


Article

Co-Producing a Social Impact Assessment with Affected Communities: Evaluating the Social Sustainability of Redevelopment Schemes

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Abstract: This paper explores the role of social impact assessment (SIA) as a tool to evaluate the social sustainability of council estate redevelopment or regeneration. The paper first revises the evolution of the concept of SIA in recent years, arguing that it should be included as a core part of the planning approval process to enhance community-centred planning decision-making practices, as claimed by the Just Space network in London. To contribute to this argument, the paper explores how to co-produce an SIA with those communities that are potentially affected by the scheme. We use as a case study William Dunbar and William Saville houses, two housing blocks located in South Kilburn Estate, London Borough of Brent, which are planned to be demolished as part of a large estate redevelopment scheme. The paper uses a diversity of participatory action research methods to co-produce an SIA with residents from the two housing blocks. From the experience of co-producing an SIA with residents, the paper comes out with three sets of findings and contributions. Firstly, the paper provides findings on the impact that demolishing the homes and re-housing residents would have on residents. Secondly, from these findings, the paper contributes to the argument that SIA should be incorporated into the planning system, but they should be co-produced with residents and carefully applied rather than becoming another box-ticking exercise. Thirdly, the paper provides very relevant methodological contributions on how to co-produce the SIA with those potentially affected.



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1. Introduction

In the current context of the climate emergency, socioeconomic inequality and the problem of housing affordability, it is essential to carefully evaluate—prior to development—the potential impact that housing schemes can have on the environment and on the lives of residents. In England, the current planning system regulates the purpose of Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) [1], the process for determining whether a development needs an EIA or not, preparing it and how it affects decision making. While the environmental sustainability of a scheme can be legally subject to consideration, there is not a formal requirement in the English planning system to prepare a Social Impact Assessment (SIA), which evaluates—prior to development—the likely effects that the scheme can have on the lives of people that live there, on the wider public as well as on the existing social infrastructure that supports social and care relationships. This lack of formal requirement to produce an SIA stems from the imbalance in the weight that ‘social sustainability’ is given in comparison to ‘environmental sustainability’ and ‘economic sustainability’ (financial viability assessments are also required in planning applications).

The concept of an SIA emerged during the 1970s in response to the formal requirements of the American National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) [2,3]. However, several

scholars—in particular Burdge and Vanclay [4], Becker [5] and Vanclay [6]—have argued that the consideration of social impacts existed long before NEPA, and it is situated at the intersection of social sciences and policy-making [7].

The existing literature highlights some main features [8] associated with the SIA process, such as (i) timing: SIA should be involved since the beginning of the engagement process, as it is understood to include adaptive assessment, management and monitoring of impacts, projects and policies [3,6,9]; (ii) scale and actors: SIA can be applied to different scales of intervention, including a wide range of actors [6,10]; (iii) strong relationship between social behaviour and contextualised environment; (iv) sustainability as a main goal of the whole process.

In urban planning, social impact assessment (SIA) refers to ‘assessing [. . .] a broad range of [social] impacts (or effects, or consequences) that are likely to be experienced by an equally broad range of social groups as a result of some course of action’ [7] (p. 452).

During the years, authors have provided multiple definitions of the process. In 1999, Vanclay associated SIA with a “social change processes to create a more sustainable biophysical and human environment” [6], having the potential to “anticipate consequences or effects of a current or proposed action on individuals, organizations or social macro-systems” [11], especially in planning development.

More specifically, social impacts in urban planning can refer to various and diverse aspects, such as quality of housing, local services and living environment, experienced health and security, people’s ways of life, gentrification or segregation, conditions of transportation, etc. [8] (p. 424). For those reasons, in its application to urban planning, SIA is a forecasting perspective tool addressing local residents’ effects, spatial familiarity and attachment and the (social) use value of space, and how these are expected to evolve over spatial transformation processes [12].

Since the late 1980s, social dimensions of urban planning have become a priority in the UK urban policy. The focus has been on community empowerment, local action and governance alongside the ongoing incorporation into a policy of concepts related to social and community sustainability, and, more recently, liveability and well-being [13]. Furthermore, the debate on ‘urban social sustainability’ [13] highlights how social cohesion and inclusion are claimed in theory and policy to support social interaction, engagement, and networks between all residents in the specific neighbourhood where those are living to promote people-centred urban regeneration strategies.

From the methodological approach, SIA (i) collects information on the geographical boundary/spatial dimension of the development or action; (ii) examines the key issues of concern relating to the proposal on the area under examination; (iii) gathers witnesses from stakeholders such as developer, affected individuals, groups or communities and the way in which they are to be included in the assessment process [8,14].

Both scholars and community groups have argued that they should be part of the formal planning process and that SIAs should be co-produced with the potentially affected communities [15,16]. In London in particular, the network of community groups Just Space has proposed using “tools that are open and transparent such as the Social Impact Assessment, that assess existing uses in an area, allow the consideration of alternative proposals and give a high value to social sustainability” [15] (p. 60). SIA is one of the key policy proposals of Just Space’s ‘Towards a Community-Led Plan for London’. It claims that local authorities should set the criteria along community groups and the voluntary sector, and that they should be prepared independently from developers [15] (pp. 63–64). After that, Just Space has kept working on developing the case for the need of SIAs with UCL scholars from the Development Planning Unit. In their report, they claim that SIA must be ‘Participatory’, ‘Pluralistic’, ‘Co-produced’, ‘Independent (from private sector interests)’, ‘Inclusive and Accessible’ and ‘Meaningful’ [16]. These key principles make a strong emphasis on the value of local knowledge and the involvement of the communities by preparing the SIA. This is precisely what this paper focuses on: how to co-produce an SIA *with* communities affected by the development, incorporating diverse voices, par-

ticularly those that are not normally heard in the planning process, and incorporating local knowledge. Building on the work of Just Space and the Development Planning Unit (UCL), the paper provides two sets of contributions. Firstly, through the experience of co-producing an SIA with those residents affected by the planned redevelopment of two council estate housing blocks, it provides empirical evidence on the need of making SIAs 'Participatory', 'Pluralistic', 'Co-produced', 'Independent (from private sector interests)', 'Inclusive and Accessible' and 'Meaningful' [16], rather than as another box-ticking exercise. Secondly, through the case study, the paper provides very relevant methodological contributions on how to co-produce the SIA with those potentially affected.

In London, particularly since 2010, austerity politics and the 'housing crisis' has led local authorities to demolish and redevelop its council estates into 'mixed income developments' with a higher density. This has been linked to a media and political discourse of stigmatising council estates and the people that live there as places of crime and poverty [17]. This political and media discourse, which is not based on scientific evidence, has informed many of the redevelopment schemes, which have proved to have a negative impact on the residents that live in these neighbourhoods. The case of the Heygate Estate in the London Borough of Southwark illustrates the impact that such schemes can have. Before demolition, the estate had 1194 homes at council rent. Once the scheme is completed, it will only have 82 'affordable' units [18]. London Tenants Federation, Loretta Lees, Just Space and the Southwark Notes Archive Group [19] traced where some of the residents had to move: (i) council tenants were displaced to other parts of the borough and some of them out of Southwark; (ii) leaseholders had to move much further away, some of them out of London, since the compensation they receive for their homes is not sufficient to buy a home in the area. This displacement had a strong social impact since it breaks social networks and relationships of care. Assessing the social impact that these redevelopment schemes can potentially have, co-producing assessments with those potentially affected, and exploring alternative proposals that do not have such a social impact can prevent these situations. Therefore, the paper has a particular focus on exploring methods for co-producing an SIA with residents and communities potentially affected by the redevelopment of a social housing estate.

Aim and Objectives

The main objective of this paper is to explore methods for co-producing an SIA with those potentially affected by a housing redevelopment scheme. Through exploring these participatory methods for co-producing SIAs, the paper also aims to provide empirical evidence on the importance of co-producing SIAs with those potentially affected, rather than as a box-ticking exercise.

This paper has a particular focus on residents and communities affected by the redevelopment or regeneration of a social housing estate. Therefore, in order to address the two aims explained above, the paper explains how we co-produced an SIA with residents from two council estate blocks that the local authority is planning to demolish and redevelop. This co-produced SIA aims, firstly, to evaluate the impact that the scheme would have on people that live there, on their daily lives and journeys, on their social relationships, on the mutual help and care relationships among neighbours, and on their home situation. In other words, it assesses the sustainability of the scheme from the social dimension. Secondly, it aims to gather evidence that can inform alternative schemes that have a more positive social impact. Thirdly, it aims to empower communities to influence decisions in the planning process through directly involving them in the co-production of evidence. The research project conducted co-produced an alternative scheme with residents. However, due to the scope of this work, this paper focuses on the methods used to co-produce SIA with the residents and on the evaluation of the social impact of the scheme.

To address these objectives and aims, the paper has the following structure: first, it explains the methods used to co-produce an SIA with residents, which is one of the key contributions of this paper. Based on these methods, the paper develops an analytical

framework for assessing the impact of the redevelopment scheme, which is presented in the results. This framework has three sections: first, we explore residents' social networks and relationships of care and kinship, as well as the collective spaces for social gatherings and how people perceive and use these spaces. Second, we explore the quality of the design of the buildings, the homes and their state of repair and maintenance. Third, we explore the degree to which residents are attached to their flat and feel a sense of belonging [20]. This is closely related to a type of tenure influencing the sense of ownership and residential security regarding the accommodation [21]. Based on the results coming out of this analytical framework, the results section continues by assessing the impact of demolition in contrast with other possible approaches such as refurbishment. Finally, based on these results, it explores alternative proposals that can have a more positive impact on residents. Lastly, the paper outlines which are the key methodological and conceptual conclusions, reflects on the relevance of co-producing an SIA with those potentially affected for assessing the social sustainability of a scheme, and on how the empirical findings can contribute to theory and practice.

2. Materials and Methods

To address these objectives and aims, we have worked with residents from two blocks within South Kilburn Estate in the London Borough of Brent: William Dunbar and William Saville houses, together with the William Dunbar and William Saville Residents' Association and with the local organisation Granville Community Kitchen [22]. The blocks were built between 1959 and 1961 [23]. They are brick blocks of 13 storeys with a modernist architectural style (Figure 1). They have 73 and 74 homes, respectively, of which the majority are council rent homes, some temporary tenants, and 19 leaseholders. South Kilburn is going through a major redevelopment scheme that involves a phased demolition of the whole estate. In the South Kilburn Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) [24] that came out of the New Deal for Communities [25], William Dunbar and William Saville Tower Blocks were planned to be refurbished, not demolished. In 2016, a new Masterplan Review was published [26], which then informed the new South Kilburn SPD [27]. This Masterplan Review and subsequent SPD include the demolition and redevelopment of William Dunbar and William Saville Houses. When residents from WDWS found out that their homes will be demolished at the end of 2016, this came as a great shock to some of the residents. The South Kilburn SPD 2017 was ratified with a residents' ballot, which asked residents from the remaining 17 blocks in South Kilburn to be demolished whether they wanted regeneration to continue and there was a majority of 'yes'. The Masterplan Review 2016 and the South Kilburn SPD 2017 propose demolishing William Dunbar and William Saville Houses, as well as other constructions on the site, and to build a new development with 213 new homes—176 (83%) market and 37 (17%) affordable and commercial units on the ground floor. They are the last phase of the development, and William Dunbar and William Saville residents will be relocated within the South Kilburn Estate.

Our team worked with the residents of the two blocks, with William Dunbar and William Saville Residents' Association and with Granville Community Kitchen on: (i) co-producing an SIA of how the proposed demolition and relocation of the residents would affect their lives, their social and care relationships, and their home situation. This was completed through a series of community workshops using co-production methods, a walk with residents around the blocks and a survey; (ii) co-designing an alternative proposal that explored the possibility of refurbishing the existing homes and adding new homes, community facilities and shops through infill development, providing a similar number of total homes as that proposed in the South Kilburn SPD 2017 but with a much larger proportion of council rent homes. This included urban design and architectural proposals—backed by the evidence collected—and a financial viability assessment prepared by a chartered quantity surveyor; (iii) knowledge exchange between researchers and residents, where researchers gain local knowledge and explore methods for co-production, and residents gain a better understanding of planning and how they can influence decision

making. This paper concentrates on the co-production of the SIA, the methods used and the results of the assessment. However, it is important to understand how this interacts with the other two objectives. The results offer evidence on how residents could be affected by demolition, redevelopment and being rehoused, which contributes to supporting the case on the importance of incorporating SIA in the formal planning process and co-producing it with those potentially affected. Moreover, the results of the study contribute to the debate on urban social sustainability from two perspectives: Firstly, the study highlights how community engagement and inclusion can promote people-centred urban regeneration strategies, embracing a more socially sustainable approach where residents are actively contributing with their needs in the process. Secondly, the results from the study show evidence of a will for an urban sustainable approach to regeneration, which implies refurbishment instead of demolition.



Figure 1. William Dunbar House. A piece of William Saville House can be appreciated at the back. Photograph by the author, May 2019.

The project uses a Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodological approach, which is “a research methodology that combines theory, action and participation (. . .)

committed to further the interests of exploited groups and classes” [28]. London Tenants Federation et al. [19] identified the problems of consultation in their Anti-Gentrification Handbook, where consultation does not really aim to involve the communities in decision-making but gain their agreement with the scheme. Another issue we have observed on estate regeneration consultations is the lack of collective reflection that leads to the cocreation of a community vision. Residents are often consulted individually rather than invited to reflect collectively on the future of their neighbourhood. In response to this, our methodological approach aims to ‘facilitate’ rather than ‘direct’ the design process in a collaborative way, with the aim to co-produce and exchange knowledge, and ultimately contribute to the transformation of the contextualised social relations and realities [29].

Departing from the Just Space and DPU’s principles that an SIA must be ‘Participatory’, ‘Pluralistic’, ‘Co-produced’, ‘Independent (from private sector interests)’, ‘Inclusive and Accessible’ and ‘Meaningful’ [16], we produced a mixed-methods approach, which included participatory observation, desk-based research, a launch event of the project to discuss the objectives of the project with residents, four community workshops to co-produce evidence and cocreate alternative proposals, a collective walk with residents, a survey with a strong focus on the SIA, site visits, a final presentation of the results to residents, and further meetings with residents after the completion of the project.

This assemblage of tools and methods was constantly reconfigured throughout the process. Data analysis, rather than being treated as a separate action, has been conducted simultaneously with the co-production or “research” process [30]. More concretely, after every workshop observation, notes and exercise outputs were processed by developing links and connections among different themes, which allowed the researchers to dig into issues of interest. Topics or issues that had emerged during the workshops influenced and guided the design of the survey, the elaboration of key questions for the following workshops, the design of the collective walk and the framework of the SIA. Below we explain in more detail each of the methods used.

2.1. Co-Production and Co-Design Workshops

Over the time span of the project, four workshops were structured with the aim of collecting qualitative and quantitative data of residents’ current housing situation, daily routines and trips, social relationships with their neighbours, the use of community spaces and other relevant data and of co-producing an SIA, as well as exploring an alternative proposal for regeneration. In addition to these workshops, there was a launch event at the beginning of the project, a presentation at the end of the project, a collective walk around the blocks with the residents, and further meetings with residents after the project ended. Given the importance of considering and exploring the complexity of the effects that demolition might have on residents’ lives, consistent emphasis was placed on the qualitative elements of the analysis. Workshops were key moments to intercept, and in a way even quantify, participants’ feelings, perceptions and considerations about the plans for demolition.

The first workshop focused mainly on co-producing evidence to assess the anticipated social impact of the regeneration scheme proposed by the local authority, which included the demolition of the blocks and the relocation of the residents. We carried out four activities with residents:

- A time-related emotions canvas—a method from the TURAS project [31]—was used to explore emotions in relation to both past experiences and future plans concerning the housing situation of the residents, acknowledging the relevance of emotions in decision-making processes, which are often dismissed (Figure 2);
- A collective mapping exercise facilitated the tracking of residents’ everyday lives (social and spatial), patterns of movement on the estate, their use of public transport, their social networks and interactions, and other everyday activities (Figure 3);
- A drawing-facilitated discussion helped to establish the internal social networks and interactions within and between the two buildings, in order to obtain a better view of

how residents rely on these and what importance or value they attach to them in their everyday life;

- Another canvas helped to measure, according to residents' opinions, the state of the two buildings in terms of maintenance and management by the Council in response to calls for repair, open-up reflections on the sustainability of the regeneration proposal, and to negotiate individual and collective interests concerning regeneration or preservation of the buildings.



Figure 2. Workshop with William Dunbar and William Saville residents, using the time-related emotions canvas, method from the TURAS project [31]. Photography by the authors.



Figure 3. Collective mapping on residents' daily lives.

While the following three workshops had a stronger focus on collectively exploring alternative options for regeneration, further insights were added to the social impact analysis. In workshop 2, residents co-assessed the Council's regeneration plan for the estate, expressing their agreement or disagreement with the guidelines of the scheme.

This helped them also to establish their priorities for regeneration. The discussions held during the following workshops supported the collection of data to evaluate the current overcrowding situation within the buildings, issues related to safety and security, and privacy and, finally, the need for community spaces. The discussions in these workshops also contributed to the design of the survey, exploring which are the key questions that can contribute to assessing the impact of regeneration and the social sustainability of the scheme.

As an additional live interaction, we organised a collective walk with the residents to collect further insights to feed into the analysis. By detecting places and spots that needed to be maintained or refurbished, it was possible to complement, reinforce and spatialise data that had already been collected through the workshops.

2.2. Social Impact Assessment Survey

The results of the social impact assessment are supported by responses to a survey that residents of William Dunbar and William Saville Houses completed between January and March 2020 (see Annex 1). The participants of the survey were recruited during the workshops and also through door-knocking on the flats on these two blocks. A total of 26 responses out of 147 households were collected, which is 17.69% of households. The survey was a key opportunity to have one-to-one meetings with residents—both reaching out to new ones or strengthening relationships with those already participating on the project, to collect deeper insights from their individual experiences, not filtered by a group setting that sometimes can prevent people from speaking up.

2.3. Desk-Based Research

The collection of primary data was supported by a review of secondary sources that included planning documents such as the South Kilburn Supplementary Planning Document [24]—resulting from the New Deal for Communities [25]—the South Kilburn Masterplan Review 2016, the South Kilburn Supplementary Planning Document [27]—which turns the Masterplan Review [26] into policy—as well as reviewing various sites in the regeneration website of the Council, minutes of Cabinet meetings and other related information to better understand the context of the regeneration of the two blocks and the whole South Kilburn Estate. In order to understand the social and cultural composition of the area, we also reviewed the other census data, statistics and area profiles. This included: South Kilburn Area Profile: an equality and socioeconomic profile of residents living in South Kilburn. Brent Council, November 2018 (data based on 2011 census); index of multiple Deprivation 2015 and 2019, accessed from “London datastore” (<https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/indices-of-deprivation>, accessed 2 December 2021); browse the IMD map at parallel.co.uk, based on statistics on relative deprivation in small areas in England published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Publication September 2019. The desk-based research helped to collect some specific qualitative or quantitative aspects that could not be addressed through the workshops and survey. In addition to this, it allowed to map transport links in the local area and its connection with surrounding areas and to detect already existing community assets and spaces of community value in the local area.

3. Results

This section summarises a cross-thematic evaluation of the impact that the demolition of William Dunbar and William Saville Houses and the relocation of the people that live there would have on its residents and the social sustainability of the scheme. Building on the co-production methods outlined above, particularly on the discussions that emerged during the workshops, we cocreated a framework, which outlines the key elements that need to be addressed in the SIA and clusters them in four themes. Figure 4 shows each of the themes, their aims, subtopics, and how each of them is addressed.

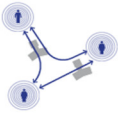



THEME	AIMS	TOPICS	HOW?
 <p>Neighbourhood location and social networks</p>	Identify the impact that demolition and consequent rehousing and geographical relocation can have on social ties and networks in which the residents are embedded.	Social ties and neighbourly relations within buildings Social networks in the area Proximity and location	Provide evidence on current social networks, and to what extent they are embedded in the current configuration of William Dunbar and William Saville Houses and their specific location. Analyse how demolition and relocation might affect these and whether it would disrupt or not social ties and networks.
 <p>Community spaces and facilities</p>	Scrutinise how community infrastructure will potentially be affected by the demolition of the existing physical infrastructure that currently hosts these facilities.	Outdoor community spaces and green areas Leisure spaces Community facilities	Provide evidence of existing community spaces and facilities, what they mean to and how they are valued by the current residents, and their importance. Analyse how demolition and redevelopment could impact these community spaces.
 <p>Maintenance and repair</p>	Diagnose the quality of design of the buildings, their state of maintenance and identify needs for repairs, refurbishment and improvements. (This would require an additional detailed study by a surveyor)	Quality of design Outdatedness State of maintenance Irreparable damage	Provide evidence of the quality of design of the buildings, in comparison with the quality of design that new build homes in the area have. Identify what needs better maintenance, what needs to be improved, and what needs to be replaced.
 <p>Housing, tenure and health</p>	Establish an overview of the impact of demolition and redevelopment on residents in relation to their current housing situation.	Housing aspirations Quality, design and composition of current flats Security of tenure Affordability Overcrowding Additional infill homes Health	Understand residents' emotional perception of the experience of moving out. Analyse residents' sense of attachment to their flats. Provide evidence of the benefits or disadvantages of current quality, composition and size of flats, and of its affordability for current residents. Provide evidence of residents' preferences on whether remaining council tenants or being transferred to a housing association. Analyse what does it mean for residents to be a council tenants and the consequences this entails. Assess the impact of demolition and change of tenancy on the residents.

Figure 4. Framework for the social impact assessment. Elaborated by the authors.

Departing from this framework, we structured the SIA in three parts: first, assessing the current living conditions, social relations and relation to the built environment of the residents, looking at the different topics outlined in the framework (Figure 4); second, evaluating the social sustainability of the scheme by assessing the impact of it, contrasting the possible impact of demolition with an alternative approach that explores the refurbishment of the buildings; third, exploring alternative community-led proposals that could have a more positive impact on residents.

3.1. Assessing the Current Living Situation, Social Relations and Relations to the Built Environment of Residents

Based on the framework, we have summarised the results in three topics, which joins the first two topics of the table in one:

- Location and community infrastructure for neighbourly relations;
- Maintenance and management by the council;
- Security of tenure, housing affordability, aspirations, and overcrowding.

3.1.1. Location and Community Infrastructure for Neighbourly Relations

During the first workshop, the importance of their location in their everyday life experience was pointed out by the majority of participants to be one of the key aspects valued most about living in the two buildings. Beyond the well connectivity of the site to

other parts of London through an optimal public transport network, residents also highly appreciate the neighbourhood and the local community. During workshop 1, some key reasons emerged regarding the satisfaction of residents with the neighbourhood and the local community (in the hierarchy of popularity among respondents):

- Transport connection.
- Satisfaction with shops.
- Feeling of belonging to the community.
- Affordability of services.
- Beauty of the area.
- Location of family members.
- Location of working place.

This point of view is confirmed, as shown in Figure 5, by the fact that in the survey, 22 out of 26 participants asserted that they are extremely satisfied with their current location (Figure 5). The survey also confirmed some of the key reasons why location was very important for residents (Figure 6).

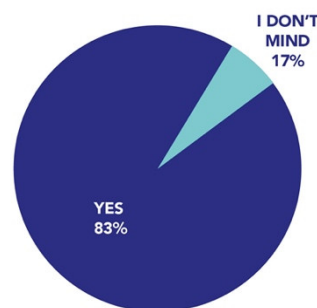


Figure 5. Survey: Q10: Are you satisfied with the current location of your home?

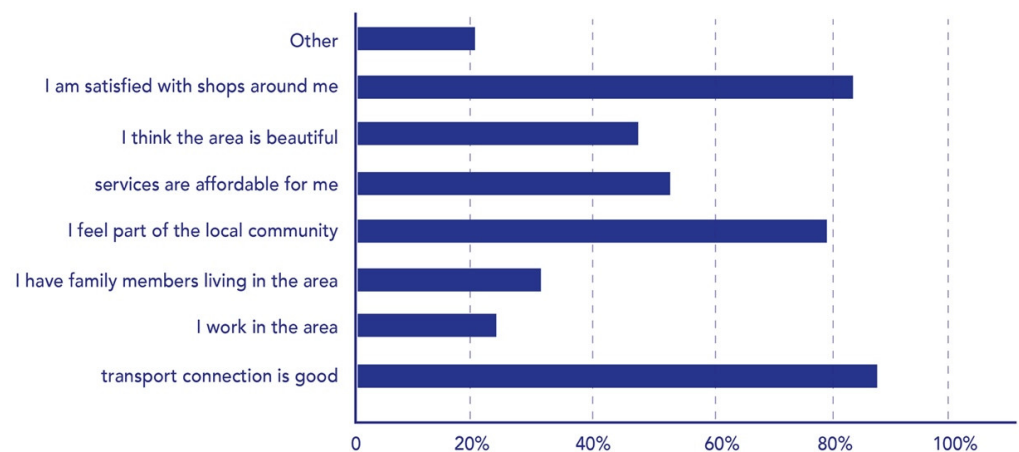


Figure 6. Survey: Q11: Indicate the main reason(s) for which you would not change your current location. You can pick as many answers as you want.

The results from the workshops and the survey highlighted the fact that William Dunbar and William Saville Houses have a high density of interactions and relationships between residents, which appears to be strong and important enough to make 28% of survey respondents feel these relations “mean a lot to them” (see Figure 7). All the residents we surveyed asserted to know at least one other resident in their building or in both buildings (see Figure 8), and all 12 participants in workshop 1 indicated they know neighbours living on the same floor, meet them in the corridor, and most of them even inside their flats too. Furthermore, most participants indicated they know residents living on other floors in their building as well. These relationships go beyond mere cohabitation and imply interactions

of mutual help and reciprocity, as evidenced by Figure 9, which shows that 43% of the respondents of the survey “regularly receive help from the same neighbours”.

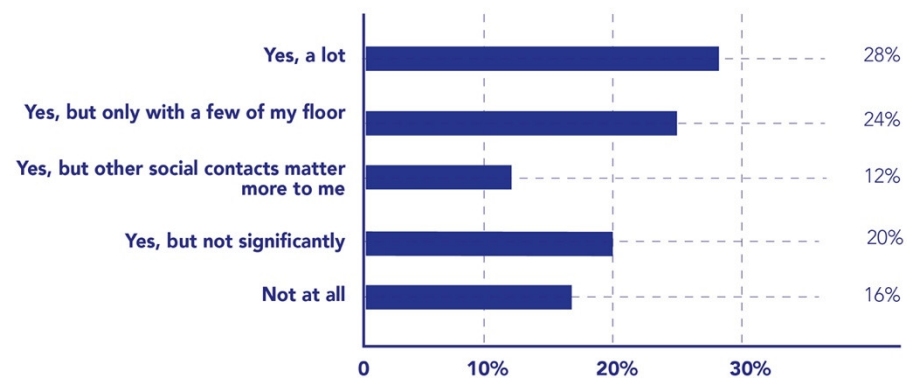


Figure 7. Survey: Q7: Are your relations with neighbours in the tower important for you?

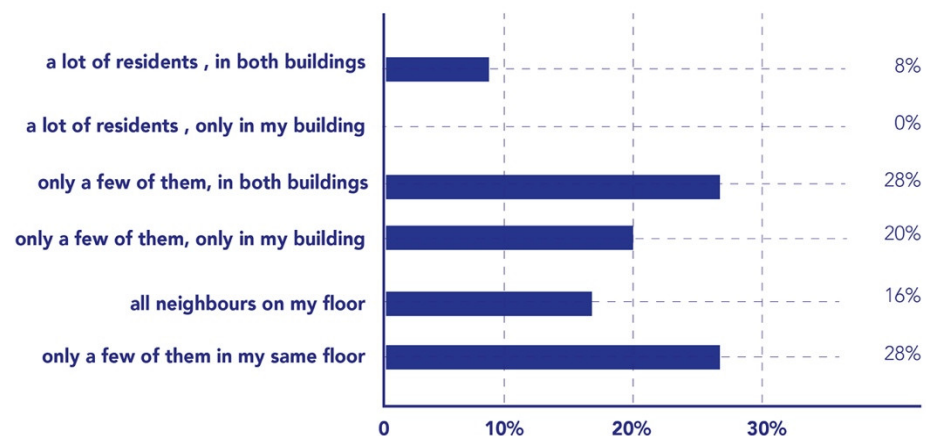


Figure 8. Survey: Q6: Do you know your neighbours?

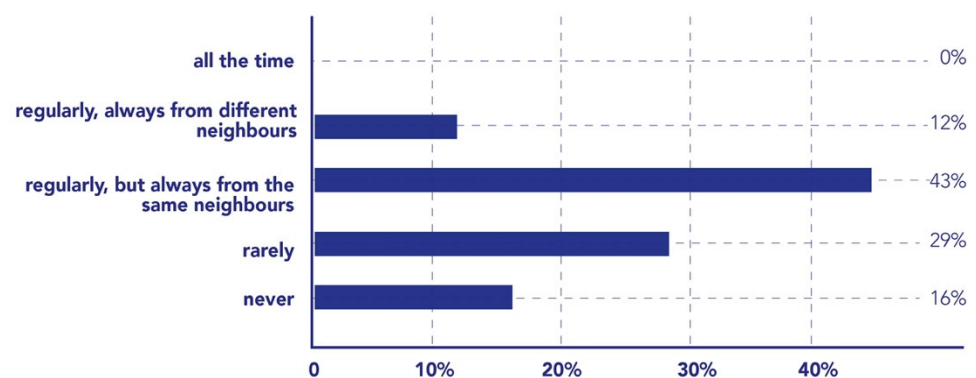


Figure 9. Survey: Q8: Do you offer or receive help to or from a neighbour?

However, the majority of residents who participated in this project expressed concerns about the fact that relationships within the buildings and within the estate do not have the space to flourish to their full potential, since they feel like they do not really have a decent space to come together and interact. Results from workshop 2 and the survey show to what extent current common spaces in the buildings are used (Figure 10) and how they are perceived by residents. Among the three key common spaces, the Resident Room seems to be the community space that is being used most, as 46% of the respondents indicated they use it “often”. On the other hand, the garden and the allotments are underused, mainly

because it is divided by several physical barriers and have been badly maintained for the past years.

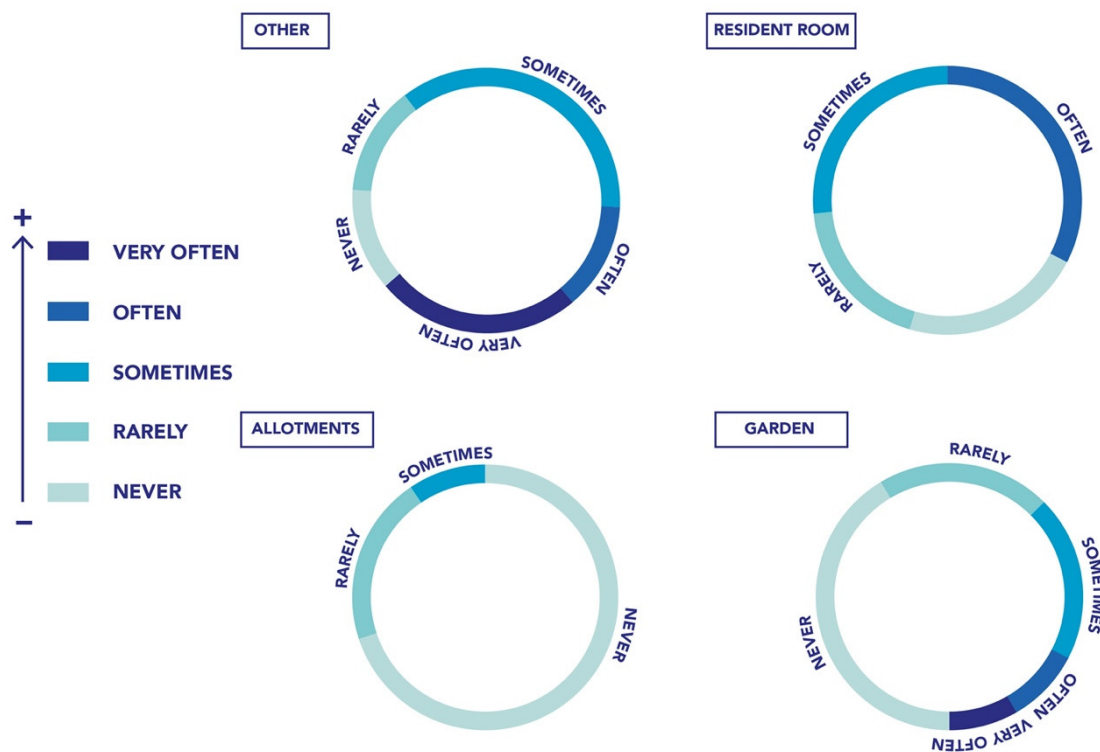


Figure 10. Survey: Q12: How often do you make use of common spaces within the buildings?

In general, some of the long-term residents mentioned multiple times during the workshops how they perceived that the gradual loss of existing common spaces within the buildings (e.g., the loss of the old IT Room) and in the immediate surrounding (e.g., Falcon Pub and Peel Precinct shopping area) over the years has contributed to a general community dispersion as well. Accordingly, 72% of the residents who were surveyed said they want and need more community spaces and facilities (see Figure 11).

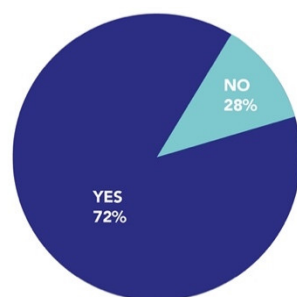


Figure 11. Survey: Q13: Do you think there should be more common spaces and community facilities in WDWS Houses, and if so, what should these be?

3.1.2. Maintenance and Management by Brent Council

Even though the majority of residents who completed the survey seem to be satisfied with the general level of maintenance and current state of the buildings, 33% of the respondents asserted not to be satisfied with it (Figure 12). By digging further into the issue during the workshops and the conversations that emerged while conducting the surveys, residents especially pointed out the need for cleaner shared spaces, such as hallways and lifts, and the need for the improvement of facades and entrances. Residents also complained about a series of maintenance issues directly related to flats concerning dampness, mould,

rust and the need for better ventilation, which they identified as first priorities for repair. Furthermore, residents stated being unsatisfied with the current waste management system: since the recycling bins are not effective, waste is always accumulating outside the bins and elsewhere on the estate. During the collective walk we also verified that the ceiling is too low on the way to the fire escape, which makes it dangerous in case of emergencies.

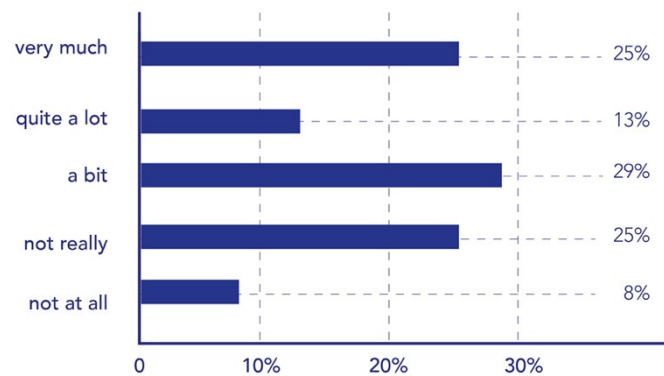


Figure 12. Survey: Q19: Are you satisfied with the general level of maintenance of the building?

During workshop 1, residents even referred to a sort of ‘managed decline’ of the estate, leading to problems that might have been easily prevented if mitigated instantly. Residents disclosed that this deterioration has sometimes led the way to acts of vandalism and contributes to undermining mutual respect and pleasant cohabitation. Consequently, issues of poor maintenance have an apparent impact on residents’ quality of life at home, especially since it became clear that residents are not only concerned with personal interests and their individual flats but also attach importance to those collective benefits that common spaces can help or prevent creating.

On the other hand, residents are really satisfied with the general quality and design of the buildings and their flats in specific. During the collective walk with the residents, we were able to verify that inside the flats, the heating system and insulation function well, since it was warm inside on a cold day (30 November 2019, average temperature of 3 °C). Lifts, common windows and floors in the hallways and staircases are in good condition (although not very clean, as a confirmation of what was stated above). The lifts have recently been changed. Doors to the flats and personal electricity cupboards have also been recently refurbished. Windows inside the flats and in hallways have been replaced since the original construction and they are in a good state of maintenance, although they have not been changed in the last ten years.

However, despite these negative perceptions of the level of maintenance, the survey results reflected that overall there is a good level of satisfaction with the current management of the buildings led by the council, since only 21% of the respondents are not satisfied and 42% said they are very much or quite a lot satisfied (see Figure 13). Nonetheless, some residents believe the council could perform better in fulfilling its duties and in involving its residents more transparently in the decision-making processes behind the management, as 56% of the respondents asserted they wished to gain ‘a bit more’ or ‘much more’ decision-making power (Figure 14). Still, 95% of the respondents affirmed that they did not want the management to be handed over to a housing association, as they perceive Brent Council to be a more responsive, loyal, transparent, fair and accountable housing management service (Figure 15).

3.1.3. Security of Tenure, Affordable Housing and Overcrowding

As Figure 14 shows, most survey respondents (95%) wish to remain a council tenant, rather than being transferred to a housing association. Actually, one of the aspects residents value most about living in William Dunbar and William Saville Houses—according to residents who participated in workshop 1—is the ‘ownership by the council’. A lot of

them regard Brent Council as more accountable and responsive than a housing association. Others see the security of tenure of their next of kin being threatened by the transfer to a housing association, particularly around the succession of tenancy. Furthermore, the biggest concern of council tenants being transferred to a housing association is the increase in expenses, that is, rent and service charges, but also energy bills. Figure 16 illustrates the fact that people can afford their rent and service charges but would struggle to pay more rent and service charges.

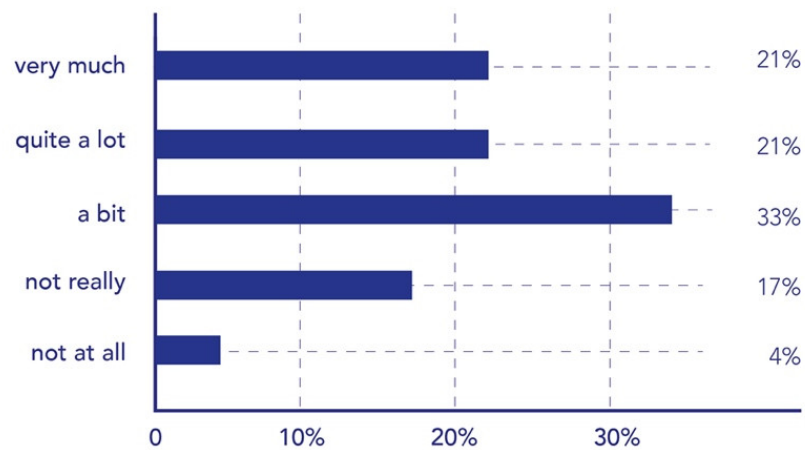


Figure 13. Survey: Q21: Are you satisfied with the current management of the buildings led by the council?

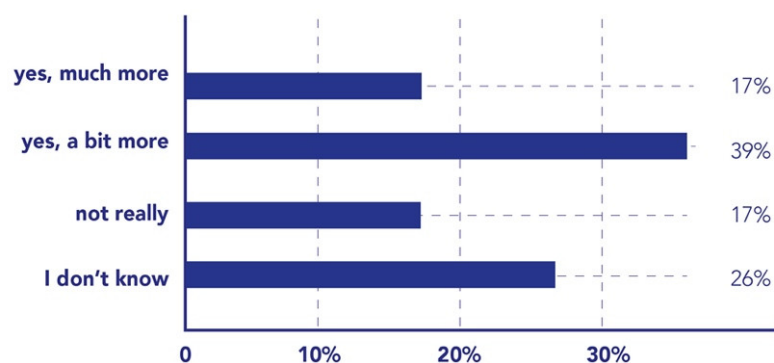


Figure 14. Survey: Q22: Would you like to gain more decision-making power regarding the management of the buildings?



Figure 15. Survey: Q14: If you are a council tenant, would you wish to remain a council tenant or be transferred to a housing association?

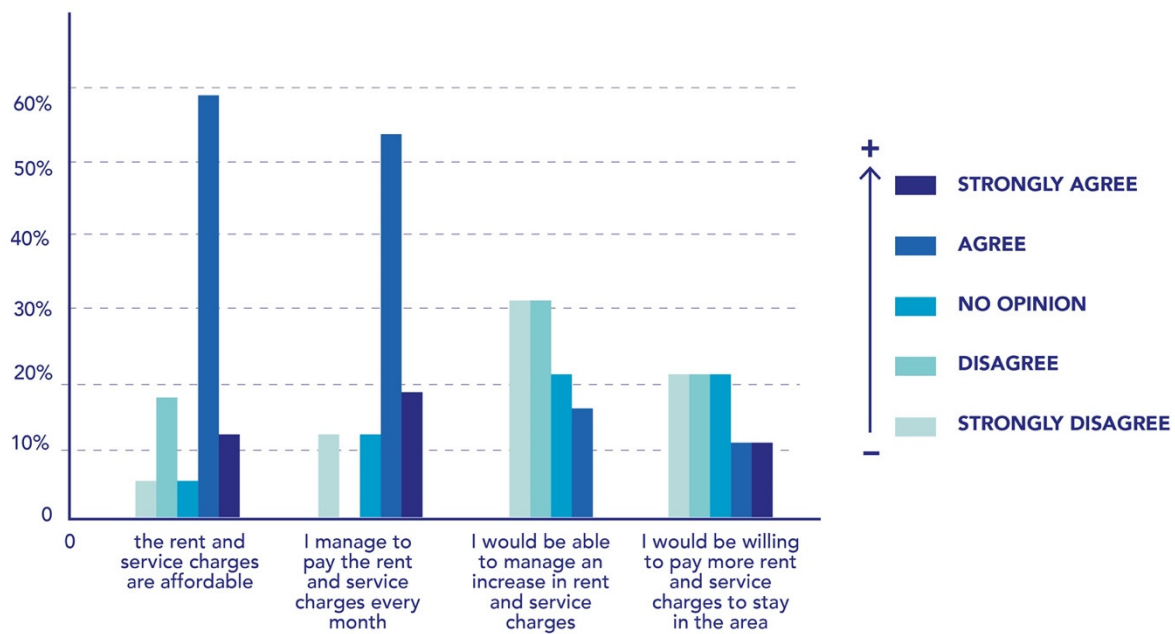


Figure 16. Survey: Q17: Do you agree with the following statements about rent and service charges?

The majority of the residents who were involved in either the survey or the workshops are satisfied with their current living situation, feel attached to their flat and feel a level of ownership over their flat. Most of them said they would not want to live elsewhere, and some of them even expressed their fear of being moved elsewhere, as some residents expressed during workshop 1 and expressed in the survey (Figure 17). The individual flats themselves, and more specifically their quality of design, with their spacious rooms and separate kitchens, play an important role in the attachment of the residents towards their living and housing situation. For many residents, living in William Dunbar or William Saville is the materialisation of their housing aspirations, since it allowed them to build up a (family) life in a decent and respectable context and home. This has proven to be very empowering to them. To a lot of residents, their flats are constitutive of a sense of security and of home, considering that a lot of residents have been living in the same flat for years.

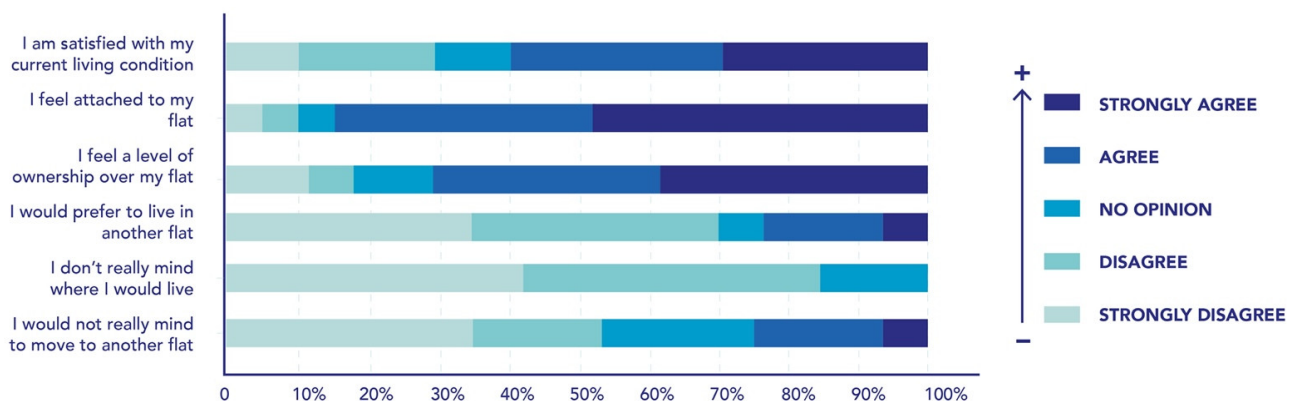


Figure 17. Survey: Q23: How do you feel about the following statement?

Others are attached to their flat and feel ownership over it but are, however, not satisfied with their current living situation. Approximately half of the flats surveyed consist of households with children, with up to four children in some cases. Considering there are only one- and two-bedroom flats, some of those households are being confronted with a situation of overcrowding (Figure 18). The results of the survey indicate that half of the households living in two-bedroom flats—which constitutes 35% of the total of

respondents—are currently living in a flat that is too small for the size of the household. However, this number only represents the results of a sample of 26 respondents, so we do not have a complete image of overcrowding in the two buildings.

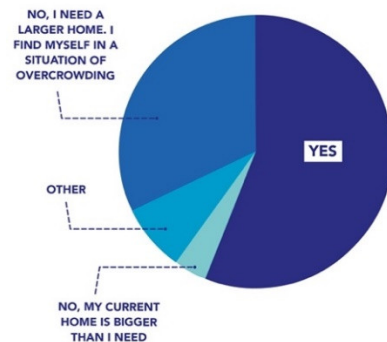


Figure 18. Survey: Q16: Are you satisfied with your current home size?

3.2. Assessing the Impact of Regeneration: Demolition or Refurbishment

Being highly satisfied with their current location and given that neighbourly relations are significant and important to William Dunbar and William Saville Houses' residents, 39% of the respondents to the survey evaluated that they would be negatively and disruptively affected if they had to move elsewhere and separate from their current neighbours (Figure 19). Relocation would mean dismantling the local community, which today signifies safety and comfort to the majority of residents (Figure 20). When considering the social sustainability of a scheme, this disruption in people's social relationships needs to be considered. Therefore, regeneration through refurbishment could reassure residents in terms of location and preserve existing relations, allowing for the re-arrangement and improvement of community spaces, which would further enhance the buildings' social network.

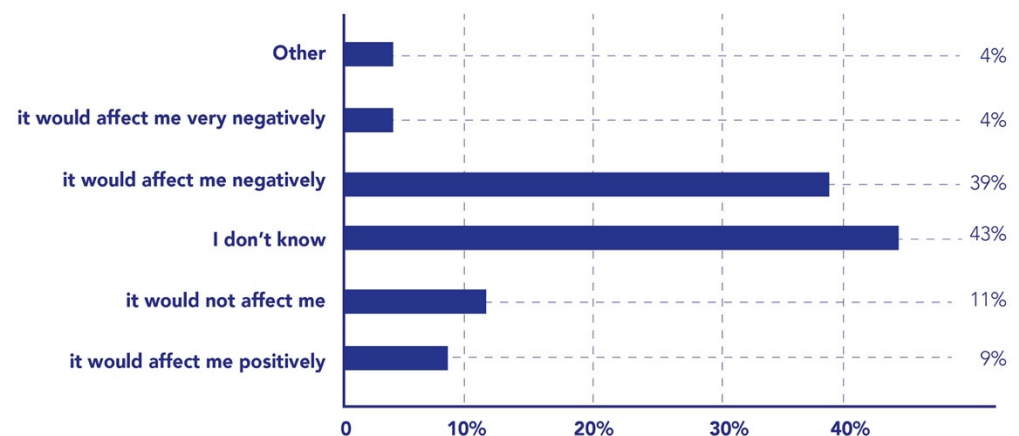


Figure 19. Survey: Q9: If you moved to a different building than your neighbours, how do you think it would affect you?

In previous regeneration phases in South Kilburn Estate, demolition and redevelopment have supposed the transfer to a housing association. However, residents prefer Brent Council to be in charge of the maintenance and management and the buildings rather than a housing association, so they would not want this transfer to happen. Furthermore, since residents are extremely satisfied with the design of flats and the two buildings in general, they believe the quality of the new development would not be able to meet the same standard and mean a decrease in the quality of design of the flats and buildings (Figure 20). Therefore, they are convinced that the refurbishment of entrances and facades, further and better maintenance of those spaces that have recently been refurbished and, in

general, better care for common areas would ensure the improvement of quality of the site and, therefore, of their housing experience.

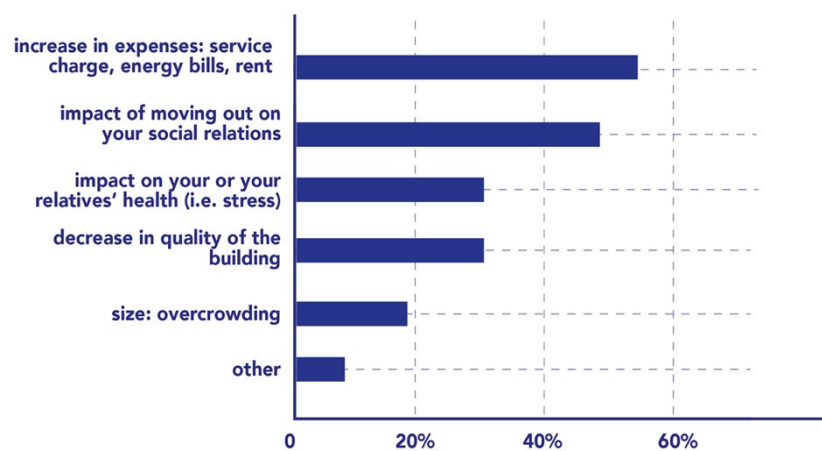


Figure 20. Survey: Q25: Select what are your major concerns in relation to demolition and moving out?

Next to this, demolition and redevelopment would put at stake the level of attachment and ownership residents feel towards their flats. Along with the physical stress of moving out, their psychological wealth and confidence would be put at risk as they would be confronted with feelings of uncertainty about the future, marked by the fear to end up in a worse living situation than the current one, seeing their housing attainments being annulled (Figure 20). Leaseholders see their efforts to buy their own flats evaporating. Most of the leaseholders that participated in the survey and the workshops want to remain in the buildings, since they fear that eventual compensations for their flats in case of relocation will not be fair or high enough to afford decent flats in decent locations. Most of them are willing to contribute to the costs of refurbishment, as long as it happens proportionately. Nevertheless, there are fears about receiving high bills for the refurbishment of the flats, as has happened in other local authorities in London. Even for the respondents dealing with a situation of overcrowding, they would prefer to stay put on site, but in a more spacious flat. This is for reasons of attachment and affordability but also because one of the biggest concerns of a lot of residents is to face even worse situations of overcrowding, since a lot of newly built flats are not as spacious. What residents fear most, according to the survey results, are the increase in expenses and the impact of moving out on their social relations (Figure 20).

To conclude the analysis, it is key to underline that, among those residents that responded to the survey and came to the workshops, there was an overwhelming preference for refurbishment rather than demolition. In total, 83% of respondents expressed in the survey they would prefer refurbishment of the existing buildings, with additional housing through infill, avoiding relocation (Figure 21). The residents that participated in the workshops were also against demolition.

3.3. Exploring Alternative Options for Regeneration

3.3.1. Improvement through Refurbishment

Even though the residents who participated in this research do not agree with demolition, this does not mean they think regeneration is not necessary. In contrast, residents demonstrated to have consistent knowledge of their needs in terms of housing and asserted to be absolutely in favour of regeneration, if it means 'improvement' of the current condition. However, throughout the project, it became explicit how different William Dunbar and William Saville Houses are in terms of needs and general conditions of the building as compared to other buildings within the South Kilburn Estate, and that, therefore, they

should be treated differently in the regeneration process, i.e., they should not be demolished and redeveloped.

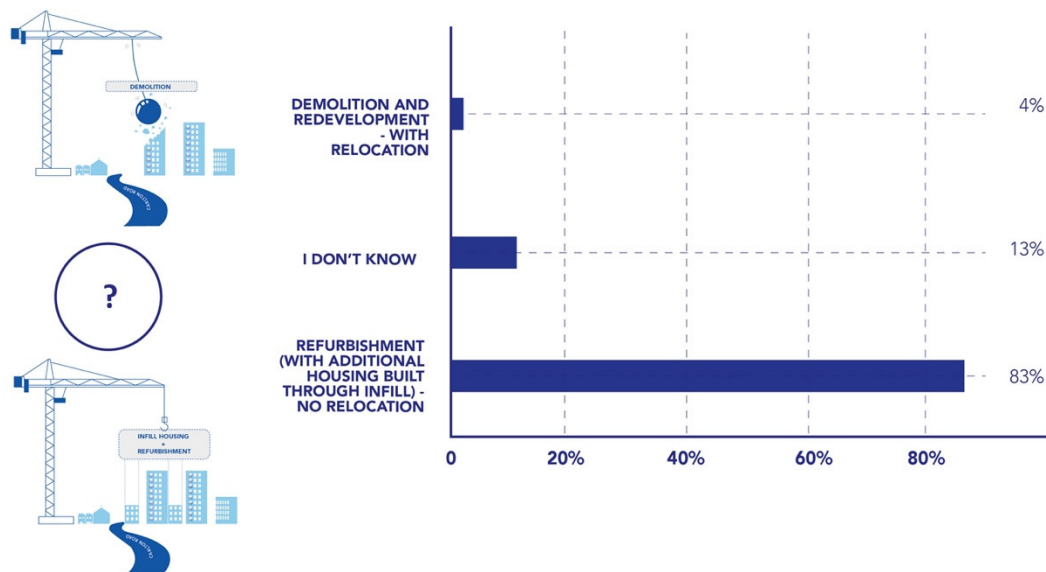


Figure 21. Survey: Q24: If you had to choose on the future of WDWS towers, which form of regeneration would you prefer?

In fact, during workshop 2, when our team and the residents participating collectively analysed and assessed South Kilburn Masterplan Review 2016 [26] and SPD 2017 [27], residents approved and welcomed all general requirements stated by Brent Council concerning the improvements on the built environment and the community facilities, and all those proposals that would improve the quality of life of current residents in the area. However, in contrast, they universally rejected all those site-specific requirements that would imply the demolition of the two buildings. This fact demonstrates that, even though they believe that the buildings are in a good state and their design stands out in quality, they acknowledge the need for intervention. All the problematic issues raised by residents could be solved, according to them, through a more viable and sustainable solution than demolition, focussing on improvement of the existing conditions through refurbishment and repair, and a more proactive maintenance and management strategy in the future.

The discontent of the residents with the current regeneration plan for William Dunbar and William Saville House is reinforced by another issue, which is the lack of meaningful participation in the regeneration process. In contrast, residents who participated in the workshops appreciated the co-design methodology our team has used, expressing that it provided a space to discuss the needs.

3.3.2. Infill Homes

In order to meet Brent Council's proposed increase in density and to address issues of overcrowding on-site, the refurbishment strategy should be complemented with the provision of additional homes on-site. The lack of three- and four-bedrooms homes could be addressed through an infill densification scheme, so overcrowded families that are currently living in William Dunbar and William Saville Houses could move to these new homes. Residents agree that solving the issue of overcrowding should be at the core of designing the scheme for infill homes on-site.

3.3.3. Community's Priorities for Regeneration

Our team and the residents co-assessed what interventions should be taken to improve the current condition where needed. Some key priorities are listed below:

- Refurbishment of flats affected by problems related to dampness, mould, rust, need for better ventilation, pigeon disturbances on the roof;

- Refurbishment of facades and re-arrangement of entrances;
- Reconfiguration of the garden, improving its quality and usability;
- Provision of more qualitative community spaces;
- Building new infill family-size homes;
- Develop a reshuffling scheme so that families currently living in overcrowded flats in William Dunbar or William Saville Houses can move to bigger flats in the same site;
- Make the buildings fire safe and more secure.

4. Conclusions

This paper has explored methods to incorporate the involvement of people directly affected by a redevelopment scheme in the co-production process of a social impact assessment. Therefore, the contribution of this study is not the application of the SIA itself in planning, but the experimentation of methods for engaging residents' voices in the co-production of an SIA, as well as providing empirical evidence that supports the importance of the involvement of residents in the process for a more socially sustainable approach to regeneration. Taking as a point of departure Freudenberg's [7] definition of SIA as the tool to assess the likely social impact that a scheme has, and also the principles outlined by Just Space and the UCL Development Planning Unit [16] that an SIA must be 'Participatory', 'Pluralistic', 'Co-produced', 'Independent from private sector interests', 'Inclusive and Accessible' and 'Meaningful' [16], we explored how to take these principles into practice. For doing so, we used a participatory action research methodology [28,29], where we involved participants in the production of the SIA through a series of workshops that had activities that encouraged collective reflection and empathy. From these workshops, we came out with a framework to analyse the potential social impact of the redevelopment scheme that the local authority is proposing for William Dunbar and William Saville houses, i.e., to assess the social sustainability of the scheme. From this experimental project, we come out with three sets of findings and contributions: firstly, the paper provides a methodological contribution on how SIA can be co-produced with residents and communities, which can provide insights on what the requirements could be for producing an SIA when considering a scheme that potentially will affect many residents; secondly, the paper produces specific findings for the case study on the likely social impact that demolishing the blocks and re-housing the residents would have on them; thirdly, from this experience with this case study, we contribute to the debate on the importance on developing SIA as part of the planning process, and provide empirical evidence that supports that these SIAs need to be genuinely co-produced with the potentially affected communities. These three findings contribute to the discussion on the social sustainability of social housing redevelopment schemes. The findings provide evidence that support the need to involve residents in assessing the social impact of a redevelopment scheme, the implications that this active participation of residents can have on evaluating the scheme, and the need to look carefully at the impact of demolishing existing homes and relocating its residents.

Based on the findings for the specific case study, it emerges that demolition instead of refurbishment is not socially sustainable for the local community. In fact, the co-production of the SIA with residents from William Dunbar and William Saville houses found that the demolition of the homes and re-housing of the residents will likely have a negative impact on the residents, since it will affect the existing social relationships of care, friendship and acquaintanceship between neighbours, which is something that residents value a lot. The current location of the buildings and the links to public transport and other facilities is something that could be lost if residents are relocated. The experience of moving, and the uncertainty on when they will be asked to move, also produces a feeling of stress on residents, which can have a negative impact on the health of the residents. Furthermore, residents demonstrated an emotional attachment to their homes, which gives them a sense of ownership and security. They also like the design and quality of their flats, and fear that new flats could have smaller spaces and worse quality, given what they have seen in new developments in the area.

These results demonstrate the importance of co-producing an SIA with those potentially affected by a development and including this in the planning process. This paper contributes to Lipietz et al. [16] argument on including SIAs in the planning process that are ‘co-produced’ and ‘meaningful’. The paper demonstrates that these two principles—co-produced and meaningful—are essential for involving potentially affected people in producing the SIA. During the workshops, residents highlighted that the consultations and ballot processes they had participated in did not have this collective reflection and valued the opportunity to truly discuss and reflect on the implications of the scheme. This demonstrates that SIA cannot be another box-ticking exercise to be granted planning permission. It needs to be truly co-produced with those potentially affected.

In connection to this finding, this paper has provided a methodology and a framework for co-producing an SIA with those affected. The methodology set our positionality as cocreators of the SIA, where our role was to facilitate the overall project to exchange knowledge with participants. The methods used in the workshops provided a space for collective reflection and empathy, which provided participants with the space to discuss the potential impact of the proposals. The initial results of these knowledge-exchange workshops provided the base to design the survey and the analytical framework.

Further studies can explore how to combine assessing the social sustainability of a scheme with the economic and environmental sustainability, looking at the financial viability of schemes as well as the carbon emissions through a life carbon assessment. This is something that this project already initiated through the collaboration with professionals and researchers that assess the economic and environmental implications of the scheme, but that can be further explored in future projects and publications.

To conclude, the specific findings on the potential social impact of the redevelopment of William Dunbar and William Saville houses provide very relevant contributions to the importance of producing social impact assessments that are co-produced with people affected and which use a methodology that allows those affected to collectively reflect and consider the likely impact that the scheme could have on them. Incorporating this in the planning process and ensuring that residents are involved in the elaboration of them, can prevent schemes from having a negative impact on communities and can truly include people in the decision-making process on the future of their neighbourhoods.

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Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

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