

ENGAGING COMMUNITIES IN CITY-MAKING

Edited by
Lucy Natarajan
Michael Short

Engaged Urban Pedagogy

Participatory practices in planning
and place-making

UCLPRESS

An aerial photograph of a city skyline at sunset. The sky is filled with warm, orange and yellow light, with scattered clouds. Several construction cranes are visible, some with their long jibs extending across the frame. The buildings are a mix of modern high-rises and older, lower-rise structures. The overall scene conveys a sense of active urban development and growth.

Engaged Urban Pedagogy

ENGAGING COMMUNITIES IN CITY-MAKING

Series editors

Sarah Bell, Tadhg Caffrey, Barbara Lipietz and Pablo Sendra

This series contributes to the urgent need for creativity and rigour in producing and sharing knowledge at the interface of urban communities and universities to support more sustainable, just and resilient cities. It aims to amplify community voices in scholarly publishing about the built environment, and encourages different models of authorship to reflect research and pedagogy that is co-produced with urban communities. It includes work that engages with the theory and practice of community engagement in processes and structures of city-making. The series will reflect diverse urban communities in its authorship, topics and geographical range.

Engaging Communities in City-making aims to become a central hub for investigation into how disciplinarity, transdisciplinarity and interdisciplinarity can enable schools, teacher trainers and learners to address the challenges of the twenty-first century in knowledgeable and critically informed ways. A focus on social justice is a key driver. The series explores questions about the powers of knowledge, relationships between the distribution of knowledge and knowledge resources in society, and matters of social justice and democratisation. It is committed to the proposition that the answers to questions about knowledge require new thinking and innovation, that they are open questions with answers that are not already known and which are likely to entail significant social and institutional change to make the powers of knowledge and of knowing equally available to all.

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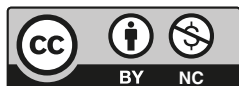
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Contents

<i>List of figures</i>	vii
<i>List of tables</i>	viii
<i>List of contributors</i>	ix
<i>Preface</i>	xvii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xviii
1 Towards an engaged urban pedagogy <i>Lucy Natarajan and Michael Short</i>	1
Section I: Reviewing curricula	23
2 Race and space: a pedagogic intervention <i>Yasminah Beebeejaun and Catalina Ortiz</i>	27
3 Queering the built environment curriculum <i>Celine Lessard, Renée Etokakpan, Juliana Martins, Corin Menuge, Jordan Rowe, Ramandeep Shergill and Michael Short</i>	44
4 Co-designing educational assessments with students and external partners <i>Gemma Moore and Maria Xypaki</i>	61
5 Engaged pedagogy, informality and collaborative governance in South Africa <i>Stuart Paul Denoon-Stevens, Lauren Andres, Martin Lewis, Lorena Melgaço, Verna Nel and Elsona van Huyssteen</i>	85

Section II: Providing teaching	103
6 Planning imaginations and the pedagogic value of external guest speakers	109
<i>Lucy Natarajan and Mike Raco</i>	
7 Co-Producing planning? Neighbourhood planning as the context for participative pedagogy	125
<i>Elena Besussi and Sue Brownill</i>	
8 Podcasting and collaborative learning practices in place-making studies	144
<i>Silvia Gullino, Simeon Shtebunaev and Elodie Wakerley</i>	
9 Adapting the Civic Design Method to digital learning and collaboration with communities	162
<i>Pablo Sendra and Domenico Di Siena</i>	
Section III: Embedding practices	181
10 Co-production and the pedagogy of exchange: lessons from community research training in Birmingham	185
<i>Sara Hassan and Liam O'Farrell</i>	
11 Role play activities: a methodology for transformative participation	207
<i>Teresa Strachan</i>	
12 City-to-city learning as impulse for engaged urban pedagogy	226
<i>Raphael Sedlitzky and Fernando Santomauro</i>	
13 Building together and co-building the city: do it yourself!	241
<i>Dominique Lancrenon, Stephan Hauser, Patrick Le Bellec and Melia Delplanque</i>	
Conclusions	
14 Critical pedagogy with urban participation	258
<i>Lucy Natarajan and Michael Short</i>	
<i>Index</i>	270

List of figures

1.1	Activities around a nexus of built environment higher education. Source: Author	3
1.2	Lammasu public art (left); queering public space (right). Source: Author	13
4.1	The domains of engaged learning within an MSc module. Source: Author	75
4.2	Summary of the action research process as applied in the coursework. Source: Authors	78
8.1	Workflow with timeline and main phases of the project. Source: Author	151
9.1	Circular process canvas in use May 2020. Source: Author	173
9.2	Civic realm canvas in use May 2020. Source: Author	175
9.3	Collective intelligence canvas in use May 2020. Source: Author	177
10.1	Area map of the USE-IT! transect. Source: Author	189
11.1	Diamond-ranking activity (based on Woolner <i>et al.</i> , 2010). Source: Author	216
11.2	'Canny' planners; the Healthy High Street game. Source: Author	217
12.1	Common challenge as entry point for actors in city-to-city learning (Sedlitzky and Santomauro, 2022).	230
13.1	Example activities of the Dunkerquois participatory circular project. Source: Author	248
13.2	Example of furniture created by En Rue. Source: Author	249
13.3	The abandoned garden city where the event took place. Source: Author	252
13.4	Map of the north region of France, with the metropolitan area of Dunkirk in dark grey, and the city of Teteghem in red. Source: Author	254
13.5	Map of the metropolitan area of Dunkirk, with the city of Teteghem highlighted in red. Made by S. Hauser on QGIS and based on OpenStreetMap.	254
14.1	Model for engaged urban pedagogy.	259

List of tables

4.1	Findings from workshop activity 1	71
4.2	Findings from workshop activity 2	72
4.3	Principles for co-designing educational assessment with community partners	73
4.4	Co-designing assessments with community partners – principles and practice	81
7.1	Phases of localism (adapted from Tait and Inch, 2016)	129
7.2	The neighbourhood planning initiatives	132
8.1	Relevant features emerged to guide the design and development of teacher-generated podcasts in Drivers of Change	158
11.1	Impact on young people’s personal outlook (Hromek and Roffey, 2009)	219
11.2	Impact on young people’s social and wider world outlook (Hromek and Roffey, 2009)	221
11.3	Creating a young person’s sense of agency and a desire to take action	222

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Preface

During 2019, while co-teaching our university students about the management challenges that built environment professionals face today, we started to have a conversation about how to promote learning for students who come from a wide variety of backgrounds. We were also reflecting on our different intellectual starting points – given Michael’s central interest in the quality of design outcomes in place-making and Lucy’s core focus on the democratic potential within processes of planning for urban development – and how we were both driven by a focus on stakeholder engagement. Although we might not have described it as such at the time, together we were pursuing a more critical, participatory and equitable form of pedagogy for urbanism.

The genesis of those discussions led to further explorations during the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, culminating in research exchanges at the UK-Ireland Planning Research Conference 2020, hosted by the Bartlett School of Planning. We were worried about how participatory activities in teaching, research and urban development practices might fare if we were all socially isolated for long periods. We were able to reach out to others who we knew already shared our concern for ‘widening participation’ in our fields – we were hoping to at least talk it through. Others joined the debates, and there were even more questions around who might be involved in this ‘nexus’ of urban learning and to what end.

What struck us throughout was the recognition that built environment higher education is bound with urban development in very specific ways. There were such fruitful discussions about where the worlds of teaching, research and practice meet, and we agreed to look to publish examples and reflect on them. It didn’t take long to agree that a work of this type should be open access and we were extremely fortunate to gain the support for this book from UCL Press. Along the way we have been heartened by the encouragement of others for the ideas behind *Engaged Urban Pedagogy*, and we very much see this as the starting point for ongoing exchanges.

Acknowledgements

We owe an enormous debt of gratitude to all the students whose learning experiences have helped shape this book; to each of the contributors for their dedication to the project; to the organisers and others involved in the Bartlett School of Planning research conference 2019 for the insights and exchanges; to Pat Gordon-Smith and UCL Press for their guidance; and to the anonymous reviewer whose helpful comments have undoubtedly helped made this work stronger.

7

Co-Producing planning? Neighbourhood planning as the context for participative pedagogy

Elena Besussi and Sue Brownill

The planning profession in the United Kingdom has experienced a long-term transformation characterised by the normalisation of the notion of growth as the guiding principle of urban development, and by the parallel erosion of the relevance of a critical practice capable of challenging these ideas. In this context, it has become increasingly difficult to justify the need, in the education of future planners, to practically engage with the politics of planning and with the expectations that planning raises especially for local and impacted communities. This practical engagement requires the design of a learning experience which substantiates theory-led critical reflection with a guided plan-making experience that can explore these problematics.

This chapter discusses the authors' experiences of bringing together community groups and planning students in the co-production of neighbourhood development plans (NDPs).¹ Co-production is here defined as a process of collaboration between communities and 'experts' which has the intent to transform pre-existing understanding of the position and expertise that both parties represent (Durose *et al.*, 2012). The process of co-production is considered able to produce shared and more robust evidence to support plan-making, and to overcome the democratic deficit of 'instrumental' participation (Ellis, 2000: 214).

For these reasons, co-production in the context of planning can be seen as a pedagogical route to expose students to (more) reflective practices (Schon, 1983), to explore the contradictions that the contemporary political environment imposes on the purpose of planning (Rydin, 2011)

and on the role of planners and the public (Clifford and Tewdwr-Jones, 2013), and to develop an understanding of planning knowledge and evidence that is plural and locally articulated (Ferm and Raco, 2020).

The analysis and reflections are framed in terms of the relationship between co-production in the pedagogical *process* and co-production in the *context* of (neighbourhood) planning. In the pedagogical process, co-production of the content and format of learning between community groups, students and teachers can be transformative of existing understandings of how learning happens, what learning is, who the learner is and what is to be learnt. In the context of neighbourhood planning, co-production can be seen as the pedagogical route to possibly transform pre-existing understanding of the roles and definitions of planners, experts and evidence. However, the chapter also shows how this context also acts to limit the potential of co-production within both the pedagogical and planning processes. These categories are further explored in the discussion of teaching practices and of the participants' experiences.

What is neighbourhood planning? The context

Neighbourhood planning was established in England as part of the Localism Act 2011 and since then has remained an opportunity for communities to write the planning policies and plans that shape the future development of their neighbourhood (Brownill and Bradley, 2017). Results from the past 10 years have made us cautious about how effective neighbourhood planning is at steering local development (Davoudi and Madanipour, 2015), but there is no doubt that it has encouraged community groups to engage with planning and in many cases also challenge or question existing planning practices and strategies (Brownill and Bradley, 2017). Since its inception more than 2,000 neighbourhood planning groups have been formed and more than 1,000 NDPs have become a statutory part of the planning system (MHCLG, 2020). The premise behind neighbourhood planning was to 'revolutionise the planning process by taking power away from officials and putting it into the hands of those who know most about their neighbourhood – local people themselves' (DCLG, 2010).

What is different about NDPs is, unlike previous hyper-local plans that were advisory only, NDPs become part of the statutory planning framework by setting out policies for the use of land in defined local areas which are then taken into consideration when decisions are made on planning applications. Neighbourhood plans carry legal weight, which

is a major part of their attraction to communities. To achieve this status (or to be ‘made’ in planning jargon) plans must be drawn up by a recognised body; either a town or parish council or in largely urban areas without these a neighbourhood forum approved as representative by the local authority. They must also go through a regulated process including consultation with residents and stakeholders, the production of a draft plan and a ‘light touch’ examination that ensures they meet a set of conditions including being in conformity with other statutory plans and meeting environmental and other standards. If the plan is approved, it goes to a local referendum and must be approved by over half of those voting. Those eligible to vote are people registered on the electoral roll. Within this process, NDPs are required to be in conformity with all other planning policies, the first of many other contradictions which will emerge through this chapter.

In addition to the right to prepare neighbourhood development plans, the Localism Act 2011 introduced a range of ‘community rights’ that allow voluntary and community groups, and parish councils to take a more direct initiative and control over development and the provision of local services. For example, the Community Right to Build Order can be used by neighbourhood forums to propose a development in their local area and obtain permission to build it, without having to go through the planning process. Although often considered under the umbrella of neighbourhood planning, the exercise of community rights requires technical expertise and knowledge different from planning, including architecture, management and development finance.

Government funded support is provided for neighbourhood planning groups in the form of funding and technical support. Groups can apply for (up to £10,000 in 2021) basic funding each year over five years, rising to £18,000 if certain conditions are met. Technical aid in the form of tailored packages linked to certain aspects such as site allocations is available from consultants AECOM. Both of these are administered by Locality (a government supported non-governmental organisation), which also provides information sharing on its website.²

Why choose neighbourhood planning for exploring co-production in planning pedagogy?

There are several reasons why neighbourhood planning is of value in learning and teaching planning in the framework of co-production. First, it is underpinned by the principle that anyone can plan and it materialises

the aspiration of breaking down the barriers between experts and non-experts in the planning process and in the production of knowledge that supports planning decisions. The 2011 legislation was based on a pamphlet called *Open-Source Planning* (Conservative Party, 2010), which set out the view that, as with open-source programming, anyone with the right tools and information can plan.

Second, NDPs are based on bounded geographical areas of intervention (the neighbourhood area), which, in the context of teaching and learning, facilitates the development of a sense of competence and allows teachers and students to gauge the resources needed to complete a project within a set amount of time.

Third, it provides a single point of reference within the community (the neighbourhood forum or parish or town council). And finally, it can be seen as a microcosm of key planning issues. It provides an opportunity to explore the nexus between local interests, supra-local drivers of development and strategic planning agendas in the determination of development decisions. It also makes real the different approaches to and styles of planning that often exist in an uneasy tension within any planning system; particularly between a growth-led and a more inclusive and socially orientated agenda. This enables students to see these relations and processes as they play out on the ground in bounded examples and to reflect critically on policy and practice.

Some possible limitations

However, for all these positive reasons there are also some limitations to the exploration of co-production through neighbourhood planning. The first is that it is well established that neighbourhood planning is more likely to happen in affluent areas (Parker, 2017) and there are also questions about the representativeness of neighbourhood planning groups (Davoudi and Cowie, 2013). Therefore, there is a risk of supporting groups who already have resources and presenting a one-sided view of planning. We must remember that neighbourhood planning is not immune to the uneven nature of participation in planning, to control by the 'usual suspects' or to the hidden and not so hidden power differences between the interests involved.

Second, although the legislation has remained static, central government regulation of neighbourhood planning has changed over time. Tait and Inch (2016) write about different phases of localism, starting with the earlier years of 'Big Society' Localism during which NDPs

emerged that stressed a citizen-led approach, this was replaced by growth localism that sought to nudge activity to promoting growth (i.e., housebuilding), and later ‘muscular localism’ where central government began to set stricter guidelines and recentralise power (see [Table 7.1](#)). The result of this has been to restrict the spaces of neighbourhood planning, affecting the scope of what neighbourhood planning groups can do and their power to influence planning outcomes.

Finally, there are some inherent contradictions in neighbourhood planning, some of which have been implied above, while others will emerge through the discussion. Of particular significance for the work presented here is the still quite heavy legal and technical requirements and processes that neighbourhood planning groups must follow. The fact

Table 7.1 Phases of localism (adapted from Tait and Inch, 2016)

Big society localism (2010–12)	The Localism Act, the National Planning Policy Framework, and open-source planning	New statutory powers introduced encouraging neighbourhood planning, power of neighbourhood planners reinforced by ministers and legal rulings
Growth localism v big society localism (2012–15)	The Planning and Infrastructure Act, and regeneration to enable growth	Favouring growth (housing developments)
Rolled-back, austerity or ‘muscular’ localism (2015–19)	Amendments to legislation and the National Planning Policy Framework; re-centralisation; changes to neighbourhood planning regulations (e.g., housing-needs methodologies); and further reliance on private-sector funding	Presumption in favour of development strengthened; less ministerial intervention in support of neighbourhood planners, tightening of regulations in relation to local plans
Levelling up and rediscovery of localism (2019–)	Planning white paper post-Brexit settlement, and levelling up	Retention of neighbourhood planning but potential shift to focus on design and character; and loss of power to allocate sites

that the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) was itself promoting links between neighbourhood planning groups and universities was in part a recognition of this gap and raised further warning signs for the possibilities of 'true' co-production in the context of neighbourhood planning. Related to this the support for neighbourhood planning groups, which until 2015 was spread between a range of community and planning based organisations, has been concentrated (and relatively professionalised) within the Locality/AECOM partnership.

These shifts in the *context* of neighbourhood planning impacted on the pedagogic *processes* discussed here. The earlier years of neighbourhood planning are characterised by a diverse range of interpretations and approaches to the formulation of NDP content and process. This diversity can be explained by the absence of a predefined model for neighbourhood planning, its uptake by community groups coming from different experiences of local campaigning and community planning and the availability of publicly funded technical support from a wide range of national organisations and was mirrored in the range of interests for collaborative projects with students. Later, the adoption of regulatory and implementation legislation and the convergence of government funding for technical support into one consultancy firm, led to the consolidation of neighbourhood planning towards a more standardised approach where planning policies and planning technical language are central to the production of the plan. This is reflected in a shift in the content of collaborative initiatives with neighbourhood planning forums towards a type of technical expertise focused on policy writing or, alternatively, in the support for the implementation and management of small urban projects. This has led some to suggest that neighbourhood planning, rather than being locally/community driven, is an example of a form of 'co-production' of planning where different interests come together in the production of a plan (Parker *et al.*, 2015)

As discussed later, the shift in focus towards more technical aspects of plan-making can be an opportunity to develop skills that are close to the demands of the planning profession, but it also puts tension on and constrains the opportunities for mutual transformative learning of which co-production is the underlying vehicle.

Creating the space for co-production for students and community groups in the context of neighbourhood planning

Many planning schools independently used the advent of neighbourhood planning as a way of continuing the commitment to engaged pedagogy

that has long characterised planning education. Here, two such examples initiated in the Bartlett School of Planning (UCL) and Oxford Brookes University are discussed. While they share similar aims in the sense of putting into practice the objectives of engaged pedagogy set out above (such as bringing students and community planners together, supporting community groups, exploring the possibilities for co-production and developing a critical perspective on planning practice among students), they also differ in terms of timing, the level of the course students were on and of course geographical context (see [Table 7.2](#)).

At the Bartlett School of Planning, the introduction of a new MSc programme in urban design and city planning offered the opportunity to redesign the core teaching on planning practice and plan-making as a collaborative project with London's communities. A new module was introduced in 2014 based on a close collaboration between the school, London's emerging neighbourhood planning forums, and Just Space (a network of community groups established to coordinate participation and responses to London planning issues). The decision to work with neighbourhood forums was inspired by the experience of Oxford Brookes University and the reasons set out above, as well as by the aspiration to close the gap in technical expertise that, at the time, appeared to be at the roots of a lower uptake and lower completion rate for neighbourhood planning in London.

The pedagogical model involves an initial collaboration between academic staff and the community partners to identify a project brief that meets the partner neighbourhood forum's agenda as well as the requirements of the school's planning curriculum. Once a brief is agreed, students develop a response which usually involves a combination of urban analysis, review of the local policy and institutional context, and recommendations, either as neighbourhood plan policy options or as direct interventions (which broadly correspond to the Localism Act 'community rights'). Together with the project brief, academic staff and neighbourhood forum members agree the type and extent of active participation of the neighbourhood forum in the teaching activities. This has ranged from support for one-off site visits to weekly feedback sessions with the students. Since 2014 the Bartlett has worked with 15 neighbourhood forums across London.

Over the years the pedagogical model has not changed although the focus of the projects has. There is of course an intrinsic variability dictated by the nature of the work being live and there is, as discussed, a transformation of neighbourhood planning towards a more standardised policy-based format. But there has also been a learning process and adaptation and the academic and teaching staff have become more

Table 7.2 The neighbourhood planning initiatives

	UCL	Brookes
Dates	2014–22	2012–18
Level	The project is part of the core teaching of a postgraduate taught programme with Royal Town Planning Institute accreditation	Adaptation of final-year undergraduate module on local plans
Timing	Over one 10-week term	Over two semesters (September–March) Neighbourhood planning project formed half of the work of each semester
Process	Neighbourhood planning groups identified by module leader Project brief prepared by module leader with neighbourhood planning groups Initial meeting and site visit Students interpret and respond to project brief Meetings with neighbourhood planning groups available but not compulsory during the project Support and associated lectures given in class	Neighbourhood planning groups identified by module leader Initial meeting and site visit at start of module Themes and tasks suggested by neighbourhood planning group Student groups take on selected topics Support and associated lectures given in class
Outputs	Report and poster (term 2)	Local poster exhibition in neighbourhood planning area (semester 1) Report to neighbourhood planning group (semester 2) Individual student reflection Assessed as part of module
Context	Fewer neighbourhood planning groups available in London, especially at early stages of plan preparation	Limited neighbourhood planning groups in and immediately around Oxford, largely in more affluent areas with a history of engagement in planning

aware of what works and what doesn't in the classroom. First, this is due to becoming more sensitive to engaging students on project briefs where the initial expertise required to complete the project was not available within the student cohort. Students are not 'experts' when the project starts. Second, as a consequence of this and of the changing nature of neighbourhood planning, the demands from neighbourhood forums have become less diverse, due partly to the establishment of government regulations and partly by the emergence of government funded technical support concentrated within one organisation.

The initiative at Oxford Brookes established close links with neighbourhood planning groups in the city and surrounding county from the time the legislation was passed. The university campus is itself located in one of the first neighbourhood planning areas in Oxford and this provided the springboard for including project work on a final year double module on the undergraduate planning degree between 2012–18. As this was an established module, it was not possible to focus a new module around co-production as at UCL, instead an existing group project element had to be adapted to enable students to produce a report with a neighbourhood planning group. This represented 50 per cent of the work that students were doing on the module that semester. Briefs were drawn up in discussion with the groups, students were given lectures and seminars around key concepts and practices, group members came along to talk to them, and field visits were carried out. The work was reported in stages, including an initial presentation of ideas to the staff and neighbourhood planning group and a final poster presentation held in the neighbourhood area. Between 2012 and 2018 we worked with all three neighbourhood planning groups in the city and one in a neighbouring village.

Despite the Barlett example being part of a wider course review, the fact that both initiatives were linked to single modules and therefore to the experiences and enthusiasm of particular module leaders raises questions about how such initiatives are embedded, or not, in the curriculum and about their sustainability. This point will be returned to in the reflections.

Co-production in practice?

This section brings together the authors' experiences and reflections from the initiatives outlined above focusing on the contradictions and issues both in the *process* of doing co-production/live pedagogy and in the *context* of co-production in neighbourhood planning. It highlights a

range of ways in which specific intellectual capacities and co-production skills have been developed through the work.

When (how) co-production happens

If we see co-production as transformational both in the context of the classroom and planning, then we would argue that breaking down barriers can be seen in a variety of ways in the examples that we have been involved in.

The first is where co-production becomes co-learning, for example, through students and community groups working out a project brief together. Significantly this process becomes more than just a set of aims and outputs, as agreeing the brief means discussing differing understandings and expectations of planning which emerge. This relates to where ideas come from. Often, up to this point in their education, students have seen planning largely from the point of view of the formal planning system and the actors within it. Postgraduate students may also be professional planners on a part-time course. Hearing from and working with community groups whose aim is to make the planning system work for them provides a different perspective. Similarly, the opportunity for community groups to have access to students' existing knowledge of skills, programmes and other examples of what does and does not work can help in reframing their objectives. For both sides, the idea that planning processes are to be discussed and considered rather than one side or the other determining it is a key learning point. At the Bartlett School of Planning, the pedagogical approach to co-production draws on the recommendations of the 'Protocol for research collaboration between community/activist groups and university staff', formulated initially by Just Space and UCL to improve the experience of all those involved in collaborative projects (Just Space, 2018). The protocol articulates in principle and, most importantly, in practice the importance of understanding and valuing different perspectives on planning, and of recognising the relative nature of planning knowledge and expertise. For example, in the principle of co-authorship and ownership of the knowledge produced through the projects, the final student's reports, including all data collected, sources and analysis methods, are always shared with the neighbourhood forum as a long-lasting resource.

In an example from Oxford, students brought skills and approaches to carrying out character assessments to the neighbourhood planning groups. This helped the neighbourhood planning group realise that they

needed to simplify their approach making it easier to implement and prioritising the elements they felt were particularly relevant rather than taking an existing methodology from the shelf. In turn, the students had to modify their methodology to these priorities but then had the benefit of implementing and evaluating it. Students commented on how the fact that the neighbourhood planning groups valued this work really increased their confidence in being able to come up with 'valid' planning solutions. This process can be assisted by students working with the same group over a number of years, as relationships build up between neighbourhood planning groups and staff and student cohorts share experiences. Nevertheless, see below for some downsides to this.

In addition, these debates can also highlight different paradigms of planning. Community groups are often challenging what Rydin (2011) refers to as the 'growth dependent' planning paradigm, which prioritises economic growth over other purposes of planning such as addressing social and environmental needs. The co-production of neighbourhood development plans in the pedagogical setting, has been able to expose all parties to the wider limitations of planning to respond to needs and aspirations that community groups identify as intrinsic to the quality of urban space but that fall beyond the legal competence of planning. This happens, for example, when traffic or public health are raised as issues of concern or when a neighbourhood forum wants to exercise one of the community rights. When both sides recognise that a development plan cannot respond to these demands, more general questions are raised and a different understanding of planning and place can emerge.

Groups are often trying to find ways to bend the existing planning framework towards other outcomes. This enables students to see that there can be other ways of doing planning and it makes real for them the debates that may seem abstract when encountered in lecture halls and articles: 'working with the neighbourhood forums was good experience and made it possible to see how planning actually works in practice' (UCL student, 2018).

At the Bartlett School of Planning, the London context always exposes students to the impacts that growth-led strategic planning at the metropolitan scale has on local neighbourhoods, but collaborative projects with neighbourhood forums have allowed students to realise that not all local responses are negative. For example, students have built knowledge expertise to develop planning responses to manage increased densities (in North Kingston and Vauxhall) and protect community infrastructures (in Grove Park and Crystal Palace) and community groups

have explored options to become proactive managing community assets in the context of intense pressure for their disposal.

Co-production can also challenge existing narratives of place. For example, taking the starting point that a local group wanted to protect local businesses from threat of redevelopment, UCL students developed evidence that supported a locally articulated understanding of the value that these businesses have in the social and economic sustainability of the neighbourhoods, offering an alternative understanding to the one provided by the local authority that often identified this area as inefficient or low performing. The rationale here was to offer evidence to alternative definitions of value that could lead to the development of a set of policies different from those contained in the local plan and aimed at achieving this alternative vision. This is doubly important, as one of the criticisms levelled at NDPs is that they merely repeat local plans and fail to develop locally distinct policies. Similarly, students at Oxford Brookes worked on re-looking at the night-time economy and what it brought to the area which challenged residents' perceptions that they wanted their place as just a 'non-party' zone. This suggested ways in which policies could be included that managed these spaces and also brought in a range of venues (e.g., school halls) to provide a variety of entertainment types.

A third area that showed some evidence of co-production was when all parties had their perceptions and practices transformed by the process. For example, students begin to understand why community members engage in planning, to respect the time and energy they put in and not to just label them 'nimbies' by appreciating that they were often articulating a different narrative of place and a different set of purposes for planning rather than merely opposing development: 'It was beneficial to engage with planning in a real life scenario, talking to those affected by it and looking to utilise Neighbourhood Planning to affect positive change' (UCL student, 2018). They could also see that planning is an emotional process rather than being solely a technical/political one, and that it has an impact on peoples' lives (Jupp, 2013). Similarly, community members could see students as young people with future possible careers in planning and engage with them to change their perspectives on planning rather than see them just as hands to get tasks done. This is linked to the willingness of all sides to open their minds and very often the 'generosity' of community planners, particularly those with experience of working with young people and in educational settings. In relation to this, some students went on to do further work in neighbourhood planning either working for neighbourhood planning consultants, doing placements with local authority neighbourhood planning units or getting

jobs as neighbourhood planning officers themselves, or even, in the case of the Bartlett School of Planning, continuing the collaboration in a volunteering role.

A further positive outcome is where parties can critically reflect on neighbourhood planning as a policy process resulting from the interaction. Representatives from neighbourhood planning groups working with Oxford Brookes University commented that coming to speak to students enabled them to stand back and reflect on the neighbourhood planning process, including what was possible and what was not, particularly in relation to their relationship with local and national plans and agencies. It also enabled them to look back on their experience from starting a plan, what they had gained and whether it was worth it! At the Bartlett School of Planning, some partner neighbourhood forums commented that through their experience they had become more confident about what to ask and how from planning consultants or the providers of technical support. Students, perhaps inevitably as they were also being asked to engage critically with planning in their courses, were also able to see some limitations in neighbourhood planning, particularly in terms of the representativeness of the groups that they were working with as already outlined. At Oxford Brookes, students were also asked to write a critical reflection on their experience, highlighting one area of neighbourhood planning. At the Bartlett School of Planning, a final session is used by students and teaching staff to develop a collective critical reflection on the experience, often highlighting a mix of frustrations with the limitation of the planning systems and the gap between the statutory provisions of a plan and the needs and aspirations posed by neighbourhood forum.

These outcomes are evidence of how knowledge and skills produced through these initiatives have transferred outside the university and can potentially have long-term effects for how groups see themselves as experts.

In reaching these positive outcomes there were some practical issues. The process of co-production works better at some stages within the neighbourhood planning process than others. It is especially effective when groups are in the early stages or articulating issues and gathering evidence. For example, in Oxford the first Brookes project in 2012 linked students to plan working groups around transport, green spaces, the high street and housing, among other things. Student groups worked with the chairs of those committees to set briefs and carry out work such as a survey of retailers and bringing in good practice from other neighbourhood planners. Brainstorming sessions and initial reports set out ideas of what the plan could do. Another group undertook an analysis of participatory

methods and what would work in the context of Headington. Some neighbourhood planning groups have used these as part of their evidence base for the NDP.

The later stages of a plan, however, proved more difficult in the Oxford Brookes example, as groups were often looking for specific skills such as writing policies or undertaking environmental statements, which were beyond the competence of undergraduate students. Linked to this is the closing down of the spaces for neighbourhood planning influence through the changes in regulation brought about by the government. This put greater emphasis on the 'robustness' of plans in being able to stand up to legal challenges and restricted the areas in which student planners could become involved. Similarly, at the Bartlett School of Planning there were projects where the technical expertise required from students was either unavailable or beyond the scope of the planning course. When this happened, project briefs would include, for example, requests for technical support in the preparation of funding bids or in the application of the new community rights enshrined in the Localism Act 2011 (right to bid, right to challenge, right to build, right to reclaim land). These are important tools in the agenda of neighbourhood forums but often require skills that planning students do not have in advance and do not develop in the space of their programme of studies.

This is where the *process* of doing live pedagogy with neighbourhood planning groups conflicts with the context of doing neighbourhood planning itself and shows some of the contradictions in a process that is meant to enable residents to plan for themselves, but which is regulated in a way that requires specific competencies and skills. While this can initially open up spaces for involved pedagogy it can also close those spaces down. As a result, while positives are possible, it is necessary to question whether this is co-production and the conclusions will return to this question after looking at what does not go so well.

When (how)co-production does not happen

There were also situations where co-learning and co-production did not emerge for a variety of reasons. Within the pedagogical *process* the most significant one is where the transformation of each sides' views, both of each other and of planning, does not occur. An example of this is where part-time students who engage with neighbourhood planning groups in their day jobs, carry this experience and framing into the learning setting. This can mean that, for example, they bring with them the planning

cultures of some local authority departments that see neighbourhood planning groups as obstructive to development or unrepresentative and are not open to having this view challenged. Alternatively, other students may see neighbourhood planning groups as not being challenging or representative enough, questioning why they should be working in areas that could access resources from elsewhere while others are unsupported. On the other side, some members of neighbourhood planning groups, especially in a university town such as Oxford, may see students as part of the problem that they are trying to plan away or that they are there to carry out what the group wants rather than agreeing an agenda through a process of negotiation. There are therefore different expectations and motivations between students, researchers/tutors and neighbourhood planning groups. Students may not share the same ideals as their tutors, particularly in terms of promoting alternative community-led approaches to the growth oriented and procedural forms of planning that are promoted by current policy and practice in England (see comments below about professional identity and careerism). These differences can be widened if the work is part of a compulsory module, as was the case in Oxford and London. Some students may then adopt an instrumental attitude, seeing the project as just another piece of coursework, and become less open to the encounter, although there are still examples of some students leaving this behind as the work progressed.

There are also different timescales. Universities are bound to semesters and courses are run within set periods with fixed assessment points that may not fit with the neighbourhood planning group. The Oxford Brookes projects worked best when there was a double module enabling the work to be carried out over a longer period (between October and March). When course changes resulted in this being turned into a single module, the flexibility was lost. The Bartlett School of Planning projects were always bound to the short period of a 10-week term. This has been a significant constraint on what kind of projects students could do, challenging the teaching staff to identify and isolate elements of the plan-making process at the expense of a more realistic plan-making experience. Then, of course, students can be students; missing sessions, undertaking last-minute work and encountering problems with group work despite the efforts put in by module leaders. As a result of these process factors, perceptions are not challenged or altered – sometimes they are even reinforced, and what is produced does not necessarily meet community needs or move their neighbourhood planning process along, and does not challenge students to learn new things.

These experiences increasingly demonstrate the need to be aware of the politics of co-production and power differentials. If co-production is about breaking down the barriers of power and transforming agendas, does this happen in practice, and, if so, where are the barriers? These issues of power become more important when the impact of the pedagogical *context* to neighbourhood planning is taken into consideration. Besides the contradictions of the technical and legal requirements of what is meant to be a non-expert form of planning and the difficulties of these requirements being met by students, neighbourhood planning groups could also access the government technical support, and some chose this as being able to better meet their needs.

There is also the wider context of the planning profession. To some student planners, neighbourhood planning can be seen as a challenge to a professional and disciplinary identity that they have been developing in response to other elements of the course, their career expectations, their sense of the key principles and practices that the planning profession is currently adopting or their existing work in planning. Students might therefore find it difficult to embrace a community-led agenda that challenges a growth-orientated planning strategy, since this position is seen to be against the principle of “positive planning”, but they might find it less problematic to support a consensus-driven model of community participation.

Part of this wider context involves the agendas of other agencies and the use made of these examples. In the early days of neighbourhood planning, the DCLG actively promoted university involvement in neighbourhood planning, as a way of illustrating its support for neighbourhood planning groups and providing a ‘good news’ narrative. Department representatives came to student presentations and tutors gave presentations to national neighbourhood planning events. However, as the support package became more developed there was less need for this. Universities keen to show their community credentials also promoted these activities, although in the case of Oxford Brookes this was complicated by a campus redevelopment that put them in the role of the planning ‘enemy’, showing how different parts of the university can have different agendas. The raising of student fees in England to £9,000 per year in 2012 also produced a more instrumental and career-focused attitude among students, leading some to question the value of this type of activity – and the nature of some planning courses has changed, perhaps reflecting the changes in the nature of the established planning profession itself. For example, at Oxford Brookes, the bespoke planning course has been changed to one that includes property development, attracting a different type of student.

The changing spaces and content of neighbourhood planning also pose challenges to co-production. Arguably, there was more opportunity in the 'Big Society' localism stage or 2011–15 for 'co-production' to occur when neighbourhood planning groups had more room to manoeuvre and be creative. Further, it has become clearer that neighbourhood planning is 'still planning', institutionally isomorphic and strategically compliant to pre-existing planning practices, policies and aims. This 'bounded recognition' (Porter, 2015) of neighbourhood planning has made the opportunities for co-production more limited over time, for example where national growth agendas considerably reduce the scope of neighbourhood planning, like in the case of Drummond Street under the shadow of HS2. As a result of these limitations and contradictions both of our attempts to undertake engaged pedagogy through working with neighbourhood planning groups have come to an end. Increasingly, the extensive time invested by tutors, students and in particular neighbourhood planning groups, did not seem to be resulting in commensurate positive outcomes. Arguably, the shifting power relations, policy context and expectations meant that the possibilities for co-production outweighed the limitations.

Conclusions: but is it co-production?

The two initiatives at UCL and Oxford Brookes have now been paused and the obvious conclusion to take from this experience is that co-production in engaged pedagogy (at least in this context) does not work or is too difficult. However, there is room for 'critical optimism' when it comes to neighbourhood planning and to reflect that the situation is more complex than this initial reading would suggest. This reflection is articulated in four main points and six practical takeaways.

First, that live pedagogy and neighbourhood planning have both to be seen as contradictory processes. The examples discussed here show that there are tensions in the way neighbourhood planning has been regulated by government (e.g., between autonomy and conformity) there are also dynamics of power and differing expectations within any example of engaged pedagogy. It is not possible to assume that initiating a project such as the ones outlined here is a 'good thing' without being aware of potential possibilities and limitations and taking these into account when designing such projects.

Second, within this there needs to be consideration of the dynamics between the pedagogical processes and the context within which they

are practised. Third, these practices suggest the need to re-examine the meaning of co-production focusing on: co-learning; challenging perceptions of place and the purposes of planning; and the way that all sides are transformed through this. And this is not just an issue for those engaged in designing such projects. It is a valuable experience for students to be exposed to the fragmented democratic processes in planning and to see how publics and planners are constructed within these.

Third, these practices suggest the need to re-examine the meaning of co-production focusing on co-learning and on challenging perceptions of place and the purposes of planning that is of value and the way that all sides are transformed through this. As such, there is value in doing this work and the initiatives presented here have shown when it can work well and what can be achieved. The focus is then not on the products that might emerge from a collaborative process through a range of interests in the shape of a plan or a report that could have the co-production 'tag' attached to it. It is therefore uncertain and maybe unhelpful to see these engaged pedagogy examples as co-production. It is more useful to focus on how some of the contradictions in these examples can be recognised and overcome, to try to be aware of the politics and power differentials, and on how different purposes of planning can be promoted through these practices.

Finally, the fact that these initiatives were paused shows their vulnerability when they are dependent on the energy of particular staff and are not fully embedded in the wider curriculum or fully supported by the institution. Once staff move on or can now longer provide the extra time and effort needed for these types of module, co-production can slip down the agenda of the curriculum unless it is included in course aims and objectives and is reflected in the resources provided both to staff and to individuals and organisations outside the university.

These experiences highlight six practical takeaways for those involved in developing engaged pedagogy initiatives. First, do not be afraid to stop what could become an 'institutionalised' pedagogical initiative (i.e., a course that runs year after year) if you feel it is no longer able to achieve its aims. Second, take time to talk with the groups beforehand to enable them to clarify what they would like out of the project and to be clear that what the group wants is within the possibility of students to deliver – be aware that this could take time and cover issues such as time-scales, expected outputs and skills needed. Third, ensure that the final brief for each group of students within the course is agreed between the students/university and the community groups to avoid unmet expectations. Fourth, have a 'debrief' afterwards to reflect on what went well and what could be improved and feed this back into future collaborations.

Fifth, set up the opportunity for students to present preliminary ideas so they can get feedback from the community before the final work is completed. Finally, consider translating your experience into a protocol of collaboration (see Just Space, 2018) that extends to how community groups relate to the students.

Notes

1. Throughout this chapter, NDPs are distinguished from neighbourhood planning (i.e., the statutory process for their production).
2. See <https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/about/grant-funding/#basicgrant>.

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Index

Page numbers in *italic* refer to illustrations

- abandonment 183, 249, 250, 252, 253 256
ableism 57
academia: participants' contact with 193
accessibility 105, 147, 150, 151, 154, 159,
173, 187, 193–95, 209, 236
action-research process 78
asynchronous learning 146, 153, 157, 160
- bakla* 59
Barcelona 228, 237, 240
Bartlett School of Planning 27, 41, 43–46, 58,
60, 63, 73, 109, 131, 134, 135, 137–39,
147, 160, 162, 165, 179
binary-gendered bathrooms 50
biodiversity 248, 253
Birmingham 144, 181, 185–92, 196, 199,
204, 206
boundaries 5, 7, 41, 77, 80, 181, 183, 224,
228, 260
Brazil 230, 231, 233–35
Britain 27, 31, 32, 42, 50
Brixton (London) 31
buildings 51, 63, 160, 168, 172–74, 176, 178,
246, 255
businesses 52, 53, 136, 147, 231, 234, 241,
244, 255
- Camden (London) 69, 74, 79
campus developments 14, 133, 140, 181, 187,
190, 203, 258
canvases to facilitate collective thinking 164,
170–76, 173, 175, 177
capitalism 14, 28, 240
Caribbean 188
ChangeMakers scheme 46, 58
childhood obesity 197, 204
citizenship 111, 211, 221, 242, 255, 265
city-to-city learning: defining common
challenge 229–30, 230
classroom practices/discussions 11, 12, 28, 30,
35, 36, 57, 96, 104, 110, 120, 122
co-design 61, 66–68, 70, 73, 81, 172, 176–78
colonialism 27, 45, 88
conformity with plans/standards 127
consciousness (global/collective) 4, 242, 258
conviviality 247
Copenhagen 228, 237
councils 67, 127, 208, 214, 215
coursework 72–79, 139, 167
- COVID-19 pandemic 1, 105, 106, 147,
149–51, 164, 165, 167, 168, 177; *see also*
lockdown
Crystal Palace (London) 135
curation 45, 104, 109–12, 115, 116,
122, 124
curriculum 120, 121, 131, 133, 142, 210, 222,
223, 231, 238
inclusive design 53, 64, 66, 68
queering 25, 44–60
Race and Space 29–41
- DCLG (Department for Communities and Local
Government) 126, 130, 140
deal-making processes 118
decision-making processes 8–10, 77, 90, 95,
97, 112, 189, 190, 199, 203, 206, 211,
221, 242, 245, 260
decolonisation 29, 32, 36, 42, 43, 48, 66
democracy 7, 36, 62–64, 66, 69, 82, 83, 87,
100, 163, 175, 241–45, 257, 265, 268
Dewey, John 4, 64, 262
diamond-ranking exercise 215, 216, 216
discrimination 34, 52, 59, 260
displacement of populations 19, 188, 190
diversity 8–9, 24, 32–35, 37, 44, 49–50, 96,
228, 237, 247, 262, 263
domination 36, 47, 51, 53
Dunkirk 245–56, 249, 252, 254; *see also*
Teteghem (Dunkirk)
dwellings (traditional/backyard) 89
- ecosystem 106, 171, 181
Edinburgh 258
Effet Papillon 241, 243, 247
elitism 120, 200, 201
Emerson College (Boston) 163
empathy 71, 96, 195
engaged learning/pedagogy *passim*; 75, 259
entrepreneurial skills 70, 71, 77
equality 31–35, 36, 38, 39, 44
essentialism 50, 58
ethnicity 27, 30, 31, 34, 188
ethnography 8, 24, 38
evaluation 4, 15, 21, 46, 113, 186, 269
experiential learning 5, 6, 12, 13, 20, 21, 62,
66, 67, 74, 76, 79, 84, 160, 212, 223,
224, 262
extracurricular activities 182, 207

- FabLab 183
 family-oriented town 252
 feminism 43, 52, 55, 59, 100, 180
 financial crisis 117, 119
 financialisation 110, 119, 121, 187, 206
 fluidity, dealing with 80
 Foucault, Michel 64
 France 183, 233–36, 241, 245, 251, 254

 games 113, 123, 208, 213, 214, 224, 225, 247
 garden city 252
 gender 6, 11, 21, 23, 24, 33, 36, 37, 44–46,
 48–51, 53, 56, 58–60, 64, 192
 gentrification 120, 188, 190
 Global South 227, 228, 235, 236–8
 globalisation 119, 226
 government 18, 20, 21, 31, 33, 88, 90, 91, 93,
 95, 99–101, 110, 114, 117, 123, 127–30,
 133, 138, 140, 141, 204, 229, 233, 244
 Guarulhos 230–34, 239

 harassment 57
 Haraway, Donna 169, 180
 Headington 138
 health 17, 52, 63, 73–77, 79, 84, 135, 153,
 161, 185, 199, 204, 210, 215, 219, 220,
 225, 260
 Healthy High Street 217–18, 217
 healthy lifestyles 214–15
 hegemony 20, 45, 47, 49, 52–54, 56, 57
 heteronormativity/heterosexism 48, 49,
 52, 56, 57
 homosexuality 59, 60
 hooks, bell 6, 11, 13, 25, 36, 40, 96
 housing 17, 52, 73, 89, 94, 99, 116–18, 123,
 129, 137, 165, 167, 168, 185, 188, 206,
 245, 246, 249–51

 identity 6, 14, 21, 28, 29, 32, 46–48, 53,
 56–59, 83, 139, 140, 219, 224, 225, 252
 imagination 40, 54, 109–11, 113, 115, 116,
 119, 121, 122, 169, 261, 263, 268
 immigration 42
 imperialism 39
 inclusiveness 11, 23, 34, 100, 145, 232, 233
 industry 56, 57, 59, 74, 95, 160, 187,
 221, 245
 injustice 23, 267
 innovation 9, 65, 71, 82, 150, 152, 164, 166,
 169, 229
 instrumentalism 14
 intelligence 160, 164, 169–71, 174,
 176–80, 225
 intentionality 15, 262
 interdisciplinary 19, 21, 24, 45, 116, 123, 144,
 150, 257
 internationalisation 42, 226, 237, 238
 internet 147, 159
 intersectionality 30, 49, 50, 52, 59, 100, 116,
 163, 164, 171, 192
 IRiS (Institute for Research into
 Superdiversity) 192
 isolation/loneliness 76

 justice 10, 11, 17–19, 24, 31–33, 35, 36, 38,
 83, 119, 124, 179, 185, 268

 Kilburn (London) 167, 172, 176
 knowledges 6–12, 23, 36, 49, 54, 61, 69, 80,
 82, 180, 242, 258–60

 Labour governments (UK) 117
 land 7, 41, 88, 90, 95, 96, 123, 126, 138, 166,
 217, 231, 245, 248, 253, 255, 264
 Latinx people 35, 42
 learners 2, 4, 6, 7, 16, 18, 23, 25, 62, 147, 148,
 153, 161, 184, 213, 224, 261
 legislation 86, 88, 96, 97, 128–30, 133
 LGBTQ+ people 25, 44, 47, 50, 52, 56, 60
 liberation pedagogies 10–16
 lifeworld 262
 localism 126–29, 131, 138, 141, 143
 Locality (NGO) 127, 130
 lockdown (COVID-19) 144, 158, 164, 167, 168
 low-income households/communities 87, 92,
 98, 99, 248

 MacPherson Inquiry 32, 33
 Manchester 191
 Manila 54, 55, 59
 Maputo 233, 234
 marginalisation 31, 202, 203
 masculinity 56, 57, 59
 Matola 233, 234
 media 2, 42, 49, 72, 106, 113, 160, 161, 163,
 170, 180, 225, 239, 261, 266
 mediation 73, 81, 143, 244
 mentoring 89, 98, 167, 186, 191, 196, 197
 Mercociudades 231, 239, 240
 Merhi 153, 161
 Merton, London Borough of 166
 methodologies 20, 47, 48, 50, 82, 129, 167,
 211, 232
 Miro (online platform) 105, 106, 164, 165,
 168, 172, 178, 180
 misogyny 58
 ‘mixité sociale’ 245
 modernity 54, 55, 124, 240
 motivation 66, 83, 148, 153, 161, 194, 197,
 210, 262, 264
 Mozambique 233–36, 239
 MPlan (Master of Planning) 179, 209, 214

 narratives (curatorial) 111–12
 Negev 190, 206
 neighbourhoods 37, 38, 52, 74, 104, 135, 136,
 183, 189–91, 193, 195, 203, 243, 245,
 246, 250, 251
 neoliberalism 54, 59, 187
 Netherlands 49
 neuroscience 262, 268
 Newcastle 182, 207, 210, 220, 222
 NGOs 228, 229, 236
 nightlife (LGBTQ+ venues) 52, 54
 Nijman 227, 228, 240
 normativities 45, 49

 obesity 197, 204
 objectivity 262
 Olympic Games 113
 online learning 144, 147, 163, 164, 166,
 168, 178
 open-mindedness 12

- open-source methods 128, 163, 164, 177, 179
 ortiz 24, 27, 28, 34, 37, 38, 42, 43, 60
- Papillons Blancs 253, 255
- pandemic *see* COVID-19 pandemic; lockdown
 'parachuting in' 202–4
- parking/traffic issues 93, 214
- participatory urban development *passim*
 and pedagogy 1–18, 258–67
 and role play 207–24
- permaculture 253
- Philippines *see* Manila
- phronesis* 261, 268, 269
- phyto-management 253, 255
- Piaget, Jean 211
- place-making 1–3, 5–10, 12, 14–16, 36, 79,
 103, 105, 106, 144, 146, 151, 154, 181,
 182, 184, 210, 212, 221, 241,
 258–60, 265
- planning schools 34, 86, 99, 113, 130–33,
 223–4; *see also* Bartlett School of Planning
- pluralism 95, 100
- podcasting 17, 103, 105, 144–61, 182
- politicians/policymakers 19, 92, 95, 120, 147,
 203, 211, 228, 231
- postcolonial perspectives 28, 54, 228, 237
- postmodern pedagogies 61, 62, 66, 82,
 84, 257
- privatisation 249
- privilege 9, 34, 40, 118, 180
- problem-solving skills/processes 70, 71, 236
- prototyping 170, 171, 176
- 'quartiers sociaux' 245, 257
- queerness 44–60
- race 6, 11, 23–25, 27–35, 38–43, 45, 56, 57,
 60, 64, 100, 268
- racism 24, 27, 29, 31–35, 45, 59
- recycling 217, 218
- 'research-action' projects 263
- research-led teaching cultures 104, 109, 111,
 115, 183
- research-teaching nexus 105, 145
- retail (high-street premises) 217
- 'Rhodes must fall' 14
- Roma migrants 191
- Rosario (Argentina) 230, 231, 240
- Royal Town Planning Institute 31, 33, 132
- SACPLAN (South African Council for Planners)
 85, 86, 88, 95, 101
- school education 10, 15, 17, 182–3,
 210, 231–2
- Seine-Saint-Denis 233, 234
- settlement 91, 93, 100, 129
- sexism 34
- sexuality 6, 23, 45, 46, 47, 49, 53, 55, 60, 64
- Siena 105, 106, 162, 163, 165, 166, 169,
 172, 179
- site reconnaissance 9
- situatedness 49, 106, 264
- solidarity 25, 40, 42, 53, 235, 236
- South Africa 85–99
- South Kilburn (London) 167, 172
- spatial experience and inequality 44–58,
 88, 90, 93
- spatial planning and participatory democracy
 242, 243, 256
- stereotyping 28, 58, 191
- stigmatisation 191
- Stonewall 54, 60
- streets 9, 50, 51, 59, 137, 141, 211, 214, 215,
 217, 218, 220, 221, 241, 253
- 'studio culture' 48
- suburbs 89
- superdiversity 190
- sustainability 7, 9, 19–21, 25, 26, 84, 85, 105,
 123, 133, 136, 222, 238, 255, 267
- takeaway outlets 207–8, 214, 215, 217, 218,
 220, 221
- teamwork skills 149, 157
- technology and pedagogy 17, 103, 105, 144,
 146, 150, 153, 231; *see also* podcasting
- Territoire Europe 243, 245, 247, 248, 255
- Teteghem (Dunkirk) 253–55
- tower blocks 167
- towns 31, 33, 42, 45, 91, 92, 94, 100, 101,
 123, 127, 128, 132, 139, 143, 179, 208,
 209, 219, 221–23, 252, 269
- traffic 93, 135, 214, 220
- trans people 50–52, 56, 58–60, 225
- transcultural competences 238
- unemployment 185, 195
- upskilling 189
- urban renewal 37, 82, 117, 245, 246, 249,
 251, 253, 255
- urbanisation 25, 101, 237, 238
- urbanism 55, 75, 227–29, 235, 236, 243,
 261, 266
- value-capture 111, 118, 119
- Vauxhall (London) 135
- viability-led planning 111, 118
- violence 50, 51, 54, 55, 56
 racial 38, 40
- waste 182, 233, 234
- waste-collector 234
- weather events 9, 264
- welfare/wellbeing 63, 73, 74, 77, 79, 118,
 121, 163, 180
- West Hollywood 50–51
- Westway (London) 166, 180
- 'White Butterflies' 251, 253, 255, 256
- wildfires 94
- Wimbledon (London) 166
- workplaces 57
- workshops as pedagogical tool 63, 68–79,
 146, 151, 152, 154–56, 159, 163, 164,
 167, 168, 172–79, 192, 194, 207–11,
 214–24, 233
- youth 53, 208–10, 214, 224, 225, 242, 257

Engaged Urban Pedagogy presents a participatory approach to teaching built environment subjects by exploring 12 examples of real-world engagement in urban planning involving people within and beyond the university. Starting with curriculum review, course content is analysed in light of urban pasts, race, queer identity, lived experiences and concerns of urban professionals. Case studies then shift to focus on techniques for participatory critical pedagogy, including expanding the 'classroom' with links to live place-making processes, connections made through digital co-design exercises and student-led podcasting assignments. Finally, the book turns to activities beyond formal university teaching, such as where school-age children learn about their own participation in urban processes alongside university students and researchers. The last cases show how academics have enabled co-production in local urban developments, trained community co-researchers and acted as part of a city-to-city learning network. Throughout the book, editorial commentary highlights how these activities are a critical source of support for higher education.

Together, the 12 examples demonstrate the power and range of an engaged urban pedagogy. They are written by academics, university students and those working in urban planning and place-making. Drawing on foundational works of critical pedagogy, they present a distinctly urban praxis that will help those in universities respond to the built environment challenges of today.

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