This issue of The Unlimited Edition has been printed locally by Aldgate Press, with recycled paper by local supplier Paperback.

Many thanks to all our contributors for their hard work.

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The Unlimited Edition

Issue I – Survey
This newspaper, The Unlimited Edition, is specifically dedicated to High Street 2012.

Over the summer months of 2011 we are publishing three issues of this paper intersecting high streets.

This stretch of road is an arterial route for many Londoners and visitors. Mile End Road has two main functions – that of connecting the City at the familiar, at a route that is so often travelled and so rarely celebrated. At the same time it is – and I believe that the historical nature of our high streets is the integral part of any critical survey. With this paper we hope to draw your attention to aspects of the High Street that you might otherwise have missed.

Articulate has provided with us just such a diversion, a survey of local halls, whose particular nature might cause you to think twice next time you pass the renowned Weigh House Bell. Ben Pearce, Historic Buildings Officer for Tower Hamlets Council, also gives us his personal perspective on some of the restoration works that form part of the wider heritage nexus of the High Street 2012 initiative. Whitechapel Market may hold new delights for you once you have inspired the stallsholders as part of the site’s ‘Happy Flower’ card game, as Harriet Haseler has done, or considered socially guided tours.

As with any survey, something is bound to be missed: the photo you just took, or the story you didn’t tell. We can not hope to accurately map the High Street, but we do hope that this issue of The Unlimited Edition will represent a fragment of the diversity of this vibrant route. We hope you will agree that it is a worthy subject for your attention, and deserves more consideration than a just fleeting visit.

Even with the offer of building grants, some people will not want to take part. Indeed many owners say that the historic nature of their building is a burden that they can ill afford to keep up.

Ben Pearce, Historic Buildings Officer for Tower Hamlets Council, twice next time you pass the renowned Weigh House Bell, is an architect and a local history from a personal perspective, the fact that these old buildings remain a drawback.

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Through this open and collaborative method of content collection, The Unlimited Edition encourages you to look again at the familiar, at a route that is so often travelled and so rarely celebrated. The Unlimited Edition is curated by WeMadeThat. All three initial issues of the paper will be distributed for free by We Made That. All three initial issues of the paper will be distributed for free by We Made That.

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High streets are real places – resilient, adaptable, and a living story of the different communities that live there, trade there and shop there. Buildings that were once loved are now dilapidated and have lost their sense of identity; but sometimes buildings that spent years being bland and unnoticed have been restored to their former glory, so businesses have come and gone.

I believe unveiling the history of the high street is key to its future success. Why do people go to the high street any more? I think that it is convenient. I don’t believe it is better to go a mall, get it all in one place. Indeed many owners say that the historic nature of their building is a burden that they can ill afford to keep up.

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Helen Ottaway, Introduces the project and tells us what to expect in the coming months leading up to June 2012.

Church bells – bicycle bells – door bells – bus bells – hand bells – shop bells – telephone bells – finger bells – anklet bells – boxing ring bells – school bells – the bell is everywhere and has many functions and meanings. It punctuates our daily life announcing beginnings and ends. It is used to attract attention or sound a warning; announcing beginnings and ends; it is used to mean something: it punctuates our daily life.

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There will be many ways for people to get involved in the project from sharing their story or contributing a bell sound to taking part in the final performance or simply by using the ring tone.

Helen Ottaway, Artmusic

Ring Ring Bell

The Ring Ring Bell project by Artmusic forms part of the High Street 2012 Heritage, Culture and Community Grants programme. In this article lead artist, Helen Ottaway, introduces the project and tells us what to expect in the coming months leading up to June 2012.

Ring Ring Bell is an exploration of bells along the High Street documenting and recording their sounds and their uses: their stories and histories. Bells of all sizes and from different cultures will come together in a new audio work and a ring tone to be created.

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There will be many ways for people to get involved in the project from sharing their story or contributing a bell sound to taking part in the final performance or simply by using the ring tone.
The area around Aldgate is characterised by employment use to the west and residential uses to the east. The form of the basis for marked contrast across the area, although the reality of how people live and work here is more nuanced. The denouement of these uses patterns has been carefully explored in the Aldgate Public Realm Strategy which reveals hidden links between these apparently divided areas of London. An excerpt of the study has been included here.

The City of London is the workplace for many thousands of skilled workers in the financial services sector. They work in high employment densities. Plot ratios are high, but so is construction quality. Streets are mostly narrow, but they are well maintained and traffic volume is low. Pedestrian movements are high at peak hours and public spaces are popular for individual and collective winding down at lunchtime and early evening.

By contrast, Spitalfields and Whitechapel are predominantly residential areas, with high levels of overcrowding. A number of the wards count amongst the most deprived in the country. The demographic profile of the area is young. There is a low provision of open space per head of population, and relatively little targeted for young people. These contrasts amount in places to stark separation with little sign of common ground. Differences between the two areas have been exaggerated by the disconnection caused by the gynnery, to the extent that they have come to be seen as two totally disparate and distant areas.

However, the reality of Aldgate’s social dynamics is less clear-cut and more interdependent than might be assumed. A number of the workers and residents cross this ‘border’ on a daily basis. City workers and residents from the Portakal Ward using local Tower Hamlets’ rental, amenities and the East London Mosque and madrassas in the east. Renters from Tower Hamlets using community infrastructure in the City of London, e.g. children attending Sir John Cass primary school.

The distribution of retail, workspace, and amenities north vary in the degree of activity they support, and consequently in terms of safety. Whitechapel / Old Street remains busy. Commercial Street is animated by little more than passing traffic, and Toynbee Street / Osborn Street is generally deserted. These contrasts amount in places to stark separation between the two areas. The relative lack of retail diversity south of Aldgate / Whitechapel High Street and Commercial Road is evident in the evening. The relative lack of services south of Aldgate / Whitechapel High Street and Commercial Road is also evident in the evening.

This study is taken from the Aldgate Public Realm Strategy, authored by General Public Agency and Gillian Thomas and completed in 2010. It was funded by European Preparations and Development Fund. The lead public sector client was Design for London. The larger grant group comprised of London Boroughs (Hammersmith & Fulham, Cann Hall / Studios are all open, the street market on Petticoat Lane (Wentworth Street) is active. The connections northwards to Liverpool Street, Spitalfields Market and Brick Lane are well-paved and appear safe. There is a noticeable drop-off in pedestrian activity south of Aldgate / Whitechapel High Street and Commercial Road, with the Tower of London’s 18 million visitors per year having a visible impact on services in the area. Concern was expressed by residents in consultation at this point of the Aldgate Masterplan over the loss of retail diversity. However, the retail provision along Whitechapel Road to the east of Aldgate Masterplan, appears to be slowly becoming more diverse.

On a weekday, the City Fringe between Bishopsgate and Whitechapel High Street is both active and diverse. The major institutions of London Metropolitan University, the Whitechapel, and Toynbee Hall / Studios are all open, the street market on Petticoat Lane (Wentworth Street) is active. The connections northwards to Liverpool Street, Spitalfields Market and Brick Lane are well-paved and appear safe. There is a noticeable drop-off in pedestrian diversity south of Aldgate / Whitechapel High Street and Commercial Road, with the Tower of London’s 18 million visitors per year having a visible impact on services in the area. Concern was expressed by residents in consultation at this point of the Aldgate Masterplan over the loss of retail diversity. However, the retail provision along Whitechapel Road, to the east of Aldgate Masterplan, appears to be slowly becoming more diverse.

With the City quiet at weekends, street markets dominate the City Fringe on Sundays, stretching from Petticoat Lane to Broadway Market, via Brick Lane and Columbia Road (although the street market at Whitechapel is closed). Spitalfields Market and the Truman Brewery have successfully inserted themselves into this Sunday network. Petticoat Lane takes over much of Middlesex Street on Sundays, stretching from Petticoat Lane to Whitechapel / Old Street. The evening / night-time economy is represented largely by pubs, bars and restaurants, within the City, and in particular in Brick Lane. The Whitechapel and Toynbee Studios are both active in the evening (the former once a week, as it is part of the ‘First Thursdays’ late opening programme), but with little else open in the immediate vicinity to service (or benefit from) these barbers’ visitors. The streets around the Petticoat Lane street market in the day are quiet, and do not support evening uses at present (unless e.g. Chapel Street Market in Islington). The routes from the north vary in the degree of activity they support, and consequently in terms of safety. Whitechapel / Old Street remains busy. Commercial Street is animated by little more than passing traffic, and Toynbee Street / Osborn Street is generally deserted. The relative lack of services south of Aldgate / Whitechapel High Street and Commercial Road is also evident in the evening.

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The Self-Tormentor

Esme Fieldhouse & Stephen Mackie

Tonight, there is an encounter between two unlikely characters. Or rather, two personalities are laughably in opposition. It would be difficult to spot of course, their similarities being far more significant than their differences. This is a quote from a 1971 Redevelopment Study of nearby South Shorelodge, which concluded that the existing buildings should not be pulled down (as planned) but that it was necessary to reorganize and adaptively redevelop them. Instead what was needed was ‘to improve the structure, convenience and efficiency of these areas of employment and thus foster and enhance the prospects of the many businesses and their work force. A resurgence of spirit is reflected in the regeneration propagated by High Street 2012, and in the current moment of activity in urbanisation which values existing strengths, address these need, and catalyses character rather than trying to replace it.

At Publica, we run a Community Interest Company and consultancy through which we conduct detailed surveys in order to understand the physical, social, cultural and symbolic landscape of places, often where change is anticipated or planned. Our tool is one of a topography of places - desks, chairs, filing cabinets, exchange shops. Seemingly banal office experiences beyond view. Lives were once consolidated land ownership. Much investment has taken place in new buildings in the past twenty years and this too has been pieced together, check by check with older worn out papers. — Michael Thwaite

“Part of a topography that stretches to the other side of the tarmac here”

“Call for Submissions

We are seeking articles for future issues of The Unlimited Edition. The newspapers will include speculation about the High Street and proposals for its future.

Proposals may be informative, revealing, outlandish, or hopefully all of these. Please send article proposals to: studionewalne@gmail.com

“The surveys always throw up surprises. In Aldgate, General Public Agency, discovered that despite a historic ‘light’ edge condition dividing the City and Tower Hamlets, thousands of people travel daily west-east to attend prayer at the East London Mosque. For a wider-areas survey around a site on the border of Spitalfields and Aldgate the Publica team documented the extent of privately controlled ‘public space’. During a survey of Aldgate for London Metropolitan, it was discovered that some residents live, work and shop in a very confined area — with differing social, cultural-economic and health implications. Change is invisible in city and in the neighbourhood along High Street 2012, but the thinking is for development to be respectful and contribute positively. It’s right that developers now have to do more than just provision on site and develop, but with that comes a responsibility to respect existing neighbourhood. So if a survey can be a starting point of a conversation about a place before change is even considered, then it can help the community to come first.”
An Open Top Tour

**East London by Bus**

Laure Oldfield Ford & Douglas Murphy

Douglas Murphy: Thank you very much. As Andrew says I’m an architectural writer so I’ll probably be attempting to provide some kind of critical framework for Laurel’s subjective rants.

**LDF:** Just going past the mosque now. There were plans to have a mosque mega-mosque in east London very near the Olympic site. There was a very small mosque just next to the Olympic site just near the Greenway Northern Outfall which was branded the ‘mega-mosque’ like the mosque we’ve just passed here, which has expanded massively in the last few years. There’s an Islamic learning centre, Islamic apartments where the old Atlantis building wise – a massive development there.

**DM:** On the left here is the best visual joke in London, which is the small house that breaks up the Whitechapel department store. Basically in the early 20th Century developers wanted Mile End to be the Oxford Street of east London and a lot of money was pumped into Mile End. When we go there now you’ll see it’s mostly a building site – mostly ruins.

**LDF:** We’re just approaching the Queen Victoria estate just a bit further along here. I think that’s the storage unit that was one of the first galleries to move into the east end and really started up a new art movement. The estate was, to use that horrible word, ‘squatting’ and it was very near the Olympic site just a bit further along here. I think that was one of the first galleries to move into the east end and really started up a new art movement.

**DM:** The People’s Palace used to be on the left, but it was demolished in the mid-20th Century. This yellow bridge we’re approaching was designed by the architect Piers Gough in the late 1990s, which is part of a longer park that joins up Mile End park with the Limehouse Cut and other such locations.

**LDF:** It’s meant to form the link in the green chain but it’s never really been made.

This area is one of the first areas to take up on urban regeneration. The Whitechapel department store, Mile End Road.

Laura Oldfield Ford: Hello, thank you for coming. The first thing I should say is that I’m not really a tour guide as such. I’m an artist so what I’m going to do is to try and provide some kind of critical framework for Laurel’s subjective rants.

**DM:** I would just agree with what Laurel says. Stylistically I think the Ocean Estate is quite reworkable for being possibly the widest selection of architecture, housing architecture, in 20th Century history. As Laurel says, from the 1930s through to contemporary stuff. Not much stuff that you’d put of as an architect to be honest – but then you go.

**DM:** This was once the site of Walter Besant’s People’s Palace, which was iron and glass building which was built by Walter Besant for the people of Mile End. He was a writer – a Victorian writer, who drew attention to the plight of the urban poor in the east end. A very classic 19th century type character.

And then there’s also the Dockside library, which I’ve recently been informed that has a dedication to King Leopold II of Belgium which is not so.

And there’s a number of late 20th Century student halls of residence by various workhorses of the British architecture scene. And a few spots of ramshackle 21st Century digital architecture as well, which are not particularly great but show a wide variety.

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There are 27 African textile shops on the west side of Wentworth Street, where the boundary between Commercial and Middlesex Streets. Unlike the orderly changing facades of the street market, the textile shops adhere to a strict menu of specialization and tradition: Swahili, Brocade, Lace, Geometric, Jacquard, Cupion, Guineas, Dutch Wax. The fabrics were originally produced in Western Europe for an African market. Claims to provenance are prominently displayed in gold-lettered labels on packaging and printed direct into the fabric margins: ‘Real Dutch Wax’, ‘Swiss Jacquard’, ‘Brocade factories’, ‘Cottage, Kilburn and Peckham’. The largest source of integration in Nigeria to London began in the late 1950s.

Export sales to Africa in particular to the Border of Switzerland and the Historic source of Swiss Voile used in African commercial dress. The quality of fabric – no machine stitching on its social distinctions. The wholesale market in Manchester is maintained by a network of local distributors, enabling the Chis Group to secure both in Africa, where Real Dutch Wax carries similar ideas and fears to those that persist in Europe and destined exclusively for Africa is possibly unique, the relationship might soon be obsolete. While Wentworth Street traders still claim to source all their fabrics from Europe, peripheral traces of Asian supply are found in textile shops along the street including large zigzag delivery loops on non-English language labels. These goods are seen in textile shops along the street market.

While the trade of goods manufactured in Europe and destined exclusively for the African community in London, particularly Nigerians, who live predominantly in Europe and the US today. While the trade of goods manufactured in Europe is driven by the integration of new development. The key production facilities are located in the factory towns of Helmond, Holland. The design team is based in Manchester, with a team of 120, including 60 senior technicians from Holland to supervise its Dutch Wax print manufacture. The Dutch Wax print manufacture is headquartered in Manchester in order to assist customers who wish to locate the market.

In order to assist customers who wish to locate a branch of Rolls-Royce in Lagos, producing Dutch Wax prints have. While textile designers and engineers are brought together in the local market. The integration of the supply chain, including local technical liaison with the many textile mills in West Africa and access to an extensive network of local distributors, enables the Chis Group to secure both in Africa, where Real Dutch Wax carries similar ideas and fears to those that persist in Europe.

The impact of the London Congestion Charge on Wentworth Street traders may be relatively beneficial. Chis Group now holds the major market share of the African wax print market, formerly held by Unilever (UP), which sold their share of the market to Vlisco in 1994. Exports of African textiles are moving into Dutch Wax fabrics branded and copper print rollers from Manchester to Akosombo, Ghana – a multi-million pound business. Chis Group has 5,000 employees, mostly in Africa, and also owns United Nigerian Textile (Pty) in Lagos, producing Dutch Wax prints. While the natural integration of the supply chain, including local technical liaison with the many textile mills in West Africa and access to an extensive network of local distributors, enables the Chis Group to secure both in Africa, where Real Dutch Wax carries similar ideas and fears to those that persist in Europe.

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Philipp Ebeling


The strategy was funded by Exemplar Properties and the lead public sector client was Design for London. The larger client group comprised of London Borough Tower Hamlets, Corporation of London, London Metropolitan University, Transport for London and Whitechapel Art Gallery. General Public Agency was run by Clare Cumberlidge and Lucy Musgrave, now of Clare Cumberlidge & Co and Publica respectively. Images © Philipp Ebeling

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The Unlimited Edition is typeset in Ursus (Beta) by Andrew Osman. The design is informed by vernacular London lettering, including tiled signage from LCC housing, an alphabet from Truman’s public houses and ultimately Johnston, the London Underground font that is synonymous with the city. The two-line treatment used to set the titles is an homage to the old Royal Mail logo, the Eastern District Post Office maintaining a large presence on Whitechapel Road.
The whole idea of talking about urban riots in relationship to architecture and urban planning was actually not an idea that came out of myself, but it was an idea that was forced upon us. What I want to show you this morning is a distillation of a lecture series that I've been giving over the last year. It's an attempt at distilling about eight hours of lectures into 25 minutes. I'm trying to use this background to get the conversation started over the UK riots. The riots that we have been studying specifically, the case studies for the lecture series, were all in the post-war period. The first were the riots that destroyed Detroit in '67, then we looked at the Broadwater Farm Riot – just to take one riot from this period of rioting in the early '80s in England. We looked at the Los Angeles riots, the Justice Riots, or the Rodney King Riots in '92, and then of course we looked at the Banlieue riots in the fall of 2005. These last riots, they were the reason for even starting this research. These were riots which happened on the 'horizon' of Paris, way away from the centre of Paris, where everything exploded, in something that also seemed like mindless violence. Communities destroying their own – not so much shops in Paris – but you could say at least as sad – they started destroying their own schools, their own daycare centres, their own primary schools. So it was this same kind of self-mutilation of communities that you could see [as in London], but this time it was 'safely' away in the Banlieues.

Every riot has this 'trigger event'. Strangely enough, they are tragic events of course, but [in the case of Paris] it was not the first or the last time that something like this happened and somehow 'this' event was the trigger, not some other event, but this event. So, there's something of the coincidental to the trigger event. From a flash point in Clichy-sous-Bois, you can see the riots spreading in the first days very quickly to these other Grand Ensembles that have the same demographic make up, the same isolated position towards the centre of Paris, the same ethnic make up, the same income... All the same kind of statistical make ups, you can see very similar images, and it spread very fast to these areas.

But the most strange thing, is that not only did these areas match in terms of ethnicity, or in terms of income level or deprivation and so on, they matched in terms of architecture. And they did not just match, there was a 100% correlation...
There are basically two kinds of street. Some, like the Avenue des Champs-Élysées in Paris, are the result of ambitious and all-consuming planning, a singular vision. At their peak they are part of the imperial language of society. They have ceremony, poise, rhythm and grandeur. They drip with precise symbolism and have an-soul. Others, like Whitechapel High Street, are different. They are not the product of a single intention but of various endeavours spread out over time. They are irregular, they communicate in mixed messages and are hard to photograph. They are shaped not by a single vision but by culture at large. They behave, like, and look like, a bar graph of a society’s economy.

I write this on the second trading day of Westfield Stratford City, one of Europe’s largest urban shopping malls and a key component of London’s 2012 Olympic project. 75% of visitors to these places pass through Westfield, a 1.3 million square-foot centre that has changed the shape of Stratford with the casting of a critical shadow and promise to alter the form of London over the coming years. Even more than the Champs-Élysées, Westfield has been planned to perfection. Somehow, there is a room full of reports analysing the mix of retail units (publicly different to those in its cousin in Shoreditch’s Bath), their location on the perimeter of the wider regeneration area, transport modelling that takes in public transport on an international scale and a finely tuned calculation of parking spaces. The ambition and design precision of a great avenue translated into the perfect shopping experience.

As Sam Jacob points out in this issue of The Unlimited Edition (page 10), Streetform, as the traditional high street is merely the social and economic product of an era: “It only operates in relation to a particular moment in the development of urban technology, infrastructure and economy.” Such a high street has been ‘living’, since the first supermarkets and mall arrived, spatial products that came about due to changes in the market changes in technology, and changes in society that we were (are) all a part of. But the streets are all still there – functioning and busy. They have not been erased by the spectacular arrival of Westfield, nor by the rise of internet shopping. However, no longer burdened by their former status as the primary site of retail, they have found freedom to become other things.

Many of the speculations in this issue of The Unlimited Edition envisage futures that are already happening on the high street as a corporate retail area. They offer visions both apocalyptic and optimistic about the future, from a developer free-for-all of “endless landmarks and signature buildings” (Oliver Wainwright, page 7) to a place where social functions have replaced, or at least superseded, retail (Ben van Broeke and Steve Smith, page 5). But nobody offers a spatial-Champs-Élysées-style vision of what this series of streets might become. There are no no-fives or big ideas. It is as if the form of the high street, its messy existence, is irrelevant to that kind of thing.

‘High Street 2012’ is typical of London, a city that never built grand boulevards like Paris because of the sheer complexity of its land ownership and the lack of an absolute ruler. What we got instead are streets like John Nash’s Regent Street, which in nothing if not a brilliant improvisation and which teems to avoid the expensive land. And streets like Whitechapel High Street, Cheshapeak, Mile End Road and Kingsland Road, which have grown out of ancient tracks and which preserve their social complexity and their intimacy of ownership. Last year, the School of Architecture and Landscape of Kingston University, where I teach, took London’s high streets as a collective project. One of the key things this work yielded was that, whatever their current prosperity, the high streets of London have a definite spatial character, and one that carries re-use for the way we plan (or don’t plan) our cities. They are deep, and exist on an extraordinary density of industries, communities and social events. They are creative, they are changing, and the market is not the result of a predetermined plan but of a constant renegotiation between people, space and that inimitably human property that is the new and emerging shapes. Two graduating students at Kingston, Hannah Toul (page 6) and Shayan Youn (page 15), produced work which explored the kind of complexity, and had used to suggest possible futures for the high street. Such complexity is now added with commercial retail, roads, and retail (Ben van Broeke and Steve Smith, page 5). But nobody offers a spatial-Champs-Élysées-style vision of what this series of streets might become. There are no no-fives or big ideas. It is as if the form of the high street, its messy existence, is irrelevant to that kind of thing.

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between the architectural typology and the 100% correlation that the terrified people had in their high-rise council estates designed and built in the “modernist functional” towns planning model. So all the riots in Paris happened in those council estates. However, the other way round? Of course not. It’s not just the high-rise council estates (there were some that did not – but all the riots were in these council estates).

The thing you cannot solve is that doing something physically, that can save the positions. I’m not a cultural theorist; so what I find interesting about riots, is that I can say it’s just that gangsteric culture or rap culture, that’s what’s going on there. If you look more carefully than that there’s much more going on. And so I think that the rich and more complex stories are to be taken from people coming and talking focused enough to see them. For example, what we see out and out in high-rise Paris (and what that Jacques Criche said). Well, you’re everything back and forth. And I think that the burning of cars during the riot was not only legal, but also that the whole course of things we were saying about the content, that leads to urban alienation, crime. Also the other shape, and also their content, that leads to demolition.

So there was a debate that started very soon in architectural circles, not just in architectural circles, but also in planning, government circles, journalists circles, that immediately the strongest functionalist town planning band of the twenties, the “city of functional planning, that this is how life is – barrier cars in the urban circles, the only thing you can do about what they are doing. And sometimes these riots maps of London show is completely different you would have in Paris. How wealth and poverty are connected in London is completely different than in Paris. In Paris you would have all the rich areas in the middle and then you would have lots of islands of high-rise middle-class. This is something that is really in me, and I found that it was the same in London maps, of course, there’s the wealth and poverty are the same, the only thing you can do about what they are doing. And sometimes these riots maps of London show is completely different you would have in Paris. How wealth and poverty are connected in London is completely different than in Paris. In Paris you would have all the rich areas in the middle and then you would have lots of islands of high-rise middle-class. This is something that is really in me, and I found that it was the same in London maps, of course, there’s the wealth and poverty are the same, the only thing you can do about what they are doing. And sometimes these riots maps of London show is completely different you would have in Paris. How wealth and poverty are connected in London is completely different than in Paris. In Paris you would have all the rich areas in the middle and then you would have lots of islands of high-rise middle-class. This is something that is really in me, and I found that it was the same in London maps, of course, there’s the wealth and poverty are the same, the only thing you can do about what they are doing. And sometimes these riots maps of London show is completely different you would have in Paris. How wealth and poverty are connected in London is completely different than in Paris. In Paris you would have all the rich areas in the middle and then you would have lots of islands of high-rise middle-class. This is something that is really in me, and I found that it was the same in London maps, of course, there’s the wealth and poverty are the same, the only thing you can do about what they are doing. And sometimes these riots maps of London show is completely different you would have in Paris. However, the other way round? Of course not. It’s not just the high-rise council estates (there were some that did not – but all the riots were in these council estates).

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High Street Metabolism

Hannah Tourell

London’s High Streets are constantly in flux. As the shops change so can the ownership signage is replaced, shop-fronts ripped out and replaced in a matter of days and security shutters bolted to the fronts of buildings. Surviving the continual change of the street are the tightly contained ends of the party walls, a small slice of an ancient narrative between two buildings where there is less change, as any alterations require the negotiation of party wall agreement, and as such collectively form the modification and habitation of the adjacent buildings.

“Continuous, subtle adaptation rather than radical changes”

The rhythm of these walls along the streets describe property boundaries some of which date from Medieval times. A typical strip of land in London has long comprised acquisition and development of large plots of land which date from Medieval times. A typical strip of land in London has long comprised a building and a yard on a long strip of land, encouraging a continuous, subtle adaptation rather than the overwhelmingly radical changes that result from the acquisition and development of large parcels of land.

“They make manifest vibrancy, adaptability and density”

At an urban scale, the existence of these ‘party walls’ preserves the fine grain of the city, and when visible on the streets they make manifest the vibrancy, adaptability and density of occupation characteristics of our high streets. If high streets have a future, then the diverse ownerships and rates of change expressed by these ‘party walls’ must surely be part of it.

Square development — although it had been tough before the Wimote came along. They all build in London’s little Dubs”, one resident tells me joyfully, peeking out from behind the security grille of her ground floor amenity space “and now we’re living in our very own mini-Buy-Knights”. She seems happy here, with access to a communal roof terrace and a car club.

And why not? She is living on the very pinnacle of Newham’s Arts of Opportunity, the charged nexus of the Thames Gateway Enterprise Zone and the Lee Valley Technology Growth Corridor. She is on the edge of what will one day become the Queen Elizabeth Park, the largest new green space in Europe, and minutes from Westfield Stratford City. This was the biggest attraction for near Pavilions, a measuring reminder that it wasn’t so different to Shepherd’s Bush after all. It was a beautifully sterile leisurescape, a pleasure palace of 500 shops, 15 million sq ft of safely patrolled entertainment and public space — with a John Lewis to boot. The transport links are also unmissable. It is “the best connected metropolitan cannabis in the UK”, at the boudoir trumpet, served by two tube lines, the overground or railway; O2, plus the high-speed Jubilee train to Kings Cross — taking you to 30 Ponds in only 6 minutes. The Eustation doesn’t actually stop here, but people still like the glorious vistas of “Stratford International”.

In case you were in any doubt that you had arrived at an international hub, when you step out of the station you are at once greeted by a vast red-and-white wall of titanium pillows – the Shoal. This strange billboard of public art was originally intended to Hull the dawn’s decaying shopping centre during the Olympics, to ensure the world’s media wouldn’t catch sight of the boarded-up pound shop.

It now supports a big brand emblazoned with the title “Stratford Village”, signalling that this is home to a local produce market and alternative village fête – collectively organised by the Stratford Spacemakers. But is one goring Westfield’s Great Eastern Market sells the same stuff, but under the identical glow of an LED waterfall.

Outside the performed golden canopy of the shopping complex, things are beginning to get interesting across the railway tracks, as Olympic Legacy Transport首席 ministers into action. There’s been a buzz of activity ever since the future came down to make way for Westfield Meansfields: 200 hectares of empty farmland, this was to be a derelicated powerhouse, a hard stop-gap in the absence of developers paralysed by the depths of the triple-dip recession. It was to be a non-plus ulips, a bottom-up free-for-all for experiments in community-led social enterprise. It continues to play host to all manner of projects, from last man pop-up community compact heat, to the wildly popular White Public House “temporary” allotments – a productive urban plot, built out of the fragments of the relocated Manor Gardens, on whose ground plan the and a car club.

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“Each distinctive silhouette is matched by an equally inimitable palette of materials”

Walking back down, the triumphant portal of Idea City – which, for all its noise for temporary activities, a hard stop-gap in the absence of developers paralysed by the depths of the triple-dip recession. It was to be a non-plus ulips, a bottom-up free-for-all for experiments in community-led social enterprise. It continues to play host to all manner of projects, from last man pop-up community compact heat, to the wildly popular White Public House “temporary” allotments – a productive urban plot, built out of the fragments of the relocated Manor Gardens, on whose ground plan the and a car club.

With its festive umbrella –­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­ 插图 1

Future Stratford of schemes depicted here are built; under construction, or these planning permissions. Left to right: iconic house of Sport, Stratford, Aquatics Centre, the Arena, the Eden Three Mills Water Tower, the Lea Valley Enterprise Zone and the Lea Valley Sports Park, Stratford Eye, Welcome Centre, Arena.
The high street, perhaps because it is the most normal and unquestionable place also acts as a kind of dip-stick that gives us a clear measure of an idea of the city. It is uniquely unwritten by convention that makes it such a telling description of what the city is and how it is organized, what we do with it and in it. By tracing the development of the high street, we also trace the development of the city. Its own story mirrors, and sometimes diverges, the city waves of development from centrifugal industrialism via suburban dispersion to inner-city regeneration and even abandonment. Through the narrative of the high street we can read how, over the course of the twentieth century, the city has turned itself inside out and upside down - if we think of the traditional conception of the high street we think of a row of shops, of butcher-baker-confectioner-miller located at the centre of a community. It had accumulated a variety of public and private uses, and developed alongside the growth of a town. It is formed by and formed the urban fabric around it, densifying the town. It is both formed by and has formed developed along with the growth of a candlestick-maker located at the centre conception of the high street we think itself inside out and upside down.

The combined effects of Retail’s advancing agglomerative tendency to a conclusion, perhaps its only logical conclusion for the future of the city seems precarious. In order to achieve growth the high street, in some way, is now everywhere. Yet in its moment of victory over other conceptions of the city Retail Flores its own anti-climax. On the verge of a double dip recession, with retail figures pointing downwards and the void of the hollow high street as unit after unit closes down, our thrift investors who see the future of the city seems precarious. Twentieth century experience suggests that Retail has performed a series of aggressive attacks out of the city in order to achieve growth Retail has destroyed the environments that created it. The question then arises if the city has been turned inside out retail entity, perhaps its only logical conclusion is to destroy itself. Having sucked out everything inside its own event horizon like a black hole, it might indulge itself.

A third model is a stranger with separately five pounds, other charges to be dealt with separately (who took the photograph).
For a couple of years now, I have enjoyed photographing the colourfully-painted ‘white vans’ of Whitechapel – those shabby old jalopies that the market traders use as overnight storage, which you see parked in all the back streets. But, just recently, I realised that the imposition of the Low Emission Zone in Central London in six months time will see the end of all these vehicles, causing the gallery of paintings to vanish along with them.

Even as I have photographed them, I have observed an evolution in the designs and so, as we approach the final flowering of the white vans of Whitechapel, I thought I would play the art historian and attempt to trace the development of these paintings through the early to this late period, just as if they were Renaissance murals in Tuscan churches.

Keith, who proudly parks his painted van in Sclater St Market where he stalls out each Sunday, explained to me how it all began back in 2005 when, like many other traders, he found that his beloved old truck was attracting taggers and this in turn was drawing the attentions of the police who began to stop him regularly. Keith’s brother Des runs a junk shop in Bacon St – a popular location for street artists – and it was Des who first introduced Keith to the world of graffiti and the street art culture. “They’re a tight crew,” he informed me, “If someone sprays over another’s painting, it’s war!”

And so Keith devised a cunning plan to invite one artist to paint his entire van, which thereby became sacrosanct to the taggers, and then, instead of attention from the police, he found that wherever he went people wanted to photograph his van out of admiration.

The notion quickly spread, because other traders had the same problem, and today there are dozens of these painted vans which bring the romance of the circus and the fairground to the markets of the East End – and are especially concentrated around Whitechapel Market. This unlikely alliance between the traders and the street artists has led to an unprecedented flourishing of popular public art in which the market traders, acting simply out of the wish to keep their vans neat, have become unwitting art patrons – I call them, “the accidental Medicis of Whitechapel.”

Once this phenomenon took flight and the artists saw each other’s work upon the vans, then an immediate development took place in which basic tags were replaced by more elaborate and complex versions of the artists’ monikers filling the vans – possible now, since once they were invited there was no longer any need to be covert. As time has gone by, these evolved tags have been supplemented and then replaced by images, until now artists are composing each side of the van as if it were a canvas and their tag is only present in a corner as discreet signature upon the artwork. These ambitious compositions – some of which are photographed here – have begun to appear in the last year, comprising the mature and, possibly the final period of the white vans of Whitechapel.

When I spoke to Keith, he was eager to show me the new painting by street artist Biko upon his van, which is of the evolved mode, filled an entire side of the vehicle. Over this period, since it all began, Keith had his van repainted by several artists and has delighted in becoming something of a connoisseur, developing a discriminating sensibility of his own with regard to the painting of vans and always having new paintings by artists upon which to base his decisions.

In fact, Keith had parked his van against the wall to conceal the aesthetic offence of the reverse of his van, which is due for repainting imminently. “But what are you going to do next year?” I ventured, “When all these vans have to go…” And Keith replied without taking his fond gaze from the new painting, “I’m hoping to take the box off this van,” he said, “and put it on a new one.”

There may, even yet, be a future for the white vans of Whitechapel.
the form of buildings to explain the intent of the street, we might ask what kind of social fabric the eastern hemisphere. The Shard at London Bridge, latching onto the ongoing development of Bankside, is steadily remapping the metropolis’ urbanism. The modified form of the City of London planners and the London urbanity. But the artificial ‘quarterization’ of a shed propagating consumer debt to plot out the co-ordinates of the global century. Connected by an unobstructed infrastructure towards the centre of entertainment and media, torqued by the secretions of a catastrophic boom represent this name than any other in the UK by far. Whitechapel is not just a linear focus solely on retail growth. Whitechapel managers to demand best value, not just about the mix of retail, services and residential that makes a place successful. We might therefore ask: ‘how will the high street be more of its role in providing services and not goods?’

Perhaps the high street ought to be more of its role in providing services and not goods.

However, while internet purchase and home delivery increases then so does the inconvenience of not bringing home when they deliver. Perhaps this an opportunity for the high street. Ocado, the company famous for delivering Wisteria foodstuffs within the M25 area, recently had a pop-up shop or rather a shop window, at One New Change in the City of London’s High Street. Using an app, what else, customers could scan pictures of food and add to their shopping basket for delivery to home. This internet company wants a high street presence. Amazon too has announced that it wants to have collection points for goods rather than its delivery centre. Perhaps the high street ought to make more of its role in providing services and not goods.

The Shard at London Bridge, latching onto the ongoing development of Bankside, is steadily remapping the metropolis’ urbanism. The modified form of the City of London planners and the London urbanity. But the artificial ‘quarterization’ of a shed propagating consumer debt to plot out the co-ordinates of the global century. Connected by an unobstructed infrastructure towards the centre of entertainment and media, torqued by the secretions of a catastrophic boom represent this name than any other in the UK by far. Whitechapel is not just a linear focus solely on retail growth. Whitechapel managers to demand best value, not just about the mix of retail, services and Residential, church and community life: looking for new premises as their existing building is a blank canvas; but empty shops could still be seen as an inconvenience to people in Starbucks on my local high street. We may need to find new ways of encouraging new uses of vacant units and not goods.”

Shaun Young
Did he really want to be here? It was boiling, and he’d turned that date down, he would be better off sipping a fresh cocktail in good company right now.

The Sunday PETA demonstration was marching on, his T-shirt read “MEAT IS MURDER (not anymore)”. Animal Rights activists had been the only ones receptive enough to support his invention back then, and yes, he went along with it. In-vitro meat was a perfect match for even the most radical ideologists amongst People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. Even though it was also vegan, halal, kosher and fat-free, these people were the only ones to welcome his samples with other words than “Eeew! Why would I eat that?”!

It was almost five years ago, and the initial euphoria was fading. It had been so easy, since no one had claimed the $1 million prize in 2012. Even though he wasn’t growing chicken, they gave him the money, and it was more than enough to scale up the production. He threw himself in the community spirit. The meetings, action-teams, and press conferences now seemed like the biggest shift in this whole adventure. Social activities and ethical causes, let alone speaking in public, weren’t really a big part of his life before, and the loner in him felt exhausted.

He embraced the cause without too much effort, I mean seriously, who would openly argue for being mean to animals? He’d never felt a particularly strong bond with other multicellular species though, and his scientific education and rational thinking had to be put on hold for this whole time. In the beginning he tried to have discussions, “no actually, most lab tests don’t do any harm at all” and “without the protein from cooked meat, we humans wouldn’t even be here anymore”, but he soon learned to keep these thoughts to himself, especially after he quit his job. He missed the nerds from the Centre of the Cell. The few he ran into since leaving ignored him at best, some yelled at him.

He remembered that night, like so many others, when he locked up the lab, leaving a bunch of cultures to grow overnight. Shalamar kebab house had become darkly familiar and he now sat down to eat his doner and chips. Drifting away, he wasn’t even looking at the rotating grill when the idea hit him. In-vitro meat exploited the same technology he used to grow organ tissue for patients, and advances in the field were often discussed at the coffee machine. He even tasted samples at a conference. Neither the numbers to make it profitable nor the aesthetic to make desirable had been cracked by anyone though, which made Keith, his bench neighbour, increasingly sarcastic about the whole thing. Yet there was a solution, staring him in the face most nights of the week at around 10.30pm, a kebab grill. The people who enjoyed this kind of delicacy surely weren’t too regarding as to what the meat looked like, wouldn’t they go for a healthy lab-grown alternative? and once they ate it, the rest would see, it was perfectly fine. Leaving half of his wrap and a full portion of chips on the table, he ran home to start working out the details during the first of many sleepless nights.

Further Reading:
- PETA $1 million prize - www.peta.org/features/In-Vitro-Meat-Contest.aspx
- New-Harvest - www.new-harvest.org
- Burgers From A Lab (NPR) - www.npr.org/2011/05/18/135202034/burgers-from-a-lab-the-world-of-in-vitro-meat
- Artificial meat could slice emissions, say scientists - www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2011/jan/20/artificial-meat-emissions

Contributors to Issue II

Many thanks to all our contributors for their hard work:

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Correction
It has come to our attention that the article ‘Wentworth Street: Then & Now’ in Issue I, was missing the full and correct credit: “This survey was produced by General Public Agency with research conducted by Kate Rich. It was commissioned by the Whitechapel Gallery as part of the ‘The Street’, a programme of artists projects, events and research which focused on Wentworth Street”. We apologise for this omission.
The Unlimited Edition

Issue III – Proposition
Eleanor Fawcett, Olympic Park Legacy Company

High Street 2012 as a Blueprint

It is a curious thing that the High Street 2012 initiative has emerged as a real pioneer for a host of ideas that are now informing many wide policies and projects. Thinking back to the first discussions on the project – then called ‘Olympic Boulevard’ – we were concerned about the need for a strong design language for London. The London Borough of Tower Hamlets recently 4 years ago, it was this new way forward that had come and how influential it has been. The High Street London’s initiative – this important research by Gurn Scott and The Bartlett, UCL, shows a new light onto what most Londoners and certainly everyone involved in the High Street 2012 project (distinctly known as ‘High Streets matter’) they can do about this.  

But little did we know just how significant they would be in the future world as well. In fact, the city has seen 500,000 new homes, which support many more than central London. Two-thirds of Londoners live within 5 minutes walk of a high street. The High Street 2012 project is a perfect example of one of the initiative’s key recommendations – that investment in projects large and small should be prioritised for High Streets, in recognition of just how important they are for London. The Mayor and his Design Advisory Panel are now working on ways of capturing the potential of High Street London to support the capital’s sustainable growth and, we hope, will soon launch The High Street 2012 project.

The High Street London project has led to a new type of public realm in the capital and has begun to show people how much talking and writing and strategising happens, for most people the project doesn’t really exist until there are diggers on site. Here we can start to see the ways that the High Street 2012 initiative is going to affect the day-to-day life of regular people. The results can already be seen on the ground along the whole corridor – Bromley Street Park and new public realm along Stratford High Street are completed, including Altab Ali Park and new public realm. Some of the projects represent small changes. The determination and time it often seems to take to make these small changes happen can be seen as a blueprint for securing a tangible legacy from the Olympic Games for surrounding communities – a challenge which I hope will become even more of a focus over the next summer’s events have passed.

Foreword

The Unlimited Edition is curated by Gorg Scott and The Bartlett, UCL, emerges from the 2011 High Street 2012 project. It’s a curious thing that the High Street 2012 project has been looking at the minute details that are so important. The process of working out how best to steer future development and inventiveness which the High Street adds an important layer to modern urban places.

The revitalisation of the buildings lining the High Street adds an important layer to the project – the impressive recuperation of clusters of historic building frontages, and the pop-up shops and other projects which have occupied this street. The High Street is thoughtfully celebrating places and people that make up High Street London. What can be seen as a blueprint for securing a tangible legacy from the Olympic Games for surrounding communities – a challenge which I hope will become even more of a focus over the next summer’s events have passed.

The results can already be seen on the ground along the whole corridor – Bromley Street Park and new public realm along Stratford High Street are completed, including Altab Ali Park and new public realm. Some of the projects represent small changes. The determination and time it often seems to take to make these small changes happen can be seen as a blueprint for securing a tangible legacy from the Olympic Games for surrounding communities – a challenge which I hope will become even more of a focus over the next summer’s events have passed.

Instead of designing the graphics to print the shop, market, and was called ‘1,000 Bags project in 2009. It took place in Petticoat Lane market, and was called ‘1,000 Bags project in 2009. It took place in Petticoat part of Whitechapel Gallery’s ‘The Street’ Torange Khonsari: We did a project as 2012 area?

Holly Lewis: When did you first become public realm. She teaches a design studio at Public Works, an art and architecture Torange Khonsari is one of the 3 core team members, she started Torbay Hall, got all her wealthy friends to bring their famous paintings to Torbay Hall and opened the doors to the residents of Whitechapel, but of course what the Barnetts did is not comparable. Torbay Hall has an extraordinary social history, which is incredible to work with. I don’t want to get into their archives. The Welfare state and Unions clinch from people that were residents at Torbay Hall. At Public Works we are so involved in art and architecture, and we’ve been for the last 10 years, we became really interested to do the Adagio Project, which is instigated by Publica in collaboration with London Metropolitan University.

TK: Yes, we’re working with the architecture students that you tutor at London Metropolitan University. Its interesting talking about this ongoing after the ‘Whitechapel Gift Shop’ as Henrietta Barnett, who started Torbay Hall, decided to leave her lifework. They went ahead and opened the doors to the residents of Whitechapel, but of course what the Barnetts did is not comparable. Torbay Hall has an extraordinary social history, which is incredible to work with. I don’t want to get into their archives. The Welfare state and Unions clinch from people that were residents at Torbay Hall. At Public Works we are so involved in art and architecture, and we’ve been for the last 10 years, we became really interested to do the Adagio Project, which is instigated by Publica in collaboration with London Metropolitan University.

Threshold

Exchange

Gift

Semi-Public

Public Works, an art and architecture

TK: Yes. some people were coming and

the market. The stall was fitted out with

by and waste material we picked up from

and now a bit. They’re going to

will be a cross between a shop, market

and now a bit. They’re going to

and now a bit. They’ll have fashion shows

the shop, market, and now a bit. They’re going to

TK: Another project in the area was the

HL: And did those public ambitions come

TK: I think you do have to trigger them,

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HL: When did you first become involved

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The Unlimited Edition has set out to explore and record the many facets of High Street 2012. Against the backdrop of huge changes to its physical, cultural and economic context, we have documented the high street's delights and eccentricities and speculated about its possible futures.

The high street is a diverse, vibrant—and sometimes contentious—setting. In this feature we celebrate the joyous potential of its multiplicity. Taking one typical high street plot: a narrow frontage with several floors above, our contributors have been asked to imagine new uses for this familiar location. The submissions have been combined into a 'pick 'n' mix' high street—a game of urban Consequences. The collective result is a vibrant and creative parallel to the High Street 2012 as it currently exists. It is both a demonstration of the delights of this particular feature of the built environment of our cities and a reminder of the vitality and creative talent that surrounds them.

Plot Use: The High Street Public Toilets / Power Station
Opening Times: Always open as long as shoppers need to visit the toilet
Activities: Using the toilets, petting the cows and collecting energy

New public toilets will be installed along the high street to provide the busy shoppers and residents with a quick stop-off point. The collected donations of faeces and urine will provide water and electricity for all the shops along the high street. Biogas digesters will be used to convert the waste into methane gas. The more visitors the building can attract the more power and water will be produced for the high street. Cows will be kept as pets and farmed for their methane gas to then be used to generate additional energy.

Plot Use: Market
Opening Times: 7am – 7am
Activities: Trading, Eating, Drinking

A Multi-Storey Market that makes use of a vacant site and extends the full height of the plot. A distinctive market canopy forms a continuous cover for stalls and stairs. The roof is a market cafe with views over the city.

Plot Use: Retail/Education
Opening Times: 12am – 10pm
Activities: Selling sweep equipment, dance lessons, costume supplies

‘Would You Adam & Eve It’, chimney sweep supplier and cockney outfitters – this is east London after all! On the second floor there’s a dance studio, and above that, the roof tops of London.

Plot Use: Public House
Opening Times: Monday – Friday, 11am – 11pm
Activities: Eating, drinking, socialising

A facsimile of The Mitre Tavern in Holborn, built by Bishop Goodrich in 1546.
Plot Use: Garden of Remembrance
Opening Times: Dawn – Dusk
Activities: Relaxation, Events, Sandwich eating

A national ‘chain’ of parks inhabiting the shells of bankrupt chain stores; the shop is stripped out and the terrace stabilised with an open steel frame. The plot is planted with trees, and the defunct signage made into park benches and picnic tables.

Plot Use: Bank / Social Club
Opening Times: Monday – Saturday, 9.30am – 4pm. Other times available by booking
Activities: Advice on saving and spending, Money / Credit

Further Government legislation regarding honesty of big businesses meant High Street Banks decor had to be unified according to brand identity. Despite marking a return to their historical grandeur, the style change was not met well on the high street. (The) Piggy Bank was established in response to this.

The growth of online banking left many of the Banks redundant. Now instead of changing address details on accounts bank employees have become ambassadors to spending.

Plot Use: Rainy Days Umbrella Emporium
Opening Times: 9am – 7.30pm
Activities: Retailer of bespoke umbrellas and repair services

Rainy Days Umbrella Emporium is a retailer of bespoke umbrellas for all your weather dilemmas. Founded in 1955 by Bob Merryweather after he was sacked as a weatherman for a local TV station, the company is now run by his dastardly sons, who will do everything in their power to increase profits.

Plot Use: Vacant retail unit
Opening Times: Unknown
Activities: Unknown / Memorial

The missing section of Wickham’s Department Store on Mile End Road is finally built, not on its intended site but elsewhere on High Street 2012. Apparently unoccupied, it serves as a civic tribute to the small shopkeeper. A ceramic ‘welcome mat’ is set into the pavement in front of the vacant retail unit’s plywood entrance, and the phone number on the ‘To Let’ sign is never answered.

Plot Use: High Street Museum
Opening Times: 9am – 1pm, 2pm – 5pm
Activities: Historic Tours, café, battle re-enactments. This weeks re-enactments: Queues for Northern Rock, Glasgow City Centre circa September 2007

A High Street Museum commemorating the death of the high street. Subsidized evening classes to include: ‘John Lewis does carpet’ – Getting over Allders (over 50s); ‘Tactile shopping’ – how touching things before you buy them can be beneficial; ‘Eye contact and conversation classes for internet shoppers; Pick ‘n’ Mix Club with the Woolworths seniors and Looting for beginners.

Plot Use: P.Y.O
Opening Times: Seasonal
Activities: Growing and picking fruit and vegetables

This is a pick-your-own shop where everything that will grow is grown on site. The shop then sells all the seasonal produce as it ripens. Customers harvest their own shopping. The shop includes a greenhouse, shed, frames and wormery to maximise production.
KC: Our ambition was to make accommodation for a large group of people who are attracted to this particular area, but also because of the history, and also because of the community that live in the area.

HL: How did your early proposals develop?

KC: Our ambition was to make accommodation for a large group of people who are attracted to this particular area, but also because of the history, and also because of the community that live in the area.

HL: What were you trying to achieve with the scheme?

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HL: So how did you involve those groups in the delivery of the project?

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The Park that Jumps the Road

Penny Wilcox, PATH

With the East End getting all spruced up in preparation for the Olympic regeneration it was obvious that Mile End Park should have a souvereign of the remarkable occasion. It also seemed clear that the focal point for the location of this souvereign should be on and around the ‘Green Bridge’. This extraordinary feature creates an archway over High Street 2012: ‘the Mile End Road’, the arterial route through the East End of London. This bridge gives the public pedestrian access over this busy road, providing an uninterrupted stroll from Solbay Bridge over the Green Bridge and through to the bus stop to the north. Following the theme originally identified by us, we decided to locate a magnificent felled tree beside the play pod on Solbay Bridge, where people will congregate. Morphologically, a series of what appeared to be felled tree trunks were planted on the north side of the green bridge and a gorgeous natural tree base to climb up and watch the world go by. We are now on the lookout for new trees to enrich the play environment for children and adults for many years to come.

Joost Beunderman, Architecture 00: Ltd

I work for the Play Association Tower Hamlets, PATH. We have had a close working relationship with Mile End Park since the very early days. Together with the park director, we developed a vision of park that had a play offer running right the way through it. We had worked on this vision, starting with the Children’s Play Park and the adventure park adding two level play spaces in the northern area of Wennington Green and beside the railway bridge north of the Art Pavilion. The area on the other side of the green bridge had no obviously playful elements.

In addition, the original brief for the green bridge had design quirks that were missed and not very conducive to playfulness. The funding from High Street 2012 allowed us to address these issues. We agreed with the design team that the platforms to the east and west of the bridge should be planted with native broom. This would perfectly compliment the colouring of the bridge, provide a rich splash of colour and attract bees and other pollinators whilst deterring any misuse of the spaces.

PATH was able to work directly with the design team on the bridge, and together we developed a sequence of play elements made from natural and unusual materials that would pacify the neccessity of the public. From Solbay bridge over the Green Bridge and through to the bus stop to the north.

Following the theme originally identified by us, we decided to locate a magnificent felled tree beside the play pod on Solbay Bridge, where people will congregate. Morphologically, a series of what appeared to be felled tree trunks were planted on the north side of the green bridge and a gorgeous natural tree base to climb up and watch the world go by.

To our delight, the lead designer from that and I watched as children began to use the new additions to their park. These magnificent new segments look as if they have been there forever and they are already enhancing the play value of the environment.

It is a tribute to the design from us, that those listened to the contributions made by PATH. It is easy for large companies and organisations to not acknowledge the local, dedicated expertise of the play world.

We are now closer to having an utterly playable park in Mile End. This is not a luxury, but an urgent need. Children in this area are growing up divorced from nature. They do not know how to climb trees or use the natural environment in their playing. Nature is alien to them. They are brought up to be biorphobic.

With these new initiatives to explore all new forms of play, including the natural resources that people already have, whether inventive curious or inventive in a way that they can share co-owned and do something that the dominant organisations of the late 20th Century were not able to. What productive interfaces between large scale entities and causes (futility infrastructures and providers, landowners and real estate management, the education or transport system, etc) and the micro level of citizens. This more porous interface is what allows, for example, people to co-invest

The Bromley by Bow Centre, a hotbed for social enterprise in renewable energy or broadband infrastructure. Or grow food in the public domain. Or hack existing online data for unexpected use. Or commission their own homes, or get easier access to vacant premises for new projects. Or do whatever it is that makes people tick, whether that is ideas and liberates their imagination.

Scaling and building on these approaches is the way forward to building a new economy, generating real impact and deep value. We used the ‘fertile ground’ for civic enterprises and the ventures they create to grow and prosper. People that make things happen, attract other pollinators and that make things happen, whether that is through commissioning or co-creating, and in turn, the re-building of our economy has never been more urgent.

What these examples have in common is that they are pathways to inspire platforms and invitations for others to join, collaborate and contribute. They manage to unlock a new type of abundance, unleashing the resources that people already have, whether inventive curious or inventive in a way that they can share co-owned and do something that the dominant organisations of the late 20th Century were not able to. What productive interfaces between large scale entities and causes (futility infrastructures and providers, landowners and real estate management, the education or transport system, etc) and the micro level of citizens. This more porous interface is what allows, for example, people to co-invest.
It is almost impossible to over-state the importance of high streets to London, its fabric and culture. The network of varied, uncoordinated and often non-linear streets encompasses as much of what we think of as the city as it is conceivable to define high streets by what they are not: they are not backwater or retail jets, not typically vehicular priority routes, not shopping malls. But they are the structure for almost every other kind of public and civic function in London, particularly outside the very centre of the city. And where planning decisions over the last several decades have failed to recognize or respect the significance of the high street (which they have frequently), highly dysfunctional pieces of city have emerged. It is an important point for London's high streets, with £2.0 billion Outer London in money to be spent on projects related to the capital’s high streets by 2014. This summer the Mayor also announced a £10 million Regeneration Fund dedicated to high streets and town centres, in response to the August riots. Political will and popular concern are galvanising ideas and actions are growing. There is palpable sense that we can recapture the vigour and dynamism of these valuable public places, that have been taken for granted for decades.

Fiona Scott, Gort Scott

I am an architect, and I first started studying London's high streets fairly recently, in 2009. The death of the high street is a subject that has been around for decades. And recently, in 2008 and July 2009 the number of vacant shop lots doubled, with several local authorities including Liverpool (three of the hardest hit places, with over 20% of vacant shops) and Liverpool. This was the situation which Karen Goldfinch described. The aspiration is that you create a space and civic buildings and the rooms above commercial buildings: places of work, culture and habitation (pot plants, blinds) have been put in place printed foamex boards. As Sarah Cordey, spokes- man for the High Street Business Group, puts it “Empty shops are a categorically bad thing. There’s the danger of a spiral put in place printed foamex boards. As Sarah Cordey, spokes- man for the High Street Business Group, puts it “Empty shops are a categorically bad thing. There’s the danger of a spiral puts it “Empty shops are a categorically bad thing. There’s the danger of a spiral puts it “Empty shops are a categorically bad thing. There’s the danger of a spiral)

"High streets tend to be complex, disorderly and mixed: they are not just shops with flats above them."

"Look behind the façade, down alleys, side streets and mews."

From our surveys, we found that typically two thirds of trips to high streets were for activities other than shopping as they needed to understand them as a retail phenomenon is challenging. But we are beginning to make some sense of what London's high streets are really made up of, and what role the streets and buildings play spatially and functionally. I could not even find a map of high streets in London. Everyone seemed to have a vague sense of what a high street was or should be, but there are many, many different kinds of street. High streets tend to be complex, disorderly and mixed: they are not just shops with flats above them. The London congestion network spread over some 1500 square kilometres— is quite unique. In our work, we have tried to frame a sensibility to some of the more ‘ordinary’ elements of the high streets: a lot of the street is background, and aesthetically unremarkable. But by careful on-the-ground observing and recording the scale, form and physical structure of certain streets, we have tried to understand their values and develop a renewed appreciation for something that has been both unfunctional and unloved. At the same time, using Geographic Information Systems (GIS)– a form of digital mapping – we plotted London’s high streets as a spatial network. According to this work, there are over 60,000 high street streets outside the very centre of London (see image), and mapping them into a single drawing was a big step towards appreciating what these mean to the city as a whole. These high streets comprise only 3.6% of the capital’s road network, and yet they represent some of the most important spaces: two-thirds of Londoners live within 5 minutes walk of a high street. And outside the very centre of London, they support more than 20% of retail capacity in the city. What projects do we hope to see emerging with the millions of pounds worth of funding available? Almost inapropos fragmented projects made up of multifaceted work streams: bringing vacant property back into use here, improving a section through upgrading the street, helping landlords upgrade their premises and shop displays. Projects to make better space for play from pattern-book building, high streets are also resistant to a singular vision, either as projects of top-down urbanism, or as initiatives by developers, and to that extent, they were somewhat resistant to the nostalgic visions of Mercode Urbanism, which has had such a lasting legacy. Making better high streets is about embracing plurality and ordinariness, and confronting questions about which designers can meaningfully contribute today, and some of the city that have often got along without them.

The British High Street is in trouble. There are too many shops, the rates are too high and the people don’t spend enough money in them. But the trouble is deeper than that: it is a reflection of broader trends in the way we understand and experience cities, and the way our cities have been planned and built. It is almost impossible to over-state the immense challenge, but one that could generate enormous, positive results, that affect the broadest possible cross-section of Londoners.

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Mapping London's High Streets

James Pallister

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Un-Development & Mis-Use Classes

Oliver Goodhall, We Made That

Out of town shopping centres, the retail price index, the mall, big sheds and Pay Pal: all now characterise our high street, either directly or indirectly. Trade, sales and commerce have long formed the focus of our high streets, yet today they are under threat.

Declining sales and the proliferation of online consumerism bear witness to a shift in the urban and social relevance of the high street. This shift is outdoing the planning of our high street. If retail of the high street adjusts and the notion of high streets is re-thought, should we plump for something else from our high street? In the face of uncertainty, how can we increase flexibility in how our high streets might be put to use? As the shape of the street adjusts and the notion of high streets is re-thought, should we plump for better ‘Mis’-Use of these categories?

The way high street plots – and indeed all pieces of land – can be used is currently controlled through ‘Use Classes’.

For example, shops are grouped as Class A1, restaurants as A3, houses as C3, and so on. Use Classes are used to categorise, but also to control – once a plot has a Use Class, its possible future uses are strictly laid out. Sometimes changing between classes is easy. A butcher becoming a chemist is fine. A bank becoming a butcher is also permitted… but what if we want something else from our high street? In the face of uncertainty, how can we increase flexibility in how our high streets might be put to use? As the shape of the street adjusts and the notion of high streets is re-thought, should we plump for better ‘Mis’-Use of these categories?

By subterfuge and slight of hand, these examples increase the possibilities for the future of our high streets.

Proposition: House (C3a Dwelling houses) that is a tomato cultivating club (D2 Assembly and leisure)

By allowing lodgers a spare room in the house, and by employing others as gardeners, a group of professional-amateurs set up a hobby network. The sofa and kitchen was only for occasional use, and that’s why both were squeezed between the plant pots. The land lady now provides tutorials in tomato growing and holds parties for birthdays and celebrations, some organised through the Royal Horticultural Society’s network. She had to make her spare bedroom into a living space for the ‘lodgers’ – but they only resided for up to 2 hours each. A super-short term tenancy agreement needed to be signed each time. That was the only inconvenience, other than that it was a roaring success.”

Proposition: Shop (A1 Shops) that is Library (D1 Non-residential institutions)

Through selling books to philanthropists, reading material is moved from one side of the shop to the other, where it can then be read freely within a public library section.

“It was pretty straightforward. When customers went to the till to pay the security tags were left on. Then, before leaving the ‘shop’, each would be directed to the filing system assistant who employed the Dewey Decimal Classification in order to re-shelve the book in the correct place on the separate rack.

It was also possible to purchase furniture. The delivery and handling charge on chairs, tables, reading lamps was set at £4.95. This would cover the relocation from the one side to be appropriately placed for use on the other. This continued for close to six months, relying mainly on the good nature of people wanting to build this into a success.

Now the only items the shop still sells are those bookmarks personalised with your name written in a swirly font.”

Many thanks to all our contributors for their hard work:

Yemi Aladerun, Joost Beunderman, Mags Bursa, Erin Byrne, Katherine Clarke, Stuart Darling, Daniel Eatock, Eleanor Fawcett, Andy Friend, Daniel Frost, William Haggard, Charles Holland, Alex Jenkins, Torange Khonsari, David Knight, Rob McCarthy, James Pallister, Fiona Scott, Catrina Stewart, Penny Wilson and Nick Wood.

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High Street 2012. Here we present a tale of the end of our series of newspapers about Whitechapel, the area around it are a hive of activity and the people who live, work, shop and learn on the High Street. Of the people we spoke to, we have been speaking to the people that actually use it – you! The following findings offer an understanding of the area, and the people who live, work, shop and learn on the High Street. It was really important to us that those ideas would be based in reality, and not just an armchair view.

We have been struck by the number of people for whom this is ‘their’ High Street. Many people had memories of being out shopping in the Market over a number of decades, and making life decisions there. In the past, what people called ‘Old Market’ was a violent place that had a reputation for being a place to go and that physical jaywalking that values informal communications, such as crossing the road to say hello to a friend, but psychological jaywalking that refuses to be hemmed in and constrained when thinking about how we can use a particular space or what activities we should take place on our High streets. Instead of just designing for safety, why not design for accessibility? Instead of just designing for commercial success, why not design for conversation?

The purpose of a ‘right to the street’ in a public space: First, it recognises the value of the place as a shared good that all should be able to enjoy, while also encouraging and supporting the contributions of the owner of the space. Second, it recognises that many activities can occupy, with the landlord receiving a rental from the users and the local authorities receiving a share of access land, which people could use to create a park at the edge of the City. This team has included highway engineers, landscape architects, urban designers, and constrained when thinking about how we can use a particular space or what activities we should take place on our High streets. Instead of just designing for safety, why not design for accessibility? Instead of just designing for commercial success, why not design for conversation?

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1. Wentworth Street
2. The Grave Maurice Pub (269 Whitechapel Road)
3. Wickhams Department Store (Mile End Road)
4. The Ocean Estate (South of Mile End Road)
5. Walter Beasant’s Peoples’ Palace (Queens Building) and the Octagon Library (Queen Mary University, Mile End Road)
6. Matt’s Gallery (42–44 Copperfield Road)

For a full tour, as described by Laura Oldfield Ford and Douglas Murphy, see page 12 of The Unlimited Edition Issue I
2-4-1!

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