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Article

Planning Around Polarisation: Components of Finding Common Ground Based on Regeneration Projects in London and Gdańsk

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Abstract
Various forms of public participation in urban design and planning—as presented and discussed in literature—have recently been challenged by the needs and expectations of different stakeholders, including those coming from the private sector. This comes with a redefinition of the public good and the roles and responsibilities of municipal authorities in post-liberal times. As a result, contemporary participatory processes need to evolve to accommodate not only the wishes and ideas of the local communities, but also those of institutional stakeholders including investors, developers and land owners. This is also accompanied by the demands, expressed by all partners in this process, associated with having a much stronger influence on the final shape of the development policies and planning regulations. The gradual democratisation of spatial planning results in more engagement of stakeholders in the process. The article focuses on the co-design method as a way to bridge the polarisation of interests and find a consensus. The article focuses on identifying co-design components leading to the successful bridging of divisions and the realisation of large-scale regeneration initiatives that could be replicated. The authors have selected examples of large-scale regeneration areas in London and Gdańsk for a qualitative assessment, given the growing polarisation in both Polish and British societies. The discussion will focus on aspects of inclusivity, partnership working in co-design and political risks associated with co-design.

Keywords
co-design; large-scale urban regeneration; participatory urban planning; polarisation in urban development

Issue
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1. Introduction

The design and delivery of liveable and beautiful places catering to contemporary lifestyles and community well-being is a joint effort of private and public investment. Albeit final success expressed in vitality and vibrancy depends upon public response to their spatial environment. In short, creators’ ambitions and users’ needs should be addressed simultaneously. The authors seek to identify specific engagement techniques that have proved to enable crosscutting fragmentation of objectives and aspirations to deliver positive regeneration outcomes on the ground based on examples from Gdańsk and London.

1.1. Large-Scale Urban Regeneration in Contemporary Cities

21st-century cities face a wave of large-scale urban regeneration initiatives driven by the global (United Nations, 2015) and national agendas for sustainable development and post-pandemic socio-economic changes (Batty, 2022; European Environment Agency, 2021; Pasquinelli et al., 2022, Rusul et al., 2022). Collective responses to an area’s critical mass of economic, social, and physical decay (Amirtahmasebi et al., 2016) are triggered by specific urban functional or material deficits (Haag et al., 2007). Urban regeneration projects are considered an efficient tool to improve

urban competitiveness, increase urban housing quality, and balance the wealth gap. A sustainable urban renewal project considers not only economic but also public health, and environmental as well as civil requirements above the entire life cycle (Wang et al., 2016).

The role of the public sector is critical in addressing those deficits, given the complexity of issues and ownership fragmentation. The larger the area, where property owners lost interest in adapting their built structures to changing demand, or even in maintaining them in a functional condition, the more necessary for public sector intervention to catalyse the renewal (Altrock, 2018). The public sector's role may vary from that of an active participant in urban regeneration, as leader, provider of the regulatory framework, landlord, or channel for community involvement, to that of promoter of environmental benefits for all (Amirtahmasebi et al., 2016).

Alternatively, partnerships of stakeholders, including the public and private sector entities, may be established to deliver commercial and non-profit development with mutually beneficial outcomes. Their life cycle involves pre-partnership collaboration, partnership creation and consolidation, partnership programme delivery, and partnership termination and succession (Williams, 2003). This article explores experiences from a range of public sector involvement scenarios, from the statutory regulator to voluntary partner. It focuses, however, on the process of capital investment where the final success of regeneration initiatives depends on their long-term operation and management.

1.2. Participatory Planning

Town planning in democratic countries has evolved throughout the 20th century, from expert-created plans towards a participatory process with a strong emphasis on citizens' involvement. Evidence ranges from observations of self-organising communities driving the development of cities (Jacobs, 1961) through research regarding community engagement in urban and regional planning and development (Arnstein, 1969; Forester, 1982; Papadopoulos & Warin, 2007) to the development of a wide range of methods of involving end users in place-shaping processes (Manuel & Vigar, 2021; Wilson & Tewdwr-Jones, 2020; Wilson et al., 2019).

The general acknowledgement is that, in the case of planning policies, representative democracy is not sufficient to deliver adequate public benefits, including beautiful places, and a wider society approach based on multi-layered, interdisciplinary participation in the creative architectural processes is needed (Jenkins & Forsyth, 2010). Substantial involvement of a wide range of stakeholders, from property owners to accidental users, could be conducted through deliberative engagements and co-design, prioritisation of collaborative rather than competitive advantage amongst landlords (Healey, 1998; Papadopoulos & Warin, 2007). The partnership approach has a particular affinity with the networking mode of governance, with key benefits perceived as synergy, cultural transformation, budget enlargement, confidence building, and risk minimisation, and with different modes of governance required at each stage of a partnership's existence (Lowndes & Skelcher, 1998).

Urban planning practice evolved through the 20th century from expert-driven decision-making to participatory processes. Research evidence confirms that linking the public and the government facilitates community buy-in and processing in the implementing or operating stage of regeneration programmes, stresses the role of appropriate techniques and communication channels to build consensus and leads to better decisions (Wang et al., 2016). Those techniques develop with social and technological progress. The recent pandemic contributed to the radical progress in using digital participation tools ranging from the use of social media, virtual reality, virtual models, and video conferences to collaborative creations.

Participation in planning has evolved from community engagement seeking community feedback and incorporating it into the policy to co-design and co-production. Co-design is focussed on policy aspects and can be defined through three components: (a) process, which must be iterative and innovative; (b) principles that prioritise the creativity of participants, their expertise in their own lives, and policy that is designed by people with relevant lived experience; and (c) practical tools—telling, enacting, making (Blomkamp, 2018). Co-production goes a step further and describes the partnership approach to the delivery of public services, sometimes encompassing the whole policy process from design to implementation (Bracci et al., 2016).

Co-design and co-production, as with every collective undertaking, are founded on the principle of a mandate for representation and decision-making on a matter. The problem is that governance structures often make de facto-binding decisions, but unlike elected representatives accountable to their constituencies, their participants lack authorisation (Parkinson, 2003). Large-scale regeneration initiatives face several dilemmas concerning collaborative planning and delivery, especially in the context of economic, social, and spatial polarisation observed throughout Europe. In the last decade, the UK (Koch et al., 2021; Silver et al., 2021) and Poland (Horonziak, 2022) have been experiencing widening political, cultural, and economic divisions, which form a background for the selection of case studies for this research.

This article focuses on co-design processes involving place-specific planning policies and design code practices, which shape the implementation of large-scale regeneration initiatives.

1.3. Polarisation in Urban Planning

Polarisation is defined by the *Cambridge Dictionary* as "the act of dividing something, especially something that contains different people or opinions, into

two completely opposing groups" (Polarization, n.d.). Social polarisation, expressed in inequalities in income, well-being, and access to capital and opportunities, has a significant impact on economic and political development resulting in reduced growth (Keefer & Knack, 2002). Complex spatial-economic structures of cities are composed of multiple physical, legal, or social layers, which are sensitive to divisions. Polarisation extrapolated into urban development reflects in skewing decision-making in policy-making, planning, management, and investment towards the extremes, leaving very little middle ground for consensus (Koch et al., 2021).

Urban development is, in principle, the field where a range of diverse interests and objectives of particular groups of stakeholders meet. Elected councils deliver specific manifestos for their constituents. Civil service represents a technical and evidence-based approach to the delivery of manifesto pledges and focuses on compliance with the appropriate processes. Developers and landowners concentrate on the profitability of their investments. Local communities seek to share benefits from new developments and upgrades to their living environment. In an ideal world, there should be a common landing zone for the interests of all stakeholders so they can agree on relevant policies, partnership working and joint investments.

2. Method

Polarisation and participatory planning have become global phenomena and practices in the 21st century. The article focuses on the identification of co-design components leading to the successful bridging of the divisions and the realisation of large-scale regeneration initiatives which could be replicated.

To identify the effective tools of participatory planning, the authors selected examples of large-scale regeneration areas in London and Gdańsk and conducted a qualitative assessment, given the growing polarisation in both Polish and British societies. All examples dealt with large-scale development areas with multiple stakeholders, fragmented ownership, and the council's low-level property interests.

To set out the comparative parameters, the qualitative review identified the context of polarisation, planning focus, mandate, and technical tools applied to the co-design process to manage the divisions. Key findings were extrapolated into possibilities for the application of particular components of co-design in other local contexts.

2.1. Context of Polarisation

Traditional and general lines of polarisation between individual stakeholder groups could be defined as follows:

- Councils with a focus on public benefits;
- Landlords with an interest in property value uplift;
- Developers on the profitability of their investments;
- Local communities on maintaining existing neighbourhood character and potentially seeking upgrades to public services and infrastructure.

However, each locality also has its particular division lines which divide social groups, and areas of common interests. These are individual matters which have been identified for each case. Key areas examined encompass economic, social, and political divisions, as well as matters of trust affecting the ability to find consensus.

2.2. Mandate

Participatory planning, especially co-design and co-production raise concerns over their democratic legitimacy. The governance networks related to the participatory development of plans often make de facto binding decisions, which is not true for deliberative polls mainly because, unlike elected representatives accountable to their constituencies, their participants lack authorisation (Parkinson, 2003). Moreover, the following statement regarding politics in general, but relevant to planning policy as well, applies:

> The multiplication of veto points makes it harder for normal people to influence politics, but actors with substantial resources can use them to navigate institutional complexity. This creates incentives for empowered representatives to accept capture by powerful organisations, to collude with each other and to shirk their duty to represent normal people. (Hutton Ferris, 2019; see also Page & Gilens, 2017)

The mandate of participating parties was identified and appraised against the relevant division lines. This assessment took into account the context of particular planning systems in Poland and the UK.

2.3. Building Bridges Across Divisions by Co-Design

The concluding section of the assessment focuses on the identification of common drivers for change against identified division lines. The success in planning around polarisation was scrutinised through lenses of bringing the polarised positions closer or as a means to avoid deeper divisions of interests. The review of co-design included criteria of timing and frequency, outreach and technology applied to facilitate dialogue with stakeholders. The evidence was based on real-life case studies.

3. Results

3.1. Old Kent Road, London

The Old Kent Road project is located within the London Borough of Southwark, which is an Inner London

Borough, the eldest part of London, situated on the southern bank of the River Thames. The Old Kent Road is an area of 281 hectares designated as the Old Kent Road Opportunity Area in the London Plan (Mayor of London, 2016, 2021). It is currently an extensively developed area dominated by retail parks, warehouses, and housing estates. As part of the Bakerloo Line Extension corridor, the Old Kent Road area is expected to accommodate substantial growth through major regeneration-managed planning policies of the emerging Area Action Plan Supplementary Planning Document. This diverse part of Southwark, with 43% of residents being born abroad, has a higher proportion of low-skilled workers and lower levels of employment than the rest of the borough and London's average (London Borough of Southwark, 2016a). The deprivation levels place Old Kent Road ward in the top 10 in the UK.

The polarisation underpinning the Area Action Plan for Old Kent Road Opportunity Area runs between existing residents and businesses and developers. The main focus was gentrification. Central location in the global city with a prosperous economy continuously drives property and rent prices up. Low-cost industrial uses became a rarity in Inner London, where the vacancy rate is as low as 4% (London Borough of Southwark, 2016b). Residential properties are also in high demand, and sales and rental prices are the highest in London. Residents and businesses fear being priced out of the borough, similarly to other regeneration areas such as Elephant and Castle. Seventy-two percent of the 3000 residents of this neighbourhood left the area in the period between 2010 and 2016 (Almeida, 2021). They were priced out of the area, the borough, and even London. The vast majority of new flats were sold to investors from East Asia (Lees & White, 2019).

Initial engagements concerning developing the principles for accommodating growth in the Old Kent Road Opportunity Area were based on the voluntary participation of local council members, organisations operating in the area, local businesses, and residential communities. Between 2015 and 2017, the leaflets were circulated to over 15,000 addresses in the area, reaching out to all residents and occupiers of commercial units.

The Community Forum has been set up to provide a platform for engagement with a regular schedule and set up agendas. The Forum channelled residents' views through people willing and acting to participate in the processes informing design development. Additionally, in February 2017, the Old Kent Road Business Network was to directly liaise with local businesses for evidence and feedback. However, the level of active participation in walkabouts, workshops, and presentations was low compared to the theoretical outreach.

The next stages of plan development focussed on ensuring that initially underrepresented groups had their say in shaping the future of the area. One such group was young people. In 2019, a dedicated Youth Outreach Programme was established. Ethnic groups were contacted and encouraged to voice their views by adding information stalls at local cultural festivals.

In June 2020, the Old Kent Road Community Review Panel was established, based on sortition methodology (Courant, 2019). The twelve members of the Panel were carefully selected from volunteers to reflect the socio-economic composition of the area. The panel is run independently from the Council and provides the platform to voice the opinions of the local community as a whole, not only of the loudest and most active residents.

The Old Kent Road Area Action Plan applied a broad selection of technologies to engage local communities in the process of plan development (see Figure 1). Classic tools such as walkabouts, mailings, consultation events and workshops with the use of pen and paper, public presentations, and exhibitions were applied throughout the process. The ambition of wide outreach drove the application of digital tools such as a consultation hub, online ideas-sharing platform Dialogue, aerial photography, and a 3D virtual model (London Borough of Southwark, 2020a).

Figure 1. Different techniques of co-design applied to engage with the local communities of Old Kent Road. From left to right: (a) output of a workshop with young people (London Borough of Southwark, 2020a) and (b) the digital model of the area allowing for a birds-eye as well as human view analysis (London Borough of Southwark, 2020b).

Preparation of the Old Kent Road Area Action Plan has taken ten years from early engagement to the planned adoption. The co-design process was iterative and innovative, based on principles of creativity and the expertise of participants, and applied a range of different techniques. The representation was the weakest point in the first phases of engagement. The polarisation of positions and antagonism between key stakeholder groups were carefully navigated by the Southwark Council. They worked very hard to secure local buy-in to the proposals and to engage with as many groups and points of view as possible. The borough council was not shy to change its engagement strategy to champion broad inclusivity and to reach out to sections of the community that were difficult to reach. They also employed innovative digital tools enabling direct co-design.

3.2. East Croydon Station, Croydon

Croydon is an Outer London borough, the second highest populated with 379,000 inhabitants. In the regional context, it acts as a leading sub-centre of outer London, with ambitions to become a metropolitan centre in its own right. East Croydon Station is in the top ten busiest interchange rail stations in the UK with excellent and fast connections with multiple central London destinations, Gatwick Airport, and Brighton.

The East Croydon development area, with approximately 10 ha, is part of the Croydon Opportunity Area designated in the London Plan (Mayor of London, 2004, 2016, 2021) located around the railway station. It has a fragmented ownership structure and has remained vacant for almost a decade. The station needed expansion and a second entrance to maintain the comfort of access for passengers. A comprehensive and mixed-use redevelopment of the central area around it was essential for accommodating growth and delivering the vision of a vibrant multifunctional metropolitan centre.

The lines of polarisation run through the traditional objectives of stakeholders' interests:

- Land use: Developers were aspiring for high-profit schemes that, in the context of London and central Croydon, meant high-density developments driven by residential towers. Given the economic crisis of 2008, the demand for commercial spaces and offices had been declining. The nearby town centre suffered from a high level of vacancies.
- Public realm and connectivity: The station was near capacity and had a single entrance to the platforms. Surrounded by private land, it had no opportunities to deliver a well-connected new entrance independently. Moreover, the severance of the railway line isolated residential areas from the commercial and cultural centres.
- Scale: Whilst tall buildings are widespread in the commercial town centre west of the station, the east side comprises established residential terraces seventy or more years old. The threat of negative impacts of tall buildings on the living environment and the influx of new residents putting pressure on local services were threatening established local communities.
- Delivery Timing: Each of the landlords was working towards different time scales, with critical urgency for the station upgrade and delivery of affordable housing for residents. Residents were expressing frustration as several visions were produced, including the ambitious and imaginative Third City Vision by the British architect Will Alsop (Alsop, 2007), whilst no change was observed on the ground.

The East Croydon Masterplan (London Borough of Croydon, 2011) was focused on bridging the polarised interests of developers to deliver a strategic piece of infrastructure for the residents and businesses. To secure political support for the project, all local Councillors and the chair of the Planning Committee were briefed during dedicated sessions, in addition to the option of participation in consultations directed to the general public. Additionally, two public workshops were organised to gather community views on the master plan's objectives, priorities and policies.

The main engagement focus throughout the project was on landlords, which in this case were also lead developers for their respective sites to ensure their buy-in and, in consequence, delivery of change. The establishment of governance for the master plan where each land owner had a platform to raise issues, negotiate design solutions and where the Croydon Council had an opportunity to get formal commitments for delivery was a key to success. The co-design process was supported and moderated by the architectural studio commissioned by the Council. The project board, entirely composed of landlords established a level of trust between parties, allowing for taking higher levels of risk stemming from dependencies between the delivery of particular components in different ownership.

Reaching out to the local communities was achieved through public exhibitions enabling interactive discussions with the project team and making formal representations. Over 1130 people attended, which is nominally 5% of the ward population; however, this number includes many residents not living in the neighbourhood.

Although local communities were consulted, their influence over the final design was relatively low. Even councillors and their representatives had limited opportunities to challenge developers and planners outside the standard planning policy and planning permission decision-making processes. Their views were embedded into the initial set of principles guiding further design and planning (see Figures 2 and 3).

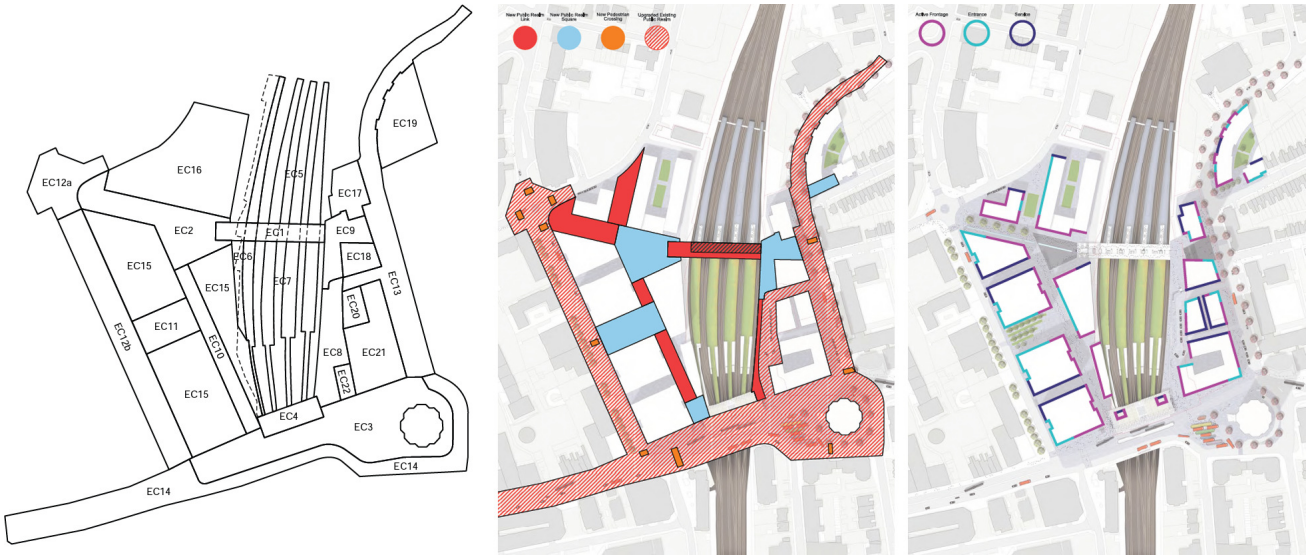

Figure 2. Diagrams illustrating components of the East Croydon Masterplan. From left to right: (a) components of the East Croydon Masterplan, (b) public realm components of the East Croydon Masterplan, and (c) the development components of the East Croydon Masterplan. Source: London Borough of Croydon (2011).

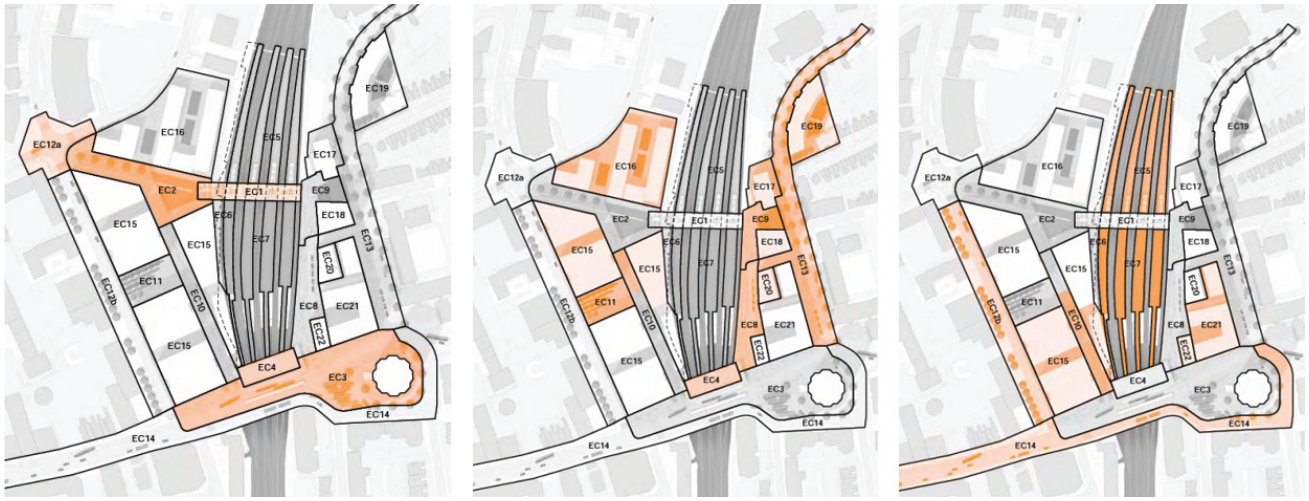

Figure 3. Diagrams illustrating the phased implementation of the East Croydon Masterplan components. From left to right: (a) components to be delivered now, (b) components to be delivered soon, and (c) components to be delivered later. Source: London Borough of Croydon (2011).

3.3. Grunwaldzka Avenue Belt Study, Gdańsk

Gdańsk is one of the major Polish cities with a population reaching 485,000. Its linear urban structure was shaped by natural conditions associated with the presence of the Gdańsk Bay coast and a line of forested hills. The main transportation axis of the city is associated with the Warsaw-Gdynia railway line as well as with the main road spine—Grunwaldzka Avenue. The space between these two lines, as well as adjacent areas, was for many years zoned for pure commercial development, which resulted in the creation in the 1990s of a "big-box'' type of development. Numerous supermarkets and other commercial structures were created. This situation changed only in the last decade when the new mid-rise and high-rise office structures were introduced. In consequence, three separate office complexes were constructed. They recently started to be reshaped as mixed-use developments. At the same time, the original commercial structures have become obsolete and were slated for redevelopment.

Recent changes in demand for offices and housing in Poland (also resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic) resulted in the emergence of the demand for housing and mixed-use structures that could substitute the above-mentioned commercial structures and also contribute to massive densification of the entire area. This resulted in several planning applications calling for changes in zoning provisions. Since many of these potential projects (as submitted in 2020 and 2021) may result in changes in the

city landscape as well as in the necessary improvements of the transportation systems, the Mayor of Gdańsk decided to commission a special-purpose urban study on the future of the entire Grunwaldzka Avenue Belt, covering approximately 620 ha and aimed at creating the comprehensive vision for the area in line with transit-oriented development principles (see Figure 4).

At the same time, this study should serve as a vehicle for integrating various needs and expectations of the diversified group of stakeholders: local communities, individual citizens, local councils, land owners, investors, and developers. This was conceptualised as a participatory co-design process, allowing each stakeholder to become an active part of the debate. In addition, this process allowed taking into account the opinions and expectations of the various municipal and state authorities, including infrastructure providers and managers. In 2022, both professional planning studies (conducted by the Gdańsk Development Agency) and the above-mentioned participatory process (managed by the Office of the Gdańsk City Architect) were delivered, which resulted in acquiring various transformation determinants for the entire site. In the coming months, a participation-led urban development vision creation process will be planned, which should allow for balancing the expectations and needs of all involved stakeholders. This will be conducted with the use of both electronic and physical models of the particular parts of the study area and will involve various experts and specialists as well as representatives of all involved parties.

Although still in the implementation phase, this study can become a point of reference for similar (although of lesser importance for the urban future of Gdańsk) urban transformation sites. This includes both the way the process is shaped, the way the opinions of the diversified group of stakeholders are taken into account, and the mode of co-design of the key development area of the city.

4. Discussion

The examples of planning around polarisation lead to several conclusions that have the potential to be universally applied. It should be noted that whilst direct engagement between land owners, developers, and local government was widely practiced, community views and interests were often solely channeled by their statutory representatives. Politicians acted on one hand as channels of communication between residents, businesses, and planners, representing them at the decision-making

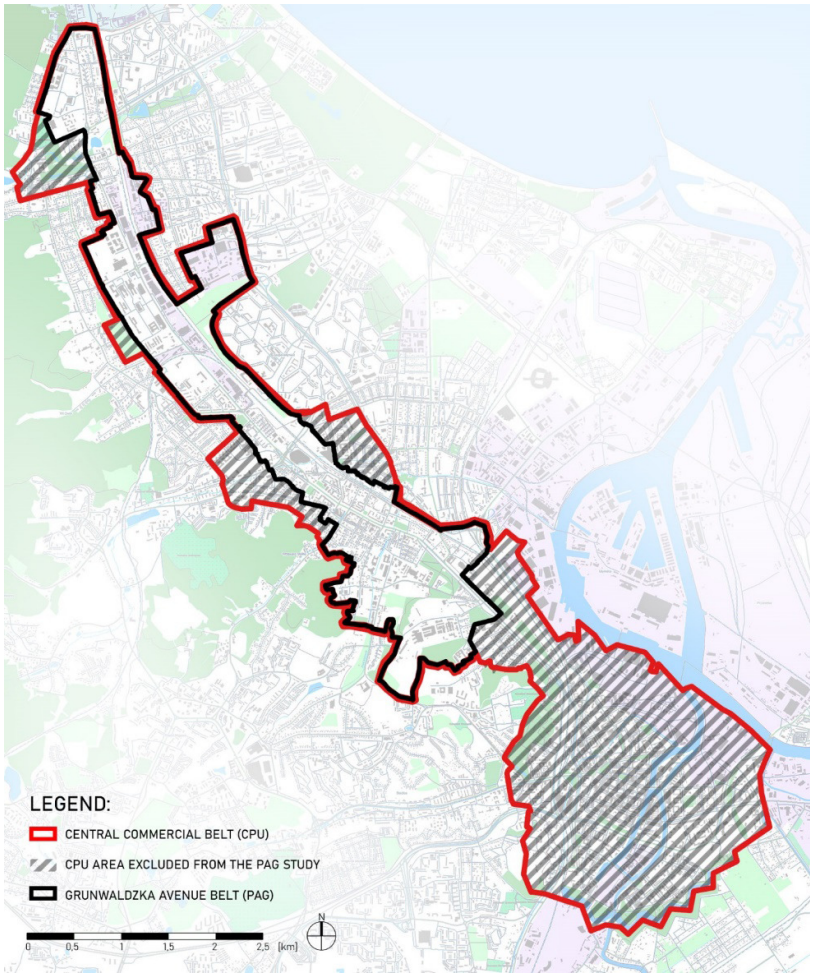

Figure 4. Grunwaldzka Avenue Belt (PAG) in the structure of the City of Gdańsk. Source: Office of the City Architect (2022).

forums such as planning committees making decisions about planning applications or at the local council sessions debating the adoption of planning policies.

The presented case studies identified three areas critical for bridging the divisions in the process of co-design: inclusivity, efficient partnership working, and political influence.

4.1. Inclusivity

All case studies had to address the matters of mandate and representation. Parties with weak or no legal interest were in general responsible for the final success of the regeneration initiatives, whilst difficult to reach and often internally polarised.

The example of the East Croydon Masterplan demonstrated that narrowing the group co-designing to landlords and the Council vastly accelerated and simplified the process. The major drawback is a low level of community participation. Also, relatively little attention was paid to building trust between developers and residents of surrounding neighbourhoods. In consequence, polarisation between existing and new communities is likely to deepen. Given the stark contrast in the spatial character of the established and newly built areas, divisions are likely to exacerbate.

The case of Southwark demonstrated how the borough council acted as a medium between the existing business and residential communities, and developers and regional authorities. Engaging local communities in drawing the future of their neighbourhoods was the most challenging task. Both the inclusivity of the process and the representativeness of collective positions remained at the heart of the council's activities. Significant efforts were made to reach out to local communities, including those ready to voice their views, and those not keen on participation and without trust that their voice would be considered. Southwark, through trial and error, explored methods of engagement and innovated in this respect by setting up the Community Development Panel. Ultimately, however, the interests of local communities in dialogue with developers and authorities were represented by the council. Statutory planning powers were applied to leverage fair deals and align competing objectives.

In the case of Gdańsk, the key challenge was to balance the interests and positions of stakeholders with legal interests and residents. Moderation of co-design sessions was led by urban design professionals using a range of techniques. Open discussions over the future of the large-scale area helped to identify conflicts and polarised expectations, and therefore to mediate between them. Ultimately the balancing act was a political decision.

Co-design should be founded on the inclusivity of all stakeholders, as each has a specific role in the regeneration projects, from planning to enjoying the use of final products. Whilst not everyone is capable or interested in taking part in the initial planning and design stages, everyone will be affected by the changes introduced in the long run. Therefore, it is essential to reach out widely. It does not mean that a council needs feedback from every resident or business, as this is unrealistic and costly. Based on selected examples, it is evidenced that targeted actions bring more credible results. Setting up panels composed of groups representative of the area founded on the sortition method (Courant, 2019), similar to the opinion poll focus groups, may be particularly useful in areas with low levels of activism.

4.2. Partnership Working

In the past, polarisation could be routed to silo thinking, where stakeholders have little trust and knowledge about specific objectives, costs, and incentives to cooperate. The greater the differences between the groups, and the greater the uncertainty about the other group, the larger the gains to stubbornness, or continued disagreement about collective decisions; as a result, the formation of consensus is impeded (Keefer & Knack, 2002). Trust based on knowledge, transparency, and openness between collaborators, expressed through their willingness to share information and resources, is essential to address the isolation of stakeholders and bring them closer so they can effectively deliver change or project (Pennink, 2017).

All analysed cases illustrate that dialogue between stakeholders is fundamental for finding common ground. Trust and commitment were fundamental for success. Setting up partnerships is relatively easy when the stakeholders have legally confirmed interest in the process.

Polarisation of interests in the urban regeneration initiatives is relatively easy to identify and therefore mitigated. An example from Croydon demonstrates that once all parties directly responsible for the development in the area gather around one table, and trust is built, the planning policy can be agreed upon and adopted quickly and its implementation progresses according to this plan. Regular engagement and binding decision-making throughout the co-design process were crucial for the success. Partnerships established at the planning stage were continued through the design and construction phases. Ten years after the East Croydon Masterplan's adoption, the development components have been completed, are under construction, or in meanwhile use. The prime objectives of the landowners were addressed in principle; however, whether the area will become a vibrant and integral part of the town centre remains to be seen. The polarisation of scale, urban character, and lifestyles between high-density schemes at East Croydon and the Victorian terraces of their neighbours suggest that differences may be irreconcilable. Co-design is processed in an introverted way, with little attention to weaving into the surroundings.

In the case of Southwark, the sizeable area of the plan, with its complex issues and high dependence on

external factors, in this case from the Greater London Authority extending the Bakerloo underground line, resulted in a prolonged process and convoluted partnership working. Policy and design details have been gradually confirmed through different planning documents: the London Plan, through high-level policies in the new local plan. Following these directives, an area action plan and design codes for particular schemes enabled fixing key development parameters. In the same time stakeholders have been working on achieving consensus about more detailed matters on sheme-by-scheme basis. Regular communication and exchange of feedback between the stakeholders and the council gradually built trust that the agreed direction of travel is managed.

Since the co-design process in the case of Gdańsk only started in 2022, the first results still have to come out, but it can already be stated that the needs of both local communities and interested land owners and developers were addressed and that it seems possible to find a common ground regarding the future development scheme. Both parties must share the vision of shaping vibrant urban districts, with mixed-use and medium-rise character architecture.

All examples demonstrate that regular communication, follow-ups and updates after an engagement, especially co-design sessions, allowing every stakeholder to see the progress, is essential for the successful planning and implementation of regeneration initiatives. It is essential that updates are honest and therefore include information about challenges and how they are to be addressed.

4.3. Political Risks

In the age of digital communication and social media, it is observed that the exchange of information and trust can be purposefully distorted through echo chambers or filter bubble techniques. Echo chambers defined as "a bounded, enclosed media space that has the potential to both magnify the messages delivered within it and insulate them from rebuttal" (Jamieson & Cappella, 2008, p. 76) can be observed as a result of applying internet algorithms—filter bubbles (Pariser, 2011). Similarly, individuals often choose conscious filtering of information using their personal social and professional biases (Jamieson & Cappella, 2008).

In the 21st century, a rise in affective polarisation is observed based on the strong emotional distinction between "we" and "them" (Silver et al., 2021). This ideological polarisation extends not only to culture or ethnicity but also to science. Recent research identifies that through psychological science rejection, people can implicitly disregard scientific facts that are inconsistent with their political identity; they may dispute specific scientific claims, distinct research fields, science in general, or the entire political system and elite (Rekker, 2021). Affective polarisation, especially concerning the approach to climate change, affects urban development through political leaders adding or abandoning sustainability agendas from their policies and investment plans, regardless of higher government-level commitments or local community views (Reiljan, 2020).

In the case of Croydon, where the master plan had relatively low support from residents, the example of East Croydon and other developments in the Opportunity Area strengthened the resistance of local communities to the intensification of urban development. In the demographic situation where the ageing population owns their houses and becomes ready to downsize, the natural next step would be for them to move to apartments in their neighbourhoods, preserving their networks of friends, and access to familiar facilities and infrastructure. Emotional reaction to high-density developments in the central areas ignited strong resistance against the changing character of the suburbs. The Croydon Plan 2018 attracted thousands of representations protesting against intensification policies. The campaign was led by local politicians who very efficiently organised a very large group of residents. Emotional narratives to preserve the character of the area despite of changing needs of its residents were the drivers. Apartment buildings in the Croydon suburbs are resisted despite their potential to address issues with housing for young families and for the elderly in particular.

5. Conclusion

Polarisation of interests can be bridged by partnerships involving co-design in planning and design and coordinated delivery. Collective creation can strengthen the sense of ownership and belonging. Involving local communities is critical as they are essential components of vibrant neighbourhoods, both existing and new ones after construction. Engaging them in planning and design and ensuring the views guiding development are representative of the area remains crucial for the final success. Developers create divisions when they compete with each other. This usually occurs when their involvement ends when the project is completed. Local governments have the ability and instruments to moderate cooperation between developers and champion the interests of local communities in the planning process. However, it is a multifaceted and lengthy process, if conducted with care. Building trust takes time, and relationships between the local communities and their councils are particularly complex.

Polarisation of opinions is very challenging to manage and its impact on planning and delivery of change in the built environment is indirect, yet can be expensive and stall progress, leading to a decline in the quality of urban areas. Local politicians have the authority and skills to influence local communities.

Sustainable growth poses particular challenges for urban planning as net zero targets require changes in counting the economics of the construction industry, priorities for new infrastructure and property developments.

Tackling climate change affects lifestyles and business models and polarises societies. Planning around this particular polarisation requires targeted research and a good understanding of related local concerns.

The literature on co-design focuses on the process, principles, and methods. Lessons learnt from the case studies presented in the article demonstrate that certain aspects, such as inclusivity of co-design, trust as a basis for partnership working and consideration for the local political risks, require particular attention. Those three elements create context enabling effective co-design and further implementation of the agreed plans.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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