Participating in Radical Visual Sociology:

Supporting housing activism through gentrification and displacement research

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Figure 1: Front cover image
Book cover image for *Deptford is Changing*. Photo: Anita Strasser, 2017.

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Abstract

This thesis examines whether participatory arts practices can be deployed in changing urban contexts without getting co-opted into that change and, instead, help to resist its uneven aspects. It presents a participatory arts and research project which responds to the politics and aesthetics of 21st century state-led gentrification, with a specific focus on Deptford, south-east London (UK). The project challenges dominant gentrification narratives by making visible and audible a variety of alternative perspectives that highlight the lived experiences of gentrification-induced displacement. It proposes a novel art and research methodology that, while emphasising participation and ethical practice, pays attention to the politics and aesthetics of creative research. It is underpinned by feminist participatory action research and the radical tradition of community arts and activism. Combining sociological research with a community arts project and the production, publication and launch of a book, this research offers rich understandings of the lived experiences of gentrification-induced displacement while also enacting these representations in the public sphere to support local housing activism. Therefore, my practice not only counters widespread depoliticised participatory practices that make community artists complicit in uneven urban change, it also offers a counterpoint to urban research that, while critically describing processes of change, does little in the way of actively engaging with those processes.

This research is an example of public sociology, engaging with non-academic and academic audiences. Publishing the research data on alternative media under the title *Deptford is Changing* to encourage public debate also challenges traditional modes of dissemination. It offers space for a multiplicity of voices and forms of representations with the aim of addressing a wide and varied audience. It is recommended to read the accompanying book of the same title alongside this thesis (The book can also be read online: tinyurl.com/deptfordischanging). The thesis argues for a creative activist sociological imagination, a Radial Visual Sociology which gets actively and creatively involved in working towards social justice.

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Figure 1.1 Map of Deptford indicating sites of redevelopment since 2011 (see key below).
The map only shows redevelopment on the Deptford side of The Creek. Map design: Adam Ramejkis, 2023

■ Redeveloped for housing and retail before the research project (2011-2017)
■ Redeveloped for housing since the research project began in 2017
■ Destroyed and redeveloped for housing since the research project began in 2017
■ Demolition/redevelopment for housing and retail planned and approved
■ Potential threat of demolition/redevelopment for housing and retail
■ Not presently under threat of demolition/redevelopment

Introduction

Moving beyond critical description in gentrification and displacement research

This thesis examines whether participatory arts practices can be deployed in changing urban contexts without getting co-opted into that change and, instead, help to resist its uneven aspects. It also explores how participatory arts as an engaged research practice can offer deeper insights into the effects of uneven urban change, namely gentrification-induced displacement, and use those insights to go beyond critical description and actively seek and effect social change. I argue for a Radical Visual Sociology and a creative activist sociological imagination: research that is actively and creatively involved in the world and works towards social justice.

This research responds to the politics and aesthetics of 21st century state-led gentrification. It challenges dominant gentrification narratives, making visible and audible a variety of alternative perspectives that highlight the lived experiences of displacement. It proposes a methodology that, while emphasising participation and ethical practice, pays attention to the politics and aesthetics of creative research output to stage an intervention in the public sphere. Underpinned by the radical tradition of community arts, especially the practice of community photography and the publication culture of investigative (photo)journalism, this research project is a critical and creative response to the processes of urban change in Deptford, south-east London (UK). It counters widespread depoliticised participatory practices that make community artists complicit in, rather than critical of, uneven urban change. It also offers a counterpoint to urban research that, while critically describing processes of change, does little in the way of actively engaging with those processes.

I offer a novel art and research methodology which repoliticises and democratises participation, which, I argue, enables a deeper understanding of the emotional impact of displacement as it is lived on the ground while simultaneously effecting social change. This methodology also involves the dissemination of research data in the form of blogging and

social media posts followed by the production, publication and launch of a book. This offers multiple opportunities for collective decision-making, co-authorship and co-production of knowledge, as well as multiple platforms for public debates with wide audiences. This has a positive emotional impact on participants. Collaboratively producing and sharing research data with participants and housing campaigns and publishing their stories on alternative media to resist uneven urban change adds an affective dimension, building or strengthening social solidarity, belonging and recognition. The published stories, which were generated between September 2017 and June 2019, can be read in the book accompanying this thesis called *Deptford is Changing* (Strasser, 2020). As frequent reference will be made to the book, it is recommended to read it alongside this thesis. [1]

Drawing on a pilot study: the conception of this thesis

This project was conceived when evaluating my final visual project on the MA Photography and Urban Cultures at Goldsmiths. Based on years of action research in the council block where I live, investigating what constitutes neighbourliness and community, the MA project examined how participatory action research (PAR), community photography and collective creativity could help improve community relations among my neighbours. There were three important insights that led to my PhD project.

The first concerns the feelings of displacement my neighbours expressed. Although focusing on life in the block, conversations very quickly extended to living in Deptford and witnessing its gentrification: regeneration that brings middle-class and wealthier people into an area, changes the aesthetics of a place and often displaces poorer and working-class residents (e.g. Ley, 2003; Slater, 2006; 2009; Davidson and Lees, 2010; Zukin, 2011; Lees, 2016; Lees and White, 2019; Watt, 2021). Commenting on recent housing developments that contain very few social and truly affordable homes and the changing identity and appearance of Deptford, research participants expressed a sense of emotional hurt from feeling economically, socially and culturally excluded from the transformation of Deptford. They expressed feelings of worthlessness, devaluation and stigmatisation, including the stigma of living in ill-maintained council housing. They said they felt perceived as unworthy of investment due to their socio-

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[1] The book can also be read online: tinyurl.com/deptfordischanging

economic status (most were working-class families on low incomes or benefits, with some suffering health issues and disabilities), saying regeneration "is not for us". In fact, ever since moving to Deptford in 2009 and working on various projects with local communities, this view has been expressed on numerous occasions.

The second insight relates to the affective dimension of a participative arts and research practice. The creative collaboration, rooted in PAR, highlighted how participation in creative action which responds to participants' needs can counter feelings of isolation and despondency. Engaging my neighbours in conversations, community photography, guerrilla decorating and gardening fostered belonging and solidarity, enticing some residents to collectively attempt to effect change (e.g. writing letters to the council). This led to further conversations that would unlikely have happened otherwise, yielding deeper insights into their personal experiences of living in the block. Furthermore, the project had political intentions: making visible and audible council tenants and their experiences, thus recognising them as valued and valid. Being represented in ways my neighbours identified with in images and texts of publishable quality and seeing them displayed in public places seemed to instil feelings of worth, affection and value. This suggests that a participative creative methodology and an outcome with an artistic and political aesthetic can mitigate negative feelings.

The third insight came from how local councillors, invited to view the display in the hope of opening up a democratic debate about some of the issues mentioned by residents, responded to the project. The initial response, when seeing photographs of residents, neighbourliness and the fruits of our decorating work, was one of appreciation. However, when reading about how tenants experience living in the block, commenting on the lack of maintenance and the feelings of neglect and displacement, councillors became very angry, dismissing residents' experiences as invalid. This highlighted the problem with regards to contemporary participatory arts: it is welcome for "positive" representation and showcasing "happy" communities but not for voicing criticism and dissent.

These insights led to the conception of my PhD project, of a participative, creative and political study within the context of urban regeneration. Together with Deptford residents, shopkeepers, campaigners, activists, volunteers and community artists and workers, this

study sought to generate alternative gentrification narratives from participants' perspectives, highlighting how gentrification-induced displacement is experienced on the ground. At the same time, the research was intended as a political intervention, publishing these accounts on alternative media in accessible language outside this thesis to contribute to local housing struggles and stimulate public debate about gentrification and displacement. I also hoped that participating in this collaborative, creative and political research project would strengthen community cohesion, solidarity and belonging among participants.

Research as a methodological and political intervention

This research is an intervention on two levels: methodological and political. It contributes to existing gentrification and displacement literature (e.g. Marcuse, 1985; 2009; N. Smith, 1996; 2002; Ley, 2003; Davidson, 2009a; 2009b; Lees, Slater and Wyly, 2010; Zukin, 2011; Slater, 2017; Elliott-Cooper *et al.*, 2019; Watt, 2021) but, located within Visual Sociology, adds a significant sociological, collaborative and creative element. It also adds a feminist and activist dimension, making the research part of participants' struggles to work towards change. Gentrification and displacement research comprises one of the largest literatures in urban studies (Lees, Slater and Wyly, 2010, p. 525), with a plethora of critical descriptions of cause and effect based on theoretical concepts and scholars' perspectives (e.g. N. Smith, 2002; Slater, 2009; 2017; Madden and Marcuse, 2016). Although more recent ethnographic studies highlight experiences of displacement through the words of research subjects (e.g. Paton, 2014; Slater, 2014; Lees, 2020; Watt, 2021), the predominantly text-based reports follow the usual format of scholar-authored analysis of interview extracts. Research on grassroots anti-gentrification struggles has also recently emerged, but again with the main focus on conceptualising and describing resistance (e.g. Lees and Ferreri, 2016; Watt and Minton, 2016; Lees *et al.,* 2018; Sendra and Fitzpatrick, 2020). I argue that displacement and resistance research needs to go beyond critical descriptions and purely text-based representations and, instead, get more actively and creatively involved in grassroots anti-gentrification struggles and rethink modes of representation and dissemination.

Although there are gentrification scholar-activists doing important work on the ground for and with campaigns (e.g. Loretta Lees and Paul Watt), there is a notable absence in much scholarly writing on academics' involvement and the collaborative aspect of working with

campaigners and residents. This raises questions as to the role of academics in housing struggles and the extent to which campaigners and residents contribute to the production of knowledge. Displacement or resistance literature rarely examines the creative material produced by campaigners and residents themselves to express their feelings of displacement. Creative forms of representation can offer richer understandings of lived experience, having the capacity to add meaning and knowledge and contribute to arguments (Harper, 2003; Knowles and Sweetman, 2004; Pink, 2007; O'Neill, Giaquinto and Hasedžić, 2019). Disregarding this material is a missed opportunity for co-authorship and additional forms of representation, which can bring across more fully the depth of the emotional pain displacement causes.

It is my contention that we need a new sociological language that better articulates 'the structures of feeling' (Williams, 1977) around displacement: how the shared experience of displacement is lived in the present and how this infiltrates people's habitus (Bourdieu, 1990) and their capacity to dwell (Heidegger, 1993 [1971]). We need additional, more creative forms of representation to move towards a deeper understanding of how spatial, social and cultural injustices are experienced in everyday life. It is also my contention that we need to rethink modes of representation and dissemination to include participants' contributions, making research more collaborative and involved in participants' struggles and reaching audiences beyond our academic remit. Thus, this thesis argues for a creative and participatory methodology where the knowledges and practices from above and below 'intersect with the research imagination' (Back and Keith, 2014, p. 15), enabling a different attentiveness to sociological research and its publication culture.

This research offers a unique way of understanding the impact of displacement by utilising an arts and research practice rooted in participants' own practices of resistance: grassroots community arts. There is a long local, London and UK-wide history of radical community arts and activism to effect social change. With both politics and art in the domain of the aesthetic in that they determine who and what is sensible (i.e. what presents itself to our senses), art, particularly that with radical intent, lends itself well to creating counternarratives. Art can disrupt 'the distribution of the sensible' – 'the system of self-evident facts of sense perception' (Rancière, 2004, p. 7) by amplifying the voices, actions and bodies of those who

have remained invisible, inaudible or ineffectual (Rancière, 2004; Mouffe, 2007; 2008). Collective creativity enables participants to define social issues from their own perspectives, creating artworks with a political aesthetic that can change perceptions and political relations (Braden, 1983; Kelly, 1984; Crehan, 2011; Jeffers and Moriarty, 2017; Stacey, 2020). It can also build community relations and identity (Rooke, 2013; Tiller, 2013). Participation is therefore ethical and political: people work together in dialogue to make sensible other bodies, visions and perspectives and to stage democracy in the public sphere.

Community arts have coexisted with urban regeneration since the post-war period. Starting as a radical practice to distribute alternative narratives and express political opposition to social inequalities and top-down urban policies, the practice has gradually been depoliticised and co-opted into processes of regeneration. This has made many community artists and participants unwittingly complicit in uneven urban change. Especially since New Labour's cultural policy with its commitment to community participation and the arts, participatory arts have become instrumentalised to ameliorate the effects of uneven urban change. However, grassroots community opposition has come into greater visibility again, with community groups in Deptford and across London using radical art to resist the politics and aesthetics of 21st century state-led gentrification (e.g. Save Reginald! Save Tidemill! in Deptford, Focus E15 in Stratford, Southwark Notes in Southwark). This research returned to the radical origins of participative art practice, combining local practices of community arts with sociological research methods into a unique methodology to create a new language that communicates the emotional impact of displacement. Adopting the ethical, aesthetic and political considerations of community arts, this research also contributed to local resistance against gentrification by enacting alternative representations in the public sphere.

Why Deptford? An history of urban and community interventions

Deptford in south-east London is a unique place for a creative study on the impact of urban regeneration. It acts as a microcosm through which to understand the general processes and effects of contemporary state-led gentrification in the UK. Deptford is an inner-city, post-industrial, predominantly working-class and multi-ethnic area bordering the Thames with a persistently high index of deprivation, unemployment and child poverty (Potts, 2008; Trust

for London, 2021). Because of these issues, it has a long history of top-down urban and community interventions to regenerate the area and tackle social problems. There is also an equally long history of grassroots community arts and activism to tackle urban issues bottom-up, critically responding to persistent social inequalities and top-down regeneration schemes and turning policy to communities' advantage. It is important to understand these histories and how they intersect as this modulates the changes taking place today. Below is a brief summary of these histories to contextualise the research.

Deptford in the post-war period: municipal housing, territorial segregation and racial tension

After heavy bombing in WWII, Deptford underwent a slum clearance programme and saw the construction of low and high-rise blocks and large new estates in the 50s and 60s (and into the 70s). New public housing estates were also built in suburbia and many Deptford residents were moved there. Whilst many appreciated the improved living standards, some also felt displaced from their former communities, feeling isolated in the "streets in the sky" or in the suburbs (Steele, 1993; Rex, 1998). This period also saw a renewed arrival of immigrant populations into Deptford, gradually changing the area's demography and enticing some white people to move into the suburbs voluntarily, a process known as white flight. The residential and industrial suburbanisation together with the inner-city crisis of the 70s and 80s led to high levels of unemployment[2] and deprivation among the remaining urban poor, increasing social tensions and racial uprisings.

Racial inequalities and tensions manifested themselves as gang identities, and estates such as the Pepys Estate or Milton Court became perceived as 'no-go ghettos' (Keith, 2005, p. 66). With many poor white people blaming immigration for their poverty, votes for the National Front (NF) increased and in 1977 the NF, with police support, marched through Deptford and New Cross to spread fascist propaganda (Steele, 1993, pp. 212-213). Despite the ensuing Battle of Lewisham, where local residents clashed with marchers and police, fascist attacks continued with brutal arson attacks on Black communities such as at the Pagnell Street Centre in 1977, The Albany Theatre in 1978 and the New Cross Fire in 1981, which killed 13 teenagers at a birthday party.

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[2] Unemployment in Deptford in the late 1970s stood at double the average for Britain (Steele, 1993, p. 204).

The late 1960s and 1970s also saw a whole host of grassroots and state-funded community development initiatives to tackle persistent inequalities. This was partly helped by Deptford's proximity to an art university (Goldsmiths), with many liberal-minded artists, teachers, social workers and voluntary sector workers living on the Crossfield's Estate and collaborating with local residents to effect social change. Together they set up community centres, support groups and creative spaces to meet people's social needs and promote social justice bottom-up (Steele, 1993; Anim-Addo, 1995). This included initiatives supporting Black communities to provide opportunities for Black children, youths and their parents (e.g. Moonshot). There were demonstrations, protests and campaigns (e.g. The Battle of Lewisham and Black People's Day of Action), as well as carnivals, theatre and a relatively big music scene (e.g. Dire Straits, Shaka's Sound System). There were also the DIY punk scene, underground press (e.g. *Sniffin' Glue*), squatting, mural painting (e.g. Greenwich Mural Workshop) and other forms of grassroots community arts and activism, uniting people from different backgrounds and ethnicities to fight for social justice: more equitable resource distribution and cultural recognition. This period of social and spatial upheaval set the foundation for Deptford's history of grassroots community arts and activism and the development of strong Black communities (Steele, 1993; Anim-Addo, 1995).

Deptford in the 80s and 90s: a depressed area before preparing for regeneration

During the 80s, while some depressed areas faced wholesale restructuring through state-led gentrification which allowed private developers to build enclaves for wealthier populations and displace working-class people (e.g. London Docklands), other areas such as Deptford were completely bypassed by the economic success of Thatcher's government. Deptford suffered high levels of deprivation, unemployment (42% for men) and marginalisation (Steele, 1993; Keith, 2005). However, the Deptford grassroots community arts scene continued and the generous funding from the Labour-run Greater London Council (GLC) between 1981 and 1986, which financially supported neglected communities to provide opportunities for social justice, enabled some marginalised children and adults to participate in the arts. The GLC also funded the Albany Theatre, which was rebuilt in 1981 and offered space for Black musicians, performers and other artists. Still, social inequalities grew under Thatcher.

It was not until 1990, when John Major became Prime Minister (followed by Tony Blair in 1997) and Michael Heseltine Secretary of State for the Environment that more community-focused urban policies were reintroduced for depressed areas. City Challenge (CC) ran between 1991 and 1994 and Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) programmes between 1994 and 2002, with Deptford receiving all rounds of funding. Although deprivation was seen as a problem of space rather than racial inequality, both CC and SRB benefitted the area in physical and infrastructural terms and in terms of community cohesion. Despite the programmes' predetermined agendas, Deptford people managed to turn these policies to their advantage and make them benefit local communities (Centre for Urban and Community Research, 1997). However, this participation in processes of regeneration also helped prepare Deptford for subsequent gentrification.

Regeneration during the 2000s: preparing Deptford for gentrification

During the 2000s, regeneration took a different turn, setting the foundations for what we see in Deptford today. Despite continuing with a community-focused social policy to tackle social exclusion, New Labour intensified and expanded the programme of state and property-led gentrification that Thatcher's government began, reaching many more inner-city areas. With its proximity to the (financial) city, its riverside views, post-industrial history and long record of deprivation, Deptford became a target for regeneration, attracting private developers to speculate on public land for profits. Additionally, New Labour embarked on a programme of arts and culture-led regeneration, instrumentalising the social and economic benefits of participation in arts, culture and community to prepare Deptford for "inevitable" gentrification. It made participation and community arts instruments of urban change.

An example of this is the Lottery and Arts-Council-funded relocation of the Laban Centre for Movement and Dance (now Trinity Laban) to a new building in Deptford in 2002. Designed by star architects and located on Creekside, a declining area previously important for the shipping industry and marked by industrial wasteland and warehouses containing cheap art studios, Trinity Laban symbolically rebranded Creekside, making it attractive for redevelopment. Essentially a high-profile cultural institution, its mission was to widen community participation through arts and education, offering utopian promises to tackle social exclusion by providing cultural facilities in a stimulating environment (Potts, 2008).

Although Trinity Laban does do some interesting community work, it was the spectacular building which was seen as the saviour of declining Creekside (Lewisham Council, 2012, p. 13).

Indeed, Creekside has since become a "creative quarter" with expensive private homes (Kent, Sun and Union Wharf) and art studios (e.g. Faircharm), displacing some (community) artists from former cheap studios. Further artists will be displaced from Art Hub, a non-profit Community Interest Company with cheap studio space, after plans to build student accommodation were announced at the end of 2022. The boating community on Creekside have also been in a long dispute with Artworks Creekside, who are planning to redevelop the mooring area, potentially displacing those living on boats. It is only lucky that the Crossfield's Estate, which still houses many artists, teachers and voluntary sector workers, is protected and Art in Perpetuity Trust (A.P.T.) an artist collective who own the freehold for their studios and gallery, thus protecting many residents and artists from displacement.

Arts and culture-led regeneration also involves other cultural provision to "enhance" an area. Deptford became a place for pop-up projects and art spaces (e.g. The Deptford Project), art residencies and property guardianships (e.g. Tidemill School), commissioned street artists (e.g. Dr. Degri) and community arts projects with local children and families (e.g. Trinity Laban). Developers and councils also started engaging local residents in community consultations, in effect presenting final decisions and subsequently distributing images of "happy" communities "having their say" to evidence community participation and support for council decisions. Deptford also saw the arrival of establishments that cater for the tastes and cultural practices of the middle-classes: cafés, vegan and artisan eateries and boutique shops run by young entrepreneurs. Developers began exploiting Deptford's status as a 'real area' with 'real people' and 'close-knit multi-ethnic communities' (The Deptford Project, no date), and writers and journalists started describing Deptford as an 'edgy', 'hip' and 'arty' area with 'rude boys' to attract urban creatives (e.g. Lanyado, 2009; Prynn, 2016; Dyckhoff, 2018; Purcell, 2018). This creation of a new place identity and the increasing presence of middle-class artists and professionals helped raise land value and set gentrification in motion.

In the early 2000s, Deptford also faced the first phase of estate regeneration: the demolition of council estates, replaced with so-called mixed-community estates. In reality, this has meant predominantly private flats and few social homes, resulting in a net loss of council housing and displacing many residents from their homes, communities and neighbourhoods (see Davidson and Lees, 2010; Lees, Slater and Wyly, 2010; Boughton, 2015; Estate Watch, 2020). For example, in 2001, five low-rise council-owned blocks on the Pepys Estate were replaced with five mixed-tenure blocks of flats plus two terraces of three-storey houses owned by a Housing Association. All 222 council tenants were displaced without the right to return. A further 144 council residents were displaced after Lewisham Council sold Aragon Tower on the same estate to Berkley Homes, which revamped it into a luxury tower block adding five floors of penthouses (ibid.).

Regeneration in the age of austerity: intensified state-led gentrification driven by "big money"

Since the Conservatives have been in power, urban regeneration has been largely controlled by private international developers. This is starkly evident in Deptford. Many "luxury" and riverside towers with not one single home for social rent and meagre percentages of "affordable" homes (80% of market rate) have been built (e.g. Deptford Rise: 0% social, 6% "affordable" (shared ownership); Kent Wharf: 0% social, 13% "affordable"; Union Wharf: 0% social, 0% "affordable") (Corporate Watch, 2019). The proposed Convoy's Wharf development at Deptford's waterfront comprises 3,500 flats, none of which will be at social rent and only 15% at "affordable" rent (ibid.). More council estates have been and will be demolished and replaced with mostly private housing (e.g. Besson Street, Tidemill Site, Achilles Street area), leading to a further net loss of council housing and displacing residents of various ethnic origins. Local specialist shops, often rented from the council by minoritised groups for peppercorn rents, are also being demolished and replaced by more expensive businesses able to afford the increased rents (e.g. Deptford High Street, New Cross Road). Vital green spaces on council land are also sold for housing (e.g. Tidemill Garden).

All this has triggered the rising of prices of homes to rent and buy in a climate of austerity politics which has dramatically reduced welfare benefits and defunded much-needed community centres and groups (e.g. Deptford Action Group for the Elderly – DAGE). This

'accumulative dispossession' (Lees and White, 2019) makes it harder for those on lower incomes to find opportunities for human fulfilment and be able to afford living in Deptford. The borough of Lewisham, which includes Deptford, is one of the most deprived London boroughs (Lewisham Council, 2019). In 2014, it was identified as one of three eviction hotspots in London due to people's inability to continue paying their rent or mortgage (Shelter, 2014). It is also one of the worst faring boroughs with regards to homelessness with around 2% of its population experiencing homelessness (Duvall, 2017; 2018; Lewisham Council, 2020a), including rough sleeping. There are 2,500 registered homeless households in temporary accommodation (Duvall, 2018; Lewisham Council, 2020a; Firth, 2022) and 9,800 families on the housing register waiting list (Barker, 2021). Whilst estate demolition and housing programmes are promoted with the aim of reducing the number on the housing register, the number of homeless households has remained relatively stable since at least 2018 (ibid.) despite a building boom.

The number of children eligible for and claiming free school meals noticeably declined between 2008 and 2018 in Lewisham (London Datastore, 2019), with one possible interpretation being that poor families are being moved out of the area. This is unsurprising considering that Lewisham has the highest proportion of children in economic deprivation (37%) and that 82% of London's homeless households in temporary accommodation (with 71% housed outside their boroughs in 2015) contain children (Lewisham Council, 2015; Trust for London, 2018). This goes hand in hand with an increased number of households registered as homeless and increased lengths of stay in temporary accommodation (ibid.). These official statistics, however, do not account for the full scale of displacement because only those moved by authorities or those registered as homeless are recorded. Crucially, these figures do not account for the feelings of displacement experienced through cultural uplift and aesthetic changes by those remaining in place. This emotional displacement is caused not only by the politics but also by the aesthetics of gentrification, a particular logic of urban restructuring which I term *the aesthetico-political regime of 21st century gentrification*.

The aesthetico-political regime of 21st century gentrification in Deptford

There is geographical variability to the logic of regeneration, with particular mixes of social, cultural and economic capitals creating particular manifestations (Bridge, 2006, p. 1966). Each logic distributes a regime of self-evident facts of sense perception, creating imaginaries that make sensible particular bodies, actions and visions. The aesthetico-political regime of 21st century state-led gentrification in Deptford is modulated by the histories examined above, all of which have helped induce a huge 'rent gap' (N. Smith, 1996, p. 51-74) – the difference between actual and potential ground rent. This attracts many property developers to speculate on potential profits, purchase land and build developments which lure wealthy and middle-class people back into the city.

Deptford's proximity to the riverside (Thames and The Creek), the financial city (The City and Canary Wharf) and the centre of London tend to attract city workers who can afford to live in the new developments. The urban imaginaries for these developments emphasise an aesthetic that concentrates on the experiential qualities of clean, safe urban living (Degen *et al.,* 2017): expensively furnished flats with glass fronts and balconies, riverside and city views, protection through gated communities, concierges and private entrances, expensive bars and restaurants nearby, and spaces mostly frequented by young, healthy, predominantly white urban professionals. This aesthetic regime generally excludes council estate residents and by extension working-class communities, poor, disabled and older people, effectively writing them out of the future of certain areas.

At the same time, there is an aesthetic which celebrates Deptford's post-industrial, multi-ethnic working-class status. This tends to attract (middle-class) artists and professionals working in the creative industries who care for a sense of historicity and authenticity. The gentrification aesthetic of industrial chic, with industrial buildings and structures transformed into polished post-industrial regeneration, celebrates industrial architecture, heritage sites, municipal housing and community infrastructure. This gentrification logic also celebrates the now safe legacy and aesthetics of community arts and activism, claiming past struggles as victories and extracting value from the rough edges of a multicultural working-class area (Zukin, 2011; Wainwright, 2018). Luxury flats in historical, post-industrial buildings (e.g.

Paynes & Borthwick Wharf), designated heritage sites (e.g. railway arches), art and history trails (e.g. Deptford Parks Art Trail), commissioned apolitical street art (e.g. Artmongers), niche businesses selling authentic products in former industrial structures and adorned with retro and vintage artefacts and a pseudo-DIY punk aesthetic (e.g. Deptford Market Yard) are all examples of celebrating the memory of a golden industrial, working-class past, stripped of its original political meaning.

This aesthetic creates an affective atmosphere of historicity and authenticity, generating an appealing balance between urban grit and industrial luxury (Lanyado, 2009; Zukin, 2011; Wainwright, 2018). Authenticity here has two meanings: something historically old which is taken as a point of origin (e.g. old buildings and structures) and the quality of products (e.g. food, art and music). With the latter, authenticity is used as a cultural tool, alongside economic and political power, to determine how people use and consume the city's spaces and culture (e.g. authentic food, artisan beer, hand-roasted coffee), thus establishing urban spaces for middle-class newcomers (Zukin, 2011, p. xiii). The gap between the historically old and the culturally innovative is exploited in place-making practices, trying to appeal to the middle-class' sense of historicity and quality lifestyle (ibid.). An example of this is when, despite high unemployment, the former job centre on Deptford High Street became a gastro pub with the same name – The Job Centre – and retained the pin wall to advertise jobs and other "original" deco. While customers found it amusing to consume upmarket food and drink in this space, many local residents were outraged at this insensitivity (Elliott, 2014).

Many long-term residents perceive the aesthetico-political regime of gentrification as "inauthentic". The term authenticity is of course always problematic as it is seen from a distance of time (and place) and suggests notions of origin, purity and nostalgia (Zukin, 2011). However, for many existing residents, the new aesthetic regime is a mockery of their struggles against ever greater inequalities and instability. Not only does the sanitised version of post-industrial chic deploy the working-class and industrial aesthetic for capital gain, it also depoliticises and exploits local identity to generate space, cultural power and profits for the well-off. It changes place identity by smoothing over contentious histories and enabling middle-class people to live with "exotic" difference and "safe authenticity" while engaging very little with difference (Jackson, 2014; Jackson and Benson, 2014). It culminates in what

Davidson (2009a) refers to as 'loss of place'. By claiming authenticity, long-term residents are defending their 'right to the city' (Lefebvre, 1996) and resisting the forces of displacement.

Researching gentrification-induced displacement

This research focuses on the lived experiences of spatial and emotional displacement. It brings to the fore 'the phenomenological and affective dimensions of displacement' (Elliott-Cooper *et al.*, 2019), highlighting the 'structures of feeling' (Williams, 1977) and how the experience of displacement infiltrates people's habitus (Bourdieu, 1990) and their capacity to dwell (Heidegger, 1993 [1971]). I noted earlier that in total 366 residents were displaced from the Pepys Estate in the early 2000s. There are further displacement figures. In 2007, 70 council flats were demolished at Besson Street, New Cross, and planning application to build 324 flats for rent – 0% social and 35% affordable – was passed in summer 2020 (Lewisham Council, 2020b). The planned demolition of Reginald House (Tidemill Site) and the Achilles Street Area in the next few years will displace 250-300 people from their homes and potentially from the neighbourhood. Furthermore, more than 15 shopkeepers will be displaced from their "cheap" shop premises on New Cross Parade as part of the Achilles Street development. Finally, during this research, hundreds of garden users were displaced from Tidemill Garden which was destroyed to build more housing. Many of my research participants have been displaced from those sites.

This research also features members and volunteers at community centres, which offer valuable social and support networks, advice and opportunities for human fulfilment. With many community centres being defunded, closed or redeveloped, there is the constant threat of potential displacement from these spaces. These displacement pressures (Marcuse, 1985, p. 207) are compounded for many by the 'loss of place' (Davidson, 2009a): the changing aesthetic, place identity and demographic as described above. Despite remaining in place, many residents experience a sense of alienation and isolation. This is not to say that all existing residents dislike the changes or feel displaced. Gentrification is a complex and nuanced process from which some existing and working-class residents also benefit (e.g. Freeman, 2006; Doucet, 2009; Paton, 2014). However, the focus of this thesis is on the

different layers of displacement and what seems to many residents a concerted effort to remove people on low incomes from inner-city areas.

Understanding the effects of displacement requires 'a move to reassert the place in dis*place*ment' (Davidson, 2009a, p. 226; original emphasis). There is a strong correlation between place attachment and how displacement is experienced. Place attachment is a strong emotional connection between people and place. This connection can have many reasons, but it often develops from continually participating in what David Seamon calls 'place ballet[s]' (Seamon, 2014, p. 13) – daily routines, interactions and events rooted in place. Place is about connections (Massey, 1991) and attachment is often intertwined with a strong sense of family and community (Manzo and Perkins, 2006, p. 339). This is particularly relevant for residents with reduced spatial mobility due to old-age, disability and poverty, and for others with a place-based existence. They often find emotional connections based on shared histories, interests and cultural practices. Although place attachment can lead to reactionary politics (examined in Chapter 3), there is compelling data indicating that identification with place contributes to existential security and emotional stability (Fullilove, 2014; Lewicka, 2014; Manzo, 2014; Seamon, 2014). The daily 'practices of belonging' (Benson and Jackson, 2012; Blokland, 2017) and participation in community not only widen people's social connections and build social capital (Putnam, 2000) but they also help develop feelings of at-homeness and the capacity to dwell. This suggests that the deeper the place attachment, the greater the emotional upheaval from displacement. I refer to this upheaval as 'root shock' (Fullilove, 2014) from 'the violence of un-homing' (Elliot-Cooper *et al*., 2019).

Resisting the violence of un-homing

Researching the violence of un-homing in Deptford with a community arts project that also contributes to local resistance makes sense not only due to Deptford's history of community arts and activism but also because local communities are resisting the current aesthetico-political regime of state-led gentrification. The displacement of council estate and poorer residents through this regime and the accumulative dispossession caused by austerity politics, as well as the exploitation of the working-class aesthetic and participatory arts have gradually brought back radical arts and community activism. In recent years, Deptford has experienced a plethora of housing and other social justice campaigns by local people

experiencing strong place attachment and armed with knowledge about the processes of regeneration from past experiences of active resistance. The root shock caused by the current logic of urban restructuring is for many too great to remain silent or inactive.

Residents are volunteering in community centres, offering material resources, mutual support and spaces of belonging; they are campaigning and protesting, taking art into the streets to highlight the uneven aspects of urban change; they are applying theatre, performance, music, design, photography and other visual media to communicate their experiences of gentrification and displacement and propose alternative visions for the future; and they are researching, documenting and publishing information on alternative media. Recognising how artists and residents have been exploited to participate in the gentrification agenda, many are also resisting the depoliticisation and instrumentalisation of participation and community arts. They are fighting in a climate that, alongside reducing truly affordable homes and much-needed welfare benefits and social institutions, reduces public funding for the arts and silences dissident voices. Campaigners and residents are fighting for a socially more just city: fairer resource redistribution (e.g. good, secure and truly affordable housing for all) and cultural recognition (e.g the inclusion of their and other voices, visions and cultural practices in the future of Deptford). They are fighting for their 'right to the city' (Lefebvre, 1996) , their 'right to place and the right to dwell' (Davidson, 2009a, p. 232).

Towards a Radical Visual Sociology: enacting resistance through a creative activist sociological imagination

Integrating local community arts practices into a research project while simultaneously making the research part of local community activism is a novel way of doing social justice research. Not only does the ethical, creative and political methodology generate alternative representations of social realities, by enacting these realities in the public sphere, thus *redistributing the sensible* and staging moments of equality and democracy (Arendt, 1998 [1958]; Rancière, 1999), the methodology becomes an act of resistance. Furthermore, it mitigates, to some extent, the experienced violence of un-homing by building affective connections among participants and instilling a sense of value. This is a renewed way of doing public sociology, a new form of creative activist sociological research. It draws on Becker's argument that to assume 'it is indeed possible to do research that is uncontaminated by

personal and political sympathies' (Becker, 1967, p. 239) is a fallacy, particularly in radical sociology, which seeks alternative knowledges to resist dominant representations and 'rests on the desire to change society in a way that will increase equality' (Becker and Horowitz, 1972, p. 52-53). The question is not 'whether we should take sides… but rather whose side we are on' (Becker, 1967, p. 239). Research does not begin from a neutral position; our values inform our choice of research, the questions we ask, our research method(s) and how we describe the realities we observe. And 'if methods are not innocent then they are also political. They help to *make* realities' (Law and Urry, 2004, p. 404; original emphasis). This research is inherently political, and I make no secret of my political sympathies with those facing displacement. The study was conceived to stage a political intervention in the aesthetico-political regime of gentrification. It politicised and democratised participation, community arts and academic research to produce alternative representations of participants' realities: their communities and their lived experiences of place, gentrification and displacement. It then deployed those representations to enact participants' realities in the public domain. It sought to clash with dominant configurations of power, making visible and audible different political positions and identities and making the public sphere a site of power struggle for economic, social and cultural justice. This also made the research a methodological intervention.

Making the methodology political and effectual necessitated new and creative ways of doing participatory research, developing alternative representations which reflect how displacement is experienced and seeking new ways of disseminating research that widens relevance, audience and potential impact. This research is unique in blurring the boundaries between sociology, community arts and activism through a creative activist sociological imagination. It is a form of *research as exchange*, working collaboratively with a variety of participants, making them co-researchers, co-producers of knowledge, co-creators of output and co-disseminators of works and findings. This thesis attends to the messiness of working collaboratively, creatively and politically, of merging traditional social research methods with a radical community arts project, intermingling the knowledges and practices from above and below, turning social research into political activism and political activism into social research.

This thesis offers multi-layered understandings of how the emotional upheaval caused by the forces of gentrification-induced displacement is experienced in Deptford. It does this by thematically analysing extracts from interviews and conversations and examining the creative-political material produced with, by and for participants as part of their struggles for spatial, social and cultural justice. It particularly looks at the affective dimensions of place, community and solidarity; displacement, stigmatisation and devaluation; and resistance, community arts and activism. Zooming in on how these themes intersect elucidates the affective landscape of displacement.

Outline of this thesis

Chapter 1 examines the interrelation between community arts and urban change from an historical and chronological perspective, exploring how an originally radical practice to express dissent and criticism to social inequalities and top-down urban policies gradually became depoliticised and instrumentalised to accelerate the processes of urban change. It also examines how the arts and creative industries became a driver for gentrification, making many artists unwittingly complicit in regeneration. It argues for the need to return to the radical practice of community arts and activism and for scholars (and artists) to get more actively involved in anti-gentrification struggles. Chapter 2 explains the methodology employed for this study – its philosophical and political underpinnings, its ethical, aesthetic and political considerations and practical realisations. It offers a creative participative methodology that critically responds to urban change while generating sociological insights.

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 explore the affordances of an engaged, creative and political methodology and what this revealed with regards to the affective dimensions of place, displacement and creative neighbourhood activism. Chapter 3 delves into the sociology of place and what Deptford means to my participants. It examines various aspects of belonging and argues that identification with place, belonging and attachment can play out in different, potentially irreconcilable ways, but are often resolved through participating in place-based communities and intercultural dialogues. Following on from this, Chapter 4 examines how participants experience gentrification-induced displacement, presenting alternative means of representation to communicate more fully the phenomenological and affective dimension of

the violence of un-homing. Chapter 5 examines local resistance past and present, arguing that community arts and activism is about working creatively in the cracks of power to make policies respond to people's needs and remedy social injustices. This chapter also argues that the affective dimension of participating in community arts and activism helps people cope with living in an unjust world. Chapter 6 explores and evaluates how this research got involved politically and contributed to effecting meaningful change. The conclusion considers the potential of participatory arts in resisting uneven urban change and what this research might mean for further visual research and displacement studies.

1

Community Arts and Urban Regeneration: How an oppositional practice became an instrument of urban policy

1.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the complex interrelationship between community arts and urban regeneration, discussing how an oppositional practice to resist social inequalities and top-down urban interventions gradually became professionalised, depoliticised and absorbed into urban policy (e.g. Belfiore; 2002; 2012; Bishop, 2012; Lees and Melhuish, 2012). Community arts, renamed participatory arts in the 1990s, has become largely seen as providing social care (e.g. Kelly, 1984; Bishop, 2012) and as being instrumentalised to accelerate and ameliorate urban change. This led to "the end of radical community arts" (e.g. Kelly, 1984) and the apparent abandonment of the idea that participatory art practices can be deployed in the context of urban change without being co-opted into that change (Bishop, 2012; Pritchard, 2017). Whilst it is widely evident that many participatory arts projects are instrumentalised as tools for urban change, contemporary housing struggles indicate that grassroots community arts are deployed again (if there ever was an end) to respond critically to top-down urban policy. There are many radical community artists involved in anti-gentrification campaigns in London (see MayDay Rooms, 2022 for examples of this in Brixton), working creatively with residents to resist gentrification-induced displacement. Yet, there is very little scholarly literature on their practices.

Presenting ideas, interventions and practices in a chronological order, this chapter provides an historical overview of how community arts gradually became repackaged as participatory arts and absorbed into urban policy. This, in turn, elucidates why it has become so difficult for contemporary community artists to respond critically to 21st century state-led gentrification. Examining the interpenetration of capital and culture in processes of gentrification and their displacement effects, the overview illuminates the complex situations artists have to navigate but also why grassroots community arts have resurfaced to resist the economic and cultural inequalities arising from gentrification. The chapter calls on gentrification scholars to work

with radical community artists and to get more actively involved with anti-gentrification struggles through displacement research. Instead of further critical descriptions (and further ameliorative participatory arts projects), there is an urgent need for more radical agendas and more engaged practices to respond critically to the politics and aesthetics of gentrification and work towards social change.

This chapter draws together literature from the community arts movement between the 1960s and 80s (e.g. Braden, 1983; Kelly, 1984; Jeffers and Moriarty, 2017; Stacey, 2020), participatory and socially-engaged art practices since the 1990s (e.g. Bishop, 2012; Hope, 2017) and from studies focusing on the role of culture and the arts in processes of regeneration (e.g. Bennett, 1998; Belfiore, 2002; 2012; Miller and Yúdice, 2002; Ley, 2003; Evans, 2005; Zukin, 2011). It also references the well-known literature on urban policy, gentrification and displacement (e.g. N. Smith, 1996; 2002; Rex, 1998; Imrie and Raco, 2003; Bridge, 2006; Slater, 2006; 2017; Lees, Slater and Wyly, 2010; Watt, 2021). However, it is not within the scope of this thesis to provide an overview of urban policy in the UK. The purpose here is to illuminate how the different phases of community arts interrelate with urban change, with a particular focus on London.

1.2 The birth of grassroots community arts: resisting the established order, offering other means of representation and effecting social change

The year 1968 is widely associated with increasing social unrest and civil disobedience in the form of riots, demonstrations, marches and squatting, as well as with grassroots community activism that took art into the streets to express political beliefs in the hope of an alternative society (Kelly, 1984, p. 9). This corresponded with the realisation that the prosperity of the 50s and 60s and the large-scale municipal housing programmes had not reached a large segment of the population, leaving the inner-city poor facing material poverty, housing issues, unemployment and marginalisation (Rex, 1998). It also corresponded with the rise of fascism and the National Front (NF), with some of the poor white population blaming immigration for the break-up of communities, lack of jobs and increased levels of crime (Steele, 1993; Anim-Addo, 1995). The widespread discrimination in terms of race, employment and housing, underpinned by 'the culture of poverty' attitude (O. Lewis, 1966)

which blames people for their own poverty, created an urban underclass, 'the new Inner-City poor' (Rex, 1998, p. 6), who suffered acute marginalisation.

This social construction of the undeserving poor together with real poverty, deprivation and fascist attacks generated resistance to the established order and dominant representations of poverty and race. Organising demonstrations and applying DIY community arts and activism with alternative press and underground networks, citizens began to mobilise themselves to effect social change bottom-up (Kelly, 1984; Crehan, 2011; Jeffers, 2017a; 2017b; Stacey, 2020). Influenced by the counterculture of the 1960s, US anti-Vietnam war demonstrations, student revolts in Paris and the Women's Liberation Movement, as well as community activism by Saul Alinsky in the US and critical community-focused pedagogy as practiced and taught by Paolo Freire in Brazil, local grassroots community development projects were set up in deprived neighbourhoods, providing a platform for marginalised voices to collectively work towards change. The aim was to emancipate poorer residents through active citizenship, participative democracy and social cohesion (Ledwith, 2011; Mayo, Mendiwelso-Bendek and Packham, 2013).

Artists disenchanted with the artworld which they saw as elitist recognised the importance of *cultural democracy* – an approach to arts and culture that actively engages "everyone" in defining culture and in making and experiencing it (Jeffers, 2017a; 2017b). They set up art labs, theatre groups and workshops to work creatively with local residents to produce alternative representations of working-class communities and effect change. Although many community artists had been to art school, they often came from similar backgrounds and lived in the same poor conditions as the people they were working with, renting or squatting semi-derelict buildings, living off "the dole", and/or depending on (small amounts of) public funding. Many were embedded in their neighbourhoods and recognised the value of collective and creative political activism (Kelly, 1984; Crehan, 2011; Jeffers, 2017a; 2017b; Stacey, 2020).

Collective creativity helps people define social issues from their perspectives, changing perceptions and social relations, and providing a space for critical pedagogy (Rooke, 2013, p.

151). Valuing the social and cultural capital of working-class people and providing platforms for their voices, knowledges and perspectives not only disrupt dominant narratives but also create a space for building community and social justice. Social justice is ultimately about fair economic distribution and cultural recognition (Fraser and Honneth, 2003) to achieve what Fraser (2000) calls 'parity of participation': being recognised as a full member of society, able to participate in public life. Resistance, therefore, is a call for the redistribution of wealth and for subordinated people to be recognised as equal participants in social life, as humans of value with opportunities for human fulfilment (Alinsky, 1989 [1946], p. 15-18). Hence, participation in grassroots community projects has a transformative agenda to bring about social change based on a more equitable world (Kelly, 1984). Claire Bishop summarises community arts as

> positioned against the hierarchies of the international art world and its criteria of success founded upon quality, skill, virtuosity, etc., since these conceal class interests; it advocated participation and co-authorship of works of art; it aimed to give shape to the creativity of all sectors of society, but especially to people living in areas of social, cultural and financial deprivation; for some, it was also a powerful medium for social and political change, providing the blueprint for a participatory democracy.
> (Bishop, 2012, p. 177)

Community artists used photography, mural painting, theatre, music and other art forms, as well as alternative publishing platforms, to, in Rancière's words (1999; 2004), amplify the voices, actions and bodies of the inaudible, ineffectual or invisible, staging political confrontations between dominant and alternative narratives. The cultural practices of the working-classes had hitherto not been acknowledged by the government and funding applications for community arts projects defied existing categorisation of the arts (Kelly, 1984). By the late 1960s, the Arts Council was inundated with funding applications from community arts organisations. Culture had become a site of resistance and people sought radical social and political change.

1.3 A thriving community arts scene in the 60s and 70s: the first round of state-sponsored community activism

The wave of grassroots movements forced the government to acknowledge alternative voices and respond with policy interventions. Both the Race Relations Act and the Urban Programme were launched in 1968, criminalising discrimination on race and ethnicity grounds and improving the physical fabric of deprived areas. The community development programmes as part of these policies aimed to ameliorate deprivation, racial tensions and social exclusion by providing education and access to art, and through mobilising self-help and mutual aid (Craig *et al*., 2011, p. 2). Despite criticisms of the programmes following a culture of poverty approach, aiming to regulate the 'unruly' behaviour of the inner-city poor (Hall *et al*., 1978; Bennett, 1992; Tyler and Slater, 2018), there is a need to recognise the multi-layered complexities of policy-making and the fact that people have agency, and as such are able to exploit policy and make the system respond to their needs. Marilyn Taylor (2003) and Mayo, Mendiwelso-Bendek and Packham (2013) argue that the programmes had a progressive agenda to meet social needs and promote social justice bottom-up. Numerous initiatives were established in deprived and multi-ethnic areas such as Deptford, including youth clubs, supplementary schools, churches, dance groups, street theatre and community festivals, as well as Black community initiatives and spaces to provide opportunities for Black children, youths and their parents (Steele, 1993; Anim-Addo, 1995).

This overlapped with an explosion of grassroots community arts projects, by then largely funded by the Arts Council, creating and distributing alternative representations of working-class communities (Kelly, 1984; Crehan, 2011; Jeffers and Moriarty, 2017; Kenna and Lobb, 2019; Stacey, 2020). Some artists set up their own spaces, others worked in more established (government-funded) spaces. Some used their skills to help political campaigns, others researched, documented and printed individually. Others worked more directly with residents, leading workshops and training participants in the skills necessary to apply certain art forms so that people could themselves communicate aspects of their lives. This means that while working towards cultural democracy and the inclusion of varied cultural practices from diverse communities, attention was also paid to the formal qualities of artistic output to communicate political messages effectively. This political aesthetic in earlier community arts

practices is an oft overlooked point, with community arts generally perceived as aesthetically inferior and bad art.

The role of photography and alternative press in highlighting social issues

Community photography and the alternative press were particularly important in highlighting abhorrent working and living conditions. Tired of problematic representations of poor and racialised people in dominant media outlets and within traditional photojournalism (see, for example, the works of Jacob Riis, Dorothea Lange and Kevin Carter), photography collectives published an array of magazines, pamphlets and exhibitions to draw attention to these conditions and try and change them. Photography collectives were set up in deprived areas, such as the Half Moon Gallery and Photography Workshop in East London, to work with local residents to challenge dominant forms of representation and highlight the structural inequalities leading to poverty. Many community photographers also started working with texts, interviewing people and offering, alongside images, unpolished interview data about working-class lives to their readers. It was a time of experimentation, producing texts and images with a political aesthetic, creating counternarratives distributed in self-established magazines and journals (Stacey, 2020).

At the time, Braden (1983) and Kelly (1984) argued that publishing and distributing counternarratives is essential if community artists want them 'to amount to anything more than instinctive self-expression' (Kelly, 1984, p. 117). Given the lack of interest from popular media channels for what was seen as too left-wing, alternative media such as *Camerawork* by Halfmoon Photography Workshop were established. *Camerawork* edition No 8 from 1977 – the Lewisham edition – is a good example of a distributed counternarrative which intervened in a national debate. The issue focused on The Battle of Lewisham in 1977 and how popular media channels reported it by vilifying Black people as rioters and instigators of violence. In response, the magazine offered photographs by Chris Schwarz and Paul Trevor showing police violence and peaceful anti-racist protestors. This exposed the problematic representation of racialised people, with accompanying texts examining 'the wider issues of discrimination and racism' (Stacey, 2020, p. 65).

Looking at the images of that time, it is clear that attention was paid to the formal qualities of imagery, creating a visual aesthetic informed by photographic training while also reflecting the social relationship with the communities depicted, the intention with which the images were taken and the production technologies used (Braden, 1983; Kelly, 1984; Stacey, 2020). Braden called this 'the aesthetics of social change' (Braden, 1983, p. 89-104). The same principle applied to images produced by residents themselves. It is a general misconception that formal qualities play no role in participant-generated community photography; this only came to be in more instrumentalised forms of participatory photography where the social process of participation is valued over the product, as I will discuss later. Traditionally, community photographers provided technical and visual literacy training to build an awareness of the language and conventions of "traditional" photography to enable residents to 'create *and distribute* an iconography of self-representation by which to counteract the dominant representations' (Braden, 1983, p. 87; original emphasis). In line with Freire's critical pedagogy (1996 [1970], the idea was to acknowledge marginalised communities' ability to act on their own behalf and enable them to participate effectively in fighting inequality. Hence the need for trained artists and educators within community arts projects.

Arts Council and state funding: the first signs of the depoliticisation of community arts

By the mid-1970s, there was an abundance of publicly funded art collectives. Kelly argues that once funding was in place, it took community arts 'away from the areas of danger in which its founders had been dabbling, and towards altogether safer pastures' (Kelly, 1984 p. 14). There was disparity within the Arts Council about how community arts should be judged, and fears that funding community arts would lower standards of excellence. With project goals defined by the funder, community arts gradually became an endeavour to provide deprived communities with access to existing and professional art rather than making people's own art socially effective. *Cultural democracy* turned into the *democratisation of culture*: making the "best" in art accessible to the disadvantaged in the hope of educating them and reforming their tastes and conduct (Kelly, 1984; Bennett, 1998; Belfiore, 2016). Funding was also provided on the premise that community arts projects were seen to provide solutions for social problems, with artists placed in deprived communities to engage and animate them, signalling a shift to what Kelly terms 'welfare arts' (1984, p. 29). This became particularly relevant during the inner-city crisis of the late 1970s.

The inner-city crisis grew out of continued residential and industrial suburbanisation and the 1970s recession. This exacerbated the plight of the urban poor with increased levels of unemployment, poverty, deprivation and racial injustice, culminating in further racially-motivated attacks and events such as the Battle of Lewisham. In response, the first 'Urban' White Paper, *A Policy for the Inner Cities*, was published in 1977 (Rex, 1998, p. 9), a policy aimed at addressing economic and physical decline, poverty and racial discrimination through partnerships with local government, the private sector and local communities (Tallon, 2013, p. 28-39). With more emphasis on state sponsorship and an increased number of temporary placements within communities, community workers and artists found themselves implicated in community activism as mere social provision to achieve small-scale ameliorative local change and diffuse unrest (Hall *et al*., 1978; Kelly, 1984; Ledwith, 2011). Braden (1978) found that artists who responded to advertised placements in deprived communities were more likely to impose their own art on communities with predefined and depoliticised methods of participation than artists who had been living among communities and set up their own initiatives. Braden's fears were well-grounded and are even more relevant today.

Nevertheless, because of the scant documentation of community arts until recently, Kelly and Braden's criticisms have created a somewhat totalising discourse, side-lining community arts which did continue to do critical work. The publications of the photography collectives as examined earlier (*Camerawork* edition No 8), and which have only recently been collated into a book (see Stacey, 2020), are examples of that. *Rock Against Racism*, a 1976 concert which morphed into a whole grassroots political and cultural movement funded by the Greater London Council (GLC) to resist persistent racism, is another. Music, dance and carnivals became particularly important sites of grassroots and state-funded cultural resistance among a new generation of politically-aware citizens that questioned narratives around race and empire (Back, 2017, p. 30). The reggae sound system culture which emerged at the time, with some dances held in government-funded spaces, addressed the cultural and economic needs of Black people while also constituting their resistance (Steele, 1993; Henry, 2014; Back, 2017). It helped create strong Black communities by generating the emotional support needed for political agency and community organising to oppose racial inequalities. This was a key period in British history when Black politics merged with British class politics, signalling

huge changes in the social and political spheres (Hall and Back, 2009, pp. 674-675).[3] Yet, Black community arts and activism are hardly mentioned in community arts literature.

1.4 The GLC moment 1981-1986: the second round of state-funded radical arts amid neoliberal urban policy

Not long after Thatcher came into power, corporate sponsorship largely replaced public subsidy for culture and the arts, and the Arts Council became an instrument of government to foster entrepreneurial skills, famous brand-names and profitability (Billington, 2013). This signalled 'the economic turn of the arts' (Jeffers, 2017c, p. 142), with most art funding allocated to the "best" of contemporary art and culture which offered a return on the investment.[4] Public funds for community development and arts were cut and often became the responsibility of local authorities, who increasingly focused on short-term projects to fix social ills with placed artists, who were having to compete for funding to earn a living in an increasingly competitive environment (Kelly, 1984). Training also became available, institutionalising community arts through education and making it into a recognised profession. Despite these trends, the beginning of the Thatcher period triggered a renewed explosion of grassroots community activism and radical arts. This was because the urban policy espoused by this government dramatically increased social, spatial and racial inequalities and because of the radical politics of the Greater London Council (GLC).

Thatcher's government not only reduced public funding for culture but also drastically reduced welfare provision, ignoring racial inequality and the structural struggles of the post-industrial working-classes and redeploying a 'culture of poverty' approach. It also introduced an urban policy underpinned by neoliberal ideology: deregulation, privatisation, global finance and market and property-led regeneration. One scheme was Right To Buy (RTB), where sitting council tenants could purchase their homes at a discount. However, this only really enabled the "deserving" (mostly white) working class to become homeowners (Marilyn Taylor, 2003, p. 69). As RTB money was not reinvested in building new homes, council housing stock was significantly reduced, limiting possibilities of subsidised accommodation for poorer citizens. Loss of council housing was also exacerbated by transferring some stock

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[3] These changes also related to differences other than race such as gender, sexuality, (dis)ability and ethnicity.
[4] The linguistic shift from subsidy to investment signalled the economic turn of the arts (Jeffers, 2017c, p. 143).

to housing associations, with council housing only reserved for the most needy, representing the stigma of belonging to the most vulnerable strata of society (ibid.).

Another major scheme was the expansion of financial institutions in urban centres. High-quality office space together with luxury homes, waterfront developments and consumption spaces and the growth of the cultural and creative industries, as in Canary Wharf, London Docklands, became part and parcel of state-led gentrification. This form of gentrification invites private property developers and foreign investors to speculate on potential profits, orchestrating investment before building mostly private homes for wealthier populations. This is underpinned by the 'rent-gap theory' (N. Smith, 1996, p. 51-74), meaning that when the difference between actual and potential ground rent reaches a significant gap – typically in deprived neighbourhoods, real estate developers purchase the land to maximise profits from high rents in new developments. As such, gentrification brings middle-class people back into urban neighbourhoods, thereby displacing existing working-class people.

N. Smith (1996; 2002) and Slater (2006; 2017) argue that the rent gap is the single most important cause of gentrification. Whilst it is undeniable that the economic power of property developers and investors, together with the enabling power of the state, offset gentrification, Zukin (1982; 2011) demonstrates that culture – the tastes and consumption choices of affluent newcomers – is a complementary force in driving gentrification. Gentrification transforms post-industrial working-class landscapes into urban enclaves for young urban professionals, with the new spaces of consumption changing the aesthetics, experience and identity of place. The result is that existing communities are displaced from an economic and cultural perspective. Where previous policies at least attempted to involve marginalised communities in cultural activities, neoliberal policy aims to economically *and* culturally regenerate deprived areas through mobilising middle-class and high-end culture and promoting a form of citizenship based on consumption (Bennett, 1998; Miller and Yúdice, 2002). This kind of state-led regeneration is not gentrification as in Glass' (2010 [1964]) original definition: haphazard, sporadic and localised. It is the wholesale restructuring of deprived areas with a seemingly deliberate attempt to "cleanse" urban areas of working-class people *and* culture. This interplay between economic and cultural forces makes redundant the debates whether gentrification is dictated by changes in land and property

markets or consumer choice and preference (see Slater, 2006). This thesis builds on Zukin's argument that capital and culture are complementary forces in processes of gentrification. They are also complementary drivers of resistance.

Radical community arts funded by the GLC

Between 1981 and 1986 the GLC became a hub for radical politics in relation to education, transport, employment and the arts, funding radical, socialised and politicised art (*The GLC Story*, 2017). Led by Ken Livingston and the radical left-wing of the Labour Party, the institution's cultural policy sought to include Londoners in decision-making processes about their local areas. It was a political act to resist the political and cultural policies of Thatcher's government. For example, the GLC generously funded community resistance to the regeneration of the London Docklands such as the Docklands Community Poster Project (DCPP). The project questioned the narratives distributed by the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) and warned local residents of their potential displacement with photo-murals, leaflets, banners, publications and a series of large events and festivals, including a People's Armada to Parliament where thousands of people sailed down the Thames in creatively decorated pleasure cruisers. By joining political campaigning with cultural activity, DCPP taught residents useful and creative tactics of resistance (Dunn and Leeson in Kenna and Lobb, 2019, p. 19). This did not halt the development and many families were displaced but DCPP gave working-class people a political voice and presented a strong and visible counternarrative the LDDC had to contend with (*East London Histories*, 2016).

The GLC also supported radical interventions by neglected social groups, such as youths, the disabled, women, homosexuals and racialised groups (as mentioned earlier, it funded *Rock Against Racism*). Its cultural policy represented a return to cultural democracy, which empowered people politically and mobilised them to become active citizens. This state-supported agency is part of London's radical socialist history, which had a huge impact on London's social and political landscapes, contributing to building social cohesion and cultural belonging. Once again, photography was at the forefront of political activism. Photographers historically marginalised from the centres of power and excluded from the canons of artistic achievement wanted to come into visibility and explore more subjective experiences of cultural identity. This resulted in critical and engaged documentary work, with a political

aesthetic questioning dominant narratives around identity and culture. The book *Different: A historical context. Contemporary photographers and black identity* (Hall and Sealy, 2001) is a good example of radical documentary photography.

Unfortunately, the generated counternarratives to the dominant representations of class, race, gender and culture were not recognised by authorities and remained contested for a long time (Hall and Sealy, 2001). With Thatcher's government more powerful than the GLC, parliament abolished the GLC and authorised its own visions of culture while delegitimising others. However, it is important to recognise that GLC funding enabled 'some of the most innovative political talent in radical politics' (Hall in Peacock, 1999, p. 39), which has gained recognition and influence more recently (Hall and Sealy, 2001).

1.5 The end of community arts in the late 1980s and early 1990s: from political participation to *pacification by participation*

With the rising inequalities in the 1980s and 90s, there was an explosion of arts-based participatory community development projects, by then often organised by large community arts organisations, where professional and placed artists worked with disadvantaged people. Earlier community artists such as Owen Kelly (1984) declared this as the end of radical community arts. Community arts had shifted from a class-based focus to being integrated in other areas of work such as health, crime prevention, community development and youth work (Jeffers, 2017c, p. 137), often burdening artists with social responsibilities they were not necessarily equipped to deal with (Gould, 2000). There was a strong focus on ethical practice, empowerment and poverty alleviation, but the implementation of standards of approaches and methods after participatory methodologies 'witnessed frenzied levels of global interest' (Guijt and Shah, 1998, p. 4) raised questions as to the ethics of projects.

Tiffany Fairey (2015; 2018), co-founder of Photovoice, a charity which claims to 'use ethical photography to promote positive social change' (Photovoice, n.d.), has herself questioned the ethics of placing artists into disadvantaged communities to work on oft predetermined projects. She has also questioned the purpose of participation, arguing that alongside 'giving voice' we need to engage in 'political listening' – making voices matter (Fairey, 2018). Fairey is thereby calling for a return to the radical tradition of participation, mirroring the basis of

this research. The fact that community arts was renamed participatory arts in the 1990s is indicative of how a once oppositional practice was emptied of its radical element, reflecting the shift from 'radicalism to remedialism' (Matarasso, 2013). Furthermore, the need to measure success in economic terms to justify the outlay to funders forced many well-meaning artists to compromise their beliefs and work towards set agendas (Belfiore, 2012).

Urban programmes such as City Challenge (CC) (1991-1994) and Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) (1994-2002) had such set agendas. These were multi-sectoral partnerships that re-involved local government, local communities and the private and voluntary sectors over a set period of time. The aim was to boost economic, social and cultural regeneration, improving infrastructure and the physical fabric and enhancing the quality of life in deprived areas (Centre of Urban and Community Research, 1997). Another period of well-funded community development was initiated but the programmes placed great emphasis on volunteering to achieve small-scale ameliorative local change (Ledwith, 2011; Mayo, Mendiwelso-Bendek and Packham, 2013). Whilst the approach aimed to embrace local talent and initiative, the tight bidding timetables necessitated that applicants had the cultural capital to present innovative projects in well-written proposals, more likely benefitting established (middle-class) artists (Atkinson and Moon, 1994, p. 121-126).

This raises serious questions about resource allocation and the extent of community participation in these schemes, making participation and community convenient add-ons for "positive" representation. This turned participation into what I call *pacification by participation* (adapted from Zukin's (1995) 'pacification by cappuccino'), making local people complicit in urban change by *professing* 'parity of participation' (Fraser, 2000). There is very little documentation on how community artists responded to the programmes and urban scholars assert the policies' ineffectiveness in reducing overall deprivation, poverty and social exclusion (e.g. Atkinson and Moon, 1994; Imrie and Raco, 2003; Tallon, 2013). However, isolated reports on CC and SRB in Deptford (e.g. Centre for Urban and Community Research, 1997; Baine *et al*., 2005; Rhodes, Tyler and Brennan, 2007) and my own empirical data as discussed in Chapter 5 indicate that local communities did participate in and benefit from these programmes but that their participation also inadvertently readied the area for subsequent gentrification.

Participation: the default mode of ethical arts practice

At this point, it is pertinent to look at developments in the UK artworld. In the 1990s, it became increasingly important for art to have social and ethical agendas, with artists judged by how they engage with participants and audiences (Bishop, 2012; Hope, 2017). With community and participatory arts seen akin to social work, the term socially-engaged art was adopted. Influenced by Bourriaud's (2000 [1998]) 'relational aesthetics' and Kester's (2004) 'dialogical aesthetics', socially-engaged art focuses on the transformative potential of an aesthetics rooted in artist-led collaborative and creative encounters (often without a final object). This offered artists a theoretical framework around notions of participation, community and the role of the artist, prioritising process over product, collective over individual authorship, collaboration and participation over artistic autonomy and quality (Bishop, 2012; Hope, 2017).

However, Bishop (2012, p. 277) argues that the social and ethical turns contributed in large parts to artists serving rather than questioning neoliberal agendas. This is evidenced by the increased interest in community arts projects and voluntary work, where artists, keen to "do good", are placed in communities for the duration of a project. The production of immaterial labour (content, knowledge or communication) is not generally perceived as work in the traditional sense but as the valorisation of relational and emotional aspects. This affective labour, fuelled by opportunities for social interaction and the potential of transformational experiences (Gill and Pratt, 2008, p. 11-12), is conceived as a new form of social control through governmental practices.

Drawing on Foucault's (1978a; 1978b) notions of 'governmentality', 'society of control' and 'biopower', where power and control permeate an individual's body and consciousness and become integral to their activities and social relations, Rose introduces 'ethico-politics' – a way of governing the soul towards responsible self-governance (N. Rose, 1999, p. 188). Ethico-politics encourages moral obligation to think ethically and consider others, with artists working with marginalised communities in their personal efforts of "doing good". It also tallies with an increasingly competitive job market and the gig economy, with freelance creatives relying on funded project work, art residencies and placements to make a living. Participatory arts projects with marginalised communities fit with many artists' sensibilities

and whilst their work is generally well intended, it lacks political intentions and is often appropriated by stakeholders as an instrument of urban regeneration through "positive" representation and the circulation of a convenient message (Zukin, 1995, p. 23). This is also where documentary photography took on another role: to "evidence" participation and "happy" communities engaging with processes of regeneration.

Bishop (2012) argues that the social and ethical turns signalled a disconnect between politics and aesthetics, with artistic autonomy and quality seen as negative. Participation has become the default mode of political practice, often resulting in works with a dialogical aesthetic that are artistically mediocre and therefore politically ineffectual. Bishop's arguments come from within the artworld and a focus on performance and theatre, whose aesthetics and artistic and participatory practices sit uneasily with those of radical community arts and even socially-engaged photography – an under-recognised art form which arose directly from community photography (Luvera, 2019, p. 6). However, her arguments are relevant in that prioritising social process over artistic outcome does little to communicate political messages to the wider public. This will be discussed further in Chapters 2 and 6.

1.6 Instrumentalising participatory arts to ameliorate the effects of urban regeneration during New Labour

New Labour coming into power in 1997 signalled another sea change in urban policy through promoting the 'third way', a centrist ideology that aimed to rebalance social and economic objectives (Marilyn Taylor, 2003). New Labour introduced the Urban Renaissance, an urban policy which in essence continued Thatcher's neoliberal programme, with state-led gentrification and its place-making practices practically written into policy documents (Imrie and Raco, 2003; Lees, 2003; 2008; Tallon, 2013). It continued RTB, stock transfers and the building of predominantly private housing for more affluent populations. It also set the foundation for the current estate regeneration programme: demolishing municipal housing estates and replacing them with mixed tenure blocks, significantly reducing the net number of truly affordable council homes and displacing low-income residents from their homes and neighbourhoods (e.g. Slater, 2009; Davidson and Lees, 2010; Boughton, 2015; Elmer and Dening, 2016; Lees and White, 2019; Watt, 2021). The idea is to disperse concentrations of poverty, largely underpinned by the rhetoric of a dysfunctional underclass being spatially

segregated on 'sink estates' (Slater, 2018) as exemplified by Tony Blair's speech at the Aylesbury Estate in Southwark in 1997:

> 'over the last two decades the gap between these worst estates and the rest of the country has grown... It shames us as a nation, it wastes lives and we all have to pay the costs of dependency and social division.' (Blair in Lees, 2014, p. 924)

The council estate has since become the renewed signifier of the underclass, and despite some attempts at social integration and channelling public and private money into social housing, targets are rarely met (Edwards, 2016, p. 229-234). During New Labour, public housing stock continued to decrease, residents were displaced from their homes and neighbourhoods and social inequality grew (Tallon, 2013, p. 81-103).

Meanwhile, New Labour strongly emphasised its commitment to neighbourhood renewal, community participation, and tackling social exclusion of the poorest through 'the revival of citizenship, democratic renewal and the participation of communities to spearhead urban change' (Tallon, 2013, p. 82). Influenced by the new communitarianism as advocated by Etzioni (1993; 1995), with citizenship founded on the premise that individual rights can only be exercised with a commitment to the common good, successful urban renewal required individuals to actively engage in civic affairs (Imrie and Raco, 2003, p. 5). Indeed, in Tony Blair's view, providing residents with the opportunity to participate in decisions over their own lives and the skills to escape poverty and welfare dependence would create a 'socially responsible individualism' (Bellah *et al.,* 1985, p. 155) that would revive social structures and build social capital (Putnam, 2000).

Participation and community were deployed as convenient add-ons for "positive" agenda-driven representations, producing an uncritical discourse of the generic good of participation. This is not to say New Labour did not have good intentions. They believed in the social impact of the arts and at least attempted to tackle social exclusion by continuing SRB programmes, making huge funds available through the Arts Council and National Lottery. Although the largest grants were still secured by middle-class artists and organisations to widen access to the "best" in art, for some community artists already working (and living) with more

disadvantaged communities the funding enabled them to progress their (critical) work (Jeffers, 2017c). Hence, some more diverse communities did also benefit (Belfiore, 2002; 2012). However, New Labour also believed in the economic value of the arts and another goal for the arts, alongside combatting social exclusion, was promoting regeneration. Participation became more manager-led, with community rhetoric and participation seemingly deployed to deliver its cultural policy agenda to make areas ripe for arts and culture-led regeneration (Craig *et al.*, 2011, p. 7).

Arts and culture-led regeneration: the economic value of culture and the arts

By the late 90s, the creative industries were deemed essential in the creation of place and community. Blair was influenced by Richard Florida's (2002) concept of the 'Creative Class', a new well-educated social class whose presence boosts urban growth and the local/national economy. Florida argues that the economy is driven by location choices of creatives and that place 'provide[s] the ecosystems that harness human creativity and turn[s] it into economic value' (Florida, 2002, p. xix). Instead of boosting growth through job creation, tax incentives and attracting businesses, cities only need to create vibrant, diverse and authentic centres of creativity which attract creatives. New Labour and its concept of 'Cool Britannia' built on Florida's ideas[5] and embarked on a programme of art and culture-led urban regeneration of inner-city areas, turning urban policy into an endeavour of place marketing and 'boosterism' mainly by the private sector in partnership with local government (Tallon, 2013, p. 84). According to Evans (2005), culture was utilised to engineer regeneration in three ways: 1) High profile cultural activities and flagship projects; 2) Integrating cultural activities into an area strategy to then write celebratory reports promoting further regeneration; 3) Other cultural provision like commissioned graffiti and street art which help enhance an area. I refer to all this as arts and culture-led regeneration.[6]

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[5] It was also influenced by publications on the economic and social impact of the arts by writers of Comedia, a New Labour think-tank, including Matarasso (1997), Landry (2008, first published in 2000) and others (Jeffers, 2017c).
[6] Evans (2005) used different terms for the different strategies: 1) culture-led regeneration, 2) cultural regeneration, 3) culture and regeneration. For ease of reference, I use arts and culture-led regeneration interchangeably for all three strands.

Flagship cultural and educational institutions are often designed by star architects and built in declining towns or city areas such as Trinity Laban at Deptford Creekside, Tate Modern at South Bank, Millennium Dome at Greenwich Peninsula, Central St Martins at King's Cross[7]. This symbolic rebranding helps put places on the map and bring art and audiences into areas, thus preparing them for regeneration and subsequent gentrification. Many such institutions offer utopian promises to tackle social exclusion by integrating cultural facilities in a stimulating environment. However, despite elevated reports of community engagement, in essence they are elitist institutions offering limited access to the "best" in art and education rather than cultural democracy and access for marginalised communities (Lees and McKiernan, 2013). While some of these institutions do good community work, attracting socially-engaged artists for placements, community development is more policy-driven and thus instrumentalised to tackle predetermined problems in set time frames, serving the interest of capital rather than combatting social inequalities (Imrie and Raco, 2003; Lees, 2003; Bishop, 2012). Again, policy-making is hugely complex, and it might be argued that New Labour was committed to enabling communities to participate in the arts. It is also hard to measure the affective impact of participating and it is fair to say that some people from deprived communities will have benefitted even amid set agendas. However, as Marilyn Taylor (2003) points out, the fundamentals of power are never addressed and participation has since been given mostly aesthetic, representational value to soften the harsh impact of regeneration. Culture is being treated like any other resource and is conveniently deployed for capital development and socio-political amelioration (Yúdice, 2003).

Artists as the foot soldiers of gentrification

The presence of cultural institutions helps raise the rent gap as they attract private developers to speculate on land and invest in regeneration. While regeneration proposals are drawn up, land values are further raised by bringing artists into run-down areas. Seeking "authentic" spaces that inspire creativity, urban artists are attracted by working-class communities, multi-ethnic diversity and the idea of a bohemian lifestyle which rejects

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[7] Art universities play a particularly important role in culture-led regeneration. Attracting wealthy, largely international students into areas through education and alternative consumption spaces (e.g. cafés, boutique shops, etc.) accelerates gentrification and leads to the studentification of areas (D. Smith, 2008). Other examples are London College of Communication in Elephant and Castle, London College of Fashion and University College London in Stratford, Goldsmiths in New Cross.

bourgeois lifestyles and capitalist consumerism (Ley, 2003; Lees, 2008; Zukin, 2011). This is nothing new; artists have historically been attracted to low-class "authentic" urban life, inspired by a sense of difference, danger and decay. Poor areas are also often the only places artists can afford. This was also the case with earlier community artists and although they belong to the first generation gentrifiers by imbuing inner-city areas with symbolic value, this did not have the same consequences as gentrification today.

Today, artists are deliberately lured into deprived inner-city areas to turn them into cultural and creative hubs and prepare them for gentrification (Ley, 2003; Tiller, 2013). Often highly mobile and rich in cultural capital due to their middle-class origins, education and cultural tastes but low on economic capital, they depend on the gig economy to make a living as artists. Alongside short-term leases and community placements with institutions, artists are offered pop-up art projects, studios and spaces, meanwhile use of community spaces and gardens, residencies and property guardianships in rundown buildings to be regenerated.[8] McRobbie (2016, p. 11-15) states that young middle-class art students are especially attracted by the excitement of occupying vacant ex-industrial buildings and getting paid for providing creative content. They are lured into a lifestyle of aspirational self-entrepreneurship, accepting a precarious existence of flexible work hours. However, they are often unaware of how their 'artistic mode of production' (Zukin, 1982) and their 'aestheticization of the commonplace' (Ley, 2003) transforms derelict urban neighbourhoods into areas with high symbolic value, which is then absorbed and commodified by capitalist economies. This process is known as artwashing (see Pritchard 2017 for examples).

Ironically, many of the artists who (unwittingly) help raise land values, particularly those reliant on cheap accommodation and/or studio space, are subsequently displaced when spaces become more expensive and are taken over by new creatives high on economic capital (Lees and Melhuish, 2012, p. 10).[9] Thus, although artists induce gentrification

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[8] Dotdotdot, for example, is a social enterprise that 'offers landlords a secure, flexible and cost-effective way to protect empty properties' (dotdotdotproperty.com) by placing property guardians committed to voluntary work in these buildings on a temporary basis.

[9] Earlier artists were often able to buy their homes under RTB or when private properties were much cheaper. Others have other "secure" and cheaper tenancies stemming from more benevolent policies. Some artists also have access to studios for which local collectives own the freehold. Therefore, older artists often do not face spatial displacement.

processes, they can hardly be blamed for this. Artists have little control over the aggressive property market which is underpinned by 'the full weight of private-market finance' (N. Smith, 2002, p. 443) and are themselves exploited by planning authorities, policy makers and property developers. Displaced artists sometimes join the working-class struggle after the realisation of their own exploitation but there generally needs to be greater awareness of the potential dangers of artists being implicated in processes of gentrification. This is particularly relevant when working with communities. If the aim of socially-engaged art practice is to think ethically, artists need to be more reflexive and reconsider the meaning and purpose of participation and the implications of their work on their participants and the area in which they are working.

1.7 Deploying the aesthetics of radical community arts as a tool for 21st century gentrification

The state and culture-led gentrification that Thatcher's government and New Labour embraced has intensified with Conservative governments since 2011. Gentrification is now driven by transnational money, with cash-strapped councils at the mercy of global property developers and forced to sell off public land to build a scant provision of social homes in largely private developments. The construction of ever more private and luxury homes for international investors and wealthy populations (including the global super-rich), many of which stand empty (Neate, 2018; Byrne, 2022), the inflated property prices and the accelerated estate regeneration programme and the resulting loss of council homes, together with benefit cuts and increased poverty levels, are all factors leading to the spatial displacement of council estate residents (including leaseholders and private renters) and people on low incomes.[10]

Already in 1985 Marcuse argued that displacement is *the* consequence of urban restructuring, an argument that has been verified again more recently by multiple urban geographers (e.g. Newman and Wyly, 2006; Slater, 2006; 2009; Watt, 2008; 2021; Davidson and Lees, 2010; Lees, 2016; Lees and White, 2019) despite some other scholars claiming

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[10] Displacement can and does happen at all income levels, like when the super-rich infiltrate a wealthy area and inflate property prices to such an extent that the previous high-income residents are priced out (see Glucksberg, 2015). However, displacement has more detrimental effects on people on low incomes.

gentrification-induced displacement is insignificant (e.g. Hamnett, 2003; 2009; Freeman, 2005; 2006; Lambert and Boddy in Davidson and Lees, 2010). The displacement maps from the Aylesbury and Heygate Estates (Southwark Notes, 2014; Lees, 2016) are particularly good indicators of the displacement effect of gentrification in London. Considering how many estates have already been or are currently being regenerated in London, it is unsurprising that gentrification is often described as *social cleansing*: a concerted effort to cleanse neighbourhoods of "undesirables" (Elmer and Dening, 2016; Lees and White, 2019; Watt, 2021). Perera (2019) and Lees and Hubbard (2021) have also argued that estate regeneration involves the removal of racialised peoples from inner-city areas, as they make up large numbers on council estates.

Current policy seems to have no strategy for deprived urban communities, except the continued 'weaponisation of stigma' (Tyler and Slater, 2018) and 'accumulative dispossession' (Lees and White, 2019) through a severe austerity programme, cutting welfare provision, defunding and/or shutting down community projects and spaces, and the ongoing vilification of council estates and tenants, welfare dependents and poor working-class people. This renewed 'culture of poverty' attitude, together with an unstable job market and a lack of truly affordable homes has resulted in the current housing crisis: increased levels of housing precarity (also among some lower middle-classes), homelessness, poverty and deprivation.[11] Furthermore, public funds for cultural activities have been drastically cut and are again mostly reserved for the "best" in art and culture.[12]

Although participatory arts and community projects are still commonly deployed to "evidence" community engagement, they are now mostly funded by property developers and sometimes local authorities. This has become particularly contentious in the balloting process of estate regeneration which London Mayor Sadiq Khan introduced in 2018. A recent investigation by Sian Berry, Green Party member of the London Assembly, showed how

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[11] Between 2009 and 2016 house prices doubled in some London boroughs (Osborne, 2016) while homelessness in London also doubled over a similar period (Matthew Taylor, 2016). Furthermore, since 1981, almost 3 million council housing units have been sold or transferred (Madden and Marcuse, 2016, p. 30).

[12] Interestingly, there has been a recent U-turn, with Arts Council England funding participatory arts projects that seem to enable cultural democracy such as Creative People and Places (creativepeopleplaces.org.uk) and 64 Million Artists (64millionartists.com).

councils deploy undemocratic tactics to persuade residents to support demolition, including the commission of art and design studios who utilise the language and aesthetics of DIY community arts to secure a yes vote (Berry, 2022).[13] This is coupled with glossy brochures filled with digital images 'emphasis[ing] the experiential qualities of new buildings and urban environments' (Degen *et al*., 2017, p. 3) and promises that are often deviated from at later stages (Berry, 2022). As is known from the Heygate and Aylesbury Estates, figures of displacement tend to be significantly higher than initially expected and fewer former tenants end up living in the new flats (Southwark Notes, 2014; Lees, 2016). Meanwhile, posters from local campaigns warning residents of potential deviations and displacement are removed by the developer or council (Berry, 2022, p. 14). Instead of engaging with criticisms and alternative visions, dissenting voices are being silenced.

Displacement, however, is not only about housing precarity and economic disadvantage as Slater (2006; 2017) seems to argue. Displacement is also experienced as cultural dislocation: a sense of alienation and isolation experienced through the changing aesthetic and place identity through cultural uplift (Ley, 2003; Zukin, 2011). This new place identity devalues those who do not identify with the new aesthetic and culture of consumption, leading to the 'loss of place' (Davidson, 2009a). Slater (2017) is right in arguing that gentrification is class struggle but the changing structure from predominantly working-class to predominantly middle-class is based on economic (rent gap) *and* cultural (lifestyles) factors. As stated in the thesis introduction in line with Bridge's (2006) argument, particular mixes of economic, social and cultural capitals create particular manifestations of gentrification, resulting in different aesthetico-political regimes of gentrification. The regime of industrial chic is particularly contentious.

The aesthetico-political regime of industrial chic

As pointed out earlier, the presence of young middle-class artists with their artistic mode of production helps set off redevelopment for wealthier creatives and the business and

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[13] Local councils also hold community consultations where residents can apparently question or object to planning proposals. However, in the consultations I have taken part in, it is evident that major decisions are made before residents get to see the plans and community consultations are mere lip-service to tick the community engagement box. Residents may be able to vote on plant types, street names and plaque locations but critical questions are often shut down.

entrepreneurial types who then convert symbolic capital into economic capital. Even grassroots community arts and activism past and present have become a cultural tool of gentrification, with the "rough" edges of the DIY punk aesthetic made appealing to those seeking "authentic" spaces (e.g. Lanyado, 2009; Dyckhoff, 2018; Purcell, 2018). This is where the cultural power of the media comes into play, with blogs, social media, lifestyle magazines and property sections of newspapers exploiting "authenticity" and the consumption culture of the middle-classes to lure new and more affluent creatives into an area (Zukin, 2011).

Although working-class people and culture are stigmatised in the media – a central strategy for justifying gentrification – at the same time, neighbourhood identity, which comes from the multi-ethnic culture of working-class residents, artists and activists, is sold as a brand to property buyers and entrepreneurs (Zukin, 2011). This is particularly evident in the aesthetico-political regime of industrial chic. Alongside luxury housing on historical sites, establishments such as coffee roasters, microbreweries, cocktail bars, boutique shops and other artisan establishments appear, often in repurposed former industrial spaces and run by young 'ethical, sustainable and highly mobile' (Pritchard, 2016) entrepreneurs referred to as hipsters. Like the artist, they are attracted by low rents in trendy areas and enhance the symbolic value of space through their stylised cultural innovation, appealing to the middle-class' sense of historicity, authenticity and quality lifestyle (Zukin, 2011, p. xiii). As such, their mode of production (e.g. food and drink inspired by other cultures, upcycled textiles, commercial art, etc.) becomes a cultural tool to determine how people use and consume the city's spaces and culture, thus establishing urban spaces for the middle-classes (ibid.).

Furthermore, these spaces are often decorated with visual materials with a pseudo-DIY punk aesthetic, plaques and heritage trails of past struggles, and are filled with 'commodities whose sole feature is their expressiveness of taste' (Raban, 1974, p. 102). This aestheticisation of different cultures and working-class struggles through stylistic entrepreneurism creates the 'experience economy' (Pratt, 2009, p. 1042), an experience of origins and edginess while fashioning a safe identity of the present. This deliberate harnessing of local history and cultural practices for economic gain creates a struggle for power over space between those experiencing spatial and cultural displacement and those who possess the cultural and economic capital to enjoy the new aesthetic. Nevertheless,

entrepreneurs are also vulnerable to the forces of capital. Once the rent gap has increased further, rents often rise to levels only affordable for big companies with more available capital (e.g. High Street chains) thus displacing small businesses and individual entrepreneurs.

1.8 Returning to the radical tradition of community arts and activism

Community and radical arts thrive in times of heightened economic uncertainty and social inequalities, with social solidarity a key strategy for resistance and healing the effects of economic and emotional upheaval (Sennett, 2012, p. 253; 279). State-led gentrification in the age of austerity is such a period of increased injustice. Not only are many council estate residents (social tenants, leaseholders and private renters), people on low incomes, individual shopkeepers and artists dispossessed of the material and cultural means to thrive and dwell, but they have also been co-opted into participating in the "wrong" way, having become unwitting facilitators of gentrification. This has united people across tenure, class and race, with people collectively resisting displacement by returning to grassroots community arts and activism. Responding to the politics and aesthetics of gentrification, there are numerous campaigns across London to save people's homes, shops and community spaces, taking art back into the streets to fight for a more egalitarian society. Similar to community arts in the 1970s, community artists, activists and residents living in the same neighbourhoods are working together to produce alternative narratives by printing information leaflets and publishing articles on alternative media, hosting art workshops including banner-making, drawing and writing poetry, and organising events such as film screenings, musical protests and carnivals. They are intervening in the aesthetico-political regime of gentrification by valuing the social and cultural practices of a multicultural working-class, claiming their right to the city and to human fulfilment.

For example, Brixton has seen a series of occupations, protests, campaigns, squats, mutual aid networks and creative events with local residents, shopkeepers, squatters, campaigners and activists teaming up with artists involving music, film, poetry and other art forms to fight against gentrification (MayDay Rooms, 2022). In other areas, Architects for Social Housing (ASH) have worked with campaigns and artists to put forward alternative plans to demolition such as at the St. Raphael's Estate in Brent (ASH, 2022), which also houses Authors of the Estate (2015), a group of residents who established a press to publish their own critical texts

about estate life. Southwark Notes, a group of local residents and activists, joined by academic Loretta Lees, actively oppose and write about the processes of (arts-led) gentrification in Southwark. They successfully opposed the commission of a public artwork representing the selective demolition of one of the housing blocks on the Heygate Estate (Pritchard, 2017), and together with other groups (e.g. Just Space, London Tenants Federation) wrote and designed *Staying Put: An Anti-Gentrification Handbook for Council Estates in London* (London Tenants Federation *et al.,* 2014). Focus E15 is a Stratford-based campaign formed in 2013 by a group of mothers threatened with eviction, which has since morphed into a larger resident group supported by academic Paul Watt (Watt, 2016; 2021; Focus E15, 2016). There is also Up The Elephant, Fight4Aylesbury, Achilles Street Stop and Listen, and many more London campaigns.

In a climate of intensified state-led gentrification that sells off public land and spaces, vilifies council estate residents, exploits artists to aid processes of gentrification and tries to silence criticisms and alternative visions, people have revived the radical practice of grassroots community arts and activism to subvert political power. With participation repoliticised to collectively express criticism and dissent, residents, artists and activists stage political intervention in the public sphere to counter the politics and aesthetics of gentrification and achieve changes bottom-up. As Chapter 5 will show, the changes should not be imagined as a reversal of planning proposals, although this has on occasion been achieved (e.g. the collapsed scheme of University College London in Stratford). Nor should they be imagined as working towards the abolition of the state, as some activists hope to do. Neighbourhood activism is about changing power relations, turning policy to people's advantage and remedying social injustices. It is also about social and affective changes: the building of community, solidarity and belonging, as well as of a political voice.

Participating in collective and creative neighbourhood activism can instil confidence to respond critically to adversity, and it is in communities' own creative responses to state-led gentrification that their perspectives and experiences of displacement are communicated most vividly and effectively. However, contrary to Kelly's (2017) argument that nowadays there is hardly a need for trained artists and educators in community arts due to the democratisation of the internet and publishing media, I argue that in the age of information

and image overload the presence of professionals is needed more than ever to deliver effective political messages. This will be discussed in Chapters 2 and 6.

1.9 Conclusion: Getting involved in grassroots anti-gentrification struggles

This chapter has examined the gradual depoliticisation of community arts and participation, demonstrating how difficult it has become for communities and artists to respond critically to top-down urban policy. However, the instrumentalisation of participation and the arts as a cultural tool of gentrification, together with the economic and social upheaval caused by 21st century state-led gentrification, have brought back grassroots community arts and activism. Slater (2014) asks what academics can learn from anti-gentrification struggles, calling for research output to go beyond informing policy, critiquing this as insufficient for 'the elite to see the world as a displaced person' (Slater, 2014, p. 522). He stresses the need for campaigning, exposing planning hypocrisies and challenging the stigmatisation of people and place. However, how this might be achieved is lacking. My research addresses this by *getting involved* in anti-gentrification struggles so as to move beyond critical descriptions of displacement and, instead, take an *active* role alongside residents, community artists and activists and use academic research and artistic output to work towards change.

Some urban scholars-cum-scholar-activists (e.g. Loretta Lees, Paul Watt) have already teamed up with local campaign groups and organisations to highlight and fight issues of gentrification and displacement. They act as experts in meetings and dealings with developers, councils and legal teams; they join protests, give talks at rallies and support campaign events; they do extensive interviews and research, and help write gentrification handbooks, toolkits and websites for the benefit of residents (e.g. London Tenants Federation *et al.*, 2014; Focus E15 Campaign, 2016; Estate Watch, 2020). This expert involvement in campaigns is invaluable, granting campaigns greater help and visibility and thus potentially more impact. Scholar-activists also write about strategies for resistance, describing the pragmatics of activism and what has been achieved (e.g. Lees and Ferreri, 2016; Watt, 2016; 2021; Watt and Minton, 2016; Lees *et al.*, 2018; Sendra and Fitzpatrick, 2020). However, there is a notable absence of detailed accounts on *how they as academics got involved* in and aided campaigns and *how their collaborations with campaigners informed*

their research and contributed to the production of knowledge. There is also an absence of *materials and representations produced by campaigners and community artists as part of their resistance*, which could offer richer understandings of the lived experience of displacement and resistance (all campaigns discussed in those texts had a large grassroot arts element). In other words, texts on displacement and resistance are critical descriptions from scholars' perspectives and do not explicitly acknowledge campaign participants as co-producers of knowledge. There remains a separation between academics' activist work with campaigns on the ground and their scholarly research and texts for academic audiences. The question of how academic research can be utilised for anti-gentrification struggles remains unanswered.

I therefore argue for an action-oriented research methodology that overcomes the separation between academia, art and activism, merging social research methods with grassroots community arts, enabling the knowledges and practices from above and below to 'intersect with the research imagination' (Back and Keith, 2014, p. 15). It is my contention that residents and campaigners' knowledges, perspectives and creative outputs offer deep insight into how gentrification, displacement and resistance is experienced on the ground, acknowledging research participants as co-producers of knowledge and representations of their lives. Instead of further critical perspectives on gentrification, displacement and resistance which platform the voices of academics, research needs to get more actively involved in resisting social inequalities. As such, academics need to re-imagine social justice research, collaboration and dissemination to reach audiences beyond their academic remit, using research data as part of participants' struggles and making it available and accessible to a wider audience. This thesis offers such a research methodology, through adopting a creative activist sociological imagination influenced by the local practices of community arts and activism in which this research is involved.

2

Participating in Radical Visual Sociology: Repoliticising and democratising participatory arts

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the relationship between politics and aesthetics in a particular form of state-led inner-city gentrification as seen in Deptford. It also examined how the politics and aesthetics of grassroots community arts have gradually been appropriated and repackaged as participatory arts, diluting a once radical practice to subvert top-down urban policy and instrumentalising it to ameliorate the effects of urban restructuring. This has made participatory arts integral, rather than oppositional, to the distribution of the aesthetico-political regime of gentrification.

In response I sought a return to the radical tradition of community arts, integrating its principles and practices into a participatory arts and research project with the aim of disrupting this gentrification regime. With both politics and art in the domain of the aesthetic in terms of who and what is sensible (i.e. perceptible), radical arts can stage political interventions by foregrounding the voices and actions of those largely absent in 'the distribution of the sensible' (Rancière, 2004) within the aesthetico-political regime of gentrification. This, in turn, can reveal valuable insights into the experiences of gentrification and displacement that might otherwise remain hidden. Applying radical community arts as a sociological method to research gentrification-induced displacement while staging political interventions with the generated alternative narratives is a novel way of doing participatory urban research. It goes beyond traditional and contemporary approaches to research, adding a creative and activist dimension to the sociological imagination.

This research combined interviewing, participant observation and visual research methods with grassroots community arts, especially documentary photography and the publication culture of (photo)journalism. This multimodal, participative art and research practice set the basis for both the content in the accompanying book used for political campaigning and the

sociological insights discussed in this thesis. The interrelatedness between my practice, the thesis and the book, between academia, art and activism, is pertinent to this research and highlighted throughout this thesis.

This chapter examines what a participatory arts and research practice with an oppositional politics within the context of urban change may look like and the complex and intertwined methodological, ethical and aesthetic considerations this presents. Although informed by feminist epistemology and participatory action research, it departs from some of the principles within those epistemologies. In particular, it challenges the view that "deep participation" naturally equals ethical, more democratic and better art or research practice. Instead, it proposes a methodology underpinned by *optimum* participation (Cornwall, 2008) and *critical* creative production for a social *and* political purpose. It deploys an art and research practice which *repoliticises* and *democratises* participation to stage a political intervention in the public sphere and generate sociological knowledge.

2.2 An initial dilemma

The following conversation occurred during a campaign meeting in Tidemill Garden – a green space under threat of destruction. This was in September 2017, at the beginning of my participatory action research (PAR), when consulting with local residents and campaigners about participating in a project researching the impact of gentrification in Deptford:

> **Anita:** I'm doing a PhD at Goldsmiths and I want to do a participatory arts and research project on gentrification, you know, people's stories and experiences, how it's impacting their lives. The idea is we work together somehow. We can produce different things, like texts, photos, drawings, poetry and you know, to show what's going on and how it affects people. I want people to speak for themselves, and make it creative and *useful* to you
>
> **Campaigner I** (*knows I'm a photographer*): Oh yeah, great, we need support, someone to visualise our campaign, take <u>good</u> photos so we can use them for our social media and show what we're doing, highlight the campaign and, you know, document all the stuff that's happening in the garden cos the council are saying the garden isn't used and we're doing loads of workshops and events. Would you do that? That'd be great
>
> **Anita:** yeah, I can do that. We can make your campaign part of my project, you know, you guys make some contributions, we pool our resources, make the project a tool for your campaign, another platform for your voices
>
> **Campaigner I:** yeah, definitely

Anita: we could do creative workshops in the garden, perhaps you could write something or create an artwork, a painting, a photograph, a piece of music, something that speaks of your experience of the campaign and of gentrification

Campaigner I: yeah, sounds great, I'll write something*, I've got lots to say… Or we could do an interview

Campaigner II: yeah, that'd be great. Could you also interview and photograph residents of our estate and publish those stories? That'd help us a lot with our campaign, we need good photographs and tell our stories

Anita: yeah sure, we'd have to think of a publishing platform. How do you imagine it?

Campaigner II: I'll introduce you to the residents and then you can speak to them yourself. If you share the stories and photos with us we can post on our social media. We really need to get those stories out, people don't want demolition, but we have no say

Campaigner I: yeah, residents here are also against demolition, you could speak to them too, I'm sure they'd be happy to speak to you

Anita: ok, but would you also write something, perhaps mix it with your own texts and photographs – old and new. You have so much experience of these processes and are so involved in the campaigns and you write about them, and some of you are also losing your home. It'd be great to have your voice in the project, you can speak for yourself rather than me

Campaigner II: yeah, I'll write something*

The writing never materialised

Considering that local campaigns utilise radical arts to make their voices heard, I approached the campaigners expecting a lot of interest in collaborative art-making. I even had a list of possible workshops and suggestions for creative outcomes ready to prompt ideas for participation. Although wary of the general lack of artistic quality in participatory arts and participatory visual sociology, particularly in relation to photography, I had been partially swayed by the argument that deep participation and self-representation were the most ethical approaches to working with communities (Arnstein, 1969; Braden, 1983). I was worried I could be seen as another researcher/artist trying to speak for the community, so I wanted to hand over the art-making process to participants while offering guidance with regards to artistic form and navigating complex power relations. Following Freire's critical pedagogy (1996 [1970]) and the principles of PAR, I wanted to recognise people's ability to act on their own behalf and support them to participate effectively in fighting inequality by creating their own counternarratives. Whilst recognising the limitations of critical pedagogies within the constraints of existing power structures (Pain, 2004; Luykx and Heyman, 2013) and that deep participation does not automatically guarantee empowerment and emancipation

(Cornwall, 2008; Bishop, 2012; Fairey, 2018), critical pedagogies do have the capacity to be transformative.

From conversations as the one above it emerged, however, that participants predominantly wanted photographic and written material by a professional ally to highlight their struggles and publicly counter dominant gentrification narratives. The fact that they requested "good" photographs underlined the role of visual quality in photographs for wider impact, resonating with Gillian Rose's argument that 'the photos used need to be – well, good' (G. Rose, 2007, p. 324). Whilst it is hard to define what constitutes a good photograph, with differing criteria for different contexts and viewers, through the process of collaborating with participants I came to understand what was perceived to be a good photograph by my participants in this context: representative of the people in the images, their lives, experiences and intended political messages; reflecting the relationships built between participants (including the photographer) during collective (political) actions; following certain photographic conventions such as sharpness, frontal framing and appropriate exposure (not bleaching or silhouetting). In sum, good images in this context required ethical, political and aesthetic considerations from somebody who understood the context. Whilst any photographer can potentially produce "good" photographs, the fact that I, a trained photographer, was asked to fulfil this task over a period of time despite many campaigners and activists taking photographs themselves recognises that a trained photographer is more likely to *consistently* produce "good" images. Furthermore, producing "good" images *for use* requires time and additional skills such as post-production work, editing and reformatting to deliver high and low-resolution images within hours. Campaigners understood how my skills could be utilised to support their causes.

It also emerged that many people's idea of participation was one of inclusion: to have as many people as possible tell their stories of displacement and counter stigmatising representations of council estates and residents. Despite expressing approval of "speaking for themselves" and promising contributions, very few joined creative research workshops or contributed autonomous responses. One reason, as I found throughout the research, was lack of time, with people busy with work, caring responsibilities, volunteering and campaigning. The fact many were already engaged in radical community arts and activism

seemed to beg the question: Why participate if the existing practice can be documented and residents photographed and interviewed? Moreover, facing and fighting against displacement was for many emotionally so demanding, they felt unable to communicate this experience by responding to a "brief". This raised questions about the meaning and purpose of participation.

Cornwall (2008, p. 276) argues that if the purpose of a research project is to make it usable and useful to participants, they need to be able to define their own participation and a project's intentionality. Most participants stressed the need to "get the stories out there", to "make the council, developer and newcomers understand how gentrification affects us". They wanted their stories published and their voices made to matter politically (Fairey, 2018). Rather than insisting on a set of ethical precepts, I decided to strive for *optimum* participation: 'getting the balance between depth and inclusion right for the purpose at hand' (Cornwall, 2008, p. 276). An ethical and democratic research process cannot be prescriptive; it is one which listens and responds to what the research context demands (Gatenby and Humphries, 2000; Kester, 2004; De Bryne and Gielen, 2011; Bax, Gielen and Ieven, 2015). This situation demanded the staging of political interventions with visually compelling photographs and supporting texts based on interviews and observation, authored by a professional but produced in dialogue with participants.

Turning the dilemma into an approach

That evening in Tidemill Garden we agreed that I work closely alongside the campaigns, producing photographs and texts and publishing photo-essays on accessible platforms to highlight participants' struggles and campaign activities and tell the stories of displaced people. Participants also agreed that the interview content, images and my observations could serve as research data for this thesis. We decided that I establish a blog[14] to publish the photo-essays and link up with participants' and campaigns' social media accounts for easy sharing and reaching wider audiences. Seeds were also sown for a subsequently printed and published book (accompanying this thesis) to collate the blog posts into a longer-lasting,

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[14] deptfordischanging.wordpress.com

wider-reaching and more recognised platform, ensuring the stories would remain available. The aim was to include as many participants and reach as many people as possible as quantity on both sides would more likely make the voices heard and matter politically.

Figure 2.1 The Tidemill Community shortly before the garden's destruction. The group requested and composed this image themselves, with me ensuring good lighting, exposure and framing. Photo: Anita Strasser, 2018.

For the photo-essays, participants could co-decide who, what and where to photograph and who to interview, and which images to use (the images used in this thesis are also from this selection). All images were shared with participants in digital and printed form for their own uses. Participants could also write, co-write and/or co-edit texts for the blog. This ensured participant-control over what was being produced and published. This necessitated my constant presence and involvement which, in effect, turned me into a housing campaigner and co-participant in most events. In other words, the research and I became participants in local anti-gentrification struggles. My close involvement did, in the end, also result in some campaigners and residents participating in a variety of creative research workshops and in contributing independently produced artworks. As such, deep participation did occur but out of participants' own directive and time frames. Overall, the project opened a space for critical

pedagogy, creating the conditions for sharing knowledges and experiences, offering mutual support and recognition, and enabling participants to co-produce counternarratives for political campaigning and sociological knowledge.

Collaborations with other community groups and residents followed a similar path, starting with an expressed preference for photographs and interviews but leading to a series of unexpected encounters, collective activities and creative outcomes. Although there was variation in how people took part, participation/inclusion could be divided into four main categories (a more detailed research timeline can be found in Appendix A):

- **Photographic and written documentation of campaign activities**, sharing images for unrestricted use and publishing campaign stories.
- **Interviewing and photographing** campaigners, residents, shopkeepers and various community groups and centres struggling to cope or facing eviction.
- **Independent creative contributions** such as texts (essays, songs, poems, comments), visuals (photographs, drawings, paintings, video) or documented performances. These were produced individually or collaboratively.
- **Participatory art workshops and discussion groups,** using a variety of visual research methods as chosen by participants, including photography walks, photo-elicitation, Lego® and drawing workshops.

The four categories were not mutually exclusive. Working with campaigns yielded, alongside documentation, interviews and creative workshops, a variety of individual contributions; workshops at community centres resulted in interviews and autonomously written stories; interviews with community workers resulted in workshops and long-time collaborations. To demonstrate this mixed-methods approach, this chapter includes a case study in Section 2.5 and another case study can be found in Appendix B. The desire to have their stories and creative outputs published on accessible platforms was omnipresent. All generated materials were transformed into accessible photo-essays and published on the blog between December 2017 and January 2020, and in the accompanying book in January 2020, co-edited

with the respective participants and credited accordingly. The generated materials also constitute the data upon which the insights of this study are based.

Figure 2.2 Local residents at a Lego® workshop in Tidemill Garden, building metaphorical models concerning their experiences of gentrification. This workshop was part of the garden's public events programme. Photo: Anita Strasser, 2018.

This research tells the stories of those who have remained inaudible and invisible in the aesthetico-political regime of gentrification, including older, poor, unemployed and homeless people, estate residents and campaigners. It tells alternative aesthetico-political narratives of those experiencing 'accumulative dispossession' (Lees and White, 2019), 'loss of place' (Davidson, 2009a) and displacement from homes, community centres and the area. It also makes visible the efforts of community groups to provide for dispossessed and displaced people. The research returned to the political origins of participatory practice, where participants take shared control and ownership, where their versions of community, lived experiences and creativity is recognised and where the purpose is to effect meaningful change.

This project made grassroots community arts an integral part of research, and the creative research an integral part of housing activism. Kester argues that the productivity of artworks lies in the collaboration between artist and participants, where the artist is open, willing to listen and accepting of dependence. It is a form of 'connected knowing', where participants build solidarity through empathy (Kester, 2004, p. 113-114). If creativity is the imagination of other possibilities, collective creativity is a form of sociable roaming which can result in a combination of ideas, approaches and outputs no one expected were combinable (Mills, 2000 [1959], p. 211). It renders redundant the simplistic binaries of collective or individual authorship, ethical practice or artistic quality, deep or shallow participation (Bishop, 2012). This research is about creativity for a social and political purpose; creativity to tell alternative narratives and effect social change; creativity to achieve rich sociological insights, in this case regarding the meaning of place (Chapter 3), the lived experience of gentrification-induced displacement (Chapter 4) and the transformative dimension of community arts and activism (Chapter 5). It is about a participative arts and research practice which gets actively involved in housing activism (Chapter 6). It is about bridging academia, arts and activism.

This chapter attends to the messiness of working collaboratively, creatively and politically, of merging traditional social research methods with the principles and practices of radical community arts, intermingling the knowledges and practices from above and below, turning social research into political activism and political activism into social research.

2.3 Starting from a creative activist sociological imagination

Starting the research with people's lives and needs, enabling participants to define their own, my and the research's parameters of participation, the project opened a space for critical pedagogy. Collaboratively engaging in an ongoing cycle of research-action-reflection (Reason and Bradbury, 2001; Kindon, Pain and Kesby, 2007), this research practice not only produced alternative representations of people's realities but also transformed the process of research by utilising it to change those realities. I stated in the thesis introduction that it is impossible to do research from a neutral position (Becker, 1967, p. 239). Particularly in radical and feminist sociology, when seeking alternative knowledges and social change, our values inform our choice of research, the questions we ask, our research method(s) and how we

describe the realities we observe. As Law and Urry (2004, p. 404) argue, methods are political and help *make* realities.

Being a Deptford community photographer and resident facing potential displacement, I declared from the outset that the research was conceived to enact a counternarrative to the dominant discourse of gentrification by giving space to a multiplicity of alternative voices through artistic and participatory practice. This necessitated alternative research methods and publication platforms such as the blog and book because only when alternative voices are visible and audible in the public sphere during moments of struggle do they have transformative power (Arendt, 1998 [1958]; Rancière, 1999). It also necessitated that the research and I got actively involved in anti-gentrification struggles. I became a social justice photographer and activist-writer, making the imperceptible stories of the violence of un-homing more tangible (Nixon, 2011, p. 15). This is in tension with this thesis or a scholarly monograph published years after the research, which require selecting who and what can speak followed by critical analysis in the language of the academy.

Figure 2.3 Joint workshop with Achilles Street Stop and Listen Campaign and GARA – Goldsmiths Anti Racist Action group, educating students about anti-gentrification struggles and educating us about anti-racist movements. Photo: Anita Strasser, 2019.

PAR and feminist research strive towards alternative descriptions of realities by working in dialogue with diverse communities, recognising that all knowledges and experiences can potentially contribute to knowledge production (Freire, 1996 [1970]; Haraway, 1988; Kindon, Pain and Kesby, 2007; Edwards and Mauthner, 2012). They are critiques of positivist, often (white) male-dominated approaches to knowledge, where an "all-knowing" researcher (or team) with a sense of theoretical purity describes a society/community from an 'objectifying, comfortable, disengaged and parochial' perspective (Back, 2012, p. 18). Whilst theoretical advances and descriptions of social realities are desirable, traditional approaches often result in ossified representations of communities that reflect the perspective of the researcher, not the researched.

This is not to say research subjects have a complete and critical understanding of their realities (Back, 2007; 2012). Viewing the knowledges of ordinary people as unproblematic can be as dangerous as uncritically accepting the totalising truth claims made by those with authority. As Donna Haraway argues, we must find a way between relativism and totalisation and make insights lead to understanding. She posits the feminist objectivity of *situated knowledges* (Haraway, 1988, p. 581; original emphasis): 'partial, locatable, critical knowledges sustaining the possibility of webs of connection called solidarity in politics and shared conversations in epistemology' (p. 584). Even a reflexive participatory research practice does not result in complete accounts of social realities (Back, 2007, p. 24), but a sociological imagination that connects personal stories with public issues can help produce more lucid accounts (Mills, 2000 [1959]).

With community arts influenced by PAR and positioned against the "all-seeing" artist and one-sided visual representations of marginalised peoples, it seemed fitting to combine these approaches. Both come from within communities and value process and outcome; both are dialogical in nature and political in intent; both follow an ethics of care and attempt to redress traditional power relations; both combine the perspectives of participants with the expertise of the researcher/artist. I developed a research methodology which attempted to understand how the views and activities from above and below 'intersect with the research imagination' (Back and Keith, 2014, p. 15), enabling a different attentiveness to sociological research. By promoting culturally and socially democratic processes, this methodology aimed

at effecting meaningful social change, including the modification of power relations, dominant narratives and policy, as well as fostering a sense of belonging and membership, recognition and value. Such impact is not always measurable or immediately visible and therefore does not fit easily with the drive to measure social impact to justify financial outlay to project funders (Belfiore, 2002; Rooke, 2013). Doing a research project within a funded doctorship is a unique opportunity to explore possibilities without having to evidence impact in such a reductive manner.

Working in dialogue with participants

I made myself and the research available to help participants 'decide, plan and take action to meet their needs' (Ledwith, 2011, p. 15). My positionality made it easier to gain access and trust, with my working-class upbringing and political sympathies a form of cultural capital within the working-class field (Bourdieu, 1990). Participants often introduced me to further contacts, but my connections established through previous engagements with local communities were also helpful. My cultural capital within the middle-class field through my Higher Education background and profession were also deemed useful, particularly my access to a variety of publication channels and audiences. This also influenced some representational choices in the published texts. Since most participants asked me to write blog posts, I had initial editorial control over the texts. Some interviews, which formed the basis of the blog content and the insights discussed in this thesis, lasted for over three hours, so I had to keep to information relevant to the blog posts' political purpose and summarise, switching between third person narrative and direct quotes as is common in journalistic writing. I did not include irrelevant information, offensive expletives, personal grievances with individuals, totalising claims and unverifiable accusations, particularly in relation to authorities, property developers and the middle-classes. Publishing these on the blog could have been counterproductive, potentially harming participants and the project as their voices would risk being discredited by target audiences.

However, participants were always given the chance to co-edit the blog posts before publishing. When queries were raised, which rarely happened, I explained the reasons for omissions and found that most participants were willing to listen and adapt. When it was felt that I had softened the tone too much, we engaged in productive discussions and found

agreeable compromises. For example, in a piece written by a participant for the blog, I had edited out a harsh critique of a named artist, saying that this was not ethical or productive. The writer insisted that this experience was key to their story and needed mentioning. We agreed to anonymise the artist and soften the critique by using less value-laden vocabulary.

It was a difficult balance to strike, trying to address middle-class sensibilities without depoliticising participants' struggles. Participants and I reached what Mouffe terms 'conflictual consensus' (Mouffe, 2012, p. 11) – a shared goal but with different interpretations of how to reach it. Together we also settled on the neutral title of the blog and subsequent book – *Deptford is Changing* – rather than using words like "war" and "battle" as had originally been suggested. This was to stimulate engagement with multiple publics in the hope of opening critical conversations. The concept of voice is ultimately about recognition, and it was necessary to ensure greater likelihood that these voices would be recognised as legitimate.

Mutual respect and equality are prerequisites if collaborators are to have critical dialogues, which can change existing thoughts and lead to insights (Freire, 1996 [1970]). Critical dialogue is unfortunately not possible with all people. Ill-informed views such as racism or classism cannot stand as valid knowledges and I terminated contact with one potential participant who saw the project as an opportunity to air their racist views, while another withdrew after I had not included the intentional shaming of their "posh neighbour" (participant's words). Although I suggested talking through our conflicting views to reach conflictual consensus, the participant declined and accused me of not telling "the truth".

My key epistemological principle was a 'feminist, communitarian ethical model' (Denzin, 1997, p. 274), which 'builds collaborative, reciprocal, trusting and friendly relations' (p. 275) and 'offer[s] a more adequate, richer, better account of a world' (Haraway, 1988, p. 579). This 'ethics of care' is 'a vision of research that enables and promotes social justice, community, diversity, civic discourse and caring' (Lincoln, 1995, pp. 277-278). It tries to avoid harm to participants *and* potential readers. It is committed to maximising the extent of critical dialogue, requiring constant reflection on approaches, methods and actions,

evaluation of practice and positionality, and a willingness to adapt, ask questions and confront challenges.

This dialogical feminist approach orchestrated a 'social ballet' (Back, 2012, p. 29) of a participative and democratic research methodology, which has generated alternative forms of situated sociological knowledges. Participants' stories, insights, suggestions, criticisms and creative productions informed both my and participants' critical understanding of meaningful participatory arts and research practice and everyday life under a neoliberal urbanism. It was a process of connected knowing, of *research as exchange,* with participants co-investigators, co-creators of research output and campaign materials and co-producers of knowledge.

Ethical research as emotional labour

While the 'ethics of care' model is, rightly so, at pains to avoid harm to research subjects, it does not consider the effect this can have on the researcher. Having to constantly deliberate the potential danger of harming research subjects, endlessly changing one's approach to respond to participants' needs, criticisms and accusations[15], absorbing the often traumatic experiences shared by participants (not always research-related)[16] and dealing with unrealistic expectations can all cause considerable emotional distress, feelings of guilt and exhaustion (Gatenby and Humphries, 2000; Dickson-Swift *et al.,* 2007; Bowtell *et al.,* 2013). Researchers are generally not trained as counsellors, therapists or community workers, and despite the willingness to acknowledge privilege, redress traditional power relations and to listen, the responsibility of conducting such research can be burdensome.

Due to great interest, I worked with approximately 160 people over two years. I offered multiple opportunities for self-representation, co-authorship, joint knowledge production and feedback, always factoring in participants' skills and time schedules. I was available at short notice to unplanned events and activities, and when I did not document an event because I was too exhausted or had other commitments, I was filled with feelings of guilt, betrayal and failure. One of the most time-consuming and frustrating tasks was having to

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[15] One participant was offended because I had interviewed somebody else before them. Another time I was accused of favouritism after spending more time with one participant than with another.
[16] One participant repeatedly called me in the evenings, offloading their financial problems and health issues.

chase people: for promised contributions, interviews, edited texts and signatures. Often people were not at the arranged time and place, did not answer the door or phone or deliver on the agreed date. Only a handful of people responded without being prompted. Some needed chasing for over a year and some never delivered the promised contribution. It was guesswork whether they were interested but too busy or felt harassed but did not state their lack of interest (Goffman, 1963, p. 106).

I kept a detailed journal to ensure a balance between giving people enough space but also enough reminders. From previous experiences I anticipated that participants would feel pride with featuring in a book, so I persisted. This paid off, but I often felt exhausted and anxious. Bishop says the artist/researcher 'relies upon the participants' creative exploitation of the situation that he/she offers, just as participants require the artist's cue and direction' (Bishop, 2012, p. 279). Participants in this project needed a lot of cues and direction, a reality mostly absent from polished project reports. I handed over a lot of control to participants, democratising intentionality and participation, but without deadlines, prompts and reminders it is unlikely I would have received many contributions.

Further to that was the added anxiety from doing public sociology. By publishing political material across different audiences, I opened myself and the research to public scrutiny from counterpublics such as local authorities, who often display aggressive attitudes towards people expressing criticism of gentrification. I researched endlessly to verify statements made by participants, and to avoid accusations of libel I engaged a media lawyer who highlighted potentially problematic statements for me to rewrite. This made me worry about diluting radical art practice and accusations of artwashing. As Back (2007, p. 161) warns, doing public sociology can lead to political compromise and vulnerability on the part of the researcher.

I also feared criticism from residents, artists and peers, who, considering I was doing most of the writing, photographing and publishing, might accuse me of exploiting participation. The fears never became reality, but such criticisms are often hurled at artists without understanding the encounters and relationships involved in artistic processes (Azoulay, 2012). Keeping an eye on readership and feedback while publishing fortnightly, sometimes

weekly, and sharing across multiple platforms and thinking about and commenting on comments consumed a lot of my time and energy and led to more anxiety, stress and sleeplessness. This process was repeated when the book was published. Although feedback was overwhelmingly positive and encouraging, it was the constant trepidation and checking which was exhausting.

The emotional burden of following the ethics of care model on the part of the researcher is substantial. For a project this size, researchers need large amounts of emotional resources, which is perhaps why not more research of this kind is undertaken. Having worked on previous community projects, I was prepared for the emotional implications. I also have good mental health, good time-management and a supportive network of family, friends and peers. I live in Deptford and was already embedded in the locality, finding it relatively easy to gain access. I was awarded an AHRC[17]-doctorship from CHASE[18], which freed me from many work commitments. It also paid for research materials and provided extra time and funding to design and print the book.

Nevertheless, the emotional burden became overwhelming, especially after the book was published, when, already under pressure to write this thesis, I personally distributed the book to participants, local libraries and community centres. I also publicised it on various platforms, presented at live events and responded to invitations, emails and comments on social media while constantly worrying about potential criticism. Upon reflection I understand why many artists and researchers utilise a more depoliticised approach to participation and stay within the "comfortable" confines of the arts or academia. Social justice research following an ethics of care requires emotional and financial resources that are usually not available.

The emotional burden is often completely absent from reports on participatory arts and research projects, but it is also a huge gap in the literature on ethics and PAR (e.g. Reason and Bradbury, 2001; Miller *et al.*, 2012) and in ethical approval forms (as completed for this research) and guidelines. The Statement of Ethical Practice by the British Sociological

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[17] Arts and Humanities Research Council
[18] Consortium for the Humanities and the Arts South-East England

Association (2017) only contains vague statements about reducing potential risks to researchers' safety, while the Code of Research Ethics and Guidelines by the International Visual Sociology Association (Papademas and IVSA, 2009) says surprisingly nothing about this. There are some good examples, mostly by feminist writers, which highlight the emotional distress for the researcher from doing sensitive and participatory research such as Gatenby and Humphries (2000), Adams and Moore (2007), Dickson-Swift *et al.* (2007) and Bowtell *et al.* (2013), and Back (2007) warns about the researcher's potential vulnerability when doing public sociology. However, there is an urgent need for more.

2.4 Documentary photography as radical urban research practice

I initially experienced unease about the request to take photographs. Not only was I concerned about unequal power relations and potential misrepresentation, I was also unsure of how to reconcile a participatory project with photographic autonomy. At the same time, I felt excited that I was asked and trusted to produce "good" photographs for local campaigns. It challenged Kelly's (2017) argument that campaigns today have no need for trained artists. It also underlined Bishop's (2012) assertion that the trained artist has an important role to play in highlighting political tensions by creating, in dialogue with participants, aesthetically and politically invigorating artworks, with aesthetics here referring to artistic style. She argues that artwork needs to antagonise so that political discourse may be sustained and result in agonistic space, where conflict can become a productive form of intervention (Bishop, 2004; Mouffe, 2012).

Considering this project aimed to foster political dialogues with multiple publics, Bishop's call for artistic autonomy and aesthetics resonated with the request for "good" photographer-authored images. However, her conceptions of autonomy and aesthetics pertain to the artworld and are an uneasy fit with the mode of artistic production in this research project. The call for "good" photographer-authored images seemed more in line with community photography in the 1970s, whose visual and political aesthetic was, alongside photographic conventions, informed by specific political intentions and the social relationship with the communities depicted. However, community photography refers to a particular historical context and the term seems outdated for contemporary practices. While socially-engaged

photography is a more contemporary term and a descendent of community photography (Luvera, 2019, p. 6), it is too broad, sitting on a spectrum ranging from practices within the artworld to resonating with what Kelly called 'welfare arts' (Kelly, 1984, p. 29). Although photographer-authored images have been deployed by visual sociologists (e.g. Harper, 2016 [1982]; Duneier, 1999; Knowles, 2000), whose visual and political aesthetic have greatly inspired my thinking around photography in sociological research, these practices do not encapsulate the complexity and hybridity of my practice.

Participants in this research could guide who, what and where to photograph and choose the images to be used. Campaigners needed images to promote their campaigns, counter dominant gentrification narratives and highlight the effects of displacement. They also needed counterimages to stigmatising representations of council estates and residents. They introduced me to residents, who then directed their portraits and what to photograph in and of their homes. Photographing others followed a similar fashion, with shopkeepers, community volunteers and members setting up or directing shots or simply allowing me to document their activities. Finally, most workshop participants also requested that I document workshop activities and outputs. Despite repeatedly offering opportunities to take photographs themselves, many simply said: "You're the photographer, you take the images". Figures 2.1-2.5 are all examples of this practice.

Unsure of what was meant by "good" images in this context, through my continuous dialogue and close relationship with participants, as well as their image choices, I came to understand their criteria: produced with their guidance and direction; reflective of their lives, cultural practices and political needs, as well as their perspectives on community, place and belonging; enacting an alternative gentrification narrative; and following certain photographic conventions which require some photographic skill (focal points, framing and exposure). Put together, "good" images appeared to be those generated by a skilled practitioner in dialogue with participants (ethical and dialogical), representative of them and their experiences, thus creating a counter-gentrification-narrative (aesthetico-political), and of publishable quality (artistic). I term this the *photographic dialogical aesthetic*.

Figure 2.4 Simon, the manager of Goddard's Pie & Mash Shop which was being evicted from its council premises. The image was taken after spending some time with Simon, his friends and customers, having conversations about the shop's history, its cultural heritage and affordable prices. The relaxed conversations and joking while taking photographs made Simon feel at ease with the camera, leading him to ask me to create this and other images. This image not only speaks of the relationship built with Simon but also of his work and character as a local pie and mash maker (flour on trousers and apron; leaning on the shop front which has given him years of stability and purpose), his defiant stance towards the changes in an area he feels he belongs to (looking out across Deptford High Street), and the importance of family (tattoo of son's name on arm; shop was a family business). Photo: Anita Strasser, 2018.

A new form of documentary research practice

The *photographic dialogical aesthetic* is the outcome of a feminist practice of documentary image-making, whereby a photographer works in dialogue with participants to create politically and visually stimulating images for political interventions. Its focus is on representational and social justice, enacting alternative representations which *redistribute the sensible*, making visible and audible alternative bodies, voices and perspectives to effect change. Like some other visual sociologists' work (e.g. Fairey and Orton, 2019; King, 2022), my conceptualisation of participatory practice builds on Azoulay's (2012) ontology of photography, which conceives of photography as an encounter or event with multiple participants involved in collaborative action. It is defined as a 'human being-with-others in which the camera or the photograph are implicated' (Azoulay, 2012, p. 18). However, unlike

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Azoulay's conception, which equalises the roles of the photographer, subject, spectator and interpreter, I (re)assert the importance of a skilled photographer in the production of "good" images.

With me being a participant in local anti-gentrification struggles, taking part in organising, attending and documenting events, the taking of images was simply a part of collective political engagement. For example, the image in Figure 2.5 is the outcome of collaborative political actions with multiple campaign participants over an extended period of time. The banners, the presence at this eviction and all that can be seen in the image came out of actions, discussions and decisions between a whole host of people, including me. However, despite other campaigners taking photographs, I, a trained photographer, was asked and trusted to take "good" images. On the day of the eviction, I was called at 7am just as the police arrived. I was led to good viewpoints and directed as to what and who to photograph. Protestors were aware of the presence of my camera (operated by me) and its role in addressing spectators, thus willing to be photographed. The images were used afterwards to contradict reports representing protestors as "violent thugs" (a councillor on Twitter). Therefore, while my photographs were only a part of collective actions, they played an important role in addressing a social injustice and enacting a counternarrative of the eviction.

The *photographic dialogical aesthetic* is informed by a skilled, situated and caring practice, which opens a democratic space for spontaneous encounters, critical dialogues and collective action with different participants over a long period of time. This constantly informs the photographer's understanding of the political context and influences the political aesthetic of images. There is no predictable outcome; the photographer is closely involved in participants' struggles and participants in how images are produced, used and published. It is a continual interaction between researcher and researched, photographer and photographed, where both think through doing, listening and gaining knowledge and understanding of the lived world through engagement with others (Kester, 2004; Ingold, 2013). This *photography of care* is a visual practice that offers a renewed criticality to the photographic imagination by attending to the fluid aspects of participation and sociality.

Figure 2.5 Campaigners asked me to document the Tidemill eviction to provide material for post-event resistance. Photo: Anita Strasser, 2018.

This close and reflexive involvement with participants created images that not only work towards representational and social justice but also offer sociological knowledge (Harper, 2016 [1982]; Chaplin, 1994; Knowles and Sweetman, 2004; Pink, 2007). Firstly, images convey something of the texture of urban environments and the social relations within them (Duneier, 1999; Knowles, 2000; G. Rose, 2007). The image in Figure 2.5 and other images of that day convey the solidarity between protestors and the tension between protestors and police. They also evidence that protestors were peaceful and the garden a meaningful space for many people – important arguments considering the council claimed the opposite. Secondly, images can present arguments and political positions through the way they are made, arranged, discussed and presented (Harper, 2003, p. 258). This is pertinent to scholarly writing as in this thesis but also to photojournalistic texts. The photo-essays created in dialogue with participants and published on the blog communicate realities from participants' perspectives, exposing the flaws in housing policy and the impact of gentrification-induced displacement. These counternarratives helped redistribute the sensible and disrupted the aesthetico-political regime of gentrification.

Finally, and as I argue, images (and other creative material) produced as part of a collective experience and political action can bear the traces of 'collective affect' (Berlant, 2011, p. 231): the affective dimension of a shared experience in the present. In other words, images can visualise the structures of feeling – in this case how the violence of un-homing is experienced – thus offering richer understandings of lived experience (O'Neill, Giaquinto and Hasedžić, 2019). I have outlined in the thesis introduction that we need a new language to better articulate the lived experiences of displacement. Images of collective campaign and workshop activities and materials which creatively express the shared feelings of displacement can re-enact these emotions, with images effectively visualising empirical data. Thus, images, alongside written texts, have the capacity to offer deeper insight into the affective dimension of displacement. This forms the main argument of Chapter 4.

2.5 Optimum participation in critical creative research: a multiplicity of unexpected outcomes

Through the concept of *optimum* participation, participants could direct how to speak and act, resulting in different forms and levels of participation. Some preferred to participate in creative workshops, which were designed, organised and run with participants. The use and production of visual data such as photographs, maps, drawings and Lego® models were incorporated into workshops to elicit different conversations and foster critical dialogues. Visual research methods and, I argue, other alternative forms of representation such as poetry, songs and performances can lessen the power divide between researcher and participants by widening access to co-authorship and knowledge production, thus reducing the dangers of misrepresentation. Collectively engaging in creative activities can help people define social issues from their perspectives and change perceptions and social relations through critical discussions and reflection, thereby making space for critical pedagogy (Rooke, 2013, p. 151).

Case study: An example of a mixed-methods approach including interviewing, drawing, building Lego® models, community photography and photo-elicitation

The Scout group leaders I approached were very keen for children to engage more critically with the changes happening in Deptford. After initial interviews with the leaders about their views on regeneration, we agreed to run a Lego® workshop to elicit children's perspectives. The leaders were eager to educate the Cubs (children aged 8-10) about some of the underlying issues around regeneration, and the Cubs got very excited about "playing" with Lego®. Almost all registered Cubs attended (12 in total) with parents' immediate agreement. The workshop was co-run with a Lego® trainer and two Scout leaders. After a brief orientation exercise with a giant hand-drawn map of Deptford, we asked children to draw the buildings they live in (Figure 2.6) and talk about what they like and dislike about their homes. This revealed insight into issues relating to noise, crime and lack of space and light and triggered a discussion about better living conditions. Then we asked them to build a Lego® model of a building that would fit into the changing landscape of Deptford and place it on the map. We deliberately gave a vague brief to see what children would create and engaged with their ideas afterwards to elicit further responses. This demonstrated the children's awareness that most of the new flats are, as they put it, for the rich and not for them. The final task consisted of building a model of something that would improve Deptford and place it on the map. The models consisted of, among others, a hospital, new schools and more parking spaces with children commenting that there are too many new people and not enough facilities. The published photo-essay of this workshop (signed off by parents) including images of models can be found in Strasser (2020, pp. 154-157).
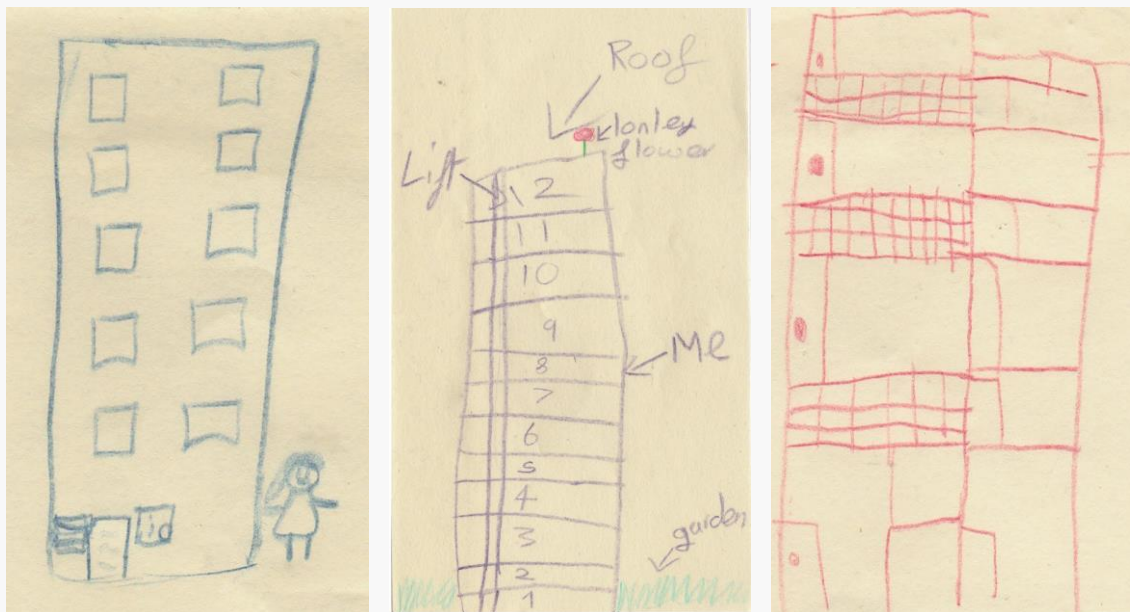
Figure 2.6 Some of the children's drawings of the buildings they live in.

Due to the popularity of this workshop the Scout leaders requested a photography walk with the Cubs to continue their critical education about gentrification in Deptford. They had wanted to do an induction to photography but were short of volunteers, funds and equipment. We planned and did the walk together and I brought three cameras. After casting children's minds back to the themes from the Lego® workshop and talking about photographing urban spaces, we guided the walk through the local area. We stopped to look at various buildings such as empty retail units, a former factory revamped into luxury apartments, 1970s tower blocks, a community centre, a former boxing club converted into flats and a new residential area with expensive flats. At each

building we asked the children what they thought they were looking at, what might have been there before or will be in the future, what and who the buildings are for and so on. Afterwards, myself and the Scout leaders, and one parent, shared our knowledge, elaborating on the children's answers. There were a lot of interesting (and silly) responses to the questions, but the walk triggered conversations about the importance of community centres and the gap between poor and rich people. Generally, the children thought that too many homes are being built for wealthy people. They also feared that other buildings such as the community centre in Figure 2.7 would be transformed into more expensive flats.

After each discussion, 2-3 children could take photographs. The children seemed eager to just point and shoot and take as many images as possible. To avoid a flood of potentially useless images I limited photo-taking to 2 shots per building per child and tried to steer children towards thinking about what they were photographing, what they wanted in and out of the frame (including fingers) and to take their time when shooting. I returned with the printed photographs a week later for a photo-elicitation session. The children were first asked to put the photographs in the order of taking and narrate what they remembered about each scene. Some gave the same answers they gave during the walk; others remembered what had been discussed. When we talked about an image of a 1970s tower block, a white middle-class girl commented that only refugees and homeless people are housed in such buildings. A Black working-class boy, who lives in that block, immediately challenged the girl, telling her that he, his family and friends live in that block and that he likes living there. It was a very emotional but firm response to the girl's assumptions, with the boy determined to correct her false impressions. This critical conversation would not have happened without the image, particularly because the girl had not been present during the walk. It is difficult to determine how this response will impact on the children, but it was an important conversation to have. The workshop ended with children choosing their favourite image and hanging it on the wall of the Scout Hall. Some weeks later I returned with the blog post for parents to sign off. The published photo-essay is in Strasser (2020, pp. 158-163).

Figure 2.7 Evelyn Community Centre which some feared would be turned into expensive flats. Photo taken by a Cub in 2018.

For example, the drawings in the case study above made by children showing where they live sparked a discussion about life in council tower blocks and how these children long for green and play space, less noise and damp. The subsequent Lego® workshop, photography walk and follow-up session, where the children were asked to respond verbally and creatively to questions regarding their experiences and views on the regeneration of Deptford, continued this dialogue. The use of images stimulated alternative conversations and insights that interviews alone might not have yielded (Chaplin, 1994; Pink, 2007; G. Rose, 2007; Back, 2012). Not only did children learn new skills and information, but the discussions around gentrification also constituted critical education.

Participatory photography as research method

As the case studies (above and in Appendix B) show, some participants were keen to take photographs themselves. Participatory photography is a useful and popular method in visual sociology, originating in PAR and the radical practice of community photography. Participant-generated imagery often has a directness that engages viewers, affording the opportunity to see through the eyes of others (Robinson, 2011). Participants can represent their social realities and highlight elements of their lives, thus redistributing visibility and exposing their realities (e.g. Mizen, 2005; Robinson, 2011; Fairey, 2018). Adopting the practice of participant-generated photography, I placed cameras in the hands of participants to create their own images. Although attempts to pre-teach the use of cameras and some visual literacy failed for different reasons (see case studies), I aimed to work towards "good" photographs but with cameras in participants' hands. The visual quality of images for research purposes is generally of less concern as photography is used as a method, either for research data or social inclusion. Participants are often sent out to take photographs without guidance from a trained image maker as taking photographs is perceived as 'fun and easy' (G. Rose, 2007, p. 307).

However, this is not always the case, with some projects resulting in "bad" photographs revealing very little, causing embarrassment and harm to participants. An example is Packard's (2008) project with homeless men, where each image of one participant was obstructed by his finger, making him feel a failure. Harm could have potentially come to some of the young participants in the case study had I published the photographs taken

without guidance, or to the older participant who took the image in Figure 2.8. Many people may not care for artworld aesthetics, but they do have a sense of what constitutes a good or bad photograph. If the concept of voice is about recognition and the purpose of participation about voice, then it is my responsibility to ensure that participants' voices are recognised. Only if participants' speech and actions are made to matter does participation have purpose.

Figure 2.8 Unpublished photograph taken by an older participant without guidance.

It is my contention that researchers using photography, particularly when doing public sociology and publishing outside academia to intervene politically, should be concerned with both ethical practice and visual quality. This does not have to mean providing full technical and visual literacy training, but assistance with camera operation, framing and exposing should be provided (see Wang and Burris, 1997; Packard, 2008; Guillemin and Drew, 2010; Luvera, 2021). Although this does not necessarily result in photographic mastery, the aim is not to achieve artworld aesthetics but images of a publishable quality so that participants' voices are more likely to be recognised.

Researchers should either be, or work with, a trained/skilled image-maker to help participants produce images that can give them confidence and help distribute images more likely to have a wider-reaching impact. In the case study above, after the children decided what to photograph, I helped set appropriate exposure levels to avoid bleaching or silhouetting images, helped them operate the device (fingers away from lens) and asked them to think about what they wanted in and out of the frame before pressing the shutter. When working with older residents, I also steadied their hands to avoid camera shake and other obstructions. This is not to say some could not have produced good images without assistance, in fact some did, but this was likely due to luck rather than skill. The resulting images made participants feel a sense of achievement and pride – feelings of value which "bad" photos (e.g. blurred, lop-sided framing, cut-off faces or structures, under- or over-exposed, etc.) did not achieve.

Images were also used for photo-elicitation sessions, utilising them to trigger reflections, evoke memories and emotional responses and prompt conversations (Schwartz, 1989; Harper, 2002; Beilin, 2005; G. Rose, 2007; Vassenden and Andersson, 2010). Responses are different from the verbal interview because the brain processes visual and verbal information differently, with 'images evok[ing] deeper elements of human consciousness than do words' (Harper, 2002, p. 13). During an elicitation session with older people using images they made during a photography walk, participants collectively engaged in lively discussions, with the images triggering insightful and emotional verbal and written responses (see Figure 2.9 and Strasser, 2020, pp. 81-88). In other workshops, responses were also elicited with other visual material such as drawings and Lego® models generated by participants as discussed in the case study above. Subsequently publishing photo-essays with participants' stories and creative outcomes reflecting their perspectives on the blog not only legitimised their voices and disrupted dominant gentrification narratives, it made participants feel validated and valued.

Figure 2.9 An example of photo-elicitation with older Deptford residents.
Photo: Rozalee Mayes; comment: Jacquie Channing-Hamon, 2018.

Autonomous contributions: radical community arts as visual research method

My close involvement with campaigns also led to the contribution of autonomously created

artworks by radical community artists. Much like community artists of the 1970s and 80s,

they work in dialogue with local people to appropriate artworld aesthetics to effect social and

political change. These artists utilise theatre and performance, music, poetry, banner-making,

painting and drawing to publicly communicate the shared feelings of displacement. Thus,

their works and the photographs I made of these also bear the traces of collective affect.

While some artists produced work directly in response to this research project, which were

then used for campaigning, others produced works out of their own directive for the

campaigns, but which also fitted the project. Instead of pressing for another artwork for the

sake of deep participation, it made sense to include the photographed works and invite

accompanying texts. After all, publishing these on the blog also helped them amplify their

voices. Once artists understood the project as a platform for their voices, they invited me to

document live performances and impromptu installations, generating further material for the

project and campaigning, and for sociological insights. These critical artworks really came

from within the community, produced in dialogue with residents and using artistic conventions to antagonise and sustain political discourse. They address deep participation and citizen control, albeit in ways that would perhaps not fall into the category of traditional participative modes. Therefore, I propose a different interpretation.

In 'A Ladder of Citizen Participation', Arnstein (1969) argues that genuine participation relates to high levels of citizen control and power. She claims genuine participation is 'the redistribution of power' and that 'participation without redistribution of power is an empty and frustrating process for the powerless' (Arnstein, 1969, p. 216). In principle, it is hard to argue with Arnstein's claim that the deeper participation and level of control, the greater likelihood to challenge traditional positions of power. Her ladder provides a useful schema for thinking about claims made about participating. However, participation in itself is much more complex, particularly when applied to the arts (see Packard, 2008; Fairey, 2018; Luvera, 2019) and to action research (see Gatenby and Humphries, 2000; Pain and Francis, 2003; Pain, 2004; Kindon, Pain and Kesby, 2007; Birch and Miller, 2012). Models of democracy in society are not the same as in the arts and research practices and Arnstein's schema does not account for their ability to generate other criteria. Bishop (2012, p. 279) says that many effective socially-engaged artworks do not offer citizen control and that 'the relationship between artist/participant is a continual play of mutual tension, recognition and dependency... rather than a ladder of progressively more virtuous political forms' (ibid.). I would argue the same applies to the researcher/participant relationship. Genuine political participation cannot be dictated by a set of ethical precepts.

In the case of the autonomously produced political artworks by Tidemill artists and photographed mostly by me, one might argue that this does not qualify as deep participation or citizen control since the works were simply integrated into this project. However, because these works were produced out of artists' own directive and artistic autonomy and artists could choose to be included in the project or not, participants had full control over their artworks: format, aesthetics, political message and usage. Miessen (2011) and Mouffe (2012) term this 'conflictual participation', a model of participation that addresses the contradictory pull between autonomy and social intervention. While there is an emphasis on participation,

the focus is on social justice, making it paramount to encourage participation to enact a political intervention.
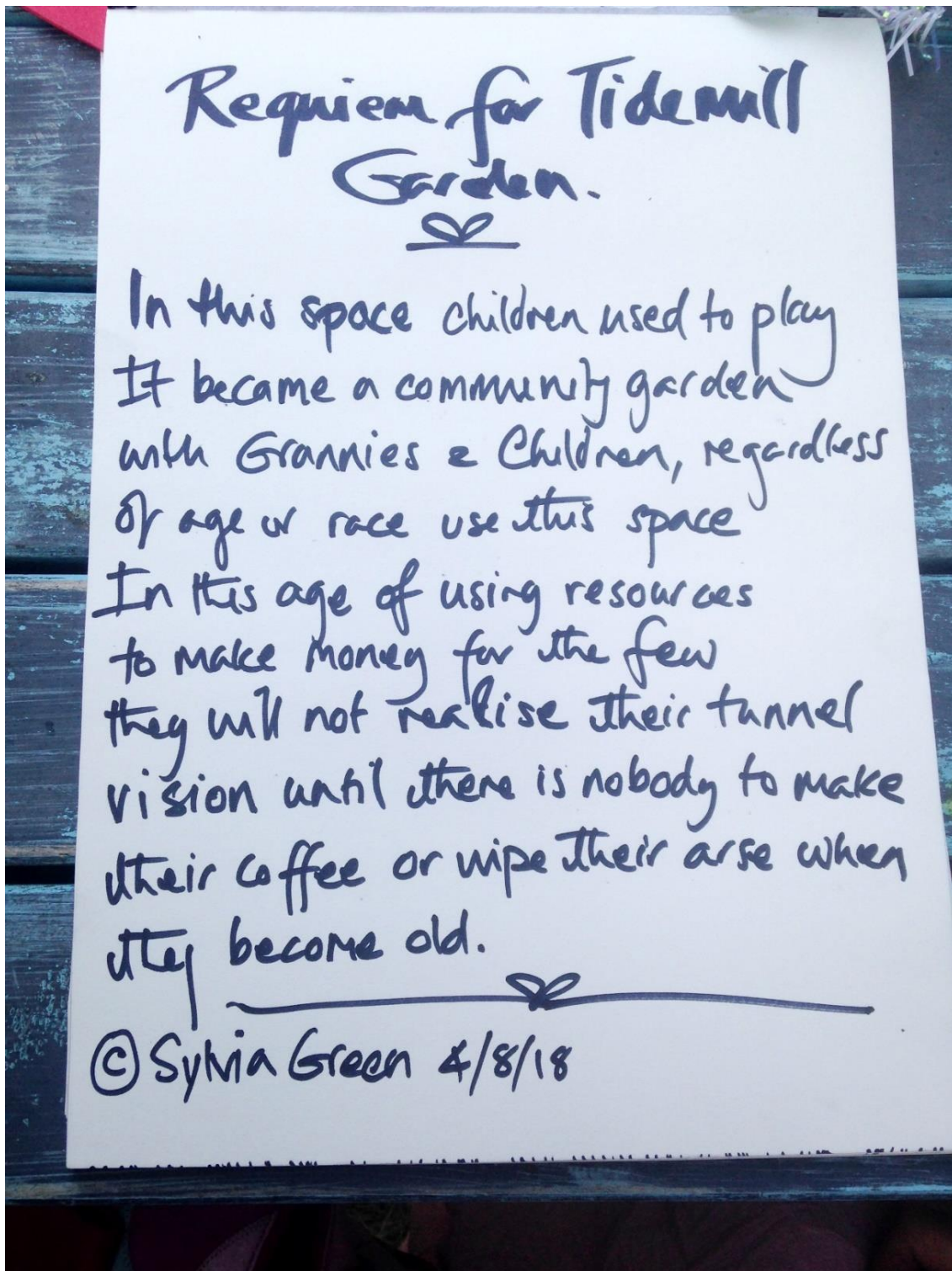

Figure 2.10 Poem written by community activist and poet Sylvia Green in response to the project. Photo: Jacquie Utley, 2018.

These works, as the works produced directly for the project (Figure 2.10), reflect an *artistic dialogical aesthetic,* produced during events and encounters with multiple participants involved in collaborative action. It is a 'human being-with-others in which [artistic practice] is implicated' (Azoulay, 2012, p. 18). It is a practice where artists are engaged in political action with others to communicate shared feelings and experiences. This is collaboration which cannot be prescribed; it happens organically through a flexible approach to participation and a common political goal. If the intentionality of art and research projects is to intervene politically, participation needs a political purpose. This turns radical arts into a visual research method, with community artists co-producers of data and output, working individually and together to disrupt the distribution of the sensible. This is a form of genuine participation, redistributed power and meaningful partnership. In other words, political and democratic participation.

2.6 Conclusion: repoliticising and democratising participation

This chapter has discussed the methodological, ethical and aesthetic considerations of a research practice underpinned by *optimum* participation and designed for a political intervention (the blog and book) and the production of sociological knowledge (this thesis). It has demonstrated throughout that deep participation and full citizen control as commonly understood are not necessarily more democratic and fitting for a practice which creates the conditions for spontaneous encounters and acts politically. Was I to chase participants to achieve citizen control when they did not want it? Was I to decline the requests to document their activities and insist on deep participation? Was I to refuse participants controlling the intentionality of the project and the kind of participation they chose? If genuine participation redistributes power, then democratic participation is the genuine choice of how to participate. The deliberation of choice and alternatives of participation was fundamental to this research, enabling people to participate in ways that fit *their* needs and skills and *their* political purpose.

What seemed to matter for my participants was that the research project, alongside its academic purpose, enacted a political intervention in a way that reflected their experiences. In Arendt (1998 [1958]) and Rancière's (1999) terms, it enabled their speech and actions to

become audible and visible in the public sphere during moments of struggle. Voice is about the politics of recognition, and participants wanted their versions of community, their stories of place, and their experiences of gentrification, displacement and resistance heard and recognised. They wanted the project to contribute to their resistance against the violence of un-homing. Participation was about being included in something that was meaningful, where participants felt valued, recognised and represented. Had I restricted participation only to those open to deep participation, many voices, stories and people would have been excluded, thus perpetuating rather than challenging traditional power relations. This would also have significantly limited the content and political effectiveness of the blog and book and the sociological insights examined in this thesis.

In radical, feminist and public sociology, creative research practice is a question of *optimum* participation in the production of *critical* art for a social *and* political purpose. It challenges the binaries of collective or individual authorship, ethical practice or artistic quality, deep or shallow participation (Bishop, 2012). It is about *democratic* choice, with participation a decision between alternatives rather than a search for consensus. Enabling participants to dictate their own level, kind and purpose of participation has led to an art and research practice comprised of surprising encounters, collaborative and creative activities and political interventions. This action-oriented research project was a creative, ethical and political experiment in knowledge production, yielding valuable research data and contributing to sociological knowledge. It turned sociological research into a form of sociable and creative roaming, resulting in a 'combination of ideas [and outputs] that no one expected were combinable…' (Mills, 2000 [1959], p. 211). This co-produced and multimodal approach created a complex, multi-layered visual and textual portrait of participants' lives in Deptford.

3

The significance of place attachment and the emotional geographies of belonging

3.1 Introduction

This study explored what a participatory arts and research practice can reveal about the impact of 21st century gentrification on various social groups in Deptford. The multimodal and political approach to participation and the inclusion of many participants of different age groups, abilities, ethnicities and housing tenures offered insights into the multiple layers of displacement caused by the current aesthetico-political regime of gentrification in Deptford. This will be discussed in Chapter 4. This approach, however, also enabled different, unexpected conversations which revealed the significance of Deptford as place, as participants' place of identification, dwelling and Being-in-the-world (Heidegger, 1993 [1971]). There is a strong correlation between place identity, self-identification and lived experience of place, with place-based and personal histories, deep commitment to place, home and community leading to place attachment and existential security (e.g. Manzo, 2003; Davidson, 2009a; Seamon, 2014). Therefore, understanding this affective connection to place helps explain the existential and emotional pain caused by displacement (Davidson, 2009a).

This chapter builds on Davidson's argument that studying the effects of displacement requires 'a move to reassert the place in dis*place*ment' (Davidson, 2009a, p. 226; original emphasis). It contributes to existing literature on place attachment among working-class communities in the context of gentrification (e.g. Davidson and Lees, 2010; Paton, 2014; Jeffery, 2019; Watt, 2021), exploring the 'emotional geographies' (Davidson and Lees, 2010, p. 403) of belonging, community and validation stemming from residential longevity, historical rootedness, class culture and commitment to place. However, alongside these more traditional aspects of place attachment, this chapter also explores dissensus and activism, intercultural dialogue and stories of migration as ways of developing place attachment, with belonging, community and identification with place playing out in different, potentially irreconcilable ways.

The chapter argues that in a 'superdiverse' (Vertovec, 2007) locality such as Deptford, where demographic diversity inevitably means the presence of heterogenous world views, place attachment is experienced in conflicting and incompatible ways. I call this presence of different relationships to the locale within any given community, or indeed sometimes in one individual, *conflictual place attachment*. However, the chapter also argues that conflictual place attachment does not necessarily forestall solidarity across ethnicities, communities and classes, with different community groups able to bridge difference through shared spaces, experiences and political goals. This chapter attends to a multiplicity of perspectives, each of which is partial and incomplete (Back, 2007; 2012) but adds to our understandings of how Deptford is experienced as place.[19]

3.2 The complexity of place and place attachment

> **Marion:** I'm a true Deptfordite, I'm one of the last surviving ones who were born and bred here. I grew up in the 50s and remember all the shops from that time. Years ago I could walk out of my mum's front door, and no sooner would I walk down the road it was like 'Hello Mrs So and So, Hello Sir…'. It's quite strange that I remember being able to talk to so many people but now they're all different faces, there's nobody to whom you can say 'Oh I remember you from like when I was a child', and that is very upsetting. They built an estate on the land [in the 70s], which is wonderful in one way, but people enclosed in their own area don't really talk to anybody outside their estate. They brought in people from other areas such as Dagenham and East London, and it was difficult to get to know them. This was all very upsetting because a lot of the people whose houses were pulled moved out of the area. I feel very isolated. I never expected Deptford to change so vastly.   (in Strasser, 2020, pp.91-92)

> **Michael:** The Battle of Lewisham in 1977[20] was the turning point for the borough of Lewisham. I can only tell you the narrative of my siblings as I was too young to experience it. The racism at that time, you could be at the wrong place at the wrong time. My siblings faced a lot of verbal abuse. The National Front had walks here. It was when the white working-class felt threatened and couldn't adapt to the new people coming in. But after 1977, Black people for the first time felt they had a voice… we experienced a tremendous hope for tomorrow and that we can be perceived as having a perspective and a voice without fear. It made the government look at all aspects. I was growing up then – you could go out, you didn't feel threatened, that's why I feel passionate about my borough… We could be expressive, there was hope, I was allowed to come to Deptford. Where would we be without the Battle of Lewisham?   (in Strasser, 2020, pp.92-93)

This conversation took place after I had been coming to Marion and Michael's Friday meetups in Deptford Lounge (the local library) for a few weeks. There they support each

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[19] From now, frequent reference will be made to the *Deptford is Changing* book (Strasser, 2020). However, interview extracts in the thesis are based on raw data, thus may not necessarily match the wording in the book.
[20] The Battle of Lewisham refers to violent clashes between members of the National Front (NF), police and anti-racist demonstrators on the day when the NF, supported by police, marched through Deptford/New Cross.

other with admin tasks, attend to each other's health problems and discuss local issues, sometimes also with others. They had agreed to take part in my research and invited me to join their weekly discussions. One day I asked them how they felt about Deptford, which resulted in a fascinating conversation. There was a white, older lady born in Deptford having a conflicting yet amicable discussion with a Black, middle-aged man, her long-time friend, with her expressing a fractured connection to place due to the physical and demographic changes since the 1970s while also claiming her moral right to Deptford due to her historical rootedness, and him expressing a strengthened connection to place due to racialised populations achieving greater rights to the city since the late 1970s. Both asserted their place attachment to Deptford, albeit for conflicting, potentially irreconcilable reasons.

Massey (1991) argues that connecting place with a singular identity, rooting place in history and drawing "us and them" boundaries ignore the multitude of flows and identities. This can lead to reactionary politics such as xenophobia, racism and bigotry. Instead, Massey argues for a more progressive and outward-looking consideration of place, viewing it as an ongoing process. She cites Kilburn in North London as an example of a place full of diversity, hybridity and global connections, with no single identity or history, unconfined by geographical boundaries. Kilburn 'is constructed out of a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus' (Massey, 1991, p. 28). The same could be said for Deptford and other areas shaped by histories of migration.

What such conceptualisations omit, however, are the phenomenological and affective dimensions of place – the experiences and knowledges of the people inhabiting place. Many narrations of place begin with place identity and family history because they provide an existential anchor for people's place-based existence. Many of my participants experience limited spatial mobility for various reasons (e.g. old age, disability, care responsibilities, poverty) so local (historical) knowledge and connections anchor people emotionally while place and the world around them keeps changing. Both Marion and Michael are impoverished, disabled and dependent on each other, leading an existence in and around Deptford. Both revert to the 1970s, with Michael describing a hopeful future for Black populations and Marion holding on to Deptford's (white) working-class history, a time when

her social connections and cultural capital gave her social standing. Both reflect the desire to be recognised as persons of value and worth.

Conflictual place attachment: understanding contentious voices

Although their place-identifications have conflicting world views, they are also a springboard for critical conversations. Michael, having experienced what he called the "you're not from here attitude" (in Strasser, 2020, p. 92), offers a critical analysis of both their perspectives in the rest of the conversation (ibid., pp. 89-94). Marion listens, seemingly finding solace in having her feelings affirmed and explained while also demonstrating understanding for Michael's perspective. It seems that their regular intercultural dialogues and negotiations of difference (Back, 1996; Amin, 2002; Cresswell, 2004) have helped them form a critical understanding of Deptford's complex histories and multiple identities, and the ever-changing nature of a multicultural area. As Massey argues, place is a site 'full of internal conflicts' (Massey, 1991, p. 28), and associating place with a particular identity, history or community does not always and necessarily blind one to its diversity, hybridity and global connections.

There is no doubt that narrow visions of place, identity and community can contribute to reactionary politics. The NF march which resulted in The Battle of Lewisham is such an example. The current political climate which has led to Brexit, Trumpism and the rise of the far right globally is another. Although many people's accounts of place identity, memory and family history are reactionary, it does not mean every individual foregrounding one identity or history necessarily indicates xenophobia, racism and bigotry. In fact, Gary Younge (in Seidler, 2018, p. 108) argues that the cosmopolitan elite constantly dismissing (white) working-class people as bigots and racists played a big part in the Brexit vote. Constantly feeling misrecognised and not having one's voice and concerns heard, the Leave vote was a chance to have a say, *any* say (Seidler, 2018; own emphasis). Instead of immediately dismissing historical place identification as parochialism, nostalgia and bigotry, it is necessary to engage with the histories/mythologies that produce those accounts and try to understand the meaning behind such place identifications and iterations of community.

Marion's narrations and memories could easily be dismissed as bigoted and nostalgic, and perhaps they are. However, her narrations take her back to a time when her social

connections and cultural capital had value and when she experienced security in Deptford. This was a time which promised "the good life", a life of upward mobility, prosperity and social equality. The physical and political changes taking place since that time have left her feeling devalued and on a downward spiral. Disabled, impoverished and displaced, she desires to be, once again, a citizen of value, whose social and cultural capital has status (Bourdieu, 1990; Skeggs, 2004a). However, the current regime of gentrification in Deptford removes her further and further from this possibility. She has been emotionally displaced since the 70s and her affective attachment to the past prior to that, expressed through the narrations of her memories, sustains her in the present. Marion's experience could also be dismissed as a case of aging in place. With age-related changes making people more sensitive to their surroundings, aging in a neighbourhood which is rapidly changing and not adapted to older people's needs can affect their well-being (Afshar *et al.*, 2017, p. 50). However, Smith *et al.*'s research (2018) has presented compelling evidence that older adults in gentrifying neighbourhoods, independent of their economic status, experience more symptoms of anxiety and depression than elsewhere. This suggests that, while aging in place is a fact of many people's lives, Marion's experience is likely compounded by the processes of gentrification. Expressing place attachment through historical narrations helps Marion maintain her mental health.

The desire for nostalgic or historical place identification, belonging and rootedness is widely understood as a reaction to global capitalism, urban restructuring and the threat of displacement (Massey, 1991; Harvey, 1993; Zukin, 2011). People are often not aware of their connection to place until it is threatened, and their familiarity with place, their habits within it and their sense of continuity disrupted (Manzo, 2003; Seamon, 2014). One way of restoring disrupted place attachment is the intentional focus on the past, with nostalgia functioning as a way of bridging the stable past with the unstable present and uncertain future rather than 'a sentimental longing for what is not' (Lewicka, 2014, p. 53). Bringing personal and historical memories and place identification to the fore, as in Marion's comments above, is a way of reiterating and reinforcing belonging to place (ibid.). Also Michael's identification with Deptford is a reiteration of belonging through expressing nostalgia for the past, a past that was full of hope, promises of freedom, belonging and integration. Although the type of racism his siblings were subjected to occurs less frequently today, gentrification provides

mostly opportunities for wealthier and therefore predominantly white populations[21], making it a class and a race issue. Reiterating memories of a hopeful past helps him retain hope in the face of adversity.

This is part of the struggle for value in a context that renders people who are older, disabled and on lower incomes redundant and worthless (Skeggs, 2004a). Their narrations are a response to the place identity the aesthetico-political regime of gentrification creates, which is no less focused on a singular identity, rooted in history and which tries to draw boundaries between "them and us". It is a regime from which Marion and Michael feel excluded. They are bound by the shared experiences of displacement and place attachment, but this plays out in conflicting ways. This research provided a space for both to safely narrate their *conflictual place attachment,* recognising both perspectives as legitimate and validating the narrators and their stories. This led to a critical and insightful conversation between them that indicated mutual understanding. Publishing this conversation on the blog and in the book as part of this project not only further validated Marion and Michael, it may have stimulated critical engagement with those perspectives among other publics. Thus, talking through contentious voices has the potential to contribute to valuable social change.

The importance of place attachment, place identification and social connections

There is overwhelming data indicating that identification with place contributes to existential security, which, in turn, leads to place attachment (Fullilove, 2014; Lewicka, 2014; Manzo, 2014; Seamon, 2014). Place attachment and identification, however, can take many forms and intensities, and is not only associated with place of birth, family history, life/long-time residence and familiar culture. It is also not necessarily permanent, restricted to one place or the place of residence, or even required to achieve "the good life". Additionally, it is also not only associated with working-class communities or those with a place-based existence. For example, there is evidence that more mobile populations search for place identification. They move to places congruent with their sense of self (Manzo, 2003, p. 54) – also known as 'elective belonging' (Savage, Bagnall and Longhurst, 2005), or seek place-identification through an overt focus on history (Lewicka, 2014). This can be seen in places with a similar

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[21] See Institute for Race Relations (2020) and Butler (2020) for poverty levels of minoritised groups in the UK.

aesthetico-political regime of gentrification to Deptford, where place identities based on notions of history and heritage, community and multiculturalism, and creativity are developed into a brand to address sensibilities for historicity and authenticity (Harvey, 1993; Zukin, 2011). However, this organised, fast-track creation of place identity is not always reconcilable with sustaining place identification for existing long-term residents, displacing them from an emotional perspective (ibid.). In fact, Jeffery (2019) argues that gentrification is designed to satisfy the modes of belonging of the incoming middle-classes and happens at the expense of the working-classes.

Figure 3.1 A befriending club at Pepys Resource Centre. This weekly lunch is part of their place ballet, a space where those excluded from dominant cultural practices find value and recognition. Photo: Anita Strasser, 2018.

Deep place attachment often develops from continually contributing to and participating in what David Seamon calls 'place ballet' (Seamon, 2014, p. 13) – daily routines, interactions and events rooted in place (Figure 3.1). Much research on belonging has focused on the residential choices and place ballets of the middle-classes (e.g. Butler and Robson, 2003a; 2003b; Savage, Bagnall and Longhurst, 2005; Benson and Jackson, 2012; Jackson and Benson, 2014). More recently, this has been counterbalanced by research which explores place

experiences of the working-classes and those displaced by gentrification (e.g. Davidson and Lees, 2010; Paton, 2014; Jeffery, 2019; Watt, 2021). While the modes of belonging between the classes is also often conflictual, my research focuses on conflictual place attachment not between the classes or between newcomers and existing residents but among existing residents who experience gentrification-induced displacement.

This chapter examines the 'emotional geographies' (Davidson and Lees, 2010, p. 403) of their 'practices of belonging' (Benson and Jackson, 2012; Blokland, 2017), informed by residential longevity, historical rootedness, class culture and commitment to place, as well as dissensus and activism, intercultural dialogue and stories of migration. It explores and validates the place ballets of my participants who have a place-based existence: the daily routines, interactions and events, which help them develop the capacity to dwell and exist in place (Heidegger, 1993 [1971]).[22] Dwelling and Being-in-the-world are intricately linked to the lived experience of place, to being involved in and belonging to place. Dwelling transcends the built environment; it is an existential state in which one feels at home in place. It follows that the more one feels at home, the greater the attachment.

This chapter also shows that Deptford's specific histories play a significant role in the way participants experience place. As stated in the thesis introduction, these are Deptford's maritime and industrial pasts followed by deindustrialisation and high indices of deprivation, numerous government interventions, the arrival of migrants, particularly from the West Indies, Nigeria and Vietnam, and the subsequent fascist attacks, as well as the long history of community arts and activism, which led to a whole host of mutually-supportive community (arts) groups. Whilst these place-based histories play an important role in modulating the changes taking place, as examined in Chapter 1, they are also fundamental to many residents' affective narratives of belonging, identification and existential security. These histories have given rise to many alliances across class, ethnicity, capital and housing tenure, and therefore shared practices of belonging, understandings of place and place attachment.

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[22] Considering the political circumstances in which Heidegger wrote, his affiliation to National Socialism and the potential reactionary politics of his thinking, it seems inappropriate to reference his words here. However, as Malpas says (in Davidson, 2009a, p. 225), rejecting Heidegger's place-based thinking risks failing to understand displacement. I reject Heidegger's politics, but I follow Davidson in arguing that the notion of dwelling is central to discussions on displacement.

Nevertheless, participants' interpretations of and attachment to Deptford also differ across different social categories. Participatory, feminist research and political listening opened up a democratic space for a multiplicity of voices to be heard. Connecting these personal stories with public issues (Mills, 2000 [1959]) offers a critical account of place attachment among my participants.

3.3 Place attachment through repeated practices of belonging

> My community is my neighbours, and my extended community is with people in the [Tidemill] garden. My immediate community are people I can depend and rely on at all costs… It is this underlying thing that you can't put your finger on… We are like family here.
>
> (Diann in Strasser, 2020, pp.27-28)

> The church helps to bring people together and green space is another way to connect. Like Tidemill Garden – it's like a magnet for people to meet. A common space, a green space is the magical ingredient when it comes to community. (Ian in Strasser, 2020, p.30)

> When I go to the market, people always say hello even if you don't know them, and if they see you sitting there, having a cup of tea, there's always somebody asking you 'Are you alright?'
>
> (Chrissie in Strasser, 2020, p.137)

People often find emotional connections based on shared histories, interests and value practices, with place attachment often intertwined with a strong sense of community (Manzo and Perkins, 2006, p. 339). The daily 'practices of belonging' (Benson and Jackson, 2012; Blokland, 2017) are part of *doing* community, which fosters place attachment. In fact, place attachment is often expressed by referring to "the community". Despite the use of the singular and suggestions of harmony, homogeneity, cohesiveness and identity, "the community" in the extracts above voiced by people of differing ethnic backgrounds refers to a variety of different social connections located in place. Diann refers to her family, neighbours, close friends and garden users; Ian talks about church groups and those connected through green spaces; Chrissie refers to the people at the market (Figure 3.2). In all examples, "the community" comprises loosely defined groups of people of different ages, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds and interests. They are networks, whose shared interests, use of place and participation in the intercultural place ballet of Deptford have developed strong affinities and, in turn, strong place attachment.

Figure 3.2 Deptford Market plays an important role in the intercultural place ballet of Deptford. Photos: Anita Strasser, 2019.

In times of social and economic upheaval, the value of community (and place) takes on greater significance (Sennett, 2012, p. 253). While the danger of reifying community is ever present, with problematic issues of exclusion and false ideals of consensus, referring to "the community" does not necessarily and always refer to a bound entity. Amin and Thrift (2002) argue that there are all kinds of localised (and non-localised) communal bonds: people with shared interests, friends, diasporas, forms of light sociality and sympathisers of causes. Drawing on Lefebvre's *Critique of Everyday Life* (1991a), Amin and Thrift talk about the community of everyday life, the community that is always being made, the community as practice rather than entity. This is worth quoting at length:

> Everyday life is profoundly related to all activities, and encompasses them with all their differences and conflicts; it is their meeting ground, their bond, their common ground. And it is in everyday life that the sum total of relations which make the human – and every human being – a whole takes its shape and form. In it are expressed and fulfilled those relations which bring into play the totality of the real, albeit in a certain manner which is always partial and incomplete: friendship, comradeship, love, the need to communicate, play, etc. Thus, the community of the banal and the mundane, but also the community of improvisation, intuition, play. The community of taking place, not place. The community that cannot be classified. The community without an identity in which 'humans co-belong without any representable condition of belonging' (Agamben, 1993: 86). The community we have in common. The coming community.
>
> (Amin and Thrift, 2002, p. 47)

The communities of Deptford I worked with comprise a complex web of social relations of varying intensities, identities and interests. It is a web which has been spun over decades and

is constantly being re-spun. As with place, understandings of community are varied, fluid and contested, and identification with "the community" is a search for, and iteration of, belonging, rootedness and emotional stability (Blokland, 2017, p. 42). It is also a search for value and recognition of one's social and cultural capital, and contribution to place and community as in the extract and Figure 3.3 below:

> The community we have here is the community no-one sees. Here you see the kind of care you experience in tight-knit communities. It's about community networks that cannot have a value put on them through box ticking.   (Bridget in Strasser, 2020, p.131)

Figure 3.3 Volunteers at Evelyn Community Store proudly posing for this photo, which they composed themselves. Photo: Anita Strasser, 2019.

Neighbourhood activism as a practice of belonging

> I'd grown to love Deptford in the 80s. At that time, I was working on arts projects at the Albany and I'd never lived in such a cohesive community before. It was very artistic, very underground and very community focussed. It housed predominantly working-class people with and without further education experiences who worked together, using their artistic talent for the benefit of the community. I have always felt a pull towards community work combined with the arts, and Deptford inspired me.   (Heather in Strasser, 2020, pp.19-21)

My hope… lies with the community that I have grown to be part of over the last year and a half – the local people, the artists, the musicians, the shopkeepers, the market traders, social tenants, private tenants, sympathetic owner-occupiers, the residents of Reginald House, the homeless, the inspiring, hard-working squatters from across the UK and the EU, the environmental activists, visionaries and dreamers who have come together to defend an extraordinarily beautiful community space and green oasis.   (Andy in Strasser, 2020, p.62)

Both these interview extracts illustrate that place attachment and identification can be deepened by contributing to neighbourhood activism and participating in community projects. Again, interviewees refer to "the community" but this comprises a wide range of people with varied interests and backgrounds. The extracts also illustrate how radical community arts and solidarity with poorer, marginalised and like-minded people is central to their value system, self-worth and identification with Deptford. The daily encounters, exchanges and collaborations between people in various spaces, including this research project, not only widen their social connections and build social capital (Putnam, 2000) but they also instil a sense of belonging, recognition and validation. Within those groups, people generate their own value systems and convert their cultural resources, which are often inscribed as worthless in the dominant systems of value, into legitimate "tradable" cultural capital (Skeggs, 1997; 2004a).

Although involved in many different community groups, both interviewees also belong to the Tidemill Community. This group consists largely of community artists and activists, residents, squatters and members of the radical left, who believe in social, cultural and environmental democracy and anti-capitalism, anti-colonialism and anti-racism. Their shared beliefs and political actions foster cross-class, cross-ethnicity, cross-capital and cross-tenure solidarity and encourage participation from others. Together they engage in DIY activism that uses various art forms to campaign against the demolition of council housing, the closure of valued community spaces, increased property prices and the displacement of working-class people and culture, as well as other social injustices such as food poverty, racism and pollution. Using their cultural and social capitals, they also find shelter and provide food for homeless people, provide support for "marginal characters", and create opportunities for participation in cultural activities. The Tidemill Community revalidates people deemed redundant in dominant value systems by absorbing them into their community as valuable

members who contribute to helping others in need. This 'revalorisation of relationships made from local, familiar sociality' (Skeggs, 2011, p. 504) gives those involved a sense of purpose, recognition and belonging (see Figure 3.4). Due to their place-based activities, participation in this group also intensifies solidarity and attachment to people and place, in this case Deptford.

Figure 3.4 Homeless people sitting by a campfire in Tidemill Garden, where they were supported by squatters, activists and campaigners, who recognised them as people of value. Photo: Anita Strasser, 2018.

There are many cross-community bonds in Deptford – a legacy of decades of grassroots and state-sponsored community development, community arts and activism, during which residents campaigned for racial justice and neighbourhood improvements based on their own value practices. During various government interventions since the post-war period, local residents have set up community forums, community advice centres and green spaces, taken part in council meetings and consultation processes, written funding bids and set up cultural initiatives for local people. This legacy of getting organised to resist racism, benefit from regeneration programmes and cultural policy, and create inclusive social and cultural spaces so that the poorest members of society find recognition and validation is fundamental

to community ties and activism in Deptford today. Chapter 5 examines past and present neighbourhood activism and its affective dimension in greater detail.

Dissensus as part of everyday life

The romantic myth of communities as entities of harmony and consent has long been dispelled in social science, and despite the persistent romantic undertones in public imaginaries and everyday discourse, my participants are aware that community, like family, involves regular conflicts and differences of opinion. Disagreements did not occur during interviews and research conversations *per se*, but I often observed disagreements, particularly among and between campaigners and volunteers/members at community centres. Occasionally, confrontations seemed fierce, the language not pretty, accusations direct, but these conflicts did not change the fact that people belonged to a group and were working towards common goals. Indeed, some of the disagreements I witnessed led me to believe that relations had soured, only to find this was not the case.

According to Mouffe (2012), true democratic engagement is not based on consensus but on dissensus, on the ability to turn antagonistic situations into agonistic communication. Rather than becoming political enemies with conflicting goals leading to a breakdown in communication (e.g between campaigners and councillors), in an 'agonistic model of democracy' (Mouffe, 2012, p. 7) conflict ends in 'conflictual consensus' (p. 11) – accepting that shared political interests can be interpreted differently but with consensus on the goal. As such, community is at times a space of agonism where differences can be confronted through democratic and conflictual discussion. Marion and Michael's friendship and ongoing dialogues are, despite their potentially antagonistic place identifications, an example of that. There were other instances in housing meetings, events and workshops where debates seemed antagonistic and people upset, but issues were resolved precisely because conflicting voices were heard and talked through. Conflicts are understood as part and parcel of everyday life and do not necessarily sever feelings of belonging. In fact, allowing space for contentious voices and being able to safely engage in dissensus seemed to make people feel recognised and validated which, in turn, might strengthen their place attachment and belonging.

Difference can of course lead to exclusion and/or detachment. All communities draw boundaries between insiders and outsiders based on a whole host of factors. It is not within the scope of this thesis to explore these in detail, but I did observe a general mistrust of middle-class newcomers within some of the groups. Although this could forestall potential class-solidarity, this scepticism needs to be understood as a response to the inverted "them and us" that gentrification creates. Not only are existing communities dispossessed of resources and subjected to ever-greater inequalities, gentrification tries to draw clear boundaries between who the city is for and who is inscribed with value and who not (Skeggs, 2004b). The persistent and widespread representation of people on low incomes as subjects of disgust is exclusion at a much more oppressive and harmful level than individualised scepticism towards middle-class newcomers. For poorer people, the arrival of more affluent populations signifies their potential displacement and the delegitimisation of their value practices. Therefore, the cool reception of middle-class newcomers is an act of resistance against their exclusion from urban imaginaries and the lack of recognition for their cultural practices and social needs. It is a way of protecting their systems of value and shielding against further stigmatisation and marginalisation.

3.4 Place identification through working-class culture

The political economy of place is essential in understanding place attachment (Manzo, 2003, p. 54). Since post-industrial places and working-class people and culture are the main targets of regeneration and austerity programmes, place has class struggle inscribed into it (Lefebvre, 1991b; Harvey, 1993; Paton, 2014). Whilst the people facing displacement span a whole range of social groups and identities, urban restructuring is fundamentally a class issue – an issue of unequal economic distribution, value attribution and power relations. Unlike Paton's (2014) research participants, many of my participants strongly identify as working-class, having formed close attachment to Deptford due to its industrial, working-class and municipal history. They perceive the changes taking place as a class issue which is disrupting their sense of security and value in Deptford:

> I don't think there is a policy to get rid of all the poor people, it's just the chasing of the dollar that is getting rid of working-class people and all the things that are valuable to them. And I know not all of it was good in the past but that's how I see Deptford changing – from a class perspective.
>
> (Heather in Strasser, 2020, p.31)

At the moment my feelings are that the council want to cleanse existing working-class communities so that the area will become a shiny and neat version. Obviously, things can be improved, we need investment, but we don't need erasing which is what I feel Lewisham Council want to do to working-class communities in Deptford. (Jacquie in Strasser, 2020, pp.30-31)

The participants identifying with working-class culture tended to be from the baby-boomer generation, having benefitted from municipal socialism including free education, funded community support (nurseries, community arts), welfare benefits (disability allowance, "the dole") and subsidised housing. They have either been a council tenant at some point in their lives, acquired a council property through RTB or lived in housing cooperatives. Some have managed to progress to middle-class lifestyles and homeownership, but face displacement due to estate demolition. This group of participants lived through times which promised ever-progressing economic, social and cultural development, raising expectations of upward mobility and "the good life". They also experienced place-based government interventions in the 1990s and 2000s, which also fostered hope for a more egalitarian world. Having experienced this hopeful future mostly in Deptford, they also experience strong place attachment there. Although minoritised working-class people share some of these experiences, those participants did not identify with class identity but with identity based on colonial history, race and ethnicity. Their stories of belonging were intertwined less with municipal socialism and more with histories of migration, family networks and mutual support structures. Their place identifications, often in direct conflict with other identifications, will be examined in Section 3.5.

Some baby-boomers identified as middle-class, acknowledging their privileged positions through their education, occupations and homeownership. However, as they are often the leaseholders of properties on council estates, they also face displacement. Only two participants owned houses which were bought through the housing market in times of much lower property prices (1980s/90s) but whose value has increased significantly with gentrification. They "only" face emotional displacement. Middle-class participants often expressed feelings of guilt for "being part of the problem", as they put it, but seemed uncomfortable at times with the framing of displacement as class struggle. Despite their privileged positions, they share experiences of displacement (although at varying levels of severity) and the concern about the inequalities urban restructuring produces. Indeed, their

shared place attachment, knowledge and experience of the UK's socially-democratic and municipal history is a form of cultural capital in the social fields (Bourdieu, 1990) of the working-classes, council estate life and housing activism. The shared sense of belonging, ideology and associations forms the basis of their cross-class alliance.

Overall, unlike the young women in Skeggs' study (1997) and some participants of Paton's study in a Glasgow working-class district (2014), who sought to disassociate themselves from working-class identity and strove for respectability within the middle-class field, it was common for participants in this research to find value by distinguishing themselves from middle-classness and expressing scorn for middle-class tastes (Skeggs, 2011, p. 503-504). Comments like the one below were voiced frequently, even by those who had acquired middle-class lifestyles:

> These arty-farty cafés, they are not for local people either. Many here are ex-dockers, they want a bacon and egg sandwich in a Greasy Spoon – not an arty farty cake in some expensive café.
> (Anonymous in Strasser, 2020, p.134)

Although not unproblematic, the voicing of disgust for middle-class culture and emphasising the cultural choices of the working-class expresses solidarity and revalidates working-class identity and cultural capital. This is part of the daily struggle against inequalities and for value in a world that dispossess people of resources and renders their cultural capital worthless (Skeggs, 2004a; 2004b; Tyler, 2015). This suggests that cultural choices are not merely the habitus of necessity, as Bourdieu (2010 [1984]) would argue; the actions and their narrations can also be conscious acts of resistance in the face of stigmatisation. With this taking place in Deptford and local community spaces, place attachment is formed there because it is where they are recognised as valuable members of society.

Intercultural dialogue as part of working-class culture

The racial dimension of class is particularly important in areas shaped by the histories of migration such as Deptford, which has a large percentage of racialised communities (Hall and

Back, 2009, p. 676; 681)[23]. As Stuart Hall said, 'race is the modality through which class is lived' (Hall *et al*., 1978, p. 394) and when I refer to my participants as a collective, I am always referring to a multi-ethnic population. This is not to say all racialised people are economically disadvantaged. There are middle-class and/or affluent racialised individuals and families who benefit from gentrification, but the number is disproportionately small (Hyra, 2012; Lees and Hubbard, 2021). Studies like *The Likes of Us* (Collin, 2004) and *The New East End* (Dench, Gavron and Young*,* 2006) keep perpetuating the notion of the white working-class despite researching superdiverse London areas. Instead of critically evaluating the meaning behind white place-based histories/mythologies and identifications, these studies pit racialised "minorities" against the white working-class, continuing to deny the legitimacy of ethnic pluralism (Back, 1996; 2009) and potentially contributing to reactionary politics.

However, there are valuable studies on multicultural/cosmopolitan belonging (e.g. Back, 1996; Keith, 2005; Jackson, 2014; Rhys-Taylor, 2014) which reflect how London is made up of 'historic and present transnational trajectories' (Jones and Jackson, 2014, p. 9). Whilst some white residents continue to assert their perceived exclusive right to the (white) city through 'our area' discourse (Back, 1996), the expression of disgust for the 'other' (Jackson, 2014), or blaming (new) immigrants for social ills (Goodfellow, 2019), these studies pay attention to the formation of new, hybrid ethnicities, urban cultures and attitudes. For example, Back (1996) found in Deptford a more inclusive use of 'our area' discourse, particularly among those who live on estates where social mixing, intercultural dialogue and a sense of shared space is more common. 'Harmony discourse' (p. 111) – Black and white people explicitly expressing alliance with each other, rejecting racism and affirming the multicultural city – suggests that everyday negotiations with difference can shift attitude and sense of place, identity and belonging over time (Back, 1996; Amin, 2002). Of course, some people only shift their xenophobia from one racialised community to another, with some expressing disdain not only for newcomers' wealth but also their race (e.g. Chinese migrants). Racism and xenophobia are persistent social ills.

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[23] According to the 2021 Census, in the borough of Lewisham, where Deptford is located, 48.5% of inhabitants are from minoritised groups (Office for National Statistics, n.d.).

While I have observed racist and xenophobic attitudes in Deptford on multiple occasions external to this research, most of the participants in this study seem to have come to terms with living with difference. Even if cultural differences and place identifications differ and cannot always be reconciled, there is a high degree of egalitarianism and anti-racism among participants, presumably stemming from regular intercultural dialogue (Amin, 2002). The Tidemill Community and its 'radical multiculture' (Back, 2009, p. 205) is once again indicative. This community not only reflects the 'superdiversity' (Vertovec, 2007) of Deptford with members strongly identifying with Deptford's multicultural sense of place, but they also actively resist the persistent imagination of the working-class as white. Participants did use phrases like 'the likes of us' and 'our area', but this was to signal the collective displacement of a multicultural working-class from the inflow of more *affluent* populations – British or foreign. Comments like the one below from a conversation between old-age pensioner friends, one from a white British and one from a racialised background, were common:

> What is happening in Deptford is not for the likes of us. Locals are priced out... These places [new cafés] are only for people in those [luxury] flats, they're not for us.
> (Paul and Jerry in Strasser, 2020, p.129)

The assertion of a collective here is not one based on race or nationhood but on the economy. It is not white people denying minoritised groups the right to the city; it is a culturally mixed group whose commonality is based on disadvantage asserting their moral right 'to stay put' (London Tenants Federation, 2014; Watt, 2021). This also comes across in the story of Marion, who, despite identifying with white working-class history as the essence of Deptford as examined earlier, asserts the multicultural collective of the disadvantaged working-class in the present when speaking about gentrification and austerity. Sitting in the social space of the local library with her multicultural friends (Figure 3.5) who are connected through age, disability and economic disadvantage, she says:

> I'm hoping that the council and developers will remember that us older people will need somewhere too. I mean we're lucky to have this library because where else would we go?
> (Marion in Strasser, 2020, p.92)

This is not only harmony discourse; it is also *harmony behaviour* – expressing alliance with other ethnicities through activities grounded in the everyday. The daily interactions with

other social groups is part of their place ballet, an 'undeclared co-existence' (Back, 2009, p. 216) where intercultural dialogues and the negotiation of difference are part of everyday life (Back, 1996; Amin, 2002; Cresswell, 2004). Being excluded from other places and dominant cultural practices, the shared histories, cultural capital and value practices within their community groups, harmony discourse and behaviour, as well as the safe engagement in dissensus as explained earlier, heightens their sense of belonging and attachment. Their attachment to Deptford and Deptford library is intertwined with *doing* community. It forms their capacity to dwell (Heidegger, 1993 [1971]).

Figure 3.5 Marion with her friends Michael, John and Peter in Deptford Lounge. Photo: Anita Strasser, 2017.

3.5 Place identification and attachment through stories of migration

It was common throughout this research for Black people to assert their understanding of Deptford through colonial history, race and ethnicity. As Michael's extract at the beginning of this chapter has shown, Deptford's colonial past, racial oppression and resistance are essential to his identification with the area. This place identification was most noticeable with Black middle-aged male participants. This is unsurprising considering that it was mostly

(young) Black men (and men from South-East Asia) who were criminalised by the state in the 1970s (and still are) while suffering police brutality (Back, 1996; Keith, 2005). Their identification with and sense of place comes from the underlying power structures of colonialism and imperialism and how this is experienced on a personal and local level (G. Rose, 1995, p. 100). This is often in direct conflict with place attachment based on "traditional" working-class culture, thus constituting conflictual place attachment. This was most clearly articulated in Michael's comment at the beginning of this chapter, with the Battle of Lewisham a turning point for Black people, who, for too long, had been excluded from place through reactionary politics. Michael's memory and experience of anti-racist struggles, hope and recognition is essential to his attachment to Deptford.

Other middle-aged Black men also concentrated on their experiences of racism and territorial conflicts in the 70s and 80s and on finding support in local Black community groups, with a particular focus on music. Bernard, for example, told the story of being beaten close to death by skinheads and how he always left straight after a Millwall football game to avoid attacks. But Bernard's memories also took him back to Moonshot Youth Club (formerly Pagnell Street Centre), run by Sybil Phoenix, a Caribbean woman and community leader, who, like many other Black women, organised youth and community projects to provide support and activities for Black youths. This club also gave birth to Shaka's sound system dances, famous for promoting roots music and a spiritually charged atmosphere, providing an alternative space where Black Londoners could express emotional and cultural support for each other (Steele, 1993; Anim-Addo, 1995; Back, 2017).[24] Hayden argues that identity is not only formed of legal membership to a country but more 'out of a sense of cultural belonging' (Hayden, 1995, p. 8). Bernard regularly attended Moonshot and Shaka's sound system nights and later became a well-known DJ, giving him significant status in the area (full story in Strasser, 2020, pp. 204-207). His sense of place is closely tied to the (Black) cultural landscape of Deptford/New Cross, a history which has not been sufficiently recognised but one which shapes Bernard's identity and place attachment.

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[24] The book *Longest Journey* (Anim-Addo, 1995), the article *Marchers and Steppers* (Back, 2017) and the film *Babylon* (1980) provide great insight into the mood of this period.

Another Black man whose self-identification, social relations and knowledge about the world are based in Deptford/New Cross is Jermaine, whose character and sense of place was shaped by the support he received in his youth from various (Black) community groups. Three places in particular – Moonshot, The Albany and a technical college on Edward Street – all of which inspired young children to get involved in music, dance and acting, are essential to Jermaine's identification with Deptford (see his map of cultural belonging in Figure 3.6; full story in Strasser, 2020, p. 192-193). These places provide(d) support, inscribed him with value and fostered belonging and identity, which has in large part shaped Jermaine's sense of self and his emotional attachment to Deptford.

Figure 3.6 Jermaine's map of cultural belonging in Deptford/New Cross, highlighting all the places that have been important to him in his youth and now.

On one hand, these men's sense of place and identity are shaped by being *othered,* by being excluded from place and from the recognised history of Deptford. On the other hand, their attachment to Deptford is rooted in places of mutual support and respect, where their difference was handled in more respectful ways (G. Rose, 1995, p. 117), where their cultural

capital gave them status and inscribed them with value and recognition (Skeggs, 2004a) and where they built their webs of social relations and sense of community. Through being excluded from place(s), many Black people had to secure their own places and initiatives, which became fundamental to their emotional connection to Deptford. These support groups made it possible for them to dwell and belong.

Safely expressing identity through mutual support structures

Identification with and sense of place among middle-aged Black women in this research was mostly connected to family and the home (residence). Although race, ancestry and stories of migration are essential to their self-definition (Reynolds, 1997, p. 10), when talking about place, family and the social relations cultivated in the home were paramount. In some cases, home meant their shop premises where they spend all day, with their social relations cultivated there. Identification with the home is not only to do with their role in the family but also with providing *A Site of Resistance* (hooks, 1990) – a place where one's identity is celebrated rather than othered, where shared experiences of oppression can be voiced and heard safely and where people find mutual support (ibid.). This is not to say that all homes are safe spaces (as will be discussed in Section 3.6) or that Black women's resistance only takes place in the home or indoors. There are many Black women activists who have taken to the streets and campaigned for change and there is a serious lack of acknowledgment for these women, because being Black and female makes it difficult to be heard in public discourse (Akpan, 2019; Blain, 2020; Brown, 2020; Elliott-Cooper, 2021). Many Black women activists were/are instrumental in grassroots community building[25], with their work focusing on family – resisting racism against their children and addressing the educational gap of Black children (Anim-Addo, 1995, p. 159), and fighting police brutality and institutional racism (Elliott-Cooper, 2021, p. 34-38).

Nevertheless, family, as well as the home, is often a site of resistance, where identity can be expressed freely and safely. All conversations I had with middle-aged Black women, born in or migrated to the UK, in their homes or shop premises, were at some point "interrupted" by other Black people – friends or family – who either telephoned or came, drank, ate, joined

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[25] I also attempted to work with a Somali woman, a known community worker involved in grassroots community activism, but she was too busy to commit and collaboration never happened.

the conversations and left again. Stories of births and deaths, weddings and other gatherings with (Black) friends and family members were frequently narrated. This makes the home a place of providing mutual support and a source for self-identification (hooks, 1990). This is evident in narrations such as the one below:

> People always used to call me and Sonia "Bench an Batty"[26] because we were always together. We are friends with each other's families, our kids are the same age and so are our grandkids. We've done a lot of growing up together. I don't know what I would have done without her. Her living here has made my life much better, otherwise I might have felt lonely and cut off.
>
> (Diann in Strasser, 2020, p.27)

For Vietnamese research participants, family, social networks and their stories of migration, particularly their status as Vietnamese refugees in the 1980s, were crucial to their attachment to Deptford. There was no mention of racism or resistance but rather an appreciation of the support they received and the social networks they built. This in no way claims that racism towards Vietnamese and other Asian people did/does not exist (see Back, 1996; Shukla, 2016; Goodfellow, 2019); merely that racial oppression did not come up in conversations. This may be in large parts because anti-racist movements tend to focus on the Black experience, neglecting the experiences of Asian communities (and other minoritised groups). Class identity was also not explicitly mentioned. Instead, inequality was highlighted: the distinction between them and more affluent newcomers and between past and present opportunities.

Jade, a mother in her 30s, and her brother Jayden, 12 years old, compared growing up in Deptford in the 90s with growing up now. Whereas Jade's strong place attachment comes from her memories of participating in a myriad of government-funded cultural activities for local children (e.g. Indo-Vietnamese Dance Group), providing her with opportunities of place-based and cultural belonging and a space for validation and recognition (more in Chapter 5), Jayden's account is more critical as he knows only of a couple of places where he feels he can participate (full story in Strasser, 2020, pp. 98-103). Comparing adolescenthood with his sister, he is aware of the injustices low-income residents experience due to the current regime of gentrification, leaving few opportunities of cultural participation for youths today.

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[26] This is Jamaican patois to describe two people that have a very close relationship with each other.

Indeed, spending on youth services has been cut by 70% in England and Wales in the last decade (Weale, 2020). As a result, Jayden's account of Deptford is more about lack than opportunity, but unlike the working-class youths in Leaney's research (2020), who do not care about their neglected neighbourhoods, Jayden feels a strong sense of attachment to and identification with Deptford (see Figure 3.7).

Jayden 10 he

In & Deptford it's always sociable and loud. At first I really liked Deptford however now its become worse. Many people now don't know the old Deptford. In the past few years, Deptford was was full of adventure however, now it's just full of buildings that are most of the time not even half-full. For me a massive building place that is now gone is the old tidemill building's garden. Many kids went there including me and we always had loads of fun. As a former student of Tidemill, I was very sad about the destruction. To improve Deptford the lewisham council should listen to the community as many in the community wanted to keep the garden however they destroyed it anyway. In my opinion they should of destroyed the old tidemill building as no one used it and it was very worn out. Even though many negative things has happened there are some positive. I love the community. Coming out into Deptford knowing many people I can always talk to someone. Deptford is my home and I hope it doesn't break apart. The Deptford market is the heart of Deptford and you can always get good quality stuff for free. In the future, I hope Deptford can go back to how it was before.

Figure 3.7 Jayden's account of Deptford, made in March 2019.

It would be interesting to do further research on how youths experience place and the gentrification of their neighbourhoods. Butcher and Dickens' (2016) research, for example, provides useful insight into the ambivalence felt by youths about gentrification and into their ability to reimagine their relationship with their neighbourhood post-restructuring.[27] I can

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[27] Studies have shown that some adults were able to re-identify with modernist housing estates after slum clearance in the 50s and 60s (e.g. Young and Willmott, 2000 [1957]; Back, 1996). This is also evidenced by residents of some Deptford housing estates today, some of whom resist their destruction because they have become attached to their estates. This suggests that also some of those fearful of displacement today might be able to re-identify with their new homes and estates after moving in.

only echo Butcher and Dickens' call for more research on how young people experience gentrification.

3.6 Place as home and dwelling

> Deptford is our home, especially the High Street, and we were desperate to stay. It really would break our hearts if the Waiting Room [café] were to close.   (Alec in Strasser, 2020, p.109)

> Deptford gets into your blood, it's got something about it. I've grown so fond of the place, I don't want to move. It's home.   (Julian in Strasser, 2020, p.76)

> Deptford is where I feel most at home, and how I remember community life when growing up in a small pit village just outside Sheffield.   (Annette in Strasser, 2020, p.105)

In these extracts, participants express their at-homeness in Deptford, their place of dwelling. Place is for many fundamental to their identity, existential security and source of validation. Heidegger said that 'Place is the locale of the truth of Being' (in Harvey, 1993, p. 13), and that the ability to dwell in place provides emotional stability and existential security. Dwelling is not just about being present in place but about existing in and belonging to a place. Dwelling and at-homeness are not necessarily bound to the built environment; they describe an existential state with home used as metaphor (Manzo, 2003, p. 49).

Home as metaphor is often conflated with home as place. However, they differ in that the former transcends the built environment and refers to the ontological nature of humanity and the latter to home as physical space, as residence, shelter or neighbourhood (Manzo, 2014, p. 49). While home as metaphor describes a positive experience, a physical home does not necessarily enable at-homeness or dwelling. As Heidegger implied, a house is not necessarily a home (and a home is not necessarily a house) (Heidegger, 1993 [1971]). However, the conflation of house and home has meant that many conceptualisations of home as place view it as the locus of purely positive experiences, suggesting that home is always a safe and stable place of comfort. It ignores the fact that for many, place and home are oppressive, dangerous and unstable. Home can be a site of power struggles, sexual violence and abuse (particularly for women and children), and full of inhospitable conditions and health hazards (Manzo, 2003; Cresswell, 2004; Relph, 2008 [1976]). For example, in Lewisham, between 2015 and 2019, nearly 7,000 women were referred to domestic violence

services (Cuffe, 2020), and since 2017, there have been over 2,000 households in temporary accommodation (Duvall, 2017; 2018; Firth, 2022), not to mention those living in substandard accommodation.

Nevertheless, in an *ideal* home, where one feels safe and secure, self-identification and identification with place is often realised most vividly. The stories of Black women highlighted above exemplify this, as do the extracts below:

> This is our home… This is where some of our greatest memories happened, where our community is and where we feel a strong sense of belonging. I want to live in this home for the rest of my life.
> (Chris in Strasser, 2020, p.212)

> I'm so happy here. I feel safe! I have never been burgled; nobody ever knocked down my door… I feel safe here because I know all my neighbours… The most important thing is being happy and the place where you live is so important for your happiness. My home, this home, is where my happiness is. Here is where I feel safe, where I feel happy. I want to stay here and die here.
> (Nancy in Strasser, 2020, p.210)

Being able to retreat from the performances of public life which necessitates the negotiation of all kinds of social interactions (Goffman, 1959; 1963), in the private sphere of a happy home people can find emotional relief and be whoever they want to be (Cresswell, 2004, p. 24). In such circumstances, a home allows people to be in control of its *ballet* – its physical appearance, social encounters and cultural activities. Such a home anchors identity and existence (Davidson, 2009a, p. 226). Ornaments, photographs, furniture and other decorations are some of the physical manifestations of identity, relating to many of the stories told in this research. For instance, the Vietnamese ornaments in Quoc Ton Luu's flat (Figure 3.8), the Western-style furniture and the self-made doors and floors speak of his Vietnamese heritage, a culturally hybrid life in Britain and his love for carpentry.

Stories of migration, memories of family life and social interactions are key for my participants, with ornaments and photographs often connected to those stories. Home is also where experiences are shared, (re)told and relived: weddings, births, deaths, funerals, misfortune, racial oppression. As Hayden argues, place and home are the storehouses for people's memories, with the physical and social manifestations of place nurturing these memories (Hayden, 1995, p. 9). This, together with length of stay, home improvements and established habits strengthen attachment to the home. Many of my participants experience

an expanded sense of home within their block, street or neighbourhood, with their social practices extending to engagements with neighbours and other residents: organising funerals, going to school, learning to ride a bike with neighbouring children, using the local hairdressers, helping each other and resolving conflicts. Even if social relations are constantly changing and full of conflict, *doing* community on a regular basis with family, friends, neighbours, familiar strangers, where people feel valued and recognised, forms 'topophilia' (Tuan, 1974) – the affective bond between people and place. Place becomes home.

Figure 3.8 Quoc Ton Luu in his council flat of 40 years, where he lives with his wife and where they brought up 4 children. He made all the floors and doors himself and would like to stay in this flat. Photo: Anita Strasser, 2017.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the 'emotional geographies' (Davidson and Lees, 2010, p. 403) of belonging in Deptford, demonstrating that the affective connection to place not only stems from the more traditional aspects of belonging such as residential longevity, historical rootedness, class culture and commitment to place, but also from dissensus and activism, intercultural dialogue and stories of migration. It has argued that in a superdiverse locality such as Deptford, where demographic diversity inevitably means heterogenous world views,

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place attachment, identification and belonging play out in different, potentially irreconcilable ways. However, this *conflictual place attachment* does not necessarily forestall cross-ethnicity, cross-community and even cross-class solidarity, especially if people are bound by the shared experience of gentrification-induced displacement. These alliances are formed through shared political goals and community activism, dissensus and talking through contentious voices, intercultural dialogues and the recognition and validation of difference. In other words, differences are bridged through 'conflictual consensus' (Mouffe, 2012, p. 11) – accepting that shared political interests can be interpreted differently. Attending to a multiplicity of (partial and incomplete) perspectives through feminist research and political listening has not only added to understandings of how Deptford is experienced as place, but it has also provided a space for recognition, validation and the safe talking through of conflicting voices. This may have contributed to participants' sense of belonging.

This chapter has also argued that those who experience place as home express deep place attachment. For my participants, Deptford and the homes of many are the centres of their existence, providing them with the capacity to dwell. The homes, the items, people and activities within them, their neighbourhoods and the area as a whole with its people, community groups and spaces and their affective atmospheres, where participants' social and cultural capitals have value, trigger reminiscences of personal and collective memories. These memories play an essential part in their identification with place and sense of belonging, as well as in their experiences of validation and recognition. They form the basis for their place attachment and this place attachment forms the basis of the profound existential threat displacement brings with it.

4

The Violence of Un-homing: Articulating the affective dimension of displacement

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter demonstrated how participants of this study are bound by shared principles of place attachment and at-homeness in Deptford but that belonging and identification with place play out in different, potentially irreconcilable ways. Insight into these different interpretations and experiences, particularly the emotional connection between people and place, contributes to understanding 'the phenomenological and affective dimensions of displacement' (Elliott-Cooper *et al.*, 2019). For, if place is closely tied to people's sense of Being-in-the-world (Heidegger, 1993 [1971]), displacement fractures people's connection to place and therefore their sense of self. People lose the capacity to dwell.

This chapter focuses on the lived experience of displacement and how the spatial, cultural and social changes during urban restructuring are experienced on the ground. I argue that urban scholars need to recognise the affective landscapes of displacement – the emotional and psychosocial impacts caused by the violence of 'un-homing' (Atkinson, 2015; Elliott-Cooper *et al.,* 2019). Fullilove's concept of 'root shock', 'the traumatic stress reaction to the loss of all or part of one's emotional ecosystem' (Fullilove, 2014, p. 142) is useful in understanding experiences of displacement and will be applied throughout this chapter (also see Elliott-Cooper *et al.*, 2019; Watt, 2021). However, it is my contention that researcher-authored critical descriptions, even if supported by powerful concepts, interview extracts and illustrative imagery, are somewhat inadequate in fully communicating the affective dimension of displacement. I argue that we need a different language to better articulate 'the structures of feeling' (Williams, 1977) – how the lived experience of displacement infiltrates people's habitus (Bourdieu, 1990) and their sense of Being-in-the-world. In other words, we need additional, more creative forms of representation as they can offer richer understandings of lived experience (O'Neill, Giaquinto and Hasedžić, 2019, p. 101).

This chapter presents the creative-political material produced by, with and for research participants as this alternative and additional means of representation. My participatory arts and research practice with its oppositional politics opened multiple spaces for empathetic and critical dialogue and collective creativity as part of political action, supporting people to communicate their feelings, struggles and experiences and, as such, define social issues from their own perspectives. Participating in collective creativity triggered emotional responses that delved deeper into human consciousness, generating creative outcomes that reflect these emotions. As explained in Chapter 2, the creative materials produced during collaborative political action and reproduced in *Deptford is Changing* (Strasser, 2020) bear the traces of 'collective affect' (Berlant, 2011, p. 231): they make perceptible, alongside written texts, the structures of feeling caused by the violence of un-homing, thus offering a rich source of data for knowledge production. Incorporating this material into sociological analysis as in this chapter and thesis offers richer understandings of the affective dimension of displacement.

4.2 Displacement through estate regeneration: the stigma of being a council estate resident

Figure 4.1 Seph's living room the day before she cleared it out. Photo: Anita Strasser, 2017.

Seph was offered her council flat on Achilles Street in Deptford/New Cross (Figure 4.1) after being displaced from her Hackney council flat during redevelopment in the 1990s. After developing a strong emotional connection to Deptford/New Cross, she purchased the flat under RTB to secure her future in the area. She saw it as a home for life. Now that her estate is being redeveloped, Seph has been displaced again. Despite being offered the right to return, Seph would not be able to afford the new flats on offer. Besides, Seph could not face living with the looming eviction and having to watch her flat being demolished. To retain some control over her life and avoid further displacement, she moved out of London altogether. I interviewed and photographed Seph the day before she started packing up.

By then, my research had joined up with the Achilles Street Stop and Listen campaign, publishing photo-essays of displaced residents on the *Deptford is Changing* blog. Seph wanted to share her experience of displacement to support the campaign, warn other residents and counter the negative rhetoric pertaining to council estates. Taking part in this publicly shared research afforded Seph the opportunity to have her story heard. She described how devalued gentrification made her feel:

> I was offered this place when nobody wanted to live here and I made it my home, but now that Deptford is up 'n' coming I'm not wanted anymore.   (unpublished extract)

She also described how she experienced being perceived as a council estate resident:

> I'm offended the council label these flats rat-infested, damp and unfit to live in. How can you call my flat uninhabitable and ready for demolition? Yes, we have some mice around the block and some flats have issues with damp but so do other blocks and lovely Victorian houses... And I can't bear the label of the 'sink estate', and the stigma that comes with living on a council estate, as if all council estates were crime-ridden and full of problem tenants. The council treat us like we're stupid.   (in Strasser, 2020, p.198)

Seph was *offended, couldn't bear* the label 'sink estate' and *felt the stigma* of living in a council estate. Once seen as a citizen of value, able to become a homeowner, she now felt perceived as a problem and treated like a person of no value. The affect of stigmatisation was displayed on Seph's body (Tyler, 2020), who was visibly upset when she told me her story and showed me her flat which she had furnished with deco bought at Deptford Market. Ironically, the aesthetic of Seph's flat reflects middle-class tastes and the aesthetic of gentrification,

with the image creating a tension between the negative rhetoric around council estates and the lived reality of some residents.

Seph asked me to photograph her and her flat and publish her story on the blog, stating the need to publicly counter the official narrative (full photo-essay in Strasser, 2020, pp. 197-199). This request could also be seen as an attempt at reasserting her respectability as the stigma of being (mis)perceived as worthless together with the imminent loss of her home had ruptured her sense of self and her connection to home and place. It had visibly led to root shock (Fullilove, 2014). The combination of image and text communicates this root shock, with the text expressing the emotional upheaval caused by being un-homed and the images deepening our understanding of her experience by evoking a sense of at-homeness and place attachment. Together, they offer a rich account of the affective landscape of displacement.

The apparent political attack on working-class people, and by extension council estate residents (of various tenancies), poor, homeless and disabled people, helps to physically remove them from inner-city areas. There are different layers to this attack, culminating in what is termed 'social cleansing' (Elmer and Dening, 2016), defined by Lees and White as a 'geographical project made up of processes, practices and policies designed to remove council estate residents from space and place' (Lees and White, 2019, p. 2). One such practice is the devaluation of working-class tastes and lifestyles by refashioning a new place identity with different aesthetic regimes, as discussed in Chapter 1. This goes hand in hand with the language used to describe working-class people: 'chavs', 'benefit scroungers', 'scum', 'the underclass' and other derogatory phrases. They represent poor people in the media as 'revolting subjects' (Tyler, 2013) and imply that poverty is down to people's own deficiencies (Jones, 2011; 2013; Slater, 2018; Tyler and Slater, 2018).

Another practice is the stigmatisation of unwanted populations as a form of governmentality, where governments act for the market and *against* the people (Tyler, 2013, p. 6; original emphasis). Applying the same language as above, stigmatisation is used to gain public consent for austerity measures that further dispossess the already disenfranchised, making it almost impossible for poorer people to participate in public life. Alongside the dismantling of the welfare state, one such mechanism is the reduction of council housing stock, removing

the last safety blanket from homelessness. Since Adonis (2015) reclassified the remaining council housing stock as the new brownfield sites, a term originally used for industrial wastelands that need to be cleaned of (toxic) waste before construction, 'council estate residents have been under threat like never before' (Lees and White, 2019, p. 1). Applying 'brownfield site' to council estates suggests that they need to be cleaned of their (toxic) contents: the neglected buildings and abject residents. Hence the term social cleansing. The use of 'sink estate' (Slater, 2018) to speak about council estates is also telling, not only because it connotes the idea of going down in quality (to sink) or of the need to wash away dirt (in the sink), but because of, as Slater (2018) reminds us, its older meaning: a cesspit, a container which collects sewage waste. As such, council estates are seen as containers for wasteful and dirty inhabitants. This is what Seph expressed in her interview.

Experiencing displacement as devaluation and stigmatisation

The symbolic power of devaluation and stigmatisation results in more than what is referred to as *symbolic* violence (Bourdieu, 2010 [1984]), a misleading term which does not fully account for the psychological impact of symbolic power and the fact that the body is the site of oppression. Being devalued and not recognised as a person of worth can 'imprison someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being' (C. Taylor, 1992, p. 25), with the body eventually enacting this experience (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 69; Skeggs and Loveday, 2012, p. 475). This was expressed by Diann who, at the time of the research, was facing eviction from her home due to estate regeneration. She had once before reached a stage of despondency through the regeneration process, developing agoraphobia, insomnia and depression. After finding renewed hope and joining the campaign to save Tidemill Garden and Reginald House where she had lived for over 30 years, she reached another point of heightened stress levels after watching her friends being evicted from Tidemill Garden and being pushed to the ground. This had such an impact on her, Diann felt compelled to tell how she was feeling:

> The first day I went back to work after that horrid day [Tidemill Garden eviction], I was having panic attacks all the way to the station, and it's been like that every day since. I'm also having nightmares with people coming through my door without warning. I'm not sleeping... It got to a stage where I had to approach a doctor, and she prescribed sleeping pills and I'm seeing her again to deal with the panic attacks and the stress of the situation.   (in Strasser, 2020, pp.51-52)

Diann's experience infiltrated her whole sense of being and was displayed on her body. She *found it difficult to go out*, *go near the garden* and *got stressed* when workers entered her building. She was experiencing *nightmares*, *sleeplessness* and *panic attacks*. In other words, symptoms of root shock. In other narrations, Diann talked about the effects of the impending demolition of one's home while also sharing experiences of belonging, community and friendship. The images taken with Diann's direction, placing herself in and pointing out favourite corners to indicate how her home anchors her identity and existence (Figure 4.2), evoke her at-homeness and sense of dwelling, thus reinforcing the sense of displacement expressed in the text. By being actively involved in the campaign and publishing the stories of displaced people on the blog, this research-based participative arts practice offered Diann the possibility to communicate her traumatic experience through empathetic dialogue for a shared political goal (full photo-essay in Strasser, 2020, pp. 25-29).
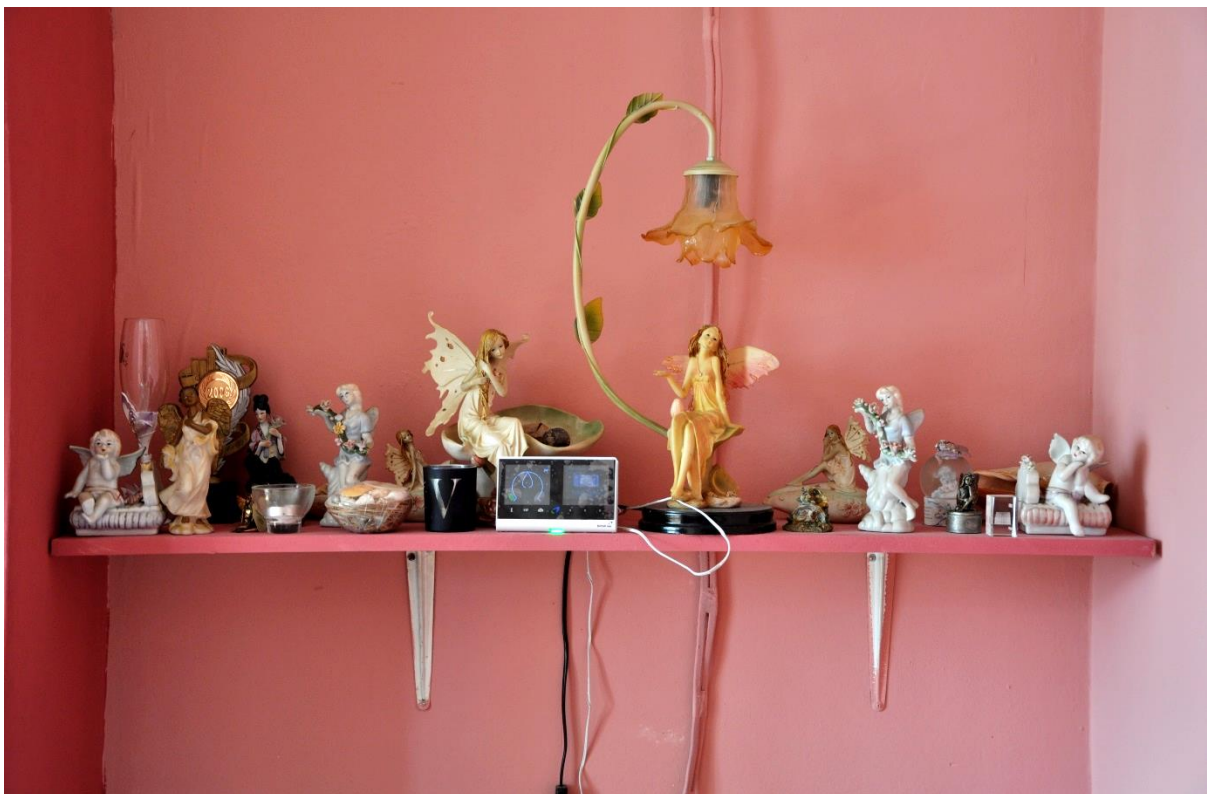

Figure 4.2 Diann's fairy collection – her favourite corner in her flat, giving her strength and stability while facing displacement and stigmatisation. Photo: Anita Strasser, 2018.

Seph and Diann's photo-essays and other research-generated materials, published in *Deptford is Changing* (Strasser, 2020) to provide ample space for a multiplicity of voices,

articulate the structures of feeling caused by gentrification-induced displacement. This collective affect results from being the target of urban restructuring, of facing eviction from a much-loved home and of having one's social, cultural and economic capitals devalued by the structures of power. This is the violence of 'un-homing' (Atkinson, 2015; Elliott-Cooper *et al.,* 2019), a violence that is felt psychologically over a long period of time, with the accumulative effect of anxiety and stress from actual and potential displacement, perceived worthlessness and public stigmatisation lived through the body. It is what Nixon refers to as 'slow violence':

> a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all… a violence that is neither spectacular nor instantaneous, but rather incremental and accreditive.
>
> (Nixon, 2011, p. 2)

The slow violence of un-homing is as much about the politics of economic redistribution and the right to place as it is about cultural recognition – the right to be recognised as a worthy participant in social life (Fraser, 2003). *Mis*recognition or *non*recognition of people in public life is a form of oppression that can cause significant harm. Seph and Diann's examples have shown how the violence of mis- and non-recognition within processes of gentrification lead to feelings of worthlessness, despondency and fear. The intersection of activism, this research and the related publications offered these women and other participants the opportunity to counter this misrecognition by representing them and their experiences in a way they recognise. It legitimised their stories.

The participative arts and research practice also revealed insightful data as to the experiences of misrecognition in children. When eliciting responses to an image of a council estate tower made by a child participating in a photography walk (Figure 4.3), a white middle-class girl asserted that this block was for homeless people and refugees (case study in Chapter 2). She had internalised the discourse of council estates as a place for (racialised) "problem" tenants often used to justify demolition and redevelopment. However, to the Black working-class boy living there and also taking part in this photo-elicitation session, the block signalled home, family and community. His emotional and physical response was telling. He trembled with his whole body, leaning forward and displaying a determined look, telling the girl that her assumptions were false and that he, his family and some friends live in

this block. Stigma clearly 'gets under your skin' (Tyler, 2020, p. 9); the boy could not wait to assert his value and respectability. By providing space for this visual and verbal exchange to take place, enabling children to communicate their perceptions and experiences, the negative impact of misrecognition became evident. The critical dialogue that followed has the potential to change the girl's and other children's perceptions and imbue the boy with confidence having asserted his value and respectability. Publishing the resulting photo-essay (in Strasser, 2020, pp. 158-163) may also change the perception of others.

Figure 4.3 The image of a tower block taken by a Cub on a photography walk in 2018.
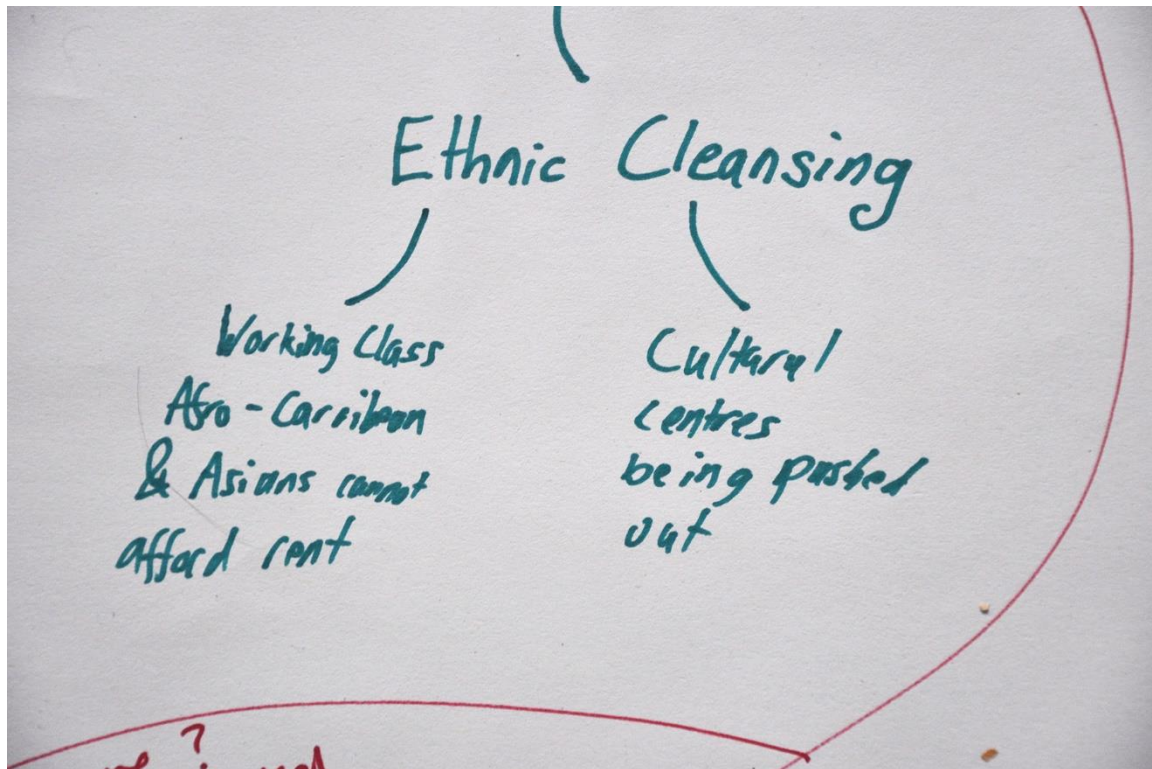
Figure 4.4 Detail of a mapping exercise during a workshop with members of GARA, where participants were asked to note down the negative effects of gentrification. Photo: Anita Strasser, 2019.

In an impromptu workshop with members of the Goldsmiths Anti Racist Action Group (GARA) occupying Deptford Town Hall, GARA referred to gentrification-induced displacement as 'ethnic cleansing' (Figure 4.4). Although adapted from social cleansing, the use of this term in this context is problematic and exaggerated considering its traumatic history. However, the point was to highlight that gentrification tends to take place in deprived multicultural areas, with students suggesting a racist ideology behind current housing policy. It was pointed out that many minoritised communities live on social housing estates either as social tenants, private renters or owners, and that through estate regeneration multicultural working-class areas are being erased from inner-city areas.[28] This assertion is supported in a report by the Institute of Race Relations (Perera, 2019) and in an article by Lees and Hubbard (2021). Although occasionally racialised persons appear in city imaginaries, this is generally as healthy young professionals adhering to middle-class tastes and lifestyles. In reality, nearly half of

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[28] In the borough of Lewisham, ca. 48% of social housing is occupied by minoritised groups. This figure does not include those renting privately and/or owning their homes on estates (see Lewisham Government, 2016).

minoritised groups in the UK are living in poverty (Institute of Race Relations, 2020; Butler, 2020).

This is reminiscent of the racist ideology in housing policy in the 1970s and 80s. However, where racialised groups (and the "undeserving" white working-class) were segregated in depressed inner-city 'improvement areas' (Rex, 1998, p. 9) and mostly excluded from council housing built for the white, "deserving" working-class in leafy suburbs (ibid.), contemporary housing policy is dictated by an inflated housing market funded by transnational money that brings wealthy, mostly white, residents back into the city and forces poor people out of inner-city London. Since a large proportion of poor people and social housing tenants come from minoritised backgrounds, they disproportionately suffer the consequences of gentrification (Lees and Hubbard, 2021).

Lees and Hubbard (2021) argue that gentrification in the UK has had a clear racial dimension but warn that 'we need much better and deeper exploration and theorisation of how race and class interact in processes of gentrification'. Nevertheless, the workshop and hand-written notes enabled an important discussion, recognising the perspectives of students, some of whom have had direct experiences of racial discrimination. The notes are a valuable reminder that 'race is the modality through which class is lived' (Hall *et al*., 1978, p. 394), particularly in areas with long histories of migration and high percentages of racialised communities (and a series of anti-racist struggles) such as in Deptford.

Indeed, the council estate tenants participating in this research facing eviction are predominantly from minoritised backgrounds. This applies to residents and shopkeepers. Many shopkeepers in Deptford and New Cross are from minoritised groups and have had their shops in the area for decades. Specialist shops are often located within or near estates and operate from council properties or other cheap premises. They face demolition as part of regeneration programmes or closure and displacement through inflated rent prices. For example, Muhammad and his family members, who came to the UK from Pakistan in the 1980s, have been operating on Deptford High Street for over 35 years (see Figure 4.5). They do not feel the council takes much interest in them and their future in Deptford:

The council are saying they are improving the area but for whom? The new people coming into the area don't do their shopping in our shops. Business isn't going well in this area and the rents are going up and up… If the rent increases again, I won't be able to continue. There aren't enough incentives from the council to help existing businesses to survive.   (in Strasser, 2020, p.119)

Figure 4.5 Muhammad in his shop on Deptford High Street, underneath an image of relatives also working in the shop, which I had taken almost a decade earlier for a community project. Photo: Anita Strasser, 2019.

Another shopkeeper is Rose, who runs a Caribbean and English Eat In and Take Away food joint, which was under threat of demolition before being taken out of the redevelopment plans. She feels the same:

The regeneration here is terrible, it's just about making more money. They are demolishing small businesses like us who have no chance, who can't afford the prices they are charging. Everything is sold to private people with money. They are not going to want us here.

(in Strasser, 2020, pp.235-236)

Rose is particularly worried about local Black children, some of whom come to her shop regularly without lunch money and whom she willingly feeds for free, knowing the poverty levels of their parents. For many of those children, Rose plays an important role in their existence. Another local shopkeeper who looks out for marginalised people is Bola, who runs

a shipping company on New Cross Road. She is concerned about older and sick people in the area who are stuck at home for lack of public facilities. Knowing there is no public toilet in New Cross, Bola allows them to use the toilet in her shop, enabling some people with incontinence issues to leave their houses (Strasser, 2020, pp. 215-217).

There are many other examples of such acts of kindness which I observed during repeated visits and various forms of engagements. These kind acts remain largely unrecognised in dominant narratives and whilst people do not seek public recognition for their community work, having their shops and services perceived as redundant and earmarked for demolition is an act of violence towards them and the people they are helping. As highlighted in Chapter 3, racialised groups often find support in specialist shops through their webs of community networks. They provide mutual support and are essential to people's sense of identity and existential security. They are places where difference is celebrated and where experiences of discrimination can be shared freely. Like their homes, specialist shops function as social spaces that foster community, belonging and resistance. Eliminating these spaces has thus wider consequences; it dispossesses minoritised groups of their places of belonging, self-identification, support and attachment. It removes opportunities for social justice. Providing a space to tell and publish their stories not only publicly asserted their shops as important social spaces but also revealed critical and alternative perspectives from people largely absent from dominant gentrification narratives.

4.3 Displacement in the age of austerity: emotional upheaval through stories of dispossession

The combined effects of estate renewal programmes and the depletion of council housing stock, new-build gentrification and austerity politics have particularly stark consequences for people with few means. As stated in the thesis introduction, Lewisham and two of its Deptford wards are among the most deprived areas in London and England (Potts, 2008; Davidson, 2009b; Lewisham Council, 2019) with high figures of eviction and homelessness while house prices have increased twofold. As one research participant put it: "Many people are only one pay packet or benefit payment away from ending up on the street". There are multiple stories of dispossession and its psychosocial effects, which were revealed predominantly during creative pre-planned and drop-in workshops at community centres

(see Figure 4.6) and through the political, dialogical and flexible approach to research, which enabled participants to decide on the direction of the workshops and conversations.
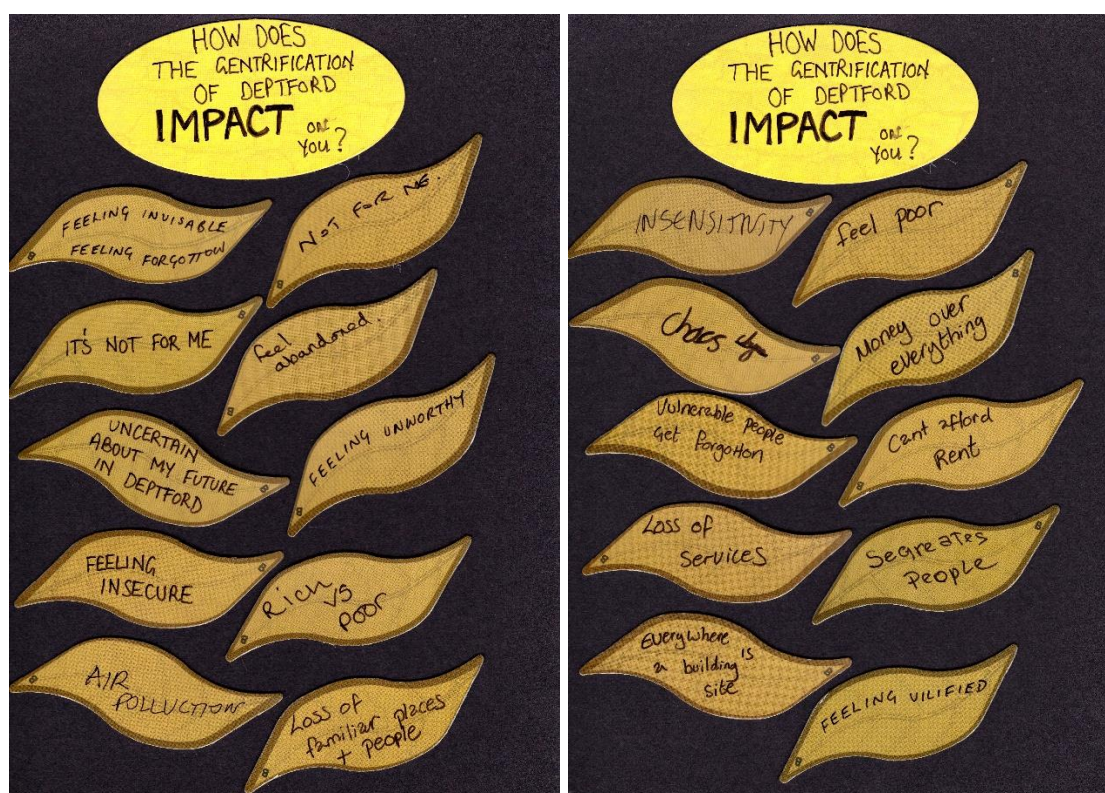

Figure 4.6 Comments left during a drop-in workshop at Pepys Resource Centre in 2018.

A drop-in collage-making workshop at Evelyn Community Store (in Strasser, 2020, pp. 164-170), for example, led to critical conversations and insightful revelations about homeless single mothers coming to the store to obtain heavily discounted food to feed their children. One working mum had slept in a car with an 8-month-old baby as she was too ashamed to register as homeless. Now that she is housed in a substandard council property, she is too afraid to be in the kitchen as the council neglects to replace a volatile central heating boiler. She has become too despondent to chase the council and avoids going into the kitchen with her children. Another mother and baby I met at the store had "lived" on a sofa for three years before they were finally housed in a council property after being subjected to the competitive and anxiety-inducing bidding process. She narrated staying up until midnight on many occasions over the space of three years in the hope of a successful bid followed by the frustration of having failed again to secure a home.

A pre-planned mapping workshop at the 999Club – a charity providing support for homeless people – revealed insights into the effects of dispossession on mental health. Although the workshop was about the regeneration of Deptford, Paul drew a map of his mind to express the mental anguish of his experience of being homeless (see Figure 4.7). Using this map as a basis for critical discussion, Paul offered insight into the emotional upheaval caused by dispossession and displacement. Paul had been homeless for the past 15 years, sleeping in a garage in Camberwell and accessing centres that provide food, activities and washing facilities. Despite his resourcefulness to access support, Paul admitted that being left homeless after serving the country has resulted in suicidal thoughts. He explained, through the drawing, that he has been in and out of depression and suffered many nervous breakdowns. Together with his words, Paul's visualisation of his mind communicates more fully and viscerally the state of his mental health – the constant back-and-forth between calmness and self-possession and feelings of rage and emotional turbulence.

Figure 4.7 Paul's visualisation of his mental health.

The different mechanisms of social cleansing make it harder for dispossessed residents to retain emotional stability. This kind of displacement fractures identification and connection

with place, impacting people's sense of self and their self-esteem. People internalise oppression and develop a mental and bodily disposition, a habitus, which impacts their sense of Being-in-the-world (Heidegger, 1993 [1971]), the way they think, feel and talk of themselves, and how they move through space (Bourdieu, 1990). It becomes part of who they are (Lawler, 2004, p. 112). Despite being born in Deptford, Paul said the local authority has no responsibility to house him due to his prolonged absence through serving in the army. This has left him feeling devalued and worthless. To tend to his mental health and retain some connection to his spiritual home, he comes to Deptford every day to endlessly walk its familiar streets.

Nick, who also attended the workshop, experienced similar issues with mental health. Nick was forced to sleep in a car despite being in full-time work, yet unable to pay the rent. He felt ashamed of being homeless and needing to ask for help. He also struggled with the general perception of homeless people as drug addicts or alcoholics and never as people who have suffered misfortune. He only circled two places on his Deptford map – the Albany and Deptford Lounge – saying these were the only places where he felt comfortable. While the research took place, Nick was rehoused. He said that being able to have his own room again, able to lock the door "is massive!" However, the lasting emotional damage caused by displacement and dispossession is vast. Dalair, a homeless father and workshop participant, says that mental health should be a priority for helping homeless people, stating that he really benefitted from group therapy and physical exercise.

After the discussion, Dalair, instead of mapping the regeneration of Deptford, noted down ideas on how good mental health could be maintained for homeless people (in Strasser, 2020, p. 191). With Paul and Nick giving plenty of signs of approval, Dalair seemed to find recognition and value in being able to offer this advice, ending the workshop on a positive note. The open and flexible approach to research not only helped communicate the structures of feeling of dispossession and displacement in alternative ways but also enabled the transmission of usable information from someone with direct experience (the full photo-essay of the workshop is in Strasser, 2020, pp. 188-193).

Further stories of dispossession

Alongside the loss of truly affordable homes for people on low incomes, the support structures offering advice, financial support and much-needed social networks are being defunded, closed down or restructured, thus further dispossessing already isolated people and leaving them vulnerable to further injustices. This was verified by Maureen Vitler, a board member at Evelyn 190 Centre – a community-based advice centre in Deptford offering assistance and advocacy to people experiencing debt, housing issues, unemployment and welfare cuts. Maureen said that austerity, benefit cuts, lack of social housing and inflated rent prices have increased the number of people falling into rent arrears, facing eviction orders and becoming homeless. Maureen also highlighted an increased use of food banks in the area. Despite growing demand to access help from the 190 Centre, in 2019 Lewisham Council withdrew their funding, threatening the centre's existence. Maureen said:

> Life for poor people is becoming really difficult and if getting help is difficult too, then you can imagine the distress this is causing.   (in Strasser, 2020, p.186)

Other centres were also under threat at the time of the research. Although Evelyn Community Centre had only recently set up the weekly Community Store with council funding to feed Deptford's poor, it was under threat of redevelopment (in Strasser, 2020, pp. 164-170); Pepys Resource Centre, another volunteer-run centre which hosts a befriending club for older people, a local library, English classes for Syrian refugees and other support networks, was under threat of eviction (ibid. pp. 171-175). The night shelter at the 999Club was also facing closure due to lack of funding despite increased demand (ibid. pp. 188-193). DAGE, Deptford Action Group for the Elderly, had all its council funding withdrawn, forcing the centre to cancel most of its annual activities which helped combat social isolation among older people (ibid. pp. 120-126). People are dispossessed of a community infrastructure, a support structure that until then had provided opportunities for social justice.

In Chapter 3 I have described how many local residents generate their own systems of value and find recognition among themselves and within their cultural activities (Skeggs, 2004b). I have examined how the practices of belonging within their community groups contribute to emotional equilibrium and attachment to Deptford – a crucial aspect to their sense of

identity and existential security. Within their social spaces and communities, these people are recognised as valuable members of society. The closure of these spaces and the breaking up of the interconnected webs of organisations and communities has psychosocial impacts. It annuls people's definitions and meanings of place, their versions of "the good life" and their ongoing efforts to compensate for the financial, social and cultural gaps left by austerity politics. It obliterates their opportunities to participate in public life and of being seen, recognised and represented as human beings of worth and value. It restricts their ability to convert their cultural practices into valued resources (Skeggs, 2004a, p. 2). This, together with being read or represented as worthless, or remaining invisible in urban imaginaries, is part of the slow and very real violence of un-homing.

4.4 Loss of place: displacement through the aesthetico-political regime of gentrification

Figure 4.8 Deptford Market Yard. Photo taken by an older participant on a photography walk in 2018.

Deptford Market Yard (DMY) (Figure 4.8) is *the* local symbol of the aesthetico-political regime of gentrification in Deptford. The "luxury" flats (all of which were sold off-plan to a Hong Kong investor; see Chandler, 2014; The Deptford Dame, 2014) at the centre of the development and adjacent to Deptford's largely dilapidated High Street added to the already

existing resentment towards regeneration. This stemmed from other private and luxury developments, which have contributed to inflated property prices in the area. However, the aesthetic regime of DMY with its affective atmosphere created through visuals, sounds, smells and a different demographic is the root cause for 'loss of place' (Davidson, 2009a) and the associated feelings of alienation.

DMY transformed the UK's oldest carriage ramp into a collection of expensive boutique shops. It is adorned with signs and posters with a pseudo-DIY, punk aesthetic and filled with commodities whose purpose is to express taste (Raban, 1974, p. 102): kitsch and retro ornaments, vintage posters, colourfully painted industrial containers converted into plant pots, barrels used as tables, jam jars used as coffee cups and cocktails served in teapots. It is what Jonathan Raban calls 'the Moroccan birdcage syndrome' (ibid.) – the process of decorating or reappropriating an object devoid of its original function and selling it or its contents at a high price as a status-enhancer, such as the empty, white-painted Moroccan birdcage ornament. It is exactly the atmosphere this gentrification aesthetic thrives on: upcycling functional containers of the past to create value for economic gain in the present (Duman, 2018, p. 183). This stylistic entrepreneurism is the ultimate arbiter of middle-class taste or, as Raban (1974, p. 102) says, the people possessed of a special kind of city knowledge. Those without this knowledge are unable to identify with this value attribution, expressing bewilderment at the apparent attraction of such curiosities (Moore, 2009). This is not to say that all existing or working-class residents dislike DMY or indeed that all middle-class people identify with it. In fact, some research participants occasionally consume there. However, there was consensus among participants that DMY has changed place identity and makes them feel out of place.

Michael, who regularly discusses DMY with Marion in their weekly conversations (Chapter 3), expresses this lack of identification with DMY and describes the psychological effect such places can have on working-class people:

> I see the enterprise, the very nice well-planned financial investment in certain areas, like the railway arches [DMY]. Are they technically saying this is for everyone? That type of business, in a brutal and psychological way, keeps people in a financial war because people are asking: 'Where are places for me? Does this investment include me? Am I comfortable here?' It's not good to

have this us and them mentality but the new shops in the area create this because they are, I hate to say it but it's true, not for us. I can't think of anyone I know who'd go there. It's perhaps not people's intentions but these kinds of establishments create a divide, psychologically and mentally. This is a working-class area and I'm wondering what tomorrow's Deptford is… People don't want that much, just something that is theirs and something they can identify with. Identification is really important, and they can't identify with what's out there… There are all the cut-backs for all of us and at the same time all this new stuff for new people.

(in Strasser, 2020, pp.93-94)

With both Michael and Marion suffering the effects of austerity measures, the flashiness of DMY seems to compound their feelings of displacement and dispossession. Not being able to access and identify with "what's out there", suffering "all the cut-backs" while there is "all this new stuff for new people" generates a lack of self-worth and the feeling that their cultural practices are perceived as worthless by developers and those participating in the new cultural exchanges (Skeggs, 2004b; Bourdieu, 2010 [1984]). This was echoed by Chris, a young, Black, university-educated, working-class man from a nearby council estate, whose sense of self is closely tied to Deptford/New Cross:

I didn't buy into the idea of social cleansing at first but having seen what is happening in New Cross and Deptford and noticing how the demographic is changing, and experiencing the threat of displacement myself, I do believe it is social cleansing. You just need to go down to Deptford Flea Market on a Saturday and then cross over to Deptford Market Yard. You can see a barrier there.

(in Strasser, 2020, p.214)

Chris feels that people like him – young Black men from council estates – are not the intended audience for the new spaces of consumption. There is nothing tangible that excludes Chris from DMY – he would be able to afford some of the products on offer and he is a young stylish man who would not stand out appearance-wise. Yet, there is a symbolic barrier: between the classes, between him and the people in the Yard, between his knowledge and others' knowledge of the city, between the atmosphere of the Flea Market and of DMY. He identifies this barrier as social cleansing taking place, as

a sense of subordination, discomfort and unease… while the visible and sensed changes of the physical and social fabric of the neighbourhood and its symbolic order [have] shifted dramatically…   (Atkinson, 2015, p. 382)

Atkinson (2015; own emphasis) refers to this as '*symbolic* displacement' generated from *symbolic* changes. There is no physical barrier between the two markets. It is cultural and

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social change which delegitimises Chris' disposition and preferences through *symbolic* power (Bourdieu, 2010 [1984]). However, the notion of symbolic displacement ignores the phenomenological and affective elements Bourdieu (1990) introduced within the symbolic order. The symbolic violence of being devalued and not recognised as a person of worth can, as pointed out earlier, significantly reduce one's self-esteem, with the body the site of oppression and eventually enacting this experience (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 69; Skeggs and Loveday, 2012, p. 475).

Repeated messages of worthlessness are internalised as self-defeating logic, with people developing a habitus of seeing themselves and acting as worthless (Bourdieu, 1990). The phrase "It's not for us" is indicative of this. So is Chris' choice of vocabulary – "barrier" and "social cleansing" – and the fact he feels comfortable at Deptford Flea Market but avoids walking through DMY. The idea of social cleansing helps him make sense of his emotions, understanding that places like DMY cause intensified devaluation and alienation. Additionally, the arrival of places like DMY in a deprived area are often only the beginning of further development, thus signalling further changes and potential spatial displacement of some existing residents. Indeed, the estate where Chris lives and the nearby shops he uses (Achilles Street Area) will be demolished and replaced with a predominantly private housing estate. As such, DMY represents his future spatial displacement from his home, neighbourhood and community; it is the beginning of Chris being un-homed. DMY signals the end of his promised future in Deptford.

Experiencing displacement through the exploitation of the working-class aesthetic

The lyrics of two songs (Figure 4.9) contributed to this research by Rachel Bennett, a local singer and songwriter, describe how it feels when experienced hardship and deprivation become attractive "edginess" for middle-class desires. They express the emotional hurt when feeling displaced from one's neighbourhood and how the symbolic power and symbolic violence of cultural change can turn into very real, psychological phenomena. The songs articulate the structures of feeling caused by the aesthetic regime of industrial chic.

Rough Side

I seen people shine out a dark place babe
Tin roof over a hole in the ground
So don't slide it over in ma face babe
Hopin' that you'll be found
Your glossy outside might blind some eyes
Unable to penetrate your disguise
But don't illuminate yourself too much babe
It'll be their discovery, your demise

As you fence we sense slightly uncomfortable
Your extra high heels feel a little tight and unstable
You been seen

Chorus

Rubbin' with the rough side
That's a place you cant hide (rushed up on the
low tide… ch 2)
'Xcuse me while we all fall down
Tripped up in the wrong part'a town
Comin' where ya don't belong
You better quit, before ya get hit
Rubbin with the rough side
Rubbin with the rough side

Ya back scratchin; into company babe
I can see you
Weavin' gainst the nap just to impress
I said round here you need identity babe
Nothin' to do with the fibre in your dress
You'd better know if you fabricate real
That's the kinda' shit people can feel
You'll wind up stitched up in a custom made
No exposé – no deal

In the end we avenge your dishonesty
Sink you down outta' town with your vanity
Yeah we're so mean

Chorus

Outro – I said who do you think you are – you're not a
super star … etc …

©Bennett/Cochrane 2004

Somethin' don't feel right

Summer's hot
Sweat the T-shirt off your back
Showin' off your spiritual ta-tooh!
Girls struttin'
Hip in their high heels
Been waitin' on the sun to wear brand new

Hollerin out like a wolf against the sky
Makin' noise so you gotta look as they pass by
Like a fire waitin' to ignite

But somethin' don't feel right
But somethin' don't feel right

Sirens scream
In the neighbor hood
Youth cussin and wont simmer down
Causin' disturbance
An' I know what you thinkin'
But I feel I'm on sacred ground

Bass beats playin' from passin' cars ….. in the night
Restless people gettin' high if they ain't gettin' tight
Like a fire …… waitin' to ignite

An' somethin' don't feel right
An' somethin' don't feel right

See I cut my teeth here
An' this is my home
Became a woman pretty quick
Brought up my child alone
Paid those bills
Survived cold to the bone
Then I gotta watch you
Take up my street
An' call it your own

That don't feel right
That don't feel right
You got no right
You got no right

©Bennett/Brown 2018

Figure 4.9 Lyrics by Rachel Bennett (and others) describing how it feels as a local resident when a poor area is transformed into a space for wealthier populations attracted by its "edginess". To listen to the songs click here (or go to deptfordischanging.wordpress.com and type 'Rachel Bennett' in the search).

The aesthetic of industrial chic is a gentrification regime whereby industrial buildings and structures are transformed into polished post-industrial regeneration such as at DMY. Industrial architecture and heritage sites, municipal housing and community infrastructure, the legacy of radical arts and community activism and the presence of multicultural working-class communities are all celebrated in this kind of aesthetic. Niche businesses selling artisan products in former industrial structures, luxury flats in historical, post-industrial buildings, designated heritage sites, street art, graffiti and artist studios, and successful multicultural entrepreneurs and artists are all utilised to create an affective atmosphere of historicity and

authenticity, generating an appealing balance between urban grit and industrial luxury (Lanyado, 2009; Zukin, 2011; Wainwright, 2018).

The sense of authenticity created within this aesthetic is based on two meanings: the historically old which is taken as a point of origin (e.g. old buildings and structures, an existing multicultural working-class) and the quality of products (e.g. artisan products, locally inspired art). The gap between the historically old and the culturally innovative is exploited in place-making practices to appeal to the middle-classes' sense of historicity and quality lifestyle. It determines how people use and consume the city's spaces and culture (Zukin, 2011, p. xiii). Thus, many are attracted to "authentic" Deptford because they can buy locally-inspired art in former industrial spaces, sip coffee and cocktails under historic railway arches, eat upmarket food in a former job centre while marvelling at "original" (read: vintage) deco, and watch a multicultural working-class going about their daily business. They can enjoy the exciting experience of being in a 'real area' with 'real people' and 'close-knit multi-ethnic communities' (The Deptford Project, no date), of *rubbin' with the rough side* (see song in Figure 4.9) while consuming high-end products in polished historical spaces. In other words, they are consuming authenticity as a product of the experience economy.

However, for many long-term Deptford residents, including the participants of this research, *somethin' don't feel right* (see song in Figure 4.9) about the way Deptford's authenticity has been commodified. In fact, the sanitised version of post-industrial chic adds further insult to injury as their cultural and social capitals, tastes and lifestyle choices are absorbed, making them unwitting agents of urban change. Not only does this gentrification aesthetic deploy the working-class and industrial aesthetic for capital gain, it also depoliticises and exploits local identity to generate space, cultural power and profits for the well-off. It changes place identity by smoothing over contentious histories and enabling middle-class people to live with "exotic" difference and "safe authenticity" while engaging very little with difference (Jackson, 2014; Jackson and Benson, 2014). Hence, many long-term residents experience Deptford's new place identity as "inauthentic". For them, the authenticity of Deptford refers to a time before this recent and overtly commercial shift, an unspecified time when they could relate to the aesthetic and social order of Deptford and which was for many marked by deindustrialisation, deprivation, municipalism and grassroots movements. Although their

sense of authenticity is also problematic as it suggests some kind of origin, purity and nostalgia of Deptford in the past, reverting to the past is, as discussed in Chapter 3, a coping strategy to deal with the constant changes in big cities, which necessitate the constant adapting to new aesthetic and social orders that favour middle-class tastes and are funded by private money (Zukin, 2011). By claiming authenticity, long-time residents are defending their 'right to the city' (Lefebvre, 1996) and 'the right to place and the right to dwell' (Davidson, 2009a, p. 232). They are resisting the forces of displacement, making their claim to authenticity about the struggle against ever greater inequalities and instability. This is what Rachel's songs communicate.

Rachel had written the songs before the project but never recorded or performed them. Faced with a largely middle-class audience these days (see Strasser, 2020, pp. 68-69), perhaps she was aware that commercially-available political songs can become easily consumable authenticity. The risk of commodifying resistance is ever-present, especially when publishing critical artworks (music, images and performances) on popular and/or commercial platforms. This will be discussed further in Chapters 5 and 6. Inviting Rachel to contribute her songs to a context-specific political intervention shared on alternative media, however, motivated her to finish and record the songs. This enabled her to share her feelings and experiences in a way that matched the political intentions of the songs. Music offers a completely different form of representation, able to communicate with the audience on a more emotional level. Thus, the songs and their poignant lyrics communicate Rachel's feelings much deeper than (scholarly) text could.

4.5 The violence of un-homing: the accumulative effect of displacement

In a Lego® workshop, I asked participants to build a model of how they view and experience gentrification. The model in Figure 4.10 is Jacquie's visualisation of the psychological and physical violence of un-homing, followed by her explanation:

> The green leaves in the middle represent my heart and the black slabs represent the various regeneration schemes in the area. Each scheme pierces my heart. This violence of regeneration has an impact on your whole being, your health, your family, your neighbours, the community, your friends... It's massive! (in Strasser, 2020, p.33)
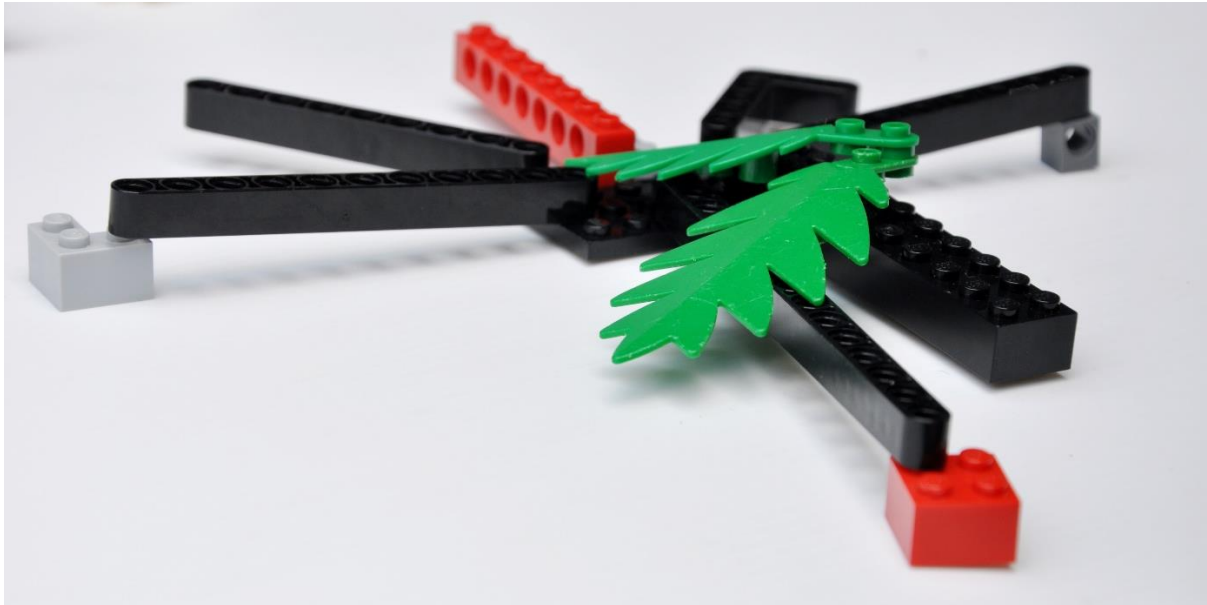
Figure 4.10 Jacquie's model of the violence of un-homing. Photo: Anita Strasser, 2018.

The caring environment of the workshop, which allocated plenty of time for thinking, modelling and sharing, enabled participants to create alternative representations which helped them articulate their traumatic experiences of being un-homed. The model was Jacquie's attempt to visualise her affective response to the processes of gentrification. Her subsequent explanation indicates how she experiences displacement through the body: as a 'piercing of the heart'. It is her representation of the violence of un-homing. It expresses root shock.

As highlighted throughout this chapter, the slow violence of un-homing is a process where the gradual loss of place and home, of affordability and liveability, reduces the sense of at-homeness and puts immense psychological pressure on residents (Atkinson, 2015; Elliott-Cooper *et al.,* 2019; Watt, 2021). It is experienced as a deep existential rupture between people and place, resulting in profound emotional (and bodily) pain (Elliott-Cooper *et al.,* 2019). It results in root shock. Considering that the participants of this study experience strong place attachment to Deptford and therefore a close connection between self-identity and place-identity, it is unsurprising that the rupture caused by restructuring is experienced as violent. Displacement, and therefore un-homing, does not only relate to spatial dislocation but also to other factors such as the loss of place, the loss of vital community and family

networks and support structures, places of recognition and opportunities to participate in public life, as well as the stigmatisation of working-class people, dispossession through the rolling back of the state and other aspects of social cleansing. The violence of un-homing is thus the accumulative effect of all the different layers of displacement, an effect which is made perceptible through Jacquie's model and explanation.

This loss of one's home, one's sense of belonging and Being-in-the-world, one's self-esteem and sense of worth, and control over the direction of one's life, as well as the disregard for one's cultural capital, contribution to society and needs and desires are a threat to one's emotional security and value as a human. People are being uprooted from home and place. The violent experience of root shock was also experienced by Diann and many others, whose homes will be demolished:

> The planned demolition of your home has so many repercussions... Losing my home will turn my life and my kids' life upside down; this is my and their family home. I do try my hardest not to think about it because I just want to go to the council and shout at them. They don't understand how it tears you up!
> (Diann in Strasser, 2020, p.28)

> Demolition is taking away my life, it's killing me and killing my entire family. I lost my mum, I lost my dad, I don't have any other close family. The community here is the family I know, this is the place I know. Being forced to move out from this place is killing my family and my community.
> (unpublished interview)

There are many other stories of the violent psychological and physical effects of un-homing. Ali, a business owner who spent a fortune establishing a business on a site earmarked for demolition without his knowledge, started suffering from so much stress, it resulted in him accumulating debt, in his divorce and in suicidal thoughts (in Strasser, 2020, pp. 227-229). Teyfik, the manager of a "greasy spoon" café, had plans to send his four children to university and take them on holiday. Since the demolition plans, he, his family and staff have been unable to make any plans for the future (ibid. pp. 222-223). For Bernard, who suffers from sickle cell disease and relies on neighbours to fetch him liquid morphine, having to move makes him feel anxious about how he will cope with new neighbours (ibid. pp. 204-207). Bill, a man in his nineties, worries he will lose his independence because he expects to be rehoused in an old-people's home somewhere (ibid. pp. 200-202).

And there is Nancy, an older lady of Turkish-Cypriot descent whose home will also be demolished (ibid. pp. 208-2210). After emigrating to the UK and London, she lived on the Pepys Estate in the 70s, an experience she will never forget. She remembers frequent fights, racial tensions and drug problems. Once she got burgled, where she lost everything, even the contents of her fridge, and one Christmas, she had firecrackers put through her letterbox, which could potentially have burnt down her flat. Being pregnant and feeling very unsafe, she pleaded with the council and was eventually moved into her current flat. Not long after, she gave birth to her son. This was 27 years ago.

This flat became her safe haven, her place of dwelling and existential anchoring. Despite her home having become a site of personal struggle (she is caring for her housebound husband whose illness adds significant strain to her life), it remains her sanctuary and place of security. She takes comfort in knowing her neighbours and tending to her plants which are adorned with "Turkish Evil Eyes"[29] – talismans which, she says, keep bad people out of her home

Figure 4.11 Nancy's balcony plants adorned with the "Turkish" Evil Eye. Photo: Anita Strasser, 2019.

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[29] Evil Eye talismans are common in Turkey, Greece, Cyprus, Algeria and other countries around the Eastern side of the Mediterranean Sea. Nancy is a Turkish Cypriot, so she referred to it as the "Turkish" Evil Eye.

(Figure 4.11). The redevelopment plans and all that comes with it have shaken Nancy to such an extent, she finds it difficult to talk about it. Frequent pauses, body shaking, eyes welling up, fear of the unknown are part of her narrations. She is experiencing root shock: her emotional ecosystem is falling apart (Fullilove, 2014, p. 142). She is wounded to the core; she is grieving for her home as if grieving for a lost family member (Fried, 1966; Sennett and Cobb, 1972). This is the violence of un-homing.

Communicating root shock through radical art

Tidemill Garden was a space where those excluded from urban imaginaries found value, meaning and belonging. Losing this space triggered a huge sense of grief among garden supporters and users. The eviction was experienced as a particularly violent event. Over 120 police and bailiffs arrived at the scene, pulling occupiers out of the garden at dawn, physically pushing protestors away from the fence and destroying the structures built by the community (e.g. treehouse, shed, office, bridge, memory board, etc.). This event and its aftermath left deep emotional wounds.

Diann was allegedly physically assaulted by a bailiff from County Enforcement when trying to walk home on eviction day. The man pushed her, a grandmother with one arm already in a visible sling from a different injury, to the ground for no apparent reason. The police dismissed her case on the grounds that witnesses are her friends, despite the assault being caught on video. Afterwards, Diann suffered anxiety attacks and needed sleep medication and counselling to cope with the trauma. This exposure of the body to power and threatening circumstances led to her increased vulnerability (Butler, Gambetti and Sabsay, 2016), developing a habitus of internalised oppression. She had panic attacks every time she came close to her home and the garden. The feeling of at-homeness in this area had been replaced by trepidation, anxiety and stress (see interview extract in Section 4.2).

Two other supporters experienced nervous breakdowns. This was exacerbated by the subsequent vilification of campaigners and activists by the council (more in Chapter 5), leading to more physical encounters between protestors and police and verbal attacks on protestors by local authorities on social media. Many campaigners felt vilified, increasing the general sense of oppression and with some experiencing burn-out, unable to continue

campaigning. One garden supporter, who had volunteered in her local community centre for over a decade, was allegedly ousted by the council because of participating in the protests. She considered leaving Deptford, up until then her place of dwelling and at-homeness, exhausted by what she felt was a personal attack on her, her community and her political beliefs. She also experienced suicidal thoughts. Her existential connection to Deptford, her sense of being had been fractured, leading to feelings of loss and grief.

The violence of this loss was expressed by many radical (community) artists participating in the Tidemill campaign and this research project. According to O'Neill, Giaquinto and Hasedžić (2019, p. 101), participatory arts and the arts in general have the ability to visualise empirical data, offering the audience access to richer and more complex understandings of lived experience. Due to the wide range of responses and the limited space in this thesis, I again refer the reader to the accompanying book *Deptford is Changing* (Strasser, 2020). As argued in Chapter 2, to provide ample space for such a multiplicity of voices and forms of representation, this research required a different mode of dissemination such as the blog and book. The drawings, photographs, maps and models, as well as poems, lyrics and essays across pages 30-69 in the book, produced collaboratively and credited accordingly, poignantly express how the loss of Tidemill Garden was experienced. They offer further alternative representations of the violence of un-homing, communicating the affective experience of root shock in a way scholarly description alone would not achieve. Integrating these representations into this thesis acknowledges participants as co-creators of research output and co-producers of knowledge, something that is often absent in academic texts.

The article 'Whose Garden? Tidemill and the Hierarchy of Violence' written by local resident Ruby Radburn and accompanied by her and others' photographs (in Strasser, 2020, pp. 54-58) is a comprehensive account of how a resident experienced the public vilification of Tidemill supporters including herself. The article 'Violent and Unforgivable: The Destruction of the Old Tidemill Wildlife Garden in Deptford' by campaigner Andy Worthington (ibid. pp. 59-63) describes the violence of the destruction of this community garden. The concept of root shock is particularly fitting here, with the uprooting of trees and plants literally resulting in the destruction of a local ecosystem as well as people's emotional ecosystems. Sue Lawes' *Tree Demolition Schedule* (ibid. p. 49) also highlights literal root shock for each single tree,

with information about age, lifespan and condition of each tree deepening the sense of uprooting. It also hints at the slow violence of pollution, a dominant issue in Deptford where pollution levels are six times over the World Health Organisation limit of acceptable particulate matter in the air (Citizen Sense, 2017; C. Smith, 2017). Concern for the environment is also echoed by Winston's *Tidemill Hotel* sculpture (in Strasser, 2020, p. 50), indicating that the garden was a much-needed space for the survival of bees, who support the growth of plants, which in turn offer food and shelter for other living creatures.

Figure 4.12 74 white crosses – one for each of the trees destroyed in Tidemill Garden. The crosses were made and installed by Tidemill campaigners on the green opposite after the garden was destroyed in February 2019. The anchor is a symbol of Deptford's maritime history and is frequently used as part of campaigns. The anchor in this image was hand-crafted by a Deptford artist. Photo: Anita Strasser, 2019.

The most vivid representation and enactment of loss, grief and pain is offered by the public installations created by garden supporters after the garden's destruction: 74 white crosses marked with "R.I.P. Tree" opposite Tidemill Garden in two different locations (Figure 4.12 and in Strasser, 2020, pp. 64-67). Fried (1966) and Sennett and Cobb (1972) have argued that feelings of displacement are akin to grieving and the reference to death and the simulation of a war cemetery in these installations are indicative of the emotional (and bodily) wounds inflicted on residents. Garden supporters frequently employ the words "war", "battle" and "violence" when talking about Tidemill and gentrification as a whole. Indeed, one campaigner

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made a film about the Tidemill campaign entitled *The Battle for Deptford* (2022). Comparing the processes of regeneration to a violent warzone gives an indication as to the emotional impact these have.

The installation, and what it represents, is reminiscent of Karen Till's (2012) concept of 'the wounded city', where she argues that 'if individuals and neighbourhoods are wounded through displacement, material devastation, and root shock, so too the city and its inhabitants' (Till, 2012, p. 6). In other words, the ripping apart of people and places has an effect on the city as a whole. Considering that Deptford is only a small microcosm through which to understand urban restructuring in London (and globally), the wounds inflicted on so many residents and neighbourhoods will have consequences for London as a city. As such, the experience of the violence of un-homing expressed in this research speaks to the experiences of many Londoners (and many others across the globe) and the materials created with and by participants of this study articulate collective affect: the shared experience of gentrification-induced displacement.

4.6 Conclusion: Articulating the structures of feeling around displacement

This chapter has examined the lived experience of gentrification-induced displacement: the emotional and psychosocial impact caused by the violence of un-homing. It has exposed the different layers of displacement and argued that displacement is experienced as violence which is more than just symbolic. It has an affective and phenomenological dimension and is lived and experienced through the mind and the physical body. It is also material violence in that people are being dispossessed of material opportunities.

How this violence is lived and experienced in the present – the 'structures of feeling' (Williams, 1977) – was articulated through the narrations of participants and the concepts of 'un-homing' (Atkinson, 2015; Elliott-Cooper *et al.,* 2019) and 'root shock' (Fullilove, 2014). The concepts of 'slow violence' (Nixon, 2011) 'grieving' (Fried, 1966; Sennett and Cobb, 1972) and the 'wounded city' (Till, 2012) have also been useful lenses through which to understand 'the phenomenological and affective dimension of displacement' (Elliott-Cooper *et. al.,* 2019). However, it is the additional creative-political material produced by and with residents

to communicate their experiences of place attachment and displacement which has enabled deeper insight into the emotional landscape of displacement. These materials produced through politically-motivated research and published in the accompanying book, and examined in this chapter and thesis, go beyond researcher-authored critical descriptions. They were made to matter politically and communicate more deeply people's feelings of loss, grief and pain to a wide audience. As this chapter has shown, they offer richer data for more insightful accounts of participants' embodied experiences of displacement.

The material produced by, with and for participants has generated alternative gentrification and displacement narratives which were used to enact a political intervention to make visible and audible their voices and perspectives (discussed in Chapters 5 and 6). For the participants in this study, Deptford as their home (metaphor and place) forms the basis for their capacity to dwell (Chapter 3). With the multiple layers of displacement, these residents have or fear to become cut off from the source of their emotional equilibrium and existential stability. In other words, the eroding of their capacity to dwell in processes of gentrification is the basis for the profound threat to their existential stability. It is the deep structures of loss, grief and pain caused by the violence of un-homing. This research has articulated these structures of feeling through a creative activist sociological imagination and a novel attentiveness to the (creative) voices of research participants.

5

The affective and transformative dimension of community arts and activism

5.1 Introduction

This chapter examines how my participants resist the violence of un-homing through grassroots collective and creative activities. After defining resistance in the local context, this chapter provides an historical overview of creative resistance in Deptford before looking at local dissenting practices today. It discusses the oppositional politics and collective creativity of different community groups, focusing on the affective and transformative dimension of their activities and the multiple contingencies of creative resistance. Being closely involved in local anti-gentrification struggles through an engaged arts and research practice enabled a deeper understanding of the multiplicity of local practices of community development and DIY community arts and activism, past and present.

As highlighted in the thesis introduction and in Chapter 1, there is a rich history of grassroots community development and community arts in Deptford and London. However, there is very little scholarly discussion on how communities navigate complex power structures, develop agency and effect social change through creative resistance, and the affective impact this has. There is also relatively little literature on contemporary anti-gentrification struggles in London that goes beyond describing the pragmatics of activism itself (e.g. Lees and Ferreri, 2016; Watt and Minton, 2016; Lees *et al.,* 2018; Sendra and Fitzpatrick, 2020). This might be because of the urgent need to achieve tangible and material results such as increased numbers of social housing units in new developments and better relocation offers for tenants in a climate where efforts to reverse the gentrification agenda have been largely ineffective. It might also be because research is not generally utilised as an instrument of resistance[30], where it is directly entangled with oppositional tactics, enabling the researcher to witness and experience the affective and transformative qualities of creative resistance.

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[30] Chester Hartman's *Yerba Buena: Land Grab and Community Resistance in San Francisco* (1974) is a rare example of research getting involved in community resistance.

This chapter argues that community arts and activism is not about resisting *any* form of change or overthrowing power structures but about what I call *creative dissent*: working creatively in the cracks of power to make policy respond to people's needs and remedy social injustices. Drawing on literature on resistance (e.g. Pile, 1997; Williams, 2011 [1961]), community activism in Deptford (Steele, 1993; Anim-Addo, 1995) and Skeggs' (2011) work on value struggles, this chapter also argues that participating in creative dissent can both empower people politically and instil a sense of value, membership and solidarity through affection, loyalty and care. This affective quality of active citizenship and cultural democracy helps residents develop *cope-ability*: the ability to cope with living in an unequal world.

5.2 Defining resistance: working in the cracks of power through *creative dissent*

> The main achievement of the Evelyn SRB was that we managed to change the Tenants' Association Representative's perception of young people in the area. We got her to change from saying <u>the</u> young people, which carried the connotations of race and crime, to <u>our</u> young people. This was significant; it was the SRB's biggest achievement.[31]
>
> (Bill, resident involved in Deptford SRB programmes)

> If residents were given suitable alternative homes; if like-for-like really meant that, i.e. if you demolish someone's flat you give them another one, not a half share of one [shared ownership]; if the elderly were given flats with wheelchair access and not coerced off to old people's homes; and if residents were treated fairly and listened to, I don't think I would be so against redevelopment. But the reality is a different story.   (Seph, displaced resident and campaigner)

This research worked with people involved in resisting past and present urban policies. Through critical conversations as in the extracts above it emerged that community resistance in Deptford is not necessarily about wanting to 'abolish the state', as some of the earlier community artists and activists hoped (Kelly, 1984; Jeffers and Moriarty, 2017), or to oppose all forms of urban change – a criticism often directed at those fighting for less harmful regeneration on social media. Rather, community activism, past or present, is to work creatively in the cracks of power, 'to make a difference' (Giddens, 1984, p. 14) by making policy respond to people's needs and remedying social injustices. I term this form of resistance *creative dissent*.

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[31] Single Regeneration Budget was a regeneration fund between 1994 and 2002 to enhance the quality of life in deprived areas.

Resistance is often framed as the dominated trying to overthrow dominating structures of oppressive and monolithic power (e.g. Abu-Lughod, 1990; Pile, 1997). Riots, protests and other public encounters come to mind, as do romanticised accounts of heroes fighting for 'freedom, democracy and humanity' (Pile, 1997, p. 1). This simplistic binary of domination and resistance, of structure and agency, ignores the complex power relations embedded in acts of resistance. Although people in powerful positions dictate the political agenda, power is not inherently "possessed" by a particular social class or institution. Power is exercised through resources, and those with the resources have the power to enact their agendas and legitimise their views while delegitimising other voices and constraining their actions. In Arendtian (1998 [1958]) and Rancièrean (1999) thought, the powerful are those with *logos*, those *authorised* to speak and act.

Given the right material and emotional resources, communities can develop agency and become empowered politically, even if they are largely kept at the margins of power. Through benevolent policies such as SRB and its community development focus, communities can shift a top-down policy to a more bottom-up approach (more in Section 5.3). As such, structures can have enabling dimensions, authorising communities to speak and act to remedy social injustices such as changing the negative perception of Black youths (Bill's quote above). On the other hand, when policies increase social injustices, creating more freedom and space for predominantly wealthier populations while displacing low-income residents as seen in contemporary urban policy, they become constraining and very divisive (Seph's quote above). This can motivate people to adapt structures and policies by acting outside of them, such as establishing a campaign (more in Section 5.4). Agency and structure are thus interdependent forces (Giddens, 1984).

The basis of my participants' resistance is to live in a more equitable world to enable 'parity of participation' (Fraser, 2000) and opportunities for human fulfilment (Alinsky, 1989 [1946]) through fairer wealth redistribution and cultural recognition (Fraser and Honneth, 2003). The radical community (arts) workers I collaborated with such as Bill and Seph are not revolutionaries trying to overthrow the government; they are *creative dissenters* 'who, though [unable to] reverse the trends, keep alternative visions alive' (Williams, 2011 [1961],

p. 396). They subvert political power by enacting alternative narratives in the public sphere to clash with dominant configurations of power. *Creative dissent* is their desire for democracy.

This chapter examines creative dissent in Deptford past and present, zooming in on how communities have navigated complex power structures, developed agency and effected social change. It examines 'structuration' – the relationships between actor(s) and structure(s) (Giddens, 1984), to understand the dynamic between power/domination and resistance. It also examines 'the spatiality of resistance' (Routledge, 1997, p. 68) – *where* resistance happens and *how* it is mobilised through specific space(s) (Pile and Keith, 1997, p. xi; own emphasis). Social relations are imbued with power and meaning and space is 'an ever-shifting social geometry of power and signification' (Massey, 1994, p. 3). Understanding the power dynamics in place provides insight into how and why acts of resistance unfold.

Creative dissent: creativity as political practice

Figure 5.1 Musical protest opposing the destruction of Tidemill Garden. Photo: Anita Strasser, 2018.

Figure 5.1 shows campaigners protesting against the destruction of Tidemill Garden, holding self-made placards, drawings and cut-outs, wearing gas masks, playing music and singing self-composed protest songs. The Tidemill Community is an indicative example of how radical

community artists in Deptford engage in creative dissent to expose flaws in policies. Creativity is fundamental to their resistance as it involves the imagination of different possibilities and the creation of alternative representations. The group use their artistic skills to publicly enact these alternatives to amplify their voices, actions and bodies. This redistribution of visibility and audibility through art generates transformative power and stages political confrontations between dominant and alternative narratives (Arendt, 1998 [1958]; Rancière, 1999). How this research supported creative dissent in Deptford will be discussed in Chapter 6.

Being closely involved with campaigns and other community groups enabled me to witness and experience how collective creativity such as preparing for or engaging in a musical protest fosters empathetic and critical dialogue. It generates a supportive sociality which enhances emotional stability and existential security. Here, creativity is less about art *per se*; it is about the affective and therapeutic element of collective doing and making, enabling people from different backgrounds but with shared political goals to communicate their feelings, struggles, knowledges and experiences. Thus, creative dissent opens spaces where people's speech is heard and recognised, where their social and cultural capital has value. It is a space for building community and social justice.

Finally, collective creativity is not all about street politics. It is often about making life more liveable through participating in community. I have already explained in Chapter 3 how the everyday practices of belonging of various Deptford communities, where people express identity, difference and affection, make people feel valued and recognised. Although this regularly involves conflict and dissensus, the intimate sociality developed through supportive community groups gives people voice, visibility and value, finding recognition and validation from within (Skeggs, 2011, p. 504). This generates 'alternative values about "what/who matters", "what/who counts" and what is just' (ibid., p. 508). This also helps build what I call *cope-ability*: the emotional stability to cope with social inequalities while also developing agency. Here, the benefits of creative dissent are more social and affective than overtly political and economic (Sennett, 2012, p. 273). As Berlant (2011, pp. 226-227) argues, the aesthetic and sensory experiences of collective activities have an affectual impact, creating a

more supportive, intimate sociality that makes life in an unjust world more liveable. This chapter, then, also examines the affective and transformative power of creative dissent.

5.3 An historical overview of creative dissent in Deptford: understanding how resistance has been mobilised in place over time

To understand contemporary creative dissent in Deptford, it is necessary to examine 'the spatiality of resistance' (Routledge, 1997, p. 68) – how resistance has been mobilised through various spaces over time. The thesis introduction has already pointed out that Deptford's histories of post-industrial deprivation, migration and racism have made it a place for repeated government interventions, state-funded and grassroots community arts and activism, anti-fascist movements and Black resistance (Steele, 1993; Anim-Addo, 1995). Examining structuration – the interplay between dissenters and power structures and how community workers have exploited top-down initiatives to open other spaces to express culture and dissent in creative ways (Pile, 1997; Marilyn Taylor, 2003; Tiller, 2013) – advances understandings of how power relations shift and change. It also offers insight into the affective dimension of achieving social changes bottom-up as in the two extracts below:

> The Battle of Lewisham in 1977 was the turning point for the borough of Lewisham. Black people experienced a tremendous hope for tomorrow and that we can be perceived as having a perspective and a voice without fear. It made the government look at all aspects. Where would we be without the Battle of Lewisham? That's why I... went to the unveiling of the plaque in 2017.
> (Michael in Strasser, 2020, pp.92-93)

> I remember the legendary music parties in the Crypt at St Paul's... In the 80s, there were the Irish, the Pakistani, Bangladeshi, West Indies, that's what made it so interesting, and the parties got a lot of us together, we were less segregated.   (Paul in Strasser, 2020, p.190)

These extracts allude to the importance of grassroots movements and community initiatives in fighting for racial justice and cultural belonging (and place attachment as discussed in Chapter 3). They are comments on the affective quality of being recognised as a member of society, able to participate in public life without fear (in some spaces at least). This was particularly important in times when the racist political agenda of some authorised voices (e.g. Enoch Powell's Rivers of Blood speech in 1968; Margaret Thatcher's TV interview in 1978) fuelled the rise of fascism and partly legitimised police brutality towards Black people.

The vulnerability felt by Black people from continual exposure to (state) violence politicised and mobilised them, with many viewing the state as a political enemy and their resistance as fighting against oppression (Anim-Addo, 1995; Elliott-Cooper, 2021). Street politics such as the Battle of Lewisham in 1977 and the Black People's Day of Action in 1981 were organised to resist persisting colonial power (Jacobs, 1996; Rex, 2006 [1973]) and numerous grassroots and state-funded initiatives such as The Crypt in St Paul's were established to improve community relations and provide minoritised people with spaces where they could experience cultural belonging (Steele, 1993; Anim-Addo, 1995). These initiatives, part of a national community development programme launched in 1969, provided the material resources and generated the emotional support needed for political agency and community organising to oppose state-induced inequalities. As such, the creation of strong Black communities addressed their cultural and economic needs while also constituting their resistance (Steele, 1993, p. 217).

This simultaneity of state violence and benevolence, of street politics, grassroots initiatives and state-funded community development is indicative of the complexity of power relations, the enabling and constraining facets of structure and the multiple contingencies of resistance. This duality of structure and agency is also evident in cultural responses such as the reggae sound system culture which emerged at the time. For example, Moonshot, which hosted Shaka's sound system dances where Black Londoners could express dissent and cultural belonging (Chapter 3), was rebuilt with public funds.[32] Lez Henry, former DJ on Shaka Sound Systems, says the sound system culture 'reflected our social, political and cultural sensibilities' (Henry, 2014), helping shape Black cultural politics. The Albany, also rebuilt with public funds, hosted a *Rock Against Racism* concert, uniting Black and white musicians and joining a nation-wide cultural and political movement. As pointed out in Chapter 1, this period led to huge changes in the social and political spheres (Hall and Back, 2009, p. 674-675), giving Black people such as Michael and Paul a sense of hope, recognition and value. It gave them the emotional resource to develop belonging and place attachment.

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[32] Moonshot was rebuilt after successful lobbying and match-funding by local people (moonshotcentre.org).

Building lasting social relations through state-funded and grassroots community arts

There were numerous other grassroots and state-funded community initiatives that met people's social needs, built community relations and promoted social justice bottom-up (Steele, 1993; Anim-Addo, 1995). There was Greenwich Mural Workshop (GMW), funded by the local council, the Arts Council, the GLC and other bodies, which engaged local communities in mural painting in the 70s and 80s, with murals enlivening neglected neighbourhoods, celebrating local identity and history and calling for political action on various issues (Kenna and Lobb, 2019). There was also the run-down Crossfield's (Council) Estate, which was saved from demolition in the 1970s to house students, teachers, musicians, artists and social workers (many from Goldsmiths). This was crucial to the development of the third sector, with community workers living in equally bad conditions as the people they supported. The estate was also instrumental in the unprecedented momentum of the local radical community arts and music scene (Steele, 1993, p. 203). Many Crossfield's residents were/are also involved in fighting for racial equality, fostering cross-class, cross-ethnicity and cross-community bonds which have lasted until the present day.

Many of my research participants live or have lived on the Crossfield's Estate. They have been involved in numerous campaigns and initiatives, particularly the Tidemill Community, and cultural centres such as the Albany. In the 1980s, the Albany Theatre 'became a beacon for ways in which arts centres could both serve their local community and bring in young audiences from the radical political movements' (Tiller, 2013, p. 137). Participants reminisced how this time shaped their belief in cultural and participative democracy and the role of the arts in this process. Fred, a local resident, campaigner and artist explained:

> This DIY approach comes out of a generation of punks which we were part of in the 1980s. We used to run club and pub nights, and we also put on comedy nights and music events. The Albany provided the venue and we provided the audience, so we were helping each other out.
>
> (in Strasser, 2020, p.79)

Another example is Co-oPepys Community Arts Project, established in 1981 with GLC-funds 'to increase community access to the arts to nurture the cultural life of the estate' (Co-oPepys, n.d.). Its programme of arts classes, festivals and events, exhibitions and theatre performances, as well as a free (discontinued) magazine edited, designed and printed by local

residents has worked with a variety of local social groups. Unlike the Albany, which later became reliant on public funding and more vulnerable to instrumentalised arts, losing some of its radical edge (Tiller, 2013, p. 138), Co-oPepys has had to continue without state-funding. It remains a space for community arts with activities decided, planned and acted upon by its members. Jade's memories of participating in Co-oPepys and various other creative initiatives demonstrate the value of participating in community arts:

> We were part of this Indo-Vietnamese Dance group and they had funding, so we actually held shows in the Albany Theatre. And through the Mulan Youth Theatre, funded by the National Lottery, we were able to do shows across London. Then the funding ended abruptly and they had to shut down, which was such a big shame... Being part of that project made us see that you can actually do something with yourself. I was also involved in The Greenwich and Lewisham Young People's Theatre Project – also funded – as a teaching assistant, so I was helping young children learn drama and make puppets and things... And there was a photography project, which was in Co-oPepys on the Pepys Estate, where I learnt how to take pictures and work in a darkroom with different filters. I really enjoyed it.   (in Strasser, 2020, pp.99-100)

When Fred and Jade talk about their experiences of participating in creative activities, it is evident that by engaging in collective creativity, they felt empowered and valorised. Both found recognition and validation from within their respective communities, and their enduring attachment and commitment to Deptford largely stem from this experience of membership, participation and valorisation. Like many other research participants, both continue to volunteer in local community centres and take active roles in neighbourhood activism. All these funded initiatives and cultural activities helped build lasting social relations, cultural belonging and community identity. They exemplify the enabling dimension of power structures (within the constraints of state-induced inequalities), when ordinary people are authorised to speak and act, develop political agency, learn new skills and make a difference.

Making top-down regeneration programmes respond to people's needs

Due to its persistent high index of deprivation, Deptford was the recipient of City Challenge (DCC) (1991-1994) and all rounds of Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) (1994-2002). With local residents keen to see regeneration and to be involved in decision-making processes, many became willing participants in the programmes. Chapter 1 examined how community and participation became more instrumentalised as part of urban policies to achieve small-

scale ameliorative local change. However, communities in Deptford, including Crossfield's residents, did manage to shift a top-down intervention towards a more bottom-up approach, deploying their local knowledge, artistic skills and experiences in community organising to ensure more marginalised people could also benefit from regeneration. Pressure from groups "forced" DCC to establish Pepys Community Forum (PCF), which was instrumental in having local voices incorporated in planning and decision-making, causing significant and lasting waves of change in the area (Steele, 1993, p. 227). PCF helped emancipate some poorer residents through active citizenship and participative democracy, educating people about the processes of regeneration, how to engage in formal politics and take action to meet their needs. PCF remains active, continuing to negotiate with authorities and provide opportunities for local residents to influence redevelopment proposals, particularly in relation to the vast Convoy's Wharf development.[33] Other organisations established during DCC such as Creekside Environmental Agency and Deptford Challenge Trust also remain, the former looking after and educating people about local ecosystems and the latter awarding grants to local arts organisations.

SRB also saw a myriad of community-led initiatives, particularly in later rounds during New Labour's term. For example, the *Get Set for Citizenship* project entailed practical workshops to train local people in the discussions and writing process of the SRB bid (London Development Agency, 2003). Another established initiative was McMillan Educational Herb Garden to educate local children about plants. In later years, the garden became a space for community artists (many of whom live on the Crossfield's Estate and perform at the Albany) who organised art workshops for local children, offered opportunities for collective gardening, and hosted radical poetry readings, dance and music performances (Strasser, 2012). The garden (currently locked) has been an important space where those outside normative value and cultural practices could find recognition. It (re)valorised people and provided a supportive sociality, enabling them to find emotional and cultural support. This supportive sociality mobilised garden users to get involved in other campaigns such as the Tidemill Garden campaign, evidencing how communities of support can develop political agency, build cross-community bonds and engage in collective political action.

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[33] Four people from PCF promised to contribute to this research but nothing materialised despite frequent promises and reminders.

The remaining community infrastructure established through these urban programmes, and the work these community groups continue to do demonstrate that, provided with enough material and emotional resources, communities can govern themselves effectively. The reason these programmes "failed" is, according to Bill Ellson (former Creekside SRB chair and board member of Deptford Challenge Trust), because 'the money was pulled after 5 years, just when things were getting in their stride' (Ellson, 2017). Instead, the short programmes helped ready the area for subsequent gentrification. The improved infrastructure, the established community spaces and the visible presence of artists and creative activity have all helped set the foundation for the current aesthetico-political regime of gentrification.

Nevertheless, it is important to recognise both the lasting value and partnerships of these programmes and that more socially-just investment could potentially make regeneration less divisive. People are generally not against regeneration; they are against the harmful aspects of gentrification. As Ellson says, 'regeneration today is not regeneration in the sense that SRB was regeneration – now regeneration is just property development' (Ellson, 2017). In this period of hope for a better future initiated by New Labour's community policies and funding for the arts, radical artists and grassroots community workers could not have foreseen that their creative dissent would make them somewhat complicit in gentrification. This is perhaps why many today are wary of state-funded artists and collaborations with local authorities. Still, many continue to engage in community activism, trying to achieve "small" victories bottom-up so that local communities might also benefit from contemporary housing policy.

5.4 Creative dissent in Deptford today: understanding the affective and transformative dimension of resisting the violence of un-homing

With neoliberal policies largely dispossessing poorer residents of the resources needed to thrive, creative dissent in Deptford today, while still working towards political alternatives, is also about developing *cope-ability*: the ability to cope with inequalities through care, affection and (re)validation. Participation in community and grassroots collective and creative practices, where people are recognised, seen and listened to helps build self-esteem, hope and belonging. This can result in cope-ability which, in turn, can develop into agency, self-organisation and dissent. In other words, participating in community and neighbourhood

activism, although not without conflict, generates social solidarity, loyalty and place attachment, mitigating some of the emotional upheaval felt from displacement, dispossession and stigmatisation. This differs from instrumentalised and depoliticised community arts which aim to *pacify by participation* and ameliorate the effects of gentrification. Grassroots resistance comes from within communities and a place of opposition. This is especially important in times when power structures are increasingly constraining and totalising, with alternative voices largely silenced and stigmatised. Resistance in this context is not only about political action; it is also about creating an alternative connective affective public sphere that compels others to participate and feel recognised (Berlant, 2011, p. 263). This research offered such a space of affective connection, recognising participants' experiences and cultural practices as valid.

Cope-ability through the work of care, loyalty and affection
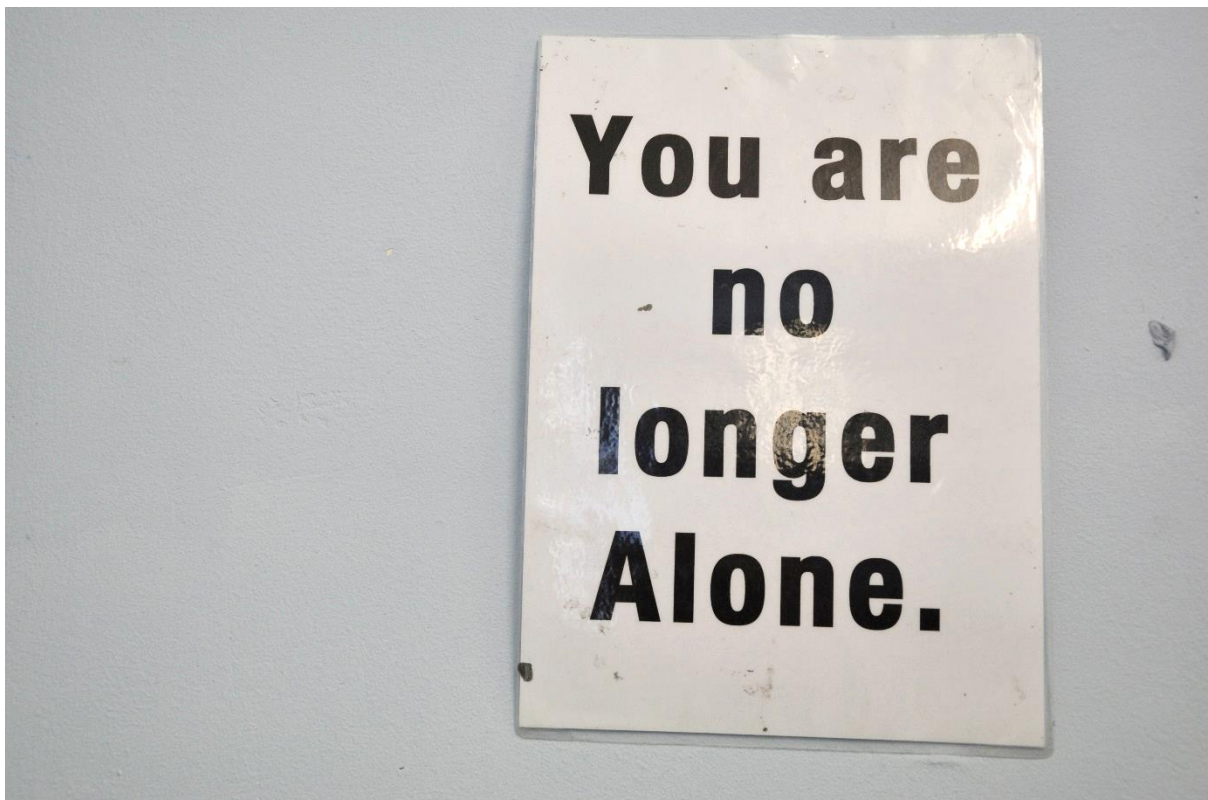
Figure 5.2 Sign on a wall at Armada Community Hall. Photo: Anita Strasser, 2017.

The community centres and groups I worked with were established in times of more community-focused urban policies. Although some centres still pay peppercorn rent on council premises and/or receive public money, most funding has been drastically reduced or

withdrawn despite growing demand, and some centres face closure or redevelopment. This seems to be the basis of 'Big Society' policy under Conservative rule: promoting voluntarism while stripping communities of resources and therefore of the opportunity to participate fully in public life. The centres/groups are run by experienced community development workers and volunteers, mostly women, to meet the social needs of marginalised communities. The volunteers have a wealth of knowledge about the welfare system and local support infrastructure, enabling them to exploit the few resources available to provide for others. As with earlier community development projects, their work has a transformative agenda, but the biggest value of these communities is social and affective (see Figure 5.2).

Their work is based on the ethics of care, 'promoting social justice, community, diversity, civic discourse and caring' (Lincoln, 1995, pp. 277-278). Through care, loyalty and affection, these centres/groups (re)validate those left behind by neoliberal urbanism: pensioners, youths, migrants, single mothers, disabled people, those on low incomes and with mental health issues. They provide them with the emotional support needed to cope. Such intimate publics offer members the promise of being held in a 'second skin' (Walkerdine and Jimenez, 2012, p. 700), thus preserving the (temporary) feeling of being sheltered from neoliberal forces. The resulting cope-ability then often develops into agency and self-organisation, with people filling the gaps left by neoliberalism themselves in creative ways. Although this is what Big Society policies aim to achieve, this is people trying to alleviate their and others' struggles.

Activities in these centres include befriending and mental health support, English classes, arts and crafts, play days for toddlers, ante- or post-natal groups, table-top sales and other activities, which members decide, plan and organise themselves. Spending time with people one identifies with in familiar places, engaging in collective activities and sharing personal stories and place-based histories/mythologies, helps develop a supportive sociality and respectability outside dominant value practices, enacting a sense of equality and therefore a space for social justice. These groups attempt to make the best of precarious circumstances where 'their best chance of value [is] moral and affective not financial' (Skeggs, 2011, p. 504):

> I've been here since it's opened and I'll be here until it closes. This place gets me out, otherwise I'd be sitting at home looking at my four walls.   (Barbara in Strasser, 2020, pp.121-122)

When I first came here, I made hand-made toys for local children and took them to places like Sure Start and 2000 Community Centre. Word got out and I was invited to do workshops during a carnival on Pepys Estate... This changed my life and I got heavily involved with local communities.
(Luciana in Strasser, 2020, p.173)

Creative activities are integral to class and value struggles and the politics of everyday life. Making toys, knitting, crochet, cooking, painting, singing and other activities, or taking part in workshops like for this research, all contribute to combatting social isolation, devaluation and feelings of oppression. Collective creativity acts as a conduit for empathetic and critical dialogue. It has a therapeutic element – an aspect many participants commented on during creative sessions, where I also witnessed the affective atmosphere of collective art-making. This draws in a variety of people excluded from dominant cultural exchanges who have a shared understanding of justice and injustice, fairness and value. Many conversations during this research revolved around how people feel stigmatised, wrongly judged and not treated as equals. They distinguished themselves from the dominant class by attaching respectability to their own values and cultural practices. Being in control of 'what/who matters' and 'what/who counts' (Skeggs, 2011, p. 508) revalorises them and their creative activities, tending to the emotional scars inflicted by stigmatisation and devaluation.

There are still some well-funded local centres such as the Albany and Deptford Lounge, supported by the Arts Council, Lewisham Council and National Lottery. They organise participatory arts projects but many of these are predetermined by the institution, artist or funder to evidence community participation and social impact rather than opening a space for criticism and dissent. This does not necessarily mean they are not beneficial to participants, but they raise questions about purpose and the degree of participation, voice and empowerment. However, there are initiatives which offer opportunities for creative dissent.

For example, the creative arts club for the over-60s Meet Me at the Albany (in short Meet Me) engages older people in a variety of creative activities decided on, planned and organised by club members (Figure 5.3). With the help of the necessary material and emotional resources, activities have resulted in public installations, exhibitions, performances and tea dances, drawing attention to the voices, actions and struggles of older people. This

Figure 5.3 The Meet Me Choir performing in Deptford Lounge. This choir, led by local singer/songwriter Rachel Bennett (Chapter 4), was set up at participants' request. Photo: Anita Strasser, 2018.

shows that cope-ability can turn into dissent, acting as a precursor to transformation. Enabling public visibility of (poor) older and disabled residents in a way participants decide is a political act in times when state-dependent pensioners are largely left behind. It reverses the stigmatisation of lacking in value and worth (Skeggs, 2004b). The generated sense of belonging, recognition and validation is evidenced in the interview extract from Jacquie, who, after years of illness and social isolation, reluctantly joined Meet Me, where she started writing poetry:

> Here you don't get fobbed off as an elderly like in other places, and they bring out your creativity you didn't know you had. Every week I look forward to coming here. This gets me out of the house. Meet Me gives me purpose.   (Jacquie in Strasser, 2020, p.81)

Attending this arts club made Jacquie not only aware of her ability to write poetry but participating in collective creativity gave her purpose and the strength to cope with health issues, isolation and displacement from her neighbourhood. Despite her ill health, Jacquie

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was a keen participant in this research, taking part through interviews, a photography walk and photo-elicitation (case study in Appendix A), which she said she enjoyed very much. She was also planning to write a poem about displacement, but this became unfeasible due to her deteriorating health. Nevertheless, taking part helped Jacquie maintain cope-ability. The affective benefits of collective creativity and the caring environment at Meet Me was evident in the productive atmosphere in the room, with Jacquie and other members expressing great affection for the club, its volunteers and collaborating artists.

Affection was also expressed by many for Deptford Lounge (the local library). The Lounge, designed by star architects and opened in 2012, is part of a multi-million-pound redevelopment plan of Deptford High Street. Although critiqued for its flashy design and complicity in gentrification, this is a contemporary example of a state-funded space, which people can use to meet their economic, cultural and social needs. The Lounge has become a vital meeting place for those excluded from dominant cultural practices, and, thus, inadvertently a space for political democracy. In one of the many conversations I joined for this research, members repeatedly commented on the value of this space:

> I can't stipulate enough how important the Lounge is, it has basically become a focal point for people, it's a community, our social space. The staff allow all kinds of people in – drinkers, the homeless, people with mental health issues, and some come to socialise here – like us. Where else would we go? You can have your hot drink, you're not harassed or sent away, there are comfortable chairs. Many are unemployed or earn just a little; many can't access help anymore. Where do you get comfort from if you can't see anyone for your weekly routine? Where can you have a cup of tea and an outlet to talk about issues? So this space has wider implications.
>
> (Michael in Strasser, 2020, p.94)

Community centres are spaces of social justice, where those devalued in dominant society can find recognition, validation, affection and care through creativity and the politics of everyday life. They help provide the emotional support to make everyday life more liveable and cope with neoliberal housing policies and austerity.[34] Closing these spaces (Chapter 4) means denying access to social justice and with it the opportunities to develop cope-ability and claim the right to place.

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[34] For further reading on how Deptford community centres/groups have cared for its members, see Strasser, 2020, pp. 81-94, 120-126, 131-134, 150-157, 164-175, 184-193.

Building solidarity through creative heritage activism

Among my research participants were heritage campaigners who strongly identify with Deptford's maritime past. For them, the destruction or removal of physical manifestations (monuments, buildings, plaques), attempts to close access to the riverside, and construction on sites of historical importance without sufficient acknowledgment erases their meaning of Deptford and mobilises them to resist. Heritage activism necessitates strategic negotiation of power relations, requiring alliances with powerholders as success often depends on their willingness to co-operate and fund projects. Deptford heritage activists have experience engaging with formal politics from involvement in local activism since the 70s and 80s, possessing the cultural capital to comprehend and object to planning proposals and have them redrafted to incorporate some of their ideas. The inventiveness and creativity of local heritage campaigners have also enticed local residents who do not normally campaign to join events.

For example, the Give Us Back Our Bloomin' Anchor campaign brought together a whole host of residents in a grassroots community arts project which earned the affection of a large segment of the local population due to the creative and joyous imprint it left on the High Street. The campaign was a four-year negotiation with the council to have an anchor reinstated at the top of Deptford High Street, which was removed to stop local drinkers sitting on its plinth. Many residents saw this as an attack on poor people and part of attempts to clean up the High Street for affluent newcomers who can drink in expensive bars. Given to Deptford by Chatham Dockyard in 1988, the anchor became an important landmark (Waywell, 2018), as stressed by a campaigner:

> It's a symbol of Deptford's maritime history, and we need to preserve that history. History is important because it gives you roots; it connects you to the past to help you understand where we are now. (Fred in Strasser, 2020, p.80)

Alongside studying policy documents, attending council meetings and publicising the council's attempts to ward off oppositional demands, campaigners organised a variety of impromptu performances, installations and other interventions. Most activities took place on Deptford High Street on market days, ensuring the involvement of as many people as

possible, gaining visibility and audibility, and exposing the council's (lack of) actions. This helped amplify the group's voices and stage political confrontations with the council's narratives.

Figure 5.4 Campaign logo for the Give us Back Our Bloomin' Anchor campaign. Design by Sue Lawes, 2013.

Using an anchor designed by local designer Sue Lawes as their campaign logo (Figure 5.4), they printed T-shirts, paper bags, stickers and petitions. Other artworks included a cardboard anchor designed by artist Laura X Carlé and free anchor tattoos by local tattoo parlour Kids Love Ink (see Figure 5.5). The "noise" of the campaign could not be ignored. It reached such momentum, the council finally accepted the demands and the anchor was reinstalled in its original location but without a plinth. The celebration consisted of a procession, baptising the anchor with rum and singing a sea shanty written for the occasion.

Figure 5.5 Among many other activities, the campaign consisted of processions, hand-made anchors, paper bags with anchor design used by local shopkeepers and free anchor tattoos at the local tattoo shop. Photos: Deptford Is Forever and Laura X Carlé, 2013.

Taking part in this campaign united many local people in a shared experience that is often talked about, prolonging the collective effervescence experienced during the campaign. The sense of achievement, of having participated in a collective and creative effort to subvert political power, continues to infiltrate narrations of this campaign and local history. The story of the campaign also made it into *Time Out* Magazine (Waywell, 2018), which could arguably aid gentrification by appealing to those looking for "authentic" spaces. As pointed out in Chapter 4, critical artworks and images of community activists engaged in creative resistance can become easily consumable authenticity when published in popular media. The fact that this edition of *Time Out* contained five property advertisements highlights the dilemma of publishing in this kind of media, risking the commodification of resistance. Still, the accompanying text did not sanitise the campaign but, instead, was critical of gentrification and the local council. For campaigners, it was an achievement that their campaign made it into a widely distributed magazine, potentially reaching thousands of readers. This and the

fact that the campaign was generated by local residents and community artists, involved people from different ages and backgrounds and used design, music and performance to get a political message across has made the anchor an even more important local landmark. It has become a symbol of affection, belonging and people power. My article as part of this project was intended to remember and prolong this sense of political achievement (see Strasser, 2020, pp. 77-80).

The preservation of maritime history needs to be viewed with caution, however. When attending a local event in 2019 to celebrate Deptford's maritime history, the 200-strong audience of maritime enthusiasts from all over London consisted mostly of white middle-aged or older men and only a handful of Black people. The failure to mention that the celebrated male maritime heroes were well-known slave traders (e.g. Sir Francis Drake) was courageously pointed out by a Black woman, who was fobbed off with "This event is not about that". Jacobs points out that 'the making of heritage is a political process' and that 'the politics of identity is undeniably also a politics of place' (Jacobs, 1996, p. 35-36). While some historical aspects are sanctioned as national heritage, others are suppressed and seen as a threat to the national imaginary. The sanitised and sanctioned versions of maritime history not only reflect certain values and beliefs, they help define place identity, leading to struggles over identity and power (ibid.).

The recently opened Deptford People's Heritage Museum in Pepys Resource Centre, which works in connection with local campaigns, is trying to resist the erasure of slavery from local history, bringing together the history of the docks with 'the journeys and fights of our ancestors and our issues in Deptford today' (Museum mailout February 2021).[35] Although Black history is also the history of white people, there is a preference for remembering 'powerful white men on horsebacks' (Cresswell, 2004, p. 87). This is also prevalent in current divisive discussions about colonial statues after recent Black Lives Matter protests, highlighting the lingering power of the British Empire.

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[35] There is also the proposed Museum of Slavery and Freedom on the Royal Naval Dockyard in Deptford (mosaf.org.uk).

The affective and transformative quality of creative housing and green space activism

Figure 5.6 Tidemill campaigners staging a political confrontation on the day of the Tidemill Garden eviction. Photo: Anita Strasser, 2018.

Working closely with the Tidemill Community, I directly witnessed and experienced the healing quality of social solidarity and the transformative power of grassroots collective and creative activities, to which this research contributed. The Tidemill Community grew out of a group of artists and activists involved in earlier community activism and was later joined by squatters, environmental activists, housing and heritage campaigners, and residents. Believing in the transformative power of collective activity, they are committed to fighting for social justice for those left vulnerable by neoliberal capitalism. They stage political confrontations by creating alternative narratives to the aesthetico-political regime of gentrification, using radical arts to draw attention to the violence of un-homing. The community centred around Tidemill Garden (now destroyed). Used by community activists, artists, families, homeless people and "marginal characters", the garden became a socially autonomous space that recognised people excluded from dominant cultural practices as valuable members of society, legitimising their cultural practices and nurturing a sense of

belonging. Coming to the garden helped them build cope-ability, which, in turn, developed political agency for creative dissent.

When the council announced plans to regenerate the site, the group launched the Save Reginald! Save Tidemill! campaign together with the Achilles Street Stop and Listen campaign to stop the destruction of the garden and a council block (Tidemill) and the demolition of further council blocks, specialist shops and cheap student accommodation (Achilles) – all to be replaced with mostly private homes. The group initially tried to engage with formal politics, trying to achieve compromises between the council's plans and their visions. The campaign was not against building homes and offered alternative plans for the Tidemill Site, which would build the same number of units, provide more social housing and save the garden and block. At Achilles they argued for infill options. However, communication stalled when the council repeatedly dismissed campaigners' ideas, ignored invitations to meetings and insisted on their pre-established plans, shutting down campaigners' questions at council meetings and accusing them of standing in the way of housing homeless families. According to August (2016) and Watt (2021), these are common tactics to try and shut down any community opposition.

Council representatives also started broadcasting their opposition to the campaigns on social media, vilifying anyone against their plans. Lewisham Council also deselected Labour councillors Joyce Jacca and Alan Hall, both of whom engaged with communities and were supportive of campaign groups. Because of this, they were seen to be working against rather than for the council. Jacca was told in her rejection email that

> The panel recognised that you had skills of engaging with your community, but felt that you failed to understand your position as an elected Labour Councillor working under a political regime with specific requirement [sic] to fulfil, something that is expected of all elected Labour Councillors.
> (in *Lewisham Lately*, 2018)

Cash-strapped Labour councils may be forced to enter 'a Faustian pact with the market' (Wainwright, 2015), selling public land to developers with private homes paying for the building of some "affordable" and social housing, but this does not justify the silencing of critical voices. It also does not justify the lack of expressed sympathy for those losing their

homes and community spaces, the public backing of profit-making schemes, the misleading information on resident letters, landlord offers and planning applications and other common tactics. Alongside fighting for spatial and social equality, campaigners' struggle also became one for value.

The cope-ability developed in the garden community through addressing people's needs, and the heightened inequalities from being vilified by local authorities, incited the Tidemill group to become a political community, a counterpublic, with social solidarity a strategy for healing and resisting (Sennett, 2012, p. 279). The politics of solidarity even mobilised unlikely resistors: previously non-politicised residents of various ages and backgrounds who felt motivated by (potential) spatial displacement and public stigmatisation. It was also motivated by hope and the sense of purpose collective struggle offered. Diann (Chapter 4) said:

> It's given me purpose. I doubt we'll win but I will try my best and at least I won't have left it untried. It's given me hope. Campaigning has rejuvenated me because I'm not resigned now. I feel stronger because there are so many other people fighting with us.   (in Strasser, 2020, p.29)

Tidemill Garden became an alternative public sphere of a counterpublic engaged in community organising and creative dissent. Alongside common strategies of housing activism (e.g. petitions, Freedom of Information requests, judicial reviews), radical community arts became the main medium to amplify their voices. People were encouraged to take ownership of the garden and organise inclusive events, resulting in a regular programme of drawing workshops, film screenings, accordion lessons, bonfire nights and magic puppet theatre performances, as well as campaign activities and political debates (example programme in Figure 5.7). There were also opportunities to participate in the maintenance of the garden. The processes of collective action had a therapeutic effect as it helped people communicate their traumatic experiences of displacement and stigmatisation in a caring and empathetic way. As one campaigner said: "I came for the trees and stayed for the people".

SAVE REGINALD!! SAVE TIDEMILL!!

FREE EVENTS IN THE GARDEN THIS SUMMER!!

(These events are in addition to the garden being open TO ALL every Saturday & Sunday 12–5pm)

SATURDAY 21 JULY 11am–2pm
DEPTFORD IS CHANGING: MODELLING THE IMPACT OF REGENERATION

Take part in a PhD research project workshop that creatively explores the personal impact Deptford's regeneration has on your life. The workshop involves building and sharing models of your experience using Lego!

SUNDAY 22 JULY 2–5pm
DRAWING IN THE GARDEN

There's plenty to draw in the garden! Workshop starts at 3pm. Materials provided. All welcome.

SUNDAY 29 JULY 2–5pm
FIX-UP & MEND

Come and get your electricals, clothes and bikes fixed for free by our menders!

SATURDAY 4 AUGUST 12–8pm
CELEBRATE JAMAICAN INDEPENDENCE!!

Music and bands from **Roger Romantic**, Food, bar and stalls from locals and activities for children. Donations on the door to raise money for Reginald House legal campaign.

SATURDAY 18 AUGUST 12–8pm
MARBLES + GUEST DJS

A free party/fundraiser in support of the campaign. More info on our Facebook page.

SUNDAY 19 AUGUST 11am–5pm
CARNIVAL WORKSHOP

In the run-up to our **Reclaim Deptford! Carnival Procession** on Saturday 1 September, come and make carnival costumes, floats and decorations – **and learn to samba!**

SATURDAY 25 AUGUST 2–8pm
CABARET & SAMBA DAY

Look out for more info on our Facebook page.

SATURDAY 1 SEPTEMBER
Meet at 11am in the garden
RECLAIM DEPTFORD!! CARNIVAL PROCESSION

March through Deptford to **reclaim it as ours!** Meet up and get dressed up before processing to **Party in the Park** in Fordham Park! http://pitpnxd.co.uk

SATURDAY 8 SEPTEMBER 12–8pm
BRAZIL INDEPENDENCE DAY BBQ CELEBRATION

Brazilian food and music + bar with the **Free Lula! Campaign.** More info soon on Facebook.

SATURDAY 22 SEPTEMBER 1–3pm
DEPTFORD DEBATES: COMMUNITY-LED HOUSING

All over London, communities are taking regeneration out of developers' hands and doing it themselves. Can we do it in Deptford?

TIDEMILL WILDLIFE GARDEN, REGINALD RD SE8 4RS

Please 'like' and 'share' our campaign page www.facebook.com/savetidemill

SIGN OUR PETITION: https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/save-tidemill

Figure 5.7 A programme of events in Tidemill Garden in summer 2018. Design by Sue Lawes.

Being involved in political struggle also raised the critical consciousness of previously non-politicised people, acquiring knowledge as to the processes of regeneration, environmental sustainability and legal rights, as well as community organising, DIY activism and other skills associated with political opposition. This was critical education, participation and community arts in the most radical form and led to a sense of empowerment and social transformation from within the group (Freire, 1996 [1970]; Kindon, Pain and Kesby, 2007; Ledwith, 2011; Jeffers and Moriarty, 2017). The garden was a space where the cultural capital of people excluded from dominant society found value and recognition. The practices of belonging, the supportive connections the community offered and the effervescence from collective activities resulted in the necessary emotional support to develop political agency and fight for an alternative future. This group became *the* local force of political opposition and this project contributed to making this opposition heard and seen (more on this in Chapter 6).

The campaigns involved a significant amount of street politics and radical arts, staging public protests, installations and performances using music, singing, theatre and dance to express political opposition. Musicians wrote and performed protest songs; artists created political poems, drawings, designs, paintings and films; campaigners made political banners, leaflets, badges and information sheets (see Strasser, 2020, pp. 10-67). The creative material which articulates how participants experience the violence of un-homing (Chapter 4) was regularly taken to the streets, documented and distributed, thus amplifying campaigners' voices and experiences. It was noise which was difficult to ignore.

For example, local musician and performance artist David Aylward performed *Hands Off* (Figure 5.8 and Strasser, 2020, p. 48) – a silent barefooted protest through Deptford, leaving a trail of red footprints leading to Tidemill Garden, where he covered the entrance with red handprints. The haunting performance through the busy market attracted attention from many shoppers and triggered critical conversations on the street. David says non-verbal communication is the best way for him to express his feelings. Berlant argues that performative silence points to an overwhelmed body politic, of politics seen as so corrupted and hopeless as to defy optimism about political speech. The noise of silence creates a different "noise": of 'a viscerally connective affective atmosphere'… to indicate… a potential social world now lived as collective affect, or a revitalised political one' (Berlant, 2011, p.

231). The performance thus enacted the structures of feeling caused by the violence of un-homing, and the documentary images which David asked me to make continued this enactment through their distribution.

Figure 5.8 David Aylward's silent protest *Hands Off* on Deptford High Street. Photos: Anita Strasser, 2018.

The group's radical politics, creativity and inventiveness reached its height during the occupation of the garden (Figure 5.9) – a response to Lewisham Council serving a possession order. Campaigners felt the only way to undermine political power and have their views heard was occupying the garden. By then, the Tidemill campaign had managed to put so much pressure on the council, the planning proposal now contained a much higher percentage of social homes (56% instead of 11%) and residents were receiving better offers (e.g. choice of block, more relocation money). The campaign was never credited; instead, the council re-established their authority by claiming the social justice agenda as theirs.

Still, the achievements (they also won deferment of the possession order) and the fact that the occupation attracted sympathy and support from local and national news outlets including the BBC, Sky News and *Time Out* (more on this in Chapter 6), strengthened their hope, solidarity and political empowerment, mobilising activists and residents to continue resisting council power. Again, it could be argued that imagery depicting artists and activists trying to save a community garden is exactly the kind of authentic imagery gentrification relies on. However, the fact that reports had political intentions, clearly stating the

campaign's aims and representing authorities as oppressive, was a welcome antidote to usually sanitised reports. In fact, the articles enticed people from other areas to come to Deptford to show solidarity.

Figure 5.9 Self-made banner at Tidemill Garden signalling its occupation. Photo: Anita Strasser, 2018.

Campaigners became more inventive the more the council tried to suppress their voices. By then, they were working wholly outside formal politics. They built shelters, privies, a kitchen unit and campaign office using recycled wood and found building materials. They tapped into the electricity of a neighbouring block and water was obtained from a tap near another building. The occupation gave shelter and food to homeless people and created opportunities of belonging and participation for "marginal characters" and anyone interested in participating.

This did not pass without conflict. There were tensions regarding some homeless men who were seen to behave in a manner destructive to the campaign. The difficult decision was made to disinvite those who interfered with the running of the occupation and campaign. They were not shunned, however; after having their exclusion explained, they were

supported in other ways (i.e. shelter elsewhere, food and emotional support). There was not always agreement on decisions, but generally, discussions were constructive and did not seem to sever a sense of community bar isolated examples. As explained in Chapter 3, conflict is part of democratic life, and being able to safely engage in dissensus can make people feel recognised and validated, thus strengthening belonging and cope-ability. The occupation was an example of the 'agonistic model of democracy' (Mouffe, 2012, p. 7), where conflict generally turned into 'conflictual consensus' (p. 11) by talking through contentious voices.

Figure 5.10 Manuela Benini's *Red Dress Performance* during the Tidemill eviction. Photo: Anita Strasser, 2018.

Even on the day of the eviction, when exposed to the violence of police and bailiffs, protestors sang, danced and performed to generate the emotional strength to resist and help each other cope with the trauma. Manuela Benini's *Red Dress Performance* is an example of this (Figure 5.10), with dance providing her with the emotional strength to resist and expose her unprotected body to officers at extremely close proximity. The deafening noise of silence, of a performance symbolising collective and connective affect during a moment when political speech had been silenced, momentarily unsettled bailiffs, creating an affective

atmosphere of hope for resistors and fostering renewed strength to continue fighting. This day was testament to how activists in Deptford use radical arts as a medium to create emotional support and political agency to fight against state power.

Responding to increased oppression

The political agency of campaigners became severely restricted after the eviction, when council representatives mobilised themselves to silence the voices of this community. Councillors used their resources to authorise their political agenda by placing round-the-clock security around the garden and vilifying garden supporters and anyone against the redevelopment proposals on social media and through powerful commentators in the media (e.g. right-wing journalist Dave Hill, 2019). It is worth noting that the council argued it did not have the £50,000 to redraw the plans but spent £1,400,000 on the eviction and securitisation of the garden. They delegitimised campaigners' voices by turning them into objects of disgust (Lawler, 2004; Tyler, 2013), pathologising them as having 'no value, the wrong culture and defective psychology' (Skeggs and Loveday, 2012, p. 487) (see Strasser, 2020, pp. 54-63 for comments by councillors).

The disgust for garden supporters was visibly expressed by then local cabinet member for housing Paul Bell, who justified the garden's destruction because "it's not exactly Kew Gardens or the Hanging Gardens of Babylon" (BBC video now unavailable). Bell's public devaluation of Tidemill Garden and expression of disgust became *the* local signifier for the oppression felt by garden supporters. The increasingly totalising power and intensified stigmatisation of garden supporters heightened many people's vulnerability and temporarily diminished their political agency and cope-ability. Council representatives came to symbolise political enemies and oppressive power, and many withdrew from campaigning. Campaigners had burnt out physically and emotionally (Chapter 4). Only a core group continued their dissent from a protest camp next to Tidemill Garden and from around the Achilles Street Estate, where a significant increase in social homes had also been achieved alongside better relocation offers and the protection of a substantial amount of green space and a street with specialist shops. Again, the group were never credited with those improvements.

Oppression continued when Lewisham Council commissioned Studio Raw, a local design studio known for working with developers and councils to prepare run-down areas for regeneration, using the arts as a tool to offset gentrification. Over tea and biscuits in a formerly defunded community space on Achilles Street, which Studio Raw had decorated using a DIY design aesthetic, and by imitating the methodology of community engagement and the language of participation, they engaged Achilles Street residents in a "CONsultation" (as spelled by campaigners) to vote yes or no to demolition. As the council's vision was presented as the only viable option (demolition and redevelopment), with a no vote meaning no action at all, this CONsultation was, in effect, to convince residents to vote in favour of estate demolition.[36] As one Achilles campaigners said in a meeting I attended:

> Lewisham [Council] knocked on the doors of all 87 residents... 28 residents opened their doors and responded to some vague questions about the 'redevelopment proposals' [...] The figure in the tenants hall [Figure 5.11] is deliberately misleading and raises questions of trust, in a Council and a PR company employed on their behalf, who seem desperate to promote the demolition of our homes and local community.   (in Berry, 2022, p. 14)

Figure 5.11 Studio Raw highlighting its success in the tenants' hall on Achilles Street. Photo: Achilles Street Campaign, 2019.

This instrumentalisation of art and design, also known as artwashing, has become increasingly common in regeneration to gloss over negative effects such as dispossession and displacement (Pritchard, 2017) and persuade residents to vote yes to demolition (Berry, 2022). At the same time, oppositional voices are silenced where possible, such as the

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[36] This cost the council another £50,000 (from a Freedom of Information request).

immediate removal of posters by the Achilles Street campaign group proposing alternative options to demolition (Berry, 2022, p. 14). The fact that artwashing often misappropriates the practices of radical community arts is another act of (state) violence towards those fighting for social justice. The emotional trauma artwashing can generate was evident when a group of unsuspecting middle-class artists were commissioned by the council to adorn the hoardings around Tidemill Garden after drawings made by the Tidemill Community to mourn the loss of the trees had been removed (Figure 5.12). This use of council power was felt so strongly, it reinvigorated political agency within the community, who then started an emotional social media campaign to stop the artists from accepting this commission. The artists withdrew, making this another victory of people power.[37]

Figure 5.12 Drawings (and photos) made by Tidemill campaigners in 2020 to commemorate the loss of the garden on the first anniversary of its destruction.

The Tidemill example has demonstrated how space is 'an ever-shifting social geometry of power and signification' (Massey, 1994, p. 3). On one hand, it has shown how communities are kept on the margins of power, with agency restricted by overarching power structures and those authorised to speak. Alternative voices, when becoming "too emancipated", can be oppressed and temporarily silenced. On the other hand, the example has shown how sustained amplification of alternative voices in the public sphere can shift power relations and "force" authorities to respond, resulting in "small" victories such as improvements to proposed developments and negative publicity for the developer. More importantly,

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[37] The Tidemill group had previously also managed to get a tree-felling company to withdraw their contract with Lewisham Council. Having been made aware how contested this space was, the company felt it unethical to fell the Tidemill Garden trees. Lewisham Council had to hire another company.

however, the Tidemill group have demonstrated how collective resistance can strengthen social solidarity, belonging and political agency among participants, affective consequences which continue to help people cope with the violence of un-homing. Although the garden is gone, the community continues to provide material and emotional support and offers spaces of social justice, care and collective creativity.[38]

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that community arts and activism in Deptford is not intended to overthrow power structures and prevent urban change. Instead, it is about *creative dissent* to make policy respond to people's needs and remedy the uneven aspects of change. It is also about developing *cope-ability*: the ability to cope with living in an unjust world. Creativity is fundamental to local practices of resistance, with the affective and therapeutic element of collective art-making enabling people to communicate their feelings, struggles, knowledges and experiences. Creative dissent helps people speak and for their speech to be heard and recognised. It thus creates a socially-democratic space where people's social and cultural capitals have value.

By examining the processes at the interface between actor and structure, this chapter has also shown how political structures can be enabling when the necessary material and emotional resources are available through benevolent policies such as the earlier community development programmes, DCC and SRB. The way communities made these programmes respond to their needs indicates that communities can govern themselves and that urban change could be much less divisive. On the other hand, the chapter has highlighted the constraining aspect of power structures, with those in power able to withdraw resources and opportunities for social justice. In the current regime of state-led gentrification, with public land becoming private enclaves from which dissenting voices are excluded, possibilities for staging political confrontations and achieving transformation have increasingly been restricted, limiting possibilities to hear alternative visions. Exercising agency is never the

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[38] After the destruction of the garden and eviction from the protest camp, members opened a social centre in squatted premises on Deptford High Street, providing opportunities for participation there. They also set up a mutual aid project in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, feeding over 70 local families.

same as exercising power (Watt, 2021), and achieving substantial political change is difficult when not authorised to speak and act.

Nevertheless, Deptford community groups have continued to resist top-down interventions and social inequalities. Creative dissent by these groups has modified power relations, achieved "small" victories, and benefitted various people. Above all, they have made significant differences on emotional levels. Community groups have created spaces of affection, solidarity and care, offering opportunities for social justice and belonging and helping people develop cope-ability. The affective and transformative qualities of grassroots collective and creative activities and the everyday practices of belonging have also helped strengthen participants' sense of value. In sum, the intimate sociality of joint activities and their positive emotional impact have helped participants cope with the violence of un-homing.

6

Bridging Academia, Arts and Activism: Supporting housing activism through gentrification and displacement research

6.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the affordances of a study underpinned by a creative activist sociological imagination. It examines how this research got actively involved in fighting for social justice, with the research methodology and output contributing to local resistance against the violence of un-homing in Deptford. This project was a political intervention, aimed at disrupting the sensible – 'the system of self-evident facts of sense perception' (Rancière, 2004, p. 7), distributed by those with logos. I argue that research which claims a radical social justice agenda needs to go beyond critical description and informing policy, and actively participate in changing the world at ground level. Activist research entails not only the generation of alternative narratives, representations and knowledges, as Chapters 3, 4 and 5 have shown, but also their public amplification through different modes of dissemination such as blogging, social media posts and publishing a book. This *enacts* alternative realities and stages political confrontations in the public sphere.

In Chapter 2 I introduced a research project with an oppositional politics. Striving for political and optimum participation, I outlined a methodology informed by participatory action research (PAR), feminist epistemology and radical community arts, opening spaces for cultural democracy, critical pedagogy and knowledge exchange. This approach highlighted the importance of socially and politically engaged documentary photography and the publication culture of (photo)journalism in activist research. With emphasis on a practice informed by ethics, politics and aesthetics, this research returned to the radical tradition of participative practice as in PAR (Reason and Bradbury, 2001; Pain and Francis, 2003; Kindon, Pain and Kesby, 2007; Miller *et al*., 2012) and community arts (Braden, 1983; Kelly, 1984; Jeffers and Moriarty, 2017; Stacey, 2020), arguing that political participation has the capacity to be transformative.

This chapter explores how the methodology of this research repoliticised and democratised participation, intervening in the common instrumentalisation of participation in regeneration programmes and generating alternative aesthetico-political narratives of gentrification. It examines how the public platforming of these narratives on various media amplified and made sensible the voices, bodies and perspectives of multiple participants, making them matter politically. This chapter also offers insight into the affective qualities of participating and researching politically, examining how actively involved academic research can change power relations, build social solidarity and valorise participants, making them feel recognised as humans of value and worth.

6.2 Repoliticising participation: opening spaces for social justice

Figure 6.1 Older residents participating in a self-devised photography walk after having shared their views during interviews. The walk was followed by a photo-elicitation session. The case study for this can be found in Appendix B and the photo-essay in Strasser (2020, pp. 81-88). Photo: Anita Strasser, 2018.

Participation in this project was about the inclusion of as many people as possible to give logos to *their* stories of place, *their* perspectives on gentrification and *their* experiences of

displacement. The project strove for *optimum* participation, politicising and democratising participation to enact a political intervention. This kind of participation offers an alternative to the schema forwarded by Arnstein (1969), where high citizen control equals a democratic process. As argued in Chapter 2, participatory arts and research practices necessitate the constant (re)negotiation of researcher-participant relationships and deliberation of choices and alternatives. Genuine political and democratic participation cannot be prescriptive and dictated by ethical precepts. A democratic research process responds to what the context demands (Kester, 2004; De Bryne and Gielen, 2011; Bishop, 2012; Bax, Gielen and Ieven, 2015) and enables participants to decide on their own level and type of participation (Gatenby and Humphries, 2000; Cornwall, 2008; Mouffe, 2012).

In this research, some participants wanted to take part in different kinds of art workshops and produce creative output, others wanted to be interviewed and photographed. Some wanted to contribute individual artworks, others wanted their activities, communities and campaigns documented. Many took part in a variety of ways (see Figure 6.1). What all participants had in common was that they participated to counter the gentrification narratives distributed by councils, developers and others driving gentrification. They wanted to tell their own stories and have them widely and publicly distributed. This made participation political. It was an act of resistance against exclusion, dispossession and displacement (also see Hartman, 1974; Watt, 2016; Lees *et al.*, 2018). It was also an act of resistance against the instrumentalisation of participation in arts projects and community consultations that serve the gentrification agenda as explained in Chapter 1. Participation in this project returned to its oppositional origins (Freire, 1996 [1970]); Kelly, 1984; Kindon, Pain and Kesby, 2007; Jeffers and Moriarty, 2017), making clear from the outset the project's activist and action-oriented nature, seeking to distribute alternative narratives which enact the voices of those displaced by the current gentrification regime.

The peace sculpture in Figure 6.2 is an example of optimising participation. The sculpture was "Fitzy's" gift to Tidemill Garden, which offered him tranquillity after serving as a soldier. He made it independently and placed it and other sculptures in the garden as part of his appreciation of the space. Although his sculptures had political intentions, they were only

Figure 6.2 Peace Sculpture made by "Fitzy" and placed in Tidemill Garden. Photo: Anita Strasser, 2018.

visible to those looking around the garden. When I asked whether he wanted the installation photographed and included in this research project and if he would like to write a comment about his sculptures to publish it alongside his works, he immediately agreed, seemingly pleased his installation was receiving attention and was perceived as worthy of being published. This is not deep participation in the Arnsteinian sense. However, because Fitzpatrick had full artistic autonomy, making the works out of his own directive to make a statement, deciding on aesthetics, political message and location, there is a depth to this kind of participation.

As the sculptures shared the political intention of the research – to express the affective experiences of displacement – it made sense to include it. This made his participation, or inclusion, also political. Inviting a commentary enabled him to explain his installation:

> As an artist/war veteran, I have spent many a time in Tidemill garden finding peace, airspace, calmness and tranquillity. I found this calms me in difficult times as I suffer PTSD, it is the one place in amongst trees I feel safe in. This place is divine, I love it. The trees cover your head and connect you to nature. It is amazing to sit in a pocket that allows you to experience a wood in a built-up area. By way of saying thank you to Tidemill and its people I have donated my sculptures

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which are repurposed nitrous oxide canisters which have been locally sourced. This place has inspired me and in return I hope others can turn up; see some art, nature and engage with its creative clarity. Long live Tidemill, it is more than a plot of land, it is a pocket of creative paradise which is there for us to love and share…. COMMUNITY. To take this away is to take away nature and freedom. This is heart breaking. Please share this as it is from the heart.

("Fitzy" in Strasser, 2020, p.45)

Making his lived experience of displacement visible and audible through publishing his work and commentary not only recognised him, his experience and his artworks as legitimate (more on publishing in Section 6.5). It also intervened in the council's argument that the garden had no value and could justifiably be destroyed. Coming from a war veteran, someone who served the country and now suffers mental health issues as a result, his sculptures and text are a strong force in bringing closer the affective experience of un-homing. They articulate an experience of gentrification that is absent from dominant narratives. Therefore, including his and other radical artists' works not only helped redistribute the sensible through the blog and book and contributed to local dissent (Chapter 5). These artworks also offer alternative representations and richer understandings of the structures of feeling regarding displacement (Chapter 4). Thus, optimising (and politicising) participation acted as a precursor to resistance and the production of sociological knowledge.

Optimum participation led to the participation of over 160 people, whose experiences regarding Deptford, gentrification, displacement and resistance are represented and enacted in the published materials. The materials include essays, workshop reports, personal stories, poetry, song lyrics, hand-written comments, drawings, paintings, photographs, models and maps, all co-created by, with and for participants. Making the voices, perspectives and bodies of poor, older, disabled, racialised, homeless, young and other displaced residents visible and matter in a way participants decided and in such a large number was a political act in times when these voices are suppressed. The research opened multiple spaces for collective creativity and critical pedagogy, where participants could share and discuss different experiences of displacement and stigmatisation in a caring and empathetic way; where they could acquire knowledge and skills as to the processes of regeneration, DIY activism and other aspects of political opposition; where their cultural practices had value and fostered a sense of belonging, affection and solidarity; and where they felt empowered to produce

alternative gentrification narratives for political interventions. It thus opened spaces for transformation and social justice.

6.3 Becoming an activist photographer: representational and social justice through socially and politically engaged photography

Optimum participation led to the unexpected scenario of me becoming a participant photographer in local housing struggles. With most participants requesting that the research get actively involved in resisting displacement and that I, local community photographer with Higher Education training in photography including an Master's Degree from Goldsmiths, provide "good" photographic material to publicly counter dominant gentrification narratives and draw attention to the effects of displacement, I became a participant in the housing campaigns I was researching. As my images became the main visual medium of local housing struggles *and* this research, it is necessary to reflect on this in some length: how the *photographic dialogical aesthetic* – the outcome of a socially and politically engaged photographic practice with a focus on ethics, politics and aesthetics (Chapter 2) – works towards representational and social justice. In other words, this is a reflection on the feedback comment received from one participant, a local resident, artist and campaigner:

> I came across Anita in Spring 2018 in Tidemill Wildlife Garden. Anita had created a memory board, with historical and new photographs, as well as post-it notes for people to share their experiences of the garden. It felt surprisingly welcoming to be represented here and to recognise others in photographs. In her own way Anita was an active participant in the Save Reginald! Save Tidemill! campaign… She consistently documented the events organised by other garden volunteers… and also a long string of public protests way too numerous to mention but including the occupation, the violent eviction and the protest camp that ensued. Her images taken with sensitivity by someone who fully understood the context were invaluable and they were used in press coverage, blogs, publicity material and our social media.

I have explained in Chapter 2 that in this particular context a "good" photograph was seen to be following the conventions of documentary photography (artistic) while also being representative of the people in the images, their experiences and intended political messages (aesthetico-political). It also reflects the relationships built between the photographer and photographed during collective activities (ethical and dialogical). The feedback comment above confirms this. Below I want to reflect on the *photographic dialogical aesthetic* and what it might mean to work towards representational and social justice.
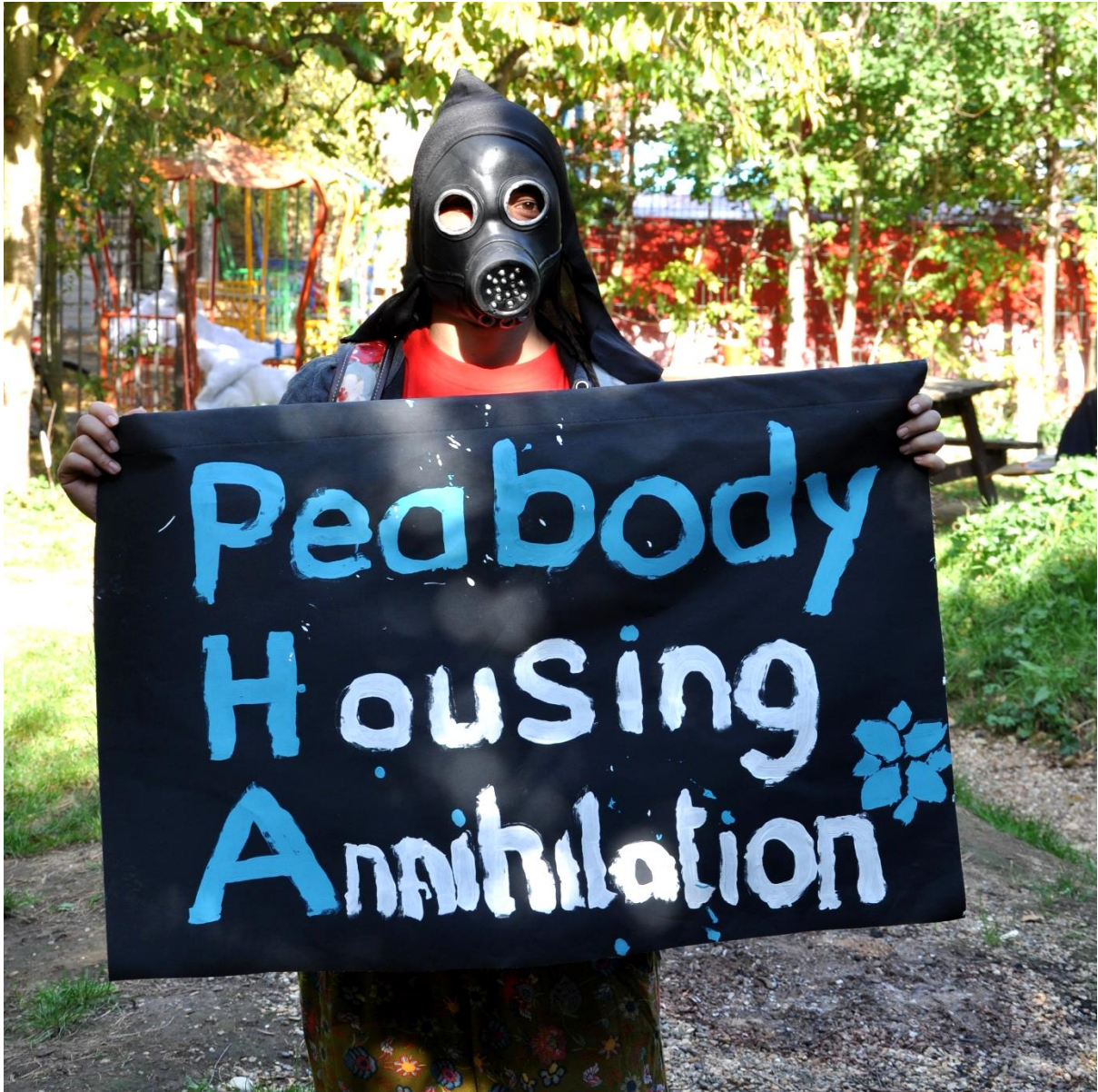
Figure 6.3 Campaigner getting ready for a protest. Photo: Anita Strasser, 2018.

Figure 6.3 is a documentary photograph of a campaigner getting ready for a protest. It is 'a photographed event' (Azoulay, 2012) and may be judged by its formal qualities, content, perceived success in communicating a (political) message and status as a documentary image. However, the importance of this image also lies in the human relationships built during a period of multiple encounters and political actions. This campaigner is part of a group that together, me included, engage in political debate, plan protests and other campaign activities to *expose* social issues, *politicise* key issues and *propose* alternative narratives and solutions (Marcuse, 2009). I was able to take this photograph because I had become an active participant in local housing activism, present at most events and trusted as

the campaign photographer. This process constitutes 'the event of photography' (Azoulay, 2012), to be understood through the human relationships of which this image is part.

As explained in Chapter 2, my practice builds on Azoulay's (2012) political ontology of photography which views photography as an encounter with multiple participants involved in collaborative and political action, creating a dialogical aesthetic that reflects those human relationships. What differentiates Azoulay's dialogical aesthetic from Bourriaud's (2000 [1998]) relational and Kester's (2004) dialogical aesthetic, as well as Bishop's writings on participatory arts (Chapters 1 and 2), is that Azoulay is less concerned with the artworld than with photography's potential for active citizenship. As photography is *potentially* open to everyone, as photographer, subject (consciously or unconsciously), spectator and interpreter, Azoulay argues that through the event of photography those excluded from dominant narratives and normative practices can exercise their citizenship. They can take, guide, direct, influence, appear in, publish, distribute, show and interpret photographs, continuously and actively contributing to the meaning of images, and telling and distributing alternative narratives and previously untold stories. They belong to 'the citizenry of photography' (Azoulay, 2008).

This dialogical element is reflected in the image (Figure 6.3). The banner and its message, the gas mask and the protest are all features that came out of collaborative actions and conversations between a whole host of people, culminating in this image taken by another collaborator (me), an artist who translates these encounters into imagery. On the day the photograph was taken, I was there with the camera as requested, and this protestor was willing to have their photograph taken for subsequent distribution. The protestor saw and approached me, briefly stopping to point the placard at the camera to enable me to take this photograph. The *photographic dialogical aesthetic* is thus the outcome of a situated practice where the photographer is closely involved in participants' struggles and participants in how images are produced, used and published. It is a continual interaction between photographer and photographed, researcher and researched, where both think through doing, listening and gaining knowledge and understanding of the lived world through engagement with others (Kester, 2004; Ingold, 2013). This constantly informs the photographer's understanding of the political context, enabling them to take images with sensitivity and

work towards representational justice. It is a *photography of care* which attends to the fluid aspects of participation and sociality.

The image only depicts one part of the whole collaboration but plays an essential role in addressing a social injustice and staging a political confrontation. Representational justice is therefore a precursor for social justice because only when representations are enacted in the public sphere can they effect change. The campaigner and their co-collaborators are exposing Peabody, a housing association founded upon the premise of social justice through housing, but which is now one of the largest property developers in the country, for their role in destroying people's homes. For audiences aware of the context, it also accuses the council of collaborating with Peabody. The image questions their facilitation of neoliberal housing policy in the destruction of a vital green space. The image was taken with the spectator(s) in mind: Peabody, the council, and others driving and supporting gentrification. The aim is to challenge their understanding of gentrification through alternative narratives, disrupt the distribution of the sensible and enact changes to housing schemes. The camera is crucial as the distribution of the photograph (and accompanying text) after the event continues the disruption. Each encounter with the image adds to its meaning and engages the citizenry of photography in democratic debate in the public sphere, continually addressing the social injustice and staging moments of interruption.

The role of the photographer: paying attention to ethics, politics and aesthetics

Despite the importance of the dialogical aspect in images, consigning aesthetics (visual quality) into the background and equalising the role of the photographer with that of subject and spectator, as per Azoulay, does not account for the context in which I was working. This view was also reflected in participants' request for "good" photographs by a trained photographer. Azoulay (2010; 2012) writes from the perspective of historical images of the Israel-Palestine war 1947-1949, analysing images of conflict through the lens of visual culture rather than the arts. Nevertheless, Azoulay's discussion begins with a photograph by professional photographer Micha Kirshner, who was widely accused by art critics of aestheticising suffering by photographing Palestinian families in theatrical settings in the 1980s. Azoulay comes to his defence, arguing the image is indicative of the (political) human

relations that led to it. The subject agreed to be photographed in this way and both subject and photographer collaborated in addressing the spectator to tell of the Palestinian struggle.

Accusations of aestheticisation belong to a particular discourse within photography, which emerged at a time when documentary images of suffering proliferated but seemed too focused on artistic quality and not enough on humanitarian causes as the pioneering work of documentary photography. Critics such as Martha Rosler (2004 [1981]) and Susan Sontag (2003) questioned photographers' ethics when shooting images of horror, triggering important conversations about ethics, aesthetics and politics within documentary photography. Although instrumental in stimulating more ethical photographic approaches, criticisms of aestheticisation have since been too readily hurled at documentary photographers and photojournalists without understanding the relationships between the photographer, the photographed and potential spectators, and how an image was arrived at (Azoulay, 2008). The criticisms also ignore how photographs are used and the effects they might have. As Bogre (2012) argues, social change is slow and not always visible.

Alongside ethical approaches, aesthetics and the photographer's voice do have a role in creating political images. Lewis argues that 'it is the artist who knows what images need to be seen to affect [sic] change and alter history, to shine a spotlight in ways that will result in sustained attention' (S. Lewis, 2016, p. 11). This brings me back to the image Azoulay discusses, why it is known and debated and not the other thousands of citizen images of the Palestinian struggle. Isn't it because it is aesthetically and politically so striking that it was published, exhibited and critiqued? Isn't it because the image was taken by a professional photographer with access to people *and* aesthetic codes (to which the subject agreed) to make an effective political statement? Isn't it because of the photographer's renown and access to publication channels and the artworld, ensuring wide distribution? After all, it is through the wide circulation of this image that it was seen and discussed, continuing to disrupt official narratives of Israel's occupation of Palestine. And the discussion on aesthetics and ethics this image stimulated has been fruitful in itself.

Figure 6.4 Tony eating and reading in Goddard's Pie & Mash shortly before its closure. I took this image after spending some time in the shop, chatting to customers about the cultural value of Goddard's and the loss of an important aspect of their cultural upbringing. Tony and other customers were excited about my research and the planned blog post. Tony was pleased to be photographed, liked the image and agreed that I could use it for the photo-essay. With this image, I wanted to unsettle the common association of pie & mash shops with only white working-class culture. A Black man's at-homeness in the shop creates an interesting tension and contrasts strongly with the usual imagery of pie & mash shops, including some of the images I took (see Strasser, 2020, pp. 112-117). Unlike in the book, I used this as the main image in the blog post to foreground this tension. The aim was to focus the debate on gentrification and displacement and for it not to be side-tracked into discussions on the loss of white working-class culture. As such, the use of this image involved decisions on ethics, politics and aesthetics, which required a skilled photographer familiar with and sensitive to the context. Photo: Anita Strasser, 2018.

Claire Bishop (2012) reasserts the role of aesthetics and the artist, saying artists have the training and ability to create, in dialogue with participants, a political aesthetic which sustains political tensions (see Figure 6.4). Artwork needs to antagonise so that political discourse may be sustained and result in agonistic space, where conflict can become a productive form of intervention (Bishop, 2004; Mouffe, 2012). Considering my project aimed to contribute to local resistance and foster political dialogues with multiple publics, Bishop's proposition resonated with the request for "good" photographer-authored images.

However, Bishop writes from within the artworld, whose aesthetic codes sit uneasily with the aesthetics of the photographic images produced in this project. Community photography

(and community arts) has never really found its place within the artworld (Kelly, 1984; De Bryne and Gielen, 2011). There is a tension between art and community, with the former being about autonomy and capitalist relations and the latter about collaboration and social relations outside the market. There is also a tension between photography and art, with photography and its operating and reproduction technologies seen as a separate strand of artistic practice. However, community and art, or ethics, politics and aesthetics, do not have to be separate goals. Images can reflect a visual aesthetic while also being representative of communities: their perspectives, knowledges and experiences, their cultural practices, stories of community and their politics. In other words, "good" images can work towards representational and social justice.

Figure 6.5 Book cover image of *Deptford is Changing* (Strasser, 2020). Photo: Anita Strasser, 2017.

Figure 6.5 is an example of combining community and art, of combining ethics, politics and aesthetics. I was able to take this photograph because, having built close and trusting relationships through working alongside campaigners and radical artists, I was invited to document events and artworks in this Deptford community pub known for its radical and creative history (The Bird's Nest). The placard was made by an artist-activist as part of

collective political action and hung in this space, symbolising the perspective of a collective experiencing the devaluation of their cultural practices through gentrification. However, to amplify the extent to which the placard intervened in the distribution of the sensible, it was necessary to photograph and distribute it. I framed the image in a visually compelling way, allowing space around the banner to communicate its location and reference the community of this pub. However, the banner and its political message take centre stage to communicate the structures of feeling within this community. The image thus bears the traces of collective affect; it stands in for the collective experience among displaced people of living with the aesthetico-political regime of 21st century gentrification in Deptford. Hence choosing this image as the book cover.

The importance of sharing images

At the beginning of the research, campaigners requested that I make all campaign-related images available for use. I shared images in high and low resolution and allowed the use of images with or without crediting me (most did). My images were shared freely among campaigners and journalists and used for social media posts and articles across various media, including Novara Media, an independent left-wing media organisation.[39] Campaigners often commented on the visual quality of images in their posts, suggesting that the photographs fulfilled the criteria of "good" images. It appeared participants thought images were representative of them, their struggles and experiences.

This is not to say that only I took photographs. Some campaigners were skilled photographers also taking "good" photos; others were less skilled. However, taking photographs alone does not necessarily make them useable. Making photographs available for use requires post-production work, including transfer to a workable programme, a tight selection process, resizing work and the enhancement of visual quality. This takes time, skill and technical know-how, something only few "photographers" had. Although any photograph can potentially intervene in the order of things, social media posts are often accompanied by a flood of "not so good" images, potentially failing to attract audiences. This is evidenced by the fact that despite millions of images of social issues being uploaded every day, very few

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[39] See Appendix C for examples.

attract attention. There are different reasons for this: the number of images, the proliferation of fake news and doubt about the veracity of images, and the problem of digital echo chambers (Bush, 2020). I would also include lack of visual quality. This is not to say that all citizen images lack quality, and that "bad" images have no impact. It is hard to gauge how images affect people, who is affected, how this manifests itself in the world and how they stimulate debates in the public sphere (ibid.). However, for campaigns and causes to have *sustained* impact, there is a need to think about *repeatedly* creating and distributing images that increase their likelihood of being noticed. This, in my experience, is the work of a skilled photographer, a view that is supported by the fact that I was asked to supply images even by those taking photographs themselves.

Figure 6.6 Memory board made by me and my partner for Tidemill Garden, including images I and others took of this space and post-it notes for people to make comments. Photo: Anita Strasser, 2018.

I also shared images for direct interventions, returning them to the locale in which they were taken, available for anyone to see who entered the space. The Memory board in Figure 6.6 and alluded to in the feedback comment at the beginning of this section consisted of images I had taken during my time with the Tidemill campaign and images collected from other garden users, including historical and recent images. I also added post-it notes, postcards and

pens to invite people to leave comments (see Strasser, 2020, pp. 38-40). The idea was to celebrate the garden and people's memories of it while also eliciting insightful research data. As the feedback comment above states, it was welcoming to be represented there, recognise others and be invited to share one's experience of this space.

Finally, I shared all the images with participants I photographed in digital and printed form, making them also available for private use. This promise of sharing images resulted in visible excitement, possibly even contributing to people's willingness to be photographed. Despite the promise, participants were surprised when eventually handed their pack, seemingly in disbelief that they not only got to see the images but also received free copies. Alongside providing input into how and what images were taken, participants were also invited to choose images for distribution. More important, however, seemed the opportunity to remove those they did *not* like. While most were unclear which images they liked best, leaving the final choice up to me, they were very clear about those they did not identify with. Participants could also have their images retaken if they felt it necessary, but this was never requested. Offering multiple opportunities to partake in decisions about which images were distributed contributed to representational (and social) justice.

6.4 Becoming an activist writer: representational and social justice through writing stories based on research data for publication

> We really need to get those stories out, people don't want demolition, but we have no say!
> (Campaigner during my first meeting in Tidemill Garden)

Participants' desire to publish their stories became apparent immediately upon starting the research as in the extract above. Questions of where, when and how the work would be shown arose in each meeting with participants, making it clear that imminent publishing on accessible media was deemed crucial. There is no point in "giving" voice if these voices are not made to matter (Fairey, 2018). The concept of voice calls on a politics of recognition, requiring 'political listening' and making voices matter (Couldry, 2010; Fairey, 2018). Thus, to make the voices in this research matter and work towards social justice, the generated representations (images and texts) needed to be *enacted* by distributing published materials to relevant audiences. As participants repeatedly said, they wanted their stories seen by

councils, property developers and newcomers to make them understand how existing residents experience gentrification and displacement.

This necessitated the transformation of research data from interviews and observations into accessibly written stories to be published on alternative media together with the images taken. As explained in Chapter 2, most participants asked me to write blog posts about their campaigns, their lived experiences of displacement, workshops they participated in, and generally about local housing struggles. As is common in journalistic writing, I added relevant photographs, switched between third person narrative and direct quotes, and removed irrelevant information, offensive expletives, personal grievances with (named) individuals, totalising claims and unverifiable accusations to avoid harming participants *and* readers. It was a strategy to maximise the extent of critical engagement. However, participants were always given the chance to co-edit their texts (and images), with only few raising points which were solved together in critical dialogues.

Nevertheless, it was difficult to know how people would react to their texts and I was anxious each time when waiting for feedback. From experience I knew that people have different ideas of how they want to be represented, ideas that often only occur to them when reading the texts about themselves. While some might decide they do not want certain information about them included despite having shared it during an interview, others might want exactly that kind of information mentioned. The lady who withdrew from the research after I refused to include her intentional shaming of a neighbour (Chapter 2) was also angry because I had included her childhood experience although this shaped the main part of the recorded interview and made a powerful plea against austerity measures. The fact that she could co-edit the text precisely to have control over what was published or not did not appease her anger. Another difficulty was the fact that people shared information with me all the time. Since I was present at so many events and activities, it was sometimes difficult to know whether I was listening as researcher, campaigner or neighbour and friend. I tried to be as transparent as possible, sometimes directly asking whether I could include a comment made during a conversation in a blog post. In the hope of minimising angry reactions, thus protecting myself, when handing over the summaries for co-editing, I always stressed that

the point was to give them control over what was being published and that nothing would be published without their consent. Still, I awaited each feedback with trepidation.

In essence, the approach to writing these stories was similar to that of taking "good" photographs: the texts were created in constant dialogue with participants (ethical and dialogical) and as part of their political struggles to work towards representational and social justice (aesthetico-political). They were written by a skilled writer familiar with writing conventions (e.g. diction, rhetorical devices, narrative structures)[40] to make them of publishable quality (aesthetic). As such, the texts could be referred to as "good" texts. This was confirmed by participants, who said the texts were powerful and enacted the counternarrative they needed. This will be discussed further in Section 6.5.

Giving space to a multiplicity of voices

It is doubtful as many people would have participated had the research been conducted merely for academic purposes, published in a thesis and/or academic monograph 4-6 years down the line for a niche audience. This is also in line with my ethical position regarding social justice research. I would not have felt comfortable doing this kind of research solely for sociological knowledge. A PhD thesis does not allow space for all those voices to speak, with researchers retaining authority over what is said in the critical rendering of their findings. Instead, alternative and immediate publishing platforms where research data could be shared allowed space for a multiplicity of voices. This research, then, did not only distribute alternative gentrification narratives to multiple publics but also offered an alternative form of disseminating academic research.

Denzin asserts that ethnographic researchers should draw on the publication culture of investigative journalism to create a space for public voices that 'promote serious discussion about democratic and personal politics' (Denzin, 1997, p. 280-287). Nixon (2011, p. 23) also argues that the writer-activist plays a crucial role in making the unapparent accessible and giving extra visibility to the struggles of communities. Immediate publication through

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[40] I completed an MA in Applied Linguistics and English Language Teaching and have been teaching writing for over 20 years.

accessible channels and media, using language and images representative of participants' experiences, affects and concerns was clearly a motivation to participate, evidenced also by the fact that only two participants requested anonymity and only three withdrew after having second thoughts about "putting ourselves out there". The wish to be heard, seen and understood by those driving gentrification was expressed on multiple occasions, as was the desire to disrupt the dominant logic of gentrification.

This was also in line with the work of photography collectives in the 1970s who published photo-essays in alternative media to highlight the working and living conditions of the most marginalised. While seeking more ethical and dialogical approaches to photography, they followed the pioneers of documentary photography, who sought social reform for the poorest citizens through publishing photojournalistic accounts of social injustices. Work was often published as photo-essays, with some work achieving significant changes, for example to housing (Jacob Riis' images of tenements in New York in the 1870s), child labour (Lewis Hine's images of working children in the 1910s) and warfare (Nick Ut's images of the Vietnam War in the 1970s). These and other works are now cited as pioneering works of investigative photojournalism (Good and Lowe, 2017) and visual sociology (Knowles and Sweetman, 2004; Harper 2016 [1982]).

Becker (1974) and Harper (2016 [1982]) urge sociologists to look back at these early practices of documentary photography. In fact, some visual sociologists have utilised documentary photography as research method, data and output, with researchers either skilled photographers themselves (e.g. Harper, 2016 [1982]) or working with professional photographers (e.g. Duneier, 1999; Knowles, 2000).[41] As discussed in Chapter 2, images can produce sociological knowledge in different ways, and the inclusion of photographs in ethnographic texts is seen to enliven the characters of their subjects and the spatial context in which the research took place (ibid.). Chaplin argues that a combination of images and text produced with an equally reflexive and critical approach is 'the most effective means of

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[41] Sociologists also place cameras in the hands of participants to redress power relations and offer opportunities of self-representation (e.g. Mizen, 2005; Packard, 2008). This has become the most popular use of photography in sociological research and also played a role in this research as discussed in Chapter 2. However, the focus in this section is on photographer-authored images.

communication' (Chaplin, 1994, p. 2). As such, photo-essays are very effective in equalising text and images, providing a rich layer of meanings that neither alone could convey. The inclusion of images in academic texts has become very common within sociology and other disciplines and has been applied throughout this thesis.

However, the discussion above relates to texts written by academics for academic audiences. Whilst these are important modes of dissemination, stimulating important debates and over time transforming research practices and informing policy, they lack the immediacy and reach of photojournalistic work. This research was underpinned by activist intentions, going beyond critical description and taking accessible photo-essays created by, with and for participants into the public domain to engage 'multiple publics' (Burawoy, 2005) in political debate and work towards social change. It drew on the publication culture of investigative (photo)journalism and emphasised the importance of the activist photographer and writer. It also rethought the academic mode of dissemination to include more voices, reach wider and more varied publics and actively work with a social justice agenda.

6.5 Becoming a photojournalist: working towards social justice by enacting and distributing alternative gentrification narratives in the public sphere

The blog *Deptford is Changing*[42] was the first publishing platform decided on with participants. Blogs are a common format among local gentrification-critical residents and are well-suited for extended pieces of writing. The inclusion of "good" images in "good" texts, a common strategy of publication culture, was seen by participants as essential in attracting attention and triggering responses. However, I realised after the first post that blogs do not trigger discussions: two people left a comment and nobody engaged with them. Seeing that people engaged more on Facebook, I also opened a Facebook account of the same name where I shared the blog posts to encourage responses and debate.[43] I linked up with the social media accounts of campaigns and residents to reach wider audiences through sharing posts. Closely observing the feeds, I could see that my posts were shared, read and commented on, with plenty of evidence that campaigners and other readers identified with

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[42] deptfordischanging.wordpress.com
[43] This account was closed by Facebook in March 2020 after I did not provide a scan of my passport. This had been requested in Facebook's clamp-down on accounts not under people's real names.

and supported the perspectives highlighted in the texts (see Figure 6.7 and Appendix D for further examples).

Figure 6.7 A screenshot of a campaign group sharing a post published on the *Deptford is Changing* blog in 2018, expressing their support for my text.

While social media can arguably be an echo chamber, bringing information from ideological allies, place-based Facebook group such as I Love Deptford or New Cross and Deptford Community Forum seem to cut across race, gender, class and political views, thus fostering

more fruitful debates. Campaigners consciously engage in debates with allies and opponents on these forums, and my posts were not only shared there, they were read and also acted upon by residents and local councillors.[44] Overleaf (Figure 6.8) is a screenshot of a blog post regarding the council not renewing the licence for Goddard's Pie & Mash, which was being shared on the New Cross and Deptford Community Forum by a local resident, tagging (now ex-) local councillor Joe Dromey and asking him for comment. This set off a lively debate between me, residents and councillors about my post and how this shop could be saved, with two councillors going to Goddard's to discuss options with the shopkeeper.[45]

Similar engagement happened with other posts. The publication of this research, enacting the social realities I was representing in the public sphere, repeatedly disrupted dominant gentrification narratives. Even when posts did not result in public debates with councillors, feedback from campaigners, residents and shopkeepers indicated that councillors were reading and responding to posts, visiting residents and shopkeepers and offering solutions such as better monetary incentives for relocation or more suitable replacement flats. Needless to say, this was not publicly acknowledged by councillors. Whilst the posts did not change the overall regeneration plans, councillors were confronted and had to contend with dissenting voices, engage with their electorate and reconsider decisions (Chapter 5). The stories also led to residents supporting charities, shops and residents, offering help, donations and moral support, thus building and maintaining important social relations and communities of support.

Through publishing an article fortnightly, sometimes weekly, with some viewed more than 1,000 times, the research redistributed the sensible and disrupted the aesthetico-political regime of gentrification. Posts exposed the flaws in the "rational" arguments within housing policy, politicised the experiences of displacement and proposed alternative visions of the future, stimulating democratic political debates. The posts and subsequent responses and discussions also emphasised the affective dimension of community, collective and creative practices and place attachment to Deptford, with people communicating their feelings,

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[44] See Appendix D for example posts.
[45] See Appendix E for a continuation of this conversation and further engagement.

Figure 6.8 Screenshot of blog post regarding Goddard's Pie & Mash. While my Facebook name (Anita In-Deptford) and names of organisations and councillors are shown, individual commentators have been anonymised to protect their privacy. See Appendix E for the whole comments chain.

struggles, knowledges and experiences. By distributing the alternative gentrification narratives generated through the research, this project recognised those stories as legitimate, thus supporting those devalued by dominant narratives. The project opened a public space for building community and social justice.

After months of publishing, I was contacted by *Time Out* to write a story about Goddard's. The proprietors declined so I offered a story about Tidemill, which *Time Out* accepted. With the permission of participants, I also successfully submitted articles to other publishing platforms[46], reaching even wider audiences and engaging with a broader public sphere. The *Time Out* article attracted many visitors to show solidarity. It also attracted journalists from other media outlets such as the BBC, Sky News and others, who subsequently produced critical news reports supportive of the campaign. Furthermore, gentrification researchers, students and interested individuals came from across London, often asking me for comment, images for articles and advice.

Of course, there is always the danger that the publication of images and texts of artists and activists engaged in community activism feeds into the kind of representation gentrification relies on. As stated in Chapter 5, publishing gentrification-critical articles in media such as *Time Out* creates a dilemma between reaching thousands of readers while risking the commodification of resistance. *Time Out* celebrates "authentic", "creative" and "edgy" spaces of London, thus addressing the liberal middle-classes' sense of authenticity. Although this edition of *Time Out* only contained one property advertisement, it contained articles promoting gentrified areas and middle-class consumption spaces. Despite my article being critical of gentrification, for some readers it will have only confirmed Deptford as a cool place to be. It is impossible to determine whether the intended message will be the received message. Nevertheless, the article had political intentions, expressing political sympathy with residents, exposing the flaws of housing policy and generating negative publicity for developers, decision-makers and regeneration plans. It also attracted journalists who wrote further gentrification-critical articles. Therefore, the *Time Out* article did enact a political intervention.

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[46] See Appendix F for these articles.

It is hard to ascertain how else this research contributed to the widespread reporting of the campaign. It is also hard to gauge its influence on Lewisham Council modifying planning proposals. However, without the repeated interventions in the public sphere – through my project and other disruptions – Lewisham Council would likely not have increased the percentages of social housing so considerably (e.g. from 11% to 56% at Tidemill), engaged more with the community (on landscaping, design, relocation procedures), reconsidered planning proposals (e.g. saving green space at Achilles Area) and made some residents featured on the blog better relocation offers. They also seemed to force the council to rethink tactics. Sadly, this also meant the vilification of campaigners on social media and the commissioning of Studio Raw to convince residents of the validity of the council's "rational" arguments through the language and aesthetics of community arts (Chapter 5). Nevertheless, the widely-shared research material in various formats helped raise awareness of housing struggles and enticed (re)action.

Further interventions through the publication of a book

Figure 6.9 The *Deptford is Changing* book. Photo: Petra Rainer, 2020.

For me this book is seriously moving on many levels. First and foremost because it is a record of people's lives and an alternative history that will endure beyond this moment. And this book is now in the hands of everyone who contributed to it, owned by all of us who participated. But this memory of things that happened locally is also going to be available permanently to other

audiences, in institutions like universities and in local libraries. Gathered together these stories are an acknowledgment and a celebration of personal lives and local networks in Deptford. These are small stories, told by individuals in their own words, and in the intimacy of their personal surroundings, and for me they are a welcome antidote to the jargon and duplicitous intent of so many community consultations. This book is not a platform for those in power who have access to the media, much of which tends to sensationalise stories and use stereotypes to characterise local protest (e.g. as violent and irrational). It provides a counter to the media, the developers and the council's narratives by showing the actual financial and emotional cost of regeneration for existing members of our communities. And perhaps it will enable readers to acknowledge what others feel when they face the loss of their local community space, support network, business or home.

(local resident, artist and campaigner)

The feedback comment above emphasises the importance of a long-lasting and accessible platform to ensure the continued telling of histories representative of ordinary people's lived experiences. The idea of a book containing all the blog material to keep the told stories alive emerged from the start. The notion of a longer-lasting and wider-reaching medium, recognised as a more legitimate publishing platform, became a big driver for motivating participation in the hope that the book might lead to further critical dialogues and posterity of the stories. The idea of featuring in a published book about the local area was another motivator for participation, evidenced by the excitement about this eventuality demonstrated during conversations. The book was not only requested by those without access to digital platforms but also by computer-savvy participants, aware of the short-lived nature of social media posts.

Publishing all the generated research material as co-produced with participants in a book, before and outside this thesis, diverts from the traditional form of a critical PhD thesis or scholarly monograph. Allowing plentiful space for a multiplicity of subjective voices and a large number of colour photographs in a colourfully designed book challenges standard academic publications containing critical summations and a tight selection of images (often in black and white and of poor quality) and interview extracts. However, it fits creative activist research seeking to bridge academia, arts and activism. It was an interesting challenge to address all the different audiences I was trying to reach. While blog posts were used as part of political campaigning and written in a more polemical style, when editing the posts for the book I adopted a slightly softer tone to avoid alienating middle-class readers. It was a difficult balance to strike, trying to address middle-class sensibilities without depoliticising and

diluting participants' struggles. Aware of the longer-lasting nature of printed material (as opposed to the ephemerality of social media posts) and to avoid backlash and accusations of libel, I researched endlessly to verify statements made by participants and engaged a media lawyer who highlighted potentially problematic statements for me to rewrite. Although I wanted participants to have as much control over the book content as possible, I knew that any backlash would be directed at me. Therefore, to protect myself, I had to make some executive decisions. However, I ensured transparency by informing participants of changes relating to them and explaining my reasons. Thankfully no conflicts arose.

Writing this thesis was another challenge as it necessitated addressing another audience – an academic audience. The format of a thesis requires the author to tightly select who and what can speak followed by critical analysis in the language of the academy. After having written collaboratively for the purpose of political campaigning, having to select certain passages and analyse participants' words and lives without inviting their feedback felt a little like betrayal. The shift from polemical writing to critical academic writing only added to this sense of betrayal. To gain the necessary critical distance after the intense and immersive period of collaboration, I changed from a full-time study mode to a part-time one to give myself time to develop my own academic voice, a voice that aimed to bridge academic rigour with more visceral forms of writing to bring across the affective impact of contemporary housing policy. Still, when writing this thesis I often wondered how participants would perceive my analysis of their lives and words but I also knew that inviting feedback could potentially interfere with rigorous sociological analysis. However, to ensure the continued telling of the multiple stories and voices collected during the research, the thesis regularly refers the reader to the book, linking the chosen extracts and analyses with the original texts.

Publishing the blog and book before and outside this thesis enabled the research to take an active role in changing the world, not only by enacting the resistance I was representing, thus disrupting dominant gentrification narratives, but also by validating the knowledges and perspectives of participants. It acknowledged participants as co-producers of knowledge and creative output, fully crediting them for their contributions. Initially, it was my plan to put myself down as editor rather than author but the participants I consulted (campaigners I worked with the most) argued that, considering it was my research and that I produced the

majority of the book content, I should be put down as author and credit contributors where applicable. Despite still feeling uneasy about this decision, I do also agree that doing otherwise would have devalued my own work and role in the project.

It was important to design the book in a manner representative of participants, their stories, politics and sense of aesthetics while also paying attention to design conventions to avoid spectators dismissing the book as naïve (read: visually poor) community arts. I opted for "good" design, referring to the same principles as "good" photographs and texts: produced in dialogue; representative of participants, their cultural practices, relationships and politics; reflecting their stories of community, belonging and home; constituting alternative gentrification narratives; raising awareness of local issues and social justice campaigns; and highlighting the emotional impact of gentrification. It also refers to a publishable quality while refraining from artworld design aesthetics.

To stay within the objective of disrupting the current logic of gentrification, the book needed to draw attention from a varied audience including incoming artists and the middle-classes. As with the language in the texts, it was important to use design language that reaches an audience beyond the participants and their ideological allies. If the book was to disrupt dominant understandings of gentrification, it was necessary to design (and write) in ways that foster debate and dialogue among multiple publics. Thanks to CHASE, who is keen for academic research to reach non-academic audiences and funded the design of the book, I was able to work with a trained designer familiar with the area. Having previously worked on designs for regeneration projects, deploying the aesthetics of gentrification to attract middle-class buyers, the designer had become aware of her complicity in processes of gentrification. Hence, she was keen on changing her practice, focusing on design for social justice purposes.

Discussing each page and design decision with the designer (e.g. lay-out, fonts, colours), followed by discussing sample pages with participants, created a book participants and residents have said is representative of their experiences and perspectives. The feedback comment above testifies to this. It also indicates that my worries about diluting radical arts practice by using language and design that also addresses middle-class sensibilities were superfluous. Instead, the book seems to strike a good balance between those sensibilities

and participants' political struggles. This is supported by the fact that the book has attracted attention from other London housing campaigners and radical initiatives (e.g. Estate Watch, 56A Radical Social Centre), artists, students and researchers (evidenced through book sales, requests for advice on socially-engaged art and housing activism, invitations for talks, interviews and podcasts on varied platforms[47]). It has also been bought by middle-class newcomers to Deptford, with one resident commenting:

> I was worried the book would alienate gentrifiers like myself, someone with a good job who's moved here because I like the area and can afford it. We're part of the problem, aren't we, but I didn't feel alienated or blamed… It's a really well-written book.

CHASE funded the printing of 250 books to give free copies to all participants, local community centres/groups and some local residents on low incomes. I self-funded the printing of another 250 copies for sale, with profits given away as donations to Deptford community initiatives. Furthermore, I have made the book available for free online, which, in the time period between April 2020 and June 2023, was read/viewed nearly 7,000 times.[48] Due to my varied contacts within academia, art, photography and housing activism and my connection to varied publication channels within these fields, the book is in wide circulation, available in local and council-funded spaces (e.g. community centres and libraries), libraries and organisations across London (e.g. London College of Communication, Central St Martins), online platforms (e.g. Estate Watch), and is owned by local, London-wide and international residents, campaigners, community artists, photographers, academics and students (evidenced through book sales). The book is listed on reading lists for Sociology courses at Goldsmiths and Graphic Design courses at Chelsea College of Art and Design. The book is also at London City Hall, having fed into a recent report by Sian Berry, Green Party member of the London Assembly, highlighting the undemocratic process of estate ballots (Berry, 2022). All this hopefully ensures the continued telling of those alternative stories, potentially feeding into policy and communicating the experience of gentrification-induced displacement to a broader public.

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[47] See selected examples in Appendix G.
[48] tinyurl.com/deptfordischanging

To conclude this section, I want to quote the full feedback comment from one campaign representative, who said that the book is of vital importance in local efforts to disrupt the council's gentrification narrative:

> Anita Strasser's research for Deptford is Changing has played a vital part in recent anti-gentrification and social cleansing struggles in the Deptford and New Cross area by capturing a period in time – three years pre-Covid-19 which was a time of much life in the street community/campaign organising against Lewisham Council's 'regeneration' plans. Anita's interviews with Deptford and New Cross residents experiencing the direct effects of losing homes, livelihoods and neighbourhoods and all the stuff that may not be physically visible but is felt: memories, feeling safe, familiarity, stress and anxiety of state-led displacement is articulated by residents and is both an individual account and a collective voice for all us experiencing this – they are our stories and many wouldn't have been heard without the research by Anita, who showed so much respect and care for residents she interviewed and photographed. The stories and photographs are now visible in book form which is particularly significant for the stories to be heard beyond the digital changes which will take place over the years and may well get lost which would allow the state narrative to be the only one present. If we keep telling and sharing our stories they can't be forgotten, and Anita Strasser's book Deptford is Changing has ensured they won't be forgotten.

Staging an intervention through a book launch

Figure 6.10 Residents, campaigners and community workers giving short provocations about a local issue, memory or struggle of their choice during the book launch in Deptford Town Hall, 24 January 2020. Photo: Petra Rainer, 2020.

The book launch was also designed to intervene in the public sphere by organising the event in Deptford Town Hall (Figure 6.10) – a building regenerated by City Challenge money in the 1990s and handed to Goldsmiths University with the condition to regularly open its doors to community events. In reality, the building is only really open to university staff and students, and many Deptford residents have never been inside. Moreover, Goldsmiths is heavily implicated in regeneration plans in New Cross including the Achilles Street Area. As such, enabling residents to take over the space for the duration of the book launch enacted the promise of earlier, more community-focused visions of regeneration and a direct confrontation with Goldsmiths as a driver of gentrification. Coincidentally, it was also the first event after the occupation of the town hall by GARA – Goldsmiths Anti Racist Action group, who alongside its anti-racist struggles, fought to open Deptford Town Hall to local people.

The book launch was a participant-led event, enabling participants to tell, perform, sing, draw, share and discuss their experiences of gentrification and displacement, their passions and affects for Deptford and their motivations for resisting. It was when Anne Caron-Delion, local resident, artist and campaigner, read out her statement expressing her feelings for this project and the book;[49] when David Aylward, local musician and performer who normally only communicates through non-verbal communication (Chapter 5) and whose ambition had been to one day perform in Deptford Town Hall, felt so compelled by the event that, after opening the night with a drumming performance, gave a speech about local struggles for the first time in his life;[50] when Rachel Bennett performed her gentrification songs (Chapter 4) for the first time in public; when residents who had never spoken on stage felt emboldened to tell of their experiences to a 150-strong audience made up of residents, campaigners, activists, shopkeepers, students, artists and academics.

This event was an example of what Puwar and Sharma (2012) call 'curating sociology': making sociological ideas and issues public through creative collaborations and live events, applying an affective force that goes beyond the discipline's conventions. Campaigners took over the hall, decorating this institutional space with images, political banners, campaign information, alternative solutions to regeneration plans, and all kinds of creative campaign paraphernalia.

[49] See Anne's full statement in Appendix H.
[50] See David's full speech in Appendix I.

Participants took to the stage to share their experiences of gentrification and displacement before joining others in political debates and networking for possible future collaborations. They also showed trailers for campaign documentaries and performed protest songs. This reclaiming of Deptford Town Hall staged a direct confrontation between dominant and alternative visions of gentrification, making this institutional setting a temporary site of struggle. Through creative intervention and political discussion and action, voices ignored in the current logic of gentrification were recognised as legitimate.

The affectual impact of this event also highlighted the aesthetic and sensory aspects of collective and creative activities and political interventions, with the event generating an alternative, affective space to cope with struggle. The supportive, intimate sociality generated through the event validated participants as human beings of worth. This emotional support for the perspectives and concerns raised during the event enabled people to relate to the political debates in the room, fostering democratic and effectual discussions among various publics and modifying some people's understanding of gentrification. As one participant admitted:

> I never understood why people don't want council estates demolished, they are old and horrible. I was aware that gentrification puts prices up but I like some of the changes and didn't support the campaigns. But today is the first time I've heard of "managed decline"[51] and that has really opened my eyes. All the stories actually have really changed how I see gentrification and I now feel I have more understanding for people's struggles.

As with the blog posts, it is hard to know how much the book and the event contributed to shifting perceptions, but the participative activities of the night were political interventions that have remained in participants' consciousness, potentially contributing to cope-ability and further creative dissent. Social change is slow and not always visible, but the book and blog remain available, keeping these alternative gentrification narratives alive. What was evident during the launch was the affective and transformative dimension of creative dissent.

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[51] Managed decline is a term used to refer to the "deliberate" disinvestment in council properties to then use the dilapidated state of these properties as a reason for demolition and estate regeneration.

Figure 6.11 The book launch in Deptford Town Hall, 24 January 2020. Photos: Petra Rainer, 2020.

The collective effervescence from this artistic and political intervention, an intervention which validated participants' voices, perspectives, values and emotions, was visible in people's body language (Figures 6.10 and 6.11). It is also evident in the drawings left on the tables (Figure 6.12), in social media posts (see Appendix J) and by the comments made by participants:

> I wasn't sure about participating but I'm so glad I did. I was nervous but I felt really proud talking on stage with all the others. I've never done this before but it felt really good.
>
> I spoke to people who I'd heard of but never met. It was great to meet them, put faces to names and find out exactly what they do. There's some amazing work going on out there.
>
> I spoke to so many people and they're all doing amazing things I didn't know about. I'll definitely keep contact with some and maybe we'll work together somehow.
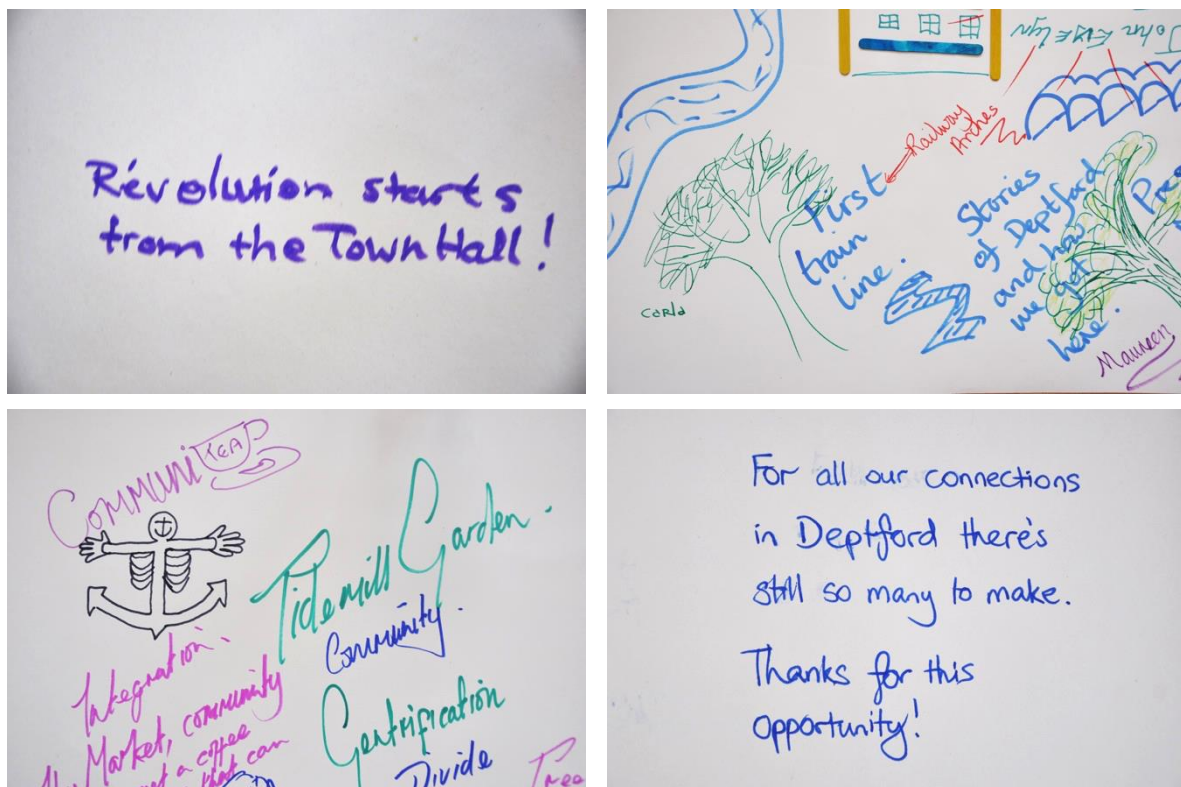
Figure 6.12 Drawings made by participants during group discussions at the book launch.

In Chapter 5 I argued that participating in creative activities and collective neighbourhood activism fosters social solidarity, belonging and political agency. It helps build community, emotional strength and cope-ability through affection, validation and care. This affective quality of creative dissent mitigates, to some extent, the emotional upheaval experienced

from the violence of un-homing, giving participants the emotional support to cope even if unable to overturn the structural parameters of current housing policy. The psychosocial impact of participating in the book launch, and the project as a whole, where participants shared their affection for Deptford, their homes and communities, exchanged concerns about gentrification, displacement and other injustices, and where their views and experiences were heard and made to matter, contributed to participants' sense of social solidarity, belonging and coping mechanisms. There was a shared sense of community during the event and after the publication of each post, with the affective memories of participating potentially taking this sense of community beyond the project.

6.6 Conclusion: towards a radical visual sociology

This chapter has presented a way of doing gentrification and displacement research which gets actively involved in participants' struggles. It has demonstrated that repoliticising and optimising participation, enabling research participants to take part in ways they decide, opens democratic spaces for representational and social justice. This approach to research has not only enabled the generation of alternative visual and textual gentrification narratives which are representative of those experiencing displacement, stigmatisation and dispossession; it has also widely distributed those narratives on alternative media to reach wider audiences and foster democratic debate. It thus *redistributed the sensible* and *enacted political disruptions* in the public sphere. These interruptions have arguably contributed to valuable change: negative publicity for decision-makers, changes to planning proposals, changes to relocation offers for displaced residents and other, smaller victories. Furthermore, the public amplification of these alternative narratives has validated people devalued in dominant gentrification narratives, recognising their knowledges, experiences and perspectives as legitimate.

This chapter has explored the affordances of activist research and demonstrated what it might mean to work and learn with people involved in anti-gentrification struggles. Whilst critical descriptions in scholarly texts are important, in current times when social inequalities are rising, it is equally important for research to get actively involved to make changes on the ground. As Slater says (quoted in Chapter 1), existing displacement studies are insufficient for

'the elite to see the world as a displaced person' (Slater, 2014, p. 522). This research has gone beyond critical description and towards a more activist and creative agenda to communicate the structures of feeling caused by the violence of un-homing to a broader public through additional and alternative means of representation and dissemination. Social justice research is not about "giving" voice; it is about making alternative voices matter politically in a way that is beneficial to participants. This means being willing to listen and respond to participants' needs and requests, changing the direction of the research and being open to a different way of researching. It means getting actively involved in political struggle. This chapter has demonstrated that such an activist approach to displacement research can contribute to effecting meaningful change.

Conclusion

Towards a Radical Visual Sociology

This thesis has presented a way of doing creative sociological research that enabled participants to instrumentalise research for their own political ends, in this case the disruption of the dominant gentrification narrative in the public sphere. This research involved a reconceptualisation of participation, or rather a return to its political origins, repoliticising and democratising participation to enable participants to take control of the intentionality of the research and work towards effecting change. Underpinned by feminist epistemology and participatory action research and combining social research methods with the principles and local practices of radical community arts and activism, including documentary photography and the publication culture of (photo)journalism, the project offered multiple opportunities for self-representation, co-authorship, co-production of knowledge and co-dissemination of research output. Taking an ethical and caring approach to methodology while also paying attention to the politics and aesthetics of creative output, this research *redistributed the sensible*, generating alternative gentrification narratives which made visible and audible the bodies, voices and perspectives of those absent from dominant narratives. It generated alternative forms of representations, creating a new sociological language which offers richer understandings of the lived experience of gentrification-induced displacement. Enacting these narratives in the public sphere through alternative forms of dissemination exposed the flaws in housing policy, politicised the structures of feeling of displacement and proposed alternative visions for the future. It thus staged moments of democracy. It also engaged multiple publics in political debate. This political approach to a participatory arts and research practice, making the research part of local housing activism, also helped strengthen belonging, solidarity and validation.

This thesis has argued that displacement research needs to go beyond critical description and get actively and creatively involved in politicising experiences of displacement. It has also argued for a different attentiveness to visual sociological research, joining the views and research practices from above with the knowledges, experiences and activist practices from

below to generate alternative knowledges and narratives and effect meaningful social change. Finally, it has made a case for "good" images, texts and design, with a particular focus on the *photographic dialogical aesthetic*, arguing that in public sociology and when redistributing the sensible in the public sphere, representations of communities need to reflect a dialogical, political and artistic aesthetic to maximise engagement with published material. Referring to my approach as a creative activist sociological imagination, I made clear from the outset my political sympathies with those facing gentrification-induced displacement and that this research was conceived to stage a political intervention in the aesthetico-political regime of state-led gentrification in Deptford. By adding significant political, collaborative and creative elements to the methodology, this research also constituted a methodological intervention, culminating in a unique approach to sociological research which generated new sociological insights.

Sociological insights from a political, collaborative and creative approach to displacement research

Working with a creative activist sociological imagination and an optimum, multimodal approach to participation in gentrification and displacement research enabled different, unexpected and critical conversations and outcomes. This offered novel sociological insights with regards to place, displacement and resistance. Chapter 3 introduced the concept of *conflictual place attachment,* an understanding of place attachment that goes beyond traditional aspects of belonging (e.g. residential longevity, historical rootedness, class culture and commitment to place) and incorporates other factors such as migration, intercultural dialogue, conflict, dissensus and activism. I have argued that in superdiverse localities such as Deptford, where demographic diversity inevitably means heterogenous world views and where minoritised groups had/have to fight for their right to be in place, place attachment, belonging, community and identification with place play out in different, potentially irreconcilable ways. While irreconcilable world views can lead to reactionary politics, this research has shown that conflictual place attachment does not always and necessarily inhibit bonds across class, ethnicity and community, especially if people share adverse experiences such as economic inequality and gentrification-induced displacement. Among my research participants, solidarity has formed through shared experiences, spaces, political goals and community activism, as well as intercultural dialogues, talking through contentious voices

and the recognition and validation of difference. Conflictual place attachment is therefore a more nuanced lens through which to understand place attachment in multicultural areas, moving beyond traditional understandings of belonging and affirming a pluralist society.

Chapter 4 presented a new sociological language through which to better articulate the structures of feeling of displacement – how the violence of un-homing is experienced in the present. Alongside critical description of the emotional and psychosocial impacts of displacement, supported by powerful concepts (e.g. root shock) and interview extracts, I have incorporated the creative-political material produced by, with and for residents to communicate their experiences of displacement as part of their housing campaigns. This not only recognises participants as co-creators of sociological knowledge and legitimises their experiences but also offers a richer account of participants' embodied experiences of displacement. The photographs, models, paintings, drawings, graphic illustrations, installations and performances, as well as the banners, poems, song lyrics and essays, produced in a caring, supportive and critical environment for a shared political goal, communicate more deeply people's feelings of loss, grief and pain than purely text-based accounts from scholars' perspectives. These alternative forms of representation together with sociological texts, as applied in this thesis and the book, contribute a new sociological language of displacement, which communicates more fully the emotional upheaval caused by the violence of un-homing. Thus, to enrichen our understanding of the affective dimension of displacement, future displacement research should consider incorporating creative-political materials produced by (and with) campaigners and residents as part of their housing struggles as alternative research data and means of representation. The hope is that richer understandings of gentrification-induced displacement might enable those driving and embracing the current regime of gentrification to see the world from the perspective of displaced persons and contribute to the development of more benevolent urban policies.

Chapter 5 offered a conceptualisation of community activism which demystifies the romantic notion of resistance, of the powerless and dominated attempting to overthrow the state. I introduced the concept of *creative dissent*, arguing that community workers and artists are dissenters rather than revolutionaries, subverting political power in creative ways to keep alternative visions alive, remedy social injustices and make life in an unjust world more

liveable. They work in the cracks of power, using their artistic and creative skills to change power relations and policy to meet the needs of more marginalised people. I also forwarded the notion of *cope-ability*, arguing that creative dissent is not only about street politics but also about coping with the strains of everyday life by participating in community. The supportive sociality of collective creativity and shared practices of belonging have an affectual impact, making people feel valued and recognised and thus more able to cope with inequality. This research has shown how cope-ability develops from the care, affection and validation community groups and collective activity provide and that cope-ability can act as a precursor to developing agency, self-organisation and more political creative dissent. Cope-ability and creative dissent are therefore useful concepts to understand and describe the complexity of community resistance. They have also played a pivotal role in this research project, with its collective, creative and political activities recognising participants as humans of value and worth.

Intervening in the aesthetico-political regime of gentrification

Alongside producing new sociological insights, this research got involved politically, with political intervention taking place on multiple levels. The first level is the methodology and its approach to participation and dissemination. By repoliticising and democratising participation as summarised above and examined in Chapters 2 and 6, the open and flexible methodology countered the depoliticised and instrumentalised practices of participatory arts, which ameliorate the effects of uneven urban change rather than expressing criticism and dissent (Chapter 1). This research started out by asking whether participatory arts practices can be deployed in changing urban contexts without getting co-opted into that change, and, instead, help to resist its most uneven aspects. Responding to the politics and aesthetics of urban regeneration and taking inspiration from the radical practices of community arts and activism, including its publication culture, the *Deptford is Changing* project (Strasser, 2020) made visible and audible alternative voices, bodies and perspectives to a wide audience through publishing photo-essays generated from research data on alternative media. The research thus went beyond the aim of informing policy and intervened directly in the aesthetico-political regime of state-led gentrification in Deptford.

Another intervention took place at the level of place identity and placemaking practices in processes of urban restructuring. As examined in Chapter 1, areas like Deptford are marketed for young creatives, wealthier populations and investors as authentic, trendy and creative places. The new place identity addresses the aesthetic sensibilities, life-style choices and cultural practices of incoming, more affluent populations. The full realities of housing struggles and other social inequalities remain invisible. So do the efforts of local community groups to create spaces of support, affection and care, thus filling the gaps left by austerity politics and offering opportunities for social justice. Opening spaces for critical dialogues, unexpected encounters and surprising outcomes, this research tells of participants' stories of hardship, disadvantage, migration, racism and displacement, as well as of diversity, cultural practices, community, belonging and home (Strasser, 2020; Chapter 3). These stories tell a different narrative of life under a neoliberal urbanism, with publications on alternative media disrupting the new place identity fashioned for gentrified Deptford by making sensible the people and places mostly absent from dominant place and gentrification narratives: community workers, community artists, volunteers, young adults, older, disabled and poor people, council estate residents, present campaigners and activists. Legitimising their meanings of place, creative talents, community work and personal stories not only creates an alternative identity of Deptford, it also counters their non- and misrecognition, validating them as humans of value and worth.

Disrupting the new place identity also involved the inclusion of radical artworks created by local community artists as individual acts of resistance against gentrification-induced displacement. Publishing these artworks not only recognised these artists' perspectives and experiences of gentrification and displacement as represented in their artworks, but it also validated them as artists and recognised their artworks as worthy of being published. In other words, the project gave greater visibility to local artists who are largely excluded from the dominant representations of Deptford as a creative area. Some have in fact been displaced from former cheap art studios. Although Deptford's existing art scene is used to promote regeneration schemes, extracting value from the legacy of community arts and activism and absorbing the aesthetics of DIY art, authorities delegitimise artworks by radical community artists and activists, trying to silence opposing voices. *Deptford is Changing* has brought some of these artists, their artworks and their dissenting perspectives into visibility.

A further intervention involved exposing the flaws of current housing policy and politicising the effects of gentrification, namely spatial and emotional displacement (Strasser, 2020; Chapter 4). Regeneration is justified under the banner of solving the housing crisis despite widespread spatial displacement of poorer and council estate residents, increased homelessness and a worsening crisis. This is despite the construction of thousands of homes, which are predominantly private and thus unaffordable for those on housing lists. As gentrification also changes place identity by modifying the aesthetics of place to address middle-class lifestyles and consumption practices, this 'loss of place' results in feelings of alienation and isolation despite remaining in place. Thus, for many, gentrification is experienced as violent emotional upheaval but with few having the opportunity to articulate and/or widely distribute this shared experience of being un-homed.

The caring, empathetic and critical environment of my participatory arts and research practice triggered emotional responses and enabled people to communicate their feelings, struggles and experiences through creative responses. Optimising participation also led to the inclusion of other artworks that were created independently by community artists. Together, the generated creative-political materials reflect back people's deeply affective experiences of displacement, communicating the collective affect from the violence of un-homing. I have already explained above and in Chapter 4 how including these materials in this thesis offers a richer account of the lived experience of the violence of un-homing. Publishing these materials with essays, artists' statements and comments through the *Deptford is Changing* project legitimised these experiences in the public sphere, communicating the emotional pain of root shock to a wider audience at pivotal moments during housing campaigns. This politicised experiences of displacement and disrupted the dominant and smooth narrative distributed by councils and developers, which frames urban regeneration as purely beneficial.

Creating and enacting alternative representations of campaigns, dissenters and other community groups, making visible and supporting their resistance, was another intervention (Strasser, 2020; Chapter 5). The photo-essays of campaigns countered representations by Lewisham Council, which depicted campaigners as violent and unreasonable, vilified them on social media and tried to silence their voices. Being closely involved in the campaigns,

working in constant dialogue with campaigners and residents and documenting activities to contribute to local creative dissent, I directly witnessed and experienced the affective and transformative impact of grassroots collective and creative activities. This enabled me to recognise, alongside the "small" victories achieved by campaigning, the caring support structures the campaigns offered to multiple people displaced by the current regime of gentrification. Additionally, observing the everyday practices of belonging in various community groups and how their creative support structures develop cope-ability, the research highlighted how these groups instil a sense of value, membership and solidarity through affection, loyalty and care. Publishing photo-essays made visible community workers and their efforts to fight for social justice.

Overall, the project helped disrupt the consensus Lewisham Council representatives sought to spread regarding planning proposals for regeneration schemes and their efforts to vilify anyone against their plans. Enabling participants to instrumentalise the research project to contribute to existing resistance ensured alternative representations of people and place were distributed widely, thus making sensible different voices, bodies and perspectives. The project created a different aesthetico-political narrative of gentrification in Deptford in the public sphere. It also developed a different mode of disseminating academic research, giving space to a multiplicity of voices and perspectives and using this to support housing activism.

The affordances and dilemmas of supporting housing activism through gentrification and displacement research

Underpinned by the notions of radical visual sociology and a creative activist sociological imagination, this research got actively involved in local anti-gentrification struggles. Listening to participants, the research context necessitated that I become an activist writer, photographer and photojournalist working in dialogue with participants to collaboratively disrupt the dominant logic of gentrification. In other words, the research was utilised as a tool for creative dissent, transforming the generated research data into accessible photo-essays which were published on alternative platforms to engage multiple publics in political debates and intervene in the distribution of the sensible. It thus went beyond critical description and conventional forms of dissemination and got actively and creatively involved in grassroots anti-gentrification struggles (Strasser, 2020; Chapter 6).

The working methodology made participants co-researchers, co-producers of knowledge, co-creators of creative output and co-disseminators of research. The widespread publication of accessible research data, alongside other activist work, not only resulted in changes to planning proposals, better relocation offers and other "small" victories, it had a transformative effect on participants, making them feel valued and recognised as people of value and worth, legitimising their stories, knowledges and experiences and strengthening feelings of community, solidarity and belonging. This demonstrates that participatory arts can be deployed in changing urban contexts without being co-opted into that change.

This is not to say that publishing photo-essays about community resistance does not come with risks. Texts and images about communities engaging in anti-gentrification struggles using radical DIY arts is in some way exactly the kind of representation that feeds into processes of gentrification, appealing to those attracted by notions of authenticity and spaces that inspire creativity. Especially when publishing in popular media such as *Time Out*, a magazine for urban creatives which promotes gentrified and creative quarters and property in such areas, the risk of commodifying community resistance is ever-present. Despite potentially reaching thousands of readers, for some readers the photo-essays may only confirm their ideas of Deptford as a cool and edgy area without fully engaging with the political content. Even when material is distributed on non-commercial and political platforms such as *Deptford is Changing* and all the sites the material was shared on, this risk cannot really be avoided.

Chapter 1 examined how young urban creatives have always been attracted to working-class "authentic" urban life, inspired by a sense of difference, danger and decay and the idea of a bohemian lifestyle. Poor and derelict areas are also often the only places they can afford to live in. Many earlier community artists, including some of my research participants, also lived in poor areas, inspired to work with urban communities and by doing so investing these areas with symbolic value. However, this happened at a slower and more organic pace and without the displacement effects of today. The problem with contemporary state-led gentrification is that artists are *deliberately* lured into deprived inner-city areas as part of urban policy to turn them into cultural and creative hubs and prepare them for gentrification. Often driven by the desire to do good and work with poorer communities while also trying to make a living in the

competitive climate of the gig economy, many artists rely on short-term residencies, projects and funding. Thus, through their artistic mode of production they inadvertently become the foot soldiers of gentrification. Once land values rise and luxury homes are available for higher earners working in the (financial) city, these artists, together with some long-term artists and residents, are often displaced themselves as a result. Artists are thus entangled in processes of gentrification without any real control over the engineered placemaking practices and an aggressive property market which is driven by transnational money and designed to predominantly benefit the wealthy.

The importance of participatory arts practices within changing urban contexts, then, lies in their political intentions. While it is impossible to control how a message is received and acted upon, enabling those suffering the negative consequences of urban change to control the intentionality of a project, their participation and creative outputs, and distributing political messages generated in dialogue with participants in ways they wish and which benefit them, is a fundamental starting point. As this project demonstrated, openly expressing criticism of gentrification processes and their decision-makers, distributing alternative visions of place, community and dissent, exposing the flaws in housing policy and government rhetoric, communicating the lived experiences of the violence of un-homing, proposing alternative visions for the future that incorporate the bodies, voices and perspectives of existing residents, and challenging the misrepresentation or non-recognition of poorer people through "good" artworks, images and texts produced by, with and for participants is in direct contrast to the instrumentalised uses of participatory arts which avoid criticism and dissent and are deployed to ameliorate and support the processes of urban renewal.

Therefore, while publishing gentrification-critical articles can aid gentrification processes, this does not mean that resistance has been co-opted by gentrification and did not have its intended effect. It is as impossible to ascertain how many people have chosen to live in Deptford after reading the articles and blog posts as it is to know how many people felt compelled to act politically. What I do know through feedback via social media, word-of-mouth and collaborations is that following my publications, many people shared my articles and blog posts with further political comment, came to Deptford to show solidarity by joining

protests, offering aid or emotional support, donated money to campaigns and community centres, helped with contacting councillors to trigger (re)action and wrote further gentrification-critical articles, including in local and national main media outlets. Some also fed back that my blog posts made them more critical of the processes of gentrification.

The regular, widespread and widely shared publications, which caused ample negative publicity for Lewisham Council and its developers, including housing association Peabody, forced Lewisham Council to (re)act. Even though this meant changes in tactics and attempts to vilify and silence dissenting voices, it also resulted in victories for campaigners and residents. This evidences that publications had the desired effect: they intervened in the aesthetico-political regime of state-led gentrification in Deptford. The blending of academic research with housing activism made visible and audible alternative gentrification narratives in the public sphere. Linking up with housing campaigns, community groups and residents across London on alternative media made noise that could not be ignored.

There is, of course, also the danger of delayed commodification. As with the legacy of earlier community arts and activism, including the fight for racialised people to gain their right to the city, once a safe distance from the original political goals has been achieved through the passing of time, resistance becomes a tool for fashioning "authentic" urban spaces. Whereas parts of Deptford were perceived as no-go ghetto areas in the 1970s and 80s, with the police supporting fascists and the state spreading anti-immigration propaganda, today local authorities celebrate the legacy of Black resistance and the multicultural city, and the presence of "rude boys" makes the area attractive to young urban creatives. The campaigns in this research project and the project itself, particularly the book, may be used by authorities in the future to celebrate the area's radical history once safe distance has been gained. This does not mean the struggle was ineffective or that people should not engage in creative dissent. If there was no grassroots resistance and if people in power were able to implement all their policy ideas without scrutiny and criticism, disadvantaged communities could potentially face more disadvantage than they already do. For, even if the structures of power are never dismantled, resistance is about making life more liveable, of working in the cracks of power to achieve small-scale changes so that poorer communities can find

opportunities for human fulfilment too. This research joined local grassroots efforts and helped achieve small changes.

Further research

This thesis has offered a detailed account of how a scholar-activist doing displacement research can get involved in anti-gentrification struggles and how research data can be adapted for immediate use and dissemination as part of housing activism. It has elaborated on the collaborative aspect of working with campaigners and residents, proposing a methodology that fosters co-authorship and alternative forms of representations created by, with and for participants, which can bring across more fully the depth of the emotional pain the violence of un-homing causes. It has examined the kinds of deliberations and considerations necessary for doing public sociology with an ethical, creative and activist sociological imagination. This has been explained above and in Chapters 2 and 6. Here I want to consider further points relevant for research of this kind.

Firstly, and as this thesis has demonstrated, social justice research requires financial and emotional resources that are usually not available. It also requires a lot of time, another resource in scant provision. Chapter 2 has examined the time-consuming and emotionally-charged aspects of research following the ethics of care model, particularly in a project with one researcher/artist collaborating with approximately 160 people, working in the "field" for over 2 years almost full-time (and over-time). It has described the emotional burden of having to constantly deliberate and change one's approach to respond to participants' needs and working an untenable number of hours while experiencing anxiety, sleeplessness and worries about unrealistic expectations. There is also the added anxiety and vulnerability from doing public sociology and opening oneself and the research up to public scrutiny from multiple publics including counterpublics, who often react aggressively towards those expressing criticism of gentrification. Doing public sociology also adds further time pressure on the researcher, necessitating the constant checking and responding to engagement with published work.

Researchers do not generally have this amount of time available despite funding. They also do not normally have the training to deal with all the demands made on them. Research which focuses on negative experiences is often akin to counselling or community development work, requiring researchers to deal with unrealistic expectations, absorb traumatic experiences shared with them and deal with time demands made outside the research project. Even if researchers have good mental health and the best intentions to redress power relations, the emotional burden is a lot for one person to carry in a project this size. Furthermore, the usually tight project span and the need to determine success in funding applications to justify the outlay to funders does not allow for the unconstrained exploration of methods as conducted in this research. Being awarded an AHRC-doctorship from CHASE not only removed worries about bills and freed me from many work commitments, it also removed the need to measure success in economic terms as the funding body is keen for doctoral students to experiment without requiring particular outcomes. CHASE are also keen for academic research to reach and communicate with audiences outside academia and offered additional funded time and funds for the publication of the book. Even so, this research project involved a significant time and emotional investment which was at times difficult to manage. With other funding unlikely to offer similar opportunities as this doctorship, a research project of this kind and size needs to be conducted by a research team, where team members can share the workload and support each other through difficult moments and throughout the whole process.

Secondly, this kind of open and flexible approach to research requires a certain skill set or at least the willingness and confidence to deal with the unknown and unexpected. I was an English language teacher for 11 years abroad and in the UK and now work as an English for Academic Purposes Tutor at University of the Arts London. I was trained in the communicative approach where the teacher is seen as a facilitator who creates the conditions for interaction and learning. I am used to working with people from different backgrounds, experimenting with different materials and methods, responding to difficult situations and adapting lessons and workshops spontaneously to respond to unexpected scenarios. I had never conducted a drawing or Lego® workshop before this research, nor had I ever worked with school children. However, my skill set, experience and appreciation of the unknown gave me the confidence to do so.

I have also been a photographer for 25 years, doing my training in the 1990s and photographing and collaborating with community groups in a variety of ways in the UK and abroad.[52] I have exhibited and written about my work and am therefore used to writing, publishing and responding to feedback. I also completed an MA in Photography and Urban Cultures at Goldsmiths and support students on the MA Photojournalism and Documentary Photography at London College of Communication. I am therefore familiar with photographic theory and current debates in photojournalism and documentary photography, as well as photographic practices that are in direct opposition to the practice I advocated in this research. This, my teaching experience and experience in working with communities have equipped me to conduct this research on my own: as researcher, facilitator of participation, workshops and artwork production/inclusion, photographer, writer and journalist, campaigner and participant in local events. However, taking on all those roles simultaneously involved a significant time commitment. In other research projects of this kind, tasks and skill sets may be shared out among a research team.

This brings me to my final point. If 21st century sociology strives for greater public engagement, reaching wider audiences and working towards social justice agendas, I urge, alongside a repoliticisation of participation, a reconsideration of the visual, or rather the creative, in Visual (public) Sociology. In other words, a reconsideration of the role of aesthetics (artistic quality) and the skilled/trained creative practitioner. With Visual Sociology sitting at the interstice of sociology and art, visual research should entail rigorous sociological methods *and* aesthetically compelling creative output. Sociological research demands a trained sociologist. It follows that visual material in public sociology should be produced by, or under the guidance of, a skilled practitioner (photographer or otherwise) to help create visually and politically strong work that can be platformed outside the discipline. As argued in Chapter 2, the researcher does not have to be the photographer/artist and this approach does not mean less ethical or less democratic engagement with participants. This research has shown that "good" creative activist research is an encounter of multiple participants, knowledges and skills, optimising participation to produce the best possible outcome for the purpose at hand.

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Final remarks

This thesis has attended to the messiness of working collaboratively, creatively and politically, of merging traditional social research methods with a radical community arts project, intermingling the knowledges and practices from above and below, turning social research into political activism and political activism into social research. Creative activist research is a delicate balancing act between research and creative output, community and art, ethical and aesthetic considerations, and between academia, arts and activism to perform the function of the political.

This research and thesis have offered an example of how research might get involved in effecting social change, offering a methodology that not only generated alternative gentrification and displacement narratives but used them as part of housing activism. It has shown that research can do more than answer a question and generate sociological insights published in a scholarly text and potentially inform policy. It can collaborate with housing campaigners, community groups and residents to help resist the uneven aspects of urban policy; it can develop participants' critical consciousness, political agency and feelings of worth; it can include people from various backgrounds in critical discussions and art-making, making participants feel valued and recognised and strengthening their sense of belonging and place attachment; it can produce alternative and richer forms of representation, change ways of disseminating academic research, reach and engage with more varied audiences and encourage political debate. In sum, it can get involved politically and effect social change. This research has made a unique contribution to displacement research, participative visual research methodologies and activist work. It has made a case for a Radical Visual Sociology.

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Appendix A: Research Timeline (following the order of articles in the book)

Participants	Place	Research activities	Time frame
Tidemill Community and Reginald House residents	Tidemill Garden and the streets of Deptford	Documenting the campaign in photographs and texts; supplying photographs for use; photographing and interviewing community members and residents to be evicted; running workshops and participating in campaign events; helping residents in meetings with councillors; co-writing and co-editing texts; inviting new artworks and including campaign artworks; checking progress on individual pieces of writing; publishing **regular** posts	September 2017 – May 2019
Boating community and maritime enthusiasts	Houseboats and The Albany	Photographing and interviewing; collecting archival material; co-writing and co-editing texts	March 2018 – April 2019
Meet Me at the Albany (over 60s arts club)	The Albany	Meetings with group leaders; interviews with members; co-planning photography walk; participatory photography walk in Deptford; photo-elicitation session; co-editing texts; presentation of photographs to members	April – September 2018
Marion and Michael	Deptford Lounge	Participating in weekly conversations; interviewing; co-editing text	October 2017 – March 2018
Year 6 pupils from two different schools	Deptford Lounge	Running two drawing/Lego® workshops	August 2018
Jade and family	Deptford Lounge	Interviewing and running a mapping workshop; co-editing text	May – June 2019
Annette Butler	Deptford Lounge	Offering support for writing own contribution; checking progress; co-editing text; sourcing images	October 2017 – December 2018

Alec and Kevin	The Waiting Room	Sourcing previously written texts; interviewing; sourcing images; co-editing text	August 2018 – June 2019
Simon	Goddard's Pie & Mash	Interviewing; photographing; documenting events; co-editing text	July – October 2018
Muhammad	Roots Fruit & Veg	Interviewing; photographing; co-editing	February – March 2019
DAGE Pensioners and staff	DAGE	Visiting pensioner's pop-in; interviewing and photographing; co-editing	October 2017 – April 2018
Armada Pensioners and staff	Armada Community Hall	Participating in creative activities and events; interviewing and photographing; documenting events; running a Ketso workshop; co-editing text	October 2017 – March 2018
Carol Kenna	Twinkle Park Trust	Offering support for writing own contribution; checking progress; co-editing text; sourcing images	February – December 2018
Jacky Jones	Armada Community Hall	Offering support for writing own contribution; checking progress; co-editing text; taking photographs	December 2017 – January 2019
Garry Lengthorn	Armada Community Hall	Offering support for writing own contribution; checking progress; co-editing text; sourcing images	October 2017 – April 2018
Charlie Baxter	Armada Community Hall; Scouts Hall	Attending, documenting and photographing events organised by Charlie; interviewing; co-editing texts	September 2017 – September 2018
Children attending Scouts training	Scouts Hall	Interviewing Scout leaders; planning workshops with Scout Leaders; running a drawing and Lego® workshop; running a photography walk; photo-elicitation session; getting approval from parents	October 2017 – September 2018
Volunteers and members of Evelyn Community Store	Evelyn Community Centre	Interviewing, observing and photographing the store; running a collage-making workshop; co-editing text	March – May 2019
Volunteers and members of Pepys Resource Centre	Pepys Resource Centre	Frequent visits; participating in and photographing and observing events; running a drop-in workshop; co-editing text	October 2017 – June 2019

Paul Clayton	By email	Offering support for writing own contribution; checking progress; co-editing text; sourcing images	March – May 2019
Maureen Vitler	St Nick's Church; Evelyn 190 Centre	Interviewing; photographing; co-editing	March 2018 – April 2019
Homeless people	999 Club	Arranging and planning a workshop with 999 Club staff member; running a mapping workshop; interviewing and photographing; co-editing; checking with centre staff	January – March 2019
Achilles Street campaigners and residents	Achilles Street area	Photographing and documenting campaign events; supplying images for use; helping with campaign video; interviewing and photographing residents and shopkeepers to be evicted; co-editing texts; sourcing design materials; publishing **regular** posts	October 2017 – December 2019
Members of Goldsmiths Anti-Racist Action group - GARA	Deptford Town Hall	Running a mapping workshop; co-editing text	May – June 2019
Other groups and individuals (including unpublished work)	Various places	Interviewing, inviting contributions	Various dates throughout the whole research process

Timeline of publications:

Platforms and activities	Dates
blog posts on www.deptfordischanging.wordpress.com	October 2017 – July 2020
Designing of book	July – December 2019
Book launch	24 January 2020
Making book available online on: tinyurl.com/deptfordischanging	April 2020

Appendix B: Case study of a mixed-methods approach including interviewing, a focus-group, community photography and photo-elicitation with older people

In the first meeting with the programme director of Meet Me at the Albany, a creative arts club for the over 60s, I asked whether there might be interest of Meet Me members to participate in my research and suggested possible workshops. While interested in the workshops, the director asked me if I could first do interviews with people who live in Deptford. This was to establish a rapport but also because they said members enjoy talking about Deptford.

I was introduced to the group in February 2018. Whilst the first few conversations were sadly fruitless due to issues of dementia and general ill health which reduced members' interest and ability to speak, later conversations with other members entailed personal memories of Deptford. One gentleman in particular was very excited to talk about his family history in Deptford, sharing his knowledge of maritime history and personal memories of people and place. He'd even brought in copies of old images of ships, streets and residents to show me. Although the conversations about Deptford memories did not directly relate to the theme of regeneration, the stories revealed insight into people's emotional connection to Deptford as place, giving an indication as to why displacement is so "painful". It made me think about the connection between place attachment and the violence of displacement. During later meetings, some members also shared their views and experiences of regeneration, highlighting the kinds of things that older people worry about (prices, cyclists, narrow pavements, broken lifts, steps).

After the interviews were completed over a few weeks, I had another meeting with the director, where I was invited to take interested members on a photography walk (something I had suggested in the initial meeting). They were planning i-pad training for members to learn to take photographs digitally and the walk could be an opportunity to try this out. We set a date for a focus-group meeting with participants to decide the route. On that day, five people participated and had a very clear idea of where they wanted to go. Together we mapped the walk, factoring in length of route, resting places and walking speed. On the day of the walk the temperatures reached over 30 degrees Celsius, meaning the walk had to be cancelled to protect members from dangerous heat levels. We postponed by a week.

When I arrived on the new day of the walk, I was told that the i-pad training had not gone well and was asked whether I could use the digital camera from the organisation. Luckily, I had also brought two digital cameras and my phone. I quickly tried out the organisation's camera while some members were already waiting outside. There were two volunteers and four members: two with walking sticks, one in a wheelchair, one with a Zimmer frame. Only three had experience with taking photographs and could take images on their own after I gave them a brief camera induction and a reminder of the walk's focus: the regeneration of Deptford.

During the walk I juggled four cameras, two of which stopped working, helped people take photographs, asked questions about the changing nature of Deptford and listened to six people speaking simultaneously, while also trying to document the walk. Three participants needed assistance with taking photographs, mostly with holding the camera (their hands were shaking due to old age), choosing the motif and helping with composition. I guided their fingers to press the shutters. It was moving to see the sense of achievement of having taken their first digital image. It was also nice to see their pride when showing off local knowledge and the excitement when learning new information from each other. There was great sadness upon learning that Tidemill Garden, which was the favourite place of the walk, was up for destruction to make way for homes. We engaged in critical discussions about past and present issues and how people are affected by these. Green spaces and air pollution were much-debated topics.

Two weeks later I returned to the Albany. I had kept note of who took which image and prepared packs of printed copies for each participant to take home. I also printed a selection in larger format for a photo-elicitation task. Only a few wrote critical comments (see example below) and some were happy for me to note down their responses, which I read back for approval. Most people just wanted to see what images

fellow members had taken, what and who they recognised and how this connected to their memories. Members simply wanted to participate in a social occasion where they could share their stories and feel valued. Participation was about inclusion and the affective quality of taking part.

I then shared all images with the organisation, who presented them to all members on screen the week after. After that, I wrote the photo-essay, including participants' personal Deptford memories, information about the walk and members' images and critical responses. I then arranged another visit to get all those involved and the programme director to read the text, inviting feedback and suggestions for changes. Not all people were present and I had to return another two times to get everybody's feedback. There were only minor changes. People were more interested in when the article would be published and when they could see the book. In the meantime, another artist had written a song about Deptford with Meet Me members. It was a follow-up task to the walk and so I asked whether I could publish the lyrics with the article. They agreed. Once I had collected approval and signatures from all participants, the article was published on the *Deptford is Changing* blog and later in the book (see Strasser, 2020, pp. 81-88).

After designing the book, I returned for another planned visit to show the group a proof copy of the book and put feelers out for potential speakers at the book launch. The gentleman whose family came from Deptford, and a volunteer who had been on the walk and with whom I worked on other occasions eagerly agreed. Others just wanted to attend the event. The Albany organised transport and volunteers to accompany members to the book launch. A couple of weeks after, I was invited by Meet Me to do a mini book launch at the Albany, to enable further members to engage in discussions about the project. I was also asked to do more projects like this.

THIS PHOTO REPRESENTS HOW PEOPLE ENJOY AND USE TIDEMILL GARDEN AND HOW SAD IT WILL BE WHEN THE COUNCIL DESTROYS THIS BEAUTIFUL GARDEN.

Image and comment by Fred Aylward, local resident, campaigner and artist, and volunteer at Meet Me. The image depicts a typical scene in Tidemill Garden: musicians rehearsing and having fun. The image and text are comments on the decision by the council to destroy the garden because "it was not being used".

Appendix C: Examples of campaigners and journalists using my images in social media posts and articles

The Tidemill Campaign using my images for posts on https://www.facebook.com/savetidemill

ARTICLES

Refurbishment Is the Dirty Word We Should Be Using, Just Look at the Achilles Street Estate

by Andy Worthington
22 October 2019

Anita Strasser

Imagine living on a council estate and being given a ballot on the proposed destruction of your home as part of a 'regeneration' plan. Imagine that the council makes all kinds of lavish promises regarding your future housing and security, but then refuses to back up these promises with anything resembling a legally-binding contract. This is what's happening at Achilles Street.

Achilles Street is a post-war estate in New Cross in south London. It contains 87 homes and associated shops and businesses, all of which Lewisham council wants to destroy for a new development of 450 properties. On September 18, the council's mayor and cabinet approved a ballot regarding the estate's demolition and 'regeneration', which began on October 18 and will conclude on November 11, with the results to be announced by November 18.

The obligation to ballot residents was introduced by Jeremy Corbyn at the Labour party conference two years ago, and has become Greater London Authority (GLA) policy under current mayor Sadiq Khan, who, in July 2018, introduced a new requirement that "major estate regeneration schemes involving any demolition of social homes must have the backing of existing residents before they can receive City Hall funding."

Big promises, sweet nothings?

In June, Lewisham council began a charm offensive on the Achilles Street estate, refurbishing a community flat and setting up drop-in sessions every Wednesday at which an outside consultancy — and council officials — have been sweet-talking residents over tea and cake, making them promises that they, crucially, cannot commit to keeping.

In the offer being made to residents and leaseholders, existing tenants are being promised like-for-like rents for life. Meanwhile leaseholders are also being promised replacement homes at no additional cost.

To current tenants the council claims, in its Achilles Street Landlord Offer, "you will continue to pay rent levels as if you had not moved...The council will still be your landlord and you will still have a secure lifetime tenancy." As an additional sweetener, it also states that "All council tenants will be entitled to a statutory Home Loss compensation payment, which is currently £6,400" — a large lump sum for those on a low income — which, "will be paid when you move."

For leaseholders, the council is claiming that it will pay "the independently assessed market value of your current home" along with "a statutory Home Loss compensation payment of 10% of the agreed value of your home."

But is this financially viable?

The council, which intends to go it alone in the development, instead of partnering with a private developer and a housing association, clearly hopes so, as it is planning for half of the new properties to be for private sale. The other 50% are described as "affordable" and the council claims that 35% of the total will be "council owned homes for social rent."

But in reality — with the exception of the like-for-like rents being promised to existing tenants — the new rental properties will be at London Affordable Rent, which is 63% higher than social rents in Lewisham for a two-bedroom flat. Some may also be at London Living Rent, which is 136% higher than social rent.

The council is disturbingly vague about these figures, because, to be blunt, they are, at present, little more than aspirations. No detailed plans have been presented to residents and no legally binding contracts have been offered that confirm the promises that are being made. If the costs of the project change — as they are certain to do — they may well find that the promises that were made vanish into thin air like a mirage.
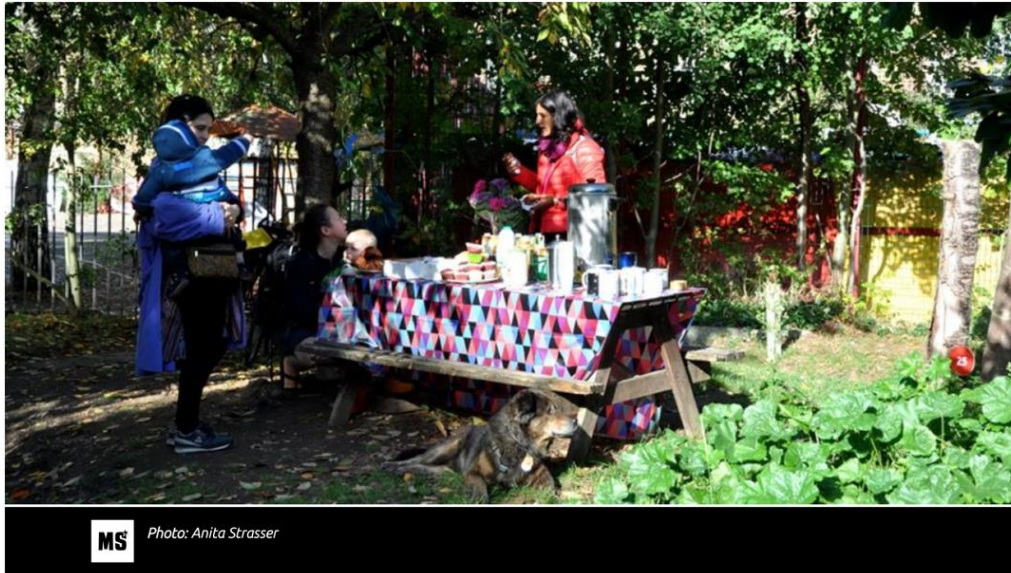
Significantly, the ballot excludes some of those affected by the proposals entirely. The shops and businesses that occupy the ground floor of the block on New Cross road will not be included in the ballot and in the flats neither non-resident leaseholders nor their tenants will be allowed to vote.

And what's more, the proposed ballot offers only two options — demolition and 'regeneration', or leaving the estate as it is —via a yes or no response to one question: "Are you in favour of the proposal for the regeneration of the Achilles Street Estate?" The wording of the question may play in the council's favour. Although the estate is structurally sound, it has been neglected for many years — a process identified by campaigners as "managed decline", which is widely recognised as a cynical precursor to regeneration plans. As a result, leaving the estate as it is may not be an attractive option to some residents.

Article by Andy Worthington, using one of my images. Article published in October 2019 in *Novara Media*, an independent, left-wing alternative media organisation in the UK. Available at: https://novaramedia.com/2019/10/22/refurbishment-is-the-dirty-word-we-should-be-using-just-look-at-the-achilles-street-estate

'Our community's wildlife garden is under threat'

Photo: Anita Strasser

LONDON'S Lewisham Council and housing association Peabody have refused campaigners' pleas against their plans to destroy the local environmental asset Old Tidemill Wildlife Garden in Deptford to make space for a new housing project.

But action group Save Reginald Save Tidemill is determined to continue its battle to protect the much-needed community space and the 16 "structurally sound" council flats next door.

Save Reginald Save Tidemill wants the council and Peabody to drop their current plans of properties for private sale and go back to the drawing board to work with the community in creating new plans for the site of the old Tidemill Primary School, which the garden used to be a part of, with homes for social rent instead.

The campaigners are also speaking out against shared ownership of the mixed properties in the current plan and the "London affordable rent," which in Lewisham is 63 per cent higher than rent for social housing.

On August 29, Save Reginald Save Tidemill occupied the garden when the council ended the community's "meanwhile use" lease in order to prevent it from being boarded up before to its destruction.

Campaigners say the action was able to get media attention through their proactiveness on social media and their attempts to engage with the community as much as possible, including regularly opening up the garden for events.

Article by *Morning Star*, using one of my images. Published in 2018. Full article available at:
https://morningstaronline.co.uk/article/'our-community's-wildlife-garden-under-threat'

A London Council Declared 'Climate Emergency' as It Destroyed a Wildlife Garden

Old Tidemill Wildlife Garden in Lewisham was a green oasis.

By Simon Childs
LONDON, GB

18.3.19   Share   Tweet   Snap

74 CROSSES PLACED BY PROTESTERS, REPRESENTING ALL THE TREES FELLED AT OLD TIDEMILL WILDLIFE GARDEN IN DEPTFORD. PHOTO VIA SAVE REGINALD SAVE TIDEMILL CAMPAIGN

As the capital basked in the hottest February on record, Lewisham council passed a motion declaring a "climate emergency". Introducing the motion, Councillor Tauseef Answar said, "We are the first generation to realise [the effects of climate change]... and we are the last to be able to do something about it. It is time to panic." Quite right. So it's a good job that dozens of mature trees were annihilated as part of a regeneration scheme a few hours *before* panic stations were declared, to avoid any embarrassment.

ADVERTISEMENT

On the 27th of February, the buzzing of an early London spring carried across the air in Deptford, south London, but this wasn't the gentle thrum of slightly confused wildlife awaking from their winter slumbers. Not far from the idling engines of an endless stream of lorries, buses and vans on the illegally polluted New Cross Road, you could hear the roar of chainsaws laying waste to Old Tidemill Wildlife Garden, a much loved nature garden.

"It was the most stunning place. Everyone that went in there went [gasps], 'Oh my god, I didn't realise it was so big and so beautiful," visually impaired resident of 24 years, Heather Gilmore, told me. "It's one of the few places we had left that wasn't monetised." And there it was, being ripped down by a contractor under the watchful eye of a private security firm. The police were standing by, as a few protesters had scaled some trees to get a better look at the destruction.

Article by Simon Childs, using one of my images. Article published in March 2019 in *Vice*, a media group which elevates young people's voices. Full article available at:
https://www.vice.com/en/article/a3b9db/a-london-council-declared-climate-emergency-as-it-destroyed-a-wildlife-garden

Appendix D: Examples of social media engagement with my posts[1]

Filter results

POSTS FROM

- ◉ Anyone
- ◯ You
- ◯ Your friends
- ◯ Your groups and Pages
- ◯ Public
- ⊕ Choose a source...

POST TYPE

- ◉ All posts
- ◯ Posts you've seen

POSTED IN GROUP

- ◉ Any group
- ◯ Your groups
- ⊕ Choose a group...

TAGGED LOCATION

- ◉ Anywhere
- ⊕ Choose a location...

DATE POSTED

- ◉ Any date
- ◯ 2019
- ◯ 2018
- ◯ 2017
- ⊕ Choose a date...

No Social Cleansing in Lewisham
24 July 2018 · 🌐   • • •

It's been a while since we dropped in on Anita Deptford's wonderful Deptford is changing website, where, as part of a PhD project, she's collecting stories from the people of Deptford about regeneration, ad how they perceive it.

Anita's latest article features DAGE (Deptford Action Group for the Elderly), based on interviews with some of the women who regularly visit its shop on the high street.

In one key passage Anita notes how one DAGE visit was "to the Old Tidemill Wildlife Garden in the summer of 2016, where they admired the wildlife, ladybirds, trees and other nature. 'It's such a lovely space with lots of kids', they said. They were horrified when I informed them about the approved planning application to build blocks of flats on the garden land, and to demolish Reginald House to make way for more flats. 'Why are they demolishing perfectly good houses?', they ask. 'Buildings in the past were built to last and to provide for everyone. These flats were spacious, and the aim was to provide decent living conditions for everyone. These new flats, restaurants and bars are all for the wealthy and not for the poor or for people like us.' Luckily, these ladies live in a secure place and don't have to worry about having to move or about housing in general. 'But we know that others are not in this position, and that a secure home is a luxury in today's standards.'"

DEPTFORDISCHANGING.WORDPRESS.COM

DAGE Part I

DAGE pensioners' pop-in – Monday to Friday 10am-1pm The pensioners...

👍❤️ You,   and 2 others   3 comments

❤️ Love   🗨 Comment   ↪ Share   ⬤ ▾

Most relevant ▾

Write a comment...   😊 📷 GIF 🏷

Press Enter to post.

No Social Cleansing in Lewisham And here's another recent article - 'Memories of an ex-stevedore', featuring Bill, who has lived for 64 years on the Achilles Street Estate in New Cross, which Lewisham Council wants to destroy: https://deptfordischanging.wordpress.com/.../memories-of.../

Anita In-Deptford shared a link to the group: **I Love Deptford.**
23 July 2018 · 🌐

This is a message to say thanks to those who have donated money to DAGE since my last post, and to say thanks for sharing the post so widely. The target has not been reached yet but every donation is much appreciated. If anyone is interested, here is a little 'report' about how important DAGE is to its members.

DEPTFORDISCHANGING.WORDPRESS.COM
DAGE Part I
DAGE pensioners' pop-in – Monday to Friday 10am-1pm The pensioners I've been meeting for tea and cake on Wednesday mornings at DAGE, Deptford Action Group for the Elderly, have been

👍❤ [_____] and 10 others   3 comments 8 shares

👍 Like   💬 Comment   ➤ Share

[_____] Glad all is going well ...
Like · Reply · 29w

[_____] Thanks Anita for everything   ❤ 1
Love · Reply · 28w

[_____] R.I.P Harry xx
Like · Reply · 28w

Anita In-Deptford
28 July 2018

DAGE Part II

DEPTFORDISCHANGING.WORDPRESS.COM
DAGE Part II
Sharon Haward works for DAGE, Deptford Action Group for the...

👍❤ [_____] and 6 others   1 comment

👍 Like   💬 Comment   ➤ Share

[_____] I popped in the the Deptford shop and put a donation in the tin. DAGE are a brilliant grass roots organisation and part of the fabric of Deptford. If you love it as much as I do, consider helping these amazing people. 👏❤
Love · Reply · 28w   👍❤ 2

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Appendix E: Continuation of the enagement with the blog post regarding the licence of Goddard's Pie & Mash Shop (continued from p. 203)

New Cross + Deptford Community Forum
© Public group

About

Discussion

_____'s post

Members

Events

Videos

Photos

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New Cross + Deptford ...

Wolf Suschitzky Photo...   12

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Silvana Kelleher Am also keen for Goddards to stay. Perhaps the community could help fundraise for the repairs?

Like · Reply · 20w · Edited   👍 1

⌃ Hide 11 replies

_____ Great idea Silvana! Do you know how we might go about it? I'm afraid I don't have that kind of experience, but I'm happy to do any design work needed.

Like · Reply · 20w · Edited

_____ Tho perhaps approach Goddards first to see if they are up for the idea?

Like · Reply · 20w

Silvana Kelleher That's Joe & my thinking.

Let us find out what's what & get back to you

Like · Reply · 20w   👍 1

_____ Yes please! I'd like to do what I can. Regeneration feels inevitable at this point, but the exclusion of the local community doesn't have to be!

Like · Reply · 20w

_____ Anita Deptford, do you think the people from Goddards would be interested in keeping the lease on if they had help with costs through community fundraising?

Like · Reply · 20w

Anita In-Deptford I'll speak to Simon today and let you know. Great idea, it would be a wonderful thing to do!

Like · Reply · 20w

_____ Thanks Anita - thanks Silvana

Like · Reply · 20w

Anita In-Deptford Just spoken to Simon. He'll speak to his family members and get back to me. It might be that it'll still cost them too much as the building is old and big. Simon was very touched by peoples support for Goddards though. We also discussed another idea wh... See more

Like · Reply · 20w   ❤️ 1

Silvana Kelleher Am happy to support this idea as the shop's in my ward & housing is my remit.

Great alternative & we could still fundraise to help with the shop

Like · Reply · 20w   👍❤️ 2

_____ Wow, how brilliant is this. Anita, what a great idea to develop the upstairs as flats. I'm still keen to get involved with my design skills. Also very happy to sit down with the family to talk about how they might market Goddards to new audiences and reach them, if they do decide to keep the restaurant on.

Like · Reply · 20w   👍 1

279

Silvana Kelleher Spoke to Simon today. His biggest need atm is customers.

Will be meeting with him again next week to find out if the family want to stay (no point fundraising if not)

Like · Reply · 19w   👍 3

[_____] Many thanks for the update Silvana. Suggest speaking to the South London Club and getting on their list. And also possibly Deptford Eats for a stall or flyering on market days.

Like · Reply · 19w

Silvana Kelleher Let's see what the family say & take it from there 😉

Like · Reply · 19w   👍 1

[_____] Absolutely Silvana. I've had so many conversations with locals about it. Everyone is rooting for the family whatever they decide to do.

Like · Reply · 19w   👍 2

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[_____] **Joe Dromey** Many thanks for this information. It does match what is actually in the article and provides a bit more background to the tale. Sarcasm and cynicism apart, the essential problem is that not enough people are eating at the local cafes and diners. Perhaps the Council could consider assisting an advertising campaign highlighting the small local businesses?

Like · Reply · 20w   👍 1

Joe Dromey Hi [____] I think some of the information reflects the facts, but lots of it is quite misleading. It asks 'how could Lewisham Council allow this?' In fact, the Council - and us as Cllrs - would be keen for Goddards to stay, as long as they can maintain the building as set out in their lease. I hope that can happen. I think your analysis is right, that some existing places struggle, and I would be keen to think about what the Council can do to support them and encourage more people to visit and spend money on our high streets. I think this is an area we need to do more on. Very keen to hear any suggestions you or others have on this, as I'm sure would Brenda Dacres who leads on town centres

Like · Reply · 20w

Anita In-Deptford Joe Dromey Hi Joe, thanks for looking into the whole issue and trying to find a way of possibly helping Goddard's to remain. Just one correction though: the article does not ask "how could Lewisham Council allow this", instead the article reports on a sentiment that was expressed in the shop when I was recording people's views. As such, it is not misleading because this is what people are feeling. Please read in context: "All the conversations that took place revolved around the closing of Goddard's. Disbelief, sadness and anger were in the air. How could Lewisham Council allow this? How could they shut one of the last remaining Pie & Mash shops in London whose history in Deptford goes back 128 years?" Thanks.

Like · Reply · 20w   👍 4
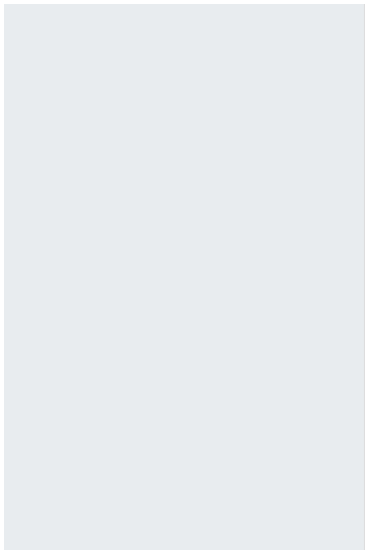
Joe Dromey Hi Anita. Thanks for the comment. I've re-read and I think you are right. I do think that some of the comments reported in the article don't reflect the reality of the situation and are misleading. But as you say, these are the views expressed to you, so I wouldn't say the article itself is misleading. Thanks

Like · Reply · 20w   👍 2

████████ Thank you both for your hard work on this difficult issue and the sensible way that it is being discussed.

Like · Reply · 20w   👍 2

████████ Given the popularity of street-food and farmers markets as well as 'foodie' quarters all over South-East London at present, could something be done to publicise the 'traditional' diners in the area at these events? Perhaps seek sponsorship from other I... See more

Like · Reply · 20w   👍 1

Further engagement with the blog post regarding Goddard's Pie & Mash

👍 Like   🔊 Following ▾   ➤ Share   ···

Deptford History
https://www.facebook.com/AnitaDeptford/posts/3364718571083
21?__xts__[0]=68.ARBLTYdXa6OD7bL3MjoORxSbE_SWpm-8-B-
KQnwsXHsP9nYrzwg4J3JNYQwvRbfrsgRdZGg9dJHCWrb2hnh7
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R

Anita In-Deptford
18 September 2018

Goddard's Pie & Mash Shop is closing
Read about it here:
https://deptfordischanging.wordpress.com/

Like · Reply · 20w   ❤️ 1

Heard some weeks ago, of the impending closure of Goddard's. Shame, with the very long history, over a hundred years. Deptford High Street was recently resurfaced through a GLA grant for the works, yet no funding for maintenance and cleaning. All Shop traders are being hit with large rent increases and/or less business rates relief.
Like · Reply · 30w

Manzies opposit lives on ?   👍 2
Like · Reply · 30w

The working class's staple eat out meal taken away from them by Lewisham's 100% LABOUR Council the so called socialist and party of the people. Don't you believe it.
Like · Reply · 30w   👍 4

↳ 2 Replies

This is not about who has the best pie and mash, but about a little bit more of Deptford history disappearing sad to say. 😢
Like · Reply · 20w   👍 5

↳ 2 Replies

This can't happen, what am I to do..... Can't stand the Greenwich one. I don't like getting older, I still hanker after Kennedy's rissoles and breakfast sausage. I'm shocked!!!

👍 Like   💬 Comment   ↪ Share

] Well, thank heavens Lewisham Council have the true interest of the locals in mind and are taking decisive action to deal with the traumatic lack of estate agents in the area. What ever would we do without a 50th identical clone house-agency? Far better than a local institution with 128 years of history... 🙄 🤔😳😟

Haha · Reply · 20w   👍😆😏 8

↳ 👥 Joe Dromey replied · 20 replies

] Is there any campaign to stop this or is it a done deal?

Like · Reply · 20w

Anita In-Deptford As far as I know it's a done deal but I'll be popping in today and if there's anything new I'll post it

Like · Reply · 20w

] Please do - it would be really sad to see it go.

Like · Reply · 20w

Anita In-Deptford] Just come back from Goddard's: no campaign unfortunately, last day of trading is Oct 7th but there is a possibility they might set up somewhere else in Greenwich borough. Let's see...

Like · Reply · 20w   👍 1

Write a reply...   😊 📷 GIF 🎟

] Wow this is the crappiest news.

Like · Reply · 20w

Anita In-Deptford Last day of trading is Oct 7th so let's all go down there and give them a proper send-off

Like · Reply · 20w   👍 2

] Awful, that this is happening. A part of Deptford High Streets unique character, will be lost.

Like · Reply · 20w   👍 2

] Omg this looks like my brother] !!!   ...

Like · Reply · 20w

] Deptford Neighbourhood Action, interviewed them on Thursday 20th September 2018. Made contact with Deptford MP and local Evelyn & New Cross Ward Councilors, to look in to what could be done to alleviate the situation.

Like · Reply · 20w   👍 3

] Looking at what can be done, with Deptford Neighbourhood Action (DNA), engaging with Deptford MP and local Evelyn & New Cross Ward Councilors.

Love · Reply · 20w   ❤ 1

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📷 Wolf Suschitzky Photo...

📅 February People Befor...

Goddard's Pie & Mash Shop is closing
Read about it here:
https://deptfordischanging.wordpress.com/

😢👍😡 Deptford Power and 11 others   25 comments 66 shares

👍 Like   💬 Comment   ➤ Share

Absolutely shameful
Sad · Reply · 20w   😢👍 3
↳ 🌐 Anita In-Deptford replied · 1 reply

The death of Deptford indeed...
Like · Reply · 20w

That's another nail in the coffin for our heritage 😢
but let's keep protecting everyone else's
Like · Reply · 20w   👍 4

This is another mail in English heritage.my grandad
and dad started taking me here as a toddler.when you walk up
that high street now you rarely hear an English voice, that's one
of the reasons places like this are going to the dogs.
Like · Reply · 20w   👍 4
↳ replied · 1 reply

Its moving to greenwich i believe
Like · Reply · 20w
↳ replied · 12 replies

The end of an era, and a sad one. I lived and
worked in Deptford and remember this place well. I - and I'm sure
many others - will be sorry to see it go.
Sad · Reply · 20w   😢 1

Traditional British grub closed down!!!
SHOCK!!! Sorry to say but as sad as this is I'm not shocked at all
😢😢😢

284

Deptford High Street
19 September 2018 · 🌐

Goddard's Pie and Mash Shop is set to close on the 7th October. Read more here:

DEPTFORDISCHANGING.WORDPRESS.COM
Deptford is changing
"The end of this shop would be the beginning of the end of my life in London" On September 1, 2018 By anitadeptford Stefan (right) and Adrian (left) in Green Onions Stefan Finnis owns Green

😢😡👍 ▬▬▬▬▬ and 30 others   11 Comments 23 shares

Like   Comment   Share

Most relevant ▾

Write a comment...

▬▬▬▬▬ Nooooooooo
Like · Reply · 20w

▬▬▬▬▬ I'm a Manzes girl but even I know that Goddard's is a Deptford institution 😭
Like · Reply · 20w

▬▬▬▬▬ How many on here actually visited the place....I mean regularly? I hold my hands up and say probably only once or twice a year and then it's a choice between them and Manzies. I like going but if everyone is like me it's no wonder they don't stay open!
Like · Reply · 20w · Edited

▬▬▬▬▬ Can Lewisham council refuse to renew the lease or is it that Goddards can't afford it? I'm new to the area and have called past last two days about 11am and both times it was closed.
Like · Reply · 19w

▬▬▬▬▬ Lewisham council are the problem for not renewing the lease they have forced loads of business out of Deptford
Like · Reply · 20w

▬▬▬▬▬.
Like · Reply · 20w

▬▬▬▬▬ ▬▬▬▬▬
Like · Reply · 20w

▬▬▬▬▬ Nooooooooooooooooo
Like · Reply · 20w

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@deptfordhighst

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"You walk around the market now and you're done in 5 Minutes. When I first started here it took 1.5 hrs, easy. Deptford's changed so much! They say up-and-coming, I'd say it's going straight down the toilet to be honest. Last Tuesday you could have heard a pin drop outside that shop, it was that quiet. Even George across the road in Manze's – we were both standing outside the shop going 'Where is everyone?' The clientele is not here no more because all the Deptford Boys, they've all moved out. Most of the people that are moving in now, they prefer deep-fried chicken or bistro or somewhere where they can get a burger for £11. They don't want old-school pie and mash, they want a Flat White from Costa for £3.50. And I understand not everybody likes pie and mash, you either love it or hate it, but people come in here and have a home-cooked meal for £3.50! I'll even throw in a cup of tea, know what I mean! We had Professor Green come in here recently, even he said, 'the people out there, they haven't got money to pay £3.50 for a Flat White.'" #Deptford

DEPTFORDISCHANGING.WORDPRESS.COM
Goddard's Pie & Mash Shop is closing
The shop front in 2010 I have recently found out that Goddard's Pie &...

👍😢😡 4   7 comments

👍 Like   💬 Comment   ↪ Share

I hear you right now, hardest thing is trying to stay optimistic.
Like · Reply · 20w

Like · Reply · 20w   😢 1

↳ replied · 3 replies

I like pie & mash, especially from this place.
Like · Reply · 20w

No connection to Goddard's Vets, I hope! 😜

286

Like   **Follow**   **Share**   ...

The Pie & Mash Club
The Pie & Mash Club
28 December 2018 · 🌐

This year has seen closures of a number of shops on the pie & mash shop scene, including the likes of Nathan's, A.J. Goddard, Mack's, Cole's and Lawsons for example. Here's an article from blogger AnitaDeptford who reported on the last day of trade at A.J. Goddard's back in October, it was an occasion mixed with sadness and celebration of the shop's legacy, where customers and former regulars flocked from far and wide to bid the shop a fitting farewell.

DEPTFORDISCHANGING.WORDPRESS.COM
Goddard's Pie & Mash shop is closed
Today was the last day A.J. Goddard's Pie & Mash shop opened its door...

👍😢😡 16   3 Comments   2 shares

Like   **Comment**   **Share**

Oldest ▾

Like · Reply · 6w

sad that they're all falling by the wayside.
Like · Reply · 6w   👍 1

Write a reply...   ☺ 📷 GIF 🎴

What next?
Like · Reply · 6w

So sad to continue to see pie and mash shops closing. Loss of culinary heritage.
Like · Reply · 6w

Appendix F: Examples of published articles on alternative media platforms

City life

MY LONDON STORY

Alongside fellow Deptford residents, Heather Gilmore is occupying a local garden to protest against regeneration plans

'It feels like we are being assaulted by concrete'

I FIRST LIVED in Deptford for a period in the '80s, and I quickly grew to love the area. In 1994, the opportunity came up to move here permanently and I grabbed it. I had never lived in such a cohesive and diverse community before. The arts were also practised in abundance: my kind of place!

In 2006, a group of us established a community arts project called 'A Madcap Coalition' to bring people together on different estates, engendering respect for each other's cultures through the arts. We organised 50 events in seven years to a great response. In 2013, we did an event in Old Tidemill Wildlife Garden. I fell in love with it the moment I walked in.

The garden was beautifully designed by a landscape architect 20 years ago and planted by the teachers, parents and pupils of Tidemill School. It's a magical place and has become incredibly important to me. I have a degenerative condition and may go blind one day, but when I come in here, my eyes are bathed in green light and it helps me cope with life. I feel at peace when I'm here.

In Deptford, there's a constant hum of digging. It feels like we are being assaulted by concrete, glass and metal monsters, as well as noise and air pollution. Amid all this new development, the garden is becoming more and more invaluable – it's priceless. A study by Goldsmiths has shown that this garden mitigates air pollution by half, in an area that's six times over the World Heath Organisation's particle limits. It also provides working-class people, who may not want to (or be able to) fully participate in gentrified culture, with a creative, healthy and affordable space to be.

Soon after discovering the garden, I got involved in the campaign to save it. Lewisham Council's developers have gained planning permission to build 209 flats here and on the site of Reginald House next door, around half of which will be for new social tenants at 'London Affordable Rent'. We want the new social housing, but not the destruction of existing community assets.

We requested a community collaborative design process, and an architect member of the group drew up alternative plans that would save the garden, but the developers and council decided against our proposals. When we were instructed to leave the site by August 29, we decided to occupy it.

Among us garden users are some amazing, creative and resourceful activists, who have used their ingenuity to build sheds, tree houses, a kitchen area and a store room, as well as to create campaigning artwork, placards and banners. We have organised many events, bringing thousands of visitors and local people to enjoy the garden and resist its annihilation. Organising events for the campaign has made me feel valued, capable and confident that, despite my disability, I can still contribute to community life.

On October 24, we may be forced by a court order to end our occupation. It is the first time in 24 years that it has occurred to me that I might want to leave Deptford. Then again, I have little choice: this is my home. That's why I will continue to resist its destruction. ■ *Interview by Anita Strasser*

→ Find out more about the campaign and lend your support at www.crowdjustice.com/case/save-reginald-save-tidemill

For more unique looks at London life, head to **timeout.com/news**

Article published in *Time Out* Magazine, 22 October 2018. Available at:
https://www.timeout.com/london/news/this-londoner-is-fighting-to-save-deptfords-community-garden-102218

Save Reginald! Save Tidemill!

Anita Strasser

For the past year, I have been documenting the Save Reginald! Save Tidemill! campaign to save Tidemill Wildlife Garden and 16 flats in council-owned Reginald House from destruction to build yet more flats in Deptford, SE8.

Lewisham Council's developers Peabody have planning permission to build 209 flats on this site, around half of which will be at 'London Affordable Rent' for new social tenants. Campaigners are keen to have more social housing, but at truly affordable rents and without the destruction of current community assets such as the much-loved garden and council block. Campaigners are also concerned about air pollution. Deptford has shown pollution levels six times over the World Health Organisation's particle limits, and a Goldsmiths study has demonstrated that Tidemill Garden mitigates air pollution by half. Campaigners requested a community collaborative design process after an architect member of the group drew up alternative plans that would spare the garden and the council block, but this was dismissed. All attempts to persuade the council and developer to meaningfully engage with them have failed. When instructed to leave the garden by 29 August 2018, campaigners decided to occupy it and launch a judicial review based on the Right to Light laws. The council then sought a possession order to evict the occupiers, but on 27 September this was deferred

in court until 24 October 2018 - seven days after the assessment of the Judicial Review application. The application was denied, and despite launching an appeal which is still pending at the time of writing, the occupiers were forcefully evicted by over 100 bailiffs and security guards on 29 October 2018. Campaigners are not giving up though; for them this green community space and council homes are too important to lose.

What I have found so inspiring about this campaign, apart from the sheer dedication and determination to fight for more sustainable development, is how campaigners and activists use their artistic talent not only to create promotional material, organise events and decorate and equip the garden, but to keep up hope and motivation despite the enormity of their struggle. Those campaigning and occupying the garden are creative and resourceful activists who have built tree houses, sheds, a shower and toilets, a functioning kitchen area and a store room, to make the garden more liveable and to raise awareness. Campaigners embrace any art form, be it photography, drawing, video, music, performance art, theatre or body percussion, and welcome anyone willing to use their skill to support the campaign. As a local photographer in the area, I have been invited to join and document the campaign and to

contribute my images and texts, which are also part of my PhD study researching the gentrification of Deptford, to be used as part of the campaign. From day one I have been made to feel very welcome and the positive and energetic attitude and atmosphere in the garden immediately rubbed off on me. Since joining, I have fallen more and more in love with the garden and have made wonderful friendships. I am also pleased that my photographs are not mere documents of a process but have gained a useful purpose in supporting the local community in fighting for more sustainable regeneration.
You can read more about the campaign on Facebook: Save Reginald/Save Tidemill.
For more on my research, please visit my blog: deptfordischanging.wordpress.com.

Article in *fLIP* magazine published by London Independent Photography in December 2018.
Available at: https://www.londonphotography.org.uk/magazine/pdf/FLIP41_bittersweet.pdf

SAVE REGINALD ! SAVE TIDEMILL !

Anita Strasser

For the past year, I have been involved in the Save Reginald! Save Tidemill campaign. The campaign is trying to stop the destruction of Tidemill Wildlife Garden and 16 flats in council-owned Reginald House in Deptford. Lewisham Council's developers Peabody have planning permission to build 209 flats on this site, around half of which will be at 'London Affordable Rent' for new social tenants. Campaigners are keen to have more social housing, but at truly affordable rents and without the destruction of current community assets. Campaigners are also concerned about air pollution. Deptford has shown pollution levels six times over the World Health Organisation's particle limits. A Goldsmiths study has demonstrated that Tidemill Garden mitigates air pollution by half.

Campaigners asked for a community collaborative design process after an architect member of the group drew up alternative plans that would spare the garden and the council block. This was dismissed out of hand. When instructed to leave the garden by 29 August 2018, campaigners decided to occupy it and launch a judicial review which questions the legality of the development. The application for judicial review was rejected by the court, and occupiers were told to

vacate the site by 24 October 2018. Despite launching an appeal, the occupiers were forcefully evicted by over 100 bailiffs and security guards on 29 October. Campaigners are not giving up though; for them this green community space and council homes are too important to lose.

What I have found so inspiring about this campaign, apart from the sheer dedication and determination to fight for more sustainable and fairer development, is how campaigners and activists have used their artistic skills.

They have created promotional material, organised events and decorated and equipped the garden, which has helped to sustain hope and motivation despite the enormity of their struggle. They are creative and resourceful activists who have built tree houses, sheds, a functioning kitchen area and store room during the occupation, along with creating artworks, placards and banners to raise awareness. They have also used photography, video, music, performance art, and other media to support the campaign. The garden has been a major source of creativity and expression, as well as a place of friendship, care and community. As one campaigner remarked: "Tidemill Garden is part of the cohesiveness of Deptford". It is also one of the last remaining green spaces in the area, providing locals with access to a bit of wildlife, nature and calm in the midst of a regeneration frenzy. Losing it would have devastating effects on the Deptford community.

'TIDEMILL GARDEN MITIGATES AIR POLLUTION BY HALF'

As a local photographer and researcher, whose PhD researches the impact of gentrification on the local

working-class population, I have been documenting the campaign, contributing my images and texts to help promote the campaign's activities. I have also launched the blog Deptford Is Changing (www.deptfordischanging. wordpress.com) to raise awareness of campaigns, to highlight the impact of gentrification on local people, and to counter the stigmatising narratives of protesters, campaigners and working-class communities. The positive, creative and energetic attitude of people in Tidemill garden that believe in a fairer society and more sustainable future has really inspired me and the garden has become an invaluable green space for me too.

You can read more about the campaign on Facebook: Save Reginald/ Save Tidemill.

Anita Strasser is an urban photographer/visual sociologist based in Deptford. She is currently in the 2nd year of her AHRC-funded PhD in Visual Sociology at Goldsmiths, studying the gentrification of Deptford and the impact this has on local residents. She works in Academic Support at University of the Arts London, supporting students on the MA Photojournalism and Documentary Photography.

Article in *Split* Sociology Zine published by Goldsmiths Sociology in December 2018.
Available at: https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/view/62257255/split-mag-issue-one

Appendix G: Examples of interest from other parties

Left: the *Deptford is Changing* book launch at Deptford Town Hall

DEPTFORD IS CHANGING

Anita Strasser's new book addresses the impact of gentrification on the people of Deptford and New Cross. She explains why she wanted to offer an alternative history of her local area

WORDS BY ANVIKSHA PATEL ■ PHOTOS BY PETRA RAINER

When photographer and sociologist Anita Strasser moved to Deptford 13 years ago, she says it was a "homecoming" – a feeling she never expected to find in a big city like London.

Hailing from a small Austrian village in the Alps, she immediately fell in love with the tight-knit community in SE8.

"I feel like I share a politics or a view of life," she says. "People look after each other here. I find that really important."

From working with community activists to collaborating with her neighbours, the people of Deptford have since been the subject of many facets of Anita's work. Now her latest self-published book *Deptford is Changing* gives a voice to the very people she has made a connection with.

The book is an academic study spanning 260 pages of photographs, essays, interviews and poetry from more than 160 residents of Deptford and New Cross, narrating their experiences of adjusting to the march of regeneration and gentrification in the area.

Anita says the idea stemmed from her first foray into documenting the history of Deptford. For her master's dissertation, she photographed her neighbours for a project on the local community.

Then in 2011, she published a photography book, *Deptford High Street*. "Photography isn't just about the image. The image is part of it, of course," she muses. "But the image is the beginning of the story rather than the end."

The camera is her way of meeting people. "It gives me the incentive to start conversations," she says. "Because otherwise if you move to a place and you haven't got that, how do you start a conversation with people?"

The longer she lived in Deptford and the closer she became to her neighbours and peers, the more she heard of the struggles under austerity and gentrification.

"You build very close relationships with people and the trust that you build up, as you visit people in their homes, becomes very personal. I can identify with the stories that they're telling me."

It all came to a head when Anita decided that as part of her PhD research, she would start documenting people's stories.

"We're sold a particular version of Deptford," she explains. "But there are so many hidden stories that are not being told."

The stories she speaks of include testimonies from residents and business owners from the Achilles Street estate in New Cross, which is facing demolition by Lewisham Council, and the residents behind the Save Reginald, Save Tidemill campaign.

The stories of people's lives being uprooted as a result of gentrification are heartfelt, raw, and sometimes difficult to read, which is intentional, Anita says.

"We need to hear people's stories to actually really understand what Deptford means to people and why the change is so painful, because some people really feel like the floor is being ripped from beneath their feet," she explains.

"There are stories in there of suicidal thoughts, of not knowing where to turn, anxieties and an increase in mental health issues because people are losing their homes."

Change is not just infrastructural, it's also sociological. The new tower blocks that are built are not accessible to everyone because there is not enough social housing, which pushes the working-class demographic out of the area, Anita says.

"There are spaces where you feel symbolically excluded and they seem to be for people of a certain income bracket," she explains.

"People are savvier than they're being given credit for. But you are very aware of what else that means once that [tower block] arrives.

"The consequences are stark, and again, that's not the [new] coffee shop in itself, but it's the rising prices. If people could afford to live here, and if there are spaces for everybody, I don't think regeneration would be quite as contentious as it is."

At the same time, *Deptford is Changing* also aims to celebrate the people of Deptford, or "Deptfordites" as one resident calls them. It shines a spotlight on the area's "amazing community spirit", as well as the "ethics of care and social solidarity that is so typical of Deptford".

It features countless examples of thriving arts spaces, opportunities for creatives and stories of residents running community services outside of their paid work.

Some of these take the form of personal essays or interviews, while others have been written by Anita due to time constraints.

"Many people work two or three jobs and then have caring responsibilities because they've got ill family members or their own mental health issues or school runs. And on top of all of that, they still manage to volunteer and look after other people."

Deptford is Changing is representative of a certain life experience in Deptford. "I just wanted the book to be an alternative history and a counter-narrative to the one that we're used to. What is really important is that it's supposed to be a platform for those voices," Anita says.

The book has been well-received by residents, with one describing it as "seriously moving on many levels"; a "record of people's lives and an alternative history that will endure beyond this moment".

Anita's highlight from the two years of research was seeing how connected people are and how strongly they identify with the area.

"You begin to understand why the change is so painful to some people," she says.

"Identification is really important. You identify with where you live, and that's stronger I think in Deptford than in other places."

> **"**
> We're sold a particular version of Deptford, but there are so many stories that are not being told

To read *Deptford is Changing* online for free or to buy a copy, visit deptfordischanging.wordpress.com

Article in *Lewisham Ledger*, a south London newspaper, in August 2020.
Available at: https://issuu.com/lewishamledger/docs/issue_12_of_the_lewisham_ledger

Deptford is Changing: Garry's Deptford Story

Deptford is Changing

Lewisham Libraries
7 May at 05:00 · 🌐

For our second episode of Lewisham Voices, we have two videos for you. This is the first. Deptford is Changing by Anita Strasser contains essays, interviews, poetry, song lyrics, hand-written comments, drawings, paintings, models, maps and artworks of all kinds and 400 photographs – all in response to the changing face of Deptford. The content was produced in dialogue with over 160 residents.

Garry Lengthorn's story from the book is read by Alice Lemmard, with permission from Anita Strasser. Alice went to Rachel McMillan Nursery School in Deptford and grew up living on the Greenwich side of Creek Road. She currently lives in Lewisham and works in the Library in Deptford Lounge as a Community Engagement Team Senior Library Assistant which is where she met Anita Strasser. Alice considers Deptford is Changing a 'Wonderfully put together book with real insights into the people I see every day. Nice to uncover their stories and see Deptford from other people's perspectives. Deptford is changing and I am proud to be a part of that.'

Anita Strasser carried out the research for the book as part of her PhD in Visual Sociology (Goldsmiths), which was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC).

If you have any questions about this research, please contact Anita.Strasser@gold.ac.uk

https://deptfordischanging.wordpress.com/

https://deptfordischanging.wordpress.com/.../garrys-deptford.../

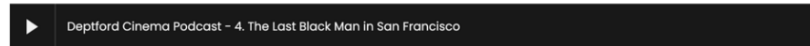👍 10   1 comment 5 shares

↪ Share

Audio story by *Lewisham Libraries*, published in May 2020. Available at:
https://www.facebook.com/LewishamLibraries/videos/deptford-is-changing/3196852543680132

CAROLINE JUPP · JULY 21, 2020

4. The Last Black Man in San Francisco

▶ Deptford Cinema Podcast - 4. The Last Black Man in San Francisco

Listen on Apple Podcasts   LISTEN ON Spotify   Listen On DEEZER

Episode 04 - 21/07/20

Deptford Cinema Film and Book Club discuss the movie, *The Last Black Man in San Francisco*, in light of the gentrification of Deptford.

In this episode, Caroline, Tashi and Ben chat about one of the outstanding movies of 2019, *The Last Black Man in San Francisco*, the semi-autobiographical story of Jimmie Fails, who tries to reclaim his childhood home in a gentrified area of San Francisco.

We are delighted to be joined by Anita Strasser, artist, activist and author of *Deptford is Changing*, to talk about her new publication, which is all about the impact of gentrification.

NB: The podcast was recorded in April 2020 before the death of Floyd George and the resulting Black Lives Matter campaign. We believe our conversations may have had a different focus if recorded more recently.

Participants

DC Volunteer Hosts:
Tashi, Ben and Caroline

Guest: Anita Strasser

Podcast with *Deptford Cinema* in July 2020. Available at: http://deptfordcinema.org/podcast-episodes/ep4

Deptford is Changing

Anita Strasser talks to **Les Back** about her book and PhD Research
3 August 2022

In this edition of Street Signs, Les Back meets visual sociologist Anita Strasser and talks to her about her book Deptford is Changing. This unique document of south London urban community is produced through a combination of photographic portraits and vivid life stories. Anita tells Les about her desire to create a collaborative sociology that really captures the spirit and defiant hope of this place, while at the same time showing the threats posed by property development, austerity and gentrification. Unlike other academic research on urban community that extracts information, this book creates a sense of community at the heart of the research process itself through collaboration that residents participate in and authorise. Deptford is Changing is a compelling example of how to write a hopeful sociology and in this edition of Street Signs we learned how it was achieved.

Deptford is Changing is available over the counter at The Word bookshop in New Cross, London SE14. You can also read it online for free at deptfordischanging.wordpress.com/

Podcast with Professor Les Back in *StreetSigns*, published in August 2022 by CUCR (the Centre for Urban and Community Research at Goldsmiths, University of London). Available at: https://streetsigns.online/DEPTFORD-IS-CHANGING-Anita-Strasser-talks-to-Les-Back-about-her-book

Appendix H: Anne Caron-Delion's statement read out during the book launch on 24 January 2020

How did I get involved in this event?

I came across Anita in Spring 2018 sitting at a picnic table in the fresh air of Tidemill Wildlife Garden. The air was made fresh by the 124 mature trees and shrubs that had grown there. The occasion was a meeting to plan activities that would draw attention to the proposed demolition of council homes at Reginald House, and to put pressure on the council to re-draw plans for the development that would accommodate new homes on the site while keeping Reginald House and Tidemill Garden.

Anita had created a memory board, with historical and new photographs, as well as post-it notes for people to share their experiences of the garden, and which I added to. It felt surprisingly welcoming to be represented here and to recognise others in photographs. In her own way Anita was an active participant in the Save Reginald/Save Tidemill campaign. She ran her workshops with garden volunteers and brought community groups such as Meet Me at the Albany to the garden. She consistently documented the events organised by other garden volunteers (like children's events, drawing workshops, live music, local election hustings and Jamaican Independence Day) and also a long string of public protests way too numerous to mention but including the occupation, the violent eviction and the protest camp that ensued. Her images taken with sensitivity by someone who fully understood the context were invaluable and they were used in press coverage, blogs, publicity material and our social media.

Anita was actively involved – which is why this book is not just an academic study by a sociologist observing communities in Deptford. She has managed to bridge 2 communities – the academic (Goldsmiths Uni) and the local (people living & working in Deptford who are effected by regeneration). The stories in her book wouldn't be possible if it weren't for the trust placed in her and the relationships she developed with people who feature in it. It goes beyond the "hit and run" culture of television sociology.

For me this book is seriously moving on many levels. First and foremost because it is a record of people's lives and an alternative history that will endure beyond this moment.

A self-published 280 page book is an enormous amount of work and a huge commitment. And this book is now in the hands of everyone who contributed to it, owned by all of us who participated. But this memory of things that happened locally is also going to be available permanently to other audiences, in institutions like universities and in local libraries.

Gathered together these stories are an acknowledgment and a celebration of personal lives and local networks in Deptford. These are small stories, told by individuals in their own words, and in the intimacy of their personal surroundings, and for me they are a welcome antidote to the jargon and duplicitous intent of so many community consultations.

This book is not a platform for those in power who have access to the media, much of which tends to sensationalise stories and use stereotypes to characterise local protest (for eg as violent and irrational). It provides a counter to the media, the developers and the council's narratives by showing the actual financial and emotional cost of regeneration for existing members of our communities. And perhaps it will enable readers to acknowledge what others feel when they face the loss of their local community space, support network, business or home.

Appendix I: David Aylward's speech read out during the book launch on 24 January 2020

My name is David. I am born and bred here in Deptford SE8. I am an artist, musician, performer. I use non-verbal communication as my means of expression. I am a community activist, an environmental campaigner and I've been a cultural ambassador all my adult life.

I think local, I act local, I am local. I'm a localist. I love living here in Deptford and I'm very passionate about the wellbeing of its people and the spirit of the place.

I was lucky enough to be born into social housing, so I can remain here at least whilst my tenancy is secure, which I don't take for granted as my landlord is Lewisham Council. I have witnessed, since Deptford was seized by the London Borough of Lewisham in 1967, the systematic demolition of perfectly good council homes in the name of regeneration.

I am a founder member of Silo SE8, a musician's collective that has made its home here in Deptford for over 30 years. We have been pushed from pillar to post, moved from warehouse space to warehouse space, following wave after wave of regeneration scams that have bombed us out of affordable creative spaces. We now find ourselves in Mechanics Path – oops! I mean Resolution Way, or should it be called Revolution Way. In a railway arch under Deptford Station we're literally with our backs to the wall, fighting for our survival, due to the dodgy sell-off of thousands of railway arches by Network rail to Arch Co. AKA Blackstone – the world's biggest landlord.

We have just received a rent review, and Arch Co. want to increase our rent by 100% making our existence totally unsustainable. The old adage comes to mind "Think global, act local" so we have now engaged in a David and Goliath scenario. We have joined arms and have become members of Guardian of the Arches, and are well on the way to becoming the biggest tenants association ever. As we become stronger in number, we intend to stop their plan for social cleansing and cultural extinction by organising ourselves collectively, to prevent being picked off arch by arch. This is yet another expression of open rebellion as we

try to safeguard ourselves and keep on keepin' on, adding to this rich mix of community and culture that we have here in Deptford.

Now Deptford is changing. It's always been changing. Since the first Mesolithic hunter gatherer stopped here seasonally at the bum in the bend of the river Thames, now known as Deptford Beach, and on through the bronze and iron ages when burial mounds were erected on the high ground at Deptford Broadway. The Romans came and built high status posh villas with mosaic floors, probably the first wave of re-generation to be seen in the area; the Saxon village of Mereton (town in the marsh) was founded here, followed by Chaucer's pilgrims on their way to Canterbury along Watling Street; the erection of Henry 8th Royal Dockyard and the first observation of a curry being made on the street outside the Kings Yard back in the Eighteenth century. It's also born witness to the rebellions of Watt Tyler, Jack Cade and the Cornish, and more recently the battle of Lewisham kicking out the National Front, and not forgetting the battle of Deptford – the campaign save Tidemill / save Reginald – a brutal eviction leaving a permanent scar on Deptford's psyche.

And so we come full circle, we now have new hunter gathers in town in the name of social cleansing and gentrification. So watch your backs my friends, the developers and council's broom is already beginning to sweep us all away. But Deptford is still the Deep-Ford and still water does run deep. So together let's turn the tide of Deptford's changing for the better. As it says on the T-shirt

DEPTFORD IS FOR EVER.

Appendix J: Examples of social media posts during and after the book launch

Deptford is Changing, a new book by Anita Strasser was launched last Friday at Deptford Town Hall with many local people in attendance. Thank you for this book, which powerfully illustrates the actual financial and emotional cost of regeneration on existing members of our communities.

Its an emotional and enlightening read. It cuts through other narratives about regeneration by showing the lived experience of individuals and families, told largely in their own words in the intimacy of their personal surroundings. All the stories are accompanied by photographic documentation recorded with great sensitivity and commitment by Anita over about a 2 year period. The book is a testament to the trust and relationships developed over that time.

Its a joy to see this work supported by the Consortium for the Humanities and the Arts of South-East England and I am very proud to have participated as speaker in Deptford Town Hall on Friday and in the events that are recorded in this book.

This a welcome antidote to the political spin that surrounds re-development (in Lewisham and elsewhere) and the marketing jargon of developers and Housing Associations who would have us believe that its all for the best and for the benefit of our communities.

Full details of the book in the comment below.

Anita In-Deptford is with ███████ and 2 others.

Save Reginald Save Tidemill
26 January at 17:43

Via Anita In-Deptford, whose extraordinary 'Deptford is Changing' book - collecting stories and photos of the people and communities affected by gentrification in Deptford and New Cross, including Tidemill and Achilles Street - was launched at an event in Deptford Town Hall on Friday evening.

Anita says, "Full house at the book launch of Deptford is Changing. I'm still beaming from the amazing turnout, atmosphere and comments and want to thank all the local residents, campaig...
See more

Anita In-Deptford
26 January at 17:21

Full house at the book launch of Deptford is Changing in Deptford Town Hall. I'm still beaming from the amazing turnout, atmosphere and comments and want to tha...
See more

You, ████████████████ and 17 others

13 hrs · 👥

The latest Deptford is Changing blog with David (Aylward)'s words spoken at the book launch.

DEPTFORDISCHANGING.WORDPRESS.COM
"So together let's turn the tide of Deptford's changing for the better"

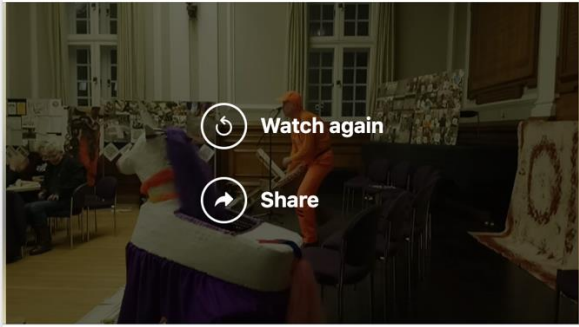👍❤️ You, and 5 others   3 comments 2 shares

👍 Like   💬 Comment   ↗ Share

Anita In-Deptford Another powerful piece!
Like · Reply · 12h

Well said David. In solidarity.
Like · Reply · 12h   👍 2

Keep on keeping on - in solidarity from Republic of Ireland. Deptford is always in my heart.
Love · Reply · 15m   ❤️ 1

PEOPLE WHO SHARED THIS

🔄 Watch again
↗ Share

Save Reginald Save Tidemill   ...
1 min · 🌐

Getting everyone's attention for the start of the book launch for Deptford in Changing at Deptford Town Hall on Friday!!!

The book by Anita Strasser, gathers stories from her blog by the same name including first hand accounts from those suffering and resisting re-generation in Deptford. Save Reginald Save Tidemill feature in several accounts, and a large section of the book is devoted to the campaign and the garden.

Tidemill will not be forgotten!

Show Attachment

🎁 Watch this video with your friends   [Start Watch Party]

❤️ Anita In-Deptford

❤️ Love   💬 Comment   ↗ Share

Entelechy Arts @EntelechyArts · 23h
"These are the best times". Ron shares some of his stories from a lifetime in Deptford for the book launch of #deptfordischanging

It's great to join Anita Strasser to celebrate her PhD research, and to mark the joys and challenges facing our local corner. #meetmeonthemove

💬   🔁 1   ♡ 6   ↑

· 24 Jan
Glad to be at Anita Strasser's booklaunch for #DeptfordIsChanging @ #DeptfordTownHall foll. #DecoloniseLib event in NX. This is what #CommunityResearch should look like: local people + researchers reclaiming space to co-critique #gentrification @thecucr gold.ac.uk/calendar/?id=1...

💬 1   🔁 2   ♡ 16   ↑

24 Jan
Community activist David opens launch of #deptfordischanging fantatsic book by #anitastrasser @thecucr @SociologyGold : 'let's turn the tide of change in Deptford for the better'
Hear, hear

Deptford is Changing
Anita Strasser

💬   🔁 3   ♡ 2   ↑

CUCR @thecucr · 24 Jan
Anita hands over to the campaigners featured in #DeptfordisChanging "so they can speak for themselves." We're hearing about the "managed decline" of Achilles Street

💬   🔁 2   ♡ 11   ↑

299

Anita Strasser did a PhD in visual sociology and did a workshop at the 999 club on the changing face of Deptford in Feb 2019. Anita wrote this fascinating book for her PhD and we're very proud to say the 999 Club features in the book . Enjoy the pictures!! 🙂

You, Michael PC and 10 others   7 comments   4 shares

❤ Love   💬 Comment   ↪ Share

Most relevant ▾

Write a comment...

Anita In-Deptford The book will soon be available for reading in Deptford Lounge, New Cross Learning, Pepys Resource Library, Evelyn Community Centre and the Pie 'n Mash Social Space on Deptford High Street and other places. If interested in buying it, please PM me.
Like · Reply · 3d   👍❤ 2

> ✏ Author
> **999 Club** Hi Anita In-Deptford This is fantastic news about the book, a huge congratulations to you!! 🙂
> Love · Reply · 23h   ❤ 1

> Write a reply...

Anita In-Deptford Thanks 999 Club for posting this and for working with me 🙂
Like · Reply · 3d

> ✏ Author
> **999 Club** Our pleasure it was a real joy to work with you and support you!
> Love · Reply · 23h   ❤ 1