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Edited by NezHapi-Dellé Odeleye, Lakshmi Priya Rajendran, and Aysegul Can

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EDITORIAL

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Temporal Entanglements, Fragmented Spaces: Planning, Politics, and Place Rhythms

Aysegul Can [1], Lakshmi Priya Rajendran [2], and NezHapi-Dellé Odeleye [3]

[1] Institute for Regional Studies, Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, Germany
[2] The Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London, UK
[3] Faculty of Science & Engineering, Anglia Ruskin University, UK

Correspondence: Aysegul Can (ayseguel.can@kit.edu)

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Abstract

What does it mean for urban planners and designers to shape places *through* and *with* time? The 2020 public health restrictions highlighted the relevance of Carlos Moreno's et al. (2021) 15-minute-city concept, which outlined the need for a "chrono-urbanism" incorporating societal resilience micro-infrastructures. Notions of temporal planning, however, have deeper roots; Kevin Lynch's classic imageability (1964) and place-timing studies (1972) highlighted Planning as a temporal art, distinct from arts such as music, and his urban theorization (1984) identified three epochs of city form (the cosmic, organic, and mechanical) as successively dominant, spatiotemporal paradigms. More recently, Christopher Alexander's (2002) analyses on the "nature of order" drew attention to the importance of time and geometry for the appropriate unfolding of complexity across domains from the arts and crafts to the scales of built form. Time is implicated in Planning's capacity to effectively harness space in meeting societal needs and challenges. Given the "temporal turn" in urban planning and design, this is an appropriate juncture to reflect upon technical assumptions underlying varied approaches to place-shaping. This issue explores how currently dominant, linear-temporal modes might be influencing spatial planning and design practices, and how inclusion of diverse, forgotten, and hidden spatiotemporal narratives including from the global South could aid development of alternative theories, tools, practices, and forms. Contributions also address implications digital modes may have for education, praxis, or resilient, city visions, and what might be the contribution of temporal perspectives in addressing the slow and out-of-sight violence created by toxic geographies or urban transformations.

Keywords

design; planning; practice; slow-violence; space; theory; time; urban

1. Introduction

Doreen Massey (1992, p. 80) famously argued that space is dynamic and interconnected with time, stating that "space is not static, nor time spaceless." Despite this influential stance, a segment of geographical literature treats space as static. Laclau (1990) exemplifies this view through his distinction between spatiality and temporality, associating each with distinct modes of social analysis.

Laclau (1990) defines space as structured repetition and coexistence, forming systems with internally consistent causal relationships. While these spatial systems may exhibit movement or internal transformations, they remain predictable and self-contained. Hence, spatiality is essentially devoid of genuine disruption or external causality. In contrast, Laclau conceptualizes temporality as inherently dislocating, characterized by disruptions that challenge existing causal structures. Such temporal disruptions constitute the essence of political possibility and freedom—elements that, according to Laclau, are inherently absent from spatiality. Therefore, his differentiation between space and time is not merely between immobility and change but between predictable internal shifts and genuine transformative potential. He distinguishes "internal" forms of cyclical or embedded time—which are essentially spatial due to their predictability—from "Grand Historical Time," representing authentic dynamism and historical change (Laclau, 1990, pp. 41, 43).

Nevertheless, Massey's (1992) conception of space significantly diverges from the static spatial framework critiqued by Laclau. Massey emphasizes space as inherently relational, constructed through the simultaneity of social interactions and networks across scales from local to global. This understanding acknowledges that all social phenomena inherently have spatial dimensions, shaped and reshaped continuously through shifting relations. Examples include community ties, corporate networks, or global debt dynamics. Such phenomena illustrate the inherently dynamic nature of spatial relations, which are continuously evolving rather than static.

From Massey's perspective, spatiality does not imply immobility; instead, it denotes the dynamic coexistence and interplay of social interactions that constitute space-time. Therefore, space is conceptualized as a product of intersecting, evolving social relationships, inherently embedded with power dynamics, symbolic meanings, consent, and conflict. Crucially, this suggests that spatial formations can influence future developments, emphasizing the emergent and unpredictable qualities of space.

2. Space-Time Connection

Integrating Massey's perspective with Laclau's reveals an intriguing theoretical intersection: spatiality, when understood relationally, may itself generate the very dislocations Laclau attributes exclusively to temporality. Spatial configurations—marked by unexpected juxtapositions and social interactions—can shape historical trajectories, positioning spatiality as a critical source of temporality and, consequently, political possibility. Rather than perceiving space and time as mutually exclusive or hierarchical, this integrated approach insists on their inseparability, advocating for a unified conceptualization of space-time. Thus, acknowledging that spatiality fundamentally influences historical and political possibilities enriches geographical scholarship. Instead of privileging temporality over spatiality or treating them as distinct, scholars must recognize their co-constitution. Such recognition highlights how geography inherently involves temporal dynamics, and conversely, how history and politics are deeply embedded within spatial structures.

This connection and co-constitution between space and time opens numerous possibilities to enrich geographical discussions across various facets of scholarship. One significant example, as Koch (2022) suggests, is colonialism. Reinhart Koselleck (1985) argues that the conception of time progressing toward an open, limitless future is fundamentally rooted in modern Western thought. This insight prompts critical reflection on the distinctly Western notions of freedom articulated by Simone de Beauvoir (1949). Koch (2022, p. 3) eloquently poses the very relevant question here: "Do our dreams of 'true' freedom echo de Beauvoir's dream of an open future—even when our freedom is built on the past and present of colonial dispossession, and liberal conceptions of time itself?"

One of the most pressing and painful contemporary contexts that foregrounds the interrelation of space, time, and power is the ongoing oppression and colonial violence in Palestine. The Israeli occupation operates not only through spatial fragmentation—checkpoints, walls, settlements—but also through temporal disruption. Palestinian lives are shaped by chronic waiting, restricted mobility, and deferred futures, reflecting a "slow violence" highlighted in this issue by Read et al. (2025, p. 18) which they acknowledge as "a concept initially intended to highlight the plight of the world's poorest and marginalised, the 'wretched of the earth' (Fanon, 2001)." Here, space and time are not merely co-constituted; they are weaponised. As Abourahme (2011) and Weizman (2007) have shown, the spatial control of land, borders, and movement is inextricably linked to a politics of temporal suspension—denying Palestinians the ability to plan, to hope, or to imagine futures beyond siege and precarity.

This temporal violence challenges Western linear notions of progress and development. In occupied Palestine, time becomes fragmented and cyclical—marked by cycles of destruction and reconstruction, hope and erasure. The present is stretched into a prolonged state of limbo, where even the rhythms of daily life are governed by occupation. The temporalities of resistance, however, emerge within these ruptures—whether in the perseverance of olive harvests, the rebuilding of homes, or the intergenerational transmission of memory and struggle. These layered experiences urge urban scholars and planners to confront how temporality is unevenly distributed and violently mediated, particularly under conditions of settler colonialism. Foregrounding Palestine in discussions of space-time deepens the call for a decolonial temporality—one that is attentive to rupture, dispossession, and resistance. It demands that we rethink temporal frameworks not only as analytical categories, but as lived registers of survival, refusal, and political imagination.

What does it mean to plan a city, design a space, or shape a place when time itself is a terrain of struggle? Across the globe, urban lives unfold in contested spatio-temporal landscapes shaped by histories of colonialism, occupation, patriarchy, and capitalism. This intertwining of space and time—so often treated separately in planning theory—is central to understanding how power operates in the urban realm. Time, like space, is not given; it is produced, controlled, and resisted. As this thematic issue argues, to challenge linear narratives of progress, attending to disrupted rhythms, and recognizing the plural, lived temporalities that shape urban experience and resistance across contexts.

Further, the informal socio-spatial structures and practices in global South cities (Watson, 2009) for example, as indicated in this issue by Zehba et al. (2025), have distinctive, temporal narratives, which are relatively underexplored in mainstream planning discourses of alternative city imaginaries that still privilege Euro-American ideals and experiences amidst emerging postcolonial studies (Porter et al., 2021).

To contribute to ongoing discussions in geography and urban studies, this thematic issue explores the concepts, practices, and implications of time, along with spatiotemporal perceptions and forms of knowledge in urban planning and design. It highlights how these temporal understandings serve as implicit frameworks that shape identities and urban forms across various historical periods—from ancient and medieval to modernist and contemporary eras—and at multiple scales and locations. The issue examines the cultural impacts of such analyses, particularly their potential to challenge dominant linear conceptions of time, support the decolonisation of indigenous knowledge, and recognize diverse temporalities within urban design and planning. Ultimately, it investigates how a deeper awareness and more deliberate inclusion of temporal dimensions can assist urban planners and designers in addressing contemporary issues, such as climate change, public health, place-shaping, and spatial justice.

3. Structure of the Thematic Issue

This issue is addressing many important subjects related to time, space, spatiality, and temporality in the urban realm. As mentioned above about unsettling Western ideas of liberalism, colonialism, or urban planning and how they travel to Southern or Peripheral cities with colonial pasts, Ren et al. (2025) are providing a very well written article on the "peri-urban turn" (Rajendran et al., 2024) within geography and urban studies. The article proposes a conceptual expansion from the well-established Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) framework to a more inclusive Historic Urban-Rural Landscape (HURL), particularly addressing the evolving and often overlooked peri-urban territories of Southern cities. Employing ethnographic fieldwork in Kathmandu, Nepal, and specifically exploring the Basantapur area's living heritage context—including transient rural rituals practiced by local communities—this study offers an urban-anthropological reading of both tangible and intangible heritage, the latter increasingly critical in Global South contexts. Ultimately, the article underscores the methodological potential of HURL to facilitate closer examinations of Southern places through time, and to articulate life-worlds that emerge from, and are embedded in, local placemaking practices beyond established Eurocentric traditions and paradigms.

Understanding the co-constitution of space and time enables scholars to approach feminist literature through a new lens as well. Massey (1992) and Ross (1988) critique the common scholarly tendency to establish a dichotomy between space and time, arguing instead that such dualisms should be overcome entirely. This argument resonates with similar points frequently made by feminist scholars regarding other dualisms. In this issue, Zehba et al. (2025) significantly advance the discussion of space, time, and gender through their analysis of spatiotemporal narratives of women's everyday mobility in Kochi, India. Urban women face disproportionate impacts from time poverty, driven by societal pressures to balance employment obligations with traditional gender roles. In urban contexts, women's allocation of time is particularly influenced by their daily mobility patterns. While there exists considerable research on time use and mobility, especially from Northern countries, gender-specific dimensions of mobility and associated time poverty in urban settings of Southern countries remain underexplored. Zehba and colleagues' research contributes substantially to this gap, deepening our understanding of gendered time allocation and the associated challenges of time poverty.

To show how time as a critical lens could contribute to investigating public policies and socio spatial justice, Sobral et al. (2025) introduce an analytical framework. Central to this analysis is understanding how time shapes power relations within the evolving contexts addressed by these policies. The framework is

developed through an extensive literature review, combined with empirical fieldwork focused on Lisbon's mobile co-policy, specifically the Bairros de Intervenção Prioritária/Zonas de Intervenção Prioritárias Strategy. The proposed framework highlights an existing analytical gap concerning the mobility of co-policies that combine spatial co-production and co-governance at the neighbourhood level.

In the same vein, Crilly and Varna's (2025) article introduces the method of "shearing layers" as a tool of analysis for public urban space by adding a temporal dimension. This framework introduces a temporal dimension, or "rate of change," to various layers of public space—including site, surface, services, spatial configuration, surroundings, signage, and amenities. Using a city centre public space as a case study, they apply an object-oriented approach to map different rates of change, from continuous or hourly adjustments up to transformations spanning decades or centuries. Better understanding the temporal cycles and adaptability of these public space layers enhances urban responsiveness to emerging challenges and opportunities.

The element of time has also been crucial to understand the profession of urban planning and national frameworks for formal urban planning. In this issue, Morato et al. (2025) focus on the element of time across planning reforms as a central dimension in their article. While academic normative debates argue in favour of faster and/or slower changes to planning as inherently good or bad, in this article, they draw on a comparative analysis of national planning reforms across three European countries (Poland, Spain, and the United Kingdom) to critically examine how time is being mobilized and with what objective. They argue that despite ambitions to make planning more responsive and participatory at the local level, planning reforms (1) reduce the influence of public participation while strengthening private property rights, (2) are used to territorialise sectoral, top-down, and long term agendas with no consideration of the timely and situated concerns and visions of residents and communities, and (3) are underpinned by a pro-growth and rapid urbanisation agenda that ignores sustainability debates.

Following these valuable contributions on time and public space and urban planning rules, Wang et al. (2025) bring the readers' focus to "non-place-networked public realm." This article hypothesizes that users interacting with digital infrastructure within non-places generate temporary non-places. A "non-place" typically lacks identity and significance; however, digital technologies impart temporary identity and meaning to these spaces. To investigate this, the article introduces an analytical method that involves quantitatively examining geo-targeted social media contributions from platforms such as X, Foursquare, and Instagram, collected within London over a specified period. Analysis of daily digital activity reveals unique temporal narratives specific to these digitally mediated non-places. Key findings indicate (1) distinct rhythms differentiate digital activities from physical activities within non-place and (2) users' digital interactions significantly shape their spatiotemporal perceptions in these settings.

Chang and Sefkatli (2025) apply rhythm-analytical approaches in their study to explore teaching and learning experiences within two socio-spatial and design-focused courses involving graduate and undergraduate students. This research is particularly significant as it illustrates the depth of contributions achievable when examining educational dynamics through a rhythm-analytical lens. These courses aim to explore how analysing rhythms-through-space compared to rhythms-in-space can lead to distinct intervention patterns. The findings highlight the necessity of integrating temporal awareness as both a conceptual and methodological focus within constructively aligned teaching activities to foster various

forms of knowledge. Central to their work is enhancing the guidance offered to students through design-oriented learning. Educationally, they investigate which conceptual structures in design-oriented teaching best support rhythm-analytical capabilities for future spatial planners and designers.

Finally, Read et al. (2025) build on the concept of *slow violence* to explore how temporal dislocation intersects with spatial precarity through the lens of housing inequality in the UK. Their article focuses on a Community Land Trust (CLT) attempting to challenge entrenched socio-spatial injustices by reconfiguring temporalities of land, ownership, and dwelling. Drawing from Lefebvre's rhythm-analysis and right-to-the-city discourse, the authors argue that conventional planning timelines—driven by short-term market cycles and long-term speculative development—often exclude the most marginalised communities. In doing so, these dominant temporal regimes perpetuate forms of housing exclusion and displacement. The CLT's efforts to reclaim slower, community-driven rhythms represent a counter-temporality that prioritises continuity, care, and the intergenerational right to remain in place. This case resonates with the earlier discussion of Palestine, where state-imposed spatial fragmentation and temporal suspension similarly operate as tools of exclusion. In both contexts, the struggle for the right to the city becomes a struggle over time itself—who controls it, who waits, and who gets to imagine a future. Read and colleagues thus foreground temporal justice as a vital dimension of spatial justice, urging planners and urban scholars to rethink time not merely as a neutral frame but as a contested and powerful tool of governance, resistance, and right-making.

4. Conclusions

Returning to the tensions earlier examined between Massey and Laclau's conceptions in this introduction, perhaps an alternative general overview could further be made in terms of the perspectives of monism and dualism—and the theories in the study of time that ascribe to these respective views. These conceptualisations range from those which deny the existence of time at a fundamental level, seeing it as reversible, to those which view time as limited, bound to spatiality or physicality (Turner, 2014), in particular Henri Bergson's (2014) positing of subjective, experiential, or lived time as a counterpoint to objective, timeless, or mechanical time.

Building on this, J. T. Fraser's hierarchical theory of time (2007) offers an emergent and nested framework for understanding the complexity and evolution of temporal experiences across different domains. Fraser's levels of time—atemporality, proto-temporality, eotemporality, bio-temporality, nootemporality, and socio-temporality—each represent distinct stages of temporal complexity, from quantum phenomena to human mind and culture (which underlies place-shaping). This multi-layered approach suggests how different aspects of time may interact and evolve, problematising accelerating drivers towards spatiotemporal uniformity. And Lee's (2012) perspective on temporal multiplicities further highlights how these diverse temporal experiences offer potential to resist the homogenising forces of global modernity, emphasizing the importance of maintaining temporal diversity in urban development and cultural practices.

Within each of the contributions that follow, the examination of spatiotemporal perceptions, and knowledges within cities, and their planning and design processes highlights such temporal multiplicities as the bases for implicit frameworks, techniques, or tools. These underlie extant and emerging expressions of local identities, heritages, lived-experiences, pedagogic possibilities, and forms of urbanism. This thematic introduction thereby raises questions about inherent rights to the city and underlying tensions between historic and ongoing spatiotemporal transformations across localities and contexts.

Consequently, this issue identifies emerging lessons and possibilities that greater awareness and more explicit treatment of the dynamic, intertwined space-time dimensions might offer cities, residents, and practitioners, professionally and culturally—enabling the critical role of multiple temporalities to be recognised and accommodated in urban planning and design as a basis for culturally-responsive place-shaping.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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About the Authors

Aysegul Can is a postdoctoral researcher at the Institute for Regional Studies. Her research interests include gentrification, housing financialization, urban resistance movements, spatial inequalities in marginalized areas, and precariousness in higher education. She is currently researching more equitable and green ways to access housing regarding the housing-energy nexus.

Lakshmi Priya Rajendran, PhD, is currently an associate professor in environmental and spatial equity and co-director of equality, diversity, and inclusion at the Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London (UCL), UK. She also serves as the co-chair of UCL's Environment Research Domain and as academic co-chair of the UCL Advisory Group on Climate Change and Health.

NezHapi-Dellé Odeleye is an urbanist with 18 years of experience across the private, third, and public sectors—as an architect, community planner, and principal planner in policy and projects. She is the course director for the MSc Town Planning and was previously the faculty director for research students. Her research spans sustainable design and the spatio-temporalities of Indigenous urbanism in urban design complexity. Recent work explores generative justice, planners' legacy and agency in sustainable urbanism, and how media tech shapes identity and future place-making.

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ARTICLE

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Placemaking Through Time in Nepal: Conceptualising the Historic Urban-Rural Landscape of Kathmandu

Xiang Ren [1], Sangeeta Singh [2], Abhishek Bhutoria [1], and Huriye Armağan Doğan [1]

[1] School of Architecture and Landscape, University of Sheffield, UK
[2] Institute of Engineering, Tribhuvan University, Nepal

Correspondence: Xiang Ren (xiang.ren@sheffield.ac.uk)

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Abstract

The ever-densifying and developing cities from the rapidly urbanising Global South are still facing severe socio-cultural challenges driven by the rapid urbanisation and tourism development, including the loss of architectural heritage, cultural memory, place identity, informal ecology, and economy in and around the historic urban landscape (HUL) particularly. Following the call for a "peri-urban turn" in recent geographical and urban studies, this article conceptually extends the established HUL framework to a broader historic urban–rural landscape (HURL) framework for the evolving and underrepresented territories of the Southern cities. It includes and interprets the local community's placemaking practices and agency in the context of transitional rural-to-urban dynamics. Through ethnographic fieldwork in the historic environment of Kathmandu, Nepal, and by exploring the Basantapur area's living heritage setting for the local community's transient, rural, and ritual practices, this article develops an urban-anthropological interpretation of tangible and, of increasing relevance in the Global South contexts, intangible cultural heritage from the local community's perspective, narratives, and agency. The article argues for a shift in focus from approaching the urban heritage buildings, urban–rural landscape, and intangible cultural heritage separately from the HUL which traces the past, to a more transitional, evolving, and layered HURL which anchors the present. It concludes with HURL's methodological capacity to further close reading of Southern places through time and the lifeworld constituted and embedded in the placemaking practice beyond the Eurocentric tradition and paradigms.

Keywords

Basantapur; cultural heritage; Global South; Historic Urban Landscape; Kathmandu; placemaking

1. Introduction

There has been a globally shifted focus in heritage-led placemaking and regeneration in the past 20 years, from the focus on the single component of building and landscape heritage, or heritage conservation area, to an integrated and evolving historic urban landscape (HUL). The emergence of the conceptual framework of HUL, which was first put forward at the UNESCO Vienna conference in 2005 (UNESCO, 2005), has developed its core concept from the predominantly Western concepts mainly based on Patrick Geddes's urban heritage conservation of cultural landscape (Geddes, 1915) and Gordon Cullen's townscapes (Cullen, 1971). The 2011 Historic Urban Landscape Recommendation by UNESCO calls for a comprehensive and integrated approach to the identification, assessment, conservation, and management of HULs within an overall sustainable development framework that shifted the focus from "monuments," namely objects and elements, to "landscapes," namely systems and processes (UNESCO, 2011). This has advanced a changing dimension of heritage discourse and practice since the adoption of an integrated approach towards heritage evaluation and preservation does not merely affect the structure itself but also creates an impact on the environment (Zaleckis et al., 2022). Therefore, the principles and approaches for managing historic built environment have grown from "monument" to a slightly larger concept of historic site, then to "setting," areas, "landscapes," cities, and finally to the HUL. The various successive enlargements of "heritage" have created an all-inclusive concept of the "historic environment" (Veldpaus et al., 2013; UNESCO, 2016). As Taylor summarised, central to the HUL are three underlying principles: (a) understanding of the city as an evolving process—living entity—not merely a series of objects such as buildings, with the idea of "process" embracing intangible cultural heritage values, genius loci, and interaction between culture and nature; (b) respect for the overall morphology of the city and its landscape setting so that future development does not overwhelm the landscape physically or its intangible meanings and values; and (c) understanding that conservation of physical and material aspects of urban landscape must be balanced taking into account immaterial aspects to do with layers of meanings residing in the urban landscape (Taylor, 2016).

HUL further articulates the subtly different, and contrasting, heritage conservation philosophies at the root of the Western concepts, which come mainly from the UK and the European continent, with the former built upon John Ruskin's positioning on the preservation of urban heritage fabric consisting of varied assemblies (Ruskin, 1989), and the latter mostly following Viollet-le-Duc's (1990) structural rationalism framework of restoration of built heritage and historic landscape. Influenced strongly by John Ruskin, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings in the UK, founded by William Morris and others in 1877, defends that buildings should be preserved as found with minimal interventions, and any additions should be distinguished from the original status without confusing both statuses (Morris, 1877). This Western-oriented framework has heavily shaped, and been reconfirmed by, a series of international charters such as the Venice Charter, which in Article 12 states that in restoration, replacements for missing parts must integrate harmoniously, whilst remaining distinguishable from the original so as not to falsify the artistic or historic evidence (ICOMOS, 1964), and also the Burra Charter in its several revisions since 1979 and the Appleton charter since 1983. The Nara document on authenticity in 1993 marked a critical moment in the history of conservation, as for the first time it sought the establishment of internationally applicable conservation principles with the inclusion of non-Western traditions and practices, addressing key areas such as "intangible cultural heritage, its cultural context and its evolution through time" (ICOMOS, 1993).

Although the HUL approach is still not formally recognized in the World Heritage Convention (Denison & Ren, 2022), the conceptual framework of HUL has promoted a more holistic approach to historic environments around the world, with an emphasis on the evolving layers of historic and social values of that spatio-temporal built fabric over time, rather than sticking to or returning to a particular time period. However, questions and arguments have emerged due to the 2011 Recommendation lacking coherent definitions, methods, and tools for the implementation of the HUL concept. Notably, HUL is predominantly focused on urban conservation and regeneration. Without a strategic vision for implementation frameworks, the HUL approach risks dissolving and remaining only an attempt to update conservation practices in the context of urbanity (Palaiologou & Fouseki, 2017). The ongoing, evolving, and progressive rural–urban transition in the evolving territories of the Global South requires a Southern theory to address the specific conditions and diversities in adopting and approaching HUL. Hosagrahar (2005) made a powerful start by reclaiming the Indigenous form of architecture, landscape, and city in, of, and from their respective modern ones. Robinson (2016) destabilised the Northern domination in theorising the urban by reimagining the southern practice of cities through comparative studies. Forster et al. (2018) highlighted the Western and Eastern conservation philosophical differences and cross-fertilisation on permanence/impermanence and tangibility/intangibility. H. B. Shin (2021) continued to question the core location of the theorising from de-centring Global East and South perspectives. Yiftachel and Mammon (2022) further stressed that in the South and East there are important roles for informal development and economies, religion, collective identities, and neocolonial processes that are often ignored by Northern theories. Woudstra et al. (2023) reminded the fundamental definition of landscape as the physical world as perceived by people, and which is the object of study, representation, design, and care to satisfy people's aesthetic, ethical, and other wants. O'Brien-Kop et al. (2024) echoed and embedded an Asia-centric perspective instead of the Euro-centric one in contemporary cultural heritage studies. More specifically, there has appeared an interconnected call for a "peri-urban turn" in recent architectural, geographical, and urban studies, with emphasis on reimagining urban–rural places through place narratives, human agency, and local worlds, instead of the existing research on flows and linkages (Rai & Singh, 2019; Rajendran et al., 2024; Ren, 2023; Tang, 2014).

From the above, and reflecting on how the HUL concept itself and its approach are deeply grounded in Eurocentric theories and predominantly urban precedents, this article conceptualises an alternative historic urban–rural landscape (HURL) theoretical framework, which opines that heritage-led conservation, regeneration, and development should follow a holistic approach to understand the HURL as an evolving spatio-temporal system that frames the historic environment of Southern place in transition (see Figure 1).

2. HURL

The ever-densifying and developing cities in the rapidly urbanising Global South are generally facing severe socio-cultural challenges driven by the rapid urbanisation and tourism development, including the loss of architectural heritage, social value, cultural memory, place identity, informal ecology, and economy in and around the HUL particularly. The HURL framework is conceptualised here to develop a more nuanced understanding of the relationships between both the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of HUL, rurality, rural–urban transition, as well as the local knowledge and ritual practices from the local community (Blundell-Jones, 2016). It is important to expand the notion of local knowledge and learn from place intelligence that has made the historical environments resilient and meaningful over centuries when the HULs are evaluated (Hosagrahar, 2021). Furthermore, it is crucial to follow a multilateral approach, which

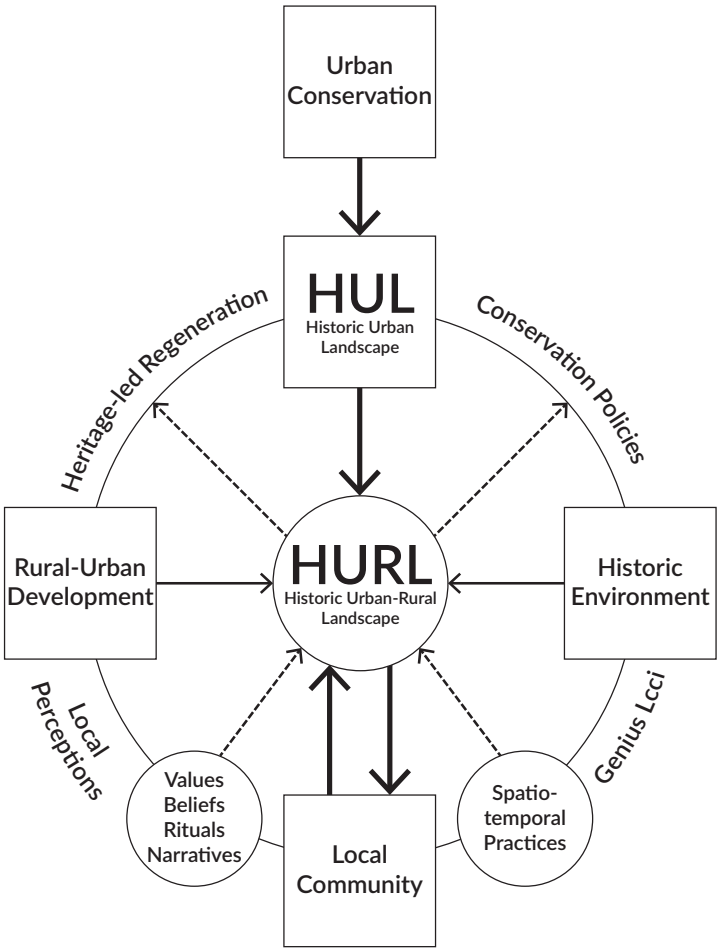

Figure 1. A diagram of HURL and its relational ecologies.

contains the determination of changes, not only about the growth and development through history but also the changes in society both at the local and national levels (Shin et al., 2015). Therefore, HURL aims to engage with contemporary issues about how relational practices can be deployed to alleviate the challenges that most cities of the Global South have already faced, or will confront in the near future, and what lessons can other HULs of the Global North learn from the South. By situating and developing spatio-temporal narratives from community perspectives on architecture, public space, and landscape in the wider socio-cultural and economic contexts of the Global South, the HURL framework includes the following four core approaches:

1. Close reading the urban–rural placemaking practices in the historic environments, predominantly in the present, via a spatio-temporal and urban-anthropological lens, investigating how and why those practices are operated and how they are continued and contested in the existing context;
2. Mapping the relational ecologies of the intangible cultural heritage through relating urban–rural landscape, public space, architecture, and ritual practices as an interconnected whole, and their multiple narratives in the rapid urbanisation, in order to provide an understanding of evolving spatio-temporal systems, contrasting them with the frozen urbanisation-based narratives;
3. Bringing together communities, academics, practitioners, and policymakers from different sectors to reflect on the evolving role and meaning of HURL in the rapidly urbanising Global South cities over time,

investigating what, why, and who determines the new yet contested interventions, for what end, and for whose benefit;

4. Addressing methodological issues and challenges of approaching intangible cultural heritage from a spatio-temporally perspective, particularly around issues of ethnographic fieldwork and community engagement by studying the intersection of cultural meaning and identity, historical and development contexts that are transitional in nature, framing the place narratives and consequent placemaking practices.

The HURL framework and approach builds on the critical position that the HURL and its associated intangible cultural heritage that evolved along the rural–urban transition, as a praxis and a verb, are socially constructed by the local communities. Exchanging and sharing knowledge from local policymakers and heritage experts is important, but local community's experience and knowledge in adapting the framework to their own development are more important. Who decides and who benefits matters most in local contexts. There might be some potential challenges while implementing the HURL framework, such as political resistance, funding constraints, or issues with community participation. In that regard, developing strategies to mitigate these challenges can strengthen the HURL framework's feasibility and practicality. These strategies include, for example, raising public awareness of the value and meaning of intangible cultural heritage in architecture, public space, and rural landscape as an integrated HURL; mapping different stories and community perspectives over time and how such narratives affect the decisions in the present context; and cultivating an inclusive model for future placemaking of marginalised, non-touristic heritage sites in the HURL of the Global South.

To test the validity of the proposed HURL framework and to analyse its strengths and potential challenges, an urban-anthropological study involving ethnographic observation, oral histories, and visual documentation was conducted in the city of Kathmandu, Nepal, particularly the Basantapur area, between 2023 and 2024. The city of Kathmandu was chosen as a "core location" (Baik, 2013), which is a strategic term coined by Young-Seo Baik and refers to a place with lived experiences of multiple layers of marginality from the Global North. Until the 18th century, the term Nepal was restricted to the Kathmandu Valley. Situated within the Himalayan mountainous and cultural area and interacting with the two great Asian religions of Hinduism and Buddhism in many ways, Kathmandu as a unique place is built upon Hindu, often combined with Buddhist, cosmological ideas (Toffin, 1997). As a cultural city originated from the 2nd Century BC, Kathmandu has experienced a long and layered development history that is strongly rooted in the socio-cultural cohesiveness and unique cultural practices, expressed through its many ancient temples, water conduits, and townscapes (Tiwari, 1990, 2010, 2015). Kathmandu preserves and presents a unique fusion of various rituals and religions that are attached to the historic urban–rural environment (see Figures 2 and 3) and its intangible cultural heritage (see Figures 4 and 5). Furthermore, this layered and fused urban process is still in transition. In more recent years, various projects in the Kathmandu Valley have touched upon the ethos of the HURL which resulted in revealing the impact of local community involvement; however, its reflection and impact on local policies are controversial (Bhatta & Chan, 2016; Chan & Bhatta, 2013). Together, these projects create the opportunity to analyse the modus operandi and learn from different strategies and narratives, which are related to both the past and the present of a transitional cultural heritage embedded in the HURL. Strategically, with Kathmandu's geographical situation and its rapid urbanisation, the city's economic development will be deeply bound to the strategic contribution from the HURL framework to the heritage-led regeneration.

Figure 2. Kathmandu's urban–rural landscape blends buildings, infrastructures, and mountains.

Figure 3. Kathmandu's informal spatio-temporal use in its historic environment.

Figure 4. The spatio-temporal flows and exchanges of Kathmandu's UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Figure 5. Kathmandu's placemaking based on a fusion of beliefs, rituals, space, and time.

3. Heritage and Development Context in Nepal

Economically, Nepal remains a disadvantaged country with an underwhelming situation despite enjoying a comparative advantage in tourism. The tourism sector, based on its rich natural and cultural heritage, is key to Nepal's economy: According to the *Nepal Tourism Statistics 2020* book, the country aims to attract more than 2.5 million tourists by 2025 (Nepal Government's Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, 2020). An enhanced approach to cultural heritage will be a key driver for meeting this national target, with a more sustainable tourism industry for Nepal, and for its sustainable cities and communities in the context of rapid urbanisation. Specifically, after the Covid-19 pandemic, a positive update evidenced by the Department of Immigration shows that there has been a significant increase in tourism, with a registered 326,667 international tourists visiting Nepal from January to August 2022 (Nepal Government's Department of Immigration, 2022). This provides a timely opportunity to rethink and redevelop strategies and approaches to the architectural heritage in Nepal, in particular Kathmandu. Nepal's 16th Plan aims to decrease people living under the poverty line and the multidimensional poverty index from 20% to 12% by 2028. One of the key strategies is to unveil and preserve the built heritage along with the associated intangible components like arts, street festivals, religious activities, spirituality, and the HUL. With the greater authority given to local government after declaring Nepal as a federal-democratic nation in 2015, the HURL framework and approach creates a promising space for development justice for the disadvantaged local communities and their cultural meanings, and simultaneously for relieving the pressure from the commercialisation of heritage and their museumification as stagnant artefacts.

Socially and culturally, Nepal, especially Kathmandu, knows about preserving its heritage since the medieval period, as can be seen, for example, in the *Guthi* system, a cultural disposition. *Guthi* is a Nepali term for the system of organised institutions historically created to enhance the standard of living of the people (Tang et al., 2014). The tangible and intangible cultural heritage of Kathmandu has been globally recognized, evidenced by its tourism industry's steadily bouncing back from the earthquake and the pandemic. In today's heritage-conservation paradigm, this is comparable to the community-led grassroots movements, with the key actors always being local communities. Projects, like the Parya Sampada in Bungamati and the Pro-Poor

Urban Regeneration Pilot Project in Lalitpur, have the ethos of the HUL and integrate cultural meaning, identity, and most importantly, local people's cultural disposition. Together, they build a coherent narrative of the historic landscape, connecting historicity to the community's prosperity. Yet, these experiences have a limited impact on policies and on heritage researchers: They still tend to see heritage as artefacts detached from the community's everyday lives, and historic landscape in conflict with the aspirations of a more top-down urbanisation. On the other hand, there were some community-based projects in Kathmandu that managed to achieve an impact on the government with a bottom-up approach as well. A good example is the restoration of Ashok Chaitya in Thamel, which was one of the first projects performed by a community initiative. The project started with the initiative of a resident and, in a short period of time, the restoration of the temple was finished, with the help of funds sourced both from the municipality and the volunteers, with the remaining funds being kept for future maintenance. Furthermore, local artisans also worked with discounted rates, and other participants worked voluntarily as well (Lekakis et al., 2018). Another example is the reconstruction of the Kasthamandap building. After the 2015 earthquake, a group of self-motivated locals successfully campaigned for the reconstruction of the structure in order for the government to prioritise the rebuilding process and demanded a community-led construction (Joshi et al., 2021). While in the first example, the community partly worked in the construction process, in the second example, the community was more involved by their campaigning to the government for timely reconstruction and the transparency of the contracting process. However, both examples are based on individual buildings.

The HURL framework is thus conceptualised within this evolving context of economy, culture, and society in Nepal. It enhances a shifted focus from approaching heritage buildings, gardens, and intangible practices separately to a more integrated and layered HURL, reframing and rebranding the transitional historic environment of Kathmandu as a whole form of cultural heritage. The HURL framework also addresses Nepal's cultural apprehensions of historic cities and the demand for tourism and development-based economic prosperity of the local community in an integrated manner. Additionally, the HURL framework reintroduces the value and significance of the community's perspective on their own historic environment, which will generate wider awareness and deeper care from the inside.

To explore these dynamics, this article takes Basantapur, the historic city centre of Kathmandu and also the site of the Kathmandu Durbar Square—one of the World Heritage Sites listed by UNESCO in 2003—as a focused case study. The three Durbar squares of Kathmandu Valley—Kathmandu Durbar Square, Patan Durbar Square, and Bhaktapur Durbar Square—along with their surrounding areas represent a key HURL within the Kathmandu Metropolitan area (see Figure 6). These changing sites are essential for understanding the ongoing transition and transformation of the socio-cultural system shaped by the multiple interactions between rapid urbanisation, modernisation, tourism development, cultural heritage preservation, and the continuation of spatio-temporal narratives, rituals, and living heritage. Rapid urbanisation and densification within the Kathmandu Valley have led to the construction of modern structures and the commercialisation of parts of historically significant areas, replacing traditional livelihoods and local community practices with tourism-oriented and market-driven development (Singh & Dhakal, 2024). This process of the rural-to-urban transformation has intensified after the 2015 Gorkha earthquake, which further increases the fragility of this HURL, highlighting the precarity and challenges of maintaining cultural memory and place identity amid post-disaster reconstruction (Lekakis et al., 2018). Among the three Durbar squares in the Kathmandu Valley, Kathmandu Durbar Square of Basantapur has been particularly affected by densification and commercialisation pressure, leading to an inevitable and irreversible changing use of space, as the site is

Figure 6. Kathmandu Valley administrative areas.

situated within the city's central business district (KC et al., 2019). The dynamism of this changing HURL makes it a compelling site for examining the complex interplay between HURL, rapid urbanisation, heritage conservation, and the local community's agency and living tradition.

4. Case Study of Basantapur, Kathmandu

The urban-anthropological approach to Basantapur as a transitional place takes root on the site-specific temporal and spatial practices through street and night market vendors in and around this core location. It involves ethnographic observation, oral history collection, and visual documentation of the spatial configuration and reconfiguration, temporary appropriation and reappropriation in this cultural and heritage site, both during daily routines and special festival seasons. Basantapur is the historic city centre of Kathmandu and its extended area continues to be so to date (see Figure 7). Its Durbar Square as a UNESCO World Heritage Site has been both a major tourist destination and a very crucial gathering place for the citizens of Kathmandu, acting as the nexus of cultural, economic, and social activities enclosed and exposed by its architecture and spatio-temporal juxtapositions (see Figure 8). It exudes a blend of both rural and urban characters, making it a dynamic urban–rural landscape for locals and tourists. The physical form of this evolving urban–rural landscape is composed of heritage, commercial, residential, social, and civic buildings, temples, monuments, courtyards, narrow alleys, open market spaces, parks, and bustling streets. This HURL showcases a rich tapestry of social and cultural heritage while also embracing the ever-evolving modernisation of urban life.

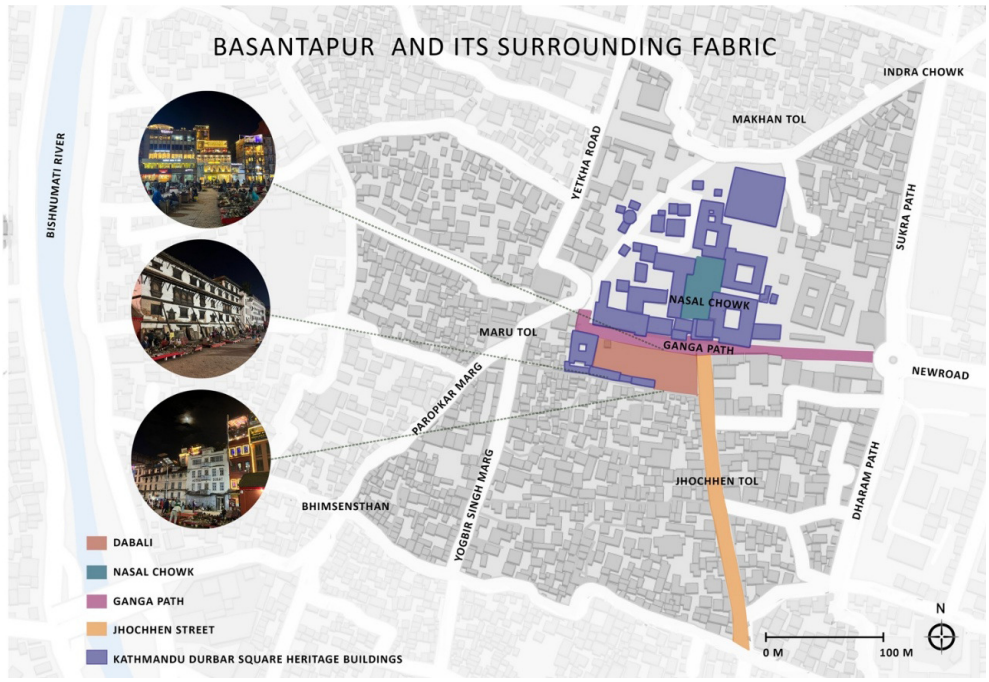

Figure 7. Basantapur and its surrounding fabric.

Figure 8. The spatio-temporal juxtaposition in the historic environment of the Durbar Square UNESCO World Heritage Site.

From an anthropological vantage point, the interpretative lens cast upon Basantapur evokes a pivotal query: Is the heritage of this vibrant locale undergoing reclamation, revitalisation, reconstruction, or indeed rebuilding? Each of these trajectories entails a distinctive vision, ethos, and methodological approach. The prevailing narrative and empirical scenario of Basantapur indicate that it is in a perpetual state of rebuilding its heritage, particularly in the aftermath of the 2015 earthquake. Historically, Basantapur has constantly been a nexus of vibrant cultural exchanges, activities, and life experiences catering to a diverse populace from hippies to devotees, locals to tourists, and vendors to strollers (Morimoto, 2015; Simone,

1989). Even after the earthquake, rebuilding its foundational heritage remains incessant. The amalgamation of contemporary edifices and practices within this historical site has lately been a subject of discourse and regular dialogue, critiqued for its perceived deviation from heritage as a discordant clash of cultures or as an encroachment upon the purity of heritage. Yet, it becomes pivotal to underscore that heritage and tradition, both in essence and practice, are inherently dynamic, an evolving construct, and not confined solely to architectural expressions.

Heritage fundamentally represents a selective product of a curated assemblage validated by societal consensus, while cultural heritage embodies an expression of living modalities, engendered by a community and transmitted intergenerationally, inclusive of practices, customs, rituals, locales, artistic renditions, tangible artefacts, and entrenched values (ICOMOS, 2002). By this axiom, for Basantapur's cultural heritage in transition, it could be postulated that it is being dynamically rebuilt and continued, bridging between its traditional roots and the imperatives of modern-day practices. This dialogue in both visual and experiential capacity refers to the interplay between tangible and intangible heritage of Basantapur, as observed through its architectural landscape, cultural practices and lived experiences of the people synchronously engaging with modernity, thereby shaping a continuum that is, in equal measure, a continuity to its resilient past, a reflection of its vibrant present, and a conscious navigation to its aspired promising future.

Basantapur, along with its contiguous vicinities, exemplifies an intricate confluence of historical continuity and contemporary urban–rural metamorphosis. Historically, the Dabali—an open public platform—has steadfastly served as an expansive canvas for vendors to showcase and sell local culinary delights, Indigenous crafts, and various artefacts to both Indigenous patrons and global tourists. Furthermore, this vibrant marketplace and communal space have expanded beyond its traditional role, metamorphosising into a dynamic epicentre for myriad community-centric engagements, ranging from festive commemorations, community programs and talks, twilight congregations, and other socio-cultural confluences. While modalities of these engagements have undergone temporal evolutions, Dabali's foundational role as a societal fulcrum remains unaltered (Chitrakar et al., 2017). Drawing a historic juxtaposition, Jhochhen once thrummed with a vibrant milieu comprising a mélange of native residents, transient travellers, myriad shops, and eclectic cafes patronised by both local denizens and the global bohemian populace. While certain erstwhile practices, such as sanctioned cannabis-centric establishments, may have waned, the street's inherent dynamism endures manifesting in bustling eateries (from local to global cuisine), avant-garde establishments, and an architectural juxtaposition of contemporary designs and Newari edifices.

On the way from Jhochhen to the Dabali, one witnesses devout individuals invariably converge upon various revered sanctuaries like the Taleju and Maju Dega Temple, among many other temples. Concurrently, both denizens and transient visitors often find moments of reflection, solace, and camaraderie on the temple steps and around the iconic Kasthamandap—the seminal wooden pavilion that bequeathed Kathmandu its nomenclature. Adjacent to the Dabali stands the majestic Hanuman Dhoka, a regal edifice tracing its lineage to the 17th century, that has been meticulously restored post its seismic tribulations. Although it has been repurposed as a museum prior to the aforementioned calamity, it now magnanimously anchors the vicinity, serving as both a historic tableau and a repository of narratives for its audience. A characteristic facet of Basantapur is its predominantly pedestrian-centric ethos during daylight hours, with restricted vehicular ingress post-sundown. This vehicular hiatus proffers a unique experiential dichotomy amidst the urbanity of Kathmandu's city centre characterised by vehicular cacophonies. The serpentine alleys punctuated by a

medley of commercial establishments, vernacular brick domiciles, and contemporary infrastructures encapsulate the very soul of Basantapur. This confluence of historical echoes, the palpable present, and a glimpse of forthcoming epochs collectively enshrine the HURL and living tradition of Basantapur.

4.1. Civic and Ceremonial Traditions in Basantapur

As for its rural character, the Basantapur area is replete with intricately carved wooden windows and doors, pagoda-style tiered temples, and stone sculptures, with its HURL telling the tales of Kathmandu's distant and recent pasts. The narrow streets and alleys, small tea shops, local handicraft vendors, traditional Newari food stalls, the warm hospitality of locals, social gatherings on temple steps, shop fronts, and open market offer a glimpse and experience of traditional lifestyles, rituals, and customs that have continued over generations. Basantapur possesses a longstanding tradition of sustained civic and ceremonial practices that intensely contribute to the symbolic construction of its HURL. These ritual practices are deeply rooted in the Newar community's beliefs and values that have endured for centuries, embedding themselves into the physical and social fabric of the area. Serving as a focal point for various civic ceremonies, Basantapur integrates elements of community gatherings, religious devotion, cultural identity, social cohesion, and commercial engagement, affirming its significance as both a sacred site and a dynamic living heritage site. The HURL of Basantapur continually embodies a symbolic fusion of its historicity with the contemporary socio-cultural agency of its community, through the following five major transient ritual movements and practices (see Figure 9).

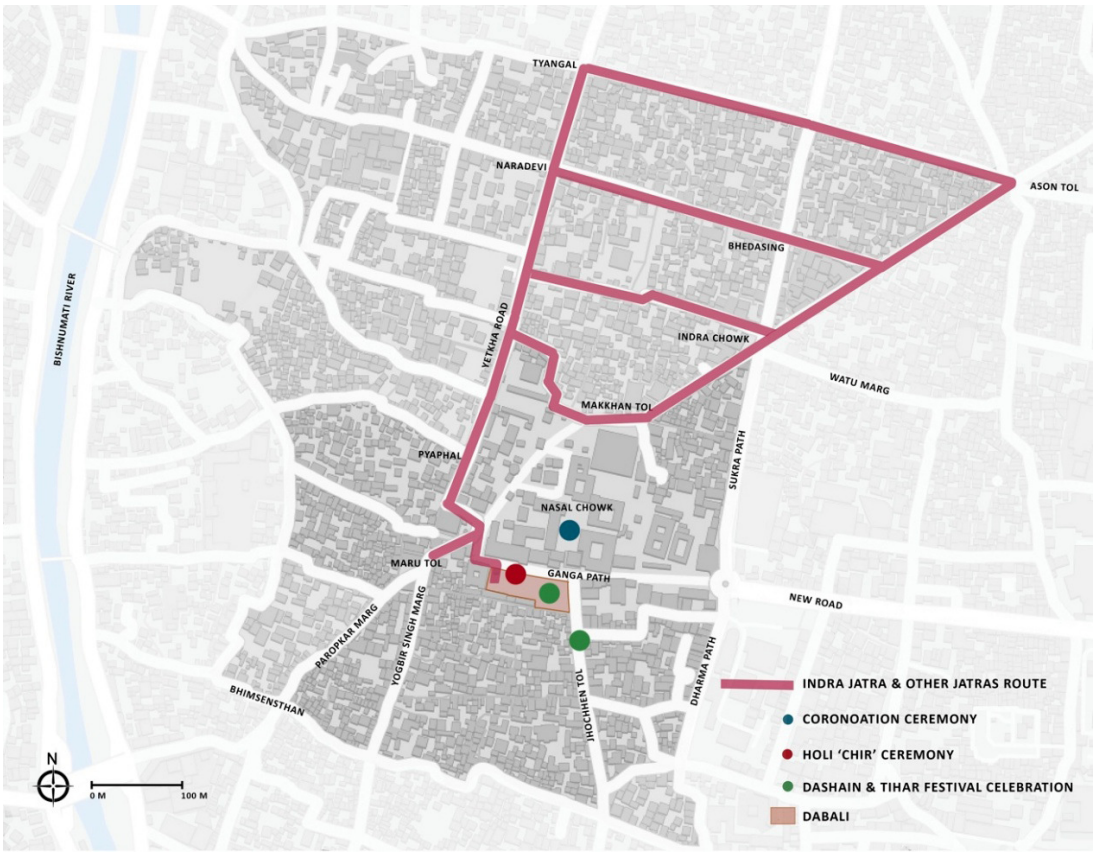

Figure 9. Kathmandu's temporary ritual practices across its transient HURL.

4.1.1. Indra Jatra Festival

Celebrated each year for eight days in September, Indra Jatra is one of Kathmandu's most significant festivals, honouring Lord Indra, the deity of rain and the heavens. The festival marks the end of the monsoon season. This festival includes processions, masked dances, and the chariot parade of the Living Goddess Kumari through Basantapur and its surrounding—Ganga Path, Maru Tol, Pyaphak, Yetkha, Indra Chowk, Ason, and more, paying homage to the old Kathmandu. This festival not only strengthens religious beliefs but also reaffirms communal bonds, symbolically linking urban and rural residents and merchants for the celebrations (Nyaupane, 2024). Over the course of the eight-day festival, Basantapur further transforms into a hub of religious, cultural, social, and commercial activity preserving its historic urban–rural heritage.

4.1.2. Dashain and Tihar Celebrations

These Hindu festivals, typically celebrated in October and November, bring unique expressions of faith and celebration to Basantapur. During Dashain, sacrificial rituals and blessings are hosted, drawing participants from diverse urban and rural backgrounds. Concurrently, events such as street concerts and food festivals are organised in Jochhen, Dabali, and Ganga Path. Tihar, the festival of lights, illuminates the homes, shops, cafes, restaurants, and temples of Basantapur. Streets are lively with people shopping, dining, and participating in celebrations. These celebrations have been reinforcing the social bond, community resilience, and the symbolic urban–rural landscape of Basantapur (Sengupta, 2023).

4.1.3. Holi

The vibrant Hindu festival of colours, celebrated in February or March, brightens Basantapur as community members and visitors all across Kathmandu, Nepal, and other parts of the world come together to celebrate spring and renewal. Festivities begin with the installation of the *Chir*, a ceremonial bamboo bole adorned with colourful cloth strips at Ganga Path, signifying the start of Holi in the Kathmandu Valley. On the main day of Holi, Basantapur becomes a vibrant scene of joy as people play with powdered colours and water and celebrate it like a mass party with music and dance. This mass Holi party is followed by the Chir Dahan ceremony, a communal event in the evening, drawing together residents and visitors to participate in taking down and ceremonially burning the *Chir* along with the offerings they had brought. This act symbolises the victory of good over evil, and the ashes from the burned *Chir* are often considered auspicious, which the residents and visitors collect, believing they will bring good fortune. These events at Basantapur during Holi underscore the symbolic construction of the HURL.

4.1.4. Jatras and Kumari

Throughout the year, various *Jatras* (ritual processions) and community gatherings are held in Basantapur, especially at Dabali and Ganga Path, as they honour numerous Hindu and Buddhist deities. Processions such as Seto Machindranath Jatra and Bhoto Jatra still follow ancient routes and draw wide community participation, connecting the area's social and religious life within this urban–rural landscape (Nyaupane, 2024). The *Kumari*, or Living Goddess, is a prepubescent girl worshipped as the earthly manifestation of the goddess Taleju in Nepal, particularly by the Newar community. The most prominent *Kumari* resides in the Kumari Ghar, a beautifully carved traditional building in Kathmandu Durbar Square. Selected through a

rigorous process based on physical and spiritual criteria, the *Kumari* serves as a cultural and religious symbol, bridging Hindu and Buddhist traditions. She plays a significant role in festivals like Indra Jatra, where her blessings are believed to bring prosperity and protection.

4.1.5. Coronation Ceremonies

Nasal Chowk within Kathmandu Durbar Square has historically served as the coronation site for Nepalese monarchs due to its deep cultural, historical, and religious significance. This tradition dates back to the Malla period, when the courtyard functioned as a primary venue for royal events and governance. The Shah dynasty maintained this tradition, and the architecture of Nasal Chowk contributed to its appropriateness as a coronation venue until the last monarch (King Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev).

4.2. Basantapur as a Living Heritage: The Fusion of Tradition, Urbanisation, and Resilience

Beyond the above sacred events and community gatherings, Basantapur is also a place for secularised political gatherings, charity events, food camps, and cultural performances, which further contribute to the ongoing symbolic construction of its HURL. It is noteworthy that the above-mentioned traditional cultural practices, festivals, and rituals of the Newar community are an integral part of the rural identity of Basantapur. The vivid festival and ritual celebrations inside the houses, on the streets, and in open spaces animate the atmosphere with vibrancy, celebration, and pride, and are reminiscent of the lifeworld from the historic eras. Locals clad in traditional attire perform age-old rituals through dance, performance, prayers, and collective activities at home and then on the streets, paying homage to their deities and strengthening the bond with their traditions and cultural roots with no distinctions of inside or outside, architecture or landscape, rural or urban (see Figure 10).

Entangled with its rural character, Basantapur also embraces the modernisation and urbanisation that have spread across Kathmandu's urban core and its peri-urban areas. Within this historic landscape, there are

Figure 10. Dabali, Basantapur: temporary night market transforming the public space by fusing rural and urban elements in the same time-space.

evolving and emerging facilities such as bustling markets, commercial hubs, banks, modern cafes and restaurants serving diverse cuisines to locals and tourists, newly built residences, and contemporary boutique shops of traditional handicrafts, clothing, and merchandise. This juxtaposition reflects this HURL's adaptability to changing times and the coexistence of rural and urban characteristics is vividly evident in the local everyday use. It coalesces to produce an enchanting landscape that celebrates the essence of Kathmandu's identity and its living heritage, where traditions persist alongside contemporary influences in the daily lives of its residents. In this coexistence, some residents and shop owners adhere strictly to their traditional cultural practices, while others embrace and practise a cosmopolitan way of life. This dynamic and harmonious blending constructs a diverse community where the old and new, rural and urban intermingle seamlessly. It is precisely this dynamism of ever-evolving social-cultural practices, values, micro-economies, and infrastructure that presents the living tradition from the past into the present time and might also inform the future.

This HURL experienced a physical, psychological, and temporal rupture when the 2015 Gorkha-epicentered earthquake's devastating force left Basantapur, with its many heritage sites, centuries-old temples, palaces, and traditional residential and commercial buildings, in ruins. This catastrophe not only endangered the cultural heritage of Basantapur but also rendered many local residents homeless, commercial users out of business, and other users bereft of social space. In the aftermath of the earthquake, there was an urgent need not only for a comprehensive redevelopment strategy to reestablish the authenticity of Basantapur's cultural heritage and significance, but also to reconstruct its socio-cultural infrastructure. This is because Basantapur is a living heritage site where the socio-cultural and economic systems are deeply woven with its HURL. The socio-cultural system in Basantapur revolves around communal ties and collective identities, which are central to maintaining its living tradition. However, the political situation of Nepal during that period was marked by instability, which went through a period of transition and constitutional reforms. This political uncertainty and bureaucratic hurdles hindered an immediate response to Basantapur's redevelopment, due to delayed decision-making, funding challenges, and competing governmental priorities (Lotter, 2021). This piqued international interest, leading to a collaborative endeavour involving the government of Nepal and the Chinese Academy of Cultural Heritage, alongside other national and international organisations. Consequently, Basantapur has been restored to operational status. However, an imperative now emerges for an anthropological examination that delves into the palpable and intangible dimensions characterising the current operational state of this HURL within the Kathmandu Valley.

The celebrated precinct of Basantapur amidst the vibrant tapestry of Kathmandu, acclaimed for its multifarious architectural aesthetics, is not solely an immutable architectural heritage showcase. Instead, it can be construed as an effervescent urban–rural milieu, where the vestiges of pre-modern tradition and the influx of modern urbanity coalesce harmoniously. The spatio-temporal dynamics and everyday activities of Basantapur reveal its multi-temporal strata in its HURL, adroitly juxtaposing its preserved historical edifices against a set of earthquake-ravaged structures along with those under reconstruction, intermingled with nascent modern constructions. This eclectic concoction of varying structural epochs infuses the locality of Basantapur with such a magnetic energy that attracts everybody including the devotees, merchants, vendors, tourists, artisans, and residents, each actively partaking in diverse activities, thus collectively weaving a placemaking narrative of heritage, resilience, transformation, continuity, perpetuity, and vivacity. However, in contemporary Basantapur, the placemaking narrative is also interlaced with the recurring themes of disaster, development strides, deceptions, authenticity, dislocations, and all in all, time.

5. Discussion

The established HUL approach effectively treats urban heritage as a social, cultural, and economic asset for the development of cities—it was not effectively designed to be implemented in historic cities with strong rural connections, often seen in the Global South. Rural-to-urban places tend to have more complex dynamics, which do not easily follow a singular approach but require an embedded approach towards its complexities and multiplicities. While the HUL framework is sensitive towards local community values, its fundamental epistemological system is still dominated by Eurocentric modes, which is not adequate enough to prevent the reduction of the local lifeworld to singularity. There has been local debates on the lack of attention towards the intangible values of heritage in the HUL approach, specifically while implementing it in non-Western contexts (Singh et al., 2020). In the case of Nepal, this disjunction can be noticed from various practices that were implemented before and after the earthquake of 2015. Local people made and sold wood carving products on the ground floor of their premises in their workshops until the earthquake damaged or destroyed these places. Projects such as Parya Sampada, funded by the European Union's SWITCH-Asia Programme, tried to assist the Nepal Government in rebuilding and revitalising the tangible and intangible heritages of Bungamati (Poudel, 2022). However, just rebuilding the buildings might generate more problems than it solves. The locals require a different narrative for their new setting, not only for actively preserving their intangible heritage for achieving sustainable tourism as a long-term goal but for keeping the intangible heritage alive for their own cultural continuity. The continuity of cultural heritage can only be achieved by making the past a part of the future—but making the present a part of the future is also essential (Thurley, 2005). In that regard, even though projects which are designed to support governmental organisations and locals for heritage preservation are important for preserving tangible values, intangible values need a more specific theoretically informed approach which keeps places alive. This is when and where the HURL approach is needed. It provides an alternative framing which is fundamentally based on the present, consisting of components in transition and layering.

6. Conclusion

This article proposes a methodological concept and framework to approach to the Global South cities and their transitional historic environment, via an original HURL conceptualisation and framing Kathmandu as a core location. The article promotes a more holistic approach of understanding an evolving city through spatio-temporal systems constructed by, and a lifeworld embedded in, the community's practices, manifested in the HURL not either-or, but both-and urban–rural. This will be foundational to engage in a deeper reading of an interconnected range of places and placemaking practices in Kathmandu at the moment, including but not limited to: the Durbar Square World Heritage Site; traditional temples and courtyards and their associated intangible cultural practices; traditional water-based heritage such as the stone spouts and *Hitis*; historic rural settlements located at the periphery of the Kathmandu core area; public festivals; and the heritage management system of *Guthis*. At another level, the HURL framework and approach contributes to the complex registers and enquiries on the spatio-temporal assemblages to produce Southern places and ways of knowing the non-western world-making in the disciplines of architecture, human geography, urban heritage, and development studies, by theorizing Kathmandu's Basantapur as a transitional core location. Via a similar close reading of their own placemaking through time and the lifeworld constituted and embedded in the placemaking practice, the historic environment of other Southern places can benefit from the HURL framework due to its inherently conflicted nature, and produce new material forms and intensities, in turn enriching its continuous iteration and reiteration towards the

anthropological interpretation and urban transformation of habitable life beyond the Eurocentric tradition and paradigms.

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Conflict of Interests

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About the Authors

Xiang Ren (PhD) teaches and researches architectural theory and design at the University of Sheffield's School of Architecture and Landscape, with a particular focus on the endangered built and cultural heritage of the Global East. With Jan Woudstra, he leads the School's research unit *East–West Studies in Architecture and Landscape* from 2018 and co-edited the book *Case Studies in Architecture and Landscape: Expanding the Legacy of Peter Blundell Jones* (Routledge, 2025).

Sangeeta Singh (PhD) is a professor in urban planning and has been teaching for more than 27 years at the Institute of Engineering of Tribhuvan University. She was the director of the Centre for Applied Research and Development at the Institute of Engineering, a member of the National Planning Commission in the Government of Nepal in 2023 and 2024, and was involved in the preparation of the 16th National Plan and the 3rd VNR National Report.

Abhishek Bhutoria is a Nepali doctoral researcher and a Grantham scholar based at Sheffield. Academically, he has an architecture and urban design background and concurrently built an interest in rural discourses. This interest and curiosity led him to pursue a PhD at the Sheffield School of Architecture and Landscape, focusing on architecture, households, domestic life, socio-cultural processes, and the newly rebuilt Himalayan villages of Nepal.

Huriye Armağan Doğan (PhD) is an architect with specialisation in cultural heritage protection and a scientific researcher. Before her full-time scientific occupation, she practised as an architect in Turkey in various restoration projects. She worked at Kaunas University of Technology between 2017–2024. She currently works at the University of Sheffield. Her research interests are adaptive reuse, preservation and perception of cultural heritage, early 20th century architecture, and cultural memory.

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ARTICLE

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"Where Is the Time?": Time Poverty and Women's Urban Mobility Narratives in Kochi, India

Fathima Zehba M. P. [1], Lakshmi Priya Rajendran [2], and Mohammed Firoz C. [1]

[1] Department of Architecture and Planning, National Institute of Technology Calicut, India
[2] Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London, UK

Correspondence: Fathima Zehba M. P. (fathimazehba81@gmail.com)

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Abstract

Time poverty disproportionately affects urban women due to the societal expectations of balancing their work and gender roles. In urban environments, women's time use is significantly influenced by their daily mobility experiences. Despite a wealth of existing research on time use and mobility, mostly in developed countries, understanding gendered dimensions of mobility and time poverty in cities of developing nations remains unexplored. Using Tiznado Aitken et al.'s (2024) integrated time use framework, the study explores how necessary, committed, contracted, and travel time collectively shape the daily routines of low-income women workers in Kochi City, India. The method involves qualitative analysis of in-depth interviews conducted during December 2022–January 2023. Interview analysis highlights entrenched gender roles disproportionately burdening women with unpaid domestic and caregiving responsibilities, leading to severe time poverty among low-income working women. The study also identifies how time poverty is exacerbated by travel constraints and access to transport services. This study substantially strengthens the literature on time poverty and gendered time use, emphasising the necessity for institutional reforms to elevate the quality of life for urban women workers. The findings presented hold implications for urban planning, transportation policy, and social equity initiatives aimed at enhancing accessibility and inclusivity within cities of the Global South.

Keywords

gendered mobility; gendered time poverty; urban women; work–life balance

1. Introduction

What does it truly mean to "start the day early," and why do some women find themselves compelled to do so perpetually? It may seem difficult to imagine the reality of waking before dawn daily juggling household duties, productive labour, and lengthy commutes to work. Yet, this is the lived experience of many working women in Kochi, Kerala, India. In this article, we use these women's stories to unveil the often-overlooked gendered interplay of mobility and time poverty.

Time poverty refers to the condition of having more tasks than the time available to complete them (Rodgers, 2023). This phenomenon arises from a confluence of institutional, societal, organisational, and psychological factors, with gender playing a pivotal role (Giurge et al., 2020). Institutional factors include inefficient public service delivery and a lack of policy awareness regarding individuals' time burdens. Organisational factors encompass time pressures imposed by employers, such as ideal worker norms, inflexible work hours, and administrative burdens. Societal factors emerge from cultural expectations that disproportionately allocate household duties to women, thereby exacerbating their time poverty (Rodgers, 2023).

In the transportation field, Lucas (2012) places time poverty as one of five interconnected dimensions of transport poverty, namely mobility poverty, accessibility poverty, transport affordability, and exposure to externalities. This can be called transport-related time poverty, which is influenced by factors such as housing location, transport availability, and activity locations, all of which can lead to social isolation or intensify poverty (Lucas, 2011, 2012; Schwanen et al., 2015). Although there have been studies on time poverty in the context of transport research, few have approached this from a gendered perspective. Turner and Grieco (2000) were one among them to study how women face time poverty through complex and poorly resourced trips compared to men. Their research pointed to the necessity of improved social policies and transport solutions to alleviate the burden on single mothers transitioning into the workforce. However, gendered time use is a widely researched area and has become a crucial aspect of transport planning research. In the transport domain, time use extends beyond mere travel duration (Chidambaram & Scheiner, 2023; Sweet & Kanaroglou, 2016). Time use or time allocation/budgeting studies provide insights into how individuals distribute their time among various activities, which is instrumental in designing efficient public transport schedules and systems (Kitamura et al., 1997). Unsurprisingly, research has consistently shown that men and women exhibit different time use patterns, which in turn influence their travel behaviours (Zhong et al., 2012). It is widely evident that women's mobility patterns are shaped by their gender roles and socioeconomic factors, with safety concerns and societal norms leading to multiple, longer commutes for them (Jones, 1983; Macedo et al., 2022; Pooley, 2009). Women's time poverty is often aggravated by barriers such as longer commute times, longer waiting periods, and unreliable services, impacting their overall well-being and daily routines (Sweet & Kanaroglou, 2016). Understanding these complex mobility patterns and their intersection with time is crucial for equitable urban transport planning and policymaking.

Time use, travel behaviour, and time poverty all exhibit distinct gendered differences (Bardasi & Wodon, 2010; Bittman, 2002). The interplay between these dimensions, and specifically how gendered time poverty intersects with gendered travel behaviour, requires further exploration. Few studies have examined time poverty in the context of travel behaviour, explicitly delving into transport-related time-poverty issues. Exploring the temporal aspect of transport poverty may provide new insights into both the time use and transportation fields of research. While developed countries have explored these dynamics, there is a

notable gap in research from the developing world, particularly in the Indian context. Thus, our study aims to address this gap by using the daily experiences of low-income working women in Kochi, a city in southern India, to examine time poverty in connection to travel behaviour through a gendered lens.

This article is part of a larger study investigating factors influencing women's mobility in urban environments of the developing world, with a specific focus on Kochi City. The broader study reveals critical aspects of gendered implications on everyday mobility, including safety concerns, infrastructural barriers, and caregiving roles. However, the current study only delves into how underprivileged women's time use and travel behaviour are mutually related and how their mobility experiences in the city aggravate their time poverty. The subsequent sections of this article will provide a review of the existing literature on "time and mobility" and "time poverty," followed by the conceptual framework adopted and a detailed description of the qualitative methodology employed in this study. The findings and discussion section will present key insights from participant interviews, illustrating their daily routines. We interpret these findings, linking them with existing research on the challenges women face in balancing time, work, and mobility, and will offer broader implications for planning and policy. The article concludes with a summary of the study's relevance and recommendations for future research.

2. Women and Time Poverty in the Developing World

Time, unlike income or consumption that can increase and improve well-being, is a finite resource (Lindskog & Brege, 2002). In capitalist societies, time is often equated with economic value, emphasising its importance in shaping transport behaviours (Urry, 2000). When more time is consumed by paid and unpaid activities, less remains for rest and leisure. This makes time crucial, as an individual's well-being depends not only on their income level but also on their available time and capability for recreation and rest (Bardasi & Wodon, 2010). In this context, the concept of time poverty emerged as a significant extension of time-use studies in the late 1990s. The gendered dimensions of time use have always been an interest to researchers. This should be understood in line with women's gender roles, care obligations, and division of labour. Across societies, women are assumed primary caregivers and responsible for reproductive labour, whilst men dominate paid labour and leisure activities (Berg & Woods, 2009; Guberman et al., 1992; Jenkins, 1997). This "care burden" often limits women's mobility, restricts their participation in the labour market, and exacerbates their time poverty. Studies have consistently shown gender disparities in experiencing time poverty as a result of this unequal and unpaid burden of household work owing to women's gender roles (Hyde et al., 2020). Chatzitheochari and Arber (2012) emphasise the importance of conducting class- and gender-based analyses of time use and point out that working women experience severe time poverty among British workers. While most of the research is based on developed countries' scenarios, a few also investigated women's time use poverty in developing countries where time poverty has been studied with a focus on rural settings. Arora (2015) found that women in rural Mozambique experience significant time poverty due to household responsibilities, despite equal labour market participation. Similar findings are reported from Pakistan (Najam-us-Saqib & Arif, 2012) and West Africa, including Nigeria and Senegal (Adeyeye et al., 2021; Marter-Kenyon et al., 2023). These studies highlight the extensive nature of women's activities, which span across farming, trading, cooking, and domestic work, contributing to their time poverty.

In India, research on gendered time poverty has gained prominence following the 2019 National Time Use Survey, revealing that 1 in 10 working Indians suffers from time poverty, with rural women being more

affected than their urban counterparts (Jaggi & Gupta, 2023). As per the National Sample Survey Office Time Use Survey 2020, women spend significantly more time on unpaid household work compared to men, underscoring the ongoing discourse on gendered division of labour and disparities in unpaid reproductive labour. The burden of unpaid work, particularly after marriage, exacerbates women's time poverty, impacting their well-being (Brahma, 2024; Sahu, 2024). Specifically in Kerala, Krishna (2024) identified the intensified burden on working mothers during the Covid-19 pandemic, leading to increased time poverty and deteriorated well-being. While quantitative studies on women's time poverty are available in India, there is a pressing need for qualitative research to provide a deeper understanding of women's experiences of time poverty within specific socio-cultural contexts. This article addresses this gap by examining the lived experiences of low-income working women in Kochi, India, offering insights into their time use characteristics and daily mobility and contributing to the broader discourse on gendered time use in the Global South.

3. Conceptual Framework: Time Poverty and Transportation

This article builds on the conceptual framework proposed by Tiznado Aitken et al. (2024), to explain how transportation contributes to time poverty. Time poverty in most research is commonly linked to the foundational time use theory of Becker (1965), which examines how individuals allocate limited time to competing activities. Tiznado Aitken et al. (2024) integrate the classical time use framework of Harvey and Pentland (2002) and Zacharias (2011) with the transport-related social exclusion framework of Lucas (2012) to understand time poverty in a mobility context. This framework, as illustrated in Figure 1, encompasses five categories of time to analyse an individual's weekly or daily free time availability. "Necessary time" is for essential activities like sleeping, eating, and hygiene. "Committed time" covers unpaid responsibilities such as housework and caring for dependents. "Contracted time" is allocated to paid work or education, which is usually time-bound and considered productive. "Travel time," the transport-related addition to the classic time use framework, accounts for commuting to and from activities, primarily work or education. Finally,

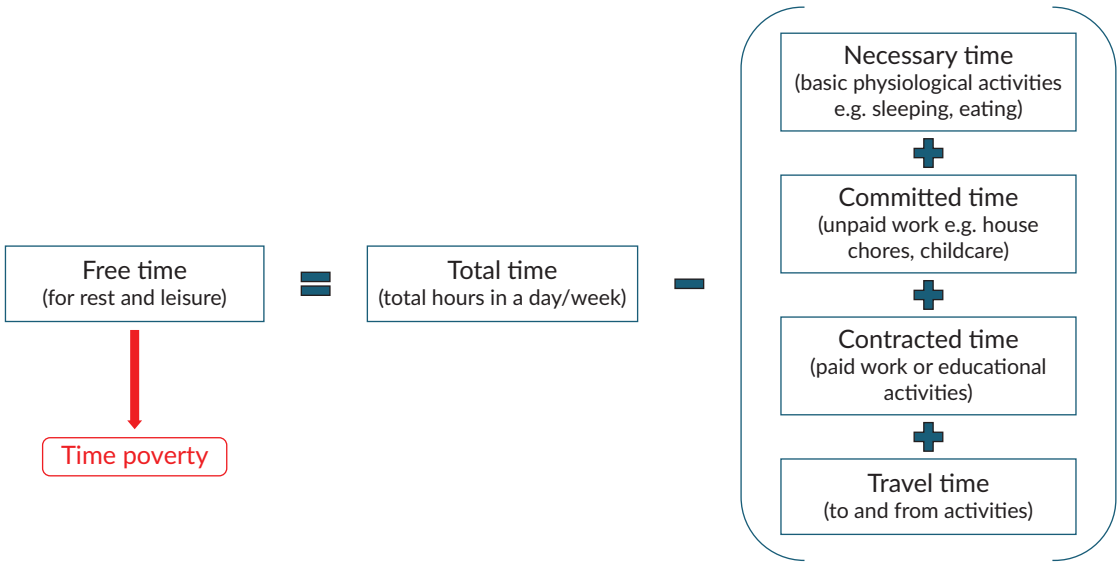

Figure 1. Conceptual framework explaining time poverty in a mobility context. Source: Adapted from Tiznado Aitken et al. (2024).

"free time" is what remains after these obligations, used for rest, leisure, or socialising. A lack of adequate free time is referred to as time poverty (Tiznado Aitken et al., 2024).

This combined framework incorporates time poverty, transport-related time poverty, social exclusion, and transport-related social exclusion to bridge existing theoretical models in time use and transportation research. However, in our study, we use the framework only to understand the overall time poverty of women and how it is affected by the other four dimensions of time, namely necessary time, committed time, contracted time, and travel time. By applying this framework through a gendered lens, we examine how transport challenges in Kochi exacerbate broader time poverty for low-income working women. This study contributes to the framework by offering insights into how socio-cultural factors and infrastructural inadequacies intensify these constraints, limiting women's capabilities and well-being.

4. Critical Review of Gendered Time Use and Travel Behaviour

Research on the role of time in human mobility from a gender perspective has been done in multiple disciplines in the last two decades, including transportation planning, sociology, and geography, and has investigated dimensions of intersectionality and marginalization. As Urry (2000), in his pioneering book, highlights, social inequalities related to time exist, and access to time is not equal across different social strata. Urry also argues that mobilities are fundamentally about temporality, indicating that how people move and travel is deeply intertwined with their experiences and perceptions of time (Urry, 2000). In this regard, it is important to understand how gender plays a role in experiencing time and travel. We critically reviewed the literature linking time, gender, and mobility and broadly classified the literature into two main categories: (a) "time use" studies, focusing on gendered disparities in "committed" and "contracted" time in our conceptual framework, and (b) "travel time" studies.

4.1. Time Use

Early studies on time use have predominantly focused on women in developed nations, revealing significant insights into gendered patterns of time allocation. Goulias (2007) investigated time management and travel behaviours in Pennsylvania, the United States, highlighting that women's travel patterns are reflective of their broader interests in engaging in various activities beyond the home. This study suggests that women's travel behaviour is an outcome rather than a cause of their broader engagement in societal activities. This means that their travel behaviour is shaped by their roles and responsibilities in society, like work and caregiving, and it is not the reason they take on these activities. In a similar line, Cao and Chai (2007) applied structural equation modelling to analyse time allocation among household heads in Shenzhen, China. Their findings indicated that traditional gender roles were reflected in the dominance of males in out-of-home activities and females in in-home activities, underscoring the need for more research in non-Western contexts. In Western contexts, there is greater gender equality in the division of labour allowing women to be involved in more out-of-home income-generating activities.

Scheiner (2016) utilised data from the German Mobility Panel to demonstrate that events related to relationships and family exert a greater influence on women's time use, whereas labour market events primarily impact men. This finding aligns with the broader narrative of gendered time use patterns but contrasts slightly with Sweet and Kanaroglou's (2016) study of Canadian residents, which found no direct

correlation between travel time and subjective well-being for either gender. Instead, the study observed a strong positive correlation between women's participation in activities and their subjective well-being, suggesting that the quality and type of activities, rather than the mere duration of travel, might be more significant.

Chidambaram and Scheiner (2023) further expanded the discourse by highlighting that women's travel behaviour and activity patterns are influenced by gender roles and multitasking, which complicate their time use. Their research indicates that women's travel and activity patterns are shaped by societal expectations and their roles within the household, which adds layers of complexity to the study of gendered time use. Hu (2023) corroborates these findings by showing that household structure, including the presence of a partner or children, affects time use patterns, with women often allocating more time to activities in response to household needs. This observation underscores a critical aspect of gendered time use: how household responsibilities shape and constrain women's time management strategies.

Overall, the literature consistently demonstrates that there is a significant variation between the "committed" and "contracted" time for men and women. Women are more time-poor than men due to the disproportionate care burden of household responsibilities, compelling them to allocate more "committed" time. However, there is a notable gap in understanding these dynamics within the context of developing countries and the unique socio-cultural environments they encompass.

4.2. Travel Time

In transport planning research, time is a fundamental component studied across various dimensions, such as travel time, waiting time, and time use or budgeting. Travel time is greatly influenced by the mode of transport. Studies show that public transport users experience more travel time due to factors such as traffic congestion, waiting time at stops, and delays caused by system inefficiencies. Previous research highlights distinct gendered differences in travel patterns, particularly concerning women's propensity for short, multipurpose trips (Hanson, 2010). Early work established the significance of travel time in commuting decisions. Moses and Williamson (1963) argued that the value of travel time varies among commuters and that understanding the time costs associated with different commuting options is crucial for designing effective transport policies (Lyman & Bertini, 2008).

Recent studies focusing on gender disparities in travel time have illuminated how these differences manifest. For instance, McQuaid and Chen (2012) examined commuting patterns in the United Kingdom and found that men typically engage in longer and more distant commutes compared to women. Their research indicated that gender, the presence of children, and working hours significantly influence travel time. Similarly, research in the United States has shown that women's shorter commutes are linked to traditional gender roles, which in turn affects their earnings and access to benefits (Haley-Lock et al., 2013). Iwata and Tamada (2014) observed that married women's commuting patterns exhibit a backwards-bending trend: Women tend to commute longer when wages are lower and shorter when wages are higher, as a strategy to manage household responsibilities and secure leisure time. Whitehead-Frei and Kockelman (2010) explored the impact of time spent with children on activity and travel time allocation in the United States. Their study found that while time spent with children adversely affects work, recreation, and personal activities within the home, it does not significantly impact travel time. This highlights an area where gendered time use intersects with family responsibilities, affecting women's overall time management.

In a different context, Kwan and Kotsev (2015) applied time geography theory to study gender differences in travel time in Sofia, Bulgaria, finding that women experienced more travel time and less spatial access to opportunities compared to men, primarily due to their reliance on public transport. Fan et al. (2016) highlighted that women's perceived waiting time in public transport often exceeds the actual waiting time, especially in unsafe environments. Hu (2023) further explored the intricate relationship between household structure and travel time, revealing that while factors like spouse presence and parenthood affect work-related travel time, they do not influence household support travel time. Craig and van Tienoven (2019) conducted a large-scale study across Australia, the United Kingdom, Spain, and Finland, revealing that while total travel time was comparable for men and women, there were notable gender differences in travel purpose, mode, and company. Additionally, Kim et al. (2019) examined the health implications of travel time, finding that long commutes and extended work hours are associated with sleep disturbances, with gender-specific differences in the impact of work characteristics on sleep quality.

Literature predominantly focuses on "travel time" as a key variable in transportation and mobility research. It is evident that gender roles, cultural contexts, and socio-economic privileges significantly shape how time is utilised in travel, with implications for equitable access to opportunities (McQuaid & Chen, 2012; Scheiner, 2016; Turner & Grieco, 2000; Whitehead-Frei & Kockelman, 2010). However, much of this research is centred on Global North contexts, leaving a substantial gap in evidence from the Global South.

5. Context and Methodology

Kerala, situated at the southern tip of India, faces geographical constraints due to its narrow coastlines on the west and the mountainous Western Ghats on the east, which limit urban expansion. This has eventually resulted in a unique settlement pattern, of a rural-urban continuum blending urban and rural areas without clear boundaries, creating challenges for infrastructure development and urban planning (Paul, 2017; Zehba M. P. & Firoz C., 2024; Zehba M. P. et al., 2021). Known for its high Human Development Index and leading figures in female literacy and sex ratio, Kerala's achievements are attributed to the "Kerala Model" of development (Franke & Chasin, 1989; NITI Aayog, 2021; Tharakan, 2006). This model prioritised land reforms, public health, education, and efforts to reduce caste and gender inequalities. Historically, practices like matrilineal inheritance in some communities have also influenced women's social roles and visibility. However, Kerala still struggles with gender disparities in workforce participation and pay equity, with over 2.2 million women actively seeking employment (Chacko, 2003). These inequalities are also reflected in urban transport systems, where efforts to incorporate gender-sensitive measures are ongoing but insufficient to ensure truly inclusive infrastructure. Kerala's biggest and densest city, Kochi, is quite indicative of the state's geography, urbanisation, and economy.

This study is part of a larger investigation into factors influencing the daily mobility of low-income working women in Kochi City in Kerala. Kochi, covering 732 sq. km in the Ernakulam district, includes the core city, nine municipalities, and 29 panchayats (Figure 2). Known as Kerala's trade and commerce hub, Kochi features dense urbanisation, with the core city under the Kochi Municipal Corporation with a population density of 7,034 persons per sq. km. As a mid-sized Indian city, Kochi's moderate urban scale is representative of secondary cities in South Asia. Transportation occupies 12.52% of the municipal area, integrating buses, metro, railways, water transport, and para-transit modes like autorickshaws. Bus services dominate public transport, with private operators and Kerala State Road Transport Corporation providing

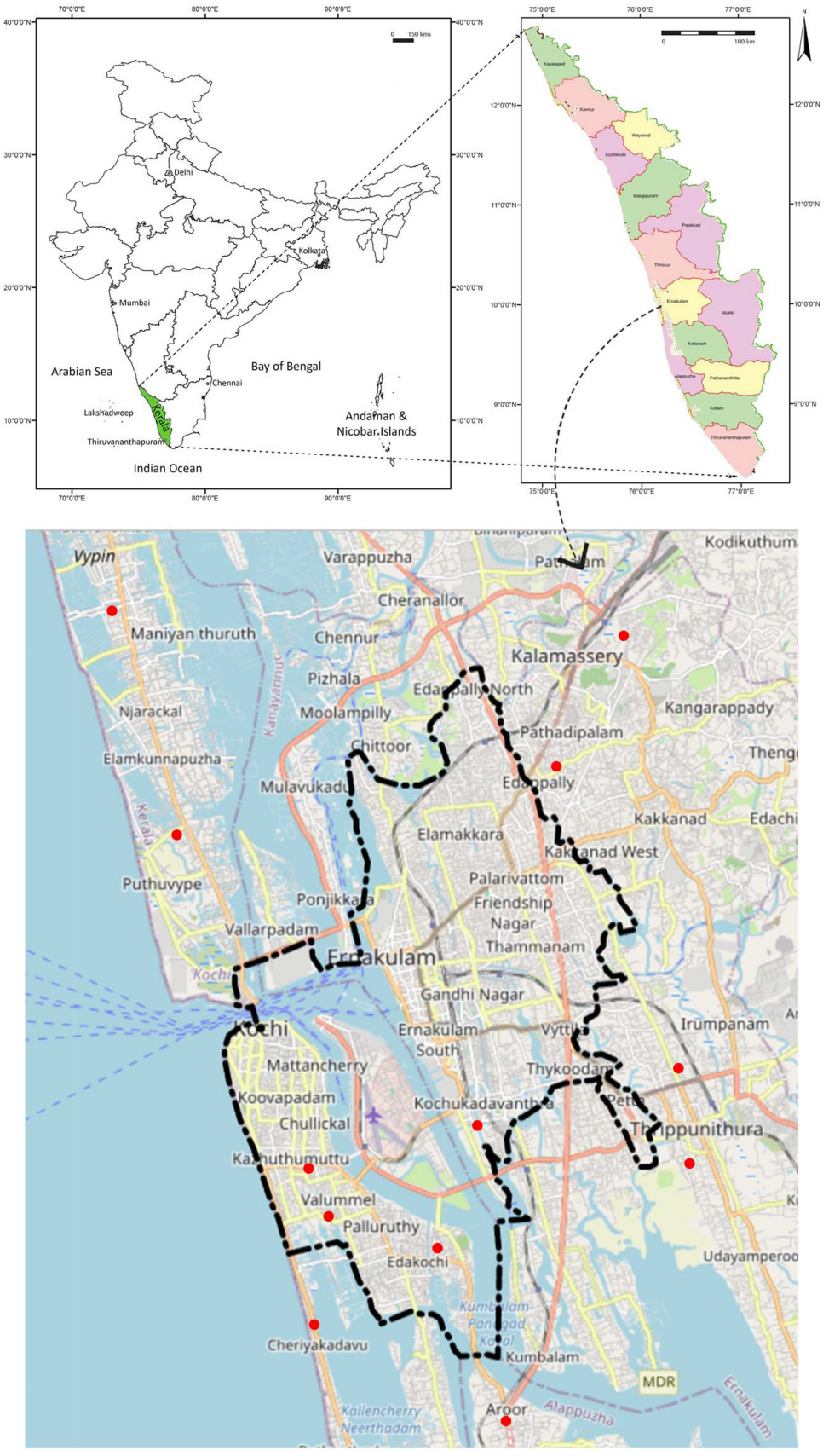

Figure 2. Study area—Kochi—with location of key study participants.

over 82% of daily trips. Buses account for 22% of the 25% public transport mode share, indicating their primary role over other modes like the metro. Furthermore, the dynamic development in the transport infrastructure in Kochi is evident in the Comprehensive Mobility Plan for Kochi, currently in its draft stage, and the transit-oriented development proposed in Kochi's Master Plan for 2040. However, while addressing the needs of the growing population in the city, it is essential to learn the emerging trends in transportation research such as time use in mobility to improve the travel experiences.

We employed phenomenology (Degen & Rose, 2012; van Manen, 2016) to gain an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of working women in Kochi, shedding light on the socio-spatial, cultural, and psychological dimensions often overlooked by conventional approaches. Phenomenology, as a philosophical and methodological approach, offers a critical lens to study lived experiences by prioritising subjective experiences and embodied realities (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). This approach is particularly potent in addressing travel behaviour, which is deeply shaped by socio-cultural norms, spatial practices, and gendered power dynamics. Phenomenology is well-suited for capturing the nuanced realities of individuals' experiences and provides a framework for exploring the complexities of daily mobility (Degen & Rose, 2012; Roy & Bailey, 2021; Sargeant, 2012; van Manen, 2016). In this study, in-depth interviews were conducted with 25 women, specifically domestic workers and housekeeping staff, who reside on the periphery of Kochi and commute daily to the city. The profile of all the participants recruited and interviewed is listed in Table 1. To protect participant confidentiality, all names used in the table and throughout this study are pseudonyms. Interviews were conducted from December 2022–January 2023 at the participants' workplaces, as they were more comfortable for the participants, which allowed them to more freely express themselves, and they were also easily accessible for the researcher, enabling richer and more authentic responses. The selection of participants was purposive, aimed at identifying individuals with substantial experience in commuting within Kochi. This approach prioritises the richness of information over representativeness (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Consent was obtained from all participants, who were interviewed for 45 minutes to one hour using an in-depth, open-ended interview guide. Interviews were recorded, transcribed in the participants' native language, Malayalam, and subsequently translated into English.

The lead author of this article, who conducted the primary research, was born and raised in Kerala and has lived in Kochi for three years, providing personal familiarity with many of the daily mobility challenges narrated by the participants. As a native woman, the author could contextualise and deeply understand the issues discussed by the participants. Furthermore, as a mother of two, the author could relate to the experiences of time poverty shared during the interviews stemming from gender roles. However, to ensure the integrity of the research, the author maintained a clear professional detachment from participants, avoiding any undue influence of personal experiences on their responses. Efforts were made to minimise power imbalances by adopting a friendly and conversational approach during interactions. Participants were fully informed about the purpose of the research, their rights to determine the depth of their responses, and their right to withdraw at any time. A neutral tone was maintained throughout the study, with active listening and acknowledgement of participants' values and opinions to ensure an ethical and respectful research process.

Table 1. Profile of all recruited participants.

Number	Participant	Age	Type of work	Years of work	Marital status and partner details
1	Mariya	36–40	Domestic help	10	Widowed
2	Reeba	36–40	Housekeeping—office	8	Married, husband working abroad
3	Thara	36–40	Housekeeping—office	15	Married, husband working
4	Samila	56–60	Housekeeping—office	10	Married, husband not working
5	Suma	56–60	Domestic help	12	Married, husband not working
6	Sindhu	46–50	Housekeeping—office	9	Married, husband working
7	Wahida	41–45	Housekeeping—office	6	Married, husband working
8	Sindhumol	51–55	Housekeeping—office	20	Married, husband working
9	Vasumathi	56–60	Housekeeping—office	10	Married, husband working
10	Naila	51–55	Housekeeping—institution	20	Married, husband working
11	Sharifa	51–55	Housekeeping—office	21	Widowed
12	Ann Mary	51–55	Housekeeping—office	17	Married, husband working
13	Fousiya	51–55	Housekeeping—office	16	Married, husband working
14	Remani	51–55	Housekeeping—office	10	Married, husband not working
15	Usha	46–50	Housekeeping—office	15	Married, husband not working
16	Neethi	41–45	Housekeeping—office	16	Married, husband working
17	Kaniha	41–45	Housekeeping—office	8	Married, husband working
18	Kamarunnisa	46–50	Housekeeping—retail	4	Married, husband not working
19	Sini	36–40	Housekeeping—retail	7	Married, husband working
20	Beena	51–55	Housekeeping, domestic help—apartment	14	Married, husband working
21	Jini	51–55	Cleaning—restaurant	1	Married, husband working
22	Kamala	61–65	Cleaning—restaurant	15	Married, husband not working
23	Angel	41–45	Housekeeping—institution	0.6	Married, husband working
24	Bindu	51–55	Housekeeping—institution	7	Married, husband working
25	Teresa	51–55	Housekeeping—institution	20	Married, husband working

Data were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019), facilitated by MAXQDA software. The analysis involved two rounds of coding to identify emerging patterns and themes. This article focuses on the theme of time, which emerged distinctly from the broader thematic analysis providing an opportunity to examine time poverty within the time-use framework. The specific themes utilised in this analysis and the corresponding codes are shown in Table 2. An inductive approach was employed (Naeem et al., 2023) to explore the interplay between time and daily mobility, and the findings provide insights into the intricate dynamics of women's time management and commuting experiences. Results are presented narratively, offering a detailed and chronological depiction of participants' daily activities and challenges.

Table 2. Key themes and codes used.

Themes	Time	Care Attributed to Gender Roles	Work Conditions	Spatial Factors	Bus Service Efficiency	Physical Setting of Travel
Codes	Work timing Morning departure time Morning wake-up time Travel time Time poverty Time for sleep Time management skill	Acceptance of gender roles Care responsibilities Morning household chores Sunday additional chores Household responsibilities Evening household chores	Work flexibility Work availability Work arrangements Years of work Preferences on work Work fulfilment Nature of work	Home location Walking distance Work location	Bus timing Bus reliability Bus availability Inconsistent bus stops	Seat availability Early/peak hours Road traffic Crowding at bus stops Bus crowding

6. The Everyday Journey: Time-Centric Dynamics of Daily Mobility

Women from underprivileged backgrounds adhere to a daily activity cycle, as illustrated in Figure 3, beginning from the moment they wake up until they retire at the end of the day. The interviews highlights several key themes that emerged from the participants' lived experiences. In the following sections, these themes have been delineated and grounded in the social contexts and realities faced by the participants. Through a narrative of their daily routines, the intricate balance of work, family responsibilities, and the systemic constraints of their environments are examined to provide a deeper understanding of their experiences of time and mobility.

6.1. Morning Activities

The interviews revealed that nearly all participants began their day before dawn, completing household chores before leaving for work, highlighting their significant time constraints as they balance family responsibilities with employment. Many participants reported waking as early as 3:00 or 4:00 a.m. to manage tasks such as cooking and cleaning, leaving them physically exhausted even before their workday begins. For example, Sindhu, one of the participants, commutes daily to Thevara for work while residing in Perumbadappu with her spouse and children. She rises well before dawn to complete her household duties, often struggling to keep up with the demands of her morning routine. As a result, she occasionally skips breakfast or tea to avoid being late for work.

> It's work from the moment you wake up at 4 a.m. You put everything in order. To be honest, you won't catch sight of how the clock flies by the time you are ready to leave. It's a race. Forget the food, sometimes we don't even have the time to take a sip of tea. It's after we come here, at around 10 a.m. that we make tea for ourselves. We don't have time for even that. (Sindhu, Perumbadappu)

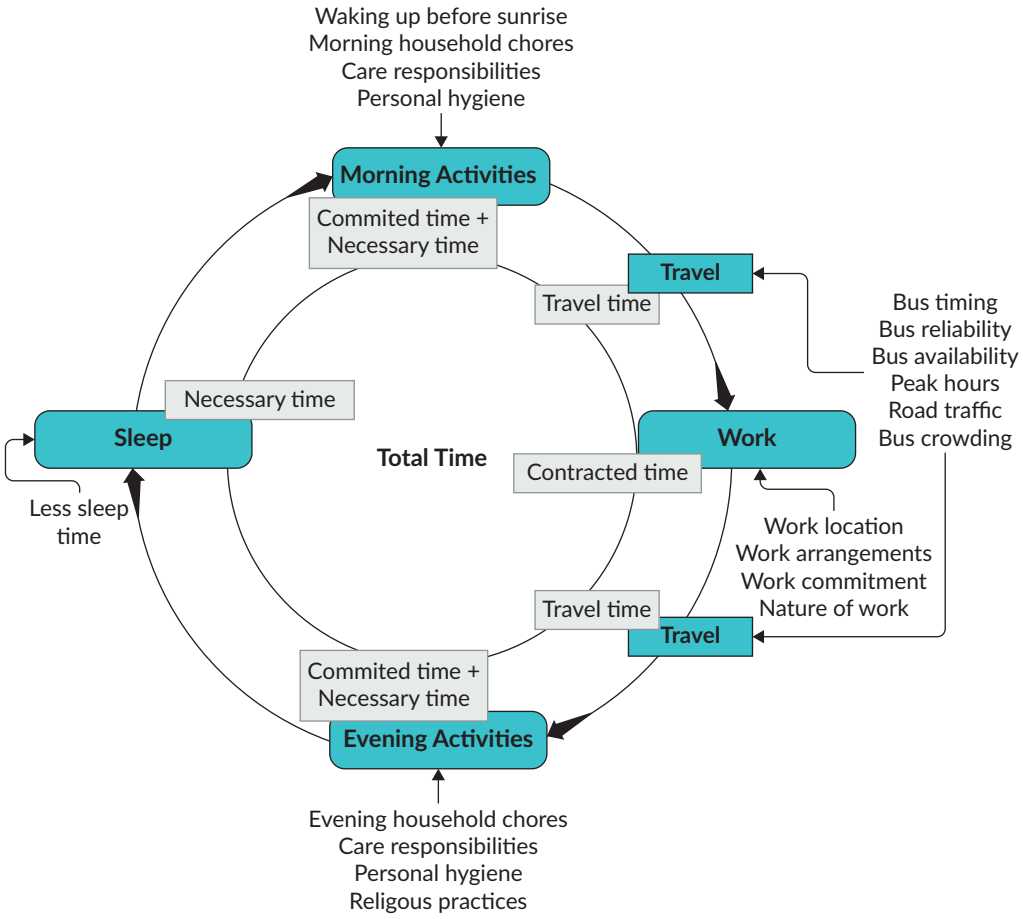

Figure 3. The daily activity cycle of participants.

Another participant, Beena, lives in Vyppin with her husband, a fisherman, their two grandchildren, her ageing mother-in-law, and her son. She rises as early as 3:00 a.m., completing nearly three-quarters of her household tasks before leaving for work. Similarly, Thara, who resides in Thuravur, wakes up at around 4:00 a.m., while Samila, from Palluruthy, typically begins her day at approximately 4:30 a.m. All three participants acknowledged the challenge of waking up so early, particularly when they were still in a deep sleep.

> Only if I wake up at 3 can I manage to reach here on time under my current circumstances. Only if I finish my chores at home can I set out for work with satisfaction. (Beena, Vyppin)

For participants with larger households, particularly those with children and elderly family members, the morning routine becomes even more challenging. Each family member must be attended to before the participants can leave for work. As a result, some women skip breakfast to save time, opting instead to eat during one of their breaks at work. For instance, Jini, a mother of two from Idakkochi, begins her day at 4:00 a.m. to prepare breakfast, cook two curries and rice, clean up after herself, sweep, mop, and wash her son's uniform, all before her husband departs for work and her son leaves for school. Her Sundays are dedicated to completing the remaining household chores.

A similar routine is followed by Kamarunnisa, who resides in Kunnukara with her husband and son. She rises at 4:00 a.m. to prepare both breakfast and lunch before heading to work, acknowledging that waking up any earlier is not feasible. All household tasks must be completed by 7:10 a.m. when her bus arrives, leaving her with no time to clean the house during the week. Like Jini, she reserves Sundays for cleaning. Most mornings, Kamarunnisa has no time to eat breakfast at home, so she packs both breakfast and lunch to eat during her workday.

> After waking up, I set out to cook rice. Then I get things for breakfast ready. And then for the rest of the meals. The bus is at 7:10, so, by then I have to finish everything. (Kamarunnisa, Kunnukara)

It is also noteworthy how the gender dynamics in the household affect women's care burden. Almost all the participants reported that any help from family members can significantly improve their daily routine. Many of the participants find themselves "lucky" enough to have their husbands or sons help with the house chores making the morning routine easier for them.

> At times, they'll help me out. But I'll have to ask them to. At times if you say you are not well or something, and if he [husband] is in a good mood, then he'll do few things for me. (Thara, Thuravur)

While some participants mentioned limited support from partners or children, such contributions were often irregular or minimal, leaving the bulk of household responsibilities to women. The absence of substantial support not only limits women's agency within their households but also exacerbates their time poverty, as they must balance these tasks alongside their paid work. These findings are no different from the evidence of gendered division of labour and assumed care responsibilities imposed by the patriarchal culture predominant in South Asian regions (Brahma, 2024; Najam-us-Saqib & Arif, 2012; Sahu, 2024).

The morning routines of participants highlight how their time is divided between necessary and committed activities. Many participants struggle to complete all essential chores before leaving for work due to limited time. This demonstrates how committed time, such as household responsibilities, often dominates their mornings, leaving little or no time for necessary activities like having breakfast. It is clear that the participants experience time poverty during morning hours.

6.2. Morning Travel and Work

After completing most of their household chores early in the morning, participants often rush to their jobs. Public or private buses are the primary mode of transport for all participants, and they reported that even minor delays in leaving the house can result in higher transportation costs. Missing their regular bus can lead to longer, more expensive commutes, adding further strain to their travel. In addition, sometimes unreliable bus timings also worsen their already demanding schedules.

The type and nature of work heavily influence their time use during work hours. Most participants work as housekeeping staff or domestic workers, with their workdays starting early—typically at 7:30 a.m.—and ending at 4:30 p.m. For housekeeping staff, it is crucial to complete the bulk of cleaning duties before other employees arrive. Although domestic workers lack formal attendance systems, punctuality is essential for completing all tasks within the designated work hours. Many participants reported that adhering to these strict schedules, along with occasional changes in work shifts, often makes their routines highly stressful.

Mariya, a single mother of two, exemplifies these challenges. Residing in Kumbalangi with her in-laws, she leaves home at 7:30 a.m. to catch the bus. If delayed by even five minutes, she must take two buses, significantly increasing her commute time and costs. After an hour-long bus ride, she arrives at work by 8:30 a.m. Recently, her work hours have increased due to additional responsibilities, further complicating her already tight schedule.

> If I set out from my house at 7:30 a.m. then I can walk there. If it gets 7:35 a.m., 7:40 a.m. and all, then I'll have to run till the market. If it gets late and I miss the bus, then I'll have to get a bus to Thoppumpadi first and catch two buses to get to the medical trust. If it's just one bus then I'll only have to pay 20 rupees. Or else 13, 15, altogether I'll have to pay 28 rupees. (Mariya, Kumbalangi)

In Beena's case, her routine has recently shifted following a month-long leave. Previously, she would leave home at 6:20 a.m. and reach her workplace by 7:00 a.m., allowing her to finish work by 3:00 p.m. However, her hours have now changed to 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., due to a change requested by a new staff and an additional job she has taken up along with the added responsibility of caring for her ill mother-in-law. Beena now juggles multiple jobs, leaving home before 7:00 a.m. to reach her first workplace by 7:30 a.m., where she works as a cook, before heading to her second job by 10:00 a.m. Despite the changes in her schedule, she continues to rush through her morning chores to catch the bus on time, ensuring she arrives at work promptly, as her employers expect.

> I'm also going for a different job these days. So, if I get there to cook at 7 a.m., I can finish off the work by 10 a.m. To manage that I have to leave my house before 7. I'll reach here around 7:30 or 7:40. I'll just get on whatever bus is available. There is almost half an hour's journey to do. (Beena, Vyppin)

Participants working as housekeeping staff in offices often face stringent time constraints due to formal attendance systems and biometric punching, where delays can result in lost attendance and potential pay deductions. The narratives reveal that participants highly value their contracted time due to its productive nature and their strong commitment to work. The nature of their job and work arrangements significantly influence their travel time and departure schedules. In essence, contracted time plays a dominant role in shaping travel decisions, alongside factors like affordability and reliability. Moreover, instances like having to eat breakfast during work breaks due to lack of time in the morning show how their free time is sometimes traded off for necessary time.

The reliability and availability of buses, particularly during peak hours, are frequently problematic, leading some participants to start their journeys earlier than necessary to accommodate inconsistent bus schedules. For instance, Thara leaves her house by 6:30 a.m. to ensure timely arrival at her workplace, which operates from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. She notes that while "limited-stop" buses, requiring an interchange at Thoppumpadi, take about 1 hour and 15 minutes, "fast passenger" buses reduce the travel time to 45 minutes. Similarly, Kamarunnisa faces a daily commute challenge, travelling three kilometres to the bus stop where her spouse drops her off. Given the distance and the 7:10 a.m. bus time, walking is not feasible. To catch the 7:05 a.m. bus, she must leave home by 6:45 a.m., and after an hour's journey, she transfers to a second bus in Aluva to reach her workplace. Occasionally, Bindu has had to resort to taking an autorickshaw, incurring costs of 150 to 200 rupees to ensure punctuality. This situation shows the participants' struggle to manage their time effectively amidst unreliable public transport and strict work schedules, leading to increased daily stress.

The above narratives underscore that daily travel time significantly affects time management. The study observed that participants typically face longer travel times than their male counterparts due to reliance on public transportation. This observation supports findings from Fan (2017), Hu (2023), and Kwan and Kotsev (2015) on gendered differences in travel times, where women often endure longer commutes. However, our study nuances the literature by revealing that, contrary to some claims (Chidambaram & Scheiner, 2023; Sweet & Kanaroglou, 2016), longer commutes can occasionally serve as a respite if the journey is comfortable, for example by seats being available and buses not being crowded. Nonetheless, the unpredictability of public transport remains a significant source of stress for women like Thara and Mariya, whose experiences underline the broader issue of time poverty exacerbated by unreliable transportation. This aligns with previous research indicating that long and inconsistent commutes adversely affect job satisfaction and overall well-being (Iwata & Tamada, 2014; Troncoso et al., 2021). Addressing these challenges may involve improvements in public transport reliability to mitigate the negative impacts on working women's time management and quality of life.

6.3. Evening Activities, Preparations for the Next Day, and Sleep

The interviews revealed that the workday for many women extends well beyond their official job hours, often continuing into the evening and sometimes late into the night. Most participants return home before sunset, contingent on road traffic conditions. Upon arriving home, they immediately resume their household chores, which include cooking dinner, performing evening prayers, sweeping the courtyard, doing laundry, and preparing for the following day.

The pressure to manage these tasks efficiently is heightened by the need to catch the earliest possible bus while returning from work to avoid additional waiting time for the next bus, which many participants view as unproductive. For instance, Sindhu typically arrives home by 5:10 p.m., depending on bus timing and traffic. Missing her bus means she faces an additional wait of 30 to 45 minutes, which she considers a waste of valuable time. Similarly, Mariya usually leaves work by 6:00 p.m., but if there are guests at her workplace, it makes her leave work late and she may not get home until as late as 7:00 p.m. Despite their exhaustion from long workdays and crowded bus rides, both Sindhu and Mariya continue to handle household chores until after 10:00 p.m., finally going to bed around 11:00 p.m. This ongoing cycle underscores the relentless demands placed on these women as they strive to manage their committed time and contracted time.

> After you come back, then it's time for the afternoon chores. I do the laundry in the evening, also brooming the courtyard. Then lighting the lamp, putting together something for curry. However it goes, up until 10:00 p.m., 10:30 p.m. it's work for me again. When it's around 11:00 in the night, then I go to bed. (Sindhu, Perumbadappu)

The evening routines of participants reveal a continuation of their workday responsibilities well into the night. Beena, for instance, leaves her job at 6:00 p.m. and navigates through crowded buses during rush hour to reach home by 7:00 p.m. Similarly, Thara usually departs work around 6:00 p.m. and aims to catch a bus by 6:15 p.m. However, due to heavy traffic, she often arrives home later than expected.

Jini, whose workday ends at 5:00 p.m., requests permission to leave at 4:30 p.m. due to the infrequent bus service. She departs for home at 4:45 p.m., but if she needs to make additional stops to buy groceries, she

arrives later. Jini must also light the evening lamp, a religious custom, and complete her dinner preparations and cleaning before going to bed by 10:00 p.m. Her flexibility at work allows her to manage her bus schedule effectively and reach home earlier.

Kamarunnisa typically returns home around 5:30 p.m., though her arrival time can vary due to delays during her three bus changes. She aims to be home by 5:00 p.m., but additional stops or social interactions may push her arrival to 6:00 p.m. Kamarunnisa feels pressured to complete her chores by 8:00 p.m. to make time for the evening prayer. If she is still engaged in cooking, such as frying or preparing fish, she pauses her tasks for prayer and resumes them afterwards.

> There's plenty of work that needs to be taken care of after returning home. Mainly cooking curry and all; I do it after getting back. In the morning, it's just a curry hastily whipped up. (Kamarunnisa, Kunnukara)

At first glance, the evening routines of participants may seem more relaxed, as there is no external time pressure beyond work commitments. However, evenings are primarily dedicated to committed activities, with some time allocated to necessary activities. Any free time available during this period is often spent on prayer and other religious practices. This further illustrates the relentless nature of their time schedules. Despite long workdays and arduous commutes, these women return home to find additional household chores awaiting them, contributing to chronic fatigue and impacting their overall well-being. Their experiences align with global research on caregiving and time constraints (Jenkins, 1997; Krishna, 2024), emphasising the continuous strain imposed by societal expectations and traditional gender roles.

A severe lack of adequate sleep is a common theme across the participants' narratives, significantly exacerbating their already demanding routines. The necessity to wake up early, regardless of how late they went to bed, is crucial for managing their extensive morning chores. For instance, Sindhu typically goes to bed around 11:00 p.m., yet she struggles to get sufficient rest due to the early start required the next day. Although she enjoys sleeping a bit more on Sundays, rising early to complete chores before sunrise remains essential for her. Waking up at 7:00 a.m. poses a significant challenge for Sindhu, disrupting her routine.

The detrimental impact of insufficient sleep is also reflected in participants' narratives of their health conditions. Beena suffers from health issues such as low blood pressure and manages only three hours of sleep per night. To manage her health condition, she increases her water intake and seeks medical attention only when her condition worsens. Her focus remains on finishing her tasks within tight time constraints, even at the expense of her health. Similarly, Kamarunnisa often goes to bed around 11:00 p.m. but struggles to achieve adequate rest due to her overloaded schedule. She frequently sacrifices sleep to address the numerous tasks she cannot complete during the day, illustrating the broader issue of balancing sleep with relentless work and domestic responsibilities.

> It'll be very late. So then by the time I eat dinner, it'll be 11. After eating dinner, how long can you really sleep? You have to wake up at 4 to get to work, right? You have to wake up even before 4. (Kamarunnisa, Kunnukara)

The importance of adequate sleep is a recurring theme and our findings resonate with established research linking care work burdens to health issues among women (Berg & Woods, 2009). Participants like Bindu, Beena, and Thara have adjusted their routines to commence their day before sunrise. This adaptation,

however, intensifies their physical and mental exhaustion due to persistent sleep deprivation. Previous research underscores time poverty as a critical factor affecting women's health and well-being (Giurge et al., 2020; Turner & Grieco, 2000), a phenomenon that is particularly pronounced in urban settings where commuting further exacerbates hardship (Carmichael et al., 2024). This study contributes to the existing literature by providing additional context from Kerala, where traditional gender roles impose a double burden on women, limiting their opportunities for leisure, personal development, and recovery (Chatzitheochari & Arber, 2012; Jenkins, 1997). Addressing this issue may require systemic changes such as more flexible work schedules and enhanced community support for domestic responsibilities.

It is noteworthy that while participants share similar age, socio-cultural, and economic backgrounds, there are distinct differences in their experiences of time poverty. For instance, widowed women like Mariya, as the sole breadwinners, face added stress to maintain their income without compromising care responsibilities. Additionally, some older participants face age-related health issues, which increase their need for rest. These factors highlight how family status and age further shape women's time poverty experiences.

These narratives also reveal the profound value these women place on time, a resource that remains elusive despite their best efforts to manage it. Within the conceptual framework of time-use and travel used in this study, our analysis highlights the significant time poverty participants face as they balance necessary, committed, and contracted time within constrained daily routines. Long commutes (travel time), rigid work schedules (contracted time), and the overwhelming burden of morning and evening household chores (committed time) dominate their days, leaving little to no free time for rest or personal care. This imbalance between time categories results in persistent exhaustion, reflecting the adverse impact of time poverty on their physical and emotional well-being. The narratives demonstrate how limited free time, consumed by relentless demands, underscores the struggle to achieve well-being amidst overlapping and competing time demands. The stories illustrate how the participants' time is perpetually under demand, highlighting the urgent need for improved supporting infrastructure and more conducive household environments. These accounts also emphasise the severe consequences of sleep deprivation, demonstrating that the participants' demanding schedules often provide insufficient opportunities for rest and recovery.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

This study provides a comprehensive examination of the daily time use and mobility challenges faced by women in Kochi, particularly those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Through qualitative methods, we have gained a detailed understanding of the complexities of their lived experiences, offering richer insights than those typically derived from quantitative analyses. Our findings highlight the profound impact of time constraints, lengthy commutes, early waking hours, and extensive household responsibilities on their quality of life. The prominent theme that emerged across participants' narratives is the prevalence of time poverty, particularly evident in the early morning hours. The findings corroborate Krishna's (2024) observation that women in Kerala experience greater time poverty compared to men, primarily due to the disproportionate burden of care work. Furthermore, our study reveals that these gendered disparities in time use are exacerbated in lower-income households, aligning with Urry (2000) and Rodgers (2023), who argue that economic disadvantage compounds time scarcity due to limited access to resources that could enhance the effective use of available time. These challenges reflect broader systemic inequities and result in significant physical and emotional fatigue.

Reiterating Tiznado Aitken et al.'s (2024) integrated time use framework, time poverty is the deprivation of free time when an individual's total time is allocated between committed, contracted and travel time. This study offers new insights into this framework through a gendered lens. The findings reveal that for women, committed time—dominated by unpaid domestic and caregiving responsibilities—overwhelms their daily schedules due to entrenched gender roles. Even when women allocate equal time to contracted activities (paid work) as men, the imbalance in their committed time leads to severe conditions of time poverty. While similar challenges are experienced by working-class women globally (Rodgers, 2023), the socio-cultural and infrastructural context in developing cities like Kochi adds a unique layer of complexity to their experiences. This article contributes to the growing scholarship on time poverty by emphasising intersections of time poverty and mobility in a Southern urban context, where transport-related barriers exacerbate existing gendered time poverty. The findings have important empirical and theoretical implications for future research on time poverty and mobility, particularly in the context of rapidly urbanising regions of the Global South.

The study's implications for transport policy are significant. Increased frequency and reliability of public transportation are essential to reduce travel time and enhance accessibility for women. Improvements such as increased bus frequency, especially during peak hours, and policies prioritising women's comfort and safety are crucial. These measures are vital for addressing the specific needs of female commuters and reducing their time-related stress. Current initiatives under Kerala's Gender Equality and Women Empowerment Policy 2014 and the formation of the Kochi Metropolitan Transport Authority are promising steps towards developing gender-inclusive transport solutions. However, Kerala's urban planning and transport policy must be better integrated to fully address time poverty associated with mobility. The collaboration between urban planners and transport authorities is necessary to ensure that transport infrastructure and services cater to the needs of low-income women. The Comprehensive Mobility Plan for Kochi, currently in its draft stage, does not adequately incorporate gender inclusivity. Our findings provide evidence for the already severe gendered issues in mobility experiences in Kochi, to support framing adequate measures for more inclusive transport systems. These insights should be used to advocate for policies that prioritise not just frequency and safety but also the accessibility and affordability of services, with a clear focus on how these systems can support women's participation in both the workforce and social activities.

While this study provides valuable insights into gendered time use and mobility, it is not without limitations. The research is confined to Kochi, and the findings may not be universally applicable to all Indian cities, although they are relevant to those with similar socio-cultural and infrastructural characteristics. The scope of this study is limited to gendered time poverty in travel behaviour research. Additionally, the focus on time and its impact on mobility does not encompass other dimensions of gendered travel behaviour, such as interactions with the environment during travel or safety strategies employed by women. Future research should address these aspects to further enrich our understanding and inform more targeted policy interventions.

In conclusion, this research contributes significantly to the literature on time poverty and gendered time use, highlighting the need for systemic reforms to improve the quality of life for urban women workers, particularly in a Global South context. The insights provided offer a basis for developing policies and practices aimed at enhancing equity and supporting women in managing their demanding routines.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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About the Authors

Fathima Zehba M. P. is a researcher in gendered mobility, with a background in architecture and urban planning. A PhD scholar at the National Institute of Technology Calicut, India, and a part-time researcher at University College London, her work centres on inclusive mobility, climate change, and systems thinking.

Lakshmi Priya Rajendran (PhD) is currently an associate professor in environmental and spatial equity and co-director of equality, diversity, and inclusion at the Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London (UCL), UK. She also serves as the co-chair of UCL's Environment Research Domain and as academic co-chair of the UCL Advisory Group on Climate Change and Health.

Mohammed Firoz C. (PhD) is a social scientist with a degree in architecture & urban studies having 20 years of teaching, research, consulting, and administrative experience at the doctoral, postgraduate, and undergraduate levels. He currently serves as the head of the Department of Architecture and Planning at the National Institute of Technology Calicut, India.

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ARTICLE

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Temporal Dynamics of Power Distribution in Mobile Urban Co-Policies: A Southern Analytical Framework

Laura Sobral [1,2], **Predrag Milić** [2], **and Burcu Ateş** [2]

[1] DINÂMIA'CET, ISCTE–University Institute of Lisbon, Portugal
[2] Interdisciplinary Centre for Urban Culture and Public Space, TU Wien, Austria

Correspondence: Laura Sobral (laura@laurasobral.com)

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Abstract

This study proposes an analytical framework for scrutinising the temporal dynamics of power distribution within the mobility of urban co-policies, particularly those that aim to enhance socio-spatial justice. The role of time in shaping power dynamics in the new contexts covered by urban co-policies is central to this analysis. The framework is constructed through a comprehensive literature review and empirical fieldwork on the Lisbon mobile co-policy, called Bairros de Intervenção Prioritária/Zonas de Intervenção Prioritárias, which is supplemented by analysis of participatory and contextual policies across cities within the Com.Unity.Lab Transfer Network. Drawing on theories of policy mobility in the context of Southern epistemologies, the framework underscores the significance of temporal dynamics in the formation of policy outcomes, which highlights the necessity of the continuous assessment of policy intermediary results over time. The proposed framework identifies a gap in the analysis of the mobility of *co-policies* that integrate spatial co-production and co-governance at the neighbourhood scale. Methodologically based on the Southern ethics of inquiry in which time serves as a critical lens through which travelling co-policies are understood, the study offers insights into the need for continuous adaptation with the overarching goal of assessing the extent to which urban co-policies can foster social justice towards fairer cities.

Keywords

analytical framework; BIP/ZIP; co-policies; policy mobility; power distribution; socio-spatial justice; time

1. Introduction

Urban societies face significant social and spatial inequalities due to disparities in access to resources, services, and opportunities, which result in the experience of poor living conditions by marginalised communities. As a reflection, many urban policies focus on strategies that promote co-production and co-governance to transform cities through socio-spatial justice based on fair power distribution (Goulart & Falanga, 2022; Iaione, 2017). In this regard, co-policies emerge as urban municipal policies that combine urban co-production and co-governance at the neighbourhood level. They enable and facilitate cooperation between citizens and local administrations in qualifying and improving local territories. Concentrating on co-policies in relation to power distribution and socio-spatial justice, this study focuses on the *mobility* of co-policies.

The study proposes an analytical framework for assessing if and how power is equitably distributed over time due to co-policies that promote urban co-production and co-governance. The discussion particularly focuses on one of the European co-policies called Bairros de Intervenção Prioritária/Zonas de Intervenção Prioritárias (BIP/ZIP). BIP/ZIP is an urban public policy that can be classified as a *citizen participation* and/or *territorial cohesion* policy. Originating in the Lisbon municipality in 2010, it offers a comprehensive toolkit that comprises mapping resources, funding mechanisms, task force frameworks, and local development networks. These elements support small-scale, community-led projects in deprived neighbourhoods to enhance quality of life. From 2018 to 2021, the BIP/ZIP initiative has travelled to seven other European cities, namely Bari, Lille, Ostrava, Lublin, The Hague, Sofia, and Aalborg, through the Transfer Network (TN) Com.Unity.Lab, which is part of the European programme URBACT.

Intending to build a rationale for the proposed analytical framework, this study first presents the theoretical grounding of policy mobility, followed by co-production and co-governance in urban policy-making, and introduces the case study of Com.Unity.Lab. It then explores the role of time and emphasises other temporalities, particularly the Southern approach to time. Afterwards, it elaborates on the methodological approach of the study that draws upon the empirical fieldwork activities and examines the importance of power distribution within the framework. Fieldwork analysis provides evidence that underlies the need for this framework, followed by a detailed description of the proposal and its application. When building the foundations of the analytical framework for assessing co-policy mobility outcomes, Gaventa's (2006) power cube was contextualised and adapted to fit the research objectives. To allow multiple entry points, the study concludes with some final remarks on the framework's rationale and summarises the key findings, anticipated application obstacles, and implications.

2. Co-Production and Co-Governance in Urban Policy Making

In contemporary urban environments, a notable increase is observed in citizen-led initiatives that aim to transform urban landscapes (Miraftab, 2017; Mitlin, 2021; Soja, 2009). In contexts where state-provided services are perceived as inadequate to meet genuine citizen needs and the demand for social and spatial equity is increasing, residents actively engage in activities to enhance communities and advocate for shared infrastructure in neighbourhoods managed as communal resources, some of them aiming at cooperating closely with public administration. Recent European policy interventions, such as the Bologna Regulation (City of Bologna, 2014) and the Ordenanza de Cooperación Público-Social de Madrid (Ayuntamiento de

Madrid, n.d.), seek to address the demands of locals by supporting these initiatives. These are mainly policies that focus on urban co-production and co-governance, occasionally combining both—into what may be termed co-policies.

Our study defines *co-policies* within the context of city-making, as agreement-based urban policies designed to support active citizen initiatives, particularly those related to the use, improvement, and long-term maintenance of public spaces. These policies enable knowledge sharing and structured cooperation between public administrations and citizens, rooted in the frameworks of *co-production* and *co-governance*. In this context, drawing from Joshi and Moore's (2006) definition, *co-production* refers to the collaborative efforts of state agencies and organised citizen groups to address local needs, not just through service provision but also by establishing meaningful, sustained relationships. From this perspective, co-policies emerge as mechanisms that allow citizens and governments to build partnerships that address public space management and other civic needs. As illustrated in Mitlin's (2008) work, these policies serve as political strategies that allow citizens to engage actively with state institutions, creating opportunities for greater inclusivity and responsiveness to local concerns. On the other hand, *co-governance* focuses on the sustainable co-management of resources, which is essential for the long-term viability of co-produced initiatives. This element aligns with Iaione's (2017) concept of mutual governance, where the ongoing maintenance of urban resources relies on partnerships that balance contributions from public bodies, social organisations, and citizen groups. This emphasis on continuous collaboration underscores a shift towards what Fung and Wright (2003) term "empowered participatory governance," where governance is not only cooperative but strives to balance power asymmetries within the decision-making process.

By integrating mechanisms that allow marginalised voices to influence public policies, co-policies contribute to more equitable city-making and democratised resource management. Moreover, as Albrechts (2013) argue, truly participatory planning involves collaborative actions that transcend theory-driven rationality, cultivating shared attitudes and empowering local actors. Co-governance, therefore, requires not only partnerships but also a realignment of power and influence to address the inequalities often inherent in traditional urban governance structures. Thus, co-policies, as such, encapsulate these multidimensional efforts, bridging the collaborative resource generation found in co-production with the long-term, community-focused stewardship integral to co-governance. In this context, Lisbon's BIP-ZIP strategy can be considered as a co-policy that supports place-based, citizen-led initiatives, fostering a localised governance structure. By doing so, co-policies can reinforce the importance of shared management and democratic accountability in urban planning (Mitlin & Bartlett, 2021).

3. Policy Mobility and TNs

In policy mobility, individuals, institutions, and networks circulate the frameworks that form the foundation of policy formulation (McCann, 2011; Peck, 2011; Peck & Theodore, 2010; Stone et al., 2019; Temenos & McCann, 2013). They leverage their intellectual authority or domain-specific expertise to reinforce particular policy frameworks or to substantiate certain normative criteria as paradigms of "best practice," while simultaneously identifying the situations that governmental entities should avoid. The dynamics and modes of knowledge production are invariably intertwined with these processes. Both the creation and mobility of co-polices are informed by various knowledge claims including codified, formal, and technical knowledge, as well as tacit, practical, and grassroots knowledge (Stone et al., 2019). The inherently multi-stakeholder

nature of policy mobility involves contextualising transferred frameworks by integrating and addressing the realities of local knowledge.

As noted by Haupt (2023), "the modifiability of policies" is central to policy mobility, yet its results and impacts have not received notable attention in the literature. Although co-policies are increasingly mobile as well, scientific approaches for analysing their mobility are scarce. How these policies—which are typically disseminated by government agencies as *best practices* and receive public funding—are encouraged to travel and inspire other cities is poorly understood. Moreover, less is known about the outcomes of mobility implementation and the methodological procedures that shaped the circulation of policies (Haupt, 2023), particularly those "demanding a step beyond the relative comfort zone of case studies and semi-structured interviews" (Cochrane & Ward, 2012).

It is particularly relevant considering TNs, also called Transfer Municipal Networks, which are organised frameworks designed to facilitate the circulation, adaptation, and implementation of policies, practices, and ideas among cities. They play a pivotal role in enabling knowledge exchange, policy learning, and collaborative governance across urban contexts, fostering transnational cooperation among policymakers, experts, local authorities, and organisations (McCann, 2011). TNs empower cities to share inspiring practices that contribute to urban regeneration and socio-spatial justice, as seen in platforms like URBACT, Urban Innovative Actions, the Interreg programmes, the European Urban Knowledge Network, and the Driving Urban Transitions partnership. While TNs facilitate structured knowledge-sharing among cities, they often overlook the long-term assessment of transferred policies after their initial implementation phase. This is partly because follow-up assessments are typically not included in the program budget. As a result, outcomes beyond the first year of implementation remain poorly documented or entirely unknown. While many TNs operate with robust structures during the transfer phase, there is a significant gap in their capacity for long-term evaluation of outcomes. Giovanni Allegretti, both a scholar and a practitioner in the field, notes that:

> Although I do not have detailed knowledge of the monitoring processes for all of them, to the best of my understanding, the available outcome materials are fragmented, and there appears to be no coherent policy for long-term evaluation in most cases. If such mechanisms do exist, I would say they are either not accessible or not easily usable; therefore, from a practical standpoint, it is as if they do not exist, unfortunately. (G. Allegretti, personal communication, November 18, 2024)

The lack of structured, accessible, and user-friendly assessment tools for long-term evaluation hinders the ability to understand the sustained impact of policies adopted in other cities. This gap highlights the need not only for developing effective assessment tools over time but also for ensuring their dissemination, usability, and communication. Without these elements, the broader goals of TNs—such as fostering lasting urban transformation and achieving territorial cohesion—remain unfulfilled. For instance, the *UIA 2014–2020* report highlights that nearly one-third of projects could not determine whether their activities would be maintained or further developed after the funding period ended (Urban Innovative Actions, 2020). This underscores the need for an optimised resource assessment mechanism that ideally covers a medium-term, post-implementation period. Regarding URBACT—which includes the case study titled Com.Unity.Lab Transfer Network—research has shown that the long-term relational and territorial impacts of similar TN outcomes remain under-documented (Domorenok et al., 2023). Thus, it would be beneficial to have access to open-access tools that allow cities to document and analyse outcomes over extended periods.

Furthermore, many TN initiatives produce intangible outcomes, such as strengthened partnerships or increased confidence among local actors, which are often difficult to measure. These relational outcomes, despite their significance, are rarely captured in conventional territorial impact assessments. For example, the "multiplying effects" of URBACT III have been described as a snowballing process that catalyses larger initiatives, yet there is insufficient documentation of their long-term impacts (URBACT, 2018, p. 35). It is also acknowledged that existing databases, such as keep.eu, while providing structured data, often lack comprehensive details on budgets, expected results, and long-term achievements, hindering the ability to draw meaningful conclusions (Briot et al., 2021, p. 57). One recommendation from URBACT's evaluation document is that URBACT could incorporate conditions into TN agreements that encourage or mandate continued engagement by local groups for a set period after the networking phase (URBACT, 2018, p. 42).

In this context, this study mainly reflects on the co-policies transferred to new contexts and focuses on the temporal dimension of their operation. Given the diversity of outcomes—many of which are intangible and relational as mentioned above—their territorial impact may only become apparent long after the formal transfer period has concluded. This extended time frame necessitates adaptable and long-term evaluation strategies that reflect the nuanced and evolving nature of these initiatives. This study, therefore, aims to establish an analytical framework for examining the changes in power relations across its implementation to assess whether or not co-policies that are re-applied to different cities contribute to power distribution. We argue that focusing on power distribution over time enables the assessment of the extent to which co-policies inspired from elsewhere will contribute to spatial justice in their new contexts.

The first BIP/ZIP mobility was facilitated by the Com.Unity.Lab TN, supported by the EU-funded URBACT programme, which promotes sustainable urban development through city-to-city knowledge exchange. The key arguments of this study have been developed during empirical fieldwork activities on the policy mobility of BIP/ZIP, which adapts the "follow the policy" approach by Peck and Theodore (2012). This approach proposes following the journey of a policy and examining its mobility and interactions among people, materials, and events. Through participant observation, document analysis, and interviews, it reveals the complexities and nuances of policy interconnections. The close observation of the Com.Unity.Lab TN within this study highlighted the need for a continuous assessment of policy outcomes. Analysing only the immediate outcomes of TNs, which is typically the case for many urban public policies identified as best practices, is insufficient.

After following up on the first mobility of the BIP/ZIP policy, we recognised the importance of analysing the temporal dimension of these processes to understand their impact in new contexts. Assessing the temporal dimension of urban co-policy mobility is essential, as time shapes how power is negotiated, distributed, and reconfigured when policies are introduced and adapted in new contexts. Policy creation, adaptation, and implementation are processes that take time, particularly for co-policies that involve extensive cooperation among groups in local democratic practices. Co-production processes require numerous gatherings and extensive negotiations involving multiple stakeholders to reach a common ground. They consequently require more time compared with top-down planning methods. Similarly, in urban co-governance, power dynamics are not static; they fluctuate based on stakeholder engagement, contextual changes, and the policy's responsiveness to specific local needs. Policy development involves a constant adaptation to contextual changes and continuous collective efforts to enhance the model. As a result, co-governance

development exhibits a spiral trajectory rather than a linear one, time-wise. This dynamic nature demands a significant level of dedication from all actors.

In this regard, temporal analysis illuminates the evolution of co-policy developments, revealing how the initial principles and structures may be transformed or challenged by local realities, social dynamics, and shifting stakeholder interactions. Examining these changes over time allows us to assess the resilience, adaptability, and genuine potential for territorial cohesion in co-policies like BIP/ZIP. This process not only supports policy adaptation for improved performance and flexibility but also enables stakeholders—such as local councils and community groups—to organise effectively in regard to these evolving dynamics. In essence, collaborative endeavours and the implementation of public policies involving numerous stakeholders are time-consuming. Therefore, considering time as a key parameter of assessing co-policy mobility outcomes is crucial. In analysing the outcomes of current European policy mobility related to urban processes derived from co-production and co-governance, we propose to address the aspects of spatial justice as a dynamic process that evolves over time instead of as a static *snapshot*.

4. The Southern Approach to Time and Space

Discourse in mainstream planning frequently overlooks the distinct temporal narratives embedded within the socio-spatial structures and practices of cities (Hutter & Wiechmann, 2022), which limits the exploration of alternative urban imaginaries. This notion presents an opportunity for critically examining the ostensibly *neutral* and *technical* assumptions that underpin various approaches to urbanism, including the linearity of time. Apart from asking which temporalities produce specific city forms (Wall & Knierbein, 2023), acknowledging that societies have crafted diverse urban landscapes influenced by cyclical, linear, and other structured understandings of time is crucial. Exploring the intersection between Indigenous knowledge systems and senses of place (Estermann, 2013) can lead to valuable insights for the reintegration of cultural values into urban planning. Embracing the richness of diverse temporalities and uncovering hidden spatiotemporal narratives from the Global South can fuel the development of alternative theories, methodologies, practices, urban forms, and politics that better reflect the complex realities of contemporary cities.

Temporalities are deeply woven into the fabric of contemporary urban landscapes. Wall and Knierbein (2023, p. 108) argue that social rhythms permeate the textures of streets and the configurations of neighbourhoods, which continually shape and reshape urban spaces. Despite their crucial role in planning processes, scholars have overlooked temporal categories in analytical frameworks for case analysis (Hutter & Wiechmann, 2022, p. 159). This oversight can be attributed to the influence of modernist periods during which notions of linear time prevailed, which reduced the intricate web of everyday rhythms, cyclical time, and ceremonial moments to a narrow framework of past, present, and future timelines (Wall & Knierbein, 2023, p. 107). This perspective has confined the understanding of time to a simplistic clock-time framework, which is characterised by linear and objective temporalities (Hutter & Wiechmann, 2022).

Despite the general neglect of the time dimension, Wall and Knierbein (2023) highlight a specific group of urban studies scholars who focus on the role of time, particularly those investigating chronopolitics. These scholars examine assumptions about time in urban politics, the political manipulation of temporalities, and the construction of meaning through temporal references. However, methods that analyse various

sequences, causal relations, or pivotal moments of transition remain uncommon (Hutter & Wiechmann, 2022). The authors argue that "too often, time is treated like a 'container' for presenting empirical findings on planning processes" (Hutter & Wiechmann, 2022, p. 162). They advocate the exploration of time and temporality beyond a linear, clock-time view among urban researchers and practitioners, which implies that an in-depth understanding of these concepts would enhance their work.

Aligned with these discussions, our proposed framework adopts a critical stance and draws on theories that advocate for urban analysis with a "view from the South" (Watson, 2009). Andean understanding inspires this Southern perspective on time in urban policy mobility. According to Estermann (2013), the Andean notion of spiral time challenges the Western conception of linear time, which implies progress, irreversibility, and quantifiability. Instead, the cyclical principle of time views *pacha* (space-time) as a spiral that consists of periodic cycles (Manga Quespi, 1994). This perspective critiques Western modernist narratives that frame development as a linear progression and modernity as the definitive surpassing of the "pre-modern" or "old-fashioned" (cf. Estermann, 2013). Aligned with these Southern approaches, our framework considers a cyclical relationship with time, prioritising the process narrative. It proposes the examination of the transformation of relationships, shifting viewpoints, evolving perspectives, and intermediary results, which emphasises that outcomes are inherently dynamic and ever-changing. This approach involves the analysis of city-making processes by accumulating cyclical layers and loops.

Overall, the proposed framework advocates for a continuous and cyclical lens on policy implementation with the objective of providing a comprehensive understanding of the policy implementation journey. This approach facilitates the identification of patterns, trends, and shifts in power dynamics that influence the development and impact of policy mobility. Such analysis enables stakeholders to make informed decisions, adapt policies to changing circumstances, and address emerging challenges over time. Understanding the evolution of power dynamics provides a comprehensive view of policy outcomes. This comprehension of the impact of co-policy mobility on neighbourhoods and communities can support the development of a more equitable city-making process.

5. Research Process

The proposed analytical framework is derived from an empirical fieldwork analysis on the temporal dynamics of power distribution within Com.Unity.Lab TN, and specifically focuses on the initial mobility of the BIP/ZIP policy—the Com.Unity.Lab TN process ran from 3 April 2018 to 14 June 2021. The leading author closely followed the process from 21 February 2020 until its conclusion and actively participated in most meetings. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, these meetings were held virtually. In addition to annual Transnational Meetings, "coordination meetings" occurred weekly or bi-weekly. Representatives from all participating municipalities—Bari, Aalborg, Sofia, Ostrava, Lublin, The Hague, Lille, and Lisbon—typically attended, with one to three participants per city, usually the project's operational leads. Occasionally, members of the URBACT Local Groups joined when their contributions were relevant. Towards the end of the process, dedicated sessions were held to develop and present the toolkit at the URBACT Festival. Our leading author actively participated in Lisbon's presentation of the Com.Unity.Lab initiative. Thus, our analysis was based on a wide range of documents and resources, including the application document, progress reports, TN podcasts, transfer diary entries (one per city), transfer plans and reports (one per city), final "learning logs" (one per city), and updates from the Com.Unity.Lab website and network.

Our research process began with "follow the policy" (Peck & Theodore, 2012), which enabled tracking the journey of the policy by thinking with and through this policy and its mobility across time and territories. This approach enabled the examination of the dynamics and connections among people, materials, and events within their respective territories over time, falling under three methods: following the actors, following the decisions, and following the effects. The empirical fieldwork is based on these three intertwined methods and our analytical framework benefited from its results. Besides the theoretical and methodological discussions among authors, the embodied and critical engagement of the leading author within the BIP/ZIP process in Lisbon enriched the data collected and analysed as part of the fieldwork. Aligned with the above-mentioned methods, our analysis focused on (a) human and non-human actors via stakeholder and context analyses (following the actors); (b) decisions via an in-depth document and protocol analysis (following the decisions); and (c) the effects of the TN via stakeholder interviews and self-evaluative focus groups (following the effects). This methodological approach situates the research at the intersection of critical action research and policy mobility studies, allowing for an in-depth examination of the complexities within urban co-policies. It enables the examination of diverse actors' roles, the tracing of decision-making pathways, and an assessment of how the outcomes of co-policy initiatives in urban settings develop and change over time. We share here key reflections from our analysis across the aforementioned methods.

5.1. Following the Actors

According to our observations, virtual meetings throughout the BIP/ZIP process mainly facilitated idea exchange and problem-solving among municipal technicians and representatives of local groups, including local associations and other civil society organisations. Local municipal teams independently determined their actions and shared outcomes during Com.Unity.Lab gatherings. We analysed stakeholder engagement during the implementation process in contrast to performed local actions. Our work revealed that engagement levels varied among the municipal teams. Building trust, learning, and translating inspiration into action were gradual and time-consuming. Meetings were more productive when participants felt comfortable sharing concerns and unconventional ideas. Public policy creation and implementation are inherently slow and context-responsive processes, which are further slowed down by bureaucratic hurdles and necessary adjustments, especially in co-policy processes such as BIP/ZIP. Our analysis showed that actors with different motivations and levels of engagement were involved, depending on their power positions. This was further reflected in the individual takeaways from the process, spanning from strategies of replicating the policy framework in their own contexts to ideas related to adopting and adjusting its particular elements or actions towards initiating a radical policy change in their cities. By following the actors and their mode of participation, we understand that the dynamics and priorities of local municipalities and other actors may change over time, and this accordingly affects how co-policies are transferred, modified, and implemented.

5.2. Following the Decisions

Throughout the BIP/ZIP process, strategic decisions frequently occurred outside online meetings, which are led by the Lisbon Local Development Department and a URBACT Lead Expert. Municipal technicians addressed day-to-day tasks, yet, they were not in a position to make decisions. The partnering cities developed context-specific co-policies that focused on power distribution through co-production and co-governance instead of replicating the format. Our analysis included document examination—project logs,

key decisions, and rationale—supported by the interviews with the Lisbon Local Development Department, which enabled us to trace decisions as they occurred. Within the mobility of BIP/ZIP, Sofia created a priority zone map. Bari enhanced facilities for citizen contribution and integrated BIP/ZIP learnings into its innovation ecosystem. Aalborg incorporated BIP/ZIP insights into three urban development plans, while Lille updated the grant scheme of its citizens. Lublin created a BIP/ZIP-inspired city map and emphasised the importance of a local group. Ostrava mapped neighbourhoods and prepared a grant scheme, and The Hague worked with community-led local development and drew inspiration from the mapping method of Lisbon. Lisbon rethought a few BIP/ZIP structures after learning from the experiences of other cities, particularly digital tools. Therefore, following the decisions in and beyond Lisbon proves the necessity of uncovering power structures in decision-making processes, shaped by professional positions and roles of the partnering municipalities within the network.

5.3. Following the Effects

Regarding the impact of TNs, no structured evaluation proposal exists for the Com.Unity.Lab policy framework. Thus, we implemented an analysis process during five of the last Com.Unity.Lab online meetings. This analytical process was inspired by the method called "*que bom/que tal/que pena*" ("how nice that…/what if…?/what a pity that…"). This straightforward method was used with the Com.Unity.Lab TN group after selected meetings, including feedback sessions on online events and the local adaptation of the BIP/ZIP tools. Each session lasted no more than one hour, during which the participants shared their thoughts on what worked well, what could be improved, and what did not work (Figure 1).

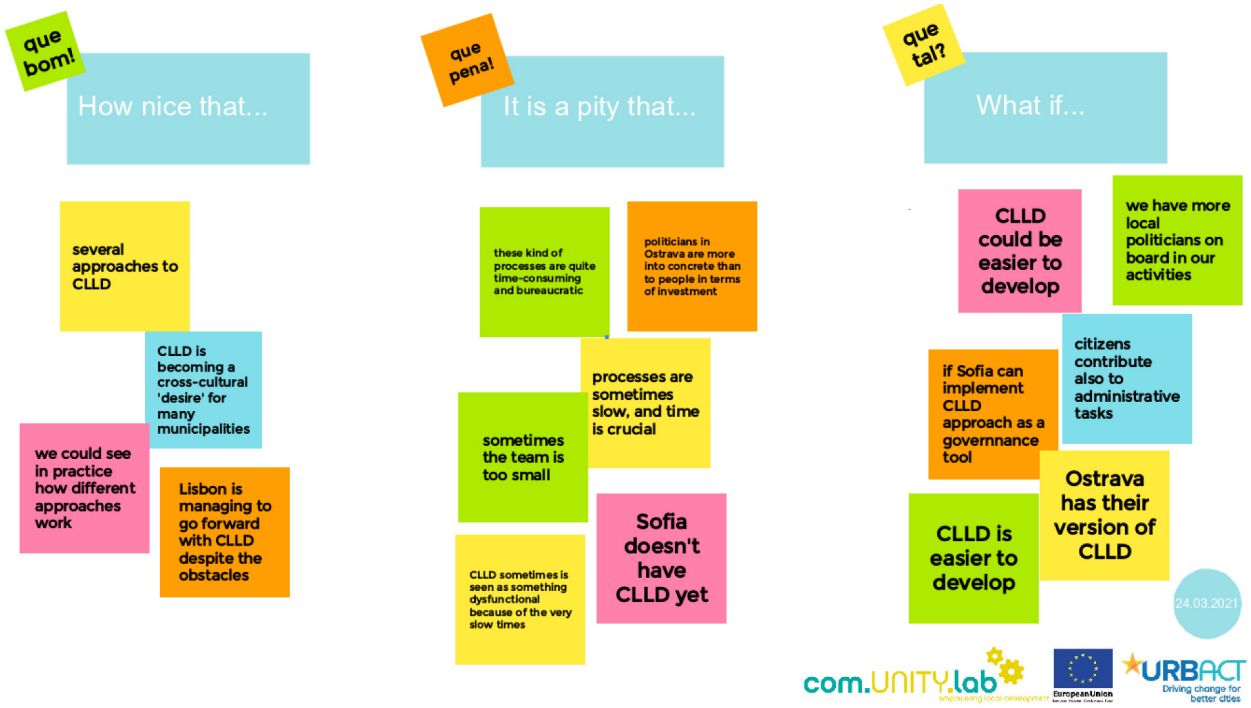

Figure 1. The outcome of the "how nice that…/what if…?/what a pity that…" session that focused on the community-led local development BIP/ZIP tool transfer process. Notes: The colours were chosen randomly and do not carry any particular significance for the analysis, meaning they can be disregarded when interpreting the results; CLLD = community-led local development.

As the "how nice that…/what if…?/what a pity that…" method was applied five times during the project, certain aspects of the policy transfer outcomes were analysed by the meeting participants, which enabled advancement in forming local policies, understanding the rationale underlying specific choices—such as how to approach decision-makers or how long some process should take—and analysing their consequences. The participating Lisbon team involved in the Com.Unity.Lab TN affirmed that this regular assessment, although relatively simple, was meaningful to the project process.

Similar to other URBACT TNs, the final report of Com.Unity.Lab contained the first steps of the policies proposed by partners, which were inspired by BIP/ZIP. However, it lacked information on the current status of the local outcomes development and further plans, which left a knowledge gap about its progress. The application of the "how nice that…/what if…?/what a pity that…" method highlighted the advantages of employing a simple and collective analysis method. This aligns with a Southern approach that prioritises resource optimisation, which ensures that even groups with limited resources can engage in analytical reflection throughout the process. Afterwards, the team of municipal technicians in Lisbon recognised the importance of an adaptable framework for evaluating power distribution within TNs:

> We think it would be beneficial if cities involved in URBACT networks were encouraged to maintain the partnership and monitor the results over a period of time (e.g., through pre-defined monitoring indicators at the application stage). This would allow URBACT to fine-tune not only the evaluation criteria of the projects/networks but also the type of networks (sharing, transfer, etc.). Therefore, the idea of assessing the results of Com.Unity.Lab over time would be welcome. (Lisbon team municipal technicians, personal communication, February 15, 2022)

5.4. Final Methodological Remarks

The empirical findings of the fieldwork imply that stakeholders in policy mobility processes appreciate and are likely to adopt analytical frameworks, especially if such frameworks are straightforward, intuitive, and easy to apply. Repeatedly employing these frameworks provides meaningful insights into the subject. Notably, the study identified the potential for stakeholders and local groups to independently apply this framework, which ensures responsible resource management—an aspect previously unexplored under the current procedures.

6. An Analytical Framework for Assessing Co-Policy Mobility Outcomes

6.1. The Role of Power (Distribution) in Co-Policy Mobility

In urban co-governance, power dynamics do not remain static; they fluctuate based on stakeholder engagement, contextual shifts, and the policy's responsiveness to specific local needs. By closely examining these changes over time, we can assess the resilience, adaptability, and true inclusiveness of co-policies like BIP/ZIP. A temporal perspective also allows for tracking intermediary outcomes, identifying critical moments where the policy may require recalibration to stay aligned with the goals towards socio-spatial justice. As theorised within Southern epistemologies, time is not just a backdrop for policy transfer but an active force that reshapes how co-policies materialise and impact communities, reinforcing the need for continuous assessment and adaptation to foster fairer cities.

We have drawn inspiration from several frameworks when considering applicability across diverse stakeholders and contexts. Frameworks like the Just City Index (Griffin, 2018) and The Chaz! Framework for Women's Empowerment, as documented in *A New Weave of Power, People & Politics* (VeneKlasen & Miller, 2007), aim to analyse policies that address power imbalances in city-making, often dealing with intangible aspects. To illustrate, the Just City Index, which was developed by the Just City Lab at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, provides a set of values—such as power, democracy, fairness, resilience, and engagement—that guide participants in assessing urban spaces and governance arrangements. These indicators are adaptable, allowing stakeholders to prioritise those values most relevant to their specific contexts. Adaptability is particularly relevant in the context of TNs, where policies must be tailored to local conditions. Although applying the index is an extensive process, it is conceptually accessible, as Griffin (2018) emphasises the importance of a collective and context-specific definition of justice and the values that should be prioritised. The Chaz! Framework for Women's Empowerment, as documented in *A New Weave of Power, People & Politics* (VeneKlasen & Miller, 2007), offers further insights into the transformative processes necessary for successful policy mobility. This dynamic, interactive framework illustrates how individual and collective empowerment evolves through conscientization, deconstruction, and political action, with time being a critical factor in its application. The Chaz! Framework is multi-dimensional, highlighting the foresight needed to account for changes over time, involving growth, conflict, and solidarity processes.

As highlighted within such frameworks, the distribution of resources across spaces and ensuring equitable access to opportunities for their use is closely linked to the concept of spatial justice and the pursuit of fairer cities and societies (Weck et al., 2021). Spatial justice provides a lens for reimagining justice through spatial and material perspectives, highlighting the importance of context-specific considerations (Young, 1990). Many scholars propose practical approaches for addressing these issues, including Dikeç (2005), Ghouchani et al. (2022), Rocco (2014), and Weck et al. (2021). As Moroni (2020, p. 260) states, "issues of justice arise when there are certain power structures in need of justification." This perspective is echoed by Rocco (2014), who argues that power imbalances in traditional hegemonic settings lead to spatial injustice, particularly in cities with radically uneven urban quality and access to common goods.

In discussing the development of the analytical framework in this article, we emphasise the significance of the "power" indicator as it connects to the concept of "democracy." Both of the frameworks mentioned above also establish this connection. A deeper distribution of power through cooperative instruments could align with Appadurai's (2002) notion of "deep democracy," which emphasises aspects like roots, anchors, intimacy, closeness, and locality. Fung and Wright (2001) assert that democracy has become synonymous with competitive elections for political leadership at both legislative and executive levels. They argue that there is a growing recognition that this electoral approach falls short of realising the fundamental principles of democratic governance. These principles include fostering active political engagement among citizens, achieving political consensus through dialogue, and formulating and implementing public policies that contribute to a productive and healthy society. In more radical egalitarian versions of the democratic ideal, the goal is to ensure that all citizens benefit from the wealth of the nation (Fung & Wright, 2001, p. 5).

At this stage, we argue that analysing power distribution is essential for understanding the limitations and potentialities of policy mobility. This analysis will serve as the backbone of the proposed framework, helping identify recommendations regarding policy transfer, translation, and implementation. It will also provide

insights into the practicality and feasibility of transferring policy experiences from Lisbon to other cities. Power distribution, in the context of city-making, is linked to how cities and city authorities—in their interactions with citizens and local initiatives—learn. It is, therefore, closely related to the reciprocal learning process between local governments and communities, particularly in adapting these learnings to meet specific needs. Of particular interest is how they learn enough to adapt these lessons to their local context and become multipliers of co-produced knowledge.

We propose that analysing power distribution over time, with a focus on urban temporalities, can complement the analysis of policy mobility limitations and opportunities, thereby contributing to the formulation of recommendations for the translation and implementation of these policies. To explore the notion of power within these processes, we embrace the power cube framework of Gaventa (2006; Figure 2). Assessing transformative action in various political spaces, this framework serves as a tool for reflecting on collective agency by mapping different types of power. Gaventa's definition of power as the ability to make and enforce decisions is central to our approach. Departing from this definition, the power cube framework analyses three dimensions of power, namely, forms of power, spaces of power, and levels of power, which align with the "three faces" of power by Lukes (1974, 2005) and were further elaborated by Gaventa (2006). This framework not only deals with these dimensions but also considers different modes of power—*power over*, *power to*, *power with*, and *power within*—as dynamic and interrelated.

VeneKlasen and Miller (2007) expand on the concept of *power over* in which one person or institution restricts the actions of another to include other dimensions of power. As addressed by Holloway (2005), *power to* refers to the ability to act, which begins with the awareness that action is possible and can transform into skill development and realisation of change. *Power with* describes collective action and agency, which stems from union and a shared understanding, while *power within* refers to confidence and self-esteem as a result of the recognition of one's situation and potential for change. These notions interact within the multidimensional framework of the power cube method, and, in our context, provide a comprehensive tool for analysing power dynamics and their role in policy implementation and mobility. The three faces of the cube represent an interplay of the three notions of power that emerged from debates

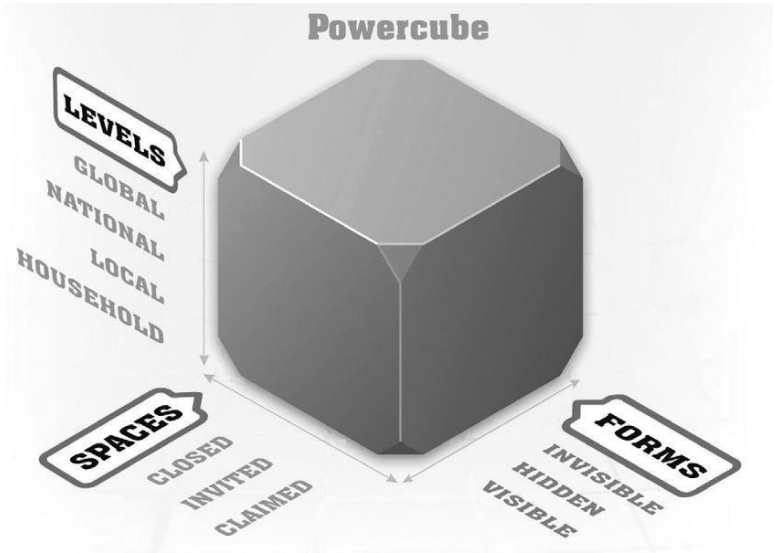

Figure 2. Power cube framework by John Gaventa. Source: Gaventa (2019).

on how power operates in political decision-making processes and inform the proposed analytical framework. As such, the power cube serves as a navigational tool for conceptualising the proposed analytical framework. This paper then contextualises the power cube using the case of BIP/ZIP policy mobility (Com.Unity.Lab TN).

6.2. Contextualising the Framework

Given the significance of developing a meaningful, feasible, and context-specific analysis of policy mobility, we propose an analytical framework as a meaningful synthesis of the power cube method and our empirical work, adapted to the co-policy mobility process. We developed it as a tool for comprehending the implementation results and outcomes of co-policies within policy mobility contexts. The aim of the framework is to enhance the analysis of urban co-policies and illuminate their potential in fostering local co-production and co-governance towards spatial justice.

This concept led to the creation of a matrix primarily based on the above-mentioned power cube framework, which is designed for straightforward application through detailed subsequent questions. These questions are based on the three dimensions of the cube, each offering a distinct analysis of power, namely, forms, layers, and spaces. This method visually maps an analysed scenario, which encompasses actors, relationships, and forces, and explores avenues for movement, mobilisation, and change. By dissecting different power dynamics, the objective is to reveal the expressions of power as *power over*, *power to*, *power with*, and *power within*. In this context, we first envisioned the application of these power dimensions to the analysis of the policy mobility results of the BIP/ZIP strategy (Table 1). We used the Com.Unity.Lab case to provide tangible examples corresponding to the dimensions of the power cube.

6.2.1. Spaces of Power

In Gaventa's (2006) formulation, spaces of power encompass *closed spaces*, *offered spaces*, and *claimed spaces*. Closed spaces are those where there is no opportunity for public input, such as budgetary decisions made by ministries of education and finance that cannot be directly influenced by the public. Offered spaces are created top-down, establishing new places of social encounter where actors from science and practice can collaborate on specific projects. These spaces facilitate engagement and interaction within predetermined frameworks. In contrast, claimed spaces arise from grassroots efforts through civil society actions, differing from offered spaces by being initiated from the bottom up rather than through top-down directives. In our framework, we kept closed spaces as proposed by Gaventa (2016) and interpreted them as the spaces where meetings with exclusive participation occurred. Given the territorial implications of the city-making process from the urban planning perspective, we adapted the remaining *spaces of power* according to the dynamics of Com.Unity.Lab. We first introduced *co-spaces* in which local government and citizen groups collaboratively provide public services, which fosters urban resource creation and promotes co-governance through public–social partnerships. These environments, whether pre-existing, enhanced, or driven by policy, emphasise the significance of local co-production and co-governance. Examples include spaces for collaborative service design meetings, areas for testing urban solutions, and hands-on workshops. We also propose the term *citizen spaces* to refer to citizen-managed and -led physical spaces and initiatives in the city that influence the local political landscape. These spaces may collaborate with each other, adhere to clear advocacy guidelines, and take collective action, which forms a robust network.

Table 1. Contextualised dimensions of power for the Com.Unity.Lab and the BIP/ZIP policy.

Power cube dimensions	Gaventa's model	Policy mobility model	Com.Unity.Lab
Spaces	Closed	Closed spaces	Closed meetings and gatherings; local municipalities team meetings not open for citizens.
	Offered	Co-spaces as co-production and co-governance spaces; mutual learning spaces	Spaces where meetings are held to discuss and exchange ideas about challenges and solutions, which fosters cooperation dynamics during co-design meetings and participation workshops. These include neighbourhood support units (GABIPs), neighbourhood associations, community-led local development network spaces and others.
	Claimed/Created	Citizens' spaces	Independent neighbourhood associations, civil society organisations and insurgent movements.
Levels	Global	Trans-municipal; international	Com.Unity.Lab TN meetings between partner cities and other meetings and decisions that could influence the co-policy local implementation.
	National	Municipal	Municipal staff meetings; actions and plans with local partners such as local groups and organised citizens.
	Local	Community	Neighbourhood: priority neighbourhood developments.
Forms	Invisible	Inscribed in the positionalities of those involved	Invisible as characterisations of power inherent to the members or groups involved in co-policy implementation that are present in interpersonal relationships, such as social position, origin, gender and race, which directly influences the process under analysis.
	Hidden	Differentiated interests	Hidden as undeclared interests of the EU, URBACT, municipalities, members of Com.Unity.Lab and citizens who guide their decisions and parameters and who exert direct influence.
	Visible	Decision-making processes	Visible as official decision-making bodies of members of Com.Unity.Lab and decisions of URBACT, municipalities and the EU, which directly influence the implementation of local policies in question.

6.2.2. Levels of Power

This dimension of the power cube identifies international, national, and local power places, pointing to framework conditions, goals, and effects across all levels and coalitions between *global*, *national*, and *local* actors. Considering a wide institutional span—from local to global—that characterises policy mobility processes, we adapted the levels of power, beginning with municipal policy mobility and eventually applying the referred dimension to the specific approach of co-policies. The proposed levels span three tiers. At the *local level*, the power dynamics are examined, which involve policy mobility structures, such as the Com.Unity.Lab TN, and international directives, such as those from the EU, and focuses on global power

dynamics. At the *municipality level*, the framework explores power dynamics within cities engaged in policy transfer and implementation and considers tangible and intangible actors. This level includes cities, such as Lisbon, as policy originators, or others that adopt policies, such as Bari, Aalborg, Sofia, Ostrava, Lublin, The Hague, and Lille. At the *neighbourhood level*, the framework highlights the dynamics within specific neighbourhoods affected by the policy in the original city or cities that implement adaptations and are guided by the evolving application of the power cube.

6.2.3. Forms of Power

Gaventa's (2006) systematisation, further developed by VeneKlasen and Miller (2007), organises power into three forms of power: *hidden power*, *visible power*, and *invisible power*. *Visible power* refers to conflicts of interest that occur in public spaces, such as formal decision-making bodies within political or organisational structures. It is considered visible because the roles of the involved parties and the mechanisms of power are clearly defined. Otherwise, *hidden power* pertains to the unwritten rules that operate behind the scenes, giving an advantage to certain groups. This form of power affects decision-making processes by precluding certain alternatives from being considered, a phenomenon also described as the "mobilisation of bias" (Schattschneider, 1975). *Invisible power* extends beyond conscious actions, encompassing internalised ways of thinking and dominant ideologies that shape desires and imagination. It is related to social structures and their impact on self-perception, akin to Bourdieu's concept of "habitus," which involves internalised patterns of thought and action developed over time, giving individuals their place in society (Bourdieu, 2006). In our analytical framework, we interpreted invisible power as the power inherent to interpersonal relationships marked by the intersectional identities of participants such as class, ethnicity, race, and gender. Hidden power is associated with undeclared interests and motivations of different partner actors. In our adaptation, we considered visible power as decision-making processes boldly leading to the implementation of policies.

6.3. Framework Application

Ideally, the TN team initiates the implementation of the analytical framework at the beginning of the mobility process. However, the framework is conceived in such a manner that other stakeholders can also undertake this task after the commencement of the implementation process. Regardless of the initiator, convening sessions with various stakeholders involved or impacted by the co-policy application are recommended (Figure 3). Preferably, these sessions should be conducted in person, although online facilitation is another option. The sessions can be led by the initiator(s) or an external facilitator. To address potential limitations stemming from insufficient information about the process and the local project, a clear communication strategy should precede the implementation phase, ensuring a shared understanding among stakeholders.

Each session should last approximately two hours. The workshop should use open-ended questions tailored to the audience and may include supporting illustrations. Sessions can be conducted in various settings, such as a circle in a room, during a neighbourhood walk, or on digital platforms. The guiding principles of the Southernised perspective include privileging informal discussions, using non-assumptive formats, promoting solidarity and mutual learning, exploring diverse communication methods from the perspective of the interlocutor, and prioritising attention to the *periphery* as much as the *centre* by seeking external narratives and engaging with supporting actors. To minimise potential misunderstandings, we recommend paying

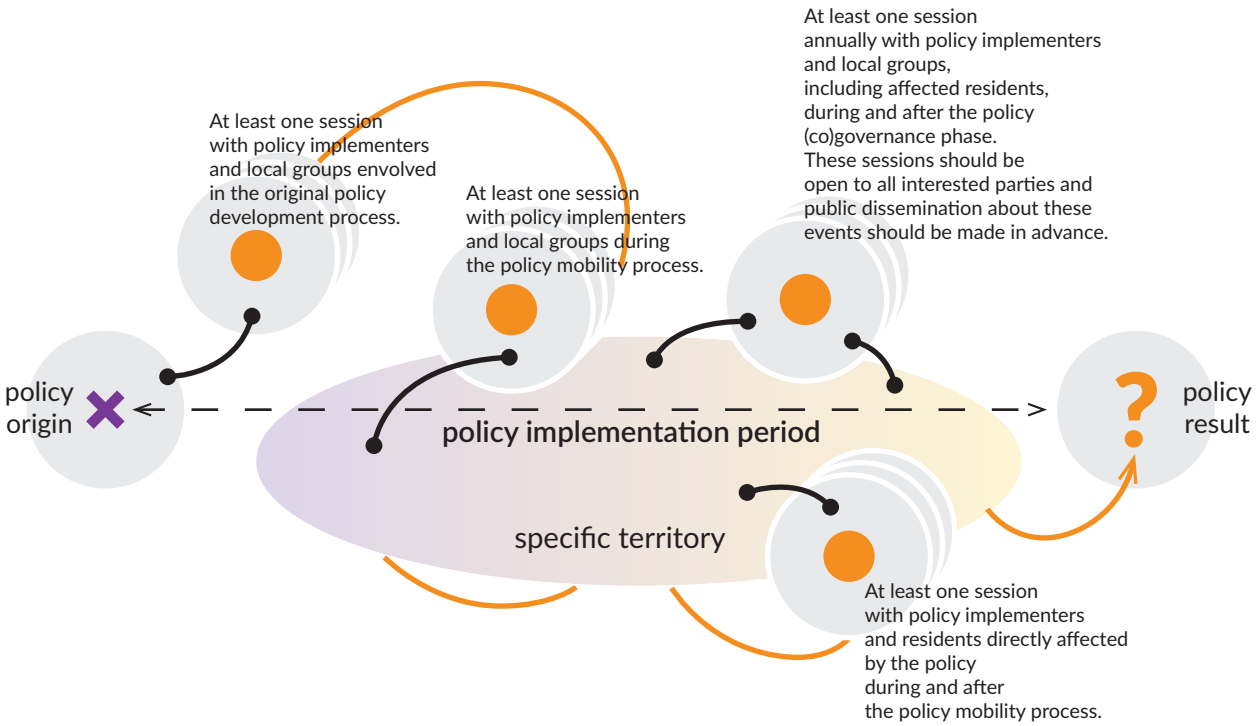

Figure 3. Recommendation for the timing of the application of the framework.

special attention to languages used during the sessions (technical, popular, minority, foreign, etc.) while organising regular feedback loops—making sure that everyone has something to say.

The sessions can begin by selecting one of the power cube dimensions, among *spaces*, *levels*, or *forms of power*. We recommend starting with *spaces of power*, as it is more tangible and therefore relatively easier to analyse, and we will use this as an example to illustrate the process. Figure 4 outlines the step-by-step process for the application session. Begin with a 10-minute introduction that provides an overview of the session's objectives, structure, and key concepts (e.g., "closed spaces," "co-spaces," and "citizen spaces"). Following the introduction, *spaces of power* can be explored in depth for approximately 30 minutes. During this time, diagrams representing each space of power (see Figure 5) can be presented, allowing participants to discuss each category of power and how it is perceived within each space. At this stage, various interlinked questions may help facilitate this part of the session, such as: "What kinds of spaces are involved in our policy mobility process?", "Who governs these spaces?", "Did you have full, restricted, or no access to such spaces?", "In which spaces did you meet other actors and collaborate?", "How do these spaces shape decision-making processes?", and "What opportunities or barriers did you encounter in these spaces?". Participants are then encouraged to share insights by placing notes around the space names, fostering a collective understanding. To address the potential limitations of abstract diagram representations, we recommend using supporting tools that explore various embodied activities. These may include utilising bodies, tangible objects, or physical models to capture and discuss the dynamics within *spaces of power*.

The following part of the session could then be either *forms of power* or *levels of power*. The *forms of power* part can be explored through questions such as: "What formal decision-making bodies and mechanisms shaped the policy?", "How transparent were the decision-making processes?", "Were there explicit conflicts

Session Structure

Introduction (10 minutes):
Overview of the session's purpose and structure, key concepts, and diagrams representing each space of power.

Exploring Spaces of Power (30 minutes):
Discussion of categories of power and their perception within each space, using post-it notes for insights.

Clustering Forms of Power (30 minutes):
Open discussion on clustering post-it notes around visible, hidden, and invisible power forms.

Levels of Power (30 minutes):
Group discussion to identify and name different levels of power and their multidimensional nature in policy implementation.

Final Discussion (20 minutes):
Reflection on the results and identification of how power was distributed to facilitate the co-production process. Use an "it's great that / it is a pity that / what if..." approach to review the diagrams and content.

Figure 4. Proposed session structure.

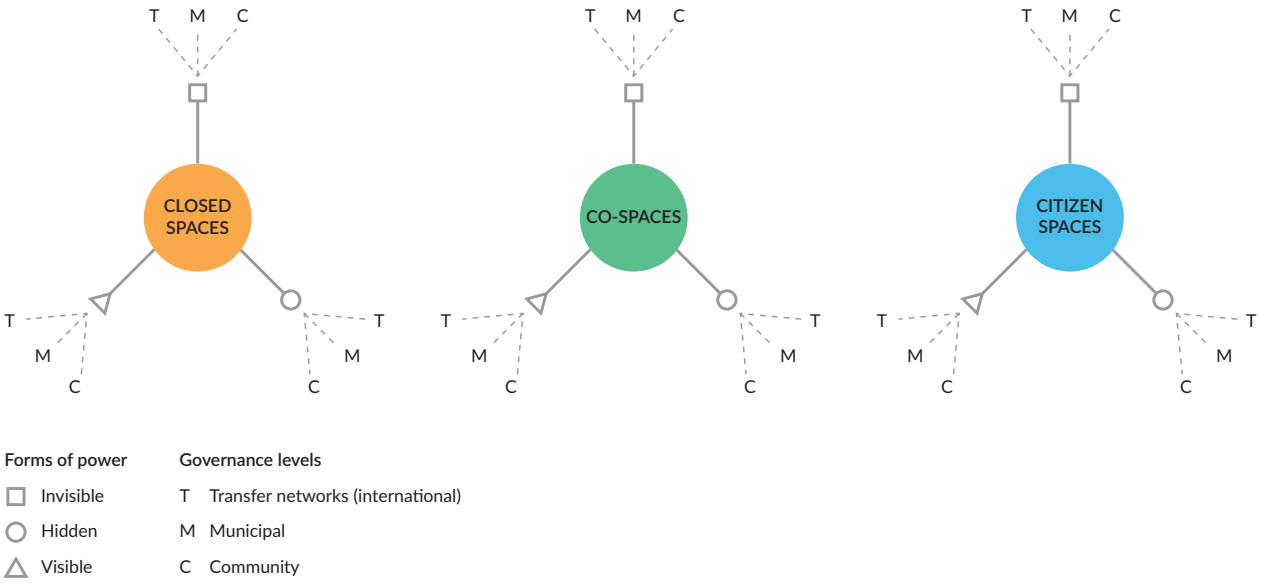

Figure 5. Diagrams of each space of power.

of interest, and how were they managed or resolved?", "What tangible outcomes resulted directly from visible power dynamics?", "What informal practices or 'unwritten rules' influenced the policy's development or implementation?", "Are there any actors or groups that exert power behind the scenes?", "How do social norms, cultural beliefs, or dominant ideologies shape the implementation of the policy?", and "What internalised assumptions or biases influenced stakeholder behaviour or perceptions?". Similarly, the *levels of power* part can be organised in an analogous fashion, guided by questions such as: "Who are the primary actors and stakeholders involved at the local, municipal, and global levels?", "What are the key dynamics at play in the neighbourhoods or communities affected by the policy?", "How do local socio-cultural and economic conditions shape the mobility process of the policy?", "What localised resources, practices, or traditions influenced the policy's outcomes?", "What role do city-level actors (e.g., city councils, urban

planners) play in adapting or implementing the policy?", and "What formal or informal coalitions exist among cities involved in policy transfer?".

As post-session activities, we recommend organising and systematising the materials collected during the session to validate the findings with the stakeholders. As co-production and co-governance presuppose cooperation in the objectives, one could expect that the methods for analysis would also occur in cooperation. Thus, an important point will be the collective character of the policy assessment approach, which considers design, theory, and implementation, because "the programmes are the product of the policymaker's prediction. Their fate, however, always depends on the imagination of practitioners and participants. Rarely do these views fully coincide" (Pawson & Tilly, 2004, p. 3).

Finally, the proposed framework should be applied at least three times during the implementation process (as illustrated in Figure 3) to provide stakeholders with opportunities to reflect on, refine, and adjust their understanding of the power dynamics at different stages of the policy mobility process. This cyclical approach aligns with the concept of action research cycles, where each cycle builds on the previous one, fostering deeper insights into the context, actors, and power relations through "planning, acting, reflecting and re-planning, acting again and reflecting again" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p. 563). The first cycle should take place immediately after the policy is implemented, such as during a pilot project, to assess initial intentions. The second cycle should occur one year later, focusing on the first developments. The final cycle, approximately two years after implementation, provides an opportunity to make adjustments and improvements based on the results. With each application, the understanding of power distribution should deepen, offering participants a more refined perspective on how power dynamics shape the transfer and implementation processes. Over time, this depth increases as participants observe changes, adapt strategies, and learn from previous rounds of engagement.

7. Conclusion

This article proposes an analytical framework that aims to assess the extent to which co-policies inspired from elsewhere contribute to spatial justice in new adopting contexts. It highlights the potential utility of this framework, particularly in the context of co-policy mobility. These urban policies, which integrate co-production and co-governance of neighbourhood public spaces, serve as an inspiration for adapted replication in numerous other cities, especially within the European context. The challenge of assessing the impact of co-policies in the policy mobility context is significant given that European TNs, such as the URBACT ones, do not incorporate impact analysis into their processes. Moreover, implementation analyses are perceived as time-consuming and costly, which renders them impractical. Additionally, the individuals involved in these networks are typically mobile and not officially committed to medium- to long-term projects.

As stated by many stakeholders in the Com.Unity.Lab TN, including the documents generated by the URBACT process, trust-building, learning, and translating inspiration into action require time, which underscores their essential roles as critical factors. Therefore, beyond presenting a framework that is open to adaptation, this study concludes that any method applied to the assessment of information on the implementation of co-policies or policies predisposed to cooperation, which seeks to deepen democracy, should consider temporal power dynamics and their evolution over time. This consideration is essential for analysing results and taking action accordingly. An understanding of the temporal dynamics of power

distribution, as informed by the Southern approaches in the framework, can be instrumental in amplifying the voices that are typically unheard in current mobility processes.

In response to these challenges and with critical empirical insights, this study argues that a potential analytical approach involves assessing whether or not power is effectively distributed during co-policies implementation and development on-site. Thus, the two key factors, time and power, are operationalised for the structure of the framework. The proposed analytical framework provides tools for the assessment of the socio-spatial impact of policy work in spatial justice, emphasising the importance of time in policy analysis. Recognising the distinct nature of this policy format, the framework suggests *low-cost* and *easy-to-operate* protocols to encourage increased participation in policy analysis. Consequently, it enables a variety of actors to continuously analyse the policy implementation process and adjust strategies accordingly.

The originality of this study is in its weaving together multiple methods and providing a workable, hands-on, structured framework for the analysis of travelling co-policies for various stakeholders, thus lowering the threshold and democratising the process of spatializing social justice. Primarily designed to be useful for municipalities with limited resources (e.g., personnel or time), the proposed framework enables analysis of the implementation results beyond the official transfer periods and targeted resources. Grassroots organisations involved in or affected by the co-policy implementation can also utilise the framework to analyse the process and results, which enables reflection and informed action, such as the organisation of advocacy strategies. Furthermore, the framework is valuable for researchers who seek insights into the co-policy implementation process and its outcomes. By examining the evolution of complementary views on power across temporal scales, policymakers can gain valuable insights into the effectiveness and implications of co-policy mobility.

The methodology employed in developing the operationalisation of this framework provides valuable insights but is not without limitations. For example, a key challenge in applying the proposed framework lies in accessing individuals involved in policy-making and policy transfer. These professionals are often assigned to specific municipal projects and, once the funding period ends, are reassigned to other projects or departments. This mobility is further influenced by political cycles, which prioritise certain policies (and personnel) over others. Consequently, bringing participants together to engage with the framework becomes particularly challenging when the referenced policy is no longer central to their current roles. Another obstacle is the need to reconcile the diverse demands and priorities of these participants, which can impede the framework's practical implementation. Travelling policies are rooted in their home context and seeded in their application contexts, which often differ in institutional settings, languages spoken, cultural traditions, practices, and the motivations of those involved. For instance, language barriers exacerbate this issue: Some participants may lack fluency in the designated language for discussions, while others may struggle to bridge the gap between technical jargon and everyday language. Language barriers often include graphic language, as the proposed framework is organised and explained using an abstract diagram as visual support. Therefore, we recommend paying particular attention to these contextual differences when setting up tools and protocols for investigating the temporal power dynamics of travelling co-policies.

The presented analytical framework enables an exploration of power dynamics in urban co-production and co-governance, building on the rich body of knowledge around frameworks such as the power cube, as well as our empirical research based on the BIP/ZIP strategy process in Lisbon. By repeating the process over

and over again throughout the implementation phase, decisions taken and strategies applied will be more informed, those involved more committed, and effects created more beneficial for urban justice—which is the very cause of such policy programs. We conclude this article trusting that the proposed framework's applicability and purpose will be continuously tested through practice and reciprocally adjusted and improved in a broad range of urban contexts.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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About the Authors

Laura Sobral is an urbanist and co-founder of The City Needs You institute and A GRUPA. Her work focuses on public space, shared management, and collaborative urban governance. An insurgent planner, she is pursuing a PhD in urban studies in Lisbon (DINÂMIA'CET ISTCE-IUL) and Vienna (URBAN–TU Wien) while sharing knowledge worldwide. She authored *Doing It Together* and has received support from Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung, IJURR Foundation, FCT, and COST. Her work promotes cooperative governance for just cities.

Predrag Milić is an activist scholar trained as an architect and urban studies researcher. He is a co-founder and a scientific coordinator of the Action Research Centre Škograd and a research and development coordinator of the Who Builds the City Association from Belgrade. As a co-founder of the Child-Focused Cities working group of ICLD Sweden, Predrag works on developing the eponymous analytical and policy framework for local governments. As an affiliated researcher at URBAN–TU Wien, Predrag is pursuing a doctoral degree in urban studies with a focus on the social infrastructure of hope. As a senior scientist, he is a part of the teaching team of the master's program Social Design—Arts as Urban Innovation of the Faculty of Applied Arts in Vienna.

Burcu Ateş practices across urbanism, landscape, bio-cultural diversity, and environmental and social justice, blending research and advocacy. She has led several projects and initiatives in Ankara, İstanbul, Berlin, Van, Vienna, and the broader Mediterranean. She holds a doctoral degree in urban studies, with her research focusing on intersectional migrations and superdiversity in the eastern borderscapes of Türkiye. Her works have been supported by programs such as the European Commission's Support to Policy Reform, the EU's Think Civic, COST, the Turquoise Coast Environment Fund, the French Embassy Environment Fund, and MAVA Foundation's Leaders for Nature Academy. She is a civic participation advisor at GIZ Türkiye, a non-key expert at EU Civil Society Facility, and an affiliated researcher at URBAN—TU Wien.

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ARTICLE

Open Access Journal

Shearing Layers of Space: Exploration of Permanency and Temporality in the Public Realm

Michael Crilly [1] and Georgiana Varna [2]

[1] Department of Architecture and Built Environment, Northumbria University, UK
[2] School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape, Newcastle University, UK

Correspondence: Michael Crilly (michael.crilly@northumbria.ac.uk)

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Abstract

Stewart Brand famously provided a framework for considering change within buildings through his idea of "shearing layers," itself based on earlier ideas from Francis Duffy and Alex Henney. In each case, a loose hierarchy starting with the relative permanency of the site, the building structure/shell, and to a lesser extent the skin, to the more temporary building services, space plan, and ultimately the scenery/stuff that fills the buildings. This article transposes this method of analysis from buildings and structures to public urban space. It achieves this by adding a time dimension in the form of a "rate of change" or renewal to the different layers of site, surface, services, space (spatial configuration), surroundings/skin, signage, and stuff within the public space. While it was initially intended as a thought experiment relating to society, the idea of long-term thinking is a beneficial tool for urban designers and planners. Demonstrated using a city centre public space case study, we present the object-orientated approach to recording and mapping the "rates of change" ranging from constant, hourly, daily, monthly, and yearly through to renewal over decades and centuries. The output is presented dynamically, as a chronological map progression supported by mixed archival secondary sources and primary data gathered using remote sensing and other photographic evidence. A move from end-state planning within the public realm, to thinking about the variable nature of change will support a more flexible and resilient public realm. As we increasingly need to be responsive to challenges, and opportunities, having a better understanding of the time cycle and adaptability of the different layers of our public realm will only benefit the city.

Keywords

chronological mapping; experimental urbanism; public realm; shearing layers; temporary urbanism; urban design

1. Introduction

"The ephemeral and its variable *time* are the great paradigm with which the discipline of contemporary design should be reinterpreted" (Crippa, 2022, p. 41). The importance of temporality, flexible adaptation, and resilience in response to changing requirements within the built environment has never been greater. A cumulation of crises around changes in geopolitics, economic austerity, and perhaps most significantly, the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic have given rise to various and changing demands for temporary, ad hoc, DIY, and occasional urban space interventions (Oswell & Varna, 2024). There are many examples ranging from guerilla urbanism, street closures, temporary signage, pop-up street vendors, external uses, and the reprioritisation of public space for social activities. In this context of adaptation of the built environment to meet changing demands, one example of particular interest is the use of shipping containers for temporary event spaces and flexible uses. This is an example that is pertinent to the day-to-day work of Stewart Brand when he wrote about the creative use of shipping containers, since their invention in 1956 up to his time of writing (Brand, 1994, p. 33). He provides a personal example of repurposing, and the low-cost conversion into his work library and research space. In his famous publication, *How Buildings Learn*, alongside his personal and practical experiences, he also provided a framework for considering change and adaptation within buildings with his idea of "shearing layers," itself based on earlier ideas from Duffy (1990) and Duffy and Henney (1989). In each case, a loose hierarchy is introduced from the relative permanency of the site, the building structure/shell, and to a lesser extent the skin, to the more temporary building services, space plan, and ultimately the scenery/stuff that fills the buildings. In their seminal report that heavily influenced Brand, Duffy and Henney questioned the cumulative cost of replacing these layers when both capital and revenue costs are considered over the entire life cycle of the building:

> Add up what happens when capital is invested over a fifty-year period: the Structure expenditure is overwhelmed by the cumulative financial consequences of three generations of Services and ten generations of Space plan changes. That's the map of money in the life of the building. (Duffy & Henney, 1989, p. 61)

In this article, our overall research objective is to translate Brand's ideas on "shearing layers," from buildings into the public realm, looking through a temporal perspective with attached parameters measuring the "rate of change" as well as creating an inventory of the objects present in public space at different times. We are initially considering changes in public spaces in terms of short-, medium-, and long-term periods and we use an innovative mixed-methods approach to illustrate the complex interrelation between permanency and temporality. We recognise that the boundary between public spaces and the built environment around them is porous and that public life spills out into the surrounding areas. We work within this ambiguity in identifying the layers when looking at our case study of the Bigg Market, located in Newcastle upon Tyne, UK. Therefore, our aim through this article is to highlight and contribute to bridging the gap that exists in relation to longitudinal, temporal studies of public space, and provide several recommendations for the scholarship and practice of urban planning and design. The six separate layers of Brand and the four proposed by Duffy in a convoluted manner all begin with the letter "S." As such we have respected and followed this unconventional naming strategy for the different layers within the public urban space.

This article is structured in six parts; after setting the theoretical foundations related to theories of temporal change and obsolesce and expanding on Brand's "shearing layers" concept, we present in detail our

mixed-methods approach. Following this, we present our key findings and analysis of the case study, after which we conclude with reflections on the research process, outcomes, and the methodologies employed, suggesting avenues for further research on public space and the practice of urban planning and design.

2. Theories of Temporal Change and Obsolescence

Brand's ideas are located within a wider discourse relating to obsolescence within the built environment going as far back as the observational and empirical survey work of Bolton (1911). This has since grown into a developing and changing assessment of the causes of obsolescence as both physical deterioration and driven by behavioural change identified from a variety of diverse sources from a theoretical and data-driven (Thomsen & van der Flier, 2009, 2011), case-study narrative (Hollis, 2009), and practice-based (Laing, 2019) approaches. These perspectives on obsolescence are characteristic of the long-term thinking by Stewart Brand, influenced directly by the work of his professor Paul Ehrlich (Ehrlich & Ehrlich, 1968) evident in the "long-bet" narrative (Sabin, 2013) leading to the establishment of the Long Now Foundation as an organisation concerned with similarly structured "pace-layers" (Brand, 2000, p. 37).

The layers identified by Brand in *How Buildings Learn* (see Figure 1) are also a methodological framework around how a theoretical model of adaptation is constructed from observation and analysis of photographs, illustrations, and other visual sources. In a similar manner, Duffy's (1990) and Duffy and Henney's (1989) studies were based on an empirical analysis of building use in the City of London employing observational methods supplemented with stakeholder/occupant engagement that is increasingly common in post-occupancy evaluation stages. Underlying the approach in this article is the priority shared by Duffy (1990), the then president of the Royal Institute of British Architects, that a lack of any systematic approach to measuring and monitoring the built environment is reputationally damaging the built environment professions. If "measurement is the foundation of facilities management" (Duffy, 1990, p. 17), then this is also the case for the management of change of the public realm. Auditing and measuring change within the built environment are important but unrecognized and often forgotten tasks. The critical question is then what we should be measuring to effectively inform our facility or asset management within the public realm. What do post-occupancy studies look like when applied to the public realm and how do we avoid bias towards recording attributes that are easily measured, or simply because data is easily available? Thus, we are proposing a similar approach to Duffy's (1990) classification within facility/public realm management

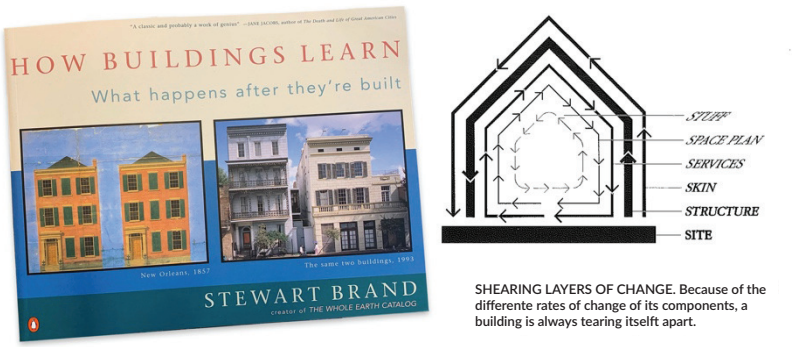

Figure 1. Cover of *How Buildings Learn* with examples of images and photographs that generated the idea of the "shearing layers of change," pictured on the right. Source: Brand (1994, cover and "shearing layers of change" diagram on p. 13).

that aims to measure the nature or rate of change (low to high rates of change, albeit subject to more precision) for a mix of hardware (measurement of physical characteristics) and software (measurement of socio-economic parameters such as replacement costs) that are operationally useful, comparative, and performance-based.

In recent years, there has been considerable growth in studies looking at the temporal dimension of city planning and urban design. The edited collection *Space-Time Design of the Public City* (Henckel et. al, 2013) is a case in point, touching upon different themes such as urban rhythms in the contemporary city, night-time uses, time and urban morphology, as well as considerations of time and social justice in urban mobility research. Rythmanalysis of public spaces became quite a fashionable area of research, famously associated with the work of Henri Lefebvre (Lefebvre & Eldon, 2004) with authors such as Hetherington and Smith (2013), Gibert-Flutre (2022), and Lyon (2020) looking at various aspects of methodologies and applications of this in real-world contexts. In addition, the Covid-19 pandemic has brought to the fore a renewed focus on temporary and tactical urbanism, as a plethora of innovative solutions were sought to and found to activate public, convivial spaces while maintaining safety guidelines (Honey-Rosés et al., 2021; Oswell & Varna, 2024). This work has revived a focus on urban experimentation and temporary, ad-hoc solutions as many cities have seen extensive implementation of pop-up cafes and social outlets and a revival of street life and diversity in the use of public spaces in post-Covid-19 times. We recognise, however, that there is a spectrum of change within the built environment, ranging from temporary and experimental approaches, seeking to promote social interaction and informal meetings of people, stronger social ties and neighbourhoods (Montgomery, 2015), through to more extreme options for planned disassembly or complete recycling (Durmisevic, 2009).

3. Making Sense of Time Layers

This article is proposing an extension of the approach to "shearing layers" with a high-level categorisation comprising site, surface, services, space (spatial configuration), surroundings/skin, signage, and just like Brand, stuff (Figure 2). Within this suggested classification we can add the inventory of public realm "objects" derived from construction object-orientated modelling standards and allocate a mix of critical time-based parameters attached to each of the individual objects within the public realm. This section sets out a descriptive specification regarding each of the separate layers and their relationship with those initially presented by Brand in his seminal publication (1994). They are presented in order of their respective longevity and durability, albeit we are aware that this is an abstraction and simplification of reality as each layer has an impact on the others.

3.1. Site Layer

The "site" layer is dominated by longer-term (deep structure) elements such as the patterns of ownership boundaries and associated plot dimensions. They are typically identified through map-based secondary data sources. The usage here is synonymous with the site context as originally described by Brand. This is a record of the underlying deep structure regarding the wider socio-economic context for the area through to how these inform the patterns of ownership and their boundaries. It has both physical and socially constructed characteristics that can be recorded and measured. This includes the actual geolocation of the area both relative to other areas within the urban context/city and also the introduction of historical

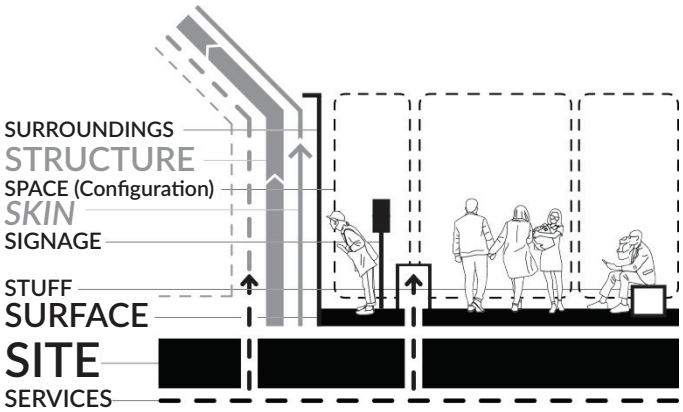

Figure 2. Extension of Stewart Brand's "shearing layers" to elements of the public realm.

boundaries forming between public and private ownerships. There is a contentious issue related to public space boundaries as one can consider the entire city an interconnected network; these boundaries can be based on several interconnected measures and criteria including perceived edges (Lynch, 1964), sense of enclosure, and historical associations, that have often been informed by "the terrier," the map of local highway and public ownership of land (Pounds, 2005). In practice, the site is complex and hard to specify when you have to select or draw site boundaries. For our use case, people in Newcastle know where the Bigg Market is but would find it hard to specify a boundary.

3.2. Surface Layer

The "surface" layer is defined as the visible street surface, the physical materials, paving, and road markings (parking bays, car-club, taxi, servicing bays, traffic restrictions). This is thus a record of the surfaces forming the floorscape or "surfacing" within the analysed site that is in part informed by the content of the UK National Model Design Code (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2021) and the elements of public space included in emerging guidance on design codes within wider UK planning policy. The recording includes the physical characteristics, temporary repairs/scars, and the variety of different materials, textures, and paving that can be observed, including where changes have occurred due to surfaces being removed to undertake underground repairs or access to services.

3.3. Services Layer

The "services" layer relates to the mix of public services and transport infrastructure and is in effect a mix of above and below-ground objects, and as such can only be partially recorded. These "services" are primarily mechanical and engineering as discussed by Brand (1994) but expanded to include additional requirements for service provision within the public realm. Most significant is the provision of surface water drainage, power supply for street lighting, broadband infrastructure, CCTV, electric vehicle charging points, etc. Some areas also have temporary provisions for short-term installations that require a power supply (event-based amplification or lighting provision such as Christmas lighting) and more recently the provision of WiFi. These are often co-located in shared underground trenches and above-ground access boxes, albeit with the recent expansion of privatisation and deregulation of public services or utilities, there is duplication of many types of service objects particularly those relating to telecommunications.

3.4. Space (Socio-Spatial Configuration) Layer

This is an attempt to translate Brand's understanding of the internal space plan, or changes in spatial configuration, into the public realm. Internal to buildings, spatial configuration includes elements of internal walls, partitions, and changes in materials or colours which are used to define activity zones and appropriate uses. Spatial configuration is often based on assumed and/or observable activity zones, such as circulation, seating/waiting, external dining areas, etc. Within the public realm, the spatial configuration is an assemblage of several different elements pertaining to the other layers and tends to be described through different mechanisms, such as small area paving and lighting for trafficked zones, barriers/edges or threshold details to zones which are themselves defined by changes in materials, and level changes or steps. The main distinction within the "space layer" is around areas allocated for movement/circulation and those anticipated as more static zones, albeit there will be many other subtle variations as spatial zones become appropriated by different users.

3.5. Surroundings/Skin Layer

The "surroundings" relates to building façades (lighting, colour) and is similar to Brand's "skin" layer of the buildings. It is a mesh between the external skin of buildings and other surroundings that add to the sense of enclosure of the public space. It is related to Brand's "skin" layer albeit when the concept of "skin" is directly translated to the public space it has a slightly different and more varied function in providing a sense of enclosure. Therefore, we can more precisely describe it as "surroundings" as it refers to building façades delineating the public space, road infrastructure, fences/bollards, and other aspects of three-dimensional enclosure that can include temporary hoardings. Again, it has a relationship with many of the principles set out in the UK Model Design Code (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2021) and the aspects of morphological analysis used to look at defining and measuring the extent and parameters of the building line. These include metrics such as contiguity, variations, projections, and set-backs. Here, the rate of change within the surroundings is often dependent upon changes made to the mix of uses within buildings. The façade of upper stories is less subject to change than the ground floor and entrances/public uses, which can be physically altered every time there is a change in leasehold or tenancy in ground floor activities and uses. This is typically between two to six years between changes in use based on the specific public use.

3.6. Signage Layer

In public space we are proposing a distinction between statutory signage and other elements of street furniture. Official signage is an addition to the public realm that requires a formal legal process to become enacted, and it is something subject to consultation and largely standardised as a result of highway legislation.

3.7. Stuff Layer

"Stuff" is similar to Brand's layer as the daily reorganisation of street furniture and other fixed elements. It is a layer that describes the daily changes to street furniture both fixed and temporary, including advertising, event-specific additions, etc.

3.8. Reflection on the Division Into Layers

We recognise that this initial description and specification of the different layers within public space, introduced as an extension of the concept of "shearing layers," is as imperfect and arbitrary as the work of Brand. This is because many separate "objects" can potentially be classified in several different layers at the same time. It is clear that, at the very least, each of these layers will impact on others, for example in changes to underground services/cabling impacting on the surface. It may be the case that in classifying this scope of "objects" and adding some form of parameters relating to their "rate of change" temporality, durability and responsible stakeholders remains an evolving exercise in classification.

4. Mixed Methodologies Used to Construct a Critical Case Study

Our research strategy consists of an experimental approach to combining mixed and multiple methods, or a form of "mixed scanning" (Etzioni, 1967) to gain a holistic understanding of the rates of change within the public realm. We utilised a common language of methods shared between disparate academic and professional disciplines that can record multiple perspectives and attributes, both intangible and tangible, relating to geographical/spatial and temporal patterns of organisation within the public realm. These include mixed qualitative and quantitative secondary data sources, with semi-automated data mining of public records, digital archives, and social media resources which were then supplemented with a series of primary longitudinal data gathered for the case study location. These data were collected from April to November 2024. This section describes the theoretical basis and scope of each of the individual mixed data sources available to describe and analyse change, alongside a detailed descriptive account of how they have been applied to the critical case study (Flyvbjerg, 2011; Ruddin, 2006) chosen. A tabulated summary of the approaches is set out in Table 1.

These collected methods are essentially ethnographic approaches applied to the urban context and share similar research methodologies with wider ethnography despite being situated in contrasting physical and cultural environments. Indeed, there is an ongoing debate regarding the actual specificity of urban anthropology and ethnography (Toulson, 2015) and whether it is a distinct field of anthropology that requires such novel methodologies or whether it has a commonality over methods of research and theory. Some reviewers go further to suggest that urban situations are by default more complex and interconnected (Pardo & Prato, 2012) around global ideas, artefacts, and communities.

In this article, we have chosen to trial and combine these mixed methods within the Bigg Market, a medieval historic square within the city of Newcastle upon Tyne, UK. The choice of the case study location is one of both relevance and convenience. It had to be relevant with regard to being a suitable critical case with transferable findings. Hence our initial criteria for case study selection were suitably broad, relating to an area under public ownership, with a mix of adjacent land uses/activities, together with variety in the levels of mixed (traffic and pedestrian) activity. Added to these criteria was the availability of open-source historic data records and as such our selection has focused the project location on a central conservation area. The convenience criteria related to accessibility and proximity for the researchers, especially as the location was subject to regular visits for survey and analysis. It is a contested space with regard to a variety of different users due to the time, day, and season, with similar contested locations being used as the basis for the demonstration of temporality arising from leisure and drinking locations (Thurnell-Read et al., 2021). Indeed, the Bigg Market

Table 1. Summary of methods and data sources tested highlighting each layer impacted by the specific method.

Method/data	Description and relevance to a longitudinal study of the public realm	Layers being analysed	Key methodological references
	Secondary sources		
Historical map regression	Comparative content analysis of geolocated series of historical maps	Site	Caniggia and Maffei (2001), Hindle (1998), Oliver (1993)
Secondary rephotography	Combination and comparison of a series of historical photographs to highlight change	Site; surface; surroundings/skin	Brand (1994)
Timelapse rephotography	Open-source digital record of 360° cameras undertaken by Google Street View	Surface; surface; services; surroundings/skin; signage	Carpenter et al. (2014), Cinnamon and Gaffney (2022)
Longitudinal CCTV	Open-source access to live and archive CCTV images covering the public realm	Space; surroundings/surface; signage; stuff	James et al. (2022), Simpson et al. (2022)
Local planning authority records	Open-source statutory planning records (applications) provided online via Planning Portal	Site; surroundings/skin	Devlin and Coaffee (2023), Varna et al. (2020)
	Primary data sources		
Secondary and primary rephotography	Supplementing historical photographs with geolocated (including augmented reality) photography	Site; surface; surroundings/skin	Bae et al. (2010), Rieger (2020)
Survey/record of dated artefacts	Systematic structured survey of the physical assets (building façades, signage, fixed features, public artworks/statues) relating to the public realm	Surroundings/skin; signage; stuff	Crilly and Varna (2024)
Participant observation	Ethnographic mapping of observable activities within the public realm, including the use of video recording	Surroundings/skin; surface; space	Gehl (1971), Hester (1985, 1987), Whyte (1980)
Inventory of artefacts/objects	Systematic, and repeated/repeatable recording of objects within the public realm	Signage; stuff	Otway (2014), Reid-Musson (2018)
Repeated LiDAR scanning of artefacts/objects	Selected LiDAR survey for long-term objects	Surroundings/skin; signage; stuff	Dawood et al. (2017), Golombek and Marshall (2021)

has been chosen as a suitable use case for several studies looking at transformation at different rates. This includes the underlying economic transformation and restructuring of the northeast regional economy with a corresponding impact on a growth in leisure and the night-time economy (Hollands & Chatterton, 2002), and more recently regarding measurable impacts of heritage-led regeneration (Veldpaus & Pendlebury, 2023).

This section presents each of these mixed methods in turn, through a summary description, an extract of the method as applied to the case study location, and a discussion of the benefits and limitations of its practical application.

4.1. Historical Map Regression

Map regression (Figure 3) is a method used for historical analysis and understanding site characteristics, shared by urban planners, conservation professionals, and archaeologists (Hindle, 1998; Oliver, 1993). It involves the collection and combination of a series of historical maps that can be scaled and geolocated for visual comparison and content analysis. This is an approach that is implicitly already widely used throughout urban design and historical analysis, where typologies of urban morphology contained in historic mapping can be categorized (Kropf, 2009) and subjected to analyses through their historical progression (Caniggia & Maffei, 2001). Applying this method to the public space case study highlights specific larger structures (statues, toilets, telephone boxes, etc.) and their date of construction or relocation, specific aspects of public transport infrastructure (tram routes, stops, etc.), physical design features (street edge/kerbs, even the presence of some limited signage, etc.), ownership boundaries (plot boundaries, party walls), and in some instances the use of the property where it has public use indicated (town hall, public house). The actual content analysis is often based on existing agreed typologies. The identifiable typologies, or aspects of the urban form chosen, derive from a seminal study of the Northumberland town Alnwick as well as the city of Newcastle upon Tyne (Conzen, 1960, 1962; Whitehand, 2001) which began to define developmental units in the hierarchy of the urban fabric such as street, blocks, plots, and buildings. This method of morphological analysis is concerned with the physical or measurable spatial aspects of these units, such as frontage width and continuity of the building line, as opposed to more dynamic characteristics such as land use, activities, restrictions, or control/ownership.

The approach is limited by the availability and frequency of the historical map sources; however, it provided a valuable starting point for the longer-term layer within the public realm. Herein there is a critical "ambiguity [as] an inherent feature of built form" (Kropf, 2013, p. 56) identified with typologies (or objects) within the environment being attached to multiple dynamic parameters at the same time and with many of these parameters being time-dependent and evolving (Farrell, 2014). These additional parameters that extend the traditional view of morphological studies can refer to land use patterns, ownership, or even management regimes and responsible stakeholders.

4.2. Secondary and Primary Rephotography

This method describes an approach to repeat-photography (Figure 3), an approach which is an important visual method in the social sciences, including the built environment. It is a method used to generate the key ideas about temporality and adaptation through the use of "then" and "now" images with contemporary photographs from an approximate matching geolocation to the original image. This useful method of revisiting older historical images set up with photographs using the same angle has been used in several high-profile examples, including the revisiting and photographing of a series of famous townscapes painted by Edward Hopper in the US town of Gloucester during the 1920s (Fox, 2012; Halaban, 2012).

Figure 3. Site boundary imposed on historical map progression for a variety of historic maps dating from the 1870s, 1890s, 1910s, 1940s, 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. © Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Limited (2024). All rights reserved, with examples of rephotography using historical image progression with first sequence from 1820, 1880s, 1950s, and 1973, and second sequence from 1950s, 1970, and authors' own 2024 rephotography image added to the historical sequence. Source: "Classic Photos of Newcastle and of the East End" (n.d.).

4.3. Timelapse Rephotography

We accessed and analysed Google Street View historic image sources (Figure 4), which has increasingly become a growing open source for historical images from the point of the initial survey by Google (2008) for selected key urban locations onwards. This is an approach set within a long tradition of longitudinal photographic records. Video and photographic analysis was first explored, if not at that stage popularised, by Appleyard et al. (1965), an example that was also Kevin Lynch's last publication with the experimental use of video analysis, amongst other forms of case study data collection and recording, in the experiential qualities of highway design. As such, it has become part of the urban designers' survey and analytical toolkit. The use of time-lapse photography is an observational approach that has been used as part of mixed methods recording and analysis of longitudinal trends based on non-participant observations (Afonso & Fatah gen Schieck, 2020; Simon, 2012), albeit in quite specific applications around digital monitoring and smart city applications. Thus, it has tended to be typically used over shorter time periods, exploring the rhythms (Lefebvre & Eldon, 2004) of hours rather than years, of events and interactions with urban spaces (Chan,

Figure 4. Google Street View images progression and street view images progression from authors' own aerial rephotography survey.

2024), even if repeated. It is a non-participatory method widely used in urban ethnography, where it can be accompanied by supporting field notes. Increasingly it is also used in an applied professional context for construction site monitoring and other applications or scenarios where the qualities of temporality and change in the built environment are evident or anticipated. The emphasis in the application of this method has long been exploring human interaction with time (Hägerstrand, 1985) with examples of street performances (Simon, 2012), different social demographics (Gilbert-Flutre, 2022), or different modes of travel/transport users (Spinney, 2010) using public space. Albeit the use of a visual timeline within Google Street View provides a long-term data set for temporal analysis that is independent from any specific study or research project.

However, the digital resource provided by Google Street View currently has limited applications regarding an element of time progression, being mostly used tacitly for accessing close to real-time information (Anacta, 2024; Mannings, 2009) and semi-automated content analysis for public realm management concerns (Kang et al., 2018), but with some growing interest for community applications (Cinnamon & Gaffney, 2022).

4.4. Aerial Rephotography With a Repeated Drone Survey

We supplemented the Google Street View and historical images, not only with our own rephotography, but with a systematic approach to primary aerial photography (Figure 4) of the case study area. This is ongoing work based on a monthly photographic survey undertaken from several take-off locations within the public realm, albeit it does demonstrate some of the specific challenges of systematic and repeated drone aerial photography. These challenges have been to not only ensure the same geolocations as an experiment, but to aim for comparative image quality that has proven difficult in undertaking the systematic survey with varying weather, especially wind and lighting conditions.

This is an emerging method for digital photography and is increasingly accessible with the use of a lightweight low-cost drone to collect aerial images. This has initially been limited to digital still images but with a future research agenda to use video survey on a similar standard flight path. Initial trials have been able to use a

sample video file to convert to still images using an open-access online file convertor; then, photogrammetry software, using a mix of video and still images, has been able to construct a three-dimensional model as the basis for repeatable visual content analysis.

4.5. Longitudinal CCTV Records

This is a series of CCTV recordings (Figure 5) provided by the Urban Observatory (n.d.) and is a location-specific data source that fortunately was available in several locations in the Bigg Market. As an adjacent method for collecting data, as well as detailed metadata, it is valuable for the ability to not only access certain CCTV cameras in real-time, and to access a historical archive of images, but it also has content analysis (derived from machine learning) of the images for the specific identification of people and vehicles and the rates of movement/usage within any given time period from the initiation of the Urban Observatory in 2014.

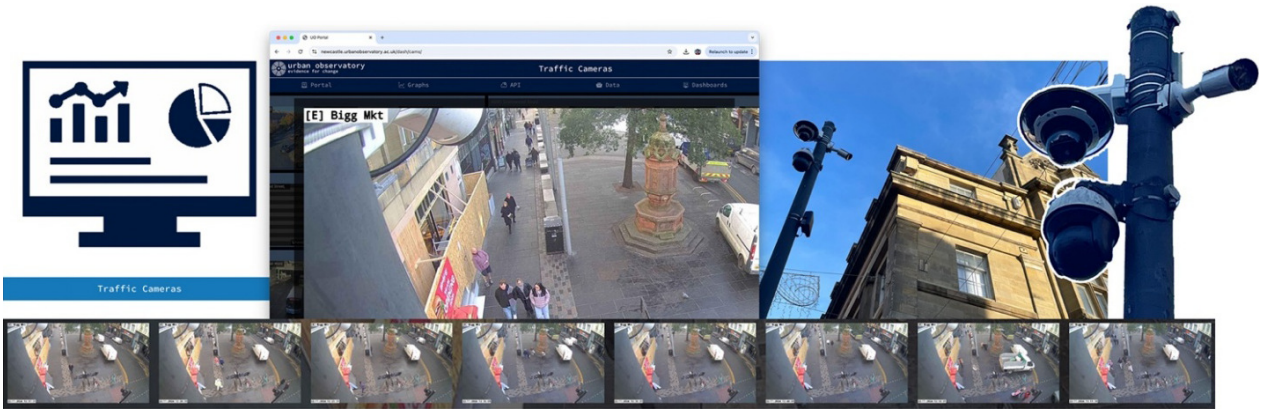

Figure 5. Sample extract from live and sequence of historical image feed from a selected CCTV camera located in the Bigg Market. Source: Urban Observatory (n.d.).

4.6. Dated Artefacts

The dated artefacts (Figure 6) methodology comprised a structured and systematic approach to recording and mapping any dated artefacts situated within the public realm in the case study area. Here, a dated artefact is a bit like a hallmarked object, as it refers to a physical object that contains a date of construction, installation, or refurbishment. We are aware that in understanding the role and significance of physical cultural artefacts, we need to be aware that they are associated with wider social and cultural contexts. There is an inherent bias in the positioning of any artefact within the public realm that is a result of the inextricable power tension between larger institutions and community-based organisations, and sometimes these objects are representative of the pressures of forced partnership arrangements with larger and often governmental entities (O'Hare, 2018). The mere existence of dated artefacts can be indicative of a controlling ownership and the presence of dominant stakeholders that are responsible for work within the public realm. Hence, with a significant collection, we are also able to provide an initial classification, if not meaning, to these artefacts. The approach to classification is adapted from *Nomenclature* (Bourcier et al., 2015), an updated version of Chenhall's system (1978) for documenting and describing historical artefacts in general, albeit mostly used within the context of museums or public archives. Any potential meaning, beyond the significance of the date of construction and/or installation of the artefact would be provided through materialistic association (ownership and/or access; Mackay, 2013).

Figure 6. Dated objects, artefacts, and signage located within the study area. Note: Authors' own images superimposed on OS MasterMap® Topography Layer (GeoPackage geospatial data), Scale: 1:1250, Tiles: GB, Updated: 1 February 2024, Ordnance Survey (GB), Using: EDINA Digimap Ordnance Survey Service (https://digimap.edina.ac.uk), Downloaded: 2024–07-09 12:25:47.538.

4.7. Local Planning Authority Records

Local planning authority development control/management records (Figure 7) are available online as a public archive of changes within the built environment for actions that require some form of statutory consent. We have accessed and analysed the frequency of different types of planning applications, grouped within five-year periods starting with the initial digital records from 1975 onwards. The local planning authority record in England and Wales typically has a summary of planning applications from 1975 onwards, with the last five years including a digital record of all documentation associated with the relevant planning application. As the Bigg Market is situated within a Conservation Area within Newcastle City Centre, (Newcastle City Council, 2024), outline planning consent is not normally accepted, so the analysis has been based on (a) full/detailed applications, (b) discharge of planning conditions attached to full applications, (c) specific change of use that is mostly internal, as well as (d) listed building consent as required for alterations and minor work that affects the character of the listed building, and (e) advertising consent as required for illuminated, projecting, and/or large signage.

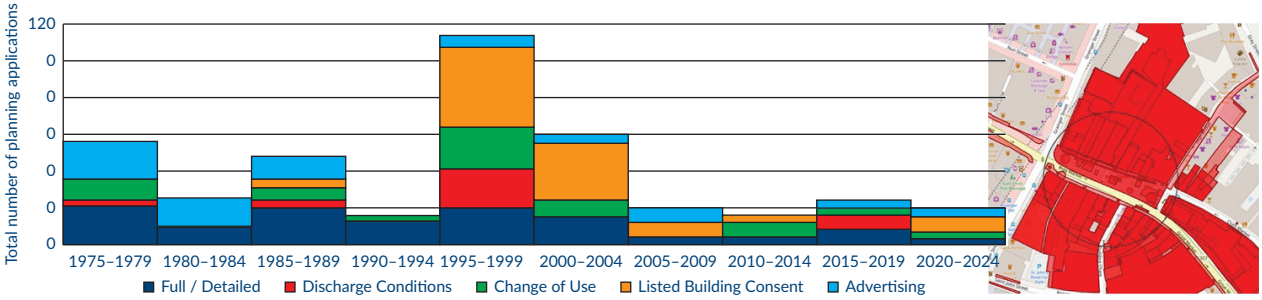

Figure 7. Analysis of the five-year grouped frequency of planning applications by type within 50 m of the Bigg Market. Source: Map extract from Newcastle City Council (n.d.).

4.8. Participant Observation

This is an approach to recording spatial behaviour (Figure 8) specifically the sorts of social interactions evident at the main junctions and nodes for key routes through the Bigg Market, utilising a passive participant observational approach (described as loitering with a good vantage point) after the urban anthropology of Hester (1975, 1985, 1987). It has developed as an accessible and low-cost method for analysing the use of urban spaces (Crilly & Mannis, 2000), albeit it has been mostly concerned with informing the design stage rather than issues of maintenance and management. It is also clearly restricted by limitations on the time and frequency of the observations.

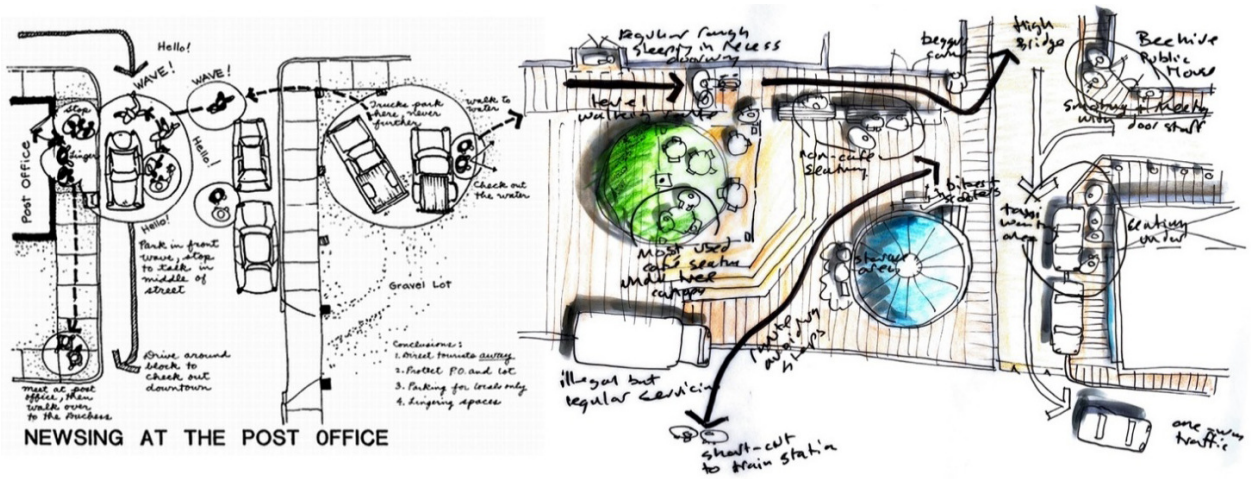

Figure 8. Mapping of participant observation: Example of "Newsing at the Post Office" (left) and lunchtime circulation in the Bigg Market, Newcastle upon Tyne (right). Sources: (a) Hester (1975), (b) authors.

4.9. Inventory of Objects

We undertook a repeated systematic survey of objects and artefacts within the public realm (Figure 9) as the basis of a temporal analysis, recording the occurrence and regularity of their appearance over a day, week, and month, as the main time gaps between the variety of available secondary sources. Other forms of temporal analysis have similarly followed daily and weekly occurrences that can be evidenced in big digital data sets (Halás & Klapka, 2023). As such we undertook a series of systematic recordings and analyses of the case study location based on the use of existing timescape studies with temporal analysis (rhythmanalysis) as a choice of method (Otway, 2014; Reid-Musson, 2018) set within the urban context, specifically short-term daily and medium-term weekly or monthly variations, but extending this to look at longer-term changes. This remains a continuing and repeating exercise.

Period	Inventory of public realm "objects" derived from object-orientated modelling standards
Short term (objects with an observable daily rate of change)	 City scooter (hourly hire vehicle), café furniture, commercial/retail signage for promotions, street café barrier, temporary traffic control measures (movement barriers and traffic cones), street planters.
Medium term (objects with an observable weekly/monthly rate of change)	 Commercial refuse bins, hanging flags (timescale sports tournament related), event/crowd control fencing.
Long term (assumed) (objects with an assumed longer rate of change —yearly plus)	 Cycle rack, cash machine (ATM), pedestrian street sign, telecommunications cabinet, city tourist map, litter bin, fixes bollards, lamp-post & spotlights.
Long term (documented) (objects with documented records that include maintenance schedule)	 Public artwork, semi-permanent objects or requiring maintenance plan or inclusion in an asset management plan.

Figure 9. Inventory of temporal objects in the study area, classified by rate of change.

4.10. Repeated LiDAR Scanning of Artefacts/Objects

We extended the initial systematic survey of objects and artefacts to identify a sample of long-term (as defined within Figure 11) "stuff" that could also be the subject of laser scanning (Figure 10). There are a growing number of studies showing how LiDAR, and specifically mobile laser scanners, are proving to be a valuable technology for accurate data in urban analysis and transportation-related research (Di Stefano et al., 2021; Golombek & Marshall, 2021). This approach is increasingly accessible due to smartphones or other hand-held devices containing lasers as default alongside their digital cameras. While still an experimental approach, due to the limitations of technical distance and access to all visible parts of the object being recorded, many of the platforms support digital sharing with associated metadata including geolocation and most significantly a timestamp of when the object was scanned.

Figure 10. Extract from LiDAR scanning of temporal objects in the study area using a hand-held device and using the professional Polycam LiDAR scanning platform for analysis and digital sharing, with an extract of timestamp/geolocation metadata.

5. Exploring Temporality and Permanency in the Public Realm

This experimental approach to translating Brand's "shearing layers" from the building level to the wider public realm lead us to uncover and compile the above methodologies. Each has the potential to provide meaningful insight and information relating to many of the layers identified (Table 1). Collectively, these methods help reveal the entanglement of time within the spatial fabric of the city. At any stage, urban ethnography suggests we record everything, in part as we don't know what aspects will have significance over time. Therefore, as a result of time and space being inseparable in city development (Madanipour, 2017), it is important to consider more closely the time dimension of spatial studies. This would result both in a deeper and more holistic analysis of urban environments as well as informing future developments to be more sensitive to both the spatially embedded histories as well as the seasonal and daily rhythms of public spaces. We can see from applying the methodology resulting from Brand's approach that public space exhibits a complex layering of different spatial elements, created in different time periods, ranging from very long histories to day-to-day and second-to-second changes. In effect, public space is fluid and permanency is illusory, or as Brand himself writes, "all buildings are predictions…all predictions are wrong" (1994, p. 178). We believe nevertheless that the framework proposed here has validity, and it can describe temporality/rates of change in the public realm by considering three levels: long-term changes that occur over years or decades; medium-term changes which are observable over a targeted study period; and finally, short-term changes happening on a daily/hourly rate.

While the specificity of each "rate of change" is dependent on the methods and the longevity of the study, it is also inevitable there will be gaps in evidence due to the lack of time-related data in most instances. We understand these are clear limitations to this approach. The application of the above methods in the context of a public space could only offer 2D snapshots in the context of the present article, recognising that 3D models, renderings, digital files, and dynamic video footage can reveal even more intimately the passage of time and the fluid, ever-changing life of the public space. We can also infer that the planned lifespan or durability of the different "objects" as identified through the layers will be different to the actual "rate of change" as the most important driving factors for obsolesce are societal changes, behaviours, fashions, trends (Thomsen & van der Flier, 2011), and changing power structures dealing with the public realm (McGlynn & Samuels, 2000), rather than the physical characteristics of the space.

6. Discussion and Conclusions

In this research we took a novel approach to understanding the urban public realm through a temporal perspective, focusing on the ideas of permanence and obsolescence and using them to illustrate and analyse the rates of change for "objects" in the built environment. Our conceptual foundations are anchored in Brand's (1994) thinking on "shearing layers" of change in buildings and transferring this to the public spaces of the city. This led us to our experimental choice of methods and the case study approach employed. The positive impacts of this pilot research project presented here can be summarised in the points below.

6.1. Replicability and Robustness of the Research Methods and Critical Case Study Approach

The exploratory approach followed presents a potential way to address the imbalance in the scholarship looking at building assets as distinct from the public realm in relation to temporal studies. Reviewing the academic literature in relation to temporal and/or longitudinal approaches to the public realm/public spaces yielded very few results and we hope the present article can spark debates and future studies on the topic. The adaptation and application of Brand's "shearing layers" approach highlights the blurred boundaries between private buildings and the public realm, increasingly as layers such as "site" and "skin" have a direct relationship with the external public "site" and the "surrounding" of the external public realm. Therefore, we believe that it is an effective and appropriate extension of a methodological framework that works well in relation to public spaces as well as built assets; we therefore think that our mixed-methods approach, involving both digital and non-digital methods, has the potential for replicability in understanding the temporal dimension of other case studies of public spaces.

6.2. Positive Proactive Planning and Urban Design

We believe that the research design and methodology employed in this article have timely and relevant practical application in providing much-needed positive planning and proactive design guidance (Punter, 2010a), supported by design management skills, but in a manner that is targeted at key stakeholders responsible for ongoing maintenance as well as the statutory/regulatory bodies that have a responsibility for the public realm. We hope that this approach will also help inform future developments and the key actors in charge—planners, urban designers, developers, and civil engineers—to be more sensitive to both the spatially embedded histories as well as the seasonal and daily rhythms of public spaces. This would lead to fostering less disruptive and more transformative urban development strategies that support an authentic public realm and create coherence in the ever-shifting life of the city.

There is clear benefit in a systematic approach to understanding specific layers within the public realm and the individual "objects" relevant to each of these layers to urban design and planning. The ability to add a temporal dimension to "objects" is a prerequisite for adding practical parameters such as "date of construction or installation," "longevity" (anticipated design life), "maintenance costs" (renewal, replacement, and depreciation of assets), alongside the relationship with stakeholder (agency/individual responsibility) roles. This is an approach that fits well with emerging schema regarding the identification of urban elements, for example, the "Uniclass" classification system used within many object-orientated digital models and used as a resource for asset management planning. Linking capital projects with ongoing management and associated revenue expenditure is seen as part of a wider process of supporting the urban renaissance

(Vescovi, 2013) and is needed to ensure quality of life. Thinking in four dimensions regarding urban design ensures that the potential for design rationalization within the public realm can then be maintained in the longer term. This positive approach recognizes and maintains the value of good design (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, 2001) and how it is maintained, even in times of economic uncertainty (Punter, 2010b). In effect, the dimension or parameter of time relates to revenue budgets, often allocated pro rata for the longevity of the "object," and can supplement existing parameters relating to capital costs and accurately support better maintenance and management within the public realm.

6.3. It Is Timely to Consider Time

In a period of critical change and polycrisis, as we are currently experiencing as presented at the beginning of this study, the 4th dimension of time does become a more significant aspect in urban design and planning research and practice. While there is still a lot of ambiguity about the definition of time, regarding measurable parameters and how time is interpreted and used in these fields that look at creating successful places, we believe it is valuable to add time-based studies to the existing work. Recent additions integrating time analysis to the previous more spatially focused scholarship comprise studies such as rythmanalysis, 15-min cities, temporary urbanism, as well as time-cost analysis of materials and structural viability in studies related to the construction and management of the public realm. In this context, we glimpse two valuable avenues for further research. Firstly, this spatio-temporal approach to the public realm, based on an expansion of Brand's framework, needs to be tested in other public space case studies, within a variety of urban contexts to determine its robustness and replicability. Secondly, further research and case study work should focus on the identification of the specific agents responsible for governance and change within the built environment and public realm, and specifically how these stakeholder roles and responsibilities can become additional parameters to attach to this object-orientated framework. This will then be able to show how a visual representation of permanency and temporality through the approach presented here can influence the underlying power structures and the decision-making landscape in urban policy and practice.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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About the Authors

Michael Crilly is a professional planner and a director of an urban design consultancy based in Newcastle upon Tyne, having previously worked in a variety of local authorities, national development agencies, civic charities, and private sector roles. He holds a PhD in sustainable urbanism and is a part-time assistant professor in architecture and built environment at Northumbria University, an associate lecturer at both Newcastle and Teesside Universities, as well as a built environment expert for the UK Design Council CABE.

Georgiana Varna is a senior lecturer in urbanism and planning at Newcastle University, School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape. She obtained her PhD, focused on assessing the quality of public spaces created on Glasgow's regenerated waterfront, at the University of Glasgow. Her main research interests and activities are grounded in a passion for quality of place, inclusive city governance, and successful city partnerships. She is a trustee of Architecture Design Scotland.

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ARTICLE

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Temporalities for, of, and in Planning: Exploring Post-Growth, Participation, and Devolution Across European Planning Reforms

Lucía Cerrada Morato [1,2], **Agnieszka Zimnicka** [3], **and Judi Wilson** [4]

[1] Geography Department, Kings College London, UK
[2] Institut Metròpoli, Spain
[3] Department of Urban Design and Regional Planning, Gdansk University of Technology, Poland
[4] Independent Researcher, UK

Correspondence: Lucía Cerrada Morato (lucia.cerrada@institutmetropoli.cat)

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Abstract

In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic and the acceleration of climate change, many governments are turning to their planning systems to explore how national planning reform can help them address their current crisis. Time across planning reforms appears as a central dimension, building on governments' long-term ambitions to speed planning. While academic normative debates argue in favour of faster and/or slower changes to planning as inherently good or bad, this article draws on a comparative analysis of national planning reforms across three European countries to critically examine how time is being mobilised and with what objective. Through an analytical framework that seeks a more holistic understanding of the planning process, we argue that temporalities in planning are relational. Across the three cases, we can see how the generation of consensus depoliticises the use of time, and it is generally used to advance regressive agendas. We argue that despite ambitions to make planning more responsive and participatory at the local level, planning reforms (a) reduce the influence of public participation while strengthening private property rights; (b) are used to territorialise sectoral, top–down, and long-term agendas with no consideration of the timely and situated concerns and visions of residents and communities; and (c) are underpinned by a pro-growth and rapid urbanisation agenda that ignores sustainability debates.

Keywords

planning reforms; planning systems; planning temporalities; post-growth; public participation

1. Introduction

Contemporary planning became a central function of government across European countries after the II World War. Although with important structural, political, and economic differences, states set planning as a key tool for reconstruction. However, since the 1960s, governments have sought liberalisation through the streamlining of planning, a trend that further accelerated after the 2008 financial crisis. The Covid-19 pandemic exposed the deep ecological and social crisis we are living in—caused by accelerated climate change, increasing inequalities, and the emergence of right-wing extremist political parties. In this context, various countries in Europe are turning to their planning systems to assess how municipal planning (and local plans as their main planning instrument) can be transformed to help address some of these issues. Time emerges as a key dimension in these debates, with the mainstream narrative that planning activity should be expedited. Despite apparent broad agreement on the need for such changes, this has opened a period of debate where different assessments of planning systems' deficiencies and opportunities emerge. In the context of the current multiple crises, we query how these time narratives are mobilised across planning reforms and to what extent these are used to advance progressive agendas.

Despite the core role of time and the pervasiveness of speeding and acceleration discourses across international planning reforms (and in other institutional changes), the topic has received limited attention in the academic planning debate. Only in the UK, with a longer history of planning practice, has the topic been studied. Tracing this literature, we can see how early studies adopted a dichotomic approach by debating to what extent planning could be speeded without impacting the quality and extent of public engagement. In 2016, Marshall and Cowell further problematised this issue by querying how time allocation unevenly distributes power between actors and how economic arguments push for streamlining and depoliticisation. Their study built on other works exploring time in different stages of planning, pointed to the need for a more sophisticated analysis of time mobilisation in planning and the role of (de)politicisation and neoliberal ideologies. Other authors have continued exploring this topic by problematising the temporal dimension in urban development by disputing the slow versus speed normative (Dobson & Parker, 2024), as well as showing how the use of time and temporalities in planning is used to advance certain actors' interests at the expense of others (Raco et al., 2018). While the former—the study of time allocation in different stages of the planning process—has been studied through the mapping of larger case-study frameworks (typically with a sector-based focus such as the analysis of infrastructure planning applications), the latter—unpacking the issue from different development actors' perspective—has explored the topic through the in-depth analysis of specific projects and/or urban developments (Arıcan, 2020; Raco et al., 2018). However, in both cases, the state is conceptualised as monolithic, obscuring the role and scope of the municipal scale—particularly in terms of municipal governance and municipal planning. Additionally, there is a lack of international comparative studies analysing commonalities and divergences in the political use of time as a resource. In light of these debates, this study addresses two key questions:

> Q1: How are time narratives with a focus on the local planning system mobilised across national planning reforms in different European countries?
>
> Q2: To what extent are these used to advance more or less municipal progressive agendas?

Methodologically, this study suggests reviewing temporal narratives in planning with a focus on the role of local planning authorities (LPA) and municipal planning. It does so through a comparative study of three European countries with very different planning systems and state structures, but where acceleration and the speed of planning are central to current reform narratives. This study, building on the review previously mentioned, advances a methodological framework that seeks to address a gap in temporal planning studies. An analysis of the literature shows how time in planning decision-making has been fragmented, with studies either assessing the plan preparation or production stage (Kitchen, 2007; Nadin & Fernández-Maldonado, 2023), the decision-making or planning determination stage (Booth, 2002; Dobry, 1975; Marshall & Cowell, 2016), and the implementation stage, which has generally been overlooked. Therefore, the proposed framework brings these three stages together (what we call temporalities for planning, temporalities of planning, and temporalities in planning) to deconstruct how the narrative of planning reforms across the three cases is proposing to shift time, tasks, or scope across them. While this methodological approach will reduce the depth of analysis of each case, it will provide a broader perspective of planning restructuring and engage with the wider discourses framing the need for planning reforms, and the diverse strategies articulated to dispute them.

The findings in this article do not show total convergence across the three cases (given legal, political, and historical structural factors that prevent radical reconfigurations of planning and local planning in particular) but instead show the hybridisation of strategies to address those speed narratives guiding planning reforms. Two key contributions emerge from the findings of this article. Firstly, in this study, we have identified common temporal strategies including front-loading and back-loading but also by-passing and downscaling. While the first two appear not to reduce overall timeframes but merely offer certainty and increased flexibility, the second two can more clearly be seen as regressive by eliminating the planning power of LPA and/or by fragmenting and isolating issues that ultimately impede broader considerations. This shows why temporal discourse cannot be analysed and interpreted in isolation at different stages of the planning process (Marshall & Cowell, 2016) but should be explored as a relational phenomenon. This framework provides an opportunity to examine how certain elements of the planning process gain or lose temporal space by considering their purpose and assessing their impact at each stage. Through this lens, it becomes evident that the fragmentation of participation in current reforms weakens its influence on shaping the urbanisation process. Finally, this study also discusses how reform narratives have shaped the debate by emphasising certain stages of the process, at the expense of others. In this regard, the research considers that depoliticising the post-permission stage cedes control to market forces. Secondly, changes in time across the three cases are not solely attributable to neoliberalisation forces—a topic that has been extensively explored in the existing literature. Instead, these changes can be understood through how narratives (de)politicise temporal shifts, often presenting them as technical issues while building consensus around three key dimensions. First, in the context of the housing crisis and the pressing need for infrastructure, planning reforms prioritise accelerating processes to facilitate growth. Second, the critique is not aimed at state incompetence broadly but focuses specifically on the role of municipalities. These reforms subtly undermine municipalities—not by explicitly removing their competencies but by framing them as inefficient, burdened by "red tape," and sparsely resourced. This critique often comes with implicit threats to local control rather than supportive measures. Third, state-led planning continues to position itself as inherently aligned with the pursuit of the "common good," framing its objectives as balancing development needs with broader societal interests. By doing so, it downplays the diverse voices of citizens and communities and the importance of meaningful consultation and engagement.

Finally, this article highlights important research agendas that should explore lobbies and the role of international actors in advancing neoliberal strategies. Additionally, it calls for a more detailed understanding of how narratives are homogenised beyond formal EU policies (Dühr et al., 2010).

2. Literature Review

The current acceleration and increased time-speeding narratives around the planning process are not new, and these build on (or are, to a certain extent, a continuation of) previous debates. These acceleration concerns have targeted different stages of planning (from plan adoption to decision-making) and different sectors (from major infrastructures to housing). However, the longevity of these debates varies across European countries. While in the UK, with the most established planning history, acceleration debates attracted attention as early as the 1970s (Ewing, 1972; Marshall & Cowell, 2016), other countries such as Spain have only more recently—since the 2000s following the 1990s devolution of planning powers to regions—been brought to the focus of planning debate (Alonso Timón, 2019). In Poland and other post-soviet countries, the research around planning reforms primarily focuses on matters of localism and liberalisation (Kolipiński, 2014; Nadin et al., 2018; Nowak et al., 2022), but also on temporalities managed at the local level, with individuals able to actively influence planning timeframes (Grzelak, 1997; Radziejowski et al., 2010). Responding to those time-speeding pressures and narratives, political and academic debates focused on the introduction of managerial tools such as procedural streamlining, the introduction of fixed time schedules, and the curtailment of public engagement. Time was, therefore, framed from a management and efficiency perspective (Booth, 2002), and primarily as a facet of performance management (Allmendinger, 2011). In that context, more critical approaches focused on trying to find the right balance between speed and democratic legitimacy (Flinders & Wood, 2015; Mironowicz & Ciesielski, 2023). As argued by Agamben (2005), those speeding debates frequently re-emerged, pushed by contextual events. After the 2008 financial crisis, narratives in the UK primarily focused on cost and efficiency. These discussions revisited the role and function of the Keynesian state, as we will explore next. In contrast, during this period, discussions on planning temporalities in countries like Poland gained prominence in various professional forums. Legalists and public sector managers played a leading role in seeking time efficiencies within rigid bureaucratic procedures (Dąbrowski & Piskorek, 2018; Kolipiński, 2014; Kolipiński & Szulczewska, 2010; Mironowicz, 2024; Mironowicz & Ciesielski, 2024). In the Spanish case, the post-2008 crisis shifted the focus to how planning had contributed to the real estate and financialisation crisis, with little attention given to temporal issues (Delgado Jiménez, 2011). This article explores how this long-term narrative is re-emerging in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Planning scholarship has (unevenly across countries as we have glimpsed earlier) recognised and demonstrated that despite the efforts of neoliberal narratives, which portrayed time efficiency as a technical and managerial issue, planning temporalities are fundamentally politicised. This line of inquiry sought to advance the debate by moving beyond the often-binary political discourses calling for either "quicker decisions" or "more public engagement" (Marshall, 2002). At an early stage, studies focused on the empirical analysis of how time was mobilised/used across different planning stages. From plan preparation (Kitchen, 2007) to planning decision-making (Booth, 2002; Dobry, 1975). On the latter, Marshall and Cowell's (2016) UK study of temporalities in the decision-making of large infrastructure developments shows how despite the adoption of planning reforms to speed the planning process, these failed to fundamentally change the length of decision-making. Instead, they demonstrate how time allocation is redistributed within the decision-making planning stage. By doing so, they argue time is used as a resource and deployed

strategically in the urban planning process. They suggest that its allocation has distributive implications among actors in the development process, exercising a balance of power between them. Furthermore, they advance a hypothesis of how neoliberal discourses sought the depolitisation of time.

The politisation of time in planning has more recently re-emerged in academia linked to normative debates of speed and slow planning (Dobson & Parker, 2024). This scholarship contends that the "speed" of decision-making processes and planning approvals is but one of many factors shaping the built environments of cities—challenging previous normative views that posted the damaging effects of unsustainable and "rapid" urbanisation (Aalbers & Christophers, 2014; Airey & Doughty, 2020; Halbert & Attuyer, 2016). Time, in this context, is framed as a resource within the development process—much like capital or labour—and, as such, represents a source of both power and control. Raco et al. (2018) expand the discussion beyond normative debates on speed, problematising planning by highlighting the complex interplay of actors within the property development sector. They argue for a nuanced understanding of how time operates as a resource, emphasising the need to examine the social and power relations within the sector. This requires acknowledging the diversity of "systems, structures, and cultures at play, each characterised by its own temporal politics" (Raco et al., 2018, p. 1190). However, a critical flaw in much of this scholarship is its implicit treatment of the state as a monolithic entity, which fails to capture the multiplicity of temporal logics, conflicts, and negotiations occurring within and across state institutions themselves.

Planning temporalities have also been critically examined by anthropological scholars, offering a perspective that diverges from the fragmented approaches often found in planning scholarship. Rather than merely mapping the allocation of time within planning systems, these studies emphasize a more holistic and relational understanding of temporalities in planning practices (Bastian, 2013, 2014). Abram (2014) highlights how the temporal dimensions of governance and planning are not merely technical but are deeply embedded in cultural and institutional logic, often revealing tensions between intended timelines and lived temporalities. Similarly, Abram and Weszkalnys (2011) challenge conventional assumptions of linearity in planning, arguing that the procedural nature of planning systems often operates through overlapping, recursive, and sometimes contradictory timeframes. This anthropological lens moves beyond the segmentation of time horizons in planning to explore how time is actively constituted through the interplay of various actors, technologies, and institutional expectations. In doing so, these studies question the rigidity of linear time and illuminate the contingent, processual nature of planning temporalities, broadening the scope for understanding the multifaceted rhythms and flows of planning as a socio-political activity.

Finally, it is important to note that although there are temporality planning studies outside the Global North, these predominantly exist in the UK. The lack of comparative studies on this topic prevents a deeper understanding of relevance to the planning discipline and other planning systems—see, for an exception, Marshall's (2014) study on planning infrastructure temporalities across three European countries and how underlying neoliberal processes and state restructuring, found across the cases, explained similarities.

3. Methodology

Considering the debates in Section 1 and Section 2, this article seeks to explore how temporalities are being mobilised across national planning reforms (to address the contemporary environmental, social, and political crises) and to what extent they are being used to advance more or less progressive agendas. We will do this through a comparative analysis of three countries in Europe.

To respond to the questions in Section 1 and, informed by the literature in Section 2, we take three important methodological decisions in this article. First, the fragmentation of time in planning studies needs to be overcome. Previous studies have offered in-depth studies of how time is politicised and allocated within a certain planning stage: the plan preparation or production stage (Kitchen, 2007), the decision-making or planning determination stage (Booth, 2002; Dobry, 1975; Marshall & Cowell, 2016), and the implementation stage (generally overlooked). To address this gap, we propose a framework where the three stages of planning are brought together. While this approach might raise questions regarding the linear assumptions of planning and the lack of depth of how each stage of planning times are allocated, it offers a more comprehensive analysis of the distribution of time. Figure 1 shows the temporalities in each of the three stages of planning: temporalities *for* planning, temporalities *of* planning, and temporalities *in* planning. Temporalities for planning is the first stage of the planning process, which primarily includes the preparation and adoption of plans. The second dimension, temporalities of planning, looks at decision-making and resolution time frames in deciding a planning application. Finally, we will be looking at planning decisions, implementation, and the temporalities involved in that stage (temporalities in planning).

Secondly, this study offers a new perspective beyond the empirical test of narratives versus reality, but more on disentangling how those narratives problematise time. This raises some key questions: How can narratives and contra narratives that point to different problematisations of time be unpacked? More importantly, how can the sources and methods be equally weighted in such different contexts? In this study, the methods have been the document analysis of acts, official reports, and stakeholders' responses to reforms (which include a variety of press and formal responses when available), and interviews with key informants that complete and contextualise the document analysis (Table 1).

Finally, this study conducts the above research through an international comparative analysis of time narratives. Considering the comparative literature existing on European planning systems, we have designed

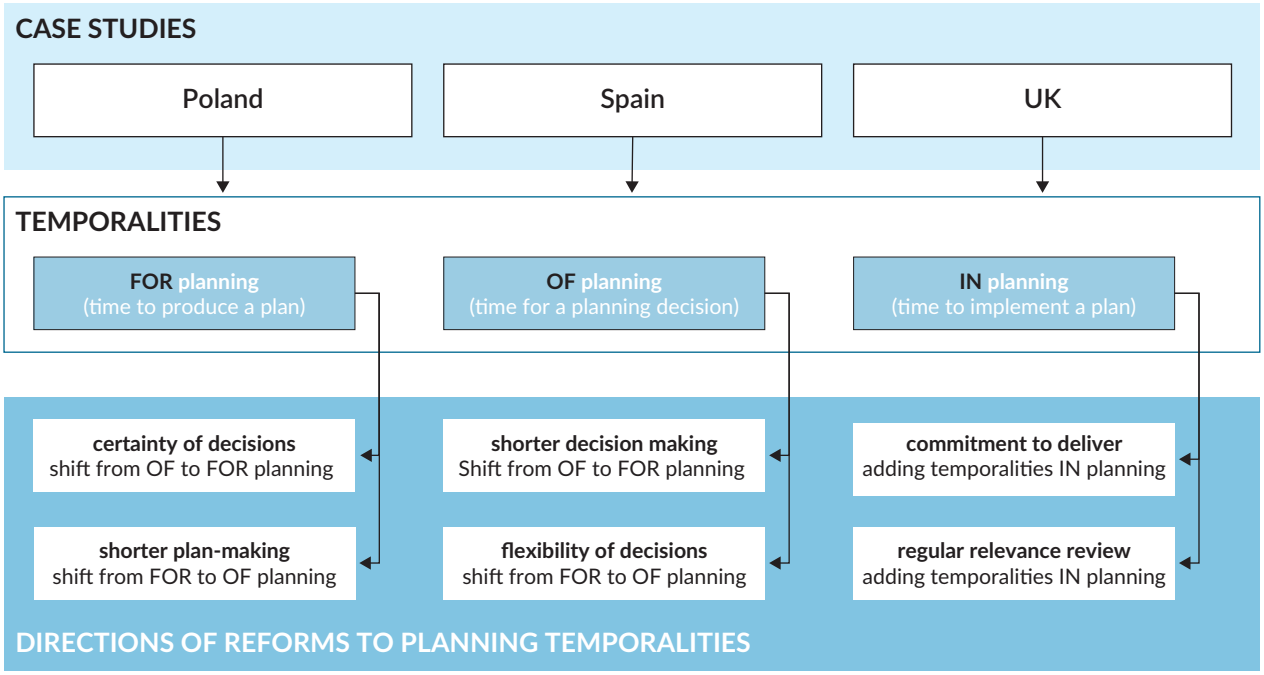

Figure 1. Methodology of comparative research temporalities in planning systems.

Table 1. Methods per country.

	Poland	Spain	UK
Interviews	Independents planners (2) Local government officers (2) Developers (1)	Independents planners (2) Local government officers (2) Developers (1)	Independents planners (2) Local government officers (2) Developers (1)
Document analysis 1: Acts	Spatial Development Act 1994 Spatial Planning and Development Act (Ministry of Development and Technology, 2023) Change of the Spatial Planning and Development Act and Other Bills (Ministry of Development and Technology, 2023)	Ley del Suelo de España de 1956 Ley de Reforma de la Ley de Suelo de España de 1975 Ley del Suelo de España de 1990 Ley de medidas liberalizadoras en materia de suelo y de Colegios profesionales 7/1997 Ley del Suelo de España de 2007	Town and Country Planning Act 1947 National Planning Policy Framework 2012 National Planning Policy Framework 2023 Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023
Document analysis 2: Official reports and responses to Acts	Office for Parliamentary Analysis (Office for Parliamentary Analysis, 2023) State of Spatial Planning in Boroughs (Śleszyński, 2022) Information on the Results of the Inspection: Spatial planning and development in Poland on the Example of Selected Cities (Najwyższa Izba Kontroli, 2022) Central Office for Statistics (Główny Urząd Statystyczny, n.d.) Official Representation to The Draft Planning Reform in Poland (Association of Polish Cities, 2023) Official Review of the Proposed Planning Reform in Poland From 26/05/2023 (Association of Polish Urbanists, 2023)	Manifiesto Asociación Española de Técnicos Urbanistas (2023, 2024) Sesión Modificación de la Ley de Suelo estatal (Ecologistas en Acción, 2024)	UCL response to the White Paper (Clifford et al., 2020) Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2022) Local Government Association (n.d.-a) Local Government Association (n.d.-b) Planning Inspectorate (2024)

a sample of countries that incorporate (a) different state models, (b) three main planning traditions, (c) planning praxis, and (d) different degrees of devolution. As per Table 1, Poland represents a combined procedural and substantive model of planning, with a regulatory praxis, and a devolved system of four tiers. Other similar countries are Germany and France, which inspired the post-Soviet planning reform in countries such as Slovakia and Bulgaria. Spain, on the other hand, is a Mediterranean state with a Napoleonic planning system, highly regulated, and with devolution to regions and local government (although with weak local

financing capacities). Other countries like the Spanish case are Italy, Portugal, and Greece. Finally, the UK represents the Anglo-Saxon residual state, with a liberal and procedural system and a planning praxis of negotiation and decision-making precedents. In this case, the devolution to LPAs is weak. Through this framework, we not only recognise how underlying structural and cultural factors influence/problematise the perception and use of planning temporalities but also seek to uncover convergence or separation of planning approaches between the three countries.

Overall, given the holistic temporal framework and the international comparative dimension, we do not attempt to provide a detailed discussion of each case but to identify common trends and/or differences that point to (a) how temporalities have been modified (or planned to be) and (b) with what ultimate purpose (Table 2).

Table 2. Characterisation of planning systems in three countries.

	Poland	Spain	UK
State model	Post-soviet and neoliberal inspired decentralised self-governance	Mediterranean	Residual
Planning system	Two distinct hierarchical layers: procedural and substantive	Napoleonic: Mix of substantive and procedural	Procedural and purpose-driven
Planning praxis	Regulatory	Regulatory	Negotiation
Degree of devolution	Three tiers: national, regional, and local. There are two levels of planning regulation at the local level: for the whole borough and for specific areas.	Three tiers: devolution to regional and local	Two tiers: national and local, with the regional level added in metropolitan areas

4. Reforms in Context

Before we comparatively analyze the three reforms along the dimensions of temporalities *for*, temporalities *of*, and temporalities *in* planning, we briefly set the context in each country concerning its recent planning history.

4.1. Poland

Over the past 50 years, Poland has undergone three significant planning reforms. The first reform, the Spatial Development Act of 1994, addressed fundamental changes in the socio-economic system and the decentralisation of planning powers. The second reform, the Spatial Planning and Development Act of 2003, established a new hierarchy of planning and introduced instruments allowing for flexibility at the local level. The most recent, third iteration of the planning system, the Change of the Spatial Planning and Development Act and Other Bills of 2023, aims to ensure comprehensive governance of development at the local level.

The spatial planning reform of 1994 in Poland was an integral component of the system transformation from a centrally planned to a market economy. The new approach to urban planning departed from integrated centrally planned blueprints by separating physical components from socio-economic ones, introducing a

two-level system of planning with Study of Development Conditions and Directions (Tier 1) defined a general spatial structure at the policy level, and Local Spatial Development Plans (Tier 2) with very detailed development regulations for a specific area. Decisions on building permissions were issued based on the verification of a project's compliance with the Local Spatial Development Plans.

Subsequent 2003 and 2023 reforms aimed to refine this neoliberal planning system, which exposed the inability to find consensus about spatial development at the local level. The hierarchical dependence between state, regional, and local planning was re-introduced to ensure strategic public investments were included at the local level. Planning processes became more formally structured and regulated with each reform. Temporalities became matters of administrative processes.

4.2. Spain

Since the first adoption of planning legislation in Spain in 1956, the Spanish national planning system has undergone several reforms. The most relevant ones were approved in 1975, 1990, 1997, 2007, and 2015 (see De las Rivas Sanz & Fernández-Maroto, 2023). We can talk about three stages. The first stage consisted of the creation of a national planning system that moved from the local scale with a narrow coverage to a centralised system that sought to cover the whole country. It is in this reform that the role and scope of local plans are set. The following reform in 1975, although building (expanding and refining) on the principles of its predecessor, initiated a liberalising path, influenced by the EU political context, which further consolidated in the next stage. However, despite its liberalisation trend, there was also an attempt to more clearly establish how capital gains could be captured to the benefit of the community.

The stage between 1990 and the late 2000s saw two major reforms. In 1990, the reform promoted the decentralisation of planning to both regional and local bodies. This reform developed further property rights, land use classification, and implementation stages. It also developed a more complex set of tools and methods for the public sector to intervene in the market. The 1997 reform consolidated the liberalisation of the planning system through a very permissive land classification that sought to classify as much land as possible for urban growth, with the underlying belief that the cost of housing would drop. It further consolidated the liberalisation of the planning system through the enhanced and central role of private actors to the detriment of the public sector. Discourses around the need for this reform also focused on how planning needed to be simplified, as it was seen as an impediment/restrictor to growth.

The reforms in the last stage (2007 and 2015) sought to moderate the liberal approach of previous reforms, influenced by environmental EU guidance. The 2007 reform focused primarily on the enhanced contributions of private developers, both through contributions to basic infrastructure as well as the allocation of 30% of land for more affordable forms of housing. Nevertheless, the new planning legislation continued to be very much focused on growth. A greater path divergence was seen in the 2015 reform, following the real estate crash of 2008. The discourse on the need for reform shifted, focusing more on issues of rehabilitation and refurbishment of the existing city. Nevertheless, the law is seen both as a mechanism of liberalising and providing more flexibility to developers in consolidated areas and as growth-dependent. Finally, in this context, a reform was drafted in 2023 and put on hold due to an intense electoral agenda. The narratives around this last reform are the focus of this article.

4.3. The UK

The UK planning reforms originated with the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act, marking a transition from a land use model to the current place-making approach (Allmendinger, 2011; Nadin & Fernández-Maldonado, 2023). For the first time, the central government determined land use, centralising land regulation and providing the government with considerable powers to demolish and rebuild following war damage and blight. Land took on a wider significance, no longer being a preserve of a privileged minority.

Between 1947 and 2012, successive UK governments sought to reform the planning system, and while there was a changing and inconsistent approach to centralisation and the expansion/contraction of planning institutional structures, there was a consistent trend of de-regulation of the planning arena in an attempt to simplify the planning process. This dynamic has continued during the following decades, with governments attempting to manage and control political outcomes through a technocratic process. These trends coalesced in 2012, under the coalition government, which decentralised planning policy via a devolved policy framework. This involved a significant reduction in planning guidance from hundreds of pages to 65 and critically introduced a central national plan that provided the framework for strategic planning policy, known as the National Planning Policy Framework. This tool minimises the role of the local planning system in favour of a centralised process that plays a material role in planning decisions.

The latest reform (the 2023 Levelling Up and Regeneration Act) removed numerous socialist principles of the 1947 Act in favour of a more centralising and conformist planning system. Details are in development and could be overturned following the Labour election result of 2024. However, the new government does not appear to eschew neoliberalism; instead, it seems to embrace the strengths of the market, forging partnerships, and ensuring an active government over the free market (Blears, 2003). In this article, we will discuss how the two narratives are conflicting.

5. Temporal Strategies and Underlying Agendas

The analysis of temporal narratives across the three cases reveals two distinct strategies in which time is redistributed between planning stages. In the first two stages (temporalities for planning and temporalities of planning) time is not only shifted across stages but also compressed through additional neoliberal strategies. In the final stage (temporalities in planning) there is a deliberate disregard and depoliticisation of time-related concerns. When examining these shifts, we highlight how narratives are constructed across cases through efforts to build consensus and the strategic (de)politicisation of specific aspects.

5.1. Temporalities for Planning: Back-Loading (But Also Downscaling and Bypassing)

In Spain and Poland, where the planning system relies on a detailed and legally binding plan (see Supplementary File, Appendix 1), reform narratives emphasize the lengthy process of this early stage, which prevents the production of plans with regularity. Meanwhile, in the UK, the five-year statutory plan review period does not appear to be considered a problem in principle, although, in practice, several LPAs retain plans over five years, creating temporal lags (Matos & Herman, 2020). In the former two cases, reform narratives are focused on reducing this early planning stage by in principle, reducing the scope and bureaucracy of the planning process.

As an interviewee argues:

> The complications that currently exist in this early stage make it impossible for municipalities to develop plans. If we want to change this, we must reduce bureaucracy, etc. but also less complex, simpler, setting overall strategies—similar to the English planning system. (Interview 7, 2024)

While the main narrative of making plans more strategic is presented as apolitical and focused on efficiency, some complexities of such reforms are overlooked. As we will see next, actors in both countries have pointed out that certain functions cannot simply disappear. However, narratives (de)politicise the issue and present it as unproblematic, even though time allocation is merely deferred to the decision-making stage. Additionally, these reforms and narratives also aim to "speed up the system" by reducing detail, eliminating planning controls, bypassing regulations, and even downscaling their scope.

In Spain, reform narratives have focused on building broad consensus around the issue that entire local plans can be annulled if a judicial review identifies flaws in the plan-making process or its content. While there is widespread agreement on the problematic nature of this approach, which has led to numerous plans being annulled and forced planning to revert to outdated plans (73% of plans are over 20 years old), this consensus tends to overshadow other aspects of the proposed changes. Additionally, it fails to highlight other problematic factors that shift responsibility onto different state actors. Regarding the first issue, a key aspect that gets obscured is how the proposed legislation limits the scope of public participation by restricting opportunities for "collective action." Only certain civil groups that meet specific criteria would have the ability to challenge a plan or its process. According to major civil society environmental groups, such as Ecologistas en Acción, this change further reduces participation without offering alternatives to an already weakened engagement process (Ecologistas en Acción, 2024). As for the second issue, the Asociación Española de Técnicos Urbanistas (2023, 2024) argues that a key factor contributing to the lengthy process is the requirement to incorporate numerous sectoral plans, making the entire system highly vulnerable to delays. Dominant narratives and the proposed legislation fail to address this issue or critique the role of regional governments, which, instead of supporting LPA in producing plans, act as regulatory enforcers in Spain's quasi-federal system.

In Poland, post-1989 planning practices aimed to address the lengthy plan-making process through two major strategies: reducing the local plan area and bypassing planning requirements. The combination of local spatial development plans serving as legally binding references for building permit applications and their non-mandatory status led to a low rate of local plan adoption. As of 2024, only 31.4% of the country has approved local plans, with 17% of local authorities having coverage below 1% (Główny Urząd Statystyczny, n.d.). The first strategy, widely applied by LPAs, sought to reduce plan production time by limiting the size of local plans to the absolute minimum necessary for development—resulting in 30% of plans covering less than 1 hectare (Najwyższa Izba Kontroli, 2022). The second strategy, introduced in the 2003 reform, established a mechanism to bypass the traditional plan production process. Under this approach, development directions were prepared by a developer or Council officers, reviewed by an independent professional body appointed by the Council, and ultimately adopted by the Council. This bypass effectively functioned as a localised plan for a specific area, informed decision-making processes, and had no expiry date. The process shares similarities with the pre-application procedure in the UK.

The recent 2023 reform introduced a tier of legally binding general plans, similar to those in Spain and the UK, covering the entire area of a borough. However, to streamline the process, these plans are strategic, with

significantly reduced detail and a reliance on quantitative standards—back-loading details to a later stage. There is a presumption that their temporalities can be easily controlled, and Polish LPAs have until January 1, 2026, to prepare them. The general plan dictates where local plans must be developed and where time-bound instruments can bypass them. As a result, planning temporalities vary between areas. Where possible, they have been shortened, although the final planning framework in Poland remains sufficiently detailed to ensure project compliance, ultimately leading to building permit approval.

5.2. Temporalities of Planning: Front-Loading (or Streamlining and Paving the Path)

In Poland and Spain, where local plans are legally binding, the decision-making process is primarily limited to verifying whether a project complies with the established plan requirements (see Supplementary File, Appendix 2). As a result, projects are developed in such detail that, in practice, the main role of LPAs is to confirm a project's suitability for occupancy upon completion. In both cases, current reform narratives fail to adequately consider how the previously discussed "back-loading" will affect this stage.

In contrast, the UK operates a flexible, negotiation-based planning system (see Supplementary File, Appendix 2). Reform narratives in the UK have long emphasized concerns about the length of planning decisions. Unlike Poland and Spain, where the process is streamlined after initial compliance verification, the UK system requires multiple decisions between the planning application and project completion. These include securing planning permission, finalising associated Section 106 agreements, and discharging various conditions through formal decisions (Cerrada Morato, 2019). While reform narratives often highlight inefficiencies in LPAs and the need for additional resources, the proposed reform instead seeks to front-load the system with more detailed plans—potentially resembling Poland's thinner general plans or Spain's general municipal plans. However, the legally binding nature of detailed plans in Poland and Spain underpins their effectiveness, contrasting sharply with the UK's discretionary planning system. Current reforms in the UK show no indication of limiting the discretionary nature of planning or its decision-making processes. As stated by one interviewee:

> The fact that everything can be negotiated at any phase of decision-making [from planning permission to discharge of individual conditions] facilitates developers' capacity to negotiate in their favour conditions [densification, height, etc.] that would not be easily achieved if a detailed plan was binding. (Interview 3, 2024)

This sentiment is widely shared among interviewees. In some collective efforts to prepare masterplans for areas with multiple landowners—such as the South Quay Masterplan in Tower Hamlets—plans were largely ignored during the decision-making stage. According to interviewees, this was primarily due to the irregular timing of implementation for specific sections and competition among stakeholders. Nevertheless, other existing planning tools, such as outline planning permissions, appear to function more effectively. These permissions are typically issued to a single developer and are reinforced by the inclusion of design codes within a legally binding decision.

Contrary to the main reform narrative in the UK, numerous actors argue that the urgency to accelerate planning timelines is justified by the central claim that democratic planning is causing the housing crisis. However, scholars and activists contend that the housing crisis is multifaceted, driven by complex factors

such as "infrastructure investment, the business models and motives of housebuilders, and the lack of funding and capacity for LPAs to build more homes directly themselves (particularly social housing)" (Clifford et al., 2020, p. 2). Growth remains a key underlying consensus shaping planning reform and the debate on planning timelines (Dobson & Parker, 2024).

5.3. Temporalities in Planning: Depoliticisation of the Implementation Stage

Interestingly, in none of the three reform narratives has land banking drawn the attention of the legislature. In all three countries, the time between permission to build and permission to occupy is fully controlled by the developers, with LPAs having very little influence despite their strong growth agendas. In Spain and Poland, a regulatory framework exists to manage the pace of construction—if work is paused for more than three years, the existing permission lapses, requiring a new building control inspection. Moreover, the LPA may order the site to be cleared. However, due to the under-resourced state of LPAs, monitoring and enforcement are rare. In the UK, interviews and sources suggest that this stage of the planning process is frequently manipulated by private interests (see Supplementary File, Appendix 3). As one interviewee argued: "It is striking that in the UK an implemented planning permission, often as simple as clearance of a site with some remediation works, locks it with no time limitations" (Interview 9, 2024).

As a result, there is a persistent discrepancy between permitted growth and actual delivery in the UK. In the housing sector, for instance, this gap has remained at approximately 20–30% over the past 15 years (Local Government Association, 2021; Terra Quest, n.d.). Stalled construction projects are common across the UK, even in prime locations, particularly following the 2008 financial crisis and Brexit. Landowners often secure the value of their land by obtaining planning permission and then waiting for market conditions to stabilise before deciding on their next steps. A common practice involves renegotiating new designs at a time of their choosing, leveraging the reset of the permission process to establish the physical parameters of the implemented scheme as the baseline for value uplift. In the UK, the relationship between time and profit is particularly pronounced.

The emphasis on planning temporalities—often framed as aspects of public sector bureaucracy (Clifford, 2022), such as plan-making and decision-making in development management—is insufficient to drive meaningful change on the ground. Planning and building permissions do not equate to a commitment to build. None of the reforms examined address the need for closer control over the timeframe between the start of construction and project completion, which remains the least politically charged of all planning temporalities.

6. Underlying Planning Agendas

The framework developed in this article has been useful in demonstrating that temporalities in planning cannot be understood as a unitary or dichotomous issue but rather as a relational one across the planning process. This study of temporal narratives in planning reforms across three European countries (Poland, Spain, and the UK) reveals that, despite inherent cultural and socio-economic differences, all three explicitly aim to promote traditional economic growth, with limiting temporalities in planning to be a major focus of these reforms. The hybridisation of planning techniques—broadening the scope of planning in Poland and Spain while emphasising more detailed coding in the UK—brings the actual outcomes of plans in these countries closer together, even as they uphold the principles of their respective planning systems. None of the three countries shows an appetite for fundamental reform of their planning systems; instead, temporalities are

being managed through market mechanisms or amendments to existing legislation. Moreover, changes in temporal structures across these cases are not solely a result of neoliberalisation forces, a topic widely explored in the literature. Instead, this study highlights how narratives (de)politicise temporal changes—often framing them as technical issues—by generating consensus around three key dimensions.

6.1. Reduced Local Participation

Democratic participation in planning is often viewed as a major cause of delays. As a result, all three cases exhibit some level of restriction on community involvement in planning and decision-making processes. This reduction in public input is counterbalanced by increased certainty: for developers, in securing building permissions, and for landowners, in ensuring the delivery of publicly funded infrastructure. The ongoing tension between public benefits and private property rights continues to shape the extension of planning temporalities.

Pan-local and supra-local investments present planning challenges in all three countries. However, in Spain and Poland, LPAs must integrate such developments into their local plans if they align with adopted policies. By limiting public participation at the local level, these countries significantly reduce planning temporalities, particularly when compared to the UK.

In all three countries, the primary mechanism for incentivising timely decision-making by LPAs is the threat of either automatic approval or the transfer of decision-making powers to a higher administrative level (Cerrada Morato, 2022). In both scenarios, local oversight is effectively removed from the process. Additionally, procedural instruments have been introduced to allow for legal extensions of planning timelines, such as the Planning Performance Agreements in the UK or pauses to supplement evidence in Poland. To maintain control over decision-making, LPAs often resist the transfer of planning powers by actively managing temporalities through engagement with applicants.

6.2. Planning Cultures

In Spain and Poland, LPAs' approach to temporalities in planning is deeply rooted in the presumption that certain public discussions about future development can be curtailed simply because the state, as the guardian and generator of the common good, is presumed to "know better" (Kellokumpu, 2021). Both EU member states have institutionalised hierarchical dependencies between state (EU), regional, and local planning, where higher-level designations are automatically embedded into local plans (Nadin et al., 2018; Nowak et al., 2022). Similarly, the ongoing debate on planning reforms in the UK advocates for strengthening quantifiable development requirements imposed by the state on LPAs—see the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2024) National Planning Policy Framework draft.

This perception of powerful authorities shaping planning temporalities creates confusion when it comes to actual implementation timelines. The time required to implement plans is generally perceived as excessive (Clifford, 2022; Sager, 2022). Public frustration over delays is often directed at LPAs, despite their limited role at this stage. The private sector remains the dominant developer in all three countries, yet planning reforms in each case have so far avoided addressing the management of planning temporalities.

The managerial approach to improving time efficiency in planning reveals stark cultural differences between the cases analysed. In the UK, de-regulation has historically been the primary means of reducing or bypassing decision-making timelines. In Poland, by contrast, each reform has further regulated decision-making time, with bureaucratic deadlines enforced through financial penalties. However, in all three cases, failure to comply with planning timelines can result in the partial loss of planning powers by LPAs.

6.3. Growth Consensus

By definition, the planning process focuses on the future. However, an analysis of the case studies reveals that planning reforms are primarily concerned with the present, raising questions about whether LPAs are genuinely planning for future needs (Interviewee 2, 2024). The degrowth debate (Martínez-Alier et al., 2010; Priewe, 2022; Vazquez-Brust & Plaza-Úbeda, 2021) underscores these tensions. While the Covid-19 pandemic significantly altered the spatial needs of communities worldwide, there is little evidence of increased planning activity in the studied countries that, for example, adjust development scenarios to accommodate these changes.

All three countries examined are pursuing reforms to enhance the role of planning in managing development. However, issues such as environmental justice, whole-life carbon footprints, and population growth remain in the early stages of evidence gathering. While Poland, Spain, and the UK have all committed to climate change adaptation and aspire to achieve net-zero economies by 2040, a notable gap exists in the discourse on the efficiency of planning processes and their associated temporalities—particularly the timeline between producing planning evidence and implementing plans. How well are plans informed by future needs? Are they adaptable to the rapid pace of technological and societal change?

The consensus on growth remains strong in Poland and the UK. In Poland, however, the current land capacity allocated for housing—primarily for low-density suburban developments—could accommodate nearly twice the country's population, despite its negative population growth (Śleszyński et al., 2020). Similarly, in the UK, national and metropolitan governments pursue a growth and densification approach (Cerrada Morato & Mumford, 2021) and aim to deliver homes for approximately 1 million people annually, even though population growth is less than half that figure (ONS, 2021). Spain presents an exception, as growth pressures do not dominate the discourse on planning timelines. Instead, there is a growing belief that growth as a guiding principle in planning should be reconsidered (Cerrada Morato, 2024, 2025). Consequently, planning efforts focus on revising pre-2008 financial crisis plans to reduce growth expectations.

Further research that cross-references the temporalities for, of, and in planning with the temporalities of growth cycles could offer valuable insights for reforming planning systems. However, the planning reforms currently implemented or under development in the case studies do not advance progressive planning agendas. Instead, they primarily focus on accelerating development. At present, spatial planning efforts seem more concerned with addressing the dysfunctional practices of the past and present rather than building a forward-thinking, adaptive framework for the future.

7. Conclusion

This study critically examined the role of temporalities in planning reforms across Poland, Spain, and the UK, analysing how time is mobilised within planning systems and whether these reforms advance progressive or regressive agendas. The findings reveal a consistent pattern of temporal restructuring that primarily serves pro-growth objectives, often at the expense of public participation, municipal autonomy, and sustainable urban development.

While the study does not suggest complete convergence across the three cases—given the legal, political, and historical factors that prevent radical reconfigurations of planning systems—it does highlight a hybridisation of strategies in response to dominant speed narratives guiding planning reforms. In particular, four key temporal strategies emerge: front-loading, back-loading, bypassing, and downscaling. While the first two strategies do not necessarily reduce overall timeframes but instead offer greater certainty and flexibility, the latter two can be considered regressive, as they strip LPAs of planning power or fragment and isolate critical issues, ultimately undermining broader considerations. This reinforces the argument that temporal discourse in planning cannot be analysed in isolation but must be understood as a relational phenomenon, where different elements of the process gain or lose temporal space based on purpose and power dynamics.

Through a comparative analysis, this study demonstrates that planning temporalities are not neutral but strategically manipulated to shape power dynamics in decision-making. The research identifies three key dimensions of time in planning reforms: temporalities for planning (plan preparation and adoption), temporalities of planning (decision-making and approvals), and temporalities in planning (implementation and execution). Across all three case studies, planning reforms attempt to streamline or accelerate these stages, but largely in ways that benefit private interests rather than fostering democratic engagement or environmental responsibility.

A significant trend observed is the depoliticisation of planning through time management. By framing time as a technical rather than a political issue, governments generate consensus around reducing bureaucratic delays while simultaneously limiting public participation. In Spain and Poland, this is particularly evident in back-loading planning responsibilities, shifting crucial details from the plan-making stage to later decision-making processes. In contrast, the UK prioritises front-loading, where planning policies seek to simplify approval procedures, reinforcing discretionary decision-making that favours developers. Additionally, across all three cases, the post-permission stage remains largely unregulated, allowing private sector actors to dictate the pace and outcomes of urban development. This study argues that ceding control of this stage to market forces limits the state's role in ensuring long-term, equitable, and sustainable planning outcomes.

Despite differences in planning traditions, legal frameworks, and governance structures, all three countries demonstrate a strong growth consensus, where planning reforms prioritise economic expansion over social equity and environmental sustainability. Poland and the UK exhibit particularly aggressive pro-growth narratives, using planning reforms to accelerate decision-making. Meanwhile, Spain, despite revising its planning expectations post-2008, continues to rely on flexible frameworks that ultimately serve market interests. However, the study also finds that changes in planning temporalities are not solely driven by neoliberalisation forces—a topic extensively covered in the literature—but also by how narratives strategically (de)politicise temporal shifts. Three critical narrative dimensions emerge:

1. Framing speed as a necessity: In the context of the housing crisis and pressing infrastructure demands, planning reforms prioritise acceleration to facilitate growth.
2. Municipalities as scapegoats: The critique of inefficiencies is not directed at state incompetence broadly but specifically targets municipalities. Instead of removing their competencies outright, reforms subtly undermine local governments, framing them as inefficient, overburdened by bureaucracy, and under-resourced. This justifies external interventions or transfers of planning power rather than providing meaningful support.
3. State-led planning as the "common good": State planning presents itself as balancing development needs with societal sinterests while downplaying the role of citizens, communities, and meaningful public engagement.

Moving forward, future research should explore the role of international actors, financial lobbies, and EU-level policies in shaping these temporal strategies. Additionally, further examination of how planning reforms interact with broader economic growth cycles could provide valuable insights into how planning systems might better serve public interests rather than perpetuate market-driven urbanisation. This study also calls for a deeper investigation into how narratives around planning temporalities are homogenised beyond formal EU policies (Dühr et al., 2010).

Ultimately, if planning is to serve as a tool for equitable and sustainable urban development, it is not enough to focus on speeding up processes, instead, the underlying objectives, power structures, and long-term societal impacts of planning reforms must be critically assessed. Without a fundamental re-evaluation of how time is managed in planning, reforms risk reinforcing market-driven priorities at the expense of more democratic, inclusive, and forward-thinking urban futures.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

Supplementary Material

Supplementary material for this article is available online in the format provided by the authors (unedited).

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About the Authors

Lucía Cerrada Morato is an architect and planner working at the intersection of theory, policy, and practice. Before joining Institut Metròpoli in September 2024, she was a Research Associate in the Geography Department at King's College London and previously conducted research in local government in the UK. Her work focuses on the governance and planning of metropolitan areas, the relational geographies of urban and suburban development, and urban policy innovations within a post-growth framework.

Agnieszka Zimnicka brings 30 years of experience in spatial planning and urban design, drawing from her expertise in architecture, town planning, and urban management. Part-time associate professor at the Gdansk University of Technology with practical experience in European and London contexts, and private and public sectors. Her research interests focus on managing sustainable growth, community engagement, application of visual communication in development strategies, tall buildings, local public infrastructure, quality of spatial development, and urbanisation processes in metropolitan areas.

Judi Wilson is a seasoned project manager with extensive experience in development and regeneration. She has successfully delivered a variety of urban development projects for both private and public sector organisations. As a predoctoral student, she is embarking on independent research to refine her skills and establish herself as a leading independent researcher. Her research interests include estate regeneration, housing policy, planning delivery, and project management. Judi Wilson holds a master's degree in urban regeneration from the University of Westminster.

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Making Places: From Non-Place to User-Generated Space Through a Diversity of Media

Weijue Wang, Mark Tewdwr-Jones, and Valerio Signorelli

The Bartlett Centre for Advanced Spatial Analysis, University College London, UK

Correspondence: Weijue Wang (weijue.wang.19@ucl.ac.uk)

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Abstract

The prevalence of rich and dynamic multimedia information has dramatically accelerated the development of communicative non-places over the last 30 years. This has prompted planners to consider the question of how the long-term shift from a place-based to a non-place-networked public realm can be achieved. This article proposes the hypothesis that users of digital infrastructure in non-places create temporary non-places. In this process, a "non-place," as intended by Augé, is neutral and lacks identity, but digital technology endows this physical non-place with new characteristics: identical, relational, and historical. By focusing on London as a case city, this article proposes a new method for observing the transformation process of urban places and non-places from location-based social media data. The research involved collecting, quantitatively, geo-targeted contributions within London during a predefined period, and an analysis of contributions on social media over time, collected from X, Foursquare, and Instagram. Daily digital activity patterns show distinctive temporal narratives in non-place-based digital spaces. The key findings from these patterns are: (a) There is a rhythmic difference between digital and physical activities in non-places; and (b) non-places accelerate the use of digital technologies as they stimulate the desire to share personal status through social media. The study aims to understand what placemaking practices occur in spaces overlayed by invisible infrastructures, as well as users' self-generated spatio-temporal perceptions.

Keywords

digital activity patterns; location-based social media; non-places; placemaking; spatio-temporal perceptions; temporal narratives

1. Introduction

This article assumes that two closely related concepts have expanded noticeably in the late 20th century and early 21st century: digital media; and the development of urban non-places. As introduced by Marc Augé, non-places refer to transient spaces that do not foster social connections among people (Augé, 1995, p. 78). It is crucial to emphasize that non-places encompass both physical and virtual reality (Fernández, 2018, p. 215). Indeed, communicative non-places have expanded and grown most significantly in response to the pace of social change, largely caused by the development of virtual communications. According to Augé, with regard to the dimensions of virtual space, virtual non-places are "spaces of communication: screens, communication infrastructures, waves with immaterial appearance such as Wi-Fi" (Augé, 1995, p. 89). Subjective, user-specific, and customized social media interfaces enable people to consume standardized spaces in their own personalized way. Mobile devices and wireless networks promote mixed occupancy of public places and the deprogramming of architecture (Anagnostou & Vlamos, 2011). These non-places, that are applied to areas through soft occupation, will most often create small, closed personal domains within public space, and allow a timeless and delocalized domain to be shared (Eriksson et al., 2007, p. 31). The media micro-environments can be generated from particular non-places within social non-places and give the urban environment a humanized social atmosphere. In this process, digital media adorns non-places, which leads users to relieve the loneliness of waiting in transit situations by entering a personal, virtual non-place. Undoubtedly, in terms of transforming the way shared spaces are experienced and by customized emotional surroundings, this individual sphere is filled with personal emotions that can often be more profound than traditional physical non-places.

The revolution in information technology, the emergence of artificial intelligence, and the continued social isolation after the Covid-19 pandemic, have all exacerbated the dynamics of individualization ("Even after Covid-19 crisis," 2022; Nelson, 2020, para. 10; Reades & Crookston, 2021). The planning world has raised the question of how the long-term shift from a place-based to a non-place-networked public realm can be accommodated, or even achieved, if it is considered desirable (Worpole, 2021, para.3). A growing body of research is now discussing how to move towards non-place urban design. For example, Coyne (2007) demonstrates how situated cognition of places and non-places through virtual reality is now occurring through, inter alia, on-site seminars at supermarkets, immigration offices, and airport terminals. Spinne (2007, p. 42) explores the sensory construction of non-place in mobile practice through cycling the city. Ciuccarelli et al. (2014) use visualization data obtained from social media as a source of knowledge for non-place planning and management. The methodology of identifying places and non-places via crowd-harvested photo data is posited by Bauder (2016). Fernández (2018) states that music is an invisible infrastructure used to occupy and humanize non-places. And Ayiter (2019) relates Augé's concept of non-place to the avatar of perpetual, three-dimensional, real-time virtual builders' worlds, questioning whether the metaverse is a "place" or "non-place."

Previous urban design literature has touched upon the distinction between non-place and place from the viewpoint of sensory experience and subjectivity. This distinction has been identified as a potential research topic for urban planning (Harvie, 1996; Maximiliano, 2018; Merriman, 2004; Moran, 2005). However, in the existing literature, there is a need to be more specific about abstract terms such as place and non-place. There is growing evidence that the relationship between place and non-place is constantly transforming in the modern world (Hendry, 2014). The geographical concept of space as only a physical entity has been

disputed (Massey, 2005). Instead, space has been discussed as ephemeral, sensory, and performative (Wunderlich, 2014, p. 62). It acquires a specific meaning, especially so when personal experience is incorporated. In these contexts, digital media creates the potential to redefine a space. Non-places become lived places because emotions are aroused. This statement is the cornerstone for understanding the focus of this study: People's use of digital infrastructure in non-places suggests they create a temporary place in those non-places. In this process, the non-place is neutral and lacks character, but digital technology endows this physical non-place with new characteristics: identical, relational, and historical. Therefore, from a contemporary networked experience perspective, it is meaningful to investigate the transformative processes of non-place and place.

There is also a lack of empirical data that evidences how these non-places change over time and geography. Within the context of physical places, temporality, the sense of time, and rhythm have all been used as research themes in urban placemaking (see, for example, Ingold, 1993; Isaacs, 2001; Knox, 2005; Lynch, 1972). However, digital non-places as an explicit topic of research have only recently been considered in the literature, and specifically in urban design (Carroll, 2017; Hendry, 2014; Lammes, 2007). The relationship between digital non-places and both digital media and urban social time remains unexplored. This is perhaps hardly surprising given the complexity of the factors at play: Non-places under virtual reality superimpose digital content and information onto physical reality, generating digital activity patterns that are not synchronized with physical activity. The use of mobile electronic devices promotes distinctive, temporal narratives of non-place that may even create alternative city imaginaries. We have witnessed these trends through, for example, people's blurring of fictionalized places depicted in film and fiction, and augmented reality smart games into physical places (Tewdwr-Jones, 2011).

This article investigates placemaking practices that occur in non-places, with the aim of answering the following questions: (a) In the physical dimension, can the application of digital technology create a temporary place in a non-place, and what meaningful spatio-temporal patterns would this reveal?; (b) In the virtual dimension, how does the digital space created by social media sit with Marc Augé's definition of non-places, and is it possible to demonstrate that virtual communication can allow place and non-place transformations? In essence, the critical issue here is to understand whether people create a "place" without the existence of a physical space.

In Section 2, we discuss whether traditional notions of "non-place," which have been developed by Augé (1995) and used extensively by geographers and anthropologists, should be reassessed. The urban spaces that people experience have changed over the last 30 years and, despite being named "non-places," this term may no longer be appropriate to describe fully people's relationship with their surroundings. Section 3 presents the methodology and introduces the case study research, focusing on the degree to which it is possible to develop quantifiable and measurable non-place urban spaces through a quantitative experiment. Section 4 outlines the results with a focus on measuring the intensity and frequency of social media activity in city-specific non-places. The final section concludes by answering the research questions, highlighting the limitations of this study, and identifying avenues for further research.

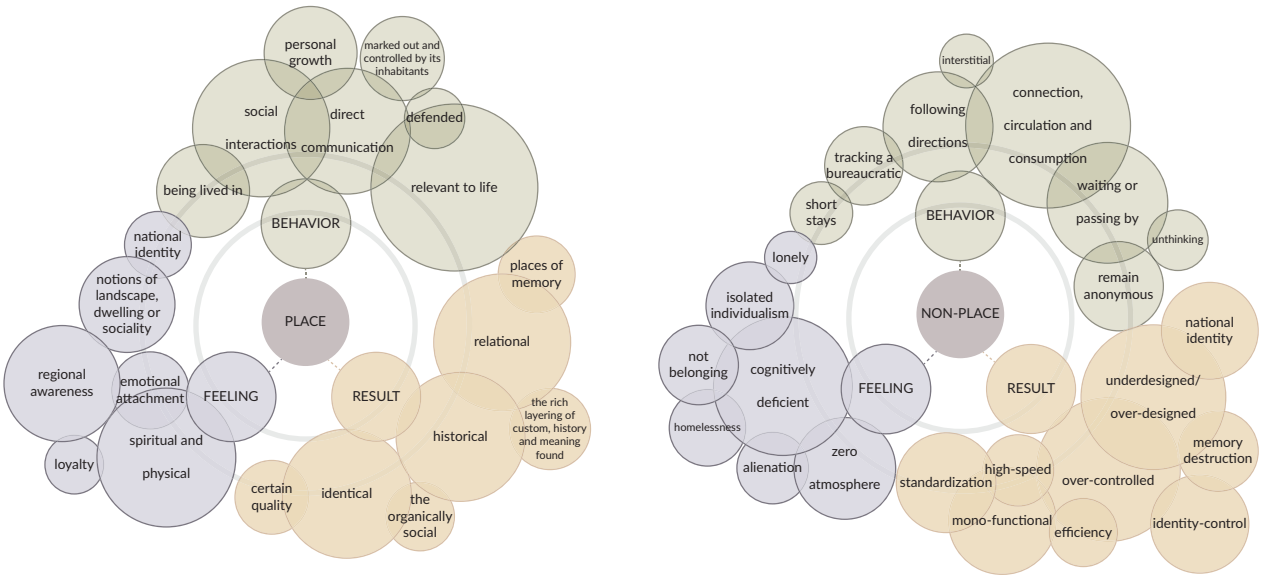
2. Placemaking in Non-Places

2.1. Non-Places: Manmade Atopia

Within the fields of architecture, cultural geography, and anthropology, a great deal of focus has been placed on the conceptualization of place. Much work in humanism has debated, redefined, and criticized our understanding of "place" (Cosgrove & Daniels, 1989; Cresswell, 2003; Daniels, 1993; Duncan, 1990; Matless, 1995). For example, geographer Yifu (1977) describes places as locations that are imbued with value through human experience and interaction, distinguishing them from mere physical space. Places are typically associated with history and shared social practices, making them sites of individual and collective identity. There were far fewer studies explicitly analyzing the notion of "non-place" until social anthropologist Augé (1995) refined the concept of non-place from a societal perspective in his seminal work *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*. Before this, the notion of the embryonic form of the non-place appeared in the consideration of some authors, such as Merleau-Ponty (1948) and the architect Gruen (1964). However, Augé provided a definition of the concept that became more widely adopted in the literature.

Augé's conception of non-place is largely derived from its opposition to place. In his view, a place is characterized by sociality, dwelling, and landscape (Augé, 1995). By the same token, space is a "place" if it can be physically occupied, directly communicated with, defended, marked out, and thus become emotionally involved. However, Augé (1995) argues that supermodernity—a historical period marked by rapid change—creates "non-places." Supermodernity shows how standardization has taken hold, leading to the suppression of individuality. This leads to the opposite of the concept of "place" which confers a sense of belonging and fixity. Augé (1995) categorizes "non-places" as spaces of communication, consumption, and circulation that exist outside of identity, relations, and history. These spaces, typically airports and shopping malls for example, lack important cultural identity and have little or no attachment or memory for those who pass through them. Globalization has expanded the non-places, making them standardized, efficient, and anonymous, where people spend short, disconnected moments (see Figure 1). This "global sense of place," or in other words, the homogenization of society, is causing the differences that once characterized each city to disappear.

It can be argued that there are many similarities between Augé's "non-place" and the notion of "atopia." The word "atopia" is derived from the Greek prefix ἀ- (without, deprived of) and τόπος (place), indicating a space that is antithetical to a habitable place (Millet, 2013). It is also currently used to describe manmade atopias like airports, railway stations, and chain stores that interfere with the identity of individuals and communities. A classic example is the way international hotels operate. From the layout to the color of the towels, hotel chains worldwide are similar to induce an abstraction from the surrounding world. In the same vein, a 2000 *The New York Times* article accused a Starbucks that opened in China's Forbidden City of sharing the same decoration and advertising the same "glazed donuts, cinnamon rings, and banana walnut muffins" as the Starbucks in the United States (Smith, 2000). To build this Starbucks in the first place, the Forbidden Palace's Jiuqinfang building was remodeled, and its historical status and sense of place were replaced by a consumer space designed to be nearly identical to that of Starbucks worldwide. Thus, being trapped in a manmade atopia will ultimately preclude the variations produced by the individual's interactions with the local place, leading to the disintegration of humanism.



"place" (as an anthropological entity) "non-place" (as an consumer-oriented funcional structure)

Figure 1. Different characteristics of places and non-places (the larger the circle, the more often the word appears). Sources: Author's work based on keywords collected from Augé (1995, 2017), Ayiter (2019), Carroll (2017), Cosgrove and Daniels (1989), Cresswell (2003), Daniels (1993), Duncan (1990), Grotius (2004), Matless (1995), Relph (1976), Spinne (2007), Urry (2000), Yifu (1977).

Augé's arguments have been challenged by a number of people. Harvie (1996) challenges Augé's assumption that non-place has no historicity. He argues that the perception of non-place is entirely subjective. Individuals can perceive any given location as a non-place or a crossroads of human relations. For instance, India is dotted with many British buildings constructed in the 19th and early 20th centuries. These historic buildings, which might not be "places" in the eyes of indigenous peoples, are or at least were "places" in the eyes of the British because their forms reflect capitalist social relations. Moreover, in *Reading the Everyday*, Moran (2005) uses the example of London's infamous M25 motorway to advance Harvie's theory. He points out that spaces like motorways, service stations, and airport terminals may present themselves to the traveler as unmarked spaces. However, to Britons who know their legal and cultural history, this flagship project of Margaret Thatcher's 1980s Conservative Party reminds them of the "destruction of the trade union movement" and the "industrial dereliction of much of the north of Britain." As Yifu (1977) points out, whether a place is a space, a place, or a non-place must be judged based on individual experience: "We are always at the center of our perceptual space and hence in place" (Relph, 1976).

From the perspective of this study, any space can be classified as abstract (waiting to be embodied), potential (waiting to be activated), and neutral (waiting for transformation). A change in the state of space occurs when a person enters the space and individual experience is incorporated into it. Thus, a non-place never exists in its pure form. The same location can simultaneously be a space removed from anthropological places for one person and a non-place for another. For example, shopping malls are often considered to be "non-places" as they are used for temporary, transactional purposes. However, for the salespeople who work there, these spaces become "places" full of personal and social meaning, as they conduct their professional and daily lives and build relationships within this environment.

2.2. Digitization: A Reclaiming of the Possibilities of Place From Atopian Non-Place

It should be noted that Augé's discourse on traditional "non-place" is being increasingly questioned with the advent of diverse media. These smart technologies mix the digital and physical worlds for a better user experience. The infrastructure of the physical world, background data, human activities, and network signals are all different levels of this hybrid space throughout the city. In this situation, the attributes of actual physical space seem to become less important for the nurturing of identity or a sense of belonging than before, as individuals' electronic connections with other places are increasing (Varnelis & Friedberg, 2008, p. 15). People can turn their bedroom into a remote meeting room or put on headphones to turn the airport lobby into a customized private concert hall. People who use a mobile device at a railway station gain a sense of belonging and identification. It is worth noting that non-places require personalized digital enhancement to provide the cognitive scaffolding that allows people to think beyond space. In London's Heathrow Airport, for example, travelers need to use supplementary hardware such as electronic diaries, iPods, mobile phones, and Kindles to compensate for non-place cognitive deficiencies. Unlike the aforementioned negative non-place, this phenomenon creates a positive manmade atopia. While people rarely associate airport terminals and shopping malls with opportunities for self-expression and creativity, cyberspace and social media have provided new ways of user engagement and community connection. For example, virtual public spaces provide citizens and social movements with new forms of political expression, thereby changing the forms of political participation and protest (Maireder & Ausserhofer, 2014, p. 305). Dispersed communities are simultaneously integrated through digitally-mediated communication, thereby promoting multi-site lifestyles and intimate relationships from a distance (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2014, p. 12). Unlike the "pre-internet times," the "era of digitalization" came to extend the place for information, opinion, and debate to the private sphere (Riether, 2010). Media technologies such as mobile phones and laptops allow people to express their opinions publicly without gathering in a specific physical place. This behavior contributes to the segmentation of perception and reduces the connection to the physical public space. As a result, the former role of public space as a primary site for information exchange and political discourse has diminished, thereby reducing its significance.

Meanwhile, cyberspace and social media have also made public space become a private space in the digital sense. It could be argued that digital labor additionally produces new forms of exploitation, flexibility, and freedom, blurring the boundaries between the workplace and private places (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014, p. 28). Also, a system of automated, dynamic, nuanced, and subjective filters and controls becomes the method through which users regulate spatial boundaries via parameter control, leading to temporary, hierarchical, and subjective concepts of public and private spaces (Eriksson et al., 2007, p. 31). Each device user's dynamic and customized space completely overturns Kevin Lynch's concept in *The Image of the City* (Lynch, 1960, p. 86). The spatial structure can be abstracted into five elements, namely edge, node, path, district, and landmark, all due to the invariability of the original physical space, which may no longer exist in virtual non-places. For instance, an ordinary store will not be regarded as a landmark in *The Image of the City*. Still, in digital mapping software, the store may be rendered in front of Google Maps users by a digital marker or marked as an important node on the map. In this situation, virtual non-places turn public mapping into a private and customized action, and the original concept of public space has eventually been shaken.

For Augé, a place is an anthropological place characterized by history, relation, and identity (Augé, 1995, p. 51). Therefore, a space that cannot be defined as historical, relational, and concerned with identity is then

a non-place. The development of cyberspace is sufficient to critique the above view. First, upon early encounter, the meta-spaces are a construction of solitude, blankness, anonymity, and consumption. They are devoid of personality and memory. Nevertheless, users create personal profiles and spend a large amount of time and resources in the meta-space, leading to the creation of highly personalized virtual "places." At the moment, the digital world is no longer seen as an illusory space used to escape reality, as people are able to complete their daily necessities online. Using platforms such as Zoom, Teams, Skype, WeChat, and X can give rise to new forms of work and learning and even facilitate multi-location lifestyles and long-distance intimacy. Therefore, there is no shortage of "relation" in the meta-space. In addition, Instagram, Foursquare, Facebook, and other social media platforms are full of memories and significance, and encourage users to record their personal lives on them. Personal information, data, and texts are injected into the meta-space as content from the day is uploaded. It is evident that meta-space can be defined as "historical." Finally, each device user's dynamic and customized space has led to temporary, hierarchical, and subjective concepts of "public" and "private" places (Eriksson et al., 2007, p. 31). These places, which reflect people's daily activities in the city, are marked as their "favorite" placemarks on Google Maps and given unique names and routes colored in. These annotations provide a personalized way for users to understand and record their life trajectory in the city. This customization of urban space through personal experience can be viewed as a reorganization of the digital map. It inadvertently renegotiates the authority of urban planning and zoning and emphasizes the user's personal identity. In *Remediation*, Bolter and Grusin (1999) project the concept of non-place in cyberspace. They formulate the identity of non-place as dynamic, like a chameleon, absorbing other identities to create its own. Thus, there is no shortage of "identity" in meta-space. Augé (2017) revisits the term and defines non-places in his book *L'Avenir des Terriens*: "In short, the places I used to call non-places are now the potential link of every possible space" (p. 40). He suggests that digital spaces, much like physical non-places, offer a paradoxical mix of isolation and connectivity. In line with the views of this study, Augé agrees that these digital environments may lead to a redefinition of personal identity and social practices, reflecting both the alienation and the possibilities within modern life.

The question posed in this article is whether the digital space accessed is, in fact, a "place" that may supplement some of what has been taken away from us in our supermodern public "non-places." Considering that digital non-places are invisible to the naked eye, the research methodology adopted in this study is not limited to visual and material forms, instead shifting attention to tempo, patterns, and experiences. The supermodernity proposed by Augé requires a renewed methodological reflection on the category of otherness (1995, p. 24), whose driving force includes the transformation of people's concepts of time, space, and daily life. The place is seen as ephemeral, sensory, and performative (Massey, 2005; Seamon, 1980; Thrift, 2003; Wunderlich, 2014, p. 62). This is reinforced by the fact that spatio-temporal boundaries have slowly disappeared as a result of everyday life in digital space, exacerbating this sensorial, transient, and temporal phenomenon and blurring the distinction between place and non-place. The significance of the sense of time and the perceived rhythmicity of places in shaping the quality of people's temporal and sensory experiences in urban spaces has long been recognized (Ingold, 1993; Massey, 2005; Thrift, 2003). According to Wunderlich (2013), urban design themes such as placemaking, urban identity, and relationships can be analyzed in terms of time, which suggests that non-places can also be spaces with history, relation, and identity.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Approach

This study proposes a new method for observing the transformation process of urban places and non-places from location-based social media data. In order to explore the transformative processes of non-places and places, this research demonstrates that digital technologies can endow non-places with identity, relationality, and historicity by creating interactions and personal experiences. While the digital age has given rise to many online technologies, it is social media platforms that facilitate and create a data source of interactions and daily memories in a virtual space. These data sources include those that are publicly visible (such as comments under a YouTube video, "likes" on Facebook, and shared content like photos, blog posts, etc.), and data that are hidden (such as website search history and phone calls), both of which leave digital traces. In this context, digital traces are "records of activity left by individuals when they interact online," which allows researchers to observe users' social behavior in real-time (Keusch & Kreuter, 2021).

This study focuses on London. On the one hand, London's urban space contains many non-places in its physical dimension. London's shopping centers and transport hubs (airports, train stations, and tube stations) are the epitome of a modern, globalized city. The efficient and standardized design of public spaces obscures personal sub-narratives. Retail chain stores, which are common across many large cities, have resulted in a form of urban homogenization, sometimes referred to as the "McDonaldization" of cities (Ritzer, 2008). Conversely, a study by BroadbandUK (2022) has revealed that London is the most online-obsessed area in the UK: The city has the highest broadband usage per household and uses 11% more than the national average. Three South London boroughs are among the UK's top 10 most active social media usage areas (Hyde, 2021). Admittedly, London is not representative of all cities, but it is nonetheless a useful example to analyze what the era of digitalization has brought about in cities.

3.2. Methods

This study utilized quantitative geo-tagged social media data. Specifically, this research relied upon social software streaming APIs to gather geo-localized social text content in near real-time. When users send social text or images, the social software automatically tracks and records their latitude and longitude to determine their geographical location. While some users do not send tweets or photos immediately in situ and on-site, they tend to give additional location context or add a location tag to the text after they arrive home. Therefore, to ensure accuracy, this work disregards location tags and textual content, and instead collects social text content based solely on the backend records of the user's geographical information in real-time. For example, when GPS positioning is enabled, social content that mentions "Hyde Park" or sets "Hyde Park" as a location tag will not necessarily be collected. Social content for this case would only be collected if the user uses the social software within Latitude: 51.508610, Longitude: −0.163611, Radius: 0.42 miles (which is, of course, the exact geographic location of Hyde Park).

Due to privacy concerns, GPS and mobile phone tracking data can be difficult to obtain even for research purposes. Therefore, social media applications that provide geo-localized information are somewhat limited. Previous literature has suggested that X, Foursquare, and Instagram often prove to be the richest sources for contributions containing data (Arjona et al., 2021; Ciuccarelli et al., 2014; Martinez & Martinez, 2014).

Therefore, the study used Python code to collect social text content from X, Foursquare, and Instagram via the streaming API. The data collected in this study included (a) the number of geo-tagged contributions/check-ins within the case study regions in a predefined period, and (b) the trend of user contributions on social media over time.

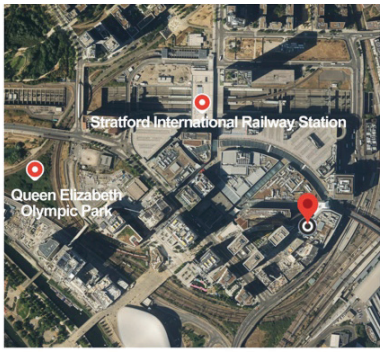
3.2.1. Case Study 1: Spatio-Temporal Patterns of User Activity

Case Study 1 visualizes the distribution of people's digital activities within non-places and places, and its peaks over time. Six different locations in London were chosen: (a) St. Pancras International Station, (b) London Heathrow Airport, (c) Westfield Shopping Centre Stratford City, (d) Hyde Park, (e) Regent's Park, and (f) Natural History Museum and Victoria and Albert Museum (see Figure 2). Based on the literature review, St. Pancras International Station, London Heathrow Airport, and Westfield Stratford City are the railway station, the airport, and the shopping center, respectively. They are typical non-places. Hyde Park, Regent's Park, and the Natural History Museum and Victoria and Albert Museum are typical places. The primary reason for choosing these six locations is their function as either archetype places or non-places, but also because they all have a vast footprint. The real-time geolocations collected through the streaming API are based on the size of an area. Therefore, the larger the radius around a point, the more data is collected. Moreover, St. Pancras International Station is connected to Eurostar rail departures; London Heathrow is the UK's largest airport; Westfield Stratford City is a popular stopover for those traveling to Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park and is also close to the high-traffic Stratford transport hub; Hyde Park and the neighboring Regent's Park are the largest green spaces in central London; and the Natural History Museum is adjacent to the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Science Museum.

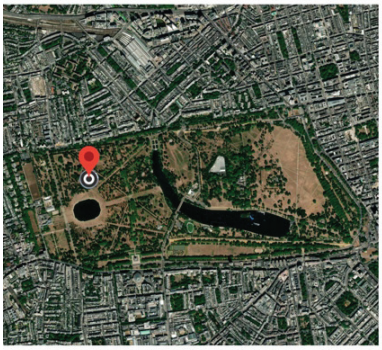
The research began with geo-referenced public tweets gathered from the X APIs. Based on the latitude, longitude, and radius entered, it is possible to retrieve 100 tweets sent from a particular geographic location from the previous seven days. Case Study 1 involved a three-month data crawl, focusing on tweets from 1,260 active users between June 14 and July 14, 2023, February 14 and March 14, 2024, and June 5 and July 5, 2024. To complement the data from X, Foursquare and Instagram were also utilized as geospatial social media platforms. Unlike X, where tweets can be retrieved based on both location and a specific time frame, Foursquare allows location-based searches but lacks a mechanism to control the temporal aspect of the data. As a result, check-in data collected from six locations correspond to different time periods, leading to variations in the amount of data obtained. Instagram's statistics are partly based on data collected through the streaming API, and partly data that were manually retrieved. For users who have voluntarily enabled Instagram's geo-localization service, their posts include precise timestamps and locations, revealing their movements through the city. A three-month data crawl was used on Instagram from 800 active users in the same time frames as those studied for X activity. Entering the location allowed the researchers to browse through all Instagram posts made at that location in recent weeks and manually categorize them into different times of the day based on when they were posted. Generally speaking, when scholars try to collect people's activities in a physical dimension, it is often necessary to do fieldwork and be physically present. Nonetheless, given that digital activities are intangible and difficult to capture with the naked eye, most collection efforts must rely on streaming APIs. However, the manual search process allows for observing the individual motivations of users using Instagram to post information.

(a) St. Pancras International Station

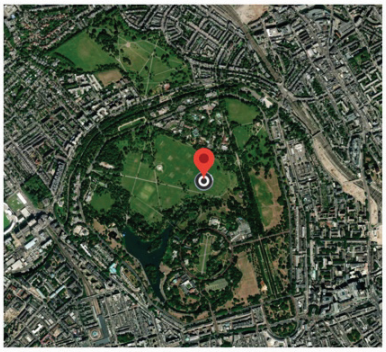
(b) London Heathrow Airport



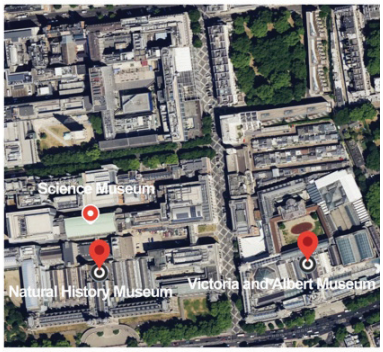
(c) Westfield Shopping Centre Stratford City



(d) Hyde Park



(e) Regent's Park



(f) Natural History Museum and Victoria and Albert Museum

Figure 2. Geographical location of the six sites. Source: Authors' work based on maps collected from Mapbox (2024).

3.2.2. Case Study 2: Assessing the Relation to Non-Place Through a Diversity of Media

Case Study 2 categorizes non-places further. Four different London railway stations were chosen. They are (a) St. Pancras International Station, (b) London Victoria Station, (c) Charing Cross Railway Station, and (d) Euston Railway Station (see Figure 3). The primary reason for choosing these locations is that these stations are the most common non-places with which people come into contact daily. Transportation hubs such as railway stations and metros are spaces filled with textual information (Gaste & Gentes, 2013). In addition to signs and posters, people interact with newspapers, books, and smartphones. Many tourists perform digital activities such as gaming, communicating (social media, SMS, phone calls), and reading the news when traveling. In most cases, when traveling by train, they isolate themselves from the rest of the world and create their own personal spheres in non-places. Modern airport terminals and train stations often look the same in cities; the only thing differentiating the traveler's experience is their individual digital activities.

In the controlled case study, St. Pancras International Station and London Victoria Station are categorized as the first group, and Charing Cross Railway Station and Euston Railway Station as the second group. The stations in the first group are connected directly to airports (London Luton Airport and London Gatwick Airport), and the stations are designed like shopping centers with extensive infrastructure (cafes, restaurants, shops). The stations in the second group do not connect directly to an airport and have less infrastructure. Case Study 2 was used to verify (a) whether train stations connecting to airports and containing shopping centers have more frequent digital activity, and (b) whether the reason people are willing to talk about a certain area on social media apps is related to the richness of local infrastructure.

Figure 3. Geographical location and interiors of the four London railway stations. Sources: Authors' work based on photos collected from (a) "What are they building" (2024), (b) Travellers Toolkits (2024), (c) Patuffel (2018), (d) SpaceandPeople (2024).

4. Results

Figure 4 presents the difference in the intensity of rhythm of digital activity between non-places and places and shows that this is not stark. Hyde Park has a much higher frequency of tweets than the other sites. However, the frequency of digital activity for non-places and places is broadly equal. Regarding digital activity on Instagram, London Heathrow Airport has a higher level of user activity than Regent's Park and the Natural History Museum and Victoria and Albert Museum. There was even a peak at London Heathrow at 3pm in X's digital activity. Several studies have speculated that people tend to use social media in places rather than non-places. Erwin Goffman's theory of social interaction shows that people curate their self-presentation more in meaningful settings (places) because they feel a stronger sense of social interaction (Goffman, 1956). Places tend to mean more social activity and the generation of more memories to share, leading to users being inclined to comment on others' opinions or share their own photos. Secondly, many social media platforms, especially Instagram or Facebook, emphasize location-based sharing (Ciuccarelli et al., 2014). People often tag or share their location when they are in places with emotional or social relevance (e.g., a family gathering in the park, or visiting a museum). Furthermore, Christopherson (2007) states that people tend to engage in more passive online behaviors in anonymous or transitional spaces. However, the results show that while people engage in digital activity in places with a high frequency, it does not open up a significant gap with digital activity in non-places. In summary, this observation found that the duration, intensity, and number of events comprising people's non-place use of social media are higher than expected. From one vantage point, this result confirms the hypothesis that non-places accelerate people's adoption of digital technologies. Digital technologies stimulate the desire to express and share in non-places. In addition, the difference in the frequency of physical activity between non-places and places is more pronounced, as shown in Figure 5. It shows that London Heathrow Airport receives the most visitors per year, followed by the Natural History Museum and Victoria and Albert Museum, and Westfield Stratford City. In contrast, although the number of visitors to the parks is the lowest per year, the visitors to Hyde Park post social media content much more frequently than the other locations. This indicates that both parks and museums are "places," and although museums have a much more mobile population than parks, people can experience a stronger sense of social interaction in parks.

Figure 4. The intensity and rhythm change of digital activity in time as analyzed through X, Foursquare, and Instagram at six locations.

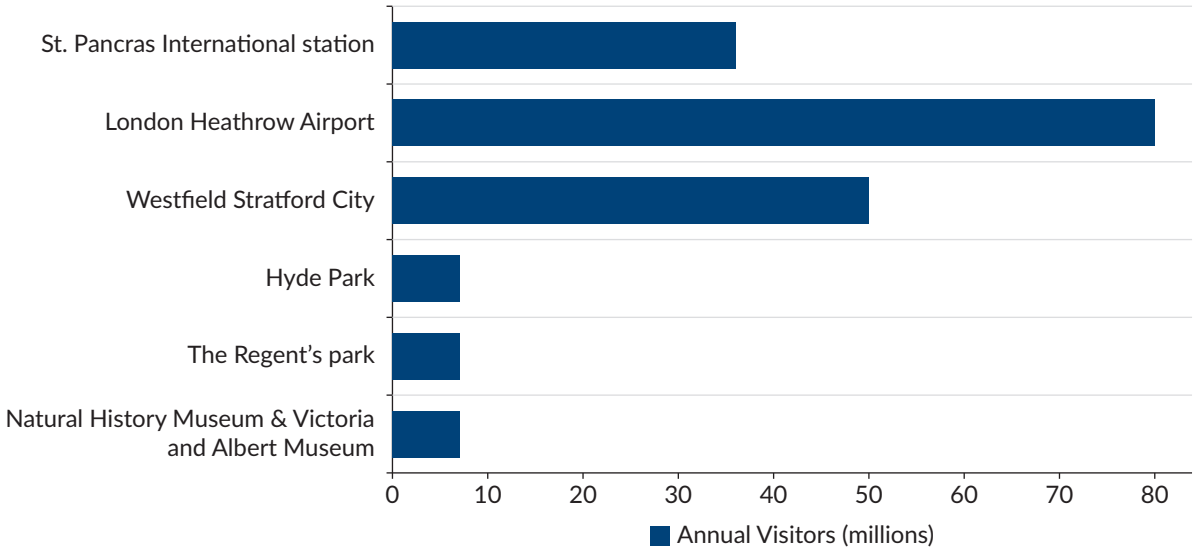


Figure 5. Number of visitors per year to the six locations (in millions). Considering data limitations, this study has compiled data from 2018 for St. Pancras International Station, London Heathrow Airport, Westfield Stratford City, and the Natural History Museum and Victoria and Albert Museum, along with 2014 data for Hyde Park and Regent's Park. Sources: Association of Leading Visitor Attractions (2018), Heathrow Media Centre (2019), Natural History Museum (2019), Office of Rail and Road (2020), Statista Research Department (2014), "Westfield Stratford city welcomed" (2018).

Figure 6 presents the variation in digital activity on three social media platforms in six locations over the course of one day. The scale of digital activity at St. Pancras International Station is focused between 7am and 8pm, with a peak in the activity between 11am and 2pm. London Heathrow Airport's digital activity ebbs and flows, as might be expected from a 24-hour airport. Compared to the train station, the digital activities happen slightly later in Westfield Stratford City and mainly between 10am and 8pm, corresponding to the opening hours of the shops in the mall. The peak occurs at 3–7pm. User activity in Hyde Park and Regent's Park exhibits less variation and reaches a long-lasting plateau. The peak at the Natural History Museum and Victoria and Albert Museum occurs at 11am–3pm, after which a steady decrease occurs.

Figure 7 shows the distribution of digital activity (left) and physical activity (right) and their peaks over time. The left side of each group of graphs shows the average of the frequencies of the three social media platforms over 24 hours, including the period of the day when people are present and active in these locations (x-axis) and the peak of the intensity of digital activity (y-axis). The right-side graphs in each group are derived from Google Maps' predicted "busy times" data, which reflect activity levels at various times throughout the day. Due to the limited Google Maps data, the graphs on the right show only when people are present and active at these locations. The rhythm of physical activity in the six locations is relatively flat, with only one to three peaks during the day. In contrast, the rhythm of digital activity is full of ups and downs, often accompanied by multiple peaks. Overall, the difference in the intensity of rhythm is stark and vivid, presenting considerably different patterns. The results confirm that there is a rhythmic difference between digital and physical activities in non-places. The rhythm of digital activity is unique and unaffected by the factors that influence the rhythms of physical activities. Whether a space is a non-place or a place, it is not open 24 hours a day in the physical dimension. Therefore, physical activities only occur during concentrated periods. However, digital activity occurs 24/7 in the virtual dimension, which results in several peaks of digital activity that do not coincide with the peaks of physical activity.

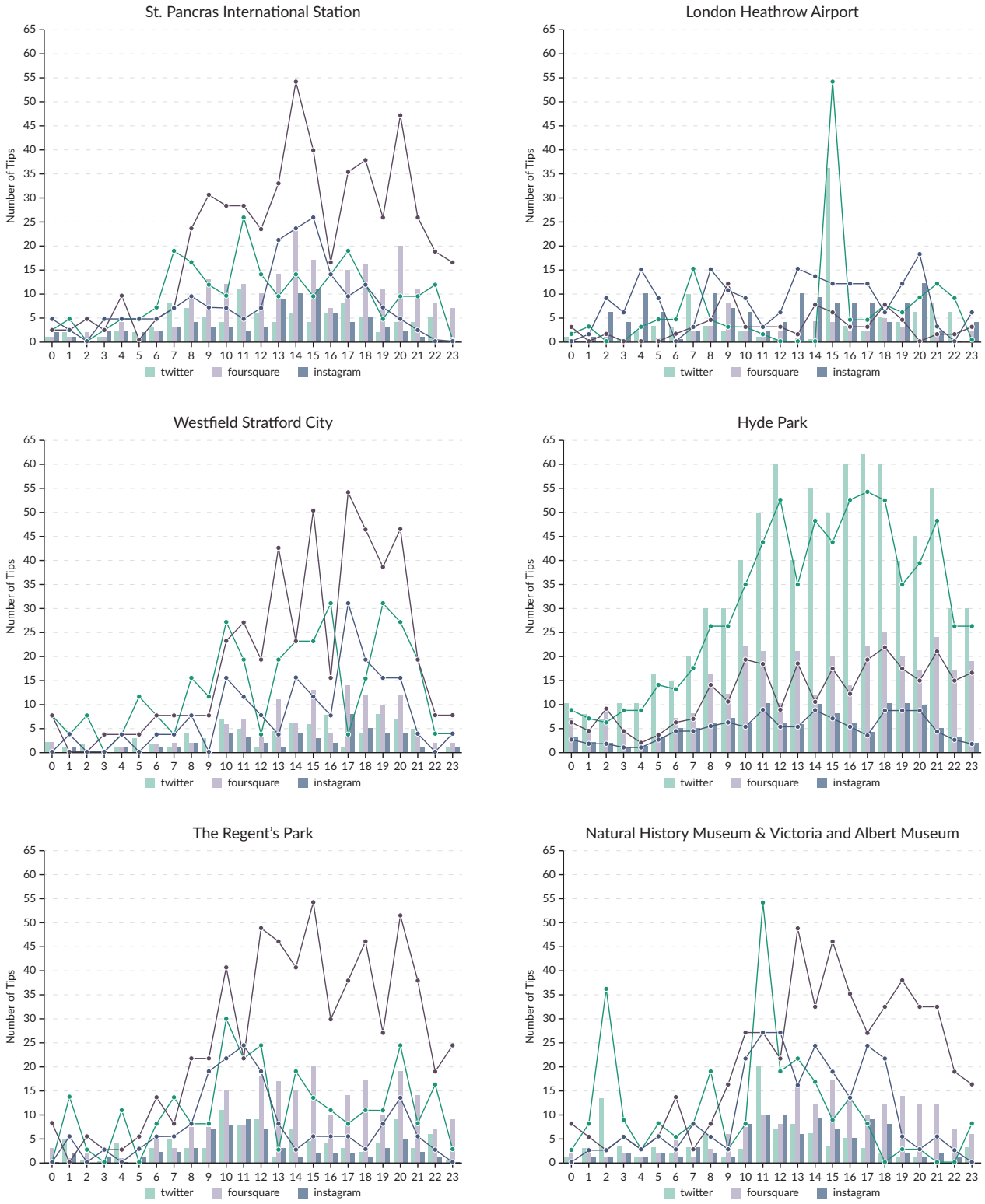


Figure 6. Variation in digital activity on three social media platforms in six locations over a single day.

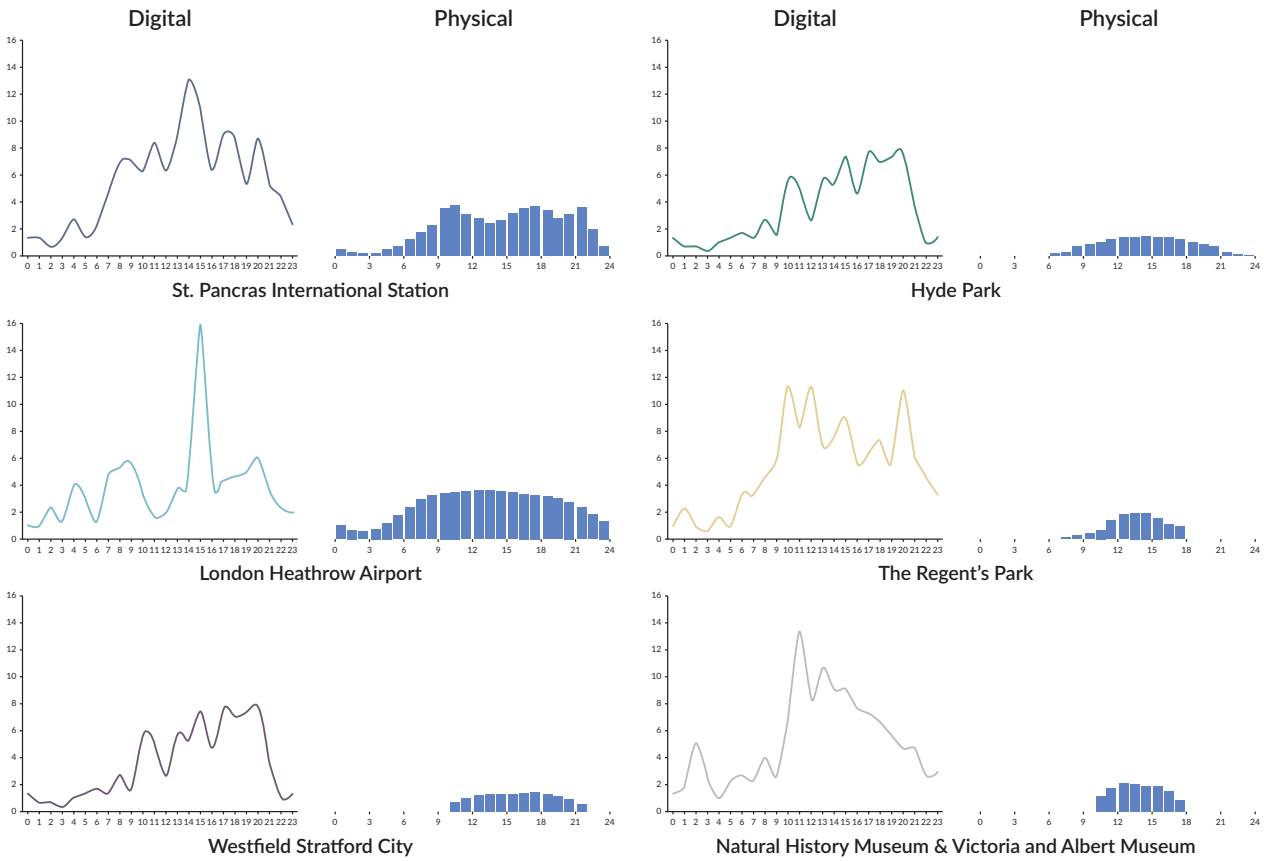


Figure 7. The distribution of digital activity and physical activity and their peaks over time, based on Google Maps' "busy times" data.

Figure 8 shows the daily digital activity patterns for four London railway stations. The vertical axis of each graph corresponds to the number of people using social media. The horizontal axis corresponds to the 24 hours of the day. Taking the top left graph as an example, the black line is the variation in the average pattern of digital activity on X at all four railway stations throughout one day (similarly, the black line in the bottom left graph is the average pattern of digital activity on Foursquare at four railway stations over a day—and therefore is the same in each row). The solid red line shows the frequency of digital activity at St. Pancras International Station and the dashed red line shows the frequency of digital activity at London Victoria Station. Areas shaded green show where a railway station's digital activity exceeds the average, while areas shaded red show where it falls below the average. These results show that on X and Foursquare, digital activity at St. Pancras International Station and London Victoria stations is above the average of the four railway stations, while the Euston and Charing Cross stations are below the average most of the time. It appears that train stations connecting to airports and containing shopping centers have more frequent digital activity, but this may be but two factors related to the functions and locations of those stations.

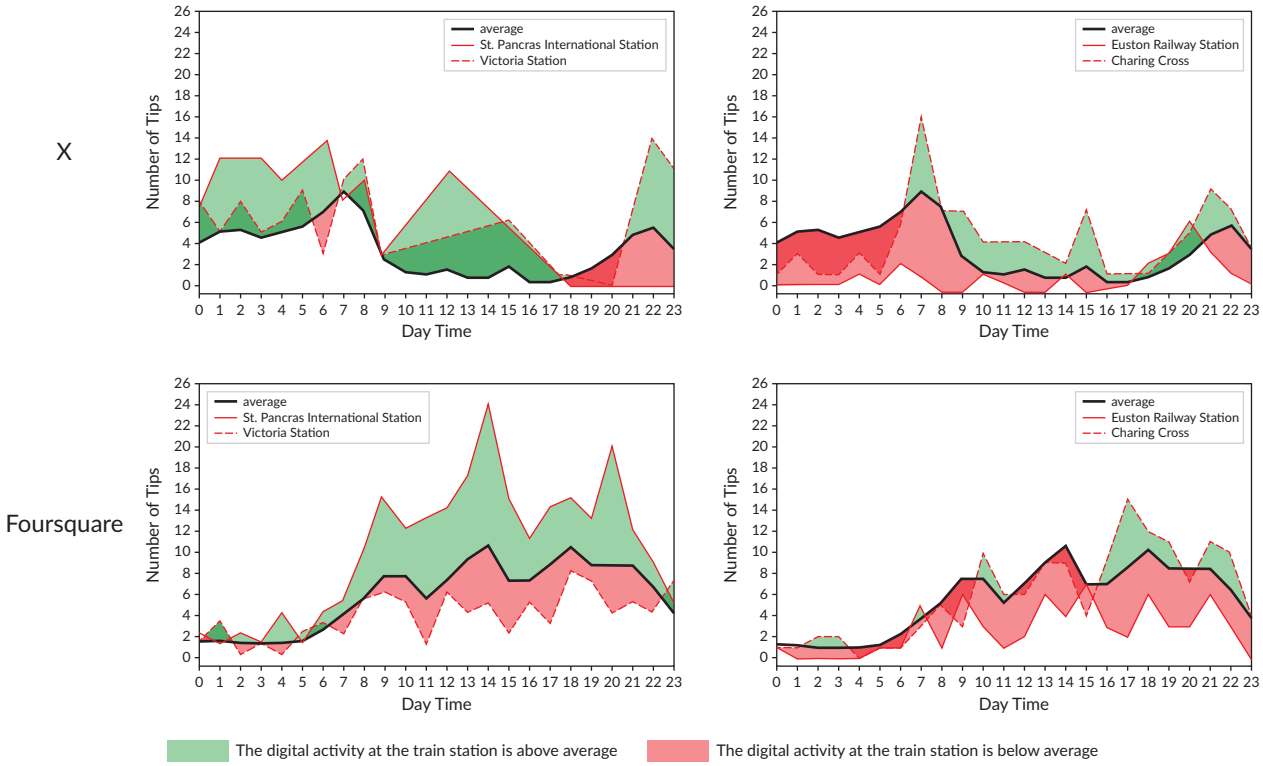


Figure 8. The daily digital activity patterns for four London railway stations.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

The above results reveal that with the development of digital media, non-places have become the multi-complex spaces of the city. In the virtual dimension, Case Study 1 indicates that virtual communication can enable transitions between non-places and places. The application of digital technology can create a temporary place (media micro-environment) in a non-place (train station, airport, etc.). The results of Case Study 1 support the hypothesis that non-places accelerate people's adoption of digital technology, and that digital technology stimulates people's desire to express and share in non-places. Therefore, the use of social media in non-places can generate countless temporary and meaningful "places" in a "non-place" that may lack emotional, historical, or cultural connections. In this situation, digital content and information are overlayed onto the physical world. Unlike Case Study 1, Case Study 2 discusses whether the application of digital technology can create a temporary sense of place within non-places by improving users' emotional attitudes towards non-places in the physical dimension. The results of Case Study 2 suggest that digital activities are more frequent in railway stations that have more infrastructure that generates social interaction. For instance, many tourists will take a picture of themselves on the Harry Potter platform at King's Cross Station and post it on social media. This station has always been a "place" for Harry Potter fans. However, King's Cross Station may be just an ordinary railway station for a commuter, notwithstanding the station's age, architecture, and history.

On this basis, we emphasize that people's emotional attitudes towards non-places could transform them into meaningful places within the urban environment. People's motivations for coming to non-places affect their emotional attitudes towards non-places. Someone may feel great after consuming a meal at a restaurant at

St. Pancras Station, so they may take a photo and post it online. This behavior, in turn, may result in others, who see the social content, to visit the railway station with the intention of checking out the restaurant, rather than seeking out an alternative at a different location. Visitors may use photography in a celebratory and memory-inducing way to maintain their relationship with the culture of this non-place. So-called "significant locations" are photographed or commented on, allowing the non-place to be imbued with a new relationship. Photographs and social comments uploaded by visitors are proof of people having been actually present on-site in order to capture the occasions and transform them into a digital story. In most cases, non-places are seen as waiting areas or passing spaces where people simply pass by or stop for a short time. However, the infrastructure within the non-place (e.g., shopping malls, restaurants, and cafes in railway stations) allows people to treat the non-place as a destination, changing the motivation for people to visit it and spend time there. Social media allows people to share their experiences and stories in this space, giving the non-place a new identity (not a transport hub but a place full of memories) and turning it into a temporary "place."

We have explored placemaking practices occurring in non-places as well as users' self-generated spatio-temporal perceptions, by examining distinctive temporal narratives in digital spaces. The two case studies show that transitional spaces may influence smartphone usage and social media engagement, and the use of digital platforms can, in turn, affect the rate of temporal flow in urban public spaces. In addition, the daily rhythms of urban public spaces are influenced by a combination of digital and physical activity rhythms. Non-place rhythms are more susceptible to the frequency and duration of mobile device use in digital spaces. The study corroborates Stylianou-Lambert's (2012) view that diverse media technologies are tools for constructing identities and relations. However, in the two case studies, digital technology was found not to endow non-places with identical, relational, and historical characteristics. Social media simply facilitates the spread of news by sharing photos and comments, thus accelerating the transformation between non-place and place. Instead, people's perceptions and attitudes toward the non-place give it a new identity or at least a relation.

This study has involved only two cases in a single city. Caution must therefore be exercised in generalizing the conclusions and lessons. But there are some critical and methodological issues that arise from the work. First, we acknowledge that this study has been based on one city at one moment in time. Although it has attempted to provide an initial research study about user-generated space in urban settings through the lens of non-space, we are aware that similar studies in other locations may generate different findings. The urban pattern, the configuration of buildings, services, and open spaces, the impact of policies and regulatory decisions, and the accessibility of places for different purposes and their use digitally and non-digitally by different societal groups, may all affect how places are and how they are perceived.

Secondly, the range of real-time geolocation data collected using the streaming API of social software needs to be sufficiently granular. Social media data streams provide data based on a certain range of an area from a single point, but sites are often more rectangular or irregularly shaped. As a result, the final measured area may not accurately represent the selected location. For example, the number of Foursquare postings continues to rise even after the museums close since some users visit the bars and restaurants on streets adjacent to the museum. The APIs used can only control geolocation, but the timeframe for collection is 24 hours a day. Therefore, it is expected that during the time the site is closed, if someone inside that geolocation is still using social software, it will still be collected. This results in the number of geo-targeted contributions within the

case study regions collected by this study being slightly larger than the actual number within the predefined period. However, considering that the coverage error of the final measured area is only within 1%, the error is acceptable. For example, Hyde Park is an irregular shape of 142 hectares. The area collected by the study is a circle with a radius of 0.42 miles which covers an area of 143.53 hectares.

In addition, GPS accuracy in personal devices is limited, and indoor GPS data is even less precise, meaning that social media platforms may only generate approximate locations. Moreover, different social media data contain different biases. On X, bias is associated with uncertainty about both location and semantic information, as X users usually refer to past or future events rather than reporting an ongoing situation (Steiger et al., 2015). Conversely, Foursquare is primarily used for sharing real-time geolocation information and "check-ins." However, check-in data contains both place and age group biases (Sun et al., 2016). For instance, users check in more frequently at commercial locations, and check-ins are predominantly made by younger demographics.

These biases affect the results of this study in two key ways: (a) In Case Study 1, the number of geo-targeted contributions within Westfield Stratford City will be slightly larger than the actual number. (b) The age distribution of active users also skews the dataset. According to 2024 and 2025 user statistics, the 25–34 age group has the highest penetration on both X and Foursquare, while individuals aged 64+ in the UK do not use Foursquare at all (Metev, 2024, para. 3; Woodward, 2025, para. 2). Similarly, Instagram's global active user base is predominantly between the ages of 18–34 (Dixon, 2024, para. 1). As a result, the statistical findings of this study are more representative of younger demographics (18–34 years old), which are the primary target audiences of X, Foursquare, and Instagram. However, it is important to acknowledge that these regular social media contributors do not fully represent the broader population.

Finally, the specific setting of the mobile device from which a user accesses social media platforms can also affect the accuracy of the statistics. For instance, not all users have a data plan with their mobile operator. Some visitors to the city may prefer to post on social media after returning to their accommodation when they may have access to a free Wi-Fi network. In these cases, they may still travel with their smartphone and use it in non-places, but we are unable to capture these digital activities. Obviously, the distribution of Wi-Fi networks in the city influences the geographical dimension of the social media analysis, as massive contributions may occur in areas with more accessible and reliable or even free Wi-Fi networks. Selecting London as the case city for research has somewhat reduced this limitation. As mentioned earlier, London is the most online-obsessed area in the UK. All the selected research locations, even Hyde Park, are popular places and possess free Wi-Fi. However, it is crucial to acknowledge the existence of data poverty and lack of access to digital infrastructure in certain regions. Many areas, especially in developing, suburban, or rural areas, face significant barriers to collecting and using high-quality data due to insufficient infrastructure, inadequate or unaffordable digital connectivity, and limited technological resources. These issues hinder the adoption of data-driven strategies and exacerbate inequalities in urban development. Future research should refine the proposed framework and test its applicability in different urban contexts. In particular, the development of cost-effective data collection methods and the promotion of international cooperation could mitigate these gaps and ensure more inclusive urban development.

Overall, the use of digital technology in public spaces in the city is increasingly blurring the boundaries between what might be thought of as a place and a transient non-place. As some of these transient places become

destinations in themselves, they increasingly take on greater uses and have a greater impact on those visiting or using those spaces. Given the proliferation of digital media, the accessibility of personal technology, and the widespread presence of physical media screens, it is not surprising that the public will start to imbue non-places with a sense of meaning and relevance and, in turn, memory, which in some cases may be highly personalized. The relevant questions for the future are not only how we may research, capture, and assess these changes to the way we navigate and use the city, but also whether digitally personalizing places is an activity restricted to certain age groups, genders, and ethnicities. This, in turn, may privilege access to and use of urban places for some people, but certainly not all.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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About the Authors

Weijue Wang is a PhD candidate at UCL's Bartlett Centre for Advanced Spatial Analysis, researching urban public space usage through location-based social media data. She holds a bachelor's degree in architecture (University of Liverpool, 2019) and a master's degree from Bartlett School of Architecture (UCL, 2020). Previously, she worked as a research assistant at the Beijing Institute of Architectural Design (2021–2022), focusing on spatial justice. Her work explores the intersection of virtual and physical spaces in shaping urban public spaces.

Mark Tewdwr-Jones is professor of cities and regions at the Centre for Advanced Spatial Analysis, Bartlett School, UCL. With degrees in urban planning, political science, and film, his expertise covers urban and regional planning, planning engagement, digital planning, and urban futures. Over the last 30 years, he has produced 20 books, and over 200 peer-reviewed articles and book chapters. He has been a visiting professor at Berkeley, Nijmegen, Hong Kong, Western Sydney, New South Wales, Guadalajara, Pretoria, Dublin, and Malta.

Valerio Signorelli is an architect by training and a lecturer in connected environments at University College London. His research centers on the intersection between digital and physical urban environments, with a focus on their temporal, spatial, and sensory aspects. His work explores the role of interfaces, both in practical and theoretical contexts, as tools to describe, communicate, and better understand our living places.

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Space-Shaping Through Rhythmic Interventions for Teaching and Learning: Pedagogical Perspectives

Robin A. Chang [1] and Pinar Sefkatli [2]

[1] Chair of Planning Theory and Urban Development, RWTH Aachen University, Germany
[2] Department of Human Geography, Planning and International Development, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Correspondence: Robin A. Chang (chang@pt.rwth-aachen.de)

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Abstract

We explore the challenges and opportunities relevant to rhythmanalytical approaches in teaching and learning through two socio-spatial and design-oriented courses with graduate and undergraduate students. Through the courses we investigate how different understandings and analyses of *rhythms-through-space* in comparison to *rhythms-in-space* generate different patterns of interventions. We also share prospects for preparing and structuring future teaching and learning that integrate time-sensitivity through constructively aligned activities supporting the development of different forms of knowledge. This work supports recent calls for greater attention to how temporality and particularly rhythms could be better understood, observed, framed, and conveyed. In the foreground is the need to improve how we guide students' research through design-oriented learning experiences. For this we provide frameworks bringing together concepts from rhythmanalysis and constructive alignment. We draw on comparative and case study experiences from 2022 and the winter of 2023/2024 involving interdisciplinary bachelor-level and master-level courses, respectively. Our cases wrangle with the relationships between socio-spatial and temporal scales that steer or constrain rhythmic patterns expressed in students' analyses and design interventions. From an instructional standpoint, this contribution poses the question: Which conceptual structures in design-oriented pedagogy could support rhythmanalytical approaches and capacities for future spatial planners and designers? Our final reflections discuss opportunities for improvement and evaluate how future planning pedagogy research and work could build on our experiences.

Keywords

constructive alignment; course design; pedagogy; rhythmanalysis; spatial planning and design

1. Introduction

Time-sensitive and specifically rhythmic approaches to exploring and analysing space are increasingly of interest in urban planning and design (Marušić & Marušić, 2024). In parallel, time-sensitivity is increasingly pronounced in practice and policymaking, too. We see evidence of this vis à vis discourses relating to the 15-minute city, which leverages a temporal motto to idealise proximity-based accessibility (Mouratidis, 2024). We also see this rise in rhythm-based approaches that some link with territorial intensities and activities (Drevon et al., 2024), or concerns with possibly reckless focus on efficiency through increased pace in planning (Dobson & Parker, 2024). Even in the context of well-being and sustainability-minded efforts, governments are being lobbied for time policies honouring the right to time or improved collective organisation of time (Time Use Initiative, 2024). These recent and practical initiatives follow historical engagement with policies for managing rhythms of daily life, such as local "time offices" from the 1990s highlighted by Drevon et al. in their Gwiazdinski-inspired work (2024, p. 23). A last frontier at which work has yet to grapple with time-sensitive and particularly rhythmic foci is within the educational realm. Our contribution takes up this concern to improve treatments of rhythms through teaching and learning by responding to the question: Which conceptual structures in design-oriented pedagogy could support rhythmanalytical approaches and capacities for future spatial planners and designers? The following sections set a context for, introduce, summarise, discuss, and reflect on the integration of rhythmanalysis in teaching and learning through design studio courses contributing to spatial planning education and research.

In delving into current pedagogical work involving design-oriented projects for spatial planning, little language on time-sensitive or rhythmic concerns exists. This is no wonder, as current debates integrating rhythmic approaches into design formats and practices are still developing. These currently work on (a) advancing time-sensitive concepts as dimensions worthy of equal consideration alongside spatial or place-based concepts (Marušić & Marušić, 2024) and (b) the need to innovate disciplines methodologically (Wunderlich, 2024). Yet, despite growth in attention to design-oriented thinking in spatial planning and its pedagogy, an explicit and finer-grained consideration of rhythm is still absent. We address this blindspot by beginning with a discussion on design-oriented planning scholarship and pedagogy to contextualise possibilities for rhythmanalysis. Turning to the work by Cozzolino et al. (2020) that aims to clarify growth and interest in design-oriented studies, we can follow a five-fold increase of urban design studies and the focus on *change over time* and *future-orientation* for design-oriented practice and scholarship. This confirms observations from others (Roberts & Nelson, 2024) but expresses minimal time-sensitivity (i.e., rhythm, tempo, lifecycle, etc.) despite the growth in attention over the last two decades. This deficit in time-sensitive thinking is likely attributed to how planning and design approaches commonly privilege spatial concepts (Chang, 2023a; Wunderlich, 2014).

Perceiving this lack of development, Wunderlich's (2024) emphatic rejoinder argues for the sensibility of evolving our thinking and practice by integrating time-sensitive dimensions into how we analyse, design, and deliver urban spaces through a new and rhythmically centred form of temporal urban design. In a similar fashion, we believe opportunities for time-sensitive and rhythmic foci could be created through planning pedagogy. This could enhance the slow move away from relying on pre-determined or purely physical planning aims to outfit future practitioners with additional creative competencies in the face of the growing complexity observed by Frank and Da Rosa Pires (2021), amongst others (Lukovich, 2017). This re-orientation could also seek out and evaluate the critical but creative de-layering and re-layering exercises

for students that some already experience by integrating rhythmanalysis into design-oriented approaches and methods (Radović, 2004). But first, we introduce rhythmanalysis before examining how pedagogy research in spatial planning and design has yet to accept or integrate time-sensitive thinking.

2. The Rhythmanalytical Point of Departure

When Lefebvre, along with his wife Catherine Régulier, developed rhythmanalysis in their publication *Le projet rythmanalytique* or *The Rhythmanalytical Project*, prevailing and time-sensitive concerns of their epoch put forward by Bergson concentrated on measures of duration or *durée*; rhythmanalysis, in contrast, illuminated the lived and incalculable experiences of time inspired by the flows and pluralities of rhythms in everyday life (Lefebvre & Régulier, 1985; see also Lefebvre, 1992/2013). The legacy philosophy and analytical theory acknowledges and accentuates *rhythms* that unfold through the temporal qualities of unintentional as well as coordinating and programming practices or relationships in space (Chang, 2023a). We are also encouraged by Lefebvre and others to draw on corporal senses and observations to learn the rhythms of the body before developing the capacity to "listen to the world" without disrupting rhythms or dislocating them in time (Lefebvre, 1992/2013, p. 29). Rhythmanalysis thus motivates us to engagements with time and its repeating patterns that may be constrained by or succumb to capitalist production of space (Lefebvre, 1992/2013). Lefebvre and Régulier possibly built their thinking upon the work of Lúcio Alberto Pinheiro dos Santos and Gaston Bachelard (Lyon, 2018). Different from other work, their thinking is gaining appeal from readers who are curious about alternative and rhythmic ways of framing time that are manifold and associated with but not the same as movement (Lefebvre & Régulier, 1985; Lefebvre, 1992/2013). To this end, rhythm is both qualitative and quantitative. It is a concept and analytical tool for settings where place, time, and energy interact (Lefebvre, 1992/2013). By appreciating rhythm as a vital concept in how space is experienced and conceived, rhythmanalysis enables us to articulate the many co-existing and simultaneous rhythms (polyrhythm) that may be further delineated into rhythmic patterns of combination (eurythmia), attuned unison (isorhythmia), or even discordance (arrhythmia; Lefebvre, 1992/2013; Lyon, 2022). The value of this is not only felt in spatial and urban planning; the evidence of this was clearly heightened during the Covid-19 pandemic after public health and social distancing policies drastically changed behaviours in public and private spaces (Lyon, 2022). Beyond this, we see proof of expanding appreciation via the take up of rhythmanalysis in fields such as urban sociology, urban studies, and geography, as well as specific fields such as mobility studies and urban design (Chang, 2023b; Edensor, 2010; Lyon, 2022; Wunderlich, 2024), or even as a methodological field of its own (Chen, 2016).

With regards to spatial planning and design pedagogy, no comparable precedent exists up to date. A limited number of studies explore classroom settings through rhythmanalysis in education research. These studies analyse physical teaching and learning spaces as potential sites for improvement. For example, Andersson and Risberg (2019) consider how physical education learning environments could provide better integrative spatial and temporal experiences by exploring the rhythmic and in-path interactions between teachers and students. Similarly, Davies (2023) uses rhythmanalysis to demonstrate the lack of intercultural capability characterised by the fluid, symbolic, and rejected spaces conceived and communicated by geography students during the simple act of switching classrooms. Unlike these examples that leverage rhythmanalysis *in* spaces of teaching and learning addressing social subjects of study, our approach reformulates rhythmanalysis *for* teaching and learning about socio-spatial concerns in planning and design pedagogy. The intent is to inform methodology through the development of new educational frameworks that

influence future spatial planners' and designers' work. It also supports design-informed ways of understanding temporal and spatial concerns (Wunderlich, 2024), while enhancing urban policies and programmes serving communities with social science supported methods (Nevejan & Sefkatli, 2020). In the next section, we build upon rhythmanalysis to introduce spatially relevant concepts that will be linked to the pedagogical framework of constructive alignment. The latter refers to the outcomes-based and pedagogical approach developed by Biggs et al. (2022) that strives to enable students to perform final learning objectives by ensuring that programme or unit teaching/learning activities and final assessment tasks are aligned to the activities stated in the intended learning outcomes. This pedagogical framework is a standard of pedagogical practice in fields including planning and design (Ma & Rizzo, 2024; Moosavi & Bush, 2024; Qu et al., 2020); it will be detailed in Section 2.2.

2.1. Rhythms and Space: Finding Patterns of Flows and Fixity

A key characteristic of rhythm is that it expresses continuous fluctuation through repetition marking socio-spatial regularities that we may discover, observe, and analyse (Lefebvre, 1992/2013). Recall the concepts of polyrhythmia, eurhythmia (and isorhythmia), as well as arrhythmia introduced by the work of Lefebvre and Régulier. A socio-spatial re-framing of this could differentiate between (a) *rhythms-through-space*—flows of repetitive patterns with trajectories from one place to another—and (b) *rhythms-in-space*—repetitive patterns that stick to sites over a timeframe. The first pattern draws on Hägerstrandian time geographic considerations of movement constraints (see Ellegård, 2018). This rhythmic pattern helps us to contrast between polyrhythmic and neighbouring states or forces that induce eurhythmia or arrhythmia. This type of rhythm along "space-time paths" reflects how socio-spatial accessibility might be limited, directed, or coupled with other rhythms (Drevon et al., 2024, p. 22). An example of this could be the momentum (eurhythmia) or disruptive jams (arrhythmia) carried by commuter flows at specific hours of working days. The second pattern focuses on the polyrhythmic entanglements that may find ways to layer and work together (eurhythmia) or in some cases be at odds with each other (arrhythmia). Exemplifying this could be tolerated but temporary uses that synchronise individual rhythmic behaviours into collective routines for undefined periods of time or co-locate in shared spaces (Chang & Gerrits, 2022). Repeating patterns can be analytically studied by following the behaviours and activities contained or coaxed by spatial affordances; these patterns constantly change, unlike the fixed nature of relevant spatial or physical forms or amenities (cf. Marušić & Marušić, 2024). Moreover, these rhythmic patterns are many and diverse; they reflect a vast spectrum of human and non-human actors that interact in, or with space (Sefkatli, 2022). Equally diverse are the perspectives required to make sense of, relate and order, or monitor the rhythmic patterns. To this end, multi- or interdisciplinarity is invaluable in contexts involving the study of rhythms (Wang et al., 2020; Wunderlich, 2024). Finally, and comparable to spatial scales, rhythm fluctuations occur and embed themselves at a range of temporal scales (Abram, 2014). However, the pursuit of relating rhythm to design-oriented endeavours is not without its challenges. The barriers we encounter are deeply rooted in the disciplinary materials and logic that are inherited, reproduced, and ultimately shaped by space- and place-dependent experiences and traditions (Carmona, 2014, p. 12; see also Wunderlich, 2014). If we review the suite of instruments and representations of change over time through maps, plans, or diagrams, it becomes clear how formalistic and traditional means of space-shaping analytics and aesthetics are chiefly static and not effective in communicating dynamic patterns.

2.2. Building Capacity for Time-Sensitivity Through Functioning Knowledge

A pedagogical project supporting rhythmanalysis must first enable teaching and learning to discover new time-sensitive concepts and frameworks both in and outside of the classroom. But a general capacity for this must be built up as even current research and practice experiences show a need for "methodological innovation" to better support rhythmically attuned forms of analyses and design (Wunderlich, 2014, p. 65). In pedagogical terms, educators' and students' knowledge about time-sensitive concepts and how these may be applied must develop simultaneously. For this, it is helpful to recognise how rhythmanalysis entails both *declarative* knowledge embodied in time-sensitive concepts and *functioning* knowledge enacted in the use or interpretation of these concepts in the real world through empirical and analytical tasks. In the context of constructive alignment, declarative knowledge is "knowledge about things" and is defined by content knowledge whereas functioning knowledge "informs action" or is applied knowledge (Biggs et al., 2022, p. 78). This differentiation is pivotal when learning about and engaging with concepts such as rhythmanalysis in a novel manner because it is best supported through an inquiry-based approach to learning, which is often brought to bear with both forms of knowledge developing simultaneously (Biggs et al., 2022). Unlike pedagogical formats such as lectures or seminars that are effective ways for transmitting declarative knowledge, this approach thrives in design-oriented pedagogical environments supporting functioning knowledge or formats that are conducive to process- rather than product-oriented experiences (Pojani et al., 2023). And, because teaching and learning rhythmanalysis cannot rely on established pedagogical conventions (which may be insular and insufficient), different perspectives and methods may need to be introduced or explored. This then emphasizes the need for "learning environment(s) for interdisciplinary negotiation and cross-pollination" that, according to Moosavi and Bush, encourage constructivist learning and innovative pedagogy (2024, p. 577).

As already hinted, these requirements complement constructively aligned pedagogy since "constructively aligned teaching is not a closed loop," rather it allows for "extended abstract" as well as "open-ended" outcomes and does not emphasize what is pre-determined (Biggs et al., 2022, p. 96). This openness invites external or interdisciplinary perspectives to construct new knowledge together. What is essential to this teaching and learning approach is the intrinsic alignment of (a) what is to be learned (intended learning outcomes), (b) how this is to be learned (teaching and learning activities), and (c) the standard of the learning (assessment tasks). Verb-oriented formulation of intended learning outcomes, teaching and learning activities, and assessment tasks underpin this alignment and imply constructivist frameworks of learning (Biggs et al., 2022). Here again, there is compatibility with teaching and learning that seeks to embrace time-sensitive concepts by building up both declarative and functioning knowledge through socio-spatial analysis and design. In recent efforts to update the pedagogical approach and its concepts, Biggs et al. (2022) also explain that the development of functioning knowledge alongside or beyond declarative knowledge is most relevant for the education and capacity building of those who eventually work in professional contexts; this includes spatial planners and designers or architects. Through the next sections we will demonstrate and break down our experiences of integrating rhythmanalysis and constructive alignment into teaching and learning processes.

3. Pedagogical Framework and Methodology

This contribution draws on two comparative and pedagogical case studies to inform and reflect on the conceptual structures needed to incorporate rhythmanalysis into teaching and learning. Both case studies challenged students to improve their understanding of how rhythms might characterise socio-spatial qualities as well as the potential and generative effects of these rhythms through analyses and design. The first pedagogical case study follows the experiences of a project course titled "Changing Rhythms During the Pandemic in Amsterdam Zuidoost" instructed by the second co-author, while the second case study covers the experiences from a design project titled "Shaping Eu(regional) Meuse-Rhine Rhythms— Towards Tri-Regional Harmony, Integration, and Regeneration" instructed by the first co-author. In both courses, students developed empirically supported analyses and designs regarding socio-spatial rhythms. While the first case study featured rhythmic experiences following urban social life during the pandemic, the second case study included a broader range of rhythms linking socio-spatial experiences at the urban and regional levels. Both courses' formats encouraged what Ma and Rizzo (2024) highlight as iterations of exchanges that should take place throughout a course as "timely and frequent provision of knowledge-enhancing feedback is essential for both students and educators to monitor progress and understanding" (p. 6). The case studies shared teaching and learning that structured initial theoretical and substantive topics (block 1) before considering, preparing, and conducting methodological work (block 2). The details regarding participants, disciplines, structure, and constructive alignment of the courses are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Comparative breakdown of courses integrating substantive (rhythmanalysis) and pedagogical (constructive alignment) concepts.

	Changing Rhythms During the Pandemic in Amsterdam Zuidoost	Shaping Eu(regional) Meuse-Rhine Rhythms—Towards Tri-Regional Harmony, Integration, and Regeneration
Level of study	Advanced undergraduate: third-year urban sociology students (10 participants)	Graduate: third-year urban planning, architecture, and Transforming City Region students (3 participants)
Duration	February–July 2022 (5 months)	October 2023–February 2024 (5 months)
Intended learning outcomes	Identify, document, and analyse rhythms in space and time Articulate urban life with rhythmanalysis concepts during the Covid-19 pandemic from a spatio-temporal lens	Document, compare, and conceive rhythms in space Interpret how rhythmic patterns of harmony, integration, and regeneration could be mapped and represented through a spatio-temporal design concept
Teaching/learning activities	21 sessions Regular readings Weekly supervision meetings Collaborative mapping rhythms in Amsterdam Zuidoost Presentations to the local municipality and feedback session	15 sessions Regular readings Short presentations Regular group meetings, critiques, and coaching Mid-term and final design reviews Individually formative reflections through surveys Sharing of GIS layers used for analysing the cross-border Euregio region

Table 1. (Cont.) Comparative breakdown of courses integrating substantive (rhythmanalysis) and pedagogical (constructive alignment) concepts.

	Changing Rhythms During the Pandemic in Amsterdam Zuidoost	Shaping Eu(regional) Meuse-Rhine Rhythms—Towards Tri-Regional Harmony, Integration, and Regeneration
Digital support tools	Material pooling via Canvas, Google Docs, and Google Maps	Material pooling via Moodle and Miro Mapping with QGIS
Assessment tasks/deliverables	Active participation in all group meetings Individual mid-term assessments of progress (i.e., "Go/No-Go meetings") Mid-term and final presentations Final written thesis (6,000–10,000 words)	Active participation in site visits Active participation in group and peer feedback Teaching and learning survey during weeks 7 and 11 of the course Final poster designs Oral presentations

3.1. Teaching and Learning Activities

Students were provided basic readings and presentations about rhythmanalysis as foundational sources of declarative knowledge. They were also provided methodological support (i.e., materials and orientation for qualitative data collection methods). A key motivation for this was to help build references for a functioning knowledge base to which students could refer for individual work as they iteratively tried new ways to apply their knowledge about rhythms. This was helpful for students as they developed their capacities for identifying, relating, ordering, interpreting, and visually representing the rhythms that they found. With regards to illustrative representations, both spatial and aspatial dimensions were visualised. Since rhythms may seem extremely abstract, finding ways to communicate how they appeared or changed was crucial for both the process of applying the declarative knowledge and influencing or inspiring how they could articulate and design their results.

3.1.1. Visually Representing Rhythms and Space

An effective technique often used in design-oriented courses, including the courses profiled here, is mapping observed uses and activities at multiple points within timeframes; this helps locate behaviours in space and relate them to temporal qualities of duration, frequency, or intensity of phenomena (Marušić & Marušić, 2024; Wunderlich, 2014, 2024). The results from the teaching and learning activities in the form of graphics and maps were the subject of regular discussions on how different spatial features and societal conventions temporally structure rhythms. All projects drew on preceding learning activities that generated data from interviews, participant observations, and qualitative or GIS-informed mapping. For instance, natural features such as topographies or rivers embody unique and tempering elements for speeds of movement or cycles of flow volumes depending on seasonal changes in climate. This was validated by spatial data and interview statements. The final analyses and representations engendering *rhythms-through-space* might show how seasonal constraints limit the periods of activities or express distinct *rhythms-in-space*, such as pauses or changes to recreational activities as illustrated in Figure 1. The same applies to socio-spatial localities such as churches, shopping and cultural centres, or community centres with their own conventions, such as Sunday services, mealtime-based gatherings or general operation schedules and activities as visualised in Figure 2.

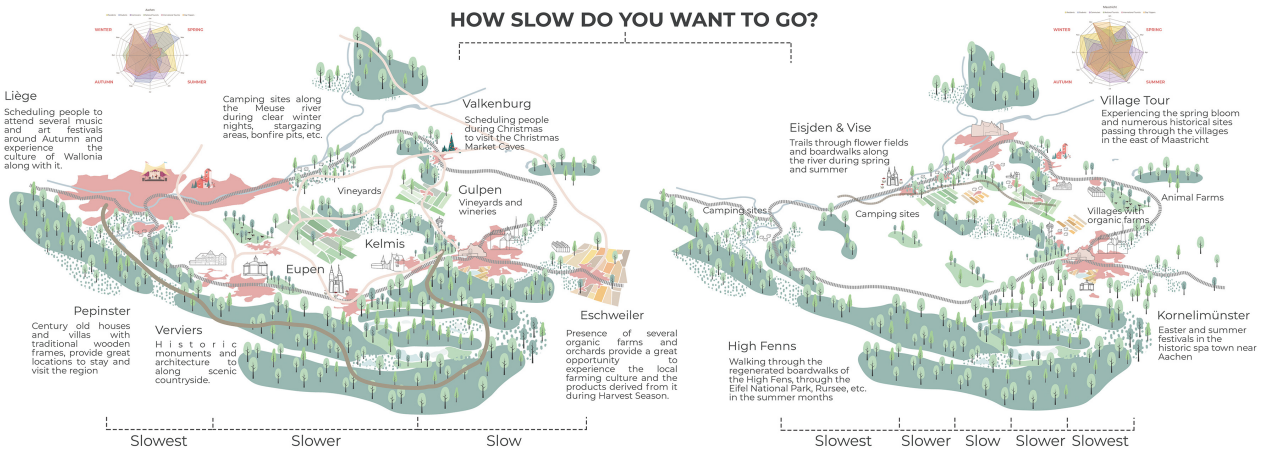

Figure 1. Spatial design-oriented intervention proposing alternative and slow tourism pathways within the Euregio region. Graphics created by Shristi Thakuria during their master studies at RWTH Aachen University (2024).

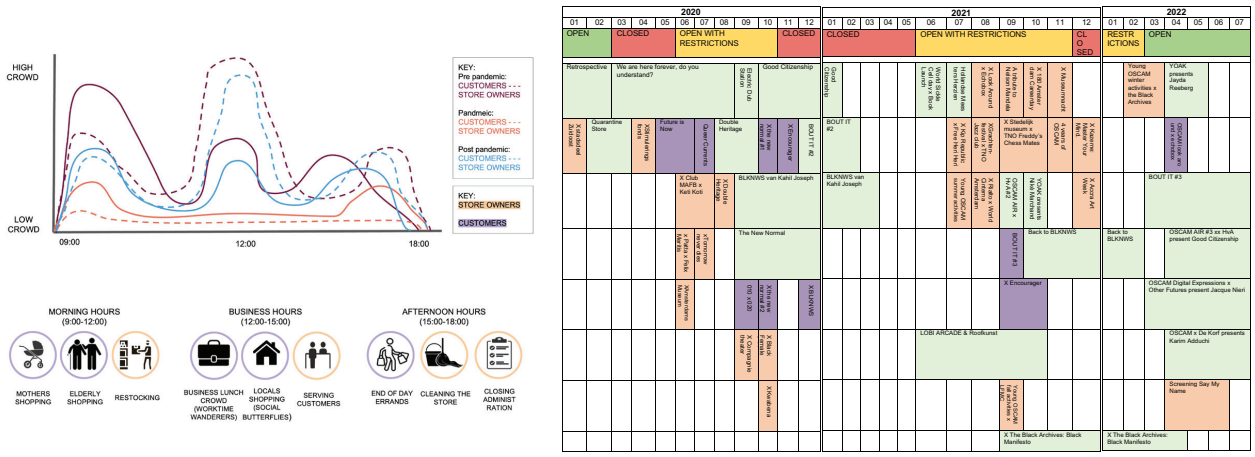

Figure 2. Graphic visualisations of daily rhythms of the Shopperhal shopping centre (on the left) and yearly rhythms of the local contemporary art centre (on the right); created by Anke Krogh and Claire van den Broek (in order) during the 3rd year of their bachelor studies at the University of Amsterdam (2022).

3.1.2. Resource Sharing

Both courses encouraged students to share interim and final content, along with resources, such as literature or GIS layers through online learning management systems (e.g., Canvas and Moodle) as well as applications (e.g., Google products and Miro). Sharing time together, as demonstrated in Figure 3, through iterative discussions during weekly meetings was crucial to helping students in both cases to discover or learn additional methodological insights from their peers. This helped students work through their independent processes of formulating their unique research questions. Moreover, students accessed a broader range of knowledge sources including design and scientific research projects, the instructors' work, or experiments peers conducted on their own. This also improved students' sense of confidence in their abilities to capture and represent rhythms.

Figure 3. Students from case study 2 listen to and discuss a presentation from second co-author in preparation for their own work exploring rhythms in the Euregio context.

3.1.3. Fieldwork

To identify and document rhythms, students in both case studies used ethnographic methods in the field such as site and participant observations along with interviews. The students from case study 1 were introduced to different neighbourhood contexts and community centres in the city borough of Amsterdam Zuidoost. Similarly, students in case study 2 were also presented with the urban centres of Aachen (DE), Maastricht (NL), and Liège (BE) as recommended foci for fieldwork. With regards to local experts, the second co-author facilitated a few points of contact, while the first co-author provided recommendations but did not facilitate contacts for students. Some participants of the first case study also volunteered with the initiatives involved in their subject of study to research topic activities.

The projects that developed a *rhythms-in-space* approach focused on specific and stationary urban places, diving into their rhythmic structures, how they changed during a period (i.e., the pandemic or a calendar year), and the implications of such changes in the participants of these spaces and the areas where they are located. These projects mainly made use of ethnographic methods, where they conducted participatory observations and strengthened their data through informal conversations or semi-structured interviews. The projects that developed a *rhythms-through-space* approach focused on tracing diverse human and non-human subjects of study moving between multiple locations. Similarly, these projects made use of ethnographic methods including participatory observations but supplemented their empirical work with other sources of data such as precipitation statistics or GIS map overlays.

3.2. Assessment Tasks

The means for evaluating the quality of students' learning relied primarily on final and conventional deliverables in the form of theses or posters as dictated by their course and module regulations or manuals. Comparable to the experiences of Ma and Rizzo (2024), however, other formative means of assessment

were included. These focused on active participation in facilitated discussions along with critique and coaching sessions.

4. Analysis and Results

In both case studies, students shared that they missed the tools or terminology for time-sensitive concepts such as rhythms in conventional curriculums. As instructors, we also found few references for orientation and thus incrementally adapted teaching content and activities, while coming to value the advantages of iterative and interactive exchanges as ways to support the integration of rhythmanalysis into the courses.

4.1. Rhythmanalytical Forms of Knowledge

Reflecting on experiences of designing and delivering courses that integrate time-sensitive concepts, a key result related to thinking beyond declarative knowledge during the early phases of teaching and learning activities. Both courses included initial phases with teaching and learning activities as well as materials that helped students deepen their familiarity with how rhythms are structured through conventions such as clocks and calendars that mark or measure time at different scales. The effectiveness of how students began to think critically about the complexities of how or which rhythms locate in space surfaced through the discussions in groups or with the instructors. Declarative knowledge in relation to daily, weekly, monthly, seasonal, and annual time scales or frames were easy starting points for students to identify, classify, and relate rhythms.

Through the fieldwork, students confronted knowledge in action but also realised their own learning activities either required changes or were constrained by the parameters of the course. By thinking through and communicating these limitations, students demonstrated functioning knowledge in the form of new methods or experiments to consider or employ as a part of their own learning activities. For example, some course participants who researched university and high school students mentioned that the rhythm perspective enabled them to empathise with the paused and disrupted experiences of their informants throughout the pandemic. Their take-up of this knowledge would have been limited, had their learning activities been tied to readings and lectures. On the other hand, relying mainly on interviews made the research trajectory more challenging since it required them to build a large sample kit. In contrast, one student following rhythms of river changes through space proclaimed a greater appreciation of fluvial changes but lamented that the four-month semester and course duration did not enable them to follow the natural features over an adequate length of time. Here the students learned first-hand about rhythms in natural spaces but also the shortcomings of broader structures delineating teaching and learning activities. They then adapted their own data collection to include statistical data for precipitation to patch their knowledge gap.

Similarly, one student who followed the elderly at a community centre began with participant observation, which then generated spontaneous and informal encounters. These evolved into unplanned informants and unstructured interviews. Here again the student learned that access to rhythms was not limited to passive methods, but that active methods of collecting information could snowball from initial fieldwork and introduce multiple sources of knowledge. This realisation required more effort but eventually generated more satisfaction for the student. Likewise, students also learned that sources such as GIS layers are limited in how they can enable the visual representation of time. Students who did not intend to step out of

classroom confines quickly learned that they could not rely on the established but static spatial resources to identify rhythms in space. Not only did these sources show a partial snapshot of socio-spatial activities but they demanded students reconcile themselves with fieldwork or ethnographic activities at seasonally uncomfortable or inconvenient times of the year: It would be too cold outside or there would be no informants as it was too cold outside. Developing functioning knowledge through fieldwork was not an option for all students, but instead the only means for accessing the deeper knowledge they required for rhythmanalysis. Various dimensions of knowledge relating to rhythms were taken up through an array of learning activities. These are listed in Table 2.

Table 2. Rhythmanalytical breakdown of knowledge and learning activities.

	Rhythms-in-space	Rhythms-through-space
Course focus and context	Individual and community activity patterns at sites in Amsterdam	Human and environmental activity patterns within the Euregio Meuse-Rhine region
Points of entry How or where did students first identify rhythms?	High school Student accommodations Community centre Food bank Local church Sports club Local art museum or cultural centres Shopping centre	Markets Food producers, suppliers, and retailers Tourists Precipitation, climate, or ecological elements
Rhythmanalytical frames How did students temporally bracket or delimit the rhythms they analysed?	Parts of: Phases of the day (morning, afternoon, evening) Daily rhythms Weekly rhythms (differences between weekdays and weekends) Monthly/seasonal rhythms Annual rhythms Comparing across different time frames: Weekly vs. annual Daily vs. weekly Weekly vs. seasonal Monthly/seasonal vs. annual	
Socio-spatial activities and rhythmic patterns Which patterns of behaviour or action characterise the rhythms?	Suspension (e.g., weekends, holidays) Disruption or decreased rhythms (e.g., social routines during the pandemic) Peak and troughs (e.g., busy periods during lunch hour traffic versus quieter hours) New times and spaces	Seasonal cycles (e.g., fluvial runs and retreats, rivers, agricultural and recreational offerings, holiday periods) Social and collective schedules (e.g., markets, commuting, holiday periods) Distance and proximity (e.g., movements between settlements)

Table 2. (Cont.) Rhythmanalytical breakdown of knowledge and learning activities.

	Rhythms-in-space	Rhythms-through-space
Analytical insights How did spatial elements relate to the rhythms students identified and analysed?	Spatial amenities and activities can convene (i.e., mealtimes) or constrain/construct (i.e., working hours, care work) eurhythmic patterns Places can present unexpected functionalities during the disruption of other rhythms and create new arrhythmic patterns	Natural and moving elements, such as rivers, can be leveraged to attract and create agile but eurhythmic patterns through space Digital events and platforms offer alternative spaces for activities with their own rhythms
Key learning activities What did the students do to identify and analyse the rhythms?	Explore places through observations at different time frames Collect data on a specific place through desktop research Gather qualitative data through interviews or informal conversations Visually and graphically represent spatial and temporal rhythms (e.g., 24 hour-cycle charts for daily rhythms, linear charts for weekly and yearly rhythms)	Collect data via desktop research (i.e., precipitation data sets, website scrapping) Observe sites and their participants over specific timeframes and at various intervals Cartographically analyse and represent rhythms with overlays using the application QGIS Gather qualitative and anecdotal data through interviews and informal conversations Draw, design, and layout cartographic and graphical representations of spatial and temporal rhythms (e.g., paths over space and seasonal changes, river ebbs/flows/cross-sections, seasonal calendars)

4.2. Learning Versus Teaching Activities

Due to the novelty of time-sensitive concepts, both learning and teaching activities have much potential for development. An important takeaway from the experiences shared here is the relevance of interdisciplinarity through diverse methods that students will require to develop the functioning knowledge for conducting rhythmanalysis. Even in early phases of both courses, discussions across different disciplinary experiences presented possibilities for more time-sensitive ways of thinking. Over the course of the learning, peer-to-peer and instructor-to-peer exchanges broadened to include other informants outside of the classroom once students realised that they could not solely rely on conventional sources, references, or methods. For teaching, this means that the instructor's role is invaluable in structuring the process of learning. In other words, we recommend formative approaches to organising how course content is introduced with regular and interactive meetings to generate feedback that help students frame and direct their own inquiry and interpretations about rhythms.

Since rhythms in space are not often obvious, the collaborative and collective processes of finding and sharing rhythms are crucial to enabling students and instructors to build up their own foundation of declarative knowledge. In parallel, these exchanges in the classroom or through fieldwork expose students to new ideas or experiments in analysing and representing rhythms. Small exercises provided by instructors

but conducted together with all students are also helpful. For instance, a simple brainstorm of sensing slow versus fast cities could illuminate how rhythms in space contribute to patterns of temporal intensity. Alternatively, highlighting how temporal scales and structures (e.g., day/week/month/season/year or calendars/schedules) relate to specific sites helps filter out which activities temporally position in which spaces. Another suggestion would be a half-day rhythmanalysis crash course following the introduction to theories relevant to rhythms. This could include individual or group exercises around the university campus during which students and instructors observe rhythms over a short period, then regroup to share and discuss the qualities they see that might help them analyse the rhythms. This in-class warm-up could also reduce students' hesitation to conduct their own rhythmanalysis in the field.

A future initiative to reduce the challenges for instructors interested in pursuing pedagogy that integrates time-sensitive concepts is a repository of exemplary exercises that could help students engage more meaningfully in relating space and time. These could help students develop capacities to identify, classify, relate, analyse, or even evaluate and design rhythms. Such a resource also supports pedagogy that is committed to re-thinking planning and design in terms of both time and space. More broadly and immediately, teaching activities should help students become familiar with the diversity of rhythms in space and become comfortable in making sense of these as socio-spatial patterns. Teaching activities and roles, then, are less about preparing and delivering content as experts and more about staking out or facilitating the process of inquiry. This resonates with the iterative process of pedagogy advanced through constructive alignment as well as the process-oriented and constructivist experiences highlighted by others (Biggs et al., 2022; Moosavi & Bush, 2024; Pojani et al., 2023).

4.3. Coverage, Constraints, and Future Perspectives

A challenge that both instructors and students may confront will concern coverage or the extent of topics to cover in relation to rhythmanalysis. Biggs et al. (2022) discuss the tension between coverage and depth in designing teaching and learning as a matter of expertise and judgment. As there are few to almost no other preceding references on integrating rhythmanalysis into pedagogy, instructors (like students), will likely have to rely heavily on the experiences of their first course as a baseline endeavour. Reflecting on the experiences here, we recommend delimiting the spatial scope and perspectives by beginning with *rhythms-in-space* as these will not overwhelm the teaching and learning activities. A building or site-scale context will be the most comfortable context. It could be worthwhile to delegate sites or encourage students to pick research locations as early as possible to avoid expending unnecessary time and energy dwelling on the uncertainties of how to initiate rhythmanalysis. Even with a city borough-scale spatial context, the students in case study 1 found Amsterdam Zuidoost too broad of a location for their individual projects. Another means of mitigating the students' bewilderment with the new time-sensitive approaches to pedagogy is to focus the learning activities on socio-spatial activities at specific temporal scales. This tack portions spatial and temporal coverage and may require more preparatory and declarative knowledge about social practices, routines, or processes. Most likely, a hybrid of the two approaches to starting the learning activities will be the result.

It also bodes well to prepare introductory materials on methods for fieldwork and visualisation. Mobilising colleagues with experience in specific methods that support rhythmanalysis, optionally, can be helpful, too. Those trained in ethnographic methods or with extensive knowledge and readiness to conduct fieldwork will be better equipped to orient students in their own data gathering and analysis. Additionally, visualisation

techniques including cartographic skills (i.e., with or without GIS) and informed by data that account for time will also help reduce frustration. For example, references to the data visualisation and mapping work of others including Tufte (2006) who spotlight masters such as Minard were well received. We would not recommend focusing only on a singular method as this would hinder students from becoming familiar with the complexity of how socio-spatial rhythms could be understood. A framework for analysing data could also be helpful in case students become dubious or distrustful of their rhythmanalysis process because they end up collecting what they think is too much qualitative data through field notes, ephemera, and interviews. Such a framework could focus or structure in-class discussions, too. An example of this type of framework could follow the rhythmanalytical frames listed in Table 2. A distant aim could be the development of an openly accessible repertoire on rhythmanalysis for capturing rhythms in different contexts. The repertoire could provide orientation by identifying which types of methods are useful for the analysis of which types of locations or spaces along with the kind of data these methods generate, and the skills required for processing data.

More importantly, discussions between peers and instructors are fundamental to the constructivist sense-making process when students are first exposed to rhythmanalysis. Not only does this enable students and instructors to share resources and empathise with each other's teaching and learning processes, but it also enables opportunities for collective confirmation and boosts confidence as a part of the capacity-building for time-sensitivity in planning and design pedagogy. This aspect will, however, be constrained by the parameters of standard courses. In both case studies, students and instructors felt they did not have enough time to conduct the analyses because their processes of building the declarative knowledge base had to run in parallel to developing their functioning knowledge. This constraint also applied to the fieldwork, which could have been better initiated with additional and collective site visits. It is also important to keep in mind how opportunities for this are more constrained in fall and winter seasons as periods of daylight decrease and weather conditions become unwelcoming for certain fieldwork.

An improvement in designing future courses could introduce rhythmanalysis in an initial course unit that requests students to reflect on the relationships between time and space, followed by a course unit with more analytical and applied learning outcomes. This would decouple the parallel development of declarative and functioning knowledge bases and permit differentiation between concept versus design-oriented courses. It would, however, require that instructors dedicate a longer spread of time to rhythmanalysis. Another aspect that may be hindering students and their creative potentials for interpreting and representing rhythms may be conventional course output formats and evaluation rubrics. In the future of both case studies, the instructors plan to include reflective logs as personalised and formative means of assessing students' development of functioning knowledge in future iterations of the courses. Written reports and standard presentations or posters might be adequate ways for conveying socio-spatial patterns visually and in two dimensions, but they do not permit students to capture other experiential representations that might be more dynamic. Other forms of outputs could express more auditory, cinematographic, or performative representations. The inclusion of creative practitioners such as musicians and artists might also inspire students to think differently about rhythm, time, and space (Nevejan et al., 2018; Wunderlich, 2024). This would allow the students to expand their theoretical perspectives and find different ways to identify rhythms. As well, other formative deliverables for evaluation, such as through learning logs and reflections, could more effectively convey the process and quality of students' learning activities and achievements.

5. Discussion

The experiences here demonstrate that although complex and initially demanding, a rhythmanalysis approach to pedagogy is possible and positive. Students value time-sensitive approaches to spatial planning and design. In a final reflection session with students focusing on the Euregio Meuse-Rhine region, students shared the following:

> The temporal perspective shows the life that [is] going on in the spatial elements. And this vibrancy is creating those space[s] in the first place.
>
> [Rhythmanalysis] shows new patterns or trends within the spatial realm but [is] difficult to sometimes visualise…on a regional scale.

Whilst students agree that the pedagogical framework introduces them to the terminology or general tools needed to improve how they consider, conceptualise, and convey time-sensitive concepts, most students asked for more visualised precedents or prompts that are still absent or underdeveloped in spatial planning and design. Here we encounter two challenges. The first lies in making clearer the relationship between space and socio-spatial structuring devices such as clocks, routines, schedules, or seasons, while the second is that how rhythmanalysis or time-sensitive concepts are conveyed is still primarily based on textual forms of communication. For students with strengths in spatial design, this may be a challenge:

> Making urban design (and, in fact, architecture) students read is very difficult. It is traumatic to them, because they are simply unaccustomed to much reading. While it ought to be a "must component" in their proper training, it is a real challenge. (Lukovich, 2017, p. 94)

This emphasises the value of a well-thought-out and prepared introductory phase of teaching and learning experiences to help students effectively understand rhythmic patterns and rhythmanalysis before immersing themselves in the research and design work.

The experiences here aim to help instructors and students identify and analyse socio-spatial rhythms by integrating rhythmanalysis and constructive alignment concepts. The initial time-sensitive pattern categories (these are not exhaustive and are only a start) of *rhythms-in-space* versus *rhythms-through-space* along with the constructively aligned breakdown of two case studies may inspire or inform others' initial pedagogical experiences with rhythmanalysis. Our hope is to reduce burdens and anxieties concerning course design for instructors and fieldwork for students. The discomfort for instructors and students in exploring time-sensitive concepts is comparably, if not equally, high due to the novelty of the endeavour. Students who are not acquainted with ethnographic methods will also encounter discomfort because they leave the classroom confines for more experiential and qualitative forms of work, while they confront their own uncertainties associated with seeking out or conveying rhythmic patterns. For both teachers and learners, time-sensitive topics may present a vast territory and appear overly conceptual.

In terms of a general learning philosophy, our experiences highlight the advantages and disadvantages of a stronger process- and less product-based approach recommended in recent design-oriented scholarship (Marušić & Marušić, 2024). The insights here underline the development of different forms of knowledge

and pedagogical design for constructive alignment. Not only is there no singular form of knowledge, both declarative and functioning knowledge must be developed in parallel for students to learn how to apply rhythmanalysis. Supportive of this are teaching and learning activities that commit to mixed methods including ethnographic techniques. Moreover, designing for constructive alignment should focus on processual and formative approaches to facilitate the parallel development of both forms of knowledge. This means courses should intentionally create space for iterative consultations typical of design-oriented formats so that students are encouraged to consistently engage with rhythms that emerge in real-time during their work. Rhythmanalysis will involve both inductive and abductive approaches to exploring and analysing rhythms. In the experiences with the students' work in Amsterdam, an inductive approach encouraged students to not only go into the field but immerse themselves in certain contexts as volunteers or participants. In comparison, the work in the Euregio context encouraged inductive exploration of rhythms but developed abductive approaches as the students began with working hypotheses regarding patterns. In both pedagogical contexts, regular exchanges were held by the instructors with their students, which supported the iterative process of honing the working assumptions guiding their data collection. These provide space for students' feedback:

> I am still struggling to articulate an accurate hypothesis and set an adequate frame for the following month, so I will not get lost in the topic but be able to focus.

> Adding to the hypothesis: After the feedback today, I feel like I have to sharpen it and decide whether I want to focus on the rhythms of seasonal land use, consumer patterns, or a combination.

Finally, our experiences only scratch the surface of the diversity in time-sensitive perspectives and how this diversity affects students' learning processes. Beyond cross-cultural experiences highlighted in the work from the Amsterdam context, ecologically shaped perspectives from the work in the Euregio Meuse-Rhine context presented students with other challenges, which students shared:

> Beyond that, I find it difficult to grasp natural rhythms, also because in the face of climate change they are changing very fast.

> [The environment and climate] plays a major part as my whole project is dependent on river rhythms, post- and pre-flood rhythms. So, collecting this data is a bit tricky as it has sudden variations and indicators are changing.

This exposes external factors limiting how we can support time-sensitive concepts and capacities in design-oriented teaching and learning. This could exacerbate burdens for students with greater reliance on or preferences for quantitative data. Certainly, there is still much potential for improving on the initial pedagogical insights we present here.

6. Conclusion

In the sections above, we introduce how time-sensitive concepts and specifically rhythmanalysis may be integrated into pedagogy for spatial planning and design. This endeavour has weaknesses but is the first of its kind and inspired by initiatives from educational research on the application of rhythmanalysis *in* spaces

of teaching and learning. We admit that due to the exploratory nature of the work, the number of participants or their backgrounds affecting exact degree of comparability between the course designs was not ideal. One course included only three students at the graduate level, while the other undergraduate course was not as interdisciplinary. For the latter, it is important to know that the instructor came from a different disciplinary background and so interdisciplinarity was not entirely absent. Even the number of sessions of the courses differed and were defined by the curriculum of the respective universities. Nevertheless, this contribution does take steps to enhance design-oriented planning pedagogy by examining how rhythms of socio-spatial concerns could be taught and learned. We build on the developing debates in planning and design scholarship regarding time-sensitivity and its value for research methods as well as policymaking. The aims here are to innovate design-oriented education by providing initial conceptual structures that integrate rhythmanalysis and constructive alignment to help orient future courses and their activities. At the same time, it is an attempt to enhance the processes through which we pass on how we think (about) time and space as co-constitutive in socio-spatial theory-building and creative processes of spatial planning and design.

The differentiation between *rhythms-in-space* versus *rhythms-through-space* introduces conceptual structures intended to help familiarise students to rhythmic patterns in the socio-spatial features or phenomena that are both human and non-human. These help students identify and analyse through rhythmanalysis before considering design or policy interventions. Our experiences demonstrate that beyond conventional design-oriented pedagogical formats, it is essential to not underestimate the thoughtful preparation key to students' effective exposure to, learning, and application of rhythmanalysis. The ways for future work and improvement range from creating and pooling materials relating to representational precedents that are visual, exercises enabling formative learning, or even course designs that decouple the development of declarative and functioning knowledge. Our suggestions for next steps to build teaching and learning capacity for rhythmanalysis here are not all-encompassing but a constructive baseline for curious and committed planning educators and students ready to explore time-sensitive concepts.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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About the Authors

Robin A. Chang is currently a postdoctoral researcher and an instructor at the Chair of Planning Theory and Urban Development from RWTH Aachen University (DE). As a trained environmental planner, she also conducts community-engaged research and teaching. Her work examines how adaptability and time-sensitive concepts such as temporality, rhythms, and agility affect the built and lived environment through urban planning practice and pedagogy. She practised planning in Canada prior to completing her MSc and PhD in Germany.

Pinar Sefkatli is an architect and researcher specialising in rhythms. She holds a PhD from the University of Amsterdam (NL), where she explored rhythm analytical methods for urban research and practice. As a postdoc in urban planning at the University of Amsterdam, she further develops this approach in the context of socially inclusive climate adaptation. She previously worked for the City of Amsterdam, TU Delft, and architecture bureaus in Amsterdam and Rotterdam.

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The Poly-Rhythmic City: Urban Community Land Trusts as Opposition to the Slow Violence of Housing Development

Robert Read [1,2], NezHapi-Dellé Odeleye [3], Alison Hirst [1], and Alison Pooley [2]

[1] Faculty of Business & Law, Anglia Ruskin University, UK
[2] Suffolk Sustainability Institute, University of Suffolk, UK
[3] Faculty of Science & Engineering, Anglia Ruskin University, UK

Correspondence: Robert Read (r.read2@uos.ac.uk)

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Abstract

Gradual and invisible, "slow violence" has been applied to housing and urban redevelopment, gentrification, and its embodiment as stress and anxiety by those affected, usually the least well-off. This article presents a case study of the London Community Land Trust (CLT), which was engendered from a combination of the longstanding traditions of East End opposition to social harms, combined with new mutual housing forms that emerged in the early 2000s. Campaigners invested energy in the CLT, generating new rhythms and an imagination of territory that would provide an alternative to the failure of mainstream housing systems. The homes would be affordable to local people on average incomes and the neighbourhood characterised by a sense of belonging and community. The case study's findings offer a fresh perspective on London's housing crisis, and the potential of CLTs, by centring the experience and reflections of some whose lack of a suitable home threatened them with spatial displacement. Participant observation, surveys, and interviews with residents show the depth and impact of London's housing crisis through reflections on the past, the joys and challenges of moving to an affordable, secure home, while building new relationships with neighbours and the physical environment.

Keywords

community land trust; community-led housing; slow opposition; slow violence; territorialisation

1. Introduction

Community land trusts (CLTs) in the UK emerged in the early 2000s, as part of a family of housing types challenging the dominance of mainstream owner occupation, and private and social renting (Moore & McKee, 2012; Mullins & Moore, 2018). CLTs, co-housing, co-operatives, and community self-build—collectively labelled community-led housing (CLH) (Mullins, 2018)—are celebrated for enabling local communities to have agency in defining housing needs and providing the right types of homes in their area. Studies have analysed the spatial context, including urban and rural areas, place attachment, uneven urban development, and CLTs reviving "the commons" (Bunce, 2016; Moore, 2021; Moore & McKee, 2012; Thompson, 2015, 2020). Others focus on policy, support infrastructures, and the potential for scaling up (Hughes, 2024; Moore, 2018; Moore & Mullins, 2013). Temporally, Thompson (2015, 2020) noted how the incremental approach of Liverpool CLTs mirrors the collective involvement of earlier generations of housing alternatives in the form of co-operatives. CLH has been conceptualised as "slow opposition" to mainstream housing development, affiliating campaigners with similar localist, organically grown movements—"slow food" for example (Jarvis, 2015). However, few spatio-temporal case studies involve CLT residents, most limited to advocacy and pre-occupation phases (Kruger et al., 2020; Mullins & Moore, 2018).

Meanwhile, housing studies mobilising the concept of "slow violence" as "a gradual and/or invisible form of violence" have primarily focused on specific urban regeneration schemes (Keller, 2024, p. 1256). They demonstrate the embodiment of slow-violence by low-income residents in the stress and anxiety caused by endless "waiting" and uncertainty before their inevitable permanent or temporary displacement enables their home's destruction or redevelopment (Keller, 2024; Westbrook et al., 2024).

This article examines the case of London CLT and the UK's first urban CLT homes at the former St Clements Hospital in Mile End, East London. In 2019, 23 average-income households in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets moved into the properties London CLT acquired as part of the affordable housing contribution for St Clements' redevelopment. While impacting most acutely its poorest and marginalised citizens, London's housing crisis is increasingly affecting people with incomes that once offered protection from housing insecurity—threatening their ability to remain in the city (Watt & Minton, 2016). Using data from interviews, participant observation, and online and physical documents, this article addresses gaps in existing CLT and slow violence research, contributing to knowledge in three key dimensions. Firstly, it includes the perspectives of CLT residents alongside board members, moving consideration of temporality from a theoretical level to one revealing a range of embodied rhythms. Secondly, it extends the use of slow violence from specific urban redevelopment projects to a broader, spatially distinct area, and its impact on median-income earners. Finally, the article introduces a third term to mediate between the binaries of slow violence and slow opposition by analysing London CLT and residents' actions through the lens of territorialisation—their relationships with each other and their physical space (Brighenti, 2010; Brighenti & Kärrholm, 2018, 2020).

The article continues with a review of selected literature on territorialisation, slow violence, and CLTs, followed by the study's methodology, findings, and discussion before drawing some conclusions.

2. Literature Review: Rhythms of Territorialisation, Slow Violence, and the Slow Opposition of CLTs

In considering London CLT's attempts to offer alternatives to existing housing systems and urban redevelopment, this article combines three concepts to help understand the roles of the various actors: territorialisation (Brighenti, 2010; Brighenti & Kärrholm, 2018, 2020), slow violence (Nixon, 2011), and slow opposition (Jarvis, 2015).

2.1. Territorialisation, Slow Violence, and Slow Opposition in London's East End

Like all space, the East End is a product of the prevailing economic model (Lefebvre, 1991). Transformation from the city's rural food producer to the location for industrialisation's most toxic trades and its gateway, via the docks, to colonised lands produced the East End as the "largest impoverished urban enclave in the world" by the 19th century (Dench et al., 2006, p. 1). In modern times, it finds itself wedged between London's two centres of international capitalism—the city to the west and Canary Wharf to the south (see map in Figure 1).

Space is also comprised of relations between people and their physical surroundings which, combined with simultaneously constructed boundaries, produce territories (Brighenti, 2010; Brighenti & Kärrholm, 2018, 2020). East End territories have been shaped by relations including those of work, class, family, residence, religion, immigration, and gentrification. For space to continue serving the economy, the state and market must exert power and control, repurposing parts no longer serving its interests, and fragmenting territories in the process (Lefebvre, 1991). This has been conceived as "slow violence" (Nixon, 2011): gradual, insidious, and hidden by its normalisation as logical economic, urban, and housing policy (Rannila, 2021). It has manifested itself in the East End through industrialisation, de-industrialisation, state-led gentrification, and the threatened and actual exclusion of those unable to continue living decently in the City (Lees & Hubbard, 2022; Watt & Minton, 2016).

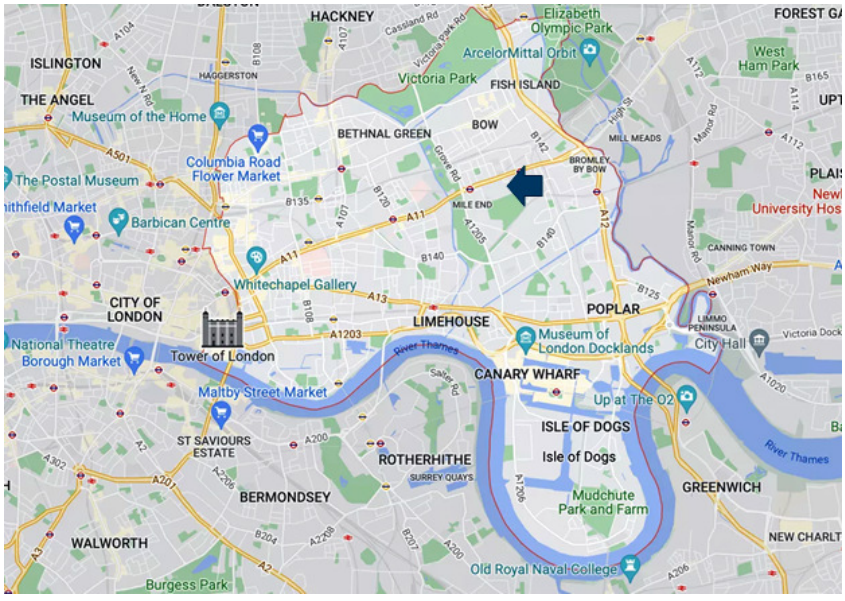

Figure 1. London's East End. Note: The position of St Clements is marked with an arrow. Source: Alexander (2022).

Power, control, and slow violence are not endured passively though; they co-exist with conflict, resistance, and territorialisation (Storey, 2001). The East End has taken on recognisable spatio-temporal characteristics, comprising community organising, philanthropy, and social work—all infused with religious faith (Back et al., 2009). Longstanding, enduring opposition is institutionalised in faith and community institutions, attempting to mitigate slow violence's worst impacts. Occasionally, new territorial relations are "animated" (Brighenti & Kärrholm, 2020), such as London CLT, which merged the East End's traditional forms of resistance with the slow opposition of the emerging CLH and CLT movement.

The relationship between these three concepts, considered separately in the next section, and how their co-existing manifestations in the East End produced St Clements in its current form is illustrated in the conceptual framework in Figure 2.

2.2. Territorialisation

Territorialisation has been associated with the exercise of power, "the attempt to affect, influence, or control actions and interactions…by asserting and attempting to enforce control over a geographic area" (Sack, 1983, p. 55). It has been applied to macro-scale actions of states and micro-scale claims on space in the home, conflict, and resistance co-existing with territorialisation and power (Storey, 2001). This article adopts Brighenti's (2010, p. 57) conception of territory as the interrelations between people and their social and material spaces: "territory is not defined by space, rather it defines spaces through patterns of relations." Territorialisation is temporal and rhythmic, containing a plurality of temporalities to produce distinctive time spaces (Brighenti & Kärrholm, 2020). Rhythm is produced by "investments of energy, or intensities that accompany it…investments in social life as meaning and as concerted action" (Brighenti & Kärrholm, 2018, p. 2). These investments produce "animative moments," the gathering of actors emerging as a collective entity, where "space is set into play, and different aspects of life are at stake" (Brighenti & Kärrholm, 2020, p. 17).

Domestic territorialisation is where "ecological and spiritual factors are intermingled," while temporally, "frequentation" produces a home through the quantity and quality of time spent there and the assemblage of physical, emotional, and social aspects (Brighenti & Kärrholm, 2020, p. 115). While always unique, domestic territorialisation involves associations made with other homes and with human, and non-human, neighbours.

A territorial lens affords a spatio-temporal and relational view of London CLT's morphogenesis, its relation to becoming and the "slow, dynamic, and multitemporal processes inherent to it" (Brighenti & Kärrholm, 2020, p. 57). It draws attention to how power exercised at global and regional levels shaped the East End historically and continues to reshape it through urban redevelopment, resulting in forms of "slow violence." Simultaneously, it shows how such violence results in de-territorialisation, fragmenting relationships, followed by re-territorialisation as new ones are formed. Brighenti (2010, p. 63), after Deleuze and Guattari, argues that it is this "double movement…that evokes the primitive movement of territorialization, which otherwise tends to be taken for granted" (See Figure 2).

2.3. Urban Redevelopment and Slow Violence

Urban redevelopment is frequently driven by events occurring at regional, national, and even global scales (Zaban, 2023). Subsequently, programmes can be drawn out over prolonged periods, with those with capital

and power controlling time for the less well-off (Keller, 2024). Urban redevelopment, mostly occurring in the poorest neighbourhoods, typically involves cycles of dilapidation and decay, before their symbolic designation as unfit places; redevelopment decisions often come years before action, preceding managed decline (Lees & Hubbard, 2022). Residents experience uncertainty, insecurity, and seemingly endless "waiting," the "unmaking" of home occurring long before residents lose their physical dwellings (Arrigoitia, 2014; Keller, 2024; Westbrook et al., 2024). Residents' existence in this liminal space has been conceptualised as "slow violence," which, following Nixon's (2011, p. 2) definition, occurs "gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all."

Slow violence is part of a "provocative…structural 'violence turn'" in housing studies, positioning limited housing choices not as the outcome of personal failure, individual decisions, or poor life choices, but of political economy (Gurney, 2023, p. 237). Violence inflicted by urban redevelopment results from ostensibly normal, legal, seemingly progressive, and justifiable actions, only becoming apparent when the impact on individual neighbourhoods and people is seen and understood (Rannila, 2021). Residents embody slow violence as stress caused by "temporal uncertainty" about the future and "displacement anxiety," impacting their health and well-being (Westbrook et al., 2024).

Zaban (2023) observes multi-temporality in competing perspectives of stakeholders in urban redevelopment, causing asynchronicity; "worldly imaginaries and experience" of planners and developers bringing a different view of the proper pace of change than the "place attachment and belonging" of long-term residents (Zaban, 2023, p. 1513). Meanwhile, marginal gentrifiers (Rose, 1996)—newcomers to poor neighbourhoods—who enhance the area's credentials without significantly increasing its wealth, may benefit from and champion redevelopment (Zaban, 2023). Kern (2016, p. 442) noted how middle-class occupants in a post-industrial Toronto neighbourhood transformed social space through "new rhythms and timespaces of everyday life": cultural events, craft markets, and "authenticity" recreated through "sophisticated consumption" (Bourdieu, 1984) of retro chic. Longer-term inhabitants, having lost their own indicators of place, and unable to participate in the neighbourhoods' new rhythms and "performative codes," found themselves subject to temporal displacement (Kern, 2016, p. 442).

Preece and Flint (2024) extend the social harms conceptualisation, from the least well-off to homeowners in blocks of flats with combustible cladding like that which fueled the catastrophic Grenfell Tower fire. Having endured longstanding but invisible danger, they were rendered "unhomed," either psychologically by fears for their safety, or physically when forced to leave. While marginalised communities have become inured to the state's indifference, these more affluent leaseholders "struggled to reconcile it with their own biographies, trajectories, and self-perception" (Preece & Flint, 2024, p. 105).

Slow violence is not simply experienced passively, with many residents and community organisations actively resisting (Keller, 2024), such is the case with CLTs.

2.4. CLTs and Slow Opposition

Defined as "democratic, non-profit organisations owning and developing land for the benefit of the community" (CLT Network, n.d., para. 1), CLTs emerged in the UK alongside the 2005 New Labour

government's policy of devolving power to local government and communities and against a backdrop of falling levels of affordable housing (Moore & McKee, 2012). Through long-term ownership and stewardship, CLTs capture the land value, locking in future increases, and ensuring homes built remain affordable in perpetuity (Diacon et al., 2005).

The model gained legal status in the 2008 Housing and Regeneration Act, enabling CLTs to take ownership of land and other assets for community benefit. This has largely, though not exclusively, meant providing affordable housing. In 2015, the government announced a five-year (later reduced to four) Community Housing Fund to support new groups, provide capital for building homes, and create support structures (Hill et al., 2020).

Urban CLTs have been associated with distinct spatio-temporalities and socio-political roots and ambitions beyond providing affordable housing; Liverpool CLTs arose from existing residents struggling against post-war disinvestment and dilapidation (Thompson, 2015). Though London CLT's impetus differed in meeting housing needs in an inflated housing market, Bunce (2016) argues that it too was engaged in the creation of a new "urban commons." This long-term, gradual struggle resembles Ward's (1974) "encroaching control," stealthily extending the idea of cooperative ownership and self-management.

While advocates stress that CLT developments are not intrinsically slower than the mainstream (Archer & McCarthy, 2021), Jarvis (2015, p. 204) notes the connection between the "convivial scale of citizen participation in 'slow' quality of life movements and new forms of citizenship associated with CLH." "Slow" here is spatial as well as temporal, "slow food" movements, for example, privileging local traditions and flavours over globally available "fast food." Applied to housing, "slow" emphasises the active involvement of ordinary citizens in identifying local housing needs and aspirations, often aligned to long-term environmental sustainability and maintaining a sense of place. For Jarvis (2015), authentic citizen involvement is not an event, like consultations, but the gradual cultivation and flourishing of public life requiring "craft" skills to "act together" (Sennett, 2013)—Figure 2 summarises these conceptualisations and relationships in London's East End & St Clements.

3. Methodology

3.1. Empirical Setting

London CLT, originally formed as East London CLT in 2007, initially aimed to provide affordable housing as part of the London 2012 Olympics legacy, before shifting attention to the closed and boarded-up St Clements hospital. It became London CLT when campaigners in Lewisham, Southeast London, asked for help developing 11 flats, completed in 2023 and called Citizens House. While most CLTs, including in London, have a narrower geographic focus, London CLT provides governance, knowledge, and skills to support people across London to build the affordable housing they campaign for. London CLT provided the case study for the first author's PhD thesis, chosen following engagement with various urban CLH organisations in East Anglia, East and Southeast London.

London's East End is ideally positioned for investigating slow violence due to its historic association with poverty, the working class and immigration, along with the pronounced impact of housing and urban policy.

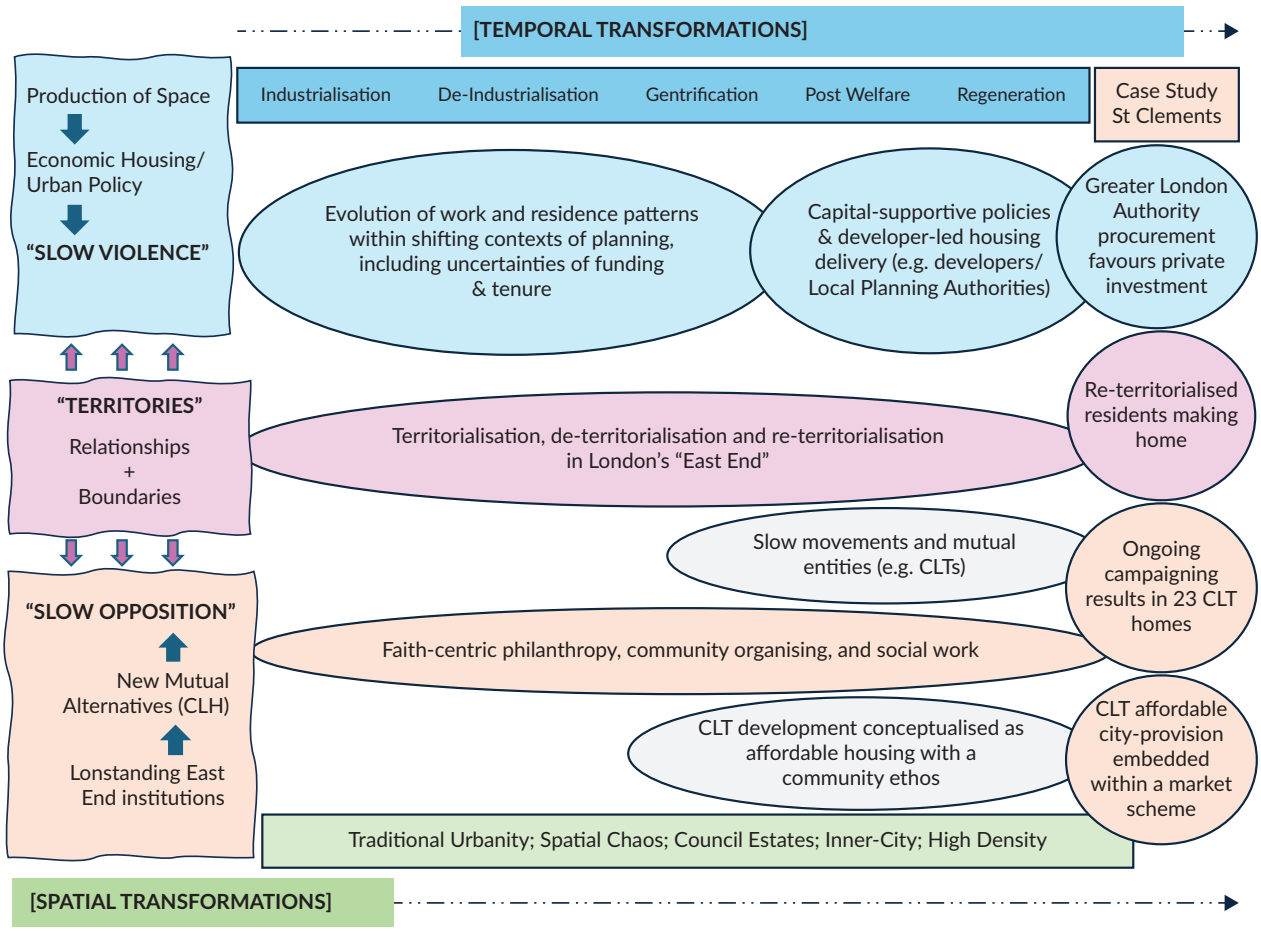

Figure 2. Conceptual framework and the production of St Clements.

In 1981, 82% of Tower Hamlets residents lived in council housing—the highest percentage in London—and just 20 years later "social housing" accounted for only 36% (Watt & Minton, 2016), with the "right-to-buy" council housing without replenishment, financialisation, and state-led gentrification of estates all contributing (Hodkinson, 2020; Lees & Hubbard, 2022; Watt, 2021; Watt & Minton, 2016). While average house prices were five times the median earnings in 2000, they rose to 12 times by 2020 (Office for National Statistics, 2023a).

Simultaneously, London CLT is a good case for studying opposition to slow violence. With its roots in community organising and faith organisations, it connects the traditional "enduring" opposition to slow violence in the East End with the emerging "slow" mutuality of CLH forms in the early 21st century. London CLT recognised that housing precarity affected not just the least well-off but increasingly middle-income earners in critical, community-facing roles. When the research was conducted, only London CLT had homes built and occupied in the capital, allowing the study to hear from residents with expertise by experience of slow violence, slow opposition, and territorialisation.

St Clements' redevelopment consisted of refurbishing the centrally listed buildings and constructing new flatted blocks around the perimeter, producing 252 new properties: 58 for "social rent," 23 CLT, and the remainder for open-market sales (London CLT, n.d.). CLT residents were selected by criteria assessing

housing need, affordability, local connection, community contribution, and commitment to London CLT's values. After joining the CLT, successful applicants bought the homes, dispersed amongst the new-builds, for 27% of the open-market value (London CLT, n.d.).

Data provided by London CLT shows St Clements' demographic breakdown, with residents broadly matching Tower Hamlets' ethnicity mix (Figure 3), while most adults fall within its low to low-middle income bands (Figure 4). The final chart shows the range of household types (Figure 5).

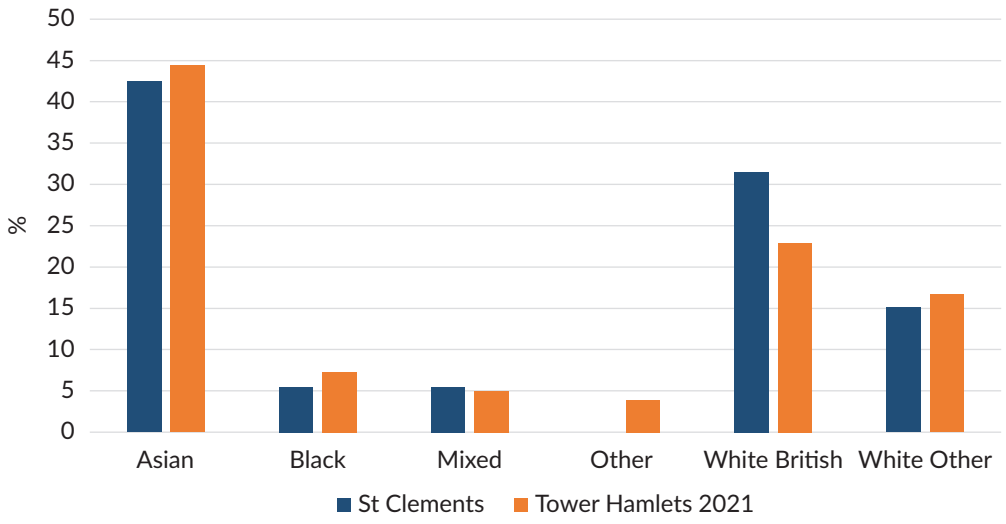

Figure 3. St Clements CLT residents—ethnicity, compared with London Borough Tower Hamlets. Note: Based on personal communication with London CLT (2023) and data from the Office for National Statistics (2023b).

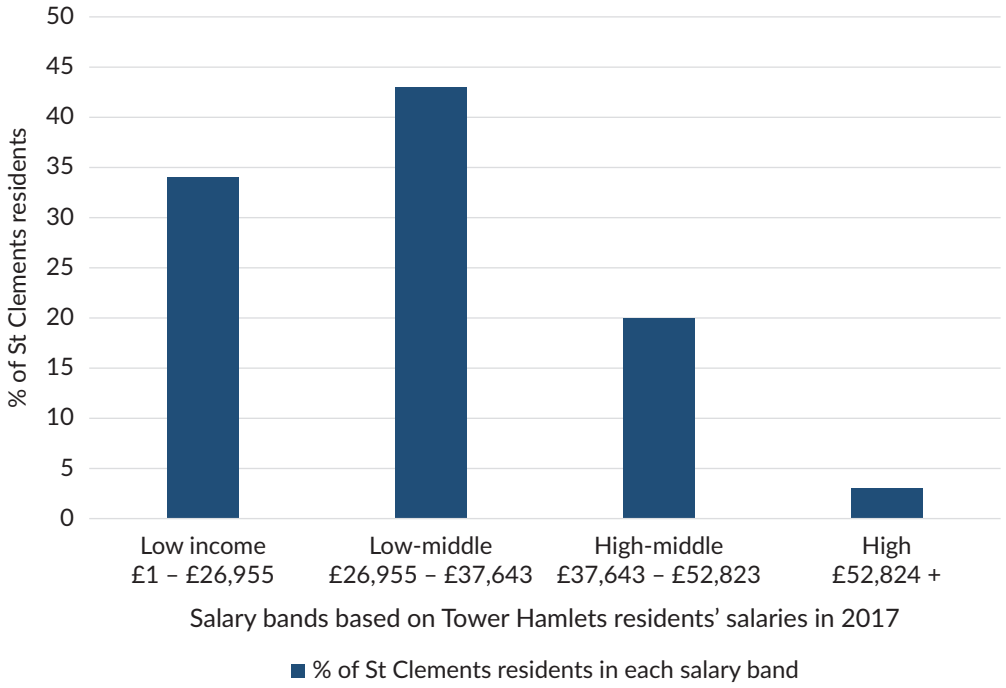

Figure 4. Annual salaries of St Clements residents by salary bands 2017. Note: Based on personal communication with London CLT (2023).

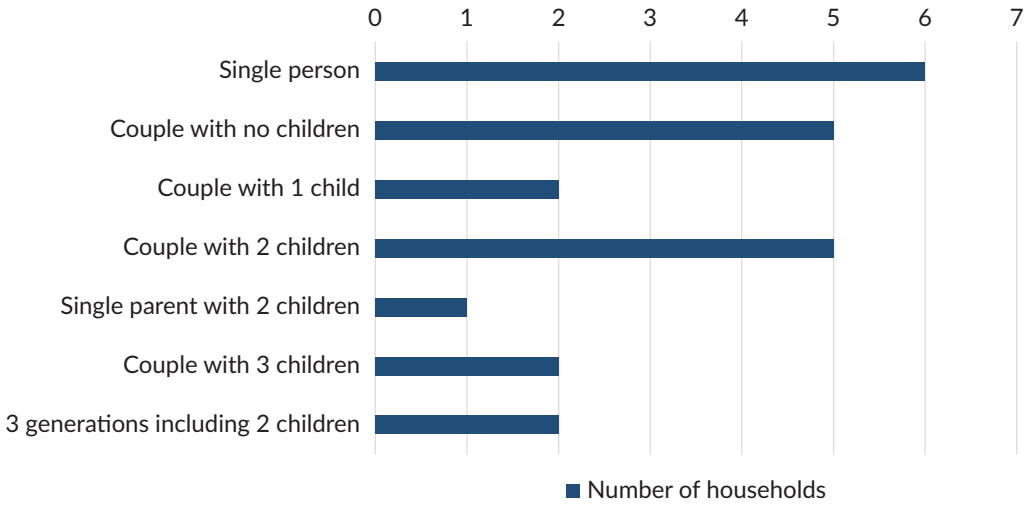

Figure 5. St Clements CLT residents—household composition (initial allocation). Note: Based on personal communication with London CLT (2023).

3.2. Fieldwork

A case study methodology was considered the best way to conduct an "in-depth enquiry into a specific and complex phenomenon [London CLT as a case of CLH] set within its real-world context" (Yin, 2013, p. 321). Data was initially sourced from the websites of CLH support organisations and London CLT's own (Community Led Housing London, n.d; CLT Network, n.d; London CLT, n.d.). Data included summaries of CLH initiatives, reports, photographs, blogs, and video recordings; London CLT's website contained testimonies from residents. Between September 2021 and October 2023, semi-structured interviews were conducted with London CLT staff and board members, and with 15 St Clements' residents from 11 unique households. Due to considerable interest from media, built-environment professionals, researchers, and community groups in St Clements, London CLT were initially reluctant to directly ask residents to take part. However, they enabled the researcher to recruit participants directly by inviting them to meetings, events, and community celebrations that simultaneously provided opportunities for participant observation. Data were captured in fieldnotes, while events provided opportunities to meet residents informally. Snowballing through residents' personal contacts and social media channels provided the primary participant recruitment method, made additionally challenging by the early stages of the research coinciding with Covid-19 lockdowns and ongoing sensitivity to personal contact. Unfortunately, due to their absence from meetings and events, no responses to social media messages, or later CLT encouragement, the researcher was unable to meet any of the Bengali households, around a third of St Clements' CLT residents. The findings therefore remain partial and future research should seek to examine the experience of this important group of residents.

Resident interviews were face-to-face, in homes or cafes, and online during Covid lockdowns, lasting between one and two hours. Discussion included previous housing circumstances, local connection, community contribution, finding out about St Clements, moving in and the impact of moving, St Clements as a place to live, community involvement, and thoughts on their future. Interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher, transcripts producing between 7,400 and 17,500 words.

3.3. Analysis

Data from websites, official and unofficial documentation, interviews with staff and board members, and fieldnotes built a temporal picture of London CLT, St Clements, and residents' self-organisation through a Resident Management Company and community events. Interview data were analysed through an amalgam of "meaning condensation" (Kvale, 2012) and "systematic text condensation" (Malterud, 2012). Interview transcripts were read twice before being separated into meaning units: "a text fragment containing some information about the research question" (Malterud, 2012, p. 797). These were condensed, or summarised, from the interviewee's perspective, and coded using an abductive approach (van Hulst & Visser, 2024), iterating between theory and all the data collected. Codes were assembled into themes, with one theme comprising the different ways slow violence had manifested itself in residents' previous housing circumstances—overcrowded in shared ownership and unable to afford to move, for example. Another theme was their deterritorialisation, how needing to find a housing solution meant having to consider leaving the neighbourhood they called home. Codes represented different responses, such as moving back in with parents to save, moving to temporary property guardianship, or making existing circumstances as homely as possible. A further theme was the prior relationship residents had with London CLT and the institutions involved in opposing slow violence.

The names of all participants in this article have been replaced by pseudonyms.

4. Findings

4.1. London's East End: Rhythmic Territories of Power, Slow Violence, and Resistance

In 1849, the City of London Poor Law Union built the Bow Road Workhouse (The Workhouse, n.d.), later converted into an infirmary for the assessment of "mental patients," then the City of London Institution for the "chronically ill" (Roman Road London, 2021). It was renamed St Clements in 1936 and absorbed by the new National Health Service after the war, undertaking pioneering work to treat 1960s adolescent heroin addiction. St Clements was declared unfit to treat patients in 2006, its role in mitigating the impact of slow-violence inflicted on the East End paused until its next incarnation included the country's first urban CLT homes.

In the 1990s, new relationships were built between long-standing East End institutions, the "animistic moment" coming with the arrival of Neil Jameson, a Quaker, who wanted to establish a new, nationwide, social justice organisation from the East End (Warren, 2009). Former London CLT chair, Geoff, explained Jameson's influences:

> He went over to the US and trained with the Industrial Areas Foundation, which was founded by Saul Alinsky in Chicago in the 1930s. So, there's a long track record of this activity, community organising, in the States going back to the 1930s.

Jameson was conscious of the East End's community organising legacy—the "rich history of people who came before me" as community organisers: the Matchgirl Strikers, George Lansbury's municipal socialism, and Cable Street's anti-fascists (Jameson, 2019). He recognised an opportunity to build the new organisation's first branch, The East London Communities Organisation (TELCO), in the growing Muslim

population, alongside the established Catholic community (Warren, 2009). The enduring resistance to slow violence had engendered cross-faith alliances: between Jews and Irish Roman Catholics in the 1930s and Bangladeshi Muslims with the Church of England in the 1970s (Glynn, 2005). Geoff was involved in TELCO from the start, and his Methodist church was a sponsoring organisation. He explained their slow, deliberative approach to building effective alliances:

> It took us three years to find 30 organisations that were prepared to go in and put their money on the table…the Mosque, the Church, and the Synagogue, which wouldn't normally meet with the school, were all in the same room, getting to know each other…the community organising methodology is relationship before action. If you haven't got the relationships, you don't go to the action.

TELCO sought to first empower the community leaders within institutions (Balazard et al., 2017; Wills, 2012). Through multiple one-to-one conversations, they would develop the ability of communities to recognise, prioritise, and address their own needs. Consequently, more affordable housing, depleted due to the slow-violence of consecutive national housing policies, became one of TELCO's first campaigning priorities. Geoff, the Former London CLT chair explained:

> Thatcher had sold off all the council houses…the residue of homes that were available for people who were not on good incomes had been obliterated virtually hadn't they? People had sold them on, and they'd made a nice packet very often, but their children and grandchildren were stuck because there was nowhere for them to live. So, we were saying, well, if the market has failed, what else can we do?

The social profile of some of those experiencing housing needs had changed from when council housing dominated, reflecting the area's ongoing and significant population shifts. By the early 1970s, the East End was deindustrialising, and anti-establishment middle classes began squatting in empty buildings, inadvertently initiating future gentrification (Dench et al., 2006; Elliott-Cooper et al., 2020). The arrival of intermediate non-manual workers in the 1980s (Butler et al., 2008) is often conceptualised as "marginal gentrification," enhancing the area's credentials without significantly increasing its wealth (Rose, 1996). Others note a "fragmented middle-class" presence, with jobs in the arts, and the devalued public sector, often with non-linear or broken career paths (Watt, 2005). However, the 1990s influx of professional classes brought soaring increases in new housing development and property values, especially close to the City and Canary Wharf (Fenton, 2016). Between 2001 and 2011, the "creative class" increased by 50%, mostly around Brick Lane and Spitalfields (Hubbard, 2016; le Grand, 2020). TELCO recognised these changes meant London's housing market was now failing not only the least well-off but increasingly those in professional occupations. Geoff explained:

> It seemed to us that the market catered for the people who were wealthy enough. Social housing and housing associations catered for people who were on the lower end, but there was a gap for people in the middle who were quite important members of the professions, who were being left out…all of them doing really important jobs in the community.

In 2003, the UK announced its bid to host the 2012 Olympic Games, centred in East London. This would be a "mega-event," "organised via a social elite…to affirm or catalyse its economic, cultural and social development or renewal" (Poynter, 2009, p. 133). Following initial scepticism about its benefits, TELCO

made its support for the Games conditional on organisers signing a People's Ethical Guarantee, which was assembled after "thousands of conversations" in the local community (Gotora, 2022). TELCO secured a deal with then London mayor, Ken Livingstone, and Lord Sebastian Coe, the bid team's Chair, including commitments to a living wage games, local employment, and a legacy of 2,012 affordable CLT homes (Smith, 2020). With the bid successful, communication with TELCO stopped until—after further lobbying—the new Olympic Delivery Authority declared the protocol its predecessor body signed, non-binding (Smith, 2020). Agreement to CLT homes became contingent on a pilot elsewhere in London: until that point, UK CLTs were confined to rural and coastal areas.

The state-led regeneration accompanying the 2012 Olympic Games in East London perpetuated polarisation between wealthier new and existing working-class and marginalised communities, exacerbating displacement pressures (Poynter, 2009; Watt, 2013). Despite promising a social inclusion model, and renewal of deprived boroughs, the Games were a display of direct state intervention in the production of space (Poynter, 2009). Watt (2013, p. 114) found people living in working-class spaces near the Olympic Park did not consider the "upmarket private apartments for sale or rent, as having much to do with them." Even for many earning median salaries, including those successfully applying for a CLT home, the Olympics only made their struggles to secure a suitable home in the area harder.

4.2. The Impact of Slow Violence, Temporal Displacement, and Spatial Dispersal

St Clements residents have multiple life courses, trajectories, and connections with Tower Hamlets. While some were born in the Borough, others moved there in the 1990s or early 2000s. Their housing tenures varied, but all were living in housing that did not enable them to feel at home (Richardson, 2019).

Three families had been living in shared ownership flats, a tenure where buyers acquire a mortgage for part of the property's value and pay rent for the remainder. Over time, shared owners theoretically "staircase" to higher levels of equity. Though designated by the government as "affordable housing," when Gabriel and his wife considered moving to a larger flat to comfortably accommodate his family, he found the cost prohibitive: "One was [£]900,000. Okay, 50%, 40% [mortgage]…plus the rent, plus the service charge…it was just not feasible…add everything up, and then it's not that affordable."

Nancy, who moved to East London in the 1990s, owned 25% equity in a one-bedroom flat. A single parent, she slept in a foldout bed in the living room, her son and daughter sharing the bedroom. Though Nancy's earnings were above average for the Borough, she could not afford to move somewhere larger, describing her daily routine to maintain a semblance of a family home as "quite stressful….I would get up in the morning, immediately fold up the bed, leave it there and then in the evening immediately fold it back out again so that it felt like we had a living space during the day."

The slow-violence of the housing economy is experienced differently by these shared owners than by those displaced by regeneration programmes impacting specific estates or neighbourhoods. "Waiting," for Nancy and Gabriel, was not for their landlord or developer to tell them to leave, or when they can return to a refurbished home. Instead, waiting was a question of endurance, of seeing how long they could tolerate increasingly unsatisfactory circumstances. These are not personal failures, but social harms caused by the structuring of the housing economy. Nancy struggled with lack of privacy and her inability to control the

time she had to herself, saying "I am very much an introvert you know, I like to have my own space." She embodied the slow-violence as stress, as did her daughter who had to share a bedroom with her younger brother, despite her being a teenager. The "displacement anxiety" (Westbrook et al., 2024) meanwhile came from the knowledge that unless the waiting somehow produced an alternative, finding somewhere affordable of sufficient size and quality would likely mean moving somewhere housing costs were cheaper.

For James, working in a hospital brought eligibility for a key-worker scheme, enduring rising costs after his flat was sold to a Housing Association, the deal allowing annual 9% rent increases. Meanwhile, dampness and mould exacerbated his child's existing allergies. Moving elsewhere though, James said, would mean paying twice his existing rent, leading to a feeling of both being "unhomed" (Preece & Flint, 2024), given his existing flat no longer provided the necessary quality of space and affordability, and living in a liminal space in which no possible future could be planned for.

Joanna and Leon also qualified for key-worker housing, but for them, the impact came suddenly, when their housing association landlord decided to sell their flat. Unable to afford the market price, the couple and their children faced eviction, described by Joanna as moving from a "quite safe arrangement to actually becoming almost homeless." Joanna experienced anxiety about displacement from her home and neighbourhood, severing her from strong connections made since emigrating from Eastern Europe: "I can't imagine moving out of the community. Like a huge loss for us really leaving this place, almost like moving to another country again…yes, I felt quite rooted."

Joanna and Leon discovered the CLT by chance, going past St Clements on the bus, Joanna's attention was drawn to the adverts for affordable housing due to a professional connection with the hospital. Alice, on the other hand, was aware of the housing project from its inception due to previous involvement with TELCO. As a child, arriving with her family as refugees, Alice suffered carbon monoxide poisoning from a faulty boiler in temporary accommodation. As an adult, after a series of "really, really bad flat shares," amidst rapidly rising rents in the pre-Olympics period, Alice moved to a new-build flat. Within five years, the rent increased fivefold while "the building was basically falling apart….We had a leak that was through the living room. Literally, we had to have three buckets. Nothing got fixed."

Alice's experience as a refugee meant waiting was routine, along with the repetition of presenting documents to various agencies of the state in a bid to find out, "am I worthy?" Applying for housing at St Clement's, having to present herself as "vulnerable" and "in need," again supplying the right documents was "re-traumatising." However, Alice also understood how a secure, affordable, and good-quality home would enable her and her partner to take some control over the planning of major life events. Alice noticed how some in her peer group were having children due to support from well-off parents, and how that gave them more control over time. For Alice, that security blanket did not exist:

> It was very difficult to think about having a family in [an] unstable, leaking accommodation, it felt probably it would be a bit irresponsible…there wasn't a way to go, "Mum, you know I want to have a baby, that money you saved…."

Most households had considered the impact spatial displacement—moving from the place they called home—would have. Alice's ethnicity, faith, refugee history, and career in the charity sector are bound up with the neighbourhood she has lived in most of her life:

> I love to be in a city where I can buy cultural food, I want to be able to go to a shop and get my, you know, my bananas and beans….I wanna be able to do my hair locally, and get it braided…those are the things that become then compromised.

Like Alice, Nathalie did not experience slow violence passively, her experience illustrating how the polyrhythms of territorialisation, slow violence, and slow opposition are embodied within the same household. Nathalie and her partner lived in a two-bedroom shared ownership flat with "two girls, one gone through puberty, and a little boy sharing a bedroom." Though not born in East London, it is where they "put down roots and raise[d] children." While connections to the City came through their work and outside interests, at a neighbourhood level, having children meant "everything becomes very interconnected…your friends are through children and you're helping out the playgroup."

Territories are constructed from these every day relationships and the boundaries established (Brighenti, 2010), however porous. Families moving to St Clement's had similar frames of reference, some knowing each other from school or local dance classes. Interviewees spoke affectionately about their connections and the quality of relationships and spaces used, such as parks and nature reserves. Her family's housing situation led to Nathalie trying to take control over their impending displacement, working out:

> How much of a commute we could tolerate…looking, I mean, at mad places with no connection in terms of family or prior knowledge…a mathematical equation…what do we need to live? Where can we do that, [and] on what budget? And then I thought, this is insane.

Joining the CLT campaign, Nathalie embodied the feeling of it as "revolutionary…very exhilarating," while simultaneously, "it sucked up months and years of my life, not in a bad way but I think, you know, it sort of did have an impact on the family." Nathalie sensed progress being made but "temporal uncertainty" about the future and "displacement anxiety" remained (Westbrook et al., 2024). These were embodied, with the family still severely overcrowded, by Nathalie's partner experiencing poor mental health on top of existing health conditions. Even if the campaign for the homes to be built was successful, Nathalie knew, "there's no guarantee that there's a place for us."

Lisa has multi-generational roots in Tower Hamlets, both she and her partner grew up on council estates close to St Clements. With many of her family and friends moving out and herself unable to find somewhere secure and affordable, she felt what Fullilove (2020, p. 184) describes as "wounds" inflicted through "serial displacement…the truncation and dispersal of networks, and accumulation of sorrow." Without the secure council housing her parents enjoyed, the couple moved from one insecure rental to another, meaning they "never really put roots down, because we always thought, oh we might be moving." Meanwhile, with some considerable irony, streets like those where previous generations of Lisa's family lived are now designated conservation areas (London Borough of Tower Hamlets, 2017): "I look in the…estate agents' windows…someone's selling one of the properties down there and I'm like, it's [£]1.2 million! And I'm like, really?…it's just ridiculous."

Moving to the East End with the influx of other "intermediate workers," Gabriel and his partner made lasting connections in the neighbourhood they lived in, through schools, local facilities, and shops, but subsequent gentrification impacted their ability to inhabit the space, making it unrecognisable:

> It's nice to live in [a] bohemian area, nice shops or independent shops, bars…it's also nice sometimes not to have to pay almost £4 for a coffee [laughs]…can we just have a proper "caff," normal? And that is disappearing from that area quickly.

Several St Clements residents were able to take this nuanced view of the area's development, understanding the improvements brought by redevelopments while also mourning the loss of their neighbourhood's identity. They understood some of the new "performative codes," possessed some of the social capital and "cosmopolitan knowledge" (Bridge, 2007) but unlike those in Zaban's (2023) study, lacked the economic capital, or sometimes the will, to take advantage of mainstream redevelopment. Ella and John, attracted by East London's arts scene, cultural diversity, and relatively cheaper rent, had been housed for a while as part of a subsidised artist residency programme. Afterwards, they took up the option of property guardianship through an organisation offering affordable rents in exchange for "giving back" to the community through volunteering. John said living on an estate awaiting redevelopment brought "some unpleasantness…living on a semi-derelict site…kids tried to break into our house in the night." Ella meanwhile was concerned about complicity in others' "displacement [and] dispossession," while John feared being "co-opted into the gentrification of the area…these methods of housing tend to lean towards creative practitioners because they're on unstable wages."

While such property guardianship promises "homes," for Ella and John they provided a liminal space allowing only respite from ever-present "displacement anxiety." Ella described it as "like a broken record, every Sunday we would sort of circulate back to that question of where shall we go." However, with family, friends, and work all centring around London, the reasons for wanting to stay were "financial and kind of emotional and practical as well."

These examples highlight how the existing housing economy produces slow violence, building up over many years, gradually worsening as families grow, "unhoming" them as situations become intolerable, while "waiting" is a test of endurance: How long can the circumstances be tolerated before the option of displacement from the territory they are entangled with has to be taken? For some, the violence comes more quickly through an eviction notice disturbing an apparently secure situation, though the violence would have been accumulating, unseen in the impact of the economy and subsequent decisions being considered in the boardrooms of housing providers. The violence was embodied as stress and anxiety growing over time, often normalised, and as the next section shows, not fully appreciated until the stress was removed by moving to their new CLT homes.

4.3. Frequenting New Territory at St Clements

According to another former chair of London CLT, Phil, identifying St Clements as a potential site for a development provided an animating and energising moment:

> I always had a problem with the CLT that it was like this abstract concept…we then rooted it in a particular neighbourhood, [and] local people wanted to get involved with it….Families could see

> themselves in their cramped accommodation thinking, "oh, you could make that really nice, and we could live there."

Approaching the Greater London Authority with the idea, the site was put out to tender (Bunce, 2016; Smith, 2020). London CLT's original ambition was for the whole site to be a CLT, offering affordable housing for rent. However, this was discounted in discussions with development partners; housing economics and London CLT not being a registered social landlord meant a small percentage of the homes in the bid would be CLT homes and they would be for sale. A major construction company won the bid, but further lobbying produced a deal supported by London's mayor whereby 23 of the 252 homes were sold to London CLT at a cost allowing onward sales affordable to average-income earners in Tower Hamlets.

Lefebvre (1991, p. 103) argued that any alternative urban society needs a "practico-material base, a morphology" and London CLT wanted not just to build homes but to assemble an affective community, spreading its ethos. Geoff said residents would act as:

> A sort of animating group within the whole development…become the sort of movers and shakers to help other people to integrate and feel part of the community there….One of the things we did with the selection criteria…[was] to gauge whether the people would be a fit with what we were trying to do in the longer term, which was to develop [a] community.

London CLT's agreement with the developers included a community-planning refresh of their designs, while a film festival was hosted onsite. St Clements was a workhouse before it was a psychiatric hospital and Phil recognised the challenge:

> How do you take historically quite a sad place in the local community and reinvent its image as a welcoming one….The building became…a character within the campaign, you know, that we got people to associate with…it created relationships, people knew each other, they got involved…it became a feature of the neighbourhood.

Brighenti and Kärrholm (2020) describe such events as "animistic moments." After the long, slow opposition of the campaign, the territory reveals itself in "precise, punctual moments, with crucial morphogenetic import" (Brighenti & Kärrholm, 2020, p. 113). Further animistic moments followed when residents were selected and brought together for community-building events before moving in, shifting the emphasis to "frequentation." The new rhythms provide a stark contrast to those residents experienced where they lived before, with interviewees reflecting on the importance of the emotional and physical qualities of home (Richardson, 2019). Ray described the first few weeks:

> I remember each time you opened the door you just got that sound of that perfect seal around the door. And you got the smell of fresh paint. And it was, the carpet was so soft and clean…it's that new car smell, that new trainer smell, for ages, every time we opened the front door, just to get hit with that freshness.

Nathalie described the combination of factors constituting both her home and her territorial associations, while acknowledging the challenges for the Resident Management Company once they take responsibility: a transfer of power constantly postponed by the developer's perpetually delayed completion.

> It utterly transformed our lives. And although these problems, such as they are, they are a bit all-consuming at times…we have our own home, which is big enough, in the place that we've we set down roots 20 years ago, with, you know, a park, cemetery park down there, green space over there, the canal there, you know, the schools that, the friends, the neighbours, I mean, that's still there every day.

Nancy was able to move to a three-bedroom home and reflected on the benefits of being able to frequent the new space and the rhythms that her housing now affords:

> I feel now like I have a place which is home…where I can retreat and have my own space and recharge and rest….I walk to and from work pretty much every day up along the canal and back again….It really helps me decompress….I might be chewing things over but by the time I'm here, it's just like, home now, I can, I can just relax.

Lefebvre asked, "what is it that a buyer acquires when he [sic] purchases a space? The answer is time" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 356). Ella and John regained the time previously devoted to finding a solution to their dire housing circumstances. Ella reflected on "the security of not having to think, not having to devote any further emotional, intellectual labour on where do we live? That weight…being lifted, I felt different…a sense of life is a bit lighter."

For Ella, home "is my nest," allowing a more private performance of self than a public-facing job requires. Ella and John are one of four couples who had their first child after moving to St Clements, something that leaves less time for the functional and expressive aspects of territory: the formation of the Resident Management Company and organising community events. A full assessment of this aspect of life at St Clements is beyond this article's scope, however, frequentation of home and new territory establishment involves both affective, neighbourly relations, and the establishment of distance (Brighenti, 2010). While the developer's failure to relinquish power has provided a block on resident control, from a temporal perspective, most residents have experienced difficulties in accommodating their rhythms of involvement with "other rhythms and commitments of work, family or domestic life" (Lyon, 2019, p. 54). Alice though wants to avoid St Clements drifting towards slow accession to life's demands, calling for the rediscovery of the spirit of experimentation that saw its creation in the first place: "Let's continue…with the understanding and the openness that it might cause some crazy tension. But I think that's also good…sometimes just silence doesn't actually mean it's good….I'd love to support people to be able to experiment."

5. Discussion

The impact of the housing crisis on London's middle-income earners is "spatially dispersed," in pockets of the private-rented sector, shared ownership, key-worker accommodation, property guardianship, and in struggles to maintain increasing mortgage payments. Despite being more hidden than other forms, both in its diffusion and the apparent social privilege of its occupiers, Richardson and Moreira (2023, p. 11) argue that "this feeling of insecurity or lack of safety is a form of homelessness…'home' is lacking."

Applying a slow violence lens to examine the harm caused to those unable to secure a suitable home, and enduring housing conditions that could lead to poor physical and mental well-being, is part of a "structural 'violence turn'" in housing and health studies (Gurney, 2023, p. 237). Rather than being an outcome of

personal failure or poor life choices, limited housing options are attributed to the political economy of successive governments, the actions of corporations and the array of post-political partnerships (Poynter, 2009) that have engrained inequality into London's housing system. Setting St Clements in the context of the East End's development shows how decisions taken at the outset of industrialisation still shape the system today, adding to the understanding of violence as both slow and cumulative, with subsequent decisions reinforcing the status quo, widening the equality gap, and deepening urban trauma (Pain, 2019). The gap makes those without the protection of housing and financial wealth more susceptible to the occasional shock of "fast violence"—from global financial meltdowns to eviction threats.

It might be argued that it weakens the potency of a concept initially intended to highlight the plight of the world's poorest and marginalised, the "wretched of the earth" (Fanon, 2001), by its application to those who may earn upwards of £50 K per year in the metropolis. It is, however, a feature of slow violence that it often goes unrecognised, while simultaneously grinding people into submission. Rannila (2021, p. 239), who raises similar concerns about terminology, argues that "to understand the specificities of post-welfare housing, it needs to be regarded as processual, slow violence that occurs more in discourses, conditions and invisibilisations than in the direct acts of violence."

For interviewees, psychological temporal displacement arose from the feeling of precarity, articulated in endless conversations behind closed doors about where to move to when it is no longer financially sustainable to stay in a place they have come to call home. This was in addition to the known health impacts of overcrowding and poor conditions. St Clements came along at the right time to prevent spatial dispersal to places without the same connections. For many others before, and since, it would have been that or continuing to endure the harm inflicted on them. Gurney (2023) argues that while social harm offers radically new ways of thinking about the meaning of home, a rallying cry for action, and a way of evaluating housing and health policies, more work is needed to refine the conceptualisations. The findings of this article would support that call.

Terminology describing the housing crisis will always be important. Meek (2024, p. 11) argues that language can disguise the calculated structuring of the housing and political economy as natural occurrences: a "perfect storm" to describe the factors behind the "current surge of homelessness," for example. Despite all that is known about the impact of the 1980s deregulation of financial markets, the right-to-buy, failure to build enough houses, and the financialisation and gentrification of social housing in London, Meek (2024, p. 11) argues that the reverberations of the housing crisis are "so sharp, the contingent symptoms so extreme and various, that it seems like a vast natural phenomenon…a tsunami." This vastness of the problem and urgency of finding solutions can raise doubts about whether the slow opposition represented by CLTs is worth advocating for, falling back instead on solutions of speed and volume in planning and housebuilding. In their 2024 pre-election manifesto, the incoming Labour Government prioritised injecting speed into the planning process, pledging both to "ensure local communities continue to shape housebuilding" and to use "intervention powers to build the houses we need" (The Labour Party, 2024, p. 36). While the latter may open new tensions between developers and local residents, in March 2025, the Government ended a period of financial uncertainty by announcing a £20 million funding scheme to support new CLH developments (UK Government, 2025). Meanwhile, following an investigation, the London Assembly's Housing Committee has produced a report calling for more land and finance to support CLH in the capital (London Assembly, 2025).

While this one case study does not allow for empirical generalisation, it does allow for theoretical generalisation (Yin, 2013), especially when "triangulated" with similar analyses of London CLT's Citizens House development (Read, 2025; Read et al., 2024). Applicants there were similarly affected by the impact of slow violence in southeast London, and as with those who moved to St Clements, lacked control over time leading to the forced endurance of unsatisfactory housing situations. They reaped the benefits of moving to a CLT home made possible by the slow opposition of local campaigners over an 11-year period. However, the aim of this article is not necessarily to make a claim that CLTs have a greater place in housing strategies but to argue that their approaches are worth further consideration, especially, in the case of London CLT, in the way that may provide an affordable solution to the impact of slow violence for those on middle incomes. While the benefits residents have found could be delivered by other housing forms or changes of circumstances, this need is currently poorly met. Affordability and security often mean spatial displacement, while maintaining a sense of belonging may involve enduring unsuitable conditions (Read & Emery-Wright, 2023).

While their process of land development itself is not inherently slower, since St Clements, London CLT has built only 11 more homes: a total of 34 in the 17 years since their 2007 formation. It is not for want of trying, and there are several schemes at various stages of planning, as there are for other CLTs in the capital (CLH London, n.d.). However, to date, only one other CLT, the Rural Urban Synthesis Society, has built homes in London: 38 in Lewisham taking 15 years from conception to completion (Rural Urban Synthesis Society, 2024). Again, these should not be considered failures on behalf of the CLTs but an indication that a focus on genuine community involvement, relationship building, and collaborative design and build approaches are out of kilter with the approach of the mainstream market, state, and housing association providers (Jarvis, 2015). The current pace may also represent a slow start while adapting to the changing policy and fiscal environment, but could be a gradually gathering momentum, having "broken-the-ground" with their initial developments.

CLTs in London are reliant on land in public ownership being donated free or cheaply to ensure affordable homes are built. If public bodies are not building on the land themselves, they are bound by the impact of austerity and financial rules that bind them to "best consideration" for the value of the land (UK Government, 2003). This may change given the recent Government announcement and the recommendation of the London Assembly's Housing Committee. However, ending housing inequality requires disruption at far more significant scales, across all tenures, if the violence is not to grind slowly and inexorably on.

6. Conclusion

This study shows the relevance of slow violence and slow opposition to territorial dynamics and housing inequalities across scales in East London, using St Clements to analyse the effects of a CLT approach on the lived experiences of residents earning average incomes. Relief from the slow violence of the housing crisis came from having a home that met their household needs: allowed them privacy, was affordable, of decent quality, safe, and provided long-term security for themselves and their families. They have prolonged their sense of belonging to the neighbourhood they call home, gained greater control over time, which is no longer marked by endurance, and built new relationships with those they now share space with. Even at a discount, buying property has meant buying time (Lefebvre, 1991). Slow violence and slow opposition came together for the 23 households, producing an energetic period of animistic moments which has since slowed to a pace determined by how each household wants to frequent their territory. For most, rhythms

of family, work and social lives dominate, and the everyday conviviality amongst neighbours is highly valued. Having gained their "right to the city" through a foothold in the capital, new temporal bridges are being forged between the rhythms of the CLT's public sphere, and their familial, work, and social rhythms. Building and nurturing meaningful place-based relationships takes time (the rupture of which in gentrification, is one of the harms resulting from slow violence) and the long-term ethos promoted by London CLT (slow opposition and community curation) perhaps embodies temporal impositions that may be at variance with some rhythms of the couples and families they offer the chance of home to. If slow violence is to be countered by more than slow opposition, the lessons of what works in these small experimental schemes need to be learned, and understanding the significance of their poly-rhythmic integrations may offer a revealing starting point.

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Data Availability

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

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About the Authors

Robert Read recently completed his PhD at ARU on residents' experiences in two urban Community Land Trusts in London. He is a research associate at the Suffolk Sustainability Institute, focusing on the private rented sector and its links to health and well-being. Formerly in local government for 30 years, his roles spanned housing, community development, and neighbourhood management. A chartered CIH member, his research interests include housing and health, and the meaning of home and community.

NezHapi-Dellé Odeleye is an urbanist with 18 years of experience across the private, third, and public sectors—as an architect, community planner, and principal planner in policy and projects. She is the course director for the MSc town planning and was previously the faculty director for research students. Her research spans sustainable design and the spatio-temporalities of Indigenous urbanism in urban design complexity. Recent work explores generative justice, planners' legacy and agency in sustainable urbanism, and how media tech shapes identity and future place-making.

Alison Hirst teaches and researches in the area of organisation studies. She has published research on the role of spaces, places, and material objects in organising, based on ethnographic or other qualitative methods. Her current research focuses on how people acquire agency through their associations with the material world. She has published in organisation studies, gender, work and organisation, and public administration and organisation.

Alison Pooley leads the Sustainable Healthy Communities theme within the Suffolk Sustainability Institute. Alison has extensive experience within higher education, particularly within built environment disciplines. Prior to her academic career, Alison worked as a housing officer in East London before retraining in architecture, where she practised for several years. Her current research focuses on community-led housing, resilience, health, and equity, bringing her professional practice full circle to address issues of provision and performance.

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