

# Gentrification and Community-led design: Renegotiation and limitation of the rent gap in the UK

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**Abstract:** Socio-spatial issues are a consequence of underlying social relations - in the case of gentrification delineated by the rent gap theory. Community-led initiatives work to renegotiate and limit the impact of this relation, making understanding the capacity of these initiatives to provide alternative models of development crucial when austerity weakens government's ability to intervene. This paper offers the Fountainbridge Canalside Initiative (FCI) as an example case, gathering data as an interview with a steering group member and capturing the socio-spatial context, the participant's theories, and any actions they have taken. FCI attempt to enable their community to tackle gentrification in three senses; through the renegotiation of the socio-spatial relations that facilitate gentrification, through limitation of the socio-spatial issues associated with it, and through symbolic acts of design activism. These findings may demonstrate the generalisable capabilities of community-led practise to tackle problems around land value and cuts to services, potentially informing best practise and approaches to planning, placing an emphasis on not only planning environments but infrastructuring the socio-spatial relationships that produce them.

**Keywords:** Gentrification, community-led, housing, activism

## 1. Introduction

*'Since money, materials, land and authority to act were necessary and since the ruling power was the only force capable of furnishing him with these means, the architect had to identify himself with it, even transforming himself into its operative appendage' – from Giancarlo De Carlo's lecture 'Architecture's Public'*

(Jones, Petrescu, & Till, 2013)

Housebuilding in the UK has been steadily rising since around 2014, following a six-year slump after the 2007/8 financial crisis. New development has been so sustained that the number of additional dwellings has almost returned to its pre-crash peak (see figure 1), yet the country is still struggling with housing shortage. In 2016/17 net additional dwellings were up 0.92% on the previous year, with the vast majority of gains resulting from new builds (HCLG, 2018). These additional homes failed to have any impact on the rates of statutory homelessness, with households in temporary accommodation rising over the same period by 8% (DCLG, 2017). This rise in statutory homelessness cannot be explained away as population growth, with average rate of annual change sitting far lower at 0.6% (World Bank, 2019). Part of the explanation is that the stock of *vacant* dwellings rose faster than houses were being built - a 2.7% increase – creating the situation in which the number of vacant properties (605,891 dwellings) vastly surpasses the number of statutory homeless (82,310 households) (HCLG,2018). In short, we are building new developments, but they are not developments that are designed with the purpose of housing those who need it.

If it is not housing need that has fuelled the sustained growth in housing stock, then what? As figure 1 shows, since the late 1980's additions to the housing stock have come largely from the private sector, with new developments of social housing by local authorities all but disappearing. This transition is to what David Harvey terms the 'speculative city' (2013), where housing development acts as part of the machinery of capital accumulation. In fact, the UK's *National Planning Policy Framework* (HCLG, 2019) places 'significant weight' on new developments supporting economic growth. This attention to growth shifts the emphasis away from housing and on to the land it is built on, with the speculation of investors driven by the differential existing between the current value of land's use and its potential value under a different use/improvement. This is known

as the ‘rent gap’ theory of gentrification (Smith, 2002), a process which leads, in its worst cases, to the displacement of a land’s use and/or its inhabitants.

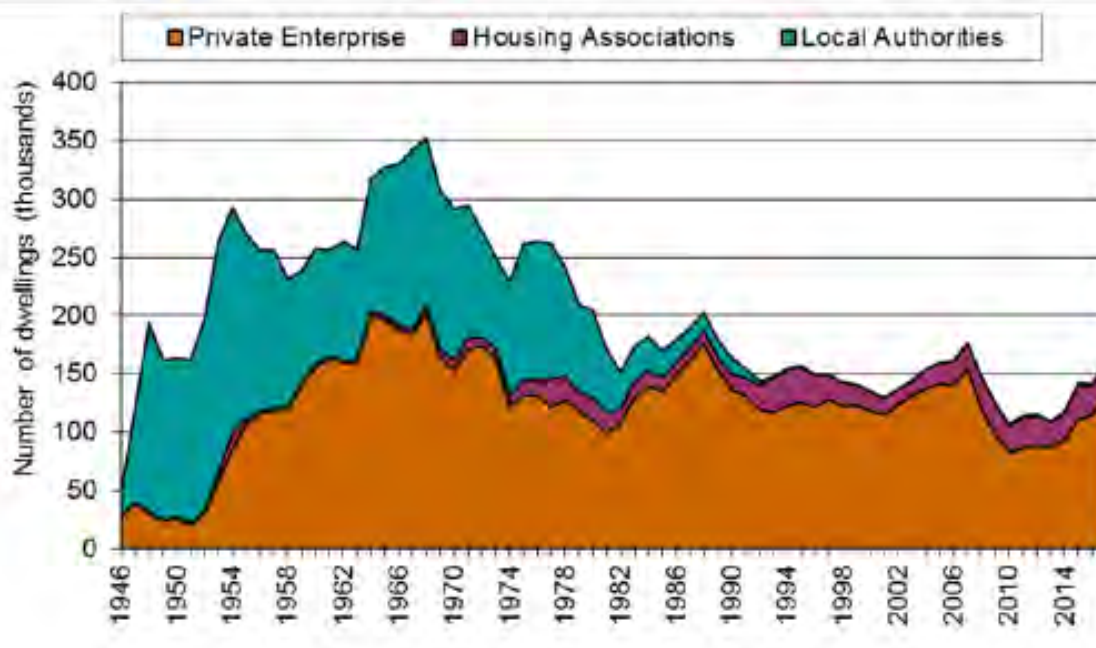


Figure 1. Permanent new build dwellings completed, by tenure, England 1946 to 2017. Source: Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government 2018

So, the explanation for the continued housing crisis is (at least in part) the heavily financialised housing market. However, each one of these new developments has been produced by architects, planners and designers. Acting as De Carlo’s ‘operative appendage’ to the ubiquitous power of financialisation, urban development is *designed* to maximise the highest return on investment. In these contexts, community-led design (CLD) initiatives offer alternative models of development, initiated and steered by grass roots community organisations who, as non-profits, foreground the use value of urban environments to the communities who live in them. Unlike government sponsored planning programs in the UK such as the Localism Act (Bevan, 2014; Brownill & Bradley, 2017; Gallent, 2013) these initiatives make non-statutory interventions into their built environment fundamentally challenging the politics of planning practise with their own radical interpretations of urban planning and the socio-spatial issues they associate with development. If exchange value driven planning has - at least in part - produced the gentrification of our urban environments, this paper seeks to understand what we can learn from planning practises unmotivated by profit.

## 2. The case study

This paper offers a case study of a CLD initiative working within the context of gentrification and with the ambition - amongst other aims - of providing accessible housing for the locality. FCI is an ongoing CLD project based in Edinburgh. The location of interest to the initiative is a brownfield development on a former brewery site, a post-industrial area very near to the centre of the city. The 11-acre site had been cleared having changed ownership a number of times, but the impetus to form FCI came when the council brought the land into public ownership to build a school in one corner of the site, with initial plans to build offices on the rest. FCI’s objection to the proposed development of additional office buildings was that it would extend Edinburgh’s business sector into to the socially mixed and fragmented communities surrounding the canal, an area that was already experiencing recent high-end development including office space, student accommodation, and hotels. For the purpose of this research FCI steering group representative and founding member Joan was interviewed (participant name anonymised).

The aim of the case study was three-fold, to gather data relating to the context in which the initiative undertakes their work, to distil from the case study the participant’s theories about the work that they do, and finally to analyse how both context and theory inform any actions they have taken in the form of practise and process. To investigate these lines of enquiry, Joan took part in a face-to-face interview. It was first necessary to understand her basic assumptions about the socio-spatial issues affecting the community, but in turn the interview aimed to gather FCI’s assumptions about what the solution to these problems might look like. These lines of inquiry covered both how they perceived the solutions to the problem of gentrification, as well as how the social relations between stakeholders and their relations to the sites of redevelopment could be structured differently.

This paper will argue that these basic assumptions about gentrification and the social relations underlying it form elements of FCI's approach to CLD, offering alternative models of planning and the production of housing.

## 2.2. Case selection

For the purpose of this research it was necessary to adopt a stringent definition of CLD in order to filter potential cases. It was decided that for a case to meet the criteria of being genuinely community-led, the project must be a self-initiated act. In practise this relates to grass-roots projects based in beliefs and desires or projects that are reactions to contextual changes in the socio-spatial landscape (Zamenopoulos et al., 2016). This understanding of CLD excludes responsive acts that are supported or initiated by state sponsored programs such as the Localism Act in the UK. Secondly the cases needed to be undertaking work within the context of gentrification. This paper shares a materialist understanding of gentrification with Smith's rent gap theory as described above. However, in many of the cases interviewed the conception of gentrification also included post-Fordist understandings of gentrification as the transition from industrial/productive economies to service-based/consumption economies (Hamnett & Whitelegg, 2007; Rousseau, 2012), as well as post-modern revaluations of urban space (Hackworth & Smith, 2001).

Using these criteria potential cases were selected following scoping meetings with third sector organisation the Glass House, a national CLD organisation that supports communities to work collaboratively on the design of places in the UK. From these meetings a number of case CLD initiatives were identified, before using the above criteria to filter these down to six. Of these six case initiatives this paper deals solely with FCI a case that highlights the need to reappraise and offer alternative modes of planning and development.

## 2.2. Interview Design

Once cases had been selected, members from each initiative's steering group were invited to take part in a face-to-face interview. The interview involved the completion of a resource which consisted of five components (see figure 2), each with the aim of collecting data relating to different aspects of a CLD project. In this section a rationalisation for each component is provided:

1. *Where you were*: This section of the interview gathers data relating to the socio-spatial context in which the CLD project is undertaken. This includes participant's perception of any socio-spatial issues that were problematic at the time of the projects initiation, as well as how they perceive the relevant social relations to be configured.
2. *Where you hope to be*: Here is where data relating to participant's theory is gathered. By outlining an envisaged future, they hope to achieve through their work, participants reveal potential re-configurations of the socio-spatial landscape as well as specific outcomes of development.
3. *The players*: In this section key stakeholders are identified. This includes discussing the relationship of these stakeholders to the development site and how these stakeholders relate to one another.
4. *The project*: Here the actions taken as part of the project are recorded. This in part includes the creation of a timeline of events or a map of a journey, but also how decisions were made/achieved and what has been created towards the project's completion.
5. *The transitional qualities*: Finally, the attributes of the project are discussed in relation to how the work of the CLD initiative will help make the movement from where participants *were*, to where they *hope to be*. These may be material properties of the final outputs of the project, though they may also be characterised by re-configured relationships or symbolic properties.

In short, this resource seeks to understand how context informs participant's theory, a theory which is the basis of an alternative model of planning and in turn how this theory informs their action. The fact that these activities are community-led, means that by their very nature these insights are based in the pragmatic and experiential knowledge of community members affected by developmental issues such as gentrification. These experiential perspectives contain within them potential solutions to developmental crises, based in a lived experience of the phenomena.

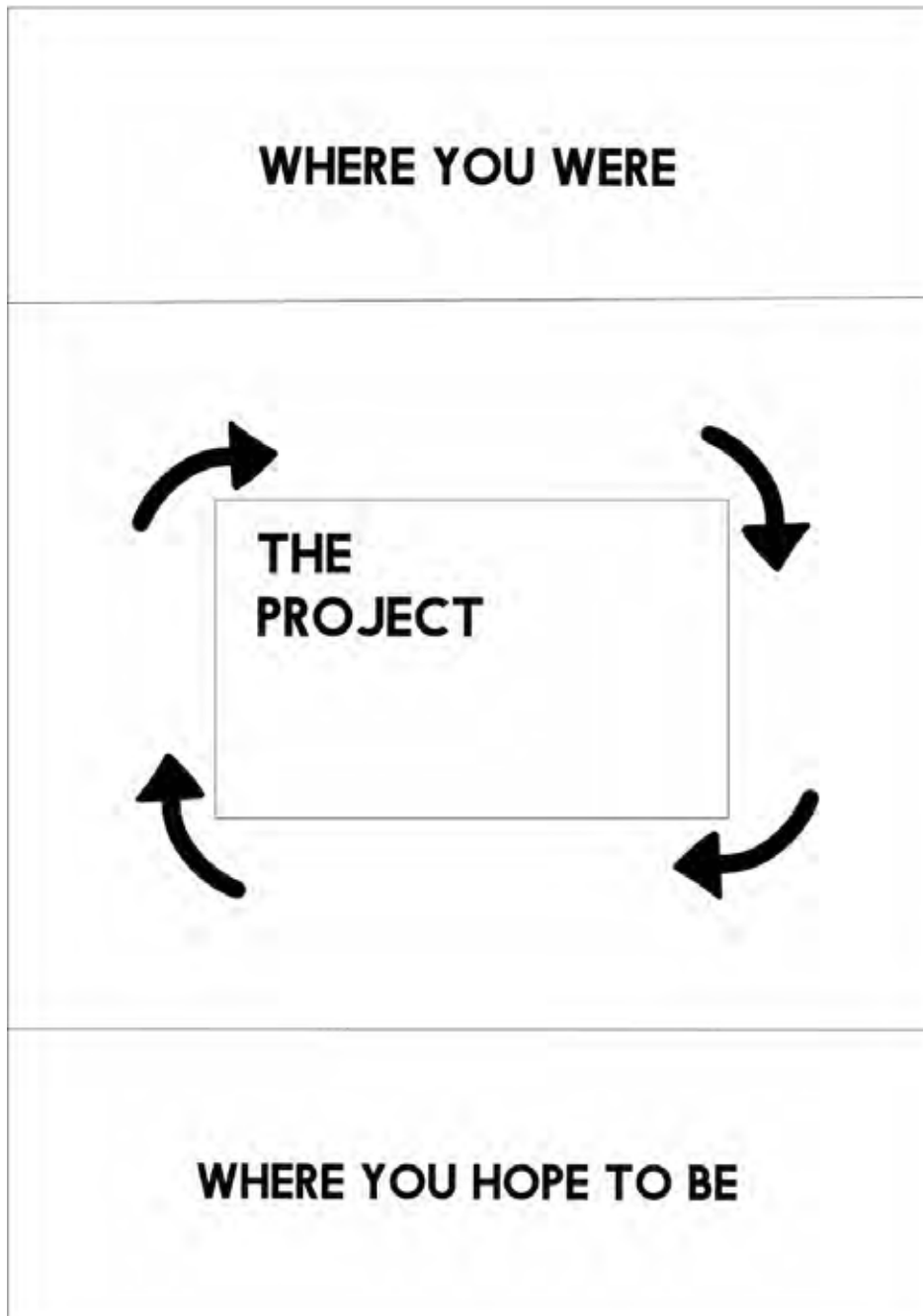


Figure 2. The interview resource to be completed by participant with the researcher

### 3. Where you were

When gathering data relating to the context in which FCI was initiated, Joan identified austerity cuts as contributing to a general decline in the area, with these cuts to local services resulting in a lack of community-based activity. At the time of the interview the area was still undergoing very recent high-end development. The former brewery offices along the canal-side had been demolished and redeveloped in the previous six months, including hotels and cafes.

*I think to be honest it was quite depressed around Tollcross because it had a lot of cuts to the community centre. It's not a very rich area actually and I think it looks a bit grim to be honest round there and the canal certainly was a bit grim. Services hadn't disappeared but they were being cut and now of course more, so it's almost disappeared. There was a lot of anger in Edinburgh about the planning committee letting things through that people didn't want. Big shopping centres and stuff that people thought was pretty poor actually. So, there was a lot of feeling of I suppose alienation about politicians and councillors, and not a big community action project around here.*

Fountainbridge is an area experiencing the disinvestment/reinvestment cycle of the rent gap theory. As a publicly owned site, disinvestment in the form of austerity incentivises the council to exercise a policy of municipal entrepreneurialism (Beswick & Penny, 2018), speculating on the exchange value of the site in the hope of ensuring a financial return. In practise this means a change in land use, replacing the industrial buildings with office space and hotels. This economic transition from production economy to consumption economy had in turn created a fragmentation of the surrounding communities formerly connected by the industry in the area. The already socially mixed communities – along lines of class and ethnicity – now had the additional factor of being faced with a gentrification frontier (Smith, 1996) as what Joan describes as the ‘new business sector’ expanded into the former industrial area.



Figure 3. Data relating to context, as captured by participant and researcher.

#### 4. Where you hope to be

FCI envisage a future where instead of office buildings, working class communities can live in the centre of Edinburgh. To this end their primary interest is in the inclusion of social housing in the final development of the site, with an additional desire for homes on the development to be sustainable utilising alternative energy systems like district heating. After the technical priorities of the site, FCI value non-tangibles in their theory of development citing terms like ‘mixed’ and ‘lively’. In the following passage, Joan outlines how the CLD initiative’s theory of development diverges with the local authority’s planning orthodoxy.

*We used to laugh when all these master planners and architects talk about vibrancy and we know what they mean is Costa coffee shops and tourist hotels. That's what they see as economically attractive...I don't think they understand what makes it an interesting area for everybody. People like quirky things. They like little workshops. They don't want everything to be all the same, sitting in coffee shops looking at other tourists...So there are a lot of ideas about what we call vibrancy as well. I think that areas that are attractive to most people...are slightly old kind of quaint things or perhaps people working on something...You know you could wander in to kind of locally run businesses or see activity on the canal boats. Just draw more people and ages in...The whole mix of the population being there. You know some of the visuals you get for these master plans, it always amuses me. They show very smart young couples usually or people or individuals...Not usually old people, or kids, or black people. It's very mono-cultural stuff they tend to promote...it doesn't have to be art shows or exhibitions. Just people being busy. When you go to visit places something about people engaging in some kind of purposeful activity, or artistic activity, or something, it's always very enjoyable...because we've become passive consumers in some way I think.*

Here Joan expresses an understanding of vibrancy similar to that of the post-modern planners and discussions around ‘exuberant diversity’ (Jacobs, 1961). This approach to planning considers an exuberant diversity to be a mix of land/property use, tenure, age, ownership and takes this diversity to be the ultimate aim of a sustainable and gradually implemented urban plan. FCI appear to share this post-modern theory of development, placing an emphasis in particular on a diversity of enterprise, and craft. This final point is interesting to note in relation to Joan’s framing of their theory of development as against the move to becoming ‘passive consumers’. This situates FCI’s theory of development as against the post-Fordist transition to a consumption economy, a kind of industrial revival.



Figure 4. Data relating to theory as captured by participant and researcher.

### 5. The players

In the identification of the key stakeholders connected to the site, Joan delineates a triumvirate of interested parties (see figure 5). These are what we can term first the organised community (in this case FCI and its co-opted organisations), an authority (City of Edinburgh council), and a developer (arm’s-length developer EDI). The configuration and structure of these social relations is a crucial dimension for CLD initiatives in envisaging future models of development. Here Joan begins to outline FCI’s theory of how a CLD project should be infrastructured. The first stakeholder she identifies is the community, however she specifically identifies the politicians as the *key* players, providing the following rationale.

*[I]t's owned by the council. If it wasn't, I don't know what I'd be saying. But I do think people underestimate the democratic pull. People often moan, but they don't actually engage the councillors. They just think they are rubbish. But come on they are our elected representatives. So, the councillors, the politicians, not just the officials. On this particular site the elected representatives were the key people on our side and we kind of created that relationship with them deliberately.*

Here Joan has identified the local councillors as the ‘key’ individuals in the project and stated that a conscious effort was made to engage with them. Finally, the third stakeholder is identified as the developers, which in this project includes one arm’s length developer engaged by the council and one private developer working on a separate section of the site. Whilst the private developer was identified as a stakeholder the efforts of FCI have been focussed on the council owned section of the site. This presents FCI’s theory of CLD infrastructure; an organised community engaging collaboratively with two sets of power brokers (i.e. stakeholders with jurisdiction over money, materials, land, and authority). In the next stage of the interview the aim was to understand how the community became organised, how this engagement with power brokers was infrastructured, and the planning process as it unfolded up and until the present day.

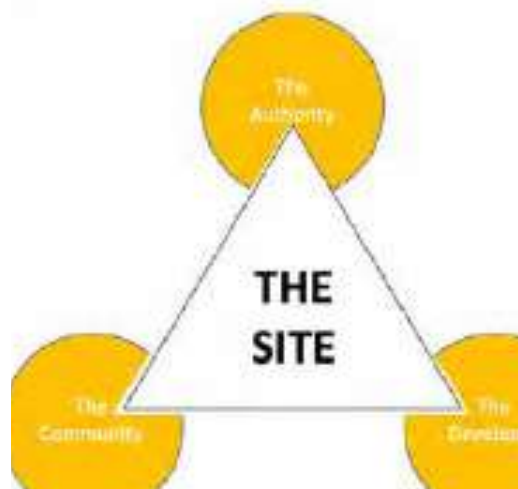


Figure 5. A triumvirate of stakeholders as identified by the participant

## 6. The Project

When CLD projects are undertaken within the context of gentrification, it is common for them to be a reaction to a contextual change in the socio-spatial environment. Initially FCI was the work of three retired community workers who were engaged with one another through an existing social network. The point at which this initial group were galvanised to take action was when the brewery site was brought into public ownership.

*[T]he council bought it to build a school, which they have built now, what they were going to do was sell off the rest of it. Just at that time we were very lucky it was local elections and we made it a whole campaign to push the council to keep hold of it. That was really important to us that they keep hold of it because we felt we'd have a better purchase on them.*

This passage is consistent with FCI's theory of development, in which they acknowledge the need to renegotiate the socio-spatial relations of the rent gap theory. For FCI this means that land must be held outside of the private market place if it is to be developed with the needs of the community as its foundation. This renegotiation is a struggle between competing interpretations of value across a socio-spatial landscape, with the council on the one hand seeing the site in terms of its exchange value and the community members fighting to keep the land in public ownership to better realise its use value in their interests. The tension between these competing interpretations of value and how it is mediated and engaged with plays a crucial role in the style of CLD process and how it unfolds.

The campaign to keep the site in public ownership was the first instance of the community taking action in an organised sense and would lead to the formation of FCI. Once the land was brought into public ownership the initial group began outreach in the community, organising the first formal FCI meeting.

*I think our original aims that we bashed out then were a bit the same, it was about the belief that the community should be involved in every stage of the design process. We had people volunteer to be part of [the steering group] which had about 12 members in the beginning. We also co-opted a lot of local organisations...So, we had like local housing associations, the nursery and all the other people that were kind of like co-opted reps. So that group met for the first time, elected a chair and a secretary. Set up a constitution and a bank account to get organised and then we just started having meetings about what can we do next/what needs to happen.*

This passage demonstrates that the organisational structure of FCI is the first thing that is created in the project's journey. The creation of this organisation was aided by the communities access to expertise in the form of the retired community workers who lived in the area and who took on the role of enabling community members to infrastructure themselves. The first stage in the planning process for FCI was the creation of a community design brief. By holding an event which they termed a 'visioning day' the aim was to create a space in which community voices could engage in discussion and debate, building a strong mandate within the community for FCI going forward. The event was split into 5 themes:

1. Social;
2. Culture and recreation;
3. Economic;
4. Environment;
5. Napier site and park.

Each of these themes detailed the desired qualities of the development for community members. These included aesthetic qualities such as a rejection of faceless concrete and glass, suggestions for specific form such as colony style housing, and desirable functions for the development such as a mix of tenure and use. The report from the visioning day was then presented to other community groups and organisations as part of an open-ended process of outreach within the area. It is clear that FCI are interested in empowering a multiplicity of voices around the site of contestation and had utilised existing social networks to engage with as broad an audience as possible. This again illustrates FCI's theory in relation to how to infrastructure an organised community, co-opting existing organisations and collaborating with them under the umbrella of FCI. Hereafter it is the interactions between this organised community and the power brokers – both councillors and developers – that becomes the relation of interest.

Whilst FCI place a clear emphasis on collaboration with the City Council, the engagement is not built on deliberative consensus building. The two stakeholders participate with one another agonistically, with the engagement being designed to bring power relations out into the open to be examined and contested (Inch, 2015; Mouffe, 1999, 2000). For instance, FCI's initial engagement with the council was primarily as single-issue lobbyists, using direct activism aimed at communicating the political interests of the council to the wider community. Joan explains some of the kinds of activity FCI were engaged in.

*Before the election we did actually have posters around saying, these are the people standing, ask them what they are going to do about Fountainbridge. Do they want it to be all these things we said it should be? And we actually sent questions to all the candidates. It was a survey saying what do you think about this? And we published that.*

However, an adversarial relationship does not alone make for agonistic planning. It was not until FCI sought to engage design expertise from the Glass House, that an agonistic planning *process* was undertaken. FCI managed to secure a free ‘planning-for-real’ workshop from the Glass House in which participants would model potential developments with plasticine. The participants at the workshop were divided along the lines of 50% Councillors, council officers, and developers, and 50% community representatives. Dividing participants in this way begins the construction of an agonistic pairing, as opposed to the two groups occupying adversarial positions. By grouping council and developers together we begin to see the creation of an ‘us’ – an organised community - by the definition of a ‘them’ – power brokers (Mouffe, 1999). Creating this agonistic dynamic is touched on by Joan in her reflections on the workshop.

*At that point there was people in the council who thought we were trouble and didn't want anything to do with us. So, when we actually wrote to them and the leader of the council had agreed to this day, we asked him to chair it because we knew it would bring the people [council officials and developers] along, and he was supportive. But his officials, some of them were awful. One of them when I wrote to him saying we were going to have this planning day, he actually wrote back to me, saying 'you have no right to organise this planning day. The council is going to decide what to do and there will be consultation in the future'. So, I sent a copy of that to one of the councillors and said, 'Is this the councils reaction?' There was another department, that were a bit reluctant. So, I was sending out emails saying that 'I think the leader of the council will be quite disappointed if you don't come, because so and so is coming'. You have to try and persuade them all that it's an important event and of course they don't think that community events are. Or they think they are going to be got at. So, there was a lot of reluctance and we had to do a lot of work to get them all out. Of course, the beauty was that they all did come and because it was playing with plasticine, modelling stuff, it wasn't like a confrontational public meeting. But I think the thing that was really important that the officials and the politicians realised they could have a meeting with the community that wasn't antagonistic. It wasn't getting at them, it was constructive, and I think that then enabled the sounding board to be developed.*

The Sounding Board that Joan refers to is the main agonistic mechanism utilised in the planning process. A forum constituted in the same manner as the planning-for-real workshop - 50% community representatives and 50% council and developers - it was suggested as a mechanism by FCI and the council agreed to take part. The sounding board members – both community and power brokers - have equal power to submit papers for discussion in the forum, and it is chaired by the head of the council in an effort to lend the forum authority and legitimacy. Unlike the neighbourhood forums that exist under the Localism Act, the sounding board has no formal decision-making ability. However, Joan rationalises this fact in saying that the real purpose of the sounding board is as a mechanism to ‘hold the ring’ when the economics and the politics of the socio-spatial landscape changes. This makes the purpose of the sounding board two-fold, not only does it enable FCI to be active participants in the planning process but also to hold power-brokers accountable for any deviation from the decisions made in the forum. This open acknowledgement of power relations in the design process is similar in nature to the Scandinavian participatory designers, particularly in its utilisation of assemblies around objects of contention (Bjerknes, Ehn, Kyng, & Nygaard, 1987; Bjögvinsson, Ehn, & Hillgren, 2012; Ehn, Nilsson, & Topgaard, 2014). As well as the agonistic model, FCI shares with the Scandinavian designers an open-ended process of infrastructuring in which community participants are capable of setting up their own separate forums, actions, and lines of enquiry. Joan details an example of this open-ended infrastructuring process in relation to the struggle to include a district heating system as part of the development.

*[W]e raised it [district heating] at some meeting at the sounding board, but we could feel they weren't going to go for it. So, we organised a meeting about district heating and we invited all the experts. So, in Aberdeen for example, the council has actually done a district heating scheme on some of its council housing and it was really successful. The other side of it was the legal side, because nowadays when you can choose your own energy supplier it's a bit tricky if everyone has to have the same one. So, I got in touch with...a big law company here and got this chap who knows a lot about this contract stuff who came free because he supported us. We got the technical expertise from the university and then we decided that instead of us chairing it we would get the Green councillor to chair it because again we knew they [power-brokers] were more likely to come if he chaired it. [The developer] wanted to influence it, so they came along to the meeting with their architects. They were a bit suspicious with the idea in the beginning asking, 'will it work?' and 'will people want it?' and 'investors won't invest' and as they put forward their worries, all the expertise we had round the table answered their queries and about half way through the meeting [the developer] said, 'Well this could be an eco-site' and suddenly it's their idea and it's all wonderful.*

This passage demonstrates that when the agreed mechanism of the sounding board proved unable to further the material aspirations of FCI, the group were able to infrastructure a separate mechanism dealing specifically with the issue of including a district heating system on the site. This open-ended process of infrastructuring would be used repeatedly in FCI's undertaking of future action.

In the visioning day report ‘Brewing New Life’ a desire was expressed to hold so called “Meanwhile” activity on the site as it would be left empty for an extended period of time. This included landscaping activity and using the site as an event space. It was agreed in the sounding board, seemingly without controversy, that the meanwhile activities would be allowed on site. Each of the activities brought on to the site in some way related to elements identified in the community’s visioning report (aside from, for obvious reasons, the provision of housing). This included:

- Temporary community gardens in line with the report’s call for greening of the site.
- Metal, wood, and glass workshops in compliance with the report’s call for artisanal workspace.
- A “Pianodrome”, a 100-seat amphitheatre constructed entirely from reclaimed pianos and in line with the report’s call event space on site.
- A community wiki-house in line with the report’s call for a community hall on the site.

In each instance these activities were facilitated by FCI, sourcing materials and funding either through community donations, sounding board partners, or grant agencies. Again we see the open-ended infrastructuring process at work. For each meanwhile activity, FCI enabled the participants to create separately constituted organisations, Joan offers the following example of the process in relation to the meanwhile garden.

*About 40 people came to the first meeting about a community garden. Where they asked do you want a community garden or an allotment and then they developed it. They've got their own constitution, they got their own bit of funding I think initially, they've got their own Facebook page, they're their own organisation. They're separate but we supported them, and they're linked with us. We do things together.*

This open-ended process of infrastructuring within the community fulfils the agonistic call to empower a multiplicity of voices in the struggle for hegemony over the site. The previously empty site, surrounded by fragmented and unintegrated communities had been transformed into a hub of activity, providing access to resources, training, and social networks. Suddenly it was not only FCI with a vested interest in the site, but a network of community groups. This aspect of the FCI project features as a central concept in Joan’s discussion of the transitional qualities of their work.



Figure 6. ‘The Grove’ meanwhile community garden (right). The construction of ‘Pianodrome’ seating (left)

## 7. The transitional qualities

Of the work they have undertaken so far FCI attribute the main transitional qualities to the meanwhile project. We can think of these meanwhile projects as acts of design activism in the sense understood by Markussen (2013), aesthetic disruptions placed into the socio-spatial landscape in an effort to create a conceptual space in which accepted ideas can be re-evaluated and challenged. Joan describes the transitional qualities of the meanwhile projects as follows.

*[I]t was actually a living demonstration of what we are talking about. In terms of the social vibrancy and the greening of the site and the pleasure people have in it. It's a living demonstration of what we are talking about when we say social capital or a vibrant neighbourhood. We had a mini-community there if you like that came together and was very welcoming to everybody. To old ladies and to younger kids a very nice inclusive community actually. From the tow path it looked kind of like a hippy camp and I think people weren't really sure what was going on there. Which is why we had all these events like the spring fling and so on, to invite people in and they were very well attended.*

Here the aesthetic disruption is the introduction of rustic, handmade, installations often built with reclaimed materials such as shipping containers and wooden pallets (see figure 6). These activities exhibited the style of community that *could* exist in Fountainbridge and the local appetite for a diversity of activity at the site. Specifically, it challenges the post-Fordist transition from production economies and the disinvestment that created the rent gap, to consumption economies and the reinvestment that creates gentrification. This is in keeping with FCI's theory of development and Joan's earlier call for an industrial revival.

However, the transitional qualities of the FCI's model are not solely symbolic. Joan highlighted the capacity of the community-led vision to facilitate wealth building within the locality, through the provision of workspace for local enterprise. This again draws our attention to the competing interpretations of value that exist across the socio-spatial landscape. Joan outlines how the local authority's understanding of wealth building differs from that of FCI.

*[A] lot of Local Authority economic development guys are really a bit old fashioned about how they think the local economy works. They still seem to be wedded to the idea of big hotels, tourists, and that that creates jobs. I don't always think it does. I actually think that a small local enterprise, probably brings more to the local economy. The council are now actually moving towards an innovation centre, where the ground floor will be workshops for little businesses etc.*

FCI's focus on small local enterprise is an attempt to build reciprocity into the local economy. This is a challenge to the local planning convention which to this point has focussed on high-end development of services and a consumption-based economy. It is these competing interpretations of value that engage with one another in an agonistic planning process in the sounding board. It is through this mechanism that FCI have built the capacity to materially further their aspirations and work collaboratively from within the positions of power that hold jurisdiction over money, materials, land, and authority.

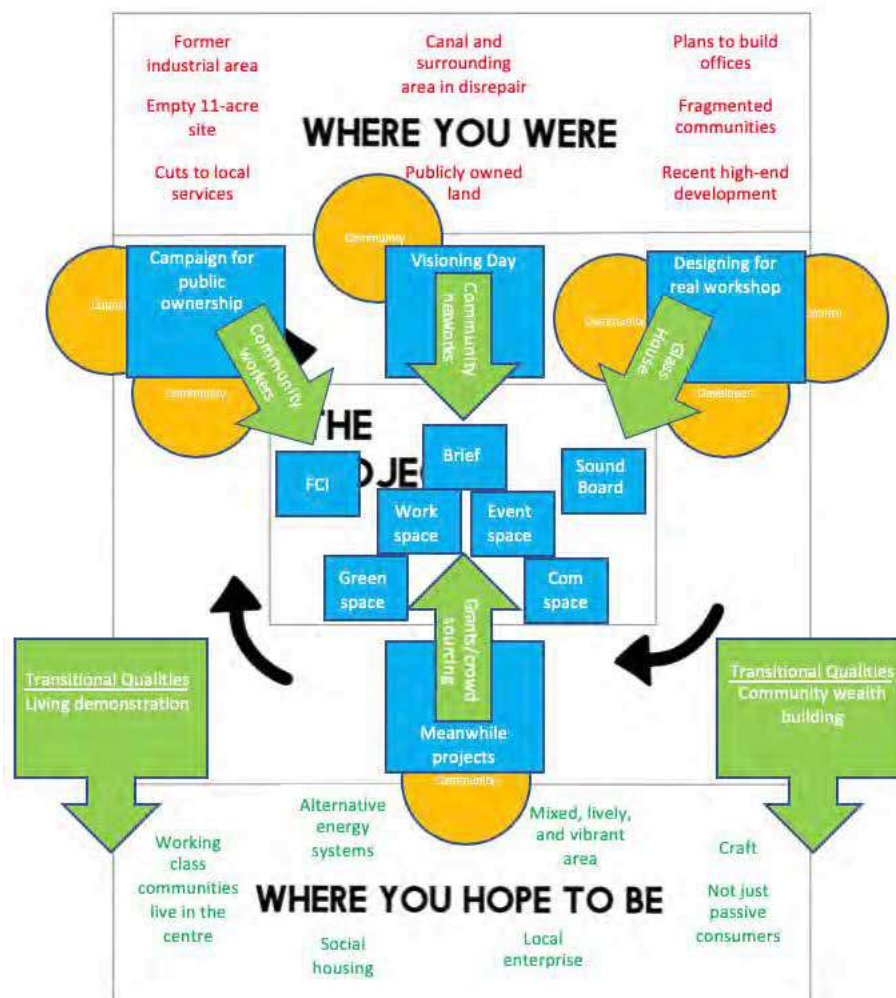


Figure 7. Interview resource as completed by participant and researcher.

## 8. Conclusion

This research argues that there are three aspects of FCI's practise that can tackle the socio-spatial crises associated with gentrification. First there are acts of renegotiation of the socio-spatial relations described in the rent gap theory. This necessarily entails some reconfiguration of socio-spatial relations or the removal of land and/or property from the market place, a kind of urban re-commoning, enabling the production of buildings and space to be entirely dictated to by the needs, desires, and tastes of the end users. Second there are acts of limitation on the socio-spatial issues associated with gentrification. This includes work undertaken within the confines of the speculative land market, attempting to restrain its excesses and its impact on communities. Finally, there are acts of design activism where aesthetic interventions are made as disruptions to existing systems, creating a space in which ways of living and working can be engaged with critically. This research joins the conversation surrounding new models of public ownership of land such as the so called "People's Land Trust" (Stratford, 2018) and the inclusion of citizen participation in public ownership (We Own It, 2019), attempting to decipher what lessons can be learned from existing community-led models.

The work of FCI can be understood as an attempt to renegotiate the socio-spatial relationships underlying the financialization of urban space. This theory of development begins at the point of land use, believing that such a central location should be used as residential space for local workers. The desire to house a working-class community so centrally necessarily requires a subversion of the market forces driving the rent gap, in short detaching the land in some sense from the market place. FCI centralise public ownership and/or social rent in their proposals for the brewery site, this renegotiation foregrounds the use value of urban space and challenges the "common-sense" of speculative, exchange value driven development, querying its economic arguments and even contesting its understanding of abstract concepts such as vibrancy. The central achievement of FCI's work has been in the development of new spaces and forums in which de-facto community power has been created and in which the socio-spatial manifestations of social power can be brought to the fore and interrogated. They identify a triumvirate of key stakeholders across a socio-spatial landscape, amongst whom the tensions between competing interpretations of value must engage. Working collaboratively within this triumvirate, FCI create an agonistic 'us' (the organised community – FCI and its Co-opts) by the establishment of a 'them' (the power brokers – council and developers) and through an open-ended process of infrastructuring, empower a multiplicity of voices in the struggle for hegemony in the planning process. They utilise a variety of tactics, from formal collaboration to direct action, using design activism to communicate ideas and create the conceptual space in which new ways of living can be engaged with. In practise and despite their vision, the work of FCI and their engagements with power through the sounding board, may in the end only act as a limitation to the socio-spatial issues associated with development. Whilst FCI have developed forums through which the material aims of the organised community can be furthered, they are none the less engaged in a *struggle* for hegemony, with no guarantee their vision will be realised.

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