



Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series (KESS)

...is a forum that encourages debate on a wide range of research findings, with the overall aim of promoting evidence-based policy and law-making within Northern Ireland



A Fresh Look at Community Engagement and Regeneration: Toward Good Practice and Innovative Policy in Northern Ireland

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Where development is top-down or seen as counter to local visions, “spatial conflicts can develop, based on “struggles of inequality [...and] collective resistance to processes of gentrification, discrimination and exclusion.”

Di Masso et al. (2011)

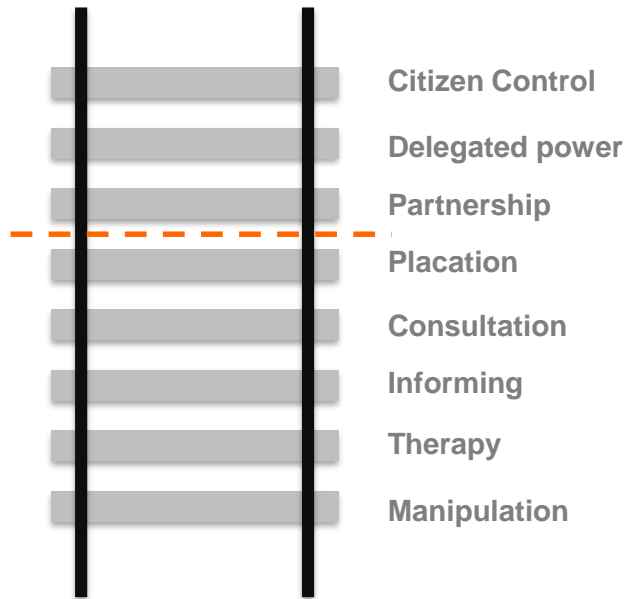
Briefing Overview and Aims

- Context: Public-private development processes lacking effective public engagement can result in perceptions of pre-determined outcomes.
- Case Studies: Public-focused events, organised by the authors, with communities responding to major regeneration project proposals.
- Focus: Impact of Low-cost, incremental, locally-based events to actively engage with communities and gain data to better inform policy.
- Method: Comparisons with Statutory developer-led processes via questionnaires and surveys with observational, anecdotal analysis.
- Aims: Contribute to planning policy development and best practice for more effective, grounded public engagement strategies and outcomes.



Background: Planning and Participation

What model of community engagement & participation is the right one?



Whether development projects are driven by local communities or through private, market-driven frameworks, many actors play a role in shaping the physical and socio-cultural or economic character of new buildings and public-spaces.

Past experience has shown that massive investment can be made in building or refurbishing residential or business property with very little impact on local people. (Social Exclusion Unit 2000, 29)

'Ladder of Citizen Participation' – Journal of the Institute of American Planners, 34, no.4, 1969

NI Planning Policy Changes since 2015

From June 2016 applicants for 'major' projects must submit evidence of having completing a pre-application consultation process, including to:

- (a) hold at least one public event in the locality in which the proposed development is situated where members of the public may make comments to the prospective applicant as regards the proposed development; and*
- (b) publish in a newspaper circulating in the locality in which the proposed development is situated a notice containing [a specified list of required information] (The Planning Order (NI) 2015)*

NI Councils set out the key stages for public engagement and inform the community of how and when they can become involved.

Regeneration powers - affecting the funding and procurement of key major projects - remain with the regional Department of [Communities].



A Fresh Start: Engagement Objectives

THE STORMONT AGREEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN 2015

Launched by the then *Northern Ireland* Executive and the UK and Irish governments, the Agreement aimed to be a “far-reaching and comprehensive framework” for addressing some of the most challenging and intractable issues that impact upon communities. (Executive Office NI 2015, 5)

“Draft Guidelines On Good Practice In Public Consultation-Engagement” to:

- **Enhance decision-making;**
- **Improve the acceptability of decisions reached;**
- **Build capacity internally and externally for improved relationships and stakeholder input to political processes.**

“...a resolve to defend core public services, to attract foreign direct investment, support indigenous businesses and to provide better jobs particularly for our young people.” **Still relevant to policy and relations!**



Arguing for Inclusive + Shared Places

Like more successful urban spaces and regeneration schemes that are open and accessible, consultation can aim for the widest diversity of stakeholders and stakeholder knowledge versus more closed and exclusive frameworks.

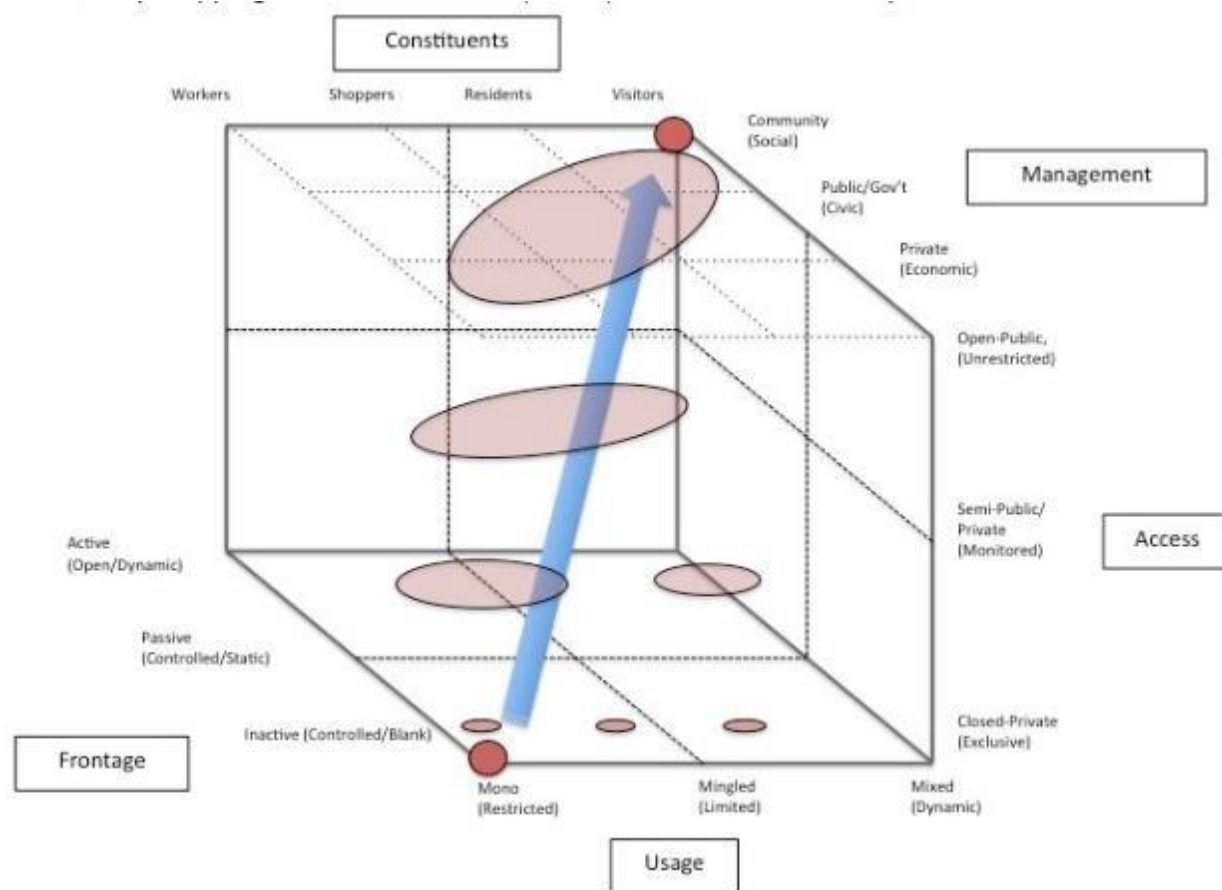
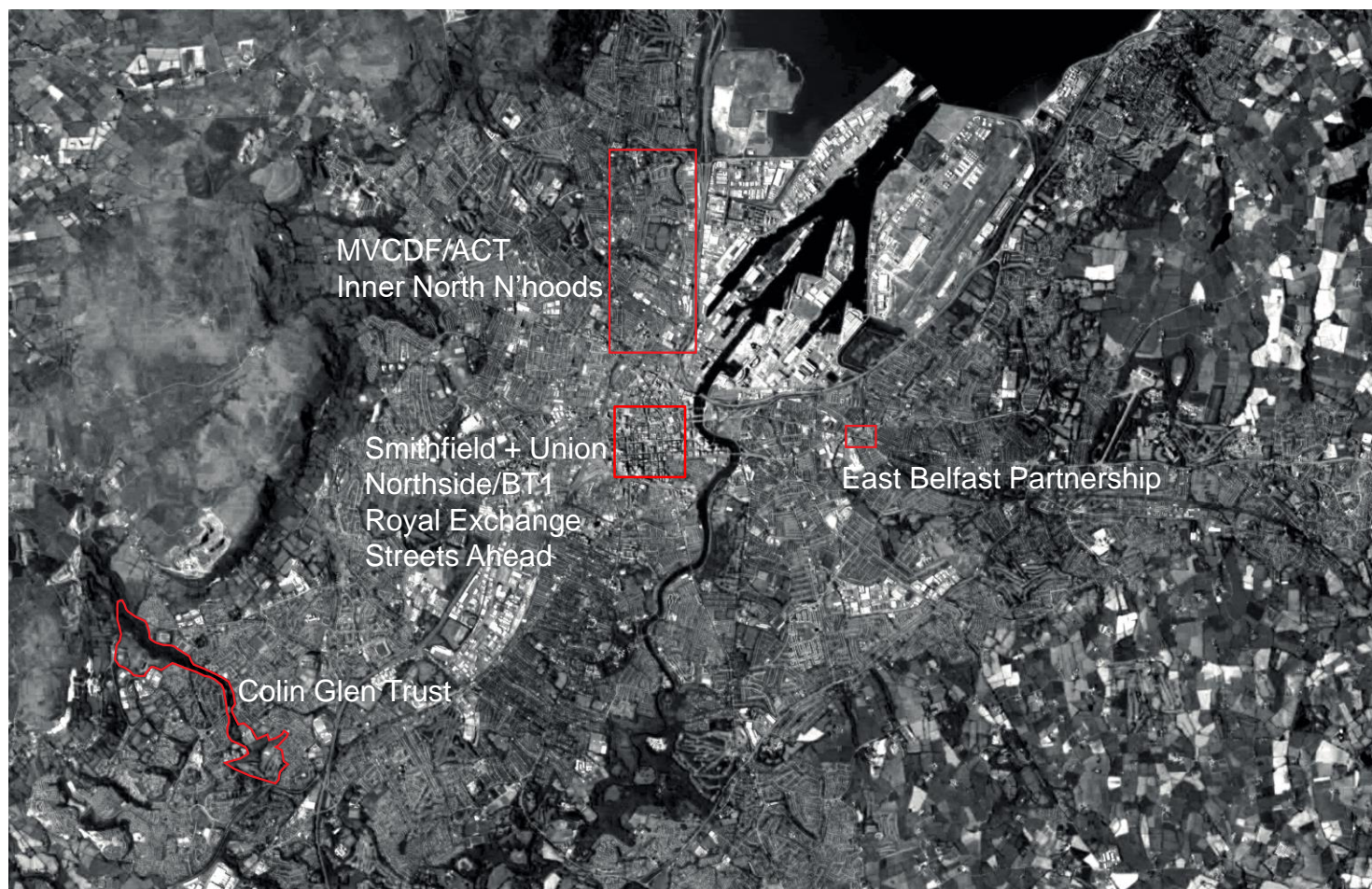


Image: City space qualities – more open versus closed urban places that can be akin to consultation (Golden et al. 2015)

Community-led Policy Research



Lessons from Failed Processes

£300m Northside development in chaos as DSD announces review (2016)



Dear Occupier,

Northside Regeneration is currently shaping plans for a mixed use development in the area around the University of Ulster's new campus on York Street which will take forward the objectives identified by the Department for Social Development's Northside Urban Village Regeneration Plan.

We are keen to share our draft proposals with local residents and hear your views.

A public exhibition of initial plans will be on display at Belfast Central Library from Monday 20 October to Saturday 25 October 2014. Library opening hours are as follows: Monday - Thursday: 9:30am - 8:00pm; Friday: 9:30am - 5:30pm and Saturday: 9:30am - 4:30pm. Feedback on the proposals can be provided by filling in a comment card and placing it in the comment box at the exhibition.

Alternatively, comments can be submitted by visiting www.northsidereregeneration.org, by email to info@northsidereregeneration.org or in writing to - Northside Regeneration, 46 Colágen Park, Belfast BT9 6HH.

Representatives of the development team will be available to discuss the plans at two open events, and all members of the public are welcome to attend:

DATE	TIME	VENUE
Monday 20 October 2014	5.00pm - 8.00pm	Belfast Central Library (Ground floor)
Saturday 25 October 2014	10.00am - 1.00pm	Royal Avenue, Belfast BT1 1EA

The closing date to submit comments is **Friday 31 October 2014 at 5.00pm**.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Ian Woosley



“...the whole project should be scrapped and all stakeholders called back to the drawing board to plan regeneration with the interests of everyone central to any new plans.”

Carrick Hill Residents Association, North Belfast News, 29 January 2016



Case Studies: Activentions

Positive and temporary occupations of/events in public spaces.

- A mix of activism and spatial intervention, i.e. experimentation.
- Collaborative events with volunteers, local businesses, and authorities.
- Open-ended events without a pre-determined design proposal.
- A series of conversations, observations, and social-political interaction.
- Triangulation: Activities that allow new connections amongst strangers.
- Collecting and sharing development data through social engagement.



Place-Mapping, Occupations, Exhibits



Briefing Events & Landscape Mapping

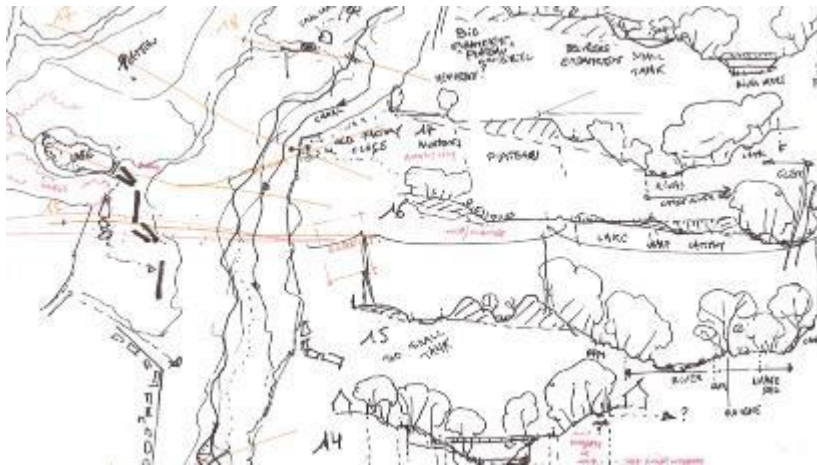


57
OUTDOOR MUSIC EVENT

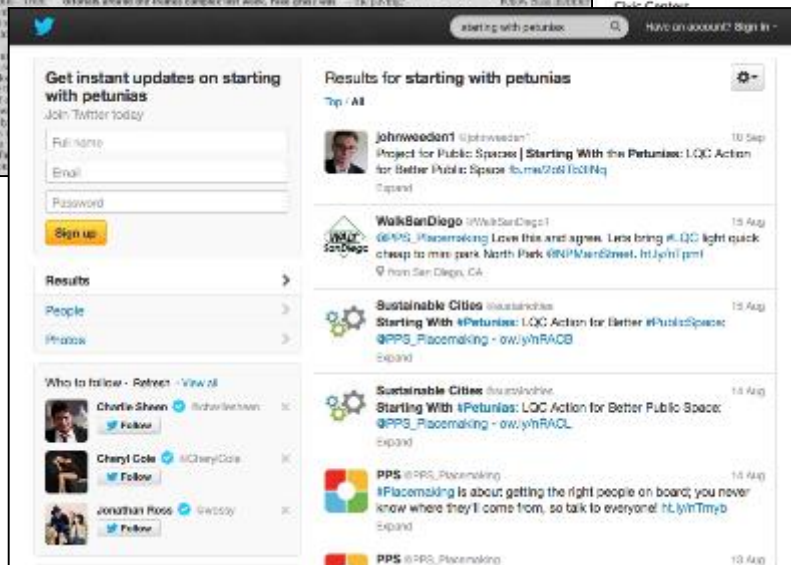
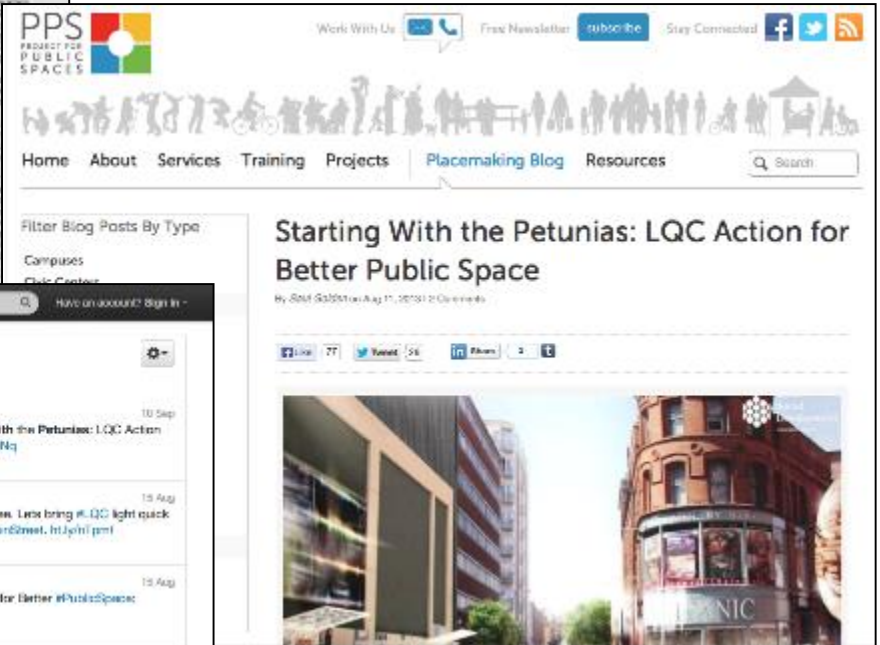


Time taken to deliver	3
Cost to Deliver	2
Local economy	3
Wow factor	5
Ecological footprint	2
Social capital	2

PROPOSAL
MEANINGLESS USE



Publicity & Engagement via Social Media



Evaluative Surveys: Scope-Structure

Anonymous surveys with:

- Members of the Public
- Design and Planning Professionals
- Representatives of Statutory Organisations
- Representatives of Voluntary Organisations
- Students
- Academics from Ulster University and Queen's University Belfast
- Local Business owners and employees.

Qualitative feedback with open and closed questions:

- involvement in consultation and project proposals,
- sources of information about development,
- reasons for responding or not responding to traditional consultation,
- priorities for investment and development impacting public space,
- perceptions of the pop-up street event and project exhibitions,
- comments on statutory consultations and
- quality of the public realm.

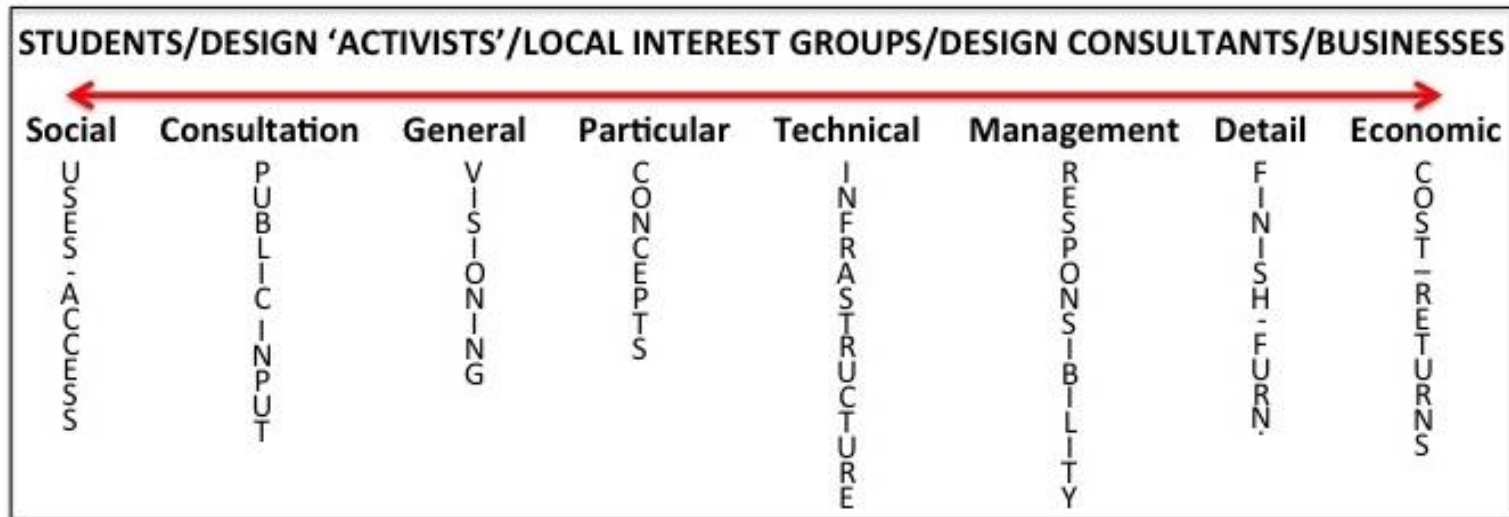


Responses and Analysis

- A lack of engagement, awareness, and/or access to the information and feedback exists through traditional and online processes.
- Performative tactics can be a viable and economically efficient way for the public to contribute to strategic planning and design consultation at earlier stages of (re)development considerations.

Golden (2014)

Data showed a wide range of priorities from feedback on major development.



Wide spread of knowledge on development priorities from active approaches (Source: Authors 2018)

Further Findings

Responses reflected a predominant, but not exclusive, view that:

- ‘Pop-up’ and less-formal type events can be more effective than pre-selected or advanced proposals from design teams for consultation.
- Some members of the public and business had concerns negative comments to major projects might thwart any/all inward investment.
- Avoid “expert” trap. Experts were often seen as alienating to lay people, cutting off opportunities for deeper conversation and local knowledge.
- One never knows where the ‘right’ people will come from, or who represents “a community” so it’s best to talk to everyone if possible.
- Earlier engagement processes would be valuable to build deeper understandings of local issues rather than aiming for ‘buy-in’.
- Early stage consultation should have a greater emphasis on strategies rather than visualisations of pre-designed proposals.

Concluding Thoughts & Actions

Good management techniques and lessons from inclusive places can enhance economic, social, and environmental design decision-making.

ACTION 1: To address current failings, future policy reviews on major project planning should include strategic re-consideration on the extent of evidence of, and guidance for, earliest stage consultation.

ACTION 2: To help avoid aborted time & capital expenditure (social & financial) Best Practice should promote wider use of inclusive, active approaches, with managed processes to evaluate public data quality.

Where client, community, and statutory organisations jointly articulate planning, design and building aspirations through more interactive processes the result can be improved local buy-in and decision-making capacity (revisit Fresh Start objectives).

Thank you.





Northern Ireland
Assembly



Queen's University
Belfast



The Open
University



Ulster
University

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