Designing Publicness
Equitable Futures and Ecological Possibilities

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Design West

Saharan dust storm covering Lisbon
View from Miradouro de São Pedro de Alcântara
Credit: Elahe Karimnia

City as critical stage

Entanglement of bodies, nature, things, technologies, infrastructures, and institutions.

Produced through relations: finance, migration, tourism, culture, climate, and political influence.

Jubilee Park and Garden
Credit: Elahe Karimnia

Publicness

Interactive and collaborative generating hope
for building solidarity
for pursuing change
for creating dream
for equitable futures

Wall of Kindness. A grassroots initiative in transforming urban walls for the poor.
Photo: Rio de Janeiro, 2016. Credit: Elahe Karimnia

Publicness

Interactive and collaborative generating hope
for building solidarity
for pursuing change
for creating dreams
for equitable futures

performative, live,
embodied and experienced,
constantly shaping.
temporary traces

emerges from "cojoint action"
Reflects political actions
Creates effects

Subway Therapy. An artistic initiative in New York City, 2016
Source: http://www.subwaytherapy.com/

Publicness

a social construct
a matter of political attention
challenges systematic exclusions
and structural inequalities

TO WHOM DOES THE CITY BELONG?

Equitable Futures

What would it mean to design publicness?
inclusion into urban public spaces?

Source: Twitter account: Bristol GreenCapital

Recognition of **difference**, it refers to mixing building types; among planners it denotes both mixed uses of land and social heterogeneity of residential buildings, neighbourhoods, and public spaces.

Such diversity will prove beneficial not only for producing attractive cities but for making cities economically productive (Jacobs, 1961)

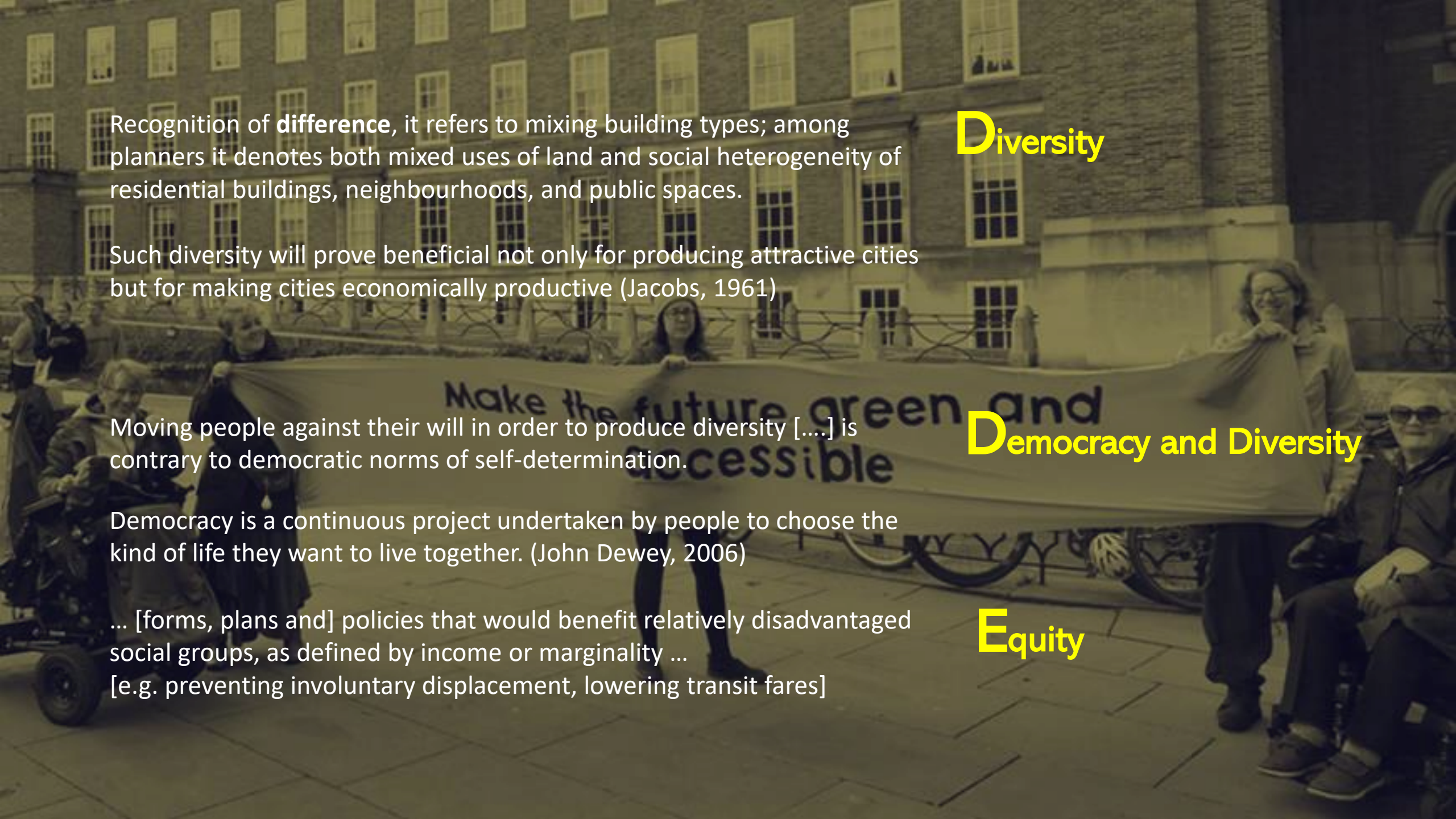**D**iversity

Moving people against their will in order to produce diversity [....] is contrary to democratic norms of self-determination.

Democracy is a continuous project undertaken by people to choose the kind of life they want to live together. (John Dewey, 2006)

Democracy and Diversity

... [forms, plans and] policies that would benefit relatively disadvantaged social groups, as defined by income or marginality ...
[e.g. preventing involuntary displacement, lowering transit fares]

Equity

Designing Publicness

Constantly designing democracy

Practices of everyday life

Critical

An approach that refuses to take things for granted including its way of thinking and theorizing. (Marcuse 2009).
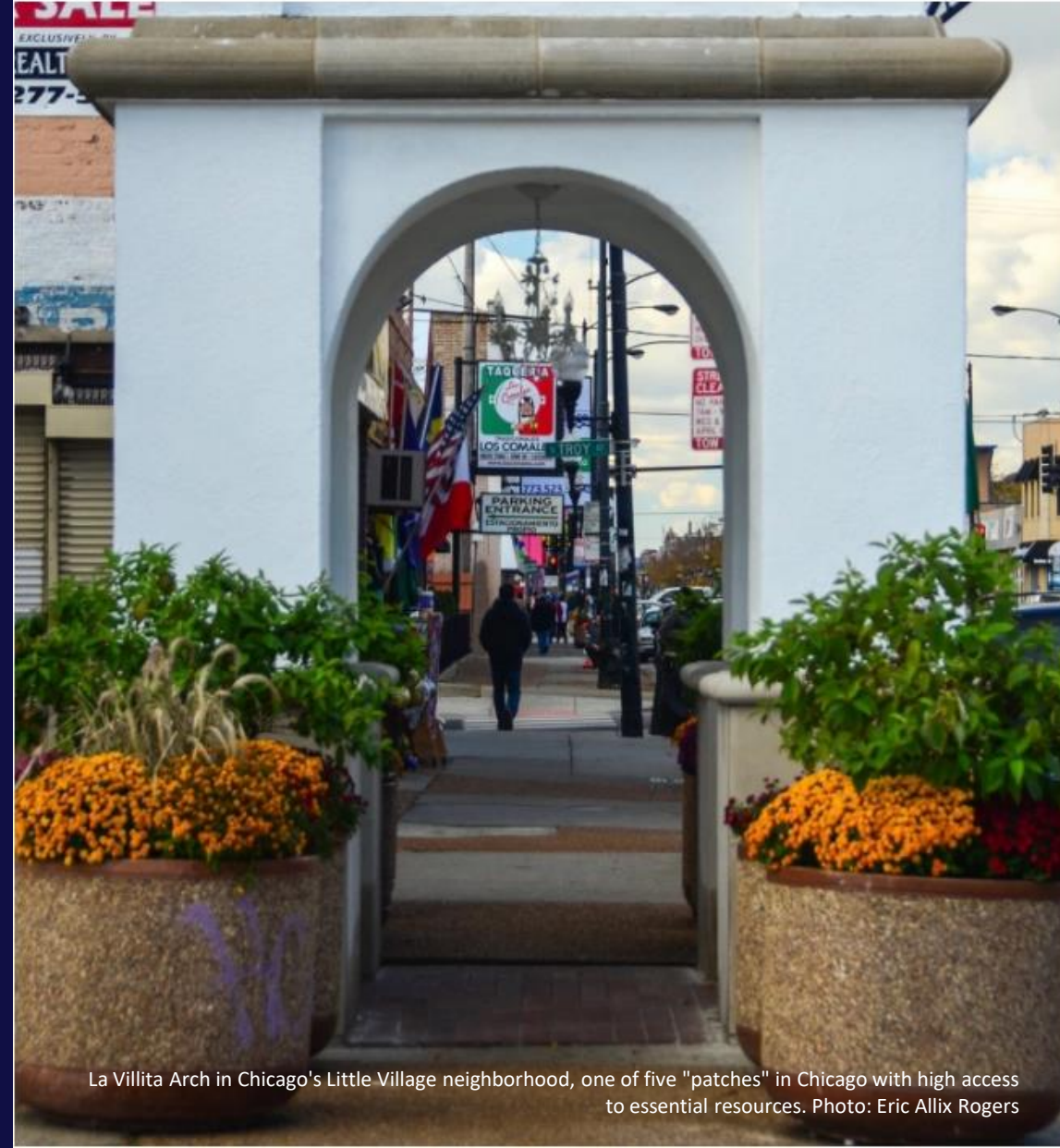
Defies fix approaches

Plural narratives
Neoliberal narratives are presented as standardized and no-other-alternative.

Study: 15-minute walk/bike access to key resources is not enough to guarantee prosperity

By John Greenfield | Sep 9, 2021 | 3 COMMENTS

La Villita Arch in Chicago's Little Village neighborhood, one of five "patches" in Chicago with high access to essential resources. Photo: Eric Allix Rogers

Publicness – an ontological turn

Beyond binary divisions
public-private: land, finances, management

"Such a space is the sphere in which distinct stories coexist, meet up, affect each other, come into conflict or cooperate. This space is not static, not a cross-section through time; it is disrupted, active and generative."

Massey, 1999: 272

Part of the proposal for central shopping area in Elephant and Castle, London

Parklet in Shoreditch
Source: Meristem Design

Publicness – an ontological turn

Beyond binary divisions

Public-private land, finances, management

Top-down – bottom-up initiatives

Long term – temporary

Publicness – an ontological turn
Beyond binary divisions

public – private land, finances, management
top-down – bottom-up initiative
Long term – temporary

Human – non-human
Citizenship – citizenship
culture – green infrastructure
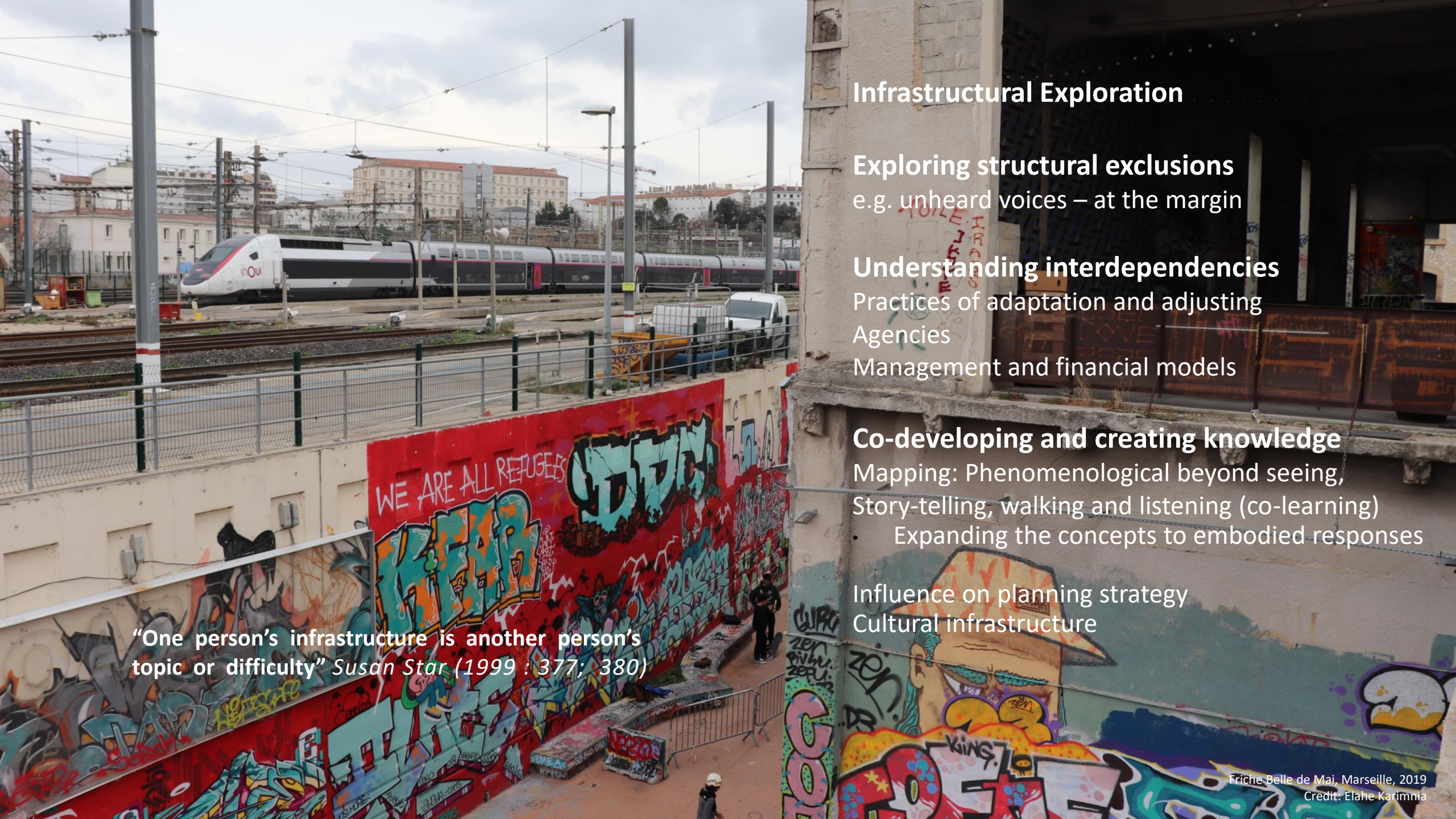
The growth of urban rewilding
Source: Savills

Equitable futures

Designing publicness emerges from the tension between these divisions.

What solidarities can be designed between [marginalised] forms of bodies, [ignored] spaces, and [degraded] practices?
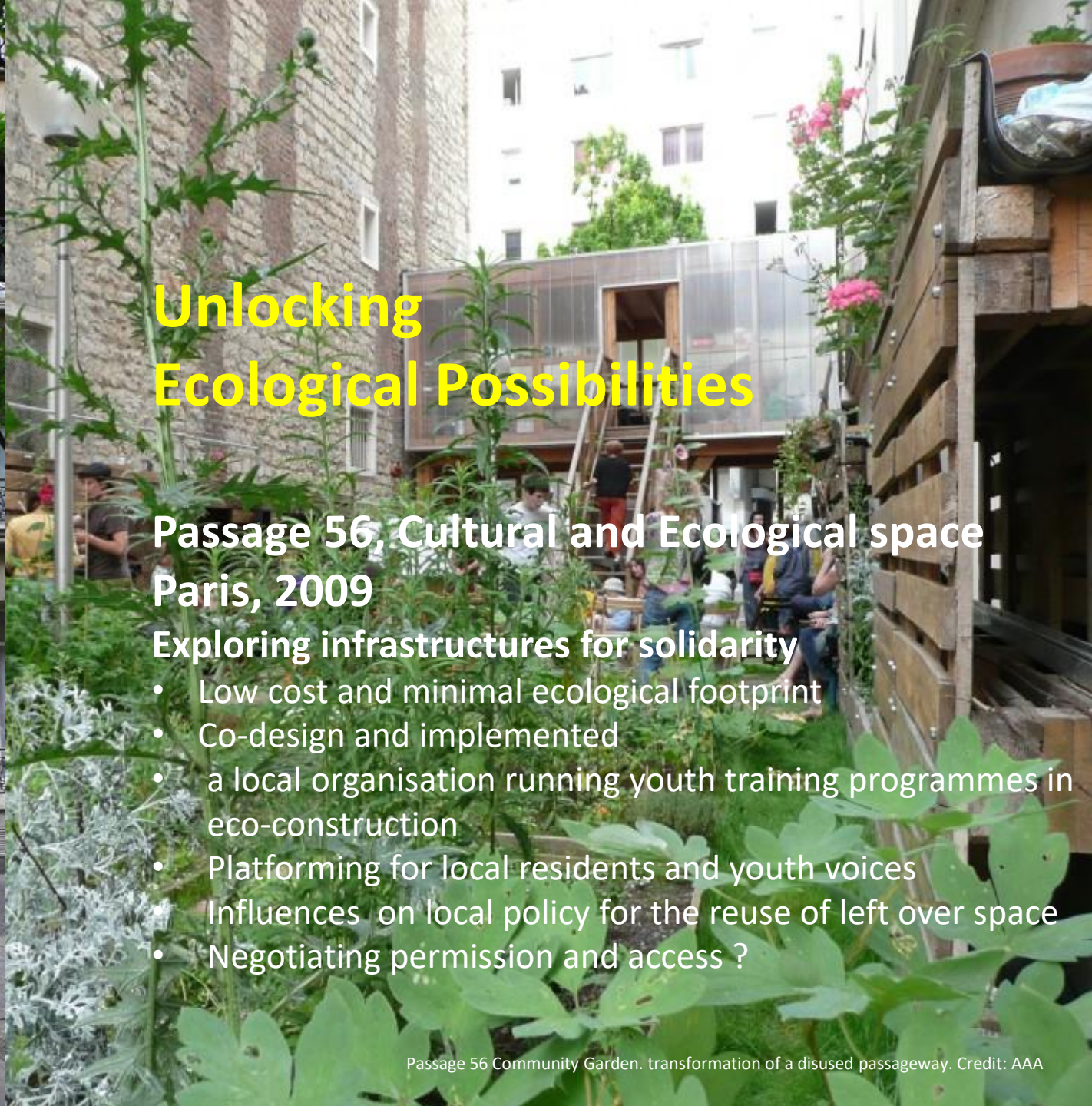
Infrastructural Exploration

Exploring structural exclusions
e.g. unheard voices – at the margin

Understanding interdependencies
Practices of adaptation and adjusting
Agencies
Management and financial models

Co-developing and creating knowledge
Mapping: Phenomenological beyond seeing,
Story-telling, walking and listening (co-learning)
• Expanding the concepts to embodied responses

Influence on planning strategy
Cultural infrastructure

"One person's infrastructure is another person's topic or difficulty" *Susan Star (1999 : 377; 380)*

Friche Belle de Mai, Marseille, 2019
Credit: Elahe Karimnia

Unlocking
Ecological Possibilities

Passage 56, Cultural and Ecological space
Paris, 2009

Exploring infrastructures for solidarity

- Low cost and minimal ecological footprint
- Co-design and implemented
- a local organisation running youth training programmes in eco-construction
- Platforming for local residents and youth voices
- Influences on local policy for the reuse of left over space
- Negotiating permission and access ?

Passage 56 Community Garden. transformation of a disused passageway. Credit: AAA

Unlocking
Ecological Possibilities

Next step …

Exploring infrastructures for solidarity

- Arnos Vale cemetery, Bristol

(publicness in relation to/tension with ritual, cultural and environmental practices)

- Railway Gardens, Cardiff

In whose interest?
Who is engaged? Who benefits? Models of adaptions? Organisation and management?

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Many Thanks!