

AMT workshop 9 November 2011

This note picks up some of the main points I made in introducing this workshop and then attaches a press release from the London Just Space Network.

Some points for discussion:

1. Many people are excluded from participation by material conditions - they are working too hard, they can't afford to get to meetings (paying to attend, paying for transport, childcare etc).
2. Many people are turned off by professional language, jargon.
3. Building an informed and effective public is a long, slow, process which requires more than the charettes, events and one-off workshops which many consultants and authorities lay on (and which can be experienced as condescending); that sustained effort involves money for admin support in the long run.
4. Most effective in our London work has been building mutual-support networks among groups and activists in which the more experienced help the less experienced build knowledge and confidence.
5. Importance of reaching out to potentially-supportive groups which already exist (like Age Concern, disability groups, youth organisations, tenants' associations) who may take some convincing to realise that their concerns intersect strongly with 'planning'
6. Simple electronic media (email, blogs, twitter) can help (not replace) meetings, especially for those who are constrained from coming to meetings or dislike them, but want to contribute.
7. Don't forget your universities and colleges: institutions like that or individual staff or students within them can be very helpful with data, research etc, and universities are now under pressure to do more 'public engagement'. Just Space has written a document on how community group / university cooperation can work well and avoid disappointments. <http://wp.me/PL68t-g7>

Just Space Network statement on London Plan 2011

Just Space Network <http://justspace2010.wordpress.com>

(press - release)

Mayor's 20 year development plan for London will increase polarisation of London's communities says network of London community and voluntary groups

Just Space, a pan-London network of voluntary and community groups says the London Mayor's recently published 20 year development plan will continue to promote increased levels of inequality and polarisation of London's communities. Just Space says it will also result in increased road traffic and pollution levels. On some key issues, while Just Space convinced the planning inspectors, changes have been rejected by the Mayor.

The Just Space Network is critical of the London Plan model for encouraging market led development under the guise of promoting London as a 'world class city'. Unless there is a proper analysis of the model and its detrimental impact on the majority of Londoners, the capital will remain 'world class' only for an elite. They say there is serious need for a rethink.

Just Space ensured that a very large number of community voices were heard at the 6 month long public examination into the London Plan. They succeeded in persuading the Mayor to strengthen policy on protecting local shops, extending green infrastructure, and promoting Community Land Trusts and Community Development Trusts.

On the big issues of affordable housing, road user charging, air quality, and avoiding displacement of ordinary Londoners from 'regeneration' areas the Network persuaded the independent Inspectors of their arguments. It is hugely disappointing then that the Mayor has

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rejected the Inspectors' recommendations.

The London Plan is supposed to be 'evidenced based'. But it has completely ignored the evidence on housing need and gypsy and traveller pitches and fails to produce an evidence base that demonstrates the benefits of large regeneration schemes for London's established communities.

The Mayor's 20 year development plan for London is a hugely significant document which the majority of Londoners are totally unaware of. Our view is that there is a pressing need for wider debate in the media on the significance of the London Plan and how much it impacts on the kind of development that is occurring every day in our own neighbourhoods.

Notes

1. The Just Space Network brings together an impressively wide range of groups, some with a London-wide remit such as London Civic Forum and Friends of the Earth, others locally based community groups such as the Spitalfields Community Association and the King's Cross Railway Lands Group.

2. The Network also has links with some of the Universities in London (e.g. UCL and King's College) whose staff and students provided research that the network presented alongside their own grass roots evidence.

3. More than 50 community groups engaged in the 6-month 'Examination in Public' (EiP) of the London Plan at City Hall, overseen by the Just Space Network statement on London Plan 2011

by an independent Panel of planning inspectors. The Report of the Panel was published in March 2011.

4. As a result of this engagement, our members have come to understand how political this technical, spatial planning document is, and how important it is for many of the key issues they are focused on, such as health inequalities, targets for affordable housing, progress on environmental issues and pitches for gypsies and travelers.

5. Just Space Network is developing further work with communities, including: producing information packs, establishing local planning networks, recording the experience of ordinary community members' attempts to influence planning policy and a seminar series on alternative plans. Members of the Network will continue to monitor, expose and campaign around contradictions in the Plan and where it fails to address key issues impacting on the majority of Londoners.

6. For the newly adopted London Plan, EiP Panel report etc <http://www.london.gov.uk/priorities/planning/londonplan>

For more on JSN <http://justspace2010.wordpress.com>

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Article giving more background: Michael Edwards (2010 October) Do Londoners make their own plan? in K Scanlon and B Kochan (eds) London: coping with austerity, LSE London Series, paperback, 978-0-85328-459-8, chapter 5, 57-71. Eprint <http://eprints.ucl.ac.uk/20241/> Whole book is a free download at <http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/LSELondon>