

Is this our Edgware Road? —moi

Edited, published and designed using edgwareroad.org

Comissioned by the Edgware Road Project

This pamphlet was produced using the online archive and publishing tool edgwareroad.org, created by Bombay based media collective CAMP while in residence on the Edgware Road.

It is part of the series, *Studies on a Road*, in which groups who took part in the Edgware Road Project from 2008–2016, have shared their studies of the area and reflections on the stakes of the project.

The Edgware Road Project was developed in 2008 to support local and international artists and community groups to develop 'possible studies' responding to issues faced by those living, working and visiting the area. Over these 8 years a widening gap of inequality has opened in the area at the hands of local processes of development and the national climate of forced austerity. In response to these conditions, groups that included artists and non-artists were supported in their development of analyses and actions that would address the various dimensions of the development process. Four main thematics have opened up in response to these inequalities outlined in this series. They include Policing, Education, Housing and Care.

Researchers

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We, researchers from Westminster Academy, have formed a design and research collective, 'moi' in response to our time as participants in the Public Space Seminar at the Serpentine Gallery's Centre for Possible Studies.

This pamphlet was developed during our residency there, in which we asked the question 'Is this our Edgware Road?'. What follows is our response to this question, proposed as a series of possibilities for the area that we hope will be heard.

Methods

We designed a birds eye view map of the Edgware Road and areas surrounding it for the original purpose of helping us to locate specific areas where we would like to propose things. We then used it to illustrate where we have been and the areas we have looked at. It marks where we roamed the streets with our signs and questionnaires!



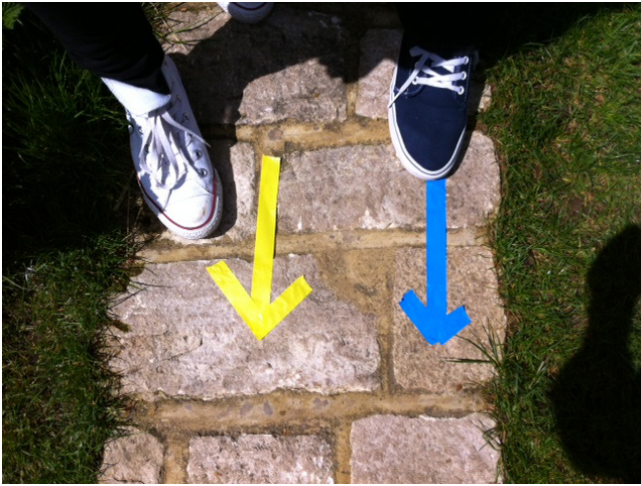


Possibility 1: Games

At Broadley Street Gardens, we began to think about what would happen if less money was spent on excessive construction and more on developing and hosting activities for people with simple materials. We decided to create games using our imaginations, the spaces around us and the constructions that had already been built. Although there are many elements in this constructed park, we felt that it was a difficult space to engage with and wanted to encourage ourselves and families to re-imagine the idea of play and what is possible. The games we came up with were all very DIY! All the games are accessible and can be played by all ages. This is the kind of work we as young people would like to do and be paid for. We thought we could begin this process of youth-led games for children with students from King Solomon Academy, across from the park. The game instructions and game materials (gaffa tape!) are held within the Possibility Archive Mobile Research and Archiving Unit. This will venture out to the Broadley Street Gardens and other parks and open spaces to test and try and the games with local people. We invite you to come and play with us.

The Possibility of Play

Through moi's play and research, it became clear that there was less need for building play areas and more for person-to-person programme. Is it possible for young people to have a platform to present their ideas more formally to the local council and stake holders?



1. Sit back to back on bridge
2. Stand up and race down the bridge
3. Start running towards the big rocks
4. Pick up the cup of water and water the plants around you
5. Sprint toward the finish line



Possibility 2: Changes to Specific Locations (Walking Statements)

A number of places in the area look empty, neglected and under-used.

We walked around the area with statements regarding possible improvements that could be made and called these 'Walking Statements'. For example, we used the sign 'Paint Me?' in areas that were plain and dreary, and the statement 'Don't Desert Me!' in spaces that aren't really used by locals or visitors. We used the statement 'Is this ours?' to tap into bigger questions in the community. With this sign we are asking who is able to use certain areas; who owns them; and can we use spaces for other things than they were designed for? What is the purpose of a space if people don't use it? Why is it run down or vacant? Places are sometimes left in a bad way on purpose: to create the need for regeneration that displaces the people who live there in favour of those with more money. We think that improvements should be suggested by people who live in the area and those people should be able to stay and enjoy them. The (Walking Statements) get the community thinking about how they can improve the area on their terms and how they can feel ownership over the place now and in the future. We wanted to create a walk that was quite performative. By holding these big protest-like banners we got the attention of the local community and passers-by. They stopped and asked why we were doing this and asking these questions. This served as a great starting point for a conversation about the areas.



A Seminar on Regeneration

As background to this possibility we invited urbanist Mara Ferreri from Queen Mary University to come and speak with us about other communities who had gone through regeneration or gentrification.

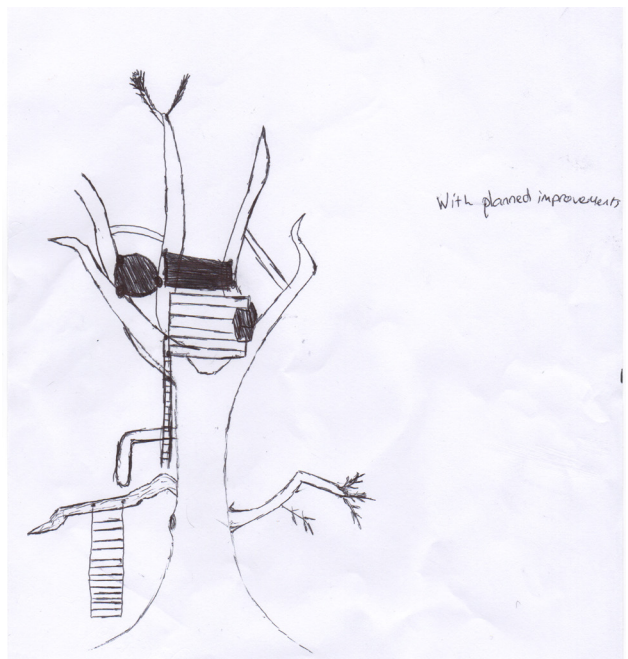
The seminar provided a brief overview of the history of urban planning, with a special focus to the notions of 'urban renewal' and 'regeneration', and their relationship to dynamics of gentrification. Looking at maps of Church street and its surrounding areas, as well as of Elephant and Castle in south London, we explored people's power to change top-down plans, and the difficult relationship between residents, the council and private developers in consultation processes. Discussing questions such as 'Who shapes the city and to what aim?', the seminar reflected on the interconnection between rising rents in the commercial and residential sectors, and the neglect and/or renewal of public spaces. From these reflections we discussed critically moi' proposed interventions in the area and what kind of projects were most needed.

Possibility 3: The Private Tree Spaces

The tree spaces proposal addresses the lack of open space in London and breaks through the barriers that are enforced to restrict our privacy and limit our abilities to feel relaxed and free.

As much as London Councils try to create green spaces such as Hyde Park, Regents Park etc they never really give it the feel of wide open spaces. I think the idea of tree houses as private play spaces would be a really good way to encourage this feeling and also encourage the use of wild spaces.

As a member of moi I have a personal connection with the British countryside. I am enticed by grassy areas because I was a born and raised in the countryside just on the border of Gloucestershire and Wiltshire where I learned a lot about my own culture, not in a patriotic sense but enough to be glad about the history and use of the land.



Possibility 4: A film Programme run by local youth for local youth

A lot of young people are unemployed and a lot of others don't know what to do. We think a free film programme of screenings would be a great way to bring life to empty spaces. The programme would be programmed by us. We would show films that are not in the mainstream theatres, and for free. But, we feel that for this work, we should be paid as it would add a lot of value to the area to have films screened from young peoples' perspectives!



Possibility 5: Some Questions We Want To Ask

We used our time where we are out to gain the opinions and views of local residents and local businesses as we want feedback from our actions.

Are you a local resident, what are you doing here?
No, work

Do you like this area?
Not anymore

Yes - What do you like about this area
No - What do you not like about this area
Noisy, smelly

What do you use this area for? Which spaces are most used?
Shopping

What else could these spaces be used for? / are there any spaces that you know of that could be used better / differently?
playground for children.

Question related to the other groups activity.

Feed back / How did it go? Additional feedback.

Are you a local resident, what are you doing here?
Yes.

Do you like this area?
Love it

Yes - What do you like about this area
No - What do you not like about this area
people, individuality, shopping, markets, leisure (parks)

What do you use this area for? Which spaces are most used?
Living in it / Shopping / Broadley Garden, dogs walking.

What else could these spaces be used for? / are there any spaces that you know of that could be used better / differently?
Don't want to see it changed.

Question related to the other groups activity.

Feed back / How did it go? Additional feedback.

Are you a local resident, what are you doing here?

Do you like this area?

Yes - What do you like about this area

No - What do you not like about this area

What do you use this area for? Which spaces are most used?

What else could these spaces be used for?

Are there any spaces that you know of that could be used better / differently?

Question related to the other groups activity.

Feed back / How did it go? Additional feedback.

Where do the Possibilities Go?:

A conversation about the future, with moi and the Possibility Archive

In the course of your research, what have you become passionate about?

Changing the appearance of the area, making it seem less neglected. Making proposals to the Council for resources to be involved in making things happen in the area: Film screenings, making things look better, programmes for kids at King Solomon school led by us.

The question you decided to answer was 'Is this our Edgware Road?' Do you feel that through answering this question you know the area better and feel more ownership over it?

Yes, but we won't feel real ownership over the area until we feel like our proposals are heard and even realised.

What do you think of the work we did in relation to the idea of 'work experience'?

Work experience is better when it has something to do with the future that we can make . We think there should be wider possibilities for work experience: for the jobs we would like to do in society.

Our age is a restriction from doing things that really matter in the world (i.e. work in hospitals). Some people work in Boots and stock shelves. We would not want to repeat those things filing things, putting things on shelves, labelling things in the office. Companies make money from this but the students don't get paid. When you are on your own it's really boring. Working together in groups is more interesting you learn more.

What do you learn in a group that you don't learn on your own?

We learned how to get on with people. We spend a lot of time in groups. It's hard to work alone.

Do you feel that the project was long enough?

We want to keep coming back. It was too short.

What should happen next?

We'd like to get paid to do this kind of work in the community. We want to work on projects and be paid as we have something important to contribute.

moi

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The Possibility Archive

The Possibility Archive is an artist residency by Polly Brannan and Jackson Lam at the Centre for Possible Studies for Serpentine Gallery's Edgware Road Project. The Possibility Archive works with local archives and groups to develop a study of the many possibilities that have been generated in relation to the Edgware Road in recent history. Examining those possibilities that have been realised, but also those that were deemed impossible in their day, the study will manifest on edgwareroad.org and via a series of posters and pamphlets, forming the basis for community discussions about the future.

The *Studies on a Road* pamphlet series was produced using edgwareroad.org

It is part of the Possible Studies series that are free to download and distribute for non-commercial use.

The Possible Studies imprint was developed through the Edgware Road Project. Initiated by Serpentine Galleries in 2008 the Edgware Road Project links local groups and international artists with people living and working in this area. The itinerant project base for the project is the Centre for Possible Studies, home to screenings, events, a publishing imprint and an ongoing project archive.

From 2016 the Possible Studies imprint will be housed at Church Street Library on a specially commissioned shelf dedicated to the local area. Designed by Bahbak Hashemi-Nezhad.

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Studies on a Road is a series of pamphlets developed by artists, researchers and community groups in residence with the Edgware Road Project from 2008–2016. In response to growing conditions of inequality and austerity groups including both artists and non-artists were supported in their development of analyses and actions to address the various dimensions of the neighbourhood around thematics including Policing, Education, Housing and Care.

