

The Politics of Urban Expertise

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I, Enora Robin, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the work. This research received ethical approval (8721/001) from the UCL Ethics Committee.

Abstract

This doctoral research investigates the politics of urban expertise in the context of urban redevelopment schemes in Cape Town and London. Paying attention to the politics of scientific techniques and experts in particular sites, this research engages with contemporary urban scholarship looking at the role of expertise in the production of urban space and the politicisation of experts' activities. The analysis presented here introduces three analytical concepts that intend to capture the relationship between politics, expertise and spatial transformations, namely the concepts of abstraction, performance and maintenance. These three concepts form the theoretical backbone of the comparative analysis presented in this thesis, which looks at two urban redevelopment projects: King's Cross Central in London, and the Fringe in Cape Town. The empirical examination of the two cases reveals that the socio-technical conditions underpinning the production of urban expertise in both projects support the dominance of techno-financial expertise in the design of spatial interventions. This hegemony is supported by the institutionalisation of financial and economic valuation techniques as key instruments to assess the quality and credibility of the visions behind urban projects. Paradoxically, the research findings also shed light on the relative marginalisation of individual technical experts, whose ability to meaningfully influence the design of redevelopment projects is constrained by project timeframes and resource allocations. The extent to which the status quo can be resisted is also explored, as this research unpacks the mechanics of counter-expertise and discusses community groups' capacity to subvert dominant modes of expertise production and to generate alternatives to techno-financial expertise.

Impact statement

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List of abbreviations

CBD: Central Business District

CCDS: Central City Development Strategy

CCID: Central City Improvement District

EIA: Economic Impact Assessment

GLA: Greater London Authority

HODS: Hands Off District Six

KCC: King's Cross Central

KXCAAC: King's Cross Conservation Area Advisory Committee

MSDF: Municipal Spatial Development Framework

OA: Opportunity Area

OAPF: Opportunity Area Planning Framework

SIA: Social Impact Assessment

SNA: Social Network Analysis

UDC: Urban Development Corporation

UK: United Kingdom

WDC: World Design Capital

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Experts, scientific techniques, urban transformations

Behind the cities of the pre-colonial African kingdoms, Maya empire, medieval Europe, behind the colonial cities and twentieth century modernist schemes, contemporary mixed-use regeneration developments, smart city fantasies, and eco-districts, different forms of expertise have shaped how cities were planned and built (Choay 1965, Sutcliffe 1981, Daunton and Chombard 1984, Boyer 1986, Myers 2003, Silva 2015). Throughout history, politics has infused the work of various experts - including governments, private firms and citizens (Sandercock 1998) - and the mobilisation of specific scientific techniques in the production and control of urban space (Lefebvre 1974, Foucault 1975, 1980, Scott 1998). Existing research has convincingly shown urban developments to be shaped by different professions such as planning consultants, engineers, architects (Coutouzis and Latour 1986, Prince 2010, Björkman 2018) and particular tools and techno-scientific rationalities (Evans et al. 1999, Legg 2005, Rose-Redwood 2006, Benbouzid and Bentayou 2010, Harris 2018). This techno-scientific apparatus, made of technical devices and people, has been shown to support post-political modes of urban decision-making (Swyngedow 2009, Beveridge 2012, Allmendinger and Haughton 2012, 2014, MacLeod 2013, Raco 2014a, Vogelpohl 2018a). In that sense, urban expertise supports the exercise of power over urban space as it produces abstract understandings of how cities (should) function. This in turn informs how urban spaces are planned, built, organised, policed, managed. Thus, analysing contemporary urban transformations requires to look at the process by which particular expert professions and scientific techniques come to dominate the production of knowledge about the urban to inform spatial interventions. In this thesis, I take this agenda forward through a comparative analysis of the politics of urban expertise in contemporary spatial strategies, focusing on two urban redevelopment projects: one in Cape Town (The Fringe), and one in London (King's Cross Central).

1.2 Defining urban expertise

This comparative research brings together new materialist perspectives from urban geography, science and technology studies (STS) and planning theory to conceptualise urban expertise as an assemblage of *knowledge devices* (i.e. scientific tools holding different degrees of agency) and *experts*¹ interacting in particular *sites* (i.e. places that have become the object of scientific abstractions). These three components of urban expertise (knowledge devices, experts, and sites) and their interactions are further described in chapter 2. The term 'urban expertise' is used intentionally throughout this thesis to refer not only to experts but also to the scientific techniques that are mobilised to inform spatial interventions, all of which are embedded in particular locations characterised by specific material and socio-political configurations (Latour and Wooglar 2013). This approach seeks to depart from analysis that would solely focus on actors (e.g. a single expert organisation, such as an architectural firm or planning consultancy) or technologies (e.g. maps, statistics, real time dashboards) to demonstrate that the interaction of things (knowledge devices), beings (experts) and particular sites plays a key role in facilitating the emergence of powerful configurations of urban expertise which dominate the contemporary production of urban space.

Envisaging urban expertise as a constellation of people and techniques involved in producing knowledge about the urban in specific places, I argue, can help analyse the emergence of hierarchies of urban expertise shaping contemporary spatial transformations. Indeed, whilst it establishes a clear link

¹ According to the Oxford English Dictionary, 'expertise' can be defined as "expert skill or knowledge in a particular field." However, the production expertise is often mediated by the use of particular tools and techniques, which requires to acknowledge the non-human component of expertise. Hence, here I propose a definition that brings together the human and non-human components of urban expertise.

between urban expertise, power, and urban transformations, existing research has tended to treat any technical expert (e.g. environmental consultant, planner, engineer, or economists) as unequivocally powerful (for instance compared to citizens). Consequentially, technocratic experts' power in the post-political city has been treated with relatively little nuance, and this, I argue, neglects several fundamental features of the politics of urban expertise. For a start, the market for expert advice is a competitive one, and hierarchies of experts do exist, within and across expert organisations. As this research will show, even within urban redevelopment projects' teams, different expert professions (landscape architects, transport engineers, architects, etc.) and the scientific techniques they use are unequally valued in the design of spatial interventions (as discussed in chapters 5 and 8). This in turn means that entities that commission expertise, or that are able to determine what type of expertise should be used in decisions related to spatial transformations are able a) to define who is/is not an urban expert and which techniques should be systematically used to guide decisions, b) are able to shape hierarchies of urban expertise, and c) can influence the content of experts' work (as discussed in chapters 5, 7 and 8). Hence, existing research on the politics of urban expertise would benefit from elucidating how hierarchies of urban expertise emerge in particular places, and from providing more granular and context sensitive analyses of how particular configurations of urban expertise in turn affect the concrete and variegated production of urban space(s). This means research should address the issue of how politics shape the value attached to distinct types of urban expertise on the one hand, and on the other hand, it should trace the material effects of dominant forms of expertise, that is, whether powerful forms of urban expertise actually transform urban spaces and if so, how.

1.3 Tracing the politics: research questions and hypotheses

Throughout this thesis, I analyse how the complex configuration of sites, devices and experts shapes the (re)production of dominant forms urban expertise and concrete spatial transformations, addressing the following research questions (RQs):

RQ1: How do hierarchies of urban expertise emerge?

RQ2: How does this hierarchisation influence how the urban is known (i.e. what type of dominant understandings of urban space result from this process)?

RQ3: What is the relationship between dominant urban expertise and the production of space (i.e. do particular understandings of space permeate into concrete spatial transformations, and if so, how)?

RQ4: Are dominant forms of urban expertise resisted? If so, which processes underpin the production of alternative and effective forms of counter-expertise?

In response to these questions, I formulate five research hypotheses this thesis will test empirically building on comparative empirical research conducted in Cape Town and London.

Hypothesis 1: The dominance of particular forms of urban expertise at a given point in time and in particular places emerges from the relational composition of assemblages of urban expertise. This means that hierarchies of urban expertise are socially constructed, hence they need to be explained relationally by looking at how different values are assigned to experts/knowledge devices within and across different sites.

Hypothesis 2: Knowledge devices hold agency. Knowledge devices in and of themselves hold power over the production of abstract urban visions; they enact and perform such visions. Their repeated use in the design of spatial interventions contributes to maintaining the dominance of the partial understandings of the urban they produce.

Hypothesis 3: The urban project has become a dominant vehicle through which heterogenous configurations of urban expertise are assembled and maintained, and abstract urban visions produced and performed, in contemporary spatial transformations. This means that dominant assemblages of urban expertise emerge and are maintained in particular sites: a) which are geographically bounded and unique in their socio-institutional setting; b) but also sites which allow the theoretical work of urban expertise (abstraction) to be practiced (performance) in the real world. Sites are socio-material constructs created *in order to be* shaped by experts work, thus they differ from - albeit can overlap with - places.

Hypothesis 4: Dominant assemblages of urban expertise stabilise and maintain their power over space through coordination (i.e. mobilisation of diverse forms of expertise by central actors) and institutionalisation (i.e. formal and informal process supporting the reification of hierarchies of expertise). This means that they are structured around the coordinating capacity of specific actors, which in turn are able to shape the content of and value assigned to distinct types of expertise on the one hand. On the other hand, dominant forms of urban expertise are maintained by formal and informal rules which support the repeated use of specific knowledge devices and the inclusion of specific experts in the design of spatial interventions.

Hypothesis 5: The contestation and destabilisation of powerful configurations of urban expertise implies the subversion of dominant forms of expertise - as opposed to a total rejection of those - in the production of counter-expertise. The mechanics of counter-expertise rests on the contestation/rewriting of dominant knowledge devices, on the subversion of the figure of the expert, and on the creation of alternative urban visions mobilising dominant modes of expertise production.

1.4 Case studies overview

In this work, I address these RQs and hypotheses through the comparative study of the design phases of two urban redevelopment projects. In Cape Town, this research focused on the (failed) attempt to turn Cape Town's East City into a design district named the Fringe. This project was led by the Cape Town Partnership, a former public-private partnership involved in the regeneration of Cape Town's Central Business District (CBD) between the early 2000s and 2018. The site chosen to implement the Fringe vision was located on the eastern edge of the CBD and overlapping with District Six, an area that was once an ethnically diverse and thriving part of Cape Town until it was declared a 'white-only' area by the apartheid government. It is in this contentious historical and political context that conceptual plans were developed, starting in 2008, to create a brand-new design precinct 'between' the CBD and District Six, a project which really took off in 2011 when the Cape Town Partnership publicised the renewal of the area as 'the Fringe'. In London, my research focused on the well-known redevelopment of inner London's former industrial heartland, the King's Cross railway lands, into a brand new mixed-use redevelopment named King's Cross Central. Real estate firm Argent was appointed as developer for the site in 2000 and over the past twenty years, the scheme has radically transformed the former railway lands and working-class neighborhood. King's Cross Central is now host to a global university (Central St Martins), arts galleries, theatres, bars, restaurants, 3.4 million square feet of workspace, parks, and (predominantly high end) housing. The redevelopment's global significance is further attested by Google's decision to locate its Europe Headquarters in the area, in a £1 billion starchitect-stamped building designed by Thomas Heatherwick.

Whilst these two projects might differ in many respects, they are representative of a key aspect of contemporary global urban transformations: the governance of spatial transformations by means of projects (Pinson 2009, Roy and Ong 2011, Guironnet and Halbert 2014, Hanakata and Gasco 2018). Urban projects mobilise a wide range of experts, public and private in their design (Swyngedouw

et al. 2002, Savini and Aalbers 2016) and often induce forms of resistance based on the production of counter-expertise (Shatkin 2011). They thus offer a compelling case to explore the politics of knowledge devices and experts in places, to trace the translation of abstract urban knowledge into spatial interventions, and to unveil the mechanics of resistance to this translation process. The choice to put these projects in conversation with one another is further motivated by a willingness to engage in comparative efforts to theorise urban processes by thinking through differences (Robinson 2005, 2011), in order to “*articulate generalities previously overlooked*” (Cirolia 2017, p. 33). Hence, in this thesis I sought to generate empirical and theoretical insights by both acknowledging the nuances of each case and emphasising processes that transcended both locations. This attention to similarities in difference is reflected in my choice of organising my research findings thematically, rather than in a case-by-case fashion, across five empirical chapters (5 to 9).

1.5 Thesis structure

This thesis is structured as follows. In chapter 2, I review existing scholarship attending to the politics of urban expertise, drawing on predominantly on critical urban geography, science and technology studies (STS) and planning theory. This theoretical chapter introduced three interrelated concepts which, I argue, constitute useful frames to analyse how power operates through site-specific configurations of urban expertise. These concepts are: the concept of abstraction, which refers to the production of abstract representations of urban space; the concept of performance, which refers to the socio-material enactment of these abstract representations in particular places; and the concept of maintenance, which refers to the (temporary) stabilisation of powerful configurations of experts and devices that dominate the production of urban expertise in specific locations, at a given point in time. I then describe my mixed-methods comparative research design in chapter 3 and introduce my Cape Town and London case studies in chapter 4. The comparative empirical analysis proceeds in chapters 5 to 9. In chapters 5 and 6, I respectively look at the hierarchisation of urban experts and the agency of knowledge devices. In chapters 7 to 9, I turn to the analysis of how dominant configurations of urban expertise emerge and are stabilised in particular places; of how the abstract representations these produce are enacted in space (i.e. performance); and of whether and how these are contested. Chapter 7 highlights how the governance of spatial transformations on a project-by-project basis maintains the power of actors that are able to coordinate complex and fragmented networks of technocratic, hyper-specialised experts and tools. Chapter 8 explores how the growing influence of real estate actors as coordinating forces in both cities reinforces the dominance of the real estate gaze in the production of urban expertise and in spatial transformations. Chapter 9 explores how this gaze is resisted, unpacking the mechanics of counter-expertise. Finally, chapter 10 concludes and discusses the key theoretical and empirical contributions of this doctoral thesis, opening up avenues for future scholarly research on the topic. In this concluding section, I hope to emphasise how future research can engage with alternative (and more inclusive) forms of knowledge production, rooted in a deep engagement with the material, political and human fabric of places.

Part 1: Urban expertise and the production of urban space

Chapter 2: Theorising the politics of urban expertise

This chapter introduces the theoretical framework deployed to analyse my two case studies. It builds on existing scholarship dealing with the politics of urban expertise in critical urban geography and science and technology studies (STS), together with planning theory,² analysing the relationship between expertise and socio-technical transformations. Bringing together these different research strands allows me to define three analytical concepts. I then employ these in subsequent chapters to elucidate how power operates in and through particular configurations of urban expertise. My first analytical concept is that of *abstraction*, which refers to the process by which the urban becomes a known object, reduced to its partial representations, and by which the urban becomes an object that can be manipulated, altered, transformed (2.1). My second analytical concept is that of *performance*, which refers to the process by which abstract and fragmented representations of the urban come to be performed in the real world, through

² Trained in political science and in economic geography, having worked as a researcher on urban governance issues, and subsequently relocated to an engineering and public policy academic department to carry out this doctoral work, my orientation is inevitably interdisciplinary. The theme of urban expertise – or urban knowledge politics - is broad enough to have been covered by a very wide range of scholarly traditions, often in relative isolation. Such endeavours include, to name only a few, critical geographical studies looking at data politics, cartography and governmentality in urban settings; critical urban studies looking at post-political urban governance and policy mobilities; planning studies looking at rationality, power, communication, collaboration and coproduction; and environmental geography looking at community and/or indigenous knowledge in the context of climate change adaptation and energy transitions. The relationship between scientific production and socio-technical transformations has been widely covered, and theorised, in science and technology studies (STS). STS theories have also been heavily influential in contemporary conceptualisations of urban processes both in geography and planning, thus were relevant to integrate in this study. In this literature review – and throughout this thesis more generally - I intend to capture relevant observations from this very wide body of scholarship, albeit I predominantly mobilise research that sits at the crossroads between STS/urban geography and planning to look into the politics of urban expertise. My objective here is to develop an analytical framework that can be deployed to study the politics of urban expertise - beyond the empirical examination of spatial planning - across different 'urban domains' where expertise is central to the (re)production of uneven power dynamics (e.g. climate change adaptation, urban violence, sustainability transitions, infrastructure politics, and more). Hence, as is probably the case with any interdisciplinary endeavour, I contend that this thesis does not cover the full depth of academic debates unfolding within particular disciplines. However, I hope the conceptual approach presented here, and the different disciplinary strands it weaves together, provide useful analytical lenses to explore the intersection of expertise and politics in the contemporary production of urban space.

various means (individual actions, physical interventions, norms, and regulations, etc.) (2.2). My third concept is that of *maintenance*, which refers to the process by which specific configurations of urban expertise are stabilised and the abstractions they produce become dominant, contributing to their performance in particular places and at a given point in time (2.3). These three frames are mobilised throughout the empirical chapters (5 to 9) to understand how abstract (and at times conflicting) visions of the urban emerge from the work of various urban experts (governments, communities, consultants, real estate developers); to elucidate how these are enacted (i.e. performed) in the real world, through a range of interventions; and to analyse how dominant configurations of urban expertise maintain their power over the production of urban abstractions guiding contemporary urban transformations. In essence, these concepts seek to enlighten existing understandings of the politics of urban expertise by bringing to the fore the relationship between abstract urban representations, concrete urban interventions, and heterogenous configurations of urban expertise.

2.1 Abstraction

In this thesis, I use the concept of abstraction to address the following question: how does the urban become a known object, an object that can be manipulated and transformed? Does abstraction have politics? Abstraction, this section will show, consists in generating abstract representations of the urban, its form, function(s), and functioning, to guide concrete actions upon urban space. Abstraction is a central feature of the work of urban experts and of the knowledge tools/scientific techniques they use; it is also inherently selective, partial, incomplete, hence political. In what follows, I elaborate on these ideas, exploring how existing scholarship has conceptualised abstraction as a process that supports concrete urban transformations through the division, control and (future-oriented) projection of urban spaces.

2.1.1 Concrete abstractions

The relationship between abstract urban representations and spatial transformations has been the focus of an extensive scholarship. This relationship is clearly articulated in the seminal work of Henri Lefebvre (1974) developed in *The Production of Space*. In this book, Lefebvre builds on Hegel and Marxist political economy to develop the concept of concrete abstraction ('abstraction concrète') to refer to the process by which the ideal-abstract space is deployed in the real world, physically, institutionally, politically, socially.³ Abstractions are concrete in that they are translated into "*material practices performed in spatial settings*" (Tait and Jensen 2007, p. 114). Lefebvre's work stresses the relational process through which the abstract and the concrete co-constitute each other. It emphasises the dialectical relationship that exists between the transformation of the real space and the various abstract concepts that are created to make sense of that very same space (Robinson 2016). To Lefebvre, concrete abstractions are inherently violent as they impose themselves upon the organic, everyday urban life and support the domination of particular expert professions (in his view mostly public engineers, planners, architects) in the production of space. By emphasising the concrete work of abstraction, this approach helps us to start thinking about the politics of expertise and real/actual urban transformations. It invites us to abolish the dichotomy between the abstract and the concrete, to think of the two as co-constitutive of one another.

Through abstraction, urban expertise seemingly reveals the (urban) world to itself, although this representation is always partial and incomplete. For instance, engineers can produce abstract representations of the movement of natural

³ See Stanek 2008 for an extensive discussion of Hegel's influence over Lefebvre's conceptualisation of concrete abstractions.

resources, waste, energy, goods, and people, and of how such flows could be controlled and managed. Harris explored the function of “engineering practices, techniques of visualization and processes of standardization” as ways of “producing urban formality” in contemporary Mumbai and as efforts to “define and distinguish urban spaces, bodies and categories” (Harris 2018, p. 2-4). The abstract categories produced and mobilised by different professions to transform the materiality of urban spaces thus have concrete implications, for they induce concrete interventions in space, and they are political as they induce processes of generalisation that can never fully capture the diversity of urban experience (Douglas et al. 2010). From where they stand, engineers often see how physical infrastructures shape urban systems and make these more governable and efficient, but they often overlook (consciously or not) their social embeddedness (Lam 2018, Bingham-Hall and Cosgrave 2019), that is how people use and relate to them, or the type of uneven spatial development they create (Acarón 2016). This example from the engineering profession illustrates that by singling out specific elements of the urban, by establishing causal relationships and by anticipating the effects of particular actions, abstraction shapes concrete urban transformations. This idea has been extensively researched and commented upon - although not always with direct reference to Lefebvre’s work - and existing scholarship can be clustered around three distinct processes constitutive of the logic of abstraction, which in turn shape urban interventions: division, control, and projection. I turn to each of these in the next subsections.

2.1.2 Abstraction as division

Etymologically, *abstratio* (in Latin) refers to the process of extracting, separating, detaching, taking or drawing something away.⁴ Abstraction therefore,

⁴ In French, an abstraction is “an intellectual operation that consists in isolating the characteristics of an object through thought process and to consider it independently from the other characteristics of that object” (Larousse

applied to the study of the urban, can be seen as an operation that consists of dividing the urban, isolating and extracting its different parts to think about them independently, in order to turn them into objects that can be manipulated. As illustrated by my engineering example, this tendency to produce partial representations of the urban is supported by the (professional and disciplinary) division of expertise. For instance, Lefebvre highlights the tendency of architects, planners, policy makers, and researchers to divide and isolate the urban according to different components and functions, arguing that "*in this mode of production, knowledge work like material work is dividing itself endlessly*"⁵ (Lefebvre 1974, p. 15).

This fragmentation of urban expertise along disciplinary lines is further reinforced by the use of specific scientific techniques producing abstract understandings of the urban that are inherently incomplete. For instance, financial analysts working for real estate companies use sophisticated modelling techniques to anticipate return on investments in particular sites, be that a building or a redevelopment scheme, in order to guide investment decisions (Crosby and Henneberry 2016). Such techniques reduce urban space to its economic value and call for interventions that seek the extraction of such value (a point I come back to in chapter 8). Scholarship over the past twenty years has also brought our attention to the increasing automation of abstraction. Thrift and French have argued that the digitisation of contemporary Western societies and the automated, calculative logic that underpins this process, has penetrated spaces of everyday life which they claim are now dictated by "*a software [that] has come to intervene in nearly all aspects of [it] and has begun to sink into its taken-for-granted background*" (Thrift and French 2002, p. 309). In their view, abstraction is not just the result of human actions such as professional experts, but panoptic views of the urban are automatically produced

2018). Similarly, the English Oxford Dictionary defines abstraction as something that "exists only as an idea" and which relates to "the process of considering something independently from its associations or attributes."

⁵ Author's translation - originally in the text: "dans ce mode de production, le travail de la connaissance comme le travail matériel se divise sans fin."

by algorithms and software with little human intervention. They thus argue that what is increasingly dominant is an “*automatic production of space [...] new landscapes of code that are now beginning to make their own emergent ways*” (Ibid.).⁶ Abstraction remains however an inherently selective process, and it remains difficult - if at all possible- to provide holistic representations of the urban, even with greater automation. For instance, as Kitchin puts it:

despite systems becoming more widespread, fine-grained, and sophisticated, they have largely operated as independent systems and the notion of a panopticon (an all-seeing vantage point) has remained open to vertical (within an activity) and horizontal (across activities) fragmentation due to agencies communicating imperfectly or being unable or unwilling to exchange or compare information (Hannah 1997). Governance has thus consisted of a set of oligopticons—partial vantage points from fixed positions with limited view sheds (Amin and Thrift 2002). (Kitchin 2014a, p. 11)

Thus socio-technical configurations, including fragmented organisational structures and disciplinary silos support the divisive work of scientific abstraction. This divisive power also rests on dynamics of inclusion/exclusion in the process of making things and livings visible through abstraction. Still today, large parts of urban areas remain excluded from national and local government statistics or maps: a well-documented case is that of informal settlements (e.g. Karanja 2010, Dovey and King 2011, Patel et al. 2012, Livengood and Kunte 2012, Vuksanović-Macura 2012), but one could add for instance migrant communities (Huang and Yi 2015) or low-income groups (McArthur et al. 2019). Often this absence of information supports governmental (or

⁶ A similar argument is made by Coletta and Kitchin 2017 in their discussion of the implications of what they refer to as the ‘algorithmic governance’ of cities. Researchers interested in algorithmic bias have further demonstrated that social hierarchies and inequalities are reified by algorithms themselves. For instance, literature looking at racial profiling in critical data studies from geography (Crutcher and Zook 2009) has explored how “racial logics are “black-boxed” and naturalized in the sociotechnical systems that increasingly influence how urban space is governed” (Jefferson 2018, p. 1247).

other actors) inaction (e.g. inadequate service provision in informal/low income neighbourhoods). Therefore, abstraction constitutes a political terrain, it is divisive and exclusive. As described by Beauregard:

Abstractions abound. Anxiety is reduced. Professionals isolate in order to control, and this hermeneutic move enable professionals to claim that their depiction captures the foundational nature, the truth, of the place. (Beauregard 2005, p. 41)

In response to that, counter forms of expertise emerge to make the invisible visible, challenging the partial abstractions created by professional experts - this has been widely explored in critical GIS studies (e.g. Peluso 1995, Harris and Weiner 1998, Elwood and Leitner 2003, Perkins 2004, Elwood 2006, Cidell 2008, Brown and Knopp 2008, Crampton 2009). Insurgent practices aim to challenge dominant abstractions and the logic of control they support, often subverting the scientific tools mobilised by professional experts or governments to make visible aspects of the urban that are obscured.⁷ Dominant forms of urban expertise support the division of urban characteristics which, once isolated, are reified as both objects of study and of concrete interventions - objects that can be controlled.

2.1.3 Abstraction as control

Beyond the planning field, expert professions involved in the production of knowledge about the urban have been shown, in many cases, to either hold power over space or to work for those who hold such power. Indeed, whilst the domination of the state in making urban space is evident throughout history, other actors'

⁷ According to Lefebvre, the scientific division of knowledge production belongs to the realm of the "ideal space," the realm of ideas, of mental categories which is heavily infused by mathematical and logical thought. This idealised, cut, specialised space is, according to him, a "dead space" ('un espace mort') and this specialisation of urban expertise has, to him, led to ineffective spatial strategies and designs as they negate everyday urban life.

influence over urban transformations should not be underestimated, these include real estate developers and investors (e.g. Fainstein 2001, David and Halbert 2014, Halbert and Rouanet 2014, Weber 2015, Searle 2016, Guironnet et al. 2016), international organisations (e.g. Roy 2010, Peck and Theodore 2015, Fay et al. 2018), foreign nation states (e.g. Mohan and Tan-Mullins 2018) or communities themselves (McFarlane and Silver 2017a, Simone and Pieterse 2018). In this thesis, the case of private-led urban redevelopment projects illustrates that the boundary between public/private actors (i.e. local state/real estate actors) is sometimes, if not always, hard to draw (see for instance Harvey 1989, Fainstein 2001, Moore 2012, Weber 2015). Both are actively involved in shaping urban transformations, for instance through investments (both public and private, but increasingly private) or regulation and policing (here again, public and private actors are both involved in the regulation of urban space).

Abstract representations of the urban are thus produced by private consultancies or architectural firms, economic development specialists, community consultation experts, engineering and infrastructure agencies, heritage or environmental consultancies, but also by public authorities (e.g. government planning departments), or private companies (e.g. real estate investors, IT companies and developers) to guide particular interventions across a number of policy domains (planning, environment, heritage, economics, culture, etc.) (Paquot et al. 2000). This endeavour is supported by scientific techniques that allow their users to (partially) read and control space (Coutouzis and Latour 1986). Critical geographical studies have shown how technologies such as mapping or population surveys supported the control of bodies in, and through, space (e.g. Gregory 1978, Robinson 1982, Lewi and Wickham 1996, Harley 1989, Crampton 2001, 2003,

Rose-Redwood 2006, Huxley 2008, Haffner 2013).^{8 9} Van Damme (2013) for instance discusses the importance of mapping in the early nineteenth century in Paris in supporting the emergence of “medical topographies,” and the development of a geography of (in)salubrity, and its associated spatial practices such as the widening of streetscapes and erasing of informal housing during Haussman’s Grand Travaux. Modernist planning was underpinned by the abstract division of urban space and human living into distinct functions (working, consuming, reproducing) and its actualisation through top down planning (Lefebvre 1974, Holston 1989). Contemporary, twenty-first century, models of urban development have moved away from this functional discourse¹⁰ to replace it with abstract concepts of liveability, creativity, mixity of use, responsiveness, and smartness, seemingly embracing the complexity and messiness of urban living (McArthur and Robin 2018). At the same time, the production of these contemporary urban spaces often rests on the monitoring of flows, movements and behaviours, mobilising surveillance technologies (e.g. data tracking, sensors, video surveillance) to regulate urban life (e.g. Kitchin et al. 2017, Kitchin 2011, 2014b).

The subversion of these technologies of control is also central to the production of counter-expertise and collective mobilisation. For instance, marginalised urban populations such as slum dwellers or indigenous groups have used mapping and self-enumeration to create new cartographies and spatial representations and to claim political agency in the planning process and urban

⁸ By and large these have drawn on a Foucauldian governmentality - power/knowledge framework to highlight the importance of scientific tools in supporting the logics of abstraction and control.

⁹ Another strand of scholarship interested in this issue belongs to critical geopolitics (e.g. Ó Tuathail 1996, Agnew 2004, Sharp 2013) and postcolonial studies exploring the geopolitical role of knowledge in supporting the colonial project throughout history (Mignolo 2002, 2007, 2009, Escobar 2007). It is out of the scope of this thesis to review such a rich body of scholarship, but it offers interesting insights to how we read the contemporary geopolitics of *urban* knowledge, I discuss this further in Robin and Acuto (2018).

¹⁰ This rhetorical move does not mean that these different models, approaches and understandings of the urban replace each other in a linear fashion, and they certainly still coexist. For instance, contemporary regeneration projects (Campkin 2013) or large-scale slum evictions (Ghertner 2010, Doshi 2013, Fält 2016) are justified by sanitary discourses.

policy more broadly (Wainwright and Bryan 2009, Patel et al. 2012). Mapping has also been used to shed light on the progressive disappearance of cultural spaces, for instance LGBTQ+ night venues (Campkin and Marshall 2017) in the context of rapid gentrification; to measure the social value of urban natural heritage (Tyrväinen et al. 2007); to map out environmental risks and hazards (Allen et al. 2018), in the context of accelerated urbanisation and environmental depletion; or to visualise how urban dwellers qualitatively experience their urban environment (Pánek and Benediktsson 2017). These examples of subversion, aiming at making particular issues visible to call the state into action, do not go against the logic of (state) control over the urban. Rather, they illustrate that the production of abstract knowledge aims to direct the exercise of state control towards fairer or more sustainable interventions. Yet, other examples show that mapping can form cartographic-legal strategies to contest state or private control over land, directly challenging this logic of control (Appadurai 2012). This is extensively discussed in literature on counter-mapping (for a review see Rundstrom 2009) looking at the role of mapping in supporting citizens' rights struggles over land and citizenship - predominantly in non-urban settings (Peluso 1995, Bryan 2011, Rye and Kurniawan 2017). Abstraction, thus, does not only provide partial representations of the urban (through division), it also supports the logic of control - and its contestation. In doing so, it plays a key role in enabling various actors (e.g. local governments, community groups, citizens, businesses, etc.) to articulate representations of desirable urban futures in order to guide action over space.

2.1.4 Abstraction as projection

Abstraction generates fragmented understandings of urban realities, but it also nurtures visions of what cities are and should be, hence guiding action over space and across geographies. In that sense, abstraction supports the projection of idealised models of urbanity geographically and temporally (Beauregard 2005, Tait and Jensen 2007). In today's 'fast policy world' (Peck and Theodore 2015), new buzz words emerge every day to describe what a good city ought to be. The global flow of abstract urban models has been widely explored in urban policy

mobility research, which has traced how popular policy trends and frameworks emerge from (Hoyt 2004, Ward 2007, González 2011, Pow 2014), move and land in particular places, highlighting how these mutate as they are enacted in distinct locations (Tait and Jensen 2007, Cook 2008, Peck and Theodore 2010, McCann and Ward 2010, 2011, Faulconbridge 2012, Didier et al. 2013, Harris and Moore 2013) and emphasising the non-linearity and inherent messiness of policy transfers (Peck 2011, Temenos and McCann 2013, Robinson 2015). This literature has often focused on following abstract models as these are put in motion (e.g. González 2011, Didier et al. 2012, Wiig 2015, Montero 2018a) and in doing so has identified a plethora of actors that facilitate the geographical movement of abstract urban visions. For instance, researchers have traced the geographical movement of urban experts throughout history, looking at how specific professions and individuals have contributed to exporting urban models to different locations, particularly engineers, planners and architects (e.g. Cusset 2005, Nasr 2005, McNeill 2009, Healey and Upton 2010, Bunnell and Das 2010, Prince 2014, Jacobs and Lees 2013, Ponzini 2014, Rapoport 2015, Lieto 2015, Wood 2018). Other important actors for the circulation of urban ideas include governments, be that the nation-state (e.g. Béal et al. 2018, Croese 2018, Datta 2018), local governments (e.g. Temenos and McCann 2012, Ward 2018), civil society networks (McFarlane 2012), property developers (e.g. Rimmer 2002, Sklair 2005, Morange et al. 2012, Brill 2018), private firms (McNeill 2015, Bok and Coe 2017), management consultants (Vogelpohl 2018b), academics and higher-education institutions (Jacobs and Lees 2013), as well as international agencies and philanthropic organisations (e.g. Stone 2004, Roy 2010, McFarlane 2011a, Acuto et al. 2017, Montero 2018a). Those processes are not new: through colonisation, war and domination, colonial powers have put into motion ideas of what modern urbanity should look like, exporting them to other places in the world (e.g. Myers 2003, Njoh 2009, King 2012, Silva 2015). Contemporary studies of mobile policies have also demonstrated that the movement of abstract urban concepts has not always and uniquely been following a North-South direction, and recent work emphasises the importance of South-South circulations in the dissemination and local rearticulation of urban models (e.g. Bunnell and Das 2010, Didier et al. 2012, Wood 2015a,).

Additionally, research has highlighted the importance of objects as key mediums to disseminate abstractions, thus supporting their projection across distinct locations. For instance, Rapoport (2015) shows the impact of visual media coupled with tangible, real-time experiences on promoting sustainable urbanism. Pow has shown how the Singaporean model has been constructed and disseminated through the production of various “*mundane urban artefacts such as scaled architectural models, glossy brochures and high-tech policy showrooms*” (Pow 2014, p. 298) (see also Healey 2004, McFarlane 2011a, Montero 2018b). Other researchers have looked at the role of specific technologies in disseminating urban norms globally (see for instance Faulconbridge 2015 for a discussion of travelling sustainable building assessment models). Studies of the relationship between the production of abstract understandings of the urban and concrete spatial transformations have also stressed the importance of story-telling and narratives used to legitimise and compel specific actions over space (Fijalkow 2018). Narration thus plays a key role in strengthening the projective power of particular abstractions, and abstractions, in turn, play a fundamental role in generating concepts that can feed into urban narratives and future actions over space. Drawing on the notion of myths to explain how travelling objects - in this case “*good planning ideas*” - can move across geographies, Lieto indicates that these need to be “*sufficiently polysemous and capable of being charged with new values and implications*” and “*to be partly deprived of its contextual biases and provided with some degree of abstraction*” (Lieto 2015, p. 116-118). This attention to the construction of mythical narratives is essential not just to understand how abstract urban ideas travel globally and gain traction in the first place. It is also key in understanding how such myths can be rearticulated where they land and propel action in and over space. In this process, experts, such as planners, as well as knowledge devices, such as master-plans, 3D models, marketing brochures, are means by which coherent myths that can fit the local context are articulated. The mythical power of abstractions also helps us understand how local visions (sometimes borrowing models from elsewhere, sometimes not) are able to mobilise local, trans-sectorial coalitions of actors (public, private, civic) that work together to facilitate their *concrete* realisation. A related observation is made by Tissot who observes how the invention of abstract categories such as ‘sensitive areas’ in France and ‘historic districts’ in the US

participated in the production of exclusionary urban spaces, notably as the terms came to be used widely by the media and policy practitioners:

The various agents who shape space - mayors, planners, architects, developers - do so through various material resources, such as government programs, local organisations and land, but *also through symbolic resources: vocabulary, in particular the vocabulary that is used by media and policy practitioners*. (Tissot 2018, p. 151)

For her, ideas and concepts mobilised in policy and public discourse contribute to providing a shared language to different actors across multiple sectors of society, to guide collective action and to legitimise specific interventions. Similarly, Watson (2014a) has shown how contemporary master-plans for African cities can be seen as 'urban fantasies' which mobilise abstract concepts that in turn bring to life coalitions of actors involved in spatial transformations (a point also raised by Datta 2015, in the Indian context). Those plans, she argues, tap into ideas related to

globally circulating terms that have all found their way into these plans as part of their promotion. These concepts link in various ways to a growing network of interests in "future cities," which includes an interesting mix of property developers, designers, engineering and infrastructure companies, finance and IT firms and those promoting urban sustainability. (Watson 2014a, p. 216)

Abstractions thus act as coordinating devices bringing together actors, networks of people, material and financial resources, places, regulations, and more, that can support their enactment - or rather, their variegated re-articulation - through concrete interventions. Recognising the projective power of abstraction, as the production of powerful myths, helps us better grasp the political nature of urban expertise, recognising the importance of narration in projecting and legitimising visions of desirable urban futures, and in bringing together actors and resources to make such visions concrete. Throughout this research, I thus explore how the politics of urban expertise shape how abstract myths are constructed, which partial representations they offer, and which human and non-human actors are called into

action for their realisation. My empirical analysis does not follow particular abstract models, although it recognises the value of existing work on policy mobilities and the importance of global knowledge flows and their local re-articulation as a key aspect of the politics of expertise in contemporary London and Cape Town. Rather, it demonstrates how abstraction is generated from specific contexts, paying attention to how locally embedded actors, governments, developers, different consultants and community organisations, produce abstractions. In some cases, like in the case of Cape Town, this also includes 'arriving at' global urban models (Robinson 2015), I further unpack these mechanisms in chapter 6. My analysis also seeks to unveil whether and how such abstractions are then rendered concrete (chapters 7 and 8) and the extent to which such practices are resisted (chapter 9).

In this section, I have introduced the concept of abstraction as a useful heuristic to explore the intrinsic politics of urban expertise, as abstraction supports the division, control and projection of urban space and in doing so turns it into a manipulable object. The question of whose and which abstractions dominate the production of space (i.e. are rendered concrete) yet remains to be addressed. If the importance of considering the *abstract* work of expertise and the *concrete* transformation of urban space has now been established, the process by which abstract urban ideas translate into actual interventions still requires clarification. To address this issue, I now bring in conceptual insights from assemblage theory and science and technology studies looking at the performativity of abstract models. In what follows, I demonstrate that tracing the performance of particular abstractions is fundamental to understanding the process through which abstract representations of the urban are enacted. Looking at the dynamics of performance implies looking at how assemblages of experts and knowledge devices in particular sites lead to the translation of abstract ideas into concrete spatial interventions.

2.2 Performance

The past decade has been marked by the inclusion of "*Deleuzian-inspired readings of assemblage*" (McFarlane 2011b, p. 206) and actor-network-theory (ANT)

(Callon 1984, Law 1992, Latour 1996, 2005a) in urban geography and planning theory (e.g. McFarlane 2009, Rydin and Tate 2010, Jacobs 2012, Farias and Bender 2012, Rydin 2010, 2014, Beauregard 2015, Lieto and Beauregard 2016). Several aspects of this material turn in urban studies are helpful to further conceptualise the politics of urban expertise, in particular to trace the process by which abstractions are both produced and enacted in and through urban space.

2.2.1 Opening up the black box of urban expertise

Assemblage theory invites us to think the urban as a processual and heterogenous configuration of things (e.g. roads, dust, buildings, trains, rubbish, laws, taxes etc.) and beings (e.g. trees, foxes, humans). From an analytical standpoint, it assumes a flat ontology or generalised symmetry among various parts of the urban assemblage: there is no *a priori* hierarchy between its human or non-human elements (Farias and Bender 2012). This relational and heterarchical conception of the urban, bringing together its multiple components is particularly helpful in thinking of urban expertise itself as an open box made of knowledge devices (e.g. maps, travel demand modelling tools, plans, power-points), experts (e.g. engineers, public planners, community participation experts, etc.) and places (i.e. the people within those places, their physical and institutional features, etc.) (see also West 2016). Places are both objects of study, abstracted through the work of urban expertise, and sites of intervention, where abstract representations of the urban are rendered concrete, thus reshaping their sociology, physicality, politics, ecology, etc. This relational view of the urban is not new in geographical thinking, which sees space as embedded across multiple scales of relations (Massey 2005). Yet, thinking about objects such as knowledge tools (chapter 6) or a place's material features (chapter 9), its people, the rules that govern it, the money that flows in it (chapters 5, 7 and 8), and the multiple elsewhere it relates to "*both practically and imaginatively*" (Robinson 2011, p. 16) requires an analytical vocabulary that can describe these human-non-human interactions and the type of power relations they induce.

Whilst existing scholarship mobilised assemblage theory as a powerful tool to map out such socio-material interactions, ANT has offered an analytical vocabulary that can help describe how power operates within complex, human and non-human assemblages - or indeed actor networks - of urban expertise. In that perspective, categories/processes such as the urban can be understood as heterogeneous socio-material and technical constructs. Their (open ended) formation processes are embedded in multiple scales of interactions. Some of their parts - actants in ANT terminology - shape the nature and (temporary) structure of these interactions, thus exert power in the organisation of assemblages. Throughout this thesis, for the sake of consistency, I chose to use the term assemblage of urban expertise, rather than actor networks, to refer to the relational configuration of heterogeneous experts and devices in specific sites. Using this framework, the city can be seen as the product of what complex assemblages of urban expertise do; power can be traced by looking at how specific relationships hold together distinct parts of heterogeneous assemblages of urban expertise; or by looking at how the deliberate absence of relationships can preclude the inclusion of some actors (human or not) into a given assemblage (Mitchell 2007). This point is particularly important, for instance, when looking at the marginalisation of community expertise, a point I come back to in chapter 7.

ANT thinkers have long been interested in issues of knowledge production and in the co-constitutive nature of scientific expertise and society (Bijker et al. 1989), exploring how through division and categorisation, scientific abstraction, especially of a quantitative nature, creates manipulable objects (Callon and Latour 1997, Mitchell 2002, Callon and Law 2005, Callon and Muniesa 2005, MacKenzie 2006, Muniesa et al. 2007, Callon 2007, MacKenzie 2008). Thus, even though objects already exist in the world, it is their problematisation, categorisation and scientific examination - that is, in our case, their inclusion into assemblages of urban expertise that allows them to be manipulated and altered, for example by ways of spatial interventions. This relational view emphasises the politico-material underpinnings and effects of urban expertise. For instance, the decision to build a new Tube (metro) station first requires the production of abstract assessments of transport needs, as well as of the topological features of the chosen location to

determine whether construction is possible or not. Throughout that process, people (commuters) and geological objects are brought into the network, abstracted and used in the design of particular interventions, interventions which in turn concretely shape how people move and reshape urban morphologies by creating new infrastructures. Thus, the power of assemblages of urban expertise resides in their capacity to *enrol* (another ANT term), that is to bring together, manipulate, shape various elements into complex relational configurations, which in turn support the production of abstractions and their enactment.

This framework invites us to consider, trace and document the simultaneous work of experts (individuals or organisations), of knowledge devices (Muniesa et al. 2007), of socio-cultural, political and physical urban space, and of formal and informal institutions (e.g. planning laws; professional standards and expectations; informal relationships) in shaping the concrete manifestation, re-configuration, contestation, sometimes extinction, of dominant urban abstractions in particular locations. It lends itself to analysis that does not presuppose the dominance of particular experts (e.g. engineers) or devices (e.g. environmental impact assessments, spatial plans) in the production of abstract urban visions and their concrete implementation.¹¹ This networked and relational view of how abstract concepts shape the world is not far from Lefebvre's exposition of the work of concrete abstractions, which, according to him "*attain 'real' existence by virtue of networks and pathways, by virtue of bunches or clusters of relationships*" (Lefebvre cited in Stanek 2008, p. 68). Paying attention to the coordination mechanisms that hold

¹¹ These various elements (experts, calculative devices, built form, institutions, etc.) matter together, although they do not always matter equally. Assemblage thinking, and ANT in particular, have often been criticised for their lack of clear account of agency, politics and power, for instance, Tonkiss argues that assemblage thinkers "see agency everywhere. In this sense, assemblage has decided one of the basic problems in social science firmly on the side of agency. Partly it does this by collapsing both these notions into a concern with process (structuration, anyone?), but principally it pulls it off by a generalised attribution of agency. Just about everything, in this account - human, non-human and especially the hybrid bits in between - gets to have a go" (Tonkiss 2011, p. 584-585). Taking these criticisms seriously also implies reflecting on how this approach can avoid simply providing a long list of those human and non-human elements that matter in the politics of urban expertise "without necessarily distinguishing between what is active, what is latent, what is incidental and what is simply around" (Ibid.).

these complex configurations of urban expertise together and allow them to be performed in the real world is essential if one is to understand how power operates through and is unevenly distributed within particular assemblages of urban expertise. This has been addressed in recent developments in STS looking at the performativity of abstract scientific concepts.

2.2.2 Performing abstractions

The term performativity itself has its roots in linguistic philosophy, most notably in the work of John Searle (*Speech acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* 1969) and John Austin (*How to do Things with Words* 1975) as well as in feminist theory, particularly the work of Judith Butler (*Performative Acts and Gender Constitution* 1988). Given its main focus on language and discursive apparatuses, work from linguistics has informed a large body of research looking at how urban (policy) discourses are enacted through particular urban interventions (see for instance the edited volume on urban discourses and city-making by Fijalkow 2018). The question of politics is central to this work, as it seeks to unpack how dominant discourses about what good urbanity should look like influence concrete spatial interventions. Studies of the geography of power - predominantly Anglo-Saxon - have built on Judith Butler's seminal work on the performativity of gender norms (1988, 1990) to explore how dominant political orders are enacted through the production of space. For instance, the edited collection *Performativity, Politics and the Production of Social Space* (Glass and Rose-Redwood 2014) explores how "*the ritualized repetition of norms*" (citing Butler 1993, p. x) contributes to the performance (and maintenance over time) of political authority in space. These insights further support the idea that abstractions serve the logic of control, as previously discussed, and bring our attention to the fact that these are enacted (i.e. rendered concrete) through bodies, spatial configurations, norms and institutions, both explicitly and implicitly.

Over the past 15 years, science and technology scholars have appropriated the concept of performativity to move beyond a sole focus on discourses and

narration to look into the relationship between scientific knowledge, scientific tools and the real world. What they share with feminist accounts of performativity is their attention to how specific concepts and ideas are embodied within individuals themselves, as much as in the law, particular physical configurations (buildings, streets and transport networks, public spaces) or objects. According to Callon it is essential to understand “*scientific statements - to take only them - [as] performative*” for “*this assertion would shield us from the temptation to contend that they are constative, that they try to describe and analyse a reality on which they will not intervene*” (Callon 2009, p. 18). In that perspective, abstract theories (pardon the tautology) are concrete: they do not merely describe the world, they actually shape and enact it.¹² A lot of this work has focused on the performativity of economic theories and their role in the production (rather than mere description) of markets (e.g. Callon and Muniesa 2005, Callon 2007, 2009, 2010, MacKenzie 2006, 2008, Mitchell 2002, 2007, 2009, MacKenzie et al. 2007). This body of scholarship looks at the norms, institutions, actors and tools that have shaped the translation of theoretical economic ideas into actually existing economic practices, norms and regulations. In doing so it borrows much to Polanyi’s (1944) early thinking on the social construction of markets and “*demonstrates how abstract market logic can be productive of actually existing markets that appear to reproduce that logic across a diversity of social and geographic contexts*” (Muellerleile 2013, p. 1626). Thus, the concept of performativity

underscores the fact that there are no effects of knowledge without well-designed interventions, and that it is these interventions, with the events that they produce and that they enable us to describe, which are at the origin of the production of facts (Callon 2009, p. 19)

¹² This work builds on early ANT work on the sociology of translation (e.g. Callon 1984). Tait and Jensen (2007) offer a useful demonstration of how this concept can help understand how mobile urban models are reconfigured in different locations.

This notion appears particularly useful to think through the politics of urban expertise in the context of urban redevelopment projects, for these are characterised by the strong presence of market actors. But even beyond the economic sphere, this framework is useful to understand the enactment of abstract urban visions. What this approach brings to our understanding of the relationship between abstract urban ideas and their concrete realisation is a greater attention to the human and technical system that underpins the production and materialisation of abstraction through particular *agencements* (i.e. powerful configurations) of actors (human and non-human). Timothy Mitchell's now canonical exploration of the making of modern Egypt - notably through the constitution of its national economy - reminds us that

Our world is made up of technical bodies, hybrids that are neither wholly objects nor ideas, more than just things but not disembodied spirits [...] not properly divisible into nature and culture, or reality and representation. (Mitchell 2002, p. 117).

This research agenda laid the ground for studying the formation of actual markets in conjunction with the production of knowledge about those markets, of ideas about how they should be functioning, of rules to facilitate their realisation, of technical apparatus to marketise things and beings, through calculation (this will be further discussed in chapter 8). It abolishes the dichotomy between the represented and the real, opening up avenues to explore the materiality of abstraction, be that the material underpinnings of the production of abstract representations, or the material implications of particular concepts and ideas. For instance, Mitchell (*Ibid.*) shows in great detail how physical constraints such as the size or texture of a map do in turn shape and limit what can possibly be understood - abstracted - from the real world, stressing the inherent materiality of knowledge production processes. This scholarship took the work of orthodox economic theory as a point of departure to think about how abstract economic thinking expands its reach to economicise various spheres of society, inviting us to consider how various actors 'co-perform' economic principles in the real world (Mitchell 2002, Callon 2009).

2.2.3 Performing the urban

When it comes to urban ideas, understanding how urban abstractions are performed in the real world requires looking at how abstract concepts about what cities should and ought to be are enacted through powerful agencements of people (e.g. Nasr 2005, Souami 2005, Weber 2016), marketing brochures and plans (e.g. Pow 2014), software (Marvin and Luque-Ayala 2017), institutionalised circuits of circulating mobile ideas (Clerc 2005, Roy 2010, McFarlane 2011a, Peck and Theodore 2015), regulations and operating standards (Mitchell 2009, Easterling 2014, Schindler and Marvin 2018) etc. Scientific techniques and the law, for instance, also perform abstract economic ideas. Financial calculation tools (e.g. algorithms) contribute to performing abstract understandings of how markets should function, they guide individual actions, for instance that of traders (Zaloom 2006); accounting techniques, through recording and making specific things calculable (Callon and Muniesa 2005), enrol them into the market; new laws and regulations¹³ can reify different objects as items that can be analysed in economic terms, contributing to making the world fit for economic theory and to performing economic theory itself (Mitchell 2002, 2007, 2009).¹⁴

To date, this framework has rarely been employed to look at the politics of urban expertise and the role of particular concepts and scientific techniques in changing the urban fabric (for exceptions see Aalbers 2014 for a focus on the performativity of maps). When they exist, studies have focused on the importance of financial tools in planning decision-making processes (Christophers 2014,

¹³ For instance, Fields (2018) has shown how post-Global Financial Crisis regulations have created new products on the US housing market (in that case foreclosed homes were turned into single family rental units).

¹⁴ Mitchell (2002, 2009) offers a fascinating and historically detailed account of conflicts around the formalisation of property rights - particularly in Egypt and Peru - exploring the political process by which specific objects (in that case land and houses) are brought into formal market mechanisms through classical liberal regulations.

Crosby and Henneberry 2016, McAllister et al. 2016). Yet, such studies have focused on particular tools or expert organisations pertaining to the economic sphere, but they have not explored in depth how complex assemblages of urban expertise support the performance of financial abstractions.¹⁵ This requires broadening the analysis to the (wide) range of actors and techniques that are working collectively to produce and implement abstract urban visions. Thus, it is important to understand the role of market actors, real estate developers included, and the techniques they use (e.g. financial viability assessments) in contemporary spatial strategies. Yet, assessing the performativity of the abstract representations of the urban these market actors produce necessitates that their role in the constitution of assemblages of urban expertise be unpacked. If we were only to look at their human component, these would include architects, engineers, planners, urban data scientists, lawyers, local governments, but also other actors (not only those easily labelled as experts, such as citizens and community organisations) that become, temporarily or not, involved in the production of urban expertise. For instance, in the United Kingdom (UK hereafter), the early 2000s have been marked by an increasing involvement of citizens and community organisations in the making of urban visions (public or private led), a point I come back to in chapters 5 and 9. Other techniques, such as social or environmental impact assessments, transport or heritage studies and many more, underpin the production of urban visions and in turn bring new elements into assemblages of urban expertise (heritage building, soil, air, trees, infrastructures). By enrolling these elements of the urban fabric, they aim to facilitate their manipulation and to invite them to perform abstract urban visions (I provide further evidence to this claim in chapters 6 to 9).

¹⁵ For instance, Christophers looked at the role of a particular firm providing financial viability advice in informing local governments' planning strategies in the UK. He reminds us that "the degree of a model's performative power depends on a whole series of conjunctural factors, institutional design arguably foremost among them" (Christophers 2014, p. 82).

In this thesis, thus, I mobilise the notion of performativity to explore how assemblages of urban expertise support the performance of urban abstractions, through the use of specific scientific techniques (e.g. calculative devices); through the various objects of knowledge that are named, identified, dissected, contained in and manipulated through those abstractions; through individuals who produce, enact and embody those abstractions in and through their actions; through existing (formal and informal) norms and rules that institutionalise particular abstractions as a mode of action. In doing so, I explore how dominant assemblages of urban expertise are produced and maintain their power over the production of space, which also implies looking at dynamics of contestation and resistance. To date however, the performativity literature has been relatively blind to the influence of spatial configurations on the production of expertise and the enactment of theories (for exceptions see Barnes 2008, Muellerleile 2013, Weber 2016). Without reproduction and repetition over time and space, abstractions could not become concrete, they could not be enacted in the world, they could not be performed. In addition, abstract ideas are not performed identically across places (as illustrated by the urban policy mobility literature). Thus, powerful assemblages of urban expertise need to be situated geographically, if one is to grasp how abstract understandings are generated from specific places and in turn shape those places. This leads me to introduce my last analytical concept: *maintenance*. The concept of maintenance aims to better conceptualise how abstractions are produced and performed in and through particular sites. In this thesis, I take the cities of London and Cape Town, and within them, neighbourhoods identified for regeneration, as field sites to explore these issues. Powerful configurations of urban expertise are made of numerous moving parts that are temporarily stabilised, that is maintained, in specific locations. The concept of maintenance, I argue, is helpful in understanding this temporary stabilisation of powerful assemblages of urban expertise but also in acknowledging their precarity and potential to be de-stabilised.

2.3 Maintenance

The notion of maintenance is central to the politics of urban expertise for it allows us to explore how complex configurations of actors, rules, scientific techniques, policy prescriptions, materials, money and more hold together to support the performance of specific urban abstractions in particular places. As Van Damme argues, looking at urban science implies looking at “*successive and contradicting identities, temporary polarisation of this or that knowledge, and innumerable webs that link together heterogenous spaces of knowledge*”¹⁶ (Van Damme 2005, p. 4). The concept of maintenance I argue is helpful to think through the performance of abstraction and the temporary stabilisation of assemblages of urban expertise in particular geographical settings. In addition to shedding light on how various parts of such assemblages hold together over time and in space, this concept also invites us to explore whether and why it might be difficult to contest/reverse powerful configuration of urban expertise, thus paying attention to their likely/potential destabilisation (a theme I come back to in chapter 9). Maintenance is made possible by the temporary stabilisation that results from interactions and negotiations between and within three interacting parts of assemblages of urban expertise (themselves constituted of a multitude of things and beings): urban experts defined as individuals/organisations involved in the production of urban expertise; knowledge devices defined as scientific tools that support the concrete/abstract work of expertise and can differ for / be shared by different experts; and sites defined as spatial and politico-institutional contexts within which knowledge producing activities are embedded and which they intend to shape at various scales, for instance a city, a neighbourhood, a street. It is through the interaction of those three elements - sites, people/organisations and devices - that assemblages of urban expertise are temporary stabilised, that is maintained, and that specific abstractions come to be performed in the real world.

¹⁶ Author's translation, orginally in the text: “Avec les sciences sur la ville, on a affaire à des identités successives et contradictoires, à des polarisations temporaires de tels ou tels savoirs, à des ramifications innombrables qui relient des espaces savants hétérogènes.”

2.3.1 Sites

The production of abstract concepts, through the work of expertise, is a situated practice (Haraway 1988, Latour and Wooglar 2013, Barnett and Bridge 2017). Whilst concepts, knowledge devices and experts can travel (e.g. McFarlane 2011a), the ways in which urban abstractions are articulated and performed is always site specific¹⁷ (e.g. Peck 2011, Lieto 2015, Robinson 2015, Wood 2015b). Sites are always embedded in particular socio-political relations. This has been highlighted for instance in research looking at the work of international experts abroad. Cusset (2005) has shed light on how interactions between foreign consultants and local experts working on urban infrastructure development in Vietnam foregrounded the local re-articulation of interventions imported from elsewhere. Souami (2005) investigated similar issues in his work on knowledge exchanges between French, Egyptian and Lebanese urbanists and the reconfiguration of planning models in Cairo and Beirut. Furthermore, research has shown that experts such as consultants always have to adapt to and work with local institutions and actors (Rapoport 2015, Rapoport and Hult 2017, Brill and Robin 2018) in their attempt to transform specific sites. Here I refer to sites as distinct from places, defining those as delimited socio-material spatial constructs that are created to enact abstract urban visions (Burns and Khan 2005) (e.g. redevelopment zones, estates designated for regeneration, transport hub waiting to be upgrading, urban corridor waiting to be filled with new transport infrastructures). Places on the contrary are socio-relational, material entities imbued with symbolic, cultural and emotional meaning that are created through direct encounters and everyday experiences. Sites do overlap with places. Thus, sites within places are always

¹⁷ Places where the politics of urban expertise unfold are numerous in contemporary urban policy making. McFarlane (2011) for instance refers to 'urban forums' as key sites of urban learning and exchanges of urban ideas. They exist across interrelated global, regional, national and local decision-making arenas: from the United Nations Habitat III conference (e.g. Parnell 2016, Caprotti et al. 2017, Acuto et al. 2018) to global real estate fairs (Guironnet 2017), international city networks (e.g. Lee and Van de Meene 2012, Castán Broto and Bulkeley 2013, Hakelberg 2014, Acuto and Rayner 2016), neighbourhood planning forums (e.g. Parker et al. 2015, 2017) and other participatory arena (e.g. Corburn 2003, Häkiö 2007, Farías 2016).

shaped by the presence of various material objects and the existence of complex socio-material configurations which themselves shape how urban expertise is formed, articulated, politicised (e.g. Whatmore and Landström 2011, Lieto 2017). Therefore, it is essential to incorporate the politics and dialectics of place erasing/site-making (Beauregard 2005) into the analysis of the emergence of particular abstractions and of the maintenance and performative power of dominant assemblages of urban expertise. Understanding what type of expertise is deemed relevant and legitimate across distinct locations is essential to understand how local politico-institutional and cultural contexts contribute to the hierarchisation of distinct forms of urban expertise. It is also essential to analyse the role of place attachment and materiality in the contestation of these hierarchies. There is a need to understand the process

by which actors (including collectives) struggle to impose versions of reality on others which define (a) the number of those others, both natural and social, that may be said to exist in the world, (b) their characteristics, (c) the nature of their interrelations, (d) their respective sizes and (e) their positions. (Law 1986, p. 6)

This implies paying attention to the socio-economic, political and material configurations of sites within places and how they shape and constrain the boundaries, content and use of urban expertise (these themes are explored in depth in chapters 7 and 9). This in turn, shapes how dominant urban abstractions emerge and whether or not those are performed in and through particular sites.

2.3.2 Experts

As explored in the first section of this chapter, different organisations have led the production of urban expertise at different points in time. Equally, traditional urban expert professions have evolved over the years. For instance, the late twentieth century has been characterised by an increased privatisation, specialisation and diversification of the planning profession (Mazza 2002). Research has shown how, in a context characterised by the influence of the real

estate sector over urban transformations (Sassen 2001, Fainstein 2001, David 2012, Weinstein 2014, Rouanet and Halbert 2016, Searle 2016) economic science, in particular financial modelling techniques, increasingly permeates local governments' spatial strategies (Christophers 2014, Weber 2015, McAllister et al. 2016, Guironnet et al. 2016). Similarly, the rise of public-private partnerships as a way to finance and deliver urban projects have changed the ways in which architects operate, privileging cost-efficiency over good design - however subjective this notion might be - in their proposals (Van Den Hurk and Siemiatycki 2018). Planners in local governments have been shown to exert little power over the production of abstract urban visions and to be increasingly tasked with processing and negotiating planning applications (Clifford 2016). Communities and citizens themselves engage in the production of urban expertise, be that to support their political struggles or to partake in urban decision-making (or both, as will be discussed in chapter 9).

Experts are defined as such because of the institutional recognition of their domain of expertise in a given context, whilst domains of expertise are constantly being challenged by experts themselves, or technological change, or the institutions that fund experts' work (Van Damme 2013). Indeed, experts might well be heralded as experts because they use knowledge devices that are deemed legitimate, policy-relevant, fashionable, or cutting edge at a given point in time.¹⁸ Furthermore, the saliency of specific political issues, coupled with administrative reforms, might force municipal governments to engage with new types of expertise to inform urban interventions. For instance, the prominence of resilience and climate change issues in global discourses, coupled with multi-billion-dollar philanthropic investments from the Rockefeller Foundation, have contributed to the hiring of Chief Resilience Officers in over 100 localities from all over the world over the past two years

¹⁸ As contemporary developments indicate, IT companies and data scientists are often presented as the new urban experts for their ability to make sense of the vast amount of information that is generated by and in cities every day, and to provide automated urban solutions based on those data (Kitchin 2014b).

(Spaans and Waterhout 2017, Fastenrath et al. 2019). Therefore, understanding how internal (i.e. intra-organisation) and external (i.e. inter-organisations) politics shape who and what is perceived as a legitimate source of urban expertise is essential to the analysis of the formation and maintenance of powerful configurations of urban expertise. In doing so, one must refrain from defining who is an expert *a priori* and must also attend to the politics of knowledge devices.

2.3.3 Knowledge devices

Studies that have looked into the material and technical component of urban expertise have often focused on a particular scientific techniques underpinning the production of abstract understandings of the urban. For instance, research has been attendant to the politics of mapping (e.g. Aalbers 2004, Patel et al. 2012, Luque-Ayala and Neves Maia 2018), of urban indicators and city rankings (e.g. Holden 2006, Rydin 2007a, Barnett and Parnell 2016, Robin and Acuto 2018, McArthur and Robin 2019) or of urban modelling tools (e.g. Kitchin et al. 2015, Schindler and Marvin 2018). More recent scholarship, notably that focusing on urban data politics, has started to pave the way for exploring the politics of new technologies and how this shape how urban space is understood, socially and materially transformed, sometimes with little human intervention (e.g. Amin and Thrift 2002, Kitchin 2014a, Marvin and Luque Ayala 2017). The power of scientific techniques, I argue, can be better reflected through the use of a terminology that accounts for the agency of these objects, in this thesis I refer to powerful scientific tools as knowledge devices. In choosing this term, I take inspiration from scholarship exploring the performativity of economics which uses the concept of market device¹⁹ to refer to elements of an assemblage that support the economic

¹⁹ The concept of device finds resonance with the Foucauldian notion of *dispositif* or apparatus. *Dispositif* comes from the Latin word *dispositio* which literally translates as 'putting in order'. For Foucault, the *dispositif* goes beyond the narrow definition employed in this thesis, for it encompasses the strategic configuration of "heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative

agencement of objects, laws, human, institutions, for instance turning real things into calculable objects, so that they can be put on the market. Devices, for instance in the case of economic markets, play a key function in enabling the performance of abstract economic laws or predictions - they include pricing systems, analysts' financial reports, consumer credit scorecards (Callon et al. 2008). They support the performativity of abstract ideas and they are constitutive of what holds assemblages of urban expertise together. In that perspective, knowledge devices can be defined as the scientific techniques that allow to abstract and put in order specific qualities of the urban space; techniques that guide and incentivise actions in and over space - notably by supporting the abstract and concrete manipulation of particular objects. This in turn supports the performance of abstract urban visions. The notion of device is a helpful one to think about abstraction, performance and maintenance in conjunction and relationally. For the urban world to be controlled, manipulated and altered, for urban visions to be performed, the urban world itself needs to be abstracted, cut into pieces and ordered in a way that makes spatial interventions - and action upon space - possible. Therefore, knowledge devices hold agency over the urban, they perform key mediating functions by making visible selected aspects of the urban world and facilitate their manipulation. Those tools actively shape how space is perceived, they create connexions between the socio-physical world and human actors in that they allow to make sense of the urban environment and to create meaning which in turn influences urban interventions (I discuss this extensively in chapter 6).

There is a need to understand how knowledge devices allow for specific aspects of the real urban world to become the subject of abstraction and of manipulation. Paying attention to those objects also links back to my previous

measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions" (Foucault 1980, p. 194) which in turn supports the disciplining of bodies in space.

interrogations regarding what counts or does not count as an urban expert, as it relates to the exclusionary processes induced by “*the different types of knowledge required to produce and stabilise these devices*” (Callon 2009, p. 5). The valorisation of particular knowledge devices in the production of what is recognised as legitimate urban expertise in itself excludes actors who are unable to use and/or understand such devices; it plays a key role in the inclusion/exclusion dynamics inherent to the processes of abstraction, performance and maintenance. Knowledge devices do things as part of assemblages of urban expertise when they are maintained as key features of these relational configurations (and contribute to their reproduction). Understanding the hierarchisation of knowledge devices, and their appropriation and use by different actors, in particular locations, is therefore essential to analyse how particular assemblages of urban expertise are maintained over time and in particular places. It is also key to understand the extent to and process through which the abstractions these create come to be performed in the real world. I return to these observations in chapters 6 and 8.

Conclusion

This chapter reviewed existing literature on the politics of urban expertise, highlighted its shortfall and contributions, and laid the theoretical foundations for an examination of the interplay between politics, expertise and spatial transformations. Building on critical urban geography, science and technology studies and planning theory. I introduced three interrelated concepts that can help analyse the processes by which expertise shapes the production of urban spaces: abstraction, which enables the division of the urban into manipulable objects that can be controlled, and which supports the temporal and geographical projection of urban visions; performance, through which abstractions become routinised and enacted by individuals, institutions, rules, interventions and the knowledge tools that are used to make sense of the urban; and maintenance, through which assemblages of urban expertise are temporarily stabilised and become dominant. Those three processes are non-linear and occur simultaneously, they reinforce each other and are conflictual and contingent in nature, as will be shown throughout this thesis. These three analytical frames constitute useful heuristic tools to explore the politics of urban expertise by bringing to the fore the relationship between abstract urban representations, concrete urban interventions, and the maintenance of powerful and heterogenous configurations of urban expertise. The next two chapters introduce the comparative methodological approach employed in this research to analyse these processes (chapter 3) and my two fields of inquiry, namely King's Cross Central, in London and the Fringe, in Cape Town (chapter 4).

Chapter 3: Methodological approach

What are the key features of powerful configurations of urban expertise? What type of urban abstractions do they produce? How and why do specific experts and devices come to dominate the production of abstract urban visions? Is this process resisted? In this chapter, I introduce the methodological approach I employed to tackle these questions, arguing that comparative mixed methods case studies constitute a relevant epistemological strategy to look into the politics of urban expertise. In what follows, I first present the rationale for adopting a comparative research design and discuss how it was mobilised to think across two remarkably different locations (3.1). I then describe the methods (semi-structured interviews, documents' review and social network analysis) employed to collect and analyse the empirical material presented in chapters 5 to 9 and discuss their limitations (3.2).

3.1 Comparative research design

The past decade has been marked by a revived interest in comparison as a tool to generate new theories of the urban, particularly under the influence of postcolonial urban scholars (Robinson 2002, 2011, 2016, Nijman 2007, McFarlane and Robinson 2012, Jacobs 2012, Myers 2014). This has opened up new lines of inquiry that attempt to understand complex urban processes by thinking across different locations, in order to unsettle predominant Northern (Anglo-Saxon) perspectives: these include studies of gentrification (Harris 2008, Janoschka et al. 2014, Lemanski 2014, Wu 2016), urban restructuring and privatisation (Morange et al. 2012, Shatkin 2016), infrastructure politics (Bulkeley et al. 2014, Wood 2014, McFarlane et al. 2017) or informality (McFarlane et al. 2014). Looking at urban processes from a comparative perspective, this strand of research argues, helps us to theorise by thinking about the urban relationally (Ward 2008) and through difference to develop *“knowledge, understanding, and generalisation at a level between what is true of all cities and what is true of one city at a given point in time”* (Nijman 2007,

p. 1). This doctoral research project sought to engage in these efforts, as reflected in the structure of this thesis which is organised around different themes that are explored by thinking across London and Cape Town - the urban expert (chapter 5), knowledge devices (chapter 6), the logics of performance and maintenance in and through redevelopment projects (chapters 7 and 8) and the mechanics of counter-expertise (chapter 9) - and not by discussing them separately in each case.

3.1.1 The case for comparison

When it comes to comparison the question of research design and methodological tactics is not a mundane one (Rankin 2011, McFarlane and Robinson 2012, Wood 2016). Finding the right balance between depth and breadth emerged as a key challenge for the design of this research project early on: should I privilege research breadth by focusing on a very wide array of cases to understand the process at play in each of these, emphasising commonalities rather than differences, or should I pick only a handful of cases that I will be able to explore in more depth? Equally, issues related to the definition of adequate selection criteria to choose cases infused early reflexions related to my methodological approach: should I pick cities of the same size, same level of development, similar socio-institutional context, in order to avoid comparing 'apple and pears' or should I focus on radically distinct places to generate even more compelling theoretical insights? How can I discuss commonalities across cases without negating what is inherently distinctive in both cities?

In relation to the first question, there is no consensus on the ideal number of cases from which one can theorise (Robson and McCartan 2016, McFarlane and Robinson 2012). This research focuses on two sites in two cities, The Fringe in

Cape Town and King's Cross Central (KCC)²⁰ in London, and this choice was motivated by a willingness to “*taking case study seriously*” (Robson and McCartan 2016, p. 151) requiring a certain degree of commitment to both places. While it was easier to access the London field, I made three trips to Cape Town and kept up to date with local politics when I was in London and was in regular contact with colleagues at the African Centre for Cities and informants I met throughout the course of the research. Besides, doing interdisciplinary research and being able to understand the assumptions and limitations of different knowledge devices that partake in the production of urban expertise, such as financial viability assessments, or social and environmental impact assessments and more, also proved time consuming as it required additional training (in addition to field work and empirical data collection). The variety of epistemological and ontological traditions mobilised by the various experts and tools I studied throughout this research required me to engage with completely new strands of work, from transport engineering to real estate finance, landscape architecture, archaeology and more. I thus decided to focus on two cases I would be able to engage with more fully.

On the second set of questions, dealing with similarities and difference, the answer is not straightforward either. However, existing research has shown the value of engaging in iterative research, using differences between contexts as a key resource to inform existing urban theories by thinking across cases that seemingly cannot speak to one another. In his exploration of gentrification in Mumbai and London, Harris (2008) shows the value of looking from the Mumbai context to develop new insights into gentrification processes in cities like London. In her comparison of real estate-led redevelopment projects in London and Johannesburg, Brill (2018) discusses how thinking across both cases can further

²⁰ Throughout this thesis, I use 'KCC' to refer to the King's Cross Central scheme (i.e. redevelopment site) and 'King's Cross' to refer to the broader neighbourhood.

our understanding of real estate actors' strategies when they 'land' in particular locations. Albeit not explicitly comparative, Ananya Roy's theorising of 'planning as informality' in India (2009) allows us to think about planning strategies and policies in cities like London in new ways. Indeed, by *thinking from* Indian cities, Roy invites us to acknowledge how informality is orchestrated by the state itself in its own planning regime to marginalise and dispossess vulnerable communities. Such findings might hold true in India but my own exploration of the relationship between the real estate industry and policy makers in London yields similar observations: it shows that state-orchestrated informality serves the integration of real estate actors' interests in planning law. In that sense planning regulations perform real estate-based understandings (of the value) of urban space. I discuss this further in chapter 8. The question of similarities and differences can be partly overcome, or transcended, by recognising that cities around the world (some more than others) - are affected by similar trends, which then take distinct forms that both emerge from and shape distinct locations (e.g. Brenner and Theodore 2002, Roy and Ong 2011, Lees 2012, Didier et al. 2013). On the one hand, the projects I am looking at are part of global urban restructuring processes, reflective of the tendency to govern urban transformations by means of projects, with references/inspirations to global best practices and involving public and private coalitions. On the other hand, both cases are embedded in and shaped by local historical and institutional processes that greatly differ (these differences are described in the next chapter). This does not mean that both cases are too exceptional, or particular, to be put in conversation. Yet, adopting a comparative research design required me to make the effort to think *across* both cases, drawing comparisons on similar processes whilst acknowledging the different forms these could take in the two cities. It also required me to be able to think *from* different places and to decentre my own analytical gaze, particularly when it meant looking at London from Cape Town. These two related comparative gestures - thinking *from* and *across* - are further discussed in the next sections.

3.1.2 Thinking from multiple locations

Being able to conduct research iteratively was a key aspect of this project. It was essential to be able to take a step back from each site - to leave them and go back to them regularly - in order to then think across my two cases. Inevitably, starting this research from London meant that my preliminary findings and theoretical intuitions were heavily shaped by the London context, a city I was also very familiar with. However, the reason why I adopted a comparative research design was also to be able to think about London from elsewhere. Hence, I travelled regularly to Cape Town and immersed myself in this new city, notably by visiting colleagues at the African Centre for Cities during my stay and by working from my case study site (from coffee shops, coworking spaces or the District Six Museum café, all located in the Fringe). I made three separate trips to Cape Town (four months in total) and attended conferences focusing on African Urban Planning and held regular phone/Skype calls with key contacts to follow up on gaps and contradicting information when I could not do this face to face. I also engaged with the local literature (Masters and PhD dissertations, essays, news articles), culture (fictional books, movies, documentaries) and followed Capetonian politics closely.

This approach allowed me to take findings from the London case to Cape Town and vice versa. For instance, looking from King's Cross to the Fringe, I had the suspicion that the governance of spatial transformations on a project-by-project basis contributed to reinforcing the power of actors that can pull together vast coalitions of experts and devices within relatively short timeframes (further explored in chapter 7). Taking this observation to Cape Town allowed me to test it, but also to add more nuance to it. Indeed, my interviews in Cape Town confirmed this intuition but also pushed me to refine it and to question the actual power of technical experts within assemblages of urban expertise. What I observed in the case of the Fringe was the paradoxical marginalisation of individual experts' voices in design of spatial interventions, and in the formulation of abstract urban visions. I then took this lesson back to London and conducted follow up interviews with King's Cross informants to understand the value projects leaders assigned to distinct types of

expertise. In King's Cross, I was not sure how to analyse the mechanics of community expertise, and it is only when visiting the Fringe that I realised the importance of the material features of a place in shaping the production of counter-expertise, a theme I discuss in chapter 9. I then took this lesson back to London and pushed this argument further, notably through follow up interviews with community representatives involved in the King's Cross scheme, and through further archival work. This back and forth between the two sites and their broader context (i.e. London and Cape Town) were fruitful in leaving enough time between different visits to allow myself to explore similarities and differences across the two cases throughout the project, and to refine some of my hypotheses and findings iteratively.

3.1.3 Thinking across places, acknowledging differences

In thinking across both cases, I sought to highlight similarities in the ways in which power shapes and operates through assemblages of urban expertise, whilst constantly acknowledging what makes both cases distinct and the nuances of such processes in both. In chapter 8 for instance, I discuss the supremacy of a real estate gaze - that is, its performative power - in the design of redevelopment projects, whilst also acknowledging that the modalities of its performance differs in the two cases. Being able to think across, however, implied using methods that could generate comparable data, whilst being agile enough to account for local and contextual differences. Engaging with the comparative gesture (Robinson 2011) invites us to reconsider the tools and approaches that are currently used in urban research to allow for the development of more experimental modes of inquiry (Lancione and McFarlane 2016) be that in unfamiliar or seemingly all too well-known cities such as London (Parnell 1997, Robinson 2005, Harris 2008, Robinson and Roy 2016, Parnell and Robinson 2017, Simone and Pieterse 2018). Yet there is no clear prescription as to how this can be achieved.

From the outset, this doctoral research project was designed to allow a certain degree of standardisation by deploying the same methods in both cases, in

order to be able to compare findings in both cities (I discuss those in the next section). However, it also necessitated a certain degree of flexibility, as both contexts required some adaptive capacity in the field. For instance, it was quite easy to access documentation related to the KCC scheme online. In Cape Town, building trust with participants was essential to access the documents included in this study, and this required me to interview key informants several times, often starting with off the record conversations. My research in Cape Town was hence much more focused on interviews and document review. In London, some key actors, for instance consultants involved in the project, refused my interview requests - yet I was able to attend public events where they were talking about their involvement in KCC, and to observe how they framed their participation in the scheme. Some of them also intervened in some online videos and podcasts, which I was able to access to gain information despite their refusal to be interviewed. In King's Cross again, I was able to spend time attending meetings organised by local community organisations in order to identify people who had participated in the design of the project (when possible) and to follow the scheme's evolution. In Cape Town, I could not use the same approach as the project I was studying had been put on hold. This required me, again, to rely much more on trusted contacts to access community leaders, and to collect data through interviews. The adoption of a standardised yet flexible mode of investigation was thus required to explore issues of complexity, differentiation, emergence, temporary stabilisation, negotiation, embeddedness, and to think across both cases, whilst also acknowledging how inherently different they were.

3.2 Methodological tactics

The use of mixed-methods case studies to comparatively explore the politics of urban expertise in Cape Town and London appeared the most rigorous strategy in a project seeking to think through difference to generate theoretical insights. In what follows, I describe the different methodological tactics deployed to build my case studies, how they were used to think comparatively, and discuss their value and limitations.

3.2.1 Tracing power in assemblages of urban expertise

Existing studies of the politics of expertise across STS, planning and geography show there are many ways in which this topic can be approached empirically. For instance, it can be explored through ethnographic studies of a single expert organisation (see Latour and Wooglar in their seminal work in *Laboratory Life: The Construction of Scientific Facts* (2013). In urban research, numerous studies have attempted to follow the experts as they move from one location to the next (e.g. Rapoport and Hult 2017) and provide advice to local governments (e.g. Vogelpohl and Klemp 2018) or private clients (e.g. Brill 2018). A related strand of scholarship has developed methodological tactics focusing on unpacking the reification (and subsequent movement) of particular abstractions (e.g. Moore 2013 on the typification of New Urbanism in Toronto) and following specific urban models or concepts as they travel from one city to the other (e.g. González 2011 for a discussion of the Barcelona and Bilbao models of urban regeneration in motion; Didier and al. 2013 on City Improvement Districts in Cape Town and Johannesburg; Wood 2015a on the adoption of Latin-American inspired Bus Rapid Transit solutions in South African cities). In this scholarship, actors involved in the circulation of particular models are included in the analysis, yet are not necessarily the focal point, since the aforementioned studies also look at documents facilitating the dissemination of models, or at the particular forums (McFarlane 2011a) where mobile ideas are discussed.

Explorations of the politics of urban expertise can also focus on the in-depth study of a specific knowledge device, tracing the ramifications of its many usages in urban policy. This strand of work has been particularly popular, mostly building on Foucault-inspired governmentality approaches to the study of techniques of knowing and building on older work on the politics of mapping and surveying (already mentioned in the previous chapter). For instance, Rydin (2007a) and Elgert and Kruegert (2012) have discussed the role of sustainability indexes as governmental technologies that tend to frame sustainability issues in a technocratic

way. Similarly, and borrowing from STS scholarship in our review of the use of urban liveability indexes, McArthur and I (2019) showed how very narrow and growth-oriented understandings of what urban liveability means has led to the design of urban strategies that cater for the needs of a privileged cast of urban dwellers. STS-inspired approaches to performativity of knowledge devices have however been less frequent in urban scholarship, with the exception of Christophers (2014) looking at the performativity of financial viability assessments in UK urban governance (see also McAllister et al. 2016). However valuable and insightful, all these approaches only offer a partial view of how expertise is formed and influences spatial outcomes, for they presuppose the importance of specific organisations, individuals, tools or concepts over others in that process. For instance, much literature on experts has only focused on planning and engineering consultancies and/or architectural firms, yet, as will be further explored in chapter 5, many kinds of consultants beyond those well-known categories play a role in urban redevelopment projects (e.g. community engagement experts, environmental specialists, heritage consultants etc). Furthermore, the rapid diffusion of urban development projects as a vector of urban transformations worldwide raises interesting questions related to the production of urban expertise, for they mobilise a complex mix of public, private and community actors, and they mobilise a large network of consultants (sometimes operating globally, but not always) from a variety of disciplines and mobilising very different knowledge devices. These include viability assessments and metrics but also case studies, best practices, drawings and maps, or videos. Urban redevelopment projects thus appeared particularly pertinent entry points to open-up the black box of urban expertise and to think about how powerful configurations of expertise particular places. To fulfil this objective, I developed a multi-methods case study approach, which I discuss in the next sections. This approach allowed me to link together sites/experts/devices to better understand how particular urban abstractions emerge and are performed in specific locations, and to analyse how power operates within and through dominant assemblages of urban expertise supporting the production and performance of such abstractions.

3.2.2 Documents' review: spatial plans as a point of departure

In this study, I decided to take spatial plans for the two chosen redevelopment projects as a point of departure to analyse the politics of urban expertise. Various scholars have shown documents to be artefacts of knowledge in contemporary societies (Riles 2006, Latour and Wooglar 2013). Ethnographers have explored the importance of looking at documents when studying the politics of knowledge, despite them often being seen as "*the most despised of all ethnographic subjects*" (Latour 1988[1986], p. 54 in Riles 2006). STS scholars have envisaged these as "*immutable, presentable, readable and combinable*" artefacts used to mobilise networks of ideas, people and technologies (*Ibid.*, p. 26). The same idea is defended by Kaplan who defines documents as "*socially mediated textual performance in which there are norms of interconnectedness between texts, their authors and readers*" (Kaplan 2002, p. 347). In other words, documents allow to connect things, institutions, abstractions and individuals in the process of producing (and using) them. Indeed, work from anthropology focusing on administrative documents in South Africa during the colonial period see those objects as key "*in the making of ideology and arguments*" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991, p. 34) thus emphasising their function in the dissemination of dominant abstractions. These insights are relevant to this research because spatial plans, although bounded to the transformation of particular sites, also carry with them normative, universal and ideological assumptions about what cities are and should be, and about how these can be transformed. Indeed, scholars have highlighted their role in supporting attempts to exert control over the future and in guiding collective, transformative action (e.g. Clarke 1999, Healey 2006, Riles 2006, Hillier 2011, De Roo and Hillier 2016) (this will be further explored in chapters 6 to 9). The projective - and as I shall demonstrate performative - power of spatial plans resides in the fact that they produce collective and action-oriented imaginaries through the complex assemblages of urban expertise, in order to guide spatial interventions. The power of spatial plans also resides in their apparent a-political content. As discussed by Davoudi, spatial plans play a role in disseminating hegemonic urban abstractions, but the inherent politics of plans is very rarely acknowledged in practice, as spatial imaginaries

are often adopted and enacted as unproblematic representations of places of yesterday, today and tomorrow. Their role in power struggles over places and spaces is masked by the processes of de-politicisation in which dominant spatial imaginaries are essentialised and naturalised as true representations of the ‘reality’. (Davoudi et al. 2018 p. 197)

But plans are imbued with politics, and they have played a “*key role in producing, spreading and putting into practice such idealised models*” (Ibid., p. 105). Therefore, their power resides not only in their ability to integrate different forms of knowledge in order to project abstract urban imaginaries into the future, but also in their ability to guide practical actions and actual transformations (Rydin 2007b). In that sense they hold performative power. Spatial plans act as devices that build new communities and coordinate different interests (Watson 2014a). They can be seen as the product of multiple interactions, they can be envisaged as relational objects which capture a process of negotiation between actors, including urban experts and particular devices in the formulation of urban abstractions. In this process, plans themselves can be seen as the materialisation of the negotiations of different relationships through time and space (Healey 2004, 2006, Hillier 2017): relationships between actors (human and non-human) and relationships between different places across scales (as is the case with travelling planning ideas) and timescales (past, present and future). Urban experts and knowledge devices are mobilised through plan-making, and their interactions are crystallised and materialised in and through plans, which in turn shapes the ways in which the urban is framed, presented, discussed and debated. The plan is a material object where urban expertise gets assembled, it can be seen as a coordination tool that can also be moved from one site to another (Latour 1986). Therefore, spatial plans, and their supportive evidence, constitute a relevant entry point to map out the multiple relationships that bring together human and non-human elements into powerful assemblages of urban expertise. Plans can also be the object of contestation (chapter 9), which in turn makes them relevant objects to study potential threats to powerful assemblages. Paying attention to the types of knowledge devices and experts that

are included and excluded from the plan throughout plan-making process, and to how urban abstractions are enacted through those plans is therefore essential.

In this research, the *review of key planning documents and their technical base* was used as the main method to identify the array of urban experts and knowledge devices involved in the production of urban expertise (full list of documents used in the two cases is available in Appendix A). The documents' review in each case was originally conducted before the qualitative interviews took place - that is pre-field work - and revised as new documents emerged from the field (i.e. those identified through interviews). The review evolved as the interviews progressed. Documents were coded using NVivo, a qualitative content analysis software to search for keywords related to particular themes as these emerged from reading the documents and conversations with informant (e.g. spatial boundaries, financial viability assessment, community expertise, etc.). I took spatial plans for the Fringe (urban design framework) and KCC (planning application/masterplan) as starting points to identify other documents including: their supportive evidence (i.e. additional technical studies), the planning frameworks/regulations they are related to, and alternative/counter reports (principally from community groups) when available. Building on existing work on the ethnography of scientific publications (Biagioli 2006), attention was paid to authorship and citation in each of the documents, in order to identify which actors were involved in their production and which other pieces of evidence each document referred to, in order to trace connexions between different experts' work. In relation to knowledge devices, the documents were reviewed to trace the types of devices mobilised (e.g. calculative devices, visual devices, qualitative information/case studies, impact assessments etc), to better understand which knowledge tools underpinned the production of urban abstractions across the two cases (I discuss this further in chapter 6). The documents' review was complemented by a review of news articles discussing both redevelopment projects to identify controversies, conflicts and how the two projects were perceived by different constituencies. This analysis of news articles conducted throughout the research. The document review directly fed into the network analysis and it is mobilised throughout this thesis to discuss the power of different experts and devices within assemblages of urban expertise in both places.

3.2.3 Social Network Analysis: mapping powerful configurations of urban expertise

Social network analysis (SNA) was used to analyse the power of specific configurations of urban expertise in the two cases. It allowed me to highlight how key actants maintained their power through particular configurations. Gephi, an open-access SNA software, was used to produce the network graphs presented in chapter 7. This SNA software is a useful tool to create visual and analytical representations of networks of expertise. SNA has rarely been used in urban studies, except to look into relationships between individuals across urban governance networks. For instance, John (1998) uses it to study local economic policy networks in Rennes, Lille, Southampton and Leeds; Holt et al. (2012), Connolly et al. (2014), Enqvist et al. (2014) mobilise SNA to study local ecosystem governance. SNA, to my knowledge, has been used very rarely in comparative urban research, let alone in studies of knowledge production processes in urban settings (Muñoz-Erickson 2014). It has mostly been used in support of institutional analysis, rarely in relation to objects and devices, except for Rydin (2012) who incorporated non-human elements into her analysis of the role of energy modelling tools in planning decision-making. Hence, my methodological approach builds on this work and mobilises network analysis to support a materialist approach to the politics of urban expertise. This tool allowed me to show how specific documents act as mediating devices and catalysts for knowledge production, holding assemblages of expertise together. Building on citation patterns and the coding of key planning documents, networks graphs were established to highlight the centrality of specific (human and non-human) actors in complex assemblages of urban expertise in the two cases. In SNA terms, centrality is the proxy for actors' influence within the network, which accounts for the political power of different actors and/or organisations (Scott 1988). I used this method to visualise the hierarchisation of distinct types of expertise within assemblages. The ways in which centrality is assessed through SNA is based on the study of ties (relationships) that unite different constitutive elements of the networks, and the degree of connection between these elements. Network graphs were created before the field work in both cases, based on preliminary document reviews, and were then revised as the document review evolved in response to the semi-structured interviews. Preliminary

graphs allowed me to formulate preliminary findings regarding the power structure of assemblages of expertise in the two case studies (i.e. which actors seemed particularly influential, which reports were cited repeatedly across documents, etc.). The draft graphs were also used in conversation with trusted informants, when appropriate, to gather feedback on missing information (it was useful in the Cape Town case and helped me identify two property studies I had not originally included in my database).

3.2.4 Semi-structured interviews: looking beyond the plan

Unpacking the politics of urban expertise also required looking beyond the plan (and the various documents that feed into plans), as particular kinds of expertise can be intentionally excluded from spatial plans, through various processes. Indeed, as a French urbanist once told me “the problem with planners is that they only see one thing: the plan.” Although rather unfair (planning scholars and professional planners do look outside the plan, and they do so very often) this comment was useful in that it led me to look beyond plans to unveil dynamics of inclusion and exclusion (intentional or not) in the production of urban expertise (Smart 2018). This meant paying attention to what is not written, or indeed inscribed, in the plan. To put it quite simply, plans can be taken as a point of departure to understand the ways in which urban expertise is constituted, negotiated, contested, marginalised and aggregated in a given context, but need to be put in conversation with the people that use or make them, or the people that are excluded from their production and use. Thus, combining semi-structured interviews with document review and network analysis was a fruitful way to explore the politics of urban expertise, and to understand *“how diverse types of agency are produced, stretched or abbreviated through the medium of the document”* (Riles 2006, p. 21).

Semi-Structured Key Informant Interviews (between 45 minutes and 1 hour 30 minutes) with relevant stakeholders (consultants, local government officials and civil servants, property developers and owners, community groups, journalists,

academics working on the two projects) were undertaken between 2016 and 2018. Building directly on the insights provided by document review and SNA, the interviewees were identified by looking at report authorship, news articles related to the two redevelopment projects, and by looking at the lists of contributors provided in technical reports and through snowballing. The interviews allowed me to get information about the relationships between stakeholders (and to enrich the network graphs or corroborate some of the relationships observed on those graphs), the formation of hierarchies of experts, and experts' own perceptions of the impact of their work on spatial transformations. The interviews were transcribed, and I used NVivo to analyse their content thematically, focusing on themes related to the hierarchisation of expertise, the politicisation of experts' work, resistance and counter-expertise and the power of knowledge devices. I mobilise quotes and references to specific conversations to evidence the findings in every chapter, in combination with insights from the SNA and documents' review. Throughout this thesis, I chose to anonymise references to interviewees through the use of a generic nomenclature highlighting their role and function in the assemblage of urban expertise (e.g. consultant, public sector planner, developer, community organisation, etc.) and the organisation they belonged to during their involvement in the two projects (some of them have changed jobs since then). This reflects my willingness to adopt a 'flat ontology' perspective, treating urban expertise as an open box, made out of human and non-human components. A degree of generality was thus required to refer to these components, but also to allow comparison between the two cases. Biographical information about interviewees was provided when these constituted relevant explanatory factors to understand the emergence of particular hierarchies and powerful configurations of expertise (e.g. movement of experts from public sector to private sector organisations). Whilst in most cases such information will not allow the reader to identify the informant, there are a few instances throughout this thesis where readers familiar with the cases might be in a position to identify interviewees (particularly as both the Fringe and King's Cross Central were heavily publicised and involved a relatively small number of 'public figures'). In these cases, consent from interviewees was obtained to use such information (these were provided during the interview and/or through the use of publicly available information published by interviewees themselves). A full anonymised list of the 51 interviewees I met for this research is presented in

Appendix B, alongside the two interview protocols used, in Appendix C. In London, 18 actors were interviewed (between April 2016 and September 2016) and 33 in Cape Town (between April 2017 and February 2018, at the occasion of three field trips, in April and May 2017, in September and October 2017, and in January and February 2018).²¹

The lower number of interviewees in London is due to several factors. For a start, interviewees were harder to recruit. Some of the protagonists in KCC, in particular community activists, had sadly passed away at the time of this study, and I was therefore unable to interview them (it was the case for three important informants). These difficulties were overcome by the use of written transcripts of community meetings to capture the views of protagonists that a) would not participate in the study or b) could not participate in the study. For instance, I was able to access 22 minutes produced by the King's Cross Development Forum (i.e. a community umbrella organisation which participated in the master-planning process between 2004 and 2006, a full list of minutes used is presented in Appendix A). I also built very good relationships with community activists involved in the scheme, so I could meet with them regularly to follow up on key issues as my research progressed. Some of them gave me access to their personal archives and unpublished material, which proved very insightful. In addition, given the controversy raised by the KCC scheme, one of the developers approached for this study and several consultants declined my interview requests. One of the key limitations of my KCC case thus is the difficulty to recruit former consultants (beyond the master-planning team, which I interviewed) as key informants (on the contrary, in Cape Town, I interviewed the vast majority of consultants involved in the project I was studying). I however managed to interview the lead developer for the

²¹ The number of people I engaged with for this research exceeds the number of interviewees listed for each specific case. In both cities, meetings with academics, representatives of the community, real estate, artistic and policy sectors outside of those working on the projects I chose to study were incredibly valuable and allowed me to better understand the context within which my specific cases were embedded.

redevelopment project, which allowed me to get insights on the use and political mobilisation of different consultants' expertise from the developer's perspective. In addition, existing academic literature, news items, YouTube videos (including some consultants and developers), public events etc. provided me with additional information regarding the redevelopment project. Another research team (based at the Future Cities Lab, ETH Zurich, in Singapore) was also working on the governance of KCC at the time I was conducting my research. Exchanges with this team provided me with relevant contextual information on the governance of the project since its inception, which meant I necessitated fewer contextual interviews and could focus predominantly on key informants that could discuss issues related to the politics of urban expertise. In contrast, the Cape Town case used in this research, the Fringe, is a relatively understudied project. As a result, it required much more engagement with local groups and stakeholders to a) access relevant documents (not all of them were available online, for instance the *Property Strategy*, the *Economic Impact Assessment* or power point presentations to the project's steering committee), and b) to gain a deeper understanding of the politics that infused the development of the project throughout the years. More generally, it appeared easier to recruit participants in Cape Town than in London, probably because of my status as an outsider, and the perceived a-political dimension of my research. Indeed, the London case used in this research has been the topic of much academic criticism over the years, and various actors involved had been interviewed by academic researchers in the past. It is still heavily scrutinised and criticised by large media outlets. A certain degree of research fatigue and defiance was thus notable among the London interviewees.

Conclusion

From a theoretical perspective, using combinations of different methods allowed me to produce analytical insights on how power operates through assemblages of urban expertise. It allowed on the one hand to unpack the black box of urban expertise in both cases, looking at the relationship of devices and experts in sites, and, on the other hand, it allowed me to better understand how the politics of urban expertise unfolds through abstraction, performance and

maintenance. Table 1 summarises how different methods were used across the different empirical chapters. I am confident that the insights generated from my case studies make a valuable theoretical and empirical contribution to current debates on the politics of urban expertise, for they represent a rare attempt to look at actors, devices and sites of expertise production simultaneously, accounting for the specificities of the two cities whilst also identifying commonalities in the process through which urban abstractions are produced, performed, maintained and resisted. In the next chapter, I introduce the cities of Cape Town and London and the two redevelopment projects I used as case studies.

Table 1: Mixed Methods Approach

	Part 2: Urban experts and knowledge devices (Chapters 5 and 6)	Part 3: Maintaining, performing and contesting urban abstractions (Chapters 7, 8 and 9)
Documents' Review	<p><u>Use:</u></p> <p>Identifying actors involved in the production of urban expertise (through reports authorship, list of contributors, acknowledgements).</p> <p>Identifying knowledge devices mobilised in the production of particular abstract urban visions (e.g. risks assessments, cost benefit analysis, environmental impact assessments).</p>	<p><u>Use:</u></p> <p>Textual analysis of the content of dominant urban abstractions (e.g. narratives of decline and renewal).</p> <p>Identifying inter-referencing in the formulation of urban abstractions (e.g. policy mobility).</p> <p>Identifying how particular places are defined and qualified in technical documents (e.g. through mapping and enumeration).</p> <p>Identifying the prominence of particular knowledge devices in the formulation of urban abstractions.</p>
Semi Structured Key Informant Interviews	<p><u>Use:</u></p> <p>Identifying potential missing actors involved in the process of knowledge production (i.e. not captured through the document review).</p> <p>Understanding actors' perception of the value of their own/other actors' expertise and its use (or lack thereof) in plan-making.</p>	<p><u>Use:</u></p> <p>Identifying missing/informal connexions between actors (e.g. co-authorship, list of interviewees and contributors, etc).</p> <p>Getting a deeper understanding of the reasons why specific actors are central when it comes to the production of expertise and how they shape other actors' knowledge producing activities.</p> <p>Understanding actors' perception of the power of particular knowledge devices.</p> <p>Understanding the role played by different pieces of evidence (community briefs, planning briefs, planning documents, technical reports) and their production in articulating relationships between actors.</p> <p>Understanding process of marginalisation/exclusion of specific actors.</p> <p>Understanding the reasons why specific pieces of evidence are neglected/left unused in final plans.</p>
Social Network Analysis	n/a	<p><u>Use:</u></p> <p>Assessing the centrality of particular actors/organisations in assemblages of urban expertise.</p>

Source: Author.

Chapter 4: In the field: Cape Town and London in conversation

In this chapter, I introduce the two urban development projects used as case studies in this research: Kings Cross Central (London) and the Fringe (Cape Town). I first discuss the value of putting the cities of Cape Town and London in conversation, asking whether or not these two places are beyond compare and discussing my rationale for selecting them (4.1). Before introducing the two case study sites in more details, I describe three features common to Cape Town and London which in my view make them relevant cases for broader theorisation of the relationship between the politics of urban expertise and contemporary spatial transformations (4.2). Finally, I provide background information on the context within which the Fringe and King's Cross Central emerged in their respective cities, their function as part of larger metropolitan spatial development strategies, and the key institutions involved in their design and management over the periods analysed in this thesis (4.3).

4.1 Cape Town and London beyond compare?

Cape Town and London might, at first sight, seem to differ greatly on various aspects (table 2). They vary in size (London is over twice as big as Cape Town) and with respect to their respective positions within the national city hierarchy (Cape Town is a large secondary city, London is the UK's powerhouse). Cape Town's history as a colonial settlement also differs from London's past as the heart of the British colonial empire. Yet several factors justified the selection of these two cities for this comparative research. Firstly, as is the case in many post-colonial cities that once belonged to the British empire, planning cultures and ideas from the UK travelled to South Africa. Existing literature has shown how planning practices imported from the UK have shaped both the colonial and apartheid city (see Wood 2018 for a review). Since the end of the apartheid, the repertoire of planning ideas

shaping Cape Town's spatial policy has evolved over time to integrate non-UK models in more recent years (e.g. Bus Rapid Transit system imported from Colombia, Wood 2015a), yet, influences of the British planning culture can still be observed, for instance South African planners interviewed in this study received training in the UK, global UK planning consultancies have branches in Cape Town. This was one of the reasons why comparing London and Cape Town appeared particularly relevant. Secondly, this research was interested in understanding how the politics of urban expertise shape (uneven) urban geographies. What is particularly interesting in Cape Town-London's comparison is that both cities are characterised by extreme inequalities. Based on existing research, an implicit assumption in this doctoral project was that the politics urban expertise in and of itself might play a role in uneven spatial development and persisting inequalities, notably through the mobilisation of market-based calculations and through the marginalisation of community voices. Therefore, being able to compare cities with similar levels of inequalities and concentration of wealth was essential. A third and related selection criteria was the economic base upon which both cities' growth is predicated. The dominance of the finance, insurance and real estate sectors in Cape Town and London, which taken together contribute to about a third of both cities GDP, led me to hypothesise that the co-location of finance and real estate actors might have an influence over spatial transformations but also - and more importantly for this doctoral research - over the production of urban expertise. In order to test this assumption, I needed to compare cities with established and autonomous real estate and financial industries - particularly in relation to land ownership. This led me to discard other postcolonial cities such as Hong Kong or Singapore as a case studies, given the stronger degree of state control over spatial developments (see Haila 2000). In the case of Cape Town, the property sector is much more domestic (South-Africa or Cape Town based) than in London, where global financial and real estate actors are more involved in the built environment. Fourthly and finally, the selection of these two cases was also motivated by practical concerns and personal interests. Being based in London allowed me to go back to interviewees regularly and to immerse myself into local urban politics, so it made sense to choose my home city as a case study. It was easier for me to access local networks in Cape Town than in other cities that shared some of the characteristics described above (similar planning culture, strong real estate and financial sector

and uneven urban development), notably thanks to pre-existing relationship with the African Centre for Cities, which provided useful support during my field work. I was also generally interested in conducting research in an African city, as I had previously worked in Kampala, Kigali and Nairobi, and was keen to expand my knowledge of urban processes in the continent.

4.2 Cape Town and London as locations for theory building

In what follows, I provide a brief overview of three features of Cape Town and London which, in my view, make them relevant sites for broader theory building, as these features are characteristics of urban processes shaping various cities around the world. This does not mean that the theoretical and empirical insights generated in this thesis would necessarily apply anywhere, but it means that the findings I am presenting here are relevant to study and test in other locations, as part of broader theory building efforts.

4.2.1 Fragmented institutional landscapes

Acknowledging how cities are governed is important to understand by whom how and where urban expertise might be solicited and for what purpose. For instance, budgetary constraints, the sharing of competencies between different layers of governments, local governance networks (including civil society and private sector participation) are all important contextual elements that shape the production and use of distinct types of expertise in particular places. Understanding these conditions is essential to analyse which actors and devices are maintaining their power over the production of urban abstractions, and the extent to which these ideas are performed in the real world.

Table 2: Cape Town and London: key features

	Cape Town	London
Population	2001: 2.8 million (Source: Provincial Population Statistics in the Western Cape) 2018: 4 million (Source: Provincial Population Statistics in the Western Cape)	2001: 7.2 million (Source: UK Office for National Statistics) 2018: 8.7 million (Source: UK Office for National Statistics, 2017 mid-year estimate)
Creation	Earliest human settlements were established in the Cape Peninsula long before the Roman/Christian era. The Cape Colony was established by Dutch settlers from the Dutch East India Company in 1652.	Founded by the Roman empire circa 50 AD
Governance	3 tiers of government shaping urban trajectories: National Government - control of resources (strategic investments), laws and regulations (e.g. property rates); and guidelines for spatial planning, service provision and performance management system. Provincial Government - involved in strategic spatial planning and economic development on municipal territory. Metropolitan Government - limited fiscal autonomy, drafts the Integrated Development Plan and the Cape Town Municipality Spatial Development Framework (revised every 5 years) is intended to guide spatial developments and to shape planning applications. Strong private sector involvement in urban developments: degree of institutionalisation of private sector participation varies and can take different forms, e.g. public-private partnerships, City Improvement Districts.	3 tiers of government shaping urban trajectories: National Government - strong national planning framework (NPPF); control over resources (strategic investments). Metropolitan Government - tax raising power including introduction of new taxes and financing mechanisms; the Greater London Authority published its own metropolitan planning and development strategy, the London Plan (revised every 4 years) in conformity with NPPF. Sub-city Government - London Boroughs create their own planning frameworks in conformity with the London Plan and NPPF; low fiscal autonomy; competent authority granting planning permission. Strong private sector involvement in urban developments: degree of institutionalisation of private sector participation varies and can take different forms, e.g. public-private partnerships (Development Corporations), Business Improvement Districts, Special Purpose Vehicles.

	<p>Planning applications negotiated <i>directly</i> between the City of Cape Town and the applicant (private developers, individuals).</p> <p>Public consultation enacted by law - intervenes after planning application has been submitted (before approval).</p>	<p>Planning applications are usually treated by London Boroughs, the Mayor can use its statutory power to bypass Boroughs' decisions, notably in the case of large-scale urban redevelopment projects.</p> <p>Public consultation enacted by law - should intervene in the initial stages of the project (pre-application).</p>
Status	One of South Africa's political and economic centres (where the South African Parliament is based); regional capital for the Western Cape Province.	Capital city: UK's economic and political centre.
Gini coefficient	0.61 (Source: Western Cape Province figure for 2016)	0.67 (based on wealth distribution); 0.31 (based on income distribution) (Source: Trust for London based on ONS data for 2012 - 2014)
Key sector driving urban economic growth	<p>Regional powerhouse contributing to 9.5% of South African GDP, behind Johannesburg/Tshwane and eThekweni/Durban.</p> <p>Finance, insurance, real estate and business services represent 32.6% of the city's GDP (Source: Quantec Research 2016 data)</p> <p>GDP/capita £4,060 (Source: Based on 2016 South African Rand/Pound Sterling conversion rate)</p>	<p>National power house contributing to 22.5% of UK national GVA in 2014.</p> <p>Financial, insurance and real estate sectors represent 31.5% of London's GVA (Source: ONS and GLA data)</p> <p>GDP/capita £43,629 (Source: Office for National Statistics)</p>

Source: Author.

Cape Town is the second largest city in South Africa (after Johannesburg) with around 4 million inhabitants. The post-apartheid years in South Africa were marked by a restructuring of local administrations and in Cape Town, this restructuring put an end to the existence of 25 racially segregated municipalities and 69 decision-making authorities. It gave birth to a brand-new metropolitan authority, the City of Cape Town (the City hereafter) in 2000 (van Donk and Pieterse 2006, Todes 2006, McDonald 2012).²² Since then, the City has been organised as a single metropolitan government responsible for economic development, spatial and transport planning, infrastructure provision, housing.²³ It is further subdivided into 24 sub-city councils and 111 wards but those do not hold spatial planning competencies. Since 2000, the Democratic Alliance (DA) is the ruling party in the City (merger of the New National Party and the Democratic Party). In Cape Town, the DA has been dominating metropolitan politics over the last 18 years (apart from a brief ANC rule interlude in 2002, but the DA came back into power in 2006 and is still ruling today).²⁴ The DA is often portrayed as neoliberal and pro-market, and the City, under its leadership, has been implementing municipal reorganisation and conservative fiscal policy (McDonald and Smith 2004, McDonald 2012). In addition, between the national and local governments, the Province is another administrative layer in South Africa (table 2). The Western Cape Government (the Province

²² The creation of metropolitan governments across the country was part of the Unicities movement that aimed to reunite South African cities in an attempt to overcome the racially, socially, economically and spatially divisive legacy of the apartheid (Watson 2003, Beall et al. 2014).

²³ National planning frameworks also have an influence over metropolitan planning. Specifically, it makes it compulsory for metropolitan authorities to establish an Integrated Development Plan, which is revised every five years. However, spatial planning has been a relatively weak component of South African national policy since 1994 - see for instance the edited volume *Democracy and Delivery, Urban Policy in South Africa* (Pillay et al. 2006) but also Pieterse (2006), Harrison et al. (2007) and van Donk et al. (2008) for a discussion of post-apartheid planning/local government reforms and their limited success in redressing socio-economic and spatial imbalances. In 2016 however, the South African government released a *National Integrated Urban Development Framework*, acknowledging the failure of past policies in addressing spatial imbalances and inequalities (both urban and rural) and the challenges posed by rapid and uncontrolled urban growth across the country. For a detailed discussion of constitutional reforms affecting local government's activities and national planning system, see van Donk and Pieterse (2006). The development of Municipal Integrated Development Plans and Spatial Development Frameworks is shaped by the requirements of the Municipal System Act, Act 23 of 2000 and more recently by the Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act (SPLUMA), Act 16 of 2013.

²⁴ To put it in context, the DA is currently the main opponent to the African National Congress (ANC) which has been the ruling national party since the end of the apartheid, beginning with the election of Nelson Mandela as President in 1994.

hereafter) is the provincial authority that administers the Western Cape Province (of which Cape Town is part of) across a wide range of policy areas: policing, disaster management, economic development, land use planning, housing. It is responsible in part for spatial development strategies, notably as it owns land in the metropolitan area (LSE Cities 2016). Metropolitan and provincial rivalries²⁵ but also the duplication - and therefore lack of clarity - of responsibilities and competencies between these two layers of government when it comes to spatial planning and development functions create a complex administrative imbroglio (Pieterse 2009) which shapes how spatial transformations are governed. The implications of this fragmented institutional landscape for the politics of urban expertise will be further explored in the next chapters, particularly in chapters 5 and 7.

London is the largest city in the UK with around 8.7 million inhabitants. Similar to what happened in Cape Town in the early 2000s, a metropolitan government for the city, the Greater London Authority (GLA hereafter) was created in 2000.²⁶ Whilst the GLA is in charge of strategic planning and city-wide policies across a wide range of areas (air quality, mobility, green spaces, culture, employment and economic development, policing, to name only a few) it is also subdivided into 32 Boroughs and the City of London, all of which hold competencies in relation to various policy areas of spatial planning, culture and transport, social services, waste collection (table 2). The national government is responsible for budget allocation at the local level and for national planning regulations, which in turn shapes the capacity for metropolitan and inner-city government action. There is no layer of government between the GLA and the national government. Since its

²⁵ Party politics intervene at multiple scales of government and a wide range of political blockage in Cape Town have been attributed to the rivalry between the Western Cape government, which was under ANC ruling until the 2014 elections (since then it has been the only South Africa Province to be ruled by the DA), and the City of Cape Town which is ruled by the DA.

²⁶ When the Greater London Council, former London metropolitan coordinating body, was abolished by Thatcher's government in 1986, London was effectively governed by the Boroughs, with national oversight on key strategic functions (e.g. large-scale regeneration projects, infrastructure investments, etc.) (Travers 2003).

creation, the GLA has been ruled by the two political parties that dominate UK politics: Ken Livingstone ran as an independent candidate but has been affiliated with the Labour Party during his political career (2000 - 2008); Boris Johnson was elected as a Conservative Party candidate (2008 - 2016); current mayor Sadiq Khan is a member of the Labour Party (2016 - now). London's institutional landscape, especially in relation to spatial strategies and economic development is characterised by the fragmentation of authority between the GLA and the London Boroughs, but also by the proliferation of public-private partnerships as a way to govern urban developments across the city (Imrie and Thomas 1999, Raco 2005).

The fragmentation of both cities' institutional landscapes makes them particularly fruitful cases for studying the politics of urban expertise in the context of urban (re)development policies. This administrative imbroglio is characteristic of many urban contexts around the world, albeit it obviously takes different forms in different countries.²⁷ The involvement of a broad range of public, private and community actors and the fragmentation and overlapping of government responsibilities means that different actors, sometimes with competing objectives and mobilising different knowledge devices are involved in the production of urban expertise. Finally, the complexity of urban governance in Cape Town and London means that analysing the politics of urban expertise and its influence over urban transformations implies accounting for the internal and external constraints faced by experts located in public administrations, private companies and community organisations, and the extent to which these are included in broader urban politics.

²⁷ For instance, the existence of multi-level governance structures in centralised countries characterised by strong state-intervention might not weaken the local state capacity to act, produce expertise, and shape urban developments.

4.2.2 The art of being global

Both cities have been the subject of much academic attention in relation to the ‘worlding strategies’ (Roy and Ong 2011). Cape Town’s historical involvement in international affairs has been well documented, as the ‘Mother City’ is South Africa’s oldest city. It was founded by Dutch East India Company in 1652 as a hub for international trade, although traces of human settlements date back to the pre-roman times. Colonisation and migration from Europe, Asia, Africa have been prominent features of the city’s development since its creation (Wilkinson 2000). At the end of the nineteenth century already, Cape Town was “*the commercial centre dominating the Western Cape, attracting HQ of banks, and land and insurance companies*” (Miraftab 2012, p. 285). Whilst the apartheid years have contributed to marginalising South Africa, and its cities, from global exchanges, national, provincial and local governments in the post-apartheid years aimed to reverse this isolation. Since the mid-1990s onwards, emphasis has been put on the ‘worlding’ of Cape Town (McDonald 2012, Nkula-Wenz 2014, Nkula-Wenz 2018) through territorial marketing and the renovation of its Central Business District (CBD hereafter) as well as its (and South Africa’s oldest) harbour with the V&A Waterfront project. This repositioning as a ‘global city of the South’ (Gibb 2007, Lemanski 2007, McDonald 2012) has occurred through branding, but also - and most importantly - through the design and implementation of pro-market strategies aiming to attract local and global investors, companies and international skilled labour as well as tourists. The production of an internationalised urban space, notably through urban regeneration and fiscal reforms, have played a key role Cape Town’s attempts to position itself as a global city. Since the publication of its economic development strategy *Going Global, Working Local* (1999), the City of Cape Town embraced a “*world class marketing*” agenda aimed at attracting foreign direct investment and tourists consistently and without any “*shift in policy orientation by any of the major political parties*” (McDonald and Smith 2004, p. 1467). Relatedly, Cape Town, has embarked in the building of a global image through hosting global events, such as, the 2010 FIFA World Cup (Newton 2009) and the 2014 World Design Capital (Nkula-Wenz 2018). Local property investors are similarly contributing to

strengthening the city's positioning in the "*fight for the global catwalk*" through "*the construction of major flagship projects*" (Fu and Murray 2014, p. 843).

Similar to Cape Town, London's historical positioning as a global city has been well documented (Knox and Taylor 1995, Sassen 2001, Fainstein 2001). Eade (2000) discusses the city's long-standing ambition to nurture a world leading status, not only through strengthening its position as an international financial and economic hub, but also through its history as the heart of the British colonial empire. Since the 1980s and the redevelopment of London's Docklands (Church 1988, 1990), the British capital has been marked by a series of large-scale regeneration projects, embarking public and private sector actors in the production of globalised (and exclusionary) urban spaces across the city. Indeed, London's recent global reinvention has been driven by flagship urban development projects such as the 2012 Olympics (see for instance Davis and Thornley 2010, Watt 2013, Raco 2014b), and various mega-projects aimed at increasing London's global connectivity and positioning as an international financial hub, a place for international businesses to grow, high skilled professionals to locate, and for global investments in real estate to generate high returns. The relationship between a real-estate driven growth agenda pursued by the GLA has been widely explored in the literature, especially in relation to issues of gentrification, housing affordability, social inequalities and broader sustainability challenges (see for instance Imrie et al. 2009). The global positioning of both Cape Town and London makes them particularly interesting cases to study the politics of urban expertise. Indeed, local governments' planning practices and spatial strategies in these cities support their global positioning. This in turn shapes how abstract urban visions are created, for instance characterised by the production and mobilisation of global urban models, experts and devices. Finally, both cities are characterised by a strong emphasis on the attraction of private capital and the inclusion of the real estate sector in city-making, which contributes to strengthening these actors' (and the expertise they hold) influence over urban transformations (this will be discussed in chapters 7 and 8).

4.2.3 Private-led urban development

Development coalitions involving the private sector, especially the real estate industry, have been a key motor of urban transformations in both cities over the past decades. At the occasion of the devolution movement that followed the end of the apartheid, South African cities were given more power to implement a wide range of strategies at the local scale with little transfer of resources, although they were given the capacity to raise their own tax revenues (van Donk and Pieterse 2006, McDonald 2012). Post-apartheid planning reforms have since then been criticised for nurturing world-class and entrepreneurial aspirations, thus reinforcing inherited racial, socio-economic and spatial divides in South African cities (e.g. Turok and Watson 2001, Pieterse 2006, Watson 2009, Berrisford 2011). 80% of the City of Cape Town's budget is raised locally (national government's contributions represent 14% of Cape Town's budget and transfers from the Provincial government 6%) mostly through user fees (60%) with taxes representing only 20% of total revenue, as share the City is trying to increase. In addition, more than 70% of Cape Town's land is privately owned (LSE Cities 2016). In a context characterised by dramatic socio-territorial inequalities (Lemanski 2007) the City has embraced a pro-market agenda to steer urban development and to generate revenues from taxation (Pieterse 2009, McDonald 2012, Didier et al. 2012). A corollary effect of the reliance on private investments to fund key city developments has been the increasing involvement of the private sector in urban governance (van Donk and Pieterse 2006) and the increasing focus of municipal policies on creating an enabling environment for private investments, including real estate investments, in already well-off parts of the city (e.g. the central city).²⁸ This turn towards market-

²⁸ Such dynamics, as argued by Mirafab, are not new and have in fact shaped the spatial trajectory of Cape Town historically as "in the colonial era, the elites' spatial interests were secured through regulatory means by making political citizenship contingent on wealth and property ownership, and through discursive means to justify creation of special location (call it districts or areas)" (Mirafab 2012, p. 293-294). The importance of property ownership in Cape Town politics, and property ownership as a political resource can thus be traced back to the late nineteenth century.

friendly urban policy was initiated in 1996 at the national level first, through a new national macroeconomic strategy: *Growth, Employment and Redistribution*. The strategy highlighted the importance of “*working with the spatial trends set by private capital investment*” (Harrison et al. 2007). In Cape Town more specifically, City Improvement Districts (Miraftab 2007, Bénit-Gbaffou et al. 2008, Didier et al. 2012, 2013) were set up in order “*to generate income for government through real estate development and lucrative tourism, with the promise to also create jobs*” (Miraftab 2007, p. 604) which also included private policing in various parts of the city (Berg 2004, Lemanski 2006). The creation of Cape Town’s most researched public-private partnership, the Cape Town Partnership (Partnership hereafter) in the late 1990s has contributed to pushing a pro-business and property-driven urban development agenda in the inner parts of the city - in particular its CBD - with the explicit objective to increase Cape Town’s global attractivity (Lemanski 2007). This new institutional arrangement has been portrayed as a “*kind of shadow government*” (Visser 2016, p. 406)²⁹ for its competencies much resemble that of the City but circumscribed to the inner-city area. The Partnership was largely funded by the City, for instance, in 2009, it received 70% of its budget from the municipality.³⁰ The Partnership from its inception has been involved in the creation of a Central City Improvement District (CCID hereafter) (created in 2000) which collects businesses tax to fund additional renovation/maintenance in the CBD through private policing and street cleaning (adapted from the US/Canada Business Improvement District model, Didier et al. 2012). Overall, during its first 10 years of existence, it is more than “*R15 billion (US\$2 billion) [that have] been invested in an area no larger than 4 square km*” (Visser and Kotze 2008, p. 2577). The Partnership and CCID developed the Central City Development

²⁹ Visser further emphasises the importance of the property sector in the governance of the Partnership: “In July 1999, the Cape Town Partnership (CTP), a non-profit management agency, was established, comprising representation from the City Council, the Cape Metro Council, the South African Property Owners Association, private businesses and their representative organisation. The Partnership’s brief was to lead and manage the regeneration of Cape Town’s Central City and promote it as a destination for global business, investment, retail, entertainment and leisure, launching Cape Town into the global arena” (Visser 2016, p. 401).

³⁰ Municipal support to the Partnership however decreased over the years and the organisation was dissolved in 2018.

Strategy (CCDS 2008) which was used by the City and the Province in their own spatial planning strategies. Spatial planning frameworks have contributed to reasserting the prominence of the private property sector (I come back to this at length throughout the thesis). Cape Town's CBD itself can be seen as a zone of exception that aims to incentivise and attract private investments, as it is "*one of the national government's specified 'urban development zones', where private sector investment enjoys tax incentives to construct and improve building stock*" (*Ibid.*).

Similarly, in London, the last thirty years have marked by the development of city-wide strategies that would facilitate the private sector's participation in and financing of urban development (Turok 1992, Fainstein 1991, 2001). Various flagship development projects across the capital, starting with the regeneration of the Docklands, but also including the redevelopment of Stratford initiated at the occasion of the 2012 Olympics, for instance, were delivered through the creation of Urban Development Corporations (UDC) (see Raco 2005 for a full account of the evolution of UDCs since the 1980s and after their reactualisation in the early 2000s). Of particular interest, and similarly to what happened in Cape Town's CBD with regards to tax exemption and the institutionalisation of regimes of exception to stimulate private investment, is the creation of Opportunity Areas³¹ (OA hereafter) in London, as a tool to incentivise property-led urban regeneration. The designation of strategic OAs by the GLA constitutes an iteration of "instrumental land planning" (Savini and Aalbers 2016) where the metropolitan authority (or national government, before the GLA was created) identifies sites suitable for large-scale redevelopment across the city, and for which traditional planning rules can be modified. Those areas are typically ruled by their own Opportunity Areas Planning Frameworks (OAPF hereafter). These frameworks are developed by the public

³¹ In the mid-1990s, the Strategic Guidance for London (1996) identified "Central Area Margin Key Opportunities" across the British capital for their growth and employment potential, those were subsequently renamed Opportunity Area for regeneration by the London Plan (2004) when the GLA was created. There are currently (2019) over 40 designated Opportunity Areas across London highlighting their importance as planning instruments for metropolitan redevelopment.

authority in charge of granting planning permission (usually the Boroughs), the GLA, internal experts or external consultants and other relevant stakeholders, including private developers and community groups. The modes of production and content of OAPFs for each OA will therefore vary from site to site, allowing for more flexibility in the design and management of new brownfield redevelopments. OAs have been promoted by all London Mayors since the GLA was created, presented as “*the capital’s major reservoirs of brownfield land*” by former Mayor Boris Johnson (GLA 2011, p. i). Through this mechanism, large consortiums of developers, architects, engineers, are invited to take over entire parts of London and to regenerate them. The involvement of real estate actors in urban (re)development has a fundamental impact on the shaping the boundaries, production and use of urban expertise in spatial strategies. Particularly, it raises interesting questions on the extent to which use of knowledge devices guiding decision-making in the real estate sector (e.g. financial appraisals, business cases, profit projections, etc.) shape the knowledge-producing activities of other actors. It also invites us to question whether or not these types of rationalities can be resisted, and what type of counter-expertise might be politically effective in shaping urban redevelopment policies.

4.3 The Sites: King’s Cross Central and the Fringe

Since the early 2000s in both Cape Town and London - and many other cities around the world - the urban project has become a key instrument to drive spatial transformations (e.g. Swyngedouw et al. 2002, Gellert and Lynch 2003, Pinson 2009, Watson 2014b, Kennedy et al. 2014).³² The institutionalisation of a project-

³² Urban projects are in fact not new occurrences: the post-war era was marked by the implementation of various large-scale housing programs and the creation of entirely new towns and neighbourhoods (Epstein 2011). For a discussion of the contemporary mutations (since the 1980s) of redevelopment projects, including of their location and governance, see for instance Orueta and Fainstein 2008, Roy and Ong 2011; for a discussion of their impacts on local communities see for instance Bornstein 2010, Shatkin 2011. See also Pinson (2009) for a European perspective; other accounts have explored those issues in the North American context (Orueta and Fainstein 2008,

based approach to urban change has contributed to strengthening the position of non-public actors in spatial planning (Shatkin 2011, Guironnet and Halbert 2014). Swyngedouw and colleagues in their review of 10 large-scale development projects across Europe argue that project-based urban governance contributed to strengthening the rule of experts as according to them

the shift from centralist, formalised, bureaucratised, hierarchical, top-down planning approaches to decentralised, more horizontal, informal, flexibilised, bottom-up, and network planning approaches has gone hand in hand with increasing inequality in access to decision-making. (Swyngedouw et al. 2002, p. 574)

Within these institutional arrangements, they argue that

the role of experts is strengthened at the expense of a diminishing role of the public in general and of traditional organised groups in particular, with a consequent loss of democratic accountability. (*Ibid.*)³³

Thus, focusing on the making of urban redevelopment projects appeared particularly relevant to this doctoral research. It allowed me to look at the politics of urban expertise in a context where the production of expertise is linked to (intended) spatial interventions. It allowed me to explore how distinct types of urban experts and knowledge devices get assembled and maintain their dominance in particular

Fainstein 2008, Lehrer and Laidley 2008 in the same special issue in the International Journal of Urban and Research Research). More recently, critical urban scholars have documented similar trajectories across cities of the Global South. Shatkin (2016) explored the privatisation of planning in South East Asia. In an edited volume (del Cerro Santamaria 2013) providing a “worldwide view” on mega-projects, examples from Latin America (amongst others) are discussed in relation to the global flows of planning practices and architectural models.

³³ My research findings confirm this view, but also put forward a more nuanced take on the rule of technocratic expertise than the one advanced in the work Swyngedouw and colleagues and which tends to focus on the vague figure of “the expert” without acknowledging the wide range of experts that are mobilised in projects, and/or the limited agency of individual experts themselves (e.g. consultants) within large-scale urban development projects.

sites, and how the abstractions that emerge from those interactions get performed and transform urban spaces. Focusing on project-based expertise production is useful to compare what assemblages of urban expertise are made of in separate locations, and how power operates within those.

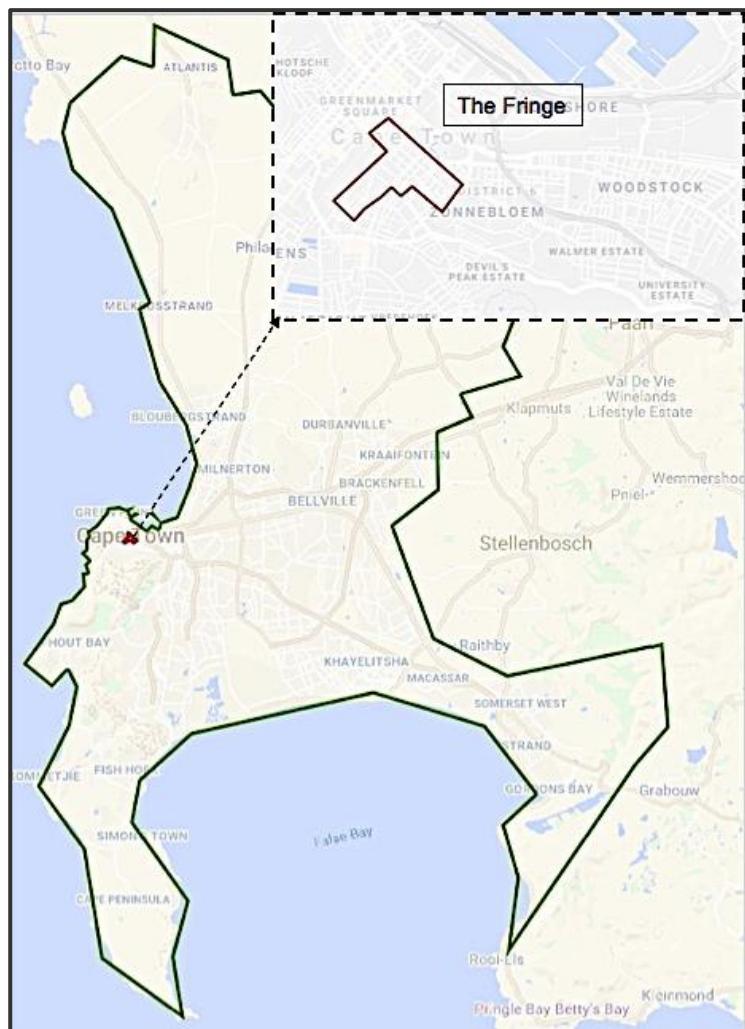
4.3.1 The Fringe

In Cape Town, I selected The Fringe as a case study: a regeneration project that aimed to create a design district to facilitate the clustering of the creative industries in the eastern edge of the inner-city area. The Fringe project was effectively overlapping with the CBD and District Six, as shown on map 1 (the CBD is the area around Greenmarket Square on the western top edge of the Fringe, District Six/Zonnebloem overlaps with the Fringe and continues further east of Cape Town). Whilst the CBD has been the subject to intensive renovation since the early 2000s to attract businesses, District Six is the physical reminder of the forced removals that occurred in Cape Town during the apartheid. In 1966, District Six, which has been historically an ethnically diverse and commercially vibrant part of Cape Town,³⁴ was declared a ‘white-only’ area by the apartheid government. Over 60,000 people were forcibly removed from these lands, houses, businesses and community assets destroyed, throughout the late 1960s until the early 1980s. Since the end of the apartheid in 1994, a land reclamation process has been initiated to facilitate the return of forcibly removed families across South Africa. Yet, in the case of District Six, due to various institutional, political and administrative blockages (Beyers 2007a), only a handful of 135 homes had been built by 2016 and thousands of claimants were still waiting for their rehousing at the time of this study. It is in this difficult historical and political context that conceptual plans were developed, starting in 2008, to create a brand-new design precinct ‘between’ the CBD and

³⁴ See for instance the novel *Buckingham Palace*, by Richard Rive (1999) for a literary account of what the area used to be, for an academic account of forced removals, see Hart 1988.

District Six, a project which really took off in 2011 when a group led by the Partnership publicised the renewal of the area as 'the Fringe': Cape Town's new design district. The Fringe project emerged at the occasion of Cape Town's bid for the World Design Capital (hereafter WDC) award, and the leading force in the development of the Fringe vision was the Cape Town Partnership, which was also heavily involved crafting the WDC bid (Nkula-Wenz 2018). As part of this bid, the Partnership proposed to transform the Fringe into a prime location for start-ups and designers. This thesis explores the politics of urban expertise as it played out in the process of developing the Fringe *Urban Design Framework* (2012), including the development of preliminary concepts in 2008 and the creation and marketing of the Fringe project in 2011 until it was put on hold in 2013. To date, this development has been the subject of little academic inquiry (with the exception of Nkula-Wenz 2014).

Map 1: The Fringe location - Site location



Source: Author, based on the Fringe Urban Development Framework - Size: 53ha.

4.3.2 King's Cross Central

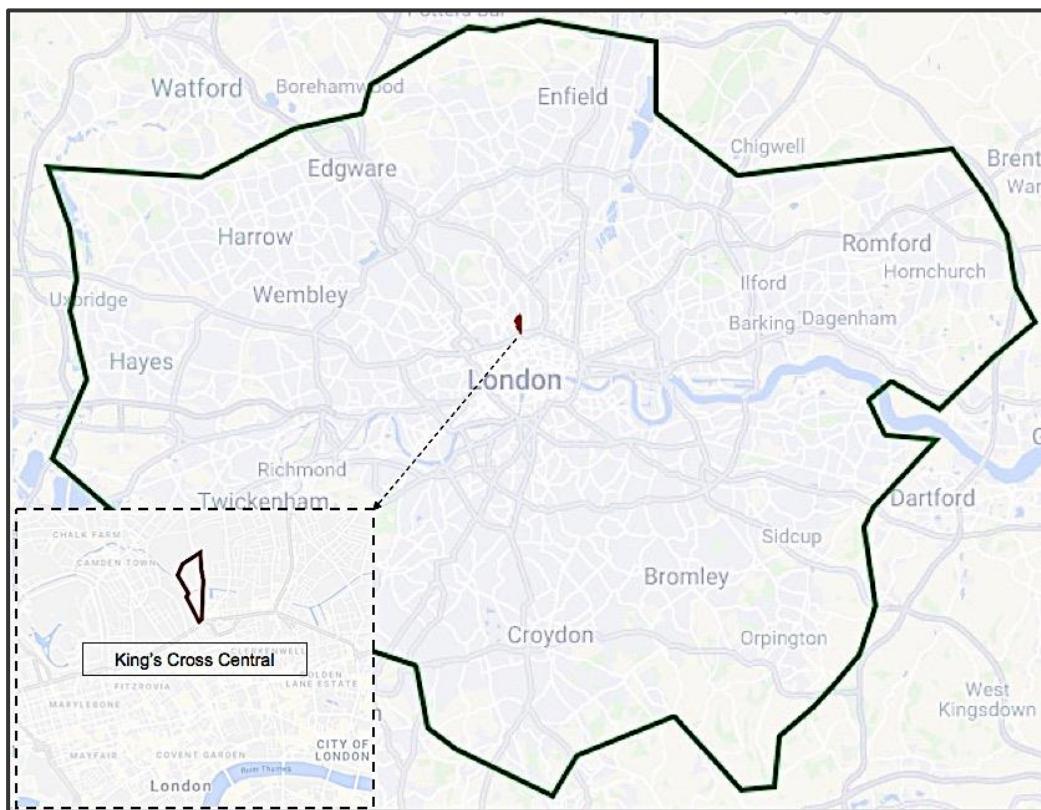
To speak to this case, I selected another inner-city redevelopment project in London: King's Cross Central (KCC). These former industrial railway lands in the heart of London (map 2) underwent very rapid transformations since the mid-2000s, in an attempt to turn what used to be seen as a red-light district (Campkin 2013) into what was subsequently praised as a paradigmatic example of twenty-first century, mixed-use and economically successful regeneration project:

King's Cross is being transformed from an area once known for lost industry into a vibrant mixed-use city quarter. Thousands of workers, residents, and students now inhabit King's Cross, the largest area of city-centre redevelopment in Europe [...] A new piece of London, with its own brand-new postcode, King's Cross is a vibrant urban space [...] King's Cross has also become an exemplar of place-making practice within the U.K. real estate community. (ULI 2014, p. 1-2)

The redevelopment of the site put an end to three decades of failed attempts to regenerate the area.³⁵ In the mid-1990s, the *Strategic Guidance for London* (1996) identified King's Cross as a Central Area Margin Key Opportunities. In the early 2000s, King's Cross was again highlighted as a key OA for regeneration by the London Plan (2004).

³⁵ Susan Fainstein (2001) provides a detailed account of the failure of the Norman Fosters scheme that aimed to turn King's Cross into an office city in the 1990s. Another interesting account of the late 1980s - early 1990s redevelopment politics in King's Cross is the 1992 documentary *King's Cross: David and Goliath* directed by Sue Crockford.

Map 2: King's Cross Central - Site Location



Source: Author, based on Argent's Planning Documents and the London Borough of Camden Unitary Development Plan - Size: 32.2ha.

In 2000, Argent was appointed as developer for the King's Cross railway lands by the two main landowners, the state-owned London and Continental Railways (LCR) and Exel (subsequently DHL Supply Chain). The scheme has radically transformed the former railway lands over the past twelve years. The regeneration of King's Cross has been the subject of numerous academic inquiries, exposing its conflictual nature (Newman and Papin 2010, Brenner 2014) and showing how the scheme failed in integrating the needs of local communities (Parkes 2004, Holgersen and Haarstad 2009) - particularly in providing adequate levels of affordable housing as well as opportunities for local residents (Edwards 1992, 2009, Deckha 2003, Parkes 2004, Holgersen and Haarstad 2009, Campkin 2013).

In King's Cross, my investigation focuses on the 2000 - 2006 period during which the master-plan for the main area was developed, revised and approved

under the leadership of Argent.³⁶ In the Fringe, I am focusing on the 2010 - 2013 period during which the design framework for the Fringe was developed and heavily promoted, under the leadership of the Cape Town Partnership. The analysis also includes documents which were produced prior to this period, for instance through the *East City Design Initiative* (2010), as they fed into the design of the Fringe project. Political changes and community backlash (mostly led by the District Six Museum) resulted in the suspension of the Fringe back in 2013. The project was subsequently revived by municipal officers in the City of Cape Town under the name of the *East City Core* in 2017 (which still had not been approved by the new Cape Town Mayor at the time this thesis was submitted), and the Partnership was dissolved in 2018. These later developments will be discussed in the thesis, but the main analysis focus on the development of the Fringe *Urban Design Framework*, as it was the main source of inspiration for post-2013 policy proposals.

Conclusion

As illustrated throughout this section Cape Town and London differ in many respects but are also characterised by similar processes reflective of broader trends shaping contemporary urban transformations. Both cities' politico-administrative landscapes appear fragmented with overlap of competencies between different tiers of governments. Those two cities have been historically significant on the global stage, and the last decades have been marked by a revival of their worlding strategies, notably through the nurturing of political, economic and institutional milieu that is conducive to international investments and to the attraction of a global creative class, and through the instrumentation of redevelopment projects as a way to assert their global stature. Both have adopted a developmental agenda that rests

³⁶ The part of the development that falls under the jurisdiction of the London Borough of Islington (the Triangle Site) was granted approval in 2008 after judicial review.

heavily on private sector involvement to fund not only new constructions, but also government activities through taxation and land value capture. Those three elements, fragmentation, globalisation, privatisation have, as I shall demonstrate in the next chapters, deep consequences on the ways in which the politics of urban expertise unfolds and shapes the production of urban space. Whilst Cape Town is far from representing the breadth and depth of urban condition throughout Africa, as much as London is far from representing the breadth and depth of urban conditions throughout European, and more broadly Western, cities, both cities constitute interesting cases to start theorising the politics of urban expertise in contexts characterised by heavy private sector involvement in urban transformations, fragmented governance, high levels of inequalities and governments' reliance on private led redevelopment projects to assert their world-class stature. These features are not exclusive to these two cities, which makes them relevant cases from which to generate conceptual insights that can inform studies of the politics of urban expertise in other cities.

Part 2: Urban experts and knowledge devices

Chapter 5: Hierarchies of urban experts

Who are we talking about when we talk about 'urban experts'? The very act of defining an expert is political as it contributes to hierarchising different ways of knowing. This chapter shows that exploring the politics inherent to the functioning of different expert groups can help better understand a) how these produce abstract knowledge about the urban, and b) how they position themselves within assemblages of urban expertise, and how much power they hold within these. This chapter thus focuses on the production of hierarchies of urban experts in the Fringe and KCC (addressing hypotheses 1 and 4 of this research), a first step before moving on to exploring the politics of knowledge devices (chapter 6), the maintenance of powerful configurations of urban expertise (chapters 7 and 8) and dynamics of resistance to those (chapter 9). The analysis of technical documents authorship, news articles, meeting minutes and interviews for my two cases allowed me to identify multiple organisations involved in the production of urban expertise across the two projects. These can be clustered into four broad categories: local governments, real estate actors, consultants and local communities. In what follows, I discuss how each group's internal politics shapes their positioning within assemblages of urban expertise and the power they hold within those. I first turn to local government experts and analyse the constraints they face in an environment characterised by limited public funding and an increasing reliance on the private sector to drive spatial transformations (5.1). Following that, I turn to the real estate industry to show that as its role in spatial transformations is increasing, its way of understanding the urban need to be further unpacked (5.2). I then turn to another category of actor that straddles the public-private divide as their expertise can be mobilised by both public and private clients: consultants. I propose to unpack the 'black box' of the consultant to start exploring the very diversified expertise produced by distinct types of consultants, and their respective valuation on the market for urban expertise (5.3). Finally, I turn to the role of community groups in the production of forms of expertise that find resonance in decision-making (5.4).

5.1 Local governments: negotiating the city

Local governments are plural and complex organisations faced with the challenges of managing and delivering urban transformations across a wide range of policy areas with relatively limited resources. In relation to urban redevelopment projects more specifically, the delimitation of roles and responsibilities in urban regeneration within local governments involves public planners but not only (for the term planner itself is multifaceted, Duminy et al. 2014). It includes urban designers, economists, transport planners, spatial planners, environmental experts, lawyers and many more. Work on planning reforms in the UK has explored how reduced human resources and an increased emphasis on 'speeding up' the planning application process made it difficult for public sector experts, planners in particular, to focus on actual design work and/or meaningful engagement with developers and communities in the development of spatial plans (e.g. Allmendinger and Haughton 2013, Clifford 2013, 2016). In South Africa, research on post-apartheid planning reforms highlighted public planning shift towards supporting local economic growth at the expense of equity and spatial justice (Turok and Watson 2001, McDonald and Smith 2004, McDonald 2012). The challenges faced by Cape Town and London with regards to the provision of housing and economic opportunities in a context characterised by enduring socio-economic and racial inequalities³⁷ has been explained in the previous chapter. However, less research has attempted to unpack how local government expertise itself - including but not restricted to the planning profession - has been reconfigured by these broader trends. Particularly, it has paid little attention to the type of expertise valued in the public sector when it comes to managing spatial transformations. In what follows, I draw from interviews with public sector experts leading both redevelopment projects to explore these issues. In the Fringe, whilst the Province and the City were both involved in the

³⁷ Recent studies on gentrification in the British capital have highlighted its relationship with intersectional issues of race, gender and socio-economic disadvantages for the people who experience displacement and eviction (see for instance Lees 2016, Mavrommatis 2003, 2011).

project's steering committee, the Partnership (i.e. the Cape Town Partnership) was the authority in charge of its day to day management, with public funding. For this research, I interviewed a senior urban designer employed by the municipality who had been involved in the project since its inception, acting as one of its leading points of contact from within the City. She herself had been trained in architecture, planning and urban design and worked as a professional planner in the UK. Asked about how she perceived her role, and the influence of her expertise on the Fringe and redevelopment projects more generally, she lamented the bureaucratic functioning of the City compared to what she perceived as the greater ability of the Partnership to deliver a vision for the site quickly. She reported the Partnership could "appoint consultants within a day" whereas for her "it takes one to two years."³⁸ She further stressed the limited room for manoeuvre she generally had in producing urban visions for redevelopment projects, given the small number of urban designers working in her team. She attributed this to the differing value politicians/officials attach to different forms of expertise within the City, which in turn shapes the amount of resources (human and financial) allocated to different departments (planning, design, transport, environment, etc.) as illustrated by the following remark:

When I started here I was constantly told that urban design is nice to have. I had to fight for three years to say it's not [just nice] it is actually critical. As urban designers we can actually be the glue between all these activities - transport planning, environmental planning [...] It shapes the anti-apartheid and anti-everything [...] Spatial planners only look at planning, transport engineers only look at transport engineering, heritage consultants just look at heritage ...³⁹

³⁸ Senior urban designer at the City, 2017, INT19-TF-LA

³⁹ Senior urban designer at the City, 2017, INT19-TF-LA

With only five urban designers for the entire metropolitan area, she highlighted the lack of time and human resources available to engage meaningfully with the development of spatial visions for the metropolitan area:

We are just four/five urban designers - we've got a junior now - for all this city - [on] the island of Manhattan [they] have 250 urban designers.⁴⁰

She concluded that the technical expertise she and her team held was not sufficient to shape actual spatial interventions (and urban development more broadly) given these human, financial and political constraints. For her, there is little local governments can do in terms of urban design and intellectual production: she highlighted that the thinning of planning and urban design expertise within the municipality pushes the City to adopt a much more managerial approach to knowledge production, through the hiring of external contractors. The Partnership appeared to be a more flexible entity, able to bring together a coalition of consultants to inform the project relatively quickly, without necessarily holding the relevant technical expertise in-house. Furthermore, as discussed in the previous chapter, the Partnership's strong involvement in inner-city regeneration made it a natural leader for the project. In fact, the idea of creating a design precinct on the Eastern part of the CBD had originally been initiated by the Partnership itself (in the late 2000s, with first mentions of it featuring in the Partnership-crafted CCDS 2008). Thus, local government's technical expertise was not necessarily the most highly valued (and influential) in the Fringe project.

Between 2011 and 2013, the role of the Province and the City, as funders, was focused on commenting on the proposed plan for the area as part of the Fringe steering committee (which also included representatives from the Cape Peninsula

⁴⁰ Ibid.

University of Technology, and the Cape Town Craft and Design Institute). They were kept up to date on project progress by the Fringe project team at the Partnership, as reported by consultants⁴¹ and the Fringe project manager.⁴² Public funders' expectations had to be integrated into the final plan - especially those of the Province, which had been involved in previous discussions on the creation of a science park in the eastern part of the inner-city,⁴³ and which was expected to unlock further funding⁴⁴ to implement the Fringe vision (a point I come back to in chapter 8). The production of the *Urban Design Framework* (2012) was commissioned to a private architecture consultancy, and technical inputs on various aspects of the project were provided by external consultants whose work was coordinated by the Partnership. This work picked up on previous ideas to regenerate the eastern part of the CBD through the mobilisation of triple helix, innovation district and science park models. Whilst the Fringe focused more prominently on 'design', perceived as more inclusive and holistic than technology-driven interventions, early conceptual inputs were provided by the Western Cape Government (i.e. Provincial level) which in the mid to late 2000s released its provincial innovation-driven economic development strategy (CHEC 2010).⁴⁵ Provincial strategies thus did not provide a clear spatial development framework for the Fringe but set out early strategic directions in relation to the type of economic activities that could be seen desirable in the East City, particularly around the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.⁴⁶ The Province, alongside the City, was a major public stakeholder in the Fringe steering committee, particularly as it was expected to provide initial funding to implement the Fringe *Urban Design*

⁴¹ Fringe lead urban design consultant, 2017, INT34-TF-Cons, Consultant, Independent (worked on the Fringe), 2017, INT33-TF-Cons

⁴² Fringe Project Manager, Cape Town Partnership, 2017, INT50-TF-CTP

⁴³ Senior official Western Cape Government, 2017, INT40-TF-LA, Faculty CPUT, 2017, INT42-TF-Ac.

⁴⁴ Fringe Project Leader, Cape Town Partnership, 2017, INT51-TF-CTP

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ This was mentioned by a former academic at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) involved in early discussions related to the creation of a science park in the East City, through CPUT, 2017, INT42-TF-Ac.

Framework (2012), as previously mentioned. At the same time, in the context of the Partnership leading Cape Town's WDC bid (i.e. World Design Capital) in 2014 (which benefitted from strong support from the City of Cape Town) the idea of a design precinct appeared to be a good way to find common ground between the Province innovation-led growth agenda and broader City efforts to brand Cape Town as a Design Capital.⁴⁷ The City of Cape Town had a very limited role in the conceptualisation of the project but still had a strong relationship with the Partnership (to which it provided financial support at that time) and was actively involved in Cape Town's bid for the WDC award. It is only in 2015 - two years after the Fringe project was dropped in 2013 - that the urban design team at the City of Cape Town took over the task of producing a new vision and design framework for the area, the *East City Core* (2017). Even then, urban designers within the City did not drastically rework the vision that was originally commissioned by the Partnership: the *East City Core* framework was drafted by a junior designer tasked with simplifying the framework and aligning it to the City's spatial development priorities, but it remained mostly based on the Fringe *Urban Design Framework*.⁴⁸

*We did not work on it between 2013 and 2014 because we kind of hoped that this thing [the Fringe Design Framework] was going forward but nothing happened; we realised no one was doing anything with it, and then I got a new colleague straight from the university and I thought "oh fantastic opportunity for someone to look at all these things objectively" and then we can massage it and do something we think will be helpful.*⁴⁹

The new strategy was envisaged more as a guideline document that could help guide real estate investments in the East City, rather than a formal master-plan that would have to be delivered. This, she added, was also due to the "pro-development"

⁴⁷ Senior official Western Cape Government, 2017, INT40-TF-LA

⁴⁸ The *East City Core* framework, however, puts more emphasis on the relationship between the East City and District Six (*East City Core* 2017, p. 29).

⁴⁹ Senior urban designer at the City, 2017, INT19-TF-LA

⁵⁰ approach adopted by the City's political leadership. Consequently, the way she perceived her work was that of a facilitator of the development process with limited power: "we develop guidelines, so the applicant must still take these into account but it's not like "we are going to kill you" if you don't use it."⁵¹

The retreat of city governments as agents of spatial change in the shift to entrepreneurial urban strategies in Cape Town has been well documented (Watson 2003, Miraftab 2007). However, how this shift impacts local government experts' work and perception of their role within and outside of local government has been overlooked. Indeed, other informants praised the urban designer interviewed for this study for her "ability to engage"⁵² unlike "traditional public-sector type of planners."⁵³ She herself emphasised this aspect of her work when describing the way she envisaged her role:

I am not dogmatic. The City is pro-development, so there is little you can do [...] so I meet with developers and try to convince them about the value of good urban design.⁵⁴

These insights show that the internal and external politics of urban expertise unfolding within government organisations need further scrutiny. Internal political dynamics can explain why different expert professions are (or feel) marginalised in the production of urban expertise, or why they become reliant on external sources of expertise for the production of abstract urban visions. In the case of the Fringe, the perceived ability of the Partnership to be quicker at sourcing external expertise

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Program manager at the Cape Town Partnership, involved in the Fringe project, 2017, INT24-TF-CTP

⁵³ Consultant, Independent (worked on the Fringe), 2017, INT33-TF-Cons

⁵⁴ Senior urban designer at the City, 2017, INT19-TF-LA

and at engaging with various stakeholders on the ground is also reflective of the valorisation of managerial and relational skills to lead large-scale regeneration efforts. This in turns shapes how government experts perceive their own role and the value attached to their skills, and that of their external partners. The position of local government experts in assemblages of urban expertise in this case therefore remains at the margin of the production of abstract visions for redevelopment projects. However, 'engaging' and 'entrepreneurial' local government officers (regardless of the content of their expertise) play a key function in maintaining the assemblage together and in promoting greater proximity between public and private sector actors, and in some cases also manage to shape redevelopment project's content and outcomes. In this process, whilst negotiation skills are put forward as essential, benefitting from human resources with expertise that put the local government "on a level playing field"⁵⁵ with real estate actors (especially legal and financial expertise) is also important, as illustrated by the KCC case.

To deal with the KCC redevelopment, a special team of experts - the King's Cross Team (the Team hereafter) - was set up within the London Borough of Camden in 2001. The Team was in charge of negotiating with Argent (i.e. the developer) in the period that would lead to the submission of its planning application. The Team's director, an urban planner and designer by training, was portrayed as "a very strategic man"⁵⁶ by several interviewees. When asked about his personal skillset, he himself emphasised his "negotiating skills" and "experience of working on large-scale projects," of "dealing with developers" and "speaking their language."⁵⁷ Asked about his relationship with Argent in the KCC scheme, he stated

⁵⁵ Former head of the King's Cross Team, 2016, INT12-KCC-LA

⁵⁶ Cally Rail Group member, 2016, INT5-KCC-Comm; a view shared by other interviewees: Senior Planner at the GLA, 2016, INT6-KCC-LA, Former head of Argent, 2016, INT3-KCC-Rea, King's Cross Railway Lands Group founding member, 2016, INT10-KCC-Comm

⁵⁷ Former head of the King's Cross Team, 2016, INT12-KCC-LA

that he managed to “deal with Argent like a co-pilot.”⁵⁸ His experience of negotiating the outcomes of complex large-scale projects across London is further emphasised in his personal biography:

In 1985 as planning director at Tower Hamlets I dealt with the planning and negotiations on major commercial developments, including the redevelopment of Spitalfields Market and Canary Wharf. From 1997 at Hammersmith and Fulham I dealt with the planning of the BBC media campus at White City and large-scale residential developments, including the achievement through negotiations of the first scheme to deliver 50% affordable housing as a “planning gain.” From 2001 at Camden I conducted the negotiations on the Kings Cross scheme, one of the most complex schemes to date and viewed as an exemplar of participative planning and mixed-use development.

Here, ‘planning and negotiations’ are presented as two key aspects of his skillset. The set-up of the King’s Cross Team⁵⁹ illustrates the significance of KCC in policy terms but also confirms that public planners are valued for their ability to negotiate redevelopment outcomes. The Team was allocated a “negotiating fund”⁶⁰ of £500,000⁶¹ by the London Borough of Camden - a sum which would be increased as the negotiations progressed (Bishop and Williams 2016). This was expected to allow the Team to negotiate more favourable development outcomes for local communities (including affordable housing, community facilities, local jobs, etc.). Its former head reported that “having financial and human resources capacities” had put him and his Team “on a level playing field with the developer.”⁶² He further

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Some members of the King’s Cross Team were also working on other projects for the Borough of Camden.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ This sum remains relatively negligible compared to the budget Argent allocated to the pre-planning phase of the scheme: another researcher working on KCC mentioned the sum of £2.5 million, but I was not able to cross-check this figure.

⁶² Ibid.

added that “usually developers hire big, multidisciplinary teams and the Boroughs cannot really cope,”⁶³ so for him having a group of experts (which grew from five to nine people) dedicated to the development was essential to negotiate with the developer. More specifically, hiring lawyers and experienced professionals used to deal with large-scale private-led schemes meant that “everyone spoke the same language and came from the same epistemic community.”⁶⁴ As illustrated by the following statement from a GLA representative, the creation of this team of experts led by an experienced ‘negotiator’ strengthened the Borough of Camden’s position and its ability to engage with Argent directly, which the developer also valued, as it allowed it to better grasp the local authority’s expectations (this is further discussed in chapter 8):

In Camden, the Team was established when I left [for the GLA] and was expanded - and the feedback I got from the developer is that there were people to speak to when they were issues about the master-planning, design, content.⁶⁵

The KCC case thus appears in contrast with the well-known stories of unbalanced fights between rich developers and the experts they hire on the one hand, and understaffed planning departments in local governments⁶⁶ on the other hand (Adams et al. 2016). In both the Fringe and KCC, negotiating and managerial expertise appear to be highly valued by external stakeholders dealing with local government officers. In KCC, the Team perceived itself as able to influence the content of the developer’s proposed master-plan, albeit not necessarily in terms of

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Senior Planner at the GLA, 2016, INT6-KCC-LA

⁶⁶ A representative from the GLA involved in the KCC scheme emphasised the strength of the King’s Cross Team: “in Southwark, talking about mega project, take Old Kent Road: Southwark does not have resources to handle the site which is the size of Nine Elms [...] In Camden they were well resourced because the leaders of Camden knows it needs to be done” (INT6-KCC-LA). Southwark is a South London Borough. Old Kent Road and Nine Elms are two large-scale redevelopments similar to King’s Cross Central. Interestingly, the planner quoted here was sent on a secondment at the London Borough of Southwark to assist in the Old Kent Road regeneration scheme.

urban vision *per se*. Rather, the negotiation focused on the level of affordable housing provision, adoption of roads, provision of public spaces and community facilities. Expertise about real estate operations as well as a deep knowledge of 'the confines' of planning regulations (Bishop and Williams 2016) were required from the Team to be able to secure development gains. This highlights the value attached to economic and legal expertise within the public sector when private sector actors increasingly drive spatial transformations. The King's Cross Team in London appeared more eager to shape the content of Argent's project. In Cape Town, the proximity and long-standing collaboration between the Partnership and the City perhaps did not require City officials to engage in such intensive negotiations. After all, the City remained part of the Fringe steering committee, and the Provincial Government had to be convinced to unlock further funding for the project to go ahead. In Cape Town, the Partnership benefitted from a strong institutional recognition for its role in steering inner-city regeneration, a point I come back to in the next section. In London, the King's Cross Team would have been in a position to convince elected officials (within the Borough of Camden) to refuse planning permission for Argent's scheme, thus also needed to be convinced of the value of the redevelopment.

What appears clear across both cases is the recognition by public sector experts that their expertise lies in their ability to use negotiations to shape redevelopment projects (Fainstein 1991, Adams and Tiesdell 2010, Clifford 2016), and in their ability to understand private actors' expectations, rather than in their capacity to produce grand urban visions. This requires of planning experts in leadership positions within local governments a deep understanding, if not internalisation, of private actors' constraints, expectations, and ways of conceptualising (urban) space (Moore 2012). In both cases, the individuals in charge of overseeing redevelopment projects from within local governments valued (and were valued for) their position as negotiators, and their ability to understand the development process from the perspective of the property sector. This further encourages modes of engagement between public and private experts that are based on the negotiation of quantitative targets (for jobs, affordable housing, community amenities, etc.) or compliance with planning and design regulations,

rather than on higher level discussions about the development of urban visions or the social function of urban planning (further discussed in chapters 8 and 9).⁶⁷ These findings thus call for a deeper examination of how institutional constraints, new governance arrangements, and professional expectations within and outside local governments all contribute to the reconfiguration of public expertise. This research shows that whilst public sector experts find themselves relatively marginalised as knowledge producers within assemblage of urban expertise, they play a key function when it comes to facilitating the enactment of abstract (private led) urban visions into concrete urban forms, because of their capacity to grant planning permission (like in London) and/or to provide initial investments to allow further development to take place (like in Cape Town) (this is further discussed in chapters 7 and 8).

5.2 Real estate actors: territorialising economic and financial expertise

Over the past 40 years, the real estate industry has played an increasing role in urban redevelopment and governance more broadly, across the globe (e.g. Fainstein 2001, Savini and Albers 2016, Rouanet and Halbert 2016, Searle 2016, Goodfellow 2017). The significant role played by real estate actors in governing spatial transformations has been fostered by new institutional and regulatory arrangements incentivising investments in real estate and increasing local state reliance on those investments (Weber 2002, 2010, Pike and Pollard 2010, French et al. 2011, Searle 2014, Sanfelici and Halbert 2016, Savini and Aalbers 2016, Fox Gotham 2016, Ward 2018). Hence, it is important to understand how real estate actors position themselves within assemblages of urban expertise and the role they

⁶⁷ A senior public planner working at the GLA lamented that “local authorities don’t have planners anymore, people do not do plans, they do not do maps, they have no experience of the states or rights and wrongs of doing planning. They do not practice planning. So you just end up in the soap opera of individual planning applications” (INT6-KCC-LA).

play in their maintenance, and in the performance of abstract urban visions. The real estate industry can be defined as the constellation of actors shaping urban environments through private investments in the built environment: these include property owners, landowners,⁶⁸ investors, property brokers, real estate developers. Each category is inherently complex and can overlap (Henneberry and Parris 2013, Weinstein 2014, Fauveaud 2014, Theurillat et al. 2015) but they are useful distinctions to keep in mind when it comes to describing how different real estate actors relate to and are involved in assemblages of urban expertise. For instance, real estate developers are usually the interface between financial investors and public authorities at the planning stages of a project (e.g. Searle 2014, Guironnet et al. 2016) and thus play a key role in articulating investors' expectations and local governments' objectives. They also play a key function in anchoring mobile financial capital into particular places by engaging with transterritorial networks of actors (Halbert and Rouanet 2014).

In both KCC and The Fringe, two specific actors, respectively a real estate developer (Argent) and a property focused *public-private partnership* (Cape Town Partnership), are shown to play leading roles in driving urban transformations as they bring together technical experts and knowledge devices to produce abstract urban visions for the two projects. In London, Argent's previous experience of designing and implementing an award-winning scheme in Birmingham (Brindleyplace) - "*the first major mixed-use development to be delivered in the UK*" (Argent 2018) - was perceived as a marker of its expertise in delivering "high quality

⁶⁸ Real estate developers do not necessarily own the land they intend to develop (in the KCC case, Argent was originally backed by BT pension fund) - contrary to property owners. Property owners do not necessarily act as real estate developers (sometimes they just sit on their assets waiting for their value to go up and sell them, without explicit attempts to redevelop them) although both actors obey to similar rationalities. The timescale at which they make their decisions however might differ, with some developers looking for quick returns on investments (addressing their financial backers' expectations) and some property owners adopting a more 'patient capital' approach to their investments. This in turn shapes the content of redevelopment projects themselves (e.g. Guironnet and Halbert 2014, Fauveaud 2014).

regeneration schemes” by public officials.⁶⁹ When Argent was designated as main developer for the site in the early 2000s, it started producing various reports and documents outlining its vision for the future KCC redevelopment, starting with its ten *Principles for a Human City* (2001).⁷⁰ Argent won several awards for the KCC scheme including the London Mayor’s excellence award for planning in 2007. KCC itself has since its inception been regarded as an exemplar of private-led projects’ capacity to deliver economically successful schemes that incorporate considerations of ‘good urban design’ principles such as sustainability, walkability, open spaces and high-quality public realm (ULI 2014). This view was corroborated by various interviewees, in particular from the GLA and the London Borough of Camden, who highlighted that Argent was “a rather unique developer.”⁷¹ A representative of the GLA indicated that project leaders at Argent:

*were informed about the question of heritage within the creation of place and character, which loads of developers did not get at all at the time; they were thoughtful and considered.*⁷²

One of the master-planners hired by Argent also noted the developer’s expertise in place-making, compared to other real estate developers:

*They had people with engineering backgrounds, place-making ... we did not have the typical property developer in the crew which made the conversations much less about money and much more about design.*⁷³

⁶⁹ As mentioned by the former head of the King’s Cross Team, 2016, INT12-KCC-LA: “in over 25 years working in London, the only two places where we talked about vision were King’s Cross with Argent and Spitalfields.”

⁷⁰ The ten Principles include: 1) a robust urban framework; 2) a lasting new place; 3) promote accessibility; 4) a vibrant mix of use; 5) harness the value of heritage; 6) work for King’s Cross, work for London; 7) commit to long term success; 8) engage and inspire; 9) secure delivery; 10) communicate clearly and openly.

⁷¹ Former King’s Cross Team planner, 2016, INT13-KCC-LA

⁷² Senior Planner at the GLA, 2016, INT6-KCC-LA

⁷³ Lead master-planner, 2016, INT1-KCC-Cons

Others highlighted that the nature of the investor backing the real estate company, at the time BT Pension Fund,⁷⁴ meant that Argent had more leeway to make original suggestions in relation to the design aspect of the scheme and to take decisions:

Argent had the power to say Yes or No on behalf of BT Pension fund, so we did not end up in that situation where you need to take any question or negotiation to the board.⁷⁵

This view on the developer's ability to mediate its (main) investor's expectations was seen as critical in allowing the company to act as a place-maker. Interviewees from the GLA, community groups and the King's Cross Team noted that the fact that Agent was backed by a pension fund (perceived as a usually more 'patient' kind of investors) gave the developer more time to dedicate to the design phase of the project.⁷⁶ This does not mean that financial considerations did not play a role in shaping Argent's plan but the relative agency of Argent vis-à-vis its financial backers meant the developer could propose a scheme that would probably be more innovative and less standardised than other projects of this kind developed at the time in London. As a result, the developer could consider longer timescales for its project and spend more time on the conceptual work that underpinned its vision for regenerating the area.

⁷⁴ Today the site is largely owned by an Australian Superfund pension fund.

⁷⁵ Former head of the King's Cross Team, 2016, INT12-KCC-LA

⁷⁶ Former head of the King's Cross Team, 2016, INT12-KCC-LA, Senior Planner at the GLA, 2016, INT6-KCC-LA, Academic Activist, 2016, INT4-KCC-Ac

The former head of Argent regularly emphasised the company's success at meeting its investor's expected returns on investment, whilst also highlighting its ability to contribute to broader socio-economic objectives through well-designed urban regeneration:

From the outset we had a clear set of aspirations for what we needed to achieve at King's Cross. We wanted to do development differently; to create a place that would not only be good to work, but also a place to live, eat and shop and simply a place to meet and wander. We believe that the creation of both economic and social value are completely inter-related - and to achieve that we have focused resolutely on quality; not only in terms of design and construction but also in terms of engagement, the public realm, our occupiers and the mix of uses at the development.⁷⁷

In Argent's view, good urban design and commercial success were intrinsically related. What is more, throughout the pre-planning stages of the project, Argent commissioned over 30 reports (and took part in the production of some of these) across a variety of domains ranging from air quality to regeneration impact, community engagement and including environmental, transport, landscape, heritage and urban design. Whilst some of these documents formed part of the official planning application, a lot of supplementary evidence was produced and submitted by the developer in addition to it. This further attests to the centrality of real estate actors within assemblages of urban expertise. They play a key role in enrolling other actors (such as consultants and communities) and devices (by choosing which type of expertise to mobilise) in the production of urban expertise, partly because of their financial capacity to commission reports. In doing so, they are able to shape the content of experts' work (I unpack this process in chapter 7) and to support the performance of their own way of seeing the urban by and through assemblages of urban expertise (a point I fully develop in chapter 8).

⁷⁷ Former head of Argent, 2016, INT3-KCC-Rea

In Cape Town, the designation of the Partnership as project lead for the Fringe yields a slightly more nuanced analysis. The Partnership was established in 1999 “to stop the negative decline of the Central City [...] and the decline of the City’s revenue base.”⁷⁸ Hence, since its inception, the Partnership’s ‘raison d’être’ rested on the strong belief of its founders (that is the City, as well as CBD property owners and businesses) in the alignment of the local state’s interests with that of the property and business sectors. Its mission was to “*manage, promote and develop the Cape Town Central City*” (Boraine 2009, p. 2). Since its creation, the Partnership has developed expertise in urban regeneration through interventions seeking to address “issues of security and safety, cleaning, urban management and then, later on, social development” in order to establish “confidence from citizens and the market in the Central City.”⁷⁹ Such interventions were also geared towards the attraction of investments that would “restore property values and municipal revenues”⁸⁰ in Cape Town’s CBD (see also Boraine 2009). Aligning the local government’s financial interest to increasing property values meant that the Partnership’s way of seeing the urban was closely aligned to that of the property sector. In the early-mid 2000s, the Partnership started to broaden its focus beyond the CBD, exploring avenues to expand its reach over urban design and spatial strategies in Cape Town’s East City. At the time, it sought to use urban regeneration and urban design tools to incentivise investments in the area, as reported by its founder:

In 2004 what would be significant for you is that we held an East City Development conference because we deliberately wanted to shift beyond the clean and safe urban management narrative and start looking at the redevelopment of the precinct or of the city as a whole. The East City then was lagging behind, with no investment from the public or the private sector, and so we deliberately started focusing on the east [...] to develop a very rough development framework for the area.⁸¹

⁷⁸ Former CEO, Cape Town Partnership, 2017, INT23-TF-CTP

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Property consultant, 2017, INT49-TF-Rea

⁸¹ In a similar vein, Argent in its *Principles for a Human City* (2001) links directly urban design and regeneration to economic development.

This re-focus of the Partnership on issues of urban regeneration and design was originally met with resistance from the City of Cape Town itself, according to the same interviewee:

They [the City] were happy to have a Partnership looking at clean and safe to make sure that businesses were happy, but they were not really willing to share the sort of planning and design function.⁸²

For the Partnership, urban design and place-making in the East City were means towards the achievement of economic growth, the attraction of investments and increased municipal revenues. Urban design was mobilised to craft a site that would be attractive to real estate markets, and that was expected to bring jobs and opportunities through the location of businesses in an area that was perceived as lagging behind. In the late 2000s, the Partnership broadened its remit to consider “*inclusive development*” (Boraine 2009, p. 2) and cultural policy, notably through the creation of Creative Cape Town (a networking platform for Cape Town’s creative community, from the design, arts and cultural sectors). This tension between the property focus of the Partnership since its inception and its progressive ‘acculturation’ to cultural and social issues was reflected in the Fringe project team set-up: the team was led by the founder of Creative Cape Town, who provided much inspiration for the creative, design and cultural aspects of Fringe concept. However, for the project to be perceived as ‘credible’ and appealing to the property sector, a property expert was brought into the team, as project manager. In chapter 8, I discuss the tension between culture versus property-led visions of regeneration in greater length. For now, it suffices to say that politics internal to the Partnership, as well as its historical focus on mobilising urban design as a tool to increase property values, meant that the Fringe project also enacted this property focus, by design. Thus, the central position of the Partnership within the assemblage of urban

⁸² Former CEO, Cape Town Partnership, 2017, INT23-TF-CTP

expertise, as project coordinator, meant that the view from the property sector was enacted in this network, and the organisation played a key function in maintaining it.

What is more, in both cases the power of real estate expertise in the design of urban redevelopment projects is strengthened by a culture of cooperation between the public sector and the real estate sector, as briefly touched on in the previous section. It is also supported by the ease with which individual career trajectories span these different worlds, which in turn means that local governments enrolled in assemblages of urban expertise internalise real estate actors' way of seeing the urban. Through these interactions, real estate actors also become more familiar with municipal constraints, priorities and expectations, facilitating dialogue and cooperation between these two entities. In Cape Town, the Partnership had been involved in urban politics and regeneration in the Central City since the early 2000s. Its former head worked at the City during the post-apartheid transition and he is now leading the Economic Development team at the Province. A former Partnership employee who worked on the Fringe project in 2012 - 2013 is now also working in that team. The former project lead for the Fringe was subsequently employed as head of Culture at the City. In London, Argent's former lead is highly regarded in the planning and real estate community - in London and beyond - in particular for his work on the KCC scheme.⁸³ The former head of the King's Cross Team moved on to become director in the master-planning firm Argent hired to produce the master-plan for the KCC scheme. Furthermore, real estate actors' expectations and priorities are also reflected and performed by knowledge devices that are increasingly valued by both public and private actors in the design of spatial strategies. I further analyse the hierarchisation and power of knowledge devices in chapters 6 and 8. Hence, real estate actors play a leading role in the maintenance

⁸³ Former King's Cross Team planner, 2016, INT13-KCC-LA, Senior Planner at the GLA, 2016, INT6-KCC-LA, London Assembly member, 2016, INT15-KCC-LA

of assemblages of expertise, in the production of abstract visions, and in their performance. In both the Fringe and KCC, the Partnership and Argent surrounded themselves with an army of technical consultants that they enrolled into the assemblage, I discuss their role in the next section.

5.3 The consulting ecosystem: technical urban expertise

The role of consultants in producing urban expertise needs to be further examined, as they are often mobilised by real estate actors as well as public authorities (and sometimes, albeit less frequently, community organisations) to produce knowledge informing the design and implementation of redevelopment schemes. A number of scholars have explored how the rule of experts (Mitchell 2002) has contributed to the marginalisation of non-technical expertise, shaped urban socio-material and institutional (trans)formations and supported the rise of the techno-political consensus as a way to govern the 'post-political' city (e.g. Swyngedouw 2009, MacLeod 2011, Raco et al. 2016). Private consultancies have been shown to play a key role in that process, with existing studies focusing on the internationalisation of planning, architectural and engineering expertise since the 1980s (Rapoport 2015) and on their role in the global flow of planning idea(l)s, architectural models and forms (e.g. Rimmer 1988, Sklair 2005, Barthel and Verdeil 2008, Faulconbridge 2009, McNeill 2005, 2009, Ponzini 2014, Rapoport and Hult 2017). At a global scale, a handful of big international, multidisciplinary engineering consultancies (Arup, AECOM, Atkins for instance) are advising a very wide number of public and private clients involved in urban development projects, such as eco-districts, smart cities or mixed-use regeneration schemes across the globe. However, as mentioned in the previous chapter, fewer efforts have been made to open up the black box of 'the consultant' (Prince 2012) or to move away from a focus on single professions or firms - such as architects or global engineering corps - to explore how 'consulting ecosystems' emerge in particular locations and what their politics are. Looking at the configuration of consulting ecosystems, I argue, can help to understand the value attached to the expertise produced by different consultants as well as their role within assemblages of urban expertise. It can also

shed light on the process through which these different experts are enrolled in the assemblage by particular actors, and on their degree of agency and independency vis-à-vis such actors.

Urban projects require the mobilisation of technical expertise across a range of topics spanning planning, architecture, heritage, economic development, environmental protection, transport and more. which contributes to the “*conversion of decision-making into a technical process*” (Raco 2014a, p. 159). In KCC, thirteen organisations with expertise ranging from heritage to acoustics, including landscape architecture, planning, air quality, environment and urban design were hired by Argent. In the Fringe, nine organisations were brought on board by the Partnership, although the range of expertise provided is less broad than in the KCC case.⁸⁴ As shown in table 3, the term ‘consultant’ itself refers to distinct organisational settings, ranging from independent consultants to large international multidisciplinary firms. Urban redevelopment projects become a structuring tool for the assemblage of diverse forms of expertise - this sometimes induces conflicts and/or misunderstandings between professions that try to establish their respective legitimacy (e.g. Godier and Tapie 2008, I explore this issue further in chapter 7). What is relatively striking in KCC and the Fringe is the prevalence of very local consultancies as the main sources of expertise. The only international consultancy present in both projects is Arup (although in the London case it could also be considered as local, since Arup is a UK company headquartered in the British capital), which is also the oldest of all consultancies involved in both projects. The presence of Arup is not really surprising if one looks at the history of the company, which has been implanted in South Africa since 1954 and has a long-lasting

⁸⁴ This is due to the differing scope of the projects. Whilst Argent mobilised an army of consultants to develop a planning application in line with planning regulations, the Partnership hired in various experts to help develop a design framework for the area to unlock further funding from the Western Cape Government to support the implementation of the project. Therefore, most of the experts’ work fed into a narrative explaining ‘why’ the Fringe was a good idea, what it could look like, and how it could be implemented, while the Argent scheme needed to comply with existing regulations and provide numerous technical reports explaining ‘how’ the scheme would be implemented, in order to be granted planning permission.

presence and experience of working in urban development in the country. As a result, Arup, although international, had had a historical presence in South Africa, and the lead consultant hired for the project knew the local context very well.⁸⁵ Looking at the degree of engagement of the firm in both projects, it appears that its influence over the Fringe was much less significant than over KCC. In the Fringe, Arup was only commissioned to do a small transport study that would inform the final design framework and “is still sitting on a shelf” according to the Arup consultant who produced it.⁸⁶ On the contrary, in KCC, the company was commissioned to produce seven reports ranging from environmental statements to a regeneration strategy (this is further illustrated in graph 1, chapter 7). The KCC case shows the importance of multidisciplinary companies like Arup in assemblages of urban expertise mobilised in complex redevelopment projects: the company actually produced more reports than the three consultants hired to form the core master-planning team.⁸⁷ The Fringe case sheds light on the malleability of this multidisciplinary firm which, through the mastering of a very wide ranging expertise, can be mobilised to produce reports that are smaller in scope and more focused.

These contrasting findings also bring some nuance to claims that international consultancies like Arup dominate the production of urban expertise worldwide. Whilst this is probably true in some instances, both case studies importantly highlight the predominance of local firms within assemblages of urban expertise, even in internationally significant schemes like KCC and globally oriented projects like the Fringe (i.e. see chapter 3). In the KCC case, whilst over half of the consultancies mobilised have developed international activities, they are also all headquartered in the UK, mostly in London, hence can be considered as ‘local’,

⁸⁵ Although originally from Canada, he was trained as a civil engineer at the University of Cape Town and has been involved with local activist networks (focusing on enhancing pedestrian and cycling access to the public realm).

⁸⁶ Arup transport consultant, 2017, INT43-TF-Cons

⁸⁷ Allies and Morrisons, Porphyrios Associates and Townshend Landscape Architects

participating in a UK-based scheme and working for a UK developer.⁸⁸ In the case of the Fringe, most consultancies are in fact small in size and Cape Town based, apart from Arup, even though its Cape Town office remains relatively small.⁸⁹ Of the three consultancies with international outreach involved in the Fringe, one is the lead urban design company, Guy Briggs Architecture + Planning, which had been involved in projects in the UK and South Africa. Its founder (also lead designer for the Fringe) was trained in both countries (University of Cape Town and LSE Cities). This UK-South Africa trajectory was actually quite common, as many consultants and policy makers interviewed in this study had been trained/worked in the UK in the past. Earthworks Landscape Architect is the other local consultancy, based in Cape Town, that carries out international work across the African continent. However, the majority of its projects are based in South Africa. Relatedly, this research also reveals the importance of interpersonal relationships, reputations and histories of collaboration in the integration of particular consultancies within assemblages of urban expertise. Indeed, whilst public sector organisations often have to release public tenders (depending on the size of the contract), developers or public-private quangos like the Partnership are not constrained by the necessity to hire through public tendering processes. As a result, a 'club-like mentality' (Brill 2018) and tight networks of technical experts, developers and policy makers emerge based on reputation and past experience of working together on projects. For instance, in Cape Town, one of the consultants at Kaiser Associates Economic Development (who developed the *Business Case* for the Fringe) was also involved in the *Social Impact Assessment* (SIA hereafter) through her own practice (EDGE Tourism Solutions). Several other consultants hired by the Partnership highlighted that they were asked to contribute because they knew members of the Partnership for having collaborated with them in the past.⁹⁰ The consultant hired for the

⁸⁸ The only exception is EDAW, a landscape architecture firm collaborating with the master-planner in charge of the landscape element of the scheme.

⁸⁹ The company also has offices in other South Africa cities (Durban and Johannesburg).

⁹⁰ Senior consultant, *Property Strategy*, 2017, INT39-TF-Cons

Landscape Study was finishing up her masters doing an internship at Earthworks Landscape Architects, she knew the Fringe project lead and that is how she got the job:

If I hadn't been in an office with [Fringe Project Lead] looking at what he was doing asking 'oh what about the landscape element?' I don't think that the design or landscape architectural perspective would have been included because they are always seen as an afterthought.⁹¹

In KCC, Argent hired the same master-planning team as the one it previously hired on its award winning scheme in Birmingham because they "already had experience of working with them," they "knew them" and knew they would be able to "work well together."⁹² Argent also hired other technical consultants based on recommendations, past work and reputation.⁹³ Politically, being surrounded by experts that are known by other local actors such as policy makers and that have been involved in other schemes across the city is instrumental⁹⁴ in gaining political support for a scheme.⁹⁵ As one interviewee put it, when asked about the size of the urban consulting market in Cape Town:

Cape Town is small, we all know each other, we have all worked together, been to university together, the City, the Partnership ... they are used to work with the same people, they have their go-to people.⁹⁶

⁹¹ Junior consultant *Landscape Study*, 2017, INT44-TF-Cons

⁹² Former head of Argent, 2016, INT3-KCC-Rea

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ This might be different in contexts where the 'market for urban expertise' is less developed (i.e. where the consultant ecosystem is less diverse) and where local governments/developers might be more prone to source expertise from elsewhere (e.g. international consultancies, international organisations, philanthropies or NGOs).

⁹⁵ Senior urban designer at the City of Cape Town, 2017, INT19-TF-LA Former head of the King's Cross Team, 2016, INT12-KCC-LA, Former head of Argent, 2016, INT3-KCC-Rea

⁹⁶ Arup transport consultant, 2017, INT43-TF-Cons

This highlights how consultants are valued for their expertise, but also and more fundamentally, for the networks, connections and reputations they bring to a specific project (see also Brill 2018). In addition, and as illustrated in the Fringe case more specifically, there is a hierarchy of expertise shaping what forms of knowledge are deemed fundamental in a project (property based, economic and financial, as well as urban design and planning), whilst other forms of expertise can be more of an “afterthought” (as mentioned by the junior landscape architect who worked on the Fringe). Whilst existing research on consultants refer to them as epitomes and drivers of contemporary forms of urban development, this literature, I argue, does not account for the wide variety of professions that compose the consultant ecosystem, nor does it discuss their (uneven) influence over the production of abstract urban visions and their differing positions within assemblages of urban expertise. Research should thus attend to the politics of experts’ selection and what it says about their actual function - as well as the expertise they produce - in urban redevelopment projects. If developers and semi-private organisations hire consultants through their interpersonal networks to help them produce plans and evidence for a particular scheme, what does it say about the role of consultants’ expertise itself in assemblages of urban expertise? As chapter 7 and 8 will show, the mobilisation of technical experts plays a political function, supporting the legitimacy of redevelopment schemes and preventing potential contestation to those. Alongside this triad of actors (consultants, real estate actors, government), both cases also reveal the importance of community organisations as producers of urban expertise. Their relationship to the other three categories of experts is more ambiguous and conflictual, issues I turn to in the next section.

Table 3: Composition of consultant ecosystem in both cases – Source: Author.^t

	Consultants Name	Focus	International	Local	Size (employees)	Location (when contracted)	Founded	Other
King's Cross Central	EDAW	Landscape architecture	x		>10000	San Francisco (USA)	1939	Bought by AECOM in 2005 and fully incorporated in 2009
	Arup	Multidisciplinary	x		>10000	London (UK)	1946	
	RPS	Environment	x		5000-10000	Abingdon (UK)	1970	
	Allies and Morrison	Urban Design and architecture	x		100-500	London (UK)	1984	
	Porphyrios Associates	Urban Design and architecture	x		1-10	London (UK)	1985	
	David Morley Architects	Architecture		x	10-50	London (UK)	1987	
	Townshend Landscape Architects	Landscape architecture	x		10-50	London (UK)	1988	
	Air Quality Consultant Ltd	Air Quality	x		10-50	London (UK)	1993	
	Access Design Consultants	Accessibility		x	1-10	Marlborough (UK)	1994	
	Fluid	Community engagement		x	10-50	London (UK)	1996	
	General Public Agency	Regeneration		x	1-10	London (UK)	2003	
	International Heritage Consultancy	Heritage		x	1-10	St Albans (UK)	2004	
	The English Cogger Partnership	Accoustic		x	1-10	Winchester (UK)	2005	
Cape Town	Arup	Multidisciplinary	x		12800	Cape Town (South Africa)	1954	
	Stratecon	Economics and Finance		x	1-10	Cape Town (South Africa)	1990	
	Kaiser Associates Economic Development	Economic Development		x	1-10	Cape Town (South Africa)	1998	One of the partners is also directing EDGE Tourism Solutions
	EDGE Tourism Solutions	Social Impact Assessment		x	1-10	Cape Town (South Africa)	2005	
	Guy Briggs	Urban Design and architecture	x		1-10	Cape Town (South Africa) and London (UK)	2009	Bought by DHK Associates in 2013
	Independent Urban Ethnographer	Social Impact		x	1-10	Cape Town (South Africa)	2011	
	Independent Property Consultant	Property		x	1-10	Cape Town (South Africa)	2011	
	John Spiropoulos Associates	Economic Development		x	1-10	Cape Town (South Africa)	n/a	
	Earthworks Landscape Architect	Landscape architecture	x		1-10	Cape Town (South Africa)	2004	

5.4 The community: from controlled to counter-expertise

Urban dwellers develop and hold knowledge that allows them to tactically produce urban space outside of formalised governance structures (e.g. Simone 2001, 2008, McFarlane et al. 2014, Lancione and McFarlane 2016, Simone and Pieterse 2018, Carrero et al. 2019, Bhan 2019). My interest here is in the influence of such knowledge over the production of abstract urban visions (and its role in their performance, but I come back to that in subsequent chapters). In the Fringe and KCC, I observed two modes of community expertise production mobilised to influence such visions, what I would refer to as *controlled* and *counter-expertise*. Both contribute to enrol communities in assemblages of urban expertise, although through different vectors. On the one hand, controlled expertise is deliberately sought in reaction to the work of other experts (consultants in particular). This process of gathering communities' comments or input is often institutionalised and controlled by other - more powerful - actors in the assemblage (e.g. the state, the developer, public-private partnerships).⁹⁷ Thus, communities' participation is shaped by the institutional mechanisms created by other actors in the assemblage. Their ability to partake in the production of abstract urban visions is constrained by these institutionalised participatory settings. On the other hand, counter-expertise emerges in opposition to proposed visions and schemes within and outside institutionalised participatory structures. This type of expertise is more marginal in assemblages of urban expertise, that is, located further away from key actants (such as real estate actors) yet it also has a greater ability (and indeed willingness)

⁹⁷ Power imbalances in institutionalised community participation in urban policy making (not just planning) has been the object of much academic focus, if the reader is interested in learning more about these issues see Cornwall and Cohelo (2007) for a discussion of democratic experiments throughout the world (see also Cornwall 2008 for a review of participation models meanings, and practices and Barnes et al. 2007 for an exploration of participation at different scales of governance). In the context of planning more specifically, scholars have explored the role of the planner in mediating different types of knowledge, building consensus and addressing power dynamics (detrimental to vulnerable communities) in the planning process (for useful syntheses spanning the African and European and North American contexts see Watson 2003, Healey 2006, Miraftab 2009, Innes and Booher 2010).

to destabilise dominant assemblages. The production of counter-expertise is a key aspect of community political struggles. These two types of community expertise are discussed in what follows.

In the UK, the late 1990s and early 2000s were marked by an increased emphasis on community consultation and participation in the planning process (e.g. DETR 1998, Atkinson 1999, Raco and Flint 2001, Imrie and Raco 2003).⁹⁸ In South Africa, the post-apartheid transition has been marked by a strong emphasis - at least in political rhetoric and legislation - on citizens' participation as a cornerstone of the democratic reconstruction project (Oldfield and Wafer 2013). This has led to the creation of particular arenas where 'the community' is invited to react to policy proposals within institutional parameters set up by authoritative organisations. This is what I refer to as controlled expertise. As already well-documented, the importance of participatory institutional design is paramount in shaping whether and how community expertise actually shapes the content of particular projects (e.g. Rydin and Pennington 2000, Innes and Booher 2004, Watson 2014b). In both case studies, a mix of face to face and digital platforms were created to allow community groups and citizens' inputs in spatial planning. In Cape Town, the Partnership created a webpage dedicated to the Fringe project where the draft *Urban Design Framework* was published for people to review and comment on. However, the timing of the consultation, in 2013, and its basis (i.e. a fully-fledged urban framework) contributed to park community opposition, particularly from the District Six Museum. Its representatives perceived that community knowledge was solicited in reaction to plans and strategies that had "been decided for the most part, behind

⁹⁸ It is out of the scope of this thesis to review the very large amount of planning literature that explores - and criticises - planning reforms in the UK in relation to community participation. However, should the reader be interested in these issues, Parker and al. 2015 provide a good empirical basis to start discussing the efficacy of neighbourhood planning. For a critique of localism and neoliberal governmentality see Davoudi and Madanipour 2013.

closed doors”⁹⁹ by a select group of consultants, policy makers and project managers. In KCC, the London Boroughs of Camden and Islington created online consultation tools¹⁰⁰ to gather comments on the planning application. Online platforms sought a reactive engagement, as they were open for a limited period of time in reaction to already draft plans and technical reports. One community representative reported that the way consultation was carried out gave the impression that “Argent knew what they wanted”¹⁰¹ and that there was little room for community groups to shape the master-plan.

We were shown the plans when they knew what they wanted to do. But it was a done deal. [...] The idea of a master-plan thought up and devised by somebody up there ... how this was decided and developed, that we don't have a clue [...] we started off with the concept of what KCC was going to be, square foot of offices, residence, etc. It was pre-determined that it would be concrete built - I don't know where this came from [...] where that concept comes from I don't know.¹⁰²

The vast majority of community representatives interviewed for this study had a more nuanced appreciation of the consultation process. Many indicated there had actually been a long (and strong) consultation, led firstly by Argent and then by the King's Cross Team. Yet they felt the problem was not the amount of consultation, but the extent to which community inputs had been integrated in the vision for the scheme, which to them was unclear. One community representative explained her group commented on the plan but she did not know “how much influence it had” since “Camden was controlling and editing the responses.”¹⁰³

⁹⁹ District Six Museum, 2017, INT20-TF-Comm

¹⁰⁰ Local historian, 2016, INT7-KCC-Comm

¹⁰¹ Cally Rail Group member, 2016, INT5-KCC-Comm

¹⁰² Regent Canal Network member, 2016, INT16-KCC-Comm

¹⁰³ Cally Rail Group member, 2016, INT5-KCC-Comm

A similar issue was mentioned in the case of the Fringe:

... subsequent to that, it was three, four years ago - I haven't got a response to our submission. I also wanted to know which were the other entities - I mean I was quite curious to know who were the allies, what other issues emerged. Because we were also clear that even though District Six is a big story and another prominent story we can't make the world about District Six. So we wanted to know about the other issues, what are the blindspots? Who are the other stakeholders? We got no response.¹⁰⁴

Face to face arenas for consultation varied in their scope, inclusivity and focus in both cases. In the Fringe, a Charette exercise was organised and included experts, universities, policy makers, property owners, local businesses - the event was publicised through the Partnership network and aimed to provide early input on the project, before the Fringe design framework was finalised (full list of Charette participants available in Appendix D). This event was less open than the online consultation mechanism, since most of the participants were already part of the project (either in the Fringe steering committee or had been hired as consultants). This moment is presented as a milestone of stakeholder engagement in the Fringe *Urban Design Framework* (2012, p. 5). In KCC, several face to face platforms ran in parallel. In the very early phases of the project (2001 - 2003), the developer Argent led the consultation efforts and hired a community engagement consultancy (Fluid) to manage the production of three *Statements of Community Engagement* (2004a, 2004b, 2004c). The three reports emphasised Argent's significant involvement in the process: "*the chief executive of Argent Group plc, has alone met with nearly 4,000 people since March 2000 in over 200 meetings*" (*Statement of Community Engagement* 2004a, p. 5). Community representatives confirmed the large scope of this consultation, although they perceived this as public relations exercise, rather than meaningful engagement. When we discussed how she perceived the

¹⁰⁴ District Six Museum, 2017, INT20-TF-Comm

involvement of Argent's former head at that time, an interviewee mentioned she thought he "was a very charming man and he was indeed on the ground" but noted that "the extent to which he listened to what we [her community group] said" was "relatively limited."¹⁰⁵

After this first developer-led community engagement exercise, the London Borough of Camden funded and set up the King's Cross Development Forum to facilitate community participation in the run up to the submission of Argent's planning application (in 2005). With the creation of the Forum, Camden (in particular the King's Cross Team) also aimed to undermine the ability of particular community groups to further contest the scheme. Their efforts were targeted at the King's Cross Railway Lands Group, a community umbrella organisation with historical presence in King's Cross (I discuss their role in contesting the scheme in chapter 9), as highlighted by this statement by the former director of the King's Cross Team:

*The objective with creating the Forum was to move the centre of gravity of the contestation from the King's Cross Railway Lands Group. It was a way to control opposition to the scheme.*¹⁰⁶

The lack of autonomy and agency of the Forum and its absence of effective leadership was evident to community organisations involved in it, particularly the ones that were more sceptical of Argent's plans. A community representative further reported that because "the meetings were organised by the King's Cross Team" in effect "the Forum didn't have any autonomy."¹⁰⁷ The same person perceived the Forum as a "cosmetic, a box ticking exercise, rather than real participation in the

¹⁰⁵ Cally Rail Group member, 2016, INT5-KCC-Comm

¹⁰⁶ Former head of the King's Cross Team, 2016, INT12-KCC-LA

¹⁰⁷ Cally Rail Group member, 2016, INT5-KCC-Comm

plan.”¹⁰⁸ Others were more positive about the existence of the Forum. As one community activist reported, the Forum was actually a promising idea and gave local residents and community groups a direct access to public decision-makers. However, he also stressed that the quality of community groups was not reflected in the choice of Forum’s leaders, as illustrated by the following remark:

*The Forum was an interesting idea, with dedicated members of the [Camden] council responsible for providing administrative support. But the community was too weak. The people I was working with [there] were very strong, except the ones leading the Forum. The Forum’s leaders [...] were being brought in by the local authority. And these were the community’s interface. So the community was in fact very weak.*¹⁰⁹

The fact that the Forum was set up by the King’s Cross Team, and its perceived lack of leadership, lead various community organisations to express their opposition to Argent’s scheme outside of the Forum’s structure (I discuss this strategy in chapter 9). This case illustrates how the process grouping and controlling made it even harder for local organisations to produce evidence that would inform the plan. By creating a new institution for community engagement, it created a hierarchy of community voices, whereby the Forum was the only legitimate community platform. By relegating historical community groups to the informal/illegitimate space, the King’s Cross Team attempted to contain opposition to the scheme by limiting the parameters of its expression within the Forum’s boundaries.

As illustrated in those two cases, community expertise is often not fully exploited in participatory exercises, either because they intervene after plans have been produced, because groups and citizens’ inputs are not explicitly articulated in

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ King’s Cross Railway Lands Group employee, 2016, INT11-KCC-Comm

revised plans, or because government control is too strong. These instances of controlled expertise, whilst enrolling communities into assemblages of urban expertise, also restrict the parameters of their expression, and hence their ability to shape the production of abstract urban visions. Such modes of participation have often been criticised for, and shown to, depoliticise community struggles and to “*extend state control within society*” (Miraftab 2009, p. 34). Outside of these controlled platforms, counter-expertise aiming to destabilise dominant assemblages of urban expertise also emerged through community activism. Often self-selected yet with historical presence and legitimacy in both sites, these groups mobilised against the proposed redevelopment plans. The production of counter-expertise (e.g. alternative plans, visions, maps) was a constitutive feature of such opposition, as positioning oneself as an ‘expert’ appeared fundamental for groups to gain in legitimacy and for their contestation to be heard (by politicians, the media, the real estate industry). Those groups engaged in the production of expertise that mimics and subverts the structure and content of the technical documents produced by consultants. In Cape Town, the District Six Museum was a key opponent to the scheme and mobilised its historical knowledge of the area to de-legitimise the Fringe. In KCC, various community groups, such as the umbrella organisation King’s Cross Railway Lands Group and the King’s Cross Conservation Area Advisory Committee (KXCAAC hereafter) were active in producing an alternative vision for the area. This section discussed how on the one hand, formal community engagement processes are controlled by powerful actors (developers, public-private partnerships, local government) thus limiting the parameters within which citizens and community groups can voice their opposition and/or partake in urban visioning. In that context, community expertise is more reactive than generative. On the other hand, the production of counter-expertise that mimics that of consultants, or policy makers is a key component of community organisations’ political struggles and has destabilising effects on the maintenance of dominant assemblages of urban expertise. The mechanics of counter-expertise will be further unpacked in chapter 9.

Conclusion

In this chapter I started analysing how hierarchies of urban experts emerge, paying attention to the process by which local governments, real estate actors, consultants and communities intervene in the production of expertise. These four categories are inherently plural and imbued with their own politics and hierarchies, which in turn influences how actors position themselves within - and are able to influence the maintenance of - assemblages of urban expertise. Within local governments, developing expertise about how real estate actors operate and how property markets function is central to the work of lead planners and urban designers whose work focuses on negotiating the outcomes of private-led regeneration schemes, rather than designing those. Real estate actors are shown to be astute city builders (Fainstein 2001) as they lead the production of urban abstractions by enrolling consultants, including designers and planners, into assemblages of urban expertise and by developing expertise in urban regeneration. They also shape how the credibility and quality of redevelopment schemes are assessed: the value of a site, a plot of land, a building, is intrinsically and predominantly linked to its future economic value (I elaborate on this claim in the next chapter and in chapter 8). Consultants working for developers and public-private-partnerships are shown to be important sources of expertise in redevelopment projects and the strength of their local connections supports their enrolment into assemblages of urban expertise. Consultants' ability to influence the shape and content of abstract visions depends on the differing value attached to distinct types of expertise and/or on their ability to mobilise a diverse skillset. Indeed, organisations that are able to mobilise different forms of expertise seem to be better positioned within the consultant ecosystem. This is particularly true of polymorphous (international) multidisciplinary consultancy firms such as Arup, which are able to address differing clients' needs for technical expertise, from small scale involvement in Cape Town to large-scale participation in London. I discuss this further in chapter 7. The creation of institutionalised participatory structures for community engagement support the control of citizens' input and constraints communities' ability to fully engage with the production of abstract urban visions. I

discuss how this process is resisted through the production of counter-expertise in chapter 9. Finally, this chapter generated empirical insights which will be further unpacked in the rest of this thesis. Particularly, it showed that actors holding external coordinating capacity (supported by financial and institutional resources) can shape and maintain configurations of urban expertise that serve their strategies (hypothesis 4). In the two case studies, both Argent and the Cape Town Partnership hold such capacity and are able to shape the content and pace of other experts' work, and to influence the content of abstract spatial visions. These issues are further explored in chapters 7, 8 and 9. Hence, this chapter started to address two of my hypotheses: hypothesis 1 stating that the dominance of particular forms of urban expertise at a given point in time and in particular places emerges from the relational composition of assemblages of urban expertise (i.e. internal and external politics); and hypothesis 4, according to which dominant assemblages of urban expertise stabilise and maintain their power over urban space through coordination (i.e. mobilisation of diverse forms of expertise by central actants) and institutionalisation (i.e. formal and informal process supporting the reification of hierarchies of expertise). However, as emphasised in chapter 2, a complete analysis of these hierarchies and their effects should attend to the agency of knowledge devices (hypothesis 2). I turn to this issue in the next chapter.

Chapter 6: The politics of knowledge devices: dividing, controlling, projecting

As the previous chapter has shown, coordinating power is key in allowing specific actors to shape assemblages of urban expertise by enrolling and controlling the engagement of other experts in the production of abstract urban visions (in the case of Argent and the Partnership). In this process, it is not just humans that are assembled, but also the knowledge devices they use, which are brought together in the making of abstract urban visions. Knowledge devices, which can be defined as the scientific and technical apparatus that underpins the production of urban expertise, play a fundamental role in relation to the logics of abstraction, performance and maintenance. Maps, plans, technical descriptions and calculations perform partial understandings of the urban. They mediate experts' ability to abstract the urban space in order to control and transform it, thus shaping how different actors see (selected aspects of) the urban and act in space. This chapter proposes to further analyse the power of knowledge devices addressing hypothesis 2 of this research, which stipulates that *knowledge devices hold agency*. The following findings draw predominantly on content analysis of the Fringe and KCC respective master-plans/design frameworks and their supporting documentation, as well as interviews with key stakeholders. In a first section, I show that the power of knowledge devices resides in their capacity to divide urban space, that is to define its boundaries, and isolate and hierarchise its human and non-human characteristics so that these can be manipulated and transformed (6.1). I then demonstrate that knowledge devices also allow their users to (at least seemingly) predict various outcomes (positive or negative) linked to the redevelopment projects. This predictive power plays a key role in giving various actors a sense of control over the urban, and in supporting the performance of abstract urban visions through redevelopment projects (6.2). Finally, I show that the projective power of knowledge devices in turn calls into action various actors which can collectively enact abstract urban visions, beyond the realm of experts (including policy makers, investors, builders, residents, etc.). Through the production of

visuals, numerical projections or narration, knowledge devices give substance to abstract urban futures and spark new collectives into being, collectives that can partake in the performance of such abstractions (6.3). In doing these three things (dividing, giving the illusion of control and projecting), knowledge devices shape assemblages of urban expertise and expand their reach to invite non-experts to co-perform abstract urban visions. Thus, they are inherently political objects.

6.1 Devices of division: dismantling the urban

As already mentioned in chapter 2, the process of division is a key component of the logic of abstraction and is a necessary step in the concrete transformation of urban space. Through abstraction, redevelopment sites are divided into pieces that can be manipulated, altered, destroyed or preserved. Through these different interventions, abstract urban plans can be performed in the real world. Different tools and techniques allow for this division to occur; their intrinsic politics reside in the fact that they isolate what is deemed worthy of protection or bound to destruction. The politics of division, I argue, operate through a dual process of enumeration of the different constitutive human and non-human elements of a site (be that buildings, residents and communities, businesses, environmental features) and of qualification of the same elements, that is the description of their characteristics and determination of their value in the redevelopment process.

6.1.1 Enumeration

The very act of enumerating, singling out somebody or something as pertaining to a regeneration site is a pre-requisite for the determination of their value (thus hierarchisation) in the redevelopment project. Knowledge devices supporting this process of enumeration are numerous but in our two cases consist of maps, lists and statistics (i.e. numerical estimates of a community's size, value of local

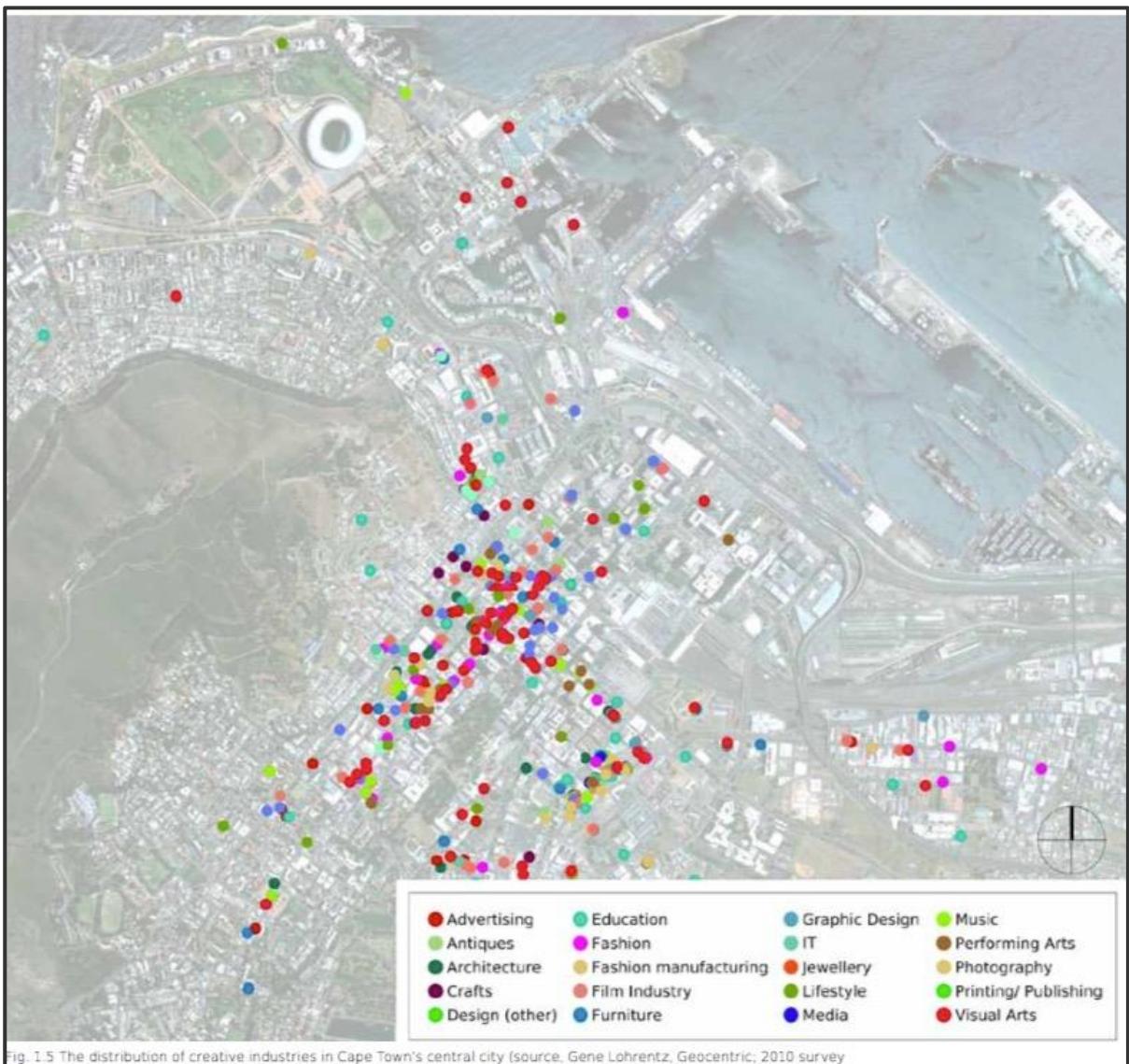
businesses, etc.) assembled in technical reports. Analysing how human communities were enumerated in King's Cross and the Fringe reveals the power of knowledge devices in creating abstract communities. Defining and setting the boundaries of 'the local community' is strategic in identifying who the redevelopment scheme is for (or who it is not for), and who therefore can claim a voice in the regeneration process.

In the Fringe, two communities were identified in reports that pre-dated the draft *Urban Design Framework* (released in 2012). The creative businesses community was made visible through the commissioning of a *Creative Industries Survey* (originally produced in 2005, updated in 2008 and 2010 and published in 2011). A map of the creative industries was produced. It highlights their concentration within and nearby the Fringe (map 3). Although informative in many respects, this device also played a key political function. It contributed to legitimising the concept of the Fringe as a design district, for it would directly address the needs of creative companies "who really struggled finding affordable workspace"¹¹⁰ and needed "infrastructures to expand their companies"¹¹¹ in central Cape Town. It also contributed to justify the selection of the location of the Fringe in the eastern part of the CBD as the geographical concentration of creative businesses matches the redevelopment site boundaries and its direct surroundings, as shown on map 3.

¹¹⁰ Fringe Project Leader, Cape Town Partnership, 2017, INT51-TF-CTP

¹¹¹ Local Property Owner, 2017, INT32-TF-Rea

Map 3: Location of creative businesses in and around the Fringe



Source: *The Fringe Urban Design Framework* (2012).

As already hinted on in the previous chapter, another community was singled out through the production of a technical report: the real estate community. At the time, the Fringe team at the Partnership “had very little knowledge of who owned what” in the area and of “what could be done, who would get on board with the

project.”¹¹² Consultants were hired by the Partnership to identify properties located in the area which could be mobilised as a “*vehicle to facilitate and house the incubation process*” of “*new businesses and job creations*” (*Property Report* 2011, p. 2). Beyond mapping buildings, the production of the *Property Report* was designed as a tool for engaging the property community located in the Fringe (or with interests in investing, renting, selling in the area). The two consultants met “*with numerous property owners, managing agents, stakeholders and tenants in the area*” in order to better understand how they perceived “*the evolution of the property market in the East City*” (*Property Report* 2011, p. 3). They also sought to understand whether the Fringe could “create some sort of change” in the property market including “*property owners selling their buildings, new firms and investors coming in*.”¹¹³ Data collection for the report consisted of meetings and interviews which also contributed to enrol new actors in the assemblage of expertise. Hence, the *Property Report* can be envisaged as a strategic knowledge device that sought: a) to single out and inscribe the importance of the property sector in the evidence base underpinning the Fringe vision; b) to enrol property actors in the assemblage, as its production involved engaging with them and making them aware of the project to gauge their interest in taking part (thus participating in co-performing the Fringe vision); and c) to inscribe property actors’ expertise into the project, specifically in relation to the types of buildings to mobilise in the process of “*creating space for prospective tenants*” (*Property Report* 2011, p. 7). Thus, this device was mobilised by the Partnership to enrol the property community to co-perform the Fringe vision but also to internalise their expectations and needs in the design of the project. In that sense the technical reports and the Fringe vision perform the needs and expectations from the property sector, a point I come back to extensively in chapter 8. The *Property Report* commissioned by the Partnership also provided a list of fifteen buildings and assessed their potential as spaces for businesses incubation. This aimed to identify

¹¹² Fringe Project Leader, Cape Town Partnership, 2017, INT51-TF-CTP

¹¹³ Property consultant, 2017, INT49-TF-Rea

sites of performance, where the Fringe vision could be enacted, and contributed to enrol these buildings in the assemblage by listing them and their characteristics classified as “opportunities and risks” (*Property Report* 2011). A third (or fourth, counting the buildings) community was singled out, this time after the *Urban Design Framework* for the area was produced: the homeless community (also referred to as “street people” by several interviewees).¹¹⁴ The Fringe is host to a large homeless population. This community was not enumerated in preliminary efforts to define different communities in the evidence base underpinning the spatial vision for the Fringe. It is only in 2012, as the *Urban Design Framework* was almost complete, that a qualitative study was commissioned to describe the needs and characteristics of the homeless population, as reported by a former program manager at the Partnership involved in the project:

*We knew that we were doing all these things for funky people but there were actually a lot of homeless in the streets, as well as a lot of organisations that provide direct services to people in the streets. Service dining rooms which provide meals for people in the streets for instance was located in the area; Carpenters shop is a shelter and place where people do woodwork and skills and there is a couple of places where people from the streets can get food, skills, shower, or whatever. This was a whole set of tenants in the area that hadn't really been engaged with or understood. Increasingly we were being approached by people who wanted to put on street parties or cool events in the area, and we knew that at certain times of the day there were trollies being pushed, or people living in the streets would gather or be sleeping. And we did not have the information on how we could put up these events without displacing those people. We needed to understand that.*¹¹⁵

Opportunities for this work to feed into the final *Urban Design Framework* remained limited, and the study was not integrated in the proposed vision. Indeed, whilst the *Property Report* (2011) and *Creative Industries Survey* (2011) are both

¹¹⁴ Consultant, Independent (worked on the Fringe), 2017, INT33-TF-Cons, Social development officer, CCID, 2017, INT35-TF-PPP

¹¹⁵ Program manager at the Cape Town Partnership, involved in the Fringe project, 2017, INT24-TF-CTP

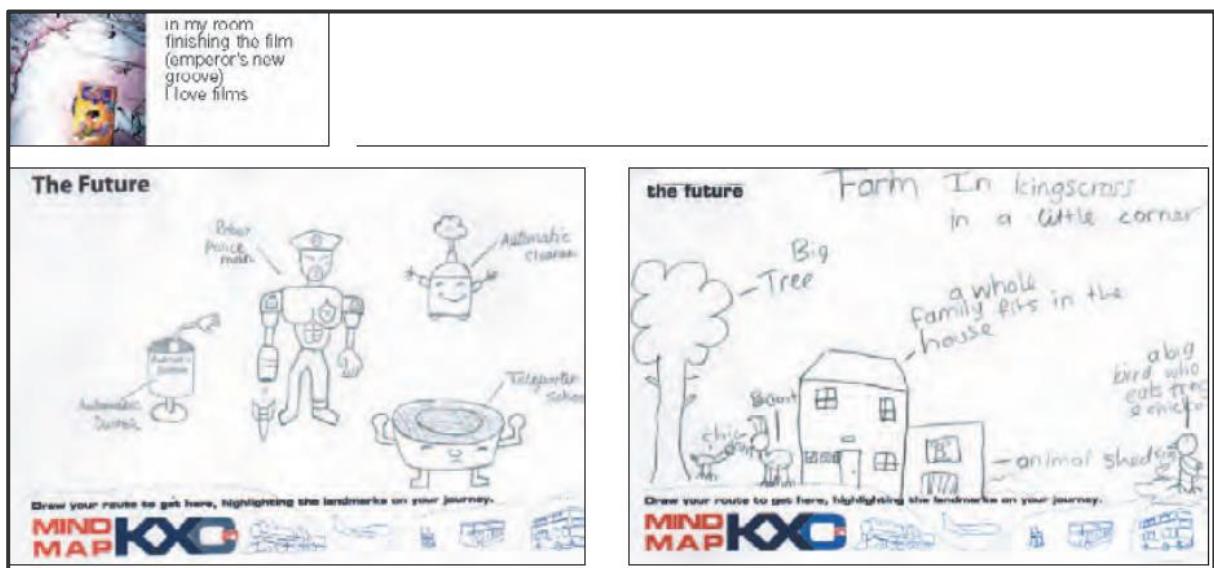
mentioned, the framework does not mention the *Street People Vignettes* (2012) once. This focus on creative businesses and property owners is perhaps unsurprising in a project that aimed to create a creative cluster from its inception. However, it reveals how the act of abstracting and making visible different communities - in this instance by surveying, mapping, listing - contributes to defining whose needs the redevelopment will address. Simultaneously, the act of not counting is political, for it conceals the experiences of other groups through their invisibilisation (see chapter 2) and limit their ability to partake in the production of abstract urban visions, effectively excluding them from assemblages of urban expertise. This selective enumeration made possible by the use of particular knowledge devices was a prerequisite for the performance of an abstract urban plan that sought to turn the eastern part of the CBD into a design quarter.

In KCC, like in the Fringe, Argent commissioned several studies aiming to define/enrol the local community early on in the master-planning process. Almost as soon as it was appointed as a developer for the site in 2002, Argent commissioned Fluid, a consultancy specialising in public engagement, to design a large-scale consultation exercise and to produce three *Statements of Community Engagement* (2004a, 2004b, 2004c). As in the Fringe, the studies sought to simultaneously describe the communities likely to be affected by the scheme and to integrate their knowledge and needs into the design of the project. However, the role of these reports is perhaps more ambiguous in the KCC case. One specific community was clearly singled out from the onset of the consultation (first phase from February to July 2002): schoolchildren and young people. Representatives from the King's Cross Team highlighted Argent's strong focus on the youth, concluding that "they did a great job, spent a lot of time in schools meeting people."¹¹⁶ In fact, a preliminary report focusing exclusively on this community was

¹¹⁶ Former head of the King's Cross Team, 2016, INT12-KCC-LA

published as soon as 2002 (*Youth Consultation Report 2002*). This focus was motivated by the fact that many of these children would “be the inhabitants of the future King’s Cross, and will be raising families of their own by the time it is nearing completion” (*Youth Consultation Report 2002*, p. 8), and also because of the “high levels of deprivation in the area.”¹¹⁷ A mix of methods were used by the consultants to identify their needs and aspirations, including face to face interviews, school visits, focus groups, mind maps, hotspot maps, site visits, participatory films and a website (figure 1).

Figure 1: Example of Future Mind Maps



Source: King’s Cross Central Statement of Community Engagement (2004c).

This community was made visible through a standalone report (*Statement of Community Engagement 2004c*) assembling images of the mind map, of the consultation website, alongside a map of the different youth organisations consulted (map 4). The report also provides a narrative description of their needs and

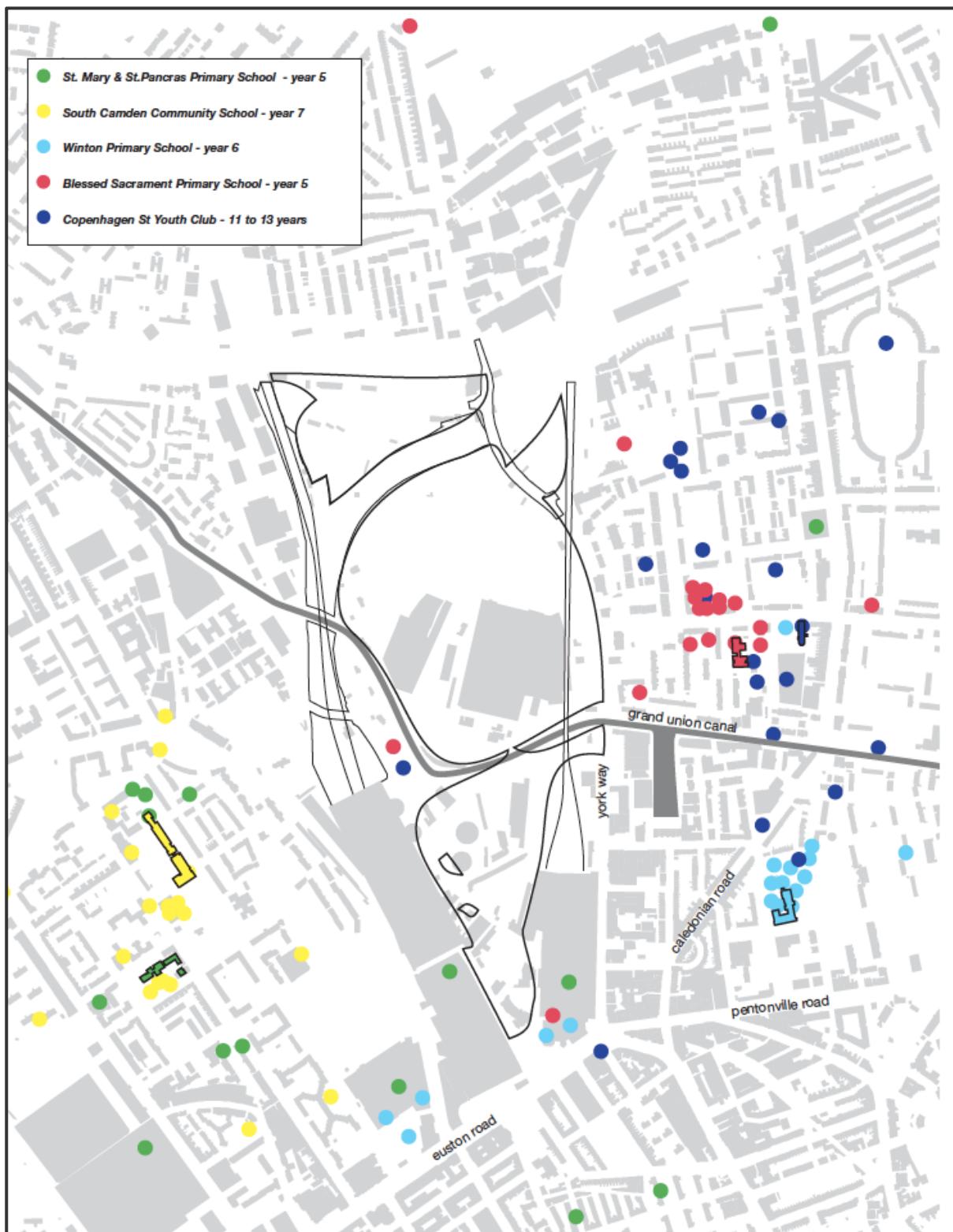
¹¹⁷ Former head of Argent, 2016, INT3-KCC-Rea

expectations from the redevelopment. School children and youths were the only community explicitly enumerated in this case (despite the ethnic and social diversity characterising King's Cross, London Borough of Camden 2003). Instead of singling out different communities of beneficiaries - as was the case in the Fringe - the community in King's Cross was enumerated through the use of large numbers. In several reports, Argent's representatives emphasise the scope of the consultation to show support for the project:

We have talked with, and presented to, over 4,000 people since July 2001, including representatives of over 150 community, business and other organisations. We have been encouraged by a good response and we are very grateful to everyone that has taken part. (*Framework Findings* 2003, p. 3)

The '4,000' number is mobilised repeatedly across documents; for instance, one of the statements of community engagement states that: "*approximately 450 written, video or workshop responses to the Framework proposals and ideas, plus ongoing meetings and dialogue with over 4,500 people*" (*Statement of Community Engagement* 2004a, p. 3, emphasis added). Various other technical reports refer to the 'local communities' in their plural and potentially diverse form (e.g. *Public Realm Strategy*, *Regeneration Strategy*, *Environmental Impact Assessment*, *Implementation Strategy* 2004) whilst at the same time stressing the consultation of "*4000 people and representatives of over 150 community, business and other organizations.*" This does not mean that different constituencies (e.g. women's group, churches, BAME groups) were not consulted, but community engagement reports did not single those out explicitly.

Map 4: Youth organisations involved in Fluid/Argent consultation



Source: King's Cross Central Statement of Community Engagement (2004c).

The use of an aggregate number attested to the scope of the consultation exercise yet contributed to negating local communities' intrinsic plurality and differentiated needs. It thus defined the community in a way that erased the existence of specific (and potentially oppositional) groups and contributed to the apolitical categorisation of 'the local community' as a whole entity. Why apolitical? Because this number (4,000) was subsequently mobilised by the developer to undermine further community opposition, on the grounds that a large number of people had already been consulted and had opportunities to feed into the design of the KCC vision. As reported by one interviewee Argent and its team "would always refer to the thousands of people they met"¹¹⁸ to discard opposition to their plans. This was corroborated by other community members highlighting that the developer was "very proud of these large numbers"¹¹⁹ but paid little attention to communities' needs, especially in relation to social housing. The heterogeneity of what constitutes the community is negated through the existence of a large number providing the sufficient "proof" that all views have been heard and considered. This knowledge device played an important role in a) indeed enrolling different constituencies into the assemblage through the consultation exercise (not all of them opposed the scheme); b) foregrounding the legitimacy of the scheme into its democratic quality (large consultation numbers, focus on youth) and; c) undermining subsequent community opposition to the project by framing it as marginal, thus diminishing community organisations' power to contest the scheme.

Finally, in KCC as in the Fringe, several buildings were brought into the assemblage and framed as objects of intervention. This is reflected in the two *Heritage Baseline* studies (2004), but also in the *Planning Statement* (2004, p. 14, revised in 2005), which indicates which buildings are to be destroyed and which

¹¹⁸ Cally Rail Group member, 2016, INT5-KCC-Comm

¹¹⁹ Ibid., also corroborated by King's Cross Railway Lands Group founding member, 2016, INT10-KCC-Comm, Academic Activist, 2016, INT4-KCC-Ac

Argent “proposes to retain” as part of the redevelopment, such as the Great Northern Hotel, the German Gymnasium, the Fish and Coal Offices or the Granary building (all iconic landmarks of KCC today) (see also Argent’s initial *Framework for Regeneration* 2002, p. 11). These two cases illustrate that by grouping different human communities living in / expected to live in, or to be affected by the redevelopment schemes, knowledge devices create abstract communities (present and future). Identifying them, in turn, supports their recognition in the redevelopment process. Similarly, enumerating the non-human characteristics of a site contributes to describing (and thus reifying) what it is made of, and to identify what needs to be destroyed, refurbished or preserved, and under which conditions (for instance in the case of listed buildings). Thus, as explained in chapter 2, the process of who/what gets enumerated, how and by whom, is political (e.g. Weru 2004, Karanja 2010, Appadurai 2012). Technical reports inscribing maps, statistics and lists perform the communities and objects they describe. They make them visible and worthy of attention; they call for specific interventions (preservation, demolition, etc.) directed towards them. The role of knowledge devices in assigning a value - through qualification - to these human and non-human communities is further explored in the next section.

6.1.2 Qualification

Simultaneous to the process of enumeration is that of qualification. Both are constitutive of the act of abstract division. To put it simply, this process of qualification contributes to determining the value (architectural, economic, social, cultural, environmental) of different elements that compose a given site (Beauregard 2005). This concept is borrowed from Callon, Méadel and Rabeharisoa who use it in their discussion of the qualification of goods in specific markets. For them, “*a good can be defined by a combination of characteristics that establish its singularity*” (Callon et al. 2002, p. 198). Similarly, in redevelopment projects, different elements that constitute a given area can be singularised, their characteristics established, which in turn determines their value in abstract urban

visions. Various knowledge devices play a key role in revealing and reifying these qualities: again, technical reports, statistics, and surveys deployed in the process of qualification are tools that contribute to the singularisation, abstraction and reification of the qualities of, and value attached to, a particular object, building, or group of people (Callon 2007). The power of knowledge devices also resides in their apparent neutrality, as such qualities seem to be established logically through objective scientific assessments. Yet, my two case studies demonstrate this process of qualification to be inherently political.¹²⁰

In the Fringe, the value of the creative community was established by abstracting statistics on the positive economic impact of the creative economy in cities worldwide in general (in documents such as the *East City Design Initiative* 2010, the *Fringe Business Case* 2011, which both fed into the *Fringe Urban Design Framework*). Other devices included case studies highlighting the contribution of the creative sector: for instance, references to 22@Barcelona infused the *East City Design Initiative* (2010) report that subsequently fed into the Fringe design framework. Such devices aimed to provide robust evidence of the economic contribution of the creative sector to urban development. By emphasising the economic value of the creative industries, knowledge devices contributed to the scientific justification of a redevelopment project targeting their needs. Furthermore, qualification participates in the hierarchisation of needs, for instance through the de-valorisation of particular actors.

¹²⁰ There is a well-established body of scholarship in economic sociology and STS looking at these issues through the lens of valuation (see for instance the edited volume *Making Things Valuable* by Kornberger et al. 2015). More recently, the politics of valuation has been a topic of geographic (urban or not) inquiry especially with regards to the valuation of nature by financial markets (see for instance Kay and Kenney-Lazar 2017, Christophers 2018).

In the Fringe, the homeless community is shown to have a negative impact on other actors' perception of the Fringe area thus threatening its economic potential:

The Fringe has for decades been viewed as a marginal location in the city [...] the lack of street facing activity across most of the area similarly contributes to this perception, as does the presence of a large number of homeless people [...] the Fringe is perceived to have a high crime rate, due perhaps to the poor lighting and presence of homeless people [...] Alcoholism is also perceived to be an issue in the area, perhaps because of the presence of many taverns - including a bottle store purportedly selling alcohol to inebriated homeless people. (*Fringe Urban Design Framework* 2012, p. 53)

The homeless community is only mentioned three times in the final design framework, with reference to the challenges they pose to the implementation of the project (i.e. threatening the attractivity of the East City for investors and businesses). This contributes to further de-valuing and marginalising their needs in the formulation of abstract urban visions, as this community is framed as a potential barrier to economic development (a rather classic story of sanitary and exclusionary urban discourse, I come back to this in the next chapter). In KCC, the politics of qualification occurred principally in relation to heritage buildings. The qualification of the heritage (and relatedly commercial) value attached to these buildings occurred through the use of particular devices, in this case technical heritage statements, which aimed to reify the qualities of the different buildings located on site to justify their conservation or demolition (based on existing legal requirements on listed buildings) (*Heritage Baseline* studies 2004: part 1 and 2). This qualification process was met with resistance, and community organisations produced counter-expertise to support the retention of buildings targeted for demolition, or to propose different uses for the buildings that would be retained. For instance, the KXCAAC produced an alternative report *Respecting the Railway lands: KXCAAC reconsiders King's Cross Central* (2005). The report reframes and contests the qualification proposed by Argent by emphasising the cultural and symbolic value of the heritage buildings located on the site, and by developing proposals for alternative uses for

those buildings. For instance, it integrates existing Borough-level planning regulations to oppose the demolition of the Culross Building proposed by Argent and to suggest alternative usages for the building:

Argent believe that it is essential to have high-value new office blocks in the immediate vicinity of the two historic stations [...] However good the design, there will be little to distinguish the area from any other up-market new commercial development. If, instead, on emerging from the stations the traveller sees the German Gymnasium, perhaps reconfigured as a gallery and cafe, with small workshops and ateliers in the Stanley Buildings, landscaped between, they will be drawn into the site in a unique way. Moving along the Boulevard, through Culross Buildings, will be like entering a walled city. (*Respecting the Railway Lands* 2005, p. 21, further discussed p. 23)

The alternative report played a key role in the negotiation of building qualification and was instrumental in marshalling community opposition to various aspects of the scheme, including the demolition of the former social housing estate and the design of public spaces and housing around Regent's canal, which divides the site in two (this is further explored in chapter 9). This process of qualification is thus open to contestation, it is never permanent: there is "*a (continuous) process of qualification-requalification*" (Callon et al. 2002, p. 199). Enumeration and qualification are constitutive features of the divisive power of knowledge devices. Isolating the human and non-human components of a redevelopment site and assigning them a qualitative or quantitative value allows these to become objects of intervention. The process through which components are enumerated and qualified is political and matters as much as the process through which other elements are found absent, as shown in the case of homeless communities in the Fringe, or in the case of large community numbers in King's Cross. Hence, it is necessary to understand how the combination of different knowledge devices maintains a temporarily stabilised and abstract definition of what a site is, what and who it is made of, and what the qualities of those seemingly constitutive attributes are. These momentarily maintained abstract definitions rest on enumerations and qualifications that are always incomplete, contestable, mediated by the use of specific knowledge

devices, and limited by their inherent representational constraints. By temporarily maintaining a coherent definition of the essential qualities of a site, devices of division in turn allow real estate actors, local governments and sometimes communities to manipulate urban space, to control (aspects of) what it is made of. This ability to control urban space is made possible by the power of knowledge devices in providing the illusion that the future can be predicted and navigated. Knowledge devices play a key role in supporting the performative power of abstract urban visions, by enrolling elements that can be manipulated into the assemblage, and by endowing various actors with the tools to navigate concrete spatial interventions.

6.2 *Devices of control: navigating the future*

In my two case studies, knowledge devices are used to predict the outcomes - economic, environmental, social - of particular interventions linked to the redevelopment projects. These describe different scenarios and related impacts. In both cases, project leaders commissioned transport studies (in the two cases those were commissioned to Arup 2004, 2013) and economic impact assessments (Fringe *EIA* 2011) or financial viability assessments (Argent 2005 - *undisclosed*). In the KCC scheme, other assessments such as environmental statements, regeneration strategies, heritage assessments, etc. were commissioned. Such knowledge devices played a key function providing roadmaps for action to navigate uncertainties related to both urban projects, in order to mitigate risks and to achieve desired outcomes. Through formulating anticipations about the future state of a site, and linking those to specific interventions, such devices created a sense of control over urban space and its transformations and invite particular actions. Such projections themselves are imbued with uncertainty as:

The expectations substituting for the unachievable calculation-based anticipation of future states are not based on observable facts but on contingent assumptions about future developments. (Beckert 2013, p. 226)

The use of projective devices in both projects (but also in urban decision-making more generally, Raco 2014a) makes it necessary to further unpack how they shape actors' behaviours and expectations, how they exert influence within assemblages of urban expertise, and how they shape the performance of abstract urban visions. In what follows, I focus on the use of economic predictions and modelling tools used in both cases to explore the dual process through which those devices achieve an illusion of control that seeks to guide concrete spatial interventions. On the one hand, they do so by producing quantifiable representations of future impacts of the redevelopment projects. On the other hand, they do so by establishing causal mechanisms and highlighting the parameters - or conditions - which lead to the achievement of desired outcomes and the mitigation/management of projects' negative/undesirable consequences.

6.2.1 Predicting impacts

Firstly, by providing estimates about future economic conditions and expected returns, devices of control seek to provide apparent certainty about the economic gains that can be derived from implementing (and investing in) both projects. Their combination into a complex, quantitative and predictive knowledge apparatus contributes to reinforcing various actors' illusion of control over future events, for instance to maintain their expected profit levels in the case of Argent, and/or to deliver the economic benefits the scheme promises, in the case of the Fringe. By creating a sense of certainty over future impacts, devices of control play a key role in generating trust among investors (public or private) and project partners regarding the value (economic and financial) of redevelopment projects, and motivates action in specific sites - thus partaking in the enactment of abstract

schemes through actual interventions.¹²¹ I exemplify this claim by analysing the function of risks management plans and economic impact studies in KCC and the Fringe respectively. In KCC, as mentioned by the project leader, anticipating risks and benefits related to a (large-scale) redevelopment project was essential as developers “are in it for over a decade.”¹²²¹²³ As highlighted in the *Implementation Strategy*, the costs associated with redeveloping the former railway lands were deemed significant by Argent:

King's Cross Central is a large, complex brownfield site. Delivering development, on any significant scale, would require very substantial infrastructure costs to be incurred. For example, extensive mains water, site drainage, electricity, gas, service diversion, earth works, highway and public realm works would be required. (*Implementation Strategy* 2004, p. 18)

The identification of the costs associated with the complexity of the site provided the technical legitimacy for the design of a scheme that was “*likely to offer its investors an appropriate rate of return; i.e. one that reflects the risks involved*” (*Implementation Strategy* 2004, p. 13). When asked to discuss their anticipated rate of return for such a risky project during the interview, both the developer and former members of the King's Cross Team avoided to answer the question directly, referring to average, “standard rates of return you would find across the industry.”¹²⁴ In London, the rate of return for developers and their investors is typically around 20%

¹²¹ This is particularly important in our two cases because both redevelopment schemes appeared risky to investors, local governments and developers themselves for they implied long timeframes and complex operations.

¹²² Former head of Argent, 2016, INT3-KCC-Rea

¹²³ Although investors always have the power to exit the project and resell their share in the project (within the scope of contractual arrangements).

¹²⁴ Former head of the King's Cross Team, 2016, INT12-KCC-LA, also mentioned by Former head of Argent, 2016, INT3-KCC-Rea

according to UK planning regulations (Grayston 2017).¹²⁵ The *Implementation Strategy* in its section 4 predicts a series of risks that need to be controlled to enhance the economic viability of the project and introduces a mitigation strategy for each of these (p. 13-18). The report states that the project “*is only deliverable if it proves to be economically viable*” (*Implementation Strategy* 2004, p. 13). The risks identified in this predictive exercise include planning and regulatory control risks; engineering risks; construction risks; letting risks for commercial offices, leisure and retail buildings; sales risks for residential and other developments; finance risks; competition risks and political risks. This device of control (i.e. *Implementation Strategy*) which identifies several project risks also plays a political function in that it motivates the design of schemes that can generate profit (typically, commercially-driven schemes focusing on high end housing and retail space, as opposed to affordable housing) to compensate for the costs associated with redevelopment risks. Control is achieved through the use of knowledge devices that allow the identification of risks and that enrol actors such as the local and national state as co-risk mitigators, notably through the design of flexible planning instruments that would allow the developer to navigate market uncertainties (I describe these instruments further in chapter 8). In the Fringe, devices of control played a key role in predicting positive economic impacts of the scheme on the local area and on municipal revenues, to justify its implementation. This was deemed instrumental by the Partnership in its task of convincing the Province to unlock further public funding to implement the project.¹²⁶

¹²⁵ This figure can however be negotiated, behind closed doors, between the local authority in charge of granting planning permission and the developer.

¹²⁶ Fringe Project Leader, Cape Town Partnership, 2017, INT51-TF-CTP, Program manager at the Partnership, involved in the Fringe, 2017, INT-24-TF-CTP, Consultant, Independent (worked on the Fringe), 2017, INT33-TF-Con

As highlighted in the Economic Impact Assessment (EIA hereafter) for the Fringe:

it was necessary to determine how many existing businesses might relocate and how many new businesses might start up at the Fringe. [...] in order to determine whether the Fringe proposal has economic merit. (*Economic Impact Assessment 2011*, p. iii)

To prove the economic benefits of the Fringe, the report used cost/benefit analysis to determine the anticipated economic value of the project but also to highlight the underlying drivers of growth and guide investment decisions towards supporting those. The report concludes that the Fringe is:

not only economically viable it is also economically robust. The costs have a present value (PV) of R420m. The benefits have a PV of R1 527m. This means that it has a net present value of R1 106m, a benefit cost ratio (BCR) of 3.6 and an economic internal rate of return of 24%. [...] Total direct and indirect jobs are expected to amount to 1 495 in 2012, 495 in 2013, 502 in 2014, 300 in 2015 and 406 in 2016. It is expected that as many as 3 573 direct and indirect jobs would be created and sustained by 2031. (Ibid., p. iv-vi)

It is estimated that in 2012 there would be 6 jobs created per R1m public expenditure. This amount increases until by 2031 there are 255 jobs per R1m public expenditure. [...] Total tax generation is expected to increase from R54m in 2012 to R146m in 2031. (Ibid., p. vii)

In the Fringe therefore, the cost/benefit analysis aimed to prove the contribution of the scheme to local economic growth, providing legitimacy to the project whilst feeding into the pro-growth agenda of both the City and the Province (as discussed in chapter 4) in the hope of incentivising firstly public (and then private) investments into the project. In other words, by predicting the scheme's anticipated economic benefits, the report also sought to convince local authorities to co-perform the Fringe vision, through investments. The *Property Strategy* (2011, p. 10) also provided evidence of the future increase in municipal revenue rates in

the area (all tied to an increase in local property values). The local government was often perceived as more 'risk adverse' than real estate actors by representatives from the Partnership¹²⁷ and property sector.¹²⁸ In Cape Town's case, as previously discussed, the difficulty in unlocking public funding can be attributed to both political priorities and scarce public resources for transformative projects. The Fringe project leaders were pressured by public authorities (especially the Province) to produce a *Business Case* highlighting the economic value of the project. Thus, producing optimistic estimates of the economic benefits of the project was essential to unlocking future public funding and to incentivise government actors to co-perform the Fringe vision. The *Property Strategy*¹²⁹ and the *EIA* provide such evidence, in a rather optimistic way, as illustrated by this excerpt from the latter:

Two assumptions were made about new business starting up at the Fringe. The first was that they would have the same growth as business currently located at the Fringe. The second was that 40% of this new business would fail. It is realised that this is considerably lower than the Business South Africa estimate that 80% of new businesses fail within the first five years. (*Economic Impact Assessment* 2011, p. iv)

The *EIA* assumptions regarding the rate of business failure are extremely optimistic compared to what nation-wide estimates tend to anticipate. Nevertheless, and regardless of the optimistic (unrealistic?) nature of these assumptions, the conclusions of the report and the economic contributions it highlighted were mobilised by the Fringe project lead in various meetings with local officials and property owners (e.g. presentation to the Fringe steering committee 2013) to call

¹²⁷ Fringe Project Manager, Cape Town Partnership, 2017, INT50-TF-CTP

¹²⁸ Local Property Owner, 2017, INT32-TF-Rea

¹²⁹ *Property Strategy* 2011, p. 11

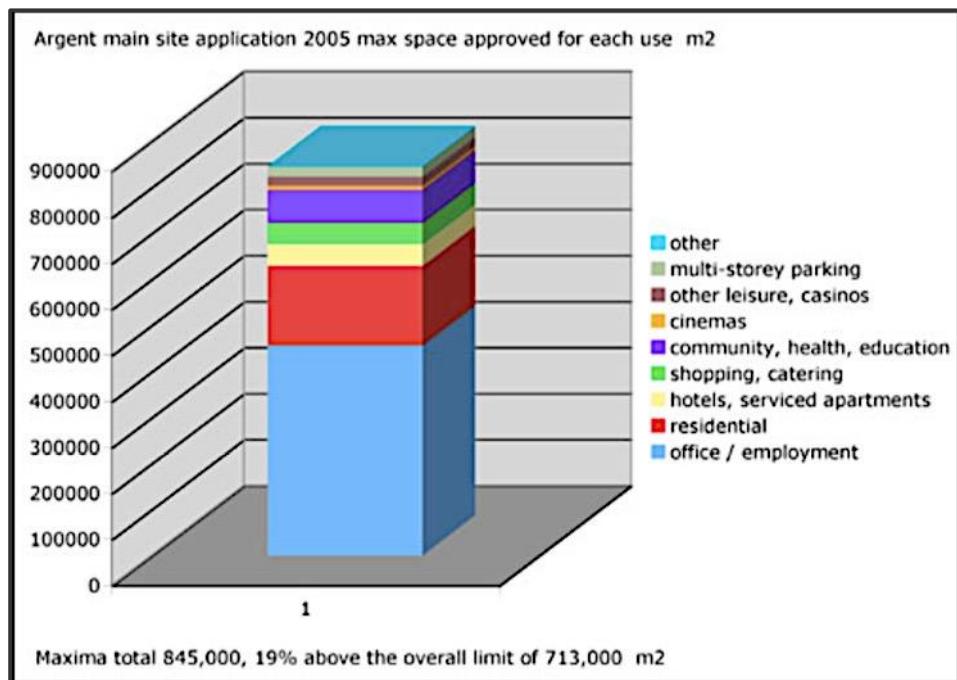
for investments and interventions, that is, to call for actions that would enact and perform the Fringe vision.

6.2.2 Controlling (re)development parameters

These devices of control also define the conditions under which the financial and economic value of the scheme can be achieved, by establishing causal relationships between concrete interventions and predicted outcomes. These predictions indeed rest on a range of assumptions which allow (at least in theory) the actors involved in the implementation of the scheme to control and manipulate those baseline conditions/parameters to achieve a redevelopment project's expected (economic) outcomes. Such assumptions can be obtained by building on the information gathered through devices of division - for instance, the expected economic value of a scheme can be calculated by assigning a rental price to the space available for commercial or residential use in a particular building, based on this building's characteristic. In KCC, economic and financial expectations determined the allocation of the site's available floor space to different uses. Indeed, the undisclosed financial viability assessment was used to predict the cost/profit ratio associated with the redevelopment under different scenarios of floor space use, and to justify the final floor space allocation to different activities¹³⁰ as illustrated in figure 2.

¹³⁰ Former head of the King's Cross Team, 2016, INT12-KCC-LA, Senior Planner at the GLA, 2016, INT6-KCC-LA, Former head of Argent, 2016, INT3-KCC-Rea, King's Cross Railway Lands Group employee, 2016, INT11-KCC-Comm

Figure 2: Floor space per use in the King's Cross Central application



Source: Edwards 2009, adapted from Argent's 2005 planning application.

As they enable the abstract manipulation of different parameters related to financial gains (in this case floor space allocation to different usages) devices of control create the illusion that projects' risks can be fully anticipated and mitigated to achieve economic gain. The actors that use and produce those models are well aware that those projections are approximate and come with a degree of uncertainty attached to them and the assumptions they rely on (Zaloom 2006). Nevertheless, devices such as financial viability assessments are used extensively in planning decision-making in London (Christophers 2014): they occupy a central position in assemblages of urban expertise and they contribute to stabilise and maintain configurations where the calculation of financial risks and economic returns influence the content of abstract visions for a given project. They hold power in determining what can and cannot be built, how, when, and where (Guironnet et al. 2016). Hence, they influence the phasing of the project and its design.

In the final planning application submitted in 2005, Argent proposed the mix of use presented in figure 2, which can

be described as a predominantly-office mixed-use development of 26 hectares. The permission is innovative in that it allows the developer roughly 20% flexibility to vary the mix of uses within the total 713,000 m² floor space permitted. (Edwards 2009, p. 19)

This flexibility that allows the developer to change 20% of the total floor space usage was justified by the need to secure financial gains in the event of economic turmoil as highlighted by the former head of the King's Cross Team:

*We built in some flexibility regarding usages [...] with this type of project, you can't predict everything, developers also need to adapt to the market, they are the ones taking the risks.*¹³¹

Pessimistic assumptions about potential economic recession justified the design of a scheme that would focus on office buildings and high-end residential and that would include 20% of flexibility in floor space allocation. The assumptions - both positive and negative - established in those predictive financial models intend to guide concrete urban interventions but also allow for flexibility in their performance. Indeed, the abstract visions themselves can be revised directly in response to market conditions. Putting such devices at the heart of urban design and decision-making on redevelopment schemes implies that redevelopment schemes also perform market values in and through urban space. This process is discussed in great length in chapter 8. In the Fringe, as previously mentioned, optimistic

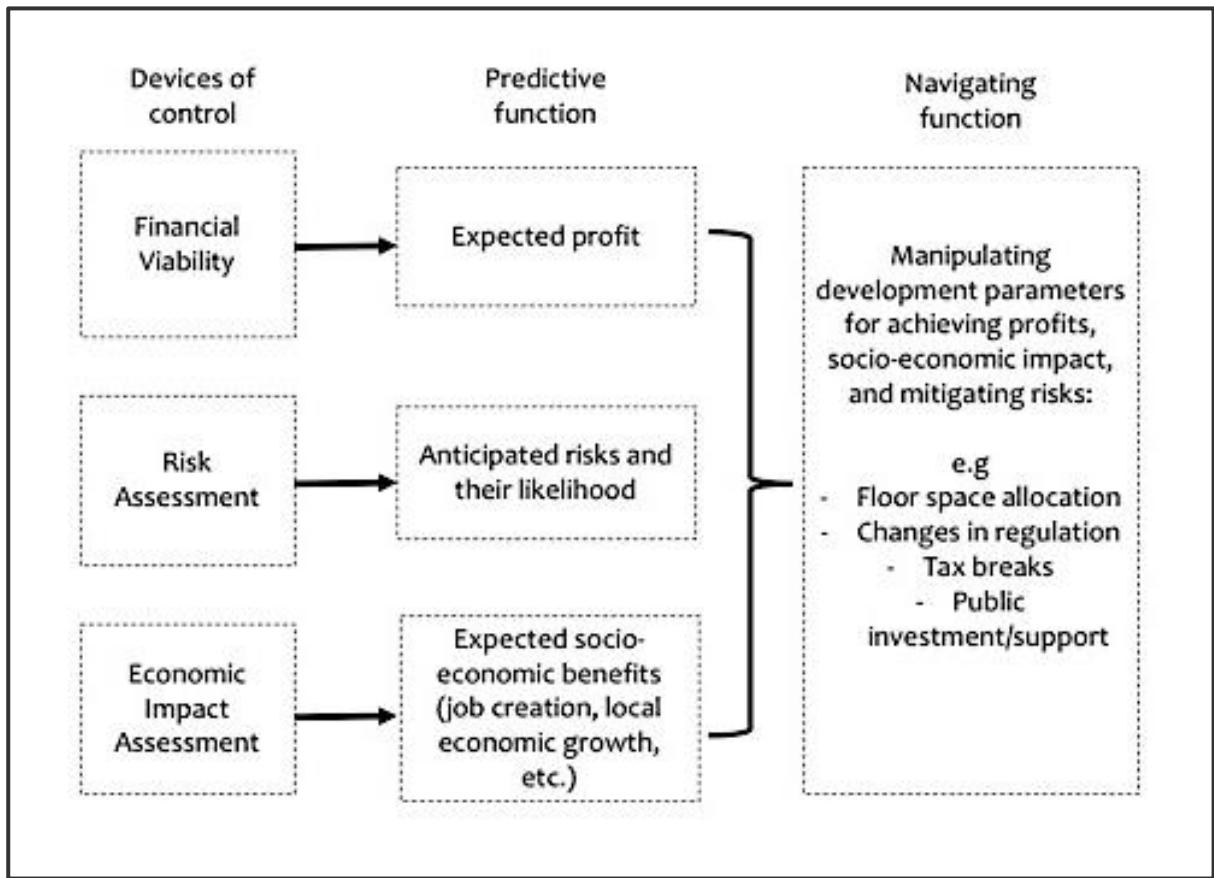
¹³¹ Former head of the King's Cross Team, 2016, INT12-KCC-LA

assumptions were intended to incentivise government investment in the area, and the *EIA* provided specific guidance as to how economic growth could be achieved. More specifically, the report emphasises the need to nurture clustering and incubation in the Fringe:

The overall conclusion from all the sensitivity analyses is that two variables hold the key to economic success. The first is the clustering effect for the creative industries and the second is the benefits from incubating. In the absence of the clustering effect the incubators still deliver sufficient benefits to make the project economically viable. However, it is the clustering effect that delivers stellar benefits and if the project is to be economically optimised then the clustering effect needs to be nurtured. (*Economic Impact Assessment* 2011, p. vi)

In this quote, the relationship between clustering/ incubating and economic success is evidenced through references to *sensitivity tests*. The formulation adopted in the report tends to indicate some causal relationship between clustering, incubating and growth, as it is stated that those “*two variables*” (clustering and incubation) “**hold the key to economic success**” (my emphasis). The identification of those “keys to” economic growth and job creation are subject to a series of assumptions about future economic trajectories, and the Fringe *Urban Design Framework* recommended the activation of a series of levers that would allow to unlock co-location and growth in the area - for instance, subsidies to the installation of high-speed broadband and the creation of facilities (co-working spaces, low rent offices) for creative businesses to cluster in the Fringe. It is essential to look into the structure of those devices of control to understand how abstract calculations and inscriptions of risks, impacts and mitigation strategies into assessment reports in turn shape concrete urban transformations. Figure 3 summarises how devices of control directly shape actions in and over urban space, highlighting their predictive and navigating functions.

Figure 3: Devices of control - a schematic view



Source: Author.

Devices that help predict and navigate the future (through abstract anticipations) are central in the maintenance of assemblages of urban expertise and in the performance of abstract visions, as they seek to guide actions over space and to give the illusion of control over future events. Devices of control, especially predictive models, are central to the notion of maintenance. Indeed, studies of financial modelling tools have shown that faulty models are often sticky: once their use has been embedded in a particular organisation, it is difficult to get rid of them, even when they are proven to be wrong. In turn, their use over time leads to the repetition of misguided actions over time and space, with actors performing these models and bringing them to life with unintended consequences, for instance in the case of economic crashes (Weber 2015, 2016). This was observed in contexts where actors knew these models to be, if not faulty, at least limited (Zaloom 2003, 2009). Thus devices of control shape actors' anticipations as much as their actions

in the present: their use shapes the content of redevelopment projects, their management and phasing. Indeed, to act according to plan, one needs to be able to formulate predictions about future events that might facilitate and/or hinder the realisation of what is stated in the plan: devices that aim to control the implementation of the plan, by producing knowledge about future events, perform this function. Spatial plans too, by assembling and inscribing such devices into a coherent abstract project, perform this navigating function. The performative power of spatial plans as well as their role in the maintenance of assemblages of urban expertise can be further grasped through the analysis of their ability to produce a coherent narrative that links past events, present actions and future developments. By providing this coherent fictional narrative, spatial plans can be read as knowledge devices that play a key function in projecting desirable urban futures (Davoudi et al. 2018).

6.3 Devices of projection: creating coalitions through fictional expectations

In these two cases, whilst devices of control gave project leaders (and the other actors they enrolled with them) the illusion of control over space and future events, a certain degree of fiction and imagination was needed to drive their actions towards a shared goal. As Latour puts it, any inquiry exploring the relationship between scientific work, politics and societal change needs to “*take writing and imagining craftsmanship into account*” (Latour 1986, p. 3). Indeed, whilst devices of control and division single out several aspects of a site and establish causal relationships between the manipulation of those and the achievement of desirable outcomes (or the mitigation of risks), the projective power of knowledge devices is central to the enactment and performance of abstract visions. Through the production of fictional sites, devices of projection provide a cohesive and unified narrative that seeks to guide actors’ present and future actions in space. Devices of projection, of a narrative and visual nature, were mobilised in the proposed spatial plans for the Fringe and KCC. They formulated logical yet fictional narratives about

what a site is, how it can be changed, and what it will be in the future. A useful notion to grasp the projective power of knowledge devices is that of *fictional expectations*. This term was introduced by Beckert who argues that economic agents' actions are motivated by "*the inhabitation in the mind of an imagined future state of the world and the beliefs in the causal mechanisms leading to this future state*" and that "*the decision-making of intentionally rational actors is anchored in fictions*" (Beckert 2013, p. 220). The causal mechanisms established by devices of control and devices of projection are assembled into fictions that help guide actors' behaviours under conditions of uncertainty and provide fictional anchor points towards which collective action can be oriented.¹³² In that sense, they hold performative power: they perform these fictions, inscribing them into material documents, and invite others to co-perform the fictions they describe. Devices of projection "*represent future events as if they were true*" (Ibid., p. 226). Spatial plans epitomise the enactment and inscription of such fictions. For instance, 'inspirational' or 'best practice' case studies in the Fringe and KCC fulfilled this function and contributed to position both projects into *meta-narratives* about desirable urban futures (Beauregard 2018). Comparison thus plays a key role in fictional story-telling. In KCC, one of the key case studies used to project what the area would become was the regeneration of Brindleyplace in Birmingham. The award-winning scheme was mobilised by the developer and throughout the plan (figure 4) "to show what they [we] could achieve in London."¹³³

¹³² See also Boudreau (2007) for a discussion of the mobilisation of spatial imaginaries in the formation of new political (and spatial) collectives.

¹³³ Former head of Argent, 2016, INT3-KCC-Rea

Figure 4: Brindleyplace case study

Brindleyplace, Birmingham



Brindleyplace – Argent Group

Brindleyplace, Birmingham, is one of the largest examples of traditionally master-planned mixed use development in the UK. The 17 acre development is adjacent to the International Convention Centre (a past winner of a BURA Best Practice Award) and the National Indoor Arena.

Brindleyplace is contained around two new public squares and comprises: 1.1m sq ft of office accommodation in 10 separate buildings, many of which have active ground floor uses; Symphony Court, 143 apartments and town houses and 35 serviced apartments; the Water's Edge, 65,000 sq ft of shops, restaurants and bars; City Inn, a 240 bedroom hotel (due for completion in December 2000); the Ikon Gallery, one of the UK's leading contemporary arts galleries; the Crescent Theatre with a 340 seat auditorium, a studio theatre, a workshop and ancillary facilities; a 900 space multi-storey car park complete with a 35,000 sq ft Living Well Health & Leisure Club and a convenience store; the National Sea Life Centre, England's largest aquarium attracting over 500,000 visitors a year

(Source: BURA Best Practice in Regeneration Awards 2000)

Source: King's Cross Central Regeneration Strategy (2005).

In the Fringe, such references were brought from other cities by the lead designer for the *Urban Design Framework* who looked at “inspiring examples of successful regeneration, place-making beyond the design elements [of the project].”¹³⁴ These included several examples from Barcelona including Las Ramblas and 22@ Barcelona, as previously mentioned, but also various examples from London (e.g. Soho, Broadway Market) and many more locations (mostly Global North cities) (figure 5). The choice of these cases was partly motivated by the designers’ own trajectory (having worked and been trained in the UK) but also by the global aspiration of the Fringe, which was being developed as part of Cape Town’s bid to become WDC (i.e. World Design Capital). Thus, it speaks to the ambition of embedding the Fringe into global success stories of design-led urban regeneration. Through references to (national or international) examples from elsewhere, the new schemes are shown to be well founded and feasible, for they resonate with other success stories. These references also provide a description of what desirable urban presents and futures look like. Hence, case studies of best practices and success stories play a key role in linking a particular site to broader narratives of urbanity and modernity (Watson 2014a). Furthermore, such devices are central in the construction of supportive political, economic and civic coalitions to perform abstract urban visions. Once the two projects have been positioned within the broader context of urban ‘success stories’, site-specific fictional expectations can unfold.

¹³⁴ Fringe lead urban design consultant, 2017, INT34-TF-Cons

Figure 5: Case studies used in the Fringe Urban Design Framework

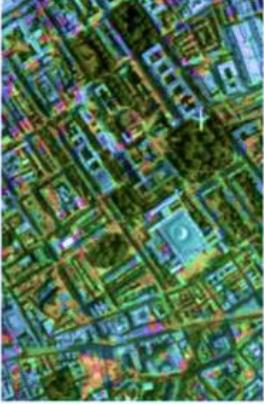


Fig. 3.1 The urban precinct: an aerial view of Bloomsbury in London.

In this chapter we explore issues of permeability, scale and grain, variation, public space and character, through an examination of:

- 22@Barcelona
- Sônia, London
- University Park, MIT, Boston (Massachusetts)
- Design London Precinct (including Royal College of Art and Imperial College), London
- MaRS Centre, Toronto, Canada



Fig. 3.2 Street: Las Ramblas in Barcelona.

Section 3.2 explores the street, in terms of scale and definition, activity, management, and pedestrian priority, by looking at:

- Broadway Market (London)
- Marchmont Street (London)
- Las Ramblas (Barcelona)
- New Road, Brighton (England)



Fig. 3.3 Detailing the public realm: New Road in Brighton, UK.

In Section 3.3 we explore the role of branding, street furniture, public art, and surface texture, with examples drawn from a wide range of places, including:

- Brighton, UK
- Bristol, UK
- Brussels, Belgium
- Sydney
- New York
- Tokyo
- Vancouver
- Roanoke, USA
- Mexico City
- Hong Kong
- Paris
- Karlsruhe
- Melbourne
- Zaragoza
- Madrid
- Copenhagen
- Bratislava



Fig. 3.4 Temporary activities: a street musician in Broadway Market, London.

Temporary activities includes markets, pop-up venues, performers and events, and pavement extensions, with precedents examined from:

- London
- Cape Town
- Johannesburg
- Melbourne
- Oakland
- New York
- Barcelona
- San Francisco

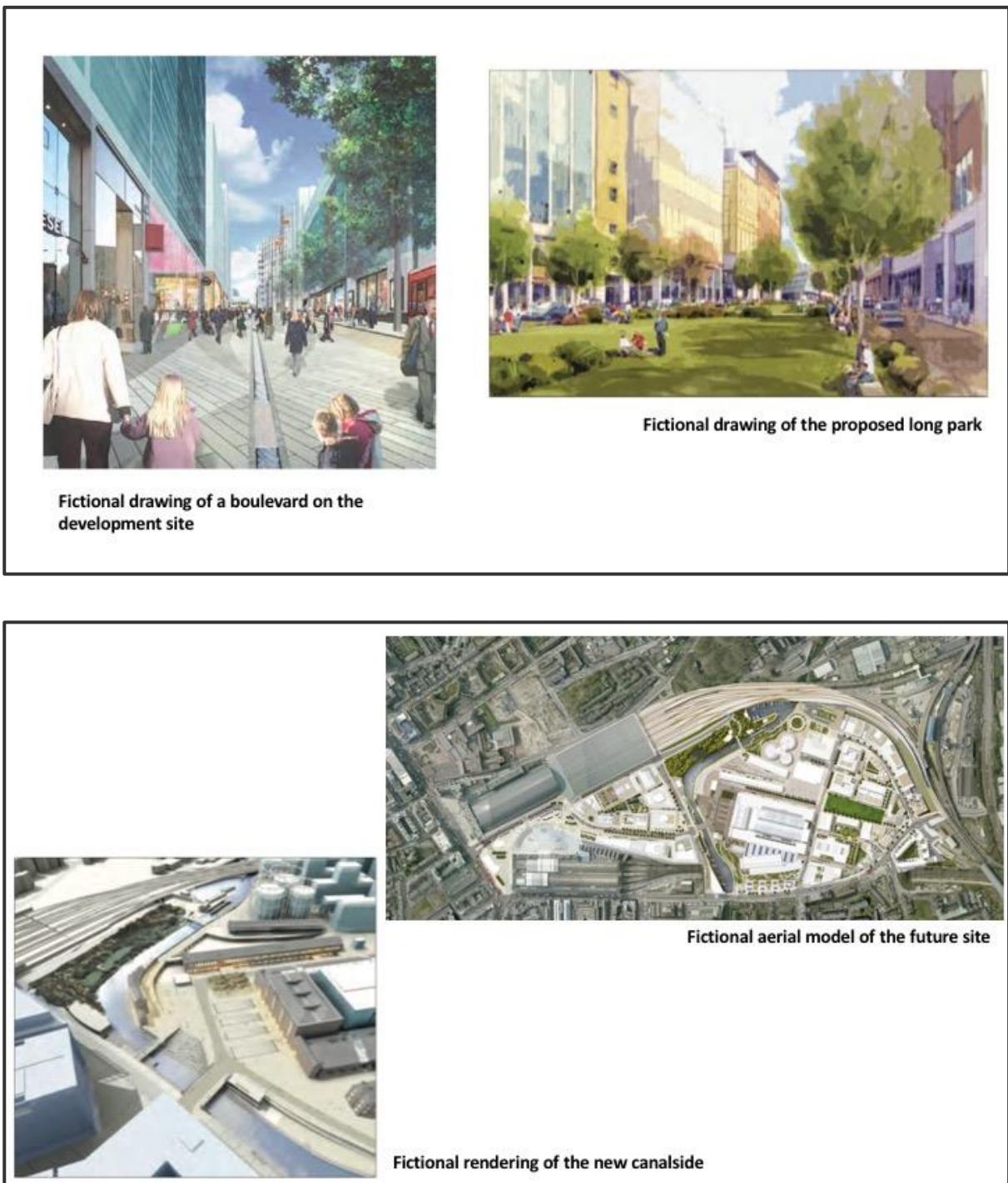
Source: *Fringe Urban Design Framework* (2012).

Sites' futures are narrated through text, images, 3D models (e.g. Harvey 2009, Pow 2014, Watson 2014a, Jones 2015, Glass 2018). Mandelbaum (1990) argues that plans can be read as stories and should be analysed as inherently discursive and persuasive devices. From Lefebvre's (1974) perspective, writing is actually a 'significant practice' in the sense that writing creates and formalises meaning where spoken words cannot really do that: in his view, writing is a 'transcendental illusion' in the sense that writing equates knowing and confounds itself with the real. Writing holds a performative power in that by telling the future, it invites actors to contribute to the realisation of the futures that are narrated. Devices that contain such narratives perform in and of themselves the stories they tell us. In KCC several documents (*Regeneration Strategy, Urban Design Statement, Public*

*Realm Strategy, Environmental Statement 2005) contain entire sections describing what the area will look like once the scheme has been implemented. The actual planning application did not contain any visuals, but these documents formed part of the application package. In the Fringe, the *Urban Design Framework* (2012) performed this narrative and fictional function. Often in those descriptions, it is not just writing that matters but its combination with visual inscriptions that provide a pictorial representation of the proposed projects. Text and images work together in the formulation of urban futures. Documents alternate images of specific elements of a site (like parks or canal) and aerial, totalising and panoptical visions of the area, viewed from above, which in turn create a sense of mastery and control over the entire site subject to redevelopment (figures 6 and 7). This god's eye view also gives a sense that the future can be known and presented in great detail, in turn contributing to this sense of possibility. Through these devices of projection, future projects are rendered both mobile and immutable (Latour 1986). Immutable in the sense that their physical inscription into plans and/or physical models reifies them to a degree. Mobile in the sense that those devices can be shared, moved, disseminated among different groups, they can travel from meeting rooms to news websites and promotional videos, locally and globally (e.g. McFarlane 2011a, Montero 2018b). Projected futures are fixed in the physicality of these plans and reports, which simultaneously provides an abstract vision of a site that can be mobilised, in the real world, to spark action. Through the physical inscription of detailed fictitious accounts, devices of projection play a key role in coalition building and in fostering engagement - especially from policy makers and the broader public - in support of the project. By bringing political collectives to life, such devices indeed support the performance of abstract urban visions, calling for various actions from different actors (Boudreau 2007). For instance, they call local policy makers into action, as their buy-in for specific projects in turn induces the granting of planning permission (discussed in the previous chapter, and in more depth in the next one). They call into action investors (individual or institutional) by convincing them to invest in a particular location (this will be discussed in chapter 8). They can also call the media into action, inviting them to promote the area to consumers and investors (the Fringe and King's Cross were both heavily promoted in local*

newspapers). They spark reactions from various publics (this is further explored in chapter 9).

Figure 6: Fictional images in King's Cross Central



Source: In order, from left to right and top to bottom, King's Cross Central Design Guidelines - South Side (2004), King's Cross Central Regeneration Strategy (2004), Allies and Morrison (2005), King's Cross Central Regeneration Strategy (2004).

Figure 7: Fictional images in the Fringe



Fictional model of the Fringe



Fig. 7.1.2. Temporary Shared Space Project (Marrington Transformer), by DesignSpaceAfrica.



Fictional examples of potential temporary use



Picture of a model for the main square in the Fringe

Source: *The Fringe Urban Design Framework* (2012).

Conclusion

This chapter addressed hypothesis 2 of this thesis, analysing the concrete power of knowledge devices. It has shown that in creating partial representations of the urban, knowledge devices shape how urban space is understood, they invite concrete actions over that space and contribute to bringing new collectives to life. Knowledge devices *do* three things in particular. Devices of division shape actors' perception and understanding of the urban world they live in as they selectively enumerate and qualify elements of a site. They bring these elements into assemblages of urban expertise. Fundamentally, such devices naturalise the constitutive features of a site, for instance determining who is/is not part of the local community, or what constitutes its architectural heritage, by way of inscriptions. They also create hierarchies of things and beings by assigning different qualities to those. This in turn determines their value in the redevelopment process. The contestation of the inclusion/exclusion induced by devices of division will be further explored in the next chapter. Devices of control are key in providing an illusion of control over the future impacts of urban development projects and their associated risks. They establish causal relationships and create the illusion that outcomes can be achieved, and risks mitigated through the manipulation of a set of defined objects of intervention. Such devices usually rest on complex modelling techniques and the capacity to use and understand those tools is unevenly spread amongst different categories of urban experts. Hence, devices of control play a key function in the maintenance of exclusionary assemblages of urban expertise, by preventing the inclusion of non-technical expertise in the formulation of abstract urban visions (or their contestation) (this is further discussed in the two next chapters). Devices of projection provide a sense of direction through the production of fictional expectations. They bring together an understanding of a site's current conditions (as defined by devices of division) and its potential (as defined by devices of control) in order to formulate narratives about the future. Devices of projection are thus central to the enrolment of various actors, local politicians, present and future residents, investors, the media, into the task of turning visions into concrete interventions. This unified narrative finds its convincing power in the mobilisation of

devices of control and of division, which provide the scientific justification for projected visions. Knowledge devices allow the transformation and manipulation of urban space, and of the human, natural, material elements urban space is made of. Through division, control and projection, knowledge devices do not only produce abstract representations of the urban, they also guide actions over space. The hierarchisation of knowledge devices in urban decision-making also contributes to maintaining specific devices as actants in the assemblages of urban expertise. Institutional and regulatory structures that make the use of particular knowledge tools and devices compulsory in decision-making processes over time (for instance by making it obligatory to produce economic viability assessments, environmental viability assessments, heritage studies and so on) contribute to maintaining the dominance of those in assemblages of urban expertise. It is the particular configuration of knowledge devices, regulations, and experts that determines what counts and does not count as relevant techniques to study the urban in different locations. This complex entanglement of devices, people, norms and institutions in particular places is the object of the next three chapters, which look into the politics contained within and emerging from the complex configurations of urban expertise in the Fringe and KCC.

Part 3: Maintaining, performing and contesting urban abstractions

Chapter 7: Assemblages of urban expertise in urban redevelopment projects

In this chapter I discuss how, through projectification, the urban itself is divided into parts which become the sites where various actors (public, private, communities) negotiate the production of urban abstractions at the project-level, that is, within specific and artificial sites. This chapter explores how powerful assemblages of urban expertise are articulated and maintained through urban redevelopment projects, what they do to the sites they intend to alter, and to the places these sites are embedded in. Here I analyse how assemblages of urban expertise are shaped by the institutional set-up and organisational structures of projects, and address three of the four hypotheses laid out in my introduction: hypothesis 1, which posits that the relational composition of assemblages of urban expertise shapes who and what holds power within those; hypothesis 3, arguing that the project has become a key site of abstraction, maintenance and performance; and hypothesis 4 stressing the importance of coordination capacity. In what follows, I build on documents' review, interviews with key informants and SNA to demonstrate two main points. First, I argue that as the urban becomes projectified (that is, governed by means of projects) urban expertise plays a key political function in redefining a city's internal boundaries, creating sites where abstraction can be performed and filling these with meaning (7.1). Second, I show that whilst urban projects support the maintenance of a techno-post-political consensus, their set up also paradoxically undermine the power of individual urban experts within assemblages of urban expertise (7.2).

7.1 Urban redevelopment projects and the redefinition of urban space

Urban projects often intend to transform existing neighbourhoods and/or create brand new ones. My two case studies exemplify such an attempt. They are characterised by the mobilisation of expertise in the production and superimposition of new names and identities upon pre-existing places. Thus, it can be argued that in the governance of spatial transformation by means of projects, urban expertise plays an important political function by producing legitimacy and meaning for the emergence of new inner-city sites. In that process, and as described in the previous chapters, experts and devices play a key role by dividing the urban (that is, redefining its boundaries) and qualifying the content of newly created sites. Through projects, new sites are produced in abstract and concrete terms. This proposition is taken forward in what follows.

7.1.1 Strategic planning and the division of urban space

Since the 1980s and the redevelopment of the Docklands in Canary Wharf, the London landscape has been transformed by large-scale development projects aiming to 'regenerate' former industrial lands (Fainstein 2001, Imrie et al. 2009). Various institutional mechanisms and planning reforms have supported the development of London in a piecemeal fashion and facilitated the inclusion of the private sector in regeneration efforts. Most notably and as mentioned in chapter 4, the creation of Opportunity Areas (OA) as a way to govern the spatial transformations has provided the strategic backbone for the projectification of urban regeneration efforts since the creation of the GLA (2001).¹³⁵ These are designated

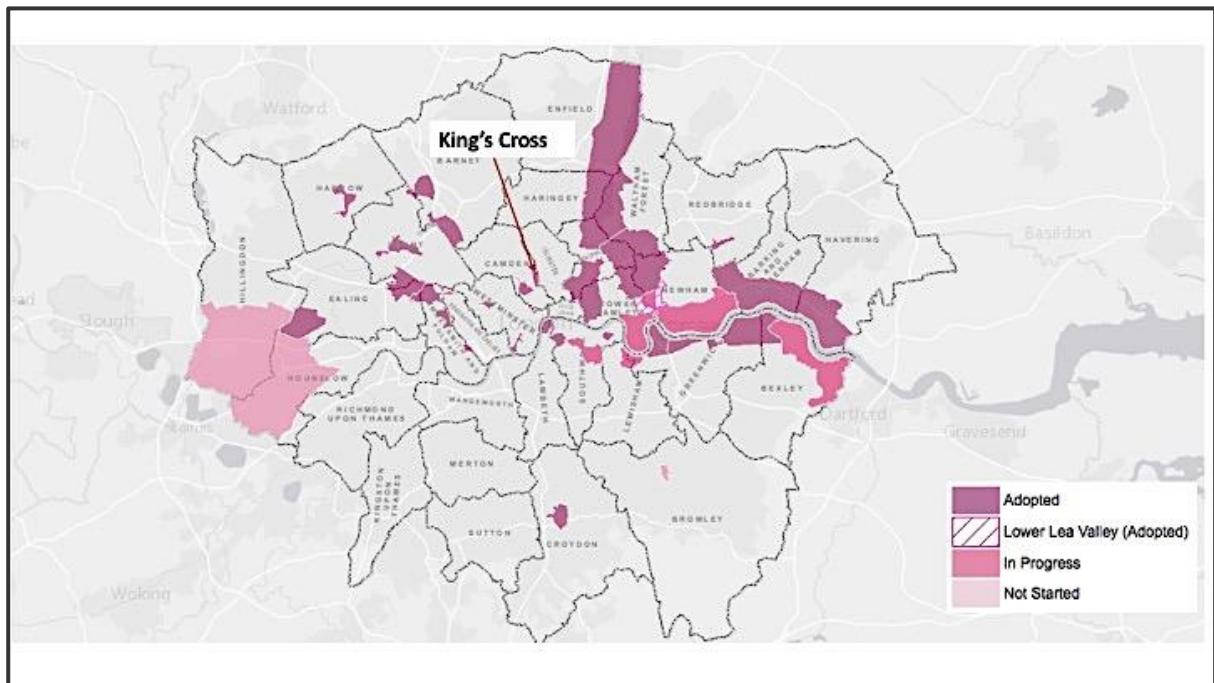
¹³⁵ The use of OAs as a way to drive regeneration in London has created real zones of exception where traditional planning regulations are loosened to allow the rapid implementation of large-scale regeneration projects. OAPFs can be seen as instances of "weaker" planning rules or negotiated planning rules in that sense, where real estate

in Greater London's strategic planning framework: the London Plan. In OAs, planning regulations are relaxed to facilitate the implementation of large-scale private-led redevelopments, such as KCC. KCC was one of the first flagship projects to be approved and implemented under the OA regime in the mid-2000s. Each OA is ruled by its own Planning Framework (OAPFs)¹³⁶ developed by the Boroughs in charge: they must show compliance with National, London-wide and Borough-level regulations, yet can (and should) be negotiated between the Boroughs and local stakeholders, including real estate, business and community actors. In addition to inviting new actors to take part in urban transformations by introducing area-specific planning guidance, OAs contribute to reshaping London's geography by creating new sites of investment and highlighting strategic locations for densification, transport and housing provision. They also reshape urban geographies by creating new inner-city boundaries and, as a result, increase the complexity of the governance of urban regeneration (map 5). Indeed, OA boundaries are sometimes drawn across different Boroughs, such as in the KCC case, which tends to complexify the governance structures of the projects implemented within these new sites, as will be further exemplified in the next section.

actors, consultants, communities and local governments negotiate planning outcomes on a site-by-site basis (Robin and McArthur 2018).

¹³⁶ That is in theory. To date, Boroughs have had quite a large discretion regarding the production of planning frameworks for OAs. Many of them have indeed produced OAPFs - this is the case in King's Cross - but others have simply updated their Borough-wide spatial and development plans or have produced supplementary planning guidance to guide developments in designated OAs.

Map 5: London's Opportunity Areas



Source: GLA website - there are currently (as of 2019) over 40 designated Opportunity Areas across London (GLA, 2019), highlighting their importance as planning instruments for metropolitan redevelopment. The caption highlights the development stage of each OA's Planning Framework.

In Cape Town, similarly, metropolitan planning frameworks have contributed to segmenting the city into parts, to invite private and public actors to transform it on a project basis. Since the 2000s, urban transformations have been guided by the *Cape Town Municipality Strategic Development Framework* (MSDF hereafter)¹³⁷ which itself subdivides metropolitan areas hierarchically, in order to highlight “development corridors, activity spines and economic nodes where public and private investment will be prioritised and facilitated” (City of Cape Town 2018).

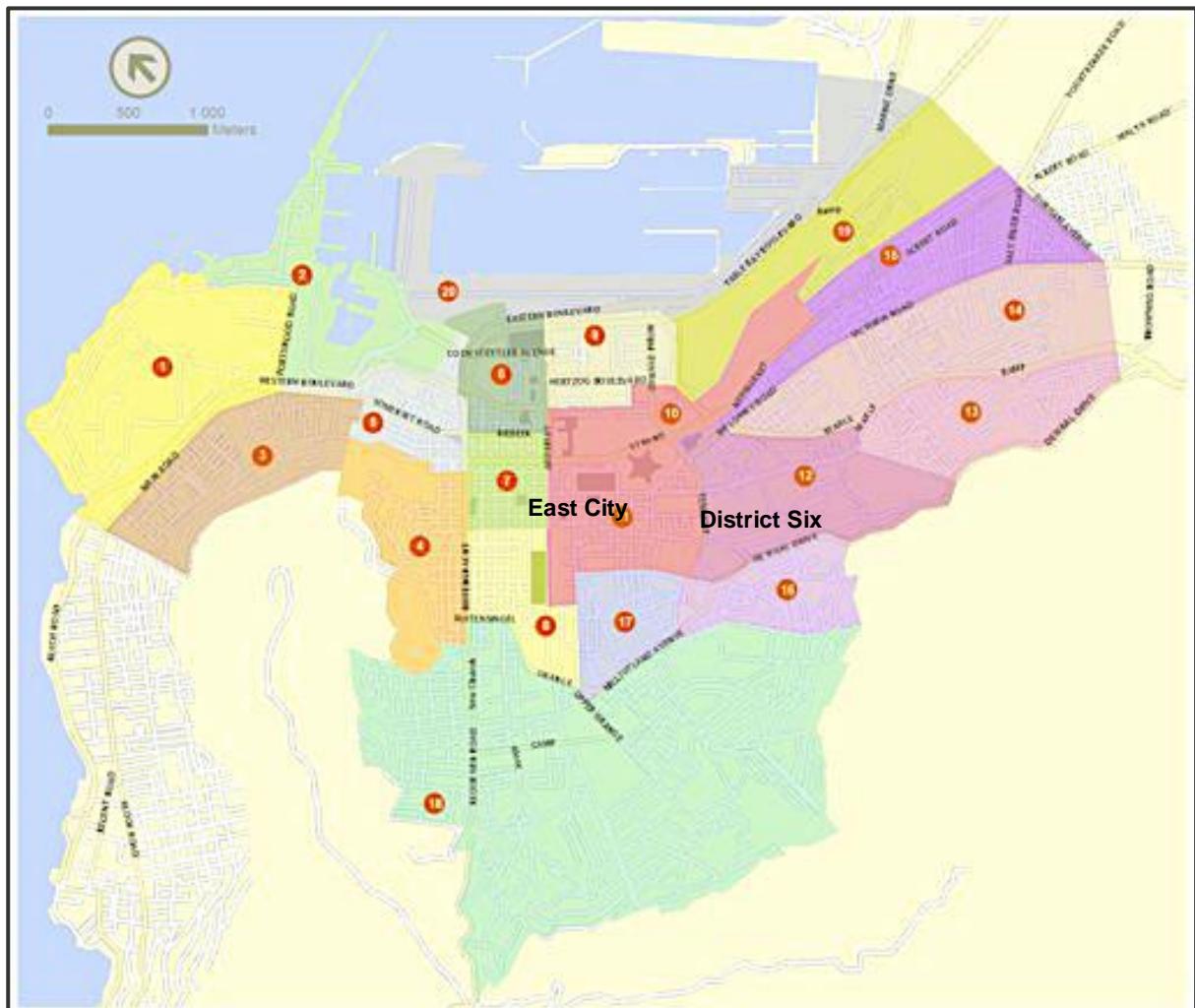
¹³⁷ Cape Town's twenty-year plan revised every five years. Here I am referring principally to documents produced at the time the Fringe was being developed. Since then, Cape Town's municipal development frameworks have been adapted and revised. The City's *Integrated Development Plan* (2007-2012) shapes the *Municipal Spatial Development Framework* and provides overarching strategic direction for the City, beyond spatial development, but also including social and economic development, infrastructure provision, etc. These domains are naturally interrelated and overlap.

More specifically, the objectives of this subdivision are to:

indicate areas best suited to urban development [...] provide investors with a clear idea of where they should invest; guide public investment in infrastructure and social facilities; and will be used to assess applications submitted by property developers and to guide changes in land use rights. (City of Cape Town 2012, p. 21)

The MSDF emphasises the importance of ‘priority areas’ as well as fiscal incentives (such as the implementation of economic development zones) to attract targeted private investments and urban development projects in different locations across the metropolitan area. In addition to the MSDF, as previously mentioned, the Central City Development Strategy (i.e. CCDS 2008) was created by the Partnership (in collaboration with the City of Cape Town) to shape spatial developments in the central city, of which the Fringe is part of. As early as 2008, the East City is singled out as a distinct neighbourhood, separated from District Six (map 6). The CCDS identifies different neighbourhoods with “*diverse character*” some of which are “*more appropriate for taller skyline than is currently permitted*” (CCDS 2008, p. 24). The strategy also already at that time points to the need for development projects to “*provide for the requirements of the creative industry and business sectors such as fashion, architecture and others*” which “*require small and flexible but well located space*” (*Ibid.*). As mentioned in the previous chapter, such ideas were enacted in the Fringe *Urban Design Framework*.

Map 6: Cape Town's Central City Subdivision into twenty neighbourhoods



Source: Central City Development Strategy 2008, p. 24.

In other words, like the denomination of OAs in London, city-wide strategic planning in Cape Town is used to guide and incentivise private sector investments in particular locations across the city, through its subdivision. In the redevelopment process for newly delimited areas in both cities, the various consultants mentioned in chapter 5 are contracted by the entity in charge of leading the development. Equally, planning regulations require the production of technical documents across a wide range of topics, favouring the use of particular knowledge devices (e.g. financial viability assessments) to inform spatial visions in the redevelopment process for particular areas. Therefore, whilst strategic spatial plans perform the task of dividing the urban, they simultaneously contribute to scaling down the production of urban expertise, enrolling various other actors - investors, public-

private partnerships, developers, private experts - into the assemblage of urban expertise. In this sense, the project becomes the medium through which urban expertise is articulated and urban space can be transformed in abstract and concrete terms. By creating new artificial intra-city boundaries, such projects reshape the scale at which urban abstractions are produced, by whom and how. They do so by creating new sites and scales of governance. In addition, both cases demonstrate how the logic of division that underlies those projects often contradicts the lived experience of existing residents and communities living in these areas.

In both KCC and the Fringe, interviewees highlighted that this artificial subdivision resulted in the production of abstract visions that poorly resonated with the sites' local contexts.¹³⁸ For instance, the KCC scheme fell mostly within the administrative boundaries of the Borough of Camden (Main Site) and a very small part of the site fell under the jurisdiction of the London Borough of Islington (Triangle Site) (see map 7). Community activists interviewed for this research highlighted that the scheme was very likely to impact small businesses and residents located in the Islington area, but felt that because of their location in Islington, these voices were marginalised in the process as the larger part of the site fell within Camden in administrative terms:

*A key problem was the juggling for power between the two Boroughs ... my experience is that Camden had the power and they behaved like it, especially the King's Cross Team. So if you were in Islington [...] Islington community groups and the Islington Council were both side-lined.*¹³⁹

¹³⁸ Cally Rail Group member, 2016, INT5-KCC-Comm, Consultant, Independent (worked on the Fringe), 2017, INT33-TF-Cons, District Six Museum, 2017, INT20-TF-Comm, Artist/Fringe consultant, 2017, INT25-TF-Cons

¹³⁹ Cally Rail Group member, 2016, INT5-KCC-Comm

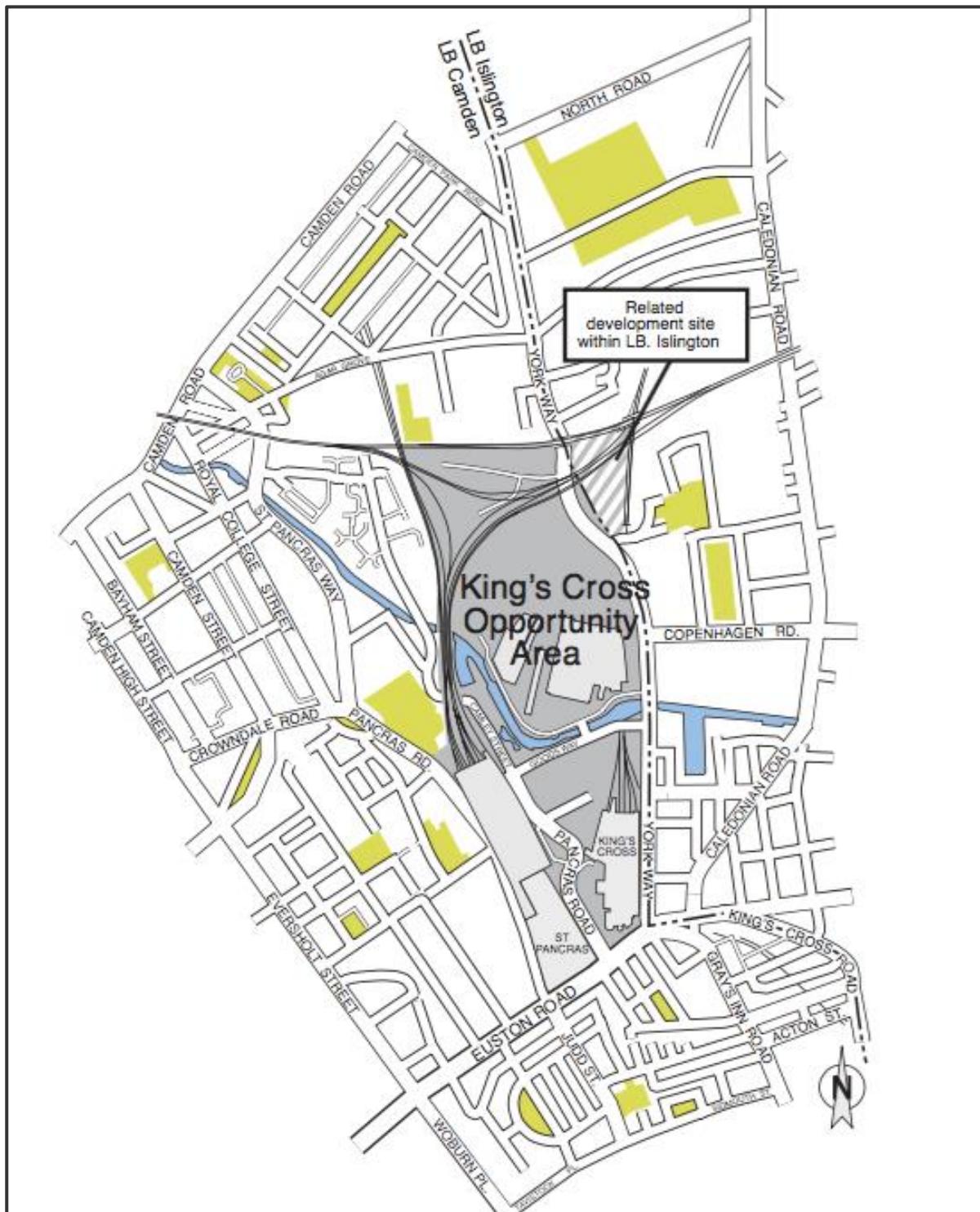
This shows that the enrolment of community expertise into the production of urban visions is affected by the ways in which projects redefine the boundaries, administrative as well as physical, of a given area. The master-planners themselves recognised that the scheme they developed was likely to impact greatly on Islington communities, yet this challenge was mostly envisaged in technical rather than political terms, and framed around the need to develop the “connectivity” of the site through the master-planning exercise:

The question of connectivity is central in the King's Cross case as the area cannot be seen as an enclave - it is connected to Camden through the Canal, but mentally it is more connected to Islington on the North Side and to central London on the South Side. We had to make sure the site was porous enough to allow this connectivity.¹⁴⁰

There is thus an inherent tension brought about by the new sites created by redevelopment projects (geographical and institutional) which in and of themselves shape which organisations are brought into assemblages of urban expertise.

¹⁴⁰ Lead master-planner, 2016, INT1-KCC-Cons

Map 7: Administrative divide in King's Cross Central



Source: Joint Planning Brief (2004) - the small 'triangle site' on the North-Eastern edge of the site falls within the boundaries of the London Borough of Islington.

Furthermore, the former head of the King's Cross Team, in our interview, indicated how he played with this administrative division to marginalise community opposition as well as that of the London Borough of Islington (under a different political leadership at that time) in the negotiations related to Argent's master-plan. He recognised that indeed "King's Cross is administratively in Camden, but geographically, it's in Islington," yet also emphasised that the Team and Argent decided to keep control of the negotiations and to "marginalise community groups and Islington [Council]" in the process notably by "including people from Islington in the Team so that everything was actually discussed in Camden."¹⁴¹ He further added that "King's Cross was a political process rather than a master-plan."¹⁴² Hence in this case, the newly created administrative boundaries also contributed to reinforcing the power of the King's Cross Team, by providing it with administrative power to grant permission to the largest part of the site, by strengthening its role as lead negotiator with the developer, and by allowing it to marginalise its potential opponents located in Islington. In Cape Town, all interviewees highlighted the ongoing battle between the District Six community, led by the District Six Museum, and the Partnership (as well as the City) regarding the 'boundaries' of the Fringe. This conflict was described by a former consultant hired by the Partnership:

So what people, my friends at District Six, think is that if you live in District Six, you are constantly walking and you cannot separate. It is a planners' separation, it is not a - what's that, when you describe things experientially? - it is not phenomenological, it's real for people. They pushed that idea and I think it is a good one to push, because in that city we love to separate things and it is more of the same, more of the same idea. Same machine replicating itself.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ Former head of the King's Cross Team, 2016, INT12-KCC-LA

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Artist/Fringe consultant, 2017, INT25-TF-Cons

Representatives from the City and the property sector however maintained that the Fringe and District Six were distinct administrative entities, as for instance argued by the City's urban designer interviewed for this research:

Now the East City - where the Fringe was located - is a local area, District Six is a local area in this big district. [she shows me the map] Yellow is District Six effectively, it is part of the bigger picture and the East City is sort of the edge of District Six. It is between the CBD. We then broke it into sub-districts. You zoom down further and further. The structure is here.¹⁴⁴

In this case the Fringe project boundaries were a key point of contestation and sparked the enrolment of the District Six community into the assemblage, motivating them to produce counter-expertise to contest how the Fringe was geographically and symbolically framed as a site that is separate from District Six. The Fringe *Urban Design Framework* (2012) recognises some of these tensions, acknowledging for instance that the area covered by *District Six Development Framework* (2012) actually overlaps with the Fringe, yet adding that:

The Fringe core area covers **only a small part** of the *District Six Development Framework* area; and The Fringe will stitch District six back into the city centre, providing opportunities for good public spaces and enterprise development. (*Fringe Urban Design Framework* 2012, p. 14, emphasis added)

Representatives from the District Six Museum in particular contested such a view, arguing that the Fringe was part of District Six (I come back to this in chapter 9). The two case studies show that institutional mechanisms that facilitate the management of urban transformations on a project basis match the logics of

¹⁴⁴ Senior urban designer at the City, 2017, INT19-TF-LA

abstraction in that they turn the urban into an object that can be controlled by project-specific coalitions. Hence, the project site shapes - as much as it is shaped by - the politics of urban expertise, not least because through projects, private sector and consultants' expertise is made more central in urban governance networks, but also because project boundaries create artificial sites where abstract visions can be performed, sites which often contradict how local communities see and experience pre-existing places, thus enrolling them in the assemblage, although in an oppositional mode. The destabilisation of dominant assemblages through the production of counter-expertise is further explored in chapter 9. The next section explores how these areas, after they have been geographically delimited, are imbued with meaning and what role assemblages of urban expertise play in that process.

7.1.2 Urban redevelopment projects as sites of *requalification*

The previous chapter has explored how knowledge devices *qualify* redevelopment sites and *project* their future, highlighting the importance of narration in that process. The project creates a container (spatial, institutional) for this qualification and fictional work to unfold. Thus, as discussed in the previous section, this process of delimiting urban spaces does not happen in a vacuum, since the project site is juxtaposed upon pre-existing relational spaces (i.e. places) characterised by diverse sets of relationships, occupations, activities, meanings and histories. In this section, I am elaborating on this point looking at how the politics of urban expertise operates via a rewriting - or requalification - of the new places created by the project. This process of requalifying the history and identity of a redevelopment site is imbued with politics, for it supports the justification and legitimisation of the proposed alterations. In the Fringe and KCC, this process of requalification supported the justification of the radical transformation of both sites through a glorification of their past, the documentation of their decline, and the projection of their glorious future via the redevelopment project. Narratives of decline but also their documentation, through knowledge production, perform a key task in rewriting the past to legitimise future interventions (Beauregard 1993, Imrie

et al. 2009, Campkin 2013). In the Fringe, historical evidence is mobilised to emphasise its position as a transition zone that:

links two distinct parts of Cape Town: the eastern boundary of the historical inner core of the city at Buitenkant Street; and the early nineteenth century extensions to the east of the city extending south-east from Buitenkant Street to Canterbury Street, and to District Six. (*Fringe Urban Design Framework* 2012, p. 21)

Historical evidence is mobilised in the *Urban Design Framework* to legitimise the separation of the Fringe and District Six. The framework treats the Fringe as a separate unit with its own history, and it plays a key function in articulating this history by bringing together historical facts into a coherent story for the Fringe - even though the name 'the Fringe' itself was invented in 2011 by the Partnership. It comprises an entire section entitled "*historical development of the Fringe 1780 - 1840*" (*Ibid.*, p. 23) emphasising its function as a trading hub, attested by the implantation of various warehouses and commercial activities:

With the slow growth of trade which followed the British occupation in 1806, warehouses extended south up Buitenkant Street towards Roeland Street [...] By the late 19th century, warehouses lined both sides of Buitenkant Street [...] The presence of the Barracks and a link to the commercial activities of Cape Town as a port city in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had a profound impact of the development of the eastern part of the City including The Fringe area. Taverns, warehouses, and industrial and commercial uses replaced high quality residential environments. (*Ibid.*, p. 23-24)

The framework also stresses the historical importance of its "*urban poor and working-class immigrants communities*" and the cultural diversity of "*households including Irish, Chinese, Africans, Cape Muslims, and Jewish immigrants*" (*Ibid.*, p. 25). All these elements contribute to emphasising the Fringe's historical diversity, vibrancy, commercial focus and its contribution to Cape Town's development.

The framework treats the history of District Six as a separate one, started in 1840 when:

the city's residential expansion **jumped the Buitenkant/Harrington Street boundary to the east of the city** [...] in response to demand for housing particularly for the urban poor. The area was first known as Kanaladorp and after 1867, District Six. (Ibid., p. 25, emphasis added)

The boundary referred to is a subjective one identified for the purpose of delimiting District Six and the East City, which, again, was heavily contested (I discuss this in chapter 9). Narratives of decline are associated with District Six, with reference to the forced removals of people and communities by the apartheid government and the impact those had on "*reducing the Fringe core area to a completely marginal space on the eastern edge of the city*" (Ibid., p. 32). The historical narrative created in the framework hence played a key role in a) legitimising the existence of the Fringe as a separate site with its own identity; and b) in explaining its decline (related to District Six fate) to legitimise its rejuvenation. The Fringe project itself – through its *Urban Design Framework* - proposes to reactivate the areas' past as a vibrant and diverse commercial hub by turning it into a design district where small businesses and creatives can thrive. In KCC too, the area's vibrant industrial past is celebrated and its post-industrial decline documented in order to justify the creation of a brand-new mixed-use development. In its seminal *Principles for a Human City* Argent states that:

King's Cross has a powerful heritage of great historical significance. Its original development was an incredibly vigorous manifestation of Victorian society and its economic activity. Today, this human vigour and activity is reflected in the historic buildings, structures and surfaces that remain at King's Cross and its urban form. (*Principles for a Human City* 2001, p. 21)

In other places, such as KCC promotional videos, the site is again portrayed as a thriving hub and its decline is associated with deindustrialisation, emptiness, blight and crime. King's Cross is described as:

a thriving hub of commerce and industry during the Victorian era. But by the 1970s, tension in the city mounted over what to do with the site as it deteriorated into dilapidated warehouses and contaminated land where crime was a concern. (King's Cross Central promotional video 2014)

Past vibrancy and decline are articulated into narratives inscribed in plans, videos, and presentations to support Argent's vision and to emphasise the necessity of the redevelopment project but also already providing justification for future demolitions:

Many historic buildings, structures and surfaces are capable of being re-used in exciting new ways that will generate new life. Others, however, because of their nature, condition or location, may not have the same potential. There may be strong, valid reasons why we should consider their removal. [...] we must balance the need to conserve the historic environment with the economic, social and environmental benefits of development and regeneration. (*Principles for a Human City* 2001, p. 21)

In the two case studies, the past is narrated in a way that fills the project site with meaning (and justifies it at the same time). In that sense, they illustrate that in the production of abstract urban visions "*the future is born from the past*" and "*it is equally true that the past is also continually shaped by the future*" (Mellucci 1996, p. 12 cited in Jasanoff 2015, p. 21). Whilst the past informs the design of redevelopment projects (for instance the treatment of heritage buildings), historical narratives serve the interests of specific actors in the present, and in the future. This is particularly true of our two projects leaders, Argent and the Partnership, which had an obvious interest in seeing their visions being enacted in these two sites. In the Fringe, historical narratives contributed to singling out the site from its adjacent District Six and to justify its existence (even though the Fringe as such never existed

previously). In King's Cross, historical narration introduces a degree of inevitability in relation to the potential demolition of historical buildings and provides justification for the area's regeneration.

What is more, whilst both redevelopment projects build on their sites' previous identities and propose to 'modernise' those, this process of rewriting (or erasing) a place's history through site building is inherently selective. As explored in the previous chapter, some historical features were obscured and silenced in the process of making sites fit for redevelopment, fit for the performance of dominant abstract urban visions. In the Fringe for instance, representatives from the District Six community regretted that there was no acknowledgement or reflection on the role a design precinct could play in providing jobs and housing for claimant¹⁴⁵ communities.¹⁴⁶ In KCC, the focus of the plan on preserving the material features of the site was motivated by the fact that the presence of heritage buildings was expected to enhance the 'character' of the proposed scheme, and its commercial value as a result (the law also required Argent to preserve heritage buildings as much as possible). As highlighted by a representative from the GLA involved in the discussions on the Argent master-plan:

Argent explained to me they wanted to base the master-plan around listed buildings and heritage buildings because they saw the value of it within regeneration.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ 'Claimant' refers to former District Sixers displaced during the apartheid - or family members of former District Sixers - who have filed a land/housing restitution claim and are waiting to be rehoused in District Six.

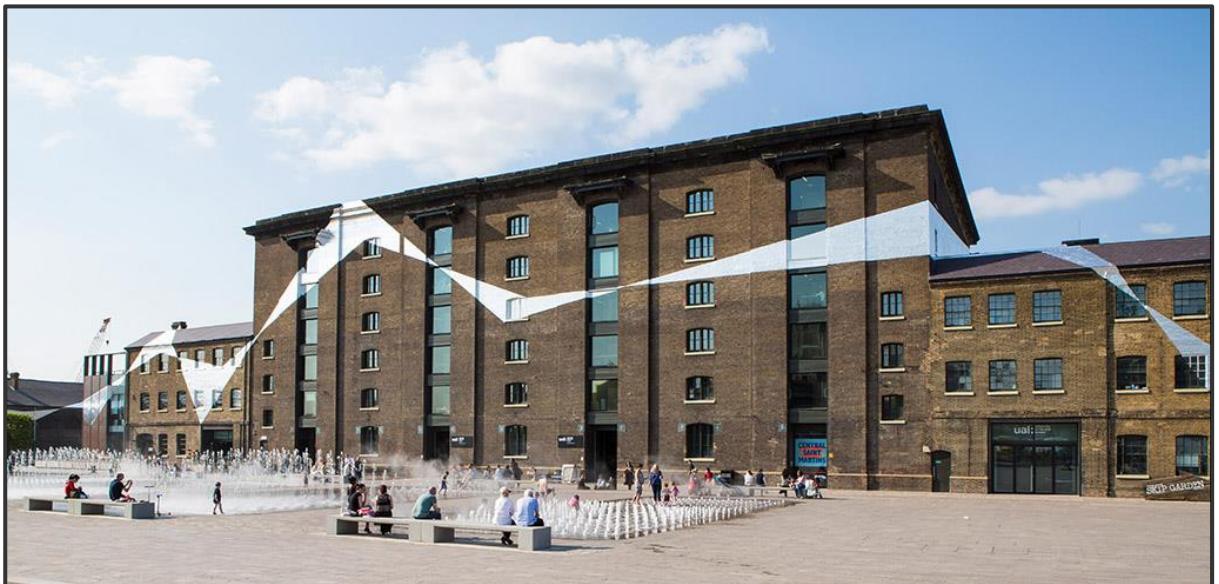
¹⁴⁶ District Six Museum, 2017, INT20-TF-Comm. As a counter-argument to that, representatives of the City (senior urban designer, 2017, INT19-TF-LA) and the Partnership (former CEO, INT23-TF-CTP) highlighted that that the Fringe area did not fall within the boundaries of the site where claimants should be relocated.

¹⁴⁷ Senior Planner at the GLA, 2016, INT6-KCC-LA

Throughout the project, the area's glorious industrial past was celebrated in the evidence base underpinning the scheme to justify the renovation and repurposing of emblematic buildings (such as the Granary building, picture 1 and the Gas Holders, picture 2) - even though the main motivation for building renovation and retention were the expected commercial benefits they could bring to the scheme (for instance by bringing in consumers, enhancing the character of the redevelopment, etc.). As members of local heritage and community groups highlighted, other historical features of the area - including the existence of social housing estates - were obscured in the abstract vision for the site. The conflict around the destruction of the Culross buildings, a former social housing estate (Arup 2004 developed the case for demolition) is emblematic of such tensions. According to interviewees, the estate epitomised the working-class character of the area at the beginning of the 2000s, and its demolition reinforced the impression that this working-class identity was erased in Argent's vision, and that the scheme was being designed for a wealthy elite.¹⁴⁸

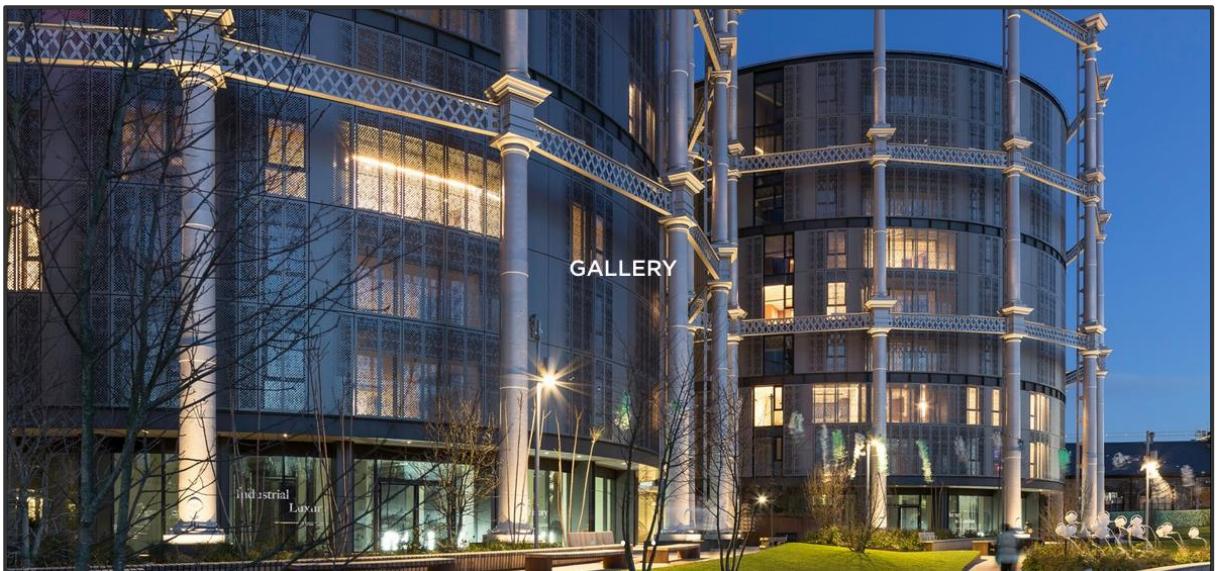
¹⁴⁸ King's Cross Development Forum member, 2016, INT8-KCC-Comm, Academic Activist, 2016, INT4-KCC-Ac, Cally Rail Group member, 2016, INT5-KCC-Comm

Picture 1: Granary Building



Source: King's Cross Central website - the Granary Building has been turned into a mixed-use complex hosting retail and food stores as well as a Theatre and Central Saint Martins, a world leading design university.

Picture 2: Gas Holders



Source: King's Cross Central website - King's Cross' emblematic Gas Holders have been turned into a luxurious apartment complex with prices starting at £810, 000 for a studio flat (Wainwright 2018).

In both cases, the projectification of urban developments induced a rewriting of the boundaries and histories of particular areas, through the division of the urban into isolated islands that could be qualified, manipulated and transformed by project-based coalitions. Indeed, as highlighted by Gualini and Majoor in their study of the Zuidas redevelopment in Amsterdam, urban projects hold the “*capacity to elaborate and transmit planning ideas, concepts and images that are capable of penetrating different levels of governance practice*” (Gualini and Majoor 2007, p. 302) and different geographies. I have demonstrated how expertise is mobilised by property actors and the consultants they employ (in particular the designers) to legitimise abstract project-site boundaries that do not fit neatly with places’ histories. I have also shown that the local state plays a key role in the redefinition of inner-city boundaries by way of institutional design, in this case through metropolitan planning frameworks and through the creation of zones of exceptions for redevelopment projects to unfold. This in turn strengthens the role of private actors in the production of abstract urban visions and the production of urban space, but also induces resistance from communities. In the next section, I take a closer look at the governance of spatial transformations by means of projects does to expertise itself, exploring how redevelopment projects’ organisational structures in turn shape how power is distributed within assemblages of urban expertise.

7.2 Urban redevelopment projects and the politics of assemblages

The Fringe and the KCC cases illustrate how decentralised urban governance structures in both cities have created a fertile ground for the rule of technical expertise to dominate the production of urban space (abstract and concrete) as developers, public-private partnerships and their consultants are invited to reinvent entire neighbourhoods. However, in what follows, I further this argument by exploring how expertise is organised and hierarchised in the two projects. I demonstrate first that the complexity of, and risks associated with, inner-city redevelopment projects contribute to reinforcing the dominance of hyper specialised technocratic expertise in the production of abstract urban visions. Yet,

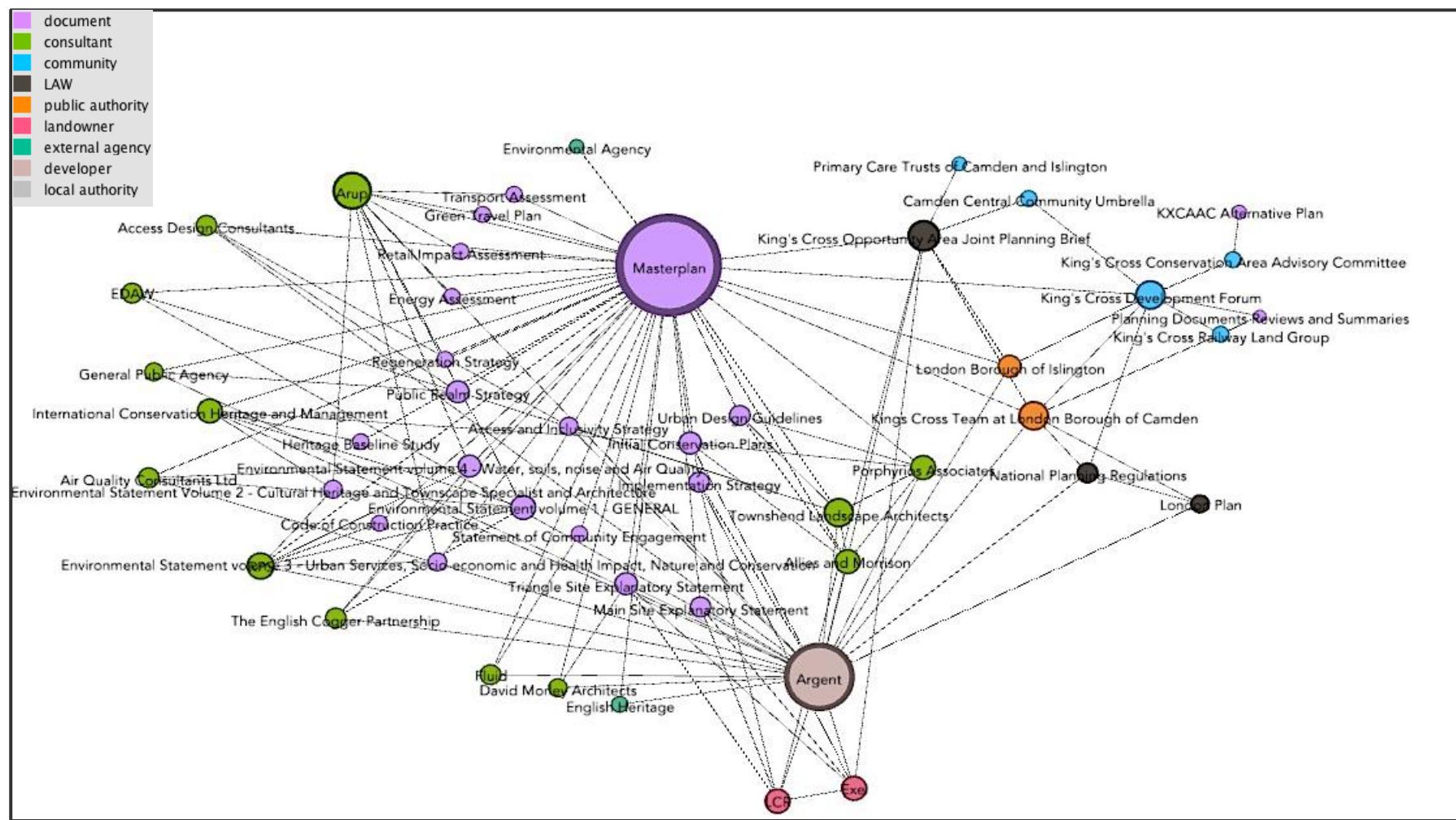
I show that simultaneously, and quite paradoxically, the institutional set up of projects tends to undermine the power of individual experts within assemblages of urban expertise, reinforcing the dominance of organisations that are able to coordinate fragmented networks of expertise and to influence the type of knowledge these produce, as mentioned in chapter 5.

7.2.1 Holding the assemblage together

In both KCC and the Fringe the number and types of consultants mobilised either by Argent or the Partnership were vast, ranging from transport policy to planning law, landscape architecture, heritage, property and economics, urban design ... Equally, the methods, techniques and tools they mobilised to produce urban visions borrowed from various different disciplines and epistemologies. Hence, the projectification of spatial governance (and the governance and planning frameworks supporting such projectification) supports the emergence of assemblages of expertise that are fragmented and specialised, and where power lies in actors' capacity to hold coalitions of expertise together. In that sense, far from asserting the power of individual experts, project-based governance reinforces the power of entities that are able to coordinate complex assemblages of private consultants and devices to advance their agenda. Social network graphs 1 and 2 provide a visual representation of this coordinating power in assemblages of expertise for both the Fringe and KCC. They visualise the production of reports (these include master-plans, technical reports, important planning guidelines, counter-evidence such as alternative plans), and the organisations involved in their production. The links (i.e. ties) between each node are a marker for collaboration between different entities in the production of particular reports, and the links between organisations indicates the relationship between report commissioner (i.e. organisation that paid for the production of a particular report) and producer. This set of relationships was established looking at each report's authors list and the name of the organisation that commissioned its production. When organisations' roles were unclear, information was gathered through interviews. The objective was to explore the relationship between the various experts involved in the production

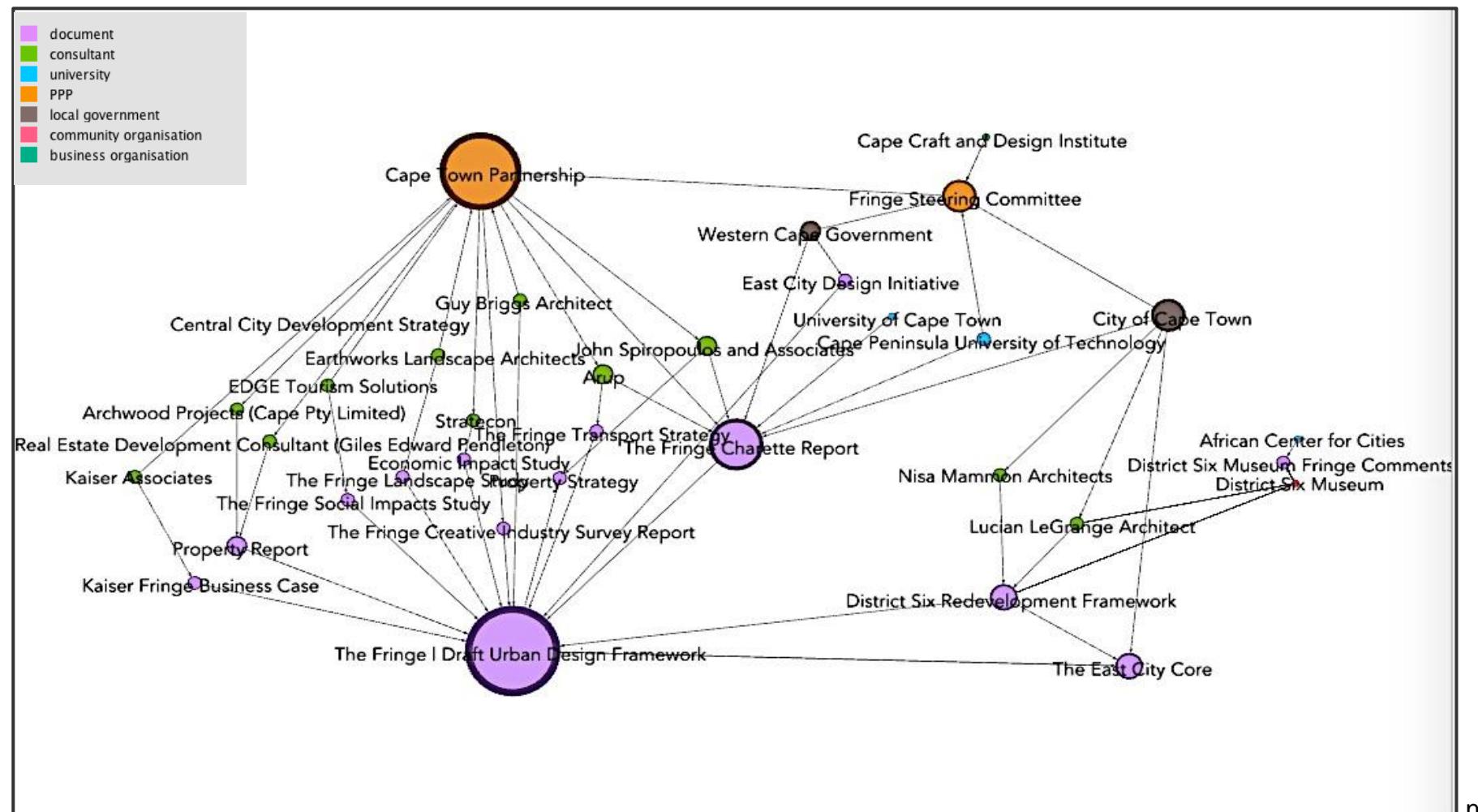
of expertise for both schemes, in order to assess important entities in the assemblage of expertise. On the graphs, the centrality of different actors in the production of reports is assessed through the number of ties that link them to other entities. In SNA terms, centrality is the proxy for actors' influence within a network (Scott 1988). Centrality is assessed based on the study of ties (relationships) that unite different constitutive elements of the network and the degree of connection between these elements. To put it simply, the bigger the node, the more connected an entity. On these graphs, Argent and the Partnership are the most connected human entities, and both projects' masterplans/urban design framework are the largest non-human entities, which is unsurprising given that both documents integrate insights from the large technical base commissioned to inform their production. The centrality of Argent and the Partnership in the coordination and stabilisation of assemblages of urban expertise is evident. Both projects illustrate that the complexity of urban redevelopment projects requires the involvement of a multitude of private consultants in the formulation of preliminary ideas, strategies and technical information to build project legitimacy in order to unlock planning permission (in the case of KCC), or to build up the case for the project (in the case of the Fringe). However, the graphs exhibit quite distinct features with regards to the centrality of technical consultants. Indeed, in the KCC case, the greater contribution of Arup (top left-hand side of graph 1) is reflected in its size, larger than that of other consultants involved in the process, including the master-planners, located at the bottom of graph 1, near Argent (Allies and Morrison, Porphyrios, Townshend Landscape Architects). This does not mean that the master-planners did not have a significant input in the overall vision for the scheme: they produced the vast majority of design documents and scheme renderings, and as shown on graph 1, worked closely with Argent. However, what this shows is that beyond visions, planning requirements imply the production of extensive technical documents: within the pool of experts hired to produce this (important) evidence base, Arup was the most involved, and worked across different technical areas (regeneration, environmental impact, etc.), leading several teams. Linking to chapter 5, this speaks to the capacity of polymorphous, multidisciplinary firms to deploy a wide range of experts on different topics to inform complex projects.

Network graph 1: Shaping the politics of urban expertise: a networked visualisation of Argent's coordinating power in King's Cross Central



Source: Author, based on documents' review and interviews.

Network graph 2: Shaping the politics of urban expertise: a networked visualisation of the Partnership's coordinating power in The Fringe



Source: Author, based on documents' review and interviews.

In the Fringe (graph 2) however, the consultants' nodes are of the same size, including the urban designer in charge of producing the Fringe *Urban Design Framework* (i.e. Guy Briggs Urban Strategy Planning + Design). This is because each consultant was commissioned separately by the Partnership. They did not really work together and were involved in the production of very focused reports, for quite short missions (more on that in the next section). Graphs 1 and 2 further show the unbalance between the number of consultants hired and number of technical reports produced by the Partnership and Argent on the one hand, and the amount of evidence produced by other actors, especially community groups on the other hand. In the KCC case, alternative community reports are located on the top right-hand side of graph 1, highlighting the difficulties for community groups to get involved in technical and design work. It also shows that community expertise is mediated - or rather, controlled, see chapter 5 - by the King's Cross Development Forum, established by the London Borough of Camden. Similarly, in the Fringe, the evidence/comments on the plan produced by the District Six Museum and other organisations, such as the African Centre for Cities, is disconnected from the network of expertise underpinning the production of the Fringe *Urban Design Framework*. In addition, the City is shown to be an important actor notably for its role as commissioner of the *District Six Development Framework* (2012) (roughly at the same time as the Fringe *Urban Design Framework*, which draws on it quite extensively), and because it took over the production of an *East City Core* (2017) strategy after the Fringe project was abandoned (both documents feature in graph 2 and already mentioned in previous chapters). We know from the interviews that the *East City Core* rests heavily on what was proposed in the Fringe - albeit it makes its connexions to District Six more explicit - and adapts it to the City current planning priorities. It is interesting to note that two frameworks for Cape Town's inner-city major redevelopment sites - the Fringe and District Six - were not produced in-house by the municipality but delegated to private consultancies. In King's Cross, the London Boroughs of Camden and Islington produced jointly a *King's Cross*

Opportunity Area Joint Planning and Development Brief,¹⁴⁹ released in 2004 (hereafter the *Brief* or *Joint Planning Brief*) for the KCC site. The *Brief* had to “be taken into consideration in everything Argent did” and as further reported by the real estate firm’s leader at the time: “it set out the parameters within which we could work.”¹⁵⁰ Thus, I observed the local state played an uneven role in both cases. In Cape Town, for the reasons described in chapters 4 and 5, the City is more prone to delegate the production of strategic area frameworks to private entities, thus retreating from urban design work. In London, this will vary on a Borough by Borough basis, but in this case specifically the two Boroughs in charge produced several planning guidelines - such as the *Joint Planning Brief* - to set out the parameters within which development should occur, and to try and shape the content of Argent’s plan as much as possible. I come back to the story of the production of this *Brief* in the next chapter.

Taking a closer look at the implications of Argent and the Partnership’s coordinating power, one might ask: what is this power mobilised for, what does it do to experts’ work (i.e. local governments, private consultants, communities)? In what follows, I explain how the structure of the assemblages represented on graphs 1 and 2 can be understood as reflective of Argent and the Partnership’s strategies in both processes. In KCC, the then head of Argent explained to me that “master-planning until planning permission is not about building styles,” adding that gathering together a large and diverse team of experts allowed to “build confidence” in the scheme.¹⁵¹ This has, for instance, motivated Argent’s choice of hiring two architecture and master-planning agencies with very different styles: “people who are like Prince Charles were happy because we had Porphyrios and the modernists in the room were happy because we had Allies and Morrison.”¹⁵² He further stressed

¹⁴⁹ Camden was the first Borough to adopt it in December 2003, followed by Islington in January 2004.

¹⁵⁰ Former head of Argent, 2016, INT3-KCC-Rea

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

the importance of having teams that could work together, but ultimately, he described the pre-planning stages of the project as essentially about complying with the technical requirements of the planning system and generating trust and political support through the assemblage of diverse teams of experts. This does not mean that developers like Argent are not interested in working with experts who hold a certain recognition. Arguably, the developer also wanted to create “a new piece of London”¹⁵³ and valued good urban design. As illustrated by the following remark, Argent also wanted to create a place:

*where people can walk, work and live [...] We did not want people to rely on car [...] We wanted lots of public and green spaces [...] We also wanted it to become a new destination, somewhere people want to come to do all sorts of things you know, shopping, studying, going to the theatre.*¹⁵⁴

Thus, good design was important, and mobilising a competent team was key. Yet, as development outcomes are negotiated principally between the Boroughs and real estate actors on a site-by-site/project-by-project basis, with inputs - and very often contestation - from local communities.¹⁵⁵ The mobilisation of multiple experts thus also forms part of the political game for it contributes to establishing the credibility of the scheme and to marginalising opposition foregrounded in a review of technical work. If decisions are made on the basis of compliance with technical requirements and planning guidelines, then communities can do little when a project ticks all the boxes. Indeed, in KCC planning regulations contributed to reinforcing the influence of actors that hold this coordination capacity over assemblages of urban expertise. They require the production of technical evidence to support planning applications, and thus act as something that contributes to stabilising and maintaining the dominance of specific kinds of experts - the technocratic,

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ The GLA would also intervene – or at least keep oversight of the project - for major schemes. However, in KCC, the King’s Cross Team took control of the negotiations quite early on.

multidisciplinary consultants team assembled by the developer - over others (community organisations, NGOs, citizens) in the development of spatial visions, by requiring the production of various technical reports on specific themes. For instance, by requiring the provision of specific types of evidence (e.g. heritage studies, air quality studies, environmental impact assessments, etc. ...) regulations support the emergence of assemblages of expertise characterised by their technical fragmentation, since numerous reports are commissioned to address very narrow themes. They support the enrolment of technical consultants into the assemblage by turning the expertise they hold into a legal requirement, and at the same time create the conditions for the proliferation of technical reports, beyond what is required by the law. Indeed, Argent commissioned consultants to produce reports that were not required by law but nonetheless included in the planning application as 'supplementary evidence'. These technical devices played a key function in the marginalisation of any opposition elected officials and communities could formulate based on evidence review. Interviewees highlighted that the mobilisation of multiple private consultants and the production of lengthy technical reports contributed to undermine their capacity to engage with their content. This was for instance stressed by a Camden elected official:

*Councillors get put on specific issues because they have been elected - that is the only criteria that you have to fulfil. You have to have training here, but it is not in depth. What is your role within the system? It is to apply the policies decided by the Council and to grasp very technical planning issues as well. I studied it, but most councillors do not have a specialist knowledge about it and some of them do not even want to be in the committee. Some of them hate it, it takes hours and hours to get through the papers, then you have presentations by the officers and it is helpful because they are here to give you expert advice [...] You follow it, or you don't. Often, they will say why it should go through, community groups will say it should not and councillors will be in the middle weighing up the argument. So it requires a lot of skills. If you believe in democratically elected representatives, you cannot tell people that their skills are not good enough to deal with these issues.*¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁶ Elected Official Camden Council, 2016, INT14-KCC-LA

Similarly, the complexity, technicality and volume of the evidence base submitted by Argent required community organisations to rely on individuals or institutions that were able to summarise and translate the information to a non-expert audience (the mechanics of translation is analysed in greater details in chapter 9). This does not mean that community representatives themselves did not hold technical expertise, as reported by an interviewee involved in the development - “we majored in three themes: codes of construction, architecture and conservation, and the Triangle Site.”¹⁵⁷ But it was difficult for them to cover each and every domain of expertise held by Argent’s team. This case thus illustrates how planning regulations shape what type of expertise is brought into assemblages and is valued in the decision-making process, again bringing to light the role played by non-human (in this case legal) devices in structuring how power operates within assemblages of urban expertise. The KCC case also shows how the developer itself can mobilise a large technical expert base (beyond what is required by law to pre-empt opposition to its project). Hence the coordinating power of Argent in this case supports the constitution of assemblages of expertise that are mobilised for technocratic (e.g. regulatory compliance) as much as political purposes (e.g. inundating local governments and communities with technical information).

In the Fringe, the mobilisation of a fragmented system of experts had less to do with securing planning permission than convincing public authorities, particularly the Province, to provide financial support to the next phase of the project and to start engaging with property owners (existing and potential) through report production, as discussed in chapters 5 and 6. The land and property ownership structure was much more fragmented in the Fringe than in KCC: the *Urban Design Framework* (2012), *Property Strategy* (2011) and *Business Case* (2011) stress that this part of the inner-city was owned by many public (the Western Cape and the City of Cape Town) and private landowners (maps 8 and 9 in Appendix E show the

¹⁵⁷ Cally Rail Group member, 2016, INT5-KCC-Comm

proportion of publicly and privately owned properties in the area). In that sense the Partnership had a much less direct power than Argent to bring its vision to life without enrolling other public and private actors that would co-perform it. As reported by the former Fringe project lead:

We needed to convince the Province this project should go ahead [...] showing its value for the city [...] we were also engaging with businesses, creatives and of course the property sector, it was A's mission [anonymised]. He spent a lot of time with the business community talking about incubators, he also met with investors.¹⁵⁸

Technical reports on topics ranging from property studies, to economic impact and transport aimed to bring other actors on board and to bring credibility to the project. The same interviewee reported:

We commissioned various studies to demonstrate the value of the project, but also to get a better sense of how it would affect the area [...] we appointed a couple of consultants on different issues ... to get the whole picture if you want. We had people, Arup working on transport, a guy working on the property side of things ...¹⁵⁹

The Partnership thus mobilised technical experts for reasons that differ from Argent's strategy which used technical report production as a) a way to comply with the law and, b) a way to contain opposition in the context of a planning application. In the Fringe, the complex nature of the project, as the site was not owned by a large single landowner, meant that a lot of contextual information needed to be commissioned, for instance through the *Property Report* and the *Property Strategy*. Besides, as mentioned previously, the area had not been covered by a fully-fledged spatial plan, for instance developed by the City. KCC had its own OAPF and Argent could build on various local planning guidelines providing contextual information

¹⁵⁸ Fringe Project Leader, Cape Town Partnership, 2017, INT51-TF-CTP

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

about the Boroughs' objectives and expectations with regards to the redevelopment. The project structure of the Fringe in an area that lacked a coherent ownership structure and had not been prioritised by the City or the Province (at least not to the extent of producing a spatial framework) meant that the Partnership was *de facto* in charge of doing all the 'leg work'. This is reflective of a) the Partnership's influence over inner-city spatial development strategy since the publication of the CCDS in 2008 and, b) its relatively limited capacity to implement strategy without government support and property actors/businesses buy-in. So in this case the commissioning of several technical studies played both an informational and political function, and the Partnership was key in enrolling experts based on the information gaps they perceived (with the exception of the *Business Case* which was an explicit request from the Province), whilst in KCC technical experts were brought in partly because of planning regulations and partly because of Argent's own perception of what additional pieces of information would support their application and help them neutralise contestation.

In the Fringe, the mobilisation of multiple private consultants in the production of technical reports aimed to build trust, and to reduce uncertainty through the production of evidence supporting narratives of booming creativity and opportunities associated with the area. In that process, the reports shown on graph 2 were commissioned to inform the *Urban Design Framework* and to make the case for the Fringe more broadly. The consultants themselves did not work together towards a comprehensive plan, they were in charge of providing pieces of information on specific topics. As shown on graph 2, they did not interact or work as part of the same teams, and this was corroborated by consultants interviewed in this study, as illustrated by the following remarks:

*I was working for the Partnership, and they would take the report and share it with the main urban designer [...] from what I remember there was no further engagement, it was pretty focused.*¹⁶⁰

*The budget was quite small, so it was [a] relatively small-scale study aiming to get a sense of what were the property needs and potential in the area.*¹⁶¹

The Fringe and KCC cases highlight the importance of private technical expertise in producing evidence that aims to build credibility around the two projects in the context of uncertain redevelopments. Hence, the governance of spatial transformations by means of projects strengthens the rule of fragmented urban expertise as constitutive of local political games and negotiation processes, especially in the early phases of redevelopment projects, where many actors need to be brought on board to co-perform abstract urban visions. It is not experts themselves in that context that are powerful, it is the ability of specific actors - Argent and the Cape Town Partnership - to coordinate the production of various hyper-specialised technical reports and to package those in a convincing way for their intended audiences. The mobilisation of multiple consultants and the production of a large number of knowledge devices (calculations, projections, maps aggregated in technical reports) play a persuasive role in establishing the legitimacy of a project, its necessity, its feasibility. This has further consequences for the context within which consultants themselves operate, and the ability of community organisations to contest the maintenance of dominant assemblages of urban expertise. Indeed, as the urban becomes projectified, the timeframe at which decisions are made matches projects' (reduced) temporality: project timelines constrain the work of consultants and communities. This confirms that holding coordinating power allows central organisation to shape the content and pace of other experts' work and, by

¹⁶⁰ Social Impact Assessment consultant, 2017, INT26-TF-Cons

¹⁶¹ Senior consultant, Property Strategy, 2017, INT39-TF-Cons

extension, their power and position within assemblages of expertise. These issues are further explored in the following section.

7.2.2 Controlling timeframes

How do project timelines¹⁶² influence the politics of urban expertise? In what follows, I demonstrate that on the one hand, the time allocated to review the technical reports produced by various consultants makes it difficult for elected representatives, local policy makers, and communities to critically evaluate the work of experts, and to produce alternatives to proposals. On the other hand, the very fast pace at which consultants are mobilised also minimises their own ability to produce meaningful evidence, or at least to engage with the context (socio-spatial and cultural) for which they are supposed to generate expertise.¹⁶³ In the case of the Fringe, whilst the idea of an innovation precinct had been germinating since 2008 (Robin and Nkula 2019) the 2010 - 2012 period constituted a political window for the Partnership to push the project forward: it sought to build-up the case for the project in a very short timeframe to get buy-in and project funding in a context characterised by the buzz caused by Cape Town's WDC bid¹⁶⁴ (see also Nkula-Wenz 2014). Thus the development of the Fringe urban vision had to follow a tight timeline related to the production of the WDC bid book and the event itself in 2014. Figure 8 highlights the very fast pace at which the majority of consultants' reports used in this project were produced. Most of those were drafted within six months between November and May 2011, with no time allocated for feedback, for instance from the public, beyond that of the Fringe project team and the Fringe steering

¹⁶² Projects as a whole (from design to implementation) may be implemented over long time periods: KCC is still in construction today, the Fringe project was dropped in 2013 but new investors are coming into the area and are progressively turning it into a creative quarter (Robin and Nkula-Wenz 2019). This research only focuses on the design phase of both projects.

¹⁶³ See also Raco 2014a for a discussion of the politicisation of planning timeframes in the UK context.

¹⁶⁴ Fringe Project Leader, Cape Town Partnership, 2017, INT51-TF-CTP

committee. The majority of consultants interviewed¹⁶⁵ reported that the small budgets allocated to their work and the short timeframe within which they had to produce their reports prevented them from engaging with local communities and to conduct in depth research. For instance, the expert responsible for the production of the *Social Impact Assessment* reported he worked mostly from Johannesburg highlighting that (2017):

*It was mostly desk-based research [...] At the time it was a bit doing it for the sake of doing it as a requirement and I did not necessarily feel that this would inform other planning processes ... but I was not really involved with on the ground discussions and did not have much client interactions. [...] For SIA, budgets are not enough to have that much extensive stakeholder consultation, so most consultants would do desktop research, looking into policy and planning frameworks and then complement it with case studies.*¹⁶⁶

The SIA was carried out in relative isolation from other studies and was commissioned after the decision to name the project 'The Fringe' was taken, according to the same consultant:

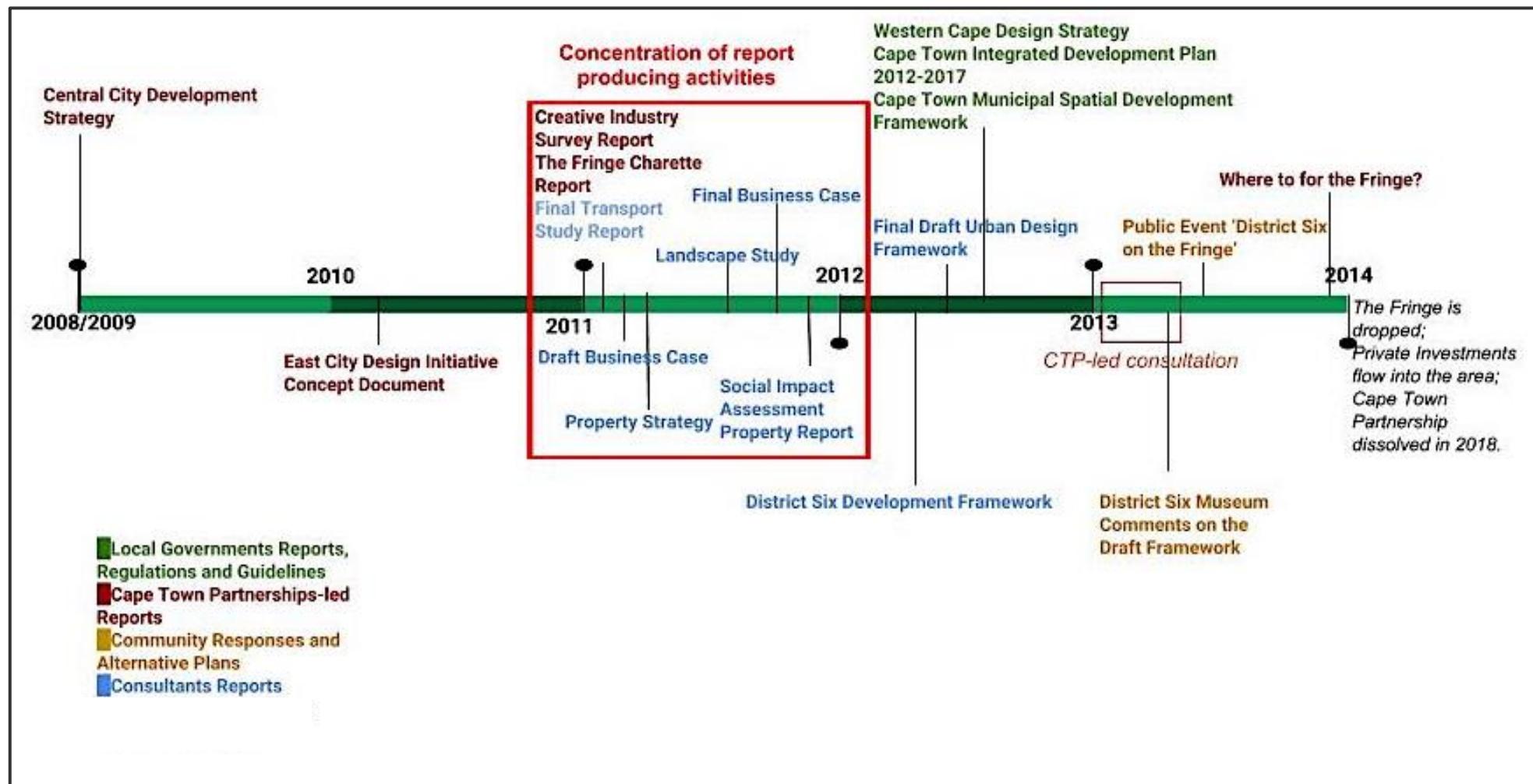
*The Fringe brand was already used in different reports. So we did not have any say around it. The brand and the development vision were already there: "here is development vision, here is what we want to do, so you need to produce the social impact that would arise from that.*¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ Consultant, Independent (worked on the Fringe), 2017, INT33-TF-Cons, *Social Impact Assessment* consultant, 2017, INT26-TF-Cons, Planning consultant Fringe *Urban Design Framework*, 2017, INT31-TF-Cons, Fringe lead urban design consultant, 2017, INT34-TF-Cons, Senior consultant, *Property Strategy*, 2017, INT39-TF-Cons, Junior consultant *Landscape Study*, 2017, INT44-TF-Cons

¹⁶⁶ *Social Impact Assessment* consultant, 2017, INT26-TF-Cons

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

Figure 8: Timeline of Report writing for the Fringe



Source: Author, based on documents' review

In mentioning these issues, the expert interviewed also recognised the limited quality and relevance of his work to the local context, partly explained by the managerial structure of the project and the timeframe allocated to research work. Consultants are sometimes portrayed as money-making entities that pay little regard to the applicability - contextual relevance - of the solutions they propose (e.g. Watson 2014a, Brill 2018). However, the picture is more complex. It might be true that many consultancies work at a fast pace on projects, sometimes on very low budgets, and consultants might find it easier to copy-paste or slightly adapt best practices to the many locations they work in. Sometimes even, clients themselves (policy-makers or developers) ask for so-called best practices to feature in the fancy new plans they commission. These examples are probably what researchers have been most interested in to date, and for good reasons, as these processes are relevant to understand how urban models are transferred from one city to the next and why projects with little contextual relevance get designed in the first place. Such examples are also arguably easier to track, as projects and plans infused with global imageries and best practices are widely disseminated in the media, which is not necessarily the case of urban projects that are not aggressively marketed. However, more research is needed to unpack how projects' structures themselves, timeline and financial arrangements foremost, impact experts' work, in order to move beyond the assumption that consultants (particularly, but not only, the ones involved with the design aspects of redevelopment projects) care very little about producing context-relevant expertise and solutions. My interviews with small consultancies based in Cape Town revealed that most of the consultants thought the timeframe and limited resources allocated to their projects make it difficult to fully engage with the production of context-sensitive expertise.¹⁶⁸ In fact, when asked whether this state of play and those challenges were specific to their work on the Fringe, all experts reported that those issues are the norm in their profession.

¹⁶⁸ Social Impact Assessment consultant, 2017, INT26-TF-Cons, Senior consultant, *Property Strategy*, 2017, INT39-TF-Cons, Junior consultant *Landscape Study*, 2017, INT44-TF-Cons

The lead urban designer hired to produce the final *Urban Design Framework* emphasised these issues, reporting that:

*The problem with this [the Fringe] was that what was supposed to be a three months project with a very low budget turned out to be a one-year project; but within that context it was not my role to engage in extensive consultation work.*¹⁶⁹

In his case the budget he was originally allocated only justified three months of work on the project, and even when this was extended, no additional resources were provided to support further research and potentially more community engagement, which he believed “the Partnership was supposed to deal with.”¹⁷⁰ And indeed, whilst there is disagreement on the degree to which local communities’ input was actually solicited throughout the process, it appeared clear that the final proposed scheme felt alienating - not least because of its name - to District Six community members. In the Fringe, as shown on the timeline, public consultation occurred after the draft *Urban Design Framework* was produced and was focused on commenting on the vision for the Fringe, rather than engaging with technical evidence (further explored in chapter 9).

In the pre-planning stages of private-led redevelopment projects, the inability of developers to unlock planning permission relatively quickly implies project delays and costs - especially when a wide range of consultants are mobilised and need to be called back to revise the evidence submitted as part of the planning application. Argent, however, was in a relatively privileged position for it was backed up by a pension fund, as previously mentioned, and thus was “under less pressure to unlock permission and start building quickly”¹⁷¹ as reported by a member of the community

¹⁶⁹ Fringe lead urban design consultant, 2017, INT34-TF-Cons

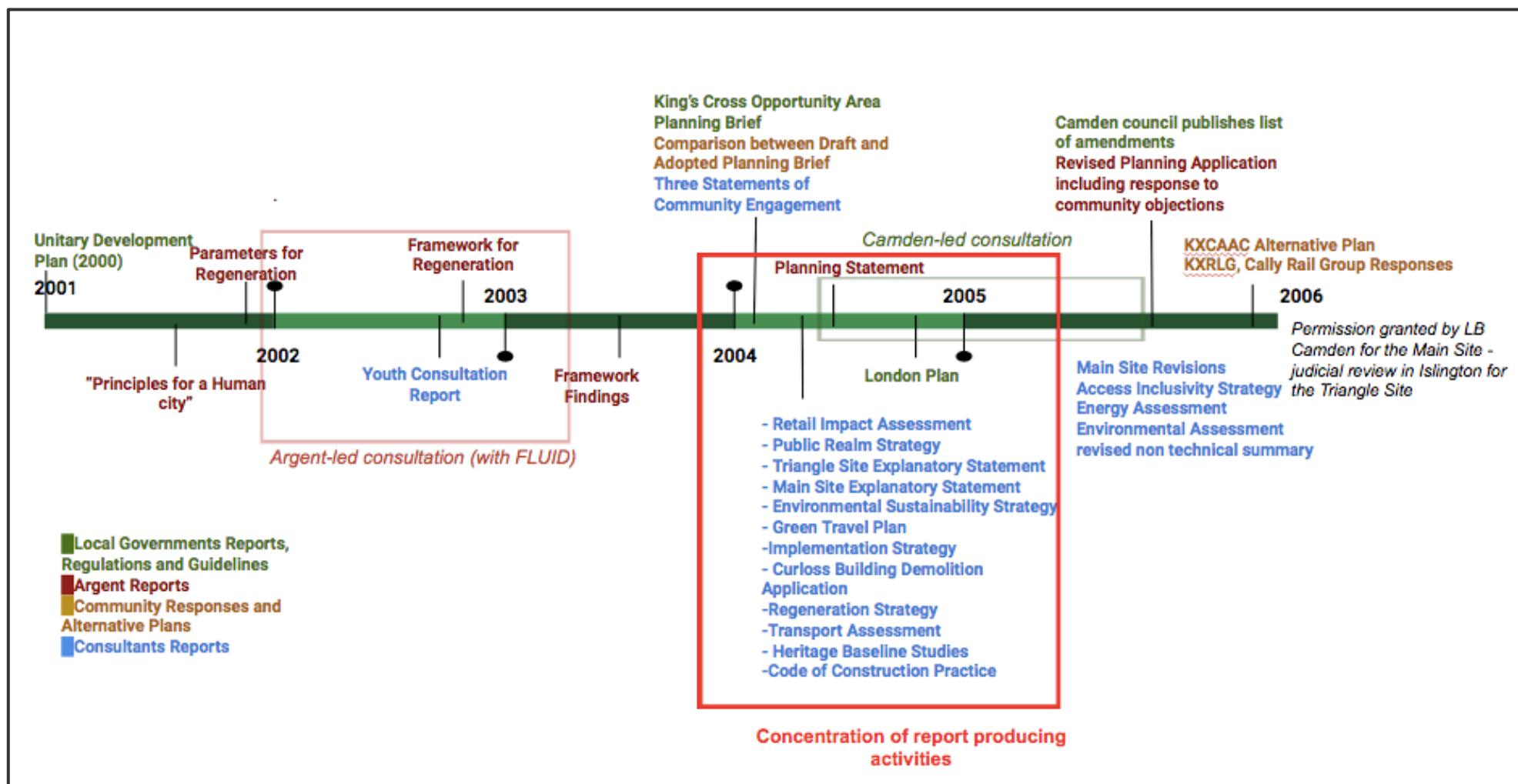
¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ King’s Cross Railway Lands Group founding member, 2016, INT10-KCC-Comm, this was also corroborated by a representative of Argent, INT3-KCC-Rea and of the King’s Cross Team, INT12-KCC-LA

sector. This meant that the developer had a relative autonomy to determine the pace at which it would develop its vision, effectively from 2001 to 2006 when the planning permission was granted as shown on figure 9. The timeline highlights a concentration of technical report production and publication in 2004, but also shows that community consultation occurred in the early stages of the project. Whilst the master-planning team worked “hand in hand”¹⁷² with the developer throughout the process, other specialised consultants were mobilised over shorter periods of time for very specific tasks (some reports had to be revised after consultation, for instance the environmental statement and the codes of construction). The control of timelines by Argent and the King’s Cross Team differed from what I observed in the Fringe case. In 2002 - 2003, communities were invited to comment on Argent’s draft *Framework for Regeneration*. A second wave of controlled community engagement was carried out in 2004 - 2005, through the King’s Cross Development Forum (as discussed in chapter 5) and focused on commenting on the technical reports and the draft planning application released in 2004. I accessed the minutes of 22 meetings organised by the King’s Cross Development Forum between 2004 and 2006 (to my knowledge, these were all the meetings that were organised between the date the Forum was established, and the date Argent was granted planning permission). Seventeen of these meetings were held in 2004, highlighting the intensity of community engagement induced by the publication of numerous technical reports and the relatively short timeframe dedicated to their review, given that community members are not supposed to be experts on all these topics.

¹⁷² Lead master-planner, 2016, INT1-KCC-Cons

Figure 9: Timeline of Report writing for King's Cross Central



Source: Author, based on documents' review.

The time allocated to communities and elected officials to comment on and engage with technical reports was perceived as problematic by interviewees from the community and public sectors (here by public sector I mean elected officials, as opposed to councils' technical experts such as members of the King's Cross Team). This timeframe was largely determined by the legal and procedural norms shaping public consultation. As previously mentioned, the production of an inflated technical evidence base, through multiple reports, contributed to undermining the capacity of community organisations and local governments' elected officials to contest the development on the basis of evidence review. Technical knowledge devices such as specialised reports are extremely long and detailed, in this case representing more than 2000 pages of supplementary evidence in addition to the 200 pages of planning application. They mobilise expertise that members of the community are unlikely to hold and therefore which in turn prevents them from engaging with the content of these documents in the imposed timeframe.¹⁷³ These issues were reported by members of the King's Cross Development Forum at a meeting with the King's Cross Team in 2004:

B [anonymised] suggested that the application supporting documents such as the Implementation Strategy were very considerable documents and would require considerable review which further justified an extension of consultation time from 21 days.¹⁷⁴

A Camden councillor interviewed for this research reported it was difficult to engage with such a long and detailed evidence base, specifically because they are elected officials and not technicians. Whilst usually planning officers (in that case the King's Cross Team) are in charge of synthesising and presenting the evidence to elected councillors, when an application comes through with a large body of supportive evidence generated by established consultancies, it might be hard for political

¹⁷³ King's Cross Development Forum member, 2016, INT8-KCC-Comm, Cally Rail Group member, 2016, INT5-KCC-Comm, King's Cross Railway Lands Group founding member, 2016, INT10-KCC-Comm

¹⁷⁴ King's Cross Development Forum Meeting Minutes: 27th November 2004 - Location: Working Men's College

actors to refuse planning permission, even when they are not in a position to evaluate the validity of these documents:

If you refuse an application it could go to appeal, and you can lose the appeal because you haven't used that report. How do you turn something down when there is a very technical report that says it is fine? You're just a rubber stamp.¹⁷⁵

The KCC shows that the coordination of technical urban expertise allows the production of an inflated technical evidence base and various knowledge devices which once produced, speak and act for themselves, and can have an impact on whether a planning permission is approved or refused. Coupled with what are perceived as relatively short consultation timeframes, the production of numerous knowledge devices contributes to the marginalisation of communities and some elected officials in assemblages of urban expertise, and undermines their ability to feed into, and assess the scientific soundness of abstract urban visions. Through my two case studies, I demonstrated that it is essential to account for how the temporality of projects affects individual consultants, communities and sometimes even local governments' (politicians particularly) capacity to meaningfully contribute to abstract urban visions. It highlights one of the key paradoxes of urban redevelopment projects: whilst at first sight it allows more knowledge about a very specific sites to be produced (through the mobilisation of a wide range of experts and devices, through the production of technical reports across a wide range of areas), and brings the formulation of urban visions closer to local communities, in reality the projectification of spatial transformations ends up marginalising the voice of individual consultants (in the case of the Fringe), that of communities (in both cases) and politicians (in the KCC case).

¹⁷⁵ Elected Official Camden Council, 2016, INT14-KCC-LA

Conclusion

This chapter has shown the importance of looking at how the relational composition of the project site shapes how urban expertise is hierarchised and for what (political) purpose it is mobilised (addressing hypotheses 1 and 3). The projectification of urban developments has contributed to creating new sites which have become more isolated from the broader context within which they exist, as they are governed as separate entities. Thus, project-based urbanism supports the logic of abstraction, through the division and control of inner-city space (hypothesis 3). In this context, real estate developers and/or public-private quangos in charge of managing redevelopment projects assemble multi-disciplinary teams that often work over-compressed timeframes.¹⁷⁶ Thus, the ability of actors to coordinate fragmented, often private, and hyper-specialised expertise in turn allows them to shape the content of urban expertise itself (hypothesis 4). Institutionalised planning processes underpinning project-based urban governance, either under the form of planning regulations (KCC), or approaches to the production of planning frameworks (the Fringe), shape what type of expertise is valued and mobilised to inform abstract urban visions, and the extent to which communities (the Fringe and KCC) and politicians (KCC) are able to engage in the production, review, contestation of such visions (hypothesis 4). As a result of these processes, projectification supports uneven power distribution and hierarchisation across assemblages of expertise (confirming hypothesis 1). In the next chapter, I explore how the type of urban expertise that emerges from these complex project-based configurations further contributes to reducing urban space to a set of economic and financial outcomes, elaborating on some of the points raised in chapter 6.

¹⁷⁶ For a discussion of how developers mobilise time as a political resource in the planning process (in the London context) see Raco et al. 2018.

Chapter 8: Performing the real estate gaze

The previous chapters have shown that contemporary governance arrangements in cities favour the leadership of the real estate sector in urban redevelopment and in the production of abstract urban visions. The previous chapter in particular has highlighted the centrality of Argent and the Partnership within assemblages of urban expertise, as they are able to bring together and coordinate the work of vast pools of hyper-specialised experts and technical devices. This chapter builds on those observations, demonstrating how as real estate actors have gained influence over urban matters, their way of seeing the urban has become dominant. Before digging deeper into the processes by which real estate actors' way of seeing the urban is enacted through assemblages of urban expertise and performed in and through space, one question needs answering: what does it mean to know the urban abstractly - or to see the urban - like a real estate actor? Here I take inspiration from Scott (1998) who highlighted the ways particular entities (in his case, 'the state') see, know and act upon space. Studies of the relationship between the production of selective representations of urban subjects (human or non-human) and of urban space - through knowledge production - and the exercise of governmentality have to date focused on the 'governmental gaze' of local and/or national states (Valverde 2011, Simcik Arese 2018). Magnusson (2013) invites us to decentre the analysis from a focus on the state to understand how urban life is shaped (and ordered) by complex practices of government and self-government, practices that always involve multiple types of authorities and modes of exerting power. Different modes of exerting power which in turn involve distinct ways of knowing space. Given real estate actors' influence over spatial transformations in Cape Town and London, it is important to understand how they see the urban to explore whether and how this gaze shapes urban transformations. As alluded to in the previous chapters, real estate actors see urban space as potentially profitable (chapter 5), but also potentially risky, which requires them to develop tools that can help foresee and navigate uncertainties (chapter 6) particularly in the early stages of redevelopment projects (chapter 7). I argue that these two abstract concepts, of risks and economic returns, and the knowledge devices that underpin their calculation, are constitutive of the real estate gaze.

This chapter mobilises insights from interviews and from the review of the knowledge devices used in the design of the Fringe and KCC to demonstrate that the real estate gaze is made dominant in both projects. In doing so, I continue to address my first, second and fourth hypotheses. First of all, I explore how real estate actors themselves come to dominate the production of urban expertise in both cases, beyond their capacity to pull together vast coalitions of experts (as analysed previously). In the KCC case, this was achieved through the involvement of real estate actors in the co-design of planning regulations; in the Fringe, it was achieved through the direct hire of property expert in the project team (8.1). I then discuss the centrality of knowledge devices - especially risks and returns calculation techniques - borrowed from the real estate sector in both assemblages of urban expertise. I show that the use of such devices tends to reduce urban space to a series of calculable financial outcomes and risks. The institutionalisation of their use as rigorous ways of determining a project's credibility and value has implications for how the urban is seen and planned for in the context of urban development projects. It supports the performance of the real estate gaze within and through assemblages of urban expertise and the abstract urban visions they produce (8.2).

8.1 Enacting the view from the real estate market

The following sections explore how the real estate gaze is made dominant within assemblages of urban expertise in both cases: through regulations in the case of KCC, and project team organisation in the case of the Fringe. Both cases illustrate that a focus on organisational politics (like in the Fringe) and the making of rules such as planning regulations (like in KCC) can deepen existing understandings of the various ways in which the view from the property market shapes the production of abstract urban visions as well as the production of space. They also both illuminate the importance of looking at informal processes of negotiations within organisations to understand how the real estate gaze comes to dominate the production expertise, and space, in different geographical contexts.

8.1.1 Project team composition and the valuation of property experts: lessons from the Fringe

Looking at the history of the Fringe project is essential to better understand the process through which the initiative became progressively focused on the property sector. Its precursor, the East City Design Initiative (ECDI) launched in 2009, brought together the Partnership, but also other partners such as the Cape Town Peninsula University of Technology located in District Six, the Cape Town Fashion Council, the Cape Craft and Design Institute, local property owners, the Province and the City in discussions on the creation of an innovation precinct/science park in the Eastern part of the CBD. The initiative aimed to create *“the premier African environment for design innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship being developed in the Cape Town Central City within the next 10 years”* (East City Design Initiative 2010, p. 6). Around 2011, the momentum created by Cape Town’s WDC bid contributed to coalescing interests towards the project. At this time the Province, which was the leading governmental force behind the idea of a science park, commissioned the Partnership to lead the conceptual thinking for the regeneration of this part of the city: the initiative would be revamped as the Fringe in 2011. The City itself was involved as Partnership funder and as the project fell within the City of Cape Town’s administrative boundary, and hence was of strategic importance at the metropolitan level. At the Partnership, the Fringe project leader came from the creative and cultural sector (as founder of Creative Cape Town) and a property expert was hired by the Partnership to act as his “right hand man,”¹⁷⁷ acting effectively as project manager for the Fringe.

It is interesting to note how organisational politics internal to the Partnership shaped the intellectual orientation of the project and vision for the site. The Partnership, as explained in the previous chapters, is in and of itself geared towards

¹⁷⁷ Consultant, Independent (worked on the Fringe), 2017, INT33-TF-Cons

creating a conducive environment for property developments, notably through urban regeneration. However, the presence of a project lead from the creative and cultural sector also reflected the Partnership's ambition to create a project that would speak to that community, and not exclusively to the property sector. When I asked him about his background and the reasons for his involvement in the project, he explained that what drove him to the project was the idea it could provide affordable spaces and facilities to the cultural and creative sectors in a way that could be linked to the history of the area and its heritage:

I thought the area had a lot of cultural potential. I thought it had a lot of important spaces, the Castle, City Hall, Granary, District Six Museum and you know they struggle to get people to go there, those historic spaces. And I thought it was quite sad that nobody was caring for these things and all you heard was fancy ideas coming from government with not a real plan for action or real connexion between things [...] I was coming across a lot of people who desperately needed exhibition space, event space, project space working in the non-profit arena and there were a lot of opportunities [...] I thought there was a shortage of imagination of how the space could be used and the sort of connexions that could be made [...] And I recognised there was an opportunity to leverage the design side of that in a creative way. So that became an important element. There were so much stuff happening around the design side that there were good arguments that could be made - thinking about design quite broadly [...] and having a clear sense of history and memory behind these things and not seeing these things as abstract global economy concepts.¹⁷⁸

According to the Fringe project leader therefore, the redevelopment could have been the opportunity to enhance local heritage, in order to provide relatively affordable spaces for the design, creative and cultural sectors. In other words, it could have been an opportunity to use urban design to support the cultural and creative sector as opposed to parachuting a science park model imported from elsewhere (the "global economy concepts" he referred to in our interview). At the same time, the same interviewee recognised that to implement such a vision the Partnership "needed to pull resources together"¹⁷⁹ and this included unlocking

¹⁷⁸ Fringe Project Leader, Cape Town Partnership, 2017, INT51-TF-CTP

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

further financial support from the Province and convincing real estate actors to invest in the area and to provide facilities that would support the creative sector. A project manager for the Fringe was recruited in 2011 and his role was to create momentum around the initiative to unlock this support. He came directly from a property background, and his task included coordinating the work of the various consultants hired to produce different reports informing the project, promoting the Fringe to local property owners, investors, prospective tenants, and coordinating the work underpinning the production of a *Business Case* (2011) to be submitted to the Provincial government (as discussed in previous chapters). The necessity to bring this type of expertise into the project was underlined by the project lead, but was also described as difficult to reconcile with his vision for the Fringe, which was less business oriented:

*I also struggled with my kind of skills and experience and it was a learning curve for me. And I had a colleague [A project manager, anonymised] and it was the same for him and we had to find our feet and sometimes we clashed with each other and sometimes we worked very well. He was very much a property guy, very into the kind of incubators and stuffs. I was interested in that. He was more knowledgeable of venture capital. He had lots of good things, but he was very much on the business ... that edge of things.*¹⁸⁰

When asked about why he thought he was hired on the project, the project manager responded that was due to his “interest in property” and to the fact that he “did a lot of research with property investors.”¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Fringe Project Manager, Cape Town Partnership, 2017, INT50-TF-CTP

This point was further corroborated by a former Cape Town Partnership consultant:

When the Fringe was led by C [project lead, anonymised], A [project manager, anonymised] was sort of his right-hand man, and A came to the Partnership with a property background, a property focus. And because the Fringe was a property-led initiative - it was a creative hub for Cape Town, as I understand it, but not led by culture - it was done through property [...] This was going to be the keystone, the spatial area that will represent what the Partnership, and the city, is capable of doing to revitalise the central city from a property perspective.¹⁸²

In the Fringe therefore, the real estate gaze was enacted directly through the hiring of a property expert as project manager. By hiring a “property guy”¹⁸³ the Partnership prioritised inputs from this sector into the project vision, as well as that of the broader real estate ecosystem (i.e. including property managers, potential tenants and investors). The project manager reportedly worked with “property brokers, building managers, their tenants” throughout the project in order to understand “what makes financial sense in the property market.”¹⁸⁴ Property experts were further mobilised to produce two reports, the *Property Strategy* and the *Property Report*, both published in 2011. The *Property Report*, as mentioned in chapter 6, was commissioned to two real estate developers. These were tasked with mapping out the commercial potential of properties located in the area. The *Property Strategy* was commissioned to an economic consultant and aimed to lay out an integrated strategy:

to identify and define the possible property and public environment/urban design related catalysts that might serve as an impetus to unlocking the development and economic potential of The Fringe. (*Property Strategy* 2011, p. 3)

¹⁸² Consultant, Independent (worked on the Fringe), 2017, INT33-TF-Cons

¹⁸³ Local Property Owner, 2017, INT32-TF-Rea

¹⁸⁴ Former CEO, Cape Town Partnership, 2017, INT23-TF-CTP

Local property owners were also consulted throughout the design phase of the project (some of them had been involved since 2008/2009, when the idea to create a design park in this area was being discussed with local stakeholders).¹⁸⁵ The production of the *Urban Design Framework*, key vision for the area, was itself seen as an opportunity to engage local developers and property owners and “to send a message to potential property investors and tenants.”¹⁸⁶ Hence, the production of an urban vision for the Fringe was used as a catalyst to create a coalition between future tenants (the creative sector), property owners and investors - the real estate community at large - to rejuvenate the area. As highlighted by a former Partnership employee, the project manager was hired for his capacity to build coalitions across the real estate community at large:

*At the time A [anonymised] was the project manager and he was based in the East City so he was kind of on the ground, day to day work. He was walking the streets, spent a lot of time with potential tenants and potential investors showing them the spaces ... he became very much like more of a real estate person than a project manager ... he ran a lot of events like “meet and greets” and things like that between the businesses.*¹⁸⁷

Thus, in this project, the real estate gaze was internalised within the Partnership through the hiring of a project manager known for his entrepreneurial spirit, local connections and ability to create such connexions. It was further performed by the production of two property studies¹⁸⁸ which themselves enacted property owners, investors and future tenants’ needs and expectations. The predominance of this real estate gaze is further reflected in other technical reports produced to inform the Fringe *Urban Design Framework* which further emphasise some of the concerns raised by the real estate community in various instances. This is the case of the SIA

¹⁸⁵ Local Property Owner, 2017, INT32-TF-Rea

¹⁸⁶ Fringe Project Manager, Cape Town Partnership, 2017, INT50-TF-CTP

¹⁸⁷ Program manager at the Partnership involved in the Fringe, 2017, INT24-TF-CTP

¹⁸⁸ *Property Report 2011, Property Strategy 2011*

which states that “*homeless people and vagrants are likely to be seen as problematic*” (*Social Impact Assessment* 2011, p. 12) by future tenants and/or investors. The ‘homeless question’ was also raised in the *Creative Industries Survey* which stated that:

A considerable number of firms cited “homeless people/street children” in the East City area as both a “major issue” and “concern.” The issue of street people/children was also raised a couple of times during our interviews with property managers/owners in the area. (*Creative Industries Survey* 2011, p. 27)

This report, by surveying creative businesses and property owners, aimed to understand what might prevent potential tenants (from the creative sector) from relocating their activities in the Fringe. The assemblage of urban expertise underpinning the production of the Fringe vision therefore supported the production of knowledge generated from the perspective of the property sector. This is evidenced by the project team set-up and by the production of reports that focus on identifying the needs of property owners, prospective investors and tenants, and which tie project’s success to the satisfaction of such needs. In KCC, the real estate gaze was enacted by means of (informal) institutional design, as Argent collaborated with the King’s Cross Team to co-produce the regulations against which its project for the area would be evaluated.

8.1.2 Inscribing real estate values into planning frameworks: lessons from King’s Cross

As previously explained the KCC scheme falls under the jurisdiction of both the London Borough of Camden (responsible for granting permission for the “Main Site”) and the London Borough of Islington (responsible for granting permission for “the Triangle”). The *Joint Planning Brief* – i.e. the King’s Cross Opportunity Area Planning Framework (OAPF) - set up the legal framework within which the regeneration scheme could occur, alongside providing indications on the objectives the developer should be seeking for the site (e.g. level of affordable housing, local

job creation, provision of healthcare and community facilities, provision of green and public spaces, etc.). These planning frameworks allow local governments to call for revisions to planning applications if these do not comply with what OAPFs establish as key redevelopment priorities. Therefore, OAPFs in theory can be seen as instruments that ensure the realisation of public value (as opposed to private value) in the context of private-led urban redevelopment, for they enshrine some key objectives related to project outcomes. In that context, the pre-planning stages of a scheme often represent an intense period of negotiations between the Boroughs in charge of granting permission, real estate developers, sometimes the GLA, and local communities.¹⁸⁹ OAPFs represent a moment in the planning process where public and private values can be negotiated. In KCC, the London Boroughs of Camden and Islington released their *Joint Planning Brief* in 2004 after consultation with key stakeholders. In essence, the *Brief* sought to “*set out requirements for planning applications for developments within the Area*” and to provide parameters for regeneration including:

Opportunity for local community involvement in the future; development in the Area and the Triangle; Guidance on how Camden’s particular objectives for the Opportunity Area and Islington’s particular objectives for the Triangle can be reached and informed by the known aspirations of developers across all the King’s Cross projects;¹⁹⁰ Providing certainty for land owners and developers, to encourage investment in a long-neglected area; A way of seeking as much agreement as possible among the various parties about how development should come forward, including indications of where conditions or legal agreements will be appropriate. (*Joint Planning Brief* 2004, p. 6)

¹⁸⁹ Other regulatory mechanisms are subject to negotiations between developers and local governments: these include for instance Section 106 Agreements (these agreements are negotiated between the developers and local authorities to secure community gains from development projects and to mitigate against their potential negative economic, social, or environmental, impacts), and Community Infrastructure Levies (these refer to fees/charges UK local authorities can impose on new developments and use to fund infrastructure, facilities and services needed to accommodate new homes and businesses where developments will be implemented).

¹⁹⁰ Administratively, the *Brief* covered the entire King’s Cross Opportunity Area, within which KCC is located, yet effectively “the scale of the main development (i.e. King’s Cross Central) means that it naturally dominates the *Brief*” even though “much of this guidance has general application to the other projects, as well as specific advice where appropriate” (*Joint Planning Brief* 2004, p. 5).

Various documents produced by Argent and its team of consultants¹⁹¹ refer to the requirements¹⁹² set out in the *Brief* extensively, showing its influence over the design of the KCC scheme. Equally, community organisations always referred to it when contesting Argent's proposed project and demanded alterations to it (Cally Rail Group 2006, King's Cross Railway Lands Group 2005). Given the *Brief's* strategic importance in informing the content of the KCC vision, paying attention to its mode of production is essential. At first sight, the *Brief* appears to be a formal legal device highlighting strategic objectives for the redevelopment project, produced by the two responsible public authorities in consultation with the developer and local community groups (both are acknowledged in its introductory section). However, Argent played a much greater role in designing the content of the *Brief* than what reading the document suggests, and many activities influencing the final shape and content of this *Joint Planning Brief* were negotiated directly between the developer and technical experts within the King's Cross Team. Indeed, the King's Cross Team was instrumental in the pre-planning phase of the project and the type of expertise valued by its former director was one that can "speak the language"¹⁹³ of real estate actors, allowing the Council to negotiate on equal grounds. The close proximity between Argent and the King's Cross Team meant they could also discuss the *Brief* as it was being drafted. A former member of the Team and a representative from Argent both confirmed the developer's strong involvement in the co-production of the *Brief* and highlighted the marginalisation of the London Borough of Islington in that process:

¹⁹¹ Planning Statement 2004, p. 3, p. 82, Retail Impact Assessment 2004, p. 20, Environmental Statement Volume 2 2004, p. 9; Environmental Statement Volume 3 2004, p. 76, Environmental Statement Volume 4 2004, p. 94, Transport Assessment 2004, p.1, p. 23, Regeneration Strategy 2004, p. 6, Application to Demolish Culross Building 2004, p. 14, Implementation Strategy 2004, p. 4, p. 15, Green Travel Plan 2004, p. 8, Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2004, p. 3, Triangle Site Explanatory Statement 2004, p. 2

¹⁹² As mentioned in chapter 4, the UK planning system also requires developers to comply with national planning regulations, the London Plan since February 2004, as well as Boroughs local development plans. The *King's Cross Opportunity Area Joint Planning Brief* operates as a supplementary planning guidance and provides information that is relevant to the design of abstract urban visions.

¹⁹³ Former head of the King's Cross Team, 2016, INT12-KCC-LA

*The problem is that at that time Islington was under a very different leadership [...] and they adopted a very defensive position for about six years, during which we developed the scheme and negotiated with Argent. So yes, we negotiated the Brief with Argent, but why wouldn't you do that?*¹⁹⁴

The collaboration between Argent and the King's Cross Team in the co-design of the *Brief* contributed to set up the rules of the game for the redevelopment in a way that internalised and enacted the developer's constraints whilst also attempting to secure community gains (from the Boroughs' perspective). In other words, it allowed these actors to negotiate the institutional parameters within which a project that would satisfy both the developer's financial objectives, and the Boroughs' requirements, could be designed and implemented. In that process, the articulation of local values and expectations was delegated to a group of technical experts, within the Borough of Camden. This is very much reflected in the final content of the *Brief* which states multiple (if not contradictory) objectives for the site which were very much in line with Argent's original objectives of creating a mixed-use, economically vibrant new part of London. In its *Framework for Regeneration*, the developer emphasises the importance of creating a new destination, which would support London's world class status whilst creating economic opportunities:

By the start of the next decade, King's Cross Central should be a role model for a sustainable world city, a rich mix of city life at a world-class transport interchange. It should be a busy, thriving and exciting destination; a confluence of people and activity; an outstanding place to live work or just 'be'. (*Framework for Regeneration* 2002, p. 4)

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

The *Brief* adopted a similar language and conflicting aspirations:

The development of King's Cross is expected to contribute to long established objectives for London, including its promotion as a World City, maintaining and enhancing the competitiveness of business, maximising housing provision to meet changing needs, encouraging a pattern of land uses and transport which minimises harm to the environment. Achieving this involves incorporating sustainable design principles, maintaining and improving the natural and open environment, promoting urban regeneration, while not harming the vitality & viability of town and other centres.

(*Joint Planning Brief* 2004, p. 12)

What appeared clear during this study is that members of the King's Cross Team (as well as political actors within the Borough of Camden) welcomed the scheme¹⁹⁵ in a context of reduced public finance and after twenty years of failed redevelopment promises. This position is further reflected in the opening section of the *Brief* which states that "*the two councils wish to see major development and regeneration started, and completed, as soon as possible, to overcome the problems and uncertainties that have blighted this site in the recent past*" (*Joint Planning Brief* 2004, p. 2). The two Boroughs, Camden and the King's Cross Team in particular, were keen to develop good working relationships with Argent's team to secure planning gains whilst ensuring the scheme would be viable for the developer itself (a point I come back to in the next section). In London, Boroughs' dependence on private investments to steer house building and redevelopment make them more proactive in trying to attract such investments and in finding ways to accommodate the developer's financial constraints and expectations.¹⁹⁶ Paying attention to informal processes such as the

¹⁹⁵ Although political dissension internal to the Borough of Camden were notable, with various elected members actually opposing the scheme publicly. It is out of the scope of this thesis to review these conflicts, but I elaborate on some of these issues in Brill and Robin (2019) where I discuss the role of politicians and community actors in taking the scheme judicial review in 2006-2007.

¹⁹⁶ Former Head of the King's Cross Team, 2016, INT12-KCC-LA, also mentioned by a former King's Cross Team planner, 2016, INT13-KCC-LA. Sometimes Boroughs even create new special purpose vehicles to channel financial investments into housing projects (see Beswick and Penny 2018).

making of the *Brief* is thus essential in unveiling real estate actors' role in the making of planning rules, which in turn determines what values and forms of expertise are valorised, accounted for and performed in urban redevelopment projects.

8.1.3 Viewpoints matter

As both cases highlight, real estate expertise and understandings of (the value of) urban space dominates assemblages of urban expertise, and thus heavily influence the production of urban visions underpinning redevelopment projects. The real estate gaze is enacted differently in both projects. In the Fringe, it was enacted through the hiring of a project manager from the property sector to coordinate other experts' work and to bring perspectives from the real estate industry into the project. This in turn contributed to refocus the project from an initial emphasis on addressing the needs of the cultural and creative community, to an emphasis on generating buy-in from the property sector in order to support cultural and creative businesses. In this context, the assemblage of urban expertise that emerged from the Fringe project enacted the real estate gaze, for the evidence it produced was geared towards the production of an urban vision that sought to establish the commercial viability of the scheme. In London, Argent was actively involved in setting up the planning framework against which its project would be assessed, and the King's Cross Team was set up so that public sector experts could easily speak the same language as the developer.¹⁹⁷ The *Joint Planning Brief* itself was negotiated by a

¹⁹⁷ The work of Ananya Roy appears particularly relevant here, as she highlights how in the Indian context informality is a constitutive feature of state-led planning processes. In one of her articles she argues that planning laws "and forms of regulation are in and of themselves permeated by the logic of informality" (Roy 2009, p. 82) and she states that "the law itself is rendered open-ended and subject to multiple interpretations and interests, the 'law as social process' is as idiosyncratic and arbitrary as that which is illegal (Berry 1993; Holston 2009)" (Ibid., p. 80). The same applies to London where the creation of OAs and opaque negotiation processes between local governments and developers contribute to institutionalising a constant state of exception, where planning rules can be rewritten to achieve particular public-private compromises. Thus, informality, here understood as informal negotiations (informal for they are not open to the public) should be read as a constitutive feature of London's planning system, where planning gains are negotiated by the Boroughs, developers, and sometimes the GLA, on a site-specific basis. Tom Goodfellow (2019) also discusses the issues of informality, deal-making, trust and negotiations in relation to urban land value capture in Kampala.

group of technical experts in the London Borough of Camden in collaboration with Argent, thus enacting a vision for the site that would internalise the developer's constraints whilst laying out principles to secure some level of community gains. The 2004 *Brief* that resulted from this negotiation very much reflected the original vision laid out by Argent as early as 2002, albeit it also included additional requirements such as a minimum of 1800 new housing units (of which originally 40% should be affordable, a number which was subsequently revised down by the developer), and public spaces, etc. More importantly, the *Brief* itself recognises that long-term uncertainties related to project implementation required the planning process to integrate a certain degree of flexibility (i.e. non-binding commitments) to allow the developer to revise its project to adapt to "*changing market demand*" (*Joint Planning Brief* 2004, p. 26). Thus, in this case, Argent's way of seeing urban space, priorities and expectations are enacted by means of institutional design, through the *Brief*. The *Brief* itself would be heavily mobilised by the developer and its consultants in the production of the planning application and its technical evidence base. These two examples thus demonstrate that the influence of the real estate industry over urban transformations goes beyond real estate actors' positioning within governance networks, or their ability to channel mobile capital into urban developments. This influence also stems from their central position within assemblages of urban expertise as coordinators, and from the fact that their way of seeing the urban is performed through various means (e.g. institutional design, project team set up, engagement strategies). Furthermore, this view from the real estate market is enacted through the repeated use of economic and financial knowledge devices to assess the value and feasibility of abstract urban visions, a point I discussed in chapter 6 and elaborate on fully in the next section.

8.2 Tracing the power of economic and financial knowledge devices

I previously defined the real estate gaze as focused on the calculation of economic gains and anticipation of various risks related to investments in the built environment, particularly in the context of uncertain redevelopment projects like the Fringe and KCC. In this section, I demonstrate the importance of economic calculations and financial risk projections in the design of abstract urban visions and in the assessment of both projects' feasibility. As mentioned in previous chapters, the systematic and repeated use of particular knowledge devices influences how urban space is understood abstractly, as well as how, for whom and for what purpose it is transformed. It also shapes the influence of different human actors in assemblages of urban expertise, depending on whether or not they can use and/or engage with such tools, for instance to analyse/contest their assumptions and the descriptions of the urban they offer. Knowing techniques such as economic impact or financial viability assessments, risk management plans and business cases were prevalent in informing the design and assessing the feasibility of the Fringe and KCC. This leads me to argue that such knowledge devices hold the power to put a project on hold, to call for its revision or for its implementation. Their centrality within assemblages of urban expertise supports the performance of a real estate gaze within those assemblages, and through the types of spatial interventions they induce.

8.2.1 Calculating economic gains

In the Fringe and KCC cases, interviews with key stakeholders involved in the two projects revealed the dominance and prevalence of economic calculations in the assessment of the feasibility and opportunities of both redevelopment projects. In Cape Town, the Fringe project leader and manager and a consultant

highlighted the importance of the *Business Case*¹⁹⁸ in the discussions that underpinned the decision to take the project forward, or indeed not to take it forward. They further indicated that its production was required by the Province, as a pre-requisite for the project to receive further funding. This is illustrated by the following remark from the Fringe project lead:

*Then we get pulled in by the Province to go in certain direction. And what the Province wanted was a Business Case. This part was A's [anonymised] baby and I think he handled it all wrong and went off track [...] The Business Case was supposed to unlock opportunities but that is where we stuffed up and that was a critical time. At that moment, with that piece of work.*¹⁹⁹

A planner interviewed for the study indicated that this was not restricted to the Fringe, but indeed common practice for redevelopment projects more generally to be shaped by and evaluated against a business case (or 'plan' as the interviewee refers to in the following quote):

*The City [...] would tell us "now you do a development framework" and your brief would be [...] to make sure that you can set up a business plan in order to make the framework work. So there was a different team working on the business plan, but the spatial plan and the business plan had to work together [...] so what we do is that we develop the spatial plan and run it through an economic and financial model and they give it back to us and say this is not going to work. You need to increase the floorspace, you need to increase the number of units, you have to do this and that ... but ultimately what they do is very quantitatively based.*²⁰⁰

By mainstreaming the use of business cases/plans in decision-making processes related to urban developments, public authorities also strengthen the centrality of this device in the design of redevelopment projects. Indeed, judging the

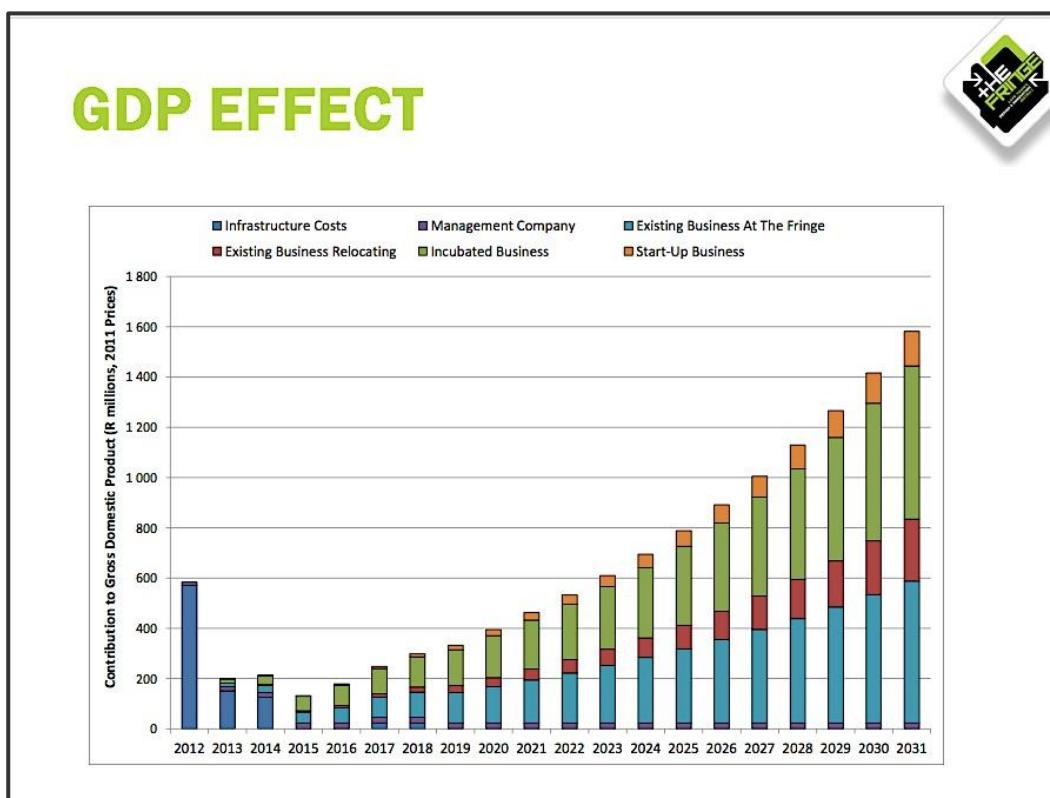
¹⁹⁸ Fringe Project Leader, Cape Town Partnership, 2017, INT51-TF-CTP, Fringe Project Manager, Cape Town Partnership, 2017, INT50-TF-CTP, Consultant, Independent (worked on the Fringe), 2017, INT33-TF-Cons

¹⁹⁹ Fringe Project Leader, Cape Town Partnership, 2017, INT51-TF-CTP

²⁰⁰ District Six Development Framework consultant, 2017, INT30-TF-Cons

quality of a project based on such tools influences how redevelopment schemes are designed, as illustrated by the two quotes above. In the Fringe, the *Business Case* was supposed to build up the case for redevelopment in that area of Cape Town, to convince the Province of the feasibility of the project and to highlight challenges and necessary investments that would be needed to upgrade the area. It was produced by Kaiser Associates Economic Development Partners (2011) and economic projections were modelled by Stratecon, a Cape Town based economic consultancy in the *EIA* (i.e. *Economic Impact Assessment* 2011). The *Business Case* (2011) was the main knowledge device through which project credibility and feasibility was assessed. In a presentation to the Fringe Executive Committee, the Fringe project lead used figures presented in the *Business Case* stressing the redevelopment's anticipated exponential contribution to local GDP (figure 10) and job creation: "It is expected that as many as 3 573 direct and indirect jobs would be created and sustained by 2031. This amounts to 6 jobs per million rand spent in 2012 and 255 jobs per million rand by 2031" (Minty 2012).

Figure 10: The Fringe projected contribution to South African GDP (in Rand)



Source: *Economic Impact Assessment* (2011) used in a presentation to the Fringe steering committee (Minty 2012).

In addition to the *EIA*, the *Property Strategy* (2011) was produced to further explore how those targets could be achieved and how the project's success could be measured. Interestingly, the ways in which the *Property Strategy* links the achievement of desired economic outcomes to increased property value supports the legitimacy of the project's emphasis on property-led economic development:

a set of related strategies that need to be implemented together in a coordinated and programmatic fashion to achieve the desired renewal impact in the area [...] an increase in the rental attributed to the existing rental stock as a real reflection of 'increased demand' for space in the area and corresponding increase in property valuations. (*Property Strategy* 2011, p. 3)

The Fringe case highlights the dominance of calculative practices that emphasise the increase in property value as a good indicator of a scheme's success and means by which to achieve economic growth, almost unquestionably. This bias towards evidence that would support the case for property-led regeneration was further emphasised by consultants and public officials involved in the project, as illustrated by the following quotes:

*The City as a whole is very pro-development in Cape Town, almost to the point of not caring about what kind of development it is. That is the perception - I don't know if it's a fair statement. And when you get to that point the evidence becomes almost irrelevant, the only evidence you need is that you are providing a development which is ... you can argue it is providing jobs and rates revenues for the City and all that kind of things.*²⁰¹

*As I said, economics is very important in the City: we need income, every big development that is coming brings a lot of work opportunities for local communities but the revenue that comes from the development itself... because that is rates and taxes that you get out of it [...] Therefore, our politicians want us to be pro-development.*²⁰²

²⁰¹ Arup transport consultant, 2017, INT43-TF-Cons

²⁰² Senior urban designer at the City, 2017, INT19-TF-LA

These quotes illustrate the centrality of economic projection in determining the value of redevelopment projects, as these need to prove they will attract enough private investments to generate municipal revenues. Whilst the broader anticipated impacts of the scheme seem to focus on job creation and economic growth, the ways in which such targets are expected to be met remains focused on creating a conducive environment for the area to attract investments and for property markets to thrive, this in turn supports the dominance of the real estate gaze. In KCC, discussions informing the approval/refusal of Argent's scheme focused on the economic and financial viability of the project. The dominance of financial and managerial expertise and considerations throughout the decision-making process was further highlighted by the majority of interviewees participating in the study.²⁰³ The former head of the King's Cross Team argued that Argent's project was itself shaped by "the need to provide a return to the landowner," hence conditioned by investors' financial expectations. In a book he recently published, the former officer explains that:

Argent itself was constrained by the need to provide a return to the landowners and its board. When land is owned, developed, financed privately, the landowner retains the right under the law to enjoy their land, planning can never be an open exercise. The landowners had every right to maximise the value of their land within the confines of planning policy. (Bishop and Williams 2016, p. 146)

This quote illustrates how the impetus to generate economic returns constrains spatial visioning which "can never be an open exercise" (*Ibid.*). These constraints were further tightened by the use of financial viability assessments as central devices to assess the feasibility of different aspects of Argent's scheme: items such as the provision of affordable housing, community amenities, public space, commercial space, high-end rentals, etc. were all assessed through the prism of

²⁰³ Twelve interviewees (out of eighteen) interviewed in this study reported financial and managerial expertise as the most influential over the design of the KCC project.

the project's anticipated commercial success which in turn would strengthen its financial viability.²⁰⁴ An interviewee involved in the project explained that viability assessments are often used as authoritative tools to determine the level of affordable housing to be provided onsite, even though these devices are inherently limited. She explained how viability assessments were mobilised by Argent to justify a reduction of its original commitment to build 40% of affordable housing in KCC. This reduction was implemented after Argent was granted planning permission in 2006, thus does not directly fall within the period analysed here. However, this event provides interesting information as to how viability assessments can be instrumented politically. An elected member of the London Assembly, who started her political career in Camden when Argent's scheme was going through planning application commented extensively on this event. In her remark, she suggests viability assessments can be instrumented to look at the viability of specific developments (e.g. single building) within the broader redevelopment site, and without showing how economic loss on one building can be compensated by other usages in other parts of the site.

The problem is that when Argent revises the scheme - it does so at the scale of the plot and does not take into account the broader context [of its development]. Valuation is made on the value of one specific development instead of showing evidence of how this plays out at the scale of the whole scheme. Government cuts now prevent them from accessing housing funding they need for social housing so they decided to cut the number of social housing based on that, but they never brought the evidence of how this plays out when considering other major developments on the site. For instance, letting a whole building to Google must have brought them a lot of money. Originally, the planning permission was granted on the basis of having a vision for the site and viability assessment for the whole site but now when it comes to altering the plan evidence is shown at the scale of small developments around the site.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁴ As I have discussed elsewhere, financial viability assessments are often used by developers as a justification to cut down the amount of social housing in a scheme, and to justify increasing floor space for commercial use or high end residential (Robin 2018). Often presented as objective, scientific measures of potential risks and expected returns, existing literature has shown those notions to be up for grabs (McAllister et al. 2016) and lacking specificity (Savini and Aalbers 2016).

²⁰⁵ London Assembly member, 2016, INT15-KCC-LA

Assessments of the financial viability of the KCC scheme dominated community-developer-local government debates until planning permission was granted to Argent in 2006. These were used as authoritative devices when it came to deciding which alterations to the plan were feasible or not feasible, a view corroborated by representatives from the King's Cross Team.²⁰⁶ Community members reported that "it was always about viability, whenever we asked for more affordable housing, more community spaces, more open spaces."²⁰⁷ Yet, none of the community members interviewed for this study were allowed to access the financial viability assessment submitted by Argent to the two Boroughs in support of its planning application (nor was I able to access it).²⁰⁸ This shows that an authoritative device remains opaque to the broader public, who is unable to assess whether the assumptions and calculations determining a project's viability are valid, flawed, or questionable. This in turn contributes to reinforcing the performance of the real estate gaze within assemblages of urban expertise, and to limit communities' ability to scrutinise the knowledge devices used as central tools to determine the content of redevelopment projects.

The two cases highlight that the hierarchisation of knowledge devices in urban development projects reinforces the dominance of real estate expertise in the development of abstract urban visions and its performance in space. They further illustrate that public authorities regard economic projections (under the form of business cases or financial viability assessments) as key tools for assessing a vision's credibility and feasibility, reinforcing the power of these devices within

²⁰⁶ Former Head of the King's Cross Team, 2016, INT12-KCC-LA

²⁰⁷ Cally Rail Group member, 2016, INT5-KCC-Comm, also supported by Academic Activist, 2016, INT4-KCC-Ac, King's Cross Railway Lands Group founding member, 2016, INT10-KCC-Comm

²⁰⁸ Until 2015, copies of financial viability assessments submitted by developers to the Boroughs were impossible to retrieve, even via Freedom of Information requests. Since 2015, and further to a long judicial battle between community activists and the London Borough of Southwark (see 35% Campaign 2015), viability assessments can be requested from a handful of London Boroughs (e.g. Southwark, Croydon, Greenwich) but not from Camden and/or Islington. The culture of secrecy that surrounds the use of financial viability assessments in London's planning has been the focus of much media attention and community contestation, see for instance Wainwright 2014.

assemblages of urban expertise. In the case of KCC, the authority of opaque (at least from the perspective of local community activists) financial viability assessments supported the performance of “market values” in Argent’s vision, and “*the orientation of planners’ evaluations towards market metrics*” (Holman et al. 2018, p. 5). In the case of Cape Town, the *Business Case* and *Property Strategy* together emphasised the importance of increasing property values as a conducive factor to further economic growth and jobs creation. The systematic use of business cases in public decision-making (both at the Provincial and City level) subjects planners and designers’ work to the law of economic viability, reinforcing the power of this knowledge device within assemblages of urban expertise. Whilst business cases and financial viability assessments both seek to assess whether or not an abstract urban vision developed for a particular project can bring about economic benefits, other devices are used to define how these can be achieved. In particular, this research demonstrates the key role played by risk assessments in shaping the content of urban visions and the work of experts working on redevelopment projects. The ways in which redevelopment risks are framed through knowledge production and acted upon in both projects reflect a further enactment of the real estate gaze, as discussed in the next section.

8.2.2 Navigating financial risks

For real estate actors, and developers in particular, master-planning is intrinsically linked to the management of financial gains and losses, through foreseeing, navigating and mitigating various risks that could jeopardise their projects’ viability in a particular location (Ratcliffe et al. 2009, David 2012, Halbert and Rouanet 2014). Indeed, as Carmona and colleagues indicate: “*the advantages of master-plans are to ensure and enhance the composite value of all investments in the area and to reduce development risks*” (Carmona et al. 2003, p. 234 cited in Bell 2005, p. 93). As noted in chapter 6, regeneration projects are known to be risky but also, and as a result, yield the potential for higher economic returns, provided project risks can be identified, and controlled. However, this framing of risks around their (negative) impact on financial gains is one of many ways in which the risks associated with urban development projects can be assessed: from a public sector

or community perspective, defining development risks in relation to their social, cultural and environmental dimensions, could appear essential too. For instance, risk assessments could be used as devices that help understand whether a scheme will induce low-income population displacement (gentrification), environmental degradation, or threaten small businesses (Raco and Tunney 2010). Therefore, although instrumental in identifying and managing uncertain outcomes, the definition of risks in urban development projects through knowledge production is inherently political. The identification and hierarchisation of risks in turn raises broader questions on the value attached to different things (people, heritage, environmental assets, etc.) in the redevelopment process. Social constructivist and anthropological approaches to risk have indeed shown risk to be embedded in specific socio-cultural contexts, highlighting that understandings of risks, and risks themselves, are socially constructed, negotiated, contested reconfigured and mediated through the work of experts, calculative techniques and individual experiences and perceptions.²⁰⁹ As Lupton argues, *“there is a continual definitional struggle over risk, particularly between those who produce risk definitions (principally experts) and those who consume them (the lay public) [...] as a result, risk has become a highly politicised concept”* (Lupton 1999, p. 68).

Analysing which (and whose) definition of ‘risk’ prevails in the design of redevelopment schemes, and why, is key to understand how power operates within assemblages of urban expertise and how in turn specific definitions of risks are mobilised to legitimise particular urban visions. If the emphasis is on the risk of low-income groups displacements, then one might expect a redevelopment project’s vision to focus on the provision of affordable housing and economic opportunities

²⁰⁹ These studies have shown that the politics of risk definition unfolds in places, and therefore are framed within particular socio-institutional and territorial settings. For example, ethnographic work on trading activities has shown how individual traders use their techno-scientific but also experiential and locally embedded knowledge to make decisions on financial markets; the geography and spatial configurations of the trading room allow traders and other financial professionals to interact and anticipate market trends as well as potentially risky positions on those markets (Beunza and Stark 2004). This literature highlights that even quantified risks - and the meaning associated to probabilistic metrics - is mediated by interpretative work that is socially and spatially grounded (see for instance Zaloom 2003 for a discussion of “ambiguous numbers” and decision-making on financial markets).

for this population. If the main risk identified is related to profitability in the short run, then maybe more emphasis will be put on the construction of high-end housing and commercial space (Guironnet and Halbert 2014). Hence, attending to the politics of risk definitions is essential when unpacking the politics of urban expertise and its effects over the production of urban space. A review of the technical documents and calculation techniques used to define and anticipate risks in the Fringe and KCC cases illustrates how the definition of important and salient risks associated with both projects was largely shaped by the real estate gaze. Therefore, the categorisations of risks used to inform the design of both projects performed real estate based abstract understandings of the urban. In the case of the Fringe, the *SIA* is probably the most holistic assessment of project risks. It uses traditional cost-benefit analysis to evaluate quite a comprehensive range of impacts in relation to heritage, safety, gentrification, the quality of the environment, social cohesion, redevelopment impacts on vulnerable communities, competitiveness and cost of project failure. In this process of identification and anticipation, positive and negative impacts are distinguished. The negative impacts can be understood as a series of risks associated with the project that have been identified by the consultants and that need to be mitigated (or at least considered) in the design of the Fringe *Urban Design Framework*. As mentioned in chapter 7, this study was predominantly carried out through desk-based research with very little engagement with people on the ground. The cost and benefits of the Fringe were therefore assessed remotely, with reference to other case studies and benchmarks, and the assessment was carried out over a relatively short period. This is further attested by the rather general tone of the report which refers to impact studies on other regeneration projects, but without any reference to interviews or area-specific inputs. The majority of negative outcomes/risks have been assigned a high probability but medium to low significance. Positive outcomes/benefits associated with the development on the contrary were deemed highly probable and highly significant (table 4).

Table 4: The Fringe SIA Risk Summary Table

Anticipated Impact	Assessment			
	Nature	Significance	Probability	Duration
Impact on profiling of heritage assets & cultural activities/facilities	Positive	High to very high	High	Permanent
Adaptive re-use of heritage assets	Positive	High to very high	High	Permanent
Impact on sense of place	Positive	High to very high	High	Permanent
Impact on safety	Positive	Medium	High	Permanent
Impact on quality of living environment	Positive	High to very high	High	Permanent
Densification of activities and people	Positive	High	High	Permanent
Future-fitting for increased competitiveness	Positive	High	High	Permanent
Productive gentrification	W/out mitigation: Negative	Medium to low	High	Permanent
Impact on vulnerable communities	W/out mitigation: Negative W mitigation: Positive	Medium	High	Permanent
Impact on social cohesion and integration	W/out mitigation: Negative W mitigation: Positive	Medium	High	Permanent
Cost of failure	Negative	Low	Low	Permanent

Source: *The Fringe Social Impact Assessment 2011*.

Throughout the interviews and as reflected in table 4, it appeared clear that one of the key risks identified was the risk of gentrification, as the area had been occupied by small businesses looking for affordable spaces, and by homeless people, and remained below the radar of property investors. As mentioned by the designer hired to produce the *Urban Design Framework*:

*When you deal with regeneration projects, a central question is regeneration for whom, what gets regenerated. Gentrification is always a key tension.*²¹⁰²¹¹

The risk of gentrification was deemed probable by the consultant report, expected to have a permanent and negative impact if not mitigated and of medium significance. Interestingly, the report uses the term “productive gentrification” (table 4) and the history of how this term made its way into the *SIA* reveals how the property focus of the initiative also shaped how the risk of gentrification was framed in the *SIA* report. Asked about how the term came about, the consultant hired to work on this report explained that at the time he felt pressured to highlight the positive aspects of the Fringe as the project was already branded and marketed:

*I remember we had this discussion, we talked about gentrification with D [anonymised] ... eventually she came up with the concept of “productive gentrification” which takes a more positive approach to it.*²¹²

²¹⁰ Fringe lead urban design consultant, 2017, INT34-TF-Cons, this view was also corroborated by other interviewees: Fringe Project Leader, Cape Town Partnership, 2017, INT51-TF-CTP, Consultant, Independent (worked on the Fringe), 2017, INT33-TF-Cons, District Six Museum, 2017, INT20-TF-Comm, Artist/Fringe consultant, 2017, INT25-TF-Cons, African Centre for Cities Researcher, 2016, INT36-TF-Ac

²¹¹ Different actors had different views on who would be affected by gentrification in the area, which speaks to the issues of definition of the local community described in chapter 6. To some, inflated property prices were seen as potentially detrimental to the project’s objectives, as it might have deterred creative businesses which often do not have the resources to pay high office rents to locate in the Fringe (INT51-TF-CTP). Here the focus was more on the negative impact on the creative community. To other actors, who could be identified as belonging to the District Six community at large, gentrification would affect other communities, such as the claimant community willing to return to District Six, or the homeless community living in the area.

²¹² Social Impact Assessment consultant, 2017, INT26-TF-Cons

This remark illustrates how consultants adapt their work and findings to the dominant goals of a given project. In retrospect, the same interviewee then recognised that the qualification as positive would not necessarily be appropriate, particularly given the ongoing housing crisis Cape Town is experiencing and its extreme socio-racial and spatial polarisation as highlighted by the following remark:

*But in the current situation in Cape Town there are real valid concerns around it [gentrification] and we would not have worded it this way today.*²¹³

In that case, the SIA report enacted a property-led vision of gentrification, one where rising property prices are seen as “productive” regardless of the displacements they might induce. The next excerpt is quite telling in that regard, as it clearly states the risk of displacement of small businesses that do not fit the creative vision for the Fringe is “likely to occur, expected to be permanent” but of “medium to low significance” as illustrated in this extract:

Comparative studies indicate that interventions similar to the Fringe lead to upgrades, refurbishment or re-development of properties, increased demand for property, increase in the property values and increased rates. These are the stated outcomes of the *Property Strategy* for the Fringe. Some of the existing businesses may be unable to absorb additional operational costs, and consequently relocate to other areas, or close down altogether. The relocation or closure of businesses may be associated with job losses, decreased household incomes or disruptions to household schedules related to increased time and effort to reach the workplace. [...] **The potential impact of productive gentrification is assessed as negative, likely to occur, expected to be permanent in duration and of medium to low significance.** (*Social Impact Assessment* 2011, p. 20, emphasis added)

²¹³ Ibid.

The negative impacts of the project on existing communities were expected to be offset by the clustering of the creative industries and increased municipal revenues. This, as in many cases of urban displacements (of populations or businesses) fails to acknowledge how the loss of specific sectors of activities, businesses and communities in fact strengthens spatial polarisation and uneven urban development. This examples highlights how specific knowledge devices, such as SIAs, can be instrumented to provide a definition of risks that internalise the expectations of the property sector. In other words, even social impact studies perform real estate values by adapting findings and discourses to fit the desired outcomes identified by the leading force behind a project. The dominance of the real estate gaze over assemblages of urban expertise is reflected in its ability to influence experts' work and the evidence they produce. In KCC, economic turmoil and uncertainty around future railway developments have long prevented investments (and redevelopment) in the area, as mentioned previously. The *Implementation Strategy* (2004) recognised a number of risks that could lead to changes in the implementation of the plan in the construction phase of the scheme, all of which are described in chapter 6. This report and others repeatedly emphasised the importance of ensuring enough flexibility for the developer to safeguard the commercial viability of the scheme and adapt to changes in the property market. Thus, the identification and definition of risks in this case were closely tied to their perceived influence on the project's commercial success:

At the same time, the applicants must retain the ability to respond to changes in market and other conditions over time and the *Implementation Strategy* is candid about the cyclical nature of property markets and the problems (and opportunities) that they present. (*Implementation Strategy* 2004, p. 39)

All the targets set out in the implementation plan are subject to market dynamics and the ability of the developers to take on market opportunities. (*Regeneration Strategy* 2004, p. 40)

This focus on the financial viability of the scheme and the mitigation of market risks is of course unsurprising in a private-led development. What is interesting to note

is how this narrow abstract definition of risk, reflective of the real estate gaze, was enacted through and performed by a new planning tool: the outline planning application, used in this project in lieu of a traditional master-plan. The use of this instrument contributed to normalising a financialised definition of project risk in the institutional set-up of the KCC scheme. Indeed, in the UK, using an outline planning²¹⁴ application allows developers to get approval for their project (especially in large-scale, risky redevelopment schemes) but to renegotiate the details of its content at later stages, before any significant project costs are incurred (such as the level of affordable housing previously mentioned). The use of this flexible planning tool was expected to help Argent navigate uncertainty, and to ensure that the developer's profit margin would be safeguarded through adapting its vision for the site to changing market conditions, as highlighted in interviews with the King's Cross Team and with representatives from the GLA (2016):

When the crash happened in 2009, some investors fell away so they [Argent] flexed the master-plan. For instance, the student's tall building, in the original master-plan, T5, it was not students in there. But they changed the master-plan to have a tall building there. The plan was flexible and open to changes in the economy.²¹⁵

If you want illustrations of the master-plan's flexibility: Google wanted more space that what was originally planned, the height of the students' building was also increased ... Central St Martins was not originally planned to locate there [in the Granary Building] but having flexibility built in really helped because even in the midst of the recession, King's Cross became a destination.²¹⁶

In this instance the outline plan itself performed the real estate gaze by internalising the developer's definition of risks as *market uncertainty*. It allowed Argent to revise its commitments, for instance when those were deemed 'unviable' at later stages

²¹⁴ According to the Town and Country Planning Act (1990), outline planning applications allow the details of a scheme to be agreed following a "reserved matters" application at a later stage of the development project.

²¹⁵ Senior Planner at the GLA, 2016, INT6-KCC-LA

²¹⁶ Former King's Cross Team planner, 2016, INT13-KCC-LA

of the development, as discussed in the previous section. This made it difficult for community organisations to engage with the content of Argent plan and undermined their ability to contest it, as illustrated by the following quotes:

I was fooled because they said “it’s only an outline planning” and so a few months ago, they decided to build a bridge over the canal. I said it was not in the outline and they said “well that was only an outline.” I talked about this a lot and very often in meetings I said you shouldn’t have it, you should change it, and they say they have planning permission and I say no because you have outline permission. So the structures of a master-plan or outline plan are a big problem because designed to fulfil their purposes in the way they wish instead of taking into account local, regional policies, community issues and heritage, all these issues in a way that should act as constraint.²¹⁷

The Argent team ... what they were doing is that they had an outline planning application which they had in March 2006, based on the Planning Brief. And one of the things they did was that they got a blank check “x % of office space” and the visual representations they used were always conditional. Their 28 Storey block for Students accommodation was done in a completely separate application, it was different from the whole master-plan, it breached it! [...] It’s like the reduction of social housing ...²¹⁸

As reflected in these observations, the use of an outline plan limited community groups' ability to contest the scheme's vision and to ask for revisions. Indeed, interviewees argued that the lack of clear targets and fixed objectives undermined their ability to make the case for alternative options and to debate Argent's vision for the site. Housing targets, the provision of community facilities and space allocation to different usages presented in the outline plan were only indicative (allowing for instance a 20% change in floorspace allocation, as discussed in chapter 6). This made it hard for local organisations to review any evidence

²¹⁷ Regent Canal Network member, 2016, INT16-KCC-Comm

²¹⁸ Cally Rail Group member, 2016, INT5-KCC-Comm

submitted in the plan, as all these were tentative commitments (Parkes 2004).²¹⁹ This instrument represented a challenge to community engagement, contributing to de-politicise the plan-making process and limiting potential opposition to the developer's vision for the scheme, while supporting investors and developers' financial expectations and ability to protect their profit margins in changing economic conditions. The outline plan represents an enactment of the real estate gaze, of real estate values and objectives by institutional design, and contributed to supporting the performance of a developer's abstract understanding of risks throughout the implementation of the KCC scheme.

Both cases highlight how knowledge devices such as S/As, or planning tools such as the outline plan, enact real-estate based understandings of risks associated with particular projects, contributing to their performance through project design and implementation. In the case of the Fringe, opponents to the scheme managed to relate their concerns about the gentrifying effect of the project, especially in relation to the impact of the scheme on the adjacent District Six (this will be further explored in the next chapter). This opposition, coupled with project mismanagement, the lack of buy-in of local property owners and a retreat of Provincial funding, contributed to the halt of the Fringe project in 2013. In the case of KCC, the scheme got the green light in 2006 and since then, the 'threat' to financial viability was mobilised by the developer to cut down the amount of social housing promised in the original plan (Wainwright 2018). Regardless of their outcomes, both schemes highlight that the definitions of risks that reflect the real estate industry's concerns dominate the design (in terms of content or institutional set-up) of urban development projects, and hence contribute to performing real estate values through these projects. This highlights how knowledge devices and the work of experts serve the maintenance and dominance of real estate-based abstract understandings of risks within

²¹⁹ King's Cross Development Forum member, 2016, INT8-KCC-Comm, Cally Rail Group member, 2016, INT5-KCC-Comm, King's Cross Railway Lands Group founding member, 2016, INT10-KCC-Comm, Academic Activist, 2016, INT4-KCC-Ac

assemblages of urban expertise, as opposed to approaches that would emphasise the social, environmental and/or cultural dimensions of risks associated with urban development projects.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown the importance of looking at how assemblages of urban expertise support the performance of the real estate gaze to understand how urban expertise itself plays a mediating function in the “*normalisation of market values*” in and through urban space (Holman et al. 2018, p. 2). I demonstrated how both KCC and the Fringe projects internalise the real estate gaze in their design, through the valorisation of specific experts (real estate actors) or knowing techniques (financial and economic calculations and narrow risk assessments). In that sense, the two case studies reveal the centrality of the real estate gaze in articulating and delimiting what constitutes legitimate urban expertise in the production and assessment of abstract urban visions. In both instances, actors from the property sector play a central role in defining the scope and content of redevelopment visions, either by coordinating knowledge inputs (like in the Fringe) or by shaping the rules against which their vision would be assessed (like in King’s Cross) (confirming hypothesis 1 and 4). Furthermore, this chapter highlights that the mainstreaming of specific knowledge devices - financial appraisals and business cases - as tools to evaluate the quality and credibility of redevelopment schemes, alongside the definition of project risk based on real estate actors (i.e. investors, property owners, developers) expectations, allow real estate values to be performed (confirming hypothesis 2). What is more, local governments contribute to maintaining the dominance of the real estate gaze by basing decisions related to investments and planning permissions on evidence that measures project success and viability against criteria such as the commercial viability of a scheme, and its impact on rising property values. This further confirms hypothesis 4 which emphasises the importance of institutional design in supporting the power of specific devices or experts. Non-real estate experts, like SIA consultants in the Fringe, adapt their tools and studies to produce evidence that support real estate driven strategies and priorities. The mobilisation of calculative techniques, and the

use of narrow definitions of risks in assessing project viability and related uncertainties, contribute to the legitimisation of the design of spatial planning instruments that enact and perform real estate values, like what happened in KCC (again confirming hypothesis 4). As a result, the projects that get designed (in both cases) and/or the tools that support their implementation perform real estate values, expectations, and knowledge of the urban. This does not mean that the two projects under study did not seek to contribute to broader social and environmental goals, at least as framed by their projects leaders. In fact, they both emphasise the value of open spaces, good architecture, pedestrian access - they both refer to the imperative of embracing a 'people-centred' approach (*Principles for a Human City* 2001, the *Fringe Urban Design Framework* 2012). The KCC scheme is in many ways an interesting example of good design (compared to other private schemes that have popped up in the British capital) as it has provided new green spaces and community facilities in the area. Equally, the Fringe project genuinely sought to provide new affordable working spaces to Cape Town's creative businesses and to make the East City more open to Capetonians, through the provision of new public spaces, cultural facilities and artistic programming. However, in both visions, such objectives are expected to be achieved through investment in properties and growth in real estate markets. As a result, outcomes such as rising land, housing and rental prices are inevitable in such schemes. The next and final chapter explores the strategy employed by urban experts resisting the real estate gaze. In particular, it looks into the strategies deployed by community organisations to produce counter-expertise that challenges dominant ways of seeing the urban in contemporary planning processes.

Chapter 9: The mechanics of counter-expertise

Dynamics of contestation to urban development projects have been widely documented in the literature (e.g. Lehrer and Laidley 2008, Imrie et al. 2009, Shatkin 2011, Davis and Dewey 2015). Planning theorists have long been interested in their political role in the inclusion of diverse, non-technocratic forms of expertise²²⁰ in the planning process (for a review of collaborative, communicative and radical planning traditions and their applicability to non-Western contexts, see Watson 2008). In this chapter I draw on interviews, documents and archives review to trace the mechanics of counter-expertise, that is to explore how alternative forms of expertise emerge and whether and how these contribute to destabilising dominant assemblages of urban expertise. In exploring the *mechanics* of counter-expertise, this chapter is interested in elucidating how communities transition from a direct engagement with the materiality of the city they live in to the production of counter-forms of expertise. In studies of knowledge politics (particularly those adopting a materialist inflection), the term mechanics has been used to refer to scientific, technocratic, abstract causal thinking (Kusch 2010) removed from a direct engagement with the socio-material entanglements so characteristic of everyday life (and life with objects) (Bennett 2009). In common language however, the term mechanics also refers to the “practical study of machinery or of the working parts of something”²²¹ thus implying a practical, direct engagement with things, in order to understand how different parts of a machine, an object, relate to one another and may or may not function together. Thus in this chapter, I am using this term deliberately to refer to the process by which (some) community groups’ practical engagement with the everyday workings of a city (in that case neighbourhoods, and

²²⁰ See footnote 8. Beyond planning, the work of McArthur (2018) is also relevant here on expertise and activism in Auckland. It shows how local groups articulate alternatives to dominant transport appraisal techniques. Also of interest, and albeit more concerned with project management than with community participation, Flyvbjerg (2005) (see also Flyvbjerg et al. 2003) calls for more transparency and openness (notably involving citizens) in the process of assessing and reviewing experts’ analysis in the context of mega-projects.

²²¹ According to the Oxford English Dictionary.

their numerous, sometimes hidden, human and non-human components) is translated into forms of counter-expertise that imitate abstract thinking albeit, as I will show, in a subversive way. In that sense, the term mechanics reflects my interest in the movement from a direct everyday engagement with place-specific socio-material configurations to more abstract forms of knowledge that, once inscribed into particular material devices (i.e. maps, reports, documents) by communities, can destabilise the dominant assemblages of urban expertise described in the previous chapters.

In a first section, I show that community expertise emerges from and develops around the material features of the sites designated for redevelopment, which overlap with already existing places. In that sense, experiential knowledge of the urban needs to be understood as an emotional, symbolic and - perhaps even more importantly for the purpose of my argument here - scientific engagement with the materiality of the urban fabric (be that buildings, archaeological relics, ecological features, etc.). The material features of redevelopment sites (at least some of them) need to be studied as they become “*objects that matter*”²²² and “*can afford many different purposes*” (Lieto 2017, p. 575), and play a key role in the production of counter-expertise (9.1). However, the capacity to *translate* this engagement with, and experiential knowledge of, the materiality of the urban fabric is essential in turning communities’ experiences into ‘legitimate expertise’. It is also key in enabling community organisations to challenge the maintenance of the real estate gaze and to destabilise dominant assemblages of urban expertise. Hence, it is necessary to analyse the uneven distribution of translation capacity within local communities. The process of translation refers to the production of urban abstractions through the use and mastering of knowledge devices that mirror those used by consultants, real estate actors, policy makers (as was the case in King’s

²²² It is important to look at the agency of objects, types of publics they create and the type of political action they call for. The affordance of objects can be defined as “the perceived and actual property of the thing, primarily those fundamental properties that determine just how the thing could possibly be used” (Norman 1998 cited in Lieto 2017, p. 574).

Cross) but also their subversion (as was the case in the Fringe) in order to reframe redevelopment projects²²³ (9.2). This chapter addresses hypothesis 5 of this thesis by showing how dominant configurations of expertise can be destabilised by the production of counter-expertise, and how translation capacity reinforces the power of specific organisations within assemblages of urban expertise. It also addresses hypothesis 2 by discussing the power of knowledge devices in the production of counter-expertise; and hypothesis 3 by looking at the importance of reframing a place's identity, through expertise production,²²⁴ in the contestation of abstract project visions. In demonstrating these points, I call for greater attention to the role of objects in the formation of counter-expertise, and reiterate, after others, that the distinction between scientific expertise and experiential, lay knowledge is in practice very blurred (see for instance Callon et al. 2001, Latour 2005b, Whatmore and Landström 2011, Tironi 2015).

²²³ Or to problematise these in new ways, in Callonian terms.

²²⁴ As demonstrated by Tironi in his analysis of citizens' collectives in Santiago, it is important to recognise how "*grass root collectives weave political strategies that in practice prevent any epistemic distinction between 'us' (non-experts-metis) and 'them' (experts-episteme)*" (Tironi 2015, p. 71). He further argues that research should attend to the process by which citizens' organisations become "*technical entities*" (Ibid.). I cannot do justice to the entirety of this analysis in the scope of this work. However, I invite the reader to look into his examination of three distinct ways in which citizens' organisations acquire and politically mobilise expertise - what he refers to as modes of technification - namely: organisational, referring to a group's capacity to source technical expertise from within and outside; epistemic, referring to a group's "epistemic alignment to the technical grammars of government officials and private corporations" (Ibid., p. 83) (similar to what I refer to as capacity to enrol different elements into dominant assemblages of urban expertise); and generative, referring to a group's ability to put issues onto the political map, that is to problematise them in a way that is politically effective (similar to what I refer to as communities' ability to destabilise dominant assemblages of urban expertise).

9.1 The materiality of community expertise

Works from STS, planning theory and geography have emphasised the need to explore the social life of objects in relation to expertise formation, knowledge production and politics (e.g. Callon et al. 2001, Latour 2005b, Whatmore 2009, Hawkins 2011, Whatmore and Landström 2011, Marres and Lezaun 2011, Ernstson 2013, Barry 2013, Marres 2016, Farías 2016, McFarlane and Silver 2017b). This is particularly relevant in the context of urban redevelopment projects which intervene in places that are already characterised by a range of activities, uses and meanings. It is thus necessary to take the cultural and historical meaning of places seriously as “*before places become objects of urban planning and design, they exist in personal experience, hearsay and collective memories*” (Beauregard 2005, p. 39). Understanding the social life of objects, I argue, constitutes a relevant entry point to understand how counter-expertise emerges from communities’ direct engagement with the material features of redevelopment sites. In what follows, I demonstrate that an appreciation of “*knowledge processes [as] heavily centred on objects of knowledge*” (Knorr-Cetina 1997, p. 1-2) can help us elucidate the relationship between communities’ attachment to (some of) the material features of a redevelopment site and the formation of counter-expertise. This further speaks to the need to think about the material and socio-cultural features of places as mutually constitutive, and to attend to the materiality of expertise production.

9.1.1 Material objects as catalysts for group formation

As explored in chapters 6 and 7, KCC and the Fringe regeneration projects attempted to rewrite the identity and histories of sites that had been artificially delimited. However, in both cases, community groups mobilised around particular material features of the sites, that is objects which they intended to protect, preserve, and for which alternative visions were formulated. In that sense, redevelopment projects create controversies that bring particular (sometimes new) publics into being (Callon 1984, Latour 2005b, Callon et al. 2001, Tironi 2015). This research demonstrates that even before the two projects under study created

controversies that acted as catalysts for counter-expertise production, the material features of redevelopment sites were key elements of community formation. This is because the two redevelopment sites and what they are physically and symbolically made of have been the subject - and indeed object - of a series of controversies throughout history.

KCC's material features include the presence of physical and architectural objects recalling various aspects of the history of the railway lands. When Argent's scheme was developed, the site hosted listed heritage buildings and features that included (and still include for the most part): the stations of King's Cross and St Pancras, railways, industrial buildings (e.g. the Gasholders, the Granary Building) and two social housing estates (the Culross and Stanley buildings). Unlike the Fringe case, where most of the opposition was led by the District Six Museum, community contestation in KCC emanated from multiple community organisations which formation was sparked by different objects that characterised the railway lands. On the one hand, organisations willing to preserve the working-class identity of the area, or at least to prevent its gentrification, formed around the preservation of material objects that epitomised the industrial past of the site, mostly industrial buildings and social housing estates (e.g. King's Cross Railway Lands Group, Cally Rail Group). These groups were formed in response to attempts to redevelop the King's Cross site since the 1980s (King's Cross Railway Lands Group) and plans to relocate the Eurotunnel in the late 1990s/early 2000s (Cally Rail Group), before Argent's KCC scheme. These groups built their identity around the railways, as reflected in their names. The Islington-based Cally Rail Group was founded in 1994 "*to prevent detrimental effects arising from the Channel Tunnel Rail Link and associated developments*" and the group's name comes from the location of its members, residents and businesses that are based "*where the Channel Tunnel Rail Link crosses the Caledonian Road*" (Cally Rail Group 2005, p. 1).

The debate about the international railway was really the catalyst for community involvement and also the involvement of community groups based in Islington despite the fact that the area [KCC] is administratively located in Camden.²²⁵

The umbrella organisation King's Cross Railway Lands Group emerged in the late 1980s to scrutinise regeneration efforts in the area and soon positioned itself as a catalyst for community engagement. When asked about the choice of name, a founding member of the group indicated that it was motivated by the fact that different community organisations in the mid-1980s would refer to the area as the railway lands, thus reference to the railways seemed inclusive of various struggles and identities:

It was just how people would refer to the area ... we wanted to be an umbrella organisation, it seemed like a relevant, quite inclusive name at the time. There were many people affected by the redevelopment of the railway lands since the 1980s, from ethnic groups to conservation, to working class people but also artists, all kinds of marginalised people ... so that's how we called it.²²⁶

On the other hand, organisations formed around the preservation of the architectural heritage and the natural features of the site. Individual involvement into activist-conservation groups sometimes emerged from an emotional attachment to the waterways, as exemplified in the following response from a representative of the Regent's Canal Network, when I asked him why he started to get involved in conservation issues:

Just because I like the waterways and boats. In a way I am quite simple minded! Because it is lovely going down that canal. So from that point of view as a user and appreciator, talking to loads of people on the waterway, I got quite a lot of engagement with people because I promise them a boat trip. And at the end of the

²²⁵ Cally Rail Group member, 2016, INT5-KCC-Comm

²²⁶ King's Cross Railway Lands Group founding member, 2016, INT10-KCC-Comm

*boat trip they say oh got that's wonderful and they get involved in planning issue. For the pleasure, rightness and good order, that's the way I deal with it.*²²⁷

In the KCC case, the canal was a key object of mobilisation and central to the creation of coalitions of actors that worked together towards its protection. Groups like the Regent's Canal Network, and King's Cross Central Conservation Area Advisory Committee (i.e. KXCCAAC) sought to ensure the preservation of free and public access to the canal,²²⁸ developing and mobilising expertise around these topics to review, comment on, and attempt to reframe Argent's masterplan. The KXCCAAC was created in 1989 with support from the London Borough of Camden to scrutinise proposed developments on the railway lands, its remit also expanded to the conservation of properties and housing based in Islington. As explained in previous chapters, the railway lands are based predominantly in the London Borough of Camden, but the project itself was expected to have broader impacts on adjacent properties located in the London Borough of Islington.

This section has shown that the formation of community groups that were instrumental in producing counter-expertise in the context of the Fringe and KCC can be traced historically, namely by considering how particular objects (railways, buildings, canals, architectural remains) act as mediums through which identities emerge and political struggles are articulated. Using the materiality of urban space as a lens to understand dynamics of contestation and group formation, I argue, also helps to elucidate how the material, physical, sensorial, and emotional experiences of the urban and their translation into expertise can allow community organisations to enrol in and destabilise dominant assemblages of urban expertise. Hence, material objects (buildings, materials, archaeological remains, water, ground, dust) are more than things that can be mastered, altered and transformed into 'economically vibrant' sites: they are intrinsically linked to community life, imbued

²²⁷ Regent Canal Network member, 2016, INT16-KCC-Comm

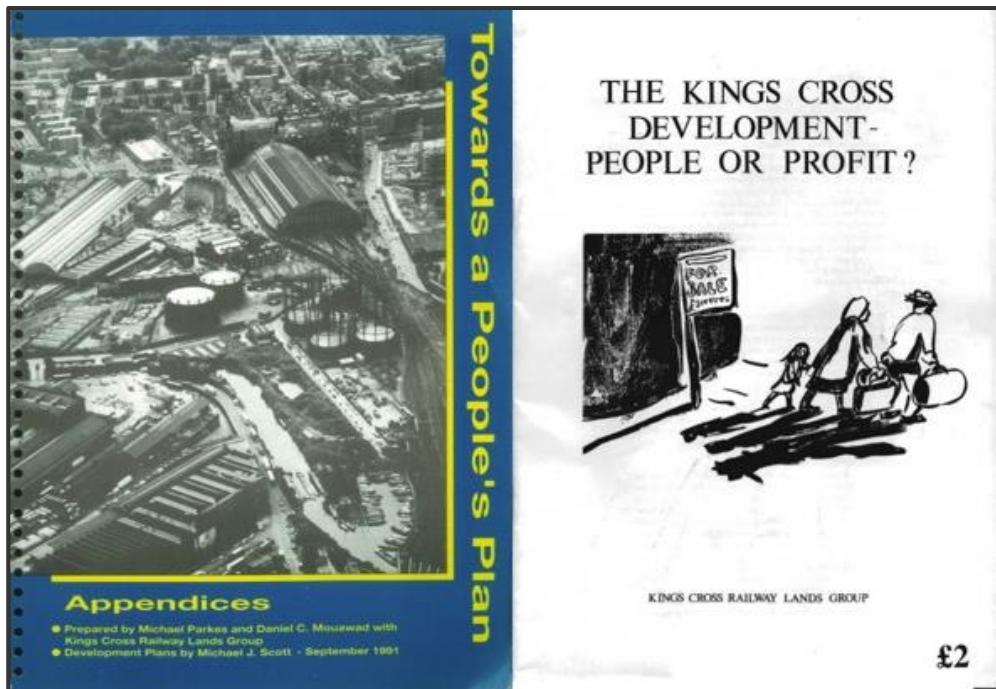
²²⁸ Ibid.

with history and hold symbolic power. Therefore, the capacity of material objects to shape the political mobilisation and production of counter-expertise needs to be acknowledged.

9.1.2 Material objects as catalysts for expertise production

In both London and Cape Town, I showed that different political communities emerged from the physical features of the two sites, and the many objects they are made of. In the KCC case, what is particularly striking when looking at the names of different community organisations is that they all refer to different objects and materials that make up the redevelopment site. In the late 1980s, the King's Cross Railway Lands Group produced a community-driven vision of what was to become KCC in response to the Channel Tunnel Rail Link plans. The alternative *People's Plan* (picture 4) focused on the provision of low-cost housing, including affordable and socially rented housing, and jobs for local people (King's Cross Railway Lands Group 1991). Both the King's Cross Railway Lands Group and Cally Rail Group's identities and further political action were built up from the railways, as these were heralded as symbols of London's diverse, working class and sometimes marginal identity. As a result, the production of expertise from both groups throughout the pre-planning stages of the KCC project focused on highlighting the plan's shortfalls in relation to affordable housing provision, gentrification, businesses and population displacement, and the lack of economic and employment opportunities for local residents (Cally Rail Group Objections to the Plan 2005, King's Cross Railway Lands Group Comments on the Plan 2005).

Picture 4: King's Cross: Towards a People's Plan and pamphlet The King's Cross Development - People for Profit



Source: King's Cross Railway Lands Group.

The KXCAAC's political activism stemmed from the existence of listed buildings and properties, housing, and architectural and archaeological heritage of the Victorian and industrial era in both Camden and Islington. Back in 1990, the Group published a short document - *Conservation Objectives for the King's Cross Railway Lands* - which was picked up by policy makers in planning guidelines for the King's Cross area (Inglis and Buckner 2012). In KCC, the expertise the group produced was mostly focused on opposing - and producing evidence to support such opposition - building demolitions and to inform the design of the scheme in relation to their architecture and physical features. The group also paid attention to other non-architectural features of the area that fall within the remit of the project including the canal. The Regent's Canal Network mentioned previously emerged to protect public access to, and lobby for, improvements to the Regent's canal which runs through the KCC site.

9.2 The mechanics of translation

Community groups generate expertise from their unmediated (that is direct) attachment to particular objects within a specific place. Conversely, real estate actors, consultants and policy makers generate expertise about (sometimes the same) objects first and foremost through the mediation of knowledge devices, pre-existing reports and analysis, and comparison with best practices. In this case, non-community experts' relationship to objects of knowledge is already mediated by the devices they use.²²⁹ In what follows, I demonstrate that when community groups mobilise knowledge devices, it is to *translate* pre-existing experiential knowledge into expertise that is legible to dominant forms of expertise and that can attempt to reframe projects' visions. Thus, this research shows that "*most objects of knowledge produce, and are translated into, all manners of signs*" (Knorr Cetina 1997, p. 15) and in particular, signs that can be read as technical expertise. Through translation, experiential knowledge is abstracted, codified, inscribed materially (see West 2015) and communicated in a way that can be used to contest dominant abstract visions and the expertise that underpins those. To be able to engage in political contestation effectively, community expertise needs to be formalised, using the tools and techniques - and sometimes subverting them, as we shall see in the case of the Fringe - that maintain the rule of hyper specialised technical urban expertise. Understanding which actants amongst communities facilitate this translation and how they do so is essential, for it reveals the power asymmetries that underpin the

²²⁹ This claim has to be nuanced, however. Various scholars, particularly in the STS field, have shown that scientific or technocratic experts themselves use experiential forms of knowledge to produce expertise. Unfortunately, it was out of the scope of this thesis to explore the (ir)relevance of the lay/expert dichotomies in relation to real estate actors, local governments and consultants' expertise. I briefly touch on the subjective dimension of financial viability assessments in chapter 8, but for a deeper examination of how these tools are mobilised alongside interpretative and experiential forms of knowledge in decision-making, see McAllister et al. (2016). Should the reader be interested in these issues, see Zaloom (2003) for a discussion of how traders subjectively interpret the meaning of numerical projections on financial markets and Latour and Wooglar (2013) on the (social) construction of scientific facts. In both KCC and the Fringe, individuals at Argent and the Partnership also used their own experiences, perceptions and subjective understandings of what King's Cross and the East City were to inform what they could become. However, when looking at the politics of expertise per se, and how power operated within assemblages of urban expertise in both cases, it is important to stress the strategic importance of knowledge devices, such as economic and financial projections, and technical expertise in asserting the legitimacy, scientific soundness and necessity of their visions.

production of community expertise and thus its internal politics. I explore these issues in the next sections, looking at how counter-expertise based on the subversion of mapping techniques supported community contestation in the Fringe; and in the case of KCC, I looked at the role of alternative plans and engagement with the technicalities of Argent's submission in supporting community demands, particularly for additional affordable housing. Through each case I demonstrate that organisations that hold this translation capacity can integrate dominant assemblages of urban expertise, destabilise them, contest their maintenance and reframe the abstract visions they propose.

9.2.1 From the Fringe to District Six and back: translation zones and mapping struggles

In the Fringe, the District Six Museum acted as a physical translation zone for turning community knowledge into legitimate - and politically effective - expertise. The Museum used its engagement with former residents, as well as with the memory and physicality of the site, as mediums through which counter-abstractions to the Fringe could be formulated.

The Museum has made comments [on the Fringe] and we had a series of meetings with our constituent members, the former residents of District Six. Those who were returning and were affected by what was happening in the area. It was a kind of collaborative paper that we put together [...] it was an open house where people would come, comment and look at the plan.²³⁰

The institution was particularly instrumental in leading and organising community opposition to the project by framing the contestation around two key issues. First, the name chosen for the project 'The Fringe' was deemed inappropriate by Museum

²³⁰ District Six Museum, 2017, INT20-TF-Comm

representatives. This opposition culminated with the organisation of a public event in June 2013 - at the District Six Homecoming Centre - entitled *District Six on the Fringe: the Absence of Memory in Design-Led Urban Regeneration* during which representatives from the Museum, as well as local researchers, voiced their concerns on the treatment of District Six in the Fringe project, as illustrated in this quote:

“The area designated as ‘The Fringe’ is intertwined with District Six and yet that history of the space, with its memory of forced removals, has not figured significantly in the ‘cultural regeneration’ plans for the East City. What place is there for memory and history within culture-led urban development? What risk is there that contemporary stylizations of Cape Town might serve to obliterate local histories and entrench the status quo? What of District Six, not only as symbol and museum, but as marker of the pasts that haunt the present?” (Borland 2013)

A local artist hired by the Partnership to organise public art interventions in the Fringe to activate public spaces in the area was invited to attend the event. When we spoke, he remembered it as “relatively unpleasant,” yet understood “why people were angry about the Fringe.”²³¹ Whilst the name chosen for the project was described to me as “offensive”²³² by the Museum director, former consultants hired by the Partnership recognised it was “a clear mistake”²³³ to use the name the Fringe to refer to an area that had been marked by the racist forced removal of over 60 000 people - people who themselves had been displaced to the fringes of Cape Town. Secondly, and relatedly, the Museum contested the idea that the Fringe and District Six could neatly be singled out as distinct neighbourhoods (as briefly touched on in chapter 7).

²³¹ Artist/Fringe consultant, 2017, INT25-TF-Cons

²³² District Six Museum, 2017, INT20-TF-Comm

²³³ Consultant, Independent (worked on the Fringe), 2017, INT33-TF-Cons

As mentioned by the former head of the Cape Town Partnership (2017) during our interview:

As with any kind of boundaries and borders ... where one thing ends is quite complicated. District Six is a disputed heritage, where it begins and ends differs depending on who you are and where you stand on a whole lot of issue. For some people, the East City falls within District Six so nothing should happen there until the District Six dispute is resolved. Others would say no that is not strictly true, the East City used to be old Victorian industrial area where people from District Six worked but no one lived there ... the debate becomes very political.²³⁴

Whilst the proponents of the Fringe (although not all of them) considered the Fringe to be 'adjacent to' District Six and emphasised the importance of consulting with the District Six Museum, they also argued that its opposition was ill-founded given that the Fringe did not strictly fall within District Six, as highlighted by this remark from a local government planner

Now the East City is a local area, District Six is a local area in this big district. In yellow [on the map] is District Six effectively, it is part of the bigger picture, and the East City is sort of the edge of District Six. It is between the CBD and District Six. [...] It was named the Fringe. What was really interesting about this area is that it was on the fringe. It was on the edge of. It was on the fringe of. The Fringe is also catchy for the creatives. And this is where the creatives hang out, so we named it the Fringe. Oh my word. The District Six community freaked out "How dare you put us on the fringe again?" So politics dominate everything.²³⁵

On the contrary, the District Six Museum highlighted the importance of the area in the District's history, regardless of administrative boundaries. To better understand the Museum's ability to contest the spatial boundaries set up by the municipality, it is important to remember that since its inception, it has focused on allowing

²³⁴ Former CEO, Cape Town Partnership, 2017, INT23-TF-CTP

²³⁵ Senior urban designer at the City, 2017, INT19-TF-LA

displaced communities to map out the lost history of District Six, both through the collection of materials (as described in the previous section) but also through the production of an actual map of the lost area (picture 6). The map itself uses cartographic information indicating former street names and layout and it mobilises arts as a way to incorporate the memories of former District Sixers into the map, as highlighted by McEarchen:

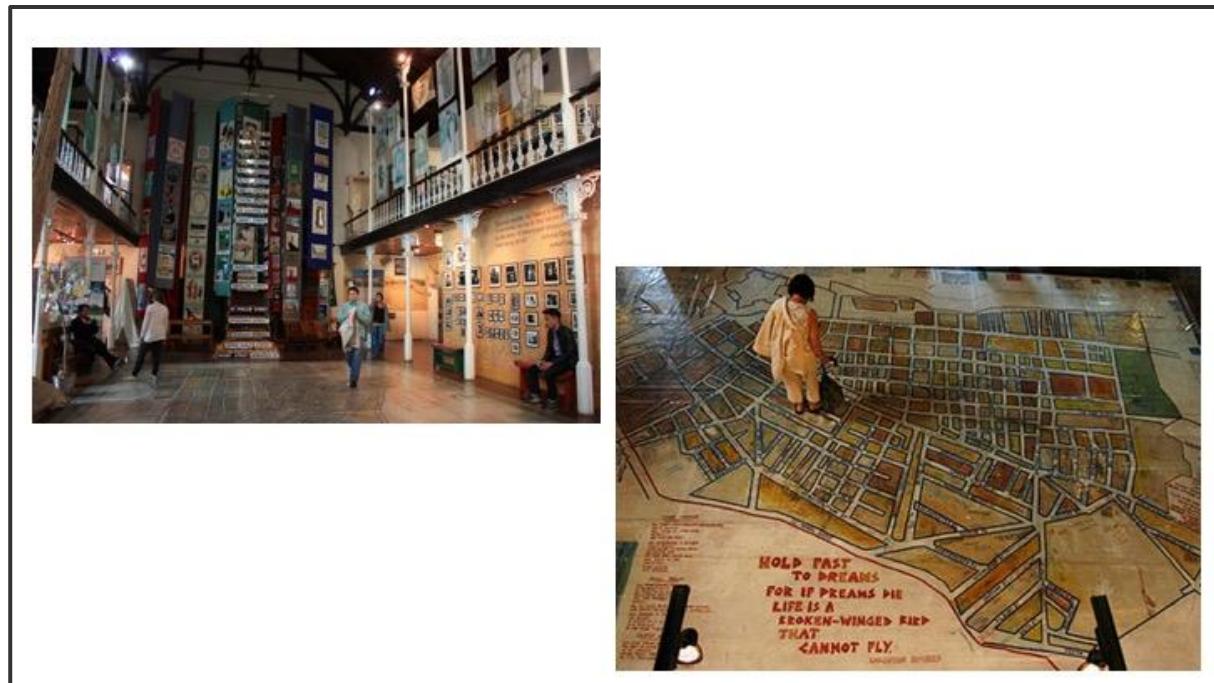
In the centre of the church [the District Six Museum's building], covering much of the floor space is a huge map of the District. The map is decorated with poems to the life of the District as well as linocuts by the artist, Lionel Davis, himself a District Sixer and a political activist who had been jailed on Robben Island. (McEarchen 1998, p. 505)

When it opened in December 1994, the District Six Museum's very first exhibition, *Streets: retracing District Six*, was the foundational stone of what the Museum would become: a space where archaeology, oral histories, images, memories of what District Six used to be, could be preserved and could serve former residents in their fight to reclaim the lands that had been forcibly removed from them (Murray et al. 2007). Mapping and naming streets, enumerating the lost past was a key feature of the Museum's curatorial work and it was also mobilised in community opposition to the Fringe (Jethro 2013, Farouk 2013):

*We also had a very focused workshop where we invited people to help them input. Mapping, talking about the archives, we did our heritage type program - we do a lot of mapping onsite, getting people to remember, resurrecting memories [...] we energise from routines that exist in the Museum but infuse it with the current content.*²³⁶

²³⁶ District Six Museum, 2017, INT20-TF-Comm

Picture 6: District Six Museum Map



Source: District Six Museum - the map was co-produced with parts of the District Six claimant community and it is displayed in the Museum's hall.

This led to the formulation of District Six Museum's written response to the Fringe, on behalf of the community they engaged with, which emphasised the importance of rethinking the boundaries of the Fringe itself and of rethinking the concept of a design precinct in light of the District Six history:

The idea to define this part of District Six as the Fringe, and to include the Cape Peninsula University of Technology campus and not the area of return, smacks of Apartheid thinking: a Bantustan approach to the mapping of spaces. Key sites that should become important spaces for innovation and design are located in the area that is being cut off from the city centre symbolically and geographically: the Lydia Williams Centre of Memory (formerly the home of the innovative design hub the Community Arts Project); The Zonnebloem Arts Centre (a key space for the development of primary design and innovation skills and knowledge); and the Moravian Church Hall and Guest house has been used over the years for several Young Curators' Projects in partnership with young photographers, visual and performance artists from Malmo and Stockholm in Sweden. None of the potential for design and innovation is explored here. (District Six Museum 2012, p. 4)

The preservation of traces of what District Six used to be was a key part of the Museum's work, but since its creation it has been concerned with the community's future as much as its past.²³⁷ In that specific instance, the preservation work and research produced by the Museum was translated through its map (before, during and after the Fringe), through the organisation of community events to discuss and comment on the Fringe, and finally through the write up of a collective written response to the proposed *Urban Design Framework*. Contesting the boundaries of the site in that instance did not aim to stop the scheme, but rather, to ask for a greater recognition of the area's past and to ensure the project would serve the displaced community and not simply lead to further gentrification. The aim was to discuss what 'creativity' and design meant in the socio-spatial and political context of District Six, rather than defining creativity based on concepts and best practice examples imported from elsewhere (as discussed in chapter 6), as explained by the Museum director when we met:

I am afraid that many entities we have to work with, like public authorities and the Cape Town Partnership, they do not get nuance. They get the yes or the no. The presentation we made was not about saying no to the concept of a design hub [...] It was really not about saying no, we loved the idea of a design hub. People thought it was a great idea, but they were also suspicious because they are used to not having access. So they were wondering who is this for? Will our children have access to this? And it felt like this design hub was brought as if nothing was happening, as if there was no design and it was just an empty space. And also the concept of 'the Fringe' in a marginalised community which was absent in the discussion²³⁸

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Ibid.

In retrospect, a former consultant working on the Fringe for the Partnership, admitted that negating the relationship between the Fringe and District Six on the ground of administrative boundaries was a political mistake, as illustrated by the following statement:

The argument would be “well why do we need to speak with District Six [community] because this isn’t District Six, in terms of spatial boundaries” ... The Museum proudly shows, in their map, that actually the boundary ends further down. This is where people think District Six ends ... this is not ethnography; this is just basic inquiry. You know, this is just basic texture analysis of what is the texture of this place. This is heritage. Let’s ask District Six what they think is the heritage of this place, and they would have easily found out that they think the Fringe falls under their boundaries.²³⁹

When the Partnership put the Fringe on hold in 2013 (it was never re-started subsequently) it recognised it should have spent more time engaging with the local community before consulting on a relatively advanced *Urban Design Framework*:

We have learned significant lessons from our work in the Fringe - that meaningful participation and engagement take time and cannot be rushed; that history and memory provide the foundation for future visions; that places are not products to be packaged and promoted, they are fundamentally about people. (Cape Town Partnership 2013, p. 3)

Specifically, it recognised the importance of taking into account “*history and memory*” (*Ibid.*) (in line with the District Six Museum’s request) as a key feature of the design process - although various actors involved in the process also highlighted that other reasons why the project was abandoned included a) the lack of funding available from the Western Cape government; b) the popularity of Woodstock (further East of the CBD) as a creative neighbourhood; and c)

²³⁹ Consultant, Independent (worked on the Fringe), 2017, INT33-TF-Cons

leadership challenges within the Partnership itself at this time (the organisation was eventually dissolved in 2018, as mentioned previously). In the Fringe, the Museum played a key role in translating the experiences and histories of marginalised communities into expertise that could destabilise dominant assemblages of urban expertise. This highlights the importance of translating capacities, characterised by the ability to produce devices (like maps, collective written responses) and to disseminate those to support the contestation of redevelopment projects. This capacity is unevenly spread across community members, and thus particular institutions or individuals act as central actants in the process of enrolling communities in assemblages of urban expertise, and in the process of challenging the dominance of the real estate gaze. The KCC case further demonstrates how uneven translation capacity strengthens the position of particular community groups as key actants in the production and mobilisation of counter-expertise.

9.2.2 Exploring uneven translation capacities in King's Cross Central

As previously mentioned, the King's Cross area has historically been characterised by the existence of a rich and active community ecosystem since the designation of the railway lands for redevelopment in the 1980s. Throughout the late 1980s up to the early 2000s, those various community organisations had punctually come together formally and informally to oppose past redevelopment projects. However, not all of them were equal in their ability to translate their knowledge of the area into expertise that could actually be politically mobilised in contesting, and demanding alterations to, Argent's project. This translation capacity was linked to the financial means, time resources and internal composition of those groups - particularly their ability to enrol volunteers with technical expertise (on this last observation, see also Tironi 2015 for a similar argument). As discussed in chapter 5, the Borough of Camden created the King's Cross Development Forum to facilitate community inputs: this is a case of controlled community expertise. However, some community organisations such as the Cally Rail Group or the King's Cross Railway Lands Group felt alienated by this, as they considered that the Forum undermined the expression of differing viewpoints on Argent's project.

This extract from the Forum's meeting minutes illustrates such frustrations:

Participant 1: There was agreement from **E [anonymised]** that the Forum has now progressed to a position where they can present a more unified approach. The [planning application] report did succeed in helping to capture ideas and portray views of a large number of people who make up the Forum.

Participant 2: Other [members of the Forum] were surprised that there is such an emphasis on uniformity and conformity - after all this is a public forum where views will of course vary.²⁴⁰

As a result, several community organisations developed new strategies to review and contest the evidence presented by Argent and the King's Cross Team, constantly oscillating between formal and informal structures of community engagement. For instance, the Railway Lands Group was a member of the Forum's steering committee. One of its members, a planner by training, often intervened during the Forum's meeting to provide other members with information and guidance about how to read the technical documents produced by Argent's consultants. He thus translated technical consultants' expertise so that community organisations with no prior knowledge of specific matters (e.g. building codes, planning regulations, etc.) could critically engage with the developer's plan and its evidence base. At the same time, the Railway Lands Group hired a coordination officer to lead a broader engagement process and to run parallel consultations with local groups and residents which were not necessarily involved in the Forum. Other historical organisations like the KXCAAC adopted a similar strategy, one foot in the Forum, and another outside, producing their own alternative plan outside of the Forum's boundaries. Those two actors, the Railway Lands Group and the KXCAAC, were instrumental in translating community knowledge into counter-expertise.

²⁴⁰ Forum Minutes - 19th May 2005 - Location: Working Men's College

The Railway Lands Group had developed its own expertise and legitimacy through almost 20 years of engagement with the planning process in King's Cross. Through this engagement, the organisation became well connected with many other local groups, for instance faith based, ethnic organisations, residents' associations or artistic collectives. In the early 1990s, and as mentioned previously, the group had produced an alternative plan for the railway lands by hiring an independent community planner. This consultant had worked for Planning Aid for London, an organisation providing "independent town planning advice and support to individuals and groups unable to afford professional consultants" (Planning Aid for London 2018). In addition, one of the Railway Lands Group founders, an academic and activist, was commissioned to produce a Monitoring and Evaluation report of the activities of the King's Cross Partnership²⁴¹ in the early 2000s (Mutale and Edwards 2003). This report assessed the impact of regeneration efforts in King's Cross through large-scale household and business surveys, proving the group's strong involvement in the production of new knowledge about the area's socio-economic characteristics. As a result, the group was recognised as a key repository of expertise about the railway lands by representatives of the King's Cross Team, as well as elected officials and community representatives interviewed for this research.²⁴²

²⁴¹ The Kings Cross Partnership was a public-private-community organisation in charge of managing Central Government regeneration funding for the King's Cross area between 1996 - 2002.

²⁴² Lead master-planner, 2016, INT2-KCC-Cons, Senior Planner at the GLA, 2016, INT6-KCC-LA, Former Head of the King's Cross Team, 2016, INT12-KCC-LA, Former King's Cross Team planner, 2016, INT13-KCC-LA, London Assembly member, 2016, INT15-KCC-LA, Cally Rail Group member, 2016, INT5-KCC-Comm

The group was pivotal in articulating community expertise but also in translating the language adopted by Argent and the King's Cross Team so that it could be understood by other community organisations, as highlighted by the Railway Lands Group project coordinator hired at that time:

My role was to coordinate the different community groups in the area under the umbrella of King's Cross Railway Lands Group, to make as much representation possible on the master-plan. Part of my job was outreach, raising awareness, bringing groups together, and part of it was also to provide summaries of the planning documents so that these were understood by the community groups. In order to do that, I attended most of the master-planning workshops which were held by the Council and the developer. I was taking notes and using it to get more insights on what was going on.²⁴³

In leading the opposition to the KCC scheme, the group produced a vast amount of counter-expertise, including reports highlighting the discrepancies between affordable housing targets set out by the Boroughs and what Argent was offering (Parkes 2004). They collated feedback from other organisations and submitted an objection to the proposed plan in 2005 and took part in a coalition that took the project to court (and subsequently lost) in 2006. Historical presence, networks and reputation, as well as internal expertise and ability to draw knowledge from planners and urban economists allowed the Railway Lands Group to position itself as a leading (and dedicated) translator, a key source of expertise and political opposition from the community throughout the pre-planning stages of Argent's project. Its work focused on opposing gentrification and the displacement of local residents, as well as ensuring that 'planning gains' for the community would be secured. Another organisation, the KXCAAC focused on producing technical reports that would push for the preservation of heritage buildings and access to the canal. As indicated by an interviewee, most of the debates related to the KCC scheme focused on very

²⁴³ King's Cross Railway Lands Group employee, 2016, INT11-KCC-Comm

technical discussions regarding the preservation of the local heritage, and Islington-based conservation groups were perceived as quite oppositional in those:

I remember very long debates around heritage, very detailed iterations about the technicalities of heritage around the site [...] the Islington community was always complaining and never happy, mostly focusing on Victorian houses and individual ownership.²⁴⁴

The group was composed of educated professionals, heritage specialists who held the skills needed to scrutinise the evidence submitted by the developer and to produce counter-expertise when required. The organisation produced an alternative plan for the area: *Respecting the railway lands: KXCAAC reconsiders King's Cross Central* (2005). The richness and symbolic significance of the built heritage in KCC also played a key mediating role by favouring the collaboration of different community groups and an alignment of their interests around conservation issues, even when these different organisations embraced different motives in their fight against Argent's project. For instance, groups interested in housing issues, populations displacement and integration, of which several material features were the symbols (social housing estates, railway lands, industrial warehouses), aligned their views with environmental groups, conservation groups and heritage associations interested predominantly in preserving the architecture of the site. For instance, the alternative vision developed by KXCAAC proposed to retain the two social housing estates located on the KCC site: the Culross Buildings (demolished)²⁴⁵ and the Stanley Buildings (eventually converted into office spaces, as highlighted in picture 7).

²⁴⁴ Senior Planner at the GLA, 2016, INT6-KCC-LA

²⁴⁵ The Culross buildings were originally built by the Great Northern Railway to provide on-site affordable accommodation for the railway workers working on the expansion of King's Cross Station in the late nineteenth century. The buildings had been vacant since June 2001, due to the beginning of the building works for the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (CTRL) and London Underground (Arup 2004). Numerous studies have documented the significant role played by old housing estates demolitions in regeneration strategies in London (Lees 2014, Watt 2013), as a resort of sanitary urbanism, and King's Cross has been no exception to that (Campkin 2013).

The KXCAAC report states that

Contrary to Argent's insistence, the Culross and Stanley Buildings can be retained without any reduction in the social or commercial appeal or viability of the northern part of the site [...] it might be argued that the neighbourhood of Kings Cross Central has been so disadvantaged as to have been scrubbed out of existence. However, the plethora of community groups suggests this is not the case: there are numerous bodies that all feel strongly involved in the area and want to see it regenerated. This, though, must not be at any price, and the support for retaining Culross and both Stanley Buildings is considerable. (*Respecting the Railway Lands* 2005, p. 2)

Picture 7: New Stanley Buildings office spaces in King's Cross



Source: King's Cross Central website - the picture shows part of the old building retained in a new development.

In addition, the KXCAAC was in a position to evaluate the evidence submitted by Argent and its consultants as illustrated by this excerpt from their report:

[Argent's application] comprising many bulky documents, purports to be thorough and methodical in its approach; sadly, we believe that much of it is little more than empty presentation, and misleading and irrelevant evidence. [...] The success or failure of any such venture is in the detail, and when analysed more closely, particularly the Urban Design Statement and the proposals for individual structures and buildings, it can be seen that a rather heavy-handed brush has been used. Often the seemingly avowed commitment to the historic setting or the integration of the urban fabric with the surviving structures and topography seems to be little more than a form of words, not backed up with the sensitivity essential to the creation of good urbanism. (*Ibid.*, p. 3)

Mastering technical expertise was key in allowing community organisations to challenge the dominance and validity of the technical expertise produced by consultants and mobilised by the developer in this project. What is more, the KXCACC, through the production of the longest objection to the project (65 pages long), managed to translate community struggles into counter-expertise that adopted the “language of viability” explored in chapter 6, thus embracing the epistemic framing (Tironi 2015) of dominant actors (i.e. real estate developers) in order to contest the expertise these produced and to reframe the plan so that it preserves the heritage buildings it intends to demolish:

KXCAAC is convinced that without affecting the commercial viability of the site, the heritage buildings can be preserved and enhanced, as called for in the *Planning Brief*. Indeed, we believe that, as has been demonstrated in P&O’s Regent Quarter site at Kings Cross, the heritage can make a major positive contribution to the economic viability of the project. (*Ibid.*, p. 3)

Both the King’s Cross Railway Lands Group and the KXCAAC were perceived by other community groups as benefitting from human, technical and financial capital that allowed them to be more visible and to articulate their views in a way that would

speak to the developer and technical experts within the local government. This therefore reinforced their position as powerful community experts within assemblages of urban expertise, and as coordinators and translators of community inputs, as highlighted by an interviewee:

We were well off with people who have experience and expertise for a largely unfunded group - whereas the Railway Lands Group could afford to pay people like F [consultant, anonymised] to provide technical aid and they were a bigger outfit than us. So very early on we collaborated and worked together.²⁴⁶

In KCC thus the most highly skilled and (financially) resourced community groups engaged in the production of counter-expertise by contesting the technicalities of Argent's project and developing alternatives to it. Their expertise allowed them to scrutinise and contest the project through evidence review, and to demand alterations to the final plan (notably in relation to affordable housing provision and heritage building retention, albeit not always successfully, for instance in the case of the Culross Buildings). This case shows that as long as the rule of hyper specialised expertise prevails in decision-making processes, middle-income groups with higher education degrees (often with better time and human resources) drive the translation of community knowledge into expertise. This does not mean that they do not commit to reflect and relate the voices of the most marginalised, but the extent to which more vulnerable groups are able to partake in the production of counter-expertise might remain conditioned to their engagement with powerful translators.

²⁴⁶ Cally Rail Group member, 2016, INT5-KCC-Comm

9.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown that the maintenance of techno-financial expertise can be challenged by community organisations, through the production and mobilisation of counter-expertise, particularly the mobilisation of knowledge devices that mimic (like in KCC) and/or subvert (like in the Fringe) dominant forms of expertise (confirming hypothesis 2 and 5). The maintenance of dominant configurations of urban expertise over time can only be verified temporarily and partially. Besides, I have shown that the materiality of a place - as well as the symbolic content of particular objects within that place - sparks community coalitions into being, confirming hypothesis 3 which posits that the physical and socio-institutional characteristics of the project-site shape the composition and configuration of assemblages of urban expertise. Adding nuance to this claim, I show that the abstract delimitation of project-sites is always open to contestation. Places thus are not just the recipient of abstract visions, their unique material, historical, symbolic characteristics hold the power to bring communities into being and to nurture the production of counter-expertise. By paying attention to the political life of objects to explore the mechanics of counter-expertise, this chapter aimed to show that expanding "*the range of entities that ought to be considered relevant to the fabric of political communities*" (Marres and Lezaun 2011, p. 493) is essential if one is to understand the genesis of community-activism and the role of expertise in different groups' political project. In this perspective, objects are socially constructed (in their form or meaning) but their presence also facilitates the production of the social and of the political. Looking at community expertise formation in the Fringe and KCC allowed me to unveil the "*socio-material conditions of public engagement*" and, in doing so, to identify "*the devices, objects, substances and material settings in and through which publics are mobilised*" (Marres and Lezaun 2011, p.490). Whilst both cases offered a look at the history of community struggles and their role in KCC and the Fringe, they also raise the issue of maintenance of community expertise and long-term dynamics of contestation. Indeed, this comparative exploration highlighted the importance of creating lasting zones of translation, such as the District Six Museum; zones that reconnect to the materiality of a place, recognise the agency of objects as key in the production of pluralistic

expertise about the urban, and engage in the production of future visions. As the Fringe case demonstrated, when rich histories have been documented, translated and mobilised as part of political struggles through stable translation zones “*the options for planners to impose their singular visions are severely curtailed*” (Beauregard 2005, p. 40). Conversely, the King’s Cross case demonstrates that even when a site is attached to a “*turbulent sea*” of “*competing meanings*” (Ibid.) the production of counter-expertise alone, if not maintained over time, is not sufficient to destabilise dominant assemblages of urban expertise, and to substantially re-articulate the meaning of dominant redevelopment projects, or to halt projects. Organisations like the Railway Lands Group and the Cally Rail Group disappeared after planning consent was given to Argent; the King’s Cross Forum was maintained but without further public funding. As the materiality of urban spaces evolves as things get destroyed, built and re-built, temporarily occupied and permanently removed, the impact these processes have on group formation and disappearance remains to be explored. The next and concluding chapter summarises my key theoretical and empirical contributions and discusses avenues for future research on the politics of expertise.

Chapter 10: Conclusion

This doctoral thesis embarked on a systematic exploration of the politics of urban expertise in the context of two urban redevelopment projects in Cape Town and London. In particular, I sought to analyse how hierarchies of urban expertise emerge (RQ1); what types of abstract understandings of the urban are produced through dominant configurations of experts/devices in particular sites (RQ2); how these abstract understandings concretely shape the production of space (RQ3); and finally, I sought to unveil whether and how dominant forms of expertise are resisted (RQ4). Relying on a comparative analysis to address these questions, I demonstrated that theoretical and empirical insights furthering our collective understanding of how power operates through particular configurations of urban expertise can be generated from everywhere by acknowledging differences as much as similarities between case studies.

Theoretically, I stressed that understanding how power operates within and through the production of urban expertise requires conceptualising urban expertise as a relational assemblage of knowledge devices and experts acting in (and with) specific sites. In other words, this thesis has shown that power is not concentrated within the hand of one (or a small number) of powerful *human* actors, but rather, it is unevenly distributed amongst the human and non-human components interacting within complex networks of experts, devices, and in particular socio-material settings. In doing so, this research has contributed to advancing broader efforts to conceptualise and analyse issues of power - its effects, operations and distribution - through a materialist lens (e.g. Bennett 2009, Braun et al 2010, Barry 2013) providing insights that will resonate beyond the topic of expertise politics. Furthermore and more specifically related to the study of expertise, I sought to advance existing research that has looked at the role of single experts and/or scientific techniques in relative isolation. Bringing together research from different disciplines (i.e. urban geography, STS and planning) I argued that analysing the politics of urban expertise requires looking at three main and interrelated ways in which heterogenous assemblages of urban expertise shape the socio-materiality of

urban spaces: abstraction, by which the urban is turned into an object that can be divided, controlled and projected; performance, by which abstract representations of the urban come to be practiced and performed in the real world; and maintenance, by which specific abstract representations of the urban, and the assemblage of urban expertise that uphold and (re)produce them, become dominant at a given point in time and in particular places. Mobilising these three concepts throughout my empirical investigation of two urban redevelopment projects, the Fringe (Cape Town) and King's Cross Central (London), I unpacked the politics of urban expertise by looking at the production of hierarchies of urban expertise, that is, the relational process by which different values are assigned to experts/knowledge devices within and across different sites of expertise (e.g. particular expert organisations, specific locations) (hypothesis 1).

In particular, I demonstrated how, in Cape Town and London, the widespread use of urban development projects as a way to articulate urban expertise and to guide spatial transformations produces and maintains hierarchies characterised by the centrality of techno-financial expertise (hypothesis 3). The dominance of this form of expertise over urban transformations stems from the powerful articulation of political, legal and socio-material arrangements supporting the importance of real estate actors, economic projections, financial risk assessments, fragmented network of consultants and the reports they produce within assemblages of urban expertise. In that process, local governments are shown to lose their in-house planning/design expertise (that is their capacity to produce abstract urban visions) but manage to exert power over assemblages of urban expertise through their role as negotiators in the context of real estate led urban transformations. Conversely, I have shown that as real estate actors have gained prominence in spatial transformations, notably through their leading role in urban redevelopment projects, they have simultaneously developed competences in urban design and place-making that are highly valued and regarded by the public sector itself. Beyond urban design, the quality, feasibility and credibility of redevelopment projects is established and assessed through the mobilisation of knowledge devices performing financial and economic projections and expectations, contributing to further maintain the dominance of the real estate/techno-financial gaze. Economic impact studies and financial viability

assessments are shown to be central to the design and evaluation of urban redevelopment projects, and to contribute to reducing places to a series of elements that can be easily manipulated, erased, transformed, enhanced in order to increase the real estate value of a site. Similarly, urban visions and their implementation are informed by knowledge devices that intend to produce abstract definitions and projections of redevelopment risks, focusing predominantly on threats to property values and future profits (as opposed to threats to local communities for instance), again supporting the maintenance of the real estate gaze within assemblages of urban expertise. In unveiling such processes, this research demonstrates the power of economic and financial knowledge devices (hypothesis 2), showing that they perform partial financialised understandings of urban space, of its value and, in doing so, shape the content of urban redevelopment projects. To sum up, the real estate gaze is performed a) through the institutionalisation of the use of devices such as economic and financial calculations as key tools to inform the design and assess the credibility and feasibility of urban projects; b) in the ways in which experts and local governments themselves perform market expectations (for instance enacting such expectations in planning frameworks, like in King's Cross, or by delegating spatial strategies to property focused public-private quangos, like in Cape Town); and c) in the content and implementation of abstract urban visions designed to make urban space fit for investment, profits and economic growth. These findings advance existing research on real-estate led urban transformations - particularly research looking at the financialisation of urban development (for a review see Aalbers 2019) - by drawing attention to the role of expertise in supporting the translation of financial concepts "*into elements of the urban fabric*" (Guironnet et al. 2016, p. 1442, see also West 2016). More broadly, these conclusions confirm existing research highlighting the importance of private/public negotiations and (informal) deal-making in determining the shape and content of urban development projects (e.g. Chapin 2002, Searle 2014, Clifford 2016), but further stresses the importance of conceptualising the power of real estate actors - and the expertise they hold - in relational terms (Brill and Robin 2018). This implies looking at how real estate actors manage to shape, or hold together, particular hierarchies of urban expertise and by doing so, how they can influence the content of and value attached to other forms of urban expertise.

Throughout this thesis, I have shown that the governance of spatial transformations by means of projects in both cities reinforces the power of actors that are able to bring together heterogeneous configurations of technical experts in the formulation and legitimisation of abstract urban visions (hypothesis 4). In that context, and quite paradoxically, technical expertise is institutionalised and reified as central to the design and (political) legitimisation of complex redevelopment projects but individual technical experts are shown to remain relatively peripheral actors, and in some cases to hold little agency in determining content of their work. The Fringe case showed that financial and time constraints limit technical consultants' capacity to produce context-specific evidence and to meaningfully engage with the places/sites they study. In King's Cross Central, firms with different architectural and planning styles were brought together to form the master-planning team not (just) because of the quality of their work, but also because mobilising a very wide range of design approaches would allow the developer to mitigate opposition to its project by catering for different tastes. As a result, in this case, the production of technical reports beyond the amount required by the law aimed to bring credibility to the scheme and to prevent and undermine potential opposition to the project. These findings, again exhibiting the uneven distribution of power across human and non-human actors, both confirm and bring some nuance to existing research on post-politics by resisting the temptation to argue that the technocratisation of urban decision-making – particularly in the context of redevelopment projects - necessarily leads to the increasing power of experts (e.g. Swyngedouw et al. 2002). Rather, this research suggests that the institutional, legal and topical complexity induced by the projectification of the city reifies the technopolitical consensus by supporting the dominance of actors - currently real estate actors – who hold *coordinating capacity* and are thus able to bring together vast and diverse coalitions of technical expertise (made up of consultants, reports, numbers, drawings, etc.) within which power is unevenly distributed, and to mobilise them for political purposes. The purposeful, strategic and coordinated mobilisation of expertise is key in that process. Hence, knowledge devices such as technical reports and documents are valued to the extent that they perform technicity. Equally, consultants are valued for their ability to produce 'proofs of expertise'. It is thus the *aggregation* of specialised forms of expertise, through coordination, that holds power over urban space.

I have demonstrated that the marginalisation of community expertise often occurs through a simultaneous institutionalisation of community participation and a relative integration of communities' knowledge into the design of spatial visions: what I refer to as *controlled* community expertise. This controlled form of expertise is unable to challenge the dominance of the techno-financial gaze, however, in both projects, I showed that forms of *counter-expertise* emerged outside of institutionalised participatory structures and aimed to destabilise powerful assemblages of urban expertise (hypothesis 5). By analysing the mechanics of counter-expertise, I highlighted how community organisations can contest and subvert dominant modes of technical expertise production. Community opposition in my two cases is articulated through the translation of experiential knowledge stemming from the materiality of particular places and from an engagement with various objects into politically effective counter-expertise. Counter-expertise is in turn mobilised by community organisations to destabilise the maintenance of dominant assemblages of urban expertise, and to contest the abstract visions they propose, by engaging with technical aspects of the redevelopment projects (site boundaries, housing provision, heritage assessments, etc.). Communities mobilise through, and generate expertise about, objects that matter (Lieto 2017) (e.g. railway lands, destroyed neighbourhoods, canal, etc.). Objects that matter should thus be integrated in studies exploring group identity formation, knowledge production, and knowledge translation into politically effective forms of counter-expertise that can challenge the maintenance of powerful experts and devices. This focus on the materiality of counter-expertise formation can help elucidate how communities develop expertise about a place, expertise that can be politically mobilised when places are turned into sites of intervention, sites dedicated to the performance of remote, financialised, abstract urban visions. In examining these issues, this thesis thus contributes to existing literature on techno-publics which suggests that democratic engagement can be renewed by paying attention to the ability of objects to spark political communities into being and to generate counter-expertise (e.g. Callon et al. 2001, Latour 2005b, Whatmore and Landström 2011). My findings suggest that research attendant to the relationship between material objects and public formation/participation needs to move beyond a focus on institutionalised settings for participatory democracy (such as the King's Cross Development Forum)

where materials and objects play a mere ‘enhancing role’ in fostering community involvement. Independent community expertise emerges from the material attributes of a place, and it is from this perspective that community expertise has to be recognised and valued. However, this research also recognises that *translation* is key in the effective articulation of community opposition. Translation implies the mobilisation of this experiential engagement with the materiality of the city in the production of counter-expertise. This research thus stresses the importance of considering community expertise as not just experiential, but as inherently technical (Tironi 2015), in the context of political struggles, notably the ones induced by redevelopment projects, but also possibly beyond these. It also highlights the need to attend to (and critically reflect on) the uneven distribution of translation capacities among community organisations and individuals.

In adopting an international comparative perspective, my aim was to generate novel theoretical and empirical insights by paying attention to differences as much as similarities between two cases that had never been studied together, and across two very distinct cities. To do so, I brought together complementary methodologies (semi-structured interviews, documents’ review and SNA) into a unified analytical framework to explore how power operates through assemblages of urban expertise. The comparative analysis presented in this thesis, by bringing to the fore some of the nuances and singular processes underpinning the emergence of powerful configurations of urban expertise in Cape Town and London, sought to straddle the North-South divide and to provide some reflexions on the value of thinking from, across and through different locations. It showed that similar processes of hyper-fragmentation and uneven power distribution across networks of urban expertise are at play in both cities. It also demonstrated that the prominence of the techno-financial gaze over the production of space in both projects resulted from the particular agencement of experts, devices, institutions, norms and objects in both sites. Furthermore, this comparative perspective allowed me to look at my home city, London, through new lenses and it also pushed me to expand some of the reflexions developed around the politics of urban expertise to my own practice, as an academic researcher interested in urban issues. For instance, issues of racial injustices and the role played by techno-financial expertise in supporting urban redevelopment projects exacerbating socio-racial divides were perhaps more

salient in the Cape Town case, where the majority of senior officials and consultants met for this study were white South Africans. In many respects I felt that engaging with them was easier given my own position as a London-based, foreign, white woman expert. Yet, coming back to London, and King's Cross in particular, I realised the same observation applied. In both cases, the experts involved in the assemblages of urban expertise (to look only at its human components) were for the most part relatively homogeneous, despite the diversity of the communities attached to (and sometimes still living in, especially in London) both King's Cross and the area designated as the Fringe. In that sense, my research findings have theoretical, epistemological, and indeed political, implications for scholarly research on the politics of urban expertise generally (i.e. beyond the context of urban redevelopment projects), and for engaged academic inquiry willing to expand the range (and diversity) of actors (human and non-human) partaking in the production of knowledge about urban processes and their consequences.

Throughout this thesis, I demonstrated the value of an approach that sought to unveil the relational politics of abstraction, performance and maintenance in particular sites, through comparison. This approach recognised that the politics of material objects, experts and knowledge devices are constitutive of the politics of urban expertise, and this conceptual framework, hopefully, can be applied beyond urban redevelopment policy to empirical explorations of pressing urban challenges that are also shaped by expertise politics in various ways: for instance urban infrastructure politics, informal urbanism, environmental transitions, climate change adaptation, disaster response, and more. From a political standpoint, these findings can also inform my own practice (and that of others) as a researcher located in academia and interested in mobilising this area of research to map out and destabilise hegemonic assemblages of urban expertise, by engaging in the production of alternatives to dominant ways of knowing (and of acting upon) the urban (Campkin and Duijzings 2016). These results, particularly the ones presented in the last chapter, call for a renewed interest in the capacity of things (railway tracks, animals, plants, buildings, etc.) to foster new collectives into being, and to pay attention to the type of affordances, attachment and potential for participation they induce (Bennett 2009, Marres 2016). This in turn raises interesting questions for the modes of production of academic urban research itself, for such an approach

would imply moving away from an attachment to abstract concepts or carefully curated material settings as ways to foster collective action and thinking, and to recognise the power of mundane and unexpected objects to form the basis of knowledge production and political coalitions. This research thus invites us to consider these objects as entry points into the political life of sites and community struggles; to open up the repertoire of what is perceived as relevant and legitimate urban expertise and to acknowledge the importance of translation zones (within and beyond academia, Parnell and Pieterse 2016) that build collective expertise, in order to challenge and subvert dominant ways of knowing the urban.

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Appendix A: List of Policy Documents

All documents are accessible upon request

King's Cross Central

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London Borough of Camden, 2000, *Unitary Development Plan*
Argent, LCR and Exel, 2001, *Principles for a Human City*
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Fluid, 2004b, *Statement of Community Engagement 2: detailed analysis of the consultation on Argent St Georges "A Framework for Regeneration,"* prepared for Argent, LCR and Exel
Fluid, 2004c, *Statement of Community Engagement 3: Youth Findings (2002 - findings drawn from the 2002 Youth Consultation Report)*, prepared for Argent, LCR and Exel

London Borough of Camden, 2004, *Draft Replacement Unitary Development Plan*

London Boroughs of Camden and Islington, 2004, *King's Cross Opportunity Area Planning and Development Brief*

Parkes, 2004, *Comparison between draft and adopted Planning and Development Brief on behalf of King's Cross Railway Lands group*

Arup, 2004, *Retail Impact Assessment*, prepared for Argent, LCR and Exel

EDAW, Townshend Landscape Architects, General Public Agency, Access Design, 2004, *Public Realm Strategy*, prepared for Argent, LCR and Exel

RPS Group, Arup, 2004, *Environmental Sustainability Strategy*, prepared for Argent, LCR and Exel

Argent, LCR, Exel and Arup, 2004, *Green Travel Plan*

Argent, LCR, Exel, 2004, *Implementation Strategy*

Arup, 2004, *Supporting Statement for a Conservation Area Consent Application to demolish the Culross Buildings*, prepared for Argent, LCR and Exel

Arup, 2004, *Regeneration Strategy*, prepared for Argent, LCR and Exel

Arup, 2004, *Transport Assessment*, prepared for Argent, LCR and Exel

International Heritage Conservation and Management, 2004, *Heritage Baseline Study Part 1: Historic Buildings*, prepared for Argent, LCR and Exel

International Heritage Conservation and Management, 2004, *Heritage Baseline Study Part 2: Historical Sites Plans and Building Drawings*, prepared for Argent, LCR and Exel

RPS Group, 2004, *Code of Construction Practice*, prepared for Argent, LCR and Exel

Argent, LCR, Exel and David Morley Architects, 2004, *Triangle Site: Explanatory Statement*

Allies and Morrison, 2004, *Urban Design Guidelines*, prepared for Argent, LCR and Exel

RPS, Arup, Air Quality Consultants Ltd, International Heritage Conservation and Management and The English Cogger Partnership, 2004, *King's Cross Central Environmental Statement Volume 1: Main Report*, prepared for Argent, LCR and Exel

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Arup, 2004, *King's Cross Central Environmental Statement Volume 4: Specialist Reports*, prepared for Argent, LCR and Exel

Argent, LCR, Exel, 2004, *Planning Statement*

King's Cross Team, London Borough of Camden, 2005, *King's Cross Central: Revisions to the Applications*

Argent, 2005, *Revised Planning Application*

Argent, LCR and Exel, 2005, *Main Site Revised Development Specifications*

Argent, LCR and Exel, 2005, *Design and Inclusivity Strategy*

Arup, 2005, *Energy Assessment*, prepared for Argent, LCR and Exel

RPS, 2005, *Environmental Statement: Revised non-technical summary*, prepared for Argent, LCR and Exel

King's Cross Conservation Area Advisory Committee, 2005, *Respecting the Railway Lands: KXCAAC reconsiders King's Cross Central*

King's Cross Railway Lands Group, 2005, *Response to the Revised Planning Application*

Inglis, 2005, *Response to the Revised Planning Application*

Cally Rail Group, 2006, *Response to the King's Cross Central Scheme: letter to Rt. Hon. John Prescott MP*

Greater London Authority (2011). London Plan

Greater London Authority (2011). Opportunity Areas Planning Framework

Greater London Authority (2018). Opportunity Areas Map : <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/implementing-london-plan/opportunity-areas/opportunity-areas-map-0>

Meeting Minutes for the King's Cross Development Forum

For the year 2004: 20th February; 4th March; 27th April; 12th June; 3rd July; 8th July; 15th July; 22nd July; 29th July; 31st July; 5th August; 12th August; 9th September; 11th September; 25th September; 16th October; 27th November.

For the year 2005: 3rd February; 7th April; 15th April.

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The Fringe

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City of Cape Town (2007) Integrated Development Plan 2007-2012

Cape Town Partnership, City of Cape Town (2008) *Central City Development Strategy: Cape Town Central City into the Future*

ODA and Allan Taylor Consulting, 2010, *The Development of a Conceptual Model for Driving Innovation in the Western Cape*, Background Paper for the Cape Higher Education Consortium Workshop on 23 November 2010

Western Cape Government, City of Cape Town, Cape Peninsula University of Technology, 2010, *The East City Design Initiative: a Proposal for the Development of a Design Precinct in the Cape Town Central City's East City*

Denoon-Stevens, S., 2010, *East City Design Initiative Symposium*, 11-12 May 2010: Conference Report

Kaiser Associates, 2011, *Supporting Innovation in the Fringe*, report prepared for the Cape Town Partnership's Creative Cape Town, the Cape Higher Education Consortium and the African Centre for Cities

Creative Cape Town, Western Cape Government, Cape Peninsula University of technology, 2011, *The Fringe Creative Industry Survey Report*

Arup, 2011, *The Fringe Design Initiative Transport Strategies*, prepared for the Cape Town Partnership

EDGE Tourism Solutions, 2011, *The Fringe: Assessment of Social Impacts*, prepared for the Cape Town Partnership

Earthworks Landscape Architects, 2011, *Life to the Fringe Landscape Study*, prepared for the Cape Town Partnership

Pendleton, G., E., and Bredenkamp, A., 2011, *The Fringe District Property Report*, prepared for the Cape Town Partnership

John Spiropoulos and Associates, 2011, *The Fringe Innovation District Property Strategy*, prepared for the Cape Town Partnership

Cape Town Partnership, 2011, *The Fringe Charette Report*

Kaiser Associates, 2011, *The Fringe Initiative Draft Business Case and Plan*, prepared for the Cape Town Partnership

City of Cape Town (2012) Integrated Development Plan

Cape Town Partnership, 2012, *Business Case for the Fringe*, presentation for the Western Cape Government

Cape Town Partnership, 2012, *Hook into Cape Town's Design and Innovation District*, presentation to the Fringe Steering Committee

Guy Briggs Urban Strategy, Planning and Design with Adam, A., 2012, *The Fringe Draft Urban Design Framework*, prepared for the Cape Town Partnership, the City of Cape Town and the Western Cape Government

Western Cape Government, 2012, *Western Cape Design Strategy*

District Six Museum, 2013, *The Fringe Draft Framework: District Six Museum Comments for Public Discussion*

Farouk, I., 2013, *Conflicting Rationalities: post-apartheid spatial legacies and the creative city*, presentation given at the District Six Museum Public Event District Six on the Fringe: The Absence of memory in Design-Led Urban Regeneration

NM & Associates Planners and Designers and Lucien Le Grange Architects and Urban Planners, 2012, *District Six Development Framework*, prepared for the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform, the Western Cape Government and the City of Cape Town

Cape Town Partnership, 2013, *Where to for the Fringe?*

Appendix B: Interviewees List

Interviewees are categorised based on ideal types and based on the role they occupied at the time of the two redevelopment projects under study. The reader should bear in mind however that some individuals have moved to new positions, and that some actors cannot easily be classified. For instance, some consultants played an active role in community struggles, similarly to academics, and it is difficult to know whether they were acting in their professional or militant capacity - they were mobilising techniques and tools they use in their professional activities but used those to support the work of community groups.

NAME OF THE ORGANISATION	CASE	ORGANISATION TYPE	ID
Allies and Morrison	KCC	Consultancy	INT1-KCC-Cons
Allies and Morrison	KCC	Consultancy	INT2-KCC-Cons
Argent	KCC	Real estate actor	INT3-KCC-Rea
Bartlett School of Planning	KCC	Academia	INT4-KCC-Ac
Cally Rail Group	KCC	Community	INT5-KCC-Comm
Greater London Authority	KCC	Local authority	INT6-KCC-LA
Local Historian	KCC	Community	INT7-KCC-Comm
King's Cross Development Forum	KCC	Community	INT8-KCC-Comm
King's Cross Development Forum	KCC	Community	INT9-KCC-Comm
King's Cross Railway Lands Group	KCC	Community	INT10-KCC-Comm
King's Cross Railway Lands Group	KCC	Community	INT11-KCC-Comm
King's Cross Team	KCC	Local authority	INT12-KCC-LA
King's Cross Team	KCC	Local authority	INT13-KCC-LA

London Borough of Camden	KCC	Local authority	INT14-KCC-LA
London Assembly	KCC	Local authority	INT15-KCC-LA
Regent's Canal Network	KCC	Community	INT16-KCC-Comm
ETH Future Cities Laboratory	KCC	Academia	INT17-KCC-Ac
Bartlett School of Planning	KCC	Academia	INT18-KCC-Ac
City of Cape Town	Fringe	Local authority	INT19-TF-LA
District Six Museum	Fringe	Community	INT20-TF-Comm
Journalist Working On District Six	Fringe	Media	INT21-TF-Media
Western Cape Government	Fringe	Local authority	INT22-TF-LA
Cape Town Partnership	Fringe	Public-Private Partnership	INT23-TF-CTP
Cape Town Partnership	Fringe	Public-Private Partnership	INT24-TF-CTP
Artist/Consultant (public engagement)	Fringe	Consultancy	INT25-TF-Cons
EDGE TOURISM	Fringe	Consultancy	INT26-TF-Cons
Lucien Grachts Architects	Fringe	Consultancy	INT27-TF-Cons
Cape Town Partnership	Fringe	Public-Private Partnership	INT28-TF-CTP
Western Cape Government	Fringe	Local authority	INT29-TF-LA
NMA	Fringe	Consultancy	INT30-TF-Cons
Ashraf Adam	Fringe	Consultancy	INT31-TF-Cons
Local Property Owner and Developer	Fringe	Real estate actor	INT32-TF-Rea
Independent Researcher	Fringe	Consultancy	INT33-TF-Cons
Guy Briggs Architects	Fringe	Consultancy	INT34-TF-Cons
Central City Improvement District	Fringe	Public-Private Partnership	INT35-TF-PPP

African Centre for Cities	Fringe	Academia	INT36-TF-Ac
Future Cape Town	Fringe	Media	INT37-TF-Media
Cape Town Partnership	Fringe	Public-Private Partnership	INT38-TF-CTP
John Spiropoulos Consultants	Fringe	Consultancy	INT39-TF-Cons
Western Cape Government	Fringe	Local authority	INT40-TF-LA
Local Artist	Fringe	Community	INT41-TF-Comm
CPUT	Fringe	Academia	INT42-TF-Ac
Arup	Fringe	Consultancy	INT43-TF-Cons
Earthworks Landscape Architects	Fringe	Consultancy	INT44-TF-Cons
CPUT	Fringe	Academia	INT45-TF-Ac
City of Cape Town	Fringe	Local authority	INT46-TF-LA
Archeologist (independent)	Fringe	Academia	INT47-TF-Ac
THA	Fringe	Consultancy	INT48-TF-Cons
Property Consultant	Fringe	Real estate actor	INT49-TF-Rea
Cape Town Partnership	Fringe	Public-Private Partnership	INT50-TF-CTP
Cape Town Partnership	Fringe	Public-Private Partnership	INT51-TF-CTP

Appendix C: Interview Protocols

Interview protocol used for each interviewee (semi-structured nature of the interview allowed me to follow up when needed on specific topics with each interviewee). The two interview protocols differ slightly as the Fringe story was a little bit more complex to unpack. In particular, the responsibility of the City of Cape Town vs the Partnership in leading the process needed to be elicited, as well as the District Six/Fringe tensions. The interviews were deliberately semi-structured and these questions only represent a guide for discussions (the order in which the questions were asked differed in each case, and sometimes, clarifications or other formulations were used to cover the same point, particularly in relation to knowledge devices).

King's Cross Central (London)

1. Could you tell me how you got involved with the KCC scheme?
2. Could you discuss the methodology you used and type of actors you engaged with in your work?
3. Do you feel like your work had an impact on the design of the master-plan?
4. What would you say are the most influential/valued expert professions/pieces of analysis and methods in this type of project?
5. What, if anything, do you think could have been done better at that time?
6. Who/which institutions supplied you with the most relevant and important information/data about urban issues in the area? Why?
7. Who/Which institutions were the most influential in informing the masterplan of the KCC scheme?
8. Who/which institutions/organisation do you think hold knowledge that should have been integrated in the master-planning process?
9. In your opinion, who were the fundamental players in informing the scheme as a whole? (i.e. providing information that has been helpful in framing the discussions and informing the upcoming negotiations)? Why were they so powerful in your opinion?
10. Are there any people/organisations that you think have been consistently side-lined in the knowledge production process? Why do you think that was the case?
11. Do you think the implementation of the KCC scheme reflects its original intentions, as laid out in the 2005 master-plan?
12. Is there any specific actor you recommend I should speak to for this research?

The Fringe (Cape Town)

1. Could you tell me how you got involved with the Fringe project?
2. Could you discuss the methodology you used and type of actors you engaged with in your work?
3. Did you use any of the following plans in your work; District six Development Framework/East City Design strategy?
4. What would you say are the most influential/valued expert professions/pieces of analysis and methods in this type of project?
5. Do you feel like your work had an impact on the design of the Fringe Project?
6. Do you feel like your work had an impact on the City of Cape Town's decision not to take the Fringe idea forward back in 2013?
7. Some actors have often referred to the Cape Town Partnership/the City of Cape Town without making any distinction between the two organisations - would you agree with such a view or would you say both organisations had different views on the Fringe project?
8. What do you think could have been done better at that time?
9. Who/which institutions supplied you with the most relevant and important information/data about urban issues in the area?
10. Who/Which institutions were the most influential in informing the design of the Fringe Urban Design Framework? Why?
11. Who/which institutions/organisation do you think hold knowledge that should have been integrated in the Fringe/East City project?
12. In your opinion, who were the fundamental players in informing the Fringe Project as a whole? (i.e. providing information that has been helpful in framing the discussions and informing the upcoming negotiations) Why were they so powerful in your opinion?
13. Are there any people/organisations that you think have been consistently side-lined in the knowledge production process? Why do you think that was the case?
14. Would you consider the Fringe as a failure?
15. Is there any specific actor you recommend I should speak to for this research?

Appendix D: List of Organisations participating in the Fringe Charette exercise

ArchRSA: local architectural practice.

ARG Design: local urban design practice.

ARUP: consultants hired by the Partnership to produce the Transport Study (2011).

City of Cape Town: project partner, part of the Fringe Steering Committee.

Cape Peninsula University of Technology: project partner, part of the Fringe Steering Committee.

Western Cape Province - Department of Economic Development and Tourism: project partner, part of the Fringe Steering Committee.

Design Space Africa DTPW: local architectural practice, DesignSpaceAfrica was involved in the initial planning of the World Design Capital; Luyanda Mpahlwa (the director) was on the board of the establishing committee, and DesignspaceAfrica has got three architectural projects on the official project selection.

Greg Wright Architects: local architectural practice.

John Spiropoulos Associates: consultants hired by the Partnership to produce the Property Strategy (2011).

Makeka Design Lab: Makeka Design Lab is a provider of planning, design and delivery solutions for the built environment.

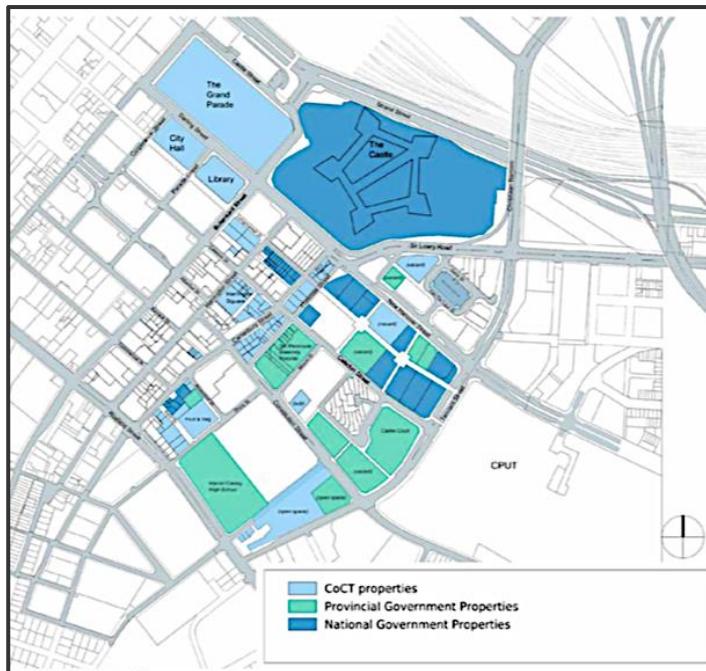
Reclaim Camissa: RECLAIM CAMISSA, a registered NGO which main aim is to reclaim Cape Town's Central City connection to the Water.

SW Design Architects: local architectural firm.

University of Cape Town: local university, a representative of the Urban Real Estate Research Unit participated in the Charette.

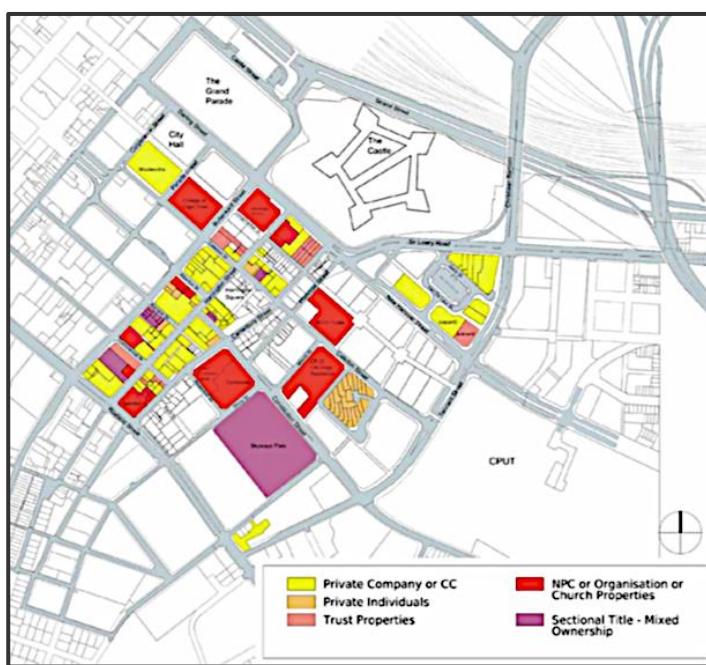
Appendix E: Public vs private ownership of building stocks in the Fringe

Map 10: Publicly owned land in the Fringe



Source: Fringe Urban Design Framework 2012.

Map 11: Privately owned land in the Fringe



Source: Fringe Urban Design Framework 2012.

