**Uneven relations: making, remaking and unmaking public space in London**

‘Any major redevelopment naturally produces a fair amount of controversy, especially if the world detects any unfairness.’

Simon Gregory, Local Historian (Interview 2012)

Public spaces in London are continually being made, remade and unmade through unequal interrelations. They are composed from an entanglement of narratives bringing together the spaces, visions and actions of central government politicians, local authority planners, property developers, landowners, community groups, urban design consultants, journalists, researchers, local residents, workers and visitors to the city. As public spaces are made the differing opportunities afforded to those involved are asserted, challenged and navigated. These interrelations lead to individual gain and shared advantage to the detriment of people whose spaces, opportunities and livelihoods are overcome. The making of public spaces over the last three decades in London reveals overlapping perspectives and competing ambitions claimed by those whose lives and work depend on them.

This paper examines three contrasting London sites where public space is subject to daily reconfigurations and large-scale masterplanned development. The nuanced accounts that constitute each case describe site-specific trajectories, of people, architectural proposals and material forms, through competing ways to realise public space. The research reveals that uneven opportunities to make public spaces are leveraged, for commercial, political and cultural advantage, by those with power against less secure public lives which are dependent on and contribute to these spaces. The three sites include: regeneration led by a local authority and made possible through a partnership with private developers (Elephant and Castle); a masterplan driven by developers facilitated by the local authority (Paddington Basin); and a project initiated by central government and continued by the metropolitan authority (Trafalgar Square). Reflecting Ali Madanipour assertion that public spaces ‘inevitably reflect the values and aspirations’ of those who produce them (1996:109), these cases reveal relations between people, organisations, cultural practices, economic conditions and planning controls constituting specific design and development geographies in London.

After describing the distinct trajectories of making public space at each site I analyse the common and overlapping narratives which offer more generalised findings. I examine three sites of shared contexts, from macro-scale economic and political impacts to recurring small-scale interactions. As I summarise the cases, conceptions of public space as *spatial forms*, *visual images* and *social interactions* can also be read. The lens of public space as *spatial forms* are found in the architectural typologies of squares, plazas and streets, brownfield sites, development opportunities, building parcels, and red-line property boundaries. These are entities where ownership is traded and frequently asserted to challenge access and use. The material public spaces are also affirmed through *visual images*, evident in the presentation of political and economic ambitions facilitated by architectural renderings, through media representations and in film-making. In many cases images are produced and disseminated showing buildings and open spaces which will never fully materialise. Additionally, visitors define their relationship to these spaces through taking photographs. This frequently conflicts with the multiple regulations to control photography, which overlaps with the third lens where we find public spaces made and remade through *social interactions* within the sites. Spaces are constituted through the embodied occupation and physical transformations which results from events, markets, gatherings and the chance encounters which remake all three places each day. This third frame of social interactions reflects the position of geographer Doreen Massey, who claims that public spaces are ‘made out of our activities and our interrelations’ (www.publicspace.org, 2013).

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*Figure 1* Three sites of public space redevelopment in the network of streets across central London (Fieldwork drawing, 2013)

The paper investigates what is lost and gained through these interconnected and uneven processes of making, which frequently favour large-scale, privately vested, singular ambitions for public space.

**Contrasting cases**

The site of the *Elephant and Castle Regeneration* offered a context for research into the social processes and spatial forms of the outdoor market by the shopping centre. The space which was formed architecturally in 1965 from the designs of Boissevain and Osmond for the Willetts Group has subsequently been transformed in composition and public life. The modern concrete paving and elevations first enclosed a space punctuated with glazed windows and doors along with trees, fountains and seating. But when a new building owner engaged market specialists Urban Space Management to operate the centre the space was filled with an outdoor market (1990) which has continued to run ever since. The transformation of this once poorly used concrete space into a mish-mash of rusting shipping containers and steel-framed stalls created a bustling scene outside of the shopping centre. It also realised the ‘market as a social space’, as Sophie Watson describes (2006:44-50), where as a researcher it is not easy to ‘disentangle’ the social, spatial and commercial processes. The narrow plaza is reconstituted each day, through close-up interactions, as market stalls are fabricated, opened, closed and then dismantled. The economic exchanges of low-cost goods intermix with conversations between the market traders, residents, commuters, migrants, workers and visitors. Flows of commuters pass through at the beginning and end of the working day, children congregate on their way to and from school and around midday the food-court fills with queues for the food vendors. During the week the food-court is so congested that diners share tables together. The sunken market is a place, which Watson describes as ‘not overtly conflictual’ (2006:2), where the differences of people working, moving through or passing the day are accommodated and negotiated.

But with the advancing regeneration at Elephant and Castle the public space is due to be reconstituted. A gradual decline in the custom for the market has resulted from the decanting of the Heygate Estate while a more noticeable weakening of footfall has been felt since the pedestrian tunnels have closed. Stephen James who oversees market operations describes that the market ‘is a general market, so it relies on the people; a general market for local people’ and as Southwark Council ‘have cleared thousands of [residents] out, so the traders are finding it difficult’ (Interview 2012). Watson recognises in her research of different markets, that ‘the social relationships between shoppers and traders’ are important (2006:50). So as the demographic of the area shifts, from previously a majority of social renting residents to instead one which will be dominated by market-rate property owners, the relations across the new market square, located on the other side of the railway viaduct, are likely to change.

The plans for regeneration have underscored contestations between Southwark Council, the developers, local traders and residents. These disagreements have been confined to community meetings and online forums rather than protests within the plaza. The concerns of residents of the Heygate and the traders inside the shopping centre have been reflected in the contested ‘Right to Return’ and the protestations outlined in the Traders Charter (2007). Unfortunately the individual market traders, operating outside of the shopping centre, are not considered in the charter. At the same time, concerns for what will result from the development has discouraged some traders to continue their stalls and has deterred some residents from settling in the area. The uncertainty over the continuation of the market is further exacerbated by its private ownership. Unlike the celebrated public market which resides south of Elephant and Castle, on East Street, and which is protected through historic legislations, this private market has a short-term and limited tenure. The value of the Elephant and Castle market remains unrecognised by Southwark Council and the developers.

What has become evident at Elephant and Castle is that the repeated strategic redevelopments facilitate new ways of ‘taking’ – a tabula-rasa development approach to regeneration – through transferring and consolidating the ownership of land. This has occurred most recently from Southwark Council to Lend Lease. The project lacks transparency in how the development, which has required handing over of public land in exchange for Section 106 planning contributions, were agreed. Although government agencies leverage the assets of their land to gain investment in public infrastructure the relationships with developers became less balanced when there are greater financial returns at stake. As a result, negotiations and agreements have been consistently concealed.

The developers of the second site, *Paddington Basin*, have a more singular approach in forming its public space. The complex of public spaces which unite the masterplan’s thirteen development parcels, across 80 acres, are under the direction of the privately led Paddington Waterside Partnership. The resultant spaces at Paddington Basin contrast with expectations of a public realm owned and maintained by the state – instead these publicly accessible spaces display signs communicating their private ownership and the restrictions to what is permissible within them. The development is creating a place where public discourses and social interactions, such as those which could be considered to form a public life, are narrowly prescribed.

Paddington Basin can be understood as a masterplan-scale framework inside which social interactions and uses occur. The process was established through long leases offered by public agencies, such as British Waterways (now the Canal and River Trust), and a masterplan initiated by the City of Westminster. The Paddington Waterside Partnership includes 22 partners across developers, businesses and former government agencies, as well as strongly informing the BID (Business Improvement District). The partnership excludes the City of Westminster who had initiated the project and who remain the planning authority overseeing the work. However, the process of development has consistently relied on the roles of public agencies who facilitate the masterplan through the favourable conditions as landlords and planning control. What is being realised is a commercial and residential development connected through a network of small private courtyards, dead-ended streets, an amphitheatre and a canal towpath. The towpath remains under the ownership of the Canal and River Trust, however the remaining public land has been handed over for private gain.

When it was formed the development partnership described the importance of a ‘high quality public realm’ that was considered ‘vital for improving perceptions and for creating a new sense of identity and place’ (PRP 2001). This emphasis was reinforced when the partnership established the BID in 2005. This business orientated operation also embraced new forms of public space as a tool which could offer a coherent image to the area. The BID, which expanded influence and control of the development partnership to encompass surrounding streets and businesses, prioritised the making of a ‘place’ (Interview with Kate, the manager of the BID, 2013). This approach allowed the development to benefit from the identity of the surrounding historic streets and buildings while informing projects to beautify the surrounding public realm and increase policing of undesirable activities, such as prostitution (Interview with Sharon, local resident and advisor to the BID). Although the BID and the development partnership share a chief-executive and office space, the geographic areas under their respective control do not fully overlap. Most of the development masterplan is excluded from the BID area. So although a majority of the businesses within the BID area voted for its establishment and continuation, most of the shops, restaurants and corporations within the development area avoid the additional charges of the BID while informally retaining some influence over its operations. The area has become dominated by a developer led process that controls, and profits from, both private buildings and public spaces across Paddington.

The third site of making public space is at *Trafalgar Square*. The *World Squares for All* masterplan frames the refashioning of the square which was completed in 2003 through the oversight of the newly formed Greater London Authority. As a central London civic space of national importance its redevelopment was strongly informed by politicians at Whitehall, through national policy, as well as by the Mayor for London and the City of Westminster in whose borough the square resides. The architectural changes to the square, which were set out in the masterplan led by Norman Foster and subsequently implemented by a team led by Atkins, are sufficiently sympathetic to the appearance of the historic forms that they can almost go unnoticed. A new flight of steps from the pedestrianized upper terrace to the main square aligns with both the National Gallery above and the statues, fountains and ornament below. These steps provide a new route for visitors passing diagonally through the square while creating a terrace of seating for resting, meeting and overlooking the activity below.

Within this architectural context the square is made socially through large organised events and gatherings as well as through tides of tourists, commuters and Londoners. The rhythm of cultural, commercial and political events which occupy the square are required to gain permission form the GLA, through an online application process. The cultural presence of Eid celebrations, the commercial presence of the T-Mobile sing-along and the political protests against student tuition fees are conflated into events which ‘use’ the square. The architect Jan Gehl, who was involved with projects in Elephant and Castle (2003), Paddington (2004) and in central London (2004), emphasises in his book *Life Between Buildings* (1971) activities ‘in’ public spaces. This is public space as a container in which social activities occur, can be encouraged or prevented by particular architectural interventions or which can be legislated against through regulations.

The by-laws put in place for the square through the 1999 Greater London Authority Act have transformed the space socially. The 1999 Act prohibits vending as well as feeding pigeons, activities that formed one of the public performances for which the square was previously renowned. Busking, displaying signs and sleeping are also legislated against preventing unlicensed performances and political expressions while restricting the presence of homeless people. Heritage Wardens, the red-jacketed private security contractors employed by the GLA, patrol the square along with a farrier tasked with discouraging pigeons from returning to the area. In contrast, the upper terrace, which has remained under the authority of the City of Westminster is congested with buskers, performers, tourists and commuters.

Rather than primarily a political space, a history for which Trafalgar Square is associated (www.london.gov.uk), the square is a highly imaged place. It was first photographed by Henry Fox-Talbot in 1844 and by 2009 it was claimed through a study of social media site Flickr that it was the second most photographed place in the world. Trafalgar Square is an open space in which people are both spectators and spectacle. When they are not gazing from seats around the edge of the square visitors are taking photographs of themselves, each other and the ornaments of fountains and statues. During events, rallies and gatherings there is an awareness from individuals and the organisers that their presence will be seen. There is a distinct political and cultural value of performing and participating in events in the square. Although traffic concerns are cited as one of the main reasons for redevelopment, this should not obscure the importance of image making as a key objective in the reconfiguration of Trafalgar Square. As with the plan originally laid out by John Nash and realised by Charles Barry, the 2003 transformation was as interested with opportunities to frame magnificent views as it was concerned with reorganising traffic. Scenic outlooks to take photographs from were enhanced while new events have since unfolded across the square transforming its global image. This is a public space as a setting which embodies strong cultural images.

Partly due to the visibility of Trafalgar Square people and organisations seek to be associated with it. In addition to its associations with ‘Britishness’ (Mace 2005:11) the site offers exposure to audiences within the square and further afield through multiplying forms of media. As a result, it is a highly charged space, where politicians and their cultural advisors, architects and curators construct the image of the space and publicise their associations with it. Commercial enterprises hire the square for spectacular performances, film-makers set dramatic scenes in the square and political rallies use the square as a platform within the view-shed of parliament. The combination of visual backdrops and associations to political, economic and social histories, all situated in the heart of London, draw people to Trafalgar Square to be remake as it spatially, visually and socially.

**Overlapping issues**

In addition to the distinctive processes and interactions which form each site there are overlapping ways of making across all three. These are identified in the recurring presence of the same politicians, consultants, critics and developers who were engaged with redevelopment projects in London around this time. Of note, consultants, like Space Syntax, Norman Foster, Richard Rogers and Jan Gehl, were employed by public agencies and private developers, influencing Elephant and Castle Regeneration, Paddington Waterside and Trafalgar Square over the two decades following the arrival of the New Labour government in 1997 and the establishment of the Greater London Authority in 1999. At a pedestrian scale, I have identified common patterns of life which follow the rhythm of the transportation systems, school holidays and seasonal differences, contributing to how people engage in and form the public realm. As these ways of making public space are asserted, through spatial, visual and social frames, relationships are formed and contestations emerge. Through considering the relations between the opportunities afforded and the ambitions sought to define public spaces nine shared issues across Elephant and Castle Market, Paddington Basin and Trafalgar Square are identified.

Firstly, I found that the architectural development of all three sites have strong *economic priorities* oriented to a private market. An emphasis on the economic priorities of the local authorities for development and the need for financial profit for the developers results in public spaces which are architectural, visually bold and socially prescribed. Despite political differences between Southwark and Westminster the local councils embrace neighbourhood-scale projects which are tied to developer participation. These mechanisms at Elephant and Castle Regeneration and Paddington Waterside bring millions of pounds of financial contributions into public infrastructures. The local authorities are dependent on Section 106 contributions and for this reason the councils take the risk to make initial investment in order to enable their masterplans. As we have seen, Southwark were responsible for decanting the Heygate Estate of its residents while Westminster facilitated the hand-over of land from public agencies. As such the planners and councillors had a lot to lose if the development did not go ahead. In contrast to the profits rendered by developers, at Elephant and Castle and Paddington Waterside, the masterplan which realised Trafalgar Square engaged with a global contest. The Greater London Authority focused on enabling the presence of visitors in the square through pedestrian improvements. They also created conditions for investment, locally for the GLA through media events and nationally as these events enhanced the image of London, England and the UK. As Aspa Gospodini recognises between competing international cities (1992:12), the public space was reconfigured with the aim of ‘upgrading’ London’s status.

With a focus on economic priorities we can see marginal lives, uses and spaces being undermined. At Elephant and Castle the market is due to be demolished, a new market square focusing on crafts will be built in a less visible location and the ‘type’ of market provided by the current traders and operators is questioned by the planners for its suitability in the regenerated area. Similar exclusions of undesirable uses are evident at Trafalgar Square and at Paddington Basin established through evictions in the process of redevelopment, rewriting of legislation that impacts the public spaces and the enforcement by private interests. While developers express that they would invest in the public realm ‘if there was a financial incentive’ (Gensler/ULI 2011:3) one of the six objectives for the GLA’s Manifesto for Public Space is also for a ‘prosperous city that can compete nationally and internationally attracting and fostering businesses that bring jobs and growth (2011:2). Therefore, when activities and uses within these public spaces threatens the investments of local and metropolitan governments as well as those of private interests it can be expected that they will be prohibited.

Secondly, the masterplanned processes, which are initiated by politicians and facilitated by their consultants, begin and are maintained through *talking down* the existing areas. Uncompromising images of failed buildings and neglected spaces, which are frequently associated with marginal lives, are highlighted through selected photographs and scripted sound-bites. Derisory representations emphasise the failures of historic social and spatial infrastructures, such as: the congested, polluting and dangerous transportation systems (Elephant and Castle Regeneration and Trafalgar Square); the dilapidated, unsightly and failed architectural forms (Elephant and Castle); and the abandoned, vacant spaces offering new opportunities (Paddington Basin). At times, the criticism of the areas by planners and politicians is reported unchallenged, such as Councillor Fiona Colley’s confident derision of the shopping centre through threatening its demolition. Other negative messages are heard in blockbuster dystopian movies like *Attack the Block* (2011) which was permitted by Southwark Council to be set within the Heygate Estate. That narratives of residents describe the low levels of crime in the area when the Heygate Estate was full of residents (www.heygatewashome.org) and the previous owners of the shopping centre had plans for renovation are less reported on websites and in newspapers.

This talking down of all three sites provides a foundation for new visions to be proposed, legitimising the ambitions of politicians and developers and the contracts of design consultants. By undermining the image of a failed area those with vested interest can, as one of the residents of Elephant and Castle described ‘stimulate the idea of an obsolete place, a failing place, a place that is full of crime, and noisy, and dirty’. This is then used to establish a confidence that ‘we [the council, developers and consultants] can change all this’ (Interview with local resident and planner Paul). We can read in the book *The New London* (1992), a manifesto to transform London’s built environment by architect Richard Rogers and politician Mark Fisher, arguments to reconfigure Trafalgar Square and Paddington Basin built from an initial critique. Rogers and Fischer introduce Trafalgar Square as a ‘rammed’ roundabout in a ‘shabby city’ (1992:xiv), before later proposing closing of roads to traffic and extending the pedestrian zones - an idea which Rogers had already drawn up for his exhibited proposal at the Royal Academy in 1986. Talking down establishes an image which argues for demolition through comprehensive redevelopment rather than small-scale local initiatives which are more complex and difficult to visualise. The process of derision also extends the timeframe of development, through extending the threat of development, leaving existing residents workers uncertain of their futures.

Thirdly, visual images are rendered to *package* the transformations proposed. The effect of talking down the existing conditions is that it establishes an opportunity for alternative visions to be proposed. Visual and written narratives are essential to communicate and fulfil the political ambitions and financial goals for urban redevelopment. They are necessary to attract investment, to persuade stakeholders and entice the media. Artistic styles of representing the city are carefully selected: from Foster and Partners’ hand sketches displaying warm, social scenes of a new craft market at Elephant and Castle and a jostling Trafalgar Square, to polished computer renders which reassure investors in Paddington Basin’s buildings of the high quality finishes of their spatial product. These artistic images, which are often distinguished more for what they conceal rather for what they show, are disseminated through websites, newspapers, television and marketing materials. Entangled with a proliferation of photographs taken in these sites and shared on social media the visual narratives contribute to what Kevin Lynch terms ‘public images’ (1960:7), influencing how we perceive of these spaces and our expectations of them.

During packaging, the production of public space as a defined architectural space and sharing it as a visual image is often compounded. In his essay ‘The Word Itself’ J.B. Jackson writes about the term ‘landscape’ where he describes that ‘first [landscape] meant a picture of the view, then the view itself’ (1986:3). Clients and their consultants, in both architects and landscape architects, use this overlap to communicate new futures of public space through drawings. But Landscape architect James Corner, writes that ‘just as there is no innocent eye, there is no neutral or passive imaging’ (1999:155). These urban ‘landscapes’ are produced with an intent to persuade, communicate and satisfy those who commissioned them, reflecting the economic priorities discussed above. These are public spaces rendered as landscapes where ‘landscape is bound into the market-place and is available only at a price’ (1999:157). In the Elephant and Castle regeneration and Paddington Waterside development the imaging of proposed public spaces, which are part of the public access which the local authority requires the developer to provide, prioritises the enhancement of the value of adjacent properties. In contrast, in the drawings of Trafalgar Square during its reconfiguration and in its imaging through its presence in photographs notions of heritage and culture are brought to the foreground. As if critically reflecting on Trafalgar Square, Corner writes: ‘It is through styling (design), of course, that one imbues the landscape with allusions to regional and cultural identity’ (1999:157).

Fourthly, each site is also spatially reconfigured with an emphasis on their *visual composition*, the control of views and opportunities to take photographs. This reflects the GLA’s first objective in their *Manifesto for Public Space*, for ‘a beautiful city where the spaces between the buildings can inspire, excite and delight visitors and Londoners alike’ (2011:2). These are public spaces fashioned as landscapes, establishing grand stately vistas, foregrounding developments and placing activities to attract custom. Extending the discourse of landscape images to physical landscapes Corner claims that ‘the scene itself displaces viewers, keeps them at a safe and uninvolved distance, and this presents the landscape as little more than an aesthetic object of attention’ (1999:156). The scenic structuring of public space, inextricably bound to culturally or financially significant buildings and punctuated by landmark water features and artworks, is present in the plaza, the canal-side and the square. It is an approach criticised by Don Mitchell (2003:186), where public spaces are composed as landscapes in which priorities for order and control overshadow marginal or unappealing daily activities. This structuring of public space is coupled with an extended visual control as all three sites display signage reminding the visiting public that they are being surveilled by closed-circuit television. The desire to control how these sites are perceived forms restrictions on the public interactions which could further animate them and limits the participation of individuals and organisations who wish to remake the spaces as public sites. In this way, narrow terms of public space as a place of safety and spectacle are formed through the overlapping intentions of the developers, the local authorities and the GLA.

The fifth shared condition is the *messy ownership* which belies the visual and spatial control of these sites. Architectural proposals and their visualisations offer confident and definite solutions to the problems affirmed through the initial talking down the three sites. Kevin Lynch describes that ‘we are accustomed to one particular form of control’ which is the ‘legally defined ownership of a sharply defined area’ (1980:205). However, across all cases there has been a need to navigate disorganised and occasionally contested conditions of ownership and management. At Elephant and Castle a patchwork of land parcels existed since the post-war reconstruction of the area confusing the council and shopping centre owners; at Paddington Basin a lengthy court battle over management responsibilities and service charges brought opposing developers and leaseholders for a legal decision by the courts; and at Trafalgar Square the different ownership of the upper terrace and the main square have allowed buskers, vendors and cyclists to circumvent the regulations put in place in 1999 by the GLA.

Mitchell describes that this ‘illusion of control is one aspect of making over a city as landscape’ (1997:325). The apparent ‘transparency’ of public spaces, as they are reinforced through a certainty of ownership, management, use and architectural drawings, gives a false confidence to clients, whether these are the local authorities, developers or people who may use these spaces. The privatisation of public space, through its shifting ownership and management from the state to private interests, has for several decades been central to public space debates. However, the uncertainty of ownership and the complexity of management across each site suggests that simplified conceptions of public space have existed before and since the privatisation that has occurred since the 1980s. The ownership of public space is found not in itself to be a problem. Instead the power that ownership offers creates uneven opportunities for engaging with and in public space.

Beyond the decanting of social housing, running down of commercial leases and the closing-off of historic rights-of-way there are threats to public space which are around its *ongoing control*. As the developments have been built the regulations, bylaws and the expectations of each site have been recomposed. While developers increasingly recognise the benefits that open spaces offer their developments holding onto the control of how they are maintained into the future is important. At Paddington Basin the BID provides a mechanism for extending control beyond the completion of building works. New regulations, written by developers and enforced by security guards at Paddington Basin and passed by parliament and enforced by Heritage Wardens at Trafalgar Square, point to the need for spatial transformations to be accompanied by legislations which reinforce the uses of public space.

The architectural masterplan of all three sites is the initial structure in the redevelopment processes. The masterplans attempt, as Corner describes (1999:156), not just to represent but to also ‘control and condition’. But the drawings of Elephant and Castle Regeneration, Paddington Waterside and World Squares for All are merely the media disseminated veneer of more complex and nuanced development mechanisms, documents, guidelines and agreements. The formation of the BID at Paddington and the new regulations at Trafalgar Square are testament to the development creep of each masterplan. However, as with the messy ownership of these sites, Corner describes a ‘veil of pretence’ which promises control but is disrupted by the more unstable and unpredictable interrelations of making public space. He claims that ‘the erring realities of life contaminate the purity of any dominant masterplan’ (1999:157). This is found in the errors of planning officials in releasing details of the developer agreements at Elephant and Castle, the incursions of undesirable users at Paddington Basin and the Heritage Wardens being overwhelmed by visitors cooling themselves in Trafalgar Square’s fountains.

At Elephant and Castle and Paddington Basin the developers rely on the *unbalanced nature of the agreements.* This is the seventh common characteristic.The provision of public goods by the developers is a planning obligation, but these are only realised in exchange for other public assets. Although government agencies leverage the ownership of their land to gain investment in public infrastructure the relationships with developers became less balanced when there is more at stake. At these times negotiations and the resultant agreements are increasingly concealed, whether in the deals between Southwark Council and Lend Lease which local resident Paul felt was ‘kept in a very narrow place’(Interview 2012) or where former teach Judy questions the closing of the school to make way for the Paddington Basin development. She concedes: ‘But you can’t prove that’ (Interview 2013).

The similar *large-scale*, distance and hierarchy from which decisions are made in all three sites, limits the ability of these masterplanned processes to consider small-scale spaces, temporal activities or marginal lives. What results is a concentration of objectives for economic gain, from the GLA, local authorities and developers. These are places of essential small-scale activities, livelihoods and discourses: sites of people meeting friends, sharing spaces with strangers, getting on with life despite the marginal spaces they have been afforded. But social interactions in and constituting these sites are marginalised. Resulting in, as Madanipour recognises, ‘marginal public spaces... are not on the list of priorities’ when local authorities are considering redevelopment (2010:113).

Finally, through the processes of making public space, there are common patterns of individuals and organisations with power strongly *asserting their presence*. Despite control for making these spaces architecturally being negotiated at a high level of councils and local authorities, control of making public space through social interactions is attested at all scales. The market managers at Elephant and Castle decide who can rent a stall and dictate what they are permitted to sell. The Heritage Wardens at Trafalgar Square are afforded the authority by the GLA Act 1999 to remove people from the space. Consultants assert themselves within the masterplanning process attempting to define ‘programme’, ‘activities’ and ‘use’. Organised events as well as large spontaneous gatherings occupy these public spaces restricting their use by others. In all three sites access, exchange and interactions are carefully negotiated. At times, conflict occurs between the security guards or police and people deemed to have transgressed the formal regulations of the spaces. But enforcement is inconsistent at the privately operated Elephant and Castle Market and Paddington Basin while at Trafalgar Square the wardens are occasionally overwhelmed by the scale of the gatherings.

However, except at Trafalgar Square there are few moments when the public who use and define these open spaces assert their presence and concerns on the large-scale decision makers, the councils, the developers and the investment funds. On most days and for most people at Elephant and Castle and Paddington Basin, the terms of private ownership are benign as rights of access across these sites is maintained by teams of contractors. But these same private rights are aggressively enforced when surprising, conflicting or undesirable uses emerge. Nevertheless on the margins of all three sites can be found slithers of space where the rules which have been written to accompany these developments are ineffective. In Trafalgar Square, unlicensed protests or performers are left to occupy the upper terrace, people distribute religious leaflets at Elephant and Castle on the narrow pavements above the market and demonstrations against certain corporate tenants at Paddington Basin have identified the public rights-of-way of the canal towpath.

**Conclusions**

We find that across these sites individuals, developers, organisations and stakeholders assert their ambitions for making and remaking public spaces. Opportunities are differentially afforded, taken and denied – opportunities to design, plan, own, manage, maintain, enter, use and define the public spaces at Elephant and Castle, Paddington Basin and Trafalgar Square. While some of these relations are formalised through contracts and planning instruments, consistently in each site there are also repeated negotiations, from individuals struggling for presence in these spaces to investors striving for greater returns. The conclusions of this research raises three particular issues around the roles of individuals and organisations involved, their priorities in producing these sites as public spaces and the mechanisms which facilitate a greater or lesser involvement.

Firstly, the employment of a masterplan at Elephant and Castle and Paddington Basin highlights the significance of the relationships between the large-scale developers, investors and local government. The research has shown that Southwark Council and the City of Westminster are reliant on a variety of planning mechanisms to provide new parks, transportation infrastructures and leisure facilities. To pay for this scale of public infrastructure requires a correspondingly large scale of commercial project from which Section 106 contributions can be secured. This positions private developers and investors as primary participants and masterplans as key tools in making public spaces.

Secondly, we have seen in Elephant and Castle and Paddington Basin that further facilitation is required by the local authorities, from the provision of tracts of public land on which the developers can build to clearing sites of residents and businesses through compulsory purchase. The complexity of these layered relationships expose the contrasting roles of the local councils as landowners, development partners and planning authority. This leads to the agreements becoming larger and more complex, and as there is more to be lost or gained from the development, critics decry the lack of transparency to public scrutiny.

Finally, and present in all three sites, ambitions for public spaces as architectural projects eclipse the priorities of individuals within these spaces. Plans for comprehensive urban regeneration and the large organisations which lead them overshadow some of the spatial forms as well as the everyday lives of the people who live, work, and pass through these public spaces. We have seen that this threat is exacerbated when activities which define the daily presence of the sites no longer aligns with the image desired by the council, GLA or developers. Although individuals can find physical presence in these architectural public spaces the opportunity to engage in their production is circumscribed. Opportunities to make these public spaces, in their many different ways, remain unevenly distributed and aggressively asserted by individuals and organisations with power to define the forms, images and actions of these sites.

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