposed urban design interventions on the urban surface and on the sections, a further dimension of space should be addressed. This further dimension is *time*, which brings to the urban debate the importance of the *process*. The process as a way to approach interventions on the public realm has been implicit throughout the whole thesis: it is implicit in the design concepts from assemblage thinking explained in the third chapter. It is also implicit in the term ‘infrastructure’ itself, which has been defined here as providing initial conditions—a beginning of a process—. Furthermore, it has been implicit in the strategies on the surface and on the strategies on the section, which need a “narrative beginning” (Sennett, 1990) and a continuous upgrade for being implemented. Although the process is embedded in other parts of the thesis and in the other two sets of strategies, it is important to highlight it and to dedicate this last section of the chapter to it. The success of the strategies on the surface and on the section will depend much on the process.

The process deals with the functional dimension of the interventions in the public space. The program—the functions and functional capacities—of an urban design proposal should be conceived as a process. Koolhaas considers the program as the “engine of a project, driving the logic of form and organization while responding to the changing demands of society” (Wall, 1999: 236-237). Tejedor Cabrera and Linares Gómez del Pulgar (2010) explain the shift from the *organization chart* to the *diagram* in the relationship between form and function: while in modernism the architectural form was tight to fixed functions, the contemporary urban projects should not be conceived with specific functions, but with the capacity of accepting diverse uses, even those not imagined by the designers.

This interest in functional capacity versus function, which has been explained when exposing assemblage thinking as a design tool, suggests that architects and planners should design *indeterminacy*: they should propose a process with its multiple possibilities, not a final end. As Innerarity suggests, the new contemporary utopia should aim to design the “open versus the perfect”, “the incalculable versus the planned” (Innerarity, 2004: 215, quoted in Tejedor Cabrera, 2006. Translated from Spanish). Likewise, Koolhaas explains the contemporary urbanism should not build on the “fantasies of order and omnipotence, but it should represent uncertainty” (Koolhaas, 1996: 9, quoted in Tejedor Cabrera, 2006. Translated from Spanish). This proposal of designing indeterminacy, which is one of the main principles of the infrastructures for disorder presented on this thesis, faces a great challenge when they attempt to come to the ground. As Sennett (2008a) explains, authorities, clients, and the public in general do not normally accept indeterminacy since they have the fear of losing control on the situation. This implies that architects are still today in service of the fixed form and function.

However, this trend is beginning to change and some public institutions are becoming more aware of the importance of the process and to overcome—at least to certain extent—the fear to indeterminacy. Examples such as the previously explained regeneration of Gillett Square support the idea that local authorities, in collaboration with enthusiastic community organizations such as Hackney Co-operative Developments and with urban designers can provide public spaces for improvisation. It is also significant the case of the Norwegian city of Hamar, who launched a competition for the process of designing the town square. The City of Hamar, instead of making the traditional competition of ideas or call for proposals for the square, asked for a participation process for redesigning the square. The winner of this competition, the Spanish architectural practice Ecosistema

Urbano, is coordinating this “participation and network design process” (Dreamhamar, n.d. [Online], accessed 2013-11-20) and has already carried on urban actions to encourage citizens to think about alternative uses of the square, workshops, exhibitions, activities in collaboration with academic institutions and many other events that help to propose a new public space as a process⁹¹. This is a good example of a shift that is starting to take place and that architects should think of when re-designing the public spaces: a shift from the interest in the finished projects towards the process.

Designing a process means designing an open system instead of a finished object. Sennett (2007, 2008a), when proposing the public realm as an open system, suggests the development of narratives and thinking carefully about the different stages of the design process: he states that architects should look at “what elements should happen first and what the consequences of this initial move will be” (Sennett, 2007: 296). They should “look at the different and conflicting possibilities at each stage”, instead of looking for a “lock-step towards achieving a single end” (Sennett, 2007: 296).

In the same way, Peter Bishop, who was responsible of Design for London, propose that urban design strategies should be “loose, flexible and capable of adaptation to take advantage of events, and essentially a focus on process” (Bishop, 2012). According to Bishop, this kind of strategies can “frame programmes consisting of lots of immediate small-scale actions that allow the local community to colonise their own area” (Bishop, 2012). He uses as example J&L Gibbons LLP and Muf Architecture/Art’s proposal for enhancing the value of Dalston. This proposal is divided in three stages: “value what



Figure 4.15: Dreamhamar by Ecosistema Urbano, December 2011. Photograph: Ecosistema Urbano (CC BY-SA 2.0).

91 For more information, see Ecosistema Urbano (forthcoming).

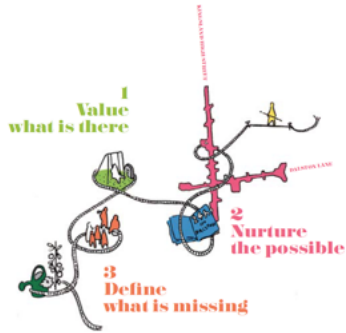


Figure 4.16: Making Space in Dalston, by J&L Gibbons LLP and muf architecture/art for London Borough of Hackney. Design for London / LDA. July 2009.

Figure 4.17: Making Space in Dalston, by J&L Gibbons LLP and muf architecture/art for London Borough of Hackney. Design for London / LDA. July 2009.



is there”, “nurture the possible”, and “define what is missing” (see J&L Gibbons LLP and muf architecture/art, 2009). However, the case of Dalston is different from that of the neighbourhoods under study. Dalston is an urban area which is already in a process of regeneration—and gentrification—and which has a lot of potential. In the case of the neighbourhoods under study, since they do not have such a strong potential as a place like Dalston, the efforts should concentrate on creating a strongest beginning and defining a system that motivates the citizens to occupy the public realm.

Following Sennett's suggestion on focusing on the stages and the possible outputs of each step, this thesis proposes a non-linear sequence of stages of the process for re-designing the public space of the neighbourhoods under study. Depending on the situation, they will follow this order or a different one, and some of them may need a stronger emphasis. They are not linear, but rhizomatic: they do not reach a single end and can re-start or go back to a previous stage at any time. They can work at the same time, overlap and assemble among each other. These proposed stages are:

- * Needs and potentials.
- * Beginning.
- * Intensification events.
- * Defining the initial system.
- * Feedback.
- * Additions to the system.

Needs and potentials: this thesis has insisted in this idea since its first chapter. The first step for proposing urban design interventions should be to carry on a deep qualitative research of the place to identify the existing processes that are already taking place—even though those which are latent or very weak—, in order to recognise the potentials, and also to identify what is missing and the main necessities. As Peter Bishop suggests, the urban design strategies should “make use of existing social and physical characteristics of an area, rather than eliminate them, (...) sculpting new programmes and places out of what is already there” (Bishop, 2012: 29). Once the existing processes and potentials are identified, the first strategies should aim to enhance them by building urban design interventions that give power to weak processes. This responds to the steps that Muf architecture/art describes: “value what is there, nurture the possible and define what is

missing”. The enhancement of these latent activities with the initial interventions may address some of the identified needs. However, since the neighbourhoods under study are in a disadvantaged position, this enhancement of the existing processes might not be sufficient to achieve an active life between buildings and a strongest beginning should be necessary. Addressing the needs may require a radical reconfiguration of the public realm, which takes the process to the next step: “beginning”.

Beginning: The neighbourhoods under study, which, as the analysis of the first chapter has shown, are in a state on obsolescence and lack urban life, need for a strong beginning, a radical reconfiguration of the public realm, to create the unexpected uses of the public realm that the strategies are aiming for. The “beginning” strategies should have three characteristics: they should be small scale, generate concentration of efforts, and have the possibility of “undo”.

Firstly, the sum of small-scale actions can have a big a very efficient impact, as Bishop (2012) explains. They have the advantage of being of easy and quick implementation, so their cost might not be very high. Furthermore, due to their small scale, they are not very invasive and citizens may not interpret them as an imposition. This will make easier that citizens take the actions as theirs and start using them and participating in them. This small-scale action can help citizens to visualize that a different public space is possible, as it happened with the kiosks in Gillett Square, which implementation made citizens realize that this open space could be a public square instead of a car park.

Secondly, for getting the most out of the first urban actions, it is important to make a concentrations of efforts in certain points of the urban surface and the section. Gehl explains



that in the public realm “something is happening because something is happening” (Gehl, 2011). Because of the open spaces of the neighbourhoods under study are so big—due to the urban layout of “pavilions in landscape”—, it is very difficult to feel that there are activities taking place in the public realm, since the very few activities that take place remain invisible in the endless urban landscape. As a result, in the council estate what happens is the opposite: “nothing is happening because nothing is happening” (Gehl, 2011). To revert this feeling, the interventions should concentrate on certain points of the surface and the section. This concentration will make them visible and may generate a self-replicating (Gehl, 2011) effect that act as a beginning for intensifying the use of the public realm. This can be materialized by concentrating pieces of infrastructure in certain points of the urban surface and the section. These concentrations of infrastructure can act as “machines for disorder” that accelerate the process of loading the platform with activities and encouraging people to socialize in public.

Thirdly, these small-scale urban actions must have the possibility of “undo”. They should be flexible enough for having the possibility of receiving feedback and redirecting efforts depending on the effect of each urban action. Making every urban action reversible can build resilient urban design projects that are no subject to the shifts on political and economical trends (Campkin, 2013: 104).

Intensification events: A beginning should go together with activities that intensify the use of the public space and promote the emergence of other activities. Archigram, in his *Instant City* (Archigram, 1968, see ‘The Archigram Archival Project’, n.d. [Online], accessed 2013-11-21), proposed a mobile and temporary infrastructure in the form of a zeppelin that arrives to a “sleeping town” and install structures that provide activities for

Figure 4.18: The public space as a process. Hypothetical proposal for Loughborough Estate. Elaborated by the author.

a few days. This temporary infrastructure, structures and associated activities bring more intensity⁹² to the place. This intensity is “infiltrated” in the city and when the zeppelin departs, it remains a legacy of intensification. Likewise, in the neighbourhood under study, intensification activities and events should be proposed to get the most of the infrastructure provided at the “beginning”. These activities will much depend on the existing social and cultural fabric and they could be events for the youth, festivals, markets, outdoor screening of films, or concerts. This kind of events can revert the fear and the unease to stay outdoor. In the case of Gillett Square, which is explained in the third chapter, such activities have been quite successful in loading with activities the public realm. In the case of the Dreamhamar participation and network design process by Ecosistema Urbano, the developed urban actions—Painthamar, Creamhamar, Lighthamar and Greenhamar (see Ecosistema Urbano, forthcoming)—have had very positive outcomes in engaging with local people and making them think about alternative uses for the public space.

Defining the initial system: This step includes the previous three and act simultaneously: the system is rooted in the existing potentials and needs, it grows from the proposed “beginning”, and the intensification events should always go together with every intervention and new addition to the system. In this way, every urban action will be more effective and will avoid that energies dissipate, encouraging the every new addition of the system contributes to the urban buzz.

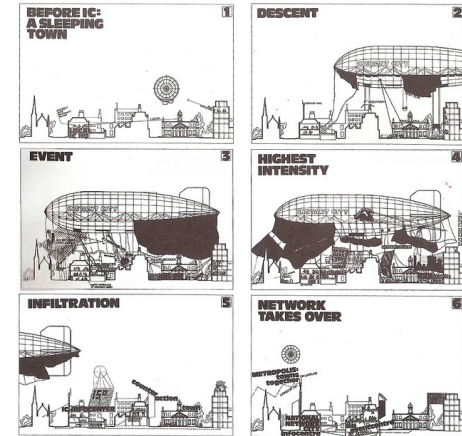


Figure 4.19: Instant City, Archigram, 1968.

92 See the definition of intensity by Dovey and Pafka (2014) who define intensity as the assemblage of different urban densities.



Figure 4.20: Urban action Creamhamar, September 2011. Dreamhamar participation and network design process by Ecosistema Urbano. Photograph: Ecosistema Urbano (CC BY-SA 2.0).

This thesis has explained that the public space should be an open, flexible and dynamic system. For materializing it, the strategies on the surface have proposed that the public space should have a modular character in a way that it can be assembled, disassembled and reassembled. This makes participation a physical experience—since it is implicit in urban design—and avoid that participation comes to a stand still. It also allows the system to grow in different directions allowing “conflict and dissonance” (Sennett, 2007: 296).

To sum up some of the concepts exposed in this thesis, the initial system should aim to introduce the condition of temporality in the public realm and to provide with devices and facilities for the self-management of it. The temporal condition will be introduced through a flexible system that allows the continuous use of the public space and that provides it with a changing capacity to adapt to the different situations: weather, seasonal, weekends and holidays, duration and intensity of the activity. The self-management can be achieved by providing initial conditions or “rules” that can be modulated according the negotiations between the citizens. These negotiations will provoke new social relationships and will bring the public life that the strategies are aiming for.

Feedback: The urban design interventions described in this chapter have unpredictable outputs. As Koolhaas highlights, urban designers have the difficult task of anticipating needs (Ducatez, 2005, referencing Koolhaas 1988). This uncertainty makes necessary that each step of the process is followed by a continuous feedback. These pieces of feedback will provide information to redirect the strategies and to learn from failure. As it has been explained, as Graham and Thrift (2007) suggests, learning from failure is how cities and public infrastructure are produced. For obtaining this information, it is necessary to

provide sources for getting this feedback and observing the output of the strategies and how people use the public space.

Additions to the system: The proposed system should always be kept on the move. The fact that the system is self-managed may imply in certain situations that the public realm requires less intervention. However, self-management does not mean that no more intervention is needed. In contrast, as it has been explained in the thesis, it needs to be in a continuous state of repair and maintenance: introducing new inputs, assemblages, and upgrades according to the obtained feedback. For keeping the public space on the move, it is necessary the continuous repetition of all the stages of the process. The character that the infrastructures for disorder will give to the public realm will allow this continuous upgrade, since the public space proposed here is not stable. The public realm that the infrastructures for disorder seek to produce is in continuous crisis—understanding crisis as change or mutation—, since the definition of disorder that has been explained throughout the thesis is not compatible with a stable state.

4.3 Conclusions in chapter

This final chapter has presented the main contribution of the thesis: urban design interventions that upgrade the obsolete public space of social housing neighbourhoods. The results have been presented through two kinds of contribution:

1. A contribution to critical urban theory: conceptual definition of ‘infrastructures for disorder’.
2. A contribution to architecture and urban design: proposing urban design guidelines that can be used by practitioners.

The main contribution to critical urban theory has been the definition of ‘infrastructures for disorder’. This definition builds on the theoretical development exposed in chapters two and three: it uses various readings of the positive uses of disorder in the city championed by Sennett to address the specific objectives of the thesis. Furthermore, it uses ‘assemblage’ thinking in critical urbanism to propose a method to implement it, to suggest how the process of taking the strategies to the ground can work. The use of ‘assemblage’ has determined the use of the word ‘infrastructure’ to describe the strategies. The definition of infrastructure proposed in this thesis connotes providing with the *beginning* of a *process*, with *possibilities* for new associations. These definitions are rooted in definitions of assemblage that have been explained in the third chapter.

Critical urban theory is in need of these kinds of concepts that offer alternative approaches to urban design intervention in the existing city. Critical theory is necessary to challenge the current urban processes that are taking place and *propose* different options.

Considering that the certain urban renewal processes in these neighbourhoods are not being successful in bringing life to their public spaces⁹³, this thesis proposes guidelines to invite practitioners to explore how these places could work differently.

The main contribution to the fields of architecture and urban design is the materialization of the conceptual definition of ‘infrastructures for disorder’ into urban design guidelines. To avoid remaining abstract, the strategies have been presented through terms commonly used by architectural design: surface, section and process.

As the chapter has exposed, they refer to different dimensions on the perception of space: ‘surface’ refers to the physical dimension of the space, to the materiality of the diverse urban surface; ‘section’ refers to a more subjective dimension, to the mental construction of the space, the atmosphere of place; ‘process’ refers to the functional dimension of space, to how the programme unfolds in time.

The ‘surface’ and ‘section’ strategies address changes—assembling, disassembling and reassembling—in the physical environment, whereas ‘process’ addresses how to do it. This last set of strategies is the keystone for creating successful infrastructures for disorder. The ‘surface’ and ‘section’ strategies address specifically the physical contributors to the public space obsolescence presented in the first chapter, which deal with two scales: ‘spatial configuration’ and ‘design and maintenance’. In the case of the ‘surface’ strategies, the surface as a ‘connective materiality’ addresses the problems of discontinuity in the

93 See Chapter One, epigraph “The legacy of the reconstruction process”, which exposes the limitations of the urban design interventions that have taken place in British housing estates since the 1980s.

urban fabric and spatial segregation that many of these neighbourhoods suffer. In a closer scale, the surface as ‘enabling materiality’ provides with strategies to turn the proposed connections into productive surfaces that encourage the emergence of unplanned activities and interactions in the public realm. The strategies are specifically on the design of these surfaces, on their materiality, their infrastructure, on how they are built and on how to make them work. The strategies on the section also address both scales. The ‘longitudinal section’ strategies address the spatial configuration issues of these neighbourhoods by proposing a succession of narrative scenes that connect the urban area with other places of the city. At a closer scale, the ‘cross section’ strategies make detailed proposals for each of the urban experiences proposed in the longitudinal section. They propose changes in the urban section by adding new structures that offer a more active interaction between the buildings and the streets, and which can hold activities. They pay special attention at the interaction between the private and public space, proposing to build porous borders rather than impermeable walls, as Sennett (2008a, 2011) has proposed in his recent essays. They also pay special attention at changing the atmosphere of place by the assemblage of these new structures, turning encounter with strangers into an arousing experience.

The ‘process’ set of strategies proposes a non-linear sequence of stages for redesigning the public space of the neighbourhoods under study. They have a non-linear character since they do not have to follow a specific order: they assume the nature of an ‘assemblage’: they can overlap, change order or go backwards depending on the output of each stage of the process. This sets of strategies provides with orientation on how to build the public space as an open system.

The strategies presented in this chapter are exploratory; they do not provide certainty. In contrast, they present alternatives on how the public space of these neighbourhoods could work differently. To illustrate the proposals, this chapter, as well as the third chapter of the thesis, has used certain examples of urban situations, processes, urban design projects, and approaches to regeneration that share affinities with this thesis's attitude towards intervention in the public space. Furthermore, the chapter has also used drawings of hypothetical proposals on the case studies that serve as illustrations of how these strategies can work. The intention of these strategies is to serve as guidelines that can be implemented by practitioners in social housing neighbourhoods, acknowledging their uncertain condition and that the public space is an open and never-ending process.

CONCLUSIONS.

La tesis ha abordado los objetivos generales y específicos descritos en la introducción. En el primer capítulo, a través de la análisis detallado de dos casos de estudio, se han identificado los factores físicos del diseño del espacio público que dificultan la interacción social y la vida pública. El cuarto capítulo, apoyándose en el discurso teórico desarrollado en los capítulos dos y tres, ha propuesto una aproximación a la intervención en el espacio público de las barriadas de viviendas sociales y una serie de estrategias que pueden ser aplicadas por profesionales de la arquitectura y el diseño urbano. Estas estrategias han abordado los objetivos específicos descritos en la introducción: construir espacios públicos expresivos que inviten a la gente a estar y quedarse, que provoquen la emergencia de actividades no planeadas, que sean ‘resilientes’¹ y flexibles ante los cambios, y que promuevan la tolerancia y la interacción social.

A partir del análisis de las barriadas de post-guerra en Londres, del contexto que influyó su construcción, de sus transformaciones urbanas, y del diseño de su espacio público, se puede concluir: en primer lugar, los efectos negativos de la construcción de los polígonos de vivienda británicos—y la concentración de pobreza que esto implicó—han llevado a la estigmatización de estos lugares y a relacionar la arquitectura del movimiento moderno con el crimen y la marginalidad. Esto ha tenido los siguientes efectos en la forma de abordar la regeneración urbana de estas barriadas:

- * Medidas de diseño urbano para incrementar la seguridad y prevenir robos, y que generalmente restringen ciertos usos del espacio público.
- * Demolición parcial o total de los polígonos de vivienda, y construcción de barriadas de nueva planta que simulan tramas urbanas históricas y de arquitectura historicista.

The thesis has addressed the general and specific objectives outlined in the introduction. The first chapter, through the detailed analysis of the two case studies, has identified physical factors of the design of the public realm that hinder social interaction and public life. The fourth chapter, building on the theoretical development carried on in chapters two and three, has proposed an approach to intervention in the public space of social housing neighbourhoods and a set of urban design strategies that can be implemented by practitioners. These strategies have addressed the specific objectives outlined in the introduction: building expressive public spaces that encourage people to stay in them, which provoke the emergence of unplanned activities, which are resilient and adaptable to changes, and which promote tolerance and social interaction.

From the analysis of post-war neighbourhoods in London, the context that influenced their construction, their urban transformations, and the design of their public space, it can be concluded the following: firstly, the negative social effects of the construction of British housing estates—and its implied concentration of poverty in them—has driven to the stigmatisation of these places and to relate modernist architecture with deprivation and crime. This has had the following effects in the way urban regeneration has been approached in such neighbourhoods:

- * Urban design measures to increase security, prevent burglaries, and which generally restrict certain uses of the public realm.
- * Partial or complete demolition of housing estates and building neighbourhoods that recreate historic urban fabric and architectural style.
- * Another effect has been the abandonment of these neighbourhoods: the reliance in public funding or in private investors to accomplish regeneration projects has also led to processes of urban decay in some of these neighbourhoods.

- * Y finalmente, el abandono de estas barriadas: la dependencia de financiación pública o inversión privada para acometer proyectos de regeneración ha dado lugar a la decadencia de algunas de estas barriadas.

En segundo lugar, podemos concluir que las transformaciones urbanas que estas barriadas han sufrido desde su construcción tampoco han contribuido a revertir la falta de vida urbana. Por el contrario, estas intervenciones han aumentado la determinación de funciones y han restringido el uso del espacio público. Este capítulo ha identificado los factores que dificultan la vida urbana en el espacio público y los ha clasificado en dos categorías: “configuración espacial” y “diseño y mantenimiento del espacio público”.

Los capítulos dos y tres, los cuales proponen una base teórica para las estrategias, han expuesto que a través de algunos de los “usos del desorden” descritos por Sennett se pueden abordar los objetivos específicos de la tesis. Es decir, se puede dar respuesta a los problemas y a la necesidad de mejorar el espacio público de las barriadas en cuestión.

Puesto que la teoría de Sennett responde a un período concreto—el de la construcción de este tipo de barriadas—, y dado que desde entonces se han producido importantes cambios urbanos, socio-económicos y culturales, la noción de “desorden” propuesta por Sennett requiere una revisión. Por otra parte, a través de las conclusiones extraídas del análisis del espacio público de las barriadas, se puede concluir que, a pesar de que algunos pensadores sobre la ciudad, como el propio Sennett, indicaran que introducir ‘orden’ a través del diseño urbano dificulta la vida en las calles, las intervenciones sobre las barriadas británicas posteriores a su construcción han ido dirigidas a introducir todavía más ‘orden’. Por ello, debido a que estas barriadas siguen necesitando ciertos tipos de desorden, esta tesis ha considerado pertinente tomar los usos del

Secondly, it can also be concluded that the subsequent urban transformations in the public space of housing estates have not contributed to revert the lack of public life. On the contrary, they have enhanced the over-determination of functions and restricted the use of the public realm. The chapter has identified which are those factors that hinder life in the public space and has classified them in two categories: “spatial configuration” and “design and maintenance”.

Chapters two and three, which propose a theoretical basis for the strategies, have exposed that certain readings of Sennett’s “uses of disorder” can address the specific objectives outlined in the introduction of the thesis, i.e. they can address the problems and the need of upgrade of the public realm of social housing neighbourhoods.

Since Sennett’s book responded to a particular moment in time—which was precisely when these housing estates were built—, and the situation of these neighbourhoods may have changed in certain aspects—socio-economic and ethnic composition, design of the public space—, Sennett’s notion of disorder needs to be revisited. Furthermore, based on the analysis of the public space of these neighbourhoods, it can be concluded that, despite some urban thinkers such as Sennett indicated that introducing ‘order’ through urban design hinders city life, the subsequent interventions and transformations in British housing estates has gone towards introducing more ‘order’. Since these neighbourhoods are still in need of certain kinds of disorder, this thesis has found pertinent taking Sennett’s uses of disorder as an approach to propose urban design strategies in the public space of such neighbourhoods.

desorden de Sennett como punto de partida para proponer estrategias de intervención en sus espacios públicos.

A través de la revisión de la obra reciente de Sennett, se propone una versión “actualizada” de la noción de desorden en la situación presente. Esta versión actualizada de desorden tiene afinidades con el uso del concepto ‘*assemblage*’ en la teoría crítica del urbanismo, y puede servir por tanto como instrumento para proponer estrategias de diseño urbano que introduzcan estos necesarios usos del desorden.

El tercer capítulo, apoyándose en esta afinidad entre ‘desorden’ y ‘*assemblage*’ hallada en el segundo capítulo, propone el concepto ‘*assemblage*’ como una herramienta para llevar de la teoría a la práctica los usos del desorden de Sennett. A través de ‘*assemblage*’, se proponen conceptos de diseño que ayuden a implementar cada uno de los usos del desorden que esta tesis pretende introducir en el espacio público:

- * El desorden como un espacio público más expresivo se aborda a través de la acción de ‘re-ensamblar’.
- * La improvisación y el uso informal del espacio público se aborda a través de las ‘conexiones complejas’.
- * Se propone conseguir la tolerancia y la interacción social a través de la ‘convergencia de diversidad’.
- * La “resiliencia” y la adaptabilidad se abordan a través de los conceptos derivados de la acción de “desensamblar”: “sistemas abiertos” y “fallos y desconexiones”.

El cuarto capítulo, ‘infraestructuras para el desorden’, expone las dos contribuciones principales de esta tesis:

Through reviewing Sennett's recent work, the chapter has proposed an updated notion of urban disorder today. This updated notion of disorder share affinities to assemblage thinking in critical urbanism, which can be a conceptual tool to propose urban design strategies that introduce this necessary disorder.

Chapter three—building on this affinity between 'disorder' and 'assemblage' found in the second chapter—has proposed 'assemblage' as a tool to bring from theory to practice Sennett's uses of disorder. Through this notion of assemblage, the chapter has proposed design concepts that help to implement each reading of disorder that this thesis seeks to introduce in the public realm:

- * Disorder as a more expressive public space is addressed through the concept of 'reassembling'.
- * Informality and improvisation is addressed through the concept of 'complex connections'.
- * Tolerance and social interaction is attended through 'convergence of diversity'.
- * Resilience and adaptability is attended through the concepts derived from 'disassembly': 'open systems' and 'failure and disconnections'.

The fourth chapter, 'infrastructures for disorder', exposes the two main contributions of the thesis:

1. A contribution to critical urban theory: definition of 'infrastructure for disorder'
2. A contribution to urban design and architecture: design guidelines.

The definition of 'infrastructure for disorder' builds on the theoretical development carried on in chapters two and three. The concept 'assemblage'—which connotes

1. Una contribución a la teoría crítica urbana: definición de ‘infraestructura para el desorden’.
2. Una contribución al diseño urbano y la arquitectura: estrategias de diseño.

La definición de ‘infraestructura para el desorden’ se apoya en el desarrollo teórico llevado a cabo en el segundo y tercer capítulo. El concepto *assemblage*—que connota proceso, emergencia e incertidumbre—ha motivado el uso del término ‘infrastructure’ para definir las estrategias de intervención. El uso del término ‘infraestructura’ es esencial para entender el papel del espacio público en las relaciones humanas: el espacio público como infraestructura para la vida urbana. ‘Infraestructura’ quiere decir que las intervenciones de diseño urbano deben ser un comienzo, un punto de partida de una proceso que necesita continuas mejoras, que debe mantenerse vivo. Esta noción de infraestructura como un *assemblage*—un ensamble—ha dado fuerza a la definición de ‘infraestructuras para el desorden’ y ha ayudado a transformar este concepto en estrategias de diseño.

La segunda contribución principal del capítulo final es la propuesta de estrategias de diseño urbano. Para hacerlas útiles para la práctica arquitectónica y urbana, este capítulo ha utilizado términos comúnmente usados por arquitectos y ha propuesto estrategias en la ‘superficie’, en la ‘sección’ y en el ‘proceso’. Las estrategias en la superficie y en la sección consisten en una serie de pequeños cambios que pretenden reconfigurar el espacio público, atendiendo a los problemas descritos en la ‘configuración espacial’ y en el ‘diseño y mantenimiento’. Estas intervenciones poseen un carácter incremental propio de las *assemblages*, de las infraestructuras que se construyen a través de la adición de diversos elementos que pertenecen a momentos diferentes en el tiempo. Asumir que el diseño urbano y el espacio público son procesos implica aceptar su condición de incertidumbre y proponer estrategias que permitan constantes cambios y mejoras.

process, emergence, and uncertainty—has motivated the use of the term ‘infrastructure’ to define the strategies for intervention. The use of the term ‘infrastructure’ is essential to understand the role of the public realm in people’s relationship: the public space as an infrastructure for city life. ‘Infrastructure’ means that urban design interventions must be a beginning, a point of departure of a process that needs to be in continuous upgrade, which must be kept alive. This concept of infrastructure as an assemblage has given power to the definition of ‘infrastructure for disorder’ and has helped to transform this concept into design strategies.

The second main contribution of the final chapter is to propose urban design guidelines. For making them useful for practitioners, the chapter has used terms commonly used by architects and has proposed strategies on the ‘surface’, on the ‘section’ and on the ‘process’. The strategies on the surface and on the section acknowledge that they are a sum of small changes that seek to reconfigure the public realm, addressing both its ‘spatial configuration’ and its ‘design and maintenance’. These interventions have the incremental nature that is characteristic of the assemblages, of the infrastructures that are built by the addition of different elements that belong to different moments in time. The process, more than as a strategy, functions as a method to implement the surface and section strategies. To assume that urban design and the public space are processes implies accepting their uncertain condition and proposing strategies that allow constant upgrade.

Futuras investigaciones

La presente tesis ha estudiado el caso de Londres, una ciudad donde el debate sobre cómo intervenir en las barriadas de viviendas sociales lleva vigente varias décadas y que todavía está en el punto de mira. Como se ha explicado en el cuarto capítulo, las estrategias expuestas aquí proponen alternativas al modo en que la intervención en sus espacios públicos se ha acometido hasta ahora. Las intervenciones propuestas se basan en el caso británico, por lo que responden a un contexto concreto.

La tesis abre, pues, interesantes líneas de investigación para el futuro inmediato:

1. Estudiar cómo se pueden aplicar estas estrategias a barriadas de viviendas sociales en otros países. Como este tipo de barriadas se construyeron, dependiendo del país, respondiendo a diferentes necesidades y contextos socio-políticos y, además, se han sometido a diferentes tipos de transformaciones y políticas urbanas, esto requerirá estudiar en profundidad cada situación concreta.
2. Investigar sobre mecanismos para aplicar esta investigación académica a casos reales de regeneración de espacio público en barriadas sociales.

Ambos objetivos de investigaciones ulteriores podrán ser atendidos a través de un proyecto de investigación con financiación que acaba de comenzar y en el que el autor de esta tesis participa. El proyecto se titula “Intervención en barriadas residenciales obsoletas: manual de buenas prácticas”² y está dirigido por Carlos García Vázquez, codirector de

² Contrato de investigación entre la Agencia de Obra Pública de la Consejería Fomento y Vivienda de la Junta de Andalucía y la Universidad de Sevilla, en el que participan investigadores de los Grupos PAI

Future research

The present thesis has studied the case of London, a city where the debate on how to intervene in social housing neighbourhoods has been present for decades and it is still on the spotlight. As it has been explained in chapter four, the strategies proposed here are alternatives to how intervention in the public space has been done so far. These interventions are based on the British experience, so they respond to this particular context.

The thesis opens up interesting lines of future research, which are:

1. To see how these strategies can work in other countries' social housing neighbourhoods. Since these neighbourhoods were built responding to different necessities and socio-political situations depending on the country, and they have undergone through diverse transformations and policies, this will require studying in depth each situation.
2. To study mechanisms to apply this academic research to real cases of public space regeneration in social housing.

Both objectives of further research can be addressed through a funded research project that has just started, on which the author of this thesis participates. The project is titled

estas tesis. El proyecto está financiado por la Junta de Andalucía, por lo que el objeto de estudio son las barriadas de viviendas sociales obsoletas en Andalucía. Se centra en aquellas de fueron construidas entre las décadas de 1950 y 1970. El objetivo del manual es producir un documento que sirva de referencia a entidades públicas para llevar a cabo la regeneración de estas barriadas. Los aspectos de diseño del espacio público son tan sólo una parte de las que incluye el manual, el cual comprenderá cuestiones relacionadas con el diseño arquitectónico, el diseño urbano, el comportamiento medioambiental y la eficiencia energética de los edificios, la gestión de las barriadas y los métodos de participación ciudadana.

El proyecto ha comenzado coincidiendo con la etapa final de esta tesis, muy cerca de la fecha de entrega. Los resultados obtenidos en esta tesis pueden ser de gran ayuda para ciertas partes del manual, especialmente para aquellas que tratan cuestiones del diseño urbano de las barriadas. El gran reto de esta futura investigación será el establecimiento de mecanismos a través de los cuales los entes públicos puedan seguir las pautas que proponga el manual.

(Plan Andaluz de Investigación) HUM 666 and TEP 130. El director del proyecto es Carlos García Vázquez, codirector of de esta tesis.

“Intervention in obsolete neighbourhoods: manual of good practices”⁹⁴ and is directed by Carlos García Vázquez, co-director of this thesis. The manual is commissioned by the Government of Andalusia, so its object of study are the social housing neighbourhoods that have become obsolete in Andalusia, Spain. It focuses on those that were built between the 1950s and 1970s. The aim of the manual is to produce a document that serves as a reference to public authorities to accomplish the regeneration of these neighbourhoods. The public realm and the urban design features of the neighbourhoods is just one of the many aspects that covers the manual, which will include recommendations related to architectural design, urban design, the environmental performance and energy efficiency of the buildings, the management of the neighbourhoods, and the methods for public participation.

The project has started coinciding with the very final stage of this thesis—very close to its submission date—. The results obtained in this thesis can be very helpful for certain parts of the manual, particularly for those that deal with the urban design of the neighbourhoods. The real challenge of this future research will be to establish mechanisms by which public authorities can follow the guidelines that the manual will propose.

94 Original title in Spanish: “Intervención en barriadas residenciales obsoletas: manual de buenas prácticas”. Research Contract between the Agencia de Obra Pública de la Consejería Fomento y Vivienda de la Junta de Andalucía and the Universidad de Sevilla, in which researchers from the PAI (Plan Andaluz de Investigación) groups HUM 666 and TEP 130 participate. The project leader is Carlos García Vázquez, co-director of this thesis.

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