

The background features several large, abstract black shapes. On the left, a large 'C' shape is partially visible. To its right is a vertical yellow bar. Further right is a large, stylized 'R' shape. At the bottom left, there is a solid black circle. At the bottom center, there is a thick, horizontal black bar that curves upwards at its right end. At the bottom right, there is a small black crescent shape. The text 'ELEPHANT PATH' is centered in the middle of the composition, with 'ELEPHANT' on the top line and 'PATH' on the bottom line, both in black uppercase letters within yellow rectangular boxes.

ELEPHANT
PATH

LONDON

This is one in a series of 6 brochures about the project Euler. Euler took place from 2015 to 2017 in Antwerp, Barcelona, Berlin and London.

Euler aims to contribute to the development of cities by harnessing the skills, competences and capacities of local people. Through peer-to-peer, cooperative and solidarity actions citizens learn but also teach each other skills that will be crucial in the future of work. Euler looks at the different ways in which this sharing and exchange takes place, and tries to derive methods that will allow others to also benefit from these empowering and emancipating practices.

Euler is a project from Transit Projectes, ndvr and Tesserae and is coordinated by City Mine(d).

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ELEPHANT

PATH

LONDON

City Mine(d)

This brochure is written to mark the end of the transnational exchange programme EULER, a collaboration between organisations from Berlin, Barcelona, Antwerp and London. It is the 4th in a series of 6 brochures, which together recount experiments set up in these cities to explore possible links between community projects and the labour market, as well as their shared context, brochure 1, and conclusions from a conference held in Berlin in September 2017, brochure 6.

Our story breaks down in two parts: first we explain the experimental enterprise Elephant Path, which we are attempting to get off the ground in London at the time of writing at the end of 2017; secondly, there are the reflections that inspired this enterprise, or what we call the urban and economic backdrop to the project.

The brochure is not a finished narrative, but provides sketches that paint a picture of what we can learn about cities and the economy by trying to build working prototypes. Further information can be found on the website <http://elephantpath.citymined.org>

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PART 1

ELEPHANT PATH

The experimental enterprise Elephant Path was borne out of the combination of urban space, a lack of time, and the 19th century porter profession. At first these 3 ingredients are described in further detail, before moving on to the company Elephant Path, its resources and its relation to the skills of those currently economically inactive. Finally, a future is explored in which the company wants to become a prototype of an enterprise that provides casual yet fair work, or a unique example of community-led regeneration.

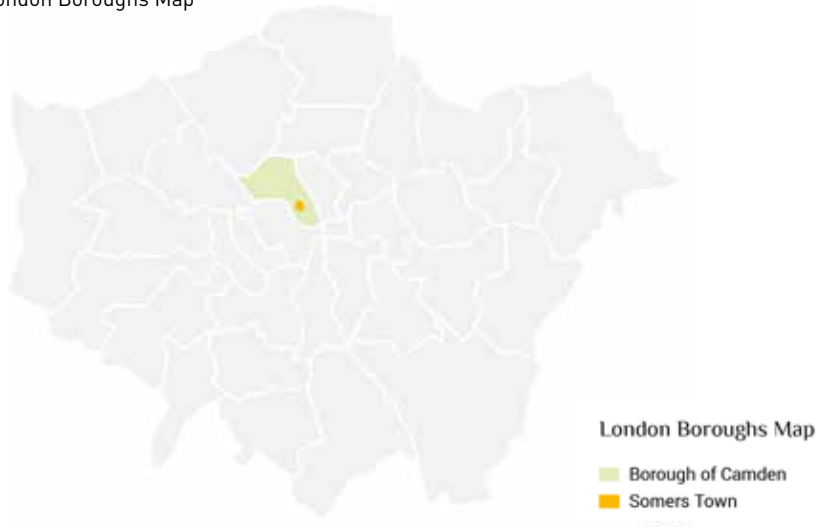
1.1 PROXIMITY

A prominent feature of major global cities is the close proximity of areas of great wealth to areas of intense deprivation

Saskia Sassen, The global City

Sociologist Saskia Sassen's general remark about the global city rings more true for London than for any other large metropolis. The urban planning choice of putting a green belt around London saved it from the unproductive sprawl other major cities suffered, but at the same time also put a limit on available space. Land became scarce, and developments had to re-use it rather than break new ground. This, together with ambitions to make London the global capital of finance, led to new office districts being developed almost on top of existing popular neighbourhood. New office developments in the City gnawed away at the Whitechapel area, in the borough of Tower Hamlets, which on the other end became overshadowed by the new Canary Wharf district.

London Boroughs Map



Map Borders
Major companies in King's Cross Area



Somers Town is another example. This neighbourhood of about 5,000 inhabitants is virtually surrounded by the office developments around the St Pancras and Euston Railway Stations. Near Euston the Regents Place office and retail development houses head offices of giants like the Santander Banking Group and Gazprom, while the St Pancras development will soon house over 10,000 office workers in media, fashion and bio-medical industries. [See II.1. renewing neighbourhoods for details]. At the same time Somers Town stubbornly remains among the most deprived wards of London and even the UK. 44% of the population is classified as economically inactive, which is double the amount of the UK. Although this category also includes those in the military, students and carers, still a substantial amount has just given up looking for work. The contrast could hardly be starker between the offices buzzing with activity and the neighbourhood in which 25% of the population has no qualification, and 71% of households need government support to have a home.

Connections between the offices and the neighbourhood have been few and far between. The approaches from businesses to the community have often been of a charitable nature, confirming locals in their unenviable position. In the opposite direction there has been indifference, frustration and anger to the point of threatening legal steps. Yet, the two are destined to share the same space for decades to come.

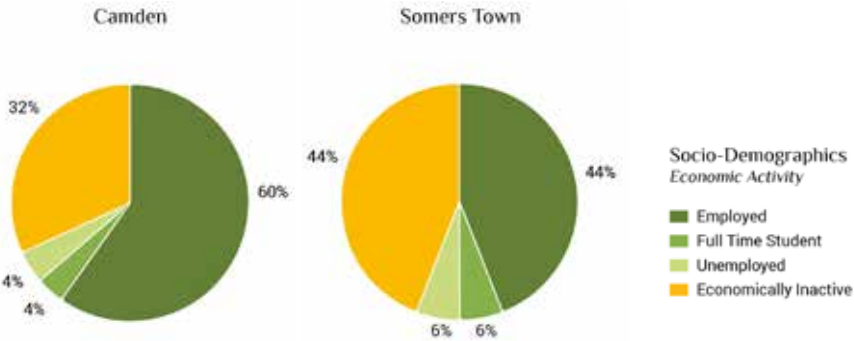


Diagram
Economic Activity in Camden and Somers Town

1.2 TIME

On an 8 hour working day, office workers on average spend 1h20 organising their personal life: shopping, paying bills, booking holidays, getting hold of tickets and parcels, organising repairmen

IPSOS, Work-life survey

Right before they start working, during lunch breaks or sometimes even in between breaks; office workers try to get a number of non-work-related tasks done. They range from getting the car serviced, a bike repaired, a parcel delivered or picked up, getting birthday or Christmas presents, to just getting lunch. Countless small obligations tend to distract people while they work. Research by market research firm Ipsos revealed that the British economy loses about £180 billion annually from staff organising their personal life at work. For comparison, the loss the UK economy makes from shoplifting, estimated at about £750million, is hardly 0.5% of that.

Trying to fit more activity into less time obviously leads to stress, and so these personal tasks increase stress at work. Research by among others Harvard Business School published in 2017 claimed that individuals reported greater happiness if they used £30 to save time - such as by paying someone for performing a dull tasks like ironing, or cleaning- rather than spending the money on material goods. From this, it was concluded that at a certain threshold, employers would be happier if their bosses gave them more time rather than increase their pay.

In other words, if it would be possible to trade money for time – “buying time” is the idiom – time famine could be reduced and happiness increased. More precisely, taking over some of the tasks that eat away at employees’ work shifts, could relieve their stress, make them more productive, and thus contribute to the aims of the company in general.

1.3 CONCIERGE

“Employees of AlliedSignal and Starbucks can make use of the company concierge service when they forget that their mothers need flowers and their dachshunds need walking”

Gallup, First Break All The Rules

In the 1990s a new industry emerged in the US. Noticing that office workers on the 99th floor of the World Trade Centre Twin Towers did not have time to pop out for breakfast or lunch, these new companies set up stall on the ground floor of the building and offered to run all types of errands instead of the employees. The company could be reached by phone and delivered items to the client's desk, saving them a lot of time and extra stress, while also introducing them to local supplies previously unknown to the desk worker.

The service and its name were inspired by 19th century grand hotels, where a porter or doorman ensured guests had everything they needed during their stay. This was followed by personal concierge services, which provide a wide variety of food, administrative, entertainment, health and wellness services, ranging from setting dinner reservations, researching travel arrangements, making telephone calls, to sometimes more fanciful services.

A concierge service offered by a company to its employees is fairly recent. In Europe and Asia the practice is hardly a decade old. Rather than a private service, it is more a favour granted by the company as part of a rewards and benefits scheme. The company itself benefits indirectly from the fact that employees are better able to focus on their work, and thus are more productive, but the main advantage is still for the workers, who can shrink their personal to-do list at the expense of their employer.

France has known a real boom in concierge services in the last 5 years. Helped by a favourable fiscal context that encourages personal services (“aide à la personne” is seen as a way to mitigate the impact of an ageing population) and that supports start-up businesses which create jobs and ease existing employment, different types of concierge services are emerging: on a regional or neighbourhood level, kiosk-based or car-fleet equipped. An inspiring example is Normandy-based FacilityServ. Calling itself the first social (or solidarity) company concierge service, it offers services in food, well-being, vehicles, home services, practical services, animals and presents. To the service it provides it adds an equitable touch by the quality of their products, but also by the fact that it trains unemployed people to provide the services.

1.4 ELEPHANT PATH

In spatial planning, an Elephant Path refers to the path people carve out when taking the shortest connection between origin and destination. Mainly in lawns, but also through bushes and other obstacles, these paths are a well-known user answer to planners’ original intent. In 2016, we, City Mine(d), intended to start tracing an Elephant Path between the local population of Kings Cross/Somers Town, and the companies and their employees moving into the area. Not a physical path, because these have undoubtedly been provided for in the master plan, but a conceptual link.



To be useful, the path needs to be used regularly, and in order to do that, it has to benefit both residents and workers of the area. So no charitable donations from one to the other, or extravagant demands the other way round, but a service that would interest both. That is when we came across the concierge service. We learned that it could reduce stress at work, by taking personal tasks off the hands of workers and thereby increasing their most valued asset of all: time. We also understood that quite a few local people were very talented and eager to work, but were held back by the lack of a platform that could promote their talents, a worry about losing benefits when engaging in employment, or just a lack of self-confidence stopping them from committing to permanent and regular work.

The Elephant Path became a local Company concierge service. We imagined it to link local skills, talents and ambitions to time-hungry office workers. A test-run in which we would propose to take over Christmas Shopping tasks in 2016 proved too ambitious, mainly for a shortage of both customer-companies and local buy-in.

As part of a more long haul approach, a first Meet & Taste was organised in January 2017. In these informal meetings we showcase the skills of a local talent and use this as an occasion to invite the community. Though turnout for this first event was limited, it enabled us to build a network of local organisations: Somers Town Community Association, Chalton Gallery, P21 Gallery, The Cock Tavern, New Horizon, Kingscross Food Assembly, Scene & Heard, Somers Town Neighbourhood Plan, St Pancras Community Association, Camden Initiative Troubled Families; a network that over time would grow to about 42 organisations and initiatives including the Knowledge Quarter, the Big Local, Hopscotch Asian Women and the British Library.

For the events a number of tools were developed to get information from people in a more playful way: there was the “map”/“game” and later the less artistically named “Questionnaire.” Yet, presence on the ground still proved one of the most successful ways of engaging with the local community. We, therefore, are very grateful to Chalton Gallery owner Javier Calderon for allowing us to use the gallery for a few weeks.

Following these meetings, we set ourselves the Challenge of creating a portfolio of 15 locals and their skills. The Portfolio works as a networking tool, as well as a way to showcase talents to potential customers. The Challenge gives us a group of 9 people who by now are quite confident in their abilities, and whose profiles are described in the next chapter.

The Challenge also teaches us two further lessons. One is that not all people are as confident in the talents they want to apply, but are still keen to be involved; the other problem is that at the start, not all demand can be met by local offer.

For the first problem, we developed a distinction between Starters and Workers. Starters are individuals who could well be a Start-up company on their own, but who see benefit – for themselves or the area- in applying their skills in Elephant Path. Below the profile of 9 starters.

The Francis Crick Institute



STCA - Somers Town Community Association



Workers are those for whom Elephant Path provides an opportunity to test skills, and if they don't like them, test another, until they find something suitable. Elephant Path will seek means to help Workers improve their preferred skills and become Starters over time.

For problem two, not being able to provide all the skills customers call upon from the list of Elephant Path talents, we are developing a catalogue of skills that can be bought locally and ethically, thereby becoming a relay rather than service provider for all. This would enlarge our offer substantially and gain us a reputation, while buying us time to further explore local talent. A list of services inspired by Company Concierge services both in the UK and abroad offered us a list covering: courier services, child nursery, car maintenance, catering, gift ideas, project arrangement, event planning, computer repair, floral displays, life coaching, sports lessons, massage therapy, ticket collection, pet walking, restaurant reservations and so on.

Camden Council



Chalton Gallery





TRACE A NEW ELEPHANT PATH WITH US!

12th JANUARY
6-9 pm

Somers Town Community Association
150 Ossulston St, NW1 1EE

Your neighbourhood is changing,
new businesses are moving in.

How can a connection between
locals and companies benefit both?

Let's offer these firms a taste of the local area
and show them what we are good at.

Join us this Thursday evening to find out more.

facebook /elephantpathcompany **email** neba@citymined.org **phone** 07927-724060

    Erasmus+ This project is funded with support from the European Commission

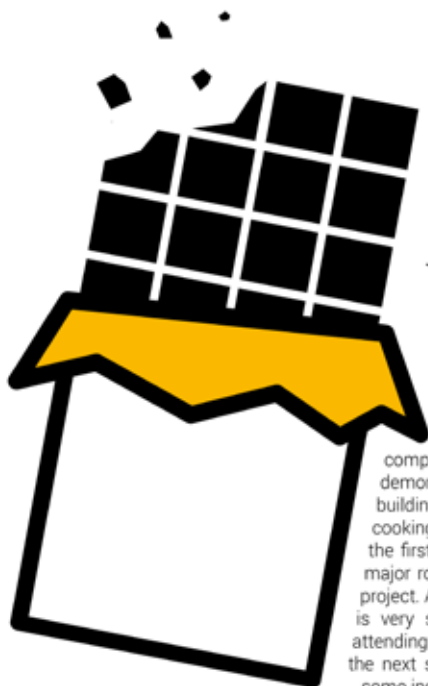
Trace a new Elephant Path with us!

companies locals hobby's game rules

The Francis Crick Institute	Label	making music / arts	<p>1 Write your name in the middle</p> <p>2 Contact with large company in area</p> <p>3 Favorite occupation / hobby</p> <p>4 Do you know local people that are good at these occupations?</p>
Eurostar	David	repairing	
The British Library	ROSANNA	theatre	
Gazprom	Jack	books / literature / writing	
Google	Ben	cooking	
Youtube	CHRIS	workout / training / exercise	
TED BAKER	JOHN	clothes / fashion	
Wellcome		DIY	
Unite Students		(local) history	
Addison Lee		cleaning / housekeeping	
		care / health	
		animals	
		photo / video	
		cycling	
		gaming	



WE'RE **HUNGRY** FOR YOUR TALENT.



Bring us
your skills.

Somers Town.
Challenge for the 1st of March.
We need 15 people offering their skills to the companies in the area. The neighbourhood has much more to offer than the companies know. Our challenge is to demonstrate your capability by building a portfolio of skills like cooking, gardening and DIY. As one of the first 15 candidates, you will play a major role in shaping the future of this project. At the moment the commitment is very small, maybe 1h a week and attending our monthly meetings. Ideally the next step will allow you to generate some income, whenever you offer a skill.
What are you good at?

facebook /elephantpathcompany

email neba@citymined.org

phone 07927-724060



This project is funded with support from the European Commission



Tasting&Idea Session

The St Pancras and Somers Town Living Centre, 11 September 2017

11.09.2017 5-7 PM

The St Pancras and Somers Town Living Centre
2 Ossulston St, NW1 1DF



TASTING&IDEA SESSION

We invite you to a free Culinary Art tasting and Info session by offering you a taste of the exquisite cuisine of local chefs Hiromi Stone, Jeremy Wickremer and Elysia catering, the session celebrates a first milestone in the development of "Elephant Path".

The starting social enterprise, in which both residents of Camden as well as companies based in the area have a stake, offers micro-services to locally based employees.

We have been working on this obvious connection since January 2016.

Together with you we would like to explore how these talents can be deployed. The interactive session aims at solving 5 questions that will help Elephant Path to its next milestone, while also hearing your feedback on the services proposed. The session is aimed at HR-staff, work organisers, CSR managers and community engagers.

facebook /elephantpathcompany

email neba@citymined.org

phone 07927-724060



Erasmus+

This project is funded with support from the European Commission



1.5. STARTERS

Albert Mceyeson is running a non-profit organisation called Action Boxing Intervention. The aim is to empower youth to change and have self-awareness of irrational beliefs using basic tools of RBT which is Rational Motional Behaviour Therapy integrated with boxing skills.



Geoff K. Cooper is a fashion stylist and advisor, he recently launched the magazine 'Sagaboi' which specialises in multicultural approach to fashion and style.

Genieve Vasconcelos is a fashion designer, specialising in bespoke dresses, incorporating re-cycled materials by weaving them together.



Hiromi Stone produces Kinomi Nuts, a line of roasted flavoured nuts as well as giving Japanese cooking classes.



Jeremy Wickremer is a local chef, specialising in fusion dishes, chocolate making, honey making, cooking classes and nutritional advise.



Joygun Nehar is a Central Saint Martins Student, studying Textile, specialising in weaving, handweaving is one of her best skills and working with people who are not from a creative background.



Maria is a Filmmaker, who works with Volunteer Camden, by making funding videos for charities. She enjoys mostly, filming, post production and the whole process.



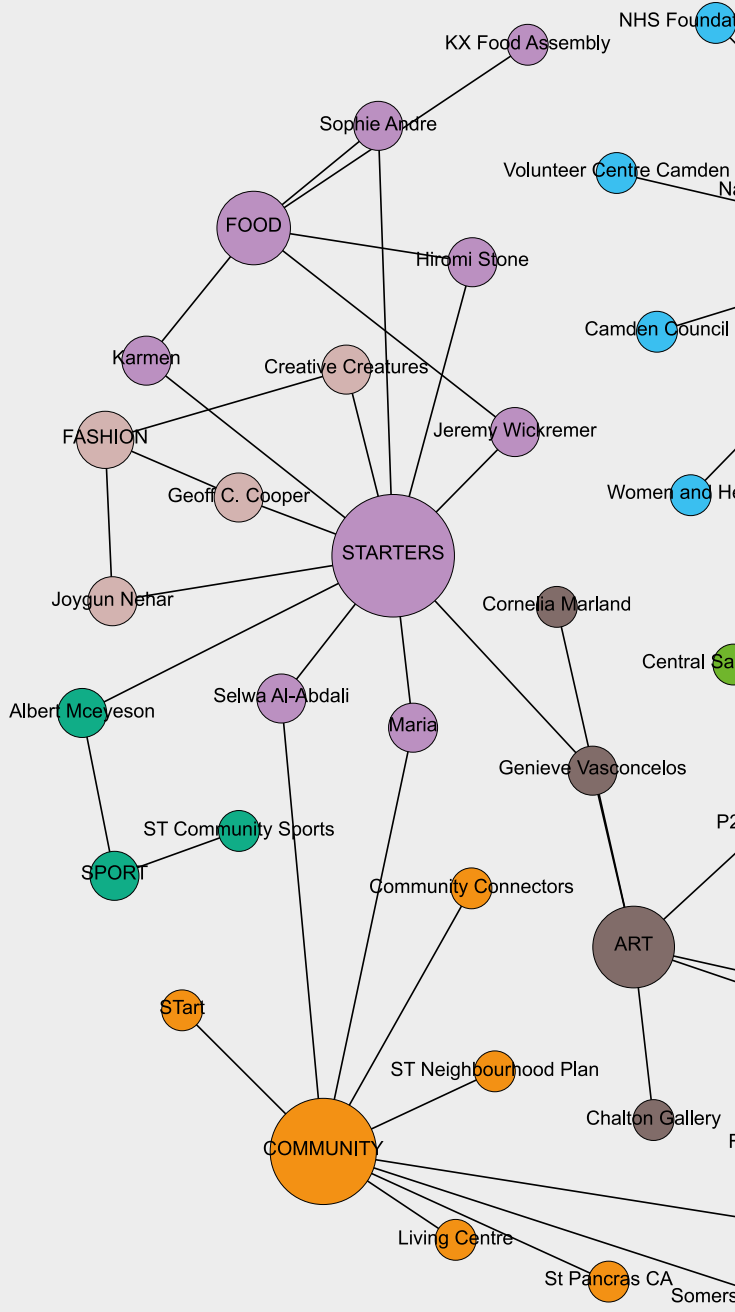
Selwa Al-Abdali is a local community enthusiast, Founder and Director of Zad Foundation, a local charity based in The London Borough of Islington and Camden.

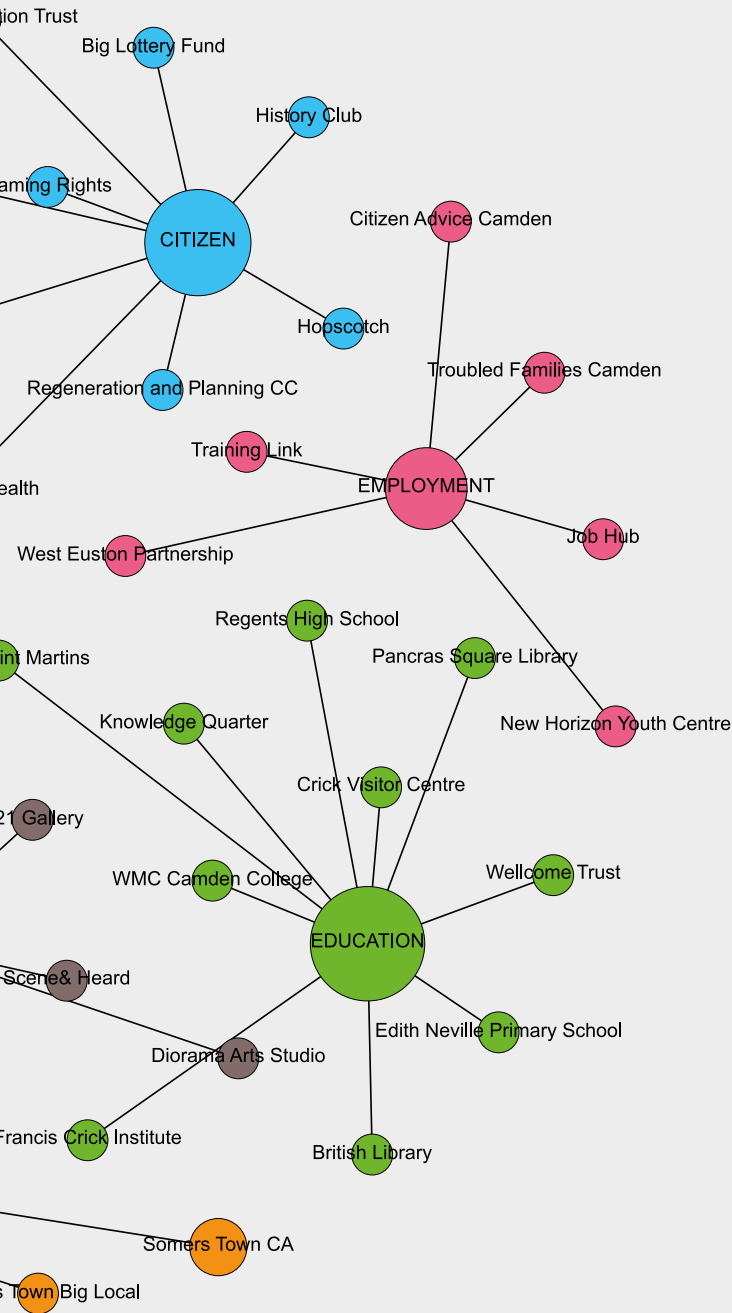
The main activities/services involve delivering healthy meals, health education and related training programmes to the community living within The Borough; with particular focus on finding young people employment



Sophie Andre started the social enterprise 'Elysia Catering' in 2016, they offer catering services with surplus, rescued foods from London based artisans. All products are handpicked and delivered via bicycle.







1.6. IDENTIFYING SKILLS

Setting up a company structure has proven an interesting way of identifying and recognising skills in the area. Where other programmes we studied concentrated more on defining an individual's skills and competences, we chose to set up a programme that would apply potential skills immediately in a real world situation and gain experience from that. The validation of skills does not come from a diploma or certificate, but from experience of using the skills. Successful use of the skills obviously also increases self-confidence of the worker and helps them on a path towards more self-reliance.

The Erasmus Plus programme of the European Commission, more precisely its Cooperation for Innovation and the Exchange of Good Practices action supported this part of Elephant Path. We are very confident that this completely new way of identifying and deepening skills will be developed further in the future. In a unique way, it recognises the history and autonomy of the participant, and inspires them for a community project rather than for a first step on a personal career path. True impact will need to be measured in the coming months and years, but the programme already reached individuals who turned their back on other training programmes.

Question remains how the applied skills are made visible, accountable, measurable and comparable. The first brochure of this series goes deeper into the question of changing valorisation of skills. The current landscape of lifelong and online learning struggles with this question, and as yet Badges or European Commission endorsed certification still have to earn a more universal acceptance. Until then, it remains hard to make the skills people acquire on the job useful in other contexts. The method we have been exploring with Elephant Path, is developing a Portfolio which can serve as a showcase and reference for emerging talents, and a platform where talents and skills can be contextualised and certified by the status of the platform. Since the Portfolio is not yet completed, it is hard to say whether this would just move the certification problem from the individual to the collective platform, and if this is a unique experience or replicable in other contexts.

1.7. NEXT ELEPHANT STEPS

The experimental enterprise Elephant Path is still in its infancy. Business plans have been drawn up, and many stakeholders spoken to. As a result of this quite a few choices have been made, yet implementing them will require more time.

Elephant Path is a social enterprise, owned by its workers. As such, it develops and tests a more equitable model for casual working, ICT-based work, or crowd employment [see II.2 Work and its Futures]. Where current models are focussed on large capital investment, and use Return On Investment as the key benchmark of success, Elephant Path measures results first and foremost in terms of individual and local well being. Well being for individuals from Kings Cross/Somers Town and for employees whose stress will be reduced; also local well being that stems from increased investment and employment in the area.

In the debate about more equitable models of gig-economy enterprises, Elephant Path wants to test and improve its model “on the job”. By developing a working and replicable model, it empowers workers while providing an alternative to aspiring entrepreneurs. The working model or prototype is a way of backing small enterprises, but equally of driving innovation in a part of the new economy that tends to come second to technological innovation, namely social innovation.

Elephant Path is an explicitly locally anchored company, owned by workers who are from the local area. Not only does working together improve local community cohesion, but by paying for work large companies invest in the local area, hence contributing to new forms of community-led regeneration.





Somers Town Community Festival
Somers Town Community Sports Centre, 22 April 2017

PART 2

URBAN AND ECONOMIC BACKDROP

This part first looks at the urban context in which Elephant Path develops. Through the lens of the KingsCross/Somers Town area and the history of its development, it challenges what is considered as successful urban regeneration. The second part, entitled Work and Its Futures, starts with the question of “will there be work for all us” to trace back the history of this question, and to sum up some labour market trends that shape the playing field for Elephant Path at the moment.

2.1. RENEWING NEIGHBOURHOODS

“Kings Cross is one of Europe’s most exciting places to live, work, or visit – a real asset to London”

Sir David Clementi, Chairman of the Kings Cross Central Limited Partnership

With 50 new buildings, 2,000 new homes, 20 new streets, 10 new public squares, 45,000 people who live, work and study in the area and a new dedicated postcode, Kings Cross has earned the right to call itself one of the most vibrant places of London. This self-declared largest urban regeneration project in Europe not only forms the backdrop of our project, but its history and aspirations might also teach us something about what we consider successful urban regeneration.

THATCHERITES

As many stories about contemporary Britain, this one starts on election night of 3 May 1979. After only half a decade of Labour rule, with the economy in such a bad shape that an IMF loan was needed to avoid bankruptcy, and a country divided between an industrial North and a more service sector oriented South with London, Margaret Thatcher was elected as Prime Minister. Her attempts to repair a badly damaged economy were inspired by her electoral home ground, but more importantly by her belief in the free market economy rather than the state as producer of prosperity. This translated into a strong emphasis on deregulation, particularly the financial sector which she wanted to lure to London, privatisation of state-owned companies and flexible labour markets. And it is these policies that would shape the Kings Cross/Somers Town area for decades to come.

Railways have shaped the history of Somers Town and Kings Cross. Before their arrival, the area was known to Londoners as destination for recreation and fresh air. In the mid-19th century the Kings Cross and Saint Pancras railway stations were opened, bringing goods and people from throughout the country to London. The building of the railways, and the industries of coal, printing, postal services and haulage, created many jobs, and brought in lots of families that needed housing. This led to the high-density working class housing that still characterises Somers Town. At the beginning of the 20th century, the slums, among the worst in London, were cleared, initially by philanthropists, later also by the London County Council, an early metropolitan-wide government.

After the Second World War the railways were nationalised, but they suffered from serious lack of investment. Together with de-industrialisation in general and indecisiveness on the side of the planning authorities about what to do with the large chunk of disused railway lands in the centre of the city caused severe blight to the area. The housing stock became a centre for the London squatting movement, and the commercial real estate, not updated since the 19th century, provided the lowest-rent offices in central London.

Then came the Thatcher years. The privatisation of the railways, together with the deregulation of the financial industry and the ambition of making London the service sector and finance capital of Europe if not the world offered a triple whammy to the area. Firstly, British Rail, the public body running the railways, was supposed to behave more like a private company in preparation of privatisation, and had to manage its assets more profitably. The re-development of Liverpool Street station in East London, in which a real estate company was allowed to build offices that financed the new station as well as investment in the railway, became the leading example. Particularly in Kings Cross, which was designated to become the terminus of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link. Secondly, it was only because of deregulation of the financial industry that speculative building at such a scale became possible. And thirdly, the booming service sector required more offices, so there was potential demand. A consortium was set up, with the same real estate developer as Liverpool Street, and Norman Foster as architect.

However, a vigilant local community refused to accept the proposal as such, particularly the large amount of office space which they considered unsustainable.

They set up a group called the Kings Cross Railway Lands Group, organised debates, confronted politicians and drew up their own citizens plan for the site. During this process the office market virtually collapsed. The boom in demand stopped and the supply in the Docklands and City met the existing demand. Developers went bankrupt, including the one working on the Kings Cross project.

Meanwhile, another flagship policy of Margaret Thatcher had reached Somers Town. A number of tenants managed to buy their house at a substantial discount. They soon cashed in on their investment and moved out bringing in a younger, ethnically and economically more diverse population. The cheaper rent also attracted artists: Anthony Gormley and Thomas Heatherwick established their studios in the area.

Although Prime Minister Thatcher left office in 1990, her ideology would persist, even beyond party lines. An example of the primacy of the market is the way the high-speed train connection between London and France and Belgium was handled. Both the Major and Blair governments insisted a private company should run this railway. The London and Continental Railway Company was set up, though ticket sale would never make it profitable. To make the government subsidy as small as possible the LCR was promised the development rights over land at King's Cross St Pancras, Stratford and Ebbsfleet as part of the agreement. This meant that property development at King's Cross was required to generate not just profit on development investment but also substantial revenues to LCR and government to help offset the costs of the railway. For the second time urban regeneration and financial gain became combined in a rather murky way.

21ST CENTURY

In the year 2000 the London and Continental Railway Company appointed the limited partnership Argent as developer of the Kings Cross site. However, they could not start developing until 2007, when the Channel Tunnel Rail Link was supposed to be finished. In the meantime P&O, the property branch of a Ferry Company, delivered Regents Quarter, a combination of office spaces, flats, a hotel, bars and cafes. The 138 flats sold at prices higher than the developer expected, though the office let more slowly. Another company, Parabola land, developed offices and a concert hall on a site called Kings Place. Half of the 7 floors of offices were pre-let by the Guardian Media Group, making it one of the first Media Companies to commit to the area. Together with the in 1997 opened British Library, these were the first tangible signs of an actually changing neighbourhood.

In 2011 the first occupant of the Argent Scheme moved in. Central Saint Martins, the renowned arts college that has icons of pop, like Jarvis Cocker, and fashion, Stella McCartney and John Galliano, as its alumni, moved its activities to the listed Granary Building. The re-purposing of the listed buildings both met the heritage concerns of the local community, and made the building fit for its new function. The square in front of the building modestly refers to itself as the largest public square since Trafalgar Square was created in 1845, and one of the largest of its kind in Europe.

After delivery of the first building, others followed suit and large companies moved in. Camden Council brought its 5,000 staff to one building in the area, the Francis Crick Institute, the people whom among other things are trying to beat cancer for us, built a home for its 2,000 researchers and staff; Universal Music, home to budding talents like the Rolling Stones and U2, moved its 1,000 employees to a new building; Havas, a publicity firm, concentrated the activity of its 1,700 employees in the area and Louis Vuitton, one of the world's leading international fashion houses, made its UK headquarters here. The most iconic was undoubtedly Google, an internet search engine company, who not only opened offices at an early stage, but also committed to

building its European headquarters in the area: one million square feet of office space, capable of hosting 7,000 employees.

The less well-off were, however, less well served. From the almost 2,000 homes Argent was building in the area, 750 were supposed to be affordable. Yet argent asked to reduce this number to sell 100 extra luxury flats. This is understandable from the perspective of a profit making company. Investigation by CityAM in October 2017 showed that housing prices in the area increased by 47% between 2012 and 2017. Foxtons, a real estate company, admitted that it sold a flat in the area in 2010 for £390,000 and resold it in 2017 for £695,000. It would go against the nature of a property developer to forgo profits like these. Yet, for the more vulnerable groups, who are unable to make the step from tenant to owner, this means slowly being pushed out. It is more than ironic that it is exactly in a study about this part of London that in 1964 sociologist Ruth Glass coined the term “gentrification”, to describe how lower-income people are displaced by wealthier people as urban areas are upgraded.

HIGH SPEED 2

One would think that after 30 years of fierce transformation, the neighbourhood deserved some pause for thought. Unfortunately they weren't allowed. In 2015 the Cameron Government proposed Britain's second High Speed Railway Line, on this occasion linking London to the North of the country. To make connection with the continental high-speed network possible, Euston, the third station in the area, was chosen as its terminus. Development of the line would swallow up half of Somers Town, so understandably the community was up in arms. At the time of writing the future of the scheme is unclear.

A second concern for Somers Town is the Brill Place development. The local primary school, housed in sheds hastily erected to meet a post World War Two shortage, is in dire need of new accommodation.

The local Council, deprived of investment funds following years of austerity policy by the central government, wants to rely upon a tested method of granting development right in exchange for investment in social infrastructure. It wants to allow the development of a high-rise residential building on Brill place, a public park, in exchange for investment in the school.

CONCLUSION

Though the neighbourhood is regared as one of the most exciting and vibrant parts of London, and maybe even because of that, it conjures up the question of what we consider successful urban regeneration. It is true that it has produced some of the more stylish urban design and very qualitative public realm. The combination of cultural, academic retail and leisure shows signs of a holistic view that is rare in this scale of development. Yet, employment statistics for Somers Town, which show an economic inactivity of 44%, which is twice the UK average, and housing prices making the rift between haves and have-nots unbridgeable, show that all is not well in the state of Kings Cross/St Pancras. The point is not to make parts of the city more attractive or exciting, but to make them a home for people from different walks of life. What Prof Edwards wrote in 2009 about why people leave London, is still very relevant today. "Middle income households, particularly at the family forming stage, are not leaving London because of its lack of attractiveness, It is generally viewed as a response to high house prices, to perceived quality of education and of the environment for children." So Kings Cross/Somers Town might be one of London's most exciting places, though not for a specific part of the population. Let they be the one who need our [and the government's] attention most.

2.2 WORK AND ITS FUTURES

“Do people need jobs or can we deliver what jobs provide some other way and in a potentially unbundled fashion? What are the “jobs of a job” ?”

Albert Wenger, Union Square Ventures

Questions such as “will there be work for all of us in the future” and “will we still have to work in the future” are as old as economic analysis itself. Eminent economists like Karl Marx and John Maynard Keynes occupied themselves with the questions, mainly from the perspective of the liberation from enforced activity. More recently, economists have started to think about the meaning and function of the job beyond earning a living. The current discussion about the future of work seems dominated by automation and de-industrialisation, and artificially intelligent or other machines taking over the labour market and pushing humans to its dark edges.

Finally, there is also the future of casual and occasional work, with its threats of turning workers into disposable items but its opportunity of liberating employees from subordination. Together these discussions draw up a landscape in which future workers have to orient and set out their paths. By setting up the experimental enterprise Elephant Path, we are hoping to provide and highlight some opportunities, provide some tools, and break new ground in the ongoing debate.

WORK NO MORE

In “The German Ideology” Marx deplored the fact that the division of labour enforces a particular sphere of activity onto a person. “He is a hunter, a fisherman, a herdsman, or a critical critic, and must remain so if he does not want to lose his means of livelihood.”

In Marx' ideal society, nobody would have an exclusive sphere of activity, which "makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner."

In 1930, in the debt of the Great Depression, John Maynard Keynes wrote an essay about the future of the economy. In it he claimed that the biggest problem for our grandchildren will not be how to create enough wealth to meet their needs, because that would be solved by science and compound interest, but rather how to deal with the freedom and leisure time that emerges from economic abundance. For centuries, we have been conditioned into working and deserving some leisure; Keynes assumes it would take long before humans adapt, and that to be content, everybody will work 3 hours a day or fifteen hours per week.

This touches upon a crucial aspect of employment. Ask an economist these days why policy puts so much emphasis on people having a job, and they will come up with explanations having to do with autonomy, agency or the capacity to take initiative, and self-reliance or not being dependent upon others. Though these are very true, they do not paint the whole picture. In 1955, sociologists Morse and Weiss stated that "If men (sic) work only for money, there is no way of explaining the dislocation and deprivation which retirement, even on an adequate salary, appears to bring to the formerly employed." Further investigation revealed that employment also provides social networks, status, structure, the impression of doing something meaningful or being useful, in addition to providing an income. It has indeed proven very hard to find an activity that would also fulfil all these functions at the same time. Voluntary work, community engagement, housework or caring often lack the income part, while work rewarded in alternative currencies or through non-monetary exchange lacks the status of a job until further notice. And fulfilling all those needs separately is just a lot of work.

AUTOMATIC

In his essay, Keynes admits that discovery of means of economising the use of labour, through scientific improvement, might on occasions outrun the pace at which we can find new uses for labour. He calls it “technological unemployment” but assures us that it is a temporary phase of maladjustment. Almost a century on, “automation” is still often cited as the biggest threat to jobs in the future. At regular intervals The Economist newspaper produces copy with titles like “The rise of the Robots” or “March of the Machine”, and 2 years after its creation a website allowing visitors to find out when their job will be taken over by robots is still one of the BBCs most visited pages. In her post-electoral-defeat book “What Happened”, Hilary Clinton, cites former World Bank chief economist Larry Summers that automation could put one-third of all American men aged 25 to 54 out of work by 2050. She feels so strong about this that she considers her misunderstanding of this as one of the reasons for her election loss. Though in general, it is more techies and it geeks who are worried about this. Historians and economists see less evidence for job displacement, but more for job polarisation –the increase of low-paid and high-paid jobs at the expense of middle income jobs - and job transformation.

MIT economist David Autor speaks in this respect of the “lump of labour” fallacy: “the notion that there’s only a finite amount of work to do, and therefore that if you automate some of it there’s less for people to do,” which he considers completely wrong. In the discussion about the job-destroying impact of self-driving cars, he likes to cite the concern about the impact of the switch from horses to cars in the beginning of the 20th century. It is true that horse-related jobs declined, but other jobs relating to the construction and maintaining of cars and the catering to its drivers emerged. He believes that the tasks that can only done by humans, the ones that involve social interaction and empathy, will gain value once all others are automated.

NEW SKILLS AND SHIFTING JOBS

A discussion that illustrates the complexity of the issue, is the one relating to self-checkouts at supermarkets. Their advantages - shorter waiting times, lower labour cost and thus higher productivity - not necessarily outweigh their disadvantages - anonymous, destroying low-skilled jobs. While some would argue that cashier-staff work is uninteresting and drudgerous, others would point out that it employs people with little training who would find it hard to find work elsewhere. In the end, this shifts the focus away from the economy towards education and training. Rather than trying to slow down technological progress in order to keep people in dull jobs, would it not make sense to make it easier for workers to acquire new skills? This would also allow them to shift jobs when needed, rather than sticking to them even when pay is not keeping up with their cost of living.

Over the last years, the hand car wash has taken back about half of the UK's car wash market, an estimated half a billion Pound sector. It is a stark illustration of how an existing technology is forgone because the required labour is cheaper and more dispensable. Mechanical car washes produce less waste and pollution, wash cleaner and do not scratch your car, yet the price differences pulls half of the customers back to the hand car wash. Providing those hand car washers with opportunities to train for another job or to shift industry probably contributes a lot more to both economic productivity and human well-being than minimum wage requirements or other worker protection.

NEW FORMS OF EMPLOYMENT

Eurofound, the European Union's Research agency, published a study in 2015 entitled "New forms of employment." It was one of the most complete investigations into the transforming relationship between employer and employee, unconventional work patterns and places of work, and the irregular provision of work. It showed that what is often referred to as the Uberisation of the economy or the gig-economy, refers to just one of the many new forms of employment that are emerging in the aftermath of the global recession.

The study identifies nine broad new employment forms: employee sharing - an individual worker is jointly hired by a group of employers -; job sharing - two or more work workers jointly fill a specific job-; interim management - a skilled expert is hired temporarily to solve a specific problem-; casual work - the employer calls the worker in on demand-; ICT-based mobile work - workers can do their job from any place and at any time-; voucher-based-work - where services are paid with a voucher purchased from an authorised organisation-; portfolio work - a self-employed individual does small scale-jobs for many clients-; crowd employment - where an online platform matches employers and workers for small tasks-; collaborative employment - where freelancers or self-employed cooperate on larger jobs.

Although according to the study these new forms should be explored because "their specific characteristics might be an attractive option for employers and employees alike, most new forms owe their renown from court cases in which employees try to obtain some form of social protection. There are, however, benefits to employees. Workers quote flexibility and freedom from subordination as the most interesting aspects.

What has been highlighted less, is benefits of the trial character of many of these forms of employment. Particularly in casual work, ICT-based mobile work or crowd employment, workers at an early stage of their career or at the point of a career switch could try out different professions and elaborate the one that suits them best. The disadvantage, however, is that it does not provide stable income, which makes it suitable for only some. Most probably this test phase is best combined with other sources of income, be they from other work, reserves or government support.

FIRM BELIEF

In the mean time, it has been 80 years since Ronald Coase applied himself to the question why firms exist, and when does it make sense for an entrepreneur to hire help instead of contracting out work. Emerging employment forms make it look as though this question has become obsolete. Yet his answers are still valid today: when for your production process you buy a good or service via the market, to its price are added cost of finding information, bargaining, policing and enforcing costs and trade secrets - known as transaction cost. If it is cheaper to produce things internally and avoid these costs, it makes sense to set up a firm. Though the changes that have led to the rise of new form of employment might reduce some transaction costs, think of ICT making information gathering and bargaining cheaper, there is still a place for a firm.

Simultaneously, there is also a call to make the organisational structure of a company fairer. Britain has a long tradition of worker cooperatives, going back to the 19th century. They adhere to a set of rules that guarantee democratic self-management by workers and independence in labour relations. Although very successful in the 1970s and early 1980s, they seem to be losing a bit of their appeal in 21st century. Reasons cited for that are a cumbersome decision-making structure, requiring both extra time and investment from employees, and meeting scepticism from partners and investors. Therefore, a number of hybrid forms have emerged, whereby workers hold the legal ownership and democratic say, but delegate the daily running of the business to appointed executives.

The most often cited example in the UK is probably the John Lewis partnership. Now known for the John Lewis department stores and Waitrose supermarkets, its founder started in distributing profits among employees in 1929. By 1950, he managed to turn the company into a partnership in complete employee-ownership, with as a purpose "the happiness of all its members, through their worthwhile and satisfying employment." Since then, the company no longer has "employees" but "partners", who through a trust have their say in the running of the company.

Because of the combination of business success and employee satisfaction, the model became a leading example. To the extent that previous Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborn proposed new legislation to make it easier to set up employer-owned companies. A Bill was written and consulted upon, but by the time it passed into Law in 2013, “employee ownership” had turned into “employee shareholdership” and confusion arose between “employee owner”, an individual who owns the company and a sole trader. This meant that the new scheme failed, and no companies moved to employer ownership. The idea of workers owning their company, however, remains attractive to those who want to give workers both a just deserve and voice at the decision-making table.

CONCLUSION

Whereas some believe that the labour market will become fragmented into individuals who market and supply their individual skills; others see employers taking more ownership of their company and their means of production. All seem to agree that there is still work to be done for some time to come, and that even with new government credit systems, work will remain a path towards emancipation, autonomy and self-reliance.

City Mine(d)

City Mine(d) is an international organisation established in London and Brussels. Since 1997 it realised over 100 projects in 15 cities throughout Europe, either at its own initiative or as a facilitator.

The aim of City Mine(d) is to involve each and everyone in the development of cities.

The urban development agenda is currently being shaped by the environment, democracy, economy and technology. City Mine(d) firmly believes that sustainable development in these domains can not be left to responsible authorities or experts alone. It requires contributions from citizens, companies, researchers as well as governments.

City Mine(d) produces very innovative and experimental products or procedures, which it refers to as “prototypes”. These working models are a unique and tangible answer to a topical societal question. Prototypes are developed in a collective process in which the knowledge of different contributors is applied, challenged and deepened.

Elephant Path was developed by City Mine(d) with Neba Sere, Ilaria Catalano and Carla Motola.

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