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# Assessing the dynamic social values of the ‘deep city’: An integrated methodology combining online and offline approaches

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## ABSTRACT

This monograph presents findings from original research on urban heritage transformations and advances existing scholarship on three grounds: (1) it offers tested combinations of methods to capture the social values of heritage; (2) it distils the complex, diverse social values generated by urban heritage and revealed by the use of these methods; and (3) it discusses the implications and potential applications of these methods for urban planning. Cities are multi-layered deposits of tangible historic features and intangible meanings, memories, practices and associated values. These dense socio-material assemblages have been conceptualised as the ‘deep city’, a concept that recognises dynamic relationships between past, present and future, whilst simultaneously repositioning heritage at the heart of sustainable transformation. However, methods for understanding people’s relationships with urban heritage are mostly applied piecemeal in urban planning and heritage management. Here, we introduce research involving a suite of social and digital research methods, which can be deployed rapidly in online and offline spaces to examine the social values generated by urban heritage. Three in-depth case studies, in Edinburgh, London, and Florence, reveal how these values are involved in urban place-making. Failure to take them into account in development and regeneration projects can result in fragmentation and/or marginalisation of communities and their place attachments. The research has important implications for urban planning, offering methods and tools for working with communities to create more socially sustainable urban futures.

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## 1. Introduction

Values should be taken as a *point of departure* in the overall management and development of the city (UNESCO, 2016: 11; emphasis in original).

This journal monograph discusses the development of an innovative approach combining online and offline methods to assess the social values of heritage places in ways that can inform the curation of heritage and its contribution to urban transformations. For much of the history of the modern conservation movement, there has been an overriding emphasis on the moral imperative of heritage conservation, linked to the preservation of material fabric (Jones & Yarrow, 2022: 3–8). Mediated by international instruments, such as the foundational Venice Charter (ICOMOS, 1964), an emphasis on material authenticity was reproduced in national planning legislation and heritage policy across Europe and beyond, producing a conservative approach to change. Whilst greater change has been accepted in urban landscapes, this cautious approach still resulted in a backward-looking ethos focusing on the historic fabric and aesthetic character of individual historic buildings and discrete conservation areas, often privileging specific periods of historic urban centres (Fouseki et al., 2020: 2–3). However, the late twentieth century witnessed a marked shift with the emergence of values-based approaches to heritage conservation, alongside the mobilisation of heritage in the pursuit of societal benefits and sustainable development of new futures (Fouseki & Nicolau, 2018; Jones & Yarrow, 2022: 23–27; Labadi, 2022; Pendlebury & Brown, 2021: 35–39; Veldpaus & Pendlebury, 2023: 378). This shift challenges the idea of the urban historic environment as, at best, a passive backdrop to change and, at worst, an obstacle to change and/or victim of it. Instead, it asks those involved in conservation to resituate heritage as something *of the present*, mediating complex, dynamic values and actively involved in the making and re-making of cities (Fouseki et al., 2022: 2–3; Labadi & Logan, 2015; Pendlebury, 2013; Stegmeijer et al., 2021).

The formalisation of a values-based approach is often attributed to the Burra Charter's (Australia ICOMOS, 1979) emphasis on cultural significance as both the *raison d'être* of heritage conservation and the procedural basis of decision-making (e.g. Cooke & Buckley, 2021: 143; Jones, 2017: 23). The Burra Charter process, placing significance assessment at the heart of conservation decision-making, has been influential in numerous other countries, with increasing emphasis on contemporary social values (stemming from the 1999 and 2013 revisions to the Charter). Values-based approaches are also often associated with the active use of heritage to leverage societal benefits and contribute to sustainable development. For instance, the Council of Europe's (2005) *Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society* (Faro Convention) offers a significant reframing in which heritage is defined as both a universal human right and a product of pluralistic values that benefit society. In the urban context, the leading international instrument reflecting these developments is UNESCO's (2011) *Recommendation on Historic Urban Landscapes* (HUL), which advocates an holistic approach balancing heritage conservation, socio-economic development and sustainability. An HUL is defined as “the urban area understood as the result of a historic layering of cultural and natural values and attributes, extending beyond the notion of ‘historic centre’ or ‘ensemble’ to include the broader urban context and its geographical setting” (UNESCO, 2016: 11, emphasis added). Importantly for our research, it also embraces intangible dimensions of urban heritage, including “social and cultural practices and values, economic processes and the intangible dimensions of heritage as related to diversity and identity” (ibid.).

As John Pendlebury and Jules Brown (2021: 55) point out in their *Concise Guide to Planning*, these values-based approaches to conserving and managing heritage, urban or otherwise, mean that engaging with people becomes an important aspect of conservation, as more generally in urban planning processes. It is particularly vital when considering the

social values associated with specific aspects of the historic environment, which encompass meanings, identities, memories, symbolic associations and collective attachments to place (after Jones, 2017: 22). In this regard, Pendlebury and Brown recommend that planners consider the following questions, though tellingly they do not provide them with guidance on the methods that might be used, aside from consulting civic, amenity and local history interest groups:

What does this place mean to people today because of its heritage? Who is it meaningful to? Is it part of local identity, social practices or communal experience? Is it cherished? Is it symbolic, commemorative, iconic? Does it hold spiritual meanings? (2021: 59)

Social research methods have been widely used by academic researchers across a range of disciplines to answer such questions, ranging from questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups, to rapid and more in-depth ethnographies using observation and participant observation (Sørensen & Carman, 2009). Not surprisingly, they have also been advocated in a variety of arenas of place-based conservation, ranging from nature conservation and management of environmental resources (e.g. Williams et al., 2013) to heritage management and conservation (e.g. Jones & Leech, 2015). More recently, people-centred participatory approaches involving co-design and co-production have added to the range of methods deployed (e.g. contributions to Graham & Vergunst, 2019; Madgin and Lesh, 2021b; Oliver et al., 2022). Rebecca Madgin and James Lesh (2021a), for instance, call for emotional attachment to place to be positioned at the heart of both academic research and urban heritage management. They and other contributors to their edited volume set about developing people-centred approaches, with chapters focusing on in-person methods ranging from in-depth ethnography (Garrow, 2021) to short workshops using emoji-based elicitation (Madgin 2021a), alongside those focusing on digital technologies, methods and sources (e.g. Gregory & Chambers, 2021).

Nonetheless, the application of such methods remains piecemeal in routine urban planning and heritage management contexts. There are some much-cited pioneering examples, such as the programme of work focusing on social significance led by Denis Bryne for the New South Wales Parks Service in Australia (Byrne et al. 2003), and the U.S. Parks Service use of Rapid Ethnographic Assessment (REAP) (Taplin et al., 2002). Yet, even in these countries there is scepticism about whether these methods have been applied effectively in dealing with heritage in planning or conservation decision-making (e.g. Lesh, 2019), leading some organisations to issue new guidelines with increasing emphasis on social methods (Heritage Council of Victoria, 2019). In other parts of the world, their impact has been even more limited and public consultation remains the prevailing mode of engagement (Labadi & Logan, 2015: 2, 15). Exceptions tend to involve collaborative projects involving heritage management institutions and university researchers (e.g., Fouseki and Sakka, 2013; Hall et al., 2013; Jones, 2004; Madgin 2021b; Robson 2021b).

The challenges associated with understanding social values in urban environments are often characterised by high levels of physical and social complexity. The situation is further complicated by widespread use of new digital media, especially various social media platforms, for expressing and contesting meanings, identities and memories. Recent academic studies have revealed online interactions with the past through data-intensive ethnographies exploring born-digital data (Bonacchi & Krzyzanska, 2019). Examples range from the exploration of user-generated images and metadata to examine memory generation (e.g. Arrigoni & Galani, 2019), to the ‘crowdsourcing’ of social media texts and photos to reveal intangible heritage values (e.g. Nummi, 2018; Bonacchi et al., 2019), or the analysis of political identities and values through references to the past on Twitter or Facebook (e.g. Bonacchi et al., 2018; Farrell-Banks, 2020; Bonacchi, 2022). Some have specifically studied the uses, perceptions and values of historic environments, including tourists’ and locals’ everyday encounters with urban landscapes, via social media data mining (e.g., Brown et al., 2014; Ginzarly



et al. 2019), or on-platform, qualitative investigation of social media data (e.g. Gregory & Chambers, 2021; van der Hoeven, 2020).

There are a growing number of initiatives that attempt to leverage social media and ‘smart city’ digital technologies to understand people’s engagements with urban environments and facilitate participatory approaches to urban planning and sustainable cities (e.g. Bibri, 2019; Duarte & Álvarez, 2019; Souza et al., 2019). The Ballerat HUL case study is one such example, which utilised an interactive website, online tools like ‘My Town Hall’ and social media to gather data from activities such as community mapping (UNESCO, 2016: 25). However, studies have also highlighted the limitations of digitally mediated attempts to sustain participation in the planning process through bespoke web-based platforms (e.g. Fredheim, 2018; 2020). Furthermore, there have been very few attempts to harvest and analyse existing social media data about public interactions with urban heritage (an exception is Kleinbans et al., 2015), let alone any that combine such methods with offline face-to-face social research methods. Madgin and Lesh (2021b: 12) conclude that “digital approaches will play a growing role”, yet whilst a few of the chapters in their edited book engage with digital technologies, platforms and sources (e.g. Gregory and Chambers, 2021; Wang, 2021), there is a marked separation between this work and those focusing on in-person social research.

Here we discuss an original body of research focusing on the problems identified above: in summary, how to accommodate the complex, diverse social values associated with urban heritage by contemporary communities in urban planning and development decisions. The objective was to develop and trial a suite of mixed methods that could be applied rapidly, flexibly and strategically in urban planning and heritage management contexts. Three in-depth case studies offer rich evidence for the effectiveness of this suite of methods revealing a diverse range of values associated with urban heritage, which are more often assumed than demonstrated. One of the key contributions of the research is that it combines qualitative social research methods with computational ones in innovative ways and examines how these can be rapidly deployed in an array of online and offline spaces to enable focused analysis of the values associated with urban heritage. Importantly, it also reveals that different values are produced and negotiated in different online and offline spaces, reinforcing the importance of combining digital and in-person social methods in order to minimise invisibilities and forms of marginalisation (something we focus on in Bonacchi et al., 2023). More broadly, the research reveals the forms of inequality and social dislocation that can be produced if we fail to incorporate the social values of urban heritage into development and regeneration projects.

The research was undertaken as part of the CURBATHERI (Curating Sustainable URBAn Transformations through HERitage) project, funded by the Joint Programme Initiative in Cultural Heritage and Global Change.<sup>10</sup> The methodological component discussed in this monograph was led by the Universities of Stirling and Edinburgh, in collaboration with University of Florence researchers, who undertook the fieldwork in Novoli-San Donato, Florence. University College London researchers provided context and comparative data for the Woolwich case study (in the form of postgraduate dissertations referenced in the text).

The CURBATHERI project, as a whole, builds on the ‘deep city’ concept, which emphasises “long-term historical changes” and “the transformative and trans-temporal character of cities as heritage values” (Fouseki et al., 2020: 6; see also Bonacchi and Lorenzon, 2021). Alongside the complex and often fragmented layers of tangible remains, the concept also stresses depth of social connections to urban places which, like the history of material transformation, are not always visible or apparent from superficial observation. It advocates that “what we don’t see” but “feel” is as important in understanding an urban environment as “what we can see” (Fouseki et al., 2022: 2–3). Moreover, it challenges the idea that heritage is merely a passive ‘victim’ of urban

transformation, arguing instead that it can play an active role in bringing about positive social change within urban environments (ibid.).

To ensure that this happens in socially sustainable ways, however, it is critical to develop a rounded approach to urban transformation that not only considers the survival of tangible historic features, but also the diverse contemporary values of different constituencies that make up the complex social fabric of the city. This requires practical measures through which these social values – the memories, meanings, practices and associations that sustain people’s relationships to the urban places – can be factored into future planning and management processes. We recognise that doing so within current conservation and planning systems presents challenges beyond the methodological but argue that the approaches presented here have demonstrable potential in practice, something which we return to later (Section 7.4)

In the next section, we discuss the ‘deep city’ concept in more depth, developing it in relation to literatures on social sustainability (e.g. Dempsey et al., 2011), critical urban theory (e.g. Brenner et al., 2012) and an assemblage approach to urban place-making (e.g. McFarlane, 2011). We then introduce a novel methodology for investigating social values in both online and offline contexts, combining born-digital and digitised data with face-to-face social research using a suite of rapid methods, ranging from ‘researcher-led’ qualitative techniques to more participatory activities. Through case studies, we then show how the use of this mixed “methods assemblage” (Law, 2004) can reveal diverse heritage values that intersect with the complex socio-material assemblages that make up ‘deep cities’. The penultimate section offers a comparative discussion identifying social value themes and the ways in which these are integral to the socio-material assemblages making up the deep city. We also reflect on potential implications and contributions to urban planning and heritage management, whilst acknowledging the challenges of doing so within current regimes of governance and associated legislation, policy and practice. Finally, we conclude by emphasising the importance of values-based approaches to place-making in bringing about more socially sustainable urban development and regeneration projects.

## 2. Theorising the ‘deep city’

Cities are multi-layered deposits of tangible features and intangible meanings, values and practices in constant flux (Leus & Kosatka, 2015: 96; Fouseki & Nicolau, 2018: 3) (see Fig. 1) and the nexus between heritage conservation and planning is an integral part of this dynamic, mediating and shaping it (Pendlebury, 2013). Fouseki et al., (2020) proposed the concept of the ‘deep city’ to capture the complex interrelationships between these tangible and intangible aspects of urban environments over time. The ‘deep city’ provides an evocative descriptive metaphor for the complex and fragmented material layers resulting from human activity, but it also involves a reconceptualization of the long-term transformative character of urban heritage and its relationship to urban transformation. Rather than focusing exclusively on heritage fabric, as fragments and relicts to be discarded, preserved or re-purposed, people’s relationships to urban heritage are also seen as integral to the ‘deep city’. Heritage is thereby repositioned as potentially an “active driver of positive change”, rather than something that is simply a passive victim or barrier (Fouseki et al., 2020: 8). The ‘deep city’ concept resonates with so-called ‘heritage-led’ or ‘heritage-driven’ urban regeneration programmes, in which (often disused or derelict) historic buildings are re-purposed with the aim of boosting local economies, and/or in pursuit of wider societal benefits like social cohesion, wellbeing and sense of place (Stegmeijer et al., 2021; Veldpaus and Pendlebury, 2023). However, whilst urban regeneration programmes often include conservation of built heritage, in some form, they can also create and/or reinforce inequalities, leading to gentrification, social exclusion and/or physical displacement of pre-existing communities (Fouseki and Nicolau, 2018: 3–4; Labadi, 2015; Stegmeijer et al., 2021:

<sup>10</sup> <https://curbatheri.niku.no/about-us/>



Fig. 1. Tolbooth Market, located in one of the few surviving upstanding buildings from the New Street Gasworks in Canongate, Edinburgh, one of our three case studies: (a) in use (© Iain Masterton / Alamy Stock Photo. This image is exempt from CC BY licensing); (b) awaiting demolition in 2021 (© Elizabeth Robson).

16; UNESCO, 2008: 4). In these processes, the social values and intangible heritage associated with urban places are often disregarded, disrupted, or destroyed. This raises questions about the social sustainability of such urban regeneration projects and urban transformation generally.

Social sustainability is an important concept in discourses surrounding urban regeneration, however, the meaning of the concept remains unclear and contested (Manzi et al. 2010: 1–2). In much of the literature there is a close relationship between social sustainability and issues of equity, social inclusion, social justice and civic participation (Mišetić & Ursić 2015: 69; Partridge, 2014). This is reflected in Dempsey et al.'s (2011: 294) much cited five aspects of social sustainability: “1. Social capital / social interaction, 2. participation in local community, 3. sense of place, identity and belonging, 4. perception of safety and security, and 5. community stability”. However, whilst these are intended to provide a framework for measuring social sustainability in specific contexts, they do not in themselves get to the root of what social sustainability is about. Setha Low's anthropological approach is helpful here, positioning social sustainability as fundamentally about people's relationships to place, and specifically linked to “maintaining and enhancing the diverse histories, values and relationships of contemporary populations” (2010: 393). A key qualifying term is “diverse” and the problem with many applications of social sustainability in urban regeneration derives from the ideal of achieving a conflict-free

consensus when, as Marcuse points out, “vital interests do conflict” (1998: 22). Attention to power relations, resource distribution, social justice, and capacity to participate are therefore key issues for urban planning and governance, including urban transformation processes (see Veldpaus et al. 2021). However, lack of understanding of, and attention to, local political complexities means that there is often a failure “to comprehend the multiplicity of inherent tensions and conflicts at community, neighbourhood, regional and national levels” (Manzi et al., 2010: 21).

In his book exploring the failures of central planning and authoritarian governance models, James Scott argues that “complex patterns of social interaction with the material environment” are an historical product of deep or “thick” cities (Scott, 1998: 256). Failure to take these existing patterns into account when planning new interventions, and lack of respect for the knowledge and practices that underpin them, risks disrupting existing community connections, resulting in what he calls “thin” cities, neighbourhoods, and communities (1998: 144). He concludes, “one all-but-guaranteed consequence of such thin planning is that the planned institution generates an unofficial reality” (1998: 261). Critical urban theory addresses these issues of power directly, insisting that a “democratic, socially just and sustainable form of urbanisation” is only possible if it “involves the critique of ideology and the critique of power, inequality, injustice and exploitation, at once within and among cities” (Brenner et al., 2012: 11). In response, Brenner et al., (2012: 3) specify that “[m]apping the possible pathways of social transformation [...] involves, first and foremost, understanding the nature of contemporary patterns of urban restructuring, and then, on that basis, analysing their implications for action”.

As discussed by Guttormsen et al. (2023), this perspective helps us to account for the importance of social diversity, community involvement, participatory engagement and power relationships in urban placemaking. However, for heritage to be successfully put to work in the creation of socially sustainable urban futures, planning and management decisions need to be informed by an understanding of the social values that emerge from the constantly evolving socio-material relations of ‘deep cities’. In their discussion of the ways in which heritage is integrated into urban planning and governance, Loes Veldpaus and John Pendlebury (2023: 378) point out that there is increasingly a problematic “dematerialised ‘value-centred’ conceptualisation of heritage, in which value can be retained while material dimensions disappear”. We agree and our theoretical approach to researching urban heritage transformations and their values is therefore rooted in urban assemblage theory (see Guttormsen et al., 2023). As McFarlane emphasises, an assemblage approach focuses attention on the social *and* material dimensions of the city and “the *process* of changing relations between humans and non-humans” within urban assemblages (2011: 215, emphasis in original). Whilst he does not discuss virtual spaces, online social media platforms also constitute an increasingly important aspect of urban assemblages, bringing diverse actors together in different ways, mediated by the different affordances and discursive cultures of the platforms themselves (Bonacchi et al. 2023). Furthermore, whereas normative understandings of urban planning see placemaking as an end point, resulting from a linear process of planning and management, assemblage approaches see placemaking as a more open process of ‘becoming’, shaped by multiple actors and practices rather than a few key stakeholders or prime drivers (Sweeney et al., 2018: 572).

The strength of an assemblage approach is that urban placemaking is understood as the result of concrete, situated practices and socio-material relationships created by different actors. In his influential article McFarlane (2011) argues that assemblage thinking is an empirical tool for engaging in the kind of thick description of the city that Scott (1998) had previously called for, providing a better understanding of how urban environments are constituted through an evolving nexus of socio-material relationships. Analytically, the focus is turned to capturing these actors, along with their agencies and power relationships, including planners, heritage managers, and citizens whose



initiatives intersect in various ways whether intentionally or unintentionally. For example, in his analysis of the “conservation planning assemblage” in England, [Pendlebury \(2013\)](#) reveals that whilst it shares values with other heritage activities there are also distinct differences, intimately related to the politics of urban management, which have been reinforced by over a decade of financial austerity ([Pendlebury et al., 2019](#)). Another example is provided by [Boonstra and Lofvers \(2017: 7\)](#) who focus on community-oriented, participative urban regeneration in Rotterdam, revealing an “innovative assemblage” derived from the interventions of an increasingly diversified set of stakeholders and interests. Urban placemaking is thus shown to be a product of the intersection between both formal strategies of the state, such as urban planning and redevelopment, and the informal, everyday “tactics” of citizens ([Sweeney et al., 2018: 574](#)).

[McFarlane \(2011\)](#) argues that an assemblage approach to urbanism has the potential to activate a critical imaginary and political sensitivity to alternative urban futures. However, this political programme remains a rather abstract projected outcome of the project of assemblage urbanism (for critiques see [Brenner et al., 2011](#); [Russell et al., 2011](#)). The question remains how can diverse actors and their differing values contribute to the creation of possible urban futures? The thorny problems levelled by critics of social sustainability agendas arguably also apply to assemblage urbanism, about the need to overcome uneven capacities and inclinations to participate and differential visibilities created by the specific mechanisms and arenas involved ([Manzi et al., 2010: 20–22](#)). To address these issues, we turn attention to the practical ways in which values assembled by the complex socio-material relationships constituting the ‘deep city’ can be empirically encountered and documented. As [Law \(2004: 113\)](#) has argued, specific methods generate specific knowledge and gaps as they recognise and amplify some patterns or realities while silencing or failing to recognise others. We therefore developed a ‘methods assemblage’ ([Law, 2004: 38–42](#)) approach, involving multiple online and offline methods, which we introduce in the next section. As demonstrated by the case studies where we applied these methods, such an approach can accommodate the complexity and flux of different urban assemblages, while also creating the space to critically interrogate the kinds of knowledge that are produced and which heritage values are made visible.

### 3. Methodology

We developed a mixed methodology to investigate the production and negotiation of social values both online and offline, combining semi-quantitative analysis of born-digital and digitised data with in-person qualitative methods and participatory research. In urban environments, planners, heritage managers, conservation officers and architects amongst others, have the task of forging strategies for sustainable heritage curation and urban transformation, working with diverse stakeholders and wider publics. Hence, it is important to devise a methodology that can be quickly and flexibly applied in an integrated manner. Our approach is influenced by rapid or focused ethnography, which is usually characterised by mixed methods, time- and data-intensity, short-term field visits and team-based research ([Knoblauch, 2005](#)). Another common characteristic is the use of active interventions to create what [Pink and Morgan](#) call “intense routes to knowing” (2013: 351):

[Rapid ethnography] involves intensive excursions into [people’s] lives, which use more interventionist as well as observational methods to create contexts through which to delve into questions that will reveal matters to those people in the context of what the researcher is seeking to find out ([Pink and Morgan, 2013: 352](#)).

Often employed in applied research contexts, rapid or focused ethnography can be used to investigate values, attitudes and practices in advance of specific decisions or developments, and sometimes even concurrently with them ([Knoblauch, 2005: 13](#)). It is well-suited

therefore to assessment of the diverse social values associated with the ‘deep city’ to inform planning decisions, and appraise ongoing/recently completed development or regeneration projects.

For our offline, in-person research, we used qualitative semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders (heritage professionals, planners, developers, community leaders and residents) to explore people’s relationships with the ‘deep city’, and the social values connected with it, in some depth. These were sometimes combined with, or followed by, site walks, allowing specific transformations, past, present and future, to be explored. Structured interviews were used to work with residents ‘on site’, in and around specific localities where they were encountered. These were also useful where it proved difficult to access and recruit local community members for more in-depth semi-structured interviews. Place-based ethnographic observation and intensive note-taking was used to identify patterns of movement and practice at/around case study sites, together with photography and audio-video recording. Care was taken to avoid photographing people close-up or face-on.

Many of the above methods are typical of focused ethnography ([Knoblauch, 2005](#)) and indeed have been adopted in heritage management. For instance in the United States, the National Parks Service developed Rapid Ethnographic Assessment Procedures (REAP) in the early 2000s ([Taplin et al., 2002](#)) and an early UK example is Jones’s work with Historic Scotland (2004). A similar approach also underpins the Social Value Toolkit resulting from a collaborative doctoral research project between the University of Stirling and Historic Environment Scotland, supervised by Jones and carried out by [Robson \(2021a and 2021b\)](#).<sup>11</sup> Participatory interventions are also increasingly used in focused ethnography to facilitate co-production of knowledge (e.g. [Jones et al., 2018](#); [Robson 2021a](#)) and these are also an important element in our CURBATHERI research. Specific participatory methods employed include photo-elicitation, using historic photographs to prompt discussion of stories, memories and values surrounding buildings, places and activities that are now gone, or only survive as fragments within the present day city, often transformed beyond recognition. Participatory mapping was also leveraged to allow people to identify places of significance to them and record their stories, memories and attachments, capturing a sense of the diverse forms of place-making and belonging.

Some of these offline methods were also digitally mediated. Conducting field research between July and October 2021 during the Covid19 pandemic, many of the more in-depth semi-structured interviews took place online using the inbuilt audiovisual recording tools in Microsoft Teams. We also took advantage of widely available online platforms for facilitating participation. Alongside the use of participatory mapping at community events, for instance, we built a bespoke online app on the MicroPasts crowdsourcing platform ([Bonacchi et al., 2019](#)) to co-produce knowledge and explore sense of place. The application was called *Your City, Your Place* (translation for the Italian case study: *La tua Città, il tuo Posto*).<sup>12</sup> This involved a map and information about specific places that were the focus of research, with tools allowing people to geo-locate places of significance to them and record associated stories and memories through web-based or mobile devices. We also designed an online questionnaire (using Google Forms) to examine people’s understandings of historical transformations and the values associated with them. In this case, proactively introducing places and features associated with the deeper past that people were likely to be unaware of to explore their responses to these hidden transformations.

Arguably the most original aspect of our methodology, however, lies in the innovative combination of focused ethnography with semi-quantitative and qualitative analysis of values expressed on social

<sup>11</sup> <https://socialvalue.stir.ac.uk/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://crowdsourced.micropasts.org/>; <https://github.com/E-Broccoli/Dee-p-Cities-Your-City-Your-place>.

media platforms. This proved important in extending the research into arenas of value production online, where diverse (often non-local) actors with varied interests and attachments engage with specific heritage places, building networks and communities that can transcend physical distance. It can also be very useful practically when working in complex urban environments where it is sometimes difficult to access and recruit participants for in-person ethnographic research. Building on the work of Bonacchi and others (e.g. Bonacchi et al., 2018; Bonacchi & Krzyzanska, 2019), these methods involved on-platform and automated data retrieval of born-digital social media data relating to specific urban heritage places. The initial phase of this work involved a survey of social media platforms containing references to the places we were studying. This was followed by an analysis of their 'researchability', i.e. whether the social media platforms identified have public APIs allowing data to be mined for research purposes. Five social media sites were selected for in-depth research, but of these Facebook, Flickr and Twitter proved the most useful, with Reddit and YouTube offering more limited relevant data for our case studies. All of them allowed data mining at the time of the research (June – August 2021), although Facebook required an approval process through the Open Science initiative, which took too long to obtain for our purposes. Facebook was therefore analysed on-platform using keyword searches and targeted sampling. For the other four platforms, data was accessed using Free and Open Source software to ensure that workflows could be replicated with limited budgets. This included the following R packages: *academictwitterR* for Twitter (Barrie et al., 2021); *tuber* for YouTube (Sood et al., 2019); and *photosearcher* for Flickr (Fox et al., 2020).

Overall, our analysis was informed by mixed qualitative and data-intensive approaches, as appropriate to the data. For the offline rapid ethnographic research (including interviews, observation and participatory visualisation/mapping), analysis involved close reading and qualitative analysis of concepts, themes and discourses (see Jones, 2017; Jones et al., 2018; Robson 2021a and 2021b). For the online research, the initial corpus was analysed quantitatively, using topic modelling, term frequencies and associations, sentiment and cluster analysis. This provided the basis for subsequent sampling of material that specifically referenced the locations under research for the purposes of qualitative analysis, including close reading and discourses analysis (see Bonacchi et al., 2018; Bonacchi & Krzyzanska, 2019).

Ethical approval was obtained prior to the start of the data collection. The research was designed to minimise the possibility of harm to those involved. Offline in-person research was informed by the Association of Social Anthropologists Ethical Guidelines<sup>13</sup> and based on the principle of informed consent. Participants were provided with relevant information before participating and were either asked to sign to confirm consent, or give explicit verbal confirmation, depending on the circumstances. The only exception was observation of public spaces where it was not feasible to obtain individual consent. Here care was taken not to intrude on personal privacy and no personal data was recorded. The online component of the research entailed automated and manual social media data retrieval and analysis in accordance with platform policies, and on spaces considered more open (i.e. not requiring entrance via a log in or the joining of bespoke groups). Potential for identification in these public spaces was minimised by use of aggregated data analysis, alongside restricted use of qualitative data (short citations or 'frames') (Bonacchi, 2022). Data collection via Micropasts and the online survey was entirely anonymous, with informed consent embedded in the process.

The methodology was developed and trialled intensively through two UK case studies located in Canongate, Edinburgh, and Woolwich, Greater London. Following training, colleagues from the University of Florence also trialled the methodology in Novoli-San Donato, Florence, Italy, although use of online methods was less extensive in this case. The

case study sites were known to varying degrees to the project partners and the specific focus areas were selected in consultation with key stakeholders responsible for urban heritage. All three have phases of industrial activity set within rich histories of urban transformation often leading to fragmentation or dislocation of tangible and intangible heritage. They are also all subject to recent or current development or regeneration processes, creating 'live' public debates about the rapidly changing city. At the same time, when the research was undertaken, each of the case studies was at a different stage of decision-making regarding urban planning and urban heritage curation, offering insights into how and when social values might be considered. In what follows, we discuss each case study in turn, summarising the background context and the specific combinations of methods used to assess social values in each case, before presenting the results of the research. We then provide a comparative discussion of the key findings and reflect on the strengths and limitations of the methodology, before exploring their implications and potential applications in planning contexts.

#### 4. New Street Gasworks, Canongate, Edinburgh

##### 4.1. Context

The first case study focuses on the area of North Canongate, Edinburgh, occupied in the 19th century by the New Street Gasworks<sup>14</sup> and its final expansion in the location of Gladstone Court (179a Canongate) (see Fig. 2). This area has had a variety of occupation phases and uses from the deep to the recent past, some of which are more evident in the present-day upstanding structures than others. The burgh of Canongate was founded in 1128, and much of North Canongate was used for semi-agricultural purposes up until the early 1800s (Adamson et al., 2016). The "airy and healthful situation" of this setting was one of the main reasons why a Magdalene Asylum, conceived as a halfway house for women leaving prison or seeking refuge from prostitution, was erected there in 1805–1807 (RSEMA, 1830). However, with the construction of the first buildings of the New Street Gasworks by the Edinburgh Gas Light Company in 1818 (McLaren et al., 2022), the Magdalene institution was relocated, and the Asylum building was incorporated into the Gasworks complex (Adamson et al., 2016: 131). Meanwhile, another welfare charity, the Canongate Charity Workhouse, remained on Old Tolbooth Wynd, immediately adjacent to the Gasworks as it grew, becoming an epidemic hospital in 1871 and then the 'Help Factory' in 1907, operated by the Edinburgh Distress Committee until 1916 (ibid. 127–29).

The Gasworks developed at various points throughout the 19th century with a major phase of expansion in the 1840s until its eventual decline with the arrival of the electric lightning in 1881 (Fig. 3). The buildings in the New Street area were demolished from around 1906 and this part of the Gasworks became a popular shale football pitch up until 1925 (ibid.). Thereafter, it was sold to the Scottish Motor Traction Company and a bus depot was constructed in 1928 (Adamson et al., 2016). This was extended in later years and turned into a large car park in the 1990s. Meanwhile, the Gasworks buildings at 179a Canongate survived and were re-used as an art gallery, architect offices and, recently, as an entertainment venue and alternative market, Tolbooth Market (see Fig. 1 above). However, they are currently standing empty awaiting an approved redevelopment for about 70 student flats, which will see most of the structures demolished, except for selective facades (see Pendlebury, 2002 on the controversial shift to facadism in conservation planning). This follows a major redevelopment of the area where the former Gasworks was located, based on the contested Caltongate masterplan, rebranded as the prestigious New Waverley development in 2014, where heritage was mobilised in a context of tensions around the

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.theasa.org/ethics/>

<sup>14</sup> Scottish National Record of the Historic Environment (Canmore) site ID 52212. Permalink to record: <https://canmore.org.uk/site/52212>



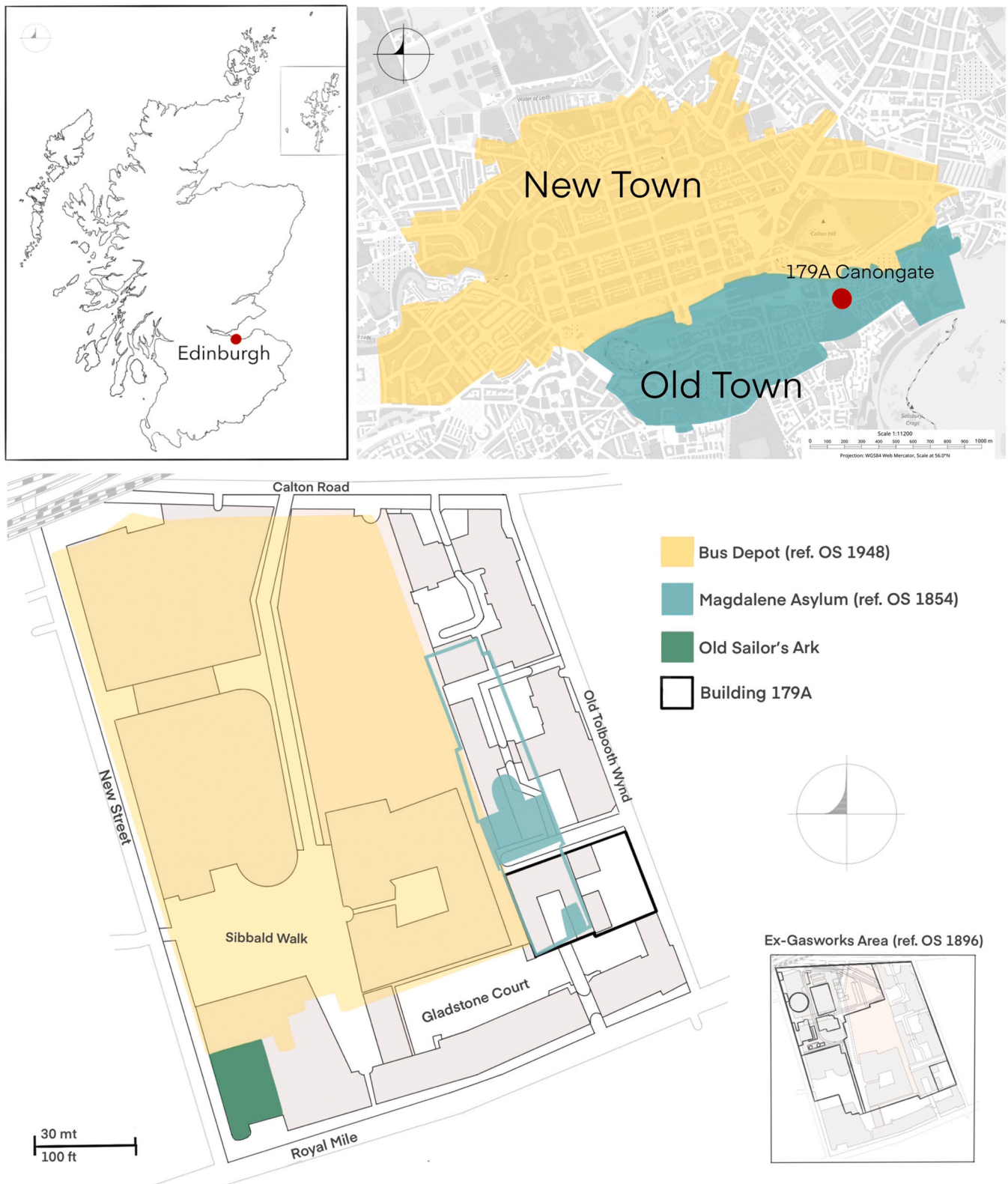


Fig. 2. Map showing the location of the New Street Gasworks and Gladstone Court (179a Canongate), Edinburgh, and the wider urban context (© Elisa Broccoli).

prioritisation of civic infrastructure and developer wishes versus residents' desire for community spaces.

The upstanding remains of the Gasworks do not have any formal heritage designation or protection in themselves. The Canongate area is part of the Edinburgh Old Town and New Town World Heritage Site, which focuses on urban transformation and locates its Outstanding

Universal Value in the contrast between Old and New Town areas, together forming "a dramatic reflection of significant changes in European urban planning, from the inward looking, defensive walled medieval city [...] through the expansive formal Enlightenment planning of the 18th and 19th centuries in the New Town" (UNESCO, 1995). This is also reflected in the *Character Appraisal for the Old Town Conservation*



Fig. 3. View of New Street Gasworks (with the tall chimney), Edinburgh, c.1906, with the 'Help Factory' located in the former poorhouse in Old Tolbooth Wynd in the foreground (© Courtesy of HES (Scottish Gas Collection). This image is exempt from CC BY licensing).

Area, which “emphasises the survival of the original medieval street pattern; the wealth of important landmark buildings; the survival of an outstanding collection of archaeological remains, medieval buildings, and 17th-century town houses” (City of Edinburgh Council, 2005).

The New Street Gasworks is fleetingly mentioned in the Character Appraisal, but, despite some fragmented remaining structures (Figs. 1 and 4), its contribution to the character of the area is presented as a thing of the past:

At one time there were some sixteen breweries and utilities, such as the former Gasworks, at the Dynamic Earth site. These uses occupied considerable land areas and would have had a major impact on the character of the area (City of Edinburgh Council, 2005: 23).

However, due to its location, the redevelopment of its last upstanding remains in 179a Canongate was deemed by heritage managers and conservation officers to have the potential to impact on the wider World Heritage site. They also took into consideration the setting of surrounding buildings with formal heritage designations, including the Old Tolbooth (Category A), the flats backing onto Gladstone Court (Category B and C) and the Kirk and Kirkyard (Category A). Furthermore, by virtue of its location within a Conservation Area, consent was required for partial demolition and development of the surviving remains of the Gasworks at 179a Canongate. Therefore, heritage managers and the City Archaeologist were able to leverage preservation of some facades and walls relating to the Gasworks.<sup>15</sup>

Our research aimed to assess the contemporary social values relating to the area once occupied by the New Street Gasworks and its surviving architectural fragments at 179a Canongate, Edinburgh, partly in response to the stated interest of key stakeholders involved in urban planning and heritage management. With consent already approved for partial demolition of the remaining Gasworks' buildings at 179a Canongate, and set against the backdrop of the New Waverley development, our research took place alongside significant urban transformations. In doing so, it examined the social values associated with forms of heritage that are in danger of being further fragmented or erased. Canongate is a

locus of residence, employment, entertainment, education, and ceremony at the heart of a capital city. As discussed below, it is also associated with one of the city's more transient and mobile populations. As a result, there are a wide range of individuals and communities with interests in, and attachments to, the area.

#### 4.2. Case study methods

The offline methods used in this assessment consisted of 18 structured (on-street) and eight semi-structured (in-person and via video call) interviews, the latter often being combined with site walks. Additional methods included *in situ* observation of the surrounding area and photo elicitation to facilitate discussions at a community event. Historic photos were also introduced as discussion points towards the end of the interviews and, in one semi-structured interview with someone who had worked in the Old Tolbooth Market, a 3D video tour of the site was shown.<sup>16</sup> Activities were conducted with nine visits to the site in three focused blocks of time: a week in late July, a week in late August, and two weeks from mid-September to early October 2021. In-person activities were complemented by a review of pre-existing sources (including the Scottish Census and Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation).

Online social media research focused on Facebook, Twitter, and Flickr. Based on an initial search of Facebook, it was decided to target the “Lost Edinburgh” group (48,000 members) and public Facebook page (160,000 followers). A total of 11 posts and 298 comments created by 181 unique authors (between 01.06.2016 and 01.06.2021) were extracted manually and analysed qualitatively, through close reading. A corpus of 6250 Tweets (posted between 01.06.2019 and 01.06.2021) containing the word “Canongate” was quantitatively analysed to provide context leading to extraction of 23 primary tweets of direct relevance to the case study for qualitative analysis, along with associated threads and metadata. Flickr data was collected in September 2021 using a combination of automated search methods and manual snowball sampling. This resulted in the selection of a sample of 100 photographs of the ex-gasworks area uploaded from 2006 to 2021 together with the

<sup>15</sup> Application for Conservation Area Consent 19/05906/CON, City of Edinburgh Council, 2020.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zyYjzBOgxys>.





Fig. 4. The surviving eastern external wall of Gasworks on Tolbooth Wynd (left side), with blind openings (© Elizabeth Robson).

texts associated with such images (titles, tags, descriptions and comments). This visual and textual content was analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively.

An anonymous online survey was also developed (comprising 16 open and close questions) to investigate heritage values associated with the case study and acquire information to help contextualise the social media data. A link to the survey was publicised to potential participants through suitable social media twice (between 27.08.21 – 29.09.21) and a total of 166 participants responded. Descriptive statistics were produced using answers from close questions, whereas answers to open questions were analysed qualitatively. Finally, we launched the crowdsourcing application for participatory mapping *Your City, Your Place*. This app allowed people to record their own values and views relating to the case study area at 179a Canongate. The data was collected for three weeks with 12 tasks submitted by seven different contributors; it was analysed qualitatively.

The combination of offline and online methods integral to our methodology was particularly important for this case study. Unusually low response rates were encountered when requesting face-to-face participation from representative community organisations, key stakeholders and local residents. Offline methods were modified in response with greater weight placed on structured on-street interviews which proved successful. However, most respondents in the offline activities were identified through their physical proximity to, or past engagement with, the site. This brings a potential bias towards communities who live in immediate vicinity of the site, although other communities of identity and interest were explored. Additionally, most of these local offline respondents indicated that they do not make extensive use of social media or online platforms in order to engage with Canongate or connect with the local community. There is therefore an interesting contrast revealed by the online research, where people who are not necessarily (or no longer) local to Canongate are reconnecting with each other and sharing memories of the area, especially on Facebook.

#### 4.3. Results

According to the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (Scottish Government, 2020), the area surrounding the site (Data Zone

S01008685) is within the lower half of all the ranked data zones in the country; it falls in the fourth decile, overall, but in the 10% most deprived for education and housing, and the 20% most deprived for crime.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, the most recent Scottish census data (Scottish Government, 2011) showed that this area (grouped postcodes EH8 8BN, EH8 8BJ, EH8 8BW) included 40 households; a relatively low proportion of properties are owner-occupied (30%), with just under half privately rented (47.5%) and the rest made up of social housing schemes (20%). The University buildings across the road from the site also mean that there is a significant student population living or traveling into North Canongate. The census data for the area showed ten per cent of households are occupied entirely by students (the figure for the whole city being three per cent) and 22.4% of residents were born outside the UK (15.9% for the wider city); of those, 60% had been resident in the UK for less than two years (double the figure for the city overall). This, together with the figures for rented accommodation, suggests the Canongate area has one of the city's most mobile/transitory populations.

The range of communities identified as having relevant attachments to, or interests in, the case study site and immediate surroundings adds to this complexity. People who identified as 'from Canongate' comprised: long-term residents; individuals born locally who have since moved away; and those who had recently moved-in or returned residents. Relatedly, there are descendants of residents or those with a hereditary interest in the area. Finally, some people express non-residential forms of attachment such as current and past local business owners and workers. Amongst the latter are performers, artists and musicians, but also the employees of the various businesses that have occupied the site of the former Gasworks after it closed and descendants of employees of the Gasworks. Religious congregations (associated with the Canongate Kirk, St Patrick's Church, and the Gospel Centre) also have a potential interest in recent and ongoing development projects. Finally, there are formal community groups (including Old Town

<sup>17</sup> The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation is a relative measure. It ranks all the data zones and divides them into ten equally sized segments: the 1st decile are the 10% most deprived areas, and the 10th decile are the 10% least deprived areas.

Development Trust, Community Council) and informal groups based on shared interests (such as gardening) or identity (including Caribbean and Irish).

This is not necessarily an exhaustive list and individuals may identify with more than one of these groups simultaneously or move between them depending on time and context. Importantly, not all the groups could be accessed or actively engaged using the offline activities in the time available. This was the case for religious communities, certain informal community groups, and performers or artists who had used the space in the past. The online methods extended the reach of this research, facilitating access to those engaging with the site at a distance, particularly people who used to be residents, descendants, relatives or friends of residents, people still working or who had previously worked in the area, and heritage interest groups.

The *Old Town Conservation Area Character Appraisal* stresses the importance of the continuing presence of a diverse residential community and the vitality and variety of different activities. Indeed, "the strong and continuing presence" of a residential community is seen as "an essential part of the character of the area" (City of Edinburgh Council, 2005: 38). However, a prominent theme arising from our research in the vicinity of the former Gasworks in North Canongate is an ambiguity or concern about the existence and visibility of such a community. The lack of public space and opportunities for residents to come together has contributed in part to the dispersal and invisibility of various local communities. Inhabitants interviewed for this research showed an acute awareness of this of this:

[I]t kinda feels un-lived, like people aren't living there, but they are. Like, there's probably more people living there than any other section of the Royal Mile, but it doesn't feel like that. Or not necessarily the Royal Mile, but Holyrood Road to Carlton Road, right? That section of the Old Town (semi-structured interview, Respondent 2.6).

This clearly articulated emphasis on a place-based community may in part be a legacy of the Save Our Old Town campaign, which sought to present Canongate as a distinct community and establish residents' rights to comment on the Waverley Development plans (see Tooley, 2012). On this basis, one heritage professional expressed the view that the identification of communities associated with the site has become 'political', implying that an instrumental dimension has informed this question. However, counteracting this, several respondents spoke about their family's multi-generational connections to the Canongate (e.g. three out of 18 on-street interviewees were third generation residents), or referred to older residents who had lived in the area all their lives. One young woman said: "My mum is Scottish and bought the flat we live in, she said Grandpa would be so proud that I lived here" (Respondent SI12). Furthermore, interviewees connected with and referenced diverse communities with a clear sense of time depth, including Moroccan landownership, a range of musical and artistic influences, and Irish in-migration, with a focus on social networks and activities. As one local resident said: "[It is a] really unique place, a mixed place since the Enlightenment, and [this] gives it a richness, different people side by side" (Respondent SI1).

Notwithstanding this vision of harmonious Enlightenment pluralism, several historical and contemporary tensions were evident. The presence of a Catholic community in the area was mentioned by several older participants, who noted that there was some anti-Catholic sentiment when they were younger (Respondent 2.11). There was also evidence of class distinctions, associated with memories of children playing in the Canongate, because they were not allowed to access the parks used by private school pupils (Respondent 2.15). Inequalities carry over into contemporary interactions to some extent, with recent residential developments described as "millionaire flats" (Respondent SI5). Relatedly, the shift from owner-occupied and social housing to holiday lets, hotels and student accommodation was often raised as a source of tension when talking about the development of the site and the wider area (see

below).

The diversity of the communities for whom the Canongate has been home are potentially elided by a focus on particular periods, especially the importance of the medieval Old Town in the national Scottish story and its UNESCO World Heritage designation.<sup>18</sup> Despite on-street interviews coinciding with the State Opening of Parliament, the ceremonial and national significance of the area's heritage was not a prominent focus of social values among participants in this study. Nevertheless, it is a significant draw for the large numbers of tourists who visit the Canongate area annually. Many offline interviewees who lived locally expressed a sense of pride at living in a city that attracts visitors from all over the world. However, while people recognised the importance of tourism to the local economy, there was a tension between the emphasis on Canongate as a place to visit *vis-à-vis* a place to live. Interviewees made references to visitors or transient populations not sharing the sense of "ownership" or "respect" for the area (Respondent 2.8) that longer term or more settled residents feel. This sentiment was echoed in online arenas, for instance one Flickr user posted historic photographs of Canongate and contrasted them with the "tourist theme park" character of the area today (Flickr User\_1). In the accompanying comment they stressed that the area was home to "real communities" where "working-class people have lived generation after generation for hundreds of years".

The retention of historic design features, such as the enclosed archways to enter the Closes and Wynds, was seen as important but contrasted with safety concerns, such as lack of lighting. Residents and heritage professionals reflected on the difference between the "hustle and bustle" of Canongate (Respondent 2.7) and the character of these other areas. As one person said: "You think you know the main street but then you go behind it and it reveals totally different things" (site walk, Respondent 2.5). One of the things potentially revealed is the evidence of the area's hidden industrial past, which has, as one heritage professional reflected, been "incrementally chipped away at" (Respondent 2.3) through successive redevelopments.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the dynamic character of urban residential populations, values associated with the area's industrial past, including the New Street Gasworks, were more commonly expressed by online communities than contemporary local ones. Facebook and Flickr were important arenas for people who remembered the case study area for the heritage associated with their working lives or those of others they knew. On the public Facebook page 'Lost Edinburgh', users expressed nostalgia for the Gasworks, the Bus Depot and subsequent gas board office. Some of the Facebook comments linked the Gasworks to distinctive urban environmental characteristics (e.g. smog) that they associated with an industrial era preceding the Clean Air Acts of 1956 and 1968. Yet, negative associations often intermingled with nostalgia for the yellow mist that shrouded the authors' younger selves. Amid the 'yucks' (FB.G1.A.26) and accounts of ill health (FB.P1.B.4), these nostalgic notes told complex stories, evoking memories that are dear to those who share them (FB.G1.A.21).

Three Facebook posts on the New Street Gasworks (FB.G1.B, FB.G1.C, FB.G1.D), published by people on the group who had either worked at the site or whose parents had done so, focussed on the connection with the case study area and solicited input from other users. FB.G1.C, for example, took the form of a question asking if anyone remembered the Gas Board Training Centre in the mid-1970s. This post received 85 comments, the majority of which engaged with the question. Referencing specific characters (FB.G1.C.4), these comments alluded to extensive memories and the significance of the Gasworks to residents

<sup>18</sup> The listed building record for 183–187 Canongate (LB28434), which backs onto Gladstone Court, indicates that the tenement was built for the Incorporation of Cordiners in 1677. The Cordiners or 'Cordovers' were group of artisans who used leather from Cordova in Spain. It was rebuilt in 1956 in the original style.



and workers past and present. There are also hints of complex stories, peopled by familiar characters, like 'Big Georgie', who worked at the Gas Training Centre. Similarly, although the Bus Depot, built on the site after the Gasworks closed, appears in only one post (FB.P1.D.), the comments that followed emphasised working connections and values associated with this urban feature and others that adjoined it (the Bongo Club and Bar). In an analogous vein, one offline interviewee, whose grandmother had been employed at the Bus Depot and who had recently worked at the site herself, recalled that, "we got quite a lot of people who came in and said, 'oh I used to work in here when it was an office, I'm interested to see how it is now'" (Respondent 2.6).

On Flickr, it was possible to identify a strong nostalgic attachment to buildings connected not only to the New Street Bus Depot (1930s-1990s; Flickr User\_32), but also to the Old Sailor's Ark, built in 1936 with the function of feeding and sheltering people in need. It helped hundreds of

thousands of families before and after the Second World War and our Flickr research revealed that it was a much photographed and iconic element of the area. Despite being a C-listed building, the Old Sailor's Ark was amongst the structures that would have been demolished by the Caltongate scheme. However, following protests by the Cockburn Association, the Old Town Community Council and the Save Our Old Town campaign (The Scotsman, 2015), new developers opted for a partial demolition, preserving the façades of the Old Sailor's Ark to the Royal Mile and to New Street even if partially changed.

Other venues and activities that grew up within the site of the former Gasworks during the 20th century also loom large in the social values and memories associated with the site (Fig. 5). These include several music venues (such as the Out of the Blue New Street Studios, the Venue and the Bongo Club), remembered as having hosted a wide range of musical genres and acts, including Eastern European music nights.



Fig. 5. Old Town Map by Canongate young community for the Save Our Old Town campaign showing the Bongo Club, the 'wrecking site', and Studio 24 with the comment "I liked doing dancing here" (© alister/Flickr).

Participants also recalled the site being an art gallery and, more recently, an Edinburgh Festival Fringe venue. These uses were described as bringing “animation” to the area (Respondent SI8). Furthermore, memories of the Canongate were often associated with public activities, whether events taking place at key times of the year (such as people congregating in the street at New Year), children playing in the Wynds and Clooses, shopping in the markets, or attending the various clubs and music venues.

Increased privatisation of what was once public space and loss of public housing were commonly shared concerns in the in-person interviews. The lack of green space was also emphasised as a critical issue by residents, with the few ‘public’ gardens often locked (Respondent 2.8). In the absence of a park, the Kirkyard is used by many to walk their dogs, and people pass through the Old Tolbooth Wynd and down Canongate to access other recreational areas, such as Holyrood Park. Social media platforms provided arenas for more explicit criticism aimed at Edinburgh City Council and the private developers involved in the area. Flickr users expressed discontent regarding the planned demolitions of historic architecture, and its replacement with “new, shiny and lush buildings” (Flickr User\_21). On Twitter, disapproval is voiced by local groups who campaigned for publicly accessible arts spaces, against property developers who were building buy-to-let properties approved by the council. Such tensions between competing community and private interests are a long-standing theme in the transformations surrounding the area occupied by the former Gasworks. There is evidence that both the 19th-century development of the Gasworks adjacent to the Magdalene Asylum for ‘fallen women’, and the Bus Depot replacing the large football ground in the 1930s, drew considerable complaints from local stakeholders. The damage to the air and water quality caused by the Gasworks is cited amongst the reasons to move the Asylum to a cleaner location in Dalry (RSEMA, 1863). A community campaign to convince the local authority not to develop the open-air football pitch, “this valuable air lung”, into a Bus Depot, also fell on deaf ears (The Scotsman, 1926). Such recurring dissonance between the priorities of urban governance and local stakeholders is also evident in public criticism of recent developments. A few of these specifically characterised the construction of new UK government offices in the New Waverley project as a form of ‘imperialism’ enacted by the British Government over Scotland, whereas others focused on the replacement of “genuine” local cafés by big chains and “city-museum” urban regeneration. Further contestation is seen in a tweet published in June 2019 to complain about Edinburgh Council’s decision to privilege the construction of “poxy flats” at the expense of an alternative proposal to convert a set of old school buildings, dubbed Venture Edinburgh, into a community centre.

What then of the values associated with these urban transformations? The online questionnaire survey was designed to gauge attitudes towards the area’s layered history.<sup>19</sup> Perhaps unsurprisingly, given its role as a major transport hub for over 60 years, the Bus Depot was relatively widely known (65%), in contrast to the older Magdalene Asylum and Gasworks, or the Tolbooth Market, which was only in existence in the surviving Gasworks buildings at 179a Canongate for a couple of years. Nevertheless, once informed about it by the questionnaire, 64% of respondents ranked the Magdalene Asylum as either the first or second most valued phase, with 56% ranking the Gasworks as either the first or second. The explanations offered suggest that, despite many respondents being non-local and unaware of their existence prior to taking the survey, they valued the Asylum and Gasworks for their age and their perceived historical value. The second most frequent reason in support of the Asylum’s preservation was the importance of remembering the difficult heritage associated with such institutions. One respondent explained, “I think the social history of the Magdalene Asylum is a story worth sharing to highlight the injustice to the women

incarcerated there. [...] (Survey Respondent 149), whereas another stated that “in order to be a more inclusive society we need to remember those who were treated badly and unfairly” (Survey Respondent 85). Here we see how the complex layers of the deep city are reframed by present values, politics and circumstances, in this case by notions of social justice associated with women’s rights, and how these in turn inform responses to current and future urban transformations.

In contrast to the survey, the offline methods and social media analysis highlighted the importance of family connections, everyday working lives and leisure experiences in the values associated with the area. Nevertheless, for several interviewees and online participants, the sense of time depth was an additional source of value, and no one indicated that any of the site’s past uses negatively impacted on their feelings towards it. For instance, personal and vague historical dimensions intersect in the following interview extract, which also highlights a lack of awareness of specific uses:

I grew up in Leith, but Dad grew up in this area and my parents were married in the Kirk, so was nice to return here. [...] So much to discover. Didn’t know about the Magdalene Asylum. I feel torn [about the development], housing going in that is needed, but architecturally not very exciting, not tapping into that rich history (Respondent SI14).

Heritage practitioners also reflected on the extent to which the remaining fragments of the exterior walls of the New Street Gasworks contributed to an overall sense of “pastness” (Holtorf, 2013), suggesting that this was likely to be what people took from the site, rather than an understanding of the specific history. During on-street interviews, the remaining walls of the Gasworks and other historic structures were valued in comparison with the new residential developments and government buildings, which were seen as lacking character – “all steel and glass” (Respondent SI8), and “antiseptic” (Respondent SI4). People who had recently worked at the site of 179a Canongate also spoke of their interest in the history of the buildings and of having speculated with colleagues about the past uses of historical features (such as the cellars), as well as engaging in discussions with residents and patrons on their future use. So, while many people may, as one regular visitor to the city said, “walk past without realising it’s there” (Respondent SI17), for others there were deep personal connections or interest in the particular histories of the site, the people who had lived and worked there, and the uses that the area had in the past.

## 5. Beresford Gate and Square, Woolwich, London

### 5.1. Context

The second UK-based case study focused on the Royal Arsenal Gatehouse (known as Beresford Gate) and Beresford Square on the boundary between the Royal Arsenal Riverside redevelopment and Woolwich High Street (Fig. 6). Woolwich is located in South-East London, on the South bank of the River Thames, within the borough of Royal Greenwich. It has been occupied since at least the Iron Age and long established as a port and crossing point. From the 16th century onwards, Woolwich was developed as a strategically important dockyard and armaments facility. The Royal Arsenal is the main site where weaponry was manufactured during both World Wars, finally closing in the 1960s (Guillery, 2012). The Royal Arsenal was designated as a conservation area in 1981 (Guillery, 2012: 184) with the intent to protect the listed buildings, given the forthcoming development of the area. Outside of the Arsenal walls, on the other side of the A206 Plumstead Road that currently separates the Royal Arsenal from the Woolwich town centre, there are two open public spaces, General Gordon Square and Beresford Square, the latter hosting an historic marketplace. The Woolwich Town Centre constitutes part of the Woolwich Conservation Area designated in 2019, which includes the main streets of the Town Centre (Royal Borough of Greenwich 2022c). This part of Woolwich includes, among

<sup>19</sup> See <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1-R9EWmy6gjFTHT0er3M0g9bTHzza0ry7sFnLfZMVqMg/prefill>



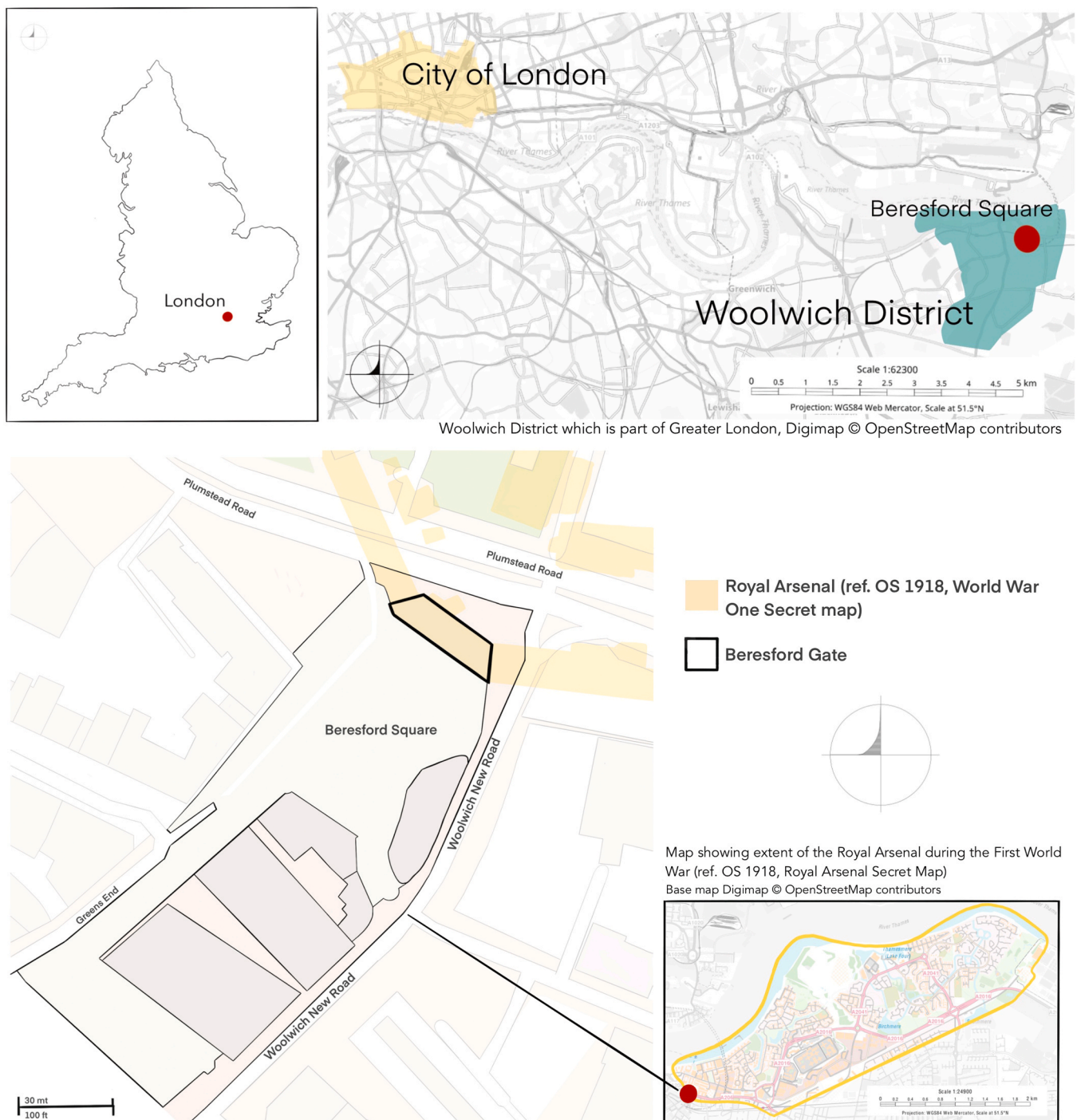


Fig. 6. Map showing the location of the Royal Arsenal Gatehouse in Beresford Square, Woolwich, and the wider urban context (© Elisa Broccoli).

others, an 18th-century parish church and gardens, a Victorian High Street, a Catholic church complex, 1930s entertainment hub, and a late 19th- to early 20th-century civic quarter. There are also several large social housing developments. Currently, the main High Street (Powis Street) in Woolwich Town Centre is the focus of heritage-led regeneration through the Heritage Action Zone scheme, which aims to:

Improve links from the Royal Arsenal to the town centre via Beresford Square market; Restore shop fronts and facades, and explore how buildings can be repurposed; Deliver cultural events promoting local history and diversity; Make improvements to the public open

spaces to make them more attractive and welcoming. (Historic England, 2022; Royal Borough of Greenwich Council, 2022b).

Several Royal Arsenal buildings are Listed, including the Royal Arsenal Gatehouse in Beresford Square, which is classified as Grade II (Historic England, List Entry Number 1079080). The Gatehouse was constructed in 1828 (lower storey, yellow brick) replacing the original entrance gate of 1720 with two further phases added in 1859 (a clock tower and offices, red brick) and 1891 (first floor offices, red brick) (Guillery, 2012: 162). The *Woolwich Conservation Area Character Appraisal* (Royal Borough of Greenwich, 2022c) identifies it as a key building symbolising the relationship between the Arsenal and the Town

Centre, as well as its distinctive contribution to the character of Beresford Square. The Gatehouse served as the main entrance to the Royal Arsenal site for workers until production ceased in the 1960s. Subsequently, the realignment of the A206 in 1986 severed the Gatehouse from the Arsenal perimeter wall and the Arsenal complex, a dislocation reinforced by the new gated entrance on the other side of the road (see Fig. 7). The Gatehouse now stands as an isolated building at the north-east end of the pedestrianised Beresford Square. Originally, Beresford Square functioned as “a large open space in front of the entrance to the Arsenal” (Guillery, 2012: 226), which organically evolved into an ‘unofficial’ market and gathering place. After unsuccessful attempts to regulate its use, the market became official in 1888 (ibid.). The Square was a vibrant gathering place until a decline in activity in the 1980s.

The Woolwich Conservation Area was designated in recognition of its special and diverse architectural and historic interest of the town centre, in particular its “fine commercial, civic, cultural, co-operative and ecclesiastical buildings spanning the 18 C to 20 C” (Royal Borough of Greenwich 2022c: 2). The *Character Appraisal* emphasises the work of leading Victorian, Edwardian and inter-war architects, alongside characteristic materials including “yellow stock, red or buff coloured brick with stone, stucco or terracotta detailing; inter-war buildings faced in red brick, fine ashlar or pale-coloured faience tiles” (ibid.). It also singles out public open spaces and historic buildings (59 local heritage assets and 18 listed buildings). Woolwich’s important place in the history of the growth of national co-operative movements and building societies is also highlighted. The designation of the Woolwich Conservation Area is, in part, a response to the emphasis on the adaptive reuse of the historic structures of the Royal Arsenal, as well as a reaction to developmental threats associated with the construction of high-rise buildings in the area. However, the Conservation Area was placed on the Heritage at Risk Register in October 2019, due to the number of neglected, vacant buildings and its high vulnerability to development proposals, which could threaten its special interest.

Woolwich has witnessed several decades of social deprivation (for a detailed analysis of the socio-economic transformation of Woolwich see Hayes, 2020). After being designated within the London Plan as an opportunity area, the district has been the target of large-scale heritage-driven regeneration initiatives. These include the Royal Arsenal

Riverside (RAR) project and the ongoing Woolwich Town Centre regeneration. RAR is described as a major regeneration project involving the construction of over 5,000 new homes in and around the Royal Arsenal site, where up to 120,000 people once worked. It is estimated that the development will be completed in 2030, but so far “more than 3,000 homes have been built, 23 listed buildings renovated, an estimated 1,300 jobs created and over 500 trees planted” (Royal Borough of Greenwich Council 2022a). New parks, squares, leisure and retail facilities have also been created, alongside community and heritage facilities (Fig. 8). However, the RAR project has also resulted in significant gentrification, reinforced by the location of Woolwich’s Elizabeth Line (Crossrail) station inside the walls of the Arsenal, inflating the price of property through the provision of high-speed links to the financial services hub at Canary Wharf, Central London and Heathrow Airport (Hayes, 2020; Shieh, 2018; Fouseki, 2022: 35–67).

One of the significant and widely recognized effects of the regeneration process is the dislocation it has created between the ‘gentrified’ Royal Arsenal development and Woolwich Town, the physical separation of which, due to the Plumstead Road and RAR walls, is mirrored by significant socio-economic differences (Fouseki, 2022: 56). More recently, Woolwich has successfully secured funding from the Future High Street Fund and the High Street Heritage Action Zone programme (Royal Borough of Greenwich Council 2022b), which both include Beresford Square and the Royal Arsenal Gatehouse within their remit. These two new initiatives, and the gentrification arising from the heritage-led Arsenal regeneration project, informed our selection of the Gatehouse and Beresford Square as a focal point in our research, located on the cusp of this socio-economic boundary. An additional reason for choosing this case study was the prior research over the last ten years by the University College London (UCL) project team (for a systems analysis of longitudinal change in Woolwich, see Fouseki et al., 2023).

## 5.2. Case study methods

The offline methods employed in this case were a combination of individual and small group (two or three people) semi-structured interviews (13 in total), rapid ethnography (observation and site walks with participants) and a participatory mapping exercise at a community event (12 participants), which involved some group discussion. The



Fig. 7. The Royal Arsenal Gatehouse separated from the Arsenal perimeter wall and buildings by the re-routed Plumstead Road, A206 (© Siân Jones).





**Fig. 8.** James Clavell Square, one of the new public spaces within the RAR development, named after a famous author, film director and producer, who served in the Royal Artillery (© Elizabeth Robson).

semi-structured interviews were conducted in-person and via video call and about half included participant-led site walks. On-street structured interviews were not conducted (as in the Canongate study), in part because a UCL postgraduate researcher was using this method with market traders in Beresford Square at the same time as this study (Pomparelli, 2021).

In-person participatory mapping was undertaken at an existing community event where people were invited to identify places of importance to them, by placing a post-it note on an outline map of Woolwich, and to briefly explain related memories, experiences, or associations. The mapping results confirmed some of the findings from the site walks, in terms of the places mentioned or not; they also revealed personal memories emphasising day-to-day experiences and practices, as well as the multi-sensory aspects of place (c.f. Cooke & Buckley, 2021). Observation and behaviour mapping was conducted on three separate occasions, at different times of the day and days of the week, as well as when moving through the area with participants. In-person activities were complemented by a review of existing documents and other materials.

Online social media research focused on Flickr data which was collected in September 2021 using both manual and automated search methods, returning 189 photos. A representative sample of 100 photographs of Beresford Gate and Square (uploaded from 2006 to 2021) was randomly selected for a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis of visual and textual content. The textual data associated with the photo was also analysed comprising: tags; title and description of photos; user comments. Our bespoke crowdsourcing app, *Your City, Your Place*, was used to allow people to add their own geo-located experiences and memories relating to the Beresford Square.<sup>20</sup> The app was publicised in two rounds on relevant Facebook pages and groups as well as through the institutional Twitter accounts of key stakeholders. It was also promoted during a community event in Woolwich, and via a dedicated poster, with QR code, placed in the Woolwich Library. Sixteen tasks were completed by six different contributors and the data was

analysed qualitatively.

Semi-structured interviews and site walks proved particularly useful in this case study for understanding what aspects of the built environment residents attached significance to, and the impacts of the regeneration project and other recent changes. Flickr also provided rich insights into change over time coupled, at times, with strong opinions about these transformations. As with Canongate, social media also offered an arena for forms of reminiscence and nostalgia about former activities and working lives, particularly in relation to the Arsenal and its Gate, as well as Beresford Square in general and its market. Woolwich is a culturally diverse area and, while the findings reflect a diversity of values, there are some gaps resulting from language barriers and the time available to establish contact and build trust.

### 5.3. Results

The area encompassing the study site falls within the 2011 census ward of Woolwich Riverside and Woolwich Common, which are categorised by the Office of National Statistics (2011) as Multicultural Metropolitan: Inner City. At the time of the 2011 census, over 30% of residents in these wards were born outside the UK and EU (31% in Woolwich Riverside and 35% in Woolwich Common). Across the two areas, between 40% and 50% of residents identify as White/-British/Irish/Traveller/Other, with around 25–30% of residents identifying as Black/African/Caribbean/Black British, and a smaller percentage (around 15%) identifying as Asian/Asian British.

Around 20% of households in these wards own their property (either outright, with a mortgage, or under a shared ownership scheme), with the rest occupying a combination of social and private rental. Several respondents expressed concerns around houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) and highlighted demand for more family-sized houses in the area. In terms of the census classification, between 70% and 75% of households in the wards are deprived in one or more dimension. The figures are slightly lower for Woolwich Riverside, which encompasses the new developments on the Woolwich Arsenal (bearing in mind that much of the development postdates the last census).

We ascertained a range of communities with relevant attachments to, or interests in, the case study site and immediate surroundings. People

<sup>20</sup> The crowdsourcing application software is available from the GitHub repository: <https://github.com/E-Broccoli/Deep-Cities-Your-City-Your-Place>.

with residential connections included both long-term residents and those who had recently moved in. Residents also draw a significant distinction between those who live in Woolwich town and those living inside the new Royal Arsenal development. These findings are also reflected in the results of longitudinal studies (online surveys during the pandemic and semi-structured interviews) conducted by a series of Master students in Sustainable Heritage as part of their dissertation projects (see Fouseki, 2022). Qualitative interviews conducted as part of this research contributed depth of understanding regarding this and other social boundaries. As with the Canongate case study, former employees of the Royal Arsenal and their descendants expressed forms of attachment and value. Current market traders and local business owners are also important stakeholders, as are the following: heritage interest groups; artists and arts interest groups; community action groups (e.g. Speak out Woolwich); and informal community groups based on shared language or culture including Nigerian, Nepalese, Caribbean and Irish. While in many ways distinct, these groups encompass significant diversity. Furthermore, individuals may identify with more than one of these groups simultaneously or move between them depending on time and context. Discussions with participants suggested that ethnicity and language are particularly important forms of social differentiation, but the research also found examples of communities of interest and place attachment that cut across these boundaries. Several respondents indicated that social media had provided a means for them to connect with other residents across communities, with help from younger, English-speaking community members.

The research revealed that the Royal Arsenal Gatehouse occupies an ambivalent, liminal position between Woolwich Town and the Royal Arsenal, associated with both connection and disconnection. Originally the main entrance to the Arsenal, it defined the boundary between the civilian and the military areas. During its active life producing armaments, townspeople were not encouraged to develop feelings of attachment and belonging to the Arsenal. Respondents recalled how workers were discouraged from talking about what happened within its walls and there was an air of “mystery” and alienation that for some people still prevails today (Respondents 1.2 and 1.11). However, the Gatehouse was also described as a place of connection, associated with positive values, where family members waited for factory workers to exit at the end of their shifts (Fig. 9). A Flickr user, for example comments on how they are glad to see the gatehouse of the Royal Arsenal standing “proud” opposite to the new apartments (Flickr commentator user). Relatedly, many Flickr users proudly shared historical information about the gate, emphasizing attachment rather than detachment.

Even the air of “mystery” had positive connotations for some. As one Flickr commentator put it, from the early 20th century, the novel production techniques produced in what became known as the ‘secret city’ helped to bring the first World War to an end. On our bespoke participatory mapping app, *Your City, Your Place*, people recalled the significance of the Arsenal Gate and Beresford Market in their everyday lives and familial relations. One contributor to the online app explained, “My Father worked in the Woolwich Arsenal in the late 1960s/early 1970s. I would wait with my Mother for him to finish work” (app\_user7). Another recalled:

Many memories of shopping at the market. Also working on some of the stalls in my late teens. My family also worked in the Arsenal so waited outside the gate for my grandfather on many occasions (app\_user 4).

These accounts highlight the significance of specific elements of the ‘deep city’ in terms of family connections and identities, framed by specific memories, something we identified across all our case studies. They also illustrate that, for some people engaged in this study, it was the experiences of the workers in the Arsenal and the wider area, including the histories of the co-operative movement, that were sources of interest, connection, and pride (Respondents 1.2 and 1.7). While spatially these overlap with the Royal Arsenal, the emphasis is rather different from in the formal heritage interpretation associated with the RAR development (Fig. 10), revealing complex forms of heritage dissonance cross-cutting oral history, social memory and authorised heritage discourses.

The changes following closure of the Arsenal, also created various forms of disconnection. As discussed above (4.1), the Gatehouse (Figure 7 above) is now severed from the Arsenal complex, a fragmentary remnant which stands in Beresford Square with its gates locked. One Flickr user, commenting on a photo of Beresford Square in the 1970s (Flickr User 19) (Fig. 11), observes that nothing has remained of what can be seen in the picture and that the road is now on the other side of the gates, so the latter are less important than they used to be. Some seem inclined to look for connections in the surviving tangible fabric, such as the remains of the original Arsenal perimeter wall or marks on the pavement, which one participant on a site walk suggested indicated to the position of the former wall. Yet, during participant-led site walks, it was unusual for someone to propose crossing the road into the new Royal Arsenal development and several respondents (professionals and local residents) expressed concern that historical barriers had been reinforced by the re-routing of the Plumstead Road and the Arsenal



Fig. 9. Woolwich 1915, market and trams in Beresford Square, postcard (©Matt Martin / Flickr).





Fig. 10. Formal heritage interpretation in the new Royal Arsenal Riverside development (© Siân Jones).



Fig. 11. Woolwich 1977, market and buses in Beresford Square (© Mike Rhodes/Flickr).

regeneration project, which has included the construction of a new wall and gated entrance. As one interviewee explained, "it still feels like [...] the people with the money and the spare cash in their pocket are on their [Royal Arsenal] development, and then the other bit are in Woolwich and in Plumstead" (semi-structured interview 1.2). Such social distinctions were captured in phrases such as "them and us"; "Royal Arsenal people"; "people from the other side". Physical fragmentation of the built heritage was also associated with social fragmentation of place and communities, with some individuals and businesses being "pushed out" (semi-structured interviews 1.5, 1.13). One Flickr commentator (user\_19) explained that the Beresford Market "lost its character", a sense of loss that was mirrored socially, for instance by interviewee 1.13 who

said, "you *miss* those people who you would meet in the market" (respondent's emphasis).

Nevertheless, this research demonstrates that Beresford Market remains a significant arena for the production of social values, particularly for residents living outside the Royal Arsenal, and hence readily mobilised in the socio-economic oppositions that inform relationships between Woolwich Town and Royal Arsenal (residents of the latter making much less use of the market for daily provisions). This is mirrored to some extent by the emphasis on formal representation of built heritage within the Arsenal, in contrast with greater emphasis on the intangible aspects of heritage associated with the Market. Participants spoke about Beresford Square as a social space, where in the past you would go to

meet people or be entertained by street performers and the bustle of the market (mapping responses and Respondent 1.13).

The research conducted for this project, and prior research focusing on the market conducted by the UCL team (Shieh, 2018; Pomparelli, 2021; Fouseki et al., 2023), revealed that residents value the distinct character of the market linked to its cultural diversity. As one 2018 interviewee explained:

For example, there's a Nepalese community there's Nepalese food truck and you will see all these Nepalese and they'll sit together. Yes. They're very nice, yeah, so for them this is their community, they go there. For example, there's something like that (Pomparelli, 2021: Appendix).

Interestingly, it is the cultural diversity of the area that seems to provide a significant boost in the revival of a declining market, as commented by both residents and officials in charge of the regeneration of the town centre. One of our respondents observed that, "This is where people look to feed their families. This is where they buy their cultural foods. They shop for their cultural things" (Respondent 1.13). The inclusion of two Woolwich-based traders in the 'Feeding Black: Community, Power and Place' exhibit in the Museum of London Docklands (16 July 2021 – 7 May 2023), also illustrates how the services available in the area come to symbolise identity and diversity. Respondents described how markets, churches and other religious organisations operating from local premises bring people from the wider area into Woolwich. The multiple uses of space and density of social relationships, as seen with the market in Beresford Square, is indicative of the 'deep city', where assemblages of physical heritage and communal connections to place are continuously renewed through day-to-day practices.

The Royal Arsenal Gatehouse might in some ways be viewed as separate from the heritage practices of the Square in which it is located. However, we found that, as a result of its separation from the Royal Arsenal, the Gatehouse is in some senses available to be remade in other ways as an integral part of Beresford Square (Fig. 12). One person involved in the participatory mapping exercise observed that:

Now the road has moved, the Gate has become part of the Market Square, become part of Woolwich. If it was on the other side of the

road, it would have been the gate to the gated community. It belongs to the Square [and I] quite like the fact it's there now.

Here the Gatehouse has the potential to become part of the practiced, everyday heritage of Beresford Square and its market. For instance, one Flickr user expressed a desire to reclaim it in this way, explaining they had hoped the section repaved in front of the Gatehouse "would be cordoned off with seats" (Flickr User\_19) and that the public would have been able to enter at least part of the building. However, at the time of our study (2021), the use of the Gatehouse as an office space without wider public access (albeit by a social enterprise company), seemed to constrain this potential, and very few people involved in this research expressed strong forms of attachment and belonging to the Gatehouse itself. It was notably absent as a point of discussion in site walks, participants' attention being more often directed towards the market stalls, the two pubs in Beresford Square or (standing with our backs to the Gatehouse) towards the town centre.

Whilst the aesthetic aspects of Woolwich's built heritage were commented upon, use and experience are integral to the generation of social values. Participants regularly presented known places (c.f. Massey, 1995: 187), referring to buildings as ex-pubs, ex-car showrooms, ex-cinemas, in this way surfacing "invisible identities" (De Certeau, 1984: 108) and connections. Some respondents were particularly keen to emphasise that the significance of Woolwich's urban heritage is more than an aesthetic concern. Rather, depth of vision and knowledge allows people to get beneath surface understandings. As one respondent said:

Because of its history, Woolwich is what it is. [...] [Y]ou have to look through or behind the walls and facades and the signs, which are really so bad, but it is a beautiful place. [...] In the beginning of the 20th century, it was built in such a lovely way, so you have to look carefully to see the beauty (semi-structured interview, Respondent 1.1).

This beauty linked to time depth was at times explicitly contrasted with what is perceived as a more superficial concern with aesthetics and heritage in the new Royal Arsenal property development. One respondent captured this sentiment well, explaining that:

Every time someone proposes something like that [a 16-story tower on General Gordon Square], it's [referred to as] a 'landmark



Fig. 12. The Royal Arsenal Gatehouse in Beresford Square with market stalls and food outlets in the foreground (© Elizabeth Robson).



building'. 'It will tell everybody where Woolwich is' [they say]. And you think, no, everybody knows where Woolwich is (semi-structured interview, Respondent 1.3).

The town's distinct "mishmash" of styles was seen as a positive quality by some, as opposed to the "anonymity" (Respondent 1.4) of new developments with a generic design and finish repeated across vastly different areas. This anonymity is also mirrored by the ways in which the military history of Woolwich is subject to professionally designed and

branded heritage interpretation within the Royal Arsenal development, through official interpretation panels, plaques, and carefully curated presentation of military artefacts (e.g. canons) (Figs. 8 and 10). At the same time, it is also commodified by property developers as part of their branding, integrally linking it to the regeneration project and the socio-economic distinctions resulting from it. Woolwich's military heritage is far less visible in the town itself. Notable exceptions are the relief mural at the Woolwich Arsenal station (the Workers of Woolwich, erected in

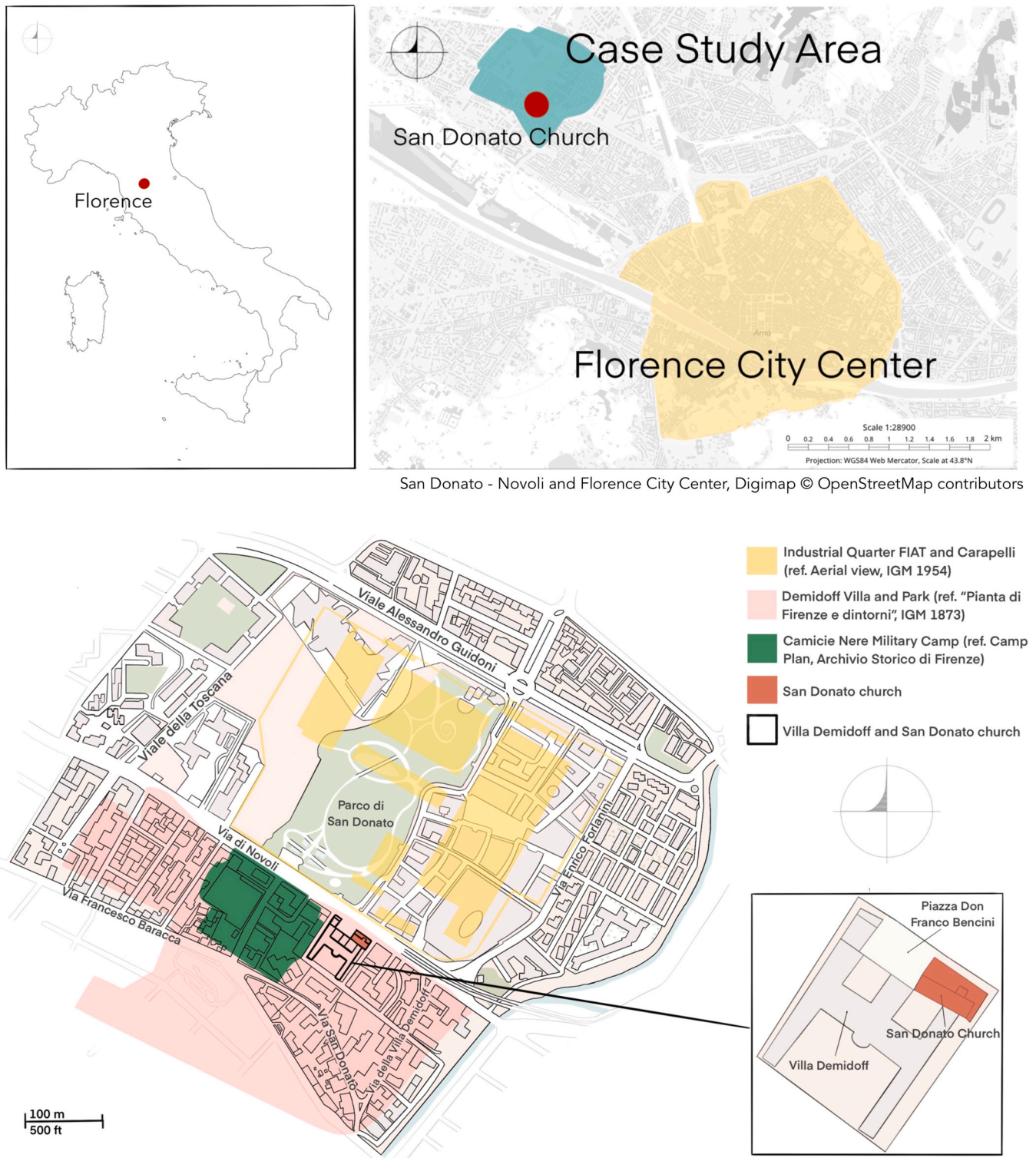


Fig. 13. Map of Novoli-San Donato showing the location of San Donato Church, the Villa Demidoff and the FIAT factory (© Elisa Broccoli).

1993), the Ordinance Pub on the corner of Beresford Square, and the Gatehouse itself. In contrast, Woolwich community heritage narratives emphasise the lived experiences and circumstances of current residents. One interviewee (1.5) explained that she and her husband used to come to do their shopping in the market and then go for a pint in the Earl of Chatham pub. “It’s our manor”, she exclaimed, “that’s what it is, it’s my stomping ground, and that’s what it means to me, and I feel loyal about it”. Whilst another pointed out that, “it’s people’s livelihood. That’s how it needs to be viewed”, which “entails everything about an individual, their families, their church, their housing”. Then in a frustrated vein:

How could you live in a city all your life, [and] now when it comes to development and you’re looking forward to improvement, you cannot even buy one bedroom? One bedroom. In the very city that you have built with your labour! (semi-structured interview, Respondent 1.13).

These statements demonstrate the deep connections many people feel to the area and reflect a belief that the city is an expression of those living and working there. These actors, who see themselves as responsible for bringing the city into being, are simultaneously attentive to both its physical heritage and social memory, whilst also invested in shaping the area’s future.

## 6. Novoli-San Donato, Florence, Italy

### 6.1. Context

The third case study focused on the Novoli-San Donato neighbourhood in Florence, Italy (Fig. 13). The area is located in north-western Florence, outside its historic centre, which is designated by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. The name of the area can be traced back to the construction of the Roman road, Via di Novoli, as evidenced by an epigraph dating to the 1st century AD. During this period the landscape was characterized by scattered farms and rural settlements, which continued into medieval times when the area became the focus for a series of religious orders and a hospital or hostel for wayfarers and pilgrims entering and leaving Florence. The church of San Donato in Polverosa is the oldest surviving upstanding monument, dating back to 1152 and consecrated to San Donato in 1187 (Fig. 14). At this time the church was associated with a convent, belonging to the Agostiniani Portuensi order (Marini, 1997). Later, the architectural complex passed to the male Humiliati order until it was granted to cloistered Cistercian nuns in 1251 (Marini, 1997).

The presence of the church and religious orders contributed to a relatively stable semi-rural landscape up until the 19th century, when it underwent significant change. In 1808 the convent of San Donato in Polverosa was suppressed and the area was purchased in 1825–1827 by the Demidoffs, an important Russian aristocratic family, who built a grandiose neoclassical villa on the site with a 42-hectare monumental garden (Sanna, 2001) (Fig. 15). The church was turned into the library and kitchen of the villa, and the villa became a reference point for the international travelling elites of the era. With the sale of the property by the last descendants of the Demidoffs, at the turn of the 20th century, the Novoli-San Donato area underwent another even more profound transformation. While the villa and its huge park were gradually abandoned and neglected, the rest of the area became rapidly industrialised and urbanised (Giorgini and Podestà, 2004).

The FIAT automobile factory was built in 1938–39, closely followed by the Carapelli Factory (a popular Italian producer of edible products and olive oil), bringing about major material and social changes (Fig. 16). The FIAT factory covered 30 ha at its full extent and involved construction of roads and workers’ houses, in addition to manufacturing buildings. This re-shaped the semi-rural landscape into an industrial urban one and the now run-down Villa Demidoff house and gardens were gradually swallowed up by the new buildings. They remained in periodic use as squatter occupations, and briefly as a military camp for



Fig. 14. Church of San Donato interior in 2022, following restoration (© Unifi, Mauro Foli and Emma Cimatti).

2000 Fascist Camice Nere (Blackshirts) during Adolf Hitler’s visit to Florence on 9 May 1938, introducing a ‘difficult heritage’ (Macdonald, 2009) that remains prominent in social memory. In 1944, the FIAT factory was bombed, and bitter fighting took place on the site between two German battalions and the local communist and Christian-democrat partisan formations. Among the last to fall was 30-year-old Enrico Rigacci, a resistance fighter killed by a German soldier hidden in the park of Villa Demidoff on 28 August 1944, an event memorialised today.

After World War II, new public and worker housing was constructed, hosting new immigrants and workers for FIAT and Carapelli. Furthermore, in 1963 the Church of San Donato was re-opened for worship. However, Novoli-San Donato became associated with illicit activities and prostitution, creating an image of degradation and social unease about the area. The FIAT factory had continued to thrive and expand up until the 1980s, but then went into decline and progressive closure in the 1990s. This marked the start of a new post-industrial phase of urban planning and regeneration.

Once closed, the FIAT and Carapelli plants were progressively demolished, except for the FIAT thermal tower. Following (and adapting) the designs of Luxembourg architect Léon Krier, several major civic projects were completed: San Donato Park (in 2010); the Palace of Justice (in 2012); University of Florence campus (in 2002); and the construction of the T2 tram line (in 2018) connecting Novoli-San Donato to Florence city centre. New university student residences and private property developments have been created alongside the renewal of civic architecture and infrastructure. However, the urban landscape of Novoli-San Donato is still characterised by extensive public housing, alongside new private housing, which constitutes a strong element of local identity.

Our research aimed to assess the contemporary social values relating





**Fig. 15.** The Villa Demidoff in ruins after World War II (© FIRENZE. SABAP Fi-Pt-Po. By courtesy of Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali. This image is exempt from CC BY licensing).

to the surviving historic buildings at the heart of the Novoli-San Donato urban regeneration project. The Church of San Donato and Villa Demidoff (both listed buildings) were restored in 2010–11, and a new public square created in front of the Church facade, while the villa was converted to private homes and offices (Fig. 17). In terms of the area's industrial heritage, the FIAT thermal tower was spared from demolition, and in future will host public art exhibitions and events. The regeneration has led to a progressive improvement in the quality of life of its local communities, both long-term residents, and newcomers, students and professionals. However, with the exception of the San Donato church, the area's rich heritage, especially the industrial phase, seems have been marginalised by urban planners and decision makers. This case study therefore allows us to explore the social values associated with the 'deep city', where most of its material layers have been obscured by a major regeneration and urban planning process. Public concern about accessibility of surviving tangible heritage, as well as recognition of the rich intangible heritage associated with the area's recent industrial character, raise important issues for the role of heritage in urban transformation.

## 6.2. Case study methods

The offline methods used in this study consisted of a combination of 32 structured interviews (on-site and at the conclusion of site walks), 13 semi-structured interviews (online and on-site, also combined in some cases with site walks), eight site walks (two community-led walks and six other site walks), observation with behaviour mapping, participatory mapping, photo elicitation and future visioning activities. The majority of the offline engagements took place in the immediate proximity of the site. Activities were scheduled over five months, between November 2021 and March 2022, with a focused period of five weeks between

January and March 2022, during which there were multiple visits to the site. In total, 104 people directly participated in one or more of the activities, including community groups, public administrators, heritage professionals, and high school students from families living in Novoli-San Donato and beyond. Most offline participants were resident in the area, including 21 older people who were born in Novoli-San Donato and resident there throughout their lives. Some of the participants recruited for short, structured interviews in public spaces were non-residents (university students, workers and visitors) who had a less intimate knowledge of the place. The preliminary phase (November and December 2021), which included a review of documentary sources, generated an understanding of the principal stakeholder groups and participant referrals during activities resulted in further contacts, which, in turn, proved to be very valuable.

The anonymous online survey developed for the Canongate case study was replicated with some minor amendments to comply with Italian legislation regarding the collection of personal data. A link to the survey was distributed to potential participants through Facebook pages and public groups and on Twitter. It was decided to target the official pages of local associations and of the district, such as "Novoli, Firenze" (7,100 followers) or "Novoli Bene Comune" (609 followers), and Facebook groups with more interaction and members such as "I ragazzi di Novoli" (6,500 members). The survey was publicised once and remained available for two months (28.01.2022 - 31.03.2022). A total of 190 participants responded. It is worth mentioning that 67% accessed the survey via Facebook with 32% via WhatsApp and other private messaging platforms, so the survey was widely disseminated by participants themselves, something not seen in the other case studies. Responses to closed (multiple choice) questions were analysed quantitatively and responses to open (free text) questions were analysed qualitatively. The crowdsourcing app *Your City, Your Place* was





**Fig. 16.** The San Donato urban landscape after World War II: the Villa Demidoff with the San Donato church (belfry) and the FIAT automobile factory (© FIRENZE. SABAP Fi-Pt-Po. By courtesy of Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali. This image is exempt from CC BY licensing).



**Fig. 17.** The Demidoff Villa following restoration and refurbishment as residential and commercial office accommodation (© Unifi, Mauro Foli and Emma Cimatti).

translated into Italian.<sup>21</sup> The app was launched in February 2022 on the MicroPasts platform and publicised twice in relevant Facebook pages and public groups. The data was collected for three months, February to April 2022, and consisted of 52 tasks submitted by 14 different contributors, which were analysed qualitatively.

As the overall number of participants in this case study indicates, there was a generally high and positive response from the local community organisations and individuals invited to participate in the research, many of whom are accustomed to collaborating and interfacing with public entities and universities. Initially the focus was on semi-structured interviews (often followed by site walks) as the starting

point for subsequent activities and an opportunity to gather additional potential contacts. However, the positive response to rapid structured interviews by people recruited in roads and public spaces at various times of the day and week led to prioritising this method. The observation sessions, carried out mainly between November 2021 and January 2022, provided an understanding of the rhythms and behaviours of people in the area and the resulting behaviour maps informed the strategy for where and when to undertake structured interviews. The use of historic images helped to effectively engage participants in the offline activities and, in some cases, prompted the spontaneous sharing of personal photos of the area. On-site research allowed for participation by individuals in their normal life context and reached people without a specific heritage interest or background. At the same time, the site walks provided a shared experience of the urban environment and allowed for the identification of critical places and positive aspects. These

<sup>21</sup> "La Tua Città, il Tuo Posto" <https://crowdsourced.micropasts.org/project/Flo/>.

observations were then compared with the findings obtained through other techniques, including the photo-elicitation, participatory mapping and future visioning, and online methods. Furthermore, the latter extended the reach of this research, facilitating access to people born in the area but who have since moved away, descendants of residents, descendants or relatives of FIAT ex-workers, people currently working but not living in the area, heritage interest groups, and informal community groups.

The offline and online methods worked productively together, feeding into each other. There is considerable overlap in the social values they reveal, but they offer access to slightly different social groups and thus different combinations of values. The online methods (especially the survey) allowed us to reach people with past or present familial connections to the area (c.25% of survey respondents), or who had lived, worked or studied there in the past, but now moved elsewhere. As with other case studies, qualitative interviews allowed for more in-depth exploration of values, especially with residents. The observation and participatory mapping also gave important insights into how values intersect with everyday life in the neighbourhood. In particular, they reveal a local awareness of the area's heritage and its time-depth, even if at different levels due to the character of its communities. Use of participatory mapping, with the students at Sassetti Peruzzi High School gave unique insights into their specific places of interest and the values associated with them, as well as for future visioning. We found a particularly strong attachment to the neighbourhood and a specific desire to be able to improve it both in services and in the quality of life.

### 6.3. Results

The research revealed that historically Novoli-San Donato has not necessarily been seen as a single entity, as the hyphenated name suggests, and it is still today criss-crossed by complicated socio-geographic boundaries that were understood and upheld by some participants, but not by others. These include the parish boundaries of the three churches of San Donato in Polverosa, Santa Maria, and San Cristofano, which, until recently, played an important role in religious and social activities, contributing to the formation of strong localised identities. Furthermore, some participants actively resisted the Novoli-San Donato label, because they still strongly identify with a distinctive neighbourhood around Via Carlo del Prete and the church of Santa Maria, associated with factory worker houses built between 1928 and 1935 and now demolished. However, between the mid-1980s and the present, Novoli-San Donato has witnessed important social transformations, as well as material ones, that have increasingly consolidated its identity as a singular socio-geographic entity.

The closure of the factories in the 1990s, followed by the relocation of the regional government offices of the Tuscany Region, and the construction of the Palace of Justice and the University of Florence campus, led to a significant shift in population from working class to administrative and professional middle classes. This research found little direct evidence of social conflict surrounding these changes, although longer-standing residents expressed a marked awareness of them. Some social tensions are evident in the context of social housing, informed by the different age profiles, lifestyles and habits of longer-term, often elderly residents, and more recent occupants, including young immigrant families and students. Finally, the construction of the T2 tram line has consolidated the connection between Novoli-San Donato and the city centre of Florence, increasing the flow of daily commuters, but also the appeal of Novoli-San Donato as a satellite residential district for Florence. Nevertheless, boundary distinctions persist, both between Florence and Novoli-San Donato and within the latter, which we return to below.

In the 2017 *Inquiry into the conditions of safety and state of degradation of cities and their suburbs* (Camera dei Deputati, 2018), the total resident population of the Novoli-San Donato neighbourhood ("Novoli-FIAT"

joint with "Novoli Baracca est" zones in the report) was 14,155 with 16% being non-Italian citizens. Our qualitative data, derived from semi-structured interviews, suggests that the Chinese and Peruvian communities are perceived to be the two largest minority ethnic groups, followed by those from Sub-Saharan African countries. The publicly available socio-economic deprivation and household occupation data relates to the entire City of Florence and is not differentiated by district. However, in the case study area more than the 60% of the resident population (25–64 years old) completed secondary school or got a degree, the unemployment index (not considering retirees but only working-age people without employment) is 7.5–8.6%, and the incidence of families with potential economic hardship about 1% (Camera dei Deputati, 2018).

The preliminary phase of the research identified a range of stakeholder communities with relevant attachments to, or interests in, the case study area. These include the residential communities discussed above, as well as former workers of the FIAT and Carapelli factories who have subsequently moved elsewhere. Other stakeholder groups include University students, in the form of both transient daily visitors and short-term resident populations, local business owners, non-resident employees, church congregations, community associations, and professional planners, architects and heritage managers. This list of communities is not considered exhaustive and, as highlighted for the Canongate and Woolwich cases, it is recognised that individuals may identify with multiple groups at any given time and may move between them over time or depending on context. As in the case of Woolwich, immigrant communities proved harder to reach, with the exception of two people from China and Morocco, both employed in local businesses.

The research revealed contrasting social values surrounding the urban regeneration project initiated in Novoli-San Donato in the mid-1990s. The demolition of the FIAT complex is perceived by some as a loss of local history and identity, but at the same time the creation of new spaces associated with the public sphere is enthusiastically received. The 30-ha FIAT factory complex had unavoidably limited the development of public spaces, such as squares and promenades, where people could meet and interact. In contrast, the regeneration project created two new public squares, Piazza Ugo di Toscana (associated with the new University quarter) and Piazza Don Franco Bencini (connected with the restoration of the church of San Donato) (Fig. 18). Both were intended by the architect and planners involved in the regeneration project to fulfil the need for public spaces in the Novoli area. However, our research showed that neither are as popular in this respect as the shopping centre of San Donato and the San Donato Park (Fig. 19), which despite being in private ownership were claimed as community spaces. In the case of the park, popular demand even resulted in its eventual transfer to public ownership.

The study revealed that longer-term residents are acutely aware of this transformation of public space. As one resident who responded to the online survey put it, "I saw an empty area turned into a place full of life" (Respondent S179). Another explained, "I lived in the area since 1980, when I got married. There was the FIAT. [...] and gradually the transformation. Now the area is enjoyable and the park is an excellent thing" (Respondent S122). Interviewees reinforced this point, elaborating on the role of the park in their everyday lives. One summed it up: "San Donato Park is truly the true green square of the neighbourhood. Everyone really comes to this park, even from outside Novoli" (Respondent SSI34). The way in which transformation itself emerges as an agent of value production in these commentaries is further reinforced by a former resident and ex-student of the campus, who responded to the survey explaining that "the park represented an alternative green lung, and all the modernity turned an industrial environment into something alternative and beautiful" (Respondent S153).

The construction of these public spaces created new arenas for the production of social values. However, we evidenced more complex, ambivalent or at times dissonant forms of value relating to some of the tangible remains of the 'deep city' that were restored as part of the





Fig. 18. Piazza Don Franco Bencini and San Donato Church (© Unifi, Mauro Foli and Emma Cimatti).



Fig. 19. San Donato Park (© Andrea Biondi).

regeneration process, in particular the Villa Demidoff. Several participants in the online survey identified the Demidoff family as a crucial trigger for the area's cultural development, as well as offering historical continuity with previous phases. As one respondent put it, "The Demidoffs were strictly bonded to the monastery, and they were essential for the area" (Respondent S100). This respondent also credited the Demidoffs with consolidating the connection between Novoli-San Donato and Florence, giving "importance to the area and [building] a strong bond with Florence".

In contrast, for residents who participated in the offline research, the Villa and its Park were also associated with more 'difficult heritage' relating to World War II. The use of the Villa Demidoff garden for a military camp of some 2000 Camicie Nere, the Fascist armed squad loyal to Benito Mussolini, between April and June 1938, appears to be relatively unknown (e.g. only 4% of online survey participants were aware of this event). As with other forms of 'difficult heritage' this may be a result of an active process of forgetting during the post-War era (c.f.

Macdonald's 2009 monograph focusing on Nuremburg), despite the wealth of documentation in the Historical Archive of the Municipality of Florence. Enquiries about this phase in the history of the Villa with local administrators (Respondents 2, 8 and 21–24) revealed concerns about the risk of making it a focal point for Far-Right nostalgia. Furthermore, since some characterise it as a form of negative memory that has not been spontaneously shared over the years, there are differences of opinion about whether to preserve it now. One online survey participant offered the view that, "it is great to preserve our own origins, but not the bad memories of Fascism" (Respondent S191), and this opinion is shared by the majority of survey respondents, who ranked this phase in the use of the garden as the least valued because it was connected with the Camicie Nere. However, other online participants, including both residents and non-residents, considered this an opportunity to critically discuss this moment of 'difficult heritage' of the area and the city of Florence in general (Respondent S13, S120, S177).

More positive value connotations surround the Italian Resistance



movement (1943–1945) who fought against the Nazi-Fascism occupation, with some of the key battles associated with the Demidoff Villa Park. This bond is reflected in the presence of three left-wing political associations in the area, and the active commemoration of Enrico Rigacci's death, by a plaque in via San Donato 5 and the laying of a wreath of flowers on the anniversary (Fig. 20). The deeds and tragic death of Rigacci are deep rooted in the memory of long-term inhabitants, but also shared by younger generations, due to the proximity of the commemorative plaque to the Sassetti Peruzzi High School. As one survey respondent explained:

The importance of the Resistance in the neighbourhood is one of the aspects that most binds it to the city of Florence. In fact, it was not easy for the partisans to push the Germans back north. In this area, although Florence was officially liberated by the British on August 9, the fighting lasted at least until the end of the month (Respondent SSI15).

Given the wealth of social values associated with the Villa Demidoff, it is perhaps unsurprising that many participants expressed

disappointment at the loss of the Villa's Park, and the inaccessibility of the two surviving historical buildings. What remained of the Park was incorporated into the recent urban regeneration, and whilst the Villa itself was completely restored between 2010 and 2011, it is surrounded by railings and used for private offices and housing (Fig. 21). The Odeon in the Villa Demidoff Park, a structure regarded of considerable architectural value with its Pantheon style oculus, is also inaccessible except for half an hour on Sunday morning, when the space is used by the international evangelical religious congregation of the Church of Christ. Some survey respondents were critical of the negative impact on historic and architectural values. For instance, one explained that:

Villa Demidoff and the Park of Villa Demidoff, [are] two historical-artistic sites seriously damaged over time, and recently affected by a reconstruction, restoration and regeneration works to get apartments for residential purposes, of which it is essential to disseminate and make accessible the history (Respondent S119, not resident).

Another, in more damning terms, exclaimed that, "Villa Demidoff and the park have been totally disfigured and abandoned, even the



Fig. 20. Plaque commemorating Enrico Rigacci (© Elisa Broccoli).



Fig. 21. Villa Demidoff's railings (© Elisa Broccoli).

restoration has erased the historical references" (Respondent S166, resident). Architectural and aesthetic concerns also extend to the wider setting of the Villa following regeneration of the surrounding area, for instance one online survey respondent explained that the magnificence of the villa is "drowned among the palazzoni [derogatory reference to the new buildings of the area]" (Respondent S15, ex-resident).

As a result, both the non-extant Park and remaining Villa were often seen as a lost heritage, as one participant put it: "The disappearance of the villa and its park has been a disaster!" (Respondent S60, resident). Indeed, 52% of the online survey participants were not even aware of the Park's existence. One interviewee discussing their own attempts to impact on the planning decisions highlights their sense of exclusion from the decision-making process:

The restoration of the Villa Demidoff was truly a missed chance to reconnect the local community with its cultural heritage. In my own small way, [I] have nevertheless tried to seek a dialogue with the

planners and the Superintendence, but without success. The fact that today the villa is completely inaccessible is certainly a further defeat (Respondent SSI18)."

Several participants who lived in the area before this transformation expressed nostalgia about the Villa and its gardens. Their comments also reveal that the sense of loss is not merely a reflection of authorised historical and architectural values but tied in with personal memories and experiences. For instance, one local resident who responded to the online survey reminisces about the Villa:

when I was a child I played among the ruins of Villa Demidoff, in its now abandoned former gardens. How many furnishings, pieces of ancient porcelain were buried in the foundations of the new buildings built there! Seen with my own eyes, a treasure thrown away (Respondent S177, resident).

Here, the socio-material dimensions of the 'deep city' and its



temporalities are rendered explicit by the survey respondent, reflecting our arguments in Section 2 above about how the ‘deep city’ conceived as a socio-material assemblage is always in the process of becoming.

In contrast with the Villa Demidoff, the regeneration of the area seems to have reinforced the role of the church of San Donato in community identity-making processes. Even if relatively unknown by online participants prior taking the survey (54% said they were unaware of its history), its medieval origins as a monastery were perceived to be important. Indeed, the San Donato church and monastery ranked as the most valued phase in the history of the neighbourhood, when survey respondents were provided with historical information and explicitly asked to rank phases. The building has not been in continuous use as a church and several respondents recalled other uses in its recent history. It was reopened for worship in the 1960s by Don Franco Bencini, an important figure in the social values associated with the building, along with the square in front that also carries his name. The beloved parish priest was often remembered by long-standing residents and congregation members, in connection to both the ensuing material restoration of the church and the social regeneration linked to its reopening. Residents emphasised the importance of the preservation of the church “in memory of Don Bencini” (Respondent S9, resident), which research participants also connected to their own biographies, for instance: “During my childhood I began the ‘parish life’ (San Donato in Polverosa) as soon as it was re-consecrated and donated to the people, thanks to the legendary Don Franco Bencini” (Respondent S177, resident).

Some participants expressed a strong attachment to the church and the parish, with one even defining it as “the historical nucleus from which everything started” (Respondent S39, visitor to the area). However, for others, the symbolic role of the church of San Donato, is complicated by the historical significance of the parish boundaries of the three churches of San Donato in Polverosa, Santa Maria and San Cristofano. These three churches, locally called *chiese millenarie* (millenary churches, because they were founded between the 11th and 12th centuries), create geographical and social boundaries that are still acutely felt by some of the older long-term residents. The system of three parishes, which stabilised with the reopening of the church of San Donato to worship in 1963, also determined clear territories for the rival gangs of boys who lived in the neighbourhood between the 1950s and 1980s. Each church, in fact, had its own social circle, its own catechism, its own after-school programme and recreational activities (like sports and cinema), which contributed to forming and strengthening local identities. As one interviewee, a long-standing resident, explained: “The meeting places of the neighbourhood corresponded very much to the parishes. In very serious terms, in fact, if you were born in a parish, you certainly could not consider yourself a citizen of Novoli but only of that specific parish” (Respondent SSI10).

Today, there are increasingly multi-faceted and dissonant values surrounding the significance of these three church parishes. For some older residents there are still strong attachments and ongoing resistance to the overarching Novoli-San Donato labelling, as one participant on a site walk explained: “In short, we feel tired of always being confused with Novoli and San Donato. We have many activities that we do in complete autonomy and carry on the history of our neighbourhood. We think that Novoli and San Donato already have a lot of light on them; luckily District 5 knows us and recognises our specific individuality” (Respondent SW35). However, with new inhabitants and younger generations, the significance of the three churches is declining, due also to the generalised decrease in congregation membership since the start of the 21st century. Set against this backdrop, the name San Donato increasingly plays an important role in people’s sense of place, providing the denomination of the shopping centre, the park and many local associations, as well as a prolific term in the online environment attributed to pages and groups associated with the area.

People’s sense of place is also informed by Novoli-San Donato’s industrial history, where the FIAT factory plays a particularly prominent role. While “the convent represents the glorious past, the FIAT area

[signifies] the industrial/commercial world of today” (Respondent S95, resident). The area is still considered to have a broadly industrial identity, despite the demolition of the factories and the subsequent transformations. Some of the older research participants had worked in the FIAT plant themselves whereas others (both online and offline) talked of parents or grandparents who worked in the factory. They recalled the siren that marked the shifts and recounted pleasing childhood memories, such as the factory boundary wall (Respondents S1, S177): “For years I have heard the FIAT siren calling the workers in the factory” (Respondent S1, resident); while another reminisced, “I remember the FIAT’s wall, when as a child we used to drive along with my parents or we went to visit my uncles” (Respondent A8, with family connections to the area). Given these associations, it is not surprising that San Donato’s industrial heritage is highly valued by some. For instance, one survey respondent with family links laid out the case for its public recognition in passionate terms:

The former FIAT’s area has represented the working and social life of thousands of people for many years. I think it is the key point of this area and the enhancement of its history and what remains of it I think is fundamental. The FIAT chimney was a symbol of Novoli and I hope that in the future that structure will be really valued according to the projects I have seen (Respondent S71, worker of the area and family connection).

However, while some participants appreciated the FIAT factory’s contribution to the industrial productivity of the area, and the city of Florence in general, others blamed it for the lack of culture, neglect, and poor landscape. Between the 1950s and 1980s the area was also associated with social housing schemes, prostitution, cigarette smuggling (up to the 1960s) and drug dealing (starting from the 1970s). Whilst new inhabitants who arrived after the regeneration of the area have no memory of these aspects of its history, and are often incredulous when they hear of them, older residents expressed negative associations. One interviewee, who discussed these aspects at length, recalling childhood memories, commented that:

I think it’s normal that the people who still live in Novoli that you interviewed didn’t talk to you about the social problems of the 50s and 70s; perhaps they are ashamed or, who knows, they hope for a better future for their neighbourhood and don’t like to talk about past problems. For me it’s different; today I live in another neighbourhood and I don’t have this kind of problem (Respondent SSI10).

For most longer-standing residents, as this interviewee implies, there is little appetite for dwelling on these perceived problems at a time when the neighbourhood is experiencing a positive phase of rebirth and redevelopment. In negotiating positive futures, they also return to the deeper past, as exemplified by one resident who explained that: “The church and Villa Demidoff represent the first settlements in the area, and it seems right to me to value them, to not continue thinking that Novoli is only FIAT, poverty and decay” (Respondent S176, resident). San Donato Church and Villa Demidoff are also marshalled in an attempt to perform the romantic imaginary associated with the historical city of Florence. Whilst some claimed that the “historical culture is missing the culture of beauty” (Respondent S44, resident) and, as a consequence, “it [the area] is not part of Florence’s history” (Respondent S128, ex-resident), others asserted the opposite. In this regard, the preservation of older historical buildings and places, such as the Villa Demidoff and especially the church of San Donato, is seen as a means “to polish” the image of the area, as one survey respondent put it: “Promoting beauty and culture is important, especially in a neighbourhood that is still not considered ‘polished’ by many” (Respondent S87).

Despite these dissonant values, there are still many who feel that Novoli-San Donato’s industrial heritage deserves to be remembered, shared, and enhanced: “The ex-FIAT area represented the social and work life of thousands of people for many years” (Respondent S72). This valorisation of the industrial past has found fertile material focus in the



FIAT plant thermal tower which is considered by some to be the symbol of Novoli, specifically, and less so of San Donato (Fig. 22). There is a great enthusiasm for the regeneration of this last remaining architectural fragment of the factory. Since the demolition of the chimney on the top of the thermal tower, the people of Novoli-San Donato started to think of how to put this building to public use, proposing various projects (e.g. Respondents 21–24). For instance, one resident proposed that “[we should] make enjoyable the thermal tower complex, creating a point of historical information, with references recognisable on the territory” (Respondent S149, resident). Others see it as an opportunity to create a community space, including a new meeting place and memory hub, which some hope will become a centre to display the history of the area. The success of this community claim to the thermal tower is symbolised by the work that recently started to turn this space into an exhibition and event space with a public viewing platform that will give an elevated view over Novoli-San Donato. As one visitor explained whilst reflecting on the project:

In my opinion, an example of industrial archaeology such as the one represented by the former FIAT factory can take on not only an aesthetic value by improving the urban landscape of the area but also a social one as it could play functions that are currently missing or create a new point of interest and aggregation (Respondent S32).

## 7. Discussion: findings, implications and applications

In this section, we provide a comparative discussion of the three case studies and explore their potential implications and applications for the heritage-planning nexus. We start by considering the ways in which authorised heritage narratives and designations have informed how heritage has been protected, conserved and/or mobilised in the urban development projects associated with the case studies. We then examine the different kinds of social values revealed by the application of our methodology in the case study settings. We draw out a range of themes



Fig. 22. The FIAT plant thermal tower (© Andrea Biondi).

illustrating how social values are integral to the unfolding socio-material relationships that make up the ‘deep city’, as well as how they are impacted by urban transformation. The strengths and weaknesses of our methodology are then discussed. Finally, we consider the implications of this research for urban planning and why it is critical that social values are taken into account in order to create socially sustainable urban development and regeneration projects. We reflect on how the suite of mixed methods used in this research might be applied in practice, while acknowledging the constraints presented by urban governance and planning regimes.

### 7.1. Authorised heritage discourses in urban development

In his analysis of building conservation in the context of town planning in England, John Pendlebury (2013) argues that, in enacting the relevant legal and policy frameworks, the individuals and institutions involved in the heritage-planning nexus also draw upon value-based norms which mediate their decisions and practices. He links these value-based norms to Laurajane Smith’s (2006) concept of authorised heritage discourse, which “seeks to control fundamental questions about why material objects from the past should be considered valuable and extend this to what should be protected and to how that protection should take place; that is, what constitutes acceptable conservation practice” (Pendlebury, 2013: 716). In the history of the conservation movement, authorised heritage discourses have informed, amongst other things, heritage designations conferring forms of protection, and in doing so they have tended to privilege time depth, elite architecture and monumentality, framed by the grand narratives of cities and nations. However, as Pendlebury argues, the value-based norms that inform these discourses “are by no means static and exist in a complex and shifting relationship [...] with other place management value systems” (ibid.: 717). Competing agendas relating to economic development, regeneration and sustainability have led to a repositioning and diversification of authorised heritage discourses, as those involved in the heritage-planning nexus seek to maintain political legitimacy. Increasingly, from the 1980s onwards, this has seen heritage being “overtly mobilised as a catalyst in regeneration for economic development” (Veldpaus, 2023: 331).

These elements are evident in our case studies, albeit to different degrees and in different combinations. The three case studies are associated with recently completed or ongoing urban development and regeneration projects. They all have major phases of industrial heritage, but in the case of Canongate and Novoli-San Donato, this was/is largely unprotected and earlier medieval and post-medieval (17th to 19th century) civic, religious and domestic architectures associated with more elite institutions and individuals are the main focus of designations informing protection and conservation in the context of urban planning decisions. In the case of the Royal Arsenal in Woolwich, industrial and manufacturing elements are designated listed buildings, but the significance of these is in large part linked to the history of British ordnance production. Novoli-San Donato and Royal Arsenal Riverside (RAR) in Woolwich can be characterised as urban regeneration projects, but only the latter involved extensive adaptive re-use of industrial built heritage with conservation and re-purposing of some of the military-industrial buildings for residential property. As part of the development, extensive on-site heritage interpretation focusing on the official history of the Arsenal has been installed, whilst property developers have also actively deployed heritage in branding and marketing. The Grade II-listed Arsenal Gatehouse in Beresford Square, the main focus of our case study research, is an exception. Separated from the Arsenal development by a busy main road, it is no longer in use as a gate and has seen little in the way of conservation, redevelopment, or interpretation (except for a small plaque). Although it is now part of the Woolwich High Street Heritage Action Zone (2020–24) regeneration programme, the impact of this on the Gatehouse and Beresford Square was not evident at the time of our case study research.

In marked contrast, the regeneration of Novoli-San Donato, has erased most of the industrial heritage associated with the FIAT and Carapelli factory plants from the urban landscape, with only fragments remaining upstanding. Some earlier historic features were selected as important elements for conservation in the regeneration process contributing to the further re-configuration of the ‘deep city’. These include the 19th-century Demidoff Villa and the medieval Church of San Donato, both of which are listed buildings which underwent extensive restoration in 2010–11. San Donato Church became a focal point for public history concerning the neighbourhood, with public access and interpretation as well as a new civic square created in front of the church facade. The Villa Demidoff, in contrast, was converted to private domestic residences and office space, conserving the building as part of the urban environment but curtailing public access and interpretation.

The ongoing Caltongate Masterplan/New Waverley development in Canongate, involving major civic infrastructure development and construction of new government buildings, provides a further contrasting situation. It is located within a large UNESCO World Heritage site, but one which identifies Outstanding Universal Value with the medieval Old Town and 18th-century New Town. The medieval architecture of the Old Town, including Canongate, is subject to extensive designation and regulation, but its industrial phase is not afforded the same degree of protection within the planning system (being subject only to weaker conservation area regulation). Industrial buildings, including the New Street Gasworks, have been progressively demolished, adapted and/or re-used from the early 20th century onwards. Set back from the Canongate/Royal Mile historic thoroughfare, the New Waverley development was not framed as a heritage-led initiative and the heritage conservation professionals involved in the planning process had to actively negotiate concessions regarding selective preservation of surviving elements of the New Street Gasworks (mainly facades).

It is clear then that the material elements making up the layered historic landscapes of the ‘deep city’ have been re-arranged and re-worked in all three cases. Where they are informed or framed by heritage and conservation, planning decisions relating to these processes were usually firmly rooted in historic significance and architectural merit, which in turn often intersect with canonical national or civic narratives. For instance, the importance of the Royal Arsenal in Woolwich in the defence of the country informs its role in the heritage-led RAR project, which in turn simultaneously consolidates and transforms its place in the urban assemblage through conservation, re-use, commodification and interpretation. The restoration of the Church of San Donato offers a focus for civic origin narratives, whilst linking the Novoli-San Donato area to dominant ideals of Florence as an iconic medieval city. Aspects of the layered historic landscape that are not officially attributed the same degree of historic and aesthetic value can be lost entirely through urban transformation or preserved in the form of isolated fragments and facades, as is the case with the industrial structures associated with the FIAT factory or the New Street Gasworks. The industrial heritage of Canongate is marginalised by dominant narratives regarding the medieval city, enshrined in Edinburgh’s UNESCO inscription. Other elements of the past remain largely hidden, sometimes associated with ‘difficult heritage’, as in the case of the non-extant Demidoff Villa Park and Gardens and their use by fascist Camice Nere in 1938, or the Magdalene Asylum located on the site of New Street Gasworks in the early 19th century, of which only fragments of original walling and archaeological deposits survive.

### 7.2. Social values and the transformation of the ‘deep city’

The value-based norms and authorised heritage discourses underpinning the heritage-planning nexus undoubtedly play a powerful role in mediating and shaping urban environments. However, as discussed in the introduction, there is an integral relationship between the tangible fabric and intangible social dimensions of the ‘deep city’. Urban place-making is therefore not merely a result of linear processes of planning



and management, but a more open process of ‘becoming’ shaped by multiple actors, values and practices (Sweeney et al. 2018: 572). The social values of heritage are a fundamental aspect of such place-making and the application of our methodology in the case study research revealed a rich tapestry of socio-material relationships that can be usefully distilled into a number of themes.

### 7.2.1. *Everyday lives*

In all three of our case studies, tangible elements of the ‘deep city’ are valued for the ways in which they evoke memories of everyday lives, including work routines, religious worship and leisure. For instance, the Royal Arsenal Gatehouse in Beresford Square is valued partly because it visibly marked the end of factory shift work, with children and spouses waiting at the gate. Those with long-standing connections to the case study areas recall childhood activities and play associated with specific spaces and features, such as the alleys and yards in the Canongate area or the Demidoff Villa Park. Places associated with leisure and sport, like pubs and night clubs, are also highly valued for their role in the social fabric, providing a locus for the production of meanings and narratives about the networks of relationships they embody. In this way, they reinvigorate connections to family members, workmates, childhood friends and social networks, even if some of those people have since died or moved away. People therefore express strong but selective values and attachments in relation to the built heritage making up the case study areas based on their biographies and those of their families and friends, which in turn inform narratives of belonging and place rooted in shared experiences.

### 7.2.2. *Affective memories*

These social values relating to people’s unfolding everyday lives are linked to the affective qualities of the memories that historic urban fabric evokes and the networks of relationships it mediates (see also Madgin 2021b). A good example of this is offered by how the posting of an historic image of the New Street Gasworks on the Lost Edinburgh Facebook group evoked memories of the smog and its impact on the senses. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the narratives connected to such memories are often mediated by nostalgic values that idealise well-known characters and activities. This is evident across the case studies in the affectionate regard that tinges accounts peopled by familiar characters like ‘Big Georgie, from the Canongate Gas Board Training Centre in the 1970s, or Don Franco Bencini, the beloved parish priest responsible for reopening the Church of San Donato for worship in the 1960s. Likewise, stories of places where children played, families mingled and adults socialised, such as markets, churches, pubs and clubs, are recounted in warm and animated ways in interviews. Whether explicitly articulated or not, these accounts are redolent with a sense of “real communities” and “generations of working-class people”, to quote some of our respondents. In Woolwich, for instance, the experiences of the workers in the Arsenal and the wider area, including the histories of labour and co-operative movements, are sources of value, connection, and pride. Even the negative qualities of industrial life can be mobilised in symbolising the value of a hard life conducted within tough conditions, the authenticity of which is contrasted with urban life today.

### 7.2.3. *Boundaries, belonging and disconnection*

Ekelund (2022: 1257), analysing Facebook pages, has shown how the “nostalgic mood” produced by these kinds of fragmented memories informs a sense of belonging and togetherness, which in turn, we argue, is an important dimension of the social values connected to the ‘deep city’. However, in fostering connection, belonging and attachment, social values can also be informed by ambivalent or negative sentiments to do with boundaries, exclusions and alienation. The Royal Arsenal in Woolwich, for instance, evokes disconnection as well as connection; the Gatehouse symbolising a boundary between civilian and military life, and the Arsenal complex evoking a sense of “mystery” and alienation for those who were not familiar with it during its active life. This historic

sense of alienation has recently been reinforced by the gentrification associated with the Royal Arsenal development. Likewise, one of the Novoli-San Donato participants talked of childhood memories of the FIAT factory walls, while others highlighted how the extensive factory boundaries had placed constraints on public spaces in the past. In this case study, the subsequent regeneration project created new squares and promenades that the inhabitants have claimed through forms of social interaction and leisure. However, the Novoli-San Donato case study also demonstrates how boundary-related values can crosscut one another, creating complexity and potential sources of tension, as in the way that the symbolic foundational role of the Church of San Donato is complicated by the continuing emphasis that some older residents place on the crosscutting boundaries of the three parish churches and their important influence on people’s relationships and identities.

In the diverse, dynamic urban environments represented by the three case studies, it might be expected that social values framed by nostalgia might inform race-related distinctions between “them and us” in the present. In our case study research, however, we found that ethnic diversity was often celebrated as contributing to the “life” of a place like Beresford Market or part of an ongoing tradition in the case of Canongate, associated with ideas of a pluralistic Enlightenment city. Instead, oppositional class-based distinctions, which intersect with ethnicity in more complex ways, were more commonly expressed in the context of gentrification (as wealthier people move into new property developments), high levels of tourism (in the case of Canongate) and increasing emphasis on short-term rental accommodation (e.g. associated with the ‘Airbnb effect’ or rapid growth of student residences). In these situations, where people recounted feeling “pushed out”, “them and us” language reflects conceptions of difference rooted in feelings of exclusion and displacement.

### 7.2.4. *Negotiating ‘public’ and ‘private’*

Contested values and tensions surrounding change often relate to increased privatisation of urban space, alongside loss of historic features and places associated with public discourses, activities and dwellings. For instance, places that animated social life in the area occupied by and immediately surrounding the Gasworks in Edinburgh include more obvious heritage places like the long-lost football ground and the surviving Canongate Kirk and Kirkyard, along with the historic wynds (public alleys) and closes (technically private alleys, but ones associated with communal tenement living). Conceptions of the ‘public sphere’ are also extended in people’s memories to commercial clubs and performance venues in and around the site of the Gasworks after it went out of use. These rapidly become an important part of people’s sense of place, the significance of which is reinforced when the interests of private development and regional/national infrastructures appear to be privileged over people’s desire for communal spaces. Indeed, our research reveals that even though the New Waverley and Royal Arsenal developments involved the creation of new civic spaces, such as squares and promenades, their association with gentrification results in ambivalence towards their ‘public’ status and feelings of disconnection or exclusion. This does not seem to be echoed in the case of the creation of San Donato Park and shopping centre, which have been actively claimed as public spaces (even when the latter is privately owned), arguably because the regeneration project did not lead to significant gentrification and associated feelings of alienation and displacement.

### 7.2.5. *Beyond designations and facades*

Many of the buildings and places involved in the production of social values, intersect with those that have official heritage designations, but, importantly, they are often valued for different reasons and in different ways. Furthermore, social values often adhere to different, somewhat hidden, phases and uses in the lives of these buildings and places, such as the football pitch, clubs and bus station that occupied the buildings and spaces associated with the New Street Gasworks at various times after it had ceased to be in active use. People actively surface the “hidden

identities” of such buildings and places and emphasise the depth of vision and knowledge required to get beyond what they see as the surface aesthetics associated with many development projects, such as the Royal Arsenal Riverside regeneration, or the selective incorporation of fragments and facades into the New Waverley development in Canon-gate. In contrast to such initiatives, which are often seen as divorced from community interests and understandings, people stress the importance of building on existing values and established connections to place, in order to build new futures through community-centred re-use. This reinforces van Knippenberg and Boonstra's (2021: 2005) argument that “immaterial heritage values are mostly impacted by [...] spatial developments rather than taken into account” and “this in turn impacts the local communities as they feel that their stories and values are not incorporated in a spatial development plan based on a confined heritage narrative”.

#### 7.2.6. Mediating past-present relations

The case study research highlights how the social values associated with urban heritage serve to mediate past-present relationships. All three case studies offer examples of how nostalgic memory work associated with social values opens up an affective space for critical commentary on the present. This can be framed by a sense of loss, as in commentaries linking the changing character of Beresford Square/Market to the loss of particular kinds of sociality and practice. Or the ways in which some participants lament the loss of the authenticity and grit of working-class industrial lives in the face of “concrete, glass and steel”, the materiality of new architectural interventions symbolising forms of social dislocation that people associate with the present-day city. Past social distinctions and boundaries are also deployed to critique and resist new ones, as in the case of older residents who are resistant to the idea of Novoli-San Donato as a single district, an identity which they feel is being imposed upon them. Furthermore, social boundaries associated with historic urban fabric are often folded forward through time as people negotiate the politics of urban place-making. The Woolwich RAR development offers one such example, where the historic Arsenal wall marks the boundary between the diverse communities associated with Woolwich High Street and Beresford Square market versus the new “Royal Arsenal people”; the “people from the other side” who are perceived to be socially and economically distinct from the established communities.

#### 7.2.7. Creating new futures

Importantly, in terms of creating socially sustainable urban transformations, the social values associated with the ‘deep city’ can also be mobilised in the imaginative creation of new heritage futures. For instance, despite the ambivalence expressed towards the Royal Arsenal Gatehouse, some people also express a desire to open it up to public use and integrate it with the practiced, everyday heritage of Beresford Square and its market. Meanwhile, the thermal tower of the FIAT factory, valued for its connection to the working lives of thousands of people, has become a material and symbolic focus for the creation of a new community meeting place and memory hub, which would locate it at the heart of extensive communal relationships once again, albeit in very different ways from its active role in manufacturing. Such uses of the fragmented and complex historic fabric of the city show how social values, embracing tangible historical elements and intangible communal connections, play an integral role in imagining new futures as proposed in our theorisation of the ‘deep cities’ concept.

The ‘deep city’ concept highlights strategies of urban placemaking where heritage can be a driving force for change. This is seen when the relicts and fragmented, ruin-like layers of the city are valued and mobilised in innovative placemaking that is open to change or reassembly in future urban development based on new needs and patterns of use among communities. As discussed in Section 2, assemblage theory can help us understand such nuances and complexities. As an open system, urban placemaking is based on the drivers of both “assemblage”

and “disassembly”, which provide opportunities for informal, unplanned activities to unfold into new types of assemblages (Guttormsen et al. 2023). The social and communal values of heritage can be mobilised in renewing the socio-material relationships making up the everyday life of the city (cf. Boonstra, 2015; Pendlebury et al. 2023). The challenge is how to ensure that these are integrated into large-scale urban transformation to create more socially sustainable future cities, giving priority to participation, inclusion, diversity, and sense of place, something we will return to in Section 7.4.

#### 7.3. Methodological strengths and weaknesses

The application of our methodology has revealed a rich and diverse body of social values that are integral to the unfolding socio-material assemblages found in the three case studies; values that are more often assumed or discussed in abstract theoretical ways rather than delineated in detail. As this research shows, social values are often diverse and multifaceted. Furthermore, they can diverge from historical, architectural and aesthetic values, as they often relate to the more recent social lives of buildings and places or involve some kind of re-working of historic and aesthetic values with respect to present-day identities, attachments and agendas. Linked to intangible stories and memories associated with the lived, everyday experience of the city, these values are not necessarily accessible to external expert appraisal, nor obvious in the tangible fabric of the built heritage. The typically dynamic, diverse character of urban populations adds additional complexity to the social values associated with the ‘deep city’ and the challenges of assessing them. The research also shows that different kinds of values are produced in different face-to-face and online milieus by different actors who often move between these contexts. Whilst it is not possible to identify clear-cut associations between specific actors and specific contexts, the affordances and usages of different spaces, including different social media platforms, produce different kinds of visibilities and invisibilities, raising the possibility of exclusions or gaps in understanding, a point that we will return to below.

We therefore argue that a combination of rapid, focused, people-centred qualitative participatory methods in offline and online milieus is essential for revealing the diverse stories, feelings, attachments and embodied experiences associated with the ‘deep city’. One of the strengths in combining a range of offline and online methods is that this facilitates access to a wider range of diverse constituencies in complex, dynamic urban environments usually characterised by highly mobile populations. Face-to-face, qualitative and participatory methods can be used with current residents, visitors and workers, to facilitate depth of understanding. Interviews and participatory mapping allow for exploration of values and conflicts associated with heritage in the context of urban transformation, whereas observation provides insights into everyday practice and interaction with tangible elements of the deep city in publicly accessible spaces. Here, there are still widely recognised barriers relating to language, ethnicity and class (Matthews, 2015; Matthews & Astbury, 2017), which require targeted strategies with researchers possessing relevant language skills and preferably facilitated by trusted community organisations or leaders. For instance, in our Woolwich case study, such strategies might facilitate greater participation in the research by the resident Nepalese community, members of which regularly gather in Beresford Square in the vicinity of the Arsenal Gatehouse.

While online research methods do not resolve research barriers in straightforward ways, they can provide access to a wider range of communities, as argued by Matthews (2015) in relation to working class communities. They can also inform recruitment strategies for the implementation of offline methods. In particular, they enable assessment of values expressed by people who have prior personal or family connections, whether through residence, employment or some other association, to the ‘deep city’, but who now live and/or work elsewhere, making them difficult to identify and access through face-to-face



research methods. This proved particularly important in our Canongate case study, where residential communities were harder to access due to a combination of fragmentation in the face of tourist development and alienation from planning consultation processes associated with urban development. A final point relating to access is relevant here, namely that methods focusing on born-digital expression and negotiation of values on social media platforms do not usually depend on willingness to participate in research or the commitment of time and energy as in the case of those involved in face-to-face, in-person methods. However, while this is a strength that may help to reach marginalised or traditionally underserved groups, as well as avoid what has been referred to by critics as the 'tyranny' of participation, it comes with specific issues relating to data protection and ethics, including right to privacy and anonymisation (see [Section 3](#) for details regarding how we approached these).

The importance of combining offline and online methods is by no means restricted to issues of accessing diverse constituencies. One of the key contributions of this research is what it reveals about how distinct offline and online milieus provide space for the production and expression of different kinds of value. The socio-material relationships and infrastructures characterising specific milieus mediate the values produced and indeed our research methods also constitute an active intervention into these relationships. For instance, everyday interaction with tangible elements of the 'deep city' produces different kinds of values to the more fleeting but intense engagement of someone returning to a place where they grew up on a family visit, participating in a semi-structured interview about that place, or viewing and discussing an image of it on a social media platform with a specific online community. Forms of material transformation and loss of historic elements can render implicit meanings and experiences explicit and be productive of symbolic values. Social media and associated digital platforms offer increasingly important arenas for the production of social values surrounding specific heritage objects that become hidden, re-worked or destroyed by urban development. Furthermore, different digital platforms have different affordances, mediating the kinds of values that are produced on them and creating differential visibilities and invisibilities. Our research suggests that Facebook is a particularly important arena for producing and negotiating nostalgic values mediated by historic photographs and the affective responses they elicit (see also [Ekelund, 2022](#); [Gregory, 2015](#)). In contrast, values produced on Twitter tend to revolve around present-day use and activist mobilisation in opposition to urban development and privatisation, whereas social values produced on Flickr expand and, to some extent, internationalise this activist ethos (see [Bonacchi et al. 2023](#) for detailed analysis of specific digital platforms).

The situated experience of interacting with and valuing a particular heritage 'thing' can vary profoundly across online and offline environments and depending on the timing and wider context of that interaction, including who else is present or involved. The type of values and experiences shared in a group discussion will differ from a one-to-one interview, while talking to people at the location of interest can prompt different reflections to sharing an historic image or virtual representation of the place. Furthermore, each of us may enact different relationships, activities and data practices in connection with one or more of our multiple identities. An interviewee may simultaneously be a long-term resident of the area, a community official, and a member of a local interest group, all of which they may wish to represent and reflect on when considering the future of their heritage. These possibilities contribute to the meanings expressed in relation to heritage and, indeed, how a particular object of attention is produced (c.f. [Jones and Yarrow, 2022](#)). It is not unusual, therefore, for people to express slightly different values depending on the situation and how they are identifying during a specific interaction.

It is also not possible to identify hard and fast distinctions between different arenas of value production, as they intersect with one another in complex ways and individual actors move between them. As others

have observed, the increasing amount of social interaction taking place online and growth in digital technologies have changed social practices ([Gauntlett, 2011: 12](#)), resulting in the formation of new communities and relationships to place ([Giaccardi, 2012](#)). These online interactions are not a straightforward reflection of offline communities and communication, but distinct spaces, relationships, and sites of value production (see e.g. [Matthews, 2015](#)). So, for instance, whilst current residents may also engage in nostalgic heritage practices online, these practices are particularly associated with people who no longer live and work amongst the buildings and places portrayed. They may see themselves as people who belonged to the 'local community' at some point in their past, or who have family connections and claims. In such cases, old images shared online may activate and mediate forms of memory transmitted between generations.

All of the methods and arenas discussed have the potential to render some values more visible than others, either through specific affordances, accessibilities and modes of participation, or as a result of the dynamics between those involved. [Law \(2004: 113\)](#) has argued that practicing any specific method will inevitably result in gaps or invisibilities within the research process, as some understandings or realities are amplified, while others go unrecognised or are silenced. We see this play out in practice in group interactions (whether in-person or online), where the values that are expressed are actively negotiated and depend on the interactions between participants, as for example in a cumulative participatory mapping exercise. Gaps may become apparent through the research, for example a group that is referred to during interviews but are not directly engaged in the process. Or, more problematically, they may be entirely absent, either due to active suppression, as with some 'difficult heritage', or because they are deemed uninteresting or unimportant.

The 'methods assemblage' ([Law, 2004: 38–42](#)) we have developed helps to overcome these limitations by engaging with different socio-material (and virtual) relationships and activating different kinds of activities and practices. In doing so, it generates different kinds of knowledge and enables a firmer grasp on the complexities of the social values associated with the 'deep city' and their role in urban place-making. Such an approach can accommodate the complexity and flux of different urban assemblages, while also creating the space to critically interrogate how heritage values are influenced by various social actors, including researchers and those who are professionally involved in the heritage-planning nexus and urban governance more generally. Critical reflection is equally important when engaging with social media platforms and online data concerning past objects, places and practices. As we analyse in depth in a related article, the specific infrastructures of individual platforms mediate this value production, as do the methods we use to try to understand them (see [Bonacchi et al. 2023](#)).

#### 7.4. Implications and applications in practice

Increasingly, planning and heritage are integrated considerations in policy and practice, albeit imperfectly realised ([Velpaas et al., 2021: 201](#)). That is to say that heritage is no longer only conserved for its own sake, but also as an integral aspect of urban planning and development, which links it to a variety of wider agendas, such as economic development, social cohesion, climate change targets and sustainability ([Boonstra, 2015](#); [Labadi and Logan, 2015](#); [Pendlebury, 2013](#); [Pendlebury et al., 2023](#); [van Knippenberg & Boonstra, 2021](#)). In their analysis of this shift in Dutch spatial planning, [Janssen et al. \(2017: 1655–1656\)](#) characterise it in terms of a two-fold reconceptualization: 'heritage as a 'factor' in spatial dynamics (heritage as an asset and stimulus to urban and rural regeneration) and heritage as a 'vector' for sustainable area development (heritage determining the direction of spatial projects and developments)'. Furthermore, like [Veldpaas \(2023\)](#), they argue that these developments have been advocated and driven by heterogeneous actors, ranging from heritage sector bodies, through to governmental policies and wider neoliberal actors focusing on economic development,

including commercial property developers.

Taking a values-based approach, UNESCO's (2011) *Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape* has played an influential role, repositioning heritage as a broader holistic concern in the context of urban spatial planning and governance, which can make a positive contribution to urban transformation and its wider economic and social projects. Academic approaches to heritage, sustainable development and urban transformation also argue for an active role for heritage and the communities associated with it in urban spatial planning and sustainable development (e.g. Pendlebury et al. 2023; Labadi and Logan, 2015). However, they stress the importance of understanding urban heritage and place-making in relational terms, taking into account the intangible stories, meanings, values, or 'imaginaries' that are generated through people's ongoing relationships with the material heritage (e.g. Hall et al. 2013; Pendlebury et al. 2023; van Knippenberg and Boonstra, 2021; Williams et al. 2013); something that we have theorised in terms of the complex, unfolding assemblages making up the 'deep city' (Section 2 above). If these aspects are not taken into account in urban governance and spatial planning, heritage is in danger of being instrumentally used in pursuit of economic gain by powerful actors, often resulting in gentrification and alienation and/or displacement of communities (Boonstra, 2015: 44–46; Veldpaus, 2023: 335). This is evident in some aspects of our case studies, where authorised national and civic discourses have been privileged and contemporary social values neglected or undermined in the complex processes and drivers informing urban development and regeneration projects, leading to tensions around gentrification and problems with social sustainability (and see Fouseki et al. 2023 for a longitudinal systems analysis of the Woolwich case study).

Most planning legislation includes a formalised legal regime of consultation rights for citizens (Pendlebury, 2013), although usually this only offers a narrowly defined form of engagement that is not designed to document and accommodate social and communal values. The 1990s witnessed a 'communicative turn' in planning theory, which led to increased emphasis in engaging disparate stakeholders and their networks in the planning process to facilitate collaboration, mutual learning, consensus-building and/or debate (Healey, 1992; Tewdwr-Jones and Thomas, 1998). More recently, as Pendlebury et al. (2023) and Boonstra (2015) point out, relational approaches to place have become established in planning theory. However, as they and other commentators assert, much work remains to be done to address the implications of such an approach and the application of people-centred, participatory methods necessary for the implementation of relational planning practices remains piecemeal (Jones et al. 2016; Pendlebury et al. 2023; Veldpaus, 2023). Furthermore, where it does occur, it is more often the result of accidental and unanticipated collaborations or circumstances (Veldpaus, 2023: 334–335). Boonstra (2015: 38) offers a forceful and succinct critique of the current situation arguing that "[t]ime and again, there seems to be a significant gap between the theory and rhetoric of empowerment, communicative and participatory planning, and citizen involvement".

The challenges for those working in spatial planning, heritage conservation and urban governance need to be acknowledged. Their work is framed by fixed institutions and procedures that do not readily accommodate relational approaches involving participatory planning (Boonstra, 2015: 11; van Knippenberg and Boonstra, 2021: 14; Pendlebury et al. 2023: 411). Historically, planners, conservation officers and heritage managers have been expected to maintain forms of objectivity and distance, which have not encouraged close engagement with stakeholders and communities (see Boonstra, 2015 on planners; Jones and Yarrow, 2022 on heritage professionals). New skillsets also arguably need developing if those involved are to engage with civil society actors, carry out social value assessments, and/or facilitate participatory and collaborative practices (Veldpaus, 2023). Such practices also demand competencies in navigating diverse, dissonant values and the conflicts, particularly in the face of dramatic change; something which Jones et al.

(2016: 169) identify as a critical challenge in the adoption of more relational planning practices. At the same time, demands for new ways of working have coincided with austerity, reducing the resources and capacity for planning and heritage management (Jones et al. 2016: 167; Onyango et al. 2023; Pendlebury et al. 2019), leading to "fragmentation of knowledge, conflicting responsibilities, and the moving of responsibilities towards actors that escape clear democratic accountability" (Veldpaus, 2023: 337). Some even suggest that without legislative change, relational practices enacted by self-organising civic activists and initiatives are by necessity expressed outside of formal spatial planning processes (Boonstra, 2015: 10–11; Pendlebury et al. 2023: 421).

These are intractable problems which extend well beyond the scope of this research. Nevertheless, there is a need for more robust methods and practices that can be used by those involved in urban governance and transformation to understand people's relationships to place and the values they attach to urban heritage better. Pendlebury et al. (2023: 412) argue that it is not always clear how to apply relational approaches and relationships to place can be "hard to grasp and formalise" (see also Garrow, 2021; Madgin and Lesh, 2021a). Yet, as many researchers have found, current participatory approaches are limited in terms of who participates and the themes or potential options that are considered; more participation is not necessarily leading to greater diversity of participants or range of values being captured and invisibilities and exclusions remain (Boonstra, 2015; Jones et al. 2016; Veldpaus, 2023). As a result, intangible heritage – in the form of the social values and related stories, memories and imaginaries linked to tangible historic elements of the city – is often not taken into account in urban planning with knock-on negative impacts on communities (Pastor Pérez and Colomer, 2024; van Knippenberg and Boonstra, 2021: 2005).

In terms of suitable methods to address this problematic situation, much of the debate in planning theory has focused on initiating community engagement, inviting participation in specific collaborative activities (e.g. collaborative mapping or future visioning), and/or handing over responsibility for local planning and development to citizen-led civic organisations (Jones et al. 2016: 165). However, we argue that these measures are not enough in themselves to grasp the complexity of socio-material relationships encompassing the 'deep city', with its multiple actors and multiple visions of what a place is and can be. To provide more robust evidence of the social values which are integral to the 'deep city' and its role in urban place-making and imaginaries, participatory approaches have to be used alongside and embedded in social research methods, which can provide depth of understanding, and the opportunity to identify and counter invisibilities and exclusions (see also contributions to Stewart et al. 2013). Our mixed methods assemblage does just this, offering those involved in spatial planning, and particularly the heritage-planning nexus, a range of rapid, focused methods that can be flexibly deployed in various combinations. As demonstrated by the case studies, its application would facilitate a more robust understanding of the complexity of people's relationships with the 'deep city' and the social values involved, because different methods generate different kinds of knowledge and evidence by engaging with different kinds of social actors, practices and relationships to place, whether material or virtual. The use of rapid ethnography as an overarching framing enables specific participatory planning activities to be set in their wider social milieu, providing insights into the power dynamics they activate and the visibilities and exclusions they generate. Inequalities and invisibilities will always remain, but the use of a range of methods can reduce these and at the very least provide evidence for critical reflection on them, as argued by Veldpaus et al. (2021: 205). Importantly, as discussed in the previous section, the combination of online and offline methods in our suite of mixed methods would allow those involved in spatial planning to engage with a wider range of actors and values because, as our research reveals, qualitatively different values are being created in distinct but intersecting online and offline arenas.



The suite of people-centred, participatory methods we have developed are included in the *Deep Cities Toolbox*, which was created to provide guidance for professionals involved in urban planning, heritage management and regeneration wishing to implement approaches resulting from the CURBATHERI project (Navas-Perrone et al., [In prep.](#)).<sup>22</sup> The section focusing on the mixed methods approach discussed in this monograph, provides an overview of the approach along with short explanations of the individual methods. The methods are relevant to various stages and elements of the planning process, ranging from local/neighbourhood place planning to urban master-planning, and from the role of social values in the designation and protection of specific historic elements to their role in future-visioning and the mobilisation of heritage as a vector for change. However, when it comes to specific urban development and regeneration projects, we recommend that these methods are applied in the preparatory planning phase alongside other forms of assessment, such as archaeological and environmental impact assessment. Given the long-term nature of major urban development and regeneration projects, we also suggest that periodic re-assessments are carried out, because of the dynamic nature of social values, especially in rapidly changing environments.

At the start of an assessment, it is important to interview key stakeholders (e.g. heritage and planning professionals and community leaders), review existing research data (e.g. planning documents, census and socio-economic data, prior consultation and survey reports), and survey social media platforms for information relating to the case concerned. These desk-based research activities facilitate rapid identification of key issues and constituencies. Face-to-face, qualitative and participatory methods can then be used to gain more in-depth understanding through exploration of the values and conflicts associated with heritage in the context of urban transformation. The numbers of participants will vary depending on the time available and nature of activities (e.g. around 25–30 people were directly involved, in person, in the Woolwich and Canongate studies, over 100 in the Novoli-San Donato case because of the scale of the case study area and correspondingly longer duration of the case study research). Alongside this in-person research, online methods can be used to facilitate access to a wider range of (often rather different) communities of attachment and interest, by analysing data generated by large numbers of participants, many of whom may not be currently resident in the area, but who express forms of identification and attachment of various kinds. Indeed, online methods are particularly useful in contexts where communities have become fragmented and/or displaced due to urban transformation and therefore have a limited presence in the area today. Additionally, offline recruitment problems created by ‘participation fatigue’ and/or alienation from consultation processes due to perceived lack of agency in urban planning and regeneration, can be partially offset by online analysis of social values produced and negotiated on social media platforms.

In both online and offline environments, it is useful to engage and collaborate with existing civil society bodies, community networks and events, and physical or online hubs to facilitate access to a range of stakeholders and encourage widespread participation. Developing trust and rapport with key contacts, such as community leaders and organisational ‘gatekeepers’, is crucial and can take time. Where this is not possible (either due to issues of access or timescales) the success of the research methods can be compromised, necessitating a change in approach. One of the key strengths of the methods assemblage developed, is the way it can be applied flexibly and creatively to adapt to changing circumstances, including different urban environments, socio-economic contexts, demographic characteristics, and phases in planning and regeneration. For instance, in the Canongate case study

(Edinburgh), the site of the New Street Gasworks was already out of public use and inaccessible whilst awaiting approved re-development. Whereas a new phase of investment and regeneration in the Woolwich Town Centre was just getting started, which, alongside high levels of civic engagement and community activism, meant that rapid face-to-face offline research was able to reach a diverse range of participants (both through gatekeeper referrals and linking with community-led activities).

It is important to stress that the strengths and weaknesses of different methods discussed in the previous section are contextually specific. For instance, in Canongate offline methods, particularly semi-structured interviews with local residents proved difficult due to consultation fatigue and alienation from development decision-making, so our approach had to be adapted to short, structured interviews with people recruited in public spaces. Whereas in Novoli-San Donato and Woolwich, engaging local communities in face-to-face offline methods proved much easier because of receptive community organisations and gatekeepers, and/or the active engagement of citizens in the planning process. In those cases, community participatory methods such as participant-led walking interviews and collaborative mapping exercises accompanied by focused, group discussion were highly effective. As a result, online research also played different roles in each case, as detailed in the case study sections. Working flexibly with a suite of methods, will enable those involved in urban planning and heritage management to adapt to the specifics of each situation, resulting in more equitable and inclusive understandings of the diverse social values of the ‘deep city’ with the aim of building more socially sustainable futures.

Given the challenges identified above, we do not assume that these methods can be rapidly implemented wholesale in routine urban planning processes and practices, which remain constrained by “an inflexible legal system, and focusing on materiality, aesthetics, and a very narrow set of values” (van Knippenberg and Boonstra, 2021: 2008). Expertise, training, organisational capacity and financial resourcing will need to be addressed to facilitate their adoption, as for community-centred processes and participatory relational planning generally. Given the increasing role of experts drawn from private sector consultancies, many of which employ former public sector employees (Raco et al. 2016), it may be this area where the expertise, skills and capacity for this kind of work can be developed, but this still requires prioritisation of financial resources to pay for it. For now, we hope that this research can make a contribution to the “more open and flexible understandings of conservation planning” that are emerging, which Pendlebury et al. (2023: 421) optimistically suggest have “the potential to broaden and change the ways we understand heritage, heritage management and urban planning”.

## 8. Conclusions

Our research makes three important contributions to scholarship and practice in the fields of planning and heritage studies. First, we have developed and tested an innovative methodology that can be deployed in assessing the complex, diverse social values generated by urban heritage. Second, our methodology has allowed the comparative re-assessment of the dynamic relationships between the social values of heritage and urban transformation. Third, we have explored the implications of our research for urban planning and governance, and discussed potential applications in planning processes, paving the way for the methodology to be operationalised at scale.

The strength of the ‘deep cities’ approach informed by assemblage theory is that urban placemaking is understood as the result of concrete and situated practices enacted by different actors. In turn, these situated practices, and the socio-material relationships they create and sustain, lead to the production of diverse social values, which are integral to the social sustainability of the city. If, as this study shows, such values are variously created by different, but overlapping actors in varied online and offline environments, then it becomes imperative that they are

<sup>22</sup> The Deep Cities Toolbox can be accessed here: <https://www.deepcities-toolbox.unifi.it/#> with a specific section dedicated to the methods discussed in this article: <https://www.deepcities-toolbox.unifi.it/p21.html>

assessed through a range of online and offline methods to inform spatial planning and urban governance. This is important, we believe, for countering the forms of inequality, gentrification and displacement that Veldpaus (2023: 335) argues are “de-problematized and even celebrated” by a more economically-driven instrumentalisation of heritage as catalyst for urban regeneration.

The case studies provide in-depth empirical evidence for the rich tapestry of contemporary social values associated with the ‘deep city’ by multiple communities of residence, attachment and interest. Many of the values expressed are associated with specific aspects of tangible heritage and related functions, events, activities, affective qualities and personal/familial connections. However, the research also highlights that social values may not be *directly* linked to the historic fabric of the ‘deep city’ and related historic and aesthetic values. Much depends on maintaining information about past functions of built heritage (official and unofficial), rather than focusing merely on preservation of architectural facades and aesthetically pleasing fragments, which the neoliberal commodification of heritage in urban development has encouraged (Pendlebury, 2002). Contested values and tensions surrounding urban transformation are often related to increased privatisation of urban space (real and/or perceived) and constraints on communal practices and relations, alongside loss of access to historic features and places associated with communal discourses, memories, and lived experiences. It is therefore important to maintain the connection between values derived from lived experience and relatively recent social memory or familial oral histories. At the same time, social histories can be silenced or lost, even when tangible traces survive in the urban environment. This is evident in the case of the Magdalene Asylum, located in the area of the Gasworks prior to its expansion, and the Woolwich Royal Arsenal, a place of restriction and secrecy during its working life as an arms factory.

Whilst historic fabric is frequently incorporated into the design and implementation of urban development and regeneration projects, this can still result in fragmentation and/or marginalisation of both tangible and intangible heritage. Our research demonstrates that there is often a palpable sense in which physical fragmentation is mirrored by social dislocation and break up of communities, with some people being marginalised or pushed out. The complexity of relationships between the heritage encompassed by the layers of the ‘deep city’ and the multiple, diverse contemporary communities involved, means that a values-led approach to the role of heritage in urban transformation is challenging. However, our research offers important insights, methods, and tools to support professionals involved in urban planning, heritage management and regeneration in implementing values-led approaches. If adopted, these could contribute to a more people-centred approach to multi-layered conservation and transformation of the ‘deep city’, encompassing meanings, memories and senses of place linked to past and present uses and associations. This in turn could help to reduce tensions associated with urban governance, planning and development, whilst also creating more socially sustainable futures for urban communities and their heritage. The combination of the ‘deep cities’ conceptualisation of heritage, as an integral part of the unfolding socio-material assemblages that make up urban environments, with a ‘methods assemblage’ approach is ideally suited to the implementation of more open, relational planning practices. Practices that can work *with* “differences, fragmentations, uncertainties, complexity” conceived as “constitutionally interrelated, plural, heterogeneous and always ‘becoming’; instead of pre-determined, structured and/or locked into itself” (Boelens 2009: 555, cited in Boonstra, 2015: 369).

In terms of the more practical implications and applications outlined in Section 7.4, our research demonstrates the effectiveness of a mixed methods approach combining online and offline (in-person), semi-quantitative and qualitative methods in assessing the diverse social values associated with the ‘deep city’. These reveal that different offline and online contexts provide the space for different kinds of value production and expression and facilitate differential access to diverse

stakeholders. Furthermore, the suite of methods we have developed can be applied intensively and iteratively in complex urban environments, with online methods feeding into and informing offline methods, and vice versa. The overall methodology is designed to be implemented rapidly and adapted to specific social and material circumstances, including various barriers and opportunities. One of the key strengths of the methods assemblage developed, is the way it can be employed flexibly and creatively to adapt to changing circumstances. As a result, it can be used to conduct focused value-based assessments in the context of urban planning and heritage management, providing more equitable and inclusive understandings of the diverse social values of the ‘deep city’, and the prospect of building more socially sustainable futures out of urban development and regeneration.

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**Jones Siân:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Supervision, Project administration, Methodology, Funding acquisition, Conceptualization, Formal analysis. **Bonacchi Chiara:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Supervision, Project administration, Methodology, Funding acquisition, Formal analysis, Conceptualization, Software. **Robson Elizabeth M.:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis. **Broccoli Elisa:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Software. **Hiscock Alex:** Methodology, Investigation. **Biondi Andrea:** Methodology, Investigation. **Nucciotti Michele:** Writing – review & editing, Funding acquisition, Project administration. **Guttormsen Torgrim Sneve:** Writing – review & editing, Funding acquisition. **Fouseki Kalliopi:** Writing – review & editing, Investigation, Funding acquisition, Project administration. **Díaz-Andreu Margarita:** Writing – review & editing, Funding acquisition.

## Declaration of Competing Interest

None of the authors have any competing interests to declare.

## Data access statement

Due to the ethical principles governing our human subject research, and the legal and policy requirements of social media sites, we are not able to make the underpinning data available.

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