

# **The Infrastructural Paradox**

How infrastructure connects places but deteriorates their identity.

14-11-2022

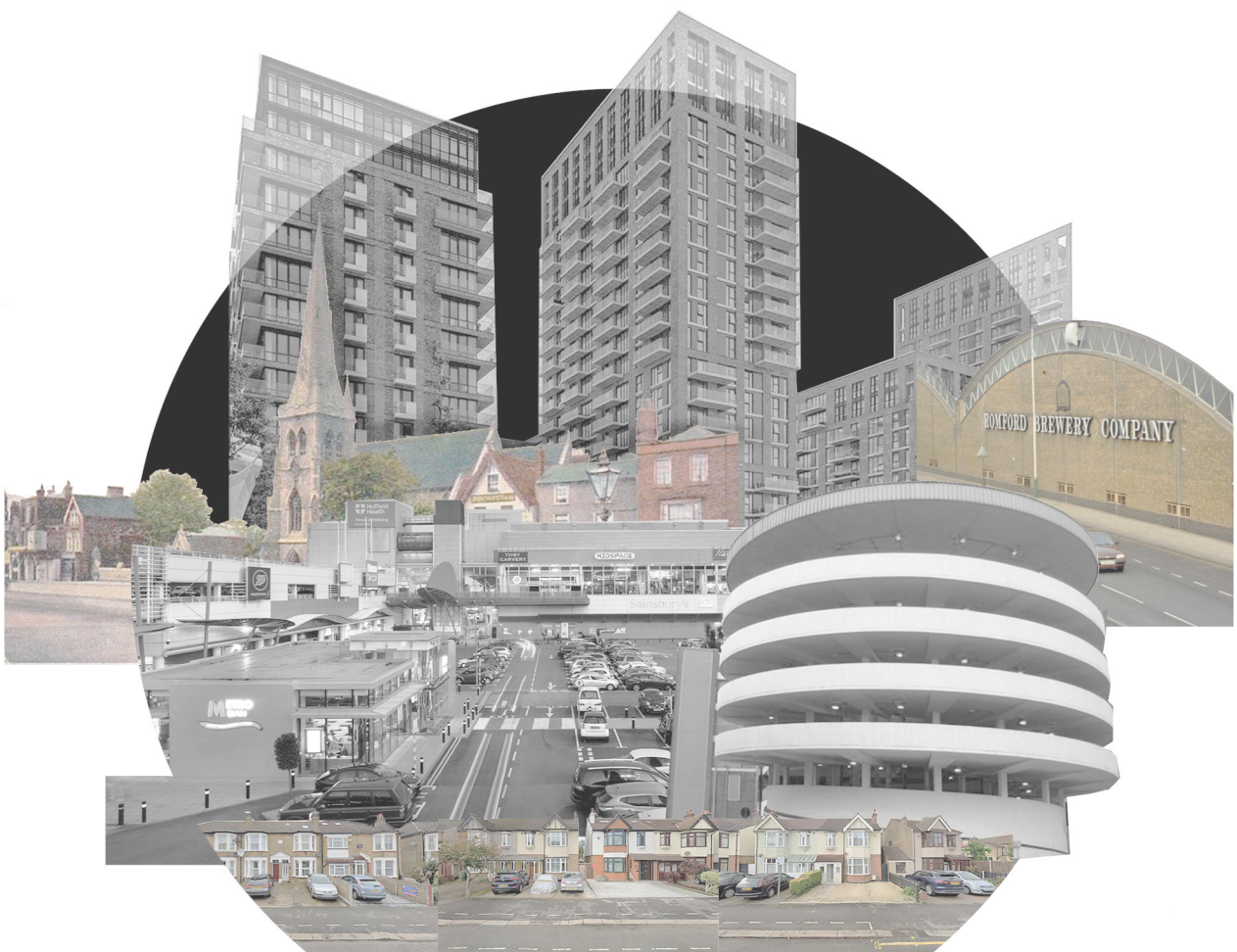
Research Plan for Graduation | Architectural Design Crossovers

MSc. Architecture, Urbanism and Building Sciences | TU Delft

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The loss of identity of Romford  
image by author

## **Fascination**

*I have always been very fascinated by the city and am always trying to understand the relationship between urbanism and architecture. Throughout the years, I had the possibility to travel and experience cities all over the world and have been noticing the generalisation of places, especially around infrastructural nodes. People are choosing time over distance and these former towns have been tremendously growing since the Modernist era. Characteristic buildings have been replaced by much more generic structures which are deteriorating the sense of place. Cities and their suburban areas are all starting to look like each other and I believe this is a problem. It is not only affecting its image, but also changing how and by whom they are being used. Are we losing urbanism and are we only left with architecture?*

### **keywords**

post-industrial city, fragmented city, infrastructure, legibility, genius loci, sense of place, identity, Elizabeth Line, Crossrail, London

## Introduction

As any city London has its own unique story. In 'London, The Unique City' architect and town planner Steen Eilir Rasmussen poses an intriguing statement on the city of London. He states that London is not one city but can in fact be seen as a collection of villages that have grown together.<sup>1</sup>

Unlike on the European continent, London never experienced a period where ruling parties restructured the city into monumental urban spaces which happened during the nineteenth century in cities such as Paris and Vienna. London also never went through an era where the upper class had a lot of legal authority, which happened in the city centre of Amsterdam during the Golden Age. In fact the United Kingdom lacked and still lacks the centrally controlled bureaucracy and legal instruments that characterized urban planning in Europe as described above.<sup>2</sup> Though London developed itself into one of the leading metropolitan cities during the Industrial Revolution. What can be said about the urban growth of the city and the towns around London?

Up until the Industrial Revolution around 1750, the Thames was the primary resource of wealth for London. Around main roads leading towards London several towns had been settled during the Middle Ages which profited from the travellers between London and other English cities. During the Industrial Revolution, the importance of London to these small towns started to shift. Waterways started to make room for train tracks and towns around London would benefit from this increased connectivity through new industries. Although the Industrial Revolution brought prosperity for London, it would change the urban environment

dramatically. Infrastructure became the new Thames around London.

The enormous growth in population led to the expansion of the city of London during the eighteenth and nineteenth century with appalling living conditions for the working class as a result. Further infrastructural networks as a result of the nineteenth and twentieth century had again impact on the existing city and the towns around London. These infrastructural networks created opportunities for the working class since their incomes were rising, cost of living was falling and hours of work were shortening. Retreat to suburban areas on a massive scale was inevitable and so they started a life outside of the city in the much greener, healthier area.<sup>3</sup> With this, the garden city movement was born.

Although London only realised a couple of garden cities as Ebenezer Howard propounded, suburban areas were constituted all around London based on this new concept. There is a continuous line from the village-based urbanization of London, via the garden city idea to the still heroically defended Green Belts which can be found around London up until today.

The concept of a green buffer zone has been used in many ways since the sixteenth century. Local government agencies in the city purchased land in the 1930s to stop further urban growth and to maintain the "character of historic communities" surrounding London. Only after the Town and Country Planning Act was passed in 1947, local governments were able to designate and safeguard regions like the Green Belt through local development without first having to buy the land.<sup>4</sup>

1. Steen Eiler Rasmussen, "London: The Scattered City," in *London: The Unique City* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), p. 36.

2. Hans van der Heijden, "Catch and Steer," *Catch and Steer*, August 27, 2014, pp. 2-4, [https://hvdha.com/22/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Verslag\\_Catch\\_and\\_Steer.pdf](https://hvdha.com/22/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Verslag_Catch_and_Steer.pdf).

3. Francis Henry Wollaston Sheppard, "Metropolitan and Imperial London 1830-1914," in *London: A History* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2006), pp. 273-274.

4. Hans van der Heijden, "Catch and Steer," *Catch and Steer*, August 27, 2014, pp. 2-4, [https://hvdha.com/22/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Verslag\\_Catch\\_and\\_Steer.pdf](https://hvdha.com/22/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Verslag_Catch_and_Steer.pdf).

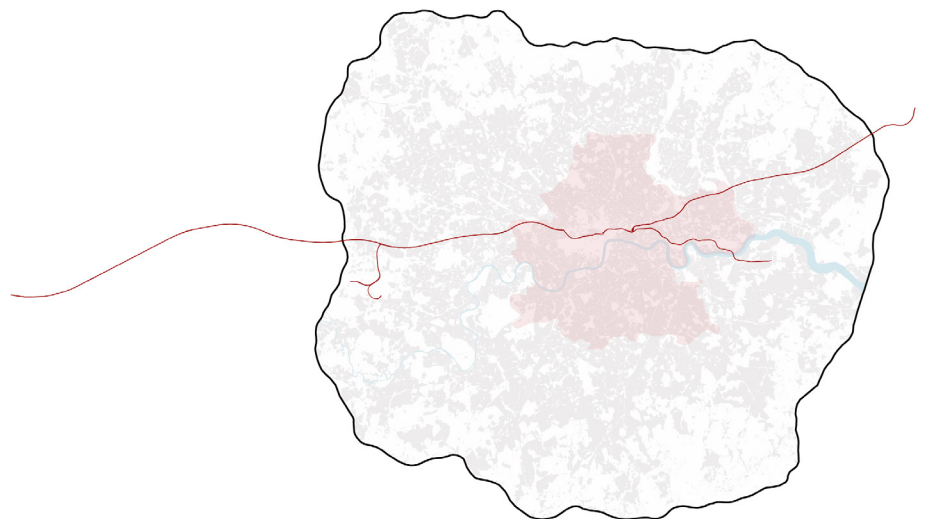
With the help of these concepts, communities that were formerly spatially apart from London swiftly grew in the direction of London and vice versa due to the continual and accelerated suburbanization of London. As a result of these two developments, all of the separate towns and London eventually merged into one large urban fabric.

In the beginning of the twentieth century, these formerly mentioned industries started to move out in and around London simply because these companies either relocated somewhere else or their trade had become obsolete. The towns had grown significantly in size and population, but physical employment was on a decline. After the Second World War, the Modernist movement really took off with a rationalist approach to the city. With the separation of working, living and enjoying free time the middle class started to move outside the centre of London and went to these towns creating a new impulse for them. Shopping malls were built to

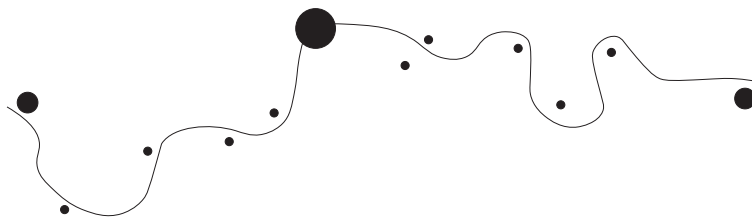
extend their lifestyle to their new environment.

With the new influx of residents of the last decades, towns' demographics are rapidly changing creating more diverse but at the same time gentrified places. Affluent people come to these towns for their improved connection to London and this increase of population expresses itself through the development of generic high rise apartment blocks: a new typology for those towns breaking up the historical structures.

This modernist ideology eventually leads to the blurring of identities of what used to be individual towns which flourished each on their own characteristics. Nowadays an increasing amount of formal towns around London are starting to have similar skylines where generic high-rise buildings are being built next to shopping malls. Together they are replacing the former landmarks of these towns. The sense of place is simply on the losing side.



The Elizabeth Line crossing the Greater London Authority  
image by author



then | activity around the Thames  
image by author

## Statement

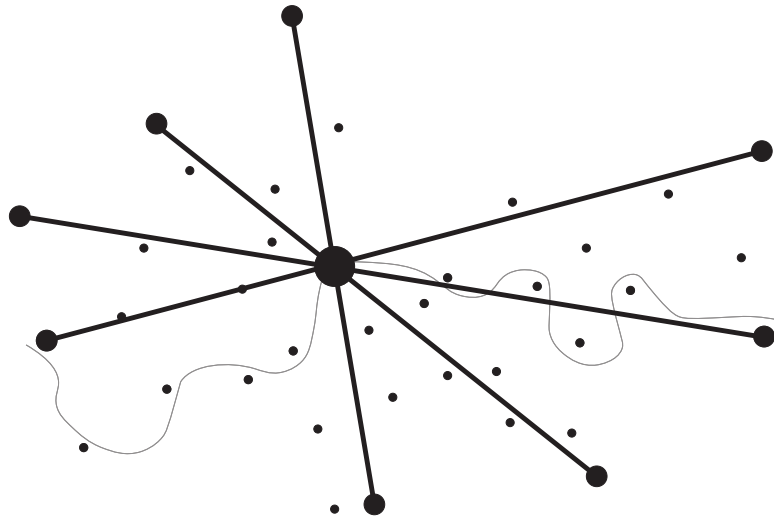
The post-industrial city has become an area of fragmented suburbanisation. The modernist ideology has invaded towns along infrastructural nodes and took away most of their identities resulting in generic areas which have become illegible and where the sense of place is lost.

Although the fragmented landscape comes with issues as described above it also offers an exciting potential. The differences which are created by fragmentation can in fact be the base for new synergies which can again characterize space. The interaction between different people is the base for this thus architecture and urbanism must provide a leading role in this. As society we cannot and should not undo the fragmentation of urban areas but we can turn it into something valuable.

Since the announcement of the Elizabeth Line, station areas in between Reading and Shenfield - especially in Outer London - have seen a massive increase in housing prices. The pitfall of this new connection is that existing towns which already have been victim will continue to lose character and gentrify further while new towns are likely to follow this trend.<sup>5</sup>

*5. Katharine Swindells, "How Crossrail Is Affecting House Prices in London's Suburbs and Commuter Towns," City Monitor, May 19, 2022, <https://citymonitor.ai/housing/crossrail-house-prices-london-commuter-town>.*





now | activity around infrastructure  
image by author

## Research Question

To formulate a design-based answer to this problem, one main question has been formulated to guide the research:

**(0)** How can architecture improve the fragmented urban landscape along the Elizabeth Line in Outer London, countering the loss of legibility by promoting its identity?

A number of sub questions will provide the necessary steps to answer the main question:

**(1)** How can the fragmented landscape along the Elizabeth Line be interpreted?

**(2)** What makes places legible and how can they be read and understood?

**(3)** 3.What is identity of a place and how can the identity of a place be promoted?

## Theoretical framework

The research tries to get a grip of an overly complex process of urbanisation through infrastructure within the heterogeneous city of London. The theory in this research is based on the understanding of the fragmented city through reading the city itself. By promoting towns' identity, the legibility and so the fragmented city can be improved. To provide a framework for this research multiple theories, concepts and approaches will be discussed.

### Fragmented cities

The post-industrial city has dramatically evolved through the last two centuries. Since 56% of all people live in cities it is no wonder there are numerous essays on this topic.<sup>6</sup> The post-industrial cities and fragmented urban landscapes can be understood according to multiple authors.

Rem Koolhaas states that infrastructure caused suburbanisation to stretch and distort the traditional city to an extent where the boundaries of it are nowadays mostly unrecognizable. The concept of the city through images, rules and fabrication has been lost.<sup>7</sup> Richard Skeates adds to this that now we are left with the continuous 'urban', which is not a city nor a country anymore.<sup>8</sup>

Henri Lefebvre talks more specific about the effect of urbanisation on rural societies as he claims that urbanisation is a process of dissolving rural societies and taking away the elements that created this specific life: trades, handcrafts and local centres. Lefebvre borrows a strong metaphor to explain the double process of urbanisation: implosion – explosion. Implosion refers to the extreme concentration of people, goods, activities etc and explosion points out

the projection of numerous individual fragments of suburbs, satellite towns etc.<sup>9</sup>

The complex urban fabric of many cityscapes – within them all its concentration and decentralisation, poverty and wealth and growth and decline are directly juxtaposed – has been described by Deyan Sudjic as an 'urban soup'.<sup>10</sup> Rem Koolhaas used a powerful metaphor to describe the traditional city vs the polycentric urban region: "We were making sand castles, now we swim in the sea that swept them away".<sup>11</sup>

Oswald Mathias Ungers and Rem Koolhaas acknowledge through their theory on Berlin that many of its historic centres drift in a much larger metropolitan area. They further state that the historic facades of the cities simply hide the reality of the un-city.<sup>12</sup>

### Legibility

Legibility talks about in what extend a city can be 'read' and understood.

For Kevin Lynch this means "the ease with which its parts can be recognized and can be organized into a coherent pattern". While people move through a city, they automatically take part in way-finding. "In the process of way-finding, the strategic link is the environmental image, the generalized mental picture of the exterior physical world that is held by an individual. This image is the product both of immediate sensation and of the memory of past experience, and it is used to interpret information and to guide action".<sup>13</sup> Lynch believes these mental maps consist of five components: edges, districts, nodes, landmarks and routes. These five elements work together to determine the city's mobility in a specific

6. World Bank, "Urban Development," World Bank, October 6, 2022, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/urbandevelopment/overview>.

7. Rem Koolhaas, "What Ever Happened to Urbanism?," in *S, M, L, XL: Office for Metropolitan Architecture* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1997), p. 963.

8. Richard Skeates, "The Challenge to Classical Notions of the City in Urban Geography and Urbanism," in *Splintering Urbanism: Networked Infrastructures, Technological Mobilities and the Urban Condition* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 2001), p. 116.

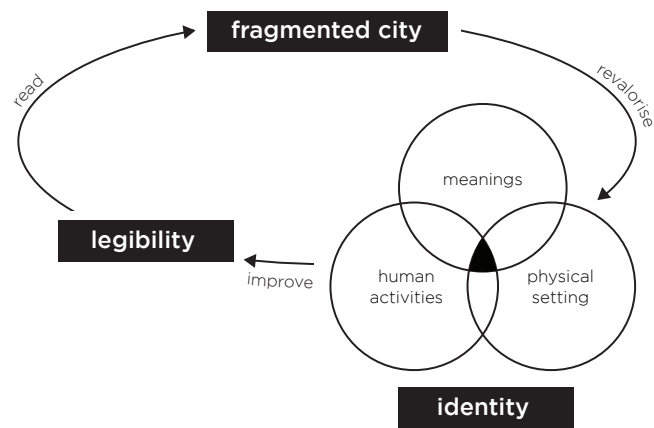
9. Christian Schmid, "Networks, Borders, Differences: Towards a Theory of the Urban," in *Implisions - Explosions: Towards a Study of Planetary Urbanization* (Berlin: Jovis Verlag GmbH, 2014), p. 69.

10. Stephen Graham and Simon Marvin, "Urban Peripheries and the Liquefaction of Urban Structure," in *Splintering Urbanism: Networked Infrastructures, Technological Mobilities and the Urban Condition* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 2001), p. 115.

11. Rem Koolhaas, "What Ever Happened to Urbanism?," in *S, M, L, XL: Office for Metropolitan Architecture* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1997), p. 971.

12. Rem Koolhaas, "Imagining Nothingness," in *S, M, L, XL: Office for Metropolitan Architecture* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1997), pp. 198-203.

13. Kevin Lynch, "The Image of the Environment," in *The Image of the City* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1960), pp. 2-4.



direction. Lynch considers routes to be an important aspect of this mental map since they determine the flow of urban movement.

Oswald Mathias Ungers discusses through his 'archipelago city' a way to make the fragmented city of Berlin readable again. Berlin is seen as a city-archipelago where urban islands will have their own identity with their history, social structure and environmental characteristics. The city as a whole will then be a sequence of these individual towns which moves away from the standardisation and allows individualization to happen. For Ungers it is not building a new environment, but rather rebuilding and improving of what is already there. Via this way the city can strengthen its identities, improve its pluralistic system and respond to the individualization of society.<sup>14</sup>

### Identity of a place

The identity of a place can be primarily understood according to Edward Relph who uses three components: physical setting, human activities and meanings that emerge from the experiences.<sup>15</sup> This theory of Relph can be linked with John Montgomery who states that the identifiable elements of a place are its physical form, activity and meaning.<sup>16</sup>

The physical setting includes buildings, objects and landscapes and can be represented by photographs or drawings. Human activities can be described as regular and occasional behaviour that occurs in this physical setting. This can be observed and

described by observing people within this physical setting. Meanings can be interpreted by its cultural networks, memorability and associations. While meanings may be rooted in setting and activities they are not a property of them, and they have their own distinctive qualities of complexity, imagination and memory.

Relph continues: "These three components are always bound together in our experiences of places, yet they are clearly distinguishable from each other and are irreducible one to another. Setting, activity and meaning are always interrelated in the identity of a place, though one component may dominate the others. It is the distinctiveness of this interrelationship that gives rise to what has been variously called the 'spirit of place,' 'sense of place' or 'genius of place', an attribute that can persist in spite of profound social, cultural and technological changes."<sup>17</sup>

In addition to understanding the identity of a place it is important to look into what distinguishes a place from a space. According to Yi-Fu Tuan, a place is an emotionally constrained space with which an individual or a group has a close emotional bond. Even their personal identities can be derived from it; for instance, they are Limburgers or Boschenaars rather than musicians, Dutchmen, or Catholics. Outside this place starts the immeasurable space. This is something that the person or group is aware of but does not feel at home or have any affectionate feelings toward.<sup>18</sup>

14. Brian McGrath and Oswald Mathias Ungers, "Cities within the City," in *Urban Design Ecologies* (Chichester: Wiley, 2013), pp. 36-47.

15. Edward Relph, in *Place and Placelessness* (London: Pion, 1976), p. 45.

16. John Montgomery, "Making a City: Urbanity, Vitality and Urban Design," in *Journal of Urban Design*, Issue 1, vol. 3, 1998, pp. 93-116.

17. Edward Relph, "A Summary Version of Place and Placelessness," *Academia.edu*, April 28, 2018, [https://www.academia.edu/36528536/A\\_Summary\\_Version\\_of\\_Place\\_and\\_Placelessness](https://www.academia.edu/36528536/A_Summary_Version_of_Place_and_Placelessness).

18. Yi-Fu Tuan, "Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience," in *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota press, 1977), pp. 4-6.

## Methodology

In order to execute this research it is important to explain the different methods which I will be implementing. Different methods consist of demographical, sociological, historical, cartographical and morphological research.

Firstly, it is essential to understand the fragmented landscape which will be investigated. I have chosen to narrow my research down to the recently opened Elizabeth Line since it is highly relevant to my research and makes the complexity of London more tangible. To get an understanding of the fragmented landscape along the Elizabeth Line, a series of sections across the Elizabeth Line stations will be made to demonstrate the ground use and building density near stations.

From this point on, the focus will be on Outer London boroughs as specified by the Office of National Statistics since the research is on (commuter) towns around London. Interesting regions to intervene will be found along the Elizabeth Line through demographical research. The movement of people is most important and quantitative maps will be produced which provide an insight into where people move to along the Elizabeth Line. For this particular part, population change will be the main factor of interest to narrow down the research to specific regions.

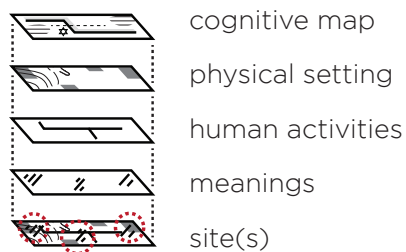
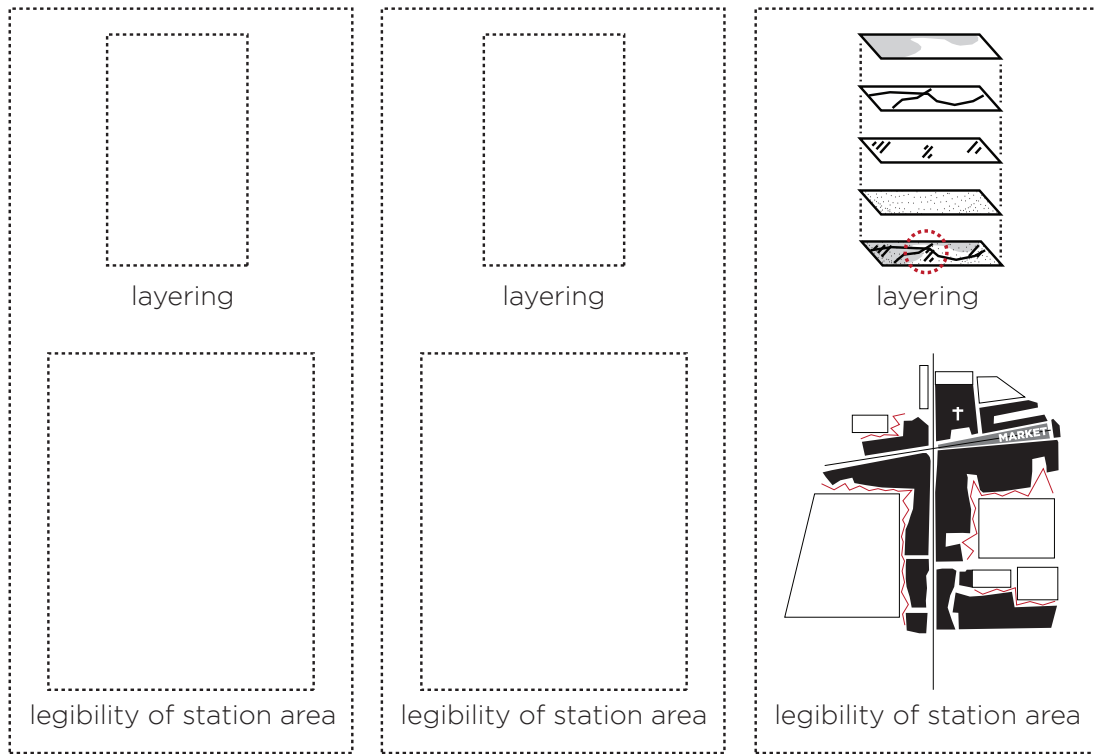
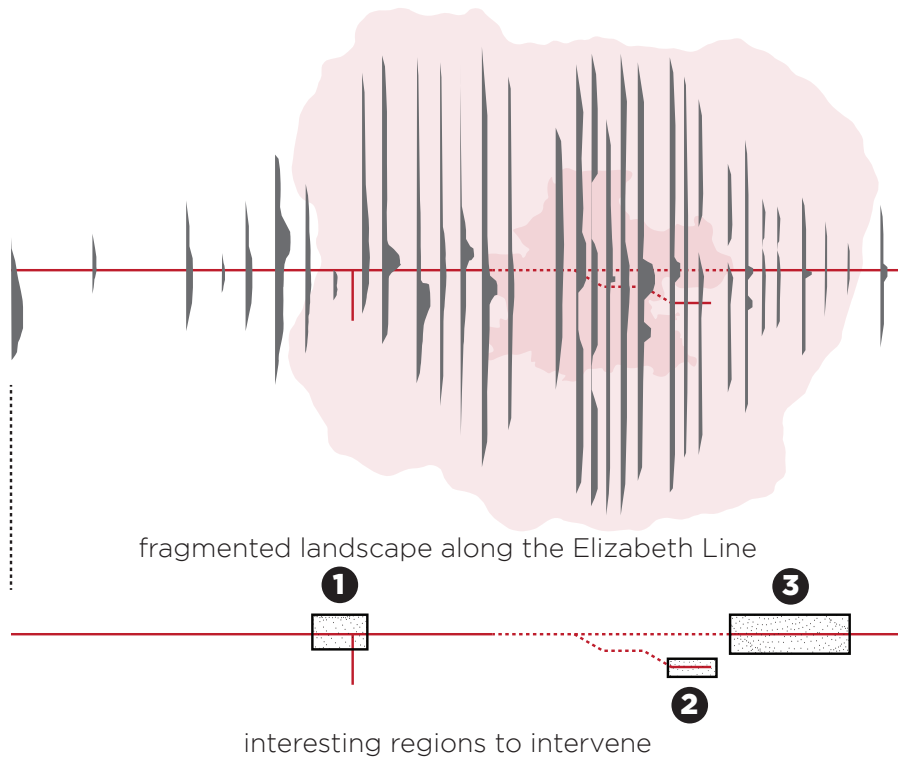
After determining possible regions to intervene, multiple layers of deprivation will be reviewed to address the different problems these regions cope with. These layers of deprivation will be created through quantitative research and by layering of these maps, specific smaller areas around stations within the found regions in the previous step become visible where deprivation is the most present.

Fourthly, maps of these deprived areas

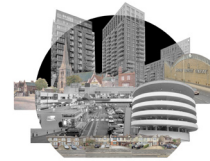
around stations will be made. Since not every deprived area around a station deals with the same problems, it is important to map these areas and get a general understanding of the legibility of the specific station areas. By doing so both positive and negative elements of the area around the station will be highlighted. Next to that, this automatically shows possible areas where those two might clash. Positive elements could be a mediaeval market square or industrial dock buildings transformed into housing. Negative elements could consist of shopping malls next to the high street or generic residential high-rise next to Victorian houses. Although these negative elements are different in function and shape, they all deteriorate the identity of an area.

Finally one particular area around a station will be chosen. A thorough analysis of the chosen station area will be done. This analysis will again study the legibility and identity of the station area. The assessment of legibility will be executed through the mapping technique of Kevin Lynch and complements the earlier legibility study in the previous step. The identity of the place will be assessed through the analysis of its physical setting, human activities and meanings. The physical setting will be analysed through photographs and historical maps. Human activities will be mapped by observing pedestrian flows. Here it is important to get an understanding of people's daily patterns of movement and activities to find out how they use and own the place. Lastly meanings will be mapped by looking into the cultural infrastructure of the area and talking to inhabitants finding out what makes this place unique for them.

Through overlaying elements of the analysis, one or multiple sites can be chosen for my architectural intervention.



fascination



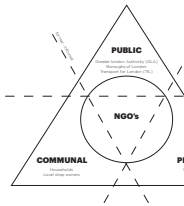
where?

Somewhere along the Elizabeth Line in Outer London

why?

The post-industrial city has become an area of fragmented suburbanisation

who?



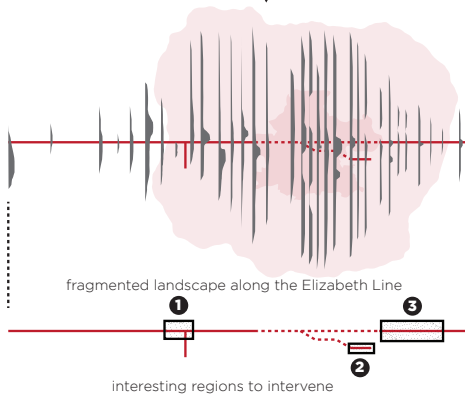
what?

A post-modernist take on the exponential growth of the city of London

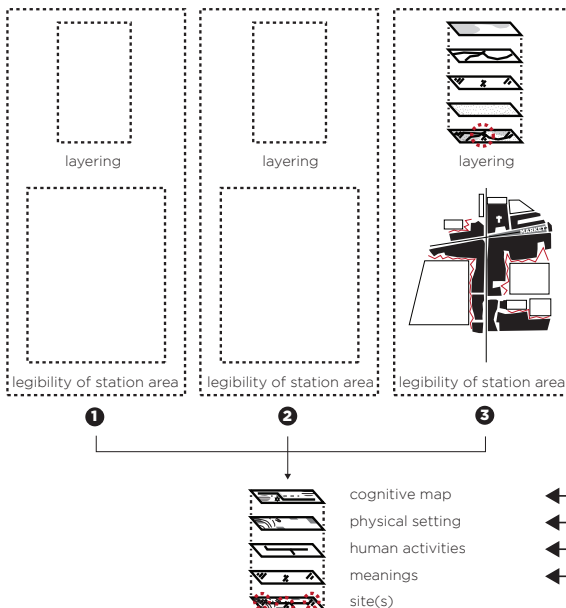
research question

How can architecture contribute to the fragmented urban landscape along the Elizabeth Line in Outer London, countering the loss of legibility by promoting its identity?

implementing



- tools
- Google Maps
  - Cadmapper
  - Openstreetmap
- London Datastore  
Office for National Statistics (ONS)
- Ministry of Housing,  
Communities & Local  
Government
- Google Maps  
historical maps
- Lynch's technique
- photography
  - interviews
  - observations
  - historical maps

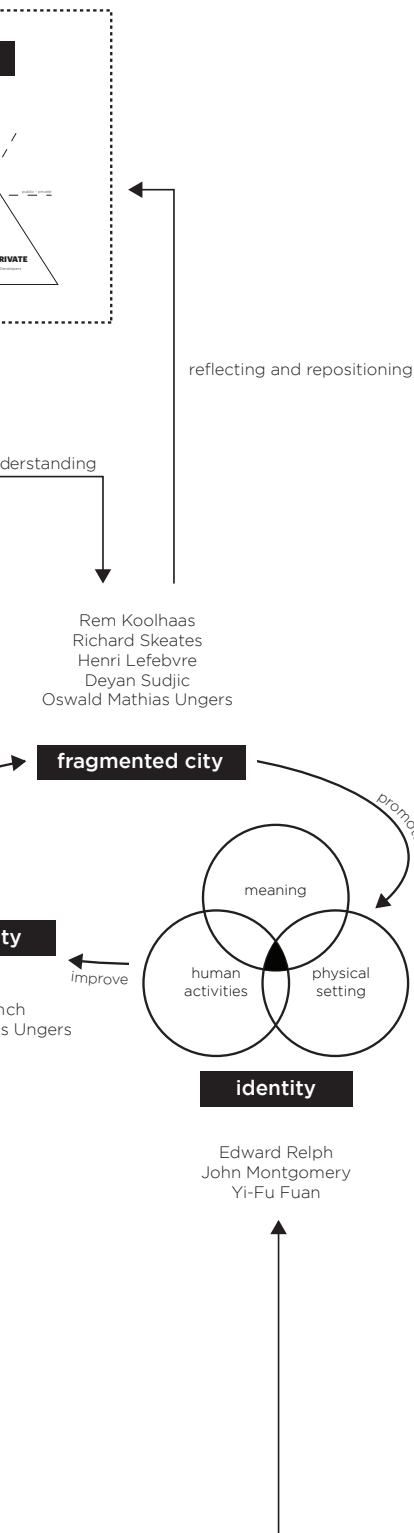


Kevin Lynn  
Oswald Mathias

## Argument of Relevance

Numerous cities such as London have been victim of uncontrolled growth which has led to fragmented cityscapes. Modernization and compulsive growth have led to illegible places where the sense of place is being lost. More cities are starting to have similar skylines where generic high-rise buildings are being built next to shopping malls replacing the former landmarks what once made them distinguishable. The image of cityscapes is blurring. I believe this is impacting cities in a negative way. Although we cannot reverse the fragmentation of cities, we can avoid making the same mistakes as the last hundred years and in fact see the situation as an opportunity. Architects and urban planners are - ironically - more relevant than ever. It is not too late to prevent the further loss of places.

This process of urbanisation has been a topic of discussion for several decades now, but for now there are relatively few hands-on approaches - such as Ungers' Archipelago City or Neutelings' Patchwork Metropolis - to deal with this growing problem. This research seeks a strategy on how to deal with the loss of legibility of towns around infrastructural nodes within the fragmented urban landscape of London. The outcomes of this investigation provide a different approach on how to read these towns and act within them to make them flourish again by promoting their own individualities.



research diagram

total word count: 2914

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**Carlo Pisano. The Patchwork Metropolis: Between Patches, Fragments and Situations. In The Horizontal Metropolis between Urbanism and Urbanization (2018) p.93-100**

Many people see a city as it is shown on a map: a red dot in the middle of a green landscape. But between all those red dots, more and more gray areas appear, of which you wonder what exactly is there. Architect Willem Jan Neutelings thinks it is time to let go of the existing view of cities and residual space. Neutelings studies the southern edge of The Hague and tries to transform the 'grey' areas into clear places. The areas along the A4 must change from a non-place to a place. He turned it into a carpet, a patchwork blanket in which each area has its own specific character.

**Christian Schmid. Networks, Borders, Differences: Towards a Theory of the Urban. In Implosions / Explosions. Towards a Study of Planetary Urbanization (2013) p. 67-80**

Christian Schmid starts with the change of urbanization in recent years. Whereas urbanization was concentric for the last century, it now is unpredictable, dissolving existing forms and focussed on polycentric structures. In this text Schmid looks through the lens of Henri Lefebvre and develops new theories based on networks, borders and differences. Lefebvre argues that we can no longer talk about the city and the country since the whole world is going through the process of urbanization. He also claims that urbanization is associated with industrialization and those two phenomena fuel each other. Urbanization is breaking up rural areas and taking away the elements such as trades, handcrafts and small local centres. These traditional towns or villages are losing their character. Schmid continues and writes about three concepts - networks, borders and differences - to help with their investigation into Switzerland. Firstly every urban area is defined by a distinct set of networks, but since these may alter it is possible to find new urban compositions. Secondly urban spaces can no longer be geographically defined but borders still hold the potential to link separate areas. Lastly differences can usually lead to segregation, ghettoization etc. when they are made unproductive whereas a developed urban form can transform the juxtaposition into reactive opportunities.

**Edward Relph. "The paradox of place and the evolution of placelessness". (2014) at UNSW**

In this lecture, Edward Relph speaks about the paradox of place and placelessness and that they in fact are intertwined. In non-places, there is always some place. A unique place is an impossibility. If it was truly unique, we could not make sense of it. If everything was placeless, place would be irrelevant. Place is about distinctiveness and placelessness is about sameness. Place is not always good. For instance too much place creates outsiders. Also, placelessness is not always negative since heaven is placeless.

**Edward Relph. Place and Placelessness (2008) Chapter 4: Identity of a Place**

According to Edward Relph the identity of a place can be observed and consists of physical setting, human activities and meanings. Those may be combined in an endless number of ways and have a limitless range of content. As a result, there is no visible limit to the variety of place identities. We do however believe that there are several sorts of place identities that can be discerned and that they correlate to different degrees of insiderness and outsiderness. None of these numerous identity kinds are mutually exclusive, distinct or constant. For instance, we perceive our hometown as insiders filled with memories and meanings but we may equally see it from the perspective of an outsider who is a professional planner or geographer.

In other words, how we experience the identity of place depends on our intentions and these can be superimposed on one another.

Hans van der Heijden gives a brief introduction to London from an architectural point of view. He firstly quotes Steen Eiler Rasmussen who claims that London is not a city but a collection of towns. This is on the one hand due to the lack of administrative concentrations of power which – in other European cities – created monumental urban spaces. On the other hand London is also not a product of civil consensus society. In other words London simply never experienced what Paris experienced with Haussmann and also never experienced complete self-regulation like Amsterdam's city centre during the Golden Age. This all created a very unique framework for London. Hans van der Heijden furthermore talks about the government's lacking central organ to guide urban planning. National or regional planning remains very basic and decisions are being made on a micro-level, concerning the different local authorities.

**Hans van der Heijden. Catch and Steer (2014) p. 1-4**

What can a city planner do to enhance the city's visual appeal and ability to stick in a person's mind? In order to address these issues, Kevin Lynch develops a new criteria called imageability and demonstrates its potential worth as a blueprint for the construction and reconstruction of cities. His work is backed by studies of Los Angeles, Boston, and Jersey City and although quite dated it certainly still has lots of relevant points and techniques.

**Kevin Lynch. The Image of the City (1960) p. 1-13, 160-181**

In this text Gandy discusses the rapid acceleration of urban growth which blurs the boundaries of the arbitrary distinctions between the city and the 'non city'. Gandy refers to Lefebvre who already spoke in 1970 of society being completely urbanised back then. For him, cities are now just a specific form of urbanisation where the boundaries between cities and rural areas are less and less visible. Furthermore Gandy argues that although the city of London has set clear metropolitan boundaries in 1965, they only show a small part of the real cultural and geographical entity it is. Lastly Gandy states that London's greenbelt is now being seen as new 'zones of intensification' whereas this area used to prevent sprawl and total urbanisation.

**Matthew Gandy. Where does the City End? In Implosions / Explosions. Towards a Study of Planetary Urbanization (2013) p. 86-89**

Oswald Mathias Ungers introduces the 'archipelago city' during a 1977 studio based on the fragmented landscape of Berlin. The specific text consists of eleven theses, but for me number four, five and 10 are most interesting. Thesis 4 talks about the diversity of the metropolis stating that it can be recognized by 'an overlapping of many opposite and divergent conceptions'. That makes them different from rural areas, towns etc. The suggestion that follows is to highlight areas which should be preserved because of their outstanding characteristics and to discard areas which work badly and are superfluous. Thesis 5 introduced the concept of the city in the city. Berlin is seen as a city-archipelago where urban islands will have their own identity with their history, social structure and environmental characteristics. The city as a whole will then be a sequence

**Oswald Mathias Ungers. Cities within the City (1978)**

of these individual towns which moves away from the standardisation and allows individualization to happen. Thesis 10 sums up reasons why creating an archipelago in the city is the answer to the modern cities. For Ungers it is not building a new environment, but rather rebuilding and improving of what is already there. Via this way the city can strengthen its identities, improve its pluralistic system and respond to the individualization of society.

**Ricky Burdett and Philipp Rode. Living in the Urban Age. In: Living in the Endless City (2011)**

In the introduction of the book *Living in the Endless City* (2011), Ricky Burdett and Philipp Rode compare the current globalisation to the aftermath of the Industrial Revolution where the same tendency happened, but at a considerably slower pace than nowadays. They furthermore describe what happened after the Industrial Revolution; how communities in traditional city were ripped apart for the 'new, urban ideology' to house the poor; how the fine grain of city streets were replaced by larger scale blocks and wide streets and how the rapid urbanisation separated functions within cities fuelling the urban sprawl without overseeing the possible consequences on climate and social level. They however also demonstrate how the cities of Barcelona, Paris, Chicago and Amsterdam faced similar challenges more than a century ago and their spatial answers have proven to be resilient to this day. The next generation of urban planners and architects has the opportunity to build on the DNA of their cities, rather than injecting generic models which result in homogeneous cities.

**Rem Koolhaas. What Ever Happened to Urbanism? (1995)**

This essay reflects Rem Koolhaas' critical view on modern urbanism of the last century. He states that Modernism has failed to achieve what she promised through abstraction and repetition. The city is no longer. Following Koolhaas the city is stretched and distorted beyond recognition resulting in disconnection. From the sixties on we have been trying to 'preserve' the existing city and at the same time ignored urbanism building satellite towns, high-ways, high-rise buildings, infrastructures and all the other fallout from modernization. For Koolhaas there is no urbanism anymore, only architecture.

'We were making sand castles. Now we swim in the sea that swept them away.'

He ends his essay talking about the 'new urbanism' where one should embrace the ever changing cities and should be flexible. It will always be 'under development'.

**Rem Koolhaas. The Generic City (1995)**

Rem Koolhaas starts his essay talking about what effect the convergence of urban tissue has on the identity of cities. He firstly states that identity is derived from a physical substance, from the historical, from context etc. Then he links that exponential growth of the human race to these identities claiming that sooner or later this identity becomes too small to share amongst all. Next to that, the enormous amounts of tourists that want to visit these places furthermore contributes to the loss of character. The stronger identity, the more it resists growth. As the most important place, it has to be both the most old and new, resulting in an everlasting

conflict. Then he introduces the 'Generic City', a place that is set free from identity since it has none. There was no before and only after. The only identity this place will have is its geographical place or main affluence. If it will be near a mountain, the hill will be shown on postcards. If it has a big port, the port will be shown in relation to the city.

Splintering Urbanism demonstrates the latest theories on social, urban and infrastructural level giving great insight into the contemporary cities of today. On this specific piece the authors write about the liquefaction of urban structure. In contradiction to the hierarchical structures of a city we have been building a cityscape which Deyan Sudjic has called a 'single urban soup'. This refers to the polycentric highly intensified urban structures where generic landscapes have been formed where high-rise buildings, shopping malls, highways and small houses are all built next to each other. A rhythm within the city is lost and we are left with individually, car-oriented buildings. Then the authors refer to Richard Skeates who argued that we cannot longer use the term city because in his opinion a city is still an entity which is recognizable as a limited and bounded structure, although bloated. Nowadays we are dealing with the urban which is not a city neither a country. It is the urban monster that is taking over and is taking everything away that once could distinguish the two mentioned.

**Stephan Graham, Simon Marvin. Splintering Urbanism (2002) p. 115-116**

This study takes the vein of social life - the High Street - and explores its social value from the Londoner point of view. It offers ten key findings based on mixed research methods and ten recommendations to help the High Street stakeholders. This is particularly interesting to me since I look into characteristics of towns and the High Street is its main asset. Key findings of this study are that High Streets: (1) are still growing, (2) offer local and accessible opportunities, (3) are social, promoting community and cultural exchange, (4) are important gathering spaces for underrepresented groups, (5) provide crucial social infrastructure and services, (6) mostly don't fall within a town centre boundary and are potentially vulnerable to developments, (7) provide a range of work spaces which can meet the needs of both newly formed and long-standing businesses, (8) businesses' are struggling to operate and participate in collective efforts, (9) are local, walkable destinations and important point of connectivity, (10) immediately perceive processes of urban change within their local borough or London as a whole.

**We Made That. High Streets for All (2018)**

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