WASTING THE INNER-CITY:
WASTE, VALUE AND ANTHROPOLOGY ON THE ESTATES

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Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for a PhD in Social Anthropology

Goldsmiths College, University of London

January 2013

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Abstract

This thesis considers the social implications of urban regeneration from an anthropological perspective centred on concepts of waste and value. It is concerned with the symbolic devaluation of people, their homes and communities on inner-city estates in south-east London. This process is of course nothing new, as the extensive literature on gentrification both in the UK and around the world, by anthropologists and social scientists in general, testifies. The originality of the thesis lies in connecting large scale urban regeneration programmes to small scale, everyday processes of dealing with waste in people's homes, and communally on their estates.

The ethnography connects these two levels by showing how those who live on estates often lack the most basic tools – such as lifts that work, or doors that open, or space in their kitchens – to engage in recycling themselves, meaning they are excluded and 'othered' from a morally loaded value-creating circuit which feeds into their symbolic representation as intrinsically worthless and 'other'. Meanwhile, the very same residents engage in community building in their everyday lives, producing and reproducing their estates as sociable spaces they care deeply about, even though within the confines of a framework that only recognises value in what is privately, individually owned, epitomised in the 'Right to Buy' policy that has deeply affected housing estates in England for the past thirty years, residents' efforts are either misread or ignored by those in charge of the estates.

The thesis thus challenges the misrepresentation of its main set of respondents – working class, poor, ethnically diverse inner-city dwellers - as valueless and as waste themselves, labels that are attached to them not just by media and popular

culture, but also by officers, policies and politicians, who are interviewed and interrogated at length in the course of the thesis. Furthermore, it questions the alleged parallels between processes of urban regeneration and recycling. It is easy to understand why local authorities and developers would wish to adopt the morally loaded terminology of recycling and apply it to their programmes, presenting regeneration as related to recycling in its positive connotations of both improvement and recovery of the old, be it people or homes. The ethnography shows instead that regeneration in practice is more akin to wasting and buying new, in that established residents are moved out of their homes, which are then demolished, or wasted, and new middle class incomers are welcomed in – bought anew?

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many people encouraged and assisted me in the process of writing the research proposal, conducting fieldwork, analysing the data and writing this thesis. Giving adequate thanks to all who have contributed to the completion of this project seems impossible.

My immense thanks and gratitude go to the people of Peckham, residents, officers and local politicians, who have been extremely generous and kind to me, donating their time, company, support and at times even friendship. I will not name them here as they have asked to remain anonymous, but I will remember them always. The dedication that some of them showed to their communities and their area was a great source of inspiration to me.

It would have not been possible to write this thesis without the generous financial support of the EPSRC (Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council), secured with the help and assistance of one of my supervisors, Catherine Alexander. Goldsmiths College offered further financial support in the form of a Departmental Bursary from the Anthropology Department, and also a final grant to proofread the thesis before submission. To these bodies I am indebted and immensely grateful.

The years in which I researched and wrote this thesis have been rather eventful in my personal life, and Goldsmiths College has represented not just an intellectual home but also a safe heaven to return to and focus on work when all else seemed very difficult, and painful. My great thanks go to my supervisors, Catherine Alexander, David Graeber, and Bev Skeggs, not just for their intellectual rigour and stimulation, but also for their humanity and personal support at times of crisis.

Very special thanks go to Victoria Goddard, who was always there for me even when she was no longer my course convenor and was clearly burdened with many other responsibilities, and to Josh Reno, who was generous with his time and willing to discuss and talk me through many intellectual issues I was struggling with. Sam Kelly, Cauvery Shelat, Hugh Macnicol, Rebecca Bath and Fiona Coward were always helpful, efficient, and friendly.

My fellow research students in the Anthropology department offered help, inspiration and support, as well as challenging debates: many thanks to Emma-Jayne Abbots, Muzna Al-Masri, Veronica Barassi, Emma Felber, Anna Lavis, Claire Loussouarn, Gabriela Nicolescu, Sarah O'Neill, Lia Philcox, Andrea Pisac, Theodoros Rakopoulos, Marcel Reyes-Cortez, Elizabeth Saleh, Dominique Santos, Cyril Siorat, Gerti Wilfred, and to the late Paul Hendrich.

Finally, many thanks to my family and friends, who were there for me and offered their support even if they were not always sure about what I was doing – and neither was I! In the beginning it was my mother, who believed in me right from the start, and at the end it was my daughter, who made this project more meaningful that it could ever have been, and in the middle there was me, and this thesis that, after all, seems to belong to many more selves than just my own.

To my mother, Marina,
Who made it all possible
And for my daughter, Zöe
Who makes it all worthwhile

Chapter One – Introduction

This dissertation began as an investigation into what people did with their rubbish at home. The rationale was to provide planners and architects with information in order for them to be able to plan better homes and services. Specifically, questions of waste in the context of inner-city social housing in the UK were to be addressed. This housing is characterised by communal waste disposal facilities, such as rubbish chutes and communal recycling bins, as opposed to households living in terraced, detached or semi-detached properties with individualised waste facilities. A key question was how people felt about, used and appropriated those communal spaces – or indeed how they did not.

The methods were to be the traditional ones of anthropology, namely participant observation and interviews to be written up in a final ethnography. However, right at the start of fieldwork it became apparent that the area I had chosen to study out of luck and accident, meaning simply that I had lived there before and therefore knew it quite well already, had just been through a regeneration process – a building programme that had reshaped the physical and social landscape of the area. It was clear that this process had been significant to the estates' inhabitants, who were very keen to talk about it, much more than they were to talk about what they did with their jam jars and plastic containers.

This is, of course, common in anthropology. Indeed one of the strengths of our discipline is that we adapt our questions and research to listen to what our informants want to tell us, instead of simply getting on with what our proposals, forged outside the field (a problematic expression and concept in itself, of course, see Amit 2000), set out to do. Dyck (2000), a Canadian ethnographer who similarly 'found' a field of research while taking his children to sports practice, describes this process very effectively:

> The frequently encountered serendipity of ethnographic fieldwork, where
> preliminary research plans are deftly adjusted to take account of phenomena
> unknown to or unappreciated by the ethnographer prior to commencing field

research, has encouraged the development of such mapping abilities amongst anthropologists. This capacity to connect diverse and even contradictory discourses to patterned activities, institutional interests and personal relationships that span a variety of social realms is not widely distributed within the social sciences (Dyck 2000:41)

I decided to carry on with the research as I had set out, trying to find out what people did with their rubbish at home, but also to dedicate time and space to follow what my informants wanted to tell me about, which was how the regeneration process had transformed their homes, estates and area as a whole.

During fieldwork, and even more so while at home (which was still in the field!) writing up the data, it occurred to me that there were parallels that would be interesting to pursue in these two phenomena, namely the physical regeneration of the area as a whole and the waste behaviours of my informants at home. From one perspective, they both had to do with questions of value and waste: what should be kept and what should be thrown away. I am not suggesting here that demolishing a building is the same as throwing packaging in the bin, of course. However, especially at a symbolic level, certain decisions to keep or 'throw away' houses, communities, people and things seemed to be connected.

Specifically, it seemed to me that there was a certain unspoken metaphor that equated what was happening on the estates in terms of regeneration with recycling, meaning that the general discourse promoted by various bodies and agencies – local and national government, developers and so on – was that the area was being improved, made better. However, from speaking with my respondents and observing their homes and behaviours, the facilities that they did or did not have and the ways in which they were spoken about, it was difficult to shake the impression that what was going on could also be seen as a generalised wastage of the area and its inhabitants. By this I mean that their homes were being demolished, they were told to move away and, by and large, a new affluent middle class[1] was moved into the new homes built

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[1] Choosing a definition of social class, or presenting a satisfactory literature review on the term, could easily take over the thesis, not leaving space for data nor analysis. It will suffice to say that Smith (1984) and Bourdieu (1987) have framed my thoughts on the issue, while Skeggs' (1997, 2004, 2008) work is used as an operational definition throughout the thesis.

where the old estates once stood. At the same time, those lucky enough to still have homes were systematically excluded by the state in the form of the local authority, from exactly those individualised recycling practices that seemed to be so important to creating 'valuable' citizens who 'cared' for their environment and did 'the right thing' (see Hawkins 2006 on the moral value of recycling).

I use an anthropological perspective focused on value and waste to connect large-scale urban regeneration programmes to the small-scale, everyday processes of dealing with waste in people's homes, and communally on their estates. Regeneration and gentrification have, of course, spanned their own vast literature, from Ruth Glass (1964) introducing the term regeneration in the 60's describing how working class quarters in London were being taken over by the middle classes, to the subsequent debates about production- (Smith 1979) or consumption- (Ley 1994) led regeneration, for example. In anthropology the tradition is to show how upon ethnographic investigation slums (Perlman 1976 in Rio de Janeiro being the exemplary one here), usually but not always located in the global south, do not match their popular representations as lawless, deviant and criminal, and how these misrepresentions serve the need of capital and local administrations alike.

Davis (1990, 2006) has written extensively precisely on this connection between capital and local politics in creating cities like Los Angeles which he defines as 'fortresses' of exclusion and inequality. These bodies of literature are not, however, the main subject of this thesis, their debates are not central to my argument and therefore are not, generally speaking, included in the literature review provided in the next chapter or throughout the thesis. I have of course used some literature on housing and regeneration but it is in an oblique rather than straightforward way, as I needed it, and especially in the context of resistance to and critical analysis of regeneration, which Slater (2006) argues are significantly absent amongst academics' concerns. The work of sociologist Allen (2008) and geographer Baeten (2009) is used extensively in the course of the thesis because their analysis resonates with the data I collected and my own theoretical stance, but it is not based on an extensive review of the field, which would not have been relevant given the focus is on issues of value and waste to look at processes of both regeneration, individual and communal waste behaviours.

This project is concerned with value and waste both in material and symbolic terms, as they apply to humans and processes, things, people and their communities, buildings and the content of individual and communal bins. In order to follow these different strands I will use literature from anthropology on waste processes to do mainly with objects, and sociological[2] literature on class and symbolic devaluation, the powerful, historical identification/misrecognition of dirt, waste and working class people by those in positions of power. While I am clearly bringing together a number of disparate strands, each chapter will help to shed light on different sides of these processes, while also following the core issues that run all the way through the thesis.

These issues are to do with what people value, or what value is, and what waste means. Marx's understanding of value as based in human labour is useful here, but as he himself makes clear this particular perspective, and the resulting division, and hierarchical placement, of productive vs. reproductive labour, are specific to a capitalist perspective.

> Among the ancients we discover no single inquiry as to which form
> of landed property. etc., is the most productive, which creates maximum
> wealth. Wealth does not appear as the aim of production, although Cato
> may well investigate the most profitable cultivation of fields, or Brutus
> may even lend money at the most favorable rate of interest. The inquiry
> is always about what kind of property creates the best citizens. Wealth
> as an end in itself appears only among a few trading peoples—monopolists
> of the carrying trade—who live in the pores of the ancient world
> like the Jews in medieval society....
> Thus the ancient conception, in which man always appears (in however
> narrowly national, religious or political a definition) as the aim of
> production, seems very much more exalted than the modern world, in
> which production is the aim of man and wealth the aim of production.
> In fact, however, when the narrow bourgeois form has been peeled away,
> what is wealth, if not the universality of needs, capacities, enjoyments,
> productive powers etc., of individuals, produced in universal exchange?
> (1854 [1965: 84])

Anthropologists have indeed long pointed out that from the point of view of most – if not all, infact - human beings of this planet, it is the production of people, not commodities, that is the most important activity of all, therefore the division of productive and reproductive labour does not really make sense. Kinship systems, for example, can be observed in any society and they are there to produce/reproduce

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2   Of course sociology is not the only discipline to have engaged with issues of waste and class, and considerable work has been produced in other fields, like socio/cultural geography , see for example Jackson (1993), Gregson (2007) and Crang (2012).

people in the appropriate way, ensuring they are looked after, nurtured and generally 'held' by a group of people, their kin, whom in turn they have obligations towards, often mediated through ritual and various culturally specific beliefs. What is more, even a strict opposition between 'traditional' societies, like those usually observed by anthropologists, where value is exchanged through barter, and 'modern' societies, where value is mediated through money, is hard to sustain empirically (Hart 2001).

Starting then from a Marxist theory of labour based value but moving substantially beyond it, anthropologist David Graeber (2001) gives a thorough review of anthropological theories of value from Mauss's (1924) essay on the gift onward, including an interesting take on Munn's thery of 'negative' value (1986) before putting forward his own thoughts on the matter. Other anthropologists (see Hart 2001 and Alexander 2005, for example) have long pondered these questions, of course, but in this thesis I have decided to adopt Graeber's theory of value based on action, as I found it to be the best suited to my data and the ways my respondents acted and related towards ideas of value. Graeber sees value as 'the way in which actions become meaningful to the actor by being incorporated in some larger, social totality – even if in many cases the totality in question exists primarily in the actor's imagination.' (Graeber 2001: xii). Value is, then, always expressed, produced and realised in a social context and reflected in socially agreed forms, like money, for example. It is important, however, to remember that it is not these 'forms' that are the sources of value (Graeber 2001: 47). In this sense children and grandchildren are valuable in a society or group that collectively places value on the concept of family; money in and of itself is rarely valued, as it is mainly seen as means to gain other things that are valued – cars, houses, clothes if a society values material things, for example. Money, of course, also works as a token of value: having it means that society values whatever it is that you do. This is by no means obvious and it is always useful to remember that the capitalist ideal of making money for money's sake, for accumulation, was something that Protestantism, and Calvinism in particular, had to argue for and justify before it became morally acceptable (Weber 1930).

One of the main problems when talking about value is the slippage between value and values; in the singular, value is often used/considered as objective and

quantifiable and embodied in some sort of currency, while values in the plural become a matter of morality, to do with family values, religious values, community values and so on[3]. This division is however misleading and counterproductive – for example in the way it seems to imply that value produced in the domestic sphere, at home, is not quantifiable and does not belong to the realm of exchange. This is strongly denied by Marxist sociologist Bev Skeggs (2008), who argues that this could not be further from the truth: under a capitalist system affective relations, community work and more or less any type of value produced by people is subjected to extraction and exploitation by those in a position to do so. In our society this results in middle class individuals extracting value from the working classes – not just through rent and regulated labour, but also the emotional labour of home and childcare, for example. Skeggs, whose ethnographic and theoretical work will be drawn upon substantially in the course of the thesis, also offers a nuanced explanation of how value produced amongst the working classes cannot travel up the social hierarchy and is thus not only disregarded by those in a higher classed position, but positively misinterpreted and misrecognised (1997). Power, in a Foucauldian sense, is diffused and about much more than overt control, and it structures how some people can accumulate value upon themselves to become 'valuable' individuals and others simply cannot (Skeggs 2004).

Thus, talking about value means understanding people's cosmologies and their ideas about society at large, about who they consider to be part of it, as 'the range of people who are willing to recognise certain forms of value constitutes the extent of what an actor considers a 'society' to consist of' (Graeber 2005: 452). This is an idea that Graeber has developed from another anthropologist, Turner, who also had something very important to say about value and power. Turner (1979) argued that in every society the real context is not over value per se, but over the ability to define what value is. This insight is crucial to this thesis, and somewhat related to what another anthropologist, Thompson, found out while researching something rather different. In his book, aptly named *Rubbish Theory: The Creation and Destruction of Value* (1979) he coined a definition of waste that is still used today – and will be used as a working definition throughout the thesis – that shares some substantial analytical ground with Turner's ideas of value. Thompson describes waste, or rubbish as he

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3   Alexander (2005) has argued that it can mean price (monetary equivalence), what a thing is, and moral worth, amongst other things.

calls it, as a dynamic category that mediates value between durables – such as antiques – that are liable to increase their value over time, and transients – such as cars – that are liable to lose value. He points out how it is always those at the top of their societies' hierarchies that are in a position to name and define objects as durable, therefore effectively establishing what value is.

The tensions generated when different groups of people and their values – what they consider valuable amongst themselves – clash with each other are what the thesis is about. It is about the complex situations created by groups generating value at one level – of the individual household through 'correct' recycling practices, for example, or a tenants and residents group building a community[4] on an estate – clashing with other groups trying to change an area by generating different types of values – economic, fiscal (more council tax and less benefits) and social even – for example through the interesting question of how people should live, if houses are 'the right' way and flats cannot possibly engender or support 'community spirit'. These issues are to do with what people value, how this value is expressed and produced always in a social context (Graeber 2001) vis a vis a hierarchical power structure that allows only certain types of individuals to accrue value onto themselves (Skeggs 2004) and therefore name value as they define it (Turner 1979, Thompson 1979).

I will now begin to locate this study, at first visually, through maps showing where the field site sits in relation to Greater London as a whole (Image 1), the borough of Southwark (Image 2) and Peckham itself (Image 3). I will then explain the rationale behind the practical choices I made with regard to the location of the field – why is it relevant to the questions being asked? – and the ways in which fieldwork was carried out and different methodologies were employed. This is particularly important in a dense urban context, where choosing to follow a particular route immediately means losing sight of many others, all different and potentially useful. I will conclude with an overview of the nine chapters that make up the thesis.

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4   Community is of course a fraught and complex term in itself, as Amit and Rapport (2002) and Joseph (2002) have shown. In this dissertation I avoids defining it myself and instead try to use it and explain it as my informants do.

Image 1: Greater London Boroughs, with Southwark (7) highlighted. Source: Wikipedia
http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:London-boroughs.svg
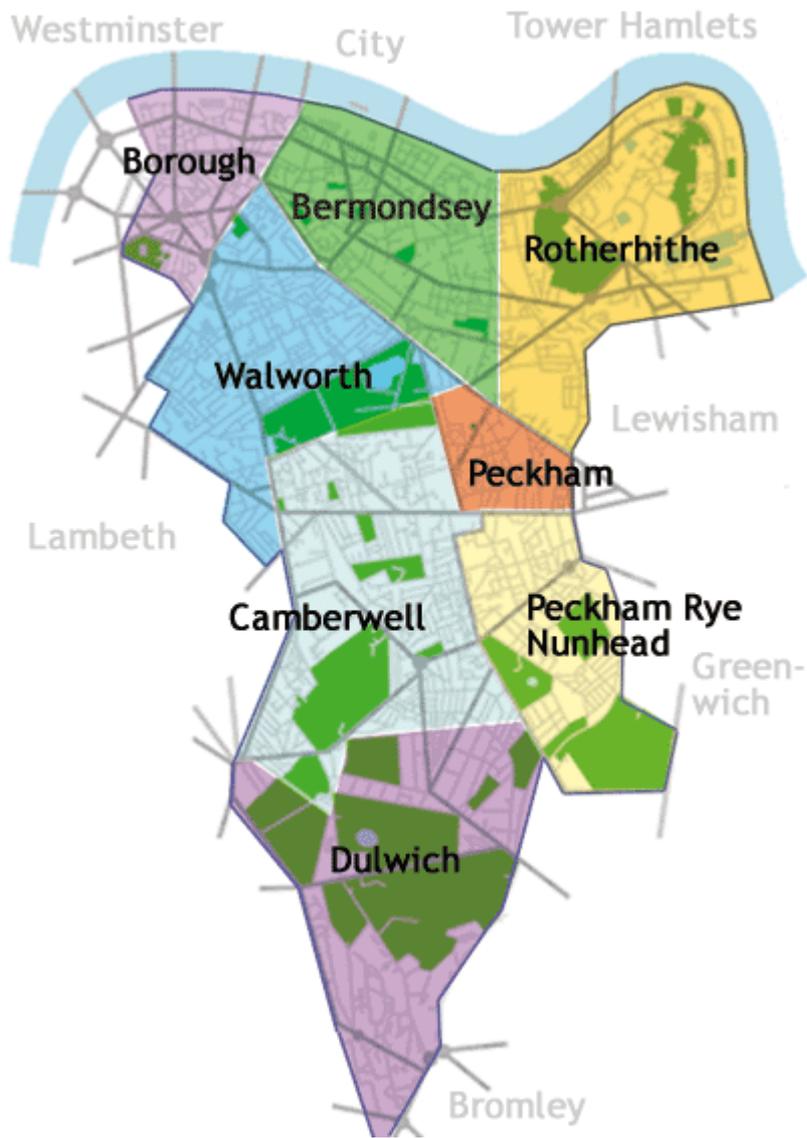
Image 2: Areas of Southwark with details of surrounding boroughs. Source: Wikipedia
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Southwark_areas.png
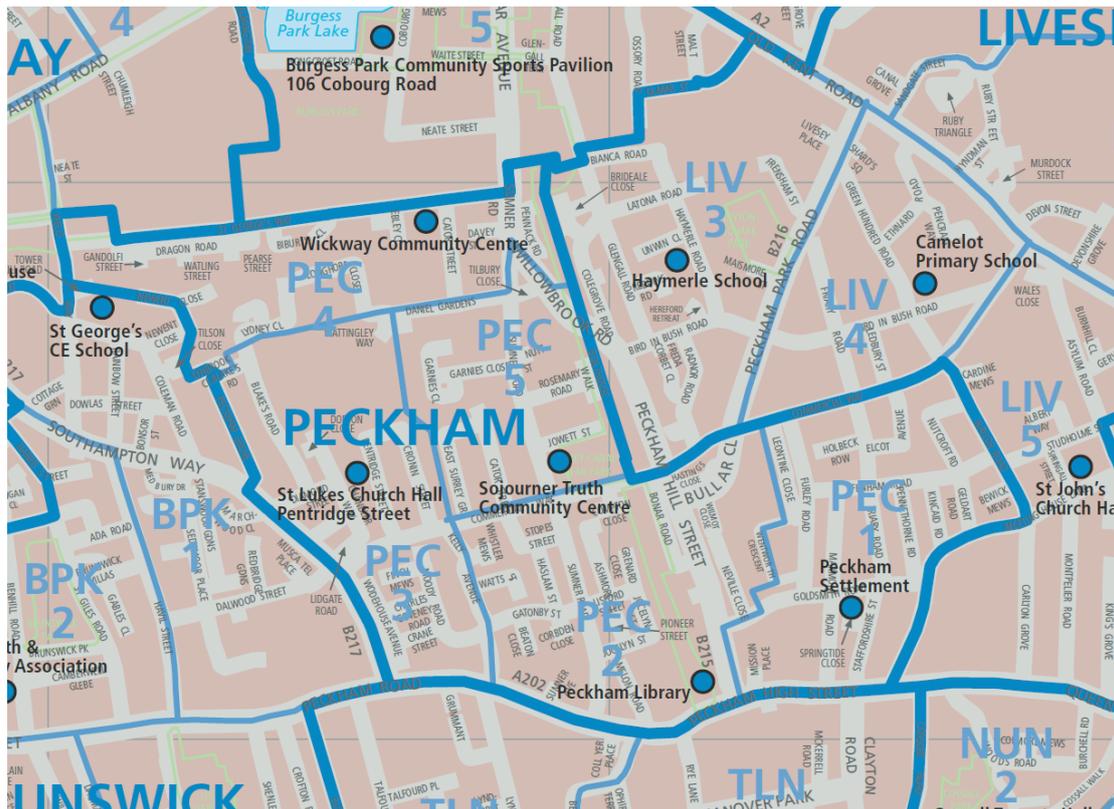
Image 3: Peckham Ward and Community Council Area. Source: Southwark Council
http://www.southwark.gov.uk/downloads/download/2246/parliamentary_constituencies_and_ward_bou
ndaries

1.1 Locating the field

Choosing a field site is never easy, and very often the choice is less analytical and more about the biographical circumstances of the ethnographer, by which I mean their place of birth, personal or professional connections they may have developed with specific sites prior to beginning fieldwork. Amit (2000) gives a convincing and comprehensive overview of the many contradictions implied in trying to separate 'field' and 'home' as if they were completely unrelated. More to the point, she questions how we can work on issues of reflexivity and positionality whilst pretending that ethnographers 'take a break' from their lives, families, selves, connections and so on while in the field, when in fact many researchers keep in touch with their departments, many travel to the field with their families or partners, and visit long-term friends while in the field. Acknowledging these intimate connections between what we think of as 'our field' and our personal lives makes our research more honest and ethically sound.

In my case, the first answer to the question 'why there' is indeed biographical. I had moved to Peckham, an inner-city area located in south-east London, to live with my ex-husband, who had lived there all his life. At a different, but still biographical level, I was interested in urban areas because I had always lived in them myself, and yet I had never encountered such stigmatisation of flats and dense urban living before moving to London, and was intrigued by it. What follows now is an account of the analytical reasons why the research site I have constructed (Amit 2000) in Peckham is relevant to the questions asked by the thesis, bearing in mind that many of the issues explored in it came out of the site, or were suggested by respondents, and therefore 'questions' and 'field' were always in a dialogical relationship.

There is a picture, a scene, a staged set that comes to mind for most British people when they hear the word Peckham. It is a representation that this thesis will aim to undermine and ultimately deconstruct, but as with racism, sexism and classism, it has to be represented and reproduced in order to be challenged. It goes as follows: Damilola Taylor was a ten year old boy; his parents had emigrated from Nigeria to Peckham a few months before, to give their family a better chance in life. He died of a stab wound, alone, bleeding to death in an empty, dilapidated stairwell. Then there was the baptism shooting: youths armed with automatic weapons opened fire on a party held in a local estate for a baby's christening. The relative who was holding the baby died but the baby, incredibly, was unharmed. And more: three kids shot dead within two weeks, all within walking distance of each other, one in his own bed, killed on some sort of retaliation mission. These are just a few of the high profile crimes that have thrown Peckham in the national media spotlights in the last few years.

On the back of these, and of the general stereotypes about inner-city areas, come an array of images in the media, exemplified by a Nissan advert for a car that was deemed 'Tough enough for the streets of Peckham'. Complaints by residents eventually had the advert changed, but what is significant is that it was launched in the first place. It is commonplace even now that Peckham has to an extent been gentrified to still read reviews of restaurants, bars or art galleries written by critics who introduce their piece with statements like 'you would never believe this but' or

'if you are not too scared to come down here'. There are relationships and connections, of course, between the actual physical violence that destroys lives, to the symbolic violence that looks down on and actively devalues a place where a lot of people live, as there are links between the structural violence that defines and reproduces poverty in the everyday lives of people and the crimes that occur in an area brutalised by need and despair. (See Bourgois 1995, Skeggs 1997 and Bourdieu 1999 amongst many others).

One of the main problems with this kind of attention is that it is always for the 'wrong' reasons, always from the outside, always painting the area with very general and negative broad strokes. The narratives created are of a nightmarish place under siege from crime, poverty and a generally undefined inner-city decline, made up of chaos and fear and high rise council flats, irresponsable single mothers and their multi-coloured children, riots and antisocial behaviour, absent fathers, drunken disorderly undeserving poor, lazy scum weighing down the benefit system, everything that the Prime Minister, David Cameron, meant when he used the expression 'broken Britain'. It is these images and stereotypes of Peckham as a gangland of danger and despair and crime and worklessness, churned out and attached to the area by politicians and media, that the thesis sets out to challenge. In this respect, it could have taken place anywhere. It is true, I would imagine, of every inner-city area that the images produced on the outside of it are stereotypical and fail to portray the complexity and richness of the lives of their people and communities. One could argue that in Peckham there are things that make this general process even worse, most of all the amplified racialising on the basis of colour coded fear: 52.5% of Peckham's inhabitants are Black, according to the 2001 Census. This is true especially for the young males that excite fears and hysteria in a clearly racialised, as well as classed, narrative of urban decline. Then again, many inner-city areas have high BME populations, so this work of undermining and contesting their representations could apply to them as well.

However this is not a study about value in inner-city working class estates, but about the circulations of value and waste brought about by urban regeneration in inner-city areas. Peckham is relevant because of the many waves of regeneration

processes[5] that have taken place there since at least the 1990s. Many of them are still ongoing, and some are described in detail in the course of the thesis, especially in Chapters Four and Five, which offer multivocal and multisited descriptions, through documents compiled by local government officers, observations as well as interviews with residents, local politicians and officers who were, and still are, involved in them. The stated aim of these processes was to improve the area, changing its built environment mainly through demolition – but sometimes refurbishment - of older blocks. These physical changes were meant to go hand in hand with, or somehow promote, improvements in the 'community' at large, with better health, education and job prospects, as well as better housing, for the inhabitants of the area. This could be summarised in an attempt to change the area into a place that people chose to live and work in – as the council put it – through demolition, refurbishment and rebuilding. There are of course many unspoken assumptions in this discourse, for example the idea that the area was not 'desirable' before regeneration, that people did not want to live there, that new buildings could deliver better jobs prospects and health outcomes and so on.

These regeneration processes attempted, with mixed and often unforeseeable results, to change and raise the value/s of the area – improving the houses but also raising its house prices, renewing its reputation as well as its facilities, and they are the focus of the thesis, in parallel with the exploration of waste practices in individual households. I look at the ways in which value is produced and reproduced in a social context, through everyday, mundane practices of waste disposal in the estates of Peckham. At the same time, I consider how, through various bureaucratic, political and symbolic practices articulated on a hierarchical power structure, the value produced by residents was, and still is, not recognised as such by their appointed representatives or the government officials meant to manage their area. Indeed, when conflict arises due to clashes of interest between residents and various agencies, it is often the case that the values produced on the estates are entirely misrecognised and translated/read instead as stubbornness, selfishness, ignorance and backwardness in the face of what government officials and representatives present as progress, but for

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5   Neil Smith has written extensively (1979, 1986, 1996, 2006) about regeneration processes, identifying at least three different regeneration 'waves' in his research.

residents is equivalent to displacement and loss of community (see Allen 2008 and Baeten 2009). By the same token, the supposedly generalised efforts to produce good citizens who care about the environment and express this 'care' through very specific practices such as recycling and composting their waste failed to include estates residents because of the semi- communal nature of their accommodation, thus denying them access to an important circuit of moral value.

1.2 Methodology

If the previous section of this introduction answered the question 'Why Peckham', and contextualised the research in its field site, this section explains what I did in practice. In order to answer it, I start by exploring and digging around the 'I' of the question, considering issues of reflexivity and positionality. I then move on to an explanation of the activities undertaken during fieldwork, and conclude by reflecting on their significance and the importance of establishing meaningful emotional relationships and exchanges during fieldwork.

Issues of reflexivity and positionality

I am a white woman, and I was in my late twenties when I began doing fieldwork. I was born in Italy, and speak English with a foreign accent that most people find difficult to place but not to perceive, usually marking me as someone nonspecifically foreign/European. I am middle class by education and marriage if not by birth, as I grew up with a single mother who struggled to make ends meet but always valued my education – low economic and high cultural capital. I have lived on an estate in Peckham from before fieldwork had begun, as my husband to-be lived there when I met him. Previously I had always lived in urban areas, first in Milan then in London, and always in rented flats in medium and high-rise blocks, before finally moving to a house with a garden on an estate in Peckham. This is significant, as most of my respondents lived in flats, and being in a house marked me out as someone with a clear economic advantage over them. Even more so because I did not just live in a house, but I owned the house, or rather my husband had bought it after a developer had acquired it from a council tenant who had used the Right to Buy scheme (more on this scheme in chapter three). While this may seem all rather too autobiographical, my status vis a vis my respondents was heavily shaped and defined

by the house I was living in, which made me amongst other thing a 'Resident' in the Tenants and Residents Associations (TRA) I was part of, meaning there were issues I was not allowed to vote on (see Chapter Six). More importantly, I had to establish myself as someone different from the diffuse stereotype of the home owners who 'don't care' and think they are 'better than anyone else' current amongst many of my respondents. In this respect, the fact that I had previously lived in rented flats and was familiar with many of the issues faced by respondents (noise, neighbours, lifts, walls too thin, rent too high, unresponsive landlords and so on) helped giving me credibility and a reasonable 'position' to work from.

This 'position', however, was obviously negotiated on a daily basis, adapted to suit my respondents (council officers, tenants and elected representatives, for example) while trying to maintain an ethical and honest stance with them all. In this context it is useful to address the question of 'fieldwork at home', which has attracted much attention in recent years. Dyck (2000) not only gives a good summary of the main issues in this debate, but offers a nuanced and perceptive account of the difficulties and challenges involved in embracing a 'field' that we did not even expect to find. From my perspective, the question of whether my fieldwork was 'at home' or not is difficult to answer, in that it took place in London, which is where my university is located – no long trips out to the field for me – but not where I was born, which by some understandings should be the same as 'home'. Of course the fact that Peckham is where I have lived now over six years, and set up home as a married woman, makes a difference; as it does the fact that for many – not all, of course – of my respondents Peckham was also not the place they were born in, but rather somewhere they have moved to at different stages in their lives. Therefore this thesis may be seen as an example of anthropology at home if one chooses to, but I do not believe this to be analytically significant overall.

More so than definitions of home as a geographical space, what did make a difference to the field was my 'classed' self. I may not have travelled far, but in terms of the social worlds we inhabited my respondents and I may as well have belonged to different planets. This became uncomfortably obvious to me when I decided to take a night off from fieldwork and go out with 'my' friends instead. It was a Saturday night and I had started going to a bingo hall with some respondents every Saturday, and I

was not keen to disrupt this arrangement, as it had created familiarity and routine between us, not to mention a good lapse of time to share stories as we travelled to the hall and back. I decided instead to go and play bingo first, and go out with my friends later. Logistically it was easy, as I agreed to meet my friends at a bus stop near the bingo hall. What I had not anticipated, however, was my respondents' curiosity in seeing my friends, and especially my partner. It made sense, of course: I spent time asking them questions about their lives, so naturally they would be interested in mine. As I approached the bus stop with my 'bingo friends' I started to worry that some of my 'personal' friends might say something wrong, inappropriate, inadvertently offensive. I felt very protective of the relationship that I had built and nourished with my 'bingo friends', not through lies, but certainly by minimising some aspects of my self (graduate, middle class, interested in the arts) and highlighting others (daughter of a single mum, tenant, interested in community issues). Right in the moment though I felt like a fraud, and did not want to be found out.

There was no need to worry, of course, as my 'personal' friends were not stupid, racist, classist nor snobs; my 'bingo friends' liked my fiancé and talking about the upcoming wedding became a great topic of conversation. What is more, they certainly did not need my 'protection', as they were perfectly capable of being around any kind of people, in their area, without needing 'help' from a student they had, relatively speaking, only just met. However, the anxiety this encounter generated was interesting and indicative of a split, a clash, a discontinuity between the experiences of people who lived in the same area and yet would not normally have talked to or met each other socially. This was even more obvious when, after a brief bus ride, myself and my 'personal' friends arrived at the South Bank, where we attended a free musical performance that took place in the foyer of a public arts centre. My initial thought of inviting one of my 'bingo' friends, who was about my age, to join us, turned into relief that I had not. She would not have enjoyed the performance (at least I thought so, and neither had I) but unlike me, I am not sure she would have had the confidence required to say so, and may have felt instead compelled to perform in a way that she may not have liked. Bourdieu's (1984) concept of the violence implied in the judgement of taste came to mind. In that space, free admission did not mean that everyone was welcome, and travelling from a bingo hall to an arts centre may have been possible and comfortable for some, but not all.

Fieldwork in practice

I may have been a middle class individual and a home owner, therefore positioned in a hierarchically superior position to my respondents in terms of - potential, future? – income, economic assets and educational capital, but none of those things made me interesting for them to talk to. It was not really a case of studying up or studying down (Nader 1972). In most cases – apart from when I was trying to get access to powerful officials and elected representatives, in which case I was definitely studying up – I was rather studying into a group of people who did not know me and needed me to do the work of convincing them that there was any point at all in them spending time with me. I made a point, out of personal ethics, never to imply or state that my work might have positive or beneficial impacts on my respondents' lives. I hope it will, of course, but I believe it might do so by providing evidence to an existing body of literature that decision makers – politicians or officials – may or may not choose to pay attention to, or have the budget to care for, and that it would have been wrong to let people believe that by telling me their story someone 'up there' would listen, take notice and change the way they did things.

Fieldwork therefore took on a rather conventional shape overall: getting to know the area, meeting a few people to start the 'snowballing' process, then trying to understand who the 'gatekeepers' were for the particular area/field/issue of interest, trying to understand how to meet them and make a good impression on them so they will help you rather than shut you out. Of course this was not easy in a densely populated urban environment where people were busy with jobs and children and various caring responsibilities. As Simmel (1950) pointed out in a seminal study of urban living, paying little attention to things and people other than those you have an active interest in is a rational adaptation of urban living, rather than a pathologised 'urban malaise' that makes urban dwellers less caring and more disconnected than, say, villagers (Wirth, 1938). It was therefore an issue for me as an ethnographer to make myself matter and be noted and accepted by my respondents.

As fieldwork was originally meant to look at people's behaviours around waste at home, the main difficulty was convincing people to allow me into their homes. The methodological difficulties of conducting fieldwork within the home

have been considered before, for example by Miller (2002) in an edited collection of works conducted inside people's dwellings. The problems lie with the intimacy required to be allowed inside the home in the first place, and then once you are there to become so 'invisible' that people just do what they normally do even when you, a stranger, are sitting in their kitchen. This is of course an impossibility, and even if it were possible it may be so in one family, if the researcher lived with them, but would then make it problematic to extend the findings beyond the household concerned. Researchers do the best they can to get data in this very specific and rather difficult situation.

Bearing this in mind, the initial methodological strategy was simply to get to know people who lived in the area, through any means at my disposal. I wanted to be trusted by them so they would allow me in, maybe invite me for a cup of tea, maybe many cups of tea, and somehow manage to blend in enough to be able to observe what they did and how they dealt with what they called waste. Using the connections I already had in the area, as I had lived there for about a year and a half before fieldwork started, I ran a few pilot interviews/chats, and started to understand that my questions needed refining as they did not seem to be relevant to my respondents. Even though I was far from 'invisible' in their kitchens, it was obvious that their range of activities to do with what they defined as waste was limited. The limiting factor was space: they did not have enough space. Enough for what? Enough to engage with the material they were discarding in any way other than 'get it out of here'. I had by this point read literature, mainly anthropological, that described a number of practices to do with discarding as a process, often one that took time but also space, where objects were placed in attics and lofts and cellars before being eventually thrown out. Clothes were sorted and kept for family members, recycling materials were stored, jars and containers were used and reused as food travelled around informal networks. (See Gregson 2007 and Hetherington 2004, for example, but mainly see Chapter Two for a fully discussed bibliography).

In stark contrast with what I had read, however, my initial respondents were keen to stress how they simply needed to get rid of stuff as quickly as possible because they just did not have enough space for anything, let alone rubbish. Emptying out the bins was a chore carried out a few times a day, often by children but

also guests and visitors as they were leaving. My questions about rubbish puzzled them because they did not see what else they should do with it other than throw it out as soon as possible. Clear, empty space was rare, kitchens were small, storage space inadequate – if it was there at all – flats themselves were small, and holding on to material things for whatever reason was difficult. In some way their attitude to what they called waste in their homes reminded me of what Allen (2008) argues about working class 'being' as dictated by issues that have to be dealt with immediately – bills to pay, work to do – without much time for reflection. Things have to be done now, the world is there banging at their door and they have to deal with it in its immediacy.

Space and class are related, of course; indeed one could argue that space is a class relation, in terms of access to space, moving through spaces and so on. What was relevant for my respondents was lack of physical space to store anything. This also applied to some middle class respondents as well, who had been keen recyclers in their previous homes, and were almost in tears while explaining to me how in their new – private, but small – flats they simply could not recycle as much as they did before as they did not have the space to store the stuff. This was similar, if possibly with less emotional involvement, to what I had witnessed in the homes of the council tenants of the estates I observed right at the beginning.

This is not to say, of course, that the way respondents living in flats did not have to go through complex socially constructed practices to rid themselves of materials they did not wish to keep in their homes. As Chapter Seven shows, if anything getting rid of waste was more complicated in a flat than it would have been in a house with more space and, in my area, a likelihood of better waste disposal services from the council. The point is rather that physical lack of space made it difficult for respondents to engage with certain practices that have been identified by other authors – discussed fully in chapter two – which instead re-emerged at the level of estates as a whole, the management of cleanliness and production of boundaries in communal and semi-communal spaces such as stairs, lifts, corridors and bin rooms.

Moving on and up to the estates

While these rather disappointing pilot interviews were taking place, I had contacted a local councillor, who thought I may be interested in speaking to a Tenants

and Residents' Association (TRA). It was at this point that I realised that the questions about waste that did not seem to work at the level of the individual households I was visiting did instead work at the level of estates and TRAs. Indeed, waste disposal, cleaning, recycling, collections and general maintenance of the places were amongst the main issues covered by these groups, which is why they became so central in the thesis (see Chapter Seven in particular). One could suppose that if there was no space to deal with material waste inside their homes, there were certainly issues to deal with the appropriate removal of it from the estate grounds. At this spatial level the arguments made by many anthropologists about the importance of space and time in codifying waste and making it 'indeterminate' (Lucas 2002) did seem to work much better.

Again there are parallels here to what Allen (2008) found in his study of regeneration in Liverpool, namely a certain reluctance amongst his working class respondents to talk about themselves, constructing a 'narrative', a story about themselves as individuals. Byrne (2003) argues that the production of narratives of the self is influenced by gender, race and class, showing how ideas and experiences of agency, subjectivity, norms and change generate different types of narratives amongst white mothers in South London. While it can be frustrating for the researcher, Allen (2008) argues this is part of a mode of being that does not construct the self in the same way as middle class individuals do, being more oriented instead towards 'we' narratives. This means in practice it is easier for respondents to talk about their families and communities and co-workers rather than their 'self', as such, which may explain why it was much easier for me to talk to them in relation to their involvement in the Tenants Movement and other community groups.

I therefore began searching for and regularly attending TRA meetings. This process, however, took a long time. In fact it took months, about three or four, before I was properly plugged into the networks of the council and tenants movement, and incidentally found many other local volunteering bodies that seemed relevant to my work and willing to talk to me. As I mention further on in the thesis (Chapter Six), the fact that it was so difficult to find out about the meetings, that the information about them was neither publicly nor easily available does raise questions about their representativeness. If it took a dedicated researcher months to understand who was

running her own estate's community hall, how could residents with jobs and children be expected to play an active role in their communities? Finding my 'gatekeepers' was essential in this respect, if not without drawbacks. These were mainly due to the fact that strong personalities were able to open doors and allow contact, but were also likely to clash with other – few – strong personalities in the network. I was then forced to dance an awkward dance, remaining amicable with everyone or, at the very least, trying to offend as few people as possible while talking amiably to 'sworn enemies.'

One of the most important activities in the course of my fieldwork was the decision to jump right into the 'participant' part of 'participant observation' and set up my estate's TRA with a few other residents. My estate had not had a residents' association for years: the previous one had folded amongst rumours of corruption and racism – mainly to do with the running of the community hall, a potential source of serious money and influence in the local area. Setting up the TRA was challenging and taught me more than I could have ever learned from just observing others run their own. At one level, setting up the group on the estate meant that I was able to feel like – and be seen as – I was doing something for the local community. It literally took months of work even to arrange the initial Annual General Meeting, and then much more to keep the group up and running. Even more to the point, being a part of the group I had set up allowed me access to all the formal council meetings I had always wanted to sit in on, but most importantly it gave me something to do while hanging around with the other members of the movement I knew. It was by working together – putting together leaflets, laminating posters and so on – that we got to know each other and share our stories.

An unexpected, and by no means unwelcome, consequence of setting up a TRA was that I started walking around my own estate much more than I had ever done before. I had used walking as a conscious part of my fieldwork right from the start. It seemed important to me that to know the area well, and walking seemed like a good way to do so. I would walk alone at first, sometimes bringing the dog with me to look like I had a purpose and was not just loitering. In time, as I made friends, I would walk them home, or go on errands with them, taking advantage of the time spent together and learning about their 'sense of place'. While Basso (1996) uses this

expression with reference to Apache's intense relationship to their natural – but of course socially constructed - landscape I think it is perfectly possible to argue (see Bender 1998) that all landscapes, including urban ones, can be dense with meanings and carry stories that make them meaningful and important to the people who live in them. By walking around with my respondents and listening to what they said I was therefore getting a sense of the area that was valuable and difficult to get in any other way.

Setting up the TRA, however, pushed things to a different level in a very literal way. One of the most time-consuming parts of running a TRA is leafleting. In order to get in touch with their fellow residents, members post leaflets through their letter boxes, door by door. In order to do so they gain access to the upper levels of the estates, the walkways, internal and external corridors, staircases and passages that lead directly to people's doors. While most of these spaces are technically public – apart from the internal corridors – it would seem strange for a stranger to walk up there for no reason, unless they were visiting someone they knew, or at least I always felt that was the case. However leafleting for the TRA gave me the perfect excuse to roam the corridors stuffing leaflets and invitations through people's doors. I even started leafleting for the local councillor, strengthening a relationship that was invaluable throughout the research period.

Walking the upper levels of the estate, I learned that a significant part of the entry systems were usually broken, and that getting access was never too difficult. I became aware that mornings were a good time to walk around, as I was likely to bump into families, workers and children going out to school and work, while early afternoons were not so good, as youngsters who did not have formal jobs or educational commitments tend to wake up around that time, and they were not quite as welcoming of local activists. Above all, I learned that things were quiet most of the times: the smells may not always be pleasant, some corridors and passages were dirty to the point of being intimidating, but I never witnessed any behaviour that would make me stop walking around. This theme of normality in an area often represented as chronically ridden with crime and violence is important, and will come back regularly throughout the thesis.

The Peckham Settlement: bingo, reminiscing and nursery

While all this was taking place and I was developing my links on the estates and in the tenants movement, I also continued to look for residents who were just prepared to sit down and talk to me from anywhere in Peckham. I had started volunteering at the Peckham Settlement before fieldwork had begun, to try and establish relationships that may help me in the future. The Settlement is a local hub for various community groups and included a nursery. I started off by writing a newsletter for one of the groups, and things snowballed from there. I found out that there were two bingo clubs held at the settlement, one on Mondays and one on Fridays, and started attending them and making friends with the old people who played there. They taught me how to play and, in time, told me their stories as well, as we shared tea, biscuits and bingo. I also attended their monthly reminiscing sessions, where old people would come together and describe Peckham as they remembered it from when they were young, and found them immensely enjoyable. Attending these activities eventually allowed me to collect a few life histories[6] that I was able to record at the end of fieldwork, which represent an invaluable commentary and provide the thesis with a much deeper sense of the history of the place as seen through these old women's eyes.

After a long time waiting for a CRB check, I was able to join the nursery as a volunteer for a few shifts a week, for a few months in total. I chose the nursery in the first place because I was hoping to get to know the parents of the children, chat to them as they dropped off and picked up their kids and arrange informal interviews back at their homes. I envisaged becoming friends with them and letting myself into a community of adults eager to talk to me and share their experiences about the area and their waste behaviour. I did not have a child at the time, or any understanding of the fact that usually parents and guardians put their children in nursery because they do not have the time to look after them personally. Given the high costs of childcare, the time when children are at nursery is usually exploited by parents as much as possible, meaning they work while their children are in nursery.

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6   Crapanzano (1980), Harevan (1999), and Day (2007) have all addressed the complex methodological issues involved in collecting and using life histories.

A corollary of this was that dropping off children was usually a hurried and stressful affair, with parents trying to literally shove them in and say goodbye as quickly as they could, and staff insisting they at least unwrap the children themselves from the many layers of coats, scarves, gloves, hats and so on. At picking up time, both parents and children were usually tired and eager to get home. My windows of opportunity were thus limited and it was very difficult to start any type of conversation in those circumstances. The few times that I managed to explain who I was and why I was there, I was met with the standard response 'Would love to, but don't really have the time'.

And yet, even though I did not get to know the parents, my time at the nursery was useful on at least two counts. To begin with, volunteering at the nursery was a wonderful 'greeting card' to use whenever I met someone. Volunteering was good, but specifically the fact that I was working with children made me into an implicitly trustworthy person. It was enough to mention it in passing – and of course as soon as I understood this I made sure I did mention it at the beginning of any interaction – to make people more relaxed around me, more willing to talk and open up. It was as if being good enough to look after the children of the community meant I must be okay at some level, and it also showed I had an interest in the area that was not too fleeting. Secondly, I got the chance to meet and talk for long periods of time with the staff working there, who were all local women with many interesting stories and connections to the area. While being intense and tiring, childcare does allow the opportunity to talk and swap stories, even if often in a broken fashion, interrupted by the many needs of the children we were looking after.

Finally, in a broader sense working in the nursery was essential to sharpen my understanding of the area as a place of work, business and overall 'normality'. This word is often frowned upon, for very good reasons, but in this case it was precisely what many of my respondents aspired to: normality, respectability, safety, a sense of stable and reliable routines. In the context of an area that is regularly pathologised and criminalised in the media as a hopeless, crime-ridden gangland, normality was a value in itself. It was important for me to see the evidence, day after day, of people working hard, trying to do the best they could for their children. Poverty was present and obvious from the brands of nappies people brought in – and often 'forgot' to

bring altogether – to the ways in which staff knew which children were likely to come in on an empty stomach (they were supposed to have had their breakfast at home) or go home and straight to bed (instead of having dinner) and tried their best to make sure they ate a lot during the day.

The working poor are all too often forgotten, and the myth that 'work pays' and it is only 'lazy' people who 'cannot be bothered' to work that end up in poverty is far from dead, as can be seen by the ways in which the term 'underclass' is coming back into use in British public discourse[7]. Originally an American term (see Lewis 1965, or Murray 1990 for an update on the old argument), the debate in the UK was coined in terms of an alleged 'culture of dependency' by Sir Keith Rogers as far back as 1972, stipulating that welfare benefits stifle people's resolve to work and turn them into dependent, therefore poor, individuals and families. Recent government rhetoric aimed at cutting back the welfare state uses very similar arguments, which were already disproven a generation ago by a variety of social scientists (Valentine 1968, Rutter and Mudge 1976, Howe 1998). Tony Blair declared in 1997, on his very first speech outside Parliament, for which he strategically chose the 'notorious' 'dilapidated' etc. Aylesbury estate in south-east London, that work was the way out of poverty. Ten years on in Peckham it still did not seem to be the case. It is in this context that is important to stress the normality of poverty in places like Peckham, where people work and work and work some more but still cannot make their money last to the end of the week.

Getting out of the field

I had made a point throughout the year of not taping my interviews, as when I started doing it at first people did not react well, closed up in front of the recorder and I missed the chance for a good chat. I also stopped doing 'cold' interviews with respondents I had not had an opportunity to talk to or work with before, as they always ended up formulaic and stale. It was therefore right at the end of the year that I did a bout of taped interviews with all my respondents, asking them properly to sit

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7   From the 1950s onwards a significant stream of urban anthropology has addressed these questions under the issue of the 'myth of marginality', showing that beneath official renditions of criminality and poverty in slums there were often people striving for normality and a life not at all dissimilar from that of mainstream citizens (White 1955, Perlman 1976, Kapferer 1978, Hart 1988, Perlman 2006)

down so I could record a few things. By this point they were not only happy to answer, they were almost relieved that we had finally got to this stage, as surely this was the 'proper' way to do an interview? This methodology allowed for good, intense interviews where I knew what my questions were and was not afraid to ask for clarifications and explanations. This intense ending was not, however, without complications of its own.

Many researchers stress the objective difficulties in getting 'into' their field, finding it, obtaining access, 'discovering' it even. In my case, while those issues were there and have been explored in the course of this methodology section, the opposite process, the 'getting out' bit was also quite complicated. As there was no obvious closure, no train to catch, no plane to board to go 'back home', the end of fieldwork had to be negotiated. I set up an arbitrary cut-off point after which, I told myself, I would not consider any more changes, any more data. My decision did not include, however, the TRA on my estate that I had helped setting up and nurtured for months, so I continued to be involved with that, even if at a less committed level. More difficult to deal with were the issues of friendships, the people I'd bump into in the streets who would ask me, 'Why did you not come to the meeting/bingo last night'? It was difficult to explain that 'fieldwork' had ended and therefore no, I would not come any more. Much as we explain to our informants what it is that we do it is always hard to maintain – and sometimes impossible, sometimes even easier to do without – our professional self in the field so that people around us always know what we are doing. By the end of it, if we have done it well, they are often happy for us to be one of them, to an extent, and that was the case with me. Fieldwork 'at home', whatever that meant, was complicated to leave 'behind', or aside, or leave altogether.

Finally, if there was something that really made the experience worthwhile was the sharing of stories and meaning, with an emphasis here on the term sharing. It was through work, volunteering or playing that I got to know my respondents, but it was sharing bits of myself, my life and my emotions that made them do the same as well, presenting me with beautiful stories that are much more than 'case studies'. Work, and the many activities I got involved with in the course of the year, allowed for a space of togetherness, for the time to get to know each other. But it was when I stopped asking and observing and started telling and doing myself that things really

started to happen. The TRA was only an example: with my bingo friends it was telling them that I had just become engaged that made them really open up and tell me the stories of their marriages, their children, their parents and their worlds. As Carol Stack (1974) had already shown back in the seventies, research really is about sharing ourselves with our informants to enable them to do the same with us.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

The thesis is organised around nine chapters, including this introduction, which is Chapter One. Chapter Two is a literature review: it includes literature from the anthropology of waste and related issues of value, but also engages with sociological literature on class and the symbolic devaluation of working class people as dirt, waste or other valueless or value negative entities by the middle and upper classes. Chapter Three is an introduction to the area: it begins with some statistical data about Peckham, and continues with a brief description of social housing and the issues revolving around it, to give the reader a way to place the field site in its historical and legislative and policy context. It then describes the area through the voices of those who live in Peckham. The aim is to portray the complexity of an area that is – like all others, but in its own specific way – individual and therefore much more complex than the 'inner-city' or 'ghetto' labels that it often attracts in popular and media descriptions. The chapter challenges such flat stereotypes and instead brings to life an extremely sociable and ever changing area, to set the stage for the rest of the thesis.

Chapter Four describes a major regeneration programme that took place in Peckham in the 1990s and interested an area known as (but even the naming is not so straightforward!) the Five Estates. It considers the points of view of residents, local politicians and council officers, looking at the documents that were produced to gain national government support, and crucially funding, for the programme. Through the use of juxtaposition a very complex reality emerges: the contradictions inevitably inherent in the programme are not smoothed away but opened up and examined. The analysis reveals interesting parallels between regeneration, gentrification, recycling and wasting of homes, buildings, communities and people.

The literal and symbolic circulations of value and waste, and the ways in which outcomes are never solely defined by structural relations or economic realities are further explored in Chapter Five, which deals with four more cases of regeneration in the area. Methodologically speaking this chapter relies less on the voices of individual informants and more on the juxtaposition of diverse stories and their contexts. This results in a rather different type of text compared to Chapter Four. On the one hand this choice is dictated by lack of space, as it would not have been possible to explore another four case studies in the same way I did for the North Peckham estate. On the other it is a deliberate attempt to present my material differently, summarising respondents views while still trying to convey their sense of place and belonging to the area. The aim of the chapter is to show the variety of outcomes that can be generated not just by human agency, but also by the material nature of buildings and the human-animal relations that sometimes occur when small creatures move into large blocks.

If Chapters Four and Five deal with crisis situations, when people's homes were threatened with demolitions and communities had to deal with real or potential evictions, Chapter Six turns instead to normality and routine. It does so by focusing on how council tenants value and care for their homes and estates on a regular basis, in practical terms by walking the grounds with maintenance officers but also in a more militant and occasionally openly political way by lobbing for better conditions and maintenance of their homes and their communities. Chapter Seven looks at how the estates deal with their own waste. It does so by following individuals as they take their bin bags down to the paladin bins – through doors, corridors, passageways and gates – but also by considering how officers and politicians think their residents act, exploring the gaps between residents actions and values and officials' expectations and judgements.

Chapter Eight brings matters to full circle by looking at the middle class residents who have moved into the new houses built on the ashes of the Five Estates described in Chapter Four. Considering continuities and ruptures between this new group and the existing residents the chapter shows how value – economic, but also moral – is attributed and recognised differently to different classed bodies, and how waste is always not just an index of individual behaviour but also of class and

community. The conclusion, Chapter Nine, links together the different strands that have been developed ethnographically in the course of the previous eight chapters, and draws out some theoretical ideas that can be applied to the initial frame of value and waste set out in this introduction. Rather than giving answers, it raises more questions, challenging again the mis-representations of both estates and their inhabitants as wasteless, and society's focus on individual waste rather than the wastes produced, for example, by the construction industry. Finally, looking back at the initial case study of the Five Estates and considering how things have changed in the 15 years since they were demolished, the conclusion assesses the significance of the issues covered in the ethnography in terms of an anthropology of policy (Shore and Wright 1997).

Chapter Two –Waste and devaluation

This thesis explores the relationships between everyday waste behaviours of individuals and groups living in an inner city area, and the symbolic devaluation of the area and its people by those placed higher up in the social hierarchy, meaning local councillors, council officials, urban developers and, to a broader extent, media and mainstream public opinion. It looks at these relationships following a process – or rather, a phase of a larger programme – of urban regeneration that had affected the field site and many of its inhabitants. I consider these issues from an anthropological perspective centred on concepts of waste and value: in terms of literature, the thesis sits between anthropology, sociology and the many areas of overlap between the two disciplines that occur when they are applied to urban areas. I will review here some anthropological literature on waste, which grounds the study and is particularly relevant to the first term in the relationship I am looking at, which is individual everyday waste behaviours. In terms of symbolic devaluation I use sociological literature that looks at how poor and working class people have historically been associated with waste, dirt and disorder by those in charge of them, be they planners, legislators, educators, landlords or others. These are not meant to be comprehensive literature reviews on waste, value, regeneration or symbolic devaluation: if they were, they would leave no space for the introduction of new ethnographic data. I have tried to balance the need to ground my findings in the relevant literature without allowing the literature to drown and obliterate the data, which are after all at least as important to the thesis as a whole.

The chapter begins with an examination of popular understandings of waste, divided into moralising and technical readings of the concept. Even though this is an academic thesis, the respondents that form the main source of evidence for it are not familiar with academic literature but use tropes and images that come from popular understandings of waste, which therefore deserve to be explored in some depth. The second section of the chapter is an edited review of the anthropological literature on waste, starting from Douglas (1966) and Thompson (1979), through various understandings of waste that have come out of the anthropology of consumption, and finally moving towards questions of waste and value and their inherent complexities. It then briefly engages with the recent work of the Waste of the World group, which

focus on the materiality of waste and its existence in production and exchange, not just at the 'end' of commodities' lives. Section three questions the relevance of it all, specifically the reasons why individual waste behaviours should matter so much when they in fact represent only a small proportion of the total wastes produced in our society. Trying to answer this question the next section – five – considers issues of symbolic devaluation of the working classes in historical and sociological terms, drawing on authors like Strasser (1999) and Skeggs (1997).[8]

2.1 Popular discourses: waste as a moral and technical problem

Within popular discourse it is possible to identify two broad strands of thought on waste: often they go together, sometimes reinforcing and sometimes undermining each other. Both positions see waste as a problem: one sees it as a moral problem, the other, as a technical one. *The Wastemakers* (1960), by Packard, an American journalist and writer, is a good example of an archetypical moral position on waste. His work did not concern waste only, but consumption in general, in what was effectively a scathing critique of US society at large. Waste was, in his view, the result of overproduction, itself the result of technological advances: at the same time, waste stood for moral decay and the loss of 'traditional' values of thriftiness and frugality. In his critique of what he called the 'throwaway society' a link between convenience, disposability and laziness was established, thus explicitly relating technological advance and moral decay. In his view American people had moved away from Puritan values, did not save any more and instead lived for the moment, devoting their energies only to short lived, hedonistic pleasures. The only possible solutions to the waste problem were thus to do with 're-moralizing': containing population growth and returning to values of quality, stability, frugality et cetera. These were exemplified in the supposedly inspiring vignette of an old woman, with no electricity in her cottage, fetching wood from the shore to cook her meals, aptly romanticised in its remoteness and unity with nature. Interestingly, Packard's *Wastemakers* (1960) was published while the debate about poverty in the US was at his height: clearly not everyone enjoyed such hedonistic consumerism as Packard

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8   Owen Jones' (2011) monograph on working class discrimination in Britain, while not an academic text, is worthy of notice for addressing a topic that is often completely ignored in main stream media and popular debate.

condemns, while many people, and certainly many black people (see Liebow 1967), were actually living in the (hardly romantic) poverty that he seemed to wish on everyone.

A great number of contemporary authors and commentators share Packard's assumptions and moral take on what they variously define as the 'problem' of rubbish and our society, whether they acknowledge him as their source or, more often, they do not. Ratjhe and Murphy (1992) take an archaeological approach to waste in the Garbage Project: as 'garbologists' they remind us that our waste is what future generations will read us by, but also that by looking at our own landfills we can gain valuable insights on our society today. Their book ends with ten 'commandments', intended to guide us all, as individuals, in our battle against ever growing mountains of rubbish that our landfills cannot cope with any more: tentative solutions for the 'waste problem'.

Journalists and feature writers also contribute their own literature addressing what they perceive as a 'crisis' of waste: Girling's popular book about rubbish (2005), or Rogers (2005) documentary and book about landfills both share Packard's sense of outrage at what 'we', alternatively used to mean individuals or humans collectively, are 'doing to' the planet. Neville and Villeneuve (2002) collected stories using metaphors of waste and memories and landfills in a literary way, and even then authors like Gross (2002), published in their edited volume, argues that objects in the past were made to last, while today people simply use things and throw them away without a second thought. While these authors are not anthropologists, it is useful to at least touch upon them to remind ourselves that concepts that have nowadays become commonplace not just in anthropology but in a large section of the social sciences, like the idea that there is more to our relationship with the material world than mindless, abstract consumerism (see Dant 2005 for an excellent comprehensive review on this topic), are not shared by all. Indeed the simplistic dualism that sees things as opposite to people, and therefore an interest in things to be somehow antithetical to an interest in people, challenged amongst others by Miller (1987) back in the eighties, is still very much current, as these authors and journalists demonstrate.

There is also another strand, exemplified by Ferrell (2006), who criticises waste from a moral-political perspective, writing about dumpster-divers as a way to critique modern capitalism and its high speed consumption patterns. When he quit his job as an academic, Ferrell chose to explore the lives of people who live off what others throw away, scavenging and salvaging and generally – sometimes literally – immersing himself in the networks of people who gravitate around scrap yards, landfills and dumps. His work reads like an interesting series of vignettes and a colourful description of a way of living somewhat alien to most people, but in his radicalism he seems to forget that there are other ways in which people have, and always have had more complex and interesting relationships with their waste in their everyday lives. While Ferrell (2006) focuses on a rather masculine world of dropouts and outsiders who openly critique and fight 'the system', others like Gregson and Crewe (2003) have been studying the ways in which people, often women, relate to objects in second-hand and charity shops, giving nuanced accounts that certainly challenge straightforward ideas that consumption is just what marketing executives would like it to be (Miller 1998) in terms of fast sales and planned obsolesence. While examining second-hand cultures, Gregson and Crewe (2003) provide plenty of evidence to show that disposal is hardly ever casual, and certainly it is not a careless procedure whenever it involves goods that have emotional value – see also the concept of *ridding* described by Gregson (2007) in a later monograph – while managing to steer away from Packard's moralising long shadow.

At the other, pragmatic/technical end of the spectrum, waste is perceived as a rather simple issue in public opinion: it's there, it's dirty and should be taken away and dealt with. Even with the current rise in environmental concerns about the disposal of our waste in industrialised societies, the issue is still perceived as a technical one, framed as a problem that needs to be solved. The solution, or solutions, may be complex and require considerable investments, but they are nonetheless waiting to be discovered or implemented by engineers and councils, reliable, practical bodies to deal with a practical problem. Cooper (2005), for instance, suggests we rethink consumption and adopt a 'slower' approach to it: focusing on 'eco-efficiency' and products' lifespan, he suggests that economic growth and environmental goals do not necessarily contradict each other. While his argument seems rather weak from an economic perspective, as the potential implications of slower consumption (reduced

sales, slower economy, lower GDP, higher unemployment etc.) are not fully addressed, Cooper (2005) clearly sees waste as a technical problem to be solved by technological and legislative means.

In policy terms, Barr and Gilg (2006) describe environmental policy discourses as rooted in the 'rationalisation' of environmental action, which assume that waste behaviours can be changed by providing people with the right kind of information. The idea is that, as a result of gaining knowledge, people will change their behaviour: the thing to fix then is simply an 'information gap' to allow individuals to make the 'right' choices. Remarkably, it is individuals that are targeted in these discourses, as opposed to, for example, organisations or businesses: "the British Government's Sustainable Development Strategy places individual actions for sustainable development at the heart of its policies for effecting change" (Barr and Gilg, 2006: 906).

Some policy-orientated documents even try to find new ways to look at waste. For example, in their paper on sustainable waste management, Bulkeley et al. (2005) state that "the image of waste as dirty and second-hand as inferior must be changed if as a society we are to really engage with the waste debate" (2005:5). Obviously this document did look at waste as a problem to be solved, but in its final recommendations it hinted at a need to re-examine the frame itself that causes waste to be seen as just something to get rid of, and instead reinvent it as a resource to be used. What these authors share is the idea that waste, or at least the level of waste produced by western society, is the result of something that has gone wrong, whether it is declining moral values or overproduction, and that it should be fixed or at least controlled and managed. Thus the placing of waste in landfills outside our cities is not simply a physical act, but also a way of removing from sight something that does not belong to our society, at least not any more. In the next section, on the other hand, we shall see how anthropologists tend instead to look at waste processes as integral parts of society.

2.2 Anthropological understandings of waste and value

Matter out of place

Moving now into anthropological territory, Douglas's classic, *Purity and Danger* (1966), and its analysis of dirt and pollution, still constitutes the bedrock of anthropological understandings of waste. It is precisely because this book is so important that it is crucial to remember the issues it was intended to deal with, which were rather different from waste as such. This is a book about 'primitive' religions, and it was an attempt to demonstrate that the taboos in these religions were neither pointless nor irrational: instead they were responses to threats, both internal and external, to the current order and structure of any given society. The main thrust of the argument was that it is impossible to understand pollution behaviours in isolation: they have to be related to the rest of the social structure to become comprehensible. Pollution and dirt are never absolutes, but always socially determined.

> Dirt then, is never a unique, isolated event. Where there is dirt there is a system. Dirt is the by-product of systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements (1966: 44).

According to this argument, dirt is disorder, and eliminating it is not just a negative response to fear of disease or misfortune but a positive, creative effort to organise an environment according to ideas of what a person, home, city or society should be like. We can thus start to see how dealing with waste is much more then simply removing what is dirty and smelly: not only the definitions of what is dirty and smelly are socially constructed, but their appropriate removal and management affirm and re-constitute social structures in our everyday lives. These processes are so practical and mundane that they can easily go unnoticed: however they become apparent when things go wrong – which is often the case, as Graham and Thrift (2007) argue, following Heidegger – and rubbish is not collected from our doorsteps, for instance: strikes by refuse collectors can easily bring a government to its knees. Another poignant example is when artists decide to make art out of rubbish, which then goes on to sell for hundreds of thousands of pounds. The popular outcry that regularly follows such events is indicative of supposedly inappropriate disposal practices: by acquiring huge monetary value waste crosses too many boundaries and threatens a social order in which waste is valueless and art is valuable, or invaluable, even. (But see Thompson 1979, in the next section).

In her most explicit formulation of a theory of waste, Douglas (1966) argues that there are two stages in the process of imposing order: in the first phase, dirt, meaning bits and pieces which are out of place and do not fit, are rejected and brushed away. At this stage they are still recognisable for what they are, they retain their identity and are therefore still dangerous. In the second phase, through processes of rotting and dissolving their identity is lost and they become common, unthreatening rubbish, especially when placed in their 'right' place (be it a bin or a landfill).

> In this final stage of total disintegration, dirt is utterly undifferentiated. Thus a cycle has been completed. Dirt was created by the differentiating activity of the mind, it was a by-product of the creation of order. So it started from a state of non-differentiation; all through the process of differentiating its role was to threaten the distinctions made; finally it returns to its true indiscriminable character. (1966: 198).

Understandably, there are a number of issues that can be raised with Douglas's argument, mainly to do with its rigidity, which is typical of her structuralist approach. The authors I will consider now have all variously critiqued her work in their theories, but it is important not to underestimate her contribution to the study of dirt and waste as socially constructed.

Durable, transient and rubbish: waste as a social category

With *Rubbish Theory* Thompson (1979) follows on from Douglas's ideas and focuses on 'the relationship between status, the possession of objects, and the ability to discard objects' (1979:1). He identifies three categories of objects: durable, transient and rubbish. Objects classed as durable are highly valued, and their value increases with time; transient objects have lower value, and they lose it with time. The third category is made up of objects considered rubbish: thus rubbish is social and its boundaries are determined by social forces and pressures. This third, relational category offers a degree of flexibility in the otherwise static model of durable and transient objects, because it is a conduit through which objects may travel from durable to transient or vice versa. Crucially, it is those at the top of the social hierarchy who establish what is durable and what is transient: this means not only that what they own is therefore by definition durable and valuable, but also that they are

the arbiters of taste, due to their power to name objects as durable or transient (See Bourdieu 1984). Once again, waste is seen as a social phenomenon, a necessary feature of human life: 'Rubbish is a universal feature, not necessarily of the human mind, nor of language, nor of social interaction, but of socio-cultural systems' (1979: 88).

In the '80s, as the focus of many social scientists and anthropologists turned towards consumption, waste fell out of fashion for a while[9], only to be picked up again in the last 10-15 years. One could argue that this recent interest in waste, and specifically the way in which it has often focused on post-consumption waste (as opposed to waste during production processes, for example) stems in fact from the 1980s interest in consumption studies, which all shared a general view of consumption as a meaningful practice, or rather practices, of course, through which individuals made sense of the world around them (see for example Douglas and Isherwood 1978, Bourdieu 1984, Appadurai 1986, Kopytoff 1986, Miller 1987, and so on). The broad case made for studying waste was, to put it in a very generalised way, that if there was more to consumption than silly/vain/unaware/selfish consumers picking things up from shelves, there was also more to waste than simply selfish/ignorant/wasteful consumers chucking things in the bin. This was often framed in terms of debates about the commodity status of objects: if the work of consumption was about turning alienable commodities into inalienable goods (Miller 1987, for example), then waste studies considered the processes by which meaningful, inalienable things turned again into alienable, undifferentiated waste.

A material culture approach

At the beginning of the new millennium a conference in Iowa in 2001 was dedicated to waste and ephemerality, confirming that anthropologists had become interested once again in the ways in which objects, and it has been mostly objects – as opposed to, for example, buildings (but see Edensor, 2005 on abandoned factories, or DeSilvey, 2006 on homesteads) or landscapes or people – become waste. The special issue of the *Journal of Material Culture* that was brought out after that conference

9 However work by authors like Bullard (1990) and Berglund (1998) showed a rise of awareness of environmental injustice, detailing where and how toxic waste was dumped – typically close to marginalised communities.

addressed themes such as seeds and biotechnology (Grodzins Gold, 2003), televisions (Colloredo-Mansfeld, 2003), human bodies (Hill, 2003), fashion (Tranberg Hansen, 2003), and glass artefacts (Harrison, 2003) to "draw attention to the details of the disintegration/release/circulation of *matter* and the tools, narratives, and settings that people need to exploit ephemerality not just as a social practice but as a material one" (Colloredo-Mansfeld 2003:248, italics mine).

Since then, the *Journal of Material Culture* has indeed published a large number of articles dedicated to waste issues, of which I will discuss some here, to show the range and breath of scholarship produced on waste from this perspective. Lucas (2002) opened the debate by setting out the argument that if consumption as a process includes making things inalienable, through appropriation and removal from the market, then wasting means making them alienable again through a gradual process usually involving disposal and landfills. If waste is unconstituted matter (Douglas 1966), he was interested in the process of de-constitution, arguing that rubbish is linked to a past desire, and includes a temporal element, marking it as what is no longer wanted. He quoted many instances when disposing of objects is a long and difficult process, claiming this was because disposal is a complex social practice, just as consumption is: if consumption is much more than purchasing objects, disposal is much more than throwing them in the bin. Lucas (2002) focused on the importance of time in what he called processes of divestment, the temporal elements of discarding things, the time when things are no-longer desirable.

Hetherington (2004) followed a similar line by focusing on disposal as a recurrent, social activity, challenging the image of waste as an individualistic and selfish practice, and showing instead how disposal is constitutive of social and ethical activity. Interestingly when compared with Lucas (2002) and his idea of a temporal element to waste, Hetherington (2004) returns to Douglas's (1966) idea of dirt as matter out of place by arguing that disposal is not about waste but placing, and it is thus a spatial category about placing absences. He challenges the idea that production, consumption and waste follow a linear pattern of mutually exclusive categories, stressing how disposal is implicated in making social order even if it is such a mundane activity. Waste and dirt, however, are never fully removed, as is implied by the notion of rubbish, but have a tendency to return: they are never

eliminated, only transformed and moved along. Ultimately, absent things have agency and consumers perform membership and identity not just by buying but also disposing of things: 'Disposal is about the mobilisation, ordering and arrangement of the agency of the absent' (2004: 168).

Edensor (2005) investigated disused industrial sites, showing that the field of waste as a consumer issue was being broadened to places laid to waste such as post-industrial sites. He described spaces that were once heavily regulated by production flows and where things now sit in tangled messes, confusing to the observer – but maybe not so much if he had spoken to the workers? – and, crucially, offering "evidence for a radical critique of the myth of universal progress driven by the supposedly innovative power of capitalism and technology" (Edensor 2005: 316). DeSilvey (2006) looked at things rotting down and by focusing on the relationships between things and nature asked questions about the nature of being human, and the inevitable complexity that resides in something – a cluster of books in which mice have nested, for example – that is *both* an artefact, in that it was made by humans, and an ecofact, something created by nature.

In 2007, Douny published "an account of Dogon conceptions of rubbish, and practices incorporating it, based on the daily shared experience of the matter" (2007: 310), a brilliant ethnographic description of waste practices that challenges many commonly held assumptions, such as when her respondents wished each other 'may god make your house dirty', meaning essentially full of life, as a spotless house was seen as a dead one. Amongst the Dogon, not washing the pots after eating was the norm, because washing them straight away was supposed to bring scarcity; being clean was a sign of being lazy, sweat being a good, comfortable smell, a sign of labouring: "cleanness is associated with sterility, while dirt signifies productivity" (2007: 318). This work fully shows the potential of ethnography for exploring the ways in which waste is experienced and contextualised in different ways by different people, bringing the author to coin a variation on Douglas's famous 'matter out of place' statement about dirt: "Dogon dirt is a matter all over the place" (2007:329).

Daniels (2009) wrote instead on unwanted gifts in Japan, challenging the utility of the differentiation between gifts and commodities in anthropology. The gifts

she has studied were commodities; they were alienable and not personally tied to the gift giver, or particularly dear to the receiver either. It is of course easy to point out that a strict distinction between alienable commodities and inalienable gifts has not really been considered a serious theoretical proposition since at least Appadurai (1986), who talked of the 'commodity potential' of particular objects rather then anything intrinsic in the object that made it either a gift or a commodity, or Thomas's (1991) monograph about the entangled nature of objects and relations between people and objects, just to name two. However, Daniels's article is a timely reminder of the simple notion that just as not all gifts are meaningful and inalienable, not all consumption is about building relationships and, more to the point, not all waste is emotionally invested, lest we get too carried away. Also in 2009, and still in the *Journal of Material Culture,* Reno (2009) published a substantial article based on ethnography of a landfill site in the USA. By focusing on people as well as things, human beings as well as waste, Reno shows how workers and the company managing the landfill site approached waste in radically different ways, and how this was about substantially different understandings of what humans and things are, or could be, their potential as well as their present condition, their individuality as well as their aggregate state.

Complexities of waste and value

While the output of one particular journal with regard to waste writing in anthropology may be significant, it is of course a limited perspective. Amongst the many publications available, the collection edited by Hawkins and Muecke (2003) is widely referenced, probably due to the breadth of its remit. The editors argue that "the contribution that cultural studies – or the humanities more generally – can make to the analysis of waste lies in its focus on the question of value' (2003: xvi), which is of course a central concern in anthropology, as we have seen so far, as well as in this thesis. Pushing past a linguistic and abstract notion of value, they reach out for a material, sensuous understanding of value and waste. They disagree that negativity, as in waste as valueless, is simply a linguistic phenomenon, "for there are other senses we use to distinguish good from bad, and contingencies which give them valency – the nose, for instance, as we go through the fridge and reject items on the basis of odour"(2003: xiii).

Taussig (2003), in their edited collection, writes lyrically about the complexities of value and waste, the ways in which the landscape of a bog, for example, can be, or look valuable to some yet embody very negative meanings for others:

> *"To the outsider this soggy medium that provides fuel for the fire is a mass of contradictions. In the form of peat, the bog is a cheery, life-maintaining thing, to be sure. Yet as a muddy prehistoric substitute for the oak forests that once covered the island, and as the remnant of what the wealthy landowners have otherwise appropriated or drained through centuries, the bog is a poignant sign of destruction, exclusion and poverty." (2003: 12)*

He then goes on to explain how nowadays bogs have taken on an even different meaning as they are fought over by developers, who see them as places that could be drained and built upon, and environmentalists, who consider them as natural reserves to be protected for the wildlife who live in them. It is this kind of complexity that will come back again and again in the words of my respondents throughout the thesis, showing how what is valuable for some – a home, family, community, continuity – can be expendable for others in the pursuit of different types of values – new housing, home ownership and higher tax revenues, for example.

Frow (2003) similarly argues against viewing objects simply according to their functions, seeking instead to understand objects as multifunctional, and therefore impossible to classify according to simple taxonomies. Indeed, if value and waste are not stable but always in flux, as Thompson argued (1979):

> this oscillation in the structure of value corresponds to a proposition that value is a process, a movement, a cycle, rather than a quality of things or a structure of cotemporal relations. We might say that whatever has once been rubbish keeps a kind of memory of that state, an awareness of the possibility of relapse into it, such that the newly aestheticised object – the kitsch silk drawing or the gentrified house – is valued precisely because its value is insecure and it is only precariously maintained within a market built upon the magical transmogrification of rubbish" (Frow, 2003: 35)

These sorts of transformations of value will be addressed throughout the ethnography, expressed for example in how people come to value their homes as places to be in as well as for their exchange value in the market for houses.

It is interesting to notice how all these authors seem to draw attention to the ways in which different value systems co-exist side by side, which is also what Myers (2001) focuses on in another edited collection on things and regimes of value. Following Thomas (1991) this collection again works at dismantling simple dichotomies of art vs. money, or gift vs. commodity, stressing how:

> "Different types of exchange may coexist within a social space [...] It is not always the case that the market's domination is complete: other systems of value may coexist, and their meaning may be reconstructed in relation to the presence of market practices" (2001: 59)

This idea of different types of exchange coexisting within a social space is also very useful in understanding the field I have worked in, especially to understand how homes, for example, can be at the same time valued as places to live in, to host one's family for Christmas, but also as potential means of getting out of the area if the situation required it, even though by doing so one would sever ties and relationships that are incredibly valuable in themselves.

Recent developments: materiality and the Wastes of the World

The Waste of the World is an ESRC funded, UK based research project that ran between 2006 and 2011, bringing together anthropologists, geographers and material scientists to develop a new approach to the concept of waste. Their work challenges social sciences' predilection for thinking about waste as something that happens at the end of a rather linear process of production, exchange and consumption. The other major contribution of this group of researchers is to move beyond small-scale, individual household waste and deal instead with large and industrial types of waste, like industrial containers ships (Crang 2010, Gregson *et al* 2010), or demolition and toxic materials like asbestos (Gregson, Watkins and Calestani 2010). Materials and materiality are clearly a major focus for this project, and the work of MacKillop (2009) for example is a wonderful study on the properties

of steel not just as a material but as an industry trying to rebrand itself as "green" due to this material's ability to be recycled. The potential of this new approach is remarkable, and its authors are clearly aware of the originality of their stance "we see waste as an ever present potential [...] thinking about economies in terms of material transformations and flows of materials [...] our emphasis is on the materialisation of commodities, that is, the processes of their coming together and dissolution in materials" (Waste of the World, 2012). In an edited collection partially based on this research project, Alexander and Reno (2012) bring together an impressive array of scholars, from Norris (2012) writing on textile recycling to Garcier (2012) on nuclear waste disposal, from Millar (2012) on dumps in Rio de Janeiro to Halverson (2012) on trades in re-used/recycled medical supplies. In the afterword to the collection, Graeber (2012: 287) pushes things further by challenging the model of recycling itself, as 'the latest in a series of attempts to impose a circular, equilibrium model on a system that is, at least in energy terms, as far from an equilibrium as it could possibly be'. This statement brings in again questions of value and, most importantly, property regimes, as 'recycling' is only defined as such when previous owners abandon property claims on an entity and allow it to have further commercial value, showing how tightly bound value, waste, recycling and property regimes are (Hann 1998).

2.3 Why does it matter?

Having considered a substantial body of literature, mainly anthropological, chiefly concerned – with the exception of Waste of the World – with individuals' behaviours around waste, I would like now to turn to an author who has raised an interesting issue in this debate, and a few of the possible answers to his question. O'Brien (2007) is a sociologist who argues against what I have described above as the popular discourses on waste, in both its moralistic and technical declinations. He rejects the assumption that our society, by which he means the contemporary western world, is unique in being a throwaway society. Indeed, he provides a wealth of evidence to support his claim that throwing away still useful things is something that people did everywhere and since the beginning of any human society. He also argues that waste should not be understood as something alien, a by-product, something that has gone wrong and society tries to fix away: "Instead of understanding 'waste' as that which is left over *after* production or consumption I propose that it should be

grasped as *what* modern society produces and consumes" (2007: 10, italics the author's own). In this sense he follows in the footsteps of the anthropological understandings of waste we have already reviewed, understanding waste as a social category rather than a moral or technical problem. Indeed in his book he tries to unravel the many layers of assumptions – that there is a 'crisis' of waste, and that individuals are responsible for it, for example – that surround the issue of waste.

Municipal waste, O'Brien explains, constitutes about 5% to 8% of total waste arisings in the UK: what is more, municipal waste is not all attributable to individuals, because it is made up of household waste as well as, depending on which definitions one chooses to follow, waste collected from streets, schools, hospitals and so on. According to his data (2007:94) in 2001 household waste, or waste collected via the dustbin, was about 3.5% of the total annual waste produced in the UK. In fact, part of the problem underlying much current thinking about waste

> Lies in the initial decision to lump together 'consumerism', 'households' and the 'waste crisis'. This triangle of ideas can lead to some serious misunderstandings of contemporary waste since it tends to misrepresent historical levels of waste and disposal and marginalises the role of production and industry in fuelling the waste stream (2007: 88)

The diagram provided below comes from the Department for Rural Affairs (DEFRA), and is useful for two reasons: it provides a visual confirmation of O'Brien's argument that, indeed, the decision to lump together households and the waste crisis is, at the very least, dubious considering the small amount of waste that originates from them. Secondly, even though this diagram was drawn up using data from 2004 rather than 2001, which is what O'Brien is using, unless we think it reasonable that the amount of household waste in the UK almost trebled from 3.5% to 9%, this inconsistency in the data shows how difficult it is to find reliable sources of data that can be compared like for like, which is a point he documents very well (O'Brien 2007). Even if we chose to use the 2004 DEFRA figure of household waste representing 9% of all UK waste arisings, the question as to why such a small proportion of the total should elicit so much attention is worth considering.

Estimated total annual waste arisings by sector : 2004

Legend:
- Agriculture (inc.Fishing)
- Mining and Quarrying
- Sewage sludge
- Dredged materials
- Household
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Construction and Demolition

<1%
29%
32%
<1%
5%
9%
12%
13%

Total = 335 million tonnes

Source: Defra, ODPM, Environment Agency, Water UK
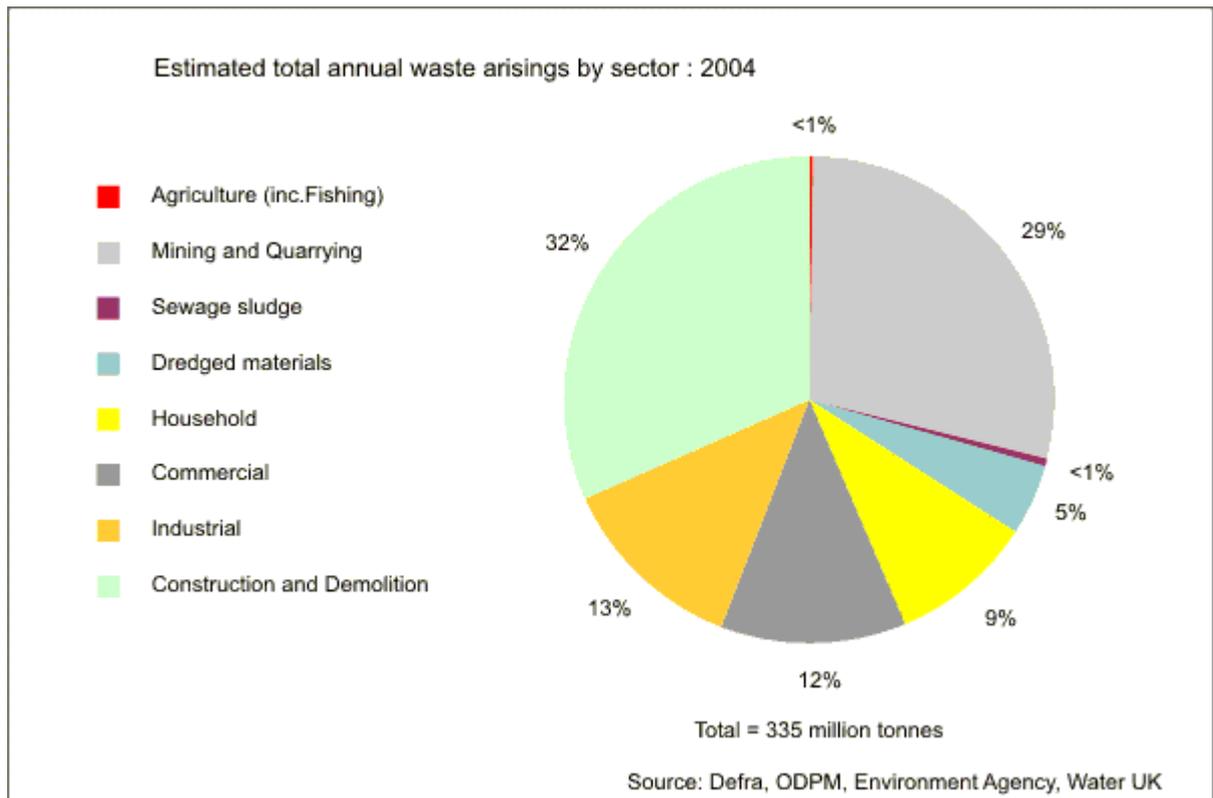
Figure 1: Estimated total annual waste arisings by sector in the UK, 2004. Source: Defra
http://archive.defra.gov.uk/evidence/statistics/environment/waste/kf/wrkf02.htm (accessed 20.12.12)

As is the case with these sorts of questions, rather than finding a straightforward answer it is more interesting to use them to think around the issues they raise from different perspectives, comparing them and assessing their potential to combine and provide meaningful answers once the question is posed in a specific historical and ethnographic setting, with all the complexities this entails. From an academic perspective, for example, one could argue that the current anthropology of waste mainly comes out of the tradition of the anthropology of consumption, which sees individual identity making through consumption as a key area of academic interest. In this sense it would make sense for the discipline to focus on individual, post-consumption wasting behaviours as well. This of course does not apply to the work of the Waste of the World group – many of whom have written about individual waste behaviours in the past, and who include Daniel Miller, a founding figure of the anthropology of consumption – who have overcome this focus and opened up well beyond individual and post-consumption waste practices, into industrial sites and waste in production, for example.

From a political-environmental viewpoint, the standard answer to this question is exemplified by Luke (1993) in his critique of recycling and the general individualisation of waste, or why waste and individual consumption are so often linked and perceived as being almost the same phenomena, to the exclusion of other possible configurations. He begins his explanation by tracing the transformation of radical environmental groups in the USA in the 1960s, which openly opposed big business and linked economic growth with environmental destruction, into the green consumerist groups of the nineties, mainly apolitical if not outright conservative. He describes this process as the 'domestication' of the green movement. During the sixties radical environmental groups challenged the factories that produced waste and pollution in the first place. In the seventies however things changed: this was due to a combination of environmental legislation, such as the Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act, not to mention the establishment of EPAs (Environmental Protection Agencies), and the actual migration of factories – and thus production processes – to countries in the global south, in search of cheaper labour and more relaxed environmental regulations.

This geographical shift of production, he argues, left US environmentalists with a rhetorical gap – the factories to attack as polluters simply were not there any more – and contributed to a shift in blame from big businesses to individual consumers. Thus, slowly but surely, individual consumers and households became the only relevant ecological subjects, whose daily activities either saved or destroyed the planet. This shift suited big business, which had found a way not just to neutralise a potentially dangerous critique of its core practices, but paradoxically had also found a brand new market: green consumerism. These new green identities in fact expressed themselves through the consumption of suitably recognised 'green' goods, opening up a new niche in the market rather than challenging it.

Thus, in the USA, there was a change in emphasis from the production of waste, responsibility of the producers, to the consumption of waste, responsibility of the consumers. It was in the interest of big business, Luke (1993) argues, to remove waste from the realm of production and leave it to consumption – and consumers – to deal with. This move was not, of course, purely symbolic: corporations worked and lobbied very hard to make sure that consumers picked up the bill for the waste they

produced, externalising their costs and leaving taxpayers to pay for their inefficient and irresponsible use of materials through their taxes, which paid for waste collection, recycling services and infrastructures (See Alexander (2005) for a detailed explanation of how sophisticated accounting practices can externalise costs onto citizens while supposedly aiming to minimise environmental destruction).

Coming at this question – why so much attention for household waste when it constitutes such a small proportion of what ends up in landfills – again from a different perspective and at a different time – Stallybrass (1986), using Babcock (1978), would argue that it is often that which is socially marginal that becomes symbolically central. Stallybrass was talking about marginalised people – the poor, gipsies, vagrant, slum dwellers, sexual 'deviants' – and behaviours, not types of waste, but I believe this insight can be useful here. It shows that beyond academic inclinations and political-economic arguments, there may be moral reasons why individual waste is treated with such attention, to do with the fashioning of 'good', moral citizens who take care of themselves and their 'environment'. The thesis as a whole can be seen as an unpacking of this loaded sentence, showing for example how tenants who fought for their estates – their environment – were cast by those who had political power over them as unruly, stubborn and selfish, while at the same time their individual behaviours to do with waste and recycling were regulated and legislated based on legislators' and officers' perceptions and expectations much more than on residents actions, needs and beliefs. To look into this social-moral aspect in more depth, the next section of this chapter is dedicated to a review of symbolic devaluation of poor people, those who Stallybrass described as socially marginal, in the eyes of those above them in classed, gendered and racialised hierarchies.

2.4 Symbolic devaluation

The chapter so far has considered anthropological approaches to waste which have focused on the complexity of the processes involved in turning not just individual commodities, but also materials in the course of production runs, into different statuses – waste, rubbish, trash, offcuts. It has shown how varied and fluid these processes can be, and highlighted how value is often mediated through waste,

going back to Thompson's (1979) definition. It has also raised questions as to why individual waste behaviours should attract so much attention in light of their proportionally small impact on the contents of landfills, sketching out thoughts about the moral importance of these individualised practices. I will now develop this angle further by looking at processes of symbolic devaluation of individuals and groups. One of the most important questions to consider here is 'by whom'? As a social process devaluation is articulated on a stratified society, where power – including the power to define something as valuable, or not – resides with those at the top and is imposed, in different guises and diffused ways (Foucault 1977), onto those lower down the hierarchy.

The processes I am interested in are to do with the creation and reproduction of value amongst certain groups – working class inner-city estate residents – and the mis-recognition of this value by those in positions of power. When I say mis-recognition I mean the ways in which, for example, my work shows estates to be places where people come together in order to be able to do pretty much anything, from fixing a roof to getting recycling services, meaning they are eminently sociable in a practical, pragmatic and literal sense. However, as Hanley (2007: 5) argues "To anyone who doesn't live on one (and to some who do) the term council estate means hell on earth". In Peckham waste behaviours and symbolic devaluation became enmeshed and entangled during a regeneration programme that took areas which were, arguably, symbolically devalued by local and national officers and lawmakers and literally demolished them, after moving away those who had lived there before, in some cases for many years, and some for their entire lives. Thus symbolic devaluation was implicated in the physical wastage of the buildings, which were turned to rubble, and the dispersal of the people who called those buildings home, who had spent and invested, if not money, certainly time and energy in producing a living environment around them – a community – that they felt at ease with. Devaluation here interests people, their homes and communities both in the extreme circumstances engendered by physical regeneration, which often mean demolition and relocation, but also in their everyday lives, considering for example why some people are not included in circuits of value generated by 'appropriate' waste practices like recycling.

Council estates are often read as 'essential', 'primordial' even, sites of anti-social behaviour, crime, poverty and squalor by those who do not live on them: in Chapter One I have given a sense of the narratives created around Peckham, for example, based on crime, violence and danger. The power differential here is evident in the fact that those who live on the estates know this is an incorrect representation of their homes and communities, and are ready to tell anyone who would be kind enough to ask and listen to them. However the images that are instead created about them – not by them, about them – are of crime and anti-social behaviour and it is those images that stick to both places and, indirectly, to the people as well.

Historically speaking this is of course nothing new. Stallybrass and White (1986) offer an illuminating historical perspective on how poor people have always been, implicitly but very often explicitly as well, connected and identified with dirt, disease, waste, crime and decay. What is more, they show that the fascination with the slums, precursors to the housing estates I have worked in for this project, goes back a very long time, tracing the bourgeois obsession with regulating, counting, observing and moralising their poor dwellers since at least the nineteenth century.

Surveying, counting and moralising in history

In 1843, Chadwick published a *Report on the Sanitary Conditions of the Labouring population of Great Britain*, calling for better sanitation in the slums for the sake of health for all British citizens. *London Labour and the London Poor*, published in 1851 (but the fourth volume was in 1861) by journalist and early social researcher Henry Mayhew, comprised four volumes of data, interviews and detailed descriptions of the lives and habits of the poor of London in the early Victorian period. They were sorted by their attitude to work, as the author himself explains in the first volume: "I shall consider the whole of the metropolitan poor under three separate phases, according as they will work, they can't work, and they won't work". Marx himself (1852) was keen to stress the moral difference between the disciplined proletariat, the class who would lead the revolution, and the lumpenproletariat, made up of

> vagabonds, discharged soldiers, discharged jailbirds, escaped galley slaves, swindlers, mountebanks, lazzaroni, pickpockets, tricksters, gamblers, *maquereaux*, brothel keepers, porters, literati, organ grinders,

ragpickers, knife grinders, tinkers, beggars — in short, the whole indefinite, disintegrated mass, thrown hither and thither (Marx, 1852: ch 5)

Engels wrote extensively and in detail about the dwellings and lives of the poor in the *Conditions of the Working Class in England*, published in 1887. *Life and Labour of the People in London* was published between 1892 and 1897 by Charles Booth and consisted of nine volumes of information on the poor of London, later expanded to thirteen volumes in the 1902 edition. These thinkers, philosophers, legislators and reformers of course came at the 'problem' of the slums and their inhabitants from very different perspectives and with different agendas, but they are all part of a tradition of observing and surveying, to borrow from Foucault, the mass of the dirty population, or as Bulwer-Lytton (1830) called them, the "great unwashed".

It is interesting to notice two things here, amongst many others: the first is the moral judgement that is almost always applied to the poor and their lives by those placed in higher class positions, and secondly the seamless conflation of poor people, immorality and slums. The problem of morality is relevant for at least two reasons: on the one hand to explain the existence of the poor at all, and secondly to ascertain whether they should be helped by the state or left to their own devices. These debates were taking place in England when, on the other side of the Channel, the French Revolution and subsequent Napoleonic Wars were raging, fuelling fears in the British ruling classes of hordes of slum dwellers taking power and demanding democracy: that was one of the strongest reasons to face the problem of the poor. It is important to remember the role that fear of social disorder played in the state's decision to take responsibility for the poor, as this makes it easier to understand subsequent developments of social policy and social housing in particular (Morris, 1994). Once the state accepted to take responsibility for the survival and housing of the poor, it became essential to ascertain whether potential recipients of aid were genuinely in need or simply unwilling to work. This distinction between deserving and undeserving poor has been crucial in social welfare since the very beginning, and brought with it in the images of the undeserving poor as depraved, immoral, lazy, criminal and lacking in every sense. In terms of symbolic valuation and devaluation, those classed by the bureaucratic system set up to deal with them as undeserving, who

usually were the lowest of the lowest, the irregular, poorest slum dwellers were therefore seamlessly and constantly devalued in the eyes of the authority and society at large.

In the US, at the turn of the twentieth century, Strasser (1999) documented the ways in which talking of the poor and talking of the problems of waste and waste disposal was essentially the same thing, highlighting the political nature of waste practices. A social historian, she has traced the changes that took place in the United States during what she called the transition from a culture grounded in reuse to one based on throwing away and disposal, emphasising how trash-making was a complex social process. She described trash as a fluid, dynamic social category created by sorting and characterised by a spatial dimension – what to keep and what to discard, where to put things – which somehow tends to end up at or near the margins of the household or the city – in the attic, in landfills out of town. In this sense she agrees with Douglas's (1966) definition of dirt as matter out of place. However, Strasser pushes things forward by adding a political element to her analysis of waste: 'But above all, sorting is an issue of class: trashmaking both underscores and creates social differences based on economic status' (1999: 9).

Discarding, Strasser argues, had always been used as a way of demonstrating power, whether through potlatch or conspicuous consumption (Veblen 1899). Furthermore, discussions of marginal places and marginal behaviours, such as dealing, collecting or living off waste, often merge with discussions of marginal people, the poor, who thus become subtly (or very explicitly at times) identified with waste itself. At the beginning of the twentieth century poverty and trash were seen as deeply connected, and refuse was treated as an issue of poverty: reuse, recycling and bricolage became associated with the poor, and particular concerns were raised about the habits of the immigrant poor (Strasser 1999: 136). It was not only the poor's ways of making a living that connected them with waste: before municipal collections, the rich living in wealthy neighbourhoods paid private collectors to take away their rubbish, while the poor simply had to live with it, throwing it out of their windows and into their streets. We can see then how structural inequalities were translated into a cultural understanding of the very close relationship, if not full identification, between the poor and waste in the US at the turn of the twentieth century.

Still with us today: contemporary examples of symbolic devaluation

In the UK, Skeggs' contemporary ethnographic work on class, gender and respectability (1997) still resonates with Strasser's historical work, showing how British working class women are only too aware of the ease with which they are symbolically conflated with waste by those in power, which is why they attempt to remove themselves as much as possible from the label 'working class', in a constant struggle to 'pass' as respectable. Thus they avoid at all costs anything that is dirty or scruffy by carefully monitoring their clothes (Skeggs 1997) and their homes (Madigan and Munro 1996, Evans 2006) for cleanliness, which they equate with respectability. The value of this kind of work lies in its ethnographic approach, in how the details of people's everyday experiences are explored and described to show how some things work, how an individual's choice of clothes or nets for her window resonates with judgements of taste and class that become inscribed on the body.

Crucially, they also show how value, which as Graeber (2001) argues is always produced socially, exists and is created amongst working class people by themselves and for themselves. The fact that it may not be recognised by middle class people as value, or taste, or education, does not mean that people do not see what they are doing as valuable, tasteful or educational for their families and children. Evans (2006) for example shows how working class parents obviously do care about bringing up their children, but the standards and aims of their parenting are different from what middle class parents believe to be a good education. The problem is that schools are geared towards middle class standards of education and behaviour, meaning that as soon as they enter formal education working class children are immediately at a disadvantage because they have not been socialised correctly for that institution, while middle class children have been, and know how to behave appropriately already. Thus working class parents reject notions of them not caring for their children, arguing instead that they are preparing them for what their specific life – of unstable, non-rewarding labour, for example – will be like.

Structural, economic differences between working and middle classes are recreated socially and culturally through thoughts and behaviour patterns: Skeggs (2004) has dealt with these issues theoretically in a very interesting way, showing

"how the middle classes were accruing value to themselves by metaphorically, symbolically and physically containing others in space in order to enable their own mobility as the vanguard of cosmopolitan modernity by figuring others as an atavistic blockage to national development, and affect stripping the working-classes (black and white) in order to increase their own value" (Skeggs 2008:1)[10]. It is especially the idea of one group of people stripping another of value that is relevant to this thesis, and the practical ways in which this works. The way, for example, in which appealing to the value of 'community' can lead to completely different results depending on who is doing the appealing and what they mean by it, what resources they can muster and how they are able to position themselves (See chapters four, five and eight especially). Or the way in which dealing with rubbish, and especially recycling, can become a mark of distinction that reproduces one group as ethically correct and worthy while others, who have no access to it, are consequently portrayed as careless and not ethically aware, not 'a good sort', as Hawkins (2006) would have it.

Hawkins (2006) tries to engender a different, ethical stance towards waste, arguing that we should look for new ways to relate to it, that we should feel connected to our waste rather than repulsed by it. Whilst her argument is interesting, the gap that I am interested in filling with my work is a problematisation of the 'we', or 'us' that she is talking about. In my fieldwork the 'problem' with waste was not so much what people did with it, but rather how differently people did it, and were expected to, and how they were allowed to do very different things with the materials they wanted to discard. The wellbeing generated by the purification ritual of recycling that Hawkins (2006) beautifully describes was not available to all of my respondents, whether they wanted it or not. This is the angle I would like to explore: what happens to those who cannot take part? Those who do not have the space, time or possibility to engage with the waste rituals that society deems worthy and ethical and good? What kinds of people and affects are created in this way?

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10   This is nothing new of course, as Parkin (1979)'s Marxist critique already described a bourgeoisie constantly redefining what class/taste was, endlessly pulling up the drawbridge behind them so that others couldn't join them.

Something to bear in mind when exploring this question is that maybe waste, or wasting practices, should not always be assumed to be creative and identity-generating, or at least not always in a positive way. This 'equation' comes arguably from the consumption literature of the '80s – reviewed in section 2.2, page 5 – which broadly speaking argued that consumption was a positive locus of identity generation to be studied, explored and celebrated. Graeber (2001) has criticised this position from a number of perspectives, generating a different approach to consumption that begins from Bataille's (1949) ideas of creativity and his ideas of culture originating in the wasteful excesses of sacrifice. Graeber (2007) argues amongst other things that this alternative perspective would explain, for example, why waste has so far being identified with consumerism and desire rather than construction and industry.

Bauman's *Wasted Lives* (2004) also challenges any necessary positivity between consumption and identities, in an approach that closely follows Douglas's (1966) ideas of dirt being the result of the ordering mind. Bauman focuses on the 'failed consumers' of today's western societies, and how their failure is articulated as an inability, usually due to lack of money and jobs, to consume properly, which turns them, as individuals – poor people, unemployed, refugees, outcasts of all sorts – into waste materials in a world that does not care about those who cannot consume properly. Giroux (2006) uses this argument and applies it, in a rather extreme fashion, to the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. His argument is that the political response to the hurricane exposed what he calls a 'biopolitics of disposability', a conscious politics to allow the death and suffering of thousands of poor black people in New Orleans because they did not matter, their lives were not worth saving as they represented 'waste', symbolically and physically, in American society.

Darling (2009) analyses the attacks on Sarah Palin during her electoral campaign to show how the politics of 'white trash' were deeply embedded in the debates. In particular she focuses on the representation of rural white Americans as 'white trash', 'rednecks', 'hillbillies' and so on, and how the critiques of Sarah Palin from the city dwelling left-wingers bought into historical stereotypes and misrecognitions of these groups. By constructing them in this way, the urban elites were able to then create themselves as clever, sophisticated, liberal, educated and cosmopolitan, much in the way that Skeggs describes happens with the British

working classes (1997, 2004, 2008). The confluence of race, rubbish and community politics is also explored by Gregory (1993), who shows how not just metaphors of rubbish, but actual physical engagement with it can mediate and bring about unexpected outcomes when groups become aware of the ways in which they are being represented and start using them themselves to challenge the spaces and stereotypes they have been cast into. Haylett (2001) considers the confluence of race and class when she argues that a mass of poor white people embodies contradictions that governments have to solve – or be seen as trying to solve – to maintain credibility, specifically since 'poor whites can be seen as dangerous to the symbolic order of British nationhood where hierarchies of national belonging and privilege are still naturalised by skin colour' (Haylett 2001:361).

Conclusion

This thesis explores the relationships between individual and communal waste behaviours in inner-city areas and the symbolic devaluation of those areas and communities by those placed outside and above them, spatially and socially in terms of physical distance and class belonging. This chapter has reviewed a body of literature by a number of authors to give a theoretical background and frame to this project. It started off by examining popular understandings of waste, because those are the tropes and explanations that the respondents who are at the centre of the thesis use to understand waste issues. It then moved onto anthropological understandings of waste as socially defined, produced and reproduced – as well as producing and reproducing society and those who deal with it, of course. The chapter questioned the importance and relevance of individual waste behaviours, finding some interesting ways to think about answering this question. Finally, it has also considered sociological literature on symbolic devaluation and the mis-representation of poor people with wastes of various kinds, across historical and geographical situations.

If anthropology has been very successful in dealing with issues of wasting relating to things and material processes, it is mainly the sociological literature on symbolic devaluation that has addressed issues to do with people and communities' values. This thesis bridges this gap by carrying out an anthropological, ethnographic exploration of the literal and symbolic processes of value creation and destruction I encountered on my field-site. Specifically, it seeks to 'unpack' discourses of

regeneration as recycling and bringing in instead ideas of wasting and devaluation. The framework developed here and in the introduction allows me to consider the issues of wasting and de/valuing described ethnographically in the rest of the thesis, reflecting in the course of the chapters on processes of regeneration, recycling, wasting and valuing that will be picked up again and reconsidered in the conclusion (chapter nine). The next chapter will introduce the 'field' site, the location where research took place in south-east London, highlighting issues of complexity and representation that are typical of dense, urban environments such as Peckham.

Chapter Three – Peckham: introducing (and producing) the field

The previous chapter positioned the thesis theoretically within the literature it addresses: this chapter describes instead the location where the research took place, the field site. I have explained in detail why Peckham is relevant to questions of value, waste and symbolic devaluation in Chapter One. Indeed, given the urban regeneration processes that have taken place there in the last twenty years it is an ideal location to look at these issues. I will now describe the area itself, to give the reader a sense of it and especially an understanding of the complexities – social, economic, ethnic, demographic to name but a few – that characterise Peckham. As Amit (2000) argues, of course, describing our site is an impossibility: we create our field by choosing it, being in it and describing it, and therefore this is an exercise in producing, not just describing, Peckham as I encountered it.

I will start with some basic demographic information about the area, with the clear understanding that, as Allen (2007: 105) argues, data created by statisticians in offices located far away spatially, but also socially, from the places they describe should be taken as *a* narrative about a place, not *the* narrative. Nonetheless they can be useful as initial framing devices, so long as they are appropriately contextualised, which is what the rest of the chapter does. After a few select statistical data, I consider some urban studies literature to contextualise slums and, later on, social housing in Britain, sketching out specifically the impact of the Right to Buy policy on the national housing stock and on deprived estates, like the ones in Peckham, in particular. Finally, I draw on informants' stories collected during fieldwork, often answers to the initial, broad question 'so, what's it like around here?'. The resulting picture is necessarily fragmented: sometimes the stories are inconsistent with each other, sometimes informants contradict one another and they almost always challenge the mainstream narrative about Peckham as a ghetto/nightmarish place. I have not tried to make the stories work with each other but rather juxtaposed them, often in the order I have encountered them during fieldwork, to give readers an impression of the different opinions and experiences of people living here.

This approach is not without drawbacks, of course. Bourdieu (1999) did something similar in his book *The Suffering of the World*, based on interviews taken

by researchers in and around poor estates, factories and deprived schools manly in France – but also in the USA. His argument was that that difficult places need to be described in ways that are complex and multilayered, specifically to overcome simplistic and one-sided images produced by the press. By 'difficult places' he meant areas where poor people lived, usually not out of choice but necessity, usually in ways and with neighbours they would not choose – meaning multi-ethnic and multinational poor neighbourhoods, a description that could be applied to Peckham. McRobbie (2002) has severely criticised Bourdieu's approach, accusing him of, amongst other things, evading issues of power, ignoring current French scholarship that has taken a different approach to the places he studied, and producing very 'thin' descriptions devoid of analytical explanations and proper ethnographic contextualisation. The approach taken here tries to avoid these pitfalls because informants' interviews represent only part of the chapter rather than all of the material used to describe the area. Furthermore, Peckham is also described, talked and thought about throughout the rest of the thesis, using various sources that take into account structural, historical, demographic and ethnographic factors.

3.1 Peckham by numbers

One of the dangers of quantitative, statistical data is how often they are used to support a strong and dominant narrative, created and reproduced by media and politicians alike, that sees Peckham as a valueless, wasted landscape of crime, fear, violence and antisocial behaviour. Produced by officials working in town halls, local and national governments, through graphs, tables and statistics, these narratives condense individual neighbourhoods into short profiles, describing how deprived, poor, mixed and unemployed their inner-city dwellers invariably are. In so doing, these descriptions obliterate the individual, specific nature of a neighbourhood and reduce it to just another problem ridden inner-city area.

> Although the media narrative of decline corresponds with the 'indicators' of decline
> that have been produced by other agencies (local government, regeneration agencies,
> research consultants) from which it derives much of its legitimacy, it is exactly that: a
> narrative. And as a narrative it can only be understood as a particular – not objective –
> way of 'knowing' that emerges from the social position from which its form of

knowing is made possible and articulated, that is, from the social and spatial distance of
the statistician's office (Allen 2007:105).

This narrative is still recreated monthly, even weekly, by national media outlets contacting local youth and media projects based in Peckham to ask for teenagers, usually boys, ideally black, for 'pieces' on gangs and violence in the inner city. One of my informants reflected on this practice in very critical terms, fully aware, as a media practitioner herself, in charge of a local radio station and many projects and youth workers that gravitated around the radio, of how this type of media attention creates and reproduces the area as a ghetto. The policy in her radio station was to decline requests from major networks for kids to appear in their features, but she was aware that many other projects were not in a position to refuse, mainly because of lack of funds.

Methodologically, the difficulties around selecting relevant statistical data to do with Peckham are of two kinds. To begin with, the area I consider to represent my fieldsite is based around individual estates that more or less sit within the area my respondents identified as Peckham, but is by no means easily bound or homogeneous. On top of that, of course, people move and work and visit friends and it feels strange, and almost artificially contrived to pretend that there is an area that I am looking at that is completely bound and separate from its surroundings. Secondly, from a technical point of view there is not a single, consistent definition of Peckham shared amongst agencies collecting and collating data. Thus for example the Peckham Ward, which is the constituency for the election of local councillors, is not the same as the Peckham Community Council area, made up of Peckham and Livesy Ward. Then there are smaller areas known as Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOA), a geographical measure used to collect relatively small scale – but still bigger than postcode areas, for example – statistical data, with an average population of 1500 people. On top of this, many data are collected at borough level, which is a much bigger area. Historically speaking, the boundaries and names of wards change as well, meaning for example that the Liddle ward, talked about as the main area/unit in Chapter Four during the regeneration of the Five Estates, does not exist anymore, having been incorporated into what is now part of the Peckham ward.

Bearing all these factors in mind, I have included below some data for the Peckham Community Council and Peckham ward areas, which are the closest units to what I would define as my field-site. These data are based on the 2001 Census, and while this may be seen as rather old data, considering the thesis is being written in 2012, I have used them because I think they are more relevant to the field site as it was at the time of fieldwork, in 2007/8. However, to compensate this choice I have also decided to include, in the final part of this section, geodemographic data from Experian, a highly sophisticated and up to date commercial database that offers compelling, if somewhat controversial, analysis of very detailed areas based on postcodes.

So to begin with, Southwark data show that Peckham ward comprised a population of around 19,500 people according to the 2001 Census, but this went up to 24,800 if we consider GLA population data: the inconsistency, as explained on the council's own website, is due to different calculation models. The two most populous ethnic groups in 2001 were Black Africans (34.1%) and White British (28.7%).

Table 2: Peckham Community Council, Population by Ethnic Group, 2001

Ethnic Group	no.	%
White British	5,491	28.7
White Irish	460	2.4
White Other	1,016	5.3
White and Black Caribbean	343	1.8
White and Black African	195	1.0
White and Asian	64	0.3
Other Mixed	188	1.0
Indian	135	0.7
Pakistani	61	0.3
Bangladeshi	201	1.0
Other Asian	102	0.5
Black Caribbean	2,807	14.7
Black African	6,524	34.1
Black Other	659	3.4
Chinese	503	2.6
Other Ethnic Group	407	2.1
Peckham CC	**19,156**	**100.0**

Source: *ONS Census 2001*

Figure 2: Peckham population by ethnic group , based on ONS Census 2001. Source: http://www.southwark.gov.uk/downloads/download/308/population_and_migration

In terms of age, these two sets of data show that the population in Peckham was remarkably young, with those in the 0-15 bracket representing a quarter of the population according to some estimates, while around two thirds of the population

were of working age. As for gender, the population wasgenerally equally split a part from those aged sixty and above, where women were in a majority.
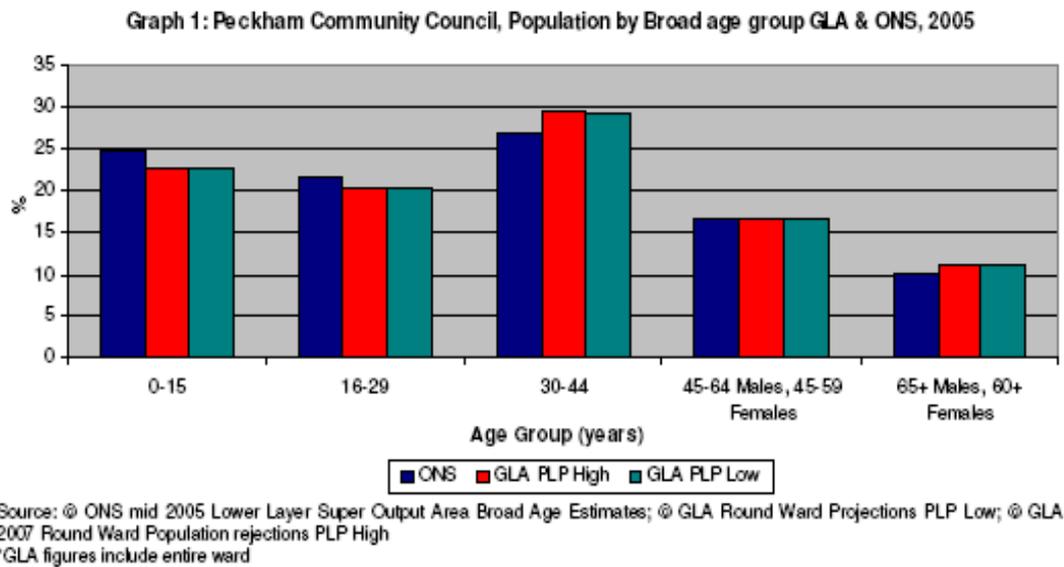
Figure 3: Peckham population by broad age group, based on ONS Census Mid 2005 and GLA data. Source: http://www.southwark.gov.uk/downloads/download/308/population_and_migration
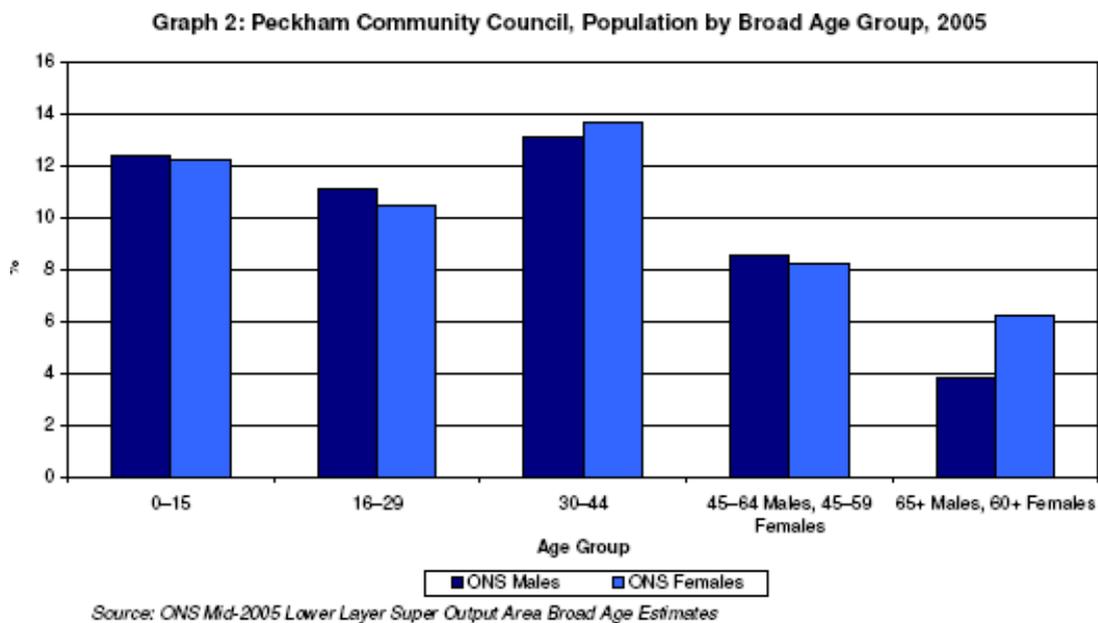
Figure 4: Peckham population by gender, based on ONS Census Mid-2005. Source: http://www.southwark.gov.uk/downloads/download/308/population_and_migration

A sense of the degree of poverty in the area can be gained by looking at data from the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) comparing Peckham's location in the index scores with the rest of the borough of Southwark, which in itself ranks very highly – meaning it is highly deprived – both within London (9th out of 32) and

England as a whole (26th of 354). Peckham is consistently the most deprived area in the borough of Southwark since at least 2004.

Table 3: Comparison of Southwark Community Councils between IMD 2004 and IMD 2007

Community Council	IMD 2007 Score	IMD 2007 Rank	IMD 2004 Score	IMD 2004 Rank	Difference in Rank	Deprivation Rank Change
Peckham	41.95	1	46.31	1	0	▬
Walworth	39.39	2	39.69	2	0	▬
Nunhead & Peckham Rye	35.21	3	36.73	4	-1	↓
Camberwell	35.20	4	38.15	3	1	↑
Bermondsey	32.57	5	35.74	5	0	▬
Borough & Bankside	30.91	6	32.89	7	-1	↓
Rotherhithe	30.57	7	33.26	6	1	↑
Dulwich	22.58	8	23.47	8	0	▬

Figure 5: 2004-2007 Comparison of Southwark Community councils scores on Indexes of Multiple Deprivation. Source: English Indices of Deprivation 2007, London Borough of Southwark, Borough Level Profile.
http://www.southwark.gov.uk/downloads/download/156/deprivation_work_and_the_economy

In terms of employment and the labour market, Peckham data derived from the 2001 Census confirm higher than average figures for unemployed and economically inactive individuals. These figures are important but in the course of the thesis I will analyse and discuss in more depth the concept of 'work' in itself, questioning what counts as 'work', why and according to whom (see especially Chapter Five).

Employment in Peckham Ward

	Peckham (numbers)	Peckham (%)	Southwark (%)	Great Britain (%)
All people				
Economically active	4,754	65.5	70.3	74.0
In employment	3,991	55.0	62.8	69.8
Employees	3,643	50.2	54.8	61.0
Self employed	348	4.8	7.9	8.8
Unemployed	763	16.0	10.8	5.7
Males				
Economically active	2,495	73.9	76.5	81.4
In employment	2,032	60.2	67.2	76.0
Employees	1,796	53.2	55.9	63.1
Self employed	236	7.0	11.4	12.9
Unemployed	463	18.6	12.1	6.5
Females				
Economically active	2,259	58.2	64.3	66.8

Employment	1,959	50.5	58.4	63.7
Employees	1,847	47.6	53.9	59.0
Self employed	112	2.9	4.5	4.7
Unemployed	300	13.3	9.2	4.7

Source: Census of Population (Table CAS028 - Sex and Age by Economic Activity)

Percentages are based on population aged 16-64, except unemployed which is based on economically active.

Figure 6: Employment figures in Peckham Ward compared to Southwark and Great Britain. Source: Nomis, Official Labour Market Statistics, ONS
https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/ward/1308625652/report.aspx?town=peckham

In terms of economic inactivity, for example, Peckham may rate significantly higher than the rest of Southwark or Great Britain, but it would not be unreasonable to question whether all those who work there do so legally and 'by the book' and are therefore prepared to declare themselves employed on a Census form. The informal labour sector was, in my impression as a resident and researcher, well-developed while obviously under the radar of statisticians' offices. Pahl (1984) and Mollona (2009) have eloquently shown the importance of the informal economy at times of de-industrialisation and crisis in general as people do whatever they can just to get by.

Economic inactivity (2001)

	Peckham (numbers)	Peckham (%)	Southwark (%)	Great Britain (%)
All people				
Economically inactive	2,504	34.5	29.7	26.0
Retired	174	2.4	2.4	4.5
Student	771	10.6	10.4	5.3
Other	1,559	21.5	16.9	16.2
Males				
Economically inactive	881	26.1	23.5	18.6
Retired	53	1.6	1.3	3.0
Student	359	10.6	10.6	5.3
Other	469	13.9	11.6	10.4
Females				
Economically inactive	1,623	41.8	35.7	33.2
Retired	121	3.1	3.4	6.1
Student	412	10.6	10.2	5.2

Other	1,090	28.1	22.1	21.9

Source: Census of Population (Table CAS028 - Sex and Age by Economic Activity)

Note: Percentages are based on population aged 16 64.

Figure 7: Economic inactivity figures in Peckham Ward compared to Southwark and Great Britain.

Source**:** Nomis, Official Labour Market Statistics, ONS

https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/ward/1308625652/report.aspx?town=peckham

In terms of occupation Peckham has a lower percentage of individuals in managerial and senior roles compared to the rest of Great Britain, a comparable amount of professionals, and a significantly lower percentage of people working in factories and processing plants, testifying how industry and manufacturing are no longer part of the area.

Employment by occupation (2001)

	Peckham (number)	Peckham (%)	Southwark (%)	Great Britain (%)
1 Managers and senior officials	384	9.6	15.3	14.8
2 Professional	420	10.5	15.8	11.1
3 Associate professional & technical	538	13.5	19.1	13.9
4 Administrative & secretarial	560	14.0	14.5	13.3
5 Skilled trades	309	7.7	6.6	11.6
6 Personal services	409	10.2	6.9	7.0
7 Sales and customer services	355	8.9	5.9	7.8
8 Process plant and machine operatives	231	5.8	4.2	8.6
9 Elementary occupations	785	19.7	11.8	11.9

Source: Census of Population (Table CAS033 - Sex and Occupation by Age)

Note: Figures are for persons aged 16-64 by Soc 2000 major groups. Percentages are based on all persons in employment.

Figure 8: Employment by occupation in Peckham Ward compared to Southwark and Great Britain.
Source: Nomis, Official Labour Market Statistics, ONS
https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/ward/1308625652/report.aspx?town=peckham

Peckham from a geodemographic perspective

Geodemographic data, as the name suggests, bring together geographic and demographic information about people, trying to profile neighbourhoods and their inhabitants. In a way Booths study of the London's poor can be seen as one of the first geodemographic study ever conducted. Recently, sociologists have become very interested in the data produced by companies such as Experian, which I will be using

here, as they often offer a very compelling and detailed picture of the areas they study. However, as with all data, they need to be contextualized and understood as, in this case, being generated for businesses who want to place their products in the most profitable neighbourhoods. As social scientists we know there is no such thing as 'neutral' data, but in this case given the strong commercial bias of this database it is even more important to remember the profit driven nature of the analysis that generated it in the first place.

Experian data and their interactive dataset 'Mosaic' classify people into 155 person types, 67 aggregate household types and 15 groups, creating a three-tier classification system that works at the individual, household and postcode level. A search of a few postcodes around Peckham reveals the following types, according to the Mosaic classification: K-49, re-housed migrants; K-45, small block singles; K-48, multicultural towers; and N-60, global fusion. The first and third group, K-49 and K-48, are the most prominent in the area, and the description given by Mosaic is worth quoting in full. K-48 are 'flat dwellers from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, renting mostly from the council in large purpose built blocks', while K-49 are 'people from diverse ethnic backgrounds surviving in low-standard small flats mostly rented by inner London councils'.

What is interesting about this data, and the website is certainly worth visiting for fascinating, if controversial, descriptions of Peckham's typical inhabitants, is their degree of accuracy. As a social scientist who spent years living in Peckham and as an anthropologist who did years of ethnographic fieldwork in this area I am seriously impressed by the level of detail provided by this data. The descriptions of Peckham dwellers on Mosaic are often less then flattering - for example the stress on migrants and ethnic's others lack of financial resources to buy products can be off-putting, but it is also justified by the commercial nature of the database. Overall, the picture is however of a vibrant and mixed neighbourhood living in cramped and often inadequate accommodation, community oriented yet generally rather conservative in their beliefs, which is something I can definitely recognize from my own ethnographic experiences in the area.

To conclude, tables and graphs, standard or geodemographic, are hardly the staples of anthropology, but they can be useful to paint a very general picture of an area, not to mention that quantitative data on poverty and deprivation are often used as 'the' narrative about Peckham, which if this thesis is to challenge should at the very least be acknowledged and reflected upon. I will now move on to discuss some authors who have concerned themselves with historical and policy dimensions of social housing, by far the most dominant type of housing in Peckham, which need to be addressed in order to understand the area and give context to my respondents stories and interviews, which make up the last section of the chapter.

3.2 Slums and social housing in Britain

This section presents a policy and historical frame for the housing estates on which fieldwork was conducted. Something to remember at all times throughout the thesis is how housing – whether it is social, private or in any other configuration of ownership, occupation and management - is not, and cannot be considered, a 'thing', a solid entity, but should rather be thought of as an infrastructure, a fluid assemblage rather than a monolithic, given reality. Even though it is almost commonsensical to see the built environment as something that is out there, solid and unmoving, as social scientists we must remember that it is not, that for example it is shaped by social, politican, economic and environmental circumstances, as this section shows. Graham's (2010: 10-11) considers urban life as processes, and infrastructures as fluid assemblages, referring to what he terms an 'infrastructural turn' in urban studies, citing among others the work of MacFarlane and Rutherford (2008), Ong and Collier (2005) and Bennett (2005).

Graham (2010) identifies three key points in this 'turn': first of all the aformentioned stress on infrastructures as more than a collection of 'things' working together, borrowing from Latour's (2005) actor-network theory. Secondly he highlights how the continuous interactions between technological and envoronmental domains create 'cyborg cities', where technological networks such as electicity, sewage, digital and gas perpetually transform the natural into the cultural. As a matter of disciplinarian difference, it is interesting to notice how Graham uses the term 'natural' as if were possible to conceive of an unmediated 'nature', which from an anthropological perspective is of course an impossibility (see Bender 1993 and 1998,

or Tilley 1994 amongst others). Thirdly and finally, the infrastructural turn considers infrastructures as political assemblages, contested and shaped by power conflicts and inbalances, following for example the work of anthropologist S. L. Star (1999). It is especially relevant to this thesis to see how housing and other infrastructures, including recycling and environmental services, "may be severely compromised as they are actively reorganized to maximize profit or return or absorbed wholesale into predatory models of neoliberal financial capital" (Graham 2010: 14).

Having established a theoretical basis to look at housing as an assemblage and infrastructure, let us now consider its empirical articulation in the fieldsite. Social housing is the type of housing most common in Peckham and indeed in the borough of Southwark as a whole, where it represents 45% of the total housing stock, the highest percentage in London and about three times as much the national average (Southwark Housing Strategy 2009-2016). It can be useful to think about these spaces not just as social housing, a specific and rather recent phenomenon in British history that only began in the 1920s, but as the housing of poor people in urban areas in Britain. One of the most important things to remember, from a historical perspective, is continuity. What is narrated in great detail in the following chapters, the tearing down of blocks that were home to respondents and therefore, from their individual perspectives, were incredibly important and unique events in their lives, seem to be from a historical perspective the norm rather than the exception.

Power (1993) argues that already in Britain in the 1800s, the poorest inner city areas were under constant assault from city developers, hungry for land and railways, commercial centres, banks, warehouses, schools and hospitals. Removing the chaotic slums was easier than either improving them, regulating them or funding real alternatives (Power, 1993: 172). During the 1860s, model dwellings to house the poor began being built by philanthropists, but already the rents were too high for the intended beneficiaries, and slum rents increased for the poorest as the slums were cleared. Overcrowding increased in the areas near philanthropic housing developments, such as those of the Peabody Trust in Covent Garden (Royal Commission 1885), as the very poor were squeezed into receding areas of cheap housing. Clearance and rebuilding did not of itself solve the problem of poor housing (Power, 1993: 174). In 1893, works began on the Boundary estate, the first ever

council estate in Britain, which was built in Shoreditch, London. Of the over 5000 slum dwellers that were evicted to make space for it, only 11 people were rehoused in the newly built estate (Collins, 2011). It seems that even though intentions may have been to help the very poor, in reality this housing was always already too expensive or not suitable for them, and the ones who did get it belonged to the respectable working classes, the top layer of that class rather than the bottom one.

The reason why this housing was being built in the first place were complex, Lloyd Goerge's promise of 'homes fit for heroes' has been interpreted as a revolutionary and enlightened social policy or simply a reaction to an agitating population – which included veterans – intended to stave off the threat of a communist revolution, or possibly both (Collins, 2011). Whatever the case, the government national commitment to housing the masses came with the end of World War One, and the Housing and Town Planning Act of 1919. This made the housing issue a national one, so that all local authorities had to consider the needs of their working classes and could build housing to deal with their needs. The years of substantial growth of council housing were thus between the 1920s and 1980: different Labour and Conservative governments have since been building houses and legislating about housing, with different results and emphasis due to their beliefs and circumstances.

During the 1950s there were new waves of slum clearances, under modernist ideals[11] of a 'clean sweep', implying more demolition and rebuilding. Between 1955 and 1965 600,000 dwellings were demolished in England; by 1976, another million. The impact was the opposite of the aim: instead of a clean sweep and modern conditions it resulted in abandoned streets of semi derelict housing, demolition sites and congestion (Power 1993: 190). Local authorities were encouraged to clear slums for demolition and rebuild; "the higher the building target, the greater the need for clearance. […] But the larger the clearance plans, the greater the rehousing needs. Thus it appeared that slum clearance targets constantly outrun rebuilding achievements". By the mid seventies "clearance was often delayed for ten or more years through a vicious cycle of partial emptying, partial refilling and partial

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[11] See Holston (1989) for a detailed account of how modernist principles shaped the birth of Brasilia, for example.

exclusion". (1993: 193). So it appears that slum clearances have been a cyclical feature of social housing in Britain and in London, and that the housing built as a result was never really suitable for the very poor, who are just shunted along in usually worsening conditions.

Right to Buy: changes on the estates

If this is the general background of the estates I have worked in, something that has changed them to a rather large extent has been the introduction of the Right to Buy (RTB), a policy that gave council tenants the right to buy the home they rented from the council. Included in the Housing Act of 1980, it has been in place now for over thirty years, and this period has been analysed in depth by Jones and Murie (2006). They argue that this policy was part of a broader New Right Conservative agenda of privatisation and marketisation, to reduce the role of the state and the influence of the trade unions. The sale of council houses was the most important privatisation of those introduced by the Thatcher government, but it had deeper roots than the New Right Agenda, as was generally agreed upon by all parties, including Labour, that property owning should be encouraged and supported as a tenure.

Jones and Murie (2006) argue that originally council housing in the UK was not residual, but simply housing designated for anyone with a housing need. In 1915, 90% of households were in private renting, by 1938 only 58% of dwellings were owned by private landlords, while 32% were owner occupied and 10% were public housing. Different governments alternatively promoted or reduced house building programmes and standards, both in terms of design and living space[12]. The sixty years of growth of council housing, from 1920 to 1980, were also the years of growth of owner occupation: what was being squeezed were private landlords. Home ownership was the dominant and normal tenure and no party was willing to challenge that norm. Council housing and home ownership were not in competition until the seventies at least: it is in the seventies that for the first time that the expansion of both became impossible and therefore a conflict between them came about. In this context

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[12]The Parker Morris standards, which detailed specific spaces and, importantly, storage facilities that accomodation had to provide, were introduced in 1969 under a Labour PM, Harold Wilson, then later abolished by Lady Thatcher with the Housing Act of 1980, and interestingly are being championed again – but not set into legislation – by London Mayor Boris Johnston.

privatisation fitted in well with Conservative arguments for the retreat of the state and reduction of public expenditure through the sale of assets and the provision of services through private rather than public capital.

RTB already existed on a discretionary level, and had in fact been introduced by Labour, giving local authorities the ability to sell their properties if they chose to. The difference introduced by the Housing Act of 1980 was that it made it mandatory for them to sell to sitting tenants who fulfilled certain basic requirements, and so local authorities were entirely overrun. This policy was a central tenet of the Conservative manifesto, explicitly about helping families fulfilling their dream of owning their own home also through wider taxation and economic measures, which was seen as an end in itself. All concerns for investment in new building, improvement, homelessness or housing need were ignored. Savings on housing costs were to be the most substantial reduction in public expenditure planned by the government: housing share of expenditure fell from 7% in 1978/79 to 3% in 1980/81 and 2% in 1985/86. Housing was to decline from a major to a minor programme. The subsidies received by home owners through mortgage relief (£285 in 1981/82) began to pull away from those received by tenants through subsidised rents (£241 in 1981/82).

Significantly, buyers who initially took advantage of the scheme were often the wealthiest tenants living in the most desirable properties (3 bed, semi-detached houses) on the best, most sought-after estates. These people bought to stay in their homes, which they liked and they had 'moved towards' in a series of moves. They were often in the middle of their family life cycle. By the 1990s buyers were younger and saw buying as a way of moving out of the estates. The RTB has eroded the significance of council housing in two ways, through less access to social housing for low income families because of a reduced number of units lost to sales, and through overcrowding for those who are in the sector, as the large/best properties have nearly all been sold up. It is interesting that Jones and Murie (2006) believe that this happened without any specific intent, without any conscious policy decision: this analysis resonates with what urban anthropologists, such as Holston (1989), found when looking at the ways in which modernist projects gave rise to specific urban formations that were perhhaps not intended by the planners, or at least not entirely.

Even though the poorer quality and less popular estates, which would include those in which I conducted my fieldwork, were not directly affected by this policy, because tenants were unwilling and/or lacked the means to take up the offer to buy their homes, they were increasingly residualised. The RTB has brought a

"changed, more transient role for the council sector, one much more like that which used to be associated with the private rented sector [...] providing housing for people at particular stages of their lives and during periods in which they have limited resources. This role for council housing has risen by default without any conscious policy decision" (2006: 98)

This has meant, amongst other things, a large influx of small, young, non-family households (see my residents of EQRA complaining about this in Chapter Eight, for example). Homelessness has also increased drastically due to lost re-lets under RTB, meaning that local authorities have to turn to private sector renting, or Buy to Let (BTL) to deal with the resulting housing deficit. RTB has decreased available council properties but provides private properties to let. Economically speaking this is puzzling, as the state ends up giving away an asset, losing re-lets and paying housing benefits to private landlords as well. What is more, this has destabilised communities as usually BTL tenants stay in a property for less than fifteen months. This means that
RTB has destabilised the remaining council stock and the least desirable estates in particular. This has inevitably increased social exclusion and economic marginalisation and reduced the sustainability of communities in these areas through the instability of local populations (Jones and Murie 2006: 153).

RTB has also increased difficulties in terms of management and maintenance by fragmenting ownership, regulations and responsibilities: mixed tenure blocks, for example, are very difficult to manage (See Chapter Four and Eight). Additionally, those who have bought properties are often unable to keep up maintenance standards, especially when they are involve serious issues like heating or roof repairs, contributing to the overall dilapidation of the stock. The effect of this policy has been far from homogenous and, in general, the poorest households have been unable to benefit from the wealth redistribution represented by RTB. More subtly, what this

policy has also done is change the ways in which tenants relate with and see their houses: "The choice facing council tenants involve the same financial variables but the emphasis has moved very much away from their home as a consumable good to that of an investment" (2006: 186). This is something that is very relevant in the context of this thesis, the idea of houses, of people's homes, being both a place to live in and an investment. Sometimes it was respondents who saw them as both things at once, and sometimes it was council officers and developers who focused on the economic value of homes, their exchange value, while residents were more interested in the use value of their houses as homes, places to be in with their families.

A Marxian analysis of the built environment

The tension between exchange value and use value in urban landscapes is nothing new of course, as Power (1993) has argued it has always been a reason for slums to be under threat by developers especially in inner city areas. It is worth however considering in greater depth how exactly this mechanism works, and why it should be the case. Horton (1997) uses a Marxian frame to analyse what he calls the waste of the built environment. His argument runs thus:

> Capitalist waste prior to consumption is more closely specified as a structural preference for exchange value over use value. Further investigation, at a lower level of abstraction, reveals the devaluation of a particular type of capital, fixed capital, to be primary form of capitalist waste in production. Finally, descending to the concrete geography of capitalism, the built environment is discovered to be a principal, and *necessary*, site of pre-consumption waste in capitalism's transformation of nature (1997: 128, italics the author's own).

While rather dense, this argument is crucial to this thesis, and deserves to be unpacked properly. When talking about a preference for exchange value over use value, Horton uses the example of produce that has been grown at a cost to a capitalist, but cannot be sold on the market for his expected price due to unforeseen circumstances, such as a bountiful harvest that means there is too much to sell, thus depressing prices. In this case what tends to happen is that the capitalist (or more likely capitalists, as a group) chose to destroy the produce itself, i.e. the use value, in order to restore market equilibrium and protect prices, i.e. exchange value. This

preference for exchange value over use value lies at the core of pre-consumption waste in a capitalist system of production.

Horton (1997) then moves on to talk about fixed capital, e.g. machinery, as opposed to circulating capital, i.e. labour power and materials. Using Marx again, he argues that waste in production really revolves around the devaluation of fixed capital, which ends up being destroyed while still viable (loss of use value) to protect capital's productivity (exchange value) which is undermined by machinery that is not of the highest-newest standard, because this can be read as structural disinvestment and would thus fail to attract more capital.

Finally, in his third step, Horton borrows from Harvey (1989:64) the concept of the *'built environment for consumption'*. Harvey (1989) himself extrapolated this from Marx's idea of the 'consumption fund', a series of commodities that function as frameworks for consumption, and can be understood as urban infrastructure, especially homes, which are essential to the consumption that goes on inside them. Horton thus calls houses as the 'necessary site of pre consumption waste in capitalism'. He first divides the built environment into buildings and land: crucially, he identifies a tension between the stability of the use value of the buildings (i.e. people living in them as their homes) and the fluid nature of the exchange value of the land (which can be sold on the market as a commodity). As we have seen just now, tensions between exchange value and use value are usually resolved in favour of exchange value at the expense of use value. In an urban environment, Horton argues, as the rent potential for land increases, speculative pressure mounts for this potential to be realised. The flow of capital into the built environment is impeded, however, by the use-values of existing built structures. These use-values (e.g. a dwelling) have to be removed (wasted) before new exchange value opportunities (e.g. a suburban shopping mall) can be realised. The 'redevelopment' of the built environment, therefore, requires that existing structures, still adequate for their purpose, be destroyed and replaced by more intensive land uses capable of maximising rents (i.e. exchange value) for fictitious capital [*meaning land*] (1997: 136).

Horton (1997) and Harvey (1989)'s arguments are useful understand the structural elements at work when buildings are demolished, especially so when these

are buildings that would otherwise look sound and safe to be lived in for a number of years to come and are instead destroyed. This is not to say, of course, that this perspective can explain everything. It is important however to bear in mind that historically speaking the housing of poor people has always been in the process of being redeveloped, usually targeted at the higher strata of the working classes – and for the profit of its developers, of course (Power 1993). Also, the growth of council housing in the UK was, relatively speaking, only a short-lived phenomenon that went from 1919 to 1980. When thinking and trying to work with and on council estates it is essential to remember that there are structural, economic forces at play that inform and shape what these places look like, in short that they are socially constructed landscapes – just like any other (Bender 1998)

Houses and being: Housing Market Renewal in Liverpool

Allen's work on the impact of Housing Market Renewal (HMR) on working class communities in Liverpool is an excellent ethnographic example of how places can be symbolically devalued, stripped of their value, and have their dwellers forcibly removed from them so that they can be 'redeveloped' and 'improved'. His book gives an alternative account of Housing Market Renewal, a controversial government policy aimed at developing high value housing markets to replace what they – government officials and developers – define 'failed markets', meaning places dominated by low cost housing where working class people live. This is done by, amongst other things, compulsory purchasing orders, where the local authority forcibly buys up people's homes to redevelop them and the area in general. His account is alternative in the sense of taking residents' views and voices into consideration, which he argues are normally sidelined and ignored not just by by planners and local politicians, but by academics as well.

He provides 'a phenomenology of the relation between social class and the market for houses' (2008: 195), defining the working classes in existential terms, characterised by their proximity to economic necessity and insecurity. In this way he can talk about working class people in their own terms, rather than relationally - to middle class people - as individuals and groups lacking resources to consume properly. In his view one of the main class differences with regard to housing is that

working class people see houses as 'simply' places to live rather than symbolic steps needed to achieve and maintain class identity, as they are for middle class people. Therefore his working class respondents are happy with where they live, with their homes, even if powerful others deem their places 'failed markets', which middle class people would not be content with inhabiting because of their lack of symbolic value.

Allen (2008) shows how HMR is misleadingly represented by local authorities and developers as something to 'help the residents' – out of poverty, into better homes – while in fact it is a policy concerned only with the state of the housing market. The forced relocations and demolitions that it generates are not, he argues, 'benevolent accidents' or unforeseen/unforeseeable consequences, but rather what the policy is intended to do in the first place: extracting as much money from the land as it is possible, generating profits by stimulating the market. This happened in inner-city Liverpool, his fieldsite, because of the presence of a large rent gap, meaning that the houses situated in a specific area were not worth as much as they could be, and therefore money can be made by large scale developers through demolition and rebuilding. His aim is to think critically about this policy as a sociologist, deconstructing the narrative created by officials and planners and exposing instead the reality of its effect on the lives of working class Liverpool residents who are literally losing their homes as a result of it.

There are a number of similarities and connections between this thesis and Allen's work, as it will become clear in the course of the next chapters. For now it will be enough to point out that in Peckham too residents' views were routinely, one may even argue institutionally, ignored and misrepresented. What is more, the regeneration that took place in the nineties, and is the topic of the next chapter, was also portrayed by the council as something to improve the area and the lives of its residents. This representation masked the ways in which an area previously outside the market for houses, to use Allen's expression (2008) was opened up to capital flows and significant profits were made in its redevelopment, as will be shown in the next chapter.

There are also, of course, some differences, but they are in themselves interesting and, possibly, significant. In my case studies it was mainly tenants who

were evicted and more or less forced to move away: one of the fault lines of my site is that between tenants and leaseholders – freeholders are extremely rare. Allen's (2008) work shows instead that working class homeowners are also vulnerable to redevelopment, and that local authorities and developers can force them to move too. Another interesting and telling difference is the fact that in Peckham flats and blocks were demolished to make space for 'traditional' terraced houses, which were meant to engender and actively promote lively and engaged communities. In Allen's (2008) case, by contrast, terraced houses were denigrated as symbolic of a backward and undesirable working class heritage and identity, something to be escaped in order to move forward to 'proper' urban living – in flats. The contradictions here do not need to be stressed, and seem to point to the ways in which a certain market logic would try to justify and protect its interests – development and profit – through whatever argument may be at hand. Even though the demolitions in Peckham in the nineties were aimed, supposedly, at curbing density, at the time of writing some of the very same sites that were arguably cleared because they were too dense are now being redeveloped to a much denser level, in a high tower block that will be 'sustainable', suitable for 'urban living' and 'make a statement' about Peckham.

Finally, Allen's (2008) analysis is novel in its openly critical approach of a policy that he sees as having specific aims and effects. In this he differs markedly from Holston (198?), for example, who sees the many issues in the development of the town of Brasilia as the results of flaws within the plans, contradictions that were not addressed, but not really to do with any one specific agency or will. In the same way Jones and Murie (2006) analyse the Right to Buy policy in the UK and find its consequences were not foreseen nor predicted, arguing that, for example, no-one in power at the time meant for the Right to Buy phenomenon to happen, or for the situation of council housing to develop as it did.

This section has brought together different authors to contextualise, historically and in terms of policies, the council estates that occupy so much of the thesis, not just as backdrops but as characters of the stories in their own right. I have shown how these spaces, just like all spaces, are socially constructed (Bender 1998) and need to be analysed critically rather than taken for granted. Together with the statistical data provided at the beginning of the chapter, this review has given readers

a feel for the area, and set the stage for the voices of Peckham that make up the final section of the chapter.

3.3 Voices of Peckham

Like many areas in contemporary cosmopolitan cities, the social landscape of Peckham is so varied and diverse that it is effectively impossible to describe it as one homogenous unit. Constant change, both in terms of its people and its physical landscape, may well be its strongest feature. Different immigrant groups, for example – Caribbeans, West Africans, Eastern Europeans, Vietnamese, to name but a few – have settled here and then moved on over the years at remarkable speed. The different groups that live in the area do not do so in a vacuum, of course; interactions and mixing is the norm, and much as there are sometimes issues of crime between them – so called 'black on black' crime is often better characterised as caribbeans vs african gangs joistling for power and influence, for example – what is more surprising is how relatively well people get along, considering how diverse the population is. It is in many ways similar to what Back (1996) describes in his ethnography of south-east London, a constant mixing and shaping and searching for new identities, especially amongst the younger residents.

By the same token, the urban landscape itself has been through some remarkable changes, with small Victorian terraced houses being destroyed during the war, large housing estates going up in the '50s, '60s and '70s only to come down again in the 1990s , and for new terraced houses and small blocks to spring up in their places, housing a new incoming white middle class (see Chapter Eight). A canal connecting the area with the docks and bearing witness to the once productive nature of the area – bricks used to be made here, for example – has been filled and turned into an attractive walkway for pedestrians and cyclists, all the way through to the largest park in the borough, where a solitary kiln has been preserved in memory of the canal's historical legacy (Beasley 1999). In this diverse landscape and amongst the different narratives provided by many residents, time is also a variable which makes matters even more complicated. When talking to older residents they inevitably recalled, with nostalgia, the ways in which the area looked like 'in the good old days' of their youth, describing the shops and the factories and their lives when they were

young. Of course, this is not unusual and has been found by other urban researchers (Watt 2006: 786).

Bringing together all these different voices in a coherent text may well be impossible, and it could well be that in doing so one would just be imposing order and coherence when in fact there is just disorder and often random juxtaposition. The linear nature of a text does not lend itself well to such a description either, and so I have decided to use juxtaposition and allow the stories to speak to one another when they need to, or sit in isolation, or jump back and forth in time and space, attempting to mimic stylistically the multifaceted nature of the area. This approach follows closely what Bourdieu (1999:3) did, arguing that

> "All of them [individuals' points of view] must be brought together as they are in reality, not to relativise them in an infinite number of cross-cutting images but, quite to the contrary, through simple juxtaposition, to bring out everything that results when different or antagonistic visions of the world confront each other".

The McRobbie (2002) criticisms that see this approach as potentially lacking in ethnographic 'thickness' and awareness of power structures have already been addressed earlier on in the introduction of the chapter, and suffice to say here that the data used in this section, even if they are 'only' conversations, are most certainly grounded and contextualised here and throughout the thesis as a whole.

Old Peckham: bingo, caring and family ties

It's a cold December day, just after lunch time, and I am sitting in a large hall playing bingo. Next to me sit three older women, all of them white, one Scottish while the other two are English. It's taken me a bit of time, I've been here a few times before, but I am now reasonably comfortable with the place and its rules – silence and, most importantly, phones off when the numbers are being called! – and rather enjoy it, even though I don't manage to win much. This is one of the first groups of people I approached in Peckham, a bingo club that meets weekly at the Peckham Settlement. It was a good choice because it turned out most of them had

lived in the area their whole life and between them shared a very substantial amount of knowledge and memories about it. The Peckham Settlement itself is located in North Peckham and houses offices for various charities operating in the area, a nursery and a large hall that is used by various community groups, as well as being occasionally hired out to local people for parties and gatherings of all sorts. The building itself is old, quite shabby and not very clean but it serves its purpose well, as it is well used and 'lived in' by local people.

The bingo group was rather homogenous in terms of gender – all women – and ethnicity – all white – and broadly speaking class as well, as the women all seemed to have been from a working class background. Most of the women there were widows, they had outlived their husbands and now cared, and one could argue lived for, their children and grandchildren. This seeming homogeneity, however, dissolved as soon as they started talking about Peckham: their views were different from the beginning, even amongst friends. One woman would tell me how much she loved the area, and straight away another one would came up and said how this 'I Love Peckham' business – a campaign to raise the area's profile launched by the council – was a load of rubbish and the area was a dump anyway. Any ideas one might have had of the 'community' expressing single simple ideas was done away with right at the start.

The overall impression of that place was one of warmth, kindness and care. Conversations about how friends and family were doing were very frequent, as was the genuine concern expressed if anyone did not turn up without any explanation, such as being on holiday or visiting their children. They always asked me how was I going to get home, asserting that it was not safe to be out once it got dark, and as it was winter it got dark very early. One of the women, Sarah, had decided not to mention to her son that she still came to the bingo club in winter, as he was very scared at the idea of her being out in Peckham in the dark. Interestingly, Sarah was coming from the other side of the old Kent Road, which marks the boundary between Peckham and Bermondsey. While for her this was not a problem her son seemed to think that it was, but as he was in prison and had no way to control or monitor his mother's behaviour, she simply chose not to tell him, so he would not worry about it.

The women looked out and cared for one another, on top of often caring for their own mothers, if they were still alive: this amount of caring work was is remarkable considering none of them were younger than 70. Just after the Christmas break there was consternation amongst the women that someone's mother had apparently spent Christmas alone: it later transpired that the woman's son had been made redundant so he was there with her, but still Dorothy and Mary seemed surprised that Barbara, the woman in question, had not taken her mother to wherever she was going to for Christmas. These responsibilities were sometimes resented, at least verbally: when I asked Mary if she went to any other club during the week, or played bingo anywhere else, she said "I can't, I haven't got the time, 'cause I have a house and a family to look after, cooking, shopping, housework, ironing and so on…not like Frances who lives by herself… it's not my own life, even though I am 72 and it should be". Having been to Mary's house many times for a cup of tea after bingo, I witnessed the way in which her sons and their partners came to 'Mary's cafe' as she put it, dropping in and having meals she had prepared and left for them with great care, according to their taste, which was clearly a labour intensive activity. On the other hand, I could not help but thinking that she was pleased she was not in a situation like that of Frances, who was widowed and lived by herself, even though she spent quite a lot of time with Sarah, the Welsh woman that sat with us playing bingo. In fact Frances and Sarah had spent New Year together, and often went on holiday together too.

Caring for each other and their own ageing parents was clearly part of their lives, but the real joy in their lives were the grandchildren. It was with pure delight that Dorothy explained to me how she had 10 grandchildren staying over at one point over the Christmas break: "madness, it was madness! Costs me a fortune, but it's only once a year" she beamed, loud enough for anyone to hear. The importance of grandchildren and the pull towards their families meant that some of the women ended up actually moving out of London to be near them and be able to help with childcare on a regular basis. Dorothy was in fact considering doing that: much as she would miss her friends in Peckham and her old life "if they need me I'll go" she said, again out loud, clearly proud of being needed, of having strong family ties (see Willmott and Young 1957).

Changing landscapes

Most of the women who played bingo there had lived in Peckham a long time, some for their entire lives. They remembered the small terraced houses that were damaged by the war, they remembered when the tower blocks went up in the '60s and '70s and what great hopes were embodied in those modern shining new homes, and are still here now after the blocks have been demolished and people are, once again, being moved, this time to low rise, low density accommodation. Noticeably, for once there seemed to be something they all agreed on, which was that houses were better than flats, and they'd all much rather live in one with a garden, given the choice.

Mary lived in a house just opposite the settlement on Goldsmiths Road and has lived and worked within a few hundred yards of that house her entire life. This is how she talks about it:

> I am Mary, Mrs Mary Smith, and I live in 15 Goldsmiths Rd, Peckham. I was born in Clifton Crescent, with my mum and dad and so forth, and after a while we moved into Friary Road, 147 Friary Road. My dad was a window cleaner, and my mum was at home for a long long while til we, me and my two brothers, Sam and Ben, til we both got off hand then she went to work to…where did she work? Somewhere on the Old Kent Road, in a factory, and she worked there for a number of years, me dad used to do the window cleaning all around the Peckham area, used to clean the window of the houses and the pubs and the factories, all around Peckham area.[...] And then…I was still living with my mum and dad when I got married, and then we [Mary and John, her husband] moved round into Goldsmiths Road, and I lived above a lady who had two children, and that was in number 48, and I lived there for…until my two boys were born in fact, upstairs in the front room [...].we was quite happy in our little house, and… I didn't tell you about the school, we went…I, myself and my three boys went to Friary Road Peckham Park School, and my mum and dad used to go there also, and…all my family lived around…all in a sort of a block, mum and dad in Friary Road, I had my brother lived in Pennycourt Road, my other brother lived in Friary Road further down, and my mum lived next door to my mum, in `149, my sister in law living in 151, and I had my cousin living along by me in Goldsmiths Road, another cousin living in Staffordshire Street, which is only a stone's throw, and as I said we were all in a little circle.

This extract from Mary's life story gives us a sense of a close-knit community, family members living close to each other and working in the area. Interestingly she mentions here and in other parts of her story the many factories that don't exist any more in the area, which has become almost entirely residential. Mary has witnessed an enormous amount of change taking place in the area around her as she has gone through life. What makes her experience somehow unusual is the fact that she has never, in any of her moves, lived in a high rise block of the type that used to dominate Peckham in the sixties and have recently been demolished, or are in the process of being demolished, by the council.

Much more common is the experience of Theo, a man just a few years younger than Mary, a second generation immigrant originally from Cyprus, whose mother came to the UK before he was born. He walks his dog regularly in Burgess Park, a large green open space in the heart of the borough. "My house used to be there", he points out to me, laughing ironically "right where the lake is now – it'd be in the middle of the lake!" Theo used to live in a similar house to Mary's, but his was knocked down years ago to make space for Burgess Park, and he now lives in a flat on a nearby estate. His estate will be considered in more detail in Chapter Four, but for now it is interesting to notice how its history is closely connected to the park, because it was the open green space of the park that was meant to sustain, in the minds of the planners at the time at least, the high densities of the biggest estate in Europe. As we will see in Chapter Four, the future of Theo's estate remains uncertain, with plans to knock it down or refurbish it, partially or entirely, going back and forth between planners, residents, developers and investors. Theo thinks he will probably have to move out of his flat, and he hopes to move back to a house with a garden like the one he used to have. This is unlikely given that he is a single man, and properties with gardens are extremely scarce in the borough and usually reserved for families with children, but he still hopes.

Decline of Rye Lane

Sharing memories and talking about the past was something that another group that met at the Peckham Settlement did as well, in more formal ways, by

inviting people to 'reminiscing' sessions, where elderly members would talk about their memories of the area when they were growing up. This group was made up of a slightly more mixed demographic than the bingo club, and it included younger people, from thirty upwards, and men as well. It was still predominantly white, but it did have a few Black people and some who were not British as well. The reminiscing sessions would usually begin with nostalgic memories of Peckham's past glories, epitomised by a department store called Jones and Higgins, which seemed to represent all that was dear to them and was now lost. This was despite the fact that most of those present openly admit they could not afford to shop in that store, or at most were able to do so only occasionally, for example during the sales, but still it seemed to have been very significant to their sense of identity and pride in the area. When Jones and Higgins was there, the old ones remember, Rye Lane – the main shopping street in Peckham, stretching about half a mile, north to south, from Peckham High Street to Peckham Rye Park – was different as well. In those days, from the forties and fifties and up to the seventies even, it used to be full of 'posh', 'desirable' shops, it was known as the Golden Mile and attracted shoppers, even celebrities, from miles around.

Ann, a retired teacher and regular at the reminiscing sessions, is very keen on this old, 'proper' Peckham, and finds it very hard to hide her sense of loss, despair even, at the ways in which things are now, especially around Rye Lane. She is a very tall woman, slightly stooped due to her age, which she would not reveal, but let us say she is in her 70s, at the very least. Her white hair is always neat and she dresses impeccably. The language she uses "it is simply disgusting now, filthy and smelly" is strong and it is hard to miss the racist undertones – or overtones? – in her stories, the ways in which nostalgia mingled with resentment for the new people who have taken over Rye Lane with "dirty" shops that "are not even proper shops", meaning that they have open fronts and display their wares openly, with shelves and crates of vegetables edging on the pavement, and that meats are hung in the open creating strong smells, for example. As Douglas taught us (1969) matters of order and cleanliness are culturally and socially constructed, and in Rye Lane people from very different places converge, reproducing practices that inevitably clash with one another and with the older residents' sense of propriety and respectability (see Chapter Five on waste in particular about this). Needless to say these remarks were often met with

a certain degree of uncomfortable silence by those – and there were a few – who disagreed and were embarrassed by them. The group's coordinator, an employee of the charity, would normally steer the discussion in a different direction to avoid anyone lingering too much on the good old – white – days.

The local historian Beasley (1999) confirms the decline of Rye Lane as a high end shopping destination during the seventies, due to competition from shopping centres in Lewisham, Croydon and Bromley, and its demise during the eighties and nineties, which saw the closure of many shops, including Jones and Higgins but also Sainsbury's and Marks and Spencer. Increasingly Rye Lane catered for the many immigrant groups that had settled in Peckham from the Caribbean, West Africa, China and Vietnam, to name but a few. Furthermore, Peckham turned from a productive area with factories and workshops into a mainly residential location, as can be gained from Mary's life history.

Times are changing: new shops for new people

Rye Lane may indeed not suit some residents, but plenty more people in Peckham and beyond love it precisely because of the shops that Ann despises, selling fruit, vegetables and groceries from many African countries. Gabri was born in Nigeria and came to live in the UK to follow her father, a diplomat who was sent to London while she was still a child. After moving around a few places she settled in Peckham, in the same housing estate I live on, in a house that is structurally identical, in fact, to my own. Stepping inside it for the first time it was strange to notice how differently her space was organised, how rooms that are the same shape and size can be made to look and feel so different. While Hanley (2007) berates the soul-crushing nature of housing estates where every house looks exactly the same as the next one, Miller (1988) shows that even on council estates, on the inside at least, dwellings can and do look very different because they embody the different social relationships their residents are steeped in. Quite simply, it is necessary to go beyond the surface, or at least past the front door, before writing off a place as standardised, homogeneous and soulless.

Even before our estate was built, Gabri had lived on a neighbouring one for about twenty years; she remembers when our one was built, at the end of the 1970s, how beautiful it was and how pleased people were to move onto it. She now owns both the house she lives in and another one, down the road, which she rents out. One of her daughters has just finished a masters degree at a nearby college, something she is immensely proud of, and she will not hear anything negative about the area in which she and her family have clearly done so well:

G: Well, I love it here, I really do. If I could move…even if I moved, I'd still come back. I would still come back at the weekends, I would still come and do my shopping here. Because the area is….even my next door neighbour, she moved to Kent somewhere, but she still comes

L: Really?

G: To buy her African food, you know?

L: Is it good for that kind of thing?

G: Yes, there is nothing…you don't feel homesick, when you are here in Peckam, because…everything you need you can find here, everything, every type of traditional African..cultural whatever you want you can get here in Peckham, you know the community…there's people from every part of the world living in Peckham to be honest with you, is the most diverse, you know cultural..

Another neighbour of Gabri, again from Nigeria, stresses how familiar the area is to her in terms of ethnicity, or even "tribe", a word she uses herself when describing Peckham:

L: And how do you like living in Peckham, what do you think of it?

N: It's OK. I would say is like any other area, I like it because I mean, based on my own tribe, and ethnic origin, I think it suits me alright. You know 'cause most of my ethnic origin [sic] are here, so I feel comfortable, I feel at home.

Nelly rents her house from the council, and she arrived in Peckham during the '80s, straight from Nigeria, through personal connections and friends who had already established themselves here. She is very involved in the local community, mainly through her church. Even though this thesis does not focus on churches and religious organisations, it is undeniable that they represent a very strong force in the lives of many people in Peckham, acting as centres of cohesion for families and individuals. Another informant – an atheist herself, incidentally – who worked with young people testified time and time again that, in her opinion, it was the kids who came from religious families who managed 'to pull through' because their faith helped them and their families stick together even during very difficult times.

It is not just Nigerians who seem to have settled well in the area, of course. Bettina is from Ghana, and lives locally with her husband, who is from Senegal, and their two sons who were born here in London. She also feels very much at home in Peckham and would not move out of the area, while she would consider exchanging her flat for a bigger one because she feels her family need much more space than they currently have in their two bedroom maisonette.

Pushed out and left behind

It is in the nature of the area and the mix of people it attracts that while some feel comfortable and at home others feel overwhelmed by change, for example Ann, who we encountered earlier. It is not, however, just white, older residents who feel this way. While many African immigrants, usually first generation, seem to find themselves at ease, there is a substantial minority of black residents of Caribbean descent, usually second generation, who express dismay and sometimes open hostility at the way in which Peckham is now, in their words, perceived as simply African.

Liz was born in Peckham, moved away but has returned many years ago; she works as a nurse in private care now, but has worked for the NHS for many years, also as a health visitor attached to a local primary school, meaning she feels she knows the area and its issues pretty well. She is very much connected to Peckham: apart from her own two sons, her mother, a sister, two brothers and eighteen nephews and nieces live nearby, representing the main reason why she stays in Peckham at all.

Liz: my community will always be here because my family is here, yes? So you feel obligated to stay, you know your kids are safe, you know safer than most because they do live…you know they were born here they know but, to be honest with you, it's family ties keeping me here, nothing more than that.

Because she is not very fond of Peckham as it is now:

L: How do you feel living in this area, what do you think of it?

Liz: I used to like it, basically is my home, you know, I was born here, even though I moved away I've come back, and the kids like it, but now it's just changed and I am not…not that keen on it, even if we have what's called a 'nice' house…

L: How do you think it's changed?

Liz: I think even though they've moved the…they built up all the houses and knocked down half the estate and everything I think basically it's just…ehm… just got less tolerant, I think it's got less tolerant, and also it's…I'm going to sound awful saying this…you've got the large influx of one particular community that I don't believe…if it was any community I don't believe you can put a group of people, such a large group of people and expect them to…mix with other people

L: Right

Liz: It's always like majority, the minority are expected to integrate with the majority, but when you move a majority into an area and are expecting the existing…who are now minority..to actually integrate with a totally new group...

Liz, and many more like her, are the children of migrants who came to the UK in the fifties, like Andrea, whom we shall meet in Chapter Five: she was born in Peckham herself, and is now raising her own two daughters here, but she is deeply resentful of the way in which, in her view, what she calls – but only behind close doors, and not explicitly when I am taping her – the 'Nigerian majority' has now taken over everything.   A story she told me time and time again, which made me

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think it must have been significant to her, was how surprised her younger son was when someone explained to him that Black History Month included him, too. Her son had always thought, and Liz blames his school for this, that the event was all about African countries and traditions, and was surprised when told that he, who was originally from Guyana, could be part of it too.

The feeling of being pushed out by a new group is not experienced just by Caribbeans who feel squashed by the incoming West African population. There are also some white middle class residents who feel, more than squashed, abandoned and forgotten by waves of regeneration that have benefited, in their views, other parts of the borough whilst leaving Peckham, or their part of it, behind. Catherine is a white woman in her 40s from a solid middle class background. She was born in India as her father was in the British Army, and then lived in Kent during her childhood and teenage years. When she moved to Southwark she lived first up by the Elephant and Castle, in a housing co-op that was owned by the council, and then moved to Peckham when the council chose to move them along. In Bourdieusian terms she has good amounts of educational, social and to an extent symbolic capital, but crucially lacks economic capital to allow her to buy her own place and move somewhere else, which she would like to but cannot do, and feels "trapped" by a relatively low rent that she cannot hope to find anywhere else.

Her major problem with the area is the patchy nature of the various regeneration projects that have been visited upon Peckham:

C: Emh...regeneration to me...I suppose it's starting from the ground up, it's like improving the infrastructure that makes life easier and more pleasant for everyone around here, so really regeneration for me, I am less worried about what type of bollard it is, you know, whether it is a designer bollard or not ... I am much more interested in, em..you know...real thought being given to how people actually live in an area and what makes life good for them, so if you've got a row of derelict shops you know, doing those shops up, say maybe there's a hairdresser and a café and a greengrocer...it means people can stay local, and interact with each other locally, you know that's the kind of regeneration that I think is really good ...regeneration...I understand why people think this cosmetic thing, cosmetically make things look lovely

help improve people's perception of an area, but I don't know that it actually…it kind of ghettoises things a bit, you know I am thinking of the Bellenden regeneration it makes one area look really nice and then what happens to all the rest? They kind of miss out on…you know it makes other areas look like they are lacking in something...

Catherine's curious reference to the designer bollards is to do with a regeneration project which improved Bellenden Rd, which she mentions later, and included bollards designed by Anthony Gormley, a local resident and internationally recognised artist. The Bellenden project has been hailed as an incredible success and has undoubtedly changed the look and feel of the road, as well as markedly increasing the value of its houses, but it has also generated, as it was probably inevitable, jealousy and resentment from areas that did not receive as much attention or money to improve themselves.

The nursery: normality and visibility

It's eight o'clock in the morning and the first children start coming in, often pushed in by their parents desperately in a hurry to get to work on time. Staff here don't like it when parents do that, they are supposed to come in with the children, take their coats and gloves and scarves off, put them on the right peg and say goodbye to the child. It's December, and children come in from the cold like little astronauts layered up in coats, snowsuits, jackets, hats, scarves...it takes time to peel them all off and release the child inside, and having to do it for 20 of them is quite a lot of work. I proceed to unwrap children as they come in, while chatting to Rose, who works there and keeps an eye on me, because I am a volunteer and cannot be alone with the children, even after having proved my 'safe' legal status with a Criminal Record Bureau check.

After unwrapping a few more children I go to the staff room myself to take my own coat off and ask if anyone has watched TV last night, as there was a programme on about gangs, and quite a lot of footage was shot not just in our area, but on my estate, literally a stone's throw from the nursery. It was a disgrace, I declare, the way they portrayed us. They interviewed a bunch of kids asking them if they had guns – the journalist was a young, beautiful (white) woman who was mildly flirting with the

(black) boys she interviewed, and they were clearly just saying anything they could to make her interested in them, telling tales of shootings and guns and friends gone to prison – it was unbelievable, such cheap pseudo journalism rubbishing our area on national television! Wasn't it a disgrace?

It was a bit of an anti-climax. My tirade didn't impress anyone, some women had seen the programme but most of them had not, or even if they had they really didn't seem bothered. They had more important things to do and think about (someone's mother was ill, Christmas shopping needed doing, money was tight as always...) and what a random journalist may say about where they lived really didn't matter all that much. I was quite unimpressed, but couldn't do anything about it, and just got on with work for the day, all the while wondering: do they really not care? Could they not see how terrible that programme was? Had I said something wrong, had I offended them in some way? All I said were positive things about the area, I even told them I was going to write a letter of complaint about it...

It was only later on, when we were getting the babies to sleep after they'd had their lunch, that Rose decided to bring up what I had said again, joking with me 'You think what you saw last night was bad? You should have heard what they used to say about us, when I used to live on the Gloucester estate!'. And so, while we were rocking two babies each, on their little seats, one per hand, in what was my favourite time in the nursery, in the silence and dimmed light of the sleeping room, Rose started telling me what it was like to live on her old estate. 'It wasn't all that bad once you lived on it, you knew your neighbours and you were basically fine if you were sensible, much as it is now around here anyway, you don't go around flashing your cash that's for sure, but you were all right'.

Rose is in her 60s and has lived in the area all her life; for a number of years she was on the Gloucester, before being moved out in the '90s, during the regeneration programme which I will consider in depth in the next chapter. She is white and working class, having worked caring for children or as a housewife most of her life. In many ways I would think of her as the old, white and working class face of Peckham, but her grandaughter Aleyha, she tells me with a certain pride (which always shows when she talks about her), is mixed race, her family history reflecting

the mixing and entanglements of different people and ethnicities coming into the area. She talked then about living on her estate with pride, being used to the fact that it was thought of as some kind of criminal haven where milkmen and postmen wouldn't deliver (which she tells me was a rumour anyway) and finding it somehow amusing that people were so scared of it while in fact it was all right. This initial conversation opened the gates for many more, while making play dough for the children, or cleaning up after their lunch. In time it became evident that much as she found it amusing in a way, she was also annoyed at the way her estate, and herself and her way of living, by extension, were always portrayed so negatively, but she knew she was powerless to change it, and so resorted to mocking it instead. She didn't exactly laugh at my idea of complaining to a TV channel, but certainly didn't think it would make much difference.

The reason why my outrage at the TV programme, that morning, fell so flat, and left me with the feeling of having said something wrong, was that far from placing me 'on their side', my self righteous, "up on a high horse" attitude marked me as an outsider. I had not realised what I happened to see one night on the telly was not the exception, but the norm. Our area, we, ourselves, are always talked about in that way, so why getting worked up about it? Are you not used to it? Well, I clearly was not, but they were. What they do to counteract it is either ignore it, like they did that morning, or joke about it, as Rose did with me. These reactions do not mean that they don't care: on the contrary they are much more aware of the stereotypes and prejudices that come with our area because they have lived with them all their lives, and they hurt, on a personal level even. This shows, for example, in the way people talk about not getting jobs because of the postcode they put on application forms, which is impossible to prove but remains a serious issue in many people's minds around here.

Working in the nursery was supposed to be a way to get to know the parents of the children, interview them but most of all chat with them informally, maybe even being invited back to their homes for a cup of tea, become friends. That did not happen. I barely got to know any parents at all, as the technique of shoving children inside in the morning was matched by picking them up late in the evenings when parents were tired and stressed out and their children were grumpy and overtired

themselves. These people did not have the time to say goodbye to their children properly in the morning, let alone speak to a researcher. The lesson, the data – however small the sample and qualitative the method – that this exercise produced, however, was important, and it was the realisation of how hard people work around Peckham. The image of the lazy poor, the 'underclass' that live off the benefit system really did not match the reality of parents who, I was eventually told by the staff, often held down two or more jobs, doing shifts, usually in casual and underpaid work.

These parents were trying their best to provide for their children but in doing so they were 'invisible' in the community and 'unavailable' to the researcher. This often results in a paradox where the only 'visible' residents of areas like Peckham are those who are out of work, but they are not necessarily the majority. Documentaries like *The Tower* (Wonke 2007), which followed the conversion of an ex-council tower block into luxury flats in the middle of a council estate in Bermondsey, anger residents of the estates they describe precisely because the researchers often fall into this trap. They interview and film addicts and poor mothers – who are available during the day, like the men hanging round their corners that Whyte (1955) followed as early as the 1950s – and hold them up as representative of the whole estate, while they are simply those who are there: the ones who work are unavailable and therefore erased from the narrative, creating an image that residents do not recognise as representative of themselves or their areas. Working in the nursery alerted me instead to the reality of many, many working parents who did long hours, lived quietly and generally kept going in the background, unavailable to me but nonetheless present and contributing to the area.

Conclusion

Peckham is a complex, difficult place to describe, but most researchers would say the same of 'their' field sites. It would indeed be strange if after working, living in and studying an area for years it were possible to see it as anything but multifaceted and complicated, at least for an anthropologist. I have tried to translate this complexity with a three-pronged approach: firstly, I have looked at the 'numbers' that describe Peckham, its unemployment rates, deprivation indexes, gender, age and so on. I am aware of the potential issues to do with quantitative data written up about an

area by people who often know very little of its specificity, I nonetheless think they offer a potentially useful narrative and framing device. Secondly I have tried to describe the estates that this fieldwork is so connected with by establishing their historical genealogy, tracing the role of various policies in making them as they are now.

Finally, the different stories collected in the final part of the chapter try to give an idea of Peckham as a specific neighbourhood with a specific history, a place that is *home* to the respondents I have worked with, somewhere they care about – not always maybe, and not without exception – but certainly somewhere they know intimately through lived experience. There were the old women from the bingo club, whose families and friends made old age and often a lack of material resources not as bleak a situation as it could have been, as they navigated the perceived dangers of the area by caring and watching out for each other. Through Mary's life history we got a sense of a close knit community that used to be common around here, as were factories and a productive, work-based landscape. The nostalgic descriptions of Rye Lane and the golden days of posh – proper, even – shops and their 'decline' into more ethnically diverse outlets track changes from a solidly white and working class area into a more mixed neighbourhood, with all the tensions these changes entail. While some Nigerian respondents feel at home in this new Peckham and rejoice at the availability of African produce and products, some of the Caribbean people feel pushed out and forgotten, resentful even.

If the improvements in the physical environment of some streets have undoubtedly made some areas look better, and increased the value of some houses, other residents feel left out because their areas have not been 'done up', and so why were they less important? Underlying all these changes and tensions, working in a nursery alerted me to the solid, constant pulse of a generally poor neighbourhood where many parents, many people, work long hours in different, casual, low paid jobs, trying hard to make ends meet and not draw attention to themselves. Being away at work they are not visible to the casual observer, and if they are difficult to interview, or find even, for a social scientist, it is no wonder that journalists ignore them completely, contributing to those flat and simplistic representations berated by so many who study, live and work in these areas.

Peckham is not just another inner-city 'ghetto', as the media would often like to portray it, nor simply an impoverished, deprived, violent 'underclass' area. It is home to many different people and while it does suffer from a series of structural problems such as poverty, unemployment and housing shortages, for example, it is also remarkably comfortable for many different groups to live in, next to each other and often mixing, especially as children meet and interact in schools and nurseries. This description openly challenges the hyperviolent, criminal descriptions that areas like this often receive in the press and presents instead a picture of overall 'normality', intended as the sociable interactions between people in their everyday lives and their care for their families and neighbourhoods. It is against this background that the next chapters need to be framed, beginning with the story of a large regeneration programme that significantly changed the area in the nineties, both in terms of its people and its buildings.

Chapter Four – **The Five Estates**

The previous chapter has described the fieldsite, using basic quantitative data – Peckham by numbers – historical and policy reviews of social housing, the most dominant housing type in the area, and finally through residents' voices. The aim was to give readers a feeling of what it was like to live in different parts of the area, and a sense of the substantial changes that have taken place during the lifetimes of some of the respondents. This chapter will now turn to a detailed example of urban regeneration in practice, focussing on the regeneration of an area of north Peckham called the Five Estates, or sometimes referred to as simply North Peckham. Within the thesis as a whole, this chapter shows how value and values work in practice by literally, physically reshaping an urban landscape. It is obvious that different individuals and groups would value different things, and be prepared to waste others.

What the chapter shows, however, is that the way these differences play out depends on who is in a position to make decisions as to what can be wasted and what should be valued. Some residents showed a strong attachment to their previous houses, for example, which they valued as the place they lived, the place they were, their homes in the deepest sense. However this value they attributed to them was either ignored or misrepresented (as selfish tenants 'holding out' for a better deal, for example) and was not enough to stop demolitions. On the other hand the values of community and neighbourliness that some of the officials thought they were bestowing upon the area through the new housing were strong enough, or rather used by people who were able to 'make them stick', even if it was clear some of those values were by no-means new to the area, unclaimed or uncontested.

For the purposes of clarity, I shall refer to the regenerated area as the Five Estates from now on, but as it will become clear in the course of the chapter, the naming of this area was part of the regeneration strategy itself. By doing so, the area was created by the council as uniform and identifiable, which is something that some residents disputed when they highlighted the heterogeneity of the estates that made up the area interested by the regeneration programme. I will begin with a brief summary of the original Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) funding application itself, followed by a detailed background of the area interested by this regeneration project, based on

documents produced by the council to support their bid for SRB funding. This is the description the council wrote in order to attract funds into the area, and as such it is a narrative worthy of attention in and of itself. It is not, however, to be taken as a neutral background but as 'part of the story'(Allen 2008), to be analysed, compared and contrasted with other descriptions of the place, by residents and officers, in the course of the chapter and the thesis as a whole.

The rest of the chapter is dedicated to the voices of people who have been involved in the project, divided into three sections: councillors, council officers and residents. I am aware that these three categories can be seen as arbitrary and potentially ambiguous: councillors often live in the area they represent and so do council officers at times. Moreover, my highlighting of official, employment categories, obscures other categories, such as ethnic belonging. This is problematic in an extremely mixed area where tensions between different groups are sometimes inevitable, as it has been shown in the previous chapter (three). For example, I was told many times in a rather hushed tone that people – the rumour was kept vague – were often resentful and concerned over the alleged corruption of council officers who, supposedly, only handed in flats to their 'Nigerian, African, Caribbean or white' friends. However, I still find these 'official' categories useful, and I have chosen to use them, because they highlight the main structural role of the individuals involved in the project.

Councillors, officers and residents were not the only players involved, of course. Architects, building firms and housing associations, to name but a few, also played their part in the regeneration of the area, but they left when the buildings were completed, meaning that whilst they experienced the process at the time, they have not lived with the results, making them less interesting subjects for this project. A separate case has to be made for Housing Associations, who did play a part in the regeneration of the Five Estates and are still involved with them as they now own and let many of the newly built flats and houses. Their absence from the story is not casual, but symptomatic of the difficulties of reaching them and establishing a dialogue with them, a problem not just for me as a researcher but, more importantly, for most, if not all, of the residents I have spoken to who live in their properties.

I have left a considerable amount of space to the voices of my informants, be they councillors, residents or officers: this is evident by the size of the original transcripts present in all sections. The reason behind this choice is that, as it will become clear in the course of the chapter, these voices do not fit with each other. It is not just details such as numbers of flats and households that vary, but significant things such as the reasons behind the regeneration process itself, whether it was 'driven from the top' or demanded by the residents themselves. Given the impossibility of establishing a single, coherent narrative, I have therefore chosen to give as much space as possible to my informants' voices and explanations, reproducing the complexity rather than forcing an orderly, unilineal narrative that did not exist in reality (Bourdieu 1999).

A potential drawback of this approach is the risk of repetition, as different informants framed the situation as they saw it at the beginning of their interviews. I have decided to take this risk, because this initial 'framing' is extremely telling, and a certain amount of reiteration may help readers navigate what was without a doubt a rather long and complex process. The conclusion will bring together and examine some of the inconsistencies and contradictions brought to light by the different voices that make up this chapter, and suggest possible alternative explanations for some of the more puzzling contradictions of this regeneration programme. Beyond this, and referring back to the general framework of the thesis, on transmutations of value and waste, the conclusion will highlight some themes that readers should pay attention to in the course of the following chapters, to do with the ways in which processes of regeneration, recycling, wasting and gentrification come together in the examined material.

Image 4: Regeneration of the Five Estates. Demolitions. Photograph by Stacey.

Image 5: Regeneration of the Five Estates. Foundations for the new houses. Photograph by Stacey.

4.1 The Peckham Partnership Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) bid

In 1994, the London Borough of Southwark (LBS) submitted a bid to the then Conservative central government for funds to regenerate Peckham, through a financial scheme called the Single Regeneration Budget. According to the bid, LBS believed that the key to regenerating Peckham was the radical transformation of the Five Estates, its most densely populated area. However, while improvements in housing formed the main part of the regeneration, LBS also recognised that what they defined as sustainable regeneration could not be achieved through changes in housing alone, and developed a broad regeneration strategy based around seven objectives: employment, education, housing, community safety, enterprise, health culture and sport, and finally accessibility. The SRB bid itself consisted of a 40 page document which 'made the case' for funding the regeneration. First of all, it introduced its readers to the Peckham Partnership: even though it did not define this body as such, or its remit and role in the proposed projects, it listed its members, or 'key players':

- London Borough of Southwark
- Countryside Properties plc
- Liang Group (builders)
- United House Limited
- Family Housing Association
- Hyde Housing Association
- Presentation Housing Association
- SoLFeD for small housing associations
- South Thames Training and Enterprise Council
- Sumner Estate tenants
- Camden Estate tenants
- Gloucester Grove Estate tenants
- North Peckham Estate tenants
- Willowbrook Estate tenants
- Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham Health Commission
- Metropolitan Police
- Peckham Traders Association
- Voluntary Sector Consultative Committee

- Routeways Housing Association

- Hummingbird Housing Association

The Five Estates were defined in the bid as 'an area of unquestionable social need'. Regeneration, it was claimed, will 'reverse this cycle of decline, building a desirable residential area, a stable and prosperous community and a competitive and thriving commercial area' (p.3). The bid continued by sketching out the 'vision' for Peckham (p.5) at the end of the regeneration: first in line were a reduction in density (from 4,532 units to 3,694 units, with a net loss of 838 units, approximately 2000 people) followed by diversification of tenure (from 4,314 LA units to 2,154 local authority, 915 housing association and 625 privately owned, meaning a net loss of approximately half of all council units) and remodeling of the Five Estates. It continued by focusing on employment growth, improved standards of education and reduced crime and fear of crime. On page 7 the bid listed the 'problems' of the area: the 'key facts' were high density, high percentage of BME people and the young age of the population. It then focused on various statistics that list Liddle ward's poor performance against many deprivation scores, pointing especially to long term unemployment. Finally page 9 turned to the 'opportunities' that were there for the area, stating that "While land and property is available, the potential cannot be realised without increased confidence in the area and its future. That confidence can only be achieved through the joint commitment of the Government and the Peckham Partnership".

The scale of what the Peckham Partnership wanted to achieve on the 5 Estates can be difficult to grasp, but the tables below, detailing their proposed changes in housing tenure and type, may be of help. I am not able to explain the difference in data between the 'housing tenure changes' (1st set of data) and the 'ownership changes' (last set of data), which should read the same, but do not. I can only speculate that the PP, which normally used and quoted data from the Census, may have used data from a different source and failed to mention it. Regardless of this inconsistency, amongst the most striking data from these set were those regarding changes in owner occupation, which was projected to rise from 3.6% (or 1.1%) to 22.7%, while council rentals were planned to drop from 86.8% (or 99%, according to PP data elsewhere in the bid) to just

above 60%. Also worthy of note is the fact that the proposed density reduction was expected to mean a loss of 1,363 homes, which even by a very conservative estimate would mean that at least around 2,000 people would have had to leave the area for good.

Tenure	Liddle	Proposed five estates
Council rented	86.8	61.5
HA rented	5.9	15.8
Other rented	3.7	0.0
Owner occupied	3.6	22.7

Figure 9: Changes in housing tenure on the 5 Estates proposed by the Peckham Partnership (data based on the 1991 Census) . Source: *A Bid for Single Regeneration Budget Funding*, London: Southwark Council.

The tenure figures in Table 1 may have underestimated council tenants, as the five estates were 99% council and 1% privately owned in 1995, according to data produced by the Peckham Partnership.

	Initial		Final		Change	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total units	4385		3022		-1363	-31.1
Bedsits	57	1.3	0	0	-57	-100%
1 bed flats	1316	30	695	23	-621	-47.2
2 bed flats	1495	34.1	620	20.5	-875	-58.5
2 bed houses	0	0	448	14.8	448	n/a
3 bed flats	1263	28.8	351	11.6	-912	-72.2
3 bed houses	0	0	574	19	574	n/a
4 bed flats	228	5.2	92	3	-136	-59.7
4 bed houses	0	0	148	4.9	148	
5/6 bed flats	26	0.6	46	1.5	20	76.9

5/6 bed houses	0	0	48	1.6	48	n/a
Ownership changes						
Council	4335	98.9	1857	61.5	-2478	-57.2
Housing Association	0	0	478	15.8	478	n/a
Private	50	1.1	687	22.7	637	1274

Figure 10: Changes in housing stock in Liddle Ward planned by the Peckham Partnership. Source: *A Bid for Single Regeneration Budget Funding*, London: Southwark Council.

4.2 The Five Estates: physical and socio-economic background

This background has been put together using different documents compiled or commissioned by the London Borough of Southwark's (LBS) in 1993-4 in order to support their bid for Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) to regenerate the Five Estates. The estates were described as "a continuous area of 60 hectares of local authority (LA) housing containing over 4600 dwellings with a population of around 11,000 people (LBS Brief for Development Partner Selection, April 1994)". The estates involved, which were only four in the beginning, were Gloucester Grove, North Peckham, Camden, Sumner and Willowbrook.

Gloucester Grove Estate was built by the Greater London Council (GLC) and completed in 1972, and consisted of 1,210 flats and maisonettes distributed in 29 blocks from three to ten storeys high. The North Peckham Estate, whose name often came to stand for the whole project, was built in the late 1960s and only completed in 1973; it consisted of 1,444 dwellings, mainly in five-storey blocks, arranged around squares. The main and most controversial feature of this estate was the 'decking', which meant that there was a continuous pedestrian deck on the second floor level running and connecting the length of the entire estate, a prime example of the 'streets in the sky' concept introduced by Le Corbusier (Towers 2000).

The Camden Estate was built in the early 70s, but included Monkland House, which was built in the early 1950s. With 874 dwellings in total, it was a traditional construction with brickwork external walls, concrete floors, timber windows and monopitched metal roofs. The Sumner Estate consisted of blocks dating partly from

the interwar period (13 blocks, 535 dwellings) and partly from the early 1950s (nine blocks, 247 dwellings) containing a total of 782 dwellings over 22 blocks, from four to six storeys high. The interwar blocks were of traditional construction with pitched roofs and concrete floors. The 1950s blocks were of three types – all traditional, some with flat roofs, some with lifts. The inter-war blocks faced onto the streets which passed through the estates whilst the 1950s blocks were reached by small access roads off these. Both types of blocks were generally arranged around communal parking and play areas. Finally, the Willowbrook Estate would have been the 'fifth' estate, but it was only partially included in the programme, and had previously been heavily refurbished under another regeneration scheme called Estate Action Plan (EAP). Gloucester Grove and North Peckham had also had works carried out on them under EAP, starting in 1987.

From a socio-economic perspective, the data used here to describe the area refer to Liddle ward, which coincided with the five estates area at the time, and contained 99% LA properties. Liddle Ward does not exist anymore, and so it is impossible to compare data (from the Census of 1991 and 2001, for example) in a like-for-like fashion, with contemporary data about Peckham such as those included in the previous chapter (three). The data have been extracted from LBS sources, mainly the report called *Housing and Health*, commissioned by the council in 1994 to provide a baseline to evaluate the impact of the planned regeneration. Most of the report's data come from the 1991 census, but the authors themselves warned that traditionally census tend to undercount, and only 85% of households in Southwark filled out their census forms that year. A turnover of tenancies of 25% per year is also to be considered when assessing the figures. Data from the LRC (London Research Centre), the authors of the report noted, may be more accurate but still tend to undercount. For example, the 1991 Census for Liddle ward counted 10,991 residents living in 4,337 households in Liddle ward, while the LRC estimated 11,600.

In terms of age, proportionally the population of Liddle ward was very young, which was characteristic of Southwark as a whole. In terms of ethnicity, according to the census there were 43% white, 47% black and 10% other minority ethnic groups, mainly Chinese. According to a MORI survey commissioned by the council there were 27% white, 65% black and 10% Asian. The figures add up to more than 100%,

showing people ticked more than one category and were counted as two people in the totals, making interpretation of the figures rather difficult. With regard to household composition, the 1991 census found the average household in Liddle size to be 2.52, the second highest in Southwark. In percentage terms, 32% were single person households, 40% had dependent children, 15% were made up of lone pensioners and 16% of lone parents, the third highest proportion of lone parents families in London.

Deprivation data showed that Liddle was the second most deprived ward in Southwark at the time, and scored extremely high on a wide number of deprivation indexes. An average of 38% pupils in the schools serving Liddle Ward spoke English as a second language. This figure went as high as 61% and 59% at two local primary schools, 90% of whose intake was from Liddle ward. Employment figures according to the1991 census showed that only 7.6% of males and 7.2% of females were from professional/managerial/technical social classes. Unemployment was at 24%, while the average in Southwark was 16.5%, and England and Wales 9%. In June 1994, according to a Mori survey, 57% of children in Liddle ward lived in non-earning households.

4.3 Councillors's views

Having looked at the regeneration plans and the area they referred to, it is now time to give space to the voices of those who were involved with the project, starting with two local councillors, Steve and Brandon. While Steve was still living in the area at the time fieldwork took place, Brandon had moved out of the area by then. As I have explained in the introduction to the chapter, I have chosen to present long quotes from my respondents to allow their voices, and their framing of the issues, to come through as clearly as possible.

Steve

It just seemed as though the whole estate, those big estates were just...you know, completely collapsing into crime and anarchy, really. Ehm...I suspect now, looking at it now, with the experience I've had over the years I suspect now that it was probably

exaggerated in…to the extent of the problem. But there were clearly, clearly serious safety problems.

Steve lives on the Ledbury estate, only a few minutes away from where the Five Estates used to stand. He is white and middle aged, proud to be a working class person and an 'old Labour' supporter, even though he is still enough of a politician not to criticise the party openly, at least at first. He was already a resident in Peckham, and a Labour councillor, at the time of the regeneration, although he never lived on the Five Estates.   Southwark council was Labour-led when the Five Estates were regenerated, and Steve remembers those days very clearly.

There was (sic) various solutions, Willowbrook got a refurbishment, complete refurbishment, and became a tenant management organization, the North Peckham, a large part of the North Peckham then got refurbished as well, and that's still here today, the Sumner was completely knocked down, the Camden was completely knocked down, and then a large part of the North Peckham was completely knocked down…half knocked down half kept…maybe even more than half knocked down. And the Gloucester Grove was completely refurbished.

Steve agreed to speak to me for the first time in his kitchen, which was homely and tidy: he sat me down with a coffee and prepared himself for a long conversation. In fact, that initial chat we had continued throughout my fieldwork; the more I got involved in the area, the more often I'd bump into him, realising every time how closely involved he was in his community, how much work he put in. We chatted at tea-breaks in meetings, on our way back from local events, and he let me back into his kitchen every few months, to touch base and allow me to ask him a bit more, clarify a few points, always willing to help and introduce me to others whom I may want to speak to.

The deal was, it was ..was a unique scheme at its time, it was under Conservative government actually, the deal was that if Southwark agreed to knock the estates down and rebuild them the government would give them money towards this, was that Southwark would have to build properties in mixed tenure, basically it was envisioned by a central government at that time that the problem was you had large, large numbers of council tenants..ehm…who they believed were generally less educated, and their children…you know…were less…you know…inclined to to to…study or, you know…hang about in the

streets, and what the solution was by the government was to say that, you would have to have mixed tenure, and therefore the deal was that...there would be a reduction in density, which is incredible now when you think about it, because now everybody is saying we need more density to to...for city living. But that was the agreement at the time, there was a reduction in density, there would be a lot more low rise properties, houses with gardens, and...there would be housing associations properties, council properties and private sector properties. And my view is...it's changed the area massively, it's made it much much better, is a much...it's a much more pleasant...visually area, it feels safer, and in some ways I think...a lot more interesting than it used to be, yeah...that's not to say that some of the...you know the decked properties that, you know...council blocks... add to the area, I mean I think the ones that've been kept..it's added to the area cause it gives it an interesting mix.

The only bad memories that Steve had about that process were about a terrible event that occurred in Peckham during the regeneration of the Five Estates: the murder of 11-year-old schoolboy Damilola Taylor in 2000, a crime that threw Peckham in the national media spotlight, as I described in the introduction (Chapter One). At the time, there were serious criticisms and allegations of council's responsibilities towards the murder, to do with the fact that the block where Damilola died, on a dirty, dark stairwell, should not have been there, it should have been knocked down by the council months before. This still haunts Steve, who does not feel very well inclined towards residents who, in his view, were slowing down the demolition process at the time.

There were some serious hiccups at the time... you will recall the...the big publicity about the Damilola Taylor murder, wouldn't you? I mean wherever you were at the time, but it was nation-wide, and actually across the world about it, you know....11 year old boy come to Peckham and ends up getting stabbed to death, is....a horrendous story, and it happened...so happened that he was living in a block at that time, that we were...partly...you know, on its way to being decanted, you know, that's the expression that used to be used...they ..they'd empty people from the blocks...before the block went to be demolished, and ...he was living in a half maintained block, and he...it was an area that at that time somehow they weren't...the electrics, the lights were going out, and they were getting water, and there were squatters...and it was...it was...it all added to a feeling of...of ...of... of complete decay, when in fact, that was one of the last bits that was actually gonna be changed, but you know people.. "oh the North Peckham Estate, how horrendous it is" but actually it was...it was being in the process of being renewed, and so...that was a very bad point...and and ....at that stage, which was...I can't remember exactly when it was...it was about 1999-2000...and at that stage a lot of people

were saying 'oh, the Peckham Programme has just been a disaster, people have been really treated really badly, they've been forced out of their homes and…it was…it was…it was a very difficult time, because the national media were…the spotlight was on Peckham, and they didn't wanna know about the successes of the programme, they just wanted to know about that…that issue and to exaggerate you know the…the plight of everybody.

The 'plight of everybody' that Steve referred to had to do with the fact that, as a result of the decrease in density, a number of people were being relocated from the area. For many, he maintained, it was a positive move, out of somewhere they had never wanted to go back to, while for others it was not quite so rosy. Some tenants, in fact, did not want to move out of their homes, which resulted in the 'decanting' process being slowed down.

They were… they were …offered properties around Southwark. I mean at the time. A lot of people it was a good deal…for a lot of people, who moved out of the north Peckham…or the five estates…people were offered good deals, to move out…people were offered houses with gardens and things like that…ehm….a lot…some people kind of tried to hang on, to try and get the best possible deal, and it meant that blocks were not knocked down as quickly as they should have been…'cause people were holding out to try and get…you know…a better deal than perhaps they deserved. But yeah, everybody that moved out was given…I think a reasonably good offer. But there was…there was…at the time there was quite a lot of rancour about…different people that had problems about it…

The changes in the ethnic make up of the area also stirred up controversy and provoked accusation of racism and ethnic cleansing (of both white and BME groups at different times).

It also…kind of…quite dramatically changed the ethnic mix in the area…the area was always multiracial, you know, well, it has been since the '70s, but I think that…I don't know if it shows up in this report but I've…I remember hearing at the time a lot of the white people wanted to move out and not come back, whereas a lot of the ethnic minority people were..were happy to stay. And consequently now, it's got a very…large majority of ethnic minority people in the area.

The feeling of his, and the council's, work going unrecognised because of a tragic fatality, together with disillusion in the face of tenants who held out to get "a better deal" mars Steve's memory of a process that he seemed to remember in an otherwise very positive light. Without jumping ahead of ourselves too much, it will be useful to bear in mind while reading other people's voices and opinions that he believed that 'the extent of the problem' of the Five Estates was somehow exaggerated, and that in fact the Five Estates themselves had 'various solutions', such as refurbishment as well as demolition, pointing to a heterogeneous area. It is also worth remembering how, as Steve spelled out, the entire project was financed and to a large extent led by a Conservative government at national level, with the explicit aim to reduce the amount of council housing across the country (Jones and Murie, 2006). The decrease in density, meaning people had to leave, and the ways in which councillors and council officers framed some residents' resistance to being moved as just being uncooperative, if not selfish, is also something to keep following throughout the chapter (Allen 2008, Baeten 2009).

Brandon

Brandon is a Southwark resident who used to live on the Five Estates and was a Labour councillor in the early '90s, when the regeneration of the Five Estates took place. He is black and younger than Steve, very energetic and motivated, and conveys a sense of the opportunities and chances that the Peckham Partnership (PP) brought to the area, even though some people, he said, failed to take full advantage of them. While the initial impetus of the programme was to address the housing situation, the physical landscape of the area, the main idea was to rebalance its demographic profile and draw in young professionals, to change the dynamics of the area. He acknowledged that this was not an easy task to achieve:

Although of course decanting is always a very very fraught issue for a lot of people, who are of course attached to an area, and a community goes around an area, and of course, they don't necessarily understand the reasons why the council are regenerating the area. That creates a lot of resentment. In the process communities were destroyed, a number of local facilities that did exist were taken out as part of the regeneration process, with the understanding that they were going to be replaced, new. And that wasn't always the case.

For two years Brandon was part of of the Peckham Partnership Board, the group that was meant to steer the regeneration process according to the wishes of the local community:

> *The Partnership…it actually was a body bringing together the local community groups in the area meant to go on and be the voice of the community; the problem was that the local groups, the local community groups, they couldn't really agree amongst themselves. And there's always issues as to who should represent the community. In the beginning, each estate would have individual TR groups, so you'd have the North Peckham group, on the Sumner estate you'd have the Sumner group, so each part of the five estates had their own TRA. They would then elect reps, they'd nominate a representative to sit on the PP forum, who in turn would elect two reps, to represent them on the PP board.*
>
> *L: OK, so you'd have five and then two?*
>
> *B: Five and two, yes,*
>
> *L: I could see how that could be a difficulty*
>
> *B: And often there were questions between the reps on the board itself, and of course for some individuals it was an opportunity to promote their individual agenda, rather than the wider tenants' agenda, and that was an issue.*

Understandably, a project on this scale would put to the test the idea of 'community' and 'common' good. It wasn't just that, in Brandon's opinion, some tenants' representatives abused their position to make personal gains. They also could not seem to agree with one another, let alone the council. When it was decided to bring in an external, independent consultant to improve "capacity building" and smooth out differences, tenants' representatives managed to fall out with the consultant as well. This, Brandon says, was down to personal relationships, and was very frustrating for councillors who were doing all they could to keep this massive project going. His words are fraught with the difficulty of balancing his understanding of tenants' arguments, and the difficulties he faced at the time as a councillor.

> *B: Tenants were involved in the consultation on the scheme, and one thing the tenants were told, was that they'd have the right to return, to the new development. I don't actually know the wording exactly, but it was that kind of token commitment, and of course, given that a lot of properties had been built, and that they were reducing the density, of course they couldn't…the council couldn't make a commitment…with everyone who'd signed a right to return. There were going to be some winners and losers. And of course there were concerns around that, and of course there were…individuals weren't necessarily given the choice they wanted. Of course*

after…that brought a lot of resentment, so the tenants refused to leave their property, and of course they weren't meant…the council needed to go to court, to seek possession of the property, in order to remain with the decanting process, we had to take possession and start the demolition programme. Of course there were complaints cases.

L: So the council knew that if everyone had exercised their right…numerically speaking it couldn't have worked?

B: it would have been very difficult, it would have been very difficult, difficult in the sense, due to the fact that the area before was predominantly social housing, and if every one of the tenants had exercised their right to return to social housing, it wouldn't have worked. 'Cause of course, the reason why the council won the funding from the government at the time, and it was a Conservative government, the actual government who approved this SRB scheme, was that the council was to reduce its stock of council housing in the area. That was the aim. Southwark still remains I think one of the largest landlords, biggest housing assets, and the key reason to get SRB funding was to reduce that. In the bid for funding that was one of the reasons, to regenerate the area, and to reduce the council housing stock in order to attract inward investment from developers.

An interesting point that Brandon made was the way in which the five estates were portrayed in the funding application for SRB (Single Regeneration Budget). While he agreed that the statistics looked really bad on paper, he was keen to stress that they had to make them look that way in order to get the funds. Nothing of course was made up as such, but there was a clear agenda when compiling those figures, which was to make the area look as desperate, needy and dilapidated as possible. His own ideas about the place he grew up in are rather different, and worth listening to in full.

B: It wasn't as if the area was all a sink estate, although, when you read the big document, you'd imagine this area was sort of beyond repair, sinking sinking, you know there were some social problems, but you know maybe in some respect some bits of that document blow your head off, even though there were figures and analysis, yes, there were some problems, there were problems with crime, low level crime, educational achievement, single parents, family breakdown, quite some indicators, you could argue, put together a compelling case. I am from the area, and I've got a friend who succeeded and left the area, went to university, so it wasn't as if the area was falling to pieces, really really bad and dire, it was just that maybe certain components of the housing stock was (sic) in disrepair, and had encouraged some behaviour, in terms of concentrating population, and in terms of concentrating certain problem families, with some kind of issues. And those issues expanded, and what happened, then maybe they kind of spread. So I think as an assessment, sometimes to do with that concentration, concentration of

social cases, poor families, and because of that concentration we needed to mix up the demographics of the area, the profile.

Of course if you are a social commentator with a liberal perspective you would say 'this is gentrification' you move the poor, bring in some more educated, affluent individuals, and that's how you transform the area. So then, if you're mixing the tenure, trying to create a more mixed community, hard to say explicitly, in your policies, it's implicit. The ministers say we wanna mix up the tenure of the area, in fact the area's demographic profile doesn't lend itself to generating urban growth. What it does is foster dependency on welfare.

L: But then what do you think happens to the ones that are moved out? Because I understand what you're saying, you want to make it more mixed, but what happens to them, what do they do?

B: well, they are just...a new problem. The problem of individuals excluded from mainstream society, not empowered, they're lacking maybe the skills, the knowledge to really take part in the community, so what we do is we have displaced the problem down to other areas in other communities.

Brandon's words are useful in understanding the ways in which this project worked from his perspective, and need very little in terms of explanation. It remains to point out a few issues that are worth bearing in mind as we read on: communities, in Brandon's own words, were destroyed as, for example, facilities – such as common rooms and tenants' halls – were taken out and never replaced. Community groups, put together to communicate with the council through the Peckham Partnership, did not seem able to agree with each other or, indeed, with a capacity building consultant brought in to help them smooth out their differences. This description seems to contradict the narrative of the estates as places of anti-social behaviour, which would imply individuals who do not care about their areas and communities. Indeed what Brandon describes shows there were many community groups, meaning committed people that wanted to be involved in a project that was significantly changing the shape of their area.

The conflicts between the groups were due to, in Brandon's opinion, selfish individual tenants with their own agenda, which is similar to how Steve described tenants who refused to move out during the decanting process. In fact, Brandon explains how the council had made a 'token commitment' to give tenants a right to return to the area, knowing full well this could not have happened because the 'deal'

with central government was that the council had to reduce its stock of council housing. The conflicts between local groups may well have had to do with the fact that it was not possible for them all to stay in the area and not lose out somehow: as Brandon put it, there were going to be some winners and losers. The position of the council was clearly a difficult one, and it is not surprising that straight after the regeneration was completed Labour lost the elections at local level.

It was also interesting to hear Brandon's take on how the bid put together by the council 'made the case' for the regeneration by drawing a picture that he himself does not recognise – as Steve said, the extent of the problem was 'exaggerated' – portraying the area as one large sink estate, which is not how he thought of it. In the context of the thesis, this is a fine example of symbolic devaluation, where texts produced by powerfully positioned others produce the area as valueless, paving the way for 'development' and demolitions. This is similar to what Allen (2008) describes in Liverpool, for example, where his field-site was also represented as valueless, specifically as backward and working class, and therefore ripe for investment through redevelopment. Finally, Brandon's explanation of moving 'problem' or 'difficult' tenants along as a practice that simply displaces them to other communities echoes decades, if not centuries, of standard urban development practice: 'slum' clearances of various sorts usually resulted in the worse off tenants being shifted along to accommodation of even lower standards, often more expensive because of the higher demand that the slum clearance itself generated (Power 1993).

4.4 Officers' views

Having considered local politicianss' perspectives, this section looks at how council officers involved in the regeneration of the Five Estates talked about their involvement in that process. Two of the officers interviewed, Daniel and Florence, still worked for the council at the time of fieldwork: Daniel was still in a similar role as he had had at the time of the regeneration, while Florence had clearly gone up the ladder in her career. Celia, on the other hand, may have felt freer to speak her mind because she spoke to me shortly before retiring from her job, which did not seem to have progressed upwards in the same way as Florence's had.

Daniel

Daniel is a planner by trade; a white man in his sixties, he lives in Southwark, not in Peckham as such, but is fiercely defensive of the area. He has worked for Southwark Council and the Peckham Partnership since almost the beginning of the regeneration process. While he was not involved in drawing up the master plan itself, which was the main document guiding the implementation of the regeneration, he has worked with it and been part of each successive modification. In fact he still works for the council, in Peckham, and is involved in the very final stages of the regeneration that are still happening today.

D: ok, so as you know it was a seven years programme, and we had £64m of government money. It was the biggest award at the time, ehm…for a regeneration programme in this country, and as part of the award of that grant we had to do, obviously an evaluation at the end. So at the end we hired Wave Hill consultancy to look at what we had achieved, and they evaluated it across the eight objectives that we set out. So when we won the award it was based on the comprehensive…sort of interlocked set of objectives, so we'd achieve proper regeneration. 'Cause every one else before had done demolition work, or estate improvement, environment improvement, but nobody had taken all the aspects of a regeneration and weaved them all together. So we had an objective around health, education and crime and..enterprise, based around the town centre. So you create a community that's properly rounded, rather than just knocking down houses and building some new ones.

Having said that, the bulk of the money was for knocking down houses and building new ones….so…and that's relatively kind of easy to achieve, cause you just set a programme going and..away you go, you do it. While some of the others, more social, challenges are not so easy, so by the time we got half way through, we realised that we were on target to achieve, at the time we were anyway, all that rebuild, but we were way behind on social stuff, so we geared up, we hired in more people to do the community development work, and then when Wave Hill [consultants who wrote an evaluation on the programme] *looked at it at the end, they echoed that and done..pretty much what we said we were gonna do in…you know, rebuilding of the area, but in terms of developing or bringing the community forward, we failed miserably, and we hadn't done very good on our health targets, and education is still a long way to go…*

As we have seen in the previous section, the body leading the regeneration was the Peckham Partnership. When I asked him what was it like as a council employee to

work for such an heterogeneous group, Daniel gave an interesting answer on the nature of the Partnership.

D: We had a board, that was the Peckahm Partnership board, which was a partnership in the true sense of the word, the way it was, the council officers, representative from the umbrella group for tenants and residents, the police, the builders…ehm….the traders from the community all sit together and…steer the kind of work of the Peckham Partnership. But, as it's obvious the reality of that really means the council is still kind of leading …as it's the council body for delivering the works, so we had to kinda…you know, you can't have a board saying, 'no, not doing that, forget it' we're already tied in to an agreement, with the funders. […] So if people talk about Peckham Partnership they tend to mean the council, and if it's a local resident and they will have and 'us and them' feeling or whatever, so…cause some of the people felt they were done out, or not done in as well, which is inevitable in any big scheme, isn't it? Some things we did extremely well..they got houses and three or four years later they were selling them, pulling the profits you know?

One of the main aim of the programme, as Daniel explained, was to diversify the tenure in the area covered by the five estates. This is sometimes referred to as 'pepper-potting', meaning mixing up private, council and housing association properties in the same street, in the same estate, even in the same block, to achieve a balanced community and, crucially, fight the stigma often attached to social housing. In practice however this is not often easy to achieve:

D: that was another tension we had, because we always said…these groups are tenants and residents, cause there was such a mixture of private weaved in with the social stuff…that we wanted to keep that…with the groups. And that is so difficult. Because…I mean, yeah, people with money…showed different level of interest in their properties to someone who's just renting it…

The financial aspects of the programme were obviously important, but it is interesting to realise how they changed throughout its development. Literally each completed house, feature, or park in this example, contributed to 'creating value', making the land more expensive and in turn funding the next stages:

D: yeah, yeah…timing didn't help us, sure, the phasing of it…cause we had to finish that one, in order to…it's all part of a process really, it's raising the land value…by having

that park virtually completed, the first phase of the private…for sale stuff around it was then…so much more sellable, which raised the value of land, which meant that we could ask for more money for other plots of land, which would give us more money to do it…

Talking to Daniel it was impossible to miss how strongly he believed in this programme, not just in the building and demolition, which he said were relatively easy, but the Peckham Partnership intended aims to weave together social, economic, health and educational objectives to improve the community in a rounded way. He took quite personally the Programme's failures, in his own opinion, to achieve many of the objectives in this area, which is remarkable considering how Steve and Brandon acknowledged, as well as the literature on housing policy discussed in the previous chapter confirm, that the main point of the project was to decrease the size of council housing. It is also useful to consider how he explained the Peckham Partnership effectively represented the council as the body that was tied in to agreements with developers, and the board really could not make decisions that went against those agreements, which again is something that Allen (2008) found in his study of Liverpool Housing Market Renewal projects. Finally, Daniel's description of demolitions and completions literally increasing land value every step of the way is a poignant reminder of one of the thesis's perspectives to do with waste and value and flows of capital through the landscape, as Harvey would argue (1989).

Florence

Florence is a white woman in her fifties, working for the housing department of Southwark Council in a managerial position. Clearly a busy professional, she was involved with the Five Estates from the beginning, managing a team involved with decanting tenants out of their old properties, and was clearly proud of what the council had achieved there.

F: if you look back on it was, in some ways it was a very successful scheme if you look at, in terms of numbers, how many people got rehoused within a defined period of time. But obviously a decant process, we don't call it decant now we call it rehousing process, is actually a very disruptive process, and yes it was successful in terms of people rehoused but obviously during the period not only the rehousing process but the whole of the redevelopment there were quite strong issues you know in terms of people being moved, and the pressures on people to move, because there was external funding, with the Single

Regeneration Budget (SRB), which was for over a period of..was it five years? Five or seven years. And basically you had outputs to actually reach, in relation to it, so it had..like lots of schemes it was quite clearly financially led, so the decant programme over a set period of time, normally about a year or so, for a decant process in terms of getting people moving. [...] Everybody realised, I think, that something needed to happen in Peckham, in terms of what…was called Five Estates but was in fact four estates, but there was a lot of opposition in terms of what was going to happen. And Gloucester Grove actually tried to get a judicial review in terms of stopping the process.

But again I think that was actually down to personalities. So, ehm, what actually happened was we started the process, we had a year to eighteen months to move probably about two..was it two or three thousands households…I can't remember, and we moved..in total moved three thousands households. And those people needed to move out of the area, to start the rolling programme. So for them I think it was probably… in two ways it was the most difficult period because we were saying "it's going to be this, you know brave new world, this utopia, and nobody'd actually seen, so all it was it was obvious on paper, so in terms of people who were moving out of the area, the majority of them did not want to come back, so what would actually… in some ways it was negative because obviously, the commitment to Peckham of the residents, but you can understand from their perspective nothing has been built, but from our perspective as well, cause we were starting a rolling programme, and if you took more out of the first step of that programme, it actually made life easier for the…For the phases coming on. So, you know…that's what actually happened.

Keeping people moving was not easy, and she is clearly aware that it was stressful not just for her officers, but also for the tenants involved. In the end, she explained, it was the courts who would decide on where they would need to move.

We also…emh…so there're lots of meetings, there was…because of the time scaling, we had a legal process which was actually…we were very upfront about but it basically meant that, we had a timescale to meet, and if people hadn't got...ehm..accepted offers that were suitable alternative accommodation, that basically the court would decide whether or not this offer was suitable or not. We all just [inaudible] you know moving is one of the most stressful things in life anyway, and we were actually telling people how to move, it was even more stressful, we accepted that, but again is a process in terms of getting people…what I had working under me, three housing officers and an admin person, and they did the actual work in terms of have a patch, and take through people in terms of the whole phasing.

Interestingly enough, while one of the main goals of the regeneration was to increase tenure diversification, many tenants she worked with wanted to remain with the council rather than move to housing association properties. This may have had to do with rents, or security of tenure or, as she explained, with the fact that there was a strong tenants movement at the time that was politicised and preferred local authority housing over housing association properties.

F: and at the end, you know people, cause they saw what actually happened, people actually wanted to move to the new properties, and... I think the majority as I said wanted to go to the local authority accommodation, and if they didn't get that they were given a housing association property, but quite a lot of people said actually I want to stay with the council, and moved out of the area because of the security of tenure.

L: OK

F: So, yes, I think people had...I think only about 30 or 40 people who at the end of the day could not remain in the area, I am not saying they could all have a council property because they couldn't, but they could have, you know if they've turned down a housing association they've been given the option to remain in the area.

L: Really? Only 30-40?

F: Because people were offered a housing association, so they had the choice to remain, and they said no, I don't want that, I want to actually move on

L: Were the rents very different?

F: ehm.... I don't think so, no I don't' think they were at all, can't remember...

L: So it was about less security?

F: And just understanding of what the difference between the council and...and there was...was a strong tenants' movement down there, and they also had a lot of access to their councillors, and think that moving to an RSL it doesn't have that same...accountability, sort of political angle. You know, it's different as well.

Florence's memories of the regeneration are clearly very positive. She was particularly happy to have helped people come together as a 'community': changing their physical environment was, for her, a way to restore 'normal' interactions between people, which had been made impossible by the architecture of the buildings in which they lived before.

F: ...saying that it does change lives, it does change lives big time, it was the ..ehm...I always remember it was a sunny day and I was just chatting to some lady and it was a typical sort of street scene, you know two ladies over the garden fence, chatting to each

other, and I sort of said "oh, how is it all and whatever" and they said " you know, God,
it's amazing," and this woman said that she lived on Gloucester Grove, for 26 years, she
basically she closed the door at night and she never came out again, and then somebody
had been living next to her for two years, and she'd met them twice, whereas this, you
know, it was just like, you know this social inter-relationship hadn't been happening in
the same way, as it had been happening down there.

It is interesting that she chose to depict this idyllic scene amongst residents of Gloucester Grove as an example of 'new' sociability, considering that earlier on in her interview she mentioned how Gloucester Grove 'tried to get a judicial review in terms of stopping the process', something that they did together as a Tenants and Residents Association, a sociable action that she, instead, put down to 'personalities'. In a similar way, the veneer of a council that listened to residents appears thin as Florence explained that the process was financially led and in the end it was the courts that decided if people had to move or not. One of the most telling points in the interview was the casualness with which she responded to the question about rent, which was clearly important for residents. Finally, her recollection of only 30 to 40 people being unable to remain in the area is unique amongst my respondents or archival evidence.

Celia

Celia is a white woman in her sixties, who has worked in the housing department of Southwark council for a number of years. When we met she worked in a tenants' resource room, a council run room with computers, printers and laminators where tenants' reps do their TRA's work, network or sometimes simply hang out (see Chapter Six). As I mentioned earlier, she retired during my fieldwork, which may have something to do with the rather nostalgic, if somehow outspoken tone of the last interview she gave me, when we finally managed to sit down together instead of just talking over the photocopy machine. Unfortunately I was unable to record her voice, but what I have compiled here is a summary of what we talked about, which I have as much as possible left in her own words, beginning with her framing of the issue.

Celia was involved with decanting and tenants' support at the time of the Five Estates. It all started, she explained, with a consultation, which was a bad one, that her team wasn't involved with at the time. The council offered the tenants four options on the way the estates should be regenerated, but eventually chose a different one from

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what the tenants had chosen, which created a conflictual situation to begin with. On the Sumner estate there were 2 nurseries and an active community, which all went. There were actually 4 and a half estates there were regenerated; half of the North Peckham is still standing. The promises from the developers to compensate tenants for the loss of public/community spaces were never fulfilled. The way they did it was taking away bits and saying "but we will give you this", then take that away and say "we'll give you that" but it just never happened. Tenants didn't realise that 'community space' could be a doctor's surgery, or shops, not necessarily a community hall. Also, "earmarked" meant nothing, the last remaining earmarked space had been taken over by the tram and that was it. Tenants' needs were not prioritised at all. They were promised at some point a big community centre in Burgess Park but that never happened.

She was in no doubt that communities had been destroyed during regeneration. In fact, she argued, there was not much of a lively community in the area any more; there are no community centres, and TAs are in trouble because they don't have spaces to do things in. North Peckham, for example, did have a rather close knit community; a bit boisterous but lively. Taking away the community centres was pivotal. Opposite from where the Peckham Academy now was, the Camden Estate had once stood, a newish estate, only about 20 years old when it was demolished. They had two halls on two different levels and the community itself was quite new and mixed, instead of being the usual all white over 50s, it was more 18-80 of all colours, and that was destroyed.

With regard to the decanting process that had taken place, Celia said that some tenants chose not to return at all, and were tempted away with better flats. Some said they wanted to return, but the new builds didn't look anything like the old ones. The sizes were different and the density lower, it went from 5000 council units to 800 council, 800 HA and 800 private. People with one bedroom flats were unlikely to be able to return because there weren't going to be any properties of that size, it was mainly going to be houses. Therefore, she thought, there had been no real right to return. Her feeling was that the consultation at the beginning was done badly because the council didn't want the tenants' opinion, and they knew they couldn't rehouse them all: in fact 2000 households were moved out and disappeared completely.

Out of those 2000, Celia explained that there was some natural wastage, i.e. death; some people got settled were they were and opted out, not wanting to move their kids again. The council were accused of ethnic and social cleansing but it was not true, they were not sophisticated enough to do that. She believed that two categories of tenants were better off: those with better resources (education and class), and those who could shout 'you're not doing this to us' in a louder voice. Those with no energy to fight just went. Her final thoughts about regeneration were that most housing and social workers could be either agents of change, or be there to keep people quiet. Most of the time, your boss wants you to keep people quiet. Her team was put on the job after the 'bad' consultation had already happened to try and pacify the tenants. There were fears from the council that the tenants would make so much noise and involve the government, who would then question why so much money was being spent in a particular way if tenants weren't happy or had not been consulted at all.

Again, Celia's words are clear and articulate, but it may be worth just focusing on how, for example, she mentioned that buildings that were only twenty years old were demolished, and how some types of accommodation – bedsits and one bed flats, for example – were never replaced in the new estates, meaning that those residents effectively were unable to return even if they had wanted to. More interesting still is the fact that her team was brought in, according to her, to pacify the tenants, which seem to imply that both local and central government were keen to at least maintain an impression that regeneration was something done *for* the tenants, as opposed to something done *to*, or even *against* them.

Regardless of their positions on various issues to do with the regeneration, Daniel, Florence and Celia's views are important and distinct from the councillors' voices, Steve and Brandon, because they worked with the tenants and implemented, in practice, what local and national politicians had thought out. Their perspectives are clearly diverse and impossible to synthesise into one 'official' line, which is telling in itself: while this project is not an anthropological study of the state or of bureaucratic institutions as such, but it is obvious that we cannot speak of 'the council', let alone the state at neither national nor local level, as a united monolith intent on pursuing a single, coherent course of action through its uncritical employees. Even amongst three

officers is possible to find substantially different positions. It may have been clear to all of them, for example, that there was a bottom line that the council had signed up to with central government, which had to do with reducing the number of council housing and council tenants in the area. However, this did not mean that they all agreed with this line, or with how to go about achieving this objective, or even how to prioritise it amongst other objectives – see Daniel's concerns for social, health and educational targets, or Celia's anger at the loss of community spaces and community spirit as a result of the regeneration, for example, and how they can be contrasted with Florence's enthusiasm towards the building of a new type of community embodied in the low density houses with gardens she was so proud to see 'her' residents in.

This is not to say simply that things are 'more complicated' than they initially appeared, a tricky cliche to avoid that must, nonetheless, be resisted and not substituted for analysis. Yes, officers' positions were diverse, but it is also clear that there was an objective pursued by central government, which was the reduction of council housing. This was to be achieved through various projects and funds administered by local governments, who had – together with their officers – a rather limited amount of choice when it came to implement them, whichever way they chose to sell them to their residents and voters. Having said that, the next section in the chapter, which is devoted to the voices of residents themselves, shows how the effects of these policies and choices worked out on the ground, which was not always how one would expect. Even more so, the next chapter will show how plans can be altered, by chance or by conscious effort or any combination of these two, and more, factors. It will become clear that human agency in all its forms refuses to be reduced to numbers and factors that can be deduced from a purely structural analysis, or by simply imagining that objectives set out at the top – central government, in our case – will materialise on the ground as they were initially thought out. Not to mention that if one were to look in detail at how those objectives were set 'at the top', which is not within the remit of this project, it is likely that they would stop looking quite so clearcut and straightforward, but that is for a different thesis to consider.

4.5 Residents' voices

Tina, North Peckham Estate

Tina is a black woman, in her sixties; we met in her office in central Peckham, where she works for a Christian charity helping people from disadvantaged backgrounds, as she put it. Their work at the time of fieldwork involved reskilling and building up self esteem in people who wouldn't necessarily think of themselves as employable. During the regeneration of the Five Estates, however, her charity's role was to help people cope with the changes involved in moving out of their homes in the old estates and into their new 'regenerated' homes. I have heard many stories of people being helped by this organisation, and wanted to hear what the process had been like from their perspectives. However, it turned out that Tina could give an even more insightful opinion. In fact she did not just help people who were being moved out at the time: she lived on the North Peckham Estate herself, and went through the process personally, as well as helping many other residents as clients of her charity.

> *Yes, people were scared to move. They feared the rents would go up in the new properties; would they have water meters? Would they get less space? Would they be moved somewhere else with even more crime?*

However, she explains, the demand for regeneration and, crucially, demolitions, had come from the people. It was so bad that taxis wouldn't take you home, so unless you had a car, or a friend with a car, you could only shop for small amounts of things, whatever you could carry, often while minding your children as well. The North Peckham estate was a maze, she assured me, with high crime, lots of trouble; it was hell. It was all connected up with walkways, and that made it scary: even ambulances wouldn't come in for fear of getting lost in there and not finding their patient anyway, as maps of the area were less than useless because of all the different levels the estate was on.

But her flat, she remembers, oh, her flat was beautiful. It was split over five levels, huge, with a big patio at the top. There were rooms for all her children, and the kitchen was so big they had a sofa and a telly in it, her children could play there, so they could keep the livingroom spotless for when family and visitors came along. She didn't have a garden but the patio was big enough to have a paddling pool for her children in the summer, and a table to have dinner outside, so she didn't really miss it. There was lots of storage space; she loved her old flat.

After the regeneration began she moved out to Crystal Palace, to a nice Victorian house with a big garden, a leafy area with good schools for her children. When I asked her if she thought people were happy with having been moved out of their homes, or if they'd have wanted to stay, or even return, she looked at me in amazement. No, definitely they wouldn't, and in fact she herself could not understand why people would ever want to go back. She assured me many of her neighbours who moved didn't even want to hear the name 'North Peckham' any more, let alone go back and live there. She even remembered impromptu celebrations when the diggers came and knocked bits of the estate down.

Tina's experience and memories are by no means atypical, and the fact that she worked to help people negotiate the changes that regeneration brought to the area make her words even more meaningful and representative. It is interesting for example to compare Tina's recollections of people's fears about moving and rents going up with Florence's casualness about rents, as rent levels clearly were not something she thought of as significant. On the other hand, for all the evidence from literature and respondents about how the regeneration was financially led and motivated by a Conservative central government's desire to decrease the size of the social housing sector, Tina and many others I have spoken to were adamant that regeneration was needed and wanted by the people who lived there. This belief, this perception should not be underestimated or swept under the carpet, even though it contradicts much of what we have reviewed so far: it is precisely these sorts of contradictions that make this story worth telling in the first place. The next section of the chapter tells the story of two women who could not have had a more different experience from Tina's own: Doreen and Stacey.

Doreen and Stacey, Sumner estate

Image 6: The Old Sumner Estate, prior to demolition. Photograph by Stacey.

Doreen is a white woman in her sixties; she had lived on the Old (now gone) Sumner estate since she was one year old. Proud of her respectable working class background, she was on the TA (Tenants' Association) of her estate when the regeneration project was introduced to the tenants. Her story, and that of her daughter, is worth telling in full, as she framed it, because it is a valuable statement of what going through regeneration means for the people who live in the blocks, beyond the numbers and figures and tables showing how the project went at an aggregate level, which is mainly where the officers and councillors we have listened to so far were working at. In his ethnography of landfills, Reno (2009) shows how people involved in a general activity, in his case dealing with materials in a landfill site – at different levels, i.e. managers and workers, for example, showed a different attitude towards 'waste' because of how they engaged with it, whether in terms of large and specific quantities of materials – literally tons of compressed stuff – or as individual bits and pieces that one can mess about with in the garage, for example, or kick around with co-workers, or as smells that linger on their clothes and on their person. There is a similarity here in the ways in which regeneration from the council offices, whether of councillors or officers, is a different thing from the lived experience of Doreen and Stacey, their shame of having to go through the courts, the personal upheaval of undoing a home, the constant efforts

to create a habitable place to live in. This difference justifies the amount of space devoted to this story, which deserves to be heard and remembered as part of the process, just as the council bid for funding or their evaluation documents.

When the project began Doreen became the spokesperson of the Project Team for the Old Sumner, which is how tenants' groups were called by the Peckham Partnership. Stacey is her daughter. She is in her forties and has lived on the Sumner (Old and New) her whole life. Both of them now live on the 'New', regenerated Sumner Estate, also known as Sumner One. They have been involved right from the start of the project, but they have rather different memories than Tina of how the process began, how the regeneration came about, and how tenants were consulted.

S: They were meant to refurbish some of the blocks, they never said anything

D: Oh yes that was it, I forgot to tell you about that, they were meant to refurbish

S: Some of the blocks they was not gonna knock down, they was gonna refurbish, cause the tenants didn't want them knocked down,

D: Yes, tenants didn't want them knocked down, but they decided it'd be more expensive to refurbish than to rebuild.

[Both of them speaking at once, inaudible but generally labouring the point that the decision to demolish rather than refurbish had already been taken]

D: The council decided that

S: We had a vote, and we wanted to refurbish them, but they decided, and then in the end, somehow, they got round that they did knock them down,

D: We had..all together there was..near enough was eight hundred and something tenants on our estate, all together, so we thought…the old ones, the big square, was that was going to..???? there was six blocks, and a lot of the tenants went for that, they'd rather be refurbished, stay where they are, than move out. But then…they got the thing that they called the master plan, apparently every year they can alter different things that they want to do, and that's when it came in, on the master plan, on the year they started to do that…they changed it.

S: They made them phase two, and then they said oh, they were gonna demolish the whole lot, and there were nothing that we could do about it, was it? And somebody made the decision without..support of the tenants, they'd done it themselves.

D: They'd done it themselves, we didn't get any consultation over that bit..but going back…that was what was meant to happen: we moved out, phase one, and then phase two Southwark had emptied it out, would come into Phase One,

S: Phase One just had to go off, we had nowhere to go.

D: But, the problem with that being, Phase Two, there were six blocks, would not have been enough properties that they'd built there, to come into phase one anyway. So that would have been a problem. So that's why it would have been better for them to re...refurbished

S: We had 212 on phase one, 212 properties on Phase One

D: Yes

S: six blocks we had as well, and that was 212 houses, so that...that was 212 families out, you know, for the Phase One.

The phasing that Doreen and Stacey are referring to here was the mechanism devised by the council at the time to organise the demolition, decanting and re-building of the old estates. Sumner residents were divided in various groups, or phases, according to which block they lived in, and the theory was that as residents of the Phase One blocks would move out, their blocks would be demolished and rebuilt, and the residents of Phase Two would move in them, leaving their blocks free to be demolished and rebuilt and so on. The obvious snags, as Doreen and Stacey point out, is that there was nowhere to go for the residents of Phase One, not to mention the fact that the properties that were being built were not big enough to house the residents that were there in the first place. We know that was part of the plan to start with, the council had received funds from central government to reduce the size of its housing stock, but this does not seem to have been clear to Doreen and Stacey, and many other residents, at the time. In fact, the prospect of having to move away for good was not very well received, and some residents decided to contact the Southwark Law Project and put together what became known as the 'Right to Return'. This was a document guaranteeing tenants the right to return to where they had lived before, and crucially return as council, not Housing Associations (HA), tenants. In Stacey's words:

S: but it wasn't easy, we did have to fight for it. There was lots of meetings, when we went to the first meeting, she said 'it's a rolling programme, you is moving off, that is it, you're gone.' She said you haven't got...but I was born, I said I was born there, I am like, nearly 30 years old, 20 something years old now, like late twenties at the time, I've lived there all my life, I want to go back there, she said 'but there's nowhere to go back' and then it started, other people said they wanted to come back, and then we started, saying, and then they actually tells you 'oh you have to have a temporary move' I thought well I don't care, you know?

The story of their temporary move was rather long and complicated. Some of the properties were not suitable at all, for example they were offered properties that had squatters in, and told to go to court to get them out:

D: they changed the keys, apparently they'd had squatters in it…two properties that they'd offered me had that, and they said 'what you gotta do is, you'll have to go to court, so we can get them out', I said 'no, I am not the one who wants to move, you wanna move me!' you know, 'you do that' , I am not getting involved in that, which I wasn't, and I weren't interested in the properties anyway, they was worse than what I was living in.

They eventually managed to get a temporary move to a three-bedroom ground floor flat on the Camden Estate, also due to be demolished at a later date, but the process of getting that transfer was far from easy. At the time Doreen was on jury service, which kept her busy during the day. It was September, and it got dark pretty early in the evenings, which made it difficult for her to go and look at properties, especially since the electricity and lights had been disconnected in a lot of the flats she was meant to view. This, however, didn't stop the council from taking her to court, to serve a possession order on their property, so they could go on with the demolitions. Stacey was somehow uncomfortable with Doreen telling me this part of the story, and 'barged in' to specify that it was not only 'them two' who were taken to court, but the entire block. There was clearly an element of shame in her mother being taken to court, which is where criminals belong, which makes sense if you spend your entire life having to prove that you are respectable and not a criminal (Skeggs 1997). Specifying that it was the entire block that was taken to court diffused the implication that they themselves were 'non respectable', criminal-like, and turned it explicitly into a political action by the council against them as tenants, something that Stacey felt more comfortable with.

D: They were trying to make out that I was…not accepting the property, but how could I accept it if I couldn't get in and view it? I got to see…see it first, so..you had to say to the judge, you had to explain to him. She [officer representing the council] said…she turned around and said 'well you can go in with a candle'..had all those metal grids up, no electricity on in the flat, it's pitch dark in there, it's a maisonette it's got stairs, you'd have gone flying, we'd take a candle in there we'd get torched I said, I am not going to view a property like that! I can't see…and in the day time I am not in, during the day
L: The judge told you…

D: No, this was the council woman, this is what she was saying, like to me and to the court. And she [Stacey, her daughter] turned around and said 'my mum is on jury service' she goes 'oh' and he [the judge] said to the council 'do you realise how tiring that is, after you've come home being on jury service?' so he…he blocked it,
S: Adjourned it for another six weeks, he said come back in six weeks time, and try again. To the council!
Laughter and satisfaction from both of them

Doreen did, in the end, manage to go and see this particular property, and in daylight it became evident that substantial repairs needed to be done before anyone could move in, as there was no kitchen floor or kitchen door, (which, as she pointed out to me, was a fire hazard) and there were nails sticking up all over the place. The council agreed to fix the property and gave her some money to improve it, so she employed someone to decorate the kitchen and hang wallpaper in the living room. She put her lights up, bought a new door knocker and a number on the door. They were quite happy with the flat after that, and lived there from October 95 to July 97, almost two years, until their new home was ready.

The moving process, which they had to go through twice, first to their temporary accommodation and then to their new home, was quite stressful in itself, as it meant getting rid of things and getting used to new people as well as a new home, however temporary. Two weeks after they had moved in, for example, their next door neighbour stole a curtain from Doreen's washing line and a vase from their garden: a big argument followed, the curtain was never recovered and on top of that the neighbour hung it, upside down, from her own window, thus annoying Doreen even more. This story was told in a cheerful, joking way, but it was obvious that at the time it had caused a lot of stress to them, and was just the beginning of a difficult year and a half with their new neighbour.

They also remember well the sheer upheaval caused by moving. Stacey had never moved before, and Doreen realised pretty soon that the stuff she had accumulated over a lifetime would not fit in her new home. Moving from a four bedroom flat to three bedrooms in temporary accommodation, and then two bedrooms in their permanent new home meant she had to get rid of a lot of her things, including objects that had belonged to her family for a long time, or things she had developed an

attachment to. In the end, however, they were quite happy to be in a two bedroom property, as they thought the rent on a three bedroom flat would have been too much for them to afford.

D: and stuff…because we were going…moving into a smaller property, we had to get rid of a lot of stuff anyway, cause we couldn't get it in there. Into the temporary move.

L: So what did you do? Did you give it away?

S: We had to chuck a lot away, didn't we?

D: Throw it out, we had to throw it out. I mean, things like her old chopper bike, and that's worth some money now

S: You chucked it out?

[Some inaudible noise when they're talking at the same time]

D: I had a cocktail cabinet and that was my mum's, it looked like a Rolls Royce, probably worth a few bob, but we had to throw it out, ehm…get rid of a load of stuff, but we couldn't …get it into the temporary move, and then we'd have to move it all back…and we was going back into a smaller place, you know what I mean?

It is interesting here to notice how a large scale regeneration process arguably involving 'ridding' of tenants and houses also triggered much smaller processes inside people's homes, which become themselves sites of 'ridding' and wasting. What was given up, however, as Doreen pointed out to me, were objects embodying family memories, like her daughter's bike and her mother's cabinet. Her words echo Gregson's work (2007) in showing how fraught these processes can be, how the dismantling of homes and ridding of personal possessions can often be a difficult and stressful process. At this personal level the value that was destroyed during regeneration was also that of a home, a personal space that a family had lived in and been in for decades, as well as an 'infrastructure for consumption' that needed to be demolished to allow a faster capital flow through the landscape (Harvey 1989). Taussig's (2003) description of a bog and the complex meanings it contains and embodies and evokes comes to mind here, in the ways in which value and waste intermingle and turn into one another.

Image 7: The rubble of the Old Sumner Estate. Photograph by Stacey.

This is what remained of Stacey's old house after it was demolished. She pointed out, and was adamant I should write it down, that the blue bits that were visible were from her bedroom, the green ones from another bedroom next door, and the pink ones were from the passage. This was her home, and look at what they had done to it. If anyone thought nobody could be emotionally attached to a flat, in a block, in the notorious North Peckham, they should go and speak to Stacey. She went round taking the photos, surveying what remained of her home, taking snaps of it before it was pulled down. These photos, the way she handled them carefully, the details she wanted me to note down, spoke of her love and affection for this place, and her painful loss, even more than her words could.

Doreen and Stacey's experience of the regeneration of the Five Estates is radically different from Tina's one, and the possible reasons for such different accounts will be explored in more depth later on in the chapter. It is worth however focusing our attention on the ways in which Doreen and Stacey framed the regeneration as something top-down, that was done 'to' them, how they felt cheated by a masterplan that kept changing and a consultation the council did not want to listen to, which

sounds similar to what Celia described as the 'bad consultation' after which her team at the time had to go in to 'pacify' tenants. What is more, Doreen and Stacey could see how the numbers did not add up, in the sense that it was obvious to them that not all would be able to return, and this mattered to them, they did not want to leave or lose their community. This caused them to work against the plans and secure a 'right to return', even if only for a few residents, an example of how individual and communal agency spurred on by a different view, one could say led by different values, could change and influence situations that might have seemed already set. The difficulties that Doreen and Stacey faced in order to stay with the regeneration programme until the end, the moving process and going through court, again resonate with how Celia described those who stayed on as the ones with the energy and determination required to fight for their homes. The next section will look instead at those who did not manage to stay the course and moved out of the area, without leaving many traces behind them.

4.6 Silences that speak

Celia identified three types of tenants affected by the regeneration: those with better resources (education andclass), those who could shout louder 'you're not doing this to us', and those with no energy to fight, who 'just went'. In the course of my fieldwork I have tried to find residents belonging to the third category, or information relating to them: how many where there, where did they move to, were they supported in their move, how did they cope in their new homes? I must admit I have not managed to find much about them, and not through lack of trying, which may be telling in itself. Out of the 2000 people who moved away I cannot say how many moved because they wanted to, like Tina, or because they could not do anything about it. Tarlo (2003) has shown how detailed archival research – of a scope that was beyond that of this project – can lead to very interesting data that can be extracted from what the records do not say, extrapolated from what is not there. Silences in the archives are part of the process of historical production (Trouillot 1995: 26). The fact that some data were deemed not important enough to be kept, as in the case of those who moved out of the Five Estates, can be data in itself, as Trundle and Kaplonski (2011) argue.

It is however possible to try and piece together some information about them, by extrapolating from the demographic data presented in section 4.1. To begin with, the Five Estates had a high proportion of lone pensioners and single persons, which was reflected in the high percentage of bedsits and one bedroom flats on the estates. After the regeneration these types of accommodation disappeared almost completely, which raises questions as to how feasible was it for such residents to return, if the housing they were entitled to by the council was not there any more?   Also, the unemployment figures produced by Mori in 1994 showed that 57% of children in Liddle ward lived in non-earning households. It is reasonable to presume that many of these households were in receipt of housing benefits, which are paid in arrears, making tenants structurally in arrears with their rent. We also know that the local primary schools (90% intake from Liddle ward) had an average of 60% of pupils who did not speak English as a first language. After reading what Doreen and Stacey's demand to return to their homes entailed in terms of assertiveness, willingness and ability to fight a system, including standing up in a court of law, it is at least reasonable to question whether tenants who were constantly in arrears with their rent, and for whom English was not the first language, would have been in a position to do the same.

4.7 Regeneration in practice: national constraints and policy changes

The text has moved from the most abstract level of a regeneration project, looking at the background documents and the successful bid that made it possible, trying to follow some of the politics involved in it and the operational difficulties involved in making it all happen. It then turned towards the realities of experiencing it as a tenant, from the perspective of one who happily moved away from the area and that of others who fought as hard as they could to remain in it. Tentatively, it also tried to speculate on those who did move out, whether they wanted to or not. I would now like to take a step back and reconsider what we have just heard from tenants, councillors and officers and frame it in the context of the housing policies at the time, which will be useful to make sense of at least some of the apparent contradictions and inconsistencies in the story.

To begin with, it is important to remember, as discussed in the previous chapter (three) that the local government at the time of the regeneration of the Five Estates

was acting under a central, Conservative government that had clear plans for the reduction of its expenditure on social housing. From the Housing Act of 1980, which gave tenants statutory rights to buy their own homes from the council, and forced council to sell their properties, whilst before this process – which had started under a Labour government – was at the discretion of the local authorities, Conservative housing policy did not allow local government much room to manoeuvre, certainly not on housing issues. Jones and Murie (2006) argue that savings on housing costs were to be the most substantial reduction in public expenditure planned by the newly elected Conservative government: housing share of expenditure fell from 7% in 1978/79 to 3% in 1980/81 and 2% in 1985/86. Housing was to decline from a major to a minor programme. By 1994, when Southwark council wrote the bid for SRB funds, the government was firmly on course to reduce council housing expenditure as much as possible, and funds such as SRB were designed to incentivise councils to decrease the amount of properties they owned.

With this understanding it then becomes apparent that the local council had to follow central government policies while at the same time trying get hold of some funds to maintain the housing it already had. This might explain the differences between the regeneration objectives, as stated in the SRB bid summarised earlier on in the chapter, and both councillors' understanding of the council's 'deal' with central government. While the official objectives point to a need to regenerate the area to reverse its 'cycle of decline', Steve and Brandon both speak of a trade off between money to regenerate old housing and the shedding of a considerable amount of social housing, which Brandon said was seen by the then-Conservative government as fostering dependence on the welfare state.. Similarly, the SRB bid lists all the members of the Peckham Partnership, the body that was supposed, through its board, to steer the regeneration. Yet Daniel, the council officer who had to work with whatever decisions came out of this board, stated in a matter-of-fact way that the board may meet and make decisions, but the council was already tied into agreements with its funders that would not be broken. This echoes what Celia said with regard of the 'bad' consultation that happened at the beginning of the process, which her team was then called in to 'sort out'. It is in this context that the 'deals' mentioned by councillors and officers start to make sense, the reasons why 'consultation' exercises could only really go so far, and why some voices had to be silenced or mis-represented (selfish tenants

and adversarial communities) so that the works could go ahead as planned. Of course appointing 'blame' or discovering what 'really' happened is not what this thesis is about, but it is nonetheless important to bear in mind the context in which the professionals – councillors and officers – involved in this project were working, to help us make sense of their actions at the time.

It is also useful to point out how quickly policies change, and how some of the things that were done on the Five Estates in the nineties could never happen now. As Daniel put it, "we wouldn't be able to do that now!". The reason is that the London Plan (2008), the Mayor's spatial development strategy for London, which regulates planning in London, states that housing policy's objectives should be to increase housing supply, to "achieve an urban renaissance through higher density and intensification in line with public transport capacity" (London Plan 2008, page 22); the target for additional homes for Southwark until 2016/17 is set at 1630 new homes each year, making up a ten year target of 16,300 additional homes in the borough. A regeneration plan that decreased density would not be allowed to go ahead nowadays, as the plans to increase the density on the nearby Aylesbury estate (chapter five), still in Southwark, by two or three times, according to different proposals, clearly demonstrate. In terms of tenure diversification, and specifically loss of council housing, again the London Plan states:

> *In view of the magnitude of the gap between current provision of affordable housing (7,000 to 8,000 a year) and estimated need, and the serious potential consequences for London's sustainable development and economic competitiveness, the Mayor has concluded that the planning system should make the maximum reasonable contribution to the provision of affordable housing" including "stemming losses from the existing stock of affordable homes" (London Plan 2008, page 74-75)*

Again, a program planning the loss of more than half of its social housing component, like the regeneration of the Five Estates, would not be possible under current planning policies.

The reason why the policy context at the time matters is that it shows how policies that seem set in stone at the time can change in the space of a few years, showing how they reflected particular political positions whilst trying to portray

themselves as rational, even commonsensical. A good example in this respect was the concept of density, which was almost demonised in the nineties, with insistent calls that density on the five estates had to come down, and the SRB bid stating clearly that density and overcrowding were major problems impacting on people's life chances. This concern with density matched a Conservative desire to reduce number of social housing units, not just in terms of relative density but overall. When a new government came in and a new set of priorities were established, suddenly high density was not an important issue anymore, and the 2008 London Plan is much more concerned with increasing availability of housing rather than reducing density. On the other hand, the lives of people who used to live on the Five Estates were seriously affected, disrupted even, by these attempts to bring density down, which explains why, in the next chapter (five) residents were so incredulous when shown plans for a new, tall tower block in their area.

Conclusion

This chapter has looked at one regeneration process, or rather processes, in depth, capturing the grains of the details as well as the ideas and plans behind it all. In this it followed what other anthropologists have done when looking at plans for urban areas, for example Holston in Brasilia (1989). In the final section the chapter has also contextualised what happened on the Five Estates in terms of national housing policies at the time, explaining some of the contradictions and inconsistencies that have resulted from the juxtaposition of officers' voices, plans, councillors' and residents' perspectives, which all seemed to point to different possible ways of reading this programme.

What I would like to do now is to suggest an alternative way of looking at this complex set of processes. Before doing so I will consider a couple of explanations, of analytical approaches, that could be considered and that have a degree of relevance but, in my opinion, fail to capture and explain the complexity of what happened on the Five Estates at the end of the '90s. On the one hand, it is possible to read this story as one big lie, a deception created to 'con' tenants out of their homes: as we have seen, there were many instances where it appears as if the council said something but did something else, at times resorting to the use of the courts to make sure tenants would do as they were told and stopped being 'in the way' of this huge programme. However as we have seen the policy constraints the council were under from national government were significant, and it would be simplistic to assume that all council employees, or even those at the top, were just trying to kick people out. This way of reading the situation does no justice to the views and feelings of many people involved, nor to the multilayered nature of the process.

On the other hand, it is possible to argue that what happened on the Five Estates was a process of commodification of what once was publicly owned, state run housing. In a clear case of 'creative destruction'(Marx 1848, Schumpeter 1949, Harvey 1985), many blocks and houses that were still structurally sound, or could have benefited from refurbishment but did not need demolition, were demolished so that new capital could be circulated and grown through an area that was once out of the market all together. As a public asset, one could argue the estates represented a form

of pure use value, in the sense that the tenants lived in their homes but had no real possibility – there had been no take up of 'right to buy' on the Five Estates at the time – of entering the 'market for houses', i.e. convert them into exchange value. This process is very common in 'regeneration' processes, and has been extensively documented by Allen (2008) in his study of Housing Market Renewal in Liverpool. From this perspective the statement:

> *While land and property is available, the potential cannot be realised without increased confidence in the area and its future. That confidence can only be achieved through the joint commitment of the Government and the Peckham Partnership (SRB bid p.9)*

may point to a different set of objectives for the program, to do with the marketisation of what was once a public asset through the sale of land to private developers (increase in private ownership from 1% to 40%) and the further shedding of council housing (net loss around 50%) with the introduction of housing associations. This is a powerful argument, and not one to be ignored, lest we fail to grasp a very important structural aspect of what happened in that process.

The way I choose to make sense of it, however, is different, and refers to the circulation of value and waste that form the theoretical backbone of this thesis. It is possible to argue that traditional, orthodox readings and representations of regeneration make clear parallels between regeneration and recycling. In both cases something without value is processed, some energy or value is added to it, and the result is an object that re-uses the old but is now new and better. As has been argued already in chapter two, recycling processes are both moral and moralising: they are perceived as 'good' in a moral sense and also make those who engage in them into 'good', moral citizens. The specific ways in which this works are looked at in depth in chapter seven. Coupling regeneration narratives with recycling makes regeneration into a good, moral thing as well, which is what the narrative of improvement and betterment of the area and its people is all about.

However, after looking at this regeneration process in practice, I would argue that it is more akin to a process of wasting something and then and buying something else, a new object. The old or valueless object that is the basis of the 'regeneration as

recycling' narrative is not, as this chapter has shown, valueless at all. It was stripped of value through being constructed as in need of regeneration. On the physical level, the uniformly dilapidated, unsalvageable estates devoid of communities turned out to be more like a diverse collection of individual estates, some of which were sound places to live in, and some of which needed major works done to them, and possibly even demolitions. The descriptions compiled by Beasley (1999) and Towers (2000), as well as the council's own documents, seem to contradict the 'continuous' or uniform nature of the area, given that the blocks were, for example, of different design and ages, and had had different amounts of work and refurbishment carried out at different stages.

This physical diversity is reflected on consciously by the respondents. One of the most striking contrasts in this chapter is that between residents Tina and Doreen: the first was ecstatic at having left Peckham behind, while the second fought with all her might to be able to return: why? What is more, these two contrasting opinions were not isolated: time and time again I have come across residents expressing similar views. So much so, in fact, that I couldn't help asking Tina once what she thought may be the reason why residents of the Old Sumner, for example, were against the demolitions. "Oh, but they had individual blocks and secure entry, it's a completely different story!" she said to me. This answer, together with many more conversations I have had with other residents, points to the fact that the Five Estates may not have been as homogeneous an entity as the SRB bid portrayed them. Tina and Doreen, and many more different people, attached different values to their homes, stressing that they were places for their families to be in, or homes located in a community that was home, or indeed hellish places they wanted to leave behind.

From a social perspective, the idea that the area was 'empty' and needed 'community building' does not tally with the ethnographic record. 'Community' was often used as a term, invoked as a value even, by officers and councillors, mainly referring to a lack of it, and the need to build it through regeneration. Florence pointed out how regenerating the Gloucester estate, for example, allowed residents who had lived on it for 20 years and never met to actually start talking to one another over their garden fence. Yet in the same interview she explained how Gloucester estate residents tried to launch a class action to stop the regeneration from going ahead. Brandon berated the lack of 'community cohesion' in the Five Estates, yet went to great length

to explain to me how different community groups and TRAs could not find an agreement with one another. Indeed the situation was so bad that the council brought in an independent consultant, but residents fell out with them as well. Both Florence and Brandon explain these problems referring to 'difficult individuals', 'selfish' tenants with 'their own agendas' and a lack of good personal relationships. Descriptions of residents as generally uncooperative, adversarial and irrational are typical in this context, as Allen (2008) has shown in Liverpool and Baeten (2009) in South London, using the term 'post-political regeneration' to describe a process whereby conflict between different interests are subsumed and brushed away through 'friendly' partnerships and vacuous populism.

If the initial element of the process, the Five Estates and their communities, were neither valueless nor empty, but a diverse collection of blocks and estates with specific issues and established communities living in them, then their demolition was an act of wasting something that was, to some people at least, valued as home. This is all this chapter can be expected to show, and in the rest of the thesis, especially in Chapter Eight, the concluding part of this hypothesis will be explored, to do with whether the final part of the regeneration can be conceptualised as recycling the old or could be better understood as 'buying new', opening up a market and enabling capital relations to take over from state obligations. The next chapter will build upon these insights by looking at four more regeneration programmes that were happening at the time of fieldwork, but whose outcomes did not follow the plans initially laid out for them, therefore highlighting how human agency can and does shape and inform the ways in which regeneration works and people and places are wasted or, sometimes, valued and saved.

Chapter Five – More regeneration: different outcomes and a few contradictions

Chapter Four examined in considerable depth a vast regeneration project that began in the mid-'90s and it is by now almost, if not completely, finished. It focused especially on the different narratives provided by documents and plans, councillors, officers and residents, juxtaposing them and highlighting contradictions and possible alternative readings. However the temporality of those events, the fact that it all happened over ten years ago, makes it seem somehow set and monolithic, as if what happened *had to* go that way and there were no other possibilities.

This chapter, on the other hand, considers regeneration projects that are currently happening, whose outcomes are most uncertain or have only just been set. In doing so, it shows how plans may be put in place by councils and developers, when they manage to find agreements, which in itself may be complicated, but this does not mean that they will come to pass. While the state of the housing market and the financial situation at a global, national, citywide and council level, together with city and nationwide policies (London Plan and Decent Homes, for example) obviously affect the outcomes of regeneration projects, the plans are also affected by human agency, individually and, more often than not, in groups. While the case studies show how deeply tenants' lives are affected by regeneration plans on a daily basis, they also bring into sharp relief the effects of people's actions on the plans themselves, whether by slowing proceedings down in the case of the Aylesbury, or changing direction entirely in the case of the Woodvale Estate

It also aims to show the variety of processes that go under the label 'regeneration', often polarised between physical demolition and decanting, i.e. the removal of all tenants to alternative accommodation, and refurbishment, whereby blocks are repaired and improved and tenants do not have to move out, or at least not on a permanent basis. While financial and political considerations are always included in the decisions made to demolish or refurbish, it is also important to remember that sometimes the buildings themselves do not allow much flexibility, as in the case of the Aylesbury estate, where a communal heating system connects large and small blocks, meaning they can only stand or fall together, with demolition of the

large ones necessarily causing demolition for the smaller, and much more beloved, ones. Materiality matters and cannot be underestimated (Dant, 2005).

It is not just the materiality of the buildings that has to be considered, but also what is living in them: the second case study considers an estate where an endemic infestation of cockroaches weighed heavily on tenants' decision to agree to the demolition of their homes. What is also interesting in this case is that the empty land left over by the demolition of the block is now been taken over by plants and wild animals, reminding us of the constant interaction between humans and nature (DeSilvey, 2006), even in the midst of an inner-city area. The third case study considers regeneration, and specifically decanting, from the point of view of a man with mental health issues, and follows him and his brother as they try to get him rehoused with a housing association, which turns out to be more difficult than they expected. Finally, the last section looks at a case where regeneration plans for an estate were turned on their heads by tenants, and describes how after a successful campaign they managed to agree a refurbishment plan for their estate rather than seeing it demolished.

As with the previous chapter, multivocality is used as a strategy to explore a variety of experiences from different perspectives rather than reinforce specific points. The focus is on listening to voices that usually do not get heard and trying to understand how *they* interpret and understand the processes going on around them. It was not my role to 'check' their stories for factual accuracy, rather to consider the discourses they employed. While the material on which this chapter is based is not meant to be a representative sample of residents, it does however comprise voices from tenants and leaseholders, younger and older residents, disabled adults, white and BME individuals, people involved in the tenants' movement and people who were not. Methodologically, the main difference from the previous chapter is that I have summarised the respondents' voices, instead of allowing them to come through in long quotes: this is due to both lack of space and a willingness to experiment with different styles of presenting ethnographic material. This stance is more fully addressed in the methodology section of this thesis, in chapter one. This chapter aims to give readers an idea of a variety of possible outcomes, so in order to achieve this

each case study, and every voice within them, had to be sized accordingly, in this case prioritizing diversity over depth.

Within the thesis as a whole, as well as providing ethnographic evidence for a variety of regeneration projects, the chapter develops themes to do with valuing and wasting, emptiness and creative destruction, tangible and intangible assets and the many ways in which 'community' is invoked as a concept, lived as a reality, lost, built, nurtured and so on. As we read through it becomes clear that places can be 'valued' in different ways e.g. loved as homes, for example, or have value stripped from them, in the form of lack of maintenance and eventually demolition. Maintenance is crucial here, as Graham and Thrift (2007) argue, because in order to keep something valued it needs to be maintained, and the estates I worked on were generally poorly maintained, something that will be explored in more depth in Chapter 7. These places were neither simple nor empty: there were, there still are, real people living in them. If we take a closer look this becomes obvious, and one could argue that the idea that 'wasting' entire blocks and estates can only work from a certain distance, possibly the distance of the planning office or the finance department.

As soon as we get close to the people living in these blocks – and this includes council workers who become too entangled and either lose their jobs or do not seem to progress up the career ladder – the destruction, discomfort and sometimes real pain caused to the residents by regeneration processes seem like a very substantial price to pay. This matters because it is not about arguing that those higher up the management chain in planning or finance do not care for the residents – fieldwork has shown that was not the case. Indeed, these people were adamant that what they were doing was for the best, to improve people's lives. What this chapter argues instead is that the idea that new is always better, and what is wasted does not matter, only works from a distance. Hetherington (2004) has argued that waste is about the placing of absences, while Lucas (2002) explained how it was about temporal processes that turned what was once alienable and individuated into something that was alienable again. Or again, Reno (2009) argued that it was about whether one looked at things as individual objects or at an aggregate level, as the distancing process means seeing things in a different way. Douglas (1966) argued long ago that dangerous dirt was

that which had not fully decomposed, where the 'bits' were still visible. In this way what this chapter, what this whole thesis does is to pluck things out of the waste bin and look at them, reassemble what was left to decompose, re-identify waste matter, bring it into the light once more and question and analyse it.

5.1 Aylesbury Estate: the complexities of regeneration

If the previous chapter examined a regeneration process that is considered by most stakeholders – developers, councillors, council officers and most residents – to have been a resounding success, this section considers a case study of an estate where regeneration, or at the very least physical regeneration, has not managed to happen, neither as refurbishment nor as demolition, at least not yet. The Aylesbury estate is one of the largest examples of social housing in Europe: it houses over 10,000 people, and has three different TRAs (Tenants and Residents Associations). Physically it is made up of different types of buildings, some small, brick built ones, and some really large system built blocks from the '60s and '70s with deck access. In 1997 it was used by Tony Blair as the setting of his first speeches as newly elected Prime Minister outside of Parliament. He promised that things were going to change for the better for social tenants, especially for those who lived in forgotten, hopeless and neglected estates.

> *After several years of economic growth, 5 million people of working age live in homes where nobody works. Over a million have never worked since leaving school […] For a generation of young men, little has come to replace the third of all manufacturing jobs that have been lost. For part of a generation of young women, early pregnancies and the absence of a reliable father almost guarantee a life of poverty, and today Britain has a higher proportion of single- parent families than anywhere else in Europe. […] Behind the statistics lie households where three generations have never had a job. There are estates where the biggest employer is the drugs industry, where all that is left of the high hopes of the post-war planners is derelict concrete. Behind the statistics are people who have lost hope, trapped in fatalism […] the idea that work is the best form of welfare, the best way of funding people's needs, the best way of giving them a stake in society […] I want to give people the will to win again. This will to win is what drives a country.*
>
> *(Tony Blair, Aylesbury Estate, 2/6/1997)*

Twelve years on – at the time of fieldwork – and the Aylesbury has not changed much, the promised changes have failed to materialise and many tenants are doubtful if they ever will.

Image 8:Aylesbury Estate, view from Burgess Park. Photograph by Will-Faichney-Photography //http://www.flickr.com/groups/60s_and_70s_buildings/pool/page2/

Laura moved on to the estate in the early nineties; she is a leaseholder, and her flat is in a block on the edge of the estate. The flat is light and airy, spacious and comfortable; it has two balconies, one on the same level as her living room, big enough for a table and chairs for six people to have dinner around it when the weather is nice, and the second one upstairs, off her bedroom, where she grows her vegetables in pots. The windows face onto the top of the trees opposite the block, and there is no noise from cars at all. She has been involved with her TRA, one of three on the estate, as secretary, treasurer and representative on a number of bodies and boards set up over the years. Laura divides the history of regeneration on her estate in four phases, or cycles they have been through. The first stage she can remember involved refurbishment, and it was a plan to re-clad the blocks, improve them and divide up the larger ones with more stairs and entrances, making the walkways smaller and more controllable, creating smaller clusters of residents sharing the same stairs and lifts and

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therefore, ideally, improving safety and security. This plan was not approved, and she thinks this was because it did not include enough demolitions on the estate.

The next phase was demolition, and it was proposed in 2001: it involved transfer to a Housing Association and substantial demolitions of the smaller blocks, as well as refurbishment of the larger blocks, which would also be divided up, as in the previous plan, and possibly given concierge systems. This plan was balloted to the tenants in December 2001, and a very large majority of tenants voted against it. However, it was not an easy vote to interpret: had tenants voted against the plans themselves, or the transfer to a housing association that came with them? Laura was very proud of the turnout in and of itself, which was about 75%, arguing this was an incredibly positive result, showing tenants were listening and actively engaged with what was happening to their homes. The group Defend Council Housing had campaigned very hard on the estate to stop the plans from going ahead, and heralded the negative vote as rejection of privatisation of social housing, as they held very strong views against housing associations, or Registered Social Landlords (RSLs). The net result of the vote was, however, that once again nothing happened.

After a rather long time, another proposal came from the council, this time going back to refurbishment. The problem with this third phase was that during surveys of some of the smaller blocks on the estate it was realised that there were serious structural problems with all of them; while the larger blocks had been built to very high safety standards at the time, and were still sound,it would take a considerable amount of money to retrofit the smaller ones to standards of structural safety required by current regulations. The prices estimated rocketed and the plans once again ground to a halt. The plans current in 2008, when fieldwork took place, had reverted once again to demolitions and transfer to a HA, but this time the decision was taken by the council's executive and tenants were not balloted. While welcoming the fact that something may, in the end, happen on the estate, Laura is aware that many tenants felt their opinions, expressed in the votes they cast in 2001, were being ignored. Her structural position as a leaseholder means that the HA transfer will not affect her directly, but her dedication to her TRA shows an exceptional level of involvement and understanding of tenants' issues, giving her perspectives on the issue an unusual mix of deep insight and detached awareness.

Over time, listening to her, it became clear how difficult and complex regeneration processes can be, not just on a personal and socio-political level, which is what the previous chapter discussed through the case study of the North Peckham estate, but even from a pragmatic, practical point of view. Her block, one of the smaller ones, for example, is indissolubly linked to one of the larger ones on the estate, because they share the same boiler, pipes and heating system. This means that if a decision is made to demolish the large one, her one will have to go, regardless of tenants or leaseholders opinions; by the same token, demolition of this larger block would imply demolition of her own simply because of the proximity between the two. Her smaller block's safety could not be guaranteed if demolition was to start on the larger one. Materiality gets in the way and there is no escaping it (Dant 2005).

This of course has implications for her personally too. While it is true that as a leaseholder she is theoretically able to sell her flat and move out, the fact that regeneration plans have been hanging over the estate for such a long time make selling the flat practically impossible, as understandably buyers tend to stay away from properties that may be condemned. On an even smaller scale, she would like to have her kitchen re-done, but has been waiting to know what is going to happen, and as nothing seems to ever be decided for good she has decided to simply redecorate it and leave it at that, as there seems to be no point investing in it. This is the same attitude that the council has taken to general maintenance on the estate, whereby anything out of the ordinary, everyday works required to keep the estate going is avoided and delayed until future plans for the estate become clear. This means, for example, that the lifts in the taller blocks, which need replacing as they keep breaking down and parts for them are increasingly difficult to find, are not replaced as this would constitute too big an investment, considering the uncertainty of their future. Adding value to one's home becomes impossible, or not feasible, when ultimately it may all be wasted by forces beyond one's control; the prospect of demolition means that even retaining value, in the sense of maintenance of the lifts, is often not as option. This fuels a sense of wastage of the whole environment, which is not what regeneration plans intend to do, of course.

On the other hand, one could argue, as do groups such as Defend Council Housing, that this is a conscious strategy of disinvestment on the part of the council – and national government. Chapter Two explored how the Conservatives made the Right to Buy policy into a law (Housing Act 1980) because they wanted to substantially decrease the size of council housing and the amount of money the government was spending on it. By not investing in maintenance and literally allowing the buildings to fall apart, when the offer comes to transfer to RSLs tenants are more likely to accept it if the deal includes badly needed maintenance of their blocks. However, this case study shows that things work out in more complex ways, as the tenants did refuse the option to go with an RSL even though it included some maintenance – but also demolitions, of course. The interesting thing here is the interplay of valuing and wasting, of how plans to 'improve', meaning adding value, may mean demolition and moving away for some people, so in fact imply loss of value in terms of their homes, networks and communities, which in fact are wasted. Not only that, but even when the plans to 'improve' do not come to pass, the fact that they exist brings down not just the exchange value of the houses of leaseholders, for example, who are unable to sell because of the potential impending demolitions, but also the use values, in terms of their ability to be used as homes, for everyone else, if the council is not prepared to fix the lifts or paint the walls or fix the entry phones because the blocks may be taken down soon.

Physical regeneration may be stalling, and affecting maintenance issues as well, but 'community development', that intangible and so often unreachable goal of many regeneration processes, is going really well on the estate, thanks to money allocated to it from an NDC (New Deal for Communities) grant, a government fund to help community building in deprived areas. Rather than setting up new organisations – 'reinventing the wheel', as Laura put it – tenants have contacted organisations that already had a track record of effective work on estates similar to the Aylesbury and paid them to send over staff to work on the estate and start projects here. This has resulted in groups working with schools, pensioners, ethnic minority groups and young carers, for example, and the results have been excellent in terms of increased tenant participation and self-esteem. Workshops were run to build up young women's confidence and convince them that they were employable, an essential but often overlooked first step if they are to look for work at all. Another project focused on

health and brought together a group of Muslim women who now go swimming once a week, which is good for their physical health but also breaks down isolation and has created a social network they can rely on.

Comparing the intangible work of community development and the value it represents with the very real prospect of demolition of the estate and the disruption it may bring to these networks is a worrying aspect of Laura's involvement with her estate, which at the moment focuses on what she calls 'referencing'. This is the process during which a council employee visits every household individually and discusses their housing needs and options as to where to go next. The steering group on the Aylesbury, of which Laura is a member, have pressed for referencing on their estate to include questions like, "Do you want to be in a block for the over 50s?", which apparently many residents are keen on, or whether they would like to be moved next to an existing neighbour, or if entire corridors or walkways want to be moved together. As on the North Peckham estate, the real problem will be with residents of the first phase of demolition, who may have to move twice, or may have to wait many years before being allowed to return on the estate if they choose to. Right to Return has been so far guaranteed to tenants as long as they are willing to become tenants of an HA (Housing Association), as all accommodation for rent on the estate will be managed by an HA. This effectively ignores tenants' vote against HA transfer in 2001, and it will be interesting to see if it will make a difference to people's willingness to return on the estate.

The steering group also want referencing to be applied to leaseholders, which is unusual but, they argue, necessary in this case. The issue with leaseholders is that their flats are relatively low value compared to what they could buy on the open market, especially now that they are threatened with demolition, and so they cannot simply sell to the council and buy on the open market because they cannot afford it. This has been cause of great anxiety especially for older leaseholders who are daunted by the idea of moving anyway, but are also aware that all they have is their flat and their pensions, and would not be able to raise the extra capital needed to buy on the market. This is a difficult situation for the council to resolve, but Laura and the steering group think that there are options that can be explored if they are referenced and their cases heard like everyone else's. For example they are negotiating if they

may be offered to go back to a secure tenancy with the council, or move to a shared-ownership situation with the HA, or maybe offered a similar value flat owned by the council elsewhere. In this instance the value of a flat is not just that of a home and a community but also a pension, a modest degree of security for the future, the idea of passing down some sort of value to one's children and grandchildren, which is endangered by the prospect of loss of value through demolition and waste of the blocks.

This is of course a problematic idea, at least in the sense of the paradox of using council property as inheritance. It is not, however, something that applies to leaseholders only, as some of the most strongly contested issues I've heard discussed at various housing and tenants fora were about the possibility of passing down of tenancies to children, something that is currently allowed, within rules, in council housing but not for HA (Housing Associations) properties. This is one of the reasons, for example, why council tenants are reluctant to move to HAs. It is also true, however, that the ideal of passing down an inheritance to children is strongly adhered to by many people regardless of their class backgrounds, and so it should not be surprising if working class respondents in council housing try do it as well, within the constraints of their situation. Again this brings us back to circuits of value that are not just economic but moral. As Engels (1884) pointed out a long time ago, in our society the concepts of family, private property and the state are indissolubly linked, and passing down property to your children is almost universally seen as 'good', making those who do into 'good' people, who have saved and cared for the well being of their offspring. Is it so strange then that council tenants and leaseholders should want to do it as well?

Laura would like to be able to return on the estate herself once the works are done, as she likes where she lives and feels very connected to her community, hardly ever leaving her flat without bumping into someone she knows, for example. The bad press the estate gets does not bother her, as she points out that their crime figures are in line with any other inner-city estate, and the main problem, as in many similar areas, is fear of crime rather than crime itself. Even so, the work done with the NDC grant has considerably reduced fear of crime amongst residents, one of the most

tangible results of all the work that has gone into building up community, networks and residents' confidence.

Whether she will be able to or not, or whether this new phase will go ahead is still to be seen at the time of writing, when it is easy to imagine that the global economic crisis and the specific downturn in the housing market may not affect plans in very favourable ways. What transpires from Laura's story is how complex regeneration processes can be. As she put it, the more you know, the more complicated it gets: how can decisions ever be made? The costs of not making decisions, however, are high, involving uncertainty and anxiety for all residents, both tenants and leaseholders, as well as delays in investments to maintain or improve dwellings, not to mention the sense of disillusion after what was promised by Blair in 1997 never materialised.

5.2 Wood Dene: emptiness and failed plans

This section looks at another case of 'failed', or 'delayed' regeneration: the late Wooddene, a block belonging to the still existing Acorn estate, was demolished in 2007, but plans for its redevelopment never came to pass. The block was a typical example of 'unloved' sixties design, concrete slabs on stilts, neglected and badly maintained. Respondents reported it was also infested with cockroaches, which in the end was one of the reasons why its own residents agreed to its demolition and rebuilding, as it seemed to be the only way to eradicate the pest once they had established themselves in the building as severely as they had in the Wooddene. Significantly, this is the only instance I have come across of tenants being balloted favouring demolition.

Residents were, of course, shown plans and made promises about what was going to be built instead of the old block. During a weekend consultation held in Peckham Library in December 2007, opinions were collected not just from ex-residents but from anyone interested in the plans enough to come to the event. Architects had made models of two possible development options for the site, and the council was clearly willing to spend some money on the consultation, providing

refreshments as well as face painting to entertain children while their parents wandered around and considered the options.

During the consultation, council officers were at hand to help people understand the proposals and collect their comments, whether in the form of a questionnaire or, for those who did not want to or were unable to fill one in, by capturing their opinions on post-it notes, which were then stuck on a large board next to the models. The architects who designed the models were there, and so was the head of the council Property Team, responsible for the overall management of the redevelopment. One model was based around a number of low-rise new buildings, while the other had a big tower block amongst a number of low-rise buildings. Residents seemed confused and not really convinced by the second model, as they perceived a high-density development, i.e. the tower block, to be against what they wanted and had been told about the need to reduce density in the area, not increase it. Interestingly, in a private conversation with the head of the Property Team it became clear that he and the council strongly favoured the second option, the one with the tower, as it made more sense financially. Almost three years on, however, and the site of the old Wooddene looks somewhat different from what either of the two models suggested at the time of the consultation.

The regeneration process back then had completed decanting, i.e. the removal of tenants from the block, and physical demolition. One of the officers present at the library consultation, called Claire, had been in charge of the decanting process, and was willing to explain how difficult it had been from her perspective. Having heard many stories from tenants going through the process in the area, it was interesting to hear about it from her viewpoint. She said there were three types of residents, those who wanted to go, those who did not, and those who just did not think they could possibly move because they had lived there their entire lives. Usually this last group was made up of older residents who were scared and confused by the idea of moving rather than being radically against it, like those in the second group.

Her position had obviously been difficult. On the one hand, she was supposed to move these people along and out of the block according to a very tight schedule, but on the other she could really understand the difficulties for some of 'her'

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residents. She was especially aware of the needs of those who needed their families nearby to help caring for children, older people and disabled relatives, and were instead consistently offered accommodation scattered all over the borough. How could they possibly accept it, if it meant they were not going to be able to go to work and leave their children with their mother, for example, because she had been moved too far away? While in regular and well-paid jobs different arrangements could easily be made, for families working irregular, low paid and short-notice shifts family networks of care were often what made going into work or training possible at all.

There were other problems as well, to do with older people who did not want to move right until the end. As the block emptied, different waves of squatters would take over the flats. The first comers were usually quite benign, in her experience; many were women from Eastern Europe here to work in need of a place to stay, who did not damage the properties nor threaten the residents. These were easy to evict because they were not violent, but the group that usually followed them tended to be addicts, usually on crack, who would go about dismantling the pipes and every other part of the infrastructure – wires, taps – anything at all that could be sold for scrap to buy drugs.   This points towards another circuit of value, where addicts literally extract any kind of valuable they can get their hands on before demolitions begin, one could argue diverting some materials from ending up in landfills, and converting them into money to buy drugs. The problem by the end was that the older residents would be surrounded by mostly empty flats and crack dens, while their water and energy supplies were disrupted because of the squatters' activities. In those cases, getting people out was not just about meeting targets, but also guaranteeing the safety of potentially vulnerable residents. Decanting processes can thus embody the physical extraction of value from buildings in more ways than one, and again as in the case of the Aylesbury this was obviously not the way the plans were supposed to work out when planners and architects drew them up.

Shortly after the consultation, as decanting was over, Claire lost her job, or rather her contract was not renewed by the local authority. With her went most of the knowledge about that decanting process, as over time she had made clear that keeping records of residents who had moved out was not really high on her team's agenda, their priority having been to move them all out of the site as soon as possible to have

it ready for demolition. This testimony, however anecdotal, confirms the problems I encountered when trying – and failing – to find data about those who were decanted from the Five Estates in North Peckham (chapter four). Claire's orientation towards the process of decanting and demolition is ambiguous because even though it is something she did as a job, for a living, which would imply distancing, she was close enough to the residents to see the consequences it had for their lives, and was clearly troubled by them.

As a last favour before leaving her post, Claire put me in touch with the Acorn TRA, with whom I worked for the rest of my fieldwork. I initially met the Acorn TRA in January 2007, and my first impressions of the group were that they meant well and were nice people, but as a TRA they were inexperienced. The group itself was rather small, many times consisting only of the required quorum of four people, who were the most committed ones, chair, vice-chair, treasurer and secretary. On many occasions there were more observers and council officers than estate residents. It was obvious that the group was new and they did not know each other very well; the minutes and agenda were rudimentary, the chair found it difficult to direct the meeting and stick to the agenda, and in general very little was decided or ever achieved.

One of the tenants, Lily, once remarked on the difference between the current TRA and the previous one she used to be part of. I asked her what she meant by that, as it is unusual to hear of TRAs that fold completely, to be replaced by an entirely new group, which seemed to be what she was implying. The reason for this, she explained, was that the old TRA was disbanded by the council on racism charges. She was the only member of the old group who had been asked to keep being involved, to provide the group with some sort of experience and continuity. She agreed, but just as a committee member, refusing to take on any core role (chair, vice-chair, secretary or treasurer). Did she think the council charges against the group were justified, was it really racist? Lily did not want to be drawn into this conversation much, but she did acknowledge that the chair used to say out loud things that "many people think them, but they know they cannot say them". Unfortunately for me, this was also the group that negotiated with the council over the demolition of the Wooddene, but as it had been disbanded it was not possible to speak with any of

the old members, whom Lily said would not be too keen to talk, considering how badly things had ended up. With Claire out of her job, and the old group disbanded, getting information on what had happened during decanting, and the future plans for the site, was as always very difficult.

Having worked with the new TRA for a while, at the end of one of their meetings I decided to ask residents if they knew anything about the new plans for the site, or if they had been kept involved and up to date with the process from the beginning, and something curious happened. Members of the TRA stared back at me blankly, unable to say much; one of them said they had no idea. However, a local councillor, whom I later discovered used to live on the estate, was present, and jumped in declaring that of course they knew, of course they had been kept in the loop about the plans, in fact there was a committee meeting regularly, of which they were all part because they were on the TRA, that discussed how things should progress. Shortly after making this remark she left, and I never managed to talk to her again about this subject, much as I tried. As far as the rest of the group was concerned, no one could remember having been on any committee, or could tell me if and when, or where, it was going to meet next.

At the time of writing, the space once occupied by the old Wooddene lies empty, with just a blue steel fence, at least three metres high, running all around it. Inside the fence the site has been cleared of the buildings remains, and is now completely empty, a flat plane of gravel from one side to the next. Empty land,

waiting.

Image 9: The empty site where the Wooddene once stood. Photograph by the author.

Image 10: Rubbish in the empty site of the Wooddene: a literal wasteland? Photograph by the author.

A literal wasteland? Emptiness is clearly the way of being meant for this space by whoever is managing it, considering the regular maintenance the site requires to bring it back to that pristine state. Emptiness is, however, rather difficult to maintain. Rubbish of all sorts find its way into the site, squished through the bars of the fence, blown in by the wind, dumped or thrown by people. Buddleias have quickly sprung up on the empty land, together with resilient long grasses that seem to thrive on harshness and neglect. Insects, of whom butterflies are the showiest, have also made their homes here. In winter especially, the snow helps reveal an even more populated landscape, as all sorts of footprints appear: paw prints of cats and foxes, maybe even dogs, mark the snow cover; the footprints of birds crisscross around all over the place, and it is possible to discern traces of mice and rats scurrying through. Emptiness here seems to be a relative concept, with regards to humans at least, and the interactions between the social and natural landscape are, as always, complex and intriguing (DeSilvey, 2006).

It was difficult to establish exact ownership of the site at the time of fieldwork, whether it was still in the hands of the council or it had been sold to developers already, as the information available from different sources had been scarce and contradictory. Every once in a while bulldozers would go in and remove the first layer of soil and grasses, and most of the rubbish, leaving the site looking empty and clean again, more like a blank slate than a wasteland, full of potential rather than simply abandoned. There were no clear explanations as to why this was, why land lay empty in the middle of zone two, in a borough with acute housing needs. It is possible of course to speculate that the economic downturn and housing market crash may well have affected development plans. The only explanation informally volunteered to me by a highly placed elected member of the housing department at the time revolved once again around density. The London Plan (2008) in place at the time of fieldwork did not allow for a loss of social housing in the borough, meaning that anything that was built on site would have to contain at least twice, if not three times the number of dwellings that were there before. This was because it was private sales that subsidised social housing being built, and the proportion needed to be at least one private flat for one socially rented, if not two, for the financial aspect to work out. This was why during the consultation officers were so keen on the model that included a huge tower block on site as opposed to low-density housing, which

was instead favoured by residents. On the other hand trebling, or even just doubling the density of the old site whilst designing something good enough to be able to attract financial backers was almost impossible, which may well be why the land lies empty, a playground for foxes and rats.

5.3 Mountain Estate stuck in the middle: disabled tenants and the selective practices of Housing Associations

Image 11: Mountain Estate almost entirely boarded up. Photograph by local resident Zefrog http://londonist.com/2011/04/in-pictures-heygate-estate-se1.php?showpage=5#gallery-1

If the Aylesbury is stuck at planning and decision levels, while the Wooddene has managed decanting and demolition but failed so far to go through to rebuilding, this case study tells the story of a tenant, and an estate, stuck in the middle of this two processes. The Mountain estate, housing 1100 households, is structurally similar to the Aylesbury, made up of large tall '60s blocks, with spacious flats on the inside and a rather ugly looking structure on the outside, according to my respondents. It also has balconies and walkways running around and connecting the different blocks, creating a vast network of paths above ground level, replete with the crime and security problems these walkways brought on the Aylesbury, the North Peckham and many other estates from the 1960s. According to my respondents residents did not agree to the demolitions but were not given a choice; the decision was made by the

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council. The blocks were due to be demolished by now, but everything slowed down and eventually came to a halt amongst rumours that the council could not find an agreement with the developers over the site. During fieldwork, as even the executive member for regeneration resigned over this project, the information channels shut down and no one was willing to talk about it any more.

John used to live on the Mountain estate, but has now moved out and lives in a flat nearby. Things have turned out to be OK for him, but could have easily gone a different way if his brother, Peter, had not been there to help him. John has mental health problems – treated schizophrenia – and relies on his brother and his mum to act as carers when he needs them. Because of this he was allocated a two bedroom flat by the council where he was able to live independently, only occasionally asking his dad or brother to stay with him if he needed any help. It was difficult, Peter explained, to convince the council to allocate a two bedroom flat to a single man, but his brother's care worker supported the application and in the end they managed, meaning John could live an independent life with only minimal support, at least for a number of years.

During the first stages of the decanting process on the estate, John was unwell and had to go into hospital, so was physically away from his flat, which, however, he had expressed no intention of leaving. Upon returning he found the flat boarded up with the metal grids used by the council to secure empty flats, as if he had moved out. His brother worked hard to clear up the misunderstanding, and in the end the council agreed to take the grids down; at this point John and Peter realised the flat had been broken into in his absence, before the grids had gone up. Both events – the burglary and finding that one's home has been boarded up by a landlord in your absence – would have been stressful for anyone, but they hit John particularly hard because of his mental health problems. As he moved back in, his life changed even more, as many of the neighbours he knew from his same balcony, a sub section of the estate sharing the same external walkway, had already been moved out, making it feel less safe. In fact, soon after coming back John's flat was broken into again when he was away during the day, and the pipes were ripped out. Again, John's brother Peter tried to fix things as best as he could and got the council to secure the door another time. Decanting meant not just the loss of a home, but of the value of safety that being part

of a community brought to someone as vulnerable as John, a loss not accounted for in planning documents but nonetheless vital from the point of view of an individual resident.

Image 12: Boarded up balconies on the Mountain Estate. Phograph by local resident Zefrog http://londonist.com/2011/04/in-pictures-heygate-estate-se1.php?showpage=3#gallery-1

By this point all residents on the estate, who had not been balloted or given much choice as to whether they wanted their homes to be demolished or not, were being 'assisted' by the council regeneration team to move out. As there were no specific plans or houses for the Mountain estate tenants to move back into, they had to enter the same bidding process in place in the entire borough, whereby prospective tenants choose properties they like from the available ones on a council database and bid for them. There is a point system and properties are allocated first to those grouped in band one, or highest need, and then down to band two and three. However, as the council needed the Mountain tenants to move out as quickly as possible, they allowed them all to bid as band one, making it easier for them to secure

properties they wanted. However, Peter argued, this put people like his brother, disabled and vulnerable, in a difficult position: in a normal situation he would have been preselected as band one and therefore have had an advantage in bidding for appropriate properties, but now he was bidding like everyone else on his estate – there is no higher priority than band one – and finding it very difficult to find anywhere suitable.

The situation quickly became even worse: when John finally managed to successfully bid for a property he wanted to live in, he was given the go-ahead from the council, but then rejected with no explanation after being interviewed by the housing associations owning the property he had bid for. This happened four times in a row, taking over four months, with no explanation given from any of the Housing Associations involved other than a refusal to house John. Emails and phone calls from both Peter and John's council housing officer did not elicit any useful information. Eventually Peter decided to confront the latest HA to have refused John, the Peabody Trust, counting on the fact that they would not want their reputation as a caring and trustworthy body tarnished. His strategy paid off, and as he explained to the HA officer he had gone to see that he had no intention of leaving their premises until they offered him an explanation of what had happened and, most importantly, a flat for his brother, an interesting story began to unravel.

HAs are not supposed to select or 'cherry pick' the tenants who bid for their properties through the council's bidding system; the interview that tenants go through is meant to be a way for the tenant to get to know their new landlord and vice versa, not part of a selection process. However the Peabody's officer explained that they deemed John to be an unsuitable and potentially problematic tenant who would be better off in sheltered accommodation due to his mental illness, and therefore withdrew their offer for a flat. He added that he assumed all the previous Has had acted along the same lines. Following Peter's explanation of his brother's situation as documented by his caseworker, and a veiled threat to take the story to the press, John was offered a two bedroom flat on the same day.

At the time of writing, John was currently settling into his new flat, which is only a short bus ride away from where he used to live. However, it will take him

months, if not years, to be comfortable in his surroundings again, as this change has been quite disruptive to his old patterns, routines and sense of place and belonging, which are very important to him and his mental health. In the end things were good for him, which is great, Peter said, but how many more people in his situation do not have a brother to fight their corner for them? How many would have simply slipped in a hostel, or into sheltered accommodation, or worst still into homelessness? Housing associations, he remarked, do not have the same duty of care for their residents that councils are bound to by law, which was why they acted as they did. Peter was clearly bitter about the whole episode, and acutely aware not just of the disruptive effects of demolitions on his own and his brother's lives, but also of the differences between council and housing associations when it came to housing tenants that were differed from their ideal 'no issues, easy rents' tenants, like his brother.

In many ways John's story on the Mountain estate reminds us of many themes we have already considered in this thesis: the difficulties he faced in finding a property were shared by Doreen, whom we met in chapter four. The same goes for John's attempt to be granted a right to return to his property, which he achieved with the help of his brother even though it was simply a sheet of paper, initially not even signed by a council officer (Peter had to go back and demand a signature) expressing tenants' interest in returning, but not a legally binding right. Once again, as on the North Peckham estate, if all tenants had been granted right to return the scheme could not possibly have worked. What is different, on the other hand, is the fact that John felt connected and supported by his neighbours and the community he had around him on his estate in the present tense, not in some kind of nostalgic, far removed past, as the stories from the North Peckham estate often evoke. Even in an estate which has acquired a bad reputation as a typical example of inner-city crime and alienation a vulnerable adult felt safe and was willing to stay rather than being moved onto a better, supposedly less dangerous site.

Another theme that runs through John's story is the difficulty in guaranteeing safety to tenants during decanting processes preceding demolition. Just as Claire explained for the Wooddene estate, safety and security quickly degenerate as soon as buildings start being emptied. Even though John's balcony was supposed to be patrolled by Community Support Officers, they could not walk past his door more

than twice a day, leaving burglars all the time they needed to get access to his by now isolated flat. The idea that community and neighbours' eyes that provide the best type of security (Jacobs 1961) seems to work well in this context. Luckily nothing serious happened, as it did indeed on the North Peckham estate where young Damilola Taylor lost his life precisely in a semi-emptied block due for demolition but still being decanted at the time, alone and unseen. All these elements become worse, of course, because of John's vulnerability as a man with mental health problems: his voice and his case were only heard because of his brother, a very articulate and confident man.

The new element in this case is the presence of housing associations, and the selection policies this case study brought into sharp relief. During interviews with staff from various housing associations this practice was flatly denied, as it is on their literature and websites. The only one who spoke about it openly was the director of one of the most important housing associations in the country, who explained how fear of being given the worst tenants, or of the council withholding information about the tenants sent to them, means that HAs do try to avoid housing those who they perceive to be potentially troublesome tenants, whether it is due to antisocial behaviour issues, disability problems or histories of non-payment of rent. On the other hand, he said, councils fear HAs' cherrypicking and do tend to withhold information on those they want to get rid of. Neither organisation's staff will ever admit to it, but this is the game played by both, and it is not dissimilar from what schools and hospitals do. He argued that as soon as you insert competition and promote market behaviour between providers they will compete for the best assets, whether they would be standard, quiet, English speaking tenants, white middle class children or low-risk patients. He explained that HAs are not bound by duties of care in the same ways councils are, specifically by the Homeless Persons Act of 1977, and it is easier for them to evict difficult tenants, but then again councils are trying to get their tenants away from secured tenancy agreements and onto assured tenancies, which grant them less rights and make them easier to evict.

5.4 Wood Vale Estate: regenerating the plans

After looking at three examples of regeneration where the plans did not quite work out and resulted in either stalling, for the Aylesbury and Mountain estates, or

demolition with no reconstruction on the Wooddene, this final section considers the case of the Wood Vale Estate (WVE). Earmarked for demolition and rebuild, instead it ended up being successfully refurbished, substantially improving all properties on site, mixing up the community with flats for sale to new leaseholders and with minimum destruction for the residents. This was achieved by a very active TRA (Tenants and Residents Association) with the support of the tenants on the estate and the tenants' movement as a whole, as well as a number of professionals – lawyers, developers – who helped with technical matters.

As we settle in the tenants' hall office, which is a very, very small space with just about enough room for two chairs and a computer desk full of the paraphernalia of organizing groups – paper work, phones, schedules, lists of phone numbers, leaflets of various activities future and past – Andrew, secretary of the estate's TRA, tells me that a few years back the estate was due for being regenerated. It was the last one of a larger group of estates being redeveloped under a project called the Southwark Estates Initiative (SEI). Because of financial irregularities that had happened in the way the project was run on the other estates, by the time they got to the Wood Vale there was no money left; in fact there was a rather big deficit. The solution according to the council plan was to demolish the estate rather than refurbish it, and decant the residents out; this is the cheapest option, much cheaper than refurbishment, which involves actually fixing up the existing buildings.

The residents of the estate were not very happy about this. Andrew went along to meetings as a tenant representative and found out how the council was going to go about the demolitions and, crucially, was going to keep one hundred per cent of the receipts (the money made from the sale of the land). Usually, he explained, councils have to give 75% of receipts back to the government, but they could keep 100% of them if they could prove that the properties they were disposing of were unused, underused or ineffectually used. However, this is what he said was done in this case, and around the borough at the time, to deal with properties that were, in fact, occupied:

A: They were, but the way they got round doing it was that they used to...when you
are decanted, you receive an eviction notice, but it's all arranged that you've got

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another property to go to, but you still get an eviction notice, that you must be out of the property by such and such a day. Once you move out of the property, the property becomes empty: so on that basis, and this we have on tape, we'd got 'cause we use to tape all our meetings, we have a council officer saying, when the system was explained to everybody, once the eviction notices have been served on the properties, the properties are empty, and therefore they are unused. OK? Now soon as I heard that, I know that that wasn't...that wasn't right under the law

Andrew and the residents turned to a lawyer who specialised in, as he put it, 'fighting for the underdog'. By pooling their legal aid together, they raised enough money to pay the lawyers and get them to follow the case as a multi-action. In this way the fact that many people on the estate were unemployed or on very low incomes worked in their favour, and all that was needed was someone to coordinate it, which is what Andrew did. A sustained battle ensued, with Andrew and by then the whole tenants' movement on the side of the Wood Vale, lobbying to have the demolitions stopped. They presented formal complaints to full council, worked their way through the various levels of bureaucracy required to stop something like the demolition of an estate going ahead, all the way through to the executive and the arbitration committee meant to oversee these kinds of disputes. The process was, of course, political as well, with Labour, Lib Dems and Conservatives all playing their parts, making deals and working out allegiances and revenges from years ago.

After having gone through the district auditor, who refused to adjudicate the case, saying it was a matter of legal interpretation to be discussed in court, the council folded, as they were apparently not prepared to go to court over this, and the district auditor had essentially said that the case would have to be taken up by a court, therefore strengthening the tenants case. What this meant was that the plan to demolish the estate was halted; however the money for the refurbishment still had to be found, as the hole down which it had disappeared was too deep for it to ever come back from.

The story here becomes interesting, and show how inventiveness and initiative can prevail over pre-ordained structural constraints as apparently insurmountable as lack of funds. Residents contacted the Camberwell Society – a voluntary community based organisation – asking for help, and were put in touch with a developer who

visited the site and gave them pointers and suggestions on how to use the space they already had on the estate more efficiently. A plan was eventually put forward to the council, which involved converting spaces previously used as laundry rooms and garages into habitable flats. The garages idea had already been experimented, with success, in the borough of Wandsworth, and the laundry rooms worked out well too. The blocks were built in the fifties, and each of them had a few rooms, originally/structurally the same as the other flats, put aside as communal washing and drying facilities for the residents. Converting them only cost about £70K, and they could be sold at about £200K to £300K on the open market. This not only generated income but also went towards mixing the community, attracting private leaseholders without forcing out existing residents. On top of that, the property developers contacted by the residents suggested that a small block could have been redeveloped and be made into a much bigger block, once again generating income to be spent on the regeneration of the rest of the estate while also mixing up the community.

In total, Andrew explained, they raised 10 million pounds, which on top of the 15 million the council put in, got them the 25 million they needed to refurbish the estate. What is more, they had gone from a planned loss of 126 flats under the old council plans, to a loss of less than 20 under current projections. There would be 28 HA flats to replace the loss of those 20 flats, plus the increase brought by the new private ones; while Andrew still thought this was regrettable, as it was a loss of council housing to housing associations, he thought it was much better than any plans the council had come up with for them. The crucial element in this whole story, he explained, was that they were not simply arguing against something, but kept putting forward options and alternatives, until they found one that was viable for both residents and council.

The case of the Wood Vale estate is remarkable because it shows residents choosing clearly between demolition and refurbishment, and being prepared to argue their case and resist council's pressures for years, until they achieved what they wanted. The key to understand why they did it, according to many people on the estate, is the sense of community and belonging they were simply not prepared to lose, as they realise how rare it is. Interestingly, these opinions were expressed about a place that is still standing rather than harking back with nostalgia to some golden

age of when the estate was a lovely place in the past, which is a narrative repeated on many of the places I have worked with, especially by older residents, and extensively documented in the regeneration literature (see for example Watt 2007).

Here a current resident explains that:

> *A: People sort of come here and they think is not a particularly nice place, but then you realise…when you start actually living here you realise that it is a nice little place, there's lots of open space, crime is very very low, is very neighbourly, and you know is all the things that, you know, society isn't any more, you've still got it here, and you got all the..place is divided into little courtyards, and you usually got the little play area and you've got car parking, so you can see the two things that are most important to you, your kids and your car, and you know, it's the reality of it..some places go 'oh the kids!' but here you haven't got it, you know, and kids just run around this estate absolutely freely with no parental control whatsoever, the kids are just 'off we go', and they're gambling on the estate and doing all sorts of things, and you know, you know touch wood, nothing ever happens bad to kids and..crime is so low around here*

Many authors, including Power (2008) and Jacobs (1961) have argued that the best way of regenerating areas is through refurbishment and, at most, small scale demolitions, keeping in mind that communities and social networks that take many years to develop and establish themselves should be protected and nurtured rather than destroyed by large scale demolitions. This example confirms their theories, and also highlights how individual agency can and does influence the outcome of plans already drawn up by institutions. Even more, it is possible to argue that one of the reasons why things worked out differently on this estate than anywhere else in the area was because the tenants, and most certainly Andrew, refused an 'us and them' rhetoric that de-humanised the council and made it into a monolith. It was precisely by engaging with officers and councillors on as many levels as possible, but primarily as individuals to be reasoned with rather than members of categories such as 'unhelpful bureaucrats' or 'members of a specific/enemy party' that dialogue was kept open and different possibilities started to emerge.

In different occasions during fieldwork I have observed Andrew refusing to take stands against the council without immediately trying to work out something

with them that will break the impasse and produce a solution. Much as he knew what his group was fighting for during the regeneration of his estate, he was not prepared to cast anyone as a villain, himself as a victim, or descend into unnecessarily argumentative debates. He was ready to talk to all involved and showed an open mind to their ideas, demanding in return that they would to the same with him. Unlike Laura on the Aylesbury estate, who is a leaseholder and therefore not immediately affected by, for example, an estate wide transfer to a HA, Andrew is a tenant, so he would have been directly affected by demolition and decanting processes. Even so he represents a different style of negotiation to anything I have seen before in the tenants' movement, balancing determination to achieve his objectives with considerable strategic flexibility and a willingness to engage with other parties in a practical, pragmatic way to try and solve problems. He is also much younger than the average members of the tenants' movement, while still being very articulate and self-confident. As he works from home running his own business he was able to commit the time needed to coordinate the TRA during the whole regeneration process, and his group have certainly shown that plans can be changed, council decisions altered and communities can be 'kept' and nurtured rather than being dismembered and then re-built from scratch.

Image 13: Successful regeneration of the Wood Vale Estate. Photograph by the author.

Conclusion

By looking at various regeneration projects this chapter explored issues of value and waste, or more specifically processes of valuing and wasting. Through ethnography it traced how value can literally be stripped from a particular place, for example by stopping maintenance to it, or ripping off its pipes for metal, or added to an estate by refurbishing it. Some of my most embittered respondents have claimed that regeneration was about de-valuing the place where they lived and 'making it' into an ASBO/empty/crime ridden estate in order to make it easier and cheaper to make money out of it by selling it, demolishing, rebuilding it and selling the flats for huge profits. This logic clearly perceives what is valuable to developers, i.e. profit, as diametrically opposed to what is valuable to residents, i.e. a safe, secure and well-maintained place to live in. It also sees council officers as simply helpers to developers, all aiming to evict tenants and extract profits, in a similar vein to what Davis (1990) described as the alliance of capital and urban administrations in LA. This is not quite what the ethnography has shown: however, it is interesting to consider this as an alternative narrative about regeneration, revealing issues and

anxieties shared by many of those who go through it, often without much choice in the matter.

A theme that runs through the thesis, and especially the previous chapter and this one, is the idea of creative destruction (Marx 1848, Schumpeter 1949, Harvey 1985), which seems to underlie the orthodoxy of regeneration. By this I do not mean solely the way in which capital can and does grow through the destruction of the built environment (Horton 1997, Harvey 1989), but also the idea that in order to create a new, better society the old has to be swept away, wasted and re-made according to new, modern principles (Holston 1989). Crucially, the corollary of this idea is that what is wasted in the process does not matter. In the introduction to this chapter I have explained how this thesis can be seen as a challenge to that corollary, a detailed work of digging into the bin of that which has been wasted because it did not matter, and question its positioning as waste. What was this destruction creative of? The site of the late Wooddene, regularly maintained to look pristine in its emptiness epitomises this question. In the middle of zone two, in a city and a borough plagued by chronic housing shortages, how could land be left to lie unused for years? Should it be thought of as a 'waste' land? Is it, as Thompson (1979) originally argued, to be seen as a relational category, temporarily kept empty, made into waste, in order to enhance its value when market forces will make it possible to capitalise on it again?

Another key concept in this debate is the idea of community, a notoriously intractable concept, hard to pin down and reason with for social scientists: anthropologists Amit and Rapport (2002) eschew definitions and challenge the concept instead, which is a useful approach in an academic sense, and very fruitful as their analysis reveal, but hard to translate back on to my field site. 'Community' was the ultimate value of/for regeneration discourse; being a rather intangible reality, especially when compared to very tangible entities like buildings, blocks and walkways, it lent itself to a myriad of interpretations and was claimed and hailed as a solution, sometimes even 'the' solution for the problems regeneration allegedly tried to tackle, the value to be fostered and protected/created above all others. On the one hand, there were abstract ideas of community that could supposedly be promoted by better design, built or established through 'community development' or 'community building' exercises. Those ideas were shared by officers who saw community as

something to do, to act upon: in other words, for whom regeneration was a job. On the other hand there were residents who lived in the areas where the officers worked and had a rather more practical relationship to this 'community' concept, based on their daily interactions with their neighbours, the myriad of small things that made, for example, the idea of moving away from their area, not just their homes, not immediately appealing. If in the previous chapter much of this was veiled in nostalgia for times when 'things were different', this chapter has shown that communities exist on the estates now; John did not want to move and was upset that his neighbours had gone; the Aylesbury tenants voted against demolitions and the Wood Vale Estate ones fought very hard to have their homes refurbished and avoid being moved out at all.

One of the main problems with the idea of communities as something to 'do', 'build', 'develop' is that it tends to overlook the ways in which pre-existing communities are damaged, sometimes beyond repair, by processes like decanting, demolition and relocation. This is nothing new, of course, as Willmot and Young (1954) and Jacobs (1961) amongst many others have been arguing ever since large urban regeneration processes have been documented. Something interesting to consider, however, is where these ideas of communities to be 'built' instead of preserved come from. When talking with the executive member responsible for regeneration at the time of fieldwork, he openly explained how he grew up in a small, rural village where everyone knew each other; another highly placed official brought his own son along during a consultation to show him, in his own words, 'how the other half live'.

These two examples may point to the fact that even though communities clearly can and do exist on inner city estates, as the ethnographic evidence shows, if those in charge of making decisions are only familiar with a particular type of community, i.e. the village variety, and feel the estates are such a foreign place that they are worth showing their children as an example of strangeness and diversity, then it may be possible that they simply cannot 'see' communities even in places where they exist. The more highly placed these officers and executives are, the less likely they seem to know what a community looks like, or behaves, in a dense, inner-city housing estate. Those who are lower down the organisational ladder may well do, but they are not in a position to make decisions, as in the case of Claire, who

could see how families and a whole community was torn apart by relocations but could not do anything about it.

Without denying the structural and economic reasons why it may make sense, or be somehow convenient for officers to ignore communities that may not just exist, but also be vocally opposed to plans to regenerate their homes, it is also interesting to consider, from an anthropological perspective, how their narratives, their ideas of what a community looks like (a small village in the country) may make it impossible for them to recognise as community behaviour what tenants do when they organise themselves. One also needs to consider that the idea, or experience, of estates as sociable spaces revealed by this ethnography clashes head on with widespread views of inner-city blocks as quintessentially 'anti-social' (Hanley 2007), torn apart by crime, gangs and drugs (see various Panorama and Channel 4 specials, for example). The next chapter, which focuses on the tenants' movement on the estates of Southwark, engages specifically with these issues through ethnography and observation, and is about value and sociable behaviour in the estates.

Chapter Six –Value and people on the estates: the tenants' movement

The production and destruction of value and waste are a central concern of this thesis. If chapters Four and Five have considered processes of valuing and wasting at the level of the built environment, this chapter now looks at people and their everyday processes of value production on estates, at the individual and group level. It works closely together with the next one, Chapter Seven, which focuses on people and waste disposal, again at individual and group level. Through an ethnographic description of the tenants' movement and its many activities, the chapter shows the production of a particular type of value on the estates. When I say a particular type of value I mean that there are other networks operating in these places – kin based ones, friendships, religious organisations and churches, to name but a few. The choice to focus on the tenants movement stems from the way in which it creates and mediates relationships between people and the buildings and areas they inhabit and makes them observable, both in terms of meetings and activities one can attend and in the physical, embodied expressions of its work – a clean stairwell, tidy grounds, a well kept tenants' hall. Also, as it has been discussed in the introduction (Chapter One), many of the 'waste behaviours' that the literature (Lucas 2002, Hetherington 2004, Hawkins 2006, Gregson and Crewe 2003, Gregson 2007) has identified as taking place at household and individual levels where living arrangements are private – such as people living in terraced or semi-detached houses – happen instead at communal level on the estates, involving communal and semi-communal spaces and through members of the tenants movements.

More importantly still, by looking at people who know each other and care for one another and their environments, who spend time and energy trying to make their estates into nicer places to live in, the chapter documents processes of community production. Thus the text questions facile stereotypes of housing estates as either empty of social behaviour – people get inside their flat, shut the door and never come out – or simply full of the 'wrong' type of interactions, classified by the authorities as anti-social behaviour. In other words it presents an alternative, ethnographic view of a complex, multi-layered, value-rich social landscape to the images of valueless, antisocial wastelands housing estates usually are represented as. After a brief explanation of the nature and structure of the movement, the chapter

describes TRAs (Tenants' and Residents' Associations) meetings and walkabouts, the activities that TRAs organise, their issues with halls and communal spaces, and their need to exclude undesirable others. It then continues by discussing AGMs (annual general meetings), Area Forum and Tenants' Council meetings.

6.1 The tenants' movement

The chapter is dedicated to a description of the work of a group of people who call themselves, and are referred to by the council, as Southwark Tenants' Movement. By focusing on their work it tries to overcome the problems of definitions, which can so often be simplistic and even misleading, excluding and not saying just as much as they reveal. One could say that the tenants' movement is made up of a group of people who mainly live on housing estates – but not all of them do – and who are mainly – but by no means all – tenants of the council. The type of housing they live in is very diverse, from individual terraced houses to flats and maisonettes, some are modern and some very old, some are on estates and some are individual street properties. Most of the group's members are tenants of the council, but there are leaseholders and even some freeholders amongst them. What binds them together is a general interest in their homes and the running of their estates by the council – I have never met a TRA on an estate run by a Housing Association, but it is theoretically possible – and the fact that they are willing, for a variety of reasons and to a different extent, to give their time freely to take part in the many activities TRAs run. As in any other group, informal relationships cut across formal structures, both in terms of friendship and animosities, long term networks of support and ego clashes.

Structurally speaking, the building blocks of the tenants' movement are the tenants' and residents' associations, or TRAs. TRAs are groups of residents living on a council estate; these are usually council tenants, but it is quite common to have one or two leaseholders, referred officially as 'residents' (hence Tenants and Residents Associations) or even, sometimes, a freeholder in the group. I have never come across any private or housing associations' tenants in a TRA during my fieldwork, but it wouldn't be impossible, as there are no rules excluding them from membership. The number of members vary; they can be anything from four or five up to 20 or 30. It is usually the case that there is a core membership, usually represented by the

'executive committee', constituted by a chair, vice-chair, secretary and treasurer, and a number of committee members that fluctuate around this core, helping out and participating as and when they can. Even at this level, the structure of the group is hierarchical, in the sense that the executive committee is elected, they have duties to carry out but are allowed to speak for the group and represent it in other arenas.

In Southwark, in order to be recognised, and therefore funded, by the council, TRAs have to comply with certain minimum requirements, usually involving a set numbers of meetings per year, an Annual General Meeting (AGM), at which elections for the executive committee take place and accounts are presented to the group, and a constitution that makes the group accountable to the estate and non-discriminatory. Their activities vary from organising trips and activities for residents to raising awareness of tenants' rights, from liaising with the council to campaigning for better accommodation and services for their members. They usually meet in tenants' halls, but not always; they are usually short of funds, but not always; they work with the council sometimes, and sometimes, as we have seen in the previous chapters, fight against it. Officers and councillors can be both a TRA's best allies and their most vicious enemies.

The structure of the tenants' movement is hierarchical, starting from individual TRAs, where members elect an executive committee made up of chair, vice-chair, treasurer and secretary who are then entitled to speak and to an extent make decisions on behalf of the group as a whole. The individual TRAs then elect members to attend Area Fora, where decisions at the area level are taken, and where representatives are elected to attend Tenants' Council, the highest body in the tenants' movement, with whom Southwark Council Executive liaises. From tenants' council, some reps are elected to sit on arbitration and funding committees; these oversee the Council's own spending plans, and adjudicate high level disputes between the council and individual tenants when they reach arbitration. Let us now see how this all works out in practice.

6.2 TRA meetings

The Silver Spring TRA currently (at the time of fieldwork) met in a children centre, essentially a nursery, because they had lost their hall during a previous wave

of regeneration in the borough, Sue explained to me as I helped her make tea and coffee for everyone in the small kitchen at the back. At first the council promised them that they could use another hall, but when that one got demolished too, they were left with nowhere to meet. They were lucky to be able to use the nursery at all, she said, and that was only possible because she volunteered in the nursery during the day, so they allowed her to use the centre in the evenings. Sue was an old white woman, almost 80 years old, and she had been on this tenants' association for 18 years. She moved to the Silver Spring estate from another estate nearby, which was itself demolished during the regeneration of the Five Estates in the early '90s (See Chapter Four). She was happy with where she lived: she told me she used to have a four bedroom flat and now she only had two bedrooms, but her husband had died and her children had moved, so she was happy with what she had.

It was very cold in the room. They could not turn the heating on in the evening, so everyone sat there with their coats on, and I kept mine on too. This looked like a serious meeting; people looked like they had things they needed to get on with, work to do, and not much time for small talk. There were eight people sitting around a few small tables that had been pushed together in the middle to make a large one. It was difficult to guess ages, but they all seemed above 50 years old at least, with a few of them, including Sue, considerably older than that. The chair, Brenda, was a black woman; Sue was white, the vice-chair was a black man and the other members were all white apart from one black woman. Just as I settled in I was asked to introduce myself and explain why I was there to the members of the TRA; they were very polite, some agreed to meet me individually, and then they asked me to leave. This group was the only one who did not let me stay to observe their meetings, and also the only ones I have observed who did not have any council officer sitting in their meetings. It took me a while to understand it, but TRAs can be suspicious of strangers and fiercely protective of their activities, especially from the council.

Why should this be the case? Why would a TRA be suspicious? Well, to begin with many of its members had been through various waves of regeneration in the borough, which as we have seen in Chapter Four can generate anxiety and resentment amongst tenants. Their hall had been taken, for example, as Sue had just explained to me, and they had probably experienced first hand some of the conflicts

and tensions described at length in chapter four. What is more, as the rest of the chapter will show, officers can try to manipulate decisions and misrepresent information for a variety of reasons that will be tentatively considered in the conclusion, making it reasonable for some groups at least to try and preserve a degree of privacy and autonomy over their meetings. The Oak TRA, on the other hand, was only too happy for me to sit in on their long meetings, and they were rather flattered by my attention. There were usually about four or five residents around the table, mainly black and younger than average when compared to local groups. There were also at least two, and sometimes up to four, external observers, including council officers, councillors and myself.

What does a TRA do? The meetings themselves can vary to a great degree, but they tend to happen around once a month, and they all involve going through the items set out in an agenda that has been decided by the chair and the secretary. This agenda, and the minutes of the previous meeting, will have been written, printed and then distributed by the secretary to all the members of the group. In fact, it is very common to find secretaries in the tenants' resource rooms, where computers and printers are available to tenants' reps, busy writing and printing minutes for their group, something that can easily take away an afternoon, if not an entire day.

The issues discussed vary, from maintenance of the estate grounds to activities the TRA is organising, from financial matters to networking with other TRAs, as it is described in the rest of this chapter. By far the most common issues to be addressed, however, revolve around cleaning: standards of cleaning in corridors, lifts and other communal areas; complaints about cleaners; complaints about other residents' dealings with waste and recycling behaviour; issues with missed collection of waste and bulky items abandoned on the estate. In fact, cleaning matters constitute such an important part not just of what TRAs do, but of what residents care about, that they will be treated in depth in the next chapter, which will focus specifically on issues of cleaning and waste.

Maintenance issues raised in the meetings are usually the result of tenants' own observations of what goes on in their immediate surroundings, such as corridors, lifts, stairs and so on. These observations are usually addressed to the estate's Housing Officer (HO), who works for the council and usually attends the TRA

meetings. Often it is these comments and remarks that constitute the starting points for the 'estate walkabouts', attended by tenants and HOs, which are described in the next section. For now, let us just note how the monthly TRAs meetings have many functions beyond what is strictly on their agendas, allowing residents to come together, get to know each other, work together and most importantly producing value and communities on the estates.

6.3 Estates' walkabouts

Oak, January 2008

It was cold and raining. I was waiting for Danielle, a resident of the Oak estate who sits on the TRA, and George, their housing officer, to go on the monthly estate's walkabout. These walks are meant to give tenants and housing officers a chance to monitor the state of their estate, working together to improve standards. The activity consisted of literally walking around the entire estate, in the communal areas that are neither public, in the sense of belonging to the streets surrounding the estate, nor private, with the definition of private usually starting at somebody's front door if not always. For example, if a front garden, which is meant to be private, in the sense that it belongs to the tenant and it is their responsibility to look after and maintain, is left to fill up with rubbish and thus becomes a hazard/nuisance for other residents (attracting vermin and smelling, mainly) than the residents may point this out to the HO, who will write to the tenant to get the issue resolved. Things are not always that easy, of course, and it can take years to resolve such issues, but that is how things are meant to be.

The route we took on our walk was negotiated between Danielle, who is an experienced tenant rep and long-term resident of the estate, and George, the Housing Officer. George seemed happy enough to go along the route that Danielle chose, acknowledging her experience and knowledge of the area. Danielle explained to me that because of high staff turnover, and various policies requiring staff to gain experience in more than one area/estate, not to mention promotion of 'the good ones', HOs always know a lot less than tenants, at least of those who have lived in an estate a long time and taken an interest in it. As another tenant once told me, it is very important that it is tenants who decide where to go and inspect with the HO. "It is

you who needs to say to them 'we're going to look at this over here, and then at that over there'!" However, in this particular case there didn't seem to be any conflict over the route; in fact, Danielle trusted George to go up and inspect the stairs and landings on the higher levels of the estate (dwellings are arranged over two floors connected by stairs and passages, all communal spaces as defined above) by himself, while we waited downstairs. She could not go up the stairs easily because of a bad knee, and she walked rather slowly.

On the couple of occasions I walked up with George, the impression I got was of dirt and shabbiness everywhere, bad smells especially in the dark passageways. It got worse when we started inspecting the bin enclosures, the rooms where the big paladin bins sit at the bottom of the rubbish chutes that serve the upper levels of the estate. Danielle and George walked into every single enclosure, checked and then came out, remarking if anything needed to be done. Most of the time they agreed things were Ok. Most of the time I could not bear to even walk into the bin rooms for the smell. By the end of my fieldwork, however, I had learned the difference between shabbiness, which cannot be fixed without refurbishing the entire estate, and is not what those walks were about, and issues that could be raised with maintenance contractors and cleaners to be fixed as one-offs, which was the point of these inspections. The smells could not be helped, and one just learned to live with them.

We continued on our inspection moving on to the outer areas of the estate; we had started in the middle and were working our way outwards. We stopped by a ground floor flat with a beautiful creeper growing up the wall. It was January, so there were only a few leaves on the branches, but it was easy to imagine the glorious picture of this plant in full bloom covering the wall. The tenant was on the porch/balcony; as we walked by I asked her about the plant, and expressed my admiration. George, however, had other ideas, asking in a rather abrupt manner how long the plant has been there, and "Who's given it permission?" The tenant replied the plant had been there a good long while and the previous Housing Officers never complained. George was concerned, he explained to me later, about the damage that ivy and many other creepers cause to rendering and mortar, but he decided to let the issue go, for now, and only noted it down in his records. The tenant did not look happy, and gave me a bad look too. Plants – and their leaves! – as well as animals –

and their faeces! – could be incredibly contentious issues and made frequent appearances in discussions, agendas and often arguments between tenants, or between tenants and council officers. Social and ecological worlds met and clashed in the inner city too, not just out in the country (DeSilvey 2006).

Finally, as we were reaching the end of our round, we came across a drain in the ground, which Danielle congratulated George for having had fixed. It had not been working for a while, and when it rained the area flooded quite badly. As it was raining then but the drain was working properly there was no water sitting anywhere, which pleased Danielle. Cold and drenched, I said my goodbyes and retreated home, arranging to meet Danielle for the next walk the following month. I would have liked to interview her, ideally in her home, but she explained to me that she was her husband's main carer; he was not very well and did not like having strangers in the house. Somewhere else then, maybe? Well, she was really busy; she would try and give me a call. In the end it never did happen. It had taken us about two hours to walk through the estate, and while George obviously got paid for this, I could not help but admiring Danielle's commitment and generosity with her time, not to mention the intimate knowledge of the estate she lived on.

Golden Winter, February 2008

This time I walked with Louise and Tony, residents and members of Golden Winter TRA, and Phil, their Housing Officer. Golden Winter was a much smaller estate than the Oak, made up of terraced houses arranged around a close, which was the only communal space as such. Technically, Phil was no longer 'their' Housing Officer, due to a restructuring of his department, and this was his last walk on this estate. Louise and Tony were not at all pleased about this, or about the 'new woman' they were about to get. I have heard stories from other estates where residents protested when 'their' Housing Officers were changed and sometimes even managed to get them back. Being able to rely on their HO was clearly important to them, and as relationships take time to build, disruptions were not welcome. As my fieldwork progressed, I realised more and more how important it was to have a good relationship with one's HO, and by the end of it I could almost tell if an estate had a good rapport with their HO by the way the grounds looked. It is not something easy to pinpoint exactly, of course; rather it is akin to what Bloch (1991) and Jenkins

(1994) refer to as non-linguistic knowledge that is borne out of experience and is not usually verbalised, and which an anthropologist can only acquire through participant observation.

The first issue Louise and Tony discussed with Phil was an overgrown hedge, situated along the perimeter of their estate and the cycling path next to it. Their main concern about it was not so much on the side of their estate, but for people walking on the cycle path who would not feel safe because the hedge was too tall and impeded visibility, making the cycle path too enclosed and potentially dangerous. Phil said he could not do anything about it; they would have to raise it with the 'Visual Audit Team', as it was their job. When I first heard housing officers reply in this way, I remember being rather surprised. A few months later, however, I had learned enough of the system to know that Phil could not have 'raised' this job himself to the other team. It had to be a resident doing it, or the order would not go through the system. The initial impression – "it's incredible to compare the council's disjointed, often schizophrenic system with the common sense, holistic thinking of those like Louise and the other TRAs I've seen" (field notes, 24.02.08) – was thus tempered through learning how the council's bureaucracy worked. Long term residents, especially those who have been active in the movement a long time, usually know how the system works, or more importantly know enough to keep on top of the continual changes to rules and structures, not to mention high staff turnover, to keep their group and estate going.

During fieldwork, for example, housing officers (HOs) in the borough had their department restructured, and their job description and functions changed, at least twice. There were also three different Residents Involvement Officers (RIOs) on my own estate. It was so difficult to keep up with the various changes and reorganizations that there was a running joke about me amongst other tenants that "oh, so now it takes a PhD to understand how this system works then!" This was obviously meant as an amusing comment, but it is quite significant: it did take me around three to four months to find the my way into the meetings and networks that connected the council, tenants movements and various community groups operating on and around the estates. At the time, finding out about those people and their networks was my highest priority, and I was working on it full time, so one could argue that this sort of knowledge is by no means easily available to all residents,

which in turns questions the representativeness of those movements, community groups and, as a consequence, the council public engagement strategy as a whole.

As we moved on around the estate, Tony asked about a metal case/box fixed to the pavement, containing apparently electrical cables and fuses, but seemingly not working any more, considering the dust and rust accumulated on and around it. What was it? Was it working, should it be fixed, or if not could someone remove it please? Phil had no idea what it was, or who may have put it there, but wrote it down in his notes and said he would investigate. At the end of the walk a report on what needed to be done, as noted down by Phil, was signed by Louise and Tony. In a few days they would receive a copy of it, after Phil had raised the jobs identified in the walkabout, listed with a likely completion day, for Louise and Tony to monitor and report back to the rest of the TRA. On a small estate like the Golden Winter the walk took about an hour, and the monitoring of repairs that Louise and Tony would certainly keep up with, as they always did, shouldn't take much longer. On estates of over 400 units spread over different blocks, this procedure (walkabout and successive monitoring) might take anything up to a few days, as another tenant, an OAP from the Long Summer estate, proudly explained to me.

The amount of time these tenants devote to their estates denoted a care for, and commitment to, their homes and their areas that did not fit with the logic that equates private property with care, or the argument that it is only through ownership that people can feel an attachment and a sense of belonging to an area. This was the argument that Thatcher had used to promote the Right to Buy policy she made into law in the Housing Act of 1980 – but let us remember that the Labour party did not abolish it during the twelve years they were in power after Blair's victory in 1997. Both parties, argue Jones and Murie (2006) were supportive of the policy and the alleged merits of promoting ownership to make people care about their homes and communities. From this point of view then council estates, and publicly owned housing in general, necessarily become symbolic sites of anti-social behaviour, if caring and the right kinds of sociability can only be obtained through private property.

One could instead turn the argument on its head, and instead say that tenants' behaviour on the estates is a form of caring for the common good, the *res publica* that

was at the core of ideas of democracy and current society as we have inherited it from Greek philosophy. The idea that a collectivity may be able to care for common property and resources has been so deeply undermined by Garrett Hardin's theory of the tragedy of the commons (1968) as to be currently counterintuitive. Hardin's argument was that, to put it briefly, resources held communally were destined to be overused to the point of exhaustion, and that private property was the only way to avoid this 'tragedy'. This line has been enthusiastically adopted and applied by a variety of disciplines - economics, political economy, conservation and so on - to the point that it took a Nobel Prize winner economist, Elinor Ostrom (1990), to point out what anthropologists had known for a very long time. The people that anthropology has traditionally studied – calling them 'primitive', 'tribal', 'underdeveloped' and so on – had been able to hold on to and successfully manage their commons for a very long time, usually until they came into contact with western capitalism through various forms of colonialism, at which point their commons were often privatised and destroyed by external influences (Ostrom 1990). Hann's (1998) review of anthropological approaches to property relations shows the richness that our discipline can bring to this subject and highlights the importance of distinguishing between public property and common property, which is usually regulated by the people who use it in order to avoid precisely what Hardin posits. From this perspective then holding common resources, or value, communally is not only possible, but a potentially succesful strategy with a very long tradition – one just needs to consider the countryside that supported English peasants before the enclosures began, for example.

Furthermore, spending time with the tenants walking and working on their estates brought into question another aspect of the equation that usually sits with private property and 'appropriate' social behaviour, namely the idea of the 'village'. The rural villages that dominate English ideals of 'escaping' the madness of the city (see for example *Escape to the Country*, *Grand Design* and *Location Location Location*) are often portrayed, as in the television programmes mentioned, as havens of neighbourliness and sociability, symbols of a lost time of true, authentic relations on a 'human' scale. The fact that the reality of the countryside may not be quite related to what city dwellers idealise has been explored by Williams (1973) in depth, of course. We may also want to consider that post offices, pubs and local schools are under constant threat in many villages for a number of reasons, that public transport is

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often patchy and problematic and that many villages become second homes for wealthy city dwellers while locals cannot afford to live there (Watt 2009).

Considering all this, one could then say tentatively that the kind of sociable behaviour observed on the estates could not compare so negatively to the idealised, but maybe not so ideal, sociability of 'a-social' suburbs and empty villages (Watt, 2009). Of course, this was already observed by sociologists in the fifties (Willmot and Young, 1957) when East Enders, and many others, where relocated to outer urban areas, suburbs and countryside, and it turned out that by and large they much preferred and missed their old urban environment, if not their actual lodgings. The reality of complex sociable behaviours and commitment to the public good found on housing estates may thus have to be reassessed and readjusted in light of the activities of its residents, as the next section will also show in detail.

6.4 Trips, activities and tenants' halls

"Do you know how to put pictures in a Word document by any chance? How do I bring them in, I have them on this, but how do they go across?" My computer skills, nothing exceptional for my generation, were greatly appreciated by people old enough to have lived most of their lives without needing to use Word or Photoshop, and were very useful in the tenants' resource room. Tenants' reps come here to use the computers and print out leaflets to advertise their activities, newsletters to keep their estates up to date, minutes and agendas for their meetings. Paula was trying to import a photograph she had in an email into a leaflet she was designing to advertise a one-day trip to Southampton. She was not very confident in her skills, but learned very quickly, and in an hour or so of playing with it we had a pretty good leaflet, which she then proceeded to print and laminate, ready to be distributed and displayed around her estate by other residents.

Advertising the trip was only a small part of its organisation, of course; there was the hiring of the coaches, choosing the destination, getting people to turn up on time, making sure you did not leave anyone behind, finding activities the residents could all enjoy while they were away and so on. "Blackpool is a good one, there is something to do for everyone there, people are always happy when we go there", said

Sonia, who worked in the resource room as staff but was also active in her own TRA. "Make sure you get them to pay for it, it doesn't matter if you don't need the money 'cause you have funds, make them pay when they book or if it rains on the day they just won't turn up", volunteered Louise. These trips were often very heavily subsidised, and residents only had to pay a couple of pounds to go to places like seaside resorts for the day. Sometimes they would go on shopping trips, to retail outlets like Ashford, or even abroad to Calais, to "stock up on the cheap", especially before Christmas.

It is not only older residents who take advantage of these trips; sometimes grandparents take their grandchildren with them, of course, but there are also trips specially thought out for kids of the estates, when TRAs try to offer them things their parents would normally not be able to afford, especially if they have a number of children and tight finances.

> *Two pounds a head, we've been...taken them horse riding, which would cost about twenty quid each, plus travelling, transport, you know they paid two quid, skiing, went go-karting at the ...in Streatham, it was forty quid ahead, they paid two pound, ehm...we went to the isle of White, to Hastings a couple of times, to Brighton, took them to safari parks, Battersea farm, Gulliver's world of adventures, is an under 13 theme park, a really really nice place for kids, is outside Milton Keynes, really really nice place, we go there every year.*

This last case is, however, an exception rather than the norm. Donal, the person speaking here, is the treasurer of an extremely active TRA that has managed to hire a fundraiser, who is able to direct the right 'funding streams' towards the group and thus generate substantial amounts of revenue, including her own salary. In other estates I have heard of chocolate eggs being distributed to resident's children for Easter, and sometimes book tokens for Christmas, if there is money available.

In fact, most TRAs managed with very little money: some of it came from the council and was proportional to the number of residents living on an estate. It used to come directly from an allowance that tenants paid in their rents, as an older TRA rep explained to me, while now it came from the council, but really it was the same money.

"The problem is, you get money for the tenants you have, but that has to cover activities you run for the whole estate, leaseholders, housing associations, private tenants and all, you know?" "Don't you get money from the HA for this kinds of things?" I asked. "Only at the very beginning, then they change, they lose interest…"

Sometimes money could come from one-off funds from the council, through various schemes for community development the TRAs might apply for. However, most of a TRA's revenue was generated through their tenants' hall, if they had one. This was a sore point for a number of TRAs who had their halls demolished when their estates were regenerated, and never managed to get them back (see Chapters Four and Five). For those who still had them, however, halls represented a brilliant community space. While the activities that were run in the halls helped funding occasional trips and outings, they also brought people together on a more regular basis.

Bingo at the Fall Estate tenants' hall, on a Sunday evening, was a good example of this. It was a bit of an institution, I was told when they invited me. People would come not just from the Fall, but also from estates nearby. The hall would fill up quickly, and sometimes people would have to be turned away because there was no space; more often than not though, players just squeezed in a bit on their tables to accommodate latecomers. The game generated considerable amounts of money, even once the winnings were taken out of the equation; this had helped refurbish the hall itself with new windows and secure shutters, allowing the safe storage of equipment and making residents feel safer about using their own hall.

Halls are also hired for private functions, such as birthdays, christenings, 21st birthday parties and so on, as Valerie explained to me while going through her books, where she had methodically recorded the income generated by her hall for the past few years, as the treasurer of the TRA. "I am a bit old fashioned, I don't do that computer stuff, but they are trying to teach me to. With me it's all here, all in the book". Valerie is the grandmother of a large extended family: she came from Trinidad when she was very young, and still remembers being the only black person on her estate, let alone her block. She remembers the suspicion, sometimes the racism she encountered, but has clearly managed to overcome all this, as she is now

responsible for the finances of her TRA. It takes time "I go to the bank, sometimes once a week, my grandchildren come with me if I am carrying too much money"; she also produces a report of the accounts every month for the TRA meetings.

Gambling and partying aside, tenants halls were often used during the day to run nurseries, "keep fit" classes and dancing groups, just to name a few. In the evenings, if volunteers and projects were set up, some would run youth clubs to keep children off the streets and offer them a safe space to socialise. By and large, the more active the TRA, the more activities were run in a hall. The only activity I found to be controversial was the hiring of halls to churches. While this made sense financially, as churches could hire halls for an entire year, guaranteeing a stable cash flow, some TRAs felt it was wrong to turn their halls into religious spaces, mainly out of concern for other religious groups: "If we give it to one of them, then why not all of them? And then what?" Some did it and some did not, but church groups were definitely major user groups of halls, when they were allowed to.

Trips away, bingo nights, church meetings and all the other activities that TRAs run are a form of regular sociality on the estates, examples of various communities existing and coming together in these places, which far from empty and waste-land like are starting to look engaged, socially active, value-rich places. Obviously, things did not always run smoothly, and with money and responsibility came the possibility of mismanagement and corruption. Stories were told of treasurers who had run away with thousands of pounds, of computers disappearing, of unlicensed bars run in halls for profit by a small minority. These things might well have happened, however they seemed to have been occasional blips in a movement that tried hard to run halls, activities and trips for the benefit of a larger community. Of course, a community of valued insiders tends to imply the existence of de-valued outsiders, and the tenants' movement is no exception, as the next section will show.

6.5 De-valued others: drunks, kids and homeless people

Michael lived on the White Birch estate, and had been on his TRA for years. Originally from St. Lucia, he had made himself at home on the White Birch, he explained as he proudly walked me around the estate. "Things have got better in the

last few years", he said. We bumped into the estates' cleaners, whom he knew by name, and they asked him for the keys to a fenced off area of the estate, so they could clean it before the Christmas break. Michael arranged to drop them off at their office and we moved on. As we walked he showed me what he had achieved on 'his' estate, as he called it: residents' parking spaces clearly demarcated in the courtyard, garages allocated fairly to residents for their right purpose, which he explained was storing a car rather than storing other possessions, or using them as warehouses for small businesses. The things he was most proud of, however, had big shiny locks on them. "They're from Italy, they're strong, you know?" he said whilst showing me an iron cupboard locked up with such a lock: inside there was a water pipe that only residents, who had a key, could now use.

Michael did not like non-residents coming onto 'his' estate. His most recent achievement had been convincing the council to install a metal railing around a grassy area at the outer edge of the estate, bordering on to the main road, just next to a bus stop. This was because a group of men, whom he described as homeless and alcoholics, used to sit on the grass and drink, eat, smoke and chat, during the day and sometimes late into the night. In the summer, he explained to me, they would stay out there for the entire night, drinking and then urinating on the trees. The purpose of the railing was two-fold: not only did it stop the men from accessing the grassy area; it also stopped from sitting on the low wall that went around the grass, which used to be a handy spot for them to sit on if the grass was wet. His next project, now that the fence was up, was to have a set of swings and children' play unit, and the benches around it, removed from their current location at the back of the estate (and, incidentally, the back of his flat) to the park area in the middle of the estate, well away from residents' windows. The problem, as he put it, was not so much the small children who were meant to use the swings, or their mothers who were meant to sit on the benches. It was the older kids who sat on the benches in the evenings, drinking and taking drugs, he said, and then going up the stairs to "relieve themselves", as he put it, on residents' doorsteps.

Along similar lines, a resident of a smaller estate proudly described to me how she had had some homeless people removed from a bin room they used to sleep in on her estate. First she had managed to convince the council to remove the roof of the

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structure, turning it effectively into an open air space that offered no shelter at all. On top of that, she got the council to install a fake camera, with a light, so that potential 'invaders' would be deterred from sleeping there or taking drugs, as she put it. At no point did she wonder, for example, who this people may be, or why would they choose to sleep in a bin enclosure? Neither did she say anything about contacting the homeless unit, a service offered by the council to those in need of emergency accommodation, something I knew she was aware of.

Mike Davis (1990) describes similar instances of 'anti-social' landscapes, where architectural features are used to make urban spaces as unfriendly and uninhabitable as possible for certain kinds of undesirable people, usually poor, ethically different, homeless or a combination of all three. Skeggs (1997) and Evans (2006) have both found shame to be characteristic of working class people who work hard to be seen as respectable by both those around them, working class people who they would see as their own community, and by middle class people who they perceive to be different – by no means always right or deserving of their material advantages – but hierarchically superior to them. In this context it could be that the anxieties and general negativity I observed displayed towards 'others' that were drunks, drug takers or homeless may point to an attempt to retain respectability, and therefore value in themselves and their own communities, by distancing themselves from individuals and groups that my respondents perceived as inferior and potentially 'polluting'.

Douglas (1966) argued that the pollution behaviours cannot be understood in isolation but have to be read in the context of a society whole set of beliefs. From this perspective it is not difficult to imagine that people who spend their lives caring for their homes and estates may feel threatened by individuals who have no homes and engage in activities or habits that are perceived as morally reprehensible by most members of their – working class – communities. These conflicts over who can be admitted into the 'community', and therefore cared for, and who could and should be kept outside of it constitute useful reminders of the fact that sociality is always qualified, value is forever contested at every level, and there is always someone less respectable, someone to be avoided. If enormous amounts of energy, labour and investment are spent building and maintaining specific networks and community

relations it is to be expected that anyone seen as threatening them would be kept outside, literally and symbolically. Conversely, the next section focuses on a TRA's effort to attract different, more desirable categories of residents.

6.6 Attracting value: young(ish) people wanted

It was early afternoon, and I was going to meet the Sunny Park TRA, just before their AGM. An AGM, or Annual General Meeting, involved lots of work and planning, which would usually begin a couple of months beforehand. The date would have to be set, a venue would be booked, council officers and councillors would be invited, or at least notified. Leaflets had to be designed, printed and distributed: this was crucial, as an AGM could not be valid if residents had not been informed about it and given four weeks notice, through notices posted, usually hand delivered by TRA members, to each one of them, through their door. Also, accounts would have to be audited by an external auditor, amendments to the constitution would have to be decided, and residents would need to be found who are prepared to stand as chair, vice-chair, secretary and treasurer, in case the current executive would want to stand down. All this was done well in advance, and usually by the time the big day would come TRA members were rather exhausted: of course all this work would be carried out on top of their normal everyday jobs and/or caring responsibilities.

My contact with this group was Margaret, a white woman in her sixties. She worked as a cleaner in private houses, mainly in the southern, wealthier part of the borough. I met her on the edge of her estate, on a pavement. She had tried to explain to me where the hall was, but by the time she had said "turn left when you hit the second walkway, then onto the split level corridor...' I had started worrying I would get lost, and asked if she could meet me outside, on the ground level, instead. The walk to the hall was indeed rather complicated. Sunny Park is one of those '60s estates, with very tall blocks, on stilts, with different levels, walkways, corridors and lifts. However, as I followed Margaret along, and we walked past residents and kids hanging out on the stairwells, I had the impression that this was probably confusing only at the beginning, and then people got used to it, and it would be just like navigating any other space.

I could hear children screaming way before we reached the actual hall. They were having a great time, there was a group of young volunteers working on a project with the TRA to engage kids through creative workshops, and they ran around happily, their clothes stained with paint, with the volunteers steering and somehow trying to control them, while seeming to have fun themselves. This was quite unusual for an AGM: they were usually adult-only events, and in fairness tended to be rather boring, formal meetings, where elections of the committee take place, accounts are presented and constitutional amendments are tabled, discussed and voted upon. Children might come and, if there were funds, there might have been a face painter to entertain them while their parents sat in the meeting, but that was usually all. This creative art project, Margaret explained to me, had been a godsend; not just because the kids had something fun to do, but because their parents had taken an interest in the TRA, which was something Margaret and Richard, who was introduced to me as the treasurer of the TRA, were extremely keen on.

"We need younger people. Look at us, we're a bunch of bloody geriatrics!" Richard declared as he showed me a photo of the TRA members taken in the summer. "Look, there's even a zimmer frame!" I wouldn't have put it that way, obviously, but he did have a point, his group was not young. "It's not like we want teenagers on, wouldn't hurt mind you, but under 60 or 70 would be a start". They had changed the time they met, so that people who worked during the day could attend; as the current members were all retired and their schedules were more flexible, they used to meet in the afternoon, but they moved the meetings to the evenings. They had gone to great lengths for this AGM to be as attractive to young families as it could be. The children had been there since after school with the young volunteers, and during the AGM itself they had hired a magician. "She's not cheap, but she's meant to be real good!" Margaret said to me. They were also going to be having food, so that parents, especially mothers, Margaret explains, did not start going home because they had to cook dinner.

Attracting new members and remaining a meaningfully representative group is a problem for many TRAs. AGMs do have a minimum quorum to be valid; usually 20 people have to attend, but as Richard said to me, if those 20 are all over 70 years old and white that is not really ideal on an estate that is mainly made up of young

families and has a strong BME presence. They were hoping this one will be different, and although I could not stay for the evening, as I had another TRA meeting to go to, it seemed like it might well have been. As I was leaving Richard was sitting by the front door, taking people's details (this is crucial, so that they would be able to contact them and invite them to the next meetings) and handing out raffle tickets. People were coming in, not in their hundreds but it was a steady trickle, and they all looked remarkably younger than those in the photos he showed me earlier: not a zimmer frame in sight...

6.7 Area Forum: structures, categories and conflict

We now move on, and up, to the next layer of the Tenants' Movement, which geographically speaking interests 'areas' of the borough, as opposed to individual estates. At the time of writing there were eight of these areas, and each comprised roughly from 10 to 20 estates, even though not all estates had operating TRAs, and not all TRAs sent elected delegates to their forum. As the following descriptions will show, a forum had its own dynamics and ways of working that went beyond its formal remit, which was simply to discuss housing matters. Forum meetings brought together committed individuals, who worked hard for their TRA and who were then elected as representatives to the forum, with the right and responsibility of representing the group, and the entire estate and its issues, to the Area Housing Manager. On top of their monthly commitments to their own TRA, forum delegates would meet and discuss papers from the council around once every two months, requiring a considerable increase in the time and energy they committed to the Tenants Movement.

Sam, from the Burgess Estate, and Lenny, from Kenneth House Estate, waved at me from the table, and invited me to sit with them. Valerie, of the Fall Estate, was also smiling at me, happy to see me there. It was the first time I got to sit around the table as a member of the forum, instead of observing from the sidelines. It was going be the first time I could speak and ask questions like everyone else, as I was an elected representative, sent by my newly inaugurated TRA to the Peckham Area Forum. There were about 15 people in total around the table; 12 were delegates, and three were council employees. The delegates were mainly women, slightly more of

them white than BME, and on average above 60 years of age. The officers, on average younger than the delegates, two of them black and one white, were from the Area Housing Office. They were part of the Residents' Involvement team: their job description was to help set up and support TRAs, and to foster participation and involvement by the tenants. In this meeting one of them, a younger white man, was taking the minutes, effectively acting as a secretary for the group. The other, a more senior black woman, was here to make sure the forum acted legally and within the rules. She spoke without going through the chair – which was what everyone else had to do – and her words were taken very seriously. The chair of the forum and the vice-chair were elected amongst the residents. Both of them were black men. They both spoke to the senior council woman in a deferential manner. There was no treasurer, as the forum is an advisory body and does not have a budget. The third person from the council was the area manager, also a black man, whose job was to report back on housing issues in the area to the forum. While TRAs could choose not to have council employees present at their meetings, as the Silver Spring TRA does, for example, Area Forum meetings were effectively staffed by the council, specifically by the Residents' Involvement Team.

Categories are important in the tenants' movement. Some categories, however, are 'more important than others': in a forum the 'relevant' categories are tenants, meaning those who rent a property directly from the council, and leaseholders, who have bought a lease on a property under the right to buy scheme, or off of somebody who had done so. Tenants of private landlords, whether renting entire dwellings or living in bedsits in multiple occupation, or tenants of housing associations, are not mentioned; neither are freeholders, who exist on estates albeit as a small minority. The hard-to-define group of people who sublet, some officially and some less so, or who 'house sit' sometimes for years on behalf of tenants who might have moved abroad, are ignored: everyone knew they existed, even though they are obviously hard to define or quantify. Area Fora – there are around eight in the borough – are the last arena in which the two categories of tenants and leaseholders can work together. Each forum then elects tenants delegates, to go to tenants' council, and leaseholders' delegates, to go to leaseholders' council. However, leaseholders' council had been inactive for many years; no-one on the forum could tell exactly since when, but they were sure that at the moment the leaseholders did not

meet as a group in the way the tenants' council did. The tenants-leaseholders dichotomy thus inscribed in the tenants' movement could be seen as an index of the structural relation between the council, as a landlord, and its tenants, which started surfacing in forum meetings, as the next section will show.

Rents increases and faulty minutes

One of the issues that area forums were asked to express an opinion on were the yearly increases in rent and service charges charged by the council to both tenants and leaseholders. The recommendations of the forum, which invariably stood against rent increases above inflation, were forwarded to tenants' council; they would then pass them onto the executive, who routinely ignored the recommendations and increased both rents and service charges without taking any notice of the tenants' opinions. The explanation usually presented by the council through the Area Manager was that if the council refused to increase the rents by the amount set by central government as a minimum, they would lose subsidies for the same amount, which they would then have to recoup from rents anyway. Tenants' opinions were thus solicited, collected and then ignored, in an interesting parallel with the consultation processes explored previously (see Chapter Four especially). However, if every year each single forum voted against the increases, as the council's own archives showed; and if every year the tenants' council agreed to pass a motion against the increases as well; and again, if every year the executive ignored the recommendations of the tenants, then it would seem natural to ask: why bother asking the Forum? Why ask the tenants' opinions, if the council is not just unwilling, but actually unable, to act on their recommendations? It is in fact true that national government does cut funds to councils that do not increase the rents in line with government's guidelines, making local governments effectively powerless on the issue.

It is of course impossible to be sure of the answer of such a question, which is not even the point of a thesis such as this one. It is, however, interesting to look at this issue in terms of a what sort of dynamics were at play, what sorts of group the tenants movement sought to be and what the council officers may have been working towards instead. This brief anecdote might help us look into this. We were in the middle of a forum meeting, when Sam asked to speak during the Area Manager's

report. Begrudgingly, the chair allowed her to speak, briefly. She pointed out how the information the Area Manager was giving to the forum was factually wrong; not just that, but she gave the address of a website where we could all check what the right bit of information was. The Area Manager smiled politely and carried on. At the next forum, as we checked the minutes for accuracy, Sam noticed that her intervention had not been minuted at all. The website address she spelled out specifically for the minute taker was not there. It was just a mistake, explained the officer who took the minutes last time. Of course he would amend the next set of minutes.

Most members of the forum I have spoken to could report similar stories, which in fact I had also experienced myself. These stories usually had two things in common: on the one hand, they referred to information and opinions being erased from official records through what was explained by the relevant officers as 'mistakes' and 'forgetfulness'; on the other hand, they always involved the residents' involvement officers running the forum. Not the housing officers, whom the TRAs deal with for everyday maintenance of the estate, and who are not usually present at forum meetings, but the residents' involvement team. It might be that the issues that come up with the residents' involvement team are indicative of their ambiguous structural role. While on the one hand their job was to foster tenants' participation, they were of course employed and managed by the council, who is the landlord.

Seen from this perspective, the fact that the council asked for tenants' opinions on rents increases every year, only to ignore them; or that they listened to what tenants' representatives said in meetings, but often 'forgot' to minute it, especially if it was controversial, could be a sign of the council position being structurally ambiguous and prone to potential conflict with residents. While it might have been necessary for the council to be seen as a listening, responsive institution that promoted participation and consultation, values that the council was proud to be seen as promoting, they were also landlords, with a responsibility to collect rents and a vested interest – see Celia in chapter Four, for example – against the tenants movement becoming too strong, articulate or demanding.

A strong tenants' movement might in fact be useful to the tenants, but in the 'post-political' times that Baeten (2009) describes in his study at regeneration politics

and policies in London, a meeker, more cooperative and subdued group of tenants – sometimes referred to as customers, even – might well be what the council, or some parts of it, prefers instead. Of course we have seen in Chapters Four and Five that we should not think of 'the council' as one, monolithic and solid institution, but rather of many different employees and officials who work through this body and shape it according to their individual agency, views and powers, thus resulting in a complex and multifaceted organization.

What is more, for all this talk of conflict between tenants and the council, during large regeneration processes like those examined in Chapters Four and Five, most tenants, especially those in the tenants' movement, chose to remain with the council rather than move to an RSL (Registered Social Landlord). The reasons for this included both perceptions of lower rents and increased security of tenancy, but also the ability to interact with the council through the tenants' movement, through their councillors, in a political process that had a degree of accountability that RSLs were seen as lacking in. As always the picture is complex and cannot be reduced so simple dichotomies but needs to be rendered in as many layers as possible, and of course conflictual relationships are social relations in and of themselves and are worth examining. In this case, the conflictual side of the relationship between council housing department and tenants' becomes even more evident at Tenants' Council meetings, which will be considered next.

6.8 As high as it goes: Tenants' Council

Tenants' Council is the most important body of the tenants' movement. It deals with matters that affect all tenants and residents in the borough, including the setting of rents and service charges; the management of tenants halls; the regulatory structure of TRAs and other tenants bodies and the allocation/denomination of dwellings for 'vulnerable' categories of tenants, including older residents. Tenants' Council is made up of delegates from the whole of Southwark council, elected from each area forum. By definition, people attending it are seriously committed to the movement. This, of course, does not mean that they all agree with each another, as we shall see shortly. In order to be delegates on Tenants Council they all have to attend their TRA meetings and work for their TRA, whose members then elect them

as their representatives onto the Area Forum. They must then attend their Forum and be active on it, in order to be elected on to the tenants' council. On top of that, they attend the tenants' council meetings, which are usually long, tiring and complex.

Tenants' Council meetings usually take place around every two months, in the evenings, in the town hall. In a large room a set of tables are arranged in a large circle; the delegates who have a right to vote, sit around the table; there are usually between 20 or 30 of them. Delegates' substitutes, who are nominated in case the delegates cannot attend, as well as observers and other interested parties, including councillors, must sit at the back of the room, where chairs are arranged in rows. Those sitting at the back must remain silent, but can raise their hands and speak if the chair allows them to do so. This rarely happens. Under no circumstances are those at the back allowed to vote, but, surprisingly, sometimes they try. If the chair spots them she may just laugh at them and discount the vote, or ask them to leave the room altogether. I shall now give an example of one of their meetings, and of its curious ending.

Patience and dedication: Tenants' Council at work

It was eight o'clock in the evening, and after the usual routine 'checks', including minutes being approved, and issues arising from the minutes having being dealt with, the group was finally moving on to the big issue of the night: the constitution of the Tenants Council itself. This document was important because it defined membership, scope of action and voting rights on the TC itself, amongst other things. There were three documents, approximately 20 pages long, to compare line by line, word by word. The first document was the old constitution of the Tenants' Council; the second was the revised version of the constitution drafted by a committee of delegates (constitution working panel), who had been working on it for the past year; the third document was a new constitution proposed by the London Borough of Southwark (LBS in this section, to differentiate from Tenants' Council, TC).

The aim of the meeting was to approve a new constitution: to do so, delegates must have read all three documents before hand and noted the changes they approved and disapproved of. The vice-chair then read out, line by line, the revised version drafted by the constitution working panel, and asked for votes on every single change

that they had made from the old constitution. The changes had to be approved by a simple majority in order to go through. Delegates could also suggest the LBS's version, or parts of it, to be integrated in the final document. All of this was discussed among 30 people, all of whom had a right to vote on every single item this. By nine o' clock we reached the end of page one, and I quietly texted my partner to let him know I was going to be late home that night.

As the hours dragged on, and I got lost in the minutiae of a debate I found difficult to follow, I was once more taken aback by the energy and commitment of these people. The details might have been lost on me, but they were certainly not lost on them, as every word was scrutinised, every possibility considered, every angle covered. The vice-chair kept pushing forward, allowing everyone to speak so that an agreement could be reached while at the same time trying to keep a reasonable pace, and even a sense of humour. A sense of humour that they all needed in the next few days, when the LBS Housing executive member announced that, after all, he would rather Tenants' Council used the constitution that his team wrote for them, thus ignoring the work of the constitution working panel over the last year, the time that delegates had taken to read all three documents, not to mention the meeting detailed above during which a final, approved version of the constitution was ratified by Tenants' Council in full session (by around 10.30 pm!). Once again the reasons behind such decisions are beyond the scope of this work, but one can reasonably speculate that there might have been similar factors at play to those we have already considered when looking at the conflictual relationships between tenants and the council as landlord in the previous section on Area Fora.

Representativeness and legitimacy

The hierarchical structure of the tenants' movement, culminating in the tenants' council, sharpened not just the level of conflict between tenants movement and the council (meaning the borough of Southwark in this case), but also issues of representativeness amongst tenants themselves that have been highlighted in the chapter's previous sections. While the gender ratio around the tenants' council table was similar to that I observed in TRAs and Area Forum meetings, with roughly the same numbers of women and men, in terms of ethnicity things changed, and the higher up I went, proportionally, the fewer BME people I could count. In the tenants'

council BME residents were definitely a minority, as were those who did not speak English as a first language. Mostly, the delegates were white, British, working class and articulate. Moreover, although I did not interview all of them individually, from what I have observed, the questions that were asked and the issues that were discussed, it seemed that the only concerns that were addressed by the council were those of legal, 'legitimate' council tenants. I never heard any mentions of Housing Association tenants or private tenants. Illegal tenants, which were taken to mean squatters usually, were only mentioned inasmuch as solutions to evict them were needed: we have already seen in section 6.5 what some of the reasons for this distancing may be.   All this has to be taken into account when assessing the representativeness of the movement.

A singular exception to this categorisation of 'legitimate' vs. 'illegitimate' tenants, which on average followed closely the definition applied by the LBS, was made for tenants in arrears with their rent. The LBS considered them 'borderline' illegal, and would have wanted them excluded from the formal ranks of the tenants' movement. However, I have sat in many meetings, at both Area Forum and Tenants' Council level, where tenants' representatives themselves powerfully challenged this distinction. The arguments they used were usually to do with privacy: how could someone be excluded from a TRA if they were in arrears? Who would hold this information, apart from the LBS? Who could police such a regulation? What about a rep's right to privacy regarding their financial situation? What if one is in arrears for a few months only? On top of that, housing benefits are normally paid in arrears, thus putting those receiving them 'structurally' in arrears with their rent. This is relevant because many tenants' reps are not fully employed: many are retired, some are disabled, some are carers of disabled children, some are unemployed, and some are simply poor. They receive benefits of various kinds, including housing benefits. Excluding tenants in arrears from sitting on TRAs, Fora and TC would potentially cripple the tenants' movement, which may be a reason why they resist this attempt by the council so strongly.

Incidentally, the fact that many tenants who are part of the tenants movement are classified as unemployed or economically inactive due to disability, old age, caring responsibilities and so on may seem curious now, after we have given full

space to the descriptions of the amount work they routinely undertake as tenants on their estates. Once again, the stereotype of estate residents as antisocial thugs, waste, or scum so common in the media seems to falter against the weight of alternative ethnographic evidence. Their labour, which is undeniably a form of work, produces and reproduces communities of value everyday, through relationships between tenants themselves and amongst tenants and the ever-changing arrays of officers and local politicians they have to relate to in order to get anything done. This situation contrasts interestingly with that created by higher earners, in full time jobs, who live in the area – specifically in the regenerated parts of the Five Estates, as Chapter Eight will discuss – but are never really there because they are at work, and see their homes as simply places to lay their heads down at night.

Conclusion

> "Over the years, our housing system has ghettoised poverty, creating broken estates where worklessness, dependency, family breakdown and addiction are endemic"
> Iain Duncan Smith, Daily Telegraph, 30/9/2008

This chapter has provided an ethnographic description of the activities of the Tenants' Movement in Southwark, showing how its members care for and reproduce their communities as valuable places to live in. In so doing it challenges and disproves the rhetoric of council estates as 'broken' promoted by some media and politicians like the Conservative MP Iain Duncan Smith, quoted above. Starting off with a description of the Tenants' Movement structure, it attempted to breathe life into it by following its members and the work they do to keep it going. This ranged from meetings to walkabouts, from bingo nights to trips to the seaside, from friendly chats with Housing Officers to fierce lobbying of the council. Moving from the bottom up, from individual TRAs up to Tenants' Council, it also tracked the way in which the relationship between tenants and local authority as primarily a landlord becomes more evident, and conflictual, the higher up we moved in the Tenants' Movement itself.

By looking at the movement we have seen how residents come together, get to know each other and become a community through their everyday involvement with their built and social environment. The generosity with which they shared their time

and energy, the detailed knowledge of their estates and of the ever-changing bureaucracy that runs them demonstrated a level of care for the public realm which questions the assumptions that couple caring and belonging only with private ownership, or even a rural location. Indeed, the labour they put into producing a public, functioning social realm makes the estates into rich, layered and deeply sociable spaces, contrasting sharply with the stereotypes of emptiness, waste lands of anti-social behaviour that so often tar them.

The tenants' movement starting point is of course that tenants and residents are stronger if they work together. Furthermore, in an environment where financial resources are often limited and individual tenants' autonomy is limited, it is precisely through communal action that it is possible to achieve things such as fixing lifts and roofs. The stereotype is therefore turned on its head, showing how deeply sociable these spaces and their inhabitants are, and in a sense have to be. This of course does not come as a surprise, as there is a rich literature showing how a lack of economic resources is often linked to sharing and an intensifying, not a weakening, of social relations (Stack 1974). As should be expected, sociality is always contested and there are conflicts, for example amongst tenants over respectability and undesirable others, like homeless people who are perceived as threats not just physically, as potential drug/alcohol users for example, but also symbolically as challenges to the respectability and pride residents have in 'their communities'. Conflicts also existed between residents and the council, when the movement turns militant and articulate in demanding for more rights and better conditions for its tenants. What is of value and what is not is, of course, always fought over.

Finally, the amount of labour, time and energy invested by residents in producing and reproducing their communities also jars with their formal classifications as unemployed or economically inactive due to disability, age, caring responsibilities and so on (see Chapter Three). This is something that will be interesting to bear in mind when reading Chapter Eight, which turns to newcomers who have full-time jobs in central London, work long hours and, whether they want to or not, are almost always away at work, seeing their homes only as somewhere to lay their heads down. But we are jumping ahead. The next chapter is still located on the estates and deals with tenants and their everyday behaviours to do with waste and

cleaning issues. Within the structure of the thesis, after looking at the production of value on the estates we move on to the production and management of waste and recycling, and the many issues it creates for tenants in social housing.

Chapter Seven –Waste and value in the inner-city

The last chapter considered the ways in which estate residents built communities and created value around them through the Tenants Movement, destabilising the popular trope of the 'sink estate' as valueless, empty or worthless . This chapter looks at estates and the people who live on them from a different perspective, namely the ways in which they deal with waste and recycling, and the social and policy settings in which this takes place. Skeggs (2004) argues that working class people are continually created, named and represented by the middle classes as valueless, backward, uncaring and fixed in space, both physically and metaphorically, so that the middle classes can be seen as valuable, progressive, caring and mobile. This happens through representation across different sites – education, the welfare system, popular representations, legislation and various regulations that working class people are subjected to (Skeggs 2004).

Whilst agreeing with her argument in general terms, this chapter considers an instance that may seem an anomaly, in which working class respondents were subjected to considerably fewer regulations than the middle class residents of the rest of the borough. I am referring to the lack, or very minimal existence, of recycling facilities on the estates I worked on. Recycling policies are usually very prescriptive in telling residents what they can and cannot dispose of and in which ways, on certain days, in certain containers and so on, but these policies did not seem to apply to some places and certain people, as this chapter will explore.

The text begins with an ethnographic description of four households and how they dealt with their waste and recycling. Starting from the very mundane and small-scale it follows bin bags and recycling boxes from people's front doors, into corridors, down staircases and lifts, into chute rooms and bin rooms, out into big paladin bins and recycling banks. The degree of variation in tenants' behaviours and the policies they are subjected to is remarkable considering they all live in a rather small area. From these descriptions we move on to officers' and councillors' ideas about waste behaviours on the estates, highlighting some interesting dysjunctures between them and the ethnographic descriptions above. The chapter then suggests some alternative views and possibilities to explain these dysjunctures, and offers a critical reading of

recycling as a moral practice, which goes some way towards explaining how some citizens are required to take part in it and some others are not.

7.1 Waste and recycling in the inner-city: complex spaces and policies

Julie

Julie lives in a two bedroom maisonette, which is a flat distributed on two floors accessible via internal stairs, in a block on Grey Stones Estate, with her husband and their two sons, aged seven and nine. To go and visit her, I need to gain access to her block via an entry phone system: I enter the number of her flat and she lets me in the first door, inside the block. I take the lift to the second floor and then need to buzz again, to get into her corridor, which is shared by another five maisonettes; she lets me in, and then opens her own front door to welcome me in. My first impressions of her block, which were confirmed on pretty much every visit, is of a clean and well maintained space; this has a lot to do with the entry systems working well, as it will become clear in the course of the chapter.

Julies's family recycles paper, cardboard, plastic and glass; the children are aware of what is 'rubbish' and what is recycling; recyclables are left in the hallway, so that the children can pick out of it any materials they may need for their school projects. It is usually her husband who takes the recycling downstairs to the 'recycling bank', which is the only recycling provision on her estate: it consists of three large bins specifically set aside for cans, glass, plastic and paper that the council collects periodically and separately from other types of household waste. These special bins are painted black, as opposed to the other bins that are metal, and are physically separated from the others, located in the open air between two blocks, unlike to the other bins, which are located in the bin rooms.

The rest of her waste is collected in a bin in the kitchen until it is full, or if it is meat it goes outside straight away, or at most stays on the balcony, but not inside the flat. Normal rubbish gets taken out by any of them, or sometimes even visitors are asked to take it downstairs, or to the chute. The chute is a hole in the wall that connects with a long pipe, or chute, running all the way from the top floor of the block and down to the paladin bins located on the ground floor, in the bin rooms.

There is a chute room on each floor in most blocks, or sometimes, like in this case, on alternate floors where there are maisonettes that take up two floors, and therefore the corridors only run every other floor. The chute rooms are tiled and meant to be clean, empty and clear of any rubbish. Julie's chute room is the cleanest I have ever seen, and crucially it does not smell: usually chute rooms smell quite foul and are sometimes used to store bulky items to be discarded, or bikes, or rubbish that didn't quite fit in the chute hole and is left to fester until the cleaners deal with it.

The rubbish chutes are not meant to be used between 8pm and 8am, probably to avoid disturbing those living right next to them, as Julie explains to me, so if they want to get rid of something later than eight at night they have to take it down in the bin rooms themselves. The bin rooms are located on the ground floor, directly below the chutes running through the floors. They are accessed through outside doors, meaning Julie, or her children or husband, need to go outside the block and then enter the bin rooms; these have very heavy metal doors, that need to be pulled back to gain entrance to the rooms, which again are often smelly and quite dirty. This is because bin bags are often left next to the bins, instead of being put inside them: the cleaners are not meant to pick them up and so they often fester there for quite a while. I have never met anyone who admitted to leaving their bags outside the bins, and the general consensus from my respondents was that those who do that are just lazy and dirty. Having lived in an estate with similar facilities myself I can also add that the paladin bins are very tall, and throwing a bin bag in there requires a considerable degree of shoulder mobility, and strength if the bag is particularly heavy, which may also be a reason why some bags are left next to the bins.

Both rubbish and recycling have to be physically moved a rather long way from Julie's home to get to the place from where they will be collected from the council. Through the corridor and into the chute room during the day for normal rubbish, if not down the stairs or the lifts, through the entry doors, into the bin rooms and into the paladin bins, or in the recycling bank. What these spaces have in common is their communal nature: they are neither private, i.e. the responsibility of Julie or any other individual resident, nor public, like the street, where everyone is allowed to walk, cleaning is the council responsibility and citizens' inappropriate or criminal behaviour is dealt with by the police.

Communal spaces such as corridors and lifts are shared between residents, but they are neither public in the same way that streets are, nor private in the same way that someone's home, or their garden or balcony, is. Cleaning them is the responsibility of cleaners who work for the council, and yet there is an understanding, backed up by council regulations, that neighbours should look after their stairs and corridors and not soil them, allow them to fill with rubbish, urinate in them et cetera These behavioural norms are enforced by housing officers, but of course they are not there all the time, and disputes over the cleaning, maintenance and standards of communal areas are common and potentially very divisive. For example, at each stage of its journey downstairs a bin bag may break and its contents spill everywhere, becoming litter, and therefore problematic; or people may choose to leave their bin bags in the corridor, outside their doors, until they leave the house. Even without breaking, bags may leak and leave a mess, or smell, or be left in the wrong place. Crucially, it is impossible to understand what people do, or may be willing to do, with their waste, without a clear understanding of the spaces they do things in, which at the same time constrain their actions while being reproduced and recreated by residents' actions. Together with the spaces they inhabit, the other issue that shapes what people do with their waste are the policies they live under, which as the next examples will highlight, can vary immensely even within a very small area of the same borough.

Eileen

Eileen is the first person I ever spoke about waste with on my fieldwork, and the first thing she said to me about it was "I am happy to recycle, but they need to come and collect it when they said they will". She lives in a flat on an estate nearby, and explained to me how where she lives she can put all her recyclables, meaning glass, paper, cans and some types of plastics, in a clear plastic bag (Clear Bag Scheme, CBS from now on) which the council collects from her front door, which opens onto a walkway. A walkway is like a long balcony that usually sits at the front of a block, with one on every floor (unless they are maisonettes, as I explained earlier), and connects the doors with the stairs. A walkway is shared by those who live on the same floor, a bit like a corridor but in the open air: this has its positive sides, in that problems with smells are usually less of an issue, but also its negatives, usually to do with being open to the elements and pigeons, which can be a problem

for residents. They are communal spaces, and the degree of privacy of a walkway is determined by the presence of an entry system on the ground floor of the block: most blocks have them, but some still do not, meaning that anyone can walk in from the streets and up to people's doors. This has implications in terms of both cleanliness and security, which will be addressed later in the chapter.

The Clear Bag Scheme that Eileen refers to allows residents to recycle without having to take their recyclables downstairs themselves, which can be very problematic for older residents, like Eileen, or those with small children or mobility issues, who may find it difficult to take bottles and cans downstairs, especially if the lifts are not working, which happens with predictable regularity. It also allows residents to keep all their recyclables together (something technically referred to as 'co-mingling'), without the need to separate them into different bags or containers. On the other hand, the scheme assumes that people have the space in their homes to store these materials for at least a week, or sometimes more than that, as Eileen mentions when collections are missed for whatever reason. Households with young children, or those with pets for example, may well not have a safe enough space to store glass for a week out of range of curious toddlers or nosy dogs.

Vanessa

Vanessa lives in a house on a similar estate to that where Julie lives. Her house is terraced, so she has neighbours on both sides, a garden at the back and a front door opening onto a close, i.e. a street that is used by residents to get into the estate and park their cars rather than drive through the estate on their way to somewhere else: it is closed at one end, so cars can get in but they have to reverse and go back where they came from if they want to go back out. She, or rather her daughters most of the time, take their rubbish to the paladin bins across the close, inside the bin rooms that serve the block opposite her house, a very similar one to the one Julie lives in.

The only provisions for recycling are the 'recycling banks' I mentioned earlier in Julie's case. Vanessa and her family store their recyclables is a bag in the kitchen, which is a generous size with plenty of storage space, and then the youngest daughter, who is very keen on recycling, takes everything to the containers herself. However, Vanessa is annoyed by the fact that the council does not come and collect her

recycling from her doorstep, because she thinks it would be a lot easier if they had a recycling bin and regular collections from the council. Vanessa is a freeholder, while Julie is a tenant, but they get very similar levels of service because of the estates they live on, rather than their tenure or the physical location of their dwelling, i.e. second floor maisonette rather than a house. As she explains

> *V: Yes we recycle. My youngest daughter she the…if you like a kind of pain in the neck here* [laughter] *she will not let anything go unrecycled, but the problem I have with that is that they don't come here to collect our recycling, they don't collect it, we don't have recycling bins as such, so although we…we try to recycle and Alex my eldest daughter encourages and support her* [the youngest daughter] *cause Alex…they're the eldest and the youngest are the two recycling fanatics we have in this house, so Alex leaves the house and constantly "mummy recycle…" anyway, so they do the recycling, for me it's…I'd love to recycle if there were proper facilities. You know, I knew that every Monday/Tuesday/ so often they come to collect it, that's the problem I have*

There is also another, informal recycling activity happening on the estate, revolving around the bin rooms, or specifically just outside their doors: people often leave all sorts of bulky items, sometimes appliances, sometimes bits of furniture, sometimes suitcases and buggies, and very often these items disappear well before the council come to pick up the rubbish, taken by anyone who may need them. This system does not always work; sometimes what is left outside is in too bad a state, or no-one needs it, in which case residents or housing officers contact the council collection service for bulky items, which are collected separately from the general waste.

Teresa

Teresa lives very close to Julie, Eileen and Vanessa, but not on any estate: she is a homeowner, although she only owns half of her house while renting the other half through a part-buy deal offered to key workers in London. Her house is terraced, like Vanessa's, but she has a small front garden, as well as a back garden slightly bigger than Vanessa's. She lives there with her two sons, two dogs and two cats, who all manage to get along quite well in her lively and tidy home. Her waste is collected by the council from her front door, as well as her recycling. She has a wheelie bin for her general waste, which sits in her front garden and is emptied by the council once a

week, and a recycling box, which she keeps just outside her front door. Teresa's kitchen is very close to the front door, and whenever she has anything to recycle she puts it in the box outside straight away, which is handy because her kitchen is rather small and doesn't allow for a lot of storage.

T: We put them just outside the door, it's a brilliant system. I'm sure you could improve it but no, you just pop it outside the door on Friday and they come and take it away, I don't know what is like with the flats and to be honest it's all very well sitting here gloating saying yes we recycle but, the guys in flats and things, actually is not as easy as you think, I don't know if I could be bothered to take all my things down from the thirteenth floor or whatever downstairs, on a certain day at a certain time, and have to live with all that waste for a week, in my kitchen until then… I don't think I would be as happy.

In the blue recycling box she has to separate glass from cans, and she has an extra bag, also provided by the council, for paper and cardboard, of which she recycles quite a lot, hence the need for the extra bag. She is very happy with this system and on good terms with the 'recycling guys', as she calls them, because 'they do a great job'; she doesn't know the waste collectors because they often come when she is out of the house, so she doesn't have a chance to see them. She is also very pleased with the bulky items collection service, which she uses quite regularly, especially to take away the large cardboard boxes she needs to dispose of after purchasing TV sets (she likes large televisions) or other large items, such as freezers or satellite dishes. Crucially, Teresa does not have to go through any 'communal' space to deal with her waste or recycling, which are both collected straight from her front garden.

These four examples are useful to show the complexity of the urban landscape I am referring to, which is made up of private, public and, crucially, communal spaces such as corridors, lifts, chute rooms, bin rooms and so on. It also describes a few of the current waste policies under which residents live, the different levels of service they receive and how they react to them, according to their expectations, their needs and the experience of family, friends and acquaintances. We have seen how some households have to sort their recyclables at home and then take it to the recycling banks themselves; some can put it all together in a clear bag and leave it outside their front door, whether it's in a corridor or a walkway, to be collected. Some other

households have to sort their recyclables at home in a blue box and then leave it outside their front door, on the street, to be collected. These variations all take place in the same borough and in a relatively small area, and they do cause confusion and sometimes resentments amongst residents, as the next section will show.

7.2 Residents' concerns: anxieties and impossible definitions

Having looked at what some residents do with their waste, this part of the chapter considers the complicated issues to do with the relative nature of what 'waste', litter and dirt are, and how they are played out. We have seen in Chapter Two that finding definitions for what waste is, or even what wasting processes are, is hardly straightforward, and all I will be doing here is report and describe the categories that residents use themselves. This section also addresses issues of cleanliness and maintenance in communal areas: while not strictly speaking 'waste', these come up almost in the same sentences when residents mention waste, and are therefore worth looking into to understand waste as a wider, more meaningful category for the residents who use it. Waste and dirt are physically difficult to isolate and contain, they have a tendency to come back, return, spill out and invade physical spaces (Hetherington 2002). I would argue also that waste and dirt have a tendency to cross, transgress and invade administrative and bureaucratic realms. They are very hard to contain as items in an agenda, or rather it takes a very skilled chairperson to stop a complaint about any kind of dirt, be it animals' faeces or a neighbour's rubbish, from invading a meeting and completely hijacking it. It can take hours to get meetings back on track, and sometimes they simply never do. People seem compelled to add their own experience, their own complaint to the pile, whether there is anyone to complain to or not. For example, while it might make sense to emphasise the gravity of a given situation to one's housing officer, if he or she were present in a meeting, residents seemed to feel the need to relate complicated details even to fellow residents, who had very little power to do anything about a given situation. It seems as if they felt compelled to relate their waste and dirt problems, almost as a way to feel cleansed of them, as if the act of recounting them made them feel better.

These issues are exacerbated by the relative nature of dirt and rubbish, as Douglas argued in the first place (1966); especially in multi-cultural, multi-ethnic

estates finding common grounds as to what dirt is, and what should be done about it can be incredibly difficult, and very stressful for those involved. I once witnessed a woman completely taking over a regular TRA meeting with a complicated littering issue that may exemplify this point. As soon as she got a chance to speak, she addressed the council officer in a rather confrontational manner: she was angry at the council's refusal to clear up litter from her garden, which she thought was their responsibility. The council officer tried to point out that if it was in her garden (her private space) then it was her problem; yes she agreed, but she did not put the tree in the garden, and the council would not let her chop it down. This was rather confusing for all those around the table: what litter was she talking about? It turned out that she was referring to the leaves the tree in her garden was dropping, and as she did not choose to have the tree she didn't think it was her responsibility to 'clean up after it', as she put it. This brought chaos around the table from residents horrified that she was complaining about having a tree, while they only had flats and wanted a garden so much; a housing officer that was trying to explain that no, she could not get rid of the tree and the leaves were her responsibility; and the chair person desperately trying to get the meeting back on track.

Misunderstandings and misconceptions such as this can really sour relationships, and what is more make residents feel excluded from processes they feel they should be allowed to join in. The same woman once complained vocally about a cat defecating outside her front door: this was met by badly disguised ridicule from the officer and most residents around the table, who tried to explain to her that in the UK cats are free to roam as they please and no-one expects their owners to clean up after them. In the very same meeting, however, concerns brought by another resident about dog owners not cleaning up after their dogs were met with all seriousness, it was decided to send letters to the residents involved and threaten them with sanctions if they continued with their behaviour. The woman left and never attended another meeting. What these examples show is that dirt, waste and the cleanliness of the estates, however differently they may be defined, are incredibly important to residents, which is why they spill out in meetings to the point that they do, or become so emotionally charged that individuals can end up feeling excluded from a community that does not share their own concerns over these issues. This intense anxiety over waste is common to estates residents at large, as a survey conducted by

Hills (2007) shows that litter and rubbish in the streets comes consistently first amongst the issues residents list as serious problems in their area, significantly above fears of drug dealers and burglary.

7.3 Cleaning and maintenance

Cleaning, and cleanliness, are inextricably linked with maintenance. While cleaners work the communal areas of a block, corridors, entrances, lifts, chute rooms etcetera, according to highly specified rules and criteria, they have no power to address extremes of dirt caused by long term neglect (dirt that accumulates outside their remit and is supposed to be dealt with periodically, for example) or, even more so, by maintenance issues. For example, if a window leaks and mould starts growing as a result; if a pipe breaks; if paint, or sometimes plaster comes off the wall and dirt accumulates there as a result, the cleaners do not, and cannot, deal with those issues. The reason is that they have a strict schedule and rota to follow and do not have the time, not to mention the training or the tools, to deal with extra cleaning tasks while on their daily round.

Some cleaners do try to clean to very high standards, and they go beyond their duties in doing so, usually resulting in cleaner than average blocks. Interestingly, most residents only notice the difference when their conscientious cleaner leaves, and their next one, who may not be so devoted to the task and simply stick to their job description, is then complained about to housing officers who have to explain to residents that the service they received was of an exceptional standard and above what the council is prepared to provide. This usually does not please residents, and highlights the 'invisibility' of cleaning as reproductive labour that is not noticed or recognised unless it stops, or somehow goes wrong. In many ways the distinction between cleaning and maintenance is arbitrary and simply refers to time frames; maintenance tasks, such as decorating, have to be done under different, longer timeframes.

Maintenance issues go hand in hand with cleaning standards and access to the blocks. In terms of perception and standards, even when cleaners clean "properly", i.e. according to the standards set out by the council, very often residents complain

that their blocks are dirty and neglected. Time and time again I have been on inspections and walkabouts, either as an observer or as a rep on my own estate, and after ticking off a corridor for being cleaned to a "good" standard, a resident would pop out and ask, sometimes demand, when something was going to be done about the state of the place, which they said was a disgrace. Often the language they used referred to dirt, which seemed to directly contradict mine, and the council officer, assessment of a corridor as being 'good'. This was because the cleaners worked, and were assessed, on the council's standards, which were much more limited in their remit; residents on the other hand perceived the space in a more holistic way, and did not distinguish between what the council calls 'cleaning' and 'maintenance'. Instead, they tended to assess the space 'on the whole' and find it grotty and neglected because the walls were peeling off, there were cables dangling from the ceiling and the doorframes were rotting, even if the floor had been swept and mopped, which was all the cleaners were meant to do, and all the blocks were assessed on during the inspections. This mismatch between residents' expectations and council's cleaning and maintenance standards – and arguably a lack of communication between council and residents – were amongst the sources of the interminable discussions referred to above, when cleaning issues spilled over and took over TRA meetings.

Access is also a very problematic area that links cleaning, maintenance, respectability and safety. Most blocks have entry systems, but some do not: in those, anyone can walk up the stairs, straight up on the walkways and up to people's doors. This is usually seen by residents as bad, and it generates fears of strangers lurking on the stairs and anxieties about dirt being brought in/up, literally and metaphorically. Sometimes open walkways are used by people, usually non-residents, to urinate, and the smell is horrible and unmistakable. The cleaners may clean as much as they want, but until access is sorted out the problem does not go away. Interestingly, in these types of blocks things tend to get better, i.e. cleaner, the further up one goes; the stairs are cleaner and the walkways look better because whoever uses them as bins or toilets tend not to stray much further up than the second floor, meaning that the higher floors are cleaner.

When blocks do have entry systems, these are meant to restrict the flow of both residents and non residents inside them, ideally only allowing a certain number

of residents to access a restricted number of flats – this is especially important in blocks with over a hundred flats or maisonettes. Even when there are entryphone systems in place, some blocks suffer from chronic vandalisation and purposeful removal and damage of their entry systems, which can be done in many different ways (physically breaking doors and locks open, interfering with the electrics and electronic parts of the doors and so on). These problems are usually associated with drug dealing, as dealers who may or may not live in the blocks need constant access to all parts of the block to deal, manage and move their stock around different areas and blocks. Interestingly, poorly maintained blocks offered dealers many convenient nooks and crannies, where plaster had fallen off, inside maintenance cupboards that had lost their locks, under pipes that had come off and so on, to keep substances in an environment that was relatively risk-free, due to its communal nature. If the police were to find the stash, they could not prove that it belonged to anyone because it was kept in a communal space, while residents (but not other competitor dealers, of course) would stay well away from it for fear of retaliation.

It is often in blocks that suffer these kinds of problems that other unpleasant issues occur, such as people urinating and sometimes defecating indiscriminately in communal areas, usually under the influence of crack or other substances. Obviously, residents complain about these incidents to the council, but it is objectively difficult to keep up repairs of systems that are broken literally within hours of being fixed: with all its imperfections, the council repair system is not meant to cope with something very similar to purposeful criminal damage. On the other hand, during meetings when council officers ask residents to identify those who vandalise the entry systems nobody speaks for obvious fear and unwillingness to get involved or standing up against powerful individuals or networks. Repeatedly, I have heard residents say that either the very large blocks, which tend to suffer more for these kinds of problems, should be broken down into smaller ones, or that wardens or keepers living on site should be reintroduced, to control access to the blocks and challenge intruders whatever their motives.

Graham and Thrift (2007) have commented on academia's relative lack of attention to maintenance issues, arguing, in Heidegger's footsteps, that maintenance, as cleaning, is usually relegated to the background until things go wrong, at which

point tools stop being simply tools for something else, and become worthy of attention themselves. Interestingly they add that in large cities of the global South 'the fact that urban life is the result of continuous efforts of infrastructural improvisation and repair is too overwhelming and visible to be ignored', which I would argue applies to the inner city estates on which this project is based as well. As it has been shown in this section, things – walls, entry systems, doors etc – continuously break down, taking front stage (Goffman 1959), demanding attention, which may explain why cleaning and maintenance issues figure so prominently in meetings, as we've seen in the previous section. So far we have looked at things from residents perspectives, considering how for some of them even getting rid of a bag of rubbish could be rather complicated, and how compared to home-owners with individual properties tenants living in flats on housing estates had, on average, much less access to recycling programmes, especially of the door to door variety. We have also looked at cleaning, maintenance issues and physical access to estates' blocks. We will now focus instead on the views of a local housing officer and councillor, and consider Southwark waste strategy as it applies to estates residents.

7.4 Dysjunctures: discipline and care

Tom is an estate officer, and has worked for the council in this capacity for over 20 years. At the beginning of his career, in the'80s, he used to work with a maximum of 200 tenants, and be responsible, as a housing officer, not just for raising both internal and external repairs (there are now at least three different phone numbers residents need to call to get things fixed), but also to make sure contractors' work was up to standards. He dealt with rent and any issues the tenants may had, both singularly or as a group, and with the estate keepers as well, in something he claimed to be the most satisfactory way to do his job, because 'the buck stopped with me, and it was ultimately my responsibility' to ensure his tenants issues were dealt with.

He is now in charge of both of the estates that Julie and Vanessa live on, which have no door to door recycling facilities, only large containers downstairs (recycling banks). He thought the residents of these estates lacked the necessary discipline to engage in recycling, and was not at all convinced that schemes such as

the CBS should be introduced, not without an extensive educational campaign before hand at least. Having worked on an estate that did have a CBS in operation, he became aware of a number of difficulties involved in the scheme. Tenants were constantly leaving bags out for collection on the wrong day, or in the wrong place; putting items that could not be recycled in the bags, thus contaminating entire loads; and bags were ripped open by foxes and rats, usually because residents had not washed cans properly before putting them in the bags. And all this, he stressed to me, was on an estate for older people, without any children or teenagers around – he stressed the lack of children a number of times – and with what he called the 'ideal' types of property for recycling, meaning terraced houses with ground floor access and a front garden for residents to leave their bags out without causing any nuisance. In his own words:

T: It's a development of nearly 170 terraced one bedroom houses that were built a very long time ago, between 1830 and 1870, so it's actually an ideal estate for recycling. Cause everybody's got a ground floor area, and a private ground floor area. Where they can leave a recycling bag out without it causing any nuisance. In fact it's probably the most straightforward property that we've got for recycling. We did usually have problems there, and still do I understand, from people leaving bags out on the wrong day, and leaving them out in the wrong location, even though they only have to choose between the front and the back, people still seemed to get mixed up and live them at the front, when they should be at the back, and also leave them out often several days in advance of collection, rather than on the day of collection.

And also there is a lot of confusion as to what is to be put in the recycling bag, and the regulations are complicated relating to recycling, to give you an example a plastic bottle may be fine to be recycled, but the top to that bottle may not be, is a requirement that only the bottle itself be put out, certain type of cans, for instance, some of which are aluminium, some which are steel, again, there can be problems about whether they are to be left out, I can't remember the situation with Caroline Gardens, but I do remember there are situation where you can't leave stainless steel cans out, for recycling, but you are supposed to do it with aluminium cans, there are complicated regulations relating to paper, for instance, and cardboard, and what kind of material can be left out.

A surprising example for instance is, that for some reason shredded paper should not be left out for recycling, although whether that's due to the nature of the product or the fact that is confidential I am not sure. Those are some of the issues that I have direct experience of, and in the four months that I was responsible for it, I was frequently finding out that I had to try and organise one off collections for bags that had been left out in the wrong place and were causing a nuisance, so there are a lot of issues about the details of

the recycling scheme, people do have a lot of trouble with the best will in the world, in following recycling...

On Julie and Vanessa's estates, Tom had visions of unruly teenagers setting bags of rubbish on fire, or using glass from the bags to fight, and of general problems to do with contamination and missed collections. Tom's views and fears were echoed by the local councillor, Terry. Much as both men were always ready to come out and defend estates and their residents from outside criticism, and both worked hard for their residents, Tom and Terry did not think it would be a good idea to introduce a scheme that required so much 'discipline' of the residents. They both used the same word, discipline, and clearly expressed their lack of trust in residents' ability to cope with such a system. This lack of trust in estates residents, and especially those in high rise blocks, and doubts about their ability to engage effectively with recycling practices is echoed and institutionalised in Southwark's own Waste Management Strategy for 2003-2021

> *"The use of chutes to collect the majority of waste arisings and the proliferation of high rise accommodation limits the actions the council can take to stem the growth in Southwark's waste. For example, where in other areas of the UK, authorities may limit bin size and move to biweekly collections, this is unrealistic and unlikely to have any effect where residents are simply able to push full bags down a chute" (p.25)*

This quote suggests that people provided with communal, as opposed to individualised, waste collection services are not likely to take part in any kind of waste reduction strategy. Skeggs (2004) and others, Bourdieu (1984) for example, have argued convincingly that judgements to do with classifications tell us more about those doing the judging than about the ones they are supposed to be observed and regulated for. They refer to social classifications, of course: in matters of taste for Bourdieu, and about representation in the case of Skeggs. In this case, the ethnographic evidence reviewed so far has shown how residents do care for their environments, some of whom give up substantial amounts of time and energy to do so through the Tenants Movement, for example. Beyond this rather limited sample, in a wide ranging review of individuals' attitudes towards the environment in low income areas, Power (2005) has found that they did not substantially differ from those of

people living in more privileged neighbourhoods. She did find that more well-off individuals were more prone to buy organic and fair-trade products, but if facilities were available, recycling rates were not likely to be different from those of less privileged areas. Southwark's Waste Management Strategy, and Tom and Terry's anxieties, may then be more about policy makers' assumptions than residents' actual behaviours.

Talking specifically about recycling, it seems that estates residents are perceived and mis-represented by their own councils as being unconcerned with environmental issues, which in turn shapes the policies that are put in place around them. This chapter, and the previous one on the Tenants' Movement, have provided ethnographic evidence to show how waste and cleaning issues do matter to residents in inner-city estates. It has also shown that residents are able to organise themselves to deal with problems, including waste and recycling, by working with the council via housing officers and councillors. In fact, I would suggest that in my area it was the lack of recycling schemes and facilities such as the CBS or Blue Box Schemes that deterred people's efforts, in other words it was a policy created situation that caused what then other policies were taking as their starting point.

Indeed, in one case I found that just as council officers did not trust residents to be disciplined enough to 'cope' with certain recycling schemes, committed tenants often shared the same lack of trust towards the council and its ability to keep its side of the bargain, i.e. to collect recyclables promptly as scheduled. Lucy, the secretary of a TRA on a large estate made up of blocks of flats and maisonettes as well as small terraced houses, was very critical of the CBS (Clear Bag Scheme) in place on her estate precisely because the council, in her opinion, wasn't good enough at collecting the bags, with the result of leaving the estate looking dirty and full of rubbish. Her estate was very clean and tidy, and she was clearly disappointed with seeing clear bags full of tins and paper left out – maybe on the wrong day by a resident, maybe a missed collection from the council. In fact, her TRA was considering asking to be taken off the scheme because it made the estate look dirty. It seems to me that the anxieties to do with the CBS can be understood through Douglas's classic concept of dirt as matter out of place (1966): recyclable materials, just like rubbish, are acceptable in the right place and at the right time; clear bags could be outside people's

doors at certain times, just before being collected, and so long as they contained the right types of items. As soon as they were in the wrong place, or were still there at the wrong time, they were not acceptable any more and become dirt to be removed, as Lucy explained and RA feared.

7.5 Waste in communal spaces or communal spaces as waste?

The presence and representation of communal spaces seemed to me to be crucial to issue of waste, especially from the point of view of the council as expressed by its officers, representative and policy quoted above. This may be better exemplified by two images produced by Southwark council and published in the same issue of *Southwark Life* (Winter 2006) a promotional magazine it produces to keep residents informed of its initiatives. The first one is part of an article aiming to encourage people to recycle their waste and help the environment. It shows a neat row of terraced houses, one with a large garden containing mature trees, a well-tended allotment, a greenhouse and a compost bin, as an example of how people should behave, specifically how they should deal with their waste. There is a compost bin for garden and kitchen waste, a blue box in the front garden for recyclable materials and a wheelie bin for everything else: everything is spacious and neat.

Image 14: Recyclying in an ideal setting. Source: *Southwark Life*, Winter 2006

The second image, however, portrays how the vast majority of council tenants in Southwark live, which is in medium or high rise blocks: this is something that the council itself knows, as on its websites it advises potential new tenants that "Most of the council's properties are flats above ground floor level on estates. Very few properties have gardens and larger properties are in very short supply."

Image 15: Social housing in high rise buildings in Southwark. Source: *Southwark Life*, Winter 2006. Copyright Mark Chilvers

On one level, one could simply notice again the dysjunctures between what people do and how they live, and what councils think they should do and how they should live. There are clear inconsistencies between the housing available in the borough, and the advice given to residents who want to engage in environmentally friendly behaviours.

There are two themes, however, that might be less obvious and more interesting to pursue. The first is the issue of communal spaces, and the second has to do with the moral aspects of waste disposal and recycling in particular, which I will discuss in the next section.

Southwark's waste strategy sees the presence of communal waste disposal facilities in blocks of flats, precisely the chutes down which tenants can simply drop bags full of rubbish, as destructive to their efforts to curb waste and increase recycling

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rates. Yet in many parts of continental Europe, and New York for example, cities where virtually everyone lives in tower blocks of various types, recycling policies have been successfully implemented. When these initiatives have not been successful, the reasons do not seem to rest with the semi-communal nature of waste disposal, which is taken for granted where people live in tower blocks as a matter of course.

If practical concerns do not appear to be crucial to the argument, it may be useful then to go back to what was argued earlier about how judgements often say more about those who utter them than those who are subjected to them (Bourdieu 1984). In this case it may also be useful to consider the opposition between private and public that this judgement makes, equating private disposal with positive connotations and public/communal disposal with negative ones – careless and impossible to monitor. Private disposal can be immediately traced back to its 'owners', or 'producers', while waste disposal in blocks of flats is also immediately communal, or at least it becomes so as soon as it enters the rubbish chute, as the legislators point out. The literature on waste that has been reviewed in depth in Chapter Two deals extensively with the anxieties generated by the ownership of rubbish, for example, where/when does rubbish cease to belong to those who put the bag out in front of their drive? This question is central in practices of 'dumpster diving', or generally any activities that take/rescue/recycle/steal items before they are collected by 'official' agencies (Ferrell 2006).

Skeggs (2004) argues that not everyone in society has a private 'self': by this she means that while some individuals are in a position to accrue value in themselves through their own labour and the labour of others, some are not able to do this by virtue of their class positioning. This is not simply to do with the job they have or the amount of money they make – much as these factors are relevant – but to do with the ways in which value circulates but only 'sticks' to certain 'selves', usually middle class individuals endowed with educational, economic, social and symbolic capital – who have the power to make their other forms of capital legitimate. Her definition of course comes from Bourdieu (1984) but is more subtle, and in this context is relevant because if we understand that certain practices bestow value on some individuals but not others we can look at waste disposal in social housing in a different way.

Individuals who live in social housing are largely poor and working class, or poor and unemployed, or from deprived backgrounds, whichever definition one chooses to follow (Hills 2007: 87). This is because social housing in England is moving more and more towards what Hills (2007) calls a residual system, whereby only the neediest sections of the population are allowed into the system to start with. These kinds of people are often, or perennially, mis-represented as having no value in themselves, as lacking value: they are unable to accrue value onto themselves in a way that is legitimate, that those with power – the middle classes – recognise as worthy. This is why I have used the term mis-representation: they of course do have value – they see themselves as valuable and struggle to make their lives meaningful and valuable amongst their communities, and this value making is just as legitimate as any representation that tries to symbolically devalue them. However this value is not recognised by middle class people placed above them socially, and they are often aware of this (Skeggs 2004). I would argue that in a similar fashion places can suffer the same fate as people, especially when certain spaces – communal spaces of social housing – are filled with people perceived as valueless and thus become symbolically devalued.

The idea of communal spaces as waste and valueless is much older than the trope of the 'sink' estate – in itself a term that started to be used by journalists in the '70s but whose origin is unclear – and arches back to a certain construction of the land and nature as being useless unless it is properly – meaning productively – used. In the Communist Manifesto, Marx and Engles (1848) advocate the 'bringing into cultivation of waste-lands' for the good of the proletarian nation. The idea of the self as the possessive individual identified by Macpherson (1964) and codified by Locke extended to spaces as well. Scanlan (2005) argues that by tying together selves (individual, property owning selves) and land as a resource to be used and profited from then anything that is not privately owned and put to good use – the lack of care for one's land was, in Locke's theory, reason to have that land taken away – becomes by definition waste in the sense of belonging to nature and chaos as opposed to the realm of men (gender intended, of course) and ordered civilisation. Locke was of course justifying the enclosure of land in England at the time, but his argument of disregard for anything communally held has since been used extensively in colonial

times to 'justify' the appropriation of communal lands and resources all over the world. The lands were usually classified as 'wastelands' by colonial powers, and then through 'Cultivation of Wastelands Ordinances' were effectively taken over by the state and allocated to private corporations, such as the East India Company in the 1800s (Saikia 2008).

Similar arguments are still deployed today whenever a group of people wishes to take resources or land from another: the idea that they do not now how to 'care' for it properly or they are wasting its potential (as a nature reserve/tourist attraction/energy source) is a powerful discourse to use. Shelton (1998) argues this is still taking place in Australia today. Finally there is of course is the idea of the tragedy of the commons (Hardin 1968) that sees anything held communally as in danger of destruction, which has been explored in depth in chapter six (Ostrom 1990).

In the UK, the many quotes attributed to Margaret Thatcher to do with men on buses being failures – only losers take the bus – the non-existence of society and the push to strengthen and institutionalise the Right to Buy council homes all point to the fact that communal land, communal resources and spaces are still today seen by a powerful part of society as at the very least not as valuable as private spaces. Value is sometimes attributed to certain public institutions: Hanley (2007) cites state education and, most of all, the National Health Service (NHS) as public yet valuable spaces/realms, but notices that somehow public housing and estates seem to not manage to evoke the same response of civic pride from the British public. It may be that the confluence of the perceived and misrepresented negative value of the residents of social-council housing, coupled with the communal nature of the assets in itself, the blocks, the walkways, the estates themselves become too much to be challenged. This is similar to the case of working class women who dis-identify from the term working class because they cannot cope with or challenge the many levels of negative value that it inscribes on their bodies and therefore refuse it all together (Skeggs 1997).

These spaces then, the estates and their residents, become through these processes places that escape regulation (waste regulations, in this case) and threaten the order of society at large *but* only in the minds of those who are in charge of writing these regulations. These communal spaces that are devalued because they are

communal are endlessly reproduced as symbolic wastelands, sink estates and so on by people who do not live there but have the power to represent them as such in a legitimate way, e.g. in official reports, documentaries, academic books, TV shows and so on. When looked at from the inside it becomes obvious that they are instead not unusual places to live in, with their issues and complexities, but nonetheless places that residents are prepared to fight for in order to retain (Chapter Four and Five) and care for intensely on a daily basis (Chapter Six). This chapter has shown in many different ways how the waste regulations and recycling regimes social tenants are subjected to have much more to do with the fears and anxieties of those who run these places than with the actual behaviour of their residents, who on the whole manage pretty well to live in blocks that may be seen as exceptions in England but are, for example, the norm in the rest of Europe.

7.6 Recycling for what? Creating valuable and value-less citizens through waste disposal practices

In recent years, recycling has become imbued with so many positive layers/evaluations that to challenge its orthodoxy can be seen in itself as morally dubious (see Hawkins 2006). For example, public opinion does not like it when commentators point out that recyclable materials circulate on international markets and are sold and bought as commodities (see Hickman on the *Guardian,* or Alexander and Reno 2012), or that for some materials recycling only makes sense up to a point in terms of the energy needed to collect them and transform them, if the material themselves are inert in landfills and easily available – such as glass, made of sand.

According to O'Brien (see chapter two for the extensive version of his argument), the amount of waste produced in the UK that can be traced back to individuals varies between 4% to 9%. Even using the highest available data of 9%, that means not even a tenth of what goes to landfill is attributable to the behaviour of individual households. The current highest targets to recycle up to half of all household waste would still, in fact, only divert from landfill up to 5% of total waste arisings: this would be a very optimistic estimate. Considering these numbers, O'Brien (2007) argues that individual recycling in the UK gets a disproportionate

amount of attention by the public, media and policy makers alike, compared to its actual size.

Why the attention then? Luke (1993), a political scientist and environmentalist, argues that this is to do with fashioning 'caring', 'moral' and individualised selves that are, crucially, uncritical of and unconcerned with production processes. This is much preferable to the threat of a movement – as opposed to individuals – intent on challenging production processes for their impact on the environment, both socially and ecologically. By focusing on individuals and their individual actions – both in terms of waste and recycling to 'save the planet' – larger questions about capitalist production and its social and environmental impacts are kept at bay (Luke 1993).

Recycling households thus perform practices that are valuable in a symbolic and moral sense (Hawkins 2006), accruing value for themselves as caring – if maybe politically unaware, according to Luke (1993) – citizens in the process. If this is the case, we may have found a possible explanation to the anomaly that was posed at the beginning of the chapter, to do with the ways in which social tenants are less regulated than middle class home-owners. Certain people and certain places – social tenants and housing estates – are excluded from processes of value creation by virtue of not being regulated, i.e not being subjected to the scrutiny of their waste, not having to wash their baked beans cans and recycle their papers. These activities, these regulations, prescribing and invading as they might seem, serve to create a caring self which is the same as that identified by Skeggs (2004), able to accrue value onto itself.

The unregulated tenants on the estates – who are regulated in every other respect, of course – cannot take part in this circuit of value creation because of their positioning in spaces both physical and social that are not conducive to the accrual of value. If recycling is about adding value to waste and turning it into something useful, valuable again, it would make sense that those at the bottom of the social hierarchy would be represented – and created, I would add, through policies – as unable to participate because lacking in value themselves, and therefore disrupting of the value creation process.

Conclusion

This chapter began with an ethnographic approach to waste in the inner city, considering and comparing the different experiences of four households, highlighting a very varied policy-scape and the relative lack of recycling facilities and door to door collection systems on housing estates. It then moved on to look at residents concerns and anxieties to do with cleanliness and waste in their immediate environment, which are common amongst social tenants on the whole (Hills 2007), and finally considered regimes of cleaning and maintenance of the buildings, with special regard to issues of access to the blocks by non-residents. From residents' perspectives it then moved on to the opinions and concerns of a local councillor and a housing officer, which mirrored those expressed in a borough-wide waste strategy that sees tenants in blocks of flats as obstacles in the way of implementing effective recycling policies. In its final parts the chapter considered how communal spaces may be implicated in this judgement, and how waste disposal and recycling in particular can be seen as symbolically loaded practices to assign and take away value from various types of individuals and groups.

The argument was that far from being unconcerned with the disposal of their waste and the general state of their environment, estate residents cared just as much as anybody else about the environment and recycling (Power 2005) and were intensely concerned with the cleanliness of their surroundings (Hills 2007). What was found was a lack of simple, effective recycling policies geared towards estate residents, combined with a physical environment that made storing and transporting large and heavy bags or boxes of paper, glass and so on impractical if not impossible. This lack of infrastructures and regulations meant that residents were effectively excluded from a symbolically loaded circuit of value exchange and acquisition, through which middle class residents living in individual houses re-created themselves as caring, concerned and respectable citizens. The next chapter will follow from this one in focusing on a significant variation in the social and physical environment of Peckham, in the shape of a new group of middle class residents who live in flats, albeit privately owned ones, built where the Five Estates we considered in Chapter Four once stood.

Chapter Eight – Regeneration in practice: new residents, new value/s?

As the final ethnographic element of this thesis, this chapter brings together a number of threads explored so far through an analysis of the new professional middle classes that moved in to the houses and flats built on the ashes of the North Peckham Five Estates, whose regeneration process was considered in depth in Chapter Four. It starts by looking at this group of people who have very recently moved into their brand new flats, sited on what once was perceived as a 'wasted', valueless site. Tellingly, they are observed in the process of trying to improve the area, which is something they do a lot, but in different ways from the other groups we have encountered so far. Some of them started a residents' group, in some ways similar to the TRAs (Tenants and Residents Associations) on council estates in the rest of the borough, but in other respects quite distinct. It is especially interesting seeing how in a context of limited resources this new residents group, NDRA (New Development Residents Association) has managed to effortlessly outcompete local groups for funds (see Lamont 1992), but not managed to achieve what they want at city level, in terms of new transport infrastructures.

One of the main differences between this group and the others we have encountered so far is that because of their employment status, often full time in demanding and high-paying jobs in central London, they work very long hours and are away from the area most of the time. Many of them are dual-earning couples, or full time single professionals: as we have seen in the previous chapters working class respondents work too, of course, but their work is often more localised – the women in the nursery, or the many respondents who had cleaning jobs south of the borough, but still nearby – and also working class respondents were connected with the area through family members who cared for their children, for example. However for NDRA residents work is often far away from Peckham – in fact I did not meet any one from their group who worked locally, and while when they do have some free time for leisure and socialising they spend it elsewhere, because they feel there is nothing much to do for them in the area (see Watt 2009). The exceptions are those with young families who like the facilities available for their children, especially the Sure Start centres. The other relevant difference of this group is the fact that being owners instead of tenants – albeit many of them are leaseholders, which in some

respects is an odd state in between these two poles, as we shall see – they can always choose to move somewhere else if they do not like the area, and either sell their property or rent it out. Indeed, many of the newly built flats were also bought as buy to let investments by absentee landlords, and are lived in by tenants on very short term contracts conspicuous by their fast rate of moving.

Within the thesis as a whole, this chapter performs different functions. On one level it is an ethnographic description of what happens after demolitions, and what regeneration in practice looks like. In doing so it considers the differences and dysjunctures between the incomers and the older residents, mainly tenants, living around them, but it also highlights elements of continuity that bind them together. These two elements, similarities and differences between new and old residents are woven throughout the text, rather than being artificially separated by the narrative, to emphasise how deeply enmeshed they are. On another level the chapter tries to answer questions that were asked in Chapter Three, to do with the nature of the processes of regeneration in the borough in terms of transmutations of value and waste. If what was wasted was older housing and some established communities, this chapter tries to understand what was gained from this transformation, what sort of value, and values, have been accrued to the area and/through its new inhabitants.

8.1 NDRA Tram Event

It was a grey morning, drizzling with rain and with an autumn chill in the air. I was more smartly dressed and more nervous than I would normally have been for my fieldwork engagements: the reason being that I was, compared with the rest of my respondents, studying 'up' for the first time (Nader 1972). Engaging with middle class people was different, and while at one level it felt easier because of the similarities we shared, it also had its intricacies and methodological complications, which I have discussed more fully in the introduction. I approached Peckham Square, slightly worried that maybe I was late and they had already left: it had been made quite clear that they were not going to wait for me, and that many people would have been happy to take up the spare place if I did not show up. The worry vanished as I saw it, sitting proudly in the middle of the square: as this space is normally off-limit

to traffic, the visual impact of an open top bus festooned with signs and banners was exploited to the full.

The library and the leisure centre provided a suitably iconic background, while the canal path, grassy and tree lined, tempered the whole urban theme. Photographers were busy taking pictures, camera crews interviewed people and radio journalists snapped sound bites from passersby. NDRA members had donned white t-shirts sporting a "Back the Tram" logo on front and back over their regular clothes, reinforcing the message of the banners and signs all over the bus. For 7.30 in the morning there were a definitely unusual number of councillors and council officers standing around, not to mention the media crews, which included not just the local press but BBC London and ITV news. Everyone was keen to be photographed in front of the bus and shaking hands with the NDRA group. More than that, they probably wanted to be on the bus, but places had already been assigned and it was clear we were at full capacity.

After one last photoshoot, with NDRA members, myself and a few councillors holding signs bearing a letter each spelling out the day's message "Back the Tram" from the top of the bus, we left amid cheers and excitement, driving around the square and leaving it from the canal path through the entrance usually reserved for fire engines. Even though the weather was miserable it felt a bit like a holiday, and for most people on board it was: they would all normally have been at work, or on their way to work at this time of the day, so this was at least a break from their routine. The only one who did not manage to make a full day out of the event was our only child on board, and much as she pleaded with her mother, an active NDRA member, they both left the bus as we went past her primary school in the middle of the Aylesbury estate, so she could join her classmates for a standard school day. Loretta, the girl's mother, explained later that she was both pleased and surprised at how good that school was, much as it was in the middle of the Aylesbury and she had not had any real hopes for it at first. As will become clear in the course of the chapter, parents whose children were in the local schools seemed more integrated and positive about the area as a whole, and less likely to criticise it or its residents.

The bus took as close a route as possible to that of the tram it was supporting, and ended up closely following the route of the 343 bus, the main form of transport from NDRA's member homes to their work places uptown. As we went on we occasionally stopped to pick up a few commuters who seemed very happy for the unexpected lift: places had actually been left strategically empty for them, and as they got on the bus NDRA members explained to them what the bus was about and rallied support for the tram, all dutifully filmed by the ITV crew that had been allowed on board. On a smaller camera Billy, the group's webmaster and all-round media expert, also filmed everything to keep records for the group's own archive.

Crawling along in the morning rush hour traffic, we eventually reached our destination: the Greater London Assembly (GLA) building on the South Bank. Although they were able to get permission to use Peckham Square, uptown things were different and the bus had to drop us off at the back of the building due to standard security reasons. Nonetheless, two members of the Assembly were there to greet us as we arrived, as well as the MP for NDRA's constituency, at the time also holding office in the cabinet. Hands were shaken and photographs taken as a document, containing a petition for the tram and a local survey, was handed ceremoniously from NDRA members to the GLA politicians. Having done this we all went round to the front of the building, through the public entrance, and queued with many others to go through security and then inside the building. NDRA's members left all their signs and banners with a GLA employee they knew, as they would have not been allowed through security, to be safely stored until the meeting we were due to attend was over.

In the queue I bumped Louise and Tony, two members of a TRA I had worked with for a long time. Chatting as we went, it was impossible not to notice the difference between them and the group I had come with. NDRA's members blended in and looked as if they worked there, or were there for a work meeting: this could have easily been the case, as they mainly worked in London, in financial, charity and media jobs, amongst others, in full-time employment. Their jobs and class position, their *habitus* was evident and clear, and they used it – not deliberately, perhaps, but they did use it – to blend in seamlessly in a building as politically and socially charged as London's town hall. Watching them come into the meeting brought to

mind Lamont (1992)'s argument that one way in which upper and middle class people reproduce their privileges is precisely by choosing to promote or 'help out/up' people who are 'like them'. Managers promote workers with whom they feel at ease, meaning usually that they share a similar class background, and in a similar way NDRA members appeared to share the same background of those who run the meeting, who were in turn well inclined towards talking to and – crucially – listening to them. On the other hand Louise, a proud working class woman, housewife and part-time cleaner, and Tony, a retired labourer and working class man, seemed somehow out of place in this building. It looked as if they did not belong, an impression that was probably highlighted by comparing them with the NDRA group I had originally come with. Both Louise and Tony seemed diffident and quite uncomfortable with the whole situation, both in the queue and during the meeting itself, something they made clear to me when we had coffee just before the meeting began. They did not believe anything much would come of it, they said, but then it would have been stupid not to come at all.

After going through security we were led upstairs, to the top floor of the town hall, where the meeting we had all come to attend was to take place. The views were breathtaking, and as the balconies were open it was possible to walk all the way around the room and literally see the whole of London: the symbolic power connotations of the building, the room and the view are probably too obvious to be spelled out, but they should be taken into account nonetheless. Tea and coffee were served first, giving people the opportunity to talk and admire the view before the meeting began. Mingling over coffee and biscuits, NDRA's members charmed their way into the crowd, chatting amiably with what looked from my perspective to be all the right players, letting their opinions known in a soft, well-spoken and effective manner. The meeting itself was set up in a traditional way, with a panel of politicians behind a table and the public sitting in rows of chairs facing them. After brief presentations from each politician questions were opened to the floor. A number of people raised their voices and made their cases in strong terms, clearly showing that the decisions the commission took mattered a great deal to them individually and to the communities they were claiming to represent. From a perspective that was admittedly that of an outsider – this meeting was not crucial for me and I did not do follow up interviews with those who took part – it was hard not to notice how

members of the panel just stopped listening and engaging as soon as members of the public raised their voices or spoke in a direct, or what I would call passionate, tone. The situation closely resembled the 'post-political' regeneration landscapes described by Baeten (2009), where open antagonism and discourses of entitlement, militancy and rights are ostracised and cast as too aggressive and too angry to be addressed. Baeten (2009) points out this is of course a strategy to focus away from issues of unequal resource distribution and onto collaborative, non-threatening and non-challenging discourses which he calls 'post-political'. In this context, NDRA's members amiable chatting before the meeting began may have been a more successful approach, as they at least managed to have meaningful, engaged conversations with the committee members.

8.2 A different class?

This event encapsulates much of what is needed to introduce NDRA residents, the main subjects of this chapter. To begin with, *who* are they? They are the people who moved into the newly built homes, mainly flats, which took the place of the old council housing demolished in North Peckham, something discussed in depth in Chapter Four. They have formed NDRA, New Development Residents Association, to deal with and address the issues that have come up in their area since they moved in. While being quite different from the rest of Peckham residents I have met so far, their way of organising themselves, closely modeled on council tenants' TRAs, points to continuities as well as dysjunctures between them and other long-standing residents of the area, something which we will return to again and again in the course of the chapter.

The main reasons why they moved to the area were price and location. Unlike many other residents and members of the tenants' movement, most of NDRA's members have well paid, full-time professional jobs in the centre of London, with many working in the financial sector. One of the main reasons they bought property on what was the old North Peckham were the prices: simply put they could not find anywhere else in zone two where their money would buy them houses or flats quite so large or so new. As an added bonus, all the residents with small children I spoke to

remarked on the high level of services provided for under five's through the Sure Start centres. While these services were meant for much poorer recipients, being based on residency NDRA members had access to them if they wanted to, and were very pleased with them. Middle class parents taking advantage of services initially provided for poorer individuals is not unusual in itself, as Gillies (2005) has shown in her research on parenting and class, which shows how middle class parents often monopolise resources and schemes – such as the Gifted and Talented program – that were aimed at disadvantaged inner-city children in the first place. Something similar happened with the NDRA residents, for example, and the council funds available for local community groups, as will be shown in section 8.7.

Their demographic profile is different from most TRAs in the area: they are younger, mainly middle class professionals and while there are a few foreigners, these were mainly white and middle class as well, like a professional Colombian couple I became friends with, or an overworked Australian banker who nonetheless managed to find some time to talk to me. The group did not have many BME members at all, although there were a few black people. However, the overwhelming impression I had when meeting them all together the very first time was that it was their class and status as home-owners, rather than gender or race, that defined their identity in that particular context, vis a vis the identities of the tenants who lived on the estates around them, or used to live on the estates that were demolished to make space for their current, new homes. Of course, as I became closer to the group I learned to distinguish and appreciate their internal differences and complexities, but I think it is fair to say that in this context their status as educated, property owning middle-classes was highly relevant.

In fact, some of the things I recall more vividly about them were the different power dynamics in place between them and the various council officials *they* invited to *their* meetings to give presentations about, for example, the state of the regeneration in the area – still not concluded, and obviously likely to impact their daily lives as well as their house prices – the transport network – meaning the tram that mattered so much to them – or other various local issues. For the first time I saw council officers sweat under the collar, literally; for the first time I witnessed residents able to pose challenging question in an unthreatening and yet highly effective way –

see Baeten (2009) on 'post-political' regeneration for a full discussion on different ways of communicating 'effectively' with politicians and officers. For the first time I saw residents slightly raised eyebrows – not voices, they would never raise their voices, of course – eliciting explanations, embarrassment and almost panic that the usual lines officers were used to feed tenants would simply not work with this group. It was the power of class coming through in their accents, cashmere sweaters and rimmed glasses, understated and yet there, reminding all presents, councillors, officers and myself, that those people knew what was going on, or would find out if they needed to, and were not to be taken lightly. There were never open threats, of course, but it was hard not to imagine that careers may well be damaged, and electoral prospects as well, if this active, knowledgeable and powerful group decided they did not like a plan or a person.

What were they doing that day? They were delivering a petition to the Mayor of London in support of the cross-river tram, and then attending a meeting about plans for its future development. This was the core of the event: the petition had been signed by many residents, not just from their group but from all over Peckham, including local councillors. It also included a survey of their group that showed how high a priority transport facilities were for residents; as the author of the survey, I was allowed to join them on their bus. The survey was, indeed, one of the main routes I used to gain access to the group. After meeting their chair at a community council meeting described below (section 8.4), I offered my services as a trained social scientist for any kind of research project they wanted – like a survey to back up the need for better transport infrastructure, for example. I was counting on the fact that they would not refuse an offer of free, qualified labour that could well strengthen the case for their cause, and they did not. After agreeing that we would set the questions together and I would be allowed to use the results as I wished, after anonymising, I became the group 'official researcher', allowed access, interviews and, most important of all for me, general time together to and from meetings and events to chat informally, which is where most of the material for this chapter comes from.

The bus, the signs, the media, photo opportunities, were a way to generate coverage for the tram, pushing it higher on the agenda of the GLA and hopefully to convince and pressure the mayor into agreeing to go ahead with the project. A

petition is neither too difficult nor too expensive to organise, and many groups in Peckham use them to lobby their elected representatives on specific issues. What was remarkable about this event was the way in which it was done: in Bourdieu's terms (1984) it showed the high degrees of economic, social, symbolic and educational capital that this group was able to call on. Their economic capital is obvious in their position as home-owners, but also in the money they raised to rent the bus, design and produce t-shirts, signs and banners, not to mention the high-tech equipment they used to record it all. Social capital, the networks individuals and groups can draw from, was evident not just in the presence of local politicians who were all scrambling to be seen as their friends, but also in the media crews that reported the event. Around half of the group involved in this stunt worked in media or PR, so it was not difficult for them to attract journalists who were probably acquaintances if not friends.

Even more so, from Bourdieu's (1984) perspective, they could convert their social and educational capital into symbolic capital, meaning they were able to make their claims legitimate (Skeggs 2004). NDRA residents knew very well how to stage a media friendly event: visually stunning, fun, easy to report for different types of media (press, TV and radio were all catered for) and generally buzzing with the right type of excitement to make people want to be part of it - a simply brilliant PR exercise. Compared with groups where basic literacy skills cannot always be taken for granted, the ease with which NDRA could fill out forms asking, for example, to park a bus in the middle of a pedestrian zone like Peckham Square, or their ability to write letters in support for their cause to politicians not just at the local, but also city and national level, speaks volumes about their educational capital. This ability is something NDRA has exploited thoroughly in the few years since it has been established, attracting considerable funding for this and many other events (festivals, gardening days and so on) and other more tangible projects, such as more bins and art features in their local park, for example.

On to the next question: *why* were they doing it? What was so important about this tram, which was supposed to offer a quick, reliable link between Peckham and the rest of London, all the way up to Camden, that they wanted it so much? As we have seen, closeness to the centre of town was crucial in their decisions to buy, but in order to make the most of this relatively short distance they needed fast and reliable public

transport. Developers and estate agents had sold many a property talking about the tram as if it were a done deal. In some brochures, I was told, computer generated images of the tram subtly hinted at its future coming as it were a matter of months. Unfortunately residents started moving in but the tram did not materialise, and they realised the transport infrastructure provided for them was not quite ideal. Even though most of Peckham is well served by buses and rail links, the NDRA area is inconveniently far away from most bus stops apart from one, which runs a bus service which is notoriously unreliable and overcrowded. Connecting their area, (the tram would have gone literally past their doorsteps, to the rest of London) was therefore important to them as a means to get into work quickly and reliably: fed up with waiting, and able to move out much more easily than tenants, some of those who had bought in the past few years had already sold their properties, or rented them out, because of this issue.

Of course, this was about much more than just a practical, pragmatic issue of transport . On the one hand it symbolised and stood for the general lack of infrastructure NDRA residents felt was blighting their area, which did not offer shops, cafes, pubs or restaurants that were 'of the right kind', or where they could feel 'at ease'. It was not just that there were very few such outlets in their area, but also those that were there were not, they felt, right for them, so they tended not to use them. This echoes middle class concerns in the suburbs, where Watt (2009) has found that middle class residents can disaffiliate themselves from certain areas, or pick and choose what they want to belong to by limiting their social interactions in what they perceived to be undesirable spaces.

On the other hand NDRAs' hope was that by getting the tram they would be able to change the area on a more subtle, symbolic level: they wanted to change its name. The tram stop would not be called North Peckham but Peckham North. This rebranding exercise was meant to detach the area, and its new residents, from the bad reputation associated with it, especially as the place where young Damilola Taylor was murdered in the year 2000 during the regeneration of the Five Estates (see Chapter Four). In their hopes and plans the tram thus played on many different levels, providing transport but also changing the area, ideally attracting retail and leisure outlets more suitable for a sophisticated, middle-class clientele and repositioning it

away from its grim past into a regenerated, exciting new identity. Symbolic capital, understood as an ability to mobilise and manipulate ideas, meaning and prestige to one's advantage, would have been deployed to their ends if the tram had gone ahead, which eventually it did not. This may show that that they may have been a powerful group in the Peckham area, at a local level, but were unable to mobilise enough resources and political capital at city and at national level to get what they wanted.

Different types of capital are constantly flowing and changing into one another, and it was clear to the residents that their lobbying for the tram and rebranding of the area would have been highly beneficial to their properties' values. While this was an obvious and openly discussed issue, on a social level the reputation of the area was also a problem for them in terms of their inability to attract friends and colleagues, who would shy away from visiting them due to a mixture of fear and transport difficulty, to which the tram would have hopefully put an end to, while also attracting more residents similar to them and hopefully creating a critical mass to convince the kind of shops, bars and restaurants they wished for to open in the area.

Finally, *how* were they doing all this? The thing that stood out most was undoubtedly their positivity and enthusiasm. The "buzz" they managed to generate around the tram event, the ease with which they dealt with politicians was not just to do with knowing how to do it politely. They also had a firm belief in themselves and their ability to shape the environment around them as they wished; this may well come from a middle class background where their entitlement to goods and services had hardly been challenged, but it is nonetheless a force in itself. Their energy was completely different from that of more groups that presented themselves – or were perceived by middle class officers – as adversarial and confrontational, and bore different fruit. This might have to do with the fact that they were a new group and had not been disappointed in the area yet, but the fact remains that by positioning themselves in this way they started, or their class background started for them, a positive cycle in which local officers and politicians were more willing to help them than they would have other groups, perceived as more aggressive or negative (Baeten 2009).

8.3 Living amongst tenants: contempt, annoyance and distancing

J: We work really long hours, like ridiculously long hours…sometimes we have to be in Tower Bridge by seven…and then you're supposed to finish at three and you don't until seven. So it's like…we don't really have time to socialise here or…which is kind of the same as when we were living…wherever we've lived has always been the same really…it's been more a place to lay our heads.

Having introduced the group, I shall now consider how they saw themselves in the area, especially with regard to their neighbours most of whom, unlike themselves, were tenants: NDRA's members were exclusively leaseholders or homeowners. By focusing on the way they talked about tenants I hope to draw out the contradictions and ambiguities bound up in these relationships, which emphasise difference while also indicating some striking similarities between them. NDRA residents live mainly in blocks of flats around three or four storeys high, with about eight to ten flats per block, and those who they consider neighbours usually live in the same blocks or in the ones next to them. When they talk about tenants, or 'renters', as some of them refer to tenants, they do not necessarily mean council or Housing Association tenants, which is the main way the term has been used throughout the thesis. They refer instead to private tenants, meaning individuals who are renting flats on a private basis from leaseholders who have bought properties in the area, either as buy-to-let investments or because they wanted to live in them but then decided to move out. According to NDRA respondents some of these tenants are in receipt of housing benefits, but a significant number of them are recent immigrants, often from Eastern Europe, simply needing a place to live and renting it on the open market.

S: We know people who bought here, and then moved away and rented out…a few people who came to the first meetings of the associations…subsequently sold and moved away…it's just the sticking point, it's losing people, it's hard if you don't have a good transport system. This development is not even three years old, and people have moved out already in the last year…it's a combination of getting pissed off with the managing company as well

The comments I collected ranged from open contempt to attempts to distance themselves from tenants in general by claiming different values and upbringing. Jean and Stephanie, a couple who had moved into the area in December 2005, were

exasperated at the ways in which 'renters' who lived in the block opposite theirs kept leaving bulky refuse – furniture and large cardboard boxes – in the car park outside the bins, without even bothering to call the council to have it removed, a service provided for free to all residents. "They just don't care" the couple claimed about the residents, after having had many arguments with them about the appropriate way of disposing of their things; the problem is, Jean and Stephanie explain, that they just move out so quickly, dump everything and leave. On the other hand, having bought a property themselves Jean and Stephanie cared about it and the area, put their rubbish in the bins and were very keen recyclers.

> *S: They leave the furniture there…it's the whole thing about moving in every six months...the first few months that they're there they're sorting out their…there's constant boxes from all the furniture they've bought...and all this crap they're throwing away, but they just leave it laying around…when they leave they just throw all their crap out...and in between they don't think about putting their rubbish bags in the bin...they just throw them outside of the bin compound …because they're not gonna live there and they're not paying the extra fines that we get…that the owners get charged for the management of the area …and then the managing agent comes around, and she doesn't even pretend to like Peckham, she's like 'you're living in Peckham' 'excuse me, you know, we're human too…so you're got the stereotype of Peckham, you say you've bought a flat, people say 'oh, where?' 'Peckham' 'frickin' hell' 'but it's a nice part of Peckham, it's a very nice street' and then it's hard for our friends to come visit because there's no transport*

This statement, the narrative that associates care with ownership is a common one, repeated over and over again by freeholders and leaseholders all over Peckham: it is part of the ideal that Thatcher tried to sell with the introduction of Right to Buy, linking property ownership with care not just for one's home but with increased responsibility towards one's area, community and nation as a whole (see Chapters Six and Seven for a full discussion of these issues). Here is Lucia, another NDRA leaseholder, expressing the same view, and Loretta, mother of two children, reiterating very similar feelings and again linking 'renters' with transience and lack of care.

Lucia: I think because many people are renting so they don't really care, they're only here for a while...families who are probably on housing benefits...is not theirs so they really don't care.

Loretta: There is still a huuuuge divide between the home owners and the renters, and you do see that the renters are transient and they don't care as much, they don't tend to their garden.

As we have seen in Chapter Six, however, there is a whole section of the local community involved in the Tenants' Movement who claim to and actively care for their estates and neighbourhoods, putting forward a coherent and alternative narrative where care is based on being in a place and living in it rather than owning it.

What is interesting in the way in which Jean and Stephanie, and Lucia as well, talk about 'renters' is the emphasis on the speed with which they move out and their – completely unsolicited – continuous reference to their inappropriate ways of dealing with their waste. The tenancy agreements these 'renters' are most likely to live under is an Assured Shorthold Tenancy, the most common tenancy for non-council dwellings in England. This type of tenancy gives landlords the right to evict tenants with two months' notice after they have been in the property for the first six months. This is quite different, at least at the time of writing, from the tenancies granted to council tenants, known as Secure Tenancies, which amongst other things effectively guarantee tenants the right to live in their homes for life, and pass their tenancy on to their children, so long as they keep paying their rent and do not cause serious damage or engage in anti-social behaviour. In practice, if these 'renters' are moving in and out as quickly as Jean and Stephanie argue, it may be difficult for them to find out and adjust to all the different rules and regulations to do with waste disposal in their new homes, which as we have seen previously in Chapter Six can be rather complex. This may well be compelled by the fact that many of them, according to my respondents, are foreigners, so language issues may make it even more difficult for them to understand the system.

At the same time, while so much of the emphasis in the council's regeneration plans examined in Chapter Four rested on the creation and building of communities, the fact that many new residents either bought their properties as investments or

decided later to rent them out on a short term basis has in fact substantially undermined this aim. Waste in the car park, or abandoned next to rather than in the bins could be due to many reasons – some respondents in other areas were disabled and could not swing a heavy bag of rubbish high above their shoulders to put it inside big paladin bins, for example, or in some families taking waste out was a job for the children, who were simply too short to get it in the bins and so left it next to them – but may also be symptomatic, as Jean and Stephanie, Lucia and Loretta claim, of the fact that 'these people' do not care. Short term tenants they have very few rights, are not included in the residents association (NDRA is only for leaseholders, as mentioned above) and are likely to be evicted very quickly, depending on their landlords' needs and plans for their homes, which are seen as an investment. It is hard to imagine how, under these circumstances, they may be in a position to make a substantial contribution to the area, or feel part of the 'community', which is something that Jane Jacobs (1961) was already arguing about in the '60s, explaining how stability and continuity were key to help communities establish themselves.

Similar feelings of annoyance are expressed about tenants or 'renters' when they move into the same blocks as NDRA members. In these cases the owners of the properties that were rented out were hardly blamed for their choice to leave, but it was made very clear to me that living next to tenants was not pleasant. Current leaseholders framed their complaints in terms of dirt and disorder: dirt left on the stairs and communal areas (crisps packets, leaves brought in from the outside, dog mess in the worst instances), disorder brought by families who moved in and started having children and therefore making more noise and taking up landing spaces with prams and other babies' items. It was often emphasised to me how it was all down to the ways in which they were brought up, which were clearly different – and, by implication, somewhat lacking – and arguably used as a device to establish difference and emphasise their own respectability instead (Douglas 1966, Bourdieu 1984). Finally, behaviours such as smoking, listening to loud music, drinking and socialising at night, which were described as what the tenants in the 'naughty block' were up to, were also frowned upon. These statements were rather ambiguous and difficult to analyse; on the one hand they were proffered in a half joking way, but at the same time they kept coming up, again and again.

This ambiguity may in fact reflect that NDRA residents may well feel out of their 'comfort zone', in that they have acquired good properties but have moved to an area and amongst people they are unfamiliar with on many different levels – class and race but also nationality, for example. This uncomfortable position generated deeply affective responses, as we have seen in the previous statement, showing ambivalence and uncertainty not only around the area and its inhabitants, but also their own identities within it and amongst them. Many respondents also explained to me the difficulties of justifying their choice of living in Peckham as a whole, struggling to convince their friends and families that it is not as bad as it's supposed to be, or that they live in an OK part of i.. While they openly criticised and made sweeping generalizations about the tenants living around them, they often *in the same sentence* claimed to be discriminated against simply because they lived in Peckham. They complained about negative media coverage, the undeservedly bad reputation of the area, the lack of easy transport links – often meaning a tube station – which meant their friends would refuse to come and visit them. Having moved to an area with a relatively bad reputation in London, and sometimes new to the experience of living in flats rather than houses, they seemed to have had more in common with the tenants they often despised than they would have been comfortable with.

8.4 Like a "normal" TRA? Between dysjunctures and continuities

If in terms of talking the NDRA residents appeared to be quite disdainful of the tenants living around them, they also picked up straight away on the fact that in order to get what they wanted from their Managing Agents they needed to constitute in a group and work along the lines of conventional TRAs in the area. True, they were not tenants and theirs could not be a 'Tenants and Residents Association', so they set up a resident association instead to deal with the issues in their new homes. The secretary of the group is called Dan, and I first met him at a community council meeting. These are meetings where local councillors sit and different issues relevant to the 'community' are discussed. They are rather formal; councillors sit behind a high table raised from the floor and the 'public', or 'community', in chairs positioned in rows at ground level. Locations and dates change, but they are usually held every six to eight weeks in schools, community centres or church halls in the Peckham area, whose boundaries are almost identical to those of Peckham Ward. The meetings are

chaired by a councillor and minutes are taken by council officers, who also sign in and take details of people as they arrive. There are normally stalls around the room about projects going on in the area covered by the community council, such as regeneration plans, schools and park developments and so on. Agenda and minutes for the meeting, plus any relevant documents, are available on the night, but the agenda is set in advance by officers and councillors.

Dan was reading out a motion he wished the community council to support. It was about street lighting around the NDRA houses, which had not been connected by the developers to the mains and was not working. It was the developers' job to do it but they were dragging their feet and not having lights was making the area less safe, so he wanted the community council to support his motion and contact the developers demanding for action on behalf of his group. The public-community voted unanimously to support the motion. Conversely, during the rest of the meeting a resident stood up while plans about the regeneration of the Wooddene were being discussed (see Chapter Five), and asked the public to support a motion demanding council housing – not social, but council housing, and he clearly knew the difference – to be included in whatever plans may be carried out on the site. This time the resident was sharply told off by a council officer for interfering, and a councillor reminded him that motions had to be submitted in advance, in writing, to be approved by the chair and included in the agenda before they could formally be voted on, or even proposed to the public-community. Regardless of the fact that he complained loudly, his request was denied, and the more aggressive, rather than assertive, he seemed to become, the quicker councillors and public alike lost interest in the point he was making. Dan had clearly liaised with the officers running the community council beforehand in order to get his group's motion allowed to be put to a vote, which he had won by explaining the situation to the public-community briefly, clearly and effectively. All things the other resident had not done, for whatever reason, meaning his point was lost, only briefly and inaccurately mentioned in the minutes circulated at the next meeting.

Even though at the time of the meeting the group had not yet been formally constituted, Dan was already acting as its spokesperson, networking and raising awareness about the issues that affected them. Young and middle class, he lived with

tenants he rented out rooms to in his house, built on the site of old the north Peckham estate. When I first approached him he was deep in conversation with Beverly, a local and very experienced housing activist, asking her questions on how to get together as a group in such a way as to be recognised by the council. The reason his group had come together initially was to negotiate with the developers who had built their homes and, in the residents' opinions, had left them either unfinished or badly finished. He had pictures of holes in the ground with wrongly sized pipes sticking out of them, which were unsafe and also used by rats, he explained; rubble left by builders, damp coming through the walls in brand new flats and so on. Just as many council tenants had realised before them, NDRA residents, all of them leaseholders, had understood that the best way to have their demands met was to constitute a group and lobby collectively rather than individually. However, for them the body to rally against was not the council, from whom they wanted instead recognition and support, but a private developer – two, in fact, as their area had been built by two different developers – and the managing agents they employed to run their blocks on a daily basis, dealing with cleaning, maintenance, gardening and some waste removal issues – this was shared with the council, more about which later.

Dan wanted his group to be recognised by the council like any other residents' group, any other TRA, and was in fact complaining that they could not get access to the fund that TRAs receive their basic funding from. What he was referring to is called Tenant Fund, a pot of money that all council tenants pay into automatically through their rent, which the council then draws from to allocate funding to individual, formally recognised TRAs that apply for it, based on the number of units (houses or flats, not residents) of the estate covered by each applying TRA. It was obviously never meant to fund groups made up of leaseholders living in private blocks, who had never – and never will – contribute to it, but interestingly Dan felt his group was somehow discriminated against by not being allowed to draw from it - "We are a residents' group like any other, why treat us differently?" He explained how they did not have a hall – something plenty of local TRAs, as discussed in Chapters Four and Five, have problems with because their own halls had been lost to make space for the housing that NDRA residents live in, incidentally – or any communal space they could use to meet, and so had been meeting in members' homes instead, which he thought was not ideal because it restricted the number of attendees and made

the meetings not as public and open to all residents as he would have wanted them to be.

He wanted to know from Beverly how to constitute as a group in the same way a TRA does, so she explained to him the need to adopt a constitution and code of conduct, hold elections for a committee, have an inaugural AGM (Annual General Meeting) and then regular meetings open to all residents, which are the basic requirements for a council TRA to come into official existence and start developing. In the end Beverly was invited to run their committee elections, holding a role that in a council TRA would have been taken by the estate Housing Officer or Resident Involvement Manager, as an "experienced friend" of the group. To grant even more clout to their inaugural AGM, at which these elections took place, they invited a local councillor to attend, and gave a couple of slots in the agenda to council officers to talk about transport and school plans for the area. In order to entice residents to come to the meeting they organised a raffle, with prizes including an IPod nano and an expensive organic food hamper, quite a world away from the usual Argos vouchers I saw raffled by other TRAs.

It was during this very first meeting as a residents' association that a council officer, invited to discuss regeneration plans for the area, explained that tenants from the nearby Aylesbury estate (see Chapter Five) may be moving in, or 'decanted' to the NDRA area shortly. A wave of obvious worry, if not fear, swept the room as the information was processed by the group, but interestingly objections to this future development were immediately framed in terms of the insufficient infrastructure in the area, especially in terms of transport, that would make it impossible to cope with a significant influx of new residents, wherever they were coming from. They all seemed to be aware that it was not appropriate to say, "we don't want tenants from the Aylesbury moving in", not least because the great majority of NDRA members and residents I have met would consider themselves liberal, even centre-left in political terms. Nonetheless their dislike of the idea was palpable, and expressed again and again in private conversations to me and amongst each other.

8.5 NDRA survey

This fear of being 'invaded' by 'other' residents could be taken to imply that there were significant differences between NDRA members and, for example, older Peckham residents or Aylesbury estate tenants, and surely this was assumed by a number of those who were afraid of this happening. This chapter has so far highlighted differences and ambiguities felt by NDRA members towards their neighbours, but it will now turn to a survey that I run for the group about residents' issues and priorities, which brought up some interesting and seemingly contradictory results. The survey was commissioned by the newly elected committee and answered by over ten percent of all residents in the NDRA area.

Most residents were dissatisfied with their Managing Agents, and were especially annoyed at lack of communication with them. In terms of safety they felt reasonably safe in their area, but would have liked more police on patrol and were worried about activities going on in the nearby parks and estates. A majority of them were unsatisfied with the provisions available for waste and recycling: they wanted more recycling facilities, were worried about overfilled bins and dirty bin rooms, and also interested in the possibility of composting their food waste. When asked about their neighbours and whether they felt integrated in their community the responses were generally very positive and pointed towards a willingness to be even more involved with their area. In an open question asking about their priorities they mainly reported transport issues, more policing, less littering and more shops and cafes in the area. From their newly formed Residents Association, which they were very happy with, they wanted more events and information about local issues.

The reason why these results are interesting is their marked similarity with the opinions I have heard expressed time and time again around Peckham and Southwark by council tenants. True, most tenants liaise with the council, or a Housing Association, rather than a Managing Agency, and it may well be that the kind of shops NDRA residents wanted were different, and maybe outside the range of the majority of residents in the area. However, apart from some small adjustments, their responses were strikingly similar, pointing to substantial continuities and similarities between this group and the residents around them (Power 2005)

Anecdotal evidence – the stories that NDRA residents were keen to tell – also seem to suggest many similarities between the tenants of Peckham and their new leaseholder neighbours. Issues to do with cleaning, waste and general management of their place were top of the list, much as it has been described in the previous chapter. For example, one couple described how they ran a long campaign, for three years, to be able to recycle in their block. The management company was in fact responsible for getting this issue sorted, but simply sat on it for a very long time. Then, through their new Residents Association, they got in touch with the council, who told them this was not unusual behaviour for managing companies and thatthey tended to act like this all the time. In the end it was the residents who had to tell the council how many properties were there on the development, as the managing company had never even told them. This information was vital in order to work out how many bins would be needed. According to my respondents the council was proactive about all this, while the managing agent was distinctly lazy and slow to respond to their requests and enquiries. In the end the residents had to go around the Managing Agents to get the bins they wanted, and now finally they have collective recycling bins in their courtyard, regularly collected by the council.

8.6 Children, schools and summer festivals: integration, in time?

Out of all the NDRA residents, the ones who seemed to have the most positive views on the area were the young families whose children were mixing with older residents' children in the local primary school, located inside the Aylesbury estate. Through their children's school they got to know other parents in the area, from the estates around them, and they were very unlikely to make general negative statements about them. There were obviously children and families they liked better than others, and their children went to play in the houses of the ones they liked, but in their ways of talking about them the generalised fear of 'the other' seemed to have been absent, replaced instead by knowledge and understanding of different, individual families' circumstances.

In one case Loretta, a middle class, media professional mother of a school age girl, remarked on how happy she was living in her new house because her daughter could play outside in the local park. She could keep an eye on her from the window –

she worked part-time as a choice to spend more time with her children, one of whom was only one year old – and she knew that if she was not in the park she was probably in one of her school friends houses, which she thought was fantastic freedom for a child being brought up in London.

> *L: And actually I have to say although this area is edgy and there's a lot of aggression and unfriendliness, you know stand offs... but I've never lived in a place where people just leave their kids out to play in the park, and that to me is the ideal...you couldn't aspire to a better situation, I can let my older daughter out in the park and she thinks she's completely independent and completely cool, I know that I'm actually peering out of the window every five seconds, but the point is she's getting independence, in an age where kids increasingly are under lock and key the whole time so I have to say there is quite a community and I know because we live in a crescent and everyone is facing on to this park, everyone is sort of looking after each other. Sort of. But to the extent you know that nothing bad will happen, because some parent or other will actually charge out if necessary, even though I don't know the parents of all these children ...it's really nice, cause you wouldn't even think ...you only get that in rural areas, you can let the kids out...and I know if she's not in the park I am not scared, 'cause I know she's just gone into the neighbour's house or something , and that is fantastic, and there's actually only one...two houses where I'd let her go, I know them a little bit, enough to think she'll be fine, but she is a very sensible kid.*

I had myself sat in that park, a pleasant green with houses in a crescent all around it, and witnessed babies left in their prams just outside their (open) front doors, facing onto the green, to soak up the sun in the afternoon. Mothers or carers were clearly nearby and keeping an eye on them, but the trust implicit in this act – leaving your door open and baby unattended – was remarkable in terms of confidence and belief in the overall safety in the area.

For those who did not have children, the events organised by NDRA did, to some extent, help break down some of the barriers between old and new residents. During a summer festival held in the park/green mentioned above, organised around events for children like magicians, musicians and a bouncy castle, but also featuring a barbecue for the adults, some NDRA residents got to meet local tenants and later

commented, with some disbelief, that "when you get to know them, they are just like us!".

> *K: But when we had the event…just meeting lots of people from that side…cause we don't really go into Peckham, don't meet them…but I got to meet them, talk to them, parents of the kids…just hearing what's important to them…about the area…it's just really nice…and we're all pretty much the same in that.*

This may have seemed strange to them, but they seemed pleased with the realisation when talking about it afterwards. While funded by the Community Council, this event, like similar others, were completely organised and run by NDRA, who like many other TRAs run their own summer festivals for children and residents. By simply getting people talking to each other, these events seemed to achieve, or maybe sow the seeds for, a sense of 'community' that was shared and not exclusive to NDRA members, based not simply on communal interests as property owning individuals in the area but as residents sharing a space with other residents who could be known and trusted rather than representing just an unknown, threatening 'other'. It is obviously too early to assess whether these events will make a significant difference in how people interact in this area, but if they continue to happen they may eventually help build up networks and eventually even friendships. In time, the ambiguity and ambivalence expressed by NDRA residents who felt threatened by those around them and at the same time anxious about being seen as local may even decrease.

8.7 Regeneration in practice: some consequences

Having looked ethnographically at this new group of residents in the course of the chapter, highlighting their differences and similarities with the tenants who lived all around them, it is now time to focus our attention on some of the consequences and implications of their arrival, as I observed them during fieldwork. This section will consider their *difference* from the past residents, how they affected funding allocation in the area, their mobility and their physical presence in and around their houses.

To begin with, the new residents are ontologically different in the sense that they are new people who have come to the area, whether they behave similarly with those who were there before them or not. This may seem a pointless observation, but it is not: one of the core assumptions of the regeneration of the Five Estates (Chapter Four), and of regeneration processes in general, is that they improve the areas and the lives of *their* inhabitants. NDRA members will undoubtedly change the statistical profiles of the area, making it look as if education, income and health, to take but a few, have improved. However it is not the established residents of the area whose education or health has improved, or who have suddenly found new or better jobs: it is new, different people who have better health, education and jobs who have moved into new and better housing. So the improvement in health, income and education, for example, will be true at the aggregate level of the area, and will make good reading on reports produced by officers, as narratives of the improvements brought by regeneration, but those are just that, narratives produced from a distance and a particular perspective (Allen 2008). From a different vantage point, as this chapter has shown, the lives of those who are still in the area will have changed, but in a different way that was planned by the regeneration. As for those who have, or have been, moved out of the area, both Chapters One and Three have explored the methodological difficulties that meant their voices do not appear in this project.

Secondly, it is worth spelling out clearly the ways in which resources are distributed in the area, and how they have been affected by this new group. In Peckham, limited economic resources are allocated to different groups through council based bodies like the Community Councils, which run both Community Council Funds (CCF) and Cleaner Greener Safer funds (CGS). Groups – TRAs, sports groups, various friends of the parks, youth groups – have to bid and compete for the money they need to run projects and improve the area, explaining through written forms how they fulfill funding criteria and why their need is greater than everyone else's. When groups like NDRA enter the competition it is inevitable not only that they will get considerable amounts of money, because they know how to articulate their needs and present themselves appropriately, but also that the resource pool will be drained and left smaller for those groups who need funds so much, that they do not have in their ranks individuals who are literate or experienced enough to write successful bids, a highly specialised skill in itself. For example in the Cleaner

Greener Safer funding round for 2008, NDRA won more awards than anyone else in the area, leaving other groups short of money to run their own projects. Another interesting point concerns the way in which new residents are clearly not aware of how their presence has meant that many older TRAs have lost the communal spaces they used to be able to use. When Dan from NDRA complained about their group not having a communal hall to meet and run activities from, the image of the Silver Spring TRA confined to borrowing a children's Pop In Centre to hold their meetings (see Chapter Five) obviously came to mind, as did a reminder that they had lost their hall so that the new blocks and houses where NDRA members live could be built.

As for mobility, the fact that NDRA residents own their homes, whether as leaseholders or, a minority, freeholders, mean that they are able to sell and move away much more easily than the previous tenants living in the area, or those living around them. Moreover, they can choose to rent their properties out if they want to, whether they bought them as a buy-to-let investment in the first place or not. This means that turnaround in the area, commonly known as churning rates by planners and statisticians, is much higher than that envisaged in the plans that guided the original regeneration of the Five Estates (Chapter Four), which imagined a new urban landscape populated by settled middle class families rather than short-term private tenants moving in and out every six months. High mobility in an area is something that Jacobs (1961) identified as far back as the '50s as a fundamental problem of 'slums' in American cities. Her argument was that urban areas and their inhabitants need to be allowed

to settle and come together as communities, which is a process that cannot be forced or legislated for, but, crucially, can be slowed down or disrupted altogether. The ideal situation for her was if people living in 'slums' slowly saw their area improving and choose to stay on instead of moving out as soon as they were materially able to do so. She was talking about poor working class, often immigrant, populations, but I believe her argument holds true in this context as well. When NDRA members move out and sell to new owners, or rent out their homes for short term lets, the long and fragile processes by which communities are formed and people come to know, trust and eventually value each other and their area are continually interrupted and have to start from scratch again and again.

Finally, in terms of time constraints it is essential to consider the fact that the new residents are for the most part employed full-time somewhere else in London: they work long hours, leave home early and come back late, as opposed to many working class respondents who worked and socialised locally and were therefore more present in the area. They also have considerable amounts of disposable income, which can be used for holidays and weekends away, or other leisure activities that tend to take part away from their immediate neighbourhood, as most of them explained that they tend not to socialise in the area but mainly in central London, near their workplaces. While this is not surprising, the implications are that a number of them see their home in Peckham, as one respondent put it, just as 'a place to lay my head down'. If on the one hand it is remarkable that given the pressures on their time some of them have managed to get together as a residents' association and are working to improve their area, for many of them work pressures are just too much to leave any time not just to be involved, but even to be physically present in the area most of the time. They are unable to be physically present in their homes, on their streets, which often take on a 'ghostlike' presence which I recorded in my notes at the very beginning of fieldwork, and this certainly does not foster a sense of community in the area.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an ethnographic description of regeneration in practice, giving a nuanced appraisal of the interactions, similarities and differences between established residents and incomers to the area. Amongst other things, it has highlighted how many of the problems commonly associated with housing estates, such as cleaning and littering issues, noisy neighbours, incompetent councils and so on, do not seem to belong exclusively to the estates where social housing is the main form of tenure. Rather they appear again and again in the narratives used by NDRA residents, and as such it would seem fair to rephrase them as problems, or issues, to do with communal living in general, whether it is in wealthier or poorer areas. As the survey of NDRA tenants has shown, the issues they cared about, and those who worried them, were not at all dissimilar from those that concerned the inhabitants of the council housing estates living all around them.

What is more, the logic that associates public management with sloppiness and incompetence and private enterprise with efficiency and speed is also challenged by this chapter's ethnographic findings. Far from rejoicing at being managed by a private company, NDRA residents consistently berated them, remarking on the difficulties involved in getting in touch with them, the lack of continuity and accountability due to the Managing Agents' firm having been sold and bought many times by different other companies, making it impossible for residents to establish a working, productive relationship with them. On the other hand the perceived stability and accountability of the council appealed to them to the point of fashioning themselves in a group that resembled as closely as possible a local TRA, the body that councillors and council officers were most familiar with and were more likely to lend a hand to.

The chapter has also highlighted the ambivalence that NDRA incomers felt about the area and their position inside it. Living in a 'notorious' area of south east London placed them outside their comfort zone on many levels, and this showed in the complexity of feelings they expressed about the area, their difficulties in convincing their friends to come and visit them, pointing towards a labour of claiming and legitimisation of the area and their position as residents in it. These contradictions surfaced and were at times happily resolved, as in the case of middle class parents confidently sending their children to the local primary, or residents interacting with council tenants during festivals. At other times however the contradictions flared up, especially around issues of dirt, waste, recycling and pollution in general, which as we have seen in the course of the thesis are powerful symbolic vehicles to express dissatisfaction, shame and anxieties about respectability and boundaries between 'worthy' selves and 'undesirable' others.

In the broader context of the thesis and its questions of transmutations of value and waste, the chapter shows new people with high levels of economic, educational, social and symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1984) moving into new, private housing that was built were once stood council housing inhabited by people with considerably lower levels of capital overall. This new group do not need subsidised housing and are not, generally speaking, on benefits; on top of this they are professionals who earn substantial wages and bring in higher tax revenues. From an economic perspective

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they are a definite asset – a value – for both local and national government, and the fact they have moved and settled into the area represents an indisputably positive outcome in terms of the plans that lay behind the regeneration of the Five Estates (Chapter Four) specifically the then Conservative Government plan to drastically cut their spending on council housing, which was to change from a major to a minor program (Jones and Murie 2006).

Just as the point of Chapter Four was not to establish any single, objective 'truth' about what 'really' happened around the time the regeneration of the Five Estates took place, the point of this chapter is not to produce a single, coherent analysis of the material, social and symbolic effects of the decanting and replacing of mainly working class tenants with younger middle class property owners. All this chapter is trying to do is deconstruct the simplicity of certain statements typical of the discourse of regeneration, that it is about improvement and difference, for example, pointing out instead the continuities of the issues the new residents share with the old tenants, or the worsening funding situation for the local, pre-existent community groups. This is not to give a general overarching statement about the success or otherwise of the program, rather to add complexity and understanding to a narrative of regeneration as recycling that often forgets to take into account that in order to create something new something old is usually wasted, that to value something usually means devaluing something else.

From a different perspective, then, the wastage of both housing – through demolitions – and people – via decanting, evictions and so on – that were caused by the regeneration of the Five Estates has left the area with a different set of issues to deal with. If the incomers represented economic value in terms of increased tax revenues and no benefit expenses, they were also likely to not be there during the day and spend their money elsewhere when they were off work. They were also more likely to move out if they were not satisfied with the area, either selling their properties or renting them out, increasing the overall instability of the area. The people that lived there before, and that to an extent still live around them, had more time, because they often did not work full time away from the area, and generally speaking lived more locally and were less likely to be able to, or want to, move out easily. It was not just housing and people's homes that were wasted, but communities

as well, made up of people with the time and interest to keep them going because they represented value for them, in the sense of being home, where their family and friends lived, where their networks of support were and so on – as opposed to just 'a place to lay my head down'.   Jacobs (1961) argued in the '60s that during planning or regeneration program it was communities that should be valued the most and helped to thrive, because they took a long time to establish and, although invisible they were, in her opinion, what made an area somewhere that people wanted to live in, instead of just get out of as fast as they could. In this case, however, communities were wasted in favour of the economic value represented by new housing and wealthier middle class incoming professionals.

Chapter Nine – Conclusion

Chapter One of this thesis explained how this project came to be the way it is, explained the analytical relevance of the fieldsite to the questions raised by the thesis, and explored the methodologies involved in the project. In Chapter Two I located the thesis theoretically at the interface of the anthropology of waste and sociological concerns with symbolic devaluation, as an ethnographic exploration of the literal and symbolic processes of value creation and destruction encountered during fieldwork. Chapter Three has described Peckham by challenging the hyperviolent, criminal descriptions that are usually attached to inner-city areas by media and politicians, focussing instead on an overall picture of sociability and normality, albeit within poverty and everyday struggles.

In Chapter Four, the analysis of a regeneration programme that took place in the '90s has been used to critique notions of regeneration as recycling, showing instead that in order for something to be regenerated it has to be wasted first, symbolically and literally. The estates to be regenerated were first represented in policy documents as uniformly dilapidated and 'beyond saving', something which is contested not just by some residents but by elected representatives at the time as well. This symbolic devaluation paved the way for the physical demolition of the blocks and removal, permanent in many cases, of their inhabitants. This chapter showed that regeneration literally wasted something that was valued by some people as their homes and communities in order to create new homes that, crucially, went to different people, i.e. the young and affluent middle classes described in Chapter Eight. The crucial element here is the *non identity* of these two groups: those who were moved out did not move back in. The area may have been improved, the houses may be nicer, but if recycling is about turning waste into something useful again, this process was more akin to throwing something away and buying, or bringing in, something new all together, in terms of a new group of people.

Chapter Five showed how human agency, as well as many other variables such as buildings materiality and human-animal interactions, can and do influence the outcome of major regeneration programmes, which therefore cannot be seen as solely determined by structural and economic relations. It has also brought to attention the

fact that people in Peckham are attached to, and prepared to fight for, their homes and communities as they are now, not just as they were in the past, going beyond nostalgic narratives of communities in the 'good old days'. Chapter Six has shown the work of the tenants' movement in Peckham and Southwark as a whole, highlighting the amount of work and level of commitment of its members in producing and caring for their estates and communities. In doing so it has undermined the Conservative narrative that equated caring for one's home and communities with private ownership only, which was the strongest rhetorical justification for the Right to Buy policy that allowed the sale of council houses in the '80s. Moreover, the chapter questions definitions of work and labour when considering the amount of time that tenants, often classified as unemployed or economically inactive for various reasons, spent caring for their estates.

Chapter Seven provided an ethnographic approach to waste in the inner city, and found that far from being unconcerned with the disposal of their waste or their environment in general, estate residents cared very much about recycling and the cleanliness and appearance of their surroundings. However a number of factors, such as inadequate policies and a physical environment that made it very hard to recycle at all combined to effectively exclude residents from the virtuous cycle of value creation represented by recycling, denying them the chance to reproduce themselves as caring, concerned and respectable citizens. Finally, Chapter Eight gave a nuanced appraisal of the arrival of middle class home owners moving into the new houses built where the Five Estates once stood, highlighting the complexity of this process, including the many similarities these incoming residents share with the old tenants of the surrounding estates. It has also shown the uncertainty and anxiety that the new residents face by living in an area with a 'bad' reputation, which they have to come to terms with themselves and justify to their extended networks. Ultimately, the aim of the chapter was to deconstruct the simplicity of certain statements typical of the discourse of regeneration, showing instead, as Chapter Four has done, that in order to create something new something old has to be wasted first, as in this case established communities were wasted in favour of the economic value represented by new housing and wealthier middle class incoming professionals.

9.1 Even more questions?

This thesis started as an investigation into what people did with their rubbish at home, but in the process of doing so, responding to residents' concerns and suggestions, I opened up the focus of the investigation to include also what was happening to both homes and people in the area. This has resulted into five (and a half) ethnographic chapters detailing processes of urban regeneration, demolition and refurbishment as well as waste behaviours in individual households and estates, cleaning and maintenance issues and, finally, a description of the incoming professional middle classes attracted by the – relatively – low prices of the newly built houses and flats. This material can and will be read in many different ways. I have chosen to read it from the perspective of wasting and valuing processes, both literal and symbolic. This viewpoint has allowed me to focus on the details of residents' everyday lives and actions, an eminently anthropological activity, and link them through to the various policies – regeneration and recycling alike – that were shaping the social and physical landscape of their area. The anxieties generated by dirt and waste, be it simply litter – which is never simple, as we have seen – or troubling 'others' that threaten complex processes of symbolic value production – like homeless people and addicts – confirm the choice of using waste as an angle to understand these processes.

Valuing and wasting are always interlinked and, as we have seen throughout the thesis, complementary processes: in order to value something, something else is devalued; whenever we add value to something, something else is wasted. The regeneration of Peckham rested on a narrative that said that what was wasted did not matter. Symbolic devaluation aided and allowed the physical destruction to take place, in fact it was instrumental and implicated in it, as the construction of the 'Five Estates' as a uniform landscape of despair and deprivation shows (chapter four): that image was the necessary starting point for the process. It was only by symbolically devaluing working class people and their homes that it was possible for 'redevelopments' to take place: if they did not matter, if they were like waste already, then it was acceptable – morally right, even – to demolish the estates, and also, crucially, it was not important to consider where the people would end up. What this thesis has done is questioning the assumption that they – people, estates, homes, communities – were like waste in the first place, or at all. If this assumption is

questioned, the entire work of re-generating social housing takes on a different meaning, especially with respect to demolition and decanting.

What about individual waste? How do these processes connect with and relate to what people do in their own homes? To begin with, the ethnography has shown how what people do with their rubbish is hardly a matter of 'free' choice: especially in the context of dense, inner-city housing estates, residents' actions were severely constrained and shaped by the policies put in place by their councils, as well as the physical set up of their dwellings, the size of their kitchen, the availability of outside storage space for their waste and recycling, the location of their flats, the availability and functioning of lifts and so on. Beyond this, two more things need to be considered as well: firstly, by focusing on the small, individual waste practices other matters are obscured, other types of waste go unnoticed.
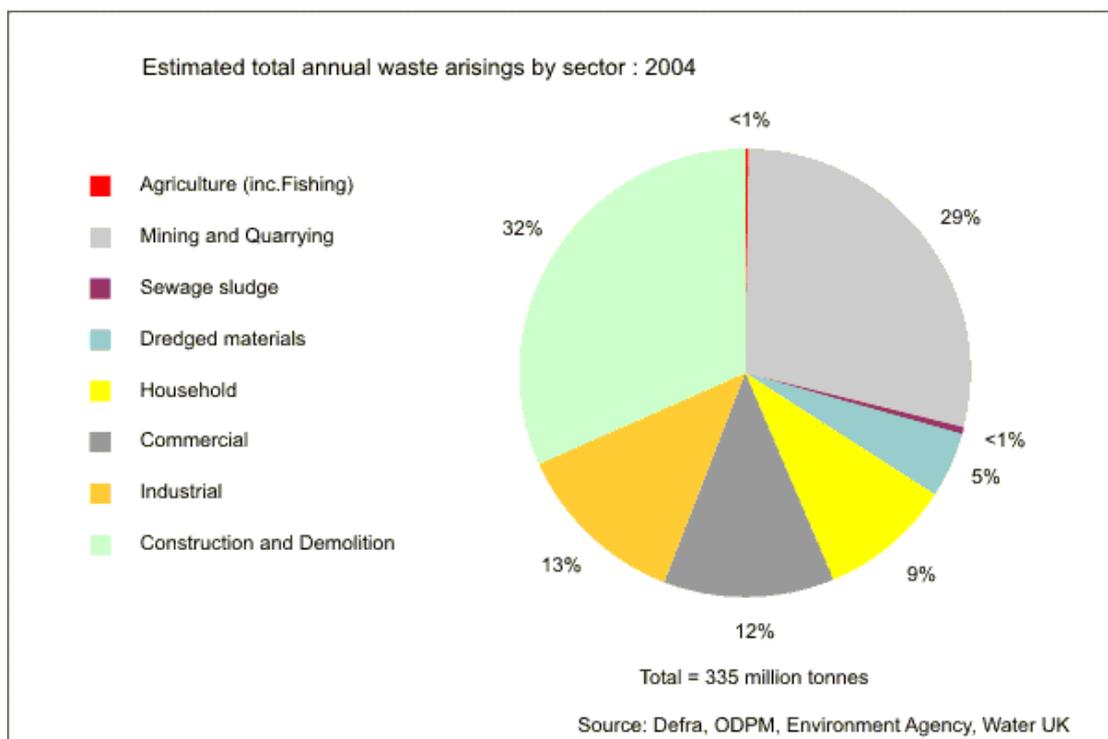

Figure 11 (1): Estimated total annual waste arisings by sector in the UK, 2004. Source: Defra http://archive.defra.gov.uk/evidence/statistics/environment/waste/kf/wrkf02.htm (accessed 20.12.12)

This graph was used in Chapter Two to illustrate how household waste represents a very small part of the total waste that ends up in landfills. However, it can also be useful to observe how the construction and demolition sector are responsible for the the biggest share of it, almost a third of the total. It could be argued that

focusing on individual waste allows this fact to go unnoticed and unchallenged, which seems to be the case when one considers that there are many campaigns 'nudging' individuals toward recycling but the construction industry is conspicuously absent from the public domain, and it is certainly not the focus, at least not in the UK, of any sustained public lobbying to decrease its waste impact. Indeed, could the size of construction waste have something to do with the obsession with destroying and remaking everything anew, and could it be linked with the regeneration processes we have looked at in the course of the thesis? Could it have something to do with the concept of creative destruction (Marx 1848, Schumpeter 1949, Harvey 1985) and the need for capital to renew and grow itself through the built environment (Smith 1979), regardless of environmental and, as we have seen, social costs?

Secondly, while looking at individual waste behaviours the ethnography (Chapter Seven) has shown that specific practices, especially recycling, can be seen as both moral and moralising, meaning that they are 'good' in themselves and make those who practice them into 'good' citizens. Thus they constitute a circuit of value through which individuals make themselves into valuable, moral, good selves. Skeggs has argued (2004) that a crucial element in the symbolic production of valuable selves is that not everyone can be one: only some people – middle class selves – are able of accrue value to themselves and construct a narrative of active, responsible and valuable citizens. They do this by systematically stripping value from others – working classes – and denying them access to value-producing cycles. This ethnography has shown, especially in Chapter Seven, how it was policies and the assumptions of politicians and officers that shaped, and most of the time closed off, the possibilities of estate residents to participate in recycling and, thus, excluded them from a virtuous cycle of value production, not allowing them to be 'good' sorts (Hawkins 2006). This exclusion from taking part in recycling can thus be seen as integral to the general theme of the thesis –the symbolic devaluation of working class selves and their homes.

9.2 Changing policies and new research avenues

In the course of the thesis I have shown how different groups in the area have made claims to different sets of values, meaning very different things while using the same, or similar words – communities, improvement, regeneration, homes, families

and so on. I have also shown how the social and power hierarchies over which the struggles for defining and appropriating value and values mapped themselves strongly influenced the outcomes of these processes. For example, tenants would usually – but not always – fail to stop the demolition of their homes and the council, with social, political and symbolic power would carry on with their 'improvement' of the area. I have used and highlighted parallels between regeneration processes and wasting processes, whereby both homes and people were thrown away, demolished and moved to make space for new housing and new people, even though the council – understandably – preferred to rely on a narrative that equated regeneration with recycling and improvement. These processes and the actors involved in them were by no means set in stone, as chapter five has shown, and it is obvious that when talking about 'the council' it is imperative to remember that it is not a monolithic institution but rather a complex, partially fluid entity made up of people and policies that are subject to change and various influences.

Policies – recycling and regenerating ones, for example – have been central to this thesis, and I would like now to focus on a particular change in policy, to do with density in the areas affected by the regeneration of the Five Estates (Chapter Four), to suggest a way in which this kind of research may move forward. The plans for regenerating the Five Estates in the '90s relied heavily on reducing density in order to turn the area into a 'desirable' residential location. The predicted outcome of the process was to reduce density from 350 h.r.h (habitable rooms per hectare) to 270 h.r.h (Peckham SRB Bid, p.15). This meant the loss of 1363 individual housing 'units' (Peckham Partnership Data, see Chapter Four), which by a conservative estimate would mean at least 2000 people had to move without the possibility of returning to the area. As we have seen in chapter four, density reduction was one of the main reasons – together with changes in tenure and dwelling sizes – why people could not go back to their homes, even when they wanted to, which many did. By 2011, however, density policies had changed, and the area covered by this research, Peckham, has been designated as an 'action area' within an 'urban zone'. Density targets for 'urban zones' vary between 200 and 700 h.r.h, and within 'action areas' 'the maximum densities may be exceeded when developments are of an exemplary standard of design' (Southwark Residential Design Standards 2011: p.8). This means standard developments in Peckham can be as dense as 700 h.r.h, which is twice as

much as the original density in the nineties, and potentially could go higher if the council deems the development to be of a high enough standard.

Table 1 – Density standards

DENSITY ZONE	HABITABLE ROOMS PER HECTARE
Central Activity Zone	650 to 1100 habitable rooms per hectare
Urban Zone	200 to 700 habitable rooms per hectare
Suburban Zone (North, Middle and South)	200 to 350 habitable rooms per hectare

Figure 12: Density standards for new developments in Peckham and Southwark: Source: New residential design standards: Supplementary Planning Document, October 2011: p.8

Figure 25: How this will look

Legend:
- Action Area
- Opportunity Areas
- Suburban Density Zone- North
- Suburban Densityv Zone -South
- Suburban Density_Zone - Middle
- Urban Density Zone
- Central Activity Zone
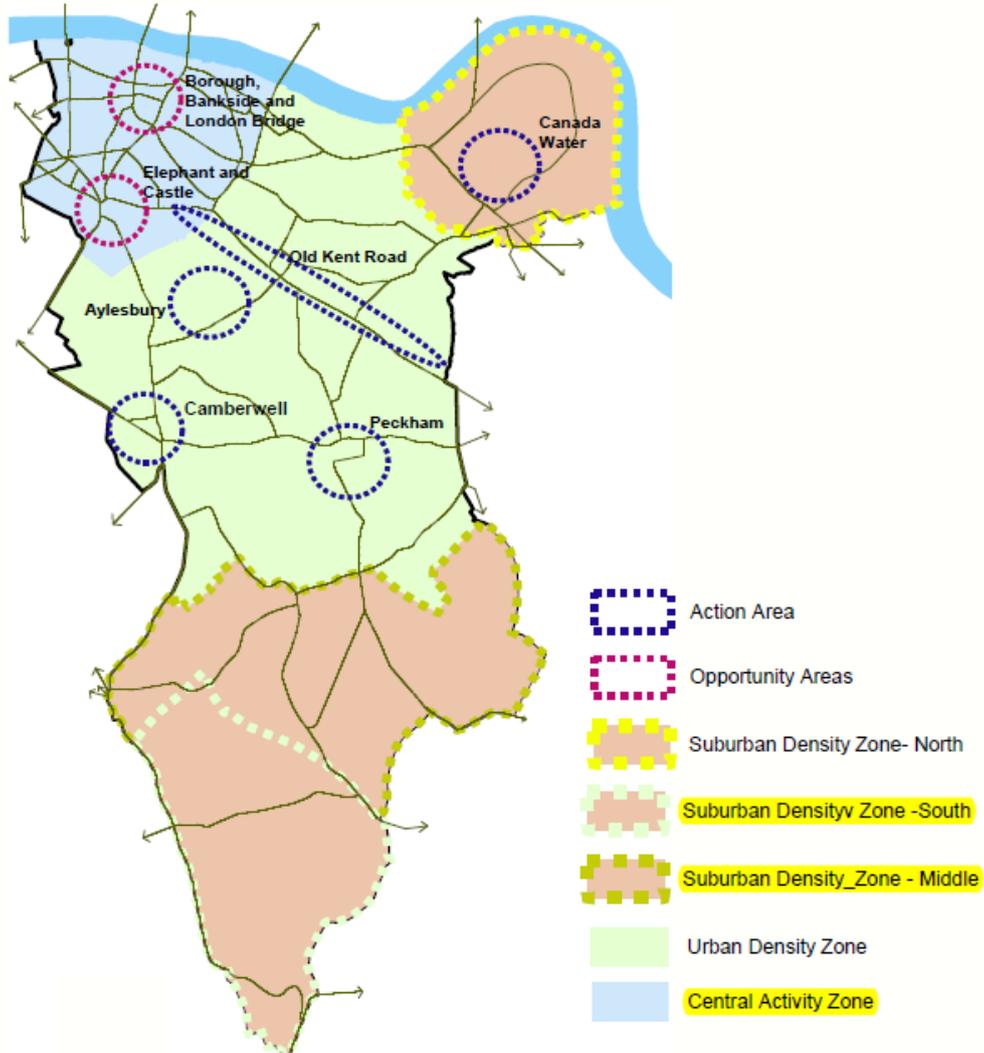
Image 16: Currently planned density standards for Pekcham and Southwark. Source: Southwardk Core Strategy Proposal Map, Appendix A, April 2011, page 78

Shore and Wright (1997: 8), drawing on Foucault, argue that

policies are most obviously political phenomena, yet it is a feature of policies that their political nature is disguised by the objective, neutral, legal-rational idioms in which they are portrayed. In this guise, policies appear to be mere instruments for promoting efficiency

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and effectiveness. This masking of the political under the cloak of neutrality is a key feature of modern power.

Their work on policies as objects of anthropological investigations can be useful in this case as a further lens, together with value and waste, to understand what has happened in Peckham. The change in density policy from the nineties to 2011 seems to fit well in the frame suggested by Wright, which would imply that density was always a political matter, as was the type of housing and, crucially, the type of people who should or should not live in those houses. Interestingly, when talking about houses, Allen's (2008) work in Liverpool shows again how political – and economic, I would argue – decisions can be disguised as rational and effective statements of fact, thus removing them entirely from the realm of politics and, therefore, democratic discussion, as Foucault (1977) explained. During the regeneration of the Five Estates, in the '90s, terraced houses in Peckham were hailed as the only 'proper' way for people to live, as exemplified in the scene narrated to me of the two neighbours chatting over the garden fence (Chapter Four). However, in Liverpool, only a few years later, terraced houses were described by the council that was doing all it could to demolish them – including compulsorily purchasing them from their owners – as the antithesis of modernity and proper living, a relic from the past – specifically a working class past – that had to be superseded in order to move the city, and its people, forward and onward.

Another anthropologist, Alexander (2005) working on value and waste as well as policies, has made this connection very clearly by looking at the ways in which waste reduction programmes, for example, all claim to 'reduce' waste – a valuable policy aim. In fact Alexander shows that the relevant thing to look for is how the frame is set around a particular phenomena, what is counted and what is not, where and when and how things/costs/assets/resources are defined and made into significant entities or masked and made invisible by placing them outside a frame that *appears* to account for everything in a neutral and efficient way, but is of course a political statement in itself. Taken all together what these authors, and the many others I have borrowed from in the course of the thesis, offer is a critique of policies and activities that portray themselves as neutral and self-evident – what can be more obvious than the fact that recycling is a 'good' thing? This is of course an eminently anthropological

endeavour, the standard practice of taking a practice or belief that a group or society takes for granted and instead interrogating it and questioning it in a critical manner.

The aim of this thesis, however, was not simply of making the 'familiar' – housing estates, working class people, recycling and regenerating policies – look exotic, but rather

> detaching and repositioning oneself sufficiently far enough from the norms and categories of thought that give security and meaning to the moral universe of one's society in order to interrogate the supposed natural or axiomatic 'order of things'' (Shore and Wright 1997: 17).

The work of an anthropologist, or of any social scientist for that matter, is not, and should not be, the same as that of a policymaker. Critiquing is not the same as offering practical alternatives, but it has a value that should not be underestimated (Allen 201). What this thesis has done has been to pick away at the varnish of programmes and ideals – regeneration, recycling – and shown some of their contradictions and, just as importantly, the pain they cause to those who are at their receiving end. It has highlighted issues of power in programmes that, for example, exclude inner-city working class people from recycling practices that society at large considers worthwhile and valuable, and in regeneration programmes that break communities and then, or even at the same time, berate residents for their antisocial behaviour. It has instead described inner-city estates as I have experienced them myself and through the eyes and stories of their residents, providing a picture of complexity, sociability and reliance in the face of media and politicians denigrating inner-city estates as breeding grounds of all that is wrong with our 'broken' society. If Peckham and, by extension, our inner-cities in general are framed as symbolic 'waste' in mainstream media and popular culture, this ethnography has gone into the wastebin and looked at all the bits again, doing exactly what Douglas (1966) thought was most dangerous, re-assembling matter that had been wasted, bringing it to light again, and substantially challenged its positioning and definition as 'waste'.

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