They've Got Their Wine Bars, We've Got Our Pubs': Housing, Diversity and Community in Two South London Neighbourhoods

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1 The Making of Inner-City Diversity

This chapter explores the constituents and dynamics of diversity, community and boundary-making in two South London neighbourhoods, Bermondsey and Camberwell. The analysis will in particular focus on how settlement patterns and residential geographies have been impacted by the nature of the housing stock and policies regulating access to social housing (Fig. 1).[1]

Despite their relative proximity in the London Borough of Southwark, the two inner-city neighbourhoods of Bermondsey and Camberwell are characterized by significant differences in terms of the built-up urban landscape and their place in the historical development of London. In Camberwell, class was built into the landscape from the late eighteenth century when city merchants built Georgian houses in the southern part of Camberwell, located on a slope above the slums and smells of northern Camberwell. Bermondsey, on the other hand, was a much more homogeneous, white working-class area, with livelihoods sustained by local employment

[1] The empirical material presented in this chapter derives from fieldwork carried out in Bermondsey and Camberwell from March 2011 to January 2012. In stage 1, a total of 20 key informant interviews were carried out. Stage 2 consisted of 36 semi-structured interviews with local residents in six sites of inter-action, three in each neighbourhood. After conclusion of the field work, Neighbourhood Forums were staged in Bermondsey and Camberwell in March 2012 in order to discuss preliminary research findings and engage the audience in a discussion of future prospects for the neighbourhood.

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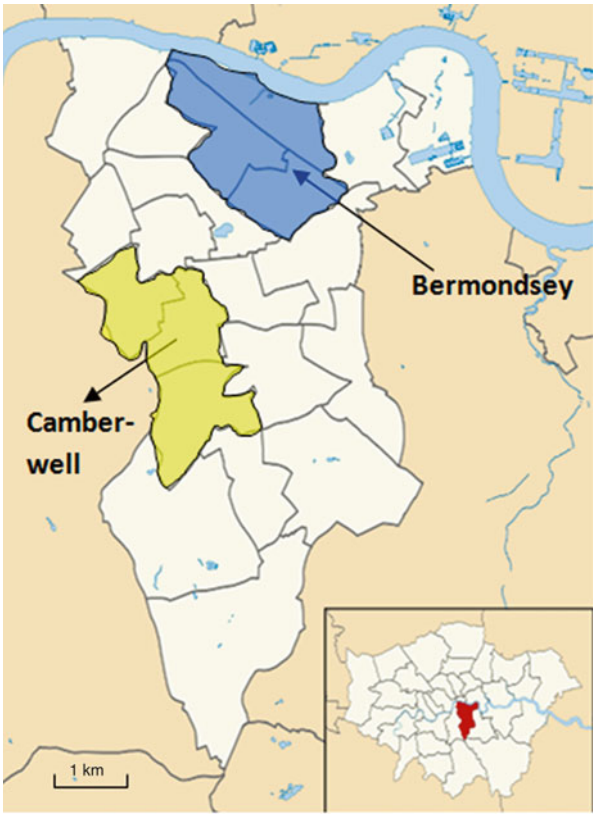

Fig. 1 Bermondsey and Camberwell, in the London Borough of Southwark

in the docklands or related industrial areas. What emerged was a tight-knit community characterized by a strong sense of local belonging and a them-us distinction on territorial grounds.[2]

These differences are even more clear-cut in terms of the historical patterns of immigration and settlement. Camberwell has long been an area of arrival and diversity. An area of settlement for early nineteenth century German immigrants, it emerged as one of the destinations for post-World War 2 Windrush immigrants, and then, as now, was characterized by one of the highest black minority concentrations in London. Bermondsey, in contrast, was often avoided by non-white minorities,

[2] As Feinstein also argues in his description of Bermondsey: 'Bermondsey was more akin to a typical English village occupied by a group of people closely tied to a particular location through a specific economic history and in marrying links of kinship and residence' (Feinstein 1998).

Table 1 Population by ward and ethnicity, 2011 (percentage points change from 2001 in brackets)

	Bermondsey			Camberwell		
	Grange	Riverside	South Bermondsey	Brunswick Park	Camberwell Green	South Camberwell
White British	43.8 (−12.3)	47.7 (−15.6)	39.3 (−21.9)	34.8 (−9.1)	26.7 (−13.7)	42.9 (−8.4)
White other	14.2 (5.8)	18.4 (7.0)	14.1 (7.2)	10.3 (3.1)	10.3 (3.5)	10.8 (3.5)
Black Caribbean	3.6 (−0.3)	1.9 (−0.3)	3.5 (−1.0)	9.2 (−2.8)	8.7 (−2.9)	7.4 (−3.7)
Black African	12.4 (−3.7)	9.2 (−1.4)	17.8 (3.2)	20.4 (0.2)	28.1 (3.5)	14.5 (0.0)
Other Black	2.9 (1.8)	2.5 (1.7)	4.5 (3.4)	5.5 (2.6)	5.5 (2.9)	4.3 (2.5)
Others	23.1 (8.7)	20.3 (8.6)	20.8 (9.6)	19.8 (6.0)	20.7 (4.1)	20.1 (5.9)
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

(ONS 2013)

and remained overwhelmingly white up into the 1980s, with Irish immigrants constituting the only significant minority population (Table 1).

As is evident from the comparison of the 2001 and 2011 census figures, these differences have, in terms of demography and ethnic diversity, become increasingly muted, with Bermondsey and Camberwell wards being characterized by similar inter-censal trends. But the decrease in the White British population is generally much more pronounced in Bermondsey, as is the increase in 'White Other'. At the same time, the increase in the categories 'Others' and 'Other Black' suggests that the proportion of the local population that does not identify with any of the main groupings is increasing significantly throughout all the wards. Together, these shifts portray a changing face to diversity, with the white majority now a minority, and the major long-settled postcolonial groups declining in significance. Altogether, both neighbourhoods are characterized by a multiplication of the axes of difference: in short, the deepening of what has been named 'super-diversity' (Vertovec 2005).

2 Why Housing Matters

Many past and present settlement dynamics are, in Bermondsey/Camberwell as well as in other parts of London, related to the availability of housing. In order to explain these differences, we will explore in this chapter how the diverse nature of, and control over, housing stock at neighbourhood level have affected local dynamics of settlement patterns and inter-group relations in the two neighbourhoods. There are two aspects to this analysis.

One addresses broader urban dynamics as well as the policy framework that has served to curtail or open access to specific kinds of housing. This concerns the manner in which access to housing in Bermondsey and Camberwell has conditioned the settlement patterns of both majority and minority populations. Of relevance here is both the impact of policy changes to social housing allocation and the post-industrial reconfiguration of urban space expressed in processes of gentrification and the redevelopment of riverside docklands into expensive housing units. As will be discussed, these developments have contributed to different narratives of community and diversity, with us/them distinctions expressed according to ethnic/racial, socio-economic and generational markers.

The other aspect concerns the nature of inter-group relations and everyday diversity at the very local level. The level of analytical interference here is, first and foremost, the estate. Defined for this purpose as a piece of land built over with houses, either privately or – as it is the case here – by a local authority, the estate constitutes a very prominent spatial form in the post-World War 2 urban landscape of inner London, typically built in the inter-war and post- World War 2 period. The estate thus provides a semi-public space of social interaction which may extend into a site of belonging and identification, the changing role of which we will examine here in the light of generational differences and the changing nature of diversity.

In the following sections we will first outline the broader housing dynamics, with particular reference to the London Borough of Southwark. Against this backdrop we will explore the housing pathways of immigrant and ethnic minority populations in the two neighbourhoods, as well as the effect of post-industrial changes to the housing stock. Moving on to the very local level, we will then analyze how post-industrial drivers and housing pathways have affected neighbourhood dynamics at estate level over time.

2.1 Social Housing: Outline of the Broader Picture

In her analysis of the history of council estates in Britain, Lynsey Hanley argues that '…class is built into the physical landscape of the country' (Hanley 2007: 18). That is probably even more the case in an urban context where the distinction, however stereotypical, between middle-class home owners and working-class tenants is manifest in the built-up landscape, most significantly housing estates developed to house the industrial working classes (ibid.: 20).

The push to end the slums and re-build bombed-out residential areas took place after the second world war, with one million houses built in the UK in the period 1945–1950 (Hanley 2007:83). Fluctuating between 100,000–200,000 units per year, the construction of social housing kept increasing until 1979 (ibid.: 100). This development was put in reverse by the Housing Act of 1980 that gave council tenants the right to buy council-owned properties while barring local authorities from building replacement houses. This has had a significant impact, so while 42 % of the British population lived in council housing in 1979, this figure had been reduced to

12 % by 2008, with a total of four million people in the UK on the waiting list for either a council or a housing association home (The Guardian 30.09.2008). As a result of decreasing stock and needs-based assessment, social housing became an increasingly narrow welfare tenure, '…increasingly the preserve of the poor, the unemployed, the elderly and the desperate' (Hamnett and Randolph 1987: 50). Such processes of residualization have in turn led to an increasing stigmatization of council estates, with popular narratives conflating council renting with moral decline and the emergence of a parasitic 'chav' culture (Jones 2011; Hanley 2007).

There is in many parts of London a co-incidence of high levels of deprivation and high proportions of immigrants and ethnic minority populations in areas where social housing constitutes a high percentage of the housing stock. In inner London the proportion of immigrants and ethnic minorities in private and social housing has been increasing since 1991, while at the same time there is increasing overall demand for a pool of affordable housing that has been shrinking since 1981 (Hamnett and Butler 2010: 71–72). In addition, the decreasing (though increasingly contested) stock of social housing has also become central to 'backlash' narratives, with white working class populations protesting against perceived favouritism towards immigrants and ethnic minorities (Hewitt 2005).

With a total of 39,000 council homes, Southwark council is the largest social landlord in London. Southwark also has the highest proportion of council housing to homes of any local authority in Britain, owning a third of all housing units and providing housing for nearly half the population in the borough (Independent Commission 2012: 11). In addition, 16,700 properties are owned by leaseholders. As in other parts of Britain, the construction of council housing kept increasing until the 1980 Housing Act. In Southwark, two-thirds of current tenants are not economically active, and have a median income which is five times lower than that of home owners (Independent Commission 2012: 11). But at the same time, a waiting list totalling 18,724 in 2012 also illustrates the continuing severity of the housing challenge.

3 Housing and Settlement in Bermondsey and Camberwell

Previously known as the 'larder of London', Bermondsey's present day socio-economic landscape has its basis in the nineteenth and early twentieth century development of the riverside docks, and industries associated with it, such as food processing – e.g. biscuits, jams, confectionary – in which many Bermondsey women worked, while many men were employed as casual labourers on the dockside (Evans 2006). Despite thriving industries in the area, the working and living conditions of most people were extremely poor, so much so that Bermondsey was known as 'the black patch of London'[3] in the early twentieth century (de la Mare 2008).

[3]The phrase is attributed to Mary Macarthur, organizer of the National Federation of Women Workers (De la Mare 2008)

While the northern part of Camberwell shares many characteristics with Bermondsey, both in terms of its industrial history and the low standards of local housing, most of Camberwell evolved as a destination and residence area for middle-class families who started building large houses in the southern part of Camberwell in the late eighteenth century. During the nineteenth century, however, the village became a suburb: 'From a straggling suburban parish of about 4000 inhabitants, Camberwell has become a congeries of streets, part of the great metropolis itself. Bricks and mortar, and universal stucco, have invaded the place' (Blanch 1875, in Boast 2000: 33). Perhaps most indicative of the rapid development was the 30-fold population increase in Camberwell parish (Camberwell, Peckham and Dulwich) in the period 1801–1901, due to both the growth of the city of London and the development of public transport, enabling people to work in central London and live at some distance from the centre of the city.

In post-World War 2 Bermondsey the vast majority of housing stock was social housing, mostly controlled by the Bermondsey Metropolitan Borough. Under a principle informally known as 'sons and daughters', housing units would first and foremost be made available to the offspring of tenants who already lived in the borough.[4] In this manner, the structure of housing allocation would serve to root local belonging in localized kinship links in the immediate neighbourhood, thus reinforcing the properties of a 'closed' system with strong internal bonds. An example of this link between spatial proximity and familiarity was provided by a lifelong resident:

> I've lived in this particular street for the last 44 years, literally moved in about two minutes from where I was born. I'm one of three, I'm in the middle, I have an older and a younger brother. Older brother is six years older than me; younger brother is three years younger than me. Both now live in Kent. I was educated locally, went to the school about 30 seconds from where we are sitting [....] parents born minutes away from here. My mother was born on the Dickens Estate 80 years ago, my dad was born in a place called New Church Street which is now Llewellyn Street, 84 years ago, in 1927 [....] so we have kind of always been in this tiny little area for a number of years, although we are now the last. [The] family have moved out, aunts and uncles used to live across the road, great uncle used to live locally, cousins you know, but they have now all gone, all dispersed to Kent. (White British Bermondsey resident, aged 47)

These properties of the local community slowly came undone during the second half of the twentieth century. The structural reform of 1965, that saw the metropolitan councils of Bermondsey, Southwark and Camberwell amalgamated into the London Borough of Southwark, meant that the social housing stock in Bermondsey became available to residents from other parts of Southwark. This was of particular significance in Bermondsey where 90 % of dwellings in 1981 were council-owned, as opposed to 50 % in Camberwell (Carter 2008: 165). Accordingly, the nature of

[4] Early ethnographies from London have described this practice in more detail – e.g. Young and Willmott (1957), pp. 31–43.

Table 2 Households by type of tenure, 2011 (percentage point change from 2001 in brackets)

	Bermondsey			Camberwell			
	Grange	Riverside	South Bermondsey	Brunswick Park	Camberwell Green	South Camberwell	Southwark
Owns outright	5.8 (0.7)	9.9 (0.6)	6.2 (−0.2)	9.7 (−0.3)	4.6 (0.1)	13.5 (0.3)	9.8 (0.1)
Owns w. mortgage or loan	16.1 (0.0)	18.8 (−2.4)	15.0 (−5.0)	20.4 (0.4)	10.8 (0.4)	26.2 (0.3)	19.5 (−0.8)
Social housing	45.1 (−17.8)	34.3 (−14.2)	52.3 (−3.3)	46.5 (−8.9)	63.5 (9.0)	37.9 (−6.7)	43.7 (−9.8)
Private renting	29.8 (15.3)	32.3 (11.9)	21.7 (6.5)	20.5 (6.7)	18.5 (6.5)	20.2 (5.5)	23.6 (8.5)

(ONS 2013)

the housing stock made it more difficult for outsiders to access housing in Bermondsey.

Overall, housing in Camberwell presents a much more heterogeneous picture, with owner-occupancy as well as private and social renting. Accordingly, the impact of the policy changes outlined above has not been as dramatic in Camberwell as in Bermondsey. Furthermore, as noted previously, newcomers from abroad and from other parts of Britain have had access to housing in Camberwell for a much longer period of time than in Bermondsey.

Table 2 sums up the more recent tenure changes in Bermondsey and Camberwell in the period 2001–2011. Whereas there is very little overall change to the proportion of households that own property, the decreasing proportion of households in social housing has been matched by an increase in private renting, particularly in the Bermondsey wards. It has been argued that the increase in the proportion renting privately is likely to reflect buy-to-let landlords purchasing many of the properties which have come on the market (Independent Commission 2012: 26).

3.1 Immigrant Settlement Patterns and Housing Pathways

It follows from the previous section that the spatial distribution of early immigrants would correlate with the availability of private housing, and this initially led to a concentration of ethnic minorities in the centre of the borough, in particular in the Camberwell-Peckham area (Carter 2008: 157). As a result, the immigrant population has been part of the social and cultural fabric here for much longer. In conversation, Greek and Greek-Cypriot shopkeepers in Camberwell would mention how Camberwell Green in the early 1970s was referred to as 'Camberwell Greek' as the majority of local shopkeepers were of Greek, or Greek-Cypriot, origin. Similarly,

residents would buy into cultural practices of the incomers, recalling how '…on summer's evenings you could hear West Indian steel band music floating in Camberwell'.

Such visible displays of minority presence contrast Bermondsey experiences from the same period, the early 1970s, as remembered by a Black Caribbean resident on Bermondsey's Dickens Estate:

> I'll tell you something. Over the shops, there was a man and his daughter and there was another African woman that moved back to Africa soon after, there was two black people living in Copperfield and myself. There wasn't hardly any black people living round here at all. You go down Tower Bridge Road and you wouldn't see another black person. (Black Caribbean Bermondsey resident, aged 73)

But despite this early accommodation of difference in Camberwell, there were nevertheless experiences of racial discrimination, in particular among Black Caribbean immigrants who constituted the most significant proportion of non-white immigrants in the post-World War 2 period. As remembered by a Camberwell resident who arrived in South London aged 13 in the early 1970s:

> A lot of people felt as well that their step-mother or the mother country, what you felt was your nice mother turned out to be the wicked step-mother (laughs) [....] I remember seeing those signs you know when I came 'No Dogs'… you know for renting accommodation, 'No Dogs, No Blacks'…well 'No Coloured' actually, coz that's what they used to call it, and sometimes 'No Blacks' as well. (Black Caribbean Camberwell resident, aged 56)

From the 1970s, as equality legislation opened up for ethnic minorities and new allocation rules gave priority to applicants in greatest need, ethnic minorities gradually got access to council housing schemes. But as they were steered towards less favoured estates – the 'second wave' of council housing – in the central part of Southwark, the borough was still markedly ethnically divided in the early 1990s (Carter 2008: 174). In addition, there were reports of harassment and intimidation to stop black families from settling when the council offered them homes in the northern part of the borough, thus initially making black families reluctant to move to Bermondsey and Rotherhithe (Carter 2008: 177; Evans 2012).

There has, however, been a significant shift over the past 20 years, and by 2011 the non-white proportion of the population in Bermondsey exceeded 40 % (ONS 2013). This increase in the immigrant and ethnic minority population in the neighbourhood has also, in particular over the past 10 years, coincided with a decrease in racial harassment and overtly racial positioning – as expressed by a resident who moved to northern Bermondsey in 1999:

> This was in 1999. Every Easter, for the five years after we came here, the British National Party did their march along the Jamaica Road. And each year, it got a bit smaller, and in 2004 or 2005 they gave it up. What's been happening here is that the ethnic and racial mix is coming to this area, so now you've got a much more mixed area, and that has all happened in the last ten or eleven years […] As soon as you get black and brown neighbours, then the whole game changes, because then, well, they are OK, some of them are good, some of them are bad, just like us, so the whole thing withers away. (White British Bermondsey resident, 60s)

This observation, made by a relative newcomer to Bermondsey, was similar to views expressed by many other local residents and service providers, stressing how racial incidents and overt racism in public areas had decreased over the past 10 years – though 30 % of the minority ethnic population in 2008 still saw racial harassment as a serious problem (Communities and Local Government 2008). There is also, as experienced by residents, evidence of the decreasing presence of the British National Party (BNP).

Significant here is also the way in which local residents were able to 'manage' friendly and cordial relationships across ethnic/racial divides at an individual level and at the same time maintain racial stereotypes. As experienced by the first black councillor to be elected in South Bermondsey:

> Now I have become part of Bermondsey. When I have my surgery [consultation with constituents] down The Blue, people come to complain to me, [saying] "they are giving the houses to black people". "We don't mean any offence", that's what one lady who comes and says, she won't say "I'm not racist", she will say "I am not racialist, but I don't like them" (laughs). (Black African Bermondsey resident, 70s)

Whereas there is an obvious irony to the situation – complaining about 'black people' to a black councillor – the exchange also demonstrates the continuing significance of housing shortages in the area. But while many white residents considered housing allocation unfair, the blame would first and foremost be on those who manage the allocation – 'they are giving the houses to black people', as stated in the quote above.

Such sentiments were also articulated in particular in the Neighbourhood Forum in Bermondsey, an event dominated by middle-aged and elderly White British residents. Here there was a strong sense that 'community' was being eroded, and that this was seen as closely related to council housing policies. But the Neighbourhood Forum also provided examples of how local residents were able to 'manage' friendly and cordial relationships across ethnic/racial divides at an individual level and at the same time maintain racial stereotypes.

3.2 Emerging Generational Divides

Overall the changing housing patterns have also impacted the demographic profile, particularly in Bermondsey where outsiders have been settling for a much shorter period of time. Whereas the older generation of White British residents have held on to their council flats, their children are often unable to find social housing locally, and they tend to move further away from London, typically to Kent, while an increasing number of ethnic minorities and immigrants are being allocated social housing in Bermondsey. There is, accordingly, a demographic imbalance, as social housing estates increasingly are inhabited by an ageing White British population and a younger minority population, as observed by a long-term community activist.

> You have the kind of pensioners who lived there and then you had the equivalent of their grandchildren who were people from all over who had been allocated those housing. So there were younger kind of black families coming in whereas there was none of the…there was no old black generation you felt in the area. There also wasn't the middle-aged people and what I've found as a community worker here was pensioners were saying what had happened was their children had not been able to get housing in the area. (White British Bermondsey resident, 50s)

Furthermore, as a final twist in the narrative of immigration and settlement, an increasing number of houses in Camberwell have become available due to return migration. As Black Caribbeans who had migrated to Britain in the 1960s and 1970s reached retirement age, many of those who had invested in houses would sell up, mostly making a handsome profit, and return to their countries of origin. The buyers of such houses, typically late nineteenth century Victorian terraces, would mostly be white professionals, self-identifying as middle-class and attracted to Camberwell because of its proximity to central London.

3.3 Wine Bars and Pubs

Whereas the trajectory outlined above constitutes the conclusion to a migrant trajectory at one level, it also testifies to the local impact of the post-industrial development that inner London is undergoing. In both Camberwell and Bermondsey, proximity to central London in combination with improved means of transportation are seen as key drivers behind the residential mobility and settlement patterns that have emerged over the past 10–20 years. But as gentrification concerns the ways in which existing residential areas become attractive to a more affluent subset of the population, these are also processes that serve to create or enhance socio-economic divides at neighbourhood level, thus bringing the underlying, classed stratifications of the urban landscape to the fore again.

Bermondsey & Proud
'Mum and dad remember the Bermondsey streets,
Where the front doors were open, no one needed their keys.
Everybody trying to forget the war
But that big pile of bricks was the house next door.
Stevedores and dockers waiting on the quays
For the next big ship full of spices and teas
But the ships are no more and the docks are all flats
Now there's rich people running round instead of the rats.'[5]

[5] This is the first verse of 'Bermondsey and proud', a song written by Tony Moorcroft and Nigel of Bermondsey in 2010.

The contrasts between past and present Bermondsey are captured in the text box above, the first verse of a song written by two local artists in 2010, with strong references to hospitality and honesty. The final line – 'now there's rich people running round instead of the rats' – refers to how the docklands, previously the mainstay of local livelihoods, have been converted into expensive housing on the riverside of the Thames in northern Bermondsey.

Riverside, the northernmost and least deprived ward, is also the part of Bermondsey that has seen the most significant housing-related changes. It is here that the former docklands – traditionally the mainstay of local livelihoods –have been redeveloped into exclusive residential areas since the late 1980s. Furthermore, the extension of the Jubilee Line to Bermondsey meant that access to central London was greatly enhanced. These new estates, some of them gated, are attractively located near the riverfront and close to the city of London, but also adjacent to deprived council estates. This resonates with a recent 'snap-shot' of Bermondsey in a nationwide newspaper: 'A tale of two cities: it is either hyper-gentrified or hyper-ungentrified, and never the twain shall meet. This makes for a peculiar patch of city where poverty and affluence jar' (Guardian 14.01.2012). Or as a resident on the Dickens Estate, immediately next to the developments, put it: 'They've got their wine bars – we've got our pubs'.

What was frequently expressed by white residents in both Bermondsey and Camberwell was the experience of an increasingly clear-cut, spatially manifest, socio-economic differentiation. While this gentrification process in Camberwell constituted a 'remake' of a historically well-defined demarcation that could be traced back to the early nineteenth century and was part of the architectural imprint of the neighbourhood, in Bermondsey the development was perceived much more as an affront to the old 'common as muck' community,[6] celebrated by old residents.

> Bermondsey's a two tier system really isn't it – them and us. There's people I speak to who live in the river side flats that I've got to know over the years. But there is the thing about building these flats and shoving great big walls and gates round them so they become gated communities […] And let's face it, the only reason they want to come here is because the city is on the door. I've seen the other day on George Road, they're building some flats on what used to be the John Fell Hall, 1 and 2 bedroom apartments, starting from £325,000. I'm sorry, that's not aimed at people round here. And yet again, it's this communities thing, 1 and 2 bedroom apartments, that's not family – you know, so you kind of get this twilight zone full of thrusting executives from the city who probably spend money here and go home to their shire homes. (White British Bermondsey resident, aged 47)

[6] Literally translated into 'common as shit' (or farm yard manure), 'common as muck' has historically held strong negative connotations, often referring to aspects of working-class behaviour. But in Gillian Evans' ethnographic study from Bermondsey, 'common as muck' has interestingly been re-appropriated by one of her key informants who uses the term to refer to 'true' working-class people: 'Sharon, who is clearly not a member of the 'new working class', revels in being 'common-as-shit', and emphasises, therefore, equality between people as an affirmation of the value of the lowest common denominator' (Evans 2006: 31).

So while living in immediate proximity, there is altogether very limited common ground – in terms of shared spaces and shared interests – in this part of Bermondsey. Whereas many residents appreciated the redevelopment of the derelict docklands, there was also resentment that most of the housing that had been constructed during the 1980s and 1990s was way beyond the means of the local population. To many, the resulting socio-economic divide was perceived as the most significant obstacle to the idea and reality of Bermondsey as a community. Furthermore, the present-day reality of 'old Bermondsey' is situated uncomfortably between the memory of the 'we was all one' community of the past and the contemporary perception of a run-down and deprived area.

4 Housing and Community

Whereas the previous sections aimed to provide an outline of settlement patterns and housing pathways within overall urban dynamics, the remaining part of the chapter will explore the nature of everyday diversity and conviviality at the level of everyday life, thereby exploring aspects of previously identified themes of ethnicity/race, generation and class in more detail. In doing this, we will be using the *estate* as the linchpin of the analysis. As argued, the estate constitutes a very prominent spatial form in the urban landscape of inner London, in particular in relation to housing built in the inter-war and post-World War 2 periods. Estate rather than street, so to speak, and residents would routinely refer to the name of their estate as their point of reference and belonging.

The estate, as a semi-public space constituted and controlled by those who live there, may then extend into an organizational form, as an estate typically is represented by a tenants and residents association (TRA). A TRA is typically set up and owned by the tenants and leaseholders living on a specific estate. The TRA thus constitutes a vehicle for the planning and execution of site-based community activities at estate level as well as a platform for communication with service providers, typically housing officers, and locally elected councillors.

While the TRAs thus are persistent elements of social organization at local level, their role has generally been diminishing over the past decades due to declining support from residents. This was also the general experience among residents who lived on estates in Bermondsey and Camberwell. There was a nostalgic memory of a past characterized by strong community relations which contrasted with the present day, in particular among older residents. This development was attributed to a stronger sense of individualism among residents, the changing ethnic profile of the estates, and a generally more rapid population turnover combined with increasing subletting. Furthermore, there was evidence of an increasing expectation, in particular among younger residents, that those who volunteered for TRA-related activities should receive financial remuneration.

4.1 The Estate as Community

For many, in particular elderly, residents, the experience of community and neighbourliness on the estate was characterized by a memory of a strong and stable community that always compared favourably with the present, as explained by a long-term resident on the Lettsom Estate:

> When we were young, well, there wasn't a lot of coloured people. They were around, but we all got on together. If they moved in next door, you used to knock on the door and say "excuse me – would you like a cup of tea?" because they hadn't got their cooker on or their electric on. You would make a pot of tea and take it in to them. And when they finished, they used to fetch it back and say 'thank you very much', and you made friends. I couldn't go to my neighbours here if they'd just moved in and say "would you like a cup of tea". They'd look at you and say "what do you want", like you were being nosy. Which you're not. You're just doing, the way I was fetched up, that was what I would do. But as I said, the society has gone completely […] They sell these properties off to people, in these rooms you don't know, the next one is let as rooms. You don't know who is the actual tenant of that, you don't know. (White British Camberwell resident, 67 years)

These are also memories where it is the *white* community of yesteryear that compares favourably with the present situation where the majority of tenants on the estate are black. Furthermore, the Right to Buy has over time led to an increase in private renting, with many flats being let as rooms. This typically leads to a high level of turnover, and this in turn leads to alienation, as experienced above. The resident in question looked forward to moving away from the Lettsom Estate, after 38 years, and 6 months after the interview she and her husband moved to Kent.

It was the perception of the resident, herself Camberwell-born and for many years an active member of the TRA committee, that many of the black tenants who had moved on to the estate over time did not want to be part of the existing TRA committee and instead wanted their own committee. A Black Caribbean former resident, who had moved on to the estate in 1989, had witnessed how the ethnic mix on the estate had changed:

> When I first went there, it was a lovely hall. They had a bar there and pool […] it was basically just whites, and then it was closed down for a while and then blacks take it over now as you can see what it is there now […] the problem with the estate as well is there is no unity because I mean "this don't like that", "that don't like that", everyone keeps themselves to themselves, the Caribbeans are arguing there are more Africans come, you know, on the estate now, you know, the same old thing. And most of the whites who live there have moved to Essex or Kent. (Black Caribbean ex-Camberwell resident, 53)

Accordingly, the dynamics between white and black residents were experienced in terms of a succession rather than a confrontation, with the white-led TRA ceasing to operate. This was accompanied by the experience of a generationally much more disjointed resident population, with the notion of 'keeping themselves to themselves' as perhaps the most widespread description of contemporary British neighbourhood relations. The suggested tensions between 'Caribbeans' and 'Africans' resonate well with the experiences of other residents. They reflect the scars of colonial history – 'they say we sold them' was how a Nigerian businessman put it – but

also how length of stay was a source of tension between well-established and newer immigrant populations.

The generational aspect and the changes to the nature of community relations on the estate were also touched on by a female resident in her early 20s. Of Ghanaian origin but born in Camberwell, she had lived on the estate all her life.

> Well, I'm not too sure about the race thing but in terms of the old and the young, it's like a lot of old people, they've been living here, so I can understand their frustration, how things have changed, and it is not as community based as it was. But a lot of people now, because they're not that much into community as much as people were a long time before when they used to do street parties, you know. For me, that's enjoyable, but a lot of people don't see that, a lot of people are into making money as well, so that comes before communities, it's more about individualism. (Black British Camberwell resident, aged 23)

It was generally immigrant and ethnic minority tenants who would be most positive about life on the estates. This is the experience of a Spanish woman who had lived on Dickens Estate with her Mexican partner since 1999. Their children went to local schools, and she was overall positive about the multi-ethnic nature of their everyday life on the estate:

> Well, I think a lot of people, well a lot of people are African, and I'm very happy with that. Also, my friends, I think they are the only white ones, but they play around down there because we got a basketball pitch, so sometimes they go there and, yeah, they are always with Africans, and they're fine. I really like them, they go and play with them and they're good. They have a good relationship with them […] I think my kids are very free from all this racist things, they don't think about black or I think well that's what I teach them no, so that's what I try to do. (Bermondsey resident, aged 35)

As opposed to residents who had spent all their life on the estate – and thus measured the present against a memory of the past – her experience was based on the friendships she had made during her time on the estate as well as the experience of her children. It is, however, also important to emphasize that local boundaries and distinctions are experienced differently by younger generations, and local respondents in Camberwell would point to the role of locally specific notions of territoriality and belonging. As explained by a D'Eynsford Estate resident:

> There was some kind of gang warfare that was in the offing, and one of the women on the estate was going 'oh no', she was crying, you know, and getting worried. There were some youths gathering on the estate, and they were youths from African parents, Caribbean parents, they were linking together because they are from here. (Black Caribbean Camberwell resident, aged 56)

So rather than organizing according to ethnic origin it is in this instance local belonging to the estate that served to structure social organization, at least for youth groups. This significance of local territory refers to phenomena popularly known as 'turf wars' fought by 'postcode gangs'. At the same time there was also evidence of an emerging, less local and less 'colour-coordinated' but more inclusive notion of being Londoners on an equal footing:

> Before, there used to be tension between black and black as in, you know, even Nigerians and Ghanaians which are Africans and there was definitely a problem within all the races

> but now we've come to a common ground of not seeing it as Black African, Caribbean, White. It's just 'oh we're Londoners'. (Black British Camberwell resident, aged 23)

It is also worth pointing out that the Black British respondent – while born and bred in Camberwell and a resident on the Lettsom Estate throughout her life – had pursued educational and professional trajectories that were different from most of her peer group on the estate. She acknowledged that her university education had impacted the composition of her friendship group, and as a result she was interacting less with her peer group on the estate:

> Not to say that you have to go to uni, but obviously, if I am in uni and you're not, there's not really that much we can talk about.

In summary, the idea of the estate as a social space, a community shared and reproduced by the residents of the estate, would seem to belong to the memories of elderly, white residents. It is thus a nostalgia discourse – with the present comparing unfavourably with the past – that brutally contrasts with the experiences of newer residents unburdened by a memory of what the estate used to be like. They have different expectations of the geography and nature of community, and therefore view the present situation more favourably.

4.2 Gentrification and the Estate

In this final section we will explore a different set of experiences of community and inter-group relations at estate level. Located literally a 5 min walk from Lettsom, D'Eynsford Estate is also situated centrally in Camberwell, just off Camberwell Church Street, the main thoroughfare. A red brick low-rise, developed in the late 1960s and consisting of around 400 flats, the estate constitutes a stark contrast to both the tired looking Victorian buildings on Camberwell Church Street and the sought-after Georgian terraces on Camberwell Grove, leading off the other side of the street.

A more accurate understanding of the ethnic composition and housing tenures could be established thanks to a door-to-door survey, designed and implemented by the TRA in January 2011. Around 40 % of the households on the estate participated in the survey, and of these approximately one-third self-identified as 'Black African'or 'African', one-third as White British, with the final one-third comprising a very wide range of ethnic identities (including 'human being'). Sixty nine per cent of those taking part in the survey self-identified as council tenants, with leaseholders constituting 22 % and private tenants the remaining 9 %. More than 50 % had been residents on the estate for more than 5 years.

The D'Eynsford Estate TRA is, as opposed to the TRA on Lettsom Estate, characterized by a mix of long-term and more recent residents, with two of the present committee members – one locally born and bred, and one originating from Jamaica – involved in the TRA for approximately 30 years. One of these members has, since

retiring early in the mid-80s, invested most of his time in community work on the estate. This has ensured continuity within the TRA as well as a significant familiarity with local service providers and the broader policy community in Camberwell.

The TRA thus aims to engage with, and mobilize, residents on the estate. Monthly newsletters are distributed, children's events are organized, for example, at Halloween and Christmas, and the TRA organizes a 'big lunch' on the estate during the summer. Thanks to the TRA, the estate is characterized by a comparatively high level of community activities. At the same time, the composition of the committee does not reflect the mix on the estate, as the co-chairperson observed:

> I am quite conscious that our committee is quite white-dominated, which doesn't really reflect our estate. But at the same time, who's going to do it? That's always the tension. I am often chairing a meeting and I'm looking and thinking 'is this really mixed, diverse? Does this really represent our estate?' If not, why not? (White British Camberwell resident, aged 33)

But the composition of the resident population of the estate, as well as the profile of the TRA committee, also reflects wider changes in Camberwell. Whereas council tenants only have limited say as to where they are allocated housing, the estate is – similar to other parts of central Camberwell – becoming a destination of choice for residents who chose to move to Camberwell and who have the means to invest in housing. This residential choice is, for some, also motivated by the intention to be part of the local community. The co-chairperson, originally from Devon, had moved on to the estate 5 years previously:

> I'm quite a strong believer in trying to live where there are more problems and where I can make a difference. I'm very, very interested in young people and community. (White British Camberwell resident, aged 33)

In contrast to the very clear-cut distinction between new developments and social housing estates in northern Bermondsey, and the classed imprint on the urban landscape in Camberwell, the move of well-educated white middle classes onto housing estates cuts across well-established socio-spatial demarcations. This was also the

The Secret Garden

The 'secret garden' on D'Eynsford Estate is a narrow strip of land at the very edge of the estate. The woman who masterminded the garden is not a resident of the estate, but lives in a house adjacent to the estate. Having looking down on the empty bit of land for more than 20 years, in 2008 she contacted the council as well as the chairman of the D'Eynsford TRA in order to take forward the idea of establishing a community garden. A community consultation was then carried out in order to pull together ideas for the design of the garden and also take potential objections into account. Subsequently, funding

(continued)

was secured from different sources, and the garden started taking shape in 2009.[7]

Due to reservations voiced by residents in ground-floor flats adjacent to the Secret Garden, it is only open on Thursday afternoons, and occasionally during the weekend. An estimated 40 residents make use of the garden on a regular basis. In addition, the volunteers who run the garden have also started doing outreach work on the estate, working in the gardens of elderly residents who live in sheltered accommodation.

The secret garden is altogether less of a secret. It is also open to Camberwell residents who do not live on D'Eynsford Estate, and it was part of the 'Open garden' event staged in Camberwell in September 2011.

case on the estate, and the co-chairperson referred to events on the estate where residents had taken her for a council worker rather than a fellow resident.

Despite the continuing efforts of the TRA committee and the successful creation of the 'secret garden' as a very visible community place (see text box), there was nevertheless a limited uptake on the estate, and it has proved challenging to encourage users and volunteers much beyond the largely White British core activists.

Altogether the initiatives undertaken on D'Eynsford Estate both mirror and bridge some of the divides that characterize Camberwell. The majority of newcomers who play an active role in the TRA are leaseholders, and they can be categorized as white and middle-class, with a positive view of ethnic diversity. But the move onto a council estate and the active involvement in community building at estate level are practices that are different from the more generalized gentrification process. At the same time the lack of more widespread uptake and engagement on the estate resonates with experiences from other parts of the neighbourhoods.

5 Housing Pathways and the Un-Making of Community

In this chapter, we have set out to explore how access to housing has impacted ethnic/racial and socio-economic diversity as well as narratives of community in Bermondsey and Camberwell. We will here first summarize our findings and then outline some of the lessons concerning the potential for conviviality and conflict at the local level.

Both Bermondsey and Camberwell are small parts of a London housing market that works regionally. Both neighbourhoods are characterized by a scarcity of affordable housing, a massive reduction in social housing stock since the 1980s and

[7] For a summary and photos of the 'secret garden' project, see http://deynsfordsecretgarden.blogspot.co.uk/

exponential rises in land values and private rents since the late 1990s. But they also have very different patterns of residence and tenure. Camberwell is characterized by a very mixed housing stock that includes owner-occupation as well as different types of private and social letting, and the availability of relatively inexpensive housing is one of the factors that have attracted immigrants to Camberwell in the post-World War 2 period. The contrast to Bermondsey is striking in that almost the entire housing stock here until the 1980s consisted of social housing controlled by the local authorities. It was only after Bermondsey became part of Southwark Borough in 1965 that the social housing stock gradually became available to residents from the entire borough, including immigrants and residents with an ethnic minority background.

The post-industrial redevelopment of the former docklands into expensive private housing units also served to re-position the social and territorial markers of Bermondsey. The new, typically affluent residents were attracted to the neighbourhood due to its proximity to central London, and there is only little interaction between them and 'traditional' Bermondsey residents. In Camberwell, the socio-economic differentiation between the industrial working classes in northern Camberwell and the middle classes in southern Camberwell is a characteristic that has historically defined the urban landscape, with well-maintained Georgian terraces contrasting against deprived housing estates. But the socio-economic disparities in Camberwell has been accentuated over the past decades, as larger parts of the neighbourhood have been gentrified, with the majority of new residents being white middle class. In both Bermondsey and Camberwell, the socio-economic differentiation can be translated into an overlaying of class with race/ethnicity, as the majority of incomers can be categorized as white and middle-class.

The two contrasting case studies have important lessons for understanding diversity, contact, and the possibilities for conviviality and conflict at micro-local level. In particular, they reveal the significance of demographic change but also of urban form and housing pathways in making patterns of interaction possible or impossible. In Bermondsey, we found a dominant note of melancholy and lament, as residents narrated the decline of a tight-knit community based on a moral economy founded on trust, reciprocity and kinship – 'we was all one'. This had been based on the isomorphism between different elements of the local urban system: housing, work, family and urban space. In the post-industrial moment, as the foundations of community were eroded, the closed system revealed its brittleness. This melancholy in the face of multicultural drift is often associated with the emergence of a politics of resentment and backlash. Nonetheless, we can see a conditional inclusion of some minority ethnic others in the imagined community, and a day-to-day muddling along with difference that produced the possibility of intercultural intimacy and trust. Negative representations of the other were often belied by positive interactions. In fact, the cleavage with gentrifiers, living parallel lives in their gated communities and wine bars, emerged as the more significant social divide.

Camberwell, in contrast, displayed a more open urban system marked by a long history of demographic churn and migrant settlement and by a more heterogeneous urban form, more connective urban morphology and more diverse housing pathways.

At first glance, this mapped on to a stronger sense of cosmopolitan urbanism and hospitability to difference. But this more positive trajectory was shadowed by a sense of social entropy in the interviews, with civic engagement and neighbourhood cohesion blocked by a lack of solidarity. Positive representations of the other, in short, were often belied by the lack of interaction: 'living together apart'. Nonetheless, where a shared locally focused and future-oriented project came about – as with the example of the Secret Garden – more profound patterns of interaction could emerge.

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