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Hello everyone. Here it is, newsletter number 3. Thank you for staying in touch and thank you for joining in if you are new. As always, unsubscribe below if you don't want to hear from me again and please do send me your thoughts and comments on jan@jankattein.com.

I came across an interesting study by **Britain Thinks** the other day. The study used focus groups and surveys to evaluate how people in Britain think about their country. In a nutshell, the outlook is bleak. 58% of respondents stated that they are pessimistic or very pessimistic when thinking about the UK. Interestingly, responses change markedly when people were asked to think about their neighbourhood. Suddenly, 61% of respondents cited that they were optimistic or very optimistic about their local area. That's a significant majority and comes despite ongoing cuts to public services and significant hardship experienced by communities nationwide.

For me the discrepancy between the national and the local outlook matters hugely because it validates how we work. Our approach seeks to make a difference in a geographically limited area by engaging individuals and community groups, securing personal investment and good will and creating opportunities for learning-, entrepreneurial success-, environmental improvements, dialogue and exchange, ultimately resulting in a greater sense of belonging (or should I call it optimism?).





The greatest endorsement of our work is when it starts to multiply, when others perfect an unfinished task, bring an initial design strategy to fruition and tend to the seeds we have sown. And here is how this can work in practice: When educational charity Global Generation were given a large vacant plot behind the British Library to build a temporary garden, we were faced with questions inherent to inception stages of community projects, i.e. who is the community? how can we set an aspirational design agenda? And with no basic facilities on site, how can you create an inspirational environment for people to become creative and invest themselves?

We decided to start by building only 1/2 a garden. A constrained budget but great aspirations saw the realisation of a polycarbonate shingled toilet block cum potting shed, a community kitchen, a little office, a translucent roof cantilever for sheltered outside seating and a shipping container workshop. Each use was given it's own little building to minimize the need for internal circulation and for activities to blend with the garden. When these structures were finished, we left site.

The garden grew subsequently (or should I say proliferated rampantly). The quirky structures springing up on the vacant plot did not go unnoticed. Soon some 400+ volunteers helped to build planters, barrow compost, plant oak trees, set-up a growing tunnel, build paths, benches and tables. The Store Summer School students built some amorphous seating arrangements and Central St Martins - who are running the on-site digital manufacturing workshop - brought in their architecture students to build a straw bale round house. The atmosphere has been electric for weeks. It's like a horticultural fairground out there. An infectious activism grips many a casual visitor to pick up the tools and get stuck in. Come and see what we have done at **The Story Garden**, Ossulston Street, London NW1 1DF.

And whilst in London's Knowledge Quarter, keep your eyes open for the electric Milk Float. It's orange and yellow and roves the streets and squares of the neighbourhood to create opportunities to meet, talk and creatively transform public space, a day at a time. One side of the vehicle has been converted into a gardening workshop, the other side features a street kitchen with running water, a gas hob and yellow canopies and lights to attract attention. At the end of the day the tools go back in to the float, the canopy is folded up and the float moves on to its next destination leaving behind the legacy of a communal meal, a joint building effort or the seeds for a new season. We worked closely with young people to develop the design brief – and when you look closely, you will discover the whittled twig drawer pulls which the children contributed to the vehicle. We made a film telling the story of the Milk Float. Here's a [link](#). And believe it or not, the project is a regional finalist in the wonderful **Civic Trust Awards**.



Travelling west you get to Drummond Street, the beating heart of Somerstown. Well, it used to be until railway infra-structure works at Euston Station put the economic ecosystem into jeopardy. The works cut the street off from its' surrounds and included the demolition of a swath of commercial buildings that had brought regular custom to a unique local high street with a distinct South Indian flavour. With high streets up and down the country struggling for survival, many of the family businesses feared that this latest disruption would be the straw that brakes the camel's back. Hitting rock-bottom often mobilises creativity. JKA and Euston Town (the local business improvement district) summoned local stakeholders to work on a 21st Century vision for the high street. And **here** it is, specific to Drummond Street, endorsed by local people, aspirational and pragmatic. And here a news clipping from **Building Design Magazine**.

In a nutshell, we are seeking to reverse the fortunes of the high street by reversing it's orientation. A number of urban interventions more cohesively link the street into its' urban context to the west and help create a people-centric oasis just off the ferocious Euston Road. Simple, but effective. Congratulations to our colleagues at De Matos Ryan for recently securing Arts Council funding to renew the Camden People's Theatre which proudly marks a primary gateway into Drummond Street to the west. And fingers' crossed for Euston Town's HS2 Community and Business Fund application which will help to realise the vision.



Just south of Victoria Station, we secured planning for our Ebury Meanwhile project earlier this year and works are scheduled to start on site imminently. Whilst Westminster Council are working closely with residents to finalise their comprehensive development plans for the site, Ebury Meanwhile will provide a much needed community hall, community cafe, 14 micro enterprise units and a garden to bridge the gap between the old and the new. The buildings are all made from wood shingle clad timber frames for sustainability and Arup have designed specialist blockwork and steel foundations to minimize the use of carbon intense concrete.



A little way to the north-east, in Haringey, the Council has teamed up with educational charity **Fashion Enter** to establish London's first Tailoring Academy. With decades of a brain- and skills drain from London's traditional fashion hub in Haringey/South Tottenham to far flung production sites (some of them

fashion production and NVQ accredited tailoring education. Our design concept utilises a folded timber and glass screen to envelop pockets of workspace that accommodate the various design-, production- and learning processes in the otherwise open-plan warehouse. The design maximises the visual interdependency between study and production spaces encouraging skills transfer. The aim was to create a warm learning environment that also responds to the functional needs of high end tailoring production. A distinct colour scheme presents clues about the uses of spaces in the building. A loading bay has been converted into a light and welcoming atrium and exhibition space giving the Tailoring Academy a public face on the street and communicating the organisation's ethos to the wider public. Production and courses are moving in at the end of November.



Crossing the river, we get to Peckham, a neighbourhood of cosmopolitan London. 49% of Peckhamians were born outside of England. It's high street has a particularly vital significance in this context, not only as a place where the culture from far flung places lives on, finding expression in exotic food offers, specialist beauty salons and fabric shops, but also as an essential safety net where newcomers can find employment advice and support. Lesser known is Peckham's incredible built heritage for the preservation of which the **Peckham Society** has been campaigning for decades until they finally secured a heritage town centre grant. JKA have been working with Southwark Council to implement the painstaking restoration of some real architectural gems. Phase 1 included comprehensive repair work to two public

is an incredible learning process where bit by bit and as you peel back the layers of time you uncover the intention of the original designer. Heritage is one of the many aspects that define the identity of a place and we are proud to be able to contribute to strengthening the identity of a very unique place in South London.



Heading east, we are working with **Peabody**, contributing to one of the most ambitious regeneration projects in London, the Abby Wood and Thamesmead Housing Zone. Claridge Way is a green artery running through the Moorings, one of the densest parts of Thamesmead. Over the past year we have been working closely with residents on a common plan. A common plan has much the same function as a master plan in setting out a strategic regeneration framework, yet the working method that leads to its' incarnation could not be more different. Rather than emphasizing the masterly disposition, the common

gates for neighbours to meet and quirky fitness equipment are now being implemented – watch this space.

There's a lot more to be optimistic about. Did I mention our proposals for the **Chapter Arts Centre** in Cardiff who are building a whole raft of studio spaces to bring artists from all over town onto site? Or our street art high street project in Poplar? The immersive bookscape conceived with children from Thornhill Primary School in Islington? The revitalisation project for a traditional east end market in Tower Hamlets? The innovative home extension research to alleviate overcrowding in Stamford Hill? There's an exciting year ahead of us and we are really grateful to trusting partners all over who are helping to make some incredible projects happen.



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