Humanitarian settlement planning: a review and recommendations

Simon Watkins and Paul Bröker for Re-Alliance
March 2024

Contents

Introduction

A B

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Purpose:

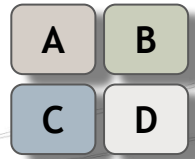***To generate recommendations for producing a viable toolkit supporting International NGOs and community responders in devising plans for regenerative humanitarian settlements, suitable to be tested in two contrasting real scenarios.***

This preliminary study prepares the ground for a workshop of practitioners in the field to discuss and refine recommendations, to be held at Coventry University from 21st to 24th March 2024. This hybrid presentation/report will support the workshop with background information and recommended talking points for discussion.

We are seeking <u>insights</u> from published materials, <u>lessons learned</u> from implementation of existing guidance where available and <u>understanding of the real challenges</u> facing communities and managers of humanitarian settlements.

Introduction
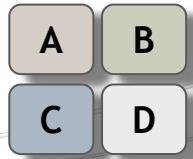
Parameters and limitations

This literature review is...

- a survey of guidance and practises applicable to spatial planning and design for humanitarian settlements
- focus on how these guides and practises support regenerative capacity
- desk-based, high-level analysis - more questions than answers
- carried out by non-specialists with some background knowledge
- a 'rapid review' of relevant information

It is not...

- an academic text
- a practice guide in its own right
- a critique of any existing text
- carried out by practitioners with current first-hand field experience

Introduction
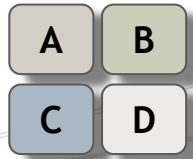
About us

Simon Watkins CMLI, holds a Masters in Food Security Management from Coventry University's Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience (CAWR) (2015). Thesis focussed on 'Re-envisioning refugee camps as regenerative and productive landscapes'. Subsequent work visiting camps in northern Iraq and supporting CAWR research on positive management of kitchen water in Gawilan camp, Iraq. Landscape Architect member of the Humanitarian Landscape Collective. Operations Co-ordinator for the Conflict and Environment Observatory.

Paul Bröker is an urban planner and landscape architect. He holds Masters in Urban Design & City Planning from UCL and Environmental Architecture from the Royal College of Art. His most recent thesis was on food-focussed landscape planning for an Indigenous community in Borneo. He recently joined the landscape team at Arup from UN-Habitat, having worked in the urban regeneration team. He also works as a consultant with the Snowchange Cooperative.

Introduction
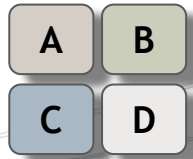
Overarching methodology

1. Scanning for relevant documentation
2. Filtering based on
   - proximity to subject
   - purpose
   - currency
   - whether referenced by more recent work examined in this analysis
3. Qualitative mapping of documents with respect to
   - Format and level of detail
   - context of use
   - spatial scale
   - design stage
4. Organisation into groups according to stage of crisis/settlement (see slide 10)
5. Analysis of topics addressed to identify areas of weak coverage
6. Suggestions for alternative guidance addressing these areas
7. Recommendations for avenues to be addressed by workshop
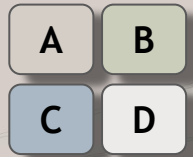
SECTION A / THE CHALLENGE

The Challenge

**Why consider settlement planning?**

At the end of 2024, <u>110 million people</u> were displaced from their homes, either as refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced people (IDPs) or other people of concern. This represents a 348% increase since the millennium.

Figures UNHCR, via statista.com

others of concern

internally displaced

asylum seekers

refugees

2000   2010   2020
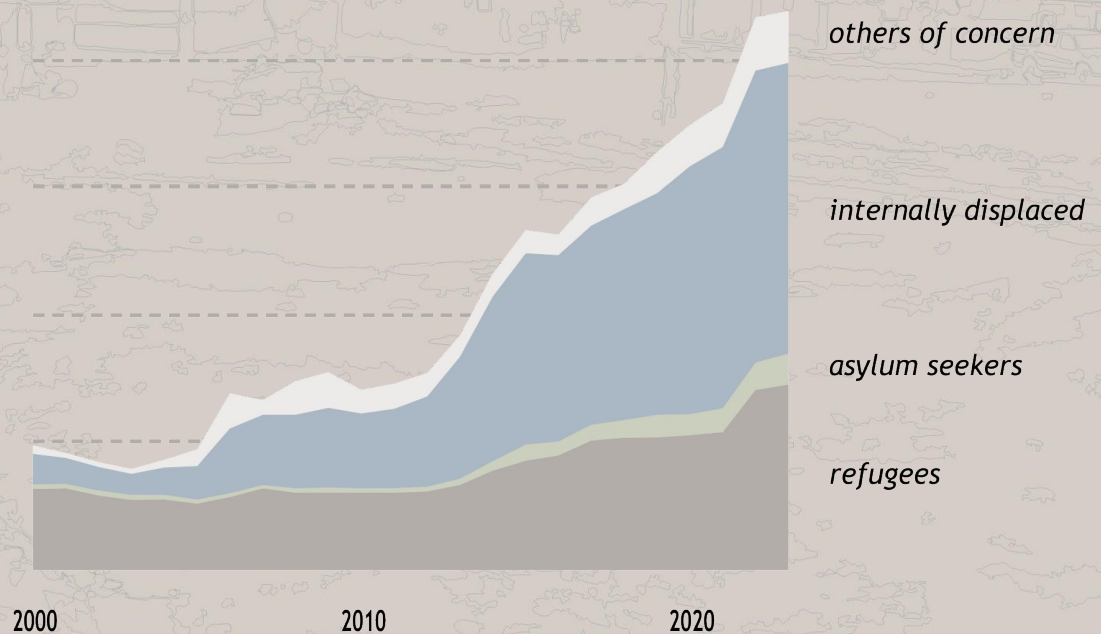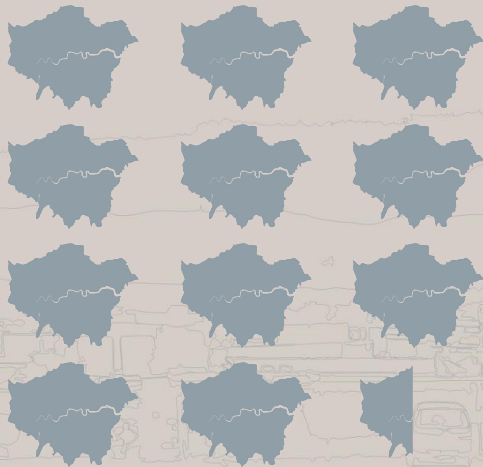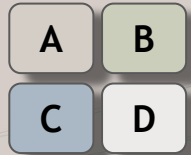
The Challenge

110 million people is the number of people living in London 11.4 times over. **It's the population of Egypt.**

How do we ensure, with limited resources, human and environmental health for such a large number of people?

How do we manage potential impacts on land, environmental resources, waste streams, local economies, social integration and political stability?

Whose challenge is this? - international & national agencies, local governments or communities?

What guidance exists to help?

(not to scale)

The Challenge

'Humanitarian settlements'

We define as:

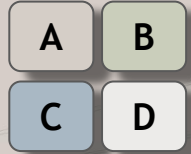*Any settlement intended to house refugees, asylum seekers or IDPs*

whether officially planned and sanctioned (managed camps) or created by the displaced people themselves (self-settled/spontaneous camps).

Dheisheh camp, Bethlehem established 1949

Domiz I camp, northern Iraq, established 2012

The Challenge

'Humanitarian settlements' contd.

Managed and self-settled camps tend to be radically different in character but both share common challenges of sanitation, food distribution, space, access and security.

- Both tend to develop organically after their initial creation or emergence.
- Both develop the characteristics of communities and internal economies.
- Both may be served by external aid organisations.
- Both are home to traumatised people.

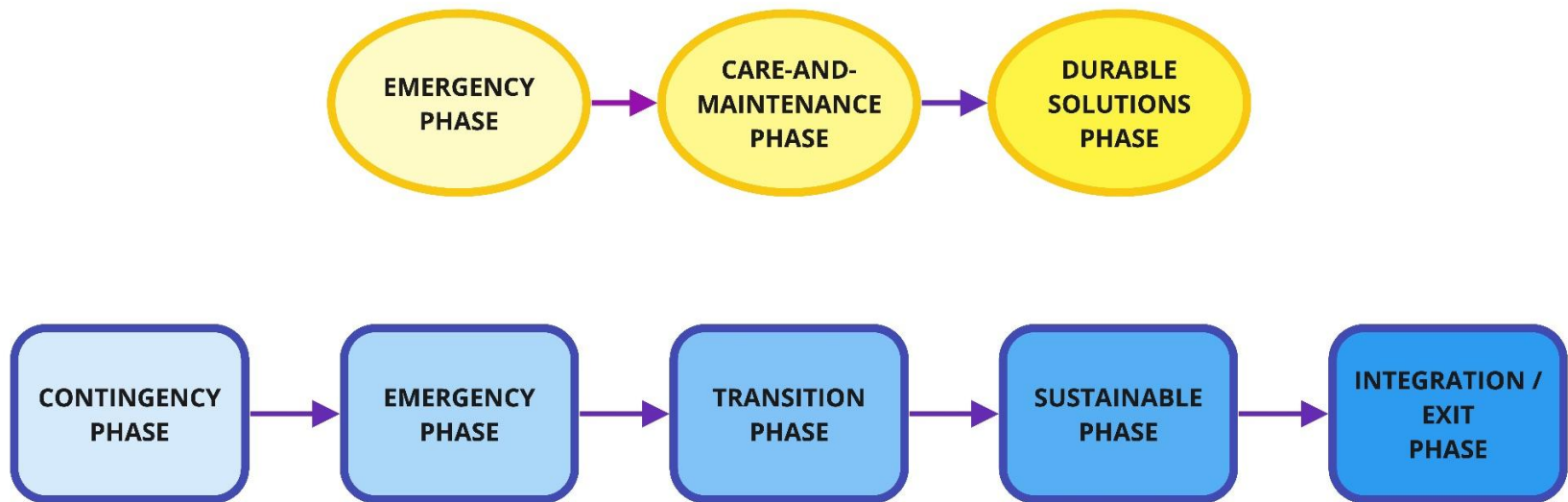Humanitarian settlements may be transient; many become permanent.

Calais 'Jungle' (now demolished)

Nicolas Pinault (VOA)

The Challenge

Humanitarian settlement development timeline

The Challenge

Conditions in settlements (and some solutions - UNHCR reports)

Public health challenges: Sudan 2023; Covid, Bangladesh 2020

Insecurity: Cameroon 2020; Burkino Faso 2020

Water scarcity: Bangladesh 2019

Overcrowding: Tanzania 2015; Iraq 2017

Educational challenges: Bangladesh 2022

Sewage: Haiti 2010

Limited humanitarian funding

UNHCR budgets increasing overall but diminishing relative to scale of the challenge: $110 per displaced person in 2015 ;$96 in 2024

Waste water from Domiz I camp, Iraq

The Challenge

And evidence of innovation and human resilience

Agriculture, Kakuma camp, Kenya 2023

Creative arts, Za'atari camp, Jordan 2023

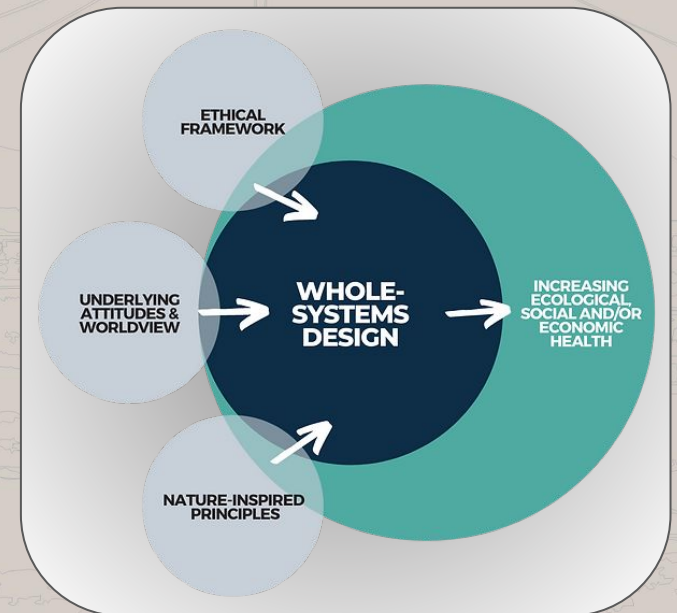*Domestic food growing, Domiz I camp, Iraq*

The Challenge

Why consider applying regenerative principles to humanitarian settlement planning?

Regenerative planning and design seek to go beyond minimising damage, using a 'whole systems' approach to increase ecological, social and economic health. Re-Alliance asks the question:

"How can we shift humanitarian and development interventions away from degrading mindsets of 'aid' and 'security', toward sovereignty?"

We define the '**regenerative capacity**' of a humanitarian settlement as its potential to:

- nurture community

- provide a safe space to grow livelihoods

- protect and restore ecosystems

- enable sovereign choices by communities and individuals

ETHICAL FRAMEWORK

UNDERLYING ATTITUDES & WORLDVIEW

WHOLE-SYSTEMS DESIGN

INCREASING ECOLOGICAL, SOCIAL AND/OR ECONOMIC HEALTH

NATURE-INSPIRED PRINCIPLES

re-alliance.org

The Challenge

What is the problem we are addressing?

How to consolidate existing standards and guidance into an accessible guide, useable both by agencies and communities for the creation or adaptation of humanitarian settlements as regenerative communities.

re-alliance.org

The Challenge : emerging questions

A1 Is our term and definition of 'humanitarian settlements' a useful one in the context of this project? ([Slide 10](#))

A2 Who will manage the creation and operation of settlements for displaced people in future? - international & national agencies, local government or communities? ([Slide 8](#))

A3 Does our definition of 'regenerative capacity' represent a workable set of design aims? ([Slide 15](#))

A4 Is the defined problem the right problem to address ([Slide 16](#))? What are some other, less-evident challenges? What are the key priorities on the ground?

A5 Can we apply regenerative thinking both to existing and new humanitarian settlements?

SECTION B / SOURCES

Sources

Selecting the texts - our methodology

Our starting point for the review was an analysis of two key documents provided by the brief:

- 'A SPHERE UNPACKED GUIDE: Nature-based Solutions for Climate Resilience in Humanitarian Action' (Sphere, 2023)
- 'Rethinking Refugee Communities: Planning & Design Toolkit' (Ennead-UNHCR-Stanford University, 2023)

We were also aware of other key relevant texts, including work undertaken Re-Alliance partners Blueprint Alliance and various international agency tools for environmental and vulnerability analysis, and undertook some supplementary research to uncover others. The bibliography within Sphere NbS also provided a long list of documents to consider.

Sources
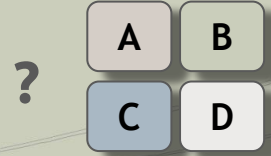
Selecting the texts - our methodology contd.

With each document, we considered:

- its proximity to regenerative planning and design for humanitarian settlements
- the original purpose of the document
- its currency - still in use or likely to be superseded by more recent guidance?
- whether referenced by other key texts examined in this analysis

using a 'yes / no / interesting' system as an initial filter, then narrowing down the selection to the most relevant documents.
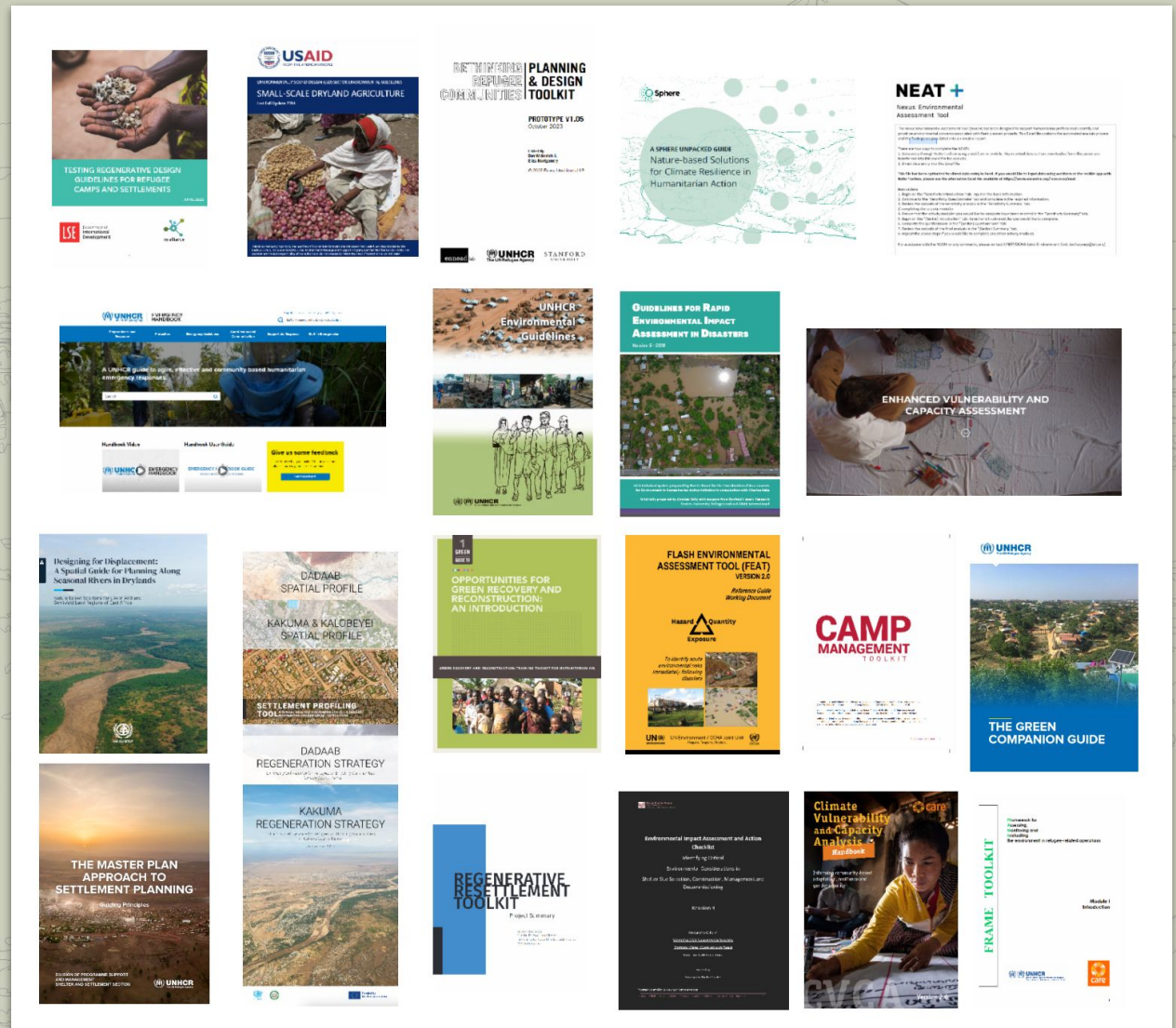
We then categorised the final selection of source documents by the stage in our modelled humanitarian development timeline to which they were most relevant.

Once categorised according to purpose, scope and target user, we examined each for key insights to the problem.
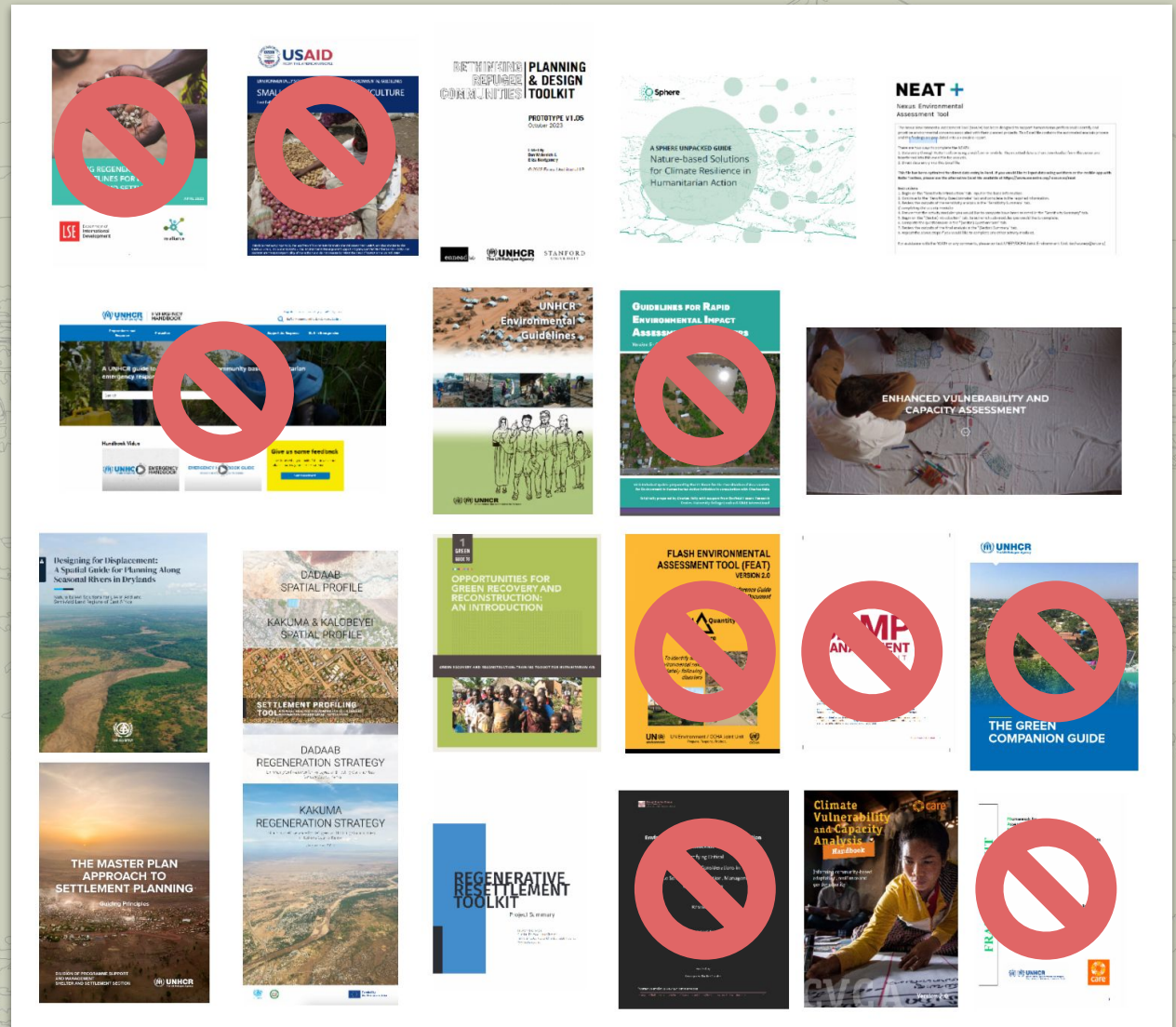
Sources

The guidance landscape

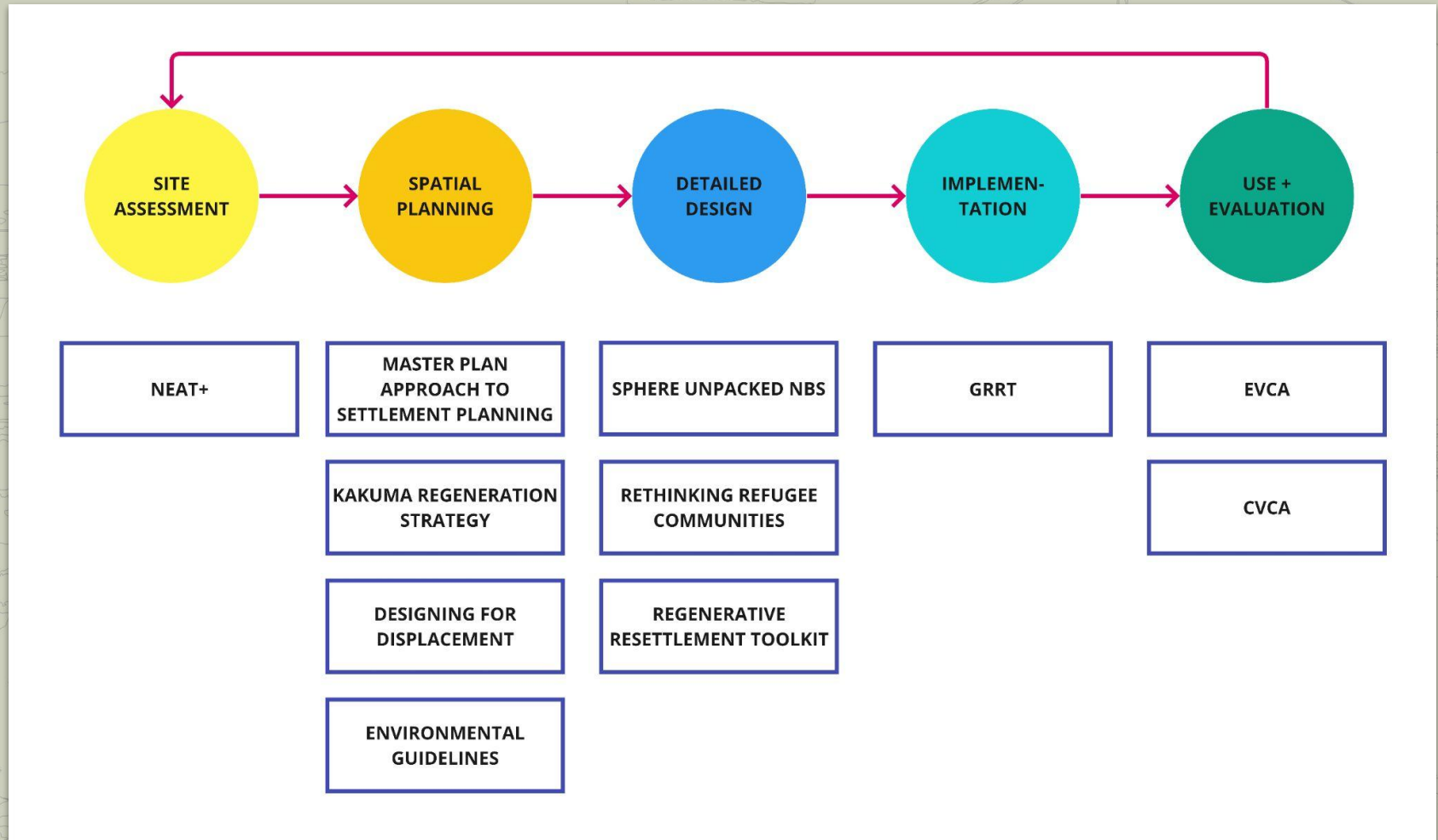Documentation considered in this review.

Sources

The guidance landscape - filtered

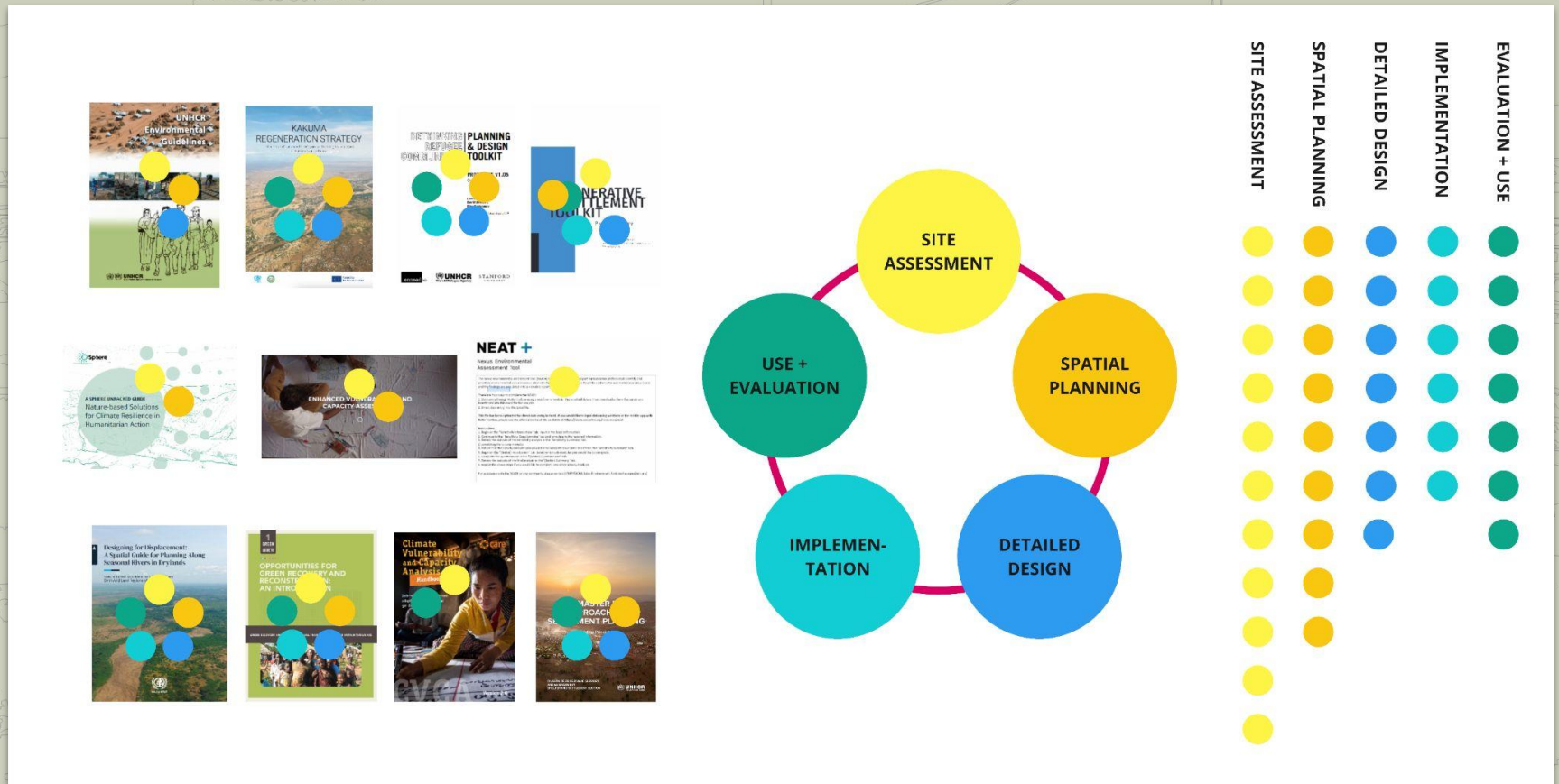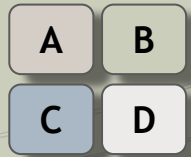Documents eliminated from the analysis.

Sources

The guidance landscape - categorised by primary function

SITE ASSESSMENT → SPATIAL PLANNING → DETAILED DESIGN → IMPLEMEN-TATION → USE + EVALUATION

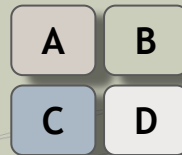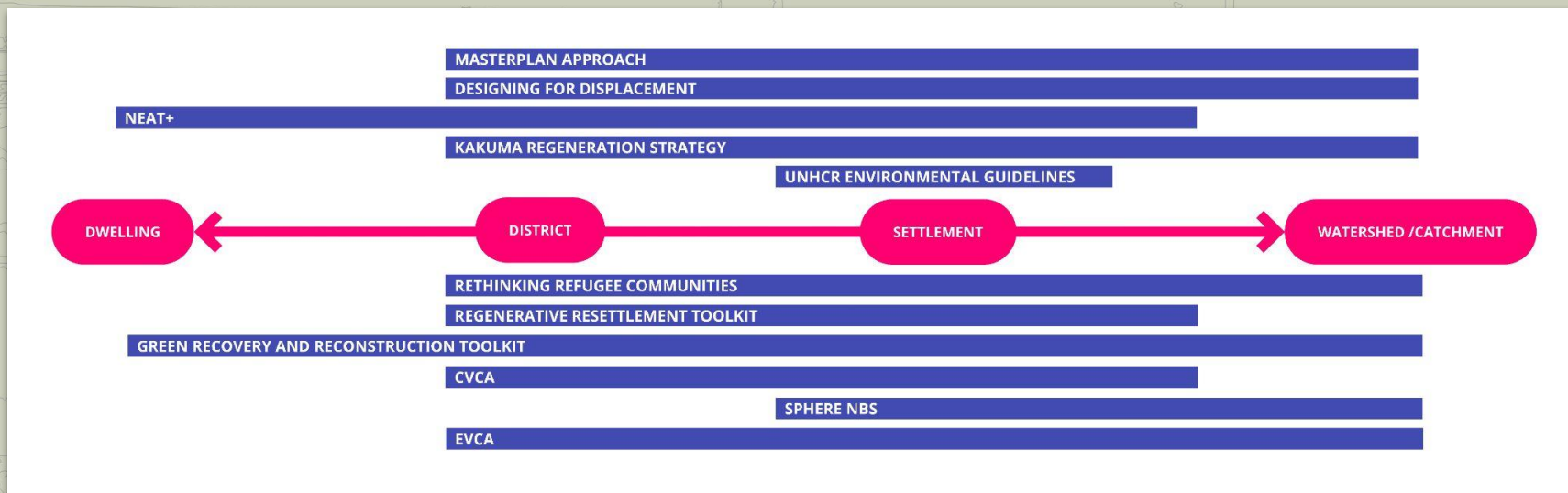| SITE ASSESSMENT	SPATIAL PLANNING	DETAILED DESIGN	IMPLEMEN-TATION	USE + EVALUATION
NEAT+	MASTER PLAN APPROACH TO SETTLEMENT PLANNING	SPHERE UNPACKED NBS	GRRT	EVCA
	KAKUMA REGENERATION STRATEGY	RETHINKING REFUGEE COMMUNITIES		CVCA
	DESIGNING FOR DISPLACEMENT	REGENERATIVE RESETTLEMENT TOOLKIT		
	ENVIRONMENTAL GUIDELINES			

Sources

Existing guidance - settlement design stage

Sources
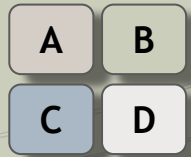
Existing guidance - spatial scale

Sources

Existing guidance - level of detail

We considered the guidance documents on a gradient of detail of information, with high-level guidance at one end of the scale and prescriptive intervention proposals at the other. This analysis would in theory also reveal the differences in spatial application, ranging from general, global guidance to specific case studies.

HIGH-LEVEL PRINCIPLES

DESIGN GUIDELINES

TECHNICAL INFORMATION

SPATIALLY-SPECIFIC INTERVENTIONS

LEVEL OF DETAIL
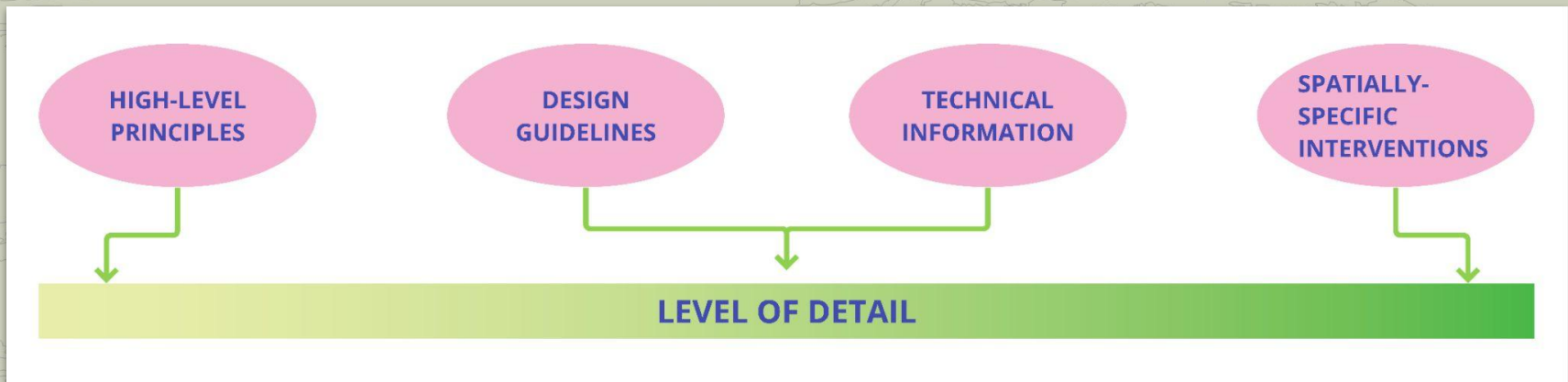
Sources

Key contributions - Environmental Assessment tools (all phases)

NEAT+ : reports from [Bidibidi](#) (Uganda) and [Maicao](#) (Colombia)

- Biophysical characteristics 'vastly alter' context for livelihood, shelter and WASH activities across a single settlement
- Social conflicts with host communities can vary across the same settlement
- Need to sensitise and educate refugees about their surroundings
- Improved data sharing between agencies could avoid duplication and gaps
- NEAT+ system is an accessible, useful non-technical precursor to formal EIA
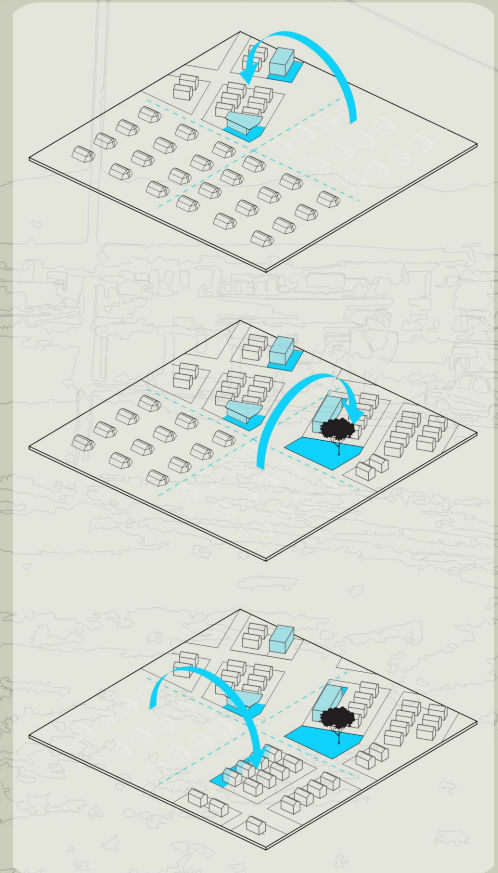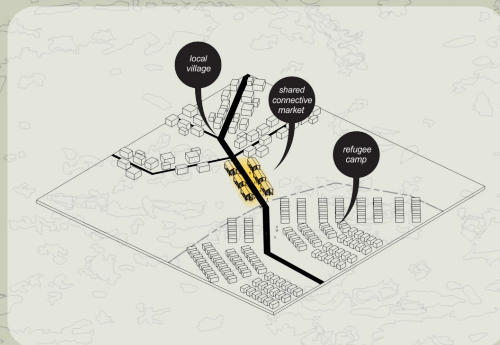
Sources

Key contributions - spatial planning (initial response phase for all phases)

Rethinking Refugee Communities : Ennead-Stanford

- Importance of designing the resettlement strategy through all phases

- Rotational phasing - enabling refugees in the planning of their own community

- No one solution for how to design a refugee settlement

- Working with topography can result in shared spaces helping to create community

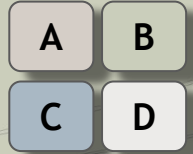- Integrated planning for both refugee and host community can benefit both in the long term

Rethinking Refugee Communities p.82

Rethinking Refugee Communities p.57

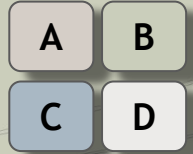diagrams © 2024 Ennead Lab – used by permission

Sources

Key contributions - spatial planning (initial response phase for all phases)

Regenerative Resettlement Toolkit : Blueprint - Surplus Permaculture Design - Tamera Peace Research & Education Center

- 'For the camp to embody a feeling of home that allows a life of dignity and peace, a certain degree of permanence must be present' (Summary, p.6).

- Community identity derives from cultural behaviours dependent upon spatial pattern.

- Shelter clusters should be designed to correspond to patterns familiar to the resettled community.

- Public space is vital for community life.

- 'Food production results in co-operation or exploitation of the environment' (p.10).

- Spatial intersection facilitates social intersection and belonging.

Sources

Key contributions - spatial planning (initial response phase for all phases)

The Master Plan Approach to Settlement Planning : UNHCR

- Set of guiding principles, including (not exhaustive):
  - National legislation, policies & plans provide a framework for settlement design
  - Environmental considerations drive design
  - Decisions about density must be taken in context
  - Providing an enabling environment for livelihoods and economic inclusion
  - Defining localised critical design drivers
  - Follow natural contours in the design of infrastructure
- Principles aim to 'facilitate the active participation of displaced populations' (p.5)
- 'Settlements shape how households relate to one another to form communities, and therefore must respond to needs and aspirations of communities, including the specific and differing needs of individuals within these communities, with regard to safety and security, access to services, economic opportunities, and socio-cultural life' (p.7)

Sources

Key contributions - technical tools and standards (initial response - established camp)

A SPHERE UNPACKED GUIDE - Nature-based Solutions for Climate Resilience in Humanitarian Action

- Safeguarding the environment is fundamental to protecting people's safety, dignity and rights and is inherent to the Sphere standards

- NbS, DRR and climate change resilience are interlinked

- NbS can be applied as part of the response to each stage of a humanitarian crisis

- Challenges include:
  - short time frame of a crises vs. longer time frame to see benefits
  - scale at which NbS is meaningful is often larger than the 'site' and requires inter-agency co-ordination
  - requires intensive cross-sectoral extension and capacity building
  - need to ensure social inclusion and gender-sensitivity throughout process

- Demonstrates the potential for a community-centred 'landscape approach'

- Offers series of archetypal strategies providing multiple ecosocial benefits
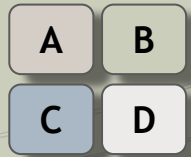
Sources
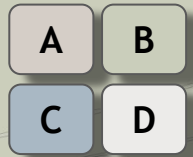
Key contributions - technical tools and standards (initial response - established camp)

Green Recovery and Reconstruction : Training Toolkit for Humanitarian Aid - WWF/ARC

- A detailed teaching aid for agencies offering training to humanitarian actors
- 'Disaster recovery and rebuilding attempts to build back in a few years what often took generations to develop... However, the recovery process can be an opportunity to build back safer' (Module 1 p.2)
- Maximise use of local knowledge to ensure recovery is grounded and supported by communities
- 'Community engagement and self-organization helps to ensure long-term project results and reduce disaster risk' (Module 1 p.13)
- Case study of Xaafuun, Somalia (Module 1, p.14): post-tsunami recovery plan demonstrates the viability of applying a development perspective in the early stages of post-disaster - parallel with humanitarian settlement planning?
- Modular nature of toolkit makes it adaptable to context: only relevant modules need be used

Sources

Key contributions - evaluation, monitoring and retrofitting (all stages from implementation onwards)

UNHCR Environmental Guidelines

- Clear list of typical environmental concerns arising from refugee settlement scenarios
  - impacts on natural resources
  - health impacts
  - social wellbeing
  - impacts on host community
  - economic impacts

- Root of challenge is the sudden imbalance between needs of resettled community and carrying capacity of local environment

- Policy that environmental action is intrinsic to UNHCR's emergency and care & maintenance responses; refugee NGOs to integrate policies with those of UNHCR

- Detailed guidance relating to management of water, health, food, energy, forestry, etc.

Sources

Key contributions - resilience planning and disaster risk reduction

Climate Vulnerability and Capacity Analysis 2.0 (CARE)

- Importance of considering gender inequality in community vulnerability and capacity

- Co-facilitation of CVCA process by local authorities and community representatives

- Information-intensive, participatory 7-stage approach to resilience planning

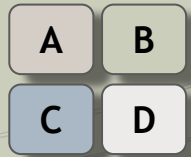- Useful set of 'field guides' to participatory tools

Sources

Key contributions - resilience planning and disaster risk reduction

Enhanced Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment Version 1 (IFRC)

- Importance of considering gender inequality in community vulnerability and capacity

- Co-facilitation of CVCA process by local authorities and community representatives

- Information-intensive, participatory 7-stage approach to resilience planning

- Useful set of 'field guides' to participatory tools

Sources : emerging questions

A B C D

B1   How might our selection methodology be improved ([Slide 20](#))? What texts might we have missed?

B2   From our selection ([Slide 21](#)), what else worth mentioning is lacking?

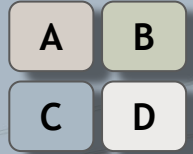B3   What are the key contributions and insights we want to take forward? (Slides 30-38)

SECTION C / IDENTIFYING THE GAPS

Identifying the gaps

Topical analysis : our methodology

Although the sources discussed in the previous section were themselves a selection, they each contained a wealth of information on a diverse range of topics. We were interested to know two things:

- how much correlation was there between the topics covered by the texts?

- how well represented were topics that might support regenerative planning?

Identifying the gaps
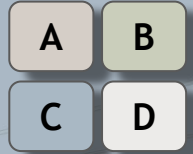
Topical analysis : our methodology (cont.)

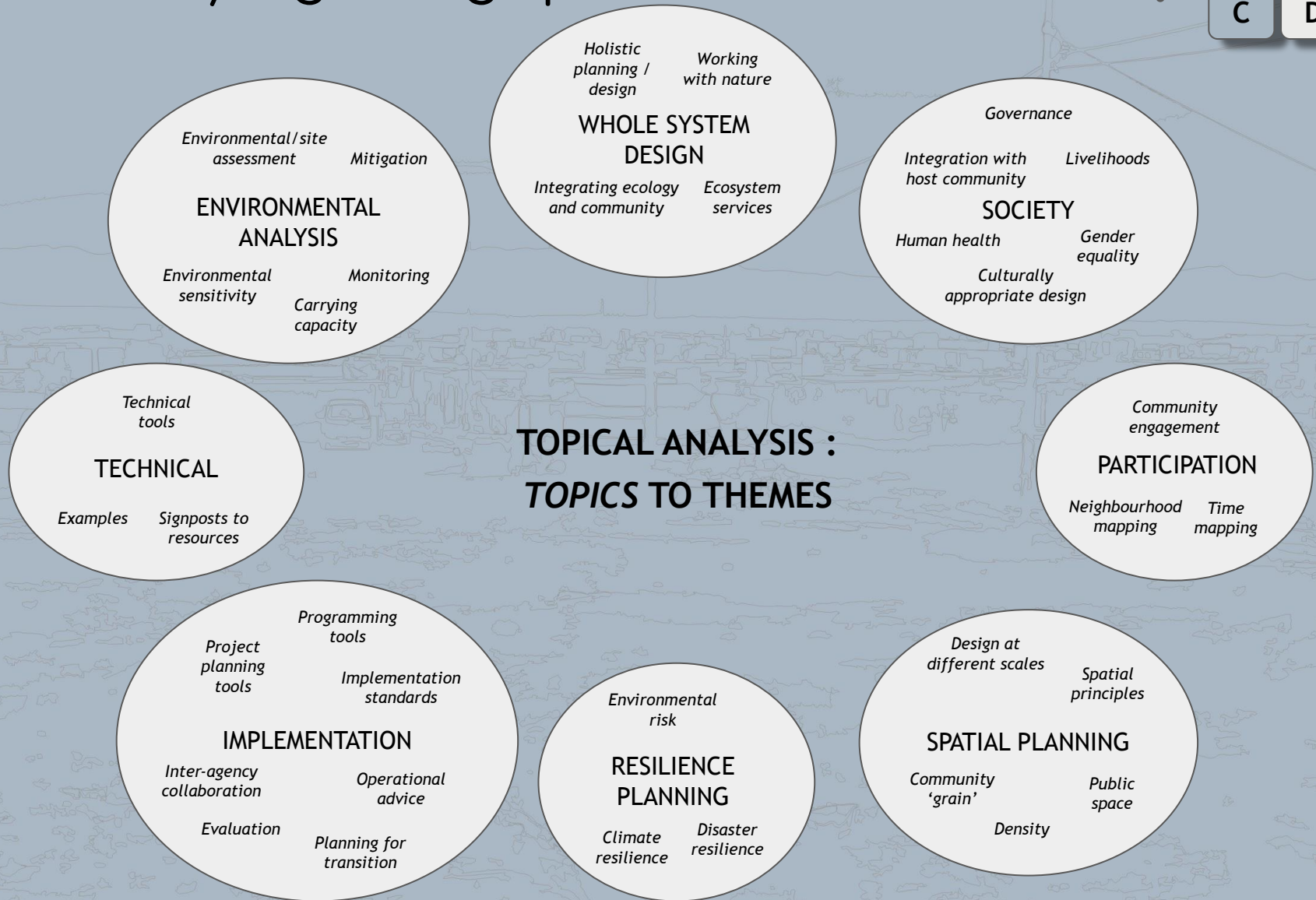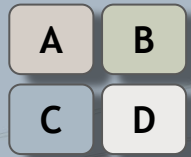To assemble the topics covered by the texts, we ...

1. read through each, tabulating key words describing topics addressed in each, modulating these to be applicable across the different modes and styles represented by the different texts;
2. highlighted topics of particular focus for each text;
3. returned to each text a second time to refine our analysis based on all topics generated during the first 'sweep'.

This generated a large number of topics - too many to illustrate simply - so we grouped them into themes, separately then collectively agreeing the final set to be used for illustrative purposes.
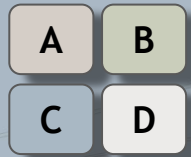
Reflecting on all our combined analysis, we picked out the challenges / weaknesses / next steps identified in the documents themselves but also by us.

Identifying the gaps

A   B   C   D   ?

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS
- Environmental/site assessment
- Mitigation
- Environmental sensitivity
- Monitoring
- Carrying capacity

WHOLE SYSTEM DESIGN
- Holistic planning / design
- Working with nature
- Integrating ecology and community
- Ecosystem services

SOCIETY
- Governance
- Integration with host community
- Livelihoods
- Human health
- Gender equality
- Culturally appropriate design

TECHNICAL
- Technical tools
- Examples
- Signposts to resources

TOPICAL ANALYSIS : *TOPICS* TO THEMES

PARTICIPATION
- Community engagement
- Neighbourhood mapping
- Time mapping

IMPLEMENTATION
- Programming tools
- Project planning tools
- Implementation standards
- Inter-agency collaboration
- Operational advice
- Evaluation
- Planning for transition

RESILIENCE PLANNING
- Environmental risk
- Climate resilience
- Disaster resilience

SPATIAL PLANNING
- Design at different scales
- Spatial principles
- Community 'grain'
- Public space
- Density

Identifying the gaps

In the following slides...

Text includes topics that are a major driver for the guidance concerned, or comprehensively discusses topics in this theme.

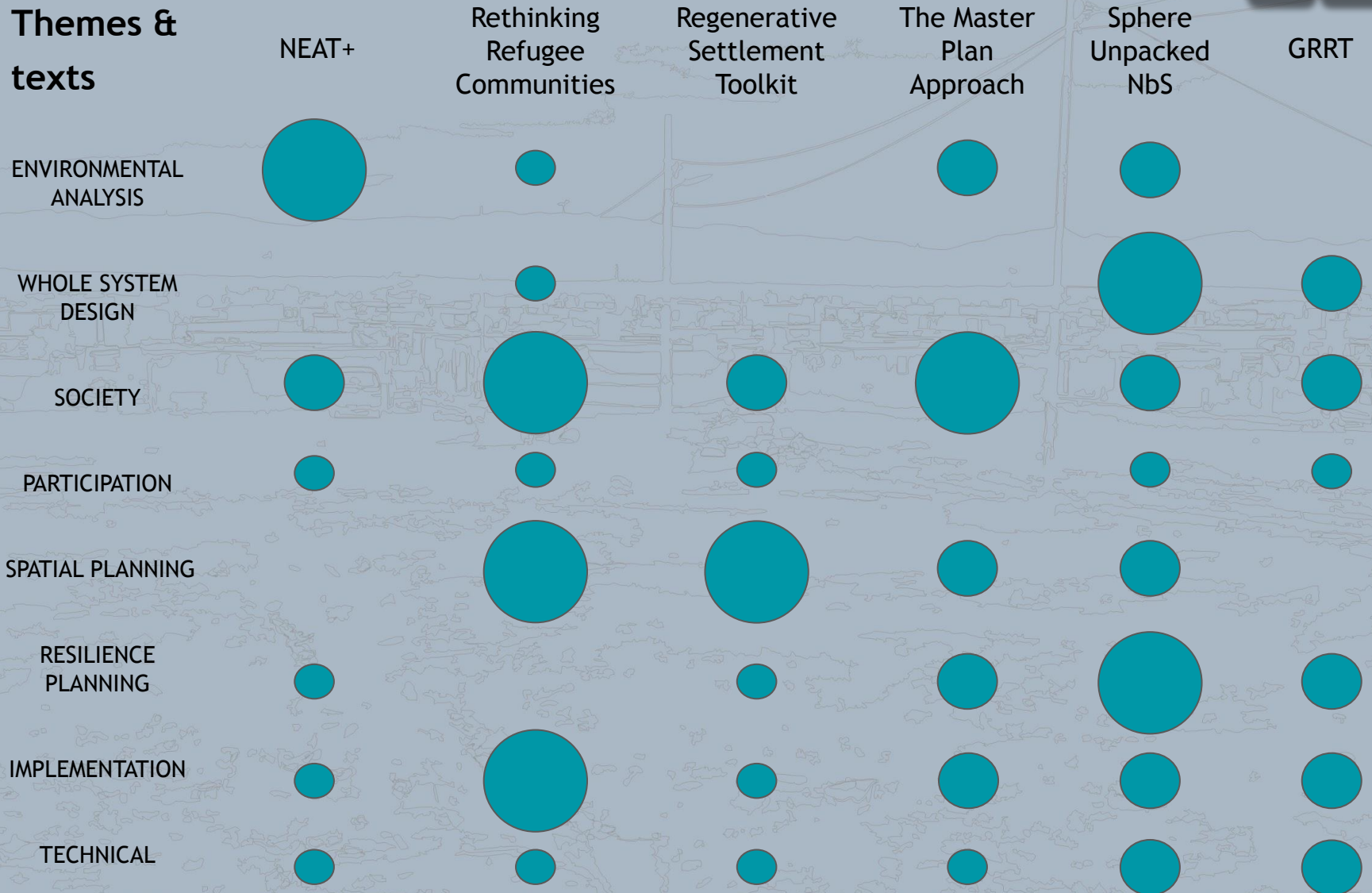Text includes a number of topics relevant to this theme.

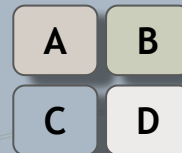Topics relevant to this theme receive limited coverage in the text.

...based on an intuitive, relativistic response to the texts. Other readings are possible.

Identifying the gaps

Identifying the gaps

Identifying the gaps

A B
C D

Themes : an intuitive visual 'DNA' of the guidance

| strong coverage | | weak coverage |

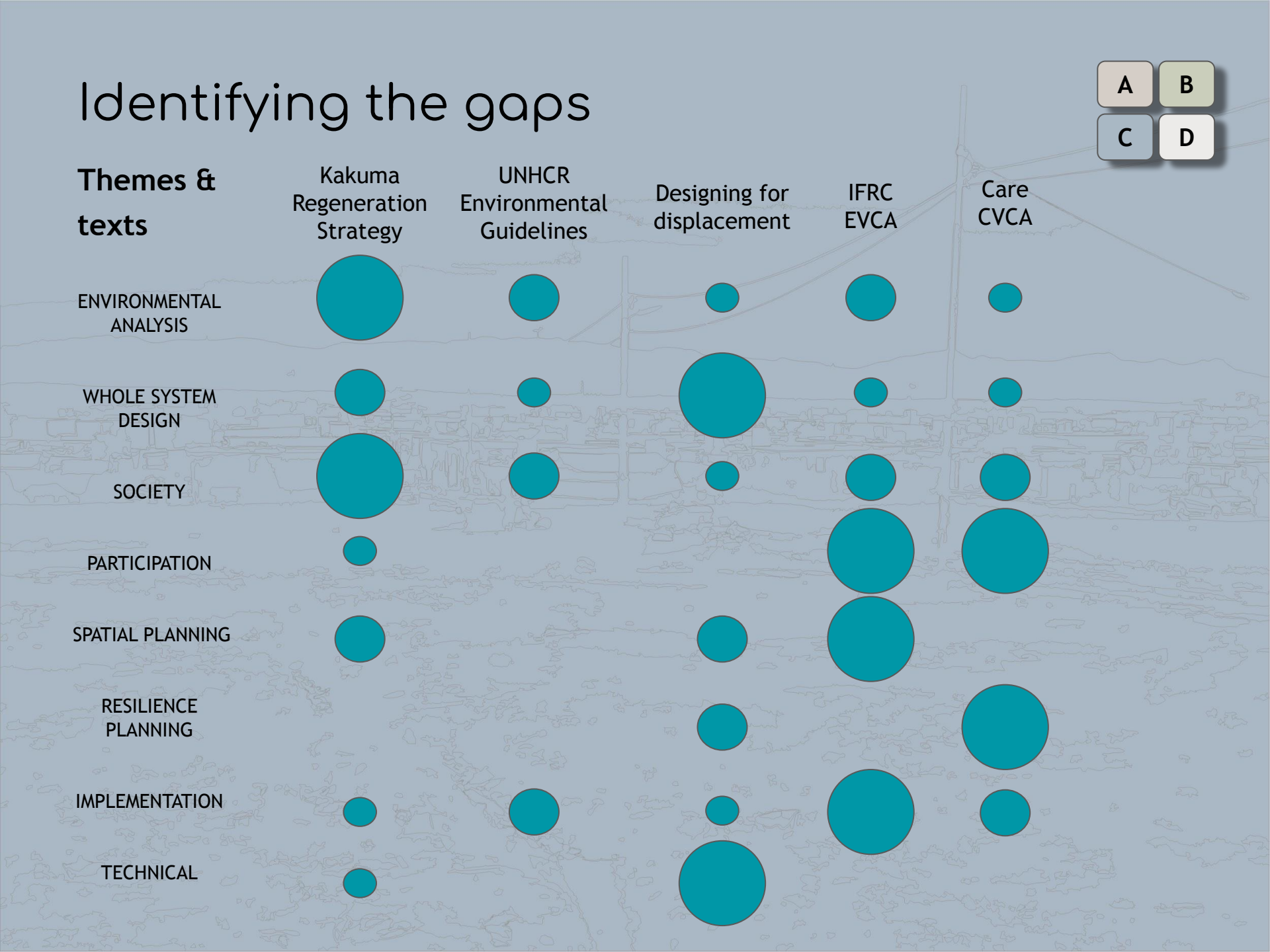ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

WHOLE SYSTEM DESIGN

SOCIETY

PARTICIPATION

SPATIAL PLANNING

RESILIENCE PLANNING

IMPLEMENTATION

TECHNICAL

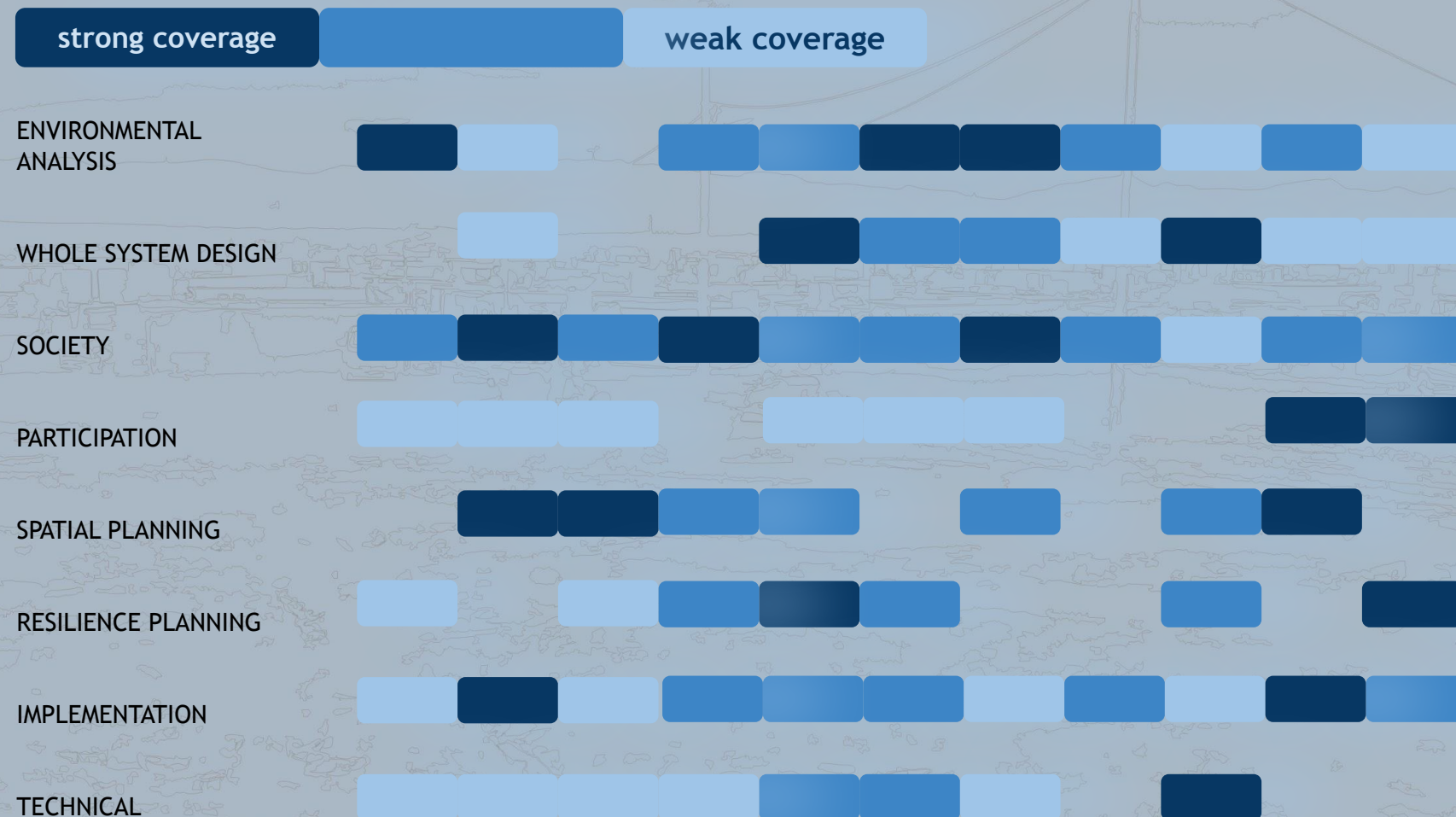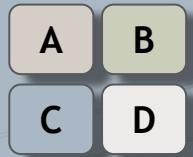# Identifying the gaps

Reflections - overview

The above qualitative analysis based on a subset of the available guidance suggests that:

- No one approach, tool or guidance covers all of the themes represented by the literature as a whole.

- Environmental analysis, social themes and implementation tools are covered by most texts, whereas whole-system design, participation, spatial planning and resilience planning are of particular focus in some approaches.

Does this suggest there is scope to develop practice guidance which more comprehensively visits themes of relevance to regenerative planning? Or is the existing guidance already adequate and sufficiently accessible?
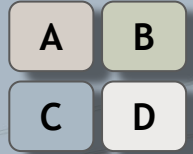
Identifying the gaps
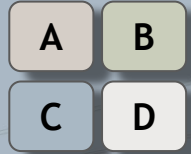
Reflections - details

- There appears to be limited design guidance at the architectural / dwelling scale, particularly regarding regenerative principles.

- There appears to be limited guidance on 'socially-regenerative interventions.'

- There appears to be a need for more data, rapidly acquired, particularly in the monitoring and evaluation of existing settlements.

Identifying the gaps : emerging questions

C1   Are any potential themes missing from the literature (Slide 40)?

C2   Is there already sufficient guidance for practitioners to develop their own approach to regenerative planning or is there scope to create something new that visits all relevant themes (Slide 45)?

C3   How can guidance best integrate expert support, inter-agency collaboration and community participation?

C4   Should any new guidance encompass dwelling-scale design and technical details alongside strategic site design?

C5   At what stage of disaster response is it most appropriate and effective to raise environmental awareness given the traumatic context?

C6   What is appropriate for the ultimate scope of a proposed design system in this context?
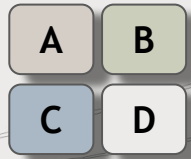
SECTION D / MOVING FORWARD

Moving forward

**Consolidating the research**

Given our findings above, we propose the following talking points flowing from the questions already raised.

Talking points

- ⬦ 'Humanitarian settlement planning means designing simultaneously for transience and permanence.'
- ⬦ 'Inter-agency collaboration including local and national government is essential to success.'
- ⬦ 'Advanced technology can be a powerful aid if applied appropriately.'
- ⬦ 'Contingency planning means pre-crisis research with vulnerable populations.'
- ⬦ 'Funding remains a central and growing challenge for the implementation of guidance in project form.'

Moving forward
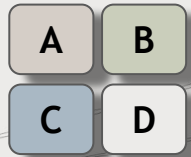
Other guides and practises

Talking point

◇ 'Planning and design for humanitarian settlements is a special case of urban design.'

Why?

- Because it deals in creating and managing space for people.
- Because it requires the integration of placemaking with environment, infrastructure and culture.

If this is the case, *what other guides and practises might shed new light on the problem?*

We are particularly interested in practises focussed on regenerative capacity, viewed through the lenses of <u>community development</u> and <u>environmental reinvestment</u>.

Moving forward
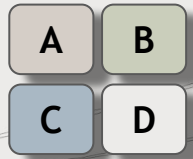
Actions

We recommend the following for inclusion in any action plan:

▶ Interviews with first responders and those with first-hand experience to glean more insights from the field.

▶ Exploration of guidance and practices from other relevant fields and contexts - e.g regenerative land management, permaculture, DRR.

▶ Appointment of a cross-sectoral steering group to guide the plan and support researchers/participants/designers involved.

▶ Survey the funding landscape to establish how to create proposals connecting donors to partner communities.

▶ Actions to add following the workshop...

Moving forward

A B C D

Suggested format for the workshop

Thursday (pm) : arrivals and introduction

Friday (am) :   defining the challenge (drawing on Section A and emerging questions)

Friday (pm) :   insights from the sources (drawing on Section B and emerging questions)

Saturday (am) : reviewing the need (drawing on Section C and emerging questions)

Saturday (pm) : discussion - other global insights, relevant practices, objectives and next steps (starting from talking points in Section D)