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Mapping social values

Article

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Mapping Social Values

Introduction

It was a hot sunny day at Orts Road as charity stalls were set up under gazebos, a temporary playground was erected and a table tennis table wheeled into position. While the bouncy castle was being inflated, an ice cream van arrived and three local councillors took their positions for an outdoor drop-in session to answer queries from local residents and stage a vote on the preferred future design of the site as a children's playground. The event was the neighbourhood's first community fun day. It was organised by the local authority with some assistance from researchers, who shared their skills, resources and time. Researchers also donated the table tennis table and ran a stall on the day. This stall comprised a small exhibition of co-produced neighbourhood maps on trestle tables alongside giant maps that were slowly filling with colourful stickers as workshop activities took place. It formed part of a larger 2-year research initiative that took place across the neighbourhood with the aim of finding out what was locally important to different age ranges and mapping places of perceived social value.

Figure 1. Orts Road Funday, June 2019. People queuing to take part in map making workshop activities under a gazebo.

With growing interest in Social Value in response to the UK Government's Social Value Act (Cabinet Office, 2012) the research project described in this document explored how practitioners working in the urban environment can, through the co-design of maps with communities, capture and share attributes of a place which typically remain undervalued or hidden. The research aimed to support negotiations across different points of view and contested interests. Whilst it is generally understood that broader involvement in planning and design processes can benefit society, specific approaches and methods often remain vague and do not link with the needs of local authorities. The research project created and tested methods for inclusive architectural research which included not only local voices and interpretations, but also evolved in response to some of the real challenges and barriers faced by the local authority. In

order to explore local understandings of social value, map-making methods were developed and used to collaboratively map Orts Road and Newtown, a neighbourhood to the east of Reading. The research supported broad discussions about values and assets which included different perspectives and interpretations. Whilst the maps did not actively seek to quantify values locally, they highlighted areas of interest and potential. These areas could benefit from future development and/or investment. Through the research, a novel asset-based spatial approach to social value was developed which evidenced social value at the neighbourhood scale in a format that is useful to decisionmakers. The project demonstrated the agency of mapping methods which can generate co-produced urban knowledge, develop capacity and make arguments for value-responsive improvements and development.

Following public map-making workshops multi-layered digital maps were drawn and subjected to group discussions, which reflected upon how social values interacted and combined across the neighbourhood and connected with the town. The maps demonstrated that values are interdependent and perform spatially. Since social values since resist metrics, they are typically difficult to capture and communicate to decision-makers. The research explored how softer forms of data can be represented and explored how architectural practice research can translate local situated knowledges and values into a format which is accessible and provides consistent evidence which can support both holistic decision-making processes and entrepreneurial approaches to working in the city.

The project highlighted some of the challenges of linking neighbourhood perspectives with local government's processes. Values across the public sphere are often contested (Bryson et al., 2017), something which was apparent through the research. However, strategic and innovative mapping practices, can provide

opportunities to learn more about common values and to develop robust approaches to developing potential in the urban environment. This approach has many potential applications for example: the accurate definition of electoral boundaries based on community self-perception; ongoing participation in the co-creation of local development plans, city models that account for social value; building procurement based on social value outcomes, as well as the use of social value in planning. Most importantly social value can be used to help make an evidence-based case for resisting developments that are destructive to communities and people.

The original contribution of the project was in developing a set of methods for evidencing social value spatially that could be replicated at different scales and locations. It raised awareness of the social value of places and buildings, something that needs to be factored into policy and procurement going forward particularly in the aftermath of COVID 19. It also began to consider ways in which Social Return on Investment financial proxies might be used to monetise social value spatially, something that has not been undertaken before. Importantly for the profession it modelled a potential role for architecture and planning professionals in supporting consultation for local development plans.

Social Value

'Social Value' is a fairly recent and ill-defined term. It is often used to explore how limited resources can be put to best use, by examining the collective benefit, beyond cost savings, that allocation of public money can have. In the UK, the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 (Cabinet Office, 2009) requires local governments take economic, environmental and social benefits into consideration when buying services. Investment decisions requiring government funding have to work within the guidance of the *Treasury Green Book* and its updates, bringing it in line with the Social Value Act,

now require recognition of economic, environmental and social values in building procurement and other projects using government money.

In the UK, government organisations are supposed to make planning and spending decisions with regard to environmental, social and economic values, the triple bottom line of sustainability, that form the foundation of the Treasury Green Book (2018). However, due to a lack of consensus on ways of measuring social and environmental value, decision-making typically focuses on economic value (Serin et al, 2018) with serious impacts on wellbeing (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2018). Without sufficient methods to discuss and promote alternate forms of value in the built environment, the current market driven approach, which many agree is not fit for purpose (Carmona et al., 2020), will simply continue.

There are different methods for measuring social value ranging from: cost benefit analysis (as employed by the Green Book), social accounting, outcome appraisals, sustainability reposting and social return on investment (SROI). Of these, SROI is recommended by the Cabinet Office for its ability to, 'help third sector organisations to communicate better their impact to customers, government and the public, through measuring social and environmental value with confidence, in a standardised way that is easy for all to understand.' (Cabinet Office, 2009, p.3) Whilst this project does not go so far as to monetise social value outcomes it was developed with an awareness of the social value proxies developed by the HACT Social Value Bank as it is anticipated that monetised social value maps are likely to become common in the near future.

SROI provides financial proxies which relate to activities or processes that are not normally assigned costs, such as the value of reduced social isolation and decreased stigmatisation of people with mental health problems. In order to determine financial

proxies, or valuations, datasets on the population are subject to statistical analysis and then financial values are assigned to proxies which take into account people's income to find the equivalent amount of money that has the same impact on life satisfaction.

SROI proxies typically relate to high level objectives, such as - reduced social isolation, the research project at Orts Road sought to add greater granularity or resolution to understandings of Social value in the environment. It studied how these values could be interpreted spatially and how they interact in context. The map-making at Orts Road evolved in parallel with another research project which developed a set of SROI proxies relating specifically to the built environment and good design (ref removed for peer review). These proxies inspired the design of workshop prompts which explored places and processes that could be mapped at a neighbourhood scale. The parallel research project's proxies describe preferred outcomes in the built environment, such as 'I talk to my neighbours regularly' and 'I am able to take frequent mild exercise'. In response to these, the mapmaking sought to reveal areas where these outcomes were already found, by finding out where, for example, people spoke with neighbours and what recreational facilities they used. As such, mapping workshops were designed around ten prompts which related to the themes of: connection, active lifestyles, positive emotions, taking notice and freedom and flexibility (autonomy).

Social value can be found across our towns and cities. It may be created through well connected and informed communities as well as through supporting people to have greater access to jobs, services and education. Whilst social value covers a very broad range of activities, the research project focused on how public spaces and buildings can support and generate social value. It looked at how the streets, parks and facilities at Orts Road and Newtown currently support: connections between people; active

lifestyles; positive emotions; pride; and participation. The project also looked to the future and asked everyone who took part what they would like to improve locally.

Mapping

The research employed mapmaking practices as a method to 'both reveal and realize hidden potential' (Corner, 1999, 213). In 'The Agency of Mapping: Speculation, Critique and Invention' James Corner argued that the creative potential in mapping processes could allow us to rethink our approach to planning and design. In his opinion, maps were too often thought to be benign and neutral representations of the world, whereas they actually had the capacity to be, 'strategic, constitutive and inventive' (215).

In practice, architects use maps as a matter of course and often may not realise the significance of what they are doing from a research perspective. The day to day nature of maps, such as site, location and master plans, in architecture means that there is a lot of expertise in the profession, however this knowledge remains largely tacit. Indeed, methods employed to make maps/plans are so embedded in practice that architects are often unaware of the ways in which knowledge can be developed through their mapping activities.

Today, maps are ubiquitous. There are many different approaches to mapping. These range from geographic information systems (GIS), enabled through the advent of satellites and Global Positioning Systems (GPS), to critical forms of cartography which posit that maps are active, construct knowledge, exert power and promote social change (Crampton & Krygier, 2005, 15). As Jeremy Crampton (2011) explained, critical cartography is an approach which seeks to make spatial knowledge through maps. These types of map generate knowledge in relation to time, space and relationships.

Community mapping is a type of critical cartography which reveals dimensions, such as local character and identity, things that not usually appear on maps. Community maps are often made by local groups and can, ‘be seen as a response to conventional, elitist cartography, comprising an alternative, egalitarian counter-culture.’ (Parker, 2006, 471)

Where community mapping can generate collective representations of a particular community and how they wished to represent themselves, asset mapping uses collaborative techniques in order to create maps which aim to reveal potential and to guide strategies for change. Asset mapping can be used by researchers, local authorities, charities and stakeholders as well as community activists in order to engage and focus discussions around themes such as ‘health and wellbeing, space, built environment, public services, urban planning, and regional development’ (Alevizou, Alexiou and Zamenopoulos, 2016, 5) The general premise to the approach is to look at what is existing rather than what is missing. Assets can be visible, tangible or external (e.g. spaces, services and infrastructures, including communications, media and informal information networks) or somewhat hidden, intangible or internal (e.g. psycho----social aspects such as aspiration, but also creative talents, skills, knowledge, social principles and emotional resources). (Ibid) Through asset mapping, theme specific information and assets can be gathered, collectively discussed and ideas and strategies can be co-produced.

In response to the rich and diverse field of mapping, the research focused on developing agency through mapping methods and combined community and asset mapping with a deliberately strategic approach, developed through a combination of action research and architectural practice research.

Orts Road and Newtown

The research studied eco social values in context Orts Road and Newtown (a 40 hectare site). The area is socially and ethnically diverse. Affordable housing stock means that first time buyers and newcomers to the town are drawn to the area. As a result the areas is multicultural and has religious buildings representing different faiths. It has good access to both the town centre and natural and recreations resources along the Thames. The side has two distinct architectural styles, with higher density flats towards the town centre meeting lower density terraced housing.

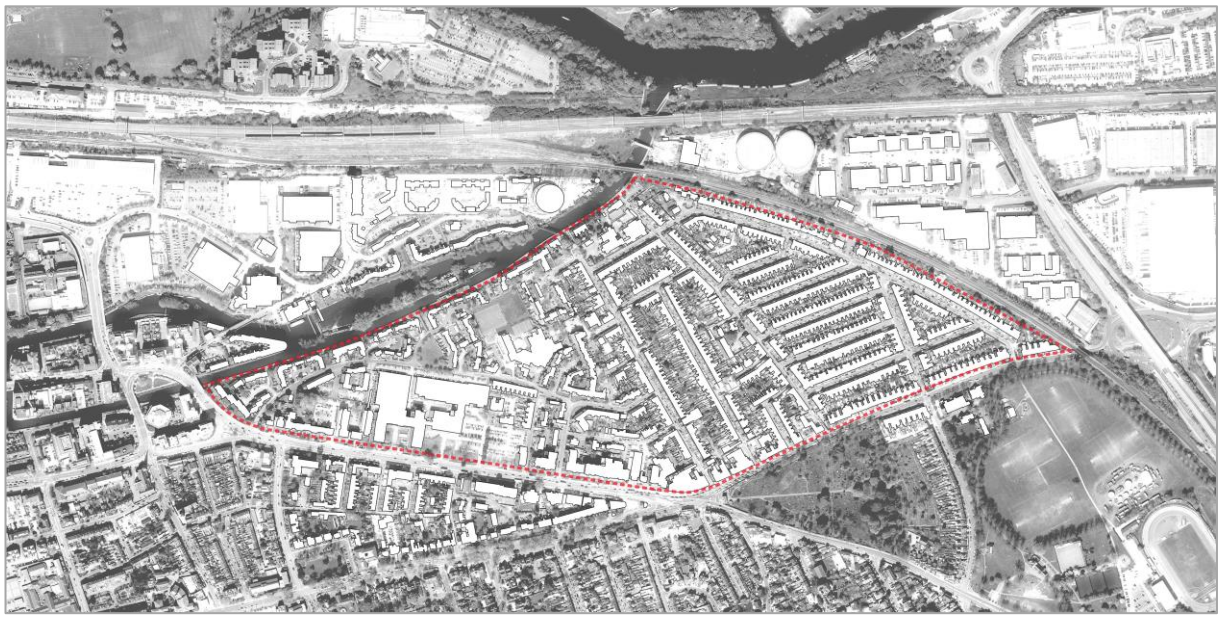

Figure 2. Orts Road and Newtown (boundary marked in red).

The higher density Orts Road estate faces the River Kennet and sits next to Reading College. To the east lies New Town which is comprised of long streets and blocks of nineteenth century housing. Previously, to the north of the site, on the other side of the canal, the Huntley and Palmers biscuit factory was so large that it had its own rail network and housing for workers where Orts Road and Newtown lie today. Since the housing at Orts Road did not meet regulations, the site was earmarked, post-war, for regeneration. Similar housing stock in Newtown was not subject to clearance and

remains in its original form today. Newtown is typified by its long streets/blocks, which are a direct contrast to Orts Road's many cul-de-sacs.

The red brick estate at Orts Road comprises of terraced housing and three- and four-storey flats set in blocks, which face away from the canal and towards internal courtyards. The site is fairly self-contained with few people passing through. Whilst the two areas have quite different housing stock, they are both multicultural and share amenities, such as religious buildings (including the Gurdwara), schools, community centres and shops. They also share access to green/blue spaces such as: Riverside and the Kennet and Avon Canal, the Thames Path and nature reserve and Palmer Park.

Orts Road and Newtown share key amenities. They are, however, divided in economy and demographics. Orts Road has a mix of providers of social housing, ranging from the local authority to housing associations. In Newtown, housing is largely privately owned or rented. Newtown is home to a broader demographic, with younger families in their first homes and older owner-occupiers. To compound the divide, a political ward boundary runs down the middle of the site, separating Orts Road estate from Newtown.

Method

Mapping was explored as visual collaborative method to support discussions about social and environmental interactions at a neighbourhood scale. Project workshops took place at venues ranging from schools, to a Scout hall, sheltered housing and outdoor community events. Participants ranged from primary school classes, to teachers, parents and other engaged local residents. The events were facilitated by the local authority. Following feedback and analysis with the local authority and councillors the project maps were used to generate a report highlighting key findings and sites of particular value and potential.

Through asking people to map the places that they valued most, researchers were able to generate a map of key neighbourhood assets, resources and places. The map includes input from both children and adults and shows where values combined across generations and shows specific locations where future investment or design interventions might have maximum social impact, leading to improved wellbeing.

Over the summer of 2019, mapping workshops were staged at seven different locations around the 40-hectare case-study site. These events saw the production of 14 community maps as well as lists of aspirational measures of improvement and headlines. This workshop data recorded input from around 200 participants and provided rich material for subsequent analysis.

Mapping workshops were designed with reference to prompts which aimed to explore places of social value and promote discussions about different interpretations of value. Following ethics approval, researchers collaborated with the LA to support the recruitment of participants. The involvement of the local authority was critical since they were embedded in the area and could provide long term points of contact, something which the timeframes of research funding generally cannot.

Throughout the workshops, the approach adapted in response to the activities. For example, at the first workshop there was some difficulty reading the base map and some participants did not want to write onto the map. To solve these issues subsequent workshops used clearer maps, both colour and aerial photography, and stickers with prewritten with text. The workshop design was also adapted to primary school children in close collaboration with their teachers. The workshop prompts were rewritten in appropriate language and the pupils were briefed before the workshop by their teacher, so they had a chance to think about what they would like to map and also discuss it with their parents prior to the event. The workshop process was also adapted to outdoor

events and discussions one on one and in small groups. Each of these iterations refined the technique but gathered equivalent data.

Following the workshops new maps were drawn of each event digitally. These were shared with participants for feedback before being combined into a composite map which represented all of the workshops.

The local authority assisted with analysis of the composite map. They provided links to local knowledge, systems and priorities. One analysis session took place over the course of an afternoon. During this time, a printed copy of the composite map was closely examined. The ensuing discussions reflected upon what the map contained, how it related more broadly to the town and the activities and aspirations of the Local Authority, as well as what was missing. The composite map also provided evidence to support the development of a new Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funded playpark at the heart of the neighbourhood.

Following feedback and analysis, the composite map was added to and refined before being split into maps relating themes emerging from the analysis. These systems maps relate back to the SROI proxies and highlight locations where spending or design interventions could have maximum social value impact.

Working with the local residents and local authority the project team developed multi-layered maps which explore social values across a residential neighbourhood in Reading. The maps reveal not only locations and combinations of different sites of perceived social value, but also expose the contested nature of value in the public sphere and some of the challenges of aligning local values with decision-making processes. The maps also have the potential to inform strategic land management for better places and more holistic forms of land valuation.

Overall those who took part were positive about their local neighbourhood and there was a strong sense of pride. However, the mapping workshops did reveal a lack of recreational facilities and a desire for healthier, less polluted and more accessible public spaces and amenities. Given the opportunity to speak about their neighbourhood, people had lots to say and typically any improvements that were suggested could be achieved without too much difficulty. Many participants, however, either did not feel part, or were not aware, of larger planning discussions affecting them locally. As such, the mapping workshops provided a neutral space to discuss some of these concerns. Ideally, the capacity that has been built through the research will continue into more conversations about social value in the environment at Orts Road and beyond.

Workshop Description

Through MESA, mapping was explored as a visual method to support collaborative discussions about social and environmental interactions at a neighbourhood scale across Orts Road and Newtown. MESA workshops took place at venues ranging from schools, to a Scout hall, sheltered housing and outdoor community events. Participants ranged from primary school classes, to teachers, parents and other engaged local residents. The events were facilitated by the Local Authority.

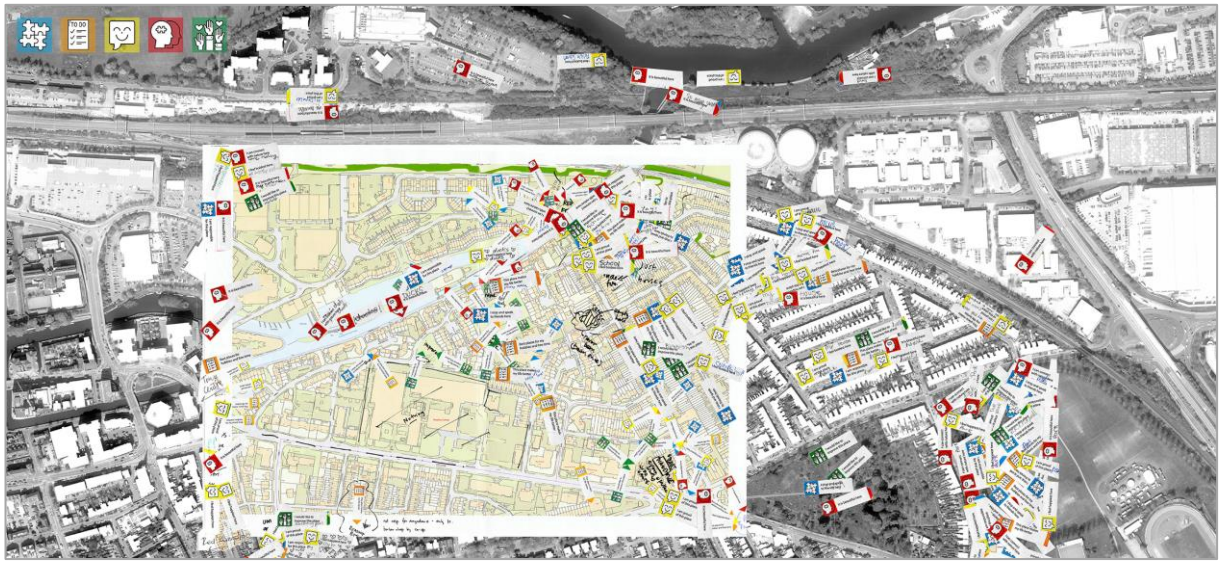

Figure 3. A completed workshop map showing different coloured stickers clustered around areas on interest and handwritten notes added during group discussions.

As an introduction to each workshop, participants were advised that the aim was to make a map, which would be used, not only, to discover local assets and resources, but also to assist in generating a more joined-up view of values across the area. Participants were then asked to engage with a large format map of their neighbourhood. They were asked if they knew what the map represented and if they could locate some local landmarks and places. Following this introduction, participants were issued with pens and stickers and asked to mark their responses to the workshop prompts onto the map. Since there were multiple people working on each map during the workshops, each theme was colour coded. This colour coding aided subsequent analysis of workshop data. At each event the group was directed to respond to one prompt at a time and work around the table to ensure that everyone got an opportunity not only to make additions to the map, but also to hear and see how others had responded to the prompts. Towards the end of the mapping part of the workshop, group analysis of the map took place, whereby collective reflections were made upon why certain areas of the map were of interest.

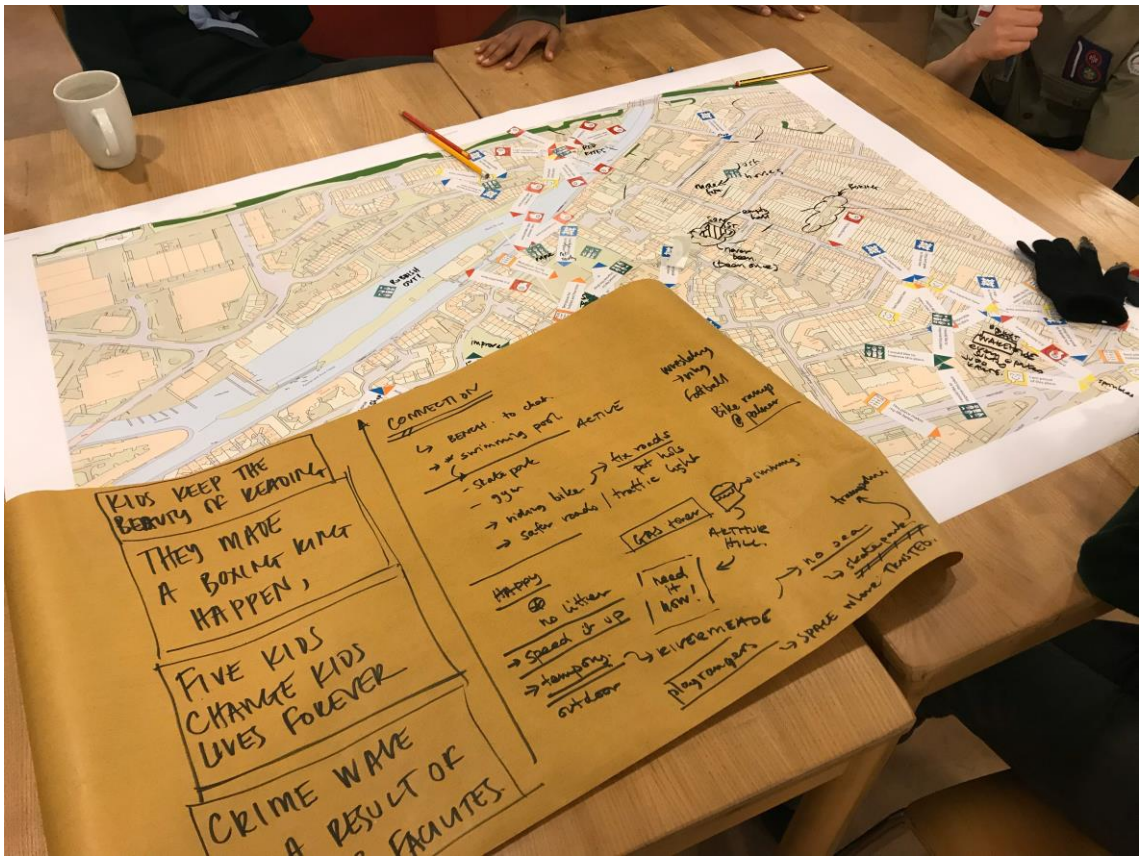

Figure 4. Workshop materials produced during an event with a local Scout group.

Once responses to all of the prompts had been mapped, workshop activities moved onto discussions about values and aspirations. Participants were asked to imagine the area in two years' time, having become a better place to live, and then to think about what practical steps or measures would need to be taken now to achieve that vision. They were then asked complete the sentences:

- We would be a better-connected community if there were...
- We would be a more active community if there were…
- We would be a happier community if there were…
- There would be greater wellbeing locally if there were…
- And, I would like the power to…

To conclude each workshop on a propositional note, participants were asked to think of a newspaper, or website, headline about what the area would be famous for in ten years'

time. Throughout the mapping workshops participants often reflected upon the loss of local facilities, such as a recently closed public swimming pool and learnt from each other about cafes and events at community centres. Each of the workshop prompts elicited dynamic and thoughtful responses.

In order to think about how the neighbourhood could succeed into the future, as part of each workshop, participants were asked what they thought success would look like in 2 years' time. The following measures give an indication of how eco-social assets could be enhanced towards a better neighbourhood from the perspective of those living at Orts Road and Newtown.

Connection

We would be a better connected community if there were...

- More places for play
- Places to do homework
- Free access to the internet
- More benches to sit and chat
- Annual get togethers
- Newsletters featuring local news and housing news
- Fun events and get togethers

Active Lifestyles

We would be a more active community if there were…

- More activities at school out of hours and free activities for children
- Pedestrianized streets so that there are fewer cars and more places to play
- Cheap and free places to spend time in the day and evening for all generations

- Diverse neighbourhood recreational activities available such as: swimming, rugby, table tennis, tennis, football and athletics.

Positive emotions

We would be a happier community if there were..

- Fewer cars and less pollution and noise
- Accessible places for everyone
- Less crime and better enforcement
- Street parties and food events
- More places to play and more play equipment

Taking notice

There would be greater wellbeing locally if there were…

- More environmentally friendly and healthy spaces
- Better maintenance, such as grass cutting and gardening initiatives
- More trees, parks and green spaces
- Encourage biodiversity, such as birds, like the kites
- Litter was reduced
- Photography Competition – 'Beautiful Orts Road'
- Public art

Freedom and Flexibility

I would like the power to…

- Reopen Arthur Hill Pool as a community asset

- Fix the potholes in the roads, to make bike riding safer
- Open more local shops and cafes
- Make the streets wider and less busy
- Get better lighting, to make it nicer at night
- Make ‘play streets’
- Have a local marathon
- Make Orts Road famous for its successful sportspeople and facilities
- Organize events to pick up litter

The long-term vision for the area was summarized by participants in the following imagined newspaper headlines for ten years’ time:

> BEST HOUSING ESTATE IN READING
> PRIMARY KIDS CHANGED THE FUTURE
> IF WE CAN CHANGE A PARK, WE CAN CHANGE THE WORLD
> KIDS KEEP THE BEAUTY OF READING
> CRIMEWAVE AS A RESULT OF A LACK OF FACILITIES AT ORTS ROAD
> OUR SPORTING CHAMPS COME FROM ORTS ROAD

Multi-layered Social Value Maps

Figure 5. A composite map produced from tracing all of the workshop maps with colour coded semi-transparent layers.

The maps made during the community workshops were traced and combined into a map which contains all of the input from each event. This map uses different colours to highlight the areas that were discussed most. The brighter the colour the more a place or building was talked about. Each colour represents a different theme from the workshop. So connectivity is blue, activity is orange, positive emotions are yellow, taking notice is red and places that can be improved are green. The full colour map shows that different values overlap across the neighbourhood and that schools and parks generate a lot of positive emotions and the riverside and cemetery are great places for taking notice and mindfulness.

Figure 6. The connection map. “I talk to neighbours regularly” valued in 2019 at £4,511 by the HACT Social Value Bank

The connection map shows all of the spaces and buildings that were discussed and mapped during the workshops in response to the questions:

- Is there anywhere that you find you tend to stop and speak to people regularly?
- And, can you mark onto the map any areas that you feel responsible for?

The areas marked in blue show where there are existing connections that could be enhanced. They reveal locations where investment or design interventions might have maximum impact improving values relating to connections. The team were also interested considering how SROI HACT Social Value Bank proxies might start to be built into the maps in order to monetise the social value of placemaking.

The map shows that social connections are located at schools, religious buildings and community centres, as well as along streets and paths and at stopping points such as bus stops. It highlights the value of public spaces/buildings and streets.

Through looking at the map it is clear that the spaces between buildings are critical for social interactions. Streets such as Orts Road, School Terrace, Freshwater Road and Cemetery Junction are all places where people can stop to have a chat.

Areas that people felt responsible for include schools and religious buildings and their own homes. Activities, led by the schools, such as litter picking meant that some people also mapped that they felt responsible for keeping waterways and green spaces tidy, so that they can be enjoyed by everyone.

The map also highlights in blue community assets that are no longer open to the public, such as Arthur Hill Pool and the East Reading Adventure Playground in Palmer Park.

Figure 7. The active lifestyles map. “I am able to take frequent mild exercise” valued in 2019 as £3,537 by the HACT Social Value Bank.

The active lifestyles map shows all of the spaces and buildings that were discussed and mapped during the workshops in response to the questions:

- Where are your local amenities, such as shops, community centres, church?
- Do you have any places you go for recreational activities and hobbies?

The areas marked in orange show where those who took part in the mapping workshops spend their free time. It highlights assets within the neighbourhood such as local shops, community centres, religious buildings, and schools. It also reveals the significance of assets around the site, such as shops, pubs, a superstore and green spaces such as Eldon Square Gardens, Palmer Park and the riverside and nature reserve.

Within the neighbourhood, many participants mentioned that opportunities for recreation and leisure are currently limited and, as such, home was often named as the only place for hobbies and activities. The workshops revealed that there is a strong local demand for more recreational facilities and activities across all age ranges. The map shows that there could be benefits to thinking about improved access to activities locally. If people are able to take frequent mild exercise, whether light exercise such as a walk to the shops or pub, or more intense exercise such as sports, then that could result a healthier and happier community.

Figure 8. The positive emotions and mindfulness map. “I feel relief from depression/anxiety” valued at

£36,766 by the HACT Social Value Bank in 2019 and "I feel a sense of belonging in my neighbourhood" valued at £3,753 by the HACT Social Value Bank in 2019.

Through the mapping workshops it became clear that the themes of positive emotions (yellow) and mindfulness (red) are closely related and overlap. The map highlights responses to the following questions:

- Is there anywhere locally that you are proud of?
- Can you show where you feel happiest locally?
- Is there somewhere in the area that you think is beautiful?
- Is there somewhere you can connect with nature?

Again schools, churches and community centres are highlighted as social assets that benefit positive emotions and mindfulness. Workshops with primary school children revealed that overall they associate school with positive emotions and a sense of belonging, which is a great credit to the staff of these institutions.

The red, yellows and oranges of the rivers, canal and local green spaces highlight a great appreciation for the value that these natural and biodiverse spaces give. It can be suggested that these spaces provide a vital resource to the local community by providing mental health benefits and supporting reflection and a sense of belonging. As such they are worth preserving and enhancing wherever possible.

Figure 9. The flexibility and freedom map. “I feel in control of my life” valued in 2019 at £15, 894 by the HACT Social Value Bank

The final map shows the spaces and buildings that participants felt could benefit from change or improvement. It reveals where people felt they would like action to be taken or to have the ability to take control themselves. With reference to the proxy ‘I feel in control of my life’ this map depicts areas where changes or improvements would have most impact.

The map highlights that keeping the river and riverside clean and well-lit was a local priority. As too was improving access to the Thames and surrounding green spaces. Participants also mentioned that there was currently limited interaction between the neighbourhood and adjoining business parks, which could provide local skills and jobs.

Within the neighbourhood, improvements were suggested to school facilities, such as through more equipment and access to playing fields out of hours. The 'Green' at Orts Road was also mapped as a site that could be greatly improved and used for

multi-generational free time activities and a patch of land connecting Cumberland Road to Amity Road was highlighted as a prime location for a small 'pocket' park.

The map reveals the significance of streets and crossings and a desire for pedestrianised areas, improved air quality and reduced traffic along Orts Road, Cumberland Road, Rupert Street and Cemetery Junction. It also highlights a will for safer crossing points to reach Palmer Park.

Arthur Hill Pool was highlighted by both adults and children as a much missed local asset. Throughout the workshops there were repeated calls amongst participants for more local recreational facilities, to improve health and wellbeing, and in light of these discussions the pool was sorely missed. Unfortunately, the pool had already been sold, to be replaced with keyworker housing, by the time the project was completed but the data collected would have been very useful to the save Arthur Hill Pool lobby. The potential of carefully conceived co-created maps, whether analogue or on-line, to provide an evidence base for democratic decision making is great.

Conclusion

The research project developed methods to collaboratively map and analyse social value across Orts Road and Newtown. The project supported broad discussions about values and assets which included different perspectives and interpretations. Whilst the maps did not actively seek to quantify values locally, they highlighted areas of interest and potential. These areas could benefit from future development and/or investment.

In order to understand social value in a complex and rich environment, the research took its starting point quite simply in asking people what they valued most locally. Conversations were structured around the planning and making of eco-social value maps of the area. The process placed emphasis on positive, existing assets and promoted discussions about what is currently appreciated most locally.

The maps spatially represent workshop data in a visual and accessible way. They have supported debate and discussions about social value, for example a recent consultation on Social Value by the London Sustainable Development Corporation. The planning system in the UK has been long criticised for being too reactive. In turn, public consultations often happen too late in the development process for meaningful engagement. The research has demonstrated that collaboratively locating social assets and values amongst communities, can not only help local authorities make informed choices based on social and environmental as well as economic value, but also provide new opportunities for them to understand the communities that they serve better.

The research developed a set of methods that can be used to evidence social value spatially. These methods have many potential future applications for example:

- The accurate definition of electoral boundaries based on community self-perception.
- Ongoing participation in the co-creation of local development plans, city models that account for social value.
- Building procurement based on social value outcomes, as well as the use of social value in planning.
- Most importantly social value can be used to help make an evidence based case for resisting developments that are destructive to communities and people drawing on SROI financial proxies as necessary.

With regards to the future, from the point of view of the Neighbourhood Initiatives Officer who helped to facilitate the process, ‘Ideally, the project [will] genuinely affect planning decisions. There are more and more pressures on development, but people need more than just homes, they also need places to live with happy and rewarding

connections to their community.'[1]

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