

## “What is placemaking? With Ruchi Chakravarty and Federico Ortiz” Podcast Transcript – LFA Building Sounds

**Eliza:** Hello and welcome to Building Sounds, the podcast exploring the stories, people and projects that shape London’s built environment. I'm your host, Eliza Grosvenor – Head of Programme for the London Festival of Architecture.

In this conversation, we're joined by one of our LFA2024 Curation Panel members Ruchi Chakravarti, to discuss the concept of placemaking, and what it means to reimagine public space.

This is a topic that fits very closely with a lot of the work we do at the Festival. Placemaking is also a key element of two other recent projects by NLA, The New London Agenda and Public London. Later, we will be joined by NLA’s Head of Content, Federico Ortiz to dive into some of the agenda’s five pillars and the upcoming Public London research.

But to begin with, Ruchi, could you give us an introduction to your work, background and your relationship to the built environment?

**Ruchi:** I am a placemaking, urban design and masterplanning consultant, and I work with clients who are agencies of change, who actually can invest in making changes in the public realm and the urban environment. I started my career actually first in architecture and then in urban design, and I was a consultant for about 15 years of my career working in a number of transformational masterplans or urban design schemes across many parts of the world, including London of course, but more broadly, even Asia, the US, etc. And somewhere after 15 years of doing that, I really wanted to understand why a lot of these studies and designs end up as reports and designs.

So in a bid do that I joined Westminster City Council, where I led the placemaking team for over six years. The placemaking team was very much the in-house design and strategy team for the council. And we were tasked with, you know, areas of change within the borough, and how to bring about change in an impactful manner. As part of that, I've worked on place plans and created place plans for a number of neighbourhoods in Westminster, including Soho, Covent Garden, Victoria, Paddington, and North Paddington or Harrow Road. But in terms of projects, I think one of the key projects I led and delivered was the Strand Aldwych project and I also led the design and strategy for the al fresco measures that went through nearly 60 streets in Westminster during COVID.

**Eliza:** Amazing. So we're going to come into some of these in a bit more detail in a moment. But before that, we'd like to start with some rapid-fire questions. So I want you to say the first thing that comes to your mind. What is your favourite place, space, or building in London, and why?

**Ruchi:** I have a few. But I think, of course, as an architect, there are amazing buildings across London and there's always one you look at and say, I think that's my new favourite. However, I think as I've evolved and placemaking, I think I really look at impact. And I think with that in mind, I think Gillet Square, which is in Hackney and which is, which is actually not a very overdesigned square but works incredibly well in terms of being holistic in its approach and it's delivery. I really find that very admirable.

And as a building, I always feel very peaceful when I enter the Tate because of how the ground floor is basically just an extension of the public realm, and anyone can just walk through and it's inspiring. So I think those two.

**Eliza:** Really good examples, and I think two that we've not had before. It's always quite nice to see people have very different responses to the city, based perhaps on their background, but also what a space might mean to them as well.

Second question, so obviously you're part of the Curation Panel this year and a big part of helping shape the theme of Reimagine. But I'm curious on a personal note, what does reimagine mean to you specifically?

**Ruchi:** I think being part of the LFA Curation Panel, and I think, you know, I'm going to dip into some of the conversations we had when we were picking the theme. I was extremely heartened by the variety of expertise in the room, which I think is the need of the hour. But I think reimagine to me, I think it's London particularly and I know the world, but London particularly is at various types of crises that we're talking about. There is of course climate action. There is, you know, the cost of living crisis, there is the housing crisis. And I think, you know, to me, that is also reflective of a number of constraints as we look at, you know, imagining our future. So I think for me reimagine is very much about working within those constraints, but actually being able to retrofit what is already a very rich city. It is a palimpsest of history, it is layers and layers of history, but being able to work within those constraints, but actually retrofit and reimagine how those areas could be to be much more impactful and work better for themselves and actually pivot the city towards making the right steps in the future that actually balances, you know, an approach to all different crises.

**Eliza:** And I think we spoke in that meeting a lot about the fact that we can't we start from scratch with many things that we need to rethink, reimagine. And actually, I think placemaking and reimaging can often go hand in hand, but I'd be quite keen, because placemaking I think some people might know the term, some people might think they know what the term means. But also, it can lead to a lot of different interpretations of what that means as a word, but also the outcomes of that. So really good place to start the conversation might be to think about, as a word and as a concept, how would you define placemaking?

**Ruchi:** Yeah, I think you're right. It's a word that's being talked about a lot, recently, and I think for the very same reasons that, you know, we have a variety of crises to deal with. And I think, to me, personally, placemaking becomes much more about a holistic approach to how we not only design spaces or places, but how we develop them, how we bring them forward, but also going on to post delivery, how we manage them. And ultimately, it is about all through the process being able to be impactful across various parts, you know, various aspects of that place. And I think, you know, I'm going to speak from the design and masterplanning background, I think, to me, it signifies a shift in the way we think, whether you know, traditionally going to architecture school, or actually working on masterplans with large clients or developers, we always talked about a very strong vision.

And I think that vision was very much always used to be about image, about, you know, what this place could be. And, you know, going back to my first point, when I introduced myself around, you know, why I moved to the public sector for a while was to understand why we end up with those visions, and I think placemaking is about stepping away from what we mean when we say vision. And it's not a rigid idea. It is a framework, it is a framework, where agility is extremely important, where you'd have to kind of tweak the balance on various aspects of place, down to, you know, how it's used, what kind of shops you should have there, how it is activated, who are the people we are really trying to impact here.

So it's very much about, you know, looking at that much more holistically. But also, it is, once you have discovered a broad framework of the what, it is very, very squarely about the how, how you take a project forward, how do you build trust? And I think, you know, like the New London Agenda talks about trust, and building trust is a big part because I was very heartened to see that actually, because, you know, I think the traditional approach to vision and building of you know, being very fixed about vision, has actually over time led to a lot of distrust and communities in these agencies of change, who bring about, you know, places and the creation of places, various to me, I think it is very much about now, having this broad framework that sets out an idea about not just what the space would look like, or the or, you know, feel like, but what is the experience of it? Who is it really helping?

And I think fundamentally, for me, the success of it lies in what is the free public offer within these places we create how do we make public assets work the hardest for themselves for the community, and that does not, that does not lend itself to a fixed vision, but much more about a framework, which is iterative, and a vision that is built over time. And as designers, I think it points to a much more flexible approach to design it's, it's looking at, you know, not as, like I said, not a straitjacket, but an agile framework where you kind of keep listening and you know, playing back and you know, no finished diagrams and no finished drawings anymore.

I don't think placemaking is drastically new concept. And I think, you know, it's something that people have done well over time. And I think it's only now that we're realizing that certain processes have done better than the others. I think for me working, you know, leading the placemaking team at Westminster, I think I led the design and creation and delivery of Strand Aldwych, and, you know, that's one of the first projects where we took a very strong placemaking approach, and the project was completely co-creative, over 70 stakeholders fed into the detailed design, but also, you know, down to the remit of the design being expanded, you know, going beyond the strand pulling in other areas, looking at how we're doing things on Aldwych as well.

But that's not where it started. It's where we tried some things out. But I think you know, for me, I've talked about Gillet square before, where, again, you know, that's a conversation that started in 1993, the square was delivered in 2006. I'm not saying it should take that long. But it was one of the first ones that actually started to take this placemaking approach in my mind, where actually, it took a parking lot in Dalston, which is, you know, is the 10% of the most deprived wards in the UK, an area of open space to efficiency, and started to really ask that question about impact. It's a square and, you know, I think the previous school of design would probably have done a very beautiful square, and gone with it. But I think this was much more about working with the community to understand what would actually make an impact. And I think it was quite amazing how that conversation started in 93.

And, you know, the questions about management being asked and led to the set-up of the corporate development, and then you know, the Gillet Square Association, etc. But beyond that, it became also a project beyond the public square. So the, you know, the dilapidated building became the jazz club, then that momentum started to, you know, there was the development to the north of the square, a mixed use development, which now has the public library at the ground floor. So it became much more about not just the Square itself, but how, as a community asset, it could work the hardest for itself. The design itself, I'm sure, you know, 15 years ago, looking at that very plan-based approach, I don't think it is one way you actually even talk about the design of it, because it works so, so well. And you always have a variety of people taking it over in different ways, but actually becomes a canvas for life to happen.

But I think Times Square New York where you know, which is of course, known as the crossroads of the world, that's not a project that came out of, you know, one vision it came from, it was a whole journey, there was you know, what people don't know was there was a real pushback against the project, when it first came about, because the traders were extremely worried about, you know, traffic and lack of parking, therefore, their shops not getting revenue. And what they started with was a meanwhile, approach to looking at, you know, the space itself. And, you know, that conversation, when it started, it was a meanwhile it, they shut five blocks of the road, they put up a very basic art installation, but actually monitored it. And what they found was a 71% increase in revenue of shops, better safety, and it helped to build trust around.

And what you see as the final scheme now is, again, iterative and a build-up of what happened there. So I think, you know, these are examples that I think again, it's much more about the process than the product. And that's very much the lessons we took forward. When we worked on strand all which were again, we were very blessed to have an amazing stakeholder group and very high calibre stakeholder group. But what was also a joint ambition around there was this acknowledgment that a lot of amazing culture amazing, you know, kind of art sits behind walls that people don't necessarily know about. And it this was about blurring those boundaries between the inside and the outside, and how do we actually start to bring that culture out?

**Eliza:** That's really great. And actually, there's two things I want to pick up on that. The first, so this idea of meanwhile, what do you think is the kind of important in the value of meanwhile projects, and obviously like the term placemaking, meanwhile projects get thrown around? For people who aren't sure what does that term mean? How would you define meanwhile projects?

**Ruchi:** I would define meanwhile projects as temporary projects that you bring forward into various places or areas and I think you know, to actually be effective they have to be driven by impact. I absolutely love meanwhile, projects because I think they provide, especially festivals such as the LFA, where of course, when I was at Westminster, we did an LFA installation on the canal in Harrow Road.

I think, you know, where places and changing places is ongoing and should be an ongoing long conversation, I think meanwhile projects provide a very important milestone in that conversation, it's almost a little pause, to reflect, to look at proof of concept, and you have the freedom to say you haven't got it all right.

To me, it signifies an openness in approach. Besides that, being able to engage people into that. So whether it's through not just the design, but how you programme it, what activities happen there, and actually being able to understand and stepping back from perhaps something you've been thinking about for years,

but actually stepping back and taking a very objective look at it, and understanding what's working and what's not. And taking that data, but building upon it, using that trial, to look at what you could do much more long term. As an example, investments, we brought on LFA and we did the meanwhile intervention along the canal. If you see the canal, you know, from Paddington, and you walk through Little Venice, when you walk towards Harrow Road, the experience drastically diminishes.

And we really, this was something that was being talked about for a long time, but the community, and really it was about putting that installation in working with local, you know, the community, local organizations to program it, but also in a way to open up the conversation beyond Westminster with and bring in Canal and Rivers Trust, who would be a big partner in it.

And it actually gives you a project and specifics to be able to talk about, because many times, as we all know, all public bodies are stretched under a lot of pressure. And it's not worldwide, a project or an area might be a priority for one body, it not necessarily is for the other. And it really provides a very, very good platform to bring those conversations together, and actually set up or actually tweak the process for the future and get to permanence. So the LFA intervention in 2018, which was just a test of what we could do with the towpath now is getting to a permanent canalside strategy on North Paddington, which is a priority for Westminster. And I think that that conversation about the limit to how far we can go in certain places doesn't happen till you actually take a moment to do that proof of concept. But also, it also means if to me, it also is an opportunity to create a strong database in a moment of time. It is you can use the time that a meanwhile project is in to actually understand the change in condition that you have enabled by putting that meanwhile project in.

**Eliza:** Yeah, and I think you've picked up on something that was really interesting, which is about that it doesn't have to be perfect. But it's an opportunity to test out ideas to get the feedback from other people who it will impact, ultimately, and what would you feel is the biggest challenge, there might be a few different ones. Is there a particular challenge, which goes across almost all placemaking projects that you've been involved with?

**Ruchi:** Yeah, I think the biggest challenge, particularly, I think we are at the other space of transition in the built environment in London. And I think good transition, because I think, you know, we have come from a time and you know, within my career, I've seen a time of mega projects, we've all heard about mega projects, you know, and big vision coming in London, we've come from that time of mega projects, and now to a time of, you know, a much more considered approach about what is absolutely needed, and what is it that we're trying to actually do here as opposed to making a beautiful pretty place.

And I think in there, I think the previous approach did lead to a little bit of loss of trust in the profession of designers, because I think and also the way we are trained, I think traditionally has been about you know, you take a brief, you go, you design it you have this you know, 'tada' vision moment and you know, you go meeting to meeting or you know, presentation to presentation. And I think that has been quite detrimental with respect to trust in the past. So I think the challenge is when I started at least to do you know, placemaking for Westminster was gaining that trust back to do actually say that we are here to listen but and be believed that we're here to listen. I don't think political cycles in in councils particular Lily held that because of course, depending on political priorities, the conversation in a place will ebb and flow, you know, a certain place will be a priority for one administration, and it isn't, you know, it is lesser of a priority for the other. And I think that's where I think being able to establish what it is that would make a place a success, establishing those parameters of success very early on with the players, with the community, but with also people who would be custodians of that place in the future. And I think that approach really helps to, you know, continue to chip away at that vision, even when it is lesser of a priority, because you have created your custodians, you have brought people in, but that shift has been more recent, and it does take a lot of work to buy that trust, and bring that trust in and get that buy in. And I think that's where place things like LFA become extremely important.

**Eliza:** Yeah, and just thinking on that point of transition to the NLA has just published the New London Agenda, which sets out sort of the key pillars for placemaking. And you've obviously mentioned trust, which is a big part of that as well. And for those who aren't aware, the pillars, the pillars that are set out in the Agenda are focusing on health, planning for future generations, thinking beyond boundaries, valuing diversity, leveraging innovation and working in partnership. I'm curious, beyond trust, or including trust, what is the most important aspect of this when moving forward and thinking about how we build cities, which are inclusive, sustainable, equitable?

**Ruchi:** I think for me, you know, it is about the process we go through to make change, I think, you know, all the aspects that you talked about there, I think these I mean, for every Londoner or cities or city-dweller, or you know, every kind of urban resident. All of these are not just, you know, broader aspirations, but also can easily translate to your own personal aspirations from your city. And I think that's what is really great about the New London Agenda, it seems to be speaking a language that goes across practitioners, but also people who are in those areas of change, and you know, the community itself. I think it is, you know, understanding or working very early on, to understand, in very basic terms, we are trying to make a change in this place. What is it that we're trying to fix, fundamentally? And what would what are those fundamental things that if we fix, it would be a successful project.

And I think that right at the beginning of the project, and being able to check that back, consistently, using those metrics quite consistently, is very important. So you know, you know, and I'm going to borrow from, I'm very fascinated by, you know, the tech world and the digital world, because there, again, change is more immediate, it's quite quick. And I think one thing that they look at, across all products, and I've borrowed this from colleagues who, who do who do a lot of digital work, is, you know, always looking at the feasibility, the usability and the profitability of a product. Now, now profitability. And I think, you know, the, the New London Agenda also talks about prosperity, I think, you know, these are great words, but I think in terms of defining that with the community, what does profitability really mean? Of course, for the, for the people putting in the money to bring that change, it is about great return on investment, but the return on investment, many times for them is socioeconomic, it's about and that's where actually profitability is no longer a distressful word with the community. But it is almost something that can be defined with the community. The feasibility of it, of course, goes back to the technical parts of it, you know, how do we work with traffic? How do we work with urban design? How do we work with landscape to actually understand what is doable here?

And then comes the usability of it, the vision going back to the experience, would people actually use it? And being able to ask those questions, and I've been using that for years now, where I asked that question at every stage of the project two years down the line, are we where we said we would be on these three aspects? So to me, it is much more about a holistic approach and being able to establish very early on what would make this a successful project all round, and being able to because in a process that is super agile, it's very easy to lose sight of the goal here and I think there needs to be certain anchors to pull the success of places and metrics there. So I think for me that that but it's the way I would approach that.

**Eliza:** So Fede, I am really keen to bring you into the conversation now, we just touched on some of the key pillars of the New London Agenda. But I thought, actually, could you give us a wider background to these pillars and how they came about and what the whole agenda is really for?

**Federico:** Yeah, so the New London Agenda is a framework for best practice in city-making. It was created by NLA. And it was really a collective effort. It was led by our Sounding Board. And they've met and worked together, together with our expert panels over the last 18 months. And across all our panels and committees, we have around 400 people. So it is really this collective initiative, we'd like to think of it as a movement as well going forward. And it also draws on our work from the last eight years or so, what it's trying to do is to set out how we as a built environment community, as a sector and an industry can work together to have the most positive impact on London, especially as we enter kind of a new cycle of London's development, if we think especially this year with mayoral elections, but also



potentially national elections. So it's really a for us, it was a key moment in London's development and future development to produce this framework. And hopefully, yeah, that everyone can get behind it and start using it going forward.

**Eliza:** And I think you've just touched on it just then. But why is the agenda important, and particularly why now?

**Federico:** Yeah, the idea was to have this agenda as an open framework that also helps us reposition the NLA in a way that people can see us as we know, we, you know, we represent, we convene, we bring people together, we bring this built environment community together. So we wanted to show how this as a collective agenda can also help us, you know, take collective responsibility for our actions, and to especially again, in this current climate, in terms of the political landscape, to demonstrate how we, as an industry can be a good partner to political leaders, and how we can collectively deliver a better city for all Londoners.

**Eliza:** Amazing, and now the agenda is launched, which is really exciting. Obviously, it is an amazing piece of work as it is. But the idea of metrics came up earlier with Ruchi, how are we trying to use the agenda to really think about how we measure kind of impact and how we use it beyond just a document that is there for the now how do we kind of look back each year or every so often to really think about how we are using this framework most successfully?

**Federico:** Yep, that's a really good question. And it's something that we've already kind of started thinking when we started putting the agenda together. So really, it's not just another document, another toolkit or framework. We really want first, we encourage everyone to use the framework to help shape the wrong kind of work and approaches to work, to test the agenda to use the framework to kind of run projects through the agenda to see how they can improve, they can use the agenda to get to try to get this kind of positive impact in the city. And then in particular, we as NLA London's built government community, so we as part of the agenda as well, we presented these kinds of actions that we proposed going forward as part of the agenda. So especially in the next kind of four years, and next cycle of the next mayor, I guess, we'll be using the agenda to shape all our actions.

It has in the past kind of shaped our programme and all our content. But now we will do this in a more structured, formal way by having this this framework. So yeah, now we want to put the agenda into practice. And one of the first things that will be kind of at the heart of the new investment prospectus, which is led by Opportunity London. And so that framework is really part of the this new investment prospectus that we're launching. We also announced already in the launch of the agenda, a new

ideas competition called Reimagine London, and it's a big international call out for new ideas, new visions for London, and we'll use the framework as a kind of guideline and asking people to respond to the framework and to think of this bold new visions for the future of London.

And then the other kind of program that we're really excited about is our Future Citymakers Programme. And that is, as well as kind of building upon the work that we've been doing already. So this is bringing together our Learning, Next Gen and Diverse Leaders work. And it's bringing all together under one program that uses the agenda as well to to guide it's, it's the work, and it's really to bring new diverse talent into the industry overall.

**Eliza:** Amazing and you've mentioned as part of that it's really a toolkit and a framework to test out and see whether this is the best approach and across the industry. If it is successful, what is your biggest hopes and ambitions for the agenda, what would success look like?

**Federico:** I think that the idea would be to see the success of the agenda being used as a framework for anyone across the industry – whether you're an architect, a developer, a local authority or a planner. To incorporate some of those principles in your day-to-day work. But obviously the most positive impact will be to see the effect in real life. Seeing it bringing positive change to London and to Londoners in their day-to-day lives. Seeing what the agenda can do in real life and seeing concrete examples of best practice and projects.

We are thinking as well that part of the programme will have to do with demonstrator districts, so it's something we're working on at the moment where we're seeing good things and where we're seeing things that are perhaps not working so well, and where we can work well together to change that using the Agenda as a framework to test some of the issues, the challenges, and also the opportunities and the possibilities where we see some of these places.

**Eliza:** I guess that idea of examples that have worked well and haven't worked well ties into some of our upcoming research that we're doing as well. Do you want to talk a bit about Public London briefly?

**Federico:** Yeah. So Public London is a book that we're working on at the moment. It's quite a unique book that will collate 20 years of best practice in placemaking or activation of public spaces. We will launch the book during the London Festival of Architecture and it's the 20 year anniversary of the LFA this year, so we thought it was a great moment to use the festival to frame these ideas of best practice in

placemaking, cultural activation and rethinking public spaces. To look back on what has changed in London in the past 20 years, but also to think about the future and what a good, engaging, accessible public space should look like in London today and going forward.

**Eliza:** We're going to bring it back to the word that we started with – placemaking. Looking ahead, you've just mentioned the future of placemaking. What does the future of placemaking look like for you?

**Federico:** I think these terms are useful for the industry and when we present, develop, or design projects, and is ultimately part of the lexicon or language that we use as an industry. I think the most important thing is to not get too stuck in that kind of language or the vocabulary that we use. It's more about how we can improve every day, in this case public spaces, to make Londoners' lives better, healthier.

**Ruchi:** I think it looks exciting. More recently one of my clients is the LSE who are considering how they look at their very urban campus and how it can work much better for itself and the public realm. They already have been creating buildings which are open and have completely accessible ground floors. I think already you can see that shift of approach.

I think what gets really exciting for me now is the way we use data, and I think the bringing data in to this holistic approach. Especially with the coming of AI you have a lot of data that's out there, but it's very easy now to understand when you look at an urban analysis of an area it's no longer about looking at a map and saying that's where the crossings are so that's where people must be crossing. We know that's not true, we know that people actually use desire lines. So I think for me the play between places and data is going to be a very exciting place we start to get into. It also helps make that process more transparent. Again, the Agenda talks about building trust and transparency and I think you know data which is going to be much more ubiquitous but also much for easy to put forward as fact, and it helps us to have that conversation not from that place of perception, but much more from that place of again finding another anchor that we can put our ideas against and actually look at holistic change in the future. So for me I think the thing that's going to get very exciting is how we use data, and bringing that back to this multidisciplinary industry, alongside communities.

**Eliza:** I think that's really important and in the very near future we have the festival coming up in June and as part of that we have our call for events, but also a Call to Action where we're asking people to respond to the theme of reimagine quite

physically and practically and think about their local areas. Is there something you'd particularly like to see from organisers?

**Ruchi:** What I'd love to see more and more is a mix of strategic thinking think about the sort of action is there a particular something in particular to see from organisers project it's a mix of strategic thinking about you know really being making the most of this moment in time of testing and I think for that there needs to be strong strategic thinking going okay, we are reimagining this area but when this festival goes away what is it that you know we're really trying to solve? I think it going back to that point of why getting the why is very important so that is important whether it's a meanwhile project, whether it serves you know a full blown but I think you know it is also important that have fun you know use that moment to have fun, do things that you probably won't be able to do permanently, but at the same time not losing sight of that goal so you know I think it it's a real opportunity to bring forward you know some of the ways we use sustainable materials. How we could look at three years now we know that all these projects you know ultimately you are there going to be dismantled after part time what happens after that?

And really there is a huge element of storytelling here for me how would that area speak about this moment in time in this kind of journey of change that to this potentially going through and I and you know there's some really exciting proposals coming forward many of which you know I'm actually involved in judging and it's so exciting to see the remit go from much more you know not just objects that are being designed but much more about a strategy to a place. And I think there's an opportunity there do not lose sight of that long term goal and find ways to almost tie what's happening in this moment of time to where it could go in the future, but most importantly it's a moment to be very playful with it which is very exciting about it.

**Eliza:** Picking up on your idea of play I'll there was one expect a placemaking, or one area in London that you like to reimagine, what might that be?

**Ruchi:** I think you know we've benefited from such amazing practitioners in London over years and years we have some of the most iconic architects, urban designers, masterplanners, and you know I always think of the Trafalgar Square, the first project where actually we could close down the road but actually that that idea of Trafalgar Square is a vision that goes down you know all the way down to the river and the broader vision was actually how we look at the entire north of the of the riverfront you know to me I think that's you know that has already been imagined and there is a part of it that was delivered around you know in the millennium but i think there is I think there is I would love to pick up that vision but actually break it down let's see how much further but and I don't mean not like as a competition to sound like I did it completely different you know things but I think there's a real opportunity there in terms of how we stitch the centre of London together in a very

cohesive healthy travel, walking, cycling because walking through London is perhaps the most favourite activity.

**Eliza:** And Fede?

**Federico:** I think there's a lot of potential with this, I've even just have been trying to get more involved in even where I live in Walthamstow to really to think how you get engaged their everyday lives where they lives daily basis. So I think there's a really great opportunity for everyone working, not just in the industry, but people living in London, to engage and for local authorities to see that engagement to really transform high streets and town centres things. The high street is the place that brings together all of these things, that brings together public spaces, transport, housing, workplaces and then in terms of different sectors if you want but also that's where you see all the issues I think that you know if it's the place that is not successful let's say you will see that probably it has problems with accessibility, with air pollution, with affordability, not enough opportunities for local people. So there are a lot of issues that you can see on the high streets our town centres and I think it's an exciting opportunity to change that reality and I think it starts with the everyday. It doesn't have to be grand gestures as well, obviously masterplans and local authorities helps but I think it is transforming that everyday.

**Eliza:** If people want to find out more about the wider work that's going on to the projects you mentioned, how can they do that?

**Federico:** Yes so everyone can download the New London Agenda from website at [nla.london](http://nla.london). We also have a kind of smaller printed version of the Agenda that is executive summary, so people can get copies of that at The London Centre and then the when you download the agenda there also more resources attached to it so all our expert panels have produced different white papers that are part of the Agenda and they have been submitted to the GLA London Programme as part of their review of the London plan. So they're more specific, sometimes more technical, so there are different levels to the agenda.

**Eliza:** Ruchi, if anyone is curious, where can they find out about the projects you're working on?

**Ruchi:** So I'm at a very exciting place in my career right now where I have moved on from Westminster and I'm working as a consultant. I haven't quite got a website and everything together, but watch this space though, it is coming very soon, but in the

meantime please find me on LinkedIn and I'm you know I am currently working as myself and I am more than you know very happy to collaborate across that is different disciplines or whether different land owners to actually help them intelligently client placemaking.

**Eliza:** Right well I think that's all the time we have left, big thank you to Ruchi and Federico for being part of this conversation around placemaking. If this conversation got you inspired to learn more or be part of the festival for this year, head to the LFA website to find out how you can get involved. We will be back next month with a brand new podcast. Until then if you like this episode, why not give it a like? Make sure to give us a follow on Spotify, Apple Podcasts or wherever you find your favourite conversations.

Until next time!