

Institution: University College London		
Unit of Assessment: 13 – Architecture, Built Environment and Planning		
Title of case study: A new paradigm for design governance leadership: how the Place Alliance became a champion of place quality in England		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2011-2018		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Matthew Carmona	Professor of Planning and Urban Design	1998-present
Claudio de Magalhães	Professor of Urban Management and Regeneration	1999-present
Lucy Natarajan	Lecturer	2012-present
Valentina Giordano	Lecturer	2014-present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014-2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)		
<p>Bartlett researchers have explored urban design governance, notably the work of the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), an executive non-departmental public body of the UK government. Having theorised and then investigated urban design governance tools, such as the use of evidence, campaigning and advocacy, UCL established the Place Alliance, which is now an influential design governance voice in the UK. It has: i) helped to fill an evidence gap for design quality in the urban development processes; ii) provided leadership through a new networked approach to design quality advocacy; and, iii) profoundly influenced the development of design policy nationally and locally.</p>		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)		
<p>The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) was an executive non-departmental public body of the UK government, established in 1999 to drive forward design quality in the built environment across the UK. Working in collaboration with architects, designers and planners, CABE advised government on key issues relating to the built environment, focusing on the promotion of high-quality urban design. In 2011, public funding was cut to CABE leaving a leadership gap caused by the absence of a national champion for better design.</p> <p>A team led by Carmona secured funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) to examine CABE's work and impact. This research focussed in particular on the informal design governance tools developed and used by CABE and how these tools might also prove effective outside of the realm of government.</p> <p>Conducted between January 2013 and August 2014, the research employed an inductive methodology to learn from the specifics of practice and apply that to an integrated theory of design governance. Such insights were notably absent from the urban design and planning literature at the time, with most urban design studies focussing on the utility of single tools for design governance in particular circumstances, rather than on the interrelationships between tools and on the processes used to decide when to use one in preference to another.</p> <p>The research delivered: i) a new theoretical framework for urban design governance [b]; ii) a review of 2,868 source documents relating to the work of CABE; iii) 39 in-depth interviews with key protagonists in the CABE story; iv) 24 'Reunion' focus groups examining particular tools and episodes of CABE's work; and v) a comprehensive synthesis of the work [a, d].</p>		

UCL produced the first full account of the range of CABE tools, programmes, projects, people and relationships – a comprehensive review of the key outputs from CABE’s various programmes. The researchers found that failing to utilize informal urban design governance tools means that those shaping the quality of the built environment are constrained in doing so—particularly for projects and place-specific design decisions [b].

Drawing from the experiences of CABE to address the question, ‘how should design governance be conducted?’, the research shows that design governance approaches are dependent on context, scale, leadership, intentions, and resources. Recognising this diversity, and shaping tools to meet each challenge, nationally, or locally, was the great strength of CABE. Analysis of the CABE toolkit (the Royal Fine Arts Commission before it, and market-led processes afterwards) [e, f] revealed that those responsible for the built environment should fully embrace informal as well as formal modes of design governance, considering such processes as part of a long-term, necessary societal investment [c].

The research was awarded the Association of European Schools of Planning (AESOP) prize for the Best Published Paper in 2018 (for [c]), after being short-listed for the same prize in 2017 (for [b]). The book, [a] was shortlisted for a National Urban Design Award in 2018. The Place Alliance won the Royal Town Planning Institute’s 2016 Sir Peter Hall Research award for wider engagement, and in 2020 was selected as one of the United Nations Case Studies for the International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning (IG-UTP).

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

- a) Carmona, M., C. de Magalhães, and L. Natarajan. (2017). *Design Governance, The CABE Experiment*. New York: Routledge.
- b) Carmona, M. (2017). Design Governance: Theorising an Urban Design Sub-field. *Journal of Urban Design* 21(6): 705–730. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13574809.2016.1234337>
- c) Carmona, M. (2016). The Formal and Informal Tools of Design Governance. *Journal of Urban Design* 22(1): 1–36. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13574809.2016.1234338>
- d) Carmona, M., De Magalhaes, C. & Natarajan, L., (2018). Design governance the CABE way, its effectiveness and legitimacy. *Journal of Urbanism: International Research on Placemaking and Urban Sustainability*, 11(1): 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17549175.2017.1341425>
- e) Carmona, M., (2018). Marketizing the governance of design: design review in England. *Journal of Urban Design*, 24(4): 523-555 <https://doi.org/10.1080/13574809.2018.1533373>
- f) Carmona, M., and Andrew Renninger. (2017). “The Royal Fine Art Commission and Seventy-five Years of English Design Review, The First 60 Years, 1924–1984.” *Planning Perspectives*, 33(1): 53-73 <https://doi.org/10.1080/02665433.2016.1278398>; The Final 15 Years, 1984-1999, 32(4): 577-599 <https://doi.org/10.1080/02665433.2017.1286609>

Grants: *Evaluating the governance of design in the built environment - the CABE experiment and beyond*, AHRC: GBP252,509 (AH/J013706/1)

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

With the aim of filling the leadership gap left by CABE’s closure, Bartlett researchers led on the establishment in 2014 of an independent not-for-profit initiative: The Place Alliance. Having first informed a critique of the *Farrell Review* (2015), UCL researchers hosted debates (BIG MEET) through which the Place Alliance emerged and, in February 2015, more than 100 professionals from 77 organisations in the UK’s architecture, design and built environment industry endorsed this cross-sector collaborative network. UCL research informed the approach, tools and initiatives underpinning how the alliance seeks to influence the national place quality agenda through the use of formal and informal urban design governance tools [b, c].

The Place Alliance has had impact in three ways, through: the evidence base it provides for national and local decision-making; the design leadership it offers via its unique networked approach; and the influence it has on national and local policy.

4.1 Filling an evidence gap for design quality in development practice

The Place Alliance has become a key source in policy-making, and day-to-day decision-making, publishing evidence-based reports and knowledge tools on design governance. Place Value Wiki is a notable example.

Place Value Wiki

The Place Value Wiki is a collaborative online tool focused on place quality and its health, and social, economic and environmental value [1]. The wiki is a collective resource, accessed by around 250 unique users per month. It is open to all researchers to add and edit evidence for use by practitioners and others. Using technology, the wiki in effect continues CABE's former workstream on measuring urban design value. It provided a knowledge baseline for *Place Value and the Ladder of Place Quality* [2], a guide for defining critical aspects of quality for public policy-making.

The Head of Urban Design and Landscape Architecture at Milton Keynes Council used the Place Value Wiki when developing the Milton Keynes Futures 2050 project. "In envisioning this future," he stated, "we believe it is important to recognise the value of this growth as regards health, social, economic and environmental outcomes. To do this we reviewed the evidence gathered by the Place Alliance and its culmination in the *Ladder of Place Quality*" [3, p. 53].

In 2020, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme commissioned a talk on Place Value from Carmona for the Global Urban Lectures series [4], and a programme officer at UN-Habitat commented that "*The Ladder of Place Quality* provides elements that can be used within the framework of our own raising awareness campaign" [3, p.64].

4.2 Advocating for design quality through a network approach

Using insights from the CABE analysis, The Place Alliance has brought a new collaborative, completely open and inclusive approach to the leadership of urban design governance, notably in the neutral space in its events and activities (e.g. 1,200 participants across ten themed 'BIG MEETS' [3]). A Senior Planning Manager in the Welsh Government remarked that "Place Alliance helps me understand the wide range of stakeholders available to drive awareness of placemaking and helps deliver change on the ground, both politically and in practice" [3 p.38].

One way the Place Alliance delivers this change is through facilitating community engagement for projects such as the Shad Thames Area Management Partnership (STAMP). The Chair of STAMP stated: "Through various Place Alliance events we connected with several professionals who are interested in engaging with us and supporting our work. [...] Engaging with Place Alliance confirmed to me, even without us having design expertise, that local knowledge and understanding are valued" [3 p.55].

Housing Design Audit for England

This approach has helped to build coalitions of interest around initiatives and ideas, for example in '*A Housing Design Audit for England*' [5]. The Place Alliance organised Design Audits of 142 large scale developments across England, supported by the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE), Home Builders Federation as well as the Academy of Urbanism, Civic Voice, Design Council, Urban Design Group and the UK Green Building Council. The Urban Design Director at Barratt Developments noted that it: "shed[s] light on what housebuilders are developing, what are the constraints behind the developers delivering good design, and how could there be more constancy in housing delivery" [3 p.58]. The audit

also underpinned the work of the Building Better Building Beautiful Commission, an independent body that advised government on how to promote and increase the use of high-quality design for new build homes and neighbourhoods [6].

4.3 Influencing design quality policy nationally and locally

The Place Alliance has fundamentally helped to shift the debate about, and national and local priority given to, design quality. Its 2017 report, *'Design Skills in English Local Planning Authorities'* [7], led the UK Government to redirect a share of the GBP11,000,000 Planning Delivery Fund of that year into a specific Design Quality Fund. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Head of Architecture states: "Place Alliance brings together industry and design sector businesses to provide research and insights on the design of the built environment. These can be beneficial for policymakers involved in the built environment. [...] UCL [...] provides a necessary academic foundation" [3 p.63].

Reviewing Design Review in London

Working with Urban Design London and the Greater London Authority, the Place Alliance examined the operation of design review through *Reviewing Design Review in London*. Published in 2018, the research significantly informed the Mayor of London's *London Quality Review Charter* [8]. A Senior Urban Designer at London Borough of Enfield remarked, "The research has helped design officers make the case for the benefits of design review to the council, increasing its use and ability to raise the standard of design across the borough" [3 p.15]. The Executive Director at Civic Voice stated: "The connection with an independent academic organisation enables us to have evidence-based and responsive discussions nationally. [...] The research into design review and the role of Councillors has been particularly valuable to us and we invited Place Alliance to present their research findings in parliamentary events that we ran" [3 p.59].

A Design Quality Unit for England

The Place Alliance instigated and led a campaign to set up a new national body to lead on design quality in England, supported by key stakeholders, such as the Academy of Urbanism, CPRE, and the Design Council. Central to this were *Delivering Urban Quality, Time to Get Serious* and *Towards a Design Quality Unit for England* [9] – based on Bartlett research. The Place Alliance led the initiative and brought together a consortium that included the Academy of Urbanism, CPRE, Civic Voice, Design Council, Design Network, Trees & Design Action Group, and the Urban Design Group. This secured commitment from the UK government to establish such a body in the 2020 Planning White Paper and in early 2021 the Office for Place was announced [10].

From its foundation out of a critique of the *Farrell Review*, informed by the underpinning research, Place Alliance has continued to use that research to structure an evolving work programme which has been hugely influential in providing national leadership and driving significant policy change in the planning and design of the built environment.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

1. *Place Value Wiki* <https://bit.ly/30WtO6s>
2. *Place Value and the Ladder of Place Quality*, 2019 <https://bit.ly/3tL06ht>
3. *The Place Alliance 5 Year Review*, 2019 <https://bit.ly/3eOHylM>
4. *Global Urban Lecture Series*, 2020 (available on YouTube) <https://bit.ly/3tAaLeO>
5. Carmona, M., Alwarea, A., Giordana, V., Gusseinova, A., Olaleye, F., *A Housing Design Audit for England*, 2020 <https://adobe.ly/3twqhrL>
6. *Living with Beauty: report of the Building Better Building Beautiful Commission*, 2020 <https://bit.ly/3cORZJT>
7. *Design Skills in English Local Planning Authorities*, Urban Design Group and Place Alliance <https://adobe.ly/3eSxfmU>
8. *London Quality Review Charter*, Mayor of London <https://bit.ly/3tBpfl5>

9. *Delivering Urban Quality, Time to Get Serious and Towards a Design Quality Unit for England*, 2020 <https://bit.ly/2NtSKiF>
10. Gardiner, Joey. *What we know about the government's new design advisory body*, Planning Resource <https://bit.ly/39aumuj>