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Enabling Collaboration: Policies and Governance

By Levente Polyák, Daniela Patti,
Loes Veldpaus

The OpenHeritage project was conceived to explore a more inclusive, sustainable, and community-based concept of adaptive heritage reuse (AHR), a concept that is discussed in greater detail in Part 2 of this book. The project built on hands-on good practices (Observatory Cases) and ongoing processes (Cooperative Heritage Labs), as well as their policy contexts. Researchers emphasised the uniqueness of all cases, often based on individual initiatives, idiosyncratic constellations of actors, and personal engagement; and also revealed clear patterns across the cases, particularly in some of the key factors facilitating or hindering success (Veldpaus et al., 2019). All of the Observatory Cases and Cooperative Heritage Labs were contextualised through policy analysis of their broader contexts, particularly the enabling or hindering policies and the governance structures that define the modalities of cooperation and decision-making between the various actors involved in developing them (Polyák et al., 2019).

Adaptive heritage reuse at the crossroads of policies

There is a wide variety of policies potentially relevant for the community-driven adaptive reuse of heritage assets, which need to be taken into account for an integrated approach. The structural factors include horizontal and vertical policy integration, e.g., across heritage and planning policies, and between tiers of governance (Veldpaus et al., 2020). Moreover, AHR also becomes easier when heritage is seen as ‘useful’ to broader policy aims such as sustainability or regeneration. This can extend to a wide range of policies dealing with place, including those on environmental sustainability, participation, health and wellbeing, socio-economic development, housing, culture, and tourism. Finally, it is helpful to rethink building codes, regulations on changes of use (including temporary uses), and zoning laws, as well as tendering, funding, and procurement criteria, and fee/tax levies or waivers. Such policies often focus on new-build or archetypal restoration projects, with no regard for the ‘hybrid’ needs of AHR.

The policies used in the OpenHeritage Observatory Cases and Cooperative Heritage Labs, to enable community-driven adaptive heritage reuse, range from heritage protection (withholding demolition permits), urban planning (zoning to allow experimental uses), and real estate policies (providing access to properties or innovative financial mechanisms to renovate endangered heritage buildings), to housing (requiring a proportion of affordable housing), and social and cultural policies (funding activities or encouraging local cooperation).

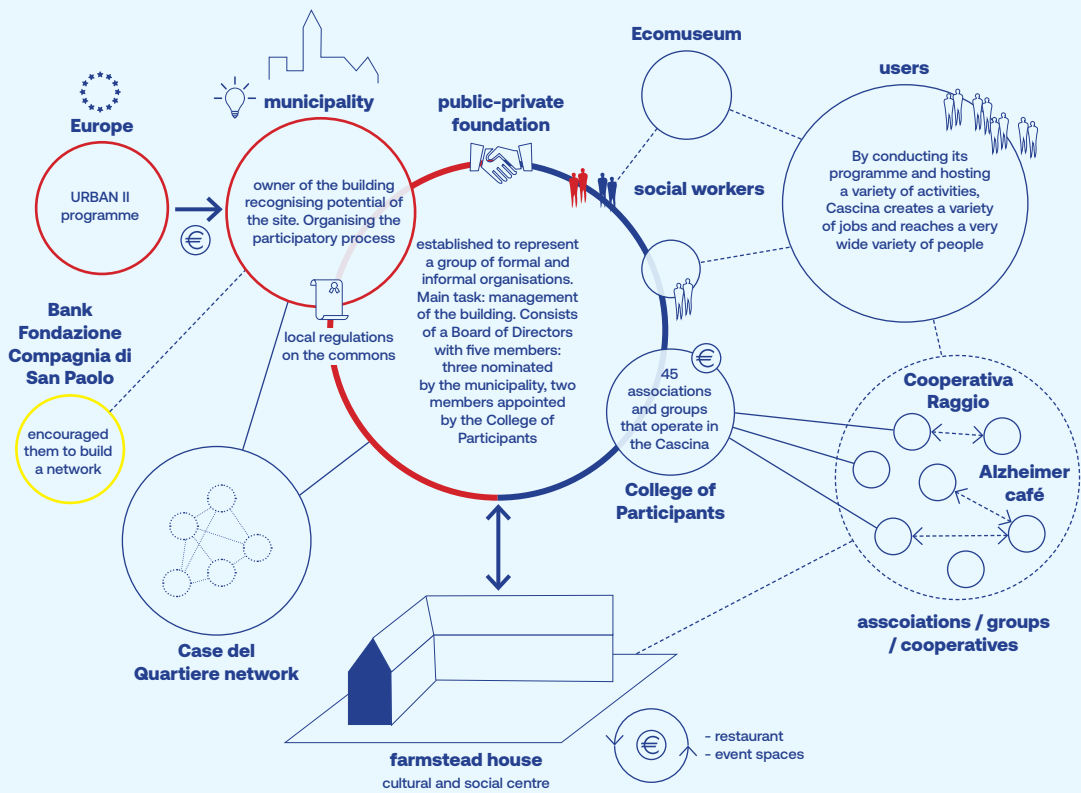


Fig. 1
Governance structure of Cascina Roccafranca

Policies and governance in the OpenHeritage cases

This chapter focuses on three case studies that intertwine decision-making structures with specific policies. If public policies or third-sector strategies can support initiatives in securing land or buildings, raising funds to purchase properties, or for renovation or structural collaboration at the local level, they can also shape collaboration at the local level by encouraging more inclusive modes of governance, allowing for horizontal decision-making and co-management structures (Fig. 1).

Cascina Roccafranca in Turin has a strong public policy dimension (Fig. 2). While its current form is the result of a series of public policies, it has also decisively contributed to shaping the city's commons regulation and related policies. A former farmstead transformed into a community venue in Turin's Mirafiori district, Cascina Roccafranca is a public facility managed collaboratively by the municipality and various civil society organisations. The partnership here is based on a decision-making structure that involves both municipal departments and representatives of NGOs, thus creating a balance between institutional and community interests and ensuring both municipal support and greater outreach to local citizens and communities.

Cascina Roccafranca has been a testing ground for Turin's commons regulation that, through its Pacts of Collaboration (tailored agreements between the municipality and various organisations / individuals), allows citizen groups or civil society organisations to care for and co-manage public or private properties defined as commons. These properties are often regarded as heritage for their important role in local narratives or social infrastructure, and their reuse is often initiated by the surrounding community.

Public-civic cooperation around commons is facilitated by a municipal working group that connects 'representatives of sectoral departments of the city administration, including those in charge of green areas, social services, real estate management' (Polyák, 2022) and representatives from the local district. Cascina Roccafranca's governance model exemplifies the potentials of the commons framework, and has provided a blueprint for various other initiatives in Turin that subsequently founded Rete delle Case del Quartiere, a network of similar community centres mostly in vulnerable and peripheral areas of the city.

The Sunderland High Street Lab helped us implement some of the key concepts of OpenHeritage (Fig. 3). The three 18th-century buildings, originally built as merchant townhouses but soon turned into shops, are now listed as Grade 2 heritage buildings. They were acquired and renovated by the Tyne and Wear Building Preservation Trust (TWBPT) in order to reverse the decline of Sunderland's city centre. Collaboration with local groups and organisations generated new activities and increased footfall, and TWBPT was a key stakeholder in the project to regenerate the wider area.

Public policies played an important role in this work. The buildings, located within the Old Sun-

derland conservation area, which was designated by the national heritage protection body Historic England as 'Heritage at Risk', became a catalyst project of the Sunderland Heritage Action Zone (HAZ). The HAZ policy tool was newly introduced by Historic England to prompt the creation of local partnerships and 'focus heritage expertise and funding towards marginalised areas', as detailed in the chapter on Sunderland. The HAZ also acts as a governance model, facilitating cooperation between different partners and stakeholders in the area. TWBPT is now involved in discussions on establishing a more permanent governance structure for the area, and building on the current collaborations towards collective maintenance, finance, and governance.

Sunderland City Council, another key stakeholder in the HAZ, played a crucial role in protecting the buildings – first preventing their demolition, then purchasing the properties and immediately transferring ownership to TWBPT for a symbolic price of £1. This required TWBPT to develop a viable business plan for the buildings' regeneration, initially through a mix of grants for capital works and temporary/future uses, and later also through crowdfunding and loans. Key in this was the collaboration with Pop Recs, a local café and music shop that now operates in two of the three buildings. The trust model is a key element of the Sunderland High Street Lab. Building preservation trusts (BPTs) typically acquire ownership (or long-term lease) of buildings, and raise funds from various organisations (including Historic England, the National Lottery Heritage Fund, and the Architectural Heritage Fund) to renovate them for sustainable uses. Any revenues are used to repay loans and support further projects. Heritage trusts take various forms (including heritage trust networks), and have proven to be an efficient vehicle for restoration (especially where local government steps away from direct involvement), and can also facilitate cooperation between public, private, and third-sector organisations.

Community land trusts (CLTs) are another version of the trust model. London CLT is one of the first urban community land trusts in the UK, and thus exercises significant influence on new CLTs both in the UK and on the European continent. CLTs are usually created to counter gentrification or the financialisation of housing assets, through community ownership. By owning land or leasing it from public owners, community land trusts can control rental and purchase prices and keep properties affordable in the long run. Depending on the particular CLT, homes may be rented or purchased from the Trust but cannot be resold for above-inflation profit. In the case of London CLT, housing prices are based on the median income within the local borough.

Horizontal governance is a key feature of CLTs. To ensure better integration within a neighbourhood, CLTs often involve residents, together with experts willing to support the project, in their decision-making. This involvement means that the individual interests of homeowners need to be harmonised with (rather than dominating) those of the community.



Fig. 2
Visit at Cascina Roccafranca

Fig. 3
High Street Sunderland,
Heritage Open Days

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Enabling policies are important for creating CLTs. As the CLT model is based on accessible, affordable land, initiatives to establish new CLTs rely on a great diversity of public property owners (municipalities, public railway companies, etc.) or charities to donate or lease land. This is possible when public actors or charities have a long-term strategy for affordable housing or a development focus on a certain area that allows them to provide land for purposes that match these long-term goals.

In some cases, the CLTs' quest for affordable land is supported by complementary policies. In the case of London CLT, Section 106 planning obligations attached to the former St Clements hospital site stipulated an affordable housing allocation of 30%. Such mechanisms can ensure the future diversity of a neighbourhood in transition as well as the adaptive reuse of its heritage assets.

While the policy sphere is particularly pronounced in defining the modalities of decision-making and co-governance in these three cases, policies are key to most of the Observatory Cases and Cooperative Heritage Labs presented in this book and the OpenHeritage database (Baudier & Erzberger, 2020). The rent-to-investment scheme of Stará Tržnica in Bratislava has created a financial mechanism that ensures the renovation of the Old Market Hall while also allowing the association managing the building to experiment with new uses and activities to make better use of it. In Lisbon, the BIP/ZIP funding scheme supports development in vulnerable neighbourhoods and encourages local initiatives to collaborate towards shared goals. In Naples, commons regulation provides a set of policies designed to create open community venues with horizontal co-governance structures, enabling citizen initiatives to utilise empty buildings such as the Scugnizzo Liberato, Ex Asilo Filangieri, and Ex OPG.

Supporting community-driven governance

Policy has important implications for adaptive heritage reuse. The OpenHeritage Policy Briefs present a series of recommendations designed to support policymaking in enabling community-driven AHR processes (Veldpaus et al., 2022), Mechanisms to support partnerships between different authorities as well as local stakeholders (Policy Brief #02: Veldpaus et al., 2022) can mobilise a diversity of skills and competences while ensuring more horizontal decision-making processes and outreach to a broader community. A diversity of funding sources, including grants, loans, equity, guarantees, or community investment (Policy Brief #03: Veldpaus et al., 2022), can enable AHR initiatives to build a sustainable financial trajectory. A long-term territorial vision (Policy Brief #05: Veldpaus et al., 2022) for an area helps different approaches, policies, and projects coalesce into a coherent strategy with better-defined local impact.

While these policy recommendations focus on local and regional administrations, they also have a strong EU dimension (Policy Brief #04: Veldpaus et al., 2022). AHR has been an important focus of European

heritage and cultural policies, especially since the European Year of Cultural Heritage in 2018. Within the EU policy landscape, AHR is already central to EU cultural- and heritage-themed programmes and is included to some extent in agendas on economic, urban, and regional development. Particularly in the context of the European Green Deal and the New European Bauhaus, AHR is also becoming important more broadly in improving the quality of the built environment and architecture, as well as greening and circular economies, material sustainability, recycling, and waste reduction. AHR is not, however, reflected in how the majority of EU subsidies are spent within the European territories. Given that innovation, inclusion, and sustainability are already criteria for funding research (Horizon Europe), innovation (European Capital of Innovation Awards), and urban (URBACT, European Urban Initiative) programmes, it is time to rethink how the EU's investment funds and Structural Funds can be utilised to finance territorial development.

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Cascina Roccafranca: Co-Governing the Commons in Turin

By Levente Polyák and
Andrea Giuliano



Cascina Roccafranca is a multi-functional community centre located in a former farmstead in Mirafiori, a former industrial area on the outskirts of Turin. After 30 years of vacancy, Cascina Roccafranca was purchased by the Municipality of Turin and repurposed with the support of Urban II, the European Union's programme to regenerate troubled urban districts. Today, it is a public asset managed collaboratively by public and civic actors, and provides a wide range of social and cultural activities. This management approach offers a valuable model for policies on citizen empowerment and public-civic cooperation connected to the regeneration of neglected areas and buildings. Since 2012, Cascina Roccafranca has been a key member of the Case del Quartiere, a network of similar community centres in Turin that was formalised in 2017, and today collaborates with the City Council in the management and regeneration of urban commons.

The farmhouse and its renovation

Cascina (farmstead) Roccafranca was built in the 17th century to serve as a farmhouse for the Compagnia dell'Immacolata Concezione religious confraternity. In 1689, the farmhouse was sold to Count Lorenzo Ballard. In 1840 the next owner, Baroness Chionio, enlarged the farmhouse and modified its original structure. From 1957, the agricultural land connected to Cascina Roccafranca was progressively reduced and taken over by the Fiat Mirafiori establishment and workers' residences. In the 1970s, Cascina Roccafranca ultimately lost its function and its buildings were abandoned. The building became an urban void, degraded by time and marginalisation. However, with its 2,500 m² floor space and 2,000 m² courtyard, it retained a significant place in local memory.

Cascina Roccafranca is located in Mirafiori Nord, a neighbourhood on the south-western outskirts of Turin, six kilometres from the city centre, covering an area of more than 3 km² (Fig. 3). Its population grew exponentially in the 1950s with the establishment of the Fiat automobile factories and the subsequent construction of public housing estates in the area. With Fiat's departure and the closure of many of its production facilities, the area experienced an economic crisis and growing unemployment starting in the 1990s.

Today, Mirafiori Nord has about 25,000 inhabitants, 30% of whom are over 65. The area has struggled with severe social and economic problems: unemployment, homelessness, crime, poverty, low levels of education and training, decaying



Fig. 1
Cascina Roccafranca in Turin. Map

Timeline	1600 – 2017
1600s	Cascina Roccafranca was built by the Compagnia dell’Immacolata Concezione
1689	Cascina was sold to Count Lorenzo Ballard
1734	Cascina Roccafranca became an independent estate
1840	Baroness Chionio bought and enlarged the building
1957	Cascina Roccafranca’s agricultural lot was halved
1970s	The estate’s agricultural function ceased due to the area’s industrialisation
1999	The municipality launched a social forum (<i>tavoli sociali</i>) to discuss the regeneration of the Mirafiori area
2001	Mirafiori Nord was selected as a target area under the European Union’s Urban II programme
2002	The Municipality of Turin bought Cascina Roccafranca with Urban II funds
2004	The renovation of the buildings started
2006	The Cascina Roccafranca Foundation was established
2007	Cascina Roccafranca opened
2012	Coordinamento Case del Quartiere was formed
2014	The Case del Quartiere network was awarded a national ‘Che Fare?’ grant
2015	Manifesto delle Case del Quartiere was published
2016	Turin City Council approved the Regulation on Urban Commons
2017	Network Case del Quartiere was established

buildings and public spaces, as well as high levels of air and noise pollution. On the other hand, the area has significant green and open spaces and a history of strong community involvement.

In 2001, Turin was selected for the European Union's URBAN II programme, receiving 16 million euros to regenerate the Mirafiori Nord area. This intervention took into consideration various types of innovative actions: public space renovation, ecological renewal, economic interventions for employment and trading, and cultural and social action. In 2002, the Municipality of Turin used Urban II funds to purchase Cascina Roccafranca and transform it into a space for public services.

When it was selected for regeneration, the site's infrastructure was dilapidated, covered by vegetation, and affected by structural problems. The building was already zoned for service provision, and so no changes of land use regulations were needed. The building also lacked heritage protection, meaning that there were no restrictions concerning its reuse, and so the architectural project was free to change its physical aspects.

Regeneration work commenced in 2004. During the redevelopment, in 2006, the management of the building was assigned to Fondazione Cascina Roccafranca, a foundation established to represent a group of formal and informal organisations that aimed to redevelop the building and to transform it into a multi-purpose neighbourhood centre. The redeveloped Cascina Roccafranca opened in 2007.

While the complex was entirely rebuilt in accordance with current safety and environmental norms, its new design evokes the original historical appearance, maintaining architectural features important for the identity and recognisability of the place, such as door and window fixtures and brickwork. The participatory planning process around the conception of *Cascina Roccafranca* fed many ideas into planning the new venue. The idea of total accessibility, with no barriers or thresholds of control, as in a public living room, came from this process; so did the idea of architectural transparency, which allows people to see what is happening inside the building (Fig. 3).

"This building is 'transparent', to facilitate the idea of sharing and of publicness. In the past there have been similar activities in the district, but they were not concentrated in a space instead carried out in rented spaces often in former classrooms or basements – never in a beautifully designed space."

Stefania Ieluzzi

Cascina Roccafranca is today divided into five parts that refer to the pre-existing spaces in the ancient Cascina. The canopy, originally used as storage, now forms the main entrance, featuring an entrance hall, the reception, a play area, and an incubator space. The stall is the best-preserved part of the old farmhouse, now hosting a cafeteria, multi-media rooms, artistic workshops, and classrooms. The villa, completely rebuilt following its original structure, is now used for adminis-



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Fig. 2
Event at Cascina Roccafranca

Fig. 3
The entrance of Cascina Roccafranca
in Turin

Fig. 4
Theatre rehearsal at Cascina
Roccafranca



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In 1997–98, the Turin municipality launched *Progetto Speciale Periferie*, a programme to requalify its urban peripheries. The programme created a series of *tavoli sociali* (social roundtables), working groups composed of various formal and non-formal organisations present in the area of intervention (such as associations, informal groups, social workers, and school teachers), plus a variety of people working, living, and managing activities in the neighbourhood. The roundtables were coordinated by municipal workers specifically selected for this task. The *Tavolo Sociale di Mirafiori Nord* was composed of about 60–70 people, representing associations, social workers, health services, and children's organisations. These discussions gave birth to the idea of Cascina Roccafranca as a community venue.

trative offices and the area's Ecomuseum. The barn hosts a restaurant and a large room used for meetings, gatherings, and parties. The internal courtyard connects all parts of the building and is used as a venue for summer events.

Social roundtables for community involvement

The redevelopment of Cascina Roccafranca was informed by the communities living in the Mirafiori area. At the end of the 1990s, the Municipality of Turin sought to develop a plan of interventions that would improve the environment and relaunch economic activities in Mirafiori Nord. For a year and a half, a group of formal and non-formal organisations composed of social, educational, and healthcare workers, religious organisations, associations, local committees, and schools came together in a social forum to discuss the possibilities for innovation in their area. This highlighted the need for a community meeting space and suggested Cascina Roccafranca as a suitable venue.

The participatory planning process revealed that residents of Mirafiori Nord lacked a suitable space for intergenerational encounters; one that could respond to a wide range of needs and interests but also be sufficiently fluid to regularly accept new proposals. Cascina Roccafranca was envisioned as a multi-purpose space for socialisation, civic engagement, and cultural activities; to promote ethical lifestyles and to support the dignity and diversity of ethnic, religious, gender, or physically challenged minorities.

“For us, a challenge was to imagine a space that could be used on the same day by users of different ages. Space is shared, and everybody needs to feel at home, but at the same time it has to be adapted to everybody's needs.”
Stefania de Masi

In 15 years of work, Cascina Roccafranca has adapted to new needs that were not envisioned during the planning phase. For example, with the economic crisis of 2007, Cascina Roccafranca became a support facility for local residents facing unemployment or poverty, as well as a centre for integration of the local migrant community. Although officially closed for several months during the COVID-19 pandemic, the entire building was reconfigured as a food distribution centre focusing on families with children, older people living alone, and people with physical disabilities. Additionally, they organised community activities (workshops, meetings, and games), and counselling for psychological issues and victims of domestic violence.

Cascina Roccafranca targets a variety of groups and interests. About 90% of its activities are directly organised by associations and independent groups that use the venue. The social workers employed by Cascina Roccafranca are also involved in planning events and meetings, but much of their work is dedicated to supporting groups in organising activities, especially younger or more disadvantaged groups that lack

experience. The programming closely follows the needs of the community, and therefore many events and activities are proposed by the users of Cascina Roccafranca.

“We imagine this place, and this project, as a container with spaces to fill. As operators, we monitor if activities correspond to the framework that we defined, the strategic goals we decided upon, the working conditions. But we expect the groups and associations to fill this space with activities.”
Renato Bergamin

Cascina Roccafranca hosts around 200 cultural programmes each year. These activities include music, theatre, conferences, book readings and presentations, language courses, cabaret, and dance courses (also for persons with disabilities). Events that are free of charge for participants can be held in the Cascina's spaces at no cost (Fig. 4).

The complex also hosts regular educational activities, such as an after-school programme run by volunteers; summer activities such as games, workshops, and excursions for groups of children (aged 0–13); and support activities for children with physical or mental challenges. Cascina Roccafranca regularly collaborates with two cooperatives promoting the integration of people with mental disorders: Mente Locale uses creative methods to address depression and eating disorders; Alzheimer Café organises informative meetings with educators and specialist doctors and physiologists.

Building a network for the commons

Mirafiori Nord and Cascina Roccafranca have been at the centre of a series of urban policies and funding programmes that enabled the Turin municipality to design and implement a long-term regeneration strategy (Pinson, 2002). In the late 1990s, in the midst of growing discussion about the problems of urban peripheries across Italy, but in the absence of any national policy addressing the issue, the Turin municipality launched the Progetto Speciale Periferie (PSP – Special Periphery Project). The capacities developed in PSP further enabled the municipality to mobilise resources from other funding sources. Since the early 2000s, the municipality's careful use of URBAN II (2000–2006) and Urban Innovative Actions (2017–2020) resources allowed the city to articulate a coherent vision for the territory.

The URBAN II programme's €10.7 million funding included €6.2 million for infrastructure and urban rehabilitation, €2.5 million for training and economic development, €1.4 million for social development and integration, and €0.6 million for technical assistance. The intervention in Mirafiori included infrastructure development, economic development, and training, as well as cultural and social activities. Renato Bergamin, the founder of Cascina Roccafranca, was responsible for some of these cultural and social activities, and one of the actions funded by URBAN II was dedicated to the adaptive

Progetto Speciale Periferie

Launched in 1997 by the Turin Municipality, PSP aimed to help the municipal administration to develop skills and capacities necessary to work with larger urban regeneration programmes. PSP focused on Turin's crisis areas in the peripheries, according to an incremental logic that facilitated local development and the active participation of local citizens. The programme linked the territorial logic of the 'neighbourhood' with a wider urban strategy of rethinking the city according to a poly-centric model and building new centralities and identities at the peripheries.

Case del Quartiere

Turin's eight *Case del Quartiere* (Neighbourhood Houses) are community spaces that offer citizens opportunities to meet through cultural events, social encounters, and self-produced workshops. They are managed by local teams that collect proposals from external organisations (associations, third sector organisations, social enterprises, committees, groups, individual citizens) to develop a rich programme of activities using the spaces of the Houses.

reuse of the Cascina Roccafranca and its transformation into a community venue.

As part of the PSP, participatory planning processes in several neighbourhoods resulted in an ambition to create spaces to host initiatives, and give a structure and continuity to participation. The spaces created through these processes, despite having different trajectories, also shared many similarities. At some point, these spaces began to connect to each other and identify themselves as *Case del Quartiere* (Neighbourhood Houses). Cascina Roccafranca was more developed than other Houses, and was hence defined as a model for the *Case del Quartiere*.

“We realised that different single programmes of urban regeneration in different neighbourhoods with different stories, different characteristics, different financial tools, and different operational tools shared the same goal of creating a space for informal socialisation and service provision.”

Giovanni Ferrero

The *Case del Quartiere* are spread across Turin, and their rootedness in different neighbourhoods makes them an important partner for the municipality. In May 2012, the eight Neighbourhood Houses in Turin established an informal coordination platform to favour the organisation of common projects. Its first milestone was winning the national grant *Che Fare?* (What shall we do?) in 2014, which provided economic resources for regular meetings. Following the publication of a manifesto in 2015 (Retecasedelquartiere, 2018), the Coordination of the Neighbourhood Houses was eventually transformed in 2017 into a formal Rete delle Case del Quartiere (Network of Neighbourhood Houses), in the form of an *Associazione di Promozione Sociale* (Association for Social Promotion).

The *Case del Quartiere* model, based on an experimental cooperation between the Turin Municipality and local civic actors, has opened a new way for public-civic cooperation. The network's experience contributed to the design of Turin's version of the Regulation of the Urban Commons, approved in January 2016.

The Regulation of the Urban Commons in Turin provides tools for formal collaboration between citizens and the city administration in running community venues. Specifically, by signing the Pact of Collaboration, the municipality and active citizens (such as informal groups, associations, NGOs, or individuals) agree to share responsibility for managing various urban spaces. Enabled by the Regulation, the municipality gathers proposals submitted by citizens and opens public consultations to identify urban common assets to include in collaboration pacts.

Shared responsibility and self-sustainability

The buildings of *Cascina Roccafranca* are owned by the Turin Municipality, which assigned the venue to the Cascina Roccafranca Foundation that manages it jointly with the munic-

ipality and district representatives. As a public asset, *Cascina Roccafranca*'s use is limited to social and cultural purposes, preventing commercial activities.

Cascina Roccafranca is managed by the *Fondazione Atipica in Partecipazione Cascina Roccafranca* (*Cascina Roccafranca Atypical Participation Foundation*), legally established in 2006. This foundation works with a model between public and private law: in some aspects it depends on public procedures, and for others it acts as a private organisation. As a legal entity, *Cascina Roccafranca* must adhere to public procedures for subcontracting, procuring goods or services, and regulations on corruption prevention and privacy. At the same time, it is a flexible entity and can hire external contractors and freelancers if it needs specific expertise.

“This structure of governance created a positive form of co-responsibility between public and private actors: the administration gave up some of its powers, and on the other hand, the private associations' mindset shifted from an idea of claiming something from the administration to a perspective in which they co-manage it.”

Renato Bergamin

The foundation's governance structure consists of a Board of Directors with five members: three are nominated by the municipality (the councillor for integration policies, the President of the District, and one member appointed by the district) and two members are appointed by the College of Participants (45 associations and groups that operate in the *Cascina*). The College of Participants meets every six months and nominates its representatives who attend the Board of Directors. The Board meets monthly to decide on some activities and current challenges.

The foundation is autonomous in its financial management and produces its own financial report, besides its institutional report, to the municipality. It differs from classical foundations as it relies on more than material assets (funds, buildings, etc.), instead adopting a form of joint management by the public administration and various informal groups. The foundation works with more than 80 associations and informal groups, as well as 20 individuals who promote activities at the venue.

The Turin municipality is not only a founding member of the *Fondazione Cascina Roccafranca* but also contributes to the foundation's work in a variety of ways: it provides the building free of charge, employs some of the staff, and covers some of the maintenance and utility costs.

Besides the seven employees that are directly paid by the municipality, *Cascina Roccafranca*'s yearly expenses amount to around €200–250,000, constituting salaries for the foundation's seven own employees (50%); another 10% is paid out in taxes and other charges, while around 40% is spent on safety compliance and organising services and events (Fig. 5).

Social impact

In 2019, *Cascina* worked with 125 partners and hosted 656 activities, with 78% organised by regular partners and 38% of the events free of charge. In the same year, 324 volunteers contributed to the venue with over 11,000 hours of work, equivalent to eight full-time employees. In 2019, *Cascina* registered over 165,000 single entries, with more than 4,500 people enrolled for courses and other activities.

“This structure of governance created a positive form of co-responsibility between public and private actors: the administration gave up some of its powers, and on the other hand, the private associations’ mindset shifted from an idea of claiming something from the administration to a perspective in which they co-manage it.”

Renato Bergamin

Fig. 5
Restaurant with outdoor tables at
Cascina Roccafranca





Cascina Roccafranca's yearly revenues amount to about €250,000. The foundation format simplifies Cascina's management and enables it to generate revenues through its spaces and activities, such as the rents paid by the café and restaurant. Further revenue is also generated through fundraising and sponsorships.

"We aim at reaching maximum self-sustainability. When we started in 2007 we could only cover 33% of our costs on our own; now we cover 66%. Besides our income from commercial activities and space rental, we do fundraising with public and private foundations and develop economic partnerships with the private sector on joint projects."

Stefania de Masi

Cascina Roccafranca's economy goes beyond the foundation's own revenues and expenses. According to data from 2019, Cascina Roccafranca's partners (mostly users of its spaces) have generated over €1 million of economic value.

The COVID-19 pandemic presented financial challenges for Cascina Roccafranca. All employees on site had access to the government's Wages Guarantee Fund to substitute the lost incomes of their organisation and to pay them salaries. Under this system, employees worked only at a rate of 20%, being officially unemployed for the remaining 80%. Fortunately, the organisations working in Cascina received economic help from the Turin Municipality as well, in the form of support for food distribution activities, and a tax discount on some of their economic resources. Ultimately, the financial loss was estimated at around €50,000.

By conducting its programme and hosting a variety of activities, Cascina creates a variety of jobs. According to data from 2019, all the organisations on the site together employed around 217 people, with hours equivalent to 35 full-time employees. Some of the activities in Cascina Roccafranca are provided by social cooperatives, selected through inclusive procurement that aims at creating positive social impact through the choice of partners or service providers. Cooperativa Raggio, the cooperative managing the restaurant and the cafeteria, gives work to 25 people.

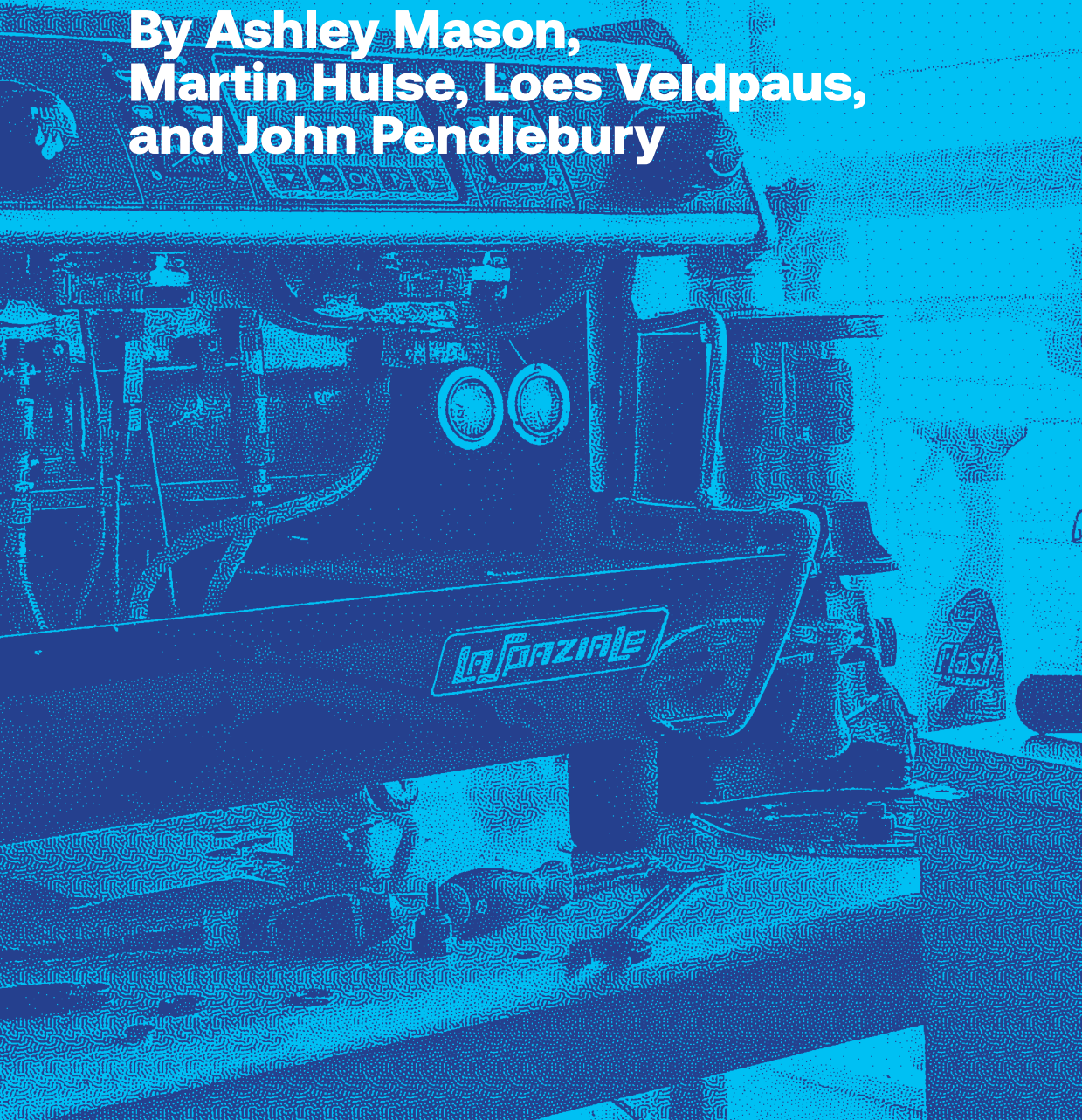
Despite the well-founded ambition of Cascina Roccafranca to become self-sustaining, the foundation continues to depend partially on public subsidies and private grants. While this dependence exposes Cascina to changing political or funding priorities, its economic activities are also vulnerable to unforeseeable events.

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Gathering a Family Around the Coffee Machine: The People at the Heart of the Sunderland Cooperative Heritage Lab

By Ashley Mason,
Martin Hulse, Loes Veldpaus,
and John Pendlebury



On 1 June 2013, popular local indie band Frankie and the Heartstrings took over the former tourist information office in Sunderland city centre, North East England, to promote their new album and protest the disappearance of record shops from UK high streets. Intended as a two-week, temporary publicity exercise, Pop Recs swiftly became a pillar of the local community, offering much-needed space for cultural activities, including yoga classes, photography exhibitions, and gigs by both local upcoming artists and more established UK musicians. In 2015, Pop Recs' music venue, independent coffee shop, and community hub moved to its next location, on the west side of the city centre, continuing to provide invaluable support for the people of Sunderland through music and much more.

Meanwhile, the Tyne and Wear Building Preservation Trust (TWBPT) – an organisation engaged in the restoration of heritage properties across North East England – was wondering where it might find the magic that would help to steer a vision for three dilapidated properties at 170 to 175 High Street West, towards the East End of Sunderland. Following an impasse in which the Sunderland City Council refused permission to demolish the buildings, the council finally agreed their purchase from the previous owner. Once the site of the first Binns store in Sunderland (before the drapery became a famous department store both in Sunderland and across the north of England), but subsequently abandoned to squatters, copper thieves, pigeons, fire, and the elements for more than a decade, these buildings certainly needed a vision for their future reuse. Former occupier Henry Binns had also unwisely removed the entire first floor and supporting walls of number 172; as such, without sufficient structural support for the roof throughout the preceding 150 years, the building was slowly collapsing in on itself. With immediate emergency repairs and subsequent extensive restoration works required, it was clear from the beginning that this project would not be viable without support, trust, and a true partnership of people working together. And so, the buildings were acquired by TWBPT for the symbolic fee of one pound from the council in order to help rescue them, with early community consultation indicating a desired cultural and community-centered future for the spaces. Thus, the seeds were sown for a cooperative relationship between TWBPT and Pop Recs, in addition to many others.

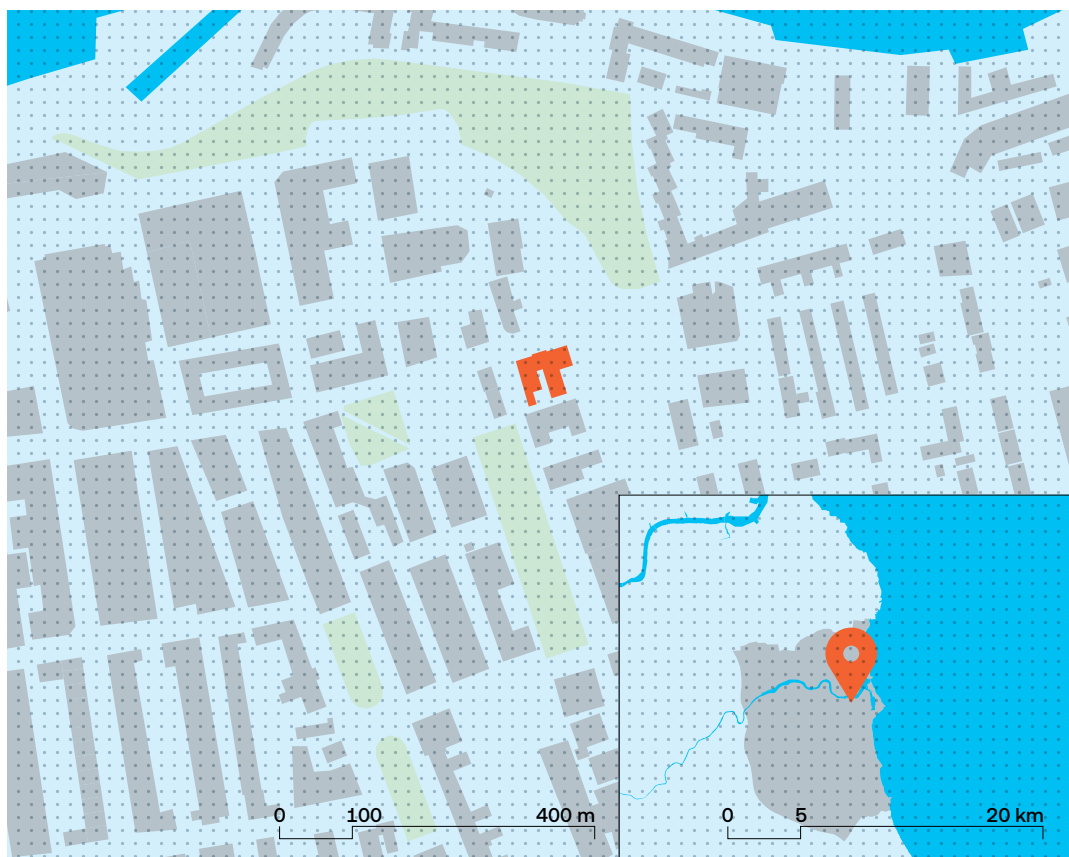


Fig. 1
High Street, Sunderland. Map

Timeline	2015 – 2022
2015	Community outreach undertaken by TWBPT and Sunderland City Council to determine local needs and visions for 170–175 High Street West; search begins for anchor tenant
2016	Collaboration commences between Pop Recs and TWBPT
2017	Historic England's Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) in Sunderland established
2018	TWBPT purchases 170–175 High Street West from Sunderland City Council for symbolic £1; OpenHeritage project begins
2019	Immediate repairs and restoration works to 170–175 High Street West undertaken; meanwhile it begins to be used in 170 High Street West by Pop Recs, including Heritage Open Days 2019 with <i>Rebel Women</i> exhibition
2020	COVID-19 pandemic impacts plans; alternative financing opportunities tested through crowdfunding campaigns
2021	Major construction works are completed; the ground floors of 170 and 172–175 High Street West open; Heritage Open Days 2021 takes place with <i>Local Edible Heritage</i> exhibition; commemorative blue plaque installed at 172 High Street West
2022	Upper floors of 170–175 High Street West continue to be restored; 177 High Street West acquired by TWBPT and restoration works begin to roof and shell; Making Space / Keeping Space event begins looking at the project's impact and legacy

Heritage Action Zone (HAZ)

The HAZ was a newly developed policy tool for Historic England to focus heritage expertise and funding towards marginalised areas; to work with the communities in these deprived areas; to enable long-term engagement and the building of trust; as well as to promote meanwhile uses and stimulate people to see opportunities in rescuing heritage properties. It came with some funding, but more important was the shift in focus by Historic England from 'Grade 1' and 'Grade 2*' listed buildings to marginalised places and people. Equally crucial was that the HAZ partnership was led by the local planning authority, which meant that it was committed to and invested in making the adaptive reuse projects within the HAZ a success. The High Street West project buildings were key in the local planning authority's application to Historic England for HAZ funding and, reciprocally, the HAZ was crucial in returning the buildings to use.

Taking risks

Beyond economic repair, the buildings were nevertheless of considerable and continued historic value due to their notable former Quaker occupants, as well as their prominent location at a key gateway into Sunderland city centre. The buildings are located within the Old Sunderland conservation area, all of which is designated by Historic England as Heritage at Risk, thereby connecting them to wider strategies as well as funding opportunities that would support their rescue and thus the regeneration and conservation of this neglected part of Sunderland. The project consequently became the catalyst for a Historic England Heritage Action Zone (HAZ). The HAZ partnership, which began in 2017 and continued until early autumn 2022, was formed of Sunderland City Council, Historic England, TWBPT, Sunderland Culture, Sunderland Heritage Forum, and the Churches Conservation Trust.

Without this and invaluable heritage funding from the Architectural Heritage Fund, repair and reuse of the badly damaged project buildings would not have been feasible. It is thus, as Historic England Historic Places Adviser Jules Brown notes, 'a really important example of how partnership can work for historic buildings [where] no player in this project could have worked alone [... and where] most importantly, working in partnership allows people to make bold decisions' (InvestSundUK, 2022). It is this trust between actors that is essential in enabling projects to take risks beyond what would otherwise be possible.

Following footsteps

Nothing ever arises in isolation. Visiting other projects, similar to what we (all those connected to the Sunderland Cooperative Heritage Lab between 2018 and 2022) imagined High Street West could become, was so much more important than initially anticipated. At the Granby Four Streets project in Liverpool, for example, we saw their winter garden set within two terraced houses in the middle of the street. The project was conceived with the Assemble collective and in 2015 became the first architectural entry to win the UK's Turner Prize for art. We also heard from the residents, about their fight against demolition, and gained an understanding of the moments, organisation, and governance models involved in bringing the project to fruition. This and other project visits to Berlin and London provided inspiration, in both the material and design senses, and in demonstrating what is possible, especially if everyone involved works together towards shared goals. Hopefully, we are now passing on that same message and inspiration to other projects that are following in our footsteps, as we have followed in others.

It was through community consultation that Pop Recs' name was first mentioned. For co-founder and then director Dave Harper, it was the highest compliment. Indeed, Pop Recs CIC (Community Interest Company) had the magic that TWBPT was seeking, which would transform this adaptive heritage reuse project. It may have been a relatively small operation in business terms, but its reach and impacts within Sunderland's

communities and far beyond are immeasurable. In the words of Dave Harper, Pop Recs could 'circumnavigate a lot of the bureaucracy that prevents creative people in Sunderland getting to the point where they've got a product and are doing something; [Pop Recs] could be the antidote to that [...] and try to support people, because we didn't have that support when we were younger, [...] When I was growing up, the support would have been greatly welcomed'. (TWBPT, 2019b)

The people of the East End consulted during the early stages of the project did not want the buildings to be converted into affordable housing (although this is equally needed within the area); instead, they wanted something with a community focus. And so, with Pop Recs fully on board, the process began of transforming number 170 to make it suitable and safe for meanwhile use, working with Sunderland College apprentices to patch the building back together through the establishment of the Living Classroom project. The first concert at the venue opened as scheduled at 7:30 pm, despite the electricity only being reconnected (thanks to an electrician, standing in a hole in the road) 15 minutes earlier. Only Pop Recs could do that: everyone could feel that they had the ability to develop a vision for the site, and to see it through.

Acknowledging the overlooked

While more extensive works began to repair Pop Recs' intended home at 172–175 High Street West, reconnection of electricity to number 170 meant that more people could begin to gather around a kindly donated coffee machine (Fig. 2). Gatherings drew from far-reaching communities, re-welcoming those already part of the family through Pop Recs' pre-existing socio-cultural initiatives (from gigs to exhibitions), but also new additions. Indeed, support and collaboration among many different actors (including national organisations such as the Arts Council, and local cultural organisations such as Sunderland Culture and We Make Culture) has helped to build strong partnerships through cultural community outreach throughout the duration of the project. As part of a variety of activities and events organised as meanwhile uses at number 170 for Heritage Open Days 2019, the Rebel Women of Sunderland project was born and shared with the community. It included an exhibition, a Mini Manifestoes workshop for children, and a lecture on Marion Phillips (Sunderland's first female member of parliament). Led by Laura Brewis from Sunderland Culture, and funded through the Great Place scheme, it was an immensely rewarding collaboration between Sunderland Culture, OpenHeritage, and the HAZ, with local illustrator Kathryn Robertson and author Jessica Andrews commissioned to illustrate and tell the stories of Sunderland's inspirational yet previously overlooked women.

For Laura Brewis, also founder and director of We Make Culture, it was 'fantastic to profile these untold stories of women from Sunderland, and I think it'll go on and on'. (TWBPT, 2019b) Since its first showing, the project has indeed been extended, re-exhibited, and shared both locally and nationally. The con-



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Fig. 2
The coffee machine

Fig. 3
Rescuing Heritage at Risk



tributions made by the city's women have continued to be acknowledged, with a blue plaque installed on the facade of the former Binns store at number 172 recognising the role played by Sunderland's Quaker women in opposing the slave trade. The recognition of overlooked heritage, too, was furthered through Heritage Open Days 2021 and the Local Edible Heritage project, where this time food (rather than coffee) was a means of bringing everyone back together, following a period of global precarity and uncertainty.

Taking care

Sometimes, events outside our control reminded us of what was important. The adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, in addition to energy and cost of living crises, on both finance and community engagement could be keenly felt at times during the project's journey. Obvious and immediate detrimental impacts of the pandemic were seen in lengthy delays and rising material costs that hampered the progress of on-site construction works considerably throughout 2020 and into 2021. But more significant were the longer-term impacts on both the individuals affiliated with the project and the wider public supporting it, in terms of the limits placed on their access and participation. During periods of social distancing measures introduced by the UK Government, collective resilience was fostered through numerous mutual aid initiatives that enabled people to voluntarily support each other in solidarity. Post-pandemic, many of these initiatives are still vital and in ever-increasing use. Yet, these measures also kept communities spatially separated and forced many interactions to migrate to online spaces, thus somewhat dampening the project's community-nurturing momentum. Online tools were an invaluable means of maintaining connections and were widely implemented by both the tenants and ourselves, but they could not entirely replace the more serendipitous opportunities of being somewhere in-person and chatting over coffee. From the moment that restrictions were eased, the project has been able to grow and flourish.

It is difficult to comprehend just how close the buildings once were to collapse (Fig. 3). Now, with the light pooling in from the skylight above, the double-height venue space of Pop Recs is an undeniably special setting for musical and community activities. Saved by a steel support structure, it is a truly communal space for people to gather and share their lives and stories, through food, music, and more. Plans for Pop Recs' relocation next door progressed swiftly in 2019, working carefully and closely with key members of the council's regeneration and conservation teams, as well as the lead architect and contractor; indeed, the council was key in its support of a restoration that, while sympathetic and respectful of the historic importance of the properties (number 172 is Grade II listed), was still open to their creative, adaptive reuse. Certain elements were subsequently maintained, including wallpaper fragments, stairs to nowhere, and the bow in the roofline of 172 that speaks of its near-collapse (Fig. 4). The process was not

3

easy, and funding paths were not always straightforward, resulting in a softer and step-by-step approach based on need and luck. Much of the funding was obtained through mobilising TWBPT's collaboration with Pop Recs, and the importance of this partnership was recently recognised in its shortlisting for the North East Culture Awards 2022. Different options to financially support the works were also explored, including through the 'Buy a Brick for Sunderland' crowdfunding campaign. Beyond stimulating funding, these mechanisms sought to generate buy-in from the local community, understanding that the more people that are emotionally invested in a place, the more support it will receive from those communities going forward, and therefore the more sustainable it will be. The ground floor spaces were the first to be completed and were tested in July 2021 for the Summer Streets Festival – a local music festival organised annually by musician Ross Millard, who played an instrumental role in connecting Pop Recs to TWBPT and is also a member of Frankie and the Heartstrings. Following the official opening of Pop Recs in autumn 2021, more of the upper floor spaces across the buildings have gradually been brought into use, with the remaining rooms to follow when the time is right.

Growing the family

The project is perhaps a story of adaptive heritage reuse, of salvaging buildings, but it is more so a tale of collaboration, community, and cultivating local pride (Fig. 5). Pop Recs' new venue space has a capacity beyond that of their previous locations, bringing more people around (and onto) their stage through the care, vision, and dedication of co-founder and director (and Frankie and the Heartstrings guitarist) Michael McKnight. Midnight Pizza Crü – a pandemic success story – is now fully part of the menu of Pop Recs' meat-free kitchen, with founder Dan Shannon coming on board as an equally dedicated director of Pop Recs in autumn 2021. The directorial team has since further expanded, with Naomi Griffin joining in mid 2022. Pop Recs has hosted the Young Musicians Project run by We Make Culture, and continues to host the Teenage Market run by Washington Mind, attentively recognising the lack of support and opportunity for youth within the area and providing a space for them to thrive. The increased turnover for Pop Recs has been remarkable. By reinvesting any profits made from sales and larger events, Pop Recs can provide a low-cost (often 'pay what you can') venue for many social activities, including for Little Pops, long-term residents Stitch and Bitch, King Ink, Sunderland Book Club, Sunderland Shorts Film Festival, and many others. In 2023, Pop Recs is also celebrating its ten-year anniversary with a series of what will undoubtedly be poignant gigs, including by the band of its founders, Frankie and the Heartstrings.

In early 2020, Sunshine Co-operative – a sustainable food company that had previously operated online, delivering food boxes – joined the family to occupy the ground floor of 170. The company has a community room, hosts a stall as part of the Teenage Market, and is beginning to transform its external



Fig. 4
170–175 High Street West

Fig. 5
In loving memory of Dave Harper

4



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space into a food-growing garden. It is also part of the Sunderland Community-Led Local Development Programme. Washington Mind, a local mental health charity that already offered sessions to young people at Pop Recs' previous location, now occupies an upper-storey office above Pop Recs, offering sessions to support Sunderland's youth. Global Teacher CIC, which provides off-grid access to education for marginalised communities, has moved into the upper floors of 170 and has since established a further CIC called Good Habits, a sustainable non-profit focused around wellbeing. Through gathering like-minded and mutually supportive cultural organisations across the tenancies of the restored buildings, the current, forthcoming, and wider High Street West family will hopefully continue to gather around the coffee machine. The buildings are but a backdrop, a space to allow things to happen. As this collection of wonderful groups shows, it is the people who really matter.

Facilitating possible futures

Not only is the family of users within 170–175 High Street West increasing, but the family of buildings has since expanded to include 177, with discussions over the fate of 176 ongoing. While works to the shell of 177 are under way, the interiors will be refurbished in due course ready for new occupants. The entire High Street West project has evolved through genuine cooperative effort, and its future will depend on that same type of partnership working towards mutual benefit – ideally with a governance structure developed to facilitate collaboration between partners, as well as to support the collective maintenance of the buildings. This could be between the tenants and owners of the buildings, or possibly through a wider local land-trust including even more land and buildings in the area. Adding additional buildings to the complex – and thus the family of cultural users – along High Street West will consolidate the occupation of this location as a cultural hub for the community; indeed, perhaps for a new or extended community, should the proposed 'Living Arts Hub' development happen on a vacant adjacent site (a feasibility study was led by a resident steering group established by local housing charity Back on the Map; developer TOWN and social enterprise Create Streets have since been leading the 'Living Arts Hub' development and are now working with the local authority to develop a master-plan for the Sunnyside area as a whole). The restored buildings are thus becoming a catalyst for the further regeneration of the area; as such, a strong area partnership, building upon the foundations of the HAZ, will remain crucial. It is key that the relationships nurtured over the preceding years do not dissipate, and that those collaborations continue and be strengthened by follow-on work, as creating truly meaningful impact within a place and within a community is undoubtedly only possible with long-term commitment.

Significant sums have been invested in these buildings, money which is unlikely to be recouped if assessing the project solely in narrow monetary terms. The value of the properties remains low, due to land-value depression in the area; never-

“This is a really important example of how partnership can work for historic buildings [where] no player in this project could have worked alone [... and where] most importantly, working in partnership allows people to make bold decisions.”

Jules Brown

theless, this can be a great advantage. For the project's ultimate value lies not in its financial metrics (although the resident businesses now provide significant economic benefits); rather, its value lies in its commitment to local people – whether that is the capacity to bring joy and to change the narrative of a previously neglected area of the city, or to make people aware of the area's rich heritage once more. Indeed, spinning tales acknowledging the area's overlooked histories or telling of the area's possible futures, together with the people who are spending time in the East End of Sunderland, remains important. We hope this chapter captures only the very beginnings of a tale that will continue for many years to come.

Dave's vision

The story of the Sunderland Cooperative Heritage Lab has been tough in places, but most especially when Pop Recs founder and director Dave Harper died unexpectedly on 25 August 2021. The immense stress that comes with projects like this undoubtedly impacted his health, although we also know that he would have stopped at nothing. Everything that has been achieved is amazing, yet, at the same time, such achievements are never worth this. The impact within the project team was immeasurable and personal, and responding to his death was both urgent yet impossible. It meant that Dave's vision for the venue had to be taken over by others, who were also grieving, and who became more determined than ever to make things work in his legacy. It meant stepping back as researchers, and stepping up as friends, allowing the amazing community built around Pop Recs to come together and support each other.

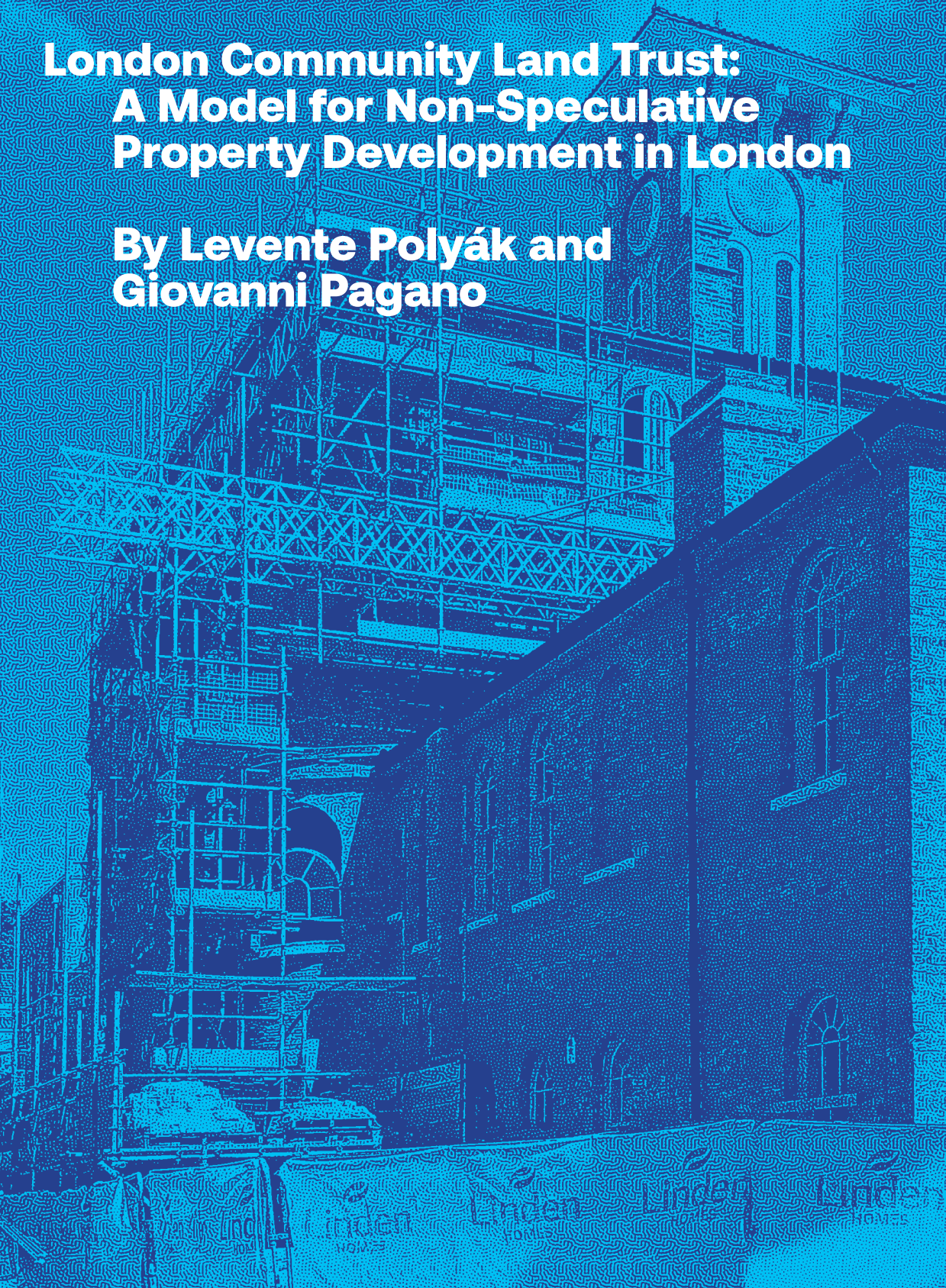
A memorial gig at the Pop Recs venue was held in Dave's memory on 3 December 2021. The Dave Harper Music Award sessions, held with groups of 16–24-year-old SEN (special educational needs) students and run in conjunction with training provider Springboard, culminated in Pop Recs winning the award for Supporting Partner of the Year at the Springboard North East Annual Awards in late autumn 2022.

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London Community Land Trust: A Model for Non-Speculative Property Development in London

By Levente Polyák and
Giovanni Pagano



London CLT is London's first Community Land Trust, which was established in the former St Clements psychiatric hospital, in the Mile End area. The CLT provides affordable housing, allowing long-term residents who would otherwise be priced out to stay in the area, countering the tendencies of displacement and housing unaffordability (Fig. 1). Supported by the Greater London Authority to work with a private developer and a social housing association, the CLT was allocated 23 (out of 252) homes, distributed among privately owned and social housing units. Besides these homes, the CLT also promotes community engagement and is actively working on the creation of a community centre at the St Clements site. As one of the first urban community land trusts in the UK, London CLT has set a model of community-driven property development and adaptive heritage reuse, which has inspired a veritable movement in the UK and Continental Europe.

From hospital to housing

Located on an important road connecting the City of London with the county of East Anglia, St Clements was built in 1848 following the design of the architect Richard Tress and opened in 1849 as a workhouse – a place where poor people were sent who had no means of supporting themselves. In the 1860s, the workhouse's function shifted towards being an infirmary. In 1909, the workhouse closed, and was reopened in 1912 under the management of London County Council, caring for more than 600 chronically ill patients. Part of the site was destroyed during the Second World War, after which it became a fully-operational hospital. In 1959, the complex became a psychiatric hospital under the National Health Service (NHS). The hospital closed in 2005 and was then unoccupied for about ten years, falling into dereliction.

St Clements is situated in East London, five kilometres from the City of London, a very central location within the London agglomeration (Fig. 1). From being a relatively deprived area with working-class families, the neighbourhood became a centre of immigration in the 20th century. In recent decades, the financialisation of London real estate resulted in rising housing prices and the displacement of less affluent residents. East London's problems of gentrification and affordability were among the main motivations for developing a CLT in the area.

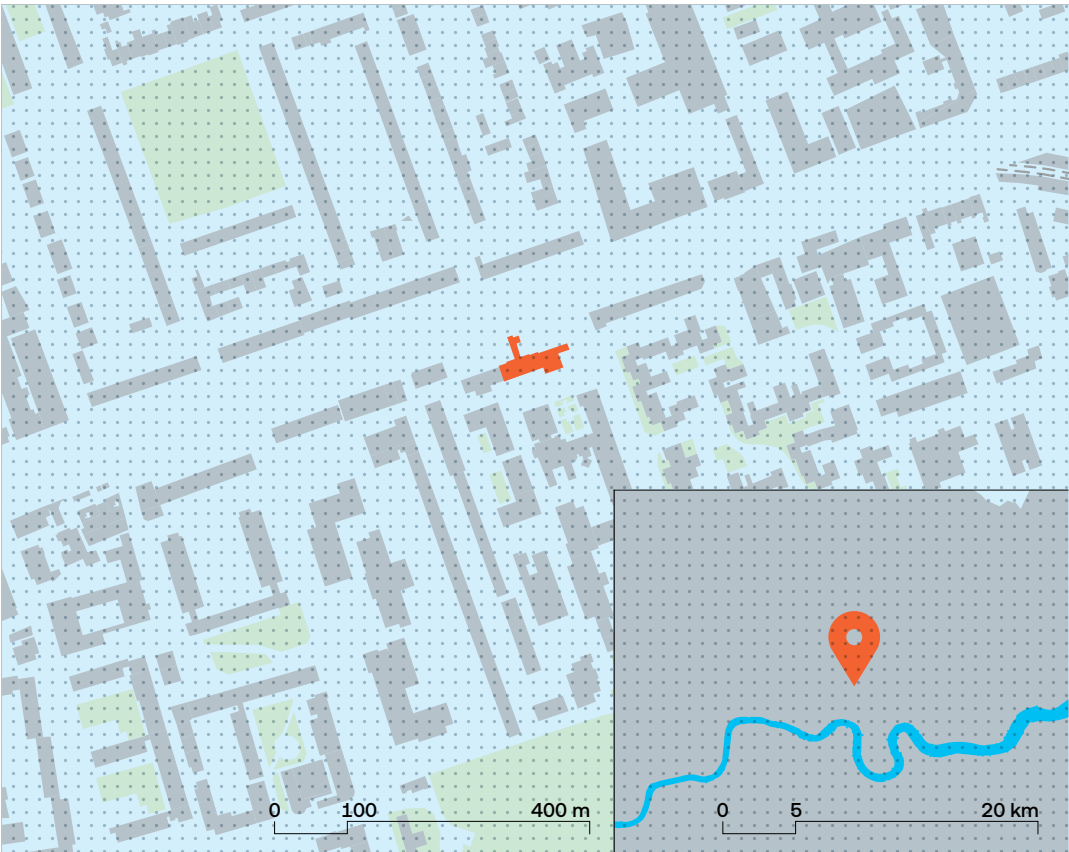


Fig. 1
CLT in London. Map

Timeline	1819—2020
1849	A workhouse opened at the St Clements site
1909	The workhouse closed
1912	The complex reopened as a hospital run by London County Council
1944	Part of the complex was destroyed during the Second World War
1948	The complex reopened as a hospital run by the National Health Service
1959	The complex became a psychiatric hospital
2005	The St Clements site was closed in a deteriorated state
2007	East London CLT (later London CLT) was established to bid for a site in Tower Hamlets borough
2009	The St Clements site became the focus of London CLT
2010	London CLT, as part of a consortium with Igloo Regeneration, bid for the site
2011	The bid for St Clements was won by Linden Homes, Galliford Try, and architects John Thompson and Partners (JTP)
2012	Community consultation events with JTP Architects (November)
2012	The Meanwhile Mixed-Use working group was formed within the CLT
2013	Shuffle Festivals took place at St Clements
2013	Planning applications for the site were submitted
2014	Shuffle Festival exhibition was hosted at St Clements (January), and the festival relocated to the adjacent Cemetery Park

2014	Planning applications for the site were approved and construction began
2015	Unsuccessful application to the National Lottery Fund, for renovation of the John Denham building
2016	Community share offer
2017	First CLT residents moved in
2020	Construction finished

St Clements occupies a long site, stretching from a major road (Mile End Road) to the Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park. Originally, the complex was built to face the street, while today it is better connected with the cemetery. The St Clements site includes 19 buildings and building parts, a combination of old and new.

“St Clements reveals a very symmetrical and orderly way to deal with the poor. It seems almost an industrial process as you enter off the main Bow Road into the reception wards and then move into the site with the chapel, the workshops, and then the fever wards, the mortuary, and the cemetery. Some people see it as a trajectory.”

Nicola de Quincey

Community organisers at the charity Citizens UK identified St Clements as a potential site for a CLT, and established London CLT in 2007 in order to bid for the site. In 2010, the Mayor’s Office opened the site to competitive bidding. London CLT presented a bid with Igloo Regeneration, an ethical real estate company, proposing a community-led design process – but was outbid by Linden Homes (a brand of a leading construction company) and Peabody (a social housing association). Nevertheless, political support resulted in London CLT joining the winning project in order to test the CLT model in an urban setting.

In 2014, planning applications for the site were approved, and demolition and construction began. The first residents moved into their CLT homes in 2017. Since 2015, London CLT has been working on raising funds to renovate the John Denham building and convert it into a community venue.

In the new urban design proposal by JTP Architects, heritage research played a significant role. This research, conducted by Nicola de Quincey, aimed to establish not only the evolution of the site, but also to understand the significance of each historical layer and addition to the complex (Fig. 2). The research findings informed decisions on which buildings to retain or demolish when opening up space for new volumes, as well as on where to place new structures to correspond to the original layout of the site.



2



4

Fig. 2
Construction site around the
Clocktower

Fig. 3
Interior of the John Denham building

Fig. 4
Entrance to the Tower Hamlets
Cemetery Park



“Besides the individual buildings, the historic pattern of the complex was respected when we tried to think of opportunities for new build between the old buildings.”

Nicola de Quincey

The original St Clements site consisted of listed Victorian buildings and ancillary buildings of a more recent era. Research into the complex’s temporal layers through demolitions and additions was conducted to inform decisions about which structures to prioritise, what to save, and where to open space for new constructions. Erecting new building volumes was also necessary to cover the renovation costs. The urban design scheme proposed by JTP aimed to restore the site’s symmetry and to build on the precedents of previous buildings that had since been demolished.

The heritage protection structure of the St Clements site is complex. Three structures on the site (the Boundary Wall, the John Denham building, and the Administration building) are Grade 2 listed monuments. The whole site is curtilage listed, meaning that every single building on the site is protected. In addition, the site is located within the Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park conservation area, meaning that any demolition must be approved and special attention has to be given by the local authority. These layers of protection signify that every single structure on the site had to be treated carefully. The organisations Historic England (Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England) and English Heritage (English Heritage Trust) demonstrated a keen interest in the site and worked closely with the architects, developers, and the council’s conservation officer.

The adaptive reuse of St Clements was designed by JTP Architects. The focus of the reuse process was to create a predominantly residential-led development: most buildings were turned into apartment complexes, except the John Denham building at the front. Besides historical research, the design decisions were also based on studies of the view of the Clocktower from different parts of the site. Moreover, there were a series of other regulations in play when designing the site’s adaptive reuse. Some were of a logistical nature, such as ensuring access for fire service vehicles, and how to remove waste – significant challenges for a long, thin site with vehicular access only at the northern end. Despite efforts by Historic England to retain as many workshops as possible, some had to be sacrificed to ensure emergency access. Another key aspect of the urban design was to allow free access to the site via Mile End Road in the north and the Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park in the south. For the residential blocks, it was important that their design did not distinguish between CLT homes, privately owned apartments, or social housing units.

JTP’s approach was to run a charrette or community planning process, inviting local stakeholders to ‘come, co-design St Clements’. Preceded by a campaign inviting the press, local stakeholders, schools, and community groups, the charrette was organised in November 2012, including an exhibition

with historical materials, dialogue workshops, hands-on planning workshops, and walkabouts. The ideas collected and the consensus developed during the workshops by more than 350 participants led the design team to create a vision for the area, feeding into a planning application that gained unanimous approval by the Tower Hamlets Planning Committee.

About a third of the site today consists of existing, retained buildings and two-thirds of new build, resulting in a variety of building styles, combined with open spaces, some of them semi-private gardens, others publicly accessible. The renewed St Clements site has 252 homes, 58 of which are social rent homes provided by the Peabody social housing association. In order to integrate the CLT within the community, its 23 homes are dispersed throughout the site.

Tools for affordable real estate

The St Clements site is governed through cooperation among a variety of actors. London CLT, one of the first urban CLTs in the UK, is a community benefit society, a not-for-profit limited company – a model widely used by community land trusts. People join CLTs as members, either because they are interested in buying a home in the long term, or because they like the project and choose to support it (Fig. 5). Others have an academic or professional interest in the project. The London CLT has about 3,000 members made up of residents who own CLT homes, the communities and campaigners from areas around CLT sites, and stakeholders who might invest their expertise in the CLT. These three membership categories are all represented in the board of trustees consisting of 15 people. Besides the board, the CLT also has subcommittees focusing on finance and risk; development; human resources; impact measurement; and allowing more in-depth discussion about these issues. Members have the right to vote and stand for elections. Membership requires the payment of a nominal sum of £1.

London's housing shortage has led to great demand for affordable housing, and so London CLT developed a well-designed selection procedure for its homes. CLT homes are allocated to local residents with a deep connection to the area (e.g., those who have worked in the area for at least five years); unstable housing situation (in risk of losing their homes); financial eligibility (not catered for by social housing programmes); local involvement (social connections in the area); and a supportive attitude towards the CLT's values and mission (potential future CLT advocates).

At the St Clements site, London CLT supported the establishment of a residents' association (including CLT, private, and social housing residents) that would participate in decision-making related to the site. This organisation has already been formed with a representative from each building, and is to be formally constituted as a resident management company to take over once the developers have left. Once the development is finished, the site will be handed over to a freeholder, the Ricardo Community Foundation (named

Community Land Trust

Community Land Trusts are a model of community-led development, where local organisations develop and manage homes and other assets important to their communities, such as community enterprises, food-growing, or work-spaces. By owning land (or leasing it from public owners) and leasing apartments, entire buildings, or other types of properties to individuals, families, or community groups, CLTs can control the use and price of such properties. CLTs can therefore use this leverage to guarantee that spaces in their management remain affordable, based on local income levels. Each CLT has a different governance system but they all share some characteristics: they are controlled by local residents in a democratic fashion. CLTs are described in the Housing Regeneration Act of 2008: while any legal format that complies with that Act can be considered a CLT, most are established as community benefit societies, a legal format updated in 2014 that refers to membership organisations operating for the benefit of a community.

The CLT's communities manager works with residents through allocations and supports them in the process of accessing their new homes. He/she also develops specific training for residents and campaigners, about what being a CLT resident means. Once the new residents are in their homes, the communities manager works with them to look at ways to transform the neighbourhood, by building up community leaders, developing community spaces, or by other means.

Section 106 agreements

These agreements are planning obligations based on the 1990 Town & Country Planning Act. They are private agreements made between local authorities and developers and can be attached to a planning permission. The land itself, rather than the person or organisation that develops the land, is bound by a Section 106 Agreement, something that any future owners will need to take into account. Section 106 agreements are drafted when it is considered that a development will have significant impacts on the local area.

Funding Community Land Trusts (CLTs)

There are different ways to fund CLTs. In the most typical case, CLTs act like regular developers, but approach a charity or a socially minded bank that provides loans at low interest rates. In addition, CLTs receive government subsidies or grants to provide affordable housing. The CLT then constructs the homes and sells or rents them, using these revenues to refinance the mortgage. In other cases, more classical housing providers such as housing associations develop homes in partnership with CLTs: in these cases, the housing association finances and builds the homes and then transfers the freehold to the CLT and leases back the homes from the CLT. In some cases, public finance in the form of affordable housing subsidies can lower the costs of establishing a CLT.

after the economist David Ricardo, whose family lived in the area) made up of different stakeholders on the site, including Peabody, the CLT, the local council, the Greater London Authority, Linden Homes, Galliford Try, and the residents' management company.

St Clements is a site where real estate pressure as well as various public policies are in play, regarding the sale of public land, housing provision, heritage protection, as well as natural ecosystems. One of the key dimensions of public policy at St Clements relates to housing. The St Clements site is subject to a Section 106 agreement (a legal agreement between a developer and the local planning authority), which stipulates that new developments should provide 30% affordable housing. In such cases, the developer constructs all of the homes, then looks for a housing association or similar organisation to take on the future management of the affordable housing units. The CLT homes account for some of the affordable units, with the remainder of that 30% being covered by other models such as shared ownership schemes.

The main costs of the CLT are construction finance, usually through social investment from large donors or community shares. The London CLT's first revenues came in 2016 from a community share offer with Ethex, a not-for-profit Positive Investing organisation. The minimum investment was £100 each, with a return on investment of about 5%. About 130 investors (some from the surrounding communities, others being large donors) contributed £450,000, which covered architect fees and planning preparations for London CLT's Lewisham site, allowing the CLT to gain time and raise additional funds.

The most important source of revenue for London CLT was from the sales of the first homes at St Clements. Due to rising property prices, a surplus – between the purchase price paid to Linden Homes at a time of lower home values versus the price subsequently paid by the homeowners – allowed the CLT to generate some income. CLT home prices at the beginning of the process were about half the market price, but are now around one third. In the long term, however, such profit margins are unlikely to provide a source of income.

Mortgages are another important source of funding for CLTs on the buyers' side. London CLT managed to engage lenders who understand the specificity of a CLT: the Ecology Building Society and Triodos Bank were the first institutions to offer mortgages, before other mainstream lenders.

London CLT has a 250-year lease on its units in St Clements, and it can sell and underlease to the residents. The CLT sells properties at prices that are linked to the median income of the borough. When a resident wants to move on, they have to sell their property back to London CLT at a rate that is linked to median income in the borough.

“The idea behind this model is that wages are the best way to determine if something is affordable for the people living in the area. Our houses are affordable in perpetuity.”

Hannah Emery-Wright

Besides funding the planning and construction process, setting up a CLT also has costs: in the case of London CLT, its parent organisation Citizens UK initially invested some staff time in the CLT’s work. In addition, the National CLT Network gave the London CLT a £10,000 catalyst grant for capacity building.

Reconnecting with the neighbourhood

After years of vacancy and decay, one way to reconnect the site with the neighbouring communities was to open St Clements for various activities. This idea was implemented by the CLT’s Meanwhile Mixed-Use working group established in 2012, aiming to bring events to the site before and during some phases of the construction. When the events and festivals organised at St Clements outgrew their original scale, the not-for-profit community enterprise Shuffle was established in 2013 to continue the activities. Shuffle’s focus was on a mixture of high-calibre art, film, and community programming and curation, focusing on themes connected to mental health.

“St Clements is a lot of stories, and a lot of those weren’t good stories. People grew up hearing ‘If you don’t eat your greens you will go to St Clements.’ We wanted to change these narratives.”

Lizzy Daish

Culture had an important role in building relationships and support for the St Clements redevelopment project. In order to explore the St Clements site, Shuffle organised cinema screenings in the former patients’ social club and outside, and worked with gardeners to plant a flower garden from seeds donated from the Cemetery Park, and with edible plants to be used in the café opening on the site. Shuffle organised two large events at St Clements in 2013, a several-month summer festival and a ten-day winter festival in November.

Shuffle also conducted an oral history study among the local communities, concentrating on the last iteration of the complex as a psychiatric hospital, organising the testimonies of people who had been patients of the old institution into an exhibition in January 2014, using the gardens and the John Denham building (Fig. 5). Soon after the exhibition, demolition began at the site and Shuffle moved its festival to the Cemetery Park, where it organised four seasons.

Besides securing affordable homes, the CLT has also been leading a campaign to turn the John Denham building, a listed building at the front of the St Clements site, into a community space. With many constraints and large spaces that limited its potential use for residential units, the building was also listed as an ‘Asset of Community Value’, referring to its significance to the wider community, thereby giving the community

Asset of community value

An asset of community value (ACV) is land or property of importance to a local community. Under the Localism Act of 2011, ACVs are subject to additional protection from development. When the owner of an ACV wants to sell the property, they must inform the local authority; if a community group wishes to purchase the asset, they can trigger a moratorium for six months, allowing them to raise necessary funds. ACV status can be used by the local planning authority as a factor to refuse planning permission for full or partial change or demolition, or can force the local authority to buy the asset if it is under threat of long-term loss to the community. ACVs across the UK include more than 800 pubs, sport facilities, and stadiums as well as parks.



Fig. 5
The John Denham building

additional time to raise funds to purchase the building. Reusing the John Denham building as a community space would provide the area with a focal point, where neighbourhood residents with different ways of life could meet.

The impacts of the London CLT on St Clements, its neighbourhood, and on the city are manifold. Opening the site from Bow Road through to Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park turned St Clements into a public space accessible to the broader community. By offering affordable housing to people involved in the neighbourhood, CLT homes are contributing to easing the effects of London's housing crisis. With its temporary use events and participatory governance model, London CLT has engaged local communities to share their memories of the site on one hand, and shape its future on the other. The involvement of local residents in the CLT board and subcommittees, as well as their participation in local campaigns, contributes to improving their skills and capacities for mobilisation and self-determination.

“It's not enough just to build affordable homes: we want to have a lasting impact in the areas we work in, by empowering our residents as individuals or leaders of the community.”

Hannah Emery-Wright

At the city level, London CLT has created a precedent that showcases how CLTs can work in an urban setting under strong real estate pressure. While previous CLTs had worked predominantly in rural areas where local communities came together to buy land, London CLT has opened the way for urban CLTs and shown how to apply political pressure in order to secure land. Reaching beyond the St Clements site, London CLT is involved in setting up other CLTs across London, and provides peer learning opportunities for other initiatives from across the country. However, gentrification trends in the neighbourhood can only be slowed if more sites become a CLT.

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