

Processes of Bottom-Up Urbanism: Psychological and Social Benefits

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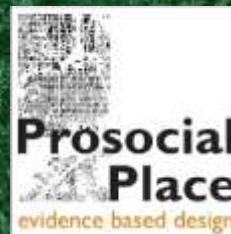
and

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Places & Spaces Matter to Us

**“85% OF PEOPLE POLLED STATED THAT
THE QUALITY OF PUBLIC SPACE HAS A
DIRECT IMPACT UPON THEIR LIVES AND
THE WAY THEY FEEL.”**

SEEN & HEARD, DEMOS, NOVEMBER 2007

Places matter to us: shifting policy



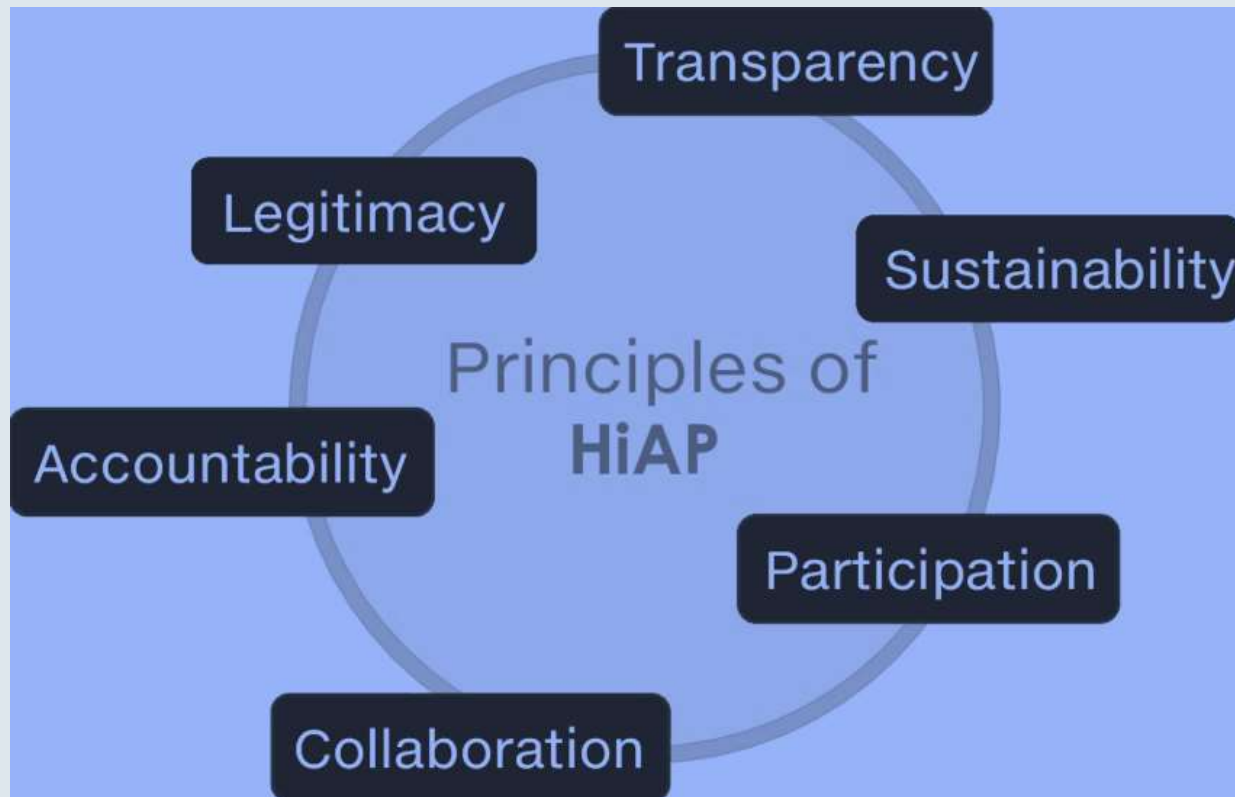
- **Co-City** began in Bologna and situates the city as an infrastructure enabling cooperation, sharing & participatory decisions, supported by open data and guided by principles of distributive justice.
- An urban governance collaborative that supports co-ownership through contractual or institutionalized public-private-community partnerships (so-called commons).

Achieving better population health



- Approach aimed at improving physical & mental health outcomes, promoting wellbeing & reducing health inequalities across an entire population (NHS England)
- Only 20 % of a person's health outcomes are attributable to accessing good quality health care
- Therefore population health management has a **strong focus** on wider determinants of health

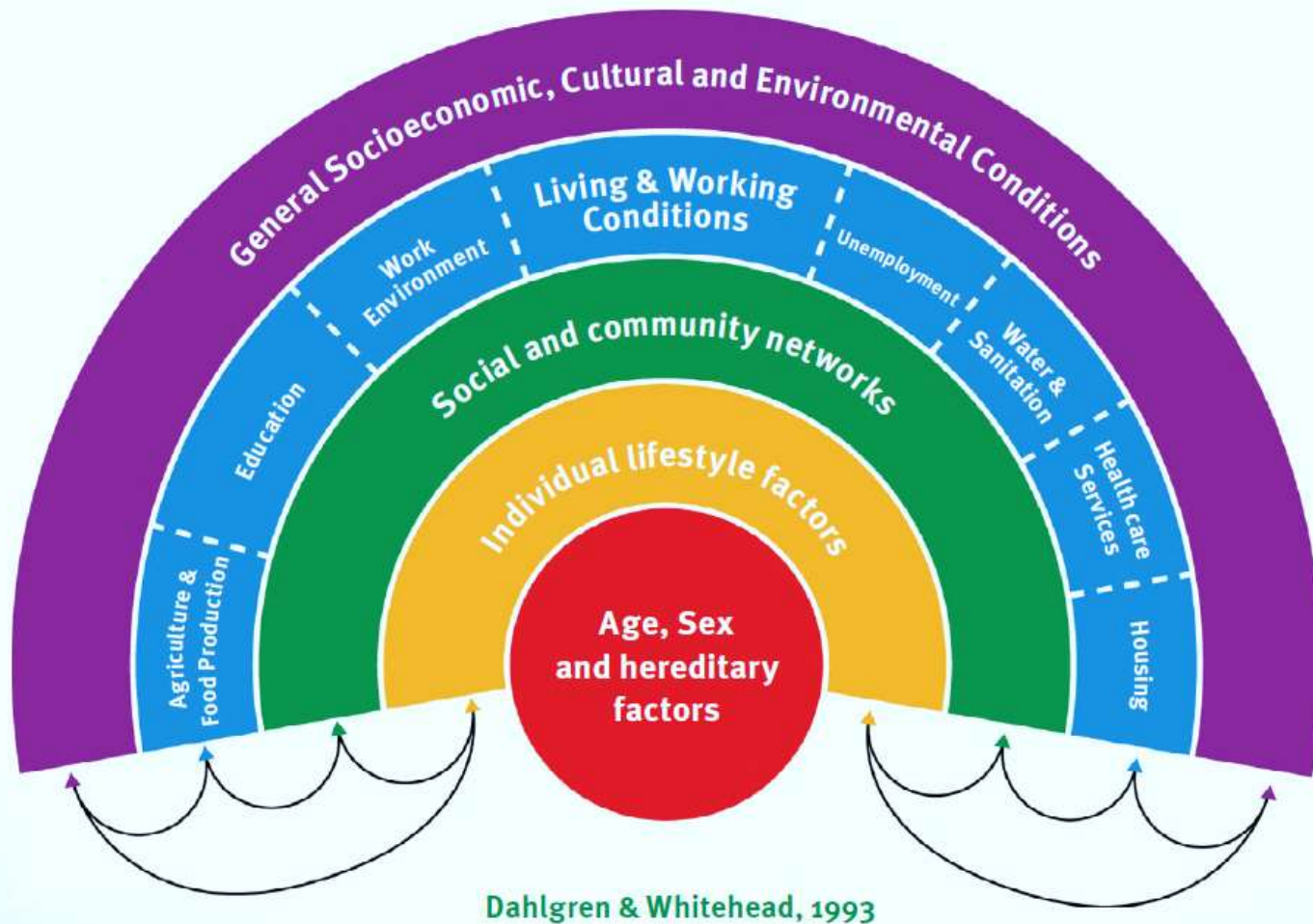
Health in All Policies



▪ Health in All Policies

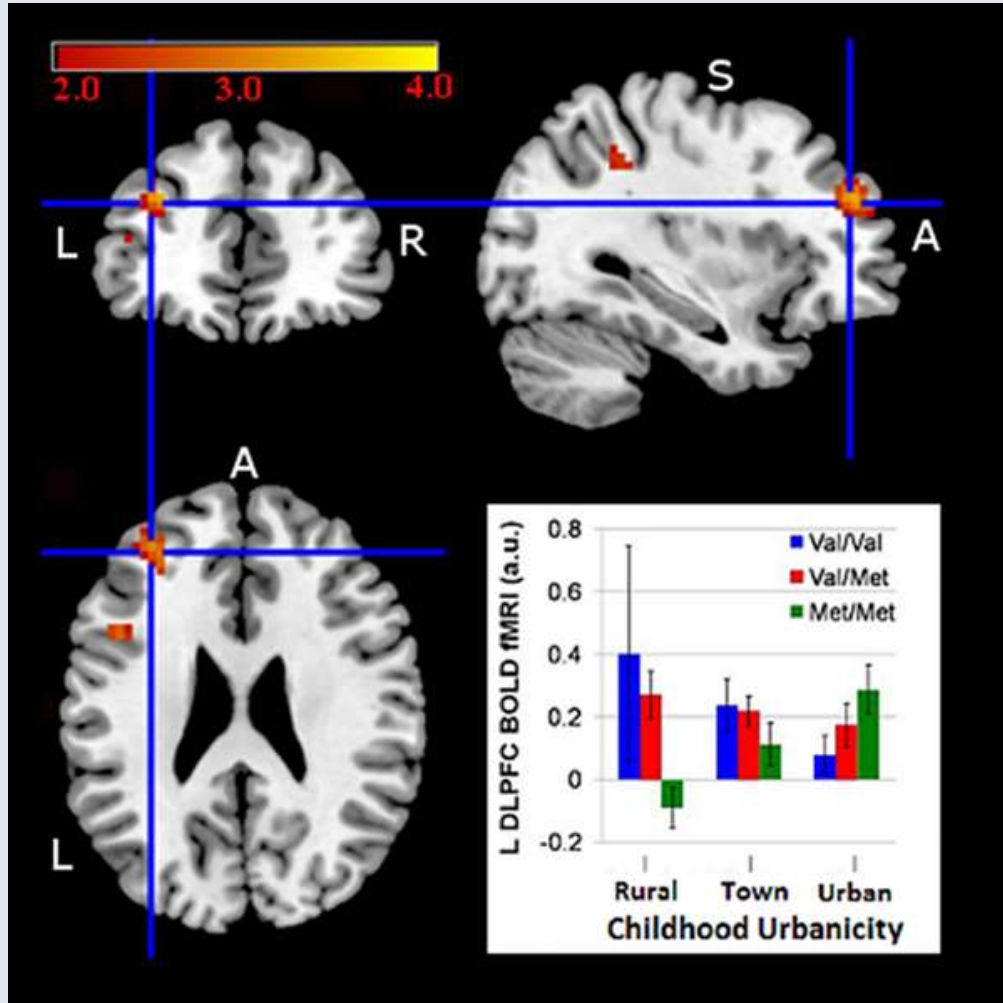
- As an approach to public policies across sectors, it systematically accounts for the health implications of decisions, seeks synergies, and avoids harmful health impacts in order to improve population health and health equity.
- As a concept, it reflects principles of coproduction:
 - legitimacy, accountability, transparency, access to information, participation, sustainability, and collaboration across sectors and levels of government.

The Rainbow Model of Health: Beyond our Control



- Dahlgren G, Whitehead M (2006)
- European strategies for tackling social inequities in health: Levelling up part 2.
- WHO Collaborating Centre for Policy Research on Social Determinants of Health University of Liverpool.
- <https://tinyurl.com/wnvfpgx>.

The urbanicity effect / urban penalty



- **Urban Penalty** - the health and wellbeing drawbacks of living in inner cities
- **Urbanicity Effect** - refers to higher prevalence of common & serious mental ill-health in inner cities
- Found to be related to perceived quality of living environment
- **Dose response relationship with time spent in inner city during childhood**
- Contrast by urban advantage (also founded on inequalities)

Wellbeing & Community Wellbeing

Community wellbeing is greater than the sum of the individual wellbeing of all the people living in an area

But what is that extra 'something' that makes community wellbeing?

We can understand community wellbeing as a 'middle-scale' measure of wellbeing that sits between individual and national wellbeing.



Individual wellbeing

What is it?

How we subjectively feel about our life, and objectively whether our human needs are being met.

How can we measure it?

Objective data, such as education level and employment status. Subjective data, like life satisfaction and anxiety levels.



Community wellbeing

What is it?

Includes (and impacts) individual wellbeing, but is more than just aggregating individual wellbeing in an area.

How can we measure it?

Individual assessments of community scale factors; group data collection; individual stories or case studies of community institutions; group discussions; local media; social media; local policy documents; local cultural fora.



National wellbeing

What is it?

Includes (and impacts) individual and community wellbeing, and covers some national-level indicators not captured at local or individual scale.

How can we measure it?

Data from the Office for National Statistics, national indices, international benchmarks

Individual Wellbeing

- Feeling good and functioning well
- Hedonic and eudaimonic; personal/subjective
- Spatially distributed

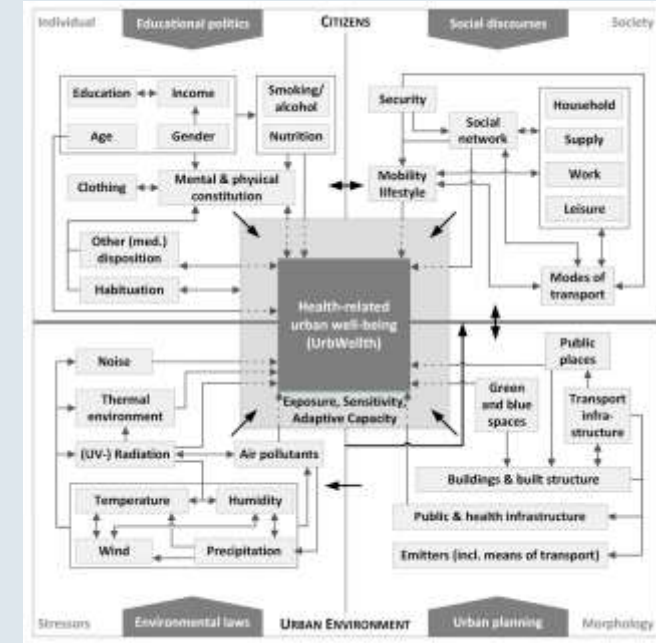
Community Wellbeing

- Feeling good and functioning well together
- More than the sum of individual wellbeing
- We-ness
- Wider determinants – social, environmental & economic

Engaging with Complexity

- Impacts of place on people are complex & based on unequal distribution of multiple disadvantage. Only bottom-up processes ground us in the real issues
- Most studies don't engage complexity - instead focus on single contributors e.g. greenspace access (Krefis et al. 2018)

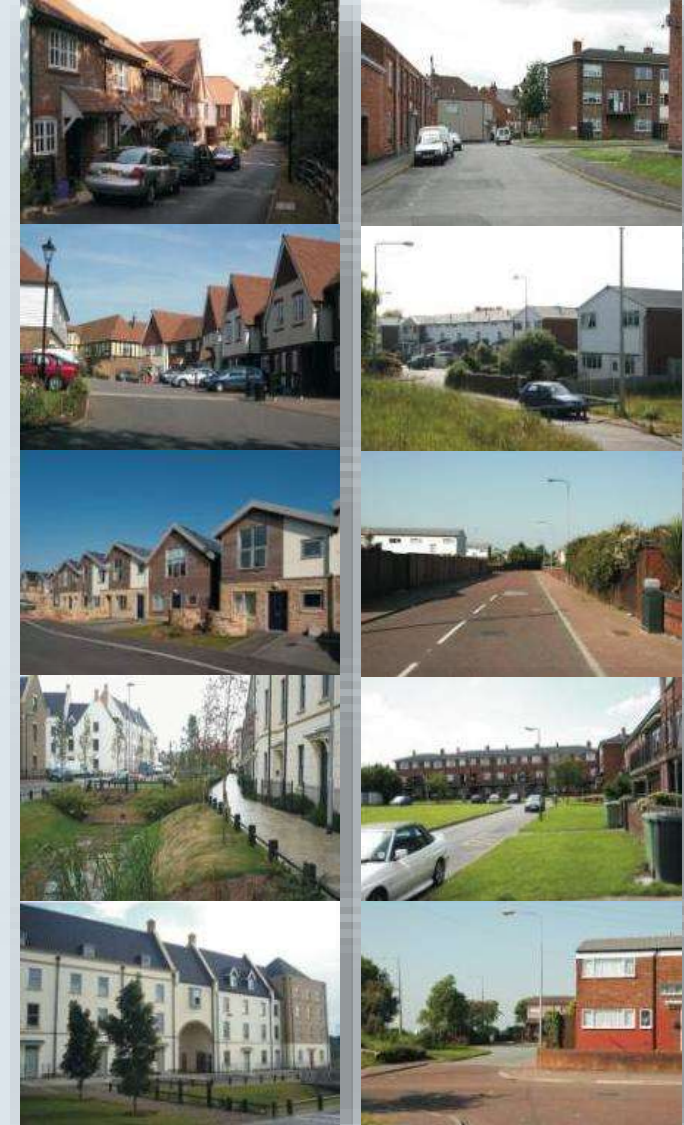
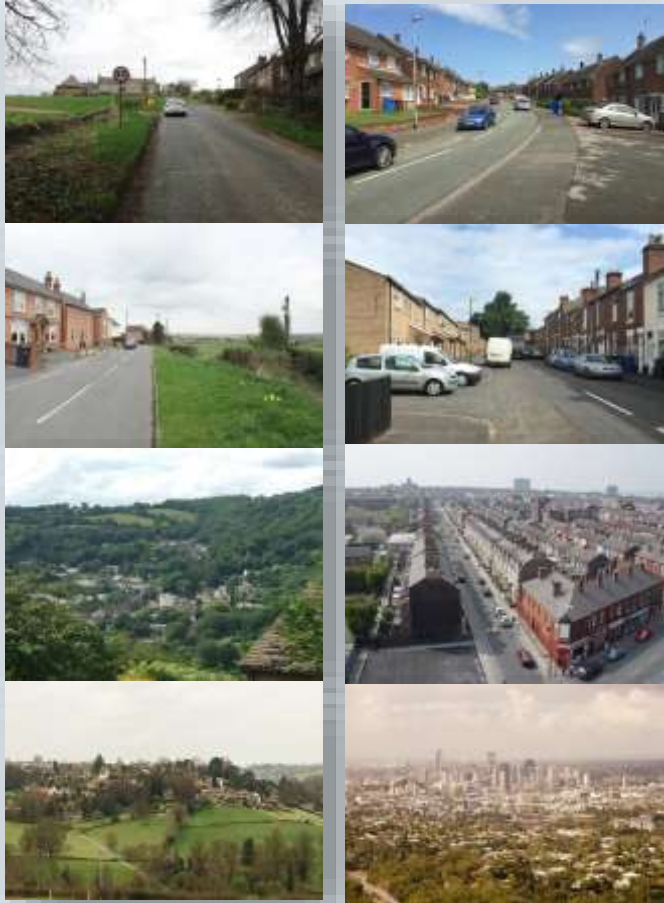
Szombathely et al. 2017; Urban Science



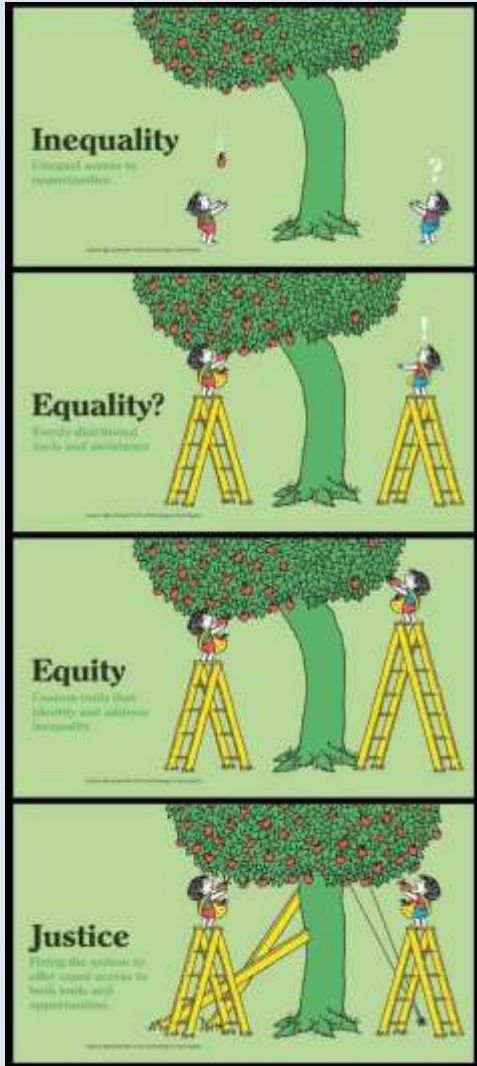
Concept Visualization of Community Wellbeing System
<https://livrepository.liverpool.ac.uk/3116862/>

More than Just Greening

- Photo contemplation studies show that urban vs rural residential photos matched for perceived quality do not differ in how they change psychological responses (threat anticipation, feeling in control of life).
- While residential photos that differ in perceived quality (matched for green-ness) do alter responses differently

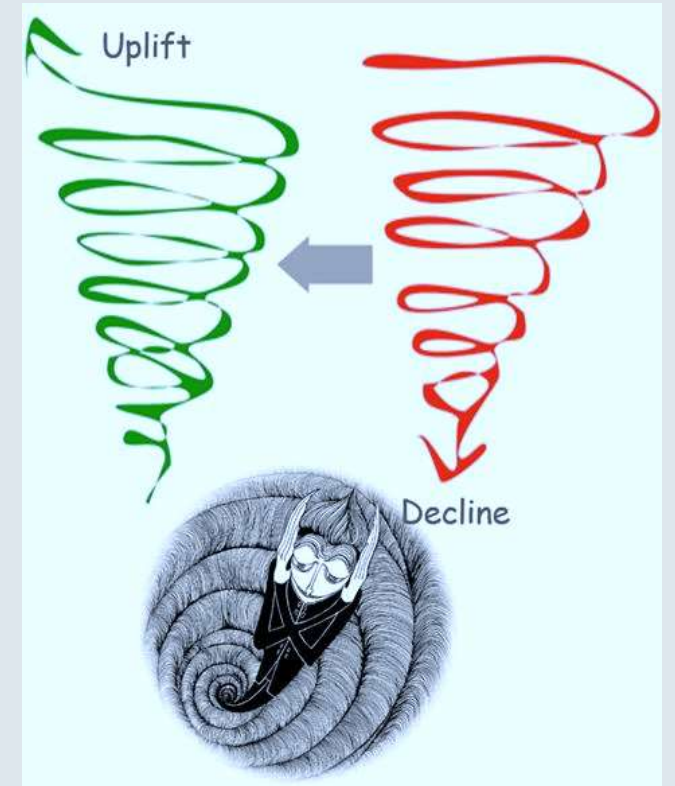


Place inequity & place stigma



Structural with psychological consequences

- Structural factors
 - poverty, disadvantage, exclusion
 - unfair, unjust & avoidable
- Perceiving that your place is bottom of the heap
 - place stigma
 - leads to self-stigma
- Perceiving that you're bottom of the heap
 - sense of impoverishment leads to
 - lack of choice/agency leads to
 - feeling and being stuck



Places Drive Behaviour

A MAP OF PROSOCIALITY

To understand the landscape of social cohesion in Binghamton, New York, David Sloan Wilson and his colleagues surveyed 1,800 secondary-school students on how willing they were to help others, and the kind of support they received from those around them. He used this information to map 'prosociality' throughout the city, then started looking for ways to increase it.

1-3: PARKS

Through the Design Your Own Park competition, community members cooperate to create or improve outdoor spaces, including: **1**, a dog park; **2**, 'Sunflower Park'; and **3**, turning an Edwards Street intersection into a community space.

4: RELIGION

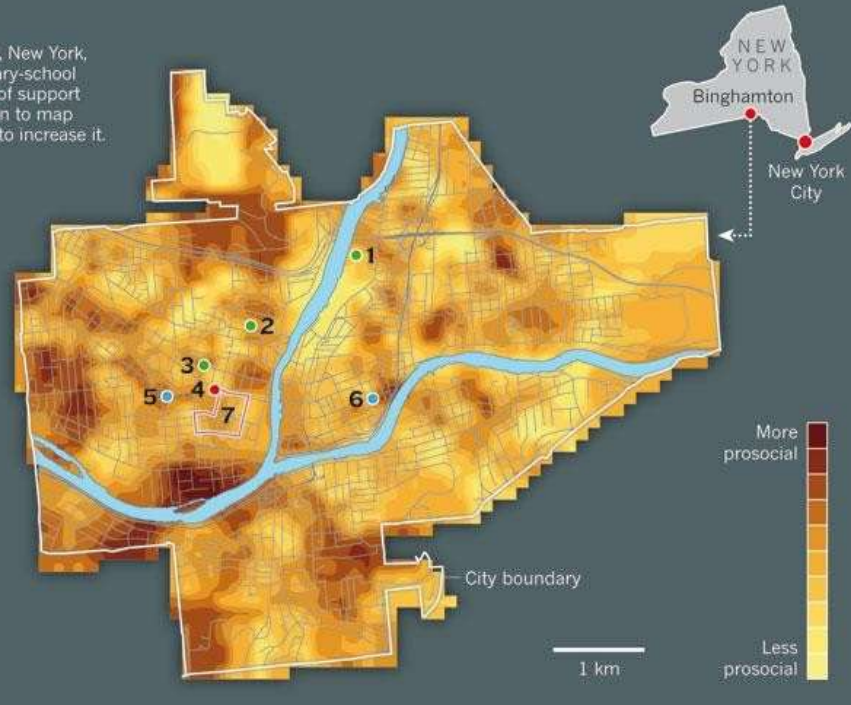
In a pilot study, Wilson and his collaborators have surveyed the congregation at Tabernacle United Methodist Church on matters of prosociality and faith.

5-6: EDUCATION

Wilson has been working with schools, including: **5**, Horace Mann elementary; and **6**, Regents Academy, to see whether incentives to promote cooperation can help to improve student behaviour and test scores.

7: LIVING

Residents of the 'Tree Street District' are being surveyed for attitudes towards different groups before and after the establishment of community-building programmes.

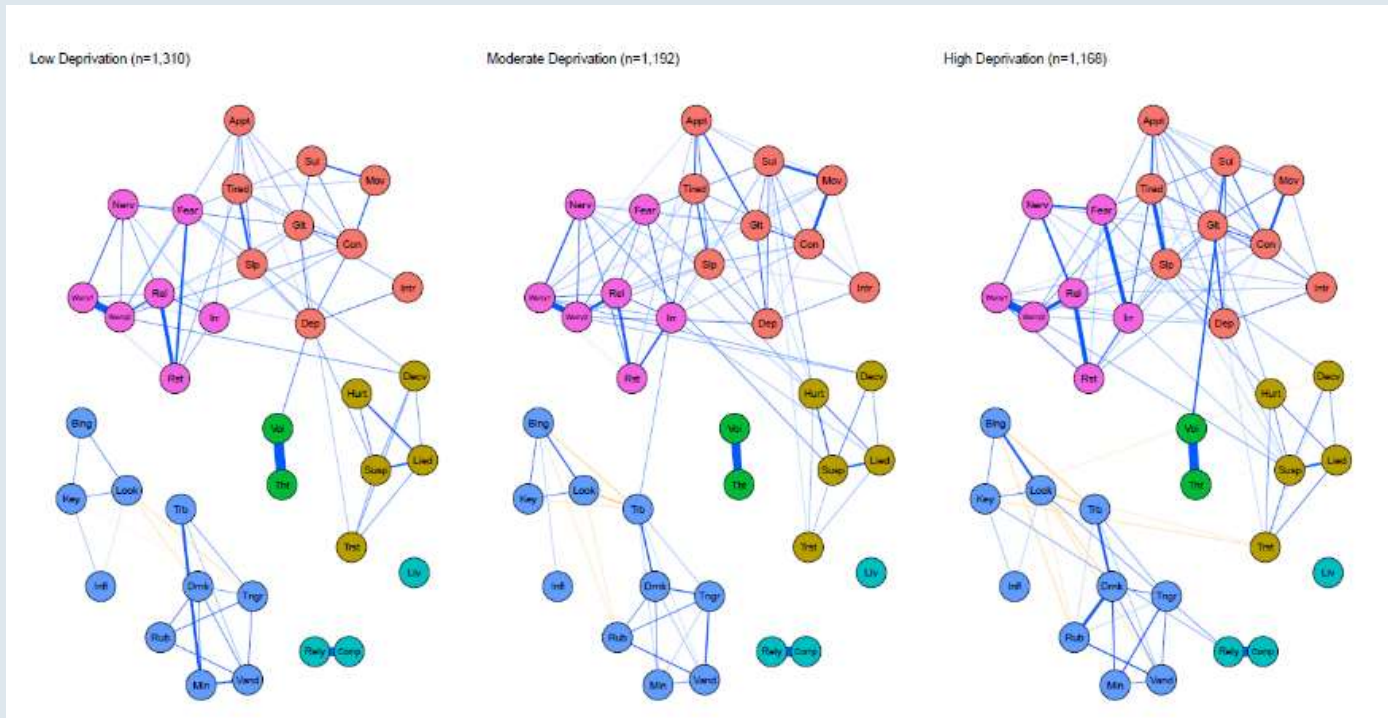


- **Evolutionary Theory, Prosociality & Life History Theory**
 - The qualities of an environment directly determine our life strategies and wellbeing affecting our ability to:
 - cooperate with others
 - plan for our futures &
 - sustain wellbeing
 - Harsh environments (resource depleted) prime future discounting behaviours in young people and so have significantly negative impacts on individuals and communities.

(Wilson, 2011)

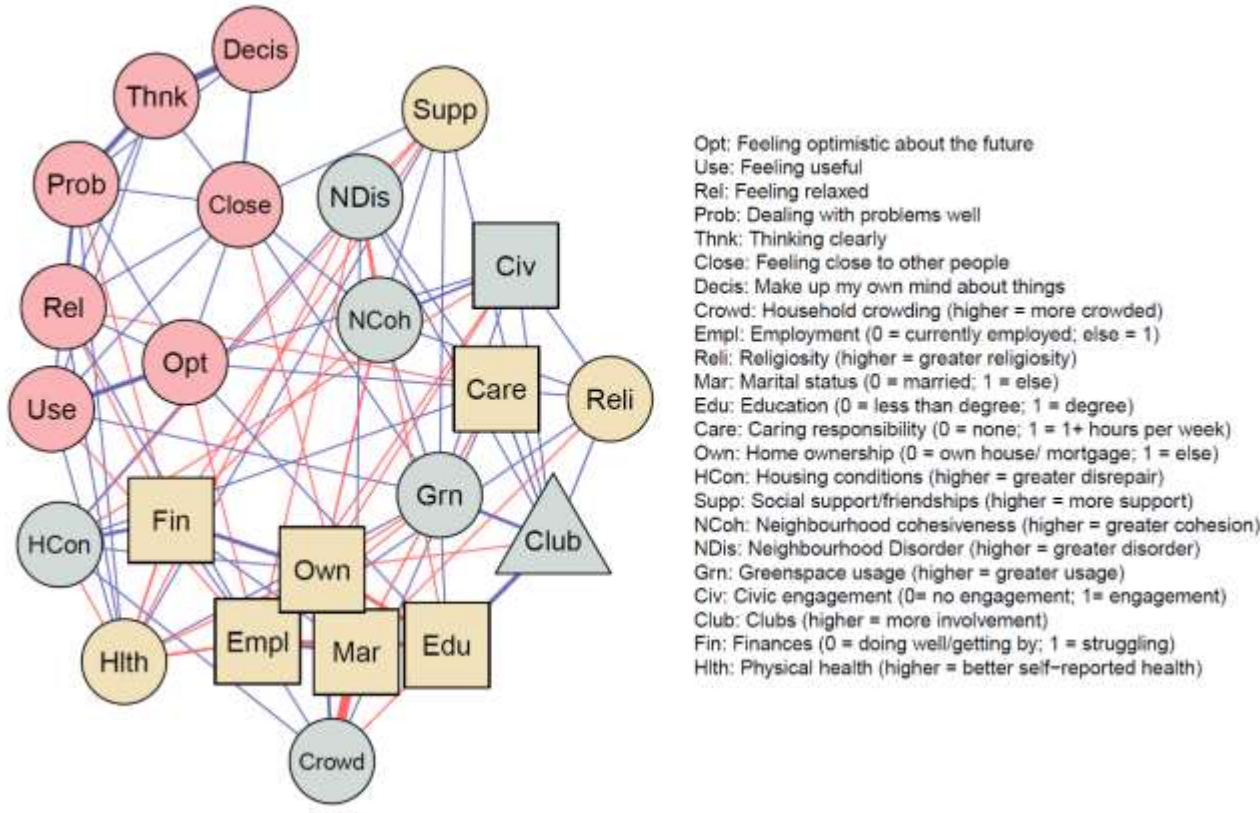
“It is always necessary to jump up and down on the scaffold of knowledge to make sure it is solid. If you are skeptical about a scientific claim, then jump up and down on it as hard as you can until you expose a weakness or convince yourself that it is solid.”

Neighbourhood Characteristics & Mental Distress



- **Mental Health, Deprivation & the Neighbourhood Social Environment: a Network Analysis (McElroy et al. 2018)**
 - The tipping points of disadvantage – from common to serious mental distress

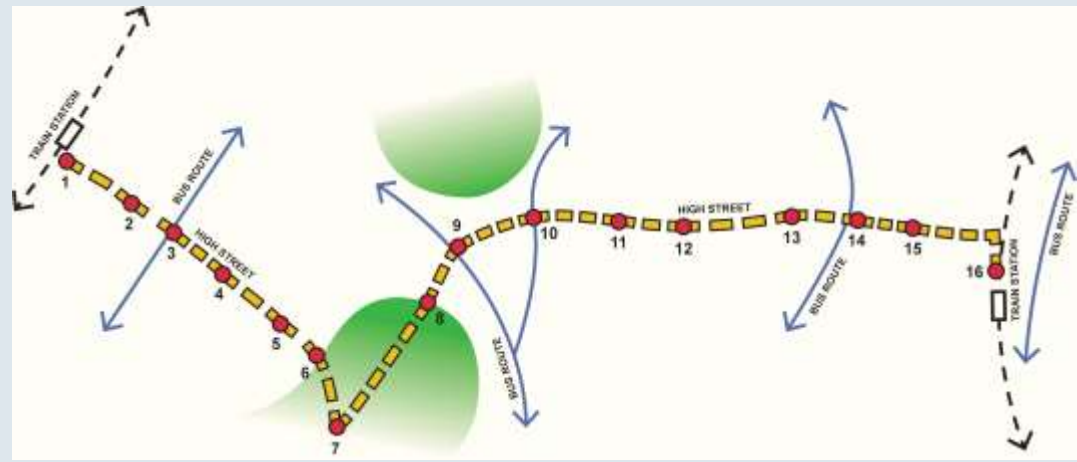
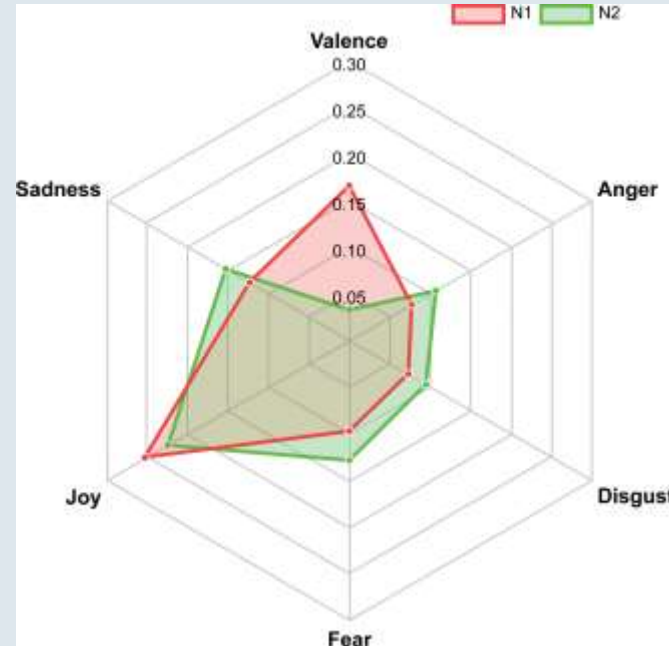
Neighbourhood Characteristics & wellbeing



- McElroy et al (2021) The Individual, place and wellbeing: A network analysis
 - Neighbourhood cohesion was positively associated with “I’ve been feeling close to other people”.
 - Civic agency (i.e. participants feeling that they could influence local decisions) was positively associated with “I’ve been feeling optimistic about the future”.
 - Green space usage was positively associated with both of the above.

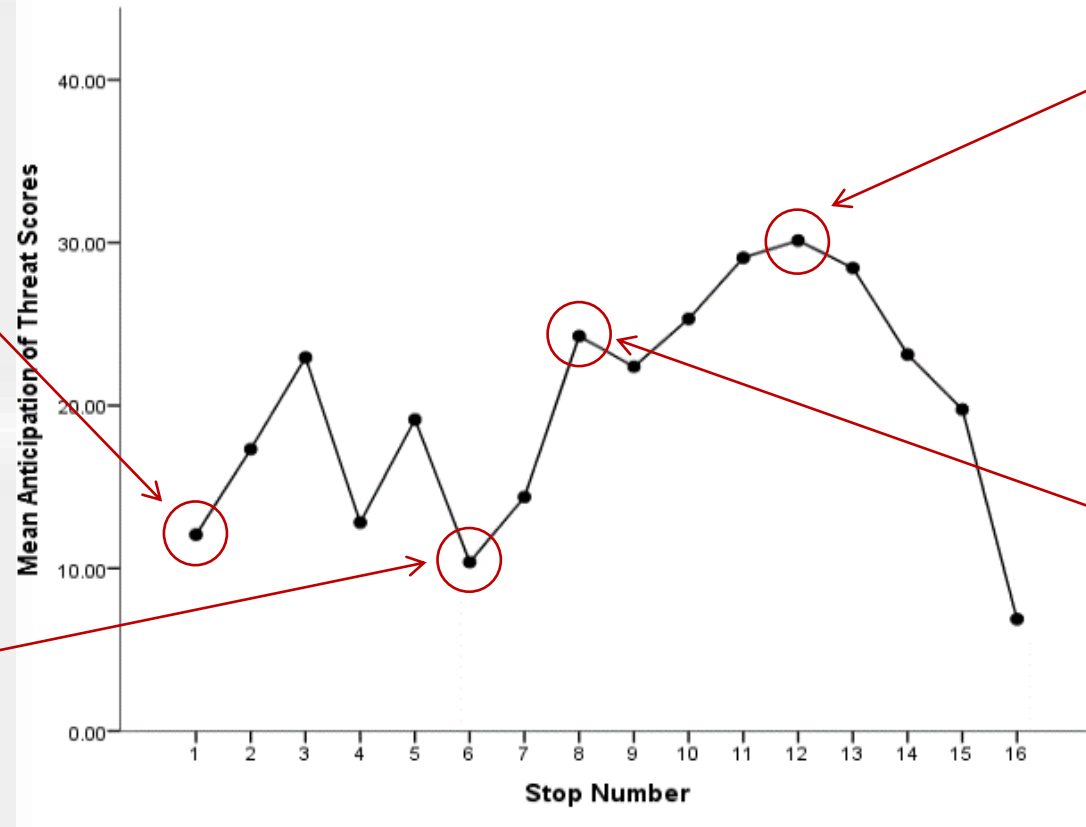
Overall wellbeing is positively associated with local green/open space usage, civic agency & neighbourhood cohesion and negatively associated with housing disrepair.

Places elicit emotions



- Affective response to places**
 (Corcoran et al., 2018)

Threat, Trust & Wealth

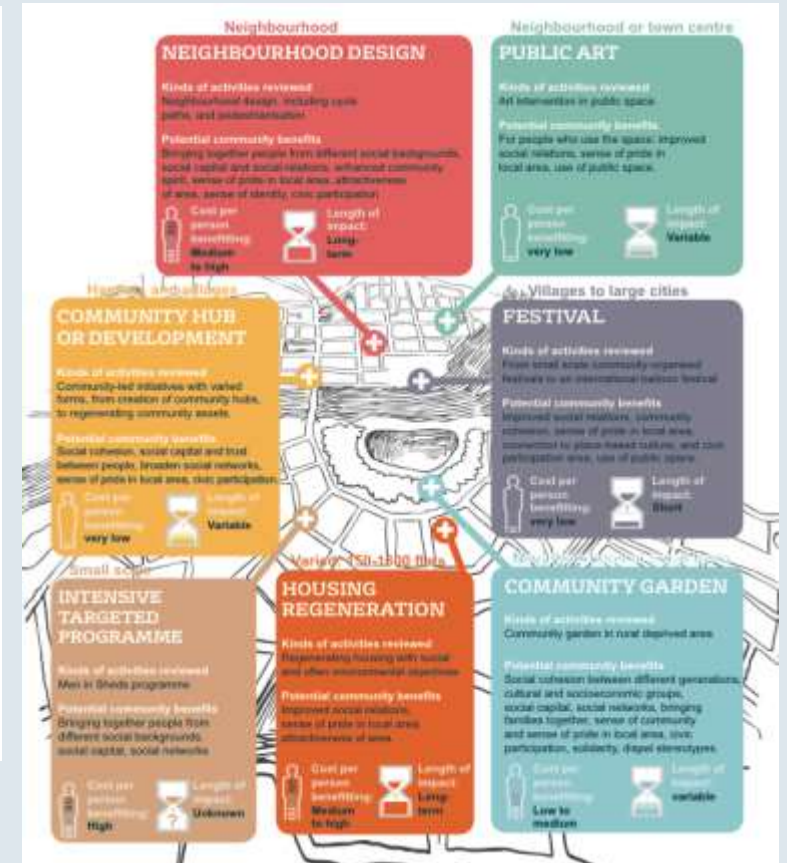
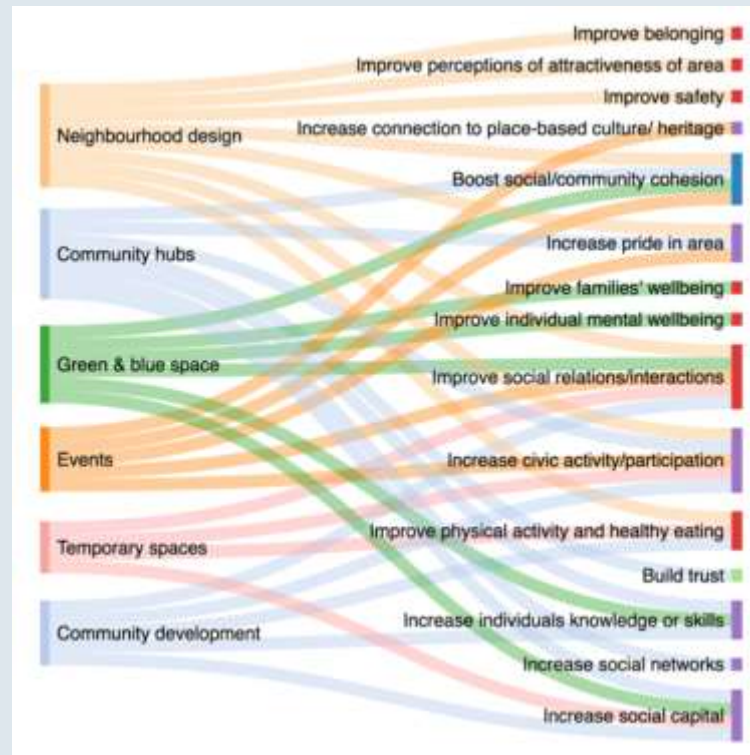


■ Feeling threat & trust in places

Corcoran et al: [An Urban Walking Study](#), 2018

Place interventions & wellbeing – Top down doesn't do it

OUTCOMES	Community Hubs	Events	Public Realm Design
+ Relationships	X	✓	✓
+ Cohesion	✓	✓	✓
+ Trust	✓	X	✓
+ Participation	✓	✓	✓
+ Belonging/Pride	X	✓	✓
+ IWB/Health/Activity	✓	X	✓
+ Networks	✓	X	X
+ Heritage/Culture	X	✓	X
+ Feeling safer	X	X	✓
+ Skills/knowledge	✓	X	X
+ Local economy	X	X	✓



Place Infrastructure Effects Community Wellbeing

(Bagnall et al., 2017)

Theory of Change - Community Wellbeing

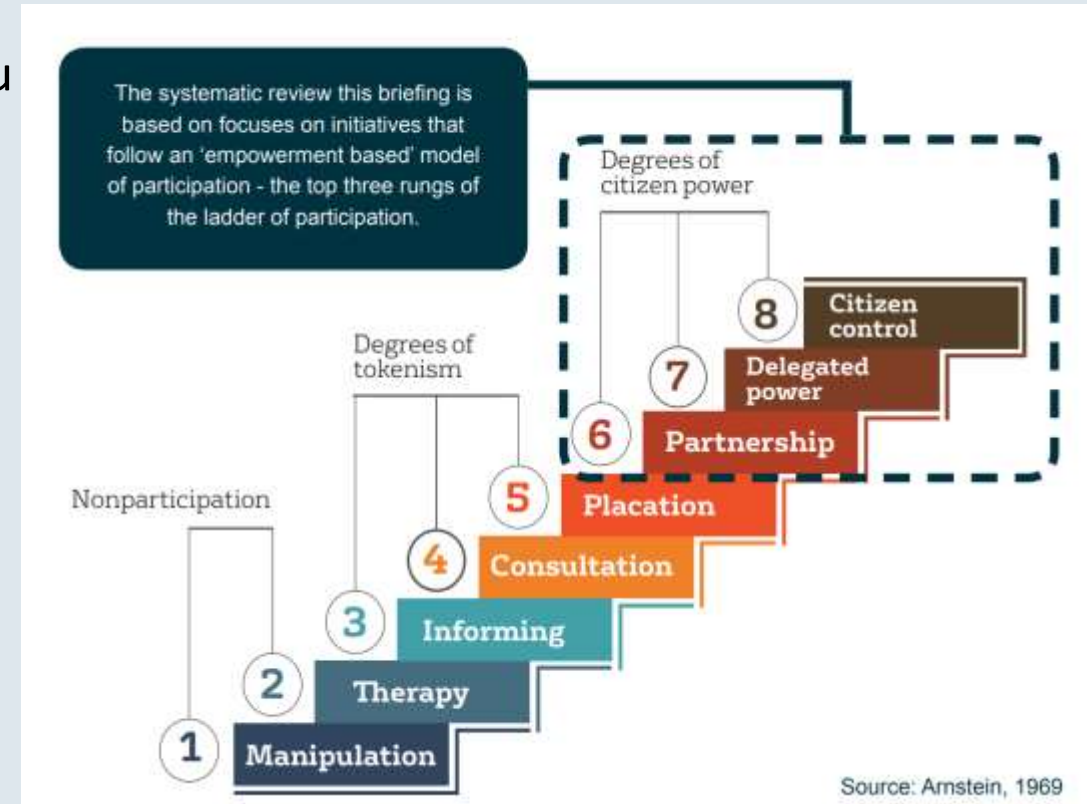


Community Power is the key mechanism of change to build into place-making/regeneration processes

Meaningful Involvement

4 simple principles of meaningful joint decision-making provide the power to positively impact wellbeing & community wellbeing & to avoid potential to do harm from feeling that you do not matter.

1. Power is agreed and acknowledged as being held jointly by all people involved at the outset.
2. There is active and full involvement in all decisions that impact the intervention or project.
3. Potential barriers to access & participation (income, education, gender, ethnicity, age, illness, disability, language, and caring responsibilities) are acknowledged & tackled.
4. When appropriate & desired by the community, there is full & active involvement in the implementation of the intervention in the community.



Pennington et al. (2018)
<https://whatworkswellbeing.org/resources/joint-decision-making/>

Guidance: wellbeing at the heart of placemaking



- Can the 'Five Ways to Wellbeing' deliver useful place-making principles?
- **Psychologically Informed Environments (PIE)** – understanding needs, thinking, emotions, personalities and experience of individuals and communities

Relational design: shifting practice



- **Relational Spaces for Mental Health & Wellbeing | Co-production in Mental Health: Lighting up Dark Places**
 - Chapter - Relational Wellbeing, Relational Spaces, Relational Design
(Corcoran, Thomas & Zielke, 2021)

- **Blauvelt 2012:**
 - “While most 20th century design is autonomous, independent, isolated, and closed, relational design is synonymous with interdependence, connectedness, and openness.”
- Relational design is :
 - “preoccupied not just with design’s form or meaning, but with it’s effects; not with isolated objects, but rather with situations embedded in everyday life.”
- Involving end-users in a process of ‘designerly thinking’.

Relational design for relational wellbeing

▪ Relational Wellbeing, Relational Spaces, Relational Design:

- Understands the **human need to be social** and to form trusting relationships
- Is **non-hierarchical** - levelling-up power imbalances
- Is **context specific** - standardised solutions cannot simply be imposed
- Is **agile, flexible, dynamic and evolving** - relational design does not stop with an output because relational wellbeing is an emergent property of interactions across time and space
- Is open to, respectful and **tolerant of difference** - understanding the need for difference before consensus
- Is **open to experiences** and to the wide views coming from diversity
- Is **always encouraging** - establishing trust
- Is **willing to take risks** because sometimes ideas will fail, and we can always learn

(Corcoran et al. 2021)

The intrinsic value of co-design



VISION – Group 1

The Reader Organisation will create a new heart for Calderstones: building a cultural community for the benefit of the city.

OBJECTIVES

- Create an accessible cultural hub for the local community
- Realise the heritage and landscape assets of the park
- Develop an attractive metropolitan destination within the city
- Establish a sustainable and identifiable home for the reader organisation
- Provide inclusive and equitable wellbeing outcomes

VISION – Group 2

The Reader Organisation will create a relaxing, inclusive and sustainable home for a cluster of cultural pursuits with reading as its foundation.

OBJECTIVES

- Facilitate a range of accessible and inclusive cultural activities
- Provide inclusive and equitable wellbeing outcomes
- Provide an exemplar 21st century suburban neighbourhood
- Realise the attractions of the park
- Establish a sustainable and identifiable home for the Reader Organisation

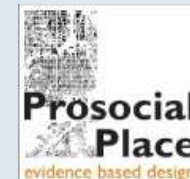
- Co-Design processes have measurable wellbeing benefits: activities supported changes to psychological & community wellbeing through a sense of personal growth and a collective place-related optimism.

The practice of co-design place-making can develop mental & social capital by reconnecting people to place & communities to neighbourhoods.

Corcoran et al: [Cooperative Placemaking](#), 2017

Borderlands Programme: Place Plans

- 1. Place-Based:** Assessing investment needs & solutions for each place on its own terms: what the place wants to be in 20 years, what it needs & what it offers.
- 2. Collective:** Looking at the contribution of each part to the whole: the added value to the place, area, region & country.
- 3. Systemic:** Bringing public, private, third sector & community assets together as part of a single, integrated system supporting communities, services & the economy.
- 4. Community-led:** Putting communities at the heart of decisions about the solutions that the Place Programme brings to the challenges facing their towns.
- 5. Prevention and Future Proofing:** Investment & action directed towards preventing further deterioration in our towns & town centres, & ensuring they are equipped to respond to future change, including recovery from the impact of Covid-19.

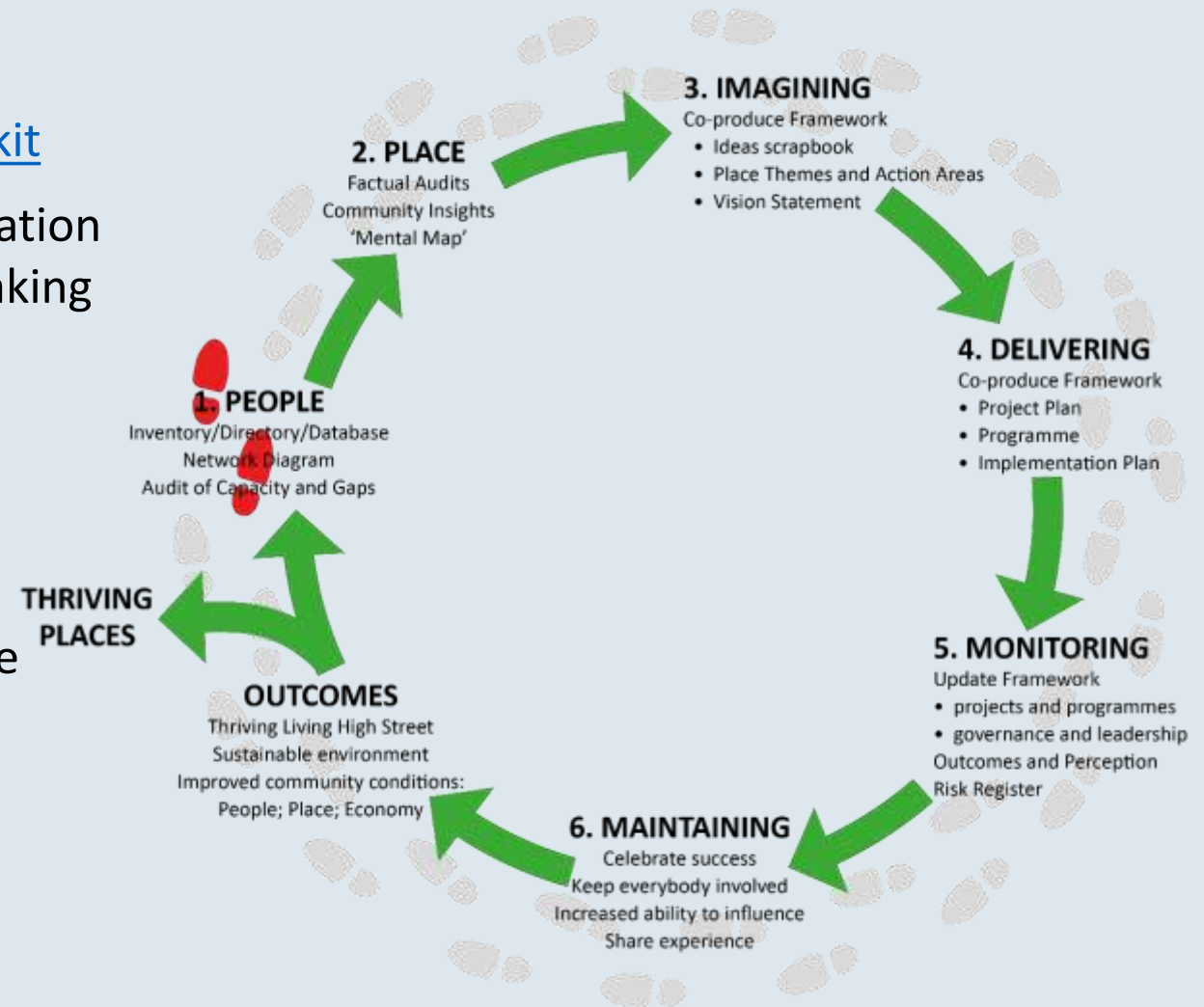


Living High Street Neighbourhoods

Based on MAG Northern Ireland Living High Streets

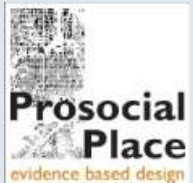
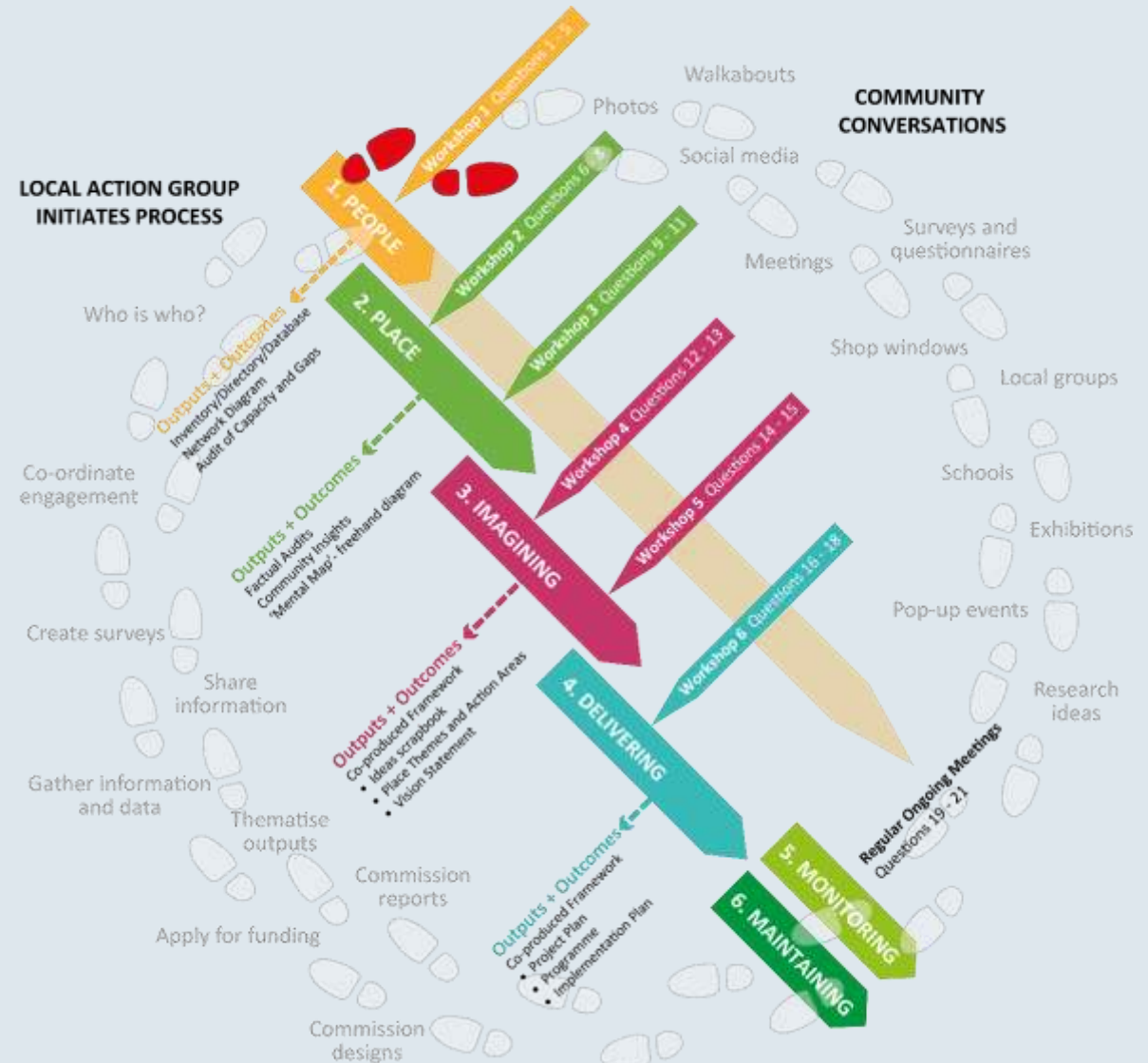
Craft Kit: <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/mag-living-high-streets-craft-kit>

- To help communities clarify their aims, build evaluation methods and set up a sustainable cycle of placemaking & stewardship.
- **Theme 1 People:** growing your skills & resources
- **Theme 2 Place:** knowing your place
- **Theme 3 Imagining:** what your place could become
- **Theme 4 Delivering:** how to focus & prioritise
- **Theme 5 Monitoring:** confirming progress
- **Theme 6 Maintaining:** loving your place



Longtown Community Place Plan Process

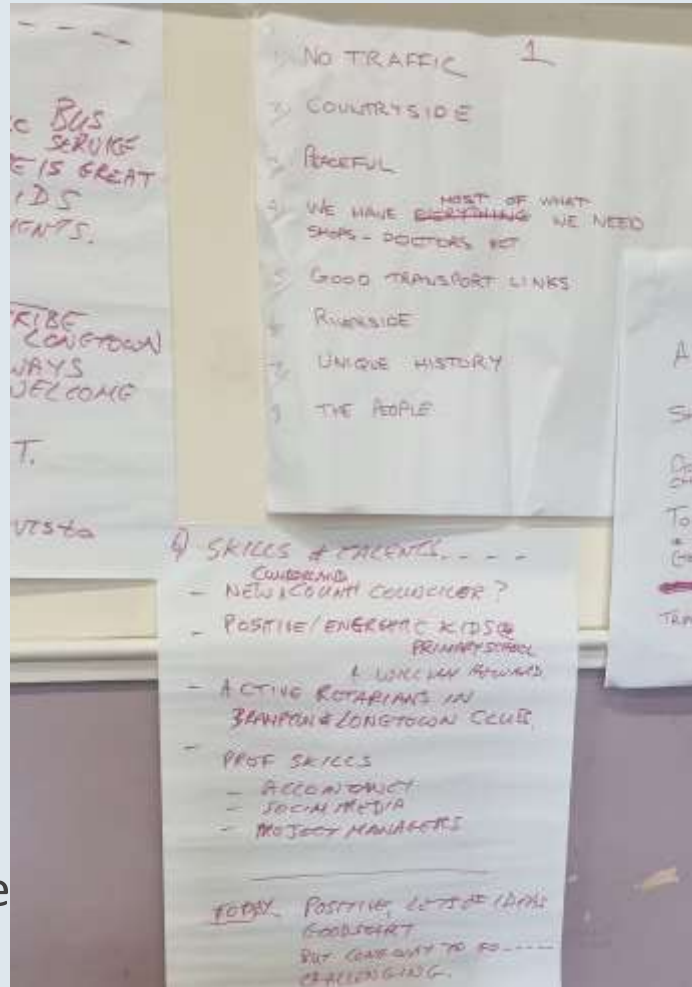
- **Workshop 1 - Bringing people together**
- **Workshop 2 – Knowing Longtown:**
 - What do we know?
 - Walkabout - what do we feel?
- **Workshop 3 - Imagining Longtown 1:**
 - What makes a good place?
- **Workshop 4 - Imagining Longtown 2:**
 - What could we do here?
- **Workshop 5 - Making the Plan:**
 - Where could we make the changes we want to see?



Workshop One Outcomes

1. What do you like about where you live?

- Longtown is a:
- Friendly place
- Unique heritage place
- Peaceful place
- Town & country place
- Affordable place
- Connected place
- Handy & Convenient place
- A riverside place



2. How would you describe the community in Longtown?

The people of Longtown are:

Welcoming

Helping

Divided

Needing a focus

Similar demographic

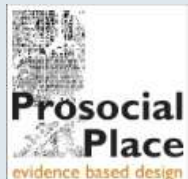
Workshop One Outcomes

3. Who visits Longtown & for what?

- An established destination for some; somewhere on a route for others
- Local residents using the towns resources
- Business folk – traders & farmers
- Passing through on A7 on the way to other places

4. How do we get everyone involved in the plan?

- Two contrasting themes emerged
- Mindset & motivation
- Channels of communication



5. How do we better connect to the wider district?

A psychological and a practical theme

Encouragement to look to the future

Enhanced cooperation between the Parishes

6. What skills and talents do we have in the community to deliver this plan?

A guiding ethos for volunteering and 'how to' concerns along with **plenty of experience**

Workshop Two: Owning Outcomes

LONGTOWN PLACE PLAN

Workshop 2: Knowing Longtown



Summary of Findings

Aims of Workshop 2:

- To gather residents' thoughts on the most important aspects of their town
 - To explore feelings about and generated by the town
 - To start people thinking about the social, environmental and economic sustainability of Longtown
 - To create mental maps of the town - linking the tables goals to the physical place
- These aims were tackled within 6 questions. Responses to these questions are briefly summarised below. More detailed analysis will be available in the Place Plan.

Question 1: What facts can you tell us about Longtown?

2 broad themes:

- **Longtown's assets and opportunities** – Many chief amenities and facilities were recorded by the workshop attendees. As well as this, subthemes that emerged included *Positive People Facts*; *Historic and Natural Assets*; *Longtown's Liminality – the debateable borderlands*
- **Longtown's challenges** - A diverse array of references to 'things that Longtown doesn't have' were collected and many missing amenities were highlighted. As well as this, subthemes that emerged included *Negative People Facts*; *Longtown's Left behindness*; *Issues in need of rapid resolution*

Question 2: How does Longtown make you feel?

2 broad themes:

- **Positive Emotional Reactions** – Subthemes included town features that elicit positive feelings but these were few; sense of belonging/home; Longtown feels safe
- **Negative Emotional Reactions** – Subthemes included town features that elicit negative feelings these were many and feelings like depressed, drab, let down, disappointed predominated; Current Hazards on the pavements and roads; Longtown lacks vitality - with feeling of boredom and solitude coming out.

LONGTOWN PLACE PLAN

Workshop 2: Knowing Longtown



Question 3: What do you think is missing from Longtown?

Responses to this question particularly picked up on things that Longtown doesn't currently have. However, its inclusion as a question was to create a natural segue into question 4 with its strategic focus on sustainability.

Three linked themes emerged:

- **Attracting Visitors** - subthemes included *Signage and Information* – including welcome signs, signs to current assets and free car parking for visitors; *Making a destination* – ideas included making the most of what we have and making future destination venues.
- **Where needs meet** - This theme pulled out residents' reflection about missing things that would serve the needs of both visitors and residents – identifying where the needs met - and through which the social and economic sustainability of Longtown can be built. Subthemes included *A vital focal point* including various ideas for activities and events as well as a place for young people; *Making the connections* focussing on issues to build Longtown's connections with other places but also building its internal connections; *Realising natural assets* - Seen as a resource that benefits both resident and visitors, the appropriate harnessing of that potential brings environmental sustainability into the mix.
- **An enduring dwelling place** – this theme identified the factors that will help to create a thriving future place. There were 4 subthemes - *Stewarding Longtown* with calls for better future place governance in many areas; *Bonding* reflected a need to pull the community together in action.
- **Affordable Longtown** reflecting a will to keep the town affordable with ideas merging around the process of doing this via co-operatives and community ownership of assets; *Education, training, development* reflected the loss of the secondary school and also a need for adult educational opportunities

Question 4: What would make Longtown a more sustainable place?

See separate poster which collates the post-it responses into environmental, economic and social sustainability – particularly identifying ideas and thoughts that exists at the intersection of these three sustain abilities.

Question 5: What are your hopes and fears for Longtown?

See separate poster which collates the post-it responses. The responses are organised into hopes and fears for the place, hopes and fears about the place plan itself and hopes and fears for the community.

LONGTOWN PLACE PLAN

Workshop 2: Knowing Longtown



Question 6: What are your top three goals for Longtown?

ON mental maps of Longtown, each of the 4 tables agreed their 3 top goals for Longtown:

Group 1

For Longtown to be more prosperous
For Longtown's community to be more fully engaged
For sustainable solutions to be identified for Longtown's future

Group 2

To bring the community together in the Community Centre
To foster local co-operative ownership
To have more renewable, locally owned, affordable energy

Group 3

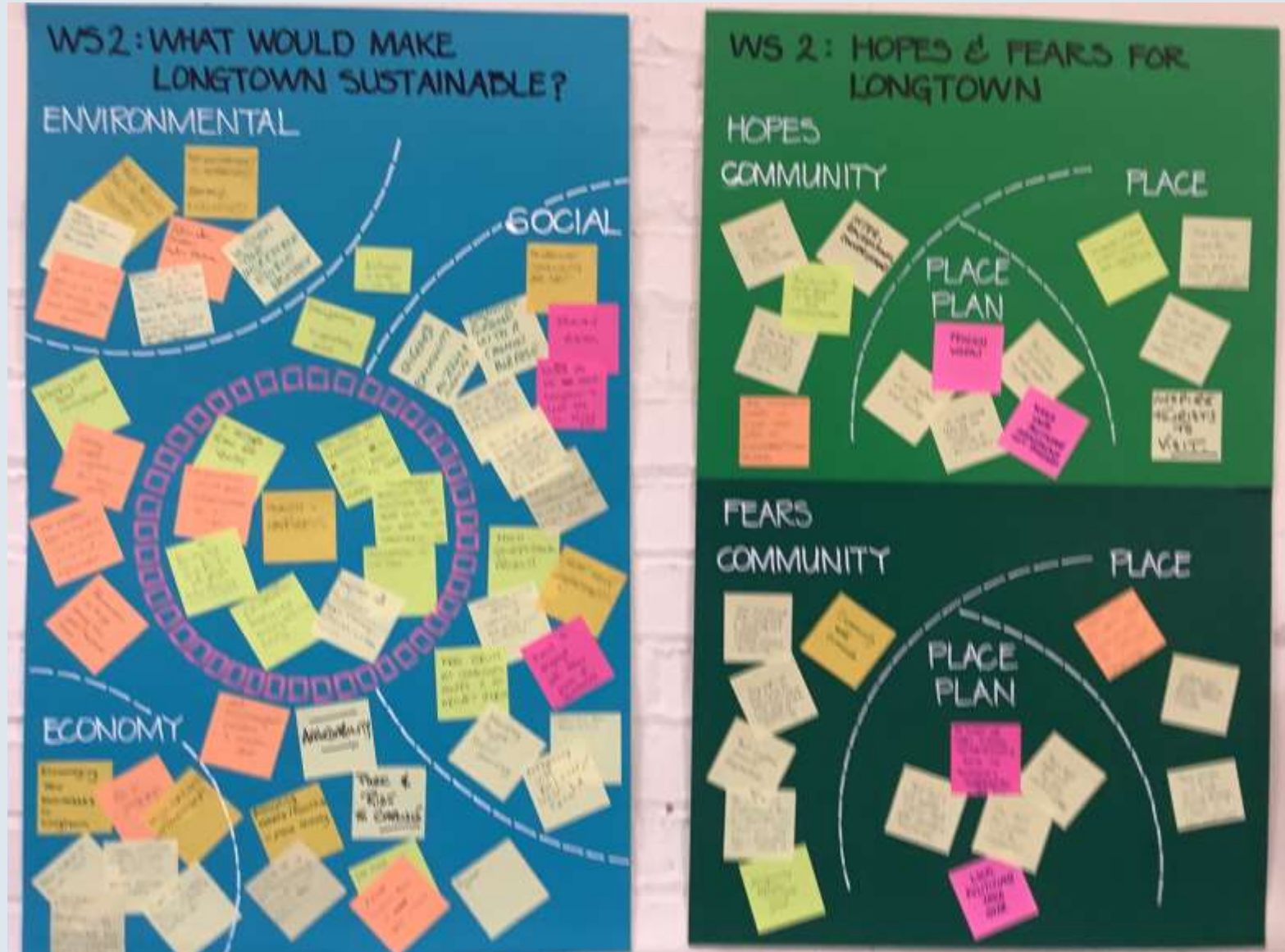
To have one big focal point for the town
To improve all facilities
To support more events and activities in the town

Group 4

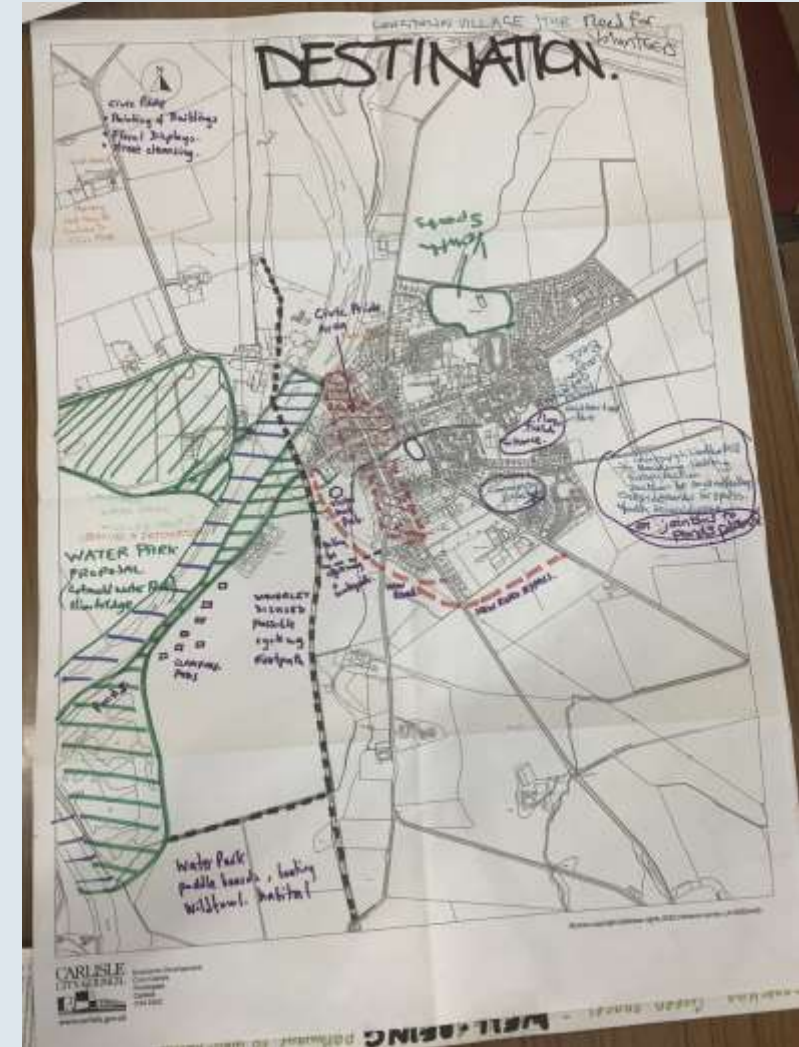
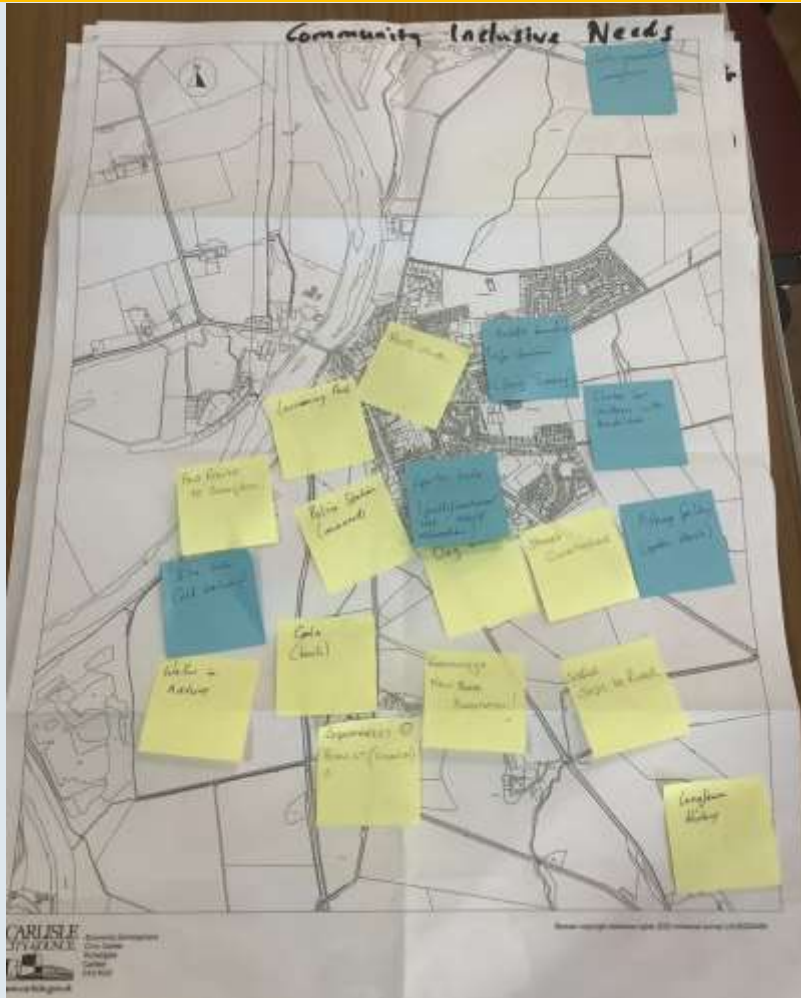
To establish a country park
To establish a heritage museum/ exhibition hall
To establish a school/ sports academy

These collective community goals are the seeds of the Longtown Place Plan Vision statement.

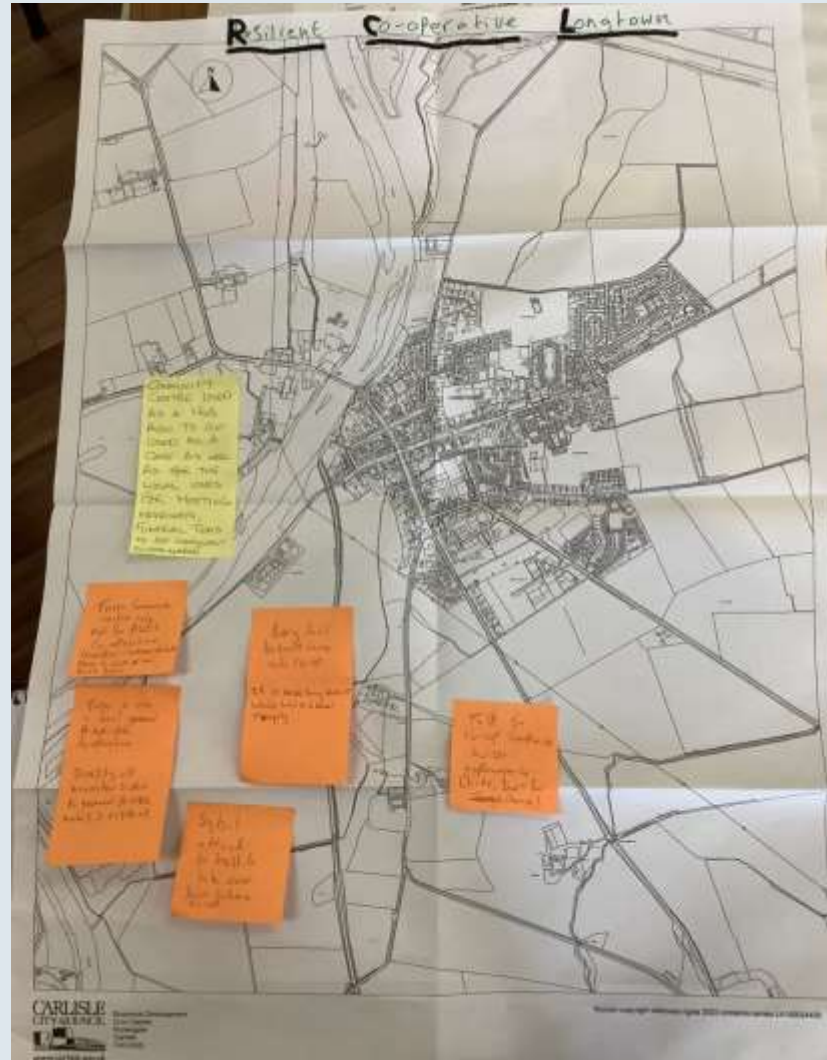
Workshop Two – displaying data



Workshop Three – mapping the future



Workshop Three – mapping the future



Taking the Keys: Longtown Town team

- A **Town Team** will manage the process over the next 20 years.
- **Every resident will be a member of the Town Team**
- **Every resident is sovereign**
- **To be an accountable body**, it will require an executive team
- **Regular meetings** to monitor and maintain the progress of the Place Plan
- **Sub-groups and other public, private, third sector & community organisations** will work through the Town Team
- **Independent organisations** can be established to deliver individual projects.
- **Guiding Principles**
 - **Being Positive**
 - **Being Proactive**
 - **Being Independent**
 - **Being Inclusive**
 - **Being Sustainable**
 - **Having Integrity, Honesty and Respect.**



Concluding thoughts

- Our places matter too much to us to allow top down processes of change to continue
- Places and their impacts upon us are complex and deeply rooted
- Place inequity/ place stigma is sustained through top-down urbanism
- Becoming place-blind, unplaced & unhitched is a consequence of top-down urbanism
- Even positive changes to place enacted top down don't translate into wellbeing benefits
- Meaningful engagement does even though you always get turbulence
- Need to be sure we agree and apply what is meaningful
- The policy and practice landscape is changing to reflect bottom-up public health approach
- The future of 'left-behind' places (e.g. Longtown) looks better for this

