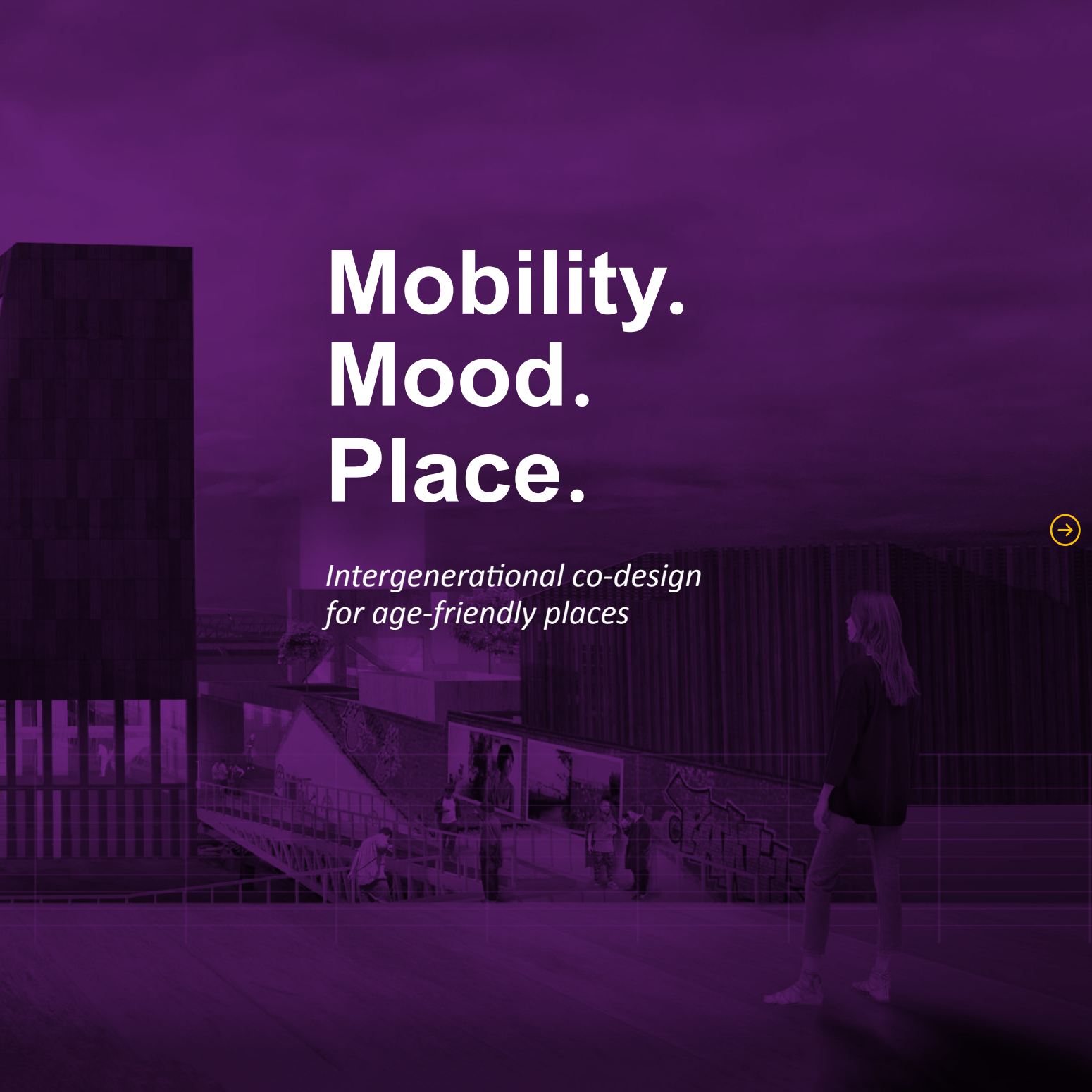
Mobility.
Mood.
Place.
Intergenerational co-design
for age-friendly places

Cover image: 'Artists' Hub and Creative Community' in Hackney Wick, London by Antanas Navidauskas

Design by Kirstie Paton/Go Bang Creative

Mobility. Mood. Place.

Intergenerational co-design for age-friendly places

www.mobilitymoodplace.ac.uk

All too often, the people who use environments day-to-day are left out of the design process. For older people, this can feel particularly alienating.

The Mobility, Mood and Place (MMP) project has brought together early career designers and older participants to envision places, from homes to public spaces, which are inclusive, enabling and inspirational.

In this short guide, we're sharing what we've found from four years of co-design activities, which form part of the wider MMP project funded by the UK Research Councils' 'Lifelong Health and Wellbeing' programme.

If you are interested in learning more about the history, processes and potential of participatory design, you may find our *A-Z of Co-Design* helpful; it can be downloaded from our website.

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MOBILITY MOOD PLACE

Research Councils UK Lifelong Health & Wellbeing Research for Healthy Ageing

Foreword

Research suggests loneliness and isolation lead to the failure of many small businesses. At a certain stage, failure isn't about the business of the business. It's the lack of company.
In our everyday spaces and places, older people face the same problem. This is a quiet and persistent challenge. It creeps up when partners pass away, friends move and family are too distant to call. Old age isn't Alzheimer's. It is a change in a way of being.

The experience of older people, our parents, relations, friends and clients is exacerbated by some basic design problems; how spaces are designed to make it hard to move about or cross the road, how places change, how streets are designed as separated buildings for separated lives. Mobility, Mood and Place tackles these challenges head on.

Architecture and Design Scotland (A&DS), as the national body for good design in Scotland, is delighted to support this excellent work for three reasons. First, it firmly positions older people at the heart of the design process: pragmatic user-centric design. Second, it is evidence based. It links practice and theory to provide the narrative to influence decisions in the design and construction process. Third, it provides practical methods and tools to do the doing.

Design for ageing isn't a sectoral activity. Places change. Smarter places are about smarter choices for all generations, enabled by smarter design. Mobility, Mood and Place provides us with a routemap on the how.

Diarmaid Lawlor, Director of Place, A&DS

Architecture & Design Scotland
Ailtearachd is Dealbhadh na h-Alba

Co-designing in Orkney

Challenging assumptions about ageing and place

Going outdoors is essential for maintaining health and wellbeing into later life, but many older people find it becomes less easy, enjoyable and meaningful as they age.

To help ensure that living longer is a positive experience for everyone, we need evidence-based solutions to support lifelong health and wellbeing.

The Mobility, Mood and Place (MMP) research project has been exploring how places can be designed collaboratively to improve older people's experience of pedestrian mobility.

Our findings have implications for the way we design for people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities so that going outdoors in younger years becomes a lifelong passion for getting out and about.

MMP has involved a large team of researchers from the Universities of Edinburgh, Heriot-Watt, York, Virginia and King's College London, and a combination of methods, from measuring brainwaves outdoors, to looking at archival data on how environments have changed over time.

This guide looks at the co-design element of the project in which we've brought together researchers, early career designers and older participants to envision places which are inclusive, enabling and inspirational.

Led by a team whose expertise spans teaching, research and practice in the fields of architecture and landscape architecture, 84 students have participated in the project, largely from postgraduate programmes at Edinburgh College of Art.

Over four years of studio work, we have focused on three urban environments - Castlefield in Manchester, Hackney Wick & the Olympic Park in London, and various sites across Copenhagen - and one rural location, the northern Scottish islands of Orkney.

The six stages of our co-design process:

01 Older people and the city
At the outset of each studio, we have undertaken group research into universal themes related to older people and the city.

02 Anatomy of place fieldwork
The students have then visited real places to contextualise this knowledge and apply it to specific contexts. Working with local older people, they've used a variety of research methods and co-design tools - from walking interviews to intervention exercises using basic materials and scale models - to generate research drawings within thematic frameworks.

03 Five scales of intervention
Back in the studio, the designers have generated ideas for age-friendly architectural interventions which respond in a positive way to the issues framed by their fieldwork. They've worked these up into individual or group manifestos to be investigated at five scales, from the city or island (largest) to the body (smallest).

04 Urban intervention
Work has then started at the largest two scales: the city or island; and the neighbourhood or community.

05 Design for intergenerational living
Work has continued at the neighbourhood (community), building and space scales, before a facilitated design review with older participants.

06 Age-friendly affordance in detail design
Work finishes at the smallest scale, addressing how the detail of buildings can address age-friendly concerns such as access to natural light and good views.

In this guide, we have summarised the 13 key things we have uncovered through the co-design process about older people's needs and preferences for age-friendly environments. Many are surprising; challenging widespread assumptions about ageing and place.

We hope that, by sharing them with you, we can encourage you to think about your own practice through an age-friendly lens, and about the benefits of meaningful collaboration with end users.

We would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the project, not least the 72 older people across the UK who have given so generously of their time to design with us, and the 19 people who shared their experiences with us in walking interviews.

01 *Well-lit spaces*

Many older people cite a good quality of light as an important generator of delight both in public spaces and within buildings, including the home. Well-lit spaces also help with wayfinding and orientation. Ideally, users should be given some control over the quality and amount of light within spaces.

'Art City' project, Hackney Wick, London by Zhanling Huang
Artists' studios and workshops combine with a new station project for 'The Wick' including an intergenerational, green courtyard. Cubed collaborative studios are well-glazed, with coloured glass panels to create warm qualities of light.

> "Sunshine […] the sun comes up and it goes right round my whole house. Love it, it makes such a difference […] sunshine makes you feel good"
>
> *— June, MMP research participant*

> "Light's the main thing"
>
> *— George, MMP research participant*

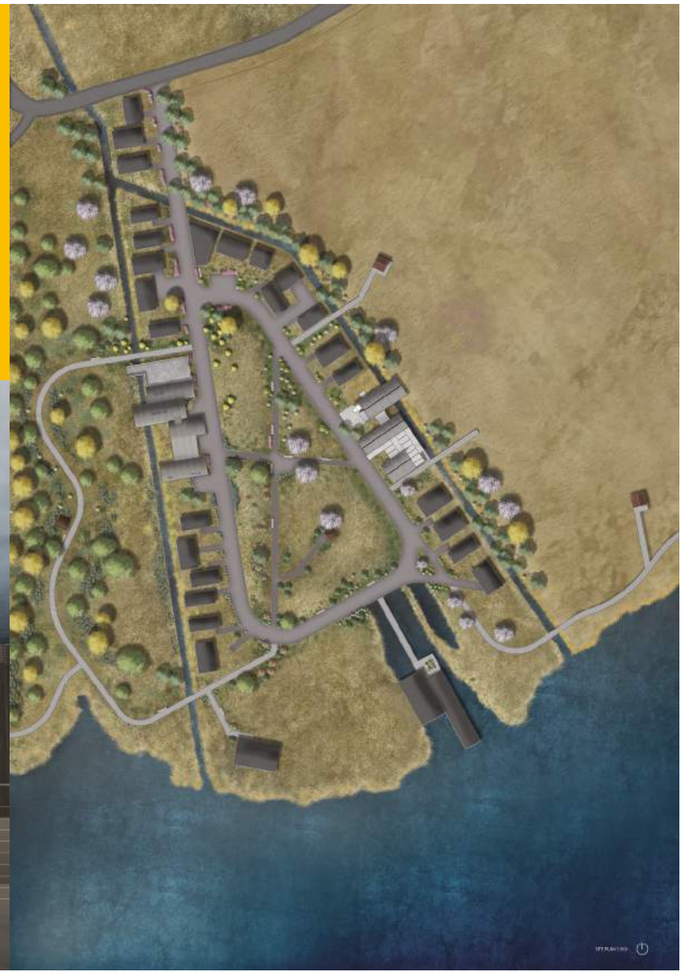
'Roofscape Route' project, Hackney Wick, London by Ekaterina Shirkina
Well-lit spaces between buildings feel safer to older people and allow for a greater chance of incidental social interaction.

02 *Legible Environments*

Clear and well-designed urban spaces are important in cities, with key buildings helping people to find their way around. This is important for everyone, but especially for older people who may rely more on landmarks for wayfinding. In rural environments, the structure of built forms in the landscape should be comprehensible, with buildings clearly communicating their function.

> “Generally you can find a landmark, like the canal. And then certain buildings. There’s always these sorts of places that register. And you see a plaque to say this is the original site of such and such, and that tells you something. And you think right okay, I know where I am now.”
>
> *— Owen, MMP research participant*

‘Artists’ Hub and Creative Community’ in Hackney Wick, London by Antanas Navidauskas
Elevated walkways and landmark buildings which engage with graffiti street art act as wayfinding devices through a post-industrial landscape. Older people from Hackney Wick and surrounding areas identified graffiti and street art as being a valuable contributor to the area’s sense of place.



‘Crafting a Dementia Friendly Community’ at the Bay of Skaill in Orkney, by Alice Mears, Jamie Wilson and Greg Bryce
Carefully placed in the existing landscape to create clear visual links to surrounding landmarks and utilise existing water-courses in the production of wool products and Orkney chairs. The community has a clear and recognisable form with a strong sense of inside and outside. The natural landscape takes precedence, with raised walkways and resting bothies in and around the community.

03 Access to Services

Designers and planners need to consider neighbourhoods holistically so that, in urban areas, there is reasonable proximity between core services. Routes to key buildings should be considered - not only in relation to mobility, journey time and distance - but also in relation to the quality of the environment along the way.

'Creating a People Friendly Civic Heart to Hackney Wick' by Zixian Wang
The creation of a people-friendly urban hub and community around the regenerated station in Hackney Wick, with the embedded provision of socio-cultural amenities within a densified area. Delightful pedestrian routes take precedence over the motor car.

'Rooting Traces and Spatial Transformation in the Fragmented Garden City'
by Roseanne Knight, Jonathon Phillips and Stephanie Sharpe
Hypothesis Drawing. An abandoned viaduct in the Castlefield district of Manchester is transformed into an elevated linear park with housing, theatre and new station project 'plugging in'. The careful consideration of the canal-side landscape provides social and experiential opportunities.

04 *Access to Nature*

Green space has been proven to have restorative benefits for people who live in urban environments. Access to city waterways can also have a beneficial effect, especially if they are clean and well-maintained.

Older, abandoned infrastructure in the city - such as viaducts, canals and disused railway lines - can be regenerated into linear natural environments which provide respite from the pressures of city living.

In more rural environments, pathways need to be well-designed, with good surfaces to allow greater access to the natural environment.

> "I used to do my mother's garden and, if I was ever worried or down about something, I would go out and within half an hour of working in the garden that had lifted. Just the fact that you're out and the birds are sitting beside you and just taking it all in, it's lovely. That's my best place really; take my bed to the garden!"
>
> *— Gloria, MMP research participant*

> There's ladies in the block of flats here, and they do this wonderful gardening, and I always stop and admire their gardens and take pictures of their gardens, and we chat and they have animals, and we talk about their animals.
>
> *— Grace, MMP research participant*

'Rooting Traces and Spatial Transformation in the Fragmented Garden City'
by Roseanne Knight, Jonathon Phillips and Stephanie Sharpe
Sheltered social spaces underneath age-friendly housing allow for older people to engage more passively in activities happening on the 'green-line' viaduct.

05 *Social Opportunity*

Public spaces, streets and communal buildings need to offer opportunities for intergenerational social interaction and activities, enabling older people to engage with public activity but also to rest, retreat and regard.

In rural environments, opportunities to rest in the landscape with the potential for increased social interaction is a clear need.

> Everybody speaks to you and it's like — how can I describe it — it's like a wee village. You see people on the street. They all ask about one another and they're not all pensioners you know, they're every age
>
> *— Anne, MMP research participant*

06 *Compacting the City*

Fragmented spaces contribute to older people's disorientation and sometimes to feelings of fear and alienation. We need less fragmented space within cities, and more clearly legible urban and green space.

'Amager Ost Sund By' masterplan proposes a primary axis from the city to the beach, acting as a key wayfinding and navigational tool to which all housing and secondary social nodes connect. Density is increased by overlaying a matrix of residential units maximising connectivity and order whilst strategically placing the required additional social infrastructure to aid legibility and guide people to social nodes, creating a rich network of ordered environments for social opportunity to reduce feelings of social isolation and loneliness.

'The Common House', Copenhagen by Jade Keiderling, Jen Love and Ayla Riome
'The Age of Loneliness, a Silent Epidemic' manifesto addresses the devastating effects of loneliness on mental health, with feelings of loneliness being recently scientifically proven to be a significant cause of dementia. The manifesto aims to create a built environment that maximises social opportunity through compacting urban patterns and creating a clear legible urban fabric.

'An Age-Friendly Community' in Orphir, Orkney Islands by Cynthia Jayne Dunwoody
Well-constructed pathways across often hazardous ground conditions allow for increased mobility in the landscape for older people.

07 *Optimising Mobility*

All of the built environment should be accessible to older people, enabling us to be and feel included in public life into oldest age. Circulation in public buildings should allow older people to rest at key moments when journeying through. In more rural environments, pathways need to be well-designed, with good surfaces.

> My confidence totally went (…) once an old person falls you have no idea what it's like trying to get out
>
> *— Margaret, MMP research participant, who had tripped on an uneven pavement, severely injuring her leg, and who was then unable to leave the house for almost four weeks.*

08 *Mix of Uses*

Intensive mixed use urban environments and buildings can make an important contribution to intergenerational activity. Mixed use urban spaces should include housing for all so that there is activity at all times of the day, increasing opportunities for social interaction.

'The Baltic Connection' by Ben Smith, Maxi Hamilton and Martin Skarbäck

An urban design proposition for the fragmented post-industrial district of Amager Ost (which also forms part of a detailed flood management strategy), welcomes the water into the city of Copenhagen and repurposes the outer streetscapes to create a new urban seashore and wetland park that is the focus of the regenerated district.

Typologically different residential programmes are combined with water and land-based transport systems, land management and educational buildings, retail and socio-cultural activities accessible to people of all ages, including people with dementia. The scheme carefully considers where hubs of activity occur and provides further spaces and opportunities for older people to rest, retreat and regard their active environment.

09 *Safety and Security*

Crime is less likely in areas ‘naturally policed’ through intergenerational public activity. All urban spaces should be well-maintained, well-lit and navigable by all. Waterways need to have safe edges.

‘Hackney Wick Linear Park’ project by Malica Schmidt
An elevated park within a glazed, linear structure connects across the centre of The Wick, from the Olympic Park to Victoria Park. This structure houses a new Hackney Wick station, commercial and retail units with embedded cultural programmes, providing natural policing to the principal civic space in the community.

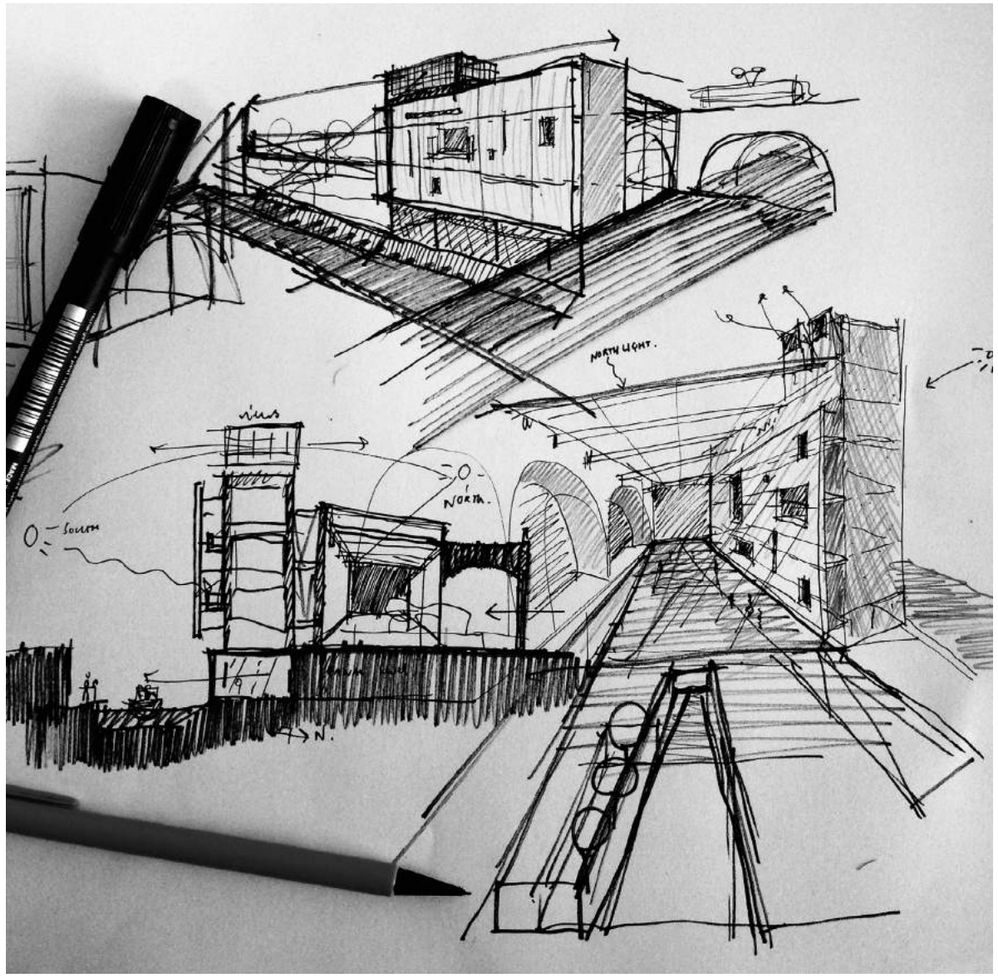
10 *Enhancing Cultural Memories*

Many older people want to see the older artefacts of the city, such as viaducts and other forgotten infrastructure, warehouses and abandoned buildings, invested in and ‘given new life’. In our work, this became an important thematic driver, leading to designs which – in an archaeological way – peeled back the built form to uncover deeper layers of embedded cultural and social history.

> “I often think back at what we used to do here when we were kids. Aye, there’s a lot of happy memories here”
>
> *— Alastair, MMP research participant*

‘People of Manchester Cultural Memory Museum’ by Michael Sim

The cultural legacy of Castlefield in Manchester as an industrial and manufacturing district, and the memories potentially invoked in the spaces in and around the museum, are drivers of both the programme and content of this museum proposition. The ‘dream-spaces’ created within the museum rest somewhere between the object and the viewer. In a similar way, cultural memories related to particular places rest somewhere between the artefacts of the city and the inhabitant.



'Naturalising the post-industrial landscape of Hackney Wick' by Emily Jacob
Accessible public gardens provide respite from the hustle and bustle of urban street life, restoring the senses and providing places of rest. Plants are carefully selected to reflect the changing seasons and uplift the senses through texture, scent and colour.

11 *Design for the Senses*

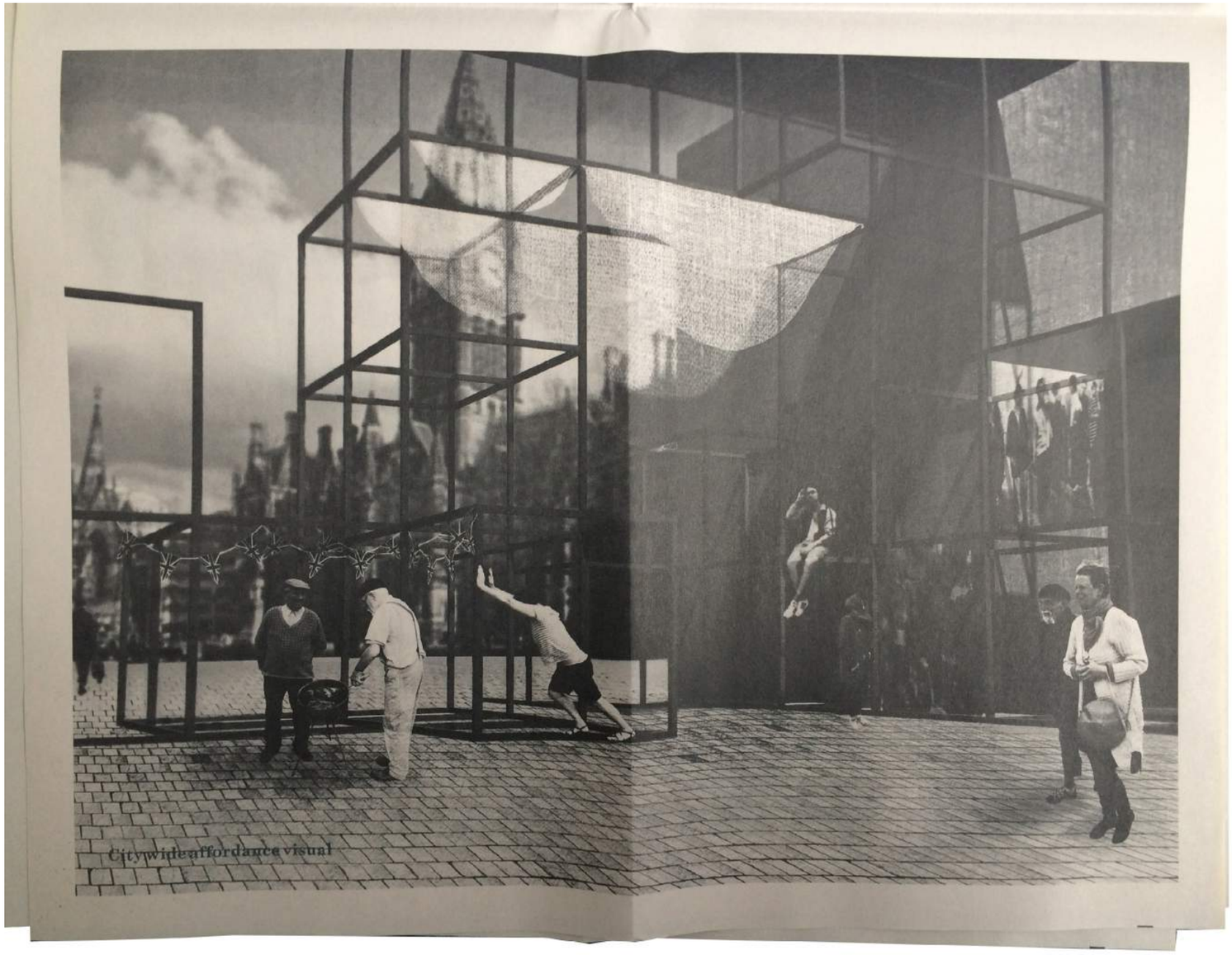
Designing for all of the senses can surprise and delight, potentially increasing older people's feelings of wellbeing, especially people with dementia. Sunlight can help orientate us in place and time, while seasonal planting can help support an understanding of the time of year and enhance our enjoyment of urban spaces. Sensorial variation can lead to feelings of invigoration and a deeper sense of connection to the world.

> "There's a lifting of the spirit when you see that sort of combination of colours, it's almost like a Monet painting as far as I'm concerned"
>
> *— Janet, MMP research participant*

12 *Enhancing Rituals*

We should strive for private and public space which supports intergenerational human rituals as a way of increasing opportunities for social connection. Domestic care environments for people with dementia can be designed to place the process of food production and consumption at the heart of the daily living experience, helping with temporal orientation and a sense of event throughout the day. Access to green space – both within and outwith care home environments – is crucial to older people and people with dementia.

'Active Ageing - an Urban Strategy'
by Sarah Lawson, Elise Rasmussen, Michael Sim and Mark Scott
A series of modular interventions which pop up around the city allow for social engagement, performance and exhibition, selling local produce, exchanging books and providing information related to the city's older inhabitants..



13 *Adaptability & Goal Setting*

In care home and domestic environments designed for people who have survived a stroke, the environment should afford occupants the opportunity to continually increase goals in relation to mobility challenges. Where possible, housing should allow for adaptability to enable people to remain in their homes for longer as their abilities change.

'Existential Qualities of Post-Stroke Recuperation.' Considering the Vast and Varied Post-Stroke Symptoms in the Design of Convalescent Spaces by Marie Mutl

How can a Centre for stroke respite and rehabilitation provide affordance for someone with physical or sensory impairment, whilst providing a working healthcare environment? This design encourages the recovery process by naturally encouraging movement. The building has a central atrium space which encourages walks and goal setting as well as connecting to walking routes within the neighbourhood, in and around the canal-side environment.

"The experience of older people is exacerbated by some basic design problems. Mobility, Mood and Place tackles these challenges head on. Smarter places are about smarter choices for all generations, enabled by smarter design. Mobility, Mood and Place provides us with a routemap on the how".

Diarmaid Lawlor, Director of Place, A&DS

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