

**Negotiating urban change in gentrifying London:  
Experiences of long-term residents and early gentrifiers in  
Bermondsey**

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## Abstract

Taking Bermondsey as a case study, my thesis examines how two groups of inhabitants – long-term residents and early gentrifiers – respond to and contest changes in urban space brought about by gentrification. Bermondsey is a gentrifying neighbourhood in London that has rapidly changed in social composition over the past thirty years. The research involved two aspects. Firstly, an historical analysis of the area's social, political and spatial trajectories. Viewed through this lens I argue that the character of the area's gentrification stems from the extent of its integration into the cultural and economic functions of the adjacent City of London. Secondly, in-depth interviews with members of the two inhabitant groups are also used to understand how they experienced change brought about by gentrification in the context of their everyday lives.

The research found that long-term residents did not regard the presence of gentrifiers as a direct threat to their housing security. Rather there was segregation between the two groups and protection provided by a large social rented tenure. A third group – 'low-status incomers' – were, however, seen as a threat both to long-term residents' access to social housing and to their (nostalgic) notions of community. I identify a form of intra-class rivalry, differing from the inter-class rivalry between lower income residents and gentrifiers that the literature typically describes. Instead of housing, I describe how public space was the crucible of tensions over gentrification, demonstrated by long-term residents' negative experiences of the public realm on new-build gentrification schemes. This prompted their withdrawal to familiar neighbourhood spaces, a form of 'internal displacement'.

I also found a loss of 'place' displayed by early gentrifiers. Through their political practices, such as lobbying for affordable housing, they aimed to mitigate against the excesses of the gentrification they helped initiate. Despite their own housing security, they felt threatened by the arrival of later gentrifiers with divergent consumption preferences and social ideals. The analysis therefore shows how experiences of gentrification among different inhabitant groups are not fixed but open, ambiguous and layered, with different groups representing real and imagined threats to each other in ways not necessarily typified in the existing literature.

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# Chapter One: Neighbourhood change in Bermondsey

## Introduction

This thesis is a study of neighbourhood change in Bermondsey, an area of south London in the Borough of Southwark. It aims to offer an in-depth examination of gentrification – a process that has brought highly evident changes to the area's composition, use and appearance in recent years. An area of former docks and processing industries, Bermondsey now contains spaces to serve London's 'global' functions, interspersed among what remains of a local working class population that once dominated the neighbourhood. It is a prime example of local urban policies aimed at integrating its inner areas into London's global economy by making them suitable places for high income groups to live, work and play. Bermondsey also reflects London planning strategy aims of increasing the population in inner city areas through policies on housing density and diversity. The prime focus of the research is to understand better the multiple experiences of gentrification among different residents. In particular I consider the experiences of two social groups among Bermondsey's now diverse range of inhabitants. Firstly, 'long-term residents', which I define as the working class inhabitants who lived in the area prior to its ongoing gentrification. In taking this focus my thesis hopes to contribute to the gentrification literature that, despite being extensive in terms of analysis of gentrification's effects in a wide range of urban settings, has rarely provided empirical investigation of the views of long-term residents in gentrifying areas. Secondly, 'early gentrifiers' – those middle class incomers who were the first to move to the area as gentrification started and have since participated in its unfolding. My thesis therefore aims to develop a more nuanced account of how urban space in gentrifying areas is experienced and imagined by its various inhabitants. The thesis consequently contributes to a pluralist reading of space (Massey 2004) and builds on urban research that is concerned with the complexity of everyday experiences for different social groups in the contemporary city.

My research has been guided by the following overarching question: how do long-term inhabitants and early gentrifiers negotiate the changes to their neighbourhood associated with ongoing gentrification? Gentrification can usefully be defined as the 'production of urban space for progressively more affluent users' (Hackworth, 2002: 815). It typically entails the movement of middle class inhabitants to a predominantly working class area (often displacing the original inhabitants), and brings changes to its socio-economic composition as well as to the appearance and uses of its built form. How the process originates and develops differs between countries and cities; even within cities there are local articulations dependent on place, locality and scale. The assumption in much of the literature is that the process is perceived by working class residents as negatively impacting their ability to live in and be part of their neighbourhood. Yet as I explain later in this chapter, this assumption is rarely premised on empirical research with these residents and as such there is a significant gap in the existing literature. My interest is therefore in whether long-term, working class inhabitants do in fact perceive gentrification in these terms or whether other urban changes are seen as a greater threat to their place in the neighbourhood. Taking gentrification as a dynamic and fluid process, I am also interested in how early gentrifiers have responded to its various forms of time, as they seek to shape and even resist changes which affect their place in the neighbourhood.

In order to answer this overarching question on how gentrification affects different inhabitants, I structure my research around the three following sub-questions:

1. *How does gentrification affect long-term residents' housing stability?* The displacement of many or all long-term residents is identified in the literature as the main outcome of gentrification (Lees et al 2012). Evictions, rent rises and housing unaffordability are examples of how pre-existing residents can be forced out by the arrival of new, middle class inhabitants into low-income neighbourhoods. Typical of inner London, Bermondsey has a high proportion of social housing and its gentrification has been concentrated on brownfield developments and

conversions of industrial buildings. Perceptions of housing displacement for Bermondsey's long-term residents may therefore challenge the established view of the academic research.

2. *How does gentrification affect long-term residents' access to public space?* If my first *sub*-question is premised on gentrification's impact on the private realm of the home, the second sub-question looks at its changes to public space. Recently identified as a further cause of displacement is the loss of a sense of belonging to a neighbourhood as it changes to meet the needs of new inhabitants (Davidson 2008). For example, new shops that cater for gentrifiers may be unaffordable to long-term residents, or the enforcement of behavioural norms in public space can exclude them from using it. The cumulative effect is that long-term residents are marginalised from the changes to the neighbourhood that no longer serves their needs. The experience of public space would seem particularly relevant to London where urban policy has promoted improvements to the public realm as a by-product of gentrification that brings benefits to long-term residents.
3. Given the various ways displacement can occur, my final sub-question is: *How do gentrifiers self-organise to negotiate neighbourhood change?* The notion of mixed communities, where different social groups successfully share a neighbourhood, has been problematised in the literature as a policy concept (Lees 2008) and social practice (Butler and Robson 2001). The literature explains how gentrifiers can impose their own vision and values on to a neighbourhood to the exclusion of long-term residents (Slater 2009), setting the two sides in binary opposition over the form of change that should take place there. Using an example of a Bermondsey community group formed by early gentrifiers, I examine how residents can create a narrative for the neighbourhood that promoted social diversity and, as consequence, housing security for long-term residents. I examine how successfully the process has worked and question whether the ideals of social diversity have been achieved as gentrification unfolded.

The principal method for answering these research questions has been a series of individual and group interviews with long-term residents, early gentrifiers and other social actors involved in changes to the neighbourhood (including community groups and council officers). This has been supplemented by visual mapping of parts of the case study area to further understand the effects of gentrification. Within Bermondsey, my research has focused on two new housing developments, Bermondsey Square and Empire Square. Both involve considerable amounts of owner-occupied housing marketed at new residents to the area. I examine long-term residents' views of the schemes and consider how effectively the planning process behind each has reflected local concerns about spreading gentrification. With regards to urban policy, I examine the role of a local community group in Bermondsey, started by early gentrifiers, which sought to promote a particular vision for the neighbourhood premised on social diversity and the 'urban village'.

As my fieldwork has progressed I have found that an analysis of gentrification is inseparable from other changes in the city, including effects of globalisation and neo-liberal policy. Consequently, at a broader level, the thesis is concerned with how these wider social and economic changes, typically associated with the global city thesis, interrelate with gentrification processes. It contends that some gentrification research tends to assume that gentrification is the prime urban experience of long-term, lower income inhabitants and so overlooks other equally significant changes in the contemporary city, such as immigration, housing privatisation and declining traditional employment. My focus then is on the everyday lives of inhabitants marginal to many empirical studies of gentrification. In broadening the scope to include their experiences and emphasising the importance of understanding urban change from a variety of perspectives, my research is tied to an understanding of the 'ordinary' in the city. For Robinson (2002, 2006) the concept of the ordinary city relates to how we frame our research into cities and attempt to account for the multiplicity of experiences that they contain. Understanding cities needs to look beyond their partial manifestations as 'global', 'gentrifying' or other terms from the academic and policy lexicon; research should also encompass the day-to-day uses and negotiations by its diverse inhabitants and the processes that these reflect. If, as



Barthes asserts, 'the most important thing is [...] to multiply the readings of the city' (1997: 158), then Robinson's work provides a methodological framework to help achieve this, as I describe in the Methods chapter. An overarching research question would therefore be: *how can gentrification research better reflect the diversity of everyday experiences of long-term inhabitants?*

The introductory chapter proceeds with a preliminary discussion of how urban studies understand neighbourhood change and its impact on inhabitants. It refers to Massey's (1994) work on the meaning of place and Giddens' (1991) concept of ontological security to theorise how long-term residents can negotiate urban change. It then outlines some of the key terms and concepts surrounding gentrification that are used in the thesis. The remainder of the chapter describes Bermondsey and its suitability as a case study area. It traces the different contours of gentrification at two separate areas in the district, contrasting the role of a large-scale, transformative regeneration agency at its riverside area with the smaller scale, privately-led gentrification further south, albeit facilitated by local authority planning policies. Its objective is to explore the spatialities within Bermondsey and the resultant distinctive forms of gentrification. It also outlines the housing circumstances of Bermondsey's working class residents, pointing to the pressures caused by gentrification as well as immigration and local housing policies. The aim is to account for the suitability of Bermondsey as a site for studying the impact of gentrification on long-term residents and to demonstrate how the process interrelates with other social changes.

### **Neighbourhood change and threats to long-term residents' security**

In this section I illustrate some of the main theories about the types of neighbourhood change that have occurred in London and their impact on long-term residents. My starting point is how describing change necessarily involves a comparison with the past and that this temporal reflection has been central to sociological accounts of urban life. The classic sociological grand theories of

Durkheim and Marx narrate the rupture that modernity brings to longstanding forms of solidarity and the new types of cities created. Another example is the more ethnographic writings of the Chicago School (Park et al 1967 [1925]), which recount the new experiences of life in industrialised cities. More recent analyses of postmodern spatial reorganisation describe the replacement of older local neighbourhoods by new spatial forms, designed for the consumption and housing preferences of elites (Harvey 1989; Zukin 1995). For Finnegan, the essential focus of urban sociology remains; it is one of 'historic change [...] community superseded by alienation, rural by urban, tradition by modernity, [which] still moves both tellers and listeners' (1998: 16).

In these accounts, urban change is rarely presented in wholly positive terms. Beauregard (1993) traces how voices of urban decline have increased since the end of World War II and especially since the early 1960s, symptomatic of a loss of faith in modernist meta-narratives of urban progress. These 'clichés of urban doom' (Glass 1989) have entered policy discourse, employed to describe the physical and social deterioration which planning interventions will remedy, implicitly comparing today's cities to a safer, more prosperous past. A further example is found in Patrick Wright's (1985) critique of British cultural politics in the 1980s, where he argues that dissatisfaction with Britain's post-imperial present was framed in distinctly nostalgic terms, expressed in an obsession with the visible past and historic preservation of urban areas. In a similar vein, it has been shown how gentrifiers valorise aspects of architectural heritage to reinforce their vision of an area's future (Jacobs 1996; W. Shaw 2005).

Community studies have featured a similar narrative, often reflecting the longing for a seemingly happier past that the urban inhabitants involved in the fieldwork describe. For example, Young and Willmott (1986 [1957]) consider the impact of the loss of traditional family-based support prompted by urban renewal. Improved material conditions in a newly built London suburb were balanced by the loss of community networks available in the impoverished East End. In a range of other settings, researchers have found narratives of decline among longstanding residents when describing the changes to their neighbourhood, where respect to elders, employment and mutual support has been lost to a

present of loose morals, violence and incivility. From the pre-civil rights era Black ghetto in the United States (Anderson 1990) to London housing estates (Back 1996; Watt 2006) and British New Towns (Finnegan 1998), change to neighbourhoods is described as undermining the old certainties with which inhabitants made sense of the worlds. In all these accounts, inhabitants of urban areas undergoing social change actively engaged with the past through nostalgia, idealising aspects of remembered urban life while downplaying others.

In a certain respect, gentrification and the middle class return to the city presents a challenge to these narratives of urban decline and the foreclosure of the inner city envisaged by the Chicago School (Hamnett 1991). In North America and Europe, inner city disinvestment in the post-War period established the economic gap between property values and underlying land values which made a return to the city financially beneficial (Smith 1979). Additionally, by the 1960s, a new cultural outlook among certain segments of the middle class predisposed them to living in inner cities and rejecting the model of suburban living (Ley 1996). It has therefore been argued that these pioneers saw the inner city as offering an emancipatory space for them to engage with a kind of social diversity and heterogeneity unavailable in the suburbs (Caulfield 1994; Butler with Robson 2003).

To an extent then, gentrification offers a new narrative for urban development. However, the repopulation of the inner city brings a potential threat to long-term residents in the form of displacement and so the narrative of decline continues in an altered form. As discussed in the literature review (Chapter Two), the form of displacement may be direct – through facing rent increases or evictions as landlords capitalise on the rising value of housing (Smith 1996) – or indirect, such as through being excluded from accessing local housing as prices rise to meet the new demand (Marcuse 1985). Apart from housing, other noticeable changes in a gentrifying area relate to the services that emerge to cater for the new residents. This can lead to polarisation in the community, as the new services are inaccessible or unwanted by long-term residents, and gradually push away the lower-income retail amenities (Butler 2003; Doucet 2009). Finally, gentrification can weaken community bonds that exist in many working class areas (Atkinson and Kintrea 2000); the individuals who built and sustained these

networks may move away because of the displacement effects of gentrification (Newman and Wyly 2006), or because the character that defined an area (from its demographic composition to its local amenities) is irrevocably changed (Vigdor 2002). The result can be resentment on the part of long-term residents, as the neighbourhood that helped sustain their identity and provided social networks is reshaped to meet the requirements of new residents. This marginalisation and exclusion from within the neighbourhood is an additional form of displacement pressure encouraging long-term residents to move away (Marcuse 1985). In summary, while incoming residents may benefit from space for self-expression and diversity, the literature overwhelmingly argues that gentrification negatively affects long-term residents (Atkinson 2002). Gentrification may reverse the decline in fortune of the inner city but not, it would seem, the fate of long-term residents in gentrifying areas.

### **The decline of community**

A common thread among all these narratives of urban decline is the loss of 'community' in their neighbourhood, 'one of the most enduring motifs of modern culture' (Savage 2008: 151). Given the various meanings the term can have in the contemporary city, it is worth briefly exploring how 'community' can be threatened by social change. It seems it is when a community is defined as coterminous with a locality that its decline seems most pronounced, such as in the late 1950s Bethnal Green of Willmott and Young (1959) or, more recently, a South London housing estate in Back (1996). In these and similar accounts (see Atkinson and Kintrea 2000), this sense of shared values and meanings which are understood spatially – and so therefore help define a place to its inhabitants – is described as insufficiently robust to withstand urban change, especially where it entails sharing space with different types of people when it was once dominated by a single social group.

One feature of economic restructuring in global cities such as London has been an increased demand for space in previously working class areas. Under globalisation, national and local borders have eroded but brought new patterns

of inequality and competition for resources (Beck 2007). Gentrification is of course one aspect of this, as an expanding professional sector stretches the frontier of middle class residency into traditionally low-income areas, and so new residents compete for housing with established ones (Hamnett 2003). At the other end of the income spectrum, there is also rising demand for housing from low-paid immigrant workers required to service the high-income lifestyles of a growing professional class (Sassen 2001). Growing inequality between the top and bottom of the income spectrum serves to diversify traditionally homogeneous urban areas. In so doing it undermines a traditional conception of community as a bounded locality occupied by a single social group (Massey 1994). Of course, 'the sheer fact of diversity does not prompt people to interact' (Sennett 1994: 357); suspicion or indifference can be common outcomes. So while the strain on community brought about by socio-spatial change is not new, it does seem to have been brought under particular stress by the conditions and pace of economic globalisation.

What is it about the concept of community which is so important, and why can its reality be incompatible with social change? There are material benefits from being part of a locally-defined and socially homogenous community, including ready access to local networks of family and friends able to provide small-scale, immediate and informal support for inhabitants, serving as a 'hidden glue' that helps sustain people who live in relatively deprived areas (Mumford and Power 2003: 55). These reciprocal relationships are a form of social capital, engendering shared values and helping people to cooperate on a day-to-day basis (Putman 2000). Just as importantly, membership of a community can be used to make claims to social resources, such as housing (Back 1996; Harvey 1996). Being part of a local community can imply entitlement to its estates or schools and, by implication, exclude others. By constructing boundaries around a community – whether based on ethnicity, class or other forms of social distinction – the allocation of resources can be controlled or, at least, contested.

In addition to material resources, psycho-social benefits can be derived from attachments to community, including fostering a sense of belonging (Brower 1996, Kearns et al 2000) and providing 'arenas of predictable encounters'

(Kearns and Parkinson 2001: 2106) to which inhabitants can easily respond. This sense of 'feeling at home' in a locality associated with notions of community is the basis of what Giddens (1991) terms 'ontological security' – a stable psychological state which provides a secure basis for identity development. For Giddens, ontological security is about people having a sense of continuity and confidence in their place in the society, and a belief that present society is a forum in which their self-realisation can be achieved. A fulfilled life comes from more than sustenance and shelter; in this account we also need a stable base where we can feel comfortable and secure. A locally bounded sense of community is one possible base for developing and maintaining ontological security.

### **Ontological security and exclusive place identities**

Importantly for our understanding of neighbourhood change, the concept of ontological security is partly based on predictability and routine of social action and outcome. As Giddens explains, 'The development of relatively secure environments of everyday life is of central importance to the maintenance of feelings of ontological security. Ontological security, in other words, is sustained primarily through routine itself' (1991: 167). This is particularly at the level of everyday interactions in which people communicate, interact and operate socially. Ontological security then structures practical everyday interactions as 'natural', 'normal' or 'real', as an unproblematic framework of reality in which personal narratives about beliefs and behaviour are readily understood.

Giddens (1991) further asserts that routines and norms allow individuals to perform as functioning agents with a sense of meaning in their lives. He argues that the reliance on predictability means that ontological security is inherently fragile. Problems arise if an event occurs which is inconsistent with this meaning and which disrupts the predictability of interactions. This leads to 'critical situations' and a challenge to an individual's ontological security. If the contours

of 'normal' everyday life are ruptured, we may face an ontological crisis. We then have to attempt to negotiate this and regain some sense of internal security by adapting to the new situation through a process of 'resocialisation' (Giddens 1984: 63). Ontological security emerges as an important concept through which neighbourhood change and individual responses to it can be examined and understood. The emphasis on predictability implies that deriving one's ontological security in part through a close relationship with place can mean the prospect of neighbourhood change is potentially deeply troubling.

This point is developed from a slightly different perspective by Massey (1994), who also links community with identity formation. She describes the dynamic social relations that define a locality and create the 'place-identity' that inhabitants can draw upon in defining their own identity. A place-based identity results to the extent that people's behaviours and self-identity (their sense of themselves), or their collective group belonging, become equated with a particular locale (Pratt 1998). But Massey (1994) argues that the definition of a locality is in flux, continually being produced and open to reinterpretation as social relations change. There is therefore a tension between the stability necessary for a place to be a source of identity and the dynamic nature of place in contemporary society. However, she explains that such fluidity of place is not always readily accepted by its inhabitants. For one, the question of which identity is dominant is the result of social negotiation and conflict between different social groups sharing the same locality. A locality can therefore contain different meanings for different groups: 'Each has its view of what the essential place is, each partly based on the past, each drawing out a different potential future' (1994: 138). Massey points to a polarity between how localities are constructed and how different inhabitants conceive them at certain times.

One response to conflicting views on a locality can be the mobilisation of an exclusive place-identity, as an attempt to fix the identity of a place in times of unsettling social change. This is often supported through claims of belonging to the 'real' locality or community, and with reference to a time where the alignment of social relations was to the advantage of the claimant group. Describing the development of London's Docklands and the social diversification which

accompanied it, Massey outlines how long-term residents attempted to defend and enclose their meaning of the locality as they found themselves sharing space with new inhabitants: 'they construct singular, fixed and static identities for places, and they interpret places as bounded, enclosed spaces defined through counterposition against the Other who is outside' (1994: 168). In order to establish secure identities, people try to anchor them to place, prompting resistance to change that may threaten its social composition and consequently their identity.

Another example from a quite different setting can be seen in Duncan and Duncan's (2004) study of Bedford, a prosperous American suburb in New York State. Here they identify established residents' fears that processes of globalisation are producing homogenous neighbourhoods and an erosion of traditional 'small town' community values. In one respect they respond in a similar way to the residents of Massey's Docklands. They create an exclusive identity as the 'original' Bedford residents upholding the perceived uniqueness of their town. The threat comes from the arrival of two groups of outsiders. On the one side, from wealthy New Yorkers vacating the city for a version of the rural idyll. Their cultural practices are seen to corrupt the distinctive 'traditional' appearance of Bedford, such as by restoring farmhouses in different aesthetic styles. On the other, Latino immigrants providing menial labour, but criticised for loitering and devaluing public spaces and making claims to social resources, such as housing and welfare rights. Importantly, Duncan and Duncan emphasise the role of the built environment in shaping identity and a deep attachment to place: 'Collective memories, narratives of community, invented traditions, and shared environmental concerns are repeated, performed, occasionally contested, but more often stabilized or fixed in artifactual form' (2004: 29). As a result, changes to the appearance of an area are often interpreted in a similar way to changes to its social composition, namely as a threat to identity.

In both explanations, inhabitants whose ontological security is threatened by change engage in a process of differentiation between themselves and an 'other' taken to embody the change. Constructing social boundaries around a locality has been interpreted as attempts to maintain or achieve superiority over an out-



group and preferential access to material resources and social opportunities (Harvey 1996; Lamont and Molnár 2002). This is legitimised by representing themselves as the norm in contrast to an other that is seen to threaten their status. Such fear can be legitimised through recourse to the other's perceived different behaviour and beliefs, often distorted and simplified into negative stereotypes which perpetuate that fear (Sibley 1995; Riggins 1997; Watson 2006).

In such instances where a group's perceived status is threatened by changing social relations and spatial organisation, the membership of can be defined by tight relationships between place, meaning and practice, and in binary opposition to members of other groups (Cohen 1989; Creswell 1996). This group is to conceive a locality as a geographically bounded entity belonging to a single community. But, returning to Massey (1994), this can be a contradictory response and ultimately untenable in contemporary cities. Firstly, 'communities' are internally differentiated and are very rarely as coherent as they are imagined. Secondly, locality can play different roles for different inhabitants of the same space; it is not always important, nor is it important in the same way to all inhabitants. In particular, how much significance is attached to locality may vary according to the extent household resources are vested in the local area, rather than in other domains (Wallman 1984).

This initial review of some of the key literature has shown how a locally bounded community can be theorised as a basis for identity-formation and self-realisation. Yet as an arena for ontological security, community requires routine; any social change that threatens the predictability of encounters can undermine a sense of community and, therefore, its members' sense of self. While the decline of community is a longstanding narrative in urban sociology, processes of globalisation have heightened the pace of change and, particularly in once working class areas of the city, have brought new demands on space from a diversity of social groups. In these areas, a community of similar individuals dominating the locality is increasingly unlikely. We have also seen how community talk is highly political: in times of social turmoil, being able to fix the

identity of a community and its membership criteria can help maintain privileged access to social resources aligned in a locality.

## **Gentrification 'waves' in London**

Before describing the development of Bermondsey, it is worth briefly outlining the contours of gentrification in London. While themes raised here will be developed in detail in the Literature Review, an outline at this stage will help inform the description of Bermondsey's gentrification, which follows this section.

The term 'gentrification' was first coined in the context of London and changes in its housing market during the 1960s. The urban sociologist Ruth Glass (1963) contrasted the middle class movement to working class areas of the West End with previous waves of migration to the suburbs and the choice to leave the city. She defined gentrification as occurring when working class neighbourhoods are rehabilitated by middle class owners, landlords or developers. The movement of middle class inhabitants to a predominantly working class area (often displacing the existing inhabitants), brings changes to its socio-economic composition, and to the appearance and uses of its built form. It is therefore a process of local 'social and spatial differentiation' (Zukin 1987: 131), operated through the housing choices of middle class newcomers in working class neighbourhoods.

A widespread heuristic to understand how gentrification occurs is in terms of three 'waves' (Hackworth and Smith 2001). The first wave was identified in Neil Smith's (1979) description of 'pioneer' households renovating cheap, dilapidated property through their own 'sweat equity', in the absence of significant economic capital. These pioneers therefore drive up the property's value through deployment of their cultural capital, with the renovation directed by their class taste, commodified in the property (Bridge 2006a). But it is not only an economic imperative that drives gentrification as certain households return to the city. It is combined with a new cultural outlook among certain segments of the middle class that predisposed them to living in inner cities and rejecting the model of

suburban living (Ley 1996). These pioneers saw the inner city as offering a space of social diversity and heterogeneity unavailable in the suburbs. Butler (1997) refers to gentrifiers' conscious decision not to move to the suburbs as a form of emancipation from class expectations. For Caulfield (1994) the inner city becomes a liberating space where the social practice of gentrification subverts the dominance of suburban conformity and creates the conditions for new, more tolerant social activities. There is, however, a tendency in this argument to assume that it was widespread for early gentrifiers to seek out social diversity in the inner city and that this was the main reason for their move. In reality many would have been attracted primarily by the cost of housing and its potential value, and if social diversity held any appeal it would have ranked lower in their reasons to move to the inner city. While the emphasis on emancipation risks privileging the experiences of middle class gentrifiers over those of working class residents affected by their migration, it does emphasise how early gentrifiers were enacting new forms of urban living through their housing choices.

This can be seen in the case of London, where processes of gentrification can be traced to the city's fundamental reshaping in the post-War period. Patrick Abercrombie's Greater London Plan (1944) was the blueprint for the city's redevelopment and became the 'key text for public decision-making for the next three decades' (Rao 2007: 21). The plan envisaged the outward movement of London's population to locations beyond a newly constructed Green Belt at the cost of a declining inner city population. Large-scale clearances and redevelopments were instigated to remove the persistent spatial concentrations of poverty, unemployment and ill health. By the 1960s urban decay and the threat of clearances saw a widespread depopulation of inner London, hastened by the creation of New Towns outside the Green Belt, designed to provide self-contained nodes of industrial growth (Hall et al 1973). Economic restructuring further accelerated the trend which planning policy had instigated. The population moved outwards as inner London employment declined as factories and warehouses closed during the 1950s while at the same time offices in outer metropolitan areas opened. Those who were left included those unable to afford to move, including new migrants arriving from the Commonwealth who moved

into houses once occupied by middle class households, but now subdivided and privately let (Hamnett 2003). It was in this context that, in the 1960s, gentrification emerged in London, as working class areas started to upgrade socially with the inward migration of middle class groups. These migrating 'pioneers' saw the inner city as a space where they could contribute towards social diversity and heterogeneity unavailable in the suburbs. They were modelling new forms of urban living by restoring townhouses in previously middle class areas that had downgraded to working class and were threatened by clearances, such as Notting Hill, Primrose Hill and Camden Town. In doing so they challenged the decline of inner city living as planned by Abercrombie (Hebbert 1998).

The second stage occurs when, embodied in restored housing, cultural capital is exchanged for the economic capital of a 'second wave' of gentrifiers – higher-paid professionals attracted to the bohemian reputation and the inner-city living aesthetic. Small-scale speculators also move in and continue the renovations, while the media begin to pay attention to the area and promotional activities begin (Clay 1979). The final stage represents the 'routinisation' of the aesthetic aspects by estate agents and developers, who market areas on their vibrant reputations (Bridge 2006a). Gentrification expands beyond the urban core into more marginal, outer zones of disinvestment as corporate interests chase the profits attainable from providing homes for a gentrifying class (Hackworth 2002, Smith 2002). This was visible in London by the 1990s when gentrification had encroached into traditionally working class neighbourhoods (Brixton, Bermondsey, Hackney) as the original gentrifying neighbourhoods (such as Barnsbury, Notting Hill and Fulham) became increasingly unaffordable to all but the financial elite (Lees 2003a; Lees et al 2008). As well as the involvement of volume house builders and its expansion into marginal urban spaces, in the third wave developers work in tandem with the state and arguably are supported by government regeneration policies (Hackworth and Smith 2001, Davidson and Lees 2005).

The logic of this type of government involvement is, firstly, that gentrification can be a boost to disinvested urban areas, reducing relative levels of deprivation through an influx of wealthier residents and breaking up local concentrations of

poverty. Gentrification need not be referred to directly – indeed, its negative connotations make this unlikely – but obliquely, under the guise of ‘social mixing’, where the expansion of middle class housing is supported in traditionally working class areas (Lees 2008). The second reason relates to globalisation and new requirements from urban space. Sassen (2001) argues that in the global competition for corporate investment in the service sector, cities such as London are required to provide attractive spaces for global economic actors. These include spaces for business, leisure and residence. In this respect, by providing centrally located and architecturally distinct enclaves, it is argued London can continue to attract the highly skilled middle class households necessary to promoting its functional role in the global economy (Butler 1997, Webber 2007).

Many of these ideas on social mix and liveable cities were synthesised in a vision of an ‘urban renaissance’ as promoted by Richard Rogers and others, which has been highly influential on London’s urban policy. Rogers first outlined this vision in the book *A New London* (1992), and it was later emphasised in the report of the Urban Task Force (1999), which he chaired, and the subsequent urban White Paper (DETR 2000). These all stressed the contribution of housing to an area’s wider regeneration, emphasised the increasing liveability of inner cities, embraced the philosophy of urban compactness and the benefits of different social groups sharing space. The influence of the urban renaissance agenda has been keenly felt in London. Rogers directed the former Mayor’s urbanism unit that advocated higher housing densities and greater mix (GLA 2003) and co-signed the foreword to the draft London Plan (GLA 2002). The ideology continued into the first version of London Plan (GLA 2004), which determined the overarching policies for spatial development. For example, it proposed to increase compactness by focusing development in areas that are potentially highly accessible by public transport. Strategic transport infrastructure supports intensification by connecting more peripheral areas to the city’s economic core. In this way, areas once perceived as too remote from London’s employment centres for professional inhabitants become suitable sites for relocation after public transport links are provided. The original London Plan also included a policy requiring new developments to include ‘a range of housing

choices' (GLA 2004: 70) in terms of size and tenure. It is this policy in particular which was accused of promoting gentrification through the language of 'social mixing', largely entailing bringing middle class homes to working class areas (Davidson and Lees 2005; Lees 2008). The following section on the case study area shows how Bermondsey offers a specific manifestation of the London Plan ideals and can be seen as a product of the changes that have affected former industrial districts of inner London.

### **Bermondsey as case study**

Bermondsey is an area of south London on the banks of the River Thames, located between Borough and Rotherhithe, opposite the City of London (Figure 1.1). From 1900 to 1965 it was a metropolitan borough but it is now part of the London Borough of Southwark, which is ranked in the top twenty most deprived boroughs nationally and the seventh most deprived in London, with a pockets of poverty in the north of the borough (GLA 2011a). This northern edge of Southwark contains perhaps the best-known example of cultural regeneration in London – Tate Modern at Bankside and City Hall, home to the Greater London Authority. Both developments have been catalysts for further commercial and residential development in their radius. North Southwark more generally has seen intensive regeneration, frequently through private sector investment in mixed commercial and residential developments. As described in Chapter Four, the result has been to integrate this part of Southwark into central London's economic, political and cultural functions.

**Figure 1.1 Bermondsey within Southwark and London**



This is quite a turnaround for a borough that, along with the rest of south London, had historically been peripheral to the centre of the capital. Southwark's separation from London's commercial and political heart was at once geographical – the Thames was a barrier with, until 1769, only one bridge crossing between the City and Southwark, at London Bridge – and more profoundly social. For example, it was to the southern banks of the river at Southwark that a sixteenth century law required the City's butchers to dispose of their waste products (Johnson 1969). This trend of banishing London's noxious and dangerous activities to its peripheral south continued through the industrial age, as north Southwark became a site for the 'stink industries' (Ackroyd 2001: 689) – tanneries and factories whose polluting smells came to characterise this part of London. In this way Southwark supported London's commercial heart of the City by providing service facilities – factories, wharves – and working class housing (Hebbert 1998). Despite the prosperity of the nearby docks, few Bermondsey residents felt the benefits of the wealth created there; employment was irregular and casual and by the mid-nineteenth century it became the home of some of the worst slums in the city (de la Mare 2008). Its people lived in some of the worst conditions in London, in poorly constructed housing among tightly-packed streets extending back from the riverside docks and warehouses (Figure 1.2). Charles Booth in his taxonomy of poverty in early twentieth century London (Figure 1.3) remarked that: 'It will be found when the different parts of south London are compared with each other and other districts

in London in respect of poverty, then St Saviours, Southwark, is the poorest of all.' (1903: 265).

Until the mid-twentieth century, employment in Bermondsey was overwhelmingly dependent on riverside industry, whether on wharves or in processing plants. However, the London docks faced obsolescence by the 1950s and gradually declined in significance until the last dock closed in 1981. In common with other parts of London, deindustrialisation in Bermondsey created landscapes of abandoned industrial buildings and falling land values as the population declined. It was in these post-industrial spaces that two parts of Bermondsey would start to gentrify – the former wharves at Bermondsey Riverside in the 1980s, and further south at Bermondsey Street in the 1990s. This disinvested periphery came to serve London's economy in a new mode – not as sites of employment and industry, but increasingly as sites of high-end housing and consumption. Much of this is on former industrial sites and adjacent to some of the oldest social housing in this part of London.

**Figure 1.2 Panorama of Bermondsey in the early nineteenth century**

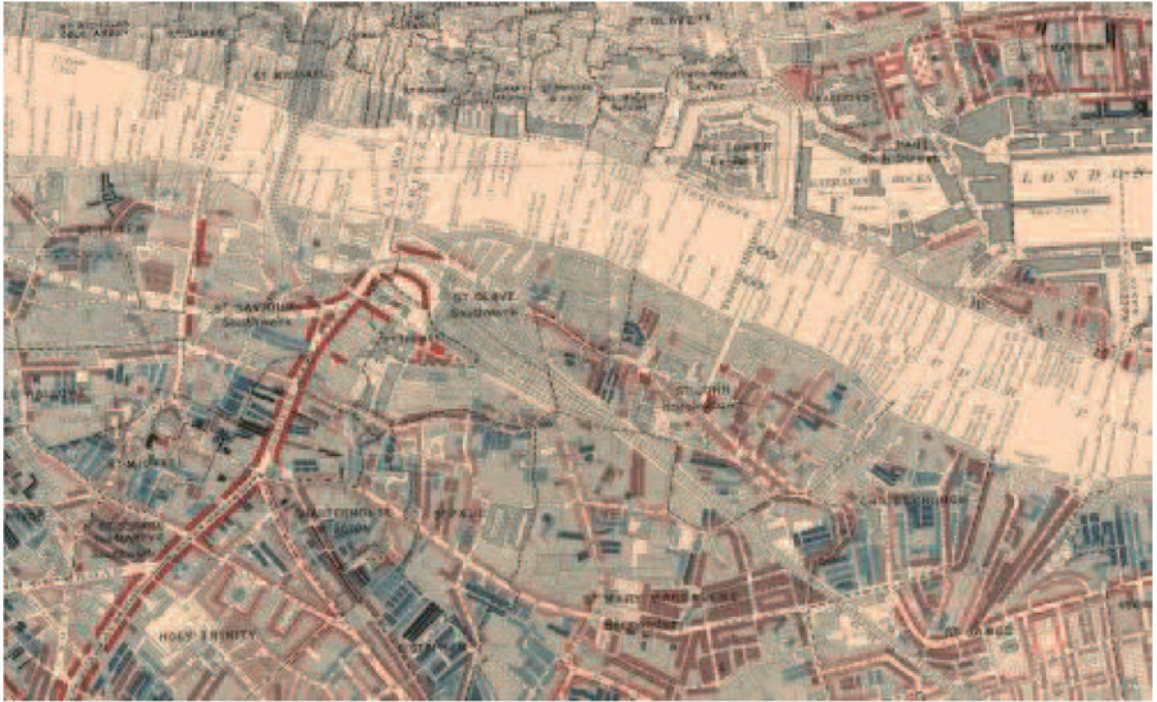


*Two sections from the Rhinebeck Panorama (1806-07) showing the densely packed housing behind the Bermondsey riverfront © Museum of London*

**F**



Figure 1.3 Poverty in late nineteenth century Bermondsey



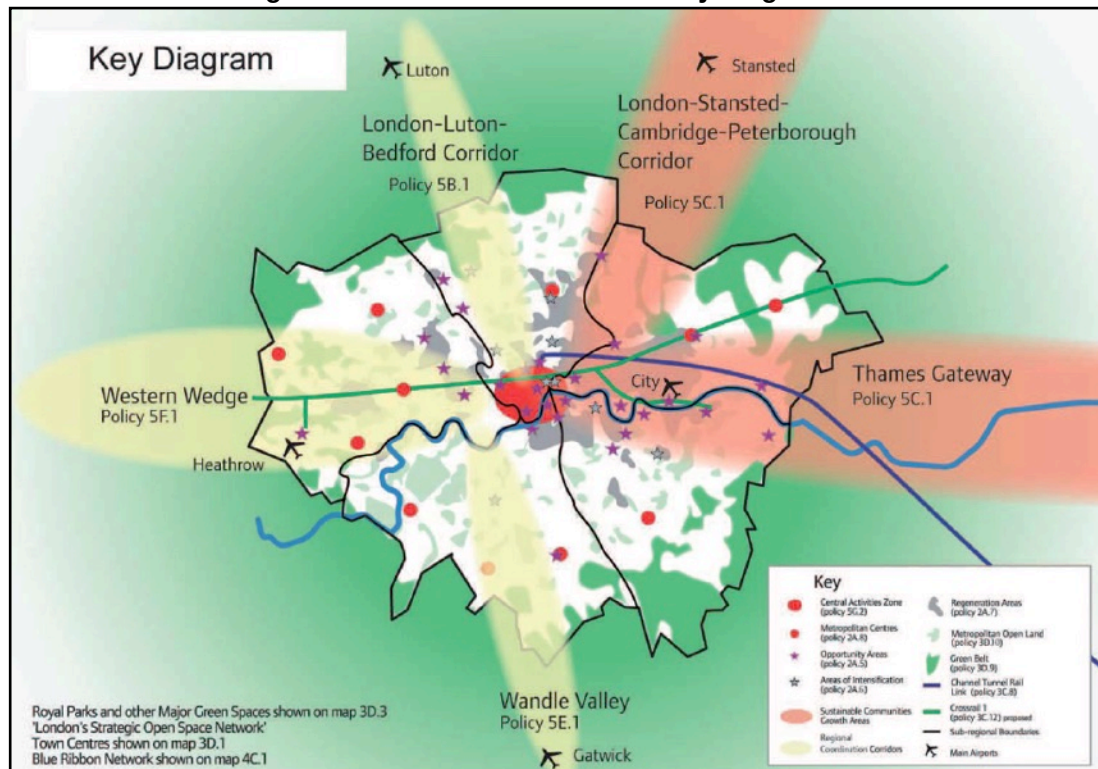
Source: Charles Booth's *Descriptive Map of London Poverty*, 1889, © London School of Economics & Political Science

Such a mix – with post-industrial housing development in close proximity to quite different housing typologies, tenures and values – realises many of the principal ambitions of the inaugural London Plan of 2004. The Plan aimed to steer the renewal of devalued parts of the city, identified as 28 'opportunity areas' (including Bermondsey Street within the Bankside / London Bridge area Figure 1.4). Control over housing supply was one of the Plan's tools for areas regeneration. Housing development was encouraged on brownfield sites,<sup>1</sup> at high densities and with a mixture of tenures to diversify its inhabitants.

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<sup>1</sup> Brownfield land is defined in Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3) as 'Previously-developed land' that is, land 'which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land and any associated fixed surface infrastructure.' (DCLG 2010: 26).

Figure 1.4 The 2004 London Plan Key Diagram



Source : GLA (2004)

As well as the London Plan, urban renewal in Bermondsey was driven by north Southwark's integration into London's global economic geography, through its adjacency - just across the river - to the financial centre of the City. The shortage of residential space in London's financial centre has heightened demand for housing in neighbouring local authorities, including in Southwark, which as discussed in Chapter Four is a borough which has actively sought to integrate itself into the City's economy and benefit from its neighbouring position. Bermondsey's proximity to the City means the results of the overspill are among the most evident in the borough as a whole. Its accessibility to central London (as in the cities of London and Westminster) was enhanced with the opening of a station on the Jubilee Line extension in 1999. Figure 1.5 shows the station and other key sites in Bermondsey. The area contains three neighbourhood centres, each following individual trajectories, which are now briefly outlined.

## **Bermondsey Riverside**

The gentrification of Bermondsey began in the 1980s in the former wharves and warehouses at Bermondsey Riverside. This is an area stretching 1.5 miles along the Thames from London Bridge to Rotherhithe (see Figure 1.5). Bermondsey's gentrification did not therefore take the form described in Glass's (1964) classic account, where residential stock in working class areas is 'rehabilitated' by middle class incomers to the inner city. Rather, it was former industrial buildings that opened up spaces for new patterns of urban living (Zukin 1988). The renewal of Bermondsey Riverside also departs from the typical gentrification template in being initiated by a government-backed private agency, rather than by a vanguard fraction of the urban middle class (cf. Hackworth and Smith 2001). In 1981, Bermondsey Riverside was vested to the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC), which had been created the same year in response to the seemingly intractable decline of population and employment in London's former dockside areas on both sides of the Thames. The areas designated to the LDDC were put outside the planning jurisdiction of their local authorities, seen by central government as acting too slowly to reverse decline.

The agency's role in the development of Canary Wharf as a secondary financial centre to the City of London is well known; broadly, it aimed to stimulate private investment in recycling old spaces to respond to changing economic conditions. The most prominent result of this approach on the south side of the Thames is Butler's Wharf in Bermondsey Riverside, now a complex of luxury apartments, student accommodation, offices, museums and restaurants. Further high-end residential conversions followed at adjacent warehouses, supplemented by a limited amount of new-build. The designation of St Saviour's Wharf as a conservation area in 1973 protected the area's historic fabric; the LDDC permitted selective demolition only of certain historical buildings in poor repair or of indifferent quality, and new-build was required to reflect the dominant style and observe the original street patterns (Tiesdell et al. 1996). In this way, the renewal of Bermondsey Riverside maintained the narrow street network of the original wharves, the tight unbroken warehouse frontages, and the catwalks and bridges that link the buildings (Figure 1.6). The development of Butler's

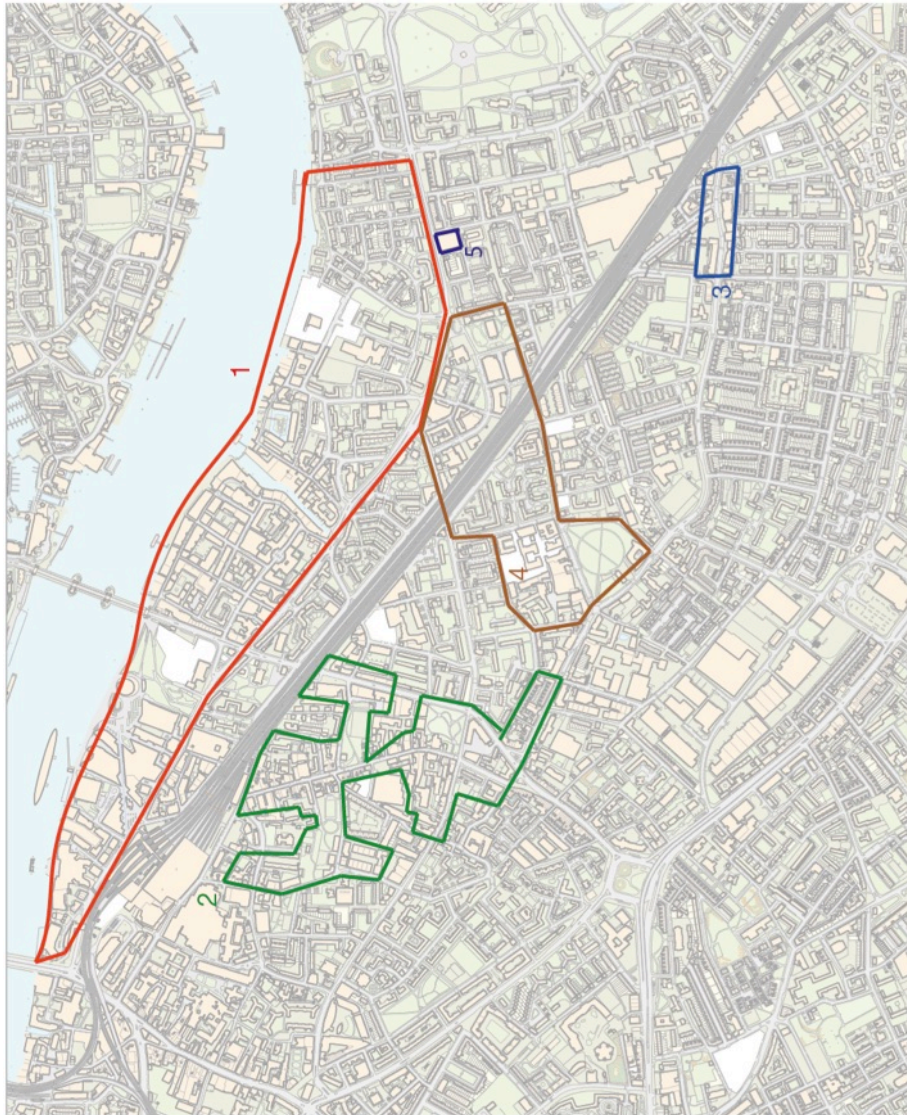
Wharf within the wider Bermondsey Riverside is significant for two main reasons. Firstly, the private developers assumed a new importance in bringing forward new housing, negotiating with the LDDC and bypassing the local authority as the traditional housing provider and planning authority of the local authority. Furthermore, this stretch of the Thames underlines the river's renaissance in London; no longer a redundant industrial thoroughfare turned open sewer, but a desirable backdrop for leisure and living. At the same time, its restored fabric contrasted strongly with the physical condition of social housing estates further away from the river

Bermondsey Riverside is a landscape recognisable in many riverside areas of post-industrial cities, where an industrial heritage has been preserved to form the type of distinctive site for consumption, employment and residence which, it is argued, is now required in a global city economy. The template of market-led regeneration was subsequently applied by Southwark Council further west along the river at the Bankside Cultural Quarter, now the location of Tate Modern, the Globe Theatre and the Bankside 1 2 3 office developments (Newman and Smith 2000). Here is the most high profile example in London of a former industrial area being reimagined as a 'global space of spectacle' (Hutton 2008: 115); a location for new types of employment interspersed among cultural attractions and high-end consumption.



Figure 1.5 Key sites in Bermondsey

- Key**
- 1. Bermondsey Riverside
  - 2. Bermondsey Street conservation area
  - 3. The Blue
  - 4. Bermondsey Spa
  - 5. Bermondsey tube station



Source: © Crown Copyright/database right 2009. An Ordnance Survey / EDINA supplied service

**Figure 1.6 Restored warehouses at Bermondsey Riverside**



### ***Bermondsey Street***

The gentrification of Bermondsey Riverside in the 1980s was driven by a market-led regeneration strategy; the area around Bermondsey Street was gentrified later and somewhat differently. Designated as a Conservation Area in 1972, it was expanded in 1991 and 1993 to its present boundaries (Figure 1.5). Once a bustling high street and centre for leather tanning and food processing, during Bermondsey's post-industrial decline Bermondsey Street mainly served as a location for small industries – including print workshops, distribution centres and (clustered at the south end) antique dealerships – and as an undistinguished thoroughfare for service vehicles between London Bridge and the Old Kent Road. Bordering the Conservation Area are several balcony-block council housing estates, mainly built in the early post-War period. The mid-1990s saw small-scale property developers and professionals in the creative industries move into the area, drawn by the availability of cheap space in former warehouses and in the mansard-roofed houses where leather trade by-products



were once manufactured. Once this bridgehead was established, the cachet of loft-living, the extra space that former industrial buildings typically offered, and the area's proximity to the City of London made Bermondsey Street an attractive location for professional workers (see also Hamnett and Whitelegg 2007; Hamnett 2009). The trend for converting industrial space into homes was accelerated when, in 2001, Southwark Council removed Bermondsey Street's zoning classification as an employment area and accepted proposals for new developments with a 'live-work' element. Empty industrial buildings could now be recycled as residential conversions, with infill new-build schemes soon following (Figure 1.7) The loosening of planning regulations, combined with the new creative kudos leant by the incomers, soon attracted established property developers who transformed the area with larger residential developments at higher densities (Davis 2008). Restaurants, boutiques and other sites of high-end consumption have appeared to meet the needs of the street's new inhabitants,

**Figure 1.7 Warehouse conversion and infill replicas, Bermondsey Street**



The result around Bermondsey Street is a distinctive mix of building styles: industrial buildings and warehouses converted into housing sit side-by-side with

ersatz replicas and other new-build properties – all intermingled with the few remaining eighteenth and nineteenth-century townhouses and twentieth-century public housing estates (Figures 1.8 and 1.9). Following its revival, the street now forms a gentrification corridor, bracketed at the north end by the transport hub at London Bridge and, at the south, by the newly built Bermondsey Square development. At times a controversial scheme (as discussed in Chapter Seven), the square is a mixed used development on mostly vacant land formerly owned by Southwark Council. It includes private housing, office space, a boutique hotel and restaurants. The corridor offers a procession of stylised bars and expensive boutiques that identify Bermondsey Street as one of the latest place to go.<sup>2</sup> For the wealthy residents and visitors, there is little reason to stray from the Bermondsey Street area into the rest of Bermondsey, still dominated by large social housing tracts and dilapidated shopping parades.

**Figure 1.8 Mixed housing typologies at Bermondsey Street**



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<sup>2</sup> Accolades in the media have helped point the way. The street was once declared in 2004 the 'funkiest newcomer' among London's cool streets by *Time Out* and South London's coolest quarter by *Vogue* in 2008.



**Figure 1.9 Housing typologies at Bermondsey Street.**



Source: Fieldwork observations, October 2009. Base map © Crown Copyright/database right 2009. An Ordnance Survey / EDINA supplied service

### ***The Blue***

The gentrification of Bermondsey is incomplete with a large low-income population remaining. At the Census in 2011, the largest housing tenure in Bermondsey was social rented which, in line with the rest of Southwark, was substantially larger than the London average (see Figure 1.14 below). The regeneration of Bermondsey Riverside and later Bermondsey Street has 're-centred' the area away from its older working class core at The Blue, further to the east. The Blue lies in the middle of a large council housing tract, and is composed of a dilapidated group of shops and a 1960s development that includes a small square hosting the remains of a local market (Figures 1.10, 1.11). It was once Bermondsey's principal shopping location, but has suffered heavily from competition from large supermarkets nearby and the relative decline of the area's working class population. Now it forms a 'proletarian island' (Hall 2007: 80) as the only part of Bermondsey that is still predominantly white working class. These very local geographies of Bermondsey have seen its old centre peripheralised, as formerly redundant spaces at Bermondsey Street and Riverside have been revived for new inhabitants.

**Figure 1.10 The market at the Blue**



**Figure 1.11 Housing typologies at the Blue**



**Key**

- Social housing (1960s to 1970s)
- Social housing above commercial premises
- Social housing (1980s)
- New-build housing
- C19th housing

Source: Fieldwork observations, October 2009. Base map © Crown Copyright/database right 2009. An Ordnance Survey / EDINA supplied service

Such a sense of encroachment is unlikely to be discouraged by the most recent regeneration scheme in the area, Bermondsey Spa, which brings a mix of housing types to a previously mono-tenure part of Bermondsey (Figure 1.12). The latest in a series of market developments on formerly council-owned land, the Bermondsey Spa scheme has seen the borough sell fifteen disparate pockets of land for the private development of 2,000 homes, forty per cent of which are affordable. The scale of the scheme underlines the council's transition from outright opposition to private housing investment in the 1980s, to being a key player in the mixed economy of urban renewal and housing delivery in early twenty-first century London.

**Figure 1.12 Bermondsey Spa**



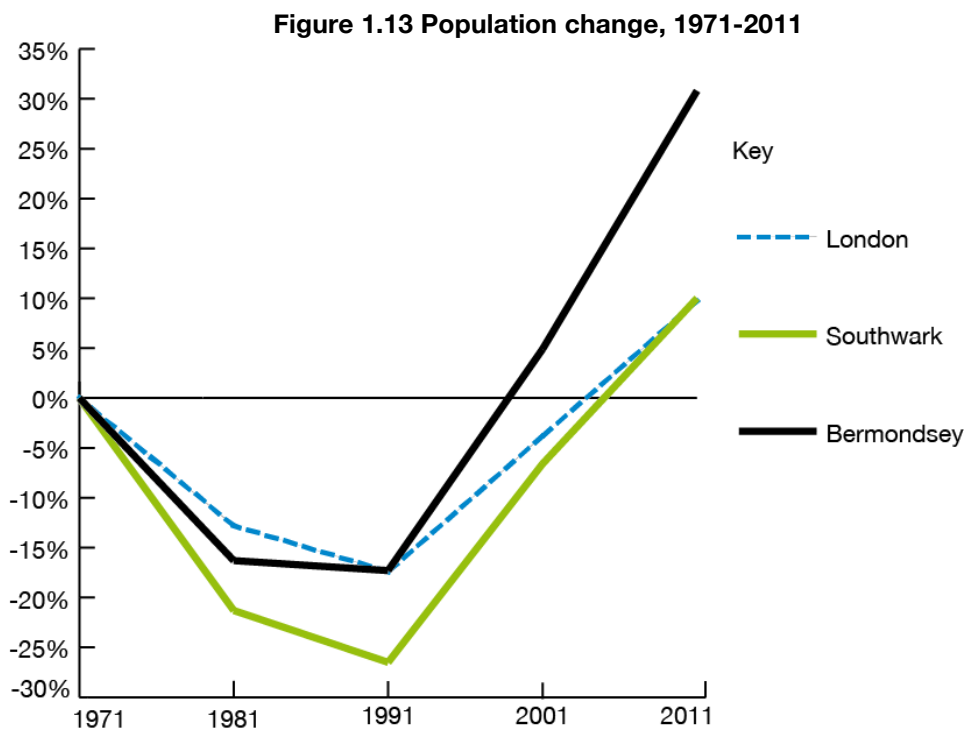
The emergence of a gentrified housing market in Bermondsey is the product of both a particular local context and of wider social and economic changes. The area's riverside location meant that as London moved from a global economic centre based on trading goods to one based on financial services, there was scope to reinvent the former docks and warehouses into living and consumption spaces for the adjacent City. This was initially carried out under a new model of market-led regeneration, where a development corporation sought to lever in private investment. The new housing helped to meet the intense demand from



increasing numbers of professional households in London, who started to see working class inner London areas such as Bermondsey as suitable places to live.

### Changes to Bermondsey's population

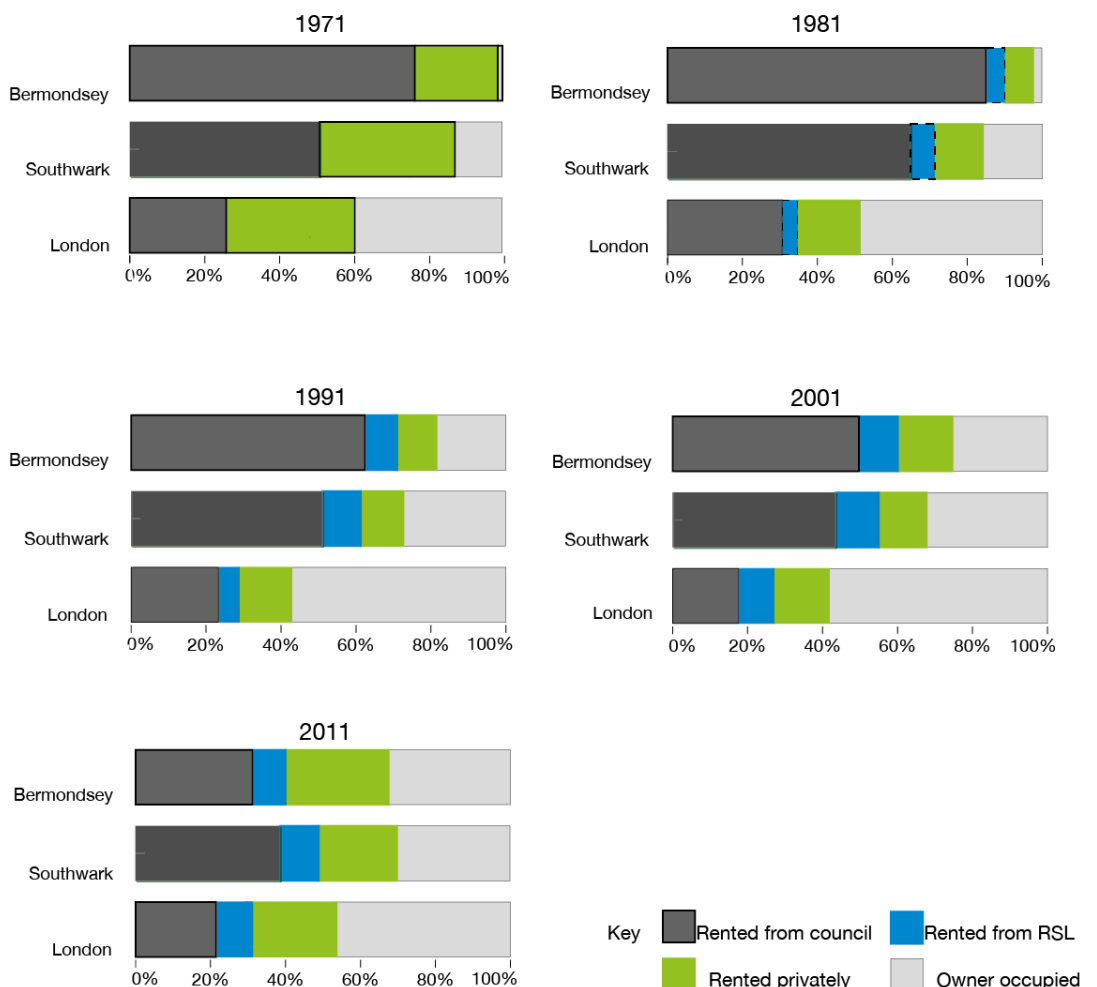
At the most recent Census, Bermondsey contained 44,930 residents.<sup>3</sup> Recent decades have seen several changes to the area's composition that are consistent with gentrification. The first is an increase in the number of residents (Figure 1.13). Along with London as a whole, census data show that the population of Bermondsey declined between 1971 and 1991 by 16 percentage points. Southwark saw an even steeper population loss, a 25 percent point fall over the same time period. The population had increased in all three areas at 2001, and has continued to do so, but Bermondsey shows a particularly steep rise by 2011 and is now 31 percentage points higher than in 1971, compared to rises of 10 percentage points in Southwark and London as a whole.



<sup>3</sup> See Chapter Three for a description of the wards that comprise the case study area and that form the basis for the analysis in this section.

The tenure profile of households in Bermondsey has also changed. For example, the proportion of households living in the owner-occupied tenure has increased from 1.2% in 1971 to 33.3% in 2011 (Figure 1.14). An upward trend is seen across London and nationally, particularly following the introduction of council tenants' right to buy under the 1980 Housing Act. However the relative fall in the proportion of households in council housing and a corresponding rise in owner-occupier households is much more dramatic in Bermondsey than in Southwark as a whole or in London: 85.0% of households in Bermondsey lived in council housing in 1981, falling to 32.7% in 2011, compared to a change from 64.8% to 39.3% in Southwark and 30.7% to 22.0% in London. A resurgent private rental sector is also apparent in the data. There was a contraction across London in the 1970s caused by, among other factors, the selling of privately rented houses for owner-occupation, and the breaking up of privately rented blocks for sale as individual flats (Hamnett 2003). The trend was only reversed in the 1990s and reflected in the 2001 Census data where growth in the sector is apparent. This can be seen in the data for Bermondsey. In 1971, 22.2% of households were in private rented accommodation, falling to 7.4% in 1981. The proportion had risen to 14.6% by 2001, and then to 26.8% in 2011. What these changes mean is that, by 2011, social housing was no longer the majority tenure for households in Bermondsey, and almost as many lived in owner-occupation as in council housing (33.3% and 33.7% respectively). Since 1971 then, households in Bermondsey have changed from being overwhelmingly likely to be in the council rented sector to now occupying a diversity of tenures with the largest growth occurring in owner-occupation.

**Figure 1.14 Housing tenure: 1971-2011 – all households**



That the type of person who lives in Bermondsey has changed in recent decades can be seen when socio-economic grouping (SEG) is considered.<sup>4</sup> Figure 1.15 shows the percentage of people aged 16-74 in the middle class groups of the SEG classification (groups 1 to 5). In Bermondsey, Southwark and London there is a significant expansion in the size of the middle classes. In London, for example, it rose from 12.7% to 33.7% of the total population between 1971 and 2011, with the largest growth between 1971 and 1981 where there was an increase of 13.4%. However there are differences in the pattern of growth between Bermondsey and London as a whole. Firstly, it started from a

<sup>4</sup> A new social group classification, NS-SEC, was used in the 1991 and 2001 censuses. These data were converted to SEG to allow comparison with earlier censuses, following the approach of Butler et al (2008). See p100 for further explanation and Appendix 1 for the full data analysis.

smaller base. In 1971 there was only a very small proportion of Bermondsey inhabitants who could be classified as middle class – just 4.1% – a lower percentage than the Southwark average of 7.0%. Moreover, the growth in Bermondsey’s middle class happened later than in the rest of London. In 1981 middle class groups comprised 9.8% of the population, but the proportion had more than tripled to 30.5% by 1991, and by 2001 was close to the average for London – 32.4% compared to 34.2% for London. Finally, it is worth noting that much of the proportionate growth until 1991 was in the lower middle classes (SEGs 5.1 and 5.2). The traditional upper middle classes (SEGs 1 to 4) made up just 15.7% of the total in 1991, compared to 22.5% in London. However it is in the proportion of the upper middle classes that Bermondsey saw the most growth since 1991, so that by 2011 they comprised 19.0% of the total, compared to 16.8% in both Southwark and London.

**Figure 1.15 Middle class socio-economic groups, 1971-2011: percentage of all persons aged 16-74**

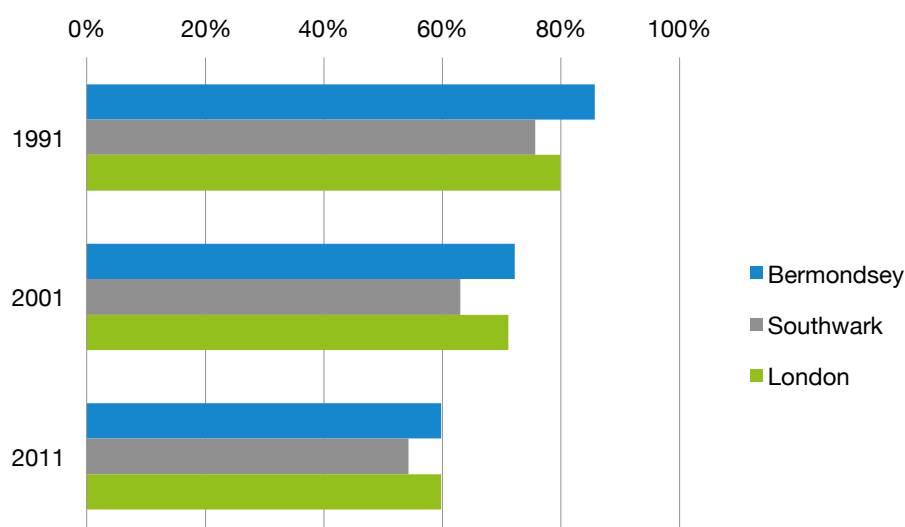




The figure clearly show Bermondsey's change from an area with a very small middle class population in 1971 and 1981, but one that grew substantially so that by 1991 it was almost of a similar size to the rest of London. The size of its middle class continued to grow and, for the upper middle classes, at a faster rate than for Southwark and London so that by 2011 they made up a larger proportion than in the borough or the rest of the city.

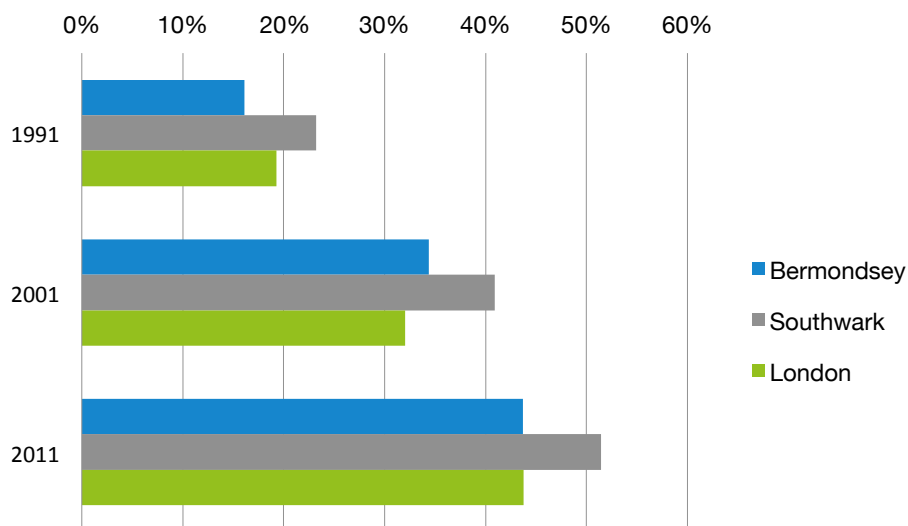
Census analysis has shown changes to the size of Bermondsey's population, its housing profile and social class composition. Finally we can analyse change in ethnic profile. Figure 1.16 shows the proportion of residents from a white ethnic group for the last three censuses where data comparisons can be made. Bermondsey had a larger proportion of residents from a white ethnic group in 1991 – 85.6% compared to 75.6% in Southwark and 79.8% in London. While all three areas saw a large decline by 2001, the decrease in proportion was greater in Bermondsey than in Southwark or London – 13.5 percentage points compared to 12.6 and 8.7 respectively. The white ethnic groups fell further as a proportion of the total in 2011 and again the decline was larger in Bermondsey than elsewhere – a 12.4 percentage point fall compared to 11.4 in London. In a similar way to social composition, the change to the ethnic profile of Bermondsey mirrors the changes taking place in the wider city, but at a faster rate.

**Figure 1.16 Proportion of residents from white ethnic groups, 1991-2011**



The size of the non-white population has grown in Bermondsey; its proportion within social housing has also increased. This can be seen in Figure 1.17, which shows the proportion of residents from non-white ethnic groups that live in social housing. In 1991 social housing was still dominated by white residents in Bermondsey – just 16.1% of residents were from another ethnic group, smaller than in Southwark (23.2%) and London (19.3%). By 2011 this had changed dramatically and, again, the change has been more pronounced in Bermondsey than in Southwark or London. The proportion of non-white residents in social housing grew by 27.6 percentage points in Bermondsey from 1991 to 2011, compared to 26.2 in Southwark and 24.5 in London.

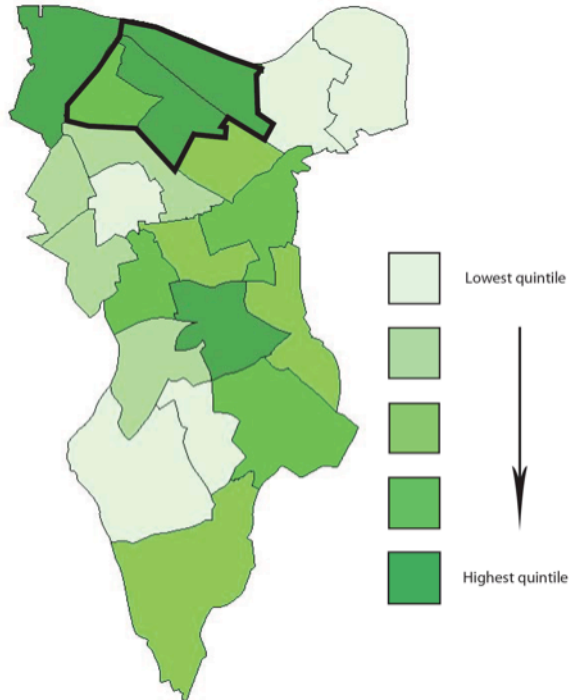
**Figure 1.17 Proportion of non-white ethnic groups in social housing, 1991-2011**



One result of Bermondsey’s reinvention as a desirable location for residence is that it has received and is continuing to receive unprecedented interest from small and large scale developers in increasing the supply of residential properties. This is shown in an analysis of Southwark Council’s planning application register in Figure 1.18. The data are the number of applications received in 2010 indexed to the population of each Southwark ward (the Bermondsey case study area is outlined in bold). It shows a concentration of applications in the north of Southwark at Borough and Bermondsey, as well as in the south, around the traditionally prosperous area of Dulwich. When only

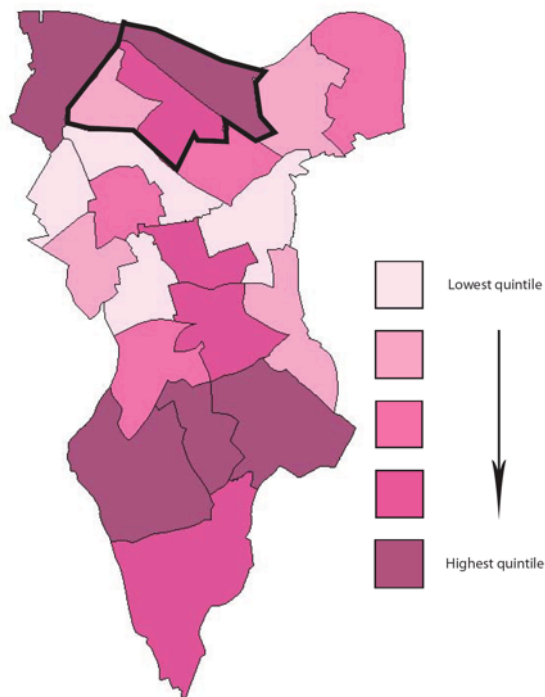
major dwelling applications (of ten or more units) during 2005-2010 are considered, again indexed to the population size of each ward, Figure 1.19 shows that Bermondsey and Borough received the most applications.

**Figure 1.18 Planning applications (all types) per person, 2010**



*Source: Southwark Council Planning Register, 2010*

**Figure 1.19 Planning applications (major dwellings) per person, 2010**



*Source: Southwark Council Planning Register, 2010*

It is however notoriously difficult to demonstrate the occurrence of gentrification through secondary data (see Chapter Two). The lack of comparable data on income and length of residency in an area means that it is hard to discern whether trends can be directly attributable to gentrification or are due to other changes. The purpose of this analysis is to reveal that the changes to the type of residents in Southwark and London have occurred in Bermondsey at a greater rate. The picture is of Bermondsey being more populous and its residents now more likely to live in owner-occupation, have a professional job and be from a non-white ethnic group than they were in the 1980s and 1990s. While these trends are discernable across London and Southwark, they have often occurred to a greater degree in Bermondsey or more quickly than elsewhere.

### **Social housing in Bermondsey**

We have seen how processes of gentrification have shifted the very local geographies of centre and margin in Bermondsey, with a declining traditional working class centre contrasting with the resurgent former industrial parts. It is worth reemphasising that, outside Bermondsey Street and Riverside, the area is still predominantly inhabited by white working class residents largely in the social rented housing tenure (Evans 2007). Social rented housing formed a defining part of Bermondsey's local governance for much of the twentieth century, whether in its enthusiastic construction by Bermondsey Council in the inter-war period, or through its promotion as a symbol of Southwark Council's opposition to private homebuilding in the early 1980s. For local government in this period, housing signalled and defined new social relations between the state and working class residents.

Yet we have also seen that new housing in Bermondsey is now overwhelming for the private market, either through the conversion of industrial buildings for residential use or through new-build developments on vacant land. The social composition of Bermondsey has certainly changed as a result of private

homebuilding. The 1991 Census recorded a rise in Southwark's population for the first time in forty years, partly as a result of a movement of middle class individuals and families to the area, despite some better-off working class families leaving (Carter 2008). However this was not necessarily a case of their being displaced by gentrification. In his history of Southwark Council's housing policies, Harold Carter (2008) describes the working class 'flight' from the north of the borough was the result of disenchantment with changes to ethnic, rather than class, composition, and the removal of allocation policies that privileged their access to social housing.

In common with other areas in London, the first wave of post-War house building excluded ethnic minority immigrants in Southwark. Allocation was based on length of residence and prioritised 'respectable' and established tenants, with local Labour councillors in Bermondsey individually deciding nominations (Weinbren 1998). Ethnic minorities were concentrated in the private rental tenure in the centre of the borough, often in homes scheduled for demolition. As opposed to elsewhere in Southwark, the initial social housing programme did not alter 'the old character of the riverside areas as almost exclusively white working class, neighbourhoods' (Carter 2008: 157). Equalities legislation opened social housing up to ethnic minorities in the second wave of council homebuilding that started in the 1960s. However the housing constructed in this period was often system-built and of poor quality with physical and social design failures, and frequently became characterised by high turnover and antisocial behaviour (Hanley 2007). In Southwark, the 1960s expansion of council housing mainly occurred in the centre of the borough and so a geographical divide emerged between the less desirable housing in areas like Peckham and Camberwell, and the more attractive housing estates found in Bermondsey and Rotherhithe to the north, still occupied almost entirely by white working class families. While Southwark's house building programme was extensive – 12,000 homes were built in the ten years after 1965 (Carter 2008) – the vast majority of new homes were replacing housing previously demolished. Demand for reasonable quality social housing was fierce. By the 1980s the only available housing for the children of established white working class families was in the decrepit estates in central Southwark.

With the introduction of right to buy in the early 1980s, better-off families from working class background sought to buy their own home. However the council's policy of acquiring and demolishing private housing stock in the north of the borough often meant moving away to the suburbs or out of London altogether to realise their ambition: "flight" by families in the face of a council that was unable to respond to their needs' (Carter 2008: 170). Those in desirable estates who were able to buy often found that moving away could release the unexpectedly high equity in the homes and so capitalise on the rapid price increases that Bermondsey's new popularity with some middle class groups had partly created.

By the late 1980s mass council house-building programmes had ceased in Britain. A new orthodoxy emerged, following the political ideology that scorned the direct provision of services by public bodies (Malpass 2005). In housing, the role of councils shifted from providers to enablers, negotiating provision of affordable housing principally through Section 106 agreements on privately built developments, although this brought forward new housing at drastically lower levels (Hickman and Robinson 2006).<sup>5</sup> Nationally the tenure became residualised – more narrowly based socially and economically, and only accessible to those in greatest need (Power and Tunstall 1995).

In Southwark, there was a marked contrast to the Council's previous attitude that sought to discourage any development that might alter the social composition of its northern areas. Instead, by the mid-1990s, Southwark's Labour administration had enthusiastically embraced private sector housing. The locational value of its riverside areas was central to developers' interest in Southwark, as the Thames emerged as an area for lifestyle rather than industry. Away from the river the abandoned warehouses and former factories also

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<sup>5</sup> 'This refers to Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Planning and Compensation Act 1991. Section 106 agreements are included in planning permissions between local planning authorities and developers. Their aim is to mitigate against the impact of development by providing additional infrastructure or affordable housing, whether in cash or contributions in kind. 'This is intended to ensure that local residents are essentially no worse off as a result of the development.' (Burgess et al 2007: 11).

offered potential for redevelopment into luxury dwellings, following the new cachet of loft-living. Southwark followed the template laid out by the LDDC and pursued market-led regeneration by using small amounts of public sector finance to act as a catalyst for wider private sector investment. The Council's approach to market-led regeneration has therefore been described as moving from unsuccessfully resisting in the early 1980s, to embracing and promoting by the 1990s (Newman and Smith 1999).

Tensions remained unresolved however. The success of the new housing schemes meant prices soared beyond levels affordable to local people as developers sought greater returns from providing high-end apartments. Within the social housing sector, London's status as a pole for international migration has created a new demand for affordable housing in areas that were almost exclusively white, and fostered competition for the homes on the best estates with long-standing residents. At times resentment over how little of the new housing is accessible has spilled over into violence and intimidation to stop ethnic minority families moving to Bermondsey, including racist attacks against black families who had moved to the Cherry Gardens Pier estate in the 1990s (see Chapter Four).

## **Conclusion and thesis outline**

Bermondsey is of course not unique in being an inner city area whose former industrial form provides the bedrock of gentrification, or where social housing shortages have fragmented working class communities – elsewhere in London, Islington's Clerkenwell (Hamnett and Whitelegg 2007) comes to mind along with former docklands in London's East End (Foster 1999; Mumford and Power 2003; Dench et al 2006). I would argue that what makes it different is how rapidly its previous isolation from the rest of London has been eroded by urban forms aimed at new types of inhabitants. London areas north of the river have historically shared stronger ties to the City than those to the south, for example as locations for middle class residential areas built alongside new commuter

transport lines (Rykwert 2000). The relative isolation of the south means that it offered a greater scope for redevelopment; the density of business premises on the northern banks of the river means that 'no further alteration to its commercial aspect or direction is possible without more destruction' (Ackroyd 2000: 696). As well as differences in the urban fabric, the attitude of local government to new development is significant. Southwark Council's strategy to integrate the north of the borough into the cultural and economic trends of the City and its use of design policy to facilitate the area's reinvention are in advance of other inner London boroughs. This is evinced in the transformation of Bermondsey Riverside and, more recently, of Bankside, now culturally linked to the centre of London with Tate Modern, and physically so with the Millennium Bridge. While not on the same scale, Bermondsey Street exhibits localised version of the same trends, with creative industries accompanying new housing forms in former industrial buildings.

One focus of my research is on long-term residents' responses to these forms of neighbourhood change. This chapter has presented how rapid social change in the composition of a neighbourhood can disrupt forms of a locally bounded notion of community, which might otherwise provide a basis for forms of ontological security. Elsewhere in London this has resulted in conflicts between gentrifiers and long-term residents and a political struggle over the supply and access of housing (Jacobs 1996), a tense dynamic that also exists in Bermondsey (Evans 2007). I have argued that this makes it a particularly suitable case study area for an examination of how long-term residents perceive gentrification, and how different social groups interact in increasingly heterogeneous neighbourhoods.

Chapter Two constitutes a review of the academic literature in which my research is situated. It focuses on the impact gentrification can have on working class neighbourhoods and their inhabitants, and the extent to which urban policy can exacerbate or limit its negative effects. It also looks more broadly at how everyday urban experiences are portrayed in the literature. The third chapter details the methods used in the research and the methodological framework for analysing gentrification.



What then follows are the substantive chapters of my thesis. In Chapter Four, I return in a more detailed way to the historical development of gentrification in Bermondsey. Based on interviews with key actors and analysis of local and regional planning policies, the chapter is intended to forward the argument that creating particular urban spaces of gentrification is directly related to the local authority's attempts to integrate North Southwark into London's 'world city' economy as a place of work, spectacle, consumption and residency.

Chapters Five and Six discuss the findings from interviews with long-term residents regarding the recent changes in Bermondsey. Chapter Five starts by examining the narratives participants constructed about change to their neighbourhood. It considers the role of nostalgia in how they talked about change and focuses on two dominant elements in their narratives: notions of community decline, and the relationship between the built environment and their perceptions of the neighbourhood. It then considers how gentrification and other forms of neighbourhood change affect their housing security, in other words, its impact on the private realm of the home. In turn, Chapter Six considers the effect of gentrification in the public realm – specifically the use of the neighbourhood's public spaces and amenities by long-term residents. It explores issues of segregation and engagement with public space through the analysis of three case studies that each reflects different aspects of Bermondsey's gentrification.

Chapter Seven examines the social and political practices of a group of early gentrifiers at Bermondsey Street. It considers how the particular vision they held for the neighbourhood – one premised on concepts of the 'urban village' and 'social diversity'. These ideals attracted them to the neighbourhood in the first place and through their founding of a community organisation, they sought to embed them in local policies for the area's development. I critically examine their efforts to promote their particular version of gentrification based on social diversity and security for long-term residents. I also reflect on their struggle to maintain this inclusive outlook in the face of the latest gentrification cycles, and the new inhabitants and forms of development that these have brought.

The ultimate aim of the research is to provide a detailed explanation of how different inhabitants experience, access and contest space in an area undergoing rapid social change. The main research findings are brought together in the final chapter where I discuss their implications for our understanding of gentrification.

## **Chapter Two. Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

This chapter reviews academic accounts of the various permutations of gentrification since Ruth Glass (1964) first coined the term. Reflecting my research questions, a particular emphasis is placed, firstly, on examining analysis of its origins and trajectories in London and, secondly, on its impact on inhabitants of affected areas. A common concern in gentrification research is the ‘perennial narrative of residential displacement’ (Ley 2012: 53) in which middle class incomers succeed lower income residents in urban areas. Yet while much of the research examines the role of gentrifiers in this process, the voices of long-term residents – the pre-existing, lower income inhabitants of a gentrifying area – are less well articulated. A significant gap in the literature is therefore empirically grounded accounts of long-term residents in the affected neighbourhoods. Where research has taken place, it suggests that long-term residents can respond to gentrification in broader, more ambiguous ways than is typically theorised. Similarly, recent studies of gentrifiers have questioned their role in the displacement narrative. Some may actively resist the displacement of long-term residents or can themselves be threatened by its newest forms. The third part of this chapter focuses on this emerging body of literature that emphasises the ambiguity of responses towards gentrification. Overall, the review aims to articulate gentrification’s pluralistic nature, both in terms of its various articulations in social and spatial contexts, and the consequent variety of experience by different social actors.

### **The economic and cultural origins of gentrification**

If we start from Glass’s (1964) original description of what she labelled gentrification, it is notable how the essence of the process remains recognisable

in contemporary accounts. For since she first identified some fifty years ago a change in the type of inhabitants living in some of London's traditionally working class neighbourhoods, her term has subsequently been applied by scholars to a wide range of socio-spatial contexts in cities around the world (Harris 2008). Glass's celebrated description succinctly identifies the upgrading of working class housing and the eventual displacement of original inhabitants that is frequently found in gentrification research worldwide:

One by one, many of the working-class quarters of London have been invaded by the middle classes—upper and lower. Shabby, modest mews and cottages—two rooms up and two down—have been taken over, when their leases have expired, and have become elegant, expensive residences. Larger Victorian houses, downgraded in an earlier or recent period—which were used as lodging houses or were otherwise in multiple occupation—have been upgraded once again... Once this process of “gentrification” starts in a district it goes on rapidly until all or most of the original working-class occupiers are displaced and the whole social character of the district is changed. (Glass 1964: xviii),

Yet quite how the process of gentrification originates is subject to extensive debate. This section draws on the two main schools of explanation for how gentrification takes place. Until recently, the divide between the production and consumption driven explanations dominated the gentrification literature. Put briefly, the former emphasises the logics of property investment and land values that make a move to the inner city a productive move for the middle class; the latter stressing the cultural consumption preferences of the incomers that make the inner city an appealing destination for them. However, in outlining the literature relevant to how gentrification has taken place in London, I draw on Slater's (2011) argument that the two explanations should not be seen as a dichotomy, and both sides of the argument draw more from each other than their most strident proponents often realise. Consequently this section attempts to draw on both arguments to move beyond the stark binaries of production and consumption, of structure and agency, and instead show how these dimensions have interacted in London's gentrification.

One of the earliest conceptualisations of how gentrification takes place, and one that draws heavily on production explanations, is the stage model first set out by Clay (1979: 57-60) and later revised into three 'waves' by Hackworth and Smith (2001). It remains a widespread heuristic to understand how gentrification in a neighbourhood starts as a minority pursuit and then becomes more widespread as corporate interests seek to benefit from the new market for middle class housing in the inner city. In the first stage gentrification is led by 'pioneers' who invest in the property of a rundown area through small-scale and 'sweat equity' – privately financed renovations carried out by the owners in cheap, dilapidated housing (Smith 1979). The renovation is directed by their class taste, and so these early gentrifiers drive up the property's value through deployment of their cultural capital, commodified in the property (Bridge 2006a). These pioneers are willing to pay the 'risk premium' (Skaburskis 2008), standing personally to make substantial economic gains if the precedent they set means they help convert an urban environment into a viable, secure location for middle class living. This discrepancy between the value of the present land use and its optimal potential use – what Smith terms the 'rent gap' (1979) – creates the conditions of affordability for homeowners, as it does in later stages of profitability for developers. The early gentrifiers therefore weigh up the gamble of moving to a disinvested area which may not improve over time as expected or will fall short of their expectations, with the potential for a greater financial reward than available through a move to an already established middle class residential area (Beauregard 1986).

The second stage of the gentrification process occurs when the middle class in-movement is expanded through the interest of small-scale speculators. It is at this stage that some displacement occurs of those long-term residents who, for a range of factors discussed below, are unable to continue living in the area. The area's growing popularity with new residents sparks media and official interest, leading to urban renewal programmes and larger scale developers moving in, signalling the area as 'safe' for young, middle class professionals. These newer residents typically have higher levels of economic capital than their predecessors, meaning they need not invest their own sweat equity but can access more expensive restored housing. Housing is now principally a vehicle

for investment and tensions rise between new and long-term residents over how the neighbourhood changes to meet the new requirements.

The final stage involves the 'routinisation' of the gentrification aesthetic (Bridge 2006a) and the arrival of a higher echelon of the middle class from managerial and business backgrounds. This causes more widespread displacement – of renters, as prices rise further and they can no longer afford housing, and of some first stage gentifiers living in owner-occupation who decide to leave, dissatisfied at changes to the neighbourhood that occur under this stage of gentrification. The different forms of displacement are discussed in detail later in this chapter. Gentrification expands beyond the urban core into more marginal, outer zones of disinvestment as corporate interests chase the profits attainable from providing homes for a gentrifying class (Hackworth 2002, Smith 2002). Not only does gentrification now occur in different sites, but it can take place in different forms (Lees 2003b). The traditional method of renovating old housing stock or converting industrial premises to residential still remains, but there is a limit to the number of actual warehouses available for conversion. Once this supply is exhausted, developers offer a simulated – and often cheaper – new-build alternative. Often the new-buildings reflect vestiges of the local and historical – exposed brickwork and 'industrial' facades' where imitation is placed above authenticity (Tonkiss 2005). As gentrification cycles develop and sweat equity is sidelined, heritage demands higher premiums. As Rem Koolhaas put it, 'there is just not enough past to go around, so its aura continues to skyrocket' (in Foster 2007). A pecking order emerges between those wealthy enough to access the 'genuine' housing aesthetic that reflects industrial heritage, and those inhabiting 'infill replicas' (Lees et al 2008: 119), a form of 'neo-archaism' and 'gentrification kitsch' (Jager 1986). In Britain, this trend has coincided with design policy encouraging new-buildings to reflect the appearance of existing ones (English Heritage 2000), providing support during planning applications for new developments that reference surrounding housing typologies as a kind of pastiche.

By the completion of its final stage, gentrification has new actors (including volume house builders), new locations (marginal urban spaces) and new forms (new-build housing). It is further argued that another distinguishing feature of the

final stage is that developers work in tandem with the state and are supported by government regeneration policies (Hackworth and Smith 2001; Davidson and Lees 2005). The link between gentrification and public policy has been particularly strongly made by Neil Smith (1996, 2002), who argues that gentrification is an outcome of globalization processes and neo-liberalism in respect of urban economies. Pointing to the restructuring of more advanced urban economies and the rescaling of state power, Smith (2002) proposes that gentrification by the 1990s had become 'a crucial urban strategy for city governments in consort with private capital in cities around the world' (2002: 93). It is no longer a quixotic endeavour led by a pioneering middle class minority in a select group of cities, but a 'class remake of the central urban landscape' (Smith 1996: 39). For Smith (2002), this strategy is a defining feature of 'third wave' gentrification in cities worldwide: the neoliberal state works in partnership with corporate powers to gentrify the city's socially and spatially peripheral neighbourhoods as new markets for capitalist restructuring. So although neoliberalism can be conceived as the commitment to the superiority of market competitiveness over Keynesian statist interventions (Peck and Tickell 2002), gentrification exemplifies how the state may use its power to intervene in order to expand or to secure the influence of markets (Brenner and Theodore 2002). Consequently cities have become the arena for neoliberal projects that aim to transform space to accommodate market-driven growth, such as housing and consumption spaces for higher income groups (van Gent 2013). Gentrification therefore comprises one of the tools for neoliberal urban governments to regenerate deprived areas and one which many cities actively seek to cultivate and promote in their deprived neighbourhoods (Harris 2008).

What is apparent from this outline of the stage model of gentrification is the salient role of capital accumulation in the explanation, whether in motivating middle class individuals to move to the inner city, or encouraging corporate and governmental actors to pursue the development of middle class spaces as an urban strategy. Moreover it is a template that, it is argued, is applied by a growing number of city authorities (Smith 1996). The difficulty for these explanations which see gentrification as following a global template, and consequently without substantial differences in process or outcome, is how to account for its different forms, the range of people involved, and that it is

achieved in markedly different ways (Lees et al 2008, van Gent 2013). In other words, how gentrification occurs is heavily context dependent, with the pace and scope of change differing per country and even within the same cities. The overwhelming power attributed by Smith (1996, 2001) through production-based explanations to the structural causes of gentrification has a tendency to dismiss the scope for individual agency. One example would be the role of policy actors and neighbourhood activists in limiting the worst effects of gentrification on long-term residents (K. Shaw 2005, Ley and Dobson 2008). One consequence is that the model is very US-centric; while European urban policy can certainly support the upscaling of once working class neighbourhoods, it is countered by better protection for existing residents in gentrifying neighbourhoods (see below) (Clark 2005; K. Shaw 2005; Hamnett 2009b; Lees 2012).

A second criticism is the model's tendency to overlook how policy and planning regimes have always been an important factor in instigating gentrification, even in the early stages, albeit in a less open and assertive manner (Harris 2008). For example, the nascent gentrification of London neighbourhoods in the 1970s was aided by local council home improvement grants (Hamnett 1973). These offered up to 50 per cent of rehabilitation costs to landlords, with the intention of improving conditions for their tenants. However many landlords instead used the grants to upgrade the property prior to selling to a new class of resident (Hamnett 1973, Balchin 1979). Another example of state support is through heritage designations. These valorise the older housing forms which gentrifiers renovate giving them a degree of exclusivity and distinction from more widespread housing forms (Jager 1986; W. Shaw 2005).

One last weakness of the stage model is that it assumes finality in the gentrification process, that it is completed once it has moved through the various stages. Empirical research has found that urban housing markets rarely reach a stage of stability which this would imply and that the process continues to mutate. For example, Loretta Lees (2000, 2003) developed the notion of 'super-gentrification' to describe 'the transformation of already gentrified, prosperous and solidly middle class neighbourhoods into much more exclusive and expensive enclaves' (2003: 2487) in areas of London and New York. Far wealthier than original gentrifiers, the super-gentrifiers are typically from



occupations tied to global financial flows and their remaking of a neighbourhood to furnace their elite consumption practices is a source of tension for the existing residents, including earlier gentrifiers as well as long-term residents.

In a similar vein to Lees (2000, 2003), Tim Butler (2003) uses the term 'regentrification' to describe how the cultural and spatial practices of a new generation of gentrifiers conflict with those of their predecessors. His research in Islington found a new type of gentrifier moving to an already gentrified neighbourhood. The difference was that they lacked a commitment to maintaining the areas as socially mixed and had limited social interaction with those from outside their particular milieu. In a literal and figurative sense, they buy into the neighbourhood's physical environment but do not practice local social interaction. This means avoiding the use of local state secondary schools, for example, and socialising in the same, highly commodified spaces. As such they occupied a 'bubble' with 'very few points of access to other sorts of people' (2003: 2483). The consequence is that the search for diversity that some writers (Caulfield 1994, Ley 1996) argue originally caused gentrifiers to spurn the suburbs has been lost (Butler and Lees 2006). Such 'isolation strategies' (Atkinson 2006) of later gentrifiers become embodied in the built environment as developers meet demand for gated communities and enclave style new-build developments that provide privacy, promote withdrawal and are visibly set apart from the rest of the neighbourhood (Davidson 2010). It is the combination of social practices that actively avoid social mixing and architecture that inhibits the possibility of mixing that makes later forms of gentrification particularly exclusionary and exclusive (Atkinson and Blandy 2005).

Lees' and Butler's studies challenge the finality of the gentrification process; their findings demonstrate how once a neighbourhood has gentrified, other changes to its social composition can still take place. These can even include the partial impeding or reversal of the process. For example, more recently Lees has described the 'stalled gentrification' (2012) that has occurred in London and other cities following the global recession and resultant collapse in private sector investment and public agencies' funding for regeneration projects (see also Pattaroni et al 2012 on 'thwarted gentrification'). What both writers emphasise are the cultural aspects of gentrification – the beliefs of gentrifiers about what

inner city living can offer, and so what motivates their in-migration, and how they position themselves in relation to other inhabitants. These gentrifiers' choices and preferences are not bounded by economic determinism, although their elevated financial resources are the consequence of changes to global economic structures and the position of cities within them. This has two implications. Firstly, there is a greater scope for human agency to affect how gentrification occurs and create a wider range of outcomes than the production-based explanations can allow. Secondly, it moves understanding of gentrification away from a strategic template applied in cities worldwide and opens it up to local interpretations around common themes. Gentrification 'cannot in any sense be considered to be a unitary phenomenon, but needs to be examined in each case according to its own logic and outcomes' (Butler and Robson 2001: 2160). What is needed is an appreciation of the 'contextual specificities of the gentrification process whilst retaining a sensitivity to more general factors that constitute the engine behind the process' (Slater 2004: 1192).

It is here that gentrification theory associated with 'consumption' can be helpful. This places a greater emphasis than in production theories on the individual strategies of gentrifiers and the changes to industrial and occupational structures in city in which these strategies are played out (Ley 1996; Hamnett 2003). Such changes are associated with the emergence of the 'post-industrial society' characterized by a shift from manufacturing to a service-based economy comprising an expanding share of professional and managerial jobs, and new urban spaces to host these groups (Bell 1973). It was in the context of the post-industrial society that David Ley (1994, 1996) first sought to locate gentrification. This phase in urban development could not simply be explained by structural forces behind housing market dynamics, but by a particular aesthetic outlook on the part of a 'cultural new class' (Ley 1996) concentrated in cities undergoing changes associated with the post-industrial society. In other words, a distinct cultural outlook among certain segments of the new middle class predisposed them to living in the socially heterogeneous inner city and rejecting the model of suburban living (Ley 1996). Butler (1997) refers to gentrifiers' conscious decision not to move to the suburbs as a form of liberation from class expectations, while for Caulfield (1994) gentrification subverts

mainstream culture as the inner city becomes an emancipatory space for new, more tolerant social activities. Writing on Toronto's gentrification, Caulfield (1994) witnessed a middle class reaction to the repressive institutions of suburbia and the 'placeless space and monofunctional instrumentality' (1994: 624-625) created by the city's post-War modernist planning.

In drawing on production and cultural explanations it is important not to represent the two as mutually exclusive or as stark binaries. Gentrification can be both an expression of the changed consumption choices among certain sections of the middle class, and the product of speculative capital and its various institutional agents in creating spaces for the gentrifying middle class (Slater 2011). Collective social agency therefore plays 'a key role in providing capitalism with market opportunities to exploit' (Hamnett 1998: 415). Gentrification in any context must recognize the importance of production and consumption factors, and how they work together to shape neighbourhood expressions of class difference (Ley 2003). Rather than a process that has 'generalized' (Smith 2002), meaning the experiences of it are broadly similar (Smith 1996), there remain striking differences in how gentrification plays out.

Gentrification is therefore a confluence of structure and agency, of production and consumption. The example of London's gentrification as described in Chapter One makes this point. Its processes of gentrification can be traced to the city's fundamental reshaping in the post-War period and a 'top-down' shift in the city's composition and form envisaged in the Abercrombie Plan (Hebbert 1998). It was in a context of a declining inner city population that gentrification later emerged, as traditionally working class areas started to upgrade socially with the inward migration of middle class groups attracted by the heterogeneity unavailable in the suburbs, while relatively low property prices in potentially gentrified neighbourhoods played an attracting factor. By giving a new lease to urban areas threatened by clearances, gentrification therefore challenged the foreclosure of inner city living envisaged in the Abercrombie Plan, but it was the consequences of the Plan that helped provide the structural conditions for gentrification (Hebbert 1998).

Recent manifestations of gentrification in London should also be seen in the context of globalisation processes and its status as a global city (Sassen 2001). The consolidation of the City of London as a major global financial centre has altered the city's class structure, with higher numbers of professional and managerial jobs in business sectors, and generated new wealth that has partly been channelled into consumption practices and property speculation (Hamnett 2003). The growth of the professional middle class leads to a substantial demand for owner-occupation and a rise in house prices affecting more peripheral areas, putting increased pressure on the remains of the low-income housing market. Moreover, by providing centrally located and architecturally distinct enclaves, it is argued London can continue to attract the highly skilled groups necessary to promoting its functional role in the global economy (Butler 1997, Webber 2007). In one respect space for the new class fraction has been created from the remnants of London's industrial past. As urban industry has declined in economic significance, so the buildings used for manufacturing have lost their original purpose. They have not become completely redundant however: 'the requirements of post-industrial production and consumption have led to a demand for new types of space, both commercial and residential' (Hamnett 2003: 6). As factories are dismantled and wharves and warehouses are abandoned, so the industrial built form is refurbished to meet new consumption demands in world cities. These include cafés and boutiques catering for high-income urban elites (Savitch 1988, Sassen 2001) but also accommodation in the form of lofts and converted warehouse spaces (Zukin 1988).

What this brief overview of London's gentrification demonstrates is how a particular local context affects how gentrification unfolds. This is of course one reason for the lack of academic consensus on its causes and impacts. Different political and urban frameworks mean that the way the process occurs and the impact that it has on social groups can vary considerably between countries, cities, and even between neighbourhoods within the same city. The definitional struggles within the literature therefore reflect the essence of the process itself and how its local articulations are dependent on place, locality and scale. So while gentrification is the consequence of wider changes in urban economy and society, its contours are rarely uniform. This is not to question the validity of an occasionally nebulous term when discussing or researching the contemporary

city. Rather it points to one of its strengths, namely the ability to highlight how broad changes – encompassing processes of globalisation, neo-liberalism and post-industrialisation – can affect the neighbourhood scale and the everyday experiences of its inhabitants. Yet this is not always reflected in the gentrification literature that can see the process operating in isolation from other social processes. The focus of the next section is on how the literature approaches inhabitants' experiences of gentrification, a body of research to which my thesis aims to contribute.

### **Social mix and the lived experiences of gentrification**

This section examines how the literature regards the impact of gentrification on its inhabitants, with particular attention on its effects on long-term residents – those who have lived in a neighbourhood prior to its gentrification.<sup>6</sup> As the survey of the literature will show, with some notable exceptions, little empirical attention has been paid to how existing residents of gentrifying neighbourhoods perceive the process that is happening around them and how they experience the changes that occur. So in the UK there has been extensive research into the constitution and behaviour of middle class gentrifiers (for example Butler 1997, Robson and Butler 2003, Bridge 2006a and 2006b, Butler and Lees 2006, Hamnett and Whitelegg 2007) but working class residents remain 'backstage, both perennial understudies and perennially understudied' (Slater 2006: 744). This section argues that the inclusion of these perspectives is necessary to develop a more complete understanding of gentrification.

Before we review the literature which directly involves long-term residents' perceptions, we examine how inhabitants experience difference in gentrifying neighbourhoods. Indeed, among the more positive portrayals of gentrification, it is the act of sharing space with different social groups that brings emancipatory

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<sup>6</sup> Other terms used in the literature for the same group of inhabitants include 'incumbent residents' (Rose 2004), 'indigenous residents' (Freeman 2006) and 'old-timers' (Brown-Saracino 2009).

benefits to all inhabitants. For example, Caulfield (1994) and Ley (1996) write on gentrifying Canadian cities with optimism about a process that has liberated the middle classes from the conformity of suburban living and brought together different people in the inner city. These spaces of difference create opportunities for social interaction and tolerance; they are 'socially diverse, welcoming difference, tolerant, creative, valuing the old, the hand-crafted, the personalized, countering hierarchical lines of authority' (Ley 1996: 210). For Caulfield (1994), sharing space with different people is a liberating experience. While Ley (1996) in particular picks up on negative aspects – for example, the threat of displacement discussed below – the emphasis on diversity and tolerance implies a strong potential for gentrification to bring benefits to all inhabitants.

This particular discourse around the benefits of social mix and city living has been picked up in urban policy. As discussed above, Neil Smith's (1996) work has associated gentrification with public policy, most saliently in his view of revanchist urbanism, where gentrification is a global strategy enacted by public and corporate institutions to rid the inner city of its working class past and make it secure for new middle class residents. Urban scholars have challenged whether this type of state-sponsored gentrification – conceived as an orchestrated campaign against less affluent social groups – is occurring to the same degree in different, and especially non-US, contexts (e.g. Slater 2004; Hamnett 2009b). It is not that the existence of the state's role is disputed, but that the version of gentrification that it facilitates is less malign. Importantly such policies are carried out not in the name of decreasing diversity of inhabitants – although, as we shall see, this may still be an outcome – but through the guise of promoting 'social mix'.

In the UK, many of the ideas around the benefits of social mix were synthesised in the Urban Task Force's (1999) and the subsequent urban White Paper's (DETR 2000) vision of an 'urban renaissance'. These stressed the contribution of housing to an area's wider regeneration, emphasised the increasing liveability of inner cities, embraced the philosophy of urban compactness, and the benefits of different social groups sharing space. The ideology continued in New Labour's national housing and planning policies. For example, the 2007 Housing Green Paper states that a core outcome of regeneration policies should be the

transformation of disadvantaged estates through promoting mixed communities, and sustaining strong and stable existing communities by promoting a mix of income, housing tenures and promoting community cohesion (DCLG 2010). Planning policy statements required local planning authorities to promote 'sustainable, liveable and mixed communities' (ODPM 2005: 3) and to deliver a mix of housing types 'to support a wide variety of households in all areas' (DCLG 2006: 6). Under New Labour, mixed communities became the 'overarching goal of all urban and housing policy' (Tunstall 2012: 35). In the context of deprived inner city areas, achieving social mixing necessarily implies encouraging middle class households to move away from the suburbs to the inner city – a form of migration that has obvious parallels to gentrification.

The focus and aims of city centre regeneration policies had therefore evolved in the UK since the adverse effects of decentralisation and suburbanisation in the 1970s (Bromley et al 2005). Following the 1997 New Labour election, housing was centrally incorporated into city centre regeneration plans, ending the approach of the 1980s and early 1990s when housing and regeneration policies were 'seriously divergent' (Lee and Nevin 2003: 66). With this came a growing reliance on the private sector as the source of funding for regeneration, principally via Section 106 agreements – where developers make a financial contribution towards affordable housing – or affordable housing targets on new developments (Lupton and Tunstall 2008). Relevant policies on how cities should be designed included targets for new housing developments on brownfield land (set at 60% in 2000), and the mixing of urban uses, replicating the traditional model of many European cities with high density and social and cultural diversity (Evans 1997). In this context, social mixing – changing the socio-demographic composition of an area through housing diversification – was regarded as bringing positive population changes and beneficial social implications through social cohesion (Meen et al 2005, Buck 2005).

Schoon (2001) identifies three distinct rationales for social mixing as the bedrock of public policy (given in Lees 2008). Firstly it is argued that middle class people are more effective advocates for better public resources, so neighbourhood services will improve as their cultural capital is brought to bear on local political structures. Next, by breaking up concentrations of poverty mixed

neighbourhoods are better able to support a strong local economy. Finally, mixed neighbourhoods promote social cohesion and economic opportunity through the 'social capital' effects of interaction between middle class and working class residents. Social mixing therefore reduces 'neighbourhood effects' whereby living in a deprived area is seen to adversely affect individuals' life chances.

The ability of the urban renaissance agenda and wider social mix policies to achieve these aims have been questioned by scholars. They represent for Rowland Atkinson an apparent 'gentrifiers' manifesto' (2002: 2). He argues that if population loss from inner cities is to be reversed by increasing liveability and quality of life, then this necessarily involves attracting back the middle classes – the social classes most directly associated with suburbanisation: the 'movement from city outskirts to inner areas [is] representing more closely the gentrification process' (2002: 18). Lees (2003b) describes the urban White Paper in similar terms. It is a 'pro-gentrification document' as it seeks to 'promote market-led gentrification as an instrument of both urban regeneration and social and economic policy' (2003b: 572). Moreover it is a policy language that never refers directly to gentrification 'and thus consistently deflects criticism and resistance' (Lees 2008: 2452). In its place terms such as urban renaissance and urban regeneration are used; more neutral terms that hide the changes in neighbourhood composition that the policies usher in. Gentrification is therefore promoted by policy-makers as 'a potential urban renewal solution' (Davidson 2008: 2385) by placing property ownership as a central driver of regeneration and encouraging middle class households to move to deprived areas to stimulate social inclusion. Furthermore, the benefits of socially mixed urban communities are unquestioned in these policy documents without providing research evidence (Cheshire 2006, Lees 2008). While the association between urban policy and gentrification in the UK is not new – for example, government home improvement grants played an instrumental role in London neighbourhood's nascent gentrification (Hamnett 1973, Balchin 1979) – the difference now is the scale and scope of state involvement in promoting gentrification.



This line of critique strongly takes issue with Caulfield's (1994) perspective on sharing space with different people as inherently liberating and mutually beneficial for all social groups concerned. Indeed, it questions the assumption in policy circles that an expanded middle class in the inner city will lead to less segregated, more liveable and sustainable communities (Lees 2008). There are three strands to gentrification researchers' critiques of social mix (Bridge et al 2012: 7-8). Firstly, it is a one-sided strategy, applied to poorer urban areas where the middle classes are invited in order to 'rescue' them, and seldom advocated in wealthy areas that can be just as socially homogeneous. Secondly, there is a concern with whether people from diverse backgrounds actually do mix in everyday life. Marcuse and van Kempen (2000) are sceptical and instead conceptualise a 'layered city' where each layer houses different activities or residential spaces that reflect different ways of living dependent on social status. Here, urban space is highly fragmented with separation of the layers maintained by fear of the other, leading to the exclusion of the low income population from public space.

Butler and Robson (2001) also questioned whether diverse groups mixing is a realistic proposition. They developed the notion of 'social tectonics' taking place in gentrified areas of London, whereby gentrifiers and long-term residents rarely interact with each other despite sharing the same proximate space. The more recent generation of gentrifiers enjoy mix, they argue, but do not practice it:

'relations between different social and ethnic groups in the area are of a parallel rather than integrative nature; people keep, by and large, to themselves... Social groups or "plates" overlap or run parallel to one another without much in the way of integrated experience in the area's social and cultural institutions.' (2001: 77-78).

What Butler with Robson (2003) also emphasise is how the gentrifiers in their study held a deep feeling of belonging to their neighbourhood and practiced a strong sense of place. Their ontological security was premised on locating 'people like us' – those who shared similar backgrounds, concerns and aspirations. This necessarily involves the creation of social others and exclusion based on a distinction between 'them' and 'us'. It would be a mistake, they

argue, to assume that physical ties lead to social ties in mixed neighbourhoods (see also Rose 2004, Slater 2004, Davidson 2008, Paton 2010). The rhetoric of social diversity still exists in gentrifiers' narratives because it allows them to distinguish themselves from suburbanites. The difference is that they do not need to cross boundaries and engage with others – it is about identity formation and distinction rather than social practice (Blokland and van Eijk 2012). This is reflected in the type of housing schemes that developers provide in more mature gentrification markets which, as discussed above, promote security and limit options for interactions with non-residents (Atkinson 2006; Davidson 2010). Paradoxically the offer of social connection with other inhabitants is a powerful marketing tool and the rhetoric of community looms large in publicity material for new housing developments in gentrifying areas.<sup>7</sup> There is an illusion of community, which gives the residents ontological security without the need to commit to the local community (Walters and Rosenblatt 2008).

Finally, critics question the assumption that socially mixed communities lay the foundations for socially balanced communities. In other words, do they form the cohesive and harmonious space envisaged in the policy discourse, or in fact lead to tensions and clashes between different social groups? Butler and Robson (2001) found that the lack of interaction between different inhabitants sharing the same space 'does not make way for an especially cosy settlement, and many residents, middle class or otherwise, speak of palpable tensions' (2001: 78). Put simply, there is little evidence that different social classes sharing space leads to more tolerance or less social difference (Watt 2006, Davidson 2008). In summary, for some gentrification researchers it means that the first wave, emancipatory gentrifier is a rare breed. That left-leaning liberal of the 1960s and 1970s, who actively seeks out diversity to reject middle class sterility, is now an exceptional occurrence and one largely confined to the urban policy imagery (Butler and Lees 2006; Davidson 2012).

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<sup>7</sup> For example, the pre-launch marketing for Bermondsey Square claimed: 'Bermondsey Square won't be 'the new' anything. Bermondsey Square is defined by its residents and businesses to create a real sense of community' (Bermondsey Square 2007)

Before we conclude that the emancipatory potential of gentrification (Caulfield 1994; Butler 1997) has been entirely lost, several qualifiers should be made. The first is that there is relatively little empirical research on whether social mixing actually takes place, particularly from the perspectives of lower income inhabitants of gentrifying neighbourhoods (notable exceptions include Freeman (2006) and Davidson (2008, 2010) discussed below). This gap in the literature is one to which this thesis hopes to contribute as part of a broader concern with long-term residents' experience of gentrification. A related point, given the lack of research, is that there is a risk of equating social mix with gentrification and assuming that the policies have a negative impact on long-term residents. For example, Rebecca Tunstall (2012) describes how, in the UK, the inclusion of social housing on even the smallest sites of private housing has created mixed tenure schemes in areas where otherwise private housing dominates. 'The net effect of these policies is the opposite of gentrification' (Tunstall 2012: 36) as they increase the numbers of new residential areas which are mixed in terms of tenure and income, and bring social housing to less deprived areas. Finally, there is the question of whether a low level of contact between different groups necessarily means that they are in conflict. What Caulfield (1994) describes in Toronto is not a high degree of contact between gentrifiers and long-term residents in daily scenarios. Nevertheless both working class and middle class residents attended community meetings and agreed mutual actions to defend their common stake in the neighbourhood. The implication is that gentrifiers and long-term residents are not necessarily in binary opposition as, with some exceptions (Brown-Saracino 2009, Doucet 2009), can be the assumption in the literature (Paton 2012).

### **Locating and redefining displacement**

So far this chapter has reviewed how the causes of gentrification and its linkages with public policy have been contested in the academic literature as researchers identify its varying forms in different contexts. What it points to is a continuous reassessment of how the process takes place and how it can affect inhabitants. A further way gentrification has been redefined is around the concept of displacement. The return of the middle classes to the inner city is not a neutral process and displacement of working class inhabitants – the

involuntary out-movement of a household from an area for reasons outside their control – has been a principal concern of gentrification researchers. Early accounts of gentrification identified a direct process of displacement, where examples include harassment to leave or landlords cutting off heating, rent increase and evictions from private rental accommodation (Power 1973, Marcuse 1985). In an extensive literature review, Atkinson (2002) found that displacement was the most commonly associated consequence of gentrification. However the findings were often not empirically based: ‘The majority of studies of gentrification identified displacement as a significant problem [...] However, this issue has taken on a cumulative weight of its own, often without supporting empirical data in many studies’ (2002: 6).

One reason for this shift may be, as Atkinson suggests, that ‘any displacement that could be achieved has already occurred’, leaving many gentrified areas as ‘high income enclaves’ (2008: 2626) that lack the subjects for empirical research into gentrification’s impact (see also Newman and Wyly 2006). A related factor is that direct displacement’s existence is difficult to calibrate. This is partly due to problems of identifying and tracking households in the secondary data, and that any displacement may be lost among wider economic, social and political transformations (Atkinson 2000a and 2000b; K. Shaw 2005). Indeed, displacement offers these conceptual and analytical difficulties because it can be defined in terms of households, housing units, or neighbourhood (van Gent 2013).

As a result, a debate has emerged over whether the decline of working class inhabitants in the inner city is necessarily the outcome of a new middle class presence. Where some see displacement occurring (Davidson and Lees 2005; Slater 2006), others point to changing social landscapes and the decline of traditional working class employment (Butler and Hamnett 2009; Freeman 2008). Chris Hamnett (2003) argues that estimates of large-scale working class displacement in London are overstated. Instead post-industrialisation has changed the occupational structure – a process he terms ‘professionalisation’ – where the manufacturing and manual labour sector has contracted and is being replaced by service-based professional occupations. Put simply, there are fewer working class jobs in the inner city, and so fewer working class households.

Indeed, some working class residents – at least among those who own their home – can benefit from gentrification in cases ‘where working class homeowners [take] advantage of the rise of property values to retire, sell out and move to the suburbs or beyond [...] A process of slow replacement of a group which is contracting by one which is expanding.’ (Hamnett 2003: 25-27). This migration would therefore seem to be closer to a type of economic relocation, rather than displacement in the strictest sense of the term. It should be added that, certainly in the UK context, many working class residents occupy the social rented sector and so are insulated from any price increases that can occur during gentrification (Hamnett 2009). Regardless of this, given the shortage of affordable housing in London, it is not clear whether feeling a sense of loss over neighbourhood identity because of gentrification would cause long-term inhabitants to actually move. There simply may be no alternative to staying in the neighbourhood even though changes to its composition and identity are resented (Slater 2009).

Furthermore, in a European context, it has been argued that urban policy restricts the likelihood of direct displacement. Atkinson (2000b) has suggested that the introduction of assured short-hold tenancies has protected tenant rights and to some extent negated the likelihood of displacement. The emphasis on infill and brownfield developments and the conversion of abandoned industrial buildings mean that changes to a neighbourhood composition occur through population additions, rather than displacement (Hamnett and Whitelegg 2007, Shaw 2008). It has also been argued that social housing – the tenure most likely to be lost through gentrification – is better protected under public policy in the UK (Atkinson 2003, Hamnett 2009). For example, London boroughs have construction targets for the number of homes that are ‘affordable’ – available to rent socially or for sale at sub-market prices. That many of these are delivered onsite has brought affordable housing to prosperous areas, almost a type of reverse gentrification (Tunstall 2012). Public policy through social housing provision and tenure security for low income inhabitants are therefore factors that can limit gentrification (Ley and Dobson 2008). This has led scholars to question claims about the revanchist nature of gentrification in Europe: ‘the fact is that welfare programmes, no matter how limited and problematic they may be,

will still act as mediators against the worst atrocities of gentrification' (Lees et al 2012: 3).

In response to these empirical difficulties, it has therefore been argued that the emphasis on direct displacement is conceptually too restrictive for the latest articulations of gentrification (Butler 2007, Slater 2008). In his writing on the third wave of gentrification, Hackworth (2002) places less emphasis on direct displacement of working class inhabitants as the defining feature of gentrification, shifting the emphasis to the 'production of space for progressively more affluent users' (2002: 815). Others argue that the stress should be placed on displacement's indirect forms. Peter Marcuse (1985) first drew attention to these in his examination of the different aspects of displacement at work in New York. It would be useful at this stage to consider each of his forms of displacement and the differences between them (Marcuse 1985: 205-208).

1. Firstly, there is direct, *physical displacement* whereby the landlord forces residents to move, for example by cutting off heat to the building.
2. The second form of direct displacement is *economic* – 'where the landlord raises the rent beyond the occupant's ability to pay' (Marcuse 1985: 205).

In terms of identifying when either economic or physical displacement has occurred, Marcuse adds that each can be 'last-resident', when the final resident of a property is forced to leave, and 'chain' – where a household 'may have been forced to move at an earlier stage in the physical decline of the building or an earlier rent increase' (1985: 206). The final two forms of displacement are indirect and, perhaps because they are premised on less blatant forms of exclusion than the direct ones, can be conceptually harder to grasp.

3. *Exclusionary displacement* is when one household voluntarily vacates a housing unit but that unit is then gentrified, thereby preventing another lower income household from moving in. The 'number of units available to the second household in that housing market is reduced' and it 'is excluded from living where it would otherwise have lived' (1985: 206).

4. *Pressure of displacement* affects households beyond those actually currently displaced. It relates to the dramatic changes to a neighbourhood that gentrification can bring – ‘when their families are leaving the neighbourhood, when stores they patronize are liquidated and new stores for other clientele are taking their places’ (1985: 207) and the loss of services and transport patterns. In other words, it refers to ‘the dispossession suffered by poor and working-class families during the transformation of the neighbourhoods where they live’ (Slater 2009: 303).

Although Marcuse does not use these terms, in defining displacement pressure he is describing a loss of place-identity and ontological security, resulting in households deciding to ‘move as soon as they can, rather than wait for the inevitable; nonetheless they are displaced’ (1985: 207). Pressure of displacement brings a temporal dimension to our understanding of how working class households may leave a gentrifying area. So, despite the fact that economic or physical displacement is not currently suffered by the household, ‘its actuality is only a matter of time’ (1985: 207) and so households decide to move. In order to understand the full impact of gentrification on working class inhabitants, their subjective fear of the possibility of displacement needs to be considered alongside what is actually occurring in terms of out-movement.

Marcuse's taxonomy of displacement is undoubtedly helpful for understanding how its manifestations can have subtle and subjective forms that still ultimately result in the out-movement of working class inhabitants. Yet, as this section has already covered, the incidences of these different forms of displacement vary across place and time, and the processes have evolved owing to changing policy structures and economic conditions. In response, Davidson (2008) reconsidered Marcuse's categories and outlined three types of indirect displacement (2008: 2389-2393) that are more suited to the later gentrification cycles. Firstly, indirect *economic displacement* occurs through prices rising as more affluent groups access the market and so exclude existing residents and future ones forming households (see also Atkinson 2000a). An example would be a household living in a private rented property that no longer suits their needs; prices rises in the neighbourhood prevent the household accessing a suitable

property there so it has to move out to access one. Newly constructed residential and commercial buildings increase the desirability of previously unfashionable neighbourhoods, drawing new middle class residents not just to these specific developments but also to the adjacent areas. These areas are then affected by price shadowing as they rise in desirability through proximity to gentrified areas. New-build developments 'have acted like beachheads from which the tentacles of gentrification have slowly stretched' (Davidson and Lees (2005: 1186). This is particularly relevant in the UK context where there is a policy emphasis on brownfield, infill development and on mixed tenure housing schemes. This can imply attracting higher income residents to bring social mix to previously homogeneous neighbourhoods (Lees 2002, 2003b). Unlike forced evictions and imposed rent hikes, indirect economic displacement is not as blatant in its manifestations as direct displacement, however the ultimate effect is the same: 'the steady reduction of housing affordability associated with price shadowing and a creeping gentrification frontier [...] makes it increasingly difficult for residents to "stay put"' (Davidson 2009: 2390).

Secondly, *community displacement* refers to changes as gentrification engenders a loss of place for working class residents, both in how it is experienced and how it is controlled (in terms of membership of local cultural and political organisations). For example, studies illustrate how gentrifiers are central to the re-imagining of place and can impose different values on an area (Butler with Robson 2003, Freeman 2006, Brown-Saracino 2009). Lance Freeman (2006) cites the differences that exist between gentrifiers and long-term residents over behavioural norms in public space, such as drinking alcohol in parks. These activities may have been tolerated by long-term residents but have now become offensive to the new gentrifiers. Often the latter's involvement in neighbourhood politics means that they can attempt to prohibit previously acceptable behaviour. Through their control of the local political apparatus, Butler with Robson (2003) found that the presence of a gentrifying population can have a dominating impact on a neighbourhood, far outweighing their often meagre numbers. Thus, middle class incoming groups are able to define the neighbourhood in their image as part of a wider strategy of middle class reproduction that can exclude pre-existing residents. For working class



residents, a move away is impelled in order to live in an area where their place-identity can be sustained.

Finally there is *neighbourhood resource displacement*, involving how local services and amenities change to meet the new consumption requirements of more affluent incomers. Improved local services may be initially interpreted as a sign of neighbourhood improvement and have some benefits for long-term residents (Freeman 2006), but many local improvements affect middle class residents more (Lupton and Power 2004). The longer-term effect for working class residents may be their marginalisation from the dominant discourse of change in the area. Residents might then move away when their neighbourhood changes to such an extent that it no longer serves their needs and tastes in terms of amenities, public services and transport (see also Slater 2009).

Not all these forms of displacement take place following the same process. It can be useful to distinguish between the moment when displacement is an actuality, so the household has no option but to move, and when the household pre-empts what is seen as the inevitable, so when out-movement is the only realistic choice. We can term the former *dislocation* and the latter *relocation*. Dislocation is relevant to the direct forms of displacement identified by Marcuse (1985) and to indirect economic displacement by Davidson (2008). In these other forms, the timing of displacement is imposed on the household by landlord action or financial pressures created by gentrification. By contrast, for both community displacement and neighbourhood resource displacement, *when* the out-movement takes place can partly be determined by the household. Loss of place-identity or the closure of amenities implies a creeping realisation for working class inhabitants that their neighbourhood is no longer a viable place to live. Of course, for all the forms of displacement the outcome is the same - the household is forced out because of gentrification - but using the term relocation allows for a degree of agency over the timing.

It is also helpful to distinguish between the spatial realms where the form of displacement is predominantly played out. Direct displacement and indirect economic displacement relate to the private realm of the home; they reflect the ability to access and maintain suitable housing. In contrast, the other two forms

of indirect displacement are largely experienced in the public realm. They refer to the power to define and access neighbourhood space, whether through controlling local political structures, setting behavioural norms or making use of available services. Again, the ultimate outcome is the same for each form, but the spatial realm can offer a more subtle understanding of how and where displacement is experienced by inhabitants. The table below summarises the forms of displacement as defined by Marcuse (1985) and Davidson (2008) and sets out their distinguishing features.

<b>Table 2.1 Different forms of displacement caused by gentrification</b>			
<b>Form</b>	<b>Realm</b>	<b>Process</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
<i>Direct displacement</i>			
Physical	Private	Eviction, utilities cut off	Housing dislocation
Direct economic	Private	Rent increase	Housing dislocation
<i>Indirect displacement</i>			
Indirect economic	Private	Housing unaffordability from price shadowing	Housing dislocation
Community	Public	Loss of place-identity and control of local politics	Housing relocation
Neighbourhood resource	Public	Needs and taste not met by local services	Housing relocation

*Sources: Marcuse (1985), Davidson (2008)*

What we see, therefore, is a broader conception of displacement – more nuanced than simply dislocation because of housing unaffordability or evictions. In other words, displacement can mean more than the spatial moment of dislocation, but also the loss of sense of place that can be the precursor to it (Davidson and Lees 2010). This is significant as it moves the focus of displacement away from just housing occupancy to also include the security of belonging in the local public realm. In multiplying the forms of displacement, such an analysis broadens the definition of gentrification and opens up research to a more inclusive perspective on how the process is experienced by different groups of inhabitants.

## **Long-term residents and multiple responses to gentrification**

As the introduction outlined, a particular focus of my interest in gentrification is how it is lived and experienced by long-term residents – non-gentrifiers whose stay in the neighbourhood predates its social upgrading. In the UK there has been extensive research into the constitution and behaviour of middle class gentrifiers (e.g. Bridge 2006a and 2006b, Butler 1997, Robson and Butler 2003, Butler and Lees 2006, Hamnett and Whitelegg 2006), but 'next to nothing has been published on the experiences of nongentrifying groups living in the neighbourhoods into which the much-researched cosmopolitan middle classes arrive en masse' (Lees et al 2008: 122). One consequence, suggested by Paton (2012), is that the gentrification literature based on empirical research tends to privilege middle class voices and experiences. They are certainly key actors in the gentrification process, whether as consumers making a lifestyle choice to return to the inner city (Caulfield 1994, Ley 1996), as economic beneficiaries of their investment in degraded urban areas (Smith 1996) or as agents in the displacement of existing residents (Marcuse 1985). This 'sovereignty of gentrifiers' (Paton 2012: 253) reifies the middle class perspective while working class inhabitants are excluded, a trend which Slater (2006) and Allen (2008a) argue reflects a wider ambivalence towards class in contemporary sociology and the consequent decline of working class perspectives in social research. Of course, lower income inhabitants do feature heavily in accounts of gentrification but the focus tends to be the material outcomes of the process – displacement, exclusion, loss of identity – rather than empirical inquiry into their lived experiences of it. As such there is often an implication that the issues of place-based attachment and ontological security that affect middle class city dwellers cannot also have significance for working class inhabitants.

There is a small body of empirical research that attempts to bring a view of 'displacement from below' (Slater 2010: 176) – in other words, to give lower income residents of gentrifying areas a degree of agency and a role in the gentrification process. As we shall now see, the same body of literature is also open to the material and cultural benefits of gentrification which may accrue to lower income inhabitants, while remaining aware of the threat of the various

forms of displacement on their continued residency. Perhaps the most well known, and contested, example is Lance Freeman's (2006) study of gentrifying neighbourhoods in New York. This was a follow-up study to quantitative research (Freeman and Braconi 2002) into household movement in New York during the 1990s, which concluded that lower income households seem less likely to move from gentrifying neighbourhoods than from non-gentrifying ones. The authors suggests that 'Improving housing and neighbourhood conditions appear to encourage the housing stability of low-income neighborhoods to the degree that they more than offset any dislocation resulting from rising rents' (Freeman and Branconi 2004: 4). However as Marcuse (2005) points out, their findings shed little light on whether people are not moving because the gentrification process is benign, or because there are no feasible alternatives in a tightening housing market. The quantitative approach necessarily excludes the experiences of living in the gentrifying areas, whether that involves appreciating the changes, or feeling trapped by them (Newman and Wyly 2006).

Meeting the call of Atkinson for gentrification research at a 'finer spatial scale using a more qualitative approach' (2000a: 163) to supplement quantitative studies on displacement, Freeman (2005, 2006) returned to two gentrifying areas in Harlem and Brooklyn, aiming to understand better the earlier study's counterintuitive findings. He found a more mixed picture behind the statistics on household movement. Amid concerns over housing affordability and displacement, residents perceived some benefits due to gentrification, including improved neighbourhood facilities and services brought about by gentrifiers' increased spending power and their more effective lobbying of service providers. Whether residents can benefit from the changes does depend though on their own socio-economic status, with owner-occupiers being in a position to benefit from rising property values unlike renters. Importantly he does not argue that this is the sole or predominant experience of gentrification by long-term residents (a point overlooked in, for example, Slater's (2006) critique). An instance is when he describes how gentrification can inflate housing prices and the consequences: 'Households that have formerly been able to find housing in gentrifying neighborhoods must now search elsewhere' (2005: 488), as an example of indirect economic displacement (Davidson 2008). He adds that even where displacement may be relatively rare in gentrifying neighbourhoods, the

traumatic experience for long-term residents means it can still engender widespread concern. Even for owner-occupiers there can be a social cost of gentrification. More deprived owners may cash in on rising prices but then find themselves likely to face matching price gains in other areas (Atkinson 2002). Moreover there was very little evidence that new and long-term residents integrate. Like Butler (2003), Freeman concludes that residents from different social groups operate for the most part in separate spheres and that ties between them are weak – merely ‘the types of casual relationships that are likely to occur simply from sharing the same neighborhood’ (2006: 165).

Another study that considers the benefits alongside the costs of gentrification to long-term residents is by Japonica Brown-Saracino (2009). Her research in Chicago and New England involved interviewing ‘old-timers’ of gentrifying neighbourhoods and found they displayed a more complex response to gentrification than outright opposition. Some supported the investment in historical buildings, for instance, others the expanded residential choices they had following the rising value of their homes. She also found that old-timers identify a wider range of motivations for moving out of the neighbourhoods. For example, some residents discussed greater mobility in terms of access to new opportunities. These participants focused less on direct housing displacement as a negative effect of gentrification, namely concerns over their sense of a reduced ownership over, and security in, public space. Some examples they give point to specific erosions of access to public space, for example, fields once used for hunting but which are now private property. Other examples conflate the changing use of public space with the decline of community – the lack of spaces for children to play because family and close friends no longer live close by to supervise the streets. Such spatial disruptions include the privatisation of spaces, new norms of behaviour in public space and increased heterogeneity of inhabitants. For many long-term residents, these forms of indirect displacement play a larger role in the loss of community and their perceptions of security in the neighbourhoods than housing displacement. The participants articulate what Davidson (2008) identifies as community displacement and reinforce his argument (2009) that displacement needs to be seen in broader terms than housing dislocation.

Two other recent examples that focus on the experiences of long-term residents in gentrifying neighbourhoods are from Scotland. Paton (2010, 2012) took a Glasgow neighbourhood, Partick, as a case study. An example of what Davidson and Lees (2005) identify as new-build gentrification, Partick was subject to a council-led regeneration programme that involved constructing housing on former docks and other industrial sites. Like Freeman (2005), Paton (2010) found that gentrification offered some rewards for owner-occupiers who benefited from gains to property prices, but others were spurred to buy for fear of future displacement as the regeneration programme started to bring an influx of middle class inhabitants. She characterised their experiences of gentrification as a paradoxical relationship. They are invited to participate as consumers, such as through homeownership or consuming new neighbourhood facilities, but in reality they have less opportunity to participate: 'they are flawed consumers because they are not in a powerful enough material position to consume' (2012: 270). The research also points to the more subtle forms of exclusion that can occur when long-term residents lack the resources required to participate fully in gentrified neighbourhoods. She takes the example of cultural and economic exclusion from the new activities in public space, such as farmers' markets that few long-term residents visited. Even though some residents gain benefits from gentrification, providing they have the means to act as gentrifiers, they frequently have less control and choice over the how the neighbourhood changes.

Brian Doucet's (2009) study was into the subjective experiences of long-term residents in Leith, a gentrifying area of Edinburgh. The neighbourhood had been the focus of large-scale developmental activity, including tourist attractions and a new-build shopping centre, leading to highly conspicuous changes to housing and amenities, and an influx of new residents breaking up the homogeneity of its social composition. He also found that some participants appreciated the new investment, as they regarded it as bringing improvements to the housing stock, a wider range of shops and an enhanced image of the area. However, for the most part, he identified 'a profound sense that the boom and development was both not intended for them, not were they the prime beneficiaries of it' (2009: 312). Yet he emphasises how there was little evidence of an antagonistic discourse or signs of animosity between the long-term residents and incomers,

or a sense that the neighbourhood was being redesigned to meet exclusively the incomers' needs. Instead, divisions between the different social groups now inhabiting the neighbourhood were more benign:

The division, rather, was more of an awareness that different Leith residents lived, worked, ate, and drank in different manners and in different parts of the neighbourhood. [...] Residents were aware that there was a divide in their neighbourhood, but did not appear to be particularly threatened by it. (2009: 311).

Several reasons are put forward for this acquiescent relationship, including how the new amenities have not displaced existing ones but were in addition, the high proportion of social rented housing meaning long-term residents were insulated from direct displacement and so feel more secure about neighbourhood change, and the strong sense of community that persisted among low income residents. In this sense, the findings run counter to much of the gentrification literature where the debate is often in terms of 'winners' and 'losers', and where the nuances of different experiences can be overlooked.

What this emerging body of research contributes is a challenge to the binaries that gentrification studies tend towards. These include the homogenous, fixed categories of diametrically opposed social groups – incomer versus incumbent; cosmopolitan versus local – that can often characterise the literature (Paton 2012). While the use of dualisms is a common feature of social science (Sayer 2000), the rush to ascribe fixity can overlook the 'chaos and complexity' (Beauregard 1986) of gentrification: its internal diversity, its multiplicity of causes, the agency of a wide variety of social actors and, more broadly, the dynamic nature of urban change. Gentrification has a temporal fluidity that can often be overlooked in research which fixes inhabitants in the time and space of the situation studied (Smith and Holt 2007).

So far we have seen how this fluidity applies to long-term residents; it follows that that the diversity of experience and complexity of response is found among some middle class inhabitants. Super-gentrification (Lees 2000, 2003a), discussed earlier in this chapter, is a case in point, where a wealthier generation

of gentrifiers usurps their predecessors. Podagrosi et al (2012) describe how, in Houston, under super-gentrification the original gentrifiers' homes were demolished and replaced by even more expensive ones: 'This is unique within the gentrification context since the homes were not devalued or deteriorated, but the vast difference in socioeconomic status among "the wealthy" enabled the "very rich" to displace the "merely rich" (2012: 1926-7). As Atkinson puts it, when describing the London housing market, the pressure to secure adequate housing means 'everyone feels like a victim' (in Holland 2012). The pressure on middle class inhabitants in later stage gentrification can see them left behind in the housing market by new elites (Butler et al 2008, Butler and Hamnett 2009).

A final consideration is therefore how to account for middle class residents of gentrifying areas who do not fit easily into the gentrifier category (Watt 2005, Smith and Holt 2007). These may be inhabitants who move to historically working class areas neither to capitalise on the rent gap nor as an expression of their lifestyle choices. It was this concern that led Damaris Rose (1984) to introduce the concept of the 'marginal gentrifier' based on her research in Montreal. She hypothesised that the marginal gentrifier is frequently a woman on a very moderate income, whose prime motive for living in the disinvested inner city is the availability of cheap housing and proximity to employment as she seeks to balance work and parental commitments. In this case the particular location is not borne of personal preferences but a necessity brought about by 'combined employment and family responsibilities' (Rose 1984: 58). She certainly does not fit into our paradigmatic conception of the 'gentrifier', but may still play an important part in gentrification as agents of the same process of displacing lower income groups, even if they themselves are excluded from many housing markets and, eventually, the neighbourhood.

A different response to the same concern is found in Brown-Saracino (2009), who identifies gentrifiers who actively work against the displacement pressures that their presence causes. She identifies the social preservationist as a variation of the gentrifier. They are middle class incomers, but they actively seek to prevent the wholesale transformation of a neighbourhood and the resultant displacement of 'old timers' as she terms long-term residents. Their strategies, perspectives and characteristics therefore differ from the more established



portrayal of gentrifiers. What distinguishes social preservationists is that they enact their appreciation of difference, in contrast to other gentrifiers who may talk the rhetoric of social diversity but live apart from other social groups (see Butler 2003; Atkinson 2006). It is about more than articulating a taste for diversity or the presence of a cultural 'other': 'Preservationists enact appreciation for difference, as embodied by old timers, through practices intended to preserve that difference' (2009: 11), namely by maintaining long-term residents' presence and community. Brown-Sarancino outlines the range of practices which social preservationists undertake to protect long-term residents and, consequently, their community's character. These include political practices such as protesting against public housing closure and more symbolic ones like promoting celebrations of long-term residents' ethnic identity. Although they may hold a romanticised view, what Brown-Sarancino emphasises is how social preservationists create their self-identity through their attitude towards long-term residents. Social preservationists are for the most part reluctant gentrifiers, highly self-conscious and aware of the negative impact their presence can have on housing affordability and community practices of 'old-timers'. Social preservationists further differ from other gentrifier types through their social practices: they seek out 'authentic' spaces and valorise the cultural events of long-term residents; they shun other affluent newcomers whose predatory attitudes towards the neighbourhood threaten long-term residents.<sup>8</sup> Significantly they also decry displacement and actively work to reduce it through advocacy for affordable housing, community organising, support of local businesses, and recognition of old-timers through art, culture, and urban design projects. However, which long-term residents count as 'authentic' old-timers is selective. They tend to be residents that social preservationists see as most different from themselves, who display cultural and social practices that distinguish the neighbourhood where the social preservationists have chosen to live.

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<sup>8</sup> Other researchers have developed different terms for gentrifiers displaying a similarly high commitment to the social composition of the neighbourhood as it was when they originally moved in. For example, Ward et al (2010) refer to 'community gentrifiers', while Simon (2005) describes 'multiculturals' in Paris - gentrifiers who 'enjoy social and ethnic mixes, are looking for an atmosphere and are quite willing, a priori, to respect the neighborhood's social order' (2005: 221).

## Conclusion

The marginal gentrifier and social preservationist are both examples of the multiplicity of processes that gentrification brings together. They are neighbourhood actors who populate a section of the literature that is attuned to the diversity of inhabitants' experiences of gentrification, and the diversification of causes behind it. It is towards this literature that my research intends to contribute, specifically by focusing on long-term residents as a social group that is empirically overlooked in the literature. This body of research has several features that this chapter has reviewed. Regarding the causes of gentrification, there is an emphasis on local articulations of the process and the different combinations of economic and cultural factors that can drive these. This helps explain the different outcomes gentrification has in cities worldwide. For example, the extent to which housing policy offers protection for existing residents will limit the amount of displacement that occurs and is one factor that varies greatly between cities. Similarly a neighbourhood where gentrification is premised on infill development or residential conversion will upgrade differently to one where housing renovation is the dominant method.

The literature also argues that, given these contextual elements, it is unlikely that inhabitants can themselves be easily divided between 'winners' and 'losers' from gentrification. We have seen how the early gentrifiers can profit by upgrading dilapidated property when a neighbourhood gentrifies, but that they themselves can be threatened as gentrification cycles mature and a wealthier elite moves to the neighbourhood. Equally there are some working class inhabitants who can benefit from gentrification, whether as owner-occupiers capitalising on rising property values, or as residents who appreciate the investment and new attention garnered by their neighbourhood. Individuals' responses to gentrification can therefore be ambiguous and can shift as the gentrification process unfolds. This perspective has brought with it a reconceptualisation of displacement. For many writers it is still the 'essence of gentrification' (Marcuse 1992: 80), but it can occur in a more diffuse and subtle manner than that conceived in early gentrification studies. Beyond housing dislocation, this body of literature regards displacement as also encompassing the loss of belonging to the neighbourhood realm that can encourage the original residents to move

away. Precisely how these indirect forms of displacement are encountered, and how these fit with wider experiences of gentrification by long-term residents, has been the subject of only limited empirical work. My thesis now turns to what a suitable methodology would be to research these concerns in my case study area.

## **Chapter Three: Methodology and Methods**

### **Introduction**

What might be an appropriate way to research gentrification and neighbourhood change bearing in mind the recognised gaps in the literature? As the previous chapter outlined, there is an empirical shortfall from under-researching the experiences of long-term residents in gentrifying areas. As a consequence, I explain in this chapter how there is a more theoretical oversight in existing research, namely the tendency to privilege gentrification as the dominant process of urban change, overlooking the ‘ordinariness’ of everyday experiences. I argue that the literature’s current focus on ‘what happens’ in a gentrifying neighbourhood (the material reality of gentrification) should be complemented with an analysis of how this is understood, negotiated, and described by those that it happens to (the subjective experiences of inhabitants). To this end, a new methodological framework is suggested, which this chapter starts by discussing. This stance was partly developed from my own position as a gentrification researcher in Bermondsey, which is explained in the next section of the chapter. Finally it describes in details the various methods used to answer my research questions. The ultimate aim of this chapter is to demonstrate the suitability of my approach for answering the research questions described in the Introduction.

### **Methodological framework**

The importance of methodology is often overlooked in gentrification studies; this is surprising given that ‘researchers’ methods and methodologies are heavily implicated in the stories, explanations, theories and conceptualizations of gentrification’ that result (Lees et al 2008: xxii). An example can be seen in

theoretical debate over gentrification's origins, as described in the previous chapter, between those who proposed an economics orientated explanation (Smith 1979, 1996, Hackworth and Smith 2001) and those who explain it through the cultural preferences of a new middle class (Caulfield 1994; Ley 1996; Butler 2003). These theoretical cleavages are reflected in different methodological approaches, each choosing the most appropriate way to investigate their interpretation of gentrification. So research favouring economic explanations tends to adopt positivist, quantitative analysis of statistical data, including census material (Hamnett 2001; Freeman and Braconi 2004) and mortgage data (Wyly and Hamnel 2004); the consumption side more often utilises interpretative, qualitative techniques, such as interviewing gentrifying residents (Butler 2003, Bridge 2006a and 2006b). A result is that gentrification in the academic literature is understood in different ways. As quantitative data are less useful in reflecting local nuances, there is a tendency to portray gentrification as a widespread social process affecting cities across the world in a similar manner. This is perhaps best exemplified in Neil Smith's (1996, 2002) description of gentrification as a global urban strategy to recover the city for the interests of capital. As described in the previous chapter, Smith views the repatriation of the middle classes under gentrification as tied to neoliberal capitalism's need to create more profitable land uses for the inner city. His account pays little attention to variations in how gentrification unfolds between countries, let alone within cities. In contrast, more qualitative studies focus on individuals or small groups. By using in-depth interviews and participant observation, the aim is to understand how gentrifiers' residential choices and cultural practices are played out in a specific, local context. The result is a focus on the differences between gentrification in different areas and even between gentrifiers in the same city (for example, Ley 1996; Butler and Robson 2001), rather than seeing them as belonging to the same global class fraction bound by economic rationality (e.g. Smith 2002; Hackworth 2002).

Clearly, then, methodological framework affects outcomes in terms of favouring a broadly economics- or culture-led account of gentrification. There are, however, three main reasons why an interest in the everyday experience of gentrification does not lend itself well to a positivist interpretation of quantitative data. Firstly, the new consumption patterns, cultural outlooks and forms of

urban living that gentrification entails – located in the realm of the subjective – are not well suited to highly formal methods of analysis (Ley 1996). Secondly, as discussed in the previous chapter, the quantitative data that one would hope to draw on to demonstrate the existence of gentrification and its effects is not available in a UK context (Atkinson 2000a, 2000b). Key variables that would help identify in-migration of gentrifiers and demonstrate the occurrence of working class displacement (such as income and length of time living in a neighbourhood) are not collected in the census or other large-scale surveys. Attempts to establish quantitatively whether a growing middle class in inner London is the result of changes to occupational structures or of working class displacement have been hotly contested (see Watt 2008, Slater 2009 in response to Hamnett 2003). Quantitative attempts to prove or disprove displacement have largely been fruitless, while also distracting from interpretive accounts of displacement (Bernt and Holm 2009). Finally, gentrification research has made it apparent how locally specific the process can be. How the process originates and develops differs between countries and cities. Even within cities there are local articulations dependent on place, locality and scale. Therefore universalist claims about how gentrification is experienced must be regarded with caution. For example, the patterns of direct displacement that gentrification can bring to US cities (rent increases, evictions and harassment) will not necessarily be replicated in the present UK context where many inner city areas still have a relatively secure social housing tenure for lower income inhabitants (Hamnett 2009).

However, in developing a methodological framework, consideration should be given to how the qualitative research is directed and the social actors it includes. Slater (2006) argues that one response to the interest in gaining a complete understanding of gentrification's origins is a body of research focussing on the practices of middle class gentrifiers, whether looking at the role of urban policy in promoting their aspirations, or examining the motivations behind their housing choices. As a consequence the experiences of lower income residents is subordinate in gentrification research (Slater 2006). To help resolve this empirical shortcoming, a methodological shift in terms of how data are collected would firstly include long-term, working class residents in gentrifying areas and, secondly, be open to other processes of neighbourhood change that may affect

their lives. By focusing on the everyday experiences of long-term residents, it can then be possible to move towards a fuller understanding of gentrification and neighbourhood change. In short, the methodology needs to include long-term residents and be sufficiently broad to encompass other urban processes.

The development of a methodological framework that seems most suitable derives from the idea of an 'ordinary city'. The term was first coined by Ash Amin and Stephen Graham (1997) as a request for scholars to be more attentive to the diversity between and within global cities. They criticised the tendency in world city theories to overlook 'the urban multiplicity stressing the interconnections between the complex time-space circuits and dimensions of urban life, as well as the diversity and contingency of the urban world' (1997: 421). Jennifer Robinson (2002, 2006) subsequently employed the concept to call for a new approach to how we frame research into cities. While her own work is a comparative study of how globalisation is experienced in different cities, I believe her methodological approach can also be applied to understanding change within the same city. In her critique of world city approaches, Robinson argues that they overly focus on relatively minor aspects of the urban economy in a small part of a city. The result is an economic reductionism that neglects the diversity of urban life and the role of local contexts. London in particular is 'poorly served by a reduction of its complex, diverse social and economic life to the phenomenon of globalisation' (Robinson 2006: 97).<sup>9</sup>

Robinson (2006) therefore calls for a more discerning approach to researching cities, capable of encompassing urban experiences that do not fit within a dominant political or theoretical paradigm. In a similar vein, Taylor (2004) calls for acknowledgement of the 'multiple globalizations' that take place in cities, representing the fractured nature of global flows between and within cities. As Marcuse and van Kempen observe: 'A "city" is not global; some of those doing business in it are, but others very like them will do business very similar to that in

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<sup>9</sup> For example, Buck et al (2002) report that almost all of London's economic activities are dominated by the national UK context, but that it is widely believed that global city functions are preeminent. This misconception has political implications for the London Mayor's function as a voice for London's interests: 'there is an obvious problem of identifying what the city economy is that he is supposed to represent, given its diversity - to which the global city functions offer a shortcut' (Gordon 2003: 12).

other “non-global” cities’ (2000: 265). It is therefore a misnomer to refer to cities in their entirety as being ‘global’; they can simultaneously contain spaces that are locally aligned or ‘non-global’.

Following this argument, the persistent emphasis on London’s global economic functions can mean that other, ordinary aspects of urban life in areas peripheral to the City, including Bermondsey, are overlooked. This applies both in terms of how cities are researched and understood, and the policies promoted by urban government. An example would be a focusing on improving integration into the global economy, of which promoting gentrification is one tactic, which prioritises the urban experience of a small section of inhabitants and can overlook the interests of the remaining population. Such a focus has been evident in policies pursued by Southwark Council in its attempts to attract a greater share of City investment (Buck et al 2002, and analysed in the next chapter). As an alternative, Robinson (2006) calls for urban strategies that enhance the very wide variety of urban experiences, not only those related to global economic integration. This is an approach that sees all cities as ‘ordinary’ – ‘unique assemblages of wider processes [...] diverse, complex and internally differentiated’ (2006: 109). Policy initiatives would then ‘attend to the diversity of social life and economic activities in cities’ (2006: 172-3). Accepting the ordinariness of each city is not to deny commonality of experience between different urban areas or to suggest that the processes experienced are unique; what makes each city distinctive is the combination of overlapping networks of economic, social and cultural interaction.

While Robinson’s aim is to move towards a post-colonial urban theory that does not categorise cities as ‘global’ or ‘developing’, her framework also has wider applications in urban research. Accepting the ordinariness of cities can bring into view different aspects of cities, such as the potential creativity and dynamism available in the interrelation of networks that connect cities and inhabitants. In the field of gentrification studies, it would have three benefits. Firstly, it would involve the inclusion of long-term residents in studies. The focus of research would be widened beyond gentrifiers to include inhabitants who are not the main actors in the process. Secondly, by considering the impact of other processes, it would allow scope for a degree of agency to return to analyses of



inhabitants in gentrifying areas and help avoid privileging gentrification as the dominant urban experience. Gentrification could then be seen in a more discriminating way, as one process in many affecting the production and use of urban space. Finally, an ordinary approach to gentrification would also have implications for the direction of urban policy. Thinking of gentrifying areas as ordinary has the potential for generating new strategies of space production that recognise each area's distinctiveness and diverse requirements. This is not to suggest an analytical position that is uncritical of trends in urban development and governance. Rather, by applying the framework of ordinary cities to gentrification, it is intended to produce a more astute analysis of gentrification, attuned to the multiple types of neighbourhood change, and therefore the possibilities of enacting more productive outcomes for affected inhabitants.

#### Approaching gentrification in Bermondsey

Before detailing the research methods used in my fieldwork, I would like to explain how I came to study Bermondsey and the development of the research questions. This is a chance to consider my position as a gentrification researcher and its potential effects on my fieldwork findings. As my research has progressed, it has become apparent that the overarching principles behind how I interpret these data is of some importance, particularly given debates over how social actors create meaning and how this is interpreted by an interviewer. I start from the position that the social world is constantly being constructed and interpreted by its inhabitants through their everyday lives. This includes implications for the researcher, who is not taken to be an objective observer detached from the reality being researched but actively involved in presenting others' subjective experiences. As I explain below, a critical and reflexive attitude towards my own positionality and how this affects data collection is therefore necessary.

I first visited Bermondsey in January 2007, at the start of the second semester of my doctoral studies. Although I had established my interest in investigating gentrification in London, I had yet to decide on my approach or where to locate my research. My visit was with MSc students on the Cities Programme for whom

a tour of the area had been arranged, guided by the former head of regeneration at Southwark Council. We were shown the key sites of Bermondsey's future – the recently opened tube station, the newly refurbished Bermondsey Spa Gardens – and the estates of the 1960s which, as in countless other inner city areas, had failed to live up to the utopian intentions of their planners and architects. Towards the end of the tour, we walked along Tanner Street, adjoining Bermondsey Street, which contains a small social housing estate surrounded on both sides by converted industrial buildings. When built in the post-War period it would have been the only housing on the street, and no doubt looked slightly incongruous among the nearby warehouses. However, its now rather shabby exterior and obvious typology as social housing was in sharp contrast to the newly restored loft apartments in the former warehouses, where the expensive cars parked in the gated forecourts made their inhabitants' social class equally clear. Our guide mentioned, in an aside, how the residents of the estate were resistant to the changes going on around them, frequently objecting to planning applications and making their concerns heard at community meetings. He suggested that many of the remaining social tenants felt themselves besieged by the encroaching professionals, contributing to an atmosphere of mutual suspicion and even hostility.

This encounter resonated with a question which had emerged during my exploration of the gentrification literature that I had started a few months previously: how do long-term residents respond to the influx of new groups of people, often from different social classes, into their neighbourhood? As Chapter Two made clear, their assumed responses were frequently discussed but assumptions were less commonly based on empirical investigation. As part of some work with a group of MSc students, I made several visits to the area over the following months. I also explored the wealth of material on the area's history held at the Southwark Local Studies Library and forged connections with local resident groups and stakeholders. The semester's work served as an ideal introduction to the area and permitted early exploration of Bermondsey's suitability as a case study area for my doctoral research.

My engagement with the area continued when, in summer 2007, I moved to Bermondsey and lived there for a year. The main motivation behind the move

was my partner wanting to live in close proximity to the school where she was about to start teaching. I certainly welcomed the opportunity for a more sustained type of involvement with the field that the move would bring, and the convenience of living in an area where most of my interview participants were located. However, I was also attracted to the area for ‘non-PhD’ reasons. Chapter One described how the regeneration of Bermondsey meant that it has retained much of its original building stock, with many former warehouses and industrial buildings preserved around a largely unaltered street network. It gives the area a distinctive character and, in contrast to some surrounding areas of south London largely rebuilt in the post-War period, the historical layers of London’s economic and social development remain visible. The bars, shops and other sites of consumption that had emerged added to the distinctive feel and livability of the area. Finally, there were other practical considerations: recent regeneration plans had focused on improving the transport infrastructure, bringing it into closer proximity to central London. A housing market with a large proportion of buy-to-let properties made it relatively affordable for Zone 1 renting, at least if one excluded any converted industrial buildings whose provenance attracted a premium.

These are all, of course, reasons shared by many other middle class incomers to inner city areas – gentrifiers, in other words. Economic and cultural factors combine to encourage the middle class to live in areas once deemed out of bounds. While I shared these motivations (although renting in the private sector gave none of the economic advantage possible in early stages of gentrification), my experiences while living there prompted me to question how well I fitted into the gentrifier paradigm. On one level, I was a middle class incomer to a working class neighbourhood. Yet, the more conspicuous sites of gentrification (such as the warehouse apartments, and the restaurants and boutiques along Bermondsey Street) were economically inaccessible and marketed at residents from different backgrounds to myself, principally wealthy City workers. At the same time, the traditional working class centre of social and commercial life around the Blue (a market place at the eastern end of Bermondsey, although serving different inhabitants, was equally remote. Other people I met socially and through my research who had recently moved to the area similarly did not seem to fit comfortably the gentrifier template. Were they all also products of and

contributors to gentrification, or reflections of other urban processes? The question which started to form was whether the academic literature's distinction between gentrifier and non-gentrifier, with inhabitants defined as either incoming middle class or indigenous working class, was too stark, whether it needed to be more inclusive of a wider range of urban experiences. This then was the background behind my research interest in how gentrification theories can better reflect the diversity of everyday experiences of inhabitants.

The sense of the ordinary, of gentrification as only one of several urban processes affecting daily life, also emerged in my preliminary research stages attending local community meetings and in pilot interviews (see below for details). Among long-term residents, the main concerns over neighbourhood change did not relate directly to gentrification, but were instead crime and antisocial behaviour, social housing maintenance, street cleanliness and appearance – the same type of concerns found in any inner urban area. Of course, the fact that gentrification or its effects were not mentioned in these forums does not mean it did not concern residents. Still, it was striking that the potential negative effects of gentrification, such as direct or indirect displacement, were not raised as priorities. From this emerged my first research question, on how long-term residents viewed the gentrification of their neighbourhood. While Bermondsey is undoubtedly a gentrifying area, it also seemed an ordinary one, containing a diversity of experiences, some entirely unrelated to gentrification.

The fact that I could be considered a gentrifier put me in an interesting position when conducting the interview research during my year living in Bermondsey. I was concerned that long-term residents might be reluctant to talk to me about gentrification, or at least may modify what they told me, if I was bracketed in the same category as other incomers whose presence they could plausibly resent. I therefore took more time than I might otherwise to explain to participants why I was interested in researching what I was and why I had chosen Bermondsey to study and live in. My partner's role in the local secondary school also helped; a job that many saw as contributing positively to the local community. My positionality underlines how the researcher is also a social actor at no point detached from the reality being researched, and so cannot be considered an

objective or impartial outsider. While this holds for any researcher, my background as a middle class incomer made it especially pertinent during my time in Bermondsey. To mitigate this, I have tried to maintain a critical and reflexive attitude to my data, recognising its limitations and my role as a researcher in the social process of generating data. How this played out in practical terms is discussed in the next section.

## **Method**

The ultimate aim of my research is to address a recognised gap in current academic accounts of gentrification, namely a limited understanding of the complexity of responses to gentrification, particularly among long-term residents. Although widely theorised, research into gentrification can lack an empirical basis for making claims about how the process affects this inhabitant group. To help remedy this, it is argued that inhabitants' everyday experiences and the 'ordinariness' of urban life should be central to an account of gentrification.

Sayer (2000) argues that an attempt to reconnect social processes with individual agents derives from an intensive research strategy. This is in contrast to an extensive strategy, preoccupied with establishing how widespread certain phenomena are and based on the belief that a large number of repeated observations produces relations which are significant. Intensive research 'is primarily concerned with what makes things happen in specific cases' (Sayer 2000: 20). Individual agents are studied to understand how a process affects them and how they respond. The aim of this intensive approach is to produce causal explanations and theoretical ideas on the production of certain outcomes and events. My research encapsulates an intensive research strategy, as defined in this way. It is concerned with: examining how the social process of gentrification operates; what mechanisms produce certain changes and experiences; how the individuals studied actually act; and, is focused on a relatively small number of cases.

### ***Case study research***

In contrast to many other studies of gentrification (for example Butler 1997, Davidson and Lees 2005, Freeman 2006), my research is not based on comparing different gentrifying areas, but proposes a single case study. I explained in Chapter One the reasons behind Bermondsey's suitability as a case study for studying gentrification. Briefly, these are the strong visual and social contrasts between the parts which have been gentrified and those which remain relatively unaltered, and (as a result) the presence of a diverse population likely to have been affected by gentrification in different ways. Given my concern with the everyday experiences of a social process, by focusing my data collection on one area I aimed to develop an in-depth examination of gentrification, albeit as a unique instance of its occurrence, limited to Bermondsey at the time of my fieldwork.

The strength of a case study approach is the scope it offers for revealing the nuances and complexities of social life in a particular area (Ragin and Becker 1992). Although a qualitative case study clearly cannot be generalised to a wider population through claims of statistical representation (in contrast to quantitative cross-sectional analyses, for example), it does not necessarily follow that findings have no wider relevance. If a phenomenon occurs in a particular way in a case study area, then it can logically be deduced that it can take place in other areas when similar structural properties are in place (Flyvbjerg 2001). At the very least, case study research can help elaborate and refine our theoretical understanding of the phenomenon (Yin 2003). Therefore findings from an area such as Bermondsey will have relevance for places undergoing a similar form of gentrification, for example, riverside locations where industrial conversions have given way to brownfield housing development. What is required, then, is a detailed description of the case study area and its structural characteristics to discern its similarities with other areas. This was the approach used in David Ley's (1996) pioneering study of gentrification in Canada. He argued that his use of quantitative analysis of secondary data (such as the census and house price data) helped to 'frame the insights of intensive ethnographic research in one or a few places' (1996: 26). The combination of both allows the linkage of a single case study with a larger set of observations about how gentrification unfolds in

different locations; it permits us to make connections between the particular instance of gentrification and its general trends elsewhere.

In order to help define these connections and develop the depth of analysis of my case study area, I have used a range of methods to explore the gentrification process in Bermondsey, namely secondary data analysis, visual mapping, and interviewing (group and individual). It also has a longitudinal aspect, with data compared over time, although this is as much due to deliberate strategy as to the inevitability of conducting the fieldwork over three years (2007 - 2009). Over that short time period, the pace of change to Bermondsey's appearance and character has been rapid. The foundations for one of the key sites in my research – Bermondsey Square – had just been laid when I started out in early 2007. As I explain in Chapter Five, the process of designing the scheme was subject to contention from the local community. I was therefore able to explore how key informants' attitudes towards it changed following its opening in March 2009.

This chapter proceeds by detailing the three stages of my fieldwork. Each occurred in different phases that gave me a chance periodically to distance myself from the field. This encouraged the development of emerging research questions and the chance to consider the type of data to collect next.

### ***Preliminary research: secondary and visual data***

The early stages of my research were concerned with collecting and analysing secondary data relating to Bermondsey's past and present development. This stage helped build my understanding of how gentrification has played out in Bermondsey and how its contours may affect local residents. In other words, it outlined the structural aspects of gentrification that inhabitants subjectively experience. These data were presented in Chapter One by way of an introduction to Bermondsey's gentrification, and includes longitudinal analysis of census data on housing tenure and socio-economic composition. The aim of the analysis is to illustrate how socio-economic changes associated with gentrification (such as increased numbers of residents in professional jobs or living in owner-occupation) have occurred in the case study area.

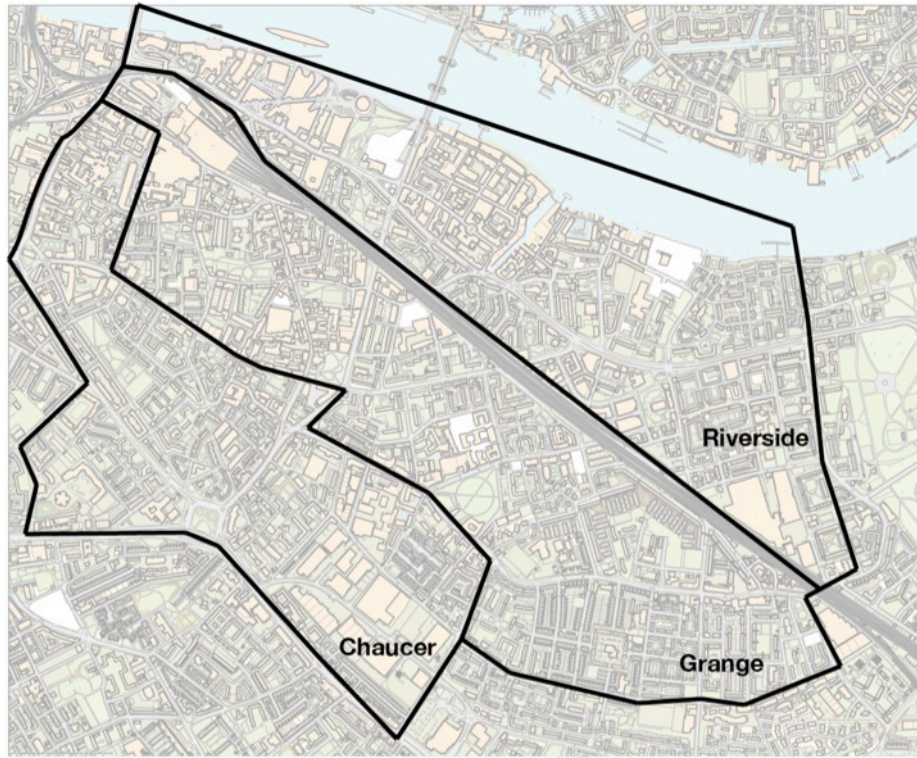
Longitudinal analysis is based on census data from 1971 to 2011, accessed via the Nomis and Casweb websites. Data from three wards – Chaucer, Grange and Riverside – are compounded to form the Bermondsey case study area (Figure 3.1). I have based the case study area on these three wards as they contain the key sites for the study as shown in Figure 1.5 and it is where my samples of long-term residents and early gentrifiers all lived.<sup>10</sup> For most analyses, Bermondsey is compared to Southwark and London as a whole, meaning that differences between the extent of change across the three levels can be identified. A consideration for the analysis is that the same categories for each variable do not remain constant across the four censuses. In particular, there is an extensive reworking of census variable definitions between 1991 and 2001. In some cases, approximations can be made between the old and new variable. I have done so for the analysis of residents' ethnic group (Figures 1.16 and 1.17). In this analysis it has not been possible to include comparison with 1971 and 1971 which did not include ethnicity, but rather place of birth, missing from the analysis British-born residents who identify with a non-white ethnic group. The 1991 Census included a broad white ethnic category, which for 2001 and 2011 was broken down further to cover White British among other white categories. It is the total of all respondents who gave one of the white groups as their ethnic background that is used in the analysis in order to allow comparison with the 1991 data.

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<sup>10</sup> My case study area therefore excludes the South Bermondsey ward, which remains almost wholly untouched by gentrification. The gentrification frontier may eventually extend here, but the housing is dominated by post-War estates which, combined with weak transport links, mean that other wards of Bermondsey have been the focus of interest from middle class incomers.



**Figure 3.1 Bermondsey case study area**



One of the most extensive changes occurred to socio-economic classification, with a new scheme introduced before the 2001 Census (Rose and O'Reilly 1998). National Statistics Socio-economic Classifications (NS-SEC) replaced Socio-Economic Groups (SEG) and have been used since 2001. One of the main differences is that the highest categories have been broadened to account for the growing number of people in professional occupations – a function of the UK's move away from industrial employment towards a service sector economy under globalisation (Beck 2000) and a trend seen even more strongly in London (Hamnett 2003). The result of the change is that it is not straightforward to give any comparison between 2001 and the earlier censuses that were largely consistent in their approaches. I have therefore employed the approach of Butler et al (2008), which transposes the new NS-SEC data from 2001 and 2011 to the older SEG categories. The method is to use the cross-tabulation from Rose et al 2005 (shown in Table 3.1 below) and allocate the 36 operational categories in NS-SEC to the 17 different SEGs. I then analyse changes to the size of SEGs 1 to 5, the middle class groups in the classification. The full data analysis is presented in Appendix 1. By also following Butler et al (2008) and analysing

changes in proportions rather than numbers, I intend to produce a more reliable reflection of socioeconomic change between 1971 and 2011.

Another form of secondary data has been documentary. This includes national, regional and local policies relating to the development of the study area, and planning applications and permissions for specific developments included in my research (such as Bermondsey Square and Empire Square). Within these sources, I have paid particular attention to changes to the balance of private and social rented housing and the design of public space, as both relate to my research questions on how new developments are perceived by long-term residents as affecting the private and public spheres. I also included a wide range of community newsletters, websites and local media relating to the area's changes and regeneration. Some were identified while living in the area or during visits, but mainly through archives at the Southwark Local Studies Library. The library and its staff have been an invaluable resource for documentary material and put me in touch with local writers and historians who could provide a personal perspective on Bermondsey's recent development.

Secondary data – particularly when at the level of official statistics – provide but one perspective on Bermondsey's gentrification. It points to the social structures – such as the changes to housing tenure or class composition – through which everyday lives are played out. Even at its most comprehensive, secondary data cannot suggest how the effects of gentrification are experienced, acknowledged and contested. The intention, therefore, is not to use secondary data to provide the definitive account or incontrovertible evidence of how gentrification has occurred in the case study area. Instead, it has two purposes. Firstly, it helps connections to be made with other areas where similar effects can be seen; to demonstrate that the process of gentrification in Bermondsey is not wholly unique despite its local articulation. Secondly, it outlines the structural elements of gentrification (industrial conversions, increasing owner-occupation), which in the analysis of interview data can then be linked to agents' perceptions and experiences of the same aspects, and others which are not covered in secondary data. It is a way, then, of bridging the gap between how space is conceived at the level of official data and how it is perceived by inhabitants.

<b>Table 3.1 Operational categories of the NS-SEC linked to Socio-economic Groups</b>	
Socio-Economic Group (1971, 1981, 1991)	NS_SEC operational categories (2001, 2011)
1. Employers and managers in central and local government, industry, commerce, etc. – large establishments 1.1 Employers in large establishments 1.2 Managers in large establishments	1 2
2. Employers and managers, industry, commerce, etc. – small establishments 2.1 Employers in industry, commerce, etc. – small establishments 2.2 Managers in industry, commerce, etc. – small establishments	8.1 5
3. Professional workers – self-employed	3.3
4. Professional workers – employees	3.1
5. Intermediate non-manual workers 5.1 Ancillary workers and artists 5.2 Foreman and supervisors non-manual	3.2, 3.4, 5.1, 4.3, 7.3 6
6. Junior non-manual workers	4.2, 7.1, 7.2, 12.1, 12.6
7. Personal service workers	12.7, 13.1
8. Foreman and supervisors - manual	10
9. Skilled manual workers	7.4, 11.1, 12.3, 13.3
10. Semi-skilled manual workers	11.2, 12.2, 12.4, 13.2
11. Unskilled manual workers	13.4
12. Own-account workers (other than professional)	4.4, 9.1
13. Farmers – employers and managers	8.2
14. Farmers – own account	9.2
15. Agricultural workers	12.5, 13.5
16. Members of the armed forces	-
17. Inadequately described and not stated occupations	16

*Source: Rose et al 2005: 60 (Table A2.B).*

The way space is conceived at the level of statistics is not of course perceived in the same ways by its inhabitants. A change in the class composition in a gentrifying area may be recognised by its inhabitants not through recourse to statistics, but by the appearance of expensive restaurants or new residential developments, for example. I have also been interested in visually mapping some of these changes in order to show the distinct spatiality of the area.

Although not necessarily directly discernible in official statistics, they can be paramount in residents' experiences of gentrification. At a very early stage of my research I photographed these more subjective forms of gentrification as embodied in the built environment, a process which has continued iteratively during the fieldwork. The photographs have provided a visual catalogue of the fieldwork setting and effectively another form of data for reporting research findings (Becker 1998). Indeed, during the relatively short time that my fieldwork has been taking place, so much has changed to the area's built environment that they also serve as a record of what was there before development took place.

A second way photographs of the built environment can be used is to subject them to a type of discourse analysis as described by Rose (2001) and Ali (2004). This approach holds that architectural images articulate various discourses of culture and social subjectivities. They can therefore be analysed both for the 'preferred readings' that the producer (architect) intended, and the 'decoded readings' made by spectators (Ali 2004: 274). This approach recognises that architecture has meaning 'hidden' in it that can be 'read' and variously interpreted (Crilley 1993; Shaw 2005). The design of public space in new developments has therefore been subject to this form of analysis to explore the underlying ways that design appeals to different social groups (Chapter Five).

In addition to photographs, I created maps to represent neighbourhood change. One example came from preliminary discussions with residents, who frequently mentioned the conversion or closure of local pubs as a salient occurrence which had accompanied the gentrification of the area. Although pub closure is a phenomenon across the UK, more pubs closed in Southwark than the rest of England between 1997 and 2009 (Truscott 2010); many residents in Bermondsey at least partly attributed it to the conversion of commercial property into residential in order to meet new demand from gentrifiers. Based on my own observations of the fieldwork area and using old postal directories at the Local Studies Library, I mapped the location of former pubs and photographed their fate (Figure 3.2). Using the same sources I have also mapped changes to housing tenure and typologies on Bermondsey Street and the Blue (Figures 1.9 and 1.11) and took photographs of examples, which complements a similar

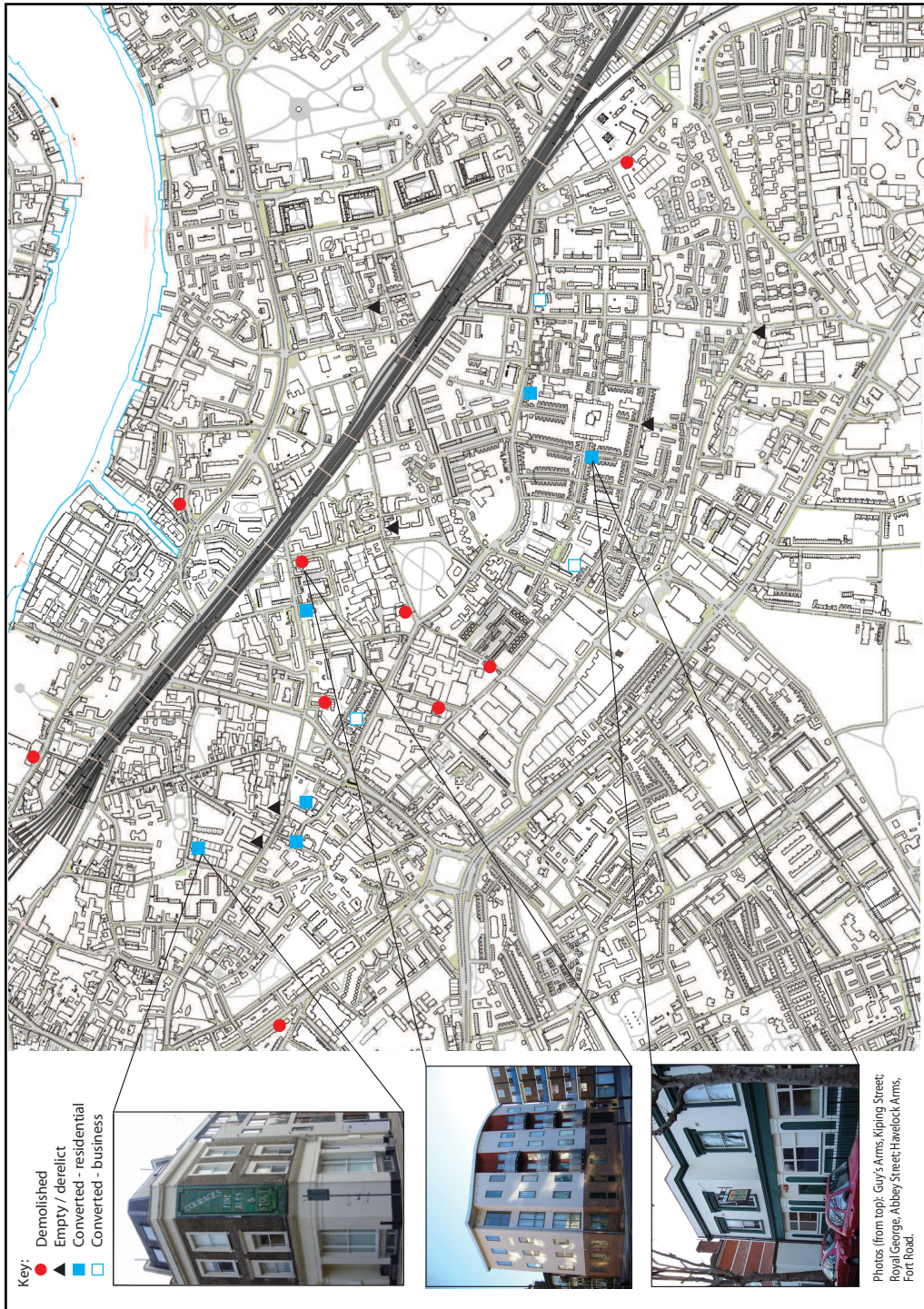
exercise undertaken on Bermondsey Street by Hutton (2008) that focussed on the economic classification of businesses. If the secondary data analysis presents a textual narrative of gentrification, the mapping helps graphically illustrate another.

The main intention of the visual data is to complement the description and analysis of Bermondsey's gentrification, but I also found they were useful tools in the interviews which took place with residents through the technique of photo-elicitation (Prosser 1998; Rose 2001; Ali 2004). Photographs and maps were shown to participants to help prompt discussion, trigger memories and explore their beliefs and attitudes towards what is represented in the visual material (see Figure 3.2 for an example). Interviews are of course very artificial situations with resultant pressures on both sides; I found that the presence of visual material reduced some difficulties created by the interview situation, allowing both parties in the interview to turn to it 'as a kind of neutral third party' (Banks 2001: 88). The actual process of visual mapping also helped my research in one unintended ways as on a number of occasions my activity led to opportunities for interactions with inquisitive local inhabitants, some of whom I later interviewed in depth. The visual material has therefore helped to develop new knowledge and inferences about neighbourhood change, as well as being a method to illustrate text and record data.

Visual data therefore have brought several benefits to my understanding of my case study, but it is worth considering its limitations. As Mason (2002) points out, reflexivity is as much required with visual as textual data, and consideration should be given to who produced the images, for what purpose and for which audience. As the visual data was self-produced (rather than collated from archives, for example), I have tried to remain aware that what I have selected to include as examples of gentrifying processes may not hold the same signification for others. In other words, they are subjective representations of gentrification that may offer entirely different meanings for a variety of people. Therefore, when I used them as eliciting tools during interviews, they were presented to participants as neutrally as possible, with very open questions asked about the particular meanings they held for the participants.



**Figure 3.2 Closure of pubs in Berrmonsey since 1995 and their use in October 2008**



Source : Fieldwork observations October 2008, Southwark Business Directory 2006.  
 Base map © Crown Copyright / database right 2008. An Ordnance Survey / EDINA  
 supplied service.

## Interviews and everyday experiences

If the previous two stages help place the research questions in the specific context of Bermondsey's gentrification, the interviews were a means to collect data on how it is interpreted and negotiated by social agents. The majority of my data have been generated through interviews with two sub-samples of inhabitants in Bermondsey: long-term residents and early gentrifiers. In this section I describe who was interviewed and how they were selected, and how data were analysed to answer my research questions.

### ***Interview sampling***

The overarching principle I used to select interview participants was theoretical sampling, a technique associated with grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967). This is in contrast to random sampling typically used in the positivist paradigm, where a representative cross-section of a population is selected, with all members having the same chance of being selected. While this can produce statistically representative data, it is limited to describing the distribution of already known attributes in social space (Bauer and Aarts 2000). Instead, a theoretical sampling process is developed iteratively and is guided by emerging findings; as data are collected, classified and analysed, a decision is taken about whom to interview next and where to find them. Interviews keep taking place until 'theoretical saturation' is reached (Glaser and Strauss 1967): interviewing continues if new questions arise, but cease when participants start to repeat existing findings. Theory is generated as the research progresses; robustness is reached when the theory has been continually revised to the point where no further contradictory evidence is obtained. Uwe Flick (2007) describes how the aim of theoretical sampling is to cover 'a fuller range of possible variations in the field and in the phenomenon under study' (2007: 26). Its strength is that it can produce a diverse sample containing cases explicitly selected to test emerging theory, which can then be refined accordingly (Charmaz 2006). Although, like all forms of sampling, it is limited by the practicalities of only interviewing people who are willing to take part, as I discuss below.

Immediately following each interview I produced a brief summary of participants' background and experiences. For residents this included the time they had lived in Bermondsey, their housing tenure and history, age and any other aspect that at the time appeared as a plausible factor on what they had told me. This

enabled me to make associations between the type of participant and their views or experiences of gentrification. As theory emerged from data, it could then be refined through further interviews with residents in the same categories, or its wider applicability tested through interviews with participants in different categories. I recorded almost all the interviews, having asked in advance if this was permissible, except in a few cases where they were captured through written notes if participants preferred, and transcribed soon after. Where notes were taken, a write-up of the interview was sent to participants at their request to help ensure I had an accurate reflection of the interview. Participants were given an information sheet, explaining the basic aims of my research, data confidentiality and how the findings would be used (Appendix 3). The sheet included the Cities Programme contact details should anyone wish to confirm my status or to retract information. A condition of participating is that names would be changed and no personally identifying information given. I was mindful of the ethical guidelines set out in Bryman (2004: 509) – not to harm or deceive participants, invade their privacy and obtain consent. Interviews were conducted at pre-arranged times and in a variety of locations, at the choice of the participants. These included cafes, offices, community centres and, less frequently, their own homes. In one case, at the participant's suggestion, an interview was conducted while walking around the case study area, enabling him to demonstrate to me the physical aspects of change to the neighbourhood which were most important to him.

Within the overarching category of the Bermondsey inhabitant, there were three types of interview participants. Firstly, there were long-term residents of Bermondsey, whom I defined as those who had lived there for most of their life and so predated the area's gentrification. Data from these interviews were used to answer my research questions on how long-term residents experience gentrification with regards to housing security and use of public space. Secondly, there were early gentrifiers who had moved to the area between 1980 and 2000, who were interviewed for their perspectives on gentrification and social diversity, and to understand the political practices of the local community organisation that some belonged to. By involving these two types of inhabitants, my approach intends to address Lees' concern that 'future [gentrification] research needs to compare more systematically, interviewing or surveying both



gentrifiers or non-gentrifiers living in the same neighbourhoods' (2008: 2464). Finally, there were a small number of expert interviews, providing data on how Bermondsey has gentrified (Chapter Four), and the two case studies of public space that form Chapter Six.

Long-term residents and early gentrifiers were accessed in the first place through attending community group and local residents' meetings. With community groups who met regularly, I had previously contacted the organiser to explain my research and to ask whether I could attend to recruit interview participants. In two cases – a local history group and the Bermondsey Time & Talents Association – I conducted a focus group with participants following a presentation of some of the visual data I had collected. Both of these focus groups took place early on in the fieldwork. They gave me a chance to orientate myself to the issues which were prevalent for participants and generate tentative hypotheses based on their insights (Morgan 1988). I also used the focus groups to recruit participants for follow-up depth interviews. To help improve the credibility of findings generated through these interviews, I returned to the community groups to present my account and receive their feedback.

While effective at recruiting participants, a limitation of this approach is that it can make the research susceptible to volunteer bias (where self-selecting participants respond differently from the general population). For example, some of the community groups were actively involved in the conservation of the area, which could mean their members have more negative attitudes towards development than other residents on the area. Another factor is that group members were often older, which could make their views on neighbourhood change susceptible to nostalgia (Blokland 2003). While this in itself is worthy of analysis – and is discussed in Chapter Five – it means the profile of my interview participants did not contain the broad range of categories demanded in theoretical sampling. In particular I lacked younger, long-term residents.

To target this segment of the local population, I conducted interviews at the Blue, the working class focal point in Bermondsey. These were 'spot interviews', so not pre-arranged and tending to be slightly shorter in length (15-20 minutes), were semi-structured and comprising open-ended questions. Around a fifth of

people I approached agreed to be interviewed, with those who gave a reason for refusing mainly citing lack of time. I found how I approached potential participants affected the likelihood of their agreeing to speak to me. My initial efforts involved introducing myself and research before asking questions from a clipboard where I could jot down answers. This was largely unsuccessful, perhaps because I resembled a market researcher or charity fundraiser. More successful was asking people if they could spare a few minutes to talk about Bermondsey and then recording their responses to (by now) memorised questions. While responses from these interviewees were useful to guide my thoughts, they tended to be briefer and lack the detail of those gathered in the more traditional interview settings. The main value of the spot interviews was to arrange follow-up interviews; five depth interviews took place in this way.

### ***Narrative interviewing***

Narrative interviewing is a form of unstructured, in-depth interview with specific features designed to avoid some of the determinism that can occur in other interview forms. For example, Jovchelovitch and Bauer (2000) argue that by following a topic guide, the interviewer imposes a structure on the participant's responses by selecting the themes and topics and by wording the questions in his or her language. They contrast this with narrative interviewing which seeks to elicit a less imposed account of a participant's experiences, one which is more 'valid' by being closer to the participant's own subjectivities and expressed in their terms. The underlying assumption is that the participant's perspective is best revealed using her own spontaneous language in the narrating of events that matter most to her. It emphasises the role of stories in how people make sense of their lives and the world around them (Ricoeur 1992; Linde 1993). The great strength of a narrative approach is how it offers insights into people's experiences of the world while avoiding the researcher's preconceptions (Hinchman and Hinchman 1997). Importantly for my research, it provides a form of communication through which participants can indicate which elements are the most important to them (Elliot 2005). Given that I wanted to avoid preconceived notions of how gentrification affects inhabitants, I considered narrative interviewing in a relevant way to conduct the interviews.

The setting of a narrative interview involves allowing participants to speak as openly as possible about the issues of salience to them, with the minimum of interference from the interviewer. If this is to succeed, it is important that the participant feels comfortable to narrate the personal experiences which matter most to them. To this end, participants chose the interview location and in all cases had met me beforehand, allowing an initial rapport to establish. I started with the same opening questioning, asking for their views on the changes they had seen in the neighbourhood. This allowed participants to raise the issues that mattered most for them, exemplified through personal experiences, and within the very broad frame of reference my opening question proposed. Beyond making signals of attentive listening, my involvement during narrative-making was limited to asking 'what happened next/then/before?' to encourage the flow of the interview. I also held a questioning phase at the end of each interview, once the narrative had reached a spontaneous end. Here I could ask for clarification and probe for more detail about specific parts of the narrative. It also meant that I could ask directly about their experiences of the public space case studies in Chapter Five, and more broadly about any particular theme that had emerged strongly in several prior interviews if it had not been raised by the participant.

Although I was less involved than in other techniques, it does not mean the interviews were entirely unstructured. Narratives themselves follow conventions and have an internal structure, featuring significant characters, dramatic episodes and shared cultural assumptions about their meaning (Linde 1993). It would also be naive to think that narrative interviews completely eliminate the interviewer's interference and produce a unique objectivity. Instead, I follow the view that the narratives are jointly constructed and the product of a dialogue between a particular teller and listener at a specific historical moment (Riessman 1993; Linde 1993). The listener is an active co-participant in recounting of narrative and exploring the meaning of the research issue for the participant (Miskler 1986). A related point is that narratives are never simply reports of experiences – as people narrate, they make sense of the events they tell and inevitably distort, by emphasising some aspects while downplaying others (Elliot 2005). Narratives should then not be seen in terms of historical record or as self-evident standards of objectivity, but as representations of people's experiences

(Riessman 1993). Through their occasional contradictions and tensions, narratives reveal responses to specific contexts, events and processes.

### ***Expert interviews***

In parallel with residents, I have carried out several interviews with experts – social actors with a professional or political role in the area’s development. They were selected for their knowledge of the recent history and development of Bermondsey and their involvement in the local community. I used these data to inform the answers to all the research questions and more widely explore how Bermondsey has gentrified. All of these interviews were pre-arranged and semi-structured with a topic guide tailored to each participant. For example, an architect of Bermondsey Square was interviewed about the design of the scheme; a local councillor about community involvement the scheme’s consultation process; and a local planning officer about how the scheme’s design was affected by various policies. The purpose of these interviews was to provide detailed knowledge about the area’s gentrification and, in particular, the processes behind the Bermondsey Square and Empire Square developments – two sites central to my research.

I did not find it easy to recruit participants for this section of the interviewing, whether in terms of identifying the ‘right’ experts to approach in large organisations such as Southwark Council (where initial contacts would frequently refer me to someone else), or in obtaining agreement to be interviewed. Several key informants I identified at the start of my fieldwork did not respond to correspondence. Partly this reflects experts’ time constraints restricting their availability for interviewing (Flick 2009). I also found early on the importance of how I described my research, particularly when approaching potential participants in local government and the development industry. Simply mentioning that I was researching the gentrification of Bermondsey left them less than enthused. I suspect they saw the interview as another occasion when they would have to defend regeneration projects against charges of gentrification. A more successful approach was to give a fuller account of my interests, so situating the research in the wider context of neighbourhood change and housing in the inner city.

From the initial interviews that did take place, I used 'snowballing' to locate other participants. This proved an especially productive technique as it helped identify previously unknown informants who could help answer the research questions, and who, in cases where the initial interview participant acted as an intermediary, were generally very willing to be interviewed. For interviews with residents and key informants, I noticed the importance of establishing a positive rapport with participants. This could make the difference between participants giving limited, even cagey responses to questions, or expanding fully on their personal or professional opinions of the issue. I found that my ability to establish a rapport improved with time as my confidence and awareness of local issues increased. However, I was also aware of my own positionality when interviewing experts. It seemed some participants tried to please by giving embellished accounts designed to give a more favourable view of their own actions. As with the long-term resident interviews, I had to be open to the subjective nature of participants' accounts during data analysis.

### ***Participant profile***

A total of 26 long-term residents of Bermondsey were interviewed, all of whom had lived throughout their adult lives. Data was gathered through 14 face-to-face interviews and two focus groups. Like the majority of people in Bermondsey, most were social housing tenants and just three are owner-occupiers (having bought their council home). Their ages ranged from 34 to 82; all were White British, except for one British Asian. Ten interviews were conducted with early gentrifiers, and seven with social actors (see Appendix 2 for breakdown). For residents, a brief summary of each participant is given in the text before the first extract from their interview. I undertook not to divulge names or addresses so pseudonyms are used and, on a few occasions where this may identify participants, place names (such as housing estates) are not given. Further details about the social actors who participated and their roles are given in Appendix 2. Throughout the following chapters quotations are given from the interview transcripts. They are chosen for one of two reasons: either because they represent a particularly common opinion or experience, and so synthesise more fragmented narratives found elsewhere, or where they are not prevalent views, I consider them especially revealing of a specific point.

### ***Analysis of interview data***

As stated above, grounded theory has guided the sampling method during data collection; it has also been the basis for data analysis. Grounded theory offers a systematic procedure involving an intensive examination of qualitative data in order to develop theory derived from data. After exposure to the field and initial data collection, when reading through interview notes and transcripts I used analytical coding to develop analytic categories – the potential themes that arose during interviews – which were then used to illuminate and fit the data. This continued until the categories become ‘saturated’, when no further instances of the categories are discovered, so further search becomes superfluous. For example, from interviews with long-term residents, one category generated from reviewing the data was the closure or upgrading of neighbourhood pubs. Following categorisation, I could link this to other narratives where it was discussed and draw comparisons between how the closure was experienced and what it was thought to signify. From this analysis, potential hypotheses were tentatively considered and explored in the context of continued data collection. Results are presented in the following chapters using examples from the data.

The strength of this approach is that emergent theories are intimately linked to the data and so cannot be easily refuted (Blaikie 2007); however this can also serve as a weakness in that theory can remain rooted to the specific time and space context of the data. This is resolved by seeing a grounded theory as constantly open to modification and reformulation as the research process is continued in different settings. An equally pertinent concern with data analysis relates back to the relationship between interviewer and participant, and how people in narrating the social world actively construct a version of it appropriate to the context and the person to whom they are talking (Silverman 2001). This constructionist view holds that participants’ descriptions are partly the product of a collaboration with the interviewer, so how the description has been assembled in the context of an interview should be considered during analysis. For example, when discussing neighbourhood change, I noticed that in some interviews with long-term residents, participants started by describing how the area had declined inexorably in recent years, often exemplified by recounting an episode that had dire consequences for someone they knew, such as a violent

attack or robbery. Yet on occasions, following further discussion and reflection later in the narratives, the eventual tone of the interview was one that was at least partly positive about neighbourhood change. The experience the episode reveals is significant, as is the participant's decision to use it to start their narratives. This I felt was often used as a way to acknowledge my status as an outsider to the area and to present an extreme example of what daily life could entail.

## **Conclusion**

How participants narrated their experiences of neighbourhood change is a reminder that interview data involve the 'situated production of knowledge' (Crang 2002: 652): what they choose to tell and how they tell it reflects their own positionality. The reflexive nature of the research process applies equally to the analysis of findings as to data collection during fieldwork. As a result, it has been necessary during analysis to describe the specific circumstances in which the interviews took place – the participant's background, for example – while being mindful of avoiding 'descriptive excess' (Loftland and Loftland 1995: 164) where the amount of contextual detail overwhelms the analysis of data. In the forthcoming data analysis chapters, how participants choose to relay experiences is considered along with the content of what they say. As Les Back (2007) has pointed out, while sociology should be a 'listener's art', accounts are always incomplete and can never be assumed to speak for themselves. I have also considered in this chapter my own positionality as a gentrification researcher, having initially been a resident of Bermondsey, and later as an inhabitant of a different kind as it contains my workplace. Through doing so and by explaining the overall methodological approach and the relevant data collection tools that I have employed, I have used this chapter to set out the suitability of my research design for answering the thesis questions. The thesis now moves on to the substantive chapters where I analyse the fieldwork data in order to explore how long-term residents and early gentrifiers experience and negotiate changes to their neighbourhood brought about by gentrification.

## **Chapter Four: From industrial periphery to gentrified enclave – Bermondsey's integration into the global city**

### **Introduction**

Before analysing how different inhabitants negotiate gentrification, I here set out the wider context in which these lived experiences are played out. By building a detailed description of how gentrification has unfolded in Bermondsey, my intention is to demonstrate how its contours are related to an historical specificity of the area and more widespread processes of urban change. My approach to understanding gentrification therefore builds on research that emphasises the specific dimensions of how urban neighbourhoods are upgraded (Lees et al 2008) and the need to consider 'the broad range of processes that contribute to this restructuring' (Smith 1996: 3). There are two strands to Bermondsey's gentrification story that form the focus of this chapter. The first, and this chapter's departure point, is the various ways that Bermondsey has historically been positioned in relation to the growing wealth and changing economy of the City of London. It starts by considering Bermondsey's contribution to the City's economic growth as a location of specialist manufacturing and riverside industry, and how these impulses defined the social and spatial form of the area. However, Bermondsey became more peripheral following the shift in the City's economy in the latter half of the twentieth century from manufacturing to services. Unable to keep pace with the City's new requirements, Bermondsey entered a period of managed decline. This was hastened by the enactment of a new London-wide planning regime based on the decentralisation of former industrial areas in the inner city. It is to this period of decline that the roots of gentrification can be traced. This is best demonstrated by the changes in Bermondsey's riverside areas during the 1980s when, under the jurisdiction of the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC), it was subject to a new model of market-led regeneration which sought to reinvent former industrial sites as desirable locations for middle class living.



The second strand of Bermondsey's gentrification is the position of Southwark Council and how this has altered in its recent history. During the 1970s, it developed a prototype of market-led regeneration for its former docklands, which although never enacted, gave a strong role for the private sector to work in partnership with the Council. Under different political leadership, and as the LDDC's fostering of gentrification became clear, the Council sought to defend the position of long-term residents through outright opposition to the LDDC's plans. A further change in leadership in the 1990s and a different strategy for regenerating Bermondsey emerged. Building on notions of place-marketing and boosterism, and drawing on the expert interviews described in Chapter Three, I consider how the Council sought to re-integrate Bermondsey, along with the wider north Southwark area, into the City's economy by meeting some of its needs as a global city (Sassen 2001; Newman and Thornley 2005), including living and consumption spaces for gentrifying global elites (Butler and Lees 2006). It is suggested that the gentrified enclaves of Bermondsey are the product of intra-urban competition, as different areas within global cities seek to promote their compatibility with the prerequisites for maintaining international primacy.

### **Dependants and rivals: Southwark's historical relationship with the City**

The fortunes of Bermondsey, as part of the Southwark borough, have long been intimately entwined with those of the City. Southwark has been 'a community kept separate by the river but owing its whole existence to the proximity of the city' (Johnson 1969: 1). Southwark's supporting role to the social and economic life of the City can be seen since its earliest history. Two thousand years ago the Thames shoreline was a miniature archipelago of small, sandy islands crisscrossed with channels and streams. For Roman London, Southwark's topography provided a suitable location for storage of imported goods. Low warehouses were sunk into the marshy ground close to the river, accessible from the Thames and providing the cool and damp conditions needed for the storage of olive oil, wine, figs and other imported dietary essentials unavailable

locally (Tames 2001). The construction of the first stone bridge across the Thames in around AD50 – close to the site of the present London Bridge – directly linked Southwark to the City and strengthened the interdependency between the two areas. Rebuilt in 1091 and 1209, London Bridge remained the only bridge over the Thames until 1750, privileging Southwark with unique access to the City among other settlements on the southern bank of the Thames. The bridge transformed what could have been a rural outlier into an integral component of the developing City. Southwark's physical connection with the City made this relationship more profitable than the analogous one between its neighbour Lambeth and Westminster, as the political heart of the metropolis (Hebbert 1998). The sole existence of London Bridge in pre-modern London also benefited the City, making it the dominant entry point for goods from southern England, so helping maintain its dominance as a commercial centre (Arnold 1999).

In his history of Southwark, David Johnson (1969) describes how the infant suburb offered medieval Londoners a space to benefit from the less restrictive life available outside the City. Jurisdictionally it was independent of the City, subject to the less stringent control of the Surrey courts. It was a place where activities deemed undesirable to the medieval City were relegated, whether in terms of leisure – such as theatres, banned by the City authorities, and 'stewhouses' – or industry, such as tanneries, abattoirs and gunpowder stores. The leather industry is particularly indicative of Southwark's relationship with the City. By 1200, small-scale industry had started in Southwark and the tidal Thames powered ten mills for leather tanning in what is now Bermondsey Riverside (Thame 2001). By the fifteenth century Bermondsey was the centre of London's leather industry, employing skimmers, tanners, shoemakers and saddlers. The industry's success was aided by an edict in 1425 which forbade butchers from disposing of animal carcasses within the City walls, creating a ready supply of hides which would form the raw material for leather processing in Southwark (Johnson 1969). The arrival of French Protestant refugees in the late sixteenth century who settled in Bermondsey brought improved tanning techniques that further advanced the industry (Bell [1880] 2010). The noxious smells and effluents produced by activities such as tanning were already evident

as Southwark became the location of the 'stink industries' (Ackroyd 2001: 689) – the noxious and dangerous activities that the rest of London banished to the southern banks of the Thames.

It was, then, a relationship of mutual dependence – Southwark's leather industry required the City for most of its customers, just as the City needed an area for an industrial process deemed unsuitable for its more reified environment. It was also a relationship from which Southwark prospered: the historian John Stow's *Survey of London* in 1598 ranked Southwark as the English borough providing the most revenue to the Crown after the City (Thame 2001). Yet it was not always a comfortable relationship. Until the Victorian Age, the partial detachment of Southwark was a source of tension in the City that feared its economic strength and judicial independence. Southwark was not bound by the City's commercial guilds, prompting complaints from City merchants of unfair competition. It lay outside the City's legal jurisdiction and had no civic authority of its own with public control exercised to varying degrees by five separate manorial courts (Sheppard 1998). It therefore formed a natural refuge for the outcasts from the City, including craftsmen who could practice their trades without guilds' interference. It also meant it was a haven for criminals and conspirators against the state. It was to Southwark that suspects fled the City to find shelter in its churches or as a stopping point on a flight to the Continent. By the fourteenth century, Southwark's burgeoning economic activity had become sufficiently vigorous to attract the attention of London's merchants, who pressured the City's leaders to rein in the upstart neighbour. As Martha Carlin (1996) has emphasised, 'to the Londoners of its own day, medieval Southwark was a headache. It was an asylum of undesirable industries and residents, a commercial rival, an administrative anachronism and a perpetual jurisdictional affront.' (1996: 95). This was the context for several charters in the Middle Ages to bring Southwark under the City's control (Johnson 1969), most significantly one in 1327 (and reconstituted in 1462 and 1550) that made Southwark a City ward without voting rights or an elected alderman. Named Bridge Ward Without, it was an attempt by the City Fathers to extend some jurisdiction to the south bank of the Thames (Sheppard 1998).

By the Victorian era, how Southwark should be integrated with the City was still the subject of contention. However, interest in further control of the borough had waned as industrialisation brought immense poverty to the area and its people lived in some of the worst conditions in London. Southwark's location in the south east of the metropolis mapped poorly on a spatial division in London which opened up in the nineteenth century, with districts to the north of the Thames wealthier than the south, and those to the west wealthier than the east. With the Thames as the divider, Roy Porter (2000) describes how 'the contrast between north and south banks was total'; governmental, cultural and commercial buildings were clustered along the north bank in Westminster and the City, but south of the Thames 'there was only stinking industry – distilleries, rope-works, tanneries, shambles and shipyards [...] punctuated with bear-baiting and bawdy-houses, hogs and fogs' (Porter 2000: 45). A similar point is made by Peter Ackroyd when he described South London as a 'poor and disreputable appendage. There was always a form of urban discrimination (2001: 692)' in which Southwark and the south London Boroughs were historically separated physically by the Thames, but also perceptually from the centre.<sup>11</sup>

Michael Hebbert (1998) draws a perpendicular dividing line, separating the western and eastern riverside areas. Western areas upstream of the Thames – Vauxhall, Chelsea, Putney – are sites of high-end residency and conspicuous consumption; the downstream areas further east were 'grimy, utilitarian, commercial and – residentially – repellent to all except those who could live nowhere else' (1998: 182). The impact of Southwark's lowly social position in the London hierarchy is exemplified in the first report from its Medical Officer of Health in 1856, which characterised the area gloomily as the unfortunate victim

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<sup>11</sup> The physical and perceptual north-south London divide persists. As a resident of north London, Jonathan Raban writes in *Soft City* how he finds 'London south of the Thames [...] impossibly illogical and continent, a territory of meaningless circles, incomprehensible one-way systems, warehouses and cage-bird shops. [...] I have friends who live in Clapham, only three miles away, but to visit them is a definite journey, for it involves crossing the river.' (2008: 192).

of a relationship which conferred on it the detritus of the City in every sense: 'The lowest and poorest of the human race drop from higher and richer parishes to our courts and alleys and the liquid filth of higher places necessarily finds its way down to us. We receive the refuse as well as the outcomings of more happily situated places.' (William Rendle in Thame 2001: 122).

So despite the success of its industry, few Bermondsey residents felt the benefits of the wealth created there; employment was irregular and casual and by the mid-nineteenth century it became the home of some of the worst slums in London (De la Mare 2008). In 1861 the parishes that would later make up the borough of Bermondsey ranked last in London for life expectancy – 34.5 years compared to an average of 36.9 (Thame 2001). One of the most vivid portrayals of the decay is from Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist*, describing the area of Jacob's Island, a slum which lay to the east of St Saviour's Dock and south of Bermondsey Wall:

Arriving at length in streets remoter and less frequented, the visitor walks beneath tottering house fronts, and dismantled walls; Chimneys half crushed, half hesitating to fall; Windows guarded by iron bars, that time and dirt have eaten away. In such a neighbourhood lies Jacob's Island, surrounded by a muddy ditch which is filled by the opening of the sluices at the mills. ([1838] 2004: 282)

Concern over who held responsibility for tackling such intense poverty caused the debate over Southwark's relationship with the City to shift. It was no longer a benefit for the City to attempt to control its former economic rival and the expense of managing its destitution had become prohibitive. Instead the debate for further integration was led by Southwark freemen. In 1835 they orchestrated a failed campaign for Southwark to be granted full incorporation into the City (Johnson 1969). Intermittent, equally unsuccessful attempts to insist on Southwark's greater political integration with the City continued throughout the nineteenth century, until rendered irrelevant by the 1899 London Government Act. This created 28 municipal boroughs, splitting Southwark in two –

Bermondsey to the east and Southwark to the west – and ended the City’s jurisdiction over the area.

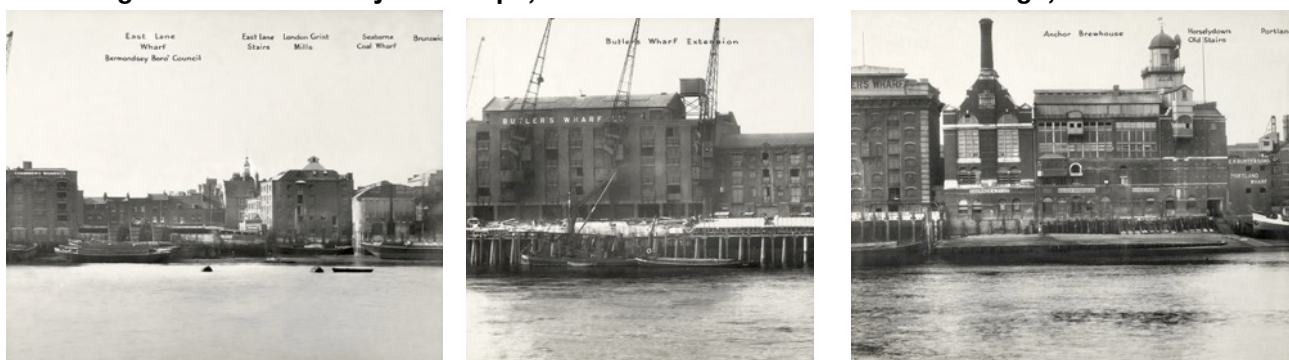
What this short historical overview demonstrates is that the efforts to integrate Southwark into the City’s economy are not new and were at different times driven by the City or Southwark. Its position on the river and adjacent to the City has had a profound impact on Southwark’s industrial development and spatial organisation as it served London’s varying economic requirements. Bermondsey served a crucial role in facilitating the City’s industrial functions, and like the rest of Southwark it has been at once integrated and peripheral to the economic centre of London. Later in this chapter we return to the relationship between the City and Southwark in more recent times, and the renewed impetus for establishing Bermondsey as an integral part of London’s global city ambitions. Before doing so, this chapter examines the changing fortunes of Bermondsey from its industrial peak at the start of the twentieth century, and how these changes led to a reframing of how it would serve London’s new requirements.

### **Deindustrialisation in Bermondsey and managed decline**

Bermondsey’s economic and social development has been inextricably linked to the Thames and, since the eighteenth century, to the Port of London. With London as the centre of a then emerging mercantile nation, Bermondsey developed rapidly to meet the city’s new economic requirements (Dimoldenberg 1976). Wharves and warehouses were constructed on the riverside, to which smaller vessels and barges brought goods for unloading and sorting (Figure 4.1). Further south were tanneries, breweries and food processing plants, interspersed by narrow streets of tightly packed and hastily constructed workers’ housing. Bermondsey was an example of an area where ‘enterprise thrived on proximity’ (Hebbert 1998: 141) – to the City for financial credit, to the port for materials and to the wider metropolis for markets. Bermondsey’s specialisation in leather, brewing and food processing created a distinct labour

market. It was also distinct geographically, with its population cut off from neighbouring areas of London (Ackroyd 2007). As well as the Thames, the railway viaduct from London Bridge station built back from the riverside served as a barrier and compounded the sense of enclosure. The closed nature of dock employment also contributed, as jobs that were passed from father to son embedded social continuity (Hobbs 2006). The result was that inhabitants evinced a strong collective identity with a clear sense of where their territory ended – a sense that still exists in parts of Bermondsey (Evans 2007).

**Figure 4.1 Bermondsey riverscape, from St Saviour's Dock to Tower Bridge, 1937**



*Source: Museum of London © PLA Collection / Museum of London*

In line with other slum areas of London, Bermondsey suffered from a lack of sanitation and clean water supply, as well as overcrowding, cholera and other diseases (De la Mare 2008). Pressures on housing intensified with the demolition of dwellings that large scale public works such as the 1835 London and Greenwich railway entailed. The population was not displaced to other areas but remained in the increasingly densely occupied slums. By the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, philanthropic trusts including Peabody and Guinness sought to alleviate the poor conditions of back-to-back rental housing through clearing slum housing and constructing model dwellings. However, in common with other areas, they had little positive influence on the housing conditions for the majority of Bermondsey residents as the rules and rent levels they imposed generally excluded the low and irregularly paid, favouring artisans and semi-skilled workers (Power 1993). What homes were built could not match the needs of the area's population, still expanding until its peak in 1891 at 136,600 (Humphrey 2008). The belief that philanthropy and the private market could solve the desperate living conditions of the London poor had started to erode in the 1890s. It was equally recognised that current government structures were

unable to do so. The need to provide adequate housing was an impetus behind the London Government Act of 1899, which established Bermondsey as one of 28 Metropolitan Authorities to which were transferred the responsibility to provide housing for its working class. It was then that municipalities started to build tenement housing paid for by the local ratepayer, with Bermondsey one of the most active London boroughs for clearing and rehousing working class residents (Wohl 2001). This culminated in 1919 legislation stating the responsibility of local authorities to provide subsidised housing with financial support from central government. Local authorities now had the fiscal and institutional means to be effective in the spheres of health, environmental planning and housing (Lebas et al 1991). They were powers that Bermondsey Council embraced enthusiastically in an attempt to create 'a small but potent socialist sovereignty' (Lebas 1993: 43), complete with a red borough flag replacing the Union Jack over the Town Hall. By 1938 Bermondsey Council had built some 1,700 dwellings and owned 3,350 in total (Porter 2000). The inter-war period also saw an active policy of de-densification by the Council. This included the construction of Wilson Grove, built in 1927 near Bermondsey Wall East and one of the first attempts in London to provide housing in Garden Suburb form (Lebas 1993).

If the 1920s represented the peak of Bermondsey's political and economic strength, it also contained the seeds of its decline. Among the first to show signs of decline was the leather industry (Porter 2000). While Bermondsey remained the main base of the industry in London, it suffered high overheads, lack of space and the challenge of mass production and technological innovation from competitors outside the capital. Population decline accompanied industrial decline. Bermondsey's population almost halved between 1931 and 1951, falling from 111,542 to 60,640 (Humphrey 2008), a steeper decline than the 40% average for central London boroughs and against a growth of two million in the Greater London area (Abercrombie 1944). Three factors lay behind this dramatic decrease. Firstly, between the World Wars there was little investment in the renewal of the urban fabric as speculative housing development on greenfield sites predominated, and many upwardly mobile Londoners left the inner city for newly constructed suburbs (Hebbert 1998). Secondly, the population decline



was hastened by evacuations during the Second World War, when many were moved outside London never returned, including Bermondsey's MP who opted to stay in the suburbs rather than return to the inner city (Humphrey 2008).

Both trends were accelerated by a third factor, the managed dispersal of Bermondsey's population to the outer city through planning policy. This was initially laid out in the County of London Plan (Forshaw and Abercrombie 1943), covering what today corresponds to inner London, and subsequently in more detail in Patrick Abercrombie's Greater London Plan (1944). This covered 2,600 square miles, extending from beyond Luton in the north to the Surrey - Sussex borders in the south, and for the next three decades served as the masterplan for the region's development (Rao 2007). Both plans were prepared in anticipation of the end of the War and the reconstruction after bomb damage that would follow. For Patrick Abercrombie, the upheaval of the War offered an opportunity to redevelop comprehensively the parts of the inner city considered obsolete, blighted by overcrowded, degraded housing stock and constraints to the growth of industrial employment. But the Plans were equally opposed to the type of sprawl and unrestricted growth that had characterised housing development thus far in the twentieth century (Mullins and Murie 2006). Instead, Abercrombie pioneered the ideas of growth management and densification. Future growth would either be concentrated within outer London, set against an agricultural or recreational backdrop of the statutorily protected 'Green Belt', or in a ring of New Towns set around 14 miles from the suburban edge of Greater London. The guiding assumption was the necessity of 'decentralisation of person and industry from the congested centre' (Abercrombie 1944: 5), with over a million people to be dispersed from inner London.

Based on the plans, comprehensive redevelopment started with the four areas containing the largest tracts of bomb damage – the City, Stepney, Poplar and Bermondsey. The nineteenth century stock of single-family terraced houses was cleared for municipal tenements and for new street patterns that included car parking or that anticipated new urban highways. Partly because of the competing uses for housing, there was not, however, a net gain in the number of units on land previously occupied by terraced housing and waiting lists remained

high for replacement homes in the same areas (Hebbert 1998), a further spur to movement away from the inner city to the newly built suburbs.

Decentralisation was not limited to housing. A shift in employment from inner London would also be necessary to fulfil the planning ambitions, hence the 1944 Plan's assumption that inner London would 'normally be banned to new industry and to any but minor extensions of existing enterprises' (Abercrombie 1944: 58). As employment moved from the inner city, so its workers would follow to the new housing constructed in close proximity. By 1951, industry was moving away from Bermondsey, downstream to Woolwich, west to Willesden and Wembley, and south to Croydon (Weightman and Humphries 2007). The cause was more than Abercrombie's planning restrictions on the expansion of industry in the inner city. Market forces coincided with planning policy as demand for labour rippled out from inner London factories to outlier London offices and warehouses, reflecting a profound restructuring of the city's employment away from riverside manufacturing industry towards the decentralised service economy (Rao 2007). The prevalence of manufacturing in Bermondsey left it especially vulnerable to the effects of this change. Its industry was inextricably linked to the Thames and a labour intensive supply chain which started with the arrival of container vessels at the large inland docks. From there goods were transferred to Bermondsey's smaller riverside wharves for sorting and storage in the adjacent warehouses, which in turn provided the raw materials for the processing plants and factories back from the river.

However, by the 1950s London's docks were facing obsolescence and gradually declined in significance until the last dock closed in 1981. Several factors foresaw the decline (Smith 1989; Hebbert 1998). The liberalisation of port legislation allowed other ports to compete with London, particularly deep-wharf ports in the Thames estuary able to accommodate container ships that could not reach riverside docks in London. Even when goods made it to the docks, Bermondsey wharves were inaccessible to the container lorries that were now used to transport goods from the ships, but unable to negotiate the narrow and winding streets that approached the riverside docks. Newer working practices such as palletisation and forklift uploading meant fewer dockers were required

to handle goods. Decasualisation of labour in 1966 imposed increasingly prohibitive costs on the Port of London Authority (PLA) by guaranteeing registered dock workers employment and sick pay whether or not there was work to do. Finally, there was the potential value of upstream docks as prime real estate close to central London. The successful redevelopment of St Katherine's Dock, one of the first to close in 1968, into a marina, residential village and hotel demonstrated the asset potential of the PLA's estate. The authority's strategy was to dispose of the loss-making riverside docks in inner London to finance expansion at Tilbury in the Thames estuary. Southwark's Surrey Docks closed in stages between 1968 and 1970, and the transferral of traffic from the Royal Docks in East Ham in 1981 marked the end of London's upstream docks.

The loss of commercial shipping negatively affected associated industries that had jointly formed the bedrock of employment in Bermondsey. In the 1960s, the gradual exodus of manufacturing industries accelerated into a rush. Between 1966 and 1974 Southwark had the highest rate of industrial decline in inner London at 38%; some 55,000 jobs (Goss 1998), mainly in transport, distribution and food processing, all sectors closely associated with port activity. By the start of the 1980s, the sector had shrunk a further 15% (Docklands Consultative Committee 1989). By 1991, Bermondsey's population had fallen by 38% in twenty years and a third of industrial premises were vacant (Civic Trust 1995), leaving large tracts of empty buildings and warehouses.

In Bermondsey, population decentralisation as envisaged by Abercrombie happened later than anticipated. It was not until the mid-1960s that industrial jobs were lost in great numbers and a relatively high proportion of social housing – a third of stock by 1963 – meant that fewer people moved away (Turner 1978). It was also isolated from the in-migration from the Commonwealth that was happening in Peckham, Brixton and other south London areas, partly because social housing was allocated on the basis of individual applications decided by councillors, rather than need, meaning estates in Bermondsey remained the preserve of families who had lived there for several generations (Goss 1988). Change may have occurred later but it was also steeper, and the impact on the

long-term residents forms the basis of the next chapter. A point worth making at this stage is how this period of decline created the conditions for gentrification. Michael Hebbert (1998) traces the roots of inner London's gentrification to the effect of Abercrombie's planning policies and the development of the Green Belt. By dispersing activity and residency out of inner London, the 'spell of suburbanisation' (Hebbert 1998: 97) was broken for sections of the middle class; it created a space for those who sought to model new forms of living in opposition to the dominant trajectory away from the inner city (Zukin 1987; Ley 1996). Deindustrialisation in Bermondsey also provided abandoned industrial buildings and spaces where, as we shall see, these culturally distinct lifestyles could be played out. How public agencies in Bermondsey helped facilitate this trend is the focus for the remainder of this chapter.

### **Market-led gentrification at Southwark's docklands**

The nature and scale of post-manufacturing decline that Bermondsey faced from the mid-1960s was, of course, not unique in London or other western cities. Bermondsey also faced a predicament common in former industrial areas, namely the curtailment of city authorities' ability to reverse the decline (Harvey 1989). In short, the Keynesian commitment to provide local services via a financially strong local government, which had dominated much of the post-War era, was severely compromised. In place of local government having the financial means to invest directly in urban areas, policy in the 1980s gave primacy to the private sector. The role of urban governance was increasingly to promote partnerships with the private sector and influence where private actors invested in development, which David Harvey (1989) conceptualises in terms of a shift from 'managerialism' to 'entrepreneurialism'. The shift can be seen in the contrasting approaches towards urban policy in legislation of the period. Labour's Inner Urban Areas Act of 1978 – the first act of parliament to specifically address inner city problems (Home 1982) – was premised on establishing partnerships between central government, local government and other public authorities. Together, public sector agencies would develop tailored programmes for specific areas facing the steepest structural and social decline

and give financial assistance directly to companies (Pacione 1997). The Act never had time to be realised before the 1979 election of a Conservative government that soon undertook a radical reshaping of urban policy through the 1980 Local Government, Planning and Land Act. Along with a reduction in public sector funding, Margaret Thatcher's government placed a new focus on the private sector as the agent of regeneration. The Act was borne out of frustration at the perceived inability of local government to reverse the decline of urban areas. In their stead, new public agencies – Urban Development Corporations (UDCs) – were tasked with deregulating urban development and introducing tax incentives to stimulate the private sector (Imrie and Thomas 1999). As Pacione (1997) argues, this meant that the ability of local authorities to direct intervention to areas most in need of renewal efforts was subjugated to the preferences of private developers who instead focused on areas of the greatest economic potential.

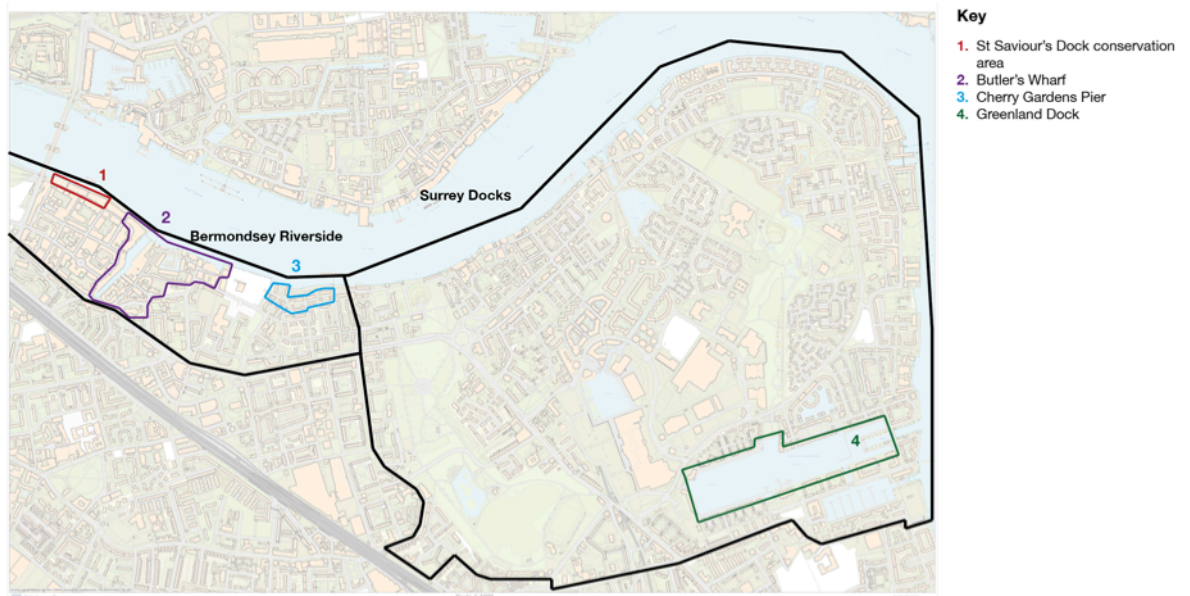
In Southwark, while there were few signs of having successfully reversed economic decline following dock closures, it was not necessarily due to a lack of intent on the part of the local authority. During the 1970s, Southwark Council was 'probably the most active of the Dockland boroughs in promoting redevelopment' (Nelson 2001: 490) and planned to invest in the area's infrastructure to support further private sector investment. Partly this was because docks in Southwark were among the first in London to close. The leadership of its Council was at the time enthusiastic about encouraging private sector development. Indeed, at the time of the first dock closures, Southwark planners were criticised for encouraging developers to move into the area without due concern for local consultation or extracting planning gains for the local community (Ambrose and Colenut 1975). At Surrey Docks – a complex of docks, wharves and timber ponds, and the first of London's docks to close in 1969 – the Council devised a proposal with an American property developer, Trammell Crow, to develop a wholesale market. The development would comprise a third of the area of the old docks, and was allocated in the Council's local plan for Surrey Docks (LBS 1976). The Council purchased this site with the GLC from the landowner, the PLA, and planned to lease it to Trammell Crow with profits used to part-fund the GLC's and Southwark's own developments.

Southwark purchased the remainder of the docks and began a programme of replacing the docks with roads, social housing and parks. Due to the worsening economic climate, the development of the market was delayed. The newly elected Conservative government was asked to guarantee the bulk of the loans for the development, which it was not prepared to do, and the project floundered (Nelson 2001). The Southwark Docks plan failed, in part, by being caught between shifting ideological approaches to the role of local authorities in urban renewal. When initially proposed in the mid-1970s, councils were able to invest capital directly into declining areas, by purchasing former industrial sites from landowners, providing infrastructure and constructing alternative uses. By the end of the decade, councils were no longer the protagonist in the redevelopment process; the private sector was instead expected to lead urban renewal.

Given changes taking place in the wider economy, most notably the decline of the manufacturing industries and rise of service industries, forms of growth and demand for new investment in urban areas were largely based around offices, retail and upmarket housing. The shift in funding mechanisms away from local authorities gave the property development industry a major role in urban investment – leading to the notion of property-led urban regeneration (Turok 1992; Imrie and Thomas 1999). This was supported wholeheartedly by the British government via grants, tax relief and relaxation of planning regulations, and was introduced to economically disinvested areas via UDCs which aimed to foster private investment. Publicly owned land was compulsorily transferred to them and they became the planning authority able to grant permission for development. The effect of these reforms is best demonstrated by the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC), created in 1981 in response to the seemingly intractable economic decline of the area which followed the dock closures. The area designated to the LDDC covered parts of Southwark, Tower Hamlets and Newham boroughs. Importantly the LDDC zone lay outside the planning jurisdiction of the local authorities, perceived by central government as acting too slowly to reverse the economic decline of the areas for which they were formerly responsible. In Southwark, the LDDC was granted responsibility for the renewal of the Surrey Docks, and for a tract stretching a mile and half along the Thames from London Bridge to Rotherhithe that it named Bermondsey

Riverside (Figure 4.2). The LDDC's role was to act as a facilitator to development, aiming to stimulate further private investment to the area, bypassing local authorities. As the Introduction outlined, the LDDC played a pivotal role in the gentrification of Bermondsey Riverside, where infrastructure improvements, heritage designations and a masterplan were used to encourage private developers to invest in a new imaginary for the area as a site of high-end consumption and living.

**Figure 4.2 Southwark docklands**



The most prominent result of the LDDC's approach to development is at the St Saviour's Dock conservation area, situated along the Thames on the east side of Tower Bridge. Nicknamed the 'Port of Bermondsey' in the nineteenth century (Bell [1880] 2010), it had lost its centrality to the economic life of the area as the dock industries declined and its surrounding warehouses were largely derelict by the early 1980s. With the LDDC's support, in 1985 a consortium led by Sir Terrance Conran's design practice Conran Roche bought the large riverside site at Butler's Wharf, and drew up a masterplan for the site aiming to attract urban professionals to live there. The LDDC proceeded to convert it into a complex of luxury apartments, student accommodation, offices, restaurants and a museum. Capitalising on the concentration of luxury residential units there, much of the commercial activity at St Saviour's Dock is centred around private galleries and fine art dealers. Further high-end residential conversions followed at the

adjacent Anchor Brewhouse and the warehouses overlooking St Saviour's Dock (Figure 4.3).

**Figure 4.3 Warehouse conversions at St Saviour's Dock**



The design of each individual scheme was subject to negotiation between the developer and the LDDC, leading to adjustments to size, appearance and use. Further high-end residential conversions followed at adjacent warehouses, supplemented by a limited amount of new build. The designation of St Saviour's Dock as a conservation area in 1973 had protected the area's historic fabric; the LDDC permitted selective demolition only of certain historical buildings in poor repair or of indifferent quality, and new-build was required to reflect the dominant style and observe the original street patterns (Tiesdell et al 1996). The outcome is that the redevelopment has maintained the narrow street network of the original wharves and warehouses, as well as the catwalks and bridges which link the buildings (LBS 2003a). The tight, unbroken frontage of the warehouses



also remains, while their apartment blocks foster a romantic association with the past through being named after the various spices and commodities once stored there (Vanilla & Sesame Court, Wheat Wharf). As well as anywhere in London, this stretch of the Thames underlines the river's renaissance; no longer a redundant industrial thoroughfare turned open sewer, but a desirable backdrop for leisure and living. Certainly the conservation of the St Saviour's Dock area has been sympathetic and adds to the visual character of Bermondsey, but it contrasts strongly with the poor condition of deprived council estates away from the river.

A key element of the emerging strategy of market-led regeneration was the marginalisation of local government and local people from areas experiencing urban decline (Atkinson and Cope 1997). The assumption was that by allowing the urban landscape to be transformed through office developments and high-end housing, and so creating jobs and residences for new inhabitants to the area, the benefits would eventually 'trickle down' to deprived communities who already lived there. In practice, there was limited positive impact on existing inhabitants in the LDDC area, whether in terms of employment opportunities or improved housing. For example, the LDDC initially claimed that the Canary Wharf development would result in the creation of up to 70,000 jobs (Brownhill 1990). Its developers Olympia and York agreed to provide funds to train local people and encouraged their recruitment as they saw it as in their interest to promote a positive relationship with the community (Foster 1999). However, when the LDDC's remit came to an end, the total number of jobs created in the whole of the Urban Development Area was calculated to be only 22,000 (Nelson 2001).

A further criticism was how a central government appointed, non-elected agency worked in conflict with local authorities and communities in order to implement a massive physical renewal project (Brownhill 1990). The LDDC's approach was criticised for its 'excess of zeal, a lack of understanding of the way in which the administration of government is different from the administration of business, and an authoritarian style' (Cullingworth and Nadin 2002: 27). The superimposition of the LDDC over local democratic structures was strongly

opposed in the Docklands boroughs and no more so than by Southwark Council. The Labour-run administration was at first unsure about how to interact with the LDDC. On the one hand, it directly threatened the democratic accountability of councillors in the LDDC areas who would lose control over planning decisions; on the other, the principle of using public funds to leverage private investment into the former docks was not a substantial break with Southwark Council's policy since the mid-1970s, as the episode over Surrey Docks highlights. Its leader was initially appointed to the board along with leaders from the two other Docklands boroughs. But when the 1982 local elections brought a New Left faction of the Labour Party into control of the Council and the leadership changed, Southwark's planning policy started to emphasise a community-orientated and participative approach to redevelopment (McCarthy 1996). In practical terms, this meant plans to construct new social housing for local people to live and industrial units where they would work. The Council was now implacably opposed to regeneration projects which were premised on objectives of attracting new inhabitants to live, work and spend in north Southwark, whether through private housing and offices (Nicholson 1988), or cultural sites, such as the Globe Theatre at Bankside, where the Council withdrew planning permission for reconstruction that had been granted by its predecessor (Newman and Smith 2000). At Bermondsey Riverside, the Council refused to cooperate with the LDDC and broke off all communication, stating that they did not want to give legitimacy to what they saw as an undemocratic, unaccountable organisation (Batley 1989). A clash over how vacant land at Bermondsey Riverside could most effectively be used was at the heart of the animosity. Following industrial decline in the 1970s, Southwark's Labour leaders were aware that the borough's position across the river from the City meant that it had strong potential to become gentrified. The Council attempted to use housing policy to hold off gentrification, which was seen to threaten their core white working class voters. For example, planning policy prohibited change of use from industrial or commercial (McCarthy 1996), and sought to deter office development in the City fringe through business rates which, by 1983, were the highest of any inner London borough (Carter 2008).

The conflict between Southwark Council and the LDDC reached its peak over alternative proposals for the redevelopment of Greenland Dock, adjacent to the

Thames on the northern edge of the Surrey Docks. In 1983 the LDDC commissioned a development framework plan for the former dock, again from Conran Roche. Recognising the landscape potential of the riverside – as opposed to Southwark Council’s plans based on infill of the docks – the brief was to create the framework for 1,250 low density, private sector homes along with offices on the west side of the dock. The LDDC then parcelled up individual sites that were sold for development via competitive tender (Buck et al 2002). Following community protests at the lack of affordable housing and loss of industrial uses in the LDDC’s framework, Southwark Council produced in 1984 the draft North Southwark District Plan, the so-called ‘People’s Plan’ for the area. For Greenland Dock, the plan proposed social housing along the river, with open space and some industry further back. The conflict culminated in 1986 when the LDDC objected to the draft North Southwark District Plan at public inquiry. The Inspector agreed with the objection that the Plan was unbalanced ‘since it sought to promote the interests of the local community at the expense of those of the private sector and the development industry’ (McCarthy 1996: 149). It was called in by the Secretary of State and subsequently rejected and remains the only local plan for which such action has been taken (McCarthy 1996). This episode is significant as it indicates how the future land use of the Docklands area resided with the LDDC and not the local authority (Thornley 1990). The LDDC’s approach based on providing private housing and office space overrode local authority efforts to bring forward affordable housing and employment for its residents. The Council’s response to the rejection of its planning policy was to dissociate itself entirely from on-going changes to its riverside areas, leaving opposition to local community groups and – at least initially – effectively giving the LDDC free rein to develop Southwark’s docklands as it saw fit (Clark 1986).

In an interview, a councillor summarised to me the LDDC’s approach to regenerating Bermondsey, her perspective on its impact still raw after twenty years:

It was crass and almost proud of being crass and free of having to listen to local comments. It literally bulldozed docks

and riverside areas seen as part of common resource – river walks were closed off, it had complete and utter disdain for the people already living there. It had no interest in listening to the Council so cooperation wouldn't have made any difference [LBS/04]

Not all housing in Bermondsey Riverside was for the top of the market. In the 1980s the LDDC built new, modestly priced housing further east from St Saviour's Dock and the office and retail developments by London Bridge. It was, though, almost exclusively for owner-occupation – 96% of the 1,600 units built during the LDDC's designation of Bermondsey Riverside were for private sale (Buck et al 2000). An exception to the dominance of market housing was the scheme at Cherry Gardens Pier. Here the LDDC proposals for redevelopment into market housing sparked vigorous community protest. The site was owned by Southwark Council and since the late 1970s had been earmarked for development into social rented homes with gardens around an open space set back from a riverside walkway. The plans had floundered due to lack of funding and in May 1984 the LDDC expressed its intentions, vesting the land from the Council using compulsory purchase powers and putting the site out to an architectural competition for private housing development (Brindley et al 1996). The plans of the eventual winner, Lovell Farrow, were for 250 luxury homes including four pairs of seven-storey blocks on the riverfront. Community protests were based on their exclusion from the site, both from the unaffordable housing and the riverside open space which would become private land (Keith and Pile 1993). A Cherry Gardens Action Committee was established and work started on publicising the implications of the plans and gathering signatures for a petition. Following a series of stormy public meetings and threats of direct action, the LDDC was left in no doubt as to the strength of local feeling and, in March 1985, it offered one third of the site to housing associations for rent. When this did little to assuage opposition, in January 1986 the LDDC released half of the land back to the Council which promptly set about building low density, family-sized homes for social rent, along with the riverside walk and open space. A planner who had been involved in developing the Council's scheme recalled how maintaining a connection with the Thames was central to existing residents'

concerns, suggesting it comprised part of their identity as residents of an area which had been so dependent on the river for employment:

People had a fairly easy access to the river, people could go down there and see it and they just built rich housing all the way along, just forcing people inside and it was just so blatant. People had a connection with the river – they had relied on it for jobs and who they were, so it was part of their heritage – and they [the LDDC] were denying that. I worked on the tenants' involvement for Cherry Gardens and what they kept saying was 'we want it open, open' and what they meant was, they wanted to see the river. If you've got buildings raised up in front and you're in lower buildings you can't see the river, you just see the sky and know the river's there. [LBS/05]

The contested development of Cherry Gardens Pier marked a turning point in the LDDC's approach to developing housing. Until then, 'the LDDC was ascendant [...] and opposition to the LDDC had been successfully excluded from the decision-making process' (Keith and Pile 1993: 15). The difficulty in overcoming local opposition to the original plans was one factor in re-evaluating the suitability of the LDDC's policies, but changes at a global scale also prompted a rethink. The viability of market-led regeneration as the dominant policy model for transforming urban areas was severely undermined by the 1987 stock-market crash and subsequent global recession. This negatively affected the ability to borrow money, whether by developers in order to fund their ventures, or by potential purchasers of the new developments. In London's Docklands, house prices fell dramatically and many units did not find buyers (Brownhill 1993). Faced with empty homes in brand-new developments, the LDDC's response was to turn to housing associations and give them funding to buy up the vacant stock which had been built for the private market (Nelson 2001). At the same time, market-led regeneration was undermined by rising concerns in central government over the failure of local people to benefit from urban regeneration initiatives and the democratic deficit that resulted when councils were excluded from the decision-making process.

In the policies of the LDDC we therefore see how the gentrification of Bermondsey Riverside was the product of a regeneration strategy premised on reinventing former industrial spaces as sites for high-end living. Rather than seeking to replace the industrial employment lost when the docks closed – the approach put forward by the Labour-run council – the LDDC aimed to realise the potential of a riverside location for housing and consumption for incoming professionals. It provided the planning framework for developers to convert derelict industrial buildings and build new housing for owner-occupation. While Riverside was the first area of Bermondsey to gentrify, the role of the LDDC as a quasi-public agency in facilitating the process means that the area did not follow the conventional ‘wave’ heuristic (Hackworth and Smith 2001) of gentrification, where initially it is individual pioneers who prepare the way for developers and then public agencies. The story also differs from traditional models of gentrification as the direct displacement of long-term residents from the area due to their housing being lost to wealthier incomers did not feature. Indeed, under the LDDC the absolute number of social housing units actually increased, but its proportion dropped from 80% to 40% in the Riverside ward [LBS/03], the result of the new private housing replacing former industrial uses. This is not to understate gentrification’s impact on long-term residents. As the struggles over Cherry Gardens Pier demonstrate, there was a conflict between the LDDC’s market-led approach, which saw the river as a profitable backdrop to new high-end housing, and the perspective of long-term residents who held it as a common resource intrinsic to their identity. Their opposition to this particular development was based on their exclusion from the way the neighbourhood was being shaped and the perception that the needs of local residents were subjugated to those of wealthier incomers. This disorientation of space among long-term residents is examined in the following two chapters. Before then, this chapter considers how the gentrification of Bermondsey continued under a new planning regime in the 1990s.

## **A cultural turn in planning policy: the gentrification of Bermondsey Street**

British urban policy as it emerged in the early 1990s under John Major's government sought to address the concerns that market-led regeneration had failed to benefit existing residents of areas targeted for investment. Urban policy coalesced around two interrelated themes: partnership and social regeneration. Partnerships would be between local government, the private sector and community groups. Through their planning policies, local authorities were expected to demonstrate how they had consulted various public and private sector development agencies and potential 'users' (Brindley et al 1996). Urban governments therefore had a renewed role in urban policy, albeit one where they were obliged to engage in a more 'entrepreneurial' approach and to collaborate with the private sector in order to revive the competitive position of their local economies (Jessop 2002). The emphasis on harnessing market dynamics as the predominant mode of reviving urban areas has been characterised as marking a 'neo-liberal' turn within public policies (Harvey 1996). Cities, or more precisely, city authorities, found themselves increasingly competing with each other for a wide range of investments, often in the form of partnerships with private sector organisations and community groups. Indeed, it has been argued that local authorities must not simply act in partnership with business, but as one themselves, as 'entrepreneurial cities' (Hall and Hubbard 1996). A related aspect was the renewed emphasis on the social dimensions of urban regeneration. The dominance of market-led, physical renewal in the 1980s did little to improve employment or education prospects of inner city inhabitants and such mounting social problems had to be addressed through this new approach (Boddy, Lambert and Snape 1997; Baeten 2001).

The fostering of partnership to help achieve social regeneration is symbolised by two programmes: the City Challenge (CC) (1991-1996) and the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) (1994-2004). These were only made available to partnerships, which would make the case for their merits of investing in their area, competing against other urban areas for scarce funds (Oatley 1995). Partnerships were required to prioritise improvements to the quality of life of

local people, improve employment prospects, and foster local economic growth. The private sector would still take the lead in delivering the physical renewal of an area, but it was intended that the involvement of local authorities and community groups in deciding how that renewal should take place would mean urban social problems could be more effectively addressed. While both programmes still focussed on physical renewal, they represented an ideological change since they required that three per cent of their budgets be allocated to community development programmes, and that bids demonstrate ways in which community participation in the plans could take place (Imrie and Thomas 1999).

That CC and SRB funds were allocated to local areas based on a competitive process had implications for how councils needed to operate. If, prior to 1979, inner city councils operated on an interventionist model and were largely bypassed in the 1980s, the 1990s required them to take on a facilitator role – their capital investment function was still constrained, so instead they worked to create a suitable ambience to ‘leverage’ both public and private sector investment (Brindley et al 1989). In practical terms this included providing statutory and non-statutory guidance to help bring forward development sites, and entering joint ventures with the private sector using council assets (McCarthy 1996). It also meant an element of ‘boosterism’ (Paddison 1993), whereby local government attempts to improve the perceptions of an area’s suitability for public and private sector investment through image-making, itself often embodied in a high profile architectural intervention signalling the area’s ability to change. Political elites engage in the courting of private investors and use often considerable amounts of public money to improve the physical and aesthetic landscapes of once neglected areas as seed funding for private sector investment (Zukin 1991, 1995; Fainstein 1994).

Under New Labour, public-private partnerships remained central to urban policy and most government regeneration funding was still based on the leveraging system of the Major government. However a stronger emphasis was placed on the role for ‘community’, with a measurement of success being how well private sector development could benefit the most deprived neighbourhoods. Community in this sense is a social institution that, it is hoped, would cushion



the worse effects of market economics and mediate between individuals and the state (Bauman 2001). The term featured strongly in policies aimed to tackle multiple problems, from social exclusion to urban decline (Kearns 2003). But community was more than the means for effecting change; 'sustainable' communities were also meant to be the outcome of urban interventions (ODPM 2003, 2005; Southwark Alliance 2006). Policy emphasised the need to create attractive and safe cities capable of drawing people to live and invest in them, and so aimed to counterbalance the continuing post-War exodus from city centres.

As the Introduction outlined, this 'urban renaissance' agenda found particular resonance with the first Mayor of London and his inaugural London Plan drew heavily on the work of the Urban Task Force. One route to creating communities which were sustainable in an environmental sense was density. Development on brownfield sites would counter the loss of population in urban centres and sustain businesses and services there, while higher construction density would reduce reliance on the car. Another tenet of sustainable communities was social mix, achieved by attracting new and more prosperous residents to urban areas and addressing concentrations of deprivation and social exclusion there (Lees 2003b). We saw in the literature review how the urban renaissance agenda has become associated with gentrification, perhaps not surprisingly given its apparent focus on attracting wealthier residents back to the inner city (MacLeod and Ward 2002, Imrie and Raco 2003; Lees 2008). The risk is that urban policy potentially privileges the interests of incomers over those of existing residents in a bid to make the area a 'sustainable' location for the incoming social group (Power 2004). Moreover it assumes that there is a single 'community' in a locality able to make unified demands for the type of place in which they wish to live, rather than several communities with different, and at times conflicting, interests.

The change in emphasis at national level coincided with a shift in approach at Southwark Council. The 1992 local elections brought a new, younger Labour group to power. Rather than resisting the policy paradigm for urban regeneration as its predecessors had in the 1980s, the Council leadership embraced it and

proved particularly adept at attracting public and private investment. It successfully bid for £60 million from the SRB for the Peckham Partnership (1995 to 2002), which, along with £3 million directly from the Council, provided £1.25 million to help build Will Alsop's Stirling Prize-winning Peckham Library in 2000. This was intended as a catalytic project, aiming to 'put Peckham back on the map' (LBS 2002a), and shift the image of the area from deprivation and crime to one of innovation and change. Symbolising the change in north Southwark, an early tenet of the new administration's regeneration policy was to embrace proposals to develop the Globe Theatre on Bankside, which its more radical left-wing Labour predecessors had resisted. This was the first move in establishing the 'Bankside Cultural Quarter' (LBS 1995a) as a globally significant site for the consumption of culture, and an example of urban government's new role in promoting cultural strategies designed to make inner city areas attractive to tourists, investors and the new middle class (Harvey 1989; Smith 1996; Zukin 2010). Southwark Council's strategy behind the Bankside Cultural Quarter was to return the area to its historical purpose as a cultural and entertainment venue for London (Godley 1996) and so reintegrate north Southwark with central London. This continued when, in 1994, Southwark Council gave a £50,000 grant to Tate Modern towards acquiring the Bankside Power Station site and then an additional £1.5million towards its decontamination; this helped secure a further £50million of lottery money, matched by £80 million of private money (Newman and Smith 2000). The Tate and the Globe provided Bankside with a new internationally recognisable profile and was the vanguard for a neighbourhood renewal programme which also included office developments and luxury apartments (Harris 2008). For a regeneration director at the Council:

Tate Modern was the key event which changed the perception of Southwark. It went from being another inner London borough to somewhere with a profile of being genuinely significant to the life of London. It was a unique opportunity; it created a shift without which the wider regeneration would have been much harder. (LBS/03).

Like the Peckham Library, new cultural amenities at Bankside were the basis for a place-making strategy which sought to disassociate the areas – indeed, the borough of Southwark as a whole – from a previous reputation as run down. In a similar vein, Tony Travers, Director of the Greater London Group at the LSE, described how Southwark’s negative image as dominated by social housing was a barrier to private sector investment: ‘So long as the borough was seen as Councilville – however much public money was spent – there’d be no regeneration’ (in Barker 1999: 18). If Southwark Council’s position in the 1980s can therefore be characterised as resistance to the encroachment of the City’s office and housing requirements, by the mid-1990s a change in local political attitudes meant tourism and commercial development were encouraged (Newman and Smith 2000; Newman and Thornley 2005).

Southwark Council’s wholesale embrace of its role as a public agency leveraging private investment represents a ‘cultural turn’ (Hutton 2008: 114) in its development pathway, reversing the opposition and attempts at obstruction that characterised the 1980s. So while the North Southwark District Plan (LBS 1982) opposed the LDDC’s policies of diversifying housing and employment, by contrast the Council’s 1995 Unitary Development Plan (LBS 1995b) emphasised the northern edge of the borough’s potential for new tourism and creative industries based on partnership between government agencies, community groups and private investors. The partnership approach to regeneration was started by a New Labour administration, but it continued under the Liberal Democrat and Conservative coalition that ran the Council from 2002 until 2010. In Bankside and Peckham, high profile architecture was encouraged by the Council as part of a place-based promotional strategy to encourage new investment. With Southwark Council’s focus on reinventing Bankside as a global site of spectacle and on reversing Peckham’s economic deprivation, by the 1990s Bermondsey was now less of a focus for regeneration efforts. Although the LDDC’s transformation of Riverside from former industrial area to gentrified quarter was complete by the time it was transferred back to the Council in 1994, the post-industrial decline of the rest of Bermondsey was still to be halted. In an interview, a former neighbourhood manager put it bluntly:

Bermondsey was way down the list [...] Their [LBS] focus was on the Globe, the Tate, Borough Market, they were all in various stages of negotiation, and they wanted symbolic, high profile architecture [...] They saw Bermondsey Street as the poor relation and they weren't interested. [LBS/01]

This was a view from which a former Council director of regeneration did not wholly diverge. He described how the Council was initially slow to respond to how gentrification was starting to affect Bermondsey Street:

During the LDDC's reign, they [developers] built things along the [river] edge and discovered they could make money, then with the [1990s] boom people discovered they could make money back from the river as well. They'd seen what a few artists were doing and saw a chance, that's when it really took off and how they got involved along Bermondsey High Street [sic] and down Tower Bridge Road, and when you walk down there there's an extraordinary number of very high density blocks which are all private. The type of housing is terrible, incredibly high density, nothing going for them except they're fairly close to the City. That slowed down once we started pushing for a proportion of onsite affordable housing, it became less attractive after that. [LBS/03]

Following the developers' lead, the Council saw how Bermondsey Street's proximity to the City could be the spur for inward investment from the private sector, aligning itself with the City's requirements for nearby housing for its service sector workforce. The gentrification of Bermondsey Street was not therefore a case of the local planning authority establishing a masterplan to provide housing and amenities for incoming professionals, as the LDDC had done at Bermondsey Riverside in the previous decade. Instead, it was the case of Southwark Council following the market and belatedly trying to influence the type of development to bring benefits for the wider community through a requirement for affordable housing. The developers were themselves following the example set by 'a few artists', suggesting Bermondsey Street fits closer to

the 'wave' model of gentrification (Hackworth and Smith 2001) than Bermondsey Riverside.

One way in which the Council encouraged the further development of Bermondsey Street was through a loosening of planning regulations in 2001 that permitted in the area the conversion of industrial uses to residential. A Labour councillor on the planning committee at the time explained the rationale for the change:

Bermondsey St had no future as an industrial area and we came to the conclusion that [...] we wanted it to retain the character which was there, but if there are buildings which were not able to be used effectively as manufacturing, industrial or office use, we'd give them consent for residential.  
[LBS/02]

The loosening of planning controls was the prelude to the substantial gentrification of Bermondsey Street.<sup>12</sup> It helped give the historic industrial buildings a new lease of life as housing for City elites, and redefining the area's place identity from declining industrial area to an architecturally distinctive neighbourhood to live in. The move at Bermondsey Street fitted neatly with Southwark Council's articulation of a new, overarching post-industrial identity for North Southwark.

Conserving the heritage of the built environment is therefore a strong feature of the gentrification around Bermondsey Street. In terms of the area's appearance, the warehouses themselves are smaller than those at St Saviour's Dock – typically four storeys high and three bays wide. One of the bays would have generally been used for loading the warehouse, with a swinging gantry from a gabled roof for hoisting goods. The gantries, winches and other industrial remnants have been retained as distinctive features in the residential conversions. Notable is how the medieval street scale has remained, with

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<sup>12</sup> The role of early gentrifiers in lobbying for the change in regulations is studied in Chapter Seven.

narrow alleys running off the high street. Combined with the buildings' industrial features, this creates a highly distinctive environment (LBS 2003b). Aspects of the built environment's heritage have been valorised in an effort to distinguish the area with architecture used to advertise its potential as a unique residential enclave. Also like St Saviour's Dock, Bermondsey Street has not been completely monopolised by residential developments. But rather than a leisure based service sector replacing the manufacturing and processing sites, creative industries have emerged, including fashion designers, architects and publishers (Hutton 2008).

Between these twin trajectories of high-end housing and creative industries, a range of sites for gentrifiers' consumption have emerged to sustain Bermondsey Street's new inhabitants: galleries, restaurants, gastro-pubs, boutiques and, most prominently, Zandra Rhodes's Fashion & Textile Museum, designed by Ricardo Legorreta (Figure 4.4). The Museum opened in 2003 in a converted warehouse, with a residential complex located behind which cross-subsidised the funding of its construction. The building was originally a concrete framed warehouse, visually incongruous with the streetscape. Its replacement is certainly high-impact – its orange and pink façade visible along the street despite its narrow elevation. While visually uncompromising, 'the new design has confidence and panache, and introduces into the street a vigour and vibrancy that reflects the spirit of Bermondsey Street' (LBS 2003b: 18). As well as a visual break with the past, the museum signifies the new cultural economy of the area and endorses its shift from a site of industrial production.

The loosening of planning regulations, combined with the new creative kudos lent by the incomers, soon attracted established property developers who transformed the area with larger residential developments at higher densities (Davis 2008). Their interest was particularly spurred following the granting of planning permission for the gated residential complex, Leathermarket Court, in 2001. More recent examples include the conversions into housing of the Alaska Factory in nearby Grange Road and the former Hartley's Jam Factory (Figure 4.5) off Tower Bridge Road, both gated developments with a mix of apartments and live-work units.

**Figure 4.4 Fashion & Textile Museum, Bermondsey Street**



**Figure 4.5 The Jam Factory**



A key moment in Bermondsey's orientation towards the City's requirements was the granting of planning permission for the Empire Square tower block in 2002 (which Chapter Six takes as a case study). This was the first tall building in north

Southwark for thirty years and comprises a 22-storey residential tower and two blocks of high-end housing next to a third block of affordable housing. The symbolism of a tall building was noted by a planning officer at the Council:

I was surprised how it quite easily got consent from the councillors, I mean I think it's a bit naff, but they really went for the tower, which was basically because it stands up as a beacon in the sky, catching your eye and being so visible.  
[LBS/05]

The Council pursued a similar strategy for regenerating Bermondsey Street as it had more actively pioneered at Bankside, however based on housing rather than cultural consumption. At both sites, the strategy can be understood as an attempt by the Council to integrate north Southwark into the global city by working with the private sector to provide amenities for global elites. The Southwark Alliance, the borough's local strategic partnership, makes clear the importance of London as a global city to the borough: 'Southwark's future is [...] as a player on the world stage. Our socio-economic fortunes are bound into those of London as a global city, presenting both our biggest opportunities and challenges' (Southwark Alliance 2006: 7). Bermondsey may have been 'millions of miles away perceptually from the City' [LBS/03], but a shift in perceptions could mean it would benefit from the consolidation of the City as a major global financial centre in the 1990s (Hamnett 2003). The strategy would be that the resultant generation of new wealth, consumption practices and property speculation could find an outlet at Bermondsey Street. Consistent with the sustainable communities policy, how far existing residents benefited from this investment was one measure of success for the Council, for example, through requiring a proportion of affordable housing on larger developments or extracting Section 106 funds to build social housing elsewhere. The Chair of the Southwark Alliance explained: 'we want to use the dynamism that comes with being part of a global city to improve jobs, opportunities for local people, to use that money to invest in their housing to help families stay in the borough' [LBS/01]; or as another participant put it more directly: 'It fitted in with an agenda of achieving your objectives with other people's money' [LBS/03].



Southwark's aspirations for integration into London's global city functions reaches its apotheosis at London Bridge Quarter. The development includes the 300 metre tall 'shard of glass' designed by Renzo Piano, providing high-end office, residential and hotel space for an expanding City. At the public inquiry, Southwark Council argued that the project was a marker of urban renaissance and fundamental to the vision of the borough as a dynamic, attractive place to live (Powell 2004).

## **Conclusion**

I have argued in this chapter that the story of Bermondsey's gentrification is premised on Southwark's integration into the City and its positioning as the ancillary provider of some of London's global city functions, specifically by offering a distinctive enclave for global elites to live. Through taking an historical perspective, I have shown how attempts to integrate Bermondsey into London's wealth are not new, but are part of an on-going process of adapting the borough to the City's demands. Through much of its pre-modern history, there was a relationship of mutual dependence with Bermondsey hosting the profitable if undesirable activities that the City had banished to the southern banks of the Thames. In Victorian London it became an industrial periphery, providing functions central to supporting the City as the heart of empire, but peripheral to its wealth creation and the location of some of the worst slums in London.

The extent of integration with the City's economy has ebbed and flowed, and was at its weakest in the post-War period as London shifted from a manufacturing to a service economy. Bermondsey was subject to managed decline as planning policy saw no future for it and other industrial areas of inner London as a place to live or work. It was following this period of decline that the shift to a gentrified quarter took root. Despite opposition from Southwark Council and local residents, the LDDC in the 1980s usurped the former docklands of Bermondsey Riverside for new, middle class housing. By the time Bermondsey Street started to gentrify in the 1990s, the Council's position had

turned full circle and had gone from resisting gentrification to embracing it. Its approach was premised on the argument that, in a globalised economy, London must constantly strengthen its global city functions (Sassen 2001; Newman and Thornley 2005) by providing spaces attractive to international elites, including housing. Through the use of planning policy to foster a gentrified enclave at Bermondsey Street, the Council hoped to create suitable space where the City's wealth could expand south of the river.

How different parts of Bermondsey gentrified is also important. Bermondsey Street follows a pattern that is well-established worldwide, where a middle class vanguard finds in a disinvested inner urban area a space for their lifestyle preferences, before public bodies and housing developers seek to capitalise on the rising cachet of the area for a wider section of the middle classes. In contrast, the earlier gentrification of Bermondsey Riverside was significant as it was led from the outset by a government agency working closely with developers to create a space amenable to gentrifiers. In other words, it is notable for the absence of individual 'pioneers' whose early movement to an area demonstrates its viability for a more widespread middle class occupancy (cf. Clay 1979, Hackworth and Smith 2001). What the gentrification of the wider Bermondsey area demonstrates, therefore, is that a flexible understanding is needed of gentrification's origins and, by implication, what its effects may be on different inhabitant groups. The detail of how the process affects long-term residents forms the basis of the next two chapters.

## **Chapter Five: 'Making them days feel the best' – long-term residents' narratives of neighbourhood change**

### **Introduction**

The next two chapters of my thesis analyse long-term residents' responses to gentrification: in broad terms, how it affects their housing security in this chapter, and their experiences of the public realm, in Chapter Six. This chapter starts, however, by considering how long-term residents describe their lives and the different changes occurring in Bermondsey. I start with this broader perspective as I found it striking how almost all participants' narratives saw neighbourhood change through the prism of nostalgia, an 'emotion of longing for a past [...] that did not necessarily exist' (Wilson 2005: 36). I therefore examine these nostalgic narratives in detail as they are central to understanding long-term residents' varying responses to gentrification. This chapter begins by describing the various purposes that nostalgia served for participants, including group identification and symbolic boundary making. It then considers how nostalgia contributes to narratives about changes to community and to the built environment where, through representations of the past as stable and familiar, their marginalisation from the present is expressed. Their narratives are not without contradictions or tensions; in emphasising certain aspects of the past while downplaying others, they do reinforce the sense of disruption that certain types of neighbourhood change have caused to their ontological security. The use of nostalgia in their narratives might therefore be interpreted as a form of 'resistance' to changes to the cityscape. Finally, it argues that their narratives show how gentrification is but one of several processes which they contest. Indeed, their nostalgic representations of the past reveal how gentrification is a relatively low priority in long-term residents' concerns when compared to other changes to the neighbourhood.

Chapter Three explained how participants were selected and the interviews structured. It is worth reiterating two aspects. Long-term residents – defined as living their adult life in Bermondsey – were identified through making connections with community group members and then ‘snowballing’, with initial contacts leading on to others. Participants were not therefore chosen for their ‘typicality’ or to be representative of their entire Bermondsey population. Rather, given that my interest is in the variety of experiences of urban life, their narratives are more likely to be highly personal responses to specific contexts. Yet in their unique, individualised way, the participants described several themes that frequently emerged during interviews, and it is these themes which form the focus of this chapter. A second point is how these themes emerged during interviews. Participants were invited to discuss informally what they thought about change in the neighbourhood, a relatively unstructured approach designed to elicit which aspects were of the greatest concern and had the most impact on their lives. Towards the end, if a particular theme which had emerged strongly in several prior interviews had not been raised by the participant, I asked them directly about it to discern how important it was to them. The intention then was to allow participants to express through their narratives which aspects of change mattered most to them.

### **Nostalgia, identity and boundaries**

The analysis starts with an extract from one of the oldest participants, Enid, where she describes her childhood and early adult life on one of the first housing estates built in the post-War period. She had since moved to a flat on the Rouel Road Estate, built in the early 1970s and the largest in Bermondsey (Figure 5.1). It consists of 900 flats and maisonettes arranged in a series of long and short low-rise blocks of between three and five storeys in height. The largest block forms a barrier alongside the London Bridge railway viaduct and partially encloses the smaller blocks, a school and open space. Access to the estate is through a series of elevated walkways which link the blocks, with internal corridors to access the homes in each block. The living spaces of the largest block’s flats face inwards and so overlook the open space and housing in the

centre of the estate. This creates a type of informal surveillance of those entering the estate through the walkways or accessing the central housing blocks. It is, then, a highly defined space with clear boundaries, designed to encourage neighbourliness and a sense of ownership among residents. As such, it is an example of what Sibley terms a 'purified space' (1988: 409) where conformity is maintained through clear boundedness and regulation, and where any behaviour that transgresses these norms can be easily identified.

The intention of the estate's design was to maintain the neighbourhood networks then existing in the tightly knit streets that the estate replaced. As Enid's narrative shows, initially the estate succeeded in replicating the sense of community that characterised her early life in Bermondsey.

**Figure 5.1 Rouel Road Estate**



My beginnings are very firmly Bermondsey, my roots are all here. I went to school at St Saviour's and I've got family going back to the 1850s, they used to live in Dockhead, Collett Road and Wilson Grove, and down to the other side of the Old Kent Road in Mason Street [...] I've got so many wonderful memories of growing up then, there was so much activity where our house was, right on the edge of Tanner Street. There was a custard factory further down the street, may have been Birds, memory's playing up nowadays, the Jam factory, remember the lovely smells coming out of these places. Then of course there was hopping in the summer, the whole family on the train to Kent for the summer hop-picking on the farms [...]

You used to know everyone [on the Rouel Road Estate] back then and have all your family and friends living close by. It'd take ages going down the Blue, you'd see so many people you knew, have a chat with them all, find out who's been up to what and see what's going on. It's not the same now though, no one's around like they were and most of the stalls have gone. [...]

I know everyone always goes on about this, but it's true, you never used to have your front door locked. Well there was nothing much to nick back then but still, you knew who your neighbours were and you could trust them like that.[...]

I wouldn't move away though, I'm too old for that now, and I've got my routine here. My daughter says I should move out near her, but there's no point, I like my flat and having the community group to go to, having our afternoons here, things like that.

Enid's story draws attention to a few key issues that are developed in this chapter. For example, it confirms the importance participants attached to establishing their connections to Bermondsey that emerged in other interviews, often early on. This helped demonstrate that they had the necessary credentials to claim status as a 'local' and be an authoritative voice. They were also visibly proud of these connections to an area which historically has been seen as one of London's less salubrious neighbourhoods. For long-term residents, this local

status is not easily attributed and several conditions needed to be met. Firstly, it requires a substantial length of time living in the area, equivalent to most if not all their life. (One woman I interviewed described herself as a newcomer having only lived in the area for twelve years). Secondly, among older residents, local status necessitated direct experience of Bermondsey's industrial history and riverside employment, whether on the docks or associated processing plants, before deindustrialisation started in the late 1970s. Frequently evident in narratives as a defining feature of belonging to the area were sensual references to Bermondsey's industrial past, such as smells from the factories or sounds from street activity. That said, it was also inheritable for younger residents – children brought up in the area were considered local. Finally, the people participants saw as local were white and working class; by implication, inhabitants from different social or ethnic groups were excluded from this place-identity.

All these issues reveal another important aspect of the narrative, namely its nostalgia. The past is described as lively, secure and friendly, in a binary opposition to present conditions. As I now demonstrate, nostalgia reflects at once a real sense of exclusion from the present, while tending to mask the divisions and tensions of the past.

In interviews, nostalgia seemed to be deployed for two main reasons. Firstly, it supported group identification. Descriptions of common events in the past were used to form a collective memory and affirm their shared identity as the remnants of the original Bermondsey residents. Being able to recall similar events – such as attending a school or working in a factory – was a signifier of membership to the group and, where such memories were absent, could be used to exclude others. The use of nostalgia was therefore in part to help participants facilitate the continuity of their identity. There is the sense then of an imagined community constructed via collective remembering, where an idealised remembrance of the past is used as a frame of reference in social identification. It also operates as a means of creating contemporary social boundaries. Those who possess the memories can claim an 'insider' status and rebuff claims to the neighbourhood made by recently arrived 'outsiders' (Blokland 2003). In her study

of London market traders, Sophie Watson (2006) makes a similar point when she describes how nostalgia can be reactionary and symptomatic of resentment towards new social groups in an area. She argues that 'nostalgia operates to close down the possibility of accepting the social and cultural changes to the locality, thus mobilising a focus on the problem of difference, rather than finding ways to negotiate the new cultural practices engaged in by different racial/ethnic groups.' (2006: 55). While nostalgia creates a dichotomy between the past and present, it can therefore reinforce a division between 'local' and 'outsider', a point that is developed later in the chapter.

Importantly for the present discussion is how, in formulating these memories, elements of the past that do not conform to the group identity can be downplayed. By analysing nostalgia in this way we can see how a divided past can nevertheless later be constructed as unified and coherent (Savage 2008). We saw an example of this in Enid's description of 'open doors' life on the estate and the highly localised sense of security this entails, with the past presented as free of crime. Through articulating this nostalgic recollection, she lays a claim to being one of the original residents who upheld the mutual trust between neighbours; conversely, more recent Bermondsey residents who do not recall this time belong to another group who are, by implication in her narrative, partly responsible for the loss of security.

Of course, like any inner city area, crime is not a recent feature of Bermondsey life, as narratives such as Enid's can suggest. Indeed, some participants freely admitted to their own past experience of – and participation in – crime and violence. The difference is that violent events in participants' distant past were often remembered as trivial and as accepted aspects of life; the rupture and disorder they presumably entailed at the time had been erased. This resulted in some ambiguities in the interviews. For example, violence and crime often featured in the episodes where participants were describing a more stable past, even though they were two aspects of their current environment that they most deplored. Tom, a school caretaker whose father was a dockworker, explained how rivalry with other areas led to violence among young men. In his and other participants' descriptions, the workings of crime were once comprehensible and



followed unwritten rules; they provided participants with a certainty about social norms which was notably absent today.

There used to be all sort of trouble come Saturday night, fights mainly, visiting gangs would come to the dancehall and it'd be for us to defend our patch. I remember one fight where the police raided and we all done a runner to the park, ended with me up a ruddy great tree to the early hours of the morning, waiting for the bobbies to leave! [...] It's not like now, soon as there's any trouble, they reach for the knife. [Tom]

As with other neighbourhood changes, it was quite a crude binary which participants offered on crime: a sociable, secure neighbourhood had given way to a fearful, violent one. But as Girling et al (2000) argue, it is precisely through such simplified categorisations that the talk of crime can be used by neighbourhood residents to make sense of the present. The violence was remembered with a certain chivalry and respectability, as young men sought to defend their territorial 'patch' and community from malignant outsiders. There was a sense that such episodes from the past were more like a game to be played between rival groups of local men and the police, in contrast to the accounts of contemporary gang violence which some participants described, where the modus operandi was unclear and the ramifications more severe.

The actors had also changed in contemporary crime. Participants described how the perpetrators were recent incomers who now lived in Bermondsey, often from non-white ethnic groups, rather than as a response to incursions from gangs who lived outside Bermondsey, in the manner Tom outlined. One participant described how on her estate – a large balcony access block on the edge of the Riverside area – a criminal gang had taken residence of a row of ground floor flats that had been abandoned due to vandalism and arson. The gang was said to intimidate estate residents, highlighting how close crime had come to their daily lives. Through a prejudice towards outsiders, which underpin its description, crime is used as a simplified code to make sense of other complex and ambiguous social changes (Caldeira 2000). In the case of Bermondsey, this often meant immigration, changes to social housing distribution, and the consequent erosion of long-term residents' territoriality. We see then how the

value of nostalgic their narratives on crime and other aspects of neighbourhood life lies in how they are created and used to articulate a juxtaposition with the present (Davis 1979; Linde 1993).

This is the second reason for using nostalgia – through narrating the past, participants could express their dissatisfaction with the present. It provided participants with a means of escape and a chance to recollect seemingly happier times. Older participants in particular took some pleasure in describing memories of growing up in the area and how the appearance and use of the neighbourhood had altered. In the group interviews, they would cheerfully reminisce about past mutual acquaintances with whom they had lost contact or recall rituals which they had shared, such as summer hop-picking. While much of the present day was described with varying degrees of bemusement and resentment, aspects of the past could be recalled with affection, even including descriptions of severe poverty that characterised the area during their childhoods. It was not just older participants, however; younger participants described life in Bermondsey even ten years ago with a sense of longing and idealised remembering. Jessie, a full-time parent in her mid-thirties, was quite clear that her aspiration was not to stay in Bermondsey, despite being brought up there. This was rationalised through reference to her children's security that she compared to her relatively recent childhood.

I'd love to move from here, get my own place somewhere without all the hassle of round here [...] It's not the same as how it used to be. When I was growing up, we used to play in the estate, all us kids, but I won't let mine go out there now, it's not safe.

At the root of their nostalgia is dissatisfaction with the present and disquiet over social change; earlier moments can be seen as safer and fairer compared to the rupture of the present and the uncertain future this entails. In order for nostalgia to emerge, the future must be seen as undetermined while the present is regarded as deficient, with the evidence for this available in the past (Chase and Shaw 1989). Nostalgia for a lost golden age is a way to pass moral judgement on the present about talking about the past.

It should be pointed out that most, but not all, participants were nostalgic about change. A small number were highly aware of how their reminiscing emphasised selective aspects of the past while ignoring recent improvements in the quality of life. One such participant was Henry, a former factory worker and amateur boxer in his late 70s. While he was just as likely to indulge in relating memories of the past during interviews, he was also grateful for the more comfortable life he led today. At one stage he qualified how we recall the past in narratives:

A boy today, when he's 20, 30 he'll say, it weren't like when I was a boy, it was lovely back then, you'll say the same, I've said the same. But it's still lovely for those who are 10 or 12 years of age today. When they're 40 they'll say, it'll never be like when I was a boy, but their children will say the same again, won't they? We make them days feel the best, don't we? I think we want to. [...] When they think about hard times, the young people, in their way of thinking, they're really not in an older person's terms. They're better dressed, the young people, better homes, much better, more money to spend. They say the good times have gone but they're not! They've only altered.

Significantly however, of all the participants Henry seemed the most comfortable with the changes that had occurred in Bermondsey. Twice during the interview he said his attitude was 'live and let live' regarding newcomers to the area, whether immigrants or gentrifiers, and that 'there's good and bad in everyone'. It also seems important that he was an active participant in a wide social network. He told me how he was involved in several community groups, adult education classes and still stopped by the boxing club where he used to train. By not limiting his socialising to other long-term residents, he was in contact with some of the newcomers who embodied the loss of community for other participants. Perhaps his familiarity with the newer residents bred an acceptance of the change they brought and so helped him avoid the rupture of ontological security that other participants narrated. Nevertheless, such dissenting voices emphasise the connection between nostalgia and security. They were however exceptions to the dominant feeling of resentment over the direction of change.

It is clear then that the use of nostalgia resonates at different levels of intensity during individuals' lives. In other words, the way nostalgia works partly depends on the present context in which the memories are articulated: 'It would seem that nostalgia is especially likely to exist when a society is under pressure, providing a framework for people to think about what is going wrong and what should be done about it' (Wilson 2005: 45). In other words, the use of nostalgic narratives is indicative of the insecurity that its narrators presently feel (Karn 2007). That participants draw on it so frequently is therefore symptomatic of their disquiet about changes to their neighbourhood and their disorientation in a space that once was familiar but was now characterised by uncertainty. It is worth emphasising that while participants constructed an idealised notion of the past in these narratives, it is not one entirely removed from the reality of how life once was in Bermondsey. As described in Chapter One, until the 1970s social continuity in Bermondsey was maintained via dockside employment and social housing that were effectively closed to inhabitants from outside the area (Hobbs 2006, Evans 2007). We also saw in the census analysis Bermondsey's relatively recent change from an area with a predominantly white and working class population to one more closely reflecting the social and ethnic diversity of the rest of London. There is therefore some validity to the participants' recollections of Bermondsey as a once homogenous and stable neighbourhood, and which rapid social change has undermined. Their desire to idealise the past when describing present day life in Bermondsey reflects how profoundly they feel undermined by the change. The main aspect of change reflected in their nostalgic narratives was immigration and the arrival of new residents to housing estates associated with it. This was seen to have ended 'open doors' living and brought new forms of crime. Gentrification as a process of neighbourhood change was overshadowed by immigration as a more immediate concern.

The chapter next considers the impact of the newcomers' arrival through analysing an element of the past that was sorely missed by participants – a sense of community. In Bermondsey, the main aspect of change reflected in nostalgic narratives was immigration and the arrival of new residents to housing estates associated with it. This was seen to have ended 'open doors' living and brought new forms of crime. Gentrification as a process of neighbourhood

change was overshadowed by immigration as a more immediate concern. The chapter next considers the impact of the newcomers' arrival through analysing an element of the past that was sorely missed by participants – a sense of community.

### **The demise of community**

As described above, nostalgia was partly used as basis for imagining a community whose members occupied the same space and shared similar experiences. It was noticeable how many participants felt that the sense of community had been significantly degraded. A central feature in participants' accounts was the deteriorating social conditions in the neighbourhood, including isolation, mistrust and fear of other inhabitants. Few participants could give examples of positive changes, and where improvements were suggested, it was often only following probing at the end of the interview. Even improvements to material living conditions were seen as insufficient to counter the loss of the social networks that inhabitants had prized. In common with other urban studies (May 1995; Back 1996; Ravetz 2001; Watt 2006), frequently when participants described aspects of their current life in the neighbourhood, including housing and especially the living environment, they compared it to a far better situation they had experienced in the past, a 'golden age' of community. This was a time when, as the Introduction outlined, membership of a community could provide support networks and a secure basis for identity development.

Through evoking these 'golden age' memories participants were able to exemplify the stability and cohesiveness which they thought had been lost, often over a relatively short time period. While once their personal lives were deeply embedded in very stable social networks, shifts in the social composition of the neighbourhood left many participants feeling isolated and resentful. One such participant was Geraldine, who described the social networks that characterised life on the Thorburn Square Estate where she moved as a young married woman in the 1960s. Built as a showcase of post-war planning ideals, her three storeyed estate forms a square surrounding a nineteenth century church. The façade of

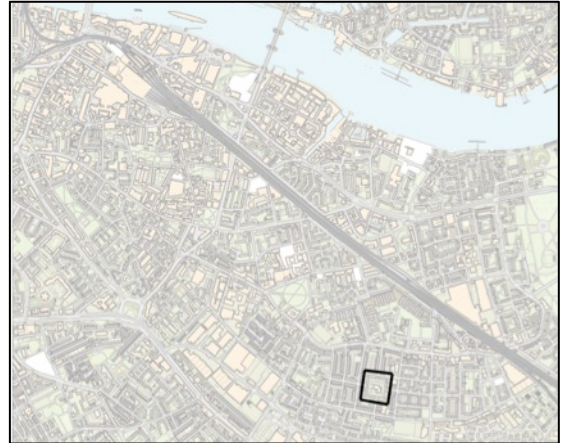
each flat contains a living room balcony looking onto the quiet, landscaped square containing the church. While on a much smaller scale than the Rouel Road Estate where Enid lived – Thorburn Square contains approximately 100 units – the effect on interaction with the surroundings appeared similar. The estate is enclosed with its boundary clearly demarcated, the flats' entrances are from the inside of the square and their living spaces face away from the outside, all helping to foster a sense of unity among its residents (Figure 5.2).

The design also allows surveillance of the square from the flats which look over it, helping to identify the presence of an 'other' as 'out of place' (Cresswell 1996). Its design is another example of a 'purified' space, where clear boundaries help regulate behaviour and maintain conformity. Certainly this was how Geraldine recalled the social relations on the estate:

When we first moved here it felt like a real community in the early years, it was people from the same streets cos what they done was try and keep friends and family living close by, so it was still a proper sense of community then, everyone used to look after each other. But now you got all these different people living on the estate, people ain't sociable in the same way. [...] It's the cup of sugar thing, knowing you've got someone you can pop round to when you're short. I can't say that goes on no more [...] You got almost 50 flats in my block and I'd say no more than... only ten from round here.

The image of community she describes is as an ideal state of security (Bauman 2001), with neighbours helping ensure the safety of other residents and providing material resources *'when you're short'*. But for Geraldine the 'real' community no longer exists on the estate. She marks the key event in the loss of community as the arrival of newcomers who are seen not to behave the same way as the original estate residents. Their arrival ruptured the stability and predictability of social interactions that had been the basis of her ontological security. As I discuss below, these 'low-status incomers' were pathologised as the cause of the decline in community.

**Figure 5.2 Thorburn Square Estate**



These accounts of community decline are not without ambiguities. Despite a lack of sociability now characterising the neighbourhood, Enid – whose narrative opened this chapter – qualified her story of community decline by stressing towards the end of the interview how she had no intention of moving anywhere else. She had too many friends living close by, whom she enjoyed seeing locally and who helped her with her daily life. As many participants spoke about people who lived close who helped them reciprocally, some sense of community still clearly remained, despite their talk of its demise. In fact, the level of support that participants referred to – local friends helping with shopping or childcare, for example – suggests the bonds in the neighbourhood remain strong. What has changed is not the relative level of solidarity within the community, but the actual size of the community, as defined by participants as only including ‘local’ (white

working class and lifelong) inhabitants. More recent neighbourhood inhabitants were 'others' who did not belong to the community in the same way.

How were these 'others' constructed in participants' narratives? Sibley (1995) describes how otherness is a discursive process through which an historically dominant social group attempts to maintain existing power relations. A stigmatised view of the 'other' is constructed based on real or imagined differences and is used to rationalise the favourable status quo. By narrating a juxtaposition between 'us' and 'other', a rationale can be offered by the former for the exclusion of the latter from a locality and its resources (see also Harvey 1996). One intention of othering can therefore be to defend the spatial identity of an area as defined by the dominant group, and maintain their power to control and provide access to residential space. In the case of long-term residents and the new groups moving to Bermondsey's housing estates, there were two main ways the 'other' was constructed.

The first was as a direct threat to long-term residents' continued habitation of the area. Interviews described how low-status incomers were competing with long-term residents and their families for scarce social housing, and were thought to receive a higher priority from the council. Kathy's three young children were outgrowing their council flat and she resented the lack of suitable alternative housing in the area she had been offered, particularly as an Asian family had moved into one of the prized houses on her estate:

Everyone needs a place to live but they should give priority to people who've lived their lives here, born and brought up in Bermondsey, but they give it to anyone. You get all these people moving up from Peckham and places, they're giving the houses to them when cos of that you've got locals having to move away.

Accusations about 'queue jumping' by 'undeserving' groups to access social housing are not new (Robinson 2010). Such claims carry significant weight where they can tap into local insecurities about living with diversity and difference, while also providing an explanation for the problem of unmet housing



need (Pillai et al 2007; Hickman et al 2008). Kathy's comments reflect an interesting aspect of the diversity that participants described as threatening their quality of life. As discussed at the start of this chapter, qualifying as 'local' was tightly defined by long-term residents, so while the 'outsider' status often had a strong ethnic dimension, with non-white immigrants criticised for their presence and behaviour in the area, 'outsiders' could equally be from the same ethnic and socio-economic background, and from places such as Peckham in the same borough as Bermondsey. The reference to Peckham taps into highly localised fears about immigration, crime and competition for social housing. One of the most ethnically diverse parts of Southwark, since the late 1990s Peckham has been subject to large-scale regeneration schemes, involving the demolition of the largest council estates and their replacement by lower density, mixed tenure schemes. The consequent decanting of many tenants to elsewhere in Southwark including Bermondsey was seen by participants as infringing their access to social housing.

Peckham is also significant to the construction of otherness as it was stigmatised by participants as an area of high crime and moral decay, exemplified in the murder of ten-year-old Damilola Taylor on the North Peckham Estate (Swale 2001). This reflects the second way otherness was constructed, namely through reference to values. Outsiders to Bermondsey housing estates were perceived to display different behavioural norms, which devalued long-term inhabitants' quality of life and eroded the 'communal decencies' (Wright 1991: 84) that maintained their feeling of community (Watt 2006). Noise and rubbish disposal were two issues frequently raised in this respect. Such 'out-of-place' behaviour transgressed the expected relations between place and practice (Cresswell 1996) and could be used by participants to justify the exclusion of 'others' from the neighbourhood. So rather than employing overtly racist discourses, participants instead sought to explain their stance through reference to immigrants' apparent activities or values, for example, different domestic standards. In the construction of the 'other' in these narratives, two homogeneous groups are juxtaposed: a trustworthy, familiar 'us' versus a morally corrupt and unknown 'them' (Riggins 1997).

Through constructing newcomers as a homogenous 'other' group with corrupting values and spatial practices, long-term residents contrast themselves as forming a trustworthy, familiar community. There is of course some accuracy underpinning these nostalgic portrayals. While the past is certainly idealised, aspects of the narratives are underpinned by historical events. For example, as we saw in Chapter One, Bermondsey's council housing stock until quite recently was selectively allocated by councillors to 'respectable' local families, rather than those in highest need, and estates also featured paternalistic management with strictly enforced rules ensuring conformity of behaviour (Ravetz 2001). Although clearly inequitable and restrictive, this approach to council housing management endorsed stability and, consequently, bred a familiarity among neighbourhood residents that was now sorely missed. Another example is how on the 1950s Dickens Estate in Bermondsey, the London County Council included a neighbourhood worker from a local charity to live in one of the new flats being built, tasked with 'encouraging a community spirit among tenants [and] helping with their problems' (Daunt 1989: 85). The allocation and management of the early housing estates in Bermondsey reinforced the familiarity that underpinned participants' descriptions of community.

Revised housing policies on allocation that opened up estates to unfamiliar families from outside Bermondsey disrupted the community feeling for long-term residents. The policies coincided with another change at national level which participants felt had similarly affected the sense of community, namely the introduction of the right to buy in the 1980s which participants reported had started the gradual out-movement of some of the original residents. The policy allowed tenants to buy their home at a significantly discounted rate, up to a maximum of 70 per cent. In London, 271,000 council homes were sold between 1979 and 2004, equivalent to 31 per cent of the stock in 1979 (Jones and Murie 2006). Wealthier council tenants able to buy on the better quality estates suddenly found themselves possessing levels of equity which meant their home ownership ambitions need not be limited to the same estate, or even the same part of London. This meant many of the original residents on estates who had bought their homes had the opportunity to move and even leave the area

altogether. Jessie, whom earlier we heard outline her own intentions to leave Bermondsey, described the process. Many of her friends had moved away having bought their council homes, achieving their aspirations to live in the suburbs away from the deteriorating inner city:

They could get more money by selling their flat and then buying somewhere else away from here. A lot do that, move out towards Kent, funny how so many Bermondsey people end up there... But they wanted a change too, it's a quieter life isn't it? Bit of open space, not all the noise and traffic the whole time, get away from the crowds, nice life it is, they've done well for themselves.

Along with the loosening of council home allocation policies, the right to buy therefore diversified the type of people who lived in social housing estates, reducing the hegemony of the white working class (Back 1996). In their stead, housing estates were also inhabited by immigrants and others in high housing need drawn from across Southwark. Participants' comments therefore reflect how social housing has changed in Bermondsey as elsewhere in the UK. Once the typical tenure of working class families, it has become the tenure of 'last resort' (Power 1993). Tenants are now drawn from a narrower social base with higher levels of need (Lee and Murie 2002) which, combined with economic and demographic changes and housing allocation policies, has intensified poverty on many council estates (Power and Tunstall 1995). Estate residents are frequently stigmatised, whether in a national context – as having failed by relying on the state for their housing – or more locally, where certain estates are blamed for the deterioration of the wider area (Bauman 2001; Hastings 2004).

It is in these terms that participants' nostalgic attitudes towards community need to be understood. National and local changes to the role of social housing brought new residents to the estates which 'locals' once monopolised, disrupting the familiarity and predictability which defined community for long-term residents. As we saw in the Introduction, the decline of community is a pervasive narrative in urban sociology, but it is one which most participants frequently drew upon when describing changes in Bermondsey. The frequent references to a lost 'golden age' reveal three key aspects about the experience

of urban change among Bermondsey's long-term residents. Firstly, nostalgia allowed them to claim an identity based on having experienced a 'real' community in the past. It is akin to the exclusive place-identity described by Massey (1994), only available to those remaining residents who had lived on the estates for several decades. However, it allowed long-term residents to distinguish themselves from other estate dwellers associated with the area's decline, whether residents living in the emerging private rental sector or those prioritised for the remaining social rented stock. Secondly, by framing their experience of the present in a nostalgic portrayal of the past, it reduces their sense of isolation at being left in a tenure from which many of their peers have removed themselves and, while once respectable, is now denigrated by wider society. Their nostalgic narratives emphasise their sense of belonging to the locality that was once a thriving, secure place before they lost their dominance over it. Thirdly, the frequency with which they employed nostalgic narratives suggests that the boundaries between themselves and other inhabitants need to be constantly reasserted, an indication of how vulnerable long-term residents feel as they struggle to adapt to ongoing change.

There is of course a danger for researchers to assume that nostalgic talk about community corresponds to a truth about their condition (Back 2009). The point I have tried to show here is that long-term residents' nostalgic narratives are born of necessity. In the absence of the homogeneity and familiarity which once defined their relationship to the locality and supported their ontological security, nostalgic narratives created a feeling of belonging among the remaining original residents who felt increasingly marginalised from the direction of change in the area. It is notable that gentrification is almost entirely absent in these narratives of community decline. In common with other historically working class areas undergoing rapid social change (Foster 1998; Mumford and Power 2003; Dench et al 2006), gentrifiers were seen to have less of an impact than low-status incomers on long-term residents' daily life. Long-term residents viewed themselves as directly competing for social resources such as housing with newcomers to the estates; gentrifiers were comparatively removed from their immediate frame of reference when narrating neighbourhood change.

## **Nostalgic relationships with the built environment**

At the start of this chapter, it was noted how participants' narratives frequently referenced Bermondsey's industrial past and its embodiment in the built environment. Edward Casey (1987) describes how place shapes urban life and how this is intimately bound to memory, as our experience of a city is never without the place that stages it. We remember past events and their settings together as they were experienced together. There is therefore an affinity between place and memory as 'memory unfolds in a spatial framework' (Boyer 1994: 68). One aspect of this relationship I now want to draw attention to is how participants responded to the new role of the area as a site of inner city living, and the consequent changes to the built environment. Through the reinvention of abandoned industrial buildings as luxury apartments, gentrification has created a new urban mix, where certain forms of the built environment are valorised by wealthier incomers for the distinctive housing and lifestyle that they offer. In Bermondsey's case this has included the restoration and conversion of industrial buildings and the new-build market housing in mixed tenure schemes. It has been argued that the formation of landscapes is communicative of its inhabitants' identities and values (Duncan and Duncan 2004). For gentrifiers, the inhabitation of a converted industrial building in a formerly working class, inner city area confers to its occupier an aura of distinctiveness through rejecting suburban aesthetics and embracing the ideals of social diversity (Ley 1996). However, what the following interview extracts make clear is that as both form and symbol, a landscape might imply quite separate identities for other social groups.

Often during interviews participants would recite the household products once made in Bermondsey's factories, before describing the fate of the building, whether demolition, conversion or abandonment. As well as demonstrating a pride in Bermondsey's importance to British manufacturing, most participants regarded the former industrial buildings as a link between themselves and the area's past. The buildings held an emotional resonance which was heightened when they were former sites of employment (as the Hartley's Jam Factory was

for one participant). In this way landscapes can help embody collective memories and stabilise community narratives in architectural form, while changes to it can alter one's own relationship to place and sense of identity.

The following interview extract shows the conflicting symbolic meanings that can be attached to housing's built form. Here two participants described their reactions to the housing forms that have appeared in Bermondsey to meet the new demand from gentrifiers. The participants were a retired, married couple in their 60s. The husband, Paul, was the former chair of their estate's tenant management organisation while Julie still served on its board. They were both brought up in Bermondsey and were council tenants in a well-maintained, balcony accessed estate dating from the 1950s. Several times they stressed how their estate compared favourably to others in the area, and emphasised the role of themselves and other active residents in ensuring that problems were promptly dealt with and that contracted services were performed to standard. Bermondsey 'born and bred', they were proud of their journey from a childhood in relative poverty to a comfortable living standard. During the interviews they gave their views of the high-end housing which had appeared around Bermondsey Street, close to where they lived. Their response was typical of participants' views, at once expressing disillusionment with the changes and a very sentimental relationship with the built environment.

P: It's absurd how much they cost, some old warehouse gets called a loft and they can charge what they want. If people want to spend that much money that's up to them, let them have it I say.

J: The amount they cost, they're not built for the likes of us, there's just no way local people can afford them when you think of the wages people are on round here.

P: The thing is, most of us lot remember what it was like before, when there really were factories and warehouses round here, when it'd be where people would work...

J: ...See, most of the women in Bermondsey have worked there at some point and now it's all flats but far too expensive for people round here to afford.

P: Now all that's left is the name.

The extract follows the conventions seen in the nostalgic narratives on community. There is a reference to “what it was like before”, this time to the plentiful industrial employment Bermondsey contained for its residents. They also talk about ‘local’ people, by which is implied long-term, working class Bermondsey residents employed in low wage sectors. Furthermore, by juxtaposing an involvement with the past with an exclusion from the present – this time through reference to the unaffordable industrial conversions – the participants express their dissatisfaction with the changes that have occurred in the area. We see then how the high-end conversions of factories, warehouses and other industrial buildings negatively affected their place-identity; they eroded the symbolic ownership they felt over the industrial buildings that once defined Bermondsey and contributed to their own identity – “now all’s that left is the name”. As Edensor (2005a. 2005b) argues, the very nature of industrial buildings means they can be an extraordinarily strong force in stabilising the lives of people who live by them. As ‘exemplary spaces in which things are subject to order’ (2005a: 313), factories and other industrial buildings provide an epistemological and practical security by regulating the lives of its workers and their families in a highly structured, predictable working pattern. Factories can also sensually dominate a neighbourhood, in terms of their scale and the noises and smells produced, as Enid described at the start of this chapter. All combine to mean that industrial buildings can be strongly connected to the lives of the people living close by.

However, ‘when industrial sites are closed down and left to become ruins, they are dropped from such stabilizing networks’ (Edensor 2005a: 313). As described, many of Bermondsey’s ruins followed the template of other post-industrial urban landscapes: after a period of dereliction, they have been reinvented as spaces of high-end living, such as the Alaska Buildings and the Jam Factory, with the factory walls and gates kept to provide securitised and segregated spaces from the surrounding streets. It is worth adding that, in their ‘restored’ state, we see how the new role of former industrial buildings can be just as unsettling for long-term inhabitants as in the derelict form which Edensor describes. Following redevelopment into exclusive housing, the buildings are recontextualised and

take on a different set of local associations, this time tied to Bermondsey's role as a site for gentrification rather than industrial employment.

New-build developments could cause similar disruption. The largest housing development in the area, Bermondsey Spa, is built across 15 sites comprising 2,000 homes at completion, with the majority for private sale. For some participants it represented further evidence of how the values associated with the area's past were being eroded by current changes. This can be seen in the following extract from one of the first interviews I conducted. I came to know the participant, David, through a local history group whose meetings I attended very early in my fieldwork. An unemployed print operator in his 40s, he owned his former council property on a balcony accessed estate dating from the 1950s, close to the recent focus of development activity at Bermondsey Street. At one point in the interview he raised the delays which had occurred to Southwark Council's programme of improvements for his estate; its stairwells and communal spaces were visibly degraded and in need of repair. I sensed his frustration at the lack of public money being spent on his immediate environment when there were so many visible signs of investment in the housing surrounding his home. He criticised the Bermondsey Spa development and explained how the appearance and build quality differed from his own expectations of housing design:

They're too densely packed to my mind and there was nothing wrong with most of what they pulled down. They were spacious, well-equipped and built to last! Nowadays they're done on the cheap – look at the ones they finished last year, already the paintwork's stained, it's very unsightly. And compare what they've got there to what the Salters wanted, they knew you had to give people space to breathe.<sup>13</sup> What upsets me as much as anything is that as soon as they [the

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<sup>13</sup> Alfred and Ada Salter were Labour politicians in the early twentieth century who did much to improve the squalid slum conditions in Bermondsey. They were responsible for establishing health and adult education centres and, through a Beautification Committee, planted several thousand trees and acquired open spaces. They were also responsible for London's first attempt at municipal housing in Garden Suburb form, at Wilson Grove (Brockway 1949).



developer] got planning permission, the first thing they did was start cutting down the Plane trees along Spa Road, mature, perfectly healthy they were, and it's so they can fit in those pokey flats. They've got no sense that those trees were originally planted for the benefit of the people of this area.

JK: But a lot of the housing is affordable, so you could sort of say that there is a benefit for local people...

... But it's more than that. Say you look at buildings like the old [Bermondsey] Town Hall, or the Library, then there was a time when you got buildings that had a real purpose for the local community, that were well designed and people got a proper sense of pride from them.

The different expectations of housing are again expressed through reference to the past, this time to the early stage of Bermondsey's redevelopment that the Salters instigated. Interestingly it is not a period which David himself experienced having been born in the 1960s, yet the benevolence which the architecture of that time implied was still recalled nostalgically. His interest in Bermondsey's history was no doubt one reason for him frequently referencing the past during interviews. However, as with other participants' nostalgic narratives, the past was also referenced to make sense of the present. For example, he makes a contrast between the civic ethos that was embodied in the original pre-War social housing schemes – such as spacious flats and improvements to open space – in order to highlight the perceived lower standards of contemporary housing. Yet such comparisons are not unproblematic. While the new buildings certainly look different to the older social housing blocks, certain design features such as cavity wall insulation or double glazed windows are now required in new homes and make them of a higher design quality.

A similar tension in his account is over the loss of six trees to make way for one of the development's housing blocks. Inspecting the planning consent for the work (LBS 2007), I saw the tree preservation order along Spa Road was only overturned on condition that the developers contributed financially to the extensive refurbishment of nearby open space, Spa Gardens, completed in 2006 along with a Sure Start centre also funded through Section 106 agreements. The

removal of six trees may seem relatively trivial and so David's reaction surprisingly intense. But it underlines how landscape is integral to identities and the emotional attachment to place this confers, meaning that threats to the landscape are often interpreted as threats to identity (Duncan and Duncan 2004). So for David the trees symbolised the erosion of the values from an earlier age, characterised by political efforts to improve the quality of life for Bermondsey residents, a juxtaposition which is made acute by Spa Road being the site of the former Bermondsey Council's town hall during the Salter era (the building is now Southwark Council offices). The evocation of the town hall and library serve as examples of 'place-memory' (Casey 1987), where the past is brought to life in the present, contributing to the production and reproduction of social memory. Additionally at an individual level, they embody for David a sense of solidity and pride available when the buildings were in their prime.

David's narrative emphasises the importance that the urban landscape can have in forming a stable basis of identity development. This role is disrupted when changes to the landscape's appearance are seen to reflect the prioritising of one social group over another, as participants perceived the supply of high-end apartments when their own living environment was disinvested. His narrative also demonstrates that the way in which a landscape is shaped and the meaning it implies can therefore be the locus of contestation and resistance (Zukin 1991). As much as material artefacts, the built environment should therefore be understood as the result of social processes, representing and reproducing power dynamics, and open to continual interpretation and appropriation (Massey, 1994; Mitchell 1994). This can be seen in participants' narratives where nostalgia is used to contest changes to the cityscape, offering an alternative to the appearance and use of the new building forms appearing in Bermondsey. Rather than high-end housing for gentrifiers, their vision emphasises bringing benefits to existing residents. As with narratives of community decline, nostalgic imaginings of the built environment are symptomatic of long-term residents' resistance to the opening of Bermondsey to alternative housing use and inhabitants from different social groups.

A final way participants responded to the new-build housing is through resentment that investment is occurring around them but not to their spaces. One of the participants, Joe, contrasted the lack of investment in his housing estate with the amount being spent on new developments in the area, and explained how this was a source of resentment. Joe lived on an estate that the council had started refurbishing to meet the Decent Homes Standard for social housing. The improvement works included new insulation and windows for the flats and, on the exterior, replaced cladding, improving the appearance. Joe made a connection between the refurbishment and the area's gentrification. He saw the work as an example of a spatial purification strategy on behalf of the council, preparing the ground for long-term residents' exclusion from the estate by making it habitable for new residents.

They're only doing it because the council wants to improve how this place looks, they're literally embarrassed about it, like it lowers tone this estate, that's what they're thinking and that's why we're getting the refurbishment works done. On the one hand it's improving the gaff so I'm not complaining, but it's the hypocrisy which grates with me, the council pretending they're doing it out of the kindness of their heart when we all know perfectly well that it's because they don't want to be ashamed of it, like how we don't fit in to the new image they've got for Bermondsey, you know, as the new place for rich people to come and live.

Joe was the only person I interviewed who firmly articulated the threat of direct displacement. Although he accepted he benefited in the short term from having his home improved, he interpreted the investment in the estate as a precursor to the enforced out-movement of long-term residents. As he saw it, the continual presence of working class council tenants conflicted with the new image of Bermondsey propagated in regeneration strategies as a desirable location for the wealthy. In his conspiratorial narrative, spaces like his estate needed to be sanitised of elements that detracted from the new conception of Bermondsey. The refurbishment of its shabby exterior was one stage of this; the removal of its tenants might be the next.

## Segregation and intra-class rivalry

Joe's narrative was exceptional in describing the threat of gentrification. For all the other participants, gentrification was a relatively low priority when compared to other processes of neighbourhood change. They did not see it as a threat to their housing security in the same way that the arrival of low-status incomers heralded. The interviews indicate that one reason for this is the temporal and spatial segregation with gentrifiers (Butler 2003). This meant that gentrifiers were largely outside the daily sphere of long-term residents, who were more concerned with the competition for scarce social resources that low-status incomers were seen to pose. For long-term residents, their segregation from gentrifiers and the development of distinct parts of the neighbourhood for each social group meant that the presence of gentrifiers was not a significant concern when compared to that of incomers from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Gentrification was experienced almost as a separate phenomenon running parallel to their daily lives but not affecting their housing security, in contrast to the social processes embodied by the low status outsiders who lived in closer proximity.

Such an analysis is consistent with urban space characterised by layering (Marcuse and van Kempen 2000) and social tectonics (Butler with Robson 2003), where for the most part, daily lives of different social groups run parallel to each other with little interaction or sharing of experiences. The limited contact does mean that there are fewer opportunities for tension or conflict between the groups, essentially placing each in a different referential frame. Rather than inter-class rivalry that theories of gentrification would expect to find, it would seem to make more sense to describe an *intra*-class rivalry. Long-term residents saw their main competition not from gentrifiers, but from other lower income inhabitants on the estates, the low-status incomers who challenged their longstanding place-identity and their access to housing resources.

One way to understand why this is happening is to consider the role that housing security has in class relations. Peter Saunders (1984) has argued that home ownership has become a significant factor in class restructuring, even

playing – greater role than position within the labour market. He was writing at the time when neoliberal states were embarking on privatising their welfare provision, with one strand being policies to extend owner-occupation beyond the traditional property-owning classes - right-to-buy being the most prominent example in the UK. He observed that owner-occupation was intensifying cleavages between owner-occupiers and renters because of its potential for wealth accumulation and its significance as 'an expression of personal identity and as a source of ontological security' (1984: 203). This was occurring to such an extent that the consumption of property had come to outweigh class alignments based on labour market position. Saunders (1984) makes a broader point about the implications that the status of housing has to ontological security and how it is consumed. He foresaw a scenario where the majority could satisfy their housing requirements through market purchases, subsidised where necessary by the state, but where a minority remain directly dependent on the retreating state. This creates a 'them-and-us' society where a small, isolated and fragmented minority would rely on welfare provision that is increasingly scarce.

Saunders wondered at that time whether the response to this progressive form of exclusion might be outward, such as 'sporadic and relatively unorganised outbreaks of civil unrest and attacks on private property' (1984: 215). The history of Bermondsey's early gentrification as directed by the London Docklands Development Corporation contains some examples that are consistent with this response – such as the struggle over Cherry Gardens described in Chapter Four. However, the dominant response from long-term residents under more recent gentrification cycles would appear to be inward, pathologising other working class inhabitants with similar, if more recent, claims on social housing. The consequence is to almost entirely remove gentrifiers from their consciousness and narratives about housing. So for long-term residents, the contraction of the social rented sector has created an intense competition for housing provision from incomers who are similarly reliant on the state.

## Conclusion

Bermondsey is of course not unique in having residents who are worried about crime, the loss of neighbourliness, or who are nostalgic for a seemingly happier past. The changes it is undergoing are common to other areas of inner London, whether through the recycling of abandoned industrial space into housing for new, wealthier residents, or facing increased demand from more deprived incomers for social housing when its supply is in long-term decline. But as I described in the Introduction, specific features of Bermondsey meant it underwent relatively rapid diversification. Perhaps this has given its inhabitants less time to adapt and so means that they can react quite sharply to the ongoing change, in the way that this chapter has described. Certainly long-term residents were deeply perturbed by the direction of change in Bermondsey that had undermined their ontological security, tied to a sense of being secure in the area. Their main concern was the arrival of low-status incomers onto the housing estates whose previous homogeneity had bonded and reassured. In their narratives, immigration, social housing residualisation and the loss of industrial employment combined to fracture the stability that characterised past life in Bermondsey. In response to re-establish their ontological security, long-term residents created a restrictive local identity, pathologising 'others' as the cause of their own declining status in Bermondsey. As a researcher my responses to their narratives was ambiguous: I was saddened by their parochialism and occasional racism, but I also appreciated their willingness to defend the notions of civility and neighbourliness that they valued so highly. Through their narratives, long-term residents therefore offer a counter-discourse of the neighbourhood's shift towards diversity, one based on maintaining the remembered values of a homogeneous community and the benefits this brought to their sense of security. It is then an entirely separate imagining of urban life than the one envisaged in the policy discourse of a global city (Robinson 2002).

This chapter has described the narratives that long-term residents used to express their concern about the changes unfolding in Bermondsey. Some narratives centred around community decline and the perceived threats which new inhabitants posed, including to safety, morality and access to housing

resources. Others also encompassed how changes to the built environment had undermined ontological security by altering the spatial markers which inhabitants used to create their identity and recall times when they had been settled in their lives. These narratives were frequently mediated by nostalgia. I have argued that there is a danger in accepting nostalgic narratives as indicative of a unified identity or community; nostalgia involves the choice to recount idealised remembering of certain aspects of the past, while overlooking those which do not fit the individual's narrative identity. Instead, despite their contradictions and tensions, the narratives are symptomatic to their threats to ontological security and reveal the aspects of neighbourhood change of the greatest concern.

Yet while the focus was on low-status incomers, raised far less frequently as a concern was gentrification – or rather its effects, as participants rarely used the term itself. Gentrification was not seen to threaten their place in the neighbourhood or their quality of life to the same extent as the other changes. This is somewhat surprising given the gentrification literature's emphasis on the negative impacts for long-term residents. A likely cause is that Bermondsey's gentrification is mainly through infill developments and residential conversion around Bermondsey Street, meaning that the process was perceived as relatively distant from their estates closer to the Blue, where different forms of urban change took place. I have conceptualised their experiences as intra-class rivalry to account for the absence of competition for housing resources with gentrifiers. What this suggests is the analysis of gentrification needs to take greater account of concurrent processes of neighbourhood change to better reflect long-term residents' experiences. This is not to say that gentrification was entirely outside their narrative scope. The discussion of the built environment shows how Bermondsey's industrial buildings contributed to an identity with the area, and how their conversion to housing added to long-term residents' feelings of exclusion from it. Outside the private sphere of the home, the impact of gentrification was more keenly felt, as the next chapter considers in relation to new public space in gentrification housing developments.

## **Chapter Six: Experiences of public space in gentrifying London**

### **Introduction**

The previous chapter focused on residential space and the private realm. It examined how gentrification and other urban changes had affected long-term residents' conceptions of the home and their access to housing as a material resource. The attention of this chapter shifts to public space and how gentrification affects on long-term residents' experience of it. It takes three different case studies of public space in Bermondsey (Figure 6.1). Two of them are squares in recent developments of high-end housing, privately owned and managed, but with public access requirements in their planning consent. Empire Square's open space is a large residential courtyard with landscaping and central pavilion. Bermondsey Square is a smaller site and a mixed development, with the open space surrounded by housing, offices and a hotel. These sites were selected as they both display the characteristics of 'new build gentrification' (Davidson and Lees 2007). They are brownfield sites developed into expensive housing marketed at young professionals, and supported by local planning policies to develop more socially mixed neighbourhoods. While long-term residents interpreted both sites as conspicuous evidence of the neighbourhood's gentrification, participants gave different responses to each. Empire Square was seen in overwhelmingly negative terms and provoked outright hostility in relation to limited access to a theoretically public resource. Responses to Bermondsey Square were more nuanced; long-term residents made some (if limited) use of the space and it contributed to their perceptions of a newly revived area. Yet the commercial uses that the space contained excluded many long-term residents, contributing to their sense of exclusion from the neighbourhood's future. The third case study is Tabard Gardens, built in the 1930s as part of a large housing estate, and adjacent to Empire Square. It forms a contrast to its recent neighbour in terms of its appeal and use among participants. Yet the space is under pressure from new inhabitants to the area



whose uses of the space compete and occasionally conflict with those of long-term residents.

**Figure 6.1 Case studies of public space**



The chapter starts by briefly reviewing the significance of public space to urban life and how contemporary trends towards privatisation and commercialisation have threatened its status. Recent scholarship has been critical of idealistic and nostalgic notions of public space and its perceived benefits to urban inhabitants, yet some of these have found emphasis in UK urban policy that encourages the provision of public space for socially beneficial outcomes. The effect of national and regional policies on urban space in London forms the next section, detailing the various forms of public space that now exist in the city. The chapter then turns to the two case studies and long-term residents' responses. It argues that at Empire Square tensions between the developer's and the local council's rival visions for the public space have resulted in a 'negative space' (Madanipour 2003), formally accessible to the public but under-used and rejected by surrounding residents for whom the space was partly intended. At Bermondsey Square how that space should be designed to encourage wider access was

considered more closely from the outset, resulting in a relatively successful example of public space provided alongside new-build gentrification.

Finally, based on participants' narratives around public space, and drawing from findings in the previous chapter about relative threats to housing security, the debate over displacement is revisited. I argue that, in Bermondsey at least, public space is the crucible of tensions over gentrification, rather than housing. As such, our definitions of gentrification-induced displacement needs to be reconsidered to account for forms of exclusion in the public realm. It concludes by considering how the patterns of withdrawal from the public sphere exhibited by long-term residents can be conceptualised within gentrification theories of displacement.

### **The decline of public space?**

If the loss of community discussed in the previous chapter is one strand found in narratives of urban decline, then the deterioration in the quality of public space is equally prevalent. Indeed, they are two sides of the same coin, proponents would argue. The value of public space is as an arena that can bring together disparate activities and inhabitants, and so create valuable encounters that build tolerance and mutual understanding (Shields 1991, Zukin 1991, Sennett 1994). For Sennett, 'Democratic government depends on such exchanges between strangers. The public realm offers people a chance to lighten the pressures for conformity, of fitting into a fixed role in the social order; anonymity and impersonality provide a milieu for more individual development' (2000: 261). Public space is therefore expected to act as the infrastructure of democratic life in cities. It is in public spaces that we can learn to live with strangers and where a diversity of interests can co-exist through tolerance. Underlying the potential for civility is the principle of free access to public space, entailing an everyday aspect of social and political belonging to a city. Spending time in public space is therefore an expression of citizenship whereby inhabitants make themselves publicly (and therefore politically) visible (Mitchell 2003).

Sennett's ideal-type public space is based on equality of access; increasingly however access is organised through control and exclusion and its value as a forum of civic exchange has declined. There are two broad strands to the way access to public space is restricted. Firstly, through the privatisation of public space, where the trend towards restricting access is symptomatic of the decline of collectivity at the expense of individuality. For example, policing, private security and defensive design interact to determine the rules of access to public space and the restriction to it of particular social groups. It is these spaces that elites increasingly occupy, where interaction with inhabitants from different backgrounds can be avoided or, at least, controlled. This a process started in Western cities in the nineteenth century but been exacerbated by recent urban design, most saliently in fortified and securitised urban enclaves for the wealthy such as gated developments. Privacy has become a spatial principle, reflected in the creeping privatisation of urban space. Sennett describes public space that is addendum to private developments as 'empty civic gesture by developers', and 'dead public space' (1974: 12). This type of privatised space is therefore a product of contemporary urban development processes. As the financing of projects and ownership are increasingly the responsibility of multi-national companies, there is a growing disconnect between those responsible for development and the needs of a locality: 'If particular developments had some symbolic value for their developers in the past, it is now the exchange value and the market that determines their interest' (Madanipour 2003: 215-6). As space has become commodified, a safe return on a developer's investment is secured by responding to future residents' needs, meaning the surrounding community's needs are given a far lower priority.

The trend is most extreme in the types of 'securitisation', which Mike Davis (1990) argues is a dominant force in the design of cities and, at least in Los Angeles, has led to the destruction of 'genuinely democratic' public space. He attributes the destruction of meaningful public space to a conspiratorial 'security offensive' on the part of developers, architects and policy-makers to meet the middle class demand for increased social and spatial isolation. Gentrification adds impetus to the offensive, as a middle class return to the inner city needs to be buttressed by efforts to assure new, wealthy inhabitants of their security and

limit their interaction with the 'unsavoury' masses of the urban poor. Gentrification shatters public space and creates a 'citadel, separated from surroundings' (1990: 154), which incorporates oppressive, fortress-like architectural designs to limit inhabitants' interactions with surrounding poor neighbourhoods. Their programmatic extinction of the poor from public space is a way to render them politically powerless, limiting their ability to contest dominant trajectories of change in the city. For Smith (1996), there is an economic imperative to limiting access to public space. He takes the example of gentrification as a deliberately strategy to reduce the diversity of streets to make the surrounding neighbourhood safe for investment and resettlement by the wealthy. Gentrification is a manifestation of 'revanchist urbanism' (1996), a vengeful reaction against 'undesirable' social groups who contribute to the diversity of public space but threaten middle class security – homeless, immigrants, young people.

The second strand in the narrative of decline – and an altogether more subtle form of exclusion than in the revanchist model – can be termed the commercialisation of public space. Sorkin (1992) argued that a new corporate city has emerged heralding the end to traditional public space, and where a standard urbanism produces public space primarily for consumption. It is a form of exclusion based on consumption patterns, what Zukin (1995, 2010) calls 'domestication by cappuccino'. Rather than formal restriction to public space, this is based on unwillingness or inability to participate in its altered forms and the resultant sense of dislocation that inhabitants may experience. Zukin (1995) takes the example of the Bryant Park redevelopment in New York, where consumption uses were expanded and better maintenance and surveillance by guards shifted expectations of behaviour. In this example, non-consumption is a form of deviant behaviour to be discouraged. The park's fusion of consumption and entertainment replicates traditional public space but is devoid of the diversity it once used to support, instead becoming domesticated by middle class inhabitants through their consumption patterns. The space is thus commercialised: it is a space not to dwell in but to move across, consuming a constant flow of experiences. Formally the park remained open to all, but as a primary function of the space was now to spend money, access to it was limited

for those who lacked the economic resources to consume in the desired way. It is a reminder of what Watson (2006) sees as the inherently two-sided character of public space. Despite idealised notions of openness, it is an arena where only 'appropriate' inhabitants might participate in a particular ideal of urban existence, and where activities which contravene the ideal are identified as out of place and curbed. Again, the decline of public space can be linked to an expansion of middle classes in cities, this time to their desire for diverse experiences through consumption activities with urban areas competing with other places by producing experiences. The two trends towards privacy and consumption interact so that cities are losing their open and unpredictable spaces, and with them the potential for sociality and unpredictable encounters with strangers.

While the 'end of public space' argument underlines what can be dramatic changes in the social and political lives of urban public spaces, it has been criticised for a nostalgic idealisation of past forms of public space and for failing to recognise the subjective viewpoints from which the users of space operate (Banerjee 2001; Walpole and Knox 2007). As several writers have asked (Atkinson 2003; Mitchell 2003; Watson 2006; Németh and Schmidt 2011), can public space ever be, and has it ever been, inclusive or unmediated? The Greek agora from which Sennett (1974) developed his theories was, of course a heavily gendered space accessible only to certain class factions. A space of inclusiveness for one inhabitant may be a space of exclusion for another. As such, Bridge and Watson (2000, 2002) argue that the notion of a single public space is difficult to sustain. Instead it is in flux, representing a multiplicity of publics with inherent ambiguity and complexity.

Critics have also argued that even where a public space is open to all inhabitants, the mere presence of diversity does not imply people necessarily engage with each other (Fainstein 2005; Watson 2006; Amin 2008). For Iris Marion Young (1990) the construction of public space as a realm of unity and mutual understanding does not always correspond to actual experience. 'In entering the public one always risks encounters with those who are different, those who identify with different groups and have different opinions or different

forms of life' (1990: 240). Meeting of difference in public space does not necessarily lead to a sympathetic negotiation of difference, rather to more complex forms of toleration and accommodation of difference. Rather than mutual understanding defining the ideal type public space, Young focuses on what she terms 'side by side particularity' (1990: 238) where differences between social groups are maintained but acknowledged within shared public space. Side by side particularity is premised on shared claims to a pluralised public space, in contrast to space where differences as fixed identities can be asserted. Where public space cannot fulfil this role – for example, in being dominated by one group and consequently alienating to another – the result is that community-based claims over territory develop and the space risks becoming monopolised and homogenous.

The range and consequences of new public spaces is another focus of the critique. Perhaps it is not that public space is in terminal decline, but that the means and ends of public space are being reformulated (Banerjee 2001; Madden 2010). Focusing on often very local levels, scholars have examined how public space is negotiated and contested in new forms (Mitchell 2003, Kohn 2004, Low and Smith 2006). Ash Amin describes 'micro-publics of everyday social contacts and encounter' (2002: 959) where inhabitants can come to terms with difference, for example workplaces, schools, youth centres, communal gardens. He argues that contact between different social groups in such places may be more durable and effective than in 'classical' public spaces because they are structured around meaningful and organised exchanges. Through engagement in a common venture and sharing activities within a single space, participants can 'break out of fixed relations and fixed notions' (Amin 2002: 970); they can learn to accept difference by themselves becoming different.

It has also been questioned whether it is valid to assume that the 'private / market is necessarily antagonistic to civic / collective, that consumption is antagonistic to civic spirit' (De Magalães 2010: 560). In other words, public life can still flourish in private spaces – pubs, bookshops, beauty salons can meet our desire for social contact although shaped by consumer culture and the experience economy (Banerjee 2001). In a similar vein, attributes of public space

are increasingly played out in non-physical public spaces such as the Internet (Amin 2008). Places of exchange and opportunities for association are not therefore limited to traditional spaces in public ownership.

Accounts of the decline of public space can seem overly pessimistic, whether through overstating the openness of idealised public spaces of the past, or overlooking the mutability of public space into new (often private) forms. The benefits of public space to urban life may consequently need to be reframed. Rather than hosting social exchanges that create mutual understanding among diverse inhabitants, instead they provide a more mundane accommodation of difference. To this end, Watson (2006) proposed the notion of 'rubbing along' as a form of limited, casual encounter between different inhabitants that characterises the range of public spaces in contemporary cities. Like the co-mingling of difference described in Young's 'side by side particularity' (1990), rubbing along mitigates against the tendency towards withdrawal from public space into mutually reinforcing private realms, regretted by Sennett, and the type of conflict situations described by Sibley (1995; see previous chapter) where a community represents itself as the norm and feels threatened by others perceived as different. Such encounters in public space are no less significant despite their banality and the minimal amount of interaction they can entail. Glances of others, seeing difference and sharing space with others even in silence – all have a potential role in challenging the withdrawal into the private realm and fear of unknown others. Watson's focus is on 'the space of pedestrian rhetoric (de Certeau, 1984), of weaving complexity and difference into the texture of mundane everyday life' (2009: 1582). Importantly, Watson identifies this type of easy sociability in mundane public spaces, not necessarily the grand places for interaction conceived in urban policy such as masterplanned squares or shopping centres, but in neighbourhood markets, parks and suburban streets. Such locations assume particular importance in gentrifying neighbourhoods where lower income inhabitants find themselves sharing their neighbourhood space with wealthier incomers, mitigating against potential withdrawal from or conflict over public space.

## **The ownership and management of public space in London**

Both the assumed importance of public space and the diversification of its forms can be seen in the spatial policies governing London. At a national level, an explicit part of the 1997-2010 Labour Government's urban agenda was the role of design in producing and enhancing public space and the social benefits this can bring (DETR 2000; CABE 2000, 2002; Urban Task Force, 1999, 2005). Policy outlined how a 'network of safe, well maintained and people friendly spaces encourage people to walk, get to know their neighbours and respect their surroundings. [...] The benefits are more vibrant towns and cities, better personal health, a stronger sense of community and a more prosperous economy.' (ODPM 2002: 3).

Central to the development of these policies is the work of the Urban Task Force (UTF). Chaired by Richard Rogers, it comprised a panel of experts tasked by the New Labour Government to identify the causes of urban decline in England and to 'recommend practical solutions to bring people back into our cities' (UTF 1999: 1). To achieve this 'urban renaissance', the task force made the case for a re-investment in the economic, social and environmental infrastructure of cities through a change in attitudes to urban living fostered by positive leadership and management (Carmona 2001). One indicator they identified of urban renaissance is a high quality, well-connected and equitable public realm, rather than the isolated and poorly designed spaces that the UTF identified as a characteristic of much of urban England. The UTF argued that the importance of high quality public space is not just a matter of aesthetics but is integral to the social and economic viability of the city. On the one hand, well-designed public spaces demonstrate the suitability of a city as a distinctive location for international companies seeking to invest. At a more local level, 'Well designed and maintained public spaces should be at the heart of any community. They are the foundation for public interaction and social integration, and provide the sense of place essential to engender civic pride.' (UTF 2005: 5). The subtext of the UTF and subsequent policies is that a high quality public realm – from streets and squares to parks and riversides – is a device to reduce an array of urban ills,



including social deprivation, health inequalities, crime and economic disinvestment. If an urban renaissance entails a return of the middle classes to the city and clear parallels to gentrification (Lees 2003b), then public space can potentially bring together different social groups in neighbourhoods which were once dominated by a single community, helping them 'rub along' rather than resorting to claims over territory and resentment at sharing space with 'others'.

The ideas around public space put forward by the UTF have been clearly reflected in London's spatial strategies, not surprising given the close links between Richard Rogers and the former mayor Ken Livingstone. For example, Policy 4B.1 of the London Plan (Consolidated with Changes since 2004) sets out twelve design principles for a compact city, one of which is that new developments 'create or enhance the public realm' (GLA 2008: 245). It goes on to require that 'New building projects should ensure the highest possible space standards for users, in both public and private spaces inside and outside the building, creating spacious and usable private as well as public spaces' (GLA 2008: 247). This can either be onsite and as an integral part of a scheme's design, or alternatively through providing Section 106 funds to the local authority to construct or refurbish public space elsewhere in an area. The intention is that new developments bring direct benefits for all inhabitants of the area, regardless of whether they live or work there.

Mayor Boris Johnson's later iteration of the London Plan continues these policies. The consultation draft replacement plan called for a 'world reputation for new and improved public spaces that Londoners will cherish for decades to come' (GLA 2009: 6). The final plan included a requirement that 'London's public spaces should be secure, accessible, inclusive, connected, easy to understand and maintain, relate to local context, and incorporate the highest quality design (GLA 2011b: 7.5A). It matters that public space achieves these aims as the 'quality of the public realm has a significant influence on quality of life because it affects people's sense of place, security and belonging, as well as having an influence on a range of health and social factors' (GLA 2011b: 7.16). In this policy discourse, public space can bolster London's global standing, allow a wide range of inhabitants to benefit from intensive development, and finally

facilitate encounters between different social groups. Yet it is recognised that past public realm policies have focussed on the quality of the physical design of open space, but less on the need to make spaces inclusive for all groups (London Assembly 2011). The second Mayor registered his concern that a trend towards private management of publicly accessible space meant that 'Londoners can feel themselves excluded from parts of their own city' (Mayor of London 2009).

The policy concern with access to public space has developed from its provision being increasingly funded and developed by private agencies. While for much of the twentieth century public space was provided directly by democratically accountable local government and managed under their general environmental responsibilities, a range of partners are now responsible (de Magalhães 2010). The trend towards control is the result of two main reasons. Firstly, the change reflects wider transformations in the role of local government during the late twentieth century. For the purpose of the present discussion, this involves the shift of local authorities from 'providers' to 'enablers' of services, collaborating with the private sector through contractual relationships of service delivery. So while local authorities previously controlled, managed and maintained public spaces, there is now a range of public and private agencies with responsibility for different aspects of it, meaning that public space displays different ownership arrangements, levels of management and control over who may use it. At the same time, there has been an emphasis on the role public space is believed to play in economic growth and social regeneration, as described above. Public agencies' options for delivering public space without private investment are constrained. Secondly developers increasingly see the quality of public space as integral to the success and value of a scheme, contributing to a thriving environment that attracts residents and businesses. They have therefore sought greater control over public space management and ownership to add value to their investment, prioritising the demands of tenants and service charge payers over general access to the space (GLA 2011).

In London, at least six different types of public space exist based on their ownership arrangements, demonstrating how a range of social actors are now

involved in the ownership and regulation of public space (Figure 6.1). Each type of ownership can have within in different degrees of accessibility. As we shall see, the fact that a public body owns a space does not guarantee uninhibited access to all users. Space management and design combine to control by whom and how public space can be used. Loukaitou-Sideris and Banerjee (1998) distinguish between 'hard' and 'soft' controls. The former are more active measures to regulate use, such as CCTV, rules which prohibit activities, or onsite private security. Soft controls are more passive, symbolic restrictions that discourage undesirable activities, including small-scale urban design measures (spikes on ledges), or the removal of public toilets that might attract undesired users.

One argument is that the fragmented ownership arrangements and increased involvement of private management means it is increasingly difficult to access public space for potential users – or at least, for those users whose presence is either not profitable for commercial owners, or may dissuade others from using it (Minton 2006). For example, in London's West End, the New West End Company – which runs the area's business improvement district – has used its collective strength to remove what they see as undesirables from Oxford Street and Regent Street, lobbying the police to issue anti-social behaviour orders, and calling for the local authority to restrict the number of street traders (Wiseman 2006). The result is space that is 'public' only in name with rules of access and conduct determined by private interests.

<b>Table 6.1 Public space typologies in London</b>		
<b>Type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Example</b>
Publicly owned space	Accessible to all who follow norms of behaviour as regulated by state legislation or bylaws.	Trafalgar Square
Community run public space	Public space or buildings transferred to a community owned organisation responsible for its management and maintenance for benefit of local community (e.g. community land trust)	Bankside Open Spaces Trust
Business run public space	Public space managed by local businesses, through an appointed management company, for the benefit of local economy (e.g. Business Improvement District)	Better Bankside
Privately managed public space	Publicly owned site but managerial or service tasks contracted out to private sector with access arrangements specified in legal agreements	Old Spitalfields Market
Publicly accessible private space	Privately owned and managed but public access arrangements a condition of ownership	More London
Discretionary public space	Privately owned and managed with access arrangements entirely at discretion of owners	Westfield shopping centre

*Sources: Minton 2006; de Magalhães 2010; GLA 2010*

However, limiting certain users' access to public space is by no means new in London, nor is it only private agencies which seek to restrict access. For example, residential squares in London historically were privately developed with access restricted to residents of surrounding properties (Webb 1990). The first example was Inigo Jones' Covent Garden in the 1630s, the product of commercial speculation by the Earl of Bedford and intended initially as a residential area for country-dwelling aristocratic families requiring a winter residence in London for business and socialising (Girouard 1990). Although the residential purpose of Covent Garden was only short-lived – the introduction of a fruit and vegetable market diversified its use and social composition – it set the template for a new model of residential development in London where properties for aristocratic families were built around a central square. The trend is epitomised in Bloomsbury, also part of the Bedford estate, where speculative builders developed housing for this new market. The central squares were fenced off from the surrounding streets, giving residents privacy from less

wealthy inhabitants and keeping out beggars and hawkers. While most Bloomsbury squares are now open, other London squares in Belgravia and Knightsbridge are still restricted to keyholders only. Yet even though the present ownership and management of Bloomsbury's squares is by the local authority – so making the square an example of an entirely public space – restrictions on behaviour are imposed via bye-laws and design alterations to discourage the homeless and beggars and cruising homosexuals (Carmona et al 2008). An elite space has become a shared space but the principle of restriction remains, aiming to curb the excesses of users to whom the space has been opened up.

The process of rigidly defining the boundary between public and private space has not been limited to housing for social elites. Describing most working class housing in England before reform took place in the mid nineteenth century, Daunton writes of 'self-contained little worlds of enclosed courts and alleys; but within each cell the residents shared space and facilities in a communal way' (1983: 12). The boundary between the private and public realms was ambiguous and easily penetrable, for example, washing and cleaning took place in communal courtyards and on the streets, while several different families often shared the same home. Space was therefore a shared asset. Attempts to improve the housing conditions of the urban poor saw this cellular pattern eroded, with inward looking dead ends replaced by an open street layout, such as back-to-back terraced housing, within which each house is rigidly encapsulated and demarcated from the surrounding public realm. Even where shared public space remained in new housing schemes – for example, the central courtyard for washrooms and toilets at Peabody estates in London – it was subject to control by its owners with strict regulations over tenants' behaviour in it (Dennis 1989).

These examples are significant not only for underlining the historical parallels over restricting access to public space, but for understanding how a public agency has been responsible for restricting it to certain users through various means. Public ownership has not brought unimpeded access to the space. This suggests that it is not the ownership or management in themselves which affect a space's publicness; it is how varying attributes of publicness are embedded in

the space for different users. In other words, what makes a space 'public' derives more from the subjective experience of its users than from its ownership status. So while the ownership and management of space through the models described above express the potential for publicness, it is the use which determines its actual publicness (Németh and Schmidt 2011). It is to this qualitative dimension of public space – the behaviour and subjective experiences of users – which this chapter now turns in order to understand further the impact of Bermondsey Square and Empire Square on long-term residents. Both squares involve private ownership and management arrangements and are products of the local authority's efforts to change the housing mix of the area. The responses of long-term residents show how one is a space of banal encounters, shared by different groups, the other has been rejected by long-term residents and has been colonised by new inhabitants.

### **Bermondsey Square: shared space, segregated uses**

The first chapter described Bermondsey Street's revival following the decline of industrial employment in the area. Its gentrification was started through pioneering individuals recycling abandoned warehouses into loft-style apartments, before large scale developers moved in, using brownfield sites to build new, high-end housing targeted at incomers to the area. A highly prominent example of the more recent gentrification cycle is the Bermondsey Square development, at the southernmost end of Bermondsey Street (Figures 6.2 and 6.3).

**Figure 6.2 Bermondsey Square**



**Figure 6.3 Plan of Bermondsey Square**



**Plan of the square**

- 1 Hotel
- 2 Flats
- 3 Entrance
- 4 Commercial building
- 5 Entrance

*Source: Igloo Regeneration Fund*

The Square is a £60m mixed-use regeneration project on a former council-owned car park which, on Fridays, hosted the Bermondsey antiques markets. The development contains 76 apartments, offices and a boutique hotel. Ground floor commercial uses include a restaurant, deli, art-house cinema, small supermarket and a gallery. It was completed in autumn 2008 by developer Igloo Regeneration and in 2011 won the best public space award at the London

Planning Awards. The square itself serves several uses. On Friday mornings it continues to host the Bermondsey antiques market and now also a farmers' market at the weekends. It is also the host of special events, such as a Christmas market, open air cinema and the Bermondsey Street Festival. The rest of the time the square is publicly accessible, and contains seating for the café and restaurant, an entrance to the supermarket and entranceways to the hotel and apartments. Benches mark out a pedestrian route through the square from Bermondsey Street and onto Tower Bridge Road. The development effectively extends Bermondsey Street southwards. The square's retail premises form a continuation of the high-end shops and restaurants found on the street and contrast with the comparatively degraded mix of charity shops and takeaways on Tower Bridge Road. There are no gates to control access to the square, and the wide entrance points make the square easily penetrable from the surrounding streets.

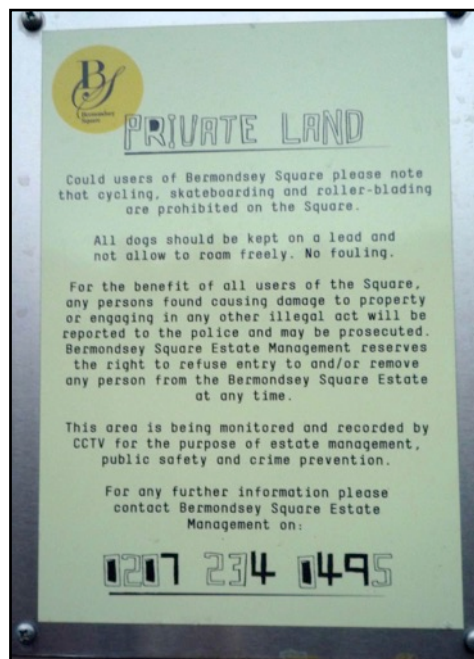
Yet as publicly accessible private space, and so privately owned and managed by an onsite company, there are controls over the use of the square. CCTV is conspicuous, monitoring entrance points and the square itself. Notices which explain that the square is on private land and which detail the forms of prohibited behaviour are designed to look like they have been handwritten, almost as an afterthought, presumably to temper the uncompromising tone of the text ('Use of the square is at the discretion of the Bermondsey Square Estate Management', Figure 6.4). It is therefore replete with 'hard' controls which actively constrain behaviour; but this is counterbalanced by its physical openness to surrounding streets and the range of overlapping functions it hosts, encouraging people to enter the square. In this sense the square's openness differs from the self-imposed isolation that can characterise some new-build gentrification developments (Davidson 2007).<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Indeed, the marketing material for the square's apartments makes frequent reference to the attractions of the wider urban space and neighbourhood (Bermondsey Square 2008). It shows how the residential landscape is being produced to appeal to a specific inhabitant, one for whom the character of the area itself seems of critical importance. The perceived vibrancy and creativity of the area is frequently referred to in promotional literature, whilst also reassuring prospective inhabitants that it has been rescued from its



**Figure 6.4 Access notice at Bermondsey Square**



During a visit to the square on a bright, spring lunchtime, the square's range of overlapping uses is apparent. A Friday, the morning's antiques market has almost ended, the traders noisily dismantling their stalls and packing their goods away into nearby vans, while a few shoppers peruse the remaining stalls for a last minute bargain. The market stalls extend close to the bar and café, where the tables are bathed in sunlight and mainly full – office workers having lunch meetings, mothers of pre-school children park their buggies at the side of the tables and meet with other parents, visitors consulting guide books ready to plan their next move along the tourism frontier of south London. Along the main route through the square, a group of older residents rest their shopping bags

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less salubrious past: "Once the home of Dickensian villains, Bermondsey has reinvented itself and become the epicentre of an explosion of mouth watering culture". The rhetoric of community looms large: "Bermondsey Square won't be 'the new' anything. Bermondsey Square is defined by its residents and businesses to create a real sense of community". Nevertheless the new developments seem to offer a lifestyle based on an only partial immersion into the area's apparent vibrancy and edginess; the sites of consumption that are mentioned ("bars next to museums . . . a boutique hotel nestling next to a cinema") are, like the development itself, designed to appeal to gentrifiers' cultural mores. More traditional neighbourhood amenities that are unlikely to service the new residents are reimagined as sites of local colour (including an eel & pie shop "that has been trading for over 100 years!").

and stop to sit on the benches and chat. Schoolchildren on their lunch hour spill out from the supermarket, loudly jostling each other. By mid-afternoon the lunchtime rush is over and the square is quieter but still occupied. Parents walking their children back from school take a detour through the square for momentary calm away from the noisy, traffic dominated Tower Bridge Road. They pause as their children make use of the sudden expanse of space to run around. In early evening the square fills up again, as residents of the square return home via the supermarket for groceries and filmgoers gather for pre-film drinks outside the cinema. Across these rhythms, the square is bustling and vibrant with different uses. It is a flexible social space for a range of inhabitants to pass the time. The lack of restraint in entering or leaving the space promotes a multitude of encounters and informal connections between different social groups during the day. Even if they take part in different activities, there are sufficient threshold spaces through which different activities can merge. Hence there are no clear boundaries where the market area ends and the café space begins, or between where pedestrian thoroughfare intersects with consumption spaces. Even when different social groups are not actively engaging with each other, it demonstrates how users can share the space as an arena for rubbing along and encountering difference.

Several of the long-term residents I interviewed saw Bermondsey Square as a prominent example of the area's gentrification. Paul commented wryly on the reversal in Bermondsey's image the boutique hotel signified: 'once you'd have to pay people to come to here, now they're paying to come and stay here'. An area for outsiders to avoid was now part of the global network of trendsetting urban destinations – a transformation met here with bemusement (similar to the views expressed in the previous chapter at how abandoned warehouses had found a new and expensive kudos), but also pride, as if the outside appreciated the uniqueness of their neighbourhood which long-term residents had known all along.

Two participants lived close to the Square on the same estate at the southern end of Bermondsey Street, and spoke about the impact of the development. Sue, a medical secretary at nearby Guy's Hospital, was originally from

neighbouring Rotherhithe, and had lived since the early 1970s with her husband in the former council flat they now owned. I first met her at a meeting of the Bermondsey community council – a forum for local councillors to meet residents – being held at the square’s cinema. She was initially sceptical about the development but had started to make informal use of the open space.

At first I thought ‘here we go again’, we’d end up with another show-off block of flats cut away from the rest of the area and it’d be for us to put up the consequences of it, the noise and so on. And at first the square did seem a bit like that. There were all sorts of arguments about the consultation and whether anyone would listen to what local people wanted [...] I remember when it first opened it was all like private feeling, it was all pristine and like you couldn’t touch anything, like it was only for the people who lived there and not for anyone else, with the swanky bars and hotel. So I didn’t have much to do with it, it was only when the council held some of their [community council] meetings at the cinema, I suppose that was the first time I actually went there. [...] So actually I’d say when the sun’s out, it’s an alright place, you can sit and see what’s happening there, it’s a bit of quiet away from the traffic, and it is a better place for the [antiques] market. [...] I’ve noticed more people now are at the market as I think people are more around there anyway, if you see what I mean.

Sue’s initial reluctance to use the square stems in part from a wider scepticism about the benefits new-build developments can bring to long-term residents of an area. Typically, her narrative suggests, they are enclaves set apart from the surrounding urban fabric, and an imposition which existing residents have little scope to influence through the planning system. Chapter Six describes in detail the contested process through which Bermondsey Square moved from planning application to completion, involving protests over the design and how the public consultation took place, and the lengthy negotiations between the Council and developers. Even in its modified form, the scheme remained contentious for some nearby residents.

If the protracted struggle over the scheme’s planning was one factor in Sue’s initial reluctance to make use of the square once complete, its design did not at

first encourage use. The private feel she describes identifies the square as a commercial space perceived as belonging to the scheme's residents or the clientele of the bars and restaurant, and so signifying that the square is 'not for us'. Two factors overcame her hostility. When the antiques market established itself once again at the square, it provided continuity with the past, and a clear embodiment of how a distinctive feature of 'old' Bermondsey could survive amidst the conspicuous change to the area. Secondly, hosting open events such as the council meetings at the square brought long-term residents into the space, and helped demonstrate its accessibility to the wider population.<sup>15</sup> Such events then prompted more mundane use of the square, in Sue's case as a space where she occasionally spent time with friends watching the world go by.

Other participants had less engagement with the square but still sensed its positive contribution to the local area. They made little direct use of the square's open space or amenities, but still saw it as part of a trend which had helped revitalise Bermondsey and which brought benefits to long-term residents. An example is Karen, a lone parent in her forties who worked as a primary school teaching assistant, and was a tenant on the same estate as Sue. She contrasted present day Bermondsey Street with its abandoned and neglected past, and described the changing nature of the street as a public space for all inhabitants to use.

A real change I noticed was when Bermondsey Street started being busy again, and at night it's now completely different, you know, with people around and walking about, going places. It really used to be sort of eerie around here, like everything would shut down, once the shops were closed that was it. It wasn't actually dangerous or anything, I mean nowhere near as bad as the reputation would have you believe,

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<sup>15</sup> Offering facilities for community meetings is one strand of a strategy by the scheme's owners to improve its image along local residents. Another is the Bermondsey Square Community Fund that offers grants of £500 to £2,500 to local community organisations. It receives contributions from the owners and occupants of the square and uses them for "the marketing, animation and promotion of Bermondsey Square Estate and making a positive contribution to the wider neighborhood and community of Bermondsey" (Bermondsey Square Community Fund (2012)).

you'd be alright going out after dark but you just wouldn't unless you had a reason to. So now, I think with all the bars and restaurants, and with Bermondsey Square opening, people use the area more in the evenings, just walking through or going to meet someone. It's nice – the busyness and the place being used.

In this narrative, gentrification has brought a new lease of life to the street through supporting a different use of public space. It helped reverse the area's population decline, meaning shops became financially viable and abandoned industrial buildings received a new lease of life. Bermondsey Square epitomises how the development of a night time economy and sites of high-end consumption have attracted new residents and visitors to the area. She implies that gentrifiers are more comfortable with using public space at night and have altered its threatening atmosphere to one with a welcoming 'busyness', appreciated by long-term residents. Consequently, gentrification had a positive effect on how long-term residents experienced and regarded where they live. The positive representations of Bermondsey Street as a desired location to live and spend time contrasted with its past reputation as 'eerie' and crime-ridden.

Yet gentrifiers' appropriation of public space has, in other respects, been to the exclusion of other local residents. Later in the interview, Karen described how her shopping habits had changed since the area started to gentrify and participants had found themselves orientated away from Bermondsey Street. She described only a limited involvement with Bermondsey Square.

I probably find myself going to Bermondsey Square less and less, I mean, I like the buzz it's got and everything, but in terms of actually the things you need, buying something there, it's not really got the shops I'd look to on a daily basis, it's all like with Bermondsey Street now, trendy boutiques and posh bars really. There used to be a post office and things. [...] I walk through the square almost every day going to collect the kids from school, but I wouldn't say I use it in terms of the cafes or shops or whatever. I've used the Sainsbury's once or twice but it's too expensive for normal shopping

So while open to the benefits that gentrification can bring, such as improved services and public space, Karen was attuned to the types of exclusion gentrification can bring to long-term residents. The consumption codes which now dominated the street and which are most apparent at Bermondsey Square meant that she found herself orientated away from her immediate locality to more practical and affordable shopping areas. In these narratives, gentrification was partly welcomed when the alternative is the disinvestment and abandonment which participants remembered, but one which had adversely affected long-term residents' use and relationship with the local area. Even the revived buzz of the area brought downsides. Participants complained of the noise from the bars and pubs at the square, creating disturbance for other inhabitants. The new ways of using public space could be a source of annoyance and an example of 'clashes over neighbourhood norms' (Freeman 2006: 155) that can characterise gentrifying neighbourhoods. The Square is an example of a commercialised public space (Zukin 1991), where only a limited range of experiences are available to less wealthy inhabitants. Long-term residents pointed to how neighbourhood space is increasingly closed in terms of access, and so is limiting their spatial practices. The consequence for long-term residents is that they had lost their willingness and capacity to spend time there, even if some were simultaneously aware that it is a more welcoming and safer space since gentrification. The exclusion these interviewees described therefore has a clear spatial manifestation.

The experience of gentrified public space at Bermondsey Square is double-edged for some long-term residents. The new population attracted to the square has made the surrounding area feel livelier and safer, far preferable to the alternative abandonment they recalled. Yet the interviews also point to a gradual exclusion from the area for those who cannot afford the new spaces of consumption which characterise Bermondsey Square and the wider renaissance of Bermondsey Street. The experience of gentrification is at once emancipatory and exclusionary. Public space has a new sociability, where long term residents such as Sue shared space with newer residents, but participants such as Karen were unable to participate in the social practice of public space they found based on high end consumption. This is a different interpretation of the 'dilemma

of gentrification' (Freeman 2006: 92), whereby any benefits of gentrification must be countered by the downsides it causes long-term residents. Unlike in Freeman's (2006) description, it does not seem to involve the threat of displacement, whether direct or indirect, and none of the participants envisaged out-movement from the area as a consequence of the changes. Instead, the narratives point to a more subtle loss of power over their ownership of space and, therefore, to their sense of belonging to the wider neighbourhood. The response for these participants was a withdrawal from the new forms of public space into the neighbourhood areas so far relatively untouched by gentrification. That withdrawal was even more apparent when we consider their responses to the second case study.

### **Empire Square: rejecting access to public space**

The example of Bermondsey Square shows the ambiguity of responses to gentrification's impact on public space: the new liveliness the development brought to the area was appreciated while the same participants resented how this was based on exclusionary forms of consumption. As a square, it provided open access to all inhabitants and some long-term residents I interviewed made use of the space's easy accessibility; but new codes of high-end consumption excluded others whose response was to withdraw from the space. There was less ambivalence among participants towards other examples of public space which resulted from new-build gentrification, and which were often seen as evidence of a deliberate strategy to exclude long-term residents from Bermondsey.

A prominent and recent example on the edge of Bermondsey is the Empire Square development,<sup>16</sup> featuring a 22-storey residential tower and three blocks (Figures 6.5 and 6.6). The housing is built around a 4000m<sup>2</sup> public square of soft and hard landscaping and a central two-storey pavilion intended for a cafe or

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<sup>16</sup>The scheme was originally named Tabard Square at the planning application stage and renamed for marketing once construction was underway.

restaurant. Developed by Berkeley Homes and designed by Rolfe Judd Architects, it contains almost 600 apartments with 25% designated as affordable, contained in two of the blocks.

**Figure 6.5 Empire Square**



**Figure 6.6 Empire Square plan**

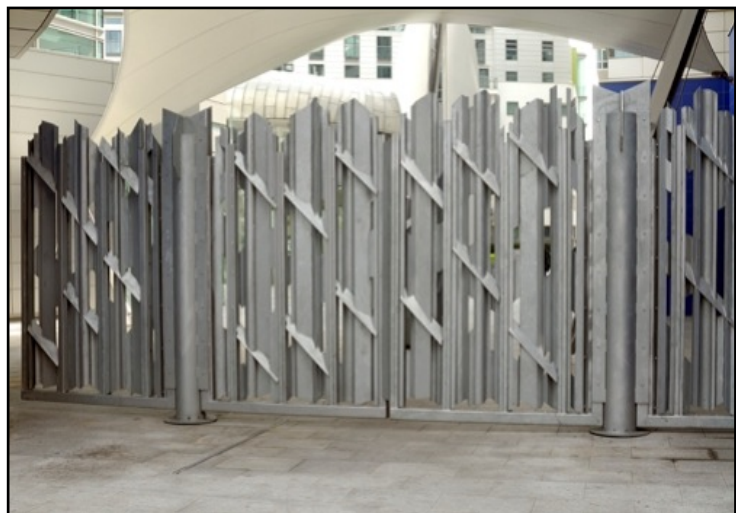


© Rolfe Judd Architects



At launch, the cheapest units started at £385,000 for a one bedroom flat, up to a penthouse at £2.5m; it is a scheme aiming to appeal to wealthy incomers to the area. It was completed in 2007 when it won the Housing Design Award and CABI Gold award. As well as housing, the scheme contains a private gym, a small supermarket and a private childcare centre, all accessible from the outside streets surrounding the square. Like at Bermondsey Square, Southwark Council was keen that local residents would benefit from the new development, even if they would be unlikely to afford the housing. To help assuage local concerns, the designation of the square as public space was made a condition of the scheme's planning permission. Access to the square is from each point of the triangular site through large sculpted metal gates that spin on their axes to close off the square at night (Figure 6.7). The square is open to the public from 6am to midnight each day, long opening hours aiming for strong pedestrian permeability.

**Figure 6.7 Entrance to Empire Square**



Despite the noisy road which runs along one side of the development, once inside the space it is surprisingly quiet and isolated from the surrounding streets, the traffic unheard and unseen, with few other sources of noise or activity to disrupt the calm. While the weak penetrability from the surrounding streets makes the inner space a type of refuge, it also means it is poorly used, particularly when compared to Bermondsey Square and the range of activities it hosts. There is a small group of students from the nearby college having lunch, and a couple of tourists arriving at reception to the serviced apartments. Very few people walk through and there are no sign of residents coming and going, whose flats' entrances are mainly accessed from the car park underneath the square or directly from the street. One side of the square is dominated by a large unlet commercial unit on the ground floor, the centre of the square by the pavilion, also empty. Both add to a slightly desolate feel only increased by the design of the overlooking housing blocks – their tinted glass betray few signs of being inhabited and many of the balconies are empty. The scale of the blocks prevent much light entering the square and it is partially shaded in the middle of the day, making other patches of open space more attractive for lunching office workers or parents with children – nearby Tabard Gardens was full of such groups on the same sunny midweek lunchtime. The predominant impression from spending time in the space is of intruding on an immaculately landscaped private courtyard intended to serve as a quiet backdrop to the surrounding apartments.

As part of my fieldwork, I spent time at the square at different periods of the day observing how people used it. Its main use was as an occasional pedestrian thoroughfare for rush hour commuters heading to Borough tube station and was largely quiet in the middle of the day. This was despite benches, landscaping and a café encouraging more prolonged public engagement. Several factors contribute to the square's under-use. The new internal routes through the square in fact duplicate the surrounding streets so even as a cut through its purpose is limited. Early designs for the scheme included a pedestrian link from the square to the adjacent Tabard Gardens Estate and so would have connected the two open spaces. The Council rejected the link because of nearby residents' concerns over the loss of six car parking spaces that this design would entail.

Furthermore the routes do not have any important uses opening onto them: an onsite nursery faces onto the square but no outside space is allocated for children's use, while the café is not visible or directly accessible from the surrounding streets so as to bring customers into the square.<sup>17</sup> A row of family-sized houses which make up one edge of the scheme have self-contained gardens and do not open on the square, so children and their parents are not brought onto the square which would increase its use.

As a tall building, Empire Square's design was required under London Plan Policy 4B.10 to use public space to 'support vibrant communities both around and within the building' and 'where appropriate, contain a mix of uses with public access' (GLA 2008: 254). This regional policy follows joint guidance from English Heritage and CABI that tall buildings should be assessed on their contribution to public space: 'The development should interact with and contribute positively to its surroundings at street level; it should contribute to safety, diversity, vitality, social engagement and 'sense of place' (2007: 5). However there is a question of whether the onsite provision of public space is appropriate to the scheme. Empire Square is a very compact development and may not be of a sufficient scale to justify such a large open space. The type of residents at which the scheme is marketed may also be less willing to live on a well-used, fully accessible public square. The fate of the square's central pavilion exemplifies this. The scheme lacks sufficient residents who would use an onsite café or restaurant and make it financially viable. At the same time, the square cannot be completely open and accessible to outsiders as potential residents may be dissuaded by the noise and perceived security threats that proximity to the urban public brings.

Although the inclusion of public space at the scheme was at the instigation of the local authority, it was less of a concern for residents of housing surrounding the sites. A planning officer involved with the scheme whom I interviewed (LBS/05) said that consultations had placed a large, lower-priced supermarket at

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<sup>17</sup> The café closed soon after the development opened and after a long period of vacancy, the pavilion is currently occupied by the square's management organisation)

the main priority for residents. Only a smaller 'metro' store – which is typically more expensive – could eventually be provided due to insufficient parking spaces underneath the development. Although likely to meet the needs of the scheme's residents, it was not the type of service long-term residents wanted to mitigate the scheme's impact. Certainly the long-term residents I interviewed rarely ventured into the square and described their unease at conspicuous CCTV at entrance ways and dislike of the large gates, which are prominent when open and give the impression of a restricted public realm. The following extract gives views of the public space from Val, a resident on the adjacent Tabard Gardens Estate and member of its Tenants Residents Association:

It's dead, you look at it [Empire Square] and who'd want to use that? It may as well be private. It looks closed half the time, shut up with those gates you've got to walk through, and then there's nothing in it! Not exactly what you'd call welcoming. No wonder it's empty all the time. [...] It's a wasted opportunity because there was a lot of consultation about what local people wanted from the regeneration and how it wouldn't be like another castle where the ultra wealthy would be looking down over us, but you speak to a lot of people around here and that's what they think it's turned into.

Like Sue's narrative of Bermondsey Square, Val refers to the prior consultation and efforts to develop a more inclusive local regeneration, although this is similarly underpinned by a scepticism over long-term residents' ability to influence a scheme's design.

What we find at Empire Square is a paradoxical space – a square conceived as a public realm to meet local and regional planning priorities, but one which commercial considerations and design compromises prevented from being achieving in any meaningful way. The result is that both onsite and surrounding inhabitants largely shunned the space. So while the square may be an example of the blank and alienating public space which Young (1990) identified as a threat to urban diversity, it has not succumbed to community-based claims over its ownership as she may have feared.

## **Tabard Gardens: the challenge of redefining public space**

Val's home is the Tabard Gardens Estate (Figure 6.8). This comprises several three- to six-storey buildings of varying scale and design built around courtyards with distinctive oval entranceways. Opened in 1916 for 2,500 residents and extended later, it is noted as one of the ambitious schemes under the London County Council's slum replacement programme (Pevsner 1983). While the estate's imposing design in red brick and terracotta is architecturally distinct from others in the area, like many others it is in need of refurbishment and at the time of fieldwork was awaiting upgrading to Decent Homes Standards. The contrast with the new tower at Empire Square overlooking the estate was unavoidable (Figure 6.9). Many estate residents had been uneasy about the Square from the start, and during its consultation period had raised concerns over its scale, height and the impact of its high density on local amenities. In 2002 estate residents organised a petition against the scheme, contributing to an amended planning application that reduced the tower's height and increased the proportion of affordable housing.

**Figure 6.8 Tabard Gardens Estate**



**Figure 6.9 Tabard Gardens with Empire Square in background**



Val lived in one of four blocks set back from public space. The Gardens are bordered by the estate on three sides and runs open along Tabard Street from the other. The space is loosely divided into three sections: playground and AstroTurf to the south; a nature area, allotments and seating in the middle; and informal open space with landscaping to the north. It is bisected by pedestrian paths linking different points of Tabard Street with Pilgrimage Street and the housing blocks beyond. Val described how the use of public space on the estate was an arena of informal encounters – an integral part of living on the estate where she could socialise with neighbours and other local residents and where her children played. The accessibility of the estate’s public space strongly contrasted with the apparently deliberately restrictive design of Empire Square. The public space at Tabard Gardens links the estate to the streets and surrounding neighbourhood, giving scope for interaction between estate residents, and with other inhabitants of the area. In contrast, Empire Square’s inner public space is inextricably part of the whole scheme – it ‘belongs’ far more explicitly to its residents, emphasised by security features at its entrance and the overlooking apartments providing more informal surveillance. The Square with its onsite amenities is an example of the self-contained form of new-build developments, creating for residents an enclave with little reason to associate with the surrounding area (Atkinson 2006; Davidson 2009). It is in Sennett’s term ‘dead public space’ (1977: 12) for Val and other long-term residents living nearby

who have little incentive to use it. They were aware of how the distinction between the two typologies of public space represented by the square and the gardens enforced a sense of 'them' and 'us' – wealthier incomers living at the self-contained Square and long-term residents at the Gardens, with minimal interaction between the two. The built environment of new housing schemes such as the Square supported this segregation, despite the benefits of its design being posited in terms of social mixing and interaction.

Additional to the public space within the development, another intended benefit to the wider community was the refurbishment of the Astro turf at Tabard Gardens, using Section 106 funds. The facility had been in a degraded state – the surface torn in parts and missing goal nets – but was well used, particularly by young people living at Tabard Gardens and surrounding estates. It can be characterised as an informal public space where young people met to play football and basketball, walk their dogs and congregate. The refurbishment repaired the surface and goals, and brought floodlighting and fencing. A more fundamental change was the introduction of a booking system whereby teams could hire the facility from the council. Weekly slots were kept free for local people to use, the rest of the time the Astro turf was locked or accessible only to paying users. Most of these were 5-a-side teams from businesses located in the borough or youth teams based elsewhere in London attracted to a new facility in a central location. To estate residents, the implication of the refurbishment was clear: an informal public space had been privatised and a part of the gardens once 'owned' by the estate's young people had been ceded to new inhabitants to the area. The Tenants and Residents Association organised a protest to highlight their perceived exclusion at the formal opening of the refurbished Astro turf (Figure 6.10). A few months later, one of the participants, Moira, described the effect of the new inhabitants on the estate's young people:

I don't think I'm putting it too strongly to say it's had a really negative impact. For a start, there's the noise nuisance of teams using it much more than before, we have to endure screaming, shouting and swearing from the people on that pitch morning, noon and night. [...] There's also nowhere for the kids on the estate to go like they used to. Just speaking to



them, there's a real fear which stems from people coming in to make use of the Astroturf from other areas. For our own kids to be afraid to use their own park is a crying shame and I don't know if the council are in any way aware of this situation. We need to support our kids to feel safe and happy in their own environment, and at the moment, I am afraid, this is not happening.

In a similar way to the narratives in the previous chapter, the ontological security of long-term estate dwellers has been undermined by the arrival of new inhabitants, in this case 'rival' Astroturf users seeking to make claims to the opened up space. We see in Moira's description a similar process as in the previous chapter, with criticisms of others' different normative standards (swearing and late night noise) that threaten the security of estate residents. The people making the incursions into the estate are not simply gentrifiers - it is a broader category of non-estate residents also comprising office workers and students. Yet their presence in the areas reflects Bermondsey's new found heterogeneity, of which gentrification is one cause. Their use of the Astroturf has redefined who 'owns' the space and has removed it from estate residents. What the episode shows is how a local regeneration initiative, funded by the proceeds of new-build gentrification, was perceived by long-term residents to subjugate their needs to those of a wide range of inhabitants moving to the area.



Figure 6.10 Astro turf protest



Source : Southwark News, March 6th 2008

## Cohabitation and displacement at neighbourhood level

In the last chapter we saw how gentrification did not appear to play a significant role in participants' housing security. Here, they have emphasised the disruptive effect of public space created by new-build gentrification and embodied most saliently at Empire Square. They described a more symbolic displacement from these new urban forms and the privatisation of informal space over which they lacked influence to design. Responses among long-term residents varied for each example of public space discussed in this chapter, although the outcome in terms of their use of the space remain similar for the majority of participants, namely a withdrawal to more familiar, non-gentrified public spaces.

What are the implications of the use of public space for our understanding of gentrification? Firstly, it demonstrates the range of responses that long-term residents can have towards gentrification. Some aspects received a qualified welcome, such as the new vibrancy and feelings of safety at Bermondsey Street which the new population fostered. Others were interpreted as evidence of neglect on the part of local authority towards long-term residents. The provision of public space through private housing developments was often seen as an empty gesture, ignoring surrounding residents' real needs and failing to mitigate the impact of new, high-end housing schemes. The inaccessibility of the shops and services that accompanied gentrification meant that long-term residents' use of the public space was limited and lacked relevance to their needs.

Secondly, I argue that, in Bermondsey at least, it is not housing but public space that is the crucible of tensions over gentrification for long-term residents. Partly this is due to the specific contours of gentrification in the area meaning its impact on long-term residents' residential security is limited. Like some other parts of inner London, gentrification in Bermondsey has been established through the conversion of former industrial buildings and through new-build developments on brownfield land. It has therefore brought a net addition of housing to the area. As we saw in the demographic profile in Chapter One, the proportion of working class inhabitants in Bermondsey has been reduced by the arrival of incomers from higher socio-economic groups, but their absolute numbers are less affected and social housing remains the largest single tenure. Bermondsey differs from areas affected by the types of regeneration policies where social housing is replaced by market housing to attract gentrifying residents, as has occurred in parts of the US (Smith 1996) and, to a lesser extent, in the UK (Cameron 2003, 2006; Allen 2008b). Traditional notions of direct displacement brought about by gentrification – such as rent rises and evictions – are therefore less relevant to an area where a tenure as secure for tenants as social rent continues to dominate the area's profile. The involuntary out-movement of long-term residents to make way for gentrifiers was not part of participants' experiences. The analysis here serves as a reminder of the diverse experiences of gentrification in different cities, and especially between the

United States and Britain, where the occurrence of displacement is less common (Hamnett 2009).

In one respect gentrifiers and long-term residents may cohabit the same neighbourhood, but are segregated into quite separate housing markets: gentrifiers in high-end market housing, including some enclave style, new-build developments; long-term residents competing for social housing with 'low-status incomers' with whom they lived in close proximity on estates. Investigations into displacement in contemporary London should not, however, be limited to its direct forms, but should also encompass the indirect, exclusionary pressures which ultimately can have the same outcomes for long-term residents (Slater 2009). So while higher and lower-income groups do not compete for the same housing stock in Bermondsey, there is competition in respect of consumption, leisure and open spaces – that is, over the more symbolic 'ownership' and occupation of public space. The vibrancy of services in the gentrified parts of Bermondsey contrasted strongly with the decline of the traditional commercial heart of the area, the Blue, which has suffered through new competition from elsewhere. The result is a form of segregation within Bermondsey, with public space hosting little interaction between long-term residents and wealthier incomers, and few opportunities for ordinary encounters which public space can facilitate.

It is apparent that the focus on involuntary out-movement prompted by a loss of housing does not sufficiently reflect these long-term residents' experiences of gentrification. This is not to discount the relevance of displacement to contemporary analyses of gentrification, but to refine its definitions to account for its effects in areas where high levels of social housing remain around pockets of infill and new-build gentrification. This is not to suggest that gentrification-induced displacement does not occur in similar settings to Bermondsey. Instead it is to decouple displacement from automatically implying housing relocation and to consider the other spaces where long-term residents can face exclusion. From my research, the arena where this exclusion plays out most frequently is not in housing but in public space and its symbolic 'ownership' in respect of consumption activities and access. Long-term residents described a spatial loss

in the context of gentrification. The parts of the neighbourhood that their white working class identity once dominated, such as pubs and the high street, were subverted to cater for a newly hegemonic social group. However the housing security of long-term residents is not under threat from this shift; they have remained living in the area through several gentrification cycles and moving away from the area was not an envisaged outcome for many of them.

In order to account for this, what is required is an addition to the three forms of indirect displacement - economic, community and neighbourhood resource - outlined by Davidson (2008; see Table 2.1 above). I refer to *internal displacement*, which is defined by the following features. First, that the displacement is premised on how pre-existing residents access the neighbourhood's public realm, rather than whether they remain living in its housing. The social upgrading of public spaces that now cater for gentrifiers' consumption practices means that, whether because of affordability or different needs, long-term residents are effectively required to use local services and public spaces elsewhere. Secondly, by bringing about their withdrawal from newly emerging gentrified spaces, it reinforces segregation between different social groups as their daily practices increasingly take place in different spaces of the neighbourhood. Finally, internal displacement has a culminative impact on place-identity. As long-term residents are excluded from the public spaces created by new investment in the area, but which they themselves do not use, their daily experiences diverge away from the dominant trajectory of neighbourhood change, with resultant experiences of isolation and abandonment, reinforcing the widespread exclusion and resentment already perceived by long-term residents reported in response to other forms of neighbourhood change. Depending on the severity of this exclusion, internal displacement can act as the precursor to the more advanced forms of indirect displacement, eventually prompting out-movement from an area. Equally it can be a near permanent experience in situations like Bermondsey's where social housing gives residential security but where there are few opportunities to move elsewhere while staying in the tenure. Internal displacement therefore helps understand situations where gentrification does not yet affect working class residents' access to housing and where the negative effects of the process have

not become so pervasive that it entirely prevents the cohabitation of space with gentrifiers.

The following table revisits the different forms of displacement set out in Table 2.1 but with the addition of internal displacement.

<b>Table 6.2 The characteristics of internal displacement</b>			
<b>Form</b>	<b>Realm</b>	<b>Process</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
<i>Direct displacement</i>			
Physical	Private	Eviction, utilities cut off	Housing dislocation
Direct economic	Private	Rent increase	Housing dislocation
<i>Indirect displacement</i>			
Indirect economic	Private	Housing unaffordability from price shadowing	Housing dislocation
Community	Public	Loss of place-identity and control of local politics	Housing relocation
Neighbourhood resource	Public	Needs and taste not met by local services	Housing relocation
<i>Internal displacement</i>	<i>Public</i>	<i>Segregation, retrenchment to non-gentrified spaces</i>	<i>Remain in area</i>

## **Conclusion**

The particular unfolding of gentrification in Bermondsey is at times contradictory for long-term residents. It has enlivened the public space of the street and brought new ways of funding public space as a by-product of private housing schemes. Yet the focus on high-end consumption prompts the withdrawal from public space of long-term residents into spaces that can better accommodate their class identities and preferences. Reactions were strongest against Empire Square, seen as a tokenistic example of a public space set apart from its surroundings by a system of signification legible in different ways to different inhabitants. The security gates and CCTV monitoring the public space may be interpreted by its residents as a reassuring contribution to the square's safety; for those living in neighbouring social housing estates it was taken as a tacit indication that non-residents' presence was not welcome. While Empire Square's public space is far from removed from an embodiment of Davis's (1990) securatisation, its design and amenities give little incentive for non-

residents to use it. The Square represented for participants how gentrification brought few benefits to long-term residents, despite the intentions of policy-makers, and left them restricted to the more established public spaces that predated gentrification, such as the neighbouring estate's gardens. Yet even here, gentrification was interpreted as having a negative effect by contributing to the privatisation of the Astroturf and there were tensions among estate residents over sharing the resource with other Bermondsey inhabitants.

Regarding Bermondsey Square, there was a divide in participants' responses. Physical access to the space was, of course, not a concern. Most participants, especially those who remembered its abandoned and crime-ridden past, recognised how the arrival of gentrifiers had reinvigorated a dilapidated part of the neighbourhood and had increased activity in the area. Although the square is privately owned and displays control features of its use, some participants viewed it as a qualified success in terms of encouraging access from a wide range of users. This has been achieved by facilitating a range of informal and formal uses, so that even if long-term residents and gentrifiers make use of the space in different ways, there is mutual recognition of their place in the square. In often mundane ways, Bermondsey Square engenders Young's (1990) side-by-side particularity, where differences between types of inhabitants are not subsumed to claims of territory by one group over another. Yet for other participants these benefits were mitigated by the high-end consumption activities that now populated the square, meaning long-term residents had less reason to make use of it. Participants described a similar result in respect of Empire Square – a withdrawal from the public space now commercialised for elites to parts of Bermondsey that were affordable and met their needs. Both examples underline a distinction Madanipour (1999) makes between physical access to a place and access to its activities. For long-term residents, the former is inconsequential if it is not accompanied by the latter.

The struggles over Bermondsey's public space shows how gentrification induced displacement is about more than material resources or property rights, but encompasses the possession of meanings and memories which help inhabitants feel at ease in their neighbourhood. However, it is clear that for many

long-term residents, the actuality of having to move from the area is not yet faced and may never be. Consequently we see a form of exclusion best described as internal displacement, where they remain living in the neighbourhood but their use of its public realm is increasingly limited to its non-gentrified parts.

## **Chapter Seven: Common cause and the ideal of diversity – the political practices of early gentrifiers at Bermondsey Street**

### **Introduction**

If the emphasis of Chapters 5 and 6 was on the outcomes of gentrification on Bermondsey's long-term residents, here my focus is on the process and the role of the various actors who contributed to it. While there have been several studies which present gentrification as an urban strategy (Hackworth and Smith 2001; Smith 2002; Slater 2004; Lees and Ley 2008), our understanding of why and how the strategy is implemented from the perspectives of social actors remains limited (Harris 2008; Doucet et al 2011). The aim of this chapter, then, is to gain the perspectives of some of those involved in the creation of Bermondsey's version of the 'gentrification blueprint' (Davidson and Lees 2005: 1167) that is being reproduced around the world, emphasising the role of the actors who shape gentrification, how their ideas gain influence and, subsequently, how gentrification is actively created in local contexts.

The basis of this chapter is the narratives of a different generation of Bermondsey inhabitants, namely a group of early gentrifiers to the Bermondsey Street conservation area (see Figure 1.5), now the most conspicuously upgraded part of the wider neighbourhood. All had to varying degrees and at different times been involved in an influential local community group, the Bermondsey Street Area Partnership (BSAP), founded and run by incoming middle class residents and business owners. At first glance the participants follow the template of the 'pioneer' gentrifier (Smith 1996), taking the risk of moving to and buying housing in an abandoned area, capitalising on its architectural heritage to create a local template for inner city living, and thus expanding the urban frontier prior to a more widespread arrival of middle class inhabitants. Yet their narratives displayed a noticeable commitment to the area's social diversity that



sits at odds with the pioneer typology. Some of them actively sought to defend this diversity through the lobbying role of BSAP. The organisation sought to promote a vision of Bermondsey Street as an 'urban village' whose character and value is at least partly derived from the mix of inhabitants' backgrounds. Keeping the qualities of place that first attracted them to Bermondsey Street partly involved preserving the status of long-term residents. However, despite some success at encouraging the local council to adopt their proposals into planning policy, the narratives also show how their concern for the place of long-term residents is intertwined with their own fears about neighbourhood change under the most recent gentrification cycles.

### **New uses of space at Bermondsey Street**

The wider context of how Bermondsey started to gentrify in the early 1990s was profiled in the Introduction. At its economic peak in the mid-twentieth century, the Bermondsey Street area concentrated a network of buildings containing manufacturing and processing industries, reliant on the nearby docks for their raw materials and on the dense housing estates that bordered the street for their employees. As the London docks gradually declined in economic significance from the 1970s, so did Bermondsey Street. The principle of mass decentralisation of people and industry from inner London as first outlined in the 1944 London Plan were fully felt in Bermondsey as families and firms were relocated to outer London and beyond. By 1991, Bermondsey Street's population had fallen by 38% in twenty years and a third of industrial premises were vacant (Civic Trust 1995), leaving large tracts of empty buildings and warehouses. The London Docklands Development Corporation's work at Bermondsey Riverside by the late 1980s had succeeded in its intentions of reimagining south London's former dockside buildings as high-end housing and it was not long before the gentrifier gaze turned further south to Bermondsey Street. Here, however, the support of a similar government agency to provide the infrastructure which could support gentrification – renovation grants, land use changes and streetscape improvements, for example – was notable in its absence. It was not, then, a space that had already been securitised for new

middle class inhabitants, unlike large tracts of London's former docklands. It also contrasted with the new sites of cultural spectacle and experience being produced at Bankside with strong support from Southwark Council, giving it a 'backwater ambience' (Hutton 2008: 114) compared to the riverside activity just to the north. As detailed below, the fact that Bermondsey Street was not a regeneration or investment priority for the Council gave the local community group space to create its own vision for the area.

So rather than government or its agencies, the gentrification of Bermondsey Street was instead led by individuals attracted to the cheap property and a version of the 'loft living' aesthetic first identified by Zukin (1982) in SoHo, Manhattan. This saw derelict industrial buildings being converted into large open-plan 'lofts' by artists that offered the possibility of large, cheap spaces where they could live and work. Zukin (1982) locates loft conversion within a wider process of urban restructuring, in particular the necessity for the profitable reuse of deindustrialised urban space for an expanding middle class. As factories are dismantled and wharves and warehouses disappear, so the industrial built form is refurbished to meet new consumption demands, including cafés and boutiques catering for high-income urban elites (Savitch 1988, Sassen 1995), as well as accommodation in converted warehouse spaces. But more than a product of economic restructuring, there is also the appeal of inner city to gentrifiers as a space to define new lifestyles (Caulfield 1994; Butler 1997).

Conversions from industrial buildings formed the dominant new housing typology in the early gentrification cycles at Bermondsey Street. However there was a co-existence between new forms of residential developments and post-industrial employment. So although it was classed as an employment area, new developments were allowed to have a 'live-work' element in building conversion, furthering the appeal for new residents and helping turn Bermondsey Street into an enclave for small-scale creative industries such as design, architecture and media (Hutton 2008). An interesting example of this was the Delfina Studios, which was in a former chocolate factory at the north of the street. Founded by Delfina Entrecanales, an art patron who had moved to Bermondsey Street in the late 1980s, the studios offered workspace for promising young artists selected

by an annual competition. The ground floor of the factory hosted a gourmet restaurant that provided an income stream for the Trust, as did endowments and donations.<sup>18</sup> The organisation's significance to the wider area is how it used high-end consumption at the restaurant to support the philanthropic work of the trust, underlining a synergy between the creative industries and the cultural preferences of the new elites (Zukin 1988). Interview participants explained how it also had symbolic importance as one of the earliest former industrial sites to be converted into a distinctive marker of cultural consumption; one describing it as 'a trophy to show how the area had changed'. Bermondsey Street's profile as a creative enclave rose higher in the 2000s as larger companies moved there, including the British shoe designer Kurt Geiger and Zandra Rhodes' Fashion and Textile Museum.

Importantly in Zukin's (1998) analysis, once the loft living aesthetic is established it cannot be contained to early gentrifiers who originally inhabit it. She describes how loft-living captures the imagination of young professionals, not only attracted to the large living spaces and character loft buildings, but also wishing to adopt the bohemian lifestyle they had come to imply due to their occupation by artists. Other writers have criticised how this new influx of middle class groups with different motives and interests from initial stage gentrifiers. In a stage variously termed 'super-gentrification' (Lees 2000, 2003a, Butler and Lees 2006) and 'regentrification' (Butler 2003), the new gentrifiers have significantly higher levels of both economic and cultural capital that has important implications for the socio-spatial characteristics of a neighbourhood. In contrast to their predecessors, the new gentrifiers appear unwilling to invest social capital into their area, despite strong rhetoric of social integration (Butler 2003). It leads to gentrifiers inhabiting a particular 'metropolitan habitus' – that is the wish to live in areas with 'people like us' with common characteristics in terms of social background, contemporary outlook and lifestyle – but with 'very few points of access to other sorts of people' (Butler 2003: 2483). Similar behaviour has been

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<sup>18</sup> While the foundation still exists, the studios closed in 2006 and were sold for conversion into apartments, perhaps succumbing to the development pressures in the area that participants describe later in this chapter.

observed among inhabitants of new-build gentrification schemes, who can insulate themselves from their surroundings in securitised enclaves (Davidson 2010).

As Bermondsey Street's gentrification cycle developed, it became no longer based primarily on the renovation of industrial properties by owner-occupiers – not least because there is only a finite amount of actual industrial buildings which can be converted – but driven by corporate property developers who sought to capitalise on the area's new profile as vibrant, creative and viable for certain strata of the middle class. Two aspects of this new-build gentrification trend can be seen in the housing typologies of the area. There are several gated housing developments built in the mid-1990s by volume housing developers on relatively large brownfield sites. These are of a high density and with little reference to the surrounding urban fabric, far removed from the loft lived aesthetic. Several were built by a volume housebuilder, Bellway Homes, including in the Bermondsey Street conservation area Leathermarket Court (Figure 7.1). They reflect a 'global style of building' (Davidson 2007: 494), whose generic appearance would not be out of place in any number of global cities.

**Figure 7.1 Leathermarket Court**



A second trend that started around 2000 is towards pastiche industrial conversions. Developers offer a simulated (and cheaper) new-build alternative, complete with exposed brickwork and 'industrial' facades, a form of 'neo-archaism' (Jager 1986: 88). A pecking order emerges between those wealthy enough to access the 'genuine' housing aesthetic which reflects the industrial heritage, and those inhabiting 'infill replicas' (Lees et al 2008: 119). At Bermondsey, this trend has coincided with local planning policy (LBS 1995b, 2002b) that sought to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of conservation areas, echoing national guidance on planning (Department of National Heritage and the Department of the Environment 1994) and design (English Heritage 2000). For example, Southwark Council's 2002 Supplementary Planning Guidance on Heritage Conservation states that new developments in conservation areas will normally only be granted permission if, among other conditions, they 'have regard for original plan forms [...] traditional patterns of frontages, scale, height and massing; [...] and] Do not introduce design details or features that are out of character with the building and the area' (LBS 2002b: 8). An upshot has been to lend support to planning applications for new developments that referenced surrounding housing typologies through pastiche.

As we shall see, the presence of new-build gentrification was often perceived as a threat to some early gentrifiers who organised through BSAP to contest some of the planning applications. Their campaign against the early designs for the Bermondsey Square redevelopment was premised on how it could undermine social diversity, and is discussed in detail later in this chapter. In so doing they formed alliances with long-term residents, finding a common cause in the desire to preserve the neighbourhood against over-development. The next section focuses is on the interviews with those middle class incomers who originally moved to Bermondsey Street in the 1990s and how their political practices defended their particular version of social diversity.

## Social diversity and residential aspirations

The sample here is nine Bermondsey Street residents involved in BSAP in different ways (see Chapter Two for sampling and research strategy). The starting point for the interview analysis is how participants recall their motivations for first moving to Bermondsey Street. A noticeable theme was the on-going decline and abandonment of the area which they saw their arrival as helping to turn. Many had arrived in the early 1990s when the recession had steepened the decline of industrial employment, offering no shortage of cheap properties for owner-occupation. An example is Richard who moved to the street in 1991 and had once played an active part in the community, by attending residents groups and liaising with local councillors. He still owned a converted loft apartment just off Bermondsey Street where the interview took place, but spent most of his time at a second home out of London. His narrative starts by describing the period between Bermondsey Street's manufacturing decline and residential growth. This is the context where local residents and businesses first came together to form BSAP, to "reclaim the street" as he had earlier put it in the interview. He describes how Bermondsey was commonly perceived by people from outside the area:

There was industry still around in the mid-80s and the traditional jobs but then there was a dip in the recession and it became a very bleak time. The famous example is how taxis wouldn't go further than Snowfield [street at the northern edge of Bermondsey Street by Guy's Hospital], or only on Fridays when the antiques market was on. There was an insurance company at the north end of Bermondsey Street, a big company which used to book taxis for its staff to get to London Bridge, they were so worried about them walking on the street. The year after I moved in there were something like 40 murders within one square mile of Bermondsey Street. They were gang related and created an atmosphere that Bermondsey is a terrible place and things are awful there. [...] The local community centre was basically a youth crime hangout, Tylers Estate [at the north end of Bermondsey Street] was then the worst in the borough, 30 or 40 squats there, no investment and the area was really suffering. [...] So you've also got to

remember that despite all of this, or because of it you might say, professionals and bohemian types started to move here because it was cheap, I mean these vast warehouses were going for ridiculously small amounts, that's how big the recession's impact was, they were halving in value between 1990 and 1991 as firms went under. But if you could ride it out, you'd know you were sitting on a goldmine.

Richard's description of what Bermondsey was like at the moment prior to its gentrification contains a number of key issues that are worth considering. Firstly, how the past is used in his narrative. There is an interesting contrast between the way Ian recollects the past in this narrative and how many of the long-term residents did in Chapter Four. Unlike the long-term residents, who often spoke of an idealised and much missed community of safety and intimacy, these participants emphasised the lawlessness and despondent atmosphere in which they intervened. It may still be subject to historical inaccuracies – the possibly apocryphal behaviour of taxi drivers and a local employer – but has value in terms of how the past is used to articulate the present (Linde 1993). It is not, then, a form of nostalgia as defined as a longing for the past (cf. Wilson 2005), but the reverse, namely a positioning of the speaker as an active agent who witnesses the area's positive change, and where the temporal distance from the past is celebrated.

The second point is how the narrative is closely aligned to a discourse where Bermondsey is a frontier and where the participants play the role of pioneers, taking the risk of moving to an area and helping securitise it for other middle class inhabitants. The talk implies taming an urban frontier inhospitable to the middle classes through select individuals' journey of self-discovery. Much of the criticism of the term is its implication that gentrification is taking place in a vacuum where no other inhabitants live. While Richard does refer to other pre-existing inhabitants, it is done so in entirely negative terms (gang members and squatters). The effect of the pioneer discourse is to 'sweep the city clean of its working class geography and history' (Smith 1996: 27). Through this journey the pioneers set out to make personal financial gain by converting an urban environment into a viable, secure location for middle class living. This is the 'risk

premium' (Skaburskis 2008) that the early gentrifiers took when moving to Bermondsey Street. As potential inhabitants they weighed up the gamble of moving to a disinvested area which may not improve over time as expected or will fall short of their expectations, but with potentially a greater financial reward than a move to an already established middle class residential area (Beauregard 1986). In Richard's case, by emphasising the hostile elements of the past, he emphasises the risks he took when moving to the area and the achievement of the financial gains which he later accumulated. As we shall see, financial returns were often not the prime motivators for these early gentrifiers – neighbourhood character, social diversity and central location were more frequent reasons given in interviews for moving to Bermondsey. Nevertheless, the fact that their investment in the area may not yield dividends unless the rest of the neighbourhood improves in line with gentrifiers' expectations contributes to the risk premium.

However, the image of an urban pioneer did not sit comfortably with most other participants' narratives of Bermondsey's past and how they as gentrifiers negotiated its period of disinvestment. Perhaps significantly, the above extract occurred towards the start of the interview and is akin to the practice of establishing the narrator's credentials which long-term residents used in their narratives of urban decline (Chapter Four). Richard uses the discourse of a dismal past to underline the risk he took in investing in the area in contrast to more recent arrivals whom he criticised later in the interview. Richard was exceptional among participants for his emphasis on economic motivations, perhaps reflecting how he appeared somewhat disillusioned with the area and, partly as a result, no longer lived there full time (for example, later in the interview he complained how Bermondsey Street was now 'overrun with City boys'). Most other participants remained to differing degrees enthusiastic about living in Bermondsey and other motives than the economic were apparent. As we shall now see, these narratives showed how notions of identity and place feature highly in a complex interplay with economic factors (Podmore 1998, W. Shaw 2006).



A different portrayal shows how the image of disinvestment and abandonment did not match the reality of life for some middle class incomers, and that practical, cultural and financial factors combined in her reasons for moving to Bermondsey. This version was given by Sarah, a publishing editor in her 40s, who had lived in the Leathermarket Close development since 2001. In this extract she describes what first brought her to Bermondsey.

For me the appeal of Bermondsey was quite practical in the first place. I was going through quite an important life change after my husband left, so it was during the process of looking for a new home that I came across Bermondsey as somewhere where basically I could afford and that was within zone 1. I mean, I'd always liked the idea of living right in the heart of the city, especially as my working hours can be quite erratic and I'm no fan of a long commute, but I hadn't never have thought I could, but Bermondsey was quite "undiscovered" as estate agent might say. [...] So it was mainly that, but when I actually started to look around the area more I was amazed that it was so hidden, I mean the fantastic history of the buildings, the individuality of the shops, the mix of people, and that it's really quite quiet for where it is. The fact you've got all this means that there is a real feel to it, there's this sense that whether you've lived here for generations or just moved recently, it's part of you. It gets under your skin! So I was surprised that this wasn't a destination place, but if I'm honest, a bit smug too that others hadn't discovered it.

Later in the interview she tells how surprised her friends were when they found out she was moving to Bermondsey:

They were at first, those that knew where it was, they were often taken aback. It was like, Bermondsey equals south London equals grime and crime, which I never found at all. I mean, it's ridiculous, I've always felt perfectly safe, as safe as anywhere in inner London. But yes, I quite liked the surprise on their faces as if I'd done something daring or risqué when if course it never really felt like that for me.

In expressing a combination of practical reasons and the appeal of living in a distinctive area, Sarah was more typical of these participants than Richard. In common with many gentrifiers who work in the business or creative industries, her long hours meant she wanted to live close to work and the cultural facilities offered by central London (Hamnett 2009a). This is not to deny that economic factors feature in Sarah's decisions – it is only because it was a relatively ignored that she could afford it – but to emphasise how the character of the area had engendered in her a commitment to it. She rejects the image of abandonment, arguing it reflects more the geographical prejudice of outsiders. She differs from a more orthodox pioneer typology; indeed Sarah seems to enjoy the kudos of living in a hostile area precisely because it contradicts her own experience. Rather than the urban pioneer capitalising on the economic potential of a disinvested urban area, Sarah is closer to the new middle class described by Ley (1996) who see the inner city as a site of resistance by valuing the old – in this case buildings and traditional notions of community. In so doing she counters the negative perceptions of Bermondsey, and the inner city more generally, as characterised by crime and disorder. She displays what Zukin (1987) saw as the distinct sensibility of gentrifiers who break from the suburbs to the inner city, attracted by social diversity and the 'aesthetic promiscuity of urban life' (1987: 131). In this context, Sarah saw the inner city as an attractive, vibrant and cultured places to live, a "melting pot" [...] providing opportunities for variety, social mixing and vibrant encounters between very different social groups' (Holloway and Hubbard 2001: 120–121). She stresses two concepts which came up frequently in participants' discussions of the area's appeal: social diversity bringing benefits of living in proximity to different types of inhabitants; and the 'urban idyll' as an alternative to the rural or suburban living environments more typically appealing to the middle classes (Hoskins and Tallon 2004).

Interestingly Sarah lives in a gated development, a more recent and cheaper entry point to the Bermondsey Street housing market than the original industrial conversions. Despite Leathermarket Court epitomising the type of highly securitised housing which limits access to social difference (Atkinson and Flint 2004, Davidson and Lees 2005), she at the very least speaks the language of

social mixing. Accompanying the magnetism of the inner city for participants like Sarah is a high level of awareness about how gentrification can threaten the aspects that initially attracted them. A further example is Danielle, an art teacher in her early 60s, who lived with her husband, also an art teacher. Their home was a former warehouse that a commercial developer had converted into fifteen apartments. While the exposed beams marked out the property's industrial heritage, the layout and size of the apartments was more conventional than the expansive lofts converted in the early stages of the street's gentrification. Danielle and her husband moved to Bermondsey having sold a larger family home in a south London suburb when their two daughters had left home, downsizing the space for a central London location. Danielle spoke of how the area's appeal was premised on diversity, but which was becoming increasingly vulnerable. She starts by recalling her and husband's decision to move to Bermondsey:

Where we lived before was fine but it was not really us, very samey. It was always a stage and somewhere we wanted to get out of once the children had grown up. It's so completely different here though. [...] One of the things I really noticed when I moved here was how varied the area was, in terms of being cheek by jowl with a council estate and a refurbished loft warehouse say. That for me definitely adds to the feel of the place. [...] I think keeping that diversity is really important, you need that mix for the area to have that community feel and as I said earlier, that mix is precisely why people move here [...] I think more and more it's something we need to work on. You look at other areas of London and it's withered away because people don't have the time or inclination to invest in their area, and a lot of us here are conscious of not letting that happen to our neighbourhood.

Danielle emphasises the contrast between the homogeneity of their previous suburban neighbourhood and the diversity of their current one. For her, the appeal of Bermondsey rests on the mix of people who live there, whether lifelong inhabitants or recent arrivals. It is worth considering which type of inhabitant contributes to this ideal of social diversity, given how the wide range of different ethnic and social groups makes contemporary Bermondsey typical

of inner London. Absent from their narratives are the new migrants or minority ethnic groups which dominated the long-term residents' descriptions of neighbourhood heterogeneity in Chapter Four. Instead, these participants called on the long-term, white working class as examples of inhabitants which constituted social diversity, including the antiques traders or estate residents whose families had lived for generations in the area.

Another significant aspect of Danielle's narrative is how she is sensitive about laying claims to urban space when she is such a relative newcomer to the neighbourhood. Later in the interview she said:

I mean, I've lived here ten years but I still always say to people that it's "only" ten years, because there are those who've been here their whole lives and for generations before that, so it's nothing in comparison.

Her narrative reveals an awareness of her own position as a gentrifier and her effects on long-term residents as an 'other' also inhabiting the neighbourhood (Butler with Robson 2003). The subtext of gentrifiers potentially displacing long-term residents means she underplays her claims of belonging to the community. For her, long-term residents are an essential part of the neighbourhood, contributing to the social diversity which she sees as underlying the positive sense of community. They bring a degree of authenticity to the neighbourhood and a distinctiveness which Danielle feels is lacking in other parts of London which have been homogenised by a dominant social group. She compares these areas to Bermondsey Street which still has long-term residents whose presence defends the sense of community from undermining processes of urban change. Danielle appears aware of the paradox that, as a gentrifier, she could be contributing to long-term residents' displacement. One way she seeks to negotiate this contradiction is by emphasising how she is prepared to 'invest' in the area – commit social capital through her time and energy spent on community activities which preserve what makes the area distinctive to her. As this distinctiveness is premised on authenticity and diversity, there is an assumed compatibility of her interests with those of long-term residents. In this way she can imply the benefits which her presence brings to all inhabitants of

the area. Rather than a threat then to social diversity, she positions herself as one of its defenders.

A similar level of self-reflexivity is seen in this extract from Ian, one of the founding members of BSAP. He is in his late 50s, an advertising professional in semi-retirement. He lives in large apartment which integrates some of the original elements of the warehouse such as lacquered metal columns, exposed brick walls and ceiling beams. Here he explains how there is a confluence of interests between some gentrifiers and long-term residents over trying to resist developmental pressures.

I suppose we are all in a way gentrifiers, it's not a label I like because its connotations, but we are in the sense of being largely from middle class backgrounds and we were new to the area [...] But where I'd disagree [with the term] is that actually we're working with those who've been here all their lives. Much of what we do is trawling through planning applications, understanding what impact the developments will have and objecting where we feel they'd have a negative effect, in terms of scale, design, so on. [...] Homogenisation will be the spiritual death of Bermondsey Street. A lot of what is proposed affects everyone who lives here, from the council estates to the lofts on Bermondsey Street. We see the same threats in all the new exclusive housing, it matters to all of us that local people don't get a look in.

Ian contests the gentrifier term and positions himself away from it as he is acutely aware of its negative cultural image. Instead, Ian positions himself and his peers as effective advocates against the over-development of Bermondsey that affects a wide range of inhabitants. He is therefore conscious of the impact that gentrification pressures can have on the area and his own complicity within this as one of the first incomers to the area. Ley (1996) explains how, often unwittingly, such incomers acted as entrepreneurs, carrying out exploratory ventures by inhabiting the area which, if financially rewarding, would mark its suitability for developmental activity by corporate investors. 'Until revitalizing neighbourhoods have been well tested by commercial success, larger companies are frequently too skeptical to enter' (1996: 45). The fact that,

sometimes inadvertently, these early gentrifiers' efforts to improve Bermondsey Street predicated the arrival of large scale developers was a source of anxiety for participants, as we shall later see. What is clear in the extracts from both participants is how they feel threatened by changes occurring at Bermondsey Street. For Ian, there is a fear of 'placelessness' (Duncan and Duncan 2004: 4), of an over-homogeneity which diminishes difference across local scales. It was particularly apparent with Sarah who appeared unsettled by pace and scope of spatial change:

I'm not against people moving to Bermondsey, I'm not unrealistic about that. But it does seem to me that much of the new housing is marketed at a particular "type"— young, wealthy, no kids, City job, so on. And having that influx has really changed the complexion of the area, so one of the big complaints round here is how it's restaurants replacing pubs, a lot of the older shops are going.

A point made in Chapter Four was how a fear of decline can be a pervasive narrative in the contemporary city and it was no exception for those among the group who had settled in the area long enough to witness change. This is perhaps surprising given that as gentrifiers they are key actors in the dominant force of change in the area. What is interesting is how the precise source of the threat depended on the participant's individual position. Those who lived in the high-end industrial conversions were more likely to decry the developers whose infill housing diluted the architectural heritage or over-densified the area. Rose was one participant who believed that "developers want to cram as much in as possible and there's very little consideration of how it all fits in with the surroundings." Implicit in such complaints is that these new housing typologies devalue by proximity the quality of their own housing. For others it was the transient nature of newer gentrifiers regarded as lacking commitment to the community. Danielle for example contrasted how she was committed to living in the area for several years with the perspective of more recent incomers: 'I think that rather than being a home for several years, it's become a stepping stone to that time when you want to settle down and belong to where you live.' In varying ways they positioned themselves in opposition to gentrification, or rather to its

most recent cycles, despite awareness of how their own presence in the area is a product of gentrification.

The responsibility which Danielle and Ian felt towards preserving the social mix of Bermondsey Street, and their willingness to work at preserving it, distinguishes them from the gentrifier typologies from the academic literature outlined so far in this chapter. The privileging of cultural motives over economic ones for moving to the area, their view of social mix as central to their perceptions of community, and the referencing of long-term residents as integral to the neighbourhood contrasts them with Smith's (1996) pioneers, Lee's (2000, 2003) financiers and Butler's (1997) metropolitans. They would appear to have more in common with 'social preservationists' (Brown-Saracino (2009), as the type of gentrifier that actively works to maintain long-term residents' presence in their neighbourhood, not least because their self-identity is partly defined through their attitudes towards long-term residents. Where they differ from the social preservationists is that their practices do not include preserving the cultural activities of long-term residents who, in Brown-Saracino's (2009) study were from different ethnic backgrounds. Instead it is focussed on housing security as the route to maintain long-term residents in the area.

As discussed in Chapter Two, in the UK the impact of gentrification-induced displacement can be more effectively mitigated by housing policy measures (Hamnett 2009) and has more nuanced outcomes, rather than the rent hikes and evictions that can characterise gentrification processes in the United States (Davidson and Lees 2010). Just as the effects of gentrification can be less drastic for long-term residents, so the concerned gentrifier's efforts to limit them are less explicit and tend not to form a concerted anti-gentrification movement (Moran 2007). Hence BSAP's role in lobbying for more affordable housing in planning proposals and organising events to bring together inhabitants, rather than explicitly working to protect long-term residents' stake in the area as Brown-Sarancino's (2009) social preservationists do. Long-term residents are not at the forefront of the participants' concerns, but rather represent a constituent part of the qualities of social diversity which they highly value in the area. Where the typology perhaps also needs to be extended is by recognising

that this does necessarily imply that these gentrifiers are acting from entirely altruistic motives, but shows how their sense of place relies on the presence of long-term residents. What seems to be happening in Bermondsey Street is that by defending long-term residents' stake in the area, these gentrifiers seek to bolster their own position against the homogenising effects of corporate-led gentrification. For these gentrifiers, the continued upgrading of Bermondsey Street has brought about undesirable changes to the urban imaginary that initially attracted them to move there. One response is to resist the influx of other middle class professionals who buy into a different vision of urban living that lacks their commitment to social diversity. The early gentrifiers assume a confluence of interests between themselves and long-term residents in resisting development pressures, rather than simply seeking to defend a marginalised section of the area's inhabitants. The social diversity which long-term residents represent becomes a narrative motif around which the early gentrifiers reference to distinguish themselves from more recent arrivals and to defend their own vision for the neighbourhood.

What this vision entails forms the remainder of this chapter through examining the work of the Bermondsey Street Area Partnership, the main forum where the early gentrifiers' political practices are mobilised against from the worst excesses of gentrification. This is shown through the case of the Bermondsey Square redevelopment where BSAP led a coalition with local tenants-residents groups and antique traders against initial plans that were criticised in part for the lack of affordable housing.

### **Protecting place and community at Bermondsey Square**

An important element in terms of Bermondsey's gentrification is how BSAP used its influence to promote a version of social diversity. The community group played a fundamental role in guiding the area's development, proposing their own masterplan to the local council and orchestrating campaigns against developments which the group perceived as threatening the diversity or appearance of the area, and sponsoring neighbourhood events, including the



annual Bermondsey Street festival. BSAP often acted in coalition with other partners, for example with antiques stall traders and other local businesses, or the Leathermarket Joint Management Board, the tenant management organisation for several estates around Bermondsey Street. The Bermondsey Street Association, as BSAP was called before 2000, was started in 1993 by a small group of middle class incomers and business owners in Bermondsey's nascent creative industry sector. The association emerged from a sense of neglect at the hands of the borough council and that reversing the area's decline was not a political priority locally.

We heard earlier from Ian, one of BSAP's founding members. An effusive supporter of his neighbourhood, he was clearly proud of some of the changes to the street which BSAP had argued for. He explained how a group of inhabitants became motivated to form the association when the council proposal in 1991 to turn an abandoned warehouse in Newham's Row into a homeless hostel. Principal among their concerns was the damage it would do to the reputation of the neighbourhood:

It was the sense of Bermondsey being used as... one wouldn't want to say a dumping ground but that putting the hostel here would further entrench Bermondsey as a place of last resort where you'd want to move from not to, when of course it is a home to many different people and that needed to be the focus of the council, rather than somewhere which could be neglected and shoved to the side. So that's how it started, a ramshackle collection of residents and local businesses, all different backgrounds and means, but I suppose what we had in common was a reluctance to see the area carry on declining, [...] but it was such a critical issue which would have real, tangible impact on our quality of life, it brought a unified response.

The successful campaign involved organising public meetings, a petition and lobbying local councillors. This was in the context of Southwark Council starting a series of transformative regeneration programmes, at Bankside, Elephant & Castle and Peckham, meaning that "Bermondsey was some way down their list

of priorities” as Ian later put it. Here the focus is more on wanting to achieve political recognition and protection for the area. What Ian argues is that the area has been politically neglected but not abandoned demographically, hence the emphasis in the extract on the variety of residents with a long-term commitment to the area. What the episode also reveals is the limit to social diversity which, as we saw earlier in the chapter, was the basis for the area’s appeal among these early gentrifiers. Again it underlines how their ideal of social diversity is constructed to include certain residents and excludes others, in this case the homeless. Nevertheless, even at this very early stage of Bermondsey’s gentrification, there is an alliance of interests between gentrifiers and long-term residents that the association helped orchestrate. However, it started and largely remained an association ran by professional incomers, whether residents or employers. Someone who observed the start of the association was Robert, neighbourhood manager for Bermondsey Street at the time. He explained how: “When it started the antique dealers weren’t interested at all, they liked it being run down, I think they liked the atmosphere of people venturing to this part of London when you had to survive the journey to get a bargain.” Meanwhile the local tenant residents associations had more pressing concerns: “Their focus was on the estates and the actual homes, dealing with all the problems of housing.”

Another example of BSAP’s political practices to preserve social mix is the contested planning process behind Bermondsey Square, touched on in Chapter Five. Since the mid 1990s, BSAP had argued for the site being redeveloped from a car park to central hub for the area with shops and public space. Chapter Five described the present form of Bermondsey Square, a development which took almost ten years to be completed since the first plans were submitted to Southwark Council. The slow route to completion partly relates to the square’s sensitive location within the Bermondsey Street Conservation Area, with listed housing along one boundary and a listed church along another. The Square is also the site of the remains of Bermondsey Abbey, a Scheduled Ancient Monument and home to the antiques market since 1948. The site was owned by Southwark Council and, when not used for the morning market on Fridays, the square served as a car park. Proposals to redevelop the market site extend back

to the mid-1990s when the Council ran a series of public exhibitions on future uses for the site. Based on a development brief, a preferred scheme was selected in March 1999, with support from BSAP and other local community groups, from a consortium of Urban Catalyst, Igloo Regeneration, ARUP Associates and Atlantic Estates (the landlord to antiques traders at the market). The scheme was predominantly five storey and included a small cinema, as an example of a community facility bringing benefits to the wider locality, as well as a hotel and restaurants. The inclusion of Atlantic Estates was important in winning traders' support for the redevelopment. Their involvement in the successful redevelopment of the King's Road antique market mitigated traders' concerns that fewer stalls would be accommodated in a redesigned Bermondsey Square.

Soon after the scheme was selected as preferred developer, Atlantic Estates dropped out and the consortium significantly revised the scheme, prior to submitting a planning application in October 2001. No consultation took place in the interim and the revised scheme caused considerable rancour to local communities. The height of the development had increased from five to eight storeys, the cinema had been removed, and the market traders would not all be accommodated on the site, requiring some of the 300 traders to locate their stalls on the roads surrounding the square. In their place were increased ground floor service and leisure units. In an interview, a developer at Igloo Regeneration said the reason for the change was that the Council wanted to seek a high financial receipt for the site than they had originally believed and the additional costs of working within the constraints of foundation design on a site that is a Scheduled Ancient Monument [Dev/02].

The scheme was objected to by English Heritage, which criticised the scale and massing of the development, and the fact that it made no significant contribution to the appearance of the Conservation Area. At a local level, opposition to the scheme was based on a perception that the proposal would overdevelop the site, literally overshadowing part of the Conservation Area and adding to the sense that the neighbourhood was being redesigned to serve the needs of incoming gentrifiers. The campaign against it was orchestrated by BSAP, coordinating a petition and a protest outside the council offices, but was

supported by the nearby estates' tenant management organisations and the antique dealers. Following the protests, in Autumn 2002 Urban Catalyst conducted a renewed round of consultations. New architects were appointed and changes were made to reduce the scheme's impact on the Conservation Area and listed buildings surrounding the square. The height of the three blocks was reduced by one storey each, and the overall width and bulk of the building facing the market square was decreased. The community cinema returned to the plans and, in a concession to the heritage lobby, archaeological remains of the abbey would be kept visible through a glass floor in one of the restaurants, with access requirements written into the lease. The scheme's development and funding partners changed further, before it was finally completed in 2008 by Igloo Regeneration.

What is significant in both examples is how some of the early gentrifiers were able to mobilise their social capital to consolidate the wider community around their campaigns and gather their support. Robert described one of BSAP's founding members:

He was very persuasive, a smooth networker and he knew how to stir up a community. And it needed that, no one else was willing to take up the mantle, the TRAs were focused on the awful condition of the flats, infestations, damp and so on.

The gentrifiers therefore also had the time to make an investment in the wider neighbourhood, in contrast to long-term residents whose associations were focussed on the more immediate concerns of housing conditions. What Robert and Ian argue is that the interest of gentrifiers coincided with those of long-term residents while their knowledge of local politics and community organising could be to the benefit of other inhabitants. This is not to argue that financial motives were entirely absent from these gentrifiers' motives when they protested against the hostel or the square's development. Both protests can be interpreted as attempts to defend the financial value of their investment in the area, in the first case, from the arrival of low-status incomers, and in the second from a degrading of the built environment. Yet the protests also reflect their objections to the homogenisation of the area and the resultant threats to a wider group of

inhabitants. They therefore demonstrate how the activities of gentrifiers were not always antagonistic to the interest of long-term residents. It also points to a certain dilemma faced by some of these participants, namely their desire to improve the area in line with their vision for urban living, while simultaneously wishing to protect 'their' neighbourhood from excessive gentrification, with its negative effects that they perceived on social diversity and on their own quality of life. As the next section describes, some participants increasingly felt the balance had swung away from the characteristics that initially encouraged them to move to Bermondsey.

### **An urban village for inner London**

Following the successful campaign against the hostel, BSAP was formally constituted in 1993, and the activity shifted to actively developing an alternative vision for the area as a way of reversing the decline that it perceived the Council was prepared to tolerate. Ian explained how "we really felt that it wasn't enough to be a reactive organisation, sort of come together to defend what the area was like and stop change happening, and that wasn't realistic and change would happen anyway." More than a conservation lobby, BSAP soon had a productive capacity and a distinct programme of change it worked to pursue. Richard put it this way:

The thinking was, wouldn't it make more sense if we set out our own vision for the area and to be proactive about it. This is how Bermondsey Street should be, so it's not left to planners, who quite frankly had bigger fish to fry, or left to developers to come in and do what we want, as we all knew it was just a matter of time before suddenly the area became "it" [...] We could tell by '95 that Bermondsey was a prime site, we didn't know how it would happen or when it would happen, we just that it would happen, so we needed to prepare.

It was in this context that BSAP, using a grant from English Heritage, commissioned the Civic Trust to develop a masterplan (1995) for the area,

setting out proposals for the area's future development.<sup>19</sup> Robert was blunt about why the masterplan was needed: "We knew we were rich pickings for developers so the report tried to pre-empt it by getting community ideas in first." The Civic Trust report starts by describing the range of building typologies, including an audit of the listed buildings at risk, such as the Leathermarket and the Sarsons Vinegar Factory (both have since been restored and adapted into offices) and potential sites for development, in particular Bermondsey Square. Since the mid-1960s it had hosted the antiques market once a week but served as a car park the rest of the time. It was 'possibly the most disappointing space in Bermondsey' but one which 'should be the central focus of the whole area' (1995: 6). The report then presents a rich description of Bermondsey's history from the fourteenth century to the present day. A constant theme in this narrative is how Bermondsey has always been a site of great diversity. This is both in terms of a mix of industrial functions – historically associated with the leather and wool trades, and more latterly design professions, paper-related industries and the antiques trade – and of land uses, with a range of housing types densely packed among business and industrial sites. The report notes the emerging gentrification of the area, describing the population change in the early 1990s from almost entirely working class to more mixed, while two thirds of manufacturing jobs were lost in the area during the 1980s.

It is noticeable how preserving this mix is a major aim of the report's proposed development strategy. This is premised on the notion of Bermondsey Street as an 'urban village', a term not fully defined in the report but implying space of diversity, sustaining the existing mix of residents and businesses. Indeed, the Civic Trust report was not the first time the concept had been applied to Bermondsey. Writing in 1983, Nikolaus Pevsner described how Bermondsey Street 'still has a recognizably village character' (2002: 608). The term was much in currency at the time, having entered UK planning discourse in the early 1990s

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<sup>19</sup> The origins of the Civic Trust stem from unpopular planning decisions that led community groups forming on an ad hoc basis, to protect neighbourhoods from demolition and rebuilding. The Civic Trust was founded in 1953 as an umbrella organisation to support local action (Hebbert 1998).

as a means to achieve a more human scale, mixed-use and well-designed places (Franklin and Tait 2002). Jane Pollard describes how, against 'a backdrop of growing concern with the quality of much modern development, the concept of the "urban village" has been promoted in the UK since the late 1980s by a group of developers, architects and planners brought together through the Prince of Wales' Urban Villages Group' (2004: 184). While the concept is loosely defined, it frequently encompasses the desire to produce distinctive, sustainable mixed-use neighbourhoods that generate a sense of community and of place.

One of the first sociological studies of the 'urban village' is by Herbert Gans, who focused on the West End of Boston in the book *The Urban Villagers: Group and Class in the Life of Italian-Americans* (1962). Gans distinguishes between the 'urban village' and 'urban jungle' as two types of city environment. The urban village is described as an 'adjusted' place, where its immigrant residents have successfully adapted their essentially non-urban culture to the urban setting. The urban jungle on the other hand is 'maladjusted' – where criminals and transients occupy 'Skid Row'. Although a slum, the neighbourhood he studied was said to have an implicit social order and a clear physical boundaries, hence the potential to replicate the qualities of a village (Franklin and Tait 2002). Young and Willmott (1962) also reflect the notion of a village in the city when, in their study of Bethnal Green, refer to the population of each street or 'turning' as 'a sort of "village" ' (Young and Willmott, 1962: 109). In these studies the urban village may be socially ordered; socially diverse it is not. Writing about the Lower East Side in New York, Janet Abu-Lughod (1994) reconceptualised the term to account for a different type of district that had emerged, not one populated by a single social group, but one which was more diversified, conflictual and multicultural. This is a new type of post-industrial 'urban village', meeting the residential and consumption demands of a range of inhabitants, including 'non-enclave clientele and tourists' (Abu-Lughod, 1994: 56). More recently scholars have argued that the urban village's search for distinctiveness remains a route to homogeneity. Although its proponents may often call for place to have distinctive attributes, 'the idea of the urban village tends to generate sameness through appealing to the aesthetics and consumption practices of

predominantly professional, managerial and service classes' (Barnes et al 2006: 345). In appealing to corporate activities, aesthetics and interests, the idea of the 'urban village' provides a spatial fixity that suggests that the uncertainties, the undesirables and the unsightly are vanquished (Smith 2002). In a similar vein, Joe Moran argues in his history of early gentrification in London that the 'much-replicated notion of the "urban village" was a way for the middle classes to be part of the city but separate from it, close to its amenities but cut off from its social problems' (2007:105). In other words, it is the ideal setting for the metropolitan habitus, which Butler (2003) argues can facilitate the new middle classes to occupy the inner city while living apart from other social groups.

In promoting itself as an urban village, Bermondsey Street was following a trend that is consistent with the gentrification process that reinvents formerly neglected areas as desirable and distinctive locations. However where Bermondsey may differ is how the initial notion of the village invoked a strong sense of social diversity. Noticeable in the Civic Trust report, and BSAP's subsequent vision for the area, is the central role that long-term residents play in maintaining the urban village character and that their displacement would threaten the wider area. For example, describing how new, wealthier residents had recently moved to the area and diversified its social composition, Civic Trust states that 'This mix must be beneficial overall to the urban village provided it does not pose a "threat" to the existing community, and so long as the change is gradual' (1995: 18). Elsewhere the report highlights the importance of meeting local need for social housing if the then mix of residents is to continue. Reading as a precursor to the Urban Task Force (1996), it also contains recommendations on increasing housing density above the borough's policy of 175 to 210 habitable rooms per hectare, encouraging street level commercial uses in housing developments and small infill schemes. The prescience of BSAP's work with the Civic Trust is still a source of pride for those involved. As Robert, the former neighbourhood manager, joked: 'Why was there all this talk of Barcelona [in the Urban Task Force report] when they could have come to Bermondsey and seen what we were doing?'



The imagery of the area as an urban village is propagated today through, for example, the community centre being styled as a 'village hall', a restaurant named Village East, while Bermondsey Village forms the domain name of BSAP's website. The references to rurality may seem curious for an inner London area undergoing gentrification, a quintessentially urban process. The use of the urban village in Bermondsey concept has several dimensions. Firstly, it implies a sense of the area being located within the city, but simultaneously distinct from it; a community autonomous from its mundane or threatening surroundings and where livelihoods are intertwined with the area. While there is envisaged the intimacy and familiarity of a village, also available are the economic and social benefits of city living. Secondly, the term brings to mind different temporalities, with connotations of a mythologised rural past embodying a longstanding essence of authentic living, yet combining the contemporary reach and opportunities of the city. Finally it bestows a sense of the neighbourhoods 'otherness' in relation to surrounding districts characterised more by urban alienation and the decline of community. The appeal to 'traditional' modes of living in an inner city setting is explained by Alex, a BSAP member who worked with the Civic Trust on the report:

[Urban village] was a handy buzzword I suppose but it encapsulated what we were trying to do here. It's about combining the best of both – building a strong sense of community and providing a real focus for it in the street. You could say, what's Tanner St Gardens if not our 'village green' and parish noticeboard? We've got our high street, hardly a traditional one, but it's the focus for people to come out, bump into each other and create the area's feel. So I suppose it's about the excitement of living in the city and having all these attractions on the doorstep.

We also see echoes of this in Danielle's and Sarah's narratives, for whom Bermondsey Street would appear to provide the perfect balance between connectivity to central London and a distinctly local intimacy. Later in the interview, Sarah referred to the links between place of work and residence, another feature of the urban village, albeit one which she acknowledges is easier

to achieve for professional incomers in the creative industries than for long-term residents, given the decline of manual employment in the area.

Planners really promoted what they call 'live-work' homes, so you have a designer or architect working in the same apartment they live. And that's fascinating for me, it's like a return of the original Bermondsey St. You might know, but the oldest mansard roof buildings would have been used in the same way with artisans living up there and working the leather or wool as part of the local industry. It's a little joke of mine that we're going back to that, although slightly more up to date and high tech!

Through this viewpoint she implies an easy transition from the manufacturing past to creative industries and the positive contribution which gentrifiers make. Again, we see her self-awareness about her background as a middle class incomer could colour her view and a degree of caution ("it's a little joke") in asserting her opinion. The seductiveness of this conception of the urban village relies upon appealing to nostalgia for an ideal 'community' lost in many parts of the city (Barnes et al 2006) and here linked to familiar motifs of a village green and hall. Heritage architecture helps establish associations with the past, reinforced by the reinvention of key sites into new uses, whether residential or industrial. There are then parallels with how long-term residents remember Bermondsey as a haven of security and neighbourliness (see Chapter Four), although far from having been lost, it is being actively recreated through gentrifiers' preservationist activities.

The Civic Trust report made 55 recommendations many of which have been followed and their impact can be seen in Bermondsey Street today. Several of at risk buildings have been restored, either by private investors or through grants from English Heritage given to the conservation area following the report. Other significant changes made by Southwark Council as a consequence of the report include the easing of planning regulations on live-work units and the expansion of the conservation area, plaques on historically significant buildings, the refurbishment of public space at Tanner Street and the redevelopment of

Bermondsey Square. More broadly, the report acted as a catalyst for Southwark Council's direct involvement in area. Alex explained:

It gave [the Council] a clear shopping list of what we wanted to do and how to make best use of Section 106 money in the area. [...] It would have been unrealistic to expect all the changes we asked for to be taken on, I mean I think the older industries would have left anyway, for example. Broadly speaking though, it has succeeded.

Notable recommendations that were not been taken up include quotas for low cost, family sized housing on new developments and support for the remaining industrial businesses. Significantly the changes which originated in BSAP's masterplan reinforce Bermondsey Street as an area of middle class residency, such as by signifying its authenticity as a London neighbourhood through the conservation measures, while other moves which would have more strongly reinforced the social mix of the area fell by the wayside. In the above extract, Alex points to the wider forces of economic change which have prompted the relocation of manufacturing industries out of the inner city (Hamnett 2003), and which cannot easily be countered by local planning controls.

Nevertheless, other participants were less sanguine than Alex and felt that the principles underlying the urban village ideal were far from being achieved. The most disillusioned view was given by Robert, recalling the initial promise of what BSAP hoped to achieve in the area.

The real lesson is, you can't buck the market! Once the developers moved in, that was it. [...] I don't like the feel of Bermondsey Street, it's all expensive coffee and posh shops. Away from the street the shops are dead, everything's concentrated on the street and all the money that's gone in hasn't benefited anywhere else nearby. There's been no thought about how it fits with the Tower Bridge Road and the wider area.

None of the others were quite so strident, instead articulating an underlying disquiet about neighbourhood change. Much of this reflected the role of

corporate developers and changes to the neighbourhood composition as outlined above. Related examples include the lack of family homes meaning that the housing profile was weighted towards younger households without children, and a general shortage of housing for those on middle incomes. Despite generally being enthusiastic about how Bermondsey had changed, Sarah was one participant who acknowledged that the area was becoming polarised between high-end housing and the residual social housing: “The risk is it’s becoming quite split with little middle ground for ordinary families to live.” Within this discourse, participants express more than sympathy for long-term residents, but appear to align themselves closer to their circumstances regarding neighbourhood change. It is not just that they wish to protect the original character of the neighbourhood partially embodied by long-term residents; they see themselves as similarly dislocated by the scope of urban change while acknowledging the appreciable difference in their economic and social resources.

## **Conclusion**

Accepting that gentrification is a dynamic process subject to wide local variations (Smith and Williams 1986, Shaw 2008), this chapter has explored how the gentrifying neighbourhood is a space in which residents are not just acted upon but co-operate with, resist and stimulate trends of urban change. These participants are more than the by-product of gentrification, but agents who actively work to shape how it is played out. This was enacted by seeking to preserve the qualities of place that made Bermondsey Street amenable to their strand of residential aspirations, in particular a notion of social diversity as a vital part of city living’s appeal. However, within their narratives there is a frequent negotiation of their status in the neighbourhood and they are keen to articulate how they mitigate against the potential for conflict with long-term residents over neighbourhood use, with the activities of BSAP one strand of this. Their presence can benefit other inhabitants through BSAP’s advocacy of better

public resources for the area and its resistance to over-development. What these participants also point to is how claims to membership of a neighbourhood rests not simply on how long one has lived there or the type of home occupied, but on how prepared one is to participate actively in its public life, what Amin (2006) calls a 'politics based on participation on the ground' (2006: 1022). In Bermondsey Street, this form of local urban politics values difference and makes alliances with other interest groups through common cause, as at Bermondsey Square. By sharing their stake in the neighbourhood with long-term residents, these gentrifiers are creating new ways of belonging encompassing a commitment to a political community of active residents. While it is not uncommon for gentrifiers to state that the presence of long-term residents is valued, however the lack of interaction between them means they are 'a kind of social wallpaper' (Butler 2003: 2484), adding to the colour of the area but firmly in the background of gentrifiers' daily lives. This chapter shows how a community group can be one forum of interaction and how defending presence of long-term residents turns rhetoric of social diversity into social action.

Also apparent in their narratives is the struggle to maintain their inclusive outlook in the face of Bermondsey Street's rising significance to London's property market and their disillusionment as they try to protect and define place through the community infrastructure they established. These original gentrifiers are not secure in maintaining the socio-economic composition of the neighbourhood and, faced with the different values and practices of a later generation of gentrifiers, they represent an example of middle class residents in danger of being left behind by new elites (Butler and Hamnett 2009). The prime threat is not from 'super-gentrification' (Butler and Lees 2006), where a new group of ultra-wealthy professionals working in the City threaten to displace some of the original gentrifiers. Instead it was a fear of a type of regentrification, where the continuing evolution of the process entails new architectural forms which economically devalue the early gentrifiers' stake in the area, and brings a new cohort of professional incomers whose different political practices are removed from the 'urban village' ideals. These early gentrifiers' concern is that gentrification has intensified to the extent that Bermondsey Street is coming to

resemble one of the 'established elite enclaves rather than the ascetic pioneer gentrification spirit' (Atkinson and Bridge 2006: 16). The subjectivities of the gentrification discourse are apparent here. They conceive their own presence in the neighbourhood as mutually supportive to long-term residents, which is contrasted to that of an 'other', such as developers whose housing designs disrupt the urban aesthetic which they brought into, or the most recent middle class arrivals seen as unwilling to invest in the community.

There is a parallel here with the experience of long-term residents in Chapter Five, as both groups were engaged in intra-class rivalry. Whereas long-term residents' rivals were low-status incomers competing for social housing resources, here the early gentrifiers were engaged in intra-class rivalry with another faction of the middle classes, namely more recent gentrifiers who were seen to lack the commitment to social diversity that had made Bermondsey unique for them. The early gentrifiers compete with recently arrived owner-occupiers to define the characteristics and values of the neighbourhood, hence defending their property investment as an expression of personal identity.

The argument is not that they are acting from altruistic reasons in seeking to preserve the security of long-term residents, but nor is it purely from self-interest. Instead they are engaging in a certain type of local urban politics that meshes different interests and perspectives on neighbourhood change. As we have seen through some of the examples in this chapter, the presence of this particular group of gentrifiers has worked to mitigate against some of the negative effects of gentrification on long-term residents. There is, of course, the paradox that the participants seek to preserve an ideal of social diversity in an area, which until their arrival scarcely existed. It is not the 'traditional' notion of community life at Bermondsey which is being protected, certainly not as it was described by long-term residents in Chapter Five, but the relatively short period when the participants first arrived in the area and, it can consequently be argued, their privileged status as pioneering newcomers. It is also a selective notion of social diversity, inclusive towards white working class residents but omitting more recent arrivals, such as minority ethnic groups or, as in BSAP's first campaign, the homeless. Gentrification is double-edged for BSAP's members, presented as a beneficial process by improving services in the area

and its appearance, and rescuing it from further decline; but also a malign one, to be managed through the group's activities. The advantages are inherently destructive to the essence of neighbourhood, to the basis of its appeal, unless carefully controlled. Nevertheless, their strongly articulated commitment to social diversity, underlined by their political practices, does not sit easily with the argument in the gentrification literature (Smith 1996, Slater 2006) which suggests the process is almost always associated with conflict and segregation imposed by gentrifiers on long-term residents. Instead they share with long-term residents a close relationship with place and a growing dismay at how their conception of place is being undermined by processes of change outside their control.

## Chapter Eight: Conclusion

### Introduction

My thesis has taken Bermondsey as an example of how different social groups respond to and contest the changes in urban space brought about by gentrification. The process by which historically working class neighbourhoods can become enclaves for incoming middle class inhabitants has long captivated urban researchers, at least in part because gentrification's origins and outcomes are subject to considerable variation between, and even within, different cities. My thesis contributes to a growing body of literature that recognises the complexity and plurality of experiences in gentrifying areas (Brown-Saracino 2009, Doucet 2009, Paton 2012). I have done this through interviews with two inhabitant groups and through case studies of public space on new 'gentrifying' housing developments.

I have argued that a weakness in much of the present literature is its tendency to offer polarised portrayal of gentrification, seeing it as a binary process dividing gentrifiers as the 'winners' and positive beneficiaries, and existing residents as the 'losers', negatively affected by direct or indirect displacement (Davidson 2008). It is towards an appreciation of the diversity of inhabitants' experiences of gentrification that my research has contributed. What helps explain the different outcomes gentrification can have in cities worldwide and how different social groups will experience it are its local articulations – such as the strength of community organisations (Ley and Dobson 2008), the role of some gentrifier groups in encouraging social integration (Simon 2005) and housing tenure system (K. Shaw 2005).

It is the importance of these contextual elements that makes it so problematic to divide inhabitants between the 'winners' and 'losers' of gentrification. Indeed, a close reading of the empirical literature reveals how difficult it can be to assume how one inhabitant group will experience gentrification. While a wide body of



research has shown how the early gentrifiers can profit by upgrading dilapidated property when a neighbourhood gentrifies (Smith 1979, Beauregard 1986, Bridge 2006a) some studies have found that they themselves can be threatened as gentrification cycles mature and a wealthier elite moves to the neighbourhood (Lees 2000 and 2003, Butler 2003, Pattaroni et al 2012). Equally there is a small body of literature that points to how some working class inhabitants can derive benefits from gentrification, whether as owner-occupiers capitalising on rising property values, or as residents who appreciate the investment and new attention garnered by their neighbourhood (Freeman 2006, Doucet 2009). Individuals' responses to gentrification can therefore be ambiguous and can shift as the gentrification process unfolds. This perspective has brought with it a reconceptualisation of displacement. For many writers it is still the 'essence of gentrification' (Marcuse 1993: 181), but it can occur in a more diffuse and subtle manner than conceived in early gentrification studies. Beyond the direct displacement – forced evictions, rent contractual terminations – this body of literature regards displacement as also encompassing the loss of belonging to a neighbourhood's public realm that can encourage the original residents to move away (Marcuse 1985, Davidson 2008). Yet precisely how these indirect forms of displacement are encountered, and how these fit with wider experiences of gentrification by long-term residents, has been the subject of only limited empirical work (Doucet 2009, Paton 2012).

## **Research questions**

It was this gap in the literature that prompted the first two of my research questions: *How does gentrification affect long-term residents' housing stability?* Here I enquire how changes to the housing composition of the neighbourhood consistent with gentrification impact long-term residents' experiences of securing suitable housing. Paying attention to the indirect forms of displacement, my second research question asks: *How does gentrification affect long-term residents' access to public space?* If my first sub-question is premised on gentrification's impact on the private realm of the home, the second sub-

question looks at its changes to public space. A factor identified as a further cause of displacement is a loss of belonging to a neighbourhood as it changes to meet the needs of new inhabitants (Davidson 2008), whether through new amenities replacing those used by working class residents, or through the enforcement of behavioural norms that exclude certain residents (Brown-Saracino 2009). The cumulative effect is that long-term residents are marginalised from the changes to a neighbourhood that no longer serves their needs, eventually prompting them to move away. The experience of public space would seem particularly relevant to London where urban policy has promoted improvements to the public realm as a by-product of 'gentrifying' developments. The assumption is that long-term residents can benefit from changes to public space, even if they are financially excluded from accessing the new housing and amenities.

By researching long-term residents, I have of course chosen to study a group that has not been displaced, although it may exist as an imminent possibility and its threat may still feature, as may more subtle forms of exclusion from public space and neighbourhood resources. Given that I am engaging with an academic debate on gentrification's impact and the existence of displacement that is, at times, fierce (see Slater, 2006, 2010; Hamnett 2009, 2010), it is worth restating that my overall intention is not to question the research evidence that displacement does take place, or that gentrification's overall outcome can be hugely negative for lower income inhabitants. But by stressing the context-bound way that gentrification unfolds and the diversity of inhabitants' lived experiences, I am critical of the binary terms that can characterise the literature. By taking a place-specific approach to gentrification theory, I intend to develop a much wider understanding of the experiences and strategies used to negotiate the changing spatial form of the contemporary city.

My first two research questions respond to a gap in the literature around long-term residents' experiences; the third question addresses a gap around gentrifiers' own practices. By asking *How do gentrifiers self-organise to negotiate neighbourhood change?* I examine a group of early gentrifiers' responses to different gentrification cycles they have participated in through a

community group they founded. Central to how they have organised themselves is around the notion of a mixed community, where in its ideal form different social groups successfully share a neighbourhood. I examined how residents created a narrative for the neighbourhood that promoted social diversity and, as a consequence, housing security for long-term residents. I also considered how these early gentrifiers' perspectives of urban living intersected with their concerns for how gentrification was now taking place locally. While their status as gentrifiers could have cast them as beneficiaries of the process, I was interested in the concerns they expressed for how the more mature gentrification cycles could threaten the social diversity that initially attracted them to the area.

### **Empirical findings**

In this section I bring together the main findings relating to each of the research questions and draw out the significance to our understanding of gentrification.

Regarding long-term residents' housing stability, gentrification was present as one of a number of processes regarded as a threat, but was a notably lower concern than some of the others that participants reacted against. In Chapter Five, I analysed how Bermondsey's long-term residents were deeply concerned by the type and extent of change in the area and how these had undermined their sense of 'ontological security' (Giddens 1991) – their sense of continuity and confidence in their place in society that is sustained through everyday practice. In particular the residents described how immigration, social housing residualisation and the loss of industrial employment had combined to erode the housing stability that, in their deeply nostalgic narratives, had once characterised living in Bermondsey.

Long-term residents pathologised some new residents in the neighbourhood as the cause of their own declining status, yet they did not react in the same way towards gentrifiers. Inhabitants they classified as the threatening 'others' were those who were in direct competition for now scarce social housing, particularly

immigrants. Gentrifiers were almost entirely absent from these narratives, reflecting how gentrification was a far smaller concern compared to other processes of urban change. This is not to state that it was completely removed from their daily lives. Long-term residents described how changes to the built environment consistent with gentrification – conversion of industrial buildings and pubs to housing, for example – had undermined their sense of place by altering the spatial markers that they used to create and sustain their identity.

Why does gentrification appear to have only limited impact on long-term residents' housing security when compared to other social changes? Two reasons are apparent. Firstly, there is the combination of Bermondsey's housing profile and the specific form of gentrification that has occurred. The area is still dominated by large tracts of social housing and this remains the largest, if declining, tenure. For those in the tenure – as the majority of the long-term residents were – lifelong tenancies offered a degree of security from housing unaffordability in the private sectors of the housing market. This is, of course, not unique in London; it is a reminder that the level of protection that the European model of social housing offers working class residents in gentrifying areas means that the impact of displacement will be significantly less than in the US (Atkinson 2003, Hamnett 2009, Bridge et al 2012). Furthermore, gentrification has predominantly taken place through conversions and infill development on brownfield sites. Long-term residents do therefore not see it as immediately affecting their housing security on the estates where they predominantly live.

The second reason is that many of the participants had witnessed how gentrification benefited some family members and peers, at least those who had exercised their right to buy a former social rented home. Many of these had sold up and followed the opposite housing trajectory to gentrifiers by moving away from the inner city to London's suburbs and fringe towns. This out-movement was not imposed, the participants emphasised; rather it met the particular individuals' lifestyle aspirations for living away from the inner city. It is therefore more akin to the process of class replacement described by Hamnett (2003), as an expanding middle class in professional occupations replaces a retreating working class in the post-industrial city. What it did mean for long-term residents

is that gentrification brought an ambiguous response. The out-movement that gentrification facilitated negatively impact on the remaining long-term residents at a personal level by adding to the erosion of social networks and place identity. Yet they could also see the benefits to their peers who had been able to capitalise on the area's social upgrading. So while it may be that whether a resident can benefit from gentrification is dependent on positionality and socio-economic status (Davidson 2008), my participants' proximity to those it had benefited meant they were well disposed to viewing the process favourably.

Another important finding from the analysis of long-term residents' narratives relates to how they regard mixed communities, the dominant urban policy during the period of my fieldwork and one associated with gentrification in its aim of bringing new inhabitants to socially homogenous neighbourhoods (Lees 2003b, 2008). The image of community they describe contrasts with how the term was envisaged in policy discourse at the time (ODPM 2003). Rather than it being premised on a neighbourhood containing a greater mix of social groups and housing types, participants saw a place-based community as a state of homogeneity that had been lost as the area diversified. Part of their response to the area's changing social and ethnic composition has been a retrenchment behind an excluding attitude towards outsiders that in turn has decreased further opportunities for spontaneous encounters. Through their narratives, long-term residents therefore offered a counter-discourse of the neighbourhood's shift towards diversity as an inherent social good; theirs is one that is based on maintaining the remembered values of a homogeneous community and the benefits this brought to their sense of ontological security. It is a localised, and at times parochial, view of urban life that contrasts strongly to the one envisaged in the policy discourse of a global city (Robinson 2002).

What was a concern for long-term residents was how gentrification affected their use of public space. However, here too, responses varied and were often ambiguous. For example, some participants viewed Bermondsey Square as a qualified success as it encouraged a range of informal and formal uses from long-term residents and gentrifiers. Its dual purpose as a thoroughfare and a commercial space brought different residents together as an example of a

'micro-public space' (Amin 2002) where inhabitants can come to terms with social difference. The interactions were low level and mundane but nevertheless engendered a 'side-by-side particularity' (Young 1990) where different groups of inhabitants could claim a sense of ownership. This was in strong contrast to how long-term residents' described territoriality on the housing estates that they sought to claim exclusively for themselves. The square's redevelopment also symbolised a new vibrancy in the area that some long-term residents valued, along with feelings of safety that the increased use of public space brought. Yet there was also ambiguity in their responses, with their enthusiasm mitigated by the high-end consumption activities that occupied the square, meaning that long-term residents' main use of the square was often in a more limited and transitory form as a thoroughfare.

The second case study of a new-build public space evoked far stronger reactions among participants. Empire Square was rarely used and actively disliked by many long-term residents. They interpreted it as a space that where access was intentionally discouraged by design features. In this sense the space served a contradictory function: the access requirements of local planning policy were subverted by the design to provide the seclusion and exclusivity that added to the development's appeal to potential residents. Despite the intentions of policy-makers, Empire Square brought few benefits to long-term residents. Their response in this case was withdrawal to nearby Tabard Gardens that enforced a segregation between the area's new residents at Empire Square and long-term residents.

If gentrification was rarely at the foreground of long-term residents' narratives about housing, it was far more prominent when it came to public space. The contrasting responses to the two new-build case studies – a qualified welcome for Bermondsey Square, outright hostility to Empire Square – demonstrate the range of responses towards gentrification that long-term residents can hold. Although both case studies are examples of publicly accessible private space (Minton 2006, de Magalhães 2010), the difference in responses is noticeably varied, reflecting an overall ambiguity about new forms of public space emerging

as Bermondsey gentrifies. So they valued some of aspects of change – such as renewed vibrancy – that gentrification processes had brought while being aware that others limited how they could use public space – the high-end consumption that increasingly characterised Bermondsey Street. What their responses demonstrate is how public space and not housing is the crucible of tensions over gentrification among long-term residents. The focus of Bermondsey's gentrification on brownfield sites and conversions means that gentrifiers are not directly competing for the same housing resources with long-term residents. It is in the design and use of public space, rather than the allocation of housing, that their often contrasting interests with gentrifiers are more apparent to long-term residents.

The range of responses displayed to gentrification in housing and the public realm show that the gentrifying neighbourhood is a space in which long-term residents are not just acted upon but can resist and co-operate with trends of urban change. This occurred to an even greater extent with the early gentrifiers whose responses I analysed in Chapter Six. Through their role in the community group they founded, the Bermondsey Street Area Partnership, they had actively shaped the form of gentrification and worked to make their chosen neighbourhood more amenable to their consumption preferences. However, what was significant was their emphasis on social diversity as a vital part of the neighbourhood's appeal for them. Like Brown-Saracino's (2009) social preservationists, this meant they consciously aimed to mitigate against the potential negative effects of gentrification on long-term residents, for example by lobbying for more affordable housing in new developments. The form of local urban politics these gentrifiers founded was one that valued difference and found common cause with others, most notably at Bermondsey Square where they led a campaign in alliance with other groups to increase the affordable housing quota and win protection for market stallholders. Where I have argued these early gentrifiers differ from social preservationists is their interest was not in protecting the cultural practices of long-term residents, not least because these are far harder to identify as there is not an ethnicity dimension as there was in Brown-Saracino's (2009) case study. Instead, their efforts were focussed more on preserving the housing security of long-term residents.

These early gentrifiers' narratives were characterised by a high level of self-awareness about their status as gentrifiers and its potentially negative effect on long-term residents; the community group's work to defend long-term residents was their method for turning the rhetoric of social diversity into action. Despite being protagonists in initiating and shaping Bermondsey's gentrification, they expressed disillusionment at how latest gentrification cycles brought new residents with different values and practices that seemed incompatible with social diversity. In this way they shared with long-term residents a concern to protect and define place through the community infrastructure they established. Like long-term residents they felt threatened by the direction of neighbourhood change and the arrival of newcomers, although in their case it was not low-status incomers, but more recent gentrifiers, they were a different cohort of professional incomers with divergent political practices and preferences for new architectural forms. While the early gentrifiers conceived their own presence as mutually beneficial to long-term residents, they contrasted themselves with an other, namely large-scale developers or newer gentrifiers unwilling to invest in the community in the same way that they did. In this sense they share with long-term residents a close relationship with place and a growing unease at how their ontological security is undermined by processes outside their control. I do not argue that the early gentrifiers bought into social diversity for altruistic reasons; there is a clear self-interest at work but nevertheless one that supports a local urban politics that meshes different interests and perspectives on neighbourhood change. Likewise, their conception of social diversity is problematic as it is selective towards a nostalgic imagining of how Bermondsey was at the point of their arrival. It is inclusive to white working class residents but omits more recent arrivals and, as in BSAP's first campaign, the homeless. As with the long-term residents, their notion of community excluded groups they defined as other.



## **Theoretical implications**

My focus on the different experiences of these two groups of inhabitants moves our understanding of inhabitants' experiences beyond the paradigm where the gentrifier plays the 'winner' versus the existing resident as 'loser'. As such I take a similar position to those researchers (Davidson 2008, Doucet 2009) who are attuned to the complex, varied and sometimes contradictory responses that different inhabitants can display towards gentrification. In doing so I am not positing gentrification as universally beneficial or attempting to discount the negative impact of displacement. I have instead shown that there is another voice of those whose housing security is not threatened by gentrification, but nevertheless affected by it in terms of social interactions, neighbourhood amenities and public space. I use this section to elaborate on the implications that my research findings has to our knowledge of gentrification.

### ***Competing pressures of neighbourhood change***

The first key implication relates to how gentrification itself is positioned in long-term residents' responses to urban change. Gentrification is one dimension of their experience, but not necessarily the dominant one. The interviews found a group acutely aware that their neighbourhood was rapidly changing and were extremely anxious about the impact on their access to housing, their identity and sense of ownership of the area. Yet based on how they narrated their everyday experiences, gentrification was a significantly lower priority and had less of an immediate impact than other changes, like immigration and social housing residualisation. This has implications for gentrification research as it suggests that, if the research is to achieve a more complete representation of pre-existing residents' experiences, then the process should not be seen in isolation from other competing pressures. This is particularly the case as their responses to these other processes of urban change mirror possible outcomes of gentrification – for example, loss of place-identity or out-movement from the neighbourhood. Not all forms of neighbourhood change are the result of gentrification, nor is it the cause of all threats experienced by long-term residents. Research into gentrification's impact on pre-existing residents should be attuned to these parallel changes and how they intertwine to forge their

experience of urban change. This is not to diminish the negative impacts that the process can have on long-term residents, but rather to highlight the complex intertwining of gentrification with other urban processes and how they combine to create the ordinary experience of urban space.

### ***Segregation and intra-class rivalry***

Gentrifiers were largely outside the daily sphere of long-term residents, who were more concerned with the competition for scarce social resources that low-status incomers were seen to pose. The fact that gentrification was a relatively low priority when compared to other processes of neighbourhood change has implications beyond methodological approaches that scholars should taken to researching gentrification. It reveals a key feature of gentrification in contemporary London, namely a temporal and spatial segregation with gentrifiers (Butler 2003). Bermondsey would seem to be an example of the 'layered city' form (Marcuse and van Kempen 2000), where the lack of inter-group engagement has created an increasingly fragmented social life within the same area. For long-term residents, their segregation from gentrifiers and the development of distinct parts of the neighbourhood for each social group meant that the presence of gentrifiers was not a significant concern when compared to that of incomers from similar socio-economic groups. Gentrification was experienced almost as a separate phenomenon running parallel to their daily lives, in contrast to the social processes embodied by the low-status incomers who lived in closer proximity.

Such an analysis is consistent with urban space characterised by layering (Marcuse and van Kempen 2000) and social tectonics (Butler with Robson 2003), where for the most part, daily lives of different social groups run parallel to each other with little interaction or sharing of experiences. The limited contact does mean that there are fewer opportunities for tension or conflict between the groups, essentially placing each in a different referential frame. The tension is instead refracted inwards – an *intra*-class rivalry rather than *inter*-class as we would expect to find in gentrification theory. Long-term residents saw their main competition not from gentrifiers, but from other working class inhabitants, the low-status incomers who challenged their longstanding place-identity and their access to housing resources. The reflects the importance of housing to

ontological security and the growing social divisions between those who can privately access their own housing and those who remain reliant on a diminishing welfare state (Saunders 1984). Meanwhile the early gentrifiers were engaged in intra-class rivalry with another faction of the middle classes, namely more recent gentrifiers who were seen to lack the commitment to social diversity that had made Bermondsey unique. Both groups saw their ontological security undermined by new inhabitants who were members of the same social class as themselves.

The lack of integration between gentrifiers and long-term residents at first glance supports critiques of arguments that a socially mixed neighbourhood is a socially integrated one (Lees 2008). As conceived by planners and policy-makers, Bermondsey appears a neat embodiment of the original London Plan's ideals. It displays a high degree of housing mix and a socially diverse population, while its changing built environment reflects the need for architecturally distinct enclaves that help promote London's role in the global economy (Butler 1997, Webber 2007). Yet when participants described their spatial practices, there would appear to be little engagement between different social groups but instead segregation of residency and quotidian routines, with various neighbourhood spaces used at different times and in different ways. Put simply, the neighbourhood may be mixed but different inhabitant groups rarely mixed. The mixed community of urban policy ideals has little traction on the ground. However, I argue that this need not necessarily be problematic if there are opportunities, however scarce, in the urban fabric for banal, low-level interactions of the type seen at Bermondsey Square. Perhaps because of its contested design process, the development has resulted in a public space that is used and valued by long-term residents, although many of the high-end amenities it contains are inaccessible to them. While this case study stands out for how inclusive its public space is, its design facilitated a 'rubbing along' (Watson 2006) of different inhabitant groups that in small ways breaks down the divisions between them, with the result that long-term residents feel less threatened by changes brought about by middle class in-migration than the development represented. There may be few opportunities for interaction between gentrifiers and long-term residents but, where they do exist in the banal form as at Bermondsey Square, they help reduce the likelihood of inter-

group tension. I therefore argue that the availability of a public space that facilitates banal interactions is another contributory factor to the low priority gentrification is given by long-term residents.

### ***The limits to gentrification's excesses***

How Bermondsey Square was produced is also important to our understanding of gentrification. The alliance of the Bermondsey Street Area Partnership (BSAP) with tenant resident associations and market traders fought for an inclusive public space and greater affordable housing. The campaign demonstrates how gentrifiers' and long-term residents' interests can overlap. At least for the group of early gentrifiers active in local community politics, the presence of long-term residents was a vital component of the area's appeal and, subsequently, their attempts to shape its planning. It is worth recalling at this point how the local authority tacitly encouraged Bermondsey Street's gentrification as it fitted with their wider strategy to regenerate North Southwark by integrating it into the City economy. As I analysed in Chapter Four, although Bermondsey Street did not feature highly in the Council's priorities for regeneration – the primary focus was Bankside and Bermondsey Riverside – the strategy of BSAP was clearly complementary to the Council's overall aims for former industrial areas. Common features of the BSAP masterplan (Civic Trust 1995) and later seen in council policies (Tiesdell et al 1996, LBS 2003a) included promoting the heritage of the built environment and encouraging live-work units in former industrial buildings. What is significant about the plans of these early gentrifiers, and what put their strategy ahead of the Council's, was the emphasis they placed on social diversity. This gave recognition to the role that long-term residents had in maintaining the character of the area that appealed to the gentrifiers, and consequently the action the partnership needed to take to protect the diversity they valued.

I have argued that how long-term residents respond to gentrification needs to be seen in the context of, firstly, intra-class rivalry over the allocation of housing resources and, secondly, the emphasis on social diversity that informed the local political economy and helped shape the process locally. A final factor is the extent to which long-term residents perceived benefits from gentrification.

Participants did occasionally speak in positive terms about the new neighbourhood facilities and amenities that had appeared as gentrification started, but more frequently about transformations that were subtle and non-material. These related to the 'feel' of the place, such as the kudos of living in an area now the focus of media attention, or the sense of safety that the increased number of inhabitants gave public space at night-time. Participants were also aware of the material benefits gentrification brought some former residents, such as family members and peers, who chose to capitalise on rising property values and funded a move from the area. This last point is important to our understanding of displacement as it demonstrates how not all out-movement of original residents is the involuntary relocation because of housing unaffordability or loss of place-identity; it can also reflect social mobility, at least for the home-owning residents who have the means to act on it.

### ***Housing security and Internal displacement***

Although gentrification rarely featured in long-term residents' discussion of housing pressures, it did not mean that the process was always viewed benignly, or that its negative effects were entirely absent from their daily lives. Instead, tensions surfaced over the use and access to public space. The example of Bermondsey Square as a relatively successful shared public space was the exception rather than the trend from participants' perspective, as evidenced when they described how they no longer shopped at Bermondsey Street or avoided Empire Square. I argue that the findings on public space have two implications for how displacement is theorised in the gentrification literature. Firstly, it adds weight to arguments that the experience of direct displacement is significantly less likely in countries with an established housing welfare system (Atkinson 2003, Slater 2004; Hamnett 2009b). Notwithstanding the arguments that social housing in Europe is becoming subject to the neoliberal pressures witnessed in the North America, even in its limited form it can still prevent the worst excesses of gentrification (Bridge et al 2012). We have also seen how specifically local factors in Bermondsey - such as the strength of a community organisation and the housing tenure system - have produced a more favourable scenario for long-term residents, making it problematic to translate the revanchist accounts of gentrification and displacement to this setting. Just as gentrification theory should be attuned to how other processes of urban change

interact with it, so it should be open to the variation of its outcomes on long-term residents and of their lived experiences. So rather than laying claim to there being a single gentrification experience, research needs to consider the factors that either unite or differentiate how inhabitants are affected by the process.

This is not to discount the existence of gentrification-induced displacement in similar settings to Bermondsey. Instead it is to decouple displacement from automatically implying housing relocation and to consider the other spaces where long-term residents can face exclusion. From my research, the arena where this exclusion plays out most frequently is not in housing but in public space and its symbolic 'ownership' in respect of consumption activities and access. Long-term residents described their loss of ontological security as gentrification developed. The parts of the neighbourhood that their white working class identity once dominated, such as pubs and the high street, were subverted to cater for a newly hegemonic social group. However the housing security of long-term residents is not under threat from this shift; they have remained living in the area through several gentrification cycles and moving away from the area was not an envisaged outcome for them.

I have used the term *internal displacement* to describe how long-term residents' have been largely excluded from the gentrified public spaces of Bermondsey; the upgrading of these areas obliges them to use local services elsewhere and renounce access to its communal life, although their housing status remains relatively secure. Gentrification does not mean they must leave the area, but affects how they are able to use it; the outcome is one of exclusion but not necessarily out-migration. Exclusion based on property rights or resource allocation does not tell the entire story of Bermondsey's long-term residents, whose sense of dislocation is linked to the wider realm than the material. What is proposed is the concept of internal displacement as an additional category to Davidson's (2008) definitions, which can help account for long-term residents' experiences of gentrification in areas such as Bermondsey. Despite gentrification there remains relatively high levels of social housing, but it exists alongside polarised uses of public space that segregate old and new inhabitants.

## **The shifting place of housing security**

An emphasis in my thesis has been how the local contours of a neighbourhood's gentrification affect different inhabitants' experiences. I would therefore like to end by considering how far the findings can be generalised beyond the specific context of Bermondsey. It is also an opportunity to consider the ongoing changes to Bermondsey and their implications to the research findings.

I chose to focus on two archetypal characters from the gentrification story: 'early gentrifiers' – the middle class vanguard who kick-started the gentrification around Bermondsey Street – and 'long-term residents' – the white working class who had spent their whole lives living in Bermondsey. Both groups were chosen for the additional perspectives their experiences could bring to the gentrification literature, whether in terms of being empirically overlooked (long-term residents) or challenging the political practices in the established literature (early gentrifiers). The detailed analysis of the two groups' experiences is necessarily to the omission of the other inhabitants in Bermondsey, many of whom have featured in the background and in relational perspective to the narratives my participants told about the changes happening locally: the non-white, low-status incomers to the social housing estates; the other community groups active in the area alongside BSAP, such as the tenant resident associations; developers behind the housing schemes seen as creating the 'wrong' sort of gentrification; their residents criticised for disrupting the social balance in the neighbourhood. The most recent census data analysed in Chapter One reveal a burgeoning private rented sector that had barely featured in previous decades; given the growth, the role of this tenure in Bermondsey's gentrification would seem an obvious additional focus for future work. So while there is an assumption by participants that, for example, newer gentrifiers do not share their attachment to social diversity ideals, it is not one I have been able to explore empirically. There is necessarily a balance between 'thickness' and breadth of description within a doctoral thesis. So while not claiming to be able to offer the complete story of Bermondsey's social change over the past thirty years, I have instead concentrated on gathering the accounts that can help create a more complete portrayal of gentrification in an area.

The census analysis also points to one of the most striking features of Bermondsey, and one which I've argued has affected the response of long-term residents to gentrification, namely the high proportion of affordable housing through the social rented tenure. Although its relative size is declining, in 2011 there were still 40% of residents living in the tenure in my case study area, against a London average of 32%. The protection this gave the majority of the long-term residents in my fieldwork sample insulated them from some negative effects of displacement brought about by the arrival of wealthier incomers. Yet this is certainly not unique in the London context. For example, in the 2011 Census, the neighbouring borough of Lambeth had 35% of residents lived in the social rented sector. Meanwhile in Hackney – a borough long at the frontline of London's gentrification (Butler 1997) and where the process has accelerated by co-hosting the 2012 Olympics (Watt 2013) – 44% did so. The relative insulation has been furthered by the concentration of social housing in large estates, for the most part separated from the former industrial areas that have incubated gentrification. Again, at least in a UK context, Bermondsey is a typical product of post-War planning policy that zoned working class housing adjacent to areas of industrial employment, ultimately creating the conditions for the segregation of residential areas that developed as Bermondsey gentrified.

Through the substantial council-owned social rented sector, the welfare regime has therefore offered the long-term residents in my sample a relatively high degree of protection from economic displacement. Yet it is worth considering the question whether this still remains the case since my fieldwork concluded in 2010. Despite the economic recession, any potential stalling in the expansion of London's gentrification to new areas (Davidson and Lees 2010) has proved momentary and the pressure on the city's housing market has only heightened. Most significantly for long-term residents has been the raft of welfare reforms introduced by the coalition government since 2010 aimed at reducing state expenditure on housing. The benefits cap and the removal of the spare room subsidy (the 'bedroom tax') in the social rented sector will limit the ability of working class residents to stay in high cost inner city areas, likewise there are



proposals to replace lifelong tenancies with fixed terms ones.<sup>20</sup> A further welfare change – the removal of council tax exemption for lower income residents – has already had an effect in Southwark, with 5,800 residents summoned by the Council to court for non-payment (Gentleman 2013).

Meanwhile the supply of affordable housing has been disrupted by other policies at national, regional and local levels. The Right to Buy discount, for instance, was increased from a maximum 16% to 75% in 2012, likely to decrease further the number of units in the social rented sector. In London, the affordable housing percentage requirements on new developments have been reduced. It had stood at 50% between 2004 and 2008 and was a significant vehicle in social mix strategies (Tunstall 2012). The percentage target was replaced in the 2010 London Plan with overall numerical targets for number of affordable dwellings in a borough. In 2011-12, only seven of the 32 London boroughs achieved their targets (Aldridge et al 2013), implying the policy shift has not created an increase in the supply of affordable homes as envisaged by the Mayor. The current Mayor's *London Plan* has a new definition of affordability (GLA 2011b: Policy 3.10). 'Affordable' homes on housing schemes that receive GLA funding can be rented at up to 80% of market rates, rather than pegged to local income levels (typically 40% of market rates), raising the question as for whom the tenure is targeted and whether existing stock and new supply can be financially accessible to low income groups.<sup>21</sup>

There have also been significant changes to Bermondsey itself in the short time since the end of my fieldwork, most notably the completion of the Shard as part of the ongoing redevelopment of London Bridge. Southwark Council's ambition of integrating Bermondsey into the City's post-industrial economy will be visibly realised as an axis forms between the new London Bridge Quarter and

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<sup>20</sup> One London borough, Hammersmith and Fulham, has already started this, limiting new tenancies for its properties to five years, or to two years for 18-25 year olds and those 'guilty of unacceptable behaviour which makes him or her unsuitable to be a tenant' (LBHF 2012: 7).

<sup>21</sup> As an illustration, social rents for a one-bedroom flat in Bermondsey in 2011 were typically £80 per week, compared to £300-£350 per week for the market rate. At a threshold of 80%, rents would rise to £240 per week.

Bermondsey Street, the former high street finding an expanded market for its restaurants and boutiques in the new inhabitants of the Shard's offices, luxury hotel and penthouses. It is a reasonable supposition that internal displacement is only becoming more entrenched as the relevance of the amenities available at Bermondsey Street dwindles further for long-term residents. Similarly the impact of the proximity to the Shard is unlikely to have lessened the early gentrifiers' anxieties that the direction of the neighbourhood is seriously diverging from their expectations for it. Even more significant is whether the group is now subject to the displacement pressures associated with super-gentrification. Bermondsey's role in London's increasingly international property market and its appeal to financial elites may create the conditions for the out movement of the initial gentrifiers as has been identified in areas already affected by more advanced gentrification cycles such as Islington (Lees 2000, Penny et al 2013).

Finally, and perhaps most importantly for the pattern of gentrification, is a recent change to Southwark Council's policy on the offsite provision of social rented housing. Whereas previously the Council insisted on the onsite provision of affordable housing – and as happened at Bermondsey Square and Empire Square – this policy now allows for developers to make a contribution to funding affordable housing elsewhere in the borough (Harrison et al 2013). Essentially the Council wants to leverage high property prices in the north of the borough to fund construction in areas where commercial land values are lower, in other words, away from the gentrification frontier. The result may be a higher absolute number of affordable units that the Council can then afford to fund, but this comes at the expense of social mix in north Southwark. The effect is most pronounced where existing social housing is subject to large-scale regeneration, as at Elephant and Castle. Here the 1970s Heygate Estate is being demolished and replaced by flats largely for affluent professionals, marketed off-plan to international property investors. While some of the original residents will be able to return, it will be in greatly diminished numbers: the 1,013 council-rented properties will be replaced by 2,300 flats and houses, but just 279 are designated as affordable and only 79 of these are social rented.

## Conclusion

The story of Bermondsey is one of complex urban restructuring in which gentrification plays a role alongside several forces of change: suburbanisation, immigration and employment restructuring are also key factors which have constrained long-term residents' ability to remain living in the area. To this list, we should not omit the hastening reduction in housing support offered through the welfare state. It is too early to predict fully the impact of the new welfare regime and policies on the local housing market for Bermondsey's long-term residents. Certainly, we should be wary of indulging in a narrative of decline; as we have seen with ideals of community and public space, narratives of decline are not always as socially grounded as they first appear, and so it may be for the place of lower income residents in north Southwark. But at the very least we can say that the recent changes point to a highly fluid and dynamic system, and one in which the historical protection for working class inhabitants in inner London is being undermined. What is clear is that the conditions that have combined to create Bermondsey's version of gentrification are constantly shifting. In particular the housing tenure system, that offers protection for long-term residents and that makes Bermondsey's and London's gentrification a distinctive case in an international context, is under growing pressure. What my thesis reveals is a particular moment in its evolution as a neighbourhood through the experiences of two inhabitant groups. Both groups felt pressurised by gentrification and its consequences on their everyday lives, but for long-term residents, their housing security was not threatened by it. A major reason for this is that the large social housing tenure has acted as a significant brake on gentrification's worst effects in Bermondsey. Its sustainability is therefore critical and, if the future brings still further erosion of London's social housing, then the politics of gentrification in Bermondsey may become far more strained.

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## Appendix 1: Census analysis of social class

<b>Table A1.1 Comparison of SEG and NS-SEC 2011 and 2001: all persons aged 16-74</b>							
		<b>2011</b>			<b>2001</b>		
		<b>Bermondsey</b>	<b>Southwark</b>	<b>London</b>	<b>Bermondsey</b>	<b>Southwark</b>	<b>London</b>
<b>SEG</b>	<b>NS-SEC</b>	<b>36,109</b>	<b>224,551</b>	<b>6,117,482</b>	<b>27,901</b>	<b>183,483</b>	<b>5,300,331</b>
	<b>1. Higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations</b>	<b>6,319</b>	<b>32,254</b>	<b>807,936</b>	<b>3,833</b>	<b>21,411</b>	<b>640,162</b>
1.1	1.1 L1 Employers in large establishments	16	73	2,424	124	768	21,272
1.2	1.1 L2 Higher managerial and administrative occupations	934	5,401	151,198	1,208	6,359	212,532
4	1.2 L3.1 Traditional employees	3,222	15,288	341,727	1,431	8,366	223,511
5.1	1.2 L3.2 New employees	1,579	7,729	207,971	616	3,173	101,391
3	1.2 L3.3 Traditional self-employed	440	3,020	84,378	309	2,054	62,546
5.1	1.2 L3.4 New self-employed	128	743	20,238	145	691	18,910
	<b>2. Lower managerial, administrative and professional occupations</b>	<b>8,106</b>	<b>52,198</b>	<b>1,410,785</b>	<b>5,488</b>	<b>37,562</b>	<b>1,178,092</b>
5.1	2 L4.1 Traditional employees	4,101	26,464	676,108	2,558	18,270	528,111
6	2 L4.2 New employees	729	3,774	110,898	203	1,124	43,039
5.1	2 L4.3 Traditional self-employed	772	6,114	148,223	438	3,615	98,652
12	2 L4.4 New self-employed	132	850	24,992	6	92	4,906
2.2	2 L5 Lower managerial and administrative occupations	1,811	10,717	313,052	1,621	9,555	330,032
5.2	2 L6 Higher supervisory occupations	561	4,279	137,512	662	4,906	173,352
	<b>3. Intermediate occupations</b>	<b>3,252</b>	<b>21,748</b>	<b>723,354</b>	<b>2,228</b>	<b>16,258</b>	<b>542,568</b>
6	3 L7.1 Intermediate clerical and administrative occupations	2,004	13,055	462,808	1,202	8,426	294,445
6	3 L7.2 Intermediate sales and service occupations	875	5,934	185,530	782	5,861	191,316
5.1	3 L7.3 Intermediate technical and auxiliary occupations	301	2,231	52,818	177	1,423	36,993
9	3 L7.4 Intermediate engineering occupations	72	528	22,198	67	548	19,814
	<b>4. Small employers and own account workers</b>	<b>2,033</b>	<b>15,563</b>	<b>575,331</b>	<b>1,245</b>	<b>8,944</b>	<b>339,188</b>
2.1	4 L8.1 Employers in small establishments in industry, commerce, services etc.	454	3,328	133,327	372	2,591	108,144
13	4 L8.2 Employers in small establishments in agriculture	2	16	663	0	3	662
12	4 L9.1 Own account workers (non-professional)	1,571	12,174	439,136	873	6,335	229,207
14	4 L9.2 Own account workers (agriculture)	6	45	2,205	0	15	1,175
	<b>5. Lower supervisory and technical occupations</b>	<b>1,604</b>	<b>11,479</b>	<b>305,781</b>	<b>1,329</b>	<b>9,222</b>	<b>264,617</b>
8	5 L10 Lower supervisory occupations	1,073	7,841	187,011	1,071	7,289	192,921
9	5 L11.1 Lower technical craft occupations	492	3,391	106,729	206	1,670	60,112
10	5 L11.2 Lower technical process operative occupations	39	247	12,041	52	263	11,584
	<b>6. Semi-routine occupations</b>	<b>3,220</b>	<b>22,801</b>	<b>633,790</b>	<b>2,659</b>	<b>18,174</b>	<b>479,074</b>
6	6 L12.1 Semi-routine sales occupations	940	6,228	211,486	578	4,469	146,059
10	6 L12.2 Semi-routine service occupations	1,599	11,642	265,206	1,384	8,910	187,139
9	6 L12.3 Semi-routine technical occupations	91	777	24,256	95	498	16,682
10	6 L12.4 Semi-routine operative occupations	146	1,038	43,233	106	769	31,433
15	6 L12.5 Semi-routine agricultural occupations	24	81	1,854	6	39	1,265
6	6 L12.6 Semi-routine clerical occupations	344	2,421	69,742	346	2,231	63,951
7	6 L12.7 Semi-routine childcare occupations	76	614	18,013	144	1,258	32,545
	<b>7. Routine occupations</b>	<b>2,512</b>	<b>18,056</b>	<b>453,923</b>	<b>1,701</b>	<b>11,664</b>	<b>306,901</b>
7	7 L13.1 Routine sales and service occupations	639	4,263	109,032	349	2,317	67,744
10	7 L13.2 Routine production occupations	186	1,131	41,006	150	921	33,452
9	7 L13.3 Routine technical occupations	559	3,838	121,673	395	3,216	94,128
11	7 L13.4 Routine operative occupations	1,114	8,743	179,465	798	5,159	109,944

<b>Table A1.1 Comparison of SEG and NS-SEG 2011 and 2001: all persons aged 16-74</b>							
		2011			2001		
		Bermondsey	Southwark	London	Bermondsey	Southwark	London
<b>15</b>	7 L13.5 Routine agricultural occupations	14	81	2,747	9	51	1,633
-	<b>8. Never worked and long-term unemployed</b>	<b>2,571</b>	<b>18,144</b>	<b>506,290</b>	<b>1,894</b>	<b>13,160</b>	<b>318,754</b>
	8 L14.1 Never worked	1,857	12,697	381,748	1,349	9,300	246,692
	8 L14.2 Long-term unemployed	714	5,447	124,542	545	3,860	72,062
<b>17</b>	<b>L16 Not classified</b>	<b>6,492</b>	<b>32,308</b>	<b>700,292</b>	<b>7,524</b>	<b>47,088</b>	<b>1,230,975</b>
	L15 Full-time students	6,492	32,308	700,292	4,273	23,046	478,376
	L17 Not classifiable for other reasons	0	0	0	3,251	24,042	752,599

<b>Table A1.2 Middle class SEGs (full) 2011 and 2001: all persons aged 16-74</b>							
		2011			2001		
SEG		Bermondsey	Southwark	London	Bermondsey	Southwark	London
	<i>All groups</i>	<i>36,109</i>	<i>224,551</i>	<i>6,117,482</i>	<i>27,901</i>	<i>183,483</i>	<i>5,300,331</i>
<b>1</b>		<b>950</b>	<b>5,474</b>	<b>153,622</b>	<b>1,332</b>	<b>7,127</b>	<b>233,804</b>
1.1		16	73	2,424	124	768	21,272
1.2		934	5,401	151,198	1,208	6,359	212,532
<b>2</b>		<b>2,265</b>	<b>14,045</b>	<b>446,379</b>	<b>1,993</b>	<b>12,146</b>	<b>438,176</b>
2.1		454	3,328	133,327	372	2,591	108,144
2.2		1,811	10,717	313,052	1,621	9,555	330,032
<b>3</b>		<b>440</b>	<b>3,020</b>	<b>84,378</b>	<b>309</b>	<b>2,054</b>	<b>62,546</b>
<b>4</b>		<b>3,222</b>	<b>15,288</b>	<b>341,727</b>	<b>1,431</b>	<b>8,366</b>	<b>223,511</b>
<b>5</b>		<b>5,863</b>	<b>39,831</b>	<b>1,034,899</b>	<b>3,980</b>	<b>28,905</b>	<b>856,018</b>
5.1		5,302	35,552	897,387	3,318	23,999	682,666
5.2		561	4,279	137,512	662	4,906	173,352

**Table A1.3 Middle class SEGs (condensed) 1971-2011: all persons aged 16-74**

<b>Count</b>																
	<b>2011</b>			<b>2001</b>			<b>1991</b>			<b>1981</b>			<b>1971</b>			
<b>SEG</b>	Bermondsey	Southwark	London	Bermondsey	Southwark	London	Bermondsey	Southwark	London	Bermondsey	Southwark	London	Bermondsey	Southwark	London	
<b>1</b>	950	5,474	153,622	1,332	7,127	233,804	42	345	17,562	18	322	16,078	7	238	12,099	
<b>2</b>	2,265	14,045	446,379	1,993	12,146	438,176	75	785	36,430	32	580	30,924	41	613	30,702	
<b>3</b>	440	3,020	84,378	309	2,054	62,546	10	106	4,044	1	55	2,924	4	41	2,931	
<b>4</b>	3,222	15,288	341,727	1,431	8,366	223,511	37	397	14,848	11	262	13,121	8	208	14,141	
<b>5</b>	5,863	39,831	1,034,899	3,980	28,905	856,018	155	1382	48,080	58	986	41,344	37	750	34,682	
<b>Percentage of total</b>																
	<b>2011</b>			<b>2001</b>			<b>1991</b>			<b>1981</b>			<b>1971</b>			
<b>SEG</b>	Bermondsey	Southwark	London	Bermondsey	Southwark	London	Bermondsey	Southwark	London	Bermondsey	Southwark	London	Bermondsey	Southwark	London	
<b>1</b>	2.6%	2.4%	2.5%	4.8%	3.9%	4.4%	4.0%	3.6%	5.4%	1.5%	2.4%	4.0%	0.3%	0.9%	1.6%	
<b>2</b>	6.3%	6.3%	7.3%	7.1%	6.6%	8.3%	7.2%	8.1%	11.2%	2.6%	4.4%	7.7%	1.7%	2.3%	4.1%	
<b>3</b>	1.2%	1.3%	1.4%	1.1%	1.1%	1.2%	1.0%	1.1%	1.2%	0.1%	0.4%	0.7%	0.2%	0.2%	0.4%	
<b>4</b>	8.9%	6.8%	5.6%	5.1%	4.6%	4.2%	3.5%	4.1%	4.6%	0.9%	2.0%	3.3%	0.3%	0.8%	1.9%	
<b>5</b>	16.2%	17.7%	16.9%	14.3%	15.8%	16.2%	14.8%	14.3%	14.8%	4.7%	7.5%	10.4%	1.6%	2.8%	4.7%	
<b>All groups</b>	<b>36,109</b>	<b>224,551</b>	<b>6,117,482</b>	<b>27,901</b>	<b>183,483</b>	<b>5,300,331</b>	<b>1,045</b>	<b>9,643</b>	<b>324,165</b>	<b>1,224</b>	<b>13,224</b>	<b>399,445</b>	<b>2,367</b>	<b>26,515</b>	<b>744,928</b>	

*NB: The census data on socio-economic groups from 1971-91 are based on 10% samples.*

## Appendix 2: Interview participant categories

<b>Category</b>	<b>Number interviewed</b>
Long-term residents – individual interviews	14
Long-term residents – group interviews	12
Early gentrifiers	10
Social actors	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>

<i>Name</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age group</i>	<i>Ethnicity</i>	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Tenure</i>
David	Male	40-49	White British	Unemployed	Social housing
Enid	Female	70-79	White British	Retired	Social housing
Geraldine	Female	60-69	White British	Retired	Owner-occupation
Henry	Male	80-89	White British	Retired	Social housing
Jessie	Female	30-39	White British	Full-time parent	Social housing
Joe	Male	40-49	White British	Hospital porter	Social housing
Julie	Female	60-69	White British	Retired	Owner-occupation
Karen	Female	40-49	White British	Teaching assistant	Private rented
Kathy	Female	30-39	White British	Care assistant	Social housing
Moira	Female	30-39	British Asian	Social worker	Private rented
Paul	Male	60-69	White British	Retired	Owner-occupation
Sue	Female	50-59	White British	Medical secretary	Social housing
Tom	Male	50-59	White British	School caretaker	Social housing
Val	Female	40-49	White British	Shop worker	Social housing

<b>Table A2.3 Breakdown of social actors</b>	
<b>Interview Code</b>	<b>Role</b>
LBS/01	Officer in council's regeneration department. Former neighbourhood manager for Bermondsey Street area.
LBS/02	Senior Planner, involved in drawing up Heritage Conservation Area's Supplementary Planning Guidance, previous role in helping define boundaries of Bermondsey Street conservation area.
LBS/03	Former Director of Regeneration and Planning
LBS/04	Liberal Democrat councillor, Riverside ward. Role in community protests to LDDC redevelopment of Bermondsey Riverside.
LBS/05	Senior Planner. Role in early career in affordable housing designations for Cherry Gardens Estate. Led negotiations with developer for Empire Square scheme.
Dev/01	Associate at Munkenbeck & Marshall, architects of Bermondsey Square
Dev/02	Partnership Director, Igloo Regeneration, developer of Bermondsey Square, and involved in negotiations with Southwark Council over redevelopment of Bermondsey Square.

## Appendix 3: Interview consent form 2007



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DATE

### **GENTRIFICATION IN BERMONDSEY: INFORMATION SHEET FOR MAIN PARTICIPANTS**

As part of my PhD in Sociology, I am looking into how Bermondsey has changed in the past twenty years. I am particularly interested in the way in which the area has gentrified and the relations between new and long-term residents. For this reason I would like to interview people who live in Bermondsey, whether for most of their lives or for a relatively short amount of time. The interview will last up to an hour. During the interview I will ask questions about how Bermondsey has changed and what reasons you think people move to or leave the area.

I would like to take notes and record the interview so that I can transcribe sections later.

I have approached you because you have lived in Bermondsey for several years and will be able to tell me about some of the changes you have noticed. I would be very grateful if you would agree to take part.

You are free to withdraw from the study at any time. At every stage, your name will remain confidential and it will not be possible to identify who has taken part in the research. In line with the Data Protection Act, the information will be kept securely and destroyed a reasonable time after the end of the study. The data will be used for academic purposes only.

If you have any queries about the study, please feel free to contact me at the number above. My Supervisor, Professor Robert Tavernor, can also be contacted at the address above or by email ([r.tavernor@lse.ac.uk](mailto:r.tavernor@lse.ac.uk)).

Yours faithfully,

Jamie Keddie  
PhD Candidate  
Email:  
Mobile:



## YOUR CONSENT TO TAKE PART IN THE INTERVIEWS

The information from the research is going to be used in a PhD thesis that I am writing for the London School of Economics, Cities Programme. It may also be presented and published in other pieces of academic work. But all of the same agreements apply – it will be confidential, anonymous, used only directly by me, Jamie Keddie, and will be my ‘intellectual property’. It will still be locked away and kept secure.

If you agree for the information from the interviews you have, and are about to conduct with me, to be used for this please sign the box below:

Signed	_____
Print name	_____
–	
Date	